

The Lamp

Volume 22, Issue 4 — December 12, 2017



United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV

www.consecratedvirgins.org

December 12, 2017 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

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

Lumen gentium 8:3 reads: “The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of perfection, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.” The Church, in so far as she is the creation of Christ, is “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). Yet, it is clear that the Church is comprised of all of us sinners. What a situation this makes! People rightly expect the Church founded by Jesus to speak and live the Gospel and yet those who are to speak and live the Gospel are sinners.

Consecrated Virgins all find themselves in the same boat. You are called to be, in many ways, icons of the Church, the bride of Christ. In so far as you are consecrated and beloved of the groom, you are holy and without blemish. In so far as you are human, like the rest of us, you are sinners, who provide a blemished icon of that Church, of being a bride of Christ.

This is why a chief ministry of the Church is reconciliation, to continue the reconciliation between God and us achieved by Christ on his cross. Now the Church, following the path of penance and renewal, constantly seeks the reconciliation of all peoples to God and to one another.

This ministry of reconciliation must be yours as well, not just in terms of regularly celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but also being reconciling women in a society so divided and torn apart. Your lamps must be lights of this reconciliation, not of course to draw others to you but to THE Light who came into the world.

Our Lady wants to draw all to Christ. May this Advent and Christmas Season be an occasion for you to join Our Lady in this ministry.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing



Inside this Issue

Page

Something Ancient-	
Something New	2
From the President's Journal	4
Upcoming Events	5
Announcements and News	6
Life Corner	6
Prepare the Way of the Lord	7
2018 U. S. Convocation of	
Consecrated Virgins	8
Consecration Announcements	10
Upcoming Consecration	10
Anniversary Reflections	11
Mary's Virginity as the	
Divine Shadow by Diane Farr	15

By Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman December 12, 2017

“Besides, we possess the prophetic message as something altogether reliable. Keep your attention closely fixed on it, as you would on a lamp shining in a dark place until the first streaks of dawn appear and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19).

These words were spoken by our first Holy Father, Saint Peter, whose election by the Eternal Father was confirmed in Caesarea Philippi when, in response to Jesus’ question, Peter acclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 16:17).

In the mystery of our faith, there is a sign of light dwelling in us: in the first place, through the sacrament of baptism, and later in our confirmation. This light appears in our life as a testimony of our faith in Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world (Jn. 9:5). The *morning star rising in our hearts* refers to Scripture as our continual light; it is a light in the darkness instructing us until the true light appears, the light which is Jesus himself. Ultimately, this describes the transformation of believers to immortality.

In our spirituality as consecrated virgins, the titles given to our Blessed Mother, the Queen of Virgins, offer a profound insight into what it means to *keep our lamps shinning in the dark places* of this world - those places enveloped in darkness of error from the “father of lies” (Jn. 8:44). An ancient title for Our Blessed Virgin Mother, *Stella Maris* (Star of the Sea), emphasizes her role as a sign of hope and love; she is a guiding star for Christians. The title *Stella Maris* is attributed to Saint Jerome and is later cited by Saint Paschasius Radbertus in the 9th century in his treatise about the nature of the Virgin Mary and the Birth of Jesus Christ. Another opinion states that Jerome himself interpreted the name “Mary” as meaning “star of the sea” or *Stella Maris*, by relating it to a Hebrew word for star, מאור (ma’or), from the verb אור (’or), to be light or to shine. (Arie Uittenbogaard, “Etymology and meaning of the name Miriam” *Abarim Publications*. Retrieved 20 October 2015).

As we consider the ancient titles of our Blessed Mother, we can also contemplate her as *dressed in stars* in several approved apparitions. Sometimes she used stars to guide to places where she desired to have a home among us, as was the case when she appeared in the sky as the Queen of Heaven and Earth, seated on a throne among the stars, leading Saint James to the Field of the Star in Spain (*Santiago de Compostela*). Sometimes she dressed with a mantle of stars, as we see in the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, with the moon below her feet, and in her appearance as Our Lady of Charity, with a crown of stars and the moon below her feet, in midst of the sea.

What a delicate expression of faith, hope and charity do we receive from the Eternal Father as he sends the Blessed Mother, who was assumed into heaven, to visit us on earth with words of consolation such as these spoken to St. Juan Diego:

“I am the ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God who is the Author of life, the Creator of all things, the Lord of heaven and earth, present everywhere. And it is my wish that here, there be raised to me a temple in which, as a loving mother to thee and those like thee, I shall show my tender clemency and the compassion I feel for the natives and for those who love and seek me, for all who implore my protection, who call on me in their labors and afflictions: and in which I shall hear their weeping and their supplications that I may give them consolation and relief....

Listen, and let it penetrate your heart, my dear little son; do not be troubled or weighted down with grief. Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain. Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under

my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?" (catholicism.org).

