

May 31, 2025 — The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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

The bishops of Michigan and Ohio recently completed their annual retreat up here in Michigan. In one of the talks, our director spoke about “Mary and Hope.” What struck me the most was that her “Fiat” is an expression of hope. It was not a feeling of being trapped into something but rather, “Let this happen, I am happy with this.” Mary is making herself completely open to and available to God. This clearly was all the work of the Holy Spirit who overshadowed her.

It seems to me that this is the very approach all of us take when we make our promises to God. We accept in faith that God is God, but we also express a great deal of hope that God will see us through. This may not happen as we might think it will. Nonetheless, God’s will is what triumphs and in that we have hope.



Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Earl Boyea

Most Reverend Earl Boyea

Bishop of Lansing

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By Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D.

Something Ancient, Something NEW

The New Grace in the Most Ancient Call for Virgins
Living in the Ordinary Circumstances of Their Centuries

The call to virginity of Mary of Nazareth

The first vocation to virginity for a woman living in the ordinary circumstances of her century was the vocation of a Virgin living in the town of Nazareth, a woman announced by prophet Isaiah: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel (Is 7:14).” The name describes a savior-king. Writing in about 732 B.C., the prophet describes with dismay the disaster of King Ahaz’s alliance with the Assyrians. What follows are the prophet’s words, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive. . . .”

It brings us joy to belong to the *Ordo virginum* and to have a Mother and Queen as our model—the very one who lives in Jesus Christ her Son the glory of perpetual virginity. “At this early point in history when we read the word “virgin,” the original Hebrew text has the word *alma* (*h*), which can mean both “virgin” in the biological sense, and “young woman.” Another Hebrew word, *betulah*, also has this double meaning. The difference is that an *alma*(*h*) is a virginal young woman who may be betrothed, while *betulah* designates a virgin who is not betrothed” (see *Mary of Nazareth, History, Archeology and Legends*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2016, translated by Michael J. Miller from the original German edition *Maria von Nazareth* 2011 by Saint Ulrich Verlag, Augsburg, Germany).

The Eternal Father chose the hagiographer, and he, inspired by God as his instrument, translates into words God’s will: “. . . fear not, for I redeem you; I call you by thy name, you are mine!” (Is. 43:1-2) Hear the Virgin of Nazareth’s call: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be called great and will be called Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.” “How will this be,” Mary asked the Angel, “since I am a virgin?” The Angel clarified that the “shadow of the Holy Spirit will cover you and the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” She replied: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May your word to me be fulfilled” (Lk 1: 30-38). Matthew and Luke are describing Mary’s miraculous pregnancy. No theologian or exegete who wants to enter into the mystery of her virginal maternity without the revelation of God by faith will ever understand the mystery.

That *fiat* or fulfillment of the will of The Eternal Father for Mary of Nazareth, virgin, confirmed the integral virginal state of the Virgin of Nazareth with the use of the Greek word *parthenos*, meaning “virgin or maiden, a young unmarried woman, and specifically one who has

not had sexual intercourse.” This term is often used to describe Mary in the context of the virgin birth, as the Greek translation of the Hebrew *alma*’s (Web dictionary).

This is the new grace that we receive during our consecration! The grace of virginity that was given to our Blessed Mother and that has been there in our soul awaiting the Eternal Father’s confirmation at the hands of the Bishop who consecrates us: “Today through our ministry He anoints you with a new grace and consecrates you to God by a new title” (homily, rite of consecration to a life of virginity). We rest in our Blessed Mother who was given a new title as the Virgin Mother of the Messiah. From the virginal essence of the Holy Trinity we are “anointed” in order to transform our body into the temple of the Holy Trinity. When the body is anointed, there is power in the senses of the soul to walk with the new title in the dignity of being a bride of Christ, and that dignity lasts forever, like that spoken by our Most Blessed Mother and Queen in the forever words of the Magnificat: “Me llamaran Bienaventurada todas las generaciones.”

Saint Matthew joined his words to the words of Isaiah: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel’” (Mt. 1:22-23, quoting Is. 7:14). When the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek, approximately two hundred years before Christ, the word *alma*’s was rendered as *parthenos*: virgin. This Greek translation is the one used by Matthew.

But the greatest evidence of Mary of Nazareth’s integrity in her virginal being at the moment of her virginal consecration is given in Luke’s Gospel. Luke was Greek, and after she was given by Her Divine Son to John the Apostle, Mary of Nazareth and John the Apostle resided in the Greek city of Ephesus. It is clear that Luke obtained from Her the information about the Annunciation—for our Mother was alone when the Messenger Angel came to announce the Eternal Father’s message upon Her as the Virgin of Nazareth chosen to be His Son’s mother. The Eternal Father promised in Paradise to send His Son to redeem us from original sin. It was a promise that He kept for centuries, before He sent His Son, and confirmed through the Old Testament prophet (Is. 7:14) seven hundred years before fulfilling it in the plenitude of time: “But when the plenitude of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Gal. 4:4).

The Gospel written by Luke has evidence that it was the Blessed Mother who dictated details of Her Divine Child’s life. These were details that only she could know, for example, the closing words at the Annunciation, and the obedience Her divine Son paid them after the time the child Jesus was left in the temple: “But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be” (Lk 1:29), and “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart” (Lk 2:19). “He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them, and His mother kept all these things in her heart” (Lk 2:51).

In accord with the Eternal Father's will, the most Blessed Mother was left for the Church after Her Divine Son's ascension to His Eternal Father's Home. She was an inspiration to the first virgins living in her time as well as to the consecrated virgins living in our time who have Her as their model in the *Ordo virginum*. Saint John and our Blessed Mother were close to Peter's family; the best example is Saint Petronilla, virgin and martyr, the daughter of Saint Peter. Saint Philip's daughters are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles: the apostle Paul in the Acts presents an account rich in historical detail about these remarkable women: "And we went to Caesarea, and went to the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven deacons, and stayed with him. Philip had four daughters, virgins, who had the gift of prophesy" (Acts 21:9). Analyzing the custom of that time, that daughters were given to the man whom they would marry at an early age, gives us the fact that these were not single women but instead were virgins imitating the Mother's virginity and loving the Lord as their heavenly spouse. Because of this, they remained in the midst of the ecclesial community and in their father's home—this was the virgins' style of life in that century.

