



March 19, 2016 Feast of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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

One of my favorite meditations on St. Joseph is that he was given a bride and family not his own. This, in fact, is true of all of us, whether married or not. Every spouse, every child, is a gift. It is not a possession, but a treasure placed into our care. This obviously has many implications for married folk and parents. It is easy to claim a right to a child or a spouse, when this is simply the wrong language to use.

I believe it also has implications for us as celibates or virgins. We have been given a family as well, even though it may not seem so obvious. But God has designed a different kind of familial responsibility for our care.

First of all, we are espoused. For you, this means that Jesus is not your possession but someone who has gifted himself to you in fidelity, in love, in grace. We do not stand in awe and wonder of our possession; we do stand in awe and wonder of not only the gift we receive but also the giver of that gift. Our primary stance then in front of such love is awe and wonder.

Secondly, into our care has been placed God’s children, our sisters and brothers. In addition to the awe and wonder which is also their due, we name them and guide them as did St. Joseph. Naming the many people we encounter means calling people by name, as those named by God himself. It also means that we invite them into our lives since we have a deep care for them, for everyone.

This care for all God’s children additionally means we spend our time and effort in providing guidance. We are not blind guides. We know where we are going, as Joseph knew he had to go to Bethlehem and then to Egypt and then to Nazareth. This guiding becomes for us a kind of second nature because we seek only the good of the other.

My sisters, let St. Joseph be our guide as we seek to honor him and to care for whatever family God chooses to give us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing

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Something Ancient Something New

By Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman

The text of the prayer of consecration of virgins that is found in the renewed Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity (May 31, 1970) is a great gift to the virgins of today because it keeps the same powerful words used by Popes and Bishops in consecrations of virgins in the ancient Church. The earliest known edition of the prayer is from the Leonian Sacramentary, which is generally attributed to Pope Leo the Great, 440-461 A.D. The prayer reflected an understanding of the great grace of virginity that had been given to the virgins of the early Church. St. Ambrose spoke of this in his treatise on virginity, written to his older sister Marcelina, as he recalled her consecration ceremony twenty-five years earlier, in the year 352 A.D., by Pope Liberius in the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome.



Under Our Lady

(Rome Conference)

How is the Queen of Virgins present in the mystery of our virginal vocation? Her “yes” is the foundation of our virginal lives; she lived in complete abandon to the will of the Eternal Father who continues to call virgins to live in witness to the Church of His Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the virginal Spouse of His Church, and we live the gift of virginity as a “surpassing sign of the Church’s love for Christ, and an eschatological image of the world to come and the glory of the heavenly Bride of Christ” (*Praenotanda* to Rite of Consecration, n. 1). Quoting St. Ambrose *De Virginibus*, Francisco De B. Vizmanos, S.J. writes, “The final city and ‘progenitor’ of virginity resides in heaven because from heaven virginity springs down to earth. Virginity does not have residence in this earth, for this is a foreign place to her. Virginity was not known in this world until God himself descended to be dressed with humanity.” (Vizmanos, “Las Virgenes Cristianas de la Iglesia Primitiva,” Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Christianos 2009, pp. 12, 19).

The First National Congress of the Ordo Virginum of Costa Rica

As individual virgins, and as an association of virgins, we are called upon to witness to the meaning of consecrated virginity through our lives, through formal presentations, and even through our website, so that this precious gift of virginity might be more fully appreciated. A recent example of this witness may be found in the First

The ancient consecratory prayer begins by addressing the Eternal Father with words of thanks for the flourishing of the gift of virginity: a gift that comes from God and enables the sacred virgin “to reflect the life of angels,” a life that had been lost in Paradise. It was the New Eve, in her humble obedience, who was revealed by the Eternal Father in the book of Genesis as the one who would defeat the devil. And it was she, Mary of Nazareth, who was greeted by the Angel Gabriel as “full of grace.” The culmination of this divine grace in Mary of Nazareth was manifest in the mystery of her Immaculate Conception and in the mystery of her virginal maternity. Through these two great mysteries, the Eternal Father realized the promise of our salvation and rescued us from the miserable consequence of the disobedience of our first parents. The “yes” of our Blessed Virgin Mother at the holy scene of the Annunciation fulfilled the will of the Eternal Father and she was covered by the shadow of the Holy Spirit. In her obedience, in the great mystery of virginal maternity, the mystery of the Holy Trinity was manifest.



Most Rev. Ulloa
Rojas, Bishop of
Cartago



Virgins Gathered after Closing Mass of Costa Rican Congress at the Basilica of our Lady of the Angels

National Congress of the *Ordo Virginum* of Costa Rica, held on Saturday, January 9, 2016. The Congress was exceptionally well organized by virgins of the Diocese of Cartago and the Archdiocese of San José, guided by Lisandra Chavez. Three of the six Bishops of Costa Rica were pleased to participate in the event, which was of great import not only to the local Church of Costa Rica, but also for the wider Church. Judith Stegman and Magalis Aguilera went in person to make presentations, Judith through an interpreter and Magalis in her native Spanish. Gloria Irene Álvaro Sanz offered a presentation via tele-conference from Spain.