The Eternal Father had entrusted Mary with a mission for this visit, because the people were in need of a Visitation, just as had happened in the mountains of *Aim Karin* with her cousin Elizabeth. The dress of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as interpreted in Mexican culture, indicated that she was with child. Using this dress, our Blessed Mother desired to manifest her Child, just as she had in *Aim Karim*, so that the people would know her maternal love. She introduced the Divine Child to those who were divided due to misinterpretation of the True God, the Author of Life.

When the Virgin appeared in the bold ocean along the Island of Cuba, she did not speak with words. In those waters, she came as a sign of charity without words, but with actions. She presented herself in the midst of a huge torment of the sea. Three men in a boat were at great risk of death when suddenly the ocean in the bay became calm and the men discovered a statue fastened to a board with the inscription: "*Yo Soy la Virgen de la Caridad*" or "I am the Virgin of Charity." Much to their surprise, the statue remained completely dry while afloat in the water.

The Blessed Mother seems to like the mountains as a place to fulfill the mission of her Son. In her expression as Our Lady of Charity, as well as Our Lady of Guadalupe, she herself decided on the place where she requested that a home be constructed for her children who were in need. In both her advocacy as Our Lady of Guadalupe and as Our Lady of Charity, our Mother displays her singular care for the Church of her Son; she brings light to our needs and announces the power and glory of her Son. She opens doors of evangelization as she comes from the eternal home to visit our earthly home. She requests a "house" in order to make us aware of her constant intercession for us. Hope moves us to accept the Cross, and charity is the consolation in which we receive strength in the midst of the darkness of this world. Our Mother desires to assure us of Her powerful intercession, and her will is only to embrace the will of the Eternal Father: "I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk. 1:38).

In Wisconsin, Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke built a "house" for our Mother, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, settled amidst a beautiful mountainous landscape. In Miami, Florida, Cuban-Americans built a Sanctuary or "*Ermita*" to our Lady of Charity. Florida is not a landscape of mountains, but of SEA ... and here our Mother has her "house" near the ocean. Let us contemplate this mystery as we consecrated virgins plan to visit our Blessed Mother as the Virgin of Charity next summer, near the sea. She is the *Stella Maris*. She will show us her love, her protection, and her blessings in her unique way to say to us: "Do whatever He ask you to do" (Jn. 2: 5).



By Judith Stegman

As we begin this Advent season and a new liturgical year of grace, I am reminded of the many blessings for which I am so grateful. The most profound, and unexpected, of these graces in recent years has been the opportunity that my Divine Spouse has afforded me to pursue advanced studies in theology, and specifically in canon law. I have been asked by consecrated virgins to write a little about this journey, and perhaps this is the opportune time to do so, as I begin now the last phase of research and the writing of a doctoral dissertation.

Many readers of *The Lamp* know that I am a CPA by profession and for many years owned and managed an accounting practice in Lansing, Michigan that served a wide variety of individuals and small businesses with their accounting, tax, and payroll needs. I was consecrated in 1993 and in addition to many members of my family and parish, a good number of business colleagues and clients attended the consecration. The consecration focused my life on love for my Divine Spouse in the midst of the world, and I was drawn more deeply into the mystery of the Church as Bride of Christ. When I was invited in 1996 to assist with the start-up of this new association of consecrated virgins in the United States, I was pleased to be able to offer my accounting and business experience. My key focus in those early years, and even as I became president of the USACV in 2004, was to keep things running well and to develop the various tools we needed to serve well the vocation of consecrated virginity in this country. I sold my accounting practice in January 2004 in order to be able to devote the necessary time to our association (not many realize how much is involved in the work). I continued to work part-time as a CPA for the new owners of the firm. I was very content!

It came as a complete surprise – a happy surprise - sometime in 2011 when I was led by the Lord, through conversations with spiritual guides, to pursue theological studies in order to hopefully allow me to serve more profoundly the vocation of consecrated virginity. I completed the tax season of spring 2012, and based on counsel from the dean of the school of canon law at the Catholic University of America, I began the online Masters in Theology program at Catholic Distance University in May 2012. My goodness, was it a new experience for me to be writing and studying theology, rather than courses that involved numbers! My Divine Spouse took me by the hand and led me deeper into His heart through all of the courses and interactions (even though online) with those at CDU, and I am grateful. My Master's thesis was entitled, "Virginal Chastity in the Consecrated Virgin," and I graduated with the MTh in July 2014.

