

# The Lamp

Volume 23, Issue 2 — May 31, 2018

United States Association of  
Consecrated Virgins

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV

www.consecratedvirgins.org

May 31, 2018 *The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

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

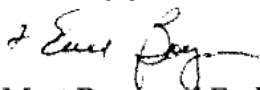
This July marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Humane vitae*, the encyclical by soon-to-be Saint Paul VI. It may seem strange for me to write to all of you about this event. However, all of us need to support marriage as the original blessing given to humanity by our creator. And you, my sisters, who honor the Church with your gift of virginity, are especially called to encourage and support our sisters and brothers who are living out the sacrament of marriage.

Because you are espoused to Christ, you are to be modeling that same sense of marriage that is celebrated as a sacrament: it is to be unitive and procreative. Your own marriage to Christ is to be both of these and a sign of both of these to all in the Church.

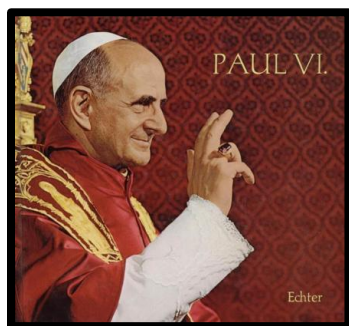
First of all, be signs of unity, not only manifesting your deep intimacy with the Lord, which is the very foundation of your lives, but showing that unity is a result of living love in truth and truth in love. Secondly, be procreative, that is, may this intimacy with Christ be productive of life for others as it is indeed for yourselves. Our generativity and creativity are means of sharing in God's own creation. We are to bring life to all we encounter, to our workplaces, our parishes, and our neighborhoods.

So, sisters in Christ, please celebrate this great encyclical on marriage and may your own marriage to Christ be an on-going sign to our world of what real marriage is to be.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing



Pope Paul VI promulgated *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, 50 years ago. He is soon to be canonized.

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By Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman     May 31, 2018 Feast of the Visitation

***Our Blessed Mother's Propositum of Virginity*<sup>1</sup>**

Throughout her life, our Blessed Mother lived a perpetual *propositum* of virginity. When the Angel Gabriel came to her with the joyful news of her conception of the Messiah, she realized that he would be born of a virgin. She questioned the Angel Gabriel about the manner of that conception and she spoke to him of her *propositum* of virginity, i.e. her intention to live in perfect chastity. In response to his explanation, she agreed to become the Virginal Mother of God and she pronounced her *fiat*.<sup>2</sup> After her *fiat*, the shadow of the Holy Spirit descended upon her and she conceived:

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. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.<sup>3</sup>

Her consecration as Virgin and Mother occurred on that very day of the Annunciation. The confirmation of her virginal being was by the action of the Holy Spirit, who consecrated her to be the Mother of God. The sign of the presence of our Redeemer, prophesied by Isaiah, was thus fulfilled: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,"<sup>4</sup>. . . "which means God is with us."<sup>5</sup>

Mary was active in her *fiat* and she was passive in the action of the virginal conception of the Christ. She was active as she hurried into the hill country to visit her cousin Elizabeth - she was inspired during the visit of the Angel Gabriel to sing the song sung by all the women of the Old Testament who expected the powerful manifestation of the Eternal Father. Now the time had come for the promise made in the Garden of Eden by the Eternal Father, to be fulfilled in the physical presence of His only begotten Son: "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'"<sup>6</sup> Mary, the Queen of Virgins, heard the voice of God in her humble abode in Nazareth. God came in search of her fidelity and she did not hide because of her nakedness or pride. Rather, she was alert to His voice because she was clothed with the virtue of humility. She was free to say "yes" to His will for her: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."<sup>7</sup>

Like Mary, Virgin of Virgins, the virgin being consecrated to a life of virginity offers her *propositum* of virginity. Her "yes" to the Eternal Father and consent to follow His call is an explicit act of freedom: "Father, receive my resolution to follow Christ in a life of perfect chastity which, with God's help, I here profess before

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<sup>1</sup> Article is from Dr. Magalis Aguilera, "Spiritual Formation," Chapter Four in USACV, *Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World* (Lansing, Michigan: USACV, 2017) 102-104.

<sup>2</sup> See Lk. 1: 26-38.

<sup>3</sup> Lk. 1: 35-37.

<sup>4</sup> Is. 7:14.

<sup>5</sup> Mt. 1:23.

<sup>6</sup> Gen 3: 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Lk. 1:38.

you and God's holy people."<sup>8</sup> The virgin does not make a vow to live in chastity from this day forward; rather she declares her *propositum* to continue in life-long virginity. She does not *vow* this, since the action of the consecration is not an action *from* her but an action taken by the Eternal Father through the ministry of the bishop of her diocese. From the very day of her consecration she lives as an icon of the Church to come.

Her consecration is not revocable because she is not consecrating herself *to* God; rather, the Holy Spirit is consecrating her through the consecratory prayer prayed by the Bishop on behalf of the Church. As stated in the *Praenotanda* to the Rite of Consecration, this is "a solemn rite constituting the candidate a sacred person, a surpassing sign of the Church's love for Christ."<sup>9</sup>

In the Examination before the Prayer of Consecration, the virgin responds "I am" to each of three questions asked of her by the Bishop:

- ❖ "Are you resolved to persevere to the end of your days in the holy state of virginity and in the service of God and his Church? "
- ❖ "Are you resolved to follow Christ in the spirit of the Gospel that your whole life may be a faithful witness to God's love and a convincing sign of the Kingdom of Heaven? "
- ❖ "Are you resolved to accept solemn consecration as a bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God?"

In response to the virgin's threefold affirmation, the Bishop declares, "Thanks be to God!"<sup>10</sup>



**Magalis, Judith, and Maria Luisa Oefele visit with Pope Emeritus Benedict in the Vatican Gardens.**

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<sup>8</sup> OCV 22: "Accipe, Pater, perfectae castitatis et Christi sequelae propositum, quod, auxiliante Domino, coram te profiteor et populo sancto Dei."

