

# Catholic Sentinel

## Consecration shines light on brides of Christ



Miriam Marston, candle in hand, reads a response as part of the ceremony for consecration to perpetual virginity. The ceremony is ancient, though the rite was revised in 1970 after the Second Vatican Council. (Photos courtesy Nichlas Schaal)

Skyla Chamard, donned in a chapel veil, awaits her consecration to perpetual virginity. (Photos courtesy Nichlas Schaal)

As Archbishop Alexander Sample celebrated Mass for the Ascension at St. Mary Cathedral in Northwest Portland, two women sat before him, ready to be consecrated to perpetual virginity.

The Mass — sparsely populated because of coronavirus restrictions — marked a special day for the local church. There are now six consecrated virgins in the state of Oregon, including Skyla Chamard and Miriam Marston, both consecrated May 24.

The rite was restored in 1970 and the first woman locally to take on the vocation did so more than 45 years ago.

In a nearly empty cathedral, Chamard and Marston, wearing simple white dresses, received their consecration from Archbishop Sample.

The women “will remind us through your form of consecrated life that our true home is in heaven,” he said in his homily.

“Their light in Christ from this day forward as consecrated women will remind us all of the things that are really important,” the archbishop continued.

“What a joy it is for the church to give you this consecration today. I pray that you will live it faithfully, that you’ll be a light shining in the darkness, pointing the way to eternal life with Jesus,” he said to the women.

After their consecration, Chamard and Marston were presented with rings, chapel veils and a book of Liturgy of the Hours. Consecrated virgins are known as brides of Christ. Their life resembles other forms of religious life, but the women do not live in community and are responsible for providing for themselves.

At the conclusion of the Mass, Marston took to the ambo and spoke to all those who were present and watching online.

“The church needs to see a flourishing of vocations if we are to bring the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. That’s a lot of Earth,” said Marston. “And to cover more ground, we’ll continue to need more loving marriages, faithful and joyful priests, merciful deacons, hope-filled religious sisters and brothers. We’re going to need devoted aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, godparents and young adults, just to name a few.

“The humbling truth is that across the different vocations and among the various stages of life, we are all just sinners stumbling along the way, falling into an ocean of mercy. Trusting that we will be caught and that we will be transformed. Trusting that we are never alone or forgotten.”

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