

The Lamp



United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

May 2007
Ascension of Our Lord

Volume 12, Issue 3

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

May 17, 2007 – Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Dear sisters in Christ,

As we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord and begin the Novena to the Holy Spirit in preparation for the celebration of Pentecost, I greet you with the words of our Lord at His Ascension: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20).

The final days of the Easter Season, which is completed with the celebration of Sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, remind us that our Lord has ascended to the right hand of God the Father not to withdraw from us but, rather, to remain with us always through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are inspired to think of the many and wonderful ways in which our Lord remains with us always in the Church, "to close of the age." We think of the Holy Eucharist, most of all.

Let us consider, in a special way, how the Holy Spirit has enlightened our minds and fortified our wills to respond to the call of Christ, which is our divinely-given vocation. Too often, in speaking about our vocation, we use the language of personal choice, as if our vocation is a way of life or work which we have chosen from a number of options. Speaking in this way easily leads us to consider our vocation as some personal project which we have undertaken for our satisfaction.

In truth, our vocation is a call from Christ to Whom we respond in obedience, dying to our own plans and projects in order to do only what God asks of us in Christ. God loves us first, calling us to share in His saving work by giving up our whole life for love of Him and our neighbor. God has, first, loved each of you, calling you to be a bride of His only-begotten Son. Recognizing in God's call the sign of His love of you in Christ, you have responded by offering your virginity, your entire being, for consecration. Recall the words of the "Prayer of Consecration" from the Rite of Consecration To a Life of Virginity which make it clear that your inspiration and strength in offering the resolve to remain in perpetual continence for consecration are themselves a gift from the Bridegroom to Whom the resolve is offered in total love.

Truly, you experience in a most wonderful Christ's abiding presence with you in the Church in your call to consecrated virginity lived in the world. He is your Bridegroom Who remains with you always, calling you to a life of perpetual continence for the sake of loving Him. Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, you have heard His call, and, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, you have responded with all your heart and continue to respond in the same way each day of your life.

With heartfelt prayers for a most blessed celebration of the Sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and with the request of a remembrance in your prayers, I remain

Yours in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

+Raymond L. Burke

(Most Rev.) Raymond L. Burke
Archbishop of Saint Louis
Episcopal Moderator of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

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Something Ancient . . . Something New . . . - Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman

The *National Catholic Reporter* headline: “Consecrated Virgins – Today they’re firefighters, nurses, Harvard students, even feminists” [April 27, 2007] I wonder what the headline might have been in the third-century time of Saint Cecilia, who was portrayed in the cover story artwork!

In his “Editor’s Note” on page two, Tom Roberts was bluntly honest in discussing his pre-suppositions about consecrated virgins and admitting a “certain jaded thinking” about what he considered “the church’s obsession with virginity”. I expect we all know some who have held such views, and I suspect similar views had to be dispelled in the time of the virgin-martyr Saint Cecilia, who explained in the face of her compelled marriage, “Do you not know that I am the bride of my Lord Jesus Christ?”

What is it that the Church really teaches about consecrated virginity? Held in high esteem by the Fathers of the Church, we find teaching on the spirituality of virginity by Saint Ambrose, Bishop Metodius of Olimpo, and Saint Augustine, among others. It was our Blessed Virgin Mary and the Lord Jesus himself who opened this radically new way of expressing spousal love. As other difficult teachings of Christ, this too poses a challenge to the hearer: fruitful virginity, virginity as an expression of a complete donation of oneself to another, virginity as a manifestation of mystical union with Christ.

This challenge is to be anticipated, according to Pope Benedict XVI in his address to consecrated persons during the 2007 celebration of World Day of Consecrated Life: “And so, when one renounces everything to follow Christ, when one gives to him all that one holds most dear, braving every sacrifice as did the divine Teacher, the consecrated person who follows in Christ's footsteps necessarily also becomes "a sign of contradiction", because his/her way of thinking and living is often in opposition to the logic of the world, as it is almost always presented in the media.”

Speaking eloquently of the vocation of consecrated virginity vis a vis Christian marriage is Mother Francis, PCC, Abbess of the Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Roswell, NM. May these words of an enclosed Poor Clare nun speak to us consecrated virgins who live in the world:

“Christian motherhood and consecrated virginity form a marvelous entity. Each is a fulfillment, and each a symbol. The Sacrament of Matrimony symbolizes the union of Christ with Holy Church. Consecrated virginity symbolizes the union of Christ with the souls of the blessed. Each is a positive thing, and virginity is no more a mere negation of motherhood than human maternity is a mere negation of virginity.

