

May 31, 2026 — Trinity Sunday and Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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

It may seem strange to honor a body part, that is, the heart of Jesus. Yet, for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (June 12), the bishops of the United States will consecrate our country to that Heart. Why do we Catholics do this? It was St. John Eudes in the 1600s who encouraged a devotion to the heart of Christ. In fact, he talked about Jesus having three hearts. Let's look at what he meant.

There is, first of all, the divine heart of Christ, a great symbol for the love which God has for us, as St. Paul states so clearly in his Letter to the Romans (5): "God proved his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." Divine love is simply a free, generous, undeserving love. It makes no demands but does invite us to love in the same way.

There is a second heart in Jesus. It is his spiritual heart, that is, the heart of his will, both his divine will and his human will, deeply united to live out true charity. This is his own specific sacrifice for us, the sacrifice of his own will for us, and the sacrifice of his life for us. This love is obvious to us. We see it in the scriptures. We see it whenever we look at a crucifix. Why would someone, anyone, let alone the Son of God go to such lengths for us--it is a love beyond our measures. We don't deserve it. It makes no sense, but that is true love.

The third heart of Christ is his physical, fleshly heart, symbol of his human affections for us. This is an intense, passionate, fixed love which is expressed in Jesus' concern, in the compassion he felt in his guts, his tenderness and tears. Jesus had passion. That passion was always focused on others, on that lost sheep, on that repentant sinner. It is always pulsating for others, for their good, to gather them, "from every dark place where they are scattered when it was cloudy and dark." He really loves helping others.

We bishops want our country to be a school of love. On rare occasions we may actually achieve that. Often, as we know, because we are all sinners, we have fallen short. Let us pledge ourselves to the heart, that is, to the hearts of Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl Boyea

Bishop of Lansing



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By Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D.  
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*The Virginal Vocation in the Image and Likeness of God*

The humanity of God's Son came in the mystery of God's will to create the human nature, not in the meaning of Jesus Christ's ancestors or genealogy, but in God's way, that is, in the meaning of His divine essence. His Mother's humanity was created by God in the same mystery as our human creation at the beginning, before the disobedience of Eve, without sin. In Mary of Nazareth there did not exist the deviation of sin, as is observed in the named ancestors of Jesus Christ's genealogy, (cfr Matthew 1 and Luke 3:23-38). She was created in the essence of the Holy Trinity and her virginity was created as Eve's, in God's virginal essence. We return to the innocence of Paradise because of the mystery of Baptism that transforms us into a new creature. In us, the consecrated virgins, there is also a "new grace" that we receive in the mystery of the human being's creation in virginity. In other words, our virginity is that originally willed by the Eternal Father for Eve and Adam, who didn't accept the divine plan. Their sin was not in their flesh or sexuality, but in disobedience. (cfr. "Something Ancient, Something New" in *The Lamp*. Vol. 30).

Jesus Christ, the new Adam, is true man and true God, and the mystery of redemption must be read and lived in Him. His teachings were always based in obedience to His Father's will. In Him, there was something like a spiritual lesson for all of us who lose the virginal essence of our creation by disobedience. "My bread is to do the will of my Father who sent me" (Jn. 4:34); "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"(Mt. 6:10); "My Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me, but not as I will, but as you will"(Mt. 26:39). Every vocation given by God is a vocation to fulfill in us the Eternal Father's will. When the Holy Spirit guides us to follow our vocation, the Holy Spirit gives us the wisdom to discern the will of the Lord in us. More than this, we are covered by the "shadow of the Holy Spirit" to bear fruit in abundance living in the vocation to which we are called. Our Most Blessed Mother and Queen lives her virginal vocation to be the Mother of God's Son in complete surrender to the will of the Holy Trinity. She is a model of the virginal vocation as well as a mirror in which every single vocation sees the meaning of eternity.

Why is the virginal vocation the mirror in which we see the face of eternal life? Because the virginal vocation is rooted in the mystery of creation and redemption. In the life of a virgin there is a return to Paradise, when God created man and woman— that is, there is a return to the original innocence of man and woman before the sin of

disobedience, to begin to walk with Jesus Christ in purity and return to that innocence of virginal creation: "To clear away the accumulated mire of sin that envelops the divine image, we must return to the original innocence of man before the fall and disobedience, with Christ in purity and obedience. That occurs in stages, in reverse of the chronology of the expulsion from Eden. First, the virgin must put off marriage (and all the attractions related to it) that was only truly instituted, in its literal sense, after the expulsion from Paradise of our first fathers to ameliorate the pain of death. Second, we must withdraw from toil over the land. Third, we must cast off the dead skins which are worldly wisdom. Fourth, we must get rid of fig leaves, which represent shame. Finally, standing again naked before God, we must follow his first commandment: to seek only good, and leave the evil untasted. Untouched by evil, we may enjoy God continually, as if we had been snatched back to Paradise. Virginity is not merely physical abstinence but the ultimate spiritual state of incorruptibility, un-decaying purity, and complete detachment from worldly, carnal, passion. Virginity is a Gift from God highlighting its purity and incorruptibility, and likens it to the divine nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our flesh is bound to death, yes, but the Spirit of God is incorruptible and life-giving, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" ( cf. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Cappadocia, 372 "Treatise on Virginity," quoted by Francisco de B. Vizmanos, *Christian Virgins of the Ancient Church*, 1947, pages 1113–1172. Brief summary from excerpt translated by M. Aguilera).

When we meditate on these words of Saint Gregory of Nyssa we can go forward and infer from his teaching: "First, the virgin must put off marriage (and all the attractions related to it) that was only truly instituted, in its literal sense, after the expulsion from Paradise of our first fathers to ameliorate the pain of death."

What does the phrase "that was only truly instituted to ameliorate the pain of death" mean for us as consecrated virgins or for future consecrations? We know that our first fathers lost the preternatural gifts and among them, immortality. They were fruitful, as God the Father had commanded them. Death entered into mankind who is created in the image and likeness of God: "male and female He created them." The Eternal Father gave them participation in His likeness, that is, in His essence as creator. We read in Genesis "God blessed them and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it' (Gen. 1:28). The Eternal Father in His immense love had to give them a new command in

their creation as male and female, to be fruitful and multiply. We are guided by the Holy Spirit, and as we will discuss later, our participation in a spousal relationship with Jesus Christ is based on returning to paradise to live the original innocence created by the Holy Trinity in their virginal essence.

The relationship between Adam and Eve was a spousal relationship. That spousal relationship was based in love, not in lust. However, the mutual donation of themselves in the innocence of their creation and image of the Creator was broken. Their body had lost its nuptial meaning, that is, the innocence and capacity of donation in mutual love in their respective masculinity and femininity.

