

September 8, 2022 — The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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

I recently saw a sign saying BLM, Both Lives Matter! In this post-Roe world, it will fall to all of us to be most attentive to the truth and beauty of this phrase and to manifest that understanding in love.

Thinking about this and your state in life, it occurred to me that you, as spouses of Christ, are to be so very attentive to your spouse and to the fruitfulness of your espousal. Why? Because that is what Christ, your spouse, is most attentive to. A wonderful way for you to imitate that attentiveness is to exercise your own loving concern for both lives, the mother and the unborn and then born child.

Each of us will, of course, do this in different ways. However, I urge upon you to seek a significant way to demonstrate that love which Christ has for you and that he has for the mother and child.

Certainly, pray for a change of hearts in so many who are willing to disregard the truth which we hold about the sanctity of all life. This is a long-range prospect. In addition, then act now to assist those in most need, the least of our sisters and brothers.

Sincerley yours in Christ,

+ Earl Boyea

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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

Every single man is enlightened in the waters of the Baptismal fountain with gifts, and among these one considered essential to walk in the way of an integral life of perfection is wisdom. The Church bestows baptismal gifts because the Holy Spirit's mission is to give life; we were in original sin like death, with our free will separated from God's will. The Holy Spirit rebirths in us the theological gifts of faith, hope and charity, and gives also the cardinal virtues of practical wisdom (prudence), justice, courage, and temperance.

Baptism opened to us the revelation of God's new life in man, created in His image and likeness. "The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord" (CCC 1831).

"A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God" (CCC 1803).

The universal call is to live the life of Jesus Christ who with his mortal life, passion, death, and resurrection, opened for us what the Holy Scriptures constantly teach us: "What we utter is God's wisdom: a mysterious, a hidden wisdom. God planned it before all ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age knew the mystery; if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:7-8).

The sublime vocation of Christianity is a vocation in which the person begins a process of re-discovering the presence of God in his inner

being, in the depths of his soul where the essence of the eternal family in the Trinity dwells in him. It is a process to discover what is part of his creation—to have a dialogue with the Eternal Father who created him in a state of original innocence. John Paul II notes that in the innocence of Adam and Eve, they were able to dialogue with God who would visit them in the garden. "The laws of knowing correspond to those of being. It is impossible to understand the state of historical sinfulness without referring or appealing (and Christ appealed to it in Mathew 19) to the state of original (in a certain sense, "prehistoric") and fundamental innocence. Therefore, right from the beginning, the arising of sinfulness as a state, a dimension of human existence, is in relation to this real innocence of man as his original and fundamental state, as a dimension of his being created in the image of God." (John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, USA: Pauline Books & Media, 1997, pp. 32-33).

Our most Blessed Mother and Queen of Virgins lived the wisdom of the state of innocence of creation that she received in the immaculate conception of her being in her mother's womb. Her vocation of perpetual virginity was inspired in her, as it is in any vocation, by the Holy Spirit. It was precisely the Holy Spirit's shadow which covered Mary of Nazareth during the Annunciation and gave life in her virginal womb to the Son of God.

She accepted to become the Mother of God's Son and her process of obedience to the Eternal Father's will begins with her *fiat*. She embraced the wisdom of God in her innermost being created by God with all the power of His image and likeness, even as Eve had received the same but didn't embrace it. Mary of Nazareth grew in the knowledge of the love that God holds

for his children who were living in the consequence of original sin.

She offered her Son, Whom the Eternal Father had given to her maternal care, knowing that His life, passion, death and resurrection would return us to the state of innocence. The gifts of God that were lost as a consequence of original sin, would be restored by her Son's conquering of death for us, and are the mystical weapons to defeat the devil. She accepted suffering during the passion of Jesus Christ her Son because she knows we would return to eternal life, participating in the eternal joy of the Eternal Kingdom of God: "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Vocations in the Church that have a special witness to that revelation of "what God has prepared for those who love him" are a great honor that not one of us deserves, though our YES to the call is a humble acceptance of that great honor.

The vocation of consecration in the *Ordo Virginum* is a powerful sacramental because through the rite of consecration of virgins it is the Church who consecrates a virgin through the Bishop's ministry. With the rite of consecration the Church herself gives testimony of her own vocation as "spouse of Christ." At the moment, the Bishop gives to those that he is consecrating symbols that teach them about their spousal decision: the ring, and the book the Church uses for the Liturgy of the Hours. The veil is the strong symbol of "desponsorium" (betrothal) with the same Spouse of the Church. The Bishop, representing the Church as spouse of Jesus Christ, addresses the newly consecrated virgin with these words: "Dearest Daughter, receive the veil and the ring that are the insignia of your consecration. Keep unstained your fidelity to your Bridegroom,

and never forget that you are bound to the service of Christ and His Body the Church."

Every single Christian is called to live the gifts received in his baptism. The consecrated virgin is a baptized and her vocation is to live the spirituality of our Most Blessed Mother, for Christ alone, and to be a witness of the Church as His spouse. She is also witness to Christ's wedding feast with his Church in eternal life.

The spirituality of our Blessed Mother is reflected with the words spoken by the Church to the virgin in consecration: "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" (homily, Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity).

The baptismal gifts from the Holy Spirit are renewed as a stronghold of the virginal vocation for a woman living "*in saeculo*," in her century, that is, in the ordinary circumstance of her time, space and work. The Church says to the virgin in consecration: "The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, through Baptism has already made you a temple of God's Glory and children of the Father. Today through our ministry He anoints you with a new grace and consecrates you to God by a new title. He gives to each of you the dignity of being a bride of Christ and binds you to the Son of God in a Covenant to last forever."

