



**take notice**

**Come Spend Your Holy Week at the Side of Christ**

Join the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi for a Holy Week Come and See Retreat. April 8-13, 2009. Activities include: Eucharistic Celebration of the Last Supper, Adoration on Holy Thursday, Good Friday Ceremonies, Talk on the Seven Last Words of Christ, and more. Register by March 28, 2009. For more information, view the [flyer](#).

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"Fasting Is the Soul of Prayer"  
excerpt from *Lenten Message 2009*  
Pope Benedict XVI

In the New Testament, Jesus brings to light the profound motive for fasting, condemning the attitude of the Pharisees, who scrupulously observed the prescriptions of the law, but whose hearts were far from God. True fasting, as the divine Master repeats elsewhere, is rather to do the will of the Heavenly Father, who "sees in secret, and will reward you" (Mt 6,18). He Himself sets the example, answering Satan, at the end of the forty days spent in the desert that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt 4,4). The true fast is thus directed to eating the "true food," which is to do the Father's will (cf. Jn 4,34). If, therefore, Adam disobeyed the Lord's command "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat," the believer, through fasting, intends to submit himself humbly to God, trusting in His goodness and mercy.

The practice of fasting is very present in the first Christian community (cf. Acts 13,3; 14,22; 27,21; 2 Cor 6,5). The Church Fathers, too, speak of the force of fasting to bridle sin, especially the lusts of the "old Adam," and open in the heart of the believer a path to God. Moreover, fasting is a practice that is encountered frequently and recommended by the saints of every age. Saint Peter Chrysologus writes: "Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others, you open God's ear to yourself" (Sermo 43: PL 52, 320. 322).

## Q & A

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"In Persona Christi"  
*with Fr Anthony Bannon, LC*

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**Q.** Dear Fr Anthony,

Thank you very much for the time and thought you put into answering the questions on this website. I want to start going to confession regularly since I read that it is a requirement when trying to discern ones vocation. I have a bit of a problem though. I know it sounds ridiculous but I get extremely nervous from the moment I tell myself that I am going to go to confession. Sometimes I get so anxious that I am unable to eat for an entire day or, when it is my turn to go, an inexplicable panic builds up inside me and I leave shaking. What can I do to make this stop? It is really embarrassing sometimes. Do you have any suggestions? Thank you in advance.

-Katie

**A.** Dear Katie,

I really admire you, because despite the difficulty you are still going to Confession. That means a lot.

Let me tell you what Confession is like from the priest's side of the screen (by the way, often using the screen option rather than face-to-face makes it easier to go to the sacrament, so you may want to try that option if you don't already use it.) The power to forgive sins is an awesome experience and responsibility. The priest meditates long and deeply on God's mercy (the Good Shepherd, the Father of the Prodigal Son, Christ on the Cross, Jesus with Mary Magdalene and the woman caught in adultery we read about in John 8) and he goes to the confessional trying to be that same Jesus for every person who comes to Confession.

Sometimes it's a sinner coming back from being long and far away from God; sometimes it's someone who comes regularly and is still struggling with major issues; sometimes it's someone who comes regularly and

the faults are much smaller. Sometimes the person is open to God's truth, other times he is not, or has a huge struggle with it. With each one the priest tries to listen carefully, to hear how the Holy Spirit is guiding that soul and to help the person listen to the Holy Spirit, believe in God's pardon and take the next step. At the same time, the priest is conscious that his role is to draw each person closer to God, closer to living the truth in their life, trying "not to stamp out the smoking reed".

So when you go to Confession, try to concentrate on Christ who is waiting for you there in the person of the priest. Remember that it is Christ who wants to draw you closer to Himself, who has died for you on the Cross, and who loves you for the effort you are making to come closer to Him and is moved by it.

