

September 15, 2025 — Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows

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

Many thanks to so many of you who participated in the gathering in the Diocese of Knoxville at the end of June. Your presence and prayers were a great blessing. I really found the Cathedral of that diocese very beautiful as we participated in our opening Mass there. It is what a Cathedral should look like. Living in the Condominium near the river was a delight and that walkway through the woods along the river was quite peaceful even with so many tourists around. As the leaves turn into colors other than green, my prayer for all of you is that your joy may manifest the interior change of heart which we must all experience as we deepen the vocational commitments we made so many years ago.



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



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By Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Psy.D.
Archdiocese of Miami (FL)

Our Blessed Mother the Woman of the Promise and the Consecrated Virgins.

When we contemplate our Most Blessed Mother and Queen of Virgins as a woman following the will of the Eternal Father when He called her in Paradise to be the Mother of the Redeemer, this is a complete joy for all of us consecrated virgins faithfully following Jesus Christ. Our virginal vocation began with her *fiat* and as the first virgin she was a model for the first virgins in the ancient Church, and as well is a model for us. The virginal call is to follow her Divine Son, and as virgin spouses of her Son we contemplate that she, in her election and in her following of her Son, is the very one who made the Church grant acceptance to the virgins of the early Church. We have the prayer of consecration of virgins composed by Saint Pope Leo the Great and later organized into a formal liturgical rite in the Pontifical. The essence of this article is based on the angel's message from the Eternal Father letting Mary of Nazareth know that she was the one called to fulfill the promise of our salvation. She accepted the call, and the Holy Spirit consecrated her.

As we read in the Old Testament of the Eternal Father's promise of restoration of His creative work of man and woman, made in His image and likeness, we enter contemplation of a mystical mystery, that is, the essence of the Holy Trinity in virginity. In God's creation of the human being, there was no intervention of any interpreted biological conception; rather, the will of the Eternal Father decided to create in His eternal love the integral human being with body, soul, and participation in His divinity. This knowledge is so profound that the psalmist wrote: "You created him like a god" (Ps. 8). The most mysterious gift in this creation was that man even received God's *freedom* in his body, soul, and divinity. Man is created with freedom "so that he might of his accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him" (CCC 1730).

Man's creation is the perfect work of God's hands: God's creation of man in innocence, in participation in God's own image and likeness, and in the knowledge of God's truth in His creation. The freedom of men and women is a gift from God that can only be understood in God's love for us, and to approach God's love is to enter the mystery of His eternal love for us—to walk in understanding this mystery is to contemplate the meaning of God's creation of us.

What happened to that man who was created and infused with preternatural gifts? Such gifts are the special abilities God gave Adam and Eve before the fall from

divine grace. These are preternatural because they were beyond the natural order of humanity but not beyond the capacity of other created beings, such as angels: infused knowledge of the universe; immortality, making them free from death and disease; and integrity, ensuring their appetites and emotions were perfectly under the control of their intellect.

The Eternal Father created man (human beings) to have gifts that were beyond his natural capacity (*praeter*: Latin: beyond) and only available by divine grace. In other words, these were infused into man by God as gifts of love in order to enhance the relationship between God and man. We know that before the fall, mankind was created to possess, always, these gifts. God willed that man would know Him—that first man and woman lived in the physical presence of God and conversed with Him freely. Adam named all the creatures created by God. Man was created in the absence of concupiscence, or integrity of human appetites, and with balance in his passions, senses, emotions, intellect, and will. We were created to be immortal, to not be ill or die.

Pope Saint John Paul II taught us in reference to our creation: "That state, the 'historical' state [of sin] plunges its roots, in every man without exception, in his own theological 'prehistory,' which is the state of original innocence . . . The laws of knowing correspond to those of being. It is impossible to understand the state of historical sinfulness without referring or appealing; and Christ appealed to it, to the state of original and in certain sense prehistorical, and fundamental innocence. Therefore, right from the beginning, the arising of sinfulness as a state, a dimension of human existence, is in relation to this real innocence of man as his original and fundamental state, as a dimension of his being created in the image of God" (John Paul II, "General Audience of September 19, 1979," in *The Theology of the Body, Human Love in the Divine Plan*, 32-33).

Immediately following Adam and Eve's first sin, God shows up, as a loving Father does, to deliver consequences to all involved. As a merciful Father, however, He also immediately provides the solution: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). This is the protoevangelium, or the announcement, of the first Gospel. This was a message of hope—hope in the promise of the Savior Jesus Christ—hope for the salvation to lead us to heaven and bring about a restoration of our preternatural gifts.

The person of Mary, the second Eve, would not be imprudent as was the first Eve. The second Eve is the woman of eternal love who discovers, in herself, the fulfillment of the person of Jesus Christ, who would

“join to himself the second Eve for the sake of a universal salvation, in contrast with the first Adam who was bound by the sin of the first Eve, seduced by the serpent in Eden.” (Stefano Manelli, “The Mystery of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Old Testament” in *Mariology, A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, and Consecrated Persons*, Mark Miravalle, S.T.D., Editor, Forward by Archbishop Raymond L. Burke, 2007, p. 5)

Mary of Nazareth was well educated in the Holy Scriptures from her childhood, and in her early adolescent age she was expecting the coming of the Messiah. Her life was transparent—our Mother, in her discovering of the will of the Eternal Father about the Messiah, discovered that the time was near. She had to follow the rules of her time, and she accedes to be in formal compromise with Joseph who is defined in the Holy Scriptures as “a just man of the house of David.” But she didn’t give up her other formal decision to remain in perpetual virginity in the Eternal Father’s love. She is the one who has the complete wisdom to teach us how to expect the second coming of her Son as she expected His first coming as the Messiah, the Redeemer. She is the one who knows and follows the will of the Eternal Father to serve His children and to be attentive to their needs.

Where began the promise of her integral being from the Eternal Father? She grew up living in the temple. In tradition and in the Gospel of Saint Luke she appeared as “Mary,” which in Aramaic means “princess noble lady.” Using the words of the Eternal Father in Paradise after the fall, the introduction or *preanotanda* of the future Church’s rite exalts her presence in her divine Son’s birth, life, death and resurrection, and even more so in the virginal maternal love she lived and has as the Queen of Virgins. The Eternal Father spoke the *praenotanda* which the Church through all centuries teaches and reflects on as the election of Mary of Nazareth to be the Mother of the Redeemer, the Son of God. The words are requisite to her consecration because in them the Eternal Father pronounced her presence in the fulfillment of the promise. Let us consider the words of Genesis 3:9-24:

“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, ‘where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ And the Lord said: ‘Who told thee that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’ And the man said, ‘the woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit of the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘what is this you have done?’ And the woman said, ‘the serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” (With this exchange, we confirm that God’s

creation in man of ‘free will’ is a powerful gift that if used incorrectly produces fruits of disobedience.)

“The Lord God said to the serpent, ‘because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.’

To the woman he said, ‘I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’” Pope Saint John Paul II taught that they lost the communication of spouses and entered in the relationship of husband and wife, creating a division (cfr. John Paul II, “General Audience of July 30, 1980,” in *The Theology of the Body, Human Love in the Divine Plan*, 129). Later, Jesus Christ elevated the relationship to a sacrament and man and woman would enter into the spousal relationship mirroring Christ’s love for His Church: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:25-27).

“And to Adam he said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in painful labor you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.’

And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever’—therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Probing His eternal love, we see that the woman of the promise is spoken of in this protoevangelium, this first gospel, of Genesis 3:15: “I will put enmity between you

and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.” The verse describes God’s promise of a Redeemer to defeat Satan after the fall of man. The “seed” of the woman will crush the serpent’s head. This foundational promise is interpreted as the first glimmer of the Messiah, foretelling Christ’s ultimate victory over sin and death.

Consider how this protoevangelium—the Eternal Father’s promise of redemption to His beloved children who had violated the gift of free will given at their creation—consider how this can be precisely likened to the *praenotanda* of the ceremony of consecration of our Most Blessed Mother, the Queen of Virgins. The Eternal Father had chosen her and revealed to the prophets her virginity and motherhood: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call Him Immanuel” (Is. 7:14).

Later, “in the plenitude of time” (Gal. 4:4) the angel of the Lord came to announce that the Eternal Father’s promise would be fulfilled by the birth of that girl who would be the mother of His Son: a woman who knew the Eternal Father’s plan of redemption and discovered it in the temple during those years when the Eternal Father raised her in protection of the covenant He had made with the people chosen to be His Son’s people.

