

Preparation Process for the Consecration of Virgins Living in the World

Prepared by the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

15 September 2000, Our Lady of Sorrows

INTRODUCTION

The revised Rite of Consecration of Virgins for Women Living in the World was published by the decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship on 31 May 1970, after having been formally decreed by the Second Vatican Council.

The decree of promulgation explains the development of this venerable and ancient rite in this way.

The rite for the consecration of virgins is one of the most treasured in the Roman liturgy. Consecrated virginity is among the most excellent gifts bequeathed by our Lord to his Bride, the Church. From apostolic times women have dedicated their virginity to God, so adding to the beauty of the mystical body of Christ and making it fruitful in grace. Even from earliest times, as the Fathers of the Church bear witness, mother Church in her wisdom set her seal on this high vocation by her practice of consecrating those who followed it by means of a solemn prayer. This prayer, enriched in the course of time by other ritual elements to bring out more clearly the symbolism of virginity in relation to the Church, the bride of Christ, was incorporated into the Roman Pontifical. [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 62 (1970): 650]

Canon 604 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law provides for the establishment of the Order of Virgins as a form of consecrated life in the Church. The word, order, is used in the sense of a distinct group of persons in the Church, for example, the order of presbyters, the order of deacons, the order of penitents or the order of widows. It is not used in the sense of a congregation of consecrated religious, for example, the Order of Saint Benedict, the Order of Preachers, or the Order of Friars Minor.

As expressed in the Roman Pontifical, the consecrated virgin is to be a ‘spouse of Christ,’ a sign of Christ’s Virgin Bride, the Church. She is freely and joyfully to bear to Christ the same undivided and perpetual love that joins Christ and the Church. The ring she receives during the Rite symbolizes her perpetual fidelity to her Bridegroom. The suggested Homily in the Rite of Consecration of Virgins for Women Living in the World explains the origins of consecrated virginity in this way.

Our Lord himself taught us the high calling of such a life, consecrated to God and chosen for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. By his whole life, and especially by his labors, his preaching, and, above all, by his paschal mystery, he brought his Church into being. He desired it to be a virgin, a bride, and a mother: a virgin, to keep the faith whole and entire; a bride, to be one with him for ever; and a mother, to raise up the family of the Church.

The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, through baptism has already made you temples of God's glory and children of the Father. Today through our ministry he anoints you with a new grace and consecrates you to God by a new title. He gives each one of you the dignity of being a bride of Christ and binds you to the Son of God in a covenant to last for ever.

The Church is the bride of Christ. This title of the Church was given by the fathers and doctors of the church to those like you who speak to us of the world to come, where there is no marrying or giving in marriage. You are 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.

.....

You are apostles in the Church and in the world, in the things of the Spirit and in the things of the world. . . .

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 the spirit of charity, so that a great family of children may be born, or reborn, to the life of grace.

Your joy and your crown, even here on earth, will be Christ, the Son of the Virgin and the Bridegroom of virgins. He will lead all of 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.
[from *Homily*, #16, Rite of Consecration for Women Living in the World]

Consecrated to God, as a 'spouse of Christ,' the consecrated virgin is at the service of the Church. Her vocation is authenticated by the call of the bishop of her diocese. She lives in the heart of the Church in a definitive state of life. Her consecration does not establish her within a new structure or institute in the particular Church. Rather it establishes her in a true spiritual bond with the Diocesan Bishop and gives her a distinct spiritual identity in the whole Church.

Like the Church herself, her vocation is virginal, spousal, and maternal. Her primary service in the Church is prayer; hence she is given the Liturgy of the Hours as a sign of this spiritual responsibility. Consecrated virginity looks to its foundation in the early Church herself, under the inspiration of the mystery of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The consecrated virgin expends her efforts and energy according to her own unique talents, age, profession or occupation, and charisms in service to the Church. Her works of charity flow from her life of prayer as 'spouse of Christ.' She is dedicated to the service of the Church because she is espoused to Christ, her Bridegroom, forever.

CONSECRATION OF A VIRGIN FOR A WOMAN LIVING IN THE WORLD
According to Canon 604

APPLICATION FORM

To _____
(*Bishop of the Diocese*)

I, _____ (*name*), of _____ (*city*), _____ (*state*),
desiring to begin formal preparation to receive the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman
Living in the World, according to Canon 604, make this petition to be considered for
such Consecration. I understand that a period of preparation must precede this sacramen-
tal, and I offer my cooperation in such a process.