Judith Stegman was invited to speak about associations of virgins, and she began by distinguishing the terms “*Ordo Virginum*,” “associations of virgins according to canon 604 §2,” and “religious institutes/orders.” She explained the voluntary nature of associations, and spoke of the organization, history, and service of the USACV. The presentation was very well-received and served as clarification to many in the audience about how a national association of virgins can be of assistance to a local Bishop in the initial process of discernment and preparation of candidates for a life of virginity, as well as in supporting a virgin’s ongoing life of consecration.



Dr. Magalis Aguilera

Dr. Magalis Aguilera was invited to give a catechetical testimony in light of having lived thirty years as a consecrated virgin. Her insightful address followed the excellent conference of Gloria Irene Álvaro, who spoke in depth on the spirituality of the *Ordo Virginum*. Emphasis was placed on the counter-cultural reality of our lives as consecrated virgins in the midst of today’s society. Each speaker clarified that it is not the pagan culture that is called to assess our vocation; rather, it is vice-

versa: we, the consecrated virgins, are called to witness to the culture and not to hide our virginal state. This becomes particularly relevant as we work in fields in which the gift of virginity is not valued, or does not fit in as a normal style of life; it is in the midst of such that we are called to witness to the Eternal Kingdom to come.

The ancient prayer of consecration, ever-relevant for today’s virgins, implores the Lord to protect those who seek his help: “Keep them vigilant and on their guard; may nothing tarnish the glory of perfect virginity, or the vocation of purity which is shared by those who are married.”



Gloria Irene Álvaro, speaking by tele-conference

Current Council

Members and Officers

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

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

Margaret Flipp, Treasurer, 2014-2016,
Diocese of Arlington

Mary Kay Lacke, Member-at-large, 2014-2016
(appointed Secretary through 2016)
Diocese of Steubenville.

Marie Beccaloni, Member-at-large, 2015-2017,
Archdiocese of Chicago.



Upcoming USACV- Sponsored Events

**2016 United States Convocation
of Consecrated Virgins
August 6-10, 2016,
The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center,
Chicago, Illinois**

(See article, page 11)

**2016 National Information Conference
on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity
August 2-5, 2016
The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center
Chicago, Illinois**

(See article, page 10)

Upcoming Issues of *The Lamp*:

May 29, 2016 Feast of Corpus Christi

September 8, 2016 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 12, 2016 Our Lady of Guadalupe

February 2, 2017 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

Special Announcements

Consecrated virgins of the Archdiocese of Portland will host their annual, national retreat for consecrated virgins June 16-19, 2016 at Our Lady of Peace Retreat House in Oregon. Registration is due May 15 to Regina Dibb. Program / registration forms can be obtained from Regina at firstjn416@gmail.com.

Recordings are available from the 2015 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity, and from the 2015 United

States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins. Order forms are available on the USACV website: www.consecratedvirgins.org.

2016 USACV Member and Friend Registration Renewal Forms are also available on the USACV website.

Elizabeth Lam reminds everyone that we are always happy to consider ideas to improve the USACV website. Please pass on links to news articles about the vocation and let us know if you want to lend a helping hand in keeping the site current. It is a volunteer activity and we are always in need of this assistance.



Lamps,
Rome
Conference



Pictures from the Rome Conference

From the President's Journal

This Lenten issue of *The Lamp* comes on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Protector of Virgins. Bishop Boyea opens the issue with a reflection on Saint Joseph as guide of a family placed as a treasure in his care. The issue continues with features on gatherings of virgins in Costa Rica in early January, and in Rome for the Close of the Year of Consecrated Life. As well, we announce plans for summer 2016 conferences and retreats for consecrated virgins to be held in the United States. There is much to be thankful for as we enter these holy days of the Triduum. Perhaps we might reflect on the words of a prayer from the Ritual Mass for the Consecration of Virgins: “As we offer sacrificial gifts, we pray, O Lord: grant generously to these your servants, perseverance in the resolve they have made their own, so that when the doors are opened at the coming of the most high King, they may merit to enter with joy into the heavenly Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord.”

“Welcome to the Rome Conference” by His Eminence João Braz Cardinal de Aviz

His Eminence João Braz Cardinal de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, gave the opening “Welcome and Introduction of Consecrated Life in the Unity of Charisms” address to all the consecrated (from various forms of consecrated life) gathered in Paul VI Hall on Friday morning January 29. He also celebrated Holy Mass for the *Ordo Virginum*, and gave a homily, on Sunday January 31.

His Eminence emphasized that consecrated men and women are called to confess the Holy Trinity with our lives, and in communion with one another. Our God, he noted, is One in Three Persons, showing that the deepest intimacy of God reflects a unity in diversity, with common roots. God is love, and men and women created in the image and likeness of God are also love, and our unity can't be uniformity. It is a unity in distinction, as the Trinity is. His talk was delivered in Spanish but with simultaneous translation into English, French, and Italian.

Celebrating the Close of the Year of Consecrated Life

Following is a copy of the report to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops following the Rome 2016 gathering of the Ordo Virginum. The report was prepared by the USACV president and vice-president, Judith Stegman and Magalis Aguilera.

