

# The Lamp



## United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

February 2007  
Presentation of Our Lord

Volume 12, Issue 1

### TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINS:

February 2, 2007 – Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas)

*Dear sisters in Christ,*

*Today, forty days after the celebration of the Solemnity of Christmas, we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, recalling how the Blessed Virgin Mary and her saintly husband, Joseph, presented the Child Jesus in the temple, in accord with the Law of Moses. The Presentation of the Lord was not, however, merely the fulfillment of a ritual law, but the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the temple which He purifies by His Coming into the world, culminating in His Passion and Death. In the Eastern Church, the feast is called “The Meeting,” signifying the meeting of mankind, represented by Simeon and Anna, with the long-awaited Savior in the temple. The full meaning of the Feast of the Presentation is uncovered by meditating upon the words of holy Simeon: “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared in the presence of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel” (Lk 2:30-32). How fittingly we pray these words every night at Compline!*

*The feast is also known popularly as Candlemas, recalling that today the candles for the use in the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the other sacred rites, and the candles for devotional use in the home are blessed in each church and chapel before the procession to the altar of sacrifice at the beginning of Mass. After the blessing of the candles, the priest and the faithful, with candles lighted, go in procession to the altar. The blessed and lighted candle is a fundamental and most powerful symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is indeed “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to ... Israel.” Christ is the fullness of the revelation of the truth and love of God; He is the Light Who shows us the way to eternal life.*

*The lighted candle is placed in our hands today. At every celebration of the Mass, the acolytes carry lighted candles for us. The lighted candle reminds us that Christ the Light indeed dwells within us for the salvation of all mankind. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council began the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church with the words from the prayer of holy Simeon, “lumen gentium,” “the light of the nations,” expressing the desire that the Council might “bring to all men that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church” (Lumen Gentium, n. 1).*

*Not surprisingly, the Church honors today those called to the consecrated life, for the light of Christ shines forth in the Church, in a preeminent way, through the closer following of Christ of those called to the life of consecrated virginity lived in the world,*

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## *Something Ancient . . . Something New . . .*

“You are an Enclosed Garden, My Sister, My Bride . . . A Fountain Sealed (Song of Song 4)

“Contemplate further the indescribable joys, the wealth and unending honors of the King, and sighing after them with great longing, cry to Him: ‘Draw me after you; we shall run to the fragrance of your perfumes, O heavenly bridegroom. I will run and faint not until you bring me to the wine cellar, until your left hand is under my head and your right hand happily embraces me and you kiss me with the kisses of your mouth’” (Saint Clare, Virgin, letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague). Saint Theresa of Avila said “the kiss of his mouth is peace.” We understand that this peace is an integral peace in our being; it is experienced in body and soul through grace. In the midst of our personal trials and sufferings we are sealed with his peace – this peace is our very stronghold.

As was true with our sisters in the ancient Church, the very essence of our spirituality as consecrated virgins is our spousal relationship with Christ as reflected in this passage of Song of Songs. We live in the joy of his love. The spirituality of the consecrated virgin is based in the title she receives during the consecration ceremony: “. . .today through our ministry he anoints you with a new grace and consecrates you to God by a new title. He gives each one of you the dignity of being a bride of Christ and binds you to the Son of God in a covenant to last for ever.” (Rite of Consecration, homily). This title is about our being, not our doing. On her wedding day, when a woman becomes the bride of her husband, she enters a new relationship with the world about her. She loves in a new way as she is committed in love with her husband. Her wedding isn’t about what she will do differently, as in a job or service, although it may impact what she does. It is about who she is.

As a virgin is espoused to Christ at her consecration, she enters a new relationship with him and with the world about her as she witnesses his spousal love to the world. It is the same spirituality as the virginal vocation of our Blessed Mother: to be and to live for Christ alone, forever doing the will of the Father in the circumstances of our daily life. Our Blessed Mother lived her fiat as a faithful daughter of the Father, as a faithful Mother of the Son and as a faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit. And we might say the same of the Church! We are called to live in the same way as our Mother Mary lived and as our Church is called: keeping unstained our fidelity to our Bridegroom. “Receive the ring that marks you as a bride of Christ. Keep unstained your fidelity to your Bridegroom, that you may one day be admitted to the wedding feast of everlasting joy.” (Rite of Consecration, Homily).