The Eternal Father advised them, and is also advising all of us who follow the command to “be fruitful” and yet deviate our calling from the innocence of creation: “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” And to him He said: “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat it, cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. . . by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return’” (Gen. 3: 17-19). Why did the Eternal Father give Adam a consequence—to work in what He created, and to Eve the sentence of submission to her husband and to have children with pain—why? Because they had lost how the Eternal Father created them in His essence. I think this is a good point of meditation: how was maternity and childbirth before the original sin? The capacity to be fruitful was interrupted by disobedience and now became subject to the man working hard and to the woman having pain. To follow the will of God is the goal of every single vocation.

How is it important for our virginal vocation that we understand and contemplate the essence of God and our creation? Why is God’s essence important to a virginal vocation? The following summary is from a teaching from a Bishop to virgins at the International Congress of Consecrated Virgins in Rome in 2008:

“God is virgin in his essence, in the dual sense of purity and fecund vitality. The word virginity means purity without mixture of any other elements and also means superabundance of life, boundless fecundity of life. God is virgin under these two aspects. God is God, and in this sense, He is absolute purity, and in this sense, He is boundless fecundity and full life. God, therefore, is virgin in essence. Jesus Christ has revealed to

us that God is not solitary; rather God is one in three Persons. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as Jesus Christ has revealed to us. How did the Father generate the Son? In what way? With whom? With what tools? With nothing. From his own abundance of life he generated his Son with the Father’s joy. The Eternal Father generates his Son virginally. God is virgin in his essence. Further, the eternal Father is virginal in the generation of the Son. And we would not know this had Jesus Christ not revealed it to us. This is important to the Trinitarian foundation of virginity because even here we discover that virginity is fullness of life. Virginity is not an impairment; virginity is not debasement; virginity is not a disgrace. Man has been created in the image and likeness of God and one of the qualities that God has is that of being virgin; the eternal Father generates his Son virginally from all eternity. When God made man in his image and likeness he made them male and female, complementary: ‘and God saw that it was very good’. Thus, this complementarity of the sexes, man and woman, as a couple, for procreation, for mutual help, is something dear to God in His plan. So, the command “increase and multiply” in the Old Testament cannot be avoided. But when Jesus Christ speaks to us in the fullness of the Revelation, we understand that we can also resemble God in virginity, because God is virgin; He is life, and He is life in abundance; that he is involved in man whether by way of matrimony or by way of virginity. These are two ways in which the human person, man or woman, resembles God. Therefore, virginity has its ultimate foundation in the virginity of God who generates his Son without any help.” (Summarized from Demetrio Fernández-González, Bishop of Córdoba, Spain, Session 2, 15 May 2008-Rome Congress-Pilgrimage of the *Ordo Virginum*: Translated from Spanish text in *Sequela Christi*, 2009/01, pp 64-76- *Virginitad Cristiana Dimensiones Trinitaria, Cristologia, Mariana y Ecclesiologia*).

Saint John Paul II wrote: “. . . the mystery of redemption bears fruit in man also in a charismatic way. The Holy Spirit enters the human body as His own ‘temple,’ dwells there and operates together with his spiritual gifts. Among the gifts, known in the history of spirituality as the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Is 11:2, according to the Septuagint and the Vulgate), the one most congenial to the virtue of purity seems to be the gift of piety. If purity prepares man to “control his own body in holiness and honor” (cf. I Th. 4: 3:5), piety, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, seems to serve purity in a particular way. It makes the human subject sensitive

to that dignity which is characteristic of the human body by mystery of creation and redemption” (“General Audience of March 18, 1981”, found in *The Theology of the Body, Human Love in the Divine Plan*, Boston: Daughters of Saint Paul 1997, 208).

The human body in its masculinity and femininity was transformed by the baptismal water to have participation of God’s essence. The essence of God and the Holy Trinity is defined as one divine nature in three distinct Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). In our pilgrimage to the Eternal Father’s home we might receive the call of matrimony, the call to Sacred Orders culminating in priestly ordination, the call to live in a religious family following Jesus Christ by living the charism given to the founder, or the call to live the virginal vocation that implies a new grace expressed through the Ritual of the Consecration of Virgins.

The consecrated virgin belongs to the *Ordo Virginitatis*, an Order promulgated later in the history of the Church but that began with the first woman consecrated by the Holy Spirit in a little town of Nazareth, in the region of Palestine, land the Eternal Father had chosen to prepare a people for her Divine Son’s mission, to fulfill His promise made in Paradise to restore man and women in the image and likeness originally created by Him in Paradise. The image of God was distorted in Paradise in Adam and Eve’s souls and thus cancelled the likeness that they were as the work of God’s creation. We continue to see how the man and the woman are trying to change the image of God’s creation in them, when we see that they dismiss that a man and a woman were created in perfection. Their brains, created by God, have a biological attraction center. That center is meant to fulfill God’s command that they be fruitful, as man and woman, in the image of their Creator. Yesterday and today, there are tendencies to destroy the image of their whole body, changing in a biological way their being man or woman, as created by God. But in His love God imprinted in our souls His divine likeness, and this, nevertheless, remains within, hidden; this is the meaning of “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21).

How is the virginal vocation related to motherhood? After their disobedience Eve and Adam lost the gifts given to them in their being, made in the image and likeness of the Creator. God in His Eternal Love, made a promise for a woman—the Church—to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the eternal Earth in His image and likeness. This woman is the New Eve who obeys, and the New Adam is the Redeemer in God’s love, His only begotten Son.

Pope Saint John Paul II wrote: “Virginitas and motherhood are two dimensions of the fulfillment of the female personality. In the light of the Gospel, they acquire their full meaning and value in Mary, who as a

virgin became the mother of the Son of God.” The woman was created in a virginal state. The family of Nazareth was the model to teach us that in eternity life will be lived in the virginal state. To us consecrated virgins is given the virginal gift from the very essence of the Holy Trinity. The Mother Queen was a virgin, created in the virginal essence of the Eternal Father; the Son as true man and true God is virgin; and Saint Joseph was given the gift of virginity. How can one doubt that virginity is the highest expression of fecundity when that holy family raised up the Redeemer of all mankind?

Our spirituality as consecrated virgins is coming from Mary of Nazareth, our Mother and Model, and she appeared in the very beginning of creation announced by the Eternal Father. “The words of the Proto-evangelium: ‘I will put enmity between you and the woman,’ is the promise of redemption. It is a new covenant confirmed with our Blessed Mother’s FIAT. . . God begins a New Covenant with humanity. This is the eternal and definitive covenant in Christ, in His body and blood, in His cross and resurrection. Precisely because this Covenant is to be fulfilled in “flesh and blood,” its beginning is in the Mother” (cf. Saint John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women) 19, found in *The Theology of the Body*, 470).

