

The Lamp

Volume 22, Issue 3 — September 8, 2017

United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV

www.consecratedvirgins.org

September 8, 2017 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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

I have been meditating lately on some of the teachings of St. Francis de Sales. In one of his reflections, he would have us spend time looking at death. What he really wants us to do is look at the moment when that could arrive for each of us. I know this sounds maudlin. But bear with me. We pray to Mary: “pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.”

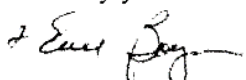
St. Francis does not want us to be morose but rather to look at our lives in the light of what we say in this prayer. Because at the hour of our death all else in our life becomes quite relativized. What has truly been important and what has been completely superfluous? A sort of sifting through of our actions, our thoughts, our fears, our hopes can take place. Now for many of us, we will not have time to do this. That is why the Genevan saint wants us to spend time now in that reflection.

Mostly, he would say, we will value those times when we have expressed our love for God and our love for our neighbor, especially in any sacrificial way. We will see that those moments were the ones when we were our very best and that will give us the greatest joy. The good bishop would add that the many times we have chased after worldly goods and values and esteem will seem quite empty in the light of eternity.

Now we should be clear that St. Francis is not recommending a flight from worldly matters and concerns. To the contrary, his primary hope is that we will focus on God’s will in our lives and that all our actions in this world will be done in light of their impact on our immortality, that is, all in heaven’s light. This does not eliminate earthly responsibilities but rather relativizes them.

Thus, our prayer to Mary “now and at the hour of our death” is most appropriate. We have a “now” which is when we are working out our salvation and that now is best served by pondering, every now and then, “the hour of our death.” In both of these instances we ask Mary to be with us, to pray for us, and to show us her Son.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing

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By Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman September 8, 2017

The life story of the Blessed Virgin Mary, extending from her childhood through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, captures the essence of her profound faith, love, and trust in God. The life of a consecrated virgin has no meaning unless it is rooted in the life of her Divine Spouse, in His Resurrection, and in the eschatological hope of the world to come, for the very act of consecration makes the virgin a witness of His Eternal Kingdom.

The essence of our lives as consecrated virgins encompasses an ongoing contemplation of our Lord Jesus Christ as true God and true man. Our Blessed Mother was the first virgin to live in such contemplation, in the mystery of her Son: “This is the Christological mystery to which St. Leo the Great, with his letter to the Council of Ephesus, made an effective and essential contribution, confirming for all time – through this Council – what St. Peter said in Caesarea Philippi. With Peter and as Peter, he professed: ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And so it is that God and man together ‘are not foreign to the human race but alien to sin’” (Pope Benedict XVI, *The Fathers* Vol. II, Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., p. 11).

The life of Mary of Nazareth, who is the model and queen of consecrated virgins, is a life characterized by complete surrender to the will of the Eternal Father. She lived solely for the mission given to her Son by the Eternal Father; she lived to return to the Father the beloved human race that He had created from His eternal love. Such is the mystery of his loving Fatherhood for us: “For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The Blessed Mother of Nazareth, in the mystery of salvation, enters into human history in time and space. In the eschatological meaning of Jesus’ redemption, she transcends time and space, entering eternity more than other human creatures. She lived the profound life of her Son, and followed Him in the totality of her virginity and maternity. Her Assumption into heaven presents the ultimate meaning of her unique being as Virgin and Mother in the Church of her Son.

Mary of Nazareth appears in the New Testament in the parallel revelations of the birth of John the Baptist and the annunciation “of the plenitude of time” in which was fulfilled the promise of the Messiah. The Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary of Nazareth six months after appearing to Zechariah as he served in the temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah was of the tribe of Levi, as was Elizabeth, the cousin of Mary. Mary herself and Saint Joseph were descendants of David, and such union among tribes was common. It is interesting to reflect on the difference between the encounters of the Archangel Gabriel with Zechariah, and with Mary. Zechariah was full of fear and doubt in the presence of the Archangel, and Gabriel did not “greet” Zechariah as he did Mary; rather, he informed him about the conception of the child. Mary was greeted by the Archangel with the words of the Eternal Father; after she confirmed how it was that His will would be accomplished in her, she immediately pronounced her *fiat* to becoming the Virgin Mother of His Eternal Son (cfr. Alfredo Lopez-Amat, S.J., *Jesus Christ, Biografia en Mosaico, Editorial Razon y Fe*, Madrid, Spain, 1964, pp. 29-33).

Saint Luke the Evangelist revealed that it was in Nazareth that Mary learned that she was chosen to be the mother of the Son of God: “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth” (Lk. 1:26). The town was not mentioned in the Old Testament, nor was it mentioned in the Talmudic writings, but it is mentioned four times in the New Testament, and once with the depictive words: “Nathaniel said to him, ‘Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see’” (Jn. 1:46). Today Nazareth is entirely transformed from the time of Herod, with the Grotto of the Annunciation and the Sanctuary of Jesus the Adolescent (cfr. Lopez-Amat).

The Virgin of Nazareth lived in silence as she faced the mystery of her vocation as virgin and mother, and as she fulfilled the complete meaning of virginal love. She awaited her Son and kept in her heart the words of the Eternal Father, who had created her immaculate and incorrupt. Her contemplation may be described by these words: “In the silence of contemplation, interspersed with wonder at the marvels of the mystery revealed, his soul was engrossed in beauty and divine glory” (St. Gregory Nazianzus, quoted in *The Fathers* Vol I, p. 84).