Our sisters in the Ancient Church praised the Father and gave their lives in total abandonment to the love of the Eternal Son. Such is our spirituality as brides of Christ, to “praise our heavenly Father with our lips; to pray without ceasing for the salvation of the whole world” until the time when our Divine Spouse comes and brings us to the wine cellar. There his right hand will happily embrace each of us and He will kiss each of us with the kiss of his mouth, the kiss of eternal peace!

*“We fix our eyes on Christ alone.”*

*..Judith Stegman*

## Council News

### Current council members and officers are:

**Judith M. Stegman, President,** 2007 – 2009; Diocese of Lansing

**Magalis Aguilera, ;** 2007 – 2009 (appointed **Vice-President** thru 2009); Archdiocese of Miami

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

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

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

### Upcoming events:

#### Convocations of the United States Consecrated Virgins

**August 8 to 12, 2007** Our Lady of Snows, Belleville, IL

**2008: no U.S. convocation** (due to International Pilgrimage to Rome)

**June 24 to 28, 2009** Saint Louis area

#### National Information Conferences

**August 1 to 3, 2007;**

**August 6 to 8, 2008;** All to be held near Chicago

**August 5 to 7, 2009;**

#### International Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins

**Rome in 2008,** tentatively May 14 to 20

(travel days on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>)

*continued from the Archbishop: the eremitical life, the monastic life, the contemplative religious life, the apostolic religious life, and the life of consecrated secularity. In many dioceses throughout the world, the procession at the beginning of today's Mass is formed principally by consecrated persons carrying lighted candles.*

*By your consecration as virgins living in the world, you carry the light of Christ within you for the salvation of our world. The total purity and generosity of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ for all mankind is resplendent in the offering of your virginity for consecration and in your virginal love of Christ and His Mystical Body, the Church. The lighted lamp is the symbol of consecrated virginity, recalling the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. At the beginning of the rite of consecration, after the proclamation of the readings and the Gospel, the candidate for consecration lights a candle or lamp and, then, approaches the sanctuary, while the antiphon is sung: "Be wise: make ready your lamps. Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet him" (Roman Pontifical). Consecrated virginity, in a most special way, helps all the faithful to have their lamps lighted and ready to meet the Lord each day, above all, in the Holy Eucharist, and, finally, at His return in glory on the Last Day.*

*May the celebration of Candlemas bring you the grace of renewed joy in your calling to follow our Lord in consecrated virginity. May your virginal consecration and life be a treasured lamp by which Christ shines forth in the Church for the salvation of all the nations.*

*Invoking God's blessing upon you and your consecration, and asking a continued remembrance in your prayers, I remain*

*Yours in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary,*

*+Raymond L. Burke*

*(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke Archbishop of Saint Louis*

*Episcopal Moderator of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins*

## Reflections

*Editor's note: We continue this presentation of brief stories from those recently consecrated, hoping to make this an annual feature of the newsletter.*

### **From Peggy Popkey, Diocese of Galveston-Houston, 11/19/05**

It is difficult to use words to describe this unbelievable journey. The moment of my birth my mother returned me to the care and protection of Our Blessed Mother, Mary. Mary has been present every step of my journey.

I struggled for years – begging Our Lord and Lady to help me find my vocation. I gave myself in surrender at age 7, “Lead me where you want me to go, let me say what you want me to say, let me do what you will me to do.” I walked each day with the Lord’s hand in mine just one step at a time. Some 50 years later, after reading an article about Alice Claire as the first Consecrated Virgin of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, my calling was clearly revealed. My application, formation moved along quickly, smoothly and peacefully. I surrendered the whole process to Jesus. “When I am ready, *you* choose the day, date, time, whenever and whatever you want.”

I was wed to my Beloved at the Vigil Mass for the Feast of Christ the King before my parish family at St. Albert of Trapani. The simple white suit I planned to wear became a beautiful dress just a few days before. I felt like a princess marrying a King. Everyone at the twilight service indicated the presence of angels everywhere. My sister sang the *Ave Maria* as I presented my bouquet to Our Lady. My parish family offered such a lovely reception. It all seemed like a dream, as though I were watching someone else’s life, not mine.

