

The Lamp

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United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV

www.consecratedvirgins.org

February 2, 2019 The Presentation of the Lord

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

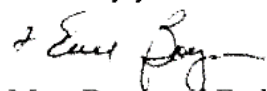
Consecrated Virgins are said to belong to an order (Code #604.1). I am struck by that term. When I think of that term it usually brings to mind the order of bishops or priests or deacons—an order to which one is ordained which makes one integrally connected to all the others in that order. This leads to each bishop being responsible for the entire Church in communion with the Holy Father and to each priest and deacon belonging to a non-voluntary body under the unifying direction of their bishop.

What does this term, “order,” means for consecrated virgins? I think there are two senses here. First of all, no consecrated virgin should see herself as a lone ranger. Not only is she connected to her bishop and the local Church over which he presides, but her life of consecration is an ecclesial act. Even if there are no other consecrated virgins in the diocese, she must see that her consecration is not primarily for the satisfaction of the woman, but rather for the service of the Church and the building up of the Body of Christ, all in union with her bishop. In this, she seeks a deeper identification with the Bridegroom, Jesus, even as that local Church does. She sees herself as a sign of that local Church. And she also seeks to live out the Gospel counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience out of love for Christ alone.

It seems to me there is a second sense in which you belong to an order. While the *Code of Canon Law* (#604.2) speaks of the possibility of being associated with other consecrated virgins in a structured way, we know this is not required. However, this does not mean that consecrated virgins are not associated with one another at all. It seems that it is incumbent on all consecrated virgins to seek the good of all consecrated virgins, to advance the vocation of consecrated virginity, to promote and pray for other virgins not only in one's diocese but throughout the world, and to further a deeper holiness among all consecrated virgins for the sake of the Church. This all may seem a bit amorphous. Yet, it does imply that we do not do something which deliberately erodes the bonds of communion among consecrated virgins. However, on a more positive note, unless we are doing something to build up these charges then we are somehow failing to live out our calling and consecration.

My sisters, you too were presented to the Lord. Live out that presentation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing

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The Presence of Mary of Nazareth in our Virginal State of Life.

By Magalis Aguilera and Judith M. Stegman

On February 2, 1974 Pope Saint Paul VI wrote an apostolic exhortation inviting us to recognize in Mary a model for all the Church in the exercise of divine worship: “Mary is not only an example for the whole Church in the exercise of divine worship but is also, clearly, a teacher of the spiritual life for individual Christians. The faithful at a very early date began to look to Mary and to imitate her in making their lives an act of worship of God and making their worship a commitment of their lives” (Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* 21).

As our Divine Lord was born of the Virgin Mary, who was designated to be in the divine plan, and because she is the Mother of God’s Son, she was constituted the first model of virginity and of Christian consecration. To us consecrated virgins, our Blessed Mother is the model for life because she opens to us the way of perfection to follow the Divine Spouse. She extended her motherhood to the glory of the Eternal Father when she proclaimed herself the handmaid of the Lord. In her humility, she accepted her specific call to be dedicated in totality to God’s Son, to be a model of faith and hope directed to Christ, a model of absolute love to Christ in his integrity as man and God, a model of collaboration with His mission; Mary modeled in her being the woman that Jesus Christ needed, a woman who lived in the will of the Eternal Father, as He was living in the Father’s will. A consecrated virgin is called to develop a profound relationship with Mary of Nazareth, who was also a virgin living in the world. In the model of life of Jesus’ mother, a consecrated virgin is to discover the model for her own calling to live as a spouse. As we follow Jesus, we are called to model the life of Mary of Nazareth as she lived for Jesus Christ.

In her *propositum*, or promise of perpetual virginity, Mary of Nazareth transcended mere human reasoning, for she received the vocation and made the decision early in her life, in the midst of a strong culture that did not recognize virginity as an ultimate choice of life for a woman. At the same time, though, she was betrothed to Joseph, for in that culture a woman could not be alone, and matrimony held a dimension of protection.