The life of the consecrated virgin is the same: to live in silence, steadfast in suffering and waiting in constant expectation of the will of the Eternal Father. We are to be dedicated, as was the Virgin of Nazareth, to loving our Divine Spouse in complete abandonment to his mission as true God and true man, resurrected:

Virgins who have the happiness of dedicating themselves to the love of Jesus Christ by consecrating to Him the lily of their purity, are in the first place, as dear to God as His angels. They shall, says the Redeemer, be like the angels of God in heaven. Such is the immediate fruit of the virtue of chastity. Hence Saint Ambrose says, that ‘whoever perseveres in this virtue is an angel, and that whoever violates it is a demon.’ Baronius relates that when a certain virgin, called Georgia, was at the point of death a great multitude of doves was seen hovering about her that when her body was brought to the Church they flew to that part of the roof which corresponded to the place where the corpse had been put, and remained there till after the internment. By all who saw them, these doves were regarded as angels playing respect and homage to the body of the virgin. Chastity is justly styled an angelic and celestial virtue. Because says Saint Ambrose, ‘this virtue has ascended even to the heavens and thence taken an example to be imitated on earth; and because only in heaven, the residence of its Spouse, it is practiced in all its perfection’ (Saint Alfonso of Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, Aeterna Press, translated from the Italian, edited by Rev. Eugene Grimm. New York, Cincinnati, Chicago: Berzigan Brothers, p. 1).

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.

Marie Beccaloni, Member-at-large, 2015-2017,
(Appointed Secretary through 2017);
Archdiocese of Chicago.

Linda Ann Long, Member-at-large,
2017-2019;
Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

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

(See article page 8)

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2018 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity

July 31 to August 3.

Bethany House, DeWitt, Michigan, Diocese of Lansing.

By Judith Stegman

The [apocryphal] *Proto-Gospel* of St. James offers a detailed account of Joachim and Anne, and the birth of their daughter, Mary of Nazareth. According to the tradition, after being reprimanded for being childless although he was known to be a holy and generous man, Joachim went into the desert and fasted for forty days and nights, begging God for a descendant. The result was the conception of the new Eve, Mary, whose fruitful virginity would be the tool used by the Eternal Father to bring salvation to the world. These are real people whose lives of faith, by the grace of God, brought forth the greatest moment in salvation history. It's a salvation history that continues into the present age, inviting our own participation.

We give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, our Divine Spouse, for inviting us to share in the working out of salvation history. My life over the last few months has been one of interacting with consecrated virgins in various ways, all the while observing the work of the Lord in the daily sorrows and joys and

faith of consecrated virgins. As you read in this issue of "The Lamp," consecrated virgins shared a meaningful time of prayer, convivium, and study during our convocation in St. Louis. It was a time of deepened relationships and fostering of our virginal vocations. With the encouragement, support, and work of many virgins, we also completed a long-awaited text on discernment and formation for the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world. Groups discussed future plans for our association of virgins, and we held our annual informational conference on the vocation of consecrated virginity.

Perhaps of greatest importance, however, is the touching of many lives by the faithful daily living out of the vocation of consecrated virginity. This issue of *The Lamp* highlights the diverse ways in which the Lord leads his virgins, through the anniversary reflections of Karen, Shalina, Francesca, Helen, Sarah, Rosie, Karen, Elizabeth, and Christina. We likewise rejoice in the consecrations celebrated over the past few months in New Orleans, Detroit, Sacramento, Denver, and Sioux Falls.



Group at 2017 Convocation

USACV Election Notice Fall 2017

One USACV Council position, At-Large Representative, will open January 1, 2018. Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes (bylaws) of the USACV, which have been mailed to all members and are available upon request. A detailed description of the qualifications and responsibilities of the At-Large Representative position can be found in the May 31, 2017 issue of *The Lamp*.

Election Process

Candidacy: Written notification of a member's desire to run for the open Council position must be received **by midnight on Friday, September 29, 2017**. We encourage each candidate to also submit a biographical statement (maximum 500 words), including remarks about her own life as a consecrated virgin, as well as her vision, qualifications, and motivation for serving in the position for which she desires to run.

Eligibility to Vote: A member is eligible to vote in the 2017 election if she has a consecration certificate on file with the USACV archivist and if she has registered as a USACV member in 2017 (Article III D 2). Ballots will be mailed in early November to those listed as registered members on **October 30, 2017**. *Registration reminders were recently sent to members; if you have not yet registered as a member in 2017, now would be a good time to do so!*

Voting Process: Ballots (and candidate biographies) will be mailed to eligible USACV members in early November 2017. Ballots will be due back to our Election Team leader, Paula Willenbrink, by Friday, December 1, 2017. Ballots must be sent by a postal service (not email or fax) and received by Paula on or before December 1 in order to be counted.

Election Results: Ballots will be opened and counted in the presence of an independent party. The position of At-Large Representative will be won by the candidate receiving the most votes of the voting members (Article VI F).

"Voting members" refers to the number of valid ballots that are returned, not to the total membership (see Article XI).

Announcements and News

USACV Photo Albums:

Thanks to Anne Gishpert, our USACV archivist, for offering to maintain the Association "Family" photo albums. These albums travel to convocations and other important events. They include photos from convocations dating back to 1996, and they include photos and memorabilia from consecrations, with a page or two dedicated to each. Please do send your consecration memorabilia for these historic albums.

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:

December 8, 2017 Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

February 2, 2018 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

May 31, 2018 Feast of the Visitation

September 8, 2018 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Report on Convocation 2017



Chapel at Pallottine

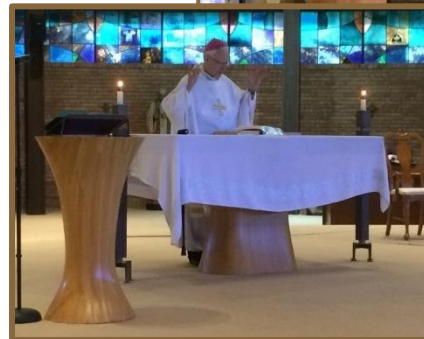


criterion for admission to the order of virgins, a review of her thesis for her licentiate in canon law. The first full day closed with a group discussion on spiritual direction for consecrated virgins facilitated by Karen Lombardi, a virgin who has completed the spiritual mentorship program offered by the Apostles of the Interior Life.

