

# The Lamp



United States Association of  
Consecrated Virgins

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## *From Archbishop Burke to the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins*

Dear sisters in Christ,

During this month, we reflect on different mysteries in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On September 8<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate her birth. Conceived without sin in view of the immense dignity of her vocation, she was born into the family of Saints Joachim and Ann. Our Lady lived our family life through childhood and adolescence. Surely, she was outstanding among her companions in grace and virtue, but these qualities served rather to touch their hearts than to draw attention to herself.

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate the memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows. The graces Our Lord gave to Our Blessed Mother were given in order to strengthen her to carry out her unique vocation. As Her Son hung upon the Cross in order to save us from our sins, she cooperated fully with Him. As our Mother, she suffered with Her Divine Son for us and our eternal salvation.

As you go forward daily, living out your vocation of virginity consecrated to Christ, in the ordinary circumstances of life, may you remain always close to the prototype of fruitful Christian virginity, the Virgin Mother of God. May she strengthen you with her prayers to live a life, in every way worthy of the calling which you have received.

Asking a remembrance in your prayers, I am

Yours sincerely in Christ,

(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke

Archbishop of Saint Louis

### Inside this issue:

Something Ancient, Something New	2
Council Elections	3
Reflections on Convocation 2006	4 & 5
Dates for future Convocations	6
Q & A with Archbishop Burke	7

### Special points of interest:

- President's Journal
- Consecration Announcements
- Conference Recordings
- Prayers submitted by members

*Please consider participating in a team or running for office to assist in carrying out the work of our Association: See the June newsletter and upcoming announcements to learn about teams being formed this year.*

## SOMETHING ANCIENT, SOMETHING NEW

Let us consider the “Fiat”, the “Yes”, of our Blessed Virgin Mother. She was called; she was chosen; to her was given the possibility of bringing forth to the human race what was not known before. It was the eternal plan of the Father that the salvation of humankind would hinge upon her. She was free to say “no” or to change His call to give room to her own dreams, ambitions, and fantasies as the virgin Eve had done many years before. She was free to choose not to say “yes”. And yet it was her choice, her decision, to show her love for God by obeying the will of God when it was presented to her by the angel.

Surely it is the same with us. To love Christ as our Spouse is first of all a decision in our free will to obey Him. It may involve our emotions and a sensorial response to Him, but primarily this love is a decision and not a sensation. It is a decision to align our will and our affections in accord with our spousal relationship with Him. This is not a sublimation or discarding of any part of our sexual identity – His love is powerful enough to fulfill the immense capacity for love that we have received with our gift of virginity.

The Prayer of Consecration from the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity was composed by Pope St. Leo the Great 440-461 [Cfr. Ludwig Munster: [Christ in His Consecrated Virgins.](#)] Characteristically, the prayer describes the wonders of creation for the benefit of mankind: “Lord, look with favor on your handmaids. They place in your hands their resolve to live in chastity. You inspired them to offer themselves [*to take this vow*]; now they give you their hearts.”

This prayer reminds us that even our desire to offer ourselves is a gift from God! And when we receive this desire to offer ourselves, we also receive the capacity to live for our Spouse alone. This offering of ourselves in daily life is a free will offering; it is action based on a decision to give the whole of ourselves and our affections as a donation to our Spouse. It isn't a repression of our emotions but a decision of love, a decision not unlike that of the wife who donates herself to her husband.

The consecrated virgin gives the totality of her being to her Spouse. A married woman donates herself to her spouse and an element of her sacramental bond is the sexual union she enjoys with him. This physical expression of her sexual love makes it obvious to us that her sexuality is not repressed. The self-donation of the consecrated virgin to her Spouse also involves a donation of the totality of her sexuality and being. The virgin keeps intact the physical integrity of her virginity for her Spouse, giving to Him the integrity of her body as a witness of the eternal life to come. She lives now what mankind hopes to live for eternity: “Already now the virgin prefigures, and takes part in, the final consummation to come. She is a sign of the perfect state of humanity after the final redemption.” [Cfr. Ludwig Munster: [Christ in His Consecrated Virgins.](#)]

Let us reflect again on the words of Saint Leo the Great in the Prayer of Consecration: “Our nature was corrupted when the devil deceived our first parents, but you have restored it in Christ. He is your Word, through whom all things were made. He has

made our nature whole again, and made it possible for mortal people to reflect the life of angels.” The consecrated virgin has truly been given the grace to be in control of her decisions and actions. How we resonate with the prayer of Consecration as it asks that the virgin be endowed with gifts of the Spirit to enable her total self-donation to Him: “Modesty with right judgment, kindness with true wisdom, gentleness with strength of character, freedom with the grace of chastity. . . They have chosen you above all things; may they find all things in possessing you.”

