

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

As I write you this note, the Michigan and Ohio bishops are preparing to go to Rome for the *ad limina* visit. In fact, on this very feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe we will be gathered in the Basilica of St. Mary in Rome for Mass at the crib of Jesus.

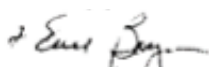
The most important parts of this pilgrimage will be Mass at the tombs of Saints Peter and Paul. There, you will be remembered in prayer. This visit will also include a gathering with Pope Francis.

This pilgrimage reminds me that your relationship with the Church is a vital part of your lives as Consecrated Virgins. It is not just your espousal to Jesus which defines you. In some ways, that could have taken place without a consecration by the Church. However, that the Church consecrated you means that the Church sets you up as an icon of her very self as espoused to Jesus Christ.

So please care for this Church we love so much: pray for her, sacrifice for her, and especially proclaim her beauty to all by the beauty of your own lives. In this way, you are manifesting what Jesus loves so much, his own body, the Church.

A Most Blessed Christmas and New Year to all of you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing



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Something Ancient, Something New

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

The Most Blessed Virgin Mary of Nazareth, Mother of God and Mother of the Church

Our Most Blessed Mother and Queen of Virgins is Mother of God and Mother of the Church. We follow our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, her Son, as she followed Him, with the logical exception that she followed Him in mystical obedience to the will of the Eternal Father from the very moment of her *fiat* when she accepted to be the Mother of His Son. She was prefigured by the Eternal Father as “the woman,” meaning either the Church Spouse of His Son or Mary of Nazareth, Mother of His Son: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Gen. 3:14-15).

Our Divine Lord was sent from heaven in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4) and fulfilled the promise of a Savior (*Salvator mundi*) that the Eternal Father made in Paradise from His eternal love and mercy for us. Saint Bonaventure teaches:

Just as man was formed from the earth on the sixth day by the power and wisdom of the divine hand, so at the beginning of the sixth age, the Archangel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin. When she gave her consent to him, the Holy Spirit came upon her like a divine fire inflaming her soul and sanctifying her flesh in perfect purity. But the power of the Most High overshadowed her (Luke 1:35) so that she could endure such fire. By the action of that power, instantly his body was formed, his soul created, and at once both were united to the divinity in the Person of the Son, so that the same Person was God and man, with the properties of each nature maintained” (Saint Bonaventure, *The Tree of Life*, trans. and ed. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press Inc, 1978) 127).

On behalf of readers, it might be noted that the author referred to “the beginning of the sixth age” because the Messiah was incarnated in the womb of Mary of Nazareth in the year 6 AD, when Judea became a Roman province, an event related to the census ordered by the Emperor Augustus Caesar.

Mary of Nazareth is The Mother of God. The title is associated with the Greek *Theotokos*, meaning “God-bearer,” and contains in itself the whole mystery of the Incarnation. It is derived from the teaching of the Fathers of the Church concerning the

exaltation and reverence due to Mary who bore the Messiah. She is called in the Gospels “the mother of Jesus”; Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, in the enlightenment of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as “the mother of my Lord.” In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly *Theotokos*, Mother of God (cfr. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 495).

In words of the Magisterium of the Church, Mary’s role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it:

“This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to his death”; it is made manifest above all at the hour of his Passion: “Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, joining herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim, born of her: to be given, by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross, as a mother to his disciple, with these words: ‘Woman, behold your son’ (Jn. 19:26)” (CCC 964, quoting *Lumen Gentium* 57, 58).

The Blessed Virgin Mary’s maternity is not only physical, in that the minimal requirement of virginity permits the Holy Spirit to integrate her soul with the grace of God in her decision to accept the will of the Eternal Father. She was not an unconscious instrument of the Father’s paradisaical promise on behalf of the salvation of humanity; rather, she knowingly and willingly conceived and bore the only begotten Son of God.

Mary’s dialogue with the Angel Gabriel revealed her physical virginity—that she had no marital intimacy with a man. She wanted to clarify that she was aware of what it meant to be a physical mother, but more than this, that she as a virgin had her heart full of maternal love. She knows that

true love comes from the Eternal Father’s love, and that virginal love is an open fountain coming from the Holy Trinity. She knows that her physical virginity must be complemented by a truly maternal love, and she fulfilled this in her *fiat*. In the answer that the Virgin Mary gave to God’s messenger, she



The Annunciation painted by
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo.

knowingly and willingly “was caught up into the miraculous activity of the Trinity enacting the Incarnation of the Second Person” (Thomas A O’Meara, O.P. *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (Seed and Ward, Inc., 1966).

