

September 15, 2023 — Our Lady of Sorrows

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

We had a wonderful time in Arizona this summer. The travel there and back was LONG. Now, I appreciate how difficult it can be for many to attend East Coast meetings or even meetings here in the heart of the country!! But all went well and we spent a good deal of time reflecting on the Mass and the Eucharist in this Year of Eucharistic Revival.

There can be no more central activity for a consecrated virgin than the Eucharist. Many are not able to attend daily Mass due to other responsibilities. However, in so far as we are able, we should be engaged by the Lord as on the Road to Emmaus, as he breaks open the Scriptures and breaks the Bread.

Next summer, many of us will be participating in the Eucharistic Congress at Indianapolis. Even now, let us pray for a deepening of faith in our Eucharistic Lord.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Earl Boyea

Most Reverend Earl Boyea

Bishop of Lansing

Inside this Issue

Page

Something Ancient, Something New	2
From the President's Journal	5
Life Corner	6
Membership Drive	6
USACV-IRC Team Members	6
Consecration Announcements	7
Upcoming Consecrations	7
Anniversary Reflections	8
2024 Convocation	10
Announcements	11
2023 Convocation	13



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

When we think about the integral maturity of a human being we have no other theoretical framework than that of the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and the Immaculate Virgin Mary of Nazareth. What is the biblical text that supports Jesus' integral maturity and the Virgin Mary's maturity?

The most perfect and profound exposition is found when Luke the Greek physician, one of the four hagiographers of the Gospels of the Lord, apparently visited with the Virgin Mary of Nazareth and wanted to know about the childhood and adolescent personality of her divine son. The Mother's words are exact, as we read in the Gospel. She revealed to Saint Luke that Jesus was like all the children. He grew up in age, with the faculty of intelligence developed and expressed in words of wisdom; he was a free child who discovered at the age of twelve that he, in addition to his human nature, was God, the Son of God. He named God His Father and knew that He had to be about His Father's will. His divine life was completely integrated in his being both true God and true man. He discovered the mystery of his being in hypostatic union as man and God.

Luke was not a direct disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, and he wanted to know how the Blessed Mother of Jesus knew about His discovering of himself as the Son of God who needed to be in care of the things of His father. She gave Luke the information about the pilgrimage to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years of age. The early adolescent boy was left in the temple and after three days his parents found him among the doctors of the law. She spoke to Luke about the wisdom of her Son in His knowledge and interpretation of the holy word of the Lord with all the elders of Jerusalem's temple.

Luke also revealed to all of us that Jesus of Nazareth, after that event in the temple, returned with Joseph and Mary and was obedient to them. He was in complete maturity in age, in wisdom, and in the completeness of His union with His eternal Father. The grace was that which he received from the eternal Father in his human nature in the hypostatic union of his being man and being God the Son in the family of the Most Holy Trinity: "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and

favor before God and man" (Lk. 2: 52). He came to us in that plenitude of time when the eternal Father fulfilled His promise to send His Son to be born of a woman, born under the law (cf. Gal.4:4).

Science defines maturity as the state or quality of being fully grown or fully developed. In His physical maturity, intellectual maturity, and affective maturity, that is, development of the capacity to make free will decisions, Jesus of Nazareth was in complete maturity to fulfill His mission as our Redeemer. "The Son, the Word, one in substance with the Father, becomes man, born of a woman, in the 'fullness of time.' This event leads to the turning point of man's history on earth, understood as salvation history. It is significant that St. Paul does not call the Mother of Christ by her own name 'Mary' but calls her 'woman': this coincides with the words of the proto-evangelium in the Book of Genesis (cf. Gen. 3:15). She is that 'woman' who is present in the central salvific event which marks the 'fullness of time': this event is realized in her and through her. . . . Thus there begins the central event, the key event in the history of salvation: The Lord's Paschal Mystery." ("Woman, Mother of God (Theotökos) Union with God" in John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body, Human Love in the Divine Plan*, page 448).

The consecrated person, the consecrated virgin, the celibate man in the priesthood, the single man or woman searching for the kingdom of God, as well as each and every one of the baptized are called "to grow in age, wisdom and favor before God and man." This growing up process in the human being is an ongoing process until the last minutes of life in this mortal world. This maturity in the grace of God, or "favor before God and man," is essential to any vocation.

We are witnesses to the Eternal Kingdom and we are witnesses to the power of the Word of God that became flesh and announced the Kingdom. To be a witness means that our faith in God has to be built up just as that of Jesus Christ; it means fulfilling the will of the Eternal Father given to each one of us. Maturity for a Christian man (human being) is not only in age (body) or in one of the faculties of the soul such as intelligence, but it means a maturity to accept the will of the Lord, unlike Adam and Eve in Paradise, who were given the will of the Lord but did not fulfill it. In our divine Lord and his Virgin Mother of Nazareth who accepted the will of the Lord, we receive the capacity to make decisions and follow God's will. This capacity to make decisions to

follow the will of the Lord is a capacity that was lost in Paradise by that wrong decision of Eve and Adam. The capacity to make decisions for the Kingdom of God comes through Jesus Christ's redemption of mankind as He gave us complete participation in His being true man and true God through his life, passion, death and resurrection.

Our Blessed Mother was given to the apostolic Church during the fifth of Jesus' words from the cross, to John the apostle. She was there in the midst of the apostles at Pentecost and she was there assisting the ancient Church of the first century with her virginal and maternal love. She continues interceding for the Church: "The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. This inauguration and this growth are both symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus, and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.'" (*Lumen Gentium* 3).

She fulfilled her mission as the virginal mother of God's Son. We consecrated virgins follow Him in the *Ordo Virginum*, in the Church, as a successor of the apostle consecrates our "virginal *propositum*." We are given through our consecration to the "kingdom of Christ now present in mystery" (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 4).

