

The Lamp



Volume 21, Issue 3 — September 8, 2016

United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV

www.consecratedvirgins.org

September 8, 2016 Feast of The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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

The unseen Mother of God! Apart from the few, but significant, episodes in the Gospels, we know really very little about the Virgin Mary. If we can talk about this hidden life of Jesus, we can speak even more so about this kind of life of Mary. And it is that hidden life of Mary which can become such a model for all Consecrated Virgins. What are some of the elements of that hidden life?

First of all, it is a life of simple things. Being espoused to Christ means seeing and serving Christ in all the ordinary daily events. One of my favorite scenes in Mel Gibson’s movie about Jesus is where Jesus falls carrying his cross and Mary runs to help him get back up — this occasions a flashback to when she did this for him when he skinned his knee as a boy. It is this kind of gentle, one could say, easy-love that is especially a quality of the hidden life. We see Jesus in each person we meet and seek to serve and love that person both for his own sake and for Jesus’ sake.

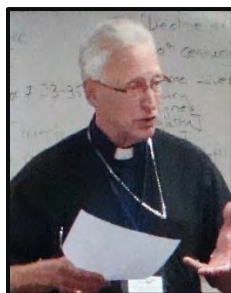
Secondly, the hidden life is one of prayer and contemplation. There must have been many days when Mary simply watched Jesus and his every word and action. Scripture does tell us that she kept all these things in her heart. There must be a lot of ruminating in your lives. Ponder the days and nights of your own experience and life to see how God is working in those moments. Jesus will show himself to you but you must be prepared to watch him and that takes practice.

Thirdly, the hidden life is marked by a virginal spousal love. Mary had such a love for Joseph. It was both virginal and spousal. Your own lives as consecrated virgins must give great evidence of chastity, of course. The more difficult aspect of this is to see your love as real and as spousal for the Lord. I once saw a painting of Jesus and Mary lamenting the death of Joseph. Imagine Mary and Joseph in their life together and how his death would have caused a real loss in Mary’s life. That is how real your spousal love must be for Jesus.

My dear sisters, your life in the world as consecrated virgins has many hidden aspects to it. Take Mary as your model on how to live that life, especially as we honor her on her birthday.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing



Bishop Boyea

Inside this Issue	Page
Something Ancient- Something New	2
Upcoming Events	3
Announcements and News	4
From the President’s Journal	4
2016 Election Announcement	5
2016 Convocation Report	6
2016 Information Conference	7
Life Corner	8
Consecration Announcements	8
Upcoming U. S. Consecration	9
Anniversary Reflections	9
Hopes for Our Vocation	10
Convocation Reflections	12
The Beauty of Encountering Our Bridegroom	13

By Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman

The virgins of the ancient Church, as well as the virgins of today's Church, live in expectation: they live as an icon of the time when the Divine Spouse will come to make a personal call for them or to make the final call to all at His Parousia. It is a great blessing and responsibility to be called to be this "eschatological image of the world to come and the heavenly Bride of Christ:"¹ to be called to live as a bride preparing to enter the plenitude of the eternal wedding banquet. Saint John the Evangelist envisions this heavenly kingdom: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."²

The Gospel of Matthew, chapters 24 and 25, is an extensive prophetic teaching about the end times. In Chapter 25:1-13, Saint Matthew records our Lord Jesus Christ using the Parable of the Ten Virgins to emphasize that believers must be prepared for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Consecrated virgins are called to exhibit this preparation: "Make your whole life reflect your vocation and your dignity. Preserve the fullness of your faith, the steadfastness of your hope, the single-heartedness of your love. Be prudent and watch: keep the glory of your virginity uncorrupted by pride." For what is the virgin preparing? "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."³

Saint Methodius advises virgins: "Now, those who sing the Gospel to senseless people seem to sing the Lord's song in a strange land, of which Christ is not the husbandman; but those who have put on and shone in the most pure and bright, and unmingled and pious and becoming, ornament of virginity, and are found barren and unproductive of unsettled and grievous passions, do not sing the song in a strange land; because they are not borne there by their hopes, nor do they stick fast in the lusts of their mortal bodies, nor do they take a low view of the meaning of the commandments."⁴

In order to follow the Lamb, the virgin must be adorned, and St. Methodius in his teaching to virgins warns them that virginity is to be cultivated and commended in every place and time. He quoted the prophet Jeremiah: "That a maid should not forget her ornaments, nor a bride her attire." He explains that the virgin "should not give up or loosen the band of chastity through wiles and distractions: Jesus, who is also our Ruler and Bridegroom, O illustrious virgins, commands both you and me to hold fast unbroken and sealed up even to the end; for one will not easily find anything else a greater help to men than this possession, pleasing and grateful to God. Therefore, I say, that we should all exercise and honor chastity, and always cultivate and commend it."⁵

The virgins in the Parable are commanded to keep their lamps ready to light when the Bridegroom comes. This same light was given to each of us on the day of our Baptism, and on the day of our consecration a light was given to us as a sign of the lamp of the virgins. We are called to be a light that illuminates the darkness of this world: "Be wise: make ready your lamps. Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet him."⁶

Saint Paul advised Timothy about the battle of living in this world of darkness, and it is important today

¹ *Praenotanda* to the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, 1.