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

Living in *saeculo*, that is,
in the Ordinary Circumstances of Life

Over the years, consecrated virgins have often discussed what it means that we “live in the world,” as Christ Himself, and our Blessed Mother, lived in the world. We find ourselves quickly differentiating “living in the world” from “being of the world.” It’s interesting to take a closer look at the origin of the label “living in the world,” and whether there may be a better descriptor of this reality for the *Ordo virginum*. The words “living in the world” come from the English translation of the lines in the *Praenotanda* (pre-notes) to the Rite of Consecration that address who it is who may be consecrated. *Praenotanda* #3: “Ad consecrationem virginalem admitti possunt sive moniales sive mulieres vitam saecularem agentes,” translated in the current (2012) English edition of the rite as: “This consecration may be received by nuns or by women living in the world.” *Moniales* is Latin for “nuns,” and *mulieres* is translated “women,” thus either nuns or women *vitam saecularem agentes* may be admitted to virginal consecration. Is “women living in the world” the most fitting translation of *mulieres vitam saecularem agentes*? Is “women living a secular life” an accurate translation? Key to answering these questions is the meaning of the Latin word *saecularis*.

Latin-English dictionaries give a sense of the meaning of *saecularis* that is more nuanced than the English word “secular” or our connotation of “living in the world.” The *On-line Latin dictionary* defines *saecularis* as: 1) of or belonging to saeculum, century, generation; 2) of Roman century games and hymns; 3) secular, of the world not of the church; 4) ecclesiastics not members of order; 5) gentile. *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*: relating to a saeculum or age: ludi, secular games (celebrated at intervals of about 100

years). *Charlton Lewis An Elementary Latin Dictionary*: adj of a saeculum: a race, generation, age, the people of any time; of time, a lifetime, generation, age; a hundred years, century, age. *Leo Stelten Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*: of the world, secular, temporal, worldly. Saeculum: time, period, age, lifetime, indefinite period of time, century, world, worldiness.

In the context of the *Praenotanda*, the word *saecularis* is used to distinguish and describe those women who are not nuns but who are, nonetheless, eligible to receive the consecration of virgins. In light of the above definitions, it seems clear that the phrase *mulieres vitam saecularem agentes* refers to women who are not living in monasteries or religious houses but instead are living in the ordinary society of the current age. It refers to women living a virginal life within the society of the current age—whatever that age may be—as the early Christian virgins lived, not separated in monasteries or religious houses.

Neither “living in the world” nor “living a secular life” seems the most worthy translation of *vitam saecularem agentes*, when read in the context of who can be consecrated. “Living in the world” too easily connotes living a worldly life, or at least a life that is not distinguished from the life led by those in the world about us, and “living a secular life” by definition refers to a life lived in contrast to a life which is sacred (see Fr. John Hardon's *Modern Catholic Dictionary*). This same understanding is conveyed by the consilium charged with drafting the revised rite of consecration after Vatican II.

Is there a better descriptor in English? We can take a clue from the English translation of the Instruction *Ecclesiae sponsae imago* #6, which does not use the term “living in the world” or “secular,” but instead keeps the Latin *in saeculo*: “Either nuns or women living *in saeculo*, that is, in their ordinary circumstances of life, may be admitted to virginal consecration.” Likewise, ESI #4 refers to consecrated virgins as living “in the social setting within which they remain inserted.”

By Florence Sundberg

Archdiocese of Hartford (CT)

Upon learning of this alternative phrasing, a number of us consecrated virgins have begun making reference to the *Ordo virginum* as “living in *saeculo*” or “living in *saeculo*, that is, in the ordinary circumstances of life,” rather than as “living in the world.” What do you think? Consecrated virgins living in this age and time live in *saeculo*, as the first Christian virgins thousands of years ago, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, lived in *saeculo*, following our Divine Spouse wherever He leads and presenting Him as Spouse to a world hungering for His love.



Attacks against human life, at every stage of development, have been growing bolder and more determined since Roe was returned to the States. It is surreal to think that we, in a civilized country, are even discussing this: when, where and how can we terminate the lives of human babies? Although I have been pro-life for so long, I never realized fully what 'abortion' is, what actually happens to a living baby during an abortion, especially when carried out just before a healthy, live birth. Then I watched the film: "Unplanned" about the woman, Abby Johnson, who helped to create the "40 Days for Life" Campaign. How can we fight against such an evil agenda? Only by going deeper in prayer in union with Christ and His Church. When I feel lost and discouraged, I just follow what Jesus said to St. Peter, encouraging him to go out into the deep, to put down his nets and to try again. To never ever give up! (Which was a motto adopted by Winston Churchill during World War II when all seemed hopeless.) We are at war against the principalities and powers of Satan who is unwaveringly determined to destroy lives created by God Himself. Those who stand with the Creator of all life cannot remain on the sidelines, must not remain on the sidelines! We are espoused to Jesus Christ, and therefore we are the spiritual mothers of His children and we are called to nurture and defend and protect our children in prayer and in action. When I feel discouraged or helpless or even afraid at times in the face of such powerful and overwhelming evil, I call to mind the suffering and the words of our blessed Martyr, Archbishop Romero, when he could not defend his people or alleviate their suffering: "Lord, I can't! You can. Lord, I can't! You must!" And of this I am sure: He, our blessed Lord Jesus, will! He will! And I, for my part, must do whatever He asks of me, as must we all even at the cost of our lives, as Jesus did.

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV
www.consecratedvirgins.org

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

**Email: info@consecratedvirgins.org
president@consecratedvirgins.org**

www.consecratedvirgins.org

Consecration Announcements

June 24, 2022 — Alycia Oswald, Diocese of Steubenville (OH), at the hands of The Most Reverend Jeffery M. Monforton.



Consecration Announcements:

The USACV invites dioceses and candidates for consecration to send announcements of upcoming consecrations, so that we can publish these in *The Lamp* and in a bi-weekly e-newsletter that is

circulated among the consecrated virgin members of the USACV. Of course, after a consecration, we are also pleased to publish the announcement and photo(s) in *The Lamp*.

