

The Lamp



United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

February 2, 2006
The Presentation of the Lord

Volume 11, Issue 2

from Archbishop Burke . . .

Dear Members of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins,

I write to you to express heartfelt greetings of joy and peace in Our Lord, Who is the source and model of every consecrated vocation in the Church. As we celebrate the Day Dedicated to the Consecrated Life, I desire to encourage you in living out your consecration to virginity lived in the world. I thank you for the witness of the beauty of a life consecrated totally to God in Jesus Christ. I am most grateful for your service to the Church in the particular circumstances in which God has called you to live out your consecration.

In the Prayer of Consecration of Virgins, the consecrating Bishop prays:

*Among your many gifts you give to some the grace of virginity.
Yet the honor of marriage is in no way lessened.
As it was in the beginning,
your first blessing still remains upon this holy union.
Yet your loving wisdom chooses those
who make the sacrifice of marriage
for the sake of the love of which it is the sign.* (Prayer of Consecration)

The consecrated virgin is called to give herself totally in love of Christ, so that she may be the sign of the faithful and enduring love to which the married are called. She offers her gift of virginity for consecration, so that she may follow Christ in “perfect chastity.” To be the bride of Christ means being a sign — for all in the Church — of the love with which Christ loves the members of the Church, love which is totally faithful and love which endures forever.

The Prayer of Consecration continues:

*Those who choose virginity have looked upon the face of Christ,
its origin and inspiration.
They give themselves wholly to Christ,
the Son of the ever-virgin Mary,
and the heavenly Bridegroom of those
who in his honor dedicate themselves to perpetual virginity.* (Prayer of Consecration)

As we celebrate this Day Dedicated to the Consecrated Life, be assured of my prayers for you, that you may know the immeasurable joy of this complete self-gift. May your life be a light to all those you meet, drawing them ever closer to Our Lord.

Asking God’s blessing upon you and your consecration, I remain

Yours devotedly in Christ,

+ Raymond L. Burke

(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke
Archbishop of Saint Louis

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SOMETHING ANCIENT, SOMETHING NEW

Brides of the Lamb, older and younger

“... Like a young man marrying a virgin,

So will the One who built you wed you.

And as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride,

So will your God rejoice in you” (CFR. Is 62, 1-12).

Isaiah uses human marriage to describe the covenantal relationship between the Creator and Israel, and between Jesus Christ and His Church. His words also point to an unexpected plan for this nuptial relationship: the Father’s eternal plan will include the marriage and motherhood of a virgin! Through our Blessed Virgin Mary will come the fulfillment of the eternal plan of the Father in the birth of His only Beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Father prepared His chosen people for a new reality by creating our Blessed Mother as a new reality. For her who was conceived unstained by original sin, the Father created the gift of virginity, announcing to His chosen people: “the Lord Himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name Him Immanuel.” (Isaiah, 7.14) God our Father prepared and chose her to be a virgin forever and to fulfill through her virginity His eternal plan of love for us. For her part, Mary, choosing to give her love exclusively and faithfully to God, embraced His will within her virginity, responding, “Fiat Voluntas Tua (be it done to me according to Your will)” (Luke 1:38). And the fruit of her virginity was to con-

ceive and bear the Redeemer of all the world.

Mary’s fruitful virginity foreshadows life in the world to come where the sacrament of marriage will no longer be necessary. She lived virginity as a docile instrument of the Father’s will and her life is a model and a stronghold for consecrated virgins, leading us ever to love her Son as the first choice in life. As Mary, we are called to live this life of virginity in the midst of the world, witnessing to life beyond this world. The consecrated virgin’s “propositum” of virginity, made in response to the gift of virginity she has received, is offered as expression of her eternal and enduring love for Jesus. Her consecration is forever, irrevocable.

Magalis Aguilera, Something Ancient, and Judith Stegman, Something New

the President's journal . . .

“[The consecrated person] lives in time, but his heart is projected beyond time and witnesses to contemporary man – often absorbed by the things of this world – that his true destiny is God himself. . . Do not be afraid to present yourselves, even visibly, as consecrated persons, and try with all means to manifest your belonging to Christ, the hidden treasure for which you left everything.”

– Pope Benedict, December 2005 [Zenit]

What do these words mean for us

as consecrated virgins, as women mystically espoused to Christ? In all our being we are called to conform ourselves to Christ and to present Him as loving Spouse to this world. In conforming ourselves to him, chaste, obedient, and poor, the mission of the consecrated virgin is “to love Him as befits your spousal state . . . by sharing His manner of life, a life of humility and gentleness, of love and mercy, of service and joyful availability. . .” – John Paul II address to Consecrated Virgins, June 1995. As such the consecrated virgin offers a witness of the per-

fect love of Christ to those in daily life about her.