The virginal vocation, including the election from the Eternal Father upon Mary of Nazareth, is a vocation without human structure and is sometimes difficult to understand in a structured world in which the vocation is immersed in a changing society without Christian goods. Most of the time our personal external presence may be countercultural; as well, our internal new anointed grace of virginity may be for the erratic society a light in their darkness. For example, the presence of the Most Blessed Mother and Queen in the New Testament in the balance of text is very sober: there is only one passage in the fourteen apostolic letters (Gal 4:4), one mention in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1: 14), two allusions in Mark and parallels (Mk. 3:31-35; Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21; 11:27-28; Mk 6:3), two episodes in John (Jn 2:1-12; 19:26-27). There is one more accentuated presentation in the Gospel of Jesus' childhood (Mt 1, 2; Lk 1-2) (Quoted from a New Dictionary of Spirituality translated from Italian "Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità," Edizioni Paulinas, Roma 1979 and Ediciones Paulinas 1983, Madrid, España).

Maria does not have great quantitative relief in the New Testament; however, despite this discretion, she appears with a unique task in the history of salvation. This is the same for Saint Joseph (virgin too) to prepare the child of God to redeem us; and about him the Holy Scripture says: "A just man from the house of David." I think that young consecrated virgins sometimes consider the nature of their mission, in addition to praying and to being witnesses of the Eternal Wedding. They might ask, "what is going on that we are like hidden in the Church?" They might ask because sometimes another consecrated woman in a religious family has a specific role in the mission of the Church. As consecrated virgins we do, too, but much of our doing is in the most secret reality of our being. Our doing is as our Most Blessed Mother did when She was for Him alone and had no visible recognition in

the midst of her town of Nazareth, in Her suffering when they crucified Her Son.

The call to virgins living in the ordinary circumstances of their centuries

What follows is a brief review of the most prominent Church Fathers, and you will note that celibacy and virginity were applicable to both men and women. We are presenting their different points of view, emphasizing the respect they have for the virgins, who were later remitted to monasteries, for their own protection. Apostolic life as a form of consecrated life did not exist until the 15th and 16th century, so the primitive virgins are the foundation of the contemplative monasteries. There was some controversy over what was better: celibacy or virginity and the married state. We are citing these examples as they may be a good resource if you wish to search more information about the roots of our vocation.

We are called to appreciate our vocation that seems to many as "new" regardless of our *Ordo* being the first. Even Bishops and priests often don't know too much about it. We are secure walking with our Divine Spouse and resting in the promise of eternity He has given us during our consecration as a product of the anointing with new grace each of us received. The future life and the expectation of the second coming of our Divine Lord was what moved multiple women virgins described below, in their centuries, to live a life of asceticism and sanctity. We are blessed as the Rite of Consecration speaks to us about the incorruptible transformation of our mortal bodies, which is part of the new grace. These points are important as we wait in hope for the Church to give more recognition to our *Ordo virginum*, as other religious families have.

In the Second Century, Saint Ignatius of Antioch (107) referred to "the virgins named widows" because they were not married and like the widows they depended on the Christian community, although when we read the life of the widows in the ancient Church many of them had heirs and others of them depended on the Christian Community to sustain them. The virgins remained with their families but without a clear status as a woman married or widowed. They were not recognized as unmarried living in celibacy because the stronghold of their life was the fidelity to the Divine Lord who bestowed in their souls the new grace of virginity.

Saint Justin Martyr in 150 wrote about women virgins noting that at 70 years of age they remained uncorrupted in their flesh (cfr. Apology I 15.6, pp 6, 340). The same was affirmed by Athenagora of Athens in 177 of those remaining virgins who belonged exclusively to Jesus Christ (cfr. Legatio pro Christianis. PG 6, 965); at the time they did not have lines to distinguish celibacy and to name their state of life as a virginal one. In about the year 200 they began to understand the meaning of each state.

Clement of Alexandria (150-215) began to defend the sanctity of marriage to stop the confusion among those who wished to remain free of the marriage bond and also of the pleasure of eating meat. Hatred of meat was even

defined by Clement as abstinence without intelligence. Those living in “celibacy” were confused about the state of sanctity within the sacrament of matrimony and Clement of Alexandria affirmed that continence in celibacy is honorable or virtuous only if it has its inspiration in God’s love. With his clarification, practices disappeared such as “spiritual matrimony” and the “*subintroductae* virgins,” the Latin term corresponding to the Greek “virgins brought in” and referred to as beloved; these were virgins or widows brought in to live with a man dedicated to celibacy, particularly clergy, to care for his domestic needs (Cfr. *Stomata* 3, 6, 1-3, PG 8,1150).

Tertullian after those 200 years wrote about the devoted virgins, *Virgines Deo Devotae*. He specified that these virgins do not receive the acknowledgment of an ordination because what constitutes a virgin is her personal decision to love the Lord who had called her. What he taught was titled “On Exhortation to Chastity” and “On the Veiling of Virgins,” as the consecration of a virgin by the Church was called. He spoke of consecration by the Pope or by a Bishop (cfr Tertullian, “De oratione 22, written between 200 to 206 PL. 1, 1188 and Hippolytus 236: “*Traditio apostolica*” 13, PG 1, 1122).

In the Third Century, Origen (185-254) interpreted Christian matrimony as the image of Christ with His Church but he sustained that the state of virginity is “superior” because it is realization, and not only image, of these mystical nuptials, with virginity going back to the primitive paradise, for it was only after the sin of disobedience that Adam “knew” Eve. He sustained his interpretation because the soul in its pre-existence lived in chastity, (cf *De oratione* 23, PG11) He expressed that virginity is the most perfect gift after martyrdom. Virginity is like the third host offered to God, that is, after the apostles and the martyrs. Virginity is a perfect oblation *oblatio perfecta* that is realized in the sanctuary of the body.

Saint Cyprian (250) under the influence of Tertullian, his teacher, exalted virginity. He saw in the virginal consecration a *desponsorium* with Christ, the possession of the resurrected glory and equality with the lives of angels. The mandate of the first creation: “Grow and multiply” (Gen. 1:28) he declared was superated and substituted by the new commandment given by Christ when He exhorted continence (*De habitu virginum*, PL 4, 416). Cyprian is the first to use the term “virginity” to appoint celibacy in men, while in the East, Methodius of Olympus (+311) interpreted testimonies of virginity to Elijah, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Paul and others.

Saint Athanasius of Alexandria (295-373) is witness to the monastic life of Saint Anthony the Great. He focused on the problem of election between the two states, defining matrimony as a mundane life that has nothing to censure but that does not have the goodness of the grace of virginity, with its image of the angels’ sanctity and with its special grace for obtaining better goods and more perfect fruit.