Upcoming Consecrations

United States:

September 15, 2022 — Elma L. Espinoza, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Mendota, CA, at 5:30pm, Diocese of Fresno (CA), at the hands of The Most Reverend Joseph V. Brennan. All are warmly invited to attend. The consecration is scheduled to be live-streamed on the parish Facebook page at facebook.com/guadalupechurchmendota.

October 5, 2022 — Catherine May Webb, at Cathedral of Saint Peter, at 10am, Diocese of Wilmington (DE). All are warmly invited to attend. Reception will follow in the courtyard. RSVP by September 29, 2022 to astrohminger@cdow.org.

June 16, 2023 — Mary Rose Rynda, at Church of the Immaculate Conception in Lonsdale, MN, at 3pm, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minnesota (MN). All are warmly invited to attend.

Canada:

October 1, 2022 — Holly Garnett, of the Military Ordinariate of Canada, at the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception (Diocese of Kingston), at 2pm, at the hands of The Most Reverend Scott McCaig. All are warmly invited to attend.

The Mass and Our Interior Life

By Diane Christine Farr
Diocese of Rochester (NY)

Here are a few thoughts on how we may enter more deeply into the profound and sacred mysteries we encounter in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The spiritual life has often been described as having three stages or phases. These are the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive way. These phases can clearly be seen as we move through the different parts of the Mass.

As consecrated virgins, we are grateful to be able to avail ourselves of every opportunity to participate at Mass and enter into everything our Beloved Jesus has done for us. On a personal note, I am thankful to be able to join the weekday EWTN Mass by means of my Kindle.

As we enter into the majestic beauty of the liturgy, we endeavor to guard against a mechanical recitation of the prayers and responses. Sacred music lifts our hearts and prepares our souls to enter into a deeper union with our Beloved Jesus. The Holy Mass begins with a Penitential Rite recalling the purgative element of the spiritual life. As Brides of Christ, we ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us any ways in which we have failed in fidelity to God's Will and perfect charity. We hand ourselves over to our Divine Lord that He may purify us and clothe us in His own holiness.

He is always at work in the depths of our souls. With His abundant grace we strive to keep our focus continuously on Him that we may respond generously to this grace. We reflect with gratitude on the many ways God has revealed His Mercy in our lives.

As we sing the Gloria we are reminded that we are called to imitate the purity of the angels as we seek to give God glory through our sacred vocation. As we sing our praises, we recognize that all we possess is a gift from our Sovereign Lord. We will

find that even our weakness and littleness will serve God for His greater glory allowing His power and strength to work in us.

As we come to the readings from Sacred Scripture during the Mass we think of the illuminative element of our spiritual lives. It is important for us to get rid of all disturbances and discouragement before we can be enlightened by the Word of God because these things take up room in our souls. They are like the clouds that cover the rays of the Sun of the Divine Will.

Jesus wishes to see the divine qualities adorning our souls making them fit for heaven. As consecrated virgins, we have been espoused to the Divine Word Himself. We have become *Sponsa Verbi*, a spouse of the Word. We pray that we may be receptive, listening to this Word at every level of our being. Our Heavenly Bridegroom wishes to bring us into a continuous communion with Him. As we hear the spoken words of scripture, we respond with the heart of a bride to her King and her God. It is God's own strength and wisdom that we will find in Sacred Scripture in times of suffering and challenge. It is with a contemplative heart that we prayerfully consider its meaning for our lives.

As we recite the Creed, we enter deeply into the mystery of the Incarnate Word, pondering the reality that we possess a Bridegroom both human and divine. Professing our faith reminds us of these words taken from the homily of the rite of the consecration of virgins: "Preserve the fullness of your faith, the steadfastness of your hope, the single-heartedness of your love."

As we offer prayers of intercession, prayerfully gathering intentions in our hearts, we also recall these words from the homily: "Through you the Church's motherhood of grace bears its abundant fruit."

As we come to the Liturgy of the Eucharist we are reminded of the unitive phase of the spiritual

life. We are drawn into a closer union with our Divine Lord as we offer our lives with Him to the Eternal Father. With the singing of the Sanctus, "Holy, Holy, Holy," we ponder the omnipotence and profound sanctity of the Most Holy Trinity. We pray to be able to recognize God's glory around us and in our lives. It has been said that we are never closer to our loved ones who have gone before us than when we are at Holy Mass. So this closeness should serve to strengthen our courage as we face life's difficulties on our journey towards heaven.

As we reflect upon the words of the Eucharistic Prayer we ask the intercession of all the saints, especially the choir of virgins. We have many sisters in heaven who have inspired our love for Jesus as our Divine Bridegroom. They will surely assist us as we seek to live lives that perfectly fulfill the Divine Will.

At the Consecration we make an act of profound adoration. It is with fixed attention that we perceive that we are in God's Holy Presence. We allow the meaning of the words of the Consecration to sink deep into our hearts. It is with wonder and awe and humble gratitude that we come to understand that Jesus has given Himself completely for us in a personal way.

Our beautiful vocation is a tremendous gift merited for us by our Holy Spouse. It is with courage that we bear our share of the cross as we offer our own lives in union with Jesus to the Heavenly Father for the benefit of our brothers and sisters. Mindful of God's Mercy towards us, we desire to emulate Jesus' own generosity of spirit as we reach out to others.

As we pray the Our Father we give thanks that He has chosen us to be espoused to His Son. Our whole desire is to see His Will perfectly fulfilled on earth as it is in Heaven.

As we pray the Agnus Dei - the Lamb of God, we reverently ask Jesus to cleanse us from the

least shadow of sin as we prepare to receive Him in Holy Communion. He wishes to surround us with the awareness of His perennial peace that will overcome any difficulties we may face. As Jesus has given Himself completely to us, He wants us to hand ourselves completely over to Him with absolute confidence and trust.