When a woman humbly receives the gift of virginity she receives the gift to live happily, freely, and serenely in the state of chastity. She chooses to accept this gift and to attempt always to love Christ through daily obedience to His will. And this in itself is a gift she hopes to give to the world about her, a world bound by the shackles of slavery to sins of impurity. The mystery of the freedom of virginity, expressed in enduring love for Christ, may remain hidden to the world, but nonetheless it helps to sanctify the world. The love of the consecrated virgin for Christ stands as a sign of the mystery of the love of her Divine Spouse for His Church. - [Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman](#)

[Mother Teresa:](#)

“All works of love are works of peace. This is the reason for our existence: to be the sunshine of God's Love, to be the home of eternal happiness. That's all.”

# Council News - Elections!

**Two Council positions, President and At-Large Representative, will open January 1, 2006.** We encourage members to consider running for these leadership position in the Association! Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes and bylaws of the USACV, which were updated in fall 2003. We're happy to give you a copy of these if you don't have them. In summary, what you need to know for these elections:

## *Election Process*

Written notification of a member's desire to run for an open Council position must be received by Judith Stegman via email, fax, or U.S. mail no later than midnight

of Friday, October 27, 2006. We encourage each candidate to also submit a biographical statement, including remarks about why she desires to serve in the position.

**Ballots (and candidate biographies) will be mailed to all members in early November 2006.** Please note that voting members of the Association are consecrated virgins living under the jurisdiction of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops who have a certificate of consecration on file with the USACV and who are registered as members in 2006. If you have not yet registered as a member in 2006, now would be a good time to do so!

Ballots will be due back by Friday, December 1, 2006. Ballots will be opened and counted in the presence of an independent party. At that time, notification of the results will be made to the President, the newly elected, and all candidates.

Results will be published on our website and will be announced in the following newsletter.

*Please refer to the June 2006 newsletter for a detailed description of the Position Terms, Descriptions and Responsibilities for the two open Council seats.*

## **Note from Mary Kantor**

I sent out a survey this summer as a part of my dissertation research. If you still have a survey and would like to complete it, you may still mail back the survey (and postcard if you choose). I will not begin compiling the data from these surveys until later autumn. I greatly appreciate all who have returned their survey.

## USACV Council and Officers

Judith M. Stegman, *President, 2004 – 2006; Diocese of Lansing*

Magalis Aguilera, *2004 – 2006 (appointed Vice-President thru 2006); Archdiocese of Miami*

Louise Pare, *Treasurer, 2005 – 2007; Diocese of Lansing*

Shalina Stilley, *2005 – 2007; Diocese of Milwaukee*

Aliceanne Sawyer, *2006 – 2008 (appointed Secretary thru 2006); Diocese of Newark*

## *from the President's Journal . . .*

*It has been an immense privilege to serve as the president of this Association for the past three years and I would be honored to continue to serve for another term. It's not been an easy service, in human terms, but it has been a happy service and one in which I've been invited continually to dependence upon the grace of God. In my nature I'm given to action*

*and this role has encouraged me to submit action to contemplation, thankful for God's trust, placing my dependence solely upon our Divine Spouse, and seeking to understand and accomplish only His divine will in all.*

*At our recent Convocation, I reflected on words of Hans Urs Von Balthasar in which he noted that the*

*twofold gifts of contemplation and action are "as inseparable as inhalation and exhalation, as the contraction and expansion of the heart." May prayerful contemplation always be the source of strength for the carrying out of our work as an Association: to serve the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world.*

*... Judith Stegman*

# Reflections . . . . .2006 Convocation

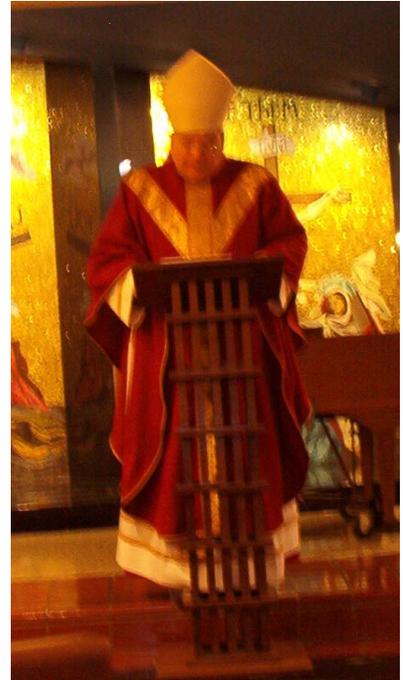
*"I have been trying to think about some of the things that most touched my heart, my soul during the 'retreat/convocation.'*

