

December 12, 2020 — Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

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

In our diocese we have begun the Bishop's Year of the Bible, BYOB, if you can believe it! That was our promo person's notion! Yet, this is a good occasion to be even more attentive to Scripture, not only during this Advent season but during the entire coming year. I really do believe that since Jesus is the Word of God, that the Scriptures, which we call the Word of God, really are a manifestation of Jesus himself. To deepen your love for your Bridegroom, Jesus, please delve more into the Holy Scriptures.

Particularly, I hope you enjoy the Scriptures and antiphons of this season, such as:

"Daughter of Jerusalem, rejoice and be glad; your King will come for you. Zion, do not fear; your Savior hastens on his way."

"Rejoice and be glad, O Daughter of Zion; I will come and make my dwelling in you, says the Lord."

"Your light will come, Jerusalem; the Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty."

On a separate note, I offer a few gentle words of encouragement in building each other up as well as any candidates of this vocation. As Saint Paul writes to the Ephesians (4:29): "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." We should always try to avoid making public judgments about another. Should we have real concerns with some degree of certitude, they should be directed privately to the bishop.

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

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Earl Boyea

Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing

Inside this Issue

	Page
Something Ancient -	
Something New	2
From the President's Journal	5
Note from the Archivist	6
Consecration Announcements	7
Voice of the Bridegroom	8
Life Corner	9
2020 Information Conference	10
USACV-IRC Leadership Team	10
Anniversary Reflections	11
In Memory of Our Deceased Sisters	14
Pope Benedict XVI to Virgins in 2008	15
Announcements	16
Leadership Team Nominations	16
Membership Reminder	16

Something Ancient, Something New

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

Our Most Blessed Mother's Feast of her Immaculate Conception is celebrated because it was at the very moment that Mary of Nazareth was visited by the Archangel Gabriel, as messenger of the Eternal Father, that His long-ago promise was made a reality—the promise made in the lost garden when Adam and Eve closed its door with their disobedience. Our Blessed Mother's obedience and humility are the powerful weapons by which the devil is forever placed below her feet. This is the history of Mary of Nazareth: she is the docile instrument of the Eternal Father in His plan of salvation, as she accepted in her free will to be the mother of His only begotten Son, sent for our salvation. The image of our Mother in her unique apparition as our Lady of Guadalupe is the image of a mother with child, as at the Annunciation; her dress was that of a woman with child in the Mexican culture. She was dressed with stars patterned in reflection of the exact constellation in the sky at that moment in history, and she appeared standing over the moon with an angel carrying her celestial image.

In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception—that Mary, as the Mother of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, was free of original sin at the moment of her conception. The feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated on December 8, and the birthday of Mary has been celebrated on September 8 since the seventh century.

In 1910, Our Lady of Guadalupe was declared Patroness of Latin America by Pope Saint Pius X, and in 1945 Pope Pius XII declared her to be the Empress of all the Americas. On January 22, 1999 Pope Saint John Paul II named Our Lady of Guadalupe patron of the Americas and raised her feast on December 12th to the rank of a solemnity throughout the Americas.

Our Blessed Mother is called “blessed by all generations” as was foretold to her by the Holy Spirit after her cousin Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had called her “the mother of my Lord.” Mary was carrying the Divine Redeemer in her womb when the child listening from her cousin's womb heard his mother name Mary “the mother of my Lord,” and he leapt with joy! John was sanctified by the Child Jesus, who did this first act of redemptive work from His Mother's womb. Truly, she deserves a special cult among all the saints: Saint Thomas of Aquinas said that Mary, as the holiest of all creatures, is venerated

with a special cult, “hyperdulia.” The main events of Mary's life are thus celebrated as liturgical feasts in the universal Church.

Let us offer a special interpretation of our Mother's life as a model for the lives of consecrated virgins. According to tradition, Mary has been declared the daughter of Saints Joachim and Anne; she was born in Jerusalem, presented in the Temple and took a vow of virginity. We know that living in Nazareth, Mary was visited by the Archangel Gabriel, who announced that by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, she would become the Mother of Jesus. From that day forward, Mary of Nazareth began her donation to her child, in the manger and in her suffering with His suffering on the Cross. In the Church, especially in its earliest days, virginity and purity were understood as great spiritual gifts. Both were praised as some of the highest ways a person could imitate Christ and devote themselves to serving him.

When we meditate on the life of our Blessed Mother, we see that it is illuminated by her infinite love for the Eternal Father's will that she be the mother of His Son, and by her infinite love for her Son and for the Holy Spirit who overshadowed her.

How did Mary of Nazareth, a virgin of twelve or thirteen years, have the fortitude to declare her *fiat*, her “yes”? The Eternal Father never asks of us more than we as human beings can tolerate, and thus He sent an angel, the Archangel Gabriel, who visited and comforted Mary of Nazareth, that she might be free to offer her “Yes.” He comforted her and she had the complete knowledge that the Eternal Father would send His angels to protect her son in her womb and to protect him later when Herod sought to kill him. She suffered a true martyrdom in her heart; the Eternal Father never abandoned Her because she was the New Arc of His Covenant, the New Eve, and the Mother of all mortals in her motherhood of the Church.