On July 9, Father David Meconi, a Jesuit, and St. Louis University professor dedicated to authentic Catholicism on campus, gave a stirring presentation on the stages of life as a consecrated virgin and the temptations and graces in her call, consecration, and commission. Mary Kay Lacke then presented the final draft of Volume Two in the *Ordo Virginum* series, which is entitled “Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World” and detailed how news of publication would be presented to dioceses around the country. The evening of July 9, convocation attendees enjoyed “Finding Fatima,” which explored the story of Fatima in a powerful way.

by Cara Buskmiller:

The 2017 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins was held July 7 through July 11 at Pallottine Renewal Center in Florissant, Missouri (just outside St. Louis). The convocation began with an opening Mass concelebrated by St. Louis Auxiliary Bishop Mark Rivituso and USACV Episcopal Liaison Bishop Earl Boyea of Lansing. Throughout the convocation, attendees were able to participate in daily Mass, frequent adoration and confession, and the Liturgy of the Hours in common.



July 8, Bishop Boyea supplied formative lectures on virtue-based ethics, reviewing the four cardinal virtues that should flower in the lives of every Christian. This was followed by a two-part presentation by Judith Stegman on the first



Lecture Hall



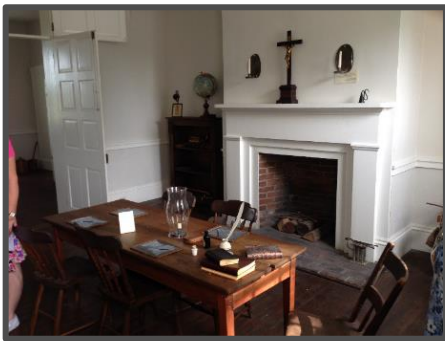


Traditional Latin Mass at Shrine



Altar at Shrine

For Mass on July 10, convocation attendees made a pilgrimage to Old St. Ferdinand Shrine, the site of St. Rose Philippine Duschene's convent and of many missionaries' formation. Mass was celebrated in the Extraordinary Form by Fr. Ambrose, O.S.B., of the St. Louis Abbey. Many prayed at the stairwell where St. Rose would sleep to be closer to the Blessed Sacrament. The Association Meeting was fruitful for consideration of how technology and social media might be used by the USACV. Anniversaries were celebrated and virgins offered beautiful reflections, some of which are highlighted elsewhere in this newsletter.



**St. Rose Philippine
Duschene's convent**

Virgins departed July 11 after Mass. Attendees included twenty-two virgins and three candidates. The St. Louis Archdiocesan Director of the Office of Consecrated Life and one of her sisters joined the virgins for the opening Mass and reception. The St. Dominic Priory and the Kenrick-Glennon Seminary sent priests to say Mass and hear confessions during the convocation.

Report on 2017 Information Conference

By Mary Kay Lacke:

Eleven inquirers and one diocesan delegate for consecrated life attended the 2017 Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World, sponsored by the USACV and held at The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in Chicago, IL, July 25 – 28. Team members who conducted the conference were Theresa Marshall, coordinator of the many logistics involved in seeing that the conference ran smoothly, Mary Kay Lacke, who hosted the conference and gave presentations on the vocation along with Magalis Aguilera, Karen Bussey and Judith Stegman.

Because of an injury that Bishop Boyea sustained earlier in the summer, he was unable to travel to Chicago for the Conference. So Magalis and Judith brought Chicago to him: they videotaped his two presentations on "Consecrated Virginity in the Scriptures" and "Consecrated Virginity in History" from his office in Lansing and broadcast the recordings for the group as the first two presentations on Thursday afternoon of the Conference.

Although the topics for the Information Conference were the same as in the past, the multi-year work on Volume Two of the ORDO VIRGINUM series, *Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*, had a significant impact on the depth of understanding of the vocation that the team members were able to give in the talks to the participants of the conference. Participants expressed their gratitude for the presentations given by the team.

Convocation 2018 “Save the Date”



MorningStar Renewal Center

Dates: July 6 to July 10, 2018, with optional extension to July 13

Location: MorningStar Renewal Center, Pinecrest, Florida, Archdiocese of Miami

Theme: “Our Lady of Charity, Model and Queen of Virgins”

Note on theme: St. John the evangelist says that God is love and he who abides in love abides in God. The love of which he speaks is charity . . . the selfless love that God has for us and that Mary showed in her life. This is the same love consecrated virgins are called to show, both to God and to His children. Hence, under her title of Our Lady of Charity, Mary teaches us virgins how to love God and to love those whom He loves – all of His children. In this way, we are to be

fruitful and evangelize as we await our call to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. (*Note by Margaret Flipp*)

Tentative plans: Our convocation days will be centered about our prayer together, while provide enriching presentations on the convocation theme, opportunities for convivium, and times for reflection in the gardens at the retreat center and at the nearby Fairchild Tropical Gardens. Bishop Boyea will welcome us, and Miami Emeritus Archbishop John Favalora and Auxiliary Bishop Peter Baldacchino both plan to celebrate Holy Mass for us. Special events include: Mass at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Charity, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, and possible excursions during the extension days to Key Biscayne, the Everglades, and historic Basilica of St. Mary Star of the Sea in Key West.

Who is invited: All consecrated virgins, from any country. Also invited are candidates for the consecration who have attended a previous Information Conference sponsored by the USACV.

Save the Date! More detailed information and pricing will follow. We’ll be asking that you help us out by letting us know your plans early, so that we are able to make necessary reservations. We hope that you’ll join us in beautiful Miami next summer!



Window in Chapel looks out onto the Atlantic

Reflections on Convocation 2017

Emily Byers of the Diocese of Lafayette: I left this year's convocation (the first one I have been able to attend!) with a heart overwhelmed by joy and gratitude. I could have never anticipated the immense amount of consolation and encouragement that Our Lord had in store for me during our time together in St. Louis. It was such a tremendous gift to pray the Liturgy of the Hours together and to celebrate the 5th anniversary of my consecration with other consecrated virgins— a blessing I will never forget!

Anne Gishpert of the Diocese of Pueblo: The Pallottine Retreat Center was wonderful. I enjoyed, don't know if that's the right word, the singing in the chapel together. Praying the Liturgy of the Hours and rosary together was very special to me since I rarely get the chance to pray within a group other than rosary before Sunday Mass at home. Time spent in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was a holy time. There seemed to be a peacefulness and connectedness each



Happy Faces at Convocation

time we gathered. It filled my soul with calm and peace as well as a certainty of our blessed vocation. I seemed to feel our holiness as a group. We are truly sisters in the Lord and share a oneness that others don't in our love for our Divine Spouse.

