

The Lamp



United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

September 15, 2008
Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows

Volume 13, Issue 5

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

August 15, 2008 – Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear sisters in Christ,

My heartfelt thanks to you for your beautiful and bountiful spiritual bouquet, your many personal greetings, and your generous monetary gift, which were presented to me on the evening of August 6th, the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, during the informational conference for those discerning the vocation to consecrated virginity lived in the world. Your greetings and gifts were presented to me during a most enjoyable reception, at which I was able to visit, at length, with both the consecrated virgins helping with the informational conference and with those hearing the call to consecrated virginity. The reception was a wonderful way to conclude my service as Episcopal Moderator of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins. The sentiments which you expressed, in so many ways, will remain with me always. Your prayers and sacrifices, I know, are assisting me and will continue to assist me greatly in meeting the new challenges which I am called to meet.

Please forgive me for not writing individually to each of you to express my gratitude. Be assured of my sentiments of esteem and gratitude, and of my daily remembrance of your intentions in my prayers.

Permit me to say, once again, how much I have been blessed through my service as Episcopal Moderator of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins. I have enjoyed so much getting to know you, both individually and as an association. Your love of the Church and of Her pastors has been a source of inspiration and strength for me. It has been an honor to offer whatever assistance I was able, over the years. You can always count upon me as an advocate for your sacred calling and life.

Please continue to pray for me.

Invoking God's blessing upon you and your consecration, I remain

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

(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke

Archbishop Emeritus of Saint Louis

Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura

Notice of change of Episcopal Moderators: We are pleased to announce that **His Excellency, The Most Reverend Earl Alfred Boyea Jr., Bishop of Lansing (Michigan)**, has accepted the position of Episcopal Moderator of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins and has been affirmed in this position by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Meet Bishop Boyea on page 5.*

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As it was in the early Church, so it is now. A virgin is consecrated to a life of virginity by the action of God through the hands of the Bishop. This fundamental characteristic of our vocation is presented in Canon 604, in the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, and in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. The virgin is forever changed; she is solemnly consecrated, “constituted a sacred person, a surpassing sign of the Church’s love for Christ, and an eschatological image of the world to come and the glory of the heavenly Bride of Christ.”[Intro, Rite of Consecration] At her consecration, she becomes a bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God [Rite of Consecration, par 17]; in the words of Saint Ambrose, she is truly *wedded to Christ*.

In other forms of Consecrated Life, a woman consecrates herself to God through her profession of vows to live the evangelical counsels and to embrace the charism of a particular religious family in the Church. There are important distinctions between the consecration of a virgin and the profession of vows. While it remains possible that under grave circumstances a person’s vows might be dispensed, it isn’t possible to dispense a consecration, for the very reason that the consecration is the action of God upon the virgin. At her consecration, the virgin has been changed forever in the integrity of her being!

During the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, the candidate for consecration doesn’t vow to live from this day forward as a consecrated virgin. Instead, she offers her “propositum castitatis,” her resolution to *remain* a virgin. It’s different from a vow. The virgin resolves to be faithful to the divine grace she has received from the Eternal Father to remain a virgin in the integrity of her human being, physical and spiritual. She approaches her Bishop after the Litany of the Saints, and, kneeling before him, places her joined hands between his hands and says: “Father, receive my resolution, to follow Christ in a life of perfect chastity which, with God’s help, I here profess before you and God’s holy people.” [Rite of Consecration, par 22]

The virgin has received the *grace* of virginity: her body and soul belong supernaturally to our Lord Jesus Christ who dwells within her forever. In a preface he composed for the Consecration of Virgins, Saint Pope Leo the Great encourages all, virgins and married, to live in this world in perpetual fidelity of mystical and spousal love for Christ, which, he says, “leads the virgins to embracing a state of union with God of which marriage is merely the earthly symbol, the natural likeness of the supernatural union of virgin and Christ.”

The consecrated virgin lives in a unique reality as she passes through this limited world on her way to eternity with her Divine Spouse, and she recognizes the sometimes fragile nature of this great gift she has been given. How can she, how can we, guard this great gift? By fostering the virtue of humility, say the fathers of the Church. The Preface of Saint Leo the Great addressed the virtue of humility with words now found in the Prayer of Consecration: “Let them fear God, let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ. . .place in them modesty with right judgment (*prudens modestia*), kindness with true wisdom (*sapiens benignitas*), gentleness with strength of character (*gravis lenitas*), freedom with the grace of chastity, (*chaste libertas*).”

Saint Augustine, too, had occasion to encourage the thousands of young virgins in his dioceses. His words about humility must have seemed nonsense to the ears of Faustus, an enemy of Christianity, who berated Augustine because there seemed to be more consecrated virgins among the Christians than there were other women.[Cf Vismanos, Francisco S.L., 1949, “Las Virgenes Cristianas de la Primitiva Iglesia”] “The great gift of virginity can be lost if one is proud. God truly sustains the grace of virginity. God will dwell only where there is humility because He is love itself. And, beware; pride leaves no places in one’s heart for love. So, humility of heart is the best way to welcome God, who is love, into our hearts. And, when He is there, He will sustain the grace of virginity.”[Cf. “On Holy Virginity”, St. Augustine, USACV Information Packet]

“What have you that you have not received? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?” [1 Cor 4:7] Let us pray that we might always guard this grace we have been given with the shield of humility.

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, 2008 – 2010; Diocese of Lansing

Twanna Bolling, Member-at-large, 2008-2010 ; Archdiocese of Chicago.