During the fourth to fifth centuries abundant literature appeared *de Virginitate*, for at the end of the third century celibacy and virginity had found a definitive status in the spirituality and lives of Christians that was contemplated as a better state than matrimony, being defended and praised with the metaphors of an angelic life, *sponsa Christi*, “espoused to Christ”, mystical nuptials, and perfect oblation.

Saint Basil (330-379), regardless of his being a monastic legislator, gave more emphasis to the teaching of Saint Paul about charity, community life and obedience to God’s commandments. The other Cappadocian Fathers; traditionally known as the Three Cappadocians: Byzantine Christian prelates, theologians, and monks, exalted virginity and praised matrimony as a way to be near God who had commanded the marital status.

John Chrysostom (344-407) considered virginity as an exceptional call and it was he who established distinctions among celibacy, virginity and matrimony. He taught that it is possible to live a chaste life in matrimony (In Mt *homilliae* 62, 5 PG 58, 599). Priestly celibacy is immersed in a sacrament because it announces the coming of the Eternal Kingdom but is not a commandment; rather, it is reserved for those who are called. Virginity in his interpretation is clear, and he recognizes that virginity and matrimony have a place in the meaning of God’s call. The veiled virgins in those centuries are included among those living in “celibacy.”

Ambrose (330-397) links virginity constantly with ecclesiology and Christology, progressing in a link to virginity being a sacrament (PL 16, 219 *De Virginibus* I,3,15) as a mysterious participation in the body of Christ, the Church, virgin and fruitful. Virginity is a virtue that makes reference to the mystery of the Incarnation. In the Word made flesh who lived as a virgin, there is a particular mode of assumption of humanity which is carried out in a similar way for those who remain virgins, (cfr *De Virginibus* I, 3, 13) Ambrose didn’t mention the Rite of Consecration but there was a “formula” something like the consecratory prayer used to “impose the veil” in the consecration of a virgin. That happened in the virginal consecration of Marcelina, Saint Ambrose’s older sister, who was consecrated in Saint Peter’s Basilica by Pope Liberius on Christmas Day in 353, when she was 26 years of age.

The virgin is “like Christ,” since from the Lord she has received virginal existence, value, meaning and redemption. As he is especially interested in virgin women, Ambrose glimpses in them the feminine in reference to their original condition, when the woman was not the seductress, but the helper of the man (Gen. 2-18) so that the same man finds again his nature as man, that he had lost; thus making possible the verification of the paradisiacal Easter prophesied by Isaiah (65: 23).

But the virgin is also the sacrament of Christ, just like the Church, as the bride of the Word, a spiritually fertile mother (Cfr, *De Virginibus* 1, 6,30): in this case the virginal option is a requirement of the Church, carried out visibly within the ecclesial communities, and being placed

as absolute chastity next to the widows (*De viduis* 4, 25). At the time Ambrose wrote this, “celibacy” involved virginity.

Jerome (345-420) often insists on the value of celibacy to the detriment of marriage; he says his praise of the wedded is almost forced by the fact it is they who generate virgins (Ep. *ad Eustochium*) 22,19,PL 22,406); He places the two states in opposition, making one the reality of the world and the other the condition of paradise; marriage, in effect, ends with death, while virginity after death receives the crown of glory (*Adversus Jovinianum* 1, 16, PL 23,235).

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) defends marriage from the attacks of the Manicheans but proclaims celibacy as a better state than marriage. He who marries begets Adam; on the other hand, the virgin begets Christ. “If celibacy is a pure act of love for Christ, it is a perfect sacrifice; and if everyone chooses this, soon the number of the chosen ones would be completed, causing the return of Christ” (*De sancta virginitate* 6, 6ss (written around 400/1), PL 40,399).

From this, we progress to the Middle Ages beginning with the fall of the Western Roman Empire around 476. What we have presented in this sporadic and brief exposition of the patristic period of time is an observation about how celibacy and virginity were approached. It is observed that when they spoke about celibacy, it was applicable to men and women, as well as virgins. Bishops, priests, and monks were considered celibate, and this implied virginity.

In this interpretation of celibacy, the Fathers of the Church presented a Christian theology. And along this line, through the Middle Ages and Scholasticism, and the theology of the Councils, an absolute preference was granted to the state of celibacy; there was never a change or renewal in the interpretation of those centuries. At most, everything was focused towards making the opinion of each one more emphatic. In the Middle Ages, the doctrine was even formulated that virginity was an infused gift given to children already in baptism (Pedro Malaria; Antonino, Summ. III, 2.1..5).

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) declared: “It is indisputable that virginity should be preferred to conjugal life” (S.Th II-II.q. 152.a.4), thus laying the foundations for the definition of the Council of Trent: “If anyone says that the conjugal state should be preferred to the state of virginity or celibacy and that it is not better to remain in virginity and celibacy than to join in marriage, be he excommunicated” (Session XXIV, Cannons of the sacrament of marriage, 10:DS. 1810).

The Second Vatican Council also exposed virginity with the traditional expressions of preeminence and superiority, but it is known that this was due only to the fact that the theological maturation on this point was somewhat inadequate at that historical time and the council preferred to keep the traditional data.

Today, sixty years after the Council, exegetes and theologians have been far from such positions. Today we read about celibacy and marriage again along the New

Testament lines, binding each other, because one explains the other and mutually receives the other’s value, but without comparing themselves; they are two different charisms, granted to the people of God in order to reach the holiness to which we are all called.

Precisely on the 31st of May 1970 the Rite of Consecration of Virgins was revised, and on this same day as is dated this edition of *The Lamp* newsletter, we celebrate 55 years of that great decree from Saint Paul VI that opened the faculty of the Bishops to celebrate, once again, the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, found in the Roman Pontifical, for the consecration of virgins living *in saeculo*, that is, in the ordinary circumstances of their century.

The call to virgins as expressed in the liturgical rite of consecration over the centuries

We include below useful information from Judith Stegman’s doctoral dissertation, as a complementary piece about the development of the liturgical rite of consecration and even the time when our rite of consecration was withheld from use. For the full reference and footnote disclosures see Judith M. Stegman, “*Mystically Espoused to Christ, the Son of God (c. 604 §1)*”: *The Basis for Proposing Juridic Principles to Guide the Development of Norms for the Ordo virginum*, pp. 89-94:

Ecclesial Law in the Second Millennium to 1917: Consecration of Virgins Primarily Reserved to Nuns; Admission Criteria in the Liturgical Rite of Consecration of Virgins

A comparative study of the rite of consecration of virgins as it appeared in editions of the Pontificale Romano-Germanicum of the tenth century reveals that the rite did not contain an explicit statement of admission requirements for the consecration of virgins. These pontifical editions presented, in the first place, a rite of consecration of sacred virgin nuns; following this was a rite for the consecration of a virgin who desired to undertake the state of chastity privately, living in her own home; separately, there was also a rite for the consecration of widows who professed chastity. Those to be consecrated as virgins were brought before the bishop by their parents; the bishop received the folded hand of the virgin in the altar cloth; and he offered the traditional prayer of consecration *Deus castorum corporum*, in use since the time of the Leonian Sacramentary of the fifth century. While the consecration of virgins was always at the hand of the bishop, the consecration of widows was permitted at the hands of a priest.

