In Matthew’s Gospel (19:11-12), Jesus concludes a discussion with these words: “Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.” The discussion which this ends had to do with divorce and Jesus’ strong stance against it, leading his disciples to wonder whether it was even expedient to marry at all.

Thus Jesus really re-directs their question by focusing on the third case, that is, those who are virgins for the sake of the kingdom. In other words, it is not so as to avoid marriage or the possibility of divorce which is where the disciples were leading. Instead, it is imitation of Christ himself, since he did all for the sake of the kingdom of his Heavenly Father.

Consecrated virginity is not embraced, either by the virgin or the Church, as a convenience or as a way to avoid something. It is always for the sake of the kingdom. The love for God and for his Church must be so all absorbing that one’s virginity can truly be said to be an imitation of Jesus. His love of the Father and of his bride, the Church, is that total.

It is in this sense that Jesus’ love is nuptial, for it precludes any exclusive union other than the union with the Church, which flows from his divine union with the Father. That is why the consecrated virgin is to experience her consecration as a nuptial union with Christ. This consecration is a true absorption, or mystical union, with the one who is the embodiment of the kingdom of heaven.

On this birthday of Mary, who was clearly in mystical union with her son, may each of you find time to ask her to help you be ever more aware of what “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” means in your own living out of your consecration.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing
Episcopal Moderator of the USACV
In the early Church, the ceremony for the consecration of virgins was usually held on the day of the Feast of Epiphany or at Easter and was celebrated by either the Bishop or the Pope. The most ancient available liturgical text is for the imposition of the veil by Pope Liberius, upon Marcellina, the sister of Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, in the year 353 A.D. The liturgical text indicates that at the beginning of the liturgy, the virgin was placed in the sanctuary facing the Pope, who addressed her with the following exhortation:

“You have chosen, my daughter, the best of weddings. See how many faithful have come together for your feast; none withdrew from this place without being fully satisfied. Your Groom is the one that transformed water into wine and now He will transform you, who were mingled with the terms of this vile nature, through the mystery of virginity. He is the same one who fed four thousand people in the wilderness with five loaves and two fish. Now he has called this great gathering of people to your wedding and He will satisfy them, not by barley bread, as he did before, but with His own body brought from heaven” (Francisco de B.Vizmanos, SJ, Las Virgenes Cristianas de la Iglesia Primitiva – Estudio historico y Antologia patristica; published by Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid MMIX; op. cit., page 183, quoting De Virginitus, lib. III, c. I: PL 16,219 s.)

The Pope ended his words by presenting to the virgin the reassuring figure of Mary, Mother of God, as her guide, her model, and her custodian. (Cfr. Vizmanos, op.cit. page 185). Saint Ambrose commented on these words of the Pope by speaking himself about the Blessed Virgin, noting “Mary raised to the glory of Christ the banner of integral virginity like the queen of virgins (Psalm 45) in the presence of the King. She is the model of virgins and the life of the virgin is to imitate the life of the Queen of Virgins.” (Cfr. Vizmanos, op.cit. page 185, quoted from Saint Ambrose, De virginibus, book II, op.cit.)

The focus of the teaching of Pope Liberius and Saint Ambrose is to present the crown of virginal integrity with two essential elements: the physical and the spiritual. After the Holy Father’s exhortation to the virgin, the liturgy continued with a Hymn to Virginity (Cfr. Vizmanos , op.cit. page 183 quoting De lapsu virginis consecratae, c. 7: PL 16, 375) inspired with his commentaries on Psalm 44 (45). The Pontiff’s words are as a presentation of jewels from the heavenly Spouse: His handsome being, His virtues, His divinity; the virgin is espoused with Christ the King.

“You are the fairest of the sons of men,” - repeats the Bishop, addressing the Divine Spouse, with the prophet David -; “grace is poured out upon your lips, and so God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one! In your splendor and your majesty ride on triumphant in the cause of truth and for the sake of justice; and may your right hand show your wonderful deeds…With myrrh and aloes and cassia your robes are fragrant; from ivory palaces stringed music brings you joy. The daughters of kings come to meet you; the queen takes her place at your right hand dressed with embroidered cloth of gold.

Listen, my daughter! Consider and incline your ear to these words: forget your people and your father’s house. So shall the King be captivated by your beauty; because He is the Lord your God, whom you worship. And the city of Tyre is here with gifts; the rich among the people seek your favor. All glorious is the King’s daughter as she enters the palace of the King; her raiment is threaded with spun gold. In embroidered apparel she is borne in to the King; behind her the virgins of her train are brought to you. They are borne in with gladness and joy; they enter the palace of the King... I will make your name memorable from generation to generation; therefore shall nations praise you forever and ever. Amen” (Cfr. Vizmanos op.cit. pages 183-184).

