

# Bride of Christ

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Lorraine Manlolo at her consecration as a Consecrated Virgin Living in the World, April 16, in the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu. Her mother Shirley Manlolo stands behind her. (Photo courtesy of Dann Ebina)

# A local doctor answers the call to be a 'Consecrated Virgin Living in the World'

**By Anna Weaver**

*Hawaii Catholic Herald*

When Lorraine Manlolo was doing her medical residency, she came across a story online showing a young woman in a wedding gown. This bride, the headline read, had "married Jesus Christ."

After clicking on the story, Manlolo learned the woman was a consecrated virgin, an ancient vocation where chaste women not in religious orders can dedicate their lives to God while still living and working out in the community.

"I remember just thinking ... 'Wow I had never heard about that!' It was interesting," the 43-year-old radiologist recalls.

Two decades later, Manlolo became a "Consecrated Virgin Living in the World" in a ritual led by Bishop Larry Silva during the April 16 noon Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu.

For Manlolo, being a consecrated virgin perfectly melds her deep devotion to God with her desire to practice medicine, be an active aunty, and spend time with her parents.

## **California-born, Hawaii-tied**

Lorraine Manlolo grew up in Banning, California, a 2-hour drive east of Los Angeles, with a younger brother, Joseph. Their parents, Nelson and Shirley, were devout Catholics originally from the Philippines. The family attended church each Sunday, prayed the rosary together and participated in many other devotions.

"Growing up, my mother always taught me to follow the Blessed Mother," she said. "She was the one to imitate in terms of purity, chastity and just loving and following Jesus."

Lorraine stayed close to her Catholicism as she studied pre-med at the University of California, Riverside. Though she considered being a pharmacist, her father encouraged her, and later her brother, to consider being a doctor.

It was a spot at the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine that first brought Lorraine to Hawaii in 2001.

"I felt really at home here with the culture, environment and the people," she said.

After getting her medical degree, Lorraine did a radiology residency on Long Island, New York, followed by an MRI fellowship in Rochester. Her training took up most of her time.

"I was so focused on my professional career that, in terms of thinking about my vocation, I figured the Lord would guide me," she said. "If I was supposed to be married, I would meet somebody. I was just open to whatever the Lord would put in my path."



**Lorraine Manlolo lies prostrate before the altar in the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu as the Litany of the Saints is prayed over her at her consecration, April 16. (Photo courtesy of Dann Ebina)**

After finishing her training, she hoped she could head back to Hawaii. While interviewing for a teleradiology job with Veterans Affairs in Northern California, the interviewer mentioned they were hoping to expand to Hawaii. Lorraine jumped at the chance to return to the islands and moved back in 2011.

Dr. Manlolo works from home reading X-rays, CT scans, MRIs and ultrasounds, working 10-hour shifts for eight days straight before getting six days off. But no matter her schedule, Lorraine attends daily Mass, mostly at her parish of Sts. Peter and Paul near Ala Moana, but also at the cathedral basilica.

"Going to daily Mass was the center of my day," she said. "First it was studying, then it was work. I was finding more peace and joy going to daily Mass, I was more looking forward to it than anything else in my day."

People also invited her to activities like perpetual adoration.

"The community here is so vibrant, there's always something you can join," Lorraine said.

### **A different calling**

In 2018, her younger brother, Joseph, got married, which made her think more about if she was really called to married life. That and realizing how much God was the center of her day made her research consecrated virginity again.

"I said to myself, 'Whom do I love the most?' And I said, 'It's the Lord!'"

"I felt the Lord calling me and saying, 'I want you to dedicate yourself to me.' And I felt so much happiness with that."

After Lorraine began learning more about the requirements of being a consecrated virgin, she realized she had already been living out a lot of them, including going to daily Mass, living out her day centered in prayer, regularly attending perpetual adoration and living a life of chastity.

As part of her discernment, she did a lot of reading and connected with the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins. She also spoke with Bishop Larry Silva, around the time before COVID-19 hit. Quarantine allowed her to focus on her discernment further.