Our 2014 Convocation and Information Conference were held in Malvern, Pennsylvania, with just a weekend separating the two July events. Earlier in 2014, working with consecrated virgin, Magalis Aguilera, I had arranged for housing very near to CUA in Washington, D.C., knowing that I would begin study for a licentiate in canon law at CUA in Fall 2014. A family in Lansing helped to carefully pack a large rented van – towards the front were materials for the Information Conference; in the middle was a load of clothes and items for my DC apartment; and in the back were items we would need first, for the convocation. In that short weekend between conferences, Magalis, Mary Kay Lacke, and I headed to D.C. from Philadelphia and spent two nights in my new apartment, beginning the set-up. In August, with another rented van, this time one-way, I moved more things; Magalis and I ordered the bits and pieces still needed to make the apartment suitable for study. In D.C., I have continued work on a smaller number of income tax returns, and on the running of our association. I kept my home in East Lansing, with its lower level devoted to storage and office equipment for the USACV, and set up a secure network between there and D.C., in order to be able to communicate with our office assistant, who took on the

added responsibility of watching over the house while I was away. (Audrey has been another great blessing in all of this process.)

I have been in D.C. studying at CUA since Fall of 2014, and I can give only rave reviews for the faculty, staff, and entire program in the CUA School of Canon Law. Canon law involves a particular way of looking at theology, and the disciplined study has deepened my understanding of our faith and this holy vocation of consecrated virginity. It is enabling me, hopefully, to strengthen others in living vocations of love for the Divine Bridegroom. After a brief delay due to surgery, I completed the JCL degree program in December 2016. My JCL thesis was entitled, "The Meaning in Law and Tradition of the First Criterion for Admission to the Order of Virgins." This work contributed to the August 2017 completion of our USACV volume, *Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*.

With the JCL completed, I began doctoral studies in January 2017, and will complete the required JCD coursework this term (Fall 2017). My doctoral dissertation will also be on a topic related to consecrated virginity; the dissertation proposal has been submitted to the University for approval. I plan to spend 2018 writing the dissertation and hope to have it nearly completed by the end of 2018, at which time my term as president of the USACV will also have ended. I look forward to seeing how our Divine Spouse will lead me to serve our vocation in the future, for the glory of God. It is the prayers of family, friends, and consecrated virgins which have sustained me through these years, and I ask that you continue to remember me during this next year of writing.



USACV Council Members and Officers

**Judith M. Stegman, President, 2016-2018;
Diocese of Lansing.**

**Magalis Aguilera, Member-at-large, 2016-
2018 (Appointed Vice-President through
2018);
Archdiocese of Miami.**

**Margaret Flipp, Treasurer, 2017-2019;
Diocese of Arlington.**

**Marie Beccaloni, Member-at-large, 2015-2017,
(Appointed Secretary through 2017);
Archdiocese of Chicago.**

**Linda Ann Long, Member-at-large,
2017-2019;
Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.**

**Emily Byers, Member-at-large, 2018-2020;
Diocese of Lafayette in Louisiana.**



Upcoming Events Sponsored by the USACV

**2018 United States Convocation of
Consecrated Virgins**

July 6 to July 10, optional extension to July 13

**MorningStar Renewal Center, Pinecrest,
Florida, Archdiocese of Miami**

(See brochure, page 8-9)

+++++

**2018 National Information Conference
on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity
Lived in the World**

July 31 to August 3

**Bethany House, DeWitt, Michigan, Diocese of
Lansing**

Announcements and News

Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World

Volume Two of the *Ordo Virginum* series, entitled *Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*, is now available for order on the USACV website, consecratedvirgins.org. A number of dioceses in the country have ordered multiple copies for use in their formation work with those aspiring to the vocation of consecrated virginity.

USACV Photo Albums:

Anne Gishpert, our USACV archivist, maintains the Association “Family” photo albums. These albums travel to convocations and other important events. They include photos from convocations dating back to 1996, and they include photos and memorabilia from consecrations, with a page or two dedicated to each. Please do send your consecration memorabilia for these historic albums!

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:

February 2, 2018 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

May 31, 2018 Feast of the Visitation

September 8, 2018 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 12, 2018 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

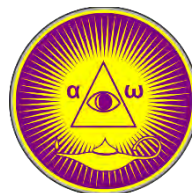
Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

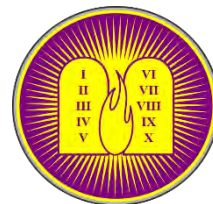
Shalina, during her recent stay with me before returning to Cambodia, shared much about the sex trafficking of children abroad as well as here in the States. As she spoke, I remembered the words of Mother Teresa: “If we would kill the innocent baby in

the womb of the mother, what would we not do?” The sex trafficking of children as young as three years of age is surely the consequence of the inhumane brutality of this mass killing of babies in the wombs of their own mothers. There are many pro-life advocates who stand strong and brave in the face of this evil and we must encircle them with our prayers so they don’t give in to discouragement. May Our Lady, Mother of Guadalupe, help the child victims, console them and give them hope and may all those chosen by God to join in an effort to rescue children respond with courage and a full heart under the grace of Our Lady’s maternal blessing.