God bless,

-Fr Anthony

## Q & A

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"Faith and Reason"  
*with Fr Anthony Bannon, LC*

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**Q.** Dear Fr Anthony,

Hi. I'm 17 and went to a youth conference at Franciscan University in Ohio. During my time spent there the priests took the Monstrance and went down the rows of people. When the Monstrance passed our row I suddenly felt strange. It was like static electricity was all over my body and then my body went numb! Is this a sign from God to be a priest, monk or any other religious order???

-Joshua

**A.** Dear Joshua,

No, what you felt is not a special sign of anything. It's just one of those things that can happen to us under certain special circumstances in our lives, and at the most it is something that God uses to jog us a little and get us thinking about the realities of our faith and our life.

If your experience of Christ during your retreat (by experience I mean not so much things like you describe in your message as the experience of faith, those times when you get the grace to really wake up to all he has done for you and it hits you more clearly than ever) has led you to take a new look at your life and consider that he might be asking something special from you in response to his love and in order to bring that love to others, then you should take it a step further.

Maybe this experience you had has gotten you to ask some questions, but you are not going to find the answer to these questions in the experience itself, but by going to the more solid bases that your faith and your reason are going to provide for you. So talk it over with some priest you know and trust.

God bless,

-Fr Anthony

"Christ, the Only Savior of the World"  
*Jn 3:14-21*

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*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.*

**Introductory Prayer:** Jesus my Lord and King, I truly believe that you are my Savior and Redeemer. I place all my trust in the power of your grace; I want to live a life that shows I love you above all things.

**Petition:** You will be my judge, Lord. Help my soul. I ask to you change my heart to receive your will with unconditional welcome, so as to draw closer to you and be able to bring others to know you and love you.

**1. That Whoever Believes in Him Will Have Eternal Life.** Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ (CCC 1022). We have to make an enormous effort and we have to count on the help of grace, in order to raise our minds and our ambitions beyond the immediate things of this life. The first step in responding to our Christian call is to believe in it. Believing means not only knowing but being convinced of the truths of our faith. And we are only convinced of something when it influences our actions. True belief cannot be separated from our actions, and by our actions we can tell if we truly believe. So, whoever believes will do the things that give us eternal life. Lent is a good time to reflect on the depth of our faith. The depth of our faith is not the amount of Apologetics we know, or the Scripture passages we can quote, or even the amount of prayers we say, but in the influence my faith has on the options I make every day (the things I read and speak about, the desires I harbor in my heart, the way I deal with others...). These are what will lead us to eternal life.

**2. God Did Not Send the Son into the World to Condemn the World, but in Order that the World Might Be Saved through Him.** Pope Benedict has reminded us that Christianity is not the religion of prohibitions. It entails some, of course, but it is essentially Good News, it is essentially a project to realize in my life. The "do's" that Jesus gives us are immensely more breath-taking and abundant than the "don'ts". Love your enemies, Do good to those who hate you, Settle with your enemy, Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, Let your light shine, Learn from me, Come to me, Go the extra mile, Forgive seventy times seven..., the list is endless. The flip-side to these "do's" are the "don'ts", but they are a consequence and not what Jesus is about. There are ways of the world we must condemn, there are attitudes of the world that can destroy the Word within us and we must eradicate them, but the essence of what we are is not in these but rather in what we are striving to attain. The same with a vocation, its essence is not to be found in the things we have to give up but in the close following of Christ that entails giving up those things, often very good in themselves. Christ's full intention in coming to this world was to save, rebuild, pacify, purify from sin, train in objective goodness, and re-establish the Kingdom in men's hearts and societies. We have the most positive message possible to give the world.