The mystical experience in this celebration of the Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe is touched upon with Mary’s own words as she declares on the Tepeyac Mountain in Mexico, in December 1531, that she is the Mother of the Church. This manifestation of her love is not only an instrument for conversion but also for the mystical revelation of God’s salvation using Mary’s maternal love for God’s Son and for His Church. Her miraculous image shows her with child, declaring that the Mother of God is also Mother of the Church.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Mary asked for a house because a mother needs a home in order to show her Son’s love. She calls Juan Diego the visionary “Juanito,” or “little Juan,” as a mother might call him: “Juanito, my son, where are you going?” . . . She said to him:

Know for certain, dearest of my sons, that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God, through whom everything lives, the Lord of all things, who is Master of Heaven and Earth. I ardently desire a teocalli (temple) be built here for me where I will show and offer all my love, my compassion, my help and my protection to the people. I am your merciful Mother, the Mother of all who live united in this land, and of all mankind, of all those who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who have confidence in me. Here I will hear their weeping and their sorrows, and will remedy and alleviate their sufferings, necessities and misfortune” (Francis Johnson, *The Wonder of Guadalupe* (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1981).

Mary, Mother of the Church, was in the Upper Room with the Apostles assisting them with her maternal love for the Church. After Pentecost, every single time that the Church is most in need of purification and clarification of the doctrine of Jesus, the Holy Spirit raises up someone in the same power with which the apostles were invested at Pentecost.

A good example can be seen in the Holy Spirit’s raising up of Saint Ambrose at a time when the mystery of the divinity and humanity of our Divine Lord Jesus Christ was attacked. Ambrose was from a noble family and was governor of Milan in 374 AD, when a Bishop was to be chosen for that great See. As the Arian heretics were many and fierce in their attacks on the divinity of Jesus Christ, he was present to preserve order during the election. Although only a catechumen, it was the

will of God that Ambrose should himself be chosen by acclamation; and in spite of his utmost resistance, he was baptized and consecrated. Although he was condescending in things of indifference, he was inflexible in matters of principle.

Ambrose resisted the Empress Justina’s attempts to give one of the churches of Milan to the Arians.

Later, Ambrose wrote a letter to the Bishops, “By the grace of your words win over your people,” in which he expressed to them that they must be faithful to the Office given to them from the Eternal Father, resisting with firm conviction the attack of the evil one: “Take firm hold of the rudder of faith so that the severe storms of this world cannot disturb you. The sea is mighty and vast, but do not be afraid, for as Scripture says: he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. The Church of the Lord is built upon the rock of the apostles among so many dangers in the world; it therefore remains unmoved” (Saint Ambrose, Bishop Epist., 2:1-2,4-5,7: PL [edit.1845] 879, 881).

We need today the protection of our Most Blessed Virgin and Mother, as she gave to the apostles at the beginning of the Church, and as she does every single time the Church needs her presence and intercession.

As consecrated virgins, we are joined to the holy host of our Mother and Queen. The Immaculate Virgin Mary of Nazareth is Queen of Virgins and is thus our model and mystical mirror. She knowingly and willingly accepted the call to give herself to the will of the Eternal Father upon her—to fulfill the mystical call of intact perpetual virginity in the eternal motherhood of her being as the Mother of the Son of God, and thus the Mother of His Church.

We are called because she was called first. As she did, we knowingly and willingly, without any human force in our decision, accepted the Eternal Father’s call to be alone for His Son and His Church. We each made a free decision to embrace the eternal way of love, beginning in this mortal life.

Through the consecratory prayer, we received a “new grace” to live the virginal vocation. With this “new grace,” the Holy Spirit has consecrated our integral virginity and transformed each of us into a bride “to be one in Him forever” (suggested homily, Rite of Consecration of Virgins 16). Like our Virginal Mother, we are called to live spiritual motherhood in order to raise up the family of the Church. Love is decision, and our decision is empowered by our testimony to be bound with our Divine Lord and Spouse in His Church in a covenant to last forever.

By Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD

On November 9, 2019, the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (CCLV) held its annual meeting with representatives of consulting organizations to the CCLV. A small group “Consecrated Life” discussion, led by Cardinal Joseph Tobin, included the executive director of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the executive director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), a representative for the United States Conference of Secular Institutes, the president of the National Conference of Vicars of Religious, and the president of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins (yours truly).

Representing various forms of consecrated life in the Church, the five participants in our small group discussed “the reasons your organizations remain hopeful for the future of the Church.” It was a vibrant discussion, and each person spoke fervently of her reason for hope being Jesus Christ himself, who is ever faithful. Each participant described signs of hope manifest in living the essence of our specific vocations in consecrated life in the Church. In regard to the vocation of consecrated virginity, I noted the wide range of ways in which virgins seek to bring the presence of Christ as Spouse to the people to whom and with whom they minister: in the medical profession; teaching profession; hospice work; theology; fighting human trafficking; defending truth; canonical work; serving in dioceses and parishes; witnessing to Christ as Spouse in various secular occupations; and quietly serving in families and ministries unknown to many. Those living various forms of religious life and life in secular institutes shared similarly about the witness of their consecrated lives: we shared much more in common as members of consecrated life, than we have as differences. The distinctions among us are important as we fill out the Body of Christ, but the essential reason for our lives and witness is our love for Jesus Christ.

