

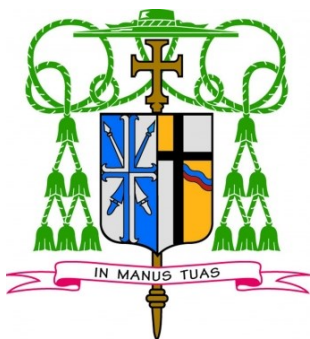
June 8, 2024 — Immaculate Heart of Mary

To the Members of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins,

The Year of the Eucharist is coming to an end. However, even when Mass is over, we are not done. The Deacon gives us direction. My favorite is, “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”

Here we are, having just finished the most sacred action of all, the Holy Mass, and now we are being told to get out of here! This is not just to make room for the next Mass attendees. Rather, it is our commission. In one sense, we have already done the most beautiful thing we can for God, we have joined our lives to the sacrifice of his Son. However, we are not done doing! That “Go!” sends us to our next responsibility as followers of the Son.

There is something sheltering about the Mass. We are gathered with friends and family and share a common faith and together worship God and enjoy the banquet of the Lord. But Christians are not to live a sheltered life. We are to go “forth,” out there where we know there is at least a lot of indifference and at most a lot of hostility toward the faith. Yet, that has been the purpose of our nourishment, in order to go forth into that world and be the Lord’s witnesses, as Jesus told the Apostles: “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).



Sincerely yours in Christ,
+ Earl Boyea

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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By Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D.
edited by Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD

The Holy Spirit and the Bride

“When the fullness of time had come, the almighty Father showed, in the mystery of the incarnation, his love for this great virtue. In the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word was made flesh, in a marriage covenant uniting two natures, human and divine” (see Homily, Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity).

When the Eternal Father’s will sent His Son to free us of original sin, the Holy Spirit was sent to a virgin who would be the mother of His son. The Holy Spirit is always present in the life of sanctification of the children of the Bride, who is the Son’s Spouse. The Holy Spirit, through the prophets, was preparing that people who were chosen by the Eternal Father, those from whom His Son took flesh. The Old Testament is enriched with the presence of the Holy Spirit and God the Father presented himself through the prophets as the God who wanted to be for them, having a caring attribute of love as a faithful Spouse. Because the people were most of the time unfaithful, the Eternal Father wanted to show His love for them in a way could recognize, as they loved their human spouses. For a man in the Old Testament, an unfaithful woman was subject to the penalty of murder or was left alone without assistance; at that time the woman had no social role of work. God the Father with His merciful love for them was preparing their hearts to receive the Messiah of the promise, and the Eternal Father gave His son to convert these unfaithful people into His Church, the Church that is the Bride of the Eternal Father’s Son.

That revelation of the Eternal Father’s will upon His Son’s people was made by the Holy Spirit and continues to be made in the Church of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. In the Old Testament, God’s covenant purpose was to announce and to prepare the chosen people for the new covenant at

the time it would be completed by Jesus Christ through His sacrifice in the Cross.

The Old Testament, through the Holy Scriptures, the Gospels in the New Testament, and the writing of the Apostles, show that the rituals of the Old Testament are no more than a preparation for Jesus Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. The redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ is a doctrine comparable to much of the revelation of the Old Testament that met plenitude in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice. The Old and New Testaments are systematic ways of two economies of salvation. First there was a preparation of the people chosen before the coming of God’s Son, prepared by the Eternal Father using the sacred writers or hagiographers. Jesus Christ, the High Priest and victim, founded, like Moses at Sinai, a covenant between God and his people. The covenant of Jesus Christ is the perfection and plenitude of the first covenant because it is the fulfilment of the promise of God the Father to redeem us from original sin. The sacrifice of our Divine Lord, the Spouse of His Church, establishes a covenant that lasts forever. The Church is the Bride of Jesus Christ.

The Church as a new creation cannot be born except by the Holy Spirit; from Him she was born as is born everything that comes from God, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God” (Jn. 3: 5). The Holy Spirit is in the Church the Spirit of Jesus Christ: He makes it possible to repeat the gestures of Jesus, to announce His words, and to repeat Jesus’ prayer as Saint Stephen did: “Lord Jesus receive my spirit. And he knelt down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he felt asleep” (Acts 7: 59). The Holy Spirit makes it possible to perpetuate the action of thanks offered by Jesus to His Father during the breaking of the bread and to keep the union among brothers in faith that gathers disciples around Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is the power that moves the Early Church: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). At times, the Holy Spirit is manifested directly to the pagans, thus proving that the Holy Spirit is poured upon every creature.

At other times, the Holy Spirit sends on mission those whom he himself chooses: Philip, Peter, Paul and Barnabas. But this is not only at the starting point; the Holy Spirit accompanies and guides the action of the apostles, He gives their decisions, and gives them authority to serve. When the Word of Jesus grows and multiplies, it is the Holy Spirit who is the inner source of this joyful impetus.

The Holy Spirit, the glory of Christ in us, “He who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom. 8: 11) by the power of his Spirit of holiness and made him a “life-giving spirit” by the same token made the Spirit, “the glory of the Lord.” The gift of the Holy Spirit is the presence in us of the glory of the Lord who transforms us into his image (2 Cor. 3:18). Thus the apostle Saint Paul does not separate Christ and the Spirit. To be in Christ Jesus is to live in the Holy Spirit (See Rom. 8: 1-5, 10).

