

September 8, 2018 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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

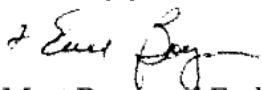
Your gift of virginity and the chastity with which you live your lives are vital witnesses to our world in these times. I recently heard the story from parents about their two sons being sexually abused by a young man and yet again I was in tears. These stories, and many that have been presented to me, leave me with a great sadness. The pain inflicted on these victims is physical and emotional and psychological and it is unfortunately quite lasting. When it is the result of a cleric, there is the added spiritual damage done. Many of these victims become permanently alienated from the Church.

Thus, your witness is all the more important today. You demonstrate that our sexuality is not a game or toy but is a gift, a divine gift, which is meant, like all divine gifts, for our salvation. Thus, your virginity is a sign, like Christ's virginity, that the Kingdom of Heaven is our destiny and that all sexuality is meant to help us attain heaven.

Your witness is also important to your bishop and his presbyterate as they seek renewal in their response to God's call to holiness especially in the virtue of chastity. Invoke Mary's protection and love upon them often.

I thank you for your witness. I also ask your prayers, constant prayers, for the victims of sexual or any other abuse, especially as committed by clerics and that we bishops will be bold in holding one another accountable to the Lord's own charge that what is done to the least of his brothers and sisters is done to him.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing



Inside this Issue

Page

Something Ancient-	
Something New	2
Upcoming Events	4
Announcements and News	4
USACV Fall 2018 Elections	5
From the President's Journal -	
on <i>Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago</i>	6
2018 Convocation Report	8
2018 Convocation, Miami, FL.	9
Report on 2018 Information	
Conference	12
Consecration Announcements	13
Consecrated Virginity Defined	14
Anniversary Reflections	15
Life Corner	18
Daily Life of a Consecrated	
Virgin	19
Roman Rite of Consecration	20

The Birthday of our Blessed Mother, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary

By Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman

We are celebrating the birthday of our Blessed Mother who is Mother of the Church and Queen of Virgins. In this reflection we contemplate her virginity, which is a perpetual gift coming from God, who is eternal. Our Blessed Mother in her immaculate conception as a human being received the plenitude and splendor of this gift, because virginity is the plenitude and splendor of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Through her obedience, our Blessed Mother and Queen was open to the will of the eternal Father to choose her as the virginal mother of His Son. Obedience to the will of the eternal Father had been lost in the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Our virginal vocation is a call that also comes from the eternal Father, and with our answer, we too, follow the obedience that was restored in our human nature with the obedience of our Mother to His will.

Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago, the recently published instruction for the *Ordo Virginum*, expresses that the call of our Blessed Mother was in the context of her divine Son's incarnation: "The infancy Gospels of Matthew (1:18-25) and above all of Luke (1:26-38) present the newness of the virginity (*carnis et cordis*) of the mother of Jesus, a visible sign of the invisible incarnation of the Son of God and a spousal expression of the covenant with God, to which all believers are called" (*ESI* 15). Our Blessed Mother fulfilled the expectation of the "newness of the virginity." The centuries are the best witness to that newness, from the virgin martyrs in the ancient Church to the virgins faithful to the Spouse in today's Church.

Francisco Vizmanos, in his book *Las virgenes cristianas de la Iglesia primitiva* (Christian Virgins in the Primitive Church, 1947) writes about the strong call of virginity, *carnis et cordis*, in the body and the heart (love), that comes to virgins from the Eternal Father. Virgins are called to follow Jesus Christ and they are called to live the spousal relationship with Him in the mystery of the eternal grace of virginity. Our spirituality is based upon our Mother's call of obedience to the will of the eternal Father.

The virginal vocation is as ancient as our Mother's *Fiat* and is as new as our own *Yes*. Based upon the information we have, the number of virgins in the international Church in this 21st century is approximately 5,000.

Vizmanos investigated the names of virgins from early centuries of the Church: in the Apostolic Time (1st century), he listed the names of 20 virgins from Palestine, Africa, the Christian West, Italy, and Spain; among them were included the daughters of the deacon Phillip in Caesarea and the deacon Nicolai in Syria, that he didn't name. In the 2nd century he listed 13 virgins in Greece, Italy, France, and Spain. In the 3rd century he listed 58 virgins in the Christian East, Italy, North Africa, France, and Spain; of these, 29 were from Italy. In the 4th century he listed 94 virgins from Palestine, Egypt, Asia, Greece, Italy, North Africa, France, Spain and Portugal; of these, 26 were from Italy. Many during these centuries were virgin martyrs. In the 5th century, 44 virgins are listed without naming how many suffered martyrdom, with Ursula in Germany, and others from Palestine, Syria, Italy, the Byzantine Empire, Italy, North Africa, France, and the British Islands. In the 6th century, he listed the names of 37 virgins from the Byzantine Empire, Italy, France, the British Islands, and Spain.

This strong call from the Eternal Father to a life of virginity is as powerful today as it was in the first centuries of the Church: “From the 4th century, entry into the *Ordo Virginum* took place through a solemn liturgical rite presided over by the diocesan bishop. In the heart of the community gathered for the Eucharistic celebration, the woman expressed her *sanctum propositum* (holy resolution) to remain in virginity for her whole life, for the love of Christ. The Bishop then pronounced the consecratory prayer. As affirmed already in the writings of Ambrose of Milan and subsequently, starting from the most ancient liturgical sources, the nuptial symbolism of the rite was displayed particularly by the bestowal of the veil on the virgin by the Bishop, a gesture that corresponded to the *velatio* (placing of the marriage veil) that took place during the marriage celebration” (ESI 3).

The meaning of the virginal vocation can be understood in light of the virginity of the Eternal Father. Using Saint Gregory’s teaching, Vizmanos wrote that: “Virginity is an attribute of the Divine and Incorporeal Nature.” He said that an acute intellectual capacity is necessary in order to understand the excellence of the grace of the virginal vocation because it comes from the same essence as the Eternal Father. The Eternal Father in His virginity engenders His only begotten Son. The Eternal Son of the Father is God and is engendered in virginal and incorruptible human nature (Vizmanos, “Excellency of Virginity” in *Las virgines cristianas de la Igelsia primitive*, 113-115).