We have done our duty - says the Pontiff - to excite love for the Divine Spouse, as we read in Holy Scripture: “Love the Lord your God.” We have performed our duty with some embellishments adorning our description of the wedding. As it is written: “Clap with hands and feet, we have fulfilled our duty to sprinkle rose petals on the thalamus (from Greek θάλαμος = bedroom, chamber) of perpetual virginity.” (Saint Ambrose, De virginibus, book II, c.6, n.40: PL 16, 218, quoted in Vizmanos, op.cit., page 184).

These images from an early consecration liturgy display the deeply nuptial understanding of the consecration of a virgin as a spouse of Jesus. Such an understanding is often lost today, as is the nuptial image of the Church herself as the bride of Christ, reflected architecturally in another thalamus image: the baldachinum, or altar canopy, prominently designed to bring focus to the sacrificial table. The origin of the word baldachinum is “Baldocco,” Italian for Baghdad, the place from which the precious cloths of the altar canopies (from Latin “canopeum” for bed curtain) were obtained. The baldachinum over the main altar in Saint Peter’s Basilica is pictured to the left.
Current council members and officers are:

Judith M. Stegman, President, 2010 – 2012; Diocese of Lansing

Magalis Aguilera, Member-at-large, 2010 – 2012 (appointed Vice-President thru 2012); Archdiocese of Miami

Nicole Battini, Treasurer, 2011 – 2013; Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Shalina Stilley, Member-at-large, 2009-2011 (appointed Secretary through 2011) Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Mary Kay Lacke, Member-at-large, 2011-2013, Diocese of Steubenville

Team Announcements:

Kateri Team: Florence Sundberg writes:
Please be assured that if any of our sisters find themselves in difficulty as a result of Hurricane Irene, we are here to offer any assistance we can. Just let us know if you need help. All are in our prayers.

Candidate Care Team: Barbara Swieciak:
Please contact Barbara at scwjoy@gmail.com, if you have consecration invitations, programs, or other memorabilia that you would like to add to our travelling collection. Also contact Barb if you are planning a consecration and would like to peruse the collection. Barb adds two special notes:

+SOS Can you help find the missing sample book of invitations? It was last seen in the hands of a candidate in New Ulm, Minnesota. She, however, does not remember where and to whom she sent the book. If you could help us out with its location please contact Barb. St. Anthony, please help us find it.

I have begun to put together a family photo album for us, featuring consecration photos. There is space for each virgin to have up to 3 horizontal and 2 vertical 4x6 inch photographs. We’ll have the album available at Information Conferences, Convocations, and other gatherings. All are welcome to participate – please forward your photos by postal mail, rather than email.

Membership Team: As noted in the announcement regarding 2011 fall elections, now is a good time to renew your 2011 membership, if you haven’t already done so. If you’re not sure if you have renewed your membership, please contact Shalina Stilley, shalinstilley@hotmail.com, or Judith Stegman, president@consecratedvirgins.org.

Formation Resource Development Team: Mary Kay Lacke: At the Convocation in July, Mary Kay Lacke gave a brief presentation on plans underway for the publication of three small volumes on essential topics regarding the vocation of consecrated virginity. At the Convocation, several consecrated virgins agreed to help to review our current information material on the vocation and to assist in editing the material being considered for the new publications. Those who volunteered to help were Mary Therese Wyant, Susan Monroe, Florence Sundberg and Shirley Farrell. Thank you, dear virgins for your generosity!

At this point, plans are moving forward to complete the work for the first volume by the end of December.

Prayer Request Network: Florence Sundberg: I want to thank everyone in our Prayer Request Network for offering prayers for all who have asked for them. When someone speaks to me of a concern they have, and I tell them I will put them and their concerns in our prayer network, their faces light up as they express their gratitude. Just knowing that consecrated virgins will be praying for them brings them consolation and hope. So many are in need of our prayers. And let us pray for each other, sister spouses of Christ, that we may live our vocation always according to the desires of His Heart. Prayer requests should be sent by email to prayerrequests@consecratedvirgins.org.

For more announcements turn to pages 10-12.

Upcoming events:

2012 National Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins:
July 18-22, 2012
Mundelein Retreat and Conference Center
Chicago area

2012 National Information Conference:
July 31-August 3, 2012
Bethany House
at St. Francis Retreat Center,
DeWitt, Michigan
Lansing area.