“In the tradition of faith and of Christian reflection throughout the ages, *the coupling Adam-Christ* is often linked with that of *Eve-Mary*. If Mary is described also as the “new Eve”, what are the meanings of this analogy? Certainly there are many. Particularly noteworthy is the meaning which sees Mary as the full revelation of all that is included in the biblical word “woman”: a revelation commensurate with the mystery of the Redemption. *Mary* means, in a sense, a going beyond the limit spoken of in the Book of Genesis (3:16) and a return to that “beginning” in which one finds the “woman” as she was intended to be in *creation*, and therefore in the eternal mind of God: in the bosom of the Most Holy Trinity. Mary is “the new beginning” of the *dignity and vocation of women*, of each and every woman” (Pope Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Letter “On the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year, *Mulieres Dignitatem*, August 15, 1988, 11)

Luke the Evangelist presents in the Gospel many secret expressions and personal experiences of our Holy Mother as “Mary keeps all these things in her heart.” His Gospel presents the moment our Most Blessed Mother inquired of the Angel and she accepted the will of the Eternal Father. In those moments of the visit of the Archangel Gabriel are realized the same as in the Rite of

Consecration of Virgins used by the Church since very early times—as we noted with the consecratory prayer written during the pontificate of Pope Leo the Great (440-461) and evidenced by tradition, although not written, in the daughter of the Deacon Nicodemus consecrated by Saint Peter, and Petronilla, his own daughter, as well as Agnes, Agatha and the list of hundreds of virgin martyrs who kept faithful to their Divine Bridegroom.

“A particular key for understanding this can be found in the words which the Evangelist puts on Mary’s lips after the Annunciation, during her visit to Elizabeth: ‘He who is mighty has done great things for me’ (Lk 1:49). These words certainly refer to the conception of her Son, who is the ‘Son of the Most High’ (Lk1:32), the ‘holy one’ of God; but they can also signify *the discovery of her own feminine humanity*. He ‘has done great things for me’: *this is the discovery of all the richness and personal resources of femininity*, all the eternal originality of the “woman”, just as God wanted her to be, a person for her own sake, who discovers herself ‘by means of a sincere gift of self’.

This discovery is connected with a clear awareness of God’s gift, of his generosity. From the very “beginning” sin had obscured this awareness, in a sense had stifled it, as is shown in the words of the first temptation by the “father of lies” (cf. *Genesis* 3:1-5). At the advent of the “fullness of time” (cf. *Gal* 4:4), when the mystery of Redemption begins to be fulfilled in the history of humanity, this awareness bursts forth in all its power in the words of the biblical ‘woman’ of Nazareth. *In Mary, Eve discovers* the nature of the true dignity of woman, of feminine humanity. This discovery must continually reach the heart of every woman and shape her vocation and her life.” (Ibid.)

The woman of promise who became and is the Mother of the Church and the Queen of Virgins is a model for all who follow the innocence of virginity that is the essence of the Most Holy Trinity. The Eternal Father’s will is to bestow this innocence upon those He calls to be witnesses of His creation— of humanity, male and female, made in His image and likeness. Virgins when consecrated are empowered by the Holy Spirit with the same grace our Mother received when she was illuminated by the Eternal Father to kindle the flame of eternal love in her immaculate body and feed its brightness to guide Her Son, and later to turn that eternal flame to the midst of the Apostles, the faithful, and the consecrated virgins in the early Church and in all centuries to come until eternity. Her *fiat* is our *propositum*; her life was to look at the face of Her Son and to present Him for adoration first in her virginal womb—His first tabernacle—and later in this mortal life to join Him in eternity.

She is model of the virtues to which the consecrated virgins are called: “modesty with right judgment, kindness with true wisdom, gentleness with strength of character, freedom with the grace of chastity, warmth of love to love [the beloved Spouse] above all others” (Rite of Consecration of Virgins, 24). Our Mother the woman of the promise of Paradise is also a model as we live her spirituality for her life deserves to be praised even as her mortal life was lived in an attitude of not seeking to be praised. She gave glory to the Eternal Father and Her Son in her holiness of life on earth in all her daily living arrangements. So do we look daily to give the Divine Spouse glory through our holiness of action and purity of heart, loving and serving Him as our Mother did: respecting the will of the Eternal Father in Her Son’s Passion and Death. We are called to fear the Eternal Father for the glory of His Son’s Church.

The Blessed Mother’s spirituality is, as our rite points out for us: to live knowing that the Divine Lord and Spouse is *our glory, our joy, and our whole desire. When in sorrow* to do as our Mother did, to search *comfort* in our Divine Lord, Her Son. When she “kept everything in her heart” she rested in God’s *wisdom*. When we cannot understand some events in our life and we feel in perplexity, the Divine Lord is to be our wisdom. Our Mother, in all the same experiences we can pass through, received the assistance of the Eternal Father and Her Divine Son. We can rest in the prayer of consecration the Church prayed for us, asking the Eternal Father to be our *protection in the midst of injustice, patience in adversity, riches in poverty, food in fasting, remedy in time of sickness*. Our Mother possessed everything in her fidelity to the Eternal Father’s will, and we are likewise called to *choose the Divine Spouse above all things* and in the Divine Spouse *we will find everything we need*.

Our Blessed Mother was conceived immaculate and this conserved in her the incorruptibility of her whole being, with no illness, and no death. The suggested homily of the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity addresses the virgin saying that the Church today “anoints you with a new grace” as a virgin bride of Christ and “binds you to the Son of God in a covenant to last forever.”

Our Mother was a sign for the Eternal Father of the great mystery of salvation; it is possible in Christ’s salvation and the virginal consecration to participate as a “sign of the great mystery of salvation, proclaimed at the beginning of human history and fulfilled in the marriage covenant between Christ and His Church.”

Our Queen has the glory both of her virginity and of maternity; at her consecration, the virgins are addressed: “Our holy mother the Church sees in you a chosen company within the flock of Church. Through you the Church’s motherhood of grace bears abundant fruit.

Imitate the Mother of God; desire to be called and to be handmaids of the Lord. . . Be prudent and watch: keep the glory of your virginity uncorrupted by pride. . . You are given over entirely to the service of the Church and of all your brothers and sisters. . . Your motherhood will be a motherhood of the spirit.” As our Blessed Mother lived in complete service of Her Son’s Church, doing the will of the Eternal Father, so we are called: “As you do the will of the Father and work with others in a spirit of charity, so that a great family of children may be born, or reborn, to the life of grace.”

Who can love our Divine Lord Jesus Christ more than His Blessed Mother? She followed Her Son and cared for His Church when He first ascended into heaven, and she keeps interceding for the Church even now, after His ascension. The consecrated virgin loves the Divine Lord Jesus Christ as her Spouse and the Church reminds her: “Your joy and your crown, even here on earth, will be Christ, the Son of the Virgin and the Bridegroom of virgins. He will call you to His presence and into his kingdom, where you will sing a new song as you follow the Lamb of God wherever he leads you.”

Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

IN DEFENSE OF LIFE. Charlie Kirk, throughout his life and now in his death, has been a witness to Christ and to His willingness to forgive even those who stood against Him. Charlie was killed because he dared to speak the truth, even though he engaged an 'opponent' gently, fairly, with a smile and a willingness to listen, and this infuriated some anti-life proponents. Charlie stood in defense of the innocent baby in the womb because he knew that the baby was created by God. I watched and listened as they tried to defile Charlie's reputation but they 'awakened a sleeping giant' as students and young people throughout the world came to Charlie's defense and joined Charlie's groups and organizations. Listening to those young people speak with hope even amidst their sadness, I determined that I would commit to fight for God and His truth and in defense of life no matter the cost. Thanks to Charlie and his open and courageous witness, I felt a surge of hope and a determination to deepen my own ministry to defend life as Christ has called me to do. And that is as it should be.

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

Many excellent questions were raised during last weekend's Information Conference on the *Ordo Virginum*. Over these past months, and, in fact, over the past years, significant questions and insights are raised regarding the meaning of our vocation as virginal brides of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Perhaps the title given each of us at our consecrations, "bride of Christ," is somewhat naturally understood, for we know who a bride is in relation to her spouse. Intrigue is heightened, however, when we speak of nuptial union with a Divine Spouse, and especially with a *virginal* nuptial union. And yet, how can mystical espousal with the Divine Spouse be anything other than virginal? The virgin's espousal to Christ shares with human marriage the characteristic dimensions of unity, procreation, fidelity, and indissolubility (Code of Canon Law, cc 1055, 1056). The virgin's espousal to Christ, however, images these dimensions not through the physical giving and receiving of the body that consummates marriage between a man and a woman, but through a spiritual—a mystical—union with Christ. Saint Thomas Aquinas explained this in his Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences of Peter Lombard:

But since a physical sign cannot sufficiently represent the spiritual thing it represents, it is sometimes necessary that several corporeal signs be used for signifying the same spiritual thing. Therefore, the spiritual marriage of Christ and the Church has both fecundity, by which we are regenerated as sons of God, and incorruption, since Christ chose for himself the Church as having no spot or wrinkle of any kind, as it is stated in Ephesians 5:27. . . Thus 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.