Consecrated Life in Unity was the title of the International Meeting that took place in Vatican City / Rome from January 28th to February 2nd 2016. The meeting marked the first time that representatives of different forms of consecrated life gathered together in Rome. The *Ordo Virginum* (The Order of Virgins) and those from other forms of consecrated life gathered for a day-long colloquium in Paul VI Hall, and met for times of prayer: an opening Prayer Vigil in Saint Peter Basilica; Pilgrimage Stations for the Year of Mercy at the papal basilicas, including the Basilica of Saint Mary Major led by the Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life; and celebration of Holy Mass with Pope Francis in Saint Peter Basilica on the Feast of the Presentation. As well, the days included a two-day gathering of the *Ordo Virginum* in the *Auditorium Antonianum* of the Antonianun University of Rome.

This was the third pilgrimage to Rome for the Order of Virgins. We had an historic pilgrimage to Rome in May 1995 when, for the first time, consecrated virgins of many countries gathered in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the revised Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, called for by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. This occasion allowed 330 consecrated virgins to meet Pope John Paul II and to begin to explore together the universal dimension of our vocation. The second assembly was in 2008, at which time 500 consecrated virgins met in audience with Pope Benedict XVI. This third pilgrimage, in 2016, received 600 consecrated virgins representing the *Ordo Virginum* from around the world. In this latest meeting, the Order of Virgins was included in a general audience with Pope Francis together with representatives of cloistered monastic life, religious institutes of apostolic life, male monastic life and societies of apostolic life, secular institutes, and new institutes and “new forms” of Consecrated Life – all on pilgrimage for the Close of the Year of Consecrated Life.

Why is this news important for our Bishops in the dioceses and archdioceses of the United States of America?

It is important because: “the Order of Consecrated Virgins is a reality that reached the number of 4,000 consecrated virgins in the world in 2015; it was composed of no more than a few women in 1970, the year of the promulgation of the ‘*Ordo Consecrationis Virginum*.’ Today, consecrated virgins are present in 78 nations, distributed in 5 continents, [with] 27% of the 4,000 in the Americas.” This information was abstracted from responses to questionnaires submitted to the CICLSAL by 114 episcopal conferences in September 2015, and was presented by Florence Motte of France and Cristina Vonzum of Switzerland to the *Ordo Virginum* gathered in Rome on January 30, 2016.

The report by Florence Motte and Cristina Vonzum also highlighted five different ways in which the *Ordo Virginum* can be seen as a reality in today’s Church: “(1) it is an aid to the spiritual growth of consecrated virgins by nurturing their faithful belonging to Christ; (2) it has a strong bond with the local Church; (3) it is an answer to the needs of evangelization in countries of mission and of a new evangelization in countries of ancient Christian tradition influenced by secularization; (4) it answers to present challenges of the Church in dialogue with the world; and, finally (5) it has the ability to be rooted in all cultures of the world.”

Twenty-five consecrated virgins from 22 dioceses of the United States attended the 2016 Rome Pilgrimage. Fifteen of them stayed in housing arranged with 25 other virgins from Germany, Canada, Ireland, El Salvador, Austria, and Australia. As in 1995 and again in 2008, many of the U.S. virgins met one another for the first time in Rome, or were able to renew and deepen friendships with one another. We were also delighted to meet up again with virgins from around the globe, some of whom we had met in earlier gatherings. Much appreciation was expressed by English-speaking virgins in other countries for the USACV website, materials, and newsletter (*The Lamp*), which are seen as key English-language resources about the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world.

The March 19 issue of *The Lamp*, the newsletter of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins, will feature photos and personal reflections from English-speaking consecrated virgins who attended the pilgrimage. For all who attended, it was a most memorable and joyful experience, as we witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit through our sisters throughout the world. We hope to continue meeting together globally to widen and enrich our theological reflections and our prayer.

*Reflections from English-Speaking Virgins
on Their Experience of the Rome 2016
Events for the Ordo Virginum:*

Noemi Angeles of the Diocese of Honolulu (Hawaii):

Joy and unity, born out of charity and a fruit of the Holy Spirit, describes my first experience of the International Congress for Consecrated Life in general and of the *Ordo Virginum* in particular. The Congress offered a great hope to the future of the *Ordo Virginum* by clarity of definition of the *Ordo*, through its breath and depth (fathomless), its universality (catholicity), its place and significance in the life of the Church, its mission, its vision of growth with the dynamism and love of the Holy Spirit. The growing support of the Church hierarchy and the work of the leaders in each country give hope to the growth of the *Ordo Virginum*. The data presented by our French sister Florence Motte, with concrete and measurable metrics, marks the growth and the strong presence of the *Ordo Virginum* in the Church and in our world. It is very inspirational, and I am filled with hopeful joy, yet am aware that there is still plenty to be done.

The *Ordo Virginum* is not a vocation lived alone, but in community, not in the sense of monastic or religious life but in the sense of the whole world being our cloister and community. Unity was emphasized during all the sessions, and Pope Francis also spoke of it during the papal audience. It is strengthened by transparency, discussion and opinions to find the truth (veritas) rooted in the Gospel.

I was overwhelmed with joy to meet some of our sisters from several countries and continents and to see familiar faces who have attended the USACV convocations. I met women from Iraq, Guatemala, Russia, India, Hungary, France, Burkina Faso, El Salvador... not to mention our lovely Irish sisters, including the twins, and Nuala, who celebrated her silver jubilee on February 2. Maria Luisa from Germany was a great resource for us as she coordinated bus transportation. My gratitude and appreciation also goes to our own sisters of the USACV: to Judith, Magalis, Betsy, Barbara, Joni and many more who took responsibility to make it easier for many.