<sup>9</sup> OCV *Praenotanda* 1: "conderetur sollemnis ritus, quo virgo constitueretur persona sacrata, signum transcendens amoris Ecclesiae erga Christum."

<sup>10</sup> OCV 17: "Vultis in sanctae virginitatis proposito ac Domini Ecclesiaeque servitio ad extremum vitae perseverare?" "Vultis Christi sequelam in Evangelio propositam ita amplecti ut vita vestra peculiari praebeat testimonium caritatis atque futuri Regni signum exsistat manifestum?" "Vultis consecrari ac Domino nostro Iesu Christo, summo Dei Filio, sollemniter desponsari?" "Deo gratias!"

## USACV Council

### Members and Officers

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

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

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

**Linda Ann Long, Member-at-large, 2017-2019 (Appointed Secretary through 2018)**  
Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

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

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY



## Upcoming Events Sponsored by the USACV

### 2018 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

**July 6 to July 10, optional extension to July 13**

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

The Registration form is available on the USACV website, [www.consecratedvirgins.org](http://www.consecratedvirgins.org).

See announcement, page 10.

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

**July 31 to August 3.**

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

See announcement, page 17.

The Registration form is available on the USACV website, [www.consecratedvirgins.org](http://www.consecratedvirgins.org).

## Announcements and News

### *Election, Fall 2018*

More information will be forthcoming to members about the Fall 2018 USACV elections.

### *USACV Website / Store*

We are in the process of updating and upgrading our USACV online store and hope to have it up and ready again soon to process orders.

### *Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:*

**September 8, 2018** Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**December 12, 2018** Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

**February 2, 2019** Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

**May 31, 2019** Feast of the Visitation





## From the President's Journal

By Judith Stegman

On Saturday, May 5, with the aid of translators, thirty or so consecrated virgins from various parts of the world participated in a discussion about the “originality” of the *Ordo Virginum* as a form of consecrated life in the Church. It was part of the International Meeting “Consecration and Consecration through the Evangelical Counsels: Reflections, Still-Open Issues, Possible Pathways,” convoked by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The Rite of Consecration expresses well the identifying characteristics of the *Ordo* that we considered: *perseverance, all the days of her life, in the holy state of virginity; consecrated as a bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and lived as a convincing sign of the Kingdom of Heaven*. This issue of “The Lamp” includes a sampling of photos from our days in Rome; we hope to continue the discussion with more photos and information during our July Convocation days in Miami.

The visit to Rome was unexpected and replete with evidence of divine providence. Magalis Aguilera and I were humbled and greatly honored to have an informal meeting with Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in the Vatican Gardens, which consecrated virgin Maria Luisa Oefele of Regensburg was able to arrange. He blessed us and smiled as we thanked him for his presentation to the *Ordo Virginum* during the Rome 2008 International Congress of Consecrated Virgins, and we greeted him from the consecrated virgins of the United States. We were also delighted to have an afternoon coffee with His Eminence Gerhard Cardinal Mueller, former prefect of the Congregation for the Discipline of the Faith (and before that the Bishop of Regensburg). As well, realizing that my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of consecration occurs in August of this year, Magalis asked His Eminence Raymond Cardinal Burke if he might celebrate Holy Mass in honor of the occasion, and he was pleased



**Virgins enjoy a formal coffee hour with Cardinal Mueller.**

to do so in his beautiful private chapel. Cardinal Burke’s blessing and words of encouragement are a deep source of joy for me. Magalis also invited consecrated virgins from the United States, along with some others, to a Roman dinner on Sunday evening to celebrate my anniversary. I was deeply touched.

To date, 26 people have registered for our July Convocation in Miami, with 11 planning to stay for the extension days. It is a good number! There are still open slots for a few more virgins, so it’s not too late for consecrated virgins to make plans to join us in this time to share together the love of our Divine Spouse.

*Homily: Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Given on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Consecration of Marianne Groesmeyer, in Sankt Knud Lavard Kirke, by Cardinal Burke*

"[A] light of revelation to the nations."<sup>11</sup> With these words, Simeon declared the great mystery of God the Son Incarnate Whom he was holding in his arms. He declared the fulfillment of God's promise to us: "And suddenly there will come to the temple the Lord whom you seek, and the messenger of the covenant whom you desire."<sup>12</sup> God the Son became a little Child, took our human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and was born of her at Bethlehem. He has become like us, "his brethren in every respect,"<sup>13</sup> in order that He might free us from our sins, winning for us the gift of the Holy Spirit who leads us into ever greater freedom for the love of God and of our neighbor. Our lighted candles are a sign of Christ the Light, the Incarnation of the immeasurable and unceasing mercy and love of God the Father Who shines forth for us and guides us in the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit. He shines forth for us and guides us most wonderfully of all in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in which we are now about to share.

Today, the Church celebrates, in particular, Christ the Light of the Father's mercy and love shining forth for all the nations through the consecrated life, through those whom the Father calls, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to give their entire life to Him and His people in a life patterned as closely as possible on the Gospel. The great gift of the consecrated life in the Church is especially evident as we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Church's consecration of Marianne Groesmeyer as a virgin living in the world. Through the Rite of Consecration, Marianne was united more closely to Christ the Light, in order to reflect the mercy and love of God, Incarnate in Christ, to all. Through the consecration of virgins living in the world, as through the profession of religious, hermits and members of secular institutes, Marianne was called to witness with constancy, with her entire life, to what Pope Saint John Paul II called "*the characteristic features of Jesus* - the chaste, poor and obedient one - ...."<sup>14</sup>

It is true, in fact, that God the Father has a plan for each one of us from the moment of our coming to life in His only-begotten Son through Baptism. We rejoice today in God's plan for Marianne, that she should be espoused forever to His only-begotten Son as His bride, that she should offer to God the gift of her virginity, so that God might espouse her, through His Holy Church, to His only-begotten Son forever in the life of consecrated virginity.

The Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity in the World is a particular sign of the grace of the Redemptive Incarnation, which continues to be at work in the Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The consecrated virgin living in the world enunciates the firm resolve to offer her life in its entirety to Christ, her Bridegroom, and God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit, blesses and consecrates the virgin, setting her apart to live in the world as a sign of the totally pure and selfless love which is to animate every Christian life. In the life of the consecrated virgin, we see the purity of body and spirit, which is to characterize us, true sons and

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<sup>11</sup> Lk 2, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Mal 3, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Heb 2, 17.

<sup>14</sup> "... *dotes Iesu propriae – virginis pauperis oboedientis.*" Ioannes Paulus PP. II, *Adhortatio Apostolica Post-Synodalis Vita Consecrata*, "de vita consecrate eiusque missione in Ecclesia ac mundo," 25 Martii 1996, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 88 (1996) 377, n. 1. [VC]. English translation: John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996, n. 3, no. 1. [VCEng].

daughters of God the Father, in His only-begotten Son. Every Christian, no matter what his or her state in life or vocation, must seek to imitate the virgin in her love which is pure and selfless, the offering of her whole being in love of God and of neighbor. So it is that the Bishop prays to God the Father in the Prayer of Consecration for a virgin living in the world:

Among your many gifts  
you give to some the grace of virginity.  
Yet the honor of marriage is in no way lessened.  
As it was in the beginning,  
your first blessing still remains upon this holy union.  
Yet your loving wisdom chooses those  
who make sacrifice of marriage  
for the sake of the love of which it is the sign.  
They renounce the joys of human marriage,  
but cherish all that it foreshadows.<sup>15</sup>

In the same light, we see the particular bond of the consecrated virgin with those called to the ordained priesthood. It is the bond of the Virgin Mary and the Apostle John, beginning at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. It is the bond of devoted love of Christ and of His Mystical Body, the Church. It is the bond of oneness of heart with the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus from which He never ceases to pour out, in abundance, the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit upon the Church and into the hearts of her members.



**Cardinal Burke visits with several consecrated virgins in Rome, May, 2018**

The reflection of Christ, the "light of revelation to the nations," in the life of consecrated persons is for all the faithful an invitation to keep their eyes fixed on Him Who alone reveals to us the mercy and love of God the Father. Consecrated persons are for all of us both a living witness to the reality of grace at work in our midst and a reminder of the finality of Our Lord's saving work among us: "a new heaven and a new earth,"<sup>16</sup> the consummation of the Redemptive Incarnation on the Last Day. The vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world exists not only for the salvation of the virgin herself but for the salvation of all,

<sup>15</sup> "... etiam hoc donum in quasdem mentes de largitatis tuae fonte defluxit, ut, cum honorem nuptiarum nulla interdicta minuissent ac super sanctum coniugium initialis benediction permaneret, existerent tamen animae, casto renuntiarent connubio at eius concupiscerent sacramentum, nec imitarentur quod nuptiis agitur, sed diligerent quod nuptiis praenotatur." Pontificale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum, *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum*, editio typica (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1970), pp. 27-28, n. 24. [OCV]. English translation: "Part Four: The Consecration of Virgins, Chapter 1: Consecration to a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World," *The Roman Pontifical renewed by decree of the most holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, promulgated by authority of Pope Paul VI and revised at the direction of Pope John Paul II* (Vatican City: Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Vox Clara Committee, 2012), p. 304, no. 24. [OCVEng].

<sup>16</sup> Rv 21, 1.

directing all to Christ, in order that they be totally for Him. Each of us, in turn, in his or her vocation, be it the married life, the dedicated single life, the consecrated life, or the priesthood, is called to be for Christ and to draw others to Christ through the fidelity with which we answer His call. The consecrated virgin, in a very particular way, is set apart, through the prayer of consecration, as a sacred person in the Church, to point all of us to Christ. Even as Christ is, for the consecrated virgin, her all, her everything, so we understand, too, that Christ must be our all.

Today, as we joyfully thank God the Father for the gift of the consecrated life in the Church and, in particular, for the gift of consecrated virginity lived in the world in Marianne Groesmeyer, we think of the brilliance of Christ, the "light of revelation to the nations," shining forth in consecrated men and women throughout the Christian centuries. We think of the host of consecrated persons who have been beatified or canonized saints, and the countless consecrated persons whose names are no longer remembered but whose lives have glorified God and have helped their brothers and sisters to follow faithfully the way home to God the Father. Consecrated persons shine forth in the history of the Church and in our midst today as so many bright stars drawing us to the source of their brilliance, Christ the Light. We think especially of Saints Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, and Cecilia, and of a host of consecrated virgins who have led us and continue to lead us to a deeper communion with God by giving our hearts ever more completely to the glorious pierced heart of Jesus.

Today, we are also aware of how difficult it is for our brothers and sisters, immersed in a culture of secularism, radical individualism and relativism, to hear the call of the God the Father to give their entire life to Him and to His people, to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to the consecrated life. Concretely, we think of the challenges and sufferings which Marianne has embraced, over the past twenty-five years, in order to live as a bride for her Bridegroom, Christ, and for His Mystical Body, the Church. Today, more critically perhaps than in any other period of the Church's history, the world needs living icons of Christ the Light, consecrated persons who live for God alone, for the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of their brothers and sisters.

Despite the difficulties which leading the consecrated life in today's society presents, we must never lose confidence in the vocation to the consecrated life, as a most beautiful work of the Holy Spirit, which has been at the heart of the Church's life from her very beginnings. When the struggle to be faithful becomes most difficult, the Holy Spirit remains present in our souls to inspire and strengthen us, if we will only give ourselves over more completely in obedience to the Father's will, to His plan for us.

The person who is called by God and responds to His call can, at some times, be tempted to think that it has all been useless, because of the failures and the difficulties which come along the way, because of misunderstandings, incomprehension – all of the many effects of Original Sin which plague us throughout our life here on this earth. But in our vocation, we come to understand, through the trials and difficulties which inevitably come in any life, that the victory of Our Lord Jesus Christ is sure. He is our recompense, and our reward is with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven.