In her "Something Ancient, Something New" article in this issue of "The Lamp," Dr. Aguilera explores the meaning of our virginal vocation as revealed in the life of our Virgin Mother. We invite virgins to continue this exploration of the meaning of virginity as an essential characteristic of our vocation. "Virginal Love for the Bridegroom" will be the theme of our 2026 Convocation.



artwork by Marion Biestek

By Diane Christine Farr

In this reflection we will explore the many facets of spiritual motherhood in the life of the consecrated virgin. A truly holy and wise mother is a treasured gift of God. We see the highest example of this in the mystery of the Incarnation. God creates for himself in the Blessed Virgin Mary His own mother. She reflects in her heart all the qualities of her creator. It is these qualities that enabled her to be the perfect mother for Jesus her Divine Son as well as for all of us who have been entrusted to her care. Jesus said while on the cross, "behold your mother." He says the same thing to all of us who are His beloved disciples. We read in the homily in the Rite of the Consecration of Virgins: "Make your whole life reflect your vocation and your dignity. Our holy mother the Church sees you in a chosen company within the flock of Christ. Through you the Church's motherhood of grace bears its abundant fruit. Imitate the mother of God; desire to be called and to be handmaids of the Lord."

As consecrated virgins we have recognized God's call and received with pure love the beautiful grace of perpetual virginity. This virginity will become fruitful in the order of grace as we work for the salvation and sanctification of souls. Its fruitfulness will depend on our faithfulness to union with Jesus our Divine Spouse. We contemplate the Blessed Virgin Mary as our highest example and seek her intercession as Our Lady of Grace. Our Blessed Mother is not only filled with God's grace, she prays that we also become holy through the working of God's grace. She desires to draw us into a deeper communion with her Divine Son. As consecrated virgins we share in her motherhood of souls especially by our prayer and the example of our lives. As handmaids of the Lord we follow our holy mother in giving our entire lives to the service of God and His people. We serve in a deep spirit of humility and kindness toward all others. Spiritual motherhood is characterized by a profound concern for the spiritual welfare of others and the willingness to pray and work toward this end. We must acquire a reflective and maternal heart patterned after Mary our holy mother. We read in the homily for the Rite of the Consecration of Virgins, "You have renounced marriage for the sake of Christ. Your motherhood will be a motherhood of the spirit, as you do the will of your Father and work with others in a spirit of charity, so that a great family of children may be born, or reborn, to the life of grace."

It is important to remember that earthly marriage is meant to be a reflection of God's supreme love for each

human soul. As consecrated virgins, we embrace the highest form of this supreme love in our vocation. It is through the work of Divine Grace and our response to it that we have come to know and love Jesus as our only Bridegroom. We recognize that the Eternal Father has drawn us into a deeper communion with His Son and the Holy Spirit has revealed Him to us as our true spouse. We strive to be attentive to His holy presence with trusting faith in His providential care. As we grow in intimacy with our Divine Lord and spouse through the gift of ourselves, our virginity becomes fruitful in a motherhood of souls. His sweet and dear presence makes holy this virginity that has been consecrated to Him. It is in coming to know and love Jesus that we come to also acquire His love for all people.

As consecrated virgins it is vital that we unite every aspect of our lives to all that He did for us while on earth. It is a powerful offering for the good of souls when we offer each breath and each heartbeat united to His own. We should place the intention of doing together with Him what He did for us. We unite our prayer to His as we go to the Father interceding for the salvation and sanctification of souls. Our prayer becomes powerful when it is united to that of Jesus. Our smallest actions take on a greater significance when we allow Jesus to come and work in us. Our interior life must be permeated with the holy presence of Jesus. He wishes to reorder everything in us in accord with His Divine Will. This causes us to reflect on how closely united the heart of our Mother Mary's heart was to that of her Divine Son. Mary's maternal heart is patterned after the virtues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She is our perfect model and wise teacher. It is with wonder that we exclaim with Elizabeth, "How does this happen that the mother of my Lord should come to me." (Luke 1:43) As consecrated virgins we pray that others will find a maternal presence in us. A loving mother's work always includes self-sacrifice and gentle concern for others. As consecrated virgins one important work we can do is mentoring candidates for our vocation. The glory and honor of both virginity and motherhood were perfectly united in the Blessed Virgin Mary. May holy virginity and spiritual motherhood be exemplified in our own lives. As it was with blessed Mary, our lives are a walk of trust and faith in the triune God who leads us on to eternal life. May our God who is infinite love fill us with His holy light and perennial peace. All praise and thanksgiving be to the most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May Mary, mother of Mercy, intercede for all of our needs.

Save the Date!
***2026 and 2027 Convocation of
Consecrated Virgins***

Friday, June 19 to Tuesday, June 23, 2026. 2026 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, Green Bay, Wisconsin at the National Shrine of Saint Joseph, at St. Norbert Abbey. Theme: “Virginal Love for the Bridegroom.”

Friday, June 25 to Tuesday, June 29, 2027. 2027 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, Charleston, West Virginia at the St. John XXIII Pastoral Center.

International Resource Center section of the

The leadership team of the International Resource Center section of the USACV-IRC, chaired by Dr. Magalis Aguilera, held the first of a planned series of panel-led virtual discussions of topics of interest to consecrated virgins and candidates. A small group of English-speaking virgins from the Philippines, India, and the United States met at 9:00pm ET on September 12, 2025, and discussed the “Something Ancient Something New” article “Historical Antecedents of the Rite of Consecration,” from the June 2005 issue of *The Lamp*. This led to a good discussion of the identity of the consecrated virgin in reference to the rite of consecration, in today’s Church. The next discussion on the history of the rite of consecration is planned for November 14, 2025. For more information, or if you are interested in participating, send an email to info@consecratedvirgins.org.

Membership Drive

Francesca Riddick

A big thank you to all who have responded to our 2025 membership drive this year. We appreciate all your support and encouragement as we continue to work to support this vocation for both candidates and those who are consecrated. There is still time to join this year! Visit the USACV website: <https://site.consecratedvirgins.org> for membership forms.

**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*).

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

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

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

September 8, 2026 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

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.

Upcoming Virtual Vespers dates:

+ Tuesday, October 7, 2025, Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary, 8:00pm ET

+ Saturday, October 22, 2025, Memorial of Saint Cecilia and Vespers I for the Solemnity of Christ the King, 8:00pm ET

Recordings Available!

Links to recordings from the 2024 Virtual Information Conference are now available. If you attended the 2024 or 2025 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

www.secure.consecratedvirgins.org/. Recordings from the 2025 Virtual Information Conference are being prepared.

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. We accept articles and artwork from consecrated virgins related to our vocation or related to Our Lady and the virgin saints. If you would like to write and submit a remembrance or memorial for a deceased consecrated virgin to be published in a future edition of The Lamp, please email it to info@consecratedvirgins.org.

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY



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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.

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.

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.

Upcoming Consecrations

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

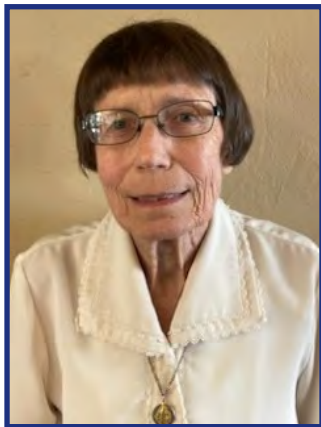
Please let us know so we can announce!

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

Hildegard (Judith) Varga
consecrated September 22, 1995
Diocese of Little Rock (AR)

Consecrated Virginity is the working out of Divine Providence in my life. I was taught for 16 years by the Sisters of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas. They instilled in me confidence that God is Provident – guiding, loving, and caring for all creation (including me).



“Nihil fit casu.” – “Nothing happens by chance.” (Cicero)

“Nulla est fortuita apud Deum.” – “Nothing is by chance with God.” (Old monastic saying)

In the designs of Providence, there are no coincidences.” (Pope St. John Paul II)

Through contact with a prayer group in the early/mid 1980’s, I learned that the Liturgy of the Hours is the Official Prayer of the Church. With the help of a Conventual Franciscan priest who was my spiritual director at the time and a copy of *Shorter Christian Prayer*, I began a lifelong journey.

Again “Providence to the rescue”—In the early 1990’s when I was the sole caregiver (I am an only child.) for my elderly widowed mother, a Sister of Divine Providence counseled me, “Take an evening course in theology. Do something for yourself. You need to take care of yourself.” That one course in theology eventually morphed into an M.T.S. (Master of theological Studies). In my Canon Law course, I learned about Canon 604 – Order of Virgins.

A few years later with the help of a diocesan priest, again a spiritual director, and the approval of Bishop Andrew McDonald of the Diocese of Little

Rock, I became a Consecrated Virgin in 1995.

My Provident God has seen me through many changes of career and relocations (Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas) both before and after I became a consecrated virgin. Most recently, I have been blessed to live in the shadow of Subiaco Abbey, Subiaco, AR, where I am an Oblate, and to be able to join the monks for prayer. My daily schedule includes Mass, Lauds on weekdays, Vespers on Sundays, Solemnities, and some feasts

“Let them prefer nothing to Christ and may He lead us altogether to everlasting life.” (*“Christo omnino nihil praeponant. que nos pariter ad vitam aeternam perducant. Rule of Benedict 72:11-12)*

Elizabeth Lee
consecrated July 1, 1995
Diocese of Fall River (MA)



In reflecting on my 30 years of Consecration to a Life of Virginity I am grateful for His grace and His light in drawing me closer to Himself, usually in unexpected ways. My

journey has been marked by unforeseen twists and turns, from setting behind my job as a dental assistant to work with the National Catholic Bioethics Center, and pursuing a number of new directions, whether providing spiritual direction and counseling, public speaking, leading a Divine Will study group, taking care of a dying sister or now assisting my aging mom and other family members who are dealing with chronic illnesses and mental health issues. This has meant seeing my time taken over by the need to attend doctor’s appointments and policy meetings, paperwork, phone calls, and paying bills, working with staff and being personally present to each member with the time they require. Although I have been intensely busy, Jesus has helped me to witness and grow by taking care of members of the family who have no one else to assist them.