Each day since November 19, 2005 I am in awe of this amazing “call”. I am humbled as it has been revealed who I have been all of these years and how each step in my life (good or bad) has brought me to this moment. While I experience more and more the challenges of the spiritual life I cannot describe with enough clarity how much my Beloved has filled the emptiness of my heart. “I am my Beloved’s and He is mine” there is nothing else to want. \*

### **From Susan Munroe, Archdiocese of New York, 2/2/06:**

My comment in the April 2006 issue of *The Lamp* is as fresh and true now as it was the day of my Consecration, “Having the Church invoke the Holy Spirit upon you is a very powerful thing. Wow!” The Presentation of the Lord will be the first anniversary of my Consecration. I could speak of all the graces my Spouse has so lovingly granted to this needy and undeserving virgin over this past year, but instead I would like to take up a topic touched on by Theresa Catteruccia in her reflection in the last issue of *The Lamp*. It is her thoughts of unworthiness. My spiritual director went the next step to tell me that I would never get over those thoughts and feelings of unworthiness; in fact they might get worse. Be that as it may, my intention to always be obedient to God’s will and always have a Yes in my heart and on my lips as Mary tends to go awry.

My sins of omission and commission, of thought, word, and deed stab at me, always reminding me that I will always be an unworthy servant, that I am human and will never be perfect. Only God is perfect. And that all my imperfections are found in all my fellow humans as well, and that it is part of God’s love that he has mercy on me and still loves me and forgives me my imperfections and transgressions. And that as my Divine Spouse does for me I in turn am compelled to do for my fellow humans, to understand that they have imperfections and transgressions and to lovingly forgive them. \*

#### **Consecration Announcements:**

France: [Liliane Carles](#), October 7, 2006

#### **Upcoming United States Consecrations:**

[Helen Qua](#), February 10, 2007, Diocese of Metuchen, Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski

[Karen Hund](#), March 26, 2007, Diocese of Erie, Bishop Donald W. Trautman, 7:00 pm St. Peter Cathedral



## Reflections

**Cathy Maley, Archdiocese of Saint Louis, 4/1/06**

*When I first read Archbishop Burke's article in the St. Louis Review, I was not about to become a consecrated virgin. This was exactly what I was thinking of at 15 but not now. After all, where was God when I was searching; when I was urged by priests to "be a nun". At this point, I wanted no parts of becoming a consecrated virgin. Enough is enough. Besides, I can't stand wedding dresses and veils!*

*It was the Holy Spirit who impelled me as I struggled through the discernment process thinking, "no way" but at the same time certain this is where the Lord had called me at 15. How would I ever look into His eyes in eternity and not do what He was asking now.*

*People would ask me, "Aren't you excited about the Consecration" and I'd respond, "no." When friends would say, "See You at the Consecration," I'd say, "I hope I show up!" I'm not one for pomp and ceremony. The Office of Consecrated Life told me to come up with an invitation. I was planning on inviting no one. If I had married, I would have eloped quietly! It suddenly dawned on me that all of this was not about me but about the LORD. If the Lord hung on a cross for me, I certainly could wear "that dress" and stand up for Jesus. The invitations went out, an opportunity to witness to the Lord and I wondered why He would even pursue a proud wretch like me! God's love and His call are wrapped in mystery. The entire Consecration ceremony was an out of body experience for*

*me. Some consecrated virgins have commented on the great grace of Consecration. Every time I heard something to that effect, I was like the apostle, Thomas, "Show me!" In faith, I implored the Lord to open to me the floodgates of his love, mercy and grace. I have realized an unfolding of this grace of Consecration and it is extraordinary! For the first time in my life, I feel so alive in God.*

*One man who attended the Consecration Mass tracked me down inquiring if I would do the altar linens for a downtown parish with no resident parishioners. Someone else who read about the Consecration and who works with the St. Vincent De Paul Society approached me to see if I would telephone a younger woman who was about to be baptized and confirmed. She has a serious terminal disease and is unable to do grocery shopping or to clean her apartment which I now do for her. With no family, she has become part of mine. It is truly an honor and privilege to serve the poor.*

*All of this has been the fruit of the Consecration and truly the work of the Holy Spirit. It reminds me of how the early Christian virgins were the working hands of the Church.*

*In looking back upon the Consecration, it is truly a wedding with the Lord. He asks us to open our hearts and souls to His plan, not ours! I'm glad I wore the wedding dress and veil because it showed Jesus, the Bridegroom. \**

**Barbara Blumers, Archdiocese of New York, 7/8/06:** My long-time spiritual director first mentioned Consecration in the mid-1990's; the idea floundered for lack of information. The attacks of

9/11 and loss of my mother on 9/14 necessitated discerning the next step. The **"Catholic Digest"** article revealed the life Jesus had prepared for me since birth, but I was tormented with groundless doubts and fears. (Thanks to Judith for giving me God's sign I was on the right path.)

