

# The Lamp

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United States Association of  
Consecrated Virgins

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV

www.consecratedvirgins.org

September 15, 2021

Our Lady of Sorrows

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

Typical of Jewish parents, Mary and Joseph have taken Jesus into the temple to offer him to the Lord as the first-born son. There they meet an elderly man, Simeon, whom we are told is righteous and pious. Like any grandfather-figure he asks to hold this baby. Three times the Scripture talks about the Holy Spirit guiding him (Luke 2:21-35). It is in that Spirit that Simeon praises God for sending this salvation of Israel.

At the end of these very positive words, Simeon turns to Mary: “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:34-35). This is not something any of us would want to hear about our kid or about ourselves.

Yet, if we reflect upon this child, who is the new Adam, given us by the Father to restore all things back to the Father, it is clear that Mary has been invited to partner with her son in his great mission. It is as though God’s initial plan in Genesis is being reworked. There God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him” (Genesis 2: 18). Mary is indeed that suitable helper.

Thus, it is appropriate that her heart will also be pierced. Mary’s incredible joy at being part of God’s plan will always be tempered by her participation in Jesus’ following the Father’s will.

As spouses of Christ, you are also called to share in Mary’s vocation. Of course, as for her so for you, God’s will for us brings us great joy.

Nonetheless, your marriage to Christ means that you are to see any of the trials of this life as a means to embrace the life of Christ for the sake of that good which God wishes to achieve.

Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, is the model for us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing



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Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD

In recent columns we have taken a closer look at the first three phrases of canon 604 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, a canon which succinctly provides the ecclesial identification of the *Ordo virginum*. In today's column, we consider the fourth phrase. Canon 604 §1:

- Similar to these forms of consecrated life is the order of virgins who,
- Expressing the holy resolution of following Christ more closely
- Are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite,
- **Are mystically espoused to Christ, the Son of God** (*Christo Dei Filio mystice desponsantur*),
- And are dedicated to the service of the Church

The first three phrases of canon 604 paint a picture of the order of virgins as a distinct form of consecrated life whose members express their holy *propositum* and are consecrated at the hands of the diocesan bishop. The fourth phrase then elucidates the key juridical effect of the rite of consecration: the virgin is *mystically espoused to Christ, the Son of God*. The virgin's state in life changes with her consecration—she becomes a married woman in the eyes of the Church—and because her spouse is the Bridegroom of the Church, she becomes the image of the Church herself, bound in an irrevocable nuptial union with the Son of God.

“The eschatological meaning of virginal espousal is discovered through the self-revelation of God in the Most Holy Trinity, and through the virginal, nuptial relationship God has chosen to have with His people, revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. The state of consecrated virginity singularly images this nuptial bond between the Bridegroom Jesus and His Bride, the Church, as the virgin lives on earth under the title ‘bride of Christ.’ Pope Pius XII in *Sacra Virginitas* notes that Saint Ambrose simply calls the virgin ‘married to God’ and Saint Athanasius refers to virgins as ‘spouses of Christ.’ The theological underpinning for this vocation of virginal espousal to Christ is perhaps most concisely articulated in lines from the prayer of consecration itself: ‘While they highly esteem the sacrament [of holy matrimony], they do not imitate what is wrought in marriage, but ardently aspire to that divine union which is purity of angels, pledges itself to the bridal chamber and couch of Him who is at once the Spouse of perpetual virginity and the Son of a perpetual Virgin.’” (Judith M. Stegman, “*Mystically Espoused to Christ, the Son of God (c. 604 §1)*”: *The Basis for Proposing Juridic Principles to Guide the Development of Norms for the Ordo virginum* (Washington, D.C., 2019 and Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest LLC, 2019) 59–60). The article “Something Ancient, Something New” in this issue explores the eternal meaning of mystical, virginal espousal as a vocational call.

An interesting point in this fourth line of the canon is that the consecrated virgin is described as being “mystically espoused” to Christ, rather than “married” to Christ. The Latin word “desponsantur” describes perfectly a mystical marriage, a marriage that is *ratum et non consummatum* (a true marriage, not consummated), as the marriage of Joseph and Mary. I had the chance to explore this line as part of our July convocation, themed, “Saint Joseph, Guardian of Virgins.” Links to recordings of this presentation and recordings of each of the important sessions of our 2021 Virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World, should be available very soon in our USACV online store. Hopefully soon after will follow links to the informative and enjoyable presentations on virgin saints, given by consecrated virgins at our 2021 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins.

A personal call from the Eternal Father to any style of life involves the common expression of human freedom in order to accept the call, in a manner parallel to the vocational calls of Adam, Eve, Jesus Christ, and Mary of Nazareth. Meditating upon the Holy Scriptures, we find that Adam and Eve were the ones chosen to fulfill the plan of the Eternal Father's creation of the human being in the image and likeness of Himself, to live on this earth in the deep manifestation of the presence of God and in the mystery of their own creation.

Adam was alone in Paradise and was happy but God-Yahweh who commanded him to classify the creatures created by Him, decided to have someone similar to the man, and so God created the woman. Adam named her Eve, meaning life, for she would be the mother to carry in her being creatures made in the image and likeness of God.



When the woman was created and Adam named her Eve, they enjoyed the freedom of their being man and woman; there was no division in their being as they were made in the image and likeness of God. Saint John Paul expressed this: "That beatifying 'beginning' of man's being and existing, as male and female is connected with the revelation and discovery of the meaning of the body which can be called 'nuptial'" (John Paul II, General audience of January 9, 1980 in *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*; Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1997, 62). This nuptial meaning of the body is the essence of freedom. Freedom, in the Eternal Father's meaning, is based in maturity, and integral maturity is the base upon which any vocation is built. The restoration of the rite of consecration to a life of virginity for women living in the world signals the Eternal Father's giving to the present culture a sign of the beauty of His kingdom to come.

The freedom of Adam and Eve reveals to us that when they became separated from His will, division entered into their being that was not created by the Eternal Father for them. Their preternatural gift of immortality changed and with their disobedience they lost incorruptibility, the product of immortality. The consequences are quoted in the Holy Scriptures: Adam would sweat and toil as he tilled the earth for their food and Eve would suffer in childbirth (Gen. 2:15; 3:24). The inference is that before the fall, work was not a load for man nor did a woman labor in childbirth. The burden of work and the pain in delivering life was the result of the free decision of the created human being; this was not in God's original plan for them.

Human nature became mortal from the moment man ate from the tree, as is said in Holy Scripture: "The death that entered into the world was brought by the envy of Satan" (Wis. 2:24). If Adam had died at that same moment, all of humanity would have perished and have no existence. We would not have been born. But God had blessed Adam and Eve and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28). God is faithful even if we are faithless.

The coming of offspring would give a chance for the coming of the Virgin from the offspring of Adam and Eve, and, from the Virgin, the coming of the Lord Christ by whom salvation would be given and in whom "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 3:15; 22:18). The Eternal Father's postponement of death was necessary so that the Lord Christ might come to effect salvation by dying for us on a cross and defeating death with His resurrection. God's plan for the woman in His mystical revelation of eternal life became new again as in Paradise with the new Adam, the only begotten son of the Eternal Father, and Mary of Nazareth, the new Eve conceived in her mother's womb without the stain of the original sin.