How did her faith guide her? She clearly understood that maternity would break her *propositum*, and she thus established a dialogue with the messenger of God. Her intention was assertive in that dialogue: “I do not know man” (Lk. 1:34), even as, at the same time, she was betrothed to Joseph. Mary’s call was unique in the history of virginity, and there is no inference of some mutual pact of virginity existing between her and Joseph. Rather, what we understand through the teaching of the Church is that Mary trusted and rested in God’s will upon her virginity, knowing that the prophet said that the Messiah will be born from a virgin: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14). (Cfr. R. Laurentin, “I Vangeli dell’infanzia,” 555s quoted in Jean Galot, *Vivere con Maria nella vita consecrata*, Milano, Italy: Ediciones Ancora).

Mary of Nazareth was the chosen virgin due to her strong and faithful trust in God’s promise. Her decision restored God’s covenant, which had been broken by the unfaithfulness of the chosen people. In Mary of Nazareth, we find love for God and the fulfilment of God’s plan to prepare a people to be the Church of His Son. The chosen people had broken the image of the faithful wife; Mary in her obedience gave God a faithful image of a virginal spouse: “I will betroth you to me forever: I will betroth you to me with justice and with judgment, with loyalty and with compassion; I will betroth you to me with fidelity and you shall know the Lord” (Hos. 2: 19-20). The Virgin Mary of Nazareth in her answer to the angel, “I do not know man,” provides a sort of continuity with God’s own words through the angel, “The shadow of the Spirit will descend upon you” (Lk. 1:35). Mary of Nazareth understood the meaning of the words, “I will espouse you in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord” (Hos. 2:20). The will of the Lord came upon her.

In our Virgin Mother of Nazareth, we find the meaning of a virginal spousal relationship with the Lord, and we understand the strength that has been given to us in the consecratory prayer. It is not only the mystical spousal relationship with our Lord that is revealed to us, but also the blessed relationship of the married couple, characterized by fidelity and a mutual donation of themselves to one another during this temporal life. In her decision to respond “yes,” the Fathers of the Church have always attested to Mary’s reflection as a model to the whole Christian Church, both to those living the virginal life as she lived, and to those living the married life while on this pilgrimage to heaven. Saint Pope Paul VI offers us a profound illustration of her participation in today’s Church, in the integrity of her human and spiritual being: “We wish to point out that our own time, no less than former times, is called upon to verify its knowledge of reality with the word. The reading of the divine Scriptures, carried out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the discoveries of the human sciences and the different situations in the world today being taken into account, will help us to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time” (Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* 37).

In the pagan culture in which we today live the virginal vocation, there is no recognition of a transcendental meaning to the spousal dimension of our vocation; even less is there an understanding that the meaning of our vocation is to be as a projection of the union of the married couple in this finite life, and ultimately of union with God in the eternal life to come. Virginité entails no diminution of our freedom, nor of the blessed joy of maternity, because our life is based upon a divine dialogue with our Lord who calls us to be witnesses to the kingdom which is to come. Saint Pope Paul VI reflected: “Thus, the modern woman, anxious to participate with decision-making power in the affairs of the community, will contemplate with intimate joy Mary who, taken into dialogue with God, gives her active and responsible consent, not to the solution of a contingent problem, but to that ‘event of world importance’, as the Incarnation of the Word has been rightly called” (Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* 37). Mary rejoiced in the sufferings of her immaculate heart, for she was collaborating in the mission of her Son.