O Antiphons



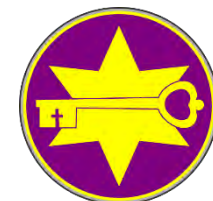
O Wisdom



O Adonai



O Root of Jesse



O Key of David



O Rising Dawn



O King of the Gentiles



O Emmanuel

Prepare the Way of the LORD! A Meditation for the Second Week of Advent, Year B

By Joyce Stolberg

Today, imagine that you are a faithful Jew, exiled in your youth and grown old in the pagan city of Babylon. Rather, perhaps, imagine that you are a second or third generation Jew who was born in Babylon and knew no other homeland. Your family had been doing well in Babylon and had achieved some wealth and influence. Your parents taught you the Jewish religion and customs but you also hung out with friends who did other things. Suddenly, the prophet tells you that you are about to be released and sent home to Jerusalem! (Chapters 40 through 55 of the book of Isaiah are called “Dutero Isaiah” and contain oracles written near the end of the Babylonian exile, 597 [587]-538 BC). Then a new king is seated on the throne in Babylon and he releases all your people to return to your [ancestral] homeland. Judea was your homeland or your parents’ or grandparents’ homeland, yet you are well aware that it was destroyed and forsaken, and you know that it would take a tremendous amount of hard work to rebuild it. Yet that very land is the sign of your covenant with God.

Isaiah's reading is a poem of joy announcing your release from exile. The highway is not built by bulldozers; it is a symbol of God's presence with his people moving from Babylon back to Jerusalem (like the pillar of cloud and fire in the desert). The joy of the Israelites’ repatriation is an anticipation of the coming of Christ in the flesh at Bethlehem and of the coming of Christ at the end of human history.

A voice proclaims:

In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!
Every valley shall be lifted up,
every mountain and hill made low;
The rugged land shall be a plain,
the rough country, a broad valley.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Isaiah 40:3-5



One year, as I was breaking open the Word with our RCIA catechumens, I asked them how they would feel if the above scenario happened to them. They all concurred that it would be, in their own single word, “bittersweet.” On one hand, resuming life in the city of Jerusalem and the land of Judah equated in the Jewish mind with God’s act of renewing his covenant with his people. Totally awesome! On the other hand, they would be required to leave behind the flourishing lives they had built for themselves, and everything they had ever known, in order to answer the call to start a new life of hard work, under very difficult circumstances.

The call to meet Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Bridegroom, at the moment of our death is something like that; it is the personal second coming of Christ for each of us. Jesus calls us from a relatively comfortable exile on earth to enter a land completely unknown to us, to be with him forever in heaven. For a consecrated virgin, who has been a living witness to the reality of this heavenly kingdom, that moment should be a totally awesome, unambiguous delight!

2018 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

July 6 – 10

2018 THEME:

*“Our Lady of
Charity, Model and
Queen of Virgins”*



LOCATION:
Morning Star Renewal
Center, Miami, FL

PROGRAM

- 7/6 Welcome (~ 4:30 PM)
Dinner
Holy Mass with
Bishop Boyea
- 7/7 AM: Presentations by
Bishop Boyea
PM: Visit Fairchild
Tropical Gardens
Adoration
Anniversary
Celebrations
- 7/8 AM: Mass with
Archbishop
Emeritus Favalora
(of Miami)
PM: Presentation on
this year's theme
Adoration
Talent Show
- 7/9 AM: Mass at Shrine of
Our Lady of Charity
PM: Visit Bayside
(enjoyable tourist
area on the Bay in
downtown Miami)
Lunch on your own
Boat ride on the Bay
Association Meeting
at MorningStar
- 7/10 AM: Closing Mass
with Bishop
Baldacchino
Brunch
PM: Departure at
noon for those not
remaining for
optional extension
(Flights should be
scheduled in the
afternoon/ evening.)

+ COST:

\$395 fee (+\$10 per night for private room) includes:

- accommodation (4 nights)
- all meals (except one lunch, Monday 7/9 in Bayside)
- admission & activity fees

Transport to/from airport:

van taxi cost is about \$50 each way. (We'll help arrange groups to share taxis.)

Please join us!

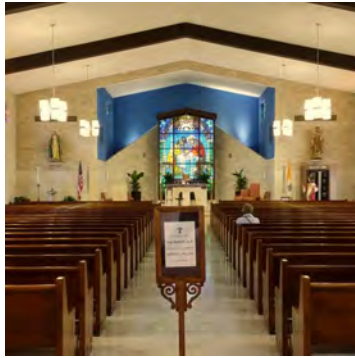
Those invited are consecrated virgins from any country. Candidates for the consecration who have attended a previous Informational Conference are also invited to attend.

In order to ensure that we have the minimum number of 30 participants, please e-mail Emily Byers (emily.claire.byers@gmail.com) to let us know your intentions about attending the convocation. Final registration forms will be available in March 2018. We hope you can join us in Miami!



COST of Extension Days:

\$330 fee, which includes:
accommodation for 3 nights, all meals (except one lunch on your own on 7/12 in Key West), transportation for day trips (as noted below), air boat ride in Everglades, and other activity fees.