The signs of the Spirit, in other words, life in the Spirit, is not an intuitive perception of the Spirit, rather, it is a life of faith, but is a real experience; it is a concrete certainty, since it is through signs the experience of a presence. These signs are extremely varied. All of them, however, from the relatively

external charisma, the gift of tongues or of healing, to the higher gifts of faith, hope and charity, are at the service of the Gospel, to which they bear witness, and of the body of Christ which they build up (see 1 Cor 12:18; 12:14; 12:12-31; 12: 4-30; 1 Thes. 1).

The Spirit is the source of new life in very different ways— the experience of the spirit is always the same background to an existence condemned and already marked by death. It is the newness of the Spirit that keeps us from being prisoners to the oldness, letter, and curse of the law; in the blessing of Abraham in the Spirit is the promise of the covenant. In the Old Testament the Spirit of God did not reveal Himself as a person, but as a divine force that transforms human personalities to make them capable of exceptional tastes.

These gestures are always intended to confirm the people in their vocation, to make them servants and associates of God and oriented towards God, it is the Holy Spirit coming from the God of Israel and consecrating Israel to the God of Covenant; the Spirit is sanctification. This action and this revaluation are affirmed in particular along three lines: the line of salvation, the prophetic line of the Word, and the testimony. According to these three lines, the entire people of Israel are called to receive the Spirit.

The spirit of the Church is the new creation born of the Holy Spirit. The Church and the Spirit are inseparable, experiences of the Spirit are made in the Church and give access to the mystery of the Church; the charisms are all the more precious and more effectively contribute to building up the Church and consecrating the temple of God. The Spirit renews, without ceasing; His action and gifts work constantly for the unity of the body of Christ as a spirit of communion that pours into hearts the supreme gift of charity and gathers all into one being.

The Spirit of God: one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one God. The Holy Spirit unites, because it is the



Spirit of God, the Spirit consecrates because it is the Spirit of the Holy God. All the actions of the Holy Spirit consist in giving us access to God and putting us in living communication with God, in introducing us into His holy depths and in communicating to us the secrets of God. In the spirit we know Christ and confess that Jesus is the Lord; we pray to God and call him by his name, "Father." From the moment we possess the Spirit nothing in the world can claim us since God has given himself to us and we live in him. One's personal vocation, lived in integrity of donation to God in an act of free will is the certainty that we "possess the Spirit and nothing in the world can lose us..." Sometimes faithful people excuse themselves for "not living the integrity of body and soul in the Holy Spirit" because their past weaknesses make them do what they don't want to do: "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it" (Rom. 7: 19-25). In the letter to the Galatians, it is clarified: "But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; and here there is no conflict within us. Those who belong to Christ have nailed their natural evil desires to his cross and crucified them there. If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's lead in every part of our lives" (Gal.5: 22–25).

The Eternal Father's love prepared the chosen people of the Old Testament. His love is one of caring for His people. The name "Bridegroom" is one of the names God gives himself (Is. 54:5) and which expresses his love for his creatures. God does not reveal himself only in his mysterious name (Ex. 3:14); other names, taken from the daily experience of life, make him known in his relations with his people: he is your Shepherd, your Father, and also your Spouse.

It is not a question here of a myth as there are with the Baal's, which answer with sexual rites, particularly sacred prostitution. These myths appear bound with idolatry and thus to better stigmatize it, the jealous god who condemns it calls it prostitution (see Ex. 34:15s; Is. 1:21).

The God of Israel is Spouse, not of his land but of his people; the love that unites them has a history; the gratuitous attentions of God and the triumph of his mercy over the infidelity of his people are prophetic themes. This first appears in Hosea who is aware of its symbolic value through his own conjugal experience (cf. Hosea 1-3). In the conjugal experience the prophet discovers the mystery of the relationship between the love of God who allies himself with his people and the betrayal of the covenant with Israel. The covenant takes on a nuptial character. Idolatry is not only a prostitution, it is an adultery, that of a spouse filled with goods which forgets all that it has received. Other prophetic themes are about the Spouse who is lovely and faithful (Jer. 2: 2,20; 31:3; Ez.16:1–43,59–63). Isaiah 54:4–8, 61:10, and 62:4s are in the same symbolic value of the spousal love of God for his people.

Is it necessary to read the Song of Songs in this prophetic perspective? Or is the Song of Songs, on the contrary, inspired by the love of a husband and a wife of this earth? Whether the Book describes allegorically the history of Israel or sings of the conjugal love of which the prophets made that kind of covenant bond, it doesn't provide us the key of the symbols that are used; never is Yahweh identified as the spouse. However legitimate it may be as an allegorical interpretation, it seems preferable to treat the Song of Songs as a parable; in it is sung a love as strong as death, whose inextinguishable flame is the image of the heavenly love of God towards his People (See Song 8:6; Dt.4:24). As for the nuptials sung by Psalm 45, those of the King Messiah, the letter to the Hebrews exploits from its elements, giving the King divine titles that were a prelude to the

revelation of the divine filiation of Christ (Ps. 45:7s; Heb. 1:8).

The realism of the prophets highlighted divine love. The mediation of the wise men underlines the personal and interior character of the union realized by this love. God communicates to his faithful a wisdom that is his daughter (Prov 8: 22) and that behaves with man as a spouse (Ec. 15:2). The Book of Wisdom resumes the image: to acquire wisdom is the means of becoming a friend of God (Wis. 7:14); one must seek it, desire it and live with it (Wis. 7:28; 8:2.9). As a spousal gift that only God can give (Wis 8:21), wisdom makes immortal the one who is united with it. Wisdom, sent from God, like the Holy Spirit (Wis. 9:17), is a spiritual gift; it is a worker that grounds in us the work of God and that engenders in us the virtues. The conjugal symbolism here is completely spiritual. The revelation of the mystery is thus prepared, thanks to which we will consummate the union of man with God: the incarnation of the one who is the wisdom of God and his nuptials with the Church, his wife. Only the love of God could fill us with the Wisdom that will conduct us through the third stage of perfection, which is the road of mystical experiences such as union and final union in Eternity.

