

# The Lamp



## United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

April 2007  
Easter Season

Volume 12, Issue 2

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

April 15, 2007 – Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday

Dear sisters in Christ,

My warmest greetings of joy and peace of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Before the mystery of our salvation in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Paul urges us to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1). He urges us: “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col 1:2). What is above is the glorious Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father, to Whom you are espoused by your consecration. What is above is His glorious pierced Heart, to which you have united your hearts totally and from which He unceasingly pours forth into your hearts the gift of divine love. What is above is what we know most perfectly on this earth in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and in the Real Presence of our Risen Lord, the Sacred Host reposed in the tabernacles of our churches and chapels.

What is above is the source of both your call to consecration as virgins living in the world and your mission as consecrated virgins, that is to be signs of God’s merciful love in the world and of the fulfillment of that love in the world which is to come. What Saint Paul writes of every Christian life applies in a most special way to your life as consecrated virgins: “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col 1:3).

As we complete the octave celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord, we meditate on the mystery of the Divine Mercy as it is most perfectly revealed in the Paschal Mystery. We live in a society which has grown forgetful of God and, therefore, has lost hope in His merciful love. You and I are keenly aware of how much our brothers and sisters in a totally secularized society long for a sign of God’s unconditional mercy and love. By the total gift of your life in espousal of Christ, you are an exceptionally eloquent sign of God’s merciful love in our world. By your vocation to the consecrated life, you draw your brothers and sisters to Christ, Divine Mercy Incarnate, above all, in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Pope John Paul II, who canonized Saint Faustina Kowalska, the great Apostle of Divine Mercy, on the Second Sunday of Easter of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, was keenly aware of the need to give strong witness to the mystery of God’s merciful love in our time. As he canonized Saint Faustina, he also proclaimed the Second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday for the universal Church. I pray that the celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday will both inspire and strengthen you in your mission as apostles of the Divine Mercy which unceasingly flows from the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, into which you have placed your hearts totally, without reserve.

With best wishes and heartfelt prayers for a most blessed celebration of the Easter Season, and with a renewed request of a remembrance in your prayers, I remain

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

(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke

Archbishop of Saint Louis

Episcopal Moderator of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

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

*The paschal mystery – the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Divine Lord and Spouse - was something new in salvation history! The Prophet Isaiah foretold this messianic mission of Christ: “See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Is. 43:19) And Saint John testified of the events: “See, I make all things new! Then He said: “Write these matters down, for the words are trustworthy and true.” (Rev. 21:5) It is also striking that the vocation to lifelong virginity lived for the sake of the Kingdom of God was also something new in salvation history.*

*The very essence of the vocation of consecrated virginity is the gift of virginity received from the Father as our Blessed Mother received it, accepted as she accepted the gift, and offered back in totality to her Divine Son. Our lived experience of following the will of the Father is to accept the sufferings of life as our Blessed Mother and our sisters in the ancient Church accepted them. How do we approach these sufferings? With joy, joy in surrendering our total being as brides of Jesus Christ, joy in daily saying our “fiat,” joy in looking at the face of the resurrected Christ, joy at living in our being the mystery of the Church, the bride of the Lamb.*

*Our vocation as consecrated virgins in the Church is a vocation of deciding over and over again to say “yes.” At Karen Hund's recent consecration in Erie on the Feast of the Annunciation, Bishop Trautman reflected on Karen's own description of this Feast as a celebration of “yes”. “Yes” to making the whole of ourselves, physical, psychological, and spiritual, totally available to God in an integrated way, in mystical union with Him as our Spouse. At the time of Consecration, our souls were illuminated with the confirmation of the gift of virginity and we began an ongoing process of maturation in experiencing the tender torrents of His love.*

*Each of us lives her human life in a particular age and time, in a particular geographic space and in relationships with particular other human beings. It was true also of our Blessed Mother! And all that we do, all that we are is an ongoing process to fulfill the will of the Father, to keep in heart and mind the mysteries of the Son, to fulfill our vocation of love in the Holy Spirit. We are called to grow in this mystical union of love until the last moment of our mortal life. We take our part in the new creation which, as Saint Paul taught us, “groans and is in agony even until now. Not only that, but we ourselves, although we have the Spirit as first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:22-23).*

*With St. Theresa of Avila, we look forward to seeing Him “in great splendor and beauty and majesty.” But in the meantime, she relates to us what Christ told her of her current life. He told her “that it was time she took upon herself His affairs as if they were her own and that He would take her affairs upon Himself, and He added other words which are easier to understand than to repeat.” (Interior Castle, Seventh Mansions, Chapter II, 1). This vocation of virginal love – something ancient, something new, as we live forever bound to Christ.*



*-Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman*

## from the President's journal

A reader of our Feast of the Presentation issue of *The Lamp* expressed concern that only one passing reference was made to the World Day of Consecrated Life. In retrospect, I see that this could have given an incorrect impression. From my point of view, I see that members of the USACV are very conscious of their identity as members of the broader form of *Consecrated Life* in the Catholic Church. .

The story that should also have been told in that newsletter is that more and more of our members have reported their delight at being invited to participate in diocesan celebrations of World Day of Consecrated Life on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, along with members of various religious orders, members of secular institutes, and diocesan hermits. In my own diocese, the consecrated virgins initiated the planning of the diocesan celebration this year. I would welcome submissions for *The Lamp* from consecrated virgins about diocesan celebrations of World Day of Consecrated Life, or other stories of how they have better understood the living of consecrated virginity in relationship with other consecrated persons in the Church.