Optional Extension Days

Tuesday, July 10 (afternoon) – Friday, July 13 (morning)

Tuesday afternoon 7/10

Key Biscayne: early afternoon at beautiful and historic St. Agnes Parish for adoration and parish visit.
Key Biscayne: mid-late afternoon to the beach and Bill Baggs park (lighthouse, trails).
Close with a barbecue at about 4 PM at a pavilion on the beach (MorningStar chef will travel with us).
Sunset drive back to retreat center.
Tuesday evening: free at MorningStar.

Wednesday 7/11

Morning: breakfast and morning prayer at retreat center; travel to Everglades.
Afternoon/evening: visit Everglades; airboat rides.
Late afternoon / evening Mass, Evening Prayer at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Miami.

Thursday 7/12

Morning: early breakfast; leave around 8:30 AM for Key West (3 hour drive).
Afternoon: visit in Key West, lunch, and tour on your own (with highlights noted).
Late afternoon Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Star of the Sea in Key West.

Friday morning 7/13:

Breakfast available. Departure to Miami airport.

Consecration Announcements

United States:

October 17, 2017 Vicky Kolman, Diocese of Colorado Springs, at the hands of The Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan.

November 18, 2017 Jennifer Sergio, Diocese of Lafayette in Indiana, at the hands of The Most Reverend Timothy Doherty.

Canada

October 7, 2017 Candia Fletcher, Diocese of Hamilton in Ontario, at the hands of the Most Reverend Douglas Crosby, OMI.

Upcoming U. S. Consecration

January 1, 2018, Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. Amanda Marie Schrauth, 12:00 Noon at St. Ann's Cathedral in Great Falls, Montana, at the hands of The Most Reverend Michael Warfel, Bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. All are invited.



Left to right: Bishop Timothy Doherty, Jenny, and Jenny's uncle, Bishop William A. Wack, CSC, new bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee.



Vicky Kolman was consecrated by Bishop Michael J. Sheridan at St. Mary's Cathedral, Colorado Springs, Colorado October 17, 2017



Four consecrated virgins now live in Colorado Springs: (L-R) Georgia Fucis, Vicky Kolman, Tara Stone, Joyce Stolberg

Anniversary Reflections: 25 Years

*Corinne Dudschus and Maureena Dudschus,
Archdiocese of Seattle, consecrated February 1, 1992*

We, Maureena and Corinne Dudschus celebrated 25 years as consecrated virgins on February 1, 2017. Our consecrated life means the world to each of us and we are so thankful to God. We kiss our rings every day, usually right after receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion at daily Mass. We both find it difficult to put into words what we feel and experience as consecrated virgins. But it is greatly felt in the depths of our hearts!

*Mary Kay Lacke, Diocese of Steubenville,
consecrated December 31, 1992*

I praise and thank my Loving Eternal Father for calling me to this blessed vocation. *Before you were born I knew you; before you were formed in your mother's womb, I called you*, the Lord told Jeremiah. I am not Jeremiah, but I know I experienced a call to consecrated life at the very young age of eight. Looking back, I responded in the only form of consecrated life I knew at the time, that of a religious sister. At seventeen I entered the convent and was a part of a religious community for nineteen years. These years were very formative for me and I am grateful for the foundation they laid in bridal spirituality with Christ, my Bridegroom. After I left my order, I continued to live a dedicated single life centered on a deep relationship with Christ.

I became familiar with the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world in 1984 when my dear friend, Isabel Bettwy, was consecrated. Later, in 1990, another beloved friend, Elsie Luke, was consecrated as a virgin at age 68. Both of these friends experienced the joy and strength of the Lord's spousal love as He called them to Himself through the consecration. During this period of time, I had been drawn by the Lord to a deeper and deeper union with Him that impacted all of my relationships with others. Through the help of good spiritual directors, my pastor and dear spiritual friends, I responded to the call to consecrated virginity lived in the world. At the

moment of my consecration as a virgin, the Lord spoke to my heart, saying, *You belong to me and I belong to you. Ask me whatever you wish and I will do it for you!* The joy of knowing Christ's love and the experience of spousal union were overwhelming. At that moment, my only wish was to be able to say, "Yes" to Him in every circumstance, every day, for the rest of my life.

Now, twenty-five years later, that is still my desire. There are so many implications that I could speak about, flowing out of the consecration, e.g. the impact on interrelationships, the approach to ministry in my parish and in the charismatic community to which I belong, and my outreach through an organization a group of us started in 2000 called Friends of Widows and Orphans.

Before I retired from Franciscan University of Steubenville in 2001 to take full-time care of my mother, I worked in various areas of ministry, the last one being as Dean of Student Evangelization. Although I worked at Franciscan before I was consecrated as a virgin, the consecration really provided a context for my ministry, i.e. as a spouse of the Lord. That spousal relationship is so sacred, so precious that it permeates every aspect of my life!