Mary of Nazareth walked in fidelity, realizing that her hidden life was a preparation for the manifestation of the Church of her Son. She was attentive to His suffering and she accepted her role as the channel through which the Eternal Father would pour upon us His merciful love. She was prepared for her mission by the Eternal Father, and she worked throughout her life to fulfill it. Mary restored woman from the limitations imposed on her total freedom, so that she might freely choose to marry or to be consecrated to God in virginity. Pope Paul VI interpreted our Blessed Mother’s state of virginity: “The modern woman will appreciate that Mary’s choice of the state of virginity, which in God’s plan prepared her for the mystery of the Incarnation, was not a rejection of any of the values of the married state but a courageous choice which she made in order to consecrate herself totally to the love of God. The modern woman will note with pleasant surprise that Mary of Nazareth, while completely devoted to the will of God, was far from being a timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others; on the contrary, she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions (cf Lk. 1:51-53)” (Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* 37).

The virginal vocation that we live in the world is a continuation of the human presence of Mary of Nazareth, the power of the faculties of her soul, and the profound spirituality flowing from the fountains of love of the Eternal Father during her mortal life and her heavenly life. Her mission as a model has not ended, for the Church, the Spouse of her Son, continues in a state of pilgrimage. Let us reflect in our own lives Mary as a model, contemplating and applying these words expressed by Saint Pope Paul VI: “The modern woman will recognize in Mary, who ‘stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord’, a woman of strength, who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile (cf. Mt. 2:13-23). These are situations that cannot escape the attention of those who wish to support, with the Gospel spirit, the liberating energies of man and of society. And Mary will appear not as a Mother exclusively concerned with her own divine Son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community’s faith in Christ (cf. Jn. 2:1-12)” (Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* 37).

Let us be faithful and humble as she was, resting in her maternal assistance, for her “...maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary. These are but examples, which show clearly that the figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion any of the profound expectations of the men and women of our time but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city; the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people's hearts” (Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* 37). May our Blessed Mother help us to live our virginal consecration in the will of the eternal Father upon us.

**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. (*Communications*).

Emily Byers (2018)-2020; **Secretary of 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 Baker (OR). (*Publication of “The Lamp”*).

Joani McCann 2019-2021 (subject to confirmation in fall 2019); Archdiocese of Boston. (*Convocation liaison*).

IRC Leadership Team

Magalis Aguilera; USA, Archdiocese of Miami.

Judith Stegman, President of USACV-IRC 2019-2025;

Treasurer 2019-2020; USA, Diocese of Lansing.

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.

Joyce Stolberg; *Lamp* layout and design.

Florence Sundberg; prayer chain coordinator.

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY



2019 USACV Membership:

from membership coordinator Francesca Riddick:

We would like to encourage all our members and friends to register this year to the USACV. The reasons for doing so are many:

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

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

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

The 2019 member and friend registration renewal forms are available now on our USACV website, www.consecratedvirgins.org. Soon we will be sending out the forms by email to those who have registered in prior years. We thank you in advance for your generous support of this association.



Upcoming Events Sponsored by the USACV

2019 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

**July 5 to July 9, Mundelein USML Conference
Center,
Mundelein, Illinois (Archdiocese of Chicago).**

See article, page 7.

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2019 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World

**July 30 – August 2
St. Francis Retreat and Conference Center,
DeWitt, Michigan, (Diocese of Lansing).**

See article, page 10.

Announcements and News

Silent Retreat for Consecrated Virgins:

A Silent Retreat for Consecrated Virgins, sponsored by Loretta Matulich and Regina Dibbs, will take place June 16 to June 24, 2019, at Our Lady of Peace Retreat Center in the Archdiocese of Portland (OR). The retreat theme will be, “To Be Parented by God and Our Blessed Mother to Begin to Live on Earth as it is in Heaven.” For more information, contact Regina Dibbs at firstjn416@gmail.com.

Recordings are Available:

Recordings are available from the 2018 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World, and from the 2018 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins. Please visit the website, www.consecratedvirgins.org.

May She Rest in Peace:

Consecrated virgin Theresita Polzin of the Archdiocese of Denver died on January 21, 2019, at the age of 103. Theresita was a long-time member of the USACV, even as she aged, and her stories of Christian living will be long remembered. May she rest in peace.