In his study of the Roman Pontifical in the Middle Ages, Michael Andrieu compares two versions of the rite of consecration of virgins in use in pontificals of the twelfth century. Neither the rite entitled “*Ordo ad virginem benedicendam*” nor the rite entitled “*Ordo ad consecrandam sacram virginem*” noted inquiries to be made by the bishop of the virgin before the consecration. The virginal status of a woman was

identified in the rites: one rite referred to the holy virgin coming forward to her bishop for consecration, and each of the rites for virginal consecration was followed by a different and distinct rite of blessing for widows who desired to profess chastity and to take on the habit in a monastery of the holy virgins regular. The rite for the blessing of widows made clear that while widows could receive the veil from a presbyter, “true virgins could only be veiled by the bishop.”

Entering the High Middle Ages, a complex variety in the status of virgins existed in the Church. Living their commitments secretly, or in some cases seeking public consecration at the hands of the bishop, there continued to be those free women, and slaves, who fostered a life of virginity privately in their own homes. However, a larger number of virgins began to embrace the monastic state, and it was clear that the practice of the bishop giving the veil of consecration to women remaining in private homes was in decline, and even viewed with a certain suspicion. Such was the reality when the Second Lateran Council (1139), during the pontificate of Innocent II, condemned as “pernicious and detestable” the custom of women wishing to be thought of as nuns, who lived in their own private dwellings rather than in monasteries. Although there is some evidence of virgins living in a public canonical state of virginity outside the monastery even in the thirteenth century, it is clear that these were an exception to the rule. Either from Innocent II’s condemnation or simply from the discontinuance of the practice, the custom of solemnly consecrating virgins living in the world fell into disuse. Two centuries later, Saint Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, affirmed as much when he wrote in 1477 about the brilliance of consecrated virginity, but noted “nevertheless among the virgins one is not approved for consecration unless she is solemnly professed in religion.” From this time until 1970, bishops who wished to consecrate a virgin living in the world adopted the rite properly used for consecrating virgins who were cloistered nuns.

In 1216, the Rite of Consecration of Virgins was reformed in a pontifical of Innocent III to eliminate the formula for a consecration of secular virgins and to modify the form for enclosed nuns. Other reforms of the rite can be identified in diocesan pontificals of the thirteenth century. Most significantly, a pontifical prepared between 1292 and 1295 by Guillaume Durand, a prominent canonist and bishop of the small village of Mende, restored the idea of a mystical marriage in the rite and required that before the consecration the bishop must be assured that the virgin had realized all the conditions stipulated by law. The Pontifical of Durand appeared as the first pontifical to require that the bishop make specific inquiries of the woman seeking consecration. René Metz describes the inquiry:

“But before proceeding to the consecration, the bishop must be assured that the virgin realized all the

conditions stipulated by law. To this end, the ritual prescribed a minute inquiry. The bishop himself was charged with this; it was to be made on the evening preceding or in the morning before the ceremony. He inquired about the age of the virgin to know if she was twenty-five as required by the canons since the council of Hippo in 393. He asked about her intentions to ascertain that she was well decided to guard her virginity. He questioned also on her past life, and particularly on the *integritas carnis*; but the last part of the interrogation was particularly emphasized.”

In 1298, the demand of Pope Boniface VIII that consecrated virginity be lived only in perpetual monastic enclosure resulted in a further reduction in the number of consecrated virgins living in the world. Individual women such as Christina of Markyate (d. 1155) and Julian of Norwich (d. 1416), however, did continue to live a committed virginal life outside of the monastery, although they are not commonly recognized as having been consecrated as virgins. From the outset of the fourteenth century, the pontifical of the bishop of Mende rapidly began to be adopted by other dioceses.

At the end of the fifteenth century, Agostino Patrizzi Piccolomini was charged by Innocent VIII with editing a Roman pontifical, and he modeled the Official Roman Pontifical on the work of the bishop of Mende. It was first printed in Rome in 1485 and included a series of inquiries to be made of the virgin in regard to age and the *integritas carnis*. Likewise, the Roman pontifical of 1595–1596, promulgated by Clement VIII, called for these inquiries to be made by the bishop himself to each woman (usually also a nun) who sought consecration as a virgin: “diligently inquire if they have completed twenty-five years of age, if they hold a fervent intention to live in virginity [*propositum virginitalis*], and above all about the quality of life and conscience and integrity of the flesh [*carnis integritate*]. Scrutinies held as part of the rite of consecration reflected the same. Each virgin would kneel before the bishop with her joined hands in his, and he would ask, “Do you promise perpetual virginity?”

Other editions of the Official Roman Pontifical were published, including those of Urban VIII in 1645, Pope Benedict XIV in 1752, Leo XIII in 1888, and John XXIII in 1962 as he convoked the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The rite remained virtually unchanged over those centuries.

Conclusion

I end this exposition as I began: “This is the new grace that we receive during our consecration! The grace of virginity that was given to our Blessed Mother and that has been there in our soul awaiting the Eternal Father’s confirmation at the hands of the Bishop who consecrates us: ‘Today through our ministry He anoints you with a new grace and consecrates you to God by a new title.’”

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

Consecrated Virginity – A Celibate Vocation?

At the 2008 international pilgrimage of five hundred or so consecrated virgins in Rome, I offered a presentation entitled “Virginal, Feminine, Spousal Love for Christ.” This was years before I studied theology and canon law; the title and concepts I presented were based on my lived experience of the vocation of consecrated virginity and discussions with virgins older and wiser than myself. The talk was meant to inspire consecrated virgins to embrace three defining features of our vocation that were often mocked by the world around us. Virgins from fifty-two countries participated, listening to translations through specially prepared headsets. As is typically the case, the part of my presentation that focused on the meaning of virginity—physical virginity—as a prerequisite for our vocation, garnered intense interest from listeners.¹

It was a pleasant surprise to me that the room burst into applause when I finished, and many women queued up to express to me (in their own languages) how much the words meant to them. Even though they may have been consecrated to a life of virginity and faithfully lived the vocation for years, many had not been affirmed in their innate understanding of virginity as central to the *Ordo virginum*. Hearing words that described their own intimately virginal, feminine, spousal love for Jesus Christ was deeply moving and resounded with the experience of their own hearts. This encounter in 2008 has led me to focus on understanding more fully why it is that “the Church loves virginity”² so much that She has preserved a rite in the Roman pontifical for the consecration to a life of virginity. At the hands of the Bishop, the rite of consecration constitutes the virgin a bride of Christ—hence the Spousal dimension. The consecration is conferred only on women—hence the Feminine. But it is often the “Virginal” aspect that most intrigues not only the secular mind, but also the Christian mind.