² Rev. 21:1-2.

³ Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, 16 suggested homily.

⁴ St. Methodius, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Disc. 4, Chap. 5, www.newadvent.org.

⁵ St. Methodius, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Disc. 4, Chap. 6.

⁶ Rite of Consecration, 13 Calling of the Candidates.

to recall his words, because we live in a world that ignores the battle and even calls the darkness, light. "Know also this," Paul advised young Timothy, "in the last days shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God, having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Avoid such people."⁷

The essential message of the Parable of the Ten Virgins is that we must be prepared for the Spouse. Our Divine Lord and Spouse asks us to wait for Him and to bring with us the oil of His love: "The wise virgins brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep" ... this could happen in our way of perfection and mystical expectation of Him. But what the Divine Spouse asks of us is that our hearts, minds and souls be open to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit awakening us, that we might follow Him during this mortal life to the Eternal Feast and keep the oil of His love lighting the lamp of our virginal being. "Behold, the Bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" The virginal vocation awakens us so that we are ready to leave the darkness of this mortal world.

Current Council

Members and Officers

Judith M. Stegman, President, 2016-2018;
Diocese of Lansing.

Magalis Aguilera, Member-at-large, 2016-2018
(Appointed Vice-President through 2018);
Archdiocese of Miami.

Margaret Flipp, Treasurer, 2014-2016,
Diocese of Arlington.

Mary Kay Lacke, Member-at-large, 2014-2016
(appointed Secretary through 2016)
Diocese of Steubenville.

Marie Beccaloni, Member-at-large, 2015-2017,
Archdiocese of Chicago.



Upcoming USACV- Sponsored Events

**2017 United States Convocation
of Consecrated Virgins
July 7-11, 2017,**

**Pallottine Renewal Center, Florissant,
Missouri (Archdiocese of St. Louis)**

**2017 National Information Conference
on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity
dates to be announced,**

**St. Francis Retreat Center, DeWitt, Michigan
(Diocese of Lansing)**

Recordings are now available from the 2016 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity, and from the 2016 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins.

Please see the USACV website:

www.consecratedvirgins.org.

St. Louis consecrated virgins Theresa Prosser and Cara Buskmiller have offered to serve as the host team for the 2017 U.S. Convocation of Consecrated Virgins. See dates and location, above. More details to follow!

⁷ 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

Thank you, Mary Therese Wyant

After many years of serving as the USACV archivist, consecrated virgin Mary Therese Wyant is passing the torch for this holy responsibility to consecrated virgin Ann Gishpert of Colorado. Many thanks to Mary Therese for her dedicated service as USACV archivist over these past twenty years. We were made keenly aware of the tremendous value of this quiet service when a few of us visited our archives this past summer in preparation for the 2016 Convocation and the session we held on the history of the USACV and the development of the vocation in the United States. These organized archives allowed us to readily retrieve photos classified by year, back issues of *The Lamp*, and important correspondence from the inception of the association. Thank you, Mary Therese!

USACV Photo Albums

We are in need of a consecrated virgin to take over another holy task for the USACV: maintaining our “family” album, which contains photos and other memorabilia from virgins’ consecration ceremonies; and maintaining our “convocation” album, which contains photos from the convocations over the years. Please contact a Council member if you are interested in helping with this task.

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:

December 12, 2016 Our Lady of Guadalupe

February 2, 2017 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

May 25, 2017 Ascension Thursday

September 8, 2017 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

By Judith Stegman

Several words of gratitude are due to consecrated virgins who worked behind-the-scenes on our 2016 Convocation: first of all, to Kathy Reda for her outstanding work as the Convocation coordinator; we hope she will take on this task again in the future. Thanks also to Magalis Aguilera for her labor of love in recording and later producing CD’s and DVD’s from both the Convocation and the Information Conference; her work not only allows many to participate who otherwise might not have the opportunity, but also provides an income to our treasury. Special words of gratitude are also to be extended to Marie Beccaloni, Karen Bussey, Mary Kay Lacke, and Margaret Flipp, for their roles in planning the various liturgical celebrations. Many others – in fact all – of the Convocation participants invested themselves in making the days together a life-giving experience for one another. “It is well that

we are here” (Mt. 17:4) was the common sentiment expressed throughout the days.



The Convocation opened on the Feast of the Transfiguration: we recalled then that both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II had likened contemplative life to Jesus’ prayer on the mountain. As the disciples were prepared by the glory of Mt. Tabor to later behold the face of the crucified Christ, so

does the contemplative prayer of virgin-spouses of Jesus draw us into an intimacy with Him in which we behold not only the glory of Christ, but are also prepared to face His cross. Such is the life of the consecrated virgin; such is the life of the entire Church, the virgin-bride of Christ.

