

December 12, 2024 — Our Lady of Guadalupe

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

Mary is the new ark of the Covenant and this is no better seen than in the wonderful image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, pregnant with something far greater than what was contained in that old ark. The description in the Book of Revelation is a more glorious presentation of Mary than we see in this humble but divine painting of the Aztec Madonna. In the Book of Revelation, she is clothed with the sun, the moon is under her feet, and she is surrounded by a royal crown of twelve stars.

Yet, we know this is not how Mary started out. In spite of being a poor young woman living in a small village of no account, this Mary is the one God chose as the perfect bearer of the Word of God. And God uses her virginity and her espousal to Joseph to further his plan. The angel then tells this trembling young person not to be afraid but to rejoice, that she has been graced by God long ago and now it is time to accept God’s plan. This is clearly seen in the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Yet, my sisters, humble beginnings and glorious endings are what we are about as Christians. God takes us as we are and by means of his love and grace, we become his daughters and heirs with Christ to the very glory of God. We give thanks today that Mary’s “yes” has made this possible and we pray that we will echo that “yes” every day of our lives. A Most Blessed Christmas and New Year to all of you.

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Sincerely yours in Christ,
+ Earl Boyea
 Most Reverend Earl Boyea
 Bishop of Lansing



By Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D.

The *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum* is the most ancient liturgical rite for our virginal vocation – it is older than any other rite of consecration for women. The ritual has a history rooted in the lives of the virgins and virgin-martyrs who were called by the Eternal Father to follow His Son’s virginal love for His Spouse, the Church. The life they live is as the life of the Virgin Mary of Nazareth—she who was called and in the mystery of the power of God was virgin before, during, and after the delivery of The Only Begotten Son of The Father. We consecrated virgins are witnesses of the wedding feast to come, of Jesus Christ with His Church, and of the future life in which there will be no matrimony but instead a return of the Father’s will of love for us in the power of the virginity of the Holy Trinity. The Father’s great love is pictured clearly in the giving to us of His Son to be our Redeemer, for the first disobedience of our first fathers, Eve and Adam. Our Blessed Virgin Mother is our model and her acceptance of the will of the Eternal Father is the stronghold of our vocation. She was left on earth, not taken to heaven immediately, because she is the Mother who with her presence in silence, solitude, and service, comforted the Apostles who awaited the resurrection of Jesus Christ, her Son, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, who at Pentecost came and unified them. There is no unity other than the one coming from the Eternal Family in their one being in Trinity!

The rite *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum* is like the rule in monastic life, but for a consecrated virgin living in midst of the circumstances of her century. The ritual is a study, reflection, and building up of the mystical experience of the life of a nuptial relationship with our Divine Lord and Spouse that witnesses to the Eternal Kingdom, where there will be no matrimony. We know that the Eternal Father blessed Eve and Adam after their disobedience, as a temporary solution for the procreation of a family. Later, our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, as He restored our communication with the Holy Trinity, elevated this first blessing to a sacrament, that is, a sign of His redemptive mission for our salvation. But at the same time, our Lord was explicit in noting the temporary meaning of a couple’s marital union: “at the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like

the angels in heaven” (Mt. 22:30). Jesus Christ is called the Bridegroom of His Church and in heaven everyone will be experiencing the virginal love of the Holy Trinity. The first human being joining the essence of the life to come in the Holy Trinity is Mary of Nazareth, who was created virgin as Eve was created virgin. Thus it is that the Most Blessed Mother is the mother of all mortals who are redeemed and have accepted the will of the Eternal Father following His Son’s words: “I came to do the will of my Eternal Father.”

The Rite is the expression of our Mother’s words: “Be it done unto me according to thy word” (Lk. 1:38). The consecrated virgin accepts the will of the Eternal Father and His Son’s Church just as the Angel of the Lord announces it, and the Holy Spirit transforms us with a new grace, the grace to be brides of Jesus Christ in the meaning of the essence of His virginity; this new call of spiritual maternity is not a product of the human body but instead of the eternal meaning of virginity in the Holy Trinity. In our spiritual being, there in our soul, we are covered in the consecratory prayer by the shadow of the Holy Spirit, as it was with our most Blessed Virgin Queen and Mother.

The spirituality of the *Ordo virginum* expressed in the rite of consecration is the spirituality of our Most Blessed Mother as we meditate on the biblical quotes in the text of the ritual that are rooted in our Blessed Mother’s YES (her *FIAT*). She is the Virgin who followed Her Son throughout His life, and after His resurrection, He left His Church in her virginal care. A powerful spiritual Mother is she! Mary of Nazareth, now Queen of Heaven and Earth.

The purpose of this article is to guide us in meditating on the meaning of the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity. The rite is our sweet and light rule of life as spouses of the Bridegroom; we will look at the rite’s development in its inspiration from the Fathers of the Church over centuries until our time, quoting those saints who spoke about virgins in order to learn the contributions they present to each one of us “to follow the Lamb wherever He leads” (Rite #16).

Antecedents of the 1970 revision of the *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum*

Two months after the promulgation of the *Missale Romanum* dated March 26, 1970, another decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship promulgated a revision of the rite “*Ordo Consecrationis Virginum*” on May 31, 1970.