Likewise, as with our Blessed Mother, the intervention of angels was present in the lives of the virgin martyr saints of the ancient Church. The work of angels in the mystery of salvation is to help to manifest the power of God and to manifest the work of God in the holy Church of Jesus Christ. Angels were created to protect us from the wickedness of the devil, and virgins of the early Church were assisted by angels as they demonstrated fortitude in closeness to the example of our Blessed Mother. The mission of angels

is sometimes not clearly taught, and we would like to clarify points about the celestial hosts by discussing how virgins were assisted by angels at the very moment of their martyrdoms.

Saint John Paul II offered three catecheses about the Angels (cf. "Catechesis on the Holy Angels" given at six General Audiences from 9 July to 20 August 1986). He explained:

"God at the beginning of time created from nothing *both creatures* together, the *spiritual* and the *corporeal*, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and thus He created human nature as having both, since it is made up of spirit and body" (Constitution *De Fide Catholica*, DS 3002). In other words, God created both realities from the very beginning—the spiritual reality and the corporeal, the earthly world and the angelic world. He created all this at one and the same time (*simul*) with a view to the creation of man, constituted of spirit and matter and set, according to the biblical narrative, in the framework of a world already established according to His laws and already measured by time (*deinde*). Jesus Himself, referring to the condition of the angels, will say that in the future life, those who are risen 'cannot die anymore, because they are equal to the angels' (Lk. 20-36).

As creatures of a spiritual nature, the *angels are endowed with intellect and free will*, like man, but in a degree superior to him, even if this is always finite because of the limit which is inherent in every creature. The angels are therefore personal beings and, as such, are also 'in the image and likeness' of God. Sacred Scripture refers to the angels also by using *terms* that are not only *personal* (like the proper names of Raphael, Gabriel, Michael) but also "collective" (like the titles: seraphim, cherubim, thrones, powers, virtues, dominions, principalities), just as it distinguishes between angels and archangels. While bearing in mind analogous and representative character of the language of the sacred text, we can deduce that these beings and persons, *as it were grouped together in society*, are divided into orders and grades, corresponding to the measure of their perfection and to the tasks entrusted to them. The ancient authors and the liturgy itself speak also of the *angelic choirs* (nine, according to Dionysius the Areopagite). We must now let ourselves be guided by Divine

Revelation in our exploration of the other mysteries of our salvation. We have now received a truth which must be profoundly important for every Christian: that there are *pure spirits*, creatures of God, initially all good and then, through a choice of sin, irreducibly separated into angels of light and angels of darkness. And while the existence of the wicked angels requires of us that we be watchful so as not to yield to their empty promises, we are certain that the victorious power of Christ the Redeemer enfolds our lives, so that we ourselves may overcome these spirits. In this, we are powerfully helped by the good angels, messengers of God's love, to whom, *taught by the tradition of the Church*, we address our prayer: "Angel of God, who are my guardian, enlighten, guard, govern and guide me, who have been entrusted to you by the heavenly goodness. Amen".

The mission of the angels, as Saint Pope John Paul concluded in his catechesis, is to be my guardian, to "enlighten, guard, govern and guide me." In the terrible moments of their expositions to death in a place of "recreation" (i.e., in the Roman colosseum), the early virgins were assisted by powerful celestial hosts before and during the cruel martyrdom. As consecrated virgins, we are assured of special protection by the angels. We can look to the explicit experience of the virgin martyrs of the ancient Church. We also are witnesses to the life to come, where, as the Saint taught us: "God created both realities from the very beginning - the spiritual reality and the corporeal, the earthly world and the angelic world."

Father Vizmanos wrote about virgins and angelic spirits, saying that the mission of the angels was to protect the integrity of the virgins—both physical and spiritual, in their free will and their knowledge of Jesus Christ's power of redemption and promise of eternity. He used the acts of Saint Cecilia's martyrdom and Cecilia's words to Valeriano, the one designated by her family to be her spouse: "You must know that I have at my side God's angel who is a jealous guardian of my body and its integrity." This same thought was repeated several years later by Saint Agnes when she was threatened by the Roman Prefect, Sinfonio, who was trying to scare Saint Agnes by sending her to a place of infamy: "You will not scare me because I have with me an Angel of the Lord, who is a custodian of the chastity of my body" (Francisco de B. Vizmanos, S.J., *The Virgins of the Primitive*

Church, Historical Study and Patristic Anthology, BAC edition, 217).

Saint Agatha belongs to the radiance of the Church in her virginity and martyrdom. She was hurt and bleeding to death in the jail when she received the assistance of an angel accompanied by Saint Peter. She pleaded to him when she saw him approaching her place, “please don’t touch me because I am a virgin.” She recuperated from her agony, cured of her wounds, and appeared before the Tribunal completely healed.



Saint Lucy like many of the early martyrs, had made a *propositum* of virginity to God, and she hoped to distribute her dowry to the poor. Her mother Eutychia, however, not knowing of Lucy’s promise, and suffering from a bleeding disorder, feared for Lucy’s future. She arranged Lucy’s marriage to a young man of a wealthy pagan family. Lucy’s protection is related to Saint Agatha. It is inferred that it was an angel who advised Lucy during a dream when Lucy’s mother visited the sanctuary of St. Agatha, seeking a miraculous cure. St. Agatha appeared to Lucy in a dream, telling her that due to her faith her mother would be cured and Lucy would be the glory of Syracuse, as she was of Catania. With her mother cured, Lucy took the opportunity to persuade her mother to allow her to distribute a great part of her riches among the poor. Lucy refused to burn a sacrifice to the emperor’s image, and the governor of Syracuse sentenced her to be defiled in a brothel. The assistance of the angels is clear when the guards came to take her

away, for they were unable to move her even when they hitched her to a team of oxen. She was set on fire, but would not burn. She finally met her death by a sword thrust into her throat, and her martyrdom appeared in the Sacramentary of Pope Gregory I. Lucy had been tortured by eye-gouging, and when her body was prepared for burial, it was discovered that her eyes had been miraculously restored.