2016 Election Announcement

USACV Elections Notice Fall 2016

Two Council positions, Treasurer and At-Large Representative, will open January 1, 2017. We encourage members to consider running for these leadership positions in the association. Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes (bylaws) of the USACV, which are available upon request. Detailed descriptions of the qualifications and responsibilities of the Treasurer and At-Large Representative positions can be found in the May 29, 2016 issue of *The Lamp*.

Candidacy: Written notification of a member's desire to run for either of the open Council position must be received by midnight on Friday, October 28, 2016. We encourage each candidate to also submit a biographical statement of approximately 500 words, including remarks about her own life as a consecrated virgin, as well as her vision, qualifications, and motivation for serving in the position for which she desires to run.

Eligibility to Vote: A member is eligible to vote in the 2016 election if she has a consecration certificate on file with the USACV archivist and if she has registered as a USACV member in 2016 (Article III D 2). **Ballots will be mailed in early November to those listed as registered members on October 15, 2016.** *Registration reminders were recently sent to members; if you have not yet registered as a member in 2016, now would be a good time to do so!*

Voting Process: Ballots (and candidate biographies) will be mailed in early November 2016. Ballots will be due back to our Elections Team leader, Paula Willenbrink, by Friday, December 2, 2016. Ballots must be sent by a postal service (not email or fax) and received by Paula on or before December 2 in order to be counted.

Election Results: Ballots will be opened and counted in the presence of an independent party. The position of Treasurer must be elected by a simple majority (over 50% of the voting members). The At-Large Representative Council member seat will be won by the candidate receiving the most votes of the voting members. (Article VI F) "Voting members" refers to the number of valid ballots that are returned, not to the total membership (see Article XI).

Results of the election will be announced in the December 12, 2016 issue of *The Lamp*.



Pictures from the 2016 Convocation are placed throughout this newsletter. Except where otherwise captioned, all pictures are from the Convocation.



Convocation 2016 Report by Marie Beccaloni



The 2016 Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins was held at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in Chicago, Illinois from August 6th through August 10th. This location has frequently served as the site for the USACV-sponsored annual Information Conference held for those discerning the vocation of consecrated virginity.

This year His Eminence, Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke was present at the convocation. He delivered two keynote presentations and celebrated Holy Mass. His first presentation was on the origin and development of Canon 604 in Church law and the second focused on the duty of the Church to defend religious liberty.

In addition, several presentations were given throughout the convocation by consecrated virgins. Maria Luisa Öfele from Germany delivered an evening talk entitled “Christ as Bridegroom.” Later on Sunday evening, virgins were invited to offer reflections on their personal experience of life with Christ as Bridegroom.

Monday morning, Judith Stegman led a two-hour period in which she and other consecrated virgins focused on the history of the USACV and the development of the vocation in this country, its current state, and the future of the vocation of consecrated virginity in the Church. Collections of photos, back issues of *The Lamp*, and other articles from USACV archives were available for virgins’ perusal. A highlight was the showing of a DVD prepared in 1996 about the historic 1995 Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins in Rome for the 25th anniversary of the renovation of the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity. (This DVD is available for order with the 2016 Convocation recordings.)



Later on Monday, Joanie McCann, Karen Bussey, and Noemi Angeles discussed their experience of travelling to Rome in early 2016 for the close of the Year of Consecrated Life. We were pleased to view a video presentation of the testimony given by Karen in Rome. As well, Joanie produced a delightful audio-visual presentation of photos from the Rome experience. (Both of these are also on a DVD available for order with the 2016 Convocation recordings.)



The National Shrine of Frances Xavier Cabrini was the site of this year’s excursion. Those in attendance were treated to a tour by a Shrine docent who provided great insight to the exhibits on display that detailed the life of Mother Cabrini.

Lauds, Holy Mass, Vespers, and Compline served as the heart of the days spent together. There was also time allotted for Confession and personal prayer during Eucharistic Adoration. The closing Mass was celebrated by His Excellency, Bishop Francis Kane, an auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

The group of attendees for this year’s convocation was larger than last year’s. There were 34 consecrated virgins and 3 candidates in attendance, with the Archdiocese of Chicago having the greatest representation. Two attendees were from dioceses outside of the United States (Goa, India and Regensburg, Germany).

2016 Information Conference

Report on 2016 Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World – Mary Kay Lacke (Chair, Formation Resource Development Team):

Fifteen women attended the 2016 Information Conference held at the Cenacle in Chicago. Theresa Marshall headed the organization and running of the conference. She reported to the Conference team that three additional women had requested to attend the Conference; but she had already filled the available spaces at the Cenacle; so she could not accept their requests.