In her immaculate conception, Our Blessed Mother received directly from the essence of God's virginity the gift of perpetual virginity. The spiritual dimension of our soul in its capacity to know (to do cognition, to learn) and to accept (free will) the gift of virginity from the Eternal Father was given to our Mother in her Immaculate Conception but is given to us during the sacrament of baptism when the "baptismal water" deletes original sin. The eternal Father has called each of us in our mothers' wombs and He has prepared for us the gift of virginity to seal us as witnesses of the eternal kingdom to come.

The woman called to perpetual virginity is going to the process of maturity in the physical dimension of her being. The most important aspect of physical maturity is the education of our senses. The Holy Spirit helps the process of gaining integral maturity by increasing in us the knowledge and dominion of our senses: to see, taste, listen, touch, and smell what needs to change during the maturing process.

The maturing process will lead us to transform our senses into the senses of the soul. In a practical way, what we are to do is to ask ourselves if we are using our senses in the freedom of original creation: are we seeing, tasting, listening, touching, and smelling in the transparency of divine grace. For example, there are several sophisticated compulsions dissimulated behind technology; one of them is the digital compulsion or the use of our fingers to be attached for distraction to technology and not giving us the time to work in our integral maturity, but rather distracting us and restricting our growth in the way of perfection to which we are called to live by Jesus Christ.

There is not an explicit psychological theory that can cover the mystery of a man created by God, nor a person's vocation. Vocation transcends time and space because vocation is a call from God and that has its plenitude in eternity. Psychology is not an operative system in the human being. Psychology is a zone of confluence among our body, soul, and divine grace, or the divine dimension of our created being. A psychological approach alone does not have the last word about our integral maturity. The integral maturity of any human being is integrated in the person's capacity to love, and love for God and following His will is a decision. The illumination of our souls is a product of divine grace, so we ask the Holy Spirit for the light of this grace to guide our actions in the freedom created by the eternal Father. The theory of emotion or perception of the senses for a mature person rests in his or her decision to walk and to grow in integrating the triple dimension of their unique being created by God.

Psychological maturity is an integration of body, soul, and divine grace. In that integration psychology is placed as a zone of confluence, as I said above. No human force can interrupt the "indissoluble tie" of our virginal vocation given first to our Blessed Mother and model. This interpretation is supported by what our divine Lord Jesus Christ won for us. The eternal Father elected each of us to be for His eternal Son on this earth the very meaning of eternal life. We live in indissoluble union with Jesus Christ through our integral virginity, in mystical union with Him as our Divine Spouse. The education of our senses is a matter of spiritual discipline to search and live in Jesus who is "the way, the truth and the life," and to contemplate and search in our inner being the meaning of our life in the "indissoluble tie" to love Him alone. Practicing daily exercises of the virtues, beginning with the human

virtues and enriching the theological virtues given to us in baptism, will give us the capacity for integral maturity—to walk following Jesus Christ wherever He leads.

Integral maturity in the virginal vocation is understandable through Christ's revelations. We were created by the eternal Father in perfect integration of body, soul, and His divine life. The capacity to integrate our being was given to us from the essence of God himself in his image and likeness; the stronghold to discover this capacity has its base in the work we do to grow in integral maturity. The joy of virginity resides in that the gift of virginity surpasses the human interpretation of physical fecundity when our spiritual maternity is close to the virginal maternity of our Blessed Mother, and in the outpouring of the Eternal Father's graces upon us to live His gift of virginity.

The interpretation of how our vocation, in the integral maturity process, is a fruitful vocation, must be made in light of the Church's definition of our Blessed Mother's motherhood: "Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth. At the same time, however, because she belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all those who are to be saved. She is 'the mother of the members of Christ . . . having cooperated by charity that faithful might be born in the Church, who are members of that Head.'" (*Lumen Gentium* 53). Our Blessed Mother's integral maturity in following her vocation is witnessed in the most beautiful and free gift given to her in her role of motherhood. She is constituted and "redeemed by

reason of the merits of her Son and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie." The same is true for each of those called in baptism to any state the divine Lord gives.

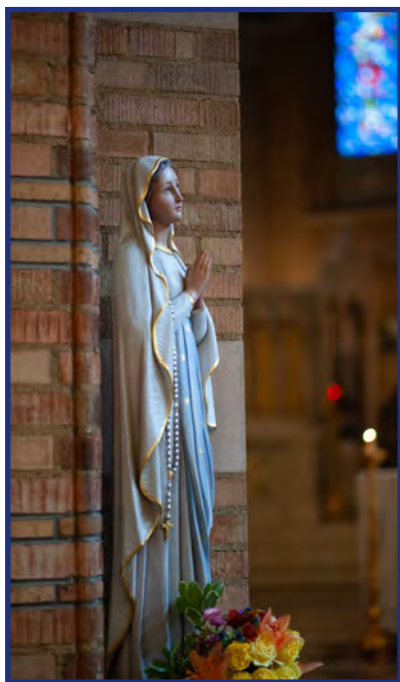
To grow in maturity and to reach the culmination of the process of integral maturity, before facing the eternal wedding feast, is more an exercise of the heart than of the intellect. The intellect discovers, but heart fulfills the

plenitude of love that is inexhaustible during our pilgrimage to our Father's kingdom in eternity. The grace of God in our being illuminates our capacity to live the theological gift of love. "Since happiness is nothing other than the enjoyment of the highest good, and since the highest good is above, no one can be happy unless he rises above himself, not by an ascent of the body, but of the heart." (St. Bonaventure).

My psychological approach about affective maturity is the same as that totality of the human being which is conceptualized by the second Vatican Council II: the integration of our body, soul, and divinity, or the grace of God in our being, "homo unus et totus," man who is one and total. In Saint Paul's teaching: "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it (1 Thes. 5: 23-24). He refers to the operative grace of the Holy Spirit working in our integral maturity.