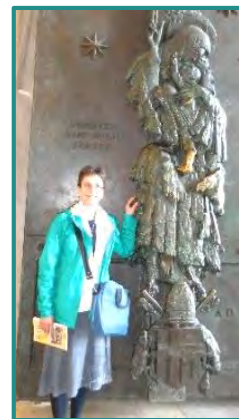
United with one mind and one heart we gathered together for one of the (por moi) most beautiful gatherings in the Church I had ever been involved in. Most of us fully participated, our hearts full of joy. We opened our hands and took advantage of every chance to grow in charity! It

was also emphasized that the spirit of the pontificate of Pope Francis is to go beyond the periphery but first within our own family, biological and those of us brought together, consecrated virgins united in our Beloved, Jesus our Spouse.

Eileen Belongea of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee (Wisconsin):

Rome was remarkable, the magnificent history of that ancient city was amazing to behold. The numerous basilicas, churches, chapels and shrines built to honor the lives of so many saints and martyrs tells the spectacular story of Christendom – the early Church and its rise to primacy among the world's religions; we read about it in books, but to walk among it is incredible.

What a double blessing to be in Rome for the close of the year of consecrated life, while at the same time, the opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. I participated in the Year of Mercy activities by pilgrimaging through several Holy Doors.



St. John
Lateran Door

But with all the hustle and bustle, pushing and shoving of so many pilgrims in Rome for the Year of Mercy, wanting to do the same as me, walk through Holy Doors and catch a glimpse of the Pope, it was difficult to find a place to be quiet and enter into the silence of my heart to experience this Eternal City spiritually as well as physically. I found my favorite place to “be still” was the beautiful little church on the edge of the Vatican – Santa Anna; it is like a miniature basilica; magnificent, but quaint & intimate, very prayerful without all the camera flashes and busyness of the major basilicas.

So many beautiful experiences and truths were shared. For me, the common message was that of **Joy**, we are called to be **joyful**, no one is attracted to a gloomy consecrated person. Our joy must depend solely on who we *are*, brides of Christ, not what we *do*, or affirmations from society or the Church. Our joy lies in the Lord Himself, our Heavenly Bridegroom. We experience that joy when we are reconciled with ourselves, with God and with others. We announce our joy when others can contemplate God's merciful love in our face and in our actions.

Pope Francis spoke of three things for the life of the consecrated person: prophesy, proximity, and hope. *Prophesy of Obedience* – others ought to be able to read the Gospels by observing our lives, the way we live and act. *Proximity* – our joy in the Lord is not meant for us alone, it is to be shared with all God’s children; we must “get our hands dirty” by entering into the lives of others. Our consecration should not make us shiny untouchable museum pieces, we must freely enter into the life of the other and be a channel of God’s mercy and joy for them – break out of your comfort zone, “get your hands dirty” for the Kingdom. *Hope* – our hope is solely in the Lord; pray unceasingly, with a “maternal” heart, and a holy trust in the Father’s faithfulness.

Papa Francesco speaking to us from his heart, as a “papa”



As consecrated virgins, we must not forget our roots, our love of Jesus; we were challenged: “Are we still in love with Jesus?” Meditate continually of the Gospel and internalize the Rite of Consecrated Virginity; continuing formation will keep us from being set adrift. We must be careful not to lose our “first love” in the busyness of “doing”. We must remember who we are, whom God called us to be – a bride of Christ; ours is not a vocation of “doing,” it is a vocation of “being” – our joy lies in *being* a bride of Christ. When we focus on “doing” – “I” is at the center; when we focus on “being” – Jesus is at the center. Everything we say, think and do must flow from who we are and who we are not. Our lives must point to the Bridegroom. As brides, we must always be about the Bridegroom’s business. And we must go to Jerusalem to be crucified with Him. Our mission is His Mission; we must be about bringing God’s love and mercy to all, profess His love for all by loving all. Be His hands and feet in the world bringing His mercy to the other; walk with them in love and compassion. Meet them where they are without judgment, and lift them up in love to Him who is Love. Bind no one, forgive freely and you will be forgiven; find that your cup overflows with His grace and love. Be a

people of pilgrimage. Make your life a continuous Exodus from yourselves to a life in Christ. Adoration and Service are inseparable. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. We must meet the Risen Christ in adoration and prayer, then leave everything (especially our comfort zone) to follow Him in service and love; then we will find our true joy and our true peace. Jesus is our joy; we must be His joy in the world.

Fr. Eugene J. Bettinger, O. Carm., of the Archdiocese of Newark (New Jersey):

Our consecrated life events in Rome and at the Vatican were well done and very beneficial to myself as one of the delegates for the *Ordo Virginum* among the various expressions of consecration. I want to thank you for facilitating me to

accompany consecrated virgin Susan Munroe who is such a plus in the chapel ministry here in the Bergen Town Shopping Mall, Paramus, New Jersey, where I am the chapel director.

Emily Byers of the Diocese of Lafayette (Louisiana):

The opportunity to attend the international gathering of the *Ordo Virginum* in Rome was truly an answer to prayer. As the only consecrated virgin in my diocese, I had been asking God for some time to show me how I might deepen my understanding of our vocation and also experience community with other consecrated women. The convocation in Rome was a tremendous gift for me in this regard, and for this I will always be grateful to my Beloved Spouse and to the friends in my diocese who encouraged me to attend. The greatest blessings of my time in Rome were meeting other consecrated virgins and hearing their testimonies, and I am overjoyed to now feel so “rooted” in friendship within the *Ordo Virginum*!