I have the privilege of having the Blessed Sacrament reserved in a chapel in my home. I also have the privilege of leading a small group in Morning Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, five days a week, before daily Mass at my parish, as well as the privilege of attending Mass seven days a week. I participate in Perpetual Adoration in my parish and I take communion to two nursing homes, at least one Sunday, a month, sometimes two, depending upon the number of Sundays in a particular month. All of these activities are an expression of the spousal union of Our Lord with me as His bride. I will be eternally grateful for the treasure of His love.

Finally, I have been involved with the USACV almost from its inception. This has truly been a blessing and a privilege for me. It is so marvelous to see the variety among the consecrated virgins and to witness the uniqueness of each one's call! Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your spousal love! Thank you, Beloved and Blessed Mother Mary for your maternal

care and your unique election by God as the first Consecrated Virgin Living in the World!

Anniversary Reflections: 10 Years

Karen Hund, Diocese of Erie, consecrated March 26, 2007

Many blessings to each of you! It has been ten years since I was consecrated as a Virgin Living in the World. It is amazing to think that ten years have passed, and they have been blessed years. So much has happened during these years. I had the joy of being a youth minister when I was consecrated, and so many of the youth (then they were youth) joined in the celebration. I thought then, and continue to sense the contradiction our consecration is to the world. The youth responded to that contradiction and saw the value of it in the face of our culture, and it gave them and me a moment to pause and affirm our commitment to be Christ-centered. Every day I am given the invitation to reaffirm that decision.

I chose the Feast of the Annunciation as the day for my consecration because I have always loved this feast. St. Bernard spoke of the world waiting in silence when Mary was asked by Gabriel to bear the Son of God, this longing is reflected in the song, "O Holy Night," but, consider the words being said as the world awaits the reply of Mary:

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

The world is waiting in silence, the angels are waiting in silence, for Mary's response. A response that would send the Savior, a response that would change the world forever, the old way would pass away and the world would never be the same again. A response that would bring salvation, forgiveness, a peace the world did not know since the Garden. Oh, how the world has been waiting for Mary's response. And Mary gives her consent, her *Fiat*, her YES! Mary's will was and is so united with the Will of God she could only respond, "Yes" with her whole

being. "Behold, you shall conceive and bear a Son, and He will be called the Son of the Most High." Mary, you are asked by Gabriel to be the Bearer of Jesus!

Gabriel also tells Mary that her cousin, Elizabeth, is to also bear a son, even in her old age. Mary goes "in haste" to be with Elizabeth! It is as though she puts aside her need and goes quickly to be with and attend to Elizabeth's need.

I have been invited to imitate this feast in my life. To wait in silence, in prayer, to hear the Word of God, to receive the Word of God through the sacraments of the Church so that my life may give honor and glory to God, if only in a small way. Through my vocation, I am asked to bear Christ to the world, to those in my life, in my Church, in my family, and among friends. I am asked to say my "Yes" to what God asks of me, even if it may not make sense at the time. I am asked to unite my will with the Father's will. Finally, I am to go "in haste" to respond to the needs of others and put their needs first. And, I am to go "in haste" to place prayers before God whenever I am asked to pray for another or am aware of a prayer need, just as Mary goes in haste to the Father and her Son still today when a prayer is placed in her hands.

Some of the ways I have done this is in ministering among the youth and the parish of St. Peter Cathedral through 2013. Then I had the privilege to walk with a person as a care assistant through her illness. Presently, I am among immigrants and migrants teaching English to them and helping them overcome barriers so they can live in the US in security and peace. I also teach two classes to help students obtain their GED's. I have had the honor of raising two boys who have special needs who would have otherwise been placed in foster care, with the support of Bishop Trautman (even though it is not common for a consecrated virgin to do so). I have taught religious education, led retreats, started a Sunday Soup Kitchen (as there were no meals in Erie for the poor on Sundays). I have grown in prayer, especially drawing closer to Mary as a virgin raising a son. I have made a Holy Hour weekly at our diocesan perpetual adoration chapel. I have the great honor of having the Eucharist in my home. I am an Extraordinary Minister of Holy

Communion for the parish, and I organize the Elijah Cup for the parish to pray for vocations to the priesthood. God has been so gracious to me through these years. God is faithful, and worthy of all praise.

Florence Sundberg, Archdiocese of Hartford, consecrated June 15, 2007

It's difficult to put into words what being the spouse of Christ means to me, how it has transformed and enriched my life, every aspect of my being – not all at once, but gradually. I heard the Lord calling me in early childhood; He gave me a heart not only for Himself but for the poor and lonely – the ones no one wanted and, even as a child, I wanted to reach out and gather them all into my heart so I could love them and let them know how very much they were loved by God. But my heart was too small and could not contain them all, it seemed. And so, I wandered far and wide, seeking the poor and the outcast and the oppressed. There were great joys along the way, and great and profound sorrows, for I did not have enough to give – my heart was too small. In Haiti and then with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, I tried to give, to serve more and more – but there were so many in need! And my heart was too small.