*One of the things was the depth of sharing with some of the women. In particular, that Thursday night at table with Beth, Maria Almeida, Karen Bussey, Cathy Maley and Katie...we each began to talk about our particular 'mission' experience, in the inner city, the mideast, India, Haiti, Home for the Dying, Sudan, the U.N....and it seemed that as we spoke, we each took the experience just spoken of*



*into deep prayer within ourselves and were silent for a moment...it all happened so naturally. And it seemed to me that our table became, for a brief time, the heart of the world within our hearts and the Heart of Christ, and that we were all held in the Center, receiving and giving over life and love and hope to all those peoples we had touched, and who had touched us.*

*And Archbishop Burke just being with us, laughing and sharing and supporting. His pride in the vocation and the women who were consecrated was wonderful to experience.  
Florence Sundberg, Candidate*



*"I heard words spoken during the Convocation that were, for me, both profound and deep. While the meaning of and the idea behind these words was not new, hearing THESE words spoken has caused an earthquake in my life as I have prayed and meditated upon these words. Just as in marriage, "the two become one flesh." The same is true for us as Consecrated Virgins. We have become "one flesh" with our Spouse, Christ."*

*Amy Shank, Consecrated Virgin, Diocese of Grand Rapids*



*"The one thing I really love from the Convocation among many things, is the book: To Love and to Serve. I would really recommend this to everyone. The second thing I got the most out of was Judith's reflections on Von Balthazar. I liked them very much, but the booklet: "To Love and To Serve" really expresses so well the call in my heart which I received when I was about eight years old. I also loved the mosaics on the mysteries of the rosary at the Christ the King Chapel. They were so beautiful and prayerful, especially the Joyful & the Glorious Mysteries."*

*Marjorie Uerling, Consecrated Virgin, Omaha*

Minutes of the annual membership meeting of the USACV, held during the 2006 Convocation, will be distributed soon to members of the association.  
*More Convocation notes on page 6*

*“What a grace-filled time it was for me to gather with Consecrated Virgins from all over the country at Our Lady of Snows in Belleville. It was wonderful to pray and dine and relax with so many beautiful Brides of Christ--a sweet celebration of Christ's love for each of us!*

*Our support for each other was underpinned and greatly enriched by the presence and talks by Archbishop Burke on Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical, Deus Caritas Est, and the magnificent paper delivered by Professor Lawrence Welch of Kenrick-Glennon Seminary entitled, "Affective Maturity and the Nuptial Mystery in the State of Consecrated Virginity." Dr. Welch broke new ground with his scholarly and spiritual integration of John Paul II's*

*Theology of the Body with our vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World. I thank these two men for their immense contributions to the further understanding of our deeply treasured ecclesial vocation. They have given us much to reflect upon and pray with in the upcoming year.”*

*Mary DeSantis, Consecrated Virgin, Archdiocese of Milwaukee*



*"I would highly recommend all of us (even attendees) purchasing the talk given by Fr. Ambrose, OSB, at our 2006 convocation. He spoke eloquently about both St. Benedict and St. Gertrude. St. Gertrude had many visions of the Sacred Heart, but the one which struck me in a particular way was the image of His Heart as a lamp. I then thought of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and their lamps. Perhaps not only is Jesus' Heart a lamp, but ours as well and that the oil needed is complete and total love of Him with nothing to distract us from giving ourselves to Him in return. It might be helpful to meditate on a blending the virgins and sower parables."*

*Barbara Blumers, Consecrated Virgin, Archdiocese of New York*



*Note: Convocation recordings of all talks are now available. Please see attached order form or visit our website, [www.consecratedvirgins.org](http://www.consecratedvirgins.org)"*

*“It was such a gift for me to attend the convocation. Listening to the various talks and to the women who attended, it reaffirmed the road God is calling me to. To be with such beautiful, Christ-centered women was an inspiration to me. The days really helped me to focus on my journey and ignite the flame of His love in my soul ever more deeply. God is faithful to his people! Praise God!”*