Thirty years ago my focus was on serving the many in and outside the Church, yet now I am understanding the importance of efforts to support members of my family who are also members of His Body and beloved

members of His Church, even as I witness the continuing breakdown of family life, and the tragic situations of those who have no local family around them to support them in their moments of need. In taking care of family, I also have grown to see with a more sensitive heart the struggles within marriages and the heartaches of parents seeing their children fall prey to the innumerable traps the world lays for them.

Though I am not able to spend as much time as I would like with friends in the face of these challenges of caring and supporting those nearby, and as I struggle to balance the needs of those I assist with my own, I recognize how we each need to take care of ourselves in order to better attend to others. To that end I have taken a personal retreat and continue to pray a Holy Hour before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament each morning before attending Mass. I have also planted a small garden again this year to enjoy the produce and the beauty of the flowers. Here is a picture of some of the produce that I am enjoying and sharing with my neighbors.

Jessica Hayes

10 Years

consecrated August 15, 2015
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South
Bend (IN)



As I reflect on the gift of my virginal consecration in these first ten years, celebrated on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven, I am most aware of the change in circumstances

of my *fiat*. My first consent to be a bride of Christ was given in the context of teaching theology at a Catholic high school, where the gift of belonging to Him entirely was made fruitful in the joy of spiritual motherhood to many teens. Walking with them in these formative years and helping them to develop their knowledge and love of the Lord and His Church was a wonderful experience for me and many of my students.

One's *fiat* in this vocation must be complete, encompassing every aspect of the virgin's life: in the words of Ludwig Munster (from his work *Christ in His Consecrated Virgins*), "Bold surrender is demanded until death." Five years ago, I accepted a position in my

beloved parish as a pastoral associate. In its beginnings, the new job seemed to make use of only my weaknesses. Any spiritual children were initially hidden from me, as was my previous identity of "teacher." I have found great consolation in these words of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (from her *Essays on Woman*): "...the Lord will never allow His consecrated bride to stray from His side; that all power in His kingdom be due her, not through delegated authority but through a loving union with Him. This is symbol of that most intimate community of love into which He entered with a human being, union with His Mother." I am, first and foremost, His; this is my identity. My primary and most effective mission is prayer, with and for the Church. In this lies my power—to be hidden love in Him Who is Hidden Love—and "the work" is not to interfere with this most important mission. I have had to learn—over and over!—to simplify my schedule so that I am more available to the Lord in prayer, this desire of mine being the reason that He chose me. My "role" in the parish is often unseen, but no less fruitful, and my prayer in these years has given rise to new opportunities to mentor and form others in their spiritual life—altar servers, the young women in the book study that I host in my home, the teens who are part of a monthly formation for discernment group that I offer, the discerning women I receive through assisting our diocesan vocations office, and the numerous prayer intentions I receive from those who know me simply as a woman of prayer. This, I would say, had proven truer to the life of a Consecrated Virgin—the gift of my interior life with Him being offered for the life of the world!

5 Years

Claire Halbur
consecrated August 22, 2020
Diocese of Phoenix (AZ)

When a couple sets out into the lifelong commitment that is Holy Matrimony, they cannot foresee the mountaintops and valleys that lie ahead. So too the bride of Christ enters into the perpetual union with her Beloved, in sickness and health, and come what may.

It is a mercy that we cannot know in advance the depths of sacrifice and intensity of self-offering that may be asked within this supernatural marriage. For the Divine union so thirsted for is only reached through the crucible of suffering, by which love's chasm is forged.

During my years of formation and preparation to



Me on my anniversary with Bishop Olmsted and fellow CV Miara Cash, after a joyful Mass in my home chapel. – Claire

enter the *Ordo Virginum*, I was told by more than one longtime consecrated virgin to expect extra trials in the months and weeks leading up to the consecration itself. In November 2019, I received a phone call to let me know that August 22, 2020 had been chosen by Bishop Olmsted as the Consecration date.

Within days of this phone call began a period of numerous trials targeting my apostolate at the parish where I served at the time.

Looking back now, I just

realized that it was nine months—a season of expectancy.

Additionally, I was consecrated during the “Covid Year” of 2020, when the world was in so many ways upside down. It was necessary for me to surrender my vision of inviting my whole parish to come to the Cathedral, to pare down a much smaller guest list, and to make reception plans amidst fluctuating hall protocols. But nothing could rob the joy of the day. Bishop Olmsted told me he believed the Lord wanted the Consecration to take place just then as a moment of hope and renewal for the local church, and the grace was palpable, both for me and for all who witnessed the Lord take His little bride to Himself. It was the first-ever Consecration in the Diocese of Phoenix (and two of us the same day).

There was a brief respite from the season of personal trials, but it wasn’t long before things again intensified, both in the area of my apostolate and in chronic health crosses. Much of the first five years of my Consecration was an extended season of my own “sorrowful mysteries”, including a painful parish departure, the toll of ongoing burnout on my body and spirit, and other crosses. However, within the last 4-6 months, the Lord has seen fit to bring me into a season of Resurrection, and I celebrated this anniversary as a “glorious mystery,” counting with wordless gratitude the ways in which suffering has grown our love, and seeing how my Divine Spouse continue to gently carry me.

“The Lord became my protector . . . he brought me out to a place of freedom” (Psalm 18:19).

Kimberley Zeeman
consecrated August 22, 2020
Diocese of Phoenix (AZ)

On August 22nd, I celebrated my five-year anniversary of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World with great joy and thanksgiving. The last couple of years have been quite challenging, but I am grateful for the gift of faith, and for the many ways that our Lord Jesus reveals Himself to me each day.

I have been living with Multiple Sclerosis for 17 years, but thankfully, I was always able to continue working and remain active in parish ministries throughout this time. Then two years ago, my MS began developing into the Secondary Progressive type, which caused enough disability to force me to give up my work and ministries and become homebound. I went quickly from being extremely busy to being unable to continue with my previous activities - a very challenging change, but with time, God’s grace, and tender care, I have been able to embrace a contemplative lifestyle which now allows ample time for prayer and study. I greatly miss being able to attend daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and monthly Reconciliation. And being without monthly Spiritual Direction has been especially difficult for me, as I had always cherished the wisdom, support, and encouragement of my director and found great solace and strength there. Yet, I am so blessed with a wonderful pastor and faith community, and I cling tightly to the Liturgy of the Hours as I unite my prayers with each of you throughout the day, as well as with the Universal Church. I recently discovered the Legion of Mary at my parish and arranged for visits from their members. I was delighted to be invited to become an ‘Auxiliary Member’ in June so now I am able to assist the Legionaries with my prayers for the active work they do for the Apostolate...what a tremendous blessing this has been for me!

I believe that the Legion of Mary is the fruit of the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary (according to St. Louis de Montfort) that I made earlier this year on May 13th – the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima. Our Blessed Mother is certainly working in my life! I now feel called to be enrolled in the Brown Scapular Confraternity, which I hope happens soon. I had never even considered this in the past. When our Lord Jesus and His most Blessed Mother ask, we must say YES!

My love for learning about the Saints continue – there are so many of them for us to emulate – individuals of every age and from every walk of life – they are such a blessing to the Church. The Rosary and Chaplet of the Divine Mercy have become such a cornerstone of my daily life that I encourage everyone I meet to add these powerful devotionals (some call them weapons!) to their prayer routines.

Now then, for any of my dear sisters in Consecration who may be experiencing exceptional challenges, whether they be health, work, family responsibilities, etc....I want to assure you that our Lord Jesus is right beside you through it all. There is nothing that escapes Him and He will provide you with the strength and perseverance that you need. On the days when you feel weary or overwhelmed, please remember that everything we go through is for our salvation. I send blessings and peace to all of you.



Michelle Piccolo
consecrated October 24,
2020
Archdiocese of Detroit
(MI)

What a joy to celebrate my 5th anniversary this October 24th! It has been such a blessed journey for me. I am firstly most grateful to have close-knit relationships with other brides to do life together and come alongside this journey

with me. Because let's face it, no one quite "gets it" like other consecrated virgins. So having that sisterhood and friendship is extremely important to me. Living two and half hours from my family, I have found the Archdiocese of Detroit to be like a second home for me and the friends I've made here these past 8 years like another family.

I'm fortunate to work at my parish as the Director of Christian Service and have really made life-long friendships with people from all walks of life and vocations. The way they have invited me into their homes and into their lives has truly been a blessing I was not expecting.

The gift of spiritual motherhood has accelerated as well. I've been asked to be a godmother 4 times now; a Confirmation sponsor 8 times (includes children and adults) and invited to celebrate milestones like wedding anniversaries and birthdays.