We as consecrated virgins in union with our Blessed Mother join the desire of our Divine Spouse that his Church, of whom we are an icon: “be a virgin, a bride, and a mother: a virgin, to keep the faith whole and entire; a bride, to be one with Him forever; and a mother, to raise up the children of the Church” (cf. Rite of Consecration, Homily). Our vocation has meaning in Mary of Nazareth, or Ephesus, or the Universal Church, in silence, service and solitude, as we produce spiritual fruit for the children of the Church. Her union with Her Son gives us the capacity to follow Him, looking to her for ways to grow up in spousal love. We follow the will of the Lord as He calls us:

“By freely choosing virginity, women confirm themselves as persons, as beings whom the Creator from the beginning has willed for their own sake. At the same time they realize the personal value of their own femininity by becoming ‘a sincere gift’ for God who has revealed himself in Christ, a gift for Christ, the Redeemer of humanity and the Spouse of souls: a “spousal” gift. One cannot correctly understand virginity—a woman’s consecration in virginity—without referring to the spousal love. It is through this kind of love that a person becomes a gift for the other” (Saint John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 20, in *The Theology of the Body*, 473).

The Church, in the name of our Divine Lord and Spouse, gives us the ring of our ‘desponsorium’ with Him: “Receive the ring that marks you as a bride of Christ. Keep unstained your fidelity to your Bridegroom, that you may one day be admitted to the wedding feast of everlasting joy” (cf. Rite of Consecration). This is one of the most powerful moments of our virginal consecration. This ring represents the mystical meaning of our spiritual marriage with our Divine Lord, and Spouse, Jesus Christ. The ring is given to us and we have not to experience a sensorial mystical union with the Divine Spouse, but to understand that our life is transformed in Him in the spousal union that lasts forever. “Among your many gifts you give to some the grace of virginity. Yet the honor of marriage is in no way lessened. As it was in the beginning, your first blessing still remains upon this holy union. Yet your loving wisdom chooses

those who make sacrifice of marriage for the sake of the love of which it is the sign. They renounce the joys of marriage, but cherish all that it foreshadows” (cf Rite of Consecration, Homily). This is the meaning of the spousal union.

Saint Theresa of Ávila describes in the 7th dwelling the deepest center of the soul, where the soul and God are united in a stable, transformative way. She received a ring from the Divine Lord. The ring symbolizes a mystical espousal or covenant between the soul and Christ, similar to the imagery of spiritual marriage. I recommend that you read about this dwelling and the experiences of Theresa of Avila that can help us contemplate our own mystical marriage with our Most Divine Lord and Spouse.

### *From the President’s Journal*

By Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD  
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#### *A “Delicate” Question*

In her “Something Ancient, Something New” article, Magalis delves into the eternal meaning of a virginal vocation. Through the new grace received in the consecration, the consecrated virgin follows in the way of our Blessed Mother, imaging the virginal life of the Most Holy Trinity, in Whose image and likeness we were created and meant to live, before the fall in Eden. I was recently asked a “delicate” question by a consecrated virgin who works with candidates in her diocese: “If a woman lives a chaste life aligned with the Church’s teachings, but is open about having same-sex attraction, would this disqualify her from being consecrated? Has the USACV developed resources to assist or inform bishops, dioceses, and delegates regarding this?”

I responded saying that in our current climate of confused sexuality, I’m not surprised to see this question come up. Our witness as consecrated virgins living in the world is to show the love of Christ as Bridegroom to that world. We are to image the Church as the Spouse of Christ (*Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago*), following the way of a virginal life that our Blessed Mother first lived. She is the model *par excellence* for the consecrated virgin, I said that it is important for us to be firm, and always understanding, in our response to such questions about our vocation. Bishops and formators for our precious vocation must keep in mind that this is a

divine call of the Eternal Father to chosen women, to image a life of virginal bridal love for the Son of God. It is a vocation for those who have been given the gift of virginity and who choose to offer this back to Jesus Christ, true God and true man, in witness to His Spousal love for His Church.

A woman who is open about having same-sex attraction is not likely a woman who has a vocation to the *Ordo virginum*. The vocation of consecrated virginity is a specific vocation of witness to the Church’s love of virginity as a chosen path of love for the Triune, virginal God. I think an important document to consider as a point of reference is the Instruction approved and ordered published by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, “Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders.” Granted - the *Ordo virginum* is not Holy Orders, but our vocation is analogous in that the priest represents Christ in His relationship of Bridegroom to His Bride, the Church; and the consecrated virgin represents the Church, the Bride, in Her relationship to Christ, the Bridegroom. One enters the *Ordo virginum* not by ordination, but by consecration according to the ancient liturgical rite of consecration to a life of virginity, found in the Roman Pontifical.

The Instruction emphasizes the need for integral formation in the area of affectivity and sexuality, and I think the question it responds to can be directly related to the consecrated virgin: “whether to admit to the seminary [to formation for the *Ordo virginum*] and to holy orders [consecration] candidates who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies.” The

Instruction discusses 3 points that I might summarize as follows:

1) The candidate for priesthood must reach “affective maturity and spiritual fatherhood.” [Analogously, the candidate for the *ordo virginum* needs affective maturity in order to take on her role of spiritual motherhood toward the Church community.]

2) While homosexual acts can never be approved, homosexual tendencies are also objectively disordered and often constitute a trial for those men and women who experience them. These people must be profoundly respected and accepted with love and sensitivity. However, for a number of reasons, those “who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called ‘gay culture,’ cannot be admitted to ordination. [For the consecrated virgin, part of relating correctly to men and women means witnessing to them the virgin's spousal relationship to Christ, who is true man and true God. It seems to me that a woman with deep-seated homosexual tendencies, especially if she is known for support of the “LGBTQ+” community, is likely to be gravely hindered from authentically witnessing to the deeply intimate, spiritual love between her and an unseen Spouse - again, true God and true man.]

It is important that the Instruction also states: “Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem—for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nonetheless, such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate.” [We see this sometimes with a young woman who in a transitory way has confused sexual attraction with a true and wholesome friendship with women.]

3) Discernment by the Church Concerning the Suitability of Candidates. The Instruction pointed to two aspects to a priestly vocation: 1) free gift of God and 2) the responsible freedom of the man. [I think this is directly applicable to discernment of a vocation to consecrated virginity. The Church—formators and consecrating Bishop—are focused on whether a woman has received a true gift of virginity from the Eternal Father and if she desires freely to give herself entirely—as a woman—to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.]

The Instruction on the *Ordo Virginum, Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago* (ESI), #105 is clear on this point: “Admission to consecration requires moral certainty about the authenticity of the candidate’s vocation, the real existence of a virginal charism and the presence of the conditions and prerequisites for the candidate to accept and respond to the grace of consecration, and be able to bear eloquent witness of her own vocation, persevering in it and growing in generous self-giving to the Lord and to her neighbor.” [I note that “moral certainty” is canonically a very high level of assurance—it is the same certainty required in the decision to ordain a man for the priesthood. This moral certainty is on the part of the Bishop, who has responsibility for the definitive discernment (ESI 104)].



artwork by Marion Biestek

By Diane Christine Farr



We know that we are made in the image and likeness of God. As consecrated virgins, it is with this in mind that we are overcome with joyful gratitude that we are called into a communion with Christ the heavenly bridegroom. Abbott Marmian describes the effects of this gift of one's self to God in these words, "This complete donation of yourself inspired and helped by grace is the great subject of your interior joy. It should also be a constant source of thanksgiving for does it not confer upon you the magnificent faculty of consecrating yourself without impediment to a life of intimate union with God? Does it not place you always in the garden enclosed there to enjoy the gifts and the presence of the bridegroom? Does it not make the soul the fountain sealed where the living and fructifying waters are?"