Our Blessed Mother's integral mature virginity comes directly from the essence of the eternal Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in their being virgin. In God there is no duality of dichotomic concepts. In other words, in theology, the doctrine of divine simplicity says that God is without parts. The general idea can be stated in this way: the being of God is identical to the "attributes" of God. Characteristics such as omnipresence, goodness, truth, eternity, etc. are identical to God's being, not qualities that make up that being, nor abstract entities inhering in God as in a substance. In other words, we can say that in God both essence and existence are one and the same. When we are called we are given that integral virginity and we must develop it, recognizing our limitations and practicing the virtues.

We in the *Ordo Virginum* have received a new grace by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us through the consecratory prayer; the confirmation of the gift of virginity comes "directly from the essence of the Eternal Father." In His essence there is no division. Let us pray and offer to Him the glory of our virginal vocation as an act of integral maturity—happy in our daily living arrangement with the sweet commandment of love alive in us. May we see with the soul's eyes the light from His resurrected body and follow him wherever He guides us, living in the Spirit of God as our Blessed Mother and Queen lived, whether in sorrow as she joined Him in Golgotha or in joy as she saw Him resurrected.



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

Sanctum Propositum or Vow -
What is the Difference?

In this President's Journal, I'll quote from my dissertation, and continue the discussion in future issues of "The Lamp."

[From Judith M. Stegman, "*Sanctum Propositum of the Virgin*" in "*Mystically Espoused to Christ, the Son of God (c. 604 §1)*": *The Basis for Proposing Juridic Principles to Guide the Development of Norms for the Ordo virginum* (Washington D.C., 2019; ProQuest Number 22623763, Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest LLC, 2019) 149–151.]

The Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity refers to the candidate's lifelong commitment to follow Christ in the holy state of virginity not as a vow or a sacred bond, but instead as a resolve or decision (*volo*) to persevere in a firm resolution or decision (*propositum*). The bishop opens the Examination of the Candidate with the question: "*Vultis in sanctae virginitatis proposito ac Domini Ecclesiaeque servitio ad extremum vitae perseverare* (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)?" [OCV 17] The "Renewal of Intention (*Castitatis propositi renovatio*)" just before the Solemn Prayer of Consecration employs similar words, as the candidate states: "Father, receive my resolution (*propositum*) to follow Christ in a life of perfect chastity" [OCV 22]. Likewise, in the Solemn Prayer of Consecration the bishop addresses the Lord, asking his favor upon these handmaids who "place in your hands their resolve (*propositum*) to live in chastity," and acknowledging that it is the Lord Himself who "prompt(s) them in this, their intention" [OCV 24, for other references to the *propositum* see OCV Appendix, Praenotanda, OCV 36]. Thirteen years after the revision of the rite, canon 604 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law employed the same language of *propositum*, rather than the language of vows or sacred bonds, when it juridically identified the order of virgins as those who, "expressing the holy resolution (*sanctum propositum*) of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite."

Different forms of bonds exist for different forms of consecrated life. Members of religious institutes "according to proper law, pronounce public vows, either perpetual or temporary which are to be renewed, however, when the period of time has elapsed" [c. 607§2]. Members of secular institutes assume the evangelical counsels by sacred bonds, as established by the constitutions [c. 712]. Diocesan hermits "publicly profess in the hands of the diocesan bishop the three evangelical counsels, confirmed by vow or other sacred bond" [c. 603]. Members of some societies of apostolic life "assume the evangelical counsels by some bond defined in the constitutions" [c. 731 §2]. It is by means of these public vows or sacred bonds that the member of the religious institute, secular institute, or society of apostolic life, and the diocesan hermit, are constituted into the juridical state of consecrated life in the Church.

In striving to identify the juridical status of virgins consecrated according to the rite of consecration to a life of virginity, canonists have considered whether the *propositum virginitatis* of the virgin is equivalent to a solemn vow of chastity. The language and concept of "solemn vow" was not used in the early centuries of the Church, and yet the key effect of what came to be understood as a solemn vow of chastity was recognized as the effect of solemn consecration in the early Church, namely that a subsequent marriage was rendered invalid. Writing in 1924 as a consultor to the Sacred Congregation, in preparation for the Plenary Assembly that would discuss the possibility of re-opening the rite of consecration to women living in the world, R.P. Haegy discussed the matter:

There can be no doubt that this rite created a legal state. To say that it corresponded to a solemn vow, while the *propositum* represented the simple vow, could be to carry modern conceptions too easily into antiquity, and exaggerate the distinction between the two degrees. But we cannot equate consecration with a simple devotional ceremony, solely destined to honor and encourage virginity; it consecrates the commitment, it constitutes the espousal between the virgin and Christ, represented by the Bishop.

To be continued in the December *President's Journal*.

By Florence Sundberg
Archdiocese of Hartford (CT)

Amidst the horror of watching people desperately trying to escape the Taliban in Afghanistan, I again recall Mother Teresa's words: "If we would kill the innocent baby in the womb of the mother, what would we not do?" The deliberate slaughter of human babies has, perhaps, unleashed the fury of God, and now we are witnessing the abominable slaughter of people, including women and children, in Afghanistan. We want to cry out: "Stop the killing!" But until we stop the killing of babies in the womb, our cries may not be answered. Let us continue to pray and speak out against the inhumanity of abortion and how this evil practice has a ripple effect on all of humanity, on all that is

taking place across the globe. We, the spouses of Christ, are His voice, His presence, His compassion in the world and we must be on the front line through prayer and through our witness to the sacredness of human life – all human life created by God in His image. Silence means consent. So let us raise our voices as one and call for an end to anti-life agendas as we go deeper in prayer and in solidarity with our persecuted brothers and sisters. May God bless us as we become a beacon of hope for others in Christ's name. We place everything and everyone and every situation in Christ's hands while we wait for the Holy Spirit to let us know what we can do to bring about a culture of life, of peace and of brotherhood. In Jesus' Name we pray.