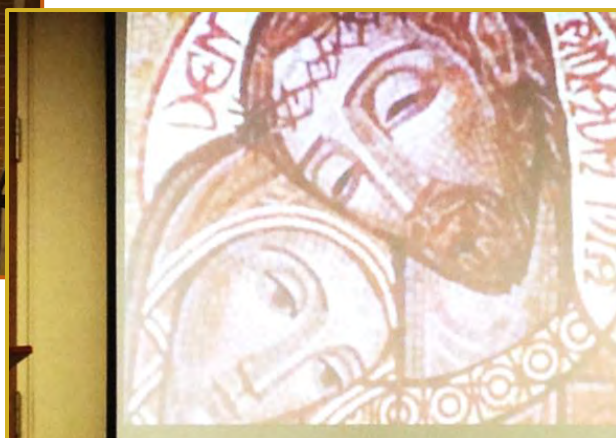
The other team members presenting the conference material were Dr. Magalis Aguilera, Karen Bussey, Mary Kay Lacke, Judith Stegman and, of course, our beloved Episcopal Moderator, Bishop Earl Boyea.

The content of the conference was very rich. Karen began the conference talks on Tuesday evening with a beautiful explanation of the Liturgy of the Hours, the daily food in the prayer life of a consecrated virgin and the prayer that was prayed throughout the days of the Conference. Judith opened up Wednesday's talks with "Fundamentals of the Vocation to Consecrated Virginity," a very clear and detailed presentation on the vocation. Mary Kay followed this with an inspiring talk on the Rite of Consecration as a reflection of the identity of the consecrated virgin. The afternoon and evening talks on Wednesday were again presented by Judith and Mary Kay. They were on "Living in the World;" a meditation on Our Lady as introduction to prayer; and an unfolding of the "Discernment Journey" a woman takes to decide on this vocation.

Thursday in the Information Conference is always very important time to help deepen the participants' understanding and appreciation for the depth and strength of this vocation. Judith and Magalis speak on "Love and Virginity," "Keeping My Love Aflame," "Essential points for Discernment" and "Integral Virginity and the Chastity required for the Consecrated Virgin according to the Unchanging Tradition of the Catholic Church." This year these talks came before and after Bishop Boyea's two-part presentation on "Consecrated Virginity in Scripture and History."

The question and answer session on Thursday evening, led by Magalis with the Team, was a very important time for the participants to clarify the requirements for the vocation and evaluate whether or not this might be the vocation the Lord was calling them to.

The final wrap-up for the conference took place on Friday morning. The Information Conference Team gave thanks to the Lord for his mercy in the conference.



Life Corner

by Florence Sundberg

We know that the sense of the sacredness of life, all life, is diminishing in our country and throughout the world daily, even as we strive to awaken hearts and minds to the presence of and the need for God and His Mercy in every aspect of our lives. We recently saw a video of a small boy in Syria being pulled from a building that had just been bombed. His name is Omran and he looked stunned and frightened as he was carried away from the rubble and placed on a seat in an ambulance – and left alone. As cameras zoomed in I could see his mud caked, bloodied and bruised face. Whenever I look at a woman who is with child, I see the power and the beauty and the glory of the Father, but when I look at the face of this small, frightened child I see the Face of Christ – crucified. As I continued to look with pity and compassion on the face of this little one, longing to reach out and comfort him, I heard the voice of my Lord and Spouse, saying to me: “Whatever you do for one of these least of My children, you do for Me.” And I held my heart up to the Lord in supplication: “Show me Lord what I can do!” And now I wait in silent longing for His answer.

Consecration Announcements

United States:

April 16, 2016, Kathleen Marie Hahn, Diocese of Buffalo (NY), at the hands of the Most Reverend Richard J. Malone.



Kathleen Hahn receives Consecration.
Photo courtesy of Patrick J. McPartland

May 29, 2016, Victoria Selkirk, Diocese of Fresno, at the hands of the Most Reverend Armando Ochoa.

June 4, 2016, Valerie Wilson, Archdiocese of Louisville, at the hands of the Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz.



Valerie Wilson,
Delighted Bride
of Christ



June 29, 2016, Shannon Ryan, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, at the hands of the Most Reverend John C. Wester.

Shannon Ryan meets her
Spouse with lighted candle.

August 15, 2016, Tara Jeanette Stone, Diocese of Colorado Springs, at the hands of the Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan.



Bishop Sheridan with Tara Stone at Reception
Photo by Joyce Stolberg

Puerto Rico

July 1, 2016, Lilly Perez, Diocese of Mayagüez, at the hands of the Most Reverend Alvaro Corrada del Rio, SJ.

Argentina

April 22, 2016, Charo Barrutia, Liliana González, Cyntia Romero, and Milagros Taié, Archdiocese of Corrientes, at the hands of the Most Reverend Andrés Stanovnik, OFM Cap.

September 3, 2016, Nora Rodriguez, Patricia Suarez, and Claudia Sivori, Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, at the hands of His Eminence Aurelio Cardinal Poli.

India

June 11, 2016, Stella Gonsalves and Judeline Maria Rego, Archdiocese of Calcutta, at the hands of the Most Reverend Thomas D'Souza.