The Divine Lord Jesus Christ is the fountain of incorruptibility in that He did not come to this world as the fruit of matrimony but through the immaculate body of Mary of Nazareth. By the power of the Holy Spirit He was incarnate in Mary’s womb; He dwelled in the womb of His blessed Mother. This was the promise of the Eternal Father in Paradise when He prefigured the incarnation of His Son. The Mother of the Eternal Son was virgin before, during, and after the birth because she received the gift of virginity from the mystery of God’s virginity. It was on behalf of the incarnation of the Son of God that she received the splendor of this gift. It is a mystery that we are chosen, in our virginal vocation from the Eternal Father, as our Blessed Mother was chosen, but only to receive the Divine Spouse in our soul. The Blessed Virgin Mary had the plenitude of God dwelling in her body and in her soul.

The consecrated virgin has the virginal gift to have the Spouse dwelling in her soul, in His resurrected being as true God and true man. The fidelity to her spousal relationship with the Divine Spouse is possible when she lives the splendor of the mystery of virginity as the Blessed Mother lived, in the totality of her being.

The Church is the Bride of Christ and the consecrated virgin witnesses to the love of the Church for the divine virginal Bridegroom of the Church. In the liturgical celebration of the consecration of virgins, the Church prays for God’s grace and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the virgins (see *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum* 17; 22-23). Let us pray for the intercession of our Blessed Mother on the celebration of her birthday and in her advocacy of charity, that we might live in contemplative expectation of her Son’s eternal spousal love for us and His Church.



USACV Council

Members and Officers

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

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

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

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

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



Upcoming Events Sponsored by the USACV

**2019 United States Convocation of
Consecrated Virgins**

Tentative plans: July 22 – July 26

More information to come.

+++++

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

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

More information to come.

Announcements and News

Save the Date

Announcement of retreat for consecrated virgins: Loretta Matulich and Regina Dibbs have set up a retreat for next June (a year from now--2019) at Our Lady of Peace Retreat Center in the Portland, Oregon, area. It will be about the 3rd week of June and the retreat will be for a week (or fewer days if the consecrated virgins cannot stay that long). The content will be on the consecrated life, but no title has been assigned to it as yet.

May She Rest in Peace:

Consecrated virgin Diana Peterson entered eternal life on August 18, 2018. Diana was consecrated on January 17, 1998 in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Our May issue of *The Lamp* included

Diana's own reflection on her 20th anniversary of consecration, in which she mentioned the medical issues she was facing. We keep our sister in prayer. May Diana rest in peace and may perpetual light shine upon her.

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:

December 12, 2018 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

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

May 31, 2019 Feast of the Visitation

September 8, 2019 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

USACV Election/Ballot Notice - Fall 2018

By Judith Stegman

On August 21, 2018, a new plan for the USACV was mailed/mailed to all members, a plan which involves a change in the organizational bylaws of the association. If you are a current or recent member of the USACV and would like to receive a copy of the plan, please be in touch with us. The Fall 2018 Election will include a vote for approval of the changes to the USACV organizational bylaws (statutes).

Following is the tentative process for the Fall 2018 Election/Ballot:

Matters that will be on the ballots:

1. Approval of revised USACV bylaws. (A copy of the revised bylaws will be enclosed with the mailing of ballots.)
2. Confirmation of five USACV Leadership Team members of the Board of Directors of The USACV and International Resource Center for the *Ordo Virginum*. (Candidate biographies will be enclosed with the mailing of ballots.)

Candidacy:

Under the new plan for the USACV, the five USACV Leadership Team members will be appointed to their positions by the seven U.S. members of the overall Board of Directors, subject to the approval of USACV membership. *USACV members who are interested in serving on the USACV Leadership Team will be warmly encouraged, and solicited, to offer their service to the vocation in this way.*

When the new plan was proposed for discussion at the USACV Association meeting this summer, a number of virgins stepped forward expressing an interest in serving on the newly structured USACV Leadership Team. The current USACV council was pleased to see this interest on the part of prepared consecrated virgins and discussed with them a feasible way of distributing the work so that no one person would be overburdened.

The names of the five consecrated virgins who are proposed to serve as members of the initial USACV Leadership Team, and the description of their particular duties, were announced in the plan that was mailed to members on August 21.

The five USACV Leadership Team members will serve for three-year terms. In order to stagger the terms, the terms of service of the initial Leadership Team under the new plan will include three members for three-year terms (1/1/19-12/31/21); one for a two-year term (1/1/19-12/31/20); and one for a one-year term (1/1/19-12/31/19). This worked out well: current council member Linda Ann Long is proposed to fill the one-year term (which will complete her term under the current USACV organizational structure) and current council member Emily Byers is proposed to fill the two-year term (which will likewise complete her term under the current USACV organizational structure).

Eligibility to vote:

In order to be eligible to vote in the Fall 2018 election, consecrated virgins must be registered as 2018 members of the USACV by October 18, 2018, and must have a certificate of consecration on file with the USACV archivist. *If you have not yet registered as a member in 2018, now would be a good time to do so!*

Voting process:

Ballots will be mailed to eligible USACV members on approximately October 25. Ballots will be due back to our Election Team leader, Paula Willenbrink, approximately one month after the mailing, or Thursday, November 29, 2018. Ballots must be sent by a postal service (not email or fax) and received by Paula on or before the due date in order to be counted.

Ballot results:

Ballots will be opened and counted in the presence of an independent party. Results will be announced in the December 8 issue of *The Lamp*.

