

February 2, 2022

Presentation of the Lord

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

Well, like many dioceses in the United States, the Diocese of Lansing is undergoing a reorganization. Even though this is in the Code of Canon Law, we Americans love reorganizing. My great fear is that the rearranging of things does not lead to the true aim of such kinds of management.

What are the aims? It seems to me that the primary one is to get everyone to heaven by the proclamation of the Gospel. But a most important secondary aim is to have more of us working together, collaborating with one another, to fulfill this mission.

There is a needed intentionality about this. It is easy to get caught up in mechanics and lose sight of the goal. Something similar can happen with our Synodal process. We are to be listening much better to one another and we are to be eliciting the heartfelt views of so many “others” among us. Yet, if we lose sight of why we are doing this, the effort will be in vain. It is to help us better discern the will of God, his desire that all be saved.

What does this have to do with you, my sisters? Well, first of all pray for our diocese and the other local churches of which you are a part, that we will be energetic in our work and always intentional about the mission.

Secondly, the Feast of the Presentation is always a time to consider those candles we carried at our consecration. Were they merely symbols of commitments to be light, not just a light of activity, but a light of God’s own will for us and for every person we encounter.

So, pray and shine and may all that we do serve the glory of God.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Earl Boyea

Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing



Drawing by Marion Biestek

Inside this Issue	Page
President’s Journal	2
Something Ancient – Something New	2
Consecration Announcements	5
Our Priceless Pearl by Diane Farr	6
2021 Convocation Homilies	7
Life Corner	9
2022 U.S. Convocation	9
2022 Information Conferences	10
Anniversary Reflections	12
Announcements	15
Events & USACV-IRC Leadership Team	16

From the President's Journal:

Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD

Consecrated virgins, each mystically espoused to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, treasure the opportunity to pray together. Formal and informal times of prayer during our annual convocations are the lifeblood of our gathering – celebrations of the Eucharist, communal praying of the Liturgy of the Hours, prayer at the opening and close of meetings, presentations, and recreation, and prayer at meals. The *Praenotanda* to the Rite of Consecration of Virgins speaks of our duty of prayer: “joining their voices to those of Christ the High Priest and of his holy Church, they will praise the heavenly Father without ceasing and intercede for the salvation of the whole world.”

It is our duty and our happy privilege to praise the heavenly Father. The nuptial bond of the virgin with Christ is a true marriage, and is thus characterized by the essential properties of unity and indissolubility (canon 1056 of the Code of Canon Law). We join our voices and our whole selves to Christ the Bridegroom and High Priest, in joy-filled praise of the Eternal Father. We join our Divine Spouse in prayer for the salvation of the whole world and in a particular way for all those He has entrusted to us to love in the world.

On January 21, 2022, the Memorial of Saint Agnes, virgin and martyr, consecrated virgins, candidates for consecration, and other friends joined together for a virtual celebration of Evening Prayer. It was a new experience for many of us to pray together virtually, and we will offer the same opportunity on February 5, the Memorial of Saint Agatha, virgin and martyr. Consecrated virgins and friends are warmly invited to join in prayer on a cold February evening.

Something Ancient, Something New

**Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D. and
Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD**

Our Most Blessed Mother and Queen stands at the right of her Son, our divine Lord Jesus Christ. She is arrayed with the dress predicted by the Old Testament: with gold, pearls, and brocade. As we sing Psalm 45 during the Liturgy of the Hours, we invoke the triumph of Jesus Christ and her triumph as Mother and Queen of His Bride the Church. The invocation becomes the clamor of the triumph of their Queen as the beloved virgins on earth hear the loud claps resounding in their souls, as if already in heaven. Our Blessed Mother's title “Queen of Heaven and Earth” makes her the Queen of Virgins in heaven and the Queen of those waiting in joy to be called from earth to heaven.

Psalm 45 sings the glories of the Messiah and His Bride. The Mother of the Bridegroom is the Queen Mother of His Church. The psalmist sings of the resurrected time of the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Lord: “My heart overflows with noble words. To the king I must speak the song I have made, my tongue as nimble as the pen of a scribe” (Ps. 45:1). This is a wedding psalm that concerns a wedding revealed first in the word of the Lord about the wise virgins entering the wedding feast of the Spouse—the kingdom of heaven is a virginal kingdom (Mt. 25: 1–13). The psalm foretells the eternal wedding of the Lamb, as we read in the words of Saint John the Apostle: “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” (Rev. 19: 6–9). John the Apostle heard—he didn't see—and to hear is to be attentive of the voice of the Lord, to follow the Lamb wherever He goes.



This is the image of Mary of Nazareth, the woman of silence, solitude, and service. Throughout her life she was dressed with linen, in robes pure and bright, never abusing the free will she received at her creation, and being marked instead by her obedience to the will of the Eternal Father. She was obedient in silence, listening not to external sounds but listening in silence to the voice of the beloved Spouse of the Church. She was the virginal woman who interpreted the voice of the Eternal Father as He showed her signs of His election upon her to be the mother of His Son—to be, in herself, His new creation of that first woman He had created in Paradise. She was the woman who contemplated the Eternal Father in her early years in the temple and later paid no heed to the voice of the disobedient angel, but listened to the voice of the obedient angel of the Lord. Mary of Nazareth's name, as the name of the sister of Moses in ancient Aramaic, probably meant Princess, or Lady.

Mary of Nazareth was a woman who recognized that the mission given by our divine Lord to the twelve apostles was a mission not to speak about her, but to announce the Word of the Lord, His Good News, in order to evangelize the world. The apostles and other collaborators with Jesus Christ had little time to talk about themselves—their time was spent in teaching and sowing the seed we have received about the Word made flesh, their Master and Lord.