Signature: _____

Dated: _____

Personal Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Place and Date of birth: _____

Place and Date of Baptism: _____

Place and Date of First Holy Communion: _____

Place and Date of Confirmation: _____

References: *(Please list three. By listing their names below, you are agreeing that they may answer questions about you and how they know you. Please do not list your spiritual director as one of these references.)*

Name: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

*Please list the name and address of your **pastor**, who will be asked to be a reference for you.*

Name: _____

Address: _____

*Please list the name and address of your **spiritual director**, who will be asked only if you have been receiving consistent spiritual direction.*

Name: _____

Address: _____

1. Have you ever been a member of a religious institute or other form of the consecrated life, or have you applied to another diocese for the consecration of virgins living in the world? If yes, please explain.

2. Have you ever been married?

3. Have you ever lived in open violation of chastity?

Documentation:

Please attach proofs of Baptism (current copy of Baptismal Certificate), First Holy Communion, Confirmation, and citizenship.

Because the (Arch)Diocese of _____ is not responsible for the **financial care** of consecrated virgins, please indicate your means of financial independence:

1. What is your current means of income?
2. Is it adequate to support you?
3. How are you providing for your retirement?
4. What health insurance provisions do you have?
5. Additional comments on your financial status if desired.

*Please attach a **personal life history**, indicating your reasons for seeking the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World.*

*Please list below **education and work experience**, both salaried and volunteer, and indicate approximate dates. Attach a separate sheet if necessary.*

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Reference for: _____

As a Consecrated Virgin Living in the World, according to Canon 604

SAMPLE letter of reference

(Arch)Diocese of _____

Address

City, State ZIP

Reference for: _____

As a Consecrated Virgin Living in the World, according to Canon 604

Note: This petitioner for the Consecration of a Virgin has agreed that you may respond to these questions. Please be as thorough and specific as possible as you answer as many of these questions as you can.

1. Under what circumstances did you come to know her? How long have you known her? What is your present contact?
2. What characteristics do you observe that make her a fitting candidate for Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World?
3. What is her understanding of the doctrine of the faith and of the discipline of the Church?
4. How has she shown her faith in practice? Can you attest to her way of life as virtuous?
5. What is her experience and understanding of prayer and the spiritual life?
6. Describe the quality of her relationships with people.

Reference for: _____(cont.)

As a Consecrated Virgin Living in the World, according to Canon 604

7. How does she understand herself as a woman? How does she understand her sexuality?

8. Is she a mature, integral person? Has she demonstrated freedom and maturity in making decisions for herself?

9. How does she understand Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World? Does she understand it as a gift of grace? Does she understand the responsibilities that this vocation entails for the rest of her life?

10. How has her call to consecrated virginity lived in the world been tested over time?

11. How does she understand her relationship with the neighborhood/area in which she lives?

12. In your opinion, does the applicant possess sufficient age, prudence, and universally esteemed character to provide assurance of perseverance in a life of perpetual chastity dedicated to the service of the Church and of her neighbor?

13. Other comments.

Evaluator's name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP code: _____

Phone : _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PROCEDURES

Criteria

1. Candidates must have suitable character and sufficient qualities of maturity as an integrated person. By age, prudence, and universally attested good character, the candidate must give assurance of perseverance in a life of chastity dedicated to the service of the Church and of her neighbor. Psychological health, character, and maturity are to be attested to, if necessary, by using experts.
2. Candidates must be free to accept a life of consecrated virginity lived in the world. It is required that she have never been married or lived in public or open violation of chastity. She should demonstrate in some way that her call to perpetual virginity has been tested over time.

Application

1. The individual completes the Application Form and submits it with the required documentation to the diocesan bishop.
2. Three references submit letters of recommendation to the diocesan bishop. See preceding sample reference questions.
3. In addition to the Application Form and the letters of recommendation from three references, documentation of Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, and citizenship, and assurance of financial independence are required.
4. The applicant's spiritual director testifies in writing to the diocesan bishop that the applicant has been receiving regular and appropriate spiritual direction.
5. The diocesan bishop reviews the application and supporting documentation and letters. He accepts or rejects the application.

Period of Preparation

1. The purpose of the period of preparation prior to reception of this sacramental of Consecration is to help the candidate better understand and live this divine vocation to which she is called. This period should further test and strengthen her resolve of perpetual virginity.
2. Ordinarily, the period of preparation is for not less than two years, but length of time will, nevertheless, depend on the candidate's progress and readiness.