You might be asking yourself where this introduction is headed. Recently, many times, I have heard the vocation of consecrated virginity referred to as a “celibate” vocation. In this essay I want to articulate a response because I think it so important that we not lose or hide our clear identity as virgins who are mystically espoused to Christ. To describe the consecrated virgin as “a celibate” downplays or even obliterates her identity as *virgin* and her identity as *bride of Christ*. How is this so?

Let’s look first at how the descriptor “celibate” downplays the *spousal* nature of our vocation. The word celibacy comes from the Latin word *caelibatus*, meaning “the state of being unmarried”³ The consecrated virgin is not married to a human spouse, it is true, but she is truly a married woman, and in fact her espousal to Christ is the essential meaning of her vocation. In the rite of consecration to a life of virginity, the Bishop asks the candidate if she resolves to “accept solemn consecration as a *bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God*.”⁴ Just before this, in the suggested homily, the Bishop has referred to the new grace and new title given to the newly consecrated: “He gives each one of you the dignity of being and bride of Christ and binds you to the Son of God in a covenant to last forever.”⁵ And later, with the giving of the insignia, “receive the ring that marks you as a bride of Christ.”⁶ Canon law (c. 604) drawing from the liturgy, identifies consecrated virgins as *mystically espoused to Christ, the Son of God*. No other form of consecrated life is identified in this way.

A virgin’s espousal to Christ is truly a marriage, in the essential aspects of marriage, because it images the archetype of marital unions, that of the Bridegroom Christ with His Bride, the Church. As such, the virgin’s espousal to Christ shares with human marriage characteristic dimensions of unity, procreation, fidelity, and indissolubility⁷—not through the physical giving and receiving of the body that consummates marriage between a man and a woman, but through a mystical union with Christ.⁸ In his commentary on the sentences of Peter Lombard, Saint Thomas Aquinas speaks of the marriage of Christ and the Church as having both fecundity, “by which we are regenerated as sons of God,”⁹ and incorruption, “since Christ chose for himself the Church as having no spot or wrinkle of any kind (Eph. 5:27).”¹⁰ Thus, Aquinas explains, “it is necessary that the spiritual union of Christ and the Church be represented by different signs as to its fecundity and as to its integrity. Therefore, as spiritual marriage is represented by carnal marriage as to its fecundity, so it is necessary for there to be something that represents the spiritual marriage as to its integrity; and this is done in the veiling of virgins.”¹¹

In the case of the woman who seeks consecration in the *Ordo virginum*, the Church requires that she has never celebrated marriage or lived in public or open violation of chastity.¹² This emphasis on never having celebrated [human] marriage, rather than on the validity of a prior bond is unique to the *Ordo virginum* and further indicates the esteem the Church has for a mystical espousal to Christ. The virgin’s first and only *propositum* for marriage is Christ.¹³

Let me conclude this discussion of why describing consecrated virginity as a celibate vocation downplays the virgin's identity as "bride of Christ" by quoting the first juridic principle I propose to guide the development of norms for the *Ordo virginum*: "Validly conferred, the solemn rite of consecration to a life of virginity effects a mystical espousal between a virgin and Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This nuptial bond of the virgin to Christ is a true marriage, characterized by the essential properties of unity and indissolubility (c. 1056)."¹⁴

I'd like to move now to a discussion of why the descriptor "celibate" for the consecrated virgin also downplays *virginity* as a defining characteristic of the *Ordo virginum*.

All vocations to Consecrated Life in the Church require that the person entering the vocation, by vows, other sacred bonds, or by consecration, not be bound by marriage to a husband or wife. In this sense, each of the many forms of consecrated life (religious institutes, secular institutes, societies of apostolic life, and diocesan hermits) are "celibate" vocations. But the only form of consecrated life that requires the candidate to have received the gift of virginity, and to have lived as a virgin throughout her life, is the *Ordo virginum*. Virginity is constitutive to the act of consecration of a virgin and is thus a requirement that cannot be dispensed for a valid consecration. Describing "the nature and value" of a consecration to virginity, the opening paragraph of the *Praenotanda* (Pre-notes) to the Rite of Consecration in the Roman Pontifical explains jubilantly: "In the rite of consecration the Church reveals its *love of virginity*. . . ." To refer to this vocation as a celibate vocation downplays, or even ignores, the centrality of virginity to the vocation of consecrated virginity.

Let us not lose the word "virgin" in our self-identification as virgin brides of Christ. Instead let us focus on coming to a deeper understanding of why it is that virginity is loved by the Church. The virginal vocation is a vocation that images the virginal nature of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Jesus Himself, and of His Bride, the Church. These are profound mysteries into which we are invited.

Gregory of Nyssa, brother of the virgin-saint Macrina, explored the Trinitarian roots underlying Christian virginity:

[The grace of virginity] is comprehended in the idea of the Father incorrupt; and here at the outset is a paradox—that virginity is found

in Him, who has a Son and yet without passion has begotten Him. It is included too in the nature of this Only-begotten God, who struck the first note of all this moral innocence; it shines forth equally in His pure and passionless generation. Again a paradox; that the Son should be known to us by virginity. It is seen, too, in the inherent and incorruptible purity of the Holy Spirit; for when you have named the pure and incorruptible you have named virginity.

I'll close with these words from the suggested homily for the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, referring to the virgin's life as an image of the eternal and all-holy God: "The life you seek to follow has its home in heaven. God himself is its source. It is he, infinitely pure and holy, who gives the grace of virginity. Those to whom he gives it are seen by the Fathers of the Church as images of the eternal and all-holy God."¹⁵

¹ "Virginal, Feminine, Spousal Love for Christ" is published in Volume One of the USACV's *Ordo Virginum* series, *An Introduction to the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*.

² *Ordo consecrationis Virginum* [OCV], *Praenotanda* 1.