In Cana of Galilee, we hear the sound of the voice of Mary of Nazareth asking for a miracle from her Son to serve the newly married couple, and there the water transformed into wine becomes the symbol of His blessing upon couples in the sacrament of marriage. Wine is a great sensorial sign of the mystery of Jesus Christ's sacramental presence among us. Her Son blessed the wine during the Last Supper and in His blessing, giving thanks to His Eternal Father, initiated the miracle of transubstantiation (Latin: *transubstantiatio*; Greek: μετουσίωσις *metousiosis*): this is the teaching of the Catholic Church, that the substance of the wine is changed (transubstantiated) during the celebration of the Mass into the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

During the Last Supper, Jesus Christ spoke to his apostles about the eternal wedding feast, saying that he would drink no more wine until the consummation of time in the eternal banquet (see Mt. 26:29, Lk. 22:18, Mk. 14:25). With both sacramental signs he announced the mystery of His resurrection and the promise of His second coming, when He will joyfully and eternally celebrate with all His Church in our Father's house in heaven.

We have reflected on the celebration of the Last Supper. As presented in the Gospels, the Last Supper was not the traditional Passover meal celebrated according to the covenant of the Old Testament; rather, it was the Last Supper of our Lord Jesus with His apostles. It was the Passover meal instituted by our divine Lord Jesus Christ as the new covenant, to be celebrated by His Church until He comes again in glory. We read in the Gospel of Luke: "He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God.' Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.' And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you'" (Lk 22: 15–20). (See also Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, Part II. Holy Week: From the Entrance Into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press (2011) 113–144).

The woman of the Magnificat shows total acceptance of her role as the mother of the Messiah. She repeated with a joyful heart the words of other women of the Old Testament who had sung the song of the Magnificat, and she closed the Old Testament with her song, for no other would need to sing it. Her Son would not void the law and the prophets, but would illuminate and fulfill them, as the Messiah announced by the law and the prophets. This song that no other would need to sing again closed with her words: "All generations will call me blessed," because she recognized the power of the Lord's name at this present time – the fullness of time – as He fulfilled the promise of His Son made to Adam and Eve.

Luke was not a direct disciple of our divine Lord Jesus Christ; his Gospel is recognized as having been written after he listened to the experiences and wisdom of our Blessed Mother. The Gospel of Luke reveals Mary during the Annunciation and in the visit to her cousin Elizabeth. In her response to the angel and during her visit with Elizabeth, Mary acted as the

“Daughter of Zion,” an Old Testament title personifying the people of God. In the moment of the Annunciation, she represented all the generations to that time and all the generations to come. The angel’s greeting to her, “Rejoice,” was not a simple salutation but evoked the promises of the Eternal Father for his holy city of Jerusalem: “Shout for joy, daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, daughter Jerusalem! The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior, Who will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, Who will sing joyfully because of you” (Zeph. 3: 14, 17).

Mary of Nazareth, in her title of “full of grace,” is the virgin covered with God’s favor in a mantle of glory. By the excellency of the Divine Lord’s love, she evokes the image of the spouse in the Song of Songs—one of the most ancient representations of the people of Israel chosen by God’s love to be the people in which His Son would fulfill the promise He made after the disobedience of Eve and Adam.

Mary of Nazareth, in her mystical silence, is the virgin who needs not speak, for the Eternal Father had spoken of her since the time of Paradise, through all the messianic prophecies announcing the coming of the Son of God. She was faithful to the Eternal Father who presented her as the Daughter of Zion to be the Mother of His Son.



Mary of Nazareth, in her virginity, discovered that among the people of Israel virginity was not a state reserved only for procreation, but was also a dimension of the essence of the Most Holy Trinity, given to a woman, as it was given in the creation of the virginal Eve, to fulfill the will of the Lord in obedience and eternal love to the will of the Eternal Father. The people at the time of Mary of Nazareth were not listening to the prophets who announced that the Messiah would be born of a virginal mother, but were listening instead to the limited meaning of virginity found in the Book of Judges (11: 37). In the virginal conception of Jesus Christ, we ponder the fulfillment of the prophetic announcement: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Is. 7: 14).

A new fact appeared in Palestine at the time Mary of Nazareth received her call to be the virgin mother of the Son of God. A new vision of virginity appeared with the advent of the Messiah, who is not the product of sexual conception but of the power of God sharing the gift of virginity in His essence, as was given in Paradise. In the Old Testament it is understood that virginity or continence was not a matter of shame; the Essenes of Qumran in the 2nd Century BC were discovered to be the first who practiced continence, with an evident concern for legal purity.

The Spirit of the Lord who guided the creation of the world established in the conception of Jesus Christ the creation of the new world—the eternal world. In His human birth, Jesus Christ opened for all creation the most relevant fact about the Eternal Father’s creation of human nature and procreation.

In an earlier issue of *The Lamp* (see “Something Ancient, Something New,” Sep. 15, 2021), we wrote about the passage in the Book of Genesis which showed that the Eternal Father had to accommodate the decision of Adam and Eve so that they would discover by themselves their disobedience to the plan of creation that the Eternal Father had prepared to show them; but even this was not outside of His plan. In other words, the mystery of liberty or free will was in process and the Eternal Father did not change this process—He only made Adam and Eve aware of the single restriction on their free will. The hagiographer illustrated this restriction in the symbol of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the science created by God for its goodness, and the science deviated by the disobedient angel to the science of evil).

