



Consecrated Virgin

An Ancient Vocation in the Church

The vocation of the consecrated virgin is one of the most ancient forms of consecrated life in the Church. From the earliest centuries of Christianity, women responded to Christ's call by dedicating themselves to a life of perpetual virginity. The Fathers of the Church understood consecrated virgins as an image of the Church herself—the Bride wholly devoted to her Bridegroom, Christ. For this reason, consecrated virgins have traditionally been called *sponsae Christi* ("brides of Christ"). At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration, the woman expresses her *sanctum propositum* (holy resolution) to remain in virginity for her whole life, for the love of Christ. The bishop then pronounces the consecratory prayer.

1. Why this consecrated commitment through Jesus Youth?

Vandana discovered and discerned her vocation to consecrated virginity through her journey in Jesus Youth. She had expressed her desire for this vocation many years ago and, around four years ago, formally made a commitment to celibacy through the Jesus Youth movement.

Over the years, this vocation has been accompanied and discerned in dialogue with the movement and with Bishop Alex Vadakumthala, who blessed her when she made her celibacy commitment. After this period of discernment and accompaniment, she is now preparing to receive the Rite of Consecration on October 7, with Bishop Alex Vadakumthala, the Ecclesiastical Advisor of Jesus Youth, presiding at her consecration.

It is important to understand that Jesus Youth does not create or confer the vocation of consecrated virginity. This is a vocation of the Church, and the consecration takes place through the bishop.

The grace of this vocation is not only a personal gift to the individual. When authentically lived, it can become a gift to the Church and to the Jesus Youth movement—a visible witness that a life given completely to Christ can become a life given completely for mission.

2. What does Jesus Youth expect from those taking this commitment?

The vocation of a consecrated virgin is governed by the norms and guidance of the Church, particularly those concerning the *Ordo Virginum*. Therefore, the first expectation of Jesus Youth is that the consecrated virgin faithfully lives her vocation according to the mind of the Church and in communion with the bishop.

At the same time, as a member of Jesus Youth, she is called to live her consecration in harmony with the spirituality, charisms, vision and mission of the movement.

The movement's expectation is therefore not simply that she does more ministry, but that her entire consecrated life becomes a mission.

3. How can it strengthen the missionary life and ministry of the person?

Consecration gives the missionary life a deeper foundation, as her entire life becomes an offering to Christ and His Church. Through prayer, greater availability, personal witness, and accompaniment of others, especially young people, she can serve the Church and the mission of Jesus Youth with greater freedom and fidelity. Her consecrated life itself becomes a witness to Christ, and her lifelong commitment strengthens her perseverance in mission.

4. What is the role of the diocese in this journey?

This needs to be particularly clear: the diocese, through the bishop, has the canonical responsibility for the consecrated virgin. The consecration is a public act of the Church, and the woman remains under the care and pastoral guidance of her bishop.

Jesus Youth does not replace this relationship with the diocese.

At the same time, the movement can provide the environment, spiritual support and missionary context in which the vocation is lived and expressed.

A helpful parallel can be seen in the case of priests in the service of Jesus Youth. A Priest ordained for the Jesus Youth Movement belongs canonically to a particular diocese and remains under the authority of his bishop. At the same time, through an understanding or memorandum with the particular bishop, he can be made available for the mission of Jesus Youth.

Similarly, a consecrated virgin may remain under the canonical responsibility and pastoral care of her bishop while being available for the mission of Jesus Youth, through a memorandum of

understanding signed by the Bishop and the movement, and in harmony with her vocation, responsibilities, and personal plan of life.

5. What is the difference between a Celibacy Commitment and Consecrated Virginity?

Consecrated Virginity (Ordo Virginum) is a public vocation in the Catholic Church. A woman is consecrated by her diocesan bishop through the Church's approved liturgical rite and enters the Order of Virgins described in Canon 604. Through this consecration she is dedicated to God, mystically espoused to Christ, and committed to the service of the Church.

A celibacy commitment, by contrast, is generally a private promise or vow to remain unmarried for the sake of Christ. Even if it is made publicly before family, friends, or a parish community, it does not in itself establish a person in a recognized state of consecrated life within the Church. The commitment is personal rather than a formal ecclesial consecration.