Most of all, I'm recognizing Jesus in everyone I meet. It's amazing how Our Lord has softened my heart and given me new eyes to see others with. I try, albeit unsuccessfully sometimes, to really see the good in *each* person I encounter, even if it's brief like at the checkout line or post office. I find it very necessary to reflect the love of the Lord to everyone, but especially as His Bride. Even if the person I'm meeting has no idea of my vocation.

Shortly after my consecration I would feel very apprehensive and put up my guard if someone inquired if I was married or had children. Surprisingly, the majority of the time the person reacts with awe and wonder and genuine curiosity when they find out who my Husband is. It's made for great conversation!

Lastly, I had the honor of giving a speech to my sister and brother-in-law on their 25th Wedding Anniversary this spring in front of a large group of friends and family. I highlighted to them and those who were in attendance that "every vocation comes with a cross." But that God gives us the grace to persevere, if only we allow ourselves to be receptive to His grace that only He can give.

I am so grateful that the Lord called me to be His bride and I pray every day that He will continue to mold and form me into the bride He desires me to be for Him and for the Church.



Our Lady of Sorrows (Salamanca, Spain)



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

Rest in peace, consecrated virgin Isabel Bettwy. Isabel passed to eternal life on July 20, 2025, at the age of 91. Isabel began her consecrated life as a Sister of Charity of Seton Hill in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and over the years has taught high school physics and mathematics in Pennsylvania and Arizona, been involved in evangelistic outreach in New Jersey, and served as the Director of the National Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. In 1976, Isabel began working at Franciscan University in Steubenville where she established and directed the Christian Conference Center and in 1985 founded and directed Franciscan University Press and University Journeys.

Isabel was delighted to learn of the renovation of the ancient rite of consecration to a life of virginity, and was consecrated according to the rite on September 15, 1984 in the Diocese of Steubenville (OH). Isabel has been a member of the United States Association of Consecration since its inception and many may recall that she acted as our travel agent / guide for United States consecrated virgins who traveled to the 2008 Congress-Pilgrimage in Rome. Rest in Peace, dear Isabel!

Some personal memories follow:

"I was sorry to hear that Isabel had passed away. I was surprised a couple of weeks after one of our convocations to receive a package from her. I had no idea what it was until I opened it to find a portrait of Our Lady of Guadalupe that had been touched to and blessed by the original Image. I love Our Lady of Guadalupe and I cherish her response to Blessed Juan: ...'am I not your Mother?' And I always ask her to be with the children who are suffering, especially those who have been kidnapped by terrorists . . . she is their Mother and they need her. I placed the Tilma on the wall in my bedroom across from my bed so when I

wake up and as I fall asleep I see her, Our Lady . . . and I say again now that Isabel is with Our Lady, the Mother that she loves, thank you my sister in Christ. You have been a blessing to me. May you rejoice as you meet that Lady, the Mother of Jesus and your mother who loves you. Pray for us, your sisters in Consecration, that we may be faithful to Christ, our Spouse and do always whatever He asks of us. Love never dies and I truly love you and I will always be grateful to you." (Florence Sundberg, Diocese of Hartford (CT))

"I knew Sr Isabel Bettwy in 1980 when I studied for my Masters of Arts in Theology at the University of Steubenville. She was a young, energetic and efficient staff member at the University, and we even went out for dinner once. Of course, all this was before she entered the *Ordo Virginum*. May Jesus receive her soul and let her rejoice in His Presence!" (Renu Silvano, Archdiocese of Bombay (India))

"Isabel had a great love for her Diving Spouse and she was noted for her missionary service in bringing people from all over the world into a relationship with her Divine Spouse and His holy Mother. She conducted pilgrimages to almost every Marian shrine in the world. She took the visionaries from Medugorje under her care and enabled them to come to the United States and get a college education. She got the Marians of the Immaculate Conception (MICs) here in Steubenville to celebrate a monthly Mass in her home chapel to honor our Lady. She especially had a devotion to Divine Mercy and to St. Faustina Kowalska who bore the message of God's divine mercy.

Towards the end of her life, she wanted to make sure that those she had reached out to would carry out in their lives the devotion to Our Lord and Our Lady so that their lives would be vessels of divine mercy and reflections of the missionary zeal of His merciful Mother.

May Isabel rest in the peace and joy of a labor of love. *A Fait Accompli!*" (Mary Kay Lacke, Diocese of Steubenville (OH))

We invite anyone who may have known Isabel personally to send your memories of her for our next issue of "The Lamp."

Report by [Mary Beth Bracy](#)
Diocese of Ogdensburg (NY)

The annual United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins (USACV) took place from June 27 – July 1 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. The convocation opened on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with Holy Mass at the Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in nearby Knoxville. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Mark Beckman of Knoxville and con-celebrated by Bishop Earl Boyea of Lansing, Episcopal Moderator for the USACV.

In his homily, Bishop Beckman spoke of how the Holy Spirit pours love into our hearts and our need to receive God's tenderness in order to give it to others. Bishop Boyea later gave a talk to consecrated virgins on the Didache and Patrology. He spoke of how the prophets, Old Testament writers, and early Church leaders underscore the need for Christians to make a choice to follow the Lord's path to find rest for themselves. "Each day is the time to make the decision," Bishop Boyea emphasized, "Exemplify what you are called to live."

The theme of the convocation was "The Interior Castle with St. Teresa of Jesus," highlighting each of the seven mansions from her mystical vision in the classic work of this great Doctor of the Church and Carmelite reformer. Presentations were made by Father David Whiteside of the Diocese of Peoria, who served as chaplain during the convocation.

Father Whiteside explained that what began as St. Teresa's vocation of logic turned into a love affair; she struggled in prayer for eighteen years as a nun until she surrendered herself to the Lord. St. Teresa details the beginning of the journey of the soul to God and the steps to take to open one's heart to hear and understand God's voice. She includes practical advice on our "line of defense" and overcoming temptations. Father broke these open for us, and guided us through the stages of prayer, culminating in the mystical marriage, with several examples. From growth in prayer and virtue, especially in setting aside time for daily mental prayer—which St. Teresa describes as giving the Lord the loving attention of our heart in secret—we grow in union with God,

In addition to listening to daily talks, consecrated

virgins participated in Holy Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, chanting the Liturgy of the Hours and a variety of community activities from dinners and a talent show, to hiking in the Smoky Mountains and chasing waterfalls, to encountering real-live bears.



The talent show showcased gifts of consecrated virgins, including poetry by Madeleine Troppe (a math teacher from the Diocese of Pittsburgh), a hymn composition by Claire Halbur (a choir director in the Diocese of Phoenix), sign language by Karen Hund (retired director of religious education and youth minister, Diocese of Erie), and musical acts with singing and instruments by Mary Kelly (a professional violinist and music teacher (Diocese of Little Rock), Francesca Riddick (a retired special education Teacher, Diocese of Joliet), and Miara Cash (a youth minister, Diocese of Phoenix); trivia by Lauren Gault (the Program Coordinator for the Office of the Diaconate in the Diocese of Pittsburgh); a powerful story sprinkled with humor by Virginia (Ginny) Meyer (a retired dance teacher from the Archdiocese of Chicago); and an inspirational true story by Adrienne Luedeking (an aspirant from the Diocese of Nashville). One consecrated virgin, Elma Espinoza (a caregiver and speaker, Diocese of Fresno), shared her costume and jewelry designs, which she recently had the opportunity to wear on the set of season six of "The Chosen" from August 11 to 13 as a background extra.

It was a blessing to spend time with other consecrated virgins from across the country, and even one who attended from El Salvador; in addition to informally sharing our stories and ministries, we enjoyed many laughs and adventures. On the optional day trip, a group of other consecrated virgins and I took a tram up the Smoky Mountains to see the breathtaking view and then went white-water rafting. Along with the worship experiences and inspiring talks, this was one of the highlights for me.

It struck me that white-water rafting should be mandatory preparation for any vocation, whether marriage, priestly, or consecrated. First, you have to remember to listen to your guide and not start paddling when the water becomes wavy and you're worried



Convocation 2025





Diocese of Knoxville, Tennessee



about staying afloat, until you are instructed to do so. And everyone on the boat needs to paddle in unison, if they aren't going to go overboard. Analogously, Jesus asks us to trust in Him fully and let Him be our guide. By totally abandoning ourselves to Christ, we learn when to be still and when to fight. Additionally, He leads us in working with others in our community and helping each other on our journey to Heaven.

Whether praying with consecrated virgins who were struggling with health difficulties or contemplating job changes or sharing the enthusiasm of those who are helping form other candidates preparing to be consecrated in their dioceses, there was an atmosphere of great joy in our common sisterhood and love for our Divine Bridegroom.

Reflections on the convocation, from attendees:

Madeleine Troppe, Diocese of Pittsburgh (PA): "It was a joy to spend a few days in the company of other consecrated virgins and candidates. I met some lovely new people and reunited with others I had met at my first convocation a couple of years ago. Fr. David gave a beautiful series of talks on the Interior Castle, and I think St. Teresa of Avila has become my new friend!"

