

3 Women 'Mystically Betrothed' to Jesus

Three women married Jesus recently, vowing to be "consecrated virgins" unto their Savior.

The Detroit-area women partook in a ceremony where they became "mystically betrothed to Christ," according to Catholic canon law, *USA Today* reports.

"The focus is on how to be in the world, but not be of it, and (having) this understanding of your role as a bride of Christ, and reflecting your love of Jesus to the world," Karen Ervin, one of the women, tells *The Detroit Free Press*.

The ceremony was the first of its kind for the archdioceses of Detroit.

Consecrated virgins differ from nuns in that the virgins hold jobs outside the church. Their commitment to Christ means they will remain celibate for the rest of their lives.

The consecrated virgin ranks are few and far between. There are about 250 consecrated virgins in the U.S. and 4,000 worldwide, Judith Stegman, president of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins, tells DFP.

But the decision is not for the faint of heart. According to Eternal Word Television Network:

The Consecration of a Virgin is one of the oldest sacramentals in the Church, and one of the fruits of Vatican II was the restoration of this profound blessing on virgins living in the world. The promulgation of this restored rite for laywomen was on 31 May 1970. Through this sacramental, the virgin, after renewing her promise of perpetual virginity to God, is set aside as a sacred person who belongs only to

Christ.

The acting agent in the Consecration is God Himself who accepts the virgin's promise and spiritually fructifies it through the action 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.

The consecrated virgin living in the world embodies a definitive vocation in itself. She is not a quasi-religious, nor is she in a vocation that is in the process of becoming a religious institute or congregation. She is a consecrated woman, nevertheless, with her bishop as her guide. By virtue of the consecration, she is responsible to pray for her diocese and clergy. At no time is her diocese responsible for her financial support.

The ceremony dates to the early church, though faded in 1139, according to *DFP*. The ritual was restored in the 1970s.

The consecrated virgin living in the world, as expressed in Canon 604, is irrevocably “consecrated to God, mystically espoused to Christ and dedicated to the service of the Church, when the diocesan bishop consecrates [her] according to the approved liturgical rite.” The consecrated virgin attends Mass daily, prays the Divine Office, and spends much time in private prayer. She can choose the church-approved spirituality she prefers to follow, according to EWTN.

“I was very happy, very elated to be wedded to Christ,” virgin Theresa Jordan tells *USA Today*. “I felt aligned with His virginity, His purity and all of His sufferings. To be mystically espoused to Him, it was very joyful.” {eo}