The proximity of the two books—the Roman Missal and the Roman Pontifical with the *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum*—indicates the continuity of a work that advanced rapidly and steadily towards the restoration of the liturgy of Rome according to the norms of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, following Pontifical advice in fidelity to two millennia of Church teachings. The proximity of the texts recalls that the great conciliar assembly applied itself with similar care and equal authority when it ordered the restructuring of the fundamental liturgical actions, such as the rite of the Eucharistic sacrifice: “The Ordinary of the Mass shall be revised...” (Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC) n. 50); and when it prescribed the revision of the more secondary actions, such as the rite of the consecration of virgins: “The rite of consecration of virgins shall be revised...” (SC n. 80). The similarity in wording was dictated by an identical love. (see Annibale Bugnini, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, in *L’Osservatore Romano*, September 27, 1970).

Although it is a minor rite, the *Ordo Consecratio Virginum* is “a precious piece for its spiritual content, venerable for its ancient origin and appreciated for the beauty of some of its formula of preparation” (Bugnini). Like the *Ordo Professionis Religiosae* promulgated February 2, 1970, the *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum* was prepared by working group XX bis, formed after the Council for the execution of the liturgical reform, established in the month of May 1966 and placed alongside Group XX, the authoritative working group that produced the first liturgical rite published in definitive form after the Council: *De ordinationi Diaconi, Presbyteri et Episcopi*, on August 15, 1966, (see Annibale Bugnini).

Bugnini noted that the process of the work for drafting the *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum* was identical to that of the other liturgical books promulgated up to that time: consultation with specialists; drafting of a basic schema; successive revisions of the schema as new reflections and

observations advised changes or additions (four drafts): presentation and discussion at the plenary sessions of the Concilium (twice); a phase of experimentation. In particular for the *Ordo Consecrationis Virginum*, it was necessary to emphasize the consultation made with numerous religious families (August 1969) and the frequent work of revision carried out by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (now the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life).

History

It is not possible to outline here, even in a brief synthesis, the history of the Rite of the Consecration of Virgins, for this would mean examining the perennial love of the Church—East and West—for consecrated virginity and for the rite which expresses its offering to God; it would mean recalling innumerable episodes of ancient Christian life and the displays of the catacombs depicting the *velatio virginum* (veiling of virgins), rereading anthological pages of Christian literature, the words of Tertullian, the paternal writings of Cyprian (North Africa), the eulogies of Methodius of Olympus, the vibrant writings of St. Jerome (4th and 5th centuries), the continual reasoning of St. Ambrose, the profound and pastoral works of St. Augustine, and the insightful books of Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great, and John Chrysostom (see various internet sources, including New Advent).

We might, in this most simple outline, consider some of the first testimonies to the existence of a proper liturgical rite for the consecration of virgins. In Rome, we can look to the pontificates of Liberius (352-366) and of Siricius (384-394); the Church always was renewed in Her mission of sanctification with the testimony of virgins living their virginal love for the Divine Spouse, and the evidence of the reciprocal love of the Divine Spouse for His spouse. Evidence of this is Saint Cecilia whose parents at the time of marriage chose a bridegroom for



her. The Divine Spouse, however, had called her first and He took care of protecting her integral virginity. On the very night of her wedding an Angel came and the man with whom she was married understood the mystical meaning of Saint Cecilia's repeated words to him: "my Spouse will send an Angel to protect me."



In retrospect, we find that the virginal consecration is a fruit of Pentecost—first there were those who were not married and followed Jesus Christ, receiving the gift of their virginity as their Lord and Master (see Mt. 19: 10–12). Later we read in the Acts of the Apostles about the four virgin daughters of Phillip the deacon who prophesied (Acts 21: 8–9). So too, since the apostolic age, there is evidence that the virginal vocation began to be treated as a stable state of life. Saint Ignatius of Antioch was witness to a group of women who were living in perpetual chastity and included with the group of widows. At that time women were unable to live alone because they depended on their fathers. The primitive Church supplied for the widows and because of that the widows and virgins were often grouped together. "I salute the families of my brethren, with their wives and children, and the virgins who are called widows" (Ignatius of Antioch (c.35–108 A.D.), Letter to the Christians of Smyrna, ch. 13, trans. in New Advent). In the first century and in the first years of the second century the observance of virginity was seen as a state of life.

In the late second century and into the third century, the virginal vocation was defined as a state of life by Tertullian (Africa), Saint Cyprian (North Africa), and Saint Methodius of Olympus in Asia Minor. The fourth to fifth centuries find the great Saint Augustine (Africa), Saint Jerome (b. Dalmatia, d. Bethlehem- Palestine), and Saint Ambrose supporting the virginal state of life. Saint Jerome was secretary of Pope Damasus I. Saint Ambrose was the brother of Saint Marcelina, virgin, who was the eldest in her family and made it a point to pass to her younger brothers the "desire not to express their virtue, but to become truly virtuous." Marcelina devoted herself

to the practice of piety and asceticism, living a life of great austerity. She was consecrated by Pope Liberius in the Basilica of Saint Peter on Christmas Day in the year 353. According to tradition, Marcelina turned the family home into a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which later became Saint'Ambrose della Massima. After Ambrose became Bishop of Milan in 374, he called on his sister, who proved to be zealous in fostering the ascetic life among the young women of Milan. Ambrose dedicated his work *On Virginity*, written in 377, to his sister Marcelina. She survived her brother by a year, dying in 398. Paulinus the Deacon wrote a biography of Ambrose at the request of Augustine of Hippo, and learned the details of Ambrose's life from Marcelina.