"I figured it was kind of a good time to keep praying and see if this was the Lord's calling," she said. "Everything kept becoming more and more clear that this was my vocation."

Lorraine formed a spiritual mentorship with Daughter of St. Paul Sister Joane Gepitulan, who was assigned to Hawaii for 11 years before her transfer last year to Toronto after the local Pauline convent and media center closed.

The two still talk monthly by phone about spiritual matters.



**Lorraine Manlolo signs the documents of consecration with Bishop Larry Silva in the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu, April 16. (Photo courtesy of Dann Ebina)**

Sharing in Lorraine's discernment journey has been a "very happy, very humbling experience," Sister Joane says. "You can see her growth and her maturity in her relationship with God."

She added that living out a religious vocation "in the world" rather than in a convent can be difficult, but she sees how dedicated Lorraine is.

"She's very determined, and she is a very prayerful person, very humble and has so much desire to grow closer to God," she said.

Lorraine also connected with fellow consecrated virgin Noemi Angeles. Angeles is one of two other consecrated virgins in Hawaii, the other being Susan Spiegelberg, who was consecrated in Minnesota before moving to Hawaii. The late Linda Cacpal was also a local consecrated virgin.

Lorraine's mother, Shirley, had been a postulant in a religious order back in the Philippines before she met and married Lorraine's father, Nelson.

Shirley believes that though the Lord didn't end up calling her to be a nun, he called Lorraine to her vocation as a consecrated virgin instead.

"She is really richly blessed by God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit," Shirley said. "All the gifts of the Holy Spirit were imbued into her."

Nelson Manlolo says he's very happy about his daughter's chosen path as well.

"I really think that this is the right vocation that she got into," he said.



**Lorraine Manlolo and her parents Nelson and Shirley Manlolo at her consecration Mass, April 16, 2023. (Photo: Dann Ebina)**

### **Being consecrated**

Ahead of her consecration, Lorraine had to collect letters of recommendation and create a "Rule of Life" document. She and her mother, Shirley, also went on a weeklong retreat at St. Anthony Retreat Center in Kalihi.

Shirley and Noemi Angeles escorted Lorraine during her consecration Mass, to which she wore a white dress and veil. According to the rite used for consecrated virgins, she lit a candle symbolic of the virgins in the Gospel of Matthew with their lamps going to meet the bridegroom in Scripture.

In his homily, the bishop spoke about how Lorraine was called by God "to be a special kind of witness for the sake of all of us."

"This is what she has been called to do for her own salvation and spiritual welfare, but this public consecration is not just for her, but is to inspire all of us and remind us to nurture our relationship with Jesus as carefully as a wife nurtures her relationship with her husband," the bishop said.

Lorraine then pledged herself to Christ, prostrated herself before the altar during the singing of the Litany of the Saints, signed her "Rule of Life" document and was presented with a ring to symbolize her marriage to Christ.



**Lorraine Manlolo with, from left: Deacon Joseph Almuena, Cathedral Basilica rector Father Pascual Abaya, vicar general Msgr. Gary Secor, Bishop Larry Silva, her mother Shirley Manlolo, consecrated virgin Noemi Angeles, Father Edgar Brillantes, and Blessed Sacrament Father Francisco de los Reyes. (Photo: Dann Ebina)**

Several priests that know the Manlolo family concelebrated the Mass with the bishop. Friends and family who weren't able to attend in person watched a livestream of the Mass.

After Mass, Lorraine was greeted by well-wishers including members of local religious congregations. Instead of a reception, she provided bentos to attendees and volunteers, with the extras given to a nearby shelter.

In an email a few days after the consecration, Bishop Silva said that Lorraine and her fellow consecrated virgins are witnesses to Jesus "when they proclaim with their lives that no one is more important in their lives than Jesus."

"It is risky to make a public commitment such as a consecration, since we all have our weaknesses," the bishop added. "Yet doing so shows confidence in the Lord more than in oneself, because they trust completely that he will make their witness effective."

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