Dawn Hausmann, Diocese of Lansing (MI): "The most beautiful part of the convocation was two-fold. One was getting to meet more of my consecrated virgin sisters in the journey and have fellowship with them in the beautiful mountain surroundings! And the second thing was to hear rich teachings of the interior castle of Saint Teresa of Avila through Fr David. What a beautiful blessing! Thank you!"

Miara Cash, Diocese of Phoenix (AZ): "It was such a joy to gather with sisters in the Lord in Gatlinburg, TN! As we entered into the Interior Castle through Fr. David's excellent talks and times of prayer, a grace that welled up within me was a profound sense of peace. I have so much gratitude for the gift of this vocation and I felt so "settled" into the beautiful joy of living out consecration to Christ as my spouse as I entered into fellowship with Him in prayer and fellowship with my sisters in our time together. More than ever before I felt able to receive with joy all that He gives, and delighted in the unique ways He is reflected and loved by each of my sisters in the *Ordo Virginum*. May He bring us ever deeper into union of love with Him, that we may reflect Him to all who encounter us!"

Valerie Wilson, Archdiocese of Louisville (KY): "I found the convocation to be a source of encouragement for our vocation. I think our vocation can be isolating sometimes, so it was nice to come together and share camaraderie with fellow sisters for awhile. Although the subject matter for the retreat on the Interior Castle was a bit intimidating for me, I found it to be very beneficial for my spiritual life. Although "Room 5" on the spousal union was describing a mystical interior experience that many have, I also was reflecting that a lot of Consecrated Virgins experience much supernatural joy during the Rite. The Rite itself can become an exterior witness to this mystical interiority. Even if the interior experience is more intense, the joy and peace that overflows from the virgin during the Rite becomes a public witness to the spousal union with God."

Julie Radachy, Diocese of Knoxville (TN): "A few years ago, when I read about the convocations, I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if everyone came to the Knoxville Diocese?' And indeed it was! In fact, it was so great that it's hard to choose a favorite part. Being able to celebrate the opening Mass with other consecrated virgins in the Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus where I was consecrated three years ago was extra special. In addition, each opportunity for prayer was beautiful, I loved having in-depth conversations with other consecrated virgins, and I was nourished spiritually by each of the talks. One thing that Fr. David included, which really resonated with me, was that Jesus consoled St. Teresa of Avila when St. John of the Cross was breaking the bread into "too small of pieces." It's a beautiful reminder of what I've thought so many times when our Divine Spouse does the unexpected: "You hear every little desire of my heart!"

Francesca Riddick, Diocese of Joliet (IL): "What a blessing it was to participate in the 2025 Convocation on the Interior Castle of St Teresa of Jesus! The setting in the Smoky Mountains was so providential to the theme of this Convocation. It was so good to see many of our sisters in consecration come to share and learn about the interior life. We all eagerly listened as Fr. David, very systematically and thoughtfully took us through all 7 dwelling places of Teresa's castle image which is really a symbol of the journey of our interior life with Jesus. Teresa describes how the soul, touched by the grace of God enters this crystal castle and all the struggles and temptations she must endure as well as tremendous grace God bestows on the soul as she desires to follow Him. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to experience Teresa's Interior Castle with my sisters in

consecration and hope to begin to apply its many lessons in my own life."

Rebecca Siar, candidate in the Archdiocese of Chicago (IL): "It was an absolute gift to be able to attend the 2025 Convocation in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. As a candidate for the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world, I loved being able to meet consecrated women from all around the world, to hear their stories, to pray alongside them, and to be spiritually mothered by them. I particularly loved getting to unpack St. Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle, especially since it had been a while since I had read it last. Essentially, it almost serves as an instruction manual for purgatory on Earth, so I loved being able to share with Jesus my desire to reach the seventh mansion and to enter into mystical marriage with Him and my commitment to spend the rest of my life working towards reaching that innermost dwelling where the Bridegroom (and King) resides. What a gift that He desires that level of intimacy and union with each of us, and, in a particular way, for those who are called to the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world!"

Rubi Garfias, Diocese of Joliet (IL): "My dear sisters in Christ, it was a joy and a blessing to be able to attend the 2025 Convocation. It was a time to rest in the arms of my Divine Spouse, listen to his guidance in my life, and deepen my relationship with Him through the Eucharist, adoration, prayer, and experiencing the love and care of my sisters in Christ and nature. After a busy month at work and dealing with illness, my trip to the Convocation was nearly impossible; however, I was able to attend. Thank you, God, for your providence. As I reflect on the graces I received at Convocation, they are many, but the ones I have been reflecting on since leaving the Knoxville airport are a greater appreciation for my vocation, trust, hope and perseverance in God. August 10, 2025, will be my first anniversary as a Consecrated Virgin. And as I move forward in my life, even with all the uncertainty life throws my way, I just know that I love Him and am thankful for my vocation. Thank you, God, for your goodness and faithfulness, for your love is eternal. You are my rock and my salvation. I love you God and I cannot imagine my life without you!"

Claire Halbur, Diocese of Phoenix (AZ): "Our 2025 Convocation was a time of joy and refreshment amidst the Creator's beauty on display in the Smoky Mountains. It was personally edifying to be among both virgins who have faithfully lived this vocation

for many years, as well as growing numbers of young virgins consecrated within the past decade. A section of St. Teresa of Avila's "The Interior Castle" played a pivotal role in my own vocational journey, so it was a true grace to enter into her writings under the guidance of our chaplain, Father David Whiteside, who has long been a "student" of Carmelite spirituality. Chanting together in the Liturgy of the Hours and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass orients us lovingly toward the presence of the Bridegroom, who also blessed us with worshipping in the majestic Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart on His Solemnity, and capped off our days together with a double rainbow.

Karen Hund, Diocese of Erie (PA): "I have not been able to attend a convocation for over 15 years due to my caring for a young man who is in my care and I am His caregiver. But by God's grace, a couple from church said they would care for Kyle so I could attend. The convocation was a time of grace and my heart is filled with gratitude and a deeper desire to grow in prayer and service to the people of God according to His will. It was such a joy to gather with women who are consecrated virgins or who are aspiring to be consecrated virgins. To listen and share with such wonderful women, to laugh with them, enjoy their company, to know we share the same conviction to remain faithful to our journey with Jesus was such an inspiration! To have time to pray with them brightened every corner of my heart! Bishop Boyea shared on THE TWO WAYS and gave me the hope to remain close to Jesus and walk the way of the Christian according to His will. Fr. David Whiteside gave such wonderful reflection on THE INTERIOR CASTLE according to St. Teresa of Avila. The reflections gave me a desire to grow in prayer and to grow ever closer to my Spouse. The reflections gave me a longing to grow in fidelity, grace, and prayer. The times of silence and adoration drew me to the heart of Jesus, our Spouse, and a deeper longing to draw closer to Jesus. My heart and soul thank Jesus for all that was given to me! And I am still unpacking it all! Praise and all glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!"

Lorraine Manlolo, Diocese of Honolulu (HI): "Thank you to all who planned and organized this year's convocation. It is always a joy to get together and pray, especially in such a beautiful and relaxing environment. Our theme this year about the Interior Castle has enriched my prayer life, and deepened my understanding of St. Teresa of Avila. May God continue to bless us in our daily lives as we live out our vocation, and I will keep all of you in my prayers. . . The days leading up to our convocation

were filled with many blessings! I was able to attend the very end of Camino de California, the inaugural journey through all 21 missions in California with approximately 40 pilgrims via caravan with the Blessed Sacrament. I was able to go to Mass at Christ Cathedral and a few parish churches in Southern California as well as the final Mission on their schedule (Mission San Gabriel Arcangel), where we Camino pilgrims attended Mass, processed with the Blessed Sacrament through the neighborhoods, and culminated the pilgrimage with Corpus Christi Mass in the Cathedral of our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles (which also marked the closing of the three year National Eucharistic Revival). The day before that, there was a day retreat at the Sacred Heart Retreat House with the Carmelite sisters in nearby Alhambra, CA, where Bishop Cozzens and Papal Nuncio Pierre attended as they were in town to celebrate Corpus Christi Mass in the Cathedral. All glory to God!"

Adrienne Luedeking, candidate, Diocese of Nashville (TN): "I had decided not to go to the convocation. As a candidate in formation, I had found myself much like a bride with cold feet before her wedding. I wasn't sure I could do this vocation and thought it might be better to skip the gathering. But I had never met consecrated virgins in person before. I lived only a short drive away. My schedule was clear. And my heart was yearning. It was only about four days long, but I'm still marveling at what I saw and experienced. Consecrated virgins of different backgrounds, with personalities that sparkled in their variety; a priest with a contemplative heart who guided us toward the summits of the spiritual life; days anchored in prayer and the sacraments. It was an atmosphere of virtue, joy, laughter, peace. But it was the individual moments, too: my roommate, who turned out to be a fellow candidate with similar passions and interests; conversations about the facets of our shared charism with women long consecrated; learning to chant the Office again, something I hadn't attempted in a long time; a moment of shared intercessory prayer; and a conversation in the rain with a virgin who looked at me and said, simply, "Be His bride." I'm often taken aback by the exalted dignity of our vocation . . . overwhelmed by the idea of being espoused to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. But at the convocation, I was reminded that, as Karl Rahner once wrote, "Some things are understood not by grasping, but by allowing oneself to be grasped." I came to the convocation with questions, hesitations, and doubts. I left with something I hadn't expected: the peace of trustful surrender. I was grasped."