The Christian virgins in North Africa provide the most exact information we have about the history of the virginal consecration because the Church of North Africa was the first to utilize the Latin language, at a time when in Rome Greek was utilized in the liturgy and in official documents.

There is information through Clement of Alexandria and Origen about the Church of Egypt where the growing number and life of the virgins was exalted. In Asia Minor Methodius of Olympus witnessed the growth in number and virtue of the consecrated virgins. Letters of Clement showed the same development of the state of life of consecrated virginity in Syria and Palestine. Tertullian noted with joyful words that at the beginning of the third century in the Church of Carthage—an ancient Phoenician city located on the northern coast of Africa which before the rise of Ancient Rome was the most prominent city in the region—"There are many virgins married with Christ!" Saint Cyprian confirmed Tertullian's observations about 40 years later: "The Church appeared crowned with flowers with such large number of virgins." Cyprian's treatise "On the Vestments of Virgins" refers to the virgins as the flower of the tree that is the Church, as they reflect the holiness of the Lord, with their total being belonging to Christ alone.

In Rome, the virgin martyr Saint Agnes was just twelve to thirteen years old in 304–305 at the time of Christian persecutions. She is a model of fidelity to the love of the Divine Spouse, for her martyrdom came in the early years of her life, at the age when adolescents begin to discover

the meaning of their vocation in this world. Our Divine Lord was twelve years of age when Hee was left in the temple in Jerusalem because He discovered that He had come into this world to take care of His Father's will for us. The noble Saint Asella, noted by Saint Jerome for her virtues, was consecrated in the year



246. Irene, the sister of Pope Damasus, was consecrated in the mid fourth century and died at twenty years of age before her brother ascended to the pontifical throne in the year 366.

Saint Jerome, during his time in Rome (382–385) noted the many consecrations of virgins, including Eustochium who was born in Rome in 368 and died in Bethlehem in 419 or 420; she was the third of four daughters of the Roman Senator Toxotius and his wife Paula, later Saint Paula. Eustochium lived a life of austerity and refrained from enjoying the normal pleasure of the world. Her mother was widowed at the age of 32, and when Saint Jerome came to Rome in 382 Eustochium and Paula put themselves under his spiritual guidance. About the year 384 Eutoschium made the promise of perpetual virginity on which occasion Saint Jerome addressed to her his celebrated letter “De custodia virginitatit” (see Ep xxii in P.L.,XXII, 394-425), in which he discusses the motivation for a life of perpetual virginity and the daily conduct of virgins.



A year later, in 385, Saint Jerome returned to Palestine and soon after was followed to the Orient by Paula and Eustochium. In 386, they accompanied Saint Jerome on his journey to Egypt where they visited the hermits of the Nitrian Desert in order to study and afterwards imitate their mode of life. In this

same year they returned to Palestine; Paula and Eutochium learned perfectly the Hebrew language and there Saint Paula (widowed) erected four monasteries: one was occupied by the monks directed by Saint Jerome and three others were taken by Paula and Eustochium for the numerous virgins that flocked around them. These monasteries were under the supervision of Paula. The virgins lived in silence and shared the common oratory, with all the virgins and widows meeting several time each day for prayers and the recitation or chanting of the psalms. Saint Jerome testifies (Epistle 108) that Eustochium and Paula did the most blessed services with their life of prayers; all the virgins and widows spent a significant part of their time studying the Holy Scriptures guided by Saint Jerome who said: “Ignorance of the Holy Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”

We consecrated virgins who living “in the century,” in the ordinary circumstances of life, have the duty and call to nurture our inner selves with the wisdom of Holy Scripture, even as we engage fully in our occupations and work. During our recreation time, we can take advantage of the good programs offered through the media to learn the Holy Scriptures and to contemplate these during our routine working time. Contemplation is the product of our opening ourselves to the Word of the Lord and allowing the Holy Spirit who inspired us, to contemplate the Lord's will at each moment. We, virgins in the present age, have to work and yet also need to remember that our sisters in the same consecration in the primitive Church had no socio-economic protection, and the widows and virgins with their inheritances supplied for those that had not. We also look back and see that our Blessed Mother and Queen had to be protected because she had no inheritance. Her Son, dying on the cross, gave her to John as her son and gave him to her as his mother. This is the meaning of the virginal vocation—to grow in our role as witnesses to the Kingdom to come in the midst of the circumstances of the century in which we are called to live.

(To be continued in the February 2 2025 issue of *The Lamp*. For more insight into the history of the Rite, see “Something Ancient, Something New” in the February and June 2020 issues of *The Lamp*.)

By Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD
Archdiocese of Miami (FL)

“The custom of consecrating women to a life of virginity flourished even in the early Church... 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” (*Praenotanda* 1, Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity).

Dr. Magalis Aguilera discusses the early history of this flourishing custom of consecrating women to a life of virginity in *Something Ancient, Something New* (see p. 2). She points to the fervent and austere lives of virgins in the early Church who sought to follow the Lamb, their Divine Spouse, wherever He might lead, enduring with joy any earthly hardship. As we live in our century, with the revision of the rite of consecration and restoration of the ancient *Ordo virginum*, consecrated virgins of today are called to remain faithful witnesses to the eternal life to come, guarding our virginal hearts and seeking only to please the Bridegroom in all we think, say, and do.

The unexpected death of consecrated virgin Dr. Linda Ann Long on the feast of Christ the King brings home the stark reality of the shortness of life on this earth, and thus the significance of each moment of life. At our consecrations, the Church has prayed “with fervor for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit” that we might persevere in our virginal lives in witness to the eternal life to come, where there will be no giving or taking in marriage, but all will live as the angels in heaven (see Mt. 22:30). “At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12). My sisters, and I speak also to myself, let us live now in the love that is patient, kind, not jealous or rude, that endures all things, hopes all things, and rejoices in the truth. Let us live as witnesses to the life that is to come.

USACV and International Resource Center for the *Ordo Virginum*

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One Unfilled Position

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Amanda Schrauth; Publication of *The Lamp*, Diocese of Helena (MT).

Submissions Accepted

If you would like to submit an article or artwork for consideration in a future edition of *The Lamp*, please email it to [Amanda Schrauth](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org) at info@consecratedvirgins.org. We accept articles and artwork from consecrated virgins related to our vocation or related to Our Lady and the virgin saints. If you would like to write and submit a remembrance or memorial for a deceased consecrated virgin to be published in a future edition of *The Lamp*, please email it to info@consecratedvirgins.org.

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY



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By Florence Sundberg

We too walk through Advent filled with Our Lady's expectation of a great change that is coming upon the world: a Savior is to be born of Mary and in our own hearts and souls and we are called to share His life, His love, His peace with each one of our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is truly a joy-filled period of time despite the darkness and the violence and suffering that is permeating our world. We are the bearers of Christ's life and His love because we are His and He is ours and we are called to generate His life, His love, His hope - His very Presence, to our brothers and sisters. I share once again this Advent poem / prayer as we unite with Our Lady and her own joy filled expectation of giving birth to Our Savior Jesus Christ.

Like the dawning of the morning
On the mountain's golden heights,
Like the breaking of the moonbeams
On the gloom of cloudy nights;
Like the secret told by angels,
Getting known upon the earth,
Is the Mother's expectation
Of Messiah's speedy birth.

Thou wert happy, blessed Mother,
With the very bliss of heaven,
Since the angel's salutation
In thy raptured ear was given;
Since the Ave of that midnight,
When thou wast anointed Queen,
Like a river overflowing
Hath the grace within thee been.

And what wonders have been in thee
All the day and all the night,
While the angels fell before thee,
To adore the Light of Light;
While the glory of the Father
Hath been in thee as a home,
And the scepter of creation
Hath been wielded in thy womb.

Thou hast waited, Child of David!
And thy waiting now is o'er!
Thou hast seen Him Blessed Mother!
And wilt see him evermore!
Oh! His Human Face and Features,
They were passing sweet to see;
Thou beholdest them this moment;
Mother, show them now to me!

Anne Gishpert, USACV-IRC archivist, reminds consecrated virgins who have not done so to please send her a copy of your consecration certificate (providing this copy also enables United States virgins to be full voting members of the USACV). Anne also keeps the USACV "family" albums, which include mementos from consecrations. You are warmly invited to send Anne the program, invitation, holy cards, photos, or other items from your consecration. Anne especially asks those consecrated in recent years to send these so that she can update our albums. The "family" albums travel each year to our convocation, and always bring smiles and memories. You can email Anne at anne.gishpert@gmail.com.

Ordo Virginum Brochures Available

The USACV has thousands of beautiful tri-fold printed pamphlets on our vocation that were prepared by consecrated virgins for the National Eucharistic Congress. These are not yet available in our USACV online store, but you may order some for displays in parishes, schools, or diocesan offices, or to have available to distribute at a consecration. The cost is \$5 for 25 pamphlets; \$15 for 100 pamphlets; or \$70 for 500, plus shipping. To order, just send an email to info@consecratedvirgins.org letting us know what you would like (number and English or Spanish), and the mailing address. We'll let you know the cost, including shipping.



SAVE THE DATE!

June 27 - July 1

2025 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

Theme: St Teresa of Avila and the Interior Castle

Plans are being made for a retreat-style 2025 convocation to be held in the Diocese of Knoxville in Tennessee. Our plans are tentative, but we hope to gather on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Friday, June 27 at the Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Knoxville.