Virginity is discovered in the innocence of Adam and Eve before their disobedience. They were created uncorrupted due to immortality but when they realized their nakedness and decided to hide from the paternal presence of God, they discovered that they did not have the same capacity. The command of mortal matrimony appeared for them and yet the reality of virginity was not discarded from the human being, created by God.

The Old Testament revealed the plan of salvation and kept intact the *good* of virginal integrity in expectation of the fulfillment of the promise of salvation made in Paradise. Virginity was to be reserved until matrimony because the expected Messiah was to be born of a virgin.

Micah 5:2 prophesies that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Messiah. The prophecy, written about 700 years before the birth of Jesus, is effective in a simple way because it eliminates all other cities and towns throughout the world as the place where the Messiah would be born. Daniel 9:25 specifies when the Messiah would appear and sets the stage for a decree by a successor foretelling that the mother of the Messiah would be a virgin: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Is. 7:14).

Thus we find that in the Old Testament, virginity was lived in expectation of the Messiah, in hope of being the virgin mother of the Messiah. If a woman virgin died childless, it was a sign that she had not fulfilled her being as a woman. In this context we can read about the daughter of the official Jephthah, whose father had promised to God-Yahweh to sacrifice in holocaust the first person who greeted him upon his victorious return; it was his virgin daughter who greeted him. She was not free to make a vocational decision and she cried alone in the wilderness because of the misfortune of her life: she would die without a child who might be the Messiah. Vocation is a decision made by the mature person who is called.

Saint John Paul II clarified the tradition of marriage and virginity in the Old Testament: “Christ spoke to men to whom the tradition of the old covenant had not handed down the ideal of celibacy or of virginity. Marriage was so common that only physical impotence could constitute an exception. The reply given to the disciples in Mathew (15:10–12) is at the same time directed, in a certain sense, at the whole tradition of the Old Testament. This is confirmed by a single example taken from the Book of Judges. We refer to this here not merely because of the event that took place, but also because the significant words that accompanied it. ‘Let it be granted to me . . . to bewail my virginity’ (Jgs. 11:37) the daughter of Jephthah said to her father learning from him that she was destined to be sacrificed in fulfilment of a vow made to the Lord . . . she went with her companions and bewailed on the mountains. At the end of two months she returned to her father who did with her according to his vow made to the Lord. She had never known a man (Jgs. 11:38–39)” (John Paul II, General Audience of March 17, 1982 in *The Theology of the Body*, 265).

Virginity in the New Testament represents the expectation of what our Divine Lord is doing in salvation, in making everything new. Virginity in the New Testament is lived in the image of Mary of Nazareth and in the image of Jesus Christ as the joyful obedient YES of Mary of Nazareth overcomes the disobedience of Eve. With her *fiat*, her YES, Mary of Nazareth embraced the plan of the Eternal Father in her life. Her act of obedience restored the glory of virginity so that today we can experience the virginal essence of virginity: the Holy Trinity manifested in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father. In Eternity there will be no more giving in marriage and we will return again to the original will of the Eternal Father for the creation of man and woman.



The presence of Saint Joseph in the mystery of Jesus Christ, true man and true God, is the manifestation of the Eternal Father’s plan of virginity for the Holy Family; they were virgins and were attentive to fulfill the Eternal

Father's will in them and in His only begotten Son, entrusted to Saint Joseph's custody and born of His Blessed Mother's joyful virginity.

When the Eternal Father calls a virgin to be consecrated as the bride of His Son, what is His will? It is that she make a joyful and free decision to give back to Him the "beautiful picture" of her integral sexuality. This definition is in accord with the teaching of Saint John Paul II when he defined sex as a beautiful gift of God: "The human person becomes a gift in the freedom of love. . . . This freedom lies at the basis of the nuptial meaning of the body. The human body, with its sex, and its masculinity and femininity seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and procreation, in the whole natural order." In the grace of hypostatic union, "Mary's divine maternity is also, in a certain sense, a superabundant revelation of that fruitfulness in the Holy Spirit to which man submits his spirit, when he freely chooses continence in the body, namely, continence for the Kingdom of heaven" (John Paul II, General Audiences Jan. 16, 1980 and Mar. 24, 1982, in *The Theology of the Body*, 63, 269).

Sexual gender and presence as a woman are two dimensions of the unique expression of a consecrated virgin's spiritual marriage with her Divine Spouse. The sexuality of a virgin transcends the biological capacity she has to be fruitful and bear biological children. The sexuality of a virgin is an essential element of the whole picture created by the Eternal Father to procreate children for His Kingdom. The call of virginity is a call "to be" more than "to do," for we live in this mortal flesh the life to be lived in Eternity. This is possible because integrity is a preternatural gift of freedom from concupiscence, ignorance, and sin, which reflects a harmonious relationship between flesh and spirit, completely subordinating man's lower passion to his reason (see Pius XI Encyclical "On Christian Education," Dec. 31, 1929).

The consecratory prayer points to this: "He has made our nature whole again, and made it possible for mortal people to reflect the life of angels" (Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, 24). Because of the spousal gift received with her vocation, the virgin embraces her virginal vocation with joy. In contrast to the woman in the Book of Judges, a Christian virgin in the primitive Church would go to martyrdom with the joy of a woman going to wed her Spouse. The Old Testament had not Jesus Christ's commandment of love nor the joy of belonging to His Spouse, the Church, with a bond that lasts forever. To suffer in her body the cruelty of martyrdom was for the early Christian virgin martyr a way to confirm to her Divine Spouse the joy she experienced in loving him, and a way to know in faith that her mortal life is not the important life, but eternal life is the important life, celebrating the eternal wedding of virginal love.



### Volume 3 of *Ordo Virginum*

Volume 3 of the USACV series, *Ordo Virginum—The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Virgins in the Catholic Church*, is planned as a volume on virgin saints who lived out their vocation in the world, and not as part of a religious family other than the *Ordo virginum*. Shalina Stilley has picked up the baton on this work and is working with Mary Kay Lacke to gather essays on virgin saints. Many virgin saints have been "claimed" by our virgin authors, but we are still looking for volunteers to help write essays. If you are interested in writing, or would like more

information on the project, please contact Shalina at [catherinestilley@gmail.com](mailto:catherinestilley@gmail.com).

### Upcoming Consecration

#### United States:

**September 18, 2021** Claire Gallagher, Archdiocese of New Orleans (LA), at the hands of The Most Reverend Gregory Aymond.



## Consecration Announcements / Reflections

**June 12, 2021 Senite Sahlezghi, Archdiocese of Denver (CO), at the hands of The Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila.**



“I’m just so grateful. I’m grateful to get to be consecrated to Christ and give him my full heart and my whole life and my whole love on the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” she said. “It’s overwhelming when I think about it. There’s a lot of mercy and me not realizing the full weight of it because it’s like a dream come true. Hearts united in more ways than one.

“Our lady’s heart is a home, that’s what the Church is,” Sahlezghi concluded. “I just hope that this for me will be that, and I hope for the local Church at large to experience the hospitality and the joy of a home, to really find rest in her heart, and then by default, in his heart because of it. It’s the same heart.”