(Continued on page 12)

by Florence Sundberg

As I watch what is happening in our political discourses, I realize that we have not only lost the sense of the sacredness of each human life; we have lost the sense of the sacred in almost every aspect of life. This is confirmed by the fact that Catholic universities are awarding prestigious awards to Catholics who promote abortion and same sex marriage. Pope John Paul II appealed to the responsibility of us all, urging us to respect, protect, love and serve life --- every human life, and to get involved with others in promoting Catholic teaching in these areas.

We who are called to live in the world among the people of God must try to make others aware of what is happening around us, in our neighborhoods, our schools, our parishes. Let us be Christ's presence to those we encounter day by day so that when they see the light and the joy that is ours because we are Christ's, they will "come and see" where the source of our joy comes from. Then they will learn of Jesus and will love and serve Him and thus, the Light of Christ will extinguish the darkness that is now spreading and devouring souls. May the Holy Spirit come upon us and give us the courage we will need to stand fast in the Faith. And may we receive the maternal blessing of Mary, our Mother, on all we undertake for the honor and glory of Her Son.

Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner: Follow-Up

by Joyce Stolberg

Father Bill Carmody, who had said Masses and led prayer vigils in front of Planned Parenthood in Colorado Springs for years, died on February 23, 2016 after having fought cancer for about four years. Only a few weeks prior, with his oxygen tank on his shoulder, he had been on the stairs of the State Capitol in Denver, protesting an assisted suicide bill, which subsequently died in the State legislature. Colorado has lost a great pro-life leader and St. Dominic's parish has lost a remarkable pastor. Robert Dear, the Planned Parenthood shooter, is undergoing psychiatric evaluation to determine his ability to stand trial. May

we all follow Fr. Bill's legacy of fighting abortion, not with rhetoric and violence, but with prayer and compassion.

Please be aware: an assisted suicide bill or a euthanasia bill will be coming to your state legislature soon if it hasn't already arrived. The arguments in their favor are extremely slick and very deceptive. Be prepared to counter these attacks on the seamless garment of respect for life.

Consecration Announcements

Upcoming Consecrations:

United States:

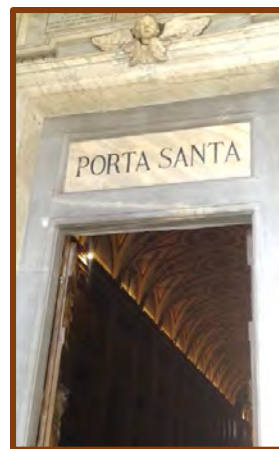
June 4, 2016, 1:00 pm, Valerie Wilson, St. Martin of Tours Church, Archdiocese of Louisville (Kentucky). All are warmly invited. You may contact Valerie at valerielynnwilson@yahoo.com.

June 29, 2016, 5:15 pm, Shannon Ryan, Aquinas Newman Center on the campus of the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque, at the hands of the Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe.

Recent Consecrations:

United Kingdom:

December 20, 2015, Anne Duell, Archdiocese of Birmingham, at the hands of the Most Reverend Robert Byrne.



Holy Door, Rome
Papal Basilica of St. Mary
Major

The Netherlands:

November 22, 2015, Eliane Popa, Diocese of Groningen-Leeuwarden, at the hands of the Most Reverend Gerard J. de Korte.



Eliane Popa with Bishop Gerard J. de Korte and

India:

February 2, 2016, Fatima Vallado, Archdiocese of Bombay, at the hands of the Most Reverend Dominic Savio Fernandes. *[This brings the number of those consecrated in Mumbai to nine, one of whom is deceased.]*

(India continued: Although consecrated four years ago, the following announcement and picture have never been posted.)

March 24, 2012, Gail Ann David, Archdiocese of Kolkata, at the hands of the Most Reverend Archbishop Thomas O'Souza.



Gail Ann David

2016 Information Conference Announcement

The 2016 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World, sponsored by the USACV, will be held at The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in downtown Chicago, Illinois, from August 2 to August 5. The Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing and Episcopal Moderator of the USACV, will once again be present to give key presentations along with experienced consecrated virgins of the Association.

Please encourage women interested in the vocation of consecrated virginity to attend this conference. A full brochure regarding the conference will be available on the USACV website, a little later in the spring. Thank you for your help in spreading the word!



Relaxing at Rome Conference

2016 Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

Announcement

Please join the United States consecrated virgins for our annual convocation to be held August 6 to 10, 2016 at The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in downtown Chicago, Illinois. We are pleased that we will welcome His Eminence Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke to offer key addresses, as we explore the theme, ***Consecrated Virginity as a Reality in Today's Church.***

All consecrated virgins, including those from other countries, are warmly invited to attend. Virgins who have been accepted by their Bishops as candidates for the consecration are also invited to come if they have attended a previous Information Conference.

Consecrated virginity is among the most excellent gifts bequeathed by Our Lord to his Bride, the church. From apostolic times women have dedicated their virginity to God, so adding to the beauty of the mystical body of Christ and making it fruitful in grace.