My consecration day was wonderful, but it flew by. I am contented in finally accepting Jesus' invitation to be His for all eternity. Upon returning from our St. Louis retreat, spiritual darkness gradually set in, completely overwhelming me. As His great gift, Jesus allowed me to share deeply His sense of abandonment during His Passion. My heart rejoiced reading the other stories and speaking with some of you, because I learned I was not alone and Satan was trying to separate me from all support systems.

After a recent homebound period, I am pleased to say His peace has returned to my soul. I am grateful for being forced to stop to just be with Him together with daily Communion calls to strengthen me.

Lessons learned for those discerning? Satan will attack you – either before or after Consecration or both; you have to be aware of how. Trust in Jesus, surrendering only to Him. Get to know your sisters by attending our conferences, so when spiritual crises arise, those who know and understand can support you. Thanks to Cathy Maley (MO), Anne Gishpert (CO) and Twanna Bolling (IL, 06/02/07) for their indispensable assistance- all of whom became my friends in St. Louis. \*

**Nancy Kushman, Diocese of Lansing, December 13, 2006**

On December 13th, 2006, the memorial of St. Lucy, Bishop Carl Mengeling of the Diocese of Lansing, Michigan consecrated me to a Life of Virginity Lived in the World. What a blessing this event has been in my life! Many times over the past 30 years of my life I have wondered just how God would fulfill the deepest longings of my heart to be His bride. Although I sometimes grew discouraged and wondered if perhaps I hadn't heard this call from the Lord after all, the Lord had other ideas: He would fulfill His plan for me, and in an even more marvelous way than I originally imagined.

I thought briefly about the religious life but never really felt con-

victed that was what God had called me to. And although I had made a private vow, I thought there was something more God had for me. When I heard about Consecration to a Life of Virginity Lived in the World and began inquiring about this vocation in 2004 things began falling into place. I attended the informational conference in Chicago in August 2004 and a few weeks later, the retreat in Belleville, IL. I read everything I could get my hands on concerning the vocation; I felt like what I read was being written just for me, like it was the story of my life.

During the next couple years I began living the life of a consecrated virgin: daily Mass as much as possible; daily Rosary; intense prayer, especially before the

Blessed Sacrament; frequent confession; Liturgy of the Hours. My consecration on December 13th, therefore, was in a sense a confirmation of the life I was already living. In another way it was the beginning of something new: a public role as a consecrated virgin in the life of the Church. This is obviously a great blessing for me (of which I know I am entirely unworthy); may it also be a blessing for the Church and the world as I take my place as an intercessor for Christ's mission along with Mary, the Queen of all virgins. \*



**Julie Enzenberger, Diocese of Peoria, 8/12/06**

There are mystical heavenly happenings during consecration that can't be explained in worldly terms. One of the most special moments of my consecration was lying prostrate on the floor. They covered me with a funeral pall and it was as if I was covered in a blanket of peace. All the moments of consecration were special in some way. The veiling, the Bishop placing the ring on my finger and receiving the Eucharist for the first time as a bride of Christ were all joy-filled moments.

I am in a marriage filled with passion, love and peace. My Spouse touches me in ways I could have never imagined. He makes love to my very soul. As in any marriage however it is not always easy. Just as the Church is often misunderstood and persecuted it only follows that as a living image of the Church the consecrated virgin must also deal with this. The good news is that as a bride of Christ you can pick up the cross with joy as the greatest Lover, your Spouse, is right there beside.

There is also the mystical fact of the number of brides Jesus fills with this love and affection. We desire to share His love with the world. There is an automatic bond felt between consecrated virgins. There is an understanding within that knows He feeds each and every one of us in a unique way and holds us all dear to His heart.

I am so glad that there were two of us being consecrated at the same ceremony as my consecration actually helped me embrace the fuller meaning of community and oneness as my Spouse calls all of us to put Him in the center of all our relationships. After all heaven is not living in seclusion with God but it is all of us living as one in God. Since consecration it seems easier to recognize the beauty of Christ that lies within others whether they can see it in themselves yet or not. The consecration helped the oneness with others begin for me. \*

## Announcements

### Formation Resource Development Team

Mary Kay Lacke has agreed to serve as the team leader for the newly formed “Formation Resource Development Team”. She is in the process now of forming that team, the mission of which is “to develop and identify resources for Bishops and their delegates to utilize in the discernment of the vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World, the preparation of candidates for the vocation, and the ongoing formation of consecrated virgins living in their dioceses.”