In the New Testament we find the Lamb, Spouse of the New Covenant. Wisdom, an idea of God who is pleased to be among men, is not only a spiritual gift: it appears in the flesh. It is Christ, the Wisdom of God, and in the mystery of the Cross it is where the love of God to his unfaithful spouse is revealed; it saves and sanctifies the spouse, of whom he is the head (see Eph. 5:23–27). Thus we find that the veil of the mystery of the union symbolized in the Old Testament by the names Spouse and wife is unveiled. For man, it is a matter of participating in the Trinitarian life, of uniting himself with the Son of God in order to be a son of the heavenly Father. The Bridegroom is Christ, and Christ is crucified. The new covenant is sealed in his blood, which is why the

Book of Revelation no longer calls Jerusalem the bride of God, but the bride of the Lamb (Rev. 21: 9). On the cross, the Church is the real symbol, in the blood and water flowing out from the pierced side of Jesus Christ, the new Adam, by the power of the Holy Spirit giving life to His Spouse, His Church.

The Church is the Bride of the New Covenant. What is Jerusalem called in the covenant with the Son of God? She is no longer the handmaid, represented by the people of the Old Covenant, but the free woman, the Jerusalem on high (Gal. 4:22–27). Ever since the blindfolding of the Bridegroom, to whom the forerunner, his friend, testified (Jn. 3:29), humanity has been represented by two women, symbols of the two spiritual cities; on the one hand, the "prostitute," as type of idolatrous Babylon (see Rev. 17:1–7; Is. 47); on the other hand, the spouse of the Lamb, as type of the loved city (see Rev. 20:9), of the Holy Jerusalem that comes from heaven, since from her Bridegroom she has her sanctuary. This woman is the mother of the children of God whom the Lamb delivers from the dragon by the virtue of His blood, for it appears that the bride of Christ is their mother by whom and in whom each of them is born and united forever with the lamb.

The eternal nuptials are prepared in the Church of



Jesus for the Holy Spirit: the promise of the Holy Spirit at the Last Supper, that Jesus must leave in order to send Him. The manifestation of Jesus Christ's divinity was on hold during the time he lived among his people except on the Mount Tabor in the presence of three of his apostles. When he was resurrected his human body was transformed in the glory of His divinity, and He was manifested to His apostles and a chosen group including, of course, His Mother. His promise to send the Holy Spirit was made to the apostles, and the Church begins to make Him manifest. The Holy Spirit is in the Church and will be until the consummation of time when at the second coming Jesus will come to judge His Church. Of the three divine persons, it is the Holy Spirit who will teach the successors of the Apostles and us about the truth of Jesus and the Church, as He guides us through the way of perfection to our heavenly home.

The nuptials of the Lamb and the Bride involve different stages as is shown by the fact that the Church is both the mother of the elect and the city that gathers them:

The first stage of the nuptials, the time of the coming of Christ, finished at the hour when Christ new Adam sanctified on the cross the new Eve; she comes out of His side, symbolized by the water and the blood, the sacraments of the Church. The love that is shown there Husband to Wife is the model of Christian nuptials. The second stage are the nuptials to which Christ invites his people, but to participate in them it is not only necessary to respond to the invitation,

Pray With Us! Virtual Vespers

Consecrated virgins, candidates, and friends continue to join for Virtual Vespers on various feast days and memorials of our Blessed Virgin Mother and of virgin saints. Here are the next dates – mark your calendars!

The next planned dates are

- Tuesday, **August 6**, The Transfiguration, at 9pm ET (8pm CT, 7pm MT, 6pm PT)
- Tuesday, **October 15**, Saint Teresa of Jesus, at 9pm ET

which many may refuse, but it is also necessary to put on the nuptial dress. This invitation resounds throughout the time of the Church; but as for each one, the hour of the celebration is uncertain; it therefore demands vigilance so that when the Spouse comes he finds ready the virgins who are invited to participate in the nuptial banquet.

The third and final stage, at the end of history, will be the finished nuptial tunic of the bride, a linen tunic of resplendent whiteness, woven by the works of the faithful. These await in joy and praise the nuptials of the Lamb with those who are invited to participate in this nuptial banquet. At this hour the prostitute will be judged, the Husband will finally answer the call that His Spirit inspires in his wife, and He will quench the thirst of all those who, like her and in her, desire this union with their Love and their Life, a fruitful union.

(cf: Xavier León-Dufour and others, *Vocabulario de Teología Bíblica* Vol. 66, páginas 296–307, ed. Herder: Barcelona, España, 1973. trans. M. Aguilera)

Volume III of the Ordo Virginum series

Shalina Stilley, Diocese of San Diego

Volume III, about virgin saints, continues to come along nicely and is in the editing stage at this point. If you have volunteered to write about a Saint but haven't yet submitted it, please contact Shalina at catherinestilley@gmail.com. Artists, too, are invited to contact Shalina if you haven't yet been in touch.

Rome in 2025?

Pope Francis has chosen the motto “Pilgrims of Hope” for the 2025 Jubilee Year. The Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has announced a Jubilee of Consecrated Life to be held October 8-9, 2025, in Rome, with the title, “Pilgrims of hope, on the path to peace.” Preparatory stages are taking place now. A Jubilee Celebration for consecrated persons, by country, is also planned for February 2, 2025. Please see a letter discussing the Jubilee year plans from the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, addressed to all members of consecrated life: [DICALSAL to all 6 members of consecrated life](#). More details to come!

By Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD
Archdiocese of Miami (FL)

I write this President's Journal as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, for publication on the Memorial of The Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Many years ago, consecrated virgins chose the Most Sacred Heart as the theme for our annual convocation. I don't recall what year it was, but Cardinal Burke (perhaps Bishop or Archbishop at the time) was our Episcopal Moderator. His Eminence holds a special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his words at the convocation touched the hearts of the gathered virgins, all of whom had been drawn by the fiery love of Jesus' Sacred Heart to give themselves entirely to Him. One image from the Cardinal's talk comes frequently to mind: it is a *human* heart that beats at the right side of the Father in heaven.

Such an image! The Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity took on human flesh and forever changed the dignity of the human heart, by making it His own. Through Jesus, the human heart was drawn into the divine heart of the Most Holy Trinity. This union of the two natures of Christ, human and divine, is an indissoluble union of two natures which keep their individual identities even as they are made one. Humanity remains human; Divinity remains divine; and in Christ the two are indissolubly bound together. How is this? Saint Paul describes the bond between Jesus and His Church as an indivisible marriage bond, referring to this bond in the same terms as the Book of Genesis refers to human marriage, "and the two will become one flesh" (see Eph. 5: 21–32). The Church, comprised of human beings, is nuptially bound to the divine Christ. This is a profound mystery! (Eph 5: 32).

Both human marriage and consecrated virginity image this wedded bond. Saint Thomas Aquinas describes human marriage as representing the *fecundity*, and consecrated virginity as representing the *integrity*, of the marriage bond between Christ, the Bridegroom, and His Bride, the Church. In its opening paragraph, the 2018 Instruction *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago* speaks of both the integrity (virginity) and the fecundity (spiritual fertility) of the spousal love of the consecrated virgin for the Lord Jesus: "Since apostolic times this expression of the mystery of the Church has been

demonstrated in a unique way in the lives of those women who with spousal love are dedicated to the Lord Jesus in virginity. Responding to a charism kindled in them by the Holy Spirit, they experience the spiritual fertility of an intimate relationship with him and offer the fruits of this relationship to the Church and to the world."

Today we honor the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary—the pre-eminent human heart united with the Sacred Heart that once beat within her womb. May she assist us as we live each day the words we spoke on the day of our consecration, "Now with all our hearts we follow you, we reverence you and seek your presence. Lord, fulfill our hope: show us your loving kindness, the greatness of your mercy."



Recordings Available!

Links to recordings from the virtual sessions of the 2022 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins (held in La Crosse) and the 2022 Virtual Information Conference on the *Ordo virginum*, are now available. If you attended a particular conference in person or virtually, and would like to receive a link to the conference you attended, at no charge, please email info@consecratedvirgins.org with your request. If you did not attend the conference, links to the recordings are available for purchase through our online store at consecratedvirgins.org.

By Florence Sundberg

Our Mother Mary did not hesitate when the Angel informed her that she was to become the Mother of God. She questioned, yes, but it was only so that she could understand. She offered her *fiat mihi* with a full heart, in complete confidence that God would be with her and would enable her to carry out whatever He asked of her. What is God asking of me, of us, in these troubled times? I again think about what Mother Teresa said: "If we would kill the innocent baby in the womb of the mother, what would we not do?" That 'what would we not do' troubles me. Our world is exploding with violent outbursts and demands that the time limit for the legal right to kill the baby in the womb of the mother be extended up until a moment before birth, when the baby is fully alive and healthy: this is not abortion—it is infanticide. I continue to wait for the global cry of horror at such a gruesome and inhumane proposal. I am still waiting . . . and praying that the Holy Spirit will implant His grace, His wisdom and His courage in the hearts of our leaders—and within our own hearts. We cannot, must not, sit back and count on someone else to take up the battle for life; we know that those who stand against the sanctity of life and win will not stop there. They will be emboldened to take their anti-life cause further to seek the termination of the lives of the elderly, the handicapped, the mentally / emotionally challenged—all who do not meet their criteria that only 'perfect' humans be permitted to live. That was the goal of Margaret Sanger who believed that blacks are sub-human and not worthy of life. She went to Germany to learn from the

Nazis how to eliminate life as quickly and as efficiently as possible; she then returned to the States and set up her 'killing / abortion facilities in poor, black communities—was there no one to stop her? Is there no one now to stop the mass slaughter of innocent babies in the womb of the mother? We are the mothers of God's children—they are ours and we are theirs—and we are called by Christ our Spouse to protect, defend and nurture 'our' children. We pray in union with our Bridegroom and then we speak out in defense of 'our' children no matter the cost of being ridiculed or even attacked as some have been who have risked defending God's babies in the womb. If a mother will not defend her children, who will?



Artwork by
Marion Biestek

By Diane Christine Farr

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me though he die yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” (Jn 10:25-26)

In Charles Dickens’ classic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, this scripture verse repeatedly presents itself to the mind of Sydney Carton. He will soon give his life to save his friend Charles Darnet and restore him to his family. The character of Sydney Carton undergoes a transformation as he considers the power of the words of Christ.

This scripture verse is one of seven “I am” statements given by Jesus to describe Himself. Each of these powerful statements deserves a careful consideration and thoughtful pondering by all Christians. The Holy Spirit reveals the depth of their meaning to us. As consecrated virgins, how have we come to recognize that Jesus is the resurrection and the life of our entire being?