Because her consecrated virginity lifts her to a plane above carnal love, her affective responses are only the more tender for being the more purified. Womanhood is fulfilled quite as perfectly in a life of virginal chastity as in human marriage. And that is why the Church's ancient and elaborate ceremonial for the consecration of virgins has for its climax the placing of a wedding ring on the finger of the newly professed nun. "Receive this ring that marks you as a bride of God." She is wedded to Christ.

And the union is fecund with souls. . . . The more perfect her life of love and reparation, the more fruitful is her motherhood of souls. Consecrated virginity generates tenderness and compassion beyond what carnal love can attain, simply because it is not limited. Virginal love partakes of the boundlessness of Christ's love for souls. A Poor Clare's Divine Lover has a heart of infinite Love. It is to be expected that her own capacity for love will go on increasing as she grows in union with Him.

There is nothing stifling to the human personality in consecrated virginity. . . . Her love is released on a plane above the relations of conjugal love in spiritual maternity. Her ambition is to mother all the souls in the world.”

Current council members and officers are:

Judith M. Stegman, President, 2007 – 2009; Diocese of Lansing

Magalis Aguilera, ; 2007 – 2009 (appointed **Vice-President** thru 2009); Archdiocese of Miami

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

Shalina Stilley, 2005 – 2007; Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Aliceanne Sawyer, 2006 – 2008 (appointed Secretary thru 2008); Diocese of Trenton.

• Newsletter Team

○ Judith asks that any consecrated virgin who is interested in serving on or possibly leading a newly-formed newsletter team, please contact her. (Since no one responded last month, she is asking again!)

○ Publication dates for *The Lamp* for 2007:

✦ Feast of Ascension May 17th, submission deadline May 3rd

✦ Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul June 29th, submission deadline June 15th

✦ Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows September 15th, submission deadline September 1st

✦ Christmas December 25th, submission deadline December 10th

Feast of the Presentation February 2nd, 2008, submission deadline January 19th, 2008

Upcoming events:

Convocation of the United States Consecrated Virgins

August 8 to 12, 2007 Our Lady of Snows, Belleville, IL

In Love with Christ and His Church

○ Watch your inbox (email or US) for an invitation and registration form from Louise Pare, 2007 convocation team leader. As noted last month, the theme for this year's convocation arose from discussions among consecrated virgins about the distinct bridal nature of our vocation which expresses itself both in the intimate personal love of the virgin for Christ, as well as her expression of that love to the world about her and to the Body of Christ.

○ Archbishop Burke will explore this theme in light of the recent encyclical of Pope Benedict, "Sacramentum Caritatis" (*The Sacrament of Charity – On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission*).

○ We will also hear from one another in response to this question: "Canon 604 describes the consecrated virgin as one who is both mystically espoused to Christ and dedicated to the service of the Church, and the suggested homily of the Rite of Consecration of a Woman Living in the World states, "Never forget that you are given over entirely to the service of the Church and of all your brothers and sisters. You are apostles in the Church and in the World." How do you personally live this out in your daily practical life experience?"

We hope that many will be able to join us. No national convocation will be held in 2008 in order to allow many to attend the international gathering in Rome.

National Information Conference

August 1 to 3, 2007 Chicago, IL

Theresa Marshall, consecrated virgin from the diocese of Lansing, has agreed to serve as the leader of the 2007 Information Conference Team. Available by request or on our website is a newly designed flyer and registration form for that conference. We encourage and invite vocation directors and others working with candidates, women personally inquiring about the vocation, and newly consecrated virgins who haven't yet attended an informational conference. It is a great opportunity to interact with consecrated virgins, pray together, and deepen in an understanding of this distinctive bridal vocation.

International Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins

Rome: May 14 to 20, 2008

Consecrated Virgins Living in the World: "A Gift for the Church and in the Church"

We look forward to soon making available detailed information on the May 14-20, 2008 pilgrimage. In the meantime, it would be helpful to know if you are hoping to attend this historic event with consecrated virgins from around the world. Please let us know your thoughts and desires for possible add-on trips by completing the survey that was enclosed with last month's newsletter or just sending an e-mail or note to Isabel Bettwy. Isabel is a consecrated virgin experienced as a pilgrimage coordinator, and we're blessed to have her services! Contact information is: Isabel Bettwy, 1205 Maryland Ave., Steubenville, Ohio, 43952; imabettwy@aol.com.

Q & A on Consecrated Virginity

Question:

Would you explain more about the recommendation that the rite of *Consecration to a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World* be celebrated as a public event in the Church, rather than as a more private event? Why is it recommended that the rite be celebrated in the diocesan cathedral?