Theresita Polzin

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:

May 31, 2019 Feast of the Visitation

September 8, 2019 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 12, 2018 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

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

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 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*.

Also Available:

The first two volumes of the USACV's *Ordo Virginum* series of books are also available: *Volume I: An Introduction to the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*, and *Volume II: Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*. Many consecrated virgins have suggested Volume II as a rich source for spiritual reflection and ongoing formation for consecrated virgins themselves. These volumes are available at www.consecratedvirgins.org.

By Judith M. Stegman

In this issue of *The Lamp* we announce plans for the 2019 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, which will focus on the Vatican Instruction *Ecclesiae sponsae imago*. A number of prepared consecrated virgins look forward to offering presentations on the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world, through the lens of the Rite of Consecration and teaching of the Church, incorporating *Ecclesiae sponsae imago* as an interpretation of the vocation for our days. We are in the process now of preparing the program, and invite input from consecrated virgins and those in dioceses working with the preparation of women for this vocation; let us know questions or issues that you would like to see addressed.

Due to a happy and unexpected opportunity, I was able to attend the consecration of Marianne Cano on January 19 in Florida. Bishop Noonan was delighted to welcome Marianne as his first consecration in the Diocese of Orlando, and he and the diocesan staff prepared a most fitting, beautiful celebration of the rite of consecration. Marianne attended the USACV National Information Conference last summer, and both she and the diocesan delegate for consecrated life appreciated the understanding it gave her of the vocation. Pass the word about the National Information Conference!



© Candle was drawn by Margaret Flipp

2019 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

Please note change in dates and location for the 2019 Convocation:

July 5-9 at the Mundelein USML Conference Center

We are pleased to announce that the theme for the 2019 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins will be *Ecclesiae sponsae imago*: A Practical and In-depth Study for Consecrated Virgins.

A team of virgins is developing the convocation program to include presentations on our vocation in light of the Rite of Consecration and teaching of the Church, and incorporating *Ecclesiae sponsae imago* as an Instruction interpreting the vocation for our days. The study will utilize the expertise of a number of consecrated virgins, in theology, canon law, psychology, and spirituality, and will feature panel-led discussions on *ESI* among participants. Our Episcopal Moderator, The Most Reverend Earl Boyea, looks forward to opening the convocation on Friday evening and offering presentations on Saturday.

Daily Mass, Morning and Evening Prayer, and times of Eucharistic Adoration will nourish these days of love with our Divine Spouse. We also hope to visit neighboring Marytown. The days, as well, will include social gatherings allowing us to meet one another and renew sisterly friendships among us.

The convocation will be held Friday through Tuesday: July 5-9, 2019, at the Mundelein Conference Center at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois.



It is a beautiful and serene setting on a 930-acre campus with a peaceful lake and walking paths through the woods. The lodge and the conference center were newly updated in December 2018. All bedrooms have private bathrooms and WIFI is included.

We warmly invite all consecrated virgins, both from the United States and from other countries. With regard to those who are candidates for consecration—the invitation is extended to any virgin who has attended a previous Information Conference and who has been accepted by the Bishop of her diocese as a candidate to receive the Consecration of a Virgin Living in the World.

Registration forms for the convocation will be available in early May on the USACV website. For more information, or if you are interested in assisting with the convocation planning, please contact Joani McCann (joani.mccann@gmail.com). The cost is still being determined, but is expected to be approximately \$550 for a single room for the entire gathering.

Flowers of the Hail Mary

By Diane Christine Farr

We read in the Liturgy of the Hours on Sundays week I and week III, “Let all creation praise the Lord.” This is followed by the canticle from the book of Daniel inviting all creatures to bless the Lord. We see hidden under the veils of creation deeper meanings and sacred mysteries revealing a divine reality. Let us ponder the meaning of the Hail Mary ascribing one or more flowers to each line.