I enjoyed my walk to the cemetery with Katie and Joanie as we waited to go to Old St. Ferdinand's for Mass and a tour of the convent and museum. It was a beautiful day in every aspect, although a little warm and muggy, since I am not used to the humidity as it is hot and dry in CO! Theresa and Cara did a marvelous job setting everything up for a peaceful time of reflection and prayer and sharing. Each priest that came offered some good words for us as virgins and was happy to be with us. The celebration for those women celebrating anniversaries was special as well as the movie night on Saturday with Our Lady of Fatima.

Mary Kay Lacke of the Diocese of Steubenville: I would like to thank Theresa and Cara from the bottom of my heart for all they did to make our time in St. Louis so blessed! I especially enjoyed the times of sharing with each other and the presentations that were given.

They deepened very much my appreciation for our vocation. I also enjoyed meeting consecrated virgins whom I had never met before. What a happy find! Please keep the Volume Two publication process in your prayers in the next few weeks! Ad majoram Dei gloriam!

Linda Ann Long of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis: Each year I ask myself "Why am I attending the Convocation?" Once there, I have my answer. I am each time edified (in the best sense) by the lives and devotion of my sisters in religion. We are all so different and have so much to offer each other. I so appreciate praying the Divine Office in common. I even enjoyed praying the Rosary! The talks by Bishop Boyea on the Cardinal Virtues were thorough and inspiring as usual. I enjoyed and was spiritually enriched by Fr. Meconi's talk on Sunday, most especially after he cried a few tears in the Sanctuary during Mass. All of the speakers understood our vocation well. It was kind of Bishop Rivituso to welcome us to the Archdiocese of St. Louis. I did miss seeing Archbishop Carlson as he is a native of St. Paul. I am grateful for driving back to St. Paul, MN from St. Louis by myself safely with no incident. I look forward to seeing many of you in Miami next year.

Ginnie Meyer of the Archdiocese of Chicago: I was so blessed to have been able to attend the USACV Convocation in Florissant, MO. Being able to spend time in prayer and fellowship with my sisters in Christ is something that I look forward to each summer. The talks by Bishop Boyea on the Cardinal Virtues, Judith Stegman on "The Meaning in Law and Tradition of the



At the Talks

First Criterion for Admission to the Order of Virgins" and Fr. David Meconi S.J.'s Presentation, along with Mary Kay Lacke's "Introduction to Volume 2 *Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*"; these were all so deep and refreshing. A special treat is always the Excursion! This year was to Old St. Ferdinand, a shrine to St. Rose Philippine Duchesne. The grounds and school were fascinating and the chapel was simply beautiful. The Holy Mass in Extraordinary Form made the morning complete. The highlight of the Convocation was the anniversary celebration, for in December, I will be celebrating my 5th year anniversary as a consecrated virgin living in the world!



Bishop Boyea's talks on the cardinal virtues were especially noteworthy for me, and I look forward to hearing them again on the recordings. I was also grateful for Mary Kay's introduction of Volume Two, and for the opportunity during the convocation to have various virgins read parts of the text before it heads to print. Many thanks to Theresa Prosser and Cara Buskmiller for the hours, weeks, and months of preparation they offered in order to welcome us so warmly to the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Paula Willenbrink of the Archdiocese of St. Louis: I really enjoyed the times of fellowship at meals and social times. It was so great meeting virgins from Hawaii and from the Holy Land. I was privileged to take some of the virgins to see the arch in St. Louis and to go to the Cathedral Basilica, which is awe inspiring to see, with all the mosaics. It is so beautiful to come together annually and share our love for Jesus. Adoration was such a Holy time with our Lord. All in all, it was a good convocation.



Mitzi Smith of the Diocese of Austin: I was so encouraged to see all the young virgins at the convocation. They are so passionately in love with their Divine Spouse, it made my heart rejoice! The Lord's work goes on! Praise be Jesus Christ the Alpha and Omega!

Judith Stegman of the Diocese of Lansing: As I read these convocation reflections, so many good memories of our days together in St. Louis come to mind. I also appreciated our liturgies together and the opportunity to spend time with so many virgins.



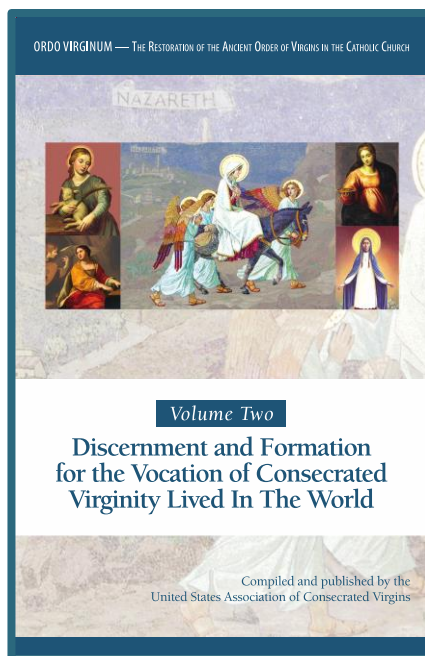


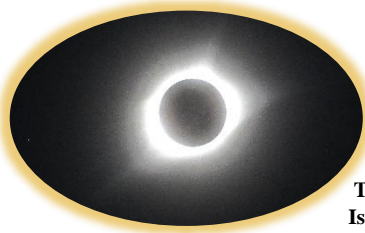
Announcing!

Now available: *Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World* (Volume Two of series, *Ordo Virginum: The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Virgins in the Catholic Church*).

See enclosed order form; also available at www.consecratedvirgins.org. Using an array of ecclesial sources related to formation for a vocation to consecrated life, and based upon the Rite of Consecration itself, this long-awaited volume provides an integrated approach to discernment and formation for the woman seeking admission to the Order of Virgins in the Catholic Church. The volume is addressed, in the first place, to bishops and those assisting them.