We know that the circumstances of our lives can be very hard, and the way we accept our crosses will help to mature us in our faith. We must look beyond our difficulties with courage and a firm trust that we are not alone. The first gift our Lord conveyed after his resurrection was his peace. We must maintain this divine peace through all our sorrows and joys. True peace can only come to us from our divine Lord.

The seeds of the resurrection begin in our life as we come to allow God’s will to reign in our souls. This divine life within us is like the rising sun illuminating our souls and giving us a pledge of our complete resurrection.

It is only through our contemplation of all Jesus did in his humanity that we reach his divinity and come to know Him as the Eternal Word of the Father. As brides of Christ, we have had the tremendous grace of coming to know him as our divine Bridegroom. The beauty of

our resurrected Lord draws us into a profound communion with Him. The joy of knowing his divine love surpasses all things. He will also share with us the pain and sorrow mankind caused His Heart. He wants us to understand the ingratitude His love receives.

The risen Christ forms the very foundation of our own lives. It is always a new encounter with our beloved risen Lord whenever we receive Him in holy communion. Jesus wants to transform us completely as we rest in his gentle presence. He teaches us to listen and respond in a spirit of continuous prayer. This spirit of interior prayer will lead us in a genuine response to the needs of others. Kindness is one of the greatest signs that Christ is living and acting within us. We learn to joyfully receive everything from our Divine Spouse in order to generously give what we possess. Our interior gaze should be constantly fixed on the one who forms our life. We know that with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He is always at work in our souls with transforming power, infinite wisdom and perfect love.

Our perpetual virginity is itself a sign of resurrected life as is the unique nuptial bond we have with Jesus. We offer to Him in adoration the fragrant bouquet of our virginal love united to His own infinite love. We pray that he imparts to us his own qualities and true sanctity. Our first duty is to recognize our origin in an act of loving adoration to our creator. As brides of Christ, we are called to be a sign of hope and a radiant light for the entire Church. We will spend our whole lives coming to know and love our Divine Bridegroom more intimately. Those of us who suffer from a debilitating illness or the death of loved ones firmly believe with absolute trust that Jesus has the final word on all things. He is the *Alpha* and the *Omega* and we draw our life from Him. We cannot comprehend His love for us. May we be genuine witnesses of the transforming power of the resurrection and the kingdom of Heaven, giving perfect glory to the Most Holy Trinity.

Consecration Announcements

May 10, 2024— **Catherine Gallagher**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Jerome ListECKI, Archbishop of Milwaukee (WI).

Catherine writes, “I am so grateful to God for His incredible mercy and how He worked through this process [of preparation for consecration]. And, of course, I am so filled with joy and the love of our Lord and Divine Spouse, for calling me to Himself.”



Catherine Gallagher with Archbishop Jerome ListECKI and Auxiliary Bishop Jeffery Haines of Milwaukee.

Upcoming Consecrations

June 15, 2024 — **Dalia Zakhory**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann, Bishop of Orange (CA), at 10:30am at Christ Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. All are warmly invited to attend.

July 6, 2024 — **Mary Kelly**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Anthony Taylor, Bishop of Little Rock (AR), during the 4:30pm Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew in Little Rock, Arkansas. There will also be a Mass of Celebration at Saint Joseph Fayetteville Parish on Sunday, July 7, at the 5:00pm Mass. A reception will follow both events. All are warmly invited to attend.

August 10, 2024 — **Rubi Gabriela Garfias**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks, Bishop of Joliet (IL), at 11:00am at the Cathedral of Saint Raymond Nonnatus in Joliet, Illinois. Refreshments immediately following. All are warmly invited to attend.

August 22, 2024 — **Amber Elizabeth Buchheit**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski, Archbishop of Saint Louis (MO), at 10:00am at the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis in Saint Louis, Missouri. All are warmly invited to attend, please RSVP for the reception to follow with Amber at amberbuchheitsn@gmail.com.

October 6, 2024 — **Helene Veronica Thérèse Almeter**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Stephen D. Parks, Bishop of Savannah (GA), at 3:00pm at the Cathedral Basilica of Saint John the Baptist in Savannah, Georgia. All are warmly invited to attend.

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY
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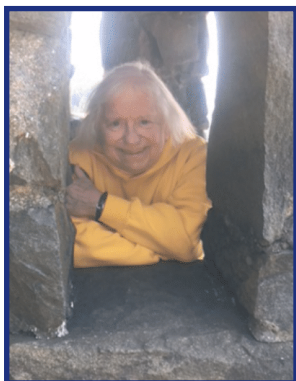
Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2024 are invited to submit an anniversary reflection for *The Lamp*. These anniversary reflections are popular among our readers as they convey a personal look at life lived as a bride of Christ in the *Ordo virginum*.

50 Years

Loretta Matulich
consecrated August 13, 1974
Archdiocese of Portland (OR)

How Great Is the Power of the Lord!

When I was asked to write a reflection on the occasion of my Golden Jubilee of Consecration this year, I immediately thought of a scene from my childhood. I'll share that with you now.



When I was a young girl, my friend Sally and I drove with her aunt from San Gabriel, where they lived, to La Jolla, located just north of San Diego. Her aunt wanted to thank the medical staff for the care they had given to her late husband. Since nightfall was getting close, Sally and I were almost in the dark as we walked along the edge of a cliff with the ocean beneath us. The waves were relentlessly rolling in, exhausting themselves over the rocks beneath us, and then ebbing only to gather their strength again and heave themselves over the boulders in the ocean.

Sally and I, being youngsters at that time, frisked and skipped around on the shelf of the cliff. After some time, her aunt came out of the medical facility and stood on the cliff, looking at the ocean in awe. Then she said what all of us felt: "How great is the power of the Lord!"