Membership Drive

By Francesca Riddick
Diocese of Joliet (IL)
USACV Membership Services

Thank you for all who registered for our 2023 membership drive. We are so appreciative for your support and encouragement for the vocation to Consecrated Virginity. Your contribution to our association supports those of us who have embraced this vocation in three important ways

First, and most importantly, you will be in communication with others who are living this vocation. You will hear stories of how other consecrated virgins live around the country. You will hear of their hopes, dreams, struggles and daily victories living in a world so opposed to Gospel living.

Secondly, with your donation you will be supporting the work of the association in promoting this vocation and help assist in the work of on-going formation of this particular vocation in the heart of the Church, here in the United States but also internationally.

Thirdly, you will have the opportunity to deepen your own vocational call through the formation and testimony of those who share on this forum.

We warmly encourage you to continue to support our efforts!

USACV and International Resource Center for the *Ordo Virginum* Leadership Team Members and Officers

USACV Leadership Team

Jenna Cooper 2022-2024; Archdiocese of New York (NY).

Claire Halbur ____-2023; Diocese of Phoenix (AZ).
(*Secretary of the USACV-IRC and USACV Online Presence*).

Elizabeth Lam 2023-2025; Diocese of Oakland (CA).
(*USACV Website*).

Joani McCann 2022-2024; Archdiocese of Boston (MA). (*Convocation Liaison*).

Francesca Riddick 2022-2024; Diocese of Joliet (IL).
(*USACV Membership and eTapestry*).

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 Rapid City (SD).

Consecration Announcements

June 16, 2023 — **Mary Rose Rynda**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda, Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (MN).

June 18, 2023 — **Elizabeth McKay** and **Madeleine Troppe**, at the hands of the Most Reverend David A. Zubik, Bishop of Pittsburgh (PA).

June 24, 2023 — **Kaitlin Simone Davis**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Douglas Deshotel, Bishop of Lafayette (LA).

July 22, 2023 — **Megan Grubb**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda, Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (MN).

July 26, 2023 — **Diane LeMay**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes, Bishop of Columbus (OH).

August 15, 2023 — **April Bailey**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann, Archbishop of Kansas City (KS).

August 26, 2023 — **Miara Cash**, at the hands of the Most Reverend John Dolan, Bishop of Phoenix (AZ).

September 8, 2023 — **Carol Bruce**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Oscar Cantú, Bishop of San Jose (CA).

Miara Cash, photo credit to Madisen Martinez



Elizabeth McKay and Madeleine Troppe with Bishop Zubik



Diane LeMay, photo credit to Shellee Fisher

April Bailey with Archbishop Naumann



Mary Rose Rynda



Upcoming Consecrations

November 22, 2023, consecration of **Mary E. Del Olmo**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, Bishop of Fort Worth, at 12:00pm at St. Patrick Cathedral, Fort Worth, Texas.

December 8, 2023, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, consecration of **Aubrey Coulter**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Carl A. Kemme, Bishop of Wichita, at 5:15pm at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 430 North Broadway, Wichita, Kansas. All are warmly invited. Kindly RSVP via email to aubrey.coulter@gmail.com.

December 8, 2023, consecration of **Margaret (Maggie) Hartman**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Timothy L. Doherty in the Diocese of Lafayette (IN), at 4pm at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Lafayette, Indiana. All are warmly invited to attend.

December 22, 2023, consecration of **Theresa Klinkhammer**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Donald Hying, Bishop of Madison (WI), at 11:00am at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church. Adoration and Confession will be available from 10:00-11:00. All are warmly invited to attend. Please RSVP theresa.klinkhammer@gmail.com.

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2023 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*.

20 Years

Theresa Howard
consecrated May 4, 2003
Diocese of Springfield (IL)

When I was 21, I knew that the Lord was calling me to give myself totally to Him. However, many years of discerning His call went by before I heard about the vocation of Consecrated Virginity.



After my consecration I finally realized that all of those years of waiting were not wasted. I could look back and see His hands at work preparing me to be His bride.

The past 20 years have flown by and have been filled with His gifts of joy and peace. Along with the joy I have also experienced many challenges. As difficult as they seemed at the time, it drew me closer to Him. These were beautiful opportunities for a more intimate relationship with my Divine Spouse. He has also given me the grace to live in the present moment and try to be more patient.

I thank Him every day for choosing me to be His bride! I am looking forward to the next five year journey with my Divine Spouse!

responsibility for my life. There's a line from a poem by Pope St. John Paul II, which totally captures the experience I had then. "Ku tobie idę i nie mówię 'przybądź' ale po prostu 'bądź'" – "I go towards you and do not say 'come' but simply 'be.'" There was no sudden change of course in my life, only in my attitude. Years later, my mom came to live with me and I was working to provide for the two of us. My mom had cared for her mom and we both had looked after two of her older brothers who were in poor health, so being responsible for the needs of others was something you just did. It was some years later, that I felt the Lord asking me what it was that I wanted. Several things ran through my mind, but nothing seemed to fully satisfy me. Then I suddenly realized what it was I wanted and I responded with His words, "I want You." How kind of the Lord to ask me what it was that I wanted, it was a question I had never asked myself.

A priest friend later mentioned to me that he believed I had a religious vocation. I explained life circumstances prevented any thought of entering a religious order, but I did feel the Lord was calling me to be His. Father suggested I simply make a personal "vow" to remain single, which I eventually, prayerfully, and very informally did. In addition to my work and caring for my mom, my life revolved around daily Mass attendance and volunteer work with the Church and my community and I was quite content. We were living in MD, when Valerie Means was consecrated in the Baltimore Archdiocese and I first learned of the vocation of Consecrated Virginity of a Woman Living in the World. The realization that this was my life was subsequently confirmed by my spiritual director, who had never heard of the vocation before either, but assured me I was "already living it." Subsequent to our move to PA, I made application for the consecration. I believed then, as I do now, that the gift of virginity, which my Beloved had given me, was a gift He also intended for His church. To be honest, while not everyone understands the vocation or the value of the gift of virginity, it is still a gift that needs to be shared whether it is well received or not.