³ (<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/what-are-celibacy-chastity-and-continence-9-things-to-know-and-share>).

⁴ OCV 17.

⁵ OCV 16.

⁶ OCV 26.

⁷ See canons 1055 and 1056, defining canons on human marriage.

⁸ For more discussion, see pages 8, 170, among others, in Judith M. Stegman, "*Mystically Espoused to Christ, the Son of God (c. 604 §1)*": *The Basis for Proposing Juridic Principles to Guide the Development of Norms for the Ordo virginum* [JMS dissertation].

⁹ See JMS dissertation, p.8 for full citation and discussion.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² OCV *Praenotanda*, 5a.

¹³ For more discussion on this and on the bond of mystical espousal to Christ as an impediment to a potential human marriage, see JMS dissertation, pp 204-211.

¹⁴ JMS dissertation, p. 358

¹⁵ OCV 16

By Diane Christine Farr

We discover that in God we find truth, goodness and beauty. We can say that the truth we come to know is both good and beautiful. God reveals these qualities to the heart that seeks to come to know Him more intimately. We contemplate the unity and harmony that exists in the most Holy Trinity.

Each vocation in the Church has its distinct characteristics and beauty. Let us consider this invocation from The Litany of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. "Jesus, purity of virgins, have mercy on us." As consecrated virgins we understand that it is Jesus himself who is the source of our virginal vocation and He forms its exquisite beauty. It is indeed an encounter with the risen Christ when a woman receives the grace of the consecration of virgins. Many graces flow from this encounter with the risen Christ. The virgin is raised beyond the earthly where she is embraced by infinite love in the divine nuptials. She sees how beautiful virginity is when it is consecrated to Christ. This beauty comes directly from Jesus Himself as He takes possession of her entire being. This is why we may say that even in this life, it is the glorious and risen Christ that is her joy and her crown.

The virgin, having responded to the invitation to the holy espousals, offers her pure love to God as a sweet bouquet. As consecrated virgins, we will be responding to God's love and serving His people in various ways throughout our lives. We have recognized our only Bridegroom as the risen Christ speaks our name. We hear His call in the depths of our hearts. Our divine Lord will draw us into a profound communion with Himself if we respond with perfect fidelity as brides. We see ourselves as only living in Him and for Him. Physical virginity is required for the consecration. This gift encompasses the entire person.

The grace of virginity is like a lovely flower that blossoms forth touching every aspect of our being. A prudent modesty is a necessary adornment. Jesus will clothe us with His own sanctity if we allow the Divine Will to reign in our souls. He wishes to lead us in a life of self-giving love. We enable Jesus to love others through us. The bride reflects all that her bridegroom is. This is one beautiful aspect of our holy vocation. We strive to demonstrate the gentle compassion of our Lord as well as the firm truth of His commandments.

As consecrated virgins, we enjoy a unique spiritual motherhood of souls with a deep concern for all people. Mentoring candidates is a special joy for us. It gives us an opportunity to witness to the beauty and power of Jesus' love in our own lives. We have been given the tremendous grace of coming to know and love Jesus as our holy Bridegroom. This grace will grow and deepen in many ways throughout our lives. This will require of us a maturity of spirit and time for serious prayer and reflection. Jesus gives Himself entirely to us and our whole lives must give Him perfect honor and glory. We learn to live of and by His heart adopting His virtues and characteristics. We come to understand things from a divine perspective. We may say that when the virgin first recognizes Jesus's call there is an exchange of loving gazes between the two of them. The virgin firmly understands that she belongs to her Lord by a perpetual bond of virginity. It is so important for us to remember that Jesus is with us always even when we don't perceive His presence.

Finally, one of the most beautiful things about our vocation is that our Holy Mother Mary is our model. As consecrated virgins, we enter into her spirit of tender virginal love for God. We follow her in joy in this her perennial bond of virginity with her God. She will prepare the brides of her divine Son by clothing them with her own virtues and dispositions of the heart. As it is with our Lady, we must possess a caring and maternal heart. We need to stay close to our mother meditating on her interior life. Her immaculate heart will be our refuge in all the difficulties and sufferings of our life. We confide everything to her heart. It is with deep humility that we raise our hearts in gratitude and thanksgiving for being chosen to be brides of Christ. We take very seriously the obligations this entails. As we carry our daily cross, we draw upon the divine strength to sustain us. We endeavor to focus on the present moment enveloped in the peaceful light of God's presence. Our constant prayer must be, "Jesus I trust in you."

We meet our Divine Bridegroom in the paradise of our soul and He will lead us to our heavenly home. Let us prayerfully contemplate the majestic beauty of our Lord and Spouse. May The Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be adored both now and forever. Amen.

By Florence Sundberg

Jesus climbed to the top of a hill and looked out upon the vast numbers of human beings populating the earth that He had created for them. He meant only good for them but what He saw was so different: His sons and daughters were hurting each other, killing each other and slaughtering their own babies in the womb: and Jesus wept. He wept the tears of all humanity, the sinners and the saints. Jesus wept. As we too should weep for we are the spiritual mothers of His children, our children, whose lives are being terminated in the womb of their mothers. Looking further, Jesus saw vast crowds of His people gathering in prayer in their homes and Churches and schools to pray in union with Him for peace and for the fulfillment of His mandate to us: to protect and defend all life created by Him; and Jesus smiled. For there He saw, in the hearts of His people, His children, hope and a determination to generate, by His grace, an understanding of the sacredness of life, all life. He saw hearts consecrated to Him strive to put His love into action everywhere they went. When He saw so many putting themselves into the battle for the life of His preborn babies, Jesus wept no more. His people were fighting in His Name for the lives of the babies He created. Jesus wept no more: He smiled and from His Heart as he sent His blessing, His love and gratitude to all who stood with Him to defend life from conception to natural death. And under His blessing, His grace, we will never retreat from this battle. I smile when I remember a scene from *The Lord of the Rings* where the people stood on the ramparts to fight off the evil that was penetrating their land. They carried bright, flaming lanterns into the darkness as we bring the Light of Christ into the darkness that now penetrates the hearts and souls and minds of so many. Let us continue to pray for each other and for our brothers and sisters around the world, especially those who valiantly stand with Christ and for Christ no matter the cost. May the blessing of God be upon us all.

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.

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.

Recordings Available!

Links to recordings from the 2024 Virtual Information Conference are now available. If you attended the conference and would like to receive a link, 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 <https://www.secure.consecratedvirgins.org/>.