The result of their disobedience was for Adam that he would toil in the soil to earn his daily bread by the sweat of his forehead, and for Eve that she would have pain in childbearing (see Gen. 2: 17; 3: 16-19). The Mother of Jesus Christ did not disobey, and Jesus Christ became man in her virginal womb under the same plan that the Eternal Father had created for the virginal Eve, without breaking the physical seal of her virginity, and without pain.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in his commentary on the Song of Songs, wrote of this reality:

Among the myriads of men born of Adam, succeeding him as long as his nature will continue through successive births, only [Jesus] came to light through a new way of being born. Nature did not collaborate at all in bringing that birth about; it was solely at the service of that birth. For this reason [the Song of Songs] says that he who is bright and ruddy (cf. Song of Songs 5:10) from having dwelled in this life in flesh and blood is the only one, among all the myriads of men, to have been chosen as the fruit of virginal purity.

His conception did not result from the union of two humans; his birth was not polluted in any way; there were no labor pangs; his bridal chamber was that of the power of the Most High, which covered virginity like a cloud; the bridal torch was the splendor of the Holy Spirit; his bed was a personal condition devoid of vices; his nuptials were incorrupt.

He who is born in such conditions is justly considered to have been chosen from among all the myriads of men; this means that he did not exist because of the marriage bed. In fact, his birth alone occurred without labor pains, and he alone began to exist without sexual relations. Indeed, for her who remained incorrupt and who had no knowledge of such relations, the word ‘birth’ does not seem appropriate, because virginity and birth do not go together.

As the Son has been given to us without a father, so the Child has been born without a birth. As the Virgin herself did not know how the body that received divinity was formed in her own body, so neither did she notice the birth. Even the prophet Isaiah affirms that her giving birth was without pain, when he says: ‘Before the pangs of birth arrived, a male child came forth and was born’ (Is. 66:7).

Therefore, he was chosen to introduce a twofold innovation into the order of nature, since he did not begin to exist because of sin, nor was he born in pain. This happened for an understandable reason; there is nothing absurd about it. Just as she who introduced death into nature by her sin was condemned to bear children in suffering and travail, it was necessary that the Mother of life, after having conceived in joy, should give birth in joy as well. No wonder that the angel said to her, “Rejoice, O full of grace!” (Lk. 1:28). With these words he took from her the burden of that sorrow which, from the beginning of creation, had been imposed on birth because of sin. (Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Song of Songs* 13; PG 44 in Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press (1999) 158–159)

Consecrated virgins living in midst of this age have the privilege to meditate on what our Blessed Mother knowingly and willingly declared to the angel: that her first vocation, received from the Eternal Father, was a vocation of perpetual virginity. She lived in the midst of a culture in which there was no separate life for a woman who received the gift of a virginal vocation. She trusted in the Eternal Father’s call upon her to be a perpetual virgin. When the Angel Gabriel announced to her that she was called to another vocation, she understood that her first vocation was perpetual. She wanted to obey and at the same time she was certain that she had first received a vocation to virginity. Mary of Nazareth, the woman of silence and service, clarified her vocation with the angel and the angel revealed to her that in her virginity the Spirit of God would create motherhood in her, and through her *fiat*, her *yes*, to her calling, the Eternal Father would restore what He had created in Paradise. Our Blessed Mother was illuminated when the Angel spoke of the Holy Spirit and maternity. She knew from that very moment that the Virgin Son of God would make her the perpetual Virgin Mother of His Church.

Consecration Announcements

We are not aware of any virginal consecrations in the United States since the December 12, 2021 issue of *The Lamp*. Please keep us updated on consecrations that occur so that we can announce these solemn and joyful events! Along with the announcement, we welcome the submission of photos from the consecration and a brief reflection from the new consecrated virgin, for publication in *The Lamp*. The newly consecrated are also encouraged to send memorabilia from the consecration to the USACV archivist, Anne Gishpert.

Upcoming Consecrations

February 5, 2022 (St. Agatha)

Christine Pinheiro

Diocese of Peoria (IL) at the hands of
The Most Reverend Louis Tylka.

St. Mary's Cathedral,

Peoria (IL),

at 10:30am.

All are warmly invited to attend.

February 11, 2022 (Our Lady of Lourdes)

Amy Roza

Diocese of Orlando (FL), at the hands of
The Most Reverend John Noonan.

Annunciation Catholic Church,

Altamonte Springs (FL),

at 3:00 pm.

All are warmly invited to attend.

September 15, 2022 (Our Lady of Sorrows)

Elma L. Espinoza

Diocese of Fresno (CA), at the hands of

The Most Reverend Joseph V. Brennan.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Mendota (CA),

at 5:30 pm.

All are warmly invited to attend.

The consecration is scheduled to be live streamed on the parish

Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/guadalupechurchmendota>

Our Priceless Pearl

Diane Christine Farr
Diocese of Rochester (NY)

On February 2nd we celebrate the world day of consecrated life. Each form of consecrated life is unique and has its special place in the Church. We should consider as no small matter the extraordinary grace we have been given as consecrated virgins. This day is a good opportunity for us to pause and reflect on God's mercy toward us and our response. This passage from the prophet Hosea is often used to describe a call from God: "Therefore behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her." (*Hosea 2:14*)

We may say that Jesus has brought us into the solitude of contemplative love and spoken to our hearts. We have been taken up into the beautiful mystery of holy virginity and found our identity in the love of our supreme Lord and Bridegroom. We have been enveloped in His eternal light and placed as beacons in His Church.

