

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

***The Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations
to Religious Life and Priesthood:
A Report for the
National Religious Vocation Conference***

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**Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D.
Jonathon L. Wiggins, Ph.D.
Jonathon C. Holland, M.A.**

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	5
Organization of this Report.....	5
Family Characteristics at the Time of Vocational Discernment.....	7
Family Practice of the Faith.....	8
Family Meals and Family Time	10
Important Religious Activities or Customs in the Family	12
Consideration of a Vocation	14
Family Experience with Vocations	15
Family Encouragement of Vocations.....	16
Which Family Members Encourage/Discourage Vocations.....	18
Characteristics of Responding Family Members.....	21
Misconceptions about Priesthood and Religious Life	26
Future of Priesthood and Religious Life.....	29
Support or Promotion of Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life	35
Questionnaire with Response Frequencies	39
All family members combined.....	40
Families of men and women religious.....	43
Families of diocesan seminarians and priests	46
APPENDIX I: Responses from Men and Women Religious.....	49
APPENDIX II: Responses from Diocesan Priests and Seminarians	96
APPENDIX III: Complete Transcription of Responses to Open-ended Comments from the Survey of Family Members.....	148
APPENDIX IV: Summary and Analysis of Focus Groups of Family Members.....	307

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a major study of the influence of families in nurturing vocations to religious life and priesthood. The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to learn from priests, seminarians, women and men religious, and their families about the role of the family in nurturing their vocation. The goal of the research is to provide information that will help families to promote vocations to religious life and priesthood.

For this study, CARA surveyed men and women religious who had entered religious life since 2000 (from lists supplied by the major superiors of U.S. congregations of women and men religious) as well as priests and seminarians who had been accepted into formation for priesthood in dioceses since 2000 (from lists supplied by the vocation director in each U.S. diocese and eparchy). In addition to asking these participants about the influence that their family had on their vocational discernment, the survey also asked respondents to provide contact information for a family member. CARA then contacted those identified family members with an invitation to complete a similar survey to gain insights on the topic from the perspective of the family member. CARA also conducted two focus groups with the family members of these religious, priests, and seminarians to explore more deeply some of the issues relevant to this study as revealed by the survey data.

CARA sent a survey invitation to 2,172 women and men religious and 4,140 priests and seminarians beginning in November 2014 and then conducted follow-up through February 2015 to achieve a high response rate. CARA received completed responses from 1,279 men and women religious and 1,352 diocesan priests and seminarians for a response rate of 59 percent and 33 percent, respectively.

The religious, priests, and seminarians that responded to the survey provided CARA with a total of 1,547 names and contact information (either a mailing address or an email) for a family member. CARA then contacted those family members in late February 2015, in both English and Spanish, with an invitation to participate in a brief survey. By the cut-off date in early April, 892 family members had responded to the survey, for a response rate of 58 percent. Another 15 family members participated in one of two focus groups, held in Washington, DC and in Chicago, IL, in May 2015.

Major Findings

There is no such thing as a “typical” family of a priest or a religious. The purpose of this study is not to discover some secret formula for creating religious vocations but rather to learn from these family members who have produced vocations to priesthood or religious life some of the common experiences, practices, attitudes, and behaviors of these families. The hope is that the characteristics and experiences of these families will be informative and perhaps instructive to other families who might be wondering if there is a potential vocation to priesthood or religious life in their midst.

Starting with a Strong Catholic Foundation

- Family members of seminarians, priests, and religious are usually Catholic themselves and typically grew up in a family in which both parents were Catholic. One in ten responding priest, seminarian, or religious grew up in a non-Catholic family, however, and another tenth grew up in a family with only one Catholic parent. One in five Catholic families that produced a vocation had a priest or a religious already in their extended family.
- Women and men religious, priests, and seminarians are more likely than Catholics in general to have attended a Catholic school for some or all of their education. More than half of men and women religious and two in three priests and seminarians attended Catholic schools for some or all of their education.
- The responding family members in families who have produced a vocation are more likely than other Catholic adults in general to say that their Catholic faith is the most important part of their daily life. Six in ten responding family members say that their Catholic faith is the most important part of their life and another third say that faith is among the most important parts of their life. By comparison, about half of Catholic parents ages 25-45 say that their Catholic faith is at least “among the most important” parts of their daily life. Among all Catholic adults, about four in ten rate their faith as at least that important in their daily life.
- These family members report a more engaged prayer life than do other Catholic parents or other Catholic adults in general. Nearly nine in ten pray daily, compared to just over half of U.S. Catholic adults and just over a third of Catholic parents between the ages of 25 and 45. They also feel more strongly than Catholic adults in general that it is important that younger generations of the family grow up Catholic.

Family Religious Practice When Growing Up

- Two in three responding men and women religious say that their family attended Mass or religious services weekly when they were growing up and another one in ten say they attended more than once a week. Likewise, responding diocesan priests and seminarians report attending Mass when they were growing up with that same level of frequency.

Hispanic/Latino respondents are less likely than other cultural groups to say their family attended Mass or other religious services at least weekly when they were growing up.

- A third of men and women religious and just over a third of priests and seminarians report that their family prayed together a few times a week or more often when they were growing up. About four in ten of each group, however, say that their family seldom or never prayed together when they were growing up. Asian respondents and those born outside the United States are particularly likely to report that their family prayed together daily.
- Family members, women and men religious, and priests and seminarians were each asked to select which of 20 religious practices or customs were important to their family when they were growing up. More than half of respondents in each group reported the same five practices or customs as important to their family: attending Mass, grace at meals, religious art (e.g. crucifix, statues, pictures of saints), active participation in parish life, and sacramentals (e.g. cross, medal, prayer card, scapular).

Building a Culture of Vocation in Families

- Religious faith was at least “somewhat” important to most of these families at the time their family member was considering a vocation. Six in ten say the family was attending Mass together weekly and a quarter say the family typically prayed at home together on a daily basis, apart from prayers said at meals.
- In addition to Mass and regular prayer at home, these family members were also engaged in their faith in more public ways. Eight in ten responding family members report that the family was active in parish life, two in three say the family participated in Eucharistic Adoration, and three in five say the family prayed the rosary together, either at home or elsewhere.
- These families also typically ate dinner together on a daily basis and two in three report that the family gathered together at least once a week for activities other than a meal, such as a game or movie night, family discussion, or family prayer.
- More than half report that Catholic media, such as books, movies, and TV shows, were important religious activities in the family. About the same proportion say that volunteer or charitable service in the community were important to the family.

Encouragement and Discouragement of Vocations

- Three in five responding religious and more than two in five responding priests and seminarians admit that starting a discussion with their family about their vocation was not easy. Three in ten responding religious said their mother had spoken to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life and one in five said their father had spoken to them about a vocation. Among diocesan priests and seminarians, four in ten said their

mother had spoken to them about a vocation and three in ten said their father had spoken to them about a vocation.

- Although very few Catholics in general have ever encouraged someone to consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life, more than half of the responding family members in families that have produced a vocation say they encouraged a family member to consider such a vocation. And having had a family member ever speak to them about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life made the discussion about a vocation easier, according to the responding priests, seminarians, and religious. Among those who said their mother had ever broached the topic, more than six in ten report that starting that discussion was easy. Similarly, those whose father had ever spoken to them about a vocation were also more likely to say that starting a family discussion about their vocation was easy.
- When first considering a vocation, at least six in ten seminarians, priests, and men and women religious report receiving “some” or “very much” encouragement from their mothers, fathers, grandparents, and siblings. Mothers and grandparents are more likely than other relatives to have offered “very much” encouragement when respondents were first considering a vocation, with at least a third reporting “very much” encouragement from these family members. Three in ten religious and four in ten priests and seminarians report that their father was “very” encouraging.
- Responding religious, seminarians, and priests report increased levels of encouragement currently in their life and ministry from all relatives. At least four in five report “some” or “very much” support from their mothers, fathers, siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, and two in three report as much support from their cousins.
- Few respondents indicate that a family member ever discouraged them in their vocational discernment, but among those men and women religious who do, about a third indicate that their mother or sibling(s) discouraged them from considering a vocation. Among priests and seminarians, one in six say that sibling(s), aunts/uncles, or their father discouraged them from considering a vocation. Fewer received discouragement from their cousins or grandparents.

Supporting and Promoting Vocation in Families

- More than half of responding family members say they have encouraged a family member to consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life. Most often, it is parents or grandparents who encourage vocational discernment.
- Family members recommend acceptance, encouragement, and support for those considering a vocation. They suggest that families should uphold priesthood and religious life as options for young people when they are exploring and considering their future.

The Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations to Religious Life and Priesthood: A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference

Introduction

This report presents findings from a major study of the influence of families in nurturing vocations to religious life and priesthood. The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to learn from priests, seminarians, women and men religious, and their families about the role of the family in nurturing their vocation to priesthood or religious life. The goal of the research is to provide information that will help families to promote vocations to religious life and priesthood.

For this study, CARA surveyed men and women religious who had entered religious life since 2000 (from lists supplied by the major superiors of U.S. congregations of women and men religious) as well as priests and seminarians who had been accepted into formation for priesthood in dioceses since 2000 (from lists supplied by the vocation director in each U.S. diocese and eparchy). In addition to asking these participants about the influence that their family had on their vocational discernment, the survey also asked respondents to provide contact information for a family member. CARA then contacted those identified family members with an invitation to complete a similar survey to gain insights on the topic from the perspective of the family member. CARA also conducted two focus groups with the family members of these religious, priests, and seminarians to explore more deeply some of the issues relevant to this study as revealed by the survey data.

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The religious, priests, and seminarians that responded to the survey provided CARA with a total of 1,547 names and contact information (either a mailing address or an email) for a family member. CARA then contacted those family members in late February 2015, in both English and Spanish, with an invitation to participate in a brief survey. By the cut-off date in early April, 892 family members had responded to the survey, for a response rate of 58 percent. Another 15 family members participated in one of two focus groups, held in Washington, DC and in Chicago, IL, in May 2015.

Organization of this Report

This report includes findings from a survey of men and women religious who entered religious life in the last 15 years, seminarians and priests who were accepted into formation in

the United States during the same time period, a survey of family members of these seminarians, priests, and men and women religious, and two focus groups of the family members of these men and women. The report compares the findings from these families to other CARA surveys of adult Catholics and to the findings from a national survey of Catholic parents (ages 25 to 45) about their encouragement of vocations to priesthood or religious life, to see if there are characteristics of family life that distinguish these families that have produced a vocation from other Catholic families.

The main body of the report synthesizes the key findings from each of the components of the study and presents the findings in a very accessible manner so that they can be used by families, parishes, and other groups to facilitate discussion of the ways that families encourage and discourage vocational discernment. Appendices to the report separately present detailed analyses and findings from each of the surveys and the focus groups. Those who desire a more detailed analysis should consult the appendices:

- Appendix I: Detailed analysis of the data from the survey of 1,279 men and women religious as well as a complete transcription of the responses to four open-ended questions that were included in the survey.
- Appendix II: Detailed analysis of the data from the survey of 1,352 diocesan priests and seminarians as well as a complete transcription of the responses to four open-ended questions that were included in the survey.
- Appendix III: Complete transcription of the responses to three open-ended questions that were included in the survey of 892 family members of men and women religious, priests, and seminarians.
- Appendix IV: Summary analysis of the key themes that emerged from the two focus groups of family members as well as a complete transcription of both focus groups.

Family Characteristics at the Time of Vocational Discernment

There is no such thing as a “typical” family of a priest or a religious. The purpose of this study is not to discover some secret formula for creating vocations to priesthood or religious life but rather to learn from these family members who have produced vocations to priesthood or religious life some of the common experiences, practices, attitudes, and behaviors of these families. The hope is that the characteristics and experiences of these families will be informative and perhaps instructive to other families who might be wondering if there is a potential vocation to priesthood or religious life in their midst.

Three in four family members who responded to the survey of family members were the parents of a seminarian, a priest, or a religious (55 percent were mothers or stepmothers and 20 percent were fathers or stepfathers). Nearly all the rest were siblings. On average, they first became aware that their family member was considering a vocation in 2003, when that family member was 21 years old.

Nearly all respondents were Catholic (96 percent) at the time they learned of the vocation and nearly all said that religious faith was at least “somewhat” (11 percent) or “very” (88 percent) important to their family. One focus group participant described their family life in these terms:

It was discussed, but not [stressed]. As a family, you’re going to Mass, you’re trying to cultivate some sort of a prayer life. You are trying to get kids to go to confession, to want to go to meaningful liturgies. It’s out there. But it was never, “[Name], did you ever, [Name], did you ever think of?” No, it was something we were just busy doing. You thought if the fruits produced it, you’d be thrilled. And if it didn’t... I just never really thought about it that deeply, until [it happened].

At the same time, another focus group participant cautioned:

My only comment is, I wouldn’t discount the Lord in this whole thing. Because from some of the other sisters that we have met at the convent, so many of them came from non-Catholic homes, with no Catholic exposure. Parents have converted after the fact, things like that. Some parents were totally dead set against it. But regardless of all of the negative influences, [these women] found a vocation. They were called—a very definite calling.

Family Practice of the Faith

In general, these families who have produced a vocation tend to practice their Catholic faith together as a family unit. Six in ten say the family attended Mass weekly during the time their family member was discerning a vocation. More than nine in ten say the Mass they attended was conducted in English.

How often did the family attend Mass?

Seldom or never	1%
A few times a year	2
About once a month	<1
Two or three times a month	2
Once a week	61
More than once a week	35

They also pray together regularly as a family. A quarter report that they prayed daily together as a family, apart from prayers said at meals.

How often did the family typically pray at home together?

Seldom or never	30%
A few times a year	18
A few times a month	13
A few times a week	17
Daily	23

One family member in a focus group described it like this:

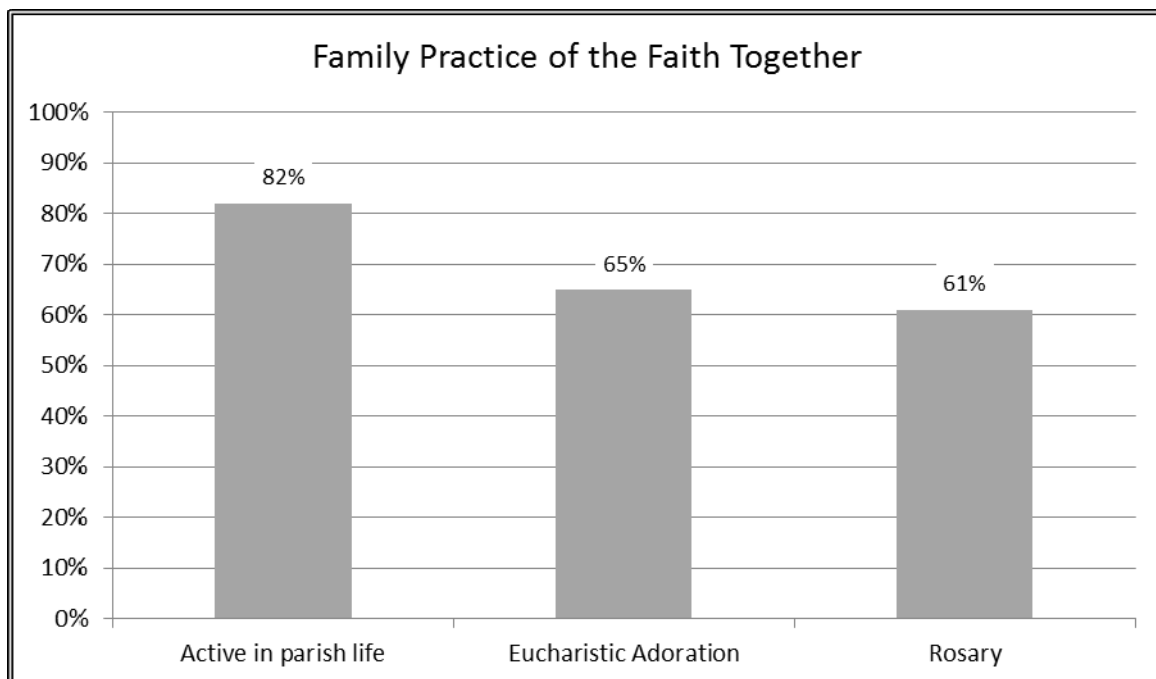
Prayer at meals, you know, grace before meals, but also prayers at bed time. Even as the kids got older and were busy with homework or whatever it was: “Put the homework aside we’re all going to have family prayers. Then you can go back to your homework.”

Another family member described their family prayer practice in these words:

[M]y family was very, very Catholic. My mom had been in the convent. We said the rosary every night. There was a lot of sharing of faith. I tried to instill that within our own family.

In addition to Mass and regular prayer at home, these family members were also engaged in their faith in more public ways. Their Catholic faith was a normal part of their daily life at the time that their family member was discerning a vocation. For example, more than eight in ten were active in parish life apart from Mass or religious services. Two in three say the family

participated in Eucharistic Adoration and three in five say the family prayed the rosary together, either at home or elsewhere.



White family members were more likely than non-white family members to indicate that the family was active in parish life (84 percent compared to 68 percent). On the other hand, non-white family members were more likely than white family members to state that their family prayed the rosary together (74 percent compared to 60 percent). One family member in a focus group told us they had instituted a family rosary on Sunday nights, which they still do with their children. Another family member described their family prayer practice in these words:

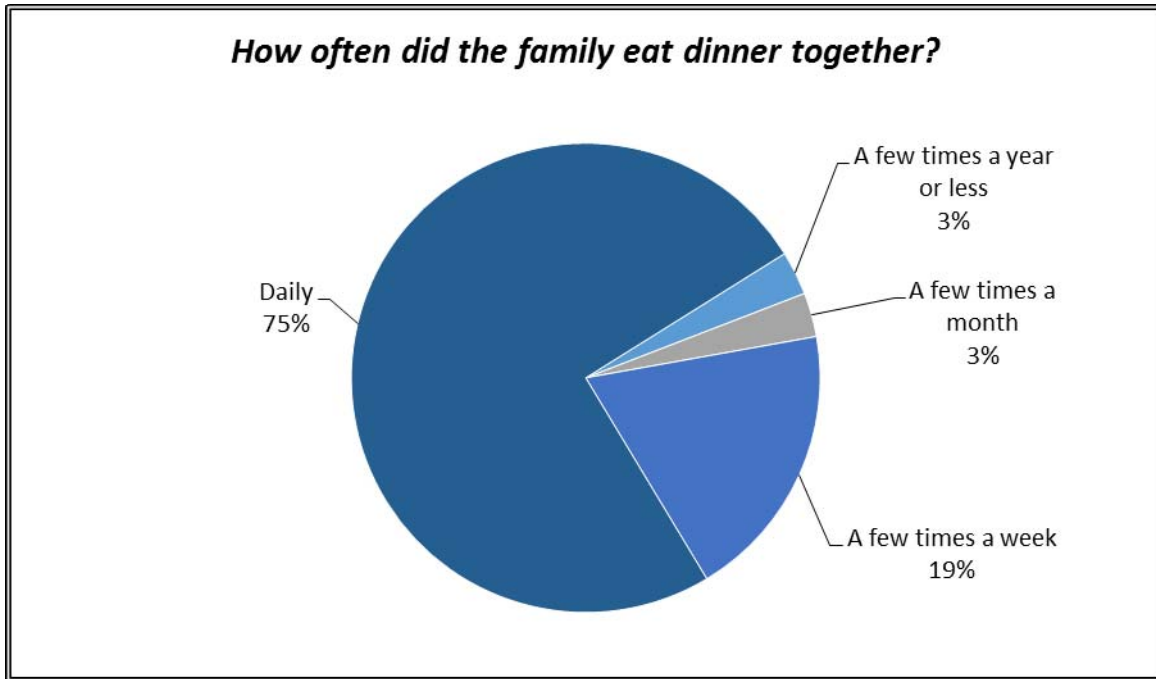
[W]e tried to keep the faith strong in the family with the rosary in May and October after meals. I always said prayers with the children as they were growing up.

By comparison, a fifth of Catholic parents who pray the rosary say they do so together with their family. Similarly, one in five Catholic parents (compared to two-thirds of these family members) say they have participated with their family in Eucharistic Adoration at the parish or elsewhere.¹

¹ The figure is 14 percent for all adult Catholics, according to CARA national surveys. The question for adult Catholics asks only about the respondent's individual behavior and does not refer to them and their family.

Family Meals and Family Time

These responding family members also typically ate dinner together as family – three in four said that the family ate dinner together on a daily basis and another fifth said the family ate dinner together a few times a week.



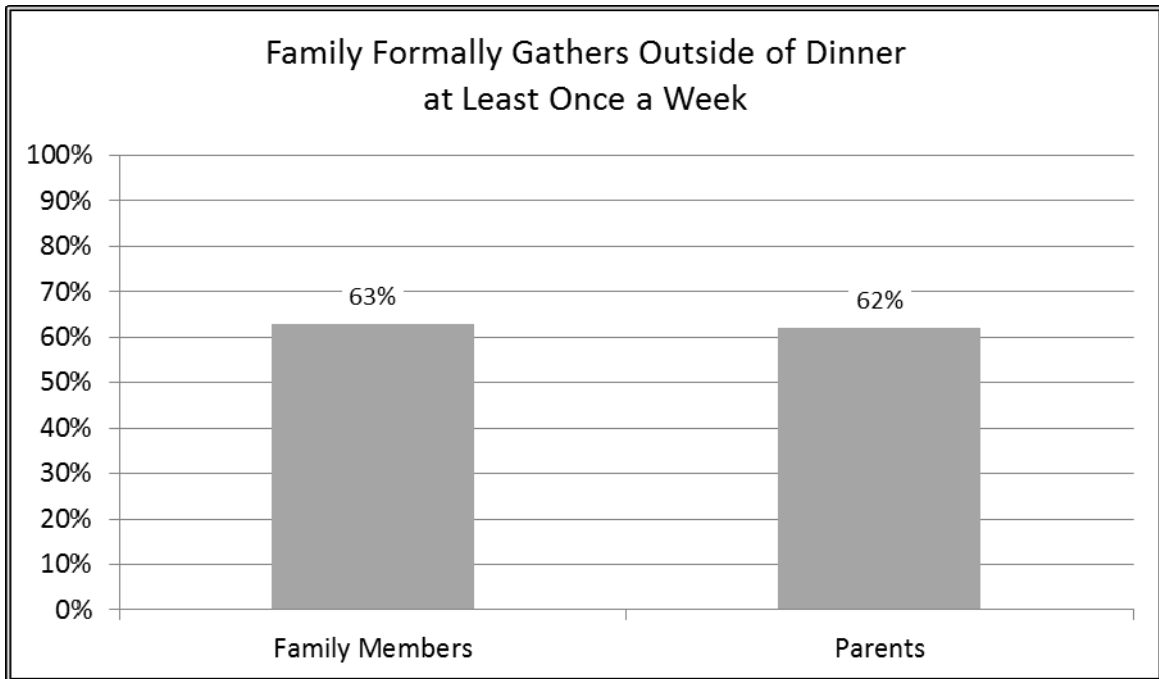
By comparison, just over half of Catholic parents (51 percent) say they eat dinner together as a family every night. Another third (35 percent) eat dinner together as a family a few times a week.

Responding family members who are white are more likely than non-white family members to report that the family ate dinner together on a daily basis during the time that they became aware of the vocation in their family (77 percent compared to 60 percent).

Six in ten responding family members indicated that the family invited sisters, brothers, or priests from the local parish or school for a meal or other social event. Said one family member in a focus group:

We often had priests to dinner. It wasn't like they were separated that much from us. They were friends. So our kids got used to having priests at dinner.

In addition to meals, these family members report that their family gathered together at least once a week for activities other than a meal, such as a game or movie night, family discussion, or family prayer. In this practice, these family members are identical to Catholic parents.



One family member described their family ritual like this:

[G]rowing up, on Fridays we would have, it was known as Catholic reading. To replace the old abstinence that used to be on Fridays we would, as a family, sit and read the Bible, or Liguorian, or whatever religious publications we had. And we do abstain on Fridays from meat. All year long. This is all part of the deal. They don't always like it, but it's Friday.

Important Religious Activities or Customs in the Family

Going to Mass and saying grace were the two practices that nearly all responding family members agreed were important religious activities or customs in the family. The question asked family members to select from among 20 religious activities or customs and identify which were important in the family at the time they became aware that their family member was considering a vocation. More than eight in ten responding family members said that attending Mass and saying grace at meals were important practices in the family. Three in four indicated that the family home contained religious art, such as a crucifix, religious statues, or pictures of saints.

Important Religious Activities or Customs in the Family*

Percentage responding

Mass, or other religious services	92%
Grace before or after meals	82
Religious art (e.g. crucifix, statues, pictures of saints)	75
Active participation in parish life	68
Sacramentals (e.g. cross, medal, prayer card, scapular)	65
Catholic books, periodicals, movies, TV shows	59
Volunteer or charitable service in the community	56
Rosary/novena (individually or as a family)	51
Family prayers for special intentions	45
Eucharistic Adoration	43
Faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups	36
Participation in Catholic organizations (e.g. Knights of Columbus, Altar Society, Legion of Mary, Sodality)	34
Sacred scripture or other spiritual reading	33
Processions (e.g. Via Crucis, Stations of the Cross)	32
Celebrations of particular saints (e.g. St. Joseph)	28
Marian devotions (e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Vietnam, Our Lady of Czestochowa)	22
Catholic advocacy (e.g. peace & justice, poverty, life)	16
Home altars	15
Quinceañeras	2
Other	9
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select all that apply.	

This is how responding family members rated the importance of other religious activities or customs in the family.

- Two in three family members said that active participation in parish life (68 percent) and sacramentals (65 percent) were important to their family.

- Catholic media, such as books, movies, and TV shows were important to six in ten (59 percent). About the same proportion indicated that volunteer or charitable service in the community (56 percent) were important to the family.
- Half of the responding family members said that the rosary/novena (51 percent) and family prayers for special intentions were important.
- Two in five state that Eucharistic Adoration (43 percent) and faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups (36 percent) were important.
- One in three respondents report that participation in Catholic organizations (34 percent), sacred scripture or other spiritual reading (33 percent), processions (32 percent), and celebrations of saints (28 percent) were important to their family.
- Less than one in four state that Marian devotions (22 percent), Catholic advocacy (16 percent), home altars (15 percent), or Quinceañeras (2 percent) were important to their family.

Family Differences According to Race/Ethnicity

White family members are more likely than non-white family members to say that grace before or after meals was an important religious activity in the family.

**Important Religious Activities or Customs in the Family,
by Race/Ethnicity**

	White	Non-white
Grace before or after meals	87%	67%
Religious art	78	69
Active participation in parish life	73	51
Sacramentals	69	58
Processions	32	47
Marian devotions	21	36
Catholic advocacy	17	9
Home altars	12	38
Quinceañeras	1	13

- White family members are also more likely than non-white family members to say the home contained religious art (78 percent compared to 69 percent), the family participated actively in parish life (73 percent compared to 51 percent), sacramentals were important to the family (69 percent compared to 58 percent), and Catholic advocacy was important to the family (17 percent compared to 9 percent).

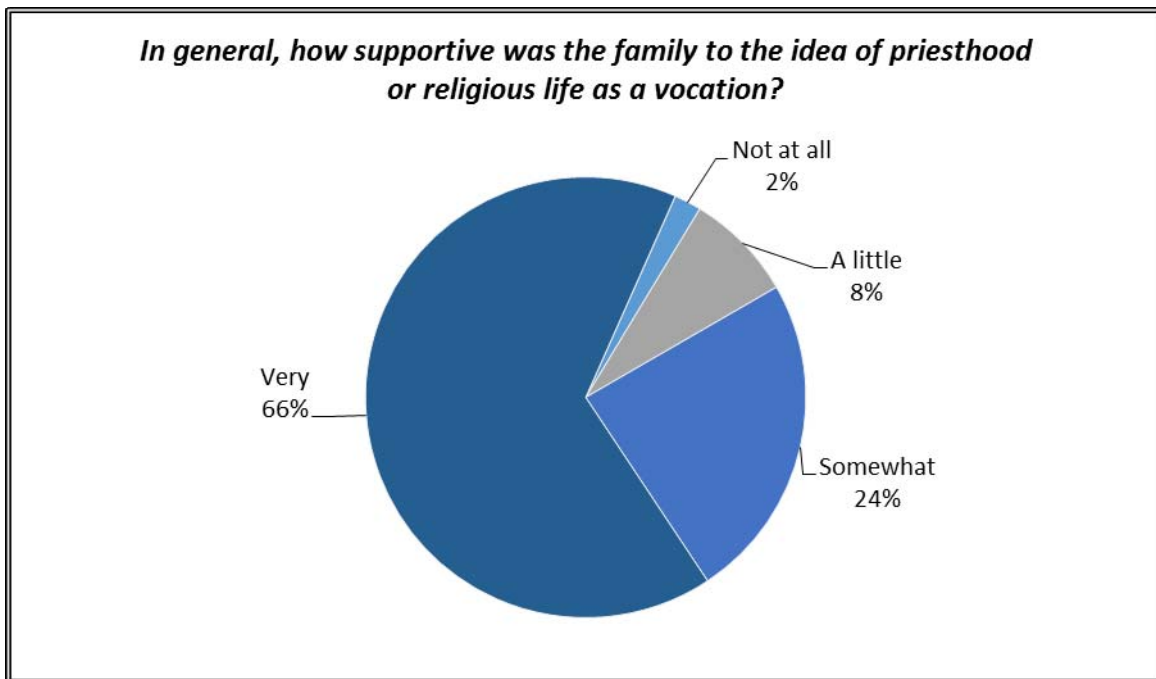
- Non-white family members are more likely than white family members to indicate that processions (47 percent compared to 32 percent), Marian devotions (36 percent compared to 21 percent), home altars (38 percent compared to 12 percent), and Quinceañeras (13 percent compared to 1 percent) were important religious activities or customs in the family.

Consideration of a Vocation

While nearly all responding family members indicate that the family was at least somewhat supportive of the idea of priesthood or religious life as a vocation, sometimes the realization that this is happening within their own family takes them a bit by surprise. In a focus group, the brother of a woman who entered religious life described his family's experience of learning about her vocation in these words:

I would categorize our experience as not a good experience or a bad experience but was really surprising for us. My father is an engineer, I am an engineer, [my sister] is an engineer, and she was very business oriented. She was in Boston for her Master's degree in administration and education, and it was surprising.

In fact, nine in ten responding family members indicate that the family was supportive of the idea of a vocation to priesthood or religious life at the time that they became aware of the vocation of their child or sibling.



Two in three said they were “very” supportive of the idea and another quarter said they were “somewhat” supportive. Said one focus group member, who was the sister of a religious brother:

My reactions were probably a little bit different because it's my brother, not my child. At the time he entered the order I was not yet married, did not have children, so I had, I think, a different perspective than even I feel now. So, in a way, it was not a surprise at all. He was a little boy who would “play church” when he was, like, four. He went through a period when he started bowing in front of things as if they were all altars.

Family Experience with Vocations

One in five responding family members report that the family had other members who were a priest or a religious at the time that they learned of the vocation of their child or sibling. This is about double the rate for all Catholics nationally.² Some of the focus group participants described their experience of other family members who were priests or religious:

One of their aunts is a [Place] Dominican. It wasn't like that was such a strange idea in their heads.

The fact that in my family were priests and sisters, it seems that it was easier for her to make the decision. Among other friends, the decision to become a sister is very strange, but for her it was not. I remember a long time ago seeing that the brother of my grandfather was a priest. All my life I've been seeing fathers and sisters so it's normal. The fact that they were there was something that I think made it easier for her to make the decision.

Of course she has a sister, a nun, who left the convent after 15 or 20 years. I have an aunt who left the convent after about 20 years. So we have examples of people who didn't like it.

In fact, many of the family members who responded to the survey say that they gave at least some thought to a vocation to priesthood or religious life for themselves. Slightly less than half (46 percent) say they have considered a religious vocation. One of the focus group participants also mentioned that both she and her husband had considered a religious vocation.

Every year during the summer we had a summer vocation program. Even me, I thought that I was going to be a nun. I was in the Catholic elementary school, middle school, and high school run by the nuns. So at one point in time, before he asked me to be his wife, I thought that I was going to be a nun. It was when I met him that he changed my mind.

² Nationally, CARA finds that one in ten never married Catholics ages 14 or older say that while they were growing up they had a priest, brother, seminarian, or woman religious in their extended family. . (Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier. *Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2012.)

(Laughter). My father-in-law was not happy. He did not accept us, because he thought that I was the one who changed him from becoming a priest, when actually it was him who changed me from wanting to be a nun!

Another focus group participant related her somewhat tentative exploration with her own mother of the idea of a vocation to religious life. She appreciated the fact that her mother did not insist that marriage was the only acceptable option and she says that she now tries to keep that awareness in mind with her own children:

I do remember having an explicit conversation with my own parents about me; I'm guessing that my brother did with my parents as well. It was after 7th grade, and some nuns had come to our Catholic school, missionaries. I was really excited about it, and saying, "I think I want to be a missionary in Africa." And my mom was like, "A nun would be fine, not so sure about the missionary part, and you know there's bugs there, right? You're not really an outdoorsy person." Maybe that was not going to be right for me. But I remember my mom being very explicit about the idea that marriage was not the default. It's something that I am trying to keep in mind with my own kids. It's challenging because it's so easy to say "when you have kids someday," "when you get married someday," "when you meet the right girl," to my little five-year-old. And maybe none of that is the right thing for him; maybe he's going to grow up to become a priest or a brother like his uncle. But it is very much our society's default that you're going to pair up. The challenge is kind of trying to socialize the idea that there's this other path you may be called to all along. Not deliberate, but not just pushing the default. Making space too for [consideration of a vocation]. Remember there are other choices.

These family members express a greater level of personal consideration of a vocation than is found among Catholics in general. In a 2012 CARA survey of never-married Catholics ages 14 and older, 12 percent of male respondents said they had considered becoming a priest or brother at least "a little" seriously. Ten percent of female respondents said they had considered becoming a religious sister at least "a little" seriously.

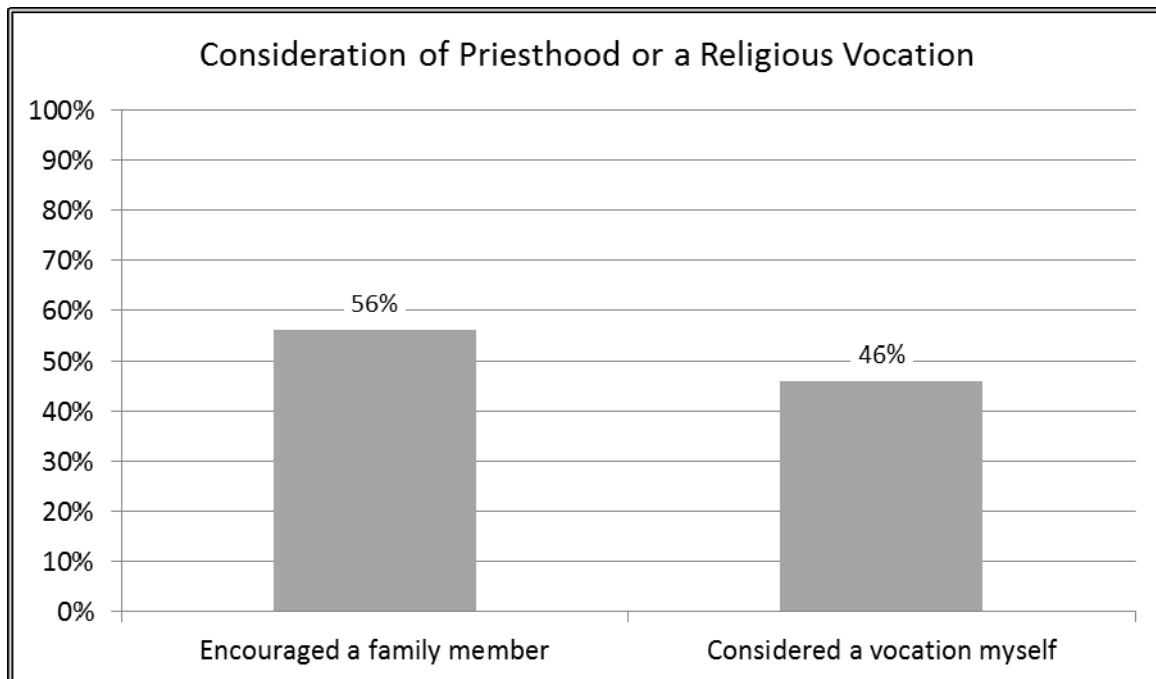
Family Encouragement of Vocations

Catholics do not typically see encouragement of vocations as something that is their responsibility. In a 2008 CARA survey of a national random sample of U.S. Catholic adults, just 6 percent say they have ever encouraged someone to consider a vocation to priesthood, and even fewer say they ever encouraged a woman (4 percent) or a man (3 percent) to consider a vocation to religious life.³ Likewise, in the 2012 CARA survey of never-married Catholics ages 14 and older, few respondents indicated that they had ever encouraged someone they know to become a priest (5 percent), a religious brother (3 percent), or a religious sister (3 percent).⁴

³ Gray, Mark M. and Paul M. Perl. *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2008.

⁴ Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier. *Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2012.

Nevertheless, in the same 2008 survey, about a third of U.S. Catholic adults say they would encourage their own child to pursue a vocation to ordained or religious life.⁵ As shown in the figure below, more than half (56 percent) of responding family members report they have encouraged a family member to consider a religious vocation. By contrast, very few respondents in the survey of Catholic parents (9 percent) say they have ever spoken to their child about a vocation to priesthood or religious life. About six in ten parents between the ages of 25 and 45, however, say they would encourage their son or daughter if they spoke to them about a vocation.



Nevertheless, several of the family members in the focus groups said the topic of a vocation was never discussed at home. The mother of a priest said, “I would say [we did not discuss a vocation to priesthood], not before he expressed interest in it himself.” Another sister of a religious brother said, “I don’t know if I ever had an explicit conversation [with my brother about a vocation] until he was an adult.” A mother of a priest described her initial conversation with her son in these words:

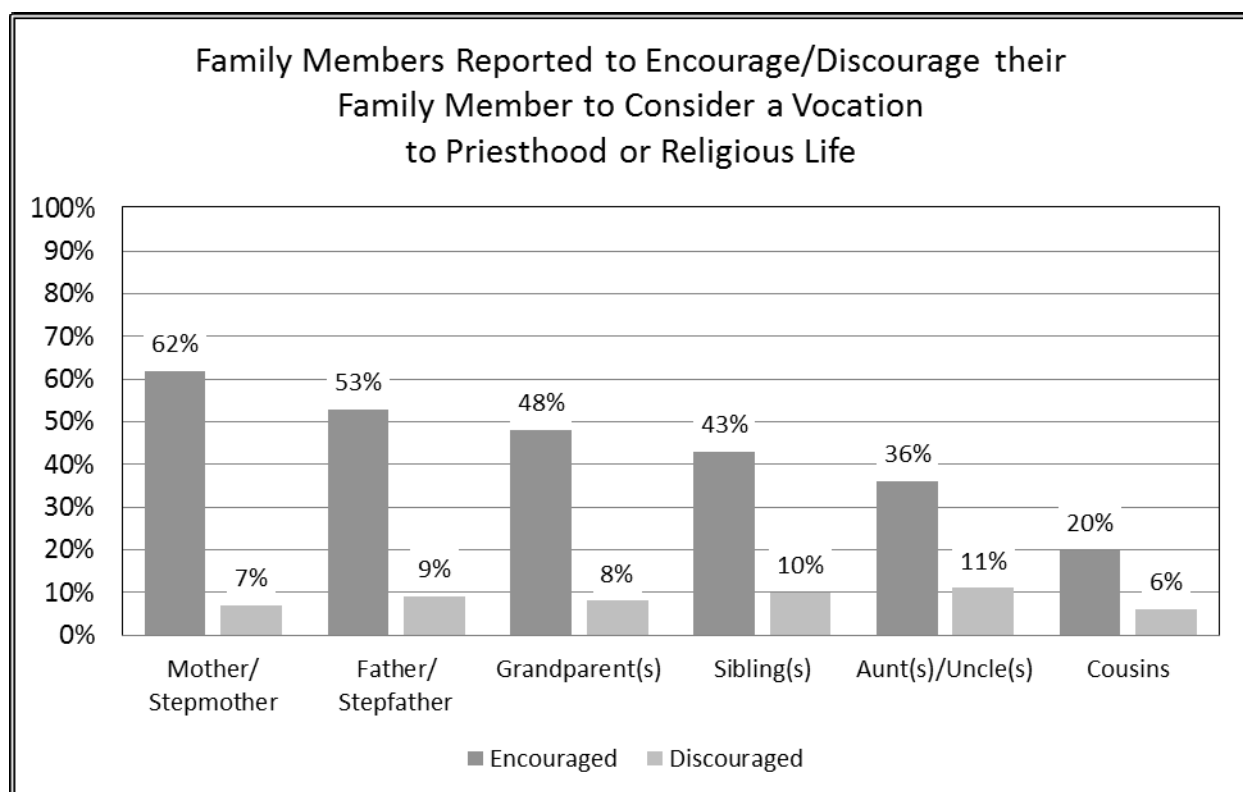
My son was going for his basic college degree. We suggested that because he was good at numbers, why didn’t he take business? He graduated with a degree in business, and was employed for a couple of years one with [Company] and then he switched to [Company]. Whenever he came home, I would say, “How is everything?” He would say, “Ehhh.” He said a month later, “I’m going for my master’s.” I said, “Oh, you’re going

⁵ This question asks whether you would encourage your child to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun, or sister. Inclusion of deacons as a vocational option (since deacons can be married) probably inflates the affirmative response to this question. Gray, Mark M. and Paul M. Perl. *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2008.

for your master's in business?" He said, "No, mom...theology." "Theology???" (Laughter). "Yes, mom." I said, "Why theology?" It did not register to me—nothing registered until he said, "I think I want to try to become a priest. I have been visiting the seminary. But don't tell Dad."

Which Family Members Encourage/Discourage Vocations

Family members were asked to reflect on the experience of their child/sibling who became a priest or religious and indicate whether any of the family members of that person ever encouraged or discouraged him or her from considering a vocation. According to these responding family members, parents were the most encouraging of a vocation. Six in ten reported that the mother or stepmother of the child/sibling who became a priest or religious encouraged that vocation. About half (53 percent) indicated that the father or stepfather encouraged the consideration of a vocation.



Other family members were reported to be somewhat less likely to have encouraged the consideration of a vocation.

- Less than half of responding family members report that grandparent(s) (48 percent) or sibling(s) (43 percent) encouraged their family member to consider a vocation.

- Over a third report that their family member's aunt(s) or uncle(s) encouraged them and one in five say that cousins encouraged their family member to consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Fewer responding family members reported that any of the other family members discouraged the consideration of a vocation in their child/sibling.

- About one in ten reported that aunts/uncles or siblings of the person considering a vocation were discouraging of that vocational consideration.
- Even fewer, less than 10 percent, of any of the other family members listed were described as discouraging the vocational consideration.

Family Differences According to Race/Ethnicity

Responding family members who are white are more likely than non-white family members to indicate that the father or stepfather of the person considering a vocation encouraged the vocation. Likewise, non-white family members are more likely than white family members to say the father or stepfather discouraged the vocation.

**Encouragement/Discouragement of Consideration of a Vocation
by Race/Ethnicity**

Encouraged	White	Non-white
Father/stepfather	54%	42%
Cousin(s)	18	32
Discouraged		
Father/stepfather	8	19

Non-white family members are also more likely than white family members to say that cousin(s) encouraged their family members to consider a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

In the focus groups, family members described priests, rather than family, as the more natural conduit for a person discerning a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

For us back home, more often than not it's maybe the priest who would then ask the child by any chance if he might not be considering a vocation. Maybe sometimes the parents would not encourage it.

Definitely the family—we never encouraged that [consideration of a vocation] because, well, we think that everyone is free and they can do whatever they want. At that time she had a boyfriend. Her connection with the priests in each university was very important, very, very determining in her decision.

On the other hand, one parent spoke of priests as discouraging of vocations.

One thing that came to my mind, even though we don't have a son who is a priest, and maybe you can speak to this. I sometimes wonder if my son is being discouraged to the priesthood because when you go into Mass the priest is kind of the center of attention. [A young man may feel], "I don't have that kind of personality to get up there and to be in a speaking role." It's almost like the priest has to entertain, to get the guys coming back in, to get the crowd coming back next week. I think that might have something to do with a turnoff from becoming a priest, for a man.

Several of the family members in the focus groups did talk about ways that the family and others may have discouraged the consideration of a vocation.

After [Name] was accepted [into formation] we didn't really say anything until he got the letter saying, "You're accepted, you're starting August 28." I had a lot of reaction from people my age, friends saying "He's what?" "Why is he going to do that?" Although it affected me, I don't think it had any impact on [Name]'s decision-making process because he had not heard them. We definitely got strange reactions from some people.

We had some negativity but it had no impact on the decision. The negativity was worthless. It hurts you, and then you would wonder, "Why would you say that?" Some would say, "He will meet somebody [to marry], don't worry about it."

We got the same reaction, "Maybe later on he'll decide the priesthood is not for him." We don't say a word. We let it go. We just pray for whatever God wishes him to be.

The fact that she was far from the family helped a lot for her. She had the chance to tell our parents and she told me, "Please don't tell until I am 100 percent sure." So for two years, the only people who were talking were my parents and myself, not my grandparents, no uncles, no aunts. They didn't know until she was 100 percent on that path.

Characteristics of Responding Family Members

Is there a difference between the family members who have a close relative who entered priesthood or religious life and other Catholics? Is there a difference between these family members and other Catholic families? To explore these questions, CARA compares the characteristics of these family members to the characteristics of other Catholics in general (from recent CARA Catholic Polls) as well as to Catholic parents ages 25 to 45 (from a 2014 survey that CARA conducted for Holy Cross Family Ministries). Similarities and differences are described below.

Age and Ethnicity

The average age of these responding family members is 57 years old, about the same as other Catholics nationally but older, on average, than the Catholic parents surveyed. Nearly all responding family members are Caucasian/European American/white. Six percent identified as Hispanic or Latino and less than one in ten respondents identified as some other race or ethnicity. This group is a little less diverse than U.S. Catholic adults in general and much less diverse than U.S. Catholic parents ages 25-45.

Race/Ethnicity of Family Members, Catholic Parents (25-45), and Catholic Adults

	Family Members	Parents Survey	All Catholic Adults
White, non-Hispanic	88%	40%	62%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	6	54	32
Other	6	6	6

Because so few family members described themselves as something other than white, any comparisons according to race/ethnicity in this report must be limited to white/non-white.

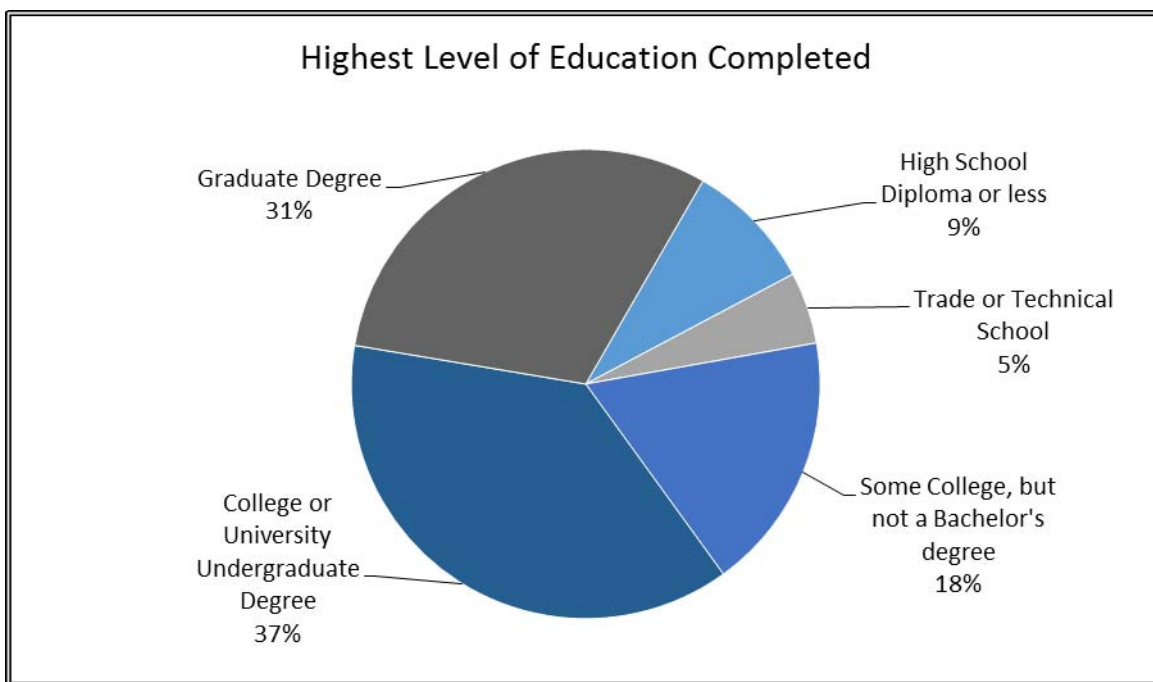
Language

Virtually all white responding family members (99 percent) state that English is the primary language spoken by the family at home. Non-white respondents are nearly equally divided by language: 47 percent declare that the family primarily uses English at home while 53 percent speak another language; most commonly that language is Spanish.

The responding family members also report that the Masses or other religious services they attend are very similar to the languages they speak at home. Almost all of the white respondents attend a Mass or religious service where English is the primary language used. About half of the non-white family members report that they most often attend a Mass or religious service in English.

Education

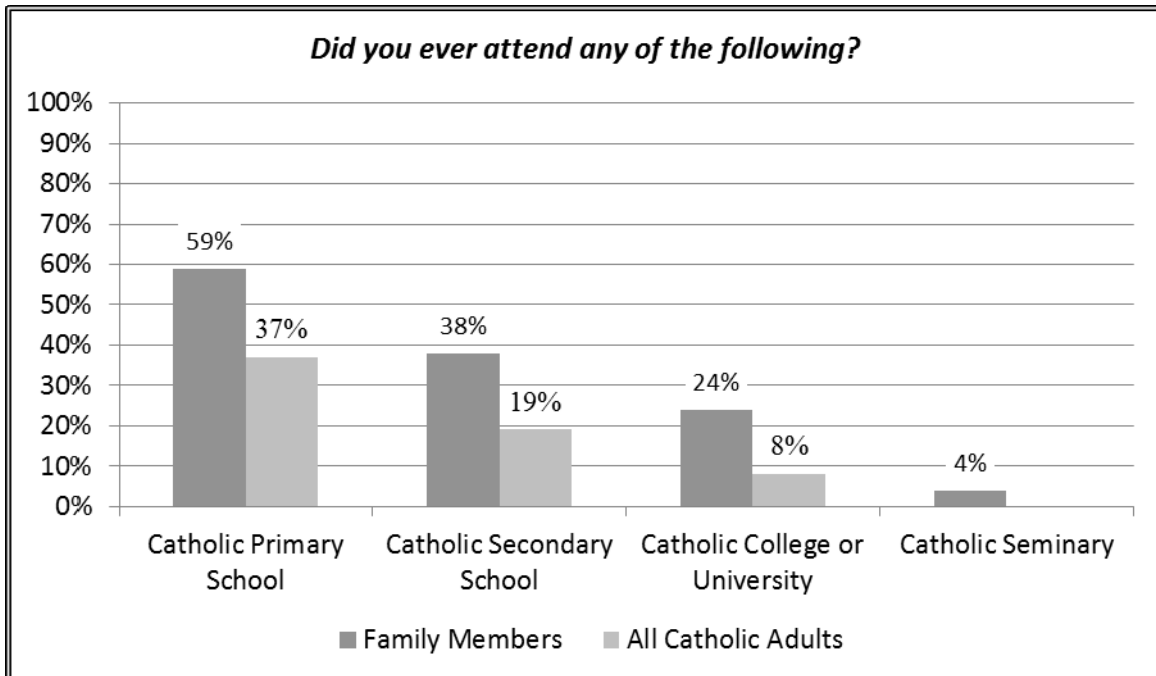
Responding family members are highly educated. Some 87 percent have at least some college education. Among those who finished college, close to half completed a graduate degree.



This level of education is substantially higher than is found among U.S. Catholic adults in general or among Catholic parents, for whom about three in ten have completed college. This is to be expected, however, considering the older average age of these responding family members and the fact that some proportion of the Catholic parents likely have not yet completed their education.

Catholic Schooling

Family members are much more likely than U.S. Catholic adults in general to have attended Catholic schools for some or all of their schooling. Six in ten responding family members attended a Catholic primary school and about two in five attended a Catholic high school. A quarter attended a Catholic college or university and 4 percent attended a Catholic seminary. By comparison, 37 percent of U.S. Catholic adults attended a Catholic primary school and about one in five attended a Catholic high school. Less than one in ten attended a Catholic college or university and the question of attendance at a Catholic seminary was not asked on CARA polls of U.S. Catholic adults.



- Responding family members of a diocesan priest or seminarian are more likely than those who are family members of a religious to have attended a Catholic secondary school.
- White, non-Hispanic family members (63 percent) are more likely than non-white family members (51 percent) to have attended a Catholic primary school.

Importance of the Faith in Daily Life

Other CARA surveys of adult Catholics suggest that these responding family members consider their Catholic faith as more central to their daily life than do Catholics in general. Six in ten responding family members say that their Catholic faith is the most important part of their life and another third say that faith is among the most important parts of their life.

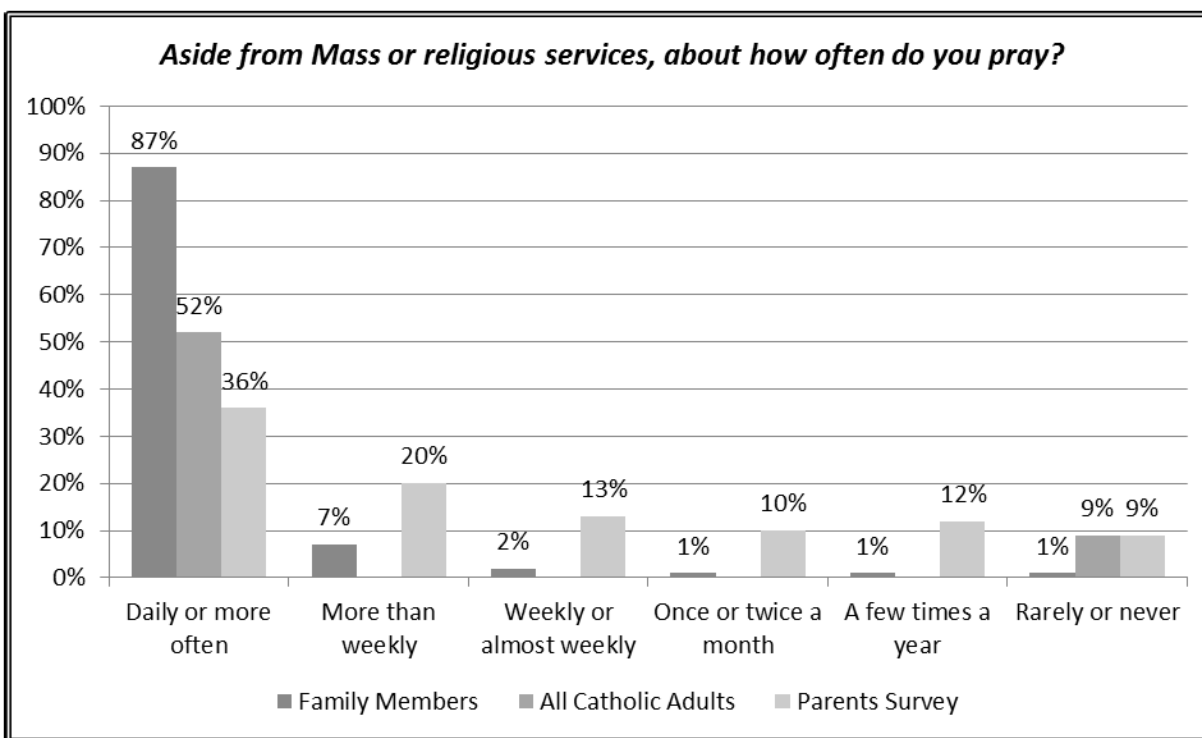
How important is your Catholic faith in your daily life? Is it...

	Family Members	Parents Survey	All Catholic Adults
The most important part of your life	58%	15%	14%
Among the most important parts of your life	34	34	27
Important, but so are many other areas of your life	7	39	40
Not too important in your life	1	9	13
Not important in your life at all	1	3	6

By comparison, about half of Catholic parents ages 25-45 say their Catholic faith is at least “among the most important” parts of their life. Among all Catholic adults, about four in ten rate their faith as at least that important in their daily life.

Prayer

Almost all of the responding family members report that they pray more than weekly (95 percent). Nearly nine in ten (87 percent) pray at least once a day or more often. These family members report a more engaged prayer life than do other Catholic parents or other Catholic adults in general.⁶

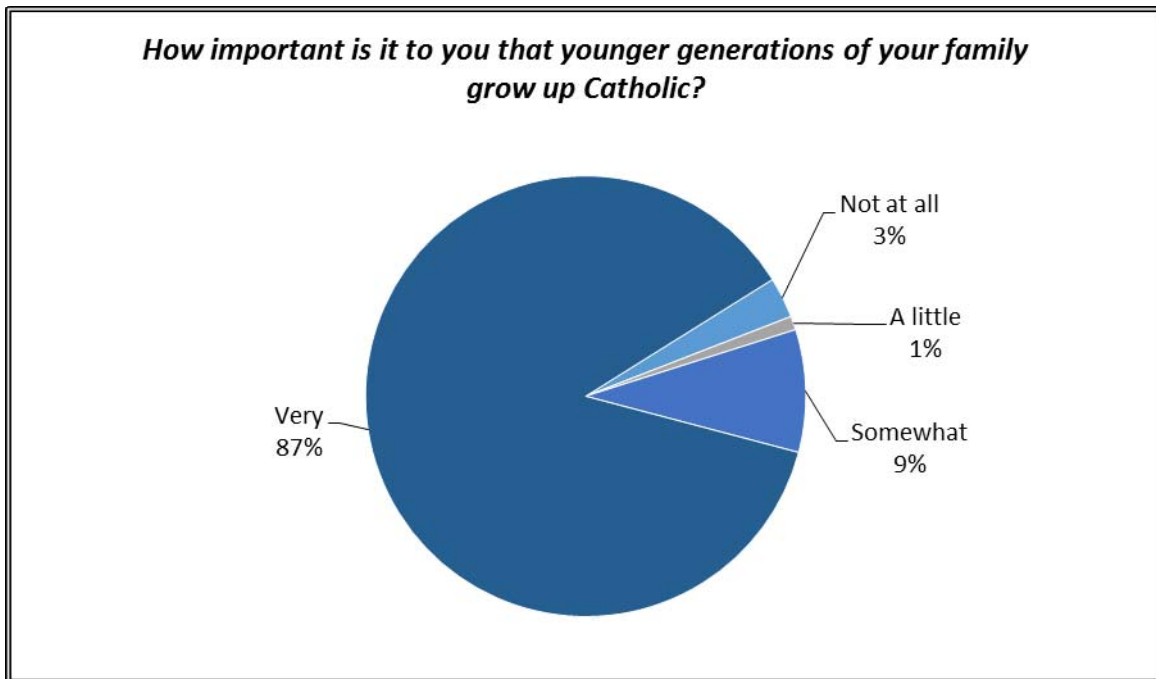


- Seven in ten responding family members report that they usually pray individually. Just 2 percent report that they pray with other family members, and 27 percent say they pray both individually and with family about equally.
- This pattern is very similar to that reported by Catholic parents: three in four parents pray individually, 7 percent pray with other family members, and 17 percent pray individually and with family about equally.

⁶ U.S. Catholic adults are less likely than these responding family members but more likely than Catholic parents to report praying daily or more often. They are equal to Catholic parents in the proportion saying they rarely or never pray. Data from U.S. Catholic adults are from a 2011 study reported in D’Antonio, Dillon, and Gautier, *American Catholics in Transition*.

Importance of Passing on the Faith

Almost all of the responding family members agree that it is at least “somewhat” important the younger generations of their family grow up Catholic. Almost nine in ten (87 percent) feel that it is “very important.”



Compared to U.S. Catholic adults in general, these family members feel more strongly that it is important that younger generations of the family grow up Catholic. Among U.S. Catholic adults, four in ten “strongly agree” that it is important to them that younger generations of the family grow up Catholic. Another 37 percent “agree” with the statement. Finally, 16 percent “disagree” that it is important to them that younger generations of the family grow up Catholic and 7 percent “strongly disagree” with the statement.⁷

⁷ Data for U.S. Catholic adults are from a 2011 study reported in D’Antonio, Dillon, and Gautier, *American Catholics in Transition*.

Misconceptions about Priesthood and Religious Life

Family members were asked to reflect on any misconceptions about priesthood and/or religious life that may have changed since their family member entered the seminary or religious life. They were invited to respond in their own words to this question:

After your family member entered the seminary or religious life, what misconceptions about priesthood and/or religious life changed among family members?

The responses to this question have been analyzed and grouped into the following categories. Representative examples of comments within each category are presented here.

No misconceptions

Two in five participants wrote that they had no misconceptions about the priesthood or religious life. Examples include:

Because my wife and I were involved in the Catholic faith and our children were raised in Catholic schools, I feel there were no misconceptions about the priesthood.

Cannot think of any misconceptions

Even those who may not have understood religious life or did not encourage religious life, never really had anything against religious life. No real misconceptions of great significance.

Fortunately for our son, his parents had many religious as friends and coworkers. Many of the common misconceptions had been cleared way before he ever made the commitment to enter. More importantly as he was discerning to enter the seminary I made it a point to discuss important issues impacting the priesthood in our society and made sure to connect him to those religious that were close to the family and would share an honest view of religious life.

Had no misconceptions, still have none

I am not aware of any misconceptions we had.

Distance/impact on the family

One in seven stated they had misconceptions about the family member's distance from the family or what impact their vocation would have on their family. Examples of this are:

Ability to contact religious.

Before, we thought a priest/religious became no longer a family member if s/he entered the seminary or religious life. In the other words, s/he is gone!

Both my husband and I are converts so our extended families were very puzzled by our daughter's entry into religious life. We have been surprised (and delighted) to be warmly embraced by her community; and thrilled that we can e-mail and phone our daughter at regular intervals.

Everyone believed that our daughter would still be as much a part of our family life as she had been previously—visiting at Christmas, Easter, birthdays, Baptisms, Confirmations, weddings. It wasn't until she entered the convent that we all realized her Order is now her family; we only get to see her at specified times that are set aside as visiting days (these don't include any of the above mentioned times).

Family had to realize that Sister would never spend a holiday with them again. She would be with her community; this has greatly hurt her sister.

How open the Sisters of St. Cecilia have been to the family. They have shown us that religious life is a way of life like any other choice in life. We've supported our daughter's decision to join the Dominican Life. We have learned to love all the Sisters and miss them terribly when we aren't there.

Community

One in ten respondents mentioned a misconception they had about the community their relative was going to join. Examples include:

For non-Catholic sister in laws, the friendliness of the sisters

Her father was upset but has become very supportive and proud of her vocation. Her mother did not encourage a religious vocation because of the sad state of convents.

I, as his mother, accepted my son entering seminary and found I had misconceived ideas about the types of young men entering the priesthood

That it is not the stuffy and undesirable institution that we grew up believing. We have been able to see the wonderful life that sisters can lead in a new, fresh order.

That sisters/religious were only old. That they were unhappy or grumpy and irrelevant.

Priests/religious are normal people

Slightly less than one in ten stated they had misconceptions about priests and religious being normal people. Some examples of those statements are:

A more realistic look at priestly life being that of one, like yourself, called to service. Realizing they will have struggles, they are human. We did not have very much personal contact/interaction with our parish priests outside of church/school. So like many, our

misperceptions about priests would be due to not knowing them well and only seeing the Sunday priest.

A nun leads a very ordinary life.

Being called does not equate to holiness. It's a process for him just as it is for all of us. And he's not there yet, but neither am I!

[Family member] would be nothing but religious in every way. But they are still human, they can get upset, impatient and angry. They apologize more quickly.

Grandparents saw that she didn't become a different person, but was joyfully herself.

Other misconceptions

Less than one in ten stated other misconceptions than the subjects mentioned above. These include: the fulfillment or joy of the priesthood/religious life, options/rules of a priest/religious, the process of formation that priests and religious go through, and celibacy or loneliness of the priesthood/religious life.

[Family member's] brothers and sister were very encouraging as they saw how happy he was in whatever he did or wherever the [Order] sent him.

Grandparents thought it would be a very hard life. This changed once they saw how joyful my son was and how he excelled in college.

Grandmother thought that he couldn't leave after he started and really didn't like the idea of him starting even though she seemed to encourage him to join by constantly showing him pictures of relatives who were priests.

Dispelled ignorance about formation, expectations of and support for potential future priests. Learned that discerning out of the priesthood is not considered bad or a failure.

Entering seminary is a discernment process.

The idea that it is taking the fun out of life has been a changed misconception among family members. That it would be lonely and sad. That it is a bad idea to become a priest and/or religious.

All the siblings suddenly were asking questions about celibacy, are you sure you want to do this your whole life, how much do you get paid, can you ever wear regular clothes? I noticed pride creeping into the siblings lives that their brother was so sure about what he was doing.

I thought it was an easy life. I now have a great sense of all the goodness and challenges that accompany a religious life.

Future of Priesthood and Religious Life

Family members were asked to reflect on any worries they have about their child/sibling and his or her vocation. They were invited to respond in their own words to this question:

When you think about the future of priesthood and religious life, what worries do you have about your family member and her/his vocation?

The responses to this question have been analyzed and grouped into the following categories. Representative examples of comments within each category are presented here.

Not worried/hopeful

Three in ten respondents say they are not worried about the future of their family member or the future of the priesthood or religious life. Some examples of these comments follow:

As I see my son developing an interior life of prayer and a love of Jesus Christ, I have much peace knowing that this is what will sustain him. He also needs a strong fraternity of brothers (seminarians and priests) with whom he can share struggles and he has a solid group of seminarian friends at present. This is so important as his father was never able to talk freely about his faith in our home. I felt this was a huge obstacle and part of our son's struggle. And good priests and family friends can stave off loneliness.

As long as he is happy I have no worries about it. It is the life he has chosen and I am proud of him.

At the moment, I do not have any concerns. Hope that he makes good choices and follows the correct path during his journey. May others around him nurture him and believe in him as The Lord believes in him.

Do not have any worries about his vocation.

I am not worried at all about her vocation. She is in God's hands and I pray regularly for her faithfulness to her vows. She is so happy being a religious sister—there is no need to worry.

I believe she is happy and therefore I'm not worried about her.

I don't worry about my son at all. I'm confident that he knows what he is doing and will be an excellent priest.

Persecution

Two in ten wrote about their fear of their family member being persecuted, either from the culture or from within the Church in regard to the child abuse scandals. Some of their answers are:

As the divergence between the Church and society widens, I'm concerned that the religious might be among the first to face persecution.

Discrimination/violence because of his vocation, the values and beliefs he professes.

Her safety

His safety is a concern with the persecutions of Christians worldwide

I am concerned about the direction our world and especially our nation is going regarding it's intolerance toward Catholics and other Christians. I am concerned for his safety.

I think my son will make a wonderful priest, but I pray to our Blessed Mother that she will protect him from any false accusations. There are untrustworthy people out there who want to hurt the Catholic faith.

Misconceptions of priests and their Catholic duties. Also the bad images that priests have received due to past legal issues that keep coming up in the news.

Over-work/stress

Slightly less than two in ten expressed worry that their family member will be over-worked or stressed, mostly because of a dwindling number of priests/religious. Their responses are provided:

All the work and time they put into a day. I worry about the priests getting burned out.

Because of the shortage of priests, I am concerned that he will become "burned" out or frustrated.

Burnout. Not specifically him, but I see the wear and tear on priests, no matter the age. Some older men can't wait to retire so that they can "finally" just "be a priest." There seems to be a lot expected of them with meetings and participation in groups. Add to that the daily administration of (generally more than one) parish plus 'on the road' time and being a shepherd. It all takes a physical & mental toll. Priests have to take from themselves in order to fulfill all these responsibilities. It seems they have very little down time. Granted, some are better at dealing with time constraints and managing stress.

Due to the shortage of priests/religious, there is a high demand in parishes. I do worry that the work will be too much for one person to handle.

Having enough time to rest/re-energize during a week of 12 to 13 hour days of ministry.

I am concerned that there will not be enough sisters to maintain their order.

I don't want him to experience burnout and/or loneliness. Priests have so many stresses in their lives. Our culture is very challenging and he must be very strong spiritually, mentally, and physically.

Loneliness

One in ten mentioned something about their family members being lonely, either currently since they do not have a family or later when they are older and have less family to turn to. Some examples of their responses are:

Being alone

Being isolated from the real world and not being allowed to visit family regularly

He is younger than most of his order and that must be isolating

I hope he will not be lonely

I often worry about him becoming lonely or depressed at times because of trying to help others and not thinking of himself. We have visited the seminary home in [Place] several times and our son never seems lonely with the group of students, priests and externs that live together daily. Everyone seems to genuinely care about each other at the house in [Place].

I worry about what happens when he's old and he has no immediate family to take care of him. I worry about him being lonely and alone.

I worry that a priest's life is lonely. While a priest spends much time with people, they still tend to live by themselves and do not have a partner to share things with. I'm concerned about what I perceive to be a priest's lack of control over their life.

Lack of encouragement or support

One in ten express a concern that their family member will not be properly encouraged or supported by their parishioners, diocese, or religious institute. Some of their responses are:

Being placed in an area where the parish isn't supportive and strong in the faith....but...that may be the reason they are there. Typical parent worries. But there is a comfort knowing God is in control and [Name] trusts in his will. And all struggles are

about “Our/Her formation. Her mother house is in [Place] so distance is a concern, but we love [Place].....

For her to be taken good care of and be treated equally.

How they are taken care of in times of serious illness or in their old age.

Just that she will continue to be taken care of as far as health and basic needs.

Retirement years.

My hope is that he continues to be happy, meaning a good assignment, a supportive pastor, etc. Since entering the seminary, he's been the happiest I've known him to be. So I hope that continues.

New vocations to religious life are plentiful currently, and the support has been strong. They are not striking out alone into the wilderness, since so many are joining. The temptation could be for individuals not to realize their irreplaceable value. The temptation could be for the laity to become lax in prayer support, since there is no longer a crisis of having no vocations in the Church. I think the year of consecrated life comes at an opportune moment to bring additional support to religious and priests.

Retirement security.

Missing their family

Slightly less than one in ten expressed a concern that their family member would miss their family for various reasons, including the distance from their family or the fact that they are overworked/too busy to see them. Examples of their responses include:

Ability to stay in close contact with family

Being apart from him as he is assigned out of our city.

Her missing her family so much. We are a very close family and do many things together as a family. If I'm not here will other family members pay attention to her the way I do. Who will take care of her if she would have a serious illness?

I feel worried that while my parents are supportive of my brother at this moment, they don't necessarily understand that he isn't exactly like them. My family has always been very Catholic and fully accepted the decision that he made, but I feel that one or both of my parents may become a bit jealous of the time that he must dedicate to the service; and that his “duty” to attend family gatherings may not always be plausible.

I think my biggest worry would be my personal attachment to my sister, in a sense that she can be called to serve the Church anywhere. Meaning that I might not be able to see

her or be with her as much as I would like to. However, despite the distance she has always been there for support. I know that she will be well taken care of wherever she may be sent to.

I worry about her relationship with her siblings being severed, despite her attempts to remain connected. They have all pretty much rejected her choice and don't like to be around her anymore.

I worry about my son being far away from his family. We are a very close family. I worry about his safety if he is sent to another country.

Keep their faith/stay with the vocation

Slightly less than one in ten stated they are worried about their family member's faith. This is usually because the priest is overworked or they will become disillusioned with the politics of the Church. Some of their comments are:

A crisis of faith.

Be patient to follow Jesus daily and forever, never stop trusting in God.

Having the patience, fortitude, and forgiveness to endure many disappointments.

Maintaining the ability to be an enthusiastic advocate for Christ. The opportunity to use his great language and thinking skills for the good of his Church.

His vow of celibacy. To love is human and as God commanded. As my son continues in his vocation I know he will love deeply, as he grows in his love for God. That love can be very attractive to others in this crazy mixed up world.

Honestly, through these last seven years, I have grown to accept God's will, whatever that is for my children. I don't really have any worries but I do pray that he be protected from the devil. I believe the devil delights in tempting his holy seminarians, deacons, and priests.

How they will be able to practice/live out their Roman Catholic faith in the face of the increasingly confused state of the Church in the post Vatican II era.

I don't worry about them, but I pray that they will always be faithful to their vocation.

Other worries

Less than one in twenty wrote comments pertaining to other worries, such as the Church as an institution or their family member's happiness. Some of the other comments include:

I am concerned that young people interested in the priesthood are more interested in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and its rules than in our loving God and his caring relationship with people.

I hope he will be happy and fulfilled in his decision. I hope that he is successful at whatever he decides to do, and if he eventually becomes a priest, I hope he serves well those whom he ministers.

I worry about his continued enthusiasm.

I worry that the convent will stay a viable financial unit so that my daughter does not experience the closing of her convent within her lifetime.

Support or Promotion of Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life

Family members were asked to suggest ways that family members can support or promote vocations to priesthood or religious life. They were invited to respond in their own words to this question:

In your opinion, how can family members best support or promote vocations to priesthood or religious life?

The responses to this question have been analyzed and grouped into the following categories. Representative examples of comments within each category are presented here.

Prayer/participation in the sacraments

Slightly under half of participants mentioned praying for vocations in general or for the specific family member involved and to participate in the sacraments of the church to promote vocations. Some examples are:

Adoration-Adoration-Adoration

By attending Mass.

By praying for that person

Families should pray together, have dinner together and go to Mass together. With all the electronic gadgets that “bring people together” it seems that families are growing farther apart.

Follow their lead and treat them with the same love, care and concern for their needs as other members of the family. Most importantly to keep them close in prayer.

Encourage/listen

One in three respondents mention encouraging or listening to their family member to support their vocation. Some of their responses are:

Accept and openly support my son's decision

Allowing people to explore different paths, being supportive and not putting labels on things. I see that people think that religious people or priests are somewhat different but they are not, they are just following a different path focusing on less mundane things. We should embrace and support that with the same enthusiasm we support college students, tradesman, singles, mothers, etc.

Always encourage

Available when he is able to be home for a bit. Be open to listening to his challenges without trying to fix them!

Be open about their experiences and support your child if they have been called.

Live out your faith

One in five respondents suggest that a good way to support vocations is to live out your own faith life as an example for others. Examples include:

I believe that the parent's practice of their faith is the first influence to a son or daughter's religious vocation. This constant practice of faith normally translates to a loving environment and help shape the heart and mind of the child. Then, at the age of reason, she/he will seek a deeper meaning of her existence.

Be active in a parish. If a teenage boy shows any interest, have them visit a seminary to talk to current seminarians

Be good examples to the children. Show them that your love for Christ is where you get your strength to resist temptation and the fortitude to listen to God's call for your married vocation. You will stay faithful until death do you part.

By living the faith.

By setting a good example of Catholic life and be supportive of those with vocations.

Communication/education

One in seven indicated that communicating with their family or educating them in the faith is a way to promote vocations. This can include a formal Catholic education or simply teaching them about the faith as a relative. Some of their responses are:

Be open and patient with the idea. Many times fear surfaces because of lack of knowledge.

Be open to learning and non-judgmental.

Communication and caring. Talk thru their questions and concerns and deal with their thoughts and feelings.

Helping others realize the importance of the priesthood and the profound meaning it has.

I believe that the best support is by sharing our experience of discernment and religious life.

Uphold the priesthood/religious life as an option

One in seven respondents suggest that upholding priesthood and religious life as viable options are a good way to support those vocations. Examples are:

As a parent, I feel it is your responsibility to “offer” or suggest looking into religious life if we see that our child may be a candidate for that life. Siblings also can help, but unless you come from a family with other Religious that option may seem unlikely. For a parish priest, you know they will not have a family, may be lonely. Yet as I see our priests, they can still remain a major part of their families. So I think it is easier to promote that life to a child and for the siblings to support it because he would still be a part of their “everyday” life.

Ask the young child if he would ever want to be a priest, when the topic of careers, etc. arise. The same for the sisterhood for a daughter. Get them to consider that vocation as a possibility! Then let the Holy Spirit take over, except for emotional, spiritual, and possibly financial support. We paid off our daughter's college loans, so she could enter the convent.

Be open to a religious vocation for your children and tell children to keep their hearts open to Gods call. I have a friend who would never speak about a religious vocation to her daughters. She was afraid it would somehow brainwash them into becoming a religious.

Discuss a “vocation” as an option when the kids are young.

Contact with priests/religious

One in ten respondents stated that contact with priests and religious helps to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Some of the statements are:

As a family we need to be more involved with our priests. Our children need to see they are people and they enjoy life.

By being around priests or religious if possible, and/or by inviting parish priests or religious over for family meals.

By including priests and sisters in family celebrations

By making encounters with priests or religious, outside of the church activities possible. i.e., inviting them to dinner at home or special events, etc. In my opinion, this makes children realize that priests and religious are normal people just like us and that they lead happy, fulfilled lives.

Catholic families need more information about the life of a priest or a sister. It seems that all the information that a lot of people receive is from the movies. Information not only

about the dogma and the religion, but about the life of a priest, the life of a sister, what are the expectations. The day to day life is something that people generally do not know (actually after 10 years of having a sister in the family I still have a lot of questions).

Other suggestions

Less than one in ten respondents wrote something that could not be classified into the categories above, such as a suggestion for a Catholic retreat/event or unity in the family. These responses include:

Be open to the option of a religious life. Let your family member explore it through retreats or visits.

I believe my daughter's religious retreats that she went on in high school were the biggest influence in her decision to enter a religious order.

Family is the core unit at which values are observed and learned. Six kids all developed from that core.

Make religion and a strong family life a priority.

Recognize it is their choice.

Spread the word.

Questionnaire with Response Frequencies



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

Family Influences on Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life

Unit:

All family members combined N=892

The percentage for each response category is below or beside its respective number, calculated out of 100 percent. The percentage of non-response (NR) for each item follows, separately calculated out of 100 percent.

Family Background

1. What is your relationship to the family member who gave us your contact information? **NR= 4**
- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 55 Mother | 20 Father |
| <1 Stepmother | 0 Stepfather |
| <1 Grandmother | <1 Grandfather |
| 1 Aunt | <1 Uncle |
| 11 Sister/Stepsister | 8 Brother/Stepbrother |
| <1 Cousin | 1 Other relative |

M=2003 2. In what year did you become aware that your family member was considering a vocation as a priest, religious brother, religious sister, or nun? If you don't recall the exact year provide your best estimate. **NR=7**

M=21 3. Approximately how old was your family member at that time? **NR=7**

4. At that time, how supportive were you to the idea of priesthood or religious life as a vocation? **NR=3**

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 4 Not at all | 6 A little |
| 23 Somewhat | 67 Very |

5. What was your religion at that time? **Check only one.**

- 96 Catholic
- 1 Evangelical or "born again" Christian or Protestant
- 1 Mainline Christian or Protestant
- 0 Eastern Orthodox Christian
- <1 Other Christian affiliation
- 0 Jewish
- 0 Muslim
- <1 Other religious affiliation
- 2 No religious affiliation
- NR=3**

The questions that follow in this section relate to the family unit of the relative who is in formation or who became a priest, brother, sister, or nun, at the time you became aware your family member was considering a vocation (i.e., around the year you entered in item #2, above).

6. Generally, how important was religious faith to the family?

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| <1 Not at all | 2 A little |
| 11 Somewhat | 88 Very |
- NR=4**

7. What was the primary language spoken by the family at home? **Check only one.**

- 92 English
- 3 Spanish
- 4 Other: _____
- NR=4**

8. How often did the family attend Mass or religious services?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 35 More than once a week | 61 Once a week |
| 2 Two or three times a month | <1 About once a month |
| 2 A few times a year | 1 Seldom or never |
- NR=4**

9. What language was used most often at the Mass or religious services the family attended? **Check only one.**

- 94 English
- 3 Spanish
- 3 Other: _____
- NR=4**

10. How often did the family typically pray at home together (outside of meal blessings)?

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 23 Daily | 17 A few times a week |
| 13 A few times a month | 18 A few times a year |
| 30 Seldom or never | |
- NR=4**

11. How often did the family eat dinner together?

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 74 Daily | 19 A few times a week |
| 3 A few times a month | 2 A few times a year |
| 1 Seldom or never | |
- NR=4**

Yes No NR

19 81 **4** 12. Did the family have any other members who were a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun at that time?

65 35 **5** 13. Did the family ever participate in Eucharistic Adoration at their parish or elsewhere?

61 39 **4** 14. Did the family ever pray the rosary together, at home or elsewhere?

82 18 **4** 15. Apart from Mass or religious services, was the family active in parish life?

63 37 **4** 16. Did the family formally gather together outside of dinner at least once a week (e.g., a game or movie night, family discussion, family prayer)?

58 42 **4** 17. Did the family ever invite sisters, brothers, or priests from the local parish or school for a meal or other social event?

54 47 **4** 18. Did the family ever have a discussion about vocations to priesthood or religious life?

19. In general, how supportive was the family to the idea of priesthood or religious life as a vocation?

- 2 Not at all 8 A little
24 Somewhat 66 Very
NR=4

20. Which of these, if any, were important religious activities or customs in the family at that time?

Check all that apply.

