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## *NRVC Vocation Vocabulary*

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In our Judeo-Christian tradition, we know by heart the scripture stories of call and countless vocation stories of Catholic women and men who have been inspired by the Spirit to answer God's call to discipleship through vowed communal life as sisters, nuns, brothers, priests, monks and friars, in religious institutes that are apostolic, cloistered, evangelical, missionary, monastic or societies of apostolic life. There is a mystery in the call and an unpredictability in the response. There is also a confident humility that God continues to call women and men to lives of holiness, which includes those who are single, vowed or ordained. Learning to speak with ease about vocations is easier when you are familiar with these words and add them frequently to your presentations.

### **ABBAY**

An abbey is a church, monastery, or convent used by a monastic community governed by an abbot (male leader/superior) or abbess (female leader/superior).

### **AFFILIATE or ASPIRANT**

An affiliate or aspirant is a discernor who has made an official connection to a religious institute while mutually discerning a call to that specific community. Also called Pre-Postulant or Pre-Candidate.

### **APOSTOLIC RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Apostolic religious life is a form of consecrated life centered on direct service in active ministries such as education, pastoral ministry, health care, and social services. In the spirit of the apostles, apostolic religious sisters, brother and priests are sent out on mission to serve wherever the need is greatest. The word *apostle*, comes from the Greek verb meaning *to send forth*.

### **ASSOCIATE**

An Associate is a single or married person who makes a formal commitment for a stated length of time (often annually) to a specific religious institute usually through a process of discernment and formation. Associates commit to embody the mission and the spiritual life of the religious institute. Some institutes allow diocesan priests as well as people of other faith traditions to become associates.

### **BISHOP**

A bishop is an ordained man appointed by the pope to be entrusted with the position of authority and leadership within a diocese. Bishops can be diocesan or religious priests. There are over 400 active and retired bishops in the United States.

### **BROTHER**

A Brother is a man who publicly professes vows to God and models his commitment by serving others in a variety of ministries that express the charism of his religious institute. Striving to imitate Christ by living the Gospel, brothers are ministers of mercy and compassion, relating to others as Jesus did, as a brother.

## **CALL OR CALLING**

A call or calling is to discern God's unique call to a way of life such as married, single, consecrated or ordained life. Vocation stems from the Latin verb, *vocare*, which means to call. In Baptism, each person is called by God to follow Jesus in a life of holiness and sacred service.

## **CANDIDATE OR POSTULANT**

A candidate or postulant is a discerner who requests and is officially accepted to live with a religious community to be immersed in prayer, ministry, customs and the common life to discern their capacity to live religious life. Often postulancy/candidacy begins with a simple entrance ceremony and provides ongoing discernment with a candidate/postulant director. The period of postulancy usually lasts six months to two years and precedes admission into the novitiate, the next step in the discernment process.

## **CANON LAW**

Canon law is the body of universal and fundamental law that governs the Catholic Church. Candidates to religious life must adhere to the novitiate admission requirements specified in canon law.

## **CANONS REGULAR**

The Canons regular, which are clergy living and praying together, sharing goods in common, but engaged in apostolic ministries, such as preaching and sacramental administration, represent the second great wave of religious life in the Catholic Church (after Benedictine monasticism) that took shape in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

## **CARDINAL**

A Cardinal is appointed by the Pope as an ecclesiastical leader. The cardinals of the Church are collectively known as the College of Cardinals. One of their primary responsibilities is to elect the pope, the Bishop of Rome, when necessary. The word *cardinal* comes from the Latin *cardo*, meaning hinge.

## **CATHOLIC SISTERS WEEK**

Catholic Sisters Week is celebrated annually March 8-14 to recognize the vocation of Catholic sisters and to invite women to consider this vocation.

## **CELIBATE**

A celibate is a person who voluntarily abstains from sexual relations.

## **CHARISM**

Each religious institute has a charism, a spirit or way of life, which is inspired by the founder(s) of the congregation. From the Greek word *charisma*, meaning gift, charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the common good of the Church.

## **CHASTITY**

The virtue of chastity, or self-giving love, is required of all Christians. For those in religious life, consecrated chastity means selflessly living out of the awareness that we belong totally to God. The vow of chastity is freely choosing to love God and all God's people wholeheartedly, instead of one person in

marriage. Publicly living chastity requires a balance of prayer, work, rest, relaxation, companionship and solitude.