Then one day I was with friends gathered together for a shared meal; among them was Elizabeth Lee. During the meal Beth spoke of her vocation of consecrated virginity, but it did not strike a chord with me. We had a wonderful time together and when everyone left, I stayed behind to help clear up. But our friend who had brought us together, told me to let everything be and just sit for a while. I did. Then he looked at me and said: “What about you?” Just that. No more. But in that moment my heart leapt with joy and I knew – knew without a doubt - that I had found what I had been seeking all my life, that to which God had called me from the beginning of time: the call to be the spouse of His Son, Jesus the Christ, and the spiritual mother of His children.

With all my heart and soul, I said yes: ‘Fiat Mihi’ and was consecrated on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Since then, I have known the Lord Jesus in a deeper and fuller and more intimate way. And the sense of “spiritual motherhood” that has always been so much a part of me now caused me to embrace the

lost and lonely, the poor and oppressed, the persecuted and defenseless with greater love and joy. I am able to gather them all into my heart, for I found that my heart is no longer too small because His Heart is in my heart — two hearts in one Heart, and together we are able to gather in all who seek a “home,” a place of warmth. I know the call to generate Christ's life in every situation and in every person I meet, by the grace and generative power of the Holy Spirit.

I think of the words of St. John of the Cross: “Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. The nations are mine, the just are mine and mine are the sinners. The angels are mine and the Mother of God and all things are mine; and God Himself is mine and all for me, because Christ is mine and all for me. What more do you ask for or seek, my soul? Yours is all this and all this is for you...go forth and exult in glory!”

Kaye Downing, Diocese of St. Augustine, consecrated November 25, 2007

My First Decade - 10 Year Anniversary Reflection as a Consecrated Virgin

When I think of a decade I think of that beautiful series of prayers given to us by Our Lady that make up the Rosary. I am now at end of my first decade of my life as a Consecrated Virgin. Like the mysteries of the rosary, this decade, for me, has been a mystery to meditate upon. Why did our Divine Spouse select me – a weak person and a sinner? I still do not have the answer to this question. Perhaps, while still engaged in my Earthly life I will not have the answer until I meet Jesus in the next life.

Like any marriage, it is a time to really get to know your partner. My Divine Spouse already knows me but I am still learning about Him. Over the years my faith has been strengthened and my prayer life has grown. Jesus has become central to my life. I have found that I am happiest when I am either doing his work or praying. I have learned so much about him and yet there is so much that I do not know.

Do I feel special? I do because Jesus sent a special grace and calling to me. I thank him for doing so. I have also felt overwhelmed as consecration carries many crosses and responsibilities. I have found

that I must really work at “being a bride of Christ” since the world is so full of temptation and occasions for sin.

Being a Consecrated Virgin has brought fulfillment to my life as a Catholic, a person, and a woman. During these past ten years, I have experienced a love that I would have never experienced otherwise. Knowing that Jesus has a special love for me and that love continues to grow is very comforting as I move into the twilight of my Earthly existence. Sometimes I am so joyous because of that love that I feel as if I could burst. This happiness and joy cannot be adequately described, it must be experienced. I often wondered if Jesus has granted me a taste of what heaven is like. I hope that the love shared between Jesus and me will continue to grow throughout my life and in eternal life.

I am so glad that I said “Yes” to his proposal. I have no regrets. Words cannot adequately express what these ten years have meant to me. All I can say is “Thank you, Jesus for your love and your patience with me – a sinner.”

Anniversary Reflections: 5 Years

Janet Smith, Diocese of Lansing, consecrated January 21, 2012

Dr. Janet Smith recently responded to interview questions for National Vocation Awareness Week, and offers some of these responses as her anniversary reflection:

1) How did you discern the vocation of consecrated virginity? What drew you to it?

My years of teaching in the seminary and my respect for the commitment being made by the seminarians caused me to consider whether I had made the commitment to which God was calling me. At the prompting of a colleague, I went on several retreats including an 8-day retreat and a 30-day retreat with the Institute of Priestly Formation, which very kindly and wisely provides its services to seminary faculty. In the course of that, it became clear to me that Jesus wanted to make an honest woman out

of me; we had been cohabitating for years but he wanted to make our commitment formal!

2) What advice would you offer to women who are looking into this vocation?

Certainly, read a lot about it; talk to those who are living it; go on a retreat and see if God is calling you to it. I believe many of those called to this vocation are essentially living it before they consider it. That is, they have been living single-heartedly for the Lord for years and really do "belong" to him. When they hear about the vocation they have an "a-ha moment," this is what I am meant to do. Becoming consecrated formalizes the relationship with amazing graces that enable one to live the vocation more confidently, to have greater clarity and confidence. I had no idea how transforming it would be.