Eileen Belongea, Archdiocese of Milwaukee (WI): "What a joy it was to gather in Gatlinburg, among God's Magnificent Smoky Mountains, to be with so many beautiful sister virgins, sharing our Love for our Divine Spouse and sharing our stories and experiences as brides of Christ. Fr. David's Reflections on the Interior Castle of St Teresa of Jesus, the Seven Mansions, a mystical journey toward union with our Divine Spouse, was very inspiring. Reflecting on the soul's journey through the Mansions of the Interior Castle, I am inspired by the example of love that the Lord gives us in human marriage, the love of husband and wife. As in human marriage where the love between husband and wife, grows in intimacy and perfection through the experiences of life; so too the consecrated virgin's love for her Divine Spouse. Through the Sacrament of Matrimony, husband and wife are espoused to one another in mutual love, though not yet perfect love, this love must mature through the giving & receiving, the little sacrifices of daily life offered for one another, and through the joys & sorrows, trials & triumphs they share together, until ultimately, what is said physically – the two become one – happens psychologically & spiritually as well, fully integrated, they become so united that they live as one person. I think most of us know of at least one beautiful couple who exemplifies this love. So too the life of the consecrated virgin. At our Consecration, we are mystically espoused to Christ, our Bridegroom. Though our love for God is not yet perfect, it slowly matures & flourishes through our daily experiences, our giving and receiving, the offering of little sacrifices to our Divine Spouse in the context of our daily life and circumstances. We grow in intimacy and perfection of love through our joys & sorrows, trials & triumph's, experienced in the Light and Knowledge of our Divine Spouse until ultimately the Lord invites us into The Seventh Mansion, the fully integrated Spiritual Marriage, Mystical Union in God. We become so perfectly united to Him that we truly become One in Him, there is no longer any thought of self; there is only Christ, Oneness in God."

Jeanne McNulty of the Diocese of Pittsburgh (PA): "The glories of the Holy Mass, Sacraments, ancient Gregorian chants, deep insights into a work of St. Teresa of Avila, time for meditative prayer in the chapel and, for some, in the nearby National Smokey Mt. Forest. Add to that the joyful sharing and camaraderie with our sisters in Christ filled the days. So many worked hard to make of the whole experience a cherished time together. Fr. David Whiteside, a diocesan priest, who was apparently very familiar with the life and works of St. Teresa of Avila gave excellent presentations of the seven

interior mansions contained within her book: Interior Castle. After each lecture he fielded our questions and answered them so knowledgeably. Claire did a fantastic job of leading us in all the music for the mass and Office in the chanting of the Gregorian notes: (punctums). I think we sounded "angelic" most of the time. Lauren Gault, Cathy Leahy and I shared one of the condos, replete with a little kitchen, living room and balcony. What I loved was the balcony because it was a wonderful space for quiet meditation. We were on the second floor and below and in front of it was a swift gurgling stream flowing over the rocks, fed by a small waterfall up on our right. The trees on the other side of the stream were tall. Many were a lacy-leafy green providing a natural wall for solitude. I could not help but think of and pray for all of us being in the stream and carried by God's will in our lives over the smooth and rough places towards the sea which symbolizes for me, the Trinity. One last thing... On the last evening after supper in the big hall there was the talent show with sharing and laughing together. The eve ended with a torrent of rain, then stillness. We then happened to gaze out the glass double doors to behold a huge DOUBLE RAINBOW! Fr. David, along with some of us saw that as a possibly wonderful sign of God's love and affirmation for His chosen ones."

Karen Ervin of the Archdiocese of Detroit (MI):

"Expect nothing. Expect everything." A priest once used this phrase to teach me how to enter into a spiritual retreat, extolling me to dance with the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead me in unexpected graces. As I went to my first convocation, I remembered this advice, going with an open heart, desiring to meet new CV sisters, be immersed in the teachings of Teresa of Avila, and to expect the unexpected. And God did not disappoint in the graces I received over the weekend, most especially in community and communion. First, community. I'm always refreshed whenever I meet new sisters on the journey, can hear their stories and be inspired by the bridal witness of their life. It is a consolation to know others consecrated in this radical vocation, uniquely espoused to "Him whom the angels serve," and are laboring to show the world a virginal love for the Lord. It's even more edifying to know the ways we each strive to grow in holiness, keeping our lamps brightly lit so that Jesus might be made known in the circumstances of our lives. It is so easy to be consumed in our day-to-day life and forget the importance of sisterhood and the strength God gives us in friendships with each other. In one another we should find a safe place to pray and discuss the deeper truths amidst the joys and sufferings of this life. Though different in many

ways, we are all united in the bridal call as consecrated virgins which roots us in this communion as sisters in Christ. // And this communion brings me to the second grace of the weekend. For me, this communion finds its fullness both in the importance of our bonds of sisterhood and in the richness of our bond with Christ as His brides. While we are each consecrated as a sign of what is to come in the spiritual marriage, we are still "here and not yet." The teachings of St. Teresa reminded me of this and of our earthly reality that though we are mystically espoused to the Lord, we are always striving for perfection of virtue in the lived experience of this spiritual marriage. I appreciated learning more what this means and how the Lord uses the purifications and humiliations of this life to refine us in the fire of His divine love, perfecting us in our union with Him. Can there be a better life than that! // While I have unpacked my suitcase, I will continue to unpack the graces of the weekend, including this spiritual nugget from St. Teresa as I ask myself: how Lord, can I deepen my union with you. 'In the spiritual marriage with our Lord, the soul always remains in its center with its God...It is like rain falling from heaven into a river or stream, becoming one and the same liquid, so that the river and rain water cannot be divided; or it resembles a streamlet flowing into the ocean, which cannot afterwards be disunited from it.' Teresa of Avila, The Interior Castle"

Anne Gishpert of the Diocese of Pueblo (CO): "TN is beautiful! I truly enjoyed every moment of my time here! It was wonderful to see women I haven't seen since Flagstaff, and meet ones I've never met before. Our condos were pleasant havens to go to for lunch. Rebecca and I enjoyed eating on the balcony and visiting there in the evenings listening to the gurgling water below us (Little Pigeon River) and watching/listening to the different birds. Rebecca wanted to see a bear but we did not. // The Mass on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the gorgeous Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Knoxville was like being in a church in Rome. Breathtaking to say the least. (You can take a virtual tour online.) We, the consecrated virgins, had reserved pews. Bishop Boyea joined us and spoke a few words about our consecrated life. He is always joyful and seems truly pleased to be with us during the beginnings of our convocations. Bishop Boyea, thank you for all of your love and support you show to us, individually and as a group. We are blessed to have you. It was a wonderful way to begin our convocation/retreat. // Fr. David Whiteside broke the Mansions of the Interior Castle by St. Teresa of Avila down for us in a way, at least for me, to understand more what I've never understood before

or had the time to try to understand. Now I'll be able to go back and read what I have never finished with a clearer understanding and a new appreciation for this masterpiece by St. Teresa. Thank you Fr. Whiteside for your thoughtful and insightful reflections told to us in a way that is easier to ponder and take to heart. Thank you for your peaceful, kind, prayerfulness throughout our time. You are an example to emulate. // Thank you to all the virgins who worked so hard to make this convocation such a prayerful, peaceful, and refreshing experience! Judith, Magalis, Julie, Claire, Eileen, Francisca, Miara, and everyone who touched my heart during this time. Thank for the planning, printing of Mass/Hours booklets, shopping for food, ordering food, stocking the refrigerators with food for us, picking us up from the airport and back again, (and coming back to the airport after finding out my 7am flight was cancelled and I couldn't fly out until 4pm; this after picking me up at 4:15AM to take me to the airport; and spending time in the park with me while we waited). I am so THANKFUL to God for each and every one of you for being who you are and sharing time with me in prayer and fun. (Baskin' Robbins-- in the rain; the Space Needle--beautiful views even though I'm afraid of heights, Rebecca was patient with me; dinner out; Masses/Holy Hours at the small church [Saint Mary's], the name that now escapes my memory, within walking distance from the condo; Monday's Talent Show was filled with true talent of singing, poetry, sign language with song and guitar, and a slide presentation from a virgin who sewed her costume for a part in the next season of Chosen. Tuesday's excursion to Cade's Cove--the rain waited until we were all in the cars leaving the parking lot; etc.....)"