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

U.S. Consecrations

Alma Bella Solis, August 2, 2008, Archdiocese of Boston, His Eminence Sean Cardinal O'Malley, O.F.M.Cap.

Katherine Mary Reda, August 15, 2008, Archdiocese of Boston, His Eminence Sean Cardinal O'Malley, O.F.M.Cap.

Bernadette Snyder, May 25, 2008, Diocese of Richmond, Most Rev. Francis X. DiLorenzo



Upcoming events:

2009 National Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins:

July 8-12, 2009

Chicago area

National Information Conferences:

August 5 to 7, 2009

The Cenacle, Chicago

August 4 to 6, 2010

The Cenacle, Chicago

Team Announcements:

Formation Resource Development

Team: See special report from on the Formation Resource Planning Symposium held August 2 to 5 in Chicago.

2009 Convocation Team: Louise Paré is beginning plans for our 2009 convocation of consecrated virgins of the United States. The event will probably be held July 8-12, 2009 in the Chicago area. Please contact Louise if you have ideas or would like to work with her in planning the convocation.

Membership Team: Shalina is on the lookout for someone who knows how to use "Print Shop" software and / or someone who knows how to design brochures. If you can help, please contact her at: shalinastilley@hotmail.com. Shalina also reminds you that only current year registered members are eligible to vote in our fall 2008 officer election, so be sure to get in your registrations if you haven't done so already!

Website Team, under development: **Katie Gesto** writes: We're forming a team to revise the USACV website, so all of you with ideas, good photos and suggestions are invited to send them to Katie at kgallforhim@gmail.com. Please also contact Katie about helping with the team if you have some website building background, basic computer skills, or are just a good-hearted friend who desires to serve our vocation.

Kateri Team: **Florence Sundberg** writes that our new Kateri Team has already had the privilege of supporting some of our sisters and she hopes we will always be able to give assistance in whatever way we can. Florence also reports that Ann Stitt has been a wonderful 'prayer warrior' in all this, and for this, she is most grateful.

Candidate Care Team: Team leader **Barbara Swieczak**: The candidate care team provides a booklet/source of sample invitations, participation aids for Holy Mass, prayer cards, etc., that candidates for consecration may use as a resource in planning their day of Consecration. Contact Barb if you would like to send your Consecration day mementoes to be shown to others, or if you know of a candidate who would like to see the samples: Barbara Swieczak, 149 South 24th Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601.

Special report on the Formation Resource Planning Symposium, held August 2 to 5, 2008 – **Mary Kay Lacke**

Thanks to all of you from the United States and around the world who were praying for the Formation Resource Planning Symposium. We experienced the power of your prayers for the six consecrated virgins who gathered on August 2-5, 2008, at the Chicago Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center to focus on the vocation of Consecrated Virgins Lived in the World. Participants in the symposium were Mary Kay Lacke, leader of the Formation Resource Development Team and facilitator for the event; Judith Stegman, Magalis Aguilera, Maria Luisa Öfele, Nicole Bettini and Elizabeth Lee. Mary DeSantis had planned to attend but was unable to come. In preparation for the symposium, she gave invaluable input that greatly enriched the discussions.

The overall goal in assembling this group of consultants for the Planning Symposium was to pull together tools to assist candidates for the vocation of consecrated virginity as well as consecrated virgins in their growth of understanding and commitment to the call to be consecrated virgins who fully embrace all that their Divine Spouse invites them to share with him and with his Bride, the Church.

Conducted under the co-patronage of Our Blessed Mother, Ever Virgin, and Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, the symposium consisted of nine sessions covering five areas in depth. These areas included the central identity of consecrated virginity lived in the world as reflected in the Rite of Consecration; the distinct spirituality of the consecrated virgin expressed in bridal mysticism; the consecrated virgin as an ecclesial woman; human formation- the transcendent values and virtues manifested in spiritual and psychological integration; and formative support in lifelong commitment of virginal, feminine, spousal love.

Each session began with a presentation by Mary Kay, Judith or Magalis. This was followed by a period of silent reflection and preparation of input, a time of individual input to the group, a facilitated discussion and a summary. At the last session, the group drew out the implications and conclusions that the FRDT could implement. This final summary was then presented to Archbishop Burke who joined the group for an hour-long meeting at the end of the symposium.

FRDT continued on page 5

Reflections on Rome 2008

Editor's note: We continue to invite English-speaking consecrated virgins to send reflections on the Rome 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins. It is a happy way for all of us to keep these days in mind and heart!

From Shalina Stilley, US:

What a profound blessing it was to gather with 500 virgins from 52 different countries! Although I knew the Congress would be a time of grace, I had no idea just how much grace the Lord had in store for me and, indeed, for the whole group. It was truly a time of joy, peace, and renewal.

One of the biggest blessings the Lord sent was the opportunity to meet two different virgins who live in countries in which they must face persecution not only for being consecrated but also simply for being Catholic. It is so easy to take religious freedom for granted and to complain when people do not understand our vocation. Having the opportunity to meet these two courageous women (one of whom is not even able to tell her own family that she is consecrated) was a true inspiration. It was likewise a great blessing to be able to visit the Basilica of St. Cecilia and to spend time in prayer in front of the room in which she endured her martyrdom.

Although not all are called to resist to the point of having their blood shed, we are all called to live with the willingness to give everything to our beloved Jesus at every moment of every day and, indeed, to live with the willingness to give up even our bodily lives. ALL must be given to our Divine Spouse in an attitude of complete surrender and self-giving! How blessed we are to have models of this attitude. St. Cecilia, pray for us.