In this life, on this earthly pilgrimage, we have only one thing to worry about, and that is that we give faithfully, every day, the witness of our love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, we need not worry about the difficulties we face. We need not worry about the incomprehension which we endure, the sufferings which come to us or those who are near to us. We place everything into the hands of Divine Providence, and we are confident that Christ will not fail to be our recompense. He will accomplish His victory of eternal life in us, if only we remain faithful, if only we strive, each day, to give ourselves completely and totally to Him. This is a particular witness which the consecrated virgin living in the world gives. She is, as the Rite of Consecrations reminds us, a



sign of the eternal destiny of each of our lives, to be with Christ in the company of the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the company of the angels and all the saints, in the Kingdom of Heaven. By her espousal to Our Lord Jesus Christ, by her living faithfully and totally for Him as a sacred person in the Church, she is, for us, a sign of that ultimate victory which Christ has won for each us by His Passion, Death and Resurrection.<sup>17</sup>

Through the Holy Eucharist which we now celebrate, let us thank God with all our heart for the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, the "light of revelation to the nations," and for the gift of consecrated persons, especially of Marianne Groesmeyer, who reflect the Light of Christ to the world. Let us pray in the words of Pope Saint John Paul II, asking God our Father, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose life was totally consecrated to Christ from her Immaculate Conception, to shower an abundance of His blessings upon Marianne and upon all whom he has called and is calling to the consecrated life, especially in Denmark:

To you, our Mother, who desire the spiritual and apostolic renewal of your sons and daughters in a response of love and complete dedication to Christ, we address our confident prayer. You who did the will of the Father, ever ready in obedience, courageous in poverty and receptive in fruitful virginity, obtain from your divine Son that all who have received the gift of following him in the consecrated life may be enabled to bear witness to that gift by their transfigured lives, as they joyfully make their way with all their brothers and sisters towards our heavenly homeland and the light which will never grow dim.

We ask you this, that in everyone and in everything glory, adoration and love may be given to the Most High Lord of all things, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

Let us now lift up our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the glorious Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. Let us be one in heart with Christ, the "light of revelation to the nations," so that His light may shine forth in the world, through our fidelity to His call, in all that we think and say and do.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE



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<sup>17</sup> Cf. OCV, pp. 26-27, n. 24. English translation: OCVEng, pp. 303-304, no. 24.

<sup>18</sup> "Tibi, Mater, quae spiritalem apostolicamque tuorum filiorum ac filiarum exoptas renovationem amore nempe respondentium atque integra sui dedicatione Christo facta, fidenter nostram destinamus precem. Quae Patris effecisti voluntatem, in oboedientia alacris, in paupertate fortis, in virginitate fecunda hospitalis, a divino impetrato Filio tuo ut, quotquot iam eius sequelae in consecrata vita donum perceperunt, testificari sua transformata vita ipsum sciant, dum laetantes singulis cum fratribus ac sororibus reliquis ad caelestem patriam procedunt adque lucem numquam occasuram.

Hoc Te poscimus, ut in omnibus et in singulis glorificetur honoretur ametur Summus rerum omnium Dominus, qui Pater est et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus." VC, 486, n. 112. English translation: VCEng, pp. 200-201, no. 112.

## 2018 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

### Announcement

*July 6-10, Morning Star Renewal Center, Miami FL*



Magalis Aguilera visits outdoor shrine of Our Lady at Morningstar Retreat House.

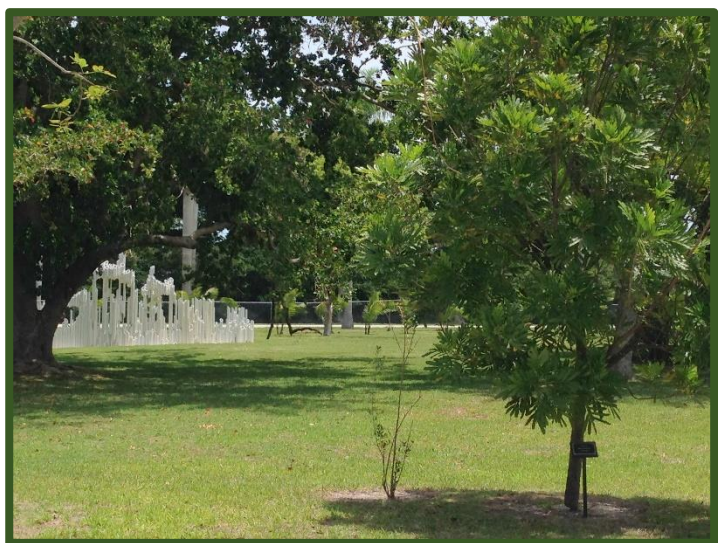
*There are still a few slots available if you register soon!*

**Registration form is attached and can also be found on the USACV website:**  
[www.consecratedvirgins.org](http://www.consecratedvirgins.org)

Please join us for this opportunity to pray, learn, and visit with consecrated virgins. Those invited are consecrated virgins from any country. Candidates for the consecration who have attended a previous Informational Conference are also invited to attend.

For more information, see registration form / flyer or e-mail Emily Byers  
([emily.claire.byers@gmail.com](mailto:emily.claire.byers@gmail.com)).

For those who have registered, please be sure to send your arrival / departure information as soon as possible and be in touch with Emily about a talent or “show and tell” you might share during our Sunday evening recreation.



Another view of the gardens at Morningstar Retreat Center





## Thanks to Judith and Magalis

Following is a letter from consecrated virgin Lisandra Chaves in Costa Rica that we want to share with readers of "The Lamp."

Lisandra Chaves, Cartago Dioceses, Costa Rica

Time has passed so quickly! It seems like yesterday when I sent an email to the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins, looking for guidance and help. I remember my surprise when I received a response from them. I had been recently consecrated (6 months) by Bishop Mons. Jose Francisco Ulloa in Cartago, Costa Rica.