“And what is extraordinary,” Saint Ambrose asks, “about the fact that the celestial angels watch for your virginity, when you watch them to imitate their spiritual virginity? Truly that virginity deserves the protection of those whose purity of life you have managed to achieve.” (Saint Ambrose, *De virginibus*, Bk. I, c. 8, n.51, quoted in Vizmanos, 217).

Virginity is a gift from the Eternal Father, bestowed upon our Blessed Mother to prepare a virgin mother, free from original sin, incorruptible. “God created both realities from the very beginning—the spiritual reality and the corporeal, the earthly world and the angelic world,” and He who is the Creator from His essence as God and in His own virginity, created Mary of Nazareth in immaculate being. He needed a woman who would give His Son a human nature, so that He might be both God and man. She in her free will and intelligence understood the profound mystery of the mission of Her Son. She is declared the Queen of Angels because she was chosen to be in her flesh immaculate and in her spirit full of grace, since her conception. She lives in this mortal earth and at the same time belonged to the eternal world to come. Christian virginity, in our time, is a gift that will be understood in the life to come and is now a powerful witness to that life to come. We never lack the assistance of our angels nor their intercession in the presence of our Queen and Mother.

The Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Mother is a daily celebration for us who have been called as she was called. Daily, we live in our body the mystery of our true belonging to the spiritual world that Jesus Christ left us in his passion, death and resurrection.



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

“How deep are the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable his judgments, how unsearchable his ways!” These words from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (Rom. 11:33) can be readily applied to consideration of the long history of the *Ordo virginum* in the Church, and the juridical summation of that history in one brief canon—c. 604—in the 1983 Code of Canon Law. During a session of our 2020 Virtual Information Conference, I had the opportunity to ponder with attendees the riches of the phrases of canon 604, which succinctly provide the ecclesial identification of the *Ordo virginum*. I hope that readers of “The Lamp” find it helpful for me to do the same over the next several issues.

The first paragraph of canon 604 can be broken into five phrases:

- Similar to these forms of consecrated life is the order of virgins who,
- expressing the holy resolution of following Christ more closely,
- are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite,
- are mystically espoused to Christ, the Son of God,
- and are dedicated to the service of the Church.

We begin by taking a look at the first phrase, and why it is that the canon begins with the words, “Similar to” (*accedit*). To do so, we need to briefly consider the structure of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, and where in the law the canon on consecrated virginity is placed. It was in 1917 that centuries of law in the Catholic Church was codified for the first time. After the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in

the 1960’s, it became evident that the codification of the law needed to be updated to reflect implementation of Council decrees that took place in the mid-twentieth century, including the 1970 revision of the rite of consecration to a life of virginity. To that end, a new code of canon law was promulgated in 1983 and continues in effect today. The drafters of the 1983 Code, working in the 1970’s, needed to consider where to include a canon on the newly restored *Ordo virginum*.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law is comprised of seven books, the second of which is “The People of God.” This Book II is further divided into three parts: 1. The Christian Faithful; 2. The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church; and 3. Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (ICLSAL). This tripartite division in law reflects three states of life in the Church, each with its own set of rights and obligations: Laity, Clergy, and those in Consecrated Life. The third part of Book II is further divided into two sections, as indicated by the title: Institutes of Consecrated Life (ICL), and Societies of Apostolic Life (SAL). And the section on ICL is further divided into three titles: Norms Common to all Institutes of Consecrated Life; norms for Religious Institutes; and norms for Secular Institutes.

Where were the drafters of the 1983 Code to place a canon on the newly restored *Ordo virginum*? In the part of Book II that addressed the Christian faithful, where the married are discussed? Or as a society of apostolic life, or a religious institute, or a secular institute? Any of these latter classifications would involve a structured institutional life and entrance by means of vows or other sacred bonds, none of which are present in the *Ordo virginum*. In the end, although the *Ordo virginum* is clearly not a religious or secular institute, the canon on the *Ordo* (c. 604) was placed

within the section that decreed norms on institutes of consecrated life, at the end of the title “Norms common to all religious institutes,” along with canon 603, on diocesan hermits, and canon 605, a canon expressing openness to new forms of consecrated life.

We begin, then, to see the significance of the opening phrase, “similar (*accedit*) to these forms of consecrated life is the order of virgins.” In Latin, the original language of the Code of Canon Law, the word *accedit* can be translated as “similar to” or “approaching” or “as with” or “added to.” While consecrated virgins are clearly included in the part of canon law that concerns Consecrated Life, by using the word “*accedit*,” the Church acknowledges that the *Ordo* is not identical to the institutes of consecrated life—neither religious nor secular—nor is it a society of apostolic life. Rather, the *Ordo virginum* is added to the forms of consecrated life as its own distinct form, with its own peculiarities and distinctions.

It is not insignificant that the *Ordo virginum* is recognized juridically as its own distinct form of consecrated life in the Church. We’ll continue in the February issue of “The Lamp,” God-willing, with a discussion of the “holy resolution (*propositum*) of following Christ more closely.”