Our retreat-styled convocation will then take place in Gatlinburg, about an hour's drive from Knoxville, where we will rent several condominium units—condos that overlook a mountain stream and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park! Our convocation-retreat will include a presentation on the Two Ways by Bishop Boyea on Saturday morning (June 28) and a series of talks by our chaplain, Fr. David Whiteside, beginning Friday evening (June 27) focused on the teachings on contemplative prayer of St Teresa of Avila using her writings on the Interior Castle. Our schedule will include daily Mass, Morning and Evening Prayer together, some time for shared recreation, and much opportunity for personal prayer and prayer walks in the Smokies.

Many more details are to come. The condominiums are in a peaceful environment and each has a large porch, living room, kitchen, two bedrooms and baths, with sleeping space for three or four virgins. There will be opportunity for an extended stay after the convocation. To help us continue making plans for what we expect to be a unique and prayerful gathering, please let us know of your interest. You can contact us with your thoughts and questions at usacvmembership@gmail.com or info@consecratedvirgins.org.



**United States Convocation
of Consecrated Virgins**

Diocese of Knoxville, Tennessee

June 27 - July 1, 2025

Save the Date! In honor of World Day of Consecrated Life during the Jubilee Year 2025, all members of consecrated life in the United States (women religious, men religious, members of secular institutes, and consecrated virgins) are invited to participate in a virtual encounter of prayer on February 2, 2025. See the announcement, below. In early 2025, the USACV will send a registration link to all consecrated virgins in the United States with whom we have contact.

**Pilgrims of Hope
on the Path of Peace**

Sunday, February 2, 2025

**Virtual Encounter of Prayer
for All Members of
Consecrated Life in the
United States**

JUBILEE 2025
PILGRIMS OF HOPE

3:30 PM PST
4:30 PM MST
5:30 PM CST
6:30 PM EST

Traductores
de Español
Disponibles

The ZOOM Link will be sent to all members of the Conferences.

Hosted by:

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious

Leadership Conference of Women Religious



United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

United States Conference of Secular Institutes



By Diane Christine Farr

A litany is a form of liturgical prayer of continuing successive invocations. The Litany of Our Lady was first approved in 1587 by Pope Sixtus V. It is also called the Litany of Loreto since it was first prayed there. In these reflections we will highlight several selections found in our Lady's litany pausing to ponder their richness in meaning.

Queen of Virgin's Pray for us

We see in the Blessed Virgin Mary the highest form and most sublime example of what it means for a woman to be consecrated to God by a perpetual bond of virginity. Holy Mary's most pure body was lovingly preserved for divine use only. The glory of her virginity had its origin in the depths of her beautiful soul. Her whole being was in perfect harmony with the Divine Will. In the incarnation, her virginity was overshadowed and made holy by the Divinity at work in her. As consecrated virgins, we are grateful to view our virginal state as the treasure of God's Holy Will for us. We are drawn into a unique intimacy with Jesus characterized by a tender spousal love. It is our delight to come to know Him as our holy Bridegroom and Mary as our dear mother and exemplar.

We also have an appreciation for those women who are called by God to bring children into the world through the gift of holy motherhood. As consecrated virgins, we have been permitted to share in the profound mystery of our Lady's perpetual virginity. We pray with deep reverence that she will continuously clothe us as her daughters with the bridal dress of true virginity of heart as well as body. May this dress be adorned with numerous acts of love for our beloved Spouse. It is with deep humility that we praise God for this precious vocation.

Ark of the Covenant pray for us

"Then God's Temple in Heaven was opened and the Ark of the Covenant was seen within His temple." Rev 11:19 "And a great portent appeared in Heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." Rev 12:1.

Mary is indeed the Ark of God's new covenant and she is clothed with the sun of His most Holy Will. It was by the Divine Will that she was conceived immaculate and prepared her mission in our redemption. The glory of the presence of God was with the people of Israel in the Ark of the Covenant. In the mystery of the Incarnation, the Blessed Virgin Mary became the tabernacle of the living holy presence of God. She would carry this presence with her as she greeted her cousin Elizabeth. Just as the Ark was covered with pure gold so also was Our Lady clothed with the gold of highest sanctity and untouched virginity. The Ark contained the tablets of the law, Aaron's rod and a bowl of manna. Holy Mary contained Jesus Christ the author of the law, Eternal High Priest and the living bread come down from Heaven. We recall the words of the angel to Our Lady, "The Lord is with you." (Lk 1:28) When we spend time with Mary we will always find her Divine Son as well.

Cause of our joy pray for us

Let us think of a time when we first knew we had a heavenly mother with us. Here are the opening lines of a lovely poem by Mary Dixon Thayer. "Lovely Lady dressed in blue, teach me how to pray! God was just your little boy, tell me what to say!"

We find great joy in experiencing the reality that Jesus has given us the gift of His own mother. She will indeed teach us how to pray if we ponder her words in her Magnificat and follow her example. She will show us how to make a joyful home in our heart for

Jesus and to love Him above all things. Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Lk 1:46) We are also exhorted by St. Paul, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say Rejoice." (Phil 4:4)

We are reminded of our Lord's words, "I have told you these things that my joy may be yours and your joy may be full." (Jn 15:11) The consecrated Virgin sees her communion with Jesus her Holy Bridegroom as her supreme joy. Sometimes He is expressed through music. In all of our sufferings and difficulties, we also need the joy and comfort of Mary the greatest of mothers.