3. The period of preparation is carried out with the assistance of the spiritual director and a preparation coordinator who is well acquainted with the Consecration of a Virgin and who is appointed by the diocesan bishop to help coordinate the preparation process for the candidate. Should the Diocesan Bishop request it, the spiritual director may carry out the preparation coordination for the Consecration. In any case, however, the preparation coordinator should well understand the nature of the Consecration itself and the practicalities of life as a consecrated virgin living in the world. Ideally, the preparation coordinator would be a consecrated virgin.
4. The spiritual director and/or preparation coordinator is to provide guidance in development of prayer and the vocation of consecrated virginity itself. This spiritual guidance should include the model of the Church as Bride of Christ and the consecrated virgin as an "icon of the Church." Guidance in prayer should include especially an understanding of the Liturgy of the Hours.
5. The preparation coordinator and the candidate periodically evaluate the progress of the preparation process. They will keep the diocesan bishop apprised of this progress.
6. At the conclusion of the period of satisfactory preparation, the preparation coordinator is to write a letter to the bishop recommending that the candidate receive the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World, according to Canon 604. The spiritual director will write a letter also attesting only to the fact that the candidate has been receiving regular and appropriate spiritual direction throughout the period of preparation.

Records

1. A file of all applications, letters, documents, and progress reports of the candidate is to be retained in the office of the diocesan bishop. A copy of her certificate of Consecration should be added to her file after her Consecration has taken place.
2. A certificate attesting to the Consecration is to be kept in the diocesan archives. [Please see sample.] The Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World should be noted on the consecrated virgin's Baptismal record.

(SAMPLE certificate of Consecration)

RAIMUNDUS LEO

Divina Miseratione et



Apostolicæ Sedis Gratia

EPISCOPUS CROSSENSIS

Hisce litteris fidem facimus atque testamur
Dilectam Novis in Christo filiam

CLEMENTISSIMAM DOMINAM
PATRICIAM MARIAM MURRAY

Virginem vitam sæcularem agentem
intra Missæ celebrationem
iuxta ritum Sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ
et formam in Pontificali Romano præscriptam
a Nobis consecratam esse
die octava mensis iunii anno Domini MCMXCVII,
in cathedrali templo Sancti Ioseph Opificis
Datum Crossæ, die octava mensis iunii
anno Domini MCMXCVII,
Dominica decima per annum.

[signed by the Bishop]
Episcopus Diœcesanus

L.S.

[signed by the Chancellor]
Cancellarius

(SAMPLE certificate of Consecration)

RAYMOND LEO

By the Grace of God and the



Favor of the Apostolic See

BISHOP OF LA CROSSE

We hereby certify and attest
that Our beloved daughter in Christ
MISS PATRICIA MAE MURRAY
a Virgin living in the world
was consecrated by Us
according to the rite of the Holy Roman Church
and the form prescribed in the Roman Pontifical
on the eighth day of June in the year of Our Lord 1997,
in the Cathedral Church of Saint Joseph the Workman.

Given at La Crosse on the eighth day of June
in the year of Our Lord 1997,
the Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

[signed by the Bishop]
Diocesan Bishop

S E A L

[signed by the Chancellor]
Chancellor

THE DIOCESAN BISHOP

Before the Preparation Period of the Candidate

The diocesan bishop is to decide if the applicant is suitable to begin preparation to receive the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World. He will take care in admitting individuals to the preparation process. Only a virgin who by her age, prudence, and universally approved character, and who gives assurance of perseverance in a life of virginity lived in the world should be allowed to receive the Consecration.

In collaboration with the candidate, he will decide on the conditions under which she will undertake a life of perpetual virginity lived in the world, in accord with her life's circumstances, health, occupation, individual talents and interests. He will also decide with her when they will have their regular meetings and whether he wishes to have any reports from her.

The diocesan bishop will see to it that a suitable preparation process is available for the candidate.

He will be able to suggest the names of possible spiritual directors in the diocese, if she does not know any who are knowledgeable about the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World.

He will be aware that the preparation for the Consecration of a Virgin Living in the World is not identical to that which some candidates may have received elsewhere in their spiritual life; therefore, he will be sure that the candidate understands the nature of this vocation in the consecrated life. It might be helpful to have available printed materials, videotapes, and audiocassette tapes that the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins has prepared as a service and resource to candidates. She should be encouraged to attend the annual Inquirers Retreat sponsored by the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins. It is understood that membership in the USACV is not required of any candidate or consecrated virgin; however, the USACV is always glad to be of service and to assist voluntarily with educational resources and personal communication.