**United States Association
of Consecrated Virgins**
PO Box 442170
Miami, FL 33144

Email: info@consecratedvirgins.org
president@consecratedvirgins.org

www.consecratedvirgins.org

Membership Drive

Consecrated virgin Francesca Riddick, chair of the membership team of the USACV, has opened the 2025 USACV membership drive. She thanks those who have already responded to her emails and renewed membership for 2025. Thank you for your ongoing support of our mission to serve consecrated virgins and offer resources for discernment and formation! Visit the USACV website: <https://site.consecratedvirgins.org> for membership forms.

USACV Leadership Team Election Results

Many thanks to the five virgins who put forward their names to run for open seats on the USACV Leadership Team. The vote results were very close; Eileen Belongea, Lorraine Manlolo, and Francesca Riddick were the top three vote-getters and will serve on the leadership team for the next three years, 2025 to 2027. Thanks, too, to Lauren Gault, for handling the 2025 election for us - there are many details to consider.

We also take this opportunity to thank the two leadership team members whose terms ended 12/31/24: Jenna Cooper and Joani McCann served faithfully for years. Jenna has offered her talents in a variety of capacities; memorable is her work in planning our La Crosse convocation several years ago, and her readiness to respond thoroughly, accurately, and compassionately to questions from inquirers about our vocation. Joani memorably worked with details of planning for our Rome 2016 adventure (and attempted to plan 2020, before it was COVID-canceled), and her generous and gracious lead in planning for the convocation held on Enders Island in 2021. Thank you, Jenna, and thank you, Joani.

Pray With Us! Virtual Vespers

Consecrated virgins, candidates, and friends joined once again for Virtual Vespers on March 25 for the Annunciation of the Lord, and in April on the Sunday of Divine Mercy. We join for Virtual Vespers on various feast days of our Divine Spouse, our Blessed Virgin Mother, and virgin saints. 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:

- + Monday, June 9, 2025, Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, 8:00pm ET
- + Monday, July 14, 2025, Feast of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, 8:00pm ET (St. Kateri is co-patroness of the USACV, with our Blessed Mother!)
- + Friday, August 22, 2025, Feast of the Queenship of Mary, 8:00pm ET

USACV and International Resource Center for the *Ordo Virginum* Leadership Team Members and Officers

USACV Leadership Team

Eileen Belongea 2025-2027; Archdiocese of Milwaukee (WI). (*Future Convocations Team Leader*).

Claire Halbur 2024-2026; Diocese of Phoenix (AZ). (*Secretary of the USACV-IRC, Music Team Leader, and 2025 Convocation Team Leader*).

Elizabeth Lam 2023-2025; Diocese of Oakland (CA). (*Website Team Member*).

Lorraine Manlolo 2025-2027; Diocese of Honolulu (HI). (*ETapestry/Membership Team Member*).

Francesca Riddick 2025-2027; Diocese of Joliet (IL). (*ETapestry/Membership Team Leader*).

IRC Leadership Team

Magalis Aguilera; USA, Archdiocese of Miami (FL). (*Chairperson IRC*).

Judith Stegman, President of the USACV-IRC 2019-2025; USA, Archdiocese of Miami (FL).

Maria Luisa Meza; EL SALVADOR, Diocese of Santa Ana/San Miguel.

Renu Rita Silvano; INDIA, Archdiocese of Bombay.

Noemi Angeles; PHILIPPINES, Diocese of Malolas

One Unfilled Position

Other USACV-IRC Services, among others

Leandra Hubka; Diocese of Winona-Rochester (MN). Coordinator of the 2024-2025 Season Candidate Discussion Group.

Diane LeMay; Diocese of Columbus (OH). Website Team Leader.

Joani McCann; Archdiocese of Boston (MA). Rome 2025 Jubilee, Event Coordinator.

Julie Radachy; Diocese of Knoxville (TN). Social Media Team Leader. Co-chair for 2025 Convocation Team. Concierge and technical assistant for Information Conference.

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

Karen Webb 2024-2026; Diocese of Rochester (NY). USACV-IRC Treasurer.

Upcoming Issues of the Lamp

September 8, 2025 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

December 12, 2025 Our Lady of Guadalupe

February 2, 2026 Feast of the Presentation
and World Day for Consecrated Life

May 31, 2026 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin

The theme for the 2025 Jubilee Year is “Pilgrims of Hope,” and the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life announced the theme “Pilgrims of hope, on the path to peace” for the Jubilee of Consecrated Life. As noted in past issues of “The Lamp,” the USACV is not planning to organize travel or housing for consecrated virgins desiring to attend the Rome Jubilee. Consecrated virgin Joani McCann offers the following information for those interested in attending:

We will be meeting in Rome. Registration, travel and accommodations are up to each individual. We recommend booking your arrangements as soon as possible as hotels are filling up fast.

Any consecrated virgin who plans to attend: please email Joani at joani.mccann@gmail.com. As soon as we know how many are planning on coming, we can organize events together as a group.

Registration for the Jubilee of Consecrated Life takes place in 2 phases: you must first complete a registration form on **the official Jubilee site** and then do another registration on the **Dicastery for Consecrated Life site**. Registration must be completed by August 3, 2025. Here are links:

- October 8 and 9, 2025: These days are organized by the Dicastery for Evangelization, in collaboration with the Dicastery for Consecrated Life. Registration can be done online or through the Jubilee application by August 3, 2025.
<https://www.iubilaum2025.va/en/pellegrinaggio/calendario-giubileo/GrandiEventi/Giubileo-della-Vita-Consacrata.html>
- October 10 to 12, 2025: These days are coordinated by the Dicastery for Consecrated Life. Registration must be done online at the link provided here by August 3, 2025.
<https://forms.gle/GiTU16sKz7VWLzVa6>

The preliminary schedule for the Jubilee is as follows:

Wednesday, October 8

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Jubilee Day lived individually
Participants will organize themselves independently to experience various Jubilee moments, such as the pilgrimage to the Holy Door, prayer, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM Prayer Vigil @ Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano.

Thursday, October 9

10:30 AM. Holy Mass presided over by the Holy Father @ St. Peter’s Square. No ticket is needed; the celebration is open to all.

3:00 PM – 5:30 PM Start of reflection and sharing @ Paul VI Hall and other nearby locations around St. Peter’s.

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM Dialogue with the City @ three squares in the city

One theme per square: 1) Commitment to the marginalized and listening to the cry of the poor; 2) Care for creation and environmental protection; 3) Universal fraternity.