Consecration Announcements:

United States:


August 10, 2011, Janet LeBlanc, Diocese of Portland (Maine), at the hands of His Excellency Bishop Richard Malone. August 10th is the date of martyrdom of Saint Philomena, Janet’s close companion in her consecrated life and pro-life apostolate.

Janet at her consecration.
2011 Convocation

Introductory remarks...

“In Praise of His Glory...in our work of prayer and our life of virtue” was the theme for our 2011 convocation of United States consecrated virgins. About thirty consecrated virgins gathered at St. Mary’s on the Lake Conference Center in Mundelein, Illinois, from Wednesday evening to Sunday noon, for prayer together, for mutual encouragement, for spiritual and intellectual formation, and for some business. I think you’ll get a flavor for what the virgins experienced, as you read the following reflections.

An order form for 2011 convocation recordings is enclosed with this newsletter, and is available on our USACV website.

This issue of “The Lamp,” also introduces a new process by which consecrated virgins may submit proposals to host a future convocation in a locality other than the Chicago area. Our 2012 convocation will again be in Mundelein, and by and large the virgins who have attended the convocation have been very pleased with this location. It is our hope that by moving the convocation to another location from time to time, some virgins will be able to attend who have not been able in the past due to the expense and distance of travel. Holding the convocation in another location from time to time may also permit virgins to visit sacred sites in other parts of the United States.

Sara Navarro, Archdiocese of Chicago:

It is a gift from God to reunite with the consecrated virgins once a year and catch up on the wonderful gifts God has given us. I am very happy to participate and share my life with other consecrated women and also to listen and learn from their lives. In this convocation I enjoyed participating and giving the virgins a taste of Lectio Divina in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

This year I learned the importance and how profound it is to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. I enjoyed having Bishop Manz as one of the speakers in the convocation. He has been supporting me for many years and continues supporting candidates and consecrated virgins who are in the process of consecration. It was a wonderful idea to invite him! May God bless all the virgins who work on the preparation of this great event.

Ann Stitt, Archdiocese of Boston:

Of all the good things to praise about the convocation, the “Costa Rica” talk – on who Ordo Virginitis is and what USACV is (and is not) – shines with peaceful clarity and joyful charity, the good fruit of all these discussions over the years as we grew and matured. For me it stood out, because of my decades of experiences dealing with the “Sister mindset,” both within myself and in others. Judith plans to publish it, © 2011, USACV. How much I appreciate this talk’s helpfulness in preventing and eliminating confusion and misunderstandings, hurt feelings and troubled thoughts about our vocation in the Church! Thank you, Holy Spirit, and bless you, Judith.

Carolyn Blaszczyk, Diocese of Harrisburg:

I had not been able to attend earlier convocations, but after having purchased and listened to the CD’s of the 2010 convocation, I decided I would not miss the convocation in 2011. As I told Bishop Boyea in Mundelein this past July, he was the reason I was there. It was such a blessing to share, personally this year, in the camaraderie enjoyed by the consecrated virgins in attendance and our Episcopal Moderator, which had come across to me so vividly in the exchanges recorded the year before. The substance of talks gave me a deeper appreciation of our common prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, and a firmer commitment to it. I would strongly urge those who could not attend to share, as I originally did, in the richness of this experience through listening to the CD recordings of the convocation. Many thanks to all those who contributed to this effort.

Kathy Reda, Archdiocese of Boston:

I was not going to come to this year’s convocation, I had a busy schedule and thought, “I went last year.” I prayed about it and the thoughts of the grounds and being with other interesting and beautiful women of God kept coming to my mind. I am so blessed and glad I decided to attend. I think the grounds of Mundelein Seminary are holy, beautiful and serene; it is the perfect atmosphere for prayer and contemplation. Bishop Boyea has such a welcoming and inviting way of explaining and educating. It is encouraging that he understands our vocation and supports us. I think all the speakers this year were great and the symposiums were thoughtful and informative.

The best part of coming to a convocation is meeting and getting to know so many and such different women. We are all called to become His bride and beloved, we all come from very different backgrounds and situations, but it is so awesome and inspiring to hear the stories of how women were called, how Jesus continued to beckon each of us...and how some of us declined to have a relationship with him for a while!! And now as CV’s how we live out our vocations in many different ways. I loved hearing people’s stories and so many blessed experiences. The camaraderie and support I feel from each of you is overwhelming.

I had such a restful and informative week, perfect in every way, being with each other and with Jesus in a beautiful rhythm of prayer.