The first part of the text describes the central elements of a vocation of consecrated virginity, considers four stages of admission to the vocation, and proposes essential aspects of discernment for this distinct form of consecrated life. The second part of the text addresses requisite formation for the fruitful living of a lifelong vocation of virginity for Christ as it considers the four pillars of formation: spiritual, human, intellectual, and pastoral.





Total eclipse, August 21, 2017 Grand Island, NE. (Photo by Joyce Stolberg)

“I am espoused to him whom the angels serve; sun and moon stand in wonder at his glory.” (from Liturgy of Consecration)

Consecration Announcements

United States:

May 27, 2017 Elizabeth Rizzo, Archdiocese of New Orleans, at the hands of the Most reverend Gregory M. Aymond.

June 24, 2017 Karen Erwin, Theresa Anne Jordan, and Laurie Malashanko, at the hands of The Most Reverend Allen Vigneron, Archbishop of Detroit.

July 8, 2017 Erica Harlidstad, Diocese of Sacramento, at the hands of the Most Reverend Jaime Soto.

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

August 22, 2017 Patricia Cordell at the hands of the Most Reverend Paul J. Swain, Bishop of Sioux Falls, SD.

Argentina:

June 21, 2017 Adriana Catalina Segovia, Diocese of Lomas de Zamora, at the hands of the Most Reverend Jorge Lugones, SJ.

Upcoming U. S. Consecration

October 17, 2017 Vicky Kolman, at the hands of Bishop Michael Sheridan, 6:00 PM in St. Mary Cathedral, Colorado Springs, Colorado. All are invited.

Photos, right upper to lower: Patricia Cordell enters the cathedral with two attendants; Bishop Swain says the prayer of consecration over Patricia; Bishop veils Patricia; Patricia receives the precious blood of Christ from the Bishop in an often-overlooked rubric, which directs that the Newly Consecrated receive both the Sacred Host and Precious Blood directly from the Bishop at the altar. This symbolizes her exalted status in the diocese. Photos by Joyce Stolberg



Karen Ervin, Theresa Jordan and Laurie Malashanko pause in prayer before the altar at the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Detroit (CNS photo/Joel Breidenbach)



Anniversary Reflections: 25 Years

Karen Bussey, Diocese of Lansing, consecrated April 11, 1992



The Lord and Lover, Jesus, continues to surprise me. Here is an example in my more recent years of consecration. We give tours at the home for the dying, Mother Teresa House, to let the public

know what we do. To my amazement, professionals from a non-faith-based group who reviewed our tour presentation, urged me to tell about my vocation as a consecrated virgin. The tours discreetly respect those in our care, and are intimate, with maybe half a dozen people attending. So twice a month, in the context of my social work profession and daily work with the dying, people of faith or no faith hear about my relationship to Jesus and the Church. Just two days ago the tour was filled with secular university students, who seemed to really be listening.

I tell them that I was called at age 16. I show the ring on my finger, and when people ask if I have kids, the answer is that everyone is my kid and my family. I tell them about you, my consecrated friends, and give them examples of the array of occupations you have. I explain that as God's plan for me unfolded and I went into social work, beginning with work with the homeless, I immediately saw how He comes close to us when we are most vulnerable.

The Lord and Lover Jesus is gentle with us while loving so fiercely. Often lately, I am struck

deeply by His solicitude, His constancy with me, and a thousand proofs of His love.

I was recently given the *Suscipe* for penance, "Take Lord, and receive my entire liberty...give me only your love and your grace..." I did not remember at first, and the priest could not have known, that this prayer was sung at my consecration. In an extraordinary celebration on my anniversary day this year, my friend and her sisters surprised me by singing this song. I exclaim inside, "Oh, my Jesus!" not in nostalgia for a song, but astonished by His jealousy as He calls me even all these years later, further into total love.



My best and most urgent word to you is: *persevere*. Most of the time I do not see, but He sometimes gives me tiny *glimpses* of what He might be making of my life and of me. A priest friend says that even we virgins don't have a Cinderella marriage and that perfect union is in heaven. Persevering in difficult prayer is real love. Persevere in overcoming ourselves though we may not see progress. Persevere in our duty. Persevere, my sisters! And we will soon be with the Bridegroom.

Anniversary Reflections: 15 Years

Shalina Stilley, Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph, consecrated September 14, 2002

Like many a bride, as my wedding day approached fifteen years ago, I knew that motherhood awaited me. I asked our Divine Spouse what the maternal aspect of consecrated virginity meant and I knew that, in time, he would show me — and indeed he has. Through teaching seminarians and through mission work abroad, he has shown me that being a spiritual mother is one of the greatest graces of consecrated life. The grace to know that Christ is present not only in the Eucharist but in the souls of all

those he puts in my path is profoundly spiritually nourishing and rewarding. When I see my students, I see Christ. When I see the Cambodian children with whom I work in the mission field, I see Christ. He is everywhere present, wherever I go, reminding me that I am called “to love and be loved,” as Mother Teresa put it. What more could a bride ask for?

For the next three and a half years, I will be serving in the mission field, teaching and doing anti human trafficking work in Cambodia. If these next few years are anything like the past fifteen years, I’m sure our Spouse will continue to show me what it means to be a bride and a spiritual mother. It is a continual journey. It is always full of surprises.

My heart is filled with gratitude for all he has given me during these past years and I look forward to seeing what the future holds. Let us continue to pray for each other that we will each come to know more and more that the Sacred Heart is an abyss of mercy. Let us also pray for the courage to plunge into it with joy and childlike trust. AMDG!

Francesca Riddick, Diocese of Joliet, consecrated December 1, 2002

This December I will be celebrating my 15th year anniversary of my consecration. It is hard to believe that 15 years have gone by already! The grace of this Consecration has carried me through the ups and downs of life and I am so grateful for the gift of my vocation and what it means to the Church as well.

I have always understood the vocation to consecrated virginity in terms of its relationship to Christ and His Church. The consecrated virgin stands in the heart of the Church, as an icon, an image that points to another reality; that of the nuptial relationship that we are all called to as part of the body of Christ. The consecrated virgin is called to live this nuptial call in a radical way, giving all her time, energy and attention to this “one thing” necessary; living a life that fosters union with the Lord Jesus.