Excerpt from an article by Aaron Lambert and Photos by Anya Semenoff, *Denver Catholic*

**August 8, 2021 Elizabeth Noelle Black, Diocese of Grand Rapids (MI) at the hands of The Most Reverend David Walkowiak.**



**August 15, 2021 Lauren Gault Diocese of Pittsburgh (PA) at the hands of The Most Reverend David A. Zubik.**



In reflecting upon my consecration as a virgin living in the world and now living out that consecration, I can only say it feels so natural to me and brings a greater purposefulness to all I do, knowing that all is for Christ. Unless I look at my ring on my finger, I wouldn’t even know it was there, for “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Or, to harken to the *Preface for Christian Death I*, “life is changed, not ended.” The intentionality of my being as spouse of Christ makes me a conduit of grace for His Body, the Church, that He may love Her and rejoice over Her in Heaven, just as He did with Mary in her Assumption.

As everyday life slowly starts back, my ring is such a reminder for me of how the will of my heart should always be in union with the will of His Sacred Heart, of



how infinite the mercy of our Spouse is as He draws us back to Himself by bands of love (Hosea 11:4). His love draws us, His brides, beyond ourselves to serve His Church and beyond this world to be His Church.

**September 11, 2021 Angela McCormick, Diocese of Portland (ME), at the hands of The Most Reverend Robert Deeley.**

### Canada

**June 12, 2021 Linda Leblanc, Archdiocese of Montreal, at the hands of The Most Reverend Christian Lépine.**



## *The Heart of Jesus and the Sanctity of Living in the Divine Will*

**By Diane Christine Farr,  
Diocese of Rochester (NY)**

In this reflection we will explore the connection between the Heart of Jesus and the Divine will, and the significance it has for the consecrated virgin. We read in St. John's Gospel, *"He who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him."* (Jn 14:21)

As consecrated virgins we have been given the extraordinary grace of having Jesus, the Bridegroom of the Church, manifest His loving Heart to us. This grace comes with the tremendous responsibility of being a light for our brothers and sisters. Jesus has also manifested to us the celestial beauty and solemn dignity of virginity, given with love exclusively to Him. We don't come to this understanding on our own. It is in prayerful reflection that we come to a greater appreciation of the value of our consecration. We read in the rite of consecration: "I am espoused to Him whom the angels serve; sun and moon stand in wonder at His glory." It is not even given to the angels to enter into the heavenly nuptials with our God. St. Faustina tells us that virginity is a flower taken from the Divine Heart.

The consecrated virgin cherishes this gift and only recognizes herself in this Divine Heart. The goal of our lives must be to allow the Divine Will and infinite love of the most Holy Trinity to take complete possession of our hearts. We may say that the sun symbolizes the Divine Will and God's infinite love is the fire it contains. We can see the intrinsic connection that exists between the Heart of Jesus and the sanctity of living in the Divine Will possessing this gift, we respond to Jesus by loving Him with His own Will.

Jesus explains to Luisa Piccarreta the importance of doing everything with Him in His Will.

*"My beloved daughter, all the things that the soul does in my Will and together with Me, prayers, actions etc., acquire my own qualities, the same life and the same value see all the things that I did upon earth: prayers, suffering, work -- are all in action and will remain in eternity for the good of whoever wants them."* (Luisa Piccarreta, vol. 11)

Elsewhere, Jesus tells Luisa that each prayer, each work we do in union with Him in the Divine Will opens one more channel of communication between Him and ourselves. As brides of Christ, it is important that we enter into everything He has done for us. It is with contemplative love that we take it into our hearts and make it our own. Jesus tells Luisa:

*"One who does my Will is so identified with Me that her heart and mine form one single heart."* (Luisa Piccarreta, vol. 11).

As consecrated virgins we always strive for union with the Heart of our Divine Bridegroom. Contemplating this Heart, we enter into and participate in its joys and sorrows. We come to understand the agony that sin has caused this loving Heart. As we come to know the Heart of Jesus, we begin to see all things from the perspective of eternity. As we grow in knowledge of this Heart, we comprehend the vital necessity of praying and working for the salvation and sanctification of all souls. As we offer all that we do, united to all that Jesus did, we place the intention of giving God the glory that all people owe Him. We fuse ourselves into the Divine Will each day, desiring that it may come to reign completely in us and become the life of our souls.

Luisa often saw images of the Heart of Jesus. These would sometimes reveal the instruments of His passion, indicating the interior pain He endured because of mankind. An extract from her writing contains a beautiful portrayal of the essence of His sacred Heart.

In giving us His Heart, Jesus gives us the incomparable gift of Himself. Throughout all eternity we will never exhaust the riches contained in His Heart. In the Heart of Jesus, we see expressions of the most Holy Trinity, manifesting the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, and the love of the Holy Spirit. We see the power, wisdom and love manifested in our own lives, working toward our sanctification. As spouses of our Lord Jesus, we seek to give Him honor and glory by prayerful adoration and reparation. Our entire life must give praise and thanksgiving to the Heart of our Bridegroom. We read in the Song of Songs: *"My beloved is mine and I am His."* (Song 2:16)

As we draw upon the grace of our consecration, we may truly say about our Bridegroom, I have welcomed Him into my heart and He has taken me into His own Heart. We must be completely transformed into His Heart, acquiring its own attributes and qualities. His Heart will be our unfailing strength as we carry our cross. It is our perpetual peace and our radiant light. No other heart can compare with the tender and compassionate Heart of Jesus.

We must have absolute confidence and limitless trust in the goodness of His Heart. We make our home and find our true rest only in His Heart. We in turn, as brides of Christ, allow Him to find perfect repose in the sanctuary of our hearts. In His great mercy Jesus has chosen us to adorn His Heart with the fragrant flowers of holy virginity and most pure love. It is through our work and universal prayer in the Divine Will, that we endeavor to lead all souls to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. May the Divine Will, which reigns perfectly in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and in the Immaculate Heart of His inseparable mother Mary, take complete possession of our hearts.



*Note: The writings of Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta are currently under consideration by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. Extracts from her diaries are considered private revelations, and final judgment lies with the Church.*

### Submissions Accepted

If you would like to submit an article, artwork, or a reflection for consideration in a future edition of *The Lamp*, please email:

[info@consecratedvirgins.org](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org).

We accept articles and artwork related to our vocation of consecrated virginity, related to Our Lady and the virgin saints, and related to Saint Joseph during this Year of Saint Joseph (2021).

### Upcoming Issues of The Lamp

December 12, 2021 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

February 2, 2022 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

May 31, 2022 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

September 8, 2022 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary



## 2021 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins – Reflections

Twenty-three consecrated virgins and two candidates attended the July 2 - 6, 2021, Convocation at St. Edmund's Retreat Center, Enders Island, CT. Forty-three registered to participate in some of the live-streamed sessions.

Ruella Ricaza of the Diocese of Savannah (GA): "It was my first time to attend the convocation. It was so good to get together with the fellow virgins. I heard someone say, 'we have one Spouse but we don't get jealous with each other.' I just smiled at this remark. Yes, indeed, we are the brides of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We started it with Rosary, Vespers and the Holy Mass on Friday. A lot of us had to wake up early to be there on time and some still didn't make it there until everybody had finished dinner. I loved it when Miss Carolee, the caretaker of the retreat house where we stayed, said that when they had assigned each of us a room, they also asked the Saint, assigned to that room, to pray for us. That was really thoughtful of them. I stayed in the room designated to St. Ambrose.