**3. All Who Do Evil Hate the Light and Do Not Come to the Light.** Our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee (Confessions, St. Augustine, Book 1, and Ch. 1). God is light, he is love. This may explain the immense depressions that occur due to sin and hatred. It seems that when a soul doesn't accept God wholeheartedly, true torture begins. This torture is not just the normal wear and tear of life. It is guilt beyond explanation. The Light is the light of Christ. We are often tempted not to come to the light, not to open up the

needs of our soul to Christ in prayer and the Sacrament of Confession. But the rewards are countless. He also gives us his light through his Body, the Church, in her teachings, which are always a reflection of him, and through her legitimate Pastors, the bishops in communion with the Pope. This is the light we must strive to bring into our conscience. When we come to the light it becomes easier to discover and eventually reject the evil and the darkness in our soul. It makes it possible to do good.

**Conversation:** Lord Jesus, help me see that my Faith is the light that should always guide my steps in life, and especially the major decisions of my life. Enable me to give my faith the place you want it to have in my life, and to act always as your true follower. During this Lenten season I rededicate my heart to you. I promise to receive your sacraments with a heart that wants to change.

**Questionnaire:**

1. Can I tell from my actions if I really believe in God and in the future life?
2. What is my attitude toward the world? Am I convinced that as a Catholic Christian I have the message it desperately needs?
3. Do I live in the Light, or is there something I am still trying to hide from myself or from God?

## Spirituality

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### "Great Saints Have Great Hearts"

Great saints have great hearts. This is God's first gift to the person from whom he is going to ask a love that is mad and passionate abandonment to him and his Kingdom. But our heart is a double-edged sword. If you are not able to wield and direct it properly, it can kill your soul and pull it away from the pursuit of perfection, leading you to hate what you should madly love. Work hard to form a charitable heart; you cannot be a Christian without charity in your heart. So try always to be understanding, merciful, meek, and humble.

It is not an easy, one-day undertaking to form your heart. On the contrary, it requires sustained effort, self-control and will power. Work at it day after day, even though it means you have to suffer and your heart seems to shrink from it. Be positive! Raise your soul to God, unite yourself to him and don't give in to anything that might undermine your charity, humility, or meekness.

## Special

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"Papal Message for Youth Day '09"  
*"Jesus Also Wants to Encounter Each One of You"*  
Pope Benedict XVI

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VATICAN CITY, MARCH 4, 2009 (Zenit.org).- Here is a Vatican translation of Benedict XVI's message for World Youth Day 2009, to be celebrated at the diocesan level this Palm Sunday. The message was released today.

\* \* \*

"We have set our hope on the living God" (1 Tim 4:10)

My dear friends,

Next Palm Sunday we shall celebrate the twenty-fourth World Youth Day at the diocesan level. As we prepare for this annual event, I recall with deep gratitude to the Lord the meeting held in Sydney in July last year. It was a most memorable encounter, during which the Holy Spirit renewed the lives of countless young people who had come together from all over the world. The joy of celebration and spiritual enthusiasm experienced during those few days was an eloquent sign of the presence of the Spirit of Christ. Now we are journeying towards the international gathering due to take place in Madrid in 2011, which will have as its theme the words of the Apostle Paul: "Rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith" (cf. Col 2:7). As we look forward to that global youth meeting, let us undertake a path of preparation together. We take as our text for the year 2009 a saying of Saint Paul: "We have set our hope on the living God" (1 Tim 4:10), while in 2010 we will reflect on the question put to Jesus by the rich young man: "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17)

*Youth, a time of hope*

In Sydney, our attention was focussed upon what the Holy Spirit is saying to believers today, and in particular to you, my dear young people. During the closing Mass, I urged you to let yourselves be shaped by him in order to be messengers of divine love, capable of building a future of hope for all humanity. The question of hope is truly central to our lives as human beings and our mission as Christians, especially in these times. We are all aware of the need for hope, not just any kind of hope, but a firm and reliable hope, as I wanted to emphasize in the Encyclical *Spe Salvi*. Youth is a special time of hope because it looks to the future with a whole range of expectations. When we are young we cherish ideals, dreams and plans. Youth is the time when decisive choices concerning the rest of our lives come to fruition. Perhaps this is why it is the time of life when fundamental questions assert themselves strongly: Why am I here on earth? What is the meaning of life? What will my life be like? And again: How can I attain happiness? Why is there suffering, illness and death? What lies beyond death? These are questions that become insistent when we are faced with obstacles that sometimes seem insurmountable: difficulties with studies, unemployment, family arguments, crises in friendships or in building good loving relationships, illness or disability, lack of adequate resources as a result of the present widespread economic and social crisis. We then ask ourselves: where can I obtain and how can I keep alive the flame of hope burning in my heart?