Each consecrated virgin will live out this nuptial call with Christ in a different way according to her unique charism. For me, my role as a special education teacher gives me ample opportunity to exercise my identity as a spiritual mother. I carry my

students through the joys and difficulties of growing up in a world that is less than supportive to the integral development of their character. They come to rely on my firm but at the same time, gentle and understanding stance as they know that I only want what is best for them. They know that I will always be fair and consistent and they can trust in me. This is part of the spiritual maternity that the Lord has developed in me over the years.

My experience in an urban monastic community for many years in my early adult life has also formed my approach to this form of consecrated life. I understand the need for silence and a certain separation from the normal state of affairs of my colleagues around me, most of whom are married with children. I have to keep reminding myself that my life is meant to be different from them, set apart in a certain sense. This solitude is also an important part of the consecrated life and a witness that our real home is not here below but in heaven.

As I approach this anniversary I give thanks to the Lord for the gift of this vocation and hope that many more will be called to give their life to this one thing necessary, participating in the Wedding Feast of the Lamb.

Anniversary Reflections: 10 Years

Helen Qua, Diocese of Metuchen, consecrated February 10, 2007

Grace and peace to all, my dear fellow brides of Christ! Such is the Father's love and mercy for us that not only did He give us His only begotten Son, the best gift we could ever receive, to redeem us and bring us to new life with Him — moreover, He gave us the gift of virginity — the call to be His bride. The all-knowing God, further gave us the Holy Spirit to help us and guide us each step of the way. Such is the “breadth and the length, the height and the depth” (Ephesians 3:14-21) of God's love and compassion for us. He poured forth His abundant graces and helps us on our earthly pilgrimage until we reach our heavenly homeland. God is awesome! He made us sons and daughters through Jesus Christ; citizens of the Kingdom of God!

Praise, honor and glory to the Holy Trinity for letting us share in the love they have one for the other and for us!

February 10th, the feast of St. Scholastica, marked my 10th anniversary. Despite great plans, I ended up celebrating in intimate moments with our Divine Spouse alone: down with the flu and an upper respiratory infection. This was another one of many grace-filled moments where God showered upon me His gifts of acceptance and surrender, a lesson of letting go and letting God, a time to reflect on my life with Him these past ten years in consecrated life. I have been filled with the gift of gratitude for the abundance of His many graces since then.

I thank God for His many gifts, as far as I can put them into words: His promise to be with us always until the end of time, the peace that comes from finding the Father's will and living it out, the gift of our Blessed Mother, her powerful intercession, love and protection and, like St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, for enabling me to say, "My vocation in the Church is love."

I thank God for the gift of service to the Church in the ministry of presence and love, the fruits of the Holy Spirit: gentleness, kindness, patience, love, joy and peace, the desire to know God more and more through Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, and the saints (I have been attending Bible studies at my parish for a number of years now), for the desire to provide a dwelling place for Him in my heart and the grace to stay focused on my way of life and the desire to live in imitation of Jesus and Mary with God's grace, and to respond to His call to live a more contemplative prayer life. Finally, I am grateful for a number of profound experiences of God's grace throughout my consecrated life; I thank God always! All I asked was to have a strong personal relationship with Him. To be His bride was beyond my expectations!

Sarah Malick, Diocese of Lansing, consecrated September 8, 2007

In reflecting on these past ten years as a

Consecrated Virgin, Diocese of Lansing, MI three words come to mind: "Grace, Gratitude, and Growth."

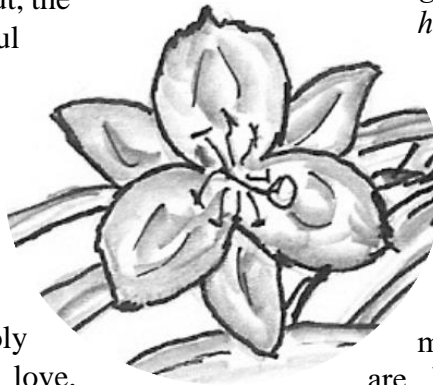
Grace

"May the Lord give you the grace to do His will so that He may be served and honored through you." - St. Louis of France

The grace of being called to this vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World is a dream come true. During the ten years of discernment before my consecration, God surely did write straight with crooked lines. There were many twists and turns, and there was also much joy in the journey! All that time I learned to strengthen and develop the virtues of trust, perseverance and faith, which have certainly helped me in living out this beautiful and grace-filled vocation.

Gratitude

"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!" - Psalm 107:1



On this, my ten-year anniversary, I have a deep sense of gratitude for the Lord's love and for this gift of which I am so undeserving. I also have a deep gratitude for three special people who nurtured and guided me toward my consecration day. They are, Bishop Emeritus Carl F. Mengeling, Diocese of Lansing, who was the Bishop who consecrated me, Judith Stegman and Karen Bussey both consecrated virgins of the Diocese of Lansing. Judith was the person who first introduced me to the vocation, and Karen was my mentor and formation director. I am forever indebted to them all for their wonderful direction and support!

Growth

"When we serve the poor and sick, we serve Jesus. We must not fail to help our neighbors, because in them we serve Jesus." -St. Rose of Lima

Throughout these past ten years as a consecrated virgin, I feel like the Lord has given me so many graces that have helped me grow in ways I would never have dreamed of. Just a few months ago I began ministering to the sick in the hospital, visiting them as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. If you knew me twenty, ten, or even five years ago, you

would *never* have believed this as a possibility for me as I used to be horribly afraid to be around the sick. This unfounded fear has totally dissolved and I am finding that my time with the sick is my favorite part of every week. Teaching music to young and old alike has been my passion and joy for the past thirty-two years as I am a full-time, self-employed piano instructor. Now, with my new ministry to the sick, I feel that another side of me has started to bloom and grow.

I would like to share a few final thoughts: The honeymoon isn't over and it has been ten years! I have heard many couples say that after a certain number of years of married life they begin to notice that they are starting to look and act like each other. My hope and prayer is that this becomes true for me and that, in time, I will start looking and acting like my spouse, Jesus!