The following days started with Lauds, and the Holy Mass, except for Sunday. Before our social gathering or evening talks, we prayed the Rosary and Vespers. We heard Bishop Boyea's talk on the Book of Revelation, which was pretty interesting. I thought about how things are in this world, in our time, and how some of it has happened before and continues to unfold. Judith presented a talk on "The Marriage of Joseph and Mary, *ratum et non consummatum*," which was very informative, relating it to our vocation and differentiating it with the marriage of couples, based on canon law. It was deep. A lot of people joining the livestream had questions which Judith answered very well.

We had a talent show spearheaded by Kathy Reda with her lovely accent. These virgins are very talented. From tap dancing to poem recitation, chalk art, directing a play at her parish, to doing a comical



skit about these 'Two Lost Virgins,' coming to Enders Island, to a lip sync karaoke to crossing a road riding piggyback, it was all a lot of fun. Thank God for blessing these virgins with such talents.

We had presentations about the virgin saints: St. Thecla, whom I had the honor to present, St. Agatha, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Petronilla, and St. Maria Goretti. May we imitate their virtues and continue to persevere to the end. May the virgin saints, pray for us.

We were grateful for Cardinal Sean O'Malley's greetings and for Carolyn's presentation on St. Joseph, Guardian of Virgins. I really enjoyed our shared reflections on St. Joseph, Guardian of Virgins, one evening, which ended with a procession to the grotto/seaside chapel, as we held votive candles and praying/chanting the Litany of St. Joseph.



We had a sailboat ride with singing and raising the sails. We got to know some islands and some rich folks' stories, thanks to our tour guide. We had an association meeting and recognition of those who had anniversaries.



We were blessed to have Father David Whiteside as our chaplain. His homilies about St. Joseph were so beautiful. He talked about St. Joseph's different virtues: Virginal Love, Silence, Freedom of Detachment to all created things, Deep Interior Life of Contemplative Prayer, and Patient Suffering. These and other things he had shared remained in me to reflect on my way back home and for the days to come.

The weather was gloomy to start with, and with some drizzling here and there. I was glad that they reminded us to bring a jacket for it was cold. But the sun came out in the middle of our stay there. The Island was so beautiful, a lot of flowers and plants. We were surrounded by bodies of water, and we had great food. They fed us well and the people there were very hospitable. The chapel was open all the time and we had adoration every day.



When we prayed the Rosary, we used the CICLSAL for *Ordo Virginum*, these are the reflections written by virgins on the different mysteries of the Rosary. We had adoration and confessions. We chanted the Lauds and Vespers, thanks to Claire, who shared her gifts with all of us.

I appreciated Joani for bringing the relics of virgin saints and allowed us to be guardians of one for a night. I had the honor of guarding St. Anastasia - or maybe it was the other way around.

It was really good to get to know different virgins from different dioceses; to know their vocation stories, their challenges, ministries, and just to know them. I am very grateful for each of them. One virgin asked me what I really liked about the Convocation. It was everything but, to be more specific, I said, 'praying together.'

To me, this all constituted a great convocation and retreat. Praise God for His goodness! To our Beloved Spouse, Jesus, be glory, honor, thanksgiving, and power, now and forever. Amen."

#### **Diane Farr of the Diocese of Rochester (NY):**

"Greetings to all of you. I was blessed to be able to participate virtually. Everyone did a great job in preparing their presentations. I especially enjoyed Bishop Boyea's talk. What really stood out was his statement that our vocation is a permanent state of sacred readiness. This is food for thoughtful meditation. We must maintain a holy attentiveness to

the interior inspirations of our divine Bridegroom. As brides of Christ, we strive to live in a spirit of continuous prayer desiring to possess the Divine Will as our life. Thank you to all of you who made the convocation possible."

#### **Mary Seguin of the Diocese of Gaylord (MI):**

"There is so much that I could write as reflections of our convocation. St. Joseph, Guardian of Virgins, was a wonderful topic that Father David illuminated so well in what were the seven keys. Now, I have gained a new appreciation for St. Joseph for my spiritual life. Praying together as consecrated virgins was the highlight of my time together with everyone. Of course, getting to meet members of the Association not known before and seeing others again was for me a time of friendship and warmth. The talent show gave me a chance to laugh as I hadn't in a long time! Thanks to all!"

#### **Elizabeth Lee of the Diocese of Fall River (MA):**

"It was great to see a number of new faces at the Convocation, along with some friends I have known from years past! Though the weather was misty and at times rainy, our spirits were lifted up by each other and the joy of sharing in our vocation. It was wonderful to listen to the reflections from Bishop Boyea and share in some laughs with those attending virtually, as well as with those in attendance. Though I was not able to be present for all of the convocation, I very much enjoyed meeting so many and reflecting upon our lives, our work, and ministries as well as the challenges and joys we face. Our time together of prayer and at Mass was refreshment for the soul. Thank for all who made this possible!"

#### **Mary Kay Lacke of the Diocese of Steubenville OH):**

"I treasure the days that I spent on beautiful Enders Isle with all of the consecrated virgins who attended the Convocation in person and virtually. Every dimension of the program was excellent, starting with our celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Holy Mass and then, the various presentations on the virgin saints, each talk being so edifying. Our leadership team was so strengthening in the ways that

they carried out their various roles. The service of the retreat house staff was outstanding. Our times of recreation with boat ride and sharing a visit to the Marian Grotto were delightful and refreshing. I appreciated having time to pray and visit and celebrate with each other at a very fun evening of entertainment. Centering this whole event on Our Divine Spouse was truly edifying."



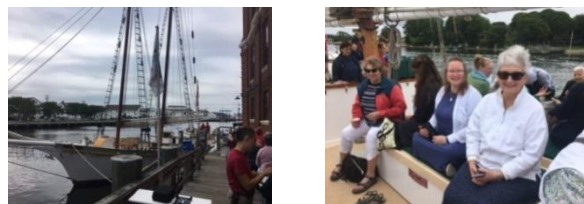
### **Candidate Julie R:**

"I really enjoyed being able to attend the convocation virtually! This was my first and I found myself being more and more excited each time I logged on to hear a speaker or to pray with those in attendance. I really enjoyed being able to learn about more virgin saints, particularly St. Thecla, who I hadn't heard of before. I fell in love with her very unique story and her connection to St. Paul. Also, since attending the convocation, I've found myself always invoking St. Joseph, Guardian of Virgins, whenever I ask something of him. That is such a lovely title for him, one I hadn't even considered until listening to that presentation. And, last but certainly not least, Bishop Boyea's talk on Revelation was really fascinating, and now I want to check out the first two parts as well! I'm really looking forward to the next convocation and hope that I can attend that one as well!"

### **Carolyn Blaszczyk of the Diocese of Harrisburg (PA):**

"The drive to Enders Island, CT, was an adventure, to say the least. I was so pleased to have Mary Kay's company and so thankful to finally arrive there safely. It is always a joy to be with so many of our CV's and a joy, this year, to experience the beauty surrounding us at St. Edmund's Retreat Center. The convocation talks were very interesting and informative; Fr. David was a genuine blessing by his pious presence and his inspired homilies on St.