Thanks to all who worked so hard to make it all happen and for those who couldn’t make it but prayed for all of us there.

Shirley Farrell, Diocese of Green Bay, shares this reflection:

Virginity is a gift that God gives us and we are chosen by Him to be His spouse.

We don’t brag about our virginity but we proclaim His gift.

Humility is truth, Virginity is humility, and truth should always be proclaimed.

Be first in virtue.

Keep your eyes on Jesus; don’t look at anyone else or you will lose your focus.

Comment from a candidate who attended:

It was a wonderful experience for me to attend the convocation. I enjoyed meeting other candidates and consecrated virgins from the United States. God is amazing and he continues to confirm my vocation and that this is what he wants from me. Even though the day was long it was nice ending the night eating popcorn and sharing with others our calling.

Note: Virgins who have attended a prior Information Conference and have been accepted as candidates for consecration by their Bishops may be invited to attend the convocation.

See photos from the Convocation on pages 5 and 7. Also on page 7, note the newly developed policy on hosting the annual Convocation.
A serious moment—Bishop Boyea and Twanna Bolling

Enjoying Magalis’ anniversary DVD

Judith’s avocation – the piano

Visiting Mary’s Grotto on the grounds at Mundelein

Karen Bussey, Magalis Aguilera and Mary Kay Lacke—Happy to be together!

2011 Convocation Attendees

2011 Convocation Attendees

Chicago attendees with Auxiliary Bishop Manz

Cheri Bowe and Nicole Bettini share their smiles
from the President’s journal . . .

I am writing this journal entry on September 11, 2011, as I reflect with our nation on the events of ten years ago. It was a day in human history that affected the lives of all Americans, and perhaps all citizens of the planet Earth. It was a day of unspeakable tragedy, from which sprang many acts of courage, many acts of selfless concern for strangers, and, at least for a time, a renewed national embrace of our pledge to be “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” May God bless America.

Our Divine Spouse is ever close, and ever faithful as we come to a deeper understanding of our vocation as consecrated virgins. An aspect of our vocation that began to beckon me to further study is consideration of the meaning of belonging to the “Order” of Virgins. It seemed to me that we had come to a clear understanding of the essential meaning of being a member of a voluntary association of consecrated virgins, such as the USACV, and, at the same time we have understood that the Order of Virgins is neither to be equated with a voluntary association of virgins, nor is it analogous to a religious or secular institute. As an “ordo,” a classification of persons, it was simply an identifying title for all those who had received the consecration of virgins. Or, perhaps, could there be an essential meaning to one’s belonging to this Order of Virgins? These are questions I began to address in the presentation I first prepared for our spring visit in Costa Rica, “The Order of Virgins and Associations of Virgins.” If the topic interests you, I hope you might have a chance to listen to the recording from our 2011 convocation and share your reflections with me.

We would also like to open a discussion, through The Lamp, on the meaning of spiritual motherhood in the life of the consecrated virgin. Motherhood is an intrinsic aspect of being female, and, as such, is an intrinsic aspect of being a consecrated virgin. Blessed John Paul II spoke of spiritual motherhood as the key to motherhood both for she who has born physical children, as well as for she who is mystically espoused to Christ. Consecrated virgins are invited to submit your reflections to be edited for an article for an upcoming issue of The Lamp.

Bishop Boyea invites us to ask our Blessed Mother to help us become more aware of living out our consecrations “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” May all that we do honor and please our Divine Spouse.

Judith Stegman

Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

For the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, I reflect on how Our Lady, the Mother of us all, must grieve the loss of her children, the millions whose lives have been terminated. We know that each new life is a unique and precious gift from our heavenly Father and yet, so many millions of these tiny human lives have been terminated and returned to Him broken, unwanted. And so our Lady grieves and urges us to defend and protect these little ones who should find safety and comfort in the wombs of their mothers. Blessed Pope John Paul II prayed, in part: "O Mary, Mother of the living, to you do we entrust the cause of life: look down, O Mother, upon the vast numbers of babies not allowed to be born...grant that all who believe in your Son may proclaim the Gospel of Life with honesty and love to the people of our time, the joy of celebrating it with gratitude and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely, in order to build a civilization of truth and love to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life.” Mary is also called "The Cause of our Joy" and perhaps it would be good to find ways to celebrate, with joy, the beauty and the giftedness of each and every human life. Please pray much for the 40 Days Campaign for Life which will begin on Sept. 28th.