Rosie Capalad, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, consecrated September 29, 2007

How time flies! I can't believe this is my 10th year anniversary as a Consecrated Virgin – Spouse of Jesus Christ. My consecration continues to be the happiest day of my life except one day, three years ago, after a routine annual check-up, cancer chose me. Although it shocked my family and friends, I bravely faced the challenges ahead, but it also humbled me. Through faith, I was able to accept and believe that He would be there for me. My expectation of the physical suffering and disappointments were all underestimated but looking back, I see that He carried me and gave me the courage to enter more deeply into the mystery of my vocation.

God speaks to me through this lovely song I selected for my Rite of Consecration: “I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have called you and you are mine.” What a song to inspire me on my chosen vocation! Yes, I want to keep this faith wholly for the rest of my life. As years go by, He does not disappoint me; my hope and trust in Him have grown so much. I know this is a call to love. He loves me unconditionally; He shares with me His sufferings, and I feel that love flowing through me. God knows what is best for me. The greatest gift that God has given me during these past three years of

sufferings and struggles is the gift of His peace and freedom and perseverance. God is good, and through prayer and my family and friends' support, I feel even closer to Him, praising Him for all the people I have touched through His mercy and compassion.

I thought: I have been out for quite a while with my Beloved, not doing anything spectacular during the past years and I feel awful about it. But soon I figured out that, as Bride of Christ, my only and true mission is to make a reality what marriage symbolizes, union with Christ. All Christians and all forms of consecrated life ought to tend to that union, but for the consecrated virgin, it is our deeply mystical mission by virtue of our special and explicit consecration.

God is calling me to deepest intimacy with Him in a new way. With His intense and intimate presence, Christ allows me to feel the promises of His Sacred Heart. I seek and love the Lord with my whole heart. I remember the ministry I started prior to my illness, the promotion of the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart, first in my own parish, then in our neighboring parish. In the midst of my tolerable sufferings, He builds my trust to continue on in small and large ways through His actions with all His promises and surprises. The devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus came through St. Margaret Mary Alacoque of Paray Le-Monial in France in 1675 AD. Through several visions of our Lord over 18 months, Jesus told St. Margaret that she was to become His instrument in spreading devotion to His Sacred Heart. He told her that He would bless and He made special promises to each home and family where an image of His Sacred Heart is exposed and honored; she should have it promoted throughout the world. This was done through the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart.

Currently, I am not yet sure what God has in store for me. I am so happy that God has called me to be His bride. I hope that the witness of my life is wisdom for each person I meet, as I try to love with His own love. May the grace of my consecration ten years ago live on in me; through the fulfillment of my baptismal promises, I embrace life to its fullest.

Karen Webb, Diocese of Rochester, Date of Consecration November 18, 2007

It's hard to believe it's been almost ten years since my public consecration. What had been a very long road, guided at every step by Jesus, leading to the consecration was followed by time seeming to speed up — the last ten years have passed much more quickly than I could ever have imagined. Since most of that time has been spent overseeing finances and doing other work for two clustered parishes in the Rochester diocese, I spend most of my days and nights working closely in and for the Church Jesus founded, another amazing blessing for which I'm very thankful. The phrase "The days are long but the years are short" is true, and I'm looking forward very much to the day when I can see my Spouse and Savior face to face. More than anything in this life I want Him to look on me with pleasure and pronounce me a faithful servant and spouse. May He grant me the grace in my weakness to persevere until that Day!

I've told Jesus countless times that He takes better care of me than any (only-human) husband ever could. I am so grateful for His kindness in every situation and He always seems to make a point of being especially kind to me at times when I definitely don't deserve it. My brother, trying to understand my vocation, asked me before I received public consecration, if I was "proud" of being a virgin. I said that since I know my virginity is God's gift to me which I just return, that no, I wasn't "proud" of it. But, I said, I was very *glad* that I was a virgin because it meant that I could dedicate all of myself, body and soul, to Him. And the same is true today. I know that many of my consecrated sisters understand better than I do what exactly it means to be a spouse of Christ. After ten years I'm still learning, and to some extent stumbling along, which makes me even more grateful for His patience and mercy with me. My prayer, as always, is that despite my weakness and limitations, I may love others as He loves them, and come to love Him as well as He deserves. Thanks be to our Lord!



Anniversary Reflections: 5 Years

Elizabeth Sledge, Archdiocese of Portland (OR), consecrated June 27, 2012.

Reflecting back on my consecration of five years ago June 27, 2012 brings happy memories of a glorious day and a picture-perfect ceremony. At times, it seems distant and at other times as if it were yesterday. There have been a lot of changes these past five years, both external and internal. Like all vocations it takes a lifetime to unfold, understand, live out ever more faithfully, and bring to full fruition.

Through grace I have been blessed with wonderful mentors to help me realize both the gift of this vocation, and the responsibilities. These loving and helpful souls offer advice and feedback that has enabled me to continue to become ever more mature and responsive to the Divine call.

A prudent virgin once told me to regularly refer back to the Rite of Consecration itself, to take just a paragraph, a sentence, or even one word and reflect on it. My Archbishop told me that when he was a priest he took the Rite of Ordination on retreat with him each year and he now adds the Rite of Ordination of a Bishop as well.

The Rite is so rich and contains everything that we may need to remember: who, whose, and what we are and how to live our calling in an exceptional manner. An excerpt from the homily in the Rite states:

Never forget that you are given over entirely to the service of the Church and of all your brothers and sisters. You are apostles in the Church and in the world, in the things of the Spirit and in the things of the world...Help the poor, care for the weak, teach the ignorant, protect the young, minister to the old, bring strength and comfort to widows and all in adversity.

In the Rite we have a treasure trove, let us not relegate it to a dusty seldom-used bookshelf.

Christina Hip-Flores of the Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba, consecrated July 24, 2012 also sends an anniversary reflection.

