News
Q&As



Archbishop Bejoy Nicephorus D'Cruze and Dora D'Rozario inaugurate the new prayer house and residence for consecrated virgins at Padrikanda in Golla Parish in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Aug. 27. (Sumon Corraya)



by Sumon Corraya

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Dhaka, Bangladesh — November 8, 2022

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

For Dora D'Rozario, living the life of a consecrated virgin is "the divine vocation, his great gift."

"Each consecrated virgin becomes a light of Christ in the world," she said.

The 63-year-old consecrated virgin has faced several challenges, such as "always explaining why I don't want to get married, a question that comes back all the time," she said.

D'Rozario says she introduced consecrated virgins to Bangladesh, and she took her first commitment on May 16, 1985. Now, the country has 11 consecrated virgins.

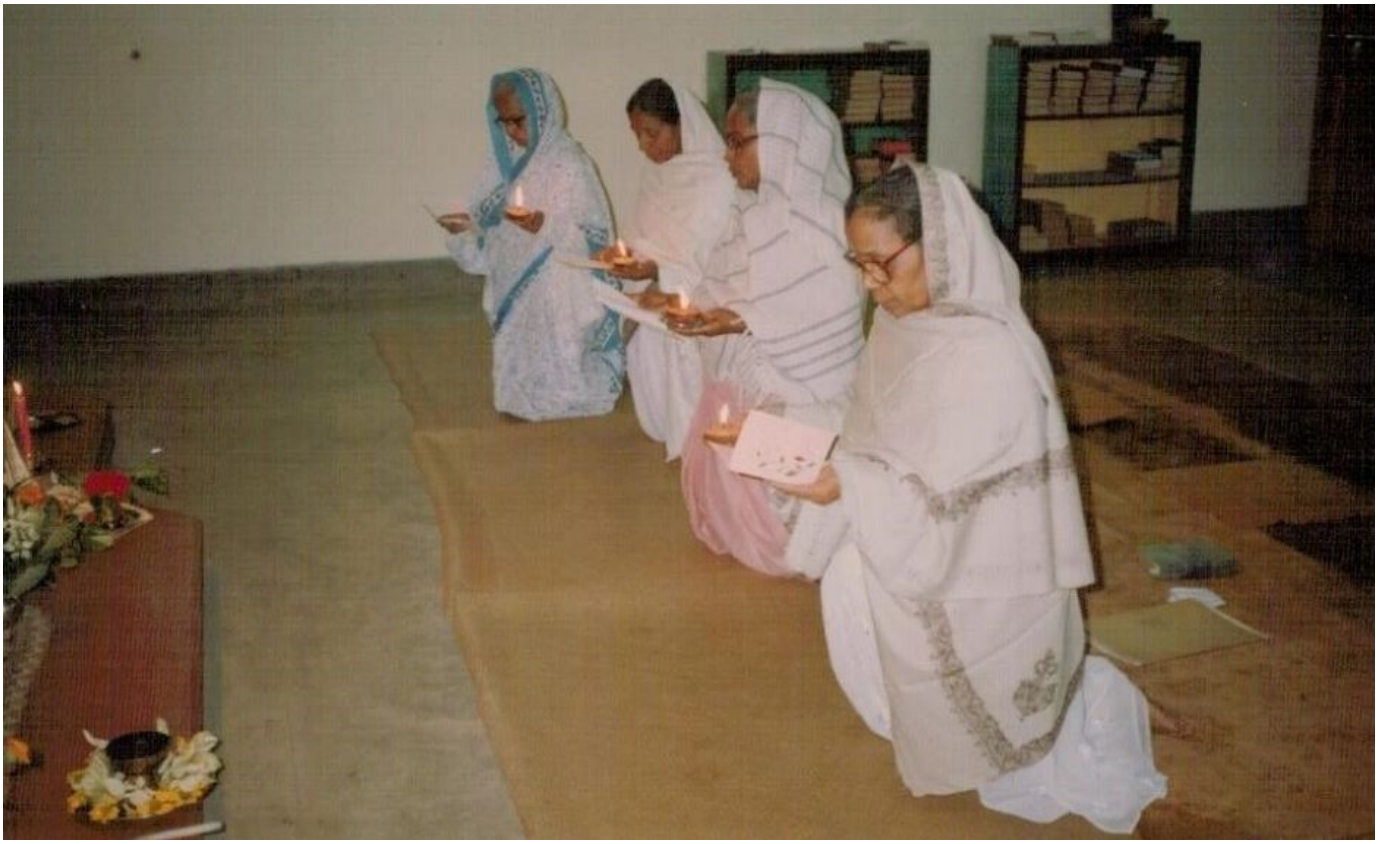
D'Rozario and other consecrated virgins live in different places and do their own work, but occasionally, they meet. To make it easier for them to gather, D'Rozario helped create a prayer house and residence for them at Padrikanda in Golla Parish in Dhaka.

Archbishop Bejoy Nicephorus D'Cruze of Dhaka, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh, inaugurated the house Aug. 27. Currently, three consecrated virgins live at the residence, which can house up to 15 people.