The theme of our 2006 convocation is: “Prefer nothing, absolutely nothing to the love of Christ” – a look at the mission of consecrated virgins in today’s Church and society.” How do you see this mission reflected in your own life or in the lives of other consecrated virgins? I invite you to respond in a few sentences and we’ll publish these in The Lamp as we move towards this 2006 convocation.

–Judith Stegman

Council News

Please pray for these works in process. . .

our “Vocations Tree” project, a soon-to-be-launched Formation Resources Development Committee, and a pastoral planning project dubbed “Sharing Our Good News.” In all of these we strive to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in carrying out our mission as an association of consecrated virgins. If you desire to help plan the 2006 Convocation, please see

the notice above and contact a Council member. We welcome your participation!

Also for prayer: The USACV president will participate in the March 2006 meeting of the National Conference of Vicars for Religious, to be held in Rome. The meeting will include contact with the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

USACV Council and Officers

Judith M. Stegman, *President, 2004 – 2006; Diocese of Lansing*

Magalis Aguilera, *2004 – 2006 (appointed Vice-President to December 31, 2006); Archdiocese of Miami*

Louise Pare, *Treasurer, 2005 – 2007; Diocese of Lansing*

Shalina Stilley, *2005 – 2007; Diocese of Milwaukee*

Aliceanne Sawyer, *2006 – 2008 (appointed Secretary to December 31, 2006); Diocese of Newark*

2006 USACV Member and Friend Registrations

Important! Please take time now to register as a 2006 member or friend of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins by completing the enclosed registration form (also available online at www.consecratedvirgins.org). Annual dues remain at \$25.

We would like to especially invite friends who enjoy receiving our newsletter to register with the Association or assist with a special donation. The educational efforts

of the Association are funded only by private donations and all services are provided by volunteers.

Reminder note to consecrated virgins: Annual registration is necessary in order to continue as a full voting member of the USACV. If you are newly consecrated or new to the Association, please also complete the “Initial Membership Application Form”, available by request or from our website.

We truly appreciate your financial support as we strive to make known the authentic message of consecrated virginity! And now your contributions are tax-deductible. The USACV is recognized as a 501(c)3 organization under U.S. tax law.

**Annual
Registration
is
necessary!**

Consecration News

[Denise Farrell's Consecration was announced last month. The story of her Consecration is the story of many of us, and we share this with joy.](#)

Bride of Christ by Loretta Matulich

"As your Bishop, I now give you a special intention for your prayer: pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life in this diocese," thus concluded the Most Rev. William Murphy, Bishop of Rockville Centre (New York), at Denise Farrell's Consecration, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception 2005, at Sts. Philip and James parish church.

Denise, native of the Brooklyn Diocese but now living in the Rockville Centre Diocese (Long Island, New York), expressed her great gratitude to her Bishop for his tremendous spiritual support of her vocation; to Sr. Maryanne Fitzgerald, who took care of preparations in the diocese for her Consecration; and to her pastor, Father Brian McNamara, who encouraged her in her vocation and prepared the parish to witness the Consecration through his teaching installments in the parish bulletin prior to the Consecration. Denise has commented that since

her Consecration parishioners have come up to her and told her that they really understood now that the Consecration is a true espousal to Jesus Christ, the Divine Bridegroom. The suggested homily in the Rite exhorts all to think of how much good a consecrated virgin can do through her loving prayers. Several parishioners, most fittingly, entrusted their special needs to her prayers the very day after her Consecration.

As at other Consecrations, consecrated virgins, candidates, and priests came from near and far to participate in the Mass. Some came from New York City and Brooklyn, others drove from neighboring New Jersey, and one consecrated virgin flew from as far as Michigan and another from Oregon. Others who could not be present sent their love and promise of prayer through the mail.

As the suggested homily reminds us in the Rite, consecrated virgins are nurtured from childhood in faithful families. As her confidante and sister, Mary Ellen, participated in the Mass, along with nieces and nephews. Denise's late brother, Fr. Loren, was remembered with

the one memento that the family still had of their brother—a piece of his Capuchin habit was placed on the table near the water and wine that would be used for the Mass. Denise chose her mother's wedding ring for her Consecration ring.

As many know already, Denise had lived a private vow of perpetual virginity for 48 years before actually receiving the Consecration to a Life of Virginity for a Woman Living in the World. She intimated something which is certainly an encouragement to those aspiring to receive the Consecration: "Before the Consecration, I could never imagine the union and the intimacy with Jesus Christ as I have now."