I have attended these meetings on behalf of the USACV for a number of years, and often the same people have been involved in the small group discussion. This year was a bit different, however, as what also seemed to animate our conversation was a concern that we should make efforts among us to keep the various forms of consecrated life in our country in contact with one another, so that we might encourage and assist one another in our mutual witness to Christ, as may be fitting. As a first step to deepening communication among us, the five of us (mentioned above) plan to hold a video conference call in January 2020. **I warmly invite consecrated virgins to offer any ideas you might have for deepening and fostering relationships with women in other forms of consecrated life in the Church.**

Many of our readers know already that I was awarded the degree of Doctor in Canon Law by The Catholic University of America after successful defense of my dissertation on

September 13, 2019. I am most grateful to have had the opportunity to study the law of the Church, specifically in light of the vocation of consecrated virginity. The title of my dissertation is “‘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*.” The dissertation is now available through ProQuest, and I hope to have printed copies available by the end of the year.

Thinking it may of interest to readers of “The Lamp,” following is a synopsis of the content of the dissertation, taken from the abstract—please just skip over this detail if this is not of interest.

Chapter one probes the theological underpinning of mystical espousal to Christ by examining the mystery of virginal nuptial love in the Most Holy Trinity, in the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in God’s bond with created man, revealed in both the Old and the New Testaments. Chapters two and three study ecclesial law and liturgy in the development of the *Ordo virginum* as a stable way of life, from the earliest days of the Church to today. Employing a canon-by-canon analysis, chapter four considers analogous application of marriage law in the 1983 Code of Canon Law to the mystical espousal to Christ that characterizes the *Ordo virginum*, and chapter five follows by considering an analogous application of the law on consecrated life to the *Ordo*.

The study concludes by proposing thirty-four principles to guide the development of norms for the *Ordo virginum* in the following areas: juridical/theological identity; validity of consecration; governance; admission and formation of candidates; obligations and rights of members; apostolate; and separation of members from the *Ordo virginum*. The theological-juridical approach of this canonical study is meant to contribute to the Church’s appreciation and safeguarding of the vocation of consecrated virginity as “among the most excellent gifts bequeathed by Our Lord to His Bride, the Church” (Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, decree *Novus consecrationis virginum ritus promulgatur*, May 31, 1970).

The rite of consecration to a life of virginity, validly conferred, effects a *true marriage* between a virgin and Jesus Christ, characterized by the essential properties of unity and indissolubility that characterize human marriage (see canon 1056). Likewise, validly conferred, the solemn rite of consecration constitutes the candidate *a sacred person in the Church*, in a form of life that is similar to (*accedit*) other forms of consecrated life. These two dimensions form the distinctive identity of the *Ordo virginum* in the Catholic Church. The consecrated virgin is a bride of Christ, a sacred person in the Church.

Announcements and News

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:

February 2, 2020 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

May 21, 2020 Solemnity of Corpus Christi

September 8, 2020 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

December 12, 2020 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Available:

Please check out our online USACV store for the following hot items at secure.consecratedvirgins.org:

- Recordings from the 2019 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins (DVD and CD) on *Ecclesia sponsae imago*.
- Recordings from the 2019 Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World
- Vocation Tree materials

BEST-SELLERS: *Ordo Virginum* series books:

Volume One: *An Introduction to the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*

Volume Two: *Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*

Note: There are also a limited number of copies of *Ecclesiae sponsae imago* available, in English and Spanish. Contact info@consecratedvirgins.org for information on pricing and availability.

Membership Reminder:

From [Francesca Riddick](#), membership chair of the USACV: If you have not yet registered as a 2019 Member or Friend of the USACV, we encourage you to do so soon, showing your support for the work of the USACV-IRC. Membership forms are available on the USACV website.

2019 Fall Election

Fall election ballots have gone out to members of the USACV eligible to vote for the new member of the USACV Leadership Team whose term will begin January 1, 2020, and to confirm [Joani McCann](#) as a member of the Leadership Team. Ballots are due back to [Diane Zervos](#) by December 13, 2019.

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 2018 and 2019 to send these so that she can update our albums. The "family" albums travel each year to our convocation and information conference, and always bring smiles and memories.

Upcoming Events

International Gathering of the *Ordo virginum* in Rome, called by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, in celebration of the golden anniversary of the renewed Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity. May 28 to May 31, 2020.

See article, page 14.

Note: Due to the Rome gathering, there will be no 2020 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins.

2020 Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World
tentative dates July 28 to July 31, 2020
tentative location in Diocese of St. Paul - Minneapolis

Consecration Announcements

Consecration Announcements:

The USACV invites dioceses and candidates for consecration to send announcements of upcoming consecrations, so that we can publish these in *The Lamp* and in a bi-weekly e-newsletter that is circulated among the consecrated virgin members of the USACV. Of course, after a consecration, we are also pleased to publish the announcement and photo(s) in *The Lamp*.