Artwork by Marion Biestek

By Dr. Renu Rita Silvano, STD
Archdiocese of Bombay (India)

(A reflection on Genesis chapter 3)

We, consecrated virgins living in the world delight in our public relationship with Jesus Christ as “bride of Christ”. A bride receives much joy, strength and wisdom when she hears the bridegroom’s voice and listens to his words of comfort and togetherness. We, consecrated virgins must attune our minds and hearts to the life-giving words of Jesus spoken in the Gospels and written by the different evangelists and apostles in the New Testament. If we never take time out to read the sacred Scriptures, we will never truly grow in our knowledge of the will of our beloved Lord. St Jerome teaches that, “If, as the apostle Paul says, ‘Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God’, then he (she) who is ignorant of the scriptures is also ignorant of the power of God and his wisdom: ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”

And we do not want to be ignorant of our closest kin, our beloved Bridegroom and Saviour Jesus, the Lord.

“What does this text mean for me?” is the most vital question we ask when we read a biblical passage. So, taking as my point of departure the fact that many biblical texts can be difficult to understand, I wrote a book (256 pages) in Mumbai in 2004, “*Seeking Jesus in the Old Testament*,” which was also published in the USA by *Our Sunday Visitor* in 2006. In it I set myself the task of

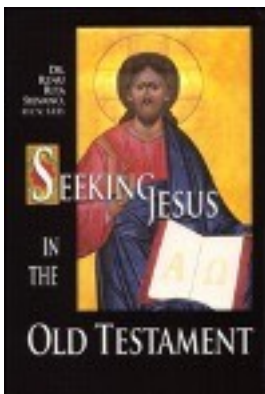
commenting on several passages from many books of the Old Testament, to offer assistance for the reading of those texts. My inspiration for the book came from the words of Jesus, “...*everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and*

the psalms must be fulfilled.” Hence, my primary objective was to ensure that Holy Scripture in its entirety can become a life-giving Word of God, and that the reader, and especially the “bride of Christ”, “*will go to the Sacred Scriptures and discover the face of Jesus shining through its pages*” (cf. *Introduction*).

This objective is not new; the question as to how far the Old Testament can also be the “Holy Scripture” of Christians has intrigued Christian theologians from the beginning. The result of their wrestling with this issue is well known: an interpretation of the Old Testament *in the light of the Christ event* created the conditions for the incorporation of virtually the entire text of the Jewish Bible into that of Christians.

An important interpretive criterion of the biblical exegesis of the first Christian centuries (Patristic exegesis) was the conviction that the Bible in its entirety was written “for us” and that it must “make sense”. A principle of Patristic exegesis – above all with respect to difficult passages – was that of the interpretation of the Scriptures *through the Scriptures* (cf. Origen, *HomGen* 2, 6). This principle is already practised in the New Testament itself, e.g. in passages where St. Paul interprets the Old Testament christologically.

It is this very principle that my book employed. Its subtitle announced “A Christocentric contemplative reading of Old Testament texts,” hence a reading of selected passages *in the light of the Christ event*, and rooted in the personal faith-experience of the author. While my book did not set itself the goal of being a scholarly and exhaustive treatise on the Old Testament, nevertheless, care was taken to use Catholic principles of biblical interpretation. The Christological reading of the texts and the basic effort to enable the letter of the Bible to become the Word of God are precisely among these Catholic principles of interpretation which I



took as my guide. My book therefore offered a personal, pastoral reading of the Bible, with the hope that when it is read, *"Seeking the face of Jesus"* would help to create a thirst for the Word of God, and guide each reader's own dialogue with the biblical text.

In this excerpt from the book, I look at some verses from Genesis chapter 3:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (3:15).

"The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (3:20).

"God placed a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (3:24).

These texts can point to Jesus! He is the seed of the Woman, he becomes the tree of life, and the bride's desire is for him, the King. These texts also apply to Consecrated Virgins!

1. JESUS AND HIS MOTHER

It was the Son (*seed*) of the Virgin Mary of Nazareth who, in fact, bruised or crushed the head of the serpent by his paschal mystery of death and resurrection. (The last enemy that Jesus destroyed was death – see 1Cor 15:26).

Jesus addressed Mary as Woman. At the very beginning of his public ministry and the manifestation of his glory, Jesus said to his mother at Cana, *"O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come"* (John 2:4).

Jesus called her "Woman" again when his hour had come and he was hanging on the cross: "Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near. He said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!'" (John 19:25-27)

The hour of Jesus, the new Adam, is closely linked with the hour of Mary, the new Eve, the mother of all the living. When the hour of Jesus

came (John 13:1), when Jesus was glorified on the cross, he gave his mother her definitive mission, that of becoming the mother of all his disciples, that is, of all the living, of all those who believe in him. Thus, we are her children and she is our Mother.

On the other hand, when the serpent tempted Eve she looked at the tree and its fruits for her own pleasure (Gen 3:6), and accepted the half-truth told her by the serpent, *"You will not die... you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* Unlike the New Eve Mary, the first Eve, looked only to her own personal benefit.

The Good News tells us about the Angel of the Lord bringing God's message to Mary (Luke 1:26-38). All his words about the child to be conceived in her womb are for the good of all humankind, and not just for Mary's personal benefit. She has found favour with God to bring into the world his Son who will save the world. So, the angel told her, *"you shall call his name, Jesus"* [saviour] (Luke 1:31). And Mary gave her consent in faith not just for herself but for the salvation of all humanity.

Jesus is the seed. He is the grain of wheat that dies and bears much fruit. Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:23-24).