Currently, I'm retired from my work as an Investigator/Mediator with the Department of

15 Years

Carolyn Blaszczyk
consecrated April 29, 2008
Diocese of Harrisburg (PA)

At a very low point in my young life, feeling alone and unwanted, I cried out to the Lord and He responded loud and clear, "I want you." Those three words changed my life. He scared me half to death at the time, of course, but He empowered me and prompted me to take



Defense and I'm active in the Unbound Prayer Ministry both in my diocese and in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. I'm also a Sidewalk Advocate for Life, an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, and I lead our parish Rosary Group. I have experienced the greatest peace and love in the Lord's acceptance of me as His Bride and I can't help but marvel at the awesome ways He has led me to serve his people both before and since my consecration. My life has truly been blessed by His abiding presence and direction, and the consecration has united me to Him and to His church through a bond of love that has brought a greater sense of being and a grace-filled anticipation of what more there is to come.

5 Years

Marge Giesken
consecrated October 7, 2018
Diocese of Grand Rapids (MI)

On October 7, 2018, I said yes to Jesus. The day I became a bride of Christ my life became a great adventure of infinite possibilities. When I fully gave my life to Christ my Lord. I was not prepared for the beautiful, spiritual, loving adventure that would take place these last five years, and it just keeps continuing.

I was seven years old when I first heard the call while in religion class. Sister Elizabeth Ann was teaching us about the Virgin Mary. The thought came to me I want to be just like the Virgin Mary. It was many years, before I followed that call. Many years of twists, and turns, ups and downs. I had a factory job for a while, became a Dominican for quite a while, tried to transfer to Saint Mother Teresa's order, became a teacher for a lot of years. Nothing brought me the peace, love, joy I was seeking.

A profound awakening came on at the age of 69 I said, "OK God I will do whatever you want of me. I will go wherever you want me to go." I finally said "yes" to the call that kept following me all those years, at the age of 72 I was consecrated to Jesus as a virgin living in the world.

These past five years have been so grace-

filled: the study of Sacred Scripture, learning to listen to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, to be taught and guided by them, to deepen my prayer life. I try to live every day in the presence of the Lord.

I also volunteer at the Cathedral of St. Andrew as a sacristan, a fourth-grade catechist, and do whatever else I am able to do. I attend daily Mass, which is the highlight of my day. We have Paulist priests who are wonderful at opening scripture, and teaching us the way of the Lord. St. Andrews is a wonderful church to grow closer to God.

And when I reflect on all these years, I see that it has been and is a journey of many profound graces. Bishop Walkowiak said at the end of his homily, October 7, 2018, "Christ, the Bridegroom of Virgins will be your joy and your crown, even here on earth. He will call you into His presence and into His kingdom where you will sing a new song as you follow the Lamb of God, wherever he leads you." I so look forward to what is to come, to whatever and wherever I am led by the Lord. I have found the peace, joy and love that I was seeking for so long. It is with and in the Church founded by Christ.

I ask for your prayers, and be assured of my prayers for you.

Leandra Hubka
consecrated September 15, 2018
Diocese of Winona-Rochester
(MN)

The life of a consecrated virgin is that of the cross, as we share in the joys and sorrows of our Divine Spouse. Christ's agonies become our agonies, as we accompany His Church and His people with our maternal embrace. A life of consecration has consolations, to be sure, but it is only through the cross that we experience the fullness of the resurrection.

This is why I desired that my consecration be held on the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows. During my time of formation, I already worked in my Bishop's office (as Assistant to the Vicar General), and had seen firsthand the challenges facing our



Church. My heart had been broken numerous times, and I knew it would continue to be so in the future.

As with any vocation, after the moment of "fiat" life does not suddenly get easier, but we are given the grace to weather the storms that come our way. In the past five years, each year has held a significant personal challenge: 1) the year following my consecration the Lord brought to light wounds from my past that I spent three years working through with the help of my spiritual director and a faithful Catholic counselor; 2) I faced the sudden loss of my long-time spiritual director, right at a time when I was reaching a breaking point in my life, but found a new spiritual director immediately and providentially in the priest who was my confessor; 3) a year later my new spiritual director fell on the ice and suffered a traumatic brain injury which left him out of commission for several months, following which I had a front row seat witnessing his long and difficult road to recovery (thankfully he was finally able to return to full-time ministry this summer); 4) we received as our new Bishop the most famous prelate in the country, making my job crazier than ever; and 5) earlier this year I accepted the position of Bishop Barron's secretary. Throughout my personal joys and trials, I have also grown in the role of spiritual

mother, as parishioners, priests, family, and fellow chancery staff come to me and unburden their hearts. I have found that although I wish I could fix their problems, usually what is most needed is a receptive and generous heart, not afraid to confront and enter into the messiness of others' lives.

But lest I give the impression that life is a continuous valley of tears, I have increasingly been more at peace and settled in my vocation as a consecrated virgin in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester. The Lord and His angels and saints provide for me way better than a mortal husband ever could, and I have numerous stories of how St. Joseph has taken care of my car, the angels have protected me, and Mary has undone knots in my life. I am blessed by friendships with priests, other consecrated virgins, and laity, who help me stay focused on Christ, while also making me laugh and not take life too seriously.

I tell people that 20 years ago, I would never have imagined that I would be a consecrated virgin. However, I am beyond blessed, for Christ is more than enough, and to be able to love and serve Him with my whole heart, mind, soul, and strength, is all for which I could ask. To Him be the glory!