During the Preparation Period of the Candidate

He will meet with the candidate early in her preparation process for the Consecration and continue to follow her progress in her preparation for this sacramental.

The diocesan bishop will make the final decision on whether a candidate, after proper preparation, is suitable to receive the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World.

The Rite of Consecration and after the Consecration

He will meet with her close to the Consecration date to begin the spiritual dialogue that they will carry on regularly after the Consecration.

The Rite of the Consecration of a Virgin is reserved to the diocesan bishop. He may, however, delegate another bishop to consecrate the virgin.

The Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity for a Woman Living in the World is to be celebrated in the manner set forth in the Roman Pontifical.

THE CANDIDATE

The virgin seeking to follow Christ more closely by the Consecration to a Life of Perpetual Virginity is consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite. The diocesan bishop may delegate another bishop to perform the Consecration.

A virgin who aspires to receive the Consecration of a Virgin does so for the sake of a more fervent love of Christ and out of love of her brothers and sisters in the Church and in the world.

As a consecrated virgin, the individual is dedicated to the service of the Church. Her service will be according to her own abilities, circumstances, talents and charisms.

The virgin who petitions to receive the Consecration of a Virgin should have already lived a virginal commitment in tranquility for a number of years.

Each virgin petitions individually and not as part of a group or formal organization.

The individual who petitions to receive the Consecration of a Virgin accepts the responsibility to collaborate actively with her spiritual director and preparation coordinator so that she may faithfully respond to the grace of a divine vocation during her preparation period.

The candidate may freely leave the period of preparation prior to the Consecration; moreover, the bishop or the bishop in consultation with the preparation coordinator can dismiss the candidate.

Following her preparation period, the virgin may petition the bishop of the diocese to receive the Consecration of a Virgin for a Woman Living in the World. The bishop makes the final decision to consecrate the virgin.

The diocese assumes no financial responsibility for the support of a Consecrated Virgin Living in the World. In cases where she may be employed by a Church institution, the normal salary and benefits are to be assigned.

According to the Rite of Consecration, the virgin renews her resolve to follow Christ in a life of perfect chastity and then is consecrated to a life of perpetual virginity in the Church by the diocesan bishop.

The virgin is to be given a copy of the Liturgy of the Hours and a ring during the Rite of Consecration.

The spiritual bond between the consecrated virgin and the diocesan bishop should be nourished by their personal meeting, preferably two times a year, but at least once a year.

The bishop will also encourage other means of communication, e.g., written communication when necessary.

The consecrated virgin should be considered an integral part of the diocese and can be called upon for prayer and intercession; she should be included in diocesan events for consecrated persons as well as on mailing lists, in vocational information events, and other diocesan events proper to consecrated life.

The consecrated virgin, on her part, should participate as much as possible, as her circumstances permit, in the full life of the diocesan church.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Certain questions and areas of concern often come to mind as one reflects on this ancient and venerable vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world. Hence we have grouped together several questions often posed during retreats and meetings with our Episcopal Moderator. We hope the following paragraphs will help enlighten inquirers as they discern the nature of this vocation and whether this is the form of consecrated life they are called to follow.

1. Can you explain some of the theological/spiritual facets of the nature of consecrated virginity lived in the world?

We must remember that the theological virtue of love – the laying down of one’s life for one’s brothers – is the most important virtue, and it applies to all vocations in the Church. The Church has come to an understanding at this time of three states of life: the clergy, the laity, and consecrated persons. The consecrated virgin is a member of that third category; that is, she is a consecrated person.

As a consecrated person she lives in the world; she does not flee the world. Her life is a public witness in the Church and in society. By her very life of virginity she is witnessing her total love for her Spouse, Jesus Christ. However, it must be remembered that her life of total virginity is a gift of grace; God Himself was the author of that gift, which she has kept intact and offered back to Him in total love on the day of her Consecration when she renewed her resolve to remain a virgin forever. During the Rite, exactly at the Prayer of Consecration which the bishop pronounces over her, the Holy Spirit poured out His grace on her to make that virginity spiritually fruitful.

2. Perhaps you can be more specific to help us understand how consecrated virginity is like and unlike other forms of consecrated life.