- 92 Mass, or other religious services
68 Active participation in parish life
43 Eucharistic Adoration
36 Faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups
34 Participation in Catholic organizations (e.g. Knights of Columbus, Altar Society, Legion of Mary, Sodality)
56 Volunteer or charitable service in the community
16 Catholic advocacy (e.g. peace & justice, poverty, life)
51 Rosary/novena (individually or as a family)
82 Grace before or after meals
45 Family prayers for special intentions
28 Celebrations of particular saints (e.g. St. Joseph)
22 Marian devotions (e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Vietnam, Our Lady of Czestochowa)
15 Home altars
75 Religious art (e.g. crucifix, statues, pictures of saints)
65 Sacramentals (e.g. cross, medal, prayer card, scapular)
2 Quinceañeras
32 Processions (e.g. Via Crucis, Stations of the Cross)
33 Sacred scripture or other spiritual reading
59 Catholic books, periodicals, movies, TV shows
9 Other: _____

Think about the family member who gave us your contact information and indicate whether or not any of the following members of their family ever encouraged that family member to consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life:

Yes No NR

- 62 38 **11** 21. Mother/stepmother
53 47 **16** 22. Father/stepfather
43 57 **19** 23. Sibling(s)
36 64 **25** 24. Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
20 80 **30** 25. Cousin(s)
48 53 **23** 26. Grandparent(s)

To your knowledge, did any of these family members ever discourage that family member from considering a vocation to priesthood or religious life:

Yes No NR

- 7 93 **15** 27. Mother/stepmother
9 91 **17** 28. Father/stepfather

Yes No NR

- 10 90 **16** 29. Sibling(s)
11 89 **19** 30. Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
6 94 **21** 31. Cousin(s)
8 92 **20** 32. Grandparent(s)

33. After your family member entered the seminary or religious life, what misconceptions about priesthood and/or religious life changed among family members?

The remaining questions are about you. Once again, your responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone. They will be combined with those of other respondents and reported in the aggregate.

34. How important is your religious faith to you? **NR=4**

- 1 Not important at all
1 Not too important
7 Important, but so are many other areas of your life
34 Among the most important areas of your life
58 The most important part of your life

35. Aside from Mass or religious services, about how often do you pray? **Check only one. NR=4**

- 87 Daily or more often 7 More than weekly
2 Weekly or almost weekly 1 Once or twice a month
1 A few times a year 1 Rarely or never

36. Aside from Mass or religious services, how do you usually pray? **Check only one. NR=5**

- 70 Individually
2 With family
27 Both individually and with family about equally

37. How important is it to you that younger generations of your family grow up Catholic? **Check only one.**

- 3 Not at all 1 A little **NR=5**
9 Somewhat 87 Very

Yes No NR

- 56 44 **5** 38. Have you ever encouraged a family member to consider a religious vocation or the priesthood?
46 54 **4** 39. Did you ever consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

Background and Demographics

M=1958 40. Year you were born. **NR= 8**

41. Please select the category that best describes your primary ethnicity/cultural background. **Check one.**

- 88 Caucasian/European American/White **NR=4**
1 African/African American/Black
6 Hispanic/Latino(a)
3 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
<1 Native American/Alaska Native
2 Other: _____

42. Did you ever attend any of the following? **Check all that apply.**

- 59 Catholic primary school (preschool through grade 8)
38 Catholic secondary school (grades 9 through 12)
24 Catholic college or university
4 Catholic seminary

43. What is the highest level of education you completed?

- 9 High school diploma or less **NR=4**
5 Trade or technical school
18 Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree
38 College or university undergraduate degree
31 Graduate degree

Please respond to the questions on the next page, too.

44. When you think about the future of priesthood and religious life, what worries do you have about your family member and her/his vocation?

45. In your opinion, how can family members best support or promote vocations to priesthood or religious life?

Thank you!



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

Family Influences on Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life

Unit:

Families of men and women religious N=450

The percentage for each response category is below or beside its respective number, calculated out of 100 percent. The percentage of non-response (NR) for each item follows, separately calculated out of 100 percent.

Family Background

1. What is your relationship to the family member who gave us your contact information? **Check only one.**

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 59 Mother | 18 Father |
| <1 Stepmother | 0 Stepfather |
| <1 Grandmother | <1 Grandfather |
| <1 Aunt | <1 Uncle |
| 15 Sister/Stepsister | 6 Brother/Stepbrother |
| 0 Cousin | 1 Other relative |

M=2003 2. In what year did you become aware that your family member was considering a vocation as a priest, religious brother, religious sister, or nun? If you don't recall the exact year provide your best estimate.

M=22 3. Approximately how old was your family member at that time?

4. At that time, how supportive were you to the idea of priesthood or religious life as a vocation?

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 5 Not at all | 7 A little |
| 25 Somewhat | 62 Very |

5. What was your religion at that time? **Check only one.**

- 96 Catholic
<1 Evangelical or "born again" Christian or Protestant
2 Mainline Christian or Protestant
0 Eastern Orthodox Christian
<1 Other Christian affiliation
0 Jewish
0 Muslim
<1 Other religious affiliation
2 No religious affiliation

The questions that follow in this section relate to the family unit of the relative who is in formation or who became a priest, brother, sister, or nun, at the time you became aware your family member was considering a vocation (i.e., around the year you entered in item #2, above).

6. Generally, how important was religious faith to the family?

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| <1 Not at all | 2 A little |
| 11 Somewhat | 87 Very |

7. What was the primary language spoken by the family at home? **Check only one.**

- 92 English
3 Spanish
5 Other: _____

8. How often did the family attend Mass or religious services?

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 38 More than once a week | 57 Once a week |
| 2 Two or three times a month | 1 About once a month |
| 2 A few times a year | 1 Seldom or never |

9. What language was used most often at the Mass or religious services the family attended? **Check only one.**

- 94 English
2 Spanish
4 Other: _____

10. How often did the family typically pray at home together (outside of meal blessings)?

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 27 Daily | 14 A few times a week |
| 12 A few times a month | 19 A few times a year |
| 28 Seldom or never | |

11. How often did the family eat dinner together?

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 73 Daily | 19 A few times a week |
| 4 A few times a month | 2 A few times a year |
| 2 Seldom or never | |

Yes No

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 19 | 81 | 12. Did the family have any other members who were a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun at that time? |
| 66 | 34 | 13. Did the family ever participate in Eucharistic Adoration at their parish or elsewhere? |
| 65 | 35 | 14. Did the family ever pray the rosary together, at home or elsewhere? |
| 80 | 20 | 15. Apart from Mass or religious services, was the family active in parish life? |
| 64 | 37 | 16. Did the family formally gather together outside of dinner at least once a week (e.g., a game or movie night, family discussion, family prayer)? |
| 57 | 43 | 17. Did the family ever invite sisters, brothers, or priests from the local parish or school for a meal or other social event? |
| 53 | 47 | 18. Did the family ever have a discussion about vocations to priesthood or religious life? |

19. In general, how supportive was the family to the idea of priesthood or religious life as a vocation?

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 3 Not at all | 10 A little |
| 27 Somewhat | 60 Very |

20. Which of these, if any, were important religious activities or customs in the family at that time?
Check all that apply.
- 90 Mass, or other religious services
 - 66 Active participation in parish life
 - 44 Eucharistic Adoration
 - 39 Faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups
 - 33 Participation in Catholic organizations (e.g. Knights of Columbus, Altar Society, Legion of Mary, Sodality)
 - 57 Volunteer or charitable service in the community
 - 17 Catholic advocacy (e.g. peace & justice, poverty, life)
 - 52 Rosary/novena (individually or as a family)
 - 80 Grace before or after meals
 - 47 Family prayers for special intentions
 - 31 Celebrations of particular saints (e.g. St. Joseph)
 - 25 Marian devotions (e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Vietnam, Our Lady of Czestochowa)
 - 18 Home altars
 - 75 Religious art (e.g. crucifix, statues, pictures of saints)
 - 67 Sacramentals (e.g. cross, medal, prayer card, scapular)
 - 2 Quinceañeras
 - 32 Processions (e.g. Via Crucis, Stations of the Cross)
 - 37 Sacred scripture or other spiritual reading
 - 62 Catholic books, periodicals, movies, TV shows
 - 7 Other: _____

Think about the family member who gave us your contact information and indicate whether or not any of the following members of their family ever encouraged that family member to consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life:

Yes No

- 57 43 21. Mother/stepmother
- 50 50 22. Father/stepfather
- 42 58 23. Sibling(s)
- 32 68 24. Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
- 20 80 25. Cousin(s)
- 42 58 26. Grandparent(s)

To your knowledge, did any of these family members ever discourage that family member from considering a vocation to priesthood or religious life:

Yes No

- 9 91 27. Mother/stepmother
- 9 91 28. Father/stepfather
- 13 87 29. Sibling(s)
- 14 86 30. Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
- 7 93 31. Cousin(s)
- 10 90 32. Grandparent(s)

33. After your family member entered the seminary or religious life, what misconceptions about priesthood and/or religious life changed among family members?

The remaining questions are about you. Once again, your responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone. They will be combined with those of other respondents and reported in the aggregate.

34. How important is your religious faith to you?
- <1 Not important at all
 - 2 Not too important
 - 8 Important, but so are many other areas of your life
 - 34 Among the most important areas of your life
 - 57 The most important part of your life
35. Aside from Mass or religious services, about how often do you pray? **Check only one.**
- 87 Daily or more often
 - 2 Weekly or almost weekly
 - 1 A few times a year
 - 6 More than weekly
 - 1 Once or twice a month
 - 2 Rarely or never
36. Aside from Mass or religious services, how do you usually pray? **Check only one.**
- 70 Individually
 - 4 With family
 - 26 Both individually and with family about equally
37. How important is it to you that younger generations of your family grow up Catholic? **Check only one.**
- 4 Not at all
 - 2 A little
 - 9 Somewhat
 - 85 Very

Yes No

- 55 45 38. Have you ever encouraged a family member to consider a religious vocation or the priesthood?
- 45 55 39. Did you ever consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

Background and Demographics

M=1958 40. Year you were born.

41. Please select the category that best describes your primary ethnicity/cultural background. **Check one.**
- 85 Caucasian/European American/White
 - 2 African/African American/Black
 - 6 Hispanic/Latino(a)
 - 4 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
 - <1 Native American/Alaska Native
 - 3 Other: _____

42. Did you ever attend any of the following? **Check all that apply.**

- 60 Catholic primary school (preschool through grade 8)
- 41 Catholic secondary school (grades 9 through 12)
- 25 Catholic college or university
- 5 Catholic seminary

43. What is the highest level of education you completed?

- 7 High school diploma or less
- 5 Trade or technical school
- 19 Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree
- 38 College or university undergraduate degree
- 30 Graduate degree

Please respond to the questions on the next page, too.

44. When you think about the future of priesthood and religious life, what worries do you have about your family member and her/his vocation?

45. In your opinion, how can family members best support or promote vocations to priesthood or religious life?

Thank you!



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

Family Influences on Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life

Unit:

Families of diocesan seminarians and priests

N=414

The percentage for each response category is below or beside its respective number, calculated out of 100 percent. The percentage of non-response (NR) for each item follows, separately calculated out of 100 percent.

Family Background

1. What is your relationship to the family member who gave us your contact information? **Check only one.**

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 54 Mother | 25 Father |
| 0 Stepmother | 0 Stepfather |
| 0 Grandmother | 0 Grandfather |
| 1 Aunt | 0 Uncle |
| 7 Sister/Stepsister | 11 Brother/Stepbrother |
| 1 Cousin | 1 Other relative |

M=2003 2. In what year did you become aware that your family member was considering a vocation as a priest, religious brother, religious sister, or nun? If you don't recall the exact year provide your best estimate.

M=20 3. Approximately how old was your family member at that time?

4. At that time, how supportive were you to the idea of priesthood or religious life as a vocation?

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 3 Not at all | 4 A little |
| 20 Somewhat | 73 Very |

5. What was your religion at that time? **Check only one.**

- 96 Catholic
2 Evangelical or "born again" Christian or Protestant
2 Mainline Christian or Protestant
0 Eastern Orthodox Christian
0 Other Christian affiliation
0 Jewish
0 Muslim
0 Other religious affiliation
1 No religious affiliation

The questions that follow in this section relate to the family unit of the relative who is in formation or who became a priest, brother, sister, or nun, at the time you became aware your family member was considering a vocation (i.e., around the year you entered in item #2, above).

6. Generally, how important was religious faith to the family?

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 0 Not at all | 1 A little |
| 10 Somewhat | 89 Very |

7. What was the primary language spoken by the family at home? **Check only one.**

- 93 English
3 Spanish
4 Other: _____

8. How often did the family attend Mass or religious services?

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 32 More than once a week | 66 Once a week |
| 1 Two or three times a month | 0 About once a month |
| 1 A few times a year | 1 Seldom or never |

9. What language was used most often at the Mass or religious services the family attended? **Check only one.**

- 94 English
3 Spanish
3 Other: _____

10. How often did the family typically pray at home together (outside of meal blessings)?

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 20 Daily | 20 A few times a week |
| 13 A few times a month | 17 A few times a year |
| 30 Seldom or never | |

11. How often did the family eat dinner together?

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 78 Daily | 17 A few times a week |
| 3 A few times a month | 2 A few times a year |
| 1 Seldom or never | |

Yes No

18 82 12. Did the family have any other members who were a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun at that time?

64 36 13. Did the family ever participate in Eucharistic Adoration at their parish or elsewhere?

59 41 14. Did the family ever pray the rosary together, at home or elsewhere?

85 15 15. Apart from Mass or religious services, was the family active in parish life?

63 37 16. Did the family formally gather together outside of dinner at least once a week (e.g., a game or movie night, family discussion, family prayer)?

60 40 17. Did the family ever invite sisters, brothers, or priests from the local parish or school for a meal or other social event?

54 46 18. Did the family ever have a discussion about vocations to priesthood or religious life?

19. In general, how supportive was the family to the idea of priesthood or religious life as a vocation?

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 2 Not at all | 5 A little |
| 21 Somewhat | 73 Very |

20. Which of these, if any, were important religious activities or customs in the family at that time?
Check all that apply.
- 94 Mass, or other religious services
 - 72 Active participation in parish life
 - 42 Eucharistic Adoration
 - 34 Faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups
 - 37 Participation in Catholic organizations (e.g. Knights of Columbus, Altar Society, Legion of Mary, Sodality)
 - 57 Volunteer or charitable service in the community
 - 15 Catholic advocacy (e.g. peace & justice, poverty, life)
 - 52 Rosary/novena (individually or as a family)
 - 86 Grace before or after meals
 - 45 Family prayers for special intentions
 - 25 Celebrations of particular saints (e.g. St. Joseph)
 - 19 Marian devotions (e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Vietnam, Our Lady of Czestochowa)
 - 12 Home altars
 - 74 Religious art (e.g. crucifix, statues, pictures of saints)
 - 65 Sacramentals (e.g. cross, medal, prayer card, scapular)
 - 2 Quinceañeras
 - 33 Processions (e.g. Via Crucis, Stations of the Cross)
 - 28 Sacred scripture or other spiritual reading
 - 56 Catholic books, periodicals, movies, TV shows
 - 12 Other: _____

Think about the family member who gave us your contact information and indicate whether or not any of the following members of their family ever encouraged that family member to consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life:

Yes No

- 68 32 21. Mother/stepmother
- 58 42 22. Father/stepfather
- 43 57 23. Sibling(s)
- 41 59 24. Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
- 18 82 25. Cousin(s)
- 54 46 26. Grandparent(s)

To your knowledge, did any of these family members ever discourage that family member from considering a vocation to priesthood or religious life:

Yes No

- 5 96 27. Mother/stepmother
- 9 92 28. Father/stepfather
- 6 94 29. Sibling(s)
- 6 94 30. Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
- 4 96 31. Cousin(s)
- 5 95 32. Grandparent(s)

33. After your family member entered the seminary or religious life, what misconceptions about priesthood and/or religious life changed among family members?

The remaining questions are about you. Once again, your responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone. They will be combined with those of other respondents and reported in the aggregate.

- 34. How important is your religious faith to you?
 - 1 Not important at all
 - <1 Not too important
 - 7 Important, but so are many other areas of your life
 - 32 Among the most important areas of your life
 - 60 The most important part of your life
- 35. Aside from Mass or religious services, about how often do you pray? **Check only one.**
 - 87 Daily or more often
 - 2 Weekly or almost weekly
 - 1 A few times a year
 - 8 More than weekly
 - 1 Once or twice a month
 - 1 Rarely or never
- 36. Aside from Mass or religious services, how do you usually pray? **Check only one.**
 - 71 Individually
 - 1 With family
 - 28 Both individually and with family about equally
- 37. How important is it to you that younger generations of your family grow up Catholic? **Check only one.**
 - 2 Not at all
 - 7 Somewhat
 - 1 A little
 - 91 Very

Yes No

- 58 42 38. Have you ever encouraged a family member to consider a religious vocation or the priesthood?
- 47 54 39. Did you ever consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

Background and Demographics

M=1958 40. Year you were born.

- 41. Please select the category that best describes your primary ethnicity/cultural background. **Check one.**
 - 91 Caucasian/European American/White
 - 1 African/African American/Black
 - 6 Hispanic/Latino(a)
 - 2 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
 - <1 Native American/Alaska Native
 - 1 Other: _____
- 42. Did you ever attend any of the following? **Check all that apply.**
 - 59 Catholic primary school (preschool through grade 8)
 - 34 Catholic secondary school (grades 9 through 12)
 - 23 Catholic college or university
 - 4 Catholic seminary
- 43. What is the highest level of education you completed?
 - 9 High school diploma or less
 - 5 Trade or technical school
 - 17 Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree
 - 37 College or university undergraduate degree
 - 32 Graduate degree

Please respond to the questions on the next page, too.

44. When you think about the future of priesthood and religious life, what worries do you have about your family member and her/his vocation?

45. In your opinion, how can family members best support or promote vocations to priesthood or religious life?

Thank you!

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

***The Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations
to Religious Life and Priesthood:
A Report for the
National Religious Vocation Conference***

APPENDIX I: Responses from Men and Women Religious



**Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D.
Jonathon C. Holland, M.A.**

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	51
Major Findings from Men and Women Religious	51
Introduction.....	55
Collecting the Names	55
Distributing the Survey	55
The Questionnaire	56
The Report	56
Characteristics of Men and Women Religious	57
Gender, Age, and Generation of Respondents.....	57
Primary Ethnicity/Cultural Background	59
Nativity	60
Education	61
Vocational History	62
Family Background.....	63
Siblings	64
Language.....	64
Family Religious Faith and Practice	65
Important Religious Celebrations or Customs in the Family.....	69
Most Influential from Family Background	71
Suggestions for Family Help in Discernment.....	76
Encouragement and Discouragement of Vocations.....	80
Family Discussion of Vocations	80
Support for Vocational Consideration	81
Discouragement from Family Members	82
Describe How Your Family Supported Your Vocational Discernment	83
Describe How Your Family Discouraged Your Vocational Discernment.....	88
Questionnaire for Men and Women Religious with Response Frequencies.....	92

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Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

**The Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations
to Religious Life and Priesthood**

APPENDIX I: Responses from Men and Women Religious

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a study of men and women who have entered religious institutes in the United States in the last 15 years about the influence of their families on their vocations. In summer 2014, the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to study the influence of families on discernment of a religious vocation. The goal of the research is to provide information that will help promote religious life and assist families with the discernment process and the transition of a family member to vowed religious life.

This Appendix is one part of the much larger study of the influence of families on vocations to priesthood and religious life. The final, comprehensive report includes these findings as well as findings from a survey of seminarians and priests who were accepted into formation in the United States in the last 15 years, surveys of family members of these seminarians, priests, and men and women religious, focus groups of some of these family members at two locations around the United States, and findings from a national survey of Catholic parents about their encouragement of vocations to priesthood or religious life. CARA developed two questionnaires for this study – one for seminarians, priests, and men and women religious and one for family members – in collaboration with Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, executive director of NRVC, and an advisory committee convened by NRVC. CARA also conducted two focus groups with family members who were identified from the surveys to hear from them about issues relevant to this study. Finally, CARA included some questions about the encouragement of vocations on a national survey of Catholic parents so that the responses of family members could be compared to those of Catholic parents in general.

Major Findings from Men and Women Religious

Family Religious Faith While Growing Up

- Eight in ten responding religious report that when they were growing up both of their parents were Catholic, just over one in ten had one Catholic and one non-Catholic parent, and just under one in ten had two non-Catholic parents.

- Nine in ten responding religious report that their mother was Catholic when they were growing up and just over eight in ten say the same about their father. Among those who had a Catholic mother, more than two in three say that religion was “very” important to her and another quarter say it was “somewhat” important to them. Concerning their Catholic fathers, just over half say that religion was “very” important to their father and another three in ten say that religion was “somewhat” important to him.
- A third of responding religious have a relative who is a priest, religious brother, or religious sister or knew one growing up. Asian religious are more likely than those of other ethnicities to report having a relative who is a priest or a religious. Religious that were born outside the United States are more likely than those born in the United States to have a relative that is a priest or a religious.
- In general, four in ten responding religious say they were about as religious as their other family members when growing up. A quarter report that they were more religious than some, but less religious than other family members. Three in ten report they were more religious than other family members. Just 4 percent report that they were less religious than other family members. Asian respondents are *least* likely than other cultural groups to say they were more religious than their other family members when growing up.

Family Religious Practice When Growing Up

- Two in three responding religious say that their family attended Mass or religious services weekly and another one in ten say they attended more than once a week. Hispanic/Latino respondents are less likely than other cultural groups to say their family attended Mass or religious services at least once a week.
- A third report that their family prayed together a few times a week or more, with another one in ten praying together a few times a month. More than four in ten, however, say that their family seldom or never prayed together. Asian respondents are particularly likely to report that their family prayed together daily.
- Religious were asked which of 20 religious practices or customs were important to their family when they were growing up. The three most commonly mentioned among responding religious overall are attending Mass or other religious services, saying grace before or after meals, and displaying religious art. The three most common among Asian respondents’ families are the Mass, displaying religious art, and recitations of rosaries/novenas. The three most common among Hispanic/Latino respondents’ families are the Mass, religious art, and Marian devotions. The three most common among those with a European American background are the Mass, grace before or after meals, and displaying religious art.

Encouragement and Discouragement of Vocations

- Three in five responding religious admit that starting a discussion with their family about their religious vocation was not easy. Three in ten said their mother had spoken to them

about a vocation to priesthood or religious life and one in five said their father had spoken to them about a vocation.

- Having had a family member ever speak to them about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life made the discussion about a vocation easier for respondents. Among those who said their mother had ever broached the topic, more than six in ten say starting that discussion was easy. Similarly, those whose father had ever spoken to them about a vocation were also more likely to say that starting a family discussion about their vocation was easy.
- When first considering a vocation to religious life, at least six in ten report having received “some” or “very much” encouragement from their mothers, fathers, grandparents, and siblings. Half or fewer report receiving that much encouragement from their aunts and uncles or cousins. Mothers and grandparents are more likely than other relatives to have offered “very much” encouragement when respondents were first considering a vocation, with about a third reporting “very much” encouragement from these family members. Three in ten report that their father was “very” encouraging and less than a quarter report that siblings, aunts and uncles, or cousins offered “very much” encouragement.
- Responding religious report increased levels of encouragement currently in their life and ministry from all relatives. At least four in five report “some” or “very much” support from their mothers, fathers, siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, and two in three report as much support from their cousins.
- Few responding religious indicate that a family member ever discouraged them in their vocational discernment, but among those who do, about a third indicate that their mother or sibling(s) discouraged them from considering a vocation. About a quarter were discouraged from considering a vocation by their father or an aunt or uncle. Fewer received discouragement from their cousins or grandparents.

Religious Background

- Men and women religious are more likely than other Catholic adults in general to have attended Catholic schools for some or all of their education. More than half attended a Catholic primary school, four in ten attended a Catholic secondary school, and half attended a Catholic college or university.
- On average, six in ten responding religious attended parish-based religious education at some point in their lives. On average, they attended for about seven years.
- The average age when respondents report first considering a vocation is 19. On average, they entered religious life at age 28. Men religious, on average, professed perpetual vows at age 32, while the average age for perpetual profession among women is 38.

Characteristics of the Respondents and Family History

- Half of responding men and women religious belong to the Millennial Generation and four in ten are of the Post-Vatican II Generation. Responding men religious are equally likely to be of the Millennial or the Post-Vatican II Generation, while responding women religious are more likely to be Millennials (52 percent) than Post-Vatican II Generation (36 percent).
- Overall, three in four responding religious identify as Caucasian/European American/white. One in ten identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a) or as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. Four percent or fewer identify as African/African American/black or as Native American/Alaska Native or some other race or ethnicity.
- Eight in ten responding religious were born in the United States. About two in three respondents identifying as Asian were born outside the United States, compared to nearly six in ten Hispanic/Latino respondents and about one in 20 European American respondents. Half of respondents who were not born in the United States first moved to the United States in 2001 or later.
- Nearly all of those identifying as European American spoke English at home as their primary language while growing up. Two in three of those identifying as Hispanic/Latino spoke Spanish as their primary language when growing up and more than two in three of those identifying as Asian primarily spoke a language other than English or Spanish at home.
- Nine in ten responding religious were raised in a traditional two-parent family. One in 20 grew up in a single-parent family and about the same proportion grew up with their grandparents as their primary caregivers or in some other family situation.
- A substantial number of responding religious have experienced family trauma while they were growing up. One in five experienced the serious illness or death of a sibling or other close relative. Just over one in ten experienced a parents' divorce and a similar proportion experienced the death of a parent.
- While, on average, responding religious report three siblings, one in 20 report being the only child in the family. More than a third were the eldest among their siblings, the same proportion were somewhere in the middle, and a quarter were the youngest sibling.
- Few responding religious were home-schooled, but women are more likely than men to have been home-schooled. Three in four men and more than two in three women had earned at least an undergraduate degree before entering their religious institute. This contrasts with self-identified Catholics nationally, among whom about a quarter have attained an undergraduate degree.

Introduction

This report presents findings from a study of men and women who have entered religious institutes in the United States in the last 15 years about the influence of their families on their vocations. The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to learn from men and women religious about the influence their family had on their religious discernment. The goal of the research is to provide information that will help promote religious life and assist families with the discernment process and the transition of a family member to vowed religious life.

This Appendix is part of a much larger study of the influence of families on vocations to priesthood and religious life. The final, comprehensive report includes these findings as well as findings from a survey of seminarians and priests who were accepted into formation in the United States in the last 15 years, surveys of family members of these seminarians, priests, and men and women religious, focus groups of some of these family members at two locations around the United States, and findings from a national survey of Catholic parents about their encouragement of vocations to priesthood or religious life. CARA developed two questionnaires for this study – one for seminarians, priests, and men and women religious and one for family members – in collaboration with Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, executive director of NRVC, and an advisory committee convened by NRVC. CARA also conducted two focus groups with family members who were identified from the surveys to hear from them about issues relevant to this study.

Collecting the Names

In fall 2014, CARA contacted the major superior at 808 U.S. based religious institutes from mailing lists provided by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), and the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (142 contemplative congregations that are not on the other three lists) to request contact information for any religious who had entered since January 1, 2000 and remained.

CARA conducted regular follow-up with these groups through mid-January and eventually received contact information from 460 religious institutes for a response rate of 57 percent among religious institutes.

Distributing the Survey

The religious institutes that responded to the request for names reported a total of 1,117 women and 1,055 men who had entered religious life in those institutes since January 1, 2000 and remained, for a combined total of 2,172 men and women religious. In addition, several institutes of women religious who refused to provide contact information for their novices and postulants agreed to distribute the questionnaire locally and return the completed responses to CARA.

CARA distributed the survey invitation via email and mail to 2,172 men and women religious, using the contact information provided by their major superior. In addition, CARA provided a pdf copy of the questionnaire to those institutes who had asked to administer the questionnaire locally to their novices and postulants. CARA conducted regular follow-up by email among those for whom there was a valid email address. By the cut-off date for religious of late January, 2015, CARA received a total of 1,279 valid responses from men and women religious – 1,085 online surveys and 194 mailed surveys – for an overall response of approximately 54 percent.⁸

The Questionnaire

This survey was designed to gather descriptive information about the men and women religious who have entered religious life in the last 15 years, such as their age, education, nativity, the year they first considered a vocation, and the year they entered religious life. Other questions asked about characteristics of their family of origin and behaviors of family members, such as Catholic practice, family prayer, family customs, and vocational encouragement and/or discouragement by family members that might have had an influence on their vocational discernment.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to provide contact information for a family member, preferably a parent or sibling, who could be asked to respond to a similar survey about family influences on vocations from the perspective of the families. A total of 800 respondents provided usable contact information (either a valid email address or a valid mailing address, or both) for a family member. At the end of February, 2015, CARA invited these family members to participate in a survey of family members. The responses to the survey of family members and the focus groups of family members are included in the main body of this report of findings.

The Report

This Appendix presents a detailed analysis of the data from the survey of 1,279 men and women religious as well as a complete transcription of the responses to four open-ended questions that were included in the survey.

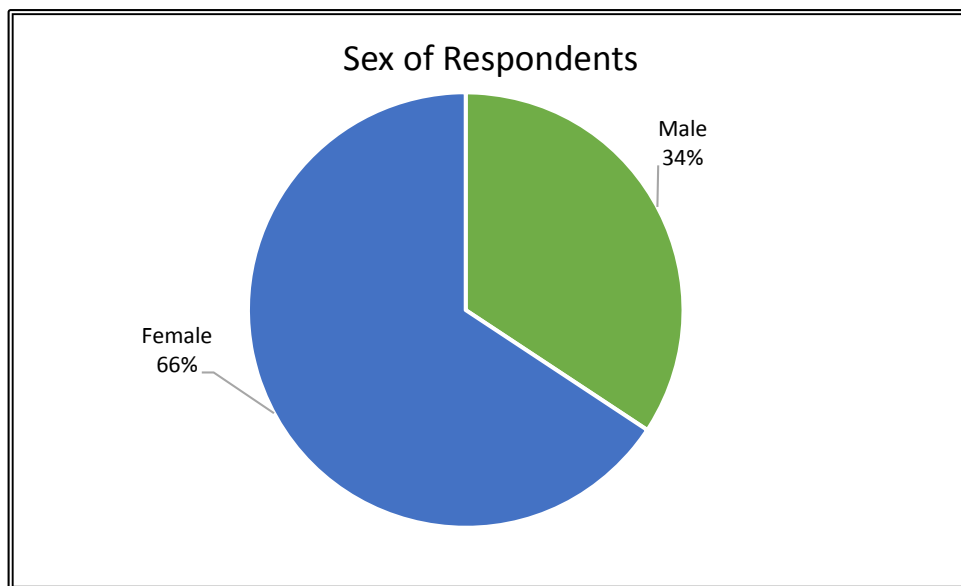
⁸ An exact response rate cannot be calculated because there is no way to calculate the true population of men and women religious who have entered religious life since January 1, 2000. This approximate response rate was calculated by adding the identified contacts to the total number of paper questionnaires received (2,172 + 194) and dividing that by the total number of valid responses (1,279).

Characteristics of Men and Women Religious

This part of the report provides a descriptive overview of the men and women religious that responded to the survey. It describes the gender, age, and generation of respondents as well as their ethnic/cultural background, nativity, education, and Catholic schooling. The section ends with a look at the vocational history of respondents – when they first thought of a vocation, when they entered religious life, and when they professed perpetual vows.

Gender, Age, and Generation of Respondents

Two in three respondents are women (66 percent) and about a third are men (34 percent). Where applicable, this report shows comparisons between these two groups.



Age of Respondents

	Men	Women
Average	37	37
Median (Midpoint)	34	33
Minimum	19	17
Maximum	82	81

The average age of men and women entering religious life in the last 15 years is 37. Half of those who enter are age 33 or younger. The youngest respondent is 17 and the oldest is 82.

In addition to age, CARA typically categorizes Catholic survey respondents into four generations, according to their year of birth. These categories are based on life experiences that are particularly relevant to Catholics:

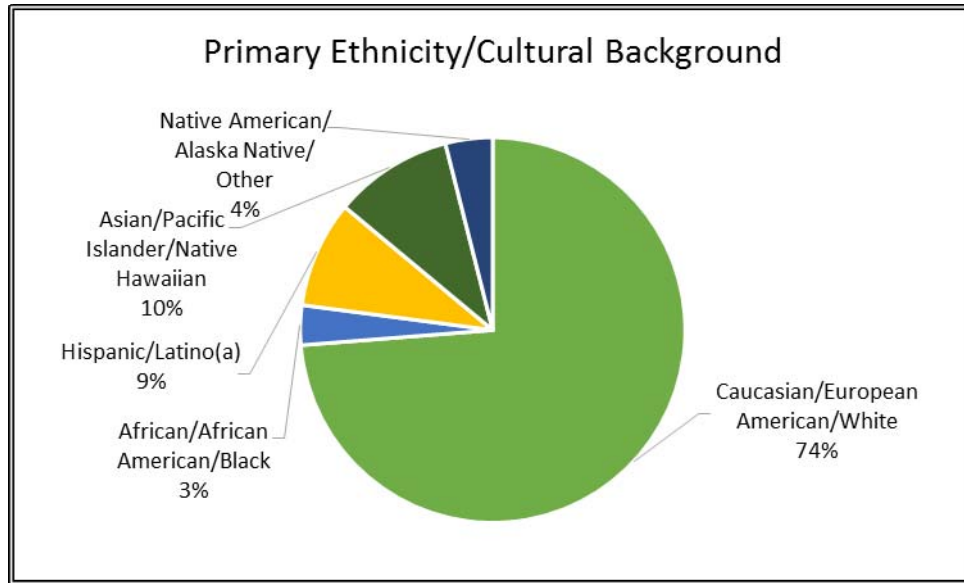
- The *Pre-Vatican II Generation* includes those born before 1943. Its members, those over age 72 in 2015, came of age prior to the Second Vatican Council. They were raised in a Church that changed dramatically after their formative years. Members of this generation played a crucial role in creating and sustaining many of the institutions of 20th century Catholic life. Just 1 percent of the respondents to this survey are members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation.
- Members of the *Vatican II Generation* were born between 1943 and 1960 and are between the ages of 55 and 72 in 2015. Members of this generation came of age during the time of the Second Vatican Council and their formative years spanned a period of profound changes in the Church (as well as in society and culture). To a large extent, this generation overlaps with the “Baby Boomers.” Almost one-tenth of the survey respondents (9 percent) are of the Vatican II Generation.
- The *Post-Vatican II Generation*, born between 1961 and 1981, consists of those who are ages 34 to 54 in 2015. Members of this generation, sometimes called “Generation X” have almost no lived experience of the pre-Vatican II Church. Their religious training occurred primarily during the 1970s and 1980s, a time when religious education patterns and methods were very different from those used up to the late 1960s. Four in ten survey respondents (40 percent) are of the Post-Vatican II Generation.
- The *Millennial Generation*, those born in 1982 or later, is the youngest generation of adult Catholics. This generation has come of age under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. On the whole, they are less steeped in the Catholic culture of earlier generations of Catholics and less knowledgeable about their faith. Millennials make up 50 percent of the survey respondents.

Generation of Respondents

	Men	Women
Pre-Vatican II (born before 1943)	<1%	1%
Vatican II (born 1943-1960)	6	11
Post-Vatican II (born 1961-1981)	47	36
Millennial (born 1982 or later)	47	52

Primary Ethnicity/Cultural Background

Three in four responding men and women religious identify their primary ethnicity or cultural background as Caucasian/European American/white. One in ten identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian and about the same percentage (9 percent) identify as Hispanic/Latino(a). Less than one in ten identifies as Native American/Alaska Native/Other (4 percent) or as African/African American/black (3 percent).



Men are less likely than women to identify as Caucasian/European American/white and are slightly more likely than women to identify as Asian or Hispanic/Latino.

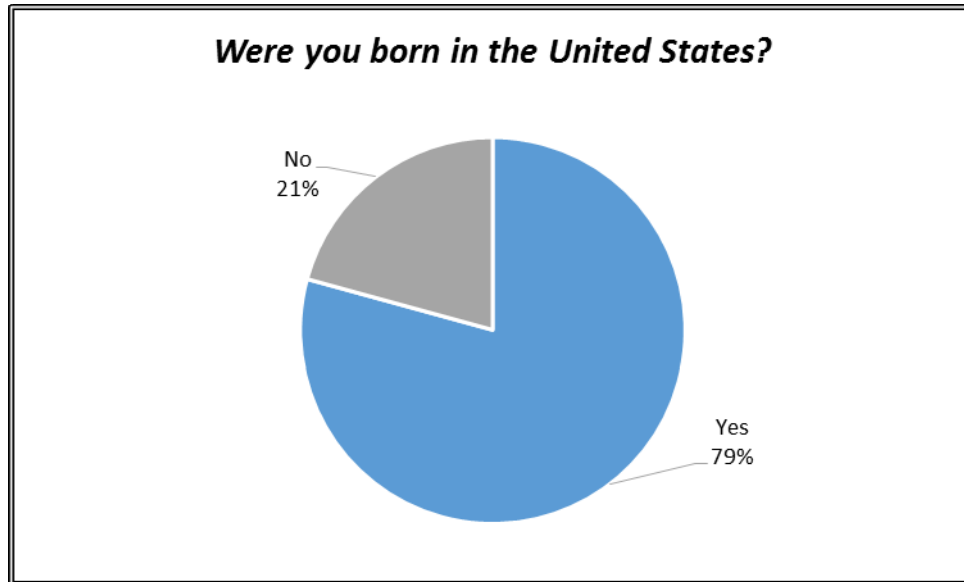
Primary Ethnicity/Cultural Background

	Men	Women
Caucasian/European American/White	66%	78%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	13	9
Hispanic/Latino(a)	13	7
Native American/ Alaska Native/ Other	4	4
African/African American/Black	4	3

Where appropriate, the remainder of this report compares respondents according to three cultural backgrounds: European American, Hispanic/Latino(a), and Asian. There are not a sufficient number of Native American or African/African American respondents to compare separately.

Nativity

Eight in ten responding religious were born in the United States but a majority among Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents and Asian respondents were not born in the United States.



Compared to responding European Americans, nearly all of whom (93 percent) were born in the United States, about four in ten Hispanic/Latino(a) and just over a third of Asians were born in the United States.

U.S.-Born by Cultural Background

	U.S.-Born
Caucasian/European American/White	93%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	43
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	37

On average, respondents that were born outside the United States first moved to the United States in 1997. Half of respondents who were not born in the United States moved here in 2001 or later. The family experience among these religious while they were growing up was probably quite different from those who were born and grew up in the United States.

Almost all respondents (89 percent) were baptized Catholic as an infant. Among the 11 percent who became Catholic later in life, on average they converted at age 20. Half of these respondents who were not baptized Catholic as an infant became Catholic in 1998 or later.

Education

Responding religious are highly educated. Three in four men and more than two in three women completed college or university before entering their religious institute.

Highest Level of Education Completed Before Entering Religious Institute

	Men	Women
High school diploma or less	13%	13%
Trade or technical school	1	1
Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree	13	19
Undergraduate degree	49	49
Graduate degree	25	18

Men and women religious are also more likely than other Catholic adults in general to have attended Catholic schools for some or all of their education. More than half (53 percent) attended a Catholic primary school, four in ten (42 percent) attended a Catholic secondary school, and half (50 percent) attended a Catholic college or university.

Attendance at Catholic Educational Institutions

<i>Did you ever attend ...?</i>	Men	Women
Catholic primary school (preschool through grade 8)	51%	54%
Catholic secondary school (grades 9 through 12)	48	39
Catholic college or university	58	45
Catholic seminary	36	2
Parish-based religious education	59	59
Years of parish-based religious education (average)	7	7

Apart from or in addition to years spent in Catholic educational institutions, about six in ten respondents (59 percent) attended parish-based religious education (e.g. CCD or PSR). Those who attended parish-based religious education report an average of seven years of parish-based religious education.

Few respondents report being home-schooled, but women are more likely than men to have had home-schooling. About one in ten responding women religious (13 percent) and 6 percent of men religious were home-schooled for some part of their education.

Vocational History

The call to a religious vocation comes throughout the life cycle. Responding men and women religious report that they first considered a vocation as early as age three and as late in life as age 63. Some of these men and women who entered religious life in the last 15 years first considered a vocation as early as 1947 and did not actually enter religious life until many years later, well into late adulthood. A few who were born outside the United States first considered a vocation as young children and actually entered religious life while still in adolescence.

Vocational Timeline

(Average response among men and women)

	Men	Women
Year you first considered a vocation	1997	1998
Age when first considered a vocation	19	19
Year you entered religious life	2006	2006
Age when you entered religious life	28	28
Year you professed perpetual vows	2009	2010
Age when you professed perpetual vows	32	38

On average, these men and women first considered a vocation to religious life at age 19, which is consistent with other CARA research on vocational consideration.⁹ They typically spent several years in discernment and entered religious life after college and/or several years in the work force, on average at age 28. Then, after several years of formation, they professed perpetual vows in their early to mid-thirties.¹⁰

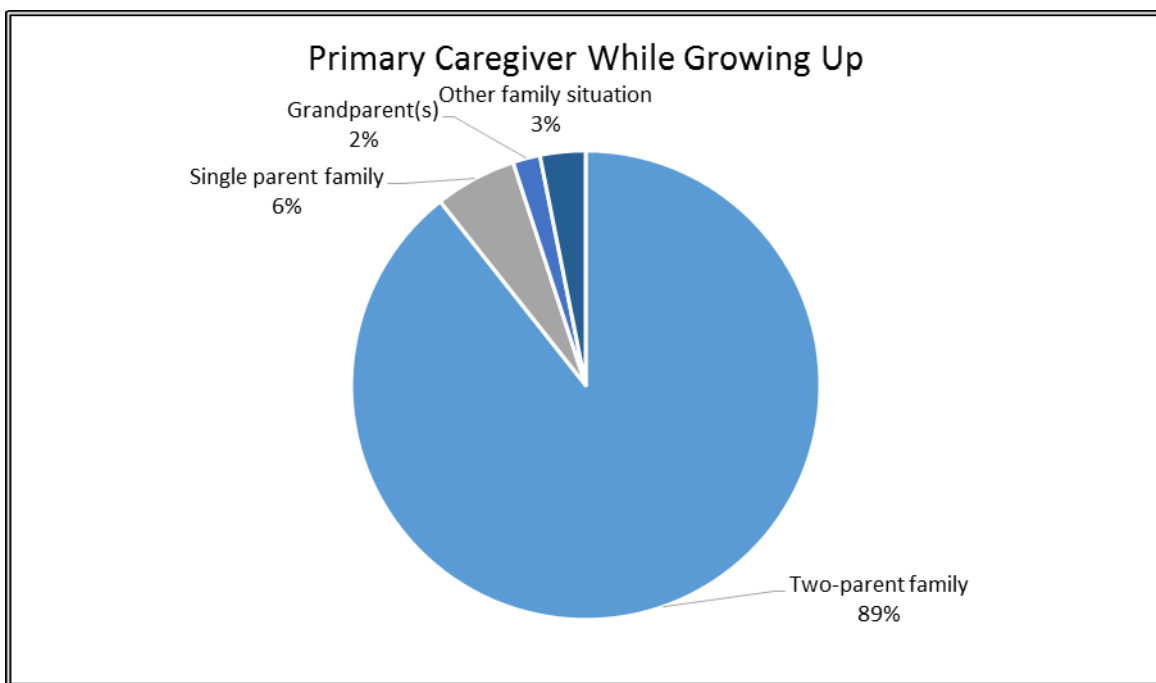
⁹ Among never-married U.S. Catholic men who report that they have considered a vocation to religious life, 53 percent say they first considered this between 13 and 18 years of age and 19 percent first considered this between 19 and 24 years of age. Among never-married U.S. Catholic women who have considered a religious vocation, 41 percent say they first considered this between 13 and 18 years of age and 16 percent first considered this between 19 and 24 years of age. (Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier. *Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2012.)

¹⁰ This is consistent with other CARA research on perpetually professed. For example, the average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2014 is 37; for women in this group the average age is 38 and 36 for men. (Mary L. Gautier and Thomas P. Gaunt, SJ. *New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2014*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2015.)

Family Background

This part of the report examines the characteristics of the families of the men and women religious that responded to the survey. It describes the family structure in which they were raised, their siblings and birth order in the family, and the primary language spoken in the home. The section then presents characteristics of family religious faith and practice and compares these characteristics among three cultural groups.

Most responding men and women religious were raised in a traditional two-parent family (89 percent), with parents who were in their 40s (58 percent) or 50s (26 percent) when they were teenagers.



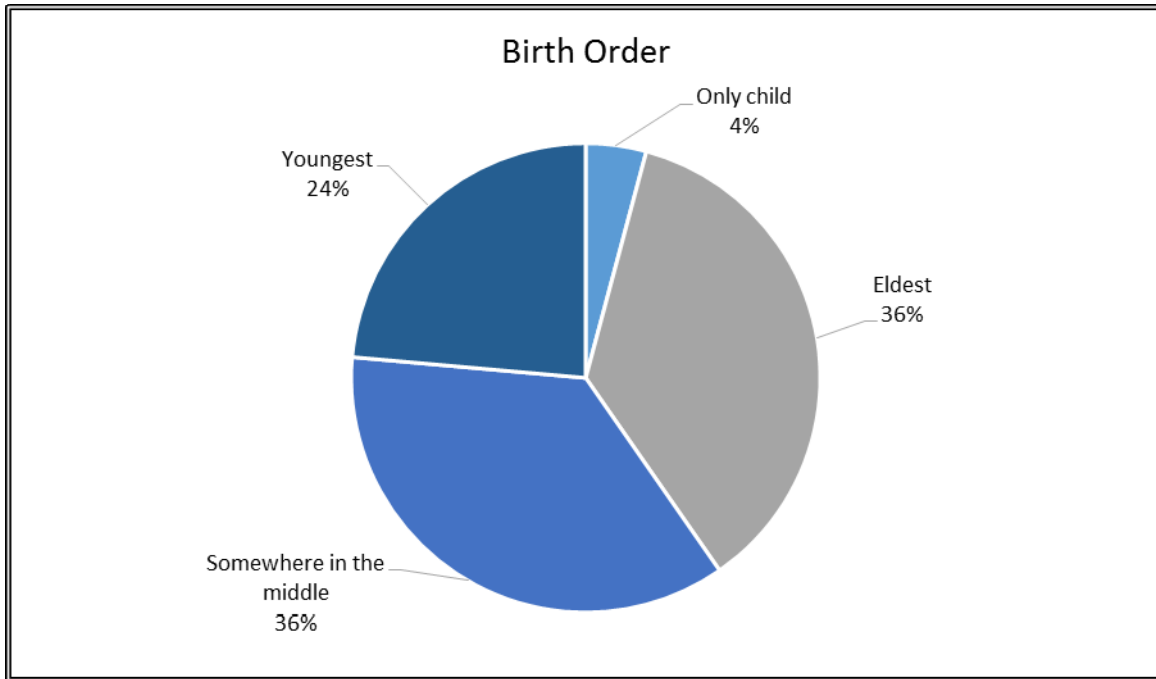
Some 5 percent, however, were raised by a grandparent or in some other nontraditional family situation. Several of these describe how divorce affected their family while they were growing up.

In fact, a substantial number of them have experienced family trauma while they were growing up:

- One in five (21 percent) experienced the serious illness or death of a sibling or other close relative
- One in eight (13 percent) experienced the serious illness or death of a parent
- A similar proportion (13 percent) experienced their parents' divorce

Siblings

Most men and women religious grew up in a family with other siblings. Few of them (4 percent) were the only child in the family and the same proportion (4 percent) reported more than eight siblings in their family. On average, these respondents reported three siblings.



Four in ten responding religious grew up in a family in which they were the eldest or the only child. A quarter were the youngest child in the family and just over a third were neither eldest nor youngest child in the family.

Language

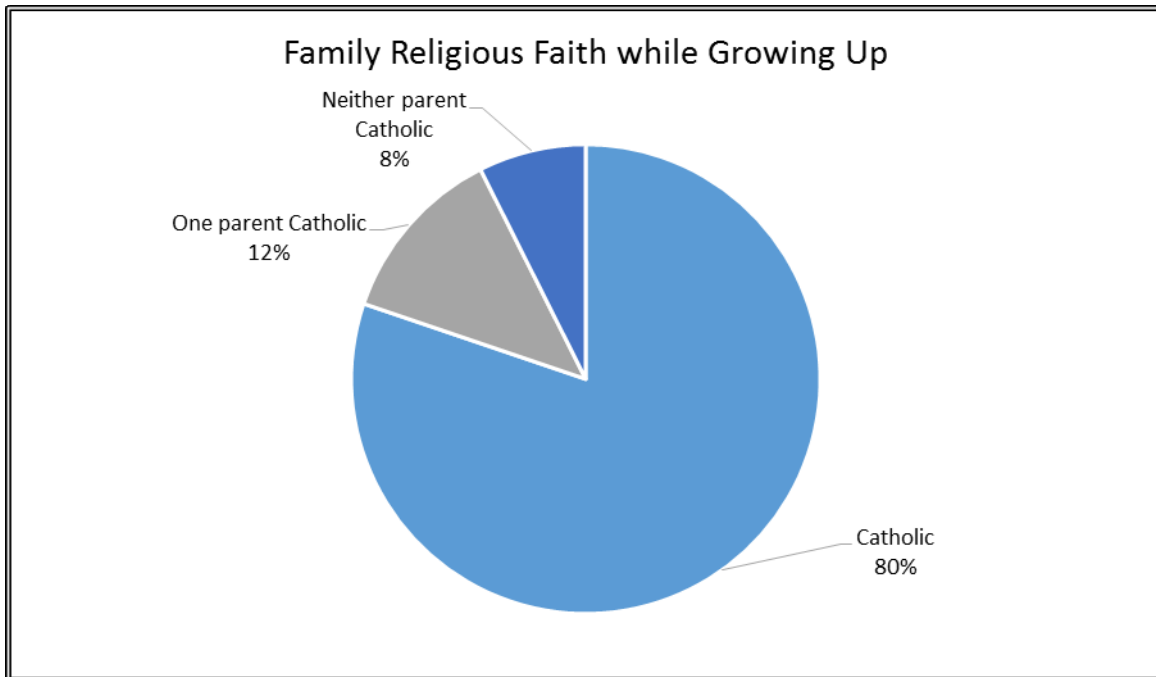
Eight in ten respondents (82 percent) spoke English as the primary language in their home while growing up. Another 6 percent spoke Spanish as the primary language in the home and 12 percent reported some other language as the primary language in the home while growing up. Vietnamese was the most commonly cited other language, followed by Igbo, Mandarin Chinese, Korean, and Malayam.

Primary Language Spoken at Home by Cultural Background

	English	Spanish	Other
Caucasian/European American/White	97%	<1%	2%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	30	66	4
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	32	1	67

Family Religious Faith and Practice

Most respondents grew up in a family in which both parents were Catholic. Just over one in ten were raised in a family with one Catholic parent and less than one in ten were raised in a family in which neither parent was Catholic.

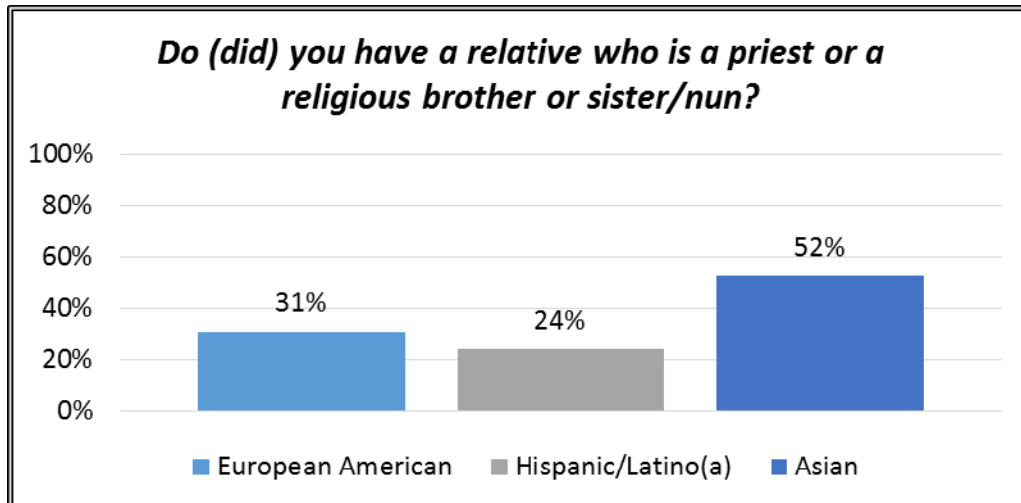


Virtually all of those with two Catholic parents (99 percent) were raised Catholic. Among those who were raised in a family with one Catholic parent 84 percent were raised Catholic. Very few who grew up in a family in which neither parent was Catholic were raised Catholic (2 percent). These religious who were not raised Catholic were most often raised with no religious faith, or were raised either Baptist or Lutheran.

Among those who had a Catholic mother while they were growing up, more than two in three (69 percent) said that religion was “very” important to her, and a quarter said that religion was “somewhat” important to her. Those who had a Catholic father while they were growing up responded similarly: 54 percent said that religion was “very” important to their father and 29 percent said that religion was “somewhat” important to him.

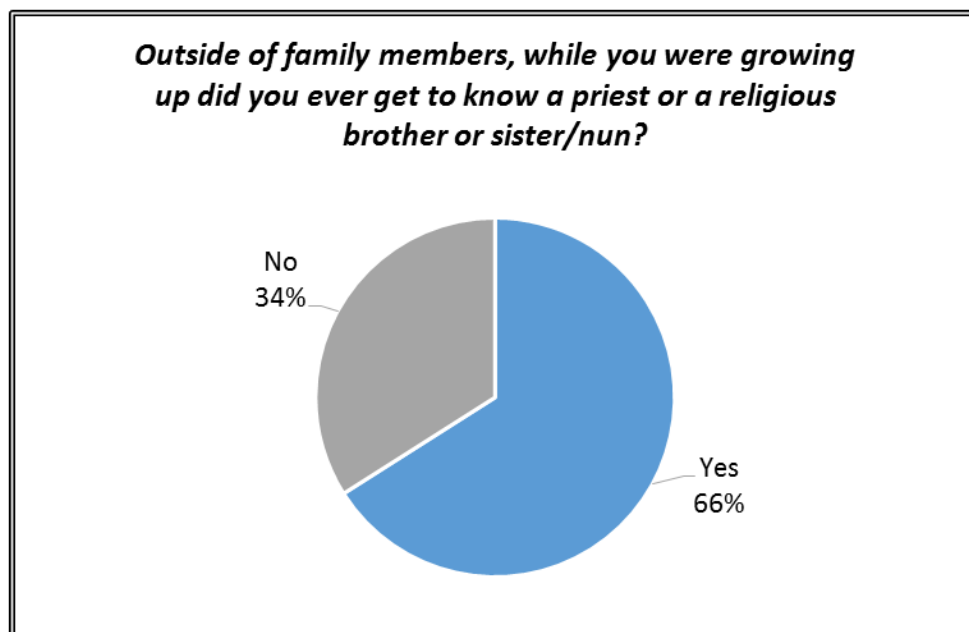
Most respondents (85 percent) report that their parents were married in the Catholic Church. Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents are slightly less likely (78 percent) than Asian (85 percent) or European American respondents (88 percent) to indicate that their parents were married in the Catholic Church.

A third of responding religious have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun. A higher proportion of religious that were born outside the United States (46 percent) have such a relative, compared to 29 percent of those born in the United States and have a relative that is a priest or a religious.

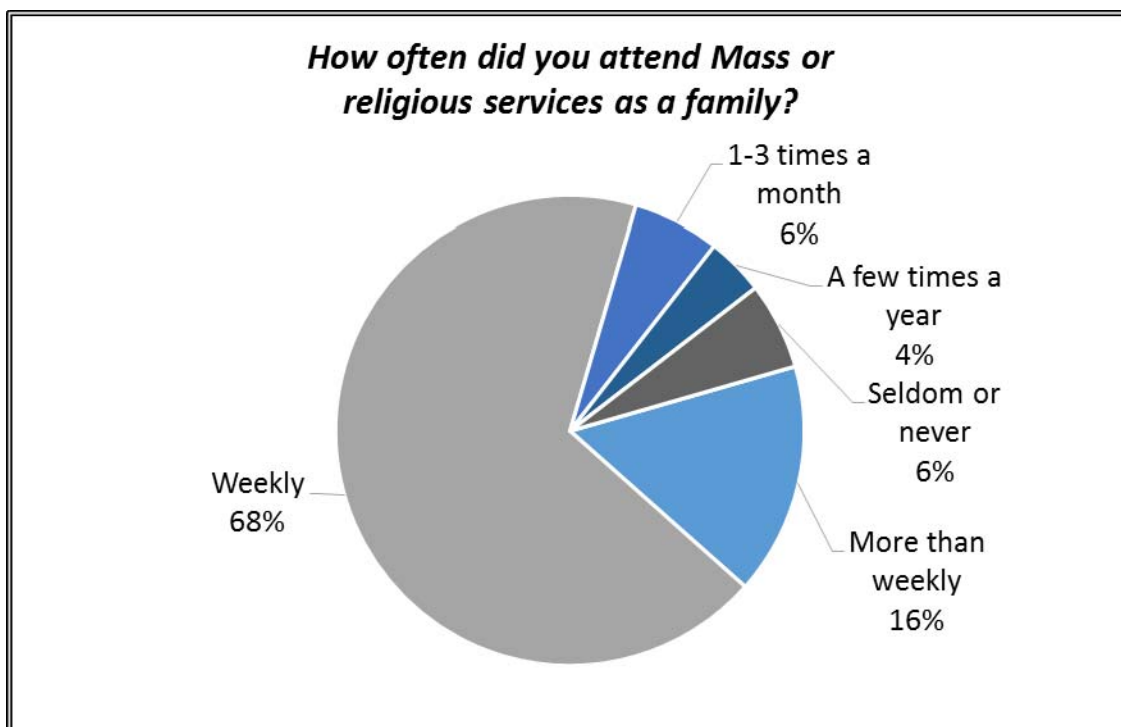


By ethnicity, a higher proportion of Asian religious have a relative who is a priest or a religious. Among Hispanics, a quarter have a relative who is a priest or a religious.

In contrast, men and women religious are equally likely to report that they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun while they were growing up. About two in three, regardless of cultural background, say they knew a priest or a religious while growing up.

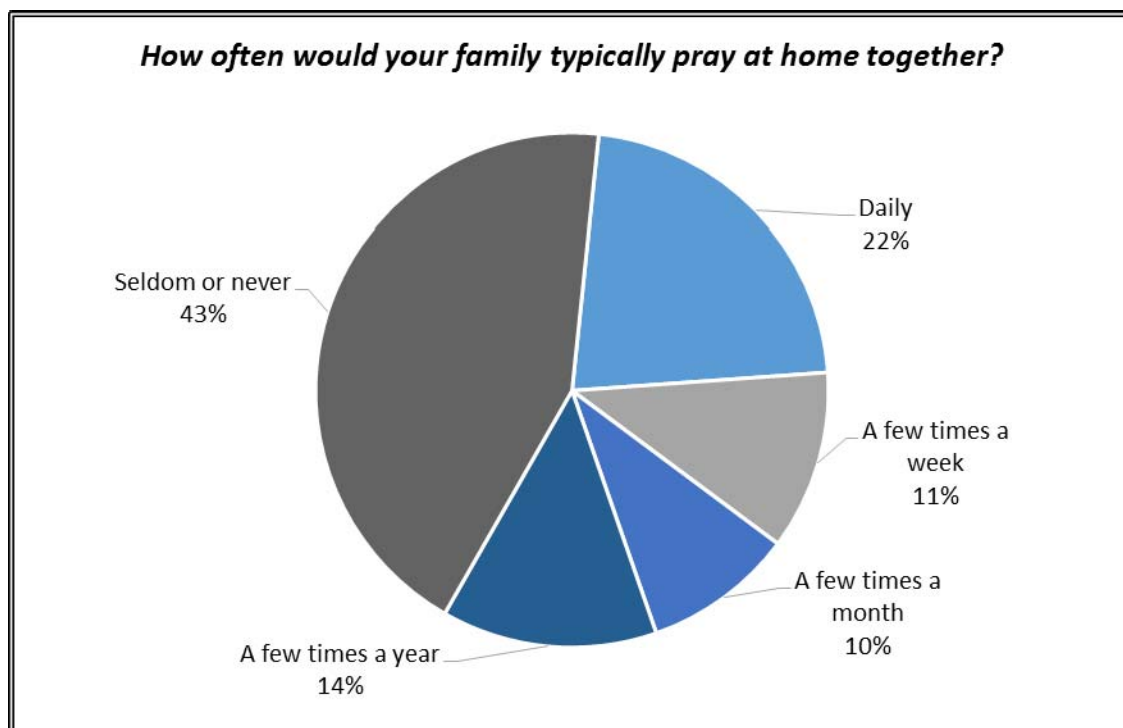


Responding religious report that while growing up they attended Mass or other religious services as a family on a regular basis. Two in three report attending weekly and 16 percent say they attended more than weekly as a family.



Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents are less likely than European American or Asian respondents to report higher levels of Mass attendance as a family: 87 percent of Asian respondents and European American respondents report attending Mass as a family weekly or more than weekly compared to 66 percent of Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents who reported that level of religious practice. In fact, more than a quarter (27 percent) of Asian respondents report attending Mass more than weekly as a family.

Asian respondents are also more likely than other cultural groups to report higher levels of family prayer. As the figure below illustrates, altogether about one in five respondents, regardless of ethnic background, report that their family would typically pray at home together (outside of meal blessings) on a daily basis. One in ten report that family prayer together occurred a few times a week and the same proportion said that family prayer together occurred a few times a month. More than half (57 percent) reported family prayer at home together would occur only a few times a year or never.



Unlike European American and Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents, who reported daily family prayer among a fifth or fewer respondents (20 percent and 16 percent, respectively), four in ten Asian respondents report that their family would typically pray at home together (outside of meal blessings) on a daily basis.

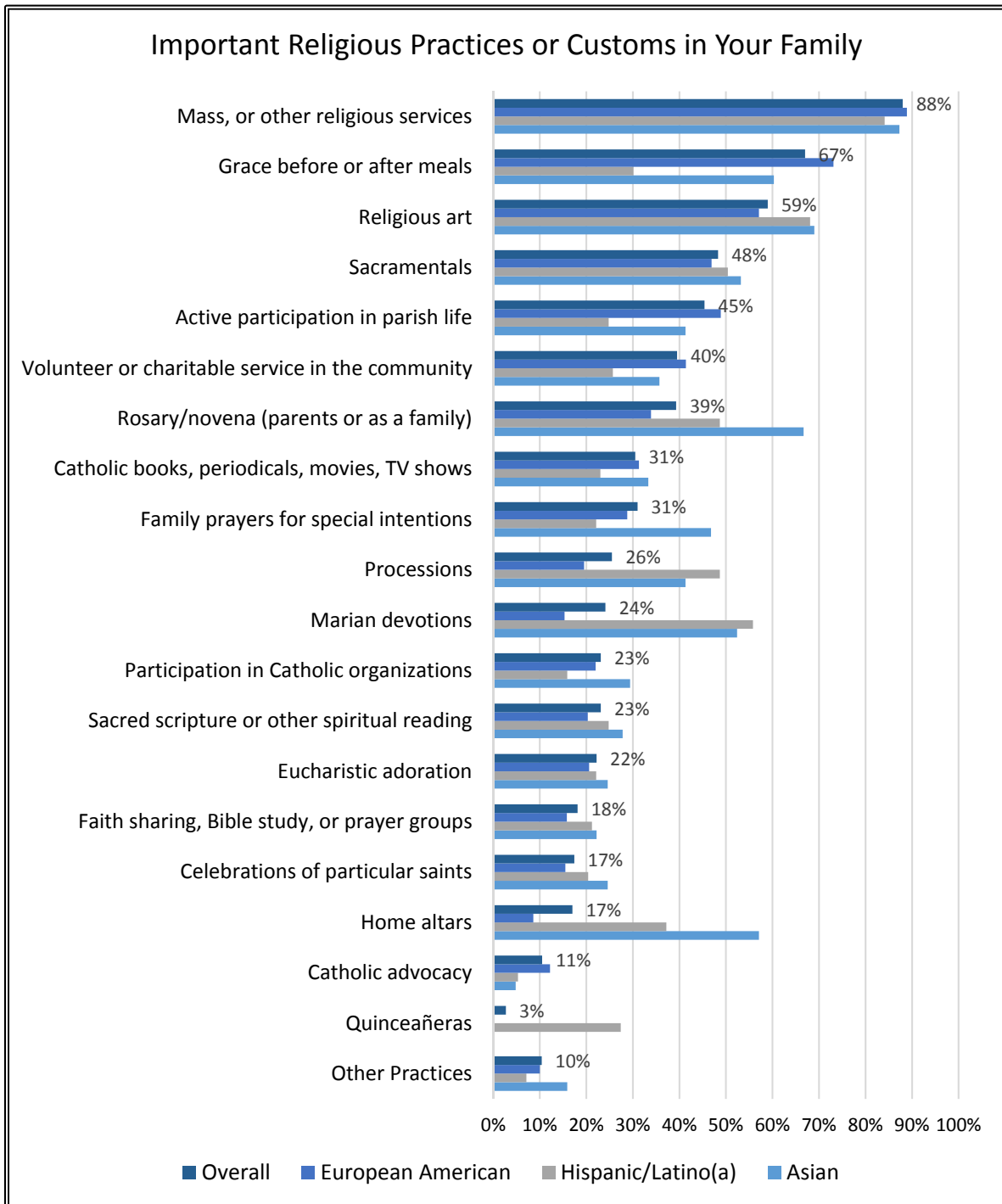
At the other extreme, nearly half of European American respondents (48 percent) and four in ten Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents (37 percent) said their family seldom or never prayed at home together. By comparison, a quarter of Asian respondents (24 percent) reported that level of family prayer.

Although Asian respondents are more likely than the other cultural groups to express greater levels of family religious practice, they are less likely than other cultural groups to declare that they were more religious than their other family members when they were growing up. Overall, three in ten respondents say they were more religious than their other family members while growing up, but a little less than a quarter of Asian respondents (23 percent) express that sentiment.

In general, four in ten respondents (42 percent) say that their religious faith was about the same as other family members while they were growing up. A quarter say they were more religious than some but less religious than other family members. Very few, just 4 percent, say they were less religious than their other family members.

Important Religious Celebrations or Customs in the Family

To learn more about important family religious customs or practices that might have had an influence on consideration of a religious vocation, respondents were asked to look at a list of 20 religious practices or customs and identify which of them were important in their family when they were growing up. Respondents could select all that apply.



As can be seen by the figure above, some of these religious practices, such as Mass or other religious services, were important family practices for nearly all respondents (88 percent) when they were growing up. Other practices, such as Bible study or Catholic advocacy were important family practices for a much smaller proportion of respondents (about 10 to 20 percent) while they were growing up.

Important ethnic differences in religious practice also appear in the figure above. For example, grace before or after meals was an important family religious practice that was reported by two in three respondents, but European Americans and Asians are much more likely than Hispanic/Latino(s) to say that was an important family practice while they were growing up. Likewise, participating in the rosary/novenas or other Marian devotions are more likely to be cited as an important family religious practice among Hispanics and Asians than among European Americans. Similarly, home altars and processions are more common family practices among Hispanics and Asians than among European Americans.

Written responses to the “Other” category also varied according to ethnicity. While European Americans mentioned night prayer, seasonal religious practices (e.g., Advent, Lent) religious education, and Catholic schooling most frequently, Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents wrote in these responses, among others:

- Spanish prayer group
- Hispanic celebrations of Saints
- Parish fiestas
- Hispanic Charismatic Renewal retreats
- Lives of the saints

Asian respondents wrote in these responses as important family religious practices when they were growing up:

- Church choir
- Daily personal prayer
- Death anniversary celebration with prayer
- Attending Buddhist temples
- Pilgrimages
- Family retreats
- Lives of the saints
- Vietnamese martyrs

Most Influential from Family Background

A question on the survey invited men and women religious to respond in their own words to this: “What in your family background was most influential in your discernment of your vocation?” CARA grouped these responses into categories for easier comparison. The categories for this question include strong faith of parents, regular Mass attendance, family love and support, prayer/devotion to Mary, strong faith of grandparents, aunts and uncles, attending Catholic schools, positive relationship with a priest or religious, and other. Some of the representative comments within each category are presented below.

Strong faith of parents: Over one in four respondents said that the example of strong faith came from their parents. This faith was instrumental in deciding to discern their vocation. Some examples include:

I think it was my parents desire to follow God and be faithful to Him. I was taught by my mom that God loved me and always wanted what was best for me. I think having this spiritual foundation was essential to having an open heart to seek God's will when he started guiding me towards religious life.

I was most influenced by my parents' religious practices. They grounded me in my religious beliefs early in life.

My family resolved to live a good Christian life and not to argue about the differences. They taught me to love rich and poor alike, to be generous, good-hearted and straight-forward. They gave me unconditional love and encouraged me to pursue what my heart desired.

On the part of my family, the most influential part of my discernment was the faith-based relationship my parents and I developed. We had grown together spiritually through bible studies, adoration, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, listening to Catholic radio, and constantly discussing the Catholic faith. Consequently, they understood and were very supportive of my vocation.

One of my earliest memories of prayer was saying the guardian angel prayer with my mother. Seeing the faith of my mother in those few moments pushed me to seek God in my life and ask questions about the Catholic faith.

The example of my parents, in particular my mother, was most influential in the discernment of my vocation. My mother taught me how to pray, and encouraged me to go to daily Mass and to participate in community service. She showed me what it meant to truly live faith. And my father also taught me how to pray, encouraging me to pray spontaneously, and to have devotion to sacred scripture. One of my most vivid and treasured memories was watching my parents pray in the evening by their bedside and joining them in prayer. So these practices laid the foundation for me to discern a vocation in college.

The faith of my parents. God was never conceived as someone absent. God was like another member of the family.

Regular Mass attendance: One in eight respondents stated that regular Mass attendance had a strong impact on their vocation. Many went to daily Mass while most went weekly. Some examples include:

Attending daily Mass.

Dad's insistence on weekly Mass attendance and clear moral teaching that he offered us while growing up. I didn't know it at the time, but my grandfather had always prayed that one of his grandsons would become a priest.

Going to daily Mass with parents as a child.

My mother's insistence in our Sunday Mass attendance.

Simply being at Mass every Sunday.

The most influential thing in my discernment from my family background would have to be the faithfulness of my family to Sunday Mass, no matter where we were, as well as the faithfulness to many other aspects of the faith.

Weekly attendance of Mass, participation as altar server.

Family love and support: One in eight respondents said having the love and support of their family made the discernment process easier. Here are a few examples:

Knowing that they supported me while I was discerning. This gave me freedom.

The encouragement of my parents to seek God's will for my life.

My parents and siblings were very supportive when I first told them I was discerning religious life, and have been ever since. I felt like this gave me freedom to prayerfully consider my vocation without internal pressure from the family.

My parents' openness to any good career lifestyle/vocation which made me happy. I trusted their support of me.

The most influential thing in my family was the openness and the support. My family was with me 100 percent.

All of my family showed support when I let them know I was considering a vocation to the religious life.

Unwavering support of my choices in life, while being fully aware of the importance that religion was for my family. Being Catholic was simply a part of who we were and as a child, it was never questioned. As I grew up, I had some space to make choices for myself. Once I chose my faith for myself, it was truly mine!

Prayer/ Devotion to Mary: One in ten respondents credited regular devotions, adoration and prayer with their family as the primary factor in their discernment. Some examples include:

Devotion to our Lady and the Eucharist.

Devotion to the Eucharist & Holy Rosary.

Marian Devotion and praying the rosary together as a family.

My family prayed the rosary together and we had a strong Eucharistic devotion.

The practice of frequent (when possible, weekly) time spent in Eucharistic adoration was the most influential factor in allowing me to be open, hear, and respond to God's call.

The single most influential aspect of my family's Catholicity was our participation, beginning when I was about ten, in a monthly night vigil of Eucharistic Adoration, prayers of reparation, and Marian devotions as promoted by the Alliance of the Two Hearts. It instilled in me a very deep love of Jesus and Mary, and an awareness of the need for prayer and reparation, especially in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

We are Mexican, so the Marian devotion was very important, especially our Lady of Guadalupe.

Strong faith of grandparents, aunts and uncles: One in ten state that their extended family members had a large impact in their decision to discern. Some examples include:

My grandmother, who is a beautiful and devout Catholic woman. She goes to Mass Daily (and has for as long as I can remember) and is very involved in active parish life. She truly lives the Gospel Message

My grandmothers and great aunts (who were sisters) were very devout and practiced their faith. They supported me growing in faith and my discernment for religious life as well.

My grandparents' prayer life. My grandfather used to tell me Bible stories as a child and seeing my grandma constantly praying, especially the rosary. Before I learned to read, I learned to recite the psalm just by listening to my grandmother recite them.

The good example of faithful service from my uncles...one as a priest and one as a brother in a religious institute.

The faith of my Grandmother. She would sometimes take me to daily Mass as a child, and when I began to grow in my own faith, that was the example that I fell back on. The witness of her fidelity to her own vocation, and her happiness in it, were wonderful witnesses to me.

The love and deep Catholic faith of my grandparents.

The witness of my grandparents' sacrifices, especially giving up their retirement to raise me and the witness of my grandfather always at the church cleaning it up and serving the church in any way he could.

Attending Catholic schools: One in ten said that attending a Catholic School greatly encouraged their choice to discern. Some examples include:

Catholic education - my parents broke their backs to pay for Catholic school for me and my siblings from Kindergarten through High School.

My Catholic education, which my parents provided through 12th grade and which I chose for university studies.

My parents gave me the option of attending Catholic school, which I did, and there I had a very influential teacher who encouraged me to be open to Religious Life.

My parents sent both my brother and I to Catholic School our entire lives. My parents always valued Catholic education and stressed its importance. With that, I was constantly exposed to Catholic practices through my school.

My parents sent me to Catholic school, so I was taught by Sisters. My first grade teacher, in particular, influenced my desire to become a Sister.

The sacrifices my parents made to send me and my siblings to Catholic schools.

This is not specifically in my family background, but, growing up going to a Catholic elementary school gave me exposure to religious sisters. It was this exposure that sparked my curiosity.

Positive relationship with a priest or religious: One in ten wrote that being related to and/or having a positive relationship with a priest or religious was most influential to their discernment. Some examples include:

I had uncles and aunts who were priests and nuns.

Most influential in my discernment of my vocation regarding my family background was the influence and experience of having an older sister who entered religious life while I was in high

school. Her example of faithful consecration as a Spouse of Christ touched my life in a very tangible way, opening up the opportunity to discern a religious vocation as a real possibility. My great uncle was a priest, a great aunt was a sister, my Dad's cousin was a sister and my Mon's cousin was a sister.

My older cousin who is a holy priest and my cousin who was a religious brother.

Personal relationships with priests/religious: my aunt and godmother, who was a religious sister (Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart), and having several Jesuit family friends.

Presence of priests & religious at the house for meals.

Religious life/priesthood was seen as a respected and noble vocation. We knew priests and religious, both as family members and friends, and they were respected and loved figures.

Other: Less than one in 20 responses did not fit the categories above. Some examples include:

Our economic situation influenced me most in making me doubt my vocation.

Polish background.

My youngest brother who has Downs Syndrome.

My father's commitment to serving his country faithfully in the Air Force.

Plurality of denominations.

The death of my father.

Suggestions for Family Help in Discernment

A second question on the survey invited women and men religious to respond in their own words to this: “What more from your family would have been helpful to you as you discerned your vocation?” CARA grouped these responses into categories for easier comparison. The categories for this question include engaging in their faith/talking about their faith, encouragement/support/understanding, praying as a family, talking about religious vocations, relationships with priests/religious, and other. Some of the representative comments within each category are presented below.

Engaging in their faith/talking about their faith: One in four respondents stated that it would have helped them discern their vocation if their family would have engaged or talked about their faith more. Some examples include:

A greater openness to faith sharing and a less hostile attitude toward the institutional church would have helped me to share my discernment with them.

A little more Catholic culture and freedom in talking about faith.

A lived faith and not just the practice of the faith.

An attempt to understand the larger Church, and not just the minimal components of a faith life that comes from once-a-week Mass.

Attending Sunday Mass as a family.

Catholic culture in the home.

Discussion of why faith was important for them.

Encouragement/support/understanding: One in five respondents stated it would have helped them discern their vocation if their family would have been more encouraging/supportive or understood what their vocation was about. Examples include:

Any positive support whatsoever would've been helpful (as it was, I received mostly negative comments and/or ambivalence).

Encouragement to pursue the idea when I was a child and first mentioned it.

Even though I began thinking about a religious vocation when I was eleven or twelve, I didn't say anything about it for years, for fear of negative reactions from my family, especially from my siblings. More support in my home would have resolved much of my hesitancy early on in my discernment.

I entered later in life. I think if my mother had been supportive of a religious vocation earlier in my adult life, I would have entered sooner.

I first experienced a call to religious life in my teens but was not encouraged to pursue a vocation. My parents, particularly my mother, did not have the understanding or resources to guide me. My hope is that parents will receive practical information to help them nurture and guide their children.

I pretty much discerned alone, as I was no longer sure that they shared the same passion for the faith, other things had perhaps drawn their attention. It was still important to my parents, but they wanted other things for me and were not supportive initially of my vocation. I think it would have been helpful for them to acknowledge it as a valid vocation for me to follow.

I think that a greater understanding from my family would have been helpful as I discerned my vocation. They didn't really have a desire to understand the religious state as I was discerning it, and they weren't really interested in the wonderful things that I was learning about as I discerned my vocation. It felt like even though they had talked about being open to God's will, they were still really hurt that God's will pulled me away from them. They always supported me, but it still took them a few years to understand that even though I was really happy in the convent with my new family, I still really loved them and my religious family would never replace them. Now they realize that I will always love them as my family, as an important support to my vocation.

Praying as a family: One in seven respondents mentioned praying as a family would have helped their discernment. This varies from praying beyond meal times to praying any time as a family. Some examples include:

Adoration, family rosaries and prayer.

Communal prayer at home.

Daily praying together, rather than just personal prayer.

Exposure to Eucharistic adoration and benediction through making a holy hour. I didn't know concretely what this was until I went on a retreat at age 16. I reacted positively immediately and know this would have sped up the discernment process.

Had there been more family prayer time together and exposure to Eucharistic adoration I think discernment would have been easier and my family as a whole would have had the perspective to be more encouraging.

I witnessed active participation, but prayer did not have a large role in my family and was always something private. I think an increase in prayer together as a family, or witnessing my parents' prayer would have been helpful.

It would have been helpful to have a more ardent family prayer life. We never really spoke about prayer or prayed together. Most of what I learned about prayer came from my Catholic schooling.

Talking about religious vocations: One in seven respondents wrote that talking about vocations would have helped them discern their vocation. Some of them commented that even mentioning that it as an option would have been helpful. Examples include:

As a slightly older vocation, most of my discernment took place in my later 20's. Being a family of mixed faith backgrounds, vocations wasn't something that frequently came up, and I don't recall talking about it in catechism classes either. So, possibly hearing a little more about vocations-- options would have been helpful.

As I was growing up, I do not remember conversations about the possibility of a religious vocation, so it seemed foreign to me when the idea first came in prayer.

Conversations about discernment and how to really listen to God's invitations in my life.

Creating a culture of vocations as a family during my childhood, I never heard my parents talk about the possibilities in vocations growing up. I think they just assumed we would all get married.

Discussion of religious life in general and religious vocations as a possible life choice for my siblings and me in particular.

Explicitly discussing calls to priesthood and religious life.

I never knew my dad had 3 cousins who were priests/sisters until after I entered the convent. It was not something we ever talked about. Even that I might have a vocation.

Relationships with priests/religious: Less than one in ten respondents mentioned that having a relationship with priests or other religious would have helped them in their discernment process. Some examples include:

Encouraging me to get to know sisters, allowing me to be more involved in parish activities.

Exposed me to more priests and religious, possibly by being more involved in a church ministry.

Getting to know priests and what they do.

Having priests/sisters over to the house; volunteering in locations where sisters/priests were serving.

I wish that we had invited more Sisters to dinner. Growing up, we always had a priest over for dinner at least once a month. I wish we had extended that courtesy to the Sisters who we loved dearly.

Other: One in five participants wrote a response that did not fit a category above. Examples include:

Coming from a non-religious household two things would have been more helpful. First, it would have helped if my family had a basic understanding of religious life and a working vocabulary of it. Sometimes, eight years later, we are still speaking in a foreign language. Second, stability would have helped me discern better. However, I do believe that God used that instability to guide and enrich my life too.

Greater teaching of the truths of the faith at home, as I was growing up.

I feel like this question is an oversimplification of a complex issue. The best way for a family to support a vocation is not to nag or push the issue. Rather, the best way is to live a truly authentic faith life and pass on the love of God and His Church.

Let me be free to make my choice.

More freedom as to whether or not I become a priest. At first they got really excited, which put a little pressure on me.

More open communication of their thoughts and feelings.

Peaceful surroundings. My mother was very strict and disciplined and this had a negative effect on how I view sisters in my religious house, superiors, and God.

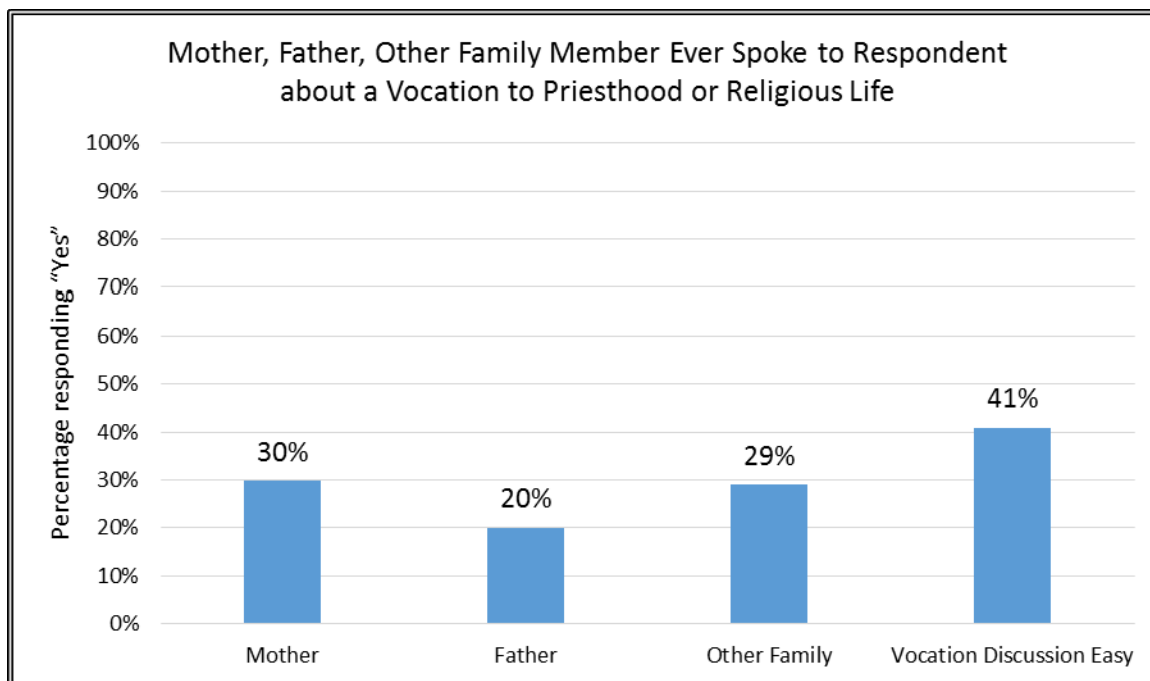
Privacy and space to let me share with others when I felt ready.