Joseph. Claire's chanting at lauds, vespers and the hymns at our Masses, not to mention singing the entire score from *The Sound of Music* on our fun sailboat cruise on the Mystic River, was angelic. Our social time together gave us a chance to get acquainted or reacquainted, share our stories on our calling, and our thoughts on St. Joseph, Guardian of Virgins. The "Talent Show" was not to be missed and Kathy's emceeing was perfect. Thanks to the leadership team and to Joani, Anne, and Sophia for their efforts in making our time together so comfortable and special."



### **Marge Giesken of the Diocese of Grand Rapids (MI):**

"I am so thankful that I attended the convocation at Enders Island, what a beautiful and peace filled retreat center. Wonderful to reconnect with Consecrated Virgins I know and to get to know new ones. I came away with a much better understanding of a section of the book of Revelation, now I must listen to the first two parts on tape. The sessions on the Consecrated Virgin Saints were awesome and inspiring and left me wanting more. I will never think of Saint Joseph as I did in the past; Fr. David opened my eyes to the kindness, spiritual quiet, and holiness of this wonderful Saint. I need to learn more. From my journal entry: this time for me is a deepening of my relationship with my Spouse, we went for walks in the rain, surrounded by the beauty of His Father's creation, and everything is more beautiful when you are in love. My Spouse will never leave me, and may I continue to grow closer to Him day by day. This has been a very blessed time."

### **Lucy Kingori, Consecrated Virgin, Kenya:**

"I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for having given to me a chance to participate in the Convocation. I felt humbled and I so much appreciated. I was not able to fully participate due to time differences, however for the few moments I attended I was happy and I felt very much encouraged to see many others who are living



their consecration well and some have lived it out for many years. I was also impressed to see how USACV is very organized. It is my hope and prayer that we shall be as well organized in the African countries. Please support the few of us to get well grounded. Please be in touch with us and form us. It is my hope and prayer that sometime in future you will have an opportunity to arrange for the convocation in Kenya or any other African country to support us and for the promotion of this vocation. I learnt much from the convocation and I feel blessed. I manage a project for the orphaned and vulnerable children, where I fundraise for their health care and education, it is my personal initiative guided by the grace of God and I manage it within the diocese. I felt the need to mention that just in case you may encounter anyone who may be willing to sponsor an orphaned child's education. Otherwise, I am happy to be one of you in the service of God, following the Lamb wherever He goes. Thank you and may God Bless you abundantly."

#### **Pauline Garland, Consecrated Virgin, Australia:**

"For me it was an emotional experience and a great joy to be among my sisters again, even if it was only by zoom, and to share time with them learning more about our spouse during the Convocation of USA Consecrated Virgins 2021. The key to understanding the book of Revelation as Bishop Boyea explained, is to see it as explaining the triumph of God over evil. This certainly clears many of the puzzles of this book of scripture, where the many images can be strange, deceptive and rather distasteful. But when seen in the context of the whole bible these images rather show fulfilment and completion while also encouraging us to see Christ has already overcome all evil that threatens us. Bishop Boyea's love and enthusiasm for this book of scripture was palpable. Studying marriage in the context of the Code of Canon Law enlightens us as to the meaning of the Order of Consecrated Virgins, as described in Canon 604. When the diocesan bishop consecrates the virgin by reciting the prayer of consecration, she becomes a married woman in the eyes of the law of the Church. Judith certainly opened up this meaning of marriage for me when she explained this unique state of life within the Church by elaborating the meaning of marriage as understood by the Church in the Canon Law. This is a unique state of life

whereby a virgin is bound by mystical marriage to Christ for the service of the Church. St. Joseph as the protector of virgins accepted this role of being protector of the Virgin Mary and her Son Jesus with all the difficulties and trials this asked of him. He is our model and patron."

#### **Kathy Reda of the Archdiocese of Boston (MA):**

"I was so happy and my soul so rested after this amazing convocation. Ender's Island was a perfect place to allow peaceful reflection and great conversations and prayer. The first beautiful grace of gathering in a group is the amazing and powerful prayer. The singing the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass parts soothe my soul! I needed this retreat away after this tumultuous year and learned so much about Virgin Saints and St Joseph. It was suggested that if we are ever in a tough situation, don't be afraid to ask St Joseph (Protector of Virgins) for help! Well, I am glad I heard and stored this tidbit away as it came in handy!!

Upon leaving the convocation, it's a simple drive to get to Rt. 95 and back to Boston. However, I sat in traffic for 45 minutes trying to merge onto 95 only then to be re-routed off at the first exit. There was a tractor-trailer accident and they closed large section of the highway. I followed the traffic, but my GPS kept trying to get me to turn around to get back on 95.

Suddenly, the GPS said to take a right turn. As I turned, a white pickup truck was coming out of that road. I rolled down the window and asked if this road leads to 95. The man said no, keep going the way I was going. He pulled out and I followed him. Then I became nervous, I didn't know where I was, my GPS was NO help and I began to panic, since I had to get home to take my uncle to a doctor's appointment.

I then remembered to ask St Joseph for help. I said a prayer asking St Joseph to please help me. About three minutes later, the white pickup truck pulled over and waved me to come up beside him. He explained, in detail, the directions I needed to get back on 95. I was so happy. I thanked him and asked for his name so I could pray for him. He said his name is JOE!!!! I kid you not!!!! I thanked him again and as I pulled away, I was crying happy tears....GOD can never be outdone in His generosity to us!! God bless you all!!"



**Debbie Sucich of the Diocese of Brooklyn (NY):**

“Thank you for the opportunity to share with all of the consecrated virgins about the two non-profit organizations I work with, in NYC, to spread the message of St. Maria Goretti's charism of purity and mercy to young adults and all those affected by abuse. It was beautiful to share about these two organizations following Cathy Leahy's talk on St. Maria Goretti, on the eve of her feast day at the annual USACV conference in Ender's Island, CT. Cathy shared about St. Maria Goretti's life and also her story of connecting with the "Friends of St. Maria Goretti," at Maryknoll in Ossining, NY, many years ago. Cathy, with the support of her pastor at the time, was able to spread the message of chastity and purity with 30 young girls ages 8 to 16.

With the support of the Young Adult Office of the Archdiocese of New York, I began a similar ministry to young adults, ages 18 to 42, with the start of The Goretti Group New York Chapter in 2013. Spreading the message of authentic love, theology of the body, church teaching on marriage, family & the dignity of human life, etc., has been a very rewarding and spirit-filled journey for me. We have monthly events consisting of confession, Mass, fellowship, and live speakers. The Goretti Group was started by Angela King Santero in 2003 in San Diego, CA to help untwist the lies of the culture and help bring about a new kind of sexual revolution in which all come to see and know the true dignity of every human being. Now in the process of approval to become an Ecclesial Association of the Faithful, The Goretti Group currently has two chapters in California and one in New York. If you would like to learn more about The Goretti Group's mission or support our annual fundraiser, the Race for the Chaste, please use the following link:

<https://www.thegorettigroup.org/new-york.html>.