-from the 1970 Decree promulgating the revised rite for the consecration of virgins

Our 2016 Convocation, with its broad ecclesial emphasis, will focus on the presence of the *Ordo Virginum* in countries throughout the world and in dioceses throughout the United States. We desire to encourage one another in the dedication of our virginity, so that the mystical body of Christ might be ever more fruitful in grace, and its beauty enhanced. Our gathering will include a look back over the twenty-year history of the USACV, not in complacency, but with an eye to considering where it is that the Lamb has led us, as a group and as individual virgins faithfully living this vocation of love. We will consider our story in light of the witness of virgins living the vocation throughout the world.

Our days together will be centered upon prayer, including Lauds, Holy Mass, Vespers, and Compline. In addition, the schedule will include time for Eucharistic Adoration and Confession. To round out the day, our evenings will serve as a time of fellowship as we engage in enjoyable recreational activities. Cardinal Burke and various consecrated virgins will offer presentations relevant to our theme. A detailed program and registration material will be available on the USACV website.

Once again, we encourage all consecrated virgins and candidates who have attended an Information Conference to join us for this wonderful time of study, prayer, and fellowship at the 2016 Convocation. We hope to see you all in August!

Mary Jo Gretsinger, U.S. virgin currently in Nigeria:

While we were in Rome, all of us consecrated virgins were together on Saturday and Sunday at the *Antonianum*. On Saturday when we went for Mass, I was seated at the rear of the Church next to one of our French sisters. At the end of the Mass as we were getting ready to leave, I thought I noticed a gold embroidered lamp on her scarf. I asked her about it, but she did not understand any English. She called one of her French sisters, who explained that all of the French consecrated virgins wear these scarves made of white cotton with the embroidered lamp in different colors, indicating from what part of



France they come. I thanked her for the explanation and did not think further about it. On Sunday after the Mass, as we were leaving the church, this same French sister found me and gave me her scarf. WOW! What a wonderful and thoughtful gift. I will wear my new scarf often and lift up my French sister up in prayer each time that I do so.

Mary Jo's Scarf

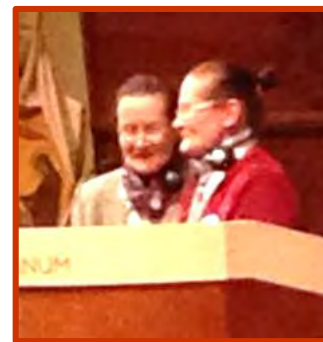
Gemma and Triona King of the Archdiocese of Dublin (Ireland):

We are back in Dublin, Ireland still living on the graces and blessings after a wonderful worldwide gathering of representatives of all forms of Consecrated Life in Rome, to mark the end of the Year of Consecrated Life. This was a historical gathering as it was the first time ever a gathering like this took place. Our deep gratitude to the organizers and coordinators and to our Pope Francis who initiated, supported and accompanied the Year as universal father and pastor. It marked the end of the year dedicated to Consecrated Life which mellowed so beautifully into the Year of Mercy... but our lives as consecrated continues ... thanks be to God!

Particular thanks to Judith and Betsy in the United States for liaising with Sheila Lanigan and Sr. Louise in Ireland. We felt so privileged to represent our Diocese of Dublin, Ireland at such a historical gathering. We were struck by the unity of spirit, the overwhelming enthusiasm to share, great humor and laughter truly evident. We,

Gemma and Triona, thoroughly enjoyed our participation in the choir. We had great fun and magnificent singing too! All of us from many nationalities met for the first time on the evening of our arrival and our skilled choir director, Ketty Fede, had us within hours singing in total harmony with splendid voices with the organist.

There were many highlights for us (Gemma and Triona), and meeting the Pope was the key highlight, when he shook our hands, looked straight at us and said 'Pray for me.' What a humble man! After all it is our mission to pray



Gemma and Triona for him! On our final night we dined in Alfredo's famous restaurant - the home of Italian fettuccine, to mark 25 years of Nuala's consecration, followed by a visit to the Trevi fountain! There, we could not go away without throwing our coins into the pristine clear fountain..... 2020 beckons! And we think we'll return before then!

We thoroughly enjoyed every moment of our historical togetherness, we met such beautiful people who will remain forever in our prayers. We came away renewed, rekindled, uplifted and inspired by such a wealth of spirituality, realizing the wonderful and most beautiful world God created is so small! We know the joy of the Lord is our strength, and the joy of the Gospel our footstool.

Sheila Lanigan of the Archdiocese of Dublin (Ireland):

Six consecrated virgins set out from Dublin, Ireland early Thursday morning, January 28, on an Aer Lingus flight to Rome. Excitement grew as we met at the airport. We stayed at the Residenza Madri Pio with other English speaking OCVs from around the globe. It was a great experience.

The preparation before the conference was mighty ... thank you to all who worked so hard to make it a wonderful experience. The bus transfer and the two days that consecrated virgins met at Auditorium Antonianum was great and gave opportunity to meet and chat with one another from different (English speaking) countries. During the Ordo Virginum gatherings it was wonderful to witness the bond among all from throughout the world regardless of language. A majority of the consecrated virgins are Italian and French.