*In search of "the great hope"*

Experience shows that personal qualities and material goods are not enough to guarantee the hope which the human spirit is constantly seeking. As I wrote in the Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, politics, science, technology, economics and all other material resources are not of themselves sufficient to provide the great hope to which we all aspire. This hope "can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain" (no. 31). This is why one of the main consequences of ignoring God is the evident loss of direction that marks our societies, resulting in loneliness and violence, discontent and loss of confidence that can often lead to despair. The word of God issues a warning that is loud and clear: "Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes" (Jer 17:5-6).

The crisis of hope is more likely to affect the younger generations. In socio-cultural environments with few certainties, values or firm points of reference, they find themselves facing difficulties that seem beyond their strength. My dear young friends, I have in mind so many of your contemporaries who have been wounded by life. They often suffer from personal immaturity caused by dysfunctional family situations, by permissive and libertarian elements in their education, and by difficult and traumatic experience. For some - unfortunately a significant number - the almost unavoidable way out involves an alienating escape into dangerous and violent behaviour, dependence on drugs and alcohol, and many other such traps for the unwary. Yet, even

for those who find themselves in difficult situations, having been led astray by bad role models, the desire for true love and authentic happiness is not extinguished. But how can we speak of this hope to those young people? We know that it is in God alone that a human person finds true fulfilment. The main task for us all is that of a new evangelization aimed at helping younger generations to rediscover the true face of God, who is Love. To you young people, who are in search of a firm hope, I address the very words that Saint Paul wrote to the persecuted Christians in Rome at that time: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:13). During this Jubilee Year dedicated to the Apostle of the Gentiles on the occasion of the two thousandth anniversary of his birth, let us learn from him how to become credible witnesses of Christian hope.

### *Saint Paul, witness of hope*

When Paul found himself immersed in difficulties and trials of various kinds, he wrote to his faithful disciple Timothy: "We have set our hope on the living God" (1 Tim 4:10). How did this hope take root in him? In order to answer that question we must go back to his encounter with the Risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. At that time, Saul was a young person like you in his early twenties, a follower of the Law of Moses and determined to fight with every means, and even to kill those he regarded as God's enemies (cf. Acts 9:1). While on his way to Damascus to arrest the followers of Christ, he was blinded by a mysterious light and he heard himself called by name: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He fell to the ground, and asked: "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:3-5). After that encounter, Paul's life changed radically. He received Baptism and became an Apostle of the Gospel. On the road to Damascus, he was inwardly transformed by the Divine Love he had met in the person of Jesus Christ. He would later write: "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). From being a persecutor, he became a witness and a missionary. He founded Christian communities in Asia Minor and Greece, and travelled thousands of miles amid all kinds of perils, culminating in his martyrdom in Rome. All this for love of Christ.

### *The great hope is in Christ*

For Paul, hope is not simply an ideal or sentiment, but a living person: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Profoundly imbued with this certainty, he could write to Timothy: "We have set our hope on the living God" (1 Tim 4:10). The "living God" is the Risen Christ present in our world. He is the true hope: the Christ who lives with us and in us and who calls us to share in his eternal life. If we are not alone, if he is with us, even more, if he is our present and our future, why be afraid? A Christian's hope is therefore to desire "the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1817).