It has been said that Jesus Christ bestows upon his bride the Church, three gifts: The gift of all He possesses; the gift of His name; and the gift of Himself. As we come before our holy Spouse as His brides, we recognize our own nothingness in order to receive and be filled with His own divine qualities. His own characteristics must be woven into the pattern of our lives. We pray to acquire His own temperament in all of our dealings with others. We carry the beauty and power of His holy name within our hearts and on our lips. We are humbled and honored to be known as brides of our Lord Jesus Christ. We desire to see His name praised and glorified. We find our joy and our peace in this holy name of Jesus. We are proud to bear the name Christian. As Christians and as brides of Christ we cannot receive a greater gift than Jesus Himself. Our true happiness and fulfillment are found only in Him. We can't begin to comprehend all that He is for us. Our gratitude in being chosen to be consecrated virgins is immense. We have discovered our priceless Pearl in our beloved Jesus. His presence fills the virginity of our whole being, for He has drawn us to Himself. We may echo the sentiments of the servant of God, Luisa Piccareta. She said of Jesus: "He is my highest good and it is He who forms my whole life."

Indeed, our Divine Lord wishes to be the foundation and the fullness of our lives. In every circumstance we should invite Jesus into the present moment along with His grace and healing presence. He knows our needs and is bigger than any situation we face. Many of us live with disabilities and debilitating illnesses. But we are no less important to His plan and the fulfillment of His divine will. We place our trust in Jesus and His divine providence. Our Lord's divine strength and eternal wisdom are often manifested in the concrete support we give and receive from others.

Jesus also gives us the gift of His sacred wounds which mirror the interior suffering of His soul. These five wounds of love are still visible in His resurrected state. The gift of His sacred heart is our dearest treasure.

Each person has a particular value to God and each vocation has its specific purpose. The day of consecrated life focuses on those who are totally consecrated to God and the service of His Church.

The Holy Trinity is glorified in a particular way by consecrated virgins. As brides of Christ, we pray for the gift of true divine wisdom in all that we do. We are images of the church as brides, and we strive to maintain communion with Jesus our heavenly Bridegroom. Our perpetual state of virginity is an anticipation of the eternity of heaven. We desire to dwell in the unity of the light of the divine will and carry this light with us everywhere. We go out to meet the Bridegroom in prayer and in addressing the needs of others. We will finally, at the end of our pilgrimage, go out to meet and embrace Him who is our priceless pearl. We read in the rite of the consecration of virgins: "Be wise; make ready your lamps, behold the Bridegroom comes, go out to meet Him."

2021 Convocation Homilies

The homilies on the virtues of St. Joseph, delivered by Father David Whiteside during each of the Masses at the convocation, were so insightful and well received by those in attendance that they are being included in *The Lamp*. The first homily was in the September 2021 issue, the second and third homilies were in the December issue, and the fourth and fifth homilies are included in this issue.

July 5, 2021, Fourth Homily: St. Joseph's Interior Life of Contemplative Prayer

We are reflecting on the keys to St. Joseph's greatness. So far, we have looked at his virginal love, his silence, and his detachment from all created things. Today let's take a look at another key to his greatness, namely **his interior life of contemplative prayer**. In our first reading today we have one of our great patriarchs... Jacob. Both Jacob and Joseph seem to have something in common. God speaks to both of them in their sleep. In the Gospels, God spoke to St. Joseph in his dreams four different times. I remember back in the seminary whenever we were tired and were going to take a nap, we would say to each other: "Well, I am going to do my St. Joseph devotion." Meaning I am off to take a nap and let God speak to me in my dreams...

In our first reading today, Jacob has a dream in which he sees a ladder reaching from earth to Heaven with God's angels ascending and descending upon it. This dream reminds me of the miraculous staircase of St. Joseph in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Perhaps you have heard of it? So in Santa Fe the Sisters of Loretto operated a girl's academy and it had grown to the point that they needed a larger chapel for all the sisters and the students. They began construction in 1873 and it took five years to build. Shortly after the chapel was built the man they had hired for the project died. The problem was that he had not constructed a stairway from the floor of the chapel to the choir loft. The sisters, not knowing what to do about it decided to pray a nine-day novena to St. Joseph, asking him to send them someone who would build the staircase. On the ninth day of the novena, a man mysteriously showed up at their door and offered to build the staircase for them. He had no wood with him and only a few very basic tools. He asked only that he work alone and behind closed doors. After three months, the man was finished but suddenly disappeared. No one knew who he was, where he came from or where he went. He had built a vertical, spiral staircase that was a beautiful, masterful, architectural wonder! The spiral staircase has no center support or load-bearing column. The man left without being paid and so in an attempt to track him down in order to thank him and pay him for the project they went to the lumber yard to get his information there. The owners at the lumber yard said no one had come there to purchase wood for their staircase and they had no idea who the sisters were talking about. Years later studies were done on the miraculous staircase and the studies showed that the wood used for its construction is a type of Spruce tree only found in Israel!



Miraculous staircase
in Santa Fe

Both Jacob's ladder and St. Joseph's miraculous spiral staircase remind me of the contemplative ascent of the soul to union with God. Due to the extraordinary graces and exalted vocation and mission that St. Joseph had received from God we can say with certainty that St. Joseph was a man of a deep interior life and lofty contemplative prayer. In the same way that his virginal heart longed to be one with Christ night and day, so too St. Joseph kept a contemplative gaze upon the mystery of the Word made flesh night and day, whether he was at work or at rest.

In our first reading today, Jacob laid his head upon a stone which he called: “God’s abode.” If we interpret this passage from a typological point of view, it is obvious the stone is Christ (our Rock) the abode of God. If you think about it, sleep is a striking image for prayer. When we are sleeping, we are quiet, still, at rest, vulnerable, and in a state of complete surrender. When we pray, we have the same dispositions: quiet, still, at rest, vulnerable and surrendered. Perhaps this is why in the Gospels we see God speaking to St. Joseph in his sleep... This describes his disposition towards God in his soul, in his prayer and in his life. Through this disposition, St. Joseph ascended the ladder and staircase of contemplation. He will help us ascend too. Remember the words of St. Teresa of Avila yesterday: “If anyone cannot find a master to teach him how to pray, let him take this glorious saint as his master and he will not go astray.”