Mystical Rose Pray for us

The rose with its lovely form and captivating fragrance is the most beautiful of flowers so it is a fitting symbol of our Lady and her perfect love for God and for us. The rose is a stunning image of her flawless beauty radiating through all of her qualities. Roses are often used to adorn her shrines. Different colors are used to symbolize the mysteries of the rosary. They are white for joyful, purple for luminous, red for sorrowful and yellow for glorious. The red and white striped rose is known as the visitation rose. The harmonious beauty we honor in the Blessed Virgin is a reflection of the perfect order and radiant beauty emanating from the most Holy Trinity. Our Lady is considered God's masterpiece. The word rosary means garland of roses. As we learn to pray the rosary more carefully, let us offer these roses to our mother asking her to obtain for us the grace to reflect the beauty of the Trinity in our own lives.

Seat of Wisdom pray for us

Jesus Christ is Eternal Wisdom Incarnate. His holy mother has become the seat of wisdom by her perfect

following of her Divine Son. Her whole life was illuminated by the light of God's wisdom. In the Gospel of John, she says, "Do whatever He tells you." John 2:5 This shows the wisdom of Mary's firm faith. The holy mother of God would learn the wisdom of the cross enduring the sword of sorrow with absolute trust in God. She would suffer the agony of losing her Divine Son for three days. This would foreshadow what she would suffer while sharing in His passion and death. She endured all with patience, fortitude and the divine strength given her to stand beneath her Son's cross. All lead her to the tremendous joy of the resurrection and eternal beatitude with Jesus.

In the sufferings that are not lacking to us, we too wish to learn wisdom as we find our refuge in Mary's Immaculate Heart. The heart of our mother will lead us into the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, our perpetual dwelling. We give thanks for our merciful mother and we pray that the peace of Christ our Divine Spouse reign in our hearts. May the most Holy Trinity be ever praised and adored.



Artwork by Marion Biestek

Pray With Us! Virtual Vespers

Consecrated virgins, candidates, and friends continue to join for Virtual Vespers on various feast days of our Lord, our Blessed Virgin Mother, and virgin saints. Mark your calendars for the following dates. A few days before each time of prayer, a link will be sent to all consecrated virgins and those who have attended a recent Information Conference. If you do not receive a link and would like to participate, please contact info@consecratedvirgins.org.

Upcoming Virtual Vespers dates:

+ Tuesday, January 21, 2025, Saint Agnes, Virgin and Martyr, 8:00pm ET

+ Tuesday, March 25, 2025, The Annunciation of the Lord, 9:00pm ET

+ Sunday, April 27, 2025, Sunday of Divine Mercy, 9:00pm ET

Rome in October 2025 - Are You Interested?

Pope Francis has chosen the motto “Pilgrims of Hope” for the 2025 Jubilee Year. The Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has announced a Jubilee of Consecrated Life to be held October 8-9, 2025, with the theme, “Pilgrims of hope, on the path to peace.” The official Jubilee events for consecrated life include passage through Holy Doors and Mass with the Holy Father, and we understand that there may be a specific gathering of consecrated virgins these days. More information can be found on the Vatican website at <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/pellegrinaggio/calendario-giubileo/GrandiEventi/Giubileo-della-Vita-Consacrata.html>.

The USACV is not planning to organize travel for consecrated virgins to Rome for these Jubilee Days in October 2025, however we would be pleased to organize some activities for virgins who may travel to Rome for these days. Are you interested in working with a group of virgins to make plans for us in Rome in October? Are you already planning to travel to Rome during these days? If so, please be in touch with Judith Stegman at president@consecratedvirgins.org.

The USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations is also preparing a Resource Packet for anyone in dioceses or organizations who might find it useful as they prepare for the Jubilee Days for Consecrated Life. The Resource Packet includes tips for those who may make a pilgrimage to Rome for the Jubilee Days as well as suggestions for celebrating Consecrated Life locally.

Openings on the USACV Leadership Team

Three of five seats on the USACV Section Leadership Team open on January 1, 2025. Last Sunday, December 8, 2024, we held a most productive online meeting for consecrated virgins interested in learning more about serving in leadership in the USACV. As a follow up, virgins are prayerfully considering this service and we plan to hold elections in early January 2025. Until then, current leadership team members will continue to serve in their positions.

2024 Membership Drive Update

Francesca Riddick, our membership chairperson, thanks all who have responded to our 2024 membership drive. A good number have not yet responded, though, and Francesca plans to send out reminder emails this week. Only those who are registered as members in 2024, by December 31, 2024, will be eligible to vote in the upcoming January election. Please register! Online registration is the fastest and easiest way to do this. Here is a link: [2024 USACV Membership Registration](#). Francesca Riddick, usacvmembership@gmail.com

Volume III of the Ordo Virginum series

Shalina Stilley, Diocese of San Diego Volume III, about virgin saints, continues to come along nicely and is in the editing stage at this point. If you have volunteered to write about a Saint but haven't yet submitted it, please contact Shalina at catherinestilley@gmail.com. Artists, too, are invited to contact Shalina if you haven't yet been in touch.

