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## Two new books for consecrated virgins receive Bishop Callahan's imprimatur

By JOSEPH O'BRIEN  
Staff Writer

LA CROSSE – Three down and two to go.

Out of a planned five books of meditations for consecrated virgins living in the world, two more have received the imprimatur by Bishop William Patrick Callahan.

The two books, written by Barbara Swieczak, "Reflections on the Rites" and "Resolved to Follow Christ" follow her "Meditations on Mary" published earlier this year by the diocese as part of a series which will help consecrated virgins live out their vocation in imitation of Christ and the Holy Family.

"Reflections on the Rites" presents a series of meditations on the rite of consecration itself while "Resolved to Follow Christ" provides meditations on the Stations of the Cross and the four "Suffering Servant" songs found in Isaiah (42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50: 4-9; and 52:13- 53:12).

Like the first book, "Resolve to Follow Christ" is available in hardcover or spiral bound soft cover, "Reflections on the Rite" is available in hard cover only. Celebrating her 30th year as a consecrated virgin this September, Swieczak is organizing the series at the behest of Bishop Callahan.

While not a sacrament, consecrated virginity offers women a way to serve the Church as a living sacramental, imitating the life of Christ and of His mother Mary, both of whom lived out their virginity in the world.

Like "Meditations on Mary," Swieczak said, "Reflections on the Rites" began as part of her discerning process in 1982.

"I established a notebook which had a sentence at the top of each page from the Rite of Consecration and I would meditate on the line while praying the liturgy of the hours or the reflections on the readings for Mass, or the writings



CT/ Joseph O'Brien

A consecrated virgin living in the world, Barbara Swieczak recently received an imprimatur from Bishop William Patrick Callahan for two more books out of a proposed five-book series of meditations on the vocation to perpetual virginity – "Reflections on the Rite" and "Resolved to Follow Christ" which have followed her "Meditations on Mary" published earlier this year. Designed to engage consecrated virgins and those discerning a vocation to perpetual virginity as a way of serving the Church in imitation of Christ and His mother Mary, the series is being published by the Diocese of La Crosse to support this state of life, one of the oldest sacramental in the Church, according to the Second Vatican Council.

of Church fathers such as St. Methodius's "Symposium on Chastity," she said, explaining that the book provides the same format of line by line reflections. "It also includes the rite of consecration in its entirety and the proper readings for a Mass for the Consecration of Virgins Living in the World."

Describing "Resolved to Follow Christ" as "a surprise from the Holy Spirit this past Lent," Swieczak said this book, while not divinely inspired in the same way as the Bible, was initiated as part of her reflections on the Rite of Consecration, especially regarding the three questions the bishop asks candidates during the Rite: "Are you resolved to persevere to the end of your days in the holy state

of virginity and in the service of God and His Church? Are you so resolved to follow Christ in the Spirit of the Gospel that your whole life may be a faithful witness to God's love and a convincing sign of the Kingdom of Heaven? Are you resolved to accept Solemn Consecration as a bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God?"

"Resolved to Follow Christ" is using those three questions and the examination plus reflecting that Jesus learned at the school of Nazareth from Joseph and Mary, the Suffering Servant songs," Swieczak said. "When you pray the Stations of the Cross, where did Jesus learn that powerful silence but from the silence of Joseph, guardian of the redeemer."

Two additional books of meditations are planned to complete the series, Swieczak said. "Uncommon Love" provides meditations integrating the Rite of Consecration with prayers found in the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church's prayers which virgins are committed to pray; and "Seasons of Love" presents meditations based on the Church's liturgical seasons.

According to Swieczak, the imprimatur (Latin for "let it be printed"), signed by Bishop Callahan and co-signed by the Chancellor for the Diocese of La Crosse, Monsignor Francis Abuah-Quansah, and the Nihil Obstat ("nothing hinders") are dated June 27. Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, an especially significant feast day for conse-

crated virgins.

"One of the prayers for the final blessing at the Mass for consecration of virgins talks about the hearts of virgins united with the heart of Christ," Swieczak said, quoting the blessing, "May the Lord Jesus who unites himself to the hearts of sacred virgins in a nuptial covenant make your hearts fruitful by the word that is God's seed."

To order "Meditations on Mary," "Reflections on the Rite," and "Resolved to Follow Christ," visit the diocesan website ([www.dioceseoflacrosse.com](http://www.dioceseoflacrosse.com)) for an order form, or contact Barbara Swieczak at [bswieciak@dioceseoflacrosse.com](mailto:bswieciak@dioceseoflacrosse.com) or call 608-788-7700 ext. 2271.