### *the way towards the great hope*

Just as he once encountered the young Paul, Jesus also wants to encounter each one of you, my dear young people. Indeed, even before we desire it, such an encounter is ardently desired by Jesus Christ. But perhaps some of you might ask me: How can I meet him today? Or rather, in what way does he approach me? The Church teaches us that the desire to encounter the Lord is already a fruit of his grace. When we express our faith in prayer, we find him even in times of darkness because he offers himself to us. Persevering prayer opens the heart to receive him, as Saint Augustine explains: "Our Lord and God ... wants our desire to be exercised in prayer, thus enabling us to grasp what he is preparing to give" (Letter 130:8,17). Prayer is the gift of the Spirit that makes us men and women of hope, and our prayer keeps the world open to God (cf. Spe Salvi, 34).

Make space for prayer in your lives! To pray alone is good, although it is even more beautiful and fruitful to pray together, because the Lord assured us he would be present wherever two or three are gathered in his name (cf. Mt 18:20). There are many ways to become acquainted with him. There are experiences, groups and movements, encounters and courses in which to learn to pray and thus grow in the experience of faith. Take part in your parish liturgies and be abundantly nourished by the word of God and your active participation in the Sacraments. As you know, the summit and centre of the life and mission of every believer

and every Christian community is the Eucharist, the sacrament of salvation in which Christ becomes present and gives his Body and Blood as spiritual food for eternal life. A truly ineffable mystery! It is around the Eucharist that the Church comes to birth and grows - that great family of Christians which we enter through Baptism, and in which we are constantly renewed through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The baptised, through Confirmation, are then confirmed in the Holy Spirit so as to live as authentic friends and witnesses of Christ. The Sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony enable them to accomplish their apostolic duties in the Church and in the world. Finally, the Sacrament of the Sick grants us an experience of divine consolation in illness and suffering.

#### *Acting in accordance with Christian hope*

If you find your sustenance in Christ, my dear young people, and if you live profoundly in him as did the Apostle Paul, you will not be able to resist speaking about him and making him known and loved by many of your friends and contemporaries. Be his faithful disciples, and in that way you will be able to help form Christian communities that are filled with love, like those described in the Acts of the Apostles. The Church depends on you for this demanding mission. Do not be discouraged by the difficulties and trials you encounter. Be patient and persevering so as to overcome the natural youthful tendency to rush ahead and to want everything immediately.

My dear friends, follow the example of Paul and be witnesses to the Risen Christ! Make Christ known, among your own age group and beyond, to those who are in search of "the great hope" that would give meaning to their lives. If Jesus has become your hope, communicate this to others with your joy and your spiritual, apostolic and social engagement. Let Christ dwell within you, and having placed all your faith and trust in him, spread this hope around you. Make choices that demonstrate your faith. Show that you understand the risks of idolizing money, material goods, career and success, and do not allow yourselves to be attracted by these false illusions. Do not yield to the rationale of selfish interests. Cultivate love of neighbour and try to put yourselves and your human talents and professional abilities at the service of the common good and of truth, always prepared to "make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15). True Christians are never sad, even if they have to face trials of various kinds, because the presence of Jesus is the secret of their joy and peace.

#### *Mary, Mother of hope*

May Saint Paul be your example on this path of apostolic life. He nourished his life of constant faith and hope by looking to Abraham, of whom he wrote in the Letter to the Romans: "Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become the father of many nations" (Rom 4:18). Following in the footsteps of the people of hope - composed of prophets and saints of every age - we continue to advance towards the fulfilment of the Kingdom, and on this spiritual path we are accompanied by the Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope. She who incarnated the hope of Israel, who gave the world its Saviour, and who remained at the foot of the Cross with steadfast hope, is our model and our support. Most of all, Mary intercedes for us and leads us through the darkness of our trials to the radiant dawn of an encounter with the Risen Christ. I would like to conclude this message, my dear young friends, with a beautiful and well-known prayer by Saint Bernard that was inspired by one of Mary's titles, Stella Maris, Star of the Sea: "You who amid the constant upheavals of this life find yourself more often tossed about by storms than standing on firm ground, do not turn your eyes from the brightness of this Star, if you would not be overwhelmed by boisterous waves. If the winds of temptations rise, if you fall among the rocks of tribulations, look up at the Star, call on Mary ... In dangers, in distress, in perplexities, think on Mary, call on Mary ... Following her, you will never go astray; when you implore her aid, you will never yield to despair; thinking on her, you will not err; under her patronage you will never wander; beneath her protection you will not fear; she being your guide, you will not weary; with her assistance, you will arrive safely in the port" (Homilies in Praise of the Virgin Mother, 2:17).