Consecration Announcements

France:

Italy:
February 20, 2011, Maria Gritti and Ivana Ortolani, Diocese of Brescia, at the hands of His Excellency Bishop Luciano Monari.
April 29, 2011, Brigida Ioviero, Diocese of Sorrento-Castellamare, at the hands of His Excellency Bishop Felice Cece.
April 30, 2011, Alessandra Sogliani, Diocese of Mantova, at the hands of His Excellency Bishop Roberto Busti.

Belgium:
September 3, 2011, Benedicte Nollet, Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels, at the hands of His Excellency Archbishop André-Joseph Léonard

Costa Rica:
July 2, 2011, Cecilia Teresa Reyes, Gloriana de los Angeles Matamoros, Ana Ligia Serrano, and Fanny Marcela Castillo, Diocese of Cartago
We are pleased to enclose with this issue of *The Lamp* a new policy developed during the 2011 summer USACV leadership council meeting, and presented and discussed during the 2011 annual association membership meeting. The policy sets forth the process to be followed for a member of the USACV to offer a proposal for hosting a future convocation.

If you have considered hosting a convocation at a retreat facility in your diocese, we encourage you to take a careful look at the policy. The policy details what we look for in a possible location for the convocation, lets you know the steps to take to submit a proposal, and describes the responsibilities of the “Host Team” in planning and carrying out the convocation.

The 2012 convocation will again be in Mundelein, Illinois. Proposals to host the 2013 convocation must be submitted by December 1, 2011, in order to make an announcement of the location and dates by January 1, 2012.

Perhaps in the future we will enjoy convocations in various parts of this vast nation of ours, and have the opportunity to interact with Church members in places otherwise unfamiliar to us. Let us keep all in prayer.
Consecrated virgins celebrating significant anniversaries during 2011 were 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 plan to offer more in our December issue.

Frances Power, consecrated October 29, 1986 in the Archdiocese of New York.

This year of 2011 finds me celebrating my twenty-fifth anniversary as a consecrated virgin. The words of the prayer of consecration that the Bishop prayed so long ago remain in my mind and heart, and reflect how I live my life. Over the course of time, we have all heard stories of how clergy and consecrated persons have come to find their vocations. Mine began as a child with the loving training provided by my parents.

My dad was a hard-working and dedicated employee for IBM as a plant security guard for many years, and my mother was a stay at home mom raising the three of us children. When I think of my parents’ devotion to us children, I think of the Church. They taught us about faith through how they lived their lives, and they made prayer a big part of our day, with morning prayer, rosary, and night prayers together. With the training I received at home and at our parish school from the Sisters of The Immaculate Heart of Mary, I had a wonderful childhood.

In 1981 I took a Dale Carnegie Public Speaking Course to gain confidence speaking in front of large groups. I did well, gained the confidence I needed, and found my niche at work in giving presentations to management, and conducting meetings. Over the course of a few years with my success at work, three years later, in 1984, I began to serve in my parish as a Lector and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and twenty-seven years later I still do both ministries for my parish. After Sunday Mass, I also bring Communion to three homebound women who are ill and infirmed. They love to see me come on a weekly basis as I bring them Jesus Christ and say prayers with each of them. During the last five years of my mother’s life, I was caregiver and also her Eucharistic Minister, as she was homebound. Since 1987, I have been a catechist in RCIA and for the past year have begun to assist my pastor with baptismal preparation classes.

Separate from Church, but very much linked to my faith formation, for the last five years I have also visited Hospice patients at a local skilled nursing facility and through my quiet presence try to provide them with love, support and compassion. But all these ministries and my lifestyle stem back to my upbringing and my parents. My father died almost forty years ago and my mother died almost twelve years ago, but they will always be alive in me, as God used them to inspire good and positive thinking in me, and they were the first to introduce me to Jesus Christ.

I am so happy that God has called me to be His bride. In my prayer time, in my interactions with my parish community and beyond, and as I simply gaze at my wedding band, I know I have chosen the better part. Whether or not other people know I am a consecrated virgin is not important, but I hope that the witness of my life is a heartfelt respect and dignity for each person I meet, as I try to love with Christ’s own love. The grace of the consecration, twenty-five years ago, lives on in me, in the words I say to comfort, uphold and support, and in knowing when it is prudent to speak and when to refrain from speaking.

