

Frequently Asked Questions

PARAPHRASE OF QUESTION/ANSWER PERIOD
INFORMATIONAL RETREAT, 14 JUNE 1997
WITH MOST REV. RAYMOND L. BURKE

1. What is the one essential of the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world?
The theological virtue of love—"laying down one's life for one's brothers"
2. Can praying the Rosary replace praying the Divine Office?
Only when one can't pray the Office for some legitimate reason
3. As episcopal moderator will you help our bishops understand the true nature of the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world?
Yes.
4. Should we renew our Consecration each year?
The Consecration is received once per life. Each year one can reflect on the day of Consecration and offer ourselves again, but only God can "renew." One can re-read the Prayer of Consecration of a Virgin from the Mass and reflect on it throughout the day. It is God who consecrates; the virgin offers herself.
5. Can the Bishop dispense the Consecration?
No, the Bishop cannot dispense the Consecration.
6. What should we do if our bishop does not understand the Consecration?
Ask him to contact me [Bishop Burke].
7. What is the main work of the consecrated virgin?
Primarily, the work of the consecrated virgin is prayer. She should pray for families, priests, and Christian unity.
8. Could a consecrated virgin have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in her home?
Her bishop must give permission for it and there must be a fitting place. Mass should be celebrated two times monthly to keep before our eyes the connection between the Mass and the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.
9. Can one be consecrated in a diocese outside of one's own?
No, but one should progress toward the Consecration with a spiritual director and prayer so that eventually one may be able to receive the Consecration properly.
10. Who is the proper community for the consecrated virgin living in the world?
Your community is your parish and you should live out your vocation in the world.
11. If one cannot pray the Divine Office, can one still be consecrated?

Yes.

12. What should one do when one travels, for instance, and cannot pray the Divine Office at the proper times?

Do it at another time.

13. Could one grow out of praying the Divine Office, as discursive prayer, and move into more contemplative prayer?

One never grows out of the Divine Office any more than one grows out of the Mass. Both are the public prayer of the Church.

14. Could a person receive a crucifix as part of the insignia during the Rite?

I would discourage adding anything to the Rite. Usually a crucifix is an insignia of mission for Sisters after they make Profession.

15. How did the bond start with the bishop and the consecrated virgin?

It started from the beginning. It is a good idea to read the Fathers of the Church as they wrote about virgins.

16. Should there be an annual review?

A review is done with the spiritual director, and this review is constant because one is always reviewing one's spiritual life. However, a meeting with the bishop of the diocese should be held about every six months and no less than once a year. This meeting should be with the consecrated virgin individually and the bishop himself, not as a group of consecrated virgins in the diocese nor delegated to someone else by the bishop. It is a good idea to write up a brief agenda for the bishop and give it to him in advance of the meeting so that he will have an idea of the topic(s) for discussion. For the bishop and the consecrated virgin, it should be a pleasant time and an appointment that each one looks forward to.

17. Is there a conflict between the three vows and the Consecration?

No. A consecrated virgin living in the world, although she does not profess the evangelical counsels of obedience and poverty as vows, still should be living in an attitude of obedience and simplicity of life with prudence.

18. What difference would the Consecration make in my life if I already have a promise of perpetual virginity?

Grace.

19. Why do the consecrated virgins not wear veils?

Part of the Rite is to show espousal to Christ and an optional symbol of this is the veil. She may wish to wear a veil, subsequently, during Mass or on the anniversary of her Consecration. However, to wear a veil in daily life seems to be part of a habit, and a consecrated virgin living in the world should not be wearing a habit, which is a sign of removal from the world in a Religious Institute.

20. How can one start to prepare to receive the Consecration?
 One should start with the prayer life of a consecrated virgin: Divine Office, Rosary, daily Mass, visits when possible to the Blessed Sacrament. Read the Rite of Consecration and the lives of the virgin saints.
21. Is there an age limit for woman to receive the Consecration of a Virgin?
 No, there is no upper age limit. At the other end of the scale, there is no certain age that one should have attained before one can receive the Consecration. Dioceses may choose to set a minimum age, but the important point is that the woman be of mature character, that she have lived in tranquil continence for a number of years, and that from all indications she will persevere in perpetual chastity.
22. How should one begin the process in her diocese to receive the Consecration of a Virgin?
 One normally should have had a spiritual director for some years, and it is understood that she is a practicing Catholic and accepts all the teachings of the Catholic Church. After a discernment process with her spiritual director and after having lived in tranquil celibacy for a number of years, then she can write a letter of petition to the bishop of her diocese and request that she be considered to become a candidate for the Consecration of a Virgin living in the world. The bishop will usually meet with her and work with the spiritual director to determine if she is a good candidate. If it is decided that she would be suitable for the Consecration, then she begins her Formation process. The time of Formation depends on how much the candidate already understands about the Consecration and how fast she can absorb the concepts. For each individual it will be different. The bishop of the diocese makes the final determination on whether the candidate, after her Formation, is suitable for the Consecration.
23. Can a person after having received the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World become a Religious Sister at a later date?
 This is theoretically possible, but certainly not advisable. One should discern clearly the vocation one is called to before receiving the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World. Each of these forms of consecrated life is a category in itself, as delineated in *Vita Consecrata*. Each of these forms of consecrated life lead to a perfection of life when lived properly; therefore, one should not consider hopping over from one track to another. It is important to discern properly, be formed spiritually and intellectually properly for whatever category of consecrated life one is called to, and then live that form of consecrated life to the very best one can.
24. Is the Consecration of a Virgin irrevocable?
 Yes, it is. The Consecration is not a vow that a woman makes herself, but a solemn blessing that she receives, a setting her apart as a sacred person, by the action of the Holy Spirit through the hands of the bishop. One cannot ‘undo’ a Consecration. One cannot ‘undo’ the bond of Christ with His bride.