Encouragement and Discouragement of Vocations

This section of the report describes some of the particular ways that family members supported and discouraged vocational discernment among religious respondents. It explores whether close family members ever spoke to the respondent about a vocation as well as the difficulty these respondents may have experienced in starting a discussion about a religious vocation with family members. It presents the level of encouragement that various family members expressed when respondents were discerning their vocation and compares that to the level of support these family members currently express. Finally, the section explores which family members may have discouraged these respondents in their vocational discernment.

Family Discussion of Vocations

Most respondents (about six in ten) admit that starting a discussion with their family about their religious vocation was not easy for them. Apparently, this subject is difficult for family members as well. Just three in ten respondents said their mother had ever spoken to them about a vocation and even fewer, one in five, said their father had ever spoken to them about a vocation.



Although most respondents indicate that starting a discussion with their family about their vocation was not easy, the conversation was better when a parent had at least approached the subject with them. Among those who said their mother had ever spoken to them about a vocation more than six in ten (63 percent) said that starting a family discussion about their vocation was easy for them. Similarly, those whose father had ever spoken to them about a vocation were also more likely to say that starting a family discussion about their vocation was

easy for them (67 percent compared to 33 percent for those whose father never spoke to them about a vocation). Having some other family member speak about a vocation did not make starting a family discussion about their vocation easier.

Support for Vocational Consideration

Respondents were asked to evaluate how much encouragement they received from various family members when they were first considering their vocation to religious life.

Encouragement When First Considering a Vocation

Percentage responding as follows:

How much encouragement from...	“Some” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” only
Mother	60%	36%
Grandparent(s)	59	35
Sibling(s)	59	24
Father	57	30
Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)	50	20
Cousin(s)	36	13

Parents, grandparents, and siblings are most often reported as supportive when respondents were first considering their vocation. About a third of respondents indicated receiving “very much” encouragement from their mother and grandparents and three in ten received as much encouragement from their father. More distant relatives, such as aunts, uncles, and cousins were reported as somewhat less encouraging.

Encouragement Currently in Life and Ministry as a Religious

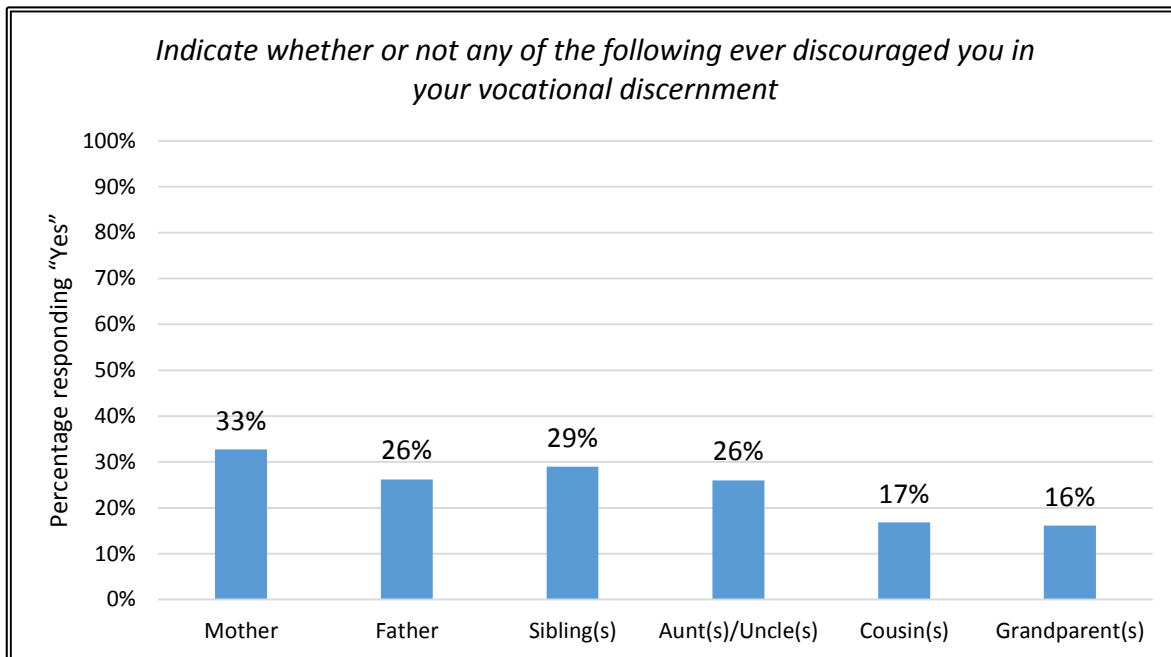
Percentage responding as follows:

How much encouragement from...	“Some” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” only
Mother	90%	76%
Father	88	70
Sibling(s)	86	57
Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)	80	46
Grandparent(s)	76	57
Cousin(s)	68	35

When asked about how encouraging these same family members are currently regarding their life and ministry as a religious, seven in ten or more report that they receive “very much” encouragement from their mother and/or father.

Discouragement from Family Members

Few respondents indicate that a family member ever discouraged them in their vocational discernment, but among those who do, a third say that their mother discouraged them from considering a vocation.



Three in ten report that one or more of their siblings discouraged them in their vocational discernment. About a quarter report that their father, or an aunt or uncle discouraged them. Very few report that a grandparent or a cousin discouraged them in their vocational discernment.

Describe How Your Family Supported Your Vocational Discernment

A box on the survey invited men and women religious to respond in their own words to this: “Briefly describe how your family supported your vocational discernment.” CARA grouped these responses into categories for easier comparison. The categories for this question include verbal encouragement, prayers, openness/acceptance, vocation events/visits, freedom/space, discussion/listening, financial support, and other. Some of the representative comments within each category are presented below.

Verbal encouragement: One in four respondents state their family encouraged their vocational discernment with verbal encouragement. Examples include:

Affirmed they were not surprised by my vocation and that I had traits that they could see were suitable for religious life.

Both parents and most of my older relatives were deceased by the time religious life was an option for me. I consulted my children when the first threads of a call surfaced and received their enthusiastic affirmation of my vocation. My brother and sister-in-law, while not Catholic, support my commitment to faith.

By letting me know that they trusted me and thought I was capable.

By understanding and giving me positive feedback on my choice.

Closeness, moral support for whatever path I chose, encouragement.

Encouraged me by affirming that following God's call/plan was most important.

From the moment I declared my intentions of being a religious I received all the support and encouragement from family. My parents helped nurture my vocation. Their life of faith, truth and giving alms were my building blocks.

Prayers: One in five respondents write that their family supported them with prayers. Some prayed after they told them about their vocation while others prayed from the time they were young for their child's vocation. Some examples include:

Always prayed for me to do God's will.

By praying for me and loving me. I knew that whatever I discerned was God's will for me they would still love me.

Grandmother and mother since a young age talked about some saints being sisters; my aunts who are sisters, mom helped me find communities and prayed/ asked for prayers from others.

I am most grateful for the prayerful support my family offered--especially my parents.

Mom prayed I would know my vocation, younger brother also discerned a religious vocation when I was discerning, parents and sibling listened when I was ready to talk about discernment.

My family always prays for me. Since entering, their prayer life has increased dramatically. I am proud and humbled by their support for my vocation.

My family prays for my vocation, especially the rosary and Eucharistic Adoration.

Openness/acceptance: One in seven respondents state that the best support their family had was an openness or acceptance. This varies considerably from a reluctant acceptance to a very loving openness to their family member's happiness. Examples include:

All they wanted for me was to find what gave me joy. They supported me in all my relationships until I found my true self in this religious life.

By accepting me and my choices, though they didn't understand.

I did not share my discernment with my parents. Once I made the decision, my parents, although not wildly enthusiastic, respected what I wanted to do.

My family showed a genuine interest in my discernment which clearly came from their love for me and their desire for the best for me. They were open which gave me the freedom to be open and honest as well.

My family was open to the idea and supported me because they were willing to support me in whatever made me happy. As I became more certain of my vocation, they also grew in their support of me and began to understand my call as an authentic call from the Lord, not just a "career choice".

My mom wanted to be a sister when she was younger. My dad & brothers are coming around & becoming more open.

My mother and father were very open to my religious vocation. They truly saw each child as a gift and that the Lord was in charge of unfolding the plan for that child's life. Because of their generosity in having thirteen children, this was one more "yes" of generosity to God's plan.

Vocation events/visits: One in seven respondents write that their family supported them by taking them to vocation events or with visits while they discerned. Some examples include:

Allowed me to visit some communities and supported by meeting with priests for spiritual direction.

General support in my life decisions; freedom to attend retreats at convents.

My family supports my vocation through visiting my Jesuit communities, telling their friends about how I am doing well and that I am happy and coming to my Jesuit vows.

My Father would take me to visit different order of sisters.

My parents attended vow ceremonies.

Since the community was far away, they were the ones who drove me to retreats. They were not always sure I was doing the right thing at the time, but that got turned around once they realized I was sure this was my vocation.

They allowed me to meet with the vocation directress, a priest, and go on discernment retreats monthly.

Freedom/space: One in eight respondents state the best way their family supported their discernment was by giving them freedom to discern without pressure from the family either way. This includes letting them decide or just not discouraging it. Examples include:

Allowed me to be whatever I felt called to be, explore my life.

Both in becoming Catholic and discerning to enter a religious order my parents were extremely supportive and wanted me to follow God's call, but they also kept their distance and we're not actively pushing me to go one way or the other. There was a healthy balance.

By never opposing it. I am a second generation Catholic, so my extended family does not understand at all. My elder brother was supposed to be the family priest, so his leaving the year I went into religious life was a serious, unexpected change of plan for everyone. But no one ever opposed my search for happiness.

I wanted to be a priest since I was in the first grade. I openly talked about this with my mother and family. I was never discouraged in talking about being a priest. My family would often ask me about my desire to be a priest as I was growing up. My family would tell other people I was thinking about being a priest. My family never forced me to think about becoming a priest.

My family allowed me to explore my vocation without any pressure in one direction or another.

My family gave me the responsibility and the choices to decide what the Lord's will was in my life. They were not going to be on top of my decision or at the same time prevent me from making a decision.

My parents let it grow naturally over time and didn't pressure me one way or the other.

Discussion/listening: One in eight respondents write that their family supported them by discussing or listening about their discernment. Some examples include:

Always asked questions.

At first, always asked about my experience while visiting the monastery. Later on, they were quietly supportive, allowing me to talk about it when I brought up the subject.

Getting to know (meet) the Marianists, reading about the order and learning as much as they could. Openly talking to me about my vocation and where I was at said stages of my life. Although I knew my father was feeling negative feelings at the time about it he continued to tell me that he loved me and respected my decisions.

I did not tell anyone in my family except my Mom and stepdad for most of my discernment process. My support came from them and my discernment guide. Once I did share that I was 2 years into a discernment process, most of my other family members were neutral in response - I think mostly due to not understanding it at all because my family is not Catholic and my family has no history of persons being in religious life - it was simply a complete unknown for them. My Mom and stepdad were two of my sounding boards and walked my entire process with me.

Listened to me and sought to understand WHY I wanted to walk this path.

My brother and his wife were my biggest support. They listened to me quite a bit during my discernment process and gave me objective feedback to help me realize that God was indeed calling me to Religious Life.

Talking about it often, especially difficulties (working them out together in a positive way).

Financial support: One in ten respondents state their family supported them financially. This could be paying for their student loans or paying for their transportation to and from their institute. Examples include:

Buying plane tickets to various convents for “Come & See” events.

Financially they helped lower my college debt; they want me to be happy.

Financially they pulled together and paid my way.

Help with paying my student loans so I could enter the convent.

I had a lot of student loan debt, so they helped me a lot to plan and organize fundraisers so I could enter. They also organized my finances and handled them since my entrance into the community.

My family gave me all I needed for affording the application and the journey and to complete my degree.

My family has helped me with student loans so I could enter religious life.

Other: One in four respondents write something other than the categories listed above. Some examples include:

By loving me.

Like every other career option I would bring up, they simply outlined what some of the day to day life of these people was like and pointed to people they knew who were in that profession.

Made sure I was in a Catholic school setting, vocation programs and other church activities often.

My family supported my vocation by attending Mass every morning and served different kinds of ministries in the parish.

My mom found brochures for me. My younger sister who was ten at the time thought it was cool.

My mom was so good about understanding that it was the Lord's will and fostering that.

My parents encouraged me to seek work and life that was fulfilling. Even though they may or may not support the vocation of a religious, they support the idea of me being fulfilled in this type of life.

Describe How Your Family Discouraged Your Vocational Discernment

A second box on the survey invited women and men religious to respond in their own words to this: “Briefly describe how your family discouraged your vocational discernment.” CARA grouped these responses into categories for easier comparison. The categories for this question include did not discourage, wasting time/talents, verbal criticism, marriage/career, rushing/lack of world experience, and other. Some of the representative comments within each category are presented below.

Did not discourage: One in five respondents write that their family did not discourage them from discerning, in fact several felt that their family left it up to them to decide. Following are a few of their responses:

I have 11 siblings, and one has fallen away from the Church and he was NOT encouraging, but ultimately accepting.

I really received little to no legitimate discouragement about my vocation. This was a wonderful blessing.

They did not discourage, but only encouraged and gave me room to decide.

They did not openly discourage me in my vocational discernment. They were willing to let me try as I had already become Catholic without their encouragement.

They didn't. I had an aunt ask me at the very beginning if I had decided on religious or diocesan life, but that is the closest to anything that could be described as discouragement that I faced.

They really neither encouraged nor discouraged - left it to me.

They would support any path I discerned.

Wasting time/talents: One in five respondents write their family said they were wasting their talents, education, or life. They felt they would not be happy in the religious life. Some of their responses include:

My attraction was always to extreme forms of monastic life, which my parents and family ridiculed as a complete waste of talent and energy. They said, “Why don't you AT LEAST become an ordinary useful priest, if you insist on going in that direction at all?” They also tried to “bribe” me away from seminary and monastery by offering me trips to Europe and the like.

My family basically believed that I was going to be oppressed if I entered the convent and that I could do so many other more valuable things with my life.

They largely discouraged me because they told me I was “wasting my life”. In the world, I was a “successful” businesswoman and they could not fathom that I would give that up.

They told me I could do so many better things than waste my life in a convent. They also said I wasn't made for the “nunnery.” They again made fun of my devotion and desire for faith life. They said I was wasting my education, my talents, and my life. I could do more in the world.

They said that I was too talented and gifted to want to join a “cult” and throw it all away.

When I first spoke to my mom she told me 'every girl thinks about being a nun, it's something you'll grow out of.' At one point, I was called a 'traitor to my family' because they had worked so hard to provide me with a good life and I was 'throwing it all away'. Were rather vocal about their displeasure on my decision telling me I was wasting my gifts and talents and abandoning them.

Verbal criticism: One in seven respondents stated their family stopped communicating with them or verbally discouraged their decision to discern. Here are some of their responses:

My discernment was short. So within four months between making the decision to apply for entrance and actually entering the community, there were numerous discussions ...and fights about why this was the wrong choice for me. Also at one point there was the discussion of bribery, if you won't go then we would do or give _____ (random items or other choices). Some family members no longer communicated with me once they realized that I was really going to enter religious life.

My family primarily discouraged my discernment through guilt (“look what this will do to our family”, or “I will never see you again before I die”), forceful persuasion (“read all this literature/watch these movies on how religious life and Catholicism are of the devil”), and slander of religious persons (priests/Catholics).

My mother and father gave very strong verbal objections when they first realized I was discerning. Since I lived at home, to allow the discernment to proceed with the prayerful peace that is needed, I was not able to share the progress of my discernment with my parents until a couple of weeks before entrance. I was able to share with my sisters who kept silence about the decision for me. I knew that healing for my parents would come after I enter, not prior.

My sister has not spoken to me since I decided to make this decision. That is very sad for me to have no contact for 15 years.

They told me that there were many more options for women now and that religious life is oppressive.

This is personal, and I do not wish to go into much detail here. I experienced much in the way of verbal abuse and shaming for my decisions initially. They viewed my discernment of a vocation as a betrayal of their values, ingratitude for all they had done for me, and a rejection of the way they brought me up. It has taken a long time for my parents to move from opposition to tolerance to acceptance. They will never understand why I have become a religious.

Marriage/career: One in seven respondents wrote their family members hoped for and expected marriage for their family member discerning. They also were disappointed that there would be no grandchildren. They were disappointed that they were walking away from a good profession and the need for financial support. Following are some of their responses:

My aunt in particular prefers that I marry and have children. She always complains of the fact that after so much money had been spent on me I decided to go to the priesthood rather than work to support the rest of the family especially my poor mother who became widowed just three years after I entered religious life.

My family voiced their disapproval and openly told me I am making a mistake, that there are other options to consider in life like continuing my career and having my own family.

My mother is thoroughly opposed, frequently asking when I will return to a “normal” life so that I may get married and raise a family.

My parents told me they would rather me get married. My parents told me they would not support me entering. I was 19, in college and had no job; I had no money. I told them if they would not help me then I was going to find a way by myself to pay the money for everything I needed to enter the convent. Once they realized how serious I was on entering, they told me they would cover the costs, but they still would not have any further support.

One aunt sat me down for over an hour and tried to talk me out of religious life. Another aunt was upset because she knew that I was going to become a Sister and that I'd “stick to it” and she was praying I'd change my mind because we were close and she wanted me to get married and have kids like she did.

They are very concerned that I will not have a nice job, a wife and children and prominent social status. It was kind of shame when they knew I gave up my previous career to join religious order.

They verbally (and angrily) asked “What happened to being a doctor?” Since they were concerned about my student loans.

Rushing/lack of world experience: One in ten respondents stated their family members were worried they were rushing into a vocation, and that they had not experienced the world enough before making their decision. Below are samples of their responses:

I think they thought I was running away from something, and didn't understand that I was choosing something very life giving. Both my mother and my grandfather (who is not Catholic) saw it as a phase at first, one that I would grow out of when I found a man. Now that they understand better, they know that this is the path that I was meant to follow. My mom voiced at one time how she was concerned I hadn't experienced enough of life to make that sort of decision.

My mom thought I was too young and I should wait. My dad became drunk one night and told me how he honestly felt. His main argument was that I was too young but he would not compromise at all. I cried a lot that night. My sister thought I was too young and was making a rash decision. My brother told me I was smart and had a lot of potential but I was throwing my life away. I am not very close to extended family but my aunts, uncles, and my mom's parents generally thought it was strange and unattractive way of life but gave an un-encouraging “whatever suits you” vibe.

My oldest sister thought it was just a phase/ridiculous, but it's kind of just her personality. A cousin wants to convert me to Pentecostalism and save me. An aunt thought I was just trying to run away from my parents and wanted me to come live with her.

Never talked about; discouraged; told I needed to “see the world,” “experience life”

Siblings – wait a few years; father – wanted me to “experience the world” and get college/university level first and was also “testing me,” he said my vocation was marriage; Grandparents/Aunts – I am too young to make such decisions

Other: One in ten respondents had other responses not listed above, examples include:

Explaining how I was “abandoning the family”

Felt I was too introverted for community life.

My grandfather seemed to think that I was being fanatical about religion.

My mom had a lot of concerns that I believe were related to her own desire to enter religious life and not being accepted.

They argued with me often of being brainwashed, joining a cult, guilt tripping me into thinking I was causing permanent emotional damage to my younger brother, bribing with cars and homes etc...

When I informed them of my vocational decision, they tried to convince me to change my mind. They accused me of being immature, deluded and homosexual. Others alleged that I was running away from 'real life' or the real responsibilities of life.

When I started discerning becoming a Brother, my mother and older sister thought I could do just as much service remaining as a layperson.

Questionnaire for Men and Women Religious with Response Frequencies



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Family Life Influences on Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life

Unit:

Men and Women Religious

N=1,279

The percentage for each response category is below or beside its respective number, calculated out of 100 percent. The percentage of non-response (NR) for each item follows, separately calculated out of 100 percent.

Family Background

1. While you were growing up, was your mother Catholic?

89 Yes 11 No **NR=<1**

2. *If no*, what was her religious preference?

3. How important was religion to your mother while you were growing up?

2 Not at all 9 A little
24 Somewhat 65 Very **NR=<1**

4. While you were growing up, was your father Catholic?

84 Yes 16 No **NR=1**

5. *If no*, what was his religious preference?

6. How important was religion to your father while you were growing up?

10 Not at all 15 A little
27 Somewhat 48 Very **NR=1**

7. While you were growing up, who was your primary caregiver?

89 Two parent family 6 Single parent family
2 Grandparent(s) 0 Sibling or other relative
3 Other: _____ **NR=<1**

M= 40's 8. When you were sixteen, how old was your primary caregiver (e.g. 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s)?

NR=1 Yes No NR

85 15 1 9. Were your parents married in the Catholic Church?

90 10 2 10. Were you raised Catholic? *If no*, what faith were you raised in? _____

11. How often did you attend Mass or religious services as a family?

16 More than once a week 68 Once a week
4 Two or three times a month 2 About once a month
4 A few times a year 6 Seldom or never
NR=1

M=3 12. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
NR=1

13. What is your birth order? **NR= 1**

4 Only child 36 Eldest
24 Youngest 36 Somewhere in the middle

14. What was the primary language spoken in your home while you were growing up? **Check only one.**

82 English

7 Spanish

12 Other: _____
NR= <1

Did you experience any of these in your family while you were growing up? **Check all that apply.**

13 Parents' divorce

13 Serious illness/death of a parent

21 Serious illness/death of a sibling or other close relative

18. Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun? 33 Yes 67 No **NR=1**

19. Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun? 67 Yes 33 No **NR= 1**

20. Which of these best describes your religious faith while you were growing up, relative to your family members?

30 I was more religious than my other family members

24 I was more religious than some, but less religious than other family members

42 I was about the same as other family members

4 I was less religious than my other family members
NR=1

21. While you were growing up, which of these were important religious celebrations or customs in your family? **Check all that apply.**

88 Mass, or other religious services

46 Active participation in parish life

22 Eucharistic adoration

18 Faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups

23 Participation in Catholic organizations (e.g. Knights of Columbus, Altar Society, Legion of Mary, Sodality)

39 Volunteer or charitable service in the community

11 Catholic advocacy (e.g. peace & justice, poverty, life)

39 Rosary/novena (parents or as a family)

67 Grace before or after meals

31 Family prayers for special intentions

17 Celebrations of particular saints (e.g. St. Joseph)

24 Marian devotions (e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Vietnam, Our Lady of Czestochowa)

17 Home altars

59 Religious art (e.g. crucifix, statues, pictures of saints)

48 Sacramentals (e.g. cross, medal, prayer card, scapular)
3 Quinceañeras

26 Processions (e.g. Via Crucis, Stations of the Cross)

23 Sacred scripture or other spiritual reading

31 Catholic books, periodicals, movies, TV shows

10 Other: _____

22. How often would your family typically pray at home together (outside of meal blessings)?
 22 Daily 11 A few times a week
 10 A few times a month 14 A few times a year
 43 Seldom or never **NR=1**

23. What in your family background was most influential in your discernment of your vocation?

Encouragement and Discouragement

Yes No NR

- 30 70 1 25. Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
 20 80 2 26. Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
 29 71 1 27. Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
 41 59 2 28. Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?

29. How much encouragement did (do) you receive from these family members in regard to your religious vocation?

Encouragement when first considering your vocation to priesthood or religious life

None	Only a Little	Some	Very Much	NR		None	Only a Little	Some	Very Much	NR
25	15	24	36	5	Mother	7	4	14	76	11
26	16	27	30	8	Father	8	4	18	70	16
22	19	35	24	7	Sibling(s)	6	8	29	57	10
30	21	30	20	12	Aunt(s) / Uncle(s)	9	11	34	46	13
42	22	23	13	16	Cousin(s)	17	15	34	34	17
29	12	24	35	26	Grand-parent(s)	19	6	19	57	35

30. Briefly describe how your family supported your vocational discernment.

Please indicate whether or not any of the following ever discouraged you in your vocational discernment:

Yes No NR

- 33 67 6 31. Mother
 26 74 9 32. Father
 29 71 10 33. Sibling(s)
 26 74 12 34. Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
 17 83 15 35. Cousin(s)
 16 84 23 36. Grandparent(s)

37. Briefly describe how your family discouraged your vocational discernment.

Background and Demographics

38. Please select the category that best describes your primary ethnicity/cultural background? **Check one.**

- 75 Caucasian/European American/White
 4 African/African American/Black
 9 Hispanic/Latino(a)
 11 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
 <1 Native American/Alaska Native
 2 Other: _____

NR= 2

Yes No NR

- 79 21 1 39. Were you born in the United States?
 M=1999 40. **If no**, when did you first move to the U.S.?
 89 11 1 41. Were you baptized Catholic as an infant?
 M=1995 42. **If no**, year you became a Catholic.
 10 90 2 43. Were you ever home-schooled?
 59 41 1 44. Did you ever attend parish-based religious education (e.g. CCD or PSR)?
 M=7 44 45. **If yes**, years of parish-based religious education.
 5 95 1 46. Have you ever been married?
 3 97 1 47. Do you have children?

48. Did you ever attend any of the following?

- 53 Catholic primary school (preschool through grade 8)
 42 Catholic secondary school (grades 9 through 12)
 49 Catholic college or university
 14 Catholic seminary

49. What is the highest level of education you completed before entering your religious institute or seminary?

- 13 High school diploma or less
 1 Trade or technical school
 17 Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree
 49 College or university undergraduate degree
 20 Graduate degree

NR

- M=1978 2 50. Year you were born.
 M=1998 2 51. Year you first considered a vocation.
 M=2006 3 52. Year you entered religious life (if applicable).
 M=2003 86 53. Year you entered seminary (if applicable).
 M=2010 52 54. Year of professed perpetual vows (if applicable).
 M=2010 91 55. Year of ordination (if applicable).

We would like to survey families, such as yours, who have produced a vocation. These family members will be asked questions similar to those asked of you in this survey, to help us better understand the influence of families on vocational discernment. Their responses will not be compared to yours, nor will any responses be reported in a way that could identify an individual. Your answers to this survey also will not be shared with any family member.

PLEASE PROVIDE CONTACT INFORMATION OF A FAMILY MEMBER (PREFERABLY A PARENT OR A SIBLING) WHO CAN RESPOND TO A BRIEF SURVEY ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON YOUR VOCATION:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

Email: _____

Please let this person know to expect a survey from us in the next few weeks. Thank you!

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

***The Influence of Families on Diocesan Vocations:
A Report for the
National Religious Vocation Conference***

APPENDIX II: Responses from Diocesan Priests and Seminarians



**Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D.
Jonathon L. Wiggins, Ph.D.**

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	98
Major Findings from Diocesan Priests and Seminarians	98
Introduction.....	103
Collecting the Names.....	103
Distributing the Survey	103
The Questionnaire	104
The Report	104
Characteristics of Priests and Seminarians	105
Ecclesial Status	105
Age and Generation of Respondents.....	105
Primary Ethnicity/Cultural Background	107
Nativity	108
Prior Marital Status	109
Education	109
Vocational History	111
Family Background.....	112
Siblings	113
Language.....	113
Family Religious Faith and Practice	114
Important Religious Celebrations or Customs in the Family.....	122
Most Influential from Family Background	126
Suggestions for Family Help in Discernment.....	130
Encouragement and Discouragement of Vocations.....	132
Family Discussion of Vocations	132
Support for Vocational Consideration	133
Discouragement from Family Members	135
Describe How Your Family Supported Your Vocational Discernment	137
Describe How Your Family Discouraged Your Vocational Discernment.....	141
Questionnaire for Diocesan Priests and Seminarians with Response Frequencies.....	145

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

**The Influence of Families on Vocations to Religious Life:
A Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference**

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a study of diocesan priests and seminarians who have entered the priesthood or the seminary in the last 15 years about the influence of their families on their vocations. In summer 2014, the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to study the influence of families on discernment of a vocation to priesthood or religious life. The goal of the research is to provide information that will help promote vocations and assist families with the discernment process and the transition of a family member to religious life or priesthood.

This Appendix is one part of the much larger study of the influence of families on vocations to priesthood and religious life. The final, comprehensive report includes these findings as well as findings from a survey of men and women who have entered religious institutes in the United States in the last 15 years, surveys of family members of these seminarians, priests, and men and women religious, focus groups of some of these family members at two locations around the United States, and findings from a national survey of Catholic parents about their encouragement of vocations to priesthood or religious life. CARA developed two questionnaires for this study – one for seminarians, priests, and men and women religious and one for family members – in collaboration with Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, executive director of NRVC, and an advisory committee convened by NRVC. CARA also conducted two focus groups with family members who were identified from the surveys to hear from them about issues relevant to this study. Finally, CARA included some questions about the encouragement of vocations on a national survey of Catholic parents so that the responses of family members could be compared to those of Catholic parents in general.

Major Findings from Diocesan Priests and Seminarians

Family Religious Faith While Growing Up

- Eight in ten responding priests and seminarians report that when they were growing up both of their parents were Catholic, one in ten had one Catholic and one non-Catholic parent, and another one in ten had two non-Catholic parents.
- Nine in ten priests and seminarians report that their mother was Catholic when they were growing up and just over eight in ten say the same about their father. Seven in ten say that religion was “very” important to their mother when they were growing up and

another two in ten say it was “somewhat” important to them. Concerning their Catholic fathers, just under six in ten say their religion was “very” important to them and another three in ten say it was “somewhat” important to them. Priests and seminarians who identify as Asian are particularly likely to say both parents held religion as “very” important to them.

- Half of responding priests or seminarians say they either have/had a relative who is a priest, religious brother or religious sister or knew one growing up. A quarter both have/had a relative who is a priest, religious brother or religious sister and knew one growing up. Nearly a quarter report neither.
- Overall, one-third of responding priests and seminarians say they do or did have a priest or a religious brother or sister as a relative. Outside of their family members, eight in ten of those born outside of the United States report knowing a priest or religious brother or sister when growing up, compared to two in three of those born in the United States. Those identifying as Asian are especially likely to have known a priest, religious brother, or religious sister (either as a relative or a non-relative) when growing up.
- About half of responding priests and seminarians say they were about as religious as their other family members when growing up, with two in ten saying they were more religious than some and less religious than some others. A quarter report that they were more religious than other family members and one in 20 say they were less religious than other family members. Asian respondents are *least* likely to say they were more religious than other family members when growing up.

Family Religious Practice When Growing Up

- Two in three say when growing up their family attended Mass or religious services weekly and another one in ten say they attended more than once a week. Hispanic/Latino respondents are *least* likely to say their family attended Mass or religious services at least once a week.
- Just over a third report that their family prayed together a few times a week or more, with another one in ten praying together a few times a month. Four in ten, however, say their families seldom or never prayed together. Asian respondents and those born outside the United States are particularly likely to report that their family prayed together daily.
- Priests and seminarians were asked which of 20 religious practices or customs were important to their family when they were growing up. The three most common ones among the families of respondents overall are attendance of Mass or other religious services, saying grace before or after meals, and displaying religious art. The three most common among Asian respondents’ families are recitations of rosaries/novenas, displaying religious art, and saying grace before or after meals. The most common among Hispanic/Latino respondents’ families are reciting rosaries/novenas, processions, and Marian devotions. The three most common among those with a European American

background are grace before or after meals, displaying religious art, and active participation in parish life.

Encouragement and Discouragement of Vocations

- More than two in five respondents found that starting a discussion with their family about their religious vocation was not easy. A similar proportion said that no member of their family had ever spoken with them about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.
- Among those 56 percent that report that any family member had ever had a conversation with them about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, four in ten had had their mothers broach the subject, three in ten had had their fathers broach the subject, and four in ten had had another family member broach the subject. Respondents identifying as Asian are most likely to have had a family member have that conversation with them. Hispanic/Latino respondents are *least* likely to report having had such a conversation.
- Having had a family member ever have spoken to them about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life made the family discussion of one's vocation easier for respondents. When a family member had ever broached the topic in the past, about two in three say starting that discussion was easy. In comparison, about half of those who had not had a family member ever speak to them about a vocation said starting that discussion was easy.
- When first considering a vocation, at least six in ten report having received "some" or "very much" encouragement from their mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, and aunts and uncles. Just over four in ten report having received as much encouragement from their cousins. Mothers and grandparents are more likely than other relatives to have offered "very much" encouragement when respondents were first considering a vocation, with about half giving "very much" encouragement. Four in ten report that their father was "very" encouraging and less than three in ten report that siblings or aunts and uncles offered "very much" encouragement. Just one in six report that cousins offered "very much" encouragement.
- Across the board, responding priests and seminarians report increased support from all relatives for their vocation currently. At least four in five report "some" or "very much" support from their mothers, fathers, siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, and two in three report as much support from their cousins.
- Few respondents indicate that a family member ever discouraged them in their vocational discernment, but among those who do, one in six say that their siblings, aunts/uncles, and father discouraged them from considering a vocation. About one in ten says they have ever received discouragement from their mothers, cousins, and grandparents.

Religious Background

- Two in three responding priests and seminarians have attended Catholic schools for some or all of their education. While respondents are similar to self-identified Catholics nationally in their Catholic primary school attendance, they are considerably more likely to have attended a Catholic high school and are about six times more likely to have attended a Catholic college or university.
- On average, two-thirds of respondents attended parish-based religious education at some point in their lives. On average, they attended for about seven and a half years.
- The average age when respondents report first considering a vocation is 16 for responding seminarians and 17 for responding priests. The average age when current seminarians first entered a seminary is 23, compared to an average of 27 for current diocesan priests. The average of ordination to the priesthood is 35.
- One in 20 respondents was married prior to entering the seminary. For these respondents, the average age they first considered a vocation was 26, their average age when first entering the seminary was 48, and their average age when ordained was 56.

Characteristics of the Respondents and Family History

- More than eight in ten seminarians who responded to the survey belong to the Millennial Generation, with most of the rest belonging to the Post-Vatican II Generation. In contrast, almost six in ten responding diocesan priests belong to the Post-Vatican II Generation and a third belong to the Millennial Generation.
- Overall, eight in ten responding priests and seminarians identify as Caucasian/European American/white. One in ten identifies as Hispanic/Latino and one in 20 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. Two percent or fewer identify as African/African American/black, as Native American/Alaska Native, or as “other.”
- Eight in ten responding priests and seminarians were born in the United States, with two in ten foreign born. About three in four respondents identifying as Asian were born outside the United States, compared to two-thirds of Hispanic/Latino respondents and one in 20 European American respondents. Half of respondents who were not born in the United States first moved to the United States in 2003 or later.
- Nearly all of those identifying as European American spoke English at home as their primary language while growing up. Three in four of those identifying as Hispanic/Latino spoke Spanish as their primary language when growing up and more than eight in ten of those identifying as Asian primarily spoke an “other” language.
- Nine in ten responding priests and seminarians grew up in a two-parent family. Most of the rest grew up in a single-parent family, with just a few growing up with their grandparents as their primary caregivers or in some other family situation.

- More than one in ten each experienced a family trauma while growing up, including their parents' divorce, the death of a parent, or the death of a sibling or close relative.
- While, on average, respondents report three siblings, one in 20 respondents report being the only child. A third is the eldest among their siblings, a third is somewhere in the middle, and three in ten are the youngest.
- One in seven responding seminarians and one in 20 responding priests were ever home-schooled. More than six in ten had earned at least an undergraduate degree before entering the seminary. This contrasts with self-identified Catholics nationally, among whom about a quarter have attained an undergraduate degree.

Introduction

This report presents findings from a study of diocesan priests and seminarians who have entered the priesthood or the seminary in the last 15 years about the influence of their families on their vocations. In summer 2014, the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to study the influence of families on discernment of a vocation to priesthood or religious life. The goal of the research is to provide information that will help promote vocations and assist families with the discernment process and the transition of a family member to religious life or priesthood.

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Collecting the Names

In fall 2014, CARA contacted the diocesan vocation director at all dioceses and eparchies in the United States to request contact information for any seminarian or priest who had been accepted into formation since January 1, 2000 and remained in the diocese or eparchy.

CARA conducted regular follow-up with these vocation directors through the winter and eventually received contact information from 180 diocesan vocation directors for a response rate of 92 percent among dioceses and eparchies.

Distributing the Survey

The diocesan vocation directors that responded to the request for names reported a total of 4,140 men who had entered since January 1, 2000 and remained. CARA distributed the survey invitation via email and mail to these men in mid-January, using the contact information provided by the diocese. CARA conducted regular follow-up by email among those for whom there was a valid email address. By the cut-off date of late February, 2015, CARA received a total of 1,352 valid responses for an overall response of 33 percent among diocesan priests and seminarians. This response included 715 ordained diocesan priests and 637 seminarians studying for the diocesan priesthood.

The Questionnaire

This survey was designed to gather descriptive information about priests and seminarians who have entered the priesthood or the seminary in the last 15 years, such as their age, education, nativity, the year they first considered a vocation, and the year they entered the seminary or were ordained. Other questions asked about characteristics of their family of origin and behaviors of family members, such as Catholic practice, family prayer, family customs, and vocational encouragement and/or discouragement by family members that might have had an influence on their vocational discernment.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to provide contact information for a family member, preferably a parent or sibling, who could be asked to respond to a similar survey about family influences on vocations from the perspective of the families. A total of 748 respondents provided usable contact information (either a valid email address or a valid mailing address, or both) for a family member. At the end of February, 2015, CARA invited these family members to participate in a survey of family members. The responses to the survey of family members and the focus groups of family members are included in the main body of this report of findings.

The Report

This Appendix presents a detailed analysis of the data from the survey of priests and seminarians who have entered the seminary or the priesthood since January 1, 2000 and remained. It includes a complete transcription of the responses to four open-ended questions that were included in the survey.

Characteristics of Priests and Seminarians

This part of the report provides a descriptive overview of the priests and seminarians that responded to the survey. It describes the gender, age, and generation of respondents as well as their ethnic/cultural background, nativity, education, and Catholic schooling. The section ends with a look at the vocational history of respondents – when they first thought of a vocation, when they entered the seminary, and when they were ordained.

Ecclesial Status

Some 47 percent (or 637 respondents) were seminarians studying for the diocesan priesthood at the time of the survey, with 53 percent (or 715 respondents) ordained diocesan priests.

Age and Generation of Respondents

The average age of respondents overall is 35, with seminarians an average of 12 years younger than priests. Half of respondents overall age 32 or younger, with seminarians an average of 11 years younger than priests. The youngest respondent overall is 19 and the oldest is 77.

Age of Respondents

	Seminarians	Priests	Overall
Average	28	40	35
Median (Midpoint)	26	37	32
Minimum	19	26	19
Maximum	73	77	77

In addition to age, CARA typically categorizes Catholic survey respondents into four generations, according to their year of birth. These categories are based on life experiences that are particularly relevant to Catholics:

- The *Pre-Vatican II Generation* includes those born before 1943. Its members, those over age 72 in 2015, came of age prior to the Second Vatican Council. They were raised in a Church that changed dramatically after their formative years. Members of this generation played a crucial role in creating and sustaining many of the institutions of 20th century Catholic life. Less than 1 percent of responding seminarians or priests are members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation.
- Members of the *Vatican II Generation* were born between 1943 and 1960 and are between the ages of 55 and 72 in 2015. Members of this generation came of age during the time of the Second Vatican Council and their formative years spanned a period of profound changes in the Church (as well as in society and culture). To a large extent, this generation overlaps with the “Baby Boomers.” Overall, 7 percent of respondents belong to the Vatican II

Generation. Just 2 percent of responding seminarians are of this generation, compared to 11 percent of responding priests.

- The *Post-Vatican II Generation*, born between 1961 and 1981, consists of those who are ages 34 to 54 in 2015. Members of this generation, sometimes called “Generation X” have almost no lived experience of the pre-Vatican II Church. Their religious training occurred primarily during the 1970s and 1980s, a time when religious education patterns and methods were very different from those used up to the late 1960s. Overall, 36 percent of respondents belong to the Post-Vatican II Generation. Just over one in ten responding seminarians belong to this generation, compared to 56 percent of responding priests.
- The *Millennial Generation*, those born in 1982 or later, is the youngest generation of adult Catholics. This generation has come of age under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. On the whole, they are less steeped in the Catholic culture of earlier generations of Catholics and less knowledgeable about their faith. Millennials make up 56 percent of the overall survey respondents. Eighty-five percent of responding seminarians are Millennials compared to 33 percent of responding priests.

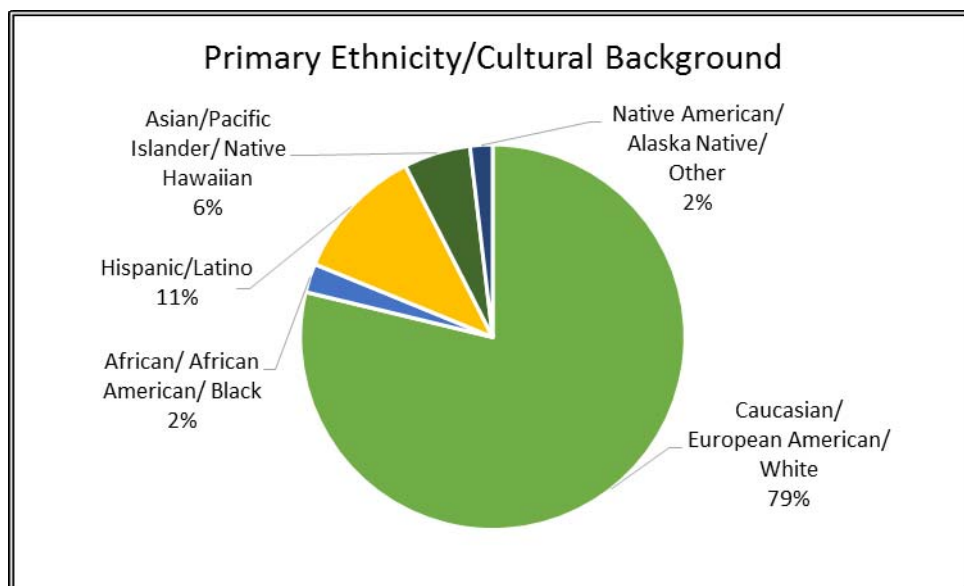
Generation of Respondents

	Seminarians	Priests	Overall
Pre-Vatican II (born before 1943)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Vatican II (born 1943-1960)	2	11	7
Post-Vatican II (born 1961-1981)	12	56	36
Millennial (born 1982 or later)	85	33	56

Due to the very low number of Pre-Vatican II Generation priests and seminarians responding to the survey, comparisons are made throughout the report only between those of the Vatican II, Post-Vatican II, and Millennial Generations.

Primary Ethnicity/Cultural Background

Four in five responding priests and seminarians identify their primary ethnicity or cultural background as Caucasian/European American/white. One in ten identifies as Hispanic/Latino and about one in 20 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. Two percent identify as African/African American/black and only one respondent identifies as Native American/Alaska Native. Two percent identify an “other” ethnic/cultural background, the majority of whom wrote in more than one ethnicity/cultural background.



Priests are slightly more likely than seminarians to identify as Caucasian/European American/white and seminarians are slightly more likely than priests to identify as Hispanic/Latino.

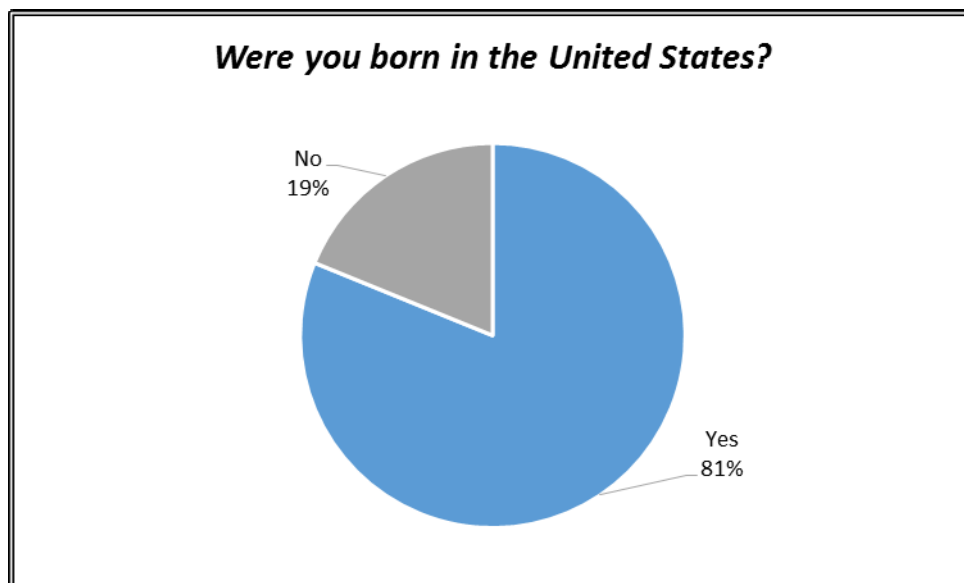
Primary Ethnicity/Cultural Background

	Seminarians	Priests
Caucasian/European American/White	74%	83%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	3	2
Hispanic/Latino(a)	15	8
Native American/ Alaska Native/ Other	6	5
African/African American/Black	2	2

Where appropriate, the remainder of this report compares respondents according to three cultural backgrounds: European American, Hispanic/Latino(a), and Asian. There are not a sufficient number of Native American or African/African American respondents to compare separately.

Nativity

Eight in ten responding priests and seminarians were born in the United States but a majority among Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents and Asian respondents were not born in the United States.



Compared to responding European Americans, nearly all of whom (95 percent) were born in the United States, a third of Hispanics/Latinos and just over one in five Asians were born in the United States.

U.S.-Born by Cultural Background

	U.S.-Born
Caucasian/European American/White	95%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	33
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	22

On average, respondents that were born outside the United States first moved to the United States in 2001. Half of respondents who were not born in the United States moved here in 2003 or later. The family experience among these priests and seminarians while they were growing up was probably quite different from those who were born and grew up in the United States.

Nine in ten respondents were baptized Catholic as an infant. Some 92 percent of respondents of the Millennial Generation and 91 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation were baptized Catholic as infants, compared to 80 percent of the Vatican II Generation.

Among the 10 percent who became Catholic later in life, on average they converted at age 17. Half of these respondents who were not baptized Catholic as an infant became Catholic in 2000 or later.

Prior Marital Status

Some 5 percent of priests and seminarians were married prior to entering the seminary. Fifty-six percent of those responding from the Vatican II Generation had been married, compared to 1 percent of those of the Post-Vatican II Generation and none of those of the Millennial Generation.

Four percent report having children. Forty-two percent of the Vatican II Generation report having children, compared to less than 1 percent of both the Post-Vatican II and Millennial Generations respondents.

Education

Responding priests were especially highly educated before entering the seminary, with more than three in five (62 percent) having earned at least an undergraduate degree. Nearly half of seminarians (46 percent) had earned at least an undergraduate degree before entering. This contrasts with self-identified Catholics nationally, of whom 47 percent have a high school diploma or less, 26 percent have some college but not a Bachelor's degree, and 27 percent have a Bachelor's or graduate degree.

Highest Level of Education Completed Before Entering the Seminary

	Seminarians	Priests
High school diploma or less	31%	22%
Trade or technical school	2	1
Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree	21	15
Undergraduate degree	37	38
Graduate degree	9	24

There are significant differences by generation, with 47 percent of the Vatican II Generation having a graduate degree, compared to 29 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation and 5 percent of the Millennial Generation.

Some 67 percent of responding priests and seminarians have attended Catholic schools for some or all of their education. Two-fifths attended a Catholic primary school, just over a third attended a Catholic secondary school, and between about two-fifths and half attended a Catholic college or university. This contrasts with Catholics nationally, where 52 percent have attended a Catholic school at one of those levels. In addition, while Catholics nationally are about as likely as seminarians and priests to have attended a Catholic primary school, seminarians and priests are more likely to have attended a Catholic secondary school and are about six times more likely to have attended a Catholic college or university.

Attendance at Catholic Educational Institutions

<i>Did you ever attend ...?</i>	Seminarians	Priests	Catholics Nationally
Catholic primary school (preschool through grade 8)	43%	49%	47%
Catholic secondary school (grades 9 through 12)	35	38	21
Catholic college or university	38	47	7
Parish-based religious education	66	67	—
Years of parish-based religious education (average)	7	8	—

Apart from or in addition to years spent in Catholic educational institutions, two-thirds of respondents attended parish-based religious education (e.g. CCD or PSR). Those who attended parish-based religious education report an average between seven and eight years of parish-based religious education.

Fourteen percent of responding seminarians and 5 percent of responding priests report ever having been home-schooled. Thirteen percent of those of the Millennial Generation report ever having been home-schooled, compared to 4 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation and none of the Vatican II Generation respondents.

Vocational History

The call to a diocesan vocation comes throughout the life cycle. Responding seminarians and priests report that they first considered a vocation as early as age three and as late in life as age 65. Some of these seminarians and priests who entered seminaries or were ordained in the last 15 years first considered a vocation as early as 1950 and did not actually enter a seminary until many years later, well into late adulthood. On average, seminarians first entered seminaries at age 23. Responding priests entered, on average, at age 27 and were ordained at the average age of 35.

Vocational Timeline

(Average response among seminarians and priests)

	Seminarians	Priests
Year you first considered a vocation	2003	1992
Age when first considered a vocation	16	17
Year you entered seminary	2005	2002
Age when you entered seminary	23	27
Year you were ordained	–	2010
Age when you were ordained	–	35

On average, these seminarians and priests first considered a vocation at ages 16 and 17, which is consistent with other CARA research on vocational consideration.¹¹ They typically spent several years in discernment and entered a seminary after college and/or several years in the work force, on average at about age 25. Then, after several years of formation, they were ordained, on average, at age 35.

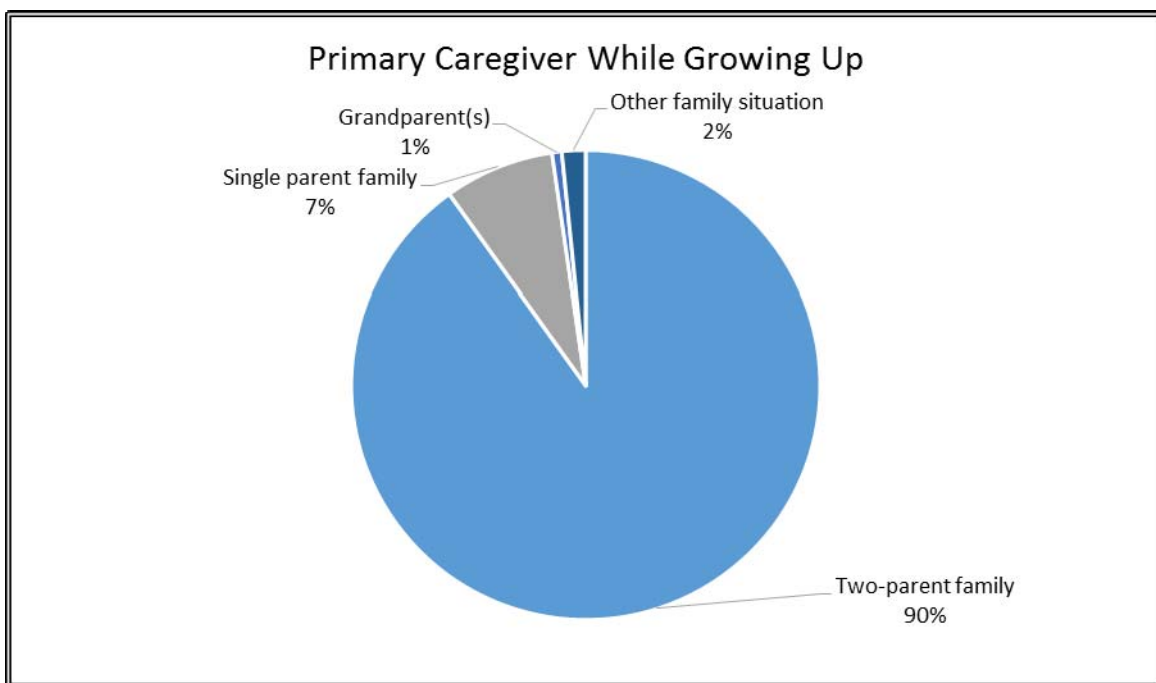
Among those one in 20 respondents who were married prior to entering the seminary, the average age they first considered a vocation was 26, their average age when first entering the seminary was 48, and their average age when ordained was 56.

¹¹ Among never-married U.S. Catholic men who report that they have considered a vocation to priesthood or religious life, 53 percent say they first considered this between 13 and 18 years of age and 19 percent first considered this between 19 and 24 years of age. (Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier. *Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2012.)

Family Background

This part of the report examines the characteristics of the families of the priests and seminarians that responded to the survey. It describes the family structure in which they were raised, their siblings and birth order in the family, and the primary language spoken in the home. The section then presents characteristics of family religious faith and practice and compares these characteristics among three cultural groups.

Most seminarians and priests were raised in a traditional two-parent family (90 percent), with parents who were in their 40s (61 percent) or 50s (23 percent) when they were teenagers.



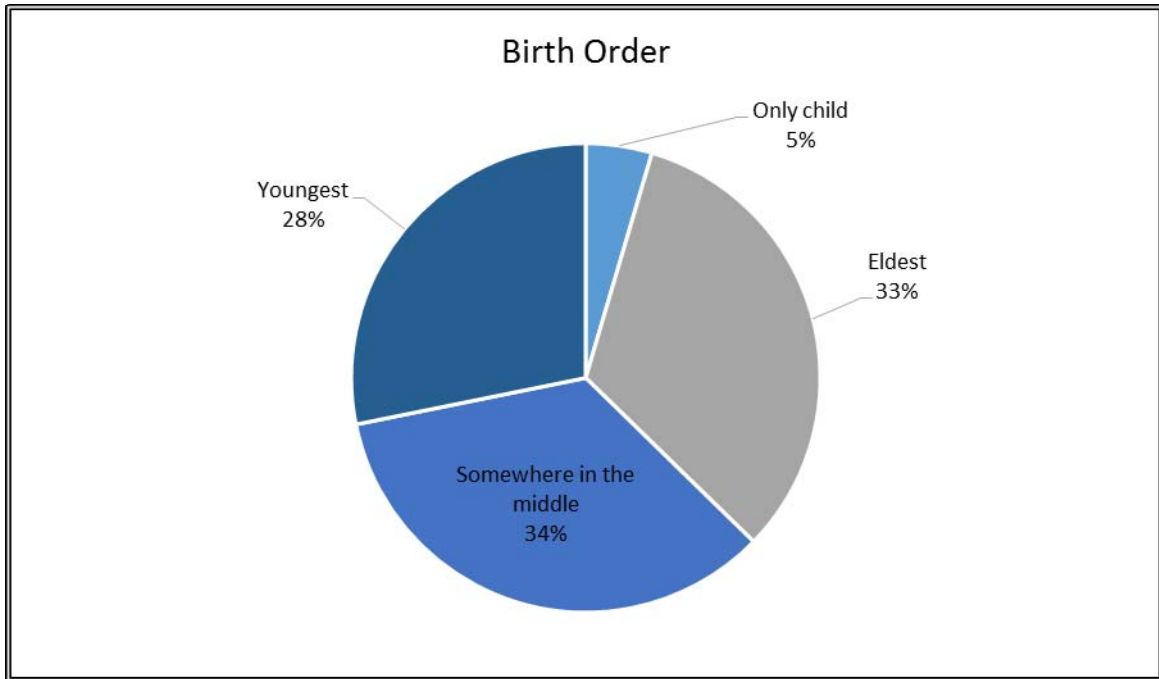
Some 10 percent, however, were raised by a single parent, a grandparent or in some other nontraditional family situation. Several of these describe how divorce affected their family while they were growing up.

In fact, a substantial number of them have experienced family trauma while they were growing up:

- One in six (16 percent) experienced the serious illness or death of a sibling or other close relative
- One in eight (12 percent) experienced the serious illness or death of a parent
- A similar proportion (13 percent) experienced their parents' divorce

Siblings

Most responding seminarians and priests grew up in a family with other siblings. Few of them (5 percent) were the only child in the family and the same proportion (5 percent) reported more than eight siblings in their family. On average, these respondents reported three siblings.



Almost two in five responding seminarians and priests grew up in a family in which they were the eldest or the only child (38 percent). About a quarter were the youngest child in the family (28 percent) and a third were neither eldest nor youngest child in the family (34 percent).

Language

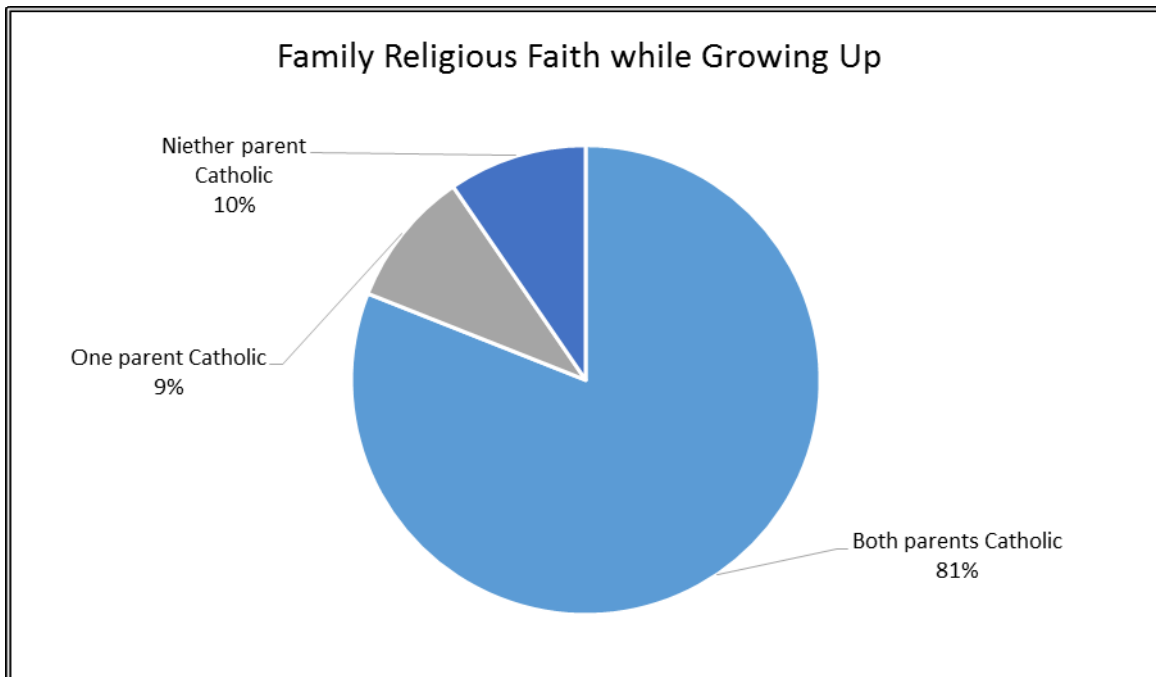
Eight in ten respondents (81 percent) spoke English as the primary language in their home while growing up. Another 9 percent spoke Spanish as the primary language in the home and 10 percent reported some other language as the primary language in the home while growing up. Vietnamese and Polish were the most commonly cited other language, followed by Tagalog (or other Filipino dialects), Igbo, Korean, and Italian.

Primary Language Spoken at Home by Cultural Background

	English	Spanish	Other
Caucasian/European American/White	96%	<1%	4%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	21	78	1
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	17	0	83

Family Religious Faith and Practice

Four in five respondents grew up in a family in which both parents were all Catholic (81 percent). One in ten was raised in a family with one Catholic parent (9 percent), with almost four in five of these families having a Catholic mother. Another one in ten was raised in a family in which neither parent was Catholic (10 percent).



Members of the Vatican II Generation are *least* likely to have grown up with two Catholic parents (70 percent) and are most likely to have had both parents identity as non-Catholic Christians (17 percent). Not coincidentally, members of the Vatican II Generation are *least* likely to have been raised Catholic as well (78 percent of the Vatican II Generation compared to slightly more than 90 percent of the other two generations).

Seventy-seven percent of those with only one parent Catholic had a Catholic mother and 23 percent had a Catholic father.

Among those with neither parent Catholic:

- 78 percent were both non-Catholic Christians
- 8 percent were both non-religious
- 3 percent both professed a non-Christian faith
- 11 percent had mixed marriages (combinations of non-Catholic Christians, non-Christians, and non-religious parents)

Virtually all of those with two Catholic parents were raised Catholic. Respondents of the Vatican II Generation are *least* likely, with 77 percent having been married in the Church compared to 86 percent of those of the Post-Vatican II Generation and 88 percent of those of the Millennial Generation.

Among those who were raised in a family with one Catholic parent, nine in ten were raised Catholic. When neither parent was Catholic, about a quarter of respondents were still raised Catholic.

Parents Religion and Respondents' Religious Rearing

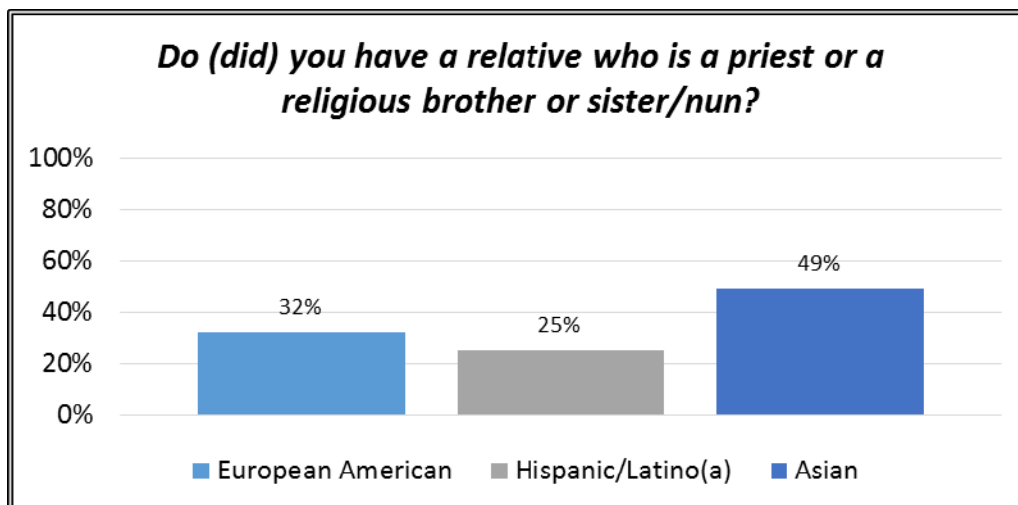
	Respondent Raised Catholic	Not Raised Catholic
Both parents Catholic	99%	1%
Only one parent Catholic	90	10
Neither parent Catholic	27	73

Nine in ten priests and seminarians report that their mother was Catholic when they were growing up (90 percent). Among those who had a Catholic mother while they were growing up, seven in ten say that religion was “very” important to her (72 percent), and almost a quarter say that religion was “somewhat” important to her (22 percent). Asian priests and seminarians (81 percent) are more likely than European Americans (68 percent) and Hispanics/Latinos (64 percent) to report that religion was “very” important to their mothers.

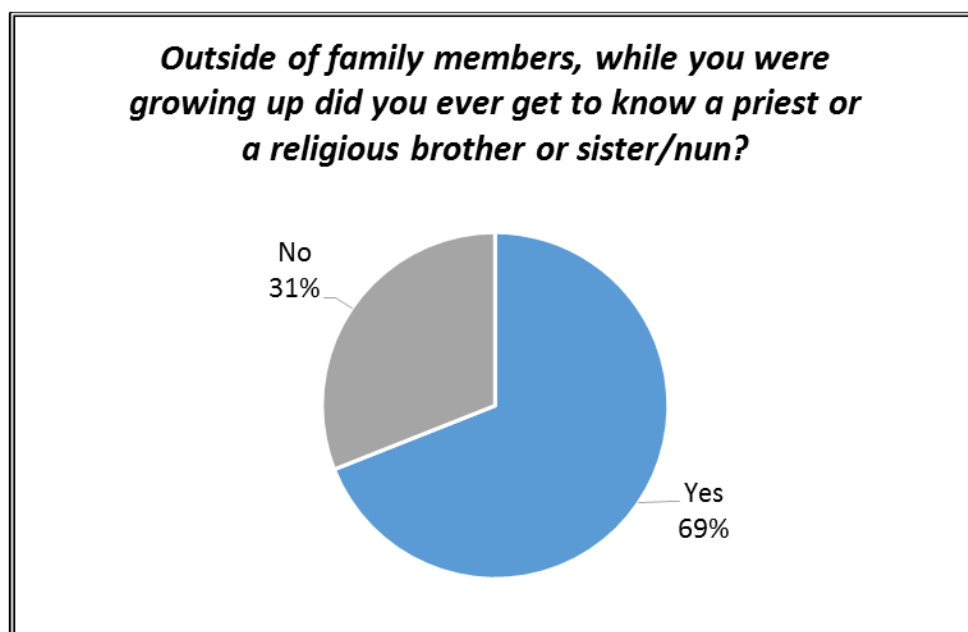
Just over four in five priests and seminarians say that their father was Catholic when they were growing up (83 percent). Those who had a Catholic father while they were growing were slightly less likely than those who had a Catholic mother to say their fathers’ religion was “very” important to him: 57 percent say that religion was “very” important to their father and 28 percent say that religion was “somewhat” important to him. Asian priests and seminarians (61 percent) are more likely than European Americans (51 percent) and Hispanics/Latinos (40 percent) to report that religion was “very” important to their fathers.

Most respondents (87 percent) report that their parents were married in the Catholic Church.

A third of responding religious have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun. By ethnicity, a higher proportion of priests and seminarians with an Asian background are especially likely to have had a relative who was a priest, religious brother, or religious sister/nun.

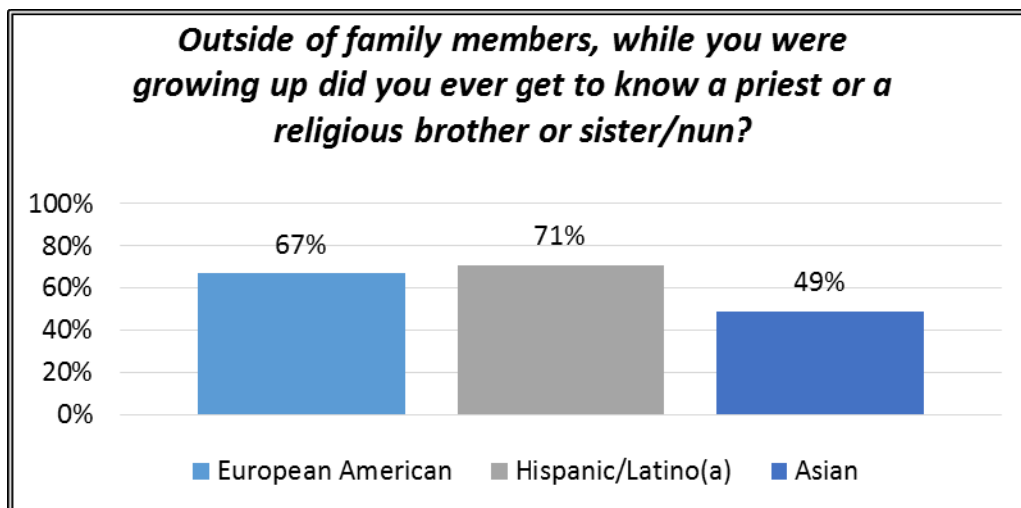


Seven in ten priests and seminarians report that they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun while they were growing up. There are differences by nativity, however, with 81 percent of those born outside of the United States saying they knew a priest or a religious while growing up compared to 66 percent of those born in the United States.

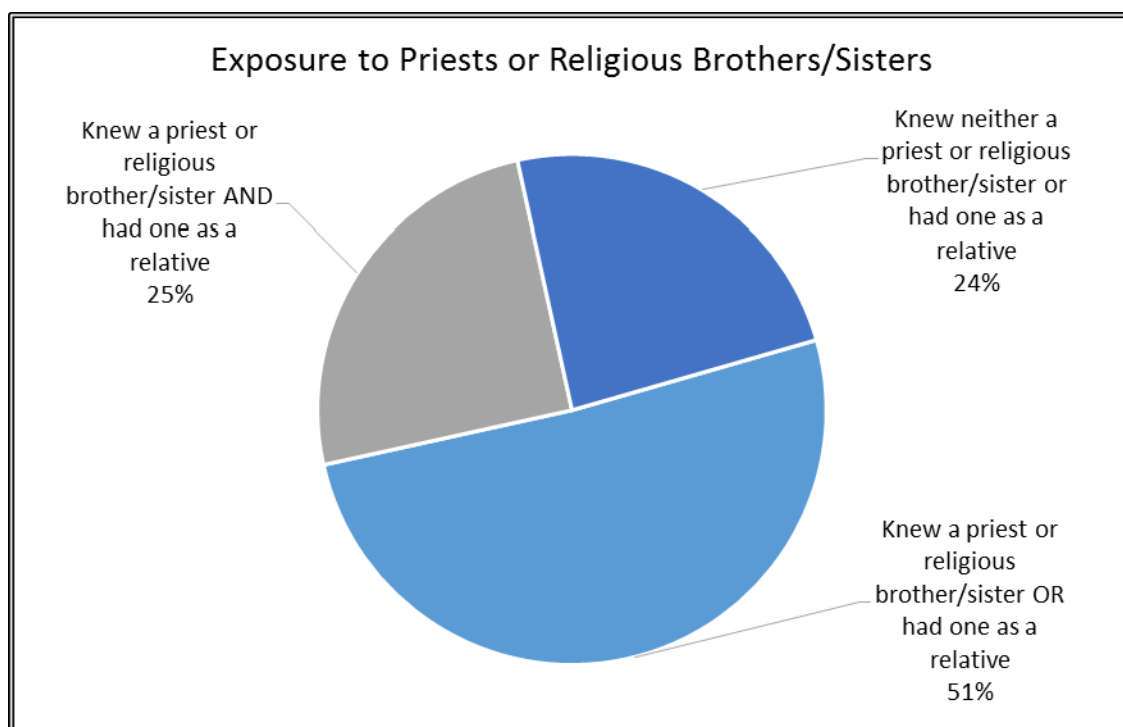


While about 70 percent of the other two generations got to know a priest, religious brother or religious sister when growing up, only 55 percent of those of the Vatican II Generation had the same experience.

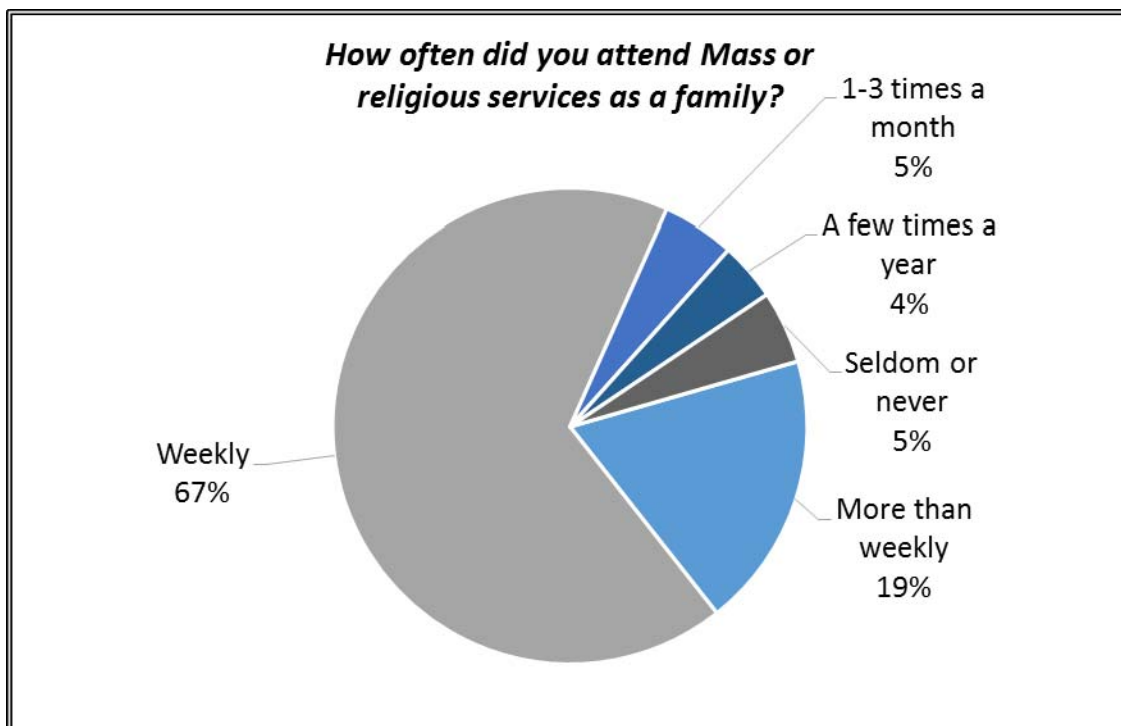
Similarly, there are differences by ethnicity, with Asians less likely than Hispanics/Latinos or European Americans to say they knew a priest or a religious while growing up.



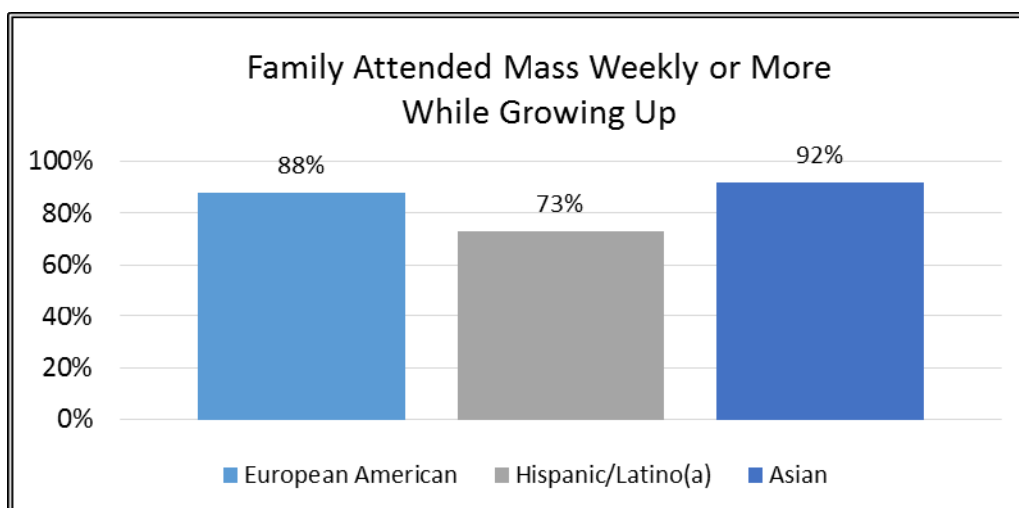
Almost one-quarter of respondents neither knew a priest or religious brother/sister when growing up nor had any family members who were priests or religious brothers/sisters. Half both knew a priest or religious brother or sister/nun and had a relative who was one. Another quarter both knew a priest or religious brother, sister, or nun and had such a person as a relative.



Responding priests and seminarians report that while growing up they attended Mass or other religious services as a family on a regular basis. Two in three report attending weekly and 19 percent say they attended more than weekly as a family.

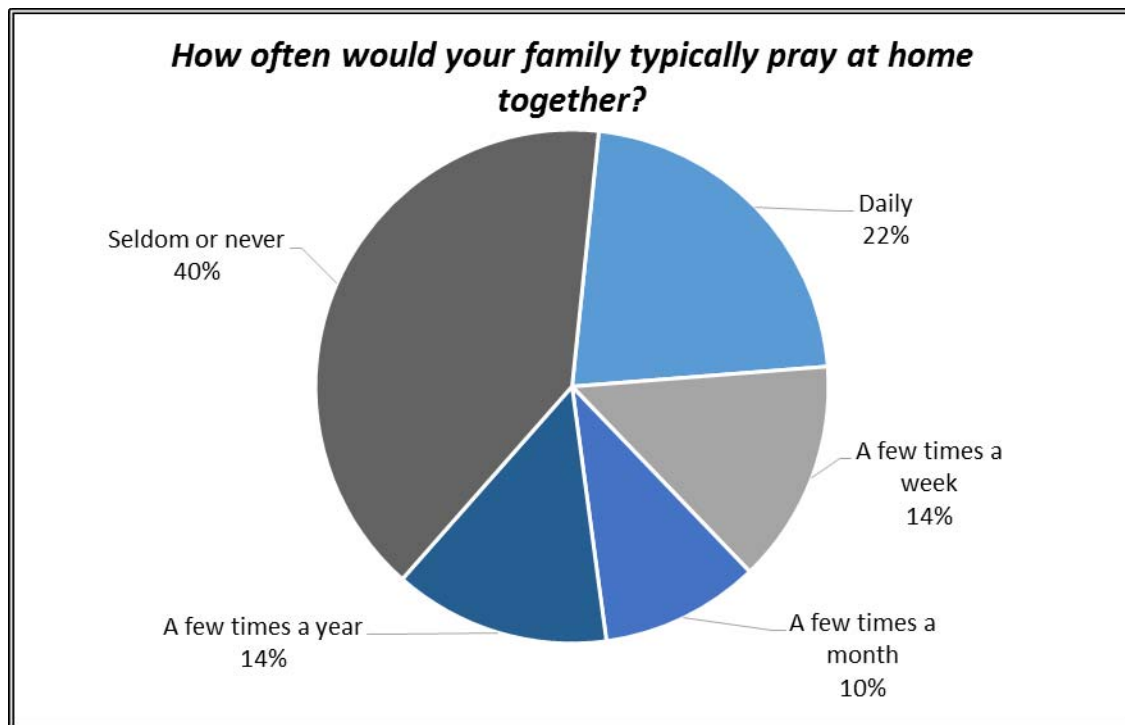


Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents are less likely than European American or Asian respondents to report higher levels of Mass attendance as a family: 92 percent of Asian respondents and 88 percent of European American respondents report attending Mass as a family weekly or more than weekly compared to 73 percent of Hispanic/Latino(a) respondents.

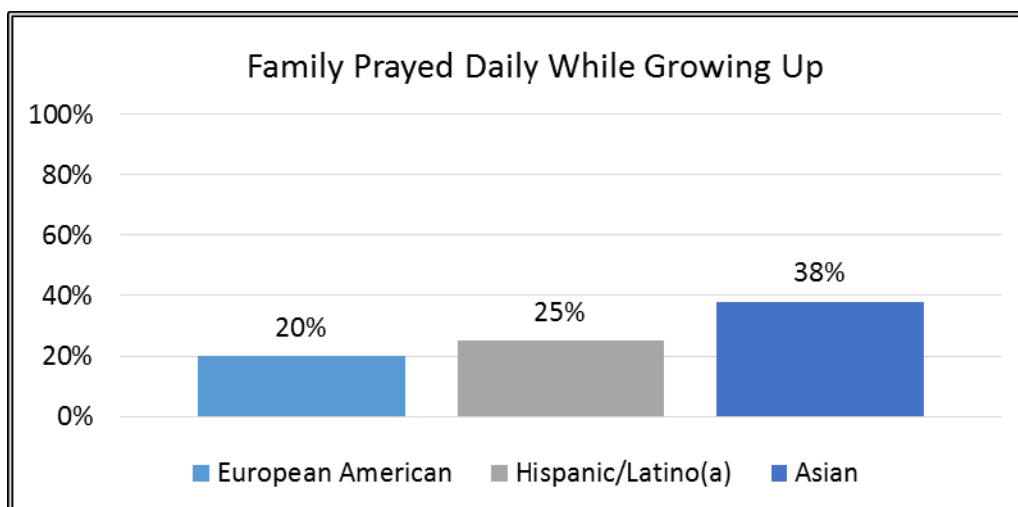


Asian respondents were more likely than other cultural groups to say their family attended Mass or religious services weekly or more often while growing up, with 40 percent attending more than once a week (compared to 16 percent of European Americans and 14 percent of Hispanics/Latinos).

As the figure below illustrates, altogether about one in five respondents report that their family would typically pray at home together (outside of meal blessings) on a daily basis. Just over one in ten reports that family prayer together occurred a few times a week and almost the same proportion said that family prayer together occurred a few times a month. More than half (54 percent) reported family prayer at home together would occur only a few times a year or never. Seminarians and priests report similar frequency of such family prayer.



Similar to their frequency of Mass or religious service attendance, Asian respondents' families were more fervent in their family prayer life, with nearly two in five praying daily.