“Hail Mary,” The rose is the queen of flowers so it is fitting that it should symbolize the love, perfection and beauty of the queen of heaven and earth. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to recognize and experience this celestial beauty of our Lady. The consecrated virgin is called to enter in to the mysteries of her holy mother’s life and imitate her in a unique way. She lives closely united with the mother of God echoing the greeting of the angel. She opens her own heart like a rose to the rays of the sun of the Divine Will embracing it with her Fiat. May all come to honor Mary as the mystical rose.

“Full of Grace,” The sweet-scented hyacinth is the emblem of the super abundant grace that flooded Mary’s soul. Our Lady is full of grace because of her Immaculate Conception, symbolized by the lily of the valley. This grace made her all beautiful and rendered her soul the paradise of the Holy Trinity. She is full of grace because of her perpetual virginity, symbolized by the glowing beauty and delicate fragrance of the madonna lily. Our Lady’s virginity was sacred to her communion with God and was thus full of divine qualities and possessed a noble character which is shared by consecrated virgins. She is full of grace because she was given the strength to be perfectly united with her Divine Son in His missions. This mystery is symbolized by cyclamen, the flower of her sorrowful and immaculate heart. The Blessed Virgin is especially full of grace because she always lived in the unity of the Divine Will. This fact is highlighted by the next line of our prayer.

“The Lord is with Thee,” The calendula which is the original marigold always turns its golden petals toward the sun. It symbolizes Mary’s heavenly glory and perfect adherence to God’s Will. The angel’s declaration indicates that the Blessed Virgin already enjoyed a singular and most profound union with God. Indeed, it would be her mission to bring Jesus to all humanity. The iris which both signifies Mary’s sword of sorrow and her queenship calls to mind the sorrows and joys of her life with Jesus. The consecrated virgin must desire to be clothed with Jesus’ merits and His own infinite love.

“Blessed are thou among women,” The fuchsia, known as Our Lady’s ear drops, signifies her listening and responding to God’s word. Elizabeth declared to Mary, “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” Lk 2:45. We can learn from Our Lady’s perfect trust that allowed God to work in her life unhindered by any obstacle. The forget-me-not is a symbol of her flawless fidelity to the divine Will. How blessed we are to have such a mother to guide us.

“Blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus,” The carnation symbolizes Our Lady’s love of God and her joy in the mystery of the Incarnation. Its botanical name is dianthus which means divine flower. Jesus, our greatest treasure, is this divine Flower that came forth from the virgin’s womb. The prayer for the consecration of virgins read, “They have chosen you above all things; may they find all things in possessing you.” The consecrated virgin must take great care in cultivating her interior life where she will come to know her Bridegroom and learn to adopt his ways. She must allow him to fill her with His peace and overcome all that is in her that is contrary to His heart. The daisy symbolizes the innocence of the child Jesus. May His simplicity and innocence reign in our own hearts.

“Holy Mary,” The violet signifies Our Lady’s humble modesty, the lavender her purity and holiness and the crocus her divine wisdom. Our Lady’s soul was invested with the light of the divine Will which formed her sanctity and crowned her with divine wisdom. The Blessed Virgin was so intimately connected with the redemption that Jesus’ infinite love and immense suffering found an echo in his mother’s heart. The consecrated virgin encloses within her own heart all that our Lord has done for us as she seeks give to him her requital of love.

“Mother of God,” The columbine is a symbol of Mary’s innocence as well as the Holy Spirit through whom she conceived her Divine Son. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, therefore the child to be born will be called holy the Son of God LK 1:35. This overshadowing of the Most High points to the nuptial union that existed between Our Lady and God. As brides of Christ, do we allow our Divine Spouse to direct everything in our lives that we might be fruitful in service to His Kingdom?

“Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death Amen,” The tulip with its folded petals signifies Mary’s prayerful heart and the daffodil her heavenly beauty. We are grateful that we have a mother who knows all our needs. We contemplate with joy the splendor of her immaculate heart. Jesus told the servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta that there is a fiber of his mother’s heart for each person. Her maternity extends to everyone. Rosemary stands for Mary’s remembrance, the snowdrop for her consolation and impatiens for the constancy of her maternal love. It is vital that we all recognize our poverty and our need for our transformation in Christ. The pansy stands for our Lady’s delight in the Trinity. We also should desire to be completely immersed in the divine life of the Holy Trinity. Entering the divine Will, we should have the intention of making our prayer a divine and universal prayer affecting all souls. It is through Our Lady’s intercession that we have been clothed in the bridal dress of holy virginity and consecrated to her Son. This garment has its origin in Christ for we read in the prayer of consecration. “Those who choose chastity have looked upon the face of Christ, its origin and inspiration.” Living completely surrendered to Jesus we will come to the end of our pilgrimage. When our life is done, we will see how all of our acts of love done according to God’s will have given him perfect glory. The petunia is known as our Lady’s praises and the cornflower her crown. May this meditation on the Angelic Salutation give honor to the most Blessed Virgin Marv. our mother of mercv.



Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

Pope John Paul II once said that every threat to human dignity and life must necessarily be felt in the Church’s very heart. And he called each and every one of us to work together to build a civilization of life and love. How do we, as spouses of Christ Jesus, do this? Primarily through prayer and then through love in action. We saw a glimpse of this action in the March for Life in Washington where the majority of the marchers were young people who have taken up the cause to witness to the sacredness of each and every life. We too are called to witness in some way. The Holy Spirit will show us how we can do this. We need only listen and then do whatever He asks us to do. Someone once said that love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing; it is because self-sacrificial love takes us out of ourselves, empties us, so that our life’s essence can be poured out for others and when we have been emptied, Christ fills us with Himself. And in this we are blessed and through this, He blesses others.

2019 Information Conference

Planning is underway for the 2019 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Live in the World, sponsored by the USACV. It is scheduled for July 30 to August 2 at the St. Francis Conference and Retreat Center in DeWitt, Michigan. Over the years, we have often enjoyed the hospitality of the beautiful DeWitt retreat center.



Top: Chapel at St. Francis Retreat House. Above: Bishop Boyea teaches at information conference a few years ago

and the preparation and formation that are essential for a life of consecrated virginity lived in the world. Along with these topics, other fundamental topics concerning the vocation will be addressed. A more detailed flyer of the Information Conference will be available with the May issue of *The Lamp*, along with a registration form for the Conference.

Over the years that the National Information Conference has been held, many, many women have shared how important the conference was in their discernment process. It is especially good to hear from virgins living the vocation about its value and helpfulness. The consecrated virgins presenting the conference are the best ones to speak about the beauty and worth of the call to a life of consecrated virginity. The USACV is always appreciative of their episcopal moderator, Bishop Earl Boyea, for his thorough presentation on the history of the vocation, dating back to the early centuries of the Church, along with his availability to meet with the inquirers, vocation directors and clergy who attend the conference on behalf of their dioceses.

Joining Bishop Boyea in conducting the conference, a team of consecrated virgins present the key dimensions of the life of consecrated virginity live in the world. Topics include the content of Rite of Consecration, the distinct spirituality of the consecrated virgin, the meaning of virginal chastity, the various dimensions of “living in the world” and more. For more information, please contact the conference coordinator, Theresa Marshall at Tel. (734)332-4648 or marshallcv@gmail.com.

We encourage *Lamp* readers to promote the Information Conference among those interested in consecrated virginity as a very important and worthwhile event for anyone in the process of discerning a vocation to a life of consecrated virginity lived in the world or preparing for the consecration. The Conference is also important for those who are helping someone in the discernment process or who want to learn more about this vocation: bishops, diocesan delegates of consecrated life, spiritual directors and other consecrated virgins who may be helping a woman to discern.

The Information Conference will place emphasis on areas that have emerged as important in the discernment and formation process, most especially the preeminence of Our Lady as model and guide in the life of the consecrated virgin, the central place of the Liturgy of the Hours in the spiritual as well as the ecclesial life of the consecrated virgin,



Retreat House: Top: Front Entrance. Above: Retreat garden.