By Judith Stegman

On June 8, 2018, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life issued the long-awaited instruction *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago* (*ESI*) for the *Ordo Virginum*. The instruction responds to many questions that have been raised about the *Ordo Virginum* over the years since the 1970 revision of the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity. Consecrated virgins who were gathered in Miami just days after the release of the instruction were encouraged as we read its affirmation of Christian virginity as “an experience of spousal union, intimate, exclusive and indissoluble, with the divine Bridegroom, who has given himself to humanity without reserve and forever” (*ESI* 24). The document beautifully emphasizes the consecrated virgin’s mystical espousal to Christ as key to this nuptial vocation of love that images the spousal relationship between Christ and the Church. The instruction also helpfully clarifies the relationship of the consecrated virgin to her diocesan bishop and the bishop’s role in her life. We are pleased that formation materials the USACV has prepared over the years are directly in line with the instruction, and references to *ESI* are already enriching our presentations (see, for example, *Something Ancient, Something New* in this issue).

Many consecrated virgins have been in contact with the USACV, however, to express their concern, and even dismay, as they read number 88 of the document and find that it seems to state that bodily virginity, while important, is not an essential prerequisite for admittance to the *Ordo Virginum*: “Thus to have kept her body in perfect continence or to have practiced the virtue of chastity in an exemplary way, while of great importance with regard to the discernment, are not essential prerequisites in the absence of which admittance to consecration is not possible” (*ESI* 88).

A link to *ESI* and commentary on the instruction by consecrated virgins can be found by visiting the USACV website at <https://consecratedvirgins.org/content/ecclesiae-sponsae-imago>. The USACV commentary specifically addresses *ESI* n. 88, a provision which stands in stark contrast to the rest of the document. Excerpts from the USACV commentary:

It is shocking to hear from Mother Church that physical virginity may no longer be considered an essential prerequisite for consecration to a life of virginity. The entire tradition of the Church has firmly upheld that a woman must have received the gift of virginity – that is, both material and formal (physical and spiritual) – in order to receive the consecration of virgins. In the rite of consecration to a life of virginity, a woman is consecrated as “bride of Christ,” so that she might be “an eschatological image of the world to come and the heavenly Bride of Christ” (*Praenotanda* to the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity).

Stretching from the time of the virgins of the early Church who lived out their vocations in the midst of a secular society, to the virgins of the second millennium whose consecrations were lived primarily as nuns in enclosure, and into the twentieth century with the re-opening of the vocation to women leading lives in a secular society, the Church has sought to guard the integrity of consecrated virginity and the uniquely eschatological sign it represents.

When a virgin offers her virginity to Christ, she offers her integral virginity – physical and spiritual. A woman who does not have the gift of virginity to offer may offer a complete gift of self to Christ, but she is not offering a gift of virginity. A gift of one’s integral virginity to Christ is a gift of both body and spirit, and one cannot offer to Christ what one does not have to offer.

The wording in *ESI* n. 88 is not clear, and we hope that CICLSAL will issue a clarification. Perhaps n. 88 is written as it is in order to allow for the case of a woman whose virginity has been lost against her will. If a woman has been violated against her will, most would hold that she remains eligible for consecration as a virgin. Such a case would require depth of “good judgment and insight” carried out in individual discernment with the bishop, as is discussed in n. 88. It is not such cases, however, that are most common, and if the intention of n. 88 is to address situations such as rape, it seems that the paragraph could have done so directly, without compromising the essential and natural requirement of physical virginity for the consecration of a virgin.

An indubitable sentence immediately precedes the questionable line in *ESI* n. 88: “it should be kept in mind that the call to give witness to the Church’s virginal, spousal and fruitful love for Christ is not reducible to the symbol of physical integrity.” The consecrated virgin’s witness to the Church’s virginal, spousal and fruitful love for Christ is the witness of an integral virginity of body and spirit; it is not solely a matter of physical virginity. Physical virginity is necessary, however, and is the natural basis of virginity; virginity is no longer virginity if it is only a symbolic spiritual virginity.

There is another possible interpretation of the questionable line of *ESI* n. 88. In light of the preceding sentence, and in light of other provisions in *ESI*, perhaps what is meant is that *in addition to physical virginity*, it may not be essential that a virgin has perfectly practiced the virtue of chastity in order to be admitted to consecration. We would welcome clarification from the CICLSAL on this point.

Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago is an instruction, the purpose of which is to clarify existing law and determine methods for carrying out that law (canon 34 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law). Instructions do not change existing law; *ESI* does not alter the long tradition of the Church nor the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity. The tradition and law of the Church, reflected in its liturgy in the Roman Pontifical, has long required that in order for a woman to be solemnly consecrated there must exist *carnis integritate* and a *propositum* to observe virginity perpetually. These prerequisites are necessary in the woman whose virginity will witness to the integrity of the spousal relationship between Christ and the Church.

St. Thomas Aquinas explains that while penance can recover virtue in regard to what is formal, it cannot change what is material. Thus, he said, “a person who has lost virginity by sin, recovers by repenting, not the matter of virginity, but the purpose of virginity . . . For God cannot make that which is done not to have been done” (ST, II-II, Q 152, AD, Ad 3). Saint Thomas concurs with St. Jerome’s assessment that “although God can do all things, He cannot raise up a virgin after she has fallen” (Jerome, letter #22 to Eustochium).

The *Ordo Virginum* are those who, expressing the holy resolution of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the rite of consecration to a life of virginity (canon 604). The virgin constitutes “a special eschatological image of the Heavenly Bride and of the life to come, when the Church will at last fully live her love for Christ the Bridegroom” (John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* 7). Bodily and spiritual virginity – both – are essential to the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world in order to image the relationship of the virgin Church to her virgin Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. The consecrating bishop prays during the Prayer of Consecration of a virgin: “Lord, look with favor on your handmaids. They place in your hands their resolve to live in chastity. You prompt them in this, their intention; now they give you their hearts . . . Among your many gifts you give to some the grace of virginity” (Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, 24). Please visit <https://consecratedvirgins.org/content/ecclesiae-sponsae-imago> for additional commentary and a link to *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago*.