This leads me to a note about the theme of our 2007 convocation, "*In Love with Christ and His Church.*" We'll focus on the expression of our bridal relationship with Christ, a relationship shared with the whole Church under the title *Bride of Christ*, and particularly shared with women living forms of *Consecrated Life* in the Church. This bridal love distinguishes one in the Order of Virgins, who Canon 604 describes as one who is both mystically espoused to Christ and dedicated to the service of the Church. The suggested homily for the Rite of Consecration also reminds us: "Never forget that you are given over entirely to the service of the Church and of all your brothers and sisters. You are apostles in the Church and in the world." We look forward to exploring this identity together.

*-Judith Stegman*

### 2007 USACV Member and Friends Registrations

Thanks to the many who have responded to our 2007 membership drive. Attached again is a registration form for membership; we encourage you to send this in as soon as possible if you have not yet registered.

Examples of work in process, funded by your donations: In February, the USACV was invited to send a delegate to present the vocation of consecrated virginity at a *Vocations Day* at Christendom College. Elizabeth Lee, consecrated virgin of the Diocese of Fall River, traveled on our behalf and made a worthwhile presentation. Work on the "Vocations Tree" artwork and presentation model continues, as does development of a new logo design for the USACV. The Formation Resource Development Team, under the leadership of Mary Kay Lacke, has earnestly begun work to make readily available professionally-designed resources for those preparing to live this vocation. And planning for three conferences is underway: the 2007 Information Conference, the 2007 national convocation, and the 2008 international pilgrimage/conference.

### Rome 2008, International Pilgrimage update

Isabel Bettwy, a consecrated virgin and experienced pilgrimage travel director, has generously agreed to coordinate travel arrangements for those from the United States interested in attending the Rome 2008 international pilgrimage/conference for consecrated virgins. Attached to this newsletter is [an initial interest survey](#) we ask all consecrated virgins to complete and return directly to Isabel. All consecrated virgins and candidates with a scheduled consecration date are invited to attend the 2008 pilgrimage/conference. Please see our January 2007 issue of "The Lamp" for more details. We commend to your prayers the planning of this international gathering; it is an immense project! We look forward to this gathering with our sisters in Christ.

### + In Memoriam +

Note from France: Renee de Tryon Montalembert has joined her eternal Spouse after a painful Holy Week. A number of us will remember Renee from her presence at the Rome 1995 international gathering of consecrated virgins. We have much to be grateful for in her life as she worked tirelessly to pioneer the restored Order of Virgins for women living in the world. Our sisters in France ask your prayer for the repose of her soul.

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Consecrated Virgins**

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### Council News

#### 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,** May 14 to 20

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

#### Current council members and officers are:

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

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

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

Shalina Stillely, 2005 – 2007; Archdiocese of Milwaukee

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

### Newsletter Team

Judith asks that any consecrated virgin who is interested in serving on or possibly leading a newly-formed newsletter team, please contact her. (Julie Taube has graciously agreed to continue to layout and publish *The Lamp* from her Minneapolis office!)

#### Publication dates for *The Lamp* for 2007:

- ✦ Feast of Ascension May 17<sup>th</sup>, submission deadline May 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ✦ Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul June 29<sup>th</sup>, submission deadline June 15<sup>th</sup>
- ✦ Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows September 15<sup>th</sup>, submission deadline September 1<sup>st</sup>
- ✦ Christmas December 25<sup>th</sup>, submission deadline December 10<sup>th</sup>
- Feast of the Presentation February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, submission deadline January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008

### 2007 National Information Conference Team

**Theresa Marshall**, consecrated virgin from the diocese of Lansing, has agreed to serve as the leader of the 2007 Information Conference Team. Enclosed with this newsletter is a newly designed flyer and registration form for that conference. We encourage and invite all who desire to have a deeper understanding of the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world. The conference is designed for vocation directors and others working with candidates, women inquiring about the vocation for themselves, and newly consecrated virgins who haven't yet attended an informational conference. It is a great opportunity to interact with consecrated virgins, pray together, and deepen in an understanding of this distinctive bridal vocation.

### 2007 Convocation Team

**Louise Pare**, council member and consecrated virgin from the Diocese of Lansing, has agreed to serve as the leader of the 2007 Convocation Team. Detailed information and schedules are forthcoming, and we are pleased now to announce the theme of the conference, **"In Love with Christ and His Church"**. The theme for the convocation has emerged during preparations for the 2008 international pilgrimage, as consecrated virgins have discussed the distinctive bridal nature of our vocation. The spousal relationship of the consecrated virgin to Christ expresses itself in her intimate personal love for Christ, a love she expresses as a member of the Church, the Bride of Christ, who day and night lives to love her Bridegroom. This spousal relationship also expresses itself in the consecrated virgin's love shown to the world about her and to the Body of Christ, an active love she expresses as she strives to be the serving hands and feet of the Church, the Bride of Christ.

This should be a rich gathering as Archbishop Burke explores this theme in light of the February 22, 2007 Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI, *"Sacramentum Caritatis (The Sacrament of Charity - On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission)*. Along with this will be more opportunities to hear from one another about the expression of our bridal love for Christ in apostolic works. We hope that many will be able to join us. No convocation will be held in 2008 in order to allow many to attend the international gathering in Rome.