

Philippine diocese consecrates woman to life of virginity

Cebu archbishop performs a rite that is becoming rarer as vocations decrease in the modern world [Joseph Peter Calleja, Manila](#) Updated: February 16, 2021 06:50 AM GMT



Cebu Archbishop Jose Palma performs the rite of consecration on Ursulina Presbitero. (Photo supplied)

A woman in the Philippines has vowed to spend her life as a consecrated virgin, the oldest recognized form of consecrated life in the Catholic Church.

Ursulina Presbitero, from the central province of Cebu, promised to serve and dedicate herself to helping the Catholic Church's mission in the presence of Cebu Archbishop Jose Palma.

"Father, receive my resolution to follow Christ in a life of perfect chastity which, with God's help, I here profess before you and God's Holy People," Presbitero said in a solemn rite of consecration at the Archbishop's Palace in Cebu City on Feb. 14.

A consecrated virgin is a never-married woman who dedicates her perpetual virginity to God and is set as a sacred person who belongs to Christ in the Catholic Church. The woman can either live as a nun or as "out in the world," as Presbitero chose to do.

Based on diocesan records, it is estimated there are about 5,000 such women around the world.

Archbishop Palma explained that women seeking the vocation must consecrate themselves to God through their diocesan bishop.

“Virgin women, upon consecration, are married mystically to Christ and they dedicate their lives to the service of the Catholic Church ... Their consecration is not temporary but permanent. Thus, they are to serve Christ and the Church all their life,” he said in his homily.

Presbitero said she would live her life according to the direction of Archbishop Palma.

Archbishop Palma said it was his first time consecrating a woman for a perpetual life of prayer and virginity.

“I have officiated over 200 ordinations, but this is the first consecration to the virgin life. And I am happy about it,” he said.

The archbishop also said that as mystical “brides of Christ,” such women formed a consecrated bond that would last for eternity.

“He [God the Father] gives you the dignity of being a bride of Christ and binds you to the Son of God in a covenant to last forever,” Archbishop Palma told Presbitero during the rite.

Churchgoers seemed surprised at Presbitero’s life choice, saying it was becoming more unusual in modern times.

“It is unusual ... The world has taught us to work towards material pursuits ... this is the norm,” Cebu churchgoer Roel Bardino told UCA News.

Bardino said vocations have decreased generally because of materialistic and worldly concerns.

“There are very few men and women entering religious life today. Many congregations have growing concerns in terms of recruitment. Many religious congregations are also dying,” Bardino said.