I was alone in my diocese (the only CV) and there was a huge confusion about the OCV in the country. At that moment, the OCV was considered to be a congregation led by a woman who truly believed that if you were not part of her group you could not be considered a CV, even if you were from another diocese. As I read on the Internet about the vocation, and also read Gloria Irene's book, *Amar y Servir*, I discovered that they were very wrong. My problem was convincing the other CVs in the country that this vocation was something different from what they believed. Then, I asked Magalis for help ... I invited them [USACV] to come to Costa Rica and talk about it to the media and speak to the people, especially to the CVs ... I waited for their reply and I prayed.

My second surprise was the positive response from them. They were coming to the country! I talked to my Bishop and he supported me, then we started to coordinate the visit. We planned to make a conference for all CVs in Costa Rica but, sadly, they declined the invitation. Indeed, the leader of that group tried to cancel the visit in ways that I prefer not to mention. But nothing could stop our plan because it was God working and helping the vocation in the country and using Judith and Magalis as instruments of his love.

We decided to open the conference to the public, as CVs were not coming. I paid for some ads in the local Catholic newspaper and by the time they came to Costa Rica, we had 50 people registered for the conference and we had a full room. Judith and Magalis met my bishop and explained to him some details regarding the vocation. They also talked to the Catholic press and we also had time to share, drink coffee and tour the country.

They spent a week in Costa Rica and our conference changed the direction of this vocation in the country; miracles started to happen. We kept on praying. Later, I could travel to Rome in 2011 for Magalis' anniversary and, sometime after, things started to change in Costa Rica regarding the OCV.

My bishop understood perfectly the situation and I always had his support. All of sudden, the five CVs from my diocese returned to where they belonged: close to their bishop in their own dioceses. Then, we started to walk a new path together in Cartago.

With our Bishop's support, we decided to initiate our own Association of CVs in the dioceses (it still remains the only one in the country and it is inspired by the USACV). We published a Directory (the first in the country inspired by the one in Valladolid, España) and we are also the first Diocese to have a 4-year formation plan for candidates to the OCV.

Today, Cartago Diocese is an example of how this beautiful vocation can be lived and also how to integrate some level or organization to support each other. Now we are giving support to two Dioceses in Costa Rica that are open to integrate the OCV as another path to consecrated life.

When we had more support from the Conference of Bishops because we were growing fast and our vocation was better understood by the same CVs, we decided to



**A group of virgins take a break at the Rome Conference, May, 2018**

organize our first National Gathering for CVs. I was asked to invite Judith and Magalis to Costa Rica to talk about Associations of CVs and share their testimony. Then, my third big surprise arrived: they agreed to come again.

The first time they came, I was alone doing everything by myself. This time they saw an organized group of CVs in Cartago. We were almost 10 CVs from my diocese but 20 CVs from the country and several candidates also came to the Congress. In the end we had more than 100 people, among them consecrated virgins, priests, bishops, seminarians and lay people. It was a total success; again, Judith and Magalis were part of our history.

I am sharing this story with you because I know Judith Stegman and Magalis Aguilera are taking on new challenges in the service of the OCV and the Church. I want to congratulate them for the immense work they have done for the good of the Church. I want to thank you both, Judith and Magalis, for the help you gave me when I needed it most. But beyond that, I want to thank you for your help to Cartago, my diocese, and therefore, to the country.

I still see some details unclear regarding this vocation that I hope Rome will specify with the coming Instruction for the OCV; however, I see how we have improved from our initial situation 7 years ago and all the efforts have paid off. That's why I say that you are part of our history and you deserve my recognition and gratitude.

We are in God's hands. Our blessed Mother Mary, our model, guides you in your new endeavors. Our goal is heaven and all the good we can do here anticipates being with our Divine Spouse forever.

In union of prayers for eternity,

Lisandra Chaves  
Cartago Dioceses, Costa Rica

### *Some Notes on the Conference on Consecration and the Ordo virginum*

International Meeting “*Consecratio et Consecratio Per Evangelica Consilia: Reflections, Still-Open Issues, Possible Pathways.*” A number of consecrated virgins from the United States were among the approximately thirty consecrated virgins from various parts of the world who participated in the meeting sponsored by the Congregation

for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, May 3 to 6, in Rome. Following are notes that Carmen Munoz shares from the meeting. Photos include various aspects of the meeting as well as other highlights from the Roman visit.



Conference Hall, Antonianum, in Rome

### *Conference on Consecrated Life, Rome, May 3 to 6*

by Carmen Margarita Muñoz,  
Diocese of Saint Augustine

*[Virginity] is not honored because it is virginity, but because it has been dedicated to God, and, although it be kept in the flesh, yet is it kept by religion and devotion of the Spirit (cf. St. Augustine, On Sacred Virginity, nos.8;11)*

*“Lo que nosotros celebramos en las vírgenes no es...el que sean vírgenes sin más, sino el que sean vírgenes consagradas a Dios a través de una continencia que nace de la piedad” (cf. San Agustín, Sobre la Sagrada Virginitad, 8;11)*



Conference participants attend Mass at Basilica of St. Anthony in Lateran.



The Congress on Consecrated Life was held in the Auditorium Antonianum in Rome from May 3-6, 2018; to participate in it was a blessing. It was a grace-filled International Congress in which at least 8 USA consecrated virgins participated. It was a time of fraternal communion and deepening of the call we have received from God and which, with the grace of God, we continue responding joyfully to Him with our Fiat, like the Blessed Virgin Mary.



**A few virgins relax during a break.**

It was a joy to listen to the conferences and to share about our vocation; but it was also a time of study, reflection, and sharing on the meaning of consecration and consecrated life, and on what constitutes a life of consecration in *Sequela Christi*, a stable form of life approved by the Church. As stated, in consecrated life, “Not one vocation is above the other;” all are equals. We ought to emphasize the similarities, not the differences. Diversity is the key word, it is what makes all the charisms in the Church beautiful. Pope Francis in his message to all present in the Audience Hall Paul VI on May 4 emphasized the three P's that are permanent pillars in consecrated life: Prayer, Poverty, and Patience.