Choosing to give myself fully to Jesus as His spouse, in fulfillment of my baptismal promises, does not mean giving up anything; rather, for me, it means embracing life to its fullest. Bringing praise to my Savior, my Spouse is all about loving and living with Him as my foundation and my guide – and with my human faults and frailties, loving is also a readiness to forgive and to ask forgiveness. Being a consecrated virgin is the best vocation in the world for me and I thank God every day as I live each moment through Him, with Him, and in Him, and pledge my love to Him through all eternity.
More Reflections

Julie Enzenberger, consecrated August 12, 2006 in the Diocese of Peoria (Illinois)

In reflecting upon my fifth anniversary, I know that I have never had more joy in my heart. Every year it gets stronger and stronger and I still feel as if I am on my honeymoon. Every morning I wake up before my feet touch the ground I say with all my heart “I love you Jesus my love”. I then pray the Office of Readings and the Morning Prayer. Praying the office of readings is like receiving love letters from my Spouse every day.

I feel blessed to be the office manager for the Cause for Canonization of Archbishop Fulton Sheen. I travel quite a bit to introduce the life of Archbishop Sheen to others. Archbishop Fulton Sheen has changed my life and teaches me something new about the heart of the Catholic Church every day. It has been a great blessing to me to work closely with the priests who serve as the Vice-Postulator of the Cause and the executive director of the Cause. Their patience, reverence, and love for others has taught me about holiness and being Christ for others, and has helped me on my road to Christ. I have also been blessed to have a Bishop, Most Reverend Daniel Jenky, CSC, who is like a father to me. I can’t imagine having a better father in Christ. Likewise, my parish pastor is a true friend and support, and as our parish celebrates Mass together, I’ve come to fall in love with all those in my community. I also have a family that is very supportive and loving. No matter what, we are there for each other. My family has always taught each other unconditional love.

To sum up this little note I truly believe when we surround ourselves with good holy people who try to bring others to Christ and love each other purely, it can do nothing but strengthen your marriage. This also gives you the strength to go out and bring others closer to Christ. I would like to say that never has one little doubt entered my mind about my marriage to Our Lord. I know with all my heart and soul that I was made to be a spouse of Christ. I could not imagine being anything else. I thank Him every day for asking me to marry Him. I am humbled every day because I know my weakness and my faults are always before me. I lay them at the foot of our Lords divine mercy in the confessional and thank Him over and over again for His Mercy and His Love. I reflect on how perfectly He loves me, and others, and I beg Him every day to help me to love the way that He Loves. Thank you for marrying me, Jesus!

Paula Willenbrink, consecrated June 2, 2011,

Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Paula writes:

June 2, 2011 was the most meaningful day of my life, as I received the consecration of a virgin living in the world, at the hands of Archbishop Robert Carlson. Reflecting upon the day, three aspects encompass the true meaning of this special day: Mercy, Love and Grace. As the recipient of the consecration, I am awed at God’s gracious mercy upon me granting this special vocation. I am 57 and since I was 21 I had tried finding my place in the Church through religious life, but since community life was not a fit for me I left. I am so grateful to God for the gift of this vocation and His Mercy.

God is Love is proclaimed in St. John’s Gospel, and it is this Love that I am now wedded to forever. Ever since my Consecration I have noticed a deeper relationship with Jesus. He truly is my Husband. My relationship with Him is much closer and more intimate. Finally, I would like to reflect upon God’s unmerited gift: Grace. Cardinal Burke was once asked what made the consecration so special and his response was grace. It is this grace that is infused upon the virgin during the Rite of Consecration when the Bishop extends his hands over the candidate. Our Blessed Mother’s proclamation in the Magnificat seems an appropriate conclusion to this reflection: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”
USACV Elections Fall 2011

One USACV Leadership Council position, At-Large Representative, will open January 1, 2012. We encourage qualified members to consider running for this leadership position in the association. Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes and bylaws of the USACV, which are available upon request. In summary, what you need to know for this election:

Election Process

Written notification of a member’s desire to run for the open Council position must be received by midnight on Friday, October 28, 2011. We encourage each candidate to also submit a biographical statement (approx 500 words), including remarks about why she desires to serve in the position.

Ballots (and candidate biographies) will be mailed to all USACV members in early November 2011. If you have not yet registered as a member in 2011, now would be a good time to do so!

Ballots will be due back to our Elections Team leader by Friday, December 2, 2011. Ballots will be opened and counted in the presence of an independent party and notification of the results will be made to the USACV President, the newly elected, and all candidates. Results of the election will be published on the USACV website and announced in the December 12, 2011 issue of The Lamp.

Position Terms, Descriptions and Responsibilities

At Large Representative

Term: January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2014

Eligibility to run for office (Article III Section D3): Open to any current voting member who has been a member or actively involved in the Association for the two previous years.