Through the beautiful example and powerful intercession of St. Joseph, let’s frequently rest our heads on the stone which is the abode of God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, giving Him our loving attention in quiet stillness and vulnerable surrender. Good St. Joseph, Guardian of Virgins, pray for us!

July 6, 2021, Fifth Homily: St. Joseph’s Patient Suffering

We have been looking at the keys of St. Joseph’s greatness. So far, we have looked at his virginal love, his silence, his detachment from all created things, and his interior life of contemplative prayer. Today, on the final day of our retreat, let’s take a look at yet another key to St. Joseph’s greatness... **his patient suffering.**

Once again in our first reading at Mass we have our holy patriarch, Jacob. In our reading today we see him encountering God at night in the dark. He wrestles with God in the dark until the Lord gives him a blessing. The struggle between Jacob and the Lord eventually leads to a wound and a blessing. This is what happens we encounter God in prayer in the darkness of faith we struggle and wrestle with Him. Eventually this encounter, if we persevere, will lead to the blessing of a deeper union with God that comes from a wound of love inflicted upon us by God. The act of surrender to His Will and His love feels like a woundedness in our soul and leads to a deeper union with Him.

This was true for St. Joseph. We can be tempted to think that St. Joseph did not suffer much in his life, since most of his life (in Nazareth) with Jesus and Mary appeared to be quiet and tranquil. However, quite the opposite is true. The Lord chastises those whom He loves. We know that the more graces given to a particular soul, the more suffering will be required by God for that soul. St. Joseph received more grace than any other person (after Our Blessed Mother) in order to fulfill his exalted mission and vocation as the foster-father of the Son of God. Therefore, he must have suffered more than any other saint (after Our Blessed Mother). It’s just that most of St. Joseph’s suffering was interior suffering, hidden suffering not seen by others. Remember, the purer one’s soul is, the more acute is the experience of suffering. Such was the experience of St. Joseph.

From the moment St. Joseph became the foster-father of the Word made flesh, he felt the burden of his lofty vocation: taking care of, providing for and protecting the two greatest treasures ever in the history of the world... Jesus and Mary. From wrestling with Mary’s conception of Jesus to being forced to provide only a poor cave for the birth of the Son of God; from witnessing the murderous hatred of King Herod for Jesus to being forced into Egyptian exile for several years with Jesus and Mary; from losing Jesus in the Temple for three days and witnessing Mary’s distress over His loss, to struggling to provide for his family and living daily in poverty; but worst of all were the words of holy Simeon that echoed in St. Joseph’s heart concerning the sword of sorrow that already pieced his and Mary’s hearts concerning their beautiful son and confirmed by the prophecies of Scripture... Jesus would suffer more in his life and in His passion than St. Joseph could possibly imagine or fathom. This thought was a daily and continual suffering for him. St. Joseph’s most pure and therefore sensitive soul suffered a deep indescribable wound of love for Jesus and His future passion.

Like Jacob, St. Joseph had to wrestle in his heart and soul with God in the darkness of faith with the great responsibility that he had been given. Like Jacob, it also left St. Joseph feeling wounded, but a woundedness that led to a deeper union of love with God. All the sufferings that the Holy Family endured (the cave, the exile, the finding in the Temple, their poverty, the reality of the Cross) ultimately brought them closer together into a greater intimacy.

It is the same for us! It was the same for Maria Goretti and all the saints. Patient-suffering is an opportunity for greater intimacy with God. The devil, however, wants to make our sufferings into obstacles rather than opportunities. The devil knows that patient suffering leads to union with God. This is why St. Joseph is the “Terror of Demons.” The demons could not break his patient suffering. He was too pure... too good. St. Joseph is offering us this lily, this gift of patient suffering today. Maria Goretti offered it to Alessandro 14 times in his dream and it transformed his life! If we accept this lily of patient suffering from the hand of St. Joseph it will transform us too!

It's okay to wrestle with God. In fact, we must if we want to grow in holiness. Like Jacob, Joseph, Maria Goretti and all the saints keep wrestling and don't let go until He blesses you with the gift of intimate union that only the wound of patient suffering can give. Good St. Joseph, Guardian of Virgins, pray for us!

Life Corner

Florence Sundberg
Archdiocese of Hartford (CT)

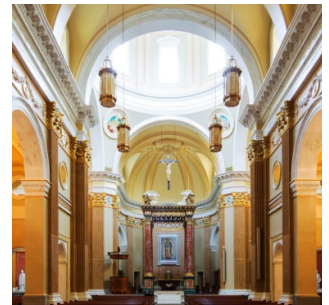
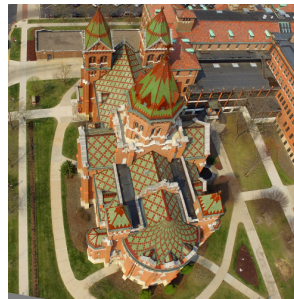
I have been struggling with what to write. People around me are struggling while trying to lead honest and meaningful lives but feel they are not doing enough, as do I, as millions of babies continue to be slaughtered and war seems imminent and we feel helpless. Theodore Roosevelt said something that encouraged people who were losing hope, losing faith, and I believe many are feeling this way today. I share this with them along with my prayers. Not only are lives at stake but the soul of America is darkening and a beacon of light is needed and we must be that light and that hope in Christ and with Christ. Let us not fear to walk out into the darkness and lead others to Christ who is our light and our only hope, even when we are criticized for doing so. *"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."* Theodore Roosevelt

2022 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

Save the Date:

Our 2022 Convocation is being planned for **June 24 – 28** in **La Crosse, WI**. We will be staying at the Franciscan Spirituality Center in downtown La Crosse, home to the famous chapel of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Mary of the Angels (Maria Angelorum) Chapel in St. Rose Convent, consecrated in 1906, serves as the place of prayer for the sisters

Take a virtual tour: www.fspa.org/content/chapel.