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, 2019, and 2020 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.



Artwork by Margaret Flipp.

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*.

October 24, 2020 — Michelle Piccolo, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Diocese of Detroit (MI), at the hands of The Most Reverend Allen Vigneron.

December 8, 2020 — Ruella Ricaza, at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Dublin, Diocese of Savannah (GA), at the hands of The Most Reverend Stephen Douglas Parkes.



Photos of the Consecration of Michelle Piccolo provided by Michelle.



Upcoming Consecrations

United States:

February 11, 2021 — Simi Sahu, at Emmanuel Catholic Church in Delray Beach, Diocese of Palm Beach (FL), at the hands of The Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito. All are warmly invited to attend.



Photos of the Consecration of Ruella Ricaza provided by Ruella.

By Diane Christine Farr
Diocese of Rochester (NY)

John the Baptist was sent to prepare his people for the coming of Christ. He used the wedding imagery of his day in order to point to a higher reality, namely Christ the Bridegroom of the church. We read in the gospel of John, “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said that I am not the Christ, but that I have been sent before him. He who has the bride is the Bridegroom, the friend of the Bridegroom who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the Bridegroom’s voice, therefore this joy of mine is now full.” John 3; 28-29. These verses highlight two very, very important themes. They illustrate the inseparability of Christ and the members of His body that form His Church. They also convey the joy that one experiences at hearing the voice of Jesus the heavenly and eternal Bridegroom.

The effectiveness of all Christians depends on their close connection with the holy Will of God in all things. This living in God’s Divine Will produces an abundance of grace in our prayer, our work and our reception of the sacraments. All Christians must strive to allow Christ to live and act in and through them. As consecrated virgins we are called to a profound intimacy with Christ our Bridegroom who wishes to take complete possession of our entire being. The bride of Christ finds her identity and recognizes herself only in Him. By virtue of our consecration, our lives are completely given over to Him. If we are properly disposed, He will endow us with His wisdom, embellish us with His beauty and cloth us with His own sanctity. The dignity and beauty of our virginal state comes directly from our communion with Jesus our holy Bridegroom. Every gift and grace we have been given is meant to not only to prepare us for heaven but for the salvation and sanctification of other people as well. The

vocation of consecrated virginity brings its own unique and special dimension in building up the body of the Church.

The consecrated virgin first hears the voice of Jesus in the holy gospels. We recall the voice of the Father at the transfiguration saying “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him” (Mt. 17:5). We have heard the voice of Jesus resounding in the depths of our hearts calling us to a deeper intimacy with Himself through the gift of holy virginity. It is through this virginal freedom that we are able to listen to the voice of the Bridegroom who draws us by the bonds of infinite love. It is this gentle voice recognized in the interior silence of our hearts that helps us to come to know Jesus as our holy Spouse. We experience a holy joy unlike anything on earth when we hear the voice of the Bridegroom. It is the joy of the Bridegroom that has been manifested in the lives of His virgin brides. We must maintain an attentiveness to our Lord’s voice that always bestows this peace.

Sometimes it is the voice of interior correction admonishing us to greater fidelity to the Divine Will. During times of trial it is the voice of encouragement saying, “Lo I am with you always” (Mt. 28:20). It is the voice of the Bridegroom’s love for His bride saying, “Come to me” (Mt. 11:28). He calls us to live continuously in His presence as He repeats these words to us, “Peace be with you” (Jn. 20:19). We recall the antiphon from the liturgy of the Hours, “Yours is more than mortal beauty. Every word you speak is full of grace.” The Holy Spirit has revealed to us the magnificent beauty of our Bridegroom and we understand the power and authority of His words. For He is the Eternal Son of the Father, the Word Incarnate. Listening to the words of our Lord demand a serious response. The more knowledge

the bride has of the Heart of Christ her Bridegroom, the greater will be her responsibility.

United in His Will, we vividly feel the wounds of His loving Heart as if they were our own. As brides of Christ we allow our prayers, works and sufferings to flow into His for the conversion and transformation of our brothers and sisters. When the soul lives completely in the divine will all her work is reflected in Jesus and the work of Jesus is reflected in her.

As consecrated virgins the unfolding of our vocation has been the work of the most Holy Trinity. In responding to the voice of our Bridegroom, He has filled us with His radiant light and the fragrance of virginal purity that emanates from His most Sacred Heart.

Life can be hard and challenging for all of us. We must however, never cease to give thanks with grateful hearts for the mercy God has shown us in choosing us for such a beautiful calling. We are also grateful for the intercession of our holy mother Mary, Queen of Virgins. We are called to the prayerful contemplation of the glory and many attributes of the heart of our Bridegroom. In His Will, we may come to know and love Him with the immensity of the love of his own heart. This Heart is our perpetual dwelling and our treasury of infinite love. When we come to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, may we hear our Bridegroom's voice saying, "Arise my love, my fair one and come away. The winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the Earth" (Song 2:10-12). We conclude our reflection the closing prayer from the rite for the consecration of virgins. "May the Lord Jesus Christ with whose Sacred Heart the hearts of virgins are united fill you with His divine love. Amen."