That’s quite a mission statement! We look forward to the fruit of the

labors of this team and ask your prayerful support. Mary Kay welcomes your input. You may contact her by email at [mklacke@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mklacke@sbcglobal.net).

### 2007 National Information Conference Team

Theresa Marshall has agreed to serve as the team leader for the “2007 National Information Conference Team”. Theresa has generously served us by leading this team for many years and she now formally takes the title of “Team Leader” under our new organizational model. She is in the process now of forming her team and preparing announcements for the

2007 conference. These announcements should be available soon on our website.

You may contact Theresa for more information about the 2007 national information conference at [marshall@wash.k12.mi.us](mailto:marshall@wash.k12.mi.us).

### 2007 Convocation Team

We are currently in the process of developing the team description for the 2007 Convocation Team. This team will have responsibility for planning the 2007 national convocation of United States consecrated virgins. Watch our website for more details on the convocation!

## 2007 Membership Registrations

Attached or enclosed you will find the 2007 registration form for membership in the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins. We lovingly encourage you to respond *now* to this annual notice, in order to save us the time of sending later reminders. Membership is at two basic levels: “Member” and “Friend”.

“Member” status is for consecrated virgins living in the United States. In addition to the annual membership registration, new members are asked to complete a one-time application form. The benefits of membership include eligibility to vote in USACV elections and opportunity for fuller participation in work and friendship opportunities with other consecrated virgins in the United States.

“Friend” status is for our many supporters, including priests, delegates for consecrated life and vocation directors, pastors, candidates and inquirers for the consecration, consecrated virgins living in other countries, parents and anyone else interested in supporting the renewal of this ancient vocation in today’s Church!

To friends and members: We greatly appreciate your donations to the USACV, enabling us to continue to serve the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world. Your support directly allows us to develop and disseminate resources to foster the restoration of the ancient Order of Virgins in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.. We are staffed by volunteers dedicated to producing materials, conferences, and worldwide communications of the highest quality, reflecting the dignity of this vocation of mystical espousal to Christ, our Lord. Thank you for your generous support.

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*from the President's journal*

**... an update on Rome 2008**

It is with great joy and with gratitude in my heart that I bring you news of my recent visit to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL). CICLSAL is the arm of the Holy See responsible for overseeing Consecrated Life in the worldwide Church and the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world falls under its jurisdiction. On January 4, 2007, seven consecrated virgins and three Bishops met with the Congregation to discuss thematic and theological aspects of planning for the 2008 international pilgrimage to Rome.

The meeting was chaired by Archbishop Burke, who had been asked to serve as the

liaison for the international committee formed to plan the pilgrimage. We were honored by the presence and leadership of Archbishop Cattenoz of Avignon, France and Bishop Gonzalez of Tarazona, Spain, each of whom accompanies the consecrated virgins in his country. Magalis Aguilera accompanied me from the United States. Yolande Salmon of France prepared the meeting agenda in her role as coordinator for the 2006 pilgrimage; consecrated virgin theologians and canonists from France, Italy, Spain, and Argentina were included.

Cardinal Franc Rodé, prefect of the Congregation, warmly welcomed us and spoke with esteem for our vocation. He announced that the Holy See itself will convoke the 2008 international pilgrimage of consecrated virgins to Rome and will send announcements to Bishops' conferences throughout the world. Let us thank God for this great gift which, I expect, will raise consciousness and respect for consecrated virginity lived in the world as a distinct vocation in the universal Church. His words spoke enthusiastically of the current renewal of the ancient Order of Virgins as he offered the assistance of the Congregation in ways we had not anticipated.

More details will follow as the program and dates for the 2008 pilgrimage are finalized. The theme was agreed upon: *Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World: "A Gift for the Church and in the Church"*. The program will be rich, including presentations on: the history of consecrated virginity extending from early centuries to its re-birth in our day; the distinct identity of Christian virginity; the Church as virgin; an in-depth look at the rite of consecration; a look at virginal fecundity – the maternal aspect of our spousal love; the distinct sign and identity of the consecrated virgin among all baptized Christians; "Love Stronger than Death" as description of the spirituality of the consecrated virgin; the secularity of the vocation and relationship of the virgin to the Church particular and the Church universal; and the eschatological character of consecrated virginity.

Let us pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all who prepare presentations and work on the many aspects of planning this event!

*reported by Judith Stegman, President USACV*