Upcoming Consecrations in the United States

Susan Monroe, 2/2/06, Archdiocese of New York

Theresa Catteruccia, 2/11/06, Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana

Teresa Gross, 2/12/06, Diocese of Bismarck (North Dakota)

Consecration Announcements from Overseas

Argentina:

- Zulma Schalbetter and Patricia Pia Blanca Sermiotti were consecrated on May 31, 2005, in the Diocese of Rosario by Most Rev. Franzini.
- Graciela Micheloni was consecrated on August 30, 2005, in the Diocese of Resistencia by the Most Rev. Giaquinta. She is the second in that diocese to be consecrated; many candidates are preparing for the Consecration in that diocese.
- Marisa Benay was consecrated on February 11, 2005.

Mexico:

- Aletheia Lopez Valdivia was consecrated on Nov. 21, 2004.

France:

- Mareille Castanie, consecrated on Feb. 2, 2003.
- Marie-Janne Wolfer, consecrated on June 19, 2004.
- Marie-Claude Gueydon, consecrated on Feb. 2, 2005.
- Claire Ponsart, consecrated on Feb. 2, 2005.
- Marie-Catherine LeSueur, consecrated on April 2, 2005.

•Claire Le Blay, consecrated on April 3, 2005, by Most Rev. Armand Maillard in the Basilica of Notre-Dame of Pontmain, Diocese of Mayenne.

•Isabelle Merienne was consecrated on Dec. 4, 2004, Diocese of Laval in her parish church of Saint-Pierre

•Marie-Noelle Gillois was consecrated on January 1, 2005, through the hands of Most Rev. Maillard.

•Marguerite Chopin, consecrated April 17, 2005, at Landean by Most Rev. Saint-Macary.

•Anne de Bourgues, consecrated July 25, 2005, by Most Rev. Andre Fort, Bishop of Orleans in the Basilica of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sevre.

•Annie Duffner, consecrated on November 20, 2004, by Most Rev. Christian Kratz, in Strasbourg.

Coming up . . .

2006 Information Conference

The 2006 Information Conference is scheduled for August 2 to August 4, 2006 at the Cenacle in downtown Chicago, Illinois. Theresa Marshall will again generously coordinate the conference for us. Please see the enclosed

flyer for details and consider posting it or passing it along to friends who may be interested. The Holy Spirit seems to always work through this conference in the hearts of those discerning a vocation to Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World.

August 2 -
August 4
2006
Chicago, Illinois

2006 Convocation of Consecrated Virgins in the United States

Theme: “Prefer nothing, absolutely nothing to the love of Christ” – a look at the mission of consecrated virgins in today’s Church and society

The 2006 Convocation is scheduled for Wednesday August 9 to Sunday August 13, 2006 at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine in Belleville, Illinois (near St. Louis). Please let Judith Stegman

or a Council member know if you would be interested in helping to plan this convocation.

The convocation theme will focus on the particular *mission* of consecrated virgins in today’s Church and society, a mission expressed in a motto of St. Benedict, recently commended to consecrated persons by Pope Benedict: “Prefer nothing, absolutely nothing to the love of Christ.”

August 9 -
August 13
2006

*Our Lady of the
Snows
Belleville, Illinois*

International Gathering in Rome 2008 Update

There are no confirmed plans for a Rome 2008 international gathering of consecrated virgins, but the hope for it is “always in our hearts”. Let us pray for this endeavor. If anyone would like to participate with our French sisters in planning this event, please let Judith Stegman know.



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Consecrated Virgins**

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Reflection

The next issue of *The Lamp* will be an Easter issue. Ann Stitt sends this Lenten reflection:

Humility is perfect quietness. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, or irritated, or sore, or disappointed; it is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when I am blamed and despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret, and be at peace as in a deep sea of calmness when all around and above is trouble. - author unknown.

Loose my tongue, O Lord

February 20, 1998
Copyright Jeanne Kun

*Loose my tongue, O Lord,
that I might sing to you a song of praise
that finds its counterpoint and harmony among the choirs of heaven..*

*There is a melody
that weaves its measures through my nights and days,
running like a current of pure praise
beneath the surface of my cares and cautions,
finding voice in those glad moments when you pass by,
pressing in on me with your fierce beauty
and unbridling all my constraints and reservations.*

O may I learn to freely sing this song for you through all eternity.

*Seek ye
first the
Kingdom of
God,
and all these
things
will be
added unto
you.*

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