3) Any other comments you would like to add?

Shortly after my consecration I became very involved in the care of my mother who had dementia. It was a challenging and grace-filled period of my life. Some of the challenges were of the sort that I needed a strong advocate supporting me in my decisions. I do not believe I could have done what I needed to do before the consecration. I also believe it was the work of the Bridegroom, as Ephesians 5 would have it, sanctifying his spouse.

In every way my life is easier now knowing that Jesus is with me every step of the way. It is also harder, since Jesus expects a lot...



Mary's Virginity as the Divine Shadow

By Diane Christine Farr

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the masterpiece of God's creation and yet she lived a very hidden and simple life. At the Annunciation, her only question was in regard to how she would bear a child since she had not known man. This is how the angel responded to her question, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." Lk 1:35 This would indicate that Our Lady had a profound communion with the Holy Trinity. Her perfect and holy virginity was filled with the divine overshadowing of God's presence. As Mary pronounced her fiat, her will concurred perfectly with the Divine Will and the miracle of the Incarnation was accomplished. Mary was full of grace and she was perfectly oriented to God, including the spousal dimension of her being. The Divine Will formed the life of her soul and infinite love carried out its great work in her. In the glory of her virginal state and with an undivided heart, Mary became the Divine Shadow following God wherever he would lead her. In this shadow, God would find the beauty and the sanctity of His own Will. The likeness of His image was faithfully represented in the Immaculate Virgin. The richness of Our Lady's interior life is expressed in her Magnificot when she says, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior," Lk 1:47 The Virgin of virgins was filled with the Divine Being, leaving no room for self-preoccupation. Her contemplative heart overflowed with praise as she shared her joy with her cousin Elizabeth.

What follows is an excerpt from volume 15 of the diary of the Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta. The subject is true virginity as the Divine Shadow. Jesus says to Luisa,

"My Supreme Will always brings about the greatest works in souls that are virginal and unknown — and not merely those who are virgins by nature, but those who are virginal in their affections, in their heart and thoughts. True virginity is the divine shadow, and only by means of my shadow can I fecundate my greatest works. During the time when I came to redeem man there were pontiffs and authorities, but I didn't go to them because my shadow wasn't in them. So, I elected a virgin who was unknown to all, but well known to Me. If true virginity is my shadow, the fact that I elected an unknown virgin is because of divine jealousy. I wanted her all for Myself, so I made her unknown to everyone else. Because this heavenly virgin was unknown, I was able to make Myself known and to clear the way for everyone to learn about the Redemption. The greater work I want to accomplish, the more ordinary I make the chosen soul appear."

As consecrated virgins, our desire is to be faithful copies of our holy Mother Mary. Virginity is something we treasure and cultivate at every level of our being. We are careful to observe modesty in dress and maintain a continuous prayerful focus on our holy Spouse. It is Our Lady's special mission to draw all people closer to Jesus. As consecrated virgins we derive great benefit from spending time with her, pondering her life and unique relationship with God. She wishes to prepare us for a more profound intimacy with our Bridegroom. Jesus has sown the seeds of divine love in the depths of our hearts. It is through prayer and the work of divine grace that they have come forth and matured into the beautiful flowering of our holy vocation. As brides of Christ we see ourselves and find our life only in Him. This helps us to guard against pride and self-centeredness. The more fully we allow Jesus to take possession of our entire being, the more available we will become to the needs of other people. United with the Queen of virgins we strive to live in inseparable union with our Lord and Spouse. One is the Love, one is the Heartbeat and one is the Will that animates our life in Christ. The Divine Will makes us aware of the infinite love revealed in the various aspects of the Redemption. We receive all of this into our hearts and become intimately aware of Jesus' joys and sorrows. If we remain attentive with grateful hearts our beloved Jesus will always have many things to teach us about our special vocation in the Church. If true virginity is the divine

shadow, it is because Jesus Himself generates its beauty and its glory. We consider ourselves greatly blessed in having given our virginity exclusively to Jesus for He has filled it with the gift of Himself. We have inhaled the celestial fragrance of His own purity. Virginity preserved for God alone not only points to the dignity of women, but to the supremacy of divine love. Indeed, His Heart is our perpetual dwelling, and He has clothed us with His own holiness. We take to heart these words 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."

In all circumstances of our lives, Jesus remains our purest joy and our most profound peace. With absolute confidence we trust that the light of His face will illuminate our path as we follow the Divine Lamb into eternal life. With eager expectation, we await the day of eternity when we will behold the majestic beauty and purity of His Divine Gaze.



**Blessed Christmas
to All
and a Happy New
Year!**

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY
USACV
www.consecratedvirgins.org

**United States Association
of Consecrated Virgins
228 N. Walnut St.
Lansing, MI 48933
USA**

Email:
info@consecratedvirgins.org
President@consecratedvirgins.org

Fax: 253-270-5507

www.consecratedvirgins.org