2018 CONVOCATION REPORT

Submitted by Emily Byers

The 2018 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins was held at Morning Star Renewal Center in Miami, FL from July 6-10, 2018, with the theme “Our Lady of Charity, Model and Queen of Virgins.” There were two candidates and 29 consecrated virgins in attendance, including five visiting the United States from other countries (Australia, Austria, El Salvador, Germany, and India).

This year, we were especially grateful for the gift of the presence of Bishop Earl Boyea, Episcopal Moderator of the USACV, who opened our convocation with the celebration of Holy Mass for the Feast of St. Maria Goretti. On day two, Bishop Boyea again celebrated Holy Mass and offered two presentations on the book of Revelation. We spent Saturday afternoon outdoors at the Fairchild Tropical Botanical Gardens, where we visited a butterfly habitat and took a tram ride through the beautiful grounds. That evening we enjoyed a presentation by consecrated virgin Maria Luisa Öfele, *“The Fiat of Mary – The Fiat of a Bride of Christ,”* and our annual anniversary celebration.

Sunday’s schedule included Holy Mass and a Q&A session with Archbishop Emeritus Favarola of Miami, Eucharistic Adoration and Confession, and a time of evening recreation that included the sharing of music, poetry, dance, and other talents. Monday’s activities included Holy Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity with the rector of the shrine, Fr. Fernando Heria, followed by a surprise mariachi serenade for the Blessed Mother and our jubilarians. We also took an afternoon boat ride in Key Biscayne.

The convocation concluded on Tuesday with morning Mass with Bishop Baldacchino, Auxiliary Bishop of Miami, who delivered a beautiful homily entitled *“Consecrated Virginity: A Folly of Love.”* After Mass, we had a closing meeting and farewells for those not remaining in Miami for the optional extension. Virgins who remained for the extension days enjoyed an airboat ride through the Everglades, a day trip to Key West, and Mass at the Basilica of Saint Mary Star of the Sea.



Above: Group picture taken at the convocation



Left: Virgins celebrating landmark anniversaries relax and enjoy their celebration.

2018 Convocation

Miami, Florida



How good it was to come together with my Sisters-in-Christ in Miami, to share time, enjoy each other's presence, renew and make new acquaintances and to share our stories, so rich in God's love and grace. It was a time of great joy. The Liturgies, Mass and Divine Office, were so rich with our leader in song bringing out our best. The special celebrants were encouraging in their understanding of our vocation and their very presence. Bishop Boyea's presentations on the book of Revelation were informational and encouraging for us to continue our growth and deeper relationship with our Spouse after our first love. María Luisa Öfele's presentation on Mary's *Fiat* and ours as Brides of Christ was beautiful and led me to further reflection. The panel-led discussion on our vocation and further understanding of it was helpful as well. The talent show was unique and priceless, a moment to enjoy the time and each other while learning about some of the activities and ministries some are involved in. The business meeting was very informational regarding a plan for our future as an association, as recently presented to the rest of the members of the USACV. Our side trips were rich in time to enjoy God's gifts in nature, His beautiful creation, and each other's company. The National Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami was beautiful and the priest who celebrated Mass for us was most welcoming and supportive of our vocation. The musical surprise that followed was indeed unexpected and most appreciated. As with all things we had to leave but with rich memories and appreciation for all that was done to make our time together possible and enjoyable.

-- Sophia Winiarski --



It was a joy to be there and to share with all the other virgins and...to see the younger OCVs present. Our vocation is surely blossoming worldwide. I thought it so providential that the Instruction from the Vatican on the Ordo Virginum came out immediately before our gathering and that we had a bit of time to reflect on it together. And...I really enjoyed Bishop Boyea's comments and teaching on the Book of Revelation. Thanks to all who worked so hard to make the event so happy and enriching.

-- Jeanne McNulty --



"Home is where the heart is" this quote comes to my mind when I'm with all of my consecrated virgin sisters.

When we're together it feels like home. I'm comfortable in my own skin and even though we come from many different hometowns and countries, for that matter, our common bond is that we are all spouses of Christ and we make our home in His Sacred Heart. One day we shall reminisce with each other in His heavenly dwelling place, all of the fun things we did together on earth like trying to snap a picture of an illusive blue butterfly or hearing a Mariachi band serenade us on the shore, praising the Lord in song during Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours and learning how to chant like the angels. God has given us a great gift in this vocation and the added blessing is to be with one another and share our lives, talents and prayers together, creating a bond that will last forever. I thank you, Lord, our Spouse, for building a home away from Home for all of us!

-- Elizabeth Rizzo --



I feel so blessed to have been able to attend this year's convocation in Miami. It was such an uplifting experience, to be able to spend time with my sisters in Christ. The Masses and Churches that we visited were so beautiful! Fun outings together and the talks were both engaging and enlightening. Thank you, USACV!

-- Virginia Meyer --



It was truly a great joy to be able to attend the 2018 convocation in Miami. Meeting and visiting with other virgins from around the country helped me to realize that I am in fact surrounded by other like-minded women even if I at times feel a bit isolated within my own diocese. What I especially enjoyed were the opportunities to go sight-seeing in the different locations near Miami and share that experience with other virgins. This gave me an opportunity to get to know them on a different level which was a rewarding experience. We also had an international flair to the convocation since virgins from Germany, Austria, Australia, and El Salvador came to share their knowledge and richness of their culture with us. It and El Salvador came to share their knowledge and richness of their culture with us. It was an experience I will remember for many years to come!

-- Francesca Riddick --





The convocation was a grace filled time to pray with and meet our sisters in Christ. Bishop Boyea was a wonderful and inspiring addition to the days together. A big thank you to all who put this together for us!

-- Catherine Richie --



It was a blessing and a joy to participate at the convocation in Miami with consecrated virgins and candidates coming from different parts of the world. Once more I had the experience that we're deeply united in love to Our Lady and to Jesus Christ, our Bridegroom. I had the opportunity to participate several times at different convocations and I always felt like "coming back home" when we meet in friendly conversations, in prayer, and sharing visits in the beauty of nature. It's encouraging to meet consecrated virgins working and living their vocation in so many different fields! It's always inspiring me for my own life.