As I reflect on my 50 years as a consecrated virgin, it would take a library full of reminiscences to narrate all I could put into written form. So, I shall just say one sentence and forego the narrative of how God put me into the right place, at the right time, to petition the right bishop for the Consecration in 1974.

"How great is the power of the Lord!"

35 Years

Theresa Marshall
consecrated June 3, 1989
Diocese of Lansing (MI)



35 years: The Best decision ever!

When I accepted Jesus' proposal, I thought He honored me by offering such a beautiful gift. I remember feeling so happy, delighted, amazed, and loved by Him. I did not expect that gift from Him. Because He gave me such joy, I thought the rest of my time on earth would be hard, a cross and a fight to be closer to Him. I read a lot about people who pray and get a giant cross.

As the years have gone by, the relationship is beyond all my dreams, thoughts and desires. It is so profound and deeper than I can express but I will share what I can. I have found that essential elements make love more robust than ever in being a bride of Christ as a consecrated virgin.

I have normal ups and downs in life. Song of Songs says, "Draw me after you. Let us run" (Song of Songs 1:4). Praying and talking to your spouse daily is essential. We need to know his voice, which comes from sitting with him in his caress and leaning into his heart. It means staying there even when he is silent. Often, he will silence my loud brokenness in his tenderness. There is a powerful grace that comes with silent waiting and trusting. I believe our hearts are made for Him. As we abide in Him, he draws us more profoundly. He longs to be near and bring us into the chamber of his Sacred Heart. Resting there, I find new praise, delight, and renewal. I meditate often on Song of Songs. It keeps me focused on him; He has a tender receptivity to the unique and unrepeatable beauty of the person I am in his eyes. There, his heart cries out to me in those moments, "You are precious in my eyes and beautiful. I love you" (Is 43:4). I use the book from Joshua Elzner titled *A Flame of God Himself* to help me see the deeper truths of His overwhelming love.

Abiding in and dwelling in the caress of the living flame of Jesus's heart gives me strength for all things. Sacrifices, disappointments, fears, and other worries are quiet in the light of his love. In the heart of Jesus

is the wound of love that heals all wounds. When I surrender to His love, even those around me experience that healing love. I have experienced profound freedom and deliverance from hurts, even those I did not know I had until he freed me. I find it easier to avoid distraction when I choose to go deeper into the chamber of his heart each day. Peace, discernment, and faith are there too. All these acts take a deliberate and active choice daily to run after Him with my whole heart.

The world is competing for our hearts, but his grace will do everything once our heart is given to Jesus. People would tell me I would never be fulfilled. They said Jesus could not complete all my needs. They said I spent too much time praying when I could be doing more service to make an impact on the world. People said, "You would make a great mom. Why waste yourself on Jesus?" I said, guess what world? Jesus completes me more and more profoundly than I knew. Because I pray my decisions, thoughts, and actions are more precise and purpose-driven toward service for building the kingdom of God. As a consecrated virgin, I have more "children" than I ever could as a mom. These 35 years have been grace upon grace for me. I still believe it is the best decision ever to say "YES" to Jesus.

In Memory of Our Deceased Sister

Rehta Zellner, consecrated November 1, 2003 in the Diocese of Rockford (IL) went home to the Lord on March 31, 2023. Eternal rest grant onto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace.

If anyone would like to write a tribute to be published in an upcoming edition of the Lamp, please email it to info@consecratedvirgins.org.

2024 Membership Drive Update

Thank you to all who have responded to our membership drive. We are very appreciative of all your help, support and generosity. As you know, the money helps fund all of the projects of the Association to advance our vocation. Online registration is the fastest and easiest way to complete this. Just go to our website: Consecratedvirgins.org and directions are on the first page. Thank you!

Francesca Riddick, usacvmembership@gmail.com

USACV and International Resource Center for the *Ordo Virginum* Leadership Team Members and Officers

USACV Leadership Team

Jenna Cooper 2022-2024; Archdiocese of New York (NY).

Claire Halbur 2024-2026; Diocese of Phoenix (AZ).
(*Secretary of the USACV-IRC and USACV Online Presence*).

Elizabeth Lam 2023-2025; Diocese of Oakland (CA).
(*USACV Website*).

Joni McCann 2022-2024; Archdiocese of Boston (MA). (*Convocation Liaison*).

Francesca Riddick 2022-2024; Diocese of Joliet (IL).
(*USACV Membership and eTapestry*).

IRC Leadership Team

Magalis Aguilera; USA, Archdiocese of Miami (FL).
(*Chairperson IRC*).

Judith Stegman, President of the USACV-IRC 2019-2025; USA, Archdiocese of Miami (FL).

Maria Luisa Meza; EL SALVADOR, Diocese of Santa Ana/San Miguel.

Renu Rita Silvano; INDIA, Archdiocese of Bombay.

Noemi Angeles; PHILIPPINES, Diocese of Malolas

One Unfilled Position

Other USACV-IRC Services, among others

Karen Webb 2024-2026; Treasurer of the USACV-IRC, Diocese of Rochester (NY)

Mary Kay Lacke; Coordinator of the Information Conference in English, Diocese of Steubenville (OH).

Anne Gishpert; Archivist, Diocese of Pueblo (CO).

Florence Sundberg; Prayer Chain Coordinator, Archdiocese of Hartford (CT).

Amanda Schrauth; Publication of *The Lamp*, Diocese of Helena (MT).