This year on July 24th, St. Christina, I celebrated my fifth year as a consecrated virgin. My predominant feeling – after the initial euphoria stemming from the beauty of the celebration itself – has been one of peaceful contentment and stability, of joyfully accepting this sublime vocation, of finally having found my niche in the Church. I've come to savor more and more the bridal charism and sought to follow the Bridegroom more closely and attentively. I've also grown in my love for the Church, whose icon I have become. The greatest fruits of the last five years have been witnessing my family grow in their practice of the faith, coming to a greater understanding of the nuptial meaning of the Eucharist, and the consecration of Yoandra, another vocation for Cuba.

The day of my fifth anniversary, July 24th, was a special gift to me from the Bridegroom. I was blessed to spend the day with three other consecrated virgins: Marielisa Puigbó and Carmen Briceño from Venezuela, and Yoandra Torres, from the diocese of Holguin, Cuba. The four of us spent 16 days this summer in Santiago, Cuba running a summer camp for children, adolescents, and adults focused on strengthening marriage and the family. At the conclusion of the summer, I made a pilgrimage of thanksgiving for my five years to the tomb of the Apostle St. James in Spain.

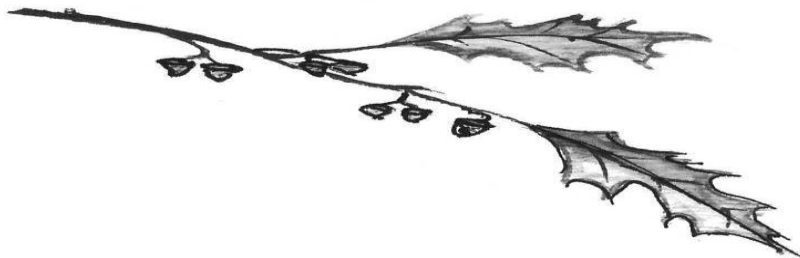
Before my consecration I had entrusted my vocation to his protection, and promised to visit his Basilica on foot. So, after 11 days of walking 336 km from Oviedo to Santiago de Compostela, I had the immense (and unexpected) joy of hearing a private

Mass celebrated on the tomb of the Glorious Apostle. There I re-entrusted myself, my Archdiocese of Santiago, and all our apostolates to his care.

Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

When I was told that organizations here and abroad are pushing to encourage euthanasia for those who are not terminally ill, even children and those who do not give their consent, it was a shock to me. Euthanasia as a “treatment” used to eliminate pain by eliminating the patient is common in Belgium and Pope Francis has spoken strongly against this. One country bragged about having eliminated Down Syndrome – they did not say that they did this by terminating the lives of Down Syndrome babies in the womb. The criterion seems to be that only those deemed worthy, those who are able to contribute to society in meaningful ways, may be permitted to live. While I was feeling very discouraged by the enormity and dreadfulness of this situation and experiencing a sense of helplessness, a pro-life center showed the film “The Courageous Heart of Irene Sendler,” a Catholic social worker who rescued over 2500 Jewish children during the Holocaust, risking her own life time and time again to save the children. This film helped me to realize that there are countless numbers of good people around the globe who are quietly going about doing good, as Jesus did, bringing light and hope and comfort into the dark places of our world. And I realize that I/we too can do this in little ways every day: countering evil with goodness so that, little by little, the Light that is Christ’s presence among us, will overcome the darkness. May it be so!



The Transfiguration and The Consecrated Virgin

by Diane Christine Farr

I was blessed to be given the gospel reading of the Transfiguration on the day of my consecration. What follows is a reflection on the beauty of consecrated virginity as seen in the light of the Transfiguration.

In St. Matthew's Gospel we read, "And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is well that we are here; if You wish, I will make three booths here, one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah." He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise and have no fear." And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one, but Jesus only.

The Transfiguration was a manifestation of the divinity of Christ to three of his apostles. God chooses some from among the children of the Church to ascend the mountain of contemplative love. He draws them with Divine attractions to the sublime intimacy of the heavenly nuptials. First, He prepares them by testing their faith and strengthening their resolve to love Him above all else. The journey that a virgin takes until the day of her consecration is often a walk of pure faith. It is true that even after her consecration the virgin must guard well the treasure she has been given. She must cultivate with care the garden of virginal love in which she has been placed.

In the Transfiguration Christ's face shone like the sun, which is an image of the Divine Will. In giving her virginity to be consecrated to Christ, the virgin also offers Him her will. She prays that she may be immersed in the immensity of the Divine Will and be invested with its all-pervasive light. The consecrated virgin desires that whatever she does in work or in prayer, her acts will be enclosed in the Divine Will, giving perfect glory to God. In the Transfiguration, Jesus' garments became as white as light symbolizing His divine purity and holiness. The consecrated virgin desires to be clothed with the wedding dress of her Lord's own sanctity.

The bride of Christ pondering the mystery of the Transfiguration takes all of the treasures of this even into her heart making them her own. She has heard the voice of our Heavenly Father inviting her to be still and listen to Jesus. She hears in the depth of her soul the invitation to enter more deeply into the mystery of divine love. Contemplating the face of Christ, His bride is filled with His beauty and offers a reciprocal response to His tender and infinite love. She must become a channel of this love to those around her.

It is our Lord Himself who imports the exquisite beauty to a life of virginity consecrated to Him. It is God alone who plants this fragrant flower and consecrates the gift that He has given. In her communion with her Divine Bridegroom, the consecrated virgin strives to be attentive and desires to be completely transformed in Him.

The apostles were overcome with fear at the Transfiguration. Jesus touches them telling them to rise and to not be afraid. As Jesus touches the consecrated virgin in the depths of her being He imparts to her the attributes and knowledge of His Most Sacred Heart. His bride, casting off all fear in an act of perfect love, rises to perennial life in His Will. She keeps her eyes firmly fixed on Jesus alone, amid the joys and sufferings of this life. Her joy and her peace flow from continually living in the sweet presence of her Divine Spouse.

The blessings of the vocation of consecrated virginity extend to the entire Church. We know that just as the Transfiguration points to the Resurrection of Christ, so does consecrated virginity point to the life of heaven. May the most Holy Trinity be praised for all the graces bestowed by Divine Mercy.



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