We will explore the interior garden of prayer as we describe a terrestrial garden of flowers and their meaning. We will find ourselves meeting in the presence of the Bridegroom as we come to know His gifts.

We see that flowers in their magnificent variety, colors, and fragrances reflect the beauty and majesty of our risen Lord and heavenly Bridegroom. At the door of our garden, we find Royal Purple Irises with their three large petals signifying faith in the Holy Trinity. Our journey with God always begins with faith. It is this faith that carries us through the many difficulties of life. It is faith in the Divine indwelling of the most Holy Trinity that is God's abiding presence always with us. The love of the Father has drawn us to His Son and the Holy Spirit reveals him to us as our Bridegroom. This



loving communion of three divine persons is also symbolized by the Pansy that calls us to thoughtful contemplation of this mystery of the Trinity. We find Pale Blue Forget Me Nots under the iris and among the pansies. These are symbols of God's steadfast faithfulness.

One of the most striking spring flowers is the Hyacinth. It is a sign of constancy and peace as well as the grace that filled our Lady. It is sometimes called the breath of God on account of its lovely fragrance. While hyacinths signify prayerful intensions, constancy means that we have unwavering loving dispositions toward God and others. The risen Christ wishes to bestow His peace on us. This peace will help to maintain constancy in us. It is hard to function without peace. The Snow Drop, being the first with its three white drooping petals being the first flower of Spring is a sign of purity and hope. We all need signs of hope in our spiritual lives to guide us to our eternal home.



The Crocus is also a sign of hope and perseverance. It also represents the divine wisdom that filled Mary's heart. The gold trumpets of Daffodils are often called Easter Bells and are a sign of renewal. They are associated with Mary's beauty. Wherever we find Jesus we will find His beautiful mother. She walks with us in this prayerful garden, guiding us along the way. The Tulip is a symbol of her prayer. We ponder her Magnificat wishing to imitate prayerful praise.

Purple and white Violets are a symbol of humility and modesty. It is said that this flower bent its head at the crucifixion in reverence for Christ's sufferings. Yellow violets stand for friendship and happiness. The spiritual life must be firmly grounded in humility so that our Lord may work freely in the soul. The bride of Christ must be adorned interiorly and exteriorly with great modesty and beauty. Our greatest happiness is our profound friendship with our Divine Lord and spouse.

The Daisy symbolizes innocence and simplicity. Our lives and indeed our prayer must be marked by a spirit of simplicity. Christ is the life of the soul. He is both the Divine Gardener and the Divine Flower of choice. Dianthus, the botanical name for Carnation, means Divine Flower. Carnations



symbolize Mary's joy in the incarnation of her son as well as her motherly care for all of us. Legend tells that carnations sprang from Mary's tears at the crucifixion.



In our garden we find Lily of the Valley nestled under a tall lilac bush. These white bells are also called our Lady's tears. Lily of the Valley is an emblem of Christ's divine nature and a sign of the sweetness of His love. It is called Ladder to Heaven in honor of the Ascension.

The Lilac is called Ascension Day Spike. The Columbine represents the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The elegant Peony is known as Pentecost Rose. Our vocation as consecrated virgins has blossomed like a beautiful flower. It is the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are at work here. The gift of wisdom especially helps us to recognize its serious nature and its exquisite beauty.



We find many different colored Roses. Red roses stand for perfect and Divine Love as well as the precious blood of Jesus. They also symbolize the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary. They are striking images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We desire to pattern our own hearts after these shining hearts. The heart of the mother reflects the heart of her son. The heart of Jesus contains the source of Divine Charity. We draw everything we need from this font.

The single rose with its five petals represents the five wounds of Christ. This reminds us of His sacrificial love which we are called to imitate. White roses stand for the joyful mysteries of the rosary and Mary's perfect virginal purity. Some of us carried white roses and lilies on the day of our consecration. Yellow roses stand for the glorious mysteries of the rosary. Pink roses symbolize kindness. It is only the truly kind heart the resembles the heart of Jesus. Peach roses symbolize gratitude. We can never thank God enough for our beautiful vocation. Purple roses represent the luminous



mysteries of the rosary. The lovely fragrance of roses reminds us of the presence of our Holy Mother who walks in this garden. She is called the mystical rose.



Tucked among the stones we see the pink butterfly like flowers of the Cyclamen. Each flower has a red spot. It is an emblem of the sorrowful and immaculate Heart of Mary. Our heart must resemble that of our mother, embracing others in their need. In a shady part of the garden, we find soft blue Hydrangea. The flowers represent trust and peaceful tranquility. Sometimes we struggle to maintain absolute trust in God. It is only with Divine Grace that we rise above our circumstances and arrive at perfect peace.

Now we come to a Lavender hedge growing in the sunshine. It symbolizes purity and holiness with its clean fresh scent. As virgins consecrated to God, our highest example of holiness is the life of our Lady. She is the mirror of perfect purity and selfless deeds.

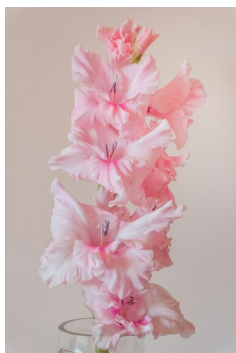
The Dogwood has white blossoms with four petals. Two of them are longer making them resemble a cross. They have become a symbol of Christ's cross and of His precious blood with their reddish markings. We pause to reflect on our Lord's suffering, especially His interior ones. It cost Him a great deal not only for our salvation but to give us the great happiness of being a bride of Christ.

The white petals and rich perfume of the Lily make it a beautiful symbol of prayer, virginity and The Resurrection. The fragrance of lilies evokes



an atmosphere of contemplative prayer and reverent silence. We are always seeking the presence of the bridegroom in this garden. The Easter Lily stands for the resurrected Christ himself. Each flower speaks to us of our bridegroom. The noble lily tells of the exquisite virginal love that exists between the Bridegroom and

His bride. The slender Madonna Lily, which is often seen in paintings of the Anunciation tells of the virgin mother's tender purity. We have joyfully received the gift of virginity in honor of our Holy Mother. It is the seal of love placed upon our communion with our Bridegroom.



The Gladiola with its strong straight stems is a symbol of divine strength and moral integrity. It is only divine strength that will carry us through every trial and moral integrity that will keep us on the right path. Dahlias symbolize transformation. We are constantly undergoing a transformation to become more Christ – like, as we allow Him to work in our souls. As we walk along, we see that the sword-like leaves of the Spring Iris are still visible. They symbolize Mary's sword of sorrow that pierced her maternal heart. Our dear mother understands all of our sufferings.