2024 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

We are in early planning stages for the 2024 Convocation, so stay tuned for updates. We plan to hold a modified convocation as we focus on serving together at the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis July 17 to 21. NEC organizers have expressed enthusiasm at having consecrated virgins volunteer to serve at the Congress. In addition to serving in more general ways at the Congress, we have offered to host workshops on: vocations, using the Vocation Tree image; consecrated virginity; the fruits of Eucharistic adoration, and practical helps; art for children focused on saints of the Holy Eucharist. We have also discussed with the NEC planning team the possibility of decorating and attending to a Eucharistic adoration chapel, leading Evening Prayer, schola, and prayer teams. Pray with us for this endeavor, and we will keep you posted as plans mature. For more information on the NEC, visit www.eucharisticcongress.org. The 2024 Convocation Planning Team: Lorraine Manlolo of the Diocese of Honolulu (HI); Carolyn Blaszczyk of the Diocese of Harrisburg (PA), Jenna Chang of the Diocese of Lubbock (TX), Jill Rodts, candidate of the Diocese of Peoria (IN). Joani McCann continues to serve as convocation liaison with the USACV Leadership Team.



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Congress**



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

Upcoming Issues of the Lamp

December 12, 2023 Our Lady of Guadalupe
February 2, 2024 Feast of the Presentation and World Day for Consecrated Life
May 31, 2024 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin
September 8, 2024 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 [Amanda Schrauth](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org) at 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.

Volume III of the Ordo Virginum series

Shalina Stilley, Diocese of San Diego
"Volume III, about virgin saints, continues to come along nicely and is in the editing stage at this point. If you have volunteered to write about a Saint but haven't yet submitted it, please contact Shalina at catherinestilley@gmail.com. Artists, too, are invited to contact Shalina if you haven't yet been in touch.

Recordings Available!

Links to recordings from the virtual sessions of the 2022 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins (held in La Crosse) and the 2022 Virtual Information Conference on the Ordo virginum, are now available. If you attended a particular conference in person or virtually, and would like to receive a link to the conference you attended, at no charge, please email info@consecratedvirgins.org with your request. If you did not attend the conference, links to the recordings are available for purchase through our online store at consecratedvirgins.org.

2023 conference recordings will be available soon!

Pray with Us! — Virtual Vespers

Consecrated virgins, candidates, and friends joined for Virtual Vespers on September 8, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After sung Vespers, anyone who desired stayed online and shared with one another about our Blessed Mother. It was a rich time of reflection. What a joy to pray together, even virtually! Mark your calendars for the next three Virtual Vespers, all at 8:00 pm ET: Tuesday, November 21, the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Wednesday, December 13, Saint Lucy; Monday, February 5, Saint Agatha.

Rome in 2025?

Pope Francis has chosen the motto "Pilgrims of Hope" for the 2025 Jubilee Year. The Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has announced a Jubilee of Consecrated Life to be held October 8-9, 2025, in Rome, with the title, "Pilgrims of hope, on the path to peace." Preparatory stages are taking place now. A Jubilee Celebration for consecrated persons, by country, is also planned for February 2, 2025. Please see a letter discussing the Jubilee year plans from the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, addressed to all members of consecrated life: [DICLSAL to all members of consecrated life](#). More details to come!

2024 Virtual Information Conference

Save the date! The 2024 Virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virgins will be held the afternoons of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, September 6 to 8, 2024. More details to follow. Pre-register by sending an email to info@consecratedvirgins.org.

2023 Fall USACV Leadership Team Ballot

Claire Halbur was appointed mid-year to fill a USACV leadership team vacancy. Her term expires December 31, 2023. Claire has agreed to place her name on the ballot as a candidate for the open leadership team position for the term January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2026. Other USACV members are invited to also put forward your names as candidates for this position. USACV members will receive ballots later this fall to vote for the candidate of their choice, who will then be recommended to the leadership team for confirmation as a leadership team member. Karen Webb's term as USACV treasurer also expires at the end of 2023, and she has agreed to serve as treasurer for another term. Her name will also be on the fall ballot. USACV members are invited to nominate themselves or another for the treasurer position. Please contact Francesca Riddick if you are interested in running for either of these positions, at usacvmembership@gmail.com.

Ordo Virginum Virtual Candidate Discussion Group

Beginning this fall, 2023, the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins will sponsor a quarterly opportunity for aspirants and candidates for the *Ordo virginum* to learn about and discuss various aspects of following Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, in the vocation of consecrated virginity lived *in saeculo*, that is, in the ordinary circumstances of life. The discussion group will provide a supplement (not a substitute) to diocesan formation for admittance to consecration.

Topics, dates, speakers, and the registration process for participation will be announced soon to dioceses and on the consecratedvirgins.org website.

French Language Jubilate Pilgrimage — Retreat to Israel for Consecrated Virgins

Communication from Consecrated Virgin Christel Koehler of Paris:

I write you after a long while about the Jubilate pilgrimage-retreat that a small group of French consecrated virgins is organizing in Israel. Unlike traditional pilgrimages, this is truly a time to revisit our vocation as spouses to the Bridegroom, with times of prayer and outreach to local Christians.

Postponed because of the covid pandemic, it will finally take place from March 9 to 17, 2024. The bishop responsible for consecrated virgins for the French Bishops' Conference, Mgr. Dognin (bishop of Quimper et Léon), supports the project, as has Cardinal Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, from the outset.

However, the project is now exclusively French-speaking. I'm passing on the information to you, should some of your sisters be interested. Those who understand French (even if they don't speak it) can take part, as can their bishops.

All the information is at <http://www.voir-entendre-decouvrir.org/jubilate/>, but I'm also enclosing the program and the invitation letter (in French. This is a good language test for the ones who will read it !) [Link to program and invitation letter](#)

We hope our American sisters will join us!