"This prayer house and residence will be used for all of the faithful for prayer, retreats and counseling," D'Cruze said in the inauguration program. "This house will be a lighthouse for all. I thank Dora D'Rozario for taking the initiative to make this house."

D'Rozario donated the land for the house, and the building was financed through donations from Missio, the German branch of the Pontifical Mission Societies; the Spanish Episcopal Conference's New Evangelization Fund; and relatives of the consecrated virgins.

Recently, D'Rozario spoke with Global Sisters Report about her vocation, challenges and more.



Consecrated virgins take their vows with Archbishop Michael Rozario in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in an undated photo. (Courtesy of Dora D'Rozario)

***GSR*: Please tell us about the Order of Consecrated Virgins.**

D'Rozario: Canon 604 states that consecrated virgins are to be added to forms of consecrated life. Through their pledge to follow Christ more closely, virgins are consecrated to God, mystically espoused to Christ and dedicated to the service of the church, where the diocesan bishop consecrates them according to the approved liturgical rite.

Can you share your own religious vocation with OCV?

During my teaching life, I experienced a faithful life that could be lived outside the convent life and could fulfill my baptismal responsibility. But I needed some sort of guide for myself. I was looking for it. I kept searching. I did study some of the secular institutes with the help of a Holy Cross priest and a Holy Cross sister. Personally, to be formed in this sort of life, I wanted to take a promise myself.

Finally, I had an opportunity to do a lay community experience for two years in Rome, where candidates come from five continents for this experience. I accepted this invitation, and I took permission from Archbishop Michael Rozario to go to Rome.

The group's spiritual director and pioneer was Jesuit Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, who was the international director of International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services in Rome. Sister Hugetle of the Missionary Fraternity of Mary was a kind of house mother who came periodically to pray with us. My consecrated life that I wished for started there, and I took my first commitment in May 1985.

Why and how did you first introduce OCV in Bangladesh?

As I was discussing the lifestyle, I already prepared unmarried girls who were involved in several ministries in the church. Holy Cross Sr. Myriam Richard was a very good spiritual guide and adviser, and Holy Cross Fr. Patrick D'Rozario [now a cardinal] was the spiritual director. As soon as I returned from Rome, with the concerned permission of Archbishop Michael Rozario, it started here in Bangladesh. Rather, I introduced or opened it in 1985 on the day of my first commitment, I could say.



The new prayer house and residence for consecrated virgins in Bangladesh opened Aug. 27 at Padrikanda in Golla Parish of Dhaka. (Sumon Corraya)

What are the activities of OCV in Bangladesh?

A virgin's resolution is to follow Christ in a life of perfect Christianity to the end of her days in the holy state of virginity and in the service of God and his church. In addition to this unique way of living, virgins carry out their missionary activities in the service of the word of God, announcing the joy of the Gospel and seeing the face of Christ in all humanity and creation. This lifestyle itself is a proclamation of the word to the people.

During the rite of consecration, the bishop concludes by giving the insignia of consecration and the book of prayer of the church with the words, "Receive the ring that makes you a bride of Christ. Keep unstained your fidelity to your bridegroom and receive the book of the liturgy of the house. May the praise of our heavenly father be always on your lips, praise without ceasing for the salvation of the whole world."