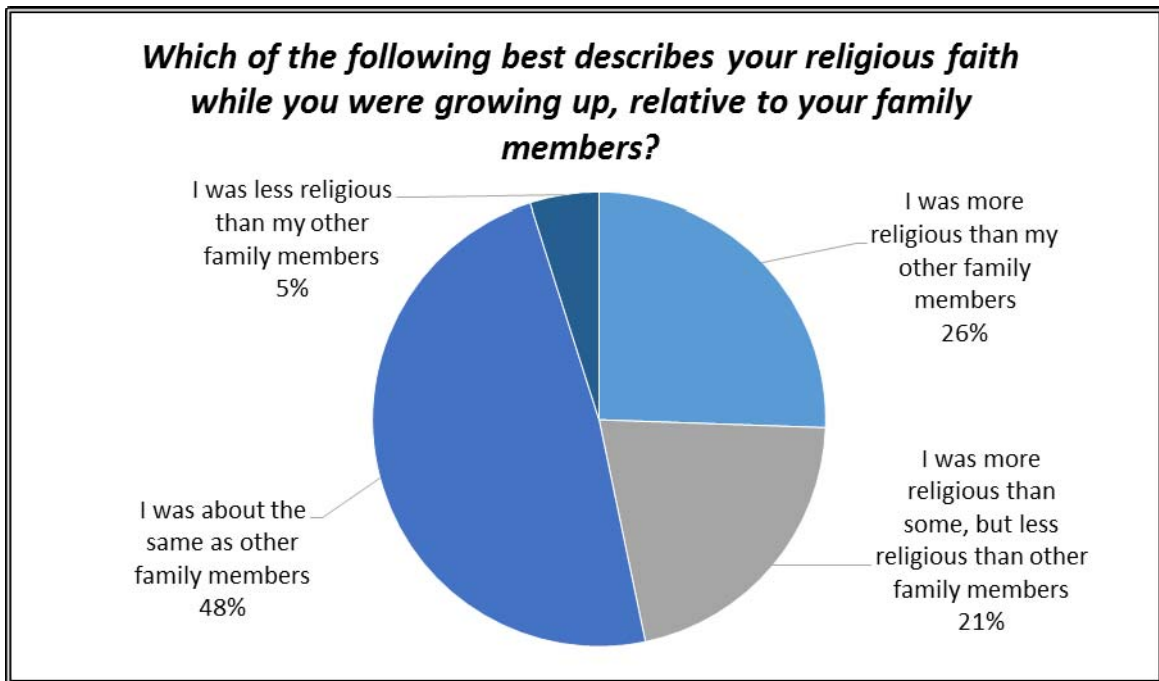


Members of the Vatican II Generation (12 percent) are *less* likely than those of the Post-Vatican II Generation (22 percent) and Millennial Generation (24 percent) to have their family pray together daily. Those of the Vatican II Generation are also most likely to report that their families seldom or never prayed together.

At the other extreme, more than two in five European American respondents (44 percent) and three in ten Hispanic/Latino respondents (31 percent) say their family seldom or never prayed at home together. By comparison, one in six of Asian respondents (17 percent) report that level of family prayer.

Differences are also notable between U.S.-born and foreign-born respondents. Thirty-five percent of foreign-born respondents say their families prayed together daily while growing up, compared to 19 percent of U.S.-born respondents. At the other extreme, 44 percent of U.S.-born respondents say their families prayed seldom or never, compared to 23 percent of foreign-born respondents.

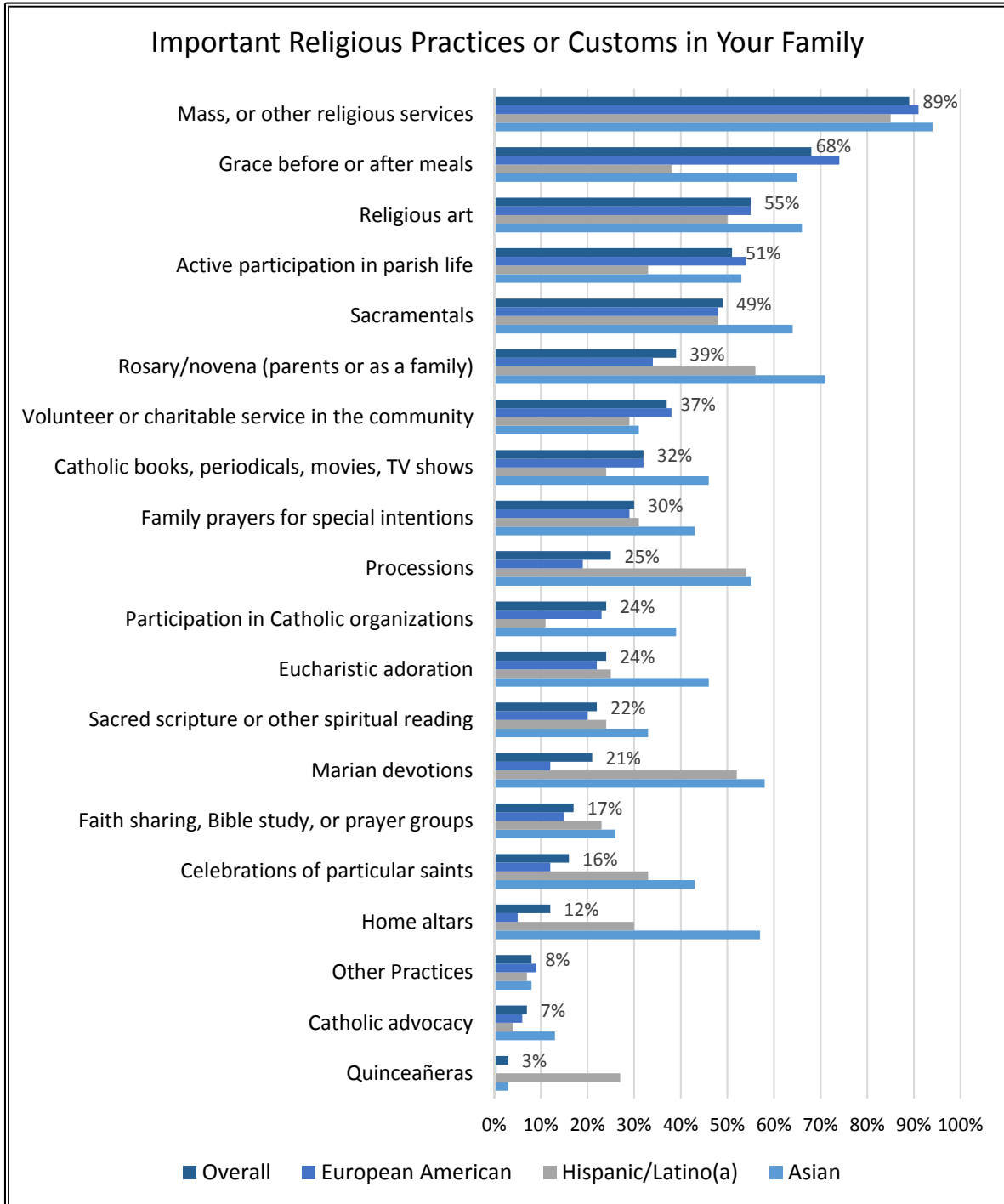
Nearly half of respondents report being about as religious as their family members when growing up (48 percent). A quarter report being more religious than their family members growing up (26 percent), with two in ten saying they were more religious than some and less religious than others (21 percent). Only one in 20 reports being less religious growing up than their family members (5 percent).



Although Asian respondents are more likely than the other cultural groups to express greater levels of family religious practice (see above), they are less likely than other cultural groups to declare that they were more religious than their other family members when they were growing up. Overall, 15 percent of Asians say they were more religious than their other family members while growing up, compared to 26 percent of European Americans and 25 percent of Hispanics/Latinos.

Important Religious Celebrations or Customs in the Family

To learn more about important family religious customs or practices that might have had an influence on consideration of a priestly vocation, respondents were asked to look at a list of 20 religious practices or customs and identify which of them were important in their family when they were growing up. Respondents could select all that apply.



As can be seen by the figure above, some of these religious practices, such as Mass or other religious services, were important family practices for nearly all respondents (89 percent) when they were growing up. Other practices, such as home altars or Catholic advocacy were important family practices for a much smaller proportion of respondents (about 10 percent or fewer) while they were growing up.

Important ethnic differences in religious practice also appear. Asians, for example, have the highest proportion participating in the first ten celebrations or customs listed in the table below. Of them Asians are particularly more likely to have had home altars and Eucharistic adoration.

While you were growing up, which of these were important celebrations or customs in your family?

	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino	European American
Rosary/novena (parents or as a family)	71%	56%	34%
Religious art	66	50	55
Sacramentals	64	48	48
Home altars	57	30	5
Eucharistic adoration	46	25	22
Catholic books, periodicals, movies, TV shows	46	24	32
Celebrations of particular saints	43	33	12
Family prayers for special intentions	43	31	29
Sacred scripture or other spiritual reading	33	24	20
Participation in Catholic organizations	39	11	23
Quinceañeras	3	27	1
Active participation in parish life	53	33	54
Grace before or after meals	65	38	74
Volunteer or charitable service in the community	31	29	38
Faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups	26	23	15
Marian devotions	58	52	12
Processions	55	54	19

Hispanic/Latinos are particularly likely to have had Quinceañeras, but are *least* likely to have had participated in Catholic organizations; to have read Catholic books, periodicals, movies, or TV shows; to have actively participated in parish life; and to have said grace before meals.

European Americans are most likely to have said grace before or after meals and to have performed volunteer or charitable service in the community. They are *least* likely, however, to have had home altars; to have participated in faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups; to celebrate particular saints; to participate in Marian devotions; to participate in processions; to read sacred scripture or other spiritual reading; and to have said rosaries/novenas.

Written responses to the “Other” category also varied according to ethnicity. While European Americans mentioned seasonal religious practices (e.g., Advent, Lent) , night/bedtime prayer, youth ministry, sacred music, and altar serving most frequently, Hispanic/Latino respondents wrote in these responses, among others:

- Participated in a Neo Catechumenal Community
- Altar server
- Contemporary Christian music
- Pilgrimages
- Retreat and mission experiences
- Youth ministry
- Cursillo
- Healing Masses

Asian respondents wrote in these responses as important family religious practices when they were growing up:

- Catholic faith healers
- Morning prayer
- Bedtime prayer
- Daily prayer
- Pilgrimages

Most Influential from Family Background

A question on the survey invited priests and seminarians to respond in their own words to this: “What in your family background was most influential in your discernment of your vocation?” CARA grouped these responses into categories for easier comparison. The categories for this question include strong faith of family members, family love/encouragement/support, regular Mass attendance/sacraments, prayer/devotion to Mary, positive relationship with a priest or religious, family values/volunteering, and other. Some of the representative comments within each category are presented below.

Strong faith of their family members: Around half of the respondents wrote about how their family members were most influential in their discernment. Examples include:

Being raised Catholic and that the faith was always considered to be important even though our practice of it was probably only nominal.

Being taught about Christ and the Bible from a very early age; having family members (grandparents, uncles) who are/were pastors and missionaries – in sum, being surrounded by family members who took their faith and personal relationship with Christ extremely seriously.

Both of my parents are converts to the Catholic Church. Their example of making difficult decisions based on faith, as well as their belief that prayer should be a major element of life choices, was instrumental in forming my own vocation.

Deep Catholic faith and devotion of grandparents.

Example of older brother as a strong figure of faith.

Faith of my parents. Even though dad was not Roman Catholic, he came to Church with us every time – it was important.

Mother's fidelity and growth in obedience to God and the Church.

Family love/encouragement/support: One in five respondents wrote that the support they received from their family was most influential. Usually this support came from their parents, although sometimes extended family was influential as well. Examples include:

All of the support and encouragement I received from my mother at a young age.

Both parents were supportive of any decisions I would make regarding my vocation.

Encouragement and promoting the goal of happiness as the marker of success.

General support of parents and extended families for the Church and parish priests.

I discovered my vocation outside of the family. But most influential in my family was the support I received.

I knew that my parents loved me and supported me in whatever I chose to do. They did not try to force me to be anything but supported me when I made a decision.

My family is my first stone step to help me grow up in my vocation. My parents and brothers and sisters-in-law have encouraged me so much. They are very happy when they know I want to become a priest.

Regularly Mass attendance/sacraments: One in five respondents mentioned the sacraments they attended with their families. This includes regular Mass attendance and other sacraments such as confession. Some examples include:

Attending Mass every Sunday.

Daily Mass when possible.

Faithful Mass attendance. We never missed. If my father worked, he got up for 7:30 Mass. If we were on vacation, we found a church.

Faithfulness to the Sacraments.

Insistence on attending Mass and preparing for the sacraments.

My First Communion.

Parents always expected me to go to Church every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation and confession during the Advent and Lent seasons.

Prayer/Devotion to Mary: One in eight respondents stated that their family's prayer life and/or their devotion to Mary was most influential in their family experience. Examples include:

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Dad prayed with me individually every night before I went to bed.

Daily Bible study and prayer as a family.

Having Adoration together.

I could say family prayer. At home we prayed every day and my family had a strong devotion to Mother Mary.

I think the importance of communal prayer was most influential in my discernment.

When my mother had a brain clot, when I was in first grade. My father took me to Adoration every night to pray for her health. In thanksgiving that a new surgery saved her life, my father and I went to Adoration every Saturday night until I left for seminary.

Positive relationship with a priest or religious: One in ten respondents wrote about their relationship with a priest or religious order, either being related to them or their family's relationship. Some examples include:

An uncle who is a priest.

Getting to know priests outside of Mass. My mother was very involved and I got to know them on a human level.

Great appreciation for the priesthood and many priest friends of my parents.

Having priests in our home for meals.

Having three uncles who are priests

Inviting priests over for dinner once a month. We got to see their humanity.

Knowing the human side of priesthood. Uncle was a priest. Aunt was a nun. Two brothers were priests. A sister was a Benedictine nun.

Family values/volunteering: One in ten respondents mentioned the family values they were brought up with or services their family did for others, especially services done for the parish. Examples include:

Being raised with strong morals and values.

General formation to expect that church involvement was a normal part of life.

I didn't discern until I had grown up and moved away from home. The most influential thing though was that I was taught good values, which was the foundation of my vocational discernment.

I was encouraged to serve as an altar boy. My vocation as a priest can be traced back to when it was planted as an altar boy. My parents supported my service as an altar boy.

Involvement in the parish.

My father's involvement in church ministry.

My parents' integrity, the principle of tithing, and the importance of giving back to the community from which we came.

Other: Less than one in ten respondents replied with a comment that could not be captured by the categories above. Some examples include:

Attending Catholic grade school, which laid the foundations for me to rediscover my faith when I was older and more mature.

Catholic grade school and Catholic high school

Hard to pin down, but as a second career vocation, family life (as a child) was a long time ago but one thing I remember well was a big framed picture of the Sacred Heart in my bedroom all those years of childhood. That picture hangs on my rectory bedroom wall today; the continuity is very meaningful to me.

I remember first thinking about the priesthood when I was 10 because I liked my public school of religion teacher's discussion of the Good Samaritan. However, my neighbor reports that I started thinking about it when I was four. I don't remember that, but it's possible. One of my earliest memories was when I was four years old, sitting on my bed with mom, and I was being fussy. In exasperation, she pointed to the crucifix and said, "He died for your sins, you know." I didn't know what that meant (again, I was four), but I remember looking at the crucifix and thinking, "whatever that is, it's really important." Mom doesn't remember this incident, but it has always stuck with me.

Leaving my family and allowing myself to practice my religion without shame was most influential to my vocation.

My mother got me going to high school youth group events; I ultimately became extremely involved in this community, attending Steubenville retreats, going on mission trips, serving, praying, meeting some of my best friends. If my mother hadn't convinced me to simply give youth group (Life Teen) a try, I might not be in seminary today.

My parents never pushed me toward one vocation or another.

Suggestions for Family Help in Discernment

A second question on the survey invited priests and seminarians to respond in their own words to this: “What more from your family would have been helpful to you as you discerned your vocation?” CARA grouped these responses into categories for easier comparison. The categories for this question include praying as a family, engaging in their faith/talking about their faith, talking about/exposure to religious vocations, encouragement/support, and other. Some of the representative comments within each category are presented below.

Praying as a family: One in four respondents wrote a comment pertaining to praying more as a family. These comments vary considerably, from attending adoration as a family to just praying at home as a family. Responses include:

A family that fostered faith and prayed together.

A more serious commitment to family prayer would have been helpful, e.g. praying the rosary more often (we did sometimes) or reading the bible together.

A regular adoration hour, rather than just going when school was not in session.

Adoration and prayers beside the one done during our meals.

Any prayer whatsoever at home. I had no idea how to pray until college. That includes the Hail Mary.

Daily rosary

Family prayer and devotionals

Engaging in their faith/talking about their faith: One in four respondents mentioned engaging more in their family’s faith life or talking about their faith more. These responses varied from being good role models to just talking to them about Jesus and God. Responses include:

A Catholic culture that included more than Sunday Mass.

A deeper understanding of the traditions of the Church. I did not experience my first holy hour until I entered seminary, the sacrament of penance growing up was scarce, etc. If these foundational elements had been part of family life I feel like my discernment would have been easier.

A greater personal devotion of faith on the part of my parents.

A more active home faith life

Active living of their faith. Most of my family was and is marginally Catholic.

Although we read Bible stories and prayed before meals, we didn't often talk about our faith.

Being raised stronger in the faith as a child would have made it much easier to transition into the prayer and spiritual life as I was discerning.

Talking about/exposure to religious vocations: One in seven respondents wrote something about talking about religious vocations as an option or exposure to religious vocations such as better relationships with priests and/or religious men and women. Responses include:

Actively asking if I thought I had a calling to be a priest, making it understood that it was an option and that it was normal.

Actively talking about possible vocations.

Being taught how to discern a vocation and that a vocation can be discerned at a young age.

Connecting me with priests and bringing up the issue more often.

Conversations about the different vocations in the Church.

Discussing the fullness of what vocation means.

Discussion about how to properly discern; discussion about how they discerned big decisions in their lives.

Encouragement/support: One in eight respondents mentioned something about being encouraged or supported more in their vocation. Some respondents wrote about being encouraged to discern their vocation while others wrote more about being supported once they had discerned and gone to the seminary. Responses include:

Acceptance/support of my father when I expressed an interest in being a priest in high school.

Active encouragement to consider a priestly vocation.

As a second career vocation, no one in those days actually encouraged me to look at a possible vocation – I think we were a little timid in those times, much to the contrary of today when we're asking young people regularly to consider studying for the priesthood/religious life or at least checking it out.

As I discerned my vocation my family was very supportive. I would have liked to feel their support in a more tangible way other than saying they are praying for me and/or support my decision to enter seminary.

Being more supportive when I first mentioned it.

Encouragement during my discernment process. As it was, I was compelled to apply to seminary in secret for fear of my family not accepting my decision. They are somewhat supportive now, but they would prefer that I wasn't going to be ordained a priest.

Encouragement that I should look into a vocation to priesthood/religious life.

Other: One in five respondents wrote something other than the categories mentioned above. These responses include:

A greater involvement in the parish community.

Active participation in the life of the Church.

Better financial planning and support would have been helpful.

Having more siblings.

I wish they had taken me more seriously when I first started thinking about the priesthood and shared it to them. I began thinking about the priesthood during high school. When I shared my desire with my family, they supported me but they did not really believe I was serious. It seemed that they "went along with it" while I was applying but were not really convinced until I was almost accepted into seminary that they began to believe me.

I would have liked for my father to have been less controlling when he realized I was discerning a vocation. Granted, he was and will always desire my best interest, but a vocation is something that must be discerned as an individual. Input and support helps, but a vocation ultimately stems from a radically individual calling from the Lord and must be discerned with a certain sense of detachment.

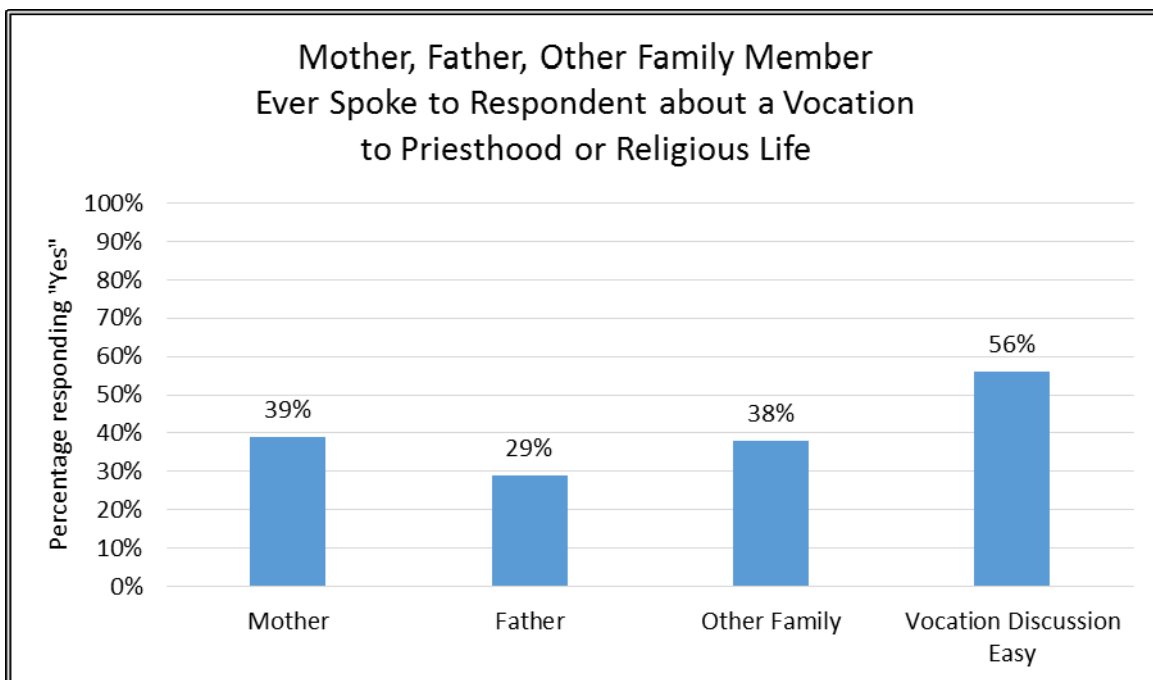
If I had been taught to love obedience to authority, rather than begrudgingly comply with authority.

Encouragement and Discouragement of Vocations

This section of the report describes some of the particular ways that family members supported and discouraged vocational discernment among priest and seminarian respondents. It explores whether close family members ever spoke to the respondent about a vocation as well as the difficulty these respondents may have experienced in starting a discussion about a religious vocation with family members. It presents the level of encouragement that various family members expressed when respondents were discerning their vocation and compares that to the level of support these family members currently express. Finally, the section explores which family members may have discouraged these respondents in their vocational discernment.

Family Discussion of Vocations

More than two in five respondents (44 percent) admit that starting a discussion with their family about their religious vocation was not easy for them. Apparently, this subject is difficult for family members as well. Four in ten respondents say their mother had ever spoken to them about a vocation and even fewer, three in ten, say their father had ever spoken to them about a vocation. Four in ten say another family member had spoken to them about a vocation. Moreover, some 45 percent say no member of their family ever spoke to them about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life (not shown in chart below).



By ethnicity, respondents are very similar in the proportion saying starting a conversation with their family about their vocation was easy. Asian respondents are particularly likely to

report that their mother (51 percent) or father (38 percent), or another family member (49 percent) ever spoke to them about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Hispanic/Latino respondents are *least* likely to say their mother (35 percent), father (20 percent), or another family member (33 percent) ever spoke to them about such a vocation.

Although more than two in five respondents indicate that starting a discussion with their family about their vocation was easy, the conversation was better when a parent or other family member had at least approached the subject with them. Among those who said their mother had ever spoken to them about a vocation about three in four (68 percent compared to 48 percent for those whose mother never spoke to them about a vocation) said that starting a family discussion about their vocation was easy for them. Similarly, those whose father had ever spoken to them about a vocation were also more likely to say that starting a family discussion about their vocation was easy for them (71 percent compared to 50 percent for those whose father never spoke to them about a vocation). Finally, those who ever had another family member speak to them about a vocation are also more likely to say that starting a family discussion about their vocation was easy for them (65 percent compared to 50 percent for those who did not have another family member speak to them about a vocation).

Support for Vocational Consideration

Respondents were asked to evaluate how much encouragement they received from various family members when they were first considering their vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

Encouragement When First Considering a Vocation

Percentage responding as follows:

How much encouragement from...	“Some” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” only
Mother	77%	51%
Father	69	42
Grandparent(s)	68	48
Sibling(s)	62	28
Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)	59	27
Cousin(s)	43	17

Parents, grandparents, and siblings are most often reported as supportive when respondents were first considering their vocation. Between two-fifths and half of respondents indicate receiving “very much” encouragement from their mother, grandparents, and father. More than a quarter received “very much” encouragement from their siblings, aunts, and uncles, with one in six receiving as much encouragement from their cousins.

Responding priest and seminarians were also asked to evaluate how much encouragement they received from various family members when they were first considering their vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

Encouragement Currently in Life and Ministry as a Religious

Percentage responding as follows:

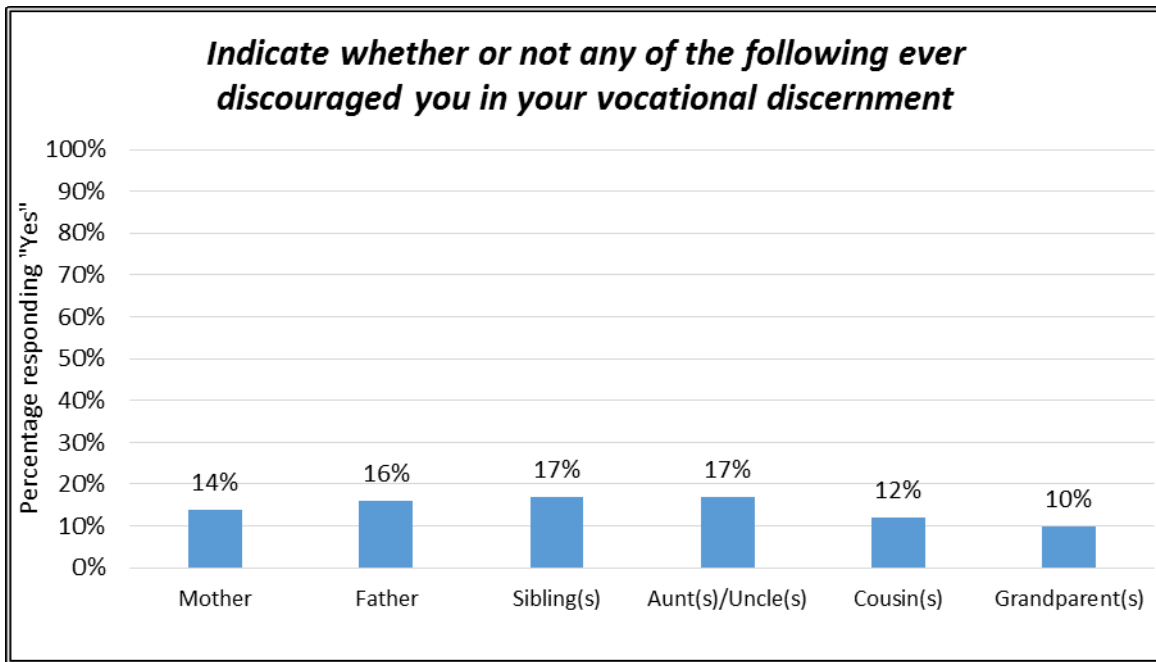
How much encouragement from...	“Some” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” only
Mother	94%	85%
Father	90	78
Sibling(s)	85	62
Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)	82	52
Grandparent(s)	80	65
Cousin(s)	68	38

Two in three relatives in all of the categories above currently offer at least “some” encouragement to respondents. Only cousins fall below half in currently offering “very much” encouragement.

The change between when respondents first considered a vocation to the time they responded to the survey is most dramatic when examining the “Very Much” only column. Encouragement from mothers, fathers, and aunts/uncles jumped between 34 and 38 percentage points during that time period. There are more modest increases for siblings (24 percentage points), grandparents (14 percentage points), and cousins (11 percentage points).

Discouragement from Family Members

Few respondents indicate that a family member ever discouraged them in their vocational discernment, but among those who do, a one in six say that their siblings, aunts/uncles, and father discouraged them from considering a vocation. About one in ten says they have ever received discouragement from their mothers, cousins, and grandparents.



Describe How Your Family Supported Your Vocational Discernment

A box on the survey invited priests and seminarians to respond in their own words to this: “Briefly describe how your family supported your vocational discernment.” CARA grouped these responses into categories for easier comparison. The categories for this question include verbal encouragement, prayers, financial support, discussion/communication/listening, openness/acceptance, freedom to discern/attend vocation events, and other. Some of the representative comments within each category are presented below.

Verbal encouragement: One in three respondents state they received verbal encouragement from their family members. This varies from actively encouraging them to discern a priestly vocation to saying they are proud of their family member. Responses include:

After the initial shock of my decision to enter seminary, my family began offering affirmation to me.

By encouraging my discernment and showing support for whatever decision comes from it.

By letting me know that they loved me and were supportive of whatever I follow God in.

By saying how great it was that I was discerning a vocation to the priesthood.

Encouraged priesthood as an option when I was growing up. Support decreased very much when I entered seminary (due to personal family issues as well as priest abuse crisis). Support increased immensely after ordination.

My dad encouraged me to think about priesthood since I was 5 years old. My mother did not really talk to me about it until I was older.

My family always encouraged us to seek the will of God in our lives. They were careful to let us know that they were proud of us, and that our ultimate happiness would be found in God's will.

Prayers: Three in ten respondents wrote their family prayed for them in their discernment. These prayers ranged from daily prayers to specific prayers, like penance or the rosary. Examples include:

Before seminary, we never spoke about vocation. My grandfather spoke about vocation with me once. Now they are overly supportive. Always remind me they are praying for me.

By their prayer and penances, especially my mother.

Constant prayer and solicited prayers from Catholic friends.

Family members (particularly my grandmother) supported me through prayer.

My extended family prayed for me during my period of discernment before and after making the decision to enter seminary discernment. After my ordination, they have continued to pray for me and remember my ordination anniversary each year. I have been asked to officiate/preside at several family events as well.

My family supported my vocational discernment through prayer and attending church functions with me in addition to Mass.

Praying for my every single day.

Financial Support: One in eight respondents mentioned their family members helping them financially. This ranges from helping them to pay off their debt to paying for them to go to vocations events. Responses include:

Financial support enabling me to enter seminary when it became clear it was not an idle phase but a serious endeavor.

Lots of gas money. They never said anything negative.

My family provided the financial means for my vocational discernment and education.

They financially supported me.

They made it possible. Helped with expenses. Overall have been present.

They sent some money during my seminary years. They rarely visited. During discernment they did not know what to do.

They were surprised, but always supportive of me. They helped me get in contact with the right people, and have supported me financially after having to leave my job upon entering seminary. Without their support I never would have had the chance to begin the discernment process.

Discussion/communication/listening: One in ten respondents stated their family would listen or talk to them about their vocation. This could include asking about their experience or starting a conversation about their vocation. Examples include:

Always being positive in conversations about it.

Asking me about how things are going, supporting me in difficult times.

By asking questions because, coming from outside the tradition, they didn't understand what I was doing.

By open and frank discussion of discernment and various options.

Everyone in my family was just overjoyed. My mom started crying out of happiness when I told her, and my dad just kept laughing and saying "I knew it! I always knew it!" They both have a great love for the priesthood and the Catholic Church and understood that in order for our Church to continue vocations would have to continue to come, even if that was from their own family. While they would ask questions to make sure that this is what I really wanted, it was never motivated from fear or doubt.

Just by being there and being good listeners. They are pretty patient.

My family always made me feel free to speak with them about discernment, though I mostly did this when I was away from home at college.

Openness/acceptance: One in ten respondents wrote about how their family was open to their vocation or simply accepted that they were going to become a priest. Responses include:

As time went on, they became much more accepting.

At first it was hard for them to accept my choice to be a consecrated man but in time they were able to accept it and support me.

By accepting me and respecting what I am doing and they understand my situation that sometimes I have to be away from them.

I announced to them that I was going to start the process and they were extremely open and helpful about it. They gave me information to aid me and tried being near me along the process.

I knew they were open to it and valued the vocation.

My family does not often dialogue about important issues viewed to be "interior" or attached to personal convictions. Thus, my family supported me mostly by silent tacit approval, wanting me to be happy with my decision whatever it may be.

My family never opposed it, but initially their attitude was one of, "Well, whatever makes you happy." They were open to it. Since my dad was not Catholic, he didn't quite understand what priestly life was like and needed more information.

Freedom to discern/attend vocations events: Less than one in ten respondents mentioned their family giving them freedom to discern or go to their events preceding ordination. Examples include:

Allowed me to be free and support me no matter what I decided.

By giving me the freedom to choose this path if I felt that this is what God wants me to do.

By not pressuring me to do one thing or another.

A good number of my extended family was more surprised by how long it took me to discern a call to the priesthood. They have all shown great support through being present to the different events as I have progressed in my formation.

Attending all of the milestone events in seminary formation, (some participation from each member).

Other: One in four respondents wrote something other than the categories listed above. Responses include:

By not actively preventing it.

By taking me every day for Mass, and giving me the opportunity to be close with the parish priest.

Everyone was surprised when they found out that I was entering the seminary. One of my brothers was against it. However after the years went by and saw that I was serious about it, they became more serious about their own faith and have become closer to the Lord.

I am grateful to God for the support of my family whom has always supported me. As a testament, when I entered Seminary in San Juan, Puerto Rico to the High School Seminary in 1992, they have always said, "he belongs to God." Still today I'm a priest in Atlanta and they don't give me a hard time when I cannot go to Puerto Rico, "el le pertenece a Dios"(He belongs to God.). This is very moving and still helps me to have total trust in the Church.

It was my grandmother who opened me up to the possibility of the priestly life. It was by their example and compassion for a lot of people especially to the hurting and the poor.

Mostly by being respectful. Some of my family members who are religious and/or priests followed my process very closely. My parents still have some difficulty accepting the distance and other implications of my vocation, they are very supportive and proud but suffer mostly with me being so far away.

My family supports me in my vocation by attending Mass with me.

Describe How Your Family Discouraged Your Vocational Discernment

A second box on the survey invited priests and seminarians to respond in their own words to this: “Briefly describe how your family discouraged your vocational discernment.” CARA grouped these responses into categories for easier comparison. The categories for this question include marriage-related comments, verbal criticism, did not discourage, other options in life, wasting time/talents or priest abuse scandals, and other. Some of the representative comments within each category are presented below.

Marriage-related comments: One in four respondents write their family discouraged them in a way that was connected with marriage. These responses ranged from their parents wanted grandchildren while others mentioned their family had a problem with celibacy. Examples include:

At first my sister and my mother were against me becoming a priest. They wanted to see me get married and have a family.

Brother and cousins focused on celibacy. They cannot imagine why I'd want that! For those with Faith it is a great gift. For the worldly person it seems crazy.

Comments about whether I would be happier being married and the fact that I would not have children to carry on the family name.

Constant comments about how celibacy was a waste of life.

Father wanted me to carry out the family name.

I had an aunt say I should get married. She is Baptist and even now tells me briefly that I should leave.

I have one uncle who does not understand how one can be celibate for the rest of your life.

Verbal criticism: One in four respondents mention verbal criticism of the priesthood and/or the discernment process. Respondents' answers include:

A brother may have made fun of me saying that the priesthood was not a good vocation. But this was not something he frequently said.

An uncle told me I must be crazy.

At first, my mother said, "I will not support that decision."

Comments that made it seem that a religious vocation would not be fulfilling.

From their experience, they had plenty on less than holy priests and religious, and "why give up so much." Comments were sometimes harsh, even hurtful.

In the beginning, my dad didn't believe in my vocational discernment process, and many times he asked me to leave the seminary.

Making comments about the priestly life being a life of ease.

Did not discourage: One in seven respondents state their family did not discourage their vocational discernment. Examples include:

I did not receive any discouragement from family. To them it seemed like I had been going in that direction for some time.

I have never been discouraged by immediate or extended family in regard to my vocation.

I've never felt discouraged about my vocational discernment from my family.

My family did not discourage me. They wanted me to make my own decision about entering the seminary.

My family never really tried to discourage me.

Other options in life: One in ten respondents mention their family discouraged them by suggesting they pursue other options in their life. These options usually included another career, although sometimes included educational or life experience options. Some examples include:

I had finished medical school at the time; one of my brothers thought I was nuts.

It was clear that my family wanted me to continue my legal career rather than become a priest.

My brothers were not quite happy when I discerned my vocation, because they wanted me to go to medical school or college at a Jesuit college. Once my mother spoke to my brothers they began to support me and pray for me.

My father seems like he does not want me to be a priest because he is afraid I may have an uncomfortable life financially.

My father thought it was absolutely nuts for me to abandon my work on a Ph.D. in History even if meant postponing going to the seminary.

My father was worried that I would suffer and not have the requisite material comforts so he would continually encourage me to find a path where I would be better provided for.

My parents only expressed concern that by entering seminary right out of high school I may be missing out on an educational opportunity at a university or college of my choosing.

Wasting time/talents or priest abuse scandals: Less than one in ten respondents mentioned that their family commented that the priesthood is wasting their time or talents or made reference to the priest sex abuse scandals. Examples include:

Conversation on how I was wasting my education

Initially, my Dad and older brother thought I was wasting my talents, but they (especially Dad) eventually changed their minds completely.

My atheistic uncle told me I was wasting my life.

Several of my brothers thought that it was a waste of my talent – that I could make more money using my PhD in other ways, but eventually they came around when they came to my ordination and saw how happy I was.

I was discerning at the time that all the priest sexual abuse exploded, so there were comments made both by father and friends at times that were hurtful.

Priest abuse crisis greatly affected the way my family viewed a potential vocation to the priesthood. Priest scandal affected my parish in particular.

The abuse scandal in the 90s colored my aunt's and uncle's opinions. They didn't want me to be exposed to the corruption in the clergy. It was to protect me - that was where the discouragement came from.

Other: One in four respondents write something other than the categories listed above. Some examples include:

Because of my parents' older age, my siblings believe that I am being selfish with them, towards being able to support my parents in their advanced age. They believe that I am forcing them to care for my parents by not contributing to their financial needs.

Didn't talk about it.

Expressed worry I was rushing into the decision without thinking enough about it.

Grandpa said I would be too far away.

I felt that I had a calling in grade school; they told me I was too young to make that decision.

My father did not say anything outright, just gave me a sense of disapproval.

My grandfather handed me a book called “She Rides a Beast” the week after I told him I was headed to the seminary in the fall. I never read it. It is full of holes.

**Questionnaire for Diocesan Priests and Seminarians with Response
Frequencies**



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

Family Life Influences on Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life

Diocesan Priests and Seminarians N=1,352

The percentage for each response category is below or beside its respective number, calculated out of 100 percent. The percentage of non-response (NR) for each item follows, separately calculated out of 100 percent.

Family Background

1. While you were growing up, was your mother Catholic?
90 Yes 10 No NR<1

2. *If no*, what was her religious preference? NR<1

3. How important was religion to your mother while you were growing up? NR=1

2 Not at all 7 A little
23 Somewhat 69 Very

4. While you were growing up, was your father Catholic?
82 Yes 18 No NR=1

5. *If no*, what was his religious preference? NR=4

6. How important was religion to your father while you were growing up? NR=2

8 Not at all 15 A little
27 Somewhat 51 Very

7. While you were growing up, who was your primary caregiver? NR=1

90 Two parent family 8 Single parent family
1 Grandparent(s) <1 Sibling or other relative
1 Other: _____

8. When you were sixteen, how old was your primary caregiver (e.g. 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s)? NR=1

Yes No NR

87 13 1 9. Were your parents married in the Catholic Church?

92 8 2 10. Were you raised Catholic? *If no*, what faith were you raised in? _____

11. How often did you attend Mass or religious services as a family? NR=1

19 More than once a week 68 Once a week
4 Two-three times a month 1 About once a month
4 A few times a year 5 Seldom or never

12. How many brothers and sisters do you have? NR=2

13. What is your birth order? NR=1

5 Only child 33 Eldest
28 Youngest 35 Somewhere in the middle

14. What was the primary language spoken by the family at home? *Check only one.* NR=1

81 English 9 Spanish
10 Other: _____

Which of these experiences occurred in your family while you were growing up? *Check all that apply.*

13 Parents' divorce
12 Serious illness/death of a parent
16 Serious illness/death of a sibling or other close relative

18. Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or religious brother or sister/nun? 33 Yes 67 No NR=1

19. Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or religious brother or sister/nun? 69 Yes 31 No NR=1

20. Which of these best describes your religious faith while you were growing up, relative to your family? NR=1

25 I was more religious than my other family members
21 I was more religious than some, but less religious than other family members
49 I was about the same as other family members
5 I was less religious than my other family members

21. While you were growing up, which of these were important religious celebrations or customs in your family? *Check all that apply.*

89 Mass, or other religious services
51 Active participation in parish life
24 Eucharistic adoration
17 Faith sharing, Bible study, or prayer groups
24 Participation in Catholic organizations (e.g. Knights of Columbus, Altar Society, Legion of Mary, Sodality)
24 Volunteer or charitable service in the community
7 Catholic advocacy (e.g. peace & justice, poverty, life)
39 Rosary/novena (parents or as a family)
68 Grace before or after meals
30 Family prayers for special intentions
16 Celebrations of particular saints (e.g. St. Joseph)
21 Marian devotions (e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Vietnam, Our Lady of Czestochowa)
12 Home altars
55 Religious art (e.g. crucifix, statues, pictures of saints)
49 Sacramentals (e.g. cross, medal, prayer card, scapular)
3 Quinceañeras
25 Processions (e.g. Via Crucis, Stations of the Cross)
22 Sacred scripture or other spiritual reading
31 Catholic books, periodicals, movies, TV shows
8 Other: _____

22. How often would your family typically pray at home together (outside of meal blessings)? **NR=2**

22 Daily 14 A few times a week
10 A few times a month 14 A few times a year
40 Seldom or never

Encouragement and Discouragement

23. What in your family background was most influential in your discernment of your vocation?

24. What more from your family would have been helpful to you as you discerned your vocation?

Yes No NR

41 61 2 25. Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
29 71 3 26. Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
38 62 3 27. Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
56 44 4 28. Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?

29. How much encouragement did (do) you receive from these family members in regard to your religious vocation?

**Encouragement
when first
considering your
vocation to
priesthood or
religious life**

**Encouragement
currently in your life
and ministry as a
priest or religious**

No ne	Only a Little	So me	Very Muc h	N R		NR	No ne	Only a Little	So me	Very Much
12	11	26	51	5	Mother	16	4	2	10	84
18	14	27	42	8	Father	21	7	4	12	77
17	21	34	28	7	Siblings	16	6	9	23	62
20	21	33	27	9	Aunts/ Uncles	17	9	9	31	52
35	22	25	17	11	Cousins	18	15	17	30	38
20	10	23	47	19	Grand- parents	34	16	5	14	65

30. Briefly describe how your family supported your vocational discernment.

Please indicate whether or not any of the following ever discouraged you in your vocational discernment:

Yes No NR

14 86 5 31. Mother
16 84 8 32. Father
17 83 8 33. Sibling(s)
17 83 8 34. Aunt(s)/Uncle(s)
12 88 10 35. Cousin(s)
10 90 17 36. Grandparent(s)

37. Briefly describe how your family discouraged your vocational discernment.

Background and Demographics

38. Please select the category that best describes your primary ethnicity/cultural background? **NR=2**

79 Caucasian/European American/White
2 African/African American/Black
11 Hispanic/Latino(a)
6 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
<1 Native American/Alaska Native
2 Other: _____

Yes No NR

81 19 3 39. Were you born in the United States?
40. **If no**, when did you first move to the U.S.?
Avg=2001 **NR=82**
90 10 2 41. Were you baptized Catholic as an infant?
42. **If no**, year you became a Catholic.
Avg=1998 **NR=91**
9 91 3 43. Were you ever home-schooled?
66 34 3 44. Did you ever attend parish-based religious education (e.g. CCD or PSR)?
45. **If yes**, years of parish-based religious education. Avg=7.6 **NR=36**
5 95 2 46. Have you ever been married?
4 96 2 47. Do you have children?
48. Did you ever attend any of the following?
47 Catholic primary school (preschool through grade 8)
37 Catholic secondary school (grades 9 through 12)
43 Catholic college or university
86 Catholic seminary

49. What is the highest level of education you completed before entering your religious institute or seminary?

25 High School diploma or less
2 Trade or technical school
18 Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree
38 College or university undergraduate degree
17 Graduate degree

NR=3

Avg NR

1980 4 50. Year you were born.
1997 4 51. Year you first considered a vocation.
2000 86 52. Year you entered religious life (if applicable)
2006 4 53. Year you entered seminary (if applicable).
2007 98 54. Year of professed perpetual vows (if applicable).
2009 47 55. Year of ordination (if applicable).

We would like to survey families, such as yours, who have produced a vocation. These family members will be asked questions similar to those asked of you in this survey, to help us better understand the influence of families on vocational discernment. Their responses will not be compared to yours, nor will any responses be reported in a way that could identify an individual. Your answers to this survey also will not be shared with any family member.

PLEASE PROVIDE CONTACT INFORMATION OF A FAMILY MEMBER (PREFERABLY A PARENT OR A SIBLING) WHO CAN RESPOND TO A BRIEF SURVEY ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON YOUR VOCATION:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

Email: _____

Please let this person know to expect a survey from us in the next few weeks. Thank you!

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

***The Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations
to Religious Life and Priesthood:
A Report for the
National Religious Vocation Conference***

**APPENDIX III: Complete Transcription of Responses to
Open-ended Questions from the Survey of Family Members**



**Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D.
Jonathon C. Holland, M.A.**

Table of Contents

After your family member entered the seminary or religious life, what misconceptions about priesthood and/or religious life changed among family members?	150
When you think about the future of priesthood and religious life, what worries do you have about your family member and his/her vocation?	190
In your opinion, how can family members best support or promote vocations to priesthood or religious life?	241

After your family member entered the seminary or religious life, what misconceptions about priesthood and/or religious life changed among family members?

1. The humanity of other priests became even more apparent, rather than thinking of them as somehow above or removed from us. 2. The priesthood did not require the parents to be actively praying for a child's vocation.

A more realistic look at priest's life, being that of one, like yourself called to service. Realizing they will have struggles, they are human. We did not have very much personal contact/interaction with our parish priests outside of church/school. So lie many, our misperceptions about priests would be due to not knowing them well and only seeing the Sunday Priest.

A nun leads a very ordinary life.

Ability to contact religious.

After seeing how happy and content she was we knew that God had called her to this

All the siblings suddenly were asking questions about celibacy, are you sure you want to do this your whole life, how much do you get paid, can you ever wear regular clothes. I noticed pride creeping into the siblings lives that their brother was so sure about what he was doing.

Always positive about the priesthood

An aunt was struggling in a parish as a pastoral associate where there was a very authoritarian priest. Because of her experience she was concerned and let him know.

As a mother of a son in seminary it took some time for me to accept that my son would not have a fly of his own and would lead such a difficult life with so many demands. I thought being in the seminary took you away from your fly. My son was able to come home and spend time with us. After a couple of years I began to understand that it is a true calling from God and God knows what is best for each of us. My son was at peace when he made his final decision to become a priest. I too am happy that he can share God's grace with all.

As a mother, I was only hesitant for my son to be a priest since I perceived as he would become older he would be lonely. This was my one and only reservation and how so very wrong I was.

My son is alone, but never lonely. He has many elderly priest acquaintances that I've known who are anything but lonely. I was so foolish!

At first, I thought the minor seminary which Benjamin attended was a little too strict as far as family interaction was concerned. However, I was impressed at the well-rounded education he received.

At the outset, my husband felt that a priestly life would not challenge our son to use his abilities to the fullest extent possible, but, over time, he has realized that those misgivings were ill-founded.

At this point, nothing really has changed from the perspective of perception, what has been recognized is the academic demand and challenges interpersonally that can impact spiritual growth.

Aunts, uncles, and a grandparent saw the joy of our child though opposed to the vocation. Some thought our child had been “brain-washed” like the Church was a cult though those relatives were ALL Catholic. They came to see our child chose freely religious life. I think they do not yet understand our child's choice. I think they do not see or understand the need for religious vocations.

Became more accepting through learning more about the Catholic faith

Became more agreeable and supportive.

Became more aware of the complete “formation” that was needed to enter religious life.

Because my wife and I were involved in the Catholic Faith and our children were raised in Catholic schools, I feel there were no misconceptions about the priesthood.

Before he entered the seminary, some of his siblings had doubts but after he entered we all became supportive of him. Fact is siblings (with one exception) didn't think he had it in him. One, the eldest brother, merely suggested that he consider the priesthood and even warned him of naysayers he might encounter.

Before our family member entered seminary, we didn't understand the process or education involved in becoming a priest. We had a general idea, but our knowledge increased. Our son attended a high school seminary, college seminary, and theological seminar. He matured and grew in his faith and as a person in first years in seminary high school and the last four years in theology. But his college seminary seemed intent on re-making him in their image. They seemed to have a single notion of what an ideal priest should look like and insisted all must conform in order to move on in formation. Our son was not alone in this experience. Instead of treating students as unique human persons, valuable and worthy of respect, some of the seminary college administration tried to coerce students into a cookie-cutter priest mold. God calls all sorts of men to priesthood: quiet and gregarious, serious and lighthearted, scholarly and social. All have gifts to offer in ministering and serving God's people. We thought our son would blossom and bloom during his time of formation, but his college years were spent struggling to either gain

acceptance for being true to himself, on one hand, or by re-inventing his personality. One or the other. Such a shame.

Before, we thought a priest/religious became no longer a family member if s/he entered the seminary or religious life. In the other words, s/he is gone!

Being a religious does not mean a person gives up family or friends. He is still a real human being with interests and activities outside of vocation.

Being called does not equate to holiness. It's a process for him just as it is for all of us. And he's not there yet, but neither am I!

Both my husband and I are converts so our extended families were very puzzled by our daughter's entry into religious life. We have been surprised (and delighted) to be warmly embraced by her community; and thrilled that we can e-mail and phone our daughter at regular intervals.

Broke my heart to have a close friend, a niece and a sister-in-law ask if our son was gay.

Cannot think of any misconceptions

Can only speak for myself and her grandfather. We were and are overjoyed to see our granddaughter in her "perfect place" – visited her three times and each time left knowing she was and will be doing God's work.

Carla was free to spend holidays and vacations with family.

Celibacy is a joy to priests who are close to Christ. Knowledge that though it is hard to be a priest, it is the most fulfilling life one could choose and makes one the happiest. The many ways that a priest is present to families and especially young people help him to live a life without children.

Church weekly

Coming to the realization that this is a true divine calling. We initially had some concern that this could be a lifestyle of loneliness. We have since learned much more about the duties and lifestyle of the priest, and that this is not a concern. We have also been so pleased with the Seminary, and how wonderful and devoted those fellow seminarians are. Our son is having a great experience there, and we couldn't be more pleased.

Concern of personal wealth, drinking, and time away from family

Concerns about loneliness and being alone in religious life.

Dad and mom became very supportive as the beauty and holiness of this life was revealed to them. This was also the case for many relatives....

Dad eventually realized it was her calling.

Dad feels that the convent controls her – almost like a cult, and that she doesn't act of her own free will.

Depending on order, the sisters didn't have to wear a habit

Depending upon the order, an individual might be able to combine other/outside interests (i.e. law, medicine) with their spiritual calling.

Devout families – no misconceptions Just more considerations – through culture and school systems – of personal fulfillment in Careers – and exposure to OKAY to DATE – etc. mentality

Did not realize he would be ordained after ten years.

Dispelled ignorance about formation, expectations of and support for potential future priests. Learned that discerning out of the priesthood is not considered bad or a failure.

Empece a ver la vida sacerdotal mas de cerca como seres humanos

Entering seminary is a discernment process.

Even those who may not have understood religious life or did not encourage religious life, never really had anything against religious life. No real misconceptions of great significance.

Everyone asks him for spiritual guidance in the family.

Everyone believed that our daughter would still be as much a part of our family life as she had been previously – visiting at Christmas, Easter, birthdays, Baptisms, Confirmations, weddings. It wasn't until she entered the convent that we all realized her Order is now her family; we only get to see her at specified times that are set aside as visiting days (these don't include any of the above mentioned times).

Everyone saw how happy it made him and that he would make a wonderful priest.

Everyone was very supportive and was very proud of his decision.

Everything changed, especially when we got to meet the Mercedarian Sisters. We didn't see the “stereotypical” strict Catholic nuns. We saw normal, funny, loving people in a very welcoming

community. We also realized that our daughter wasn't doing this to run away from anything or anybody, she was instead answering a call.

Extended family saw how well rounded seminary life was. Everyone saw how much the seminarian matured and seemed more at peace and confident.

Extended family were surprised at how happy she was. Some couldn't understand giving up sex or a lot of money

Family began to embrace the idea

Family brothers and sister were very encouraging as they saw how happy he was in whatever he did or wherever the Jesuits sent him.

Family could still communicate with her and have active relationships with her.

Family had to realize that Sister would never spend a holiday with them again. She would be with her community; this has greatly hurt her sister.

Family member would be nothing but religious in every way. But they are still human, they can get upset, impatient and angry. They apologize more quickly.

Family members did not change other than our concern for our family member being truly happy in his choice of vocation.

Family members saw priests as more regular people.

Family members saw that my son was very happy and at peace with his decision to become a priest. They saw that a good job and great pay were not always the focal point of life. They have been inspired by the theological knowledge, belief in the Catholic faith, and joy in God that exude from my son.

Family members slowly began to realize that her “new” family consisted of her religious community.

Feel happy to elect the person from our family. I thought to become nun when I was in school. But I settled as a nurse in government sector.

For immediate family, religious life become even more and more favorable. For maternal grandparents more bitter, don't know about current reaction. Paternal grandparents visited and more favorable for all those that have actually take the time to visit the convent.

For me, and probably our parents, one misconception that Michael has proven wrong since entering novitiate was the notion that we wouldn't see him very much. Or, when we would see him he would act differently or so 'priestly' or pious that we wouldn't be able to connect with him on certain issues of the day, or he'd no longer enjoy silly comedies, or act 'silly', or enjoy a night on the town. He's proven this notion to be wrong.

For non-Catholic sister in laws, the friendliness of the sisters

For the parents, no change. For the siblings, from no idea to some idea...

Fortunately for our son, his parents had many religious as friends and coworkers. Many of the common misconceptions had been cleared way before he ever made the commitment to enter. More importantly as he was discerning to enter the seminary I made it a point to discuss important issues impacting the priesthood in our society and made sure to connect him to those religious that were close to the family and would share an honest view of religious life. Found there was less support for the family member at seminary than we hoped and assumed. Issues of isolation, home sickness, depression seemed to have to deal with on their own.

Full dedication to Christ and His Works only!

Grandmother and aunt are Baptist. They are very devote to their religion but were upset he was entering the religious life to be a priest. However, even though he has made his decision for priesthood, they support him.

Grandmother thought that he couldn't leave after he started and really didn't like the idea of him starting even though she seemed to encourage him to join by constantly showing him pictures of relatives who were priests.

Grandmother was confused why we were so happy for our son, she was surprised thought he was going to become a doctor and have a family. Once we explained how happy and thrilled we were that our son made the decision for this calling, she then understood and now supports her grandson! Grandmother is 90 years old. Actually, a few siblings now have a better understanding what type of calling this is for their brother and are very happy and supportive for him.

Grandparents saw that she didn't become a different person, but was joyfully herself.

Grandparents thought it would be a very hard life. This changed once they saw how joyful my son was and how he excelled in college.

Had no misconceptions, still have none

He entered a religious community and we all thought we would remain very close. We are disappointed that his formation seemed to distance him from our family. Due to his commitment

to the community and his vows of obedience he has little freedom to be with his family. We had no idea prior to his entering the order that he would have such little freedom to do/have what he wants and make his own decisions and choices.

He still could be an active member of our family. Even though his vocation to the priesthood was paramount, he still could have friends and be involved with our family.

He was not confine all week to the seminary. They could leave the grounds. We let him decide and we supported him. He does have a calling.

He would somehow change or be different in a way that would distance him from the family

Her commitment and happiness.

Her father was upset but has become very supportive and proud of her vocation. Her mother did not encourage a religious vocation because of the sad state of convents. The order she picked is traditional and obedient to the Church.

Her father, a non-Catholic, thought that the community our daughter entered would be mostly elderly women living in a building in a state of disrepair. These concerns were allayed with his first visit to her. The community is young and lively and he could see how happy she was.

Her grandparents thought she was too young/immature to enter, but after they saw her there they changed their minds.

Her mother became more supportive

Her unavailability to the family for important days like birthdays, Christmas, father/mother's day, funerals, etc.

His dad is not Catholic and still doesn't quite see his son being a priest, sees happy young men but doesn't get it that he won't make much money

His grandfather was concerned about who would be paying for living expenses and education costs, probably thinking he would be receiving a letter asking to help foot the bill. Grandpa was assured that the Jesuits are pretty good at fund-raising without having to hit up family members on fixed incomes!

His journey is just begun. We probably still have many misconceptions.

His mother could not understand why priests cannot marry. Everything else was ok – part of discernment

His mother, who was not Catholic throughout his boyhood, became more comfortable with his vocation after his first year in seminary because our son was the “most at peace” she had seen him in years. She also came into contact with more priests and seminarians during his seminary years. To cap off the change in her, our son baptized her and welcomed her into the Church at last year's Easter Vigil.

His non-Catholic father learned what the priesthood really is about and became very supportive.

How exceptionally happy she is.

How far away he was.

How happy she could be living in community.

How joyful the sisters were

How many hours a day were spent in prayer (more than we thought). How much the religious sisters embrace the idea of obedience (there is much more accountability/control especially during formation for religious sisters than for diocesan priests). How any young people are still entering?

How many long hours a priest put in a days' time. They say to spend the holidays with your family but having a priest in the family doesn't work that way. Their obligations put their family on hold. Holidays can be quite stressful and hectic for them.

How much “sister” sacrifices of herself to serve God and others?

How nice/supportive and welcoming her “NEW” sisters/family members were!

How open and approachable priests and vocation instructors are.

How open the Sisters of St. Cecilia have been to the family. They have shown us that religious life is a way of life like any other choice in life. We've supported our daughter's decision to join the Dominican Life. We have learned to love all the Sister and miss them terribly when we aren't there.

How their whole life is given to Christ to share faith, minister sacraments and bring all they meet to Jesus. They are no longer friend, family or themselves they have totally given their life to the will of God. I did not realize how much suffering and sacrifice the priest endures for the salvation of souls. The attacks of the evil one can be very draining and exhausting for the priest. We must hold them in prayer for protection, perseverance and trust in God's love and mercy.

I am much more accepting of my son's decision now. I am not Catholic and my son was not raised in the Catholic Church.

I am not aware of any misconceptions we had.

I am not aware of any.

I am not sure there was misconceptions. My concern was that my daughter allowed herself some time after college to live in the world prior to entering an order. My daughter decided not to do this and entered the summer after graduation.

I am now a Catholic convert who will be received Easter Vigil 2015. I totally embrace. The other family member love and support our Seminarian even though not understanding.

I as his mother accepted my son entering seminary and found I had misconceived ideas about the types of young men entering the priesthood

I believe the biggest misconception was the lifestyle perception vs actual. The order my son entered has social events at the novitiate so we were able to visit and participate in different events, including Mass. This was particularly helpful for his father and his sister.

I cannot remember what they might have been.

I can't think of any misconceptions that changed, but there was more we learned about the priesthood which we didn't know before.

I can't think of any.

I can't think of any.

I did not realize how much time he would spend away from the family for the holidays.

I didn't fully understand how becoming a priest would create a new "family" for him. We have had to accept or let go of him to an extent as a family member and develop a new relationship.

I do not remember any misconceptions, it was an experience beyond our expectations.

I don't believe anyone had misconceptions about the priesthood, except his father and he still isn't convinced it's the best life choice for our son.

I don't believe anything changed as I don't believe we had any misconceptions. My brother felt "called" for a very long time and we, as a family, always supported him and his journey up to and while he answered that call. Many of the "no's" answered above about family gatherings is because we were all grown and out of college and the home and were living in different states when my brother joined the seminary. While growing up we attended Mass and CCD every week.

I don't believe we had any misconceptions. We were cautiously supportive but not overly so in case he decided to leave the seminary.

I don't feel there were misconceptions. The issue at that time was to make sure she really had a vocation and that she understood how that choice would affect her life.

I don't know that I had any misconceptions that changed after my son entered the seminary. I wasn't against his decision. I always just wanted my son to enter whatever profession he wanted to enter. My only concern was that he was happy and doing something he truly wanted to do.

I don't remember any

I don't think any misconceptions changed. We were surprised by how much she was expected to isolate herself from the family.

I don't think anything

I don't think that anything changed about what we believed would transpire in his life as a priest. He is happy and fulfilled. I do believe that we, as a family, have been drawn in deeper into our faith because of his vocation. We are very grateful for that.

I don't think there were any misconceptions for any of those in the family. It was more of an educational process for all of us to understand what he would be going through over the next years.

I don't think there were any misconceptions, so there was nothing to change!

I don't think there were any misconceptions. All four of my kids were exposed to several priests during their grade school years and saw they had interests, hobbies and different personalities just like other men.

I don't think there were any misconceptions. We have been eager to hear about his daily activities.

I don't think they had misconceptions

I don't think we had any misconceptions about it

I don't think we had any misconceptions because my sister is also a Catholic sister and also our family member that entered religious life had given us a lot of good information about the order that she was entering and their ministry, prayer life, living situations, etc.

I don't think we had any misconceptions. However, our daughter entered a conservative order and our family found it difficult understanding all the rules. But, we accepted them because it was what our daughter wanted.

I feel I/we did not have misconceptions about religious life.

I feel this question shows your bias rather than an outsider. How do you feel you are viewed?

I felt if this is what God is calling her to do, who was I to get in the way of it? It has been a joyful way of life for our daughter. It is where her heart is at. Difficult for the family was how little contact we were able to have with her. This as a struggle for her Dad and sisters, especially. We have greater appreciation for those in priesthood and religious life now. Grace spills over into our family as a result of our daughter's vocation and prayers for us. She is widely accepted by her nieces and nephews. The convent Sisters are always full of joy – a joy that is tangible, and not found in society.

I found that the nuns are not recognized by the church as much as they should be and they therefore lack some cooperation by the church hierarchy.

I gained a better understanding and respect for all that sisters do, how carefully they choose their members, how joyful they are and how central Jesus is in their lives. We were surprisingly hesitant at first, but as soon as we saw her joy at the prospect we grew to love and appreciate her vocation and all the ways it is blessing every member of our family.

I hope that those who were critical – as in, thought it was a form of brain-washing – have learned that it is a vocation like marriage or a job. However, I do not think some of my family – I am a convert – who are Protestant, have given it much thought. The Catholic faith is a mystery to them and remains so.

I initially was worried about not having grandchildren to carry on the family name. After our oldest son (not the one going into the priesthood) had a significant difficulty in his life, I called my son who had started the first year of college seminary and apologized for not being totally supportive and all of our family has been totally supportive since then. He is in his third year of priesthood today. It has been a great blessing to our family.

I learned that sisters are regular people and like to laugh and have fun. I realize the amount of sacrifice women make when they choose to enter a convent- like a vow of poverty, giving up personal possessions, limited contact with family and friends, etc.

I loved, I feel very happy. God Blessed he.

I realized an emphasis on masculinity (not all feminine men as I perceived). I saw they were ordinary, fun men (nit super-holy odd-ducks that I had thought)

I realized it was a wonderful gift that God had given her and her family.

I think his siblings felt he would become this “perfect” person and he hasn't. I believe it has opened me up to a new understanding of what it takes to be a priest, what kinds of formation occur. I realize more than ever that a priest is very much a regular person with their own issues they just work at growing in holiness in a different way. I feel a much stronger need to pray for seminarians and priests.

I think my husband feared that being a priest would be very lonely. I think he still is concerned about that, at times. In general, our faith life has increased tremendously as a result of our son's entering the seminary.

I think people were surprised at how happy, down to earth, social and human the people who are in religious life are.

I think that most had no misconceptions, but one male cousin of hers was, I think, surprised to see how much joy was in her and the other sisters when he came for her 1st profession of vows. He first saw only the restrictions on her life, but when actually observing the sisters, he started seeing the freedom that they had and the joy that was theirs in offering their lives to Jesus in this complete way.

I think that the informal, fraternal aspect of the religious community pleasantly surprised some of the family.

I think they grew in their understanding of the religious life as having value or being a reasonable choice for some people.

I think we all thought we were going to never see her but we see her a lot. I don't think entering the convent really changed the amount of times I see my sister.

I think we had a general understanding. My brother-in-law was in the seminary. We knew many priest through our parish and our covenant community

I think we were all grateful that the youngest member of the family had answered the call and is happy in her vocation. The difficulties and blessings are varied, as they are in all walks of life. I didn't have preconceived notions of what her life would be like.

I thought all of the sisters would be old and quiet and grouchy.

I thought I wouldn't be able to have contact with her and that she wouldn't be able to make choices about her own life.

I thought it was an easy life. I now have a great sense of all the goodness and challenges that accompany a religious life.

I thought it would be harder to stay close with my twin sister who is my best friend but we have grown closer in many ways since she entered

I thought we would not see him very often, but we do. I see how happy this life makes him and as a parent you have to be happy for him. The program has brought the best in him and he is going to be an excellent priest for many people

I thought we wouldn't be able to have much contact with our family member, but that is not true and for that I'm very grateful. I also thought our relationship would change and she would get "preachy" and "holier than everyone else", but that did not happen either. I found out sisters and priests are "regular" people with their own struggles.

I try to understand more of the Catholic religious details. I try to support my son as best I can but he is basically on his own

I was concerned she'd do too much fasting and not get proper sleep; her order only fasts with the church and generally retires at 9 pm for 9 am awakening. A non-Catholic aunt who thought of religious life as a penance, was able to see the joy of community life.

I was expecting a radical change in her life and I found out that she continued her life in a different pat but a pat that continues her life, not radically changed it. I was expecting a more rigid structure (almost military) but the other sisters are very nice and open to have a happy life.

I expected that she was not going to be able to have her own opinion, but she has the chance to talk, and grow as a human being. We admire the way the religious communities embrace the women and her ideas (mainly in the US religious communities).

I was glad to learn that the men who enter a seminary are scrupulously examined throughout seminary life and the discernment is for the seminarian AND the diocese.

I was glad to see they had time to take walks and have recreational time.

I was unaware I would still be able to have so much contact

I would say no real misconceptions changes, rather a better understanding of how the whole process works with full support and prayers if meant to be.

I wouldn't say I had any misconceptions, other than not fully understanding the issues leading to the general decline of vocations. That somewhat still remains with me, although I generally feel it is because of liberal theology and impacts from our non-Christian culture.

I wouldn't say that the misconceptions about the priesthood necessarily changed. They were confirmed.

I'm not sure we had any misconceptions, because, honestly, we knew nothing about the process, the expectations, or what to expect when our son decided to enter the seminary to become a priest. As I said above, we are protestant, so this is all new to us.

I'm sure there were misconceptions but not sure what they were or are.

Immediate family was always supportive. Extended family made comments like "I wouldn't want my son to do that." I told them that it was a good thing he wasn't their son.

In extended family, I think perceptions changed that religious life could be freely chosen, and fulfilling and make a person truly who they were meant to be.

INCREMENTO LA FE EN DIOS (Help the faith in God to grow)

Initially we were very concerned that we could not have frequent communication visits our relationship with her and all the sisters has grown deeper than we could ever have imagined.

Is he gay? Do all "monks" take the vow of silence? Will they live a lonely life? Will they ever call a place home? (I know now all are untrue.)

It became obvious that Sisters live a very similar life to the lay person's life in that they still have fun!

It is a lonely life.

It is something available to anyone not just someone who has lead an exemplary life in every way.

It was a good life

It was a learning experience for everyone in the family, the monthly visitation really help understand Sr. Abigail's religious life

It was even harder on the family than we had expected.

It was interesting to learn what it actually took to join the religious life.

It was more that the mother had more acceptance than the father. We grew strong in our support as the years of discernment continued on.

It's not just their life that changes, but the life of the whole family. People look at you differently, people you don't know tell you they are praying for your family member...very humbling. Saw it as a lonely life, but growing to realize it's what you made of it.

Listen to God nothing else matters!

Looking at our extended family at large, I do not think many had a true understanding of what Religious Life was and for them it has often been a great challenge. I remember one family member asking her when she shared the news of entering Religious Life "Where are you going and when will you be done your training and back home?"

Los que deciden dedicar su vida al servicio de Dios y al servicio de los demás son personas normales, no son ángeles, y su vida al igual que la de cualquiera de nosotros es de constante lucha. Estoy muy contenta de que mi hijo allá decidido tomar ese camino. (Those who decide to give their life to serve God and others are normal people, not angels. Their life, the same as ours, is one of constant fight. I'm really happy my son has chosen this path.)

los sacerdotes son aburridos, solo rezan y rezan todo el tiempo. Tener un sacerdote nos garantiza el cielo. La vida religiosa es muy facil. (Priests are boring; they only pray all the time. Having a priest guarantees our place in Heaven. Religious life is very easy.)

Many extended family members came to see that there was obvious, undeniable joy for her and in her living the life. They are still coming around to the idea that there is also tremendous freedom in religious life. Many relatives although they can see how happy she is get hung up on seeing the life as restrictive and limiting. It will take more time for them to be convinced since they have trouble seeing things outside of the mainstream culture, but I'm sure they will in the end. It's been such a blessing for us all in so many ways.

Many family members thought that life would be boring, lonely, somber, and loveless and that she would be cut off from us forever. After a visit, one joyfully remarked "I think she can be happy here!" Her face radiates joy. We see her more often than many of our friends see their own children who have married and moved out of state.

Many of us were afraid he would lead a lonely life and felt it would be difficult for him with the scandals at the time within the Catholic Church... We were wrong, he has a full and beautiful life and I am so proud of him and I feel I have become closer to my faith because of him

Many things. Ha-ha. Some misconceptions were that it will be a sad and lonely place in which you won't have much freedom. But after visiting my sister and getting to know her community more and the bigger family of the order that she entered, we were enlightened of our misconceptions.

Many things. We had very little idea about the process of becoming a priest and of the duties of a priest.

Marc's family was accepting of his joining the Jesuits and supported him and his decision but the decision to join was his.

Maybe the number of hours of work (and lack of sleep) for religious sisters

Mi esposo poco a poco fue cambiando al mirar que mi hijo esta contento con su decision de estar en el seminario. Hasta ahora esta contento con todo y muy orgulloso de mi hijo. (My husband gradually changed by seeing my son is happy with his decision of being in the seminary. He is now happy with everything and very proud of our son.)

Misconception about seminary: The realization of the difficult academics. Now have awareness of tremendous education priests must process

Misconception that the priesthood was for older men.

Misconception was that he would no longer be part of the family. That the seminary life would be dull. Boring.

Mom and dad have no misconceptions. Her brothers and sisters are more open minded now to the concept of serving God and God alone for life

Mom died, she was a widow so he was freed up to join

More deep respect for the priesthood

More of an appreciation and understanding of the formation period, why and what it means, and how prepared he would be once ordained

More respectful and appreciate my nephew said anyone can get a job but it takes a special person to give their life to God

More supportive

Mostly a greater understanding of the challenges and also beautiful aspects of the priesthood and involved preparation/seminary.

Mother came to understand that a religious vocation is a source of true happiness, not the excessive burden viewed by secular society.

Mother's side (evangelical) of family slowly accepting his calling

My brother was newly ordained near the time when another brother was getting married in a non-Catholic Church (it was a Christian church) There was a misconception in that the brother could not get approval so that the brother who was a priest could attend the marriage ceremony, even though there could have been a way through the church that would have allowed this.

My eyes were opened to the background of where seminarians had come from, I had previously thought they come from perfect families.

My family member following two years at a public university entered the brotherhood and spent 35 years in a religious community. Following the death of our mother, he had a calling to become priest, he then left the brotherhood, thought for a year prior to entering the Seminary family members were much more receptive to entering the priesthood because they better understood the vocation.

My fear was that he is my wife's only child, and I was worried that after my passing, my wife would be alone. I talked to our priest and Monsignor at the diocese about this, and they assured me that as a priest our son would remain very close to his family. My wife feared that a priest's life might be a lonely life, and after visiting with seminarians and priests could see the "brotherhood" and close relationships and happiness they shared. Other family members worried that he would not marry and have a family of his own, but everyone sees how happy and fulfilled he is and everyone is so proud of the vocation he has chosen.

My former husband came to accept my son's vocation after he read my son's account of a pilgrimage he made while in the novitiate.

My husband is a deacon who actively serves and works within our parish. I am also involved in ministry within the church. I believe that this experience has allowed those around us to clearly see what religious life and priesthood is.

My mom and I became gradually more supportive, though it was a difficult transition. My father is still adamantly opposed and in fact left the church and hasn't returned.

My oldest son is in the seminary and has always been encouraging to my daughter. My youngest son is married with children and he has a problem with the fact that the other two live far away, have to ask permission to leave to come home and are not a part of his life.

My parents who were Methodist didn't get it. Then they became increasingly more tolerant and now are happy about our son's vocation to the priesthood

My sister is about the only person any of our family or friends knew to enter religious life. I think we perceived a lot of rules and not enough explanation of how it played into her formation. We had great difficulties with how little communication we could have with her, and we went through a type of grieving process because of the visiting restrictions. I think we had more

misconceptions because we didn't have enough timely answers. But we loved the community, so it was a difficult balance.

My sister was happy with her vocation which made family members happy also.

My sister who entered religious life did so after our father had passed away. We were raised Methodist and my sister converted to Catholicism while in college. I married a Catholic and converted later when our children were studying for their First Communion. Since our sister entered later in her adult life, her mother accepted it eventually, although at first she was shocked and dismayed.

My son is happy with his life as a Benedictine brother/monk. If he is happy, I am happy. I grew up with three aunts who were sisters of the Precious Blood and an uncle who was a priest. Three of these individuals were in their late 40's when I was born. (They were out of the house before my dad was born). The girls entered the convent at age 13. They were not allowed to come home again for years. As a mother, I could not let my child leave home at age 13. I do not have fond memories of these relatives. It was hard for me to see my son thinking of religious life. My son entered a monastery (St Procopius) after college graduation. Once he professed first vows, he was not allowed to come home for one year. As a family we could visit him once a month. We live five hours away from the abbey. We made two visits the first year...once just my husband and I and the second visit was with our three younger children. We asked if we could take Eric for an outing as a family. We wanted to go to an 1800's type village. We were denied. Although it did not seem to bother my son, it bothered me. Also in this probationary year, my parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a Mass and dinner. Eric was not allowed to come home for this momentous occasion. Every grandchild was in attendance (19 grandchildren), but not my son.

My son was still the same person as he always was. He did not change.

My wife was not Catholic and in the beginning was not sure of his choice because he could only speak to us about once a month from Seminary

No misconceptions, he is the happiest that he has ever been... My prayers have been answered for him. The Paulist Fathers are a wonderful order.

No apparent misconceptions.

No known misconceptions about religious life.

No misconceptions about priesthood and/or religious life, we are just very thankful to God for calling our son to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for vocations always and for all the priests as well as other religious life. Thank you.

No misconceptions however my son has a strong dedication to serve God to lead people in a truthful, loving way and will be mindful of the weak and vulnerable who show interest in learning more about the Catholic Faith.

No misconceptions per se, but we learned more about the religious life and formation.

No misconceptions, just a more conscious awareness.

No misconceptions, just more appreciation of the priesthood.

No misconceptions. Our son was free to discern the vocation without pressure in either direction.

No misconceptions. We were all so proud.

No opinions

No opinions changed.

No real misconceptions, but certainly a better appreciation of how hard-working, and sometimes difficult it is to be a priest.

No really, except that he seems to be just a social and still having fun

Non-Catholic grandmother and half-sister accepted the vocation after grave concerns. The half-sister even attended the vow ceremony.

None – one of our children is already a priest

None – very aware what it took to become a priest.

None – we all had a very high opinion of the priesthood

None after. We were well informed prior to entering so there were no surprises.

None among parents, siblings with the possible exception of a couple much younger siblings.

None really. We have learned a great deal about the process.

None that come to mind

None that I am aware of, immediate family is all very supportive. There may be uncles and aunts skeptical.

None that I know of. I went to Catholic elementary school and was active in the religious community as a child and was also somewhat familiar with the denomination chosen by my family member.

None to my knowledge

None we all grew up in the Catholic faith as children even though some have left
None we have been involved in the lives of priest since I have been a little girl and so I can't say there have been any surprises

None, an older brother was in the same order for seven years.

None, although we found religious live disruptive of some family bonds and traditional gatherings as religious life had to come first.

None, as family members had good knowledge before.

None, I was very happy and joyful when my son went to the seminary. We gave him all the support we could.

None, no misconceptions known

None, other than being a minority in the abbey, I was shocked to learn that double standards were used when it came to my son. It was heartbreaking.

None, really. Developed more of an understanding of religious life in community.

None, we are happy to have a family member get involved in religious vocation.

None, we had relatives in religious life before.

None, we had no expectations or understanding of a priest's life other than the vows and the priests we had in our community.

None. Parents had been raised Catholic and educated in Catholic schools by priests and religious.

None. The initial lack of support had to do with an abuse situation in his life.

None. We have always support religious vocation

None. We were all pro and still are. We DO now have a more profoundly beautiful appreciation for Orders and the community aspect which nourishes and supports our son.

None. We were all quite aware of what the priesthood entailed for my brother.

None....people were happy with sister's choice, but more suspicious of the church's motives

Not aware of any.

Not aware of misconceptions among family members

Not many. He has a first cousin that is a sister.

Not me personally but some of the non-practicing Catholics became more aware of what was involved and more aware of Catholic practices that we may not have participated in as children (with eight of us, our parents were not terribly active in parish life when we were young).

Not much changed

Not sure that there were any misconceptions

Not sure, that he still has a full happy life and is not a hermit.

Nothing changed, as a family we remained the same

Nothing changed, but we are very supportive

Nothing major...we were well informed of what the expectations were for Eric for each of his 8 years of minor/major seminary.

Nothing really! The order my daughter joined was very open and joyful!

Nothing specific first he was in religious order then diocesan seminary

Nothing stands out other than the depth of formation that a priest receives in seminary. The level of education is impressive.

Nothing that I can recall

Nothing to my knowing

Nothing was a misconception, we knew that this commitment was a lifelong commitment and the family will be his second family now.

Nothing we pretty well understood the process

Of any I would say the misconception from some family, friends, and acquaintances that the religious would not be or have as much fun as before

Our family became supportive of religious life and devoted more time to the church.

Our family cultivate the habits of prayer and God give us Spiritual understanding on priesthood and religious life.

Our family did not have any misconceptions about the seminary, however we were very happy to be a part of the process – that which included family participation/attendance.

Our family learned that seminarians are just ordinary young men. Because of their fallen human nature they still aren't perfect, and their families aren't perfect either. They're all still exceptionally good people, though. We found that they are more like you and I than we would imagine.

Our religious life has changed for the better. Our son who is discerning the priesthood has introduced us to different types of prayer, books, and taught us how to evangelize. It has been a blessing. He has talked to us about the importance of confession and has helped us to go back to confession on a regular basis. My husband and I have begun going to daily Mass. He has talked to his older brothers on many occasions with problems or questions about their faith. What would we do without him? I thought I was the teacher. It turns out, the youngest one in the family is teaching us. After observing many priests in our diocese, I worry about how overburdened, overloaded, overtaxed they have become.

Our visits to the convent are more frequent than what we thought we'd be allowed

Paradigm change from studying for the priesthood, to discernment for the priesthood. We much more readily recognize the humanity of priests in general.

People were pleased with how joy filled the Sisters were and how they lived their lives with such joy and peace.

Praying hard that she has chosen the right vocation and to have the strength and grace to be able to persevere in it.

Priest and religious are people first (brother, sisters, sons and daughters).

Priesthood was a way of life.... Just as any other career aspiration.

Priesthood was for men who couldn't find a wife

Priests are human beings also.

Priests are just people like us. They have parents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts. They are not all saints, just devoted ordinary people.

Primarily, her devotion to it. I think we all knew of her commitment to service and helping her fellow man, but the depth of her devotion to the Christian faith was not known to many of us.

Probably those opposed remain opposed, for their own separation from the church. However several of these have expressed appreciation for the kind of priest that he is, that they like about him.

Protestant Grandparents think that celibacy is unrealistic

Real people. Not removed from the world.

Realization that life as a nun could involve lots of fun times also.

Realized it is what he wants.

Religious life is boring, all sacrifices, no pleasure.

Religious life is much more joyous

Same as always

Saw religious life in a different way after meeting and talking with the brothers. They encouraged us to stay an important part of his life.

Seminarians are “regular”, fun-loving guys, and not always super spiritual.

Seminarians are seen more now as real men with strong character.

Seminarians not only spend time in prayer and academic and religious formation but also formation physically and emotionally.

Seminary preparation is very intellectual where he is. In our Diocese, there are two seminaries where the Bishop can send them to. The seminarians tell us (to a person) that one is intellectually oriented and the other is “spiritually oriented.” I find that absolutely unacceptable. All should be overtly spiritual with health connections to the intellectual. Both Faith and Reason are to be combined together with spiritual emphasis and formation as paramount. This has been very disappointing. Parents will tell you that what the seminarians say is correct in reality and

my own experience is that it is as well. I am a Youth Minister and have done Youth and Adult Ministry for over 25 years. We currently have one seminarian from our Diocese who is in the intellectual one (Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving Texas, classes at University of Dallas) and the other is Covington Seminary in Covington, Louisiana. The one who is in Covington was in our Youth Program and we know him and the family very well. They say the same thing as they have both visited and done things with seminarians from both.

Separation from family

She came home from a youth 2000 retreat in 1999 and said “I know what I want to do: I want to be a nun, wear a habit, and teach.” I told her she could do two of those but nuns don't wear habits anymore. She said she would find some. She did. Eye opener for me.

She is happy and I didn't believe that was possible.

Siblings became much more encouraging and accepting of his calling.

Siblings believed it was wasting your life – education, talents.

Simply afforded us the opportunity to discover even more deeply the depth of the life of a priest and everything they have to deal with on a daily, weekly, etc. basis. Also gave us the opportunity to meet many seminarians and see the Holy Spirit working in the lives of these young men who could be CEO's, athletes, professionals, etc. if they chose to not listen to the call of God.

Since we had a son that was a priest and another older daughter that was a religious, we knew what to expect and did not really have any misconceptions. My side of the family is protestant and I was raised protestant so the family I grew up in found it had to believe that we had three religious vocations.

Since we knew quite a few priests, deacons and seminarians; we didn't really have any misconceptions. It was interesting learning first hand of the discernment/formation process involved in our son's path.

Slowly accepted by father.

So far there is no change in our conceptions about the priesthood. Also, when I checked “yes” to “encouraged”, I do not mean that we in any way spoke or acted as if we EXPECTED Peter to become a priest. We merely acknowledged the exalted nature of such a vocation, and never DISCOURAGED it.