\*Prayer is always a return to the first call, said the Pope. He added, “The prayer of a consecrated man or woman is a return to the Lord who invited me to be near him.” Prayer is precisely the task of the consecrated virgin, as indicated in the Homily of the Rite of Consecration and by receiving the Liturgy of the Hours.



**Pope Francis addresses participants in Pope Paul VI Hall.**

\* “Poverty,” said the Pope, “is the mother; it is the retaining wall of consecrated life.” The Fathers of the Church wrote about the need for a consecrated virgin to live a life of simplicity and detachment.

During the presentations, besides the Old and New Testaments, several Magisterial documents were mentioned and quoted with reference to Consecrated Life: *Lumen Gentium*, *Vita Consecrata*, *Perfectae Caritatis*, *Code of Canon Law*, and also, *Gaudete et Exultate*.



**Attendees listen with simultaneous translation.**

When talking about Consecration, the primary one is the Baptismal Consecration, (cf. LG, VC, GE). From the baptismal consecration, other “special,” “individual” (cf. PC 5) consecrations arise, which are ways to live more closely the *Sequela Christi* or the following of Christ according to the Gospel. The consecrated person is more aware of the Baptismal consecration (cf. GE 14). In the Rite of Consecration of Virgins, the bishop says to the candidate:

*“The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, through Baptism has already made you temples of God’s glory and children of the Father. Today, through our ministry, he anoints you with a new grace and consecrates you to God by a new title. He gives each one of you the dignity of being a bride of Christ and binds you to the Son of God in a covenant to last forever.”*

The Holy Spirit consecrates the virgin through the ministry of the bishop.



**Judith Stegman visits with a consecrated virgin from India.**

There are 5 forms of Consecrated Life recognized by the Canon Law: Religious Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, Secular Institutes, Ordo Virginum, and Hermits. Consecrated virgins, by the solemn consecration received from the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the bishop, are in the state of Consecrated Life. Common to all forms of consecrated life are: the evangelical counsels and fraternal life, although not always in community, are lived according to the Charism. (cf. VC 42)

In the Rite of Consecration of Virgins, before

her Renewal of Intention (*Propositum*) of virginal chastity, and before the Solemn Prayer of Consecration, the bishop asks the candidate:

*“Are you so resolved  
to follow Christ in the spirit of the Gospel  
that your whole life may be  
a faithful witness to God's love  
and a convincing sign of the kingdom of  
heaven?”*

At the Renewal of Intention to continue living in virginal chastity forever, the candidate, her hands in the hands of the bishop, asks him to “receive” her resolution or *propositum* “to follow Christ in a life of perfect chastity which, with God's help, I here profess before you and God's holy people.” (no. 22) The bishop proceeds to pray the Solemn Prayer of Consecration (cf. no. 24). By saying “yes” to this following of Christ “in the spirit of the Gospel” one lives the Gospel to its fullness, which includes the Evangelical Counsels.

In the concluding remarks there were described or defined, the characteristics that bind all forms of consecrated life and what identifies each one.

Regarding the Ordo virginum, [in their own dioceses] “Every bishop has the pastoral responsibility of the Ordo virginum.” What is peculiar or what defines it includes:

--Charism of virginity

--absence of common life (as stated before, fraternal life in the Consecrated Life is not always lived in community)

--full insertion in the particular Church (diocese). “The bishop is the one that approves the life plan ('Proyecto de vida') of the consecrated virgin.”

--and “*atraidadas por la belleza del Esposo intentan que brille siempre la belleza de la Esposa*”. In other words, Spousal love, image of the Church, and witness of the Love of Christ.





Above: Catherine Richie with Bishop Hartmayer and attendant; below: the celebrating group leaves Church.

## Consecration Announcements

### United States:

*July 22, 2017 Andrea Polito, Archdiocese of Denver, at the hands of The Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila.*

*March 24, 2018 Catherine Richie, Diocese of Savannah, at the hands of The Most Reverend Gregory John Hartmayer, O.F.M.*

### Upcoming U. S. Consecrations

*June 8, 2018, Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, consecration of Susan Leilani Spiegelberg, 3:00 pm at the Cathedral of St. Paul, 239 Selby Ave., St. Paul, Minnesota, at the hands of The Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda, Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.*

*July 16, 2018, consecration of Lisa Marie Hunt, 4:00 pm at St. Mary's Cathedral in Colorado Springs, Colorado, at the hands of The Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan.*

*September 15, 2018, Feast Day of Our Lady of Sorrows, consecration of Leandra Mae Hubka, 10:30 am at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Winona, Minnesota, at the hands of the Most Reverend John M. Quinn, Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester. All are invited. If you plan to attend, please contact Leandra at [Lhubka@dow.org](mailto:Lhubka@dow.org) for additional details.*

*October 7, 2018, consecration of Marge Giesken, during the 11:00 am Mass at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, 2750 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan, at the hands of The Most Reverend David John Walkowiak, Bishop of Grand Rapids. All are warmly invited.*



## Consecration Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2018 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*. We continue 2018 reflections with the following:

### Anniversary Reflections: 40 Years

Josephine Harsy, Diocese of Fargo

In addition to prayer, my life as a consecrated virgin has involved working in organizations which gave me an opportunity to serve the Church. First, I worked for the International Institute of the Heart of Jesus — the IIHJ — whose purpose primarily, in a time of theological turmoil, was to bring back to general knowledge the fact of the divinity of Christ through stress upon Christ's love for us, and what this love means, i.e. if Christ is not divine, this love means little and, if Christ is divine, this love transcends all else. This organization was indeed international and, as such, reached theologians worldwide through convocations in various parts of the world.

Second, I was vice Chancellor of the diocese of Fargo, working directly, often as a “ghost-writer,” for Bishop James S Sullivan. Our present Bishop, John T Folda, told me he was a great admirer of Bishop Sullivan. I report regularly to Bishop Folda. (An amusing interlude: some years back, I went to Mass at a place in the Mayo Clinic. I was late, not through my fault, and when I came in the priest said “You're late, now I will have to start my homily all over again.” He then did so, and let everyone know for the second time, that he wanted information about outreach programs of the various dioceses the people came from. He then said that no one could give him such information. He asked “Could you [me] do so? I responded affirmatively. He: “tell everyone here about it — I told everyone “everyone” about Bishop Sullivan's “open doors, open hearts” program, and the more I said, the more questions he had. It ended with his telling me that my remarks had been televised! I feel sure that it was the grace that comes with being a consecrated virgin, which brought that all about.)