We learn from the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, that Jesus, the seed, having fallen into the ground and died, is now for us **the tree of life**. We see the beautiful river of life flowing and "on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:2). There is also Jesus' earlier allusion, "To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Rev 2:7).

Consecrated virgins who truly believe in Jesus, are called to follow his example and, like seed, to die in order to produce much good fruit, expressed in their fidelity to live as committed virgins and practice love of neighbour by their life of constant prayer and good deeds of mercy.

2. RELEVANCE TO CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

“To the woman God said, ‘...your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you’.” (2:16b).

This text from Genesis usually has been understood as words of reproach and physical punishment for Eve, because she had listened to the serpent's voice. But as I meditated on these words I thought of the reality of my own experience of the rule of my Beloved in my life, namely, the Lordship of Jesus in my life. It dawned on me that these words of God touched not only the physical but also the spiritual dimension of every believer, who is a member of the Body of Christ, and which in turn is the Spouse of Christ.

Indeed, for every Christian who professes that Jesus is Lord, listening *in the Spirit* to these words of Genesis can be a liberating experience. Let me explain: my favourite address to Jesus is “My Beloved and my Lord!” Yes, I desire him at every moment of my life. “*My soul thirsts for him as a dry weary land without water*” (Ps 63:1).

I am a consecrated virgin who longs for Jesus the Beloved, and for his rule in my life. Only he can fulfill me. I keep repeating many times in the day, “Lord, your kingdom come, your will be done in my life.” There is nothing more for me to desire than his words and his instructions, they are “more to be desired than gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb” (Ps 19:10).

It was not always like this. There was a time in my life when I sought my own will in a quite foolish and self-centred way. But in his loving kindness,

Jesus met me one day and breathed his Spirit into me in a new way. He made me taste the sweetness of his love and the goodness of his words. He continued to form my mind, my will, my speech over the years, till now I can say that there is a mutuality between us, my desire is for him and his desire is for me. “*I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me*” (Song of Songs 7:10). Jesus has led me out of darkness into his wonderful light. Hence, his rule in my life is my desire, and my desire for him helps me overcome obstacles to my spiritual growth and fruitfulness. While I know that I am still not perfect, “*I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me*” (2Tim 1:12).

The rule of Jesus does not oppress or violate my rights, as the rule of people in this world does. In fact, because he rules me I can be free and know that I am protected from all that is harmful for me. Behold, his rule or Lordship has made me bloom.

The Church is the Bride of Christ. Each of us is a member of the Church, the body of Christ. Together as a community of the faithful, we constitute the Bride of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the animating force, the spark that kindles our desire for Jesus. For “*no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit*” (1Cor 12:3b).

The perfect example of the beloved who was totally open to the rule of God in her life, and whose sole desire was for God and his will, is Mary the Mother of Jesus and our Mother. She is the New Eve. May she accompany us every step of our lives, sharing with us her great desire for Jesus and for the full coming of his Kingdom!



Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2022 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*.

If you would like to submit an anniversary reflection, please email it to info@consecratedvirgins.org.

20 Years

Francesca Riddick, consecrated
December 1, 2002,
Diocese of Joliet (IL)

“Be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” Romans 12. This verse by St Paul I think sums up the graces of my consecration these past 20 years. I often repeat this verse to myself when things are difficult and the light on the journey has grown dim as it does through the ups and downs and sudden turns of life. Yet as I look back in hind sight, the Lord has truly been the light that uncovered some of the untruths that I have believed about myself and others. This has led me to a transformation, bit by bit into His wonderful light. Now that I am older, I feel I am enjoying the peace and integration that comes through just living life with God in the truth of who I am and who He is. Life has become much simpler and more imbued with deep meaning. Trust, surrender, receptivity, are some of the words that describe what this grace has taught me. At the center of it all is Jesus Himself who brings to fruition my own lived experience of maternity. Whether at school with my students, or interacting

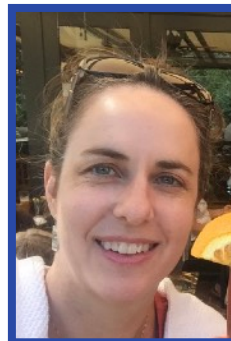


with my neighbors, or visiting family members or friends, I have a deep sense that I am not alone. May the Lord Jesus be praised for his great mercy!

20 Years

Shalina Stilley, consecrated September 14, 2002,
Diocese of San Diego (CA)

It's hard to believe it's been two decades since I was espoused to our Beloved. It's so true that the older we get, the faster time seems to go by. One way of trying to make sense of this is to realize that when you are one year old, one year is 100% of everything you know, but when you are one hundred, one year is only 1/100th of everything you know. I think this makes sense when it comes to chronological or clock time.



But there is also another way of making sense of it. The older we become, the closer we (hopefully) get to the beatific vision, where we will be face-to-face with Jesus. And the closer we get to the beatific vision, the more we live in Kairos time, qualitative time, or Christ's time, in which the present “now” becomes the central focus. So why does time fly when you celebrate twenty years of espousal to Jesus? I suppose because time comes to be more about being in the present, at the feet of the Lord with Mary, and less about yesterday, today, and tomorrow. So, I pray that time will continue to fly in this way and that all my Chronos time will give way more and more to Kairos, Jesus time.

15 Years

Florence Sundberg, consecrated June 15, 2007,
Diocese of Hartford (CT)

Once upon a time a group of friends came together to share. We spoke of many things during dinner and then, at some point, consecrated

virgin Elizabeth Lee began to speak about her journey towards becoming a consecrated virgin living in the world. I'd never heard of such a thing. I had been a lay missionary for years in Haiti and then in Calcutta with Mother Teresa and I had spent time in Rome staying as a guest of a Community of Benedictine Nuns in Trastevere while I traveled around Rome and Assisi, but I had never heard of the vocation of women being consecrated virgins and then remaining in the world to live among the people, doing ordinary work, living as ordinary people do, wearing no Religious Habit, taking no vows. I had been asked by the Benedictine Community to type up and print out the Ritual of the Ceremony of Consecration for the family of the Nun being consecrated. Reading and typing out the Rite of Consecration kind of took my breath away because it offered me a glimpse of something incredibly beautiful - almost sublime - and I'd never heard of such a thing. Although I felt drawn to Benedictine life, I wasn't sure I could live in a cloister or follow a set of strict rules.