United States:

September 8, 2019 — Linda Ann Andrejek, Diocese of Joliet (IL), at the hands of The Most Reverend Daniel Conlon.

November 16, 2019 — Weena Isabelle Gaulin and Dawn Hausmann, Diocese of Lansing (MI), at the hands of The Most Reverend Earl Boyea.

December 8, 2019 — Taryn Watkins, Diocese of Peoria (IL), at the hands of The Most Reverend Daniel Jenky.

France:

September 14, 2019 — Annick Jehanno, Diocese of Nantes, at the hands of The Most Reverend Jean-Paul James.



Photos of the Consecration of Linda Ann Andrejek provided by Tom Killoran Photography.



Photos of the Consecration of Taryn Watkins provided by Taryn Watkins.

Photos of the
Consecration of Weena
Isabelle Gaulin and
Dawn Hausmann by
Tom Gennara.



Upcoming Consecrations

United States:

March 25, 2020 — Simi Sahu, 5:00pm at Emmanuel Catholic Church in Delray Beach, Florida, Diocese of Palm Beach (FL), at the hands of The Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito. All are warmly invited to attend.

May 24, 2020 — Skyla Chamard and Miriam Marston, 2:00pm at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Archdiocese of Portland (OR), at the hands of The Most Reverend Alexander Sample. All are warmly invited to attend.



In Memory of Our Deceased Sister

“It is these who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” (Revelation 14:4)

May the Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Spouse of virgins, welcome our recently deceased sister into the heavenly kingdom. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace.

**Helen Groudís — November 2, 2019
(consecrated October 19, 1998)**

Helen Groudís, 91, passed away on November 2, 2019 at a nursing home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor in Kansas City, MO. She died surrounded by the Little Sisters of the Poor praying for her, just as she always wanted it to be. Her funeral Mass was held at St. Regis Church, where she was a parishioner.

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 Amanda Schrauth (aschrauth@gmail.com).

2021 Holy Land Pilgrimage

A group of consecrated virgins of France are planning "Jubilate 2021," a celebration retreat in Jerusalem from January 23 to 31, 2021, to further celebrate the 50th anniversary of the renewal of the rite of consecration to a life of virginity. They are planning for 500 consecrated virgin participants from around the world. The program can be found at <http://bit.ly/HolyLand2021>. Registrations are being accepted now and the organizers need enough registrations by January 2020 to assure that the Israeli travel agency can confirm the terms and conditions they have offered for the retreat. Registration forms can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/HolyLand21>.

The most advantageous preparation we can make for Christmas is to immerse ourselves in the beautiful mystery of the Incarnation. We pray that the Holy Spirit will carry us into the depths of this mystery so that we may appreciate it all the more. We may lift joyful hearts to God as we listen to the choral music of the season. It is only the silent heart that enters into and comprehends the beauty of this music. These lines from “A Child My Choice” written by Saint Robert Southwell are most compelling. The consecrated virgin may easily make them her own. “I praise Him most, I love Him best, all praise and love are His. While Him I love, in Him I live, and cannot live amiss. Love’s sweetest mark, lauds highest theme, man’s most desired light. To love Him life, to leave Him death, to live in Him delight. He mine by gift, I His by debt, thus each to other due. First friend He was, best friend He is, all times will try Him true.” It goes on to say though young yet wise, though small yet strong, though man yet God He is. As wise He knows, as strong He can, as God. He loves to bless. His knowledge rules, His strength defends, His love does cherish all, His birth our joy, His life our light, His death our end of thrall.”

The consecrated virgin has fallen in love with Divine Love itself, the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ our Lord. She is drawn by the grace of the Divine Will into an exclusive spousal union with Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, and the light of the world. The bride of Christ contemplates the beauty of her heavenly Bridegroom, entering into all of the phases of His earthly life. She ponders all of His words and works, taking them into her heart. She always seeks the face of her Beloved pondering the work of infinite love. She knows that she can only reciprocate such love by always living in the Divine Will and possessing the same love within her from his own heart.

As consecrated virgins we pray that we might have the same dispositions of heart as Mary the virgin, mother of God. No one loved Jesus as did his mother for she possessed the divine will as the life of her soul. We have been given the tremendous gift of following Our Lady in loving Jesus in perpetual virginity. We may say of Our Lady and her Divine Son that in virginity she conceived Him, in virginity she bore Him and in virginity she remained as God’s holy tabernacle. In virginal simplicity we conceive our love of Jesus in our hearts and as consecrated virgins we bring Him forth with joy to all we meet. We feel honored to know no other bridegroom for the virginity of our entire being has become the possession of Christ our Lord and King. It is His holy presence that makes our virginal state something beautiful for His glory. There are heavenly joys flowing from the Heart of Jesus that His bride cannot express in words. Speaking of virginity, the homily for the rite of the consecration of virgin says, “When the fullness of time had come, the almighty Father showed in the mystery of the incarnation his love for this great virtue. In the chaste womb of the blessed virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word was made flesh in a marriage covenant uniting two natures human and divine.”