We now come to a bright patch of annuals. Here we see the tall Cosmos with its daisy-like flowers of pink, white and wine and its fern like foliage. It is a sign of order and harmony. We need to possess order and harmony with the Divine Will in our souls in order to grow in intimacy with our Divine Bridegroom. The Sunflower is a sign of joyful devotion and adoration. We see that just as the sunflower constantly turns toward the light of the sun, so must we always be turning toward the light of God's will in order to live in His presence.



It is within this enclosed garden that we listen to God in prayers, seeking Him with attentive hearts. Morning glory vines cover the wall of the garden. Their blue flowers remind us of Mary's mantle surrounding us. Through our Lord's words in John 15:5, "I am the true vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit..." we draw our life completely from Him and He sustains us.

Red Poppies stand for Christ's blood and white ones for peace. Black-eyed Susans stand for joyful

endurance during challenging conditions. China Asters stand for patience and perseverance as they bloom late in the season. Their pink, purple and white blossoms are Mary's star and her birthday flower. Baby's breath symbolizes gentleness. Zinnia stands for enduring love and devotion. Cornflower stands for purity, innocence and Heaven. It is called Mary's crown. Snapdragon is strength and protection.



The Calendula and the Marigold are often called Mary's gold and symbolize joy, devotion and the glory of Heaven. Garden Balsam is called our Lady's Slipper and Petunia is our Lady's praises. They recall the Visitation. The flower known as Love in a Mist has delicate blue flowers surrounded by tiny green threads. It is on account of this that it is called Mary in the shade. It is a symbol of the mystery of love. There is a beautiful mystery surrounding each consecration of a virgin. It is a mystery of Divine Mercy and Infinite love. It is a light and a blessing to be revealed to the whole church.

Impatiens symbolize patience, kindness, compassion and inner peace. All of these virtues should be at work in the soul of the consecrated virgin.

Now we come to the Chrysanthemum. It is called All Saints Day flower and represents the beauty and endurance of departed souls. The garden is a reflection of Heaven. The saints walk with us, teaching us faithfulness during the tests we endure.



There are many hidden treasures in this garden waiting to be discovered. It is a garden of profound prayer and thoughtful reflection. We cultivate this garden together with Jesus. The fragrance of His presence permeates the air. He teaches us to allow the Divine Will to reign in our hearts. It must become the strength, support and life of our human will. Thus we will become a paradise for Jesus.

The Bridegroom speaks, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride, a garden enclosed. A fountain sealed" (Song of Songs 4:12).

May the most Holy Trinity be forever adored.

There is so much to discourage us these days as we watch the news and hear some teachers and students disparaging Christian and Jewish students and their faith. One popular broadcaster spoke with utter contempt about the Pope, Catholics and Catholicism. But many students are now coming out of their comfort zones to speak about their faith and to defend their fellow Jewish and Christian classmates although they were afraid because some were beaten for their defense of the lives and dignity of their classmates. A few of the students spoke against the growing culture of violence including the violence against the baby in the womb. It was so good to witness young students take a stand for life and faith with a kind of solidarity developing among them as the students in Poland did, encouraged by Pope Saint John Paul II. We don't hear much in the news about the goodness and courage and faith of our young citizens but they are out there as shining lights amidst the darkness, and speakers of truth amidst the lies and bearers of Christ's peace amidst the violence. But they need our prayers if they are to be able to keep going. We stand with them in witnessing to the sacredness and the beauty of every single human being created by God, especially the precious but vulnerable baby in the womb.

### Ordo Virginum Candidate Discussion Group 2025-2026

On November 3, the first session of the 2025-2026 season of the Candidate Discussion Group (CDG) featured consecrated virgin Elizabeth Rizzo presenting on "Consecrated Virginity: A Vocation of Hope to the World." The next upcoming session is in August, and it is not too late to register!

The CDG is a discussion opportunity for aspirants and candidates for the *Ordo virginum*. Sponsored by the USACV, the CDG 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.

### Who is invited to participate?

- *Ordo virginum* aspirants or candidates who meet the following criteria:
  - They have been accepted for formation in their local diocese
  - They have previously attended the USACV Information Conference
- Diocesan delegates for the *Ordo virginum*
- Consecrated virgins

### Registration

Those who would like to join the remaining session of the CDG can find information and online registration on the USACV website (<https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/UnitedStatesAssnofConsecra/registrationOVCandidateDiscussionGroup2025-2026.html>). Recordings will be provided after each presentation, for those unable to attend live. There is no cost to register and you can direct questions to consecrated virgin CDG coordinator Leandra Hubka, at [info@consecratedvirgins.org](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org).

### Remaining 2025-2026 Season Dates and Topics

**August 3, 2026:** "Living Arrangements for Consecrated Virgins: Possibilities, Considerations, and Recommendations," presented by Dr. Judith Stegman, JCD

### 2026-2027 Season

Stay tuned for the next season of the CDG, which will be announced upon the conclusion of the current season. More information will be in the September issue of *The Lamp*.

*Pray With Us! Virtual Vespers*

Consecrated virgins, candidates, and friends continue to 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](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org).

Upcoming Virtual Vespers dates:

- + Sunday, May 31, 2026 8:00pm ET, Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
- + Tuesday, July 14, 2026 8:00pm ET, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
- + Saturday, August 15, 2026 8:00pm ET, Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*Volume III of the Ordo Virginum series*

**Volume 3 – Coming Soon!**

The long-awaited third volume of our *Ordo Virginum* series is entitled, *Mary's Virgin Daughters, Brides of Christ: Yesterday, Today, and for Eternity*. Part I of the book includes three essays on the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, written by Bishop Earl Boyea, Dr. Shalina Stilley, and Dr. Magalis Aguilera. Part II of the book includes 18 essays on virgin saints, written by consecrated virgins of today. The essays are complemented by a diverse and beautiful selection of artwork. We have received the requisite *imprimatur* from the Bishop of Lansing, where the book will be printed, and although we will not quite have it in time for the Convocation, it will be ready shortly thereafter. It is a unique volume – the chosen virgin saints are those who were not part of other religious communities, but who lived as we do, virgins for our Lord Jesus, *in saeculo* (in the ordinary circumstances of the century).

*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](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org).

*A Note from the Archivist*

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](mailto:anne.gishpert@gmail.com).

*Recordings Available!*

Links to recordings from the Virtual Information Conference are available. If you attended the 2024 or 2025 conference and would like to receive a link, at no charge, please email [info@consecratedvirgins.org](mailto: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 [www.secure.consecratedvirgins.org/](http://www.secure.consecratedvirgins.org/). Recordings from the 2025 Virtual Information Conference are being prepared.

*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](mailto: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.

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY



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www.consecratedvirgins.org

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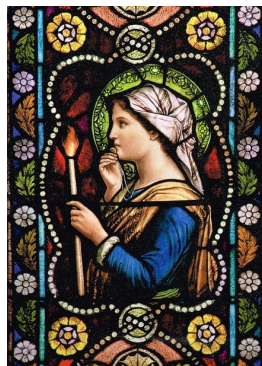
**[www.consecratedvirgins.org](http://www.consecratedvirgins.org)**

Consecrated virgins who celebrate significant anniversaries during 2026 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*.