Lebanon

May 21, 2016, Taj Kachaamy, Maronite Diocese of Antelias, at the hands of Archbishop Camille Zaidan.

Russia

April 11, 2016, Ivete Gallova, Archdiocese of Moscow, at the hands of The Most Reverend Paolo Pezzi, F.S.C.B.

June 4, 2016, Emilia Firek, Archdiocese of Moscow, at the hands of The Most Reverend Paolo Pezzi, F.S.C.B.

Venezuela

May 7, 2016, Saray Gatas, Diocese of Los Teques, at the hands of Bishop Freddy Jesús Fuenmayor.

Upcoming U. S. Consecration

November 27, 2016, Cristina Garcia, at the hands of The Most Reverend José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles. The consecration will be at 10am in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. All are warmly invited to attend.

Anniversary Reflections

30 Years

Frances Powers, Archdiocese of New York, consecrated October 29, 1986.

Around the year 1960, my mother purchased a paint-by-number kit of The Last Supper. When complete, she framed it and gave it to my father who had a deep love of our faith. It had always hung in the family home and now it hangs in my apartment living room. I look at it every day and always think of my mom and dad. At the time of its painting, my mom was a stay-at-home mom while dad worked; she raised three children. After our nightly baths and bedding us down she would take out the painting while dad worked 4:00 p.m. to midnight. She greeted him when he came in tired from work and then got up early the next morning to start the day with us children and her husband. All these years later I can't imagine how she didn't miss a line or smudge a color. Everything is just perfect in this large painting. It resembles the love and respect for the person that my mom loved --- her husband, my dad.

This painting is a symbol to me of the spiritual life. When we are born our parents give us the canvas of life and they initially color it with discipline and principles. Later as we mature into adults we choose those who will enhance our life in a positive way to bring glory to God and help us live full lives.

For the past five years, I have been primarily an active member in my parish's Legion of Mary. I pray the rosary with various groups throughout the week in our parish: I consider it a blessing to pray for an end to abortion in front of our city's abortion clinic, to pray with residents of several nursing homes and senior residences, and to pray the rosary in our own parish church with those entering for Mass. I am also part of a committee of women who crochet baby blankets to welcome infants presented for baptism to our congregation. I bless others in service organizations that I deal with, such as people at a restaurant I frequent or at Starbucks where I go daily for a cool drink. I remember them with a handmade blanket, handmade hat and scarf, and, if I know they

have children, something small for the children to honor them. A long time ago I read somewhere about the comic strip, *Peanuts*, and how Linus always patted little birds' heads and was ridiculed by Lucy for doing it. It made him feel good; it made the little birds feel good, so the gist of the story was to keep on patting to the glory of God and ignore negative remarks made by others. I guess that is what you call me – a pater. I love to tell others in thought, word, or deed how important they are to me just by being kind, loving, compassionate, merciful, and generous. I was given certain talents and I am using them to bless others. Love, they say, isn't love unless it is given away and that is what I am doing. I think that is what being a consecrated virgin is all about --- to give and show love.

Over the course of these thirty years I have grown so deep in the love of my faith. I try to be an ever ready cup into which God can pour His blessings so that I can be a blessing to others. The oil painting my mom did years ago resembles my life; my parents gave me life and faith, and the strokes of color placed by others add a dimension to that canvas and life is changed for the better. I'd like to thank family and friends and my parish for adding their strokes of love to me over these many years and making me into a more whole and a more loving person. But it all began all those years ago when I was mom and dad's firstborn. It began with them and here it will end with them as they loved me so very much and gave me everything I would ever need in giving me my faith. Mom and dad, I love you and thank you.

10 Years

Teresa Gross, Diocese of Bismark, consecrated February 12, 2006.

I feel very blessed to be a consecrated virgin. The years have gone by so fast. I had a very wonderful miracle happen. About 9-10 months ago I lost the ring I received on the day of my consecration. I had worked collecting the garbage and it slipped off. I figured it was gone forever. About a month ago my cousin and his sister in law came to St Mary's. I had been praying for

the sister in law because she had a dog bite. She showed it to me and it looked good. Then my cousin held out a gold ring and asked if it looked familiar, I said it looked like my old ring. (I had gotten a new one.) He said it is your old one. All I could do was hug him. He found it in the back of his car. I was only in the back seat once and that was years ago. I believe that God, St Anthony, and my deceased spiritual director who passed away June 11 brought it to me. What a miracle!

Hopes for Our Vocation

by Marie Beccaloni, Archdiocese of Chicago, USACV Council Representative-At-Large

When I first considered this topic, my



mind worked in a very practical manner, and my response to what I would like to see in the future of our vocation was quite simple - I would like

to see more of us in all parts of the world. However, I wanted to go deeper into why. What difference would an increase in consecrated virgins make in the world? Thanks to some remarks that were made at the Council's meeting with Bishop Boyea, I began to think about our culture and focus on the potential of our vocation to act as a transformative agent for the betterment of society as a whole.