The majority of our daytime programming will be held at the beautiful nearby **Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe** built in 2001 by His Eminence Raymond Cardinal Burke. Explore the shrine and grounds: www.guadalupe Shrine.org



Our theme this year is tentatively set as "Communion in the Bride of Christ." Suggestions for specific conference topics are welcome. We hope to reflect on this theme in its many dimensions, such as: communion as exemplified by our spousal devotion to the Eucharist; sisterly communion among members of the *Ordo virginum*; and communion within the wider Church, which we are called to image in a special way as brides of Christ.

American consecrated virgins, consecrated virgins from other countries, and candidates for consecration who have previously attended a USACV information conference are all warmly invited to attend. More details, cost information, and registration forms to come soon!

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

The USACV is pleased to host the 2022 Information Conference in a virtual format once again. Conference team members found that this format was very beneficial to women interested in this vocation from all across the United States and other English-speaking countries, since there are no travel expenses involved. The conference includes prayer together, personal testimonials from consecrated virgins, and times for questions and answers in addition to core presentations on the life of consecrated virginity lived in the world.

As hostess of this event, I encourage anyone with a serious interest in finding out more about the vocation of consecrated virginity, or who is pursuing the consecration as an applicant or candidate, to attend this conference. Also invited are diocesan delegates for consecrated life or other diocesan personnel involved in the preparation of virgins for consecration, as well as consecrated virgins themselves who seek to deepen in their vocation and to assist those preparing for consecration.

Virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity

Save the Dates: Friday to Sunday, **July 29–31, 2022**

Time: 1:00 to 6:00pm EDT each day

Format: Webinar

Coordinators: Mary Kay Lacke and Judith Stegman

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*
- ◇ Mystically Espoused to Christ, the Son of God
- ◇ Living in the World and in the Local Church
- ◇ Personal Testimonies of the 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

Registration information to come. To pre-register or express interest in attending, please contact info@consecratedvirgins.org. Resources available in online store at consecratedvirgins.org.

Dra. Magalis Aguilera, Arquidiócesis de Miami

El Centro Internacional de Recursos (IRC) para el Ordo virginum se complace en anunciar una Conferencia de Información virtual 2022 en español. La conferencia seguirá el formato que ha sido utilizado con éxito en conferencias anteriores de información en inglés, con miembros del equipo de América Latina y los Estados Unidos. La conferencia incluye oración conjunta, testimonios personales de vírgenes consagradas y tiempo para preguntas y respuestas, además de presentaciones centrales sobre la vida de la virginidad consagrada vivida en el mundo.

Como anfitriona de este evento, animo a cualquier persona que tenga un interés serio en conocer más sobre la vocación de la virginidad consagrada, o que esté pretendiendo la consagración ya sea como solicitante o candidata, a asistir a esta conferencia. También están invitados los delegados diocesanos para la vida consagrada u otro personal diocesano involucrado en la preparación de las vírgenes para la consagración, así como las propias vírgenes consagradas que buscan profundizar en su vocación y ayudar a quienes se preparan para la consagración.

Conferencia informativa virtual sobre la vocación a la virginidad consagrada

Reserva la fecha: Sábado, y Domingo, **Marzo 25–27, 2022**

Hora: de 13:00 a 18:00 hora Argentina

Formato: seminario web

Coordinadoras: Magalis Aguilera y Maria Luisa Meza

Los temas que presentaremos:

- ◇ Visión de Conjunto de las Vocaciones en la Iglesia Católica, y Identificación Eclesial del *Ordo virginum*
- ◇ El Rito Litúrgico de Consagración y la Dimensión Mariana de la Vocación
- ◇ La Liturgia de las Horas y la Vida de Oración de la Virgen Consagrada
- ◇ Aspectos Históricos de la Consagración de Vírgenes; Vírgenes Santas
- ◇ Sagrada Escritura y Testimonio del *Ordo virginum*, en *Ecclesiae sponsae imago*
- ◇ Desposada Misticamente con Cristo, el Hijo de Dios
- ◇ Viviendo en el Mundo y en la Iglesia Local
- ◇ Testimonios Personales- La Vida de las Vírgenes Consagradas del Equipo Servidor
- ◇ Madurez Psicológica para vivir la Vocación Virginal
- ◇ Prerequisitos para la Admisión a la Consagración Virginal
- ◇ Etapas de Preparación para la Admisión al *Ordo virginum*
- ◇ Sobre las Asociaciones, el *Ordo virginum*, y siguientes pasos

Para información o expresar interés en asistir, comuníquese con info@consecratedvirgins.org.

Para inscribirte en la conferencia, haz click en este enlace: [Inscríbete en la conferencia virtual informativa 2022.](#)

Consecration Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2022 are invited to submit an anniversary reflection (and current photo) for one of the 2022 issues of *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*.

Anniversary Reflection: 25 Years

Cherri Benzin

Diocese of Buffalo (NY)

Consecrated April 8, 1995

(Cherri's silver anniversary was in 2020 and we include her reflection now)

I spent several years exploring local religious orders before seeking out the vocation of consecrated virginity. In the end, I came to the conclusion that God was not calling me to religious life, and in resignation I told Him, "If you want me, come and get me. I am done looking!" That was all He needed.