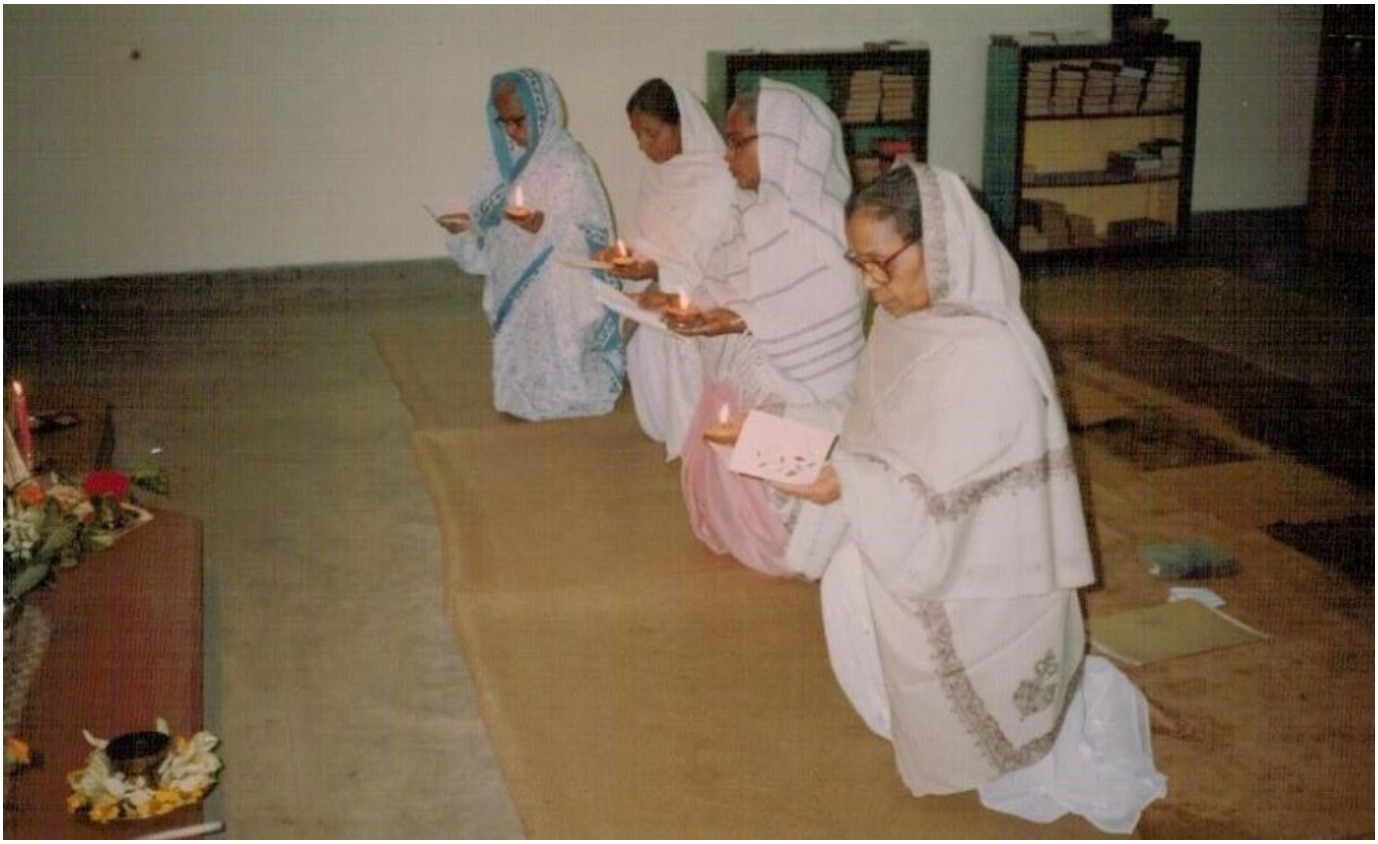
Therefore, consecrated virgins are faithful to enhance their own beauty through their quality time of prayer, reading and contemplating the word of God and others' spiritual readings.

In Bangladesh, virgins are in association. In order to make their spiritual bonding deeper, they make annual retreats together. More than twice a year, they get together to have quality time, sharing their sacred stories with one another and enjoying each other's companionship. They give prophetic witness to people though their own lifestyles and apostolic activities with love and mercy, such as pastoral work, counseling, spiritual direction, preaching retreats, teaching catechism and Bible studies, and serving the poor. They become a gift for others.

You established your prayer house, Bethany Dhyanasram (Bethany Retreat Center), in Golla Parish. What is this prayer house's importance?

For 36 years, we [members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as well as consecrated virgins] have been using the premises and houses of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions in Dhaka for contemplation and active services. It cannot be continued there because they need their house for the congregation. There is a

crucial need for a house for the virgins to live in as they continue their ministries. So Bethany Dhyanasram is a house of prayer and residence for OCV.



Archbishop Bejoy Nicephorus D'Cruze poses with consecrated virgins and their relatives during the Aug. 27 inauguration of a new prayer house and residence for the virgins at Padrikanda in Golla Parish, Dhaka, Bangladesh. (Sumon Corraya)

Religious vocations have decreased generally because of materialistic and worldly concerns. At that moment, you established Bethany Dhyanasram. Please tell us something about it.

To live the life of a consecrated virgin is a divine vocation. We continue our lives in response to God the Father's call in order to be holy like him, to love him, to adore him and to serve the church and faithful. To fulfill the purpose of this order, we follow Jesus the Lord. We pray for the help of the Holy Spirit in order to respond faithfully to our call and to consecrate ourselves fully for the service of the church and people.

The magnificence of our Mother Mary is a joy of this order of virgins. The Blessed Virgin Mary is our model, foundation and inspiration. Thus, we follow the life of

contemplation and of service.

Please tell us about consecrated virgins' community life.

Virgins are autonomous — no community living. They have a wide spectrum of possibilities of living. They may live with their parents or on their own or be attached to a religious center. They may live in a small group of three or four for the sake of an effective apostolate.

It is best to mention that in Bangladesh, virgins are an association [in addition to being members of OCV], which has a strong community spirit. The name of the association is "The Friends of the Word Association."

Advertisement

How do you attract new consecrated virgins or preach about this new vocation?

We increase new members through personal contact, and we write articles in magazines. We take part in vocation-promoting camps or vocation fairs, etc.

As this country's people don't get pensions in their old age, have members of OCV faced any financial challenges?

Archbishop Michael Rozario asked me also about the financial support. It is a challenge. As an association, we formed a common fund for urgent use and to provide the budget during our common gatherings, retreats, spiritual sessions.

Virgins are not demanding. Though we do not take the vow of poverty, we follow it. To face these challenges also is a part of our vocation. Surrender and trusting in the Lord is the help. Virgins are so confident and courageous. They surrender, totally open to God. They believe only the steadfast love of God protects them. This is how they overcome all challenges.