20 Years

**Cathy Maley,**  
consecrated April 1, 2006  
Archdiocese of Saint Louis (MO)

Cathy offers this stained glass image of the virgin Saint Genevieve, and this Litany of Gratitude, “for it is prayer that sustains us.”



*Consecrated Virgins’ Litany of Gratitude*

Lord have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Christ, hear us.

**Christ, graciously hear us.**

God the Father of heaven,

**Have mercy on us.**

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

God the Holy Spirit,

Holy Trinity, One God,

Jesus, Bridegroom of the Church,

Jesus, Son of Mary,

Queen of Heaven,

**Pray for us.**

Queen of Virgins,

Immaculate Mother, most holy,

Mother, most prayerful,

Mother, who stood steadfast at the foot of the Cross,

St. Joseph, protector of the Holy Family,

St. Joseph, protector of virgins,

St. Joseph, terror of demons,

For the Incarnation,

**We thank You, Lord.**

For Mary, our Mother,

For the gift of Redemption through Your Passion, Death and Resurrection,

For Divine Mercy and forgiveness of our sins,

For the Gift of the Holy Spirit,

For having created us to share Your Divine Life,

For Baptism, the Holy Eucharist and every Sacrament,

For every grace and virtue,

For the gift of Holy Mass, prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours,

For Sacred Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium of

the Church,

For Sts. Peter and Paul and, all the Apostles,

For the Fathers of the Church,

For the Doctors of the Church,

For all the angels and our Guardian Angel,

For St. Matthew, the Apostle first to consecrate virgins,

For the virgin saints and martyrs,

For the gift of marriage and the family,

For the Holy Father, the Pope,

For our bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, and those in consecrated life,

For the gift of consecrated virginity,

For the gift of children, young people and the elderly,

For our family, friends and those we serve,

For our joys and sorrows,

**We praise You, Lord.**

For trials and uncertainties,

For challenges and limitations,

For the call to witness to You, the Bridegroom of the Church,

For the Cross that conforms us daily to You, our Divine Spouse,

For the grace to embrace daily penance and mortification,

For Holy Wisdom, knowledge and insight given us,

For death that ushers us into eternal life and union with You forever,

For You who are Beauty, Truth, Infinite Love, Mercy and Supreme Holiness,

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,

**Spare us, O Lord.**

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,

**Graciously hear us, O Lord.**

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,

**Have mercy on us.**

V. Pray for us O Holy Virgin of virgins.

R. That we may be worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Lord, Jesus Christ, hear our prayer and clothe us with Your humility. Grant us the grace to live faithfully our Consecration. May our lamps be filled with the oil of charity so that those we serve may experience Your Spousal love for them. Amen.

15 Years

**Paula Willenbrink,**  
consecrated June 2, 2011  
Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph (MO)

I write this reflection from a nursing home in which I'm a patient in rehab following right hip surgery. Quite painful right now as it has only been a week since I had the surgery. I'll get better over time and with physical

therapy. I'm scheduled to be discharged on my birthday June 4th.

My reflection of 15 years as a consecrated virgin is one of gratitude for Our Lord's grace and faithfulness. In my struggles of life, He is always with me every step of the way and within me through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

I went to a consecration in Kansas not too far from where I live. Every consecration is such a blessing to witness as another woman becomes the bride of Jesus Christ. It is a tremendous gift from Jesus to be totally His. For this I'm eternally grateful.

### 10 Years



**Shannon Rose Ryan,**  
consecrated June 29, 2016  
Archdiocese of Portland (OR)

I was consecrated on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul 10 years ago. It was an occasion of great joy and gratitude. Despite Our Lord's special calling during my First Holy Communion, I had left the Church when I was a teenager, owing to the extreme changes to the Old Mass that

had shocked and saddened me. But through a long and circuitous road, Our Lord had His eye on me every step of the way and protected me from many snares that would have separated us in ways that would have prevented me from giving my entire life to Him later as a bride of Christ. I am so grateful for His loving, patient, and unerring guidance that placed the right people in my path to return to the Faith.

My consecration was a most wondrous day, and I continue to thank Him for giving me this privilege of being His Spouse. My spiritual director told me that as a consecrated virgin I am called, above all, to console the heart of Jesus. I felt that is the best expression of my vocation because consoling Him is loving Him with all my strength. I often fail owing to my all too human tendencies, but He is ever patient and waits with tenderness for my attention to return to Him.

Recently, I had all my cemetery and funeral affairs settled so that it will be smooth sailing for my family to deal with when the time comes. For my planned headstone, I asked that under my name and dates, this phrase from Song of Songs be added: "My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed." This quote gives me such joy and a reminder of my spousal virginity and that I am wedded to the Bridegroom forever.

### In Memory of Our Deceased Sister: Louise Paré

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



Louise Paré  
February 19, 2026

Consecrated virgin Louise Paré, who many of us knew quite well as a member of the USACV since our inception, went home to her Divine Spouse on February 19, 2026 at StoryPoint in Saline, Michigan under the care of Corsocare Hospice. Louise was consecrated to a life of virginity in the Diocese of Lansing (MI) on May 1, 1992. Louise worked for many years at Servant Publications, supporting its authors and evangelistic efforts. Her love for life was contagious and her funeral Mass at St. Andrew the Apostle Church was full with the many who loved her—family, consecrated virgins, parishioners, and other friends. Louise will be missed.



"Triumphant Lamb" by Shannon Ryan

By **Victoria Selkirk**  
consecrated May 29, 2016  
Diocese of Fresno (CA)  
and Archdiocese for the Military Services

***Between Battlefield and Sanctuary:  
A Reflection on my Tenth Anniversary  
of Consecrated Life***

*(Disclaimer: the religious views and personal perspectives contained herein are my own, and do not represent the official views of any organization or institution).*

May 29th, 2026, will mark ten years since my consecration to a life of perpetual virginity in the world.

Providentially, my consecration took place upon the Vigil of Saint Joan of Arc and the Solemnity of Corpus Christi - a convergence which, in hindsight, seems almost impossibly fitting. For these ten years have unfolded not in cloistered silence behind stone walls, but amidst service dress uniforms and wilderness, hospitals and tactical warfare trainings, grief and duty, combat boots and bare feet, exhaustion and Eucharistic longing. A life suspended continually between battlefield and sanctuary alike.

Saint Joan has always fascinated me for this reason.