Recordings Available!

Links to recordings from the virtual sessions of the 2022 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins (held in La Crosse) and the 2022 Virtual Information Conference on the *Ordo virginum*, are now available, and links to the 2024 Virtual Information Conference will be ready soon. If you attended a particular conference in person or virtually, and would like to receive a link to the conference you attended, at no charge, please email info@consecratedvirgins.org with your request. If you did not attend the conference, links to the recordings are available for purchase through our online store at consecratedvirgins.org.

September 28, 2024 — Courtney Ramsdell, at the hands of The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport (CT).

October 6, 2024 — Helen Veronica Thérèse Almeter, at the hands of the Most Reverend Stephen D. Parks, Bishop of Savannah (GA).

November 22, 2024 — Jennifer Wyckoff, at the hands of The Most Reverend David D. Kagan, Bishop of Bismarck (ND).

Upcoming Consecrations

We are unaware of any upcoming consecrations. If you would like to submit one, please email info@consecratedvirgins.org.



Helen Almeter
Photo credit: Paul Camp



Courtney Ramsdell



Jennifer Wyckoff



designs by jessina
ja.designs24@gmail.com

Upcoming Issues of the Lamp

February 2, 2025 Feast of the Presentation and World Day for Consecrated Life

May 31, 2025 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin

September 8, 2025 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

December 12, 2025 Our Lady of Guadalupe

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2025 are invited to submit an anniversary reflection for *The Lamp*. These anniversary reflections are popular among our readers as they convey a personal look at life lived as a bride of Christ in the *Ordo virginum*.

5 Years



Dawn Hausmann
consecrated November 16, 2019
Diocese of Lansing (MI)

On my 5th anniversary, I took the day to retreat with our Beloved, Jesus. I sat in my chapel and thought of the beauty of belonging irrevocably to Him and how peaceful and secure it

is. I am his and he is mine! I sing with the Psalmist. It's so simple but yet so profound to ponder this mystery. I also thought joyfully, "Jesus, happy anniversary! We are 5 years in with eternity to go! Thank you for this great gift that I love but don't deserve!"

Over these 5 years, I am in awe of the various ways that our Lord has helped me grow in trusting his Spousal love. He used various things such as, a refrigerator dying, plumbing problems, and minor health scares to give me continued opportunities to trust in his spousal provision. Every time he proves trustworthy in his care for me in mysterious ways.

One of the greatest things that I find myself in awe of is the deepening of spiritual motherhood for various people who need motherly care. In this point of my career path and service to his church, it looks like accompanying many women in their journey of discernment to their vocation. This is a great joy for me.

The last thing I will mention is the greatest thing. Our Beloved Jesus keeps beckoning me to grow with him into deeper avenues of spousal love. There is always more and it's beautiful when He encourages me to seek a deeper abiding in him, contemplating him in silence and stillness, finding him in the midst of the busyness of life and ministry, clinging to him more deeply in the various times of need, and making more time for him in the daily life

of prayer.

Thank you, Jesus, for inviting me into the mystery of this espousal with you, so that the world sees the marriage that we are all made for in heaven! Amen!

Taryn Watkins
consecrated December 8, 2019
Diocese of Peoria (IL)

It has been 5 years since my consecration. I could not have imagined then that I would be living in Rome. My first year anniversary was very difficult, I had covid and could not go to Mass! This was after months of being locked out of the churches, an exceptionally painful time.

Being without Jesus in the Eucharist is the most painful cross since being consecrated, but it also deepened the martyrdom aspect of the compound vocation of virgin-martyr. Now I am surrounded by virgin-martyrs, literally. On the feast of Saint Cecilia, I spent a lot of time in her church, her home where she lived this vocation. Saint Agnes was such an important part of my discernment, and now I live in her city! I am planning on spending much of the day with her on the 8th of December. God certainly always has surprises on this pilgrimage to the homeland . . . this was more surprising than most.

So, what am I doing in Rome? Well, I am studying philosophy and theology at the Angelicum, going on daily pilgrimages and trying to see every church in Rome, so far I am at #150 but there are many more to go. I am living at the Domus Guadalupe with religious sisters from different communities. Right across the hallway and up a couple of stairs, there is a chapel with the Blessed Sacrament!

I don't really know what God has planned—I just do whatever He asks next. Right now, He is asking me to be in Rome, to pray for the Church in the heart of the Church, to be with the saints, especially the virgin-martyrs, as a Eucharistic witness. I look forward to seeing what He is doing in all this.



Linda Ann Long, M.D.