Answer:

The *Consecration to a Life of Virginity* is most assuredly a public celebration in the Church. As in a marriage or an ordination, members of the Church gather to witness and participate in an event with meaning beyond the candidates, an event with impact on the broader Christian community.

The Church is replete with powerful symbols, with images that deepen our awareness of spiritual realities. Think of the crucifix, the sign of the cross, holy water, the priest's vestments or the nun's habit. These are familiar, publicly known symbols that immediately speak to our hearts of life beyond the mundane. Consecrated virginity is likewise a sign, a dramatic sign of the world to come when all will live in perfect union with God. In fact, holy mother Church claims the consecrated virgin as a surpassing sign of her own love for Christ! The consecrated virgin has the high dignity of following Christ under the title "bride of Christ", the same title the Church herself has. From the introductory paragraph to the rite of consecration:

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

Since the days of the early Church, the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity has merited celebration in the diocesan cathedral for the very reason that Christ himself is the Bridegroom! The virgin is publicly constituted a sacred person in the Church. This is an *ecclesial* vocation; once consecrated, the virgin belongs to the whole Church, not just to her own parish. As such, she takes on the joys and the responsibilities of participation. In the same way that the Order of Priesthood and the Order of Deacons merit celebration of ordination in the cathedral, it is equally appropriate that the consecration to the Order of Virgins, the oldest and arguably most beautiful sacramental in the treasury of the Church, be given the dignity due the divine Bridegroom, Jesus Christ himself, and therefore be celebrated with exceeding joy in the cathedral of the diocese.

It is not required that the consecration take place in the cathedral, "if local custom circumstances or custom suggest otherwise", but surely the ecclesial nature of the consecration begs this consideration.

The introductions to the rite of consecration have much to say about the public celebration of the rite. Let's look in some detail at these points (italicized are the points with direct reference to the involvement of the people of God.)

The celebration of the rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity is envisioned as a truly ecclesial event! The candidates claim the joys of a wedding day, but this celebration extends profoundly to all who participate as they catch a glimpse into their own eternal destiny, when, as members of the Church, they are forever wed to the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ!

From the Rite

Each of the three pre-requisites for a woman to receive the consecration involves a public witness to the gift she has received: "a) that she has never been married or lived in public or open violation of chastity; b) that by her age, prudence, and universally attested good character she gives assurance of perseverance in a life of chastity dedicated to the service of the Church and of her neighbor; and c) that she be admitted to this consecration by the bishop who is the local Ordinary". [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity #5]

"The minister of the rite of consecration is the bishop who is the local Ordinary." . [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity #6]

The rite consists of parts which involve the candidate in the context of the local Church: a) she is called; b) *the homily instructs the candidate and people on the grace of virginity*; c) she is examined by the Bishop about her readiness to persevere in her intention and to receive the consecration; d) *the litany is prayed to God the Father, invoking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church Triumphant*; e) the candidate renews her intention of chastity; f) *the solemn blessing or consecration is prayed by which the Church asks our heavenly Father to pour out the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the candidates*; g) *the insignia of consecration are given as outward signs of spiritual dedication*. [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity #7]

The rite is celebrated in the context of the ritual Mass for the day of consecration to a life of virginity, with special instructions given for solemnities or Sundays of Advent, Lent, or the Easter season. [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity #8] It is recommended that "the rite of consecration take place during the Octave of Easter, on solemnities, especially those which celebrate the incarnation, on Sundays, or on feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary or of holy virgins." [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World #1]

continued on page 5

Q & A continued . . .

It is suggested that the liturgy of the word for the rite of consecration to a life of virginity be used as a help in bringing understanding to the “importance and place of virginity in the Church.” To this end, except on rare occasions, it is permitted to take one reading from the special list of readings for this rite. [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity #9]

The candidate is to be presented to the Bishop on a day scheduled close to the day of the rite of consecration, or at least on the day before the consecration, “so that the father of the diocese may begin a pastoral dialogue with his spiritual daughter.” [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World #2]

“The rite of consecration should take place in the cathedral, unless local circumstances or custom suggest otherwise.” Why? Because “it is at the discretion of the Bishop and by his authority that women living in the world are admitted to this consecration, and often they take part in the good works of the diocese.” [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World #3]

“As occasion offers, and especially to promote an esteem for chastity, to deepen understanding of the Church, and to encourage a greater attendance of the people, the faithful should be notified of the celebration in good time.” [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World #4]

“The consecration ordinarily takes place at the chair. To enable the faithful to take part more easily, the Bishop’s chair may be placed in front of the altar. Seats for the candidates should be so arranged in the sanctuary that the faithful may have a complete view of the liturgical rites.” [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World #6]