It is no secret that we are surrounded by a culture of death. We live in a country that permits the slaughter of unborn children and promiscuity is glorified and civil leaders promote all types of ungodly acts. The culture in which we live is in desperate need of a prophetic witness to call people to return to the end for which they are made, and that is eternal life with God. However, we alone as consecrated virgins cannot transform society. That faculty belongs to God.

Therefore, it is in her relationship with God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that the consecrated virgin can serve as an agent of the Kingdom of God. I will briefly examine the consecrated virgin's relationship to each of the Divine Persons. I will preface this with the statement that these are simply my personal reflections and are in no way meant to be exhaustive of the actions of the Trinity in the life of the consecrated virgin.

First, as the spouse of God the Son, the consecrated virgin becomes, in a concrete way, the daughter of the God the Father. She serves as a reminder that all people are children of God and have value as such. Also, no matter what family dynamics exist in someone's life, no one is ever truly an orphan. All are beloved children of a heavenly Father whose love for them is beyond measure.

Second, as spouse of the Divine Son, the consecrated virgin provides an image of what constitutes true love, and that is sacrifice. The essence of love is a complete handing over of oneself, a surrendering of one's life, to the Beloved. The consecrated virgin is a living icon that points to the beatific vision and the union that Christ desires with all of mankind. It is only in this chaste and self-giving union that man will ever find true fulfillment.

Third, the consecrated virgin lives out her days in prayer in order to do the will of God and not her own. It is in her prayer life that God the Holy Spirit can direct her actions in order to best serve the Kingdom of God. In this manner, she lives at the service of God and His Church and demonstrates how all people are called to move beyond their own ego and self-interest and live for something greater than themselves to bring about the Good.

As the consecrated virgin lives her vocation in the world, it is through her relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that she acts as an agent of God's Kingdom. As we look to our personal futures and that of our vocation, let us hold fast to the Trinity.

In a world seemingly full of darkness and death, may God use us as He sees fit to bring forth light and life.



Noemi Angeles, Diocese of Honolulu

It is always a great joy to be with all the consecrated virgins from all over the country and beyond, and even a greater joy to meet and welcome our younger and more recently consecrated sisters. It is during the convocations that I truly recognize the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit. First, I would like to recognize that our newly consecrated virgins are a gift to each one of us, to the Church, and to the world. Pope Francis said during the International Congress that we should go out to the periphery to bring God's love and mercy. What a gift these new virgins are to our vocation!

Second, it is God who chose us, as St. John Paul II said in *Vita Consecrata*, "The initiative always comes from the Father." Therefore it is God who chose us also to be together. We did not choose each other. Third, it is during such occasions that we bear witness to the Trinitarian Unity, and we try to be united with one mind and one heart. Fourth, we imitate our Blessed Mother who emptied herself so that she could be full of God, a fertile ground for the Holy Spirit, to grow in charity, in virtues that culminate in the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. And there are plenty of opportunities to grow in charity during these occasions!

This is only the beginning of our ascetical life. For a few days during the year, the consecrated virgins living in the world return to the Source of the Living Water, together united in prayer, reflection, and renewal, nurtured by each other and by their Divine Spouse, the source of, love and mercy and all good things so that they can go back to the world as witnesses of God's love. It's God's love that can

transform the world.

Linda Long, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

It was such a joy and honor to have Cardinal Burke be with us on Sunday August 7 to instruct and to worship with us. He has been a stalwart friend of and authority on our vocation in the Church. I always appreciate the opportunity to pray the Liturgy of the Hours with my sisters in religion. It is usually a solitary part of my life.

The staff at the Cenacle Retreat House made us welcome and tended to our needs. I did not miss the walk from the residence to the refectory which is part of the experience at Mundelein. In our conversations, I so enjoy learning of the beauty and strength of the lives of other consecrated virgins. For me, annual attendance at our Convocation is a potent antidote to the temptation to believe that

the way I live out our vocation is THE way it should be lived.

Convocation reflections continued on page 14.



A sculpture (at the Pope Paul VI Hall in Rome) of Jesus on the Cross without hands and feet. We are the hands and feet of Jesus!



The Beauty of Encountering Our Bridegroom

By Diane Christine Farr

In St. Paul's letter to the Philippians we read, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise think about those things. Phil. 4:8."

Amidst the struggles and sufferings of this life we must constantly refocus our attention on Christ our heavenly Bridegroom. If we are living our vocations as consecrated virgins in the Divine Will, we know that we are not striving for a personal holiness, but seeking to be clothed with the very holiness of God Himself. The gift of our virginal consecration and espousal to Jesus is a radiant light emanating from the Heart of the most Holy Trinity and a reflection of the life of heaven. It is a precious gem, a glorious flower coming forth from the Divine Will. Pondering with reverent gratitude the beauty of our calling, we acknowledge our nothingness before God and thank and praise Him for the great mercy He has shown us.