From Ruth Durham, Great Britain:

As I reflect back on our Congress, I thank God for those very special days of great graces. The formal programme was a rich channel of God's blessings. It was a joy to daily pray the Divine Office together, to pray the Mass in glorious basilicas, with such a vast number of consecrated virgins, adoring and following the Lamb, in the presence of our esteemed beloved clergy. At the basilica of St Mary Major, as I walked around praying the

Rosary, I came to the tomb of Sixtus V. Imagine my amazement on leaving that side chapel, to hear words of exhortation! Following Mass at St John Lateran [first Friday], time allowed for an unexpected blessed penance to mount the steps of the Scala Santa kneeling. The blessing of Our Holy Father remains deeply etched within my being. What a faith reliving experience to walk the paths in the SCAVI. At the end of our privileged tour, we shared a moment of prayerful reverence to our first Holy Father as we prayed the Apostles Creed together.

The different talks and homilies profoundly engaged my heart each day. In particular, those of Judith Stegman and Archbishop Raymond Burke clarified the essence of our ecclesial vocation. At the end of our pilgrimage, both prayer at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls along with Fr Roger's excellent five bullet talk on St Paul at Tres Fontaine Abbey was a true launch pad to be "wholly converted to Him," our Lord.

Most significant of all for me was being rooted as a Bride of Christ. On the morning following Archbishop Burke and Judith's talks, I felt called to spend time alone with Him. He led me to the bridal chamber, the chapel at the Regina Apostolorum. There were only four women present. Unexpectedly, a priest arrived to celebrate Holy Mass. Three consecrated virgins sat behind me [witnesses!]. The word of the Lord rang out to me "the Bridegroom is here" at the consecration. As Bride of Christ, I went up to receive Him as His virgin bride. The chapel emptied and I stayed alone, in love with the Bridegroom. Finally, I left but immediately returned. This time, the Bridegroom wanted to veil me. At my consecration [13th July 2003], I had not received a veil. I [He] covered my head with the veil, which had been given at the start of the Congress. The Queen of Virgins ever present covered me with her mantle. For this alone, I came to spend those days of grace and blessings with my virgin sisters. To God be glory be forever.

It's not too late We have a small supply of the English weekly edition of L'Osservatore Romano dated May 28, 2008. This edition includes the English translation of the address of our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to consecrated virgins who participated in the International Congress-Pilgrimage of the Ordo Virginum. If you would like a copy, please send a note to the USACV address, along with a check for \$3.50 to cover costs including shipping.

Meet Bishop Boyea . . .

We are pleased to announce that His Excellency, The Most Reverend Earl Alfred Boyea Jr., Bishop of Lansing (Michigan), has accepted the position of Episcopal Moderator of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins and has been affirmed in this position by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Some consecrated virgins were recently able to welcome Bishop Boyea in person as he attended the last day of our annual informational conference in Chicago. During the time we were also able to hold a joint meeting with Archbishop Burke, Bishop Boyea, and three USACV council members.

Bishop Boyea was born in Pontiac, Michigan, on April 10, 1951. He is the eldest of ten children born to Helen and Earl Boyea Sr. After having attended Sacred Heart Seminary High School and College (1965-1973) and the Pontifical North American College in Rome (1973-1977), Bishop Boyea was ordained a priest on May 20, 1978, by Bishop Joseph Imesch. Bishop Boyea also attended the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1979-1980) where he obtained a Licentiate in Sacred Theology. In 1984, Bishop Boyea earned a Master's Degree in American History, and in 1987 a Ph.D. in Church History from the Catholic University of America.

On January 18, 2000, Bishop Boyea was raised to the rank of Honorary Prelate of His Holiness. On July 22, 2002, Bishop Boyea was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit and Titular Bishop of *Siccenna* by Pope John Paul II. On September 13, 2002, Bishop Boyea was ordained a Bishop by Cardinal Adam Maida. The motto on the coat of arms of Bishop Boyea is *In Manus Tuas (Into your hands)*. On February 27, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI named Bishop Boyea the fifth Bishop of Lansing. Bishop Boyea also serves on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations.

The vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World is lived under the care of our diocesan Bishops, who are spiritual fathers to us; the Episcopal Moderator of the USACV doesn't replace or interfere with that individual relationship of each virgin to her Bishop. What the Moderator does do is to serve as a spiritual father to our group, providing an important link to the body of Bishops of the United States.

FRDT Symposium continued: Conclusions and areas of implementation focused on several points:

the need to articulate a foundational understanding of the vocation of consecrated virginity, centered around three areas: bridal mysticism, the consecrated virgin as a sacred person in the Church, and the consecrated virgin as an ecclesial woman;

the need to focus clearly on two areas, among others, during the discernment process and during the preparation for consecration: the irrevocable nature of the consecra-

tion on which the vocation is based; and the intrinsic link between the consecrated virgin and her diocesan bishop;