The Immaculate virgin received her life from the creating will of the most Holy Trinity and in turn Christ received His human nature from his mother. Thus, we must say that the beauty of the mother reflects the beauty of the Son and vice versa. The love between mother and Son was so great that everything He suffered was known by and shared by her. The sufferings Christ endured for our redemption were all voluntary. The divine Will operated perfectly in Christ by nature and in his mother by grace because of her Immaculate Conception.

Let us consider the opening lines of John's Gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:1-5

Given the fact that we were created through the Word of God, we should pray that our understanding be elevated to the purpose for which we were made. It is only in Jesus Christ the Eternal Word and Son of the Father that our life finds its rich meaning. We draw life from Him and the supreme light of His Divine Will illuminates our hearts. The Holy Spirit enlightens our minds enabling us to comprehend the beauty of the order and harmony that exists in the most Holy Trinity. This order and harmony was seen perfectly in the works of Christ in the power of His divinity working in and through His sacred humanity. Our Lord wishes to see His own divine sanctity reflected in our lives. We must allow Him to work in the depths of our soul so that we may possess truth, goodness and true wisdom. We desire to give him an unbroken and continuing requital of love. This may be achieved by uniting all that we do with His divine acts and living firmly rooted in His holy will. As brides of Christ we take into our own hearts all that He has done for us as He draws us into a closer imitation of His own life.



In Jesus Christ, true God and true man, we have the perfect Bridegroom to love. He is the all pure and all holy one. We render Him unceasing praise and gratitude for our sacred vocation. We live in a spirit of constant prayer and adoration. Our prayer is that all will come to know that we have all been created for a life of communion with God through Jesus Christ the Word Incarnate. May our lives be completely transformed in Him. We close this meditation with the final lines of "A Child My Choice." "Almighty babe whose tender arms can force all foes to fly, correct my faults, protect my life, direct me when I die."

Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2019 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*.

Anniversary Reflections: 35 Years

Submitted by Isabel Bettwy
Diocese of Steubenville (OH)
(consecrated September 15, 1984)

“Listen to me, all you who revere God, let me tell you what great things He has done for me, alleluia.” (From the Office of Readings for today, the 24 Sunday in Ordinary Time.)

September 15, 2019: Thirty-five years ago today, Bishop Albert Ottenweller (RIP) consecrated me according to the Canonical Rite of consecration of a woman living in the world. I had been a member of the Mother Seton Sisters of Charity, Seton Hill, Greensburg, PA for 33 years and knew that my time with them was to end. I was being called to live out my vows in a different situation. When I consulted Bishop Ottenweller about this change in my life, he suggested the consecration of a woman living in the world, saying “This is perfect for you.” The Rite was fairly new at the time and not well known at all. After the ceremony of consecration, my mother remarked, “What you did tonight was much more than what you did as a Sister of Charity.” She recognized the permanence of the consecration and its impact on my future life in the Church.

Much has happened during the past 35 years, but the underlying factor through all the events, changes and situations is God’s faithfulness to me,

His provision for my life and for His never ending offering of grace and mercy. My heart is full of gratitude for His love and for the support I have experienced during these 35 years from family and friends. I echo St. Faustina’s prayer: “O Jesus, eternal God, thank You for Your countless graces and blessings. Let every beat of my heart be a new hymn of thanksgiving to You, O God. Let every drop of my blood circulate for You, Lord. My soul is one hymn in adoration of Your mercy. I love You, God, for Yourself alone.” (Diary 1794)

Anniversary Reflections: 30 Years

Submitted by Theresa Marshall
Diocese of Lansing (MI)
(consecrated June 3, 1989)

Some Thoughts on My 30 years

My vocation is a merciful gift from God the Father, and the best decision I ever made in my life. Thirty years is a long time for me and yet I feel like it was yesterday I received the consecration. I have had nothing but grace upon grace, love over love. Jesus thirsts for me and I know it each day. Sometimes that overwhelming love has caused me to run away, avoiding the responsibility of love to cling to self-love. But that is my life work to overcome self-love and put the love of Jesus in its place. To give Jesus my love and company is my purpose.

But Mother, Queen of Virgins, is my guide and help always. She helps me love Him with greater perfection. I ask her to help me love Jesus as much as she does. My patron saint, St. Therese, does too. She is always near to help me pray and offer small sacrifices to Jesus. So what can I say

regarding something like love so profound, it fires the soul until the heart runs deep and opens up to be transformed for love, by love, and in love.