I am also currently on the Board of Directors for the Maria Goretti Network (MGN) and coordinate the New York/East Coast monthly Zoom meeting which offers peer support for those affected by any kind of abuse. MGN focuses on the principles of forgiveness and gives survivors a safe place to listen or tell their story. This non-profit is also designed to have chapters in any diocese and currently has many chapters on the west coast, Ohio, and New York. Anyone from any location can join in all meetings

whether by Zoom, call-in or in-person for those parish-based chapters. For more information, please see: [www.mgoretti.org](http://www.mgoretti.org)

It is a joy to carry out the mission of this great virgin martyr in the modern world. I hope everyone enjoys the written account that will appear in volume three of the Ordo Virginum which includes many beautiful details of the life of St. Maria Goretti.”

**Noemi Angeles, of the Diocese of Honolulu (HI):**

“Living in Hawaii, travel is always a challenge because of the amount of time it needs to go to the mainland to attend our annual convocation and even the Informational Conference prior to my consecration. This pandemic has brought an immense blessing for me because I am one of the beneficiaries of both the convocation and the Informational Conference virtually.

I have to say, though, that nothing replaces the personal contact, conversations and interactions in between the “lectures”, meals together, social hour, personal sharing of our lives as consecrated virgins living in the world, the authenticity of our sisterhood and brides of Christ. These are irreplaceable experiences, imprinted in our hearts and memories, with the knowledge that we are in this journey together until we are United with our Beloved.

It is an immense blessing to have the alternative of being virtually present. From the camera across the vast Pacific Ocean, the joy remains to be palpable, the laughter and the chatter are delightful and still made me feel a part of the whole experience. These two conferences were so impressive that it exceeded my expectations. All the speakers were excellent, intelligent, very professional in their presentations and showed expertise of the subjects they talked about. It was also very efficient, like a well-oiled organization.

I joined the Informational Conference to continue to deepen my knowledge and commitment to our consecrated vocation. I am very grateful to all our sisters for their deep commitment and knowledge in promoting our vocation. It's obvious that, as the USACV and IRC continue these virtual conferences, the worldwide outreach will continue to grow. I know, too, that we have many more sisters who have lived with invaluable knowledge and experiences to

share. I'm indeed very humbled but at the same time proud to be a member of these consecrated virgins chosen by Christ to be His Bride. I'm so grateful because the initiative always begins with the Father who called us, as St. John Paul stated in *Vita*

*Consecrata*. May Our Spouse continue to bless us all and the Holy Spirit guide us and our leadership to promote the blossoming of our blessed vocation. With one mind and heart united with you all."



## 2021 Convocation Homilies

The homilies on the virtues of St. Joseph, delivered by Fr. David Whiteside during each of the Masses at the Convocation, were so powerful and so well received by those in attendance that they are being included in *The Lamp* in this and succeeding issues.

### St. Joseph's Virginal Love

Good evening everyone. Before I begin my homily, I just want to say how happy I am to be helping with this retreat on St. Joseph, the Guardian of Virgins... After Our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph is the greatest of all the saints. This is due to his exalted vocation and mission to love, provide for and protect both Jesus and Mary. St. Joseph was called directly by God to be at the service of the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. In this way, he (like Mary) directly participated in the Redemption of the world. After Mary, he was the nearest to the Author of all grace. Due to his unique relationship to both Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph was endowed with a superabundance of grace, virtue and glory to fulfill this mission and vocation.

One of the keys to St. Joseph's greatness was his **virginal love**. It was St. Joseph's virginal purity that allowed him above all other men to love and to guard Mary's virginal and Immaculate Heart for God. Hence, he is the Guardian of Virgins. Further, St. Joseph's virginal purity allowed him to adore with a most profound love the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. He adored the tiny, pulsing heart of Jesus hidden in the womb of Mary. Along with Mary and the shepherds, Joseph adored the heart of Jesus in the cave of Bethlehem. And he continuously adored the Heart of Jesus both during their exile in Egypt and during the hidden years in Nazareth. For Joseph, loving

and adoring the incarnate Word of God was a daily experience and was as intimate as was humanly possible (after the Blessed Virgin). Jesus was the focus and absolute center of St. Joseph's life... the purpose and end of his existence.

During this retreat, through the example and powerful intercession of Good St. Joseph, may we strive, with a virginal love, for a deeper union and more profound adoration of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God through prayer, reflection and an increase of desire for Him who loves us beyond all our imagining. St. Joseph, Guardian of Virgins, pray for us!

## 2021 Information Conference Report

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

The annual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World was held virtually once again in 2021. Although there are many benefits to holding an in-person conference, those benefits seem, perhaps, to be outweighed by the benefits of a virtual conference. Without the cost and time involved in travel, more virgins from various parts of the country, and other countries, are able to participate, both as participants and as presenters.

Fifty individuals from 40 different dioceses and nine countries attended the conference, including eight consecrated virgins, two diocesan representatives, and 40 virgins who are inquiring about the vocation or are in a stage of preparation for consecration in their dioceses. The three-day intensive conference offers an in-depth look at various aspects of the *Ordo virginum*, time for questions and answers, personal testimonials by consecrated virgins, and prayer together. We look forward to making webinar sessions available through our online store. The sessions are listed in order of presentation:

Overview of Vocations in the Catholic Church, and Ecclesial Identification of the *Ordo virginum* (Dr. Judith M. Stegman, J.C.D.)

Scripture and the Witness of the *Ordo Virginum*, in *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago* (Jenna Cooper, J.C.L.)

The Liturgy of the Hours and Prayer Life of the Consecrated Virgin (Karen Bussey, M.S.W.)

Historical Aspects of the Consecration of Virgins; Virgin Saints (The Most Rev. Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing and Episcopal Moderator for the USACV-IRC)

The Liturgical Rite of Consecration and the Marian Dimension of the Vocation (Mary Kay Lacke, M.Th.)

Mystically Espoused to Christ, the Son of God (Maria Luisa Meza, M.A.Ed.)

Living in the World and in the Local Church (Dr. Judith M. Stegman)

Personal Testimonials—Living as a Consecrated Virgin (all consecrated virgin team members)

Psychological Maturity for Living the Virginal Vocation (Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D.)

Prerequisites for Admission to Consecration (Dr. Judith M. Stegman)

Stages of Preparation for Admission to the *Ordo virginum* (Emily Byers, M.Th.)

Feedback on the conference has been positive: “appreciated the knowledge of the women presenting (they knew their stuff!)”; “a blessing to see a variety of women presenting and to ‘get to know’ each of them a little (it’s so rare to meet a consecrated virgin, so it was really good to be introduced to so many and hear a little of their stories)”; “all my questions were answered and my understanding of the vocation and consecration confirmed (thank you for being so thorough and clear)”; “thank you for responding to this need for an association, for these resources, [and] for this information conference.”

## *In Memory of our Deceased Sisters*

Consecrated virgin **Nancy Dvorak** of the Diocese of St. Augustine (FL) passed to eternal life on Monday, August 2, 2021. Consecrated virgins may remember meeting Nancy over the years at one of our convocations, most recently in Miami in 2018, or in Rome in 2008. Nancy was consecrated December 16, 2006, in the Diocese of Albany (NY). The Most Reverend Felipe Estevez, Bishop of St. Augustine (FL), offered the following letter to be read at the Mass of Christian Burial for our sister Nancy Dvorak. The letter expresses the fervent love of Nancy for her Divine Spouse, as many of us experienced from her over the years as she participated, as possible, in convocations of consecrated virgins in the United States.