Some family members had the opinion that the only men who became priests were those that were gay, hated women or had no other options in life. These people were shocked when my son

wanted to become a priest because they never viewed him in that way. As he progressed through seminary, they saw that he was approachable, happy, and normal and could choose to do anything he wanted to do. Their idea of what a priest could be like seemed to change. They saw that normal people could be called to the priesthood and the men being called lived regular lives.

Some family members thought that certain things would be allowed (that shouldn't be) because they had a relative that was a priest. We as a family thought that "formation" in the seminary was just that. We found that "formation" in many cases was not very supportive of many of the seminarians. Which we found disappointing.

Some family member struggle still with the idea that he has "given up" a normal life and do not see the closeness to Christ and his mother as more than offsetting. They can see only with secular eyes, though they are still Catholic. They are, however, coming around as they see what he has become.

Some members of our family were concerned about his happiness. We have witnessed a very real peace and joy in his life. His vocation has been a blessing to our family.

Some siblings thought he may have chosen this vocation in order to please his mother. Also, as he was known to siblings as a brother, they did not see him as "holy".

Some stated they felt that this choice in life made sense with the type of person our son is and how he presents himself to others. Some said it wouldn't last.

Some thought it would be a very hard life and maybe a lonely life.

Some were worried that my sister would not be happy, but once she entered they saw how she was usually very happy.

Son personas cercanas a la gente (They are people that are close to people.)

Sr. Anna entered eight months ago. There are still some misconceptions.

Still ongoing – priesthood/religious life often misunderstood as an "escape" from real life. That somehow they "have it made" or are running away from problems.

Still the same. They're not misconceptions but realities not addressed or taboo.

Surprised on how joyful the Franciscan Order was! Even humorous!

That all priests take a vow of poverty

That all religious brothers also became priests.

That being a priest is not a lonely experience.

That being a priest made you serious or changed you in some way. By him becoming a priest I saw priests as people and not just a religious figure.

That entering seminary meant priesthood was a done deal. It's not, it's a discernment process.

That our son would have a useless degree in philosophy if he does discern out of seminary. In fact, his degree in philosophy developed his ability to think logically and if he does discern out he would just need to get a masters in an area of interest. Not that that is easy but he would be fine and would be able to continue on and find meaningful work to support himself and a family, God willing. Now this may not be true for everyone – we know young men who have discerned out having trouble finding employment. That it would be difficult for our son to be happy/joyful in a celibate life. Not true. That our son would be lonely – this still bothers his mother at times, especially as he grows older.

That formation at the seminary would be of liberal teaching and formation would bring about a liberal priest in our son.

That he as a seminarian was the same person and still had fun.

That he was already committed to ordination; that college seminary is paid for by our diocese; most did not know that a seminarian gets a regular bachelor's degree from a 4-year institution.

That he was truly called by God to do this work. The belief was that someone had “brainwashed him” into believing this was his calling.

That he would be gone forever.

That he would not have to give up everything he owned.

That he would own nothing – that he would live in poverty.

That idea that priests and nuns are already saints was replaced with the knowledge that we are all working toward the goal of sainthood.

That if you enter the seminary you are in discernment. You may or may not decide to finish

That it is not the stuffy and undesirable institution that we grew up believing. We have been able to see the wonderful life that sisters can lead in a new, fresh order.

That it is a calling and few our chosen. We are fortunate that our son decided it was his calling and he is on his chosen journey and we support him 100%.

That it is a discernment, and he has not completely decided to become a priest. Also, some members of our family thought he would change his personality, which is not the case. He is bringing his personality to his vocational discernment.

That it is a lonely life. On the contrary, there is a fraternity among the 15 members of our son's ordination class, and many friends and families, old and new, who extend invitations to dinners and vacations.

That it is all prayer and no fun.

That it was an end of all freedom. Some family members saw that it was a very good thing and not something to be afraid of.

That most of the guys that we meet in the seminary were just typical kids who felt a calling and were not running from something else. My son's friends are very extraordinary people who I would be very happy for my son to associate with whether he went to seminary or not. Also, I was impressed with the level of academics required as well.

That my sister stayed her human self and did not become untouchably holy. We were also surprised at the absolute joy and youth in her convent's community. Personally, it has transformed my view of religious life (we knew nuns growing up but they were usually old or unhappy or both).

That nuns would not be able to see family members on a regular basis.

That our contact and time spent with him would be severely curtailed. We discovered that his becoming a community member was not any different than if he were working in another city at a secular career. We were happy to find that there was a strong value placed on maintaining family relationships.

That priest/religious have to give up all their talents.

That priests are happy people and are just like us. Priest need the support from family and friends and their parish. In addition, we understood that priests do things we never hear about and have no idea that they are as busy as they are. They bear burdens we will never understand.

That priests are somehow more pious in general than the rest of the Catholics. Many of them are not!

That religious life meant you wouldn't see them become “fully” themselves, that there was little or no authentic joy and service alive in orders today.

That Religious sisters had fun too!

That seminarians are ordinary guys seeking. God's will not religious fanatics.

That seminarians were misfits or lacking in talent and social skills.

That she would “change” and become a different person

That she would be unapproachable or totally change her personality.

That she would change and her spirit would be squashed

That Sisters were different than we were....that they spent all their spare time praying and in church.

That sisters/religious were only old. That they were unhappy or grumpy and irrelevant.

That the choice to enter is following God's will, is not an easy one

That the family member will no longer be able to have frequent contacts with their parents, siblings, and relatives.

That the seminarians would all be very similar.

That the Sisters are very normal, joyful, fun-loving people. They lead very busy lives interacting with people on a daily basis.

That there would be separation from the family.

That they are genuine people that make mistakes but are progressing in the life God wants for each of us.

That they are human too!

That they could be so joyful, having given up so much

That they to have fun

That they would be only allowed to pray and not use the talents God gave them. That they would be so active in so many ways.

That they would change drastically from who they were when they entered formation.

That they would never be part of the family again.

That they would not be able to visit the family anymore.

That they would not be close to the family. That was truly a misconception. The Jesuit have only open their hearts and homes to us. We always feel that we are a part of their family.

That we actually could grow closer because of the vocation

That we were able to stay in touch. The happiness. The freedom to stay or not. The support of their religious community. Giving up the secular life, not having a family of their own. Realizing that religious life can be as rewarding.

That we were losing her and that she would no longer be herself.

That we weren't going to see him very often or hear from him.

That we would never see her again.

That we would see or have very little contact with her again. That we would be kept out of her “new life” and her community. That she would always be denied the joy of having a family.

That she would become a different person.

That we wouldn't be able to communicate with them very much, they'd be isolated from us.

That you didn't have to be a “holier than thou” type of person. A “normal” man could become a great priest.

The acceptance that she was extremely happy with her decision. Feel that this must be a true calling.

The amount of individuality there is among the seminarians along with the amount of joy and comradeship.

The Aunt who tried to discourage her became very supportive.

The belief that seminarians were not normal well-adjusted young men. That seminary should be reserved for students who have graduated from college.

The church is a very hard place to work. It often is not Christ like. This concept changed over the years and is not related to a family member entering religious life or the seminary.

The commitment and dedication to a worthy cause.

The community supported my daughter lovingly. Recreation was encouraged. Development of the whole person, including cultural, practical daily living skills, and sports were balanced with growth in spiritual knowledge and practice.

The community was very protective of one and other. I no longer worried about my daughter and realized she was where she need to be.

The early novitiate years were harder than we realized. The limited contact was painful, but the love remained the same. We started to see that priests and sisters have fun and do things that lay people do. They are consecrated, but they still need to have recreation and fun among their community.

The extended family – uncles, aunts and cousins – became more supportive of religious life after visiting the convent and seeing the joy and peacefulness there and in my daughter.

The extended family seemed to begin to understand that this was not a prison sentence. They learned that Jordan would still be joyful and normal. There are some who still seem to think convent life is too extreme. They don't understand the gift of canonical year.

The family a good understood the priesthood and religious life. Didn't have misconceptions that needed to be dealt with.

The family member currently in seminary, has a brother who was ordained a priest in 2011 so I think our family has a pretty accurate idea of what seminary and at least the first few years of priesthood are like. However, when our oldest son, who is already a priest, began college seminary at 18 years old, just out of High School, I was concerned about how he would know if priesthood was really right for him. After he had spent his first semester in college seminary, I was pleased to see that men discerned ut of seminary without shame. I was relieved to see how his spiritual and formation directors and all the staff helped him discern how God was calling him. So that by the time he was ordained, I felt confident that this was the right vocation for him. With our second son, who is currently in seminary, I feel a lot more relaxed about the outcome of his discernment knowing that he will be guided well to understand whether he is, in fact, called to the priesthood. I think the biggest fear for me with my first on was that once he started he would feel he had to complete his training and become a priest without really knowing if he had the strength and stamina to live his life in this very unique and demanding profession. Throughout our first son's seminary training, my faith was greatly increased as my knowledge of our awesome Catholic Church grew, and I became so much more trusting of the formation process than I had been when he started. My second son, currently in seminary, was 25 when he

entered seminary and I think he has a more complete understanding of what is expected of a priest because he learned from his brother's experience. As a parent, I am more confident of the formation process and more trusting that God will indeed bring to completion the plan He has for our son.

The family members found the beauty thru him in what they had lost about our Catholic faith and upbringing.

The family was happy

The family was supportive before my brother entered the seminary. After he was ordained a transitional deacon, the family had a tour of the seminary and was impressed with the seminary and formation.

The family was worried that she would not be reachable via phone or mail. We realize now that is not the case, but since we communicate less, I personally feel that our conversations have more depth when we discuss our feelings and day to day activities.

The fear was among her siblings was that she would be separated from the family that is very close knit. Her sisters were especially afraid that they were losing her because they could not communicate with her in the same way as they used to. They don't have instant access.

The formation experience and orthodoxy of the education has been better than expected.

The idea that it is taking the way out of life has been a changed misconception among family members. That it would be lonely and sad. That it is a bad idea to become a priest and/or religious.

The idea that the person would change. Older brother sibling thought maybe he was "gay"- which was not true. Then a deeper understanding of each other developed, and a renewed sense of faith among siblings. Our seminarian is now the fountain of wealth of renewed teachings. Which now make more sense to his older siblings/ family (cousins). The biggest misconception was that we would no longer have him near to share our family life with. He is busy but he does still have some time for us and especially family gatherings.

The idea that the priesthood would separate him from his family.

The immediate family members (parents and siblings) began to understand that when one family member is discerning the priesthood, the entire family is impacted by preconceptions about and expectations of 'the family of a priest'. It was terrifying for all of us. We are all ordinary people, suddenly related to someone considering doing something extra-ordinary. A vocation of one man to the priesthood demands an extra-ordinary participation in that vocation by his whole

family, something none of us anticipated. That vocation participation exists whether it is accepted or rejected by those extended family members.

The individual is truly called by God. The amount of education a priest receives. It is not necessarily a lonely life.

The joy it is bringing our family is exceedingly more than expected!

The joy she radiated to the rest of the family including the grandparent that had discouraged her. Her aunts and uncle changes their opinion as well.

The joy the sisters' experience was remarkable. We have never seen that in any other group or organization of people. Another misconception was the strict structure of the order itself.

The joyful attitude of the religious sisters and the fact that some religious still wear the full habit.

The length/commitment to college/minor and major seminary.

The misconception that she would not be happy in religious life changed. Everyone has come to see how very happy she is in religious life and what a beautiful life it truly is.

The misconception that the priesthood would be a lonely vocation, but have realized what a rich vocation. We didn't realize how much fun seminary is, and what an amazing group of men were discerning the priesthood. We didn't realize how blessed he'd be to travel and study in Rome.

The normal misconception of thinking they would be a part of family activities more often.

The one thing that surprised me the most at first, and which still surprises most people who don't know, is how much freedom and freewill they have. They are not locked up in a convent and then thrown into the wild. The formation and preparation they have is amazing with lots of devotion, love and care from all the faculty, support groups, community and most importantly family members.

The ones against came around, and in the end we have to follow our own path. My father one that was very outspoken on his opposition and I still think he is against 70% of the time

The only thing I can think of is that maybe we became more aware of the busyness of the everyday life of a priest.

The only thing I know of is that some were surprised that our contact with her would be limited.

The order of sisters that my daughter is entering are very kind and patient with all our many questions and have become an extension of our family.

The person's personality would change but that did not occur.

The questions above were answered about the young man's immediate family unit (mother, father and siblings). His extended family unit, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents) had no misconceptions about the priesthood and are well grounded in their faiths. Most are devout Catholics but some are active believers in other Christian denominations.

The realization that the religious we encountered were very down to earth people. They didn't set like they were on a pedestal.

The religious order my daughter chose as we all learned later was much diversified. Called Sisters not Nun was new to us as they do worked in the community. After we visited the campus and saw ALL the wonderful faith filled works going on and sensing our daughter really fit in this was her calling. Helping the homeless, taking classes at the university for pastoral ministry, being where there were children at the schools on campus, most of all the loving support of the dear sisters on campus.

The rituals, the Community Life, the Divine Office, and the Life of a Sister in Community Life, and what each step toward Final Vows involved. Also learned how strong her faith was, how strong her commitment is, how great the bonfire for her fellow sisters is, and the respect for the Sisters.

The sacrifice involved. How well adjusted and productive the religious person is. The potential income she could have made. The joy in her life. The joy in the community.

The same attitudes prevailed.

The seminary training appeared to be very orthodox, black and white. Discussions of religion or spirituality became less frequent while lectures on what to believe and how to believe became more common. It created a distance between our son and the family.

The siblings were upset that they could have their brother visit them more often.

The sisters prayed and had meditative time – daughter's order is very busy even on Sundays

The warmth and joy of the convent and the obvious love the sisters have for one another. The encouragement to play and be physically active came as a surprise.

There are many young people trying a vocation and entering. They are very joyful.

There is a lot more variation among orders than I realized. I did not realize how many different religious orders exist.

There really wasn't any misconceptions. The only struggle we encountered was grieving the loss of our daughter/sister when she entered

There was a better understanding of the discernment process – and the option to leave seminary. At first, I thought it was a blinding agreement to go to seminary!

There was a change in the idea of the type of person who could become a priest or religious. It became apparent that a religious was not necessarily someone who had always been quiet and pious.

There was a heavy emphasis on getting a well-paying job from his father. Father felt priesthood was too difficult. Our son struggled for many years with his call but when he went to seminary his father supported that decision as he could see that his son at peace and was happier.

There was a misconception that priests lived a lonely lifestyle.

There was no misconception. It was only that we preferred then that she get married. I think we were selfish. I am her twin sister, I can only speak about me, and I wanted her to get married because I wanted her to have children. Throughout the years we understood this was what she wanted, and I am very happy now that she is in the religious life.

There was some confusion around the strictness, particularly our contact times. We found they were open to some flexibility. Questions were answered over time.

There were no changes in their understanding of priesthood (son is a priest) or religious life (daughter is a religious). Extended family really doesn't understand how they can be happy in their vocation.

They are real people

They aren't "holier than thou". They are down-to-earth and have "human" faults just like us. They just chose to better themselves in religious life and they have to work hard to be a role model in the name of Jesus. People also judge them more and are critical if they make mistakes if they don't behave in a Christian-like manner.

They became more aware of the difficulty and demands of the Diocesan Priesthood.

They began to realize they are "normal" people who live active, social, fun-filled lives and it's not praying 24 hours a day in community in a chapel.

They didn't know if they would ever see her again. They wondered if her friendly, fun personality would change. They became impressed with the joy of her Order and in her. They got to know her better – her talents, sense of humor, commitment became more noticed by them.

As her mother, I was happy to learn that her Order treasured family life and that I would be welcomed almost as much as she was.

They dress well! Seem very relaxed, content and comfortable in what they are doing.

They learned that her life would be the same in some respects, but that she would develop strong relationships with her new sisters that would expand their definition of family.

They now have their own family – their community. I don't believe it's a misconception but reality. Her order is very traditional and has limits on time for visitation and home visits.

They realized how happy the religious life is for those that enter.

They seem to understand more now that the calling is a vocation and not a career choice. Not being able to call or stop and visit has been hard for the extended family to accept. She is in her second year and I'm not sure that our non-Catholic family members' misconceptions have changed very much. It is a slow process.

They thought she would be giving up so much and would not be happy. However, she is extremely happy and peaceful.

They were happy because he was so happy, content, flourishing and so sure of his decision.

This is a leading question by using the term “misconceptions”. For our family, we had no idea how severe the restrictions upon family interactions would be. It was much more restrictive than we had expected.

This vocation is not a weak attraction in the individual, it is very resilient. We can encourage a vocation, we can nurture it, but we are not responsible for it.

Those who had never given it much consideration became supportive.

Though we would lose access to her, but in fact it brought the entire family closer together, more often.

Time of FORMATION was also formation time for us as parents.

Took time for some to accept

Use of musical talents. Challenging roles (management creativity) Family involvement (visiting days, home visits, travel to World Youth Days)

View did not change per se – became more tolerant, open, better able to see how this life vocation could still allow and encourage daughter's growth.

We all had to learn what a monastery was and what vows meant. We learned priests are more down to earth

We all know that it is not easy but we always pray and support.

We all, our family, prayed and encouraged our son to continue on his journey with Our Lord toward the priesthood to be always happy and truthful with himself.

We already had a cousin in the seminary, but it allowed me to see religious life more clearly when I interviewed my brother for a class project.

We are very involved with vocations, they are not. Yes they are proud, but not involved.

We as a family were clear about the priesthood and expectations – we were just very surprised that this particular sibling decided on the priesthood. It's not that it was a bad idea at all, but he had been un-officially engaged to a girl, this took us by surprise, made us wonder if this was right for him. Then he let the idea go, saw another girl seriously, always talked of marriage and family, it still took her by surprise when he did enter the seminary, because he continued to talk about girls. When he stopped talking about them (a couple years into seminary) we realized he might be serious about this. It was hard to support, when he seemed on defense about everything.

We became more supportive and are proud of it

We better realize that priests are sinners too.

We came to understand that depth of our Daughter's joy, contentment and fulfillment in religious life. I came to see that she was truly called to Religious Life. My husband who is an atheist has been able to become happy for her, for the joy and love she has/shares with her Sisters. My faith has grown as my daughter has shared prayers with me, and due to her prayers for me.

We did not have misconceptions about religious life. What we see is how happy he is and that is enough for us. I did not grow up in the US. In my own family, religion was very important and we grew up participating in church activities. My mother was very devout. My son heard me talk about those times and he was close to my mother although she did try to dissuade him because he is the only son. I just wrote down an approximate age when he was seriously considering the priesthood but I think even as a adolescent he was quite drawn to the priesthood.

We did not lose a daughter but gain many more daughters when she entered the convent.

We didn't have any misconceptions before the entrance.

We didn't know much about seminary/religious life, but my husband's family from the Methodist faith knew even less. I realize now that his life as a priest will cause him to be less available to us as a family – perhaps! – But at least we live in the same general area.

We didn't really know much about religious life so we didn't have any misconceptions

We feared that he would be unhappy and constricted in his life, especially since he really wanted to marry and have children. But his life has turned out to be more rich and fulfilling than we had anticipated.

We gained a better understanding for the reason for celibacy and why priest do not marry.

We greatly expanded our understanding of the sisterhood. I actually had thought that nuns were “a dying breed”.

We had a priest already in the family (uncle of priest) so we had no misconception.

We had already found out that her religious order would cause a disconnect from her family, and that proved to be true. We did not discourage her from joining a religious order but only the very restrictive one that she joined. She is happy, however, and we have learned to accept.

We had no misconceptions about the religious life our son chose. He is extremely happy with his chosen vocation and by extension so are we.

We had no misconceptions I had an aunt who was a nun.

We had no preconceived notions in that regard.

We had positive feelings from Family members, it was friends that sometimes were confused.

We have a much better understanding of requirements, and appreciate the depth of education required.

We have come to value and love the religious family and consider them our own family. We have gone through a complete transformation from being skeptical and sad to embracing the religious family and the way it has enriched our lives. There was a time that we thought the religious order was brainwashing our daughter. But again, over time, we have seen the wisdom of the leadership and the ways that God has worked through them all.

We just didn't know what to do or what was happening with her.

We just got to know more about the inner workings and rules of a convent.

We learned about the amount of administrative work that a priest has to do in running a Parish.

We learned the difference between a diocesan priest and an order priest.

We never understood that having our daughter enter the religious life would demand such a large sacrifice for the rest of the family. We knew that she was making a sacrifice; but we did not realize what limited access we would have to her and how this would impact the remaining family unit.

We originally thought that the Sisters were bible toting and holier than thou. However after visiting we realized how wrong we were.

We pray more for vocations.

We realized it would not be solitary life for our son but one based deeply in community. We realized that priesthood wasn't going to change my brother from being a brother first, to all of us. We (my brothers, sisters and I) as people often think, weren't nervous around him as far as letting him down. He is still a fun loving and compassionate person.

We realized that the sisters from the order our daughter joined had unique and lively personalities, varied talents and accomplishments, and were very fun to be with. They cared about maintaining family relationships, and were extremely generous with their hospitality. The Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus made our family feel happy that our daughter chose to belong to their community.

We see Sisters/nuns as real people now, not as extraordinary unreachable.

We thought he would be more secluded and restricted. This was not really the case.

We thought we would be totally cut off from her, but we have regular contact via mail, and three face-to-face visits a year.

We understood the priesthood because his dad was a deacon and his mom a previous religious.

We were all positive.

We were all surprised to learn about the depth of religious formation our daughter received/experienced as a religious sister. We were happy to discover that discernment was not taken lightly and adequate time was allowed and encouraged. Personalities don't change – they just grow and blossom.

We were all very excited for him

We were amazed at how busy they were with retreats, classes, chores and faith formation

We were encouraged to learn that entering seminary was not an unbreakable commitment to becoming a priest, but rather a commitment to the process of discernment, which could take years.

We were impressed by the many steps in the process before taking final vows.

We were only confused about how the process worked before Sr. Jody entered. That clarification would have been helpful so we understood their procedures and rules.

We were pretty keyed in to what religious life/priesthood was. We have several of both that are friends, and we work with in various capacities, so my family was pretty realistic about the vocation.

We were still normal human beings and so were they
We were surprised at how many members were disgruntled and not committed to their vocation. It seemed that many sisters were there because they didn't know where else to go, not because they wanted to be there. They seemed to have a very tepid faith.

We were surprised how difficult it was to stay in contact with her. It was like giving her away and actually at first drove her siblings further from God because of our limited contact with her and other difficult family situations that happened around the same time.

We were very happy to see how our son bloomed in the Seminary and how happy he was.

When my brother entered seminary, it was when the priest scandals were all over the news. Our family was very concerned that my brother would be caught up in the scandal and his reputation would be tarnished because of the “bad press” about priests. It was a difficult time for all Catholics, especially those with family members discerning the vocation of priesthood. However, knowing my brother and his heart, he truly was being called to serve and to the vocation of priesthood. Good priests will overcome the negative press and publicity surrounding our faith.

When our son entered, we were concerned that we would not be as close to him as we once were. Our son has kept us involved in his life and we speak weekly, more often if something special – good or bad- happens.

Within the immediate family and close circle the fear of not having family events attended was a concern. Assignments being forced rather than decided was a concern.

Within the immediate family, we were all on a similar page--we attended a high school run by the order that my sister was joining, so we knew the order and had acted with the sisters as

individuals and as members of the order. Our extended family is not all Catholic and/or does not practice a religion, so there were more questions from them--what were the order's expectations, how often would we be able to see her, would she wear a habit, where would she live, etc.

Overall, it has been a very informative time for everyone in the family. Those who were already familiar with the order and religious life and deepening their knowledge and those who are less familiar are gaining knowledge, as well.

Witnessing the joy of the members of the community. That they weren't always so solemn.

When you think about the future of priesthood and religious life, what worries do you have about your family member and his/her vocation?

1 That he will lose powerful joy 2 Too often the conflicts and struggles in a parish can be discouraging 3 He won't be able to say no to so many demands and still beat peace and joy

1 We want to be assured he will be safe. 2 Our son has a spiritual life that is rare in today's world. He will be a great priest when ordained. Does the Archdiocese provide mentoring programs for new priests? (I am assuming this mentorship is already in place) The point is that it's difficult to find and develop good priest, so let's be sure to invest in mentoring and maintaining spiritual growth

1) I am worried about the sexual abuse issues and how it will affect parishes (my son's parishes) in the future. 2) I am worried that priests have way too much to worry about--it's not just saying Mass and hearing confessions. Nowadays, priests need a strong business background, a counseling certificate, and need to be a good motivational speaker (just to name a few).

1. The laborers are few. Concerned about burnout and discouragement because our priests are spread too thin. 2. Religion is less toe rated in society- concern about the secularized ion of society, moral relativism and likelihood of persecution for faith. 3. Celibacy is dismissed as crazy and unnatural- causes pain to our priests. 4. Failure of marriages.....how can we laity expect our priests to be faithful to vows when marriage vows are so easily shed? The family (little church) must be an example of fidelity to sacramental vows for our clergy...and vice versa

1. Work overload. 2. The anti-religious attitude of our society.

1. I worry about ministry/life balance. He is so busy that I am not sure if he has much time for himself to reenergize. 2. I worry that in 9 years of priesthood, he has not been at a "normal" Catholic parish. I think that has hindered his spiritual development, not allowing him to be exposed to a wider diversity of Catholic thought/practice.

1. That it would not be supported financially. 2. That it would not be "allowed" by the government and the laws that our country adopt that do not respect religious views and practices. 3. That our daughter would be persecuted, tortured or be killed for her faith/vocation.

1. The direction of the Franciscan TOR's could change with each new Reverend Mother or with new Leadership. 2. How does the Order sustain themselves in a world which is turning away from Religion at a record pace? 3. Coping with disastrous Health System. No exemptions for Religious Conscience beliefs. 4. The intensifying persecution of all religious – Priests and Sisters.

1. The threat of our government and its ploys to restrict religious freedom. 2. The threat of secularism/relativism of the culture and the increasing incidence of religious persecution. 3. The secularizing of the Church. 4. The sometimes confusion that arises when religious (priests and/or

nuns) differ in their comments/opinions from Church doctrine (i.e. contraception, divorces, “nuns on the bus,” etc.)

A crisis of faith.

A large part of it is my fundamental disagreement with some Roman Catholic doctrine. However, the loneliness of a single life is also a significant concern. As a mother, I dreamed of seeing my son marry and have children. I know that he has to be willing to sacrifice those dreams for his future, but (selfishly) that means that I have had to give up those dreams as well.

A retirement program that will care for him when he is elderly. False accusations by parishioners. His personal happiness.

A society that is increasingly hostile toward God and religious life concerns me.

Ability to stay in close contact with family

Aging demographic and what we call in business...“Succession Planning”

All the work and time they put in day. I worry about the priests getting burned out

Aloneness As he ages and we age what about family support for medical needs and other needs. He has one sister who lives 900 miles away. How will they support each other?

Always for this safety. The world is in such turmoil and nothing or no one person seems sacred to our secular society

As a diocesan priest, he will encounter parish politics that will distract from what he truly wants to be there for: a parish priest. Also, him dealing with the ongoing priest sexual abuse cases from years past.

As a member of an order, he could be sent to a place where his personal safety would be at risk.

As a mother I am still struggling to accept my limited contact with her. I worry that I will somehow lose contact with the part of her that is “daughter and sister to her siblings”. I am fearful that she may be assigned to something that may somehow endanger her life but in spite of my selfish thoughts, I am very proud of her and am praying that God will help me overcome my fears.

As a very loved / liked priest among his parishioners, peers, and family I Pray he remain humble and holy and never take anything for granted. I pray he not feel isolated, overwhelmed, or lonely and if that occurs that he recognize it and go forward in his continued Faith and Belief in God as a solution.

As his mother I am concerned that as a diocesan priest my son will be lonely as he grows older especially if he is assigned to a small country parish in the far north of the diocese making it hard to connect with his brother priests. Our son sees the best in all people, especially his superiors. His father is concerned he not blindly trust those put in charge of him just because of his bias towards being compliant. He would like to see our son have a healthy skepticism judging people by their words and actions. That our son will be prepared and supported when he is faced with difficult parish situations. As a mother of a possible priest I will become a 'mamma bear' if people talk behind his back the way I hear some people criticize their priests! I also pray our son will be prepared to deal with all the extras of running a parish like finances, managing people, and a busy, busy life.

As I see my son developing an interior life of prayer and a love of Jesus Christ, I have much peace knowing that this is what will sustain him. He also needs a strong fraternity of brothers (seminarians and priests) with whom he can share struggles and he has a solid group of seminarian friends at present. This is so important as his father was never able to talk freely about his faith in our home. I felt this was a huge obstacle and part of our son's struggle. And good priests and family friends can stave off loneliness.

As long as he is happy I have no worries about it. It is the life he has chosen and I am proud of him.

As long as my family member is happy, we are too.

As long as my son is happy, I'm happy. I do wish the Catholic Church would allow priests to marry and have children. That is my biggest concern... that my son will be mission out on one of the greatest joys life has to offer. Just a note... I am very spiritual, not very religious.

As the divergence between the Church and society widens, I'm concerned that the religious might be among the first to face persecution.

As the wife of a Pastoral Provision Catholic Priest (he was an Episcopal Priest), this is new territory in a thousand ways. I am discovering, (with God's Help!) ways to quietly support my husband and our grown children. And I continue to enjoy learning about my beautiful Catholic faith. We converted nine years ago.

Ask Parish Priest to announce at Mass the need for vocations. Here a positive attitude – be proud you have a seminarian and / or priest religious in the family.

At first when our daughter entered there were concerns about vocations as she was the first to enter after ten years. I was concerned about her loneliness as there was no one her age and the survivorship of the convent. Many women have entered as of that year. As of now the way the world is today my concern is martyrdom. But my faith is strong but as a mother I would not want her to suffer – I'd rather it be me.

At the moment, I do not have any concerns. Hope that he makes good choices and follows the correct path during his journey. May others around him nurture him and believe in as The Lord believes in him.

At this time, none.

Attacks on the priesthood i.e., false accusations re sex abuse. They are removed from ministry, they are left in a limbo, they are left defenseless by the Church, and it takes years and years, if ever, to clear their name. By that time they are truly broken. There is no justice whatsoever with such a practice and I think it is something the Church needs to look at and change. Compassion is shown to everyone except for priests. They are human too. It seems like they are martyred by the Church

Be in jail for being a priest.

Be patient to follow Jesus daily and forever, never stop to trust in God.

Because of the shortage of priests, I am concerned that he will not become “burned” out or frustrated.

Because she is in a small, aging order, I fear for the future of her order.

Because the nature of the work involved for a Parish Priest, I sometimes have concerns about the intensity leading to possible “burnout”. I also have concerns about the sexual abuse scandals of the past leaving some to not have the respect for the vocation that it deserves.

Becoming too tired. Becoming overwhelmed with work. Not having more priests to help.

Being a priest in today's society is a true challenge due to our history of priest abuse. I pray that he will be surrounded by a supportive community that helps to meet the family needs inherent in all of us.

Being able to stay strong in his prayer life while being inundated with parish life or at some point running a parish.

Being alone at holidays, being made fun of for choice of profession.

Being alone

Being alone. Not being intellectually challenged or valued

Being apart from him as he is assigned out of our city.

Being assigned to Africa or Indonesia

Being confronted with the spiritual warfare that life brings.

Being isolated from the real world and not being allowed to visit family regularly.

Being killed by a Muslim fanatic.

Being lonely.

Being overworked, being lonely, and doubting his vocation, leaving the priesthood.

Being placed in an area where the Parish isn't supportive and strong in the Faith....but...that may be the reason they are there. Typical parent worries. But there is a comfort knowing God is in control and Sr. Jody trusts in his will. And all struggle are about "Our/Her formation. Her mother house is in Poland so distance is a concern, but we love Poland.....

Biggest concern is the amount of training he has received regarding the administration of a parish. Very little of his formation has been spent on the nitty gritty details of how to oversee finances, personnel, buildings, schools. It is a huge job even if you are well prepared. He has had great formation in theology, scriptures, philosophy and personal prayer life. While that is the most important aspect of priestly formation, much of his day to day work as a priest will be dealing with business issue.

Burn out – loneliness

Burnout as a parish priest and isolation from extended family as he is an only child

Burnout. Not specifically him, but I see the wear and tear on priests, no matter the age. Some older can't wait to retire so that they can "finally" just "be a priest". There seems to be a lot expected of them with meetings and participation in groups. Add t that the daily administration of (generally more than one) parish plus 'on the road' time and being a shepherd. It all takes a physical and mental toll. Priests have to take from themselves in order to fulfill all these responsibilities. It seems they have very little down time. Granted some are better at dealing with time constraints and managing stress.

Catholics are being persecuted in our society. The building blocks of our society are crumbling. Where will this lead as the years go on?

Concern for misconceptions about priests with regards to celibacy due to the sexual abuse crisis. Worried that he may be wrongly accused. Worried that he will have inadequate financial support needed for medical/ retirement care. Worried that he will have little say in where he is assigned and what he does.

Concerned that the U.S. church follow Pope Francis's example of care for all the children of God, rather than the condemning of others and the "politics" it is so presently identified with. Gain moral persuasiveness and an image of love and care. It also concerns me that less and less young people are in the pews, so am wondering what kind of church will there be in the future

here. Of course also a concern with diminishing number of clergy that those priests we have are not cruelly over-worked.

Concerns about overwork and isolation/loneliness for our son, especially as the number of priests continues to dwindle. I do believe however that if priesthood is truly our son's vocation, God will provide.

Could others/his peers respect and accept the culture differences. To keep the relationship with Jesus who is a fully “human” – a good friend AND fully “God” – almighty. To take care of himself physically, psychologically, and spiritually. To always live with a healthy/supportive community.

cuando estamos con dios nada es imposible nada me preocupa (When we are with God nothing is impossible, nothing worries me.)

Daily temptation, TV, media, magazines, people, etc.

Dar testimonio del llamado que he resibido. (Giving witness of the calling I have received.)

Declining numbers of parishioners and vocations and increased lack of support Loneliness from not having a spouse Increased stress from facing political/ethical issues such as right to die, abortion

Discrimination/violence because of his vocation, the values and beliefs he professes

Do not have any worries about his vocation.

Do not really have any!

Does he have enough exposure to “real life” situations? Is he going to be too judgmental when he deals with his congregation? He is so smart, but can he bring his knowledge down to the average person's level?

Don't have any worries as she will be well taken care of by the Order

Due to the shortage of priests/religious, there is a high demand in parishes. I do worry that the work will be too much for one person to handle.

During the upcoming schism, Catholic religious and the hierarchy must necessarily take sides.

Economic viability of their monastery.

Environment, TVs, and high demands of parishioners

Evil in the world in general but I believe God will protect him.

Feeling overwhelmed by the needs of so many people and their problems. Having time to be still, be quiet, reflect, and refocus. Being both administrator and priest caring for the people!!! Mothers just worry!!!

Few

Few women are choosing to enter the religious life

Financial stability for his community

Finding joy in a community.

First of all, please see my comments earlier in the survey. I am concerned that those leading seminary formation and instruction may not be fully engaged and ignited in their faith. I am also concerned that the formators vary widely regarding their experience and ability to help form seminarians. I am concerned that instruction in seminary does not include pastoral application to information discussed or very little.

For her to be taken good care of and be treated equal

For him, I worry that he might get lonely or have a crisis of faith and would not talk to family about it. For all, I worry that persecution of the Church and the faithful is coming and that they will be persecuted.

Friction between Older priests and younger priests. Especially the disdain shown by older priest for the Extraordinary Form of the Mass and the use of Latin.

Funding they need to survive as an order. They also need more awareness among the non-religious to increase their membership and their recognition by the papacy.

Future mission assignments

General comments: 1. My biggest concern is job overload. The declining numbers of priests is stretching their physical capabilities. In my geographic area and that of my family member most parishes have only one priest. 2. The priests' financial management training/parish budgets, etc. On-the-job training is totally inadequate. 3. Priests need training in public speaking.

God has brought our daughter to this vocation and she is so happy and fulfilled. We could not ask more. I always wanted her to marry and have children but am truly blessed to have her a religious.

Government and terrorists!

Have no worries.

Having enough time to rest/re-energize during a week of 12 to 13 hour days of ministry.

Having the patience and fortitude and forgiveness to endure many disappointments. Maintaining the ability to be an enthusiastic advocate for Christ. The opportunity to use his great language and thinking skills for the good of his church.

Having to deal with criticism

Having to deal with everyday life in a community when racism is prevalent and/or a gap between thinking between older religious and younger religious.

Having to stand behind and tow the Catholic line of the Church's close-minded views on many social issues; having to justify our exclusive views and yet try to say we want to be the universal church. The covering up of pedophile priests by the Church only makes the good ones look bad. Christ did not exclude sinners more over he searched them out, yet we alienate divorced people, gays, people that use birth control/abortion, women in leadership positions, Priests cannot marry. Not to say I encourage any or all of these things but how do we change people's minds or hearts if we have no tolerance or understanding. These issues affects many parishioners' extended families if not their immediate family. We as a faith appear to others very close- minded (I have asked people of other faiths "Why not become Catholic?") unfortunately I fear our membership will continue to dwindle and we will close more parishes :(The covering up of pedophile priests by the Church only makes people wonder about and look at the good ones with skepticism.

He became a priest at 60 yrs. old he loves his job but I worry about his age and the amount of work he has to do but he says he loves it and will do it as long as you need him.

He has a true vocation and will make a great priest. He will through his heart and soul into it, so I somewhat worry that he won't take good enough care of himself. With the shortage of priests, more and more have to pastor more than one parish, and can be spread very thin.

He is called to a selfless life in a selfish world – perseverance

He is very selfless. I hope and pray that he won't disregard his own physical and mental health as a result of responding to the demands of his vocation/priesthood.

He is younger than most of his order and that must be isolating.

He will be persecuted simply for teaching the faith. He was ordained in May, 2014. He will have struggles with his faith as we all do. His struggles will help him to depend on God more and to be stronger in his vocation.

He will do fine. I wish there were more contemporaries for him, to share the load.

He will wish he had a family

Her community is growing larger than anyone would have anticipated! Let's pray that trend continues and the priests will follow. Pray!

Her missing her family so much. We are a very close family and do many things together as a family. If I'm not here will other family members pay attention to her the way I do. Who will take care of her if she would have a serious illness?

Her safety.

His absence (might be permanent or very long) his big sacrifice to give (if he can maintain it)

His problem, not mine.

His retirement and how he will prepare for it.

His safety – threats from Isis on Christians!

His safety is a concern with the persecutions of Christians worldwide.

His vocation is super strong. I have no worries.

His vow of celibacy – to love is human and God commanded- as my son continues in his vocation I know he will love deeply, as he grows in his love for God. That love can be very attractive to others in this crazy mixed up world

Honestly, through these last 7 years, I have grown to accept God's will, whatever that is for my children. I don't really have any worries but I do pray that he be protected from the devil. I believe the devil delights in tempting his holy seminarians, deacons, and priests.

Hoping and praying he can stay as friendly and caring as he is now. People have so many problems. It is hard, you cannot help everyone and it can get you down at times. So many more people with “mental problems” it's difficult to help them. Same with homeless or poverty. It is all becoming a greater problem. With less vocations, today's priests will have more put upon them. More than one church. Many more people to serve.

Hoping that he will always be happy with his decision and that he will be placed in a good parish with a good and kind pastor.

How he will be accepted in such a materialistic society.

How he will be cared for if his health is not good or he is older and sick.

How others view priests, stress of dealing with complainers

How people will treat him. Seeing how some Catholics think a parish should be run their way and are disrespectful to some priests, as a mom-he's still my son and you don't want your son hurt.

How they are taken care of in times of serious illness or in their old age.

How they will be able to practice/live out their Roman Catholic Faith in the face of the increasingly confused state of the Church in the post Vatican II era.

How to discuss respectfully with those Catholics who have differing opinions on church doctrine... without alienating them.

I always told my son that his vocation was between him and God with help from his spiritual director and I will support whatever he and God decide.

I always worry that where she is sent will not receive her in a positive way.

I am a little afraid considering of what is going on in the foreign countries now

I am aware that the number of vocations in the mid-1900s do not reflect the trend throughout the years – that more traditionally, vocations have been slow and steady. Despite this, some of me worries about the generational differences between someone as young as my sister and the majority of her community. The community is extremely loving and supportive, and I know that they care deeply for my sister. I worry that when the older generation in the community passes away, that there will need to be serious examination of the order's structure and service that will deeply affect my sister. A lot of responsibility will be placed on the shoulders of the younger members of the order. Despite this worry, I know that my sister is resilient and that the order is doing God's work and will end up doing whatever it is meant to do. I know that this vocation is truly where my sister feels called to live out her life, so I know that she will be given the tools to handle whatever concerns come up with time.

I am concerned about burn-out. Being overworked

I am concerned about her safety and being targeted in light of the world situation against Christianity.

I am concerned about his safety. There is either a great admiration for a priest or a great disdain. I have witnessed both ends of the spectrum when he wears his collar. That being said, he is absolutely unafraid.

I am concerned about how easy it can be to be falsely accused of inappropriate conduct. I am concerned that the priesthood will come under persecution at some time in his lifetime. I am concerned that he gets enough support from the church structure.

I am concerned about how much he will have to try to do as he gets older, if we continue to have fewer priests ordained than retiring. I worry about his physical health due to the erratic hours making it hard to eat right and stay in shape. I worry about the target on his back as a priest that the devil will aim for.

I am concerned about the decrease of priests and the decrease of Catholics in the world. I do not have worries about my brother in his vocation. It is clear he is in the vocation God meant for him.

I am concerned about the direction our world and especially our nation is going regarding it's intolerance toward Catholics and other Christians. I am concerned for his safety.

I am concerned about the efforts of the sisters to encourage more vocations.

I am concerned that he may become disenchanted with the day-to-day realities of priestly life.

I am concerned that she is choosing this life for the wrong reason. That is, she may be escaping from secular life because of painful or unsuccessful relationships.

I am concerned that she will not be challenged enough, she has so much to offer the world, and I can only pray that the sister's will recognize her abilities and utilize them for the greater good. I guess I just need to have faith.

I am concerned that there is no longer community life for priests in parishes – often only one priest at each parish

I am concerned that there will not be enough sisters to maintain their order.

I am concerned that young people interested in the priesthood are more interested in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and its rules than in our loving God and his caring relationship with people.

I am not worried – we all know that God has called him into service and will use him in whatever way will glorify God and bring more people into relationship with God.

I am not worried at all about her vocation. She is in God's hands and I pray regularly for her faithfulness to her vows. She is so happy being a religious sister – there is no need to worry.

I am not worried at all. I feel that our son has made a wonderful decision to become a Franciscan Brother.

I am not worried, I know she is in God's hands

I am sad about the fact that she now misses the warmth of home, the laughter with her siblings and friends, and not being able to put to practice her university degree which she worked so hard

to attain (she had an excellent academic standing in school). I worry about the possibility of my daughter being sent to places where there is political unrest. I am also apprehensive about her growing old away from home.

I am supportive of religious life. The greatest worry would be that people understand that priests are just people with a religious vocation and make mistakes.

I am very confident in the sisters who are guiding her formation and trust them and value their wisdom. I really don't have worries. She is part of a vibrant and bursting at the seams community that I have no doubt will set the world on fire even more than in the years to come than they already have.

I am very encouraged about the future of priests and religious life: first, our family is supportive, second, our son is very strong in his vocation, 3rd, we pray every day for his perseverance and continued generosity, 4th, Pope Francis is giving all a breathe of fresh air and is trying to make good changes in our Church.

I am very secure in God's providence, however I am concerned that the changing culture and subsequent laws hostile to the Catholic faith could threaten the free speech of our priests and religious.

I am worried about loneliness and overwork. In our diocese there are not enough priests for all our parishes so priests are not typically able to live together in the same rectory and they often work so many hours a week, it is difficult for them to spend time with each other. I believe the companionship of other priests is essential to their mental health.

I become concerned about the challenges he will face with the history of sexual abuse among priests. Also what I perceive as a "lonely" life, although I know that is based on my perception of my own vocation to marriage and family.

I believe he is happy and therefore I'm not worried about her

I believe that God calls us to our life journey. I have encouraged my son to follow the life that he is being called to and I have supported his decision making. I don't worry about him as I believe he should make his own decisions and I support that unless it is unhealthy. I believe the Jesuits have encouraged him and supported his gifts and talents and see him growing in many ways. He also seems content and peaceful with this life so far.

I believe that our priest need prayers because our society has become very secular. I also worry about those people that hate our religion and our priests.

I believe that when anyone, religious, priest, or laity, faithfully serve God that He will protect and care for them through all the trials of life. I've experienced this in my own life numerous times.

I did worry about the possible sexual abuse in seminaries until I actually talked to formation people at the seminary and was able to visit the seminary. I sometimes worried about my son being lonely but I see that he has several good friends from the priesthood. I still worry about him being overworked due to the priest shortage and hope that he doesn't burn out from stress and lack of sleep.

I do not have any worries about her as a religious sister. She is in a thriving order.

I do not have worries about the future. Her particular convent is blessed with many vocations. Like Pope St. John Paul II said it appears to be a new springtime in the Church.

I do not worry about her vocation. I know she is fulfilling God's will. She is truly at peace and joy filled in her vocation. If I worry at all it is for the persecution she may suffer as our country comes closer to a more completely hostile environment for any form of religion.

I do not worry, I gave that to Jesus. He called my daughter, I know he will protect her, and take care of her.

I do not have any worries. God has called him at a very early age. Born of the priestly caste in Nepal as a 3 lb. baby with no life support. Just having completed a catastrophic illness his sister stated "God has been in your back pocket since the day you were born, he will never let anything happen to you." I believe God has always guided him and will continue to guide him throughout his life journey.

I don't have worries, because I believe in God.

I don't have any worries about my daughter now. She is in good hands.

I don't have any worries, she is extremely happy in the order that she is in and God will provide in the joys and sorrows of life, the Priesthood and Religious life need to be encouraged among the young and older vocations. My Dad became a priest at 71 after my mom's death because of his desire to serve the Lord and his love for the Church and he just passed away at 92 – 21 years a priest how amazing God is!

I don't have any. I know that she is happy in her faith and I know that God will be with her in all she does.

I don't have too many worries at this time. She is in a young, vibrant order that teaches in our Catholic schools, which she loves, so I know she is doing what she loves and is happy.

I don't have worries when thinking about the future of our daughter's religious life as she is within a solid order. My worries were with her entering the order prior to being out on her own after college and living in the secular world so that she would have a better understanding of families she would be serving in the future.

I don't really have any worries about my family member. I believe God called her to the religious life and it's where she belongs.

I don't really worry about this, God will take care of it, it's a big job to do but he has the right spirit and heart for it.

I don't really. This is where God led her and he will take care of her.

I don't think that there is an understanding of true consecrated life. I pray that she will always be true to her vocation in a spirit of sacrifice, obedience and humility.

I don't want a loss of connection with the family. That they will feel lonely without the companionship of a wife or husband.

I don't want him to experience burnout and/or loneliness. Priests have so many stresses in their lives. Our culture is very challenging and he must be very strong spiritually, mentally, and physically.

I don't worry about her choice because I know God will take care of her.

I don't worry about him at all but pray for him all the time, as I do for all the family. He's so enthusiastic, I believe he will inspire many vocations. Already at the school where he's the president, he has had almost an equal number of women and men join the religious life. He receives letters from casual acquaintances who tell him about the positive influence he's had on their lives. Some become priests or deacons.

I don't worry about it – she seems truly called; the other sisters are a wonderful family for her. It's great if someone has a supportive family, but they have to be called by God. Some of the most devout vocations come out of families that are not supportive at all.

I don't worry about my son at all. I'm confident that he knows what he is doing and will be an excellent priest.

I don't worry about them, but I pray that they will always be faithful to their vocation.

I don't worry because I know she is in God's hands.

I don't worry for him, I worry for the Church at large. The Church is not fulfilling its primary mission of evangelization, the “new evangelization” that is. When I look at the mission of my parish church, there is no mention of evangelization. I have requested them to add it to our parish mission statement. I see Pope Francis as a man that offers the answer. What I see in my parish church is not radically transforming lives. We are all called to be saints! Being a saint is not for a few exceptional people, it is what we are called to be.

I don't worry. My family member made his decision to enter religious life in midlife after much soul searching. He is well aware of the challenges he faces. I know God's grace will see him through. We also have another family member who chose to enter the ministry outside the Catholic Church. I guess my one worry would be that their differences will cause a rift in their relationship. They both have our blessing and I trust they will bring out the best in each other.

I feel God will always take care of them.

I feel he has made his decision and I'm very happy for him. He is in God's hands and feels God has called him to serve Him as a priest.

I feel worried that while my parents are supportive of my brother at this moment, they don't necessarily understand that he isn't exactly like them. My family has always been very Catholic and fully accepted the decision that he made, but I feel that one or both of my parents may become a bit jealous of the time that he must dedicate to the service; and that his "duty" to attend family gatherings may not always be plausible.

I fully respect my brother's decision to serve the Lord and fellow men as a priest.

I have no worries.

I have absolute trust that Sister will do the Lord's will in this area. I have absolute trust that the Lord will supply her every spiritual and earthly need.

I have absolutely no worries about her in her religious life.

I have no "worries." I pray that she will discern God's will correctly and live out her vocation fully. I pray that she will become a saint.

I have no anxieties about the vocation of my daughter. I feel she is very fulfilled by the community and vocation as a teaching sister

I have no concerns – he has lived in the "real" world in other careers and understands the challenges of the secular world. He feels religious life is the best fit for him

I have no real worries about him. He stays very close to the Lord

I have no worries about her vocation

I have no worries about her vocation because she's part of a thriving, faith-filled community of sisters.

I have no worries about him.

I have no worries about my family member as he is well formed

I have no worries about my son's vocation

I have no worries about the family member. I do have worries about our government harming religious institutions, as was said by Cardinal George.

I have no worries about the future. I do sometimes think about how they survive financially but time has shown that God truly does take care of them. I have two daughters in religious life and have seen them grow and develop well in the order. They have had loads of opportunities. They seem fulfilled and are doing good work.

I have no worries about what his vocation

I have no worries as I believe God will keep him in his care and protect him from evil daily.

I have no worries each person chooses in life what he or she wants to follow and do. We have a free will and we need to make the best of our choices and live to the best of our capacities. Believe in our supreme being and pray every day to hold on to our faith. A person in religious life is as human as anyone else, no one is perfect. If during their lifetime there is a change of mind that should be respected and dealt accordingly.

I have NO worries! The Sisters of Life are extremely dynamic and led by the Holy Spirit. I see only growth and goodness. I miss her more than I can tell you...but when I think of the gift of her life and the gift of being her mom, I am overcome with JY and grace!!!!

I have no worries, my brother will be strong leader and motivator in the religious community.

I have no worries.

I have no worries. She is happy in her chosen vocation and we are happy for her.

I have no worries. As far as I'm concerned she is doing what she loves. She is safe, happy and content. What more does a mother want for her daughter?

I have no worries. He loves his vocation which is most important to me.

I have no worries. I trust my daughter I trust God. It will all work in the end! I feel my daughter is guided. It is not about us as a family but rather allowing her to grow up in a loving caring home. She is wise and I feel strong. She will follow her heart but I believe will also know if there is something that is "not right" and be able to stand up to that "In God we Trust"

I have no worries. She is strongly grounded in her faith and is supported by a wonderful religious community.

I have no worries. She is very happy and fulfilled.

I have no worries. She married God in her accepting her Vocation. She has a second family now that has become her primary family. It is an older community and I foresee it merging with another community with the members are just a few.

I have very few worries. The gift of the priesthood has been a tremendous blessing, both to my brother (the priest) and the people he serves. My only concern is that he works too hard and often seems to over-extend himself. He has to constantly work to balance all of the tasks that are set before him.

I have worried about her being persecuted for her faith because of her obvious habit. That she may suffer from loneliness or depression...missing family and friends. That she will work too hard or regret her decision.

I hope he will be happy and fulfilled in his decision. I hope that he is successful at whatever he decides to do, and if he eventually becomes a priest, I hope he serves well those whom he ministers.

I hope he will not be lonely.

I hope her order stays vibrant, strong and active.

I hope she stays unless it is God's will that she not :)

I hope there will be more men who answer the call to priesthood. It is so important that they have a fraternity of brother priests with whom they can relate and support each other in what is often a solitary, stressful vocation.

I just hope he finds the same love and family that a marriage to a woman would. It's looking so far that he has.... but I will never know for sure of course.

I just want her to be happy. I also worry about religious persecution when you watch what is happening in the world today.

I just want to be sure her discernment is real, and that she is truly being called to a religious life. She is very confident that it is real!

I know there will be many times that it will not be easy for him but he has a solid faith foundation.

I often worry about him becoming lonely or depressed at times because of trying to help others and not think of himself. We have visited the seminary home in DC several times and our son never seems lonely with the group of students, priests and externs that live together daily. Everyone seems to genuinely care about each other at the house in DC

I only worry about the order's ability to properly care for its' retired sisters. I pray for continued strong financial support from the laity.

I place all my trust in the hands of God. I do believe that my son will be greatly persecuted for his faith.

I pray and leave it to God because these are His and I know He can protect them because the battle has been since the beginning of the world.

I pray daily for my son's peace, love, and perseverance in his vocation to the priesthood, I make this prayer for all who entered with him, and for all presently discerning. Prayer is what is needed, and then we do not have to worry.

I pray every day for him to have holiness and courage. The world no longer understands what it means to be religious, let alone Catholic or a priest. However, he has many friends and relatives [and brother priests] that he is close to that pray for him all the time. He will be tried, but he will be fine – God provides.

I pray every day that my two children, that went to Catholic School, and I raised Catholic, and went to Mass every Sunday, that they become more integrated in the Catholic Religion. It is their choice to be what they want to become. But I will be very happy if they want to be part of a religious life.

I pray that she will live her vocation faithfully, but I do not worry about anything related to her vocation.

I pray that they remain faithful to their vocation.

I really am not worried. You always worry about your children as a parent. That never goes away. I know my son has made the correct decision and for the right reasons. We are supportive of him and let him know that if things change we will be supportive of him.

I really do not worry about it. I miss her terribly, but we are convinced she is right where God wants her! I do not know what the future of religious life holds. I imagine it will be around forever!

I really do not worry. I have peace.

I really don't have any worries about my daughter's religious vocation. I'm confident that my daughter's faith and trust in God and the support of the other Sister's, will help her grow in her vocation.

I really don't have any worries because she belongs to a wonderful congregation that is very faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church and is growing.

I really don't worry about him and his vocation. I worry more about the risk of him leaving his Order, since it encompasses his entire world. I don't think he would know what to do and I wouldn't want him to feel alone.

I really don't worry she seems to be very happy.

I really have no worries my brother seems happier than he has ever been in his life! He is finally comfortable in his own skin.

I sometime feel they are over whelmed with too many hours of work. One son is a bishop...another is Vicar General and has two big parishes an is on other boards...the other has two parishes and two grade schools as well as being on the board of a Catholic high school.

I sometimes worry about the stress and conflict they will face from people with opposing convictions.

I sometimes worry that the world will turn harshly against those who are religious/priests and I sometimes worry that they will be persecuted severely. I pray that she will be faithful to her calling.

I still worry about loneliness and isolation. I also would love to see my brother experience fatherhood and being in love... So a bit sad not necessarily worried.

I support Marc and will do whatever he needs us to do.

I think female and male should have equal opportunities to serve God. As in female can enter priesthood and celebrate Mass and listen to Confession. I am not worry about my daughter's vocation at all.

I think he will be imprisoned and persecuted if the world continues on the path it is on right now.

I think it is very challenging being a priest. Always trying to live up to expectation of the church is extremely difficult.

I think my biggest worry would be my personal attachment to my sister, in a sense that she can be called to serve the church anywhere. Meaning that I might not be able to see her or be with her as much as I would like to. However, despite the distance she has always been there for support. I know that she will be well taken care of wherever she may be sent to.

I think my son will make a wonderful priest, but I pray to our Blessed Mother that she will protect him from any false accusations. There are untrustworthy people out there who want to hurt the Catholic faith.

I think she will be fine with the support of her sisters. She will lose her capacity for independent thinking and free will. There will be more disconnect with family with the limitations on

communication and travel. She has one sister she hasn't seen in five years and a nephew she has never seen.

I think that diminishing vocations is a real problem for the Church. My brother's religious order is shrinking in numbers and has already withdrawn from several parishes. I worry that his religious order may eventually cease to exist or will not be able to care for him and his fellow priests when they need elder care.

I think that my only concern thinking about the future of my sister in her vocation is if she were to discern out. It sounds silly, but when she entered and as I watched her grow through the formative years she's become and is still becoming what the Lord has planned for her all along.

I think the current priests in parishes are stretched very thin. There need to be more priests. I worry about burn out. I guess the priesthood is like the general population and there are great ones and crazy ones and the seminarians will find those life lessons as they go through the journey.

I think the future of the priesthood and religious life are very exciting. There is a movement of the Holy Spirit that is calling the young people to orders that are the more traditional orders. I don't worry about my daughter, I trust in the Lord that He will take care of her.

I think the new generation of priest like my son are going to take us back to the real teachings of the church and not the liberal watered down Catholic faith I was taught in Catholic school. My worries are that he will have to deal with the stigma of the abuse scandal that he didn't have a part of.

I think the young priest are proud of the service to God they portray. Proud to wear clerics in public. I can't believe the hurtful parishioners that spread gossip. Bullying by adults is ok? No these are our sons and daughters too. They are human too. I guess they do walk the path that our Lord.

I trust that God called them and will take care of them.

I try not to worry about our son's vocation to priesthood, I pray for Our Lord's guidance to assist him in all that he does. To help him with new vocations to strengthen the Church of today. I believe that Jesus will protect our Church and our Pope Francis will continue to be a faithful leader.

I used to be worried that he would be lonely and work from morning to night. Our son has joined a community of Archdiocesan priests called Companions of Christ. His brothers in this community are so good for him in many ways, especially fellowship, companionship, accountability, and formation. He is richer in this group and will always have them after we die. I worry about his physical health because of the stress, lack of exercise and healthy diet.

I wish we had more.

I worried about all the issues currently happening in the church today and the amount of corrupt/dishonest people in the religious life. My hope is that they do not tarnish the reputation of the good ones like my son.

I worry about the continued financial viability of the order. My daughter is very gung-ho about her vocation, although she has been discouraged by some of the dead vocations around her. I worry that she will not have the heart to continue with the same degree of fervor. I worry that the others will eventually drag her down.

I worry about (what I perceive to be) the increasing decline in vocations to the Priesthood, and about the decline of religious liberty. I also worry about the Church's ability to withstand the cultural decline that it faces.

I worry about all the demands of a priest. My son is young and this is a lifelong vocation, so naturally I worry and pray he is making the best choice for himself. I worry if there will be others to follow or if someday he will be alone.

I worry about burn out because there are too few priests and the expectations put on them are high.

I worry about her freedom to practice her vocation fully, as our society slowly chips away at our religious freedoms. Hers is a teaching order, and already one of the sisters was in the news because something she said to one of her high school classes offended some people.

I worry about her health, especially how she will be taken care of as she ages. I am concerned that she has exhibited a growing disconnect with the realities of family life. Her life as a religious sister is quite different from the lives that her immediate and extended family members live. It seems that I am always engaged in a balancing act – trying to support her; trying to help family members understand her life; trying to keep a close relationship with her despite the distance from her.

I worry about her relationship with her siblings being severed, despite her attempts to remain connected. They have all pretty much rejected her choice and don't like to be around her anymore.

I worry about her safety when she travels to Mexico on missionary, however I do trust in God to protect her.

I worry about her visible witness (habit) in society as it becomes more hostile to Catholicism, especially related to the issue of same sex marriage.

I worry about him being lonely or overworked. I pray for him daily and know our Mother Mary is watching out for him. I don't want him stretched too thin and become sickly.

I worry about his continued enthusiasm.

I worry about how others will treat him as a priest. How he will manage in today's culture of anti-religion. His ability to keep a promise of celibacy in today's culture. Will he be lonely and forgotten when he is older.

I worry about my son being far away from his family. We are a very close family. I worry about his safety if he is sent to another country.

I worry about secular persecution. I am very pleased with the congregation she chose and it is vibrant and growing so I am not worried about her being taken care of in her elder years.

I worry about the growing hostility of Christmas in the world, which since sister i in habit and strongly lives her faith, could be a target. I worry about her safety as she ministers to pregnant women in crisis situations. Sister becomes the protector of the vulnerable and could put in a hostile situation. I worry about radical pro death proponents targeting the Sisters. I worry about moral relativism influencing the World and possibly seeping into the Church.

I worry about the loneliness of the priesthood and the perception people have of a priest.

I worry about the secular world as a whole, and its impact on my son. I do not think that his faith will be deterred by secular beliefs at all, but I do become concerned about how the world will accept him. He is steadfast in his beliefs, and not one to way to earn popularity. As his mother, I would not want him to be any other way. But, I know what the world is like today, and I want him to be accepted, loved, and appreciated. There may be some that may not accept him for the man that he is. A man of God.

I worry about the society in general and the lack of support they have for all churches today. With the dwindling number of active parishioners and weekly collections, will the church be able to continue to support priests and the religious. Do the US Bishops develop long range plans to focus on all needs.

I worry about the stress he is under from his parishioners, the bishop and others. I believe the shortage of priests is likely to continue making the load heavier on him and other priests. God may walk at their side but he is human and the task is great I also worry that the scandals impacting many priests in regards to child and sexual abuse casts a negative light on him and others who walk in the Lord's path and do not do these things. I worry that the lack of leadership in the church regarding this and other issues will keep people from being Catholic and/or treating the priests with the reverence and respect they deserve.

I worry about the stresses of being a priest and leading church/parish and how the members of the parish react to him.

I worry about what happens when he's old and he has no immediate family to take care of him. I worry about him being lonely and alone.

I worry because he is not going to work in a parish setting and we need parish priests. My greatest worry is the violence in the world and the persecution of Christians.

I worry for his safety sometimes.

I worry he will burn out – become disillusioned. That he will lose faith in the goodness of humans. People are in need of him all the time. I worry he will lose himself in the bad stuff and lose sight of the light. There are times the demands on him are so high and he is so tired and I just want to take him in my arms and comfort him and give him strength to continue on.

I worry most about burnout and loneliness due to the shortage of priests. Our son was named pastor of a parish within 51 weeks of his ordination. He is wise enough to take time off from his parish duties and wiser to belong to a support group of other priests. Nevertheless, I worry about those two aspects of his life.

I worry my family member is too socialistic, too liberal, favoring government helping the poor instead of the church helping the poor. I worry because too many Catholic institutions don't follow Catholic teaching. I worry my family member will be led astray. Satan is the great deceiver.

I worry somewhat about people judging my son....as a priest. I also sometimes worry about him being lonely.

I worry that a priest's life is lonely. While a priest spends much time with people, they still tend to live by themselves and do not have a partner to share things with. I'm concerned about what I perceives to be a priest's lack of control over their life.

I worry that due to the number of priest he will get burned out very quickly. Also with Christians being outwardly persecuted around the globe I worry that our priest and religious will soon face that. I worry I will not have the strength to face that.

I worry that he will “burn out” due to the demands on his time and attention.

I worry that he will be lonely, and that he will be looked down on, or verbally abused because of his vocation.

I worry that he will be subject to harassment from those who do not believe.

I worry that he will become isolated and lonely and not experience enough support and companionship.

I worry that he will feel lonely, or maybe isolated. I worry he'll want kids one day. Selfishly, I want him to meet a wife and have kids one day. I also worry that we will never see eye to eye regarding certain Catholic tenets or practices that I disagree with.

I worry that he will get overwhelmed. So much to do at a parish, both on a practical and spiritual level.

I worry that he will lose contact with his siblings once my husband and I have passed n. (He has since entered different monastic community (St John's Abbey) 16 hours away from our home). I also realize that this train runs both ways. Eric needs to stay connected to his siblings by phone calls, email or letters and to be honest, he is not good with that. His siblings feel they have nothing in common with him.

I worry that his next assignment won't be as satisfying as his present one.

I worry that I will not get to have contact with her as often as I like. But I would never put this worry on her because I value her vocation too much.

I worry that in our diocese we are retiring priests faster than we are ordaining them.

I worry that it will be hard for him to not have a place he can call "home." Also, I worry that he stays connected to our family once we are gone.

I worry that my son will be ridiculed by others who do not know him. Also, that he will be lonely.

I worry that Pope Francis will foment a schism and throw the whole Church into chaos.

I worry that she may be persecuted for her faith

I worry that she will be moved far away and that my family won't see her often.

I worry that she will find it lonely though she tells me her community has become her family. She seems very concerned that family visit her and it is not possible to do so as often as she would like. We do not see our other children often either – however, we can talk on the phone with them and email, and her vocation only allows letter-writing. I am not sure that part of the sacrifice is working unless we fill it with visits and we are getting older and finding it difficult and costly as we are in debt. Pray for her to pray for understanding.

I worry that she will not be understood, that her health will not be cared for, that she will suffer persecution.

I worry that since he was older when he became a priest, he may not be able to serve as long as he would like if his health doesn't allow such.

I worry that sister may be physically persecuted for her faith. I worry she may weaken her health in her efforts to serve and to love. I worry her order might fall apart as some orders have none and leave her alone without her community of sisters. I constantly entrust her to God's loving care when these worries overtake me.

I worry that the convent will stay a viable financial unit so that my daughter does not experience the closing of her convent within her lifetime.

I worry that the sisterhood will exist. There are not many young woman entering the sisterhood.

I worry that the work she is doing to care for the elderly will not be carried on by other religious sisters and that more nursing homes around the world will close.

I worry that there is so much responsibility to take on in parish/parishes and schools. There is a shortage of priests. On his day off he sometimes has to work and visit the sick, dying or elderly in need or help another priest. He doesn't have much time off. I don't want him or other priests to "burn out".

I worry that there may be other "distractions" that might pull her in a different direction.

I worry that there will not be enough priests and those priests we have could become overburden with all the responsibilities they have. I also worry that priests have multiple assignments that lead them to burn out. I pray that my son never loses his joy and peace that he now has. You can see the joy on his face and his actions.

I worry that we won't have enough priests to cover all of the Catholic parishes in our dioceses, which will be more work for the individual priests.

I worry that, if the trend toward fewer priests continues, there will be increasing pressures on priests to do more with fewer resources.

I worry the same about him as I do all my children. I want them to be happy. I have no greater concern about his happiness because of his vocation, just the normal level of concern.

I would think that a burn out would be a concern.

I wouldn't call them worries as I know God will provide him the courage he needs, but trying to call people to orthodoxy and coming under the fire of those that want to mold the faith to suit them.

I wouldn't see my son very often.

If a priest is the sole priest in his parish, I worry that it can be a lonely life. Also, I think about when the priest is very elderly, and has no children of his own to care for him.

If he continues with missionary work, I sometimes worry for his safety (not where he is now, but in potential future locations.) I worry that my children won't know their uncle well since his vocation includes missionary work abroad.

If her personality is truly accepted by her peers

If I am concerned about anything, it would be that there may not continue to be young vocations in my daughter's community, so that she will have to continue to work in her old age; or that her order might dissolve.

If I have children, having them not know their uncle well when he is across the country in monastery.

If my daughters had not taken final vows I would have to have adopted another Sister so that I could continue to visit the Motherhouse. It's heaven on Earth. My husband passed away two years ago and I couldn't get there fast enough.

I'm a priest.

I'm a temporary sister now.

I'm afraid that he will get stationed in a dangerous part...anti-Catholic part...of the world where he will be physically harmed for his beliefs

I'm concerned that he will be lonely. I worry about the direction that the church may take in the future. He may be very overworked if there are not enough priests to share all the needed positions.

I'm most concerned about his heavy workload due to the severe shortage of priests in our diocese. I'm concerned about burn-out.

I'm not sure. My husband never supported the faith. I feel if he had we would have had a stranger family bond and Michael would have had a stronger family bond and Michael would have felt more love and support. However, he never stopped me from following the faith and teaching my children. Even so I often felt like I had to decide to be close to him or close to my faith almost like I could do not do both happily

I'm not worried at all.

I'm optimistic about joyful, orthodox young priests and sisters that I know. I am not worried about my daughters. (We have two daughters who are Sisters.)

In earlier days, the priesthood/religious gave the impression their life was suffering and self-denial, and entirely lacking joy. After Vatican Council II where the laity regain their responsibilities by virtue of their baptism, and got to relate more openly with them, that we can see the joy in their vocations, enjoying and loving their flock. They also start to "self-care" with days off and outings as a religious community. So nowadays I am comfortable about it.

In light of the current shortage of priests, I am concerned that Patrick will have so much pastoral work to do that he will have trouble making significant time for prayer and study.

Increasing religious intolerance

Increasing sense of secularization in religious orders and institutions

Initially I worried about preserving options if her vocation was not permanent (financial concerns about preserving savings, retirement funds). Now twelve years down the road I am comfortable and confident. The order of sisters she joined gives evidence of solid Catholic formation, good management and planning for the support of the order, support for family ties and a real welcome at regular Visiting Days. There are opportunities for volunteer work, retreats, family weekends, etc. in particular I felt blessed by the successive visits of our daughters (both in the same order) during the terminal illness of their father. Note that another daughter entered a Catholic movement as a 1 year volunteer co-worker, made a consecration within six months, and was only able to visit family for three days (two for travel) as she was sent to distant locations. There were definitely 'worries' and concerns. In retrospect she was young (age 18 just out of HS) and the progression was too swift. I was uncomfortable with the different 'cultural' aspects which I presumed were responsible for the 'strict' formation yet satisfied with the Catholic teaching of the movement. I believe there issues are being addressed in current reform. Family connection and support is and will always be a concern for me.

Is he happy without an earthly partner?

Isolation, lack of support from other priests and his bishop. His not being taken care of with day-to-day things (e.g., renewing eyeglass prescriptions, admonishments about his driving techniques, etc.).

Isolation, solitude, abuse among other priests

It can be a lonely life. The community of priesthood does not exist like it did in the past when there were more priest. I feel that the support of the family becomes more important now than ever before.

It concerns me how much she works. It also concerns me that she is not taken care of as I would hope. For example, she did not have health insurance until it was mandated by the government. I also worry about whether she will be taken care of in her old age.

It is a very difficult time for the Church. I worry about his safety. I know God will take care of him.

It is a very lonely life. Yes, they are surrounded by parishioners, but they do not have the immediate family that married people do. They carry heavy burdens and crosses for those in their parish families. I often worry that my brother cares too much and will burn out because he cares ever so deeply for his parishioners. Priests have a difficult balance of being there for their parishioners yet also of needing to have some space to "get away from it all". My deepest worry about my brother is that he will burn out because he wants to be there for everyone.

It is ALIVE and THRIVING

It is concerning in this world for our priests and religious. The persecutions and executions in the world. I pray for our priests and religious every day especially at Mass. the priests and sisters are stretched and overloaded with responsibilities and the number of people they care for – less and less. Although I do believe Jesus is raising up a new generation of young people to priestly and religious vocations. I see a resurgence to the more conservative orders. Habits and witness are important. Catholic traditions, beliefs, rituals are important.

It is Gods will. I don't worry about it.

It is so obvious that this the right direction for his life, and that he is happier than he has ever been, that I have no worries

It might become too overwhelming with all of the extra criteria expected to do the vocation. Not just being a priest – having to worry about finances, maintenance, etc.

It's not my place to worry about it, I have faith that my family member will be where they want to be.

It scares me to realize that she actually be martyred for her faith and vocation – or worse to be kidnapped, sexually assaulted

It seems that the society at large, and even nominal Catholics, are increasingly secularized. It seems to me that secularization causes people to become indifferent to religious realities and practices. As such, ministry becomes marginalized, and probably terribly frustrating

It will be very difficult not seeing her very often. She is close with her 6 siblings and missing them growing up will be quite a suffering for her though I know God will give her the grace to find peace.

Just that she will continue to be taken care of as far as health and basic needs. Retirement years.

Just that she is happy and feels fulfilled

Just that the religious order stays faithful.

Just the same as for the married children, consistency and courage

Keeping up with all the demands of the priesthood without enough time and support.

La soledad a futuro cuando este mayor y enfermo. (The solitude he may face in the future when he is older and sick.)

La unica preocupacion es que el de un buen testimonio ante la iglesia (My only worry is that he gives good testimony before the Church.)

Lack of family connection

Lack of freedom

Lack of priests and spreading themselves to thin. I worry the younger generation is falling out of faith, less going to church.

Lack of respect people have for our priest and religious. When people hear that they need to pray for priests they don't have a clear understanding what that means. To a lot of people it seems to them that priests have some deep rooted problem that needs fixing and don't want their children to become a priest or a religious in fear something weird is going to happen to them. I worry that in the future there will be a loss of freedom to worship openly and celebrate the Mass.

Lack of support and exhaustion. We expect priests to do so many jobs/fulfill so many roles but they don't seem to get much support. In the past, there was often more than one priest in a parish; this gave priests the mutual support of a brother priest, mini-community, if you will. They also often had a housekeeper/cook to help with some everyday tasks. Now priests are expected to do it all. Our son often eats out because he's too tired to cook.

Leaving behind blood family for religious family

Living alone and without immediate family support/interaction is a worry to me.

Living in community, not isolation, having the support for the challenges of the loneliness and work it takes to be so full time with their work and need to run a home and meals etc.

Living their lives under a microscope,

Loneliness

Loneliness

Loneliness

Loneliness at new locations

Loneliness and expressions of generativity

Loneliness in old age for having no spouse. Sexual misconduct of SOME priests tarnishing the reputation of ALL priests, including my family member

Loneliness, false accusations

Loneliness, isolation, rejection from other religious/priests and parishioner

Loneliness, negative societal pressure, care when elderly

Loneliness, proximity to family members, financial stability, rigors of position due to low numbers of priests.

Loneliness. Expecting to be wined and dined by others. The pull to have their own children. Has been very much protected throughout his life, and never been exposed to poverty. Can be very “preachy” about the Catholic faith.

Loneliness. The intrusion of the secular world.. Always “being there for him

Loneliness

Loneliness, discouragement

Losing touch with him....

Loss of close contact with family members.

Lukewarm Catholics and parishioners who value the norms of the culture more than the value of the Catholic faith.

Many of the priests that have come to our parish are lovely men, but they lack the skills required to lead the parish. They may be spiritual leaders, but they lack administrative know how. I want my son to remain humble, strong, and knowledgeable and be fully equipped to not only handle the spiritual leadership of the parish, but also be able to run things from an administrative end. I worry that he won't have the necessary support to run a parish.

Martyrdom

Martyrdom!!

Maybe the extreme challenges of the church today. So many Catholics have fallen away from their faith.

Mi preocupacion es que mi hijo este muy lejos de nosotros y me da tristeza que nosotros, sus papas y mas familiares, no podamos visitar a mi hijo si es que lo mandan lejos de nosotros, pero todo esto esta en las manos de Dios y El es quien tiene la ultima palabra. (My worry is that he will be far away from us and it makes me sad that us, his parents and close relatives, will not be able to visit my son if he is sent far away. But all of this is in God's hands and he has the last word.)

Misconceptions of priests and their Catholic duties. Also the bad images that priests have received due to past legal issues that keep coming up in the news.

More and more persecution against religious sisters

More people need to join the Orders.

Muslim extremism, secularization of religion in modern society, religious freedom being attacked. I am very worried for my son!!

My biggest concern is that she will have limited contact with our family and friends. She has a lot of dear friends and I'm sure she misses talking with them whenever she wants to. I'm a little concerned about the vow of poverty because she does like to go out to eat at restaurants and going out for ice cream, she also likes to visit friends that live out of the area.

My biggest worry is that the world is turning increasingly anti-Christian but if something should happen to my son due to his beliefs and convictions, he will be in heaven with God which is where we are all supposed to be anyway.

My biggest worry, as the mom, whose daughter has entered a conservative, traditional order – is that she will be totally detached from her family, relatives and former life. I realize she will have a “new” life and when I visit her there (two times a year) I can see how beautiful that life is – the sisters and all the wonderful, joyful women – I “envy” their prayer life and I know it is the life for my daughter – especially if she goes back to teaching, which I think she will! As that too is a gift from God, I just wish her two siblings – one older and one younger would be more supportive – and that she could keep in better contact with them and their future children – only one general letter per week, one phone call every six weeks makes it difficult for all of us.

My biggest worry for my brother is over work. He is a Diocesan priest. He is the pastor for 3 parishes and one of those have a Catholic School associated. He spends his time ministering to the parishes' needs. His work load is steep and I think you run the risk of burning out people like my brother. It is true there is a shortage of priests which has caused the combining of parishes. I do not know how to increase vocations – society in general is becoming more selfish – “Me generation.”

My brother is a straight forward person from childhood. With that I always thought, he may get any problems with superiors

My concern is that with the small number of young nuns relative to the larger number of older nuns who need assistance, that the financial needs can be met. Also that when my daughter is an older nun in need of assistance that there will be enough younger community members to assist her.

My family member is strong willed and may be slow to bend to the will of others.

My greatest concern is loneliness. He is very busy and has thousands of people around him, but none of them are his family. We were a very close family until he was taken away from us. He

was physically and emotionally removed from us. He no longer know how to be genuinely a son, brother, or uncle any more.

My greatest concern is that he may become lonely and/or isolated as he grows older since the population of priests is aging and fewer young men are entering the order. It is important for all people to have peer relationships.

My greatest concern is the demands on the priest. It is not humanly possible to do all that is asked of them. Only through the grace of God and the prayers of the faithful are they able to minister to those in their care. I worry about burnout, health issues and a weakened prayer life. Our son is extremely compassionate and charitable. It breaks his heart to see suffering. I pray he can offer those sufferings to Our Lord Jesus who has suffered and endured the heartaches and sin of humanity for all time. He needs time for prayer, retreats and renewal. Mother Teresa told her sisters to pray two Holy Hours per day. Her sisters said how will we take care of the poor if we spend two hours in prayer. Mother told them they would not be able to take care of any without those two hours.

My hope is that he continues to be happy, meaning a good assignment, a supportive pastor, etc. Since entering the seminary, he's been the happiest I've known him to be. So I hope that continues.

My only concern is that her gifts be used well. I'll just have to trust her discernment as to what is God's will for her. No real concerns.

My only concern would be that he can continue in his vocation for life. A vocation is a lifelong commitment and it doesn't come easily all the time. My hope and prayer would be that he finds contentment in his vocation.

My only worry is about what kind of support she would receive if she left her community. I also worry that since she often had little input on her apostolate, that she will truly be happy.

My only worry is for him to be happy and content. I am fully supportive of his choice to enter into religious vocation. One concern would be loneliness of not having your own family, but, do realize his family is widespread and devoted to others.

My only worry is the workload and stress level of most likely having to pastor multiple or clustered parishes.

My sister spent at least a year in discernment before she entered as a postulant. Her order is more robust than many, and her ministry fits her very well as a focused, detailed record keeper.

My son's vocation necessarily requires him to live "alone" with the spiritual world offering most of the nourishment and companionship that he'll receive in life. It takes great courage and perseverance to move through life remaining "in the word" but not "of the world". I worry that the atmosphere in our culture is decidedly anti-Catholic, even anti-religious, and that his whole

vocation will be spent in that hostile environment. I pray that God will always protect and keep my son in His care.

My worries are in regards to the changing social mores in society and how the Catholic Church will address these societal changes (i.e. contraception, gays, same-sex marriage, etc.) – how to balance the Catholic Church teaching against not judging and being inclusive (as Pope Francis is); so that the Church doesn't lose members.

My worries are that the Catholic Church will buckle under pressure to diminish the sanctity of marriage and family life. If the faithful are not encouraged to stay married, to persevere, to hold on, to be open to life, then vocations and the priesthood will disappear. The family is the first church and the Holy Family is our model, a father, a mother and children, freely and lovingly accepted.

My worry is that some people will associate my son with those priests who lived sinful lives and harmed people in the past. My other worry is if his path changes, he will look at it as disappointment to the Lord instead of the fact the Lord is changing my son's path.

New vocations to religious life are plentiful currently, and the support has been strong. They are not striking out alone into the wilderness, since so many are joining. The temptation could be for individuals not to realize their irreplaceable value. The temptation could be for the laity to become lax in prayer support, since there is no longer a crisis of having no vocations in the Church. I think the year of consecrated life comes at an opportune moment to bring additional support to religious and priests.

ninguna preocupacion pues considero que el llamado que le hizo el señor es una bendicion para el (No worries, because I think that God's calling is a blessing for him.)

No real worries. Religious vocations are obviously declining, especially in the US and Western Europe. I have great faith in God's will and the discernment process will determine my grandson's success or failure as a priest, but not as a human being. The orders based on service, in my opinion, are the most rewarding and therefore the most valuable to a young priest. Like all large organizations, the higher you go the harder it is to stay holy and on God's path. MY grandson's eventual priesthood will flourish and grow as long as he gets his hands “dirty” serving, not preaching, in the sanctimonious sense of that word. to be human is to be holy and from my observations the most holy are also the most human.

No tengo preocupaciones mas de las cosas que le pueden pasar a cualquier persona. Dios esta presente siempre. (I don't have worries beyond those things that can happen to any person. God is present always.)

No worries as I believe and know my son has strong faith to face any trials and tribulations.

No worries because his faith is very deep and he has support from the entire family.

No worries because I feel like she is being properly formed with a long discernment process. She seems very happy and content with her choice so far. My selfish side thinks about not having her in my life very often but I am at peace that she is where God wants her to be. I admire the courage she has to go against the culture; courage I did not have, but then, I did not have any faith formation outside of school and Sunday Mass.

No worries she works for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

No worries! She is doing very well! And is happy where she is!

No worries, I just pray for God's will to be done.

No worries, it is God's calling for him. I am very proud.

No worries, ultra-happy

No worries, we have entrusted his vocation to God.

No worries. As her mother I have always put all my trust in God for her life. I am so certain that her vocation is the best choice for her, based on her life experiences and interests and gifts, that I feel very secure that she her religious family will always support her.

No worries. I know he is happy.

No worries. I only want her to be happy and she is

No worries. She is in a loving, growing, faithfully Catholic community.

None at this time

None at this time. WHY SHOULD I HAVE WORRIES????

None I think this is a wonderful choice for him and suits him perfectly

None really. She is happy and will be taken care of. She's doing what she's always dreamed of doing so what're could a mother ask for her child?

None specifically about my son, who is a member of a religious order. I do worry about the demands on parish priests as the supply dwindles.