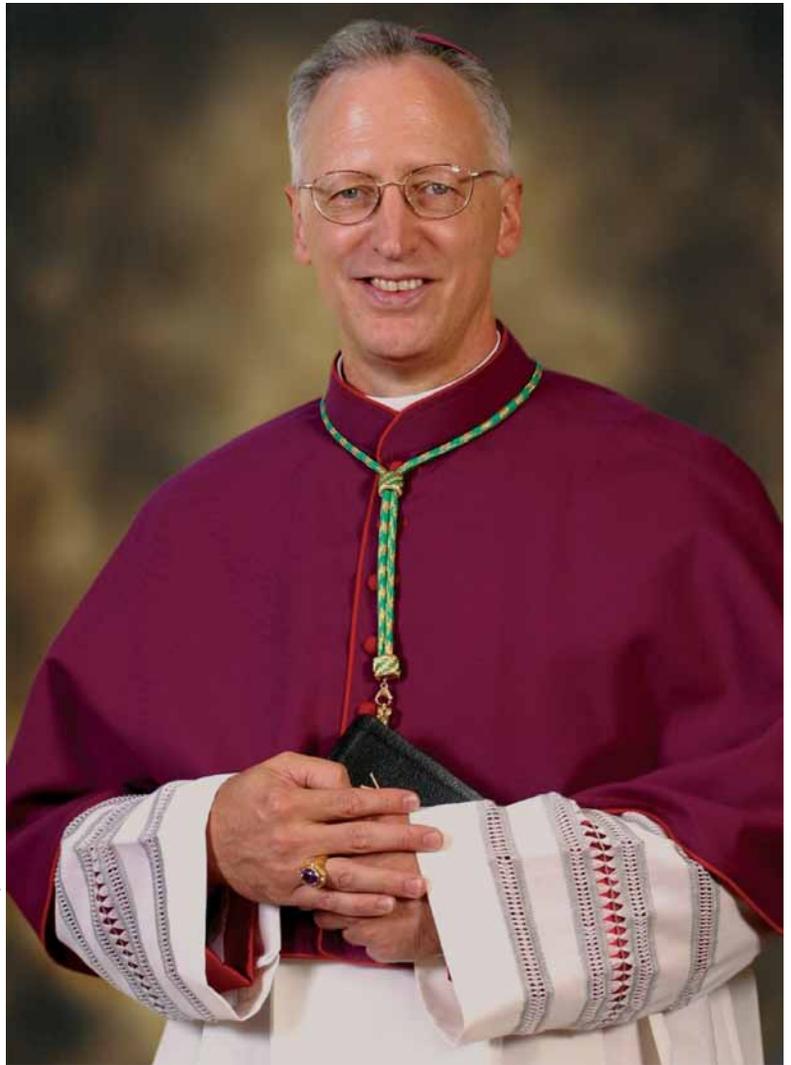
the development of various types of programs of formation and enrichment for those preparing for consecration, the newly consecrated and those who have been living the consecration for some time; some of these programs could include areas of human formation such as personal relationships, emotions, sexuality;

the media to conduct these programs, e.g. conferences, courses offered in various re-

gions of the country, online courses and interactive online courses, personal study programs.

Many thanks to these "wise virgins" who kept the midnight oil burning in order to give such rich input to the symposium. Thanks also to all those who over the years provided the resources we needed, e.g. the Information Packet, to discuss these very important topics. May Our Beloved Spouse be ever glorified as the FRDT continues to develop new resources!

Our New Episcopal Moderator



Welcome,
your Excellency Bishop Earl Boyea!
Bishop of Lansing (Michigan)

July 27 to August 11, 2008 Two Memorable Weeks for the USACV

Introduction:

A guest from Germany, a providential visit to Mother Teresa House, a chance meeting with Bishop Boyea in Lansing, a trek across Lake Michigan, exquisite dining with one of our own in Milwaukee, the dedication of shrines to our Blessed Mother and to a native American virgin, a four-day symposium on formation, a farewell reception for our dear Archbishop Burke, a most successful informational conference, a transitional council meeting with our incoming and outgoing Episcopal Moderators, and winding down days visiting family in Cincinnati. All in two weeks! Even a month beforehand, we couldn't have predicted the events of these two weeks, events which seem to have been orchestrated by the all-knowing hand of God. Many consecrated virgins were directly involved in these two weeks and many others supported us in prayer. Here's our story...

We divide this narrative into sections, roughly comparable to the five reports that Maria Luisa Öfele, consecrated virgin from Germany, sent back to her home diocese of Regensburg. You may still be able to find her photos and reports, in Deutsch, on the website of the Diocese of Regensburg.

July 27 to 29 Lansing, Michigan (report by Judith Stegman):



Bishop Boyea and Judith at the ballpark

Magalis Aguilera had already arrived from Miami on Friday July 25, just in time to watch me throw out an opening pitch during the Diocese of Lansing's vocation night at Oldsmobile Park. The announcer seemed to hesitate a moment while introducing me as a consecrated virgin, but it was our Dominican sisters in long white habits that drew most cheers that evening. And Bishop Boyea's pitch was much straighter than mine! Magalis and I picked up Maria Luisa from the Detroit airport on Sunday afternoon July 27, beginning our official days together.

Many of you know that Magalis is Cuban-American, but you may not know that Maria Luisa was born and raised in Argentina. It was rare that I heard the two of them return to their native Spanish tongue, but on Monday July 28, their Spanish was needed to comfort a local family – and I witnessed once again how our Divine Spouse uses his brides to bring His love to the world. It's worth telling a little of the story: Karen Bussey, a consecrated virgin in Lansing, is the director of Mother Teresa House for the Care of the Terminally Ill, a residential home in Lansing that provides a home and round-the-clock care, at no cost, for the terminally ill. On this particular Monday morning, Spanish-speaking family members of a guest were offered prayer and comfort from these visiting Spanish-speaking consecrated virgins. It was a very real need met tangibly by our sisters. And as the mission of Mother Teresa House was communicated back to Germany, solidarity was promoted as donations and prayers were solicited for the dying.