The most important thing in a relationship is spending time on it. For my beloved Jesus, it means keeping prayer time a priority no matter what. Having as much time to pray as I can and staying close to his Sacred Heart even in the wound of His heart while living in His presence during the day. Praying makes all the difference. It is there that wars are won, healing, deliverance from evil, comfort, miracles through His love. The rest of life involves engaging the power of his love for the transformation of the world.

Life has many ups and downs but Jesus is always the same, loving, merciful, trustworthy and just. He is captivated by us because of his love for each of us. Trust pleases Him and fear disappoints Him. But He can transform fear into faith when we ask. So I work on trusting Him for the small and big things. Praying for all those He has given me to love and asking our Lady and the Holy Spirit to help me do whatever He tells me. And believe me, there is plenty to do.

Come, Desire of Nations, Come, Lord Jesus.

Anniversary Reflections: 15 Years

Submitted by Alice Claire Mansfield
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (TX)
(consecrated May 8, 2004)

In lieu of an anniversary reflection, Alice Claire submitted the following prayer, so appropriate for Advent.

THE SILENCE OF MARY

Dearest Mother Mary, you who treasured all things and pondered them carefully in your heart, teach me that deep, interior silence of yours which enfolded you throughout your lifetime:

the silence of the Annunciation – of faith, mission and obedience;

the silence of the Visitation – of humility, service and praise;

the silence of Bethlehem – of birth, incarnation and wonder;

the silence of the flight into Egypt – of perseverance, hope and trust;

the silence of Nazareth – of simplicity, intimacy and communion;

the silence of Mt. Calvary – of courage, death and abandonment;

the silence of Easter – of resurrection, jubilation and glory;

the silence of Ascension – of fulfillment, transformation and new creation;

the silence of Pentecost – of peace, power and love.

Mother of Christ, kindly give me the wisdom to learn that true silence of yours which enables me to listen to the small, still voice of our God; which compels me to worship Him alone in spirit and in truth; which empowers me to humbly acknowledge my nothingness yet confidently exult in our Savior; which frees me to lose myself in unceasing adoration of HIM who is INFINITE LOVE. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me now and always, that I may enter into that silence of yours which unites me to your Beloved Son Jesus in the mystery of His silence before the Father of mercies. Amen.

Anniversary Reflections: 10 Years

Submitted by Marion Strishock
Archdiocese of Washington (DC)
(consecrated March 1, 2009)

I can't believe it's been 10 years since my consecration. It is still the happiest day of my life and I am so grateful to God for the blessing of my vocation. I look for God in the ordinary events of my life and I encounter him in my daily tasks, much like Mary did in her hidden life in Nazareth.

I am fortunate to have both of my parents living. My mother is homebound and my father is in his nineties. I struggle to balance work, household chores, volunteer activities at my parish and spending time caring for and assisting my parents. I see God's love in the many ways my father shows his love and devotion to my mother. It mirrors the love that our Divine Spouse has for us and the way God supports me in the challenges He gives me.

I teach 165 middle school students. They are full of enthusiasm and keep me young. When I first started teaching, all of my students were Catholic. Now my students include some non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians. It makes it more difficult to teach Religion in a classroom of varying degrees of knowledge, but it is very fulfilling. I have had the joy of seeing some students receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, and each year about 58 students receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

Teaching youth and the on-going purification and renewal of the Church remind me of the importance of setting a strong Christian witness. God worked through great saints, like St. Catherine of Siena, and He can do the same with each of us. It reinforces the duty we have to pray for the Pope, our bishops and priests. Daily Mass and Eucharistic

Adoration sustain me and I trust in God's divine plan.

Submitted by Noemi Angeles
Diocese of Honolulu (HI)
(consecrated March 8, 2009)

It was exactly the beginning of the Advent Season in 2008 when I interviewed with Bishop Larry Silva of Honolulu. I had been discerning for 3 years for the vocation of a Consecrated Virgin Living in the World. The event of my interview remains vivid in my memory and imprinted in my heart. The canonization of Blessed Damien of Molakai had been approved and it was scheduled for the following year. I prayed fervently with my whole heart, soul and strength in front of the tabernacle for an hour and asked for the intercession of Our Lady, Queen of Virgins, the Virgin saints and Blessed Damien of Molakai to grant the deepest aspiration of my being and the purpose of my life, to become consecrated to our Triune God, belonging to Him alone, to love him wholly and completely and to do with me as He pleases. The time for the interview came and I was anxious and uncertain, thinking will the bishop know what to do with me or my request. As I entered Bishop Larry Silva's office he met me, shook my hand and the first words he uttered were; "I just met Judith Stegman, the president of United States Association of Consecrated Virgins last week during one of our meetings." You can't imagine the relief I felt, rolling my eyes upward to heaven in gratitude with hopeful anticipation of that "YES" that I've been praying for. It was definitely the hands of Providence leading, guiding, managing, creating and even transforming. The rest of the interview was unbelievable! The bishop started talking about the