The Vatican was so welcoming... prepared booklets and prayers in multiple languages, translation services etc. The venues were well considered and so many people making it all go smoothly and well. It was a wonderful privilege to attend the conference, to renew contacts and friendships and share our common calling of the Ordo Virginum. The witness addresses of consecrated virgins from all parts of the world were inspiring.

The conference was a balance of meeting with five strands of consecrated life and meeting in the individual strands, Ordo Virginum being one, and the oldest historically. The meetings were attended by Cardinals, Bishops and priests as well as the various consecrated.

There was a theme throughout, focusing on three branches to our witness: *Prophetic, Proximity, and Hope*. We have not yet achieved what we hope for but look to the future, to Christ, for our strength and direction. We must fall in love with Christ again. We are called to live the gospel, to begin from intimacy with Jesus.

Janet LeBlanc of the Diocese of Portland (Maine):

Meeting other consecrated virgins at the Vatican in itself has special meaning for me. Standing in St. Peter's Basilica knowing that many yards below my feet St. Peter was martyred added a deeper meaning of the Bible stories and Sacred Traditions.

Before the conference I had the opportunity to visit the Catacomb of Priscilla; to be at the spot of my patron saint (Philomena) left me speechless.

The whole experience allowed me to connect with our Catholic inheritance, and with other consecrated virgins from all over the world. We are part of something bigger than ourselves, the democracy of the dead enables us to openly live out our vocations.

Betsy Lillis of the Diocese of Arlington (Virginia):

I didn't know what to expect during this pilgrimage, except to see the Pope and to meet other people consecrated to Jesus who were also on the pilgrimage to celebrate the end of the Year of Consecrated Life.

This is what I saw: Joyful, smiling faces, patience with waiting in lines, excitement at seeing Pope Francis, commitment to our Lord in fulfilling each one's vocation, St Peter's Basilica, a beautiful place of worship with dedicated priests and staff, and visitors who marveled at its beauty. Other basilicas, churches, statues, and the Holy Steps added to my amazement and wonder and depth of

faith. Masses were celebrated in Latin and English. Welcoming strangers were willing to give directions and help along the way.

This is what I heard: Laughter, the singing of virgin volunteers in choirs and permanent St Peter's choirs as well as other choirs at meetings, consecrated virgin speakers who had taken the time and effort to share their knowledge and expertise with us. Also, consecrated virgins who are working and living their vocations in hard and desperate places throughout the world shared their experiences. Pope Francis shared with us his expectations for us to bring new wine to our lives and the lives we touch in our everyday living. "Be joyful, nurture your faith with reading scripture", he told us. "Allow Jesus to love you." "God prunes us with trials to strength us."

This is what I have taken away from the Pilgrimage: New friendships and determination to live more fully my vocation by: being more joyful, laughing more, waking up each morning thankful for new life in the Lord, commitment to nourish my faith by reading Scripture and to allow Jesus to love me and to share that love with others.

Joani McCann of the Archdiocese of Boston (Massachusetts):

My heart is filled with great joy and awe as I reflect on the days in Rome for the closing of the Year of Consecrated Life. Every part was packed with so many graces and surprises from our Beloved Lord! There were so many great talks with deep reflections that I will be unpacking for a long time.

I met so many new friends from all over the world, sisters in Christ, we shared a special bond there that was communicated beyond spoken word. For several of them, it didn't matter that we didn't speak the same languages. Many of those I met there are now in contact with me through email and social media, we can now use automatic translators through the internet to assist us in conversation.

My experience in Rome showed a deeply universal dimension of our vocation. The sacredness of our vocation and the importance of consecrated life in the universal Church echoed throughout each part. We are called to joyfully echo the love of our Beloved Bridegroom throughout the world, wherever we are, in our daily activities. (Continued on page 15)



Fellowship



Prayer



*What happened in Rome?
New wine came into our lives!*



Learning



Sightseeing



The most amazing highlight of the whole trip, for me, was the Closing Mass for the Year of Consecrated Life with our Holy Father, Pope Francis. I was chosen to process in at the beginning of Mass, in the long line with the Holy Father, as one of the candle bearers representing *Ordo Virginum*.

As I knelt at the front, beside the main altar during Holy Mass, in total amazement as to where I, a nobody from Boston, was, I saw the Holy Father right there, celebrating Holy Mass, in front of me, and seeing the stairs that lead to under the altar, where the tomb of St. Peter rested, I couldn't help but reflect on the words we heard from Cardinal Burke the day before. He spoke of that special bond of love that we have for the Holy Father, through St. Peter. It is a love that is passed down by the Holy Spirit through the apostolic succession, through the hands of our bishops during our consecration. An example of historical proof of this that Cardinal Burke gave was when St. Peter appeared to St. Agatha during her torturous agony and immediately the miraculous healing of her breasts occurred. St. Peter and St. Agatha were separated by centuries, yet they were connected beyond the constraints of time and space. In unity with the love that St. Agatha had for St. Peter, I could feel within my core the unity that we share with the Holy Father. As a representative of our vocation among the other consecrated women and men who were candle bearers, I brought all of you with me.