August 11, 2021

Dear Fr. Jose and community of Saint Elizabeth Seton,

May Nancy G. Dvorak enter in the joy of the Risen Lord. May I express my condolences to Nancy's family and friends. Nancy was a consecrated virgin of the Lord. She loved the Lord in the manner of Saint Clare, St. Magdalene, St. Elizabeth Seton — that is, with a faithful, consecrated, total spousal love. The Eucharistic Lord was adored by her in a very unique way. She was granted a unique permission to keep the Blessed Sacrament at her home, an exceptional privilege.

Dr. Dvorak was a renowned psychiatrist widely respected in the field of mental health. Her professional care impacted the lives of so many for so long.

She came to Florida to be close to her family. She became a very active member of the parish community and attended all gatherings of the religious in the Diocese. In spite of her struggles with her physical health, she remained active to the end. In fact, last Monday, August 2, when I got the news of her passing, I was reading at that precise moment a letter she had written to me sharing her care for others and her love for the Lord and His Church. We were all touched by such a talented and loving woman who witnessed the faith with ardent love and apostolic passion.

(Most Reverend) Felipe J. Estevez  
Bishop of Saint Augustine



Consecrated virgin, **Jewel Emily Brennan**, passed away on May 27, 2021, at age 77. Prior to serving in the Diocese, as a certified annulment advocate with the diocesan Tribunal, Dr. Brennan was an adjunct professor in St. Joseph University, Philadelphia; a state licensed psychologist in private practice in Lawrenceville, NJ, and a former principal clinical psychologist at the N.J. Department of Human Services and psychiatric director of developmental disabilities. She was also an adoption caseworker with the Diocese, where she assisted in adoption placement and parental counseling. In St. Gregory the Great Parish, Dr. Brennan served as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, sacristan and a member of the parish council, and she also taught religious education in St. Gregory the Great Academy.

Upon learning of Dr. Brennan's passing, Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M. [Diocese of Trenton], offered condolences saying, "Dr. Brennan was a deeply devoted member of the faithful of the Diocese, ever present at many diocesan Masses and celebrations. She lived her special vocation as a consecrated virgin with love and joy, generously offering her service to those in need of an attentive and listening ear." (Excerpts taken from a June 2, 2021, article at the TrentonMonitor.com, the online news site of the Trenton Diocese).

**Let us keep our sisters in prayer. May they rest in peace in the arms of their Beloved Spouse.**



## Consecration Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2021 are invited to submit an anniversary reflection for *The Lamp*. These anniversary reflections are popular among our readers as they convey a personal look at life lived as a bride of Christ in the *Ordo Virginum*.

### Anniversary Reflections: 15 Years

**Julie Enzenberger, Diocese of Peoria (IL),  
consecrated August 12, 2006**

I am not much of a writer, but I know what is in my heart. The more I get to know our Lord the more I see him in others. I have been a bride of Christ for 15 years now. I love the Mass. After being fed at Mass, in holy hours, and through prayers if there is one thing I have learned, it is that then you need to bring Christ to the street. There is so much anger these days over difference of opinions. I have never been too concerned with that because my only concern is showing others that they are loved.

There will always be a minimum of two sides to every issue. What does that have to do with love one another as I have loved you? People are out there living serious problems. I have met people on their death bed. I have met people who are losing a loved one. I have met people living on the street who tell me no one looks them in the eye. All these little decisions in life that people are so angry over will come and go. The one thing I know is that I love people. Put me in a crowd of 200 people and I don't want to leave until I have talked to all of them. I always tell my friends it is not my job to make decisions on issues. That is not where God placed me. I draw all my strength and love from spending time with God. I have one job and one job only – to love everyone God puts in my path no matter who they are.

**Lori Rose Cannizzaro, Diocese of Buffalo (NY),  
consecrated October 7, 2006**

The 15th anniversary has as its traditional gift crystal, an enduring material that symbolizes the lightness, clarity, and durability of love. With this in

mind I share the following thoughts. If home is where the heart is, home for the consecrated virgin should be in the very heart of Jesus our Beloved Spouse. Getting there sometimes isn't easy as we're busy with all the "things" we need to accomplish on any given day. However, if our vocation is to flourish and not shrivel up and die, we must prioritize our days to include a significant amount of quality time with our Spouse.

Just as in a loving marriage couples need to spend time together, so too we must be sure we're spending enough time with Jesus to cultivate a loving, solid relationship with Him. Life will always be busy and full of distractions, but just as a faithful wife must take time to strengthen her love relationship with her husband, so too must we spend time with Jesus getting to know Him better. This way when the storms of life buffet our vocation we will be safe and secure in our love for the Lord and His for us. Only in getting to know God better can we be sure that the love that cascades from His Sacred Heart is the constant that never changes no matter what.

Some great helps I've found are praying the Liturgy of the Hours without rushing through it to start (or end) the day, as we savor the readings and prayers as they soak in, speaking to us personally. Daily Mass is a beautiful blessing for those who can attend, which culminates in the nuptial kiss of communion; receiving Jesus totally into our hearts. He holds nothing back from us as the Bridegroom totally enthralled with the bride. So too we should hold nothing back from Him. St. Theresa of Calcutta called purity the fruit of prayer. Draw close to Jesus and He will fill all the needs of your heart. There He dwells waiting for our inward glance, a sweet gentle thought in His direction. There He will speak to us, strengthen us and love us. Could there be anything else that we need?

St. John Paul the Great said the word chastity needs to be rehabilitated. It's a life style of purity of heart that encompasses a person's speech, actions, imaginations, and will. In prayer I've asked, "how does the way we live reflect this? Is it palpable to those around us, to those we live and work with? Do we clearly show that we are promised to God alone for all eternity?" In conclusion, I quote Caryll

Houselander who sums it up best: "What we shall be asked to give is our flesh and blood, our daily life, our thoughts, service to one another, our affections and love, our worries, intellect, our waking and working, our sleeping, our ordinary human joys and sorrows to God; to surrender all that we are, as we are, to the Spirit of Love in order that our lives may bear Christ into the world."

I am still trying to reach these ideals and with God's help I pray I will.

### *Anniversary Reflections: 10 Years*

**Sabrina Schmidt, Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau (MO), consecrated April 29, 2011**

As I celebrate ten years of consecration, I think of so many blessings in my life. One in particular stands out for me. When I was going through my formation, I had asked our retired bishop to mentor me. He and I had talked about the vocation while he was still in office as our bishop. When he was retiring, we got a new bishop who consecrated me. After I was consecrated, I asked the retired bishop to continue to be my spiritual mentor. I discovered very early that I could trust him with everything, including my journals. He just lets me talk and never judges anything I say. If I need correction, he gently tells me the issue. I'm always comfortable talking to him, so I hold nothing back. Our conversations always lead me to new insights to things that I'm reading or pondering. I always think about how important it is to find a good mentor who will help us to grow stronger in our relationship with God. We need to be comfortable talking to them so that they can help us on our journey.

I appreciate this bishop's wise guidance and the growth/blessings that have come from our conversations. May God always richly bless him.