During our conversation at dinner that night when Beth spoke about the vocation of the consecration of a virgin 'living in the world', I was intrigued but it wasn't until later on that evening when everyone left and I stayed behind to help clear up that a philosophy professor who was also at the dinner, he asked me to leave everything and just to sit down for a bit. So, I sat down and there was a prayerful silence between us and then he looked at me and said simply: "What about you?" In that moment there was a palpable stirring within me, piercing my soul and bringing clarity and peace and I knew without doubt that the Holy Spirit had spoken: "This is your call!" And I said yes.

I was consecrated a virgin living in the world on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His Presence, His Heartbeat, His love have grown within me ever since and this Heart, our Heart, reaches out to the suffering and the wounded, the unloved and the unloving and enfolds them in a loving embrace to bring about in them healing and wholeness and a sense of purpose and belonging and that is as it should be because Jesus is ours and we are His and His spousal embrace brings forth and generates new life in every person we meet and in every situation and I have experienced this so many, many times in the years since my consecration and for this I am deeply grateful. And I am grateful to the USACV which holds us in the process of becoming all Christ calls us to be even as we hold and encourage each other while proclaiming the good news of this precious vocation to all who are called but know not what to do to respond to the call. May we follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we go forth in and with Christ our Spouse to make His Presence and His love known to all our brothers and sisters in Him.

10 Years

Christina Hip-Flores,
consecrated July 24, 2012,
Archdiocese of Santiago (Cuba)

I celebrated my 10th anniversary of consecration in the *Ordo Virginum* on July 24th, in Santiago, Cuba. The country is traversing severe economic and social difficulties – the perfect storm of adverse circumstances: Covid-19, oil embargo, and demographic exodus, among others. Nevertheless, I decided to celebrate with what little



Anniversary Reflections

there was available. My Archbishop was kind enough to make one of his four scheduled masses for the day a special one for me. In front of the parish community, I stood before him and renewed my intentions made at the scrutiny: “Are you resolved to persevere to the end of your days in the holy state of virginity and in the service of God and his Church? Yes, I am! Are you so resolved to follow Christ in the spirit of the Gospel, that your whole life may be a faithful witness to God’s love and a convincing sign of the kingdom of heaven? Yes, I am! Are you resolved to accept solemn consecration as a bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Yes, I am!” And the people responded, “Thanks be to God!”

I had spent a few days before my anniversary on retreat, meditating on this scrutiny. Have I lived what I promised on that beautiful day ten years ago? Have I really been a convincing sign of the Kingdom of Heaven? How can I live my consecration more intensely? I finished my retreat with a renewed sense that consecration in the Order of Virgins is both an invitation and a challenge, a path of holiness to be forged not just in the initial, exhilarating “yes!” but every day thereafter.

Due to widespread power outages, the electricity had been cut off during most of the Mass but came back right on cue so that my consecration song could be played after Holy Communion. Back home after Mass, my parish community accompanied me in a traditional Cuban celebration of roasted pig, rice and beans, and plantains. In the midst of very severe shortages and adverse social conditions, the Lord blessed me in so many ways. He made my anniversary truly joyous; He gave me a wonderful bishop; He surrounded me with the love of my friends and family on this special day. I marvel at how the Lord continues to lead me with cords of human kindness, with ties of love (Hos. 11:4). He does not let Himself be outdone in generosity.

How can I repay the Lord for all the good He has done for me? I will offer You a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord. I will

fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people... (Ps. 116).

5 Years

Jennifer Sergio, consecrated
November 18, 2017,
Diocese of Lafayette (IN)



Thanks be to God for nearly 5 years of being a bride of Christ. It has been a good journey. I get to encounter Jesus daily in my work as a physical therapist and meet people who are face-to-face with their own pain and weakness. It is a privileged place and encounter. This is not only my work but my primary opportunity to minister to others in all walks of life. I work with people who are practicing Catholics, no longer practicing, active in another Christian community, or those who don’t know our Lord. Our vocation allows me to encounter them in a non-threatening way because they don’t know who I am and aren’t automatically defensive. I have had many beautiful and sometimes painful conversations with people who may never set foot in a church. I also specialize, as a therapist, in working with people who have various types of cancer, some of whom are very near the end of their lives. Again, it is good to bring Jesus into that time in their life in whatever way they are open. I am grateful for Jesus call to me, to all of us, and I look forward to many more years, blending into eternity.

2022 Information Conference

Mary Kay Lacke, Diocese of Steubenville (OH)

The 2022 Information Conference on the *Ordo virginum* was held virtually during the afternoons of July 29, 30, and 31. Forty-four people attended the conference, including inquirers and candidates from 29 different dioceses, as well as consecrated virgins and diocesan personnel working with candidates for the vocation.

A special thanks to Magalis Aguilera, Bishop Boyea, Karen Bussey, Mary Kay Lacke, Maria Luisa Meza, Renu Silvano, and Judith Stegman for their presentations on various aspects of the vocation; to Magalis, Mary Kay, Maria Luisa, Renu, Emily Byers, Jenna Cooper, and Claire Halbur for offering testimonials about life as a consecrated virgin, to Julie Radache for her assistance in the role of conference "conciierge," and to Claire (and Miara Cash) for sharing their gifts of song to begin each day and to close each day with Vespers.