Duties (Article V Section A):

To collaborate with other Council members in the governance of the USACV in accord with the provisions of the organizational statutes, with particular focus on the ecclesial objectives (Article II) of the Association.

To make every effort to attend the annual membership meeting and the annual Council meeting held with the Episcopal Moderator. To participate in other Council meetings or discussions as needed.

If serving as the Council representative on a standing committee, to facilitate ongoing communication between the Council and the committee.

If elected as an At-Large Representative, to make every effort to accept an appointment as Vice President (Article V Section C) or Secretary (Article V, Section D), recognizing that some responsibilities of the offices may be delegated to others (Article IV, Section A).

Other Notes

Council members rely heavily on email to facilitate communication, since we are geographically in all parts of the United States.

The Association’s travel budget currently covers accommodations and meals for Council members during the annual Council meeting with our Episcopal Moderator.

Please Consider Running for Office

Please do consider running for office, and encourage other members to run – sometimes all it takes is a personal word!

Report on the 2011 Informational Conference, by Mary Kay Lacke

Praise God for his faithfulness and love expressed in the vocation of Consecrated Virginity!

After many years of holding the USACV’s Informational Conference in other areas of the country, the Conference returned to its original site, this summer, the St. Francis Retreat Center in DeWitt, MI. Although this move was made to accommodate Bishop Boyea’s schedule, this lovely wooded area proved to be a perfect place for prayer, reflection and consideration of the vocation of Consecrated Virginity for Women Living in the World.

Sixteen women shared the four-day conference with Bishop Boyea and the team of consecrated virgins who served the Conference. Mary Kay Lacke gave overall direction for the program content while Theresa Marshall coordinated all the logistics for the conference. Others who served as speakers or organized liturgical celebrations, media recording and various types of hospitality were Judith Stegman, Magalis Aguilera, Karen Bussey, Barbara Swieciak, and Sarah Malick.

The women who attended the conference were from various parts of the United States as well as from Canada. One person was a religious sister who is the vicar of consecrated life in her diocese. The others varied in their interest in the vocation, from initially learning about it to preparing to be consecrated in the near future. All expressed gratitude for the content of the conference and the ambience of hospitality, devotion to God and reverence for the vocation of consecrated virginity that surrounded them.

Although the conference topics for presentations did not vary too much from other years, the content of those topics was deepened and enriched by the various speakers, e.g. the presentation on the Liturgy of the Hours, the discussion of the gift of virginity and what it means, the understanding of and personal witness to the espousal relationship of Christ with the virgin, and the distinction between the order of virgins and the association of virgins according to Canon 604.

Speaking on behalf of the other consecrated virgins who served with me, I can say that the conference was excellent. As we extended ourselves on behalf of those we served, we were blessed a hundredfold in return.
E-mail scams can be ferocious. Tips from Judith Stegman.

One particular email scam that a number of us have recently seen involves an email that comes from a friend’s email address. The email is written in first person and is worded as an emergency plea for money to be sent, due to a desperate-sounding situation. It’s an email that a reader would readily ignore, except that it comes from the familiar email address of a friend. In actuality, what has happened is that your friend’s email password has been compromised, and a malicious user has taken over your friend’s entire email address book. This can happen if a person maintains an address book on a site maintained by Google or Yahoo, for example.

Below is a summary of basic precautions we can all take with email – I’ve gleaned these from personal experience and a review of several articles on the web. This is not a comprehensive list, and it is meant as a guide to assist those who are email end-users. It is always good to engage the assistance of a professional to maintain your email system.

- Understand that no email communication is 100% secure. Avoid sending credit card numbers, social security numbers, user names, or passwords by email, and particularly by HTML email. Never send name, ssn, birthdate, address, and credit card number in combination.
- Never open email attachments unless you know the person the email is from, and you trust the person. Email addresses can be “spoofed” – the “from” address can be faked.
- If you do open an attachment, and the content doesn’t match the sender, send it back for clarification.
- Microsoft never sends operating system patches as email attachments.
- “Phishing is a scam where the perpetrator sends out legitimate-looking e-mails appearing to come from some of the Web’s biggest sites, including eBay, PayPal, MSN, Yahoo, BestBuy, and America Online, in an effort to phish (pronounced “fish”) for personal and financial information from the recipient.” Examples would be a message from your bank that asks you to update your account information. You click on the link, the legitimate bank site opens, then a page opens up on top asking you for your account info. This info page DOES NOT belong to the legitimate site. If you fill out your personal information and submit it, the info will go to the “phisher” to be sold or used to steal your identity.