In union of prayer,

For the Jubilate team
Christel Koehler, ov Paris



Artwork by Marion Biestek

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

A Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, by Mary Beth Bracy, Diocese of Ogdensburg (NY):

From June 23 to 27, I was blessed to attend the annual gathering of consecrated virgins living in the world. This year the convocation took place in Flagstaff, Arizona at Northeastern Arizona University. It was like a honeymoon experience for me, as it provided me with some time to go to a “deserted place and rest awhile” (Mark 6:31) following my consecration on April 16. The theme of the convocation was “The Voice of the Bridegroom” (Jeremiah 33:11), reminiscent of the dialogue between the bridegroom and bride in the Song of Songs.



It was wonderful to chant Lauds (Morning Prayer) and Vespers (Evening Prayer) with other consecrated virgins, and attend daily Mass and Eucharistic Adoration together. There was a deep sense of joy and communion as we shared our vocations stories, ministries and much laughter over meals. We delighted in venturing to the Chapel of the Holy Cross built into the red rocks of Sedona, and the historic Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Chapel in Flagstaff. Many of us also gazed in awe as we hiked around the Grand Canyon, and a smaller group of us visited the Lowell Observatory one night, breaking into “Salve Regina” before we left. One evening we also had a talent show highlighting gifts from music and art to poetry, a humorous skit, and dancing.

Our episcopal moderator, Bishop Earl A. Boyea, offered the opening Mass and later presented talks on “The Eucharist: Mystical Body, Mystical Voice,” which he developed on the meaning of the parts of the Mass for his diocese in Lansing, Michigan, to help celebrate the National Eucharistic Revival.



I was inspired by his reminders that we need to train our hearts and minds to truly listen and mean what we say. Whether it is in the Creed or Amen, we are called to remember what the gift of our Lord’s Presence in the Holy Eucharist cost. At Holy Communion, Bishop Boyea shared, we recall the marriage aspect – we become one with Jesus and receive “with joy this gift of Christ’s entire self.”

Such love requires reciprocity. This is why we worship Jesus at Mass and spend time before His Eucharistic Presence outside of Mass. I was also fortunate to sit at Bishop Boyea’s table at lunch, and he shared beautifully about how the call to consecrated virginity is unique in that it is primarily about being the spouse of Christ.

Bishop Emeritus of Phoenix, Thomas J. Olmsted’s talk “Listen First to the Voice of the Bridegroom” also fortified my faith. He reflected on the examples of Our Lady and the saints and our call to be witnesses: “signs of God’s tender love.”

Mary showed us the image of the bride from the beginning to the end of Scripture: “The wedding feast of the lamb has come and the bride is prepared to welcome him.” (Revelation 19:7) Speaking of the examples of Saints Damien of Molokai and Thomas More, he stressed the importance of beginning each day in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord. When Saint Damien arrived at the leper colony, he first restored the chapel and placed the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.

“The lepers heard the voice of the bridegroom through the fatherly love of St. Damien,” shared Bishop Olmsted. Our faith must be “something for which I am willing to die.”



Like Saint Thomas More, our lives will be a “paradox for the sake of our divine spouse... We point to the Kingdom as consecrated virgins when we live with hope and joy.”

Although most attendants were from the U.S., a consecrated virgin from Germany also presented on “The Spousal Dimension of the

Voice of the Bridegroom in Sacred Scripture and in the Rite of the Consecration of Virgins.”

María Luisa Öfele, who was celebrating 20 years as a consecrated virgin, worked with Pope Benedict XVI when he was in the Diocese of Regensburg. She highlighted God’s personal relationship with His people from the Old Testament covenants to the Voice of the Beloved in St. John’s Gospel, stressing our need to spend time in silence to hear God’s voice.



Her talk also included a meditation on the spousal dimension of the Voice of the Bridegroom in the Rite of the Consecration of Virgins, from the Calling of the Candidates and the Homily to the Resolutions, Prayer of Consecration and Presentation of the Ring. Additionally, she explained that when the candidate prostrates herself, it shows her total dependence on God, and when she places her hands in the hands of the Bishop, it testifies that the virgin is to be a sign of the covenant and mystical union with Christ now and in heaven.

Judith Stegman, JCD, President of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins, who was celebrating 30 years as a consecrated virgin, spoke of the importance of true obedience in the Church in light of canon law, Scripture and tradition.



Claire Halbur, consecrated virgin, choir director, and organizer of the convocation, also gave an interactive talk about chanting.

Several other consecrated virgins spoke on various themes. Magalis Aguilera related consecrated virgins’ call to show our exclusive love for Jesus; Jenna Chang spoke about the call to be a spiritual mother; Karen Bussey on how our prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours is “truly the voice of the Bride herself addressing the Bridegroom”; Marianne Cano on our call to intercessory prayer with the saints; Madeleine Troppe on how we are loved and worthy by God’s grace and choosing; and Francesca Riddick on how the consecrated virgin is mystically espoused to Christ.

At the Grand Canyon, I noticed a group of big horned sheep down below, climbing the rocks, then more about 20 feet away from me. I thought of the passage from the Song of Songs 2:8, “The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills.”

The Voice of the Bridegroom blessed me with many graces and renewed energy to proclaim His merciful love.

Lisette Shattuck, Archdiocese of Indianapolis:

Just want to extend my thanks and tell you that I have never had a more wonderful time in my ENTIRE life than this year at the Convocation in Arizona!

The talks were engaging and helpful and encouraging. The food was varied and good too. I loved having a chaplain with us in every step in case a thought or prayer was needed to share. The prayer times were also engaging and it was wonderful to say the psalms and prayers together out loud. It was glorious to meet newly consecrated women and those who are going through the process and those who have celebrated long anniversaries. The Masses were rich and nourishing on many levels. The sightseeing was out of this world! I’ve always wanted to see the West but never thought I’d have the chance to get there. The whole thing was set up with our holiness in mind. The organizers did a wonderful job this year.