Feedback from attendees has been positive. Here is a sample: "The webinar was a great help to me and gave me a deeper appreciation and understanding of the sacred vocation to give one's virginity as well as one's whole self to our Beloved Lord. I really enjoyed hearing the testimonies of other consecrated virgins as well as the history of this sacred vocation. I just wanted you to know I really learned a lot and I'm grateful I was able to participate. Please keep me in your prayers as I continue my walk with our sweet Lord toward this sacred vocation. May God's will be done in me and may our Blessed Mother shield all consecrated virgins with her mantel of grace."

Attendees expressed true appreciation for each of the presentations. A talk that was revised this year was "Psychological Maturity for Living the Virginal Vocation," by Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D. The presentation was a profound study of the meaning of maturity in an integrated human person living a life of virginity, and was highly regarded by participants. Another talk was changed this year due to a change in presenters: Dr. Renu Silvano, STD, pre-recorded her excellent presentation, "Scripture

and the Witness of the *Ordo virginum*, in *Ecclesiae sponsae imago*." Consecrated virgins would appreciate the depth of both of these talks, as well as others from the Information Conference.

Recordings from the conference will be available soon.



Artwork by Marion Biestek



Artwork by Margaret Flipp

Save the Date: 2023 Convocation

Tentative plans for the 2023 convocation: June 23-27 in Flagstaff, Arizona (Diocese of Phoenix), with a convocation team led by Claire Halbur, Joani McCann, and consecrated virgins and candidates of the Diocese of Phoenix.

Convocation theme "The Voice of the Bridegroom." Planning is underway for all the expected convocation highlights, centered around times of prayer with our Divine Spouse.

We plan to stay at conference facilities at Northern Arizona University, and make visits to nearby attractions, including the historic Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Chapel and Sedona's Chapel in the Rock. Consideration is being given to adding an optional extension day to visit the Grand Canyon. Flagstaff has its own airport just minutes from NAU. An alternate major airport is Sky Harbor in Phoenix, which is 3 hours away by a scenic mountain drive.

Consecrated virgins and candidates who have attended a previous Information Conference are invited. An interest survey will be sent soon so that we can get a preliminary estimate of how many will be able to attend.

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*).

Joani 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). (*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.

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 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 Great Falls-Billings (MT).

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV
www.consecratedvirgins.org

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 information conference, and always bring smiles and memories. You can email Anne at anne.gishpert@gmail.com.

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp

December 12, 2022 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

February 2, 2023 Feast of the Presentation and
World Day for Consecrated Life

May 31, 2023 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

September 8, 2023 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

Submissions Accepted

If you would like to submit an article, artwork, or a reflection for consideration in a future edition of *The Lamp*, please email it to 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.

2022 Fall USACV Election

Elizabeth Lam's first term as a member of the USACV Leadership Team ends December 31, 2022. She has agreed to serve another three year term if members confirm her in the election this fall. All USACV members are invited to put forward your name as a candidate for a leadership position. Please contact Francesca Riddick if you are interested.

2022 Membership Drive

Francesca Riddick, Diocese of Joliet (IL)

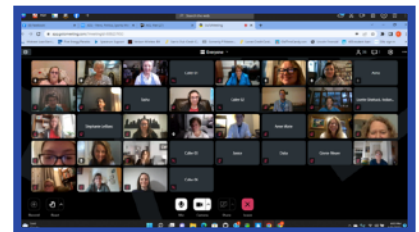
We kicked off our 2022 membership drive this March. Thank you to all who have already registered. The generosity of our members is truly inspiring and we thank you for your support. Those of you who were able to give a little or a lot more than the base dues, please know that others are being helped through your generosity. If you haven't yet registered in 2022, please do so soon so that you continue to receive *Monday Morning Mail* and have the opportunity to vote in the fall election.

Volume Three 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.

Pray With Us! Update

Many consecrated virgins and candidates from various parts of the world prayed together during virtual Vespers on Monday, August 15, 2022. Thanks to Joani McCann and Claire Halbur, especially, for making it happen. It is always good to pray together.



2022 Recordings Update

We're working now on making recordings from the virtual sessions of the 2022 Convocation and 2022 Information Conference available without charge to those who attended the respective conferences in person, or virtually. The recordings will also be available for purchase through our online store at consecratedvirgins.org.



2022 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

Joani McCann, Archdiocese of Boston (MA)

Twenty-one consecrated virgins and ten candidates attended the June 24-28, 2022 Convocation at The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, La Crosse, WI. Forty-one registered to participate in some of the live-streamed sessions, including virgins from Australia, Canada, El Salvador, France, Guam, India, Ireland, Kenya, the UK, and many from the US. We stayed at the Franciscan Spirituality Center in downtown La Crosse and spent most of our days at the Shrine. This year's theme was:



"Communion in the Bride of Christ."

Together, we reflected on the idea of "communion" in its various meanings: communion as membership in the Church, which is the Bride of Christ; communion with Jesus in the Eucharist; and sisterly communion within the *Ordo virginum*. Fr. David Whiteside spoke about "Keeping Our Lamps Burning Bright." Jenna M. Cooper, JCL shared an informative segment on "Communion in *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago*." Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD spoke about "The Ecclesial Identity of the *Ordo virginum*." The Episcopal Moderator of the USACV, Bishop Earl Boyea, shared scriptural reflections on the writings of St. Paul.

Each evening we had some kind of fun event. Jenna Cooper was our game show host for Catholic Jeopardy. Taryn Watkins presented her artwork and a discussion. Our amazing and talented Virginia Meyer organized our talent show and led us in a group performance.

In the midst of all of our 'planned events', there were many opportunities for prayer and community. We prayed Morning and Evening prayer together, and Bishop



Boyea or Fr. David Whiteside celebrated Mass for us each day. Claire Halbur once again beautifully prepared the liturgical music for Masses and the Liturgy of the Hours. We prayed the Stations of the Cross at the beautiful hill side walk at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We shared in the adventures of hiking (or catching a ride) up the hill each the day to the Shrine Church and a picnic at a beautiful and serene spot on the Mississippi River.