None whatsoever; God will look after her.

None! She is now the Bride of Christ and who could ask for a better husband! My trust in in the Lord – He led her to her Religious Vocation and He will strengthen her in it.

None! She is a Dominican Sister, they are thriving with a wonderful apostolate. The Nashville Dominicans are young (mid 30's, average age) and on fire for their charism of teaching.

None, because I know the Lord called him to this vocation.

None, except how often I'll see him

None, he has overcome it years ago.

None, I know that God walks with him and he is so happy.

None, it is a joy and a privilege to have a daughter as a professed religious. I thank God for the gift of her vocation and pray that she will grow in holiness.

None. God is in control.

None. God will provide.

None. He is well grounded and will enjoy serving the people of God for along as he can. We hope and pray that all priests, sisters and brothers continue to receive the necessary support to continue God's work.

None. I have experienced the depth of my daughter's conviction that she is doing the most important thing she could be doing in her life. After losing her faith in 8th grade, she returned to faith at the beginning of her 2nd year of college. She has a masters degree in Theology and is teaching high school students. She is dedicated to giving her students a strong foundation in faith so that they never experience a loss of faith, as she did. She also wants to give them the foundation they need to live their lives for Jesus. I am thankful that Jesus has called her to her vocation. I know that she is building up young men and women to live their lives for others, and to serve Jesus. She is so blessed.

None. Our three sons are in the seminary, studying for the priesthood and are most happy with this choice.

None. She is very happy.

None. God is in charge and He will provide.

None. He is very focused and loves what he has chosen.

None. He is very well rounded and has a good head on his shoulders. Perhaps my only concern is that he is a smoker, and I wish he would stop.

None. I feel at peace about the order that Anna chose. I only want God's will in her life.

None. There will be both positive and negative experiences, but I trust that the Holy Spirit will be the one in control.

None..... Well I guess not seeing her as often as I would like. As I grow older I fear not having her close. I guesstruly I regret not having more children. May God's will be done.

None....I trust God's will be done.

None...she is right where God wants her...and this calling was /is a perfect fit. No question it is what she was meant to do. Her vocation was a gift from God....I see that now. I didn't at first....but love it now and feel so blessed that God has chosen her.

Not being able to experience the family unit, IE Wife and children.

Not enough priests, so overload for those who are.

Not many choosing to enter the profession.

Not real worries about his vocation. Worries about religious freedom

Not seeing her very often bothers me, but we accept it.

Not talking to family

Now I don't worry about his vocation. Having come into the Catholic Church in 2014 (one year after my son's ordination), I am convinced that this vocation was definitely designed by God for both him and myself.

Numbers dwindling

Often, people are surprised my son is a priest! It helps to talk about how God's calling to the priesthood can happen to anyone! My husband was not Catholic until our Son was ordained. So sharing about this vocation is a good way to promote more families to consider it as an option for their sons and daughters.

Only that many Catholic clergy, religious and lay leaders are progressive politically and socially liberal. This is a problem for the Church.

Our culture seems to be giving in the direction of taking God out of everything. Our own priest's son believes that one day he may be saying Mass underground. I can see our priests getting burnt out because of a shortage.

Our daughter entered a thriving community and they always seem to be happy. I do not have worries about her.

Our lost culture straying away and my brother getting discouraged or down. Evil in our world falsely accusing priests of things. My brother is strong in Christ so I know it will be fine.

Our son was in high school.

Over work and burn out AND handling being lonely on occasion.

Over worked due to priest shortage. Underappreciated by parishioners.

Overall I don't worry. I do worry about the various crosses each will bear and being able to live with faith through those crosses.

Overall, numbers are declining so there will be great demands on her time and energy. She must surrender fully to the Lord's will so that she does not over-extend herself. She faces great battles and possible persecution because worldliness keeps increasing and there is a great backlash against religious values and conservatism, including from the government. She must draw her strength and courage from the Lord through all this. As a teacher, she must deal with the results of the breakdown of the nuclear family every day in her classroom. It can be very emotionally and physically draining, especially when the parent(s) do not follow through on behavior patterns she is trying to establish with a particular student.

Overload of work, negative parishioners, taking time to pray and health.

Overwork – “burning out”

Overwork.

Overworked

Parents not encouraging a vocation

People less accepting and respecting religious people

Perhaps loneliness in later life. Also that priests and religious are not seen as worthy of respect in this very secular culture, in fact they may even be more at risk for criminal and verbal attack. My son loves children and I am concerned that he must be always cautious when around them because it is so easy to blame a priest for child abuse now. They are “guilty until proven innocent.”

Persecution

Persecution

Persecution and martyrdom

Persecution from the government or other religions or other countries.

Persecution from unbelievers

Persecution of religious community.

Persecution, martyrdom.

Persecution, overwork, loneliness

Persecution – modern day martyrdom. Loneliness and lack of accountability in parish life, diocesan politics!

Perseverance and prayers will help a candidate through this long pursuit of their vocations. He must place their love, trust and prayers to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We trust San to continue our family tradition of keeping daily Mass attendance and rosaries and devotion to St Joseph, St Alphonse.

Physical safety and well-being. Not being able to be there if something should happen to them or they get sick. That they don't become discouraged. Their safety if Catholicism and priests or religious become outlawed/persecuted.

Potential feelings of loneliness, maybe not now but in the years to follow. He is a very social man, and loves comradery.

Pressures/stress of priestly life, especially larger parish life. So many people coming at you from so many angles for so many things. While part of being a priest, one would think very important to have time away for recharging of batteries like any profession.

Que algun dia empieze a pensar que no es lo qu quiere, pero el sabe que entrando en oracion Dios le Dara la respuesta y lo guiara. (That he begins to think this is not what he wants, but he know that going into prayer, God will give him the answer and guide him.)

Que cuando el este anciano quien lo va a cuidar. (That when he is older, who is going to take care of him.)

Que en algoin momento tenga dulas de so vocacion (That he has doubts about his vocation at some point.)

Que persevere en su vocacion. (That he perseveres in his vocation.)

Que pueda desistir de ser sacerdote. (That he can give up being a priest.)

Que si por alguna razón mi hijo dejara la vida sacerdotal, que seria de el afuera (That if for some reason he were to abandon priestly life, what would become of him when he is outside.)

Really have not given much thought as long as he believes that God has called him to this vocation God will provide.

Really I guess it is the isolation from the family that bothers me the most. We miss her at family reunions and weddings and baptisms and first communion etc. We miss her on the holidays and funerals. 3 hours 9 months of the year is still really hard for me.

Really, I don't have any worries. In fact we feel good about her future happiness and well-being.

Religious persecution

Religious persecution.

Retirement security

Retirement. The liberalizing of social/cultural mores by government, e.g. abortion, gay marriage, etc.

Safety – they are in a Religious Order that does missionary work around the globe.

Safety concerns arise, due to radical opposition to Christianity. Care for in the retirement years.

Safety in travels and his happiness

Separation from family

Several things: persecution; temptation; slander; that there won't be enough laborers in the vineyard; overworked; discouragement; that there will be enough resources to continue their work; that there will be people to take care of them in their old age. These are my concerns, but I continually hand them over to God in prayer so that I can trust in His divine providence.

She had 8 years of formation without any hesitation. I learned a LOT about religious life. It was a remarkable thing to witness. I worry that she does too much but I have no doubts that she doubts her vocation.

She is in God's hands. If she keeps praying, that should be enough for all to be well.

She will die a “martyr” or be denied healthcare or other services for her Catholic Christian beliefs.

Shortage of priests resulting in burnout, society perception of priests as child molesters/high risk of false accusations, fewer Catholics who recognize bases of faith, and put demands on priests to adjust to modern societal changes, having to let go of family time with priest family member due to his commitment, legal risks as related to societal changes and governmental demands no longer recognizing separation of church and state

Since he is a newly ordained Jesuit priest I worry that the demands and work assigned him will be too great and he will burn out

So many of the good Catholics I know have never had an opportunity to get to know religious sisters and don't understand or support that vocation. I fear that the way society is headed, my daughter's order may have difficulty surviving in future. In many parts of the world, religious are in danger. The US may not be immune to that in the future.

So much is done by the priests and religious that when there are very few of them I can only hope they are not more overwhelmed.

Society is very challenging and sometimes comes at you with ulterior motives. I pray that he will pray the Serenity Prayer daily, "O God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference".

Solitary life...loneliness

Staying in touch with siblings and family.

Stress and overwork – but I know they are preparing him for that. His support system is very good. Peoples attitude misunderstanding about the Catholic Church in general.

Stress of working hard over a prolonged period of time. Public perception of the "type" of person that would want to be a vowed religious.

Strong temptations, more and more negative pressure from the world, even martyrdom

Subject to hurt and/or criticism – loneliness , having individuals become angry at him if he has to tell them things they don't want to hear – being emotionally overwhelmed – compassion fatigue – not enough time to "recharge" for his personal health – mental and physical

Support from members of the order.

Support from other priests and support from the community. It can be very lonely as a parish priest. Also the anti-Christian culture of large cities is a safety concern.

Support. Facing realities of life.

Sustaining religious orders financially and with much fewer priests how do they minister to all.

Taking care of his health

Temptation, Social attitudes of the outside world. Too busy to pray.

That as a priest he will be spread so thin that the people will not get to know him, and he will not get to know the people in his parish.

That as the Church returns to the spirit of Vatican II under Francis, the conservative Catholics will not accept the way God is leading his Church. This may be very hard for the conservative religious to accept. God is good all the time, even when things do not go the way we wish. Some will be tried to the maximum.

That extremists will attack him for his faith.

That he be faithful and not give in to temptation.

That he could be called to ministry in a dangerous part of the world, unfriendly to Catholics and be killed at a young age

That he could be sent far away

That he does not have the full support of his bishop.

That he gets burned out given the demands being made on him daily.

That he is able to find the closeness that a family can provide. I also worry that in the future after his Dad and I are gone, will our other children maintain a relationship with him.

That he is supported in his parish. That he remains strong in his faith and doesn't get discouraged or lonely.

That he may be lonely after we are gone. My wife is always telling his siblings to stay in contact with him after we are gone.

That he may not feel the community support that he needs.

That he takes time to pray and take care of himself first so that he can do God's work better.

That he thinks it's not a bad idea to consider that priests should be able to marry, even though he will always be obedient to the rulings of the Pope

That he will be discouraged by the leadership of the Church. He is eager to be a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. I fear that the too many of our church leaders are inclined to water down or dilute the faith to be more socially acceptable. That would be very difficult for our son.

That he will be lonely or that he will regret not having a family and children.

That he will be lonely, overworked or too busy for family or friends.

That he will be overworked or overwhelmed due to a shortage of clergy. That he will encounter anti-Catholic bias and prejudice especially when he wears his collar. That he will be unjustly and negatively affected by the sexual abuse crisis; even though he has done nothing wrong.

That he will be persecuted.

That he will be targeted by terrorists or other evil doers. That he will be falsely accused of impropriety. That he will feel lonely at times.

That he will be truly fulfilled by his choice. We worry that he may be too dogmatic and perhaps too judgmental.

That he will become discouraged

That he will find sufficient support from his superiors and peers to persevere.

That he will get “burnt” out with being a public person. People have a way of dumping all of their problems on a priest or at least believing that the priest has all of the answers. Furthermore, I am worried that my son is at this time, very pure and strict in his intent and belief. Things are pretty much black and white. I think he gets out and has to deal with the ugliness of the world, it will be a challenge.

That he will have fewer and fewer fellow priests. That others will look down on him for all the scandals attached to the priesthood.

That he will have the strength to persevere in God's call in his life. But God will take care of these worries, I think.

That he will miss not have children. I guess I worry that he may someday regret his choice.

That he will receive an assignment that jeopardizes his faith in his abilities to perform his priestly duties.

That he will remain faithful to his priesthood and serve God no matter what the circumstance

That he will walk in the grace of The Lord always. If he becomes a priest, there is no more joyous thing than to bring a soul to God or more damaging thing than to turn a soul away. Often the difference is the humility and love demonstrated by the priest.

That he won't be able to practice his faith without government interference.

That he won't finish seminary or he'll transfer to a larger diocese prior to completing his studies.

That he works too hard with little down time to “recharge”.

That he would be weak someday. Prayers always needed asking for strength, Wisdom and Faith to move on!!!!

That her health may fail because she might not have easy access to medical care; that her asthma might exacerbate because of life of poverty and sacrifice.

That if more do not enter (priests) he will be spread so thin – will be very stressful for him. Will have very few others to lean on, especially considering the world as it is today (finding Church, Christianity uncool, etc.).

That it is a lonely life. That society will not treat him well.

That life could be more difficult.

That maybe we won't be able to see each other often

That often the seminary staff attempt to serve as psychological practitioners rather than seminary vocation formators and thus wander into making psychological and sociological judgments that they have no professional skill in diagnosing. I have seen a number of excellent seminarians fail to complete their seminary program because of some very, very minor issue that the seminary staff used to question their suitability, e.g., too patriotic and too willing to mention faults in public (faults that were mentioned only after the seminarian was asked to be frank about things to improve at the seminary).

That one day she may get “disappointed”

That people will accept him and realize he's human.

That people, who don't understand the religious life, don't treat her cruelly.

That she is always as happy as she is now.

That she is taken care of once she is old.

That she might lose her faith or become unfulfilled by her religious life

That she might not be available to take care of us in our old age. What will become of her and her order if the threat to religious liberty becomes a reality in the US? Will religious orders/priests become targets for terrorism?

That she will grow apart from our family especially her siblings. I believe she answered God's call and he will give her the graces.

That she will have extensive responsibilities as there are no younger people in her order.

That she will not always be as happy in religious life as she is now.

That she would be taken care of when she is old and has a serious illness.

That someone may falsely accuse him of an offense for revenge or money.

That the devil will go after him

That the priesthood is dying off and he will be stretched too thin trying to meet the demands/needs of the Catholic community. Also, if the church will be able to take care of him in his later years when he is not healthy enough to serve.

That the priesthood is under attack in our society and often the celibacy vow is misunderstood.

That there needs to be more vocations to the priesthood and religious life, but I am trying to pray, hope and not worry.

That there won't be a large enough group of sisters left for her. That she won't have support later in her life.

That they will not sustain the financial and social support they need to continue their ministries.

That we live truthfully to the vocation God has in store for us

That wounds received during family life may make it difficult to enjoy the freedom God wants for those consecrated to him.

The Catholic Church has always gone through times of trial. This is one such time, I believe. But, I believe the Holy Spirit is guiding us and protecting us. I believe the future is full of hope. I see and know so many youth who are on fire for their faith. However, I believe the Church is entering even greater times of trial. My son is so strong in his faith and willing to stand up for his faith, with his Protestant friends and even within the Church with other Catholics who are not orthodox or understand or know Church teaching. I try to remember and live by the words of St. Padre Pio, "Pray, hope, and don't worry." Our Church needs priests, religious, and lay who are willing to stand up for the Truth and their faith. My son is willing to do this and I am proud of him for his courage. Although I know it is stressful on my son if others don't like what he says or believe it – he believes the Truth/Church teaching must be stated clearly and definitively and without apology, and he does it. And, s, I pray for his continued zeal and courage, as well as growth in wisdom and humility and peace of heart and mind. As my 93-year-old mother tells me often – there is so much to pray for. How very true. I believe my son will make an excellent priest – he has great zeal for the faith. If, however, he discerns out, I am confident he will remain a strong Catholic willing to defend and live out his faith, no matter what trials the Church faces in the future.

The Catholic Church was such an anchor when we were growing up. Now families are spread out and society has many more demands i.e.: both parents needing to work, that it's more difficult to have a strong focus on faith. My brother has to work extremely hard to keep people inspired and engaged. With the abuse challenges the church has faced so many people have lost respect or reduced their commitment to the church. It makes me sad for him to have to work against those challenges as well.

The challenges that face all Christians in today's society. Priests might be larger targets of those who oppose our faith.

The continuous pressures of today's "social acceptances" and politics.

The culture is seemingly moving away from religious beliefs and in some ways antagonistic towards religion. I fear for his harassment and/or safety.

The dangers of standing up for one's beliefs and the laxity of our young people about wanting to learn their Catholic faith

The decision to be celibate and also that the KJV Bible doesn't seem to be encouraged

The declining number of vocations and the stress that will put on our son as he will have to shoulder a workload that was previously spread among several priests. Also, the challenge of promoting changes in the Catholic Church that will encourage people to return to practicing their faith more actively.

The decrease in the number of vocations could lead to stress as one priest has to shoulder the workload once shared by several. Also, the challenge of making changes in the Catholic Church that will encourage people to return to, or adopt, the practice of Catholicism and make it a more important part of their lives.

The demand on priests' time can be draining. I worry about his potential burnout.

The demands of his time are so great, I am worried he will burn out and be as effective as he is today. The lack of social life and personal connections creates loneliness. We need to empower more lay people to assist the priests.

The difficulties that he will have to encounter with society, and that he always stays firm and strong in his beliefs.

The difficulties they will face in a post Christian culture.

The difficulty associated with this life, and the suspicion that goes along with it.

The direction our country is taking is the exact opposite of what the Lord is wanting us to do and be. That being said I fear for the persecution that may lie ahead for all of us but our religious in particular.

The effect of growing up in a dysfunctional family on the choice of vocation

The fall of the Church

The future role of women in the faith and how she will be cared for as she ages also the hope that she will be supported by others

The intense criticism which parishioners give. Loneliness.

The lack of help if vocations aren't fostered in homes and churches and schools. The stress that we see on our own priests.

The laws of our country will change against religious freedom to the point he will be forced to break the law to live his vocation.

The liberalization of the church, the political correctness that is being encouraged and enforced. Also poor or even evil leadership.

The limited numbers and the pressures upon them. There are times where they are expected to be perfect when in fact they are human and have stresses upon them and can only do so much.

The many demands placed upon them since there are so few priests. The secular worlds anti Catholic/Christian views and attacks.

The misconceptions from uneducated or misinformed people/media that leads to lack of support for our priests and religious.

The most worries are keeping their faith and continue with their ministry.

The need for everyone to pray for priests

The needs are so great.

The negativity created from priests that have been abusive. The politics of the church has become more evident.... Sometimes priests treat their congregations as people to control rather than to serve. There have been a few who have caused us to break away from the church for limited amounts of time.

The one single thing we worry about the most in our family is the life of our priests, in this case our brother, once they are at an age where they can do all the same things as before. I think it's important to have facilities and support groups for priests in an elderly age so they don't feel alone and abandoned.

The only worries would be that he be faithful to his vocation in these difficult times. Also that his parishioners welcome and love him like his family does.

The opposition of our culture, esp. to the priests

The over-emphasis of "running things" (the business-side of the Church) and not having or giving enough time for "private" prayer is a worry. Also, the lack of spiritual guidance from their superiors i.e. bishops not being "fathers" to these young men is also a real concern!

The political climate in the United States has become very anti-Catholic, especially anti-priest. I worry that our son will face persecution in regard to what is considered "tolerant" behavior, i.e.

same-sex marriage. However, that is not a worry that bothers me as my son is prepared to give his very life for his faith. As mothers tend to worry about their children, I have always been afraid for my boys to be hurt...my son, the priest, always counters with "if I die sooner, I will be with God sooner, no worries, Mom". His vocation has strengthened my faith.

The priest shortage and how hard the work is with so few priest covering so many Catholics.

The resources for her living when she retires.

The role and expectations of society on them as individuals and their need for community in their daily lives.

The secular society doesn't want him to be a priest, although it will flatter him that it does. Also there are entrapments/temptations waiting for him that have destroyed the priesthoods of others.

The seeming mean spiritedness of some toward someone who doesn't dress as they think that they should

The stress of all of the responsibility and possible loneliness.

The stress on his health and persecution in society

The stress placed on religious to be perfect and having to prove their trustworthiness. I worry that they will be weary having to trudge through the society that we live in and all the crud that comes with it. Generally, I worry that they have a heavy load to carry because the tide seems to be going in the other direction, so it is hard to stand apart from the rest and declare your love for God in a public way.

The stresses of the demands of the religious life can be accumulate over time. His biological clock could go off. The lack of, or very limited amount of, physical touch by another caring human can be damaging.

The support he receives, from parishioners, how he handles stress, who will care for him in an extended illness, his retirement.

The terrible negative attitudes towards the religious.

The terrible way the institutional church has handled abusive priests and the effect that has on good priests and those studying for the priesthood. I worry that he will be lonely in the future.

the think what worries me is that I see the Catholic church is finally catching up with the challenges of the XXI century, but still is falling behind on women's rights, ecological crimes, sexuality, abortion (I am pro-choice), social inequality, etc. I want to see a more active and direct discourse from the Church to keep pushing for change so we can achieve a better society.

The way he might be treated by secular members of society and also by members of his parish and/or community. I have seen members of other parishes treat their pastors with disrespect, question authority, or even try to undermine their well-intentioned efforts, and it makes me cringe to think someone would do the same to my brother.

The way others will treat him in light of the scandals. He's been mistreated already on occasion when in clerics but not habit. People seem fascinated by the beautiful white flowing robes, but have disdain for the Roman collar. Sooo sad to me. Hello, Our Lady!

The way the world is becoming with hatred for religious people that something major could happen to his life. Trying to save a person/persons through talking, prays etc. could backfire.

Their safety and the possible persecution that they could face. Forgive me Lord feeling that way!

There are fewer and fewer members of religious communities. I worry about the spiritual and emotional support she may need.

There are no fundamental worries. I know that my son is well-grounded in his faith, and I know that he'll have to draw on the graces of the sacrament once he is ordained, and that it is a supernatural calling incapable of any mere human to fulfill without that grace. I also know that our dear Mother in heaven knows very well how to take care of her chosen sons.

There are no worries. Just the hope that they remain faithful.

There are so few entering the religious life and there are many older religious who are retiring.

There are so few vocations coming in. I don't know what the future holds.

There not being enough priests to go around and he will get burned out from running around; although I know that God will take care of him always

These days I feel, even in just the past few years, more extremes in society regarding her vocation and much less tolerance about a visible show of faith and belief in the public square. It makes me worry for her safety, which wasn't something I worried about before. I also worry about people or governments being hostile to their mission.

They certainly will be "working" in a more hostile environment as far as faith goes. Also, people are much less educated about the basics in the faith.

They feel they have the freedom to continue to follow God's will for their lives during the discernment process without pressure from me or her religious order.

They will be less involved in family decisions. Not being able to have children.

Time commitments that involve much traveling and shouldering all of the responsibilities of a parish and school without an assistant.

To be taken care of when my husband and I are no longer around. We have known a few priests that have had a hard time in retirement with loneliness. I also am concerned that my son finds good ways to combat loneliness. He would make a great husband and misses the lost companionship although he loves the path he is on.

To stay healthy much to do in the parish(es) with the shortage of priests. For all priests to maintain a healthy life style, invite a dietician to the seminary or diocese. Topics to include food choices based on carbohydrates, fats and sodium, which could lower risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol, weight gain, etc. Some priests eat out often or prepare frozen meals (which can be high in sodium) which are not healthy choices when eaten on a regular basis. Cooking lessons? Also stress the importance of walking or other exercise several times a week.

Today my chief worry is that he has become too rigid. It is difficult to talk to him because the conversation quickly turns to religion and lectures. When he was a seminarian, I worried about the loneliness he would face due to celibacy.

Too broad a question! The only worries I have are that priests and nuns will be financially supported. And I worry about the image that priests have as being sexual predators, and that some nuns have projected a lesbian image.

Too much stress mainly because of the priest shortage in our state.

Too much work and not enough time for rest himself, not mentioned by him but observed by me. His diocese is six hundred miles from his family and I am concerned that in later years he will be separated from family as all age and we have passed and travel and communication become much more difficult.

Una preparación mas humanizada, sigue siendo en algunos casos muy alejada de las personas (A more people conscious preparation. Preparation continues to be in some cases very detached from people.)

Very few others are entering religious vocations and she may find herself alone in her order.

We do not want to be separated from his life or his from ours. Communication with each other is important to us. Family time and communication with each other is important. We did family service together and later participated in their service projects. Helping others was challenging and fun. Then we shared the best thing and worst thing about the experience. Then we were able to reflect and grow with the grace of those reflections.

We don't feel we have any worries. The present order our daughter is in is prospering and flourishing, so to witness so much joy fills our hearts and minds with great peace.

We have a very close family and I worry about the things he misses. I know he won't be so far away after he is ordained. He is my only sibling and I rely on him a lot with changes that have occurred in our family.

We have great confidence in the leadership and wisdom of our daughter's community. My main concern is that younger women will continue to be drawn to the order, and enter it, so that there is a steady influx of younger women over many years. As our society continues to become more secular, I hope and pray that legislation (such as The Affordable Health Care Act) does not make it impossible for the sisters to continue working in the Health Field and in other areas of life

We have none. She will always have a home, clothes to wear, food to eat and a job in an environment where she is loved. What else can you want for your child?

We live in a fantastic Diocese where there is tremendous support of the Priesthood and Religious life. My daughter is in a very new religious community along with her older sister. In the past there has always been talk about the aging religious communities. How will they support themselves in the future? Who will take care of them when they are elderly? I think communities today are very forward thinking and proactive addressing these issues early on.

We need priests and I have already seen where some nuns are going to close their convents because they are not getting women to enter. I hate to see Catholic education disappearing because not every Catholic can afford it. There is so much craziness in the world right now with people killing Christians because they are not their religion. It is insane.

We put everything in the hands of Our Blessed Mother.

We'll rarely get to have her a part of our lives

When he first entered I worried about him being alone when he gets older, but seeing how close he and his brother seminarians are now, I no longer have that worry.

When he is older he won't have family support because he is the baby of the family. We worry how people in society view him because of the priest scandals

When I think about the future of priesthood and religious life, I do not believe I have any worries at all regarding my daughter's vocation. Christ has been faithful to our family for our whole lives and I expect Him to remain faithful to us in the future. We try to live our lives from a heavenly perspective. We look forward to an eternal life filled with love and joy. Everything here on earth is temporary. God is our eternal hope.

When my son was ordained a priest there were only three others ordained. The average age of the priests in our diocese is around 65 years. That is a worry to me because the responsibility of caring for so many souls will soon be on so few younger priest.

Where he will be placed once he finishes the seminary school? Should he be a priest or should he be a deacon?

Who will take care of him when he is no longer able to? Loneliness. Being over worked and burning out.

Will he find happiness and fulfillment pursuing their calling? Will he live close enough to me where my (future) children will see their uncle regularly and have a relationship?

Will religious life stand up to or endure secular around them.

Will the religious group take care of him when he is old?

Will this member be happy and fulfilled in this religious organization? What if this religious group changes as in the 70's and 80's, the way religious life changed drastically – no habits, sisters with spending money, taking trips etc. with non-religious, less community life.

With all the sex scandals I fear that could be a label placed on him by others who don't know my son. That he may chose a location somewhere in the world that is in great turmoil thinking he is doing the right thing but could be putting his life in jeopardy. But I do accept the fact that is his choice, I just hope it doesn't happen.

With our present pope I am very hopeful. I hope that he will continue to encourage all to participate in the joy of the gospel.

With the changing culture in America we are concerned about her safety.

With the older age of most religious I am concerned that the burden to carry on the mission of their order will be very hard.

With the path society in the US is taking I guess it would be that the religious and priesthood will have a target on them for religious hate and laws that go against their conscience. They will be persecuted for their faith, but they believe that is a price they are willing to pay, even martyrdom if it comes to that.

With the severe lack of priests, I worry about burnout. I worry about his health as he doesn't take time for himself. He is in an area without any other priests and I worry about lack of support.

With the shortage of priests, I am concerned my son will work too much.

With the shortage of priests, I worry about the overload of work for priests in a world that is turning more secular everyday

Worried that he/she will be home sick and lonely. Worried about the school that they have to study and it was not easy. Also worried about the financial for them as they study full time and have no money so they need a lot of support.

Worried that the shortage of priests will pose a burden; worried that people “target” priests for slander;

Worries about family members and vocation: Shortage of priests, may make priest's responsibilities overwhelming, loneliness and isolation

Worry about discouragement because of apathy or lack of cooperation from people he will serve.

Worry that she misses family and being a mother. Worry about the anti-Catholic culture and the possible negative encounters they may have.

In your opinion, how can family members best support or promote vocations to priesthood or religious life?

(i) Pray. (ii) Discuss vocations. (iii) Speak charitably of priests and religious. (iv) Reverent celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, with suitable liturgical music. (v) Frequent reception of the sacraments. (vi) Eucharistic Adoration.

1. Live a joyful faith yourself, so that the practice one's faith is seen as a gift rather than a duty 2. Make clear that material gain/a consumer lifestyle is not an adequate goal for a career choice/vocation. Again, this needs to be modeled in the family 3. Practice hospitality 4. Expose children/young adults to Godly people – to men and women who are serving God and others in different ways. If you look, you will find many. 5. Talk about the saints with your children – they are great examples of virtue and heroism in many different forms. 6. Celebrate the great feasts of the Church year by emphasizing the meaning of those feasts e.g. Christmas is about Christ's birth not about getting lots of gifts. 7 Pray daily for your children

1. Pray for vocations in our church and diocese. 2. Support and respect the religious in our own local church.

1. By being open and encouraging when a young person expresses an interest in religious life. 2. By praying for vocations in their family. 3. By showing respect and friendship to those already in religious life. 4. By spending time with religious and having them around your family.

1. PRAY! for more vocations, for the protection of professed vocations (priests, sisters, etc. remain faithful, joy filled, servants, etc.!) 2. Live the Faith. 3. Educate the children about the

Faith and applying the Faith in moral matters at home. Unfortunately from experience we learned we cannot always depend on Catholic Schools. 4. Educate children about the recognized vocations! Single life, religious life, married life. Invite children to consider religious life. 5. Continue religious education throughout one's life.

1. Prayer 2. Verbal encouragement and support

1. Prayer is Number One! Add it as a family prayer intention. 2. All parents should introduce the children to all possible vocation possibilities. 3. Retreats, religious youth conferences are wonderful opportunities for youth to discern vocations. 4. Give to the Blessed Sacrament in Adoration.

1. Prayer 2. Prayer 3. Prayer, and of course anything financial to help them on their journey. Live according to God's law, so they see the importance of also living a life of service.

1: Let them happen 2: Pray as a family often 3: Never expect it (as if you, not God, were doing the calling) 4: Pray for it privately without letting it be known that you are doing so 5: Let your child develop his own private prayer life, with the tools given of Scripture, liturgy, lives of the saints and spiritual works. Give him time to do this.

A family needs to nurture their children to be faithful Catholics at all costs. So the child/children to grow, they need to pray daily to be open to the call (vocation) God has for them. Because I thought I had a vocation (late 70's), I went through the process, entered. However (b/c of my pride) I followed through with the entry, not really communicating with my parents. I was not at peace but felt I had gone so far I could not turn back. I stayed less than 1 week. For the first time in my life, I felt like I had failed. When our daughter wanted to enter, this was my fear for her. I shared with her; I (we) asked her to wait a while (we thought 4 yrs. since she has a full 4 yr. scholarship. She came the next year and said she wanted to go 'now'. We gave over consent

A good level of communication in the family. Times of prayer together in the family. Encounters among Catholic families/with other Catholic youth.

A healthy family life that has a strong foundation in Catholic culture and practice of faith. Especially parents who are open minded and set a good example to their kids. Get the idea in their head early during infant years.

Absolutely.

Accept and openly support my son's decision

Actively discuss it as a meaningful, important vocation to be considered equally as compared to the vocation to marriage.

Adoration, prayer, daily Mass, scripture formation, performing acts of charity, spiritual retreats such as to Rome, Europe or Israel.

Adoration-Adoration-Adoration

All

Allow them to make the decision on their own without pushing or constantly bringing up the subject.

Allowing people to explore different paths, being supportive and not putting labels on things. I see that people think that religious people or priests are somewhat different but they are not, they are just following a different path focusing on less mundane things. We should embrace and support that with the same enthusiasm we support college students, tradesman, singles, mothers, etc.

Always being in contact with Prayers and Blessings from God.

Always encourage

Always encourage them from the beginning to pray that their vocation will be clear to them. It is the surest way to true happiness/joy. Stay close to the Blessed Mother.

Always keep it as an option in case God calls you to religious life

Always leave the lines of communication open, so if there is a problem, they know they have a “support network” within their family.

Always show our support by loving and praying for them.

Answer all questions – try to explain a calling by God, which is a vocation not a career. Be a good Catholic family and show it!!!

As a family we need to be more involved with our priests. Our children need to see they are people and they enjoy life.

As a family, going to Mass on Sundays was important – even his father who is not Catholic, did not miss Mass. We ate dinners together as a family and we spent a lot of time talking about social issues and social justice. I don't think one has to come from a religious family to think about the vocation. I forgot to mention that I am a lector – so from time to time, we would talk about the readings – but not overly. I think what is important is treating others with kindness, justice, and being humble.

As a parent – I feel it is our responsibility to “offer” or suggest looking into religious life if we see that our child may be a candidate for that life. Siblings also can help, but unless you come from a family with other Religious that seems unlikely. For a parish priest to feel that you know they will not have a family, may be lonely. Yet as I see our priests – they can still remain a major

part of their families. So I think it is easier to promote that life to a child and for the siblings to support it because he would still be a part of their “everyday” life.

As you would support any family member's vocation, religious or otherwise...keep in touch, ask questions, attend events when asked, express your pride, love and support of their journey and pray for them always.

Ask the young child if he would ever want to be a priest, when the topic of careers, etc. arise. The same for the sisterhood for a daughter. Get them to consider that vocation as a possibility! Then let the Holy Spirit take over, except for emotional, spiritual, and possibly financial support. We paid off our daughter's college loans, so she could enter the convent.

Ask them to consider it as an option, be supportive, PRAY, welcome faithful priests and religious into your family

At one time being in the religious life was as awesome as becoming a doctor or a lawyer (at least by society's standards) sending our son to a real Catholic high school was what punched his ticket to a vocation. St. James Academy, Lenexa, KS.

Attend all family events in relationship to their discernment, talk to other families.

Attend Mass regularly as a family have family dinners etc...

Attend Mass, Pray, Materially and spiritually support the local parish.

Available when he is able to be home for a bit. Be open to listening to his challenges without trying to fix them!

Be a well-rounded healthy family Support Catholic education Be involved with the parish – Mass, holy days, and socially Love and respect God and one another Foster a positive home environment with books, religious pictures, prayer Express an openness to religious vocations without being pushy Socialize with priests, religious brothers, sisters, deacons as a normal part of life

Be a witness in their faith. Be exposed to priests and sisters in an informal way. Franciscan University is a great witness. I think it is important to promote a personal relationship with our Lord. To trust in the Lord and want to do his will. He selects or calls those he wants to have a religious vocation. Teach them how to listen to the Lord when he speaks to them.

Be active and involved in your faith, seek it and live it! Pray together as a family. Encourage your children to be involved in faith building activities with other young people their age seeking to practice their Catholic faith. Be involved in parish life. Find a great pastor who also interacts with and encourages young people to pray, listen and live in God's will for them.

Be active in a parish. If a teenage boy shows any interest, have them visit a seminary to talk to current seminarians

Be an example: first of all of openness to God's will in our own lives, love of our Faith, and fidelity to prayer and fearless in speaking up for our faith when it comes under attack. Stand up for priests and religious in our parishes who are faithful and may be criticized by others. Go against the culture and give totally of self. I am not recommending a self-righteous witness because often that drives more people away. Don't nag someone about priesthood or religious life. Present opportunities, but then let God work on their hearts.

Be available to discuss his decision as my son did not know how happy we were that he choose to become a priest until after he made his decision. I wish we had been more proactive in encouraging him to become a priest.

Be encouraging if a family member has made the decision to vocation Allow opportunities to visit vocations such as visiting monastery, convent, seminary Suggest that seminaries more open to community through social media Promote vocations as one would promote going to a university such as recruiting at a high school college fair

Be good examples to the children. Show them that your love for Christ is where you get your strength to resist temptation and the fortitude to listen to God's call for your married vocation. You will stay faithful until death do you part.

Be honest

Be involved with your parish and visit other parishes, talk about the possibilities and jobs available to someone in the priesthood, and other branches of religious life, help them get to know people that have a vocation, make God the center of your family. Pray together, most of all let them see that the people who are living the life with in a vocation of just men and women who answered God's call they are not different then you or me, if you are called God has the plan ready.

Be open about their experiences and support your child if they have been called.

Be open and accepting of change. Trust that they are following their heart and God's call. I learned a lot from my daughter, especially how to pray the Rosary.

Be open and encourage whatever he or she feels called on their own to do.

Be open and patient with the idea. Many times fear surfaces because of lack of knowledge.

Be open to a religious vocation for your children and tell children to keep their hearts open to Gods call. I have a friend who would never speak about a religious vocation to her daughters. She was afraid it would somehow brainwash them into becoming a religious.

Be open to all vocation choices your children present.

Be open to it and not judge

Be open to it within one's own family. Discuss it as any other vocation option. Pray for priest and religious on a regular basis (daily or weekly). Allow religious to be a part of your family's life through pray, meals, and fun.

Be open to it, but I don't think you can really PUSH it. The main thing is to encourage our children to do what is right for them to do – that's where our true happiness and fulfillment are. Also, of course, pray for them and encourage them to pray about it also.

Be open to learning and nonjudgmental

Be open to the Holy Spirit and the will of God.

Be open to the option of a religious life. Let your family member explore it through retreats or visits

Be open to vocations in the family, pray for them, and develop personal relationships with priests so that family members can see their joy. Also a good catechesis.

Be open to what God's plan is for your family, not what your plans are for him.

Be open to whatever your child is interested in. Learn more about it yourself so you can talk to him or her about his/her interest. Share your own love of God and your relationship with God, including being a loving and caring person yourself.

Be open, listen. Ask questions

Be positive and supportive when the topic comes up.

Be positive! Celibacy is beautiful! Just another expression of living a wonderful and fulfilled life!

Be supportive

Be supportive of choices.

Be supportive of the decision being made. Recognize it is God through the Holy Spirit that is directing the individual, not you or me. The individual must go through the process of discerning what God is calling him/her to do/be. If he/she changes their mind during this discerning process, do not act like it is the end of the world. Discerning a vocation is not a guarantee he/she will become a priest/brother/sister, etc. But the process of discernment is already a gift that will help him/her for the rest of their life. Be willing to suggest to a young

person, he/she appears to be very into their religion and ask if they ever considered a vocation within the church. Encourage very young people who are devout as altar servers, lectors, cantors, etc.

Be supportive of the decision of each individual, but encourage them to seek out what God is calling them to do. Our older children and their spouses commented that through 12 years of Catholic school and Catholic Universities it was not mentioned to the and it never even crossed their mind that God may be asking that of them. We didn't do our part either if they didn't even think about it.

Be supportive of their life decisions and help them in any way possible. I know our grandmother was always supportive and made sure my brother always had what he needed if he didn't have the money. No matter what life one is choosing, financial responsibilities are a burden.

Be supportive of those considering it but let that person discern it on their own.

Be supportive, visit, communicate, pray.

Be sure to let your child know that you will support any decision that they make.

Be there for them and support their decision.

Be there for them when needed.

Be there for them.

Be there to listen and participate, if possible, in any functions or celebrations of faith.

Be there to listen.

Being active in faith formation of their children. Being active in the parish. Setting an example of faith filled life.

Being open about the possibility of religious life, living an authentic Catholic life

Being open and honest, and take joy and pride in this as you would of any other profession or calling

Being open to family members to choose the vocation, whatever it may be, that God might be calling them to. To pray for them in their discernment.

Being open to the possibility, be positive about the vocation, not as a last resort

Being positive. Letting the person considering a vocation know that you support them. Pray with them for guidance re their vocation.

Brindandole mucho apoyo, mucha comprension. Que lo escuchen y comprendan sus dudas, que no traten de desanimarlo ni desalentarlo. Que asistan a los mismos eventos religiosos que su hijo/hija/familiar religioso. (Providing support and a lot of understanding. To be listened and be understood in his questions, without discouraging him. To go to the same religious events as his son/daughter/relative in religious or priestly life.)

Bring up the idea early in a child's life. Continue to have it as an option. Support family members no matter what.

By always being there for him. Letting him be assured that he will always have a place to go to....have people to talk to....about anything.....anytime. That he is loved unconditionally.

By always being will to listen and talk to their family member. Be supportive and not judgmental.

By always speaking positively to others regarding the wonderful state of life that my/our son enjoys.

By answering questions that parents have about their sons going into the priesthood.

By asking our children to be open to the Lords call and to have interaction with other religious.

By attending Mass regularly, as a family, at a church that is vibrant and welcoming to all people, and interacting with the priests and religious affiliated with that parish. By providing young children with religious education to instill spiritual value during their formative years. Last but not least, by example...trying to live life to the best of your ability, showing love and respect for all, and, in the process, helping them to be the best person they can be.

By attending Mass.

By being around priests or religious if possible, and/or by inviting parish priests or religious over for family meals.

By being close to God themselves, and speaking about what they thank God for in their lives, and sharing what concerns they are bringing to God in prayer. Also, if possible, to send their children to Catholic high school.

By being faithful Catholics themselves and try to expose your children to priests/religious

By being open and supportive and by allowing the family member to pursue the path in life most important to them

By being open and trying to be as understanding as possible. And just being happy that *he* is happy with his vocation

By being open to supporting Religious in our own area and life by way of finances, relationship, and strong faith. Also sharing our faith with family, friends, and acquaintances and by always working and praying to build and strengthen our/ my own faith. Being honest about our weakness with each other and before God.

By being practicing Catholics themselves, including not only devotional practices, but the living out of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, as an example of Christian life. By praying for an increase in vocations. By sending our children to good Catholic grade schools and high schools.

By being presented with a summary of the life, expectations, and commitment during a Mass or annual service activity.

By being supportive

By being there for the family member entering this vocation as you would do for any other family member.

By being there when she needs guidance and encouragement. Make it joyous and happy to talk to each other no matter what is going on in life. Even though we are many miles apart, keeping her up to date with our life is important. Don't leave them out of the good, the bad and the ugly of everyday life. She needs to do the same.

By believing what the Catholic Church teaches with love and fervor. I was a "revert" when my daughter was 12 years old. She had grown up "New Age." In 1999 with a priest's encouragement, she and I took RCIA together. We went to Eucharistic Adoration. She was baptized in 2000.

By embracing their child's choice to follow God's call and share their excitement at every opportunity with others. This is a gift. Be grateful and happy and shout it to the world.

By encouragement to being open to God's will, going on vocation retreats

By encouraging exploration of religious life, and through prayers to help discern religious call and how to best answer. My brother spent a lot of time with the religious at the local parish, which greatly influenced him.

By encouraging members to pray and to ask what it is that God would like from them, then to answer the call. Never put the possibility of serving God through a vocation out of your mind when you are young.

By encouraging the children to take part in activities (altar server) or joining youth group in their parish. By praying together.

By encouraging their family members. I did not encourage my daughter at first because I had been a religious sister for 12 years and had some misgivings about her entering a community but when I became familiar with the congregation she entered, I was very happy that God called her.

By encouraging them to at least pursue a vocation if he/she has any interest at all about discerning. It is not for everyone, but how will they know if they don't at least try it.

By encouraging visits to active communities and working with religious in their ministries.

By enter a serious itinerary for Catholic formation

By example

By example, by the way we live our lives and make our choices; keeping God at the center of our decisions. Also, by attending Mass and parish events at their parishes. I think when asking our younger members “what do you want to be when you grow up?” We should include the option of religious life.

By example. Keeping your faith. Educate members of Family on Faith

By example...living everyday life according to the teaching of Jesus. Praying together and sending children to Catholic schools. We also watched EWTN – Catholic TV network.

By example; I mean, showing/leading-by-example that many lifestyles and careers are 'vocations', not only consecrated religious. Through prayer, knowledge, education and hard work, a 'vocation' may appear; and, we may recognize it if/when prepared for it. religious vocations may be sparse, but can be discerned among other 'vocations' and interests if/when included among other 'good', 'noble', 'satisfying' life endeavors.

By family examples of praying together, participation in Parish activities, outward respect for the Religious and adherence to the Magisterium principles of orthodoxy. Stressing Catholic Education most especially in good Catholic Schools. Living your faith daily in an outward visible way. Be sure to do the “Ask” regarding possible vocations. Invite Priest's to your house for meals and discussions with full family participation.

By getting the younger kids to go to church and becoming active in religious life

By giving it a high priority, setting good examples, volunteering at church, attending Mass regularly. Also by prayers.

By going to Mass together and praying together daily and read the bible together and doing volunteer work. You have to do and not just pray.

By including priests and sisters in family celebrations

By listening to what their loved ones really want and accepting and supporting their choices even if it is not what you would chose for them.

By lived example of our faith being the most (ideally) or one of the most important aspects of our life; by demonstrating discipleship through active involvement in parish, worship, continued formation and stewardship; and by providing loving encouragement for each individual to seek God's unique call for him/her.

By living godly lives devoted to our Lord and in that have more kids.

By living out our love of Christ as we profess it. To support our convents and seminaries financially and by prayerful support. To encourage our children to remain open to the vocation to which God calls them. That vocations to religious life, married life, and the single life can all be fulfilling if it is where God calls them to be. As we were raising our children I prayed that they be open to God's will for them in their lives! And to encourage any young people in our parishes or social circles that we think may have a calling to the religious life.

By living out their faith on a daily basis and practicing their religion. By talking about their faith on a daily basis.

By living out their own vocations with great love, and joy and by praying and encouraging other family members.

By living the faith themselves, as fully and joyfully as possible. Of course – prayer.

By living the faith.

By living the teachings of the Catholic Church; supporting the decisions of the members

By living their Catholic faith and being proud of it, to recognize Jesus as Lord and Savior and the source of all truth and the Catholic Church as His church under the leadership of the pope and talk about it.

By living their faith with their children.

By living their faith.

By living their own faith openly and with zeal.

By living their own primary vocations well, whether that be as married, single. Prayer and faith sharing among family members. Telling one another what you think their strengths/gifts are

By loving, listening, and encouraging them to not be afraid to be who God created them to be. Let the Lord have the room to work in their hearts. It is a temptation as parents to decide who or what your child will “be” when he or she grows up, it is best to leave that up to the Lord.

By making encounters with priests or religious, outside of the church activities possible. i.e., inviting them to dinner at home or special events, etc. In my opinion, this makes children realize that priests and religious are normal people just like us and that they lead happy, fulfilled lives.

By making religion a part of your everyday life. By being involved in your parish and getting all of your family involved as well. By exposing young people to priests and religious on a social basis so that they see that they are normal, well-adjusted people who are happy and fulfilled in their vocation.

By making time for God in their lives. By actually choosing to “push secular things aside”...give up secular opportunities to show the importance of the spiritual. Love, be joyful, be kind....every day. Never miss an opportunity to marvel at God's beautiful creation. Pray for strength to endure life's bumps...then work hard to do your very best...if successful (thank God...it's for his glory...).

By prayer and discussion.

By prayer and example.

By prayer and example.

By prayer and the good example of being actively involved in the faith.

By prayer, and by showing love and support for our priests both local and in general.

By prayer, example, and talking about the vocation.

By prayer, support, and example

By prayers and staying in contact

By praying and begging God to send vocations to their families...by being willing to model sacrificial love and the joy there is in giving of self to others...by holding vocations in high esteem as a great adventure of love for God and His Church...by talking about the heroic value of a religious or priestly vocation...by making specific sacrifices for those who are discerning a vocation...and by loving Truth...and being faithful to the magisterial teachings of the Church.

By praying and sharing our experiences with others.

By praying and talking about religious life.

By praying for the vocations. By inspiring or teaching the word of God to others.

By praying for them often! Listen, be understanding, and offer encouragement. And supporting the order financially as well if you are able.

By praying for, and just being for a particular priest or nun

By praying for that person

By providing spiritual and financial support also becoming active in church to promote vocations.

By raising our children in faith and helping them to develop a relationship with our Jesus. Once they know how to have this relationship it is up to them to ask Jesus for guidance.

By recognizing certain callings and encouraging those that at least appear to have a calling or may have a calling to look into that vocation further

By relating personal experiences of a son who is a priest; by praying as a family and reminding others to pray for priests and for vocations. Encourage other families to discuss the priesthood or religious life and to see vocations as a blessing to the family.

By setting a good Christian example. Asking young people if they have considered religious life.

By setting a good example of Catholic life and be supportive of those with vocations.

By setting an example of strong faith and family. And talking openly about vocations. And encouraging vocations to their children.

By sharing our family experience. As his ordination got closer people would congratulate us as parents...it was humbling because WE didn't do anything. It was God who called him, and he listened. Faith was important in our family, Mass on Sunday, receiving the Sacraments, prayers at meals. Dinner at the table with talk of our days. We formed a strong family unit. We tried to instill a sense of right and wrong. As we (my wife and I) read these questions, it truly amazed us how our Son ended up a Priest! God is amazing and we can talk, guide and pray but it is up to the person to listen!

By sharing our son's positive experience, and that of other priests with others. By praying for vocations. By sharing our own faith experiences with others.

By simply be open to them if your family member is called to this vocation by God. While one can be "put in the way of the Lord," the decision is ultimately in response to God's call.

By staying open to what the family member is thinking and talking about. If he shows an interest in religious life, give him opportunities to explore it without pushing him to it.

By supporting each child to be who God calls him or her to be.

By supporting her decisions and helping her whenever she need our help with anything.

By supporting people in traditional occupations and fostering use of free time in Church missions. For example, help someone get a degree in info tech, but maybe they have to attend Christian boot camp and serve in weekend missions for four years after graduation.

By talking to them when they are young. By them seeing young men so they can identify with them because they are young. And I think Catholic school education is very important.

By the way one lives their faith in the world. And when necessary, teach with words (the Gospel)

By the way they live

By their encouragement! Catholic education and weekly if not daily Mass! And PRAYER

By thriving in the community i.e. faith in action.

By using our son as an example. He is showing everyone that becoming a priest is not only the religious life but there is many other parts of his life that has fun and does a lot of cool things. If others knew the type of experience's he is having versus what they think a priest looks like, more may see that it is a great vocation.

By visiting family member and encouraging them in their discernment of a vocation.

By visits to the seminary or religious congregations, financial support, and by prayer and positive words of encouragement. My visits to my son's seminary when he was there, especially during the family weekend, were, I believe, very important. Also by the encouragement of other members of the extended family.

Catholic families need more information about the life of a priest or a sister. It seems that all the information that a lot people receive is from the movies. Information not only about the dogma and the religion, but about the life of a priest, the life of a sister, what are the expectations. The day to day life is something that people generally do not know (actually after 10 years of having a sister in the family I still have a lot of questions).

Catholic grade and high school education. Intact family. Mass and Eucharistic adoration

Catholic radio, CD's, books Share the importance of faith in your life childhood/adulthood.

Communication and caring. Talk thru their questions and concerns and deal with their thought and feelings.

Compartir con jóvenes que la vida sacerdotal también es una opción de vida (Sharing with young people that priesthood is also a life option.)

Congruencia (Coherence.)

Consider it a call from God. Support the process by listening to the participant. Encourage the participant when appropriate. Allow participant to fully make his own decisions.

Continually remind them that true happiness will only come by seeking God's will for their lives. Introduce religious life as an actual option. Get to know as many priests and religious as possible. Invite them into your homes.

Continue to offer it as a life choice option...offer is the key word (besides prayer)

Continued encouragement and love

Daily prayer for all priests Daily prayer for increase in vocations for holy marriages and religious vocations (private prayer and at Mass). Support our priests, seminarians, deacons and religious Talk positively about priests. Invite priests over for dinner or invite to a restaurant. A question for you on items #12 and #39 – why don't you include deacons/diaconate in your questions? My husband was in deacon formation training for 5 years while our son was in high school and college prior to his letting us know he was considering priesthood. Deacons can have a very positive impact on encouraging vocations. Thank you.

Dando buen ejemplo de fe y siendo coherentes (Giving a good example and being coherent.)

Decide that “it's okay” and it's viable means of “fulfillment”. Try to change a brainwashed mind. “Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.” In the end, conversion is God's grace so, prayer is the means by which all people are converted. Pray for peace – world and country and family. Healing – of generations of bad programming. Help to be healed to be open to be best you can be – so to love others as yourself.

Discernment is highly personal, and does not always end in ordination... but every day spent in formation strengthens one's relationship with God. So, family members should not dwell on the supposed end-result of formation, but on where their loved one is at every step of the journey, realizing that God may use that journey to open a person's eyes to their true calling. Many times, that true calling is ordination, but not always. In other words, deciding not to complete formation should not be seen as failure, but as an updated discernment of God's call.

Discuss a “vocation” as an option when the kids are young.

Discuss it in general as a family, become familiar with priests and other religious, be involved in parish life, and participate in Mass as Eucharistic ministers, sacristans, altar servers. Make prayer and Mass a priority. Participation in religious formation even if they are not able to attend Catholic school.

Discuss them as options with children. Invite priests and religious to your home

Discussion, prayer, and finding a spiritual director

Don't discourage questioning and treat the path of vocations as if it were as normal as choosing a profession.

Don't push, but just ask that they consider whether God is calling them to this life. Encourage them to be active in their parish life, youth group, etc. Attending a faithful Catholic college, such as those listed in the Newman Guide, can be very helpful. I am not certain that our daughter would have answered this call had she not attended Benedictine College (which she did) or some other Newman Guide school where she was surrounded by other young people who were serious about their Catholic faith. Finding opportunities for them to meet priests and religious in more personal ways than just before and after Mass is helpful. All of our kids attended a vocations day sponsored by our diocese in 5th grade, and that was helpful, too.

Don't really know.

Each of these flows one into the next: (1) Believe in the spiritual world. Parents need to rely on God and His Sacramental graces, and continually seek God's friendship and guidance, both as individuals and as a couple. (2) Make the spiritual world real for your children. Teach your children how to believe in the spiritual world. Teach them how to "talk to God" and to His angels and saints. Tell them about the power of the Sacraments and the graces they impart. Insist that everyone needs to "give back to God" through participation in the life of His Church. (Ask your child "what does he/she want to do to participate" in their Church, "now that they've received their First Communion".) Teach your child to measure every action in his/her life in relation to God and His teachings. (3) Pray aloud together for other people. Pray aloud for the protection of the Sacred Heart. Pray aloud regularly for intervention by spiritual beings: every time you get into the car, begin a project, retire for the night, etc. (4) Explain and discuss with your teenagers that there are only 3 vocations open to human beings: Priesthood. Religious Life. Marriage. They need to prepare for whichever of those three Vocations God calls them to. Careers are not vocations, but can become part of the preparation for their vocation.

En mi opinion la mejor manera es respetar la decision del aspirante.. (In my opinion the best way is to respect the aspirant's decision.)

Encourage and model praying about God's will in your life and your children's lives. Don't speak negatively about priesthood or religious life. Keep the lines of communication open so your son or daughter feels comfortable coming to you to discuss religious life or the priesthood as a possibility. Encourage extended family members to have a positive outlook and reaction to the idea of religious life or the priesthood. If necessary, "go to bat" for your child in that regard so no one makes her (or him) feel that there is something wrong with not getting married but choosing religious life instead.

Encourage any comments that the young person makes that show an interest. Be supportive of their desire to be a server at Mass, or attend a retreat. Make an effort to take them to Mass when the family is traveling.

Encourage children who ask about vocations and careers to consider all vocations. Teach children what the vocations are and help them identify themselves in their basic Christian vocation. Oppose actively the Culture of Death and discuss moral issues by showing the results of sin clearly on their lives. Talk about the moral implications of people in the news. Control access to movies, Internet and other gadgets. Be strict in discipline and reward good behavior.

Encourage good young men and women by talking to them and telling them they have the qualities to become a good religious leader. Pray for them.

Encourage involvement in Catholic camps of youth activities and encourage them to build relationships with sisters and priests in their community.

Encourage others to support Religious Life.

Encourage our children and grandchildren to consider as a possibility more than what we did as parents. More visible programs on vocations in our schools and CCD programs as well as making seminarians and priests as visible as possible in our parish life. Of course, always prayer for more vocations and for the support of priests both individually and through church holy hours and adoration. None of these were ever mentioned, offered or promoted in our parish when I was raising my sons. I always prayed individually for vocations, but didn't actually expect it in my own family. I feel very privileged and wished I would have done more.

Encourage the discernment process as a way to listen to God to know what path He has chosen for all of us. We all are called to serve...some as religious, some as families. Some as singles.

Encourage the young people to consider religious life. Support the Vocations offices of your diocese and the various religious orders

Encourage them to be open to whatever God has in store for them

Encourage them to consider a vocation. Be a good example, by being involved in the Church, the parish, being a good steward. Do not be over bearing about your faith, allow and encourage your children to grow their Faith in their way.

Encourage them to stay in contact with god and listen to what he is wanting to do in your life, you will know when you're happy

Encourage time for discernment, have a close relationship with parish priests, support seminarians, be involved in parish life, pray

Encourage young people to attend Mass and parents need to attend with their children. Children imitate what they see and learn. If a family member expresses interest in religious life, be supportive and encouraging, and ask a priest for advice. Lead by example and become involved in your parish in some way (choir, parish council, coffee hour, altar server, etc.) Having Catholic Schools and Catholic education will continue to build a foundation for our religion.

Encourage young people to be serious about their faith and set a good example by going to Mass, being a good Christian citizen and listening to God speak to you.

Encourage, enjoy and pray for their vocations that they bear much spiritual fruit!

Encourage, listen and not make demands of their child's time. Taking an interest in our Lord with them.

Encourage. Be friends with Priests and Religious, inviting them to your home. Be faithful, speak highly of Priests. Retreats, youth retreats and mission work.

Encouragement and financial

Encouragement at the parish level.

Encouragement, prayer, conversations, affirmations.

Encouraging young people in their vocation to marriage, priesthood, religious life, and single life.....reminding them and teaching them, how to ask about God's call in their life.

Encouraging young people to be involved as altar servers, youth groups, Searches, encouraging utility of the sacraments, especially reconciliation and Holy Communion. Going to Mass, as a family, at least once a week and holy days. Encourage prayer as a dialog with God in decision making and direction.

Encouraging young people to be open to God's call, whatever it is. To give opportunities for young people to grow in their faith. To give opportunities for young people to have discernment retreats and visits with priests and religious groups.

Ensure that they understand (and encourage their surrender to) God and His foundational vocation as a Catholic Christian, help them to understand their gifts and ask Him (God) how He wants you to use your gifts.

Estudiar en escuelas religiosas y asisitir a grupos catolicos. (Studying in religious schools and attending Catholic groups.)

Eucharistic Adoration, and the unreserved belief in the Real Presence it implies, played a significant role in my daughter's formation. St JPPII's engagement with youth and his challenge to seek excellence in living out one's faith also played a significant role. People will sacrifice much for excellence. Families can promote vocations by giving undiluted access to Truth, either directly or with the help of the parish community.

Example

Example and prayer

Explain Sr. Abigail's life and work to the extended family

Expose then both the religious and married life. Then let God work.

Exposing your children to faithful, holy priests and sisters; praying for their vocation in life; as parents, show your children a lot of respect for religious orders and religious life.

Fall in love with Christ. Once that has happened all falls into place.

Families can bring their children to visit the motherhouses of an order. It changes your life in many ways. It may plant a seed, or it can make your faith stronger.

Families can encourage vocations by becoming friends with priests and nuns they can show the young that they are very normal and happy people. We all need to pray daily for vocations and support religious and priests as much as we can.

Families can talk openly and honestly about vocations. Parents can encourage their children to listen to their hearts to determine where God is calling them. Parents can share their own discernment stories with their children. Parents can faithfully live out their vocation to married life by putting God at the center of their marriage and modeling for their children how to live out the sacrament of marriage.

Families should be given a better understanding of the religious order their son or daughter is considering entering. I think it would be helpful for families to know more about a religious order and the sacrifices that they as a family will be called to make. Knowing more about your son or daughters calling, also, would be helpful in families being completely supportive of their decision. Also, pray daily for more young people to respond to their calling.

Families should be making religion be a big part of their family's life. If a child sees how happy a religious life can be, then maybe it would be considered. Being involved in church activities can help and also allow them to see what a religious life entails.

Families should pray together, have dinner together and go to Mass together. With all the electronic gadgets that "bring people together" it sums that families are growing farther apart.

Families that have an active prayer life, that speak of our Lord often, that discuss our Catholic faith, that are active in their parishes are probably the families most likely to foster vocations. God must have really wanted our daughter because we really did not actively encourage her! She was chosen from birth and nothing we could do would dissuade her. And through her and her vocation, God has abundantly blessed us!

Family is the core unit at which values are observed and learned. Six kids all developed from that core.

Family join the Mass together, daily prayer together, and discuss about events of church and Pope, international news, social issues, political issues and so on. Share the joy and sorrow together. Tight family bond.

Family members can best promote vocations by educating the person to 1. Stay in the State of Grace, 2. Pray intentionally every day, 3. See that the person fulfills their duties in their state of life (homework, watching siblings, etc.) 4. See that the person meets priests, seminarians, and religious brothers, and sisters.

Family members can best support and promote vocations by a couple ways I think, 1. Exposure – there are so many Catholics who never meet a priest or religious outside the context of the parish life. 2. Family prayer/discussion – engaging in conversations about the saints especially creates curiosity among children. 3. Prayer: Sacraments – taking your kids to Daily Mass, Adoration, and Confession is the gateway for grace, especially as it provides for the Lord to speak.

Family members can best support or promote religious vocations in young people by encouraging them to be open to the possibility that God may be calling them to be a priest or sister/nun.

Family members can support vocations or religious life by interacting with priests or religious persons inviting them over to their homes sharing their own family life living, problems, joys and sadness. Good examples. Try to practice our beliefs.

Family members need to be accepting of another person's choice in life and especially in something like this where it is such a good thing and not something to be embarrassed by. Our society is so oversexed. The 1st thing mentioned is “Why would a person do that to themselves?” (becoming chaste) “What is wrong with them?” That is the biggest hurdle for people entering the religious life. Family members need to realize life is not all about sex and the person entering this field probably doesn't note this as the most important thing in life (just ask them – they will tell you that). Having the calling is a gift and needs to be respected, and if a family member is feeling this calling, education needs to take place among family members. On the other hand, it is important that the person entering doesn't send mixed messages, which can cause confusion among family members, which can really cause a block in the family being supportive. It's also important that the one entering the field carry on – it just takes time for some family members to get over “their ideal visions of what this person was to become. Our brother was never content in other jobs, he pursued being a priest has been the best thing for him – he has been the most content in this field – it just took time to see. We are all supportive of his field now.

Family members need to realize that the person devoting their lives to the religious life are providing a sacrifice and reparation for all mankind and come to realize how beautiful that sacrifice is to the divine plan

Family members need to talk about it. Others within the family need to know that it's okay to consider a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

Family members should be open to the possibility of a religious vocation and encourage young people to always consider “giving God a chance.” A positive attitude towards religious vocations and communicating that attitude to children is extremely important, too. All four of our children were educated in Catholic schools – that religious formation definitely played a part in our son's vocation to the priesthood, as well!

Family members should find out more about what it means to be in the seminary and discover what the formation process entails. Perhaps spend time with a parish priest to find out what daily life is like.

Family prayer, especially the rosary, and by recalling often that our ultimate purpose is to get to heaven.

Family Rosary, Mass, religious celebrations

Family, including extended family members praying together. Support and vocation awareness on a parish level. Youth Group activities, retreats, etc. I believe this was an important part of my daughter's discernment.

Financially supporting Bishop's Services Appeal. Financially supporting seminary. Encouraging young men at our parish to consider priesthood or diaconate.

First and foremost is prayer along with being supportive and talking about the need for religious vocations. We can hold our son up as an example of how parenthood can be very rewarding. He is really happy in his parenthood. Thanks be to God.

First by prayer, secondly asking God for a religious vocation in their family, thirdly financially supporting the local diocese vocation office and seminarians, fourth, writing to seminarians.

First praying for vocations. Second, living your life in the faith is the best way of promoting vocations as a family. Third, discuss vocations as a family, encourage discussions outside of the family. Fourth, establish personal relations with religious persons.

First through prayer, communication and understanding of their particular community and charism as well as support for their whole community.

First, remind children that God made them with a plan in mind (a certain path) and they will not be content/fulfilled/happy unless they find that path. Then, promote “quiet” time....especially as they enter high school and start thinking about their future; I think time in front of the Blessed Sacrament is especially helpful. Let God do the rest and don't stand in the way.

First, show genuine interest in the subject. Secondly, be enthusiastically supportive.

Follow their faith, get involved in the parish, pray daily, have devotions in the home, and good Catholic teaching from the earliest years.

Follow their lead and treat them with the same love, care and concern for their needs as other members of the family. Most importantly to keep them close in prayer.

Follow your heart and support the family member when he/she is called.

For our family, we saw our son being drawn to the Holy Spirit. How could we deny this for him? We must support our family members that are being called to the priesthood. Support your family member by meeting with a vocation director. This person can explain the process and answer all of your questions.

From an early age when we spoke of her future we tried to always frame it as “if God calls you to...” Little girls talk about being married and having children, we tried to say “if God calls you to be married. He may call you to the religious life. We want you to answer God's call.” We tried not to 'encourage' the vocation of marriage or religious but encouraged actively searching for God's call and saying “yes” to whatever that was. I think sharing personal stories of discernment. Our mantra as parents was “to raise her to know, love and serve the Lord.” We tried to have our decisions rest on this concept. We dedicated her to God at her baptism. She was never solely ours, but always and ultimately a Child of God.

From high school standard

Generally be supportive as I would be for any other life decisions made by my family members.

Get the message that someone has to do it.

Getting to know priests and religious, talking about the priesthood and religious life in everyday ordinary conversation as an option for life as you would about being a teacher, or doctor, or athlete.

Give full support and accept his call to priesthood, and that they should be honored to have him as a relative and an example for their lives.

Give a good example in your life and encourage the person. Have clergy over for dinner.

Give the family members names and numbers that they can talk to who has gone through it. Or even have a question and answer talk with parents that have children that are starting a vocation

Give the option of religious life to others/children. Don't push them but encourage them is their discernment. Remind them that discerning is not a commitment.

Give them exposure to holy priests and pray for them to do God's will.

Go to church, make adoration important.

Go to Mass every week and involve your children in the religious life

Go to Mass regularly! Send children to Catholic school! Talk about your faith often, and live it by example in your words, deeds, and attitudes.

Going to Mass every week and praying together. Being very supportive of the Catholic priesthood. Encouraging the young people in all the practices of the faith and getting them involved at Mass or youth events.

Good question since I did not necessarily promote the religious vocations to my three children. It would have been nice if our parish occasionally talked about religious vocations...in that way giving an opportunity to talk about it. My mother (his grandmother) prayed unceasingly for men to join the priesthood. His paternal grandfather often told stories of wanting to be a priest and helping the priests when he was in the service. He got out of the service, got married, and had ten kids.

Have conversations occasionally with your sons/daughters that a vocation is a viable and worthy option they have as they grow. Let the Lord know in your own prayers that if it is his will, he is welcome to have your son/daughter with your support. Stay true to the Catholic Faith in your own marriage. Stay married. Attend Mass weekly minimum. Nightly prayers. Keep your family member that is in a vocation in prayer that they stay true to their vocation as it is a natural example and opportunity for example to your children in the family.

Have priests and religious as regular visitors in the home. Talk about religious vocations as a viable choice. Encourage them to consider it and make exploring vocations available (my daughters went on retreats with various religious communities while they were still in high school), live an active Catholic life (i.e. go as a family to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day), have quality religious books/periodicals/movies in the home.

Have priests vocalize their needs from the pulpit – let people know that they want to be invited to supper and then families with children can get to know the priest. The local K of C is ready to support young men so they have the parish involved in recognizing and supporting those young people who are thinking of a vocation to religious life from the earliest possible date.

Have the family throw out the television set.

Help others to see priesthood as a joyful vocation. Also we share that our son was always full of laughter and his faith was a deep one but never overly “pious” in character – the person with a vocation is a leader and someone who likes people and life. He may not have a family of his own but he will love others, have lots of people and joy in his life, just in another way than the family pattern.

Helping others realize the importance of the priesthood and the profound meaning it has.

Honestly, I don't see the need for vocations as they exist.

I (and many others) think the diocese needs to use the Evangelist to advertise events like ordinations BEFORE the event occurs. It seems there are only pictures after the fact. I hear comments like “if I'd known, I could have taken my son”. If people were made aware of events ahead of time, it would give them opportunities to bring up vocations and use it to at least expose their children to very impressive events. Until our son was in seminary, even we were not aware the ordinations took place the same weekends every year. A popular comment from parishioners who attended his was “I NEVER knew how beautiful...” and “WOW, this was wonderful!” Since I was often asked “how did we make him a priest”, I asked my son what we did. He simply said “you didn't push me towards a particular career. You let me explore for myself.” He said friends of his felt guilty because they had always been told what path they should take, they didn't want to disappoint their parents/family, so that's what they did. Unbeknownst to us, we gave him freedom to decide for himself the path that was right for him. So, families shouldn't encourage or discourage a particular route. But including priesthood/religious life right along with white/blue collar careers at least plants the seeds for them to ponder. Then simply support whatever decision THEY make. After all, we want our children to be happy productive adults and that only comes from them listening to their heart.

I am a non-Catholic married to a Catholic. My son had a calling. I'm not sure how to promote this. Even though the priesthood is important it is so hard to promote someone entering religious life at this time plus the sacrifice of family is so hard.

I am not Catholic. Her father was so our children went to Catholic school/church. I attend Catholic Church, but am not a member. It is more important to me that our family be a family of faith rather than a certain church. At our daughter's baptism both my husband and I promised her to God (even though I didn't know this until recently . . . we didn't tell each other) She is our oldest and a gift. I feel God just took us up on our promise. At a very young age I think we both knew she would do great things and would listen to her calling. Support or promote: #1 Prayer #2 Prayer #3 more prayer.

I am not much in favor of advocating so strongly. Youth should be educated on religious life, its value, process, and way. But young people might be influenced by the adulation they receive, if we elevate them too much by this choice. If God is calling them, that should be the sign. However, we must be as supportive as possible, if and when they choose a religious vocation, because we cannot deny the value of the sacrifice that they are entering upon. In other words, I do not want someone choosing a vocation because it would make me happy or bring great satisfaction (although it certainly will). Perhaps the best thing is to stay out of God's way and let Him do the calling. Our job is to value and appreciate that calling with the proper perspective (no gushing over the candidates, please).

I am not sure.

I am not sure.

I believe family members can best support and promote vocations to priesthood and religious life by practicing their faith. Stay close to the sacraments, the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation. Encouraging themselves and their loved ones to seek God's will in everything. Focus on joy and the Holy Spirit in all they encounter. I believe the only way any of us can know true happiness is by listening and trying to do the will of our God. He is merciful and generous. He has ALL the resources we could ever need to live a life of abundance!

I believe it is a call one receives and one must answer. If a family member is feeling called family and friends should offer love and support as the individual discerns.

I believe living a close happy, faith-filled Catholic family life style can help also praying for discernment and courage to follow the vocation God calls you to.

I believe my daughter's religious retreats that she went on in high school was the biggest influence in her decision to enter a religious order.

I believe parents, especially, need to show by their own lives, and in a much more secondary way by their words, that there is nothing better to do with one's life than to be a priest or nun, if it is the will of the dear Lord.

I believe prayer is essential. We must ask the Holy Spirit to show more men how they can live joy filled lives as priests. So many of the new priests we know are joyful young men who will do a lot to encourage vocations. Families should invite these young priests into their homes to show their children how joyful these men are because they have put their trust in God.

I believe that discerning and following God's plan brings to each individual the greatest fulfillment and joy. A person "not in" their true vocation is likely to be an unhappy person. It is very difficult to seriously consider one's vocation if he or she does not have or has misinformation about priesthood, religious life, or marriage. I think family members can best support their children or siblings by first encouraging an openness to God's call for their particular path to holiness; helping them be exposed to the experiences that provide an interaction with holy priests, religious, and married people – be involved in the church at the parish and larger community; in the presence of your son/daughter/sibling honor, respect, and thank the priests and religious when you meet them.

I believe that raising children to ask questions, explore options, and be available to answer questions and live an authentic life by example will allow these children to listen to what God is calling them to.

I believe that the best support is by sharing our experience of discernment and religious life.

I believe that the parent's practice of their faith is the first influence to a son or daughter's religious vocation. This constant practice of faith normally translates to a loving environment and help shape the heart and mind of the child. Then, at the age of reason, she/he will seek a deeper meaning of her existence.

I believe the best thing that you can do is ask questions with an open mind. I see the process not so much as supporting vocations but supporting my daughter's life decisions.

I can only speak for myself. I came to realize that this was so painful for me because it wasn't what *I* wanted for my son, and that's not the point. The point is, what does *God* want for my son. The priesthood is certainly not what I would have ever chosen but I have come to accept that he is where he feels called to be right now. If that changes, I will not be sorry, but if he becomes a priest I am certainly going to be proud of him and support him. I do believe that God can use him in this and that he has learned some valuable and useful things already from his seminary experience. When he told me, "If I'm really serious about following Jesus, I have to be willing to give him everything" – well, I can't argue with that. I have to trust that God knows my son – he is His – and I can trust God to lead him.

I can't really point to any specific things that we did that would make me say with assurance "this is what families should do." Generally we tried to be supportive of our children in all aspects of their lives, and as a family we were very engaged in our faith community and placed value on daily prayer and reflection.

I do not have an opinion, cannot speak for other family members.

I don't know for sure. Encourage them and pray for them to answer the call, if it is their call.

I don't know. I think the person needs to have the feeling of being called by God, without any influence of the family. I think both religious vocations and married life are important but I wouldn't pressure a family member to go either way. Once they make their choice, then I believe support comes through prayer, public approval, and emotional support.

I don't subscribe to any religion so have no opportunity to support or promote vocations to priesthood or religious life.

I don't think that a person can persuade a person to the religious life. It has to be inspired by God

I encourage my children to pray and listen to what God is calling them to do. I pray for them.

I feel it is important to take children to church and be involved in the parish community. Personal and family prayer at home is also important, and so is teaching children that they all have a special calling by God.

I feel support is the key. She is an adult, highly educated, independent woman, and some of the family were worried that she was giving up too much to seek this new religious life. I just reminded her that it is her life to do as she wishes, and I love her no matter the path she chooses. I also told her that if this does not work out, that I will support her as well. We must have faith, and my sister is leading the family with this big step, I am proud of her no matter the outcome.

I feel that family members should pray daily for vocations and always have a positive attitude towards supporting men and women who are called to a religious vocation.

I found it more necessary to make sure that my daughters were exposed to nuns and sisters since they weren't in our local Catholic schools or visible much in the community so we volunteer at our Little Sisters of the Poor residence and attend Mass and novenas that are offered at several of the local monasteries (Visitation and Carmelite). My sons see priests at every Mass they attend and are altar boys so that is easier. We also include stories about religious in literature and movies in our home. Children can't ever consider being something that they don't know about so we try to maximize their exposure so that if they do have a vocation they can recognize that more easily.

I have always said "it's their life and career choice" not mom's or dad's. The sad thing is parents are the selfish ones. I've heard many parents say "I want grandchildren." It's not about them.

I have been asked in the past about how our family promoted vocations to the priesthood or religious life since we have 3 children with these vocations. I really do not know if we promoted vocations to the priesthood or religious life as such. I think it was more promoting and encouraging our children to figure out what God wanted them to do. As parents we have tried to live our lives as authentically Catholic as possible. We spent 3 years as Lay Missionaries early in our marriage. I think that had a great influence on what was important in our lives as a family by teaching prayer life, never miss Mass, study, Catholic School, Religious pictures, family traditions, bringing religious into the home, church activities, retreats, Scouting religious awards, good books, DVD's etc. available, help them to identify their talents, teach good stewardship and kindness to others. Again I want to emphasize that I felt my job was to help my children discover what God wanted of them, religious life being one choice of many and to LISTEN to GOD's voice.

I have supported my son when he decided to enter the priesthood. He's a deacon right now 2015: I'm so proud of him; and joyful that he expected his calling from God.

I homeschooled my daughter and used a Catholic curriculum and believe that made a huge impact on her. I also tried to make God part of my day, praying, reading, talking about God with my children. Talking about God's will in their life and to listen to what He wants them to do. I have a very supportive extended family and our faith is important to us all.

I just let them believe what they want – and support their decisions

I think by praying and having conversations about it

I think by trying to encourage their young family members to have positive experiences in their parish activities and to have interactions with all types of groups. Having other religious role models and close friends helps their faith to grow. (Youth ministry, music ministry, retreats, etc.)

I think family members need to be able to keep contact with the religious. I think the more the family knows about what the religious is doing and how gratifying that is or how it affects others or how at peace it makes them, then the family can be more supportive of the relative's vocation and to others considering a religious vocation. I know having my niece visit and attend Mass and other parish events help promote vocations. It allows others to see firsthand that people are still choosing a religious vocation.

I think if the priesthood and religious life are presented favorably, and children are exposed as much as possible to good priests and religious, they will grow up open to the idea of having a vocation. And parents should encourage any child who expresses this interest, no matter how young. They should not be pushed into it, but should be encouraged to remain open to the possibility.

I think it has to be talked about in a loving way. Every rosary we pray as a family we follow with specific prayers. We have always prayed the prayer to the little flower for our children, “for Jordan, Jennifer, Gabrielle, Madison, Nicole and Max – for their health, purity, safety, future spouse, vocation, education and attitude.” I think little things like that speak to a child's heart. Now the rest of the kids have seen what Sr. Jordan's life is like. My prayer is for increased visits by religious to rural communities to foster vocations through a sense of normalcy. We have been blessed to be able to support our daughter by visiting when allowed. It is a huge sacrifice to fly from Idaho to NYC... But all our children see and feel our love for each other.

I think it helps to be focused on the will of God and place that as the family's priority. It is also helpful for the parents to work with the siblings to help them be more supportive. In general, the more the family focuses on Jesus as the center of its life the more I think the candidate will learn to do that him or herself. I also believe World Youth Day is very important. Each of our five children attended one.

I think it is important to follow your child's lead. If they show an interest, support them but don't push them one way or another. Our son showed vocation interests at different times throughout his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. We always supported this and never tried to push him away from it. It came as no real surprise to us when he made the decision to enter and we told him at that time if he felt that strongly, he needed to try it or would wonder the rest of his life. I believe he made the correct decision and we are proud of his choice and the fine young man he has become.

I think it is something you must come into freely – but you will never know something is right for you unless it is exposed to you in an unbiased, but also passionate way. I think we are led by our hearts, but also Life (God) puts doors in front of us a well.... So essentially I think family can help expose someone to it, and be encouraging and supportive if someone is curious. I want what makes my family happy, which luckily in my case, and in many people's cases, what they want are good and virtuous things.

I think it's a calling. I think family members are too close to promote vocations, but they can certainly encourage and be supportive if there is interest.

I think my parents do the greatest job in doing this. At first they were not as supportive but once the veils on their misconceptions have been lifted and once they accepted God's will for my sister, they were able to see the beauty of priestly and religious vocations. Family members can best support and promote vocations by sharing our stories with friends, families and the members of our parish. Our family also take the chance to support and speak with other family friends who are at the same situation as we were (For parents whose child is considering or currently in religious formation).

I think that education from the beginning of their lives and incorporating prayers and God into their daily life would be the best way of support. Parents need to answer/research hard questions that society will ask and show how love and God will show the best path. Parents should lead through example and have difficult conversations regarding sex, love, friendship, and honor early before school friends or society have a chance to jade them towards the faith. However, a family member shouldn't push religion or force adolescents either. Weekly Mass is okay, but a teenager needs to feel free to go to confession on their own and learn how prayer and forgiveness are important in their lives. From my standpoint, when I was in university, I thought about becoming a sister, but every time I took steps towards dedicating myself further into my faith, my family would force me to go to confession with them and I felt like it wasn't my own will. Strong education while maintaining free will is one of the best balances towards promoting religious vocations.

I think that it is important to see our young priests in a variety of parishes. When young family members see a young priest who enjoys life and enjoys what he does, it makes it much easier to encourage young family members to consider the priesthood or religious life.

I think that it will be a great help from all family members to offer daily prayers and sacrifices for vocations and support parish priests, religious organizations and activities. This will lead to the consideration of a priesthood vocation.

I think that we need to be willing to have open conversations with our families about the possibility of choosing this life, especially if God lays the vocation of religious life on our hearts. I think that if someone would have spoken to me about religious life at an early age, I would have considered the possibility for myself. There was no encouragement or even talk about being a nun, so the idea never really occurred to me. It is also important for religious to spend time with the kids so that they get exposure to someone in that life and learn what it is all about. This can dispel any misconceptions and also open the minds of the children to know that this could be a choice for them if they are called.

I think the best thing parents can do to promote vocations is to be active in their parish communities, become friends with priests and religious; welcoming them into their homes to be

part of family life. Also pray that the Holy Spirit guide the Pope with selecting Bishops who will be pastors and not ideological 'yes men'.

I think the church does a great job of making sure the person wanting a vocation is there for the right reasons and truly feels a calling- they should try to be a support and trust that God's will help them and then they will be in the best place they should be. If that is a vocation or not.

I think the most important thing for a family to do is continue treating the person the same and not be intimidated.

I think there is a fine balance to be established. Certainly, it is not effective to write off the possibility of a family member being called to religious life – which certain comments (i.e., “I can't believe they wouldn't get married”) could do. I also believe that it is important for the individual to make that choice on his or her own and not have it constantly be suggested as the only route. I think being open to the religious people in the family's life is important and when an individual is questioning their vocation, to support that possibility. Rather than thinking of how it will impact me as an individual and what I don't like, ask the individual considering the vocation how they feel and what is helpful to them.

I think they are going above and beyond already with resource support

I think they can talk positively of priests/religious they know. I also think it is important not to assume that everyone will get married and have children (i.e. “if you get married” not “when”) to avoid the appearance that you think the vocation of marriage is better/more important. Once the person is in formation, they can take interest in that just as they would in a relationship or in a career of a loved one. And of course, prayer!

I think they should encourage them to at least give the seminary a try to see if that is a right fit for their life. When my son entered our entire parish was overjoyed as many parishioners we learned had been praying and been waiting for this to happen since he was in high school. I told him when he left that if it didn't work out not to feel bad or embarrassed as he had given it a try.

I think we did a good job of raising our son with solid Catholic values, at least what were the Catholic values. The church changed but with Pope Francis' leadership, it may regain what we considered Catholic values at one time- more of a focus on the Beatitudes.