Consecration Announcements

United States:

January 19, 2019 Marianne Cano, Diocese of Orlando, at the hands of The Most Reverend John G. Noonan.



Marianne Cano, Diocese of Orlando, is consecrated at the hands of The Most Reverend John G. Noonan. Above left: Marianne holds her lighted lamp; she prostrates during the Litany of the Saints. Top right: Bishop Noonan receives Marianne's resolution. Right, Marianne poses with Bishop Noonan and consecrated virgins present at the ceremony.

Upcoming U. S. Consecrations

Friday, May 24, 2019, Feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians, Consecration of Sara Nicole Scheunemann, 5:00 pm at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Green Bay, Wisconsin, at the hands of the Most Reverend David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay. Please RSVP to Sara at sscheunemann@gmail.com if you would like to attend.



Anniversary Reflections: 10 Years

Jenna Marie Cooper, consecrated January 3, 2009

After a life-long friendship with God, I first felt called to be a bride of Christ when I was twelve years old. I just fell completely in love, once and for all. At eighteen, I began visiting religious communities; while I met a number of admirable nuns and religious sisters, none of the communities I visited completely resonated with the specific way I felt called in my heart. When I was nineteen, a local priest gave me a copy of the *Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity*, and upon reading it, I knew instantly that this was my vocation. In particular, I was drawn to the central charism of a spousal relationship with Christ, to the spirituality of evangelical virginity, to this vocation's special bond with the local diocesan Church, toward the *Rite's* emphasis on praying the Liturgy of the Hours, and especially to the fact that this vocation is a call to follow in the footsteps of the Church's early virgin-martyr saints, like St. Agnes and the other women mentioned in the Roman Canon at Mass.

Initially, I was turned away from the consecration of virgins for being too young, but after two more years of visiting religious communities, I tried approaching my home Archdiocese of New York again, and at that point I was accepted as a candidate for consecration. I was solemnly consecrated to a life of virginity at Sacred Heart Church in Newburgh, NY on January 3, 2009, when I was twenty-three years old and a recent college graduate.

I can honestly say that I am even happier to be a bride of Christ now than I was on the day of my consecration. Although there have been many challenges over the past ten years, they have only made my vocation more precious to me. As I've grown older, I've found I have a new sense of glad astonishment that God would be so gracious as to call me to this kind of relationship with Himself.

As I reflect on my tenth anniversary of consecrated life, one image that has been frequently coming to mind is the Lamb of God. Most obviously, consecrated virgins are called to be "the Image of the

Church as Bride"; that is, the "Bride of the Lamb" mentioned in Revelation 21:9.

But more personally, the Gospel for the actual day of my tenth anniversary was John 1:29-34, where John the Baptist points to Jesus and declares: "Behold the Lamb of God." I was reminded by the priest celebrating a Mass of Thanksgiving that day that this is my mission, too—to be a witness pointing others towards Jesus, who is the Lamb.

I was reminded as well that as lambs were used for sacrificial worship in Old Testament, Jesus is the Lamb of God because he offered Himself as a sacrifice. On the day of my consecration it was very much my hope and intention to offer myself as a living sacrifice to the Lord in the same spirit as saints like Agnes offered their lives. It can be easy to forget the joy that comes with a spirit of radical self-offering, but ten years after my consecration I realize how important it is to continually renew this resolve in my heart.

Finally, my consecrated life has brought me to places I never would have guessed, including three years living in Rome as a canon law student and then later, an unexpected but clearly providential call to serve the Church in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota as a staff canonist and coordinator of the marriage tribunal. Even amidst the difficulties of leaving home and family for a new and unfamiliar place, there's a greater peace in recalling that virgins are the ones who "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." (Revelation 14:4) My prayer after ten years is that I will always be given the grace to follow the Lamb wherever He leads me.



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