Third: Since 2005, and still continuing in the fall of this year, I have been teaching theology and Scripture to

adults (ages late 20s to early 90s) at St. Mary's Cathedral. In Scripture, I've spent two semesters on John and two on Paul; beginning this semester I'll be teaching the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament. In theology, I've taught Christology, Maryology, ecclesiology, the natural law, etc., etc. — 33 different courses in all. I'm pleased to say I have an attentive and happy audience.

Fourth: I always tell my class that we open with a prayer, then study, then go out and evangelize. “How evangelize?” they asked. They were just as perplexed when I answered: “Take taxis.” (Now deceased Cardinal Francis George of Chicago wrote in a book: 5 Ways to Evangelize: the first way was “Take taxis!”) Anyway, one cabdriver in Fargo asked me a question on a religious topic, and, after answering him, I asked, how did he think I would know, to which he replied: “all the guys say that if any of us have a religion question, to ask you.” The cab drivers always take the initiative; I don't!

Fifth and last: It seems that priests of our diocese were going to the Chancery office, beginning a couple of years ago, to ask for information about what in the world “consecrated virgins” are. The answer they received was: “Go to Jo Harsy, and she will answer your questions.” I gave them long answers regarding the way in which Pope Paul VI restarted this vocation, where to find his document, and also referred them to the USACV on their computers. Then the priest vocation director, who gives vocation talks all over the diocese, called me to ask many questions about consecrated virgins. We talked on the phone for about two hours. He said he was getting many questions. I don't know the results of these inquiries.

P. S. We do have one other consecrated virgin in the Fargo diocese. She came to Fargo from Germany, although she is an American. I told her about the USACV, but she declined the possibility of joining.

### Anniversary Reflections: 20 Years

Diana Mae Peterson, Diocese of Winona-Rochester (MN), consecrated January 17, 1998.

My mother was an Irish Catholic, and my dad was an extremely strict conservative Norwegian Lutheran. Yes, I was brought up in a conservative Norwegian Lutheran church. My great aunt, Jean, made me promise her that when I grew up I would become a Catholic. Guess what? I (continued on page 18)



**The National  
Information Conference  
on the Vocation of  
Consecrated Virginity  
Lived in the World  
July 31 to August 3, 2018**

**For whom is the Conference?**

The Information Conference is chiefly designed to help a woman who is discerning this vocation or is already in the process of preparing for consecration. It is also a very helpful conference for those giving spiritual direction to a virgin who is discerning the area of consecrated life, diocesan delegates for consecrated life, pastors, and consecrated virgins who are involved in preparation of a candidate for consecration.

**Who is a suitable candidate for the vocation?**

During the conference the requirements for consecration will be examined by the various speakers giving presentations. They will address questions about a woman's suitability for the vocation:

- Life-long virginity, including intentional living of virginity for Christ for some years.
- Never having been married or lived in open violation of chastity.
- By age, prudence and good character having the suitability for dedicating herself to a life of chastity.
- The primary role of the diocesan bishop in admitting a person for consecration and determining the conditions under which the candidate undertakes a life of perpetual virginity lived in the world.
- The necessity of good spiritual direction.
- Self-supporting and financially responsible for own medical care.
- Active practice of the Catholic faith; acceptance of the authoritative teaching of the Church and Sacred Scripture; readiness and capacity for personal growth.

**Registration information is attached and can be found at [www.consecratedvirgins.org](http://www.consecratedvirgins.org).**

**Conference Team Members and Their Topics:**

**Bishop Earl Boyea, Episcopal Liaison for the USACV:** "Consecrated Virginity in Scripture and History" – a two-part address.

**Judith Stegman, JCL, President of the USACV:** "Fundamentals of the Vocation to Consecrated Virginity"; "Living in the World as a Consecrated Virgin"; "Love and Virginity"; "Essentials Points for Discernment"; Associations.

**Theresa Marshall: Conference Hostess and Coordinator of Logistics**

**Dr. Magalis Aguilera:** "Integral Virginity and the Chastity Required for the Consecrated Virgin"; other topics including the eschatological witness of the vocation, spiritual formation in the life of the consecrated virgin, and keeping aflame the spousal love of the virgin-bride.

**Karen Bussey:** speaking on the role of the Liturgy of the Hours and prayer in the life of the consecrated virgin.

**Mary Kay Lacke:** speaking on the Rite of Consecration as a reflection of the consecrated virgin in the life of the Church; the discernment journey, i.e. stages of admission to the consecration in the Church; and the intellectual formation of the virgin in knowledge of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

did, and I have never been happier! Yes, the blessings have been overflowing! Just to name a few: my dad, in the year of our Lord 1994, became a Catholic. This was a total surprise, totally unexpected.

Secondly, in the year of our Lord, 2003, Pope John Paul II accepted and instituted an invitation for World Youth Day, at Cherry Creek in Denver, Colorado. My first cousin invited Dad and me to come to Cherry Creek to be in the papal audience. The answer was an overwhelming yes; it was a true blessing!

Oh, oh yes, there have been many downfalls and pitfalls since my consecration. The most serious has been being diagnosed as having stage IV metastatic colon cancer. Yes, it was caught in time with two major surgical procedures conducted, together with 11 rounds of chemotherapy. I am still experiencing the side-effects of the chemotherapy. My cancer buddy indicates that I may experience side-effects for the rest of my life. I am truly grateful to God for blessing me with such a rewarding life. I am truly happy being Catholic and being able to celebrate 20 years of consecrated life.

Thank you, peace and joy, always,  
Diana Mae Peterson

### *Anniversary Reflections: 15 Years*

Theresa Howard, Diocese of Springfield (IL),  
consecrated May 4, 2003.