Friday, October 10

8:30 AM – 12:00 PM Listening and reflection on the theme of HOPE @ Paul VI Hall

3:00 PM – 6:30 PM Mutual listening @ Paul VI Hall and other nearby locations around St. Peter’s

Saturday, October 11

8:30 AM – 12:00 PM. Listening and reflection on the theme of PEACE @ Paul VI Hall

3:00 PM – 5:30 PM. Workshops @ Paul VI Hall and other nearby locations around St. Peter’s

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM. Conclusion of the Jubilee for Consecrated Life @ Piazza San Giovanni Bosco (Basilica of St. John Bosco).

Sunday, October 12

10:30 AM. Holy Mass presided over by the Holy Father for the Jubilee of Marian Spirituality @ St. Peter’s Square.

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 [info @consecratedvirgins.org](mailto: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.

Upcoming Consecrations

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

Please let us know so we can announce!

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*.

30 Years

Mary Therese Wyant
consecrated May 27, 1995

Since my childhood I have had a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When I received the consecration to a life of virginity lived in the world May 27, 1995 I did so intending it to be in, through, and for the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



I have tried, however imperfectly, these last thirty years to grow in this intention and to live it out in my prayer life, career as a librarian, various parish ministries, and now, along with two of my siblings, to care for my frail, elderly mother who also has dementia. This the hardest thing I've ever done in my life! But the love of the Heart of Jesus gets me through each day.

My prayer for myself and for all of you as I celebrate this anniversary is that in all our joys and sorrows the love of the Heart of Jesus will sustain us; and that the love we have for Him and those He places in our lives will be a joy and consolation to Him.

15 Years

Margaret Flipp
consecrated January 21, 2010

It is hard to believe that 15 years have passed since my consecration in 2010! As I reflect on those years, and even further back to the beginning of my consecration to God by vows in 1962,



I still cannot conceive of being anything else but the spouse of my beloved Jesus. Having reached the age of 84, my whole focus is to stretch forward, like St. Paul, to reach the goal, namely the arms of my Beloved. At the same time, I have learned to reach

out horizontally as well, through the Reach More program, to try to bring as many others as possible with me. I have been a catechist for the last three years with OCIA (formerly RCIA), along with a small group at my home, as well as being lector. However, I feel that I am primarily an intercessor for others, and as a part of that, I am a prayer person in the deliverance ministry. Life is very full and I thank God for everything in my life, and for all of you, my dear sisters in Christ.

In Memory of Our Deceased Sister

Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace.

Rest in peace, consecrated virgin Josephine Harsy. Josephine passed to eternal life on December 3, 2024, at age 91. Our records show that she lived in the Diocese of Fargo (ND) at the time of her death, and that she



was consecrated June 3, 1978 at the hands of Cardinal John Joseph Carberry in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Jo's obituary on the Boulger Funeral Home website states that she studied philosophy, earning her Master's degree at Marquette University and Doctoral degree at Georgetown in Washington, D.C. Over the years, she taught courses in theology, philosophy, and literature at the University of San Diego, Georgetown University, several community colleges, and at St. Mary's Cathedral in Fargo, and she served as Vice-Chancellor in the Diocese of Fargo from 1988-2002 under Bishop James S. Sullivan.

We invite anyone who may have known Josephine more personally to send your memories of her for our September or December issue of "The Lamp."



32 consecrated virgins and candidates have registered for the 2025 convocation, to be held June 27 to July 1 in the Diocese of Knoxville (TN). We look forward with joy to this time together in the Smoky Mountains, prayerfully exploring “The Interior Castle with St. Teresa of Jesus,” nourished with daily Mass, adoration, chanted communal Liturgy of the Hours, and time for personal prayer and fellowship.

- ◇ Registration has closed although there might be space for one or two more registrations – contact Julie Radachy (radjulie31@gmail.com) with questions. (As a reminder, all consecrated virgins are invited to attend the convocation, as well as those who have been accepted as candidates for consecration in their dioceses and have attended a previous Information Conference sponsored by the USACV).
- ◇ Those who have registered: be sure to get your travel information to Julie as soon as possible so she can arrange needed airport transportation.
- ◇ Also for those who have registered, let Julie know your talent, for the talent show!
- ◇ Visit consecratedvirgins.org for more information.

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. *Recording available to those who attended the session. Please contact Leandra Hubka for more information.*

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. *Recording available to those who attended the session. Please contact Leandra Hubka for more information.*

May 5, 2025: Living Integrated Virginity: Living the Charism of Virginity through the Lens of Theology of the Body, Presenter Jen Settle. *Recording available to those who attended the session. Please contact Leandra Hubka for more information.*

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.



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2025 Information Conference for the Ordo Virginum

The USACV-IRC is pleased to announce the 2025 Information Conference on the *Ordo Virginum*, which will be held in a virtual format once again. The conference includes prayer together, testimonials from consecrated virgins, presentations on significant aspects of the vocation of consecrated virginity lived *in specula*, and times for questions and answers. Presenters include Bishop Earl Boyea, Episcopal Moderator for the USACV and, among others, consecrated virgins Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D. and Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD.

This conference is a valuable resource for anyone with a serious interest in discovering more about the vocation of consecrated virginity, including those who are pursuing the consecration as aspirants or candidates; diocesan delegates for consecrated life; diocesan vocation directors; other diocesan representatives responsible for discernment and formation for this vocation; and consecrated virgins themselves.

Participation in the Information Conference is a prerequisite for participation in Candidate Discussion Groups and for attendance at the annual United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins.

2025 Virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity

Dates: Friday to Sunday, September 5 to 7, 2025

Time: 1:00-6:00pm ET each day

Format: Webinar

Coordinators: Judith Stegman, Julie Radachy, and Leadership Teams of the USACV and IRC

Presentation topics:

- † Overview of Vocations in the Catholic Church, and the Ecclesial Identification of the *Ordo virginum*
- † The Liturgical Rite of Consecration and the Marian Dimension of the Vocation
- † The Liturgy of the Hours and Prayer Life of the Consecrated Virgin
- † Historical Aspects of the Consecration of Virgins; Virgin Saints
- † Sacred Scripture and the Witness of the *Ordo Virginum*, in *Ecclesiae sponsae imago*
- † Mystical Espousal to Christ, the Son of God
- † Living *in saeculo* and in the Local Church
- † Personal Testimonies of Consecrated Virgins Serving on the Team
- † Psychological Maturity for Living the Virginal Vocation
- † Prerequisites for Admission to the Virginal Consecration
- † Stages of Preparation for Admission to the *Ordo virginum*
- † About Associations, the *Ordo virginum*, and Next Steps

Online registration will open in July. To pre-register, please email your name and diocese to info@consecratedvirgins.org.



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