In the prayer of consecration to a life of virginity we read, "Those who choose chastity have looked upon the face of Christ, its origin and inspiration. They give themselves wholly to Christ, the Son of the ever virgin Mary and the heavenly Bridegroom of those who in His honor dedicate themselves to lasting virginity."

When we first encounter our Bridegroom hidden in the depths of our heart it is in the mystery of His loving invitation to us. We know we are attracted by a higher love characterized by an infinite beauty and majesty. Jesus alone can satisfy the longing of our heart. Pleasing Him in all things becomes our sole desire. This idea is expressed well in an antiphon from the common of virgins in the liturgy of the hours. "With my whole being I worship Christ. I long for Him and desire to be with Him forever."

When virginity is consecrated to Christ it becomes the holy sign of the special honor we give Him through our virginal love. It is important for us to remember that our vocation has a dignity and mobility that must be safeguarded with wise prudence. Cultivating our interior life in a spirit of humble adoration will help us to achieve this.

Periods of prayerful silence are crucial for drawing us into the intimacy where we come to know more fully the Heart of our beloved Bridegroom. Even when we don't perceive His presence, He is always working in our soul. He wishes to mold the heart of His bride after the model of His own heart, and this requires constant fidelity to grace on our part. The three theological virtues of faith, hope and love must become interwoven and brought to perfection in our lives.

Again we read in the common of virgins from the liturgy of the hours this lovely antiphon, "O virgins praise the Lord with all your heart. He sowed the seeds of your virtue, He crowned the fruits of your life with His gifts."

We must keep in mind that it is the Divine Gardener who has silently come and planted the lily of perpetual virginity in the depths of our being. We are blessed to be able to glorify God by sharing in this special grace that was given to His holy mother Mary. It is our greatest joy to belong to Him alone. It is the light of the Holy Spirit who reveals the beauty of our divine Spouse to us and brings about our sanctification. We invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit to prepare us to embrace our beloved Jesus as He gives Himself to us in the banquet of His love.

Christ wishes to take full possession of our heart, identifying us with His own mission. We are all called to serve Christ and His Church in various ways. Many of us are limited in what we can do due to illness or disability. However, even if the only thing that we can do is offer our prayers and sufferings to the Heavenly

Father in union with Jesus' own offering this is an indispensable contribution to the treasury of the Church. We should never think that we have nothing to give. Any opportunity we have to serve God is truly His gift to us. What a privilege it is to express Jesus' own kindness and compassion as we make ourselves available to the needs of others. May we never forget to reach out to our sisters in Christ, especially those who are suffering.

As we await, with joyful anticipation, that splendid face-to-face meeting with our heavenly Bridegroom, let us surrender our will in perfect peace to the Divine Will. With absolute trust and confidence in Jesus who is our strength, we repeat this antiphon, "I have kept myself for you alone and with lamp alight I run to meet my Spouse."

Conference Reflections Continued

Mary Kay Lacke, Diocese of Steubenville

The 2016 Convocation, with all its various events, was a very rich experience of God's mercy, confirming in me the height and length and depth and breadth of the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world. It was such a joy to share with old friends as well as with younger virgins whom I had not met before. Our conversations served to deepen my appreciation of this beautiful call to union with Our Divine Spouse. Our times of liturgical prayer and celebration of the Holy Eucharist were especially moving.

Cardinal Burke's talks were profound. Thanks to Magalis Aguilera's wonderful recording ministry, I can listen to the Cardinal's talks over again! One time is not enough to appreciate the depth of his presentations.

The highlight of the Convocation for me, however, was the talk by my dear friend Maria Luisa Öfele, entitled "Christ, the Bridegroom." I was profoundly moved by Maria Luisa's depth of scriptural and theological understanding of and appreciation for the transforming union with Christ that takes place in the life of the consecrated virgin as she responds, daily, to this Divine election. Since the Convocation, I have been meditating on the text from Maria Luisa's talk. Thank you, Maria Luisa! And thank you to all those who helped to plan and execute the Convocation!

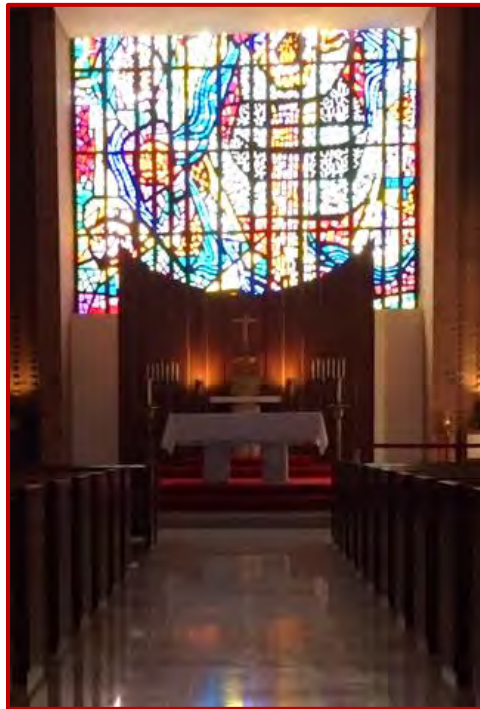
Ginnie Meyer, Archdiocese of Chicago

RUN-RUN-RUN! WORK-WORK-WORK!