(Source: searchSecurity.com Definitions)

- To reduce the risk of being the target of phishing attacks, choose plain text over HTML or XHTML.
- Remember that your email security affects others, and not just you, if your email is compromised.
- Guard passwords carefully, and don’t give them out online to anyone who is asking.
- It is best to at least meet the minimum requirements for a “strong” password. The website www.passwordmeter.com is easy to use and allows a person to check the strength of a password based on the number of characters, use of upper case, lower case, numbers and/or symbols. This is especially important if you have had issues with your email account being compromised and taken over. (tip from my brother Brad Stegman)
- Maintain your personal address book only on your local computer, and not on a public website.
- Check with your Internet Service Provider to be sure they encrypt the authentication process.
- Be aware that there are more privacy risks involved in using web-based email services such as Gmail, Hotmail, and Yahoo! There are also more risks involved in using unsecured networks or potentially compromised computers, like those at Internet Café’s.
- Don’t open any attachments unless the sender is known to you.
- Don’t respond to email requests for money. If you want to give online, go to the website of the organization and initiate the transaction yourself, through their secure site.
- Emails that come with promises and stories – read critically. If there are no citations; if the piece is undated and makes reference to relative timeframes: “a few months ago,” or, “pass this along within two days”; it is probably not authentic. Many potential email scams or false information can be examined with the help of www.snopes.com.

A new Vocation Tree DVD entitled “Fundamentals of the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World” is also available for order. The DVD includes the presentation in both English and Español, and is an excellent introductory presentation on the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world. Also newly available are two other Vocation Tree DVD’s:

- “What about Me?” is a presentation for high school students which guides them to explore the truly personal meaning of the call by God the Father to each individual.
- “You Follow Me” is a presentation for a general adult audience (RCIA, parish groups, Serra Clubs) as a primer on vocational choices in the Catholic Church.

Sadly, the Vocation Tree website store has been inoperative for a few weeks. Please visit vocationtree.com, and contact Judith Stegman at president@consecratedvirgins.org for order information.
Council Announcements

- **Upcoming issues of The Lamp:**
  - December 12, 2011 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe;
  - February 2, 2012 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life;
  - June 3, 2012 Trinity Sunday;
  - September 8, 2012 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Please send articles in electronic format at least 10 days in advance of the issuance date.

- We warmly invite virgins celebrating 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, or more? years of consecration in 2011 to write reflections on their consecrations for the December 12, 2011 issue of The Lamp. Please send reflections to president@consecratedvirgins.org.

- The fourth Symposium for Consecrated Virgins, sponsored by the Diocese of La Crosse Office of Consecrated Life, will be held October 15, 2011. For more information on the "Saint Agatha Celebration," call Barb 1-608-784-6974, or visit the Diocese of La Crosse website for a letter of information and registration materials: www.dioceseoflacrosse.com, Office of Consecrated Life, Consecrated Virgins, EVENTS

- **NEW:** Recordings of talks from the 2011 Convocation and 2011 Informational Conference are now available for order through Magalis Aguilera. Order forms are enclosed with this issue of The Lamp, and may be obtained from our website or by emailing info@consecratedvirgins.org.

- Julie Enzenberger writes: I am a consecrated virgin in Peoria, IL, and I run the office for the Cause for Canonization of Archbishop Fulton Sheen. During World War II, Archbishop Sheen wrote the Wartime Prayer Book, which includes not only prayers, but also reflections on how to personally handle the effects of having been in battle, why God allows war, and much more. We have sent over 200,000 of these books overseas to our soldiers as an ongoing project of the Foundation. If you know any soldiers in your parishes that could use a book like this, please let me know, and I will get it to them. More information can be found at the site: archbishopsheencause.org/recent-news/archbishop-sheens-book-to-soldiers/358. God Love you, Julie

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**Prayer to Saint Lucy**

– presented by Aliceanne Sawyer, who received a prayer card from a friend who visited the tomb of Saint Lucy in Venice, Italy:

Saint Lucia, you have constantly desired the Light, you have loved the light with the enthusiasm of youth! And with constancy and the witness of martyrdom you have testified that the Light is there: Jesus, our Lord and Savior, Who enlightens every person. Saint Lucia, today many persons have the eyes of flesh, but they do not have the eyes of the Heart, today our cities respond to lights, but the crowds are gloomy because pride has rendered the look impure. Saint Lucia, pray because in every family shines the Light of God; pray the young people rediscover the beauty that fills the heart and renders life luminous; we pray because we are blind that we all see the Light and receive the Light that renders us pure and beautiful. Amen.

–Most Reverend Angelo Comastri