As the holy season of Advent begins each year, I think of Our Lady bearing in her womb the Infant Jesus, filled with joyous expectation while traveling to Bethlehem. It was a tumultuous and dangerous time but Mary held within her the little Prince of Peace and His peace, the peace that only God can give, penetrated Mary's soul and gave her the strength and the courage to get through those dangerous places that she and Joseph and the pre-born baby had to pass through. Did they know about Herod's edict to kill every new born baby boy two years of age and younger? Perhaps, but her unconditional love and trust in God's Divine Providence and in St. Joseph's devotion and his promise to take care of her and the Baby to be born, steadied her spirit and enabled her to keep moving forward. How different the situation in our own time: abortion is getting more and more acceptable to the point that now the plan is to make it legal to terminate the lives of babies in the womb up until a moment before birth, when the baby is alive and kicking and smiling – this is not abortion, it is infanticide! Not all of us are called to be on the front line to defend the preborn baby and the mother from a life of grief if she has her baby's life terminated. But we can be aware of this and help to make others aware of how barbaric and inhumane it is to even consider terminating the lives of these babies who are created by God and sent by Him with an abundance of graces, blessings and gifts for all of mankind. When I speak to people of this, there is a pause and then they say something like this: But I never knew! I never considered this!

We must share God's message of love, His love for all, especially for those who are lost and broken and lonely and seeking a way to find peace. We must be His messenger and bring the message of His love and peace and forgiveness to all. This will bring healing and hope...His healing, His gift of hope; isn't this what Advent is all about: Hope and healing and the creation of a brotherhood

By Mary Kay Lacke, Conference Director
Diocese of Steubenville (OH)

On November 6-7, 2020, the USACV hosted its first virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an in-place conference was impossible. This actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise, since many more people were able to participate in the virtual conference than in an in-place conference. 77 registrants took part in the conference.

Presenters at the conference included, Bishop Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing and Episcopal Moderator for the USACV, and consecrated virgins Dr. Judith Stegman, JCD; Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D.; Mary Kay Lacke, Mth, Director of the USACV Information Conference; Karen Bussey, MSW; Maria Luisa Meza, MAEd; Emily Byers, Mth; and Amanda Schrauth, MACE, who facilitated the schedule as well as the visual presentations.

Each of the two days began with Morning Prayer and ended the afternoon sessions with Evening Prayer. After a short dinner break, there was a Friday night time for testimonials from each of the team members. These witnesses to the vocation were very well received by the participants. The closing session on Saturday evening was an opportunity for questions and answers.

Topics covered in the Conference included all the various aspects of the consecrated virgin's journey to become consecrated and her living out of the vocation as a consecrated virgin in the Catholic Church and the world.

Feedback from the participants in the Virtual Conference was overwhelmingly positive.

May God be praised in all things! May Our Divine Spouse reign in our hearts and in our lives! May Our Lady, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, intercede for all those living out this vocation!

that will draw all within its encircling arms and lead them to the Lord Jesus, whose birthday we celebrate on Christmas day.

If we do not bear witness to life, to hope, to love and forgiveness, the Light of Christ will grow dim and the darkness which so penetrates our world today will spread and take hold of souls already bending under the weight of despair. Come Lord Jesus! Come and bring Your Light, Your love to Your children, especially those most in need of Your love, Your Presence; and so we wait: Come Lord Jesus! Come!

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

USACV Leadership Team

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 2019-2021; Diocese of Great Falls-
Billings (MT). (*Publication of "The Lamp"*).

Joani McCann 2019-2021; Archdiocese of Boston (MA).
(*Convocation Liaison*).

Elizabeth Lam 2020-2022; Diocese of Oakland (CA).
(*USACV Website*).

IRC Leadership Team

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

Judith Stegman, **President of the USACV-IRC**
2019-2025, **Treasurer** 2019-2020; USA, Archdiocese of
Miami (FL).

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.

Florence Sundberg; prayer chain coordinator.

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Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2020 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: 30 Years

From an Interview with Aliceanne Sawyer
Archdiocese of Newark (NJ)
(consecrated May 31, 1990)

Aliceanne currently lives in a home for senior citizens; she is blessed because the home was a convent at one time and is located next door to a parish church. Aliceanne grew up in Staten Island and credits her parents for her lifelong faith in God and love of service to the Church. She entered a religious order at the age of 15 and it was the saddest time in her life when she needed to leave that order after about seven years due to increasing health concerns. In fact, those health difficulties have been a pervasive part of her life, but one would never know this by talking with her. Instead, what characterizes Aliceanne is her deep faith in God, her joyful demeanor, her fight for truth, and her love of service to the Church, to our association of consecrated virgins, and to anyone who crosses her path. Hers is a true spousal witness to Christ Jesus.

After leaving the convent, Aliceanne continued to serve Christ however He would lead – especially in her parish and in leadership in CUSA, a Catholic social action organization created for and by individuals with disabilities or severe illnesses. Aliceanne's life witnessed to the good of a spirituality of suffering. Although she can't recall exactly how she learned of the consecration, she remembers that an article about the vocation in the *Catholic Digest* touched her heart. She recalls bringing that article to her spiritual director and having him agree that the life of consecrated virginity seemed a perfect fit for her. Soon after, she prepared for consecration by reading, studying, and offering much prayer, and the Archbishop of

Newark consecrated Aliceanne on the Feast of the Visitation in 1990; consecrated virgin Barb Swieczak was in attendance as were other close sisters and friends in Christ. Aliceanne was 49 years old at the time of her consecration. In the thirty years that have passed since then, Aliceanne has kept our Blessed Mother, handmaid of the Lord, as her model, offering herself and her sufferings in union with her Divine Spouse, and in service to all those with whom she comes in contact. Thank you, Aliceanne, and may our Lord grant you many more years!