Elma Espinoza, Diocese of Fresno (CA): "At the convocation I had the privilege of staying in the room next to Jesus, along with my two roommates Rubi and Karen. The talks by Fr. David Whiteside on *The Interior Castle* by St. Teresa of Avila were very inspirational. I tried to finish reading the book again before the convocation but only went up to the fourth mansion. However, it was God's plan I did not get that far because when Fr. David explained the fifth mansion, something must have struck a chord within me that tears kept falling down my cheeks. At one point during the convocation, I saw a beautiful large butterfly as I walked to throw the trash. I realized that I need to continue getting rid of more things in order to become a beautiful soul in God's image. // God also allowed me to experience a couple things for the first time, like White Water Rafting in Hartford, TN along with Joani, Rubi, Mary Beth, and Mary, as

well as getting excited to see Fireflies in person in a Gatlinburg trail within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Another first that I shared during the talent show was the opportunity to be a background extra from August 11-13 in Texas for season 6 of "The Chosen," which focuses on the crucifixion. I decided to be a Jewish character and to make my own costume. I made three tunics, an over robe, a bag and a headband to hold the veil in place. During the talent show, I did a PowerPoint presentation showing images of the sewing process and some of the details of being a background extra, such as the shoes and jewelry."

[from the editor: due to space limitations in *The Lamp*, we'll include more details from Elma about her experience in The Chosen, in a future issue of "Monday Morning Mail."]



Our Lady of Seven Sorrows by Adriaen Isenbrandt (Belgium)

Thanks be to God, 100 people registered for the 2025 Virtual Information Conference on the *Ordo Virginum*, held September 5 to 7. The registrants, from 68 different dioceses, included 94 from the United States and 6 from other countries: one Bishop, 5 consecrated virgins, 9 diocesan representatives, 27 aspirants or candidates for consecration, and 58 inquiring about the vocation.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to making the Information Conference possible. Special thanks to Bishop Earl Boyea (Bishop of Lansing and Episcopal Moderator for the USACV) for his insightful presentation on the topic of “Historical Aspects of the Consecration of Virgins: Virgin Saints” and for his continued support. In addition, 15 United States consecrated virgins collaborated to make presentations, participate in the Q&A sessions, share personal testimonials, lead Vespers, and assist with the technical aspects of the webinar. May our Divine Spouse reward each of you for your voluntary contributions in making our vocation better known and understood.

Topics presented during the conference were diverse: “Overview of Vocations in the Catholic Church, and Ecclesial Identification of the *Ordo Virginum*”; “Scripture and the Witness of the *Ordo Virginum*, in *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago*”; “The Liturgy of the Hours and Prayer Life of the Consecrated Virgin”; “Mystically Espoused to Christ, the Son of God”; “The Liturgical Rite of Consecration of Virgins: The Virgin’s Rule of Life”; “Living in *Saeculo* and in the Local Church”; “Psychological Maturity for Living the Virginal Vocation”; “Prerequisites for Admission to Consecration”; and “Stages of Preparation for Admission to the *Ordo Virginum*.” Many attendees expressed their thanks. One wrote:

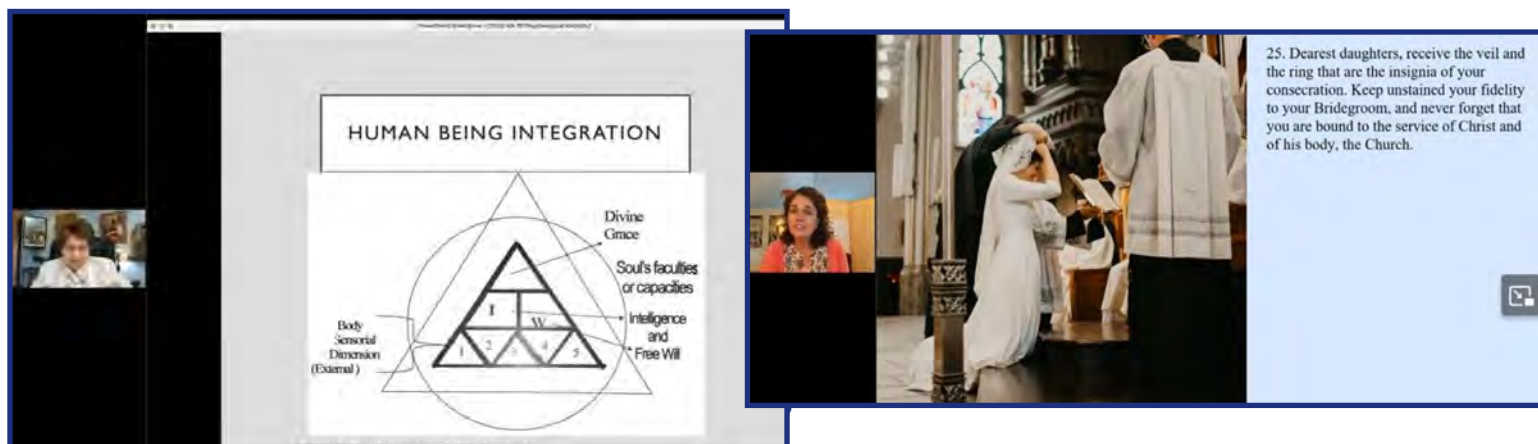
"Thank You for last weekend. It was an intense yet topically thorough introduction to the "Ordo Virginum." The USACV brochures have been immensely helpful in explaining the vocation. Please thank everyone involved in the weekend."

And another wrote:

"I just wanted to write to say how appreciative I am of all the work and planning that went into putting on such a wonderful information conference this past weekend. The talks were so incredibly helpful and engaging. Thank you for being so attentive to our questions. I had several questions coming in and all of them were answered either in the talks or during the Q and A. I also loved praying Evening Prayer together. Thank you so much for all of your hard work and dedication to increasing awareness about this vocation and providing valuable information about it."

As soon as conference recordings are ready, a link will be made available at no charge to everyone who participated in the conference, and for purchase in our online store.

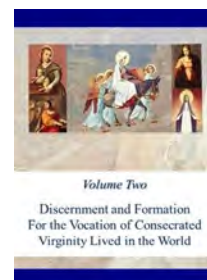
The USACV-IRC plans to host the 2026 Virtual Information Conference next September.



The United States Association of Consecrated Virgins is pleased to announce the 2025-2026 season of its Candidate Discussion Group. The Candidate Discussion Group (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

Information and online registration is available [here](#) and on the USACV website. There is no cost to register. Please direct questions to consecrated virgin CDG coordinator Leandra Hubka, at info@consecratedvirgins.org.

2025-2026 Season Dates and Topics

November 3, 2025: “Consecrated Virginity: A Vocation of Hope to the World,” presented by Elizabeth Rizzo

February 9, 2026: “Articulating the Call to Consecrated Virginity with Friends, Family, Parish, and the Public,” presented by Claire Halbur

May 4, 2026: “Liturgy of the Hours: Incorporating a Rhythm of Praying the Divine Office while Living in the World,” presented by Elizabeth Black

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

About the Presenters:

Elizabeth Rizzo: Elizabeth Rizzo is a New Orleans native who recently earned a Master of Arts in Pastoral Leadership from Notre Dame Seminary. Her professional journey includes 17 years of service with the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office Civil Division, followed by her current role as Executive Assistant to the President of Jesuit High School New Orleans, where she has served for three years. Elizabeth's spiritual journey has been one of discernment of married life, religious life, and single-dedicated life. In 2013, she accompanied a friend to the USACV Information Conference and discovered her true calling. Elizabeth was consecrated by Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond on May 27, 2017. Music holds a special place in Elizabeth's heart. She serves as a cantor at her home parish of Our Lady of the Rosary where she is also an active choir member, Reader, and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

Claire Halbur: Claire Halbur was born and raised in Illinois, but followed the Lord's call to move to and serve the Diocese of Phoenix in 2016, where she was consecrated by Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted on August 22, 2020. Her full-time profession and apostolate is as Director of Sacred Music at Saint Anne Roman Catholic Church in Gilbert, AZ, where she leads a large bilingual liturgical music program for adults and youth of all ages. She takes delight in reflecting on the Mystical Body of Christ in all its dimensions, in cultivating fellowship and hospitality, and in adding touches of beauty to everyday life.

Elizabeth Black: Elizabeth is a consecrated virgin of the Diocese of Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she was consecrated in 2021. Elizabeth has worked in Catholic education (teaching and administration) for the past eighteen years, and is currently a faculty member at the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education, where she teaches Catholic school teachers nationally in the Catholic liberal arts tradition. Elizabeth holds a M.A. in Liturgical Studies from the University of St. Mary of the Lake, and B.A. in Classical and Early Christian Studies from Christendom College.

Dr. Judith Stegman, JCD, CPA: Judith M. Stegman, JCD, CPA, consecrated August 21, 1993, has served as USACV president since 2004. She participated in the first Rome gathering of consecrated virgins in 1995, collaborated in planning the Rome 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins, and over the years has offered many conferences on the *Ordo virginum*. Judith sold her accounting practice to pursue theological and canonical studies, earning a Master's Degree in Theology in 2014 and a Doctoral Degree in Canon Law in 2019. Her doctoral dissertation proposes principles to guide the development of norms for the *Ordo* based on the virgin's identity: “mystically espoused to Christ, the Son of God.” Dr. Stegman's favorite topic to speak on is “Virginal, Feminine, Spousal Love for Jesus Christ.”