Openings on the USACV Leadership Team

Three of five seats on the USACV Section Leadership Team will open on January 1, 2025, with the election to be held in fall 2024. All USACV members are encouraged to consider serving on the leadership team. We are a volunteer organization and depend on the offers of time, talent, and treasure of our members. We plan to offer an online virtual session in August, to discuss what's involved in serving in leadership. Please let Judith or Francesca know of your interest;

president@consecratedvirgins.org (Judith), or usacvmembership@gmail.com (Francesca).

The 2023–2024 inaugural year of the USACV–sponsored virtual *Candidate Discussion Group* has been widely appreciated by participants. In response to requests from consecrated virgins, candidates, and diocesan representatives responsible for the formation of candidates for the *Ordo virginum*, Senite Salezghi led a team of consecrated virgins in developing the format, topics, and speakers for the 2023-2024 year. A word of gratitude is owed to Senite and the others for their work—thank you to all, and may our Divine Spouse continue to lead and guide you.

The purpose of the quarterly Candidate Discussion Group is to facilitate an opportunity for aspirants and candidates for this vocation to meet regularly and learn more deeply about different tenets of the life and charism of consecrated virginity. Consecrated virgin Leandra Hubka of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester (MN) will take up the coordination baton beginning in September 2024. She is working this summer on a plan for the 2024–2025 discussions, and she welcomes your thoughts as she plans, especially in regard to important topics to cover in the discussions. Send your ideas to info@consecratedvirgins.org.

Participation in the Candidate Discussion Group is limited to those who are accepted by their dioceses as aspirants or candidates for the vocation of consecrated virginity lived *in saeculo*, that is, in the ordinary circumstances of life. Participants must be referred by their diocese, and the discussion is intended for those who have already attended an Information Conference sponsored by the USACV (see page 16). The discussion group is meant to be a supplement, and not a substitute, for diocesan-based formation.

Consecrated virgins are also welcome to register and attend. Those who have participated have found enrichment of their own understanding of the vocation and a fostering of community within the *Ordo virginum*.

The final 2023–2024 discussion will be held August 12, 2024, from 6:30pm to 7:30pm MT (8:30pm ET). The topic is “Living for the Lamb *in saeculo*”, and the presenter will be Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD.

Registration information and online registration forms are available here: [OV Candidate Discussion Group Registration](#). Questions? Please contact info@consecratedvirgins.org.

Submissions Accepted

If you would like to submit an article or artwork for consideration in a future edition of *The Lamp*, please email it to [Amanda Schrauth](mailto:Amanda.Schrauth@consecratedvirgins.org) at info@consecratedvirgins.org. We accept articles and artwork from consecrated virgins related to our vocation or related to Our Lady and the virgin saints. If you would like to write and submit a remembrance or memorial for a deceased consecrated virgin to be published in a future edition of *The Lamp*, please email it to info@consecratedvirgins.org.

Upcoming Issues of the Lamp

September 8, 2024 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin
December 12, 2024 Our Lady of Guadalupe
February 2, 2025 Feast of the Presentation
and World Day for Consecrated Life
May 31, 2024 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin

A Note from the Archivist

Anne Gishpert, USACV-IRC archivist, reminds consecrated virgins who have not done so to please send her a copy of your consecration certificate (providing this copy also enables United States virgins to be full voting members of the USACV). Anne also keeps the USACV "family" albums, which include mementos from consecrations. You are warmly invited to send Anne the program, invitation, holy cards, photos, or other items from your consecration. Anne especially asks those consecrated in recent years to send these so that she can update our albums. The "family" albums travel each year to our convocation, and always bring smiles and memories. You can email Anne at anne.gishpert@gmail.com.

The days are coming soon for the 2024 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, to be held in conjunction with serving at the National Eucharistic Congress (NEC), July 17 to 21 in Indianapolis, Indiana. This will be a special convocation with an opportunity for consecrated virgins to live out the essence of our vocation—love for our Eucharistic Lord—in a more public venue. There are many ways for consecrated virgins to participate in this joyful witness: read on about the opportunities for those staying together at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, for those attending the NEC and staying in other places, and even for those who aren't able to attend the Congress.

- † For the most up-to-date 2024 Convocation Information and Program, visit our website, consecratedvirgins.org.
- † There may still be a few available rooms for our consecrated virgins group at the Fatima Retreat Center during the convocation / Eucharistic Congress days: If you are interested and haven't yet registered, contact consecrated virgin Lorraine Manlolo (Lorraine.manlolo@gmail.com) to assure that space is available.
- † For information about the National Eucharistic Congress, visit <https://www.eucharisticcongress.org/>.



Convocation Preparation Tips for Consecrated Virgins Attending the Eucharistic Congress

- † **Tip #1: Prepare your own personal schedule / program for the convocation / NEC days:**
 - † Begin with the programs for the convocation (available here: [convocation program](#)) and the Eucharistic Congress (available here: [NEC program](#)).
 - † Select the Impact/breakout sessions of the NEC you would like to attend. Questions? Contact NECRegistration@eucharisticcongress.org, 833-895-6886, ext 1.