-- María Luisa Öfele --

It was a special grace to participate in the Convocation in Miami. I thoroughly enjoyed sharing some time of fellowship and prayer with other consecrated virgins. It was a very blessed time to celebrate our vocation. I constantly marvel at the beauty of being mystically espoused to Christ Jesus, our beloved Lord. Thank you for the memorable time we had together. Let us continue to be united in prayer.

-- Maria Luisa Meza --

Thank you for the wonderful experience of joining you all for the Convocation of 2018. Each time I join you all I am amazed at the growth and development of understanding, knowledge and depth of appreciation and expression of our vocation. This truly invigorates me. // This time there was an awareness of a generational change with a few young ones coming along and giving a fresh appreciation of the grace of their call with some of us older ones realising this moving on was apparent. Praying together and being together there is an awareness of a group spirit and power where the Holy Spirit is obviously present in each of us and in the group: almost the Acts of the Apostles incarnated with all united in prayer with Mary. There is a power and spirit alive within us, we seem to fit together so well while united and enriched in our differences.

// The time together in leisure events was a great time of relaxation and fun for the whole person of each of us enjoying our life together. Although living far apart for some there is a common bond when we come together and we all seem to gel so easily and as was expressed all in love with the one spouse but not jealous of the others! There is a glorious manifestation of a common bond of our one vocation. This time with the celebrations of the jubilees and the joining with the group of some older women from the diocese of Miami there was evident the special bond of our vocation in the joy of being with sisters in the Lord. // I thank you for the wonderful work of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins and I look forward to the next stage of the development of this Association. With five international women present the Universal Church was certainly present. Thanks Magalis for sharing Miami with us, it is truly beautiful and a wonderful paradise. The number of churches having perpetual adoration is certainly amazing and a great blessing for the diocese, the country and the Church at large. I go back to Australia renewed in the grace of my vocation and truly invigorated in my love of the Catholic Church my mother which is so manifestly strong in this country, while feeling so blessed to be able to share in this experience and be part of such a group of women of the Lord, our Spouse.

-- Pauline Garland --



Report on the 2018 National Information Conference

by Mary Kay Lacke and Theresa Marshall

God blessed with abundant grace the 2018 National Information Conference, held from July 31 to August 3 at the St. Francis Retreat and Conference Center in DeWitt, Michigan.

Twenty-six women attended the conference, coming from east, west, north and south, each person seeking to know more about the vocation. Also attending the conference was a priest who is a spiritual director for three of the attendees and who gave generously of his time to help with the liturgical services that are part of the Conference.

Team members for the Conference were Bishop Boyea, Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Karen Bussey, Mary Kay Lacke, Theresa Marshall, and Judith Stegman.

On Wednesday, Bishop Boyea presented a two-part teaching on “Consecrated Virginity in Scripture and History.” He also celebrated the Mass with the conference participants, as well as made himself available for private conferences with the participants. The Conference team and the participants were so grateful for the Bishop’s generosity of time and solicitude for the vocation.

Other topics covered by team members during the conference included: the fundamentals of the vocation to consecrated virginity; a study of the Rite of Consecration; Our Lady as the model for consecrated virginity; love and virginity; living in the world; “Keeping My Love Aflame”; a description of the discernment process for the vocation; essential points for discernment; and the integral chastity required for the vocation in the unchanging tradition of the Church.

The Information Conference, sponsored by the USACV, is an annual event, serving the vocation of consecrated virginity. The 2019 conference is again planned for DeWitt.



Upcoming U. S. Consecrations

September 14, 2018, Consecration of Jackie Hintze, 1:00 pm at St. Hubert Catholic Community, Chanhassen, Minnesota, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

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

September 15, 2018, Feast Day of Our Lady of Sorrows, Consecration of Alicia Renee Pousson, 10:00 am at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette, Louisiana, at the hands of the Most Reverend J. Douglas Deshotel, Bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette. All are invited. If you plan to attend, please contact Emily Byers at emily.claire.byers@gmail.com for additional details.

October 7, 2018, Consecration of Marge Giesken at the hands of the Most Reverend David John Walkowiak, Bishop of Grand Rapids. All are warmly invited. The consecration will take place during the 11:00 am Mass at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, 2750 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49546.

October 7, 2018, Consecration of Patty-Jo Mantel, 2:00 pm at All Saints Catholic Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.



Above: Bishop Michael Sheridan, Diocese of Colorado Springs, consecrates Lisa Marie Hunt.



Above: Susan Leilani Spiegelberg poses with Bishop Hebda and clergy.

Consecration Announcements

United States:

June 8, 2018 Susan Leilani Spiegelberg, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, at the hands of The Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda.

July 16, 2018 Lisa Marie Hunt, Diocese of Colorado Springs, at the hands of The Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan.



Consecrated Virginity Defined

By Diane Christine Farr

In this reflection we will examine what makes consecrated virginity unique among women's vocations in the Church. We must first emphasize the Church's universal call to holiness, which includes all vocations. Consecrated virginity is more than a desire to live a chaste life. It is highly praiseworthy if a woman, who is not a virgin, desires to dedicate her chastity to Christ for the rest of her life. This may be lived out in a private vow. Consecrated virginity in its nature is distinct from a vow or promise of chastity. Its practice predates religious orders in the Church.

The introduction to the Rite of Consecration states, "The custom of consecrating women to a life of virginity flourished even in the early Church. It led to the formation of a solemn rite constituting the candidate a sacred person, a surpassing sign of the Church's love for Christ, and an eschatological image of the world to come and the glory of the heavenly bride of Christ. In the Rite of Consecration, the Church reveals its love of virginity, begs God's grace on those who are consecrated, and prays with fervor for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit."