Yes, sometimes it helps to compare/contrast consecrated virginity lived in the world with other forms of consecrated life so that we can see and understand each form more clearly. Often consecrated virginity is regarded as a private vow lived in the world, or as a form of Religious life. Sometimes the term “Order” is misleading. Let us clarify these misunderstandings now.

In *Vita Consecrata*, the papal exhortation which is the result of the meeting of the World Synod of Bishops, we find that various categories of consecrated life are listed. They are all forms of consecrated life, e.g., monastic life, consecrated virgins, hermits, institutes of religious dedicated to the apostolate, religious institutes completely devoted to contemplation, and secular institutes. Each of these is a separate category under the larger, general “umbrella” term of “consecrated life.” Each form is distinct in itself with its own attributes. Each form, however, lives the evangelical counsels in

imitation of Jesus Christ Himself, poor, obedient, and chaste. That does not mean, however, that all forms pronounce poverty, chastity, and obedience as vows.

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 can be fitting, even, to speak of dispensing someone from vows or promises which 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.

The Consecration of a Virgin is a sign of the relationship of Christ, the Bridegroom, to the Church, the Bride. The consecrated virgin is a sign of the relationship of the Church, the Bride, to Christ, the Bridegroom. The sign is founded on the natural order, the relationship of a man and a woman in the marriage bond. Clearly, a man cannot be the sign of the Bride of Christ. Likewise, the spiritual relationship with Christ the Bridegroom is expressed in action by spiritual maternity in the Church. A man does not have the natural gifts of woman to exercise spiritual maternity.

The bond of Christ with His bride, made as a definitive act on the part of the Church as stated above, cannot be “undone.” That is, it cannot be dispensed. For that reason, a virgin should not be admitted for Consecration until she has reached a mature age, has lived consistently a chaste life, and shows every sign of perseverance in the gift of her virginity.

As such also, the Consecration cannot be “renewed,” as vows are, because the Consecration was received by the woman, not made or professed by her. She can reflect on the great gift of the Consecration which she received, she can renew her resolve to live as a virgin, but she cannot “renew” her Consecration as such. It is God who consecrates; the virgin merely offers herself.

We often hear of “Orders” in the Church, and most of the time reference is being made to a Religious institute, e.g., Order of Carmel, Order of St. Francis, Order of St. Benedict. In English we have only one word for “Order” which could mean a Religious institute as well as a category of consecrated life. The Order of Virgins refers to the latter meaning, that is, a category of consecrated life. It is not an Order in the sense of a Religious order, which is another form of consecrated life. One cannot, therefore, transfer vows from a Religious institute to the Order of Virgins and thereby be constituted a consecrated virgin under Canon 604.

Lastly, some people raise an objection or question why one would even aspire to receive the Consecration of Virgins when one already has a private vow or promise of perpetual virginity in place. Sacramentals are part of the treasury of the Church constituted to confer grace when received properly. As any consecrated virgin can tell

you now, great graces are conferred through that sacramental of the Church when the candidate properly prepared for this Consecration.

Today, even with just the relatively few consecrated virgins living in the world, we know that they are praying for families, priests, and Christian unity. Prayer is their primary “work.” They do not wear habits and veils, nor use the title “Sister,” nor write “OCV” after their names—these marks of consecrated life for those living in a Religious Institute do not belong to their state of consecrated virginity lived in the world. However, consecrated virgins witness subtly, but powerfully, by their very lives as virgins. Their life in their occupations often draws people to ask questions of them, and this is the very same kind of witness that the early virgins in the Church gave. They did not wear habits or live and work apart from the everyday world, yet they witnessed very powerfully by their consecrated life given exclusively to Jesus Christ alone. Consecrated virgins today wear their ring, but their comportment, modesty in dress, simplicity in life style all betoken their living of the evangelical counsels. Their loyalty to their bishop and the entire Magisterium of the Church should be a flawless witness of their obedience in the Church. They often are known in their parish communities or in other diocesan groups or apostolic endeavors, as they give of their time on a volunteer basis. They are not obliged to take up any particular work or apostolic activity in their parish or diocese, but they do all that they can as their circumstances permit in service to the Church.

3. As women discerning the call to consecrated virginity, what concrete steps should they be taking?

Certainly one should start with the prayer life of a consecrated virgin: daily Mass if possible, the Liturgy of the Hours, frequent Confession, and when possible the Rosary and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. They should read the Rite of Consecration and the lives of the virgin saints. If possible, they should then read what the Fathers of the Church wrote on consecrated virginity. Of course it is understood that if one cannot pray the Divine Office by reason of some handicap or another, one could still be consecrated. The same applies to daily Mass.

