



WAKE UP THE WORLD!

— 2015 Year of Consecrated Life —

Year of Consecrated Life

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Bishop leads prayer service to open Year of Consecrated Life observance

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Correspondent

SOMERVILLE — With joyful songs, psalms, Scripture readings and a reflection, the diocese opened its observance of the Year of Consecrated Life at the Church of the Immaculate Conception Nov. 23. Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski led the prayer service, which honored the religious men and women who serve in the diocese.

Pope Francis proclaimed 2015 a Year of Consecrated Life, telling religious to Wake Up the World. At the Vatican, the year began on the first Sunday of Advent and will end Feb. 2, 2016, the World Day of Consecrated Life.

A Life Apart

Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Jeannine M. O’Kane gave a reflection on what it means to live a consecrated life.

Sister Jeannine, a professor of psychology at Immaculata University, Pa., opened her talk by reflecting on life and freedom. Everyone has the power to choose, she said, as well as “the ability to use freedom for all good.”

Religious men and women set their life apart by vowing chastity and poverty; they “take God at his word” that they will be shepherded. They believe, she said, “If I can simply let God break through, he’ll draw me to goodness.”

This “frees them to minister; they [can be] Christ [for others].” They cannot differentiate between saints and sinners; gender; sex orientation; citizen or illegal immigrant, she said. They act with the “compassion of Christ,” which is all inclusive and all embarrassing. It’s about “loving all who God loves.”

Sister Jeannine also imparted advice to all, urging the congregation to avoid trying to control others: “We can control no one. We can [only] provide information.”

“Domination,” she added, “is self-

serving. When we are powerless, we are strong. True love never dominates, it seeks to understand before being understood.”

Sister Jeannine also spoke about poverty and society.

“It is a condition we try to eradicate because it compromises our ability to survive. Yet, Jesus promises his mercy on the poor of spirit,” she said.

“Possessions give us statues, leisure, power, [and] stability, but they cannot always be depended upon. We have seen countless lives devastated to stage four cancer that no amount of money can cure.”

We are created from dust and we return to dust, she said. But, because God breathed his very life

into us, a person of strengths and weaknesses, the vow of poverty is a freedom of attachment so we can pray with open hands, she added.

Throughout the evening service, the combined parishes children’s choir, along with the diocesan chamber choir, provided the music. One of the songs they performed was commissioned by the National Religious Vocation Conference and VISION Vocation Guide. “Wake the World with Dawning Joy” was written by renowned composer Steven Warner in honor of the Year of Consecrated Life.

“It celebrates the unique and ancient form of discipleship that is known as consecrated life and, inspired by the words of Pope Francis, urges men and women to continue to wake the world with their witness,” wrote Patrice J. Tuohy in the 2015 VISION Vocation Guide.

In his closing remarks, Bishop Bootkoski thanked Sister Jeannine for her thoughtful and deep reflection Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who organized the event.

Addressing all the religious at the prayer service, the bishop said, “God bless [you who have] consecrated your lives to God. May your numbers grow.”

According to the *Catholic News Service*, lay people will have the unique opportunity to more deeply understand

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In top photo, Bishop Paul G. Bootkoski is shown with Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Mary Chapman at an evening prayer service at Immaculate Conception Church to begin the diocese’s observance of the Year for Consecrated Life; below right, from right, Mercy Sister Elizabeth O’Hara, Immaculate Heart of Mary Sister Jeannine O’Kane and Mercy Sister Patricia Vetrano; below left, from left, Dominican Sister Mary Catherine Baidy, Vocationist Sister Maria Cerisola, and Religious teachers Filippini Sister Phyllis Vella process into the church.

— Erin Friedlander and Joanne Ward photos

religious life this coming year as priests, brothers, and women religious will open their convents, monasteries, abbeys, and religious houses to the public on Feb. 8.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website, events will be coordinated to also celebrate the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. Furthermore, next sum-

mer a day of mission and service with religious will allow lay people to join religious in their apostolates or service projects.

Finally, on Sept. 13, there will be a day of prayer with religious.

In the Diocese of Metuchen the Year of Consecrated Life will conclude on Nov. 22, 2015.