We understand this life of virginity, to which the rite refers, to be a precious spiritual and physical gift that has been preserved for Christ alone. This implies that one has never made the choice to give up one's bodily integrity to another person. True virginity inspired by the Holy Spirit is a grace lived out at every level of one's being. Indeed, it involves the whole person, body and soul, united in a profound love for the heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus. Thus, in order to be consecrated, actual virginity of one's body must be present. To be consecrated means to be set apart, to be made holy. So, when virginity is consecrated it becomes the holy domain of God alone. This is a profound mystery that is little understood and must be viewed with great reverence.

The consecrated virgin rejoices that she is permitted to share in this grace of perpetual virginity, which is perfectly modeled for her in the life of Mary, Mother of God and Queen of Virgins. It is through the work of Divine Grace that a woman seeks consecration and has made a free choice to know no other spouse than her Divine Lord. Faithful to the graces of her consecration, the virgin will ever seek to grow in a deeper understanding of her call to virginal love.

In the prayer of consecration we read, "Among your many gifts you give to some the grace of virginity." It is this grace of virginity in the heart of the virgin that enables her to see her virginity of both body and soul to be in communion with Christ. Her virginal state is an anticipation of the Resurrection. It is a manifestation of God's Will for her. It is infinite love, both strong and tender that inundates the heart of the virgin bride of Christ, drawing her into the intimacy of the divine nuptials. She appreciates the beauty of this exquisite flower of holy virginity because she recognizes that it has its source in the radiant and unfathomable beauty of her beloved Jesus. She must never be filled with a spirit of pride or self-importance, but must always radiate the presence of her compassionate Lord in the world. Our Lord has the right to choose virgins, whom He has kept for Himself alone, and they in turn must give first place to His honor and glory with grateful hearts full of adoration and praise. It is with humility and prudence that the consecrated virgin guards the treasure of her vocation. If she is attentive, she will become well acquainted with the joys and sorrows of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. This heart will be her constant abode. It is this loving Heart, so pure and gentle, that she must reveal to everyone. May God in His infinite mercy, be known and loved.

Consecration Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2018 are invited to submit an anniversary reflection for *The Lamp*. These anniversary reflections are popular among our readers as they convey a personal look at life lived as a bride of Christ in the *Ordo virginum*. We continue 2018 reflections with the following:

Anniversary Reflections: 20 Years

Barbara Verry, Diocese of Trenton (NJ), consecrated September 4, 1998

I first learned about the Rite in the late 1970s from 2 articles written by a Dominican sister in a Catholic newspaper. It interested me although I was still thinking about monastic life. After a long vocation retreat, the Sisters told me that, although they believed I had a contemplative vocation, it was not one for a cloister. The Lord showed me they were right since one circumstance after another blocked any chance for a monastic life. On August 28, 1988, I became a professed Secular Augustinian Recollect. That same night, I made a private vow of virginity to Jesus. After my father died unexpectedly, I had to be there to take care of my mother. I discussed the possibility of consecrated life with my spiritual director however he advised me to wait to make sure I was over the death of my father. Then my mother died and I had to wait longer. Being the “old-fashioned” sort, I approached my pastor for permission to approach my Bishop. He arranged for me to study the celibate life under a Redemptoristine nun whose monastery was in my town. I only met with her a few times since, as she said, I’d been living the life for many years. So, on September 4, 1998, Bishop James Timlin of the Scranton Diocese, consecrated me to the Life of Virginity Lived in the World. I’d been living it for 15 years but now I had the blessing of the Church and the grace of the Holy Spirit to back me. Unfortunately, my mother didn’t live to see the day but my Godparents were there. And I had a candle, one of those old-fashioned church candles that had been handed down from my grandmother to me. It was her family’s

tradition to light it and say the Rosary during thunderstorms. Its light flickered from the altar as I placed my hands in the hands of my Bishop and pledged my life to the Spouse of my Heart. Today, my vocation is lived in helping my sister care for her six grandchildren, dealing with a disability that gives me chronic pain that I “nail to the Cross,” thus joining it to the suffering of Jesus, and participation in prayer shawl ministry. I pray daily for priests and married couples, believing that my vocation is meant to be a bridge between them. I pray for those struggling with the suffering that life brings them. And every day I remember that Jesus gave His life for me. How can I do less for Him?

Anniversary Reflections: 15 Years

Catherine Shoemaker, Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown (PA), consecrated June 28, 2003

The Allegheny plateau of west central Pennsylvania, which had been evangelized by the Servant of God Demetrius Gallitzin, was a major factor in discovering my vocation and has been the providential space for living it. As a result of his efforts the area was so heavily Catholic that there was never any question about parochial school children riding the public school busses. (The bus contractor’s daughter was in my class in St. Benedict’s school!) Growing up on a farm there gave me the opportunity to spend long days in beautiful surroundings, keeping a small flock of sheep and reading many good books. On quiet days I could hear the bells of the Carmelite monastery half a dozen miles away. My career as a farm animal veterinarian in the same area entailed a mixture of rewarding work, many hours in my “mobile solitude” and access to small Catholic churches in practically every town & village along my way. Hindsight shows me that all this was an invitation to follow the Heavenly Lamb in a public way.

After my consecration in 2003, I continued my veterinary practice. In that same period, I became the default coordinator of Catholic services at our county prison, and for a couple of those years, primary

caretaker for my mother. All of this was held together by Mass and the Office, because it was a bit crazy at times.

I closed my practice at the end of 2016, thinking I would continue with the prison apostolate and do a lot of gardening. Not long after I retired, I realized I was being called to move into new surroundings and discern a new path. The new digs turned out to be a little old house in a small town. The new path started with an expanded prison ministry and renovating that 1911 coal miner's house instead of gardening. Like both those activities, it is still a work in progress.

***Marjorie Uerling, Diocese of Omaha (NE),
consecrated April 24, 2003***

My journey began when I was eight years old. During a 40 Hours Devotion, I had a powerful experience of the love of God. It changed my life forever. It left me with the lasting conviction that nothing made any sense but to give my life to God. I committed to doing that.

As I thought about how to give my life to God, the only way I knew was to enter the convent. I committed to doing this after high school which I did. I loved the first two years. This was for the most part prayer, learning, and work and play. This was exactly what I wanted. However, I had joined an active order and after the first two years I was sent back into the world for an education and teaching. I did not love this as much. Perhaps I should have entered a contemplative order. I continued anyway, because I did want to give my life to God.

However, in time it was too difficult, and I asked for and received a leave of absence and finally a release from my vows. I continued to search for a way to give my life to God for about ten years while I continued teaching.

At that time, I came in contact with a wonderful and highly qualified spiritual director and spiritual guide. After a couple of years, he told me about Consecrated Virginity. I looked into this thoroughly, mostly through writings on the USACV website. I felt this was the perfect fit. This is my fifteenth anniversary. After retiring in 2007 and obtaining permission to have the Blessed Sacrament in my home, it was perfect.

However, I think my journey is not finished. I have become aware of what is called "The gift of living in the Divine Will." This is what we pray for in the Our Father, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What it involves is amazing, encouraging, and full of hope. I cannot stop reading about it, praying about it, talking about it and desiring it. It is the ultimate way to give one's life to God, and, I believe, the fulfillment of Consecrated Virginity. It is also the fulfillment of the Redemption--when God's Kingdom is here and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven-- a return to Eden.

This was revealed to Servant of God Luisa Peccarreta who died in 1947. She was instructed to write down everything that Jesus revealed to her which amounted to 36 volumes of diaries, and many other writings. It is beautiful as anything Jesus revealed would be. Most of her writings have received the imprimatur and her cause for canonization is moving forward. Her last spiritual director who worked to publicize her works and obtained the imprimaturs for them is already a canonized saint.

If you want to know more, there are books of summaries of her writings by Frank M Rega, OSF, or if you are a more scholarly type, Rev Joseph Iannuzzi wrote his doctoral thesis on The Gift of Living in the Divine Will as revealed to Luisa Peccarreta. And many, many things are on the internet about her and the things she wrote. There are already several religious orders devoted to Living in the Divine Will. I believe to receive this gift of living



in the divine will would be the ultimate fulfillment of my desire to give my life to God.

Anniversary Reflections: 5 Years

Maria Torres-Arroyo of the Archdiocese of San Juan in Puerto Rico, consecrated September 17, 2013

Each time that I reflect on my vocation as Jesus' spouse, I recall that all that I do in life is a means to get closer to Christ. I never saw the *Ordo Virginum* as a goal, but as a beginning, or better yet, as a continuous walk, but this time the path becomes narrower. It is true that I waited many years to be consecrated, and that I searched and searched, here and there, always living the virginal and spousal spirituality, even before I knew of the *Ordo Virginum*. Once I became consecrated, many told me: "at last, you achieved it." The day of my consecration, I felt great peace and overwhelming happiness, almost like being home after a long journey.

Nevertheless, I always knew that I was on a new path, perhaps more difficult than that which I had travelled. Consecrated Virgins are distinguished by the happiness of the newlywed who is in love and hopeful. I am not the exception, but I cannot avoid associating my consecration with the cross of my Lord. Two and a half months after my consecration, my brother died after being hit by a truck which jumped onto the sidewalk, after a young woman driver went through a red light. Today I realize that without this consecration, I could not have withstood all that we had to live through, myself and my parents (grief, legal issues, corruption, injustice). It is somewhat difficult to explain but my prayers as a consecrated virgin, for my brother, while he was dying, confirm this. Everything has its reasons, and everything happens in its precise moment.

It is particularly difficult to live this vocation in my country. This is something I already knew, and it did not take me by surprise: people who do not know or understand this way of consecrated life, the lack of a place -secure, inexpensive, and nearby- to undertake spiritual exercises or silent retreats, the lack of

consecrated virgins with whom to share experiences, among other factors. But not everything is negative. In truth, the consecrated woman is sufficiently mature to live her vocation fully and program her life according to the will of the Spouse. The Holy Spirit leads us through a life of sacraments and daily prayer. Besides, I must admit, with great heartfelt appreciation, that from the day of my consecration, I acquired new sisters, beginning with the bridesmaids of my consecration (Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman), two Consecrated Virgins who came to Puerto Rico to share such an important moment with me. I really feel close to all my consecrated sisters in the whole world.

Thanks to the internet, I realize that, although each one is different and unique, at the same time we have many things in common. It is a beautiful thing to know and it allows us to realize, in our consecration, a true form of consecrated life in the Church. Our vocation and charisma are real. I have also acquired sisters in some religious institutes, such as the Servants of Mary, and I have kept sisters in institutes completely devoted to contemplation. I especially thank and ask for blessings for two priests who have helped me with spiritual direction. I cannot forget my parish priest and my fellow parishioners. They have always taken my consecration and vocation very seriously, allowing me to exercise spiritual motherhood through my prayers, counseling, conferences, reflections, and testimony. At the same time, they are with me with their prayers and love. I cannot forget my parents, who together with me, make up a small community of love and prayer, despite our faults. Above all, thank you to our Lord-Spouse, Jesus Christ, and his Most Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary. Lastly, I ask for prayers for my family, for myself and my apostolate as a university educator, and for the reconstruction of Puerto Rico after hurricane Maria.

Theresa Prosser, Archdiocese of St. Louis

As my 5-year anniversary approaches, it is a special time to reflect and give thanks for His many blessings. One of the strange paradoxes is that the consecration did not change many of the externals of my life. I was still a daughter of an elderly mother, a

sister, friend, a college professor, and quilter. I continued my daily routine of work, caregiving, and prayer. But inside, everything changed. As St. Paul says, the life I live now is not my own. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loves me and gave Himself for me. I belonged to Him. My focus is Him and I go where I am sent.

I relied on Him heavily during my Mother's last illness. What were the right decisions? Was I doing the right thing? He closed the expected doors of a Carmelite assisted living facility and to a nursing home run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Martyr St. George. He arranged the happy death, I remembered her and my Dad had been praying for since my childhood. She was surrounded by the nuns and my sister in prayer. As I was on pilgrimage in the Holy Land when she died, I had a memorial Mass said by Archbishop Naumann in the Holy Sepulcher with all of my fellow pilgrims praying for her soul. How special is that!

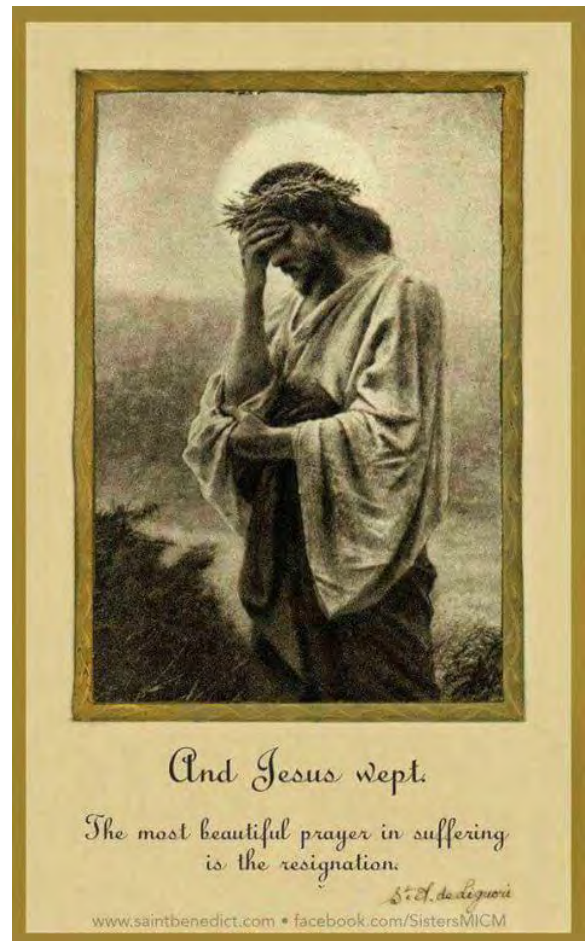
As I approach retirement age, the changes continue. I don't know to what the Lord will call me in this next phase of my life. Another blessing is a wonderful spiritual director to help me discern as I walk by faith and not by sight.

Life Corner

Florence Sundberg

And Jesus weeps! He weeps the tears of all humanity, tears which will cleanse and purify His shepherds and all the sons and daughters of His Church. And the Church weeps with Him and so do we all. He is our beloved Spouse and we must hold His light high so that all that needs to be revealed will be revealed and all that needs to be made whole, may be made whole and holy. We weep and we pray with Jesus that all may recognize and acknowledge the unique sacredness of each and every human life from conception until natural death, and that all are worthy of respect and care, especially from those who hold the

place of Christ in the Church and in our lives. Let us offer fervent prayers for bishops and priests and, in a particular way, for the Vicar of Christ, Pope Francis.



By Joyce Stolberg

What does the daily life of a consecrated virgin look like? Unless retired, she likely has a regular job or a business: that may be in teaching, health care, cooking and caring for others, military, public or commercial service, or diocesan administration --- anywhere that she can best use her time and talents to build up and serve the whole people of God. She may offer her time and talents in some type of volunteer service. The nature of her service may evolve throughout her lifetime. She may, alternatively, be bearing a special share in the sufferings of Christ through illness or disability. For all consecrated virgins, theirs is a service of intercessory prayer for the needs of God's people. If she is directly serving the Church community in some way, she may be known as a consecrated virgin to her colleagues; otherwise she is likely viewed as a single person. The only visible sign of her consecration is the ring on her finger.

Yet, woven through her life, her day, her service is the spirit of prayer, the awareness of the presence of God, the expression of a Christlike attitude, and a spiritual motherhood toward all whom she encounters. Her primary responsibility is to live a deep, genuine spiritual life. Her whole life is lived in response to the special love of God.

At the origin of the religious consecration there is a call of God for which there is no explanation apart from the love which he bears for the person whom he calls. This love is absolutely gratuitous, personal, and unique. It embraces the person to the extent that one no longer pertains to oneself, but to Christ. (19 Cf. *1 Cor* 6:19) It thus reflects the character of an alliance. The glance which Jesus turned towards the rich young man has this characteristic: "Looking on him, he loved him" (*Mk* 10:21). (*Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes* Feb 2, 1990 #8)

What changes when a virgin is consecrated? Many virgins witness, "Not much --- and everything!" Not much changes externally; she still goes to the same work venue, lives in the same home, manages the same budget, and conducts her life in the usual manner. She still strives to observe the Sixth Commandment, and all the other commandments with the help of God's grace, as all Christians must do. Externally, she doesn't leave all things to enter a new place and state of life in the way those entering convent life do. Yet internally, she is very aware that she is married to Jesus Christ, the King of kings; she no longer lives for herself, but Christ is very much alive in her. That awareness fills her spiritual life and her surrender to Christ spills over into her daily interactions with others. This makes her the leaven that raises the dough of the world; she can never again be just part of the lump. It has often been said that a saint is someone who does the same things as everyone else does, but a little better and for an entirely different reason. The same might be said of a consecrated virgin, who is striving to become a saint.





The Revised 1970 Roman Rite for the Consecration of a Virgin Living in the World

Clockwise from upper right: The virgin enters with the clergy, accompanied by two attendants. Propositum: she affirms her resolution to remain a virgin for life. She prostrates as the congregation sings the litany of the saints. Bishop recites the prayer of Consecration, imploring the aid of the Holy Spirit upon her. She is given the insignia, the signs of her office; first (not pictured) the veil, then the ring, then the book of the prayers of the Office. Then the virgin is seated for Mass in the sanctuary with the clergy, signifying her new, exalted status.



Photos by Joyce Stolberg



SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV
www.consecratedvirgins.org

**United States Association
of Consecrated Virgins**

**228 N. Walnut St.
Lansing, MI 48933**

Email:

info@consecratedvirgins.org

President@consecratedvirgins.org

Fax: 253-270-5507

www.consecratedvirgins.org