Elma Espinoza, Diocese of Fresno:

I am thankful to God for fulfilling my desire of meeting at least one other consecrated virgin. God is so generous because he gave me the opportunity to meet many consecrated virgins and candidates at the convocation. Not only that, God allowed me to spend time with them and to get to know them on a personal level. It was a blast praying and singing together as a group, as well as learning more about music. After this trip, Jesus placed in my heart to learn Latin, especially to be able to pray and sing in Latin. I was not brought up learning any type of Latin, so unfortunately I do not know the prayers in that language. I try to follow along whenever they are prayed during Mass, but it is time with God's help to learn it properly.



The guest speakers were awesome and the little getaways, like going for a picnic, visiting Sedona, and the Grand Canyon, etc. were fun. It was a great opportunity to spend more time getting to know others. My heart became overjoyed to see how happy some of the ladies got when they experienced or saw something new for the first time. There was a lot of picture taking to capture the moments and there is so much to comment about with regards to this surprising experience, but I should stop here otherwise it will be extremely long. Overall, I thank God once again, as well as everyone who had a part in making the Convocation in Arizona a memorable and wonderful experience. I hope to meet other brides of Christ in the future!

Jill Rodts, candidate, Diocese of Peoria :

‘I will allure her into the desert and speak to her heart.’ The beloved was generous in pouring out his graces and gifts of joy and peace all through the week! I brought a book I believe in Love, a retreat with St. Therese and journaled these heart thoughts. I felt like it was a mountain top transfiguration experience—exclaiming “it was so good to be here.” Many blessings of fellowship at meals, and many thanks to those who shared their experiences and stories in their talks. There are many good memories of singing together at Mass and community prayers, and highlights including the talks of the Bishops, the Mass at the chapel of the Holy Cross in Sedona on the feast of St. John the Baptist, reading Psalm 139, and holy Mass at the Church of the Nativity of Mary. It was a very special gift and retreat with so much joy, goodness, peace and love seeing the wonderful talents and gifts of the consecrated in the talent show. Jesus really affirmed my call to a sensitivity to His love, and beauty.

I feel like I am still unpacking those gifts and graces. Thank you so much for those who organized this whole event. I'm richly blessed by all the consecrated virgins I talked to and those soon to be consecrated. I am continually inspired by all of you and had a very profound moment of clarity and blessedness from this experience because of your efforts.



Lorraine Manlolo, Diocese of Honolulu (HI):

This is the first convocation I have attended, and I am so thankful to all those who had a hand in organizing it! I was consecrated this year on Divine Mercy Sunday, and getting to meet fellow consecrated virgins and aspirants was truly edifying! The blessings, graces, joy and peace I experienced as we prayed and socialized together truly felt like heaven on earth! As we go about our daily duties, may we all strive to keep the Lord at the center of our lives, as we did during our time together at the convocation.



Madeleine Troppe, Diocese of Pittsburgh (PA)::

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.” —Hosea 2:14

2023 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

For six or seven years, I had been wanting to travel to the American Southwest and see the desert. Something always prevented me—until five days after my consecration, when I flew to Arizona for the 2023 convocation of United States consecrated virgins. On the shuttle from the Phoenix airport to where we stayed in Flagstaff, our chaplain, Fr. David Whiteside, sat near me. As we pulled away from the terminal, I could not contain my excitement: ‘Whoa, look—that’s so cool! I’ve never seen the desert before...’ and I told him that I had wanted to visit for many years. I had even thought it might be a good honeymoon-with-Jesus destination! Fr. David said in his quiet, gentle way, ‘The Lord has been calling you to the desert for a long time, then...’ and he quoted the above verse from Hosea.

A couple of days later, I went outside to stargaze with Jesus. I was reminded of a song called ‘Dancing on the Waves’ by We the Kingdom. Near the end, it says, ‘I set every star into place so you would remember my name; I made it all for you.’ That’s what being in Arizona felt like. I was aware that every star, every mountain, every cactus that I saw was a gift from God to me. However, above and beyond the astonishing natural beauty of that place was the supernatural beauty I encountered in liturgy, prayer, and fellowship with the other attendees. I was able to rejoice anew in my vocation and begin to understand how God desires me, specifically, to live as a consecrated virgin.



The following notes were written by participants during the course of the Convocation:

Elizabeth Lee of the Diocese of Fall River (MA) - watching livestream: "Wonderful talks and presentations!! Such a great group of women! Wish I could have been there. You are all in my thoughts and prayers!"

Jenna Chang of the Diocese of Lubbock (TX): "I am incredibly grateful to attend this year's convocation. The presence and voice of our Bridegroom is so present during our times of prayer, the presentations and our sharing with one another."

Luz Manrique of the Diocese of Sacramento (CA): "I thank God for giving me the opportunity to attend this year's convocation. The theme was beautiful. The presentations and presenters were wonderful. I loved the chanting of the lauds and vespers and the singing at Mass. It's so nice to have Mass at the Holy Cross Chapel and the Nativity of Mary Church. It's inspiring to see many young consecrated virgins and candidates. It's awesome to hear the sharing and faithful witness of the seasoned consecrated virgins. The whole event was so well organized. Wow! I go home to California renewed! Thank you!"

Elizabeth McKay of the Diocese of Pittsburgh (PA): "Greetings to all from sunny AZ! We've just left historic Nativity Church (of Our Lady). We were blessed to learn from a generous local lady about the history of the church which was quickly built during the Great Depression. She shared several stories of the ways that this church, although closed and under renovation, continues to gather and shelter people. I'm struck by the deep dialogue of love behind our churches. Built with great care out of our love for God, their sacred art and stability tangibly remind us of our Lord's saving work in history. Deo gratias!"