That was the late 1980's. There was no internet and no USACV. Yet despite this fact, articles and information about our vocation seemed to fall in my lap! I reached out to our then bishop, Bishop Head. He was very kind and supportive of my request for consecration. There were, however, many obstacles during the path of my formation. Like Our Lady at the Incarnation, I accepted this in faith, even though the road was rocky.

After persevering for over seven years, my consecration took place on April 8, 1995. It seemed appropriate to me that I would be consecrated during Lent. My suffering, like Christ's, was culminated with my "Easter" and the joy of being espoused to my Beloved. In the 27 years that followed, three more women have been consecrated in the Diocese of Buffalo.

I'm retired now and am able to enjoy peace and quiet with my Divine Spouse. Like Our Lady, I trust God for what the future holds.

Anniversary Reflection: 15 Years

Helen Qua

Diocese of Metuchen (NJ)

Consecrated February 10, 2007



"My Vocation is Love." *St Therese of Lisieux*

It seems like just yesterday that I was discerning how I could serve God and neighbor, with all my weaknesses and limitations, and considering that I am not in the medical field. Not knowing how, I had difficulty finding my path in serving God. It seemed to me that as an introvert and in my profession, I was not capable of doing many of the apostolic works or ministries. I went through detours in searching for the Father's will for me.

A scripture passage that strikes me is "In God's will is our peace." I prayed and asked God for a strong personal relationship with Him. In His goodness, love, mercy and generosity, God called me to be His bride, unworthy as I am. Through the

intercession of our Blessed Mother and the Little Flower, I found my vocation. Like St. Therese, in the Church, my "vocation is love." A few years back, one of the previous delegates for religious in my diocese told me that I can stop searching for an apostolic work; she affirmed that what I was doing already on a one-to-one basis is a ministry: the ministry of the presence.

I am forever grateful to God for the bountiful graces He has bestowed upon me through this garden of my soul. I have found peace through the ups and downs of life, knowing and trusting that Jesus is my Divine Spouse and is beside me at all times.

By God's grace, I have been spending a lot of my time on Bible Studies for several years. I now understand Jeremiah when he said, "When I found God's Word, I devoured it." I am filled with so much joy getting to know God more and more through Scripture and spiritual reading. As my way of life, I want to know Him deeply so I can love Him more and more each day, and I thank God He has given me the interest to delve into His Word. It is a treasured place of encounter with our Lord and Divine Spouse. God calls us to a devotion to the Word of God, to be focused on His Word and reflecting on it daily, a practice which renews our priesthood as the people of God. In order to be successful and faithful as part of the people of God, I resolve to make the Word of God prominent in my life.

Anniversary Reflection: 10 Years

Gail Ann David

Archdiocese of Kolkata (India)

Consecrated March 25, 2012



"I found Him whom my soul loves"
(Song of Songs 3:4) The Search the find!

The most beautiful thing that happened to me is my consecration to Jesus. I always found that there was something missing in my life and that was Jesus. The search was always there and at last I got my calling in the year 1994 while I was working as a teacher in a convent school. From that day onwards, my search had ended. I found the most beautiful treasure, the rarest pearl that I was seeking and I did not hesitate to sell all that I have to possess this pearl of finest quality. (Jesus Himself!)

The past ten years have slipped away quickly. During these ten years I have grown closer to Jesus. Every day, every moment, I find something new. My life is now more meaningful as I try to live my consecration to the fullest by prayer, works of mercy, and apostolic activity. I tell myself that I am a living tabernacle carrying Jesus in my heart and within myself. I must carry Him to everyone I encounter and spread his love.

There were times of trials and temptations within these 10 years but I overcame them with the help of my Spouse Jesus. I was happy as I triumphed over each of them jubilantly (life is not smooth as you know). I hope in the near future I live to see my silver jubilee with my spouse before I leave this earth. I thank the Lord for my vocation and am grateful to Him for this generous gift to me. I kiss my wedding ring after every Holy Communion which reminds me that I belong to Him and I keep repeating, "Jesus I love you," throughout the day every time I remember. I am filled with joy to know that I am a bride of His!

Anniversary Reflections: 5 Years

Jen Settle

Diocese of Orlando, FL

Consecrated February 2, 2017



Today is the fifth anniversary of my consecration. What a JOY to have been Consecrated on the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life! My consecration feels like yesterday, but at the same time, it feels like my life before consecration is a distant memory. I love my vocation and have seen my heart expand in ways that I couldn't have even imagined. All of that happening because of the deep and abiding love of our Bridegroom. He knows the places in my heart in need of deeper healing and the places where my heart has a greater capacity to receive His love. I have been so grateful for the Lord placing women discerning our vocation into my path and asking me to journey with them. It has been such a joy in my life to see the Lord calling women to our vocation - calling them to Himself. One such woman is Amy Roza, from the Diocese of Orlando, who will be consecrated on February 11, 2022. What a joy it will be to stand next to her as her mentor and friend to see her lay down her life for her Bridegroom! Please pray for her! The last year has been filled with many changes, as I moved from Philadelphia to Orlando and am now working from home in a new position with the Theology of the Body Institute in Philadelphia as the Director of Ongoing Formation. I've been with TOBI for 13 years and am looking forward to bringing Pope Saint John Paul II's catechesis to priests, seminaries, and religious communities. Upon receiving me into the Diocese of Orlando last year, Bishop John Noonan asked me to be the Delegate for Consecrated Virginity in the diocese, so I pray that our vocation can grow here! Our Bridegroom will not be outdone in His generosity toward His brides! Please know that I keep you in my prayers and pray that our Bridegroom is caring deeply for your heart.