Divine Providence also arranged a meeting and photos with Bishop Boyea on that warm Monday morning, and I think this marked the informal beginning of his term as Episcopal Moderator for the USACV. Magalis cooked an Argentinian-Cuban-American dinner for us at my home on Monday evening, and we packed a very full car to begin our travels Tuesday to LaCrosse, via Milwaukee.



Dinner in Milwaukee with Judith, Mary DeSantis, and Maria Luisa

July 29 – August 1 La Crosse, Wisconsin (reported by Magalis Aguilera):

What a mystery is our vocation to join three virgins from different regions and countries of this world. Maria Luisa came from Germany to visit and work with members of the USACV. Magalis lives in Miami, Florida, a point of our nation that looks on the map like giant crocodile tooth on the Southeast coast. Judith lives in Lansing, Michigan, the Great Lakes state.

July 27 to August 11, 2008 Two Memorable Weeks for the USACV

The plan began as an idea of our president Judith Stegman, who always likes to get people together on behalf of our vocation. Back when I was 14 years old, studying English, and very impressed by the Great Lakes, who could have imagined that many years later I would be involved in a holy adventure crossing Lake Michigan on a ferry? The huge lake looked like an ocean to Maria Luisa and me, and Maria Luisa expressed her fascination and delight at being there, “a spectacular experience.” The wind on the top deck of the ferry was very strong, and I thought it seemed like the way the wind communicates when something great is about to happen. Maybe that strong wind was coming from the Holy Spirit as a product of the joy of these three consecrated virgins going together to share the very “strong wind” of the Holy Spirit at the dedication of the new shrine to our Blessed Mother in Wisconsin.

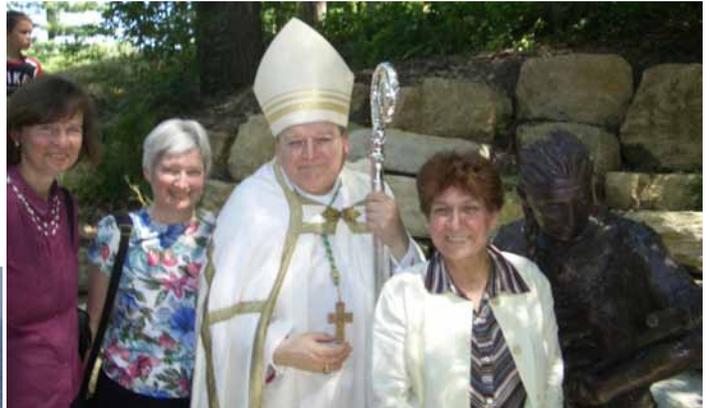


Maria Luisa, Judith, and Magalis in the “strong wind” on the boat across Lake Michigan

Although our mother languages are different, we could all understand the one language our Divine Lord gave to us during the Last Supper, the language of LOVE! So, the ferry transported us to Milwaukee and we visited Mary De Santis, a consecrated virgin living there. Mary was touched by the Holy Spirit as she waited for us and shared with us her house, dinner, and the fraternal love common to us as spouses of our Divine Spouse. We enjoyed so much our conversation, as Mary discussed her ideas for the upcoming symposium of the formation team of our association, and we talked about the meaning of this “moment” in time for our vocation. We agreed we are approaching a new Pentecost for our vocation and we can expect the mercy of our Beloved Spouse to touch our hearts and give us the way to communicate our vocation to others.

We left Milwaukee and Judith drove us late in the night to the banks of the Mississippi. Our former Episcopal Moderator Archbishop Raymond L. Burke’s holy dream was fulfilled, and the Shrine of our Lady of Guadalupe was ready to be dedicated in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Even during our travel, our hearts were inflamed with great devotion

as we anticipated our participation in a sacred experience. And the time there was full of spiritual graces as we joined our sister in consecration, Barb Swieciak and attended the dedication of the Shrine Church as well the blessing of a statue of the second patroness of our USACV, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha the first beatified native American, a virgin in the United States, “Lily of the Mohawks.”



Maria Luisa, Judith, Archbishop Burke, Magalis at the dedication of the statue of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.

The Shrine Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe is built on the top of a mountain, and the entire surrounding area invites prayer and contemplation. It seems to me that our Blessed Mother liked the mountains – she appeared to Saint John Diego on the Tepeyack Mountain in Mexico, where she came to show to all the glory of her Son. This verse from the Hymn of the Office of Readings on the celebration of her feast, December 12, is an expression of her wish to show to us her unique love for us: “You are on the mountain before the rising sun, for love is pushing you to come to us, and you asked us to build a house for you, to show to your children your unique and tender love...”



Maria Luisa, Magalis, Archbishop Burke, Barb Swieciak, and Judith at the Shrine Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

July 27 to August 11, 2008 Two Memorable Weeks for the USACV



Final session at Formation Team symposium, with participants: Mary Kay Lacke, Maria Luisa, Judith, Nicole Bettini, Archbishop Burke, Elizabeth Lee, and Magalis.

August 2 – August 5 FRDT Symposium, Chicago (reported by Mary Kay Lacke and Elizabeth Lee):

Elizabeth: What a joy it was to gather in Chicago with my sisters from the U.S. and Germany! The enlightening days of Rome continued to reverberate in our hearts and now it was time to plan for the days ahead in articulating and clarifying, developing and deepening our vocation in the Church and in the World.

We came together from various age groups, experiences, and backgrounds. Our days began with Morning Prayer together and then private study time and prayer. This gave us time to reflect and bring everything to the Lord. We also began each meeting with a prayer for the intercession of our Exemplar, Holy Virgin Mary and Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, our patroness. Our Beloved Spouse blessed us with His Light and Grace as we each had time to first reflect quietly on the subject presented.

Each of us took turns as co-facilitators who then asked one then another, to share their thoughts, experiences and possible ways to move forward. Each team member spoke, one by one without interruption, about the various topics. All listened with their heart, pondered and took notes. During the discussion time many other insights were brought out which gave us the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of how to proceed.

It was most striking for me to see how peacefully and naturally everything flowed for the concluding results. It was teamwork at its best, working with one heart and one mind in the Love of Christ. Archbishop Burke was delighted with the results and with his final blessing for the planning symposium, encouraged us to forge ahead.

Mary Kay: It is hard to put into words the depth and beauty of our experience of prayer, reflection, discussion and planning during the symposium. I really believe we felt the power of the Holy Spirit, not only in our deliberations themselves but especially in the atmosphere of peace, joy and congeniality that existed among us. Each person's input was highly valued and the best of what she had to say was drawn out and discussed in depth.

What happened in the course of four days as we carefully examined our common treasure, the vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World, was that we became awestruck by the depth of Christ's love for each consecrated virgin and for the Church, His Bride. We also experienced deep appreciation for the fidelity of the Church in reverencing consecrated virginity and guarding its purity.

I came away from the symposium, very encouraged, with a renewed insight into our vocation and a renewed zeal to share this treasure with others through the development of formation resources.

Elizabeth and Mary Kay: We wish to thank all who prayed for this meeting. Your time well spent in intercession did bear much fruit and will continue to do so as the Formation Resource Development Team implements these considerations as requested by the Church for the Glory of God.

August 6 to 8, Informational Conference, Chicago (reported by Theresa Marshall and Barbara Swieciak):

The USACV 2008 Information Conference was a busy event. It was held at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center of Chicago, Illinois. There were 14 participants and 7 team members. There were five last-minute people who had to be turned away due to lack of space and that they were unable to find suitable hotels. Those present came from all over the USA, one from England and one from Ghana.

Amid the usual intensity of prayer, conferences and quiet we had a chance to have more time for fellowship. The formation team for the USACV met prior to the conference so many of the consecrated virgins stayed to meet the information conference participants and to be present with Archbishop Burke for his going-away party. Participants were glad to meet the consecrated virgins and to have time to have the virgins share with them some life experiences.

Next year we plan to have the conference again at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in downtown Chicago. The dates will be August 5-7, 2009.

July 27 to August 11, 2008 Two Memorable Weeks for the USACV

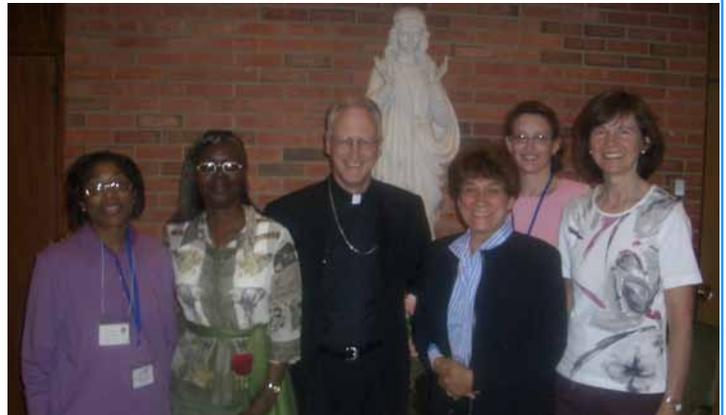
August 6, Reception for Archbishop Burke and Monsignor Breier, Chicago (reported by Shalina Stilley):



At the reception for Archbishop Burke and Msgr. Breier, Archbishop Burke receiving his gifts: Judith, Archbishop Burke, Magalis, Msgr. Breier, Shalina Stilley, Barb Swieciak, and Elizabeth Lee.

Many thanks to all of you who sent in cards and prayers to add to the spiritual bouquets for Archbishop Burke and Msgr. Breier. Although there were tears, the reception provided us with the perfect opportunity to express our profound gratitude for all our Archbishop has done for us over the years. It is, of course, difficult to see him move on, yet it is a consolation to know that we are all united in prayer. As he said in the June newsletter, “the greater the responsibilities become in the church, the more furiously Satan is at work”. Let us continue to pray fervently for him.

August 7, USACV transition council meeting (reported by Judith Stegman): Bishop Boyea generously offered to drive into Chicago to spend the last day of the informational conference with us, and to have opportunity to meet with council members and Archbishop Burke before he departed for the airport. Council members Twanna Bolling and Magalis Aguilera were able to be present, and we followed up later with a telephone conference call with our other council members, Louise Paré and Aliceanne Sawyer. It was a worthwhile time spent discussing the past, present, and future of our association of consecrated virgins in the United States. Minutes of the meeting will be sent soon to USACV members.



Bishop Boyea gathered with a few information conference participants

from the President's journal . . .

I'll add just a few sentences to what's already being highlighted in this issue of *The Lamp*. Post-International Congress work continues, with an emphasis on the publication of the texts of the Congress. Please pray for the swift progress of this work, which will make the homilies and conferences accessible to all. In the United States, I am pleased to note that the USACV will participate for the first time as an exhibitor at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors to be held in Denver at the end of September. Any interested consecrated virgins, especially those in the Denver area, are invited to contact Shalina Stilley or me about helping at the exhibitors' hall to make better known this vocation of consecrated virginity.

It's a bittersweet moment for me with the transition in Episcopal Moderators for the USACV. Bishop Earl Boyea is also the Bishop of my diocese, Lansing, and I am pleased to welcome him to this new role with our Association and to introduce him to all of you! At the same time, I will miss the solid support we have received from Archbishop Burke over these past 11 years. But as he is called to serve at a new level in the Church, it seems providential to me that the move comes after our International Congress when he seemed to be adopted by consecrated virgins from around the world. He's settling in now in Rome and continues to ask for our prayers. May our Divine Spouse grant our shepherds light and wisdom as they guide the Church.

Judith Stegman

The Solemn Dignity of Our Beautiful Vocation to Consecrated Virginity

By Diane Christine Farr

It can be said with great certainty that none of us will find true happiness apart from fulfilling the purpose for which we were created. Each soul is unique as it comes forth from the hand of God and has the potential for doing much good in the world touching the lives of many others in so far as it seeks to fulfill the divine will.

When God bestows the grace of consecrated virginity on a woman it is a gift for the entire family as well as the parish, the diocese and the whole Church. When God calls someone to a special vocation in the Church He is really calling everyone to deepen their commitment to a more serious following of Christ in their lives. To the degree that we are open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit we will be strengthened in our walk with Christ by the good example and witness of others.

My dentist was very impressed with my vocation, but he was unable to attend my consecration. I was amazed that when we presented him with a photograph of the ceremony he hung it in the waiting room of his office. Spiritual motherhood is very meaningful to a friend of mine who is raising a large family. She also loves the witness of the wearing of the simple consecration veil that distinguishes us as brides of Christ. The story of my personal calling sounded beautiful to a non-Catholic acquaintance so much so that she wished to know more about our vocation.

Consecrated virginity is unique in that it is the one vocation in the Church in which physical virginity is required. St. Ambrose states, "Virginity is from Christ not Christ from virginity." When the second person of the Blessed Trinity entered the world and became man it was in a virginal manner completely above the natural order of procreation. Christ's virginity points to the reality of His Divinity. Our virginity points to the fact that we are espoused to a divine bridegroom. The perfection and beauty of Christ's virginity seeks and finds a complement in the exclusive and pure love of the consecrated virgin. We give a very special honor and glory to our Lord as well as His virgin mother through the solemn consecration of our virginity to him.

We would do well in pondering these words from the homily for the rite of consecration, "The life you seek to follow has its home in heaven. God himself is its source. It is He, infinitely pure and holy, who gives the grace of virginity. Those to whom he gives it are seen by the Fathers of the Church as images of the eternal and all holy God."

A woman seeking the consecration often experiences a mystical dimension to her virginity that she willingly and joyfully gives to Jesus. This is something that deepens and matures over the years, and this is why it is important that one already be living a private promise of perpetual virginity before seeking consecration.

Jesus is speaking of all Christians when in the gospel of John He addresses His father and says, "Father they are your gift to me." (John 17:24) Our dear Lord receives all people who open themselves to His love as His own reward for all that He suffered for our salvation. We who are consecrated virgins must take very seriously the work of our sanctification that God brings about in us, that we might become a very special gift for Jesus. It is the gift of the virgin bride for the eternal King and Bridegroom of the Church. The dignity of a humble virgin living in intimate communion with her beloved Spouse is a striking sign of God's infinite love for all of His people. Given this fact we who are sisters in Christ should be a light and a support to each other through the many trials and sufferings of this life.

THE CONSECRATED VIRGIN AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

(Lori Rose Cannizzaro)

Have you ever stopped to ponder what our role is in the heart of the Church as consecrated virgins? What makes us unique in our intercessory role?

Since Mary is our mother and model for consecrated virginity, her title of Our Lady of Sorrows is especially poignant. Picture Mary, standing beneath the Cross of her Son, Our Lord and Savior. What must have been going through her mind and heart during all this suffering?

Did she ever cry out to God the Father in her mind and heart asking when all this would end? What did Our Lady do? She *stands* throughout the crucifixion, she doesn't shrink back from suffering, she doesn't collapse on the ground, nor do we hear recorded that she even made a sound. Certainly she cried tears for her Son, but

she is always more concerned for those around her than she is for her own pain. Mother Mary has set her sack of burdens and sufferings at the foot of the Cross. Now she must intercede for others. She is holding herself together to give strength to St. John, to the other women around her, and above all to be present to her Son in whatever way she can to give Him comfort. She is a pillar in the midst of a great storm. Her strength comes from her deep, abiding relationship with the Triune God, forged and built through prayer, meditation and great love.

Have you ever felt someone's burden in this way? Our lives as consecrated virgins can often feel like that storm. Often we are asked to share the burden of the Cross with Jesus, Our Beloved Spouse. We are asked to carry the burden that others find too heavy. Often we are in the middle of great conflict, pain, and suffering. Jesus is asking of us to share in His redemptive suffering in a very deep and profound way for the salvation of the world.



“When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He said to His mother. “Woman, behold your son.” (John 19:26) With these words Jesus gave the Church to His mother, and in turn, He gives it to the consecrated virgin. A great responsibility has been bestowed on us to stand in the gap for those who are either unwilling or unable to pray for themselves. We are to stand with Our Lady, with Christ, alongside the sick and suffering, through intercession, meditation (especially before the Blessed Sacrament and at Mass), offering our own sufferings, and also through the gift of our

mere presence with the person(s) going through hard times. Our Lady didn't *do* great things for Jesus at the foot of the Cross. She simply was there, present to Him, so He knew He was not alone. What a gift that is to one who is suffering terribly!

The contributions of Our Lady of Sorrows are multifaceted and multi-layered. Many hours of contemplation are needed to grasp this great gift of redemptive suffering in which we and others participate.

Special story on U.S. consecration

I have found Him whom my heart loves

“When the twins were as young as five years old, they always wanted to stop at every church we passed in order to go in,” recalled the mother of Yvonne and Gloria Oliver. That call of Jesus to come to Him later matured into a longing to give themselves to Him forever and decades later was realized when they received the Consecration to a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World on April 27, 2008, at Sacred Heart Church in Island Park, New York. The Most Reverend William Murphy, Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, joyfully remarked that their Consecration was the second and third in that diocese. Denise Farrell, the first to be consecrated by Bishop Murphy himself, was the first Consecration in that diocese and was introduced by the Bishop to the congregation after the Consecration Mass for the twins. Later, in his column in the diocesan newspaper, *The Long Island Catholic*, Bishop Murphy again mentioned his joy in having now three consecrated virgins in his diocese.

Identical twins, Gloria and Yvonne decided to dress identically for their betrothal to their one Spouse; they wore white suits and flowers in their hair. Gloria and Yvonne, however, are not “identical” in everything they do; one is a teacher in a Catholic school and the other is a speech therapist for children.

How did they find out about the Consecration? They say that one of them was looking at EWTN when that Catholic satellite channel showed a video of Angela and Junette's Consecration of a few years previous in Brooklyn. Like the Apostle Andrew to his brother Simon-Peter, she told her twin, “I think we have found exactly what we have been looking for.”

By Loretta Matulich,
after interview with Denise Farrell

Our warm congratulations, Mary! Mary Kantor announces that she has graduated from the Harvard Divinity School with a Doctor of Theology degree in Religion and Society. You may send a note to Mary at: mkantor@post.harvard.edu.

**United States Association
of Consecrated Virgins**

300 West Ottawa Street
Lansing, Michigan 48933-1577
USA

Fax: 253-270-5507

E-mail:
info@consecratedvirgins.org
President@consecratedvirgins.org

● www.consecratedvirgins.org

Cause of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

Monsignor Paul Lenz, Vice-Postulator for the Cause of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, has provided us with 200 prayer cards for the canonization of Blessed Kateri. Both he and Sister Kateri Mitchell, Executive Director of the Tekakwitha Conference were eager to hear of the continued interest of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins in Blessed Kateri. We will be sending prayer cards to members along with other mailings this fall.

**Prayer for the canonization of
Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha**

*O God, who, among the many marvels
of Your Grace in the New World,
did cause to blossom on the banks
of the Mohawk and of the St. Lawrence,
the pure and tender Lily, Kateri Tekakwitha,
grant we beseech You,
the favor we beg through her intercession;
that this Yong Lover of Jesus and of His Cross
may soon be counted among her Saints
by Holy Mother Church,
and that our hearts may be enkindled
with a stronger desire to imitate
her innocence and faith.
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen*

(Imprimatur +Most Rev. Howard J. Hubbard, DD Bishop of Albany)

USACV Elections Fall 2008

One Council position, **At-Large Representative**, will open January 1, 2009. We encourage members to consider running for this leadership position in the association. Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes and by-laws of the USACV, which are available upon request. In summary, what you need to know for this election:

Election Process

Written notification of a member's desire to run for the open Council position must be received by midnight on Saturday, October 25, 2008. 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 2008. 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 2008. If you have not yet registered as a member in 2008, now would be a good time to do so!

Ballots will be due back by Friday, December 5, 2008. 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 USACV President, the newly elected, and all candidates. Results of the election will then be published on the USACV website and will be announced in the following newsletter.

Please refer to the June 2008 issue of *The Lamp* for a detailed description of the terms, duties, and responsibilities of the At-Large Representative position.

Please Consider Running for Office

Please do consider running for office, and encourage other members to run – sometimes all it takes is a personal word!

More Invitations: Oct. 3-4, 2008, Washington D.C., a conference in celebration of the **20th Anniversary of Mulieris Dignitatem**. For more information, see www.avemarialaw.edu/conference/

Oct 11-12, 2008, Boston, **The Magnificat Pilgrimage of Hope**, suggested by Ann Stitt, For more information, see www.pilgrimageofhope.com.

Special invitations from Barb Swieciak:

Get your 2009 calendars out! Bishop Listecki, my Diocesan Bishop, has set aside **September 12, 2009** to mark the celebration of the **25th Anniversary of my consecration to a life of virginty for women living in the world** September 8, 1984. I would be please if you'd be able to share the celebration of Holy Mass followed by a meal. More information coming as we get closer. Have a blessed day! Barb

Symposium of the Virgin Saints: The Office of Consecrated Life in the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin invites you to Saint Agnes Fest on **Saturday, January 10, 2009** at the Holy Crosse Diocesan Center from 10 am until 3pm. . For registration and/or more information please contact Sr. Stephanina at the Office of Consecrated Life. snewell@dioceseoflacrosse.com or call Barb Swieciak at 1-608-784-66974. Hope to see you there!