I think we need to put it on the table alongside firefighter and doctor when kids think about what they want to be. I think we have to insist on yearly retreats in high school even if weekly youth ministry does not happen. I also think the family needs to expose them to adoration and the beauty of our faith. Financial commitments are made for sports and vacations – we need to make them for faith experiences like World Youth Day, mountain climbing retreats, etc. Be open to how God works in all of our lives; I wish we could all be taught to prayerfully discern life's path.

I told her from the beginning that it was her decision. I wasn't going to tell her she couldn't do what she felt called to. We visit her as often as we are permitted and we write frequent letters. I

make sure to let her know that we are proud of her. We know this has been difficult process for her and I try not to say anything that will discourage her or that will make her feel guilty for leaving us. She's an adult and I try to treat her like one.

I witnessed an absolute divine calling to the priesthood that could not have been dissuaded. I was very pleased to have my son accept this calling, but did not identify it nor any secular vocation and chose to allow this as his decision along with God. I could say that prayer, regular connection to faith activities, and proper role models in religious life and family best support vocations. Repair of the horrible, but needed recognition of years of abuse and cover-ups is needed to provide simple acceptance of religious vocations.

If a family member suggests that he or she is considering religious life, be open to the idea before voicing an opinion against it if it is not what you want or not what you would do.

If a family member thinks they have a calling, then we should encourage their action to learn more. Parents and siblings should not make fun of the history of priests. Parents and siblings should try to learn about the order and interact with other candidates.

If communities communicated the discernment process in a more concrete way, I think we would have appreciated the process more and not felt so cut off from her. When people would ask about her, we would get all teary eyed and say “we don't really know” – and although it was totally true, that probably doesn't sound that attractive to others, they basically “felt sorry” for us – which didn't promote vocations.

If it is their true calling accept it. If it is not their true calling they will find out within a few years of entering. It is difficult enough for them to make this decision without family members making them feel guilty about leaving their family.

I'm not saying I am the definition of this person at all, but, my conviction is this: Fall in love with Jesus and His Church, be evangelized yourself, be convicted yourself that the Church holds the Truth. Be joyful! Let your kids know you are in love with Christ and that it makes a difference in your life! Live it as a witness as best as you can. Don't just invite a priest to dinner, get to know your priests at the parish and build a relationship with them. Then invite them to dinner. Be honest. Don't try to hide the flaws of the Church. Spend time with your kids – time, time, time!

In my family, it was never explicitly encouraged yet two of my sisters are now religious sisters we prayed a lot as family which encouraged us all to develop personal relationships with the Lord – once this is established the Lord may invite the individual to a special relationship with Him as priest or sister, etc. We need to encourage families to pray. That is the Key.

In my opinion – I believe the church needs to better support/promote vocations to the priesthood or religious life. My son was well supported by the family but was not able to get much support from the church. I thank God for my son's vocation and his strength to follow that calling – even though it took the church many years before it supported him.

In my opinion, family members can promote vocations to priesthood or religious life by keeping active with their church, and live with good example. I think it is a call with in you, and if the person has questions about it, feel happy for them and let them be.

In my opinion, the faith formation in our family and in our small community was minimally adequate. Where I noticed the difference was in the college formation (or age 18 to 22). Franciscan University, University of Dallas and Catholic University of America were the strong pieces for two vocations to religious life and a third daughter who received excellent academic advice, direction and support toward medical career and marriage both reflecting strong Catholic faith formation and values. Of the five other children in the University of Notre Dame graduate has strong social justice convictions but no practice of the faith. Three others who went to secular colleges are also not practicing the faith. The daughter that joined a religious movement for seven years in a Catholic marriage and active faith life. It is clear that the investment in higher education at a school with a strong Catholic identity is a major contribution to education in and practice of the faith and the positive exploration of possible vocations to priesthood and religious life.

In my opinion, the first and foremost support that families can give is prayer. The second is for families to be open to talking about a vocation to the religious life. This is also true for any of the faithful in the community. I think Vocation Committees can also play an important role in promoting vocations to religious life.

In our early years as a family we use to say the rosary often and always prayed for vocations. Unfortunately, as the family, and we as a couple, grew busier, that all stopped.

Intercessory prayer of every sort

Introduce them to a highly regarded priest or member of religious life, who has experience and understanding of religious life. It should be the individual's decision to become a priest/religious and based not upon the strong influence of a parent. Family members can offer the pros/cons but an individual must make that decision. The more discussion and connection he has with priest/religious will help strengthen his desire and his ability to better articulate his decision, to increase vocations in USA churches most attract young people to attend Church via their charisma, message, etc. if attendance continues to decline so will vocations.

Introducing their children and friends to religious live and just asking if they would like to go into religious life. This seems one area where family and friends tend to shy away from.

Invest in encouraging family members to really pray and seek a revelation from God about discerning what one's vocation is (whatever it may be). It will be the source of one's life joy and meaning if you can feel certain about this, and that is invaluable to people's happiness and sense of well-being.

Invite priests/religious into home. Pray for vocations. Introduce the topic to one's children.

It is always an option for life. We always talked about it as an option along with “regular” jobs and the vocation of marriage. I would never push, but never discourage either. It is a fine line as they must be called by God, but we must make sure the calling is true.

It is hard to understand but if this is their choice and they have been called by god you do the best you can to support them.

It is important for parents to introduce priests and nuns in a positive light during their children's early years. My parents did not push us towards the priesthood, but we always knew from a young age that it was a worthy vocation, and we were never dissuaded from considering it.

It will vary with the family unit and the candidate. Encouragement is important and letting your child know that you would support them in such a vocation.

It would be nice for the diocese to offer some kind of activity for all parents of high school students that introduces the idea of vocations into their family. Types of vocations available, learn about the process for young men and young women, etc.

It's not what we say as much as what we do. Be supportive of your parish priest and other religious. Don't criticize and find fault with them because they don't fit your criteria for what you want in a religious. They all have unique gifts to share with us. Find that gift and help nourish it. Don't dwell on their shortcomings. They are after all imperfect humans, like ourselves.

Just be accepting of the individual

Just by living your faith and letting them see your joy helps to promote vocations.

Just listen and help talk through the decision, making it clear that what God wants is what's best as well as what makes them happy.

Just love people where they are at and encourage them to pursue their deepest passions that bring them closer to God.

Just love them

Just support and love them.

Just support them in their order.

Just tell them to do what makes them happy. Talk to parents of priests/religious and ask them how it has changed their lives. Get involved in parish life. Even at the lowest level, it could help promote in some way. We were involved in church maintenance. We mowed the grass, cleaned the church, changed the missalettes, set up for Mass, etc.

Keep encouraging and praying for my sister.

Keep in contact in their lives how's things are going for them. Try to be in the congregation of their parish to celebrate Masses, especially holiday Masses, throughout the year with him. Go to parish functions and fundraisers to meet the people he's involved with and give them/him support. Hear and see the feedback from his parish.

Keep in contact, appreciate that the vocation is a family in itself and support all in religious life. Support the specific cause of the vocation.

Keep open lines of communication...and not be hesitant to discuss openly all facets of what a religious life holds.

Keeping in contact

Know God and continue to learn: 1 Love more deeply 2 Grow in relation to God. 3 Serve God and others joyfully and enthusiastically 4 Never afraid to share with others a) the Faith b) Reason we love c) Reason we serve

la mejor manera es introducirlos en la fe , y dejar que su corazon escuche el llamado pues considero que esto debe ser una cuestion de vocacion no de imposicion , mi hijo por si solo escojio ese camino (The best way is to give witness, speaking of the happiness experienced in giving oneself to God and doing his will.)

La mejor manera es dar testimonio hablar de la felicidad que se vive entregandose a dios y haciendo su voluntad (The best way is to give witness, speaking of the happiness experienced in giving oneself to God and doing his will.)

La oración. (Prayer)

Lead by example, make your marriage a priority as well as your faith life. Find engaging, solid Catholic youth programs that help your teens know and live the Catholic faith. Don't be afraid to challenge our youth- they will grab on tight if they see meaning and purpose in their life. They need to have their own personal relationship with Jesus. Expose your children to holy priests and religious. Then, get out of the way! God calls, not well-meaning mothers or grandmothers. Let your children know about all kinds of vocations and then pray for holy priests to be part of your son/daughters life. If he/she has a vocation to priesthood or religious life it will surface. Nagging doesn't work, in fact it may drive a vocation away. Deal with your own issues as a parent separate from your son/daughter. We have formed a parent of seminarians support group in the diocese that helps a lot with this. Find a priest to talk to and read a lot on your own. There are challenges to giving your child totally to God! Realize that just because you send your child to a Catholic school doesn't mean they will connect with the Catholic faith. This is especially true for college. I meet so many parents whose kids have left the faith after sending them to a Catholic college primarily to keep the faith. I'm sorry to say this but this is what I see. We need our Catholic schools to have a Catholic identity- that is my prayer.

Let children know, as they grow up, that the priesthood and religious life are options to marriage. But I never encouraged it individually. Speak of religious life positively, and expose them to priests and sisters when possible. If they show an interest support them, but it should be something they are choosing for themselves, and not to please you or someone else. Live your faith and to the best of your ability make it part of your family life. God will bless and multiply your effort.

Let children make the choices they think is in their best interest. If they research their choices, they can best make the decision.

Let family see your faith and how important it is to you.

Let our seminarians know how proud we are of them. Maybe have parents of seminarians speak at some of the parishes to help advance the interest in vocations.

Let people be themselves.

Let the child know they want them to be happy and as long as they are happy in their vocation, I am happy.

Let the discernment process develop on its own and be supportive when asked for an opinion. **DO NOT PUSH IN ONE DIRECTION OR THE OTHER.** It has to be a very personal and private decision.

Let their children experience priests and sisters who are happy in the vocations. Allow them to know that priests and sisters are normal people who chose God. Don't pressure them in whatever the vocation is. Let them know you only want them to know God and be happy with their choice.

Let them take the lead and you just support them.

Let them try it out.

Letting them know that you want them to do what makes them happy. That you will support them in any way you can.

Like any evangelization endeavor, there must be a balance of encouragement and respect for freedom. I think that the conviction of the faith must be evident in the family as well as the happiness that comes from those convictions. Along with that, it must be evident that it is important to give of oneself for others and always to do what is right. Then it is also necessary that a young person has space to be themselves and respond in freedom.

Listen to their feelings and support their decision to check into it

Listen to them, encourage them, and support them 100%

Listen when a youth mentions they are considering religious life; be supportive and allow/encourage them to investigate whether this is their calling.

Live a solid, holy, Catholic life and teach it to our kids.

Live it! Breathe it! Eat it! Sleep it! (Our MAGNIFICENT Faith, that is) Encourage children to consult, then obey, the whisperings of the Holy Spirit from teeny tiny, and they'll hear and answer the call when, and if, that is God's will for him or her. I promise!

Live our faith fully. Talk about our faith. Show joy in our religious life. Be engaged in the church community.

Live our own vocations well as a good example. Pray for religious vocation.

Live the “Nazareth” life in the family which is bound by the daily sacramental life of the Church. The “monastic silence” must be lived daily in family life in order to increase vocations and change the world. Pray, pray, pray especially to the Holy Family to protect and guide you as you nurture all your children's vocations.

Live the Catholic faith in prayer, culture, fellowship, and education.

Live the faith, give the children exposure, and get them involved in religious activities. Mention the possibility of a vocation. Openly discuss your faith.

Live the love of Christ – to each other in the family and also outside the family. Pray and read Scripture (Bible stories when young) together and individually. Be an example. As they get older provide opportunities for them to meet other people who are on fire in their faith. Get them involved in service that is faith based. Let them know that everyone is called to give their life to Christ – either through marriage and family life or in religious life.

Live their faith – Holiness is Very attractive – strive for it! Encourage children to pray and discern what their true vocation is that will prove to be so joyful and give their heart peace. Pray together and individually.

Live their own vocations to the best of their ability and always be there for one another.

Live your faith every day. Live the sacrament of marriage. Expose your children to strong youth retreats, where they can take the head knowledge of God that you helped to teach them and have it seared into their hearts. Faith is a love story.

Live your faith in the home and give the person occasions to live their faith. Engage yourself in faith oriented activities and number one would be to pray daily for your family member's vocation. I would pray that they be open to the vocation that God intends for them.

Live your faith intensely. Our children have told us that it was clear to them that our Catholic Faith was the most important thing in our lives (my wife and I). I think it was not so much that we stated this as that our hearts were aglow with love and wonder whenever we spoke of God or the Church. We love the Church and it shows. We have nine children. Four tried a religious vocation and two have kept with it. This has been true bedrock for our children's vocations. They believe their vocations are precious and important.

Living a good Catholic, religious life. Being active in the Church, and actually voicing support and admiration for those that choose that calling.

Living our lives in a loving Christian manner allows Christ's light to shine through us to others in our lives. His Love can draw people to Him and His plan for them. Talking about our son's vocation with pride also shows others that this is a good vocation and not one to be feared.

Love God; actively search for Him; togetherness as a family devoted to Him; talk about Him and the Faith; homeschool; participate in the Church; show your own love and devotion to Him.

Love him

Love your Faith and live it out in all areas of your life. Pray for increase of holy vocations to the priesthood and religious life and that if God is calling your children or someone in your life pray for the grace they need to hear and answer God's call. Pray for all priests, religious and consecrated to be faithful to their vows. We all have a responsibility to pray for vocations and those in formation. Maria Rosa Mystica is one of our Family Marion devotions. In which Our Lady asks for prayers for priests and religious houses to be faithful to God's will for them.

Love, prayer, generosity, and communication. Let them know that you care about them despite the fact that you are not able to see them very often anymore.

Loving each other

Maintaining a home where our faith is paramount and that our children feel loved both by family and the church. I believe that our son found happiness with our church family, and we encouraged him to stay involved in many aspects of the church. We weren't always the most religious in our community, but we always attended Mass and made sure our children knew how important the obligations of their faith were. We also loved our pastors, never talked negatively about them, and made sure our children respected them.

Make a concerted effort to find out about their life. Go and meet the communities they are a part of. If possible, travel to their place so you get to know about what they talk about – be involved and constantly reach out, letting them know you are supportive and interested – just as you would if that person's vocation was to be married or single.

Make friends with Priests and Sisters who can personally share their faith journey, and describe the joy they experience in giving their lives to Jesus. Parents can pray as a family for Vocations

to the Priesthood and Religious Life and ask their children to consider attending a Vocation discernment retreat.

Make it a visual option. Support them as family encourages every other area of a member's life. Do not, as people I know have, pray for vocations in general – but that their child not be called. Pray for parents, that they may be open to their child's calling.

Make religion and a strong family life a priority.

Make sure the children are raised knowing the importance of a personal God in their lives and in our case expose them to the teachings of our Catholic faith even if it means personal sacrifices such as Catholic schooling, PSR, or supporting parish life. Personally, when I worked outside of the home, it was teaching at Catholic schools or working in the parish office.

Make sure the home is still a place they can come and get rest or regroup. Keep supporting them financially, (insurance, cell phones, emergencies) until ordained. Visit and call and check on them during long times of separation. Pray they are doing what they are called to do.

Make the Catholic faith the most important thing in your family life. Go to Mass and receive the sacraments often. Pray together as a family, especially the Rosary. Talk about the Faith and what the Church teaches and why. Talk about the priesthood and religious life. If the Catholic faith is lived actively in the home, religious vocations will grow naturally out of it.

Model a strong personal relationship with the Lord and encourage them to develop one of their own through Mass, adoration, prayer, Scripture study, workshops, retreats, etc. Provide them with a Catholic school education and be involved in their spiritual life as much as possible. Encourage them to surround themselves with like-minded people (religion, values, etc.). My daughter surrounded herself with spiritual people at university (one of which became a priest and another a religious sister) and it is here she discerned her call to religious life. Encourage them to prayerfully consider their vocation (whatever it may be). Have open, non-judgmental discussions with them, especially while they are considering their vocation. Expose them to religious life role models whenever possible. As a non-Catholic, my husband could not understand what she was choosing though he never voiced this to our daughter. Instead, he saw what he felt she was giving up (sexual relations and motherhood). Once he saw how joyful she was in religious life, these concerns abated. Daily Mass, regular adoration, and a knowledgeable spiritual director really helped her while she was discerning her call.

Model involvement in their faith community, model sharing their faith with their family and others, and encourage involvement by their offspring in faith communities and other volunteer organizations.

My brother has always been an inspiration to me. He is the kind of person that cares and listens. I was/am blessed to have him in my life.

Never doubt one's abilities and know that through encouragement, one can prove himself successful. Being supportive turns one candidate into a TEAM!

No opinions

No pressure either way – accept what individual call they may have – provide opportunities for exploration

Nosotros como Catholicos que somos sabemos que Dios siempre ofrecera un camino por medio de nuestras oraciones a todos aquellos que quieran seguirlo. Y nuestro seminarista lo sabe. (As Catholics, we know that through our prayers, God will always find a way for those who want to follow him. And our seminarian knows this.)

Not forget to make them a part of our family occasions, i.e. taking pictures and telling stories about family get togethers, etc. and keep them feeling a part of the family. And of course, to pray for them always!

Not my goal

Offer it as an option along with any other life career option. Encourage Altar serving and invite energetic and happy priests to dinner so that children get to know them.

Offer to be a sounding board

Once a person makes this decision to join a vocation, listen to the individual and educated yourself and always offer support along the journey.

Openly practice the faith and be active in the local parish. Invite religious to family events and meals; hang out as fiends with religious

Openness by all to support a family member even if you don't quite understand. Lots of prayers also that they will hear and answer Gods call whatever it maybe.

Oración (Prayer)

Our Daughters were exposed to Sisters through our parish CCD program as well as Priests and Sisters visiting and sharing meals at their Grandparents. I think that they were able to see Priests and Religious Sisters as regular people who lived their lives serving the Lord.

Our faith life is a normal part of our daily life. Discussions about vocations happen naturally and frequently. (I often have to tell my 13 year old that she doesn't have to have it all figured out yet.) Hospitality is an essential charism. We open our home to newly ordained priests, seminarians, high schoolers, parishioners, college students, the track team, the football team. Even the bishop has been to our home. People are welcomed and feel free to share their lives with us.

Para apoyarlos: caminar siempre al lado del joven o la joven que desiden optar por este estilo de vida. Las familias promueven vocaciones sacerdotales y religiosas cuando Los hijos Los ven unidos.

Parents probably set the stage, and siblings will follow. My husband dragged his feet a bit saying: 'Well, he still has a couple of years and might change his mind.' Even after his Deaconate, when I mentioned planning the reception for his Ordination, is dad seemed somewhat surprised (happily so) that the time had come and he actually was going to become a priest. My husband also says the mother gets all the credit! Our priest son is the youngest in the family so his brothers gave him a hard time abot his voice at First Mass of Thanksgiving (as if they were all still young!) Since then, of course, he's been called on for babies' baptisms, and nieces and nephews First Communions.

Parents should live out their vocation to Marriage (Mother and Father being faithful and fruitful – no contraceptives) and stay united in faith to the Holy Father. Develop a strong devotion to Mary, the Blessed Mother. Consistently talk to your family ad let them know God is calling them to a beautiful vocation. Pray to hear that call, especially at Mass and during Eucharistic Adoration. Consistently go to confession as a family.

Permit their family members to freely inquire, and look less at what they want and more to what their family member wants. Not having grandchildren is not a reason to attempt to steer someone away from the Lord's calling. Actively help their family member by arranging conversations with many others, from different backgrounds and ages, who've been led to the same vocation. And then, make sure the family member really feels led and isn't running away from something. When my son was willing to leave college and the wonderful friendships he had, to head off to seminary, we knew he was serious. He loved nothing like he loved his first two years of college life; being willing to leave spoke loudly to our family.

Personal example of a life of prayer, involvement in the apostolate (e.g. the Legion of Mary) and a firm conviction the Bible and the Catholic Church is God's Voice on earth.

Place your children in the presence of priests and religious so they can see these great people in a casual setting. Pray together as a family, especially in adoration, the rosary and frequent Mass during the week.

Portray being a religious in a positive light. Talk to them about it so they know it is an acceptable option. Have religious over for family times so the children see that they are just ordinary people, and get comfortable relating to them.

Practice the entire faith in truth and charity, stay close to Jesus and his Mother, continue to learn about the immense faith which has so much to offer our lives and our society; don't be afraid to speak up in truth and charity.

Practice the faith

Practicing our faith

Practicing our faith in life situations--in the ways we deal with other people. Young people are influenced by what they see and experience not by preaching to them. Also priests and religious need to be visible and a part of their formation as they are growing through their teen and young adult years. Programs explaining religious life and priesthood, along with opportunities to visit convents, seminaries, etc. help young people to see what it is really like. Families should support all of these efforts

PRAY

Pray

Pray

Pray

Pray

Pray

Pray and explain importance of religious and priests in life of church

Pray – Adoration for vocations – Spread the good news about having a vocation in the family! Support and encourage various vocations awareness programs.

Pray always. Remember that her grandfather, my father, talked with the nine of us at the dinner table about vocations and would be so proud to know of her vocation. Bring up in conversation that they have a family member with this vocation and talk about it – with anyone – Catholic or not.

Pray and bring priests into your home. Live you faith, especially in the voting

Pray and fast.

Pray and have faith that we have guided our son over the years with strong values and that those values will continue through his life so that he can become a better priest.

Pray and support financially anyway they can.

Pray and talk to people about our experience. Share information and support vocations in our diocese and families.

Pray daily. Pray for their children's vocations and have them pray for discernment.

Pray for and with her. Keep in touch when possible. Encourage and listen.

Pray for and with them. Attend any activities at seminary or other place of formation.

Pray for each child's vocation, convey in word and deed that God has a unique plan for his/her life, and assure him/her in word and deed that all of Our Father's plans are for his/her salvation and can be trusted. Bring him/her to the Sacraments frequently where the Holy Spirit will work in the heart.

Pray for family members and ask our Lord to help guide them to their vocation. Nothing wrong with discernment! Encourage spiritual direction with priest. Encourage study of saints and faith.

Pray for God's will to be done in their lives.

Pray for him and let him know that we support his choice.

Pray for priests/religious as a family; encourage openness to God's will – discern vocation first, career second; always speak positively about priests/religious; develop good relationships and visit (invite over) priests/religious orders; start with the young children, so they grow up with the possibility of God calling them always on their mind.

Pray for that intention and expose your family to happy and holy priests and religious.

Pray for the vocations and encourage others to support vocational activities.

Pray for them

Pray for them and let them know you are praying for them. Express your esteem for the priesthood and religious life. Don't criticize priests/bishops/sisters. Live your own vocation with love and zeal.

Pray for them and support the religious financially

Pray for them and support their decision to become a religious. And if they decide that life is not for them, continue to pray and support their decision. Some families are so proud that their son/daughter entered the seminary/convent and then feel so ashamed if they did not go on to become a priest/nun.

Pray for them to persevere and to be holy priests. Ask others to pray for them as well. Be supportive and interested in all aspects of what they are doing. Visit with them when permitted. Keep in touch as much as you are permitted. Try not to let them know that you miss them or to dwell on what they are sacrificing (such as a wife and children).

Pray for them, give them support, and learn more about Catholicism and the priesthood.

Pray for them, often. Make the vocation of religious life a common topic of conversation among family members. Parents ask their children “what does God want them to do or be?” as a

frequent reminder of what vocation God is calling them to. Expose children to Priests or Sisters interaction.

Pray for them.

Pray for them. Expose the children of the family to religious and priests. I am worried that there are many young men and women in the world that would not consider vocations because they have not had exposure to religious life. When I was in grade school and high school, there were nuns teaching and circulating among us. I'm sad to say that is not the case in our local Catholic grade schools and high school.

Pray for them. Talk to them about the possibility of a religious vocation. Provide opportunities for them to meet and get to know priests and religious.

Pray for them. Always speak up for them. Promote vocations to young men when you see a young man who looks like he would make a good priest. Ask if he ever thought about being a priest.

Pray for those with vocations. Write and visit as much as possible. Let them know you support them and their happiness. Visits in their setting show how truly happy they are.

Pray for vocations. Help priests and religious and encourage them, invite them in the family

Pray for vocations and discuss/witness about this. Pray and witness openness to a vocation. Voice your support.

Pray for vocations and support the seminarian brother in his decisions and then go visit and show this guy that you really do care about him and wish to further support--if travel is possible. We also invite family relatives to come to our home when son is home to show further support

Pray for vocations. Be supportive of those who are called to a religious/priestly vocation. Encourage those who we feel may have a calling to the priesthood or religious life.

Pray for vocations both individually and as a family, and pray that children are open to God's will in their lives, no matter what that may be, and as parents to model that we pray to discern God's will and follow it, however hard that may be; as parents provide opportunities for children to further their understanding and love of their faith (encourage them to go to Catholic conferences and events, e.g., Steubenville, Lifeline, TEC (Teens Encounter Christ), parish and diocesan and other local Catholic youth events and retreats, etc.; hear and see dynamic Catholic speakers via internet, in person, and Lighthouse Catholic Media CDs; give opportunities for your children/family to interact and work with priests and religious (e.g., participate in service opportunities for helping a new order of sisters renovating the school they were given for their convent); talk about all vocations, not just marriage, when discussing what God may have in store for them as adults; read about the saints as a family; read about lives of the saints to your children (it makes them more real and we see they had struggles like we do and weren't perfect

all of their lives and many of them were priests and religious); and be supportive and respectful in word and deed of priests and religious that the family knows personally as well as those they don't know. I think it is key to help family members learn about the Catholic faith so they fall in love with the Church and appreciate their faith and long to pray, and then it is more likely they will catch on fire and then they will want to spread the faith. Our oldest daughter is in formation to be a consecrated virgin. One of her majors in college was Catholic Studies and this was pivotal in helping everyone in our family become more interested in learning about our faith (which includes our son in the seminary and another daughter [adopted and originally Baptist] seriously considering to become a religious sister). Sibling influence and such.

Pray for vocations! Remember that priests are human and need the same support and friendship as everyone.

Pray for vocations. Be involved in church activities. One can bring up the subject, but you cannot force it on anyone. Our son was very involved in Boy Scouts and it had a very profound effect on him. Their moral code made a big impression on him.

Pray for vocations; be an advocate; encourage others

Pray for your children to choose the right vocation. Pray for healthy, holy priests and religious. Pray together as a family. Pray for young people to embrace the Catholic faith. Introduce them to joy-filled priests and religious. Get to know the local seminary and support it. Be active and fervent in your own faith. Keep your prayer life as number one in your day. Get to know Jesus personally and allow God to convert your heart. Love your children well. Love others as you love yourself. Be a good example and serve the poor and outsiders. Discuss social and church related issues with your children. Make faith life in the family number one. Go to church every Sunday. Put the health of your marriage as a high priority. Teach children the value of truth and goodness over possessions and power. Fast as a family. Talk to your children about God and listen to their struggles and questions about the church and God. Make sure they know they are loved unconditionally and that God is merciful. Mistakes and sins are normal. Forgiving ourselves and others is a grace from God.

Pray hard for more vocations

Pray often and together as a family. I do regret not being able to do that in our family member's younger years. Discussed vocation and invite your parish Priests for a visit it is so worth the effort

Pray regularly and live what you believe.

Pray that children will do God's will, speak highly of the church and religious life, give children confidence to have the courage to go against cultural norms

Pray that each family member will seek the Lord with a whole heart. Provide Christian education. Matthew 6:33.

Pray that God would give the person discerning and their family the grace and wisdom necessary to do His will. True happiness is only found when you are living your life God's way.

Pray together

Pray together, practice the sacraments, provide example of active faith

Pray together, invite religious to your home often, openly discuss the religious life as a very real and positive vocation for their future like any other vocation.

Pray together, participate in the sacraments, as parents – make sure your faith is sincere and children will absorb that. We have always taught our children to pray to know what their vocation will be and for the wisdom and courage to follow it.

Pray together. Live your faith out in a genuine way.

Pray! And talk about the spiritual life from an early age; and the power of God to help discern vocation, whatever that might be for each person. Make a commitment to be part of the parish community on a regular basis. Don't be lazy in your own spiritual life.

Pray, attend activities for promoting vocations, Serra club, encourage

Pray, be open to God's will.

Pray, encourage it, support the discernment

Pray, encourage, be in touch, PRAY daily for all in formation and those ordained.

Pray, monetary donations

Pray, Pray, Pray! Sacrifice and penance. We need to affirm the work he is doing gives glory to God. He has touched so many lives in his 29 years including the years before he was ordained. Support his taking time off to renew and refresh. He enjoys family time where we play board games, share meals, laugh and pray together. He especially loves to spend time with his nieces and nephews and siblings. He is blessed to have strong sibling bonds. They make time to do just sibling events. As a mother I frequently remind him to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He is learning to say no to some events and realizing he cannot be all things to all people. Even Jesus took time away in the desert. What a gift and blessing he is to all of us to remind us to leave everything behind and follow Jesus.

Pray, pray, pray, pray.

Pray, pray, pray, support and visit them more often.

Pray, pray, pray. I do feel my son at times feels different now among his family members (mostly cousins), probably rightfully so, since many have embraced the ways of the world and abandoned their core value system. That being said, I know they are all very proud of him.

Pray, share the joy and peace with friends, family, community

Pray, support in money, thank them for being a priest or Religious

Pray, visit when possible, pray, communicate often, pray.

Pray. Prayer is very powerful and everyone should pray for an increase in religious vocations as well as all God's vocations, including married life and single committed life. Be part of a vocations committee at their local parish. Look around and see if you see the qualities in men and women to enter religious life and encourage them to be open to God's call. Include religious to be part of your family and life.

Pray. Be a good example. Provide good books, magazines, art. Give space and freedom to make their own decision while affirming priesthood as a noble profession.

Pray. For them. Verbal and financial support. The church community needs to give more support.

Pray/sacrifice, encourage directly by word and mail

Prayer

Prayer

Prayer

Prayer

Prayer

Prayer

Prayer

Prayer

Prayer

Prayer. Having children develop relationships with priests and religious so that they realize the possibility of a vocation for themselves

Prayer – Pray for vocations and also for priests and sisters. Expose children to vocations. Talk about being called by Christ and saying yes.

Prayer, often contact and meaningful conversations with him

Prayer and adoration!

Prayer and adoration.

Prayer and awareness about religious life.

Prayer and be open to it!

Prayer and candid conversations. Family members shouldn't shy away from expressing their view of what is best for one of the other family members. Really, this whole discussion about how do we foster vocations is rather silly in my opinion. It should come naturally from those who take their faith in Jesus seriously. It seems absurd not to have it be discussed. Would we shy away from talking about dating and marriage with our brother, sister, or child? No. So why should it be any different for religious vocations. Both are personal choices the individual has to make. I think family members can best support or promote vocations by taking their own relationship with Jesus Christ seriously.

Prayer and communication AND encouraging “others” to listen for God's call to help build an awareness among all of the faithful.

Prayer and communication. Trusting children to God.

Prayer and discussion. They can also encourage them to go (or go with them) to seminaries, convents, etc. just like they do to check out different colleges and universities. Exposure is key – invite priests and religious to the home, send children to “vocation camps”, and encourage communication with priests and religious.

Prayer and education and being open to God's calling

Prayer and encouragement

Prayer and encouragement.

Prayer and encouragement. Attitude of acceptance of their decision whatever it may be.

Prayer and Eucharistic Adoration!

Prayer and example.

Prayer and good example of a good Christian life. Encouragement and support with letters and finances.

Prayer and living our faith.

Prayer and positive discussion regarding the religious life

Prayer and presence. Available to listen through process

Prayer and speaking about the vocations.

Prayer and surrounding them by religious

Prayer and talking about his vocation. Positive comments.

Prayer first of all. Financial contributions. Physically helping the clergy in their ministries. Bringing the idea of a religious vocation to the minds of all Catholics, not just the young.

Prayer for vocations. Actively talking about vocations as an option. Inviting priests and nuns to visit, or visiting them so that children see this as a real option.

Prayer in all forms especially Eucharistic Adoration and the Rosary; encouraging their home parishes to be supportive by taking an active interest in having a son/daughter of their parish in formation which may help others consider it, too

Prayer is important, and otherwise I think just continuing to relate as always. We only get to see our daughter a few times a year, and otherwise are limited to letters, so prayer we can do always!

Prayer is most important. Keeping our priest involved with family, other priests' families, and parish families, is important, too. The Serra Club does a fine job of working with Catholic schools and organizations.

Prayer is very important. Also encourage young people who display a devotion to their faith to consider a religious vocation. If they enter a seminary, etc., be a "cheerleader" for them while they're there.

Prayer life, spirit of service, concern for the poor

Prayer!

Prayer! Also, I try to talk to young families (in a casual sense, not formally) to keep their hearts open to a vocation. I wish I would have thought about that possibility for my children while they were young.

PRAYER! And practice of the faith. My husband and I NEVER made the suggestion that our son be a priest. It was truly spirit led.....we merely supported and let it be.

PRAYER! Only God will send us priest and religious. Educate the young to know their choices.

Prayer! We prayed for our son for many years when he had leukemia as a child and went through chemotherapy. Then, when the cancer came back and he was considered incurable and had to go to a trial transplant. The church, our family and many others prayed for him for healing and for spiritual strength.

Prayer, discussion, visits during formation, donations

Prayer, example and encouragement that they have chosen the best of all paths but not all can carry that load, and if not, hold their head high for the effort serve in other ways all of their life.

Prayer, family discussions, respect for the Pope and clergy, movies and books about heroic saints. Do all of these from a young age.

Prayer, living a life of faith, exposing children to priests and religious who are faithfully and joyfully living out their vocation.

Prayer, Mass, active teachings of the faith to younger generations

Prayer, patience and providing continual communication with the seminarian.

Prayer, prayer, and more prayer. I have three boys who I have always encouraged to have an open heart to God's will in their lives.

Prayer, showing an interest in his formation and education, not pushing an opinion one way or the other as he discerns. Provide a place for relaxation and time away when needed. Pray for vocations as a family.

Prayer, good examples and education

Prayer.

Prayer. The decision to pursue the priesthood is not so much a personal decision as it is listening to the calling of the Holy Spirit. Those who are interested in religious life need our prayers more than anything.

Prayer. Invite priests and other religious out for social engagements

Prayer. Show our public support for our child. Be honest in conversations with others.

Prayer. Showing our encouragement and happiness for our son's vocation.

Prayers

Prayers

Prayers for each member of the family

Prayers for his vocation and all the seminarians and priests, and not to make him feel bad if there is an event he is unable to attend.

Prayers or an 'adopt a seminarian' program at each parish. More open discussion at home about discernment and vocations would be good. I regret my lack of openness to my brother's call at first. I did not have a lot of information about the priesthood.

Praying and sharing with others how beautiful it is seeing these men at the seminary so full of joy and so respectful

Praying and being open to a vocation

Praying for them, giving them moral and financial if possible.

Praying for vocations

Praying for vocations, and speaking positively about them.

Praying together, attending Mass together, discussing vocations in the home, friendships with other religious.

Praying, being good role models, encouraging young people.

Praying, listening

Praying, praying. I would say for a young family parent are always so concerned about their children learning their abc's and to be sure they read to their children so that the child will enjoy reading someday. I say first have them memorize their prayers – the abc's will come easy. Read St. books and bible stories this tells the young child these stories are important to their parents. Family prayers. As far as supporting them, I would say praying for them and always include them on thing so that they don't feel left out.

Prays and more prays

Present it as a valuable option!

Primarily by example...attend Mass weekly (daily preferably) and Holy Days...pray as a family. Become involved in parish life and volunteerism.

Primeramente con oraciones y con buenos consejos para que vaya a retiros de vocaciones.

Prior to our son going into the seminary, all of our six kids had a second coming. During their college years they all drifted away from their faith. When the older kids got married they all started reading religious books. When we would have family get-togethers we would have huge

discussions about the different books everyone read and how these topics tied into everyday life. I believe this had a big impact on our son who became a priest as he was our 5th child.

Promote vocations by being a living witness to the faith through example in prayer and obedience to Christ and his church. This includes encouragement of active participation in parish life and serving others. If you see a calling in a person, make sure you tell him/her what you feel. Sometimes that person may feel a tug in their heart and it is very encouraging to know that others see it too. Supporting a vocation is similar. It is important to clearly communicate your support and offer to pray for that person, offer financial support, or other action. Discernment retreats are another great way to help foster vocations; having someone to discuss/share what is in your heart is sometimes what is needed to begin to listen to the calling.

Promote vocations by example in the way you live.

Promote: Bring it up in discussion as a possibility. Talk to religious people in a normal, friendly way. Let your family know how much you appreciate the vocations of priests and nuns. Point out how they affect the world in a positive way.

Provide opportunities for young people to meet and get to know priests and religious as people. Provide good formation according to the teaching of the magisterium. Be a role model of a person God has called to a vocation including the married life, the single life and the religious life if applicable. Teach young people the importance of knowing scripture and the reasons behind the beliefs of the Church. Provide resources that are appealing and user friendly for young people to use. Tell about experiences of how God has worked in your life and about your relationship with God. Help young people see that faith in God is about a relationship with a person and not about rules or going through the motions.

QUE SE LES HABLE Y SE LES MOTIVE A LOS HIJOS A LA VIDA RELIGIOSA Y SACERDOTAL (To talk about and encourage their children to religious and priestly life.)

Recognize it is their choice

Regular reception of Sacraments as a family.

Religion should be practiced from day one. Nothing makes me happier than to see families with young children in church every Sunday. Being involved and volunteering in your church is a great example for kids. Find good priests (or nuns), befriend them, have them over to socialize with family. Emphasize to your children how special they are!

Religious life is grounded in truth, and an honest, charitable focus on truth in all things – even when the truth condemns us – is the best support for whatever vocation our children might have. religious education (sending kids to Catholic school), prayers and church involvement (volunteers and activities) my wife is a nurse (she is a good example to my son for helping others specially those who are in need), accepting him and praising him (after he joined the seminary) we have a family get together when he is with us (vacation or day off) the community

knows about my son and they always praise him and we all pray for his success and may the LORD show him the way

Remaining faithful. Attend Mass as family. Pray together.

Remember that God has put these young men and women on a path that will glorify Him. These vocations are so critical to the building of God's kingdom, and there is no better way I know for any young man or woman to live their lives completely and fully. God has definitely blessed me and my son through his path to the priesthood.

Remember the priests but understand that they can't always come to dinner, attend that meeting, etc. – they are very busy. Family needs to be willing to encourage young adults to try out their vocation – leaving the seminary is not a failure – it was a success in discernment – whether their true calling is the priesthood or religious life or whether they discern that the life is not for them.

Remind kids that God has a plan for their lives and they will find the most happiness in life following that plan. He doesn't ask everyone to become a priest or religious, but ask Him and see if it is what he has in mind for you.

Rezando por él, económicamente, llamándolo para alentarlos sobre la vida en comunidad.
(Praying for him, economically, calling him to encourage him about life in community.)

Right now it is very hard and not easy to promote vocations to priesthood or religious life. In my opinion, we can always encourage the young people and pray for them. We also need to be a good example and someone they will look up to. Family prayer is very important and small talk and encouraging words. Also, share with them about your real life changing experiences about God. Encourage them to use their time and talent to serve others and helping out with Church activities.

Right now just prayer and some financial contributions

Send children to Franciscan University. Live your faith well.

Serra, and through prayer. By being a loving caring listener to our son. By setting a good example of Catholic family life.

Serve as testimonies and advocates; counsel/meet with other families struggling to accept vocations of a family member; make us “known” to our parishes that we have a close family member who is a priest, etc.

Set an example. Provide opportunities for them to grow in their faith. Be accepting.

Setting the example of living a faithful, prayerful life is paramount. Frequenting the sacraments and teaching the importance of the Faith early in life! Have routine discussions about surrendering to God vs. the culture of acquisitiveness.

Share about my son's experience

Share daughter's experiences. Donate money to support. Pray.

Share the faith with one another, participate as often as possible in church ministries and the Mass, mention to children the possibility of the vocation to priesthood or religious life (plant the seed), and personally befriend the religious (have a priest over for dinner, visit a seminary, etc.) When a family member mentions their interest in a religious vocation, offer a listening ear, ask questions and encourage.

Sharing her experiences with younger / potential candidates and Leading by example

Sharing The Word and let the Holy Spirit inspire them

She says I was not as enthusiastic as she'd hoped when she told me about her discernment. So, I guess it's important, especially at the beginning, to be enthusiastic – I thought I was being supportive while cautious so she wouldn't feel pressured. I was divorced from her father in 2002, so I was concerned that this vocation was just a reaction to a failed marriage.

Show love, acceptance and support. Let him know that he will always have a home with you should it not work out. Do not treat him differently and keep communications open.

Show our love and support for him. Pray for him daily.

Show pride and support

Show that it's a real option. Normal people go into religious life/priesthood! Have contact with priests/sisters at the parish and learn from a young age about what the vocation really is. And family members have to be close to God themselves so they can trust Him even when they don't understand.

Simply be open to the possibility of religious life

Simply by sharing the stories of their journey and letting others know times have changed. The Sisters live a simple life, but it is rewarding on so many non-material levels. These two years have been so great to watch and our entire family sees this was a great decision on her part.

Something we do in our house is that when our brother is home with us, he's just that, our brother! We don't see him as a priest in formation or as a religious person that is out of reach when it comes to jokes and fun family stuff. We always try to have fun with him like we had done in our younger years when the thought of him becoming a priest weren't even remote. This has helped up maintain our core in our family group and he feels that we can completely be himself around us.

Speak about vocations, discuss the life, pray together and for vocations, encourage, keep God very prominent in all of daily life, visit churches and religious places.

Speak positively about vocations. List them among one of the most important things for a child to consider as they grow up.

Spend time with people in religious life.

Spread the good news how my son says, “My life is a blessing. I am living the dream.”

Spread the word

Sr. Jody's order is very open and supportive of family so that makes it easier for a strong interaction. We love all the Sisters! They are all like daughters! By have that relationship so deep with them it binds us close. There is great strength to have them pray for us. And I trust they feel the same. The biggest part is knowing Sr. Jody is happy. That's all we want our children to be in their vocation of religious orders or marriage or priesthood. All the sisters we know are happy!

Start at their birth, always taking them to Church, rosary, novena, catechetical programs, CCD classes, confirmation, saying yes to God always or as best as you can.

Start with family prayer, meals, and service. Create an alternate culture to the society around you. Develop a community of believers that you interact with that support your Catholic beliefs, home schooling, Bible studies, neighborhood parish support groups, Cursillo, Marriage Encounter. Our faith cannot be a once a week obligation to attend Sunday Liturgy. Our children need to see their parent's example who they serve, themselves or God. Invite priest to the house for dinner. I belong to a Christian covenant community that is 85 percent Catholic. We have a few hundred families that move in close proximity with one another to develop a supportive Christian culture. I believe that this culture of service has led to over 15-20 vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Stay close to the sacraments – set a good example and promote abidance to the Ten Commandments. Visit the Blessed Sacrament often – and let them know about all of the Eucharistic miracles. Read books about the saints to them – and encourage them to do the same. Pray and remain open to your child's call. Never discourage – allow God to speak. If your child is called to a religious vocation – embrace the opportunity and assist them.

Stay in close touch with your religious family members and spread the good word of vocations to family friends and the larger community!!

Stay quiet and just be supportive!

Staying in contact regularly and talking about what is happening in seminary life and the decision making process

Strong prayer.

Suggest as an option early on but don't push

Suggest it to the child for consideration – pray for vocations

Support

Support and encourage when God calls. Model personal faith in action in the world.

Support and encourage youth. Set a good example of prayer and leadership. Confident in our Catholic Faith.

Support him the best I can.

Support my son by helping him realize the plan of God in his life and look beyond the setbacks etc. and toward the big picture. I think vocations can be promoted by showing young people how joyful and fulfilling the priesthood/religious life can really be because there is no greater calling than to help others reach heaven.

Support that decision in the same manner as any other reasonable possible occupation/profession/ vocation.

Support them in every way, emotionally, financially when it's possible, just be supportive of their way of life.

Support them! Love them, pray for them. Let them know they are loved in or out of the seminary

Support with communication and prayer. Promote – that is a challenge! Make visible the outcomes.

Support: tell them they make you proud. Tell them they made a good choice. Approach a religious vocation with the same support you would approach a marriage vocation. Tell them they are doing a good job and pray for them. Don't ever, ever act as if they embarrass you in public or private family settings. Don't ask them to disobey their obligations.

Supporting is easy when a loved one has made a decision for vocations Promoting is a hard sell. Especially with many of above mentioned issues. It makes my heart ache.

Supporting our son is easy. We are very proud of what he is doing. In talking with our friends, we brag a lot on this which is a way of promotion. I do believe that parishes need to promote and have young seminarians come to their churches several time a year to talk. Potential vocations could be on the fence and seeing a young, charismatic seminarian may be the boost they need.

Supporting the seminarians by acknowledging their initial commitment and making them understand that they are loved and always remembered by the parishioners and family,.

Support nuns/priests through words of encouragement. Provide for material and financial needs when needed.

Surround yourself by other holy families that love the church and are faithful.

Take it easy. God will take care of us all. Encourage family member to listen to God. And they are all welcome home any time. No judgement from parents.

Taking children to Mass often (more than once a week). Be involved in parish religious activities, talk about vocations. As the Lord if he wants one or all for Himself and then trust. Pray that they always remain in the true Catholic faith whatever their vocation.

Taking them to events that have religious there. i.e. Catholic conference, March for Life, visit convents, serve, talk to your parish priest. Invite them to your home.

Talk about it

Talk about it and be involved in the Church as much as you can

Talk about it as children are growing up. Talk about it in parishes and schools. Expose children and youth to religious who are close to their ages. Pray.

Talk about it with them. Invite priests over for dinner, invite them to a family member's sporting event, fine arts performance or other school activity. We had priests over for dinner on a regular basis so our boys would see that priests are people too. Plus, it didn't hurt when the priest would share how they received a calling to the priesthood! :)

Talk about it, don't fear it as if it will change your loved one into someone you will not be able to relate to.

Talk about it, get to know religious on a personal level. Watch DVD's such as Fishers of Men or Beloved. Put religious life in a positive context when speaking about it. When asking children what they want to be when they grow up include religious life.

Talk about it, present it as a viable course for one's life, pray.

Talk about it. I have spoken to many Religious Education Classes on the subject and shared our story. I also think that families need to start talking about Religious Vocations again. So many times I speak with parents and when asked if they ever talk about Vocations at home, or even our call to discernment of our vocation, they look at me like it is the first time they have every thought about it. For the family of someone actually actively discerning, be supportive and

understand that it is their discernment. Allow them time to listen to God and follow their hearts where He alone leads. The graces for the entire family are unbelievable!

Talk about it. Support it. Let them decide for themselves.

Talk about it...encourage it as a child is growing up. Invite priests and religious persons into your home on a social basis, as friends of the family. Send your children to Catholic primary and secondary schools, so that education of the Catholic faith and practice of the Catholic faith is an everyday event. It becomes a part of who they are. We were fortunate to have Nuns and Priests on staff at the Catholic schools that my children attended.

Talk about the religious life and tour a seminary.

Talk about them in a positive manner at home and defend the vocation as a legitimate way to live out a person's life.

Talk about vocation. Support the priests. Take the young people to visit the seminary, and see the happy life in there. Retreat for them. Let the young people have change to attend the ordination days. Never talk negative about priests.

Talk and pray about it every day. Also, it really helped that our son was home the summer before he entered the Jesuit seminary. We were able to see a peace come over him and true happiness with his decision. We had a little bucket list to do before he left which was fun. I think showing them love is the best support. Our friends, family, neighbors and community all showed him love and support which I think was really helpful.

Talk to them about their commitment, about God, about Jesus. I always told my children that it didn't matter to me what course they took in life as long as it was legal and they were happy and fulfilled in their chosen field. Be there for them – listen to them. Give support to other parents who have children considering a vocation or priesthood.

Talk to them about to where God might be calling him/her. Do things together as a family.

Talking about it

Talking to the Sisters and Priests. Include them in your life somehow.

Talking to younger members about the option to enter the priesthood or religious life. Answering questions and providing information.

Tell people how blessed you are to have a religious daughter. Recommend

Telling the persons you support anything they choose to do as long as it is legal.

That the children are taught the catechism, that they spend quiet time with our Lord asking His will for their life, are enrolled in parochial schools, family prays and worships together and is very active in their parish in various ministries, boys definitely as altar servers. That children are taught to put God first, family second and activities or job third. That the family spends time before the Blessed Sacrament in prayer. That the family attends retreats (NET), Catholic Summer Camps. That Parents are very encouraging and that it is offered as an option as their vocation. Family spends time with religious and that the children visit seminaries and convents. Family Pilgrimages. At a very young age read to them about the saints. Family does charity work together.

The best thing to do in my opinion is to ask questions and learn what it's really all about. I think people view it as losing a daughter/sister but it's no different than if she got married and started a family somewhere. Your family member won't be locked away somewhere and never be seen again. Life becomes different but if it's truly what they want then it should make you happy. If you're having trouble with the idea it's okay because if it's one thing I learned sisters love giving hugs and that will always help.

The best way is by being an example through their actions. Stress the importance of Eucharistic adoration and daily prayer.

The best way is to keep in touch with each other. Continue to share our lives with each other.

The best way to promote vocations is to have the home be the domestic church. That is the husband and wife should be actively pursuing their own personal holiness and helping each other grow spiritually. That means they don't contracept, and they begin to live out God's plan for marriage. Our personal spiritual journey began when we stopped using contraceptives and learned to use Natural Family Planning. We were weak in our faith when this daughter started school, but through the grace of God we grew in faith as she grew up. This happened because we were homeschooling and used Catholic materials. A religious vocation was always taught as a possibility along with the vocation of marriage.

The best way to support vocations is to be open and let the person know they will be supported unconditionally.

The best way to support vocations is to listen to your child when they tell you about their desire to enter into a vocation. That is most important. It is also very scary to do. Especially in today's world when kids are especially mean to anyone that may 'step out of the box' normal for them. It is sometimes even harder when your child is still in a public high school. It takes a lot of courage to go against peers and families need to listen-with their ears and hearts! Once you listen – then talk about it. Find out answers, together, it is an incredible journey to take with your child.

The Catholic priesthood and religious life is so far removed from how the average family needs to function in daily, secular life. He does not understand what it takes to pay household bills, prepare meals or even clean up after himself. He left home for college with a teenage, self-

consuming mental attitude and came home from the seminary with the same mentality – after 9 years! He didn't have the opportunity to experience the daily life challenges of his family. He was away during illnesses and the treatments, the death of grandparents and the financial sacrifices given to provide for others. All of his education and expenses were paid for by someone else. His free time was spent traveling and meeting other seminarians. Our free time was spent with family, volunteering in our parish, or volunteering with other school and community organizations. In my opinion, it is difficult to support vocations when unreasonable higher education is demanded over experiencing the practicality and realistic situations in life and how your faith is necessary to survive. That is something no book or profession can ever teach.

The family as a unit can discuss religious life and the priesthood as a way of life. The value of a life of service to the Church can be openly discussed just as married life and the single life are discussed as being vocations as well.

The family can create an environment in which a vocation, if it exists, will grow. Strong family bonds of love and support, coupled with daily practice of the faith and family discussion of the faith and what it means can facilitate the growth of a valid vocation. In my view one should not try to do a “hard sell” to anyone regarding a religious vocation, but one should stand ready to offer whatever support is needed when a family member has made the decision, or is in discernment.

The family needs to be open to a possible religious vocation and should pray together for God's will and guidance.

The family, especially the household head, need to treasure the gift of faith as a most precious heritage to leave to the children. Heritage of wealth, position, properties, and influence, etc. will decay. It requires commitment from the home elder to subscribe to this attitude and pass it on by way of education with time set aside regularly for family to pray together and have activities/discussions together. Encouraging and supporting children to be involved in church sponsored activities/groups helps a lot.

The first step is to find ways to keep youth and young adults engaged in the church. In high school, my daughters disliked going to Mass because they said it was boring. After my daughters went to college, they stopped going to Mass.

The key in promoting vocations among younger children rests with parents. They must not force the issue, but should encourage their sons and daughters to look at the beauty of a vocation, and at least ask their children to consider it.

The most important is living the example of your faith. Also, talking positive about priestly vocations.

The religious need to promote themselves through seminars and talks.

The seed of the Catholic faith needs to be planted when they are little children. They need also to see a family who has God as their center and everything they do revolves around pleasing, honoring and obeying God.

There must be an understanding that life changes for everyone in the family. The one that has joined the priesthood needs to understand the choice was his decision and must find a way to understand that there are people that do not and will not ever understand that decision. He should not let those people bring a cloud over his decision.

There should be an interaction and discussion openly among family members. Also opportunities within the parish and community to obtain information about religious vocation choices

They can best support and promote vocations by encouraging it. Having vocation days at the parish, inviting priest or religious to dinner. Praying as a family and seeking good spiritual direction and discernment retreats.

They can encourage their children to develop a close relationship to Jesus through consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and pray the rosary together. They can seek out religious communities who are willing to work side by side with youth by inviting them to participate in volunteer activities, and then provide talks about various aspects of living the life of a religious vocation; once found, they can encourage their children to participate by taking them there frequently.

They can keep their children connected with the Sacraments and cultivate as a family habits of daily communal and personal prayer time. Along with this, though, it's most important that parents keep the Lord at the center of their marriage through prayer and the sacraments, and that they model for their kids what a true, sacrificial, life giving marriage relationship looks like. This example is paramount for kids, I think, because they learn from this the beauty of suffering and sacrificial love – how to love as God loves. This, in turn, provides a clearer path in their hearts for the Holy Spirit to move as He wills and helps them to have the ability to listen to His voice and trust Him.

They can respect His choice and listen to Him.

They can work at having a good marriage, living their vocation and participating in the joy of the gospel.

They must realize it's a call from God. He knows best and we shouldn't stand in His way. Pray to Him for guidance and strength.

This question frightens me. A vocation is a personal decision, a call. Family pressure may encourage a vocation, but it could also “push” an impressionable person into making the decision.

Through dialogue and prayer. We can also relate the experiences that our family member has had so that others might listen and consider for themselves.

Through encouragement to follow one's vocation.

Through example, and being vocal to others about the notion of entering religious life – creating awareness.

Through exposure to sisters and priests etc. letting them beyond the inside of the chapel or classroom.

Through opportunities in learning about various vocations, then sharing the many positive opportunities and responsibilities of religious life.

Through pray, TRUST God, He is the one that makes this possible. Tell someone if you see qualities in them to consider praying about it and to talk to someone on how to discern. Be not afraid

Through prayer

Through prayer and being open to discussing it with others.

Through prayer and discussion of the faith openly.

Through prayer and encourage someone who is contemplating a vocation

Through prayer and love and example

Through prayer and positive support and love.

Through prayer first of all. It is vitally important to talk about vocations and the gifts they bring to family life and the community. We try never to miss an opportunity to tell of her vocation and share the joy we feel in her life as a sister.

Through prayer, education and financial support.

Through prayer, instilling strong moral values, a good family life and involvement in church and youth community activities, and by encouraging and not discouraging them.

Through prayer, there have been interesting talks by visiting priests in our parish that I think might prompt an interest.

Through prayers, by speaking openly about the positive influence and work that the religious/priests accomplish. By telling my sister's vocational story. I think a lot can be accomplished just through conversation with others.

Through prayers, encouragement and support

Thru prayer and example.

To be open and encouraging if someone is considering a vocation. Not to make it an expectation or condition of love to choose (or not choose) a religious vocation, but to help facilitate the needed reflection, prayer, and preparation.

To communicate with him in person or via technologies. To go to vacation with him. To allow him be who he is and to accept his wholeness/humanity. To pray for him every day.

To continue praying and educating those that doubt or those that don't understand the vocations to priesthood or religious life.

To continue to affirm his decision and to learn more about the Catholic faith and traditions since I am a "cradle Presbyterian".....and Elder in that church.

To openly speak about it and treat him/ her as a normal family member while accepting and participating with them

To pray for them daily.

To speak to our children more about vocations to the church

To support it as a positive choice.

To support, stay in touch with current people in vocations and help them continue to experience family community and friendship with families.

To trust in their family member's choice of vocation and to try to understand why he or she has made this choice by talking with them about their faith and their visions of the future.

Todos los padres tenemos que apoyar a nuestros hijos a relaizar sus suenos en la vida y pensar que Dios los llevara por el mejor camino. Para mi es una gran alegria saber que mi hijo tendra la mejor carrera del mundo y yo tdo esto se lo platiko a todas las personas que quieren saber de mi hijo que Dios recibe a todos con las manos abiertas. (As parents, we need to support our children to accomplish their dreams and trust that God will lead them through the best way. For me it is a great joy to know my son will have the best career in the world and I tell this to everyone who wants to know about my son. God receives everyone with open hands.)

Treat it as any other vocation

Trust in God's calling, that religious is a special calling. Not to think of it as a celibate life but a very fulfilling life.

Understand why they have chosen this vocation and continue to love them as you would no matter whatever other vocation they may have chosen.

Visit the seminary during family weekend and attend other events at the seminary so you can see for yourself. It was reassuring to me as a parent to see our son involved and happy. The religious and non-religious spoke with me individually and I greatly appreciated that.

Vocations need to be fostered from an early age. I think many people miss their vocation because parents do not promote them because they don't recognize it. I am guilty of not promoting and fostering vocations in my children when they were young; I did suggest religious life to my adult children. Many not-so-young people are floundering in this world, not really settled. Perhaps they missed the first call and would be a group to focus on. But the main venue for promoting vocations is prayer of the faithful. We pray a prayer for increased vocations at daily Mass. Perhaps this should be done worldwide! I am promoting vocations to my grandchildren! When you know better, you do better.

We all make a life choice, secular or religious. Once a family member has taken their call, we all should support that decision/call – no matter what we think (the example given earlier about the grandmother and aunt).

We always are curious and positive when discussing his vocation.

We are a homeschooling family. This means we work, eat, play and pray all day under the same roof together, learning to care for the different needs of each one. We learn generosity, service, patience, independence... especially in a large family. Although each one has his own activities and interests, we value our time together. As a consequence we know each other very well, love, and nurture and support each other. Our children were always encouraged to use their talents, develop their God given skills, become independent and pursue what they felt called to do in accordance with God's plan. This life style is not for every family obviously, but I believe it is by far the best environment to support and promote vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.

We as Catholics can mentor and emulate the Catholic faith. Don't discourage a child who has expressed an interest in pursuing this life choice. Offer encouragement and connect them with a religious mentor where topics, questions and concerns can be discussed. As a parent I have always wanted my children to do in life the jobs that make them happy. I will not live forever and I want them to be happy in their life choices.

We feel it is a calling. We can only encourage that person to pray and ask God for guidance. Listen to them and help them sort out their feelings and thoughts.

We have discussed our children's futures from the time they were very little. We talk about marriage, priesthood, and single as three vocational calls to service. One of these calls does not outweigh the other. Each is a call to selflessness, sacrifice, and love. With prayer, God will direct them on the path that will serve Him the best, and with a heart aligned to God's will, our children

will find happiness. I believe that children need to see the priesthood as much as an ordinary way of life, a beautiful way of life, as we see marriage and family. One is not more sacrificial than another. They each have their place in God's plan for His Church. Our son looked at religious orders, and sadly, many have lost their sense of purpose. Our son was not certain what his role would be in the order. He felt more needed by the parish. A person needs to see where he will fill a need. I think that culture in the parish needs to be fostered.

We just kept asking questions when the vocation desire was mentioned – we didn't ignore it

We may not have prayed together but during bad or good times we always gave God thanks. We also asked God to give us the answers and steer us in his direction. As children at dinner and bedtime we always prayed together. I am very proud of my daughter. She truly loves her life. We share stories about our week every Sunday on the phone. I have visited the convents and met the sisters she lives with. I plan to continue to be there for her.

We pray more for priests than we used to. We use Sister as an example of how to live a religious life.

We should openly encourage such vocations and certainly support anyone with the inclination to enter religious life.

We support by listening to his stories, and worries. We show support by attending events that he participates in. We welcome his friends always and try to be friendly with other seminarian parents. I pray for vocations and support vocations by talking about vocations to the other volunteer groups I am involved in – CDA and scouting. We try to be joyful always about his choice of vocation and our doors are always open to him and his friends whenever needed.

We support vocations to the priesthood because the men have fewer restrictions on them.

Well, my brother had a deep sense of vocation at a very early age. I think parents/family who can support or reinforce that at first glance with schools and proper education. Possibly getting scholarships for promising students. He teetered along a mainstream career and following his vocation for a while. His family and strong community continued to support him until he was ready. The great impact will be when the Catholic Church can get rid of their hidden skeletons and ask for forgiveness. Then families/friends can support a vocation with a clear and proud conscience.

What we as family members can do is just to be there for them and to let them be human beings. Priests are held to such a high standard. As my brother often says, all that he does is in the public eye. Someone is always watching him. What my brother needs the most is a retreat...some place where he can be himself, some place where no one is watching or judging. My husband and I try to give my brother that kind of place. Priests need somewhere where they can be themselves and know that no one is watching or judging. I also believe they need someone who will listen and let them “vent”. We all need an ear and a shoulder sometimes, and they are no different.

Sometimes, my brother needs to be my kid brother who just needs to let off some steam...to be human.

When a child is young, always make the religious vocations an option, regardless if the child is interested. When adults ask a child what they want to be when they grow-up, the list is endless, yet rarely includes religious vocations. ALWAYS make it an option. If there is interest, encourage the youngster and expose them to those surroundings. But don't force or mold the child into one corner. Put it in God's hands.

When he was ordained they told us not to neglect him but it's the way around we have to seek him out to do stuff. He is so involved with church and stuff

When talking about "what you want to be when you grow up" be sure to include religious life. More contact with religious would help. Our school no longer has nuns and we only have one priest who is stretched to be everything for the parish and may have less time to interact with the youth.

When they express a desire to discern just get out of their way, never discourage. Always be there for them.

When you think that someone has a calling encourage them. In our case, we always sense that our son had a calling but we encourage education and happiness and we let him make that decision and we supported him because it is his life and he has to be happy. Also, I know that seminarians need financial support. The burden can't always be placed on the parents. The Catholic Church needs to promote it more because of all the scandal that it has been through. And Pray.

While I do not support vocations I understand that it is important to my daughter; therefore I support her entirely as a person living her life.

Why would they support vocations to a misogynistic, pedophilic culture?

With a positive attitude and prayer.

With prayer and sacrifice to demonstrate assurance that God's love is never ending and is with him in all circumstances thereby celebrating his life.

Writing, visiting, and praying together for intentions and each other.

You have to allow your children to follow their dreams, even if that means limited contact with them. You want them to be happy. You need to put your own desires behind theirs. Our daughter is happy. And that makes me happy. What better gift than to see your children doing what they love! And, besides, I have the greatest son-in-law!

Young children can be told they would make a good priest or religious as early as they are told they could be a mother or a father someday.

Young men serving as altar servers is good. Encourage your child to listen to his/her heart.

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

***The Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations
to Religious Life and Priesthood:
A Report for the
National Religious Vocation Conference***

**APPENDIX IV: Summary and Analysis
of Focus Groups of Family Members**



**Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D.
Jonathon C. Holland, M.A.**

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	309
Focus Groups Analysis	310
Vocational Discernment and its Effects.....	310
Influences of the Family and Family Life on the Discerned	313
Culture of Vocations in Families	318
Hindered or Discouraged Discernment.....	318
Perceptions of Religious Life and Priesthood.....	320
Focus Group Protocol	323
Washington DC Focus Group.....	327
Chicago Focus Group	345

Introduction

This report presents a summary and analysis of the key themes that emerged from two focus groups of family members of men and women who have discerned a vocation to priesthood or religious life. In summer 2014, the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to study the influence of families on discernment of a vocation to priesthood or religious life. The goal of the research is to provide information that will help promote vocations and assist families with the discernment process and the transition of a family member to religious life or priesthood.

This Appendix is one part of the much larger study of the influence of families on vocations to priesthood and religious life. The final, comprehensive report includes these findings from the focus groups as well as findings from a survey of men and women who have entered religious institutes in the United States in the last 15 years, a survey of seminarians and priests who were accepted into formation in the United States in the last 15 years, surveys of family members of these seminarians, priests, and men and women religious, and findings from a national survey of Catholic parents about their encouragement of vocations to priesthood or religious life. CARA developed a protocol to guide these two focus groups – in collaboration with Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, executive director of NRVC, and an advisory committee convened by NRVC. This protocol is included here, following the summary and analysis of the key themes from the focus group of family members. A complete transcription of both focus groups is included after the protocol.

Focus Groups Analysis

In May, 2015, researchers from CARA conducted two focus groups on the topic of family influences on vocations. Each focus group had 8-12 participants, all family members of men and women religious, and were held in Chicago, Illinois and Washington, DC.

The groups were arranged by a representative from the National Religious Vocations Conference. The purpose of these gatherings was to study the influence of parents and families in nurturing vocations to religious life and priesthood. The goal of the study is to raise awareness in the Church on the important role of parents and families in promoting religious and priestly vocations, especially when the Church is placing a stronger, intentional focus on families and their faith life.

Each focus group began with an introductory presentation on the background of the study. The CARA researcher then followed a standardized protocol of questions categorized under four subtopics: The experience of discernment and how this affected their life, influences of the family and family life on the discerning, culture of vocations in families, and perceptions of religious life and priesthood.

Vocational Discernment and its Effects

The participants were first asked a series of questions about what their experiences were like to learn that their family member had a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. They were asked how that process affected their life. What were the emotions they felt, and were there any particularly important or memorable conversations they had and finally their perceptions at the time of priesthood or religious life?

Participants mentioned many emotions once they learned that their family member was discerning. Surprise, elation, and pride ranked high as their initial responses. Some had a feeling and expected their family member to discern.

Surprised About Discernment

You know I see a good friend of his who I thought automatically, oh, man, you are so perfect for this role and I have to admit, I didn't see that in my own son.

-Washington, DC

I would categorize the experience as - not a good experience or a bad experience, but really surprising for us. My father was an engineer, I am an engineer and she is an engineer, and she was very business oriented. [A]nd so it was very shocking, it wasn't bad or good, it was very shocking and the other thing is what we learned to accept that but, it was a process.

-Chicago, IL

I won't say I was shocked, surprised yes, he's 29 he's had girlfriends, he's played he was on a state championship lacrosse team on an NCAA championship lacrosse team, he had it going, smart guy, counseled all of his friends he was a person everyone would listen to because they trusted him.

-Chicago, IL

[I] was very surprised, and again I didn't know whether to be, "wow, that's great", in case he decided it wasn't really the thing, or "are you kidding, or what?", so I was just surprised. He had been going through some religious counseling with priests or faith formation and whether it came from that, I am not really sure how he decided, except, but I was surprised and didn't see it coming at all.

-Chicago, IL

I have to say we were thrilled. A little surprised. This is a guy who loved being a student, loved going to school, just give me more, and had a steady girlfriend and when he graduated from college, in philosophy, after having tried pre-med and business and a number of other things his dad and I said, "You know philosophy, really? What are you going to do with that?"

-Washington, DC

Elated and Thrilled about Discernment

[H]e was very well within himself and wasn't drawn to other things that sometimes happens with those years, it just something that who he was. We were elated, we were very excited and very proud. We have a daughter who questions a lot of things so, I pray every day.

-Chicago

[O]h, we were thrilled. We were truly thrilled for him. We were thrilled that he was happy, that he truly was answering a call because it was not apparent.

-Washington, DC

[F]ather talked to him and we really never known anything different and we were happy everyone was really excited so we were following him through on this journey, but again its happy with everything that's going on, but not pushing it, in fact, we said it to him at different times, because we know they have a very well rounded program.

-Chicago, IL

"I'm going to spend this year somewhere where they are going to be observing me and I think I want to be a priest." "OK", I said, "all right. It is going to be a really good thing for you, not only for you, but for all the family, and your father for him, all that he wanted to do is to have one son that would serve". He cried three times, that was coming from nowhere, I was so happy and I said, "I am happy for you", he said, "I have not even talked to father yet, but I think this is what I am going to be doing". So later that summer he went home and told them the good news and my father-in-law was like "Oh

my, really?” Everyone was behind him.
-Washington, DC

Somewhat Expected Discernment

[W]ell on one college trip I could tell she wasn't really into this whole college thing you know? I could sense she really didn't care about college. She was not into it. She was really thinking of entering and I said, “You know Maggie, if you have a vocation...”
-Washington, DC

My reactions were probably a little bit different because it's my brother, not my child and at the time he entered the order I was not married yet, didn't have children, so I had, I think, a different perspective than even I feel now. So in a way, it was not a surprise at all. He was a little boy who would like play church when he was like four. He went through a period where he started bowing in front of things as if they were all altars.
-Washington, DC

He said, “Well, I think I need a year of discernment”, and I can't say it came actually as a shock. His sisters both went, “Oh yeah, we could see that coming.”
-Washington, DC

Influences of the Family and Family Life on the Discerned

Participants were next asked their opinion about their family life and if there was anything that may have encouraged or facilitated this vocational discernment. In particular they were asked about their religious practice, parish participation, community engagement or social outreach and if they had an impact on the discerned.

Participants mentioned several aspects of their family life that may have contributed to their family member's discernment. Often the participants cited weekly Mass and prayer within the family, Catholic schooling, community service, and also being related to, or friends with a priest or religious.

Weekly Mass and Prayer

Never miss Sunday Mass. Even if that beeper was going off it was like "I'll be there in an hour" you know. So our kids always knew that was a priority. Everybody would have to line up and we'd be at Sunday Mass together. So that certainly was a priority. Meals, you know, grace before meals but also prayers at bed time. I mean even as the kids got older and were busy with homework or whatever it was like put the homework aside were all going to have family prayers then you can go back to your homework.
-Washington, DC

Our life was, we tried to keep the faith strong in the family with rosary in May and October after meals, I always said prayers with the children as they were growing up, we went to Mass regularly on Sundays, and then I would go during the week especially when the children were in school.
-Chicago, IL

It was discussed but not you know, I mean when your family, you're going to Mass your trying to cultivate some sort of a prayer life, you know if your young family, you are trying to get kids to go to confession, to want to go to meaningful liturgies it's out there but it was never like "Sean did you ever, Brendon did you ever think of?" No, I think it was just something we were just busy doing and you thought if the fruits produced it you'd be thrilled and if it didn't, I just never really thought about it that deeply, until you know.
-Chicago, IL

[A]nd one thing we did, for us to keep the children listening at Mass, we would at breakfast on Sunday, or brunch, we would always quiz them on the readings and the homily and we would also explain things that they didn't understand and talk to them about things and Jim says he learned more religion at our breakfast table than he did at school.
-Chicago, IL

You know always grace before meals. The bedtime prayer. Sometimes, I did this in my own house, but growing up on Fridays we would have, it was known as Catholic reading. So to replace the old abstinence that used to be on Fridays we would, as a family, sit and read the Bible or you know, the Koran, or whatever religious publications that we had and we do abstain on Fridays from meat. We do too. All year long. Forgot to mention that. So... this is all part of the deal. They don't always like it but... its Friday.

-Washington, DC

So, we instituted a family rosary on Sunday nights which we still do with the younger kids. We even did Latin. Yes. Maggie could recite the Latin Hail Mary and Our Father at three years old. That might've been it. She even refused to eat chocolate during lent at her preschool and they still remember that.

-Washington, DC

I think living a Christian, a full Christian life in the family, I think helps.

Chicago, IL

Community Service

[T]here was a wide range of friends, but also our children from the oldest to the youngest would volunteer at the rectory and answer the phone on weekends and there was a Brother there who would give them something to eat, a snack or something like that, so it was a good experience for all of them, and so Jim was exposed to this and he was exposed to the children all doing this.

-Chicago, IL

[B]ut there was an equal expectation that they would do good. Do good, but do well while you're there. And so all of our kids knew they were expected to not just do the community hours that the school required, but they would go beyond that and I think that may have affected Sean. He ended up being an eagle scout and his project was to repaint the Madonna house which is our Catholic Charities home for unwed mothers.

-Washington, DC

[S]o I think he was looking to kind of explore, himself separate from the rest of us. He ended up doing two years with Cap. Corps, the second one in Chicago, and by the second year I was starting to get a feeling. He not only was volunteering but he was spending a lot of his time with the friars in that city. He was really getting to know them and he did, then end up deciding... and by the time he had made the announcement I think we all were kind of just like well yeah. It was pretty clear he wasn't going to go back to his old life.

-Washington, DC

She volunteered and then she worked at the handicap summer camp. Her brother didn't even go to that but that's what she did so she was always involved. I think three years we took care of the handicap teenagers who were nearly as big as she was. Just really kind

that way, very patient. I don't know about your kids but in the case of our kids they really needed to develop a sensitivity to people in need and in many respects our kids were too sheltered and even though we lived in Oklahoma where only three percent of the population is Catholic.

-Washington, DC

[I] don't know how and I don't remember the moment, but it was soup kitchen and I think we decided were going to volunteer at soup kitchens, so my children went, they were young you know, and they saw those long lines of people that were really, and we live in Lake Forest, which is very, I mean were not wealthy Lake Forest people, but we live in a beautiful wealthy town, and north of us, Waukegan, is very humble and has needy people there. And that was a real eye opener for our children and he mentioned that, as something that really touched him as he grew up serving in those soup kitchens.

-Chicago, IL

[I] don't know when it hit him but he graduated and immediately went in to the ACE program at Notre Dame where he was inundated, living as a volunteer teacher two years, living in community with other students in Memphis Tennessee, and then he went to work for the program, got approached by the CFC's, left there, and went to work at Cristo Rey, Jesuit High School, in Polson, here in Chicago, at some point I think Ace and Cristo Rey service aspect of being a person of faith being, religious and doing service at the end of his three year stint at Cristo Rey that he told us he was going to apply to the Jesuits.

-Chicago, IL

Catholic Education

Our kids all went to Catholic schools. I think that helped as they got older especially in high school. Just the fact for us that they had Catholic friends, not all of them, I mean the diocese in high school had a large percentage of kids who were not, but there was just a very Catholic atmosphere and I think that may have helped.

-Washington, DC

[A]nd then the last thing was he did go to a Catholic college, Catholic University of America in Washington and he went to college thinking he might enter the seminary, so he took the right theology classes but that school was such a nurturing place too for faith and for students who really believed, and there was a strong faith message there at Catholic University and he too he loved the sisters because he would volunteer every week at the Shrine, which is right on the campus of Catholic U. and the sisters were so sweet and so lovely and so they were just a real part of his life as he went to school there and to this day sisters mean so much to him.

-Chicago, IL

[I]t was always Catholic education, how to make ends meet, so it was constant discussion, you know, it still is to this day because my youngest is a Sophomore in high school and I teach in a Catholic school, so it's pretty much just permeated everything we

always did, I think.
Chicago, IL

[T]hey all went to Catholic school from Kindergarten all the way through college.
-Chicago, IL

Relative of or Relationship with Priests and Religious

[W]e now have like four or five even six priests already in the family, if it just coming from him, they loved the way he served they loved the way he does with people, so growing up there, we have to serve in our church, we grow up in different Catholic movement in our church so, and every year during the summer we have a summer vocation, even me, I thought that I was going to be a nun, I was in the nun school middle school, and high school.
-Washington, DC

I think experiencing somehow being around priests, like when you're in a parish or different, schools, somehow they need exposure to nuns or priests that they might know in order to have that concept that's more concrete. I think, our son certainly through his schooling later in life, yes he had the experience of being taught by priests, or counseled by them, I think most of them as mentors.
-Chicago, IL

So you could say we set a good example, of course she has a sister, a nun who left the convent after 15 or 20 years, I have an aunt who left the convent after about 20 years, so we have examples of people didn't like it, people did, but I think he's, he wanted hands on.
-Chicago, IL

I think if you look at whether our family influence, it's my family was very, very Catholic, my mom had been in the convent, we said the rosary every night, there was a lot of sharing of faith and I tried to instill that within our own family.
-Chicago, IL

I agree, our son too, Brendon was friends with, and had a very close relationship with a priest from high school, an Opus Dei priest and his original counselor, he had a big influence.
-Chicago, IL

I agree, because my sister was a very good friend of a priest.
-Chicago, IL

The fact that in my family there were priests and sisters it seems that it was easier for her to make the decision, because she, among other friends, the decision of becoming a sister is very strange, that for her was not, because I remember a long time ago, seeing my

brother of my grandfather was a priest, so all my life I've been seeing fathers and sisters, so it's normal, so the fact that they were there, was something that I think was easier for her to make the decision.

-Washington, DC

One of the things that my sister really, I think, was really important for her was the priests in the university, the two universities that she went to, back in [Country] there was very good priests and so she became a good friend and then when she moved to [Place] one of the priests in [Place] College, that connection was very important and definitely from the family we never encouraged that because, well, we think that everyone is free so everybody can do whatever they want, at that time she had a boyfriend (inaudible) so but definitely the connection with the priests in each university was very important very, very important in her decision.

-Chicago, IL

We often times had priests to dinner it wasn't like they were separated that much from us they were friends and so our kids got used to having priests at dinner. One of their aunts is a [Place] Dominican and it wasn't like that was such a strange idea in their heads, on the other hand, I can say that we addressed it directly, it was just like it wasn't that terribly unusual either and I think our kids to benefit by being in high school where there was always as chaplain.

-Washington, DC

My side, my uncle on my father's side was a priest and my auntie on my father's side, also she was a nun, the nine children, I am the oldest of nine children, before we go to bed we say the rosary, based on that one, we make sure our two children are brought the proper way, the religious way.

-Chicago, IL

"[I]f, if I become a priest", and honestly for him I think the pivotal point in his journey was doing a pastoral year. He lived at one of the parishes and although there wasn't a whole lot he could do, he kind of shadowed the pastor and kind of got an idea of what being a priest and doing pastoral work would involve. After that year he began saying, "when I become a priest." It was as if it had changed him from if it happens to when it happens.

-Washington, DC

Culture of Vocations in Families

Participants were asked how they believe we can nurture or strengthen a culture of vocations in families. Did they or anyone else in your family talk directly to their family member about a vocation?

I would say, not before he expressed interest in it himself.

-Chicago, IL

In the family, I don't ever remember ever talking about the possibility of becoming a religious of any kind ever, we know that my father studied in the seminary and but definitely wasn't an option, for example when we discussed her career or something, it was engineer at that time, we decided to become engineers, it was never a real option of a career or of life we started to talking about it when she started to talk about it.

-Chicago, IL

I don't know if I ever had an explicit conversation until he was an adult. I do remember having an explicit conversation with my own parents about me, I'm guessing that my brother did with my parents as well.

-Washington, DC

Hindered or Discouraged Discernment

Conversely, the participants were asked if there were events, or people in their family that hindered or discouraged vocational discernment. Many participants heard negative reactions from other family members and friends. Some of the comments they heard included not having grandchildren, inability to earn a good living to support the family, or the difficulty in living a chaste life.

[B]ut I had a lot of reaction from people my age, friends saying "he's what"? "Why is he going to do that"? But I don't think that, although it affected me, I don't think it had any impact on Thomas' decision making process because he had not heard that, we definitely got strange reaction from some people.

-Chicago, IL

[S]ociety expects us to pair up. It is a big thing and my goodness, who can live a chaste life these days? That's a big thing and all the input from society.

-Washington, DC

And wanting grandchildren, if you don't have a big family, and it's your only child, that's it.

-Washington, DC

From Africa, one of the reason parents most of the time does not like the kid to go into religious life is that most of the time it's the brightest kid who choose to, there's the

economics part, ok, you know you want to be a priest, you know you're not going to be able to provide for the family.

-Washington, DC

There is also the element of separation, we had a hard time with, I remember when we dropped her off at the convent, I of course was crying all through Mass and the thing that kept coming to mind is that the Lord is a cheerful giver. But I am not cheerful. I can't stop these tears. Maybe there's that, selfishly, we already have such a bond with her as a family member, we are not really willing to give totally.

-Washington, DC

[W]e had some negativity but it had no impact on the decision, worthless, it hurts you and then you would wonder, "Why would you say that?" And the older he gets, it keeps going "he will meet somebody don't worry about it."

-Chicago, IL

My only comment is I wouldn't discount the Lord in this whole thing, just because from some of the other sisters that we have met at the convent, so many of them came from non-Catholic homes, no Catholic exposure. Parents have converted after the fact, things like that, and parents that are totally dead set against it, you know regardless of all of the negative influences, they found a vocation they were called a very definite calling.

-Washington, DC

Perceptions of Religious Life and Priesthood

The final set of questions were about perceptions of religious life and priesthood. Participants were asked what do the terms “vowed religious” and/or “priesthood” mean and how has their perception of religious life/priesthood changed, now that you have a family member who is in formation or has become a priest or a religious?

Were there stereotypes and or misperceptions that you or others may have had? What can the church do to promote a culture of vocation within families?

I saw a layman looking at a priest and so prayerful and so respect I reluctantly approach a priest, now a days it's all open, you can approach a priest anytime make a casual conversation with nothing, say “how are you?” you shake their hands with a smile, that's my perception of priests, your more open to them, you're not holding back, they are more approachable.

-Chicago, IL

I feel that some of the opinions of priests have changed with the sexual abuse issues, but when we were growing up, priests you would never thought of something like that could happen, and they were very revered and I feel like by the general populous, that it isn't exactly the same anymore and the fact that there are so many fewer priests whether in the order of the diocesan priests in the parish when we first joined the parish they might have had three or four priests, now we have one, and so I think that it's harder for maybe diocesan priests in an order, house with others in the order, so they still have a community, but for those priests that are the only one in a rector, maybe with one day off they can get together with other friends, it's a little bit lonelier experience or they get more involved with the adults in the community. Those would be the changes.

-Chicago, IL

One of the things I feel that, in the 70's and in that one period after Vatican II, the priests became confused with everybody else. And so religion wasn't taught as well as it could have been. Now, I see the younger priests now that are coming in. I mean this is my experience in seeing the Holy Cross, the new seminarians, the new priests being ordained. I think they are bringing in the best of what Vatican II brought in. They are bringing in best of the education of the theology and how to live that theology.

-Chicago, IL

One of the most interesting things that's going on is the birth of the Church today. When I was growing up, it looked like the backfield of Notre Dame. But today, you're having Vietnamese, Hungarians, and the Poles, all flying in and creating a new electricity of intellectual development. I know our son has been very much impressed and developed with that by what's been going on. It instills a competition of the mind, because we realize how small the world is, and how big the mission of the Church. The papal leadership has been outstanding in that regard.