Comments from attendees (note: Names and dioceses are indicated only for consecrated virgins and candidates whose consecrations are scheduled)

Shannon Ryan, Archdiocese of Portland: "I was able to attend [virtually] some snippets of the convocation and I really enjoyed Vespers. That venue seems like a very holy and reverent one! I do very much look forward to hearing the classes, which I missed."



Candidate Mary Rose Rynda, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, "I am so grateful for having come to the convocation last month! It was so good to be around like-vocation ladies!"

Eileen Belongea of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee (WI): "It is a joy to be at the convocation, we have enjoyed beautiful prayer, uplifting Liturgy, encouraging talks and shared stories about the lived experience of our vocation."

Elizabeth Black of the Diocese of Grand Rapids (MI): "I have been so joyful to pray in

2022 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

common with fellow virgins and to hear the unity of our prayer in song.”

Carolyn Blaszczyk of the Diocese of Harrisburg (PA): "The convocation has been a wonderful opportunity to form and rekindle relationships with other virgins and enjoy the beauty of this lovely Shrine.”

Several attendees commented on Fr. David's presentation:

Karen Bussey of the Diocese of Lansing (MI): "Fr. David gave us kind encouragement in how to lean upon Jesus' heart, which keeps the light burning in our soul.”

Anne Gishpert of the Diocese of Pueblo (CO): A few quotes from Fr. David's talk on mental prayer that touched my heart:

conversing with God in silence and solitude of the soul - thinking of Him and giving Him our loving attention; loving the Lord ardently from the heart - not just in the words spoken; make my will one with God's Will:

one heart, one will with God.

Francesca Riddick of the Diocese of Joliet (IL): "Here is one of my favorite quotes from the talk of Fr. David on 'Keeping Our Lamps Burning Bright': Mental prayer is conversing with God in the silence and solitude of our soul. Thinking of Him and giving Him our loving attention.”

A candidate from Arizona: "What a gift to delight in the Lord together! I have been profoundly touched this weekend with a sense of the concrete reality of God's grace and creativity with each heart, and the joy of witnessing to Him. He longs for such deep union with each one of us. What a gift to receive Him. Please pray for me

as I continue in my candidacy, that I may be faithful and attentive to His grace!”

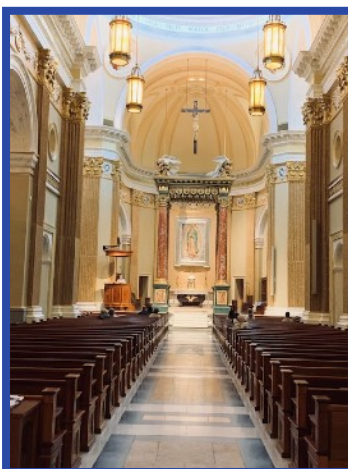
Lauren Gault of the Diocese of Pittsburgh (PA): "This is my first time at a convocation, and it has been a very fulfilling and affirming experience. The Liturgies have been the most significant part for me, but I feel like all of the talks, prayers, and sharing of the faith and life experience has been brought to the altar as an offering for each Mass. These days are a true gift from our Divine Spouse!”

Anne Gishpert continues: "I am blessed to be able to attend the USACV convocation again this summer. It is my first time this far north! I truly enjoy the praying / singing together in the beautiful St. Rose Convent. Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine is a place of beauty and God's Presence can be felt! Be assured of my prayers for all during this grace-filled time together in Wisconsin.”

A candidate from Minnesota: "I have enjoyed this convocation very much, so glad it was close enough to my home and hope we can do it here again. Enjoyed it all, especially Fr. David.”

Claire Halbur of the Archdiocese of Phoenix (AZ): "We just might have a new evening fellowship tradition for the Convocation: game show night. Last night (Sunday), the gathered virgins shared many laughs but also learned a lot during a “Catholic jeopardy” lead by Jenna Cooper. Favorite categories: Loose Canons and Potpourri of Popery!”

An aspirant from Connecticut: "As someone early on in their formation, it has been immensely valuable to talk with consecrated virgins and others in formation. I am grateful for this opportunity to learn from and build



2022 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

community with this lovely group of women."

A candidate from Ohio: "My experience at the convocation has been full of graces, spiritual wisdom, connectedness and faith-sharing. I am grateful."

Karen Lombardi of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas: "It is a great blessing to finally be back at the convocation again. This gathering is always an encouragement and a joy. We have such beautiful spaces to gather and pray together, and I am grateful for all who help made this possible."

A candidate from Illinois: "I'm grateful for the fellowship, friendship, prayerful communal spirit that the convocation provides. I enjoyed the high Mass glorious singing and solemn prayer chant of Evening and Morning prayers. It's so



have been led in beautiful song and reverent liturgy. I am grateful I've had the opportunity to attend my first convocation. Thank you."

Senite Sahlezghi of the Archdiocese of Denver (CO): "A highlight of this year's convocation is a renewal of our consecration, specifically that we 'follow the Lamb wherever He leads.'"



beautiful to see the joy in the consecrated virgins who are living out their consecration in the world. I especially loved the talk on mental prayer by Father David. St. Rose convent has a beautiful familial spirit for Morning Prayer and Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine is so impressive in size but yet so very intimate, to foster a close relationship with Jesus in adoration! May God continually bless and enrich the talents and gifts of all the virgins!"

Sara Scheunemann of the Diocese of Green Bay (WI): "It has been a blessing to share these days of the convocation with consecrated virgins and candidates from around the country. There is a joyful spirit in being together, and it is a delight to pray with women who love Jesus so deeply. We