Rite of Consecration immediately after he told me that I met all the requirements and the recommendations were all very good. At this point I believed firmly that my request was granted. I am going to be the first consecrated virgin in Hawaii. I was given several choices for my day of consecration. I couldn't do it in a month so I grabbed the opportunity to be consecrated on the Second Sunday of Lent because the Gospel reading is the Transfiguration. I was certain that the Holy Spirit was doing wonderful things in my life. The significance and meaning of the Transfiguration event in the life of Jesus and the apostles was not lost to me. This transfiguration event has been given to many saints and available to everyone, some more profoundly more than others. For St. Catherine of Sienna it was the offer of both the crown of thorns and the crown of roses, she's exceptionally gifted though. I was consecrated on March 8, 2009 at Our Lady of Peace Cathedral. I prostrated at the same place where St. Damien of Molakai prostrated and was ordained a priest.

Like any follower and more so as a consecrated bride of Jesus, the transfiguration is the front, center and goal of my life because union with Jesus is the first and the final cause. He is my ultimate happiness, my deepest desire.

It is not for the faint hearted because the journey can be from Tabor to Golgotha. To be conformed to Jesus is to deny oneself daily, picking up and carrying the cross daily. Always straining to Jesus Himself who is all in all, no matter what the circumstances are, whether in illness, disability, trials, dryness in prayer, darkness in spiritual life or just the daily challenge of being in the world but not of the world, especially in our current ethos of

relativism. One of the biggest challenges for me is adjustment from a cloistered religious life to secular life. My journey of consecration has been long, arduous but also very blessed. I was born and grew up in the Philippines, became a nurse to serve the suffering people of God came to the US and ultimately only desired to be consecrated to God.

Being a consecrated virgin living in the world is then the fulfillment of my desire and purpose of my being. It is my being. It is an immense and beautiful gift. It has given tremendous joy especially when I am with my sisters with the same vocation. I feel united with them in one mind and heart. With God's grace, fidelity to our way of life, of receiving the daily Eucharist, prayer whether vocal (liturgy of the hours) contemplative or Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, intercessory prayers for the salvation of souls and for Church especially our bishops and our particular dioceses, works of mercy, striving always to grow in charity and in friendship with God and guided by the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience it is not only possible but we can already live heaven here on earth. We have our Blessed Mother and the virgin saints to guide and intercede for us. Our Divine Spouse is always faithful, provides, cares and loves us to death.

I ask you all dear sisters to pray for me as I pray for you.



Rome 2020 Meeting of the *Ordo Virginum*

International Meeting of the *Ordo virginum*
Rome May 28-31, 2020, the Solemnity of Pentecost
Auditorium Antonianum – Viale Manzoni 2



The Spirit and the bride say, “Come”! Maranatha! (Rev. 22:17)

Ordo virginum 50 years after promulgation of the renewed Rite

Updated — Important Planning Notes:

(Quotations are taken from a “Useful Information” sheet provided by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, available at: <http://bit.ly/2020Rome>.)

1. *Letter of invitation*: The Office of the General Secretary of the USCCB forwarded a letter to all United States Bishops from His Eminence João Braz Cardinal de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), in which His Eminence extended an invitation to an international gathering to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the *Ordo Consecrationis virginum*.

2. *Who is invited*: “The meeting is reserved for women who are already consecrated, diocesan Bishops and episcopal delegates for the *Ordo virginum*.”

3. *The program*: “The Meeting aims to be a celebration, remembering and sharing the journey made by the *Ordo virginum* in these fifty years, exploring how this form of consecrated life is present today in the Church and in the world and fostering a discussion to guide the journey into the future. The theme chosen for the Meeting recalls the pneumatological, christological and ecclesiological foundation of this vocation, as well as the prophetic and eschatological tension that animates it. The program includes, in addition to liturgical celebrations, other moments of common prayer, and a meeting with the Holy Father. Through theological interventions, testimonies of some consecrated virgins and diocesan Bishops, the following thematic groups will be considered:

- The revision of the *Ordo Consecrationis virginum* in the context of the liturgical reform desired by Vatican II
- The flowering anew of the *Ordo virginum* from 1970 to the present, as a charismatic richness at the service of the Church’s mission
- Membership in the *Ordo virginum* as an experience and school of communion with the church
- The roots of the *Ordo virginum* in the local Church, as a principle of a distinctive formative teaching

There will also be a presentation of the current state of the *Ordo virginum* in the world, to be prepared using the information sent from each country by January 20, 2020.” (Note: the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations is collecting information from all U.S. Diocesan Bishops in order to respond to the CICLSAL survey on the current state of the *Ordo virginum* in the United States.)

4. Registration: Registration forms are to be completed and received by CICLSAL no later than January 30, 2020 from the designated official representative for each country.

- For the United States, the designated representative is Judith Stegman, who is being assisted by Joani McCann.