-Chicago, IL

[T]he thing I noticed about my own son that has been a really big plus was that our diocese, like maybe some of the others, really make an effort especially with their young priests to make sure that they have group of priests generally their own age those that have been ordained about the same time and they really insist that they have a fraternal group. And so they don't feel quite so alone.

-Washington, DC

As a final note, respondents were asked if they could give any advice for family members who may have someone considering a vocation or discerning a vocation.

Patience.

-Chicago, IL

Acceptance of where they are at. Do not push either way, like saying "oh that's so great, stay with it" but to accept them, let it flow. Being supportive, but not pushing one way or the other, because it has to come from them ultimately. Supporting them yes!

-Chicago, IL

On the parish level the only exposure you get especially to women's religious life is some sister coming in asking for donations to the retirement fund for the religious, like that's it, we had no idea what religious life was when our daughter says she wants to enter the convent. You know if we have more exposure than someone saying "here's a special collection", "remember these sisters who taught you in elementary school? They need your help now", there's got to be more.

-Washington, DC

You need information. When you first received the first news, you are trying to solve a problem with the little information that you have. But when you research and have the information about what your religious life is, it is good for the family member. At the beginning of the process, you don't have enough information to develop an answer for them.

-Chicago, IL

And I feel like maybe that's one of the things Vatican II didn't really give us, or at least the people who followed afterwards, didn't do a good job, so now it's up to us to educate ourselves and become articulate enough to say, "this is what we believe in, this is why it's important, this is why on a daily basis we feel like you know prayer is important and listening is important".

-Washington, DC

But I do think they need exposure to meet priests or nuns as an example. I don't know how they really can understand how the rest of their lives will be like without being able to spend time with them as counselors or just sharing their experiences.

-Chicago, IL

I feel like exposure to maybe at the high-school level at the kind of age where they are really starting to think seriously about the direction their life is going, and what is your major in college, would you enter religious life? The exposure to the diversity religious life could be really important.

-Washington, DC

Focus Group Protocol



Family Influences on Vocations



Introduction

A focus group is a gathering of about 8-12 people for about an hour to 90 minutes to talk about a particular topic in some detail. A protocol, not a questionnaire, is used. The protocol sets out the major issues that the focus group is convened to address, including a variety of probes that the researcher may use as necessary.

Unlike a questionnaire, a protocol is not followed rigorously. While survey research requires consistency every time an instrument is used, a focus group demands flexibility. Thus, not all the probes or other specific questions on a protocol are necessarily asked in a specific focus group experience. Rather, the protocol serves as a starting point for each focus group, and the experience of each focus group varies considerably depending on the issues and experiences surfaced in a particular group.

Advantages and Limitations

Focus groups allow for:

- An intensive understanding of a particular issue.
- A discovery of perspectives and ways of thinking not previously considered or known.

Focus groups do not:

- Provide measures of frequency of certain attitudes, practices, or behaviors.
- Measure a particular set of characteristics in a population.

Scientifically selected random sample surveys are best to fulfill those functions.

Timeline and Sites Selected for this Study

CARA will conduct three focus groups for this study. The National Religious Vocation Conference will make all arrangements for gathering participants for these focus groups. The focus groups will be composed of family members who have been identified by recently professed religious, those in formation, and/or recently ordained priests. The focus groups will be facilitated by CARA researcher Mary L. Gautier. They will be designed to last between 60 and 90 minutes.

Purpose:

The focus groups will help CARA learn from these family members of priests and religious to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences of the family life of those who pursue a vocation to priesthood or religious life. The focus groups will explore the dynamics of family faith practice, level of support, parish involvement, ethnic and cultural practice, and other characteristics that may influence vocational discernment in families.

Procedure:

The focus group proceedings will be audio-taped and analyzed by CARA to explore further some of the survey findings and open-ended comments of family members who responded to a 2014 CARA study, "Family Life Influences on Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life." Selected comments from the focus groups may be incorporated into the final report for this project, but no individual participant will be identified and any information in the discussion that could reveal the identity of an individual participant will not be included in any report of the findings.

Family Influences on Vocations

Focus Group Protocol

Introductions and Brief Description of the Project

5 minutes

Hello! My name is _____. I am a researcher at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). CARA is a social scientific research center affiliated with Georgetown University that uses surveys and other social science methods to study Catholic populations and institutions. Last year, the National Religious Vocation Conference commissioned CARA to survey recently professed religious and recently ordained priests as well as those currently in formation about the level of family support they may have received while discerning their vocation. These men and women were also asked to provide contact information for a parent or other close family member who could respond to a survey on the same topic. This focus group is part of a follow-up to that survey. You may or may not have responded to that survey but we still want to hear from you today. With this focus group we are hoping to gain a deeper understanding of your experience as a family member of someone who has acted on a call to priesthood or religious life.

You have been invited to this focus group today to discuss aspects of your family life. In particular, we are interested in hearing your experiences while your family member was discerning his/her vocation and any influences that your family may have had on that discernment – both positive and negative.

As you may know, a focus group is simply a guided discussion or conversation. It is a way to understand how people think or feel about a particular topic or issue and to get some feedback from them. This is not a test. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the questions we will be asking. I also want to be clear that I am not here to promote any particular policy or agenda. I am here for your honest feedback. I will audio-tape the focus group, but only so that I can accurately capture your feedback. No names or other identifying information will be included in the final report of findings.

I anticipate this focus group will last between 60 and 90 minutes. We will cover a number of topics, all related to your experiences as a family member of one who has pursued a religious or priestly vocation. While I encourage your participation in this group, your participation is not required. At times, we may be talking about sensitive information; I ask that you be respectful and honest, and that whatever is said in this room remain in this room.

Any questions? Any concerns? Before I turn on the recorder, let’s go around the room briefly and tell me your name, who it is in your family that provided us with your name, and how old that family member is today.

First, let’s talk about the experience of vocational discernment and how this affected your life. We understand that for some of you this decision on the part of your family member may have been troubling or difficult, while for others this may have been very simple and natural.

The Experience of Discernment

10 minutes

Thinking back, what was the experience like for you, to learn that your family member had a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

- What were the emotions you felt?
- Were there any particularly important or memorable conversations?
- How did this discernment affect your relationship with this family member?
- What perceptions did you have at this time about priesthood or religious life?

We'd like to hear more about what your family life was like and any influences that the family may have had on this vocation.

Influences of the Family

15 minutes

In your opinion, was there anything about your family life that may have encouraged or facilitated the vocational discernment of your family member?

- Anything about your family's cultural or ethnic heritage that was supportive?
- Anything about your family's religious practice or parish participation?
- Anything about your family's community engagement or social outreach?

We'd like to understand more about how to create and nurture a culture of vocation in families.

Culture of Vocation in Families

15 minutes

Building on your experience, how do we nurture/strengthen a culture of vocation in families?

- Did you or anyone else in your family ever talk to this family member about a vocation?
- What was it about your family that facilitated discernment of a vocation?
- Were there situations, events, or people in your family that hindered or discouraged vocational discernment?

Many people tell us that religious life and/or priesthood are different now than they used to be. We'd like to hear more about your perceptions of priesthood and religious life and how those perceptions may have changed. Let's explore these concepts.

Perceptions of Religious Life and Priesthood

20 minutes

What do the terms "vowed religious" and/or "priest" mean to you? How has your perception of religious life/priesthood changed, now that you have a family member who is in formation or has become a priest or a religious?

- What are the stereotypes and/or misperceptions that you or others may have had?
- Has your understanding of priesthood and/or religious life changed?
- What can the Church do to promote a culture of vocation within families?

Washington DC Focus Group

FACILITATOR: Let's start off by talking about this experience of vocational discernment. By vocational discernment I mean the individual family member figuring out that he or she has received a call to priesthood or religious life. Let's talk about this experience and how this affected your life. I understand that for some of you this decision may have been troubling or difficult, for others of you it may have been very simple, straight forward, natural, and positive. Thinking back, what was the experience like for you to learn that a family member had a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

PARTICIPANT: We were thrilled. A little surprised. This is a guy who loved being a student, loved going to school, just give me more and had a steady girlfriend and when he graduated from college, in philosophy, after having tried pre-med and business and a number of other things his dad and I said, "Philosophy, really? What are you going to do with that?" After he spent two years at home working for Catholic Charities and seeing a different slice of life he said, "I really want to go back to school." "Okay, have you got a plan? Don't leave until you have a plan." He said, "I'm not sure, maybe law school." He took the law boards, and did fine. But he wasn't sure he wanted to do that. I think part of his reluctance was we had said we will see you through college, anything after that you may do what you can afford. Of course, after have working at Catholic Charities for two years he didn't have much. We suggested, "At this point in your life, why don't you go back to your university professors who know you well, know what your strengths are, and talk to them?" He did. Initially he decided he was going to do a Ph.D. in philosophy. They said, "Well, [Name], you also have a minor in theology. What do you think about that? You might actually be able to get a job in theology." He thought about it for a while and said, "Tell me about the programs that are available that I can afford." They said, "Marquette has a lovely program but it's very expensive. Belgium has a pretty good program. We know some people you should stay away from but there are some good professors there." His ears perked up when he heard Belgium. He put his pool of money together. Belgium is a peculiar system. Any foreign students who study there have to submit all their tuition and their living expenses in advance and are given a stipend by the month. They don't want any students living on the street. That worked out for [Name] because he was just able to manage that. He did a masters in theology in Belgium. At that point, perhaps, he was really trying to decide, what am I going to do with my life? Removing himself from everything he was familiar with, maybe this gave him a chance to clarify what he wants to do. He loved his studies, he met a new bunch of friends, did a lot of traveling, he got his masters in theology. Before he came home, we said, "How are you doing?" He said, "I think I'm going to get a combined degree in canon law and civil law." We thought, that's a plan. We asked, "What are you going to do with that?" "I think I would like to work for an NGO or an organization that might be able to use those things." Thinking of course he would continue to go to school and prolong this a little longer. A couple of months later we went, "Well, have you applied?" And he went, "No, I haven't. I really need to talk to Father Jack," our vocations director at the time, wonderful man, and the bishop, who was a good friend. We said, "Oh, really? Why do you want to do that?" It was really almost a surprise to us because initially he said he wanted to talk to them because he wanted recommendations for school and then when he said he wasn't going to school we thought, okay, what are you telling us here? He said, "I think I need a year of discernment." I can't say it came

actually as a shock. His sisters both went, “Oh, we could see that coming.” He did come home and did talk to both of them. They said, “[Name], you’ve got too much academics behind you, you’ve had your nose in the books for so long that if you do want to try the seminary, then you will have to go to Rome. I think at that point he thought, “Rome? I could do Rome.” That showed that he was convinced even then. For several years when he was in seminary, he would say, “If, if I become a priest.” Honestly for him I think the pivotal point in his journey was doing a pastoral year. He lived at one of the parishes and although there wasn’t a whole lot he could do, he shadowed the pastor and got an idea of what being a priest and doing pastoral work would involve. After that year he began saying, “When I become a priest.” It had changed him from “if it happens” to “when it happens.” That was his journey, at least through my eyes. All along the way we were praying for him—his extended family was praying for him and his friends as well. They all knew that there was this possibility that [Name] might be a priest. But I look back on his life and he was very normal university student. He loved being at school, he loved being a student, he had a girlfriend. I think part of it was just extricating himself from that and giving himself the opportunity to really think about “What am I called to do?” That’s why I think he was a little older than some of the others in his class. But I think he was maybe readier.

When he approached the bishop, the bishop said to him, “[Name], you’ve got so much academic work behind you, do you want to be accelerated through the process?” [Name] said, “No, I don’t.” Then he took the additional pastoral year as well. We felt he had given it quite a bit of time, although this was one of those moments when he was at a retreat for all those men who were about to be ordained. It was right before the diaconate ordination. They went around the room to all the other potentials and said, “Is there anything that’s troubling you that you need to get out in the open and discuss and work through?” [Name] said, “I was so glad when the guy next to me was first because I knew I would be last.” When it finally got around it was really just a turmoil in his head. He said, “When they got around to me, I guess I had received grace. I could say, ‘I think the hardest part for me is letting go.’” He told us, “I realized that for me, there are just some things that I have to shut the door on. Just being able to say that out loud made that difference for me.” I think he’s been at peace ever since then.

He’s been a joyful priest, enthusiastic in his work, but it wasn’t like it was just there. I see a good friend of his who I had thought, oh, man, you are so perfect for this role. I have to admit I didn’t see that in my own son. It really was a process.

FACILITATOR: What was that feeling like for you when you finally recognized that?

PARTICIPANT: We were thrilled. We were truly thrilled for him. We were thrilled that he was happy, that he truly was answering a call because it was not apparent. Our four kids have all done very different things. So although we were thrilled for him it wasn’t like that was “Well, of course.” I never saw it that way for him.

FACILITATOR: How about some of the rest of you?

PARTICIPANT: Our daughter [Name] is the opposite, I guess. She entered very early, right out of high school, to the Dominican Sisters. She was never exposed, she didn’t go to a Catholic elementary school or middle school. She went to public school. We sent her to [School] in

[Place] for high school where she was first exposed to religious sisters and she fell in love with them. There's something about these women that is—there is this joy, this very tangible joy that they have and it's very contagious. Of course we would let her. [Name] is our fourth; we have eight total. Her older sister was two years ahead of her and at [School] so we already knew a lot of the sisters who taught there. We were very comfortable with them. By the time [Name] got there she was in awe. I knew there was always that possibility and always joked with the kids over choosing a vocation. I would pray for vocations generically, not necessarily hitting my family. But I would always joke, especially with the girls "Wouldn't you love to be a [Religious Order]?" They had taken field trips to [Place] to visit the motherhouse. The one trip [Name] took when she went to [Place], I guess she was overwhelmed with the joy that she felt there. They took a side trip to Our Lady of Angels, Mother Angelica's order or union. Another girl, another student, had an older sister in that order so this group of girls was going to go visit that convent and their cloister. She said it was such a difference with this younger sister meeting her older sister, heart wrenching with the grill between them. They can't even embrace and it just was—it really hurt her. She was profoundly impacted by that. Then back at the mother house in [Place], everyone is happy all the time. That had a profound influence on her. In junior year we started looking at colleges. On one college trip, I could tell she wasn't really into this whole college thing. I could sense she really didn't care about college. She was not into it. She was really thinking of entering. I said, "[Name], if you have a vocation..." One of our kids, the one after her, the fifth, is handicapped. [Name] definitely has a connection with him. She's the very mothering type and very mature. She knows the added burdens in the household because of his disability. I said, "Listen to me, if you have a calling, don't let thinking of [brother's name] hold you back. We will handle whatever happens." Maybe that's what sent her off. No, she and her older sister are very close; she told her older sister before she told us that it was a definite decision. There was at least a nine month lag before she told us anything. They kept the secret quite a while. The older sister is very forceful. They all have their own personalities. Finally she said, "You have to tell mom and dad." When she did, I admit it, it just broke my heart because I knew there were very serious limitations on communication when she enters.

It was a silly reaction on my part, you know. The guy who's praying for vocation...his selfish reaction. (Laughter). It was. Well, because our youngest, was she even in kindergarten yet? No, she wasn't. So I was thinking, maybe she won't really get to know her little sister that much. We were going to miss her. I was going to miss her and she was...special, you know. She was one that smiles all the time and was just a joy. It really hit me hard. So it was mixed emotions about all this. The day we left her there, driving down to [Place], I think we cried from [Place] all the way through [State]. It just was so hard. We left her there the day before her 18th birthday.

We dropped her off. I wore my sunglasses the whole time because one of the sisters said, "Just wear your sunglasses." So I did the whole reception while we were leaving her there. I wore my sunglasses while they go and change and stuff. I said goodbye in my sunglasses and it's fine but my tears were different. I'm crying now because I can still feel it. Mine were of joy because she was doing what she wanted to do and I'm always happy for my children to be happy and it was different. I wasn't sorry for losing her, it's not a losing thing, and I still tell them all, she didn't die! But in a way it felt like that. We talk about it still. That's how I felt it was at the time. And I just thought she was so young. Here I go again. It opened up floodgates I never knew I had and

they still happen. I had these eyes that I didn't know cried until I left my daughter at the convent. So...there were tears.

FACILITATOR: So it's definitely still an emotional response.

PARTICIPANT: I saw her last weekend. They let us stay at the motherhouse, they have rooms. I hug all these sisters and they bring a little novice that had left her mommy and she needs a hug and I hug this little sister. I must have hugged her four times over the weekend. She'd pass in the hallway and say, "I need another one." Oh my, hug! I just feel...I just love them all. There's five years in the novitiate. I go down there and I just feel the love. I come back with such a...I don't know, I just hug all these sisters and I just love them all. So I send goody boxes down ...it's like another little home. My sister-in-law and her daughter and my daughter and my little daughter... we were all in a little room together. We had air mattresses and were in one little room. They all kept coming by. "Hi, Mrs. [Name], can I have a hug? Can I have a kiss?" It's just so special. But at the time I thought, shouldn't you go to college first? Experience that?

FACILITATOR: Make sure you know.

PARTICIPANT: That this is really what you want to do. But she said, you know if you feel it. If it's time to go then it's the time to go. And she just did. She's so mature. She was called. Yes. She said this weekend that you can tell because she had a big class. I think they had 21 girls enter her year. Eleven made it to the first step so you know they're not forcing anyone to stay. It's not a cult. Part of the discernment...one of the mothers whose daughter was entering (was saying) "It's a cult! I know it's a cult!" It's not a cult. They're not keeping them against their will. She wasn't going to be talked out of that. But now that they sent her daughter home, she's upset. Her daughter wasn't to be in it.

In the cult (laughing). But [Name] said you can tell. You can tell they wanted to be there. They think it's the next thing to do with their life whereas if it's a calling...there's a difference. She says, I can tell, mom. I can tell if it's their calling or if it's something they feel they should be doing. There's a difference to that. She says you can tell.

PARTICIPANT: That's great, and from such an early age.

FACILITATOR: How about you?

PARTICIPANT: I could relate to a lot of bits of what both of you were saying, really. Hearing talk about hugging all the girls reminded me about my parent's joke that they now have thousands of new sons. My reactions were probably a little bit different because it's my brother, not my child. At the time he entered the order, I was not married yet, didn't have children, so I had a different perspective than even I feel now. In a way it was not a surprise at all. He was a little boy who would play church when he was like four. He went through a period where he started bowing in front of things as if they were all altars. Which is really funny because he turns out to be not so...what's the word he used? Not that into ritual in general. I mean obviously he goes to Mass on his own but he's not...ritual just isn't his thing. There's a reason he didn't become a priest. Liturgical. That was the word he used, "liturgically inclined," compared to a lot

of the brothers that do become priests. He went to college and followed the “geek track” that my father and I followed. Majored in computer science, got a job at IBM, where my dad worked, and worked there for two years. We were becoming close again because we’re four years apart so we spent a lot of our younger years in different places. Then in his college years, that’s when we both were grownups. We forged a new grownup relationship. But while he was in college he had become close with the Edmundites. He went to St. Michael’s College in Vermont.

He spent a lot of time not just with the campus ministry but with the priest there. We wondered, is he looking into becoming a priest? Might he join the Edmundites? None of that happened. He got a job. After two years at IBM, all of a sudden he announced he was going to go join the Capuchin Volunteer Corps in Milwaukee. We were like, “In where? Don’t they have those in the East?” But I think he, like with your son going to Belgium, was looking to... he had never lived far from home. He lived at home in college, got an apartment of his own, but still was in the same city as my parents. I think he was looking to explore—himself separate from the rest of us. He ended up doing two years with Cap Corps, the second one in Chicago. By the second year, I was starting to get a feeling. He not only was volunteering but he was spending a lot of his time with the friars in that city. He was really getting to know them. He did then end up deciding... and by the time he made the announcement, we were all—well, yeah. It was pretty clear he wasn’t going to go back to his old life. So if he wasn’t going to join the Capuchins or another order, then he was going to be taking some kind of radical career change from where he had been before. My parents’ reactions, as far as I can tell, were thrilled. They’ve never seemed anything but thrilled and proud. Worried sometimes. He did his postulancy year in Brooklyn. I think they were worried. We’re not city people at all, really. They worried about the safety of the environment.

FACILITATOR: Is it just the two of you?

PARTICIPANT: Yes, just the two of us. We all missed him. Brooklyn wasn’t too bad location-wise but his novitiate was out in rural Wisconsin, so not so convenient. I think if I had known at the time the direction that his vocation would go I might have had a different reaction. Because what ended up happening is that he spent his formative years in the United States, and then he went and became a missionary in Central America. The me that’s now does think that’s wonderful in many ways. But if I had known then that he was going to go live in Central America, I would not have been very excited about that idea when he first told me he was thinking about it. I had a reaction kind of similar to you with the little sister because by then I was pregnant with my first. You’re not going to know your nephew? How are you going to know your nephew and your future or any future children? We’re going to miss you, they’re going to miss you, but in the end you can’t stand in the way he’s supposed to go, right? No, it’s his life. This was after he had already had his solemn profession. It wasn’t like he was going to stop being a friar. But certainly in his order there is a lot of listening to what people are interested in doing before the decisions are made. So while he can get sent to some places he doesn’t want to go, it was definitely him telling the decision makers that this is somewhere he could make a difference. He’s fluent in Spanish, so that’s obviously helpful. Now he’s going to Rome...which would not have been his choice. They listen, but you don’t always get what you want. I think our family reaction has been a little bit excited for him but a little sad for him because we know he’d rather not go. From our point of view, well, they’re both far away.

FACILITATOR: And Italian is a lot like Spanish, right?

PARTICIPANT: Yes, I think he's going to get them confused a lot. I speak a little of each and usually the wrong one comes out.

FACILITATOR: I would like to hear more about what your family life was like and if you have any ideas of any influences within your family that may have had an influence on this vocational discernment.

PARTICIPANT: I have to think about what the priorities in our family were. Maybe I need to give you a little background first. My husband is a physician, a pediatric gastroenterologist. In our area of Oklahoma, he was the only one in the region who did that. Which means that from a family viewpoint he was on call twenty-four seven. Whenever that beeper went off, whatever, day or night, he'd have to go usually. The only thing our kids knew for sure dad was going to be there for was Sunday Mass. Never miss Sunday Mass. Even if that beeper was going off it was "I'll be there in an hour." So our kids always knew that was a priority. Everybody would have to line up and we'd be at Sunday Mass together. That certainly was a priority. Prayer at meals, you know, grace before meals, but also prayers at bed time. Even as the kids got older and were busy with homework or whatever it was: "Put the homework aside we're all going to have family prayers. Then you can go back to your homework."

There were routines in our family life, despite the disparity in the children's ages and their responsibilities outside. Those routines were really important. The other things our kids had that were really positives were the grandparents—who were also very active in the church—only lived a mile away. They always knew they could go to grandma and grandpa's if they really didn't like being around the house. At whatever point in time they needed a break it was: Okay, you can go to grandma and grandpa's because we all have the same house rules. They had cousins and aunts and uncles and everybody was Catholic and everybody went to church, maybe not always at the same time, but there was that expectation that we were all going to church at least once a week.

Our kids all went to Catholic schools. That helped as they got older, especially in high school. Just the fact that they had Catholic friends—not all of them. The diocesan high school had a large percentage of kids who were not, but there was just a very Catholic atmosphere and that may have helped. I'm trying to think what else. There were these expectations that they would all do well in school, but there was an equal expectation that they would do good. Do good, but do well while you're there. So all of our kids knew they were expected to not just do the community hours that the school required but they would go beyond that. I think that may have affected [Name]. He ended up being an Eagle Scout and his project was to repaint the Madonna House, which is our Catholic Charities home for unwed mothers. He got into that area of service and that may have been a positive influence on him. Those are the things that come immediately to mind for me.

FACILITATOR: Those are excellent... Is there anything about your family life?

PARTICIPANT: Well, it's a very interesting family life. About [Name], I've told her that she started evangelizing from the womb because she was our fourth. Before that, we were back and forth with the whole birth control thing. I remember when the pope came in 1988 to Denver, maybe, and he was speaking out against birth control. That was the first time—we were married in 1986—that we went, okay, let's just kind of forget about it. So we had two boys in a row and then the third came along. That notwithstanding, we were still kind of off and on with the birth control. So here comes number four and that really changed my whole perspective. I got really: okay, let me investigate. Why does the Church teach this? We were given bad information in our pre-Cana class—you know, society being the way it is these days. So through a lot of discernment, luckily there was a Catholic church across the street from my office where I could go to noon time Mass during lunch. That, and it had the Blessed Sacrament exposed. That helped a lot. And this was all happening while she was pregnant with [Name]. She had trouble nursing when she had got an infection. She couldn't nurse so we had to use a bottle and that got me up, a lot, in the middle of the night.

What else is on TV that hour? I would turn on EWTN. That introduced me to a lot, even though I had a lot from having Catholic school education from first grade through college. We were never taught that. We did not get a lot of information. I learned the faith anew. We decided okay, let's take some natural family planning classes and try to live out what the Church teaches. Things just seemed to get...the focus changed more. We instituted a family rosary on Sunday nights, which we still do with the younger kids. We even did Latin. [Name] could recite the Latin Hail Mary and Our Father at three years old. That might've been it. She even refused to eat chocolate during Lent at her preschool. They still remember that. Is she allergic to chocolate? No, she wasn't. She was fine. She was more...well, I have no will power. Her father does and [Name] does too. She inherited it from her dad. So that, I'm sure, had some influence on her. She was very good that way. I did a lot of home schooling for religion with different books. That way they could get more substance. They went to public school for elementary school. Not at the beginning, but we had some issues with...we went back and forth. We did Catholic school for the first couple of years but we didn't like the...what would you call that? The sex ed stuff that they were introducing in the kindergarten and first grade. We didn't like that so we pulled them out. Not to mention when you think about four children at that cost. We couldn't handle it and we were still having more children. Then we had the one with special needs and then the one after that was late talking and had some more problems. So we pulled them out and they went into public school. Then the girls managed to survive and even evangelize a bit in public school, middle school and then we moved them to private Catholic high schools. You more or less find high schools in name only—some of the Catholic high schools around our way. But then we did find Mount De Sales. I've come down to: What does the child get out of it is what it is. I have my own opinions on a lot of things.

FACILITATOR: (To another couple who arrived late.) Could you tell us about your family member who has a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

PARTICIPANT: I'm happy because there are many priests in the family. In the U.S., we have Father [Name], who is in the Houston Archdiocese. He was ordained three years ago, so he's now in his third parish. Second really, because he was a deacon first. At [parish]. He was posted for two years at [parish] in Houston and now he has been moved to the cathedral in Houston.

FACILITATOR: What has your family life been like and what influences do you think your family might have had on this vocation?

PARTICIPANT: Only other thing I would add is that our parish at the time established a perpetual adoration chapel which I still go to. That's where I would be praying for vocations in the generic sense, not necessarily in the family. I suppose the Lord heard it. I think again it's important to work to make sure the kids had good, good values. I always encouraged that they made good decisions and were kind and made sure they did the right thing. I was always around to make sure...we were always there for them, let's put it that way.

FACILITATOR: I know [Name] mentioned about community outreach and participation.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, [Name] volunteered and then she worked at the handicapped summer camp. Her brother didn't even go to that, but that's what she did, so she was always involved. Three years we took care of the handicapped teenagers who were nearly as big as she was. She's really kind that way, very patient.

PARTICIPANT: I don't know about your kids, but in the case of our kids, they really needed to develop a sensitivity to people in need. In many respects, our kids were too sheltered. Even though we lived in Oklahoma where only three percent of the population is Catholic, everyone they knew was Catholic and everyone they knew was pretty well off. They always knew where their next meal was coming from. They had clothes to wear, uniforms for school. Their basic needs were always provided for them. So this was an area of life that they were...my kids were very unfamiliar with unless they did additional work. It wasn't that far away. It was just they were blinded by their usual daily environment. So I think the fact that not only were they given the opportunity, but there was the expectation that there are others out there and if you are privileged enough to have the good things you do, then you also have a responsibility to be aware of others who are in need.

PARTICIPANT: I think that by having the handicapped brother in the house they almost, unfortunately, had to grow up a little faster. She was already a little mature but she had to grow up a little faster to help out with him and she just did. She also, I think by going to that public middle school her little bubble was burst a little faster than keeping her as protected. My other daughter says that to some degree they were exposed to more cursing and more socioeconomic diversity, if you want to say that, than they had been in their little public school in our little suburb in our little neighborhood where they walked to school every day. It was a lot different and we weren't keeping them in like I was kept in my little Catholic bubble. They weren't in that and I was more protected. My other daughter now works in the Baltimore City emergency room and she sees everything, so she's sheltering me. She tells me some things but then she shelters me from a lot. She slowly gives me stuff. Maybe it's good I don't know.

FACILITATOR: How about some of the rest of you? Family influences, what was your family like?

PARTICIPANT: I keep hearing about priority and that was definitely true in our home too. And it has propagated to how I raise my own children. I don't care what sports you have, you are going to get to Mass somewhere in there. We're Catholic, so this shouldn't be that hard. We would do schedule contortions if that's what it took to get there. You don't go to the game because you have Confirmation class and you don't leave Mass early because you have a game. You don't get to Mass late because you have a game. If you're going to be late you wait and go to the next Mass. You don't show up during the gospel. That was a very, very strong message in our house. Prayer, of course. You always say grace before meals. The bedtime prayer.

Sometimes, and I haven't continued this in my own house, but growing up on Fridays we would have, it was known as Catholic reading. To replace the old abstinence that used to be on Fridays we would, as a family, sit and read the Bible, or Liguorian, or whatever religious publications we had. And we do abstain on Fridays from meat. All year long. This is all part of the deal. They don't always like it, but it's Friday. I don't like it right now because it's attention to detail that I have trouble with.

There's something else that resonated with me that you were saying about the sheltering or non-sheltering. We grew up in a small town. I would not say either of us did much in the way of community service growing up. We're old enough and were in a place where no community service hours were required at that time. We went to Catholic elementary school, public high school, but I don't think public high school burst the bubble very much. It was still a small, small town. Not rich but not poor, not a very diverse town. My brother went to the Catholic elementary then public high school in one town. Then we moved to Vermont, which managed to be more diverse than where we started, believe it or not. To the extent that Vermont has socioeconomic diversity, Burlington is where it is. We went to a different high school there and then to St. Michael's College, which is also kind of "bubbly" in a way. I wonder if that speaks to the strength of the call, that he took this big left turn, to go join the Capuchins to work in inner city Milwaukee. It was such a huge change and there was nothing in the background to me that would have suggested that was very likely. But maybe that was part of the journey he was meant to have. Now it seems so natural that he works with people in need and he works with groups that don't necessarily get the support of the elite. When he was 18 it wouldn't particularly occur to me that was likely.

FACILITATOR: It's your younger brother that's a priest here in the U.S.? Can you tell us a little about what was life was like in your family growing up?

PARTICIPANT: My husband and I came from a really Catholic village, about 90 percent Catholic. His father and my great grandmother—those are the origins of the Catholics in the family. His father was a catechist. They came from the coastline because the first priests were at the coastline. My father-in law got baptized there and then was going to work with the priests that were coming from overseas. He was a resident on the coast; he came from the same village as my great grandma. He was the first coming inland and later on my great grandmother followed. When the priest was not there, he was the one that replaced the priest's service by bringing communion to the people.

FACILITATOR: Catechist they call it, right?

PARTICIPANT: Later on, my grandmother passed away. So my great-grandmother had to go and get my mother and the other children of her daughter. She brought them up. Then my uncle came and got my mother, who went back to the coastline. That way my mother grew up with a very traditional Catholic family. You have to pray in the morning, your kid can only be in Catholic school. We could only go to Catholic school. The only school that was not Catholic was university. I was thinking that maybe that influenced him, because even [my husband] was to be a priest. It was first his brother that was to be a priest, the older one, because there were nine of them. The first one was to be a priest, but that was not to be. After that they sent [my husband] to the minor seminary. The kids around 11 or 12 will go there. Those kids would be nurtured there to become the future priests. When he finished the high school, it was not what he wanted to do. My father-in-law was really disappointed. But now, Father [Name] was third behind [my husband]. Fr. [Name] came from nowhere the year that we got married, when [my husband] left to come to school in the US and I was still at home. Fr. [Name] came to see me and said that he was not in the line to be a priest, because of the fact that he did not go to Catholic school except for primary school. Fr. [Name] went to the public high school. When he finished high school, that year I was to come to the U.S. to meet [my husband]. Fr. [Name] came to me and told me, “You know what? I think I have a call to be a priest. I’m going to spend this year somewhere where they are going to be observing me and I think I want to be a priest.” OK. I said, “All right.” He said, “It is going to be a really good thing for you, not only for you but for all the family. For your father, all that he wanted is to have one son that would serve.” [My husband] cried three times, because that one came out of nowhere and made us so happy! And I said “I am happy for you!” He said, “I have not even talked to father yet, but I think this is what I am going to be doing.” Later that summer he went home and told them the good news and my father-in-law was like, “Oh my, really?” Everyone was behind him. Why I am saying this is because [Name] was the one who stayed with Fr. [Name].

PARTICIPANT: Fr. [Name] is my brother and [Name], the priest in Houston, was then studying and staying with him.

PARTICIPANT: So after Fr. [Name], we now have like four or five even six priests already in the family, just coming from him. They loved the way he served, they loved the way he does with people. Growing up there, we are expected to serve in our church. We grow up with different Catholic movements in our church. Every year during the summer we had a summer vocation program. Even me, I thought that I was going to be a nun. I was in the Catholic elementary school, middle school, and high school run by the nuns. So at one point in time, before he asked me to be his wife, I thought that I was going to be a nun. It was when I met him that he changed my mind. (Laughter). My father-in-law was not happy. He did not accept us, because he thought that I was the one who changed him from becoming a priest, when actually it was him who changed me from wanting to be a nun!

PARTICIPANT: Yes, it was not easy because we were so young. He was going to turn 23 and I was going to turn 19. After five years they thought we were ready, so we were able to get married. In our family, growing up, we have to pray a lot. We have to go to church in the morning first. For my husband, even his parents, who were farmers, when they wake up in the

morning they had prayer at around 5 o'clock in the morning. And in our family, our prayer was 6 o'clock in the morning.

FACILITATOR: So you could sleep in? (Laughter).

PARTICIPANT: So everybody has to come together and we pray. Then you can go and do your different chores before you go to school. Before meals, we have to get together and pray before we eat. Normally we used to have different prayers, such as morning prayer, mid-day prayer, 3 o'clock prayer. That is the way we grew up. It was a little bit the same for my husband. In fact, growing up I did not even know that he and I were not in the same family. I thought that we were somewhere related. It is only our faith that related us.

FACILITATOR: I would like to hear more from you, but also from all of you as well, about how do we nurture and strengthen this culture of vocations in families? Obviously each of you has in your own way developed that within in your family, a culture of vocations, an atmosphere that it's okay to think about becoming a priest or a sister. Did you or did anyone else in your family ever talk to this family member about a vocation? Did you have a specific conversation with your brother about being a priest or with your daughter about being a religious?

PARTICIPANT: I don't know that we did. I think back now that we should have maybe. But it would not have made a difference because he somehow figured it out on his own. We often had priests to dinner. It wasn't like they were separated that much from us. They were friends. So our kids got used to having priests at dinner. One of their aunts is a Sinsinawa Dominican. It wasn't like that was such a strange idea in their heads. On the other hand, I can't say that we addressed it directly. It wasn't that terribly unusual, either. I think our kids benefitted by being in high school where there was always a chaplain. Our kids had theology classes, of course, but the theology was awful. I mean it was superficial. I look at the classes our kids took Advanced Placement. Then they had religion classes, which were so basic. I can see why a lot of them just went to college and that was it. In fact our son [Name] now has helped to teach in the Catholic high school and I think comes across being kind of rigid about what they have to have (knocks on table emphatically). Because this is their last opportunity to get anything academic, they really need to pump a lot more substance into it. But that is a side subject. From a family point of view, our kids never really thought that having a conversation with a priest or nun was that unusual.

PARTICIPANT: I think that one way of nurturing it is for the kids to have experience in various Catholic movements. Like serving at church, in the choir, singing, in scouts and so on. In most cases, you get close to a priest. You like the way they are and then you wonder whether that could be a life for you. For us back home, more often than not it's maybe the priest who would then ask the child by any chance if he might not be considering a vocation. Maybe sometimes the parents would not encourage it. But the priest sees the way he is behaving and sees how much the boy maybe likes dressing like priests and so on. Somehow, in most cases, a priest by observing those children usually would see an implicit call to serve. Maybe the parent would not necessarily see this because at home you just see him like a normal child.

PARTICIPANT: I don't know if I ever had an explicit conversation [with my brother about a vocation] until he was an adult. I do remember having an explicit conversation with my own parents about me I'm guessing that my brother did with my parents as well. It was after 7th grade, and some nuns had come to our Catholic school, missionaries. I was really excited about it, and saying, "I think I want to be a missionary in Africa." And my mom was like, "A nun would be fine, not so sure about the missionary part, and you know there's bugs there, right? You're not really an outdoorsy person." Maybe that was not going to be right for me. But I remember my mom being very explicit about the idea that marriage was not the default. It's something that I am trying to keep in mind with my own kids. It's challenging because it's so easy to say "when you have kids someday," "when you get married someday," "when you meet the right girl," to my little five-year-old. And maybe none of that is the right thing for him; maybe he's going to grow up to become a priest or a brother like his uncle. But it is very much our society's default that you're going to pair up. The challenge is kind of trying to socialize the idea that there's this other path you may be called to all along. Not deliberate, but not just pushing the default. Making space too for [consideration of a vocation]. Remember there are other choices. But as far as the conversation that I had myself, it was when he was working and was out of college. We were only living about an hour and a half apart. So we were forming this adult relationship. We would get together without my parents and have conversations. He had been spending a lot of time with the Edmundite priest. I asked him if he was thinking of becoming a priest. He said he had been thinking about it, but he wasn't sure that was right. I guess it wasn't, because the priesthood wasn't actually the thing after all. He did end up becoming a brother in the end. He struggled with the fact that male religious life that is not ordained is not something that a lot of people know about. Even where he is now in Central America, he gets called "father" all the time. He either corrects them or he doesn't, depending on the situation. I think that religious life of serving a particular cause for the church that didn't involve being ordained is something that took him a while. I don't think it was conversations with me that did it. It was more the relationship he had with those priests in college.

PARTICIPANT: My only comment is, I wouldn't discount the Lord in this whole thing. Because from some of the other sisters that we have met at the convent, so many of them came from non-Catholic homes, with no Catholic exposure. Parents have converted after the fact, things like that. Some parents were totally dead set against it. But regardless of all of the negative influences, [these women] found a vocation. They were called—a very definite calling.

FACILITATOR: Sometimes it's in spite of the family.

PARTICIPANT: Or recently with priests friends as well.

PARTICIPANT: The Lord has a big hand at this.

PARTICIPANT: He's got his thumb on the scale, so to speak.

FACILITATOR: Why do you think that some families are against a vocation?

PARTICIPANT: Well, if it's a convert, someone who wasn't Catholic to start with, then it has to be a long journey.

PARTICIPANT: Society expects us to pair up. It is a big thing, and my goodness, who can live a chaste life these days? That's a big thing and all the input from society. And wanting grandchildren. If you don't have big family and it's your only child, that's it.

PARTICIPANT: One young lady in the novitiate at the Dominican Sisters and her brother is in the seminary, and that's the only two children they have—no other children. If both your children are going into a religious life, that's amazing. It's 100 percent success rate but zero percent grandchildren.

PARTICIPANT: It's like the Little Flower's parents, who are going to be canonized now, right? St. Therese's parents. They have five daughters and all of them entered the convent. Maybe that has to be promoted a little more. You don't have to have grandchildren, you know, this is good too.

PARTICIPANT: We have a grand puppy.

PARTICIPANT: From Africa, one of the reason that parents most of the time do not like the kid to go into religious life is that most of the time it's the brightest kid who chose to [go into religious life]. You know, there's the economics part of it. If you know you want to be a priest that means that you're not going to be able to provide for the family.

FACILITATOR: It's not a high paying position.

PARTICIPANT: We had a friend, [Name]. He is the only child to his mom and he is a priest in [place]. So it was not easy for him. At one point in time he took time off, during the year that we were at university. Jerome was there searching for the Lord to say something to him so that he could just go away and say "Ok, Lord, you're the one that told me that I cannot be a priest anymore." He could not find that answer, but he had to go back and face the call that he had received; he had to answer it.

PARTICIPANT: Definitely for those, because we do know many of them, for those that are coming from families that are non-Catholic—that's really when you are tested. Because you have to really say, "What's this?" In fact, there is one that we have to pay for his schooling, because the family said, "If you really want to continue in that direction, then forget about anything else, anything at all." Basically, he lives in our home with our family. Because his family said if you really want to go that way, we wash our hands of you. So accepting to be a priest when they are not Catholic themselves is one thing. Two is the economic part of it, whereby we were expecting that you would take care of us and now you won't be able to do any of this. Then of course we want grandchildren and now you are saying there will be none. So, it is more difficult for people who are coming from background of family that is not Catholic.

PARTICIPANT: There is also the element of separation. That, we had a hard time with. When we dropped her off at the convent I of course was crying all through Mass. The thing that kept coming to mind is that "the Lord loves a cheerful giver." Okay, I know that, but I am not

cheerful. I can't stop these tears. Maybe it's that selfishly, we already have such a bond with her as a family member we are not really willing to give totally.

FACILITATOR: What a sacrifice.

PARTICIPANT: But then we decided, what a son-in-law were getting! (Laughter). That's true, and my other daughters will never surpass our first daughter. The sisters always said, you give up a daughter but you will gain 300 more. It's a slogan, but it really is true. You are really part of this family now, and the gifts she gets, the prayers, there's a good side to all of this

PARTICIPANT: You get used to the rhythm. He comes in just a couple times a year we get him for a few days. We Skype. It's probably not what I would have picked, but time goes by. We only got three days one year. We got six days this past year to visit. We get our letters and then eventually it will get better. Actually it will get better. She will come home to visit for a week, but it gets better...it gets better.

PARTICIPANT: There was a question that she asked about what we can do to get the children to become....

FACILITATOR: The culture of vocations, is the way I talked about it.

PARTICIPANT: Okay, at home I think what they are doing is helping a lot. Because we are seeing now in our hometown, even the families before that were not open are becoming more open to the idea. Maybe the kids are forcing them into it. But they are really becoming more open to the idea of having a kid that can be a priest. I think the vocations are coming, because each year in our diocese we have different activities, different calling for children who come from age 11 to the late teens, 18 or 19. There is a different program for each group, for one week or sometimes for two weeks, praying and different things.

FACILITATOR: For retreats?

PARTICIPANT: Yes, retreats, doing things, going to different things in the Catholic life. I think that is happening a lot. From our village now—our village is less than 10,000—but we have like a dozen priests now. We have a Bishop, so I think that is helping a lot. In April this year, it seems like we have three priests coming from our village. I think that the vocation program is helping.

PARTICIPANT: Obviously a lot of prayer. You can't discount prayer. One thing that came to my mind, even though we don't have a son who is a priest, and maybe you can speak to this. I sometimes wonder if my son is being discouraged to the priesthood because when you go into Mass the priest is kind of the center of attention. [A young man may feel], "I don't have that kind of personality to get up there and to be in a speaking role." It's almost like the priest has to entertain, to get the guys coming back in, to get the crowd coming back next week. I think that might have something to do with a turnoff from becoming a priest, for a man.

PARTICIPANT: Becoming a priest, a diocesan priest.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, maybe that is at the diocesan level. Maybe there is not enough exposure for other forms of religious life that are out there. But I once read that somewhere, that it's a little too much "hey, look at me" the way Mass is celebrated. It just won't appeal to a lot of personality types.

FACILITATOR: That's a very good segue to another question I would like to ask you. What I would like to hear from you is, what were your perceptions of this life? How has it changed since you have now a family member that is a priest or religious?

PARTICIPANT: I grew up in the diocese of Chicago. There were parish churches really everywhere. Even though there were that many parish churches, you know I don't feel like the priests themselves really had a lot of camaraderie. I could be wrong about that. But I think the thing I noticed about my own son that has been a really big plus was that our diocese—like maybe some of the others—really makes an effort, especially with their young priests, to make sure that they have group of priests, generally their own age or those that have been ordained about the same time. They really insist that they have a fraternal group. So they don't feel quite so alone, especially in Oklahoma where the parishes are far flung. The younger priests tend to get put out in the rural areas. They can very quickly become isolated. But I think they have done a very good thing. At least once, but preferably twice a month, they try to get some of the young priests together to just kind of have a fraternity. That's made a big difference. I know for myself, for my own son, he has always been happy in a group. He's gregarious. That really made a big difference for him, knowing that there were other young priests who were ahead of him that he would be able to associate with. I think that was a big, big deal.

PARTICIPANT: Age really is a huge factor, especially with women religious. There are so many of advanced age. You don't see as many young sisters. I know that was one of the things that attracted [Name] to the [Religious Order]—because they are all so young there.

PARTICIPANT: And they keep them in a community too. They stay in community. When they send them out on mission they are at least two or three, at least in a group. Even if they are teaching at different schools, they come back together. They stay in a community, in prayer, and so forth.

PARTICIPANT: Even if she were interested in another congregation, if they didn't have people her age, she just wouldn't fit in, as sweet as these older sister may be. Of course, there are some older sisters. They usually have a cut off age of thirty for new sisters entering that order. I know they can fudge that for a few years. But that was huge change in my perception of what a sister could be. Because, of course, the sisters that taught me when I was little were much older. And you know, you still see them from time to time, my goodness and they look just the same as they did back in grade school. (Laughter). But you don't see a lot of the younger ones, so that's a nice change to see.

PARTICIPANT: I feel like when people talk about religious life being different than it used to be, they are talking about the changes around Vatican II. It's not really meaningful to me because I am a post-Vatican II creation. I don't have any memories of anything before that. But I don't think either of us grew up with much exposure to religious life. The principal of our elementary

school was a Sister of Charity. There were a couple of older sisters that helped out, but that was it. It wasn't until our college years—I went to Sienna College, which is Franciscan run—[that I had more exposure to religious life]. It was very familiar to me when my brother became a different branch of the Franciscans. It was still a familiar feeling for me. Even with that exposure, I think what I've heard from my brother talking about what it is like to live in community has been eye opening. You don't think about the inner lives of religious that much when you just know them from school or whatever. The kind of, I hate to use this word—politics—but that's almost how it can play into the individual personalities interacting, when you're kind of like a family but really not quite the same as a family. You're not really in it by blood. You're choosing to be together, but you have made this promise to be together. The composition of the community changes as people come and go. Especially in something like the Capuchins, itinerancy is explicitly part of their values. He will probably never stay in one place for more than a decade tops. People will always come and go. Hearing about the challenges behind that, both personality-based and also logistics [leads to questions]. Are we a community if we don't at least try to eat dinner together a few days a week? You have people that have a variety of jobs out in the world, because that is part of their charism too. That has been eye opening because it wasn't [what I expected]. It has been eye opening again as he has moved because then it's influenced by local cultures—[such as] the kind of community life and things that happened in the U.S. versus the community life in Central America. I guess I will hear more about what it is like now in Rome and how things have changed.

FACILITATOR: So for you, it sounds like you have always had a culture of vocations in your house.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, that's what I would really say so. But definitely I would go back to what he was saying. In the sense that having possibilities for them to have a fraternity of almost the same age where they can discuss, but also be able to relate to, people who are like two, three years ahead of them. That is where the vocation programs that she was talking about come in. If you have somebody who is five years older, he can relate to his experience. When they get ordained, getting that regular meeting with other priests and exchanging experiences definitely is very helpful.

FACILITATOR: I would like to know if you have any last thoughts or anything further you would like to share, particularly about promoting a culture of vocation within families.

PARTICIPANT: I will say it again, but with my own conversion, so to speak, on the whole birth control issue, I think that's a huge factor. If you have more kids, then you are more willing to be open to allow them to go into the priesthood or religious life.

PARTICIPANT: I think we could all do a better job of articulating the fact that we need to be open to the religious life. Maybe not encourage it so much, as just to be able to talk about it. To find the words. I think that's something I found when it comes to a lot of religious matters. I went all through Catholic schools. So did my husband. We find it hard to articulate what we believe in.

FACILITATOR: Why is that?

PARTICIPANT: I feel like maybe that's one of the things Vatican II really didn't give us. Or at least the people who followed afterwards, didn't do a good job. So now it's up to us to educate ourselves and become articulate enough to say "This is what we believe in. This is why it's important. This is why, on a daily basis, we feel like, you know, prayer is important and listening is important."

PARTICIPANT: On the parish level, the only exposure you get, especially to women's religious life, is some sister coming in asking for donations to the retirement fund for the religious. Like that's it. We had no idea what religious life was when our daughter said she wanted to enter the convent. If we had more exposure than someone saying, "Here's a special collection." Or "Remember these sisters who taught you in elementary school? They need your help now." There's got to be more.

PARTICIPANT: Then you think of a few sisters that are still around, here and there, sitting, or you know, I see them come through the business or whatever because they're living in the local community. But you don't really know them too much. Nobody sees them much. A lot of sisters aren't in habit anymore.

PARTICIPANT: So you don't recognize their presence in the community.

PARTICIPANT: It's not as prevalent. I again re-echo your sentiments about religious education. I feel like we lost out after Vatican II. It was a lot of peace, love, and maybe one of our sisters did throw in a special prayer book. Because we weren't getting it and our parents thought we were getting it in Catholic school. But we didn't get it in Catholic school. Then high school gave us a few Bible lessons and gave us information on other religions. But they kind of left out Catholicism. And then we get the wrong information in our Pre Cana class. And so I feel like I just got "stuff" and I didn't get the "right stuff." So I feel like we're trying to give our children the right information, once we had our new awakening. That's where we have come from. So my biggest pet peeve in the world these day is not getting the right information. And I feel like that is why we are losing a lot of our Catholics.

PARTICIPANT: It's hard to be a witness, if you can't explain yourself. I feel like they are losing the opportunity. That is why people are going to other churches. They are looking for things that are more gregarious and more lively. They feel like they are getting more of a show or more of something because they are not the "one thing" [that is most important].

PARTICIPANT: My sister-in-law just visited the motherhouse with [Name]. She said when she went to Mass there, they weren't rushing through. Obviously, nobody had to rush to get back to the parking lot to get to wherever their next appointment was. It's just they took the time to do it right. Why, why do we have these schedules now? We all need a little retreat every now and then, just to get away from the cell phones.

PARTICIPANT: I feel like exposure to religious life [would be important], maybe at the high school level, because that is the kind of age where they are really starting to think seriously about the direction their life is going. They are dealing with questions like, "What are you going to major in at college?" "Would you consider entering religious life?" The exposure to the diversity

of religious life could be really important. If my brother had only heard of a community of men like the one your daughter is in, he would have run the other way so fast! It is not what he called to, at all. Your daughter probably would have run away from the female Capuchins, too. They would have thought it meant that they didn't have a calling to religious life. So getting that kind of information about the variety of ways in which you can serve in the priesthood or in religious life [is important].

FACILITATOR: Isn't that the beauty of it? That there are so many different ways.

PARTICIPANT: I guess that diversity, you don't know that it's out there. I never knew that there was this much diversity until today.

PARTICIPANT: I was only vaguely aware that your daughter's order existed, although there is evidently a lot of them. Then they say if somebody is looking at too many, that's not good, either. If you're called, you're kind of drawn to the right one, and it doesn't take too long.

PARTICIPANT: As a Catholic, I'm going to say that it is also my responsibility to help children also to keep thinking, later on, of being in the religious life. I teach children for two classes in confirmation, the first year and the second year. Those kids are from the sixth grade and then in the 11th and 12th grades. I tell them that another major [option] is a religious life. I think we have to keep more focused [on the idea of a vocation from early on]. Don't start [talking about it] only late [when they are preparing] for the confirmation.

PARTICIPANT: Plant the seed.

PARTICIPANT: Yes. Slowly, slowly so that they can get into it. In our parish, what we started to do, because it was first for the confirmation that they used to have a retreat. Now, even with the First Communion we have a retreat. Where I came from back home, normally, we have a retreat for all sacraments, so you have to have time when you have to think. I think it's better to get the kids to know that even the religious life is a major [option] too. It's not only to be a doctor, or some other major [role].

FACILITATOR: Thank you all very much. Your comments are most helpful.

Chicago Focus Group

FACILITATOR: I would like you to focus in on the experience of vocational discernment that happened in your family and how that process affected your life. We recognize for some family members, this was not necessarily a positive thing; it could have been a very difficult thing. For other family members it might have been very simple and straight forward and totally expected. Think back for yourself: What was the experience like for you to learn that your family member was discerning a vocation?

PARTICIPANT: My son was going for his basic college degree. We suggested that because he was good at numbers, why didn't he take business? He graduated with a degree in business, and was employed for a couple of years one with [Company] and then he switched to [Company]. Whenever he came home, I would say, "How is everything?" He would say, "Ehhh." He said a month later, "I'm going for my master's." I said, "Oh, you're going for your master's in business?" He said, "No, mom...theology." "Theology???" (Laughter). "Yes, mom." I said, "Why theology?" It did not register to me—nothing registered until he said, "I think I want to try to become a priest. I have been visiting the seminary. But don't tell Dad."

PARTICIPANT: I am a former Marine. They have a wonderful program. You get a law degree. You have to spend your time in the Marine Corps, and you've got a government paid law degree. He checked it out and said, "Dad, you're crazy." I said, "Why?" He said, "They want me for six years." I said, "Yes! The government is paying for a law degree at any law school you can get enrolled in." I asked, "Well, what are you going to do then?" He said, "I am going back to Notre Dame." I said, "What subject?" He said, "Theology." He realized, "Oh, Mom didn't tell you." He could tell that I had no idea. I said, "No." He said, "I asked her not to, because you'd have made a big joke out of it." When he was living at home and I thought he was perfect Marine Corps material, I said, "Check it out." I had already talked to a lieutenant in the Marine Corps, a recruiter. My son said, "You're crazy, dad, six years—I'm not going, that's too long." When I realized he was going back to Notre Dame, majoring in theology, I said "How long is theology? Is it six years also?" He said, "Oh." On the day he was ordained, we were so proud of him. He was very high ranked in the class. I went up to him and congratulated him. I said, "[Name], you know the Marine Corps takes guys." (Laughter). He said, "Dad, stop it about the Marine Corps, I am not going in the Marine Corps!"

PARTICIPANT: I would categorize our experience as sad—not a good or bad experience but it was really surprising for us. My father is an engineer, I am an engineer, she is an engineer. She was very business oriented. She was in [Place] for her master's degree in administration and education. It was surprising because my family on both sides, my father's and my mother's side, in the generation of the grandfathers, there are religious. There are priests. We have a couple of sisters. My father before marrying my mother went to the seminary, two or three years. So the religious part and the religious experience in my family is, I would say, good. But my sister was very career oriented. So it was a total surprise. On one side it was very good for us, nice, very happy and we believe that is a good thing for her. But on the other side it was very sad. My mother cried for months. The first time I went to [Place] to visit her—she was in a house for discerning—it was very shocking for me. It was sad because we both had gone to the same

university in [Country], were both engineers, we have the same group of friends, and of course we partied a lot. So it was very shocking, it wasn't bad or good, it was very shocking. We learned to accept it, but it was a process. The other thing is that religious life for sisters here in the United States is very different from what it is in [Country]. So the experience we had with our other family was different. Here we learned to accept that. We really liked the way the religious here in the United States are orienting to life for women in the United States. So that [realization] ended a lot of fear for her. At the end, we are happy because she is happy.

PARTICIPANT: Our son—in fifth or sixth grade, he wanted to become a priest. He got teased so much he just pushed that back. He did high school, college and he became an aeronautical engineer. He went down to [Place] to work. [Place] is where the novitiate is for the [Religious Order] priests. He was seeing the novices and what they were doing. He was seeing what he was doing. And he felt that their life was more meaningful than his own. So he looked again to religious life. The director of vocations, when he would visit, [Name] would talk to him. Then [Name] came up to South Bend for psychological review. We did not even know he came up—we live in South Bend. Then he went back down and thought about it. He called us and said he was going to go into the [Religious Order]. We were very excited for him. We didn't want to get too excited and put pressure on him in case it didn't work out. But my daughters were very happy. We had a son-in-law who is not Catholic who said, "What's wrong with [Name] that he is becoming a priest?" Mostly the family was very happy and supportive.

PARTICIPANT: Mine was a little bit different. [Name] was younger. He was entering senior year in high school. We had never discussed it. We have ten children, four sons. He is the youngest son. He was the only one who didn't serve Mass. It was October and I just had a stirring inside and knew that we had a vocation. It was coincidental that I heard a commercial on Relevant Radio that said if you thought your child might have a vocation, not to pressure them. The parents really should not approach them. You should have someone else approach them. Here it is, October. He wrestled, football, the girls and handsome, everything. I pulled up to [Name] High School and saw this big burly football coach. I said, "Hey, coach, come over here. I've got to talk to you." I said, "I think [Name] might have a vocation, but I heard this commercial and I really can't say anything to him." I knew my husband wouldn't say anything to him. I went into parent teacher conferences and I talked to Fr. [Name]. I said, "You know what, Father? I think someone should say something to [Name] before he graduates just to touch base with him, because I really think he has a vocation." Father talked to him. We were happy—everyone was really excited. We're following him on this journey. We're happy with everything that's going on. But we didn't do any pushing. We knew they had a very well rounded program. They had parties, soirees, so he was in contact with girls. We'd say to him from time to time: "It's a big decision in your life. If you ever say that's it, we're willing to accept that. So just keep going year to year." So here we are.

PARTICIPANT: Our son, [Name], was in all public schools, so his vocation was most unique in a sense. But in high school years, he started hanging out with some kids who were really interested in their religion, from Opus Dei. He learned a lot about the direction of Opus Dei, but still was very involved in football and all the sports in the public school system. He went to prom. But in third grade, he had written a little essay saying that he wanted to be a priest. So that's how it started.

PARTICIPANT: We had a little summer place that we would go to every summer. It was Sunday morning and we had to drive quite a way to church because we were on the lake and had to go back into town. We were getting ready and I'll never forget, he was ten years old. He said, "Mom, were going to be late for church." I thought, oh, my God. That spoke to us.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, taking it seriously.

PARTICIPANT: He would go to confession with his grandparents. There were signs. He had friends as a high school or junior high student, but he was his own person. He was very well within himself. He wasn't drawn to things that sometimes [make young people] forget who they are. We were elated! We were very excited and very proud. We have a daughter who questions a lot about it. This has been a struggle because she questions a lot of things. I pray every day. That's our story.

PARTICIPANT: I'm [Name]. Our son [Name] is in formation with the Jesuits. I have a real religious background. My mom was in the convent for several years; obviously she left to marry my dad. My sister joined the [Religious Order] nuns and was a nun for 20 years but she did leave after some unhappy circumstances. My brother when he was in grade school entered the seminary and through most of college and then left to become a diocesan priest. So there's some background there. I didn't see [Name] heading to be a priest. I saw no notice of that. But his oldest brother [Name] did counselling with a priest, feeling perhaps he was drawn to the priesthood. But ultimately decided that he wanted to get married and have a family. Our son [Name] did all the sports, dated, went to Catholic grade school and high school, secular college at [Name] College. He didn't tell us until he was 29 [that he thought he had a vocation]. He had a lot of different experiences in the ACE program [Alliance for Catholic Education] through Notre Dame, which was a wonderful experience with other Catholics. The priests very definitely tried to recruit him for the Holy Cross priests. He told us, "No way." So when he said he was considering joining the [Religious Order] when he was 29, we were very surprised. I didn't know whether to say "Wow, that's great!" in case he decided it wasn't really the thing, or "Are you kidding?" I was just surprised. He had been going through some religious counseling with priests and faith formation. Whether it came from that I am not really sure how he decided. But I was surprised and hadn't seen it coming at all.

PARTICIPANT: I agree with not seeing it coming. I can't identify a specific moment—he did the usual things in high school. He went to a fine college, Middlebury College in Vermont, but not very religious, not very service oriented. I don't know when it hit him. But he graduated and immediately went into the ACE program at Notre Dame where lived two years as a volunteer teacher in community with other students in [State]. Then he went to work for the program, got approached by the [Catholic non-profit], left there and went to work at [Name] High School here in Chicago. At some point, I think the ACE and [Name] High School service aspects of being a person of faith moved him. At the end of his three-year stint at [Name] High School, he told us he was going to apply to the [Religious Order]. I won't say I was shocked; surprised. Yes. He's 29, he's had girlfriends, he was on a state championship lacrosse team, on an NCAA championship lacrosse team. He had it going on. He was a smart guy, counseled all of his friends. He was a person everyone would listen to because they trusted him, trusted him not to blab it all over place. When he said that he [was entering], I said, "Ohh! Hey, that's nice." I

wasn't against it. We had had a lot of experience with the [Religious Order] even though I'm Notre Dame, (laughter) due to my sons having gone to [Name] high school. He was just amazing and he went through the meat grinder. I don't know what it's like in the archdiocese and I don't know what it's like with the [Catholic non-profit], but the [Religious Order] don't take a candidate easily. You have about 20 interviews, you get tested, psychological, smarts, everything else. On Mother's Day the year he turned 29, he met us in Chicago and told us he had been accepted. She cried. (Laughter).

PARTICIPANT: I was happy for him.

PARTICIPANT: But I look back...he went to Catholic schools, except for college. We go to church, to Mass 50 Sundays out of 52. We do volunteer work, she does volunteer work.

PARTICIPANT: I taught in Catholic school for 26 years.

PARTICIPANT: So you could say we set a good example. Of course she has a sister, a nun, who left the convent after 15 or 20 years. I have an aunt who left the convent after about 20 years. So we have examples of people who didn't like it. But I think he wanted hands on. He doesn't want to go to [Place] and study philosophy for three years even though he did. He wants to be in the trenches, he wants to be doing something. He was in [Country] last summer not too far from where they had the earthquakes, [Country] the summer before with the [Religious Order]. He likes hands on.

FACILITATOR: That's an excellent segue to the next question I want to explore here. I want to hear more about what your family life was like and any influences you think of that may have been a factor in this discernment process. What was the family life like? Was there anything about your family life that might have encouraged this vocational discernment or discouraged it?

PARTICIPANT: My side, my uncle on my father's side was a priest and my auntie on my father's side was a nun. I am the oldest of nine children. Before we went to bed, we said the rosary. Based on that, we make sure our two children are brought the proper way, the religious way.

PARTICIPANT: Last Father's Day, my son called me on Father's Day. I heard his voice and I said to myself, oh he remembered its Fathers' Day. He said, "Hello, dad, is mom there?" (Laughter). He talked with his mom, and I know she said, "You know it's Father's Day." Then she said, "Here, [Name] wants to talk to you." (Laughter). After we were finished, I said, "That doesn't count, that's cheating."

PARTICIPANT: He relates more to me than my husband.

PARTICIPANT: The fact that in my family were priests and sisters, it seems that it was easier for her to make the decision. Among other friends, the decision to become a sister is very strange, but for her it was not. I remember a long time ago seeing that the brother of my grandfather was a priest. All my life I've been seeing fathers and sisters so it's normal. The fact that they were there was something that I think made it easier for her to make the decision.

PARTICIPANT: Our life was, we tried to keep the faith strong in the family with the rosary in May and October after meals. I always said prayers with the children as they were growing up. We went to Mass regularly on Sundays. I would also go during the week especially when the children were in school. They all went to Catholic school from kindergarten through college. We've got seven children. [Name] is the youngest boy, our sixth child. He was always a little different. I mean that when he was young, he was smiley and always happy. His friends in high school were very eclectic, a wide range of friends. But also our children from the oldest to the youngest would volunteer at the rectory and answer the phone on weekends. There was a brother there who would give them something to eat, a snack or something. It was a good experience for all of them. So [Name] was exposed to this and exposed to children all doing this. Another thing we did to keep the children listening at Mass, at Sunday breakfast or brunch, we would always quiz them on the readings and the homily. We would explain things they didn't understand and talk to them about things. [Name] says he learned more religion at our breakfast table than he did at school because that was at the time they were teaching what we called fluff and stuff. It wasn't the concrete theology of our religion and so he feels he learned more at [our breakfasts]. I think that all influenced him a lot. But I think the actual decision was influenced by the fact that he was [influenced] by the [Place] Mission where he was working. I mean, he had a big SUV, he had a motorcycle, he had a snowboard—he would go skiing and snowboarding. He had everything and yet he felt that the novices had meaning.

PARTICIPANT: In the case of my sister, when my sister and I moved from [Country] for our master's degrees, our parents were in [Country]. We think that the fact that she was at [Place] College was very determining in her decision. We were so far away and at that time, the internet was not easy. We don't really know, it was like in the middle of nowhere that she decided. It was not like our home was in [Country], where our home was half a block from the church. But we never really had this connection with the Church. My mother, of course, she prays a lot. Belief is in the family. But we didn't have a strong praying time, for example, the rosary. My sister got very, very business oriented, very strong. I would say she had like a decision to become a nun or sister or become a very bad boss. (Laughter).

PARTICIPANT: I used to be an altar boy in grade school. I say a prayer for two nuns every night of my life. They were so sweet to me. They knew I was very reliable, so if they needed a kid for a wedding or a funeral they knew they could call my house and [Name] would be there. Sixty years later, every night I say a prayer for those two nuns. Father would ask me to take something over to the nuns. It would be January and cold. The door would open and I would smell a nice coffee and whatever else. They would always invite me in and give me hot cocoa. I had never had hot cocoa and I didn't know what it was. They said, "It's okay, [Name], it's hot cocoa." Oh, was that good! And a donut. I don't know where they would get the donuts but they would always have a donut for me. Here it is so many years later and every night I say a prayer for those two nuns. They were such a great influence on my life, that here sixty plus years later I still remember them in my prayers every night and I say, "Thank you, sisters, you were so nice."

PARTICIPANT: A lot of kids who go to college get a job and get married. Some kids after high school go straight to become a priest. I think the better experience is to really know what they want in their life first. Work first and realize what is really for them. Our son, I think, made the

right decision: he worked first and then decided on the priesthood. I noticed too that he didn't wear blue jeans. He led a simple life. The money thing didn't matter to him, none of this glorified haircut, nice clothes. I said, he's really something else. That really affected me. I said I want him to get married and make a lot of money.

PARTICIPANT: I didn't know he cut his own hair. The last time we saw him, I said, "[Name], where did you get that haircut? It's really great." He said, "I cut my own hair." (Laughter).

FACILITATOR: How about some of the rest of you?

PARTICIPANT: Mass was always important. We lived from here to there to a church. [We were] newly married and things are happening. We befriended a wonderful priest. We used to drive 40 miles, 20 and 20, with the kids to Mass every Sunday. That was a carload full. We did that for years and years until the boys got to high school. Then the caddying started. But we always said the rosary. I was laughing with [Name], he was asking me some questions [recently]—that rosary wasn't anything I'd ever want to get on film, but it was the best we could do. My dad was a Carmelite high school seminarian in the 1920s, so a long time ago. But I think that really impacted my family. My family was from Ireland so they always said they said the rosary, adults at home until you left the house, until they came to America in 1962. So that was always a big part of our life, grace at meals, church. It was always Catholic education, how to make ends meet, so it was a constant discussion. It still is to this day, because my youngest is a sophomore in high school. I teach in a Catholic school so it's pretty much permeated everything we always did.

PARTICIPANT: One of the things that I think was really important for my sister was the priests in the two universities that she went to. Back in [Country] there were very good priests. She became a good friend [with some]. When she moved to [Place], one of the priests at [Place] College—that connection was very important. Definitely the family—we never encouraged that because, well, we think that everyone is free and they can do whatever they want. At that time she had a boyfriend. Her connection with the priests in each university was very important, very, very determining in her decision.

PARTICIPANT: There were several things my son mentioned when he was ordained and they had a little interview [of him] for the [Catholic Newspaper]. He said he remembered as a young child going to Mass. He was fooling around—he was probably six—and his father had him go back to Mass again that Sunday. Another thing he mentioned was, because he was in public grade and high school, I decided to teach catechism to the children who went to public school. We decided to volunteer at a soup kitchen. My children were young. They saw those long lines of people who were not wealthy. Most of the people were wealthy in the town we live in but north of us is a very humble town with needy people. That was a real eye opener for our children. My son said that really touched him as he grew up serving in those soup kitchens. Then he did go to a Catholic college—[College] in [Place]. He went to college thinking he might enter the seminary. He took the right theology classes but that school was such a nurturing place for faith and for students who really believed. There was a strong faith message there at [Place] University. He loved the sisters, too. He would volunteer every week at the [Parish] which is

right on the campus. The sisters were so sweet and so lovely. They were a real part of his life as he went to school there. To this day, sisters mean so much to him.

PARTICIPANT: If you look at our family influence, my family was very, very Catholic. My mom had been in the convent. We said the rosary every night. There was a lot of sharing of faith. I tried to instill that within our own family. I felt like with four boys, sometimes it was hard, especially as they got older, with high school things. High school is very influential [with the] service program. Faith was shared there and the college experience, but not as much I think because it was not Catholic. But I think it gave him a yearning to go back more to faith because then he made sure he joined the ACE program [Alliance for Catholic Education] through Notre Dame. In that program, and the young people, and then after college service-oriented things, there were a lot of influences there.

PARTICIPANT: Yes, I think your mother is one of the holiest people I have ever met. She had eight children. She was an influence. Her daughter—this one here—the branch didn't fall far from the tree. But interestingly, in terms of the whole family—I have four sons. [Name] is in the [Religious Order]. His oldest brother married a woman from [Country]. They are both very religious. Their daughters, their son do all kinds of heavily religious things. I have a second son who hasn't stepped foot in a church in 30 years and is just completely anti-religion in any form. My son Mr. [Religious Order], he went to the [Place] academy, went to [College Name], worked at [College Name], and taught at [Name] High School. He's very religious. He's very caring. He will do anything for you. He'd give you the shirt off his back. But he's not into what I call ritual Catholicism. This all had to have influenced my son that's in the seminary for better or for worse. Sometimes I just scratch my head and say "What made him decide?" to apply to the [Religious Order]. It's a hard one.

FACILITATOR: Yes, there's no magic formula.

PARTICIPANT: For several years through the ACE program and afterward, he always had a spiritual advisor. Usually it was a priest.

PARTICIPANT: I did tell him that when he got out of [Place] College and went to Notre Dame that it was nice for him to finally go to a real school. I give him a hard time. (Laughter).

FACILITATOR: Let's talk about creating and nurturing a culture of vocations. What advice would you give? What do you think about how do we nurture or strengthen a culture of vocations in families? I would like to know very concretely, did you or anyone else in your family ever talk directly to your family member about a vocation?

PARTICIPANT: Not before he expressed interest in it himself.

PARTICIPANT: It was discussed, but not [stressed]. As a family, you're going to Mass, you're trying to cultivate some sort of a prayer life. You are trying to get kids to go to confession, to want to go to meaningful liturgies. It's out there. But it was never, "[Name], did you ever, [Name], did you ever think of?" No, it was something we were just busy doing. You thought if

the fruits produced it, you'd be thrilled. And if it didn't... I just never really thought about it that deeply, until [it happened].

PARTICIPANT: I think being a family of prayer [encourages vocations] because it's beneficial and helps to cultivate [vocations]. Some of the things that I volunteered in [might have helped]. Doing some kind of an outreach [also would be helpful]. An older man on the paper route lived alone. Sometimes I would send Easter candy or something to his house through the children. We had a neighbor who after a while couldn't cook for herself. When I made dinner, I would send one of the children to take food over to her. I think living a Christian life, a full Christian life in the family helps.

PARTICIPANT: I think being around priests when you're in a parish or different schools [helps]. Somehow they [young people] need exposure to nuns or priests that they might know in order to have a concept that's more concrete. Our son certainly through his schooling later in life had the experience of being taught by priests, or counseled by them. I think most of them were mentors.

PARTICIPANT: I agree. Our son too. [Name] was friends with and had a very close relationship with a priest from high school—an Opus Dei priest and his original counselor. He had a big influence.

PARTICIPANT: I agree because my sister was a very good friend of a priest. But in the family, I don't ever remember ever talking about the possibility of becoming a religious of any kind, ever. We know that my father studied in the seminary, but definitely that wasn't an option. For example, when we discussed her career, it was engineer was everything. At the time we decided to become engineers, [a religious vocation] was never a real option of a career or of life. Another thing is that as a family, this small, close family, we felt a little alone. We were the four of us, my parents and my sister and myself. We felt like we were alone in the world. But the fact that there were family members older who were priests or nuns, I think that was a lot of help for her discerning. And the priest of the university was a very, very important factor in her decision.

FACILITATOR: Were there situations or events or people that you feel hindered or discouraged the vocational discernment?

PARTICIPANT: One of my old friends who would attend our Christmas parties, Easter gatherings and birthday parties—when I told him that [Name] was going to be a priest, he said, “That doesn't surprise me at all. I feel that he has made a wise decision.” I said, “I thought you were going to be surprised to hear that.” He said, “No, after all our talks during birthday parties and whatever, it doesn't surprise me at all he has chosen to go in that direction.” My friend's reaction surprised me.

PARTICIPANT: After [Name] was accepted [into formation] we didn't really say anything until he got the letter saying, “You're accepted, you're starting August 28.” I had a lot of reaction from people my age, friends saying “He's what?” “Why is he going to do that?” Although it affected me, I don't think it had any impact on [Name]'s decision-making process because he had not heard them. We definitely got strange reactions from some people.

PARTICIPANT: We had some negativity but it had no impact on the decision. The negativity was worthless. It hurts you, and then you would wonder, “Why would you say that?” Some would say, “He will meet somebody [to marry], don’t worry about it.”

PARTICIPANT: We got the same reaction, “Maybe later on he’ll decide the priesthood is not for him.” We don’t say a word. We let it go. We just pray for whatever God wishes him to be.

PARTICIPANT: The fact that she was far from the family helped a lot for her. She had the chance to tell our parents and she told me, “Please don’t tell until I am 100 percent sure.” So for two years, the only people who were talking were my parents and myself, not my grandparents, no uncles, no aunts. They didn’t know until she was 100 percent on that path.

PARTICIPANT: We did that too when he first shared with us that he was thinking of [a religious vocation]. Until he had actually applied and been accepted, we didn’t share the news with anyone else because you don’t want people approaching him if he is in that discernment process—except if he sought them out.

FACILITATOR: A lot of people tell us that religious life and priesthood are different now than what they used to be. How have your perceptions about priesthood and religious life changed through your experience? What do those terms mean to you? What does “vowed religious” mean, what does “priest” mean to you?

PARTICIPANT: Where once a layman looking at a priest as so prayerful and someone to be respected would reluctantly approach a priest, nowadays it’s all open. You can approach a priest anytime, make a casual conversation, say “How are you?” and shake their hands with a smile. That’s my perception of priests. You’re more open to them. You’re not holding back. They are more approachable.

PARTICIPANT: Our son is at one of the Hollywood studios on a three-year [Religious Order] scholarship to learn documentary film production. He told me when he called me for my birthday, “Hey, dad you will be very interested to know that some of the popular movie and TV stars come to Mass every day. Dad, how about you?” I said, “How about me? You know how about me.” He said “I know. I couldn’t resist giving you a zinger. I said, “I’m happy to hear that. Do they go to confession?” He said, “None of your business.”

PARTICIPANT: I feel that some of the opinions of priests have changed with the sexual abuse issues. When we were growing up, you would never thought of something like that could happen. They were very revered. I feel by the general populous that isn’t the same anymore. There are so many fewer priests, whether in the order or diocesan priests in the parish. When we first joined the parish, they might have had three or four priests. Now we have one. I think it’s harder for diocesan priests. In an order house with others in the order, they still have a community. But for those priests that are the only one in a rectory, maybe with one day off to get together with other friends, it’s a little bit lonelier experience. Or they get more involved with the adults in the community [who are active in the parish]. Those would be the changes.

PARTICIPANT: When I was younger I think the priests got more respect from the congregation. Maybe it's where I live. I live in a community in Evanston that has a very educated and very forward population. They don't think twice about questioning something the priest says or a decision that gets made. I mean it's a tough job, being a diocesan priest in a parish when you are the only or maybe there are two of you. You come out of church and 500 people come to say hello. 300 of them say "Great job, Father," and 200 are complaining that they want to register online. I give the priests a lot of credit because they have a hard job. In some areas they don't get the respect they deserve.

PARTICIPANT: I always think about how the priest sees all the parishioners and says "Hello," and "How are you?" They are nice, the whole day. At the end of the day, if you ever think about it, they are alone by themselves, alone. It's kind of really depressing. That's why I noticed that a lot of priests, at least two, have a pet, a dog pet, to give them comfort. It's the same with us. We have a small puppy who gives us comfort. It's the same with a priest. At the end of the day they are by themselves.

PARTICIPANT: That's why I'm happy that our son is in a community rather than a diocese. The [Religious Order] tries to have more than one priest per community. Even if they are not assigned to that parish, they do have other people living in the rectory. That's what I see as the benefit of a congregation. In the 70s and in the period after Vatican II, the priests became confused with everybody else. Religion wasn't taught as well as it could have been. Now, I see the new younger [Religious Order] priests now that are being ordained. The new priests are bringing the best of what Vatican II brought in, but they're bringing in the best of education in theology and how to live that theology. That's what I'm seeing, especially in my experiences with the [Religious Order] parish we grew up in. My children also grew up in a [Religious Order] parish. We used to get a lot of the deacons that were there for their first assignment. So we saw a lot of these priests when they started and how they felt. And even with the classes before and after my son, they are returning to the habit because they want to be that presence to the world. But also talking about the priests' abuse. My son travels in his clerics, his roman collar, because he wants the Church to be seen. But he has people come up to him and be very angry because of the Church. He has learned to deal with it and he is able to inform people.

PARTICIPANT: One of the things we experienced with the decision of my sister to join a group of sisters was the change of how we saw the sisters. It was not only a difference in terms of years, but also between Latin America and the United States. Before my sister, sisters seemed to have sacrifice and the solitude that was too much to understand. We learned that she's happy doing what she's doing, there is no real sacrifice. She has a group of sisters in a community, so she's not alone. She's an individual person, which is different than what we thought of our grand-aunt. Our grand-aunt was a part of a community, but she was just a component in her community. It was very good for us to see the community, that the sisters are individuals. It's a vibrant community. They fight a lot. (Laughter). They are very strong women. And that changed a lot. That made the decision easier to accept for us because we didn't want for my sister a life of solitude and sacrifice per se. Instead of spending all her life fighting against something or sacrificing, right now she's happy, part of a community, helping people, doing her job. It was easier for us to accept that and be happy for her. The change was radical between how we saw

that in our other family members and how we see now her community. I don't know if it is the times, or the fact that they are in the United States, but the sisters are more loving.

FACILITATOR: That's great, thank you.

PARTICIPANT: One of the most interesting things that's going on is the diversity of the Church today. When I was growing up, it looked like the backfield of Notre Dame. But today, you're having Vietnamese, Hungarians, and Poles, all flying in and creating a new electricity of intellectual development. Our son has been very much impressed and developed by what's been going on. It instills a competition of the mind because we realize how small the world is, and how big the mission of the Church. The papal leadership has been outstanding in that regard.

FACILITATOR: Any advice for family members who may have someone considering or discerning a vocation?

PARTICIPANT: Patience.

PARTICIPANT: Acceptance of where they are at. Do not push either way, like saying, "Oh that's so great, stay with it," but to accept them, let it flow. Being supportive but not pushing one way or the other because it has to come from them ultimately.

PARTICIPANT: Encouragement but not pushing.

PARTICIPANT: Another thing I said to my son the day he was ordained was, "Congratulations, son, you only have to work once a week." (Laughter).

PARTICIPANT: You need information. When you first receive news from them [sons/daughters about their vocation], you are trying to solve a problem with the little information that you have. But when you research the information about what your religious life is, it is good for the family member. At the beginning of the process, you don't have enough information to develop an answer for them.

FACILITATOR: And maybe a little exposure.

PARTICIPANT: People would say, "Aren't you proud of [Name]?" I would say, "I am proud of all of my children."

PARTICIPANT: A lot of [Religious Order] priests have different degrees before they decided to become a priest. Engineer, businessman, different backgrounds.

PARTICIPANT: I go to a lot of Notre Dame Football games when they are at South Bend. I occasionally drop in on the swim coach, and he's got a picture of our son above his desk. I said, "What is that all about?" He said, "This is my first priest." (Laughter).

PARTICIPANT: Because he was in swimming for varsity.

PARTICIPANT: He was an outstanding swimmer, as a matter of fact his name is up on the wall of fame at Notre Dame.

FACILITATOR: So it's not just the family members that are proud?

PARTICIPANT: Exactly.

PARTICIPANT: Whether its order or diocesan priests all over the country, there has to be a way to get the young men or women out into the community around so that we, and more importantly younger people who might have a vocation, can see them in action. In the past, the reaction to a religious brother who had gone into the seminary in 9th grade was, oh my goodness, he didn't have any experience. So if there's way you can make clear that the process of becoming a priest or a nun involves going to school for a while, then being a deacon at a parish for six months, other young people will be able to see you that you don't just go into the ivory tower and learn philosophy and theology for five and now magically you're a priest. No, it would help candidates to have both the education and the service. This also shows everyone else that they're normal people. They can become priests or nuns and still be normal. This would help vocations.

PARTICIPANT: When she decided to become a sister, my sister had a conversation with us. The rest of the extended family then had a conversation with us about her when she was not there. You have to be prepared to defend her even though she is not there. This is because the rest of the family starts to comment and to question, but it is not their decision. You are in the middle, the mediator. You are not really prepared for that. The person that took the decision, he or she prepared for that, but you as a family member are answering a lot of questions from a lot of people. You have to be prepared with a lot of information and a lot of learning—that would be a lot of help.

FACILITATOR: That's a really good insight.

PARTICIPANT: Be a supportive, faith-filled family that shares your faith with your community whenever you can. But I do think people, and young people, need exposure to priests or nuns as an example. I don't know how they really can understand what the rest of their lives will be like without being able to meet and spend time with them as counselors—just sharing their experiences.

FACILITATOR: I want to respect your time and contributions. If you have anything that you want to share after this, feel free to give me a call, drop me an email. Thank you.