25. Can one use 'OCV' or 'CV' after her name after she receives the Consecration of a Virgin?
No, she should not use these initials because she is not a member of a Religious Institute. The Order of Virgins is not a Religious Institute in the Church. In this use of the term 'order,' it signifies a category of consecrated life, as the various categories are listed and explained in *Vita Consecrata*.
26. Can one be called 'Sister' after having received the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World, according to Canon 604?
No, and for the same reason as given in the question above, #25.
27. Should the Consecration of a Virgin be recorded in one's baptismal record?
Yes, it should be recorded, just as one records marriages or Religious Profession. Also, she herself should receive a document testifying to her Consecration and a copy of this document should be filed in the diocesan archives. [a sample of such a document is given in this Information Packet]
28. Can the Consecration of a Virgin be delegated to a priest to perform?
It is very clear from history and from the *Roman Pontifical* that this Rite is reserved to the bishop of the diocese. The bishop of the virgin's diocese, however, may delegate it to another bishop to perform, but not to a priest.
29. What should a consecrated virgin do when she must move her residence from the diocese in which she was consecrated or in which she now lives?
She should write a letter to inform her current bishop that she will be moving and write a letter to the bishop into whose diocese she will be moving to let him know who she is and of her plans to change residence. It is helpful for the bishop of her current diocese to write a letter to the bishop into whose diocese she will move to introduce her to him.
30. Is physical virginity necessary in order to receive the Consecration of a Virgin?
Answer: Can someone offer to God what she does not have?

Questions and Answers

Questions from the membership for Bishop Burke at the April 30, 1999, Council meeting:

1. **How should consecrated virgins refer to themselves?** Bishop Burke: The Church has come to an understanding of three states of life: the clergy, the laity, and consecrated persons. So, consecrated virgins should refer to themselves as “consecrated-virgins.”
2. **A candidate currently owns a house and has lived all her life in one diocese, but has a live-in job now in another diocese. Which bishop should she petition for the Consecration?** Bishop Burke: She should consider herself a part of the diocese in which she intends to make her home.
3. **Which Hours of the Liturgy of the Hours are we obliged to pray?** Bishop Burke: My personal suggestion is that she tries to pray Office of Readings (at any time during the day), Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer. She should pray one of the Little Hours during the day if she can. However, I would have to check on this.
4. **Can we be a god-mother for a child at Baptism? What if the child’s parents die? How to rear that child?** Bishop Burke: Certainly a consecrated virgin living in the world can be a god-mother for a child at Baptism. The Church only obliges the god-parents to see to the religious instruction of that child, should the parents die. It is not the understanding that the god-parents have to rear the child in their own household.
5. **How to answer the question about the Consecration of a Virgin for men? We are told it is unfair for it to be open to women only.** Bishop Burke: The Consecration of a Virgin is part of the principle of the supernatural building on the natural order. A bride is a woman; therefore, a “bride of Christ,” so aptly shown in the Rite, is a woman.
6. **What Canons would be appropriate to consult for permission for the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament?** Bishop Burke: Canons 934-44 all pertain to this question, but especially Canon 934. If it be impossible because of a priest shortage in a diocese to have Mass celebrated in the oratory at least twice a month, then the local Ordinary of the diocese can take that into consideration.
7. **A spiritual director asked this question: How can the Church be supportive of your vocation of consecrated virginity lived, in the world?** Bishop Burke: One of the answers is the permission for the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. Another answer is that consecrated virgins be invited to diocesan functions and be on a diocesan mailing list. No doubt there will be additional responses from other consecrated virgins in the membership.
8. **Need a spiritual director recommend a person to the bishop for Consecration?** Bishop Burke: All that I require is that the spiritual director assures me that the person has indeed received regular spiritual direction. A spiritual director deals with matters of

conscience and therefore I never ask for more than the assurance that regular spiritual direction has taken place.

9. **Can the Consecration be dispensed?** Bishop Burke: In the case of religious profession, the vows are pronounced and received by the Church. In the case of consecrated virginity the virgin presents herself to the Church and she is consecrated by the Church as a virgin living in the world. The Consecration is a definitive act on the part of the Church constituting the individual in a particular state of holiness by the Church. Whereas it is fitting to speak of dispensing someone from vows or promises which he or she may have made, it does not make sense to speak of dispensing someone from an act of consecration made on the part of the Church itself.