Anniversary Reflections: 25 Years

Submitted by Mary Therese Wyant
Diocese of Santa Fe (NM)
(consecrated May 27, 1995)

Even as a child, His Heart attracted me.

In my youth His Heart spoke to me.

In my middle years these words were prayed over me: "May the Lord Jesus Christ with whose Sacred Heart the hearts of virgins are united, fill you with His divine love."

Now in my senior years, my only desire is to be hidden in His Heart.

All Praise, Glory, And Honor Be To The Sacred Heart of Jesus Forever!

Anniversary Reflections: 15 Years

Submitted by Peggy Popkey
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (TX)
(consecrated November 19, 2005)

I find it hard to believe that it has been 15 years since I received the Blessings and Grace of the Rite which espoused me to the Love of My Life. Finally, I was able to show the world about this relationship which began when I was so very young! Are you familiar with the Doris Day song, *Secret Love*? That is my song; I consider much of it to reflect my relationship with my Lord. When I think about the time I gave myself to Jesus, I wonder, did I really know what I was promising Him? I know my prayer was passionate but did I really understand

what it meant and would the Lord accept it from someone so young?

Our Catholic faith is amazing. We receive First Confession and it is a list of our sins. We receive First Communion and we have just barely begun an understanding of the Eucharist. Some exchange Marriage vows with no idea what the journey will bring. Some receive Holy Orders and begin a journey no doubt much different in reality than as what the person thought. It is on our journey through our days and years that we grow to truly understand the depths of these Sacraments and their meaning.

I think the same is true of each of us who receive the Rite of Consecrated Virginity. CV's know and experience the Blessings and Grace of this extraordinary life but we also know the weight of the Cross and Share in the Suffering of Our Beloved Spouse, Jesus. While we all share in the suffering of the cross, our experiences are personal and the adjectives we each use to describe our journey are vastly different.

Let me see if I can briefly explain about our suffering experiences. Back in August I became a victim of Identity Theft. This journey has been a long one and continues as I try to recover from many things. Recovering from such an experience is not an easy one; it takes a very long time. I had, and still have, tremendous feelings of frustration and depression, not to mention struggling with the whole issue of forgiveness. Forgiveness is releasing feelings of vengeance and resentment toward another. A very long journey. When I look at my life, and the people I need to forgive I can see that I don't wish any of them ill but I wouldn't run out to hug any of them either. My journey of Forgiveness is long and continues.

As I struggle with the aftermath of all that Identity Theft leaves behind, it was my sister – with whom I share a home – who pointed out that I may need to speak with someone regarding this experience and talk out my feelings. As I prayed about that, someone came back into my life whom I knew years ago. He is a Carmelite Priest and while

we are miles apart in the midst of this pandemic, we managed to find a way to visit. Although we don't really discuss the issue of the identity theft, my friend, in his wisdom and anointing of the Spirit, has led me back to the readings of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and the Little Way.

In Thérèse' Personal Retreat, "I Believe In Love" her words spoke so clearly to me. She says, "Jesus, to love my neighbor as You love me is impossible with my poor heart so small, so narrow, so mean. Therefore, in giving me this precept, You must give me Your own Heart to fulfill it."

In addition to St. Therese, the Spirit also led me to the "Ceaseless Act of Love", the messages Jesus gave to Venerable Sr. Consolata Betrone. You need only use your rosary to pray the words which form this chaplet; on the Our Father beads pray: *I Will Think of Everything, You, think Only of Loving Me.* On each Hail Mary bead pray: *Jesus, Mary, I love you, save souls.* Jesus told Consolata to say this prayer: *Jesus, Mary, I love you, save souls* first thing in the morning and the last thing at night. He instructs us to pray this Ceaseless Act of Love as often as possible during our day, without taking away from your duties. Jesus says while you are blessed, you will also be saving souls so, when I am faced with the struggles of my day, I take time to pray the chaplet or just recite a single line of prayer. Before I realize it, Jesus has blessed me with what I need and I have saved souls. The Ceaseless Acts of Love is a continuation of the Eucharist. If you're interested, perhaps it is best read for yourself in the book, *I Will Think of Everything, You, Think Only of Loving Me.*

In the last several months our world has changed so much there is no one who has not been affected in one way or another by the pandemic. Social distancing, wearing masks, experiencing lock downs have all taken their toll on us. Something I do find interesting, however, is that when we encounter someone while wearing a mask we need to look them right in the eye. It's as though we must try to find out what they are really feeling. Our eyes are expressive but, I would bet not many stopped to

Anniversary Reflections

really think about that before the pandemic. I now notice the pain, joy, sadness, wonderment and smiles in the eyes of people I encounter these days. The pandemic has changed us all. So as Jesus ask me to love my neighbor my prayer goes like this: *Jesus, to love my neighbor as You love me is impossible with my poor heart so small, so narrow, so mean. And my eyes so blind to the pain and suffering of others. Therefore, in giving me this precept, You, must give me Your Eyes to see and Your own Heart to fulfill it.*”

This counter cultural life I live is so amazing. Like my understanding of the Sacraments and the Mysteries of the Eucharist, I am still growing into my role as a Bride of Jesus Christ.