June 15, 1944 – November 24, 2024 (the Solemnity of Christ the King)

Many consecrated virgins knew and loved Linda Ann, and many attended her funeral last Saturday, December 7, 2024, in her beloved Church of Saint Agnes in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Linda Ann was a well-known cardiologist in Saint Paul, and her circle of professional, Church, and personal acquaintances was large. Among these, the consecrated virgins held a special place in Linda Ann's heart. She was consecrated on June 3, 1995, in Rome, and was the first consecrated virgin for the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

These words of consecrated virgin Janice Terhaar echo what virgins repeated over and over again as they gathered for Linda Ann's funeral Mass: "I first met Dr. Linda Ann Long at a Serra Club Meeting in 2018 where she spoke on

the life of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World. This love she had for the life was evident as she spoke, with tears in her eyes, of her spousal relationship with Jesus. Her sharing that day increased my desire for it. This desire continued to grow through my monthly meetings with her in 2019. She cared for me, in my formation, with love, wisdom, knowledge, generosity, humility, and humor. Her wealth of information of the *Ordo Virginum*, the Church, the Archdiocese and the USACV was invaluable. In March of 2023 she was a lector for my Mass of Consecration in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Thank you Dr. Linda Ann Long. Your death is a great loss for us. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. (Psalm 116:15)"

Linda Ann loved the Ordinary Form Latin Mass, she loved her garden, she loved to help others and serve the Church, she was always generous with any need that arose for consecrated virgins, she loved choral music. She is a consecrated virgin who will be sorely missed on this earth. Her passing was not anticipated and brings to mind the frailty and shortness of this life.

The Concluding Rites, as printed in the program for Linda Ann's funeral Mass, from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States:

At the Incensing:

Subvenite Sancti Dei,

occurite angeli Domini:

Suscipientes animam eius:

Offerentes eam in conspectu Altissimi.

Suscipiat te, Christus, qui vocavit te :

Et in sinum Abrahae angeli deducant te.

Come to her assistance, O you saints of God,

go forth to meet her, Angels of the Lord;

receive her soul:

Present it in the sight of the Most High.

May Christ, who called you, receive you:

and may Angels lead you to Abraham's side.

In Paradisum:

In Paradisum deducant Angeli,

In tuo adventu suscipiant te Martyres

et perducant te

in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem.

Chorus Angelorum te suscipiat,

Et cum Lazaro quondam paupere,

Aeternam habeas requiem.

May the angels lead you into Paradise,

at your coming may the martyrs receive you

and bring you

into the holy city Jerusalem.

There may the chorus of angels receive you,

and with Lazarus, who once was poor,

may you have eternal rest.

2024-2024 Season of the Candidate Discussion Group

Consecrated virgin Leandra Hubka of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester is coordinating the 2024-2025 season of the Candidate Discussion Group, sponsored by the USACV. The Candidate Discussion Group is designed to be a supplement for diocesan-based formation for consecration in the *Ordo virginum*. The group meets quarterly, online, for one hour, to hear presentations and engage in guided discussion regarding relevant aspects of the life of consecrated virginity.

2024–2025 Program

The Candidate Discussion Group (CDG), sponsored by the USACV, is designed to be a supplement (not a substitute) for diocesan-based formation for consecration in the *Ordo virginum*. The CDG meets quarterly, online, for one hour, to hear presentations and engage in guided discussion regarding relevant aspects of the life of consecrated virginity. Topics for the 2024-2025 Season:

November 4, 2024: *Ora et Labora: Prayer in the Life of a Consecrated Virgin In Saeculo*, Presenter Leandra Hubka.

February 3, 2025: Relationships in the Life of the Consecrated Virgin: Living in the World but not of the World, Presenter Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D.

May 5, 2025: Living Integrated Virginity: Living the Charism of Virginity through the Lens of Theology of the Body, Presenter Jen Settle.

August 4, 2025: Virginity and the Interior Life: The Virginal Heart in Its Seasons, Presenter Elizabeth Lee.

Who is invited to participate?

Aspirants or candidates for consecration in the *Ordo virginum* who are referred by a diocesan representative, and who have previously attended an Information Conference sponsored by the USACV, are warmly invited to participate in the Candidate Discussion Group. Because the next Information Conference will not be held until September 2025, an aspirant or candidate who plans to attend the 2025 Information Conference and has viewed the recordings of the 2022 or 2024 Information Conference, is also invited to participate.

Consecrated virgins are also most welcome to attend, as ongoing formation.

Registration

Registration information and online registration forms are available here: [OV Candidate Discussion Group Registration](#). There is no cost to register. Further information about each of the 2024-2025 presenters can be found on the registration form.

Questions? Please contact Leandra Hubka at info@consecratedvirgins.org.

2024 and 2025 Information Conferences

Fifty-six people attended and seemed to be fully engaged in the 2024 Information Conference, held virtually September 6-8, 2024. Attendees included 4 diocesan representatives, 33 persons inquiring about the vocation, and 18 aspirants or candidates for the vocation, from 38 different U.S. and 3 foreign dioceses. Feedback has been positive from the participants and recordings of the sessions are almost ready. These will be available at no charge to those who participated in the conference.

The 2024 Information Conference included times of prayer, personal testimonials from consecrated virgins and core presentations on the life of consecrated virginity lived *in saeculo*. 2024 presenters: Bishop Earl Boyea and consecrated virgins Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Elizabeth Black, Mary Beth Bracy, Karen Bussey, Maria Luisa Meza, and Dr. Judith M. Stegman. Special thanks are due to the presenters and those who assisted with music (Claire Halbur and Leandra Hubka), and the organization / technical aspects of the webinar (Julie Radachy).

The 2025 Information Conference is scheduled for September 5 to 7, 2025 and will be held virtually once again.