Virginia Meyer of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Illinois):

My heart sings praises to the Lord! I have just returned from one of the most memorable trips of my lifetime! A week in Rome with my consecrated brothers and sisters! The first morning after arriving, we experienced Mass at the tomb of St. Peter in lower St. Peter Basilica. Such a moving experience! During the week, we heard so many inspiring talks by such gifted speakers. What joy! Meeting, eating, and praying together each day. Our audience with the Pope will always be such a special day of remembrance, as will the Eucharistic Celebration on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord! I feel so blessed that I was able to participate in this glorious celebration at the end of the Year of the Consecrated Life!

Carmen Margarita Muñoz of the Diocese of St.

Augustine (Florida):

The more I reflect on the 1st International Meeting of Consecrated Life in Communion, the more I give thanks to the Lord for the opportunity to participate in it, for the gift of Consecration, and for sharing with so many consecrated persons the joy of the vocation, of having been called by the Lord to follow Him more closely as His bride. As the Holy Father Pope Francis told us after the Mass in St. Peter's on February 2, "non dimenticare," never forget the first moment we received the call to Consecrated Life. And with this year being the 20th anniversary of my Solemn Consecration in the Order of Virgins, it was more special for me.



Joani McCann in procession

Those days we truly lived the *Koinonia*, the communion among all. It was a great joy to greet again and share with many consecrated virgins from the 2008 International Pilgrimage-Congress of the *Ordo Virginum*, as well as to meet others for the first time. It has been a great blessing for those of us delegates of the *Ordo Virginum* from all the continents, but also for the whole Church, the Bride of Christ, and for the world. The unity in joy of consecrated women and men of every form of Consecrated Life meeting together at the See of Peter, sent a strong signal to the world that to follow Christ with love, faith, and hope, as Mary did, continues to be a great witness of Christian life lived to the fullest, because the Consecrated Life is a prophecy that has to be lived as such.

Each of the speakers offered important insights into the vocation of consecrated virginity. Cardinal Braz de Aviz, Prefect of CICLSAL and Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM, Secretary of the Congregation, each spoke about the importance in the Church of the *Ordo Virginum*. Archbishop Carballo further indicated that the diocesan bishop should offer opportunities for permanent, integral, formation: "ecclesiological that is pastoral." He reminded us, "your vocation is a mystical vocation," and he insisted on fidelity to prayer: "this vocation must be lived with fidelity in Mary's style." In his Address, the Holy Father, on February 1, emphasized three things: the prophecy of obedience, proximity, and hope.

These were days of communion among the different forms of Consecrated Life and a deepening in our vocation as consecrated virgins. The presence of the Holy Spirit was felt deeply, and rejoicing at being the Bride of Christ resonated everywhere. The speeches were excellent and the organization was superb.

Helen Qua of the Diocese of Metuchen (New Jersey):

I would like to share with all of you the behind-the-scene work of the Holy Spirit on the second day of our symposium in Rome. I attribute my volunteering to speak, so unexpectedly, to all in attendance at the Auditorium *Antonianum*, to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Being a reserved, quiet, and interior person, I would not normally speak in front of so many in an auditorium. I would be content to listen. I did listen and I heard a voice deep in me saying, "Helen, go and tell them what I have done for you." I found myself standing up so suddenly as the Holy Spirit helped me to respond and give my 'fiat,' running down the wide steps towards the stage and up to the podium. As I looked at the full room, in my human weakness, my mind went blank for a second, but the Holy Spirit came to the rescue and led me on what to say.

I know God is continuing His work in the garden of my soul and he is giving me another touch of grace: His gift of surrender that I may empty myself and make room for Him to enter and do as He wills. I remember the scripture passage that God led me to choose on the day of my consecration nine years ago on February 10, 2007, the Feast of St. Scholastica: *This is my joy and it is complete. He must increase; I must decrease* (John 3:29-30). I was filled with joy when the Holy Spirit was leading me to witness to the faith. Later, a consecrated virgin shared with me about seeing the joy in me. Also, during the break, Karen Bussey came to thank me for the witness and for touching her life. Thank you, Karen for sharing. For one who is so deep in the love and service of God in the terminally ill, your sharing with me in that brief moment means a lot to me. You touched my life too.

For those of you who were not at the symposium, I will relate some of what the Holy Spirit led me to say, "All

I asked from God was to have a strong personal relationship with Him. Look what He did for me! He gave me the gift of being His spouse. His bride! And I am growing in His grace! God is AWESOME! I remember what St. Paul said, *When I am weak, I am strong*. In my human weakness, the Holy Spirit carried me! Praise God for His love and mercy and His faithfulness. I am forever grateful for the gift of virginity, God's love and mercy and His bountiful graces. I want to love Him more and more each day. As Jesus prayed for me in May, 2008 in our extended pilgrimage in Italy under the foot of the Holy Cross in the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, *Engulf me in your love, that I may share Your love with the people You want to touch in my lifetime*.

And last but not least, as St. Therese, the Little Flower gave me a very special gift at the onset of my discernment, *In the Church, my vocation is love*. So help me God that everything that I do and say is and will forever be for Your honor and glory! Amen.



Many Lamps, One Love

Sophia Winiarski of the Archdiocese of Hartford (Connecticut):

The rich memories of our time in Rome remain and are treasured. How good it was to be there in the Heart of the Church with so many others consecrated to our Beloved Lord. My love for the Church and my relationship to our Spouse were enhanced and deepened and I came away with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for my vocation. It was truly a blessing and a privilege to have been a part of the sacred moment of the International Meeting and of the close of the Year of Consecrated Life.

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