Anniversary Reflections: 10 Years

Submitted by Margaret Flipp
Diocese of Arlington (VA)
(consecrated January 21, 2010)

Although I have been a Consecrated Virgin for ten years, my belonging to Jesus spans over 50 years, 21 as a Poor Clare, and the years before I was consecrated, by private vow. Looking back, I am filled with deep gratitude for the care Jesus has taken of me. Like the joyful mysteries of the rosary, my life's joys have always had the shadow of the cross, but I know that Jesus has used them, not only to help me grow, but also to use them to help others on their way. Recently, I have been in training to be a small group leader. And He has shown me that I should purchase a condo, close to the church, so that I may be available for whatever the future has in store. Through the years I have learned to be totally open to Him, desiring only to live more and more in His holy Will, in good times and not so good. What the future holds I do not know, but I wait with anticipation and peace.



Anniversary Reflections: 5 Years

Submitted by Minette Sternke
Diocese of Peoria (IL)
(consecrated June 20, 2015)

It's hard to believe that five years ago, I was standing in the back of the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, pausing on my way to process up to the altar and become a Spouse of Christ. Some days, it feels like yesterday – others, it feels like a lifetime ago. Two parts of that day continue to stand out in my memory: the overwhelming feeling of all of the Angels and Saints of God present with me during the Litany of the Saints, and deep gratitude that my mother, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease, was with me as we presented cana lilies to Our Lady after Holy Communion. Since that day, my life has had many changes. My mother died in November 2018; I've moved to a new house; and certainly this past year has been “not like the others.” I have the same job, and I still serve the Lord in Deaf ministry and in my home parish. Through all these things, however, an even deeper change is happening. My relationship with my Spouse has deepened as I serve the People of God and spend time with Him in prayer. I have found new ways to pray, and to lead others in prayer. He has guided me in immeasurable ways and I could not have come through all of these changes without Him. I can't wait to see what these next years bring! “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Cor 9:15)

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Submitted by Sophia Winiarski
Archdiocese of Hartford (CT)
(consecrated August 8, 2015)

As my 5th Anniversary approached on August 8th, I stepped back to review and renew my call to be Christ's bride. I was reminded of how The Lord prepared me throughout my life and continues to draw me ever closer to Himself. I for my part, recognize that it's far more about Him

Anniversary Reflections

and much less about me. What a grace and pure joy!

In these troubling times when the Sacraments were not readily accessible, how I hungered for the Sacramental encounter with my Spouse and cried. The TV was supportive to some extent until at last Jesus provided.

The realization of Jesus' desire to be received deepened in me the great mystery that even in my brokenness and weakness I can console Jesus for all who turn away from Him. I am but a broken vessel holding the greatest Treasure, a priceless Gift. Jesus is all I have, but more than I need, so He can flow out, over the top and through the cracks to those around me and to those He sends. What a Mystery! and I am intensely grateful.

"We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).



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 (info@consecratedvirgins.org).

In Memory of Our Deceased Sisters

*"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 deceased sisters who would have celebrated a significant anniversary this year into the heavenly kingdom. Eternal Rest grant upon them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.

45 Years

Delores Pint, Diocese of Davenport (IA) 1/1/75

Mary Ann Follmar, Diocese of Providence (RI)
1/21/75

Joan Sutherland, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston
(WV) 4/29/75

Cecilia Wilms, Diocese of Spokane (WA) 12/31/75

35 Years

Mary Irving, Diocese of Palm Beach (FL) 6/22/85

Theresa Turinsky, Diocese of Toledo (OH) 10/13/85

30 Years

Elsie Luke, Diocese of Steubenville (OH) 9/8/1990

Jane Carew, Diocese of Fort-Wayne-South Bend (IN)
12/8/1990

25 Years

Joanna Roberts, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston
(WV) 4/17/1995

20 Years

Jane Claire Forte, Archdiocese of Boston (MA)
6/30/2000

10 Years

Linda Cacpal, Diocese of Honolulu (HI) 9/10/2010

"They stand before God's throne and worship Him day and night in His temple. The one who sits on the throne will shelter them. They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun or any heat strike them. For the Lamb who is the center of the throne will shepherd and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
(Revelation 7:15-17)

Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Ordo Virginum on May 15, 2008

I greet and welcome with joy each one of you, consecrated with the "solemn consecration as a bride of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World [RCV], n. 17), on the occasion of the International Pilgrimage and Congress of the Ordo Virginum, for which you are gathered in Rome during these days. In particular, I greet and thank Cardinal Franc Rodé for his cordial greeting and his dedication to this initiative, while I address my heartfelt thanks to the Organizing Committee. In choosing the theme for these days you were inspired by one of my affirmations which sums up what I have already had the opportunity to say concerning your state as women who live consecrated virginity in the world: A gift in the Church and for the Church. In this light I would like to strengthen you in your vocation and invite you to develop, from day to day, your understanding of a charism that is as luminous and fruitful in the eyes of the faith as it is obscure and futile in those of the world.

"Imitate the Mother of God; desire to be called and to be handmaids of the Lord" (RCV, n. 16). The Order of Virgins is a special expression of consecrated life that blossomed anew in the Church after the Second Vatican Council (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 7). Its roots, however, are ancient; they date back to the dawn of apostolic times when, with unheard of daring, certain women began to open their hearts to the desire for consecrated virginity, in other words, to the desire to give the whole of their being to God, which had had its first extraordinary fulfilment in the Virgin of Nazareth and her "yes". In the thought of the Fathers Mary was the prototype of Christian virgins and their perception highlighted the newness of this new state of life, to which a free choice of love gave access.