That's all I do all Day!

That's why I like to take the time,

to go to the Convocation and Pray!



Each Year, I enjoy the Convocation even more. It gives me a time to meet and get to know the other consecrated virgins; a time to just stop and listen to great speakers, Mass, prayers and Eucharist Adoration without the worry of being late; a total time of Peace and Reflection.

In the Evening, it is a time of roaming the town streets with the other virgins, trying out different foods and shops. Touring the Shrine of Mother Xavier Cabrini was a special treat. I so look forward to next year's Convocation, no matter where it is!

Maria Luisa Öfele, Diocese of Regensburg (Germany)

It was a special gift for me to participate in the Information Conference and the Convocation for consecrated virgins sponsored by the USACV during their 20th anniversary. That's why, first of all, I would like to thank the USACV and their leadership throughout all these years, for their selfless work serving the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world! Thank you!



During the two meetings I was very touched by the heartfelt spiritual joy and friendly atmosphere among all the participants. The longing for Christ in both groups was an open testimony during these days that encouraged me on my way back to Germany. I remember many deep

conversations during our breaks, meals, walks and the joy of celebrating the Liturgy together! It was so good to meet again some consecrated virgins after many years and others who were in Rome for the closing of the Year of Consecrated life. Be sure that you're in my prayers!

The presence of Cardinal Burke, Bishop Boyea, Bishop Kane and the different priests who celebrated the Liturgy with us was also a special gift and blessing. Let us keep united in prayer for the Church and for our vocation.

Valerie Wilson, Archdiocese of Louisville

As a newly consecrated virgin and first-time attendee at the convocation, I looked forward to our communal prayer time together, reciting the Divine Office with my fellow virgins and worshipping at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I crave beautiful liturgies, beautiful music and beautiful worship spaces in the celebration of the Mass. In my opinion, Mass should reflect the best human efforts to worship our Divine Spouse who is the King of Love, crowned with thorns for us, the King of Glory, risen in his beautiful, wounded, glorified Body, the King of the Universe to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been bequeathed; the King of Kings to whom no mortal power could ever compare.

But oftentimes, these efforts fall short, whether it is a rushed liturgy, loud music or a worship space that resembles a courthouse. As my dearly beloved seven year-old niece observed, her church looks like "a giant conference room with a lot of holy objects in it" (kids you have to love them-they are so astute). All of these things combine to make it seem like Jesus is often reduced to mediator of a town hall meeting in our liturgies. True, that is just a human perception and does not reflect reality but for consecrated virgins, the

liturgy is how we make love to our Spouse. One of the sacrifices I believe we make "living in the world" is that we oftentimes don't get to experience the type of liturgy we ideally would like to encounter. In an ideal world, I would live next to a monastery and attend liturgy there on a daily basis; but I don't as most of us do not. In fact, the reality for some is that due to their occupation, some don't even get to attend daily Mass.

So for the convocation, I knew the liturgies would be beautiful and I was not disappointed. When you gather brides of Christ together, they will make certain He is given the appropriate respect, attention and love during the Liturgy.

As we met each day for prayer and sang parts of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass, there it was --- the choir of virgins! A foreshadowing of our future home in heaven brought here to earth: simple, elegant, peaceful . . . each one of us . . . our voices being raised as one to our Lord, King and Bridegroom. In the Common of Virgins, the Divine Office notes, "As consecrated virgins, you possess the glory of the Resurrection here on Earth." Frequently, it is hard to see or realize this in the daily dealings and drudgery of everyday life. But at least, for a couple of days, I could feel myself possessing the glory of the Resurrection here on earth as I participated in the choir of virgins and it invoked in me the mystical, supernatural element of our vocation.

Sophia Winiarski, Archdiocese of Hartford

The Convocation in Chicago was for me, best described as one of JOY. From the unique privilege of celebrating my first anniversary with such beautiful women who share my relationship with Christ, to the presence of Cardinal Burke, to the Masses, conferences, times of prayer and meals, and most of all, the sharing of the stories of our lives and our individual call by Christ were truly joy-filled.

I've heard it said that "Joy is not the absence of sorrow but the presence of God" and so it was for me and I am so grateful for having had the privilege of being a part of it all. May our Blessed Spouse be ever praised and glorified as we continue to grow in our love for Him and His people.



“It is well that we are here” (Mt. 17:4)



SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV
www.consecratedvirgins.org

United States Association of Consecrated Virgins
300 West Ottawa Street
Lansing, MI 48933-1577
USA

Email:
info@consecratedvirgins.org
President@consecratedvirgins.org

Fax: 253-270-5507

www.consecratedvirgins.org