*Karen Hund, Candidate*



*"While it was sad that some of our sisters could not be with us this year it was a delight to see so many new and aspiring consecrated virgins at our gathering! A big round of applause to all of those who made the event possible and so joy-filled."*

*Jeanne McNulty, Consecrated Virgin, Diocese of Wheeling/Charleston*

## More Convocation notes . . .

++A transcript of the presentation by Dr. Lawrence Welch, "Affective Maturity and the Nuptial Mystery in the State of Consecrated Virginity" is available by email upon request from Aliceanne Sawyer. Also available by email upon request is a copy of the thesis of Father Ambrose Bennett from which was drawn the content of his talk. Email requests to Aliceanne at aasawyer@optonline.net .

++Archbishop Burke sent a letter expressing his heartfelt thanks for the generous gift collected at the convocation and given to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in his honor, as a token of our gratitude for his participation in the convocation. He writes, "You could not honor me in any better way than by assisting in the important work of the Shrine of Guadalupe at La Crosse, Wisconsin. It was a source of deepest joy for me to be able to participate in the recent National Convocation. I was especially pleased by the presentation by Dr. Welch of Kenrick-Glennon Seminary. Also, I am certain that Father Ambrose Bennett, O.C.B., of the Abbey of Saint Mary and Saint Louis gave you a very inspiring presentation on the Heart of Jesus in the writing of Saint Gertrude of Helfta." - *That he did, dear Archbishop.*

### 2006 Information Conference Recordings Available

Recordings of the 2006 Information Conference are now available on CD or audiocassette. You may want to take a fresh look at the order form and consider ordering the recordings. Archbishop Burke's talks on the "Essential Elements of Consecrated Virginity" were revised this year and two new presentations were given by consecrated virgins - an in-depth "Look at the Rite" by Mary Kay Lacke and a talk "Love and Virginity" by Susan Cummins. Judith Stegman's "Overview of Vocations in the Church" was expanded this year as was the significant presentation on the history of consecrated virginity by Loretta Matulich.



## Consecration Announcements

### France:

[Annie Brault and Dominique Rochon](#), at Limoges, by Bishop Christophe Dufour. (no date given)

[Myriam Seran](#), April 21, 2002, in Montpellier, by Bishop Jean-Pierre Ricard, Auxiliary Bishop.

### United States:

Congratulations to our newly consecrated :

[Barbara Blumers](#), July 8, 2006, Archdiocese of New York, Bishop Gerald J. Walsh, D.D.

[Julie Enzenberger and Linda Frickey](#), August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Diocese of Peoria (IL), Bishop Daniel Jenky, C.S.C.

[Lourdes Ramirez](#), August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Archdiocese of Chicago.

### Upcoming Consecrations in the United States:

[Lori Rose Cannizzaro](#), October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, 11:00 am, Diocese of Buffalo, Immaculate Conception Church, 520 Oakwood Ave., E. Aurora, NY 14052.

[Regina Dibb](#), October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006, 7:30 pm, Archdiocese of Portland (OR), Archbishop John G. Vlazny

[Maria de los Angeles Exposito](#), December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006, 5:30 pm, Archdiocese of Miami, Archbishop Favalora

[Nancy Kushman](#), December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006, 7:00 pm, Diocese of Lansing, Christ the King Catholic Church, Ann Arbor, MI

### Convocations of United States Consecrated Virgins:

- August 8 to 12, 2007 Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, IL
- 2008: no U.S. convocation (due to International Pilgrimage)
- June 24 to 28, 2009; St. Louis area

### Information Conferences

- August 1 to 3, 2007; Chicago area
- August 6 to 8, 2008; Chicago area
- August 5 to 7, 2009; Chicago area

### International Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins

- Rome, probably May 2008

*Upcoming events!  
Mark Your Calendars  
and plan to attend !*

## Q & A with Archbishop Burke

### **Question:**

***Is physical virginity a requirement for a woman to be consecrated according to the Rite for the Consecration of a Virgin Living in the World? The first of three prerequisites stated in the introductory norms in the Rite of Consecration makes clear that a woman seeking consecration may have never been married, but it also states that she must have never “lived in public or open violation of chastity.” How are we to understand this? Is it a settled matter in the Church? Spiritually, why is physical virginity important?***

### **Answer from Archbishop Burke:**

From my understanding of the nature of the consecration, physical virginity is strictly required. The essence of the vocation is the virgin's offering of the gift of her virginity to God for consecration, and God's consecration of her virginity through the ministry of the Church, setting her aside as a sacred person in the Church. It makes no sense to me to say that a woman who is not a virgin offers virginity as a gift to God for consecration. I have always counseled women, who are not virgins and who want to live a life of dedicated chastity, to make a private vow, which is recognized by the Church. The women who have done so have been most at peace with their form of life consecrated to God through the vow of perpetual continence.