Karen Paschke

Diocese of Madison, WI

Consecrated February 11, 2017



I can't believe that it's been five years. Sometimes it seems like yesterday and sometimes it seems like I've always been a consecrated virgin. Neither one feels like five years. There has been nothing normal about the time and I can measure it off by big events. Cancer. A badly broken arm. Covid. Teaching school online. Teaching school in a world of masks, contact tracing, and quarantine (so much better than online!). Yes, those are my five years. But through it all my confidence in my love from and for God has only increased.

I have been listening to Father Mike Schmitz's Bible in a Year Podcast. Admittedly I'm on Day 199 and it's from last year. But through listening to Father Mike reflect on events big and small makes me better able to see God working in my life. There have been big events . . . see the list in the previous paragraph. But God's love can also be seen when you enter early morning Mass in the dark and exit seeing a glorious sunrise. And then finding out that no one else seemed to notice the sunrise that morning.

As far as an update about my day to day life, it's been quite stable. I teach mathematics in a public high school in Madison, Wisconsin. I work with RCIA, which I have done since I came into the Church 12 years ago. I ring handbells with a community choir. I'm planning a trip to Arizona for spring break and a trip to Oberammergau, Germany this

summer. And on February 11, I will buy a bouquet of white roses, the same flowers from my consecration, and put them on my desk at school and marvel at their beauty and the creative love of God.

Announcements

2022 USACV Membership Drive

Thank you to all who have registered during our 2021 membership drive. We are so appreciative of your support and encouragement for the vocation to consecrated virginity. Once again in early spring (probably mid-March) we will begin our 2022 membership drive. Details will be coming in the weeks ahead. – Francesca Riddick, USACV Section Membership Chair

Congratulations to Bishop Boyea

Congratulations to our Episcopal Moderator, Bishop Earl Boyea, on his election to serve as chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations (CCLV). This is an appropriate time to add a word of thanks to him for his support and encouragement of consecrated life, and specifically his active support for the *Ordo virginum* in the United States. We look forward to his presence with us at our June convocation in LaCrosse.

Virtual Evening Prayer, February 5, 2022

Virtual celebration of Evening Prayer on the Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr, February 5, 2022, at 8pm EST. If you would like to participate, please email Joani McCann, joani.mccann@gmail.com. The USACV-IRC sponsored virtual Evening Prayer for the Memorial of Saint Agnes, Virgin and Martyr, on January 21, and many found it a great blessing to pray together in this way.

Upcoming Issues of *The Lamp*

May 31, 2022	Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
September 8, 2022	Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
December 12, 2022	Our Lady of Guadalupe
February 2, 2023	Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

Submissions Accepted

Consecrated virgins are invited to submit articles, artwork, or reflections for consideration in a future edition of *The Lamp*, please email:

info@consecratedvirgins.org.

We accept articles and artwork related to our vocation of consecrated virginity, Our Lady, and the virgin saints.

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. This will also enable United States virgins to be full voting members of the USACV. Anne also keeps our “family” albums, which include mementoes from consecrations. Consecrated virgins are encouraged to send programs, invitations, holy cards, photos, or other items from your consecration for these precious albums. Contact Anne at anne.gishpert@gmail.co. The “family” albums travel each year to our convocation and always bring smiles and memories.

Volume 3 of *Ordo Virginum*

Shalina Stilley is leading the effort to complete work on the third volume of the USACV series, *Ordo Virginum— The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Virgins in the Catholic Church*, which will cover the lives of virgin saints who lived out their vocation in the world, and not as part of a religious order. If you are interested in helping, or would like more information on the project, please contact Shalina at: catherinestilley@gmail.com.



Our Lady of Protection
Shannon Ryan

Upcoming Events

2022 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins Living in the World
Sponsored by the USACV
June 24-28, 2022
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
LaCrosse, WI
(See Page 9)

2022 Virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World
Sponsored by the USACV-IRC
JULY 30-31, 2022
(See page 10-11)

Conferencia Virtual sobre la Vocación a la Virginidad Consagrada
Patrocinada por la IRC por la Ordo Virginum
En Marzo 25-27
(Referencia la pagina 11)



St. Agatha, Pray for Us

United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins
PO Box 442170
Miami, FL 33144

USACV
www.consecratedvirgins.org

Email: info@consecratedvirgins.org
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USACV and International Resource Center for the *Ordo Virginum*

Leadership Team Members and Officers

USACV Leadership Team

Emily Byers 2021-2023; Diocese of Lafayette (LA). (*Secretary of the USACV-IRC and USACV Online Presence*)
Francesca Riddick 2022-2024; Diocese of Joliet (IL). (*USACV Membership and eTapestry*).
Joan McCann 2022-2024; Archdiocese of Boston (MA). (*Convocation Liaison*).
Elizabeth Lam 2020-2022; Diocese of Oakland (CA). (*USACV Website*).
Jenna Cooper 2022-2024; Archdiocese of New York (NY).

IRC Leadership Team

Magalis Aguilera; USA, Archdiocese of Miami (FL).
(*Conferencia Informativa en Espanol*)
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. (*Conferencia Informativa en Espanol*)
Renu Rita Silvano; INDIA, Archdiocese of Bombay.

Two Unfilled Positions

Other USACV-IRC Services, among others

Karen Webb 2021-2023; Treasurer of the USACV-IRC; Diocese of Rochester (NY)
Mary Kay Lacke; Coordinator, Information Conference in English; Diocese of Steubenville (OH)
Anne Gishpert; Archivist; Diocese of Pueblo (CO)
Florence Sundberg; Prayer Chain Coordinator; Archdiocese of Hartford (CT)
Judy Kvasnicka; Publication of *The Lamp*; Diocese of Salina (KS)

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV