

The Lamp



United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

February 2, 2014
The Presentation of the Lord

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINS:

Volume 19, Issue 1

February 2, 2014 The Presentation of the Lord

Pope Francis (*Open Mind, Faithful Heart*, p. 112) commenting on this feast day notes: "There is radiance in the temple because the Light is entering into it: 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel' (Luke 2:32)."

Of course, he was speaking of Christ being presented into the Temple in Jerusalem. However, it seems to me that we should think of this scene in terms of Jesus being presented to each of you, as his consecrated spouse. You, each of you, as a temple of the Holy Spirit, are filled with the radiance of the Light, of Jesus.

First of all, this means that Jesus, your spouse, has actually become a light within you. It is, of course, his light. Nonetheless, it is spousally yours. That light is like a beam shining into the four corners of your life, such that wherever there was or is darkness, such darkness cannot defeat that light. This is both a fact and a challenge. It is a fact, in that it is not something you have to create. It is a challenge, in that his light keeps searching you and desires nothing more than to eliminate all darkness.

This scene, however, also emphasizes that this light is for the gentiles and for the people Israel. To be consecrated is an act of the Church for the Church. That light of Christ, that radiance in you, his temple, is meant to cast aside the darkness of our world, both that world out there and the world within the community of the Church.

My sisters, happy feast day! You are the Light of Christ. Let him shine!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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Special Points of Interest:

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Francisco de B. Vizmanos, SJ, in his study, *The Christian Virgins of the Early Church* (1947) explores the history of the use of the veil in the Rite of Consecration.

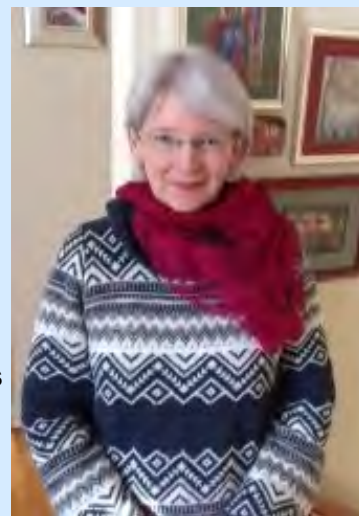
The virgins of the ancient Church used the veil that was a part of their daily dress, but the meaning of the use of the veil during the Rite of Consecration stemmed from its use as a marriage symbol for centuries, even in pagan culture. The use of the veil was certainly not exclusive to the virgins of Christ in the early Church. Ladies of the Roman Republic wore the veil as a sign of their married status, and Tertulian reported that the veil was common in Northern regions of Africa. For this reason, Roman society in the early Church was not surprised to see the adoption of the veil by Christian virgins, for the veil was already well established as sign of marriage. Tertulian noted that the use of the veil was a protection for the virgin from the advances of pagan men, who, seeing the veil, respected the fact that the virgin was married.

Vizmanos quotes from a letter attributed to Saint Jerome, “Because it is the same Church authority that enables us to call the virgins spouse of Christ as the veil is imposed, it is demonstrated precisely that those who have renounced carnal links can even better boast of spiritual marriage. For the love of God, they have despised all earthly marriage and worthily unite with Christ by the mystical bond of marriage.” It is this sense of a mystical binding, a mystical betrothal, to Christ that was represented by the veil. The veil was seen in ancient Greek and Roman culture as so symbolic of marriage that even the act of covering (*obnubere*, to cover) came to name the marriage (*nubere* or *nuptiae*). Vizmanos points to the meaning of the marital veil in pre-Christian days as being a symbol of the newly wedded woman being veiled as she crossed the threshold of her new home and was initiated into the domestic worship practiced by her husband. The link to the mystical marriage of virgins is sublime. The new bride of Christ is veiled as she enters the presence of her divine Spouse in worship, in a wholly new way.



Vizmanos reports that the bridal veil came to be named *flammeus* (Latin for flaming or fiery) because it was the ordinary garment worn by women of the Flamen Dialis, the high priest of Jupiter, who were not permitted to divorce. This word, *flammeus*, was chosen by the Fathers of the Church to designate the virginal veil that was imposed on young consecrated virgins. Its flaming color also indicated a burning love for Christ.

Vizmanos notes that in introducing the rite of veiling into the ceremonial for the consecration of virgins, the Church was quite consciously granting to virgins the character of brides of Christ “by a symbolism which, in addition to containing the representation of marriage, included in its historical origin a double nuance of consecrated life and indissoluble firmness. We are left to hear voices from the depths of the catacombs, dating back at least to the year 250AD, that testify to the existence of this ceremony of virginal veiling. After these memories, we are assured of the words spoken by the pontiffs in later times as they impose the veil upon virgins, ‘Receive the sacred veil as a sign of having despised the world and having given yourself forever to Christ as his humble and true spouse, with all the ardor of your heart...’”(Vizmanoz, 161).



We recently received an email from a consecrated virgin in Mexico saying that some virgins there have discussed among themselves the possibility of wearing an “eternity veil” during Mass as a special sign of our consecration. She said that one of the virgins even thought that she would like to use it as a scarf, the rest of the day, to remind herself of her consecration. They like the idea of choosing a distinctive type of veil for virgins, and even the name “eternity veil” seems appropriate. She sent along an article about the use of the *flammeum* in the early Church and she sent a link to a website that features eternity veils. Thinking it was interesting, I ordered one of the red eternity veils from the website, and I thought I would share the photos with you all. What do you think?

Council News

Current council members and officers are:

Judith M. Stegman, President, 2013 – 2015; Diocese of Lansing

Magalis Aguilera, Member-at-large, 2013 – 2015 (appointed **Vice-President** thru 2015); Archdiocese of Miami

Margaret Flipp, Treasurer, 2014-2016, Archdiocese of San Francisco

Mary Kay Lacke, Member-at-large, 2014-2016 (appointed **Secretary** through 2015) Diocese of Steubenville

Florence Sundberg, Member-at-large, 2012-2014, Archdiocese of Hartford

Upcoming events:

2014 National Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins

July 28-August 1, 2014

Malvern Retreat House

Malvern, PA

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

See announcement for more information; registration form to be available in May on USACV website.

2014 National Information Conference

August 5-August 8, 2014

Malvern Retreat House

Malvern, PA

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

See enclosed flyer; also available on USACV website.



Announcements:

2014 Membership Drive: Watch your in boxes and mail for 2014 USACV membership announcements, to be sent in February. As our vice-president, **Magalis Aguilera** is responsible for membership renewals and updates for consecrated virgins and friends of the association. It is an important time of year for the USACV and we count on your support! Thank you and may the Lord Jesus, Spouse of the virgin Church, guard you and keep you.

Hosting Future Convocations: Consecrated virgins are reminded that they are welcome to submit proposals to host a convocation in their locality, following the guidelines prepared last year. These guidelines are available on the USACV website or from **Judith Stegman**. The 2014 convocation will be in Philadelphia. The 2015 convocation will be held in Mundelein (Archdiocese of Chicago), and is tentatively scheduled for August 12 to August 16, 2015. Proposals to host the 2016 convocation are due December 1, 2014.

Upcoming issues of The Lamp:

May 31, 2014 Feast of the Visitation

September 8, 2014 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 12, 2014 Our Lady of Guadalupe

February 2, 2015 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

Information Conference 2014 Announcement:

Included with this issue is the flyer advertising the 2014 USACV Information Conference to be held Aug.5-8, 2014, at Malvern Retreat House in Malvern, Pennsylvania (Archdiocese of Philadelphia).

Please encourage anyone whom you know is looking into the vocation of consecrated virginity to attend this conference. It has been a blessing to so many people in the past.

Consecrated virgins: if you yourself have never been to an Information Conference, consider attending for your own personal enrichment.

You will notice on page one who makes up the target audience. There may be someone you know in that list who would appreciate a personal invitation from you. Thanks for any way you can spread the word!

-Mary Kay Lacke

Consecration Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins celebrating significant anniversaries are invited to offer a reflection on their years of living as a consecrated virgin. We're pleased to offer a few stories in this issue of "The Lamp," and will offer more in future issues.

5 Years:

Diane Zervos, Archdiocese of Chicago, consecrated June 28, 2008

Years ago, I was with some Carmelites out West for a Congress in New Mexico. A Carmelite woman must have given me the book by the Little Flower, *The Story of a Soul*, as it was signed with this note: May St. Therese send you one of her choicest roses. I was thinking of this as I reflected on these past five years. Could the gift of consecrated virginity be one of her choicest roses? When I pulled the book out of my bookcase recently to reread what she wrote, I saw the woman's name was Cecilia. I have been praying to St. Cecilia for some time about playing heavenly music. I wear her medal as a woman on a pilgrimage gave it to me – she just wanted to play for the glory of God. We now have a group of five adults called "Heavenly Strings." We're all at different levels, but enjoy playing together. It seems that the saints and consecrated virgins are helping us along the way, in ways we never could have planned ourselves.

For my anniversary reflection, I would like to offer this poem by St. John of the Cross. I think other consecrated virgins might also enjoy reading it. I was reading a commentary on St. John of the Cross that noted that while he speaks of desolations and spiritual suffering, the words "fire of love" appear more times than "dark night." With deeper meditation on John's poetry, one discovers that "he gives us the gifts of dark night, but he's really the poet of light and fire" (Keith Egan, lecture given at University of Chicago, November 14, 2013). I think of my past five years as a pearl of great price, and there are many facets to this pearl – joys and sorrows, anxieties and the trials of life. It is as Mother Teresa said about not forgetting the Resurrection; it doesn't end with the Cross. Jesus is Risen!!

The Dark Night - by St. John of the Cross

*One dark night,
fired with love's urgent longings
- ah, the sheer grace! -
I went out unseen,
my house being now all stilled.*

*In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised,
- ah, the sheer grace! -
in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.*

*On that glad night
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything
with no other light or guide
than the One that burned in my heart.*

*This guided me
more surely than the light of noon
to where he was awaiting me
- him I knew so well -
there in a place where no one appeared.*

*O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
the Lover with his beloved,
transforming the Beloved into his Lover.*

*Upon my flowering breast,
which I kept wholly for him alone,
there he lay sleeping,
and I caressing him
there in a breeze from the fanning cedars.*

*When the breeze blew from the turret,
as I parted his hair,
it wounded my neck
with its gentle hand,
suspending all my senses.*

*I abandoned and forgot myself,
laying my face on my Beloved;
all things ceased; I went out from myself,
leaving my cares
forgotten among the lilies.*

Save the Date: July 28-August 1, 2014

**2014 United States Convocation of
Consecrated Virgins**

Malvern, Pennsylvania

Our Convocation will be held this year, for the first time in many years, on the east coast. All consecrated virgins are invited to attend. Also invited are those who are accepted by their Bishop as Candidates for the Consecration if they have attended a previous Information Conference.

We will be staying at the McShain-Horstmann Family Life Center at Malvern Retreat House, which is America's oldest and largest retreat house. The Family Life Center is located on 125 wooded acres, about 25 miles from Philadelphia. It is a one-story facility with 50 air-conditioned rooms, each with a private bath. Four rooms are fitted for wheelchair accommodation and contain one double bed. The Family Life Center includes a magnificent Chapel/Conference Room, two smaller Conference Rooms, a private dining room, snack room and a reading room. There is a meditation garden, which has a small pond, a cedar gazebo, cedar benches and a large cedar tree cross providing a peaceful setting for private prayer. The Stations of the Cross path is situated to the side of the building wrapping around wooded pathways.



Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing Michigan and Episcopal Moderator of the USACV and USACV Council Members, **Judith Stegman**, **Magalis Aquilera** and **Mary Kay Lacke** will present this year's theme, "Who is the Consecrated Virgin Living in the World," highlighting topics from previous convocations and information conferences and focusing on two questions: "Who is the consecrated virgin?" and "How does she witness to chaste and fruitful love in this world?" Those attending will have an opportunity to participate in in-depth discussion on questions related to the theme.



An afternoon reception, hosted by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, will include a presentation by USACV Council President, **Judith Stegman**, and an opportunity for representatives of the archdiocese and nearby dioceses to meet with consecrated virgins and learn how we live out our vocation in the world. A visit to the nearby Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia, in Philadelphia, is also being planned. Time will be reserved to explore the beautiful grounds of the Retreat House, for prayer and reflection, and for fellowship. We will come together for Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer, and for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass each day – to be celebrated by **Archbishop Chaput**, at Malvern, on Wednesday, July 30. More details will be available as planning progresses; consecrated virgins should also refer to Monday Morning Mail for updates. If you have an idea for a table display at the reception and/or can help with the displays or in any way, your input and assistance will be most welcome. **Anne Gishpert** is serving as Convocation Coordinator and will be available to assist with the displays, facility and room accommodations and transportation issues.

We look forward to greeting those who will be attending the convocation for the first time, renewing relationships formed at previous convocations and, especially, celebrating with our newly consecrated virgins and those marking special anniversaries this year. - **Carolyn Blaszczyk**, 2014 Convocation Host Team Leader, with Planning Team members: **Florence Sundberg** and **Anne Gishpert**

from the President's journal . . .

Praised be Jesus Christ! The blessing of these bitter cold, snowy days is the accompanying quiet – it seems a natural time for added prayer and phone calls to family and friends, even as we anticipate Lent and the first buds of spring. These days since our last issue of *The Lamp* have been full as we've progressed with planning for the 2014 Convocation and with the details of planning for the Second Volume of our *Ordo Virginum* series, a volume on discernment and formation for the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world.

In regard to the 2014 Convocation – be sure to take a look at the article in this issue of *The Lamp* to get a feel for the many plans Carolyn, Florence, and Anne have underway. Planning for the Information Conference next summer is also well underway, under the watchful eyes of **Mary Kay Lacke** and **Theresa Marshall**. Please do spread the news about the Information Conference to anyone you think may have an interest.

On a more personal note, my classes at Catholic Distance University this term are in Church History and Phenomenology, and I continue to find the study both enriching and challenging. It is a great blessing to be able to have this opportunity to deepen in an understanding of the rich tradition of our faith.

Judith Stegman

Consecration Announcements:

United States:

December 28, 2013, **Marie Beccaloni**, Archdiocese of Chicago, at the hands of His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, OMI. →

February 2, 2014, **Karen Lombardi**, Archdiocese of Kansas City, at the hands of His Excellency Joseph Naumann.



France:

March 3, 2013, **Brigitte Maurice**, Archdiocese of Avignon.

April 20, 2013, **Annick Lequien**, Diocese of Toulon.

November 3, 2013, **Anna Maciko**, Archdiocese of Paris.

December 8, 2013, **Christinne Durret**, in the parish of St. Therese in Lausanne.

Mexico:



December 22, 2013, **Ana Martinez** and three others, Diocese of Guadalajara, at the hands of His Eminence Jose Francisco Robles Ortega.



Jennie Lucero, consecrated in the United States in December. *See last issue for details.*

Reflection on the Feast of the Presentation – **Mary Kay Lacke**:

Ever since the 2013 USACV Convocation, I have been drawn into a deeper and more profound relationship with Our Blessed Mother. As I approach the Feast day of the Presentation, my attention is riveted on her and her response to Simon's inspiration of the Holy Spirit.



At the moment of his prophecy, Our Lady was embraced anew by the strength of the Holy Spirit and drawn into greater intimacy with Him and her Divine Son. Though a sword would pierce her heart, yet she trusted in God's Divine Mercy and surrendered her life and her Child anew to Him. As daughters of Mary and daughters of the Church, through our consecration as virgins living in the world, we are empowered with that same grace of surrender of our life to God and that same trust in His Divine Mercy as we bear Christ into the world.

Consecration Anniversary Reflections

10 Years:

Judith Hervieux, Diocese of Albany, consecrated November 16, 2003

I grew up in a wonderful Catholic family that recited the rosary every night. God blessed me by giving me an identical twin sister and Carol and I have always been fully bonded in all that we do. She is the sunshine of my life. My one desire, since I was a child, was to become a religious. Since I was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, I decided to enter this community. I loved religious life as well as teaching school. Due to serious medical issues when I was thirty years old, I needed to leave the community for a period of time. After two years, I was well and ready to return.

God, however, had other plans for me. My father had a severe stroke which left him with Parkinson Disease, and since my mother's health was never very good, I could not leave my sister Carol to take care of two sick parents while operating a family Real Estate and Insurance office. I had been a Sister of Saint Joseph for 18 years and although I decided not to return to religious life, I never lost my vocation. I had everything in life – a wonderful family, a successful business, but my only great desire was to be a spouse of Christ.

After thirty years of praying and waiting, one day my mother shared with me an article she read in the local paper entitled, *Women Consecrated in Catholic Rite* describing two women who had been recently consecrated. I immediately made an appointment with Bishop Howard Hubbard, Bishop of the Albany diocese. I wrote to the USACV and attended my first retreat at Mundelein, and I was greatly impressed with what I saw and heard. Bishop Hubbard appointed a priest to be my spiritual director and instructor in the course of studies for consecrated virgins. I was consecrated in the year 2003 at St. Mary's Church in Waterford, New York. The ten years since my consecration have passed so quickly.

Bishop Howard Hubbard celebrated my consecration, and seven priests concelebrated with him. I had the privilege of having our very talented organist and magnificent choir participate in the inspirational ceremony. My twin sister Carol and a Sister of Saint Joseph were my attendants. Jane Claire Forte, may she

rest in peace, and Rita Mawn, consecrated virgins, were Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The one hymn that especially touched my heart was "Only This I Want." How true are these sacred words.

When Bishop Hubbard placed the ring on my finger, I knew I was Jesus' spouse forever, and my heart was filled with joy. The Mass has always been my life. Each day, I give myself to God as I renew my consecration prayer. I trust God completely to do what is best for me. During the Mass, I unite all my sufferings, trials with Him as redemptive suffering for the souls in purgatory. There were about 175 persons who attended the Mass and reception, and as they left the ceremony, they related to the Bishop how impressed and inspired they were at the beautiful service.

As a consecrated virgin, I continue the work I have done throughout the years. I have been the coordinator for First Holy Communion for 32 years. I have brought the Blessed Sacrament to Senior Adult Homes for 35 years. I have been an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion every Sunday and Holydays for 35 years.

My Dad established our Real Estate and Insurance Business and our office has been in Cohoes, New York, for 65 years. I have been a realtor for 40 years, and both Carol and I operate our business. Besides doing the business, the two of us were caregivers for our parents. Real estate slowed down considerably beginning in 2007 and is just starting to get back to normal. I did some substitute teaching while the business was slow.

As part of my being a consecrated virgin, I spend a few hours a day being a caregiver to an 87 year old woman. I also belong to St. Vincent de Paul Society for 10 years, and St. Mary's has a very active food pantry. I also belong to St. Anne's Society, which is an organization that has many successful events to help St. Marys School.

The most important event in my day is my Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament. The main reason for my vocation is to pray for priests, deacons, clergy and religious in our diocese. I do attend retreats and seminars when possible. As you can see, I have a very busy schedule, for the glory of our Divine Spouse.

Continued from page 9 and the date for two of us was set for February 11, 1999, and IT CAME TO BE !! Since then there are five of us in our diocese.

I regret I have been unable to attend any of our meetings because of my age and physical condition, and am most grateful for the letters and other literature you have been so kindly sending me. If there is any service you think I can give the organization, please let me know. I am still mentally alert, by God's generosity. I do keep you all in my prayers.

United with You All in Our Divine Spouse,

Theresita Polzin (2/11/99)

Esposued to the Word Incarnate

by Diane Christine Farr

We read in the prologue of St John's Gospel, "And the Word was made flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." The consecrated virgin through the grace of her consecration is esposued to the Word Incarnate, the Son of the Eternal Father. With a great joy she beholds His glory revealed to her in the depths of her heart and she humbly seeks His grace and His truth.

We will reflect on an antiphon from the rite of the consecration of virgins and words written in honor of St. Agnes, pairing the lines together in three sections.

The first line of the antiphon from the rite reads: "Now with all my heart I follow you." The first line of the antiphon of St. Agnes reads: "His love is the sure protection of my chastity." As consecrated virgins the heavenly Father has drawn us to His Son in a unique manner. The Holy Spirit has revealed Christ to us as our divine Bridegroom. We have not come to this understanding on our own. We follow our Lord with an undivided heart since it is His love that has caused us to see our virginity as belonging solely to Him alone. Our gratitude for this tremendous grace must be ever constant. Following Jesus with all our hearts means that our lives must echo the sentiments of His own Heart. Our presence in the world as brides of Christ must manifest the gentleness and compassion of our Bridegroom. Our share in His cross will also serve to deepen our love for Him as well as our love for those we serve.

The second line of the antiphon from the rite reads, "I reverence you and seek your presence." The second line from the antiphon of St. Agnes reads: "His touch will purify me more and more." As consecrated virgins we should never lose sight of the fact that it is our God in all His majesty who has esposued us to Him. We should seek to live in his presence with an attitude of profound reverence and pure love. All pride must be rooted out of our hearts. We acknowledge our great need for purification and healing as we ponder the awesome mystery of the Word made flesh. In chapter 8 of St. Mark's Gospel, people bring a blind man to Jesus begging Him to touch him. Referring to these passages venerable Bede, a Church father, explains: "Putting spittle into the eyes of the blind man, he lays his hands upon him that he may see, because He has wiped away the blindness of the human race both by invisible gifts and by the Sacrament of His sacred humanity. For the Lord touches us when He enlightens our minds with the breath of His

Spirit, and he stirs us up that we may recognize our own infirmity and be diligent in good actions."

Speaking as one who is both legally blind and a bride of Christ these words serve only to heighten my desire for a deeper intimacy with Him who is all pure and all holy. It is vital that our desire be for Jesus Himself and not just for what He can do for us. Our divine Spouse continues to touch us and give himself entirely to us in the sacrament of His love. We recall how St. Therese called her first holy communion the first kiss of Jesus. It is the brilliant light of His radiant beauty that compels us to long for Jesus with all our heart.

The third line of the antiphon from the rite reads: "Lord, fulfill my hope: show me your loving kindness, the greatness of your mercy." The third line of the antiphon of St. Agnes reads: "In possessing Him, I shall always remain a virgin." In receiving the grace of our consecration our hope has been fulfilled with ineffable joy. We should also see our consecration as a gift of God's great mercy since He gives us the vocation that is best for us and in which we will give Him the greatest glory. We experience our frailty and complete dependence on Jesus as we surrender ourselves with steadfast trust to the transforming power of His love. In His loving kindness, He unites us to Himself and wishes to take complete possession of our hearts.

In a letter to Bl. Agnes of Prague, St. Clair states: "Thus you have taken a spouse of a more noble lineage who will keep your virginity unspotted and unsullied, the Lord Jesus Christ." Our virginity has been made holy by our consecration, for our Lord Himself is the source and summit of all virginal beauty. Virginity is a most beautiful note in the music of our union with our Divine Spouse. It is a sweet fragrance emanating from the garden of the most Holy Trinity that was first given to the Immaculate Virgin Mary. It has a mystical quality that touches every level of our being. Christ alone may enter the locked doors of our virginity manifesting His peaceful presence and the desires of His Heart. He takes His repose among lilies planted by His own hand.

Let us listen to Jesus, the Word Incarnate, peacefully resting our head upon His Heart that we may come to know him more perfectly. In prayer and silence the bride will grow in intimate knowledge of her Bridegroom rendering their union fruitful in works of perfect charity. We need to make ourselves available in support of our sisters in Christ. Quite often due to the difficulties of life we feel nothing but suffering and emptiness. Offering our lives to God in the present moment we cling to Jesus in faith, hope and love remembering that He is our Alpha and Omega and our Eternal Light.

*I am esposued to Him whom the angels sing;
sun and moon wonder at His glory!*

We lived on a farm and attended the public school taught by a female. When we made the trip on Sundays for Mass (thirteen miles by horses drawing a wagon) it was enough for a child to see the prairies on the way, and the few blocks of the small town to absorb all attention. I never saw a Sister. Catechism was taught either by lay people or by the priest.

I recall two times between my first grade and graduation from the eighth grade, once when I was in the second grade and again once in the seventh grade, when I did find the appearance of a boy attractive, but I felt guilty immediately and said to myself, "That is not for me," and was more careful.

When I was ten, we moved to Denver. I was in grade five, and registered in the nearest public school because our parish did not have a Catholic school. As part of a small Polish minority in Denver in 1925 meant to be called "dirty Pollok" on the street and have no respect in my classroom until I turned out to be at the head of the class in studies, although dressed in poor and odd clothes comparatively. At year's end I was given a Special Promotion to 6A instead of 6B, the benefit of which I lost because our Parish had built a Catholic School before the next school year. Of course I registered in our school which had no A or B divisions, and I was now in the sixth grade.

A Catholic School meant SISTERS! That was all I needed! From the moment I saw the first Sister I was decided, with no "discernment". By July 5 after our June 16 graduation, I was no longer in Denver, but in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, at the Convent Academy. Because that was the year of the Great Depression, the family I left in July lost their jobs and suffered dire poverty, with no thought of any visits either on my part nor that of any member of my family to Wisconsin. We had no phone. A letter was our closest contact.

I was sometimes lonesome, but never thought of returning home. I was 13 years old and completed high school at 16, because we also went to summer school. I entered the Order of Sisters without any home visit because there was no money, and at that time parents were the ones who paid all expenses, and mine were too poor to do so. I became a novice at 16, pronounced my three simple Vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience at 18, and Perpetuals at 21, living the Franciscan Rule until 1970.

During Vatican II, the split between the radical Sisters and the rest in many Religious Congregations, including mine, became too wide to close. For example, a redefinition of the vows and total revision of the Holy Rule so that Poverty was Availability and Chastity was Loyalty, was too much for many to take. Many tears were shed and sleepless nights spent in prayer before Rome was "flooded" with requests for dispensations.

My basic dilemma was giving up my Vow of Chastity, but authorities assured me that Chastity was the only vow I could make as a lay person, but only for one year at a time. That is what I settled for as my only course, and the day I signed my dispensation, I immediately knelt before the desk of the Bishop's Representative that was in charge, and made my Vow of Chastity for one year, which was all that was allowed, so that I would not spend even one night without this gem which it tore me to even think of giving up.

I continued to renew it every year from 1970 to 1999 before a priest (usually in confession) when God gave me the grace to become a Consecrated Virgin. Until 1997 I was not aware that the ancient privilege of Vowing Perpetual Virginity by virgins was again reinstated after Vatican II. As soon as I read about it the first time in Our Sunday Visitor, I immediately contacted my spiritual director who referred me to the Bishop. Since I was 83 at the time, I thought that I was too old, but (thank God!) I was mistaken,



Theresita Polzin

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● www.consecratedvirgins.org

Life Corner by Florence Sundberg



On January 22nd, we watched perhaps more than a hundred thousand people brave the bitter snow and cold to witness to the sanctity of each and every human life. Young people mourned the generations of youth slain in the wombs of their mothers even as President Obama celebrated 41 years of *Roe vs. Wade* as an opportunity to fulfill dreams: “We recommit ourselves to the decision’s guiding principle that every woman should be able to make her own choices about her body and her health...this is a country where everyone deserves the freedom and opportunities to fulfill their dreams.” This does not, of course, include the pre-born baby.

Pope Francis offered, instead, special thanks to young people “...for their willingness to show solidarity with the most innocent and vulnerable members of the human family...they give prophetic expression to our deepest conviction about the enduring right of each human person, beginning with the right to life. Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defense of human rights, which will always be subject to the passing whim of the powers that be.” Mother Teresa of Calcutta said that abortion pits mothers against their children, and women against men for it sows violence and discord at the heart of the most intimate human relationships. “It has portrayed the greatest of gifts – a child – as a competitor, an intrusion, and an inconvenience.” We are hearing so much about the “war on women” and there is indeed a ‘war on women’ – it comes in the form of a war on motherhood, on family, on freedom of religion because abortion is the ultimate exploitation of women and children.

Archbishop Chaput, in a homily given on the anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade*, said: “Evil talks a lot about ‘tolerance’ when it is weak. When evil is strong, real tolerance gets pushed out the door...evil cannot bear the counter-witness of truth. It will not coexist peacefully with goodness...our lives matter not because of who we are but because of who God is. His mercy, His justice, His love - these are the things that move galaxies and reach into the womb to touch the unborn child with the grandeur of being human. And we become more human ourselves by seeing the humanity of the poor, the weak, and the unborn child and then fighting for it....The truth about the dignity of the human person is burned into our hearts by the fire of God’s love...we can make our hearts and our witness a source of light (and love) for the world...our job is to work as hard as we can, as joyfully as we can, for as long as we can to encourage a reverence for human life in our country and to protect the sanctity of the human person, beginning with the unborn child.... David cut down the warrior Goliath with a sling and a smooth, simple stone...our job is to slay the sin of abortion and to win back the men and women who are captive to the culture of violence it creates. In the long run, life is stronger than death, and your courage, your endurance, your compassion even for those who revile you, serves the God of life.”