“For the Eucharistic celebration enough bread and wine should be prepared for the ministers, the candidates, their parents, relatives, and friends. If only one chalice is used, it should be sufficiently large.” [Intro to Consecration for a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World #7]

from the President’s journal

The USACV leadership council met with Archbishop Burke for most of the day on April 20, 2007 and again for a work session on April 21. Members are invited to review the minutes of these fruitful meetings and ask questions. The formation of new teams continues and I expect a number of you will be contacted over the next few months. The much-needed work of the Formation Resource Development Team is beginning to take shape under the leadership of Mary Kay Lacke and work on the plans for Rome 2008 is gearing up. We count on your prayers in all of these endeavors. Above all, let us lift one another in prayer that each of us might grow in holiness as we strive to live this vocation of love. — Judith Stegman



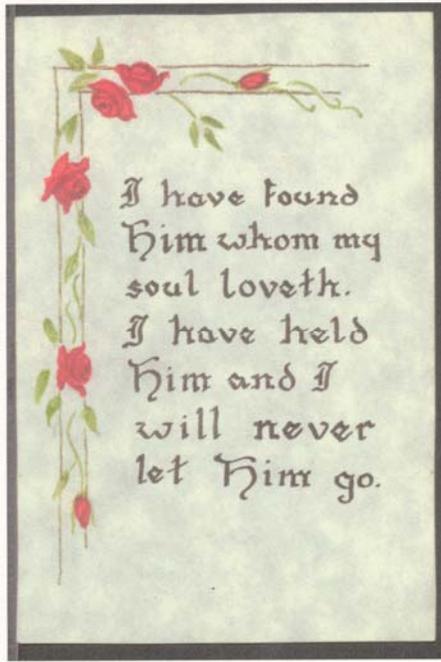
United States Consecration Announcements

Recent Consecrations

Helen Qua, February 10, 2007, Diocese of Metuchen, Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski.

Karen Hund, March 26, 2007, Diocese of Erie, Bishop Donald W. Trautman, 7:00 pm St. Peter Cathedral.

Geraldine DeBenedetto, April 14, 2007, Archdiocese of Boston, Archbishop Sean O'Malley.



Upcoming United States Consecrations:

Twanna Bolling, June 2, 2007, Archdiocese of Chicago, Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.

Vickie Hamilton, June 15, 2007, Feast of the Sacred Heart, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan, Shrine of St. Bernadette in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Florence Sundberg, June 15, 2007, Feast of the Sacred Heart, Archdiocese of Hartford, Archbishop Henry Mansell.



*I am
espoused to
Him
whom
the angels serve;
Sun and moon
stand in
wonder
at His glory.*

Photographs courtesy of Aliceanne Sawyer from Helen Qua's consecration celebrations.



Consecration Announcements from Other Countries

We are pleased to make the following announcements whom our Spouse calls to be His bride:

Canada:

Christelle Seguenot, Archdiocese of Sens-Auxerre, 1 October 2006

France:

Liliane Carles, 7 October 2006

Dominique Rochon, 17 December 2005, Diocese of Haute-Vienne

Elizabeth Chervet, 24 November 2006, Archdiocese of Paris

Chiara Zampolli, 24 March 2007, Archdiocese of Albi

Isabelle Coels, 13 May 2007, Archdiocese of Albi

Marie-Sylvie Latour, 25 February 2006

Genevieve Ripoché, 25 February 2006

Valerie Ward and Agnes-Marie Bodson, 8 June 2005, Diocese of Beauvais

Evelyne Le Beugle, 7 July 2005, Diocese of Beauvais

Armelle Viavant, 29 October 2005, Diocese of Luçon

Claire LeBlay, 3 April 2005, Diocese of Mayenne

Isabelle Meriende, 4 December 2004, Diocese of Laval

Marie-Noelle Gillois, 1 January 2005

Margaret Chopin, 17 April 2005

Anne de Bourges 25 July 2005, Diocese of Orleans

Myriam Seran 21 April 2006, Archdiocese of Montpellier

Argentina:

Marta Raquel Castagna, Laura Garcia, Estela Lujan Gomez, Silvia Larreategui; 31 May 2006, Diocese of Mar del Plata

Nancy Mirta Solari and Paula Andrea Zapata, 15 August 2006, Diocese of La Plata

Rosa Basgall, Gladis Arjona, Andrea Ferreira; 15 August, 2006, Diocese of Rafaela

Spain:

Silvia Gracela Tello, 20 November 2006

Italy:

Patrizia Vento, 4 April 2005, Diocese of Albenga

Uliana Silipo, 23 April 2006, Archdiocese of Perugia

Lorella Massagrande 6 May 2006, Diocese of Ascoli Piceno

Marilena Civefla 26 May 2007, Diocese of Gubbio

Alfina Faro, Santa Pappalardo, Pinella Pennisi, Lina Santangelo, 13 May 2006, Diocese of Catania

Puoti Patrizia, 31 May 2006, Diocese of Torino

Tarantino Pina, Gerardi Anna, De Matteis Anna Rita, Accoto Roberta, Stippelli Anna, Arnesano Caterina (Katia), 31 May 2006, Diocese of Lecce

Maria Luisa Crippa, Mariangela Natan Motta, Monica Somacai, 6 September 2006, Archdiocese of Milano

Antonella Garuti 8 October 2006, Diocese of Modena

Giuseppina Bruscolotti and Michela Marraro, 19 November 2006, Diocese of Orvieto-Todi

Laura Necchio and Ivana Zaino, 25 March 2006, Diocese of Pavia

Anna Arduini and Cristina Acquistapace, 25 March 2006, Diocese of Como

Gemma Grazia Cenci, 25 March 2006, Diocese of Arezzo/Cortona

Elisabetta Casadei, 21 April 2006, Archdiocese of Rome

Patrizia Pini and Marina Stella, 23 April 2006, Archdiocese of Rome

Carla Maria Benedetta Campori and Anna Cristina Peracchia, 31 May 2006, Diocese of Brescia

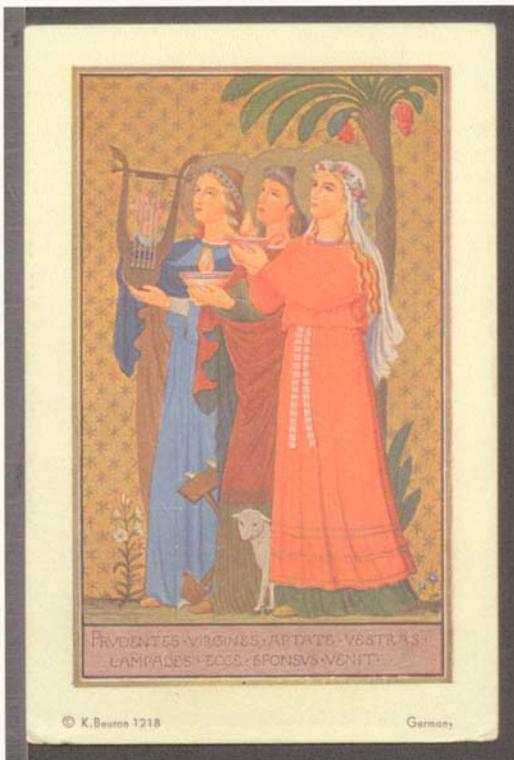
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Letter from Ann Stitt

Those of us who know Ann would not be surprised to learn that she kept a letter she wrote to her friends on the day of her consecration, 1974. The recent reflections by newly consecrated virgins inspired Ann to dig up this writing and send it to us. For your enrichment:

Peace! 26 July '74

My dear friend, friend of God,

That you are, and so very truly dear to me, I am sending you a little something to celebrate with God, with me, with! on the tenth anniversary of my Baptism, of my birth into the Kingdom of heaven, that begins here and now in knowing and loving JESUS the Son of God. These words of the homily, and of the Solemn prayer of Consecration, from the Ceremony for the Consecration of Virgins, are the words of the Church that has heard me saying my YES to JESUS, and has answered with this calling, this embracing, this YES to me that come to me from all Eternity! in the Spirit!

When I knelt down, again in my place after receiving my first holy communion, I asked our Lord to make of my life one long holy communion! Ten years later I ask, as I have often repeated this asking of Him, today, and I know that the asking and the answering, the calling and the saying YES, shall go on each new day of my life until that day comes when I joyfully say YES once more, the last time, yet the first, in heaven!

Please do not stop praying for me, as I do not stop praying for you, gratefully praising God for you who have so much helped to show me His Way! It is our strength, our true comfort, that we pray for each other. God love you and keep you in His joy and peace.

In Jesus,

Ann Elizabeth Rose

Special Announcement

Information Packet now on line! The entire content of the Information Packet is now available on the USACV website, www.consecratedvirgins.org. We owe a debt of gratitude to Loretta Matulich and Vickie Hamilton for their tremendous labor of love in re-typing and formatting all of the documents for uploading to the website.

The images in this newsletter are from old holy cards. The replicas were sent to me by a friend last Christmas. I hope they touch your hearts as they have mine. Julie Taube