- † **Tip #2: Fill in your personal schedule with various service opportunities.** *Please note that you may have to forego or be late in attending some NEC or other Convocation events in order to assist / attend the following:*
 - † Sign up for timeslots at the USACV's exhibit booth in the Expo Hall, a booth which will show in a visual way the features and beauty of the *Ordo Virginum*. Jenna Chang is coordinating the booth and has prepared a signup genius link: [USACV Expo booth signup link](#). Jenna notes that each 1.5 hour shift will have a total of 3 people (which will include one convocation planning committee member) to answer vocation questions, to share USACV resources, or to simply pray with visitors to our booth.
 - † Plan on Evening Prayer each evening at 5:30 pm at St. John the Evangelist Church, across from the Indiana Convention Center. The hope is to have 25 consecrated virgins joining each evening as Vespers is opened for any Congress participant who wishes to attend. Consecrated virgin Claire Halbur will lead Vespers on Thursday evening, July 18, so you are especially encouraged to join for 5:30 pm Vespers that evening.
 - † Sign up for hour(s) of adoration at St. John the Evangelist Church. The goal is to have 10 consecrated persons (religious, consecrated virgins, . . .) praying during each hour. Sign up here: [Adoration sign-up link](#).
 - † Join consecrated virgins staying at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat Center any morning for Morning Prayer, Mass, and breakfast (or any of these). Please let Lorraine Manlolo know if you are interested (lorraine.manlolo@gmail.com). Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House is located at 5353 E 56th St, Indianapolis, IN 46226.

- † Join us for Saturday dinner, 6:30pm, at Bazbeaux Pizza, 329 Massachusetts Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46204, where we will honor virgins who celebrate a significant anniversary in 2024. You may register to attend this dinner and pay the \$25 cost using the [2024 Convocation Online Registration form](#). (This dinner is included in the convocation registration fee paid by those staying at Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House.)

- † **Tip #3:** There are also opportunities for consecrated virgins to **volunteer to assist with registration at the National Eucharistic Congress**; the NEC volunteer manager indicates that they need and would like the assistance of consecrated virgins. Currently, there is great need for people on July 17th from 6:00pm to 10:00pm and on July 18th from 6:30am to 12:30pm. Other slots are also available morning and evenings July 18th to July 20th. **Please contact Lorraine Manlolo by June 14 if you are interested**, and she will put you in touch with the NEC staff.
 - † Note: There is required training for those volunteering at the NEC. It is our understanding that those who volunteer for only one or a few shifts, must attend only a virtual training on July 1st at 8:00pm ET. If, on the other hand, you would like to volunteer *full-time* during the Congress, it is our understanding that you: must attend a virtual training on July 1st at 8:00pm ET and attend an all-day in-person training & orientation on Tuesday, July 16 from 9am to 6pm; do not need to purchase a Congress Pass; and will have lunch and dinner provided for you Tuesday to Sunday. If you have any interest in volunteering, for one or several shifts, or full-time, please contact Lorrain Manlolo for details.

- † **Tip #4:** Don't forget to put on your calendar the Convocation Logistics Planning Meeting on July 9, 2024 at 8:00 pm ET. The meeting is important for all who will be attending the convocation because we will work out details of cars and transportation between the retreat center and the various NEC venues. Please have your personal schedule prepared in advance of this meeting so that we can make best use of the time. The GoTo link for the meeting is included in the Convocation Information Sheet, available here: [2024 Convocation Information](#).

- † **ALL Consecrated Virgins**—including those not attending the NEC / Convocation—are invited to:
 - † Contribute photos from your consecration to our shared Google album, from which select images will be drawn for a slideshow at our expo booth. Please prioritize high resolution images. Photos will be identified by first name, last initial, Diocese, and date of consecration. Email these details to Mary Beth Bracy (sondance20@aol.com) and ask her for the link to the shared Google album where you can upload your photos. Please title your message to Mary Beth “CV Album” so she gives it prompt attention. Thank you.
 - † Pray for the Eucharistic Congress, and for the convocation, that the people of God in the United States may have their faith in our Eucharistic Lord enlivened during these days!

Questions? Please contact one of our convocation 2024 planning team members: Lorraine Manlolo (lorraine.manlolo@gmail.com); Carolyn Blaszczyk (pacv2008@gmail.com), Jenna Chang (jgchang1@gmail.com), or Joani McCann (joani.mccann@gmail.com).

The USACV-IRC is pleased to announce the 2024 Information Conference on the *Ordo Virginum*, which will be held in a virtual format once again. The conference includes prayer together. Testimonials from consecrated virgins, presentations on significant aspects of the vocation of consecrated virginity lived *in saeculo*, and times for questions and answers.

This conference is a valuable resource for anyone with a serious interest in discovering more about the vocation of consecrated virginity, including those who are pursuing the consecration as aspirants or candidates; diocesan delegates for consecrated life; diocesan vocation directors; other diocesan representatives responsible for discernment and formation for this vocation; and consecrated virgins themselves.

The Information Conference is a prerequisite for participation in Candidate Discussion Groups (see page 15).

2024 Virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity

Dates: Friday to Sunday, September 6 to 8, 2024

Time: 1:00-6:00pm ET each day

Format: Webinar

Coordinators: Judith Stegman and Leadership Teams of the USACV and IRC

Presentation topics:

- † Overview of Vocations in the Catholic Church, and the Ecclesial Identification of the *Ordo virginum*
- † The Liturgical Rite of Consecration and the Marian Dimension of the Vocation
- † The Liturgy of the Hours and Prayer Life of the Consecrated Virgin
- † Historical Aspects of the Consecration of Virgins; Virgin Saints
- † Sacred Scripture and the Witness of the *Ordo Virginum*, in *Ecclesiae sponsae imago*
- † Mystical Espousal to Christ, the Son of God
- † Living *in saeculo* and in the Local Church
- † Personal Testimonies of Consecrated Virgins Serving on the Team
- † Psychological Maturity for Living the Virginal Vocation
- † Prerequisites for Admission to the Virginal Consecration
- † Stages of Preparation for Admission to the *Ordo virginum*
- † About Associations, the *Ordo virginum*, and Next Steps

Online registration is not yet open. To pre-register, please email: info@consecratedvirgins.org.