In my early 20s, I first heard God calling me to give myself totally to Him. For many years, I searched and discerned about where God was calling me to serve Him. My heart and soul ached for Him and there were times that I would cry out, "What do you want me to do and where do you want me to serve you?" For many years I heard nothing but silence, yet I knew he wanted me to give my life to Him.

I visited religious communities and in the late 80s, after spending time for about a year with one community, the vocation director told me that they would like for me to enter that August 1<sup>st</sup> upon completion of testing and a physical. On my way home, I was in a near fatal accident and ended up in the hospital on life support. When I woke up I asked God what he was trying to tell me. Was he telling me "no" to this community? Was he telling me "no" to religious life? Was he telling me "no" for now? I was

so confused and I told the vocation director that I needed more time for discernment and would not be entering the community. Also, due to my internal injuries and relearning how to walk, it took me a year to recuperate. After my recovery, I continued my search as to where God was calling me. A few years later, I started preparation for the Secular Franciscan Order (my profession ceremony was January 1997). The evening before I professed as a Secular Franciscan, I felt that God was asking more of me.

In 1998, I joined St. Mary's Parish in Alton, IL. In October of that year my new spiritual director mentioned the vocation of Consecrated Virgins. I pushed this aside until sometime later when another priest asked me if I had ever looked into the vocation. As I was driving home that day, I thought: why would God call me to that life? Upon arriving home, I heard God say, "Check it out." With the assistance of my spiritual director, I studied and prepared for my Consecration. Bishop George Lucas (the Bishop of our Diocese at the time) gave us guidance; I had meetings with a Franciscan Religious with the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr Saint George in Alton, and Carol Lankford, a consecrated virgin in Mexico, MO, was my mentor.

On the day of my Consecration, I woke up to thunder, lightning, and pouring rain. Although it was a cold, dark day on the outside, it was a beautiful day inside St. Mary's. Moments before Mass began, sunshine came pouring through the stained-glass windows. To me that was God whispering to me. What a beautiful day it was! I experienced peace, joy and a freedom that I had never experienced in my life.

I can't believe this year marks my fifteenth anniversary. Along with the joys, there have been challenges and opportunities to grow closer to the Lord. The joy, peace and freedom that I experienced on my wedding day have also grown.

I am happy to be able to spend time with other consecrated virgins living in St. Louis, Missouri and staying connected with others through our Association. It is so important for all of us to support each other through our gatherings and our prayers. What a beautiful life it is to be a bride of Christ!



## *Anniversary Reflections: 10 Years*

Carolyn Blaszczyk, Diocese of Harrisburg (PA),  
consecrated April 29, 2008

I celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my consecration with a Mass of thanksgiving on April 29<sup>th</sup> with my pastor and members of the Parish Council of Catholic Women at our monthly meeting earlier that month.

There are so many beautiful passages in our Rite of Consecration and I'm sure all of us have prayers from the Rite that have special significance for us. The prayer that holds special significance for me is, "She has chosen You above all things, may she find all things in possessing You." As some of you may recall, my mother, who had lived with me and been in my care for almost 35 years, passed away three weeks before my consecration. Although I had felt called to belong to the Lord in a special way for many years, I had never dreamed that he had called and gifted me to be consecrated by my Church as His Bride. It seemed at the time, and seems even more so now, that He had kept me for Himself as I completed the task He had given me and, now that He had taken my mother to Himself, that He was opening up a new life of love and service dedicated solely to Him.

My activities, these past years, have centered on evangelization and it is a joy to see others open to growing freedom in Christ and to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is with a very thankful heart that I find the goodness and blessings in my life come from possessing so good and loving a Spouse.

## *Life Corner*

By Florence Sundberg

The multitudes whose lives are being terminated in the womb daily and the multitudes who are being trapped and exploited in modern day slavery as sex and labor workers are massive and beyond comprehension. But the greatness and the goodness of God far outweigh all these evil enterprises and, even in the darkness of despair, His light shines strong and bright, bringing comfort and hope to the hopeless even as we give our voices to speak on behalf of those who have no voice. The exquisite beauty of God shines over and penetrates all and we, called to live as the spouses of Jesus in the world, must radiate that light, His light, in all the dark places where God is not welcome or where some are not permitted to look and see because they are forcibly held captive in the darkness of humanity's sin. Let us pray for all these suffering children of God and reach out to them as God calls us to do. In the Name of Jesus, we pray: Help us to free the captives and console the suffering, for in serving the least of our brothers and sisters, we are serving You.



**Pope Paul VI**

## Pioneers in an Ancient Vocation

by Joyce Stolberg

Mary, our Blessed Mother, was the first consecrated virgin. Following her lead, many virgins since apostolic times have received the consecration of virgins at the hands of their bishops. Saints Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, and other Church fathers have written instructions for consecrated virgins. To read these instructions you can simply access the *New Advent* website on your computer. Try <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/> to get started. Although written for another era and another culture, they apply to your life as a consecrated virgin. Read the lives of some ancient virgins and consider how they served the Church in their diverse circumstances. St. Marcelina raised her brother, St. Ambrose, to become a giant in the faith, while St. Demetrias used her great wealth to build a church at the request of St. Leo the Great. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/1295.html>

The vocation fell out of practice following the fall of the Roman empire; it became too dangerous for virgins to live in the world and they began to congregate in convents. Only women living in certain cloistered orders could receive the consecration of virgins. The bishops at Vatican Council II reinstated this holy vocation; the rite for the consecration of virgins was revised in 1970 and, once again, opened to virgins living in the world. It has been received by a very diverse aggregation of women with varied careers and lifestyles, living in all populated areas of the world. We, the consecrated virgins of today, represent the first and second generations of virgins living this vocation in modern times: we are truly pioneers in an ancient vocation.



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

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

**Email:**  
[info@consecratedvirgins.org](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org)  
[President@consecratedvirgins.org](mailto:President@consecratedvirgins.org)

**Fax: 253-270-5507**

[www.consecratedvirgins.org](http://www.consecratedvirgins.org)