The words “public or open violation of chastity” must be interpreted within the context of the whole history of the consecration and according to their canonical sense. For instance, I have always understood that a victim of incest or rape could be a candidate for the consecration because she was violated against her will. She can therefore offer to God what she did not knowingly and willingly give up. A woman who knowingly and willingly engaged in sexual relations with a man has openly violated chastity, no matter how well known her sexual relationship is to others.

I am confident in this understanding, but due to persistent questions, especially from well-meaning pastors, I have requested clarification of the meaning of “lived in public or open violation of chastity” from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Until such clarification is received, permit me to offer a strong caution with regard to the propagation of the idea that physical virginity is not required for the consecration.

From my long experience with consecrated virgins, I have known a few who were consecrated, even though they were not virgins. These women, who desire to give themselves completely to Christ and are doing so, experience a certain struggle in identifying their call to chastity with consecrated virginity. It is understandable, for the whole nature of the vocation of consecrated virginity is centered upon the offering of the gift of virginity. Many consecrated virgins who have offered the gift of their virginity for consecration have told me of the deep spiritual meaning of this offering. They are humbly aware that the preservation of their virginity is itself a gift from God and a confirmation of their call to this particular vocation. They do not consider themselves better than other women, but simply recognize the gift which God has given to them for their salvation and the salvation of the world.

Women who are not virgins may surely be called to dedicate their chastity to God, and they have a beautiful gift and witness to give, but it is a different witness and a different gift than the offering of virginity. The state of consecrated virginity, by its very name, is a state that offers the particular witness of a virgin “mystically espoused to Christ”.

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Some contributions from members: Ann Stitt right and Cathy Maley, below.

***Some wisdom from Mother Teresa, courtesy of the Holy Spirit:***

*“I think if we can spread this prayer, if we can translate it into our lives, it will make all the difference. It is so full of Jesus. It has made a great difference . . .”*

*Dear Jesus, help us*

*To spread Your fragrance everywhere we go.*

*Flood our souls with Your spirit and Life.*

*Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of Yours.*

*Shine through us and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel Your Presence in our soul.*

*Let them look up and see no longer us but only Jesus. Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as You shine, so to shine as to be a light to others.*

*The light, O Jesus, will be all from You.*

*None of it will be ours.*

*It will be You shining on others through us.*

*Let us thus praise You in the way You love best by shining on those around us.*

*Let us preach love without preaching, not by words, but by our example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to You. — John Henry Cardinal Newman*

## Prayer of St. Columba

Lord, grant me in the name of Jesus, your Son, my God, the love that does not fail, so that my lamp may be always lit, never extinguished, and may burn for me and give light to others. Lord, kindle our lamps, that they may always shine in your temple and continually receive light from you, the Eternal Light, that our own darkness may be illuminated and the darkness of the world expelled from us. Give my lamp such a share of your light that its brightness may reveal to me the Holy of Holies, where you are the Eternal Priest. May I love and contem-

plate you alone and may my lamp ever burn and shine before you.

Most loving Savior, show yourself to us who seek you, so that knowing you we may love you alone, desire you alone, contemplate you alone by day and by night and keep you always in our thoughts. May affection for you pervade our hearts. May attachment to you take possession of us. May love of you fill all our senses. May we know no other love except you who are Eternal. Lord Jesus Christ, to you be glory forever and ever. Amen

**We are repeating this information since there has been high interest:**

**Message from Carmen Muñoz:** To Love and to Serve: The Order of Virgins according to Canon 604. A limited number of copies of an English translation of AMAR Y SERVIR: El Orden de las Virgenes según el Canon 604, written by Spanish consecrated virgin Gloria Irene Alvaro Sanz, will be available to consecrated virgins and candidates in time for the celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This translation, made with the Author's permission by United States consecrated virgin Carmen M. Muñoz, will be available for a suggested donation of \$8.50 to cover printing and shipping. For more information or to request a copy, please contact: Carmen M. Muñoz; FIATcmm@juno.com or c/o P.O. Box 212594; Augusta, GA 30917.