- **Registration forms should be sent as soon as possible to Joani McCann, and must be received by January 25, 2020. Send completed registration forms to Joani at joani.mccann@gmail.com or 188 Madison St., Dedham, MA 02026. Registration forms can be obtained from Joani or be accessed on the USACV website at bit.ly/USACV2020.** To date, 29 United States consecrated virgins have indicated interest in attending (25 have registered).

- The maximum total number of participants will be about 600/700. After receiving the registrations, CICLSAL will send confirmation of the number of consecrated virgins who can participate from each nation. Judith Stegman / Joani McCann will communicate this information to consecrated virgin participants in the United States.

- As a guide, the registration fee will be 150 / 200 Euro, which will cover expenses, including the cost of some of the meals according to the program, to be determined at a later date.

- Registration and payment of the fee must be completed by March 1, 2020. Details of the exact amount of the payment and how it is to be made will be communicated later.

5. Translations: Simultaneous translations will be offered in Italian, English, Spanish, French, and German.

6. Travel and housing: Travel to and from Rome, transportation in Rome, housing and meals in Rome, are on your own.

- Consecrated virgins interested in sharing housing at the *Santa Maria alle Fornaci* in Rome should contact Joani McCann, to let her know: a) single room or shared double room; and b) expected dates of arrival and departure. A limited number of rooms are available and Joani needs to confirm reservations in December. Requests will be considered on a first-come, first-serve basis.

- We are looking into arranging private bus transport between the *Santa Maria alle Fornaci* and the *Antonianum*.

7. Other notes:

- The USACV-IRC continues to investigate options for post-meeting pilgrimage days in Rome on June 1 and June 2, to possibly include visits to the Basilica of Saint Agnes Outside the Wall, the Basilica of Saint Cecilia in Trastevere, and Sant'Agata Dei Goti, the titular Church of Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke.



- TO DO list for consecrated virgins interested in the Rome 2020 Meeting:

1. Registration form is due to Joani McCann ASAP (final due date January 25, 2020).
2. Contact Joani McCann ASAP if interested in shared housing at the *Santa Maria alle Fornaci*.
3. Contact Joani McCann if interested in Rome pilgrimage days June 1 and June 2.
4. As soon as available, pass along your Rome travel information to Joani McCann.

By Florence Sundberg

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart" (Jeremiah 1:5). If we are truly aware of just how powerful God's personal love for every human being is, and how He gave his only Son up to death on the Cross that we might have life to the fullest, we would support and protect life at every stage of being, from conception to natural death. The enemies of life are powerful and very vocal; those who stand with the Father of all creation need to be even more vocal, more committed in prayer and in action in the

defense of life. If we do not together take up this cause to protect and defend the sanctity of all life then all that is good and sacred will not be able to stand against the forces of evil. Before all else we must pray, and pray fervently, that God will show us our part in the battle for goodness, for life and then we must have the courage and commitment to do whatever He asks of us on behalf of His children who are in danger in the womb and after birth. The powers of evil which are so prevalent in our culture today will fall only if we stand in and with Christ, His Church and with each other. May God who is the Father of us all, empower us to know His will and then to carry it out no matter the cost, even to the giving of our lives. Cardinal George, before he passed away, spoke about how we would be persecuted and imprisoned and even put to death for our faith, for to live our faith to the fullest is a martyrdom of the soul. Oppression and persecution of 'goodness' is being experienced globally beginning with the baby in the womb of the mother. We who are espoused to Christ and spiritual mothers of His children, have a profound responsibility to life – Christ's life in each human being created in the image and likeness of God. They are ours simply because they are His.

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

USACV Leadership Team

Linda Ann Long (2017)-2019; Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis (MN). (*Communications*).

Emily Byers (2018)-2020; **Secretary of the USACV-IRC**; Diocese of Lafayette (LA). (*USACV Online Presence*).

Francesca Riddick 2019-2021; Diocese of Joliet (IL). (*USACV Membership and eTapestry*).

Amanda Schrauth 2019-2020; Diocese of Great Falls-Billings (MT). (*Publication of "The Lamp"*).

Joani McCann 2019-2020; Archdiocese of Boston (MA). (*Convocation Liaison*).

IRC Leadership Team

Magalis Aguilera; USA, Archdiocese of Miami (FL).

Judith Stegman, **President of the USACV-IRC** 2019-2025, **Treasurer** 2019-2020; USA, Diocese of Lansing (MI).

Maria Luisa Meza; EL SALVADOR, Diocese of Santa Ana/San Miguel.

Maria Luisa Oefe; GERMANY, Diocese of Regensburg.

Renu Rita Silvano; INDIA, Archdiocese of Bombay.

Other USACV-IRC Services, among others

Mary Kay Lacke; Information Conference director.

Theresa Marshall; Information Conference coordinator.

Margaret Flipp; assistant treasurer.

Anne Gishpert; archivist.

Elizabeth Lam; website coordinator.

Florence Sundberg; prayer chain coordinator.

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY



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