It is understood that those discerning this call should progress toward the Consecration with a spiritual director. Eventually, if it be discerned that this is the proper call, then the spiritual director will help them receive the Consecration properly and with its full effect as a sacramental in the Church.

Specifically, the process usually goes this way. One normally should have had a spiritual director for some years, and it is understood that the virgin 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 to determine if she is a good candidate. If it is decided that she would be suitable for the Consecration,

then she begins her preparation process. The time of preparation 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 preparation, be suitable for the Consecration.

The Consecration as such has 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.

The spiritual bond that the consecrated virgin will have with the bishop starts even before she receives the Consecration. In the introductory text for the Consecration, it is stated that the bishop is to start a dialogue with the virgin even before she is consecrated. It is understood, then, that if this dialogue is only to start before the Consecration, it will continue on after the Consecration too. Usually, the bishop will meet with the consecrated virgin every six months, or at least once a year. Of course the bishop himself will meet with the consecrated virgin as an individual, never delegating such a rich meeting to someone else nor meeting with all the consecrated virgins in the diocese at once. This is not an annual review, but a rewarding and pleasant dialogue. It is a good idea sometime to read the Fathers of the Church as they wrote about virgins as they knew them in the early Church.

4. Some practical questions often come up about the Rite itself and related matters. Let us tackle those briefly now.

Some candidates ask if they can receive a crucifix as part of the insignia during the Rite. It is discouraged to add anything to the Rite, and usually a crucifix is an insignia of mission to Sisters after they make Profession. This addition of a crucifix, as devotional as it is, would tend to blur the distinction of consecrated virgin living in the world and a Religious making Profession in an apostolic institute.

Sometimes it is thought that the Consecration could 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 he should not delegate it to a priest. The full symbolism of the Rite of Consecration is reflected when the diocesan Bishop carries it out because of the spiritual bond which exists between consecrated virgins and their bishop.

After the Consecration, an official notation should be made in the Baptismal record of the consecrated virgin, just as one records marriages or Religious Profession. The consecrated virgin herself should receive a document testifying to her Consecration and a copy of this document should be filed in the diocesan archives.

5. Could we look at some of the practical questions now about the actual living of this vocation in the Church? What are some of the aspirations of consecrated virgins today?

Because consecrated virgins want to grow in their life of prayer and to participate in their diocese as much as their individual situations permit, they often have two requests. They want to be able to adore the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament as fervently and as often as they can and, therefore, they ask how they can receive permission **to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in their homes**. This permission can be granted only by the Ordinary of the diocese. The pertinent canons of the Code of Canon Law are: Cann. 934 § 1, no. 2; 934, § 2; 938, §§ 2-5; 940; 941, §§ 1-2; and 943. A second request is **that they be notified of diocesan events** that would pertain properly to them so that they can attend, if they can.

Sometimes they want to know if they can **be a god-mother** for a child at Baptism. Of course they can. Others wish to know what procedure to follow should they have to **move from their current diocese into another one**, to take a job, for example. In the case of relocation, a consecrated virgin 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 living 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.

In some rare cases, a consecrated virgin may live in one diocese but work “across the border,” so to speak, in another diocese. Then the question comes up as to which diocese she should consider herself a part. The answer is that her diocese is the one in which she intends to make her home.

Another question, sometimes posed, is whether a person after having received the Consecration of Virgin for a Woman Living in the World **could become a Religious Sister** at a later date. It is possible that a consecrated virgin living in the world may later discern a further vocation to the religious life. There is nothing in the vocation to consecrated virginity lived in the world which is contrary to profession as a religious. It would, however, mean that the consecrated virgin ceases to live in the world and accepts the essential elements of religious life, which are distinct from consecrated virginity. What must be noted here is that consecrated virginity lived in the world has its own integrity as a distinct form of consecrated life and leads the consecrated virgin to holiness of life. It is not a lesser form of consecrated life which can be perfected by the call to a higher form of consecrated life. Therefore, the consecrated virgin living in the world who has carefully discerned her vocation will not be likely to discern another form of vocation to the consecrated life. It is important to discern properly, through a thorough preparation, whether one is called to consecrated virginity lived in the world. Once the virgin has made the proper preparation and received the Consecration, she should devote herself with an undivided heart to fulfilling the requirements of her state and vocation in life.