"They have chosen you [Lord] above all things; may they find all things in possessing you" (cf. RCV, n. 24). Your charism must reflect the intensity but also the freshness of its origins. It is founded on the simple Gospel invitation: "He who is able to receive this, let him receive it" (Mt 19: 12), and on St Paul's recommendations of virginity for the Kingdom (I Cor 7: 25-35). Yet the whole of the Christian mystery shines out in it. When your charism came into being it did not take shape in accordance with specific ways of life. Rather, it was institutionalized little by little until it became a true and proper solemn, public consecration, conferred by the Bishop in an evocative liturgical rite which made the consecrated woman the sponsa Christi, an image of the Church as Bride.

Dearest friends, your vocation is deeply rooted in the particular Church to which you belong: it is your Bishops' task to recognize the charism of virginity in you, to consecrate you and, possibly, to encourage you on your way, in order to teach you fear of the Lord, as they commitment themselves to do during the solemn liturgy of consecration. From the sphere of the Diocese with its traditions, its Saints, its values, its limits and its problems you broaden your horizons to the universal Church, sharing above all in her liturgical prayer, which is also entrusted to

you so that "the praise of our heavenly Father be always on your lips; pray without ceasing", (RCV, n. 28). In this way your prayerful "I" will gradually be enlarged, until there is no longer anything except a great "we" in the prayer. This is ecclesial prayer and the true liturgy. May you open yourselves in your dialogue with God to a dialogue with all creatures, for whom you will find you are mothers, mothers of the children of God (cf. RCV, n. 28).

However, your ideal, truly lofty in itself, demands no special external change. Each consecrated person normally remains in her own life context. It is a way that seems to lack the specific characteristics of religious life, and above all that of obedience. For you, however, love becomes the sequela: your charism entails a total gift to Christ, an assimilation of the Bridegroom who implicitly asks for the observance of the evangelical counsels in order to keep your fidelity to him unstained (cf. RCV, n. 26). Being with Christ demands interiority, but at the same time opens a person to communicating with the brethren: your mission is grafted on this. An essential "rule of life" defines the commitment that each one of you assumes, with the Bishop's consent, at both the spiritual and existential levels. These are personal journeys. There are among you different approaches and different ways of living the gift of consecrated virginity and this becomes much more obvious in the course of an international meeting such as this, which has gathered you together during these days. I urge you to go beyond external appearances, experiencing the mystery of God's tenderness which each one of you bears in herself and recognizing one another as sisters, even in your diversity.

"That your whole life may be a faithful witness of God's love and a convincing sign of the kingdom of heaven" (RCV, n. 17). Take care always to radiate the dignity of being a bride of Christ, expressing the newness of Christian existence and the serene expectation of future life. Thus, with your own upright life you will be stars to guide the world on its journey. The choice of virginal life, in fact, is a reference to the transient nature of earthly things and an anticipation of future rewards. Be witnesses of attentive and lively expectation, of joy and of the peace that characterizes those who abandon themselves to God's love. May you be present in the world, yet pilgrims bound for the Kingdom. Indeed, the consecrated virgin is identified with that bride who, in unison with the Spirit, invokes the coming of the Lord: "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'" (Rv 22: 17).

As I take my leave of you I entrust you to Mary; and I make my own the words of St Ambrose, who sung the praises of Christian virginity, addressing them to you: "May there be in each one the soul of Mary to magnify the Lord; may there be in each one the Spirit of Mary to exult in God. If there is only one Mother of Christ according to the flesh, Christ on the other hand, according to the faith, is the fruit of all, since every soul receives the Word of God so that, immaculate and immune to vice, she may preserve her chastity with irreproachable modesty" (Comment on St Luke, 2, 26: PL 15, 1642).

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:

February 2, 2021 Feast of the Presentation and

World Day for Consecrated Life

May 31, 2021 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

September 8, 2021 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

December 12, 2021 Feast of Our Lady of

Guadalupe

USACV-IRC Leadership Team

Nominations:

Two USACV-IRC leadership positions open January 1, 2021: 1) USACV-IRC Treasurer, and 2) a seat on the USACV Section Leadership Team (replacing Emily Byers, whose term ends December 31, 2020).

Due to the pandemic affecting various aspects of our work this year, we were not ready to facilitate an election earlier this fall, as we have done in the past. The USACV-IRC Leadership Teams have candidates in mind to appoint to both positions, subject to the approval/recommendation of USACV members. Paula Willenbrink has graciously offered once again to manage the election, which will be secret ballot by U.S. mail. We hope to have the mailing ready to go out by December 18 and we will ask your response by a date in early January.

Those who are 2020 members of the USACV by December 18, with consecration certificates on file, are eligible to vote in the election. Be sure to register for membership soon, if you have not done so already.

Membership Reminder:

From [Francesca Riddick](#), membership chair of the USACV: Thank you for those members who have already registered for 2020. We are happy that we now have the possibility to accept registrations and donations electronically. If you have not registered for this year and still would like to, please click on the links below to access the form that is appropriate you for you.

On-Line form: <https://bit.ly/2020USACV>

If you prefer to access a paper form to download and mail in please click on this link: <https://bit.ly/20USACVpaper>

We thank you in advance for your support of the USACV.



Save the Date

**United States Convocation of
Consecrated Virgins**

Sponsored by the USACV

July 2 to July 6, 2021

Enders Island, Connecticut

More Information to Follow.

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

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