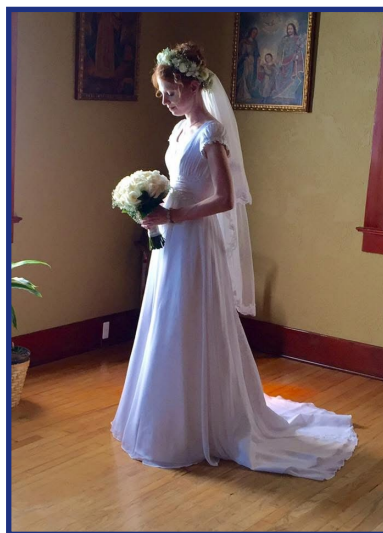
A young woman wholly belonging to God, yet commissioned directly into the utter brutality of the world.

No enclosure.

No weaponry, save the Holy Spirit's promptings.

No veil separating her from dust, chaos, misunderstanding, violence, politics, betrayal, corruption or fear.

Only radical fidelity to Christ \*within\* them.



There is something profoundly terrifying about that kind of invitation from God.

And profoundly extraordinary.

Consecrated virginity (Canon 604) lived in the world is the Church's oldest form of Consecrated life, yet also one of Her most hidden.

There is no monastery bell marking the hours.

No abbey walls softening the blight of modernity.

My habit, mere camouflage.

A spiritual battlefield, my enclosure.

One lives fully immersed within ordinary life, while belonging entirely to Christ **in the midst of it.**

In many ways, military life has exponentially intensified my understanding of this Mystery.

I joined the military not because I sought prestige or self-importance, but because I believed God could use even this - hardship, discipline, operational uncertainty, wilderness, fatigue, loneliness, sacrifice, obedience, and service - as an invincible crucible for sanctity.

Faith, forged in stone and steel.

Trust, tempered in flames.

And He has.

Military life strips away all false illusions from a person.

It exposes both greatness and fragility with startling speed and laser clarity.

One learns quickly that institutions and warfighters are human.

That strength has limits.

That suffering is unavoidable.

That courage is often silent.

That loneliness can become almost physical.

And that many of the most transformative battles fought within a soul remain entirely invisible to the outside world.

There is a particular kind of interior solitude to belonging wholly to Christ while moving through environments shaped by cacophony, urgency, performance, bureaucracy, metrics and constant motion. To carry within oneself a hidden Bridal vocation while standing beneath fluorescent hospital lights, moving through command structures, traipsing along on tactical snowshoes, traversing roaring flightline, or driving alone through mountains, valleys and storms.

And yet perhaps this is precisely why I love Saint Joan so fiercely.

Because she reminds me that holiness is not confined to cloisters.

Sometimes God consecrates souls directly into the worldly wreckage, into the waywardness, into the darkness, into utter siege.

Not away from the battleline, but straight through the whirlwind of flames.

Not protected from the world, but consecrated \*into\* it.

Sanctified into the same brokenness, shedding the same tears, bearing the same wounds, carrying the same uncertainties, anguish, vulnerabilities and fears of the fractured world around you.

**“I am not afraid. I was born to do this.”**

Those words of Saint Joan have echoed through my soul more times than I can count.

Not because I believe myself fearless.

Far from it.

But because an authentic call from God often carries within it a terrifying, almost-prescient clarity: the realization that He is truly asking **everything** of you, and that despite the cost, despite the wounds, despite

the loneliness, you cannot ultimately flee Him without fleeing yourself.

One Body, One Blood. One Flesh. Entirely Christ's.

There have been moments over these ten years marked with extraordinary beauty:

Snowy field chapels glowing in the dark before dawn,  
The stillness of Eucharistic Adoration after operational chaos,

The quiet dignity of service members entrusting burdens no one else sees,

Pinyon-scented crosswinds hollowing the stillness of a barren desert.

The profound intimacy of Jesus Christ encountered in unspeakable gratitude, exhaustion, and solitude.

And there have also been seasons where the cost of following Him in so radical a call has felt almost unspeakable.



Moments where fidelity to Christ carried betrayal, misunderstanding, isolation from community, grief, humiliation, uncertainty, or profound interior desolation.

Moments where I realized with searing clarity that to belong entirely to God is not romantic symbolism, nor some storybook fantasy.

Moments where I fully understood that I belong solely to Jesus Christ, and not the waywardness of this fading world, this passing life.

To truly claim myself as entirely His, my life \*must be\* entirely subsumed into His.

And perhaps nowhere is this Mystery embodied more gloriously than in the final hours of Saint Joan herself.

Condemned.

Abandoned by the very authority she was entrusted to.

Awaiting the pyre's leaping flames.

In her dimly-lit chamber, Death lingering in the margins, a priest held the Blessed Sacrament before her and asked:

“Do you believe this is truly Jesus Christ?”

And Joan answered:

**“Yes. And He alone can save me.”**

A most radical declaration of the maiden’s complete fidelity to her Bridegroom.

**“He alone can save me.”**

Not politics.

Not armies.

Not earthly vindication.

**He alone can save me.**

Our contemporary world often speaks of freedom as insatiable self-construction, power and prestige: the ability to endlessly reinvent oneself according to desire, optics, acclaim, wealth and independence.

Consecrated virginity witnesses to something unimaginable to human understanding: something radically and supernaturally different.

**That true freedom is found in total belonging and utter dependence upon Jesus Christ alone.**

He alone can save me.

Not rank.

Not ribbon.

Not power, optics, prestige or politics.

Not ephemeral admiration of others.

That a human life can still be poured out entirely for Christ.

That love can still be irrevocable.

That the battle-armor of God is ever-sustaining, my shield and buckler.

That following Him must include a daily expiation of oneself.

That wholeness of one’s Christian dignity remains possible even amidst wilderness, bureaucracy, war, corruption, scandal, clamor, and modernity.

Ten years later, I cannot say this path has been easy.

But I can say with certainty that it has painstakingly formed me, and His promises are ever-true.

**Christ has never once abandoned me.**

Never once.

I didn’t commission into the military in search of power, rank, ribbon and worldly adulation.

I commissioned into the military in search of eternal Life with Jesus Christ.

He alone can save me.

And so, standing now at this threshold of a full decade consecrated to Him, I find myself returning to the same eternal fiat spoken by Our Lady, embodied so courageously by Saint Joan, and whispered quietly within my own soul before the Tabernacle ten blessed years ago:

I am my Beloved’s. Entirely His.

Between Battlefield and Sanctuary.

He alone can save me.

May it be done unto me, according to His word.



*Consecration Announcements*

**May 2, 2026** — Consecration of **Savanna Balado**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Michael Duca, Bishop of Baton Rouge (LA).

**May 25, 2026** — Feast of Mary, Mother of the Church — Consecration of **Carole Brown**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Scott Bullock, Bishop of Rapid City (SD).

**May 30, 2026** — Consecration of **Erin Coran**, at the hands of the Most Reverend Mark Eckman, Bishop of Pittsburgh (PA).



Savanna Balado



Carole Brown



*Upcoming Consecrations*

**July 18, 2026** — Consecration of **Mary Tamburello**, at the hands of the Most Reverend James Golka, Archbishop of Denver (CO).