Mary, Star of the Sea, we ask you to guide the young people of the whole world to an encounter with your Divine Son Jesus. Be the celestial guardian of their fidelity to the Gospel and of their hope.

Dear young friends, be assured that I remember all of you every day in my prayers. I give my heartfelt



blessing to you and to all who are dear to you.

From the Vatican, 22 February 2009

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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## Upcoming Events & Retreats

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(( Listed here are retreats directed by the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi members. For a listing of diocesan activities and other events, click here to go to the vocation.com website ))

### the very latest

Select a region of the United States or Canada.

Northeast

- Retreats for Men  
 Retreats for Women

### LEGIONARIES OF CHRIST

#### **Mark Your Calendars!** Test Your Call Weekends for the 2009

Calendar Year. Experience the novitiate in Cheshire, CT with retreats for young men ages 16-27 sponsored by the Legion of Christ. These weekend retreats combine time for personal reflection, preached meditations, conferences, and opportunities for confession and spiritual direction with the experience of the day to day life of the seminarians. For more information, please call Br. Francois at (800) 420-5409 or email vocation@legionaries.org. Dates in 2009: March 20-22, April 8-12, April 24-26, May 22-25, June 19-21, July 3-5, July 24-26, August 14-16, September 4-6, October 23-25, November 25-29, December 19-23, and December 26-30.

**Test Your Call Weekends, Canada!** Experience the novitiate in Cornwall, ON with retreats for young men ages 16-27 sponsored by the Legion of Christ. These weekend retreats combine time for personal reflection, preached meditations, conferences, and opportunities for confession and spiritual direction with the experience of the day to day life of the seminarians. April 9-12, 2009. For more information, please contact Br. Xavier Kleinermann de Lance at xkleinermann@legionaries.org or (001) 613-203-3776.

**Holy Week Missions in Mexico!** Door to door evangelization missions in Guadalajara, Mexico for young men ages 15-25. Spend 10 days spreading the faith like the first apostles. Training provided. Sponsored by the Legion of Christ. Cost \$550 plus airfare. For more information please contact Fr. Daniel Wilson at dwilson@legionaries.org or (914)409-2930.

### REGNUM CHRISTI consecrated women

**Come and See Weekends.** Spend a weekend with the consecrated women of Regnum Christi, learning about their life, spirituality and mission within the Church. Activities include: Talks/conferences about the Church, Regnum Christi, the Spiritual Life, and consecrated Life in Regnum Christi; a half-day retreat; opportunities for confession and Spiritual Direction; daily Mass and time for prayer, silence and reflection; sports and meals with the

consecrated women; vocational panel: Questions & Answers with consecrated women. Ages 16-30. For more information, contact Jill Swallow at [vocation@inteducators.org](mailto:vocation@inteducators.org) or 401-949-2820. 2009 dates: March 20-23, May 22-25, and July 10-13

**Holy Week Vocational Discernment Retreat.** Greenville, RI. A vocational discernment convention featuring conferences, meditations, and opportunities for Mass, Confession and spiritual direction, for young women ages 16-30, interested in discerning a vocation to the consecrated life. Sponsored by the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi. April 8-13. For more information please contact Jill Swallow at [vocation@inteducators.org](mailto:vocation@inteducators.org) or 401-949-2820.

ShoreLines

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