### *Anniversary Reflections: 5 Years*

**Valerie Wilson, Archdiocese of Louisville (KY), consecrated June 4, 2016**

It is hard for me to believe that it has been five years since my consecration; these last five years have passed by at warp speed but they certainly have been

the most fulfilling of my life. Every day, I am so grateful for my vocation and for the enormous blessings God has bestowed on me. Certainly, there have been some trials, but the Lord has shown his Divine Providence in all of them.

This vocation is truly like the hidden life of Jesus with Mary and Joseph at Nazareth, Emmanuel-God with us. He is there with me in all the daily, mundane tasks of living and work and at every moment of my life; my constant companion. I know there will be struggles in the future but I am consoled by the fact the Lord is always with me and always there to help me. I have to look at these struggles as opportunities to increase my trust in the Lord because, despite his profound goodness to me, my trust is still quite feeble.

But I do know that my life changed dramatically in a way that I cannot pinpoint externally since my consecration; in fact, it seems sometimes that my "true" life didn't start until I was consecrated; there is an interior difference within me.

**Tara Stone, Diocese of Colorado Springs (CO), consecrated August 15, 2016**

Every year on my anniversary, I like to read and pray with the words of the Rite of Consecration, to refresh their meaning in my mind and heart. This year, I was blessed to attend the consecration of Lauren Gault in Pittsburgh, PA. I've been to other consecrations since my own, but there was an extraordinary grace in hearing those words again on my anniversary. Certain parts of the homily and Prayer of Consecration hit me with particular poignancy.

#### **From the Homily**

*Let your life be hidden with Christ in God.* I've come to appreciate since my consecration that we aren't hidden in the same sense that cloistered nuns are hidden. We hide in plain sight. Much of this vocation is hidden from the world's gaze, however — not because we are secretive but because a life of virginity reflects a profound mystery.

*Your motherhood will be a motherhood of the spirit.* My deepest experience of spiritual motherhood is in my relationship with my two youngest nieces. My closest sister asked me to be in the delivery room for the birth of both her daughters. It's the closest I will

ever get to experiencing physical motherhood. I have many other nieces and nephews whom I love dearly, but those two girls — Gianna and Claire — are my little nuggets. I have a bond with them unlike any other.

### From the Prayer of Consecration

*Make their lives deserve our praise, without seeking to be praised.* These words were like a punch to the gut. I often fail both parts of this petition — my sins make my life unworthy of praise, and yet I constantly seek the praise of others. Pray that I might grow in holiness and humility.

*Be yourself their glory, their joy, their whole desire. Be their comfort in sorrow, their wisdom in perplexity, their protection in the midst of injustice, their patience in adversity, their riches in poverty, their food in fasting, their remedy in time of sickness. They have chosen you above all things; may they find all things in possessing you.* I am preparing to walk the Camino de Santiago (in fact, I'll already be there by the time you read this). This part of the prayer perfectly encapsulates my purpose in taking this pilgrimage. I want to detach from all that is not Christ and allow Him to become my all.

### Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg  
Archdiocese of Hartford (CT)

Amidst the horror of watching people desperately trying to escape the Taliban in Afghanistan, I again recall Mother Teresa's words: "If we would kill the innocent baby in the womb of the mother, what would we not do?" The deliberate slaughter of human babies has, perhaps, unleashed the fury of God and now we are witnessing the abominable slaughter of people, including women and children, in Afghanistan. We want to cry out: "Stop the killing!" But until we stop the killing of babies in the womb, will our cries be answered?

Let us continue to pray and speak out against the inhumanity of abortion and how this evil practice has a ripple effect on all humanity, on all that is taking place across the globe. We, the spouses of Christ, are His voice, His presence, His compassion in the world

and we must be on the front line through prayer and through our witness to the sacredness of human life - all human life created by God in His image. Silence means consent. So let us raise our voices as one and call for an end to anti-life agendas as we go deeper in prayer and in solidarity with our persecuted brothers and sisters.

May God bless us as we become a beacon of hope for others in Christ's name. We place everything and everyone and every situation in Christ's hands and in Mary's Heart, while we wait for the Holy Spirit to let us know what we can do to bring about a culture of life, of peace and of brotherhood. In Jesus' Name we pray.



### Announcements and Events

#### Upcoming Events

2022 United States Convocation of  
Consecrated Virgins  
*Sponsored by the USACV*  
*Dates and Venue to be announced.*

2022 Information Live/Virtual Information  
Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated  
Virginity Lived in the World  
*Sponsored by the USACV-IRC*  
*Dates to be announced.*

Conferencia Virtual sobre la Vocación a la  
Virginidad Consagrada  
*Patrocinada por la USACV-IRC*  
*En Marzo 25-27. Reserva la fecha.*

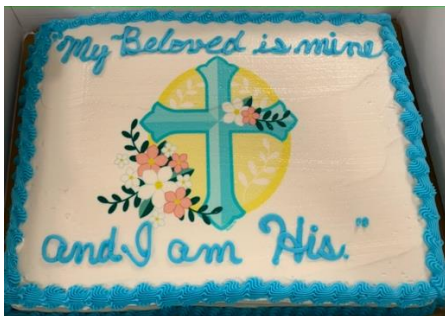
## USACV-IRC Leadership Team

Francesca Riddick and the USACV Leadership Team are in the process of gathering nominations to help facilitate the selection of a consecrated virgin to fill out the remaining term of Amanda Schrauth, who needed to resign her position due to health-related issues. The three-year position ends December 31, 2021. Nominations are likewise being considered to fill this position for a subsequent three-year term, January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2024. If you would like to nominate yourself or another consecrated virgin to serve our vocation in one of these roles, please contact Francesca at:

[usacvmembership@gmail.com](mailto:usacvmembership@gmail.com)

## A Note from the Archivist

**Anne Gishpert, USACV-IRC Archivist**, reminds consecrated virgins who have not done so to please send her a copy of your consecration certificate (providing this copy also enables United States virgins to be full voting members of the USACV). Anne also keeps the USACV "family" albums, which include mementos from consecrations. You are invited to send Anne the program, invitation, holy cards, or photos from your consecration. Anne especially asks those consecrated in recent years to send these so that she can update our albums. The "family" albums travel each year to our conferences, and always bring smiles and memories. You can email Anne at: [anne.gishpert@gmail.com](mailto:anne.gishpert@gmail.com).



SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY  
**USACV**  
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## USACV and International Resource Center for the *Ordo Virginum*

### Leadership Team Members and Officers

#### USACV Leadership Team

**Emily Byers** 2021-2023; **Secretary of the USACV-IRC**; Diocese of Lafayette (LA). (*USACV Online Presence*).

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

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

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

**Vacant Position**, after resignation due to health reasons

#### IRC Leadership Team

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

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

**Renu Rita Silvano**; INDIA, Archdiocese of Bombay.  
**Two Unfilled Positions**

#### Other USACV-IRC Services, among others

**Karen Webb** 2021-2023: Treasurer of the USACV-IRC; Diocese of Rochester (NY)

**Mary Kay Lacke**: Information Conference Director.

**Anne Gishpert**: Archivist.

**Florence Sundberg**: Prayer Chain Coordinator.

**Carolyn Blaszczyk**: Publication of *The Lamp*

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