**July 25, 2026** — Consecration of **Katherine Lingenfelder**, 10:30am, at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the hands of the Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman, III, Diocese of Biloxi (MS).

**November 22, 2026** — Consecration of **Caroline Cole**, 3:00pm, at the Cathedral of St. Matthew, South Bend, Indiana, at the hands of the Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend (IN).

## Upcoming Events

- May 31, 2026**, 8:00pm ET, Virtual Vespers for Trinity Sunday (traditional Feast of the Visitation)
- June 19 to 23, 2026**, United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, Green Bay, Wisconsin at the Norbertine Center for Spirituality at St. Norbert Abbey. Theme: “Virginal Love for the Bridegroom.”  
*See page 20 for more information.*
- July 14, 2026**, 8:00pm ET, Virtual Vespers for the Feast of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin.
- July 25, 2026**, Consecration of Katherine Lingenfelder, 10:30am, at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Diocese of Biloxi (MS).
- August 3, 2026** *Ordo virginum* Candidate Discussion Group on the topic, “Living Arrangements for Consecrated Virgins: Possibilities, Considerations, and Recommendations,” presented by Dr. Judith M. Stegman, JCD. *See page 10 for more information.*
- August 15, 2026**, 8:00pm ET, Virtual Vespers for the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- August 23, 2026**, USACV Leadership Team Virtual Meeting, 6:00pm ET. USACV members are welcome to offer suggestions for our meeting agenda.
- September 4–6, 2026**, 1:00-6:00pm ET each day, Virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity. *See page 19 for more information.*
- September 8, 2026** Publication of *The Lamp* for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- November 22, 2026** Consecration of Caroline Cole, 3:00pm, at the Cathedral of St. Matthew, South Bend, Indiana, at the hands of the Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend.
- November 29, 2026**, USACV Leadership Team Virtual Meeting, 5:00pm ET. USACV members are welcome to offer suggestions for our meeting agenda.
- December 12, 2026** Publication of *The Lamp* for Our Lady of Guadalupe
- February 2, 2027** Publication of *The Lamp* for the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life and the Presentation of the Lord
- May 31, 2027** Publication of *The Lamp* for the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- June 25 to 29, 2027** United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

## 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). (*Convocations Planning Team Leader*).
- Claire Halbur** 2024-2026; Diocese of Phoenix (AZ). (*Secretary of the USACV-IRC, Music Team Leader*).
- Lorraine Manlolo** 2025-2027; Diocese of Honolulu (HI). (*ETapestry/Membership Team Member, IRC Team Member*).
- Julie Radachy** 2026-2028; Diocese of Knoxville (TN). (*Website Team Co-Leader*).
- 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 Candidate Discussion Group.
- Claire Halbur and Julie Radachy**; co-chairs, Website Development Team.
- Julie Radachy**; Diocese of Knoxville (TN). Social Media Team Leader. 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.

## 2026 Information Conference for the Ordo Virginum

The USACV-IRC is pleased to announce the 2026 Information Conference on the *Ordo Virginum*, which will be held in a virtual format once again. The conference includes prayer, testimonials from consecrated virgins, presentations on significant aspects of the vocation of consecrated virginity lived *in saeculo*, 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.

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

### 2026 Virtual Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity

**Dates:** Friday to Sunday, September 4 to 6, 2026

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

**Format:** Webinar

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

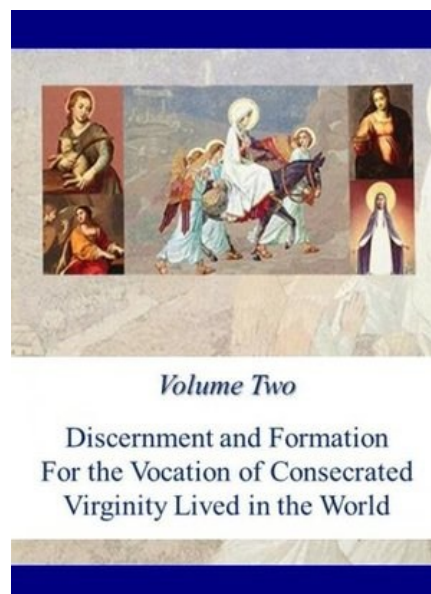
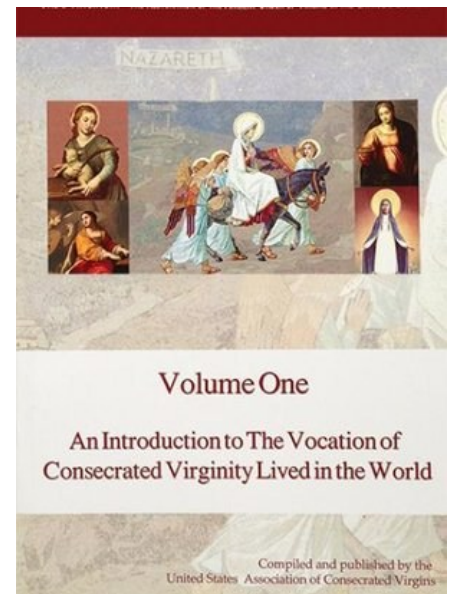
#### Presentation topics:

- † 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
- † 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

Registration for the conference will open online in late July.

To pre-register and hold a place,

please email [info@consecratedvirgins.org](mailto:info@consecratedvirgins.org)



**United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins**

Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin

**June 19-23, 2026**



**Theme: Virginal Love for the Bridegroom**

*Join us for the 2026 convocation of consecrated virgins in historic Green Bay, Wisconsin, known for its rich spiritual heritage, and home of the iconic Green Bay Packers (Titletown). We will stay in the newly renovated Norbertine Center for Spirituality at St Norbert Abbey. Situated on 160 acres of natural and landscaped beauty, this serene setting invites contemplation. You'll be nourished with daily Mass, adoration, chanted communal Liturgy of the Hours, time for personal prayer, and fellowship, as we also celebrate 30 years as an association of consecrated virgins!*

Many consecrated virgins have registered for the 2026 United States convocation of consecrated virgins—in fact, we are filled a bit beyond capacity! Please keep us in your prayers as we will keep the entire Church in our prayers during our days together.

A few last-minute notes for those who will be attending:

- If you haven't done so already, please send your travel plans, especially airline arrival and departure times, to Eileen Belongea at this time. Email: [andeileen237@gmail.com](mailto:andeileen237@gmail.com).
- The full convocation schedule has been emailed to those registered to attend. Let Eileen know if you need a copy.
- Be thinking and planning your contribution to our Monday evening talent show. Elma Espinoza will coordinate the evening. You can reach her at [elma007abba@gmail.com](mailto:elma007abba@gmail.com).
- Are you interested in participating in any of the program by live-streaming? Be in touch with Judith if you are. We are still working on these details and will announce soon by email and on our website. The full convocation program will also soon be available at [site.consecratedvirgins.org](http://site.consecratedvirgins.org).

Be sure to watch our September issue of "The Lamp" for photos and a report on the convocation. May our Divine Spouse be praised!