

## What is the Consecration of Virgins?



The Consecration of a Virgin is one of the oldest sacramentals in the Church. One of the fruits of the Vatican II was the restoration of this profound blessing on virgins living in the world. The promulgation of this restored Rite for women living in the world was on May 31, 1970. Through this sacramental, the virgin publicly expresses her resolve to live in perpetual virginity for God and is set aside as sacred, espoused to Christ and belonging only to

Him alone. It is God Himself who accepts her resolution and makes it spiritually fruitful by the power of the Holy Spirit. This sacramental is reserved to the Bishop of the diocese. The consecrated virgin shares intimately in the nature and mission of the Church; she is a living image of the Church's love for her Spouse while sharing in His redemptive mission.

Through her consecration, the virgin has a particular bond with her local Bishop, as the living representative of Christ, and with her local diocese. She shares in the concerns of her diocese through their on-going communication. The consecrated virgin is responsible to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. She receives the sacraments regularly and is faithful to private prayer. She keeps as a special focus of her prayer the intentions of her Bishop and clergy and the needs of her diocese. Consecrated virginity is a distinct form of consecrated life in the Church. Therefore, while it is related to other forms of consecrated life, it is not identical to any of them. The consecrated virgin has been irrevocably "consecrated to God, mystically espoused to Christ and dedicated to the service of the Church," which happens "when the diocesan bishop consecrates [her] according to the approved liturgical rite" (Canon 604).

### For more information

To learn more about the ecclesial vocation of Consecrated Virginity Living in the World in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, please contact the Delegate for Consecrated Life.



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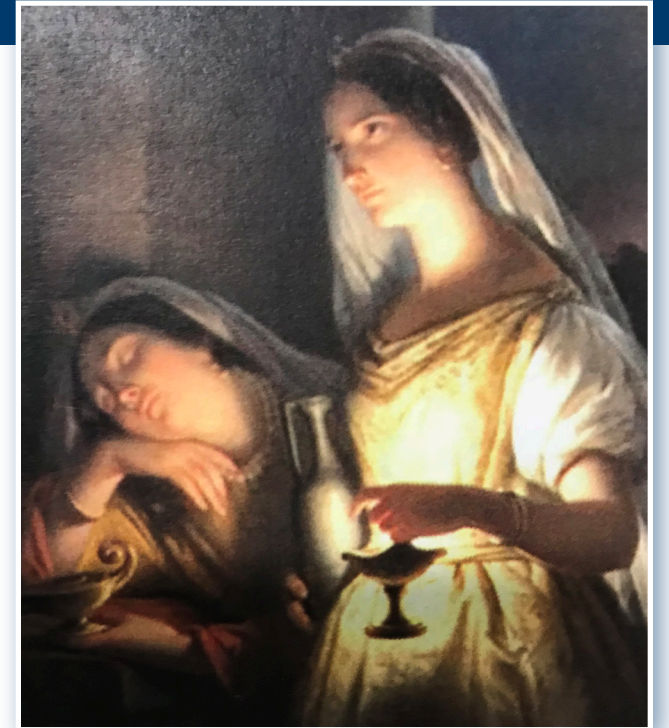
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## The Order of Virgins: Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World



Be wise: Make ready  
your lamps. Behold, the  
Bridegroom comes;  
go out to meet him.



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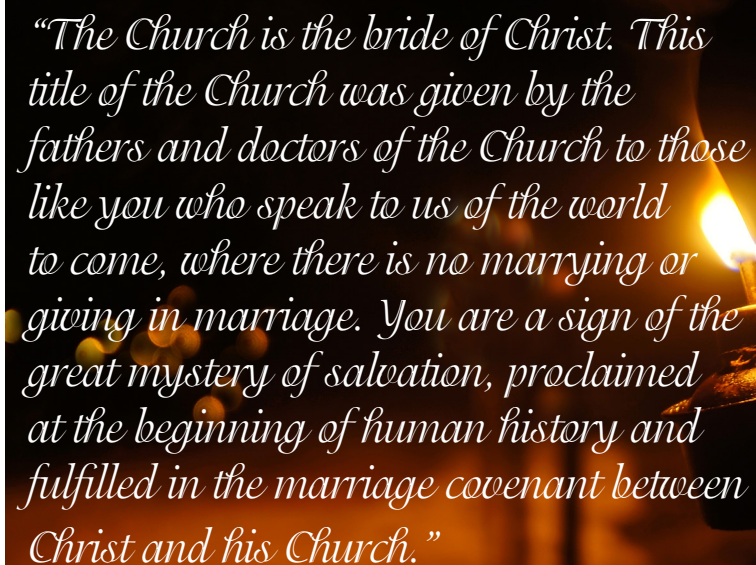
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*“To hope that any other will please me does wrong to my Spouse. I will be His, who first chose me for Himself.” Saint Agnes, Virgin-Martyr*

The consecrated virgin living in the world understands the positive value of living for the Lord in the midst of the world. She does not wear a habit or religious veil, nor does she use the title “Sister.” While she may associate with other consecrated virgins for friendship and mutual encouragement, she lives her vocation individually. She provides completely for her own material needs, including medical care and retirement resources through employment, pension or other means. At no time is her diocese financially responsible for her. Not restricted to a particular apostolate, she is free to choose her own way of serving the Church according to her natural and spiritual gifts. Consecrated virgins usually offer their free time, as they are able, to their parish, diocese or Church-sponsored association. Some volunteer their time also in civic responsibilities.

### **Principle duties of those consecrated**

The consecrated woman is to serve the Church in the place where she lives and in a manner that suits her situation. This service may be either an active apostolic commitment or the service of prayer for the Church. The consecration does not confer an employment or professional office within the Church.



*“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.”*

*Rite of a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World, 16*

### **Role of the bishop and the diocese**

With the loving care of the Father and in the authority of Jesus Christ, the diocesan Bishop is to judge whether or not to admit an aspirant as a candidate for consecration and to assure that a program of formation is arranged for the candidate before her consecration. The Rite states that the diocesan Bishop is the minister, as chief pastor of the local church. It belongs to him to choose and consecrate for service to the diocese.

### **Those who may be consecrated**

This consecration may be received by nuns or by women living in the world. In the case of women living in the world, it is required:

- a) that they have never married or lived in public or open violation of chastity;
- b) that by their age, prudence and universally approved character they should give assurance of perseverance in a life of chastity dedicated to the service of the Church and of their neighbor;
- c) that they be admitted to the consecration by the bishop who is the ordinary of the diocese.

It is for the Bishop to decide upon the conditions under which women living in the world are to undertake a life of perpetual virginity. [Introduction, Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, No. 3 & 5] And it is understood by the above norms that widows and women whose marriages may have been annulled would not fit into the stated criteria. The Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has also clarified that “women who have lost the gift of virginity by knowingly and deliberately engaging in sexual relations should not be received as consecrated virgins.” [Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, Prot.n.231/06/L, Rome, 4 April 2007]