### **CLOISTER**

A cloister is the part of a monastery reserved only for the monks or nuns who reside in that monastery. Such monks and nuns may be referred to as *cloistered*. As cloistered religious, they rarely leave their monasteries, and all or most of their work is done within the monastery itself.

### **COLOTIO**

*Colotio* is a form of prayer developed in the spirit of St. Ignatius that uses the imagination to immerse the person who is at prayer into a story from scripture. As you visualize the details, you are drawn to an encounter and/or conversation with Jesus.

### **COME AND SEE EXPERIENCE**

The Come and See experience is one that is designed to help inquirers who are interested in spending a short time to learn more about religious life by visiting the places religious serve and live. A vocation team plans a schedule that may include time for prayer, conversation, ministry, meals, catechesis and information about religious life.

### **COMMUNAL LIFE**

Inspired by early Christians, who “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the common life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42), communal life as it relates to religious life refers to groups of people who share the same beliefs, live together with a common rule, and pursue common interests for the benefit of others.

### **COMPLINE**

Compline, also known as Night Prayer, is the final prayer of the day in the Christian tradition of the Liturgy of the Hours. The word *compline* is derived from the Latin *completorium*, which means completion. In some monasteries, the custom of the Great Silence begins after Compline, observing silence until Morning Prayer, also called *Lauds*.

### **CONFIGURATION STAGE**

This is the third stage of formation for seminarians which includes the Reception of Candidacy, and conferral of the ministries of lector and acolyte occurs during this stage for seminarians, marking the progressive deepening of this self-configuration to Christ both liturgically and in catechesis, evangelization, and active service to the poor.

### **CONSECRATED LIFE**

Consecrated life is a state of life recognized by the Catholic Church characterized by the public profession of the evangelical counsels (vows) of poverty, chastity and obedience. Since the Second Vatican Council, consecrated life has grown to include religious life, secular institutes, hermits and consecrated virgins.

## **CONSECRATED VIRGIN**

A consecrated virgin is a woman who makes a public commitment to live permanent celibacy in a rite presided over by a diocesan bishop. Consecrated virginity is the oldest recognized form of consecrated life in the Church, predating religious life. The Eastern Church has a provision for consecrated widows.

## **CONTEMPLATION**

Contemplation has been described as “a simple loving gaze.” The person in prayer is simply silently alone with God, open to listening. It is being aware of God rather than saying or doing anything.

## **CONTEMPLATIVE RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Contemplative religious life is a form of consecrated life centered on prayer, solitude, silence and penance. Contemplatives tend to live in greater solitude than apostolic communities as a way of growing in deep relationship with God in contemplation.

## **CONVENT**

A convent is the residence where women religious live. It typically has a chapel in it for communal prayer.

## **CONVERSATIO OR FIDELITY**

*Conversatio* is the monastic promise which means fidelity to the monastic way of life.

## **DEACON**

A deacon is an ordained minister in the Catholic Church. Men who are transitional deacons are ordained typically six months to one year as a step prior to ordination as a priest. Permanent deacons are men at least 35 years old, married or single, who may have employment beyond his diaconate ministry. Deacons assist and preach at liturgical celebrations; they may also preside at baptisms, marriages and funerals.

## **DIOCESE**

A diocese is a geographic area under the leadership of the local bishop, known as its ordinary. There are almost 200 dioceses in the United States. The word *diocese* comes from the Greek meaning *administration*.

## **DISCERNER**

A person who is considering a religious vocation is commonly referred to as a discerner. A discerner meets on a regular basis with a vocation director to mutually make a decision on how to best respond to God’s call to holiness. They often participate in Come and See experiences, communal prayer, or service opportunities to experience a community’s way of life.

## **DISCERNMENT**

Discernment comes from a Latin *discernere*, meaning to prayerfully sift apart, often with the assistance of others, to distinguish God’s call from egocentric desires. It is a process of listening, deciding and freely responding to God who is already present in our lives. Vocation discernment focuses on responding to God’s call to holiness and sacred service by choosing either marriage, single, consecrated or ordained life. Vocation directors are professionally trained to assist Catholics in discerning their vocation.

## **DISCERNMENT RETREAT**

Discernment retreats are typically overnight or weekend experiences to provide those interested in religious life focused time to recognize the movement of the Spirit. The schedule includes time for personal and communal prayer, direction, spiritual reading, faith sharing and common meals. Meeting with members of the religious institute and the vocation team offers extended time for questions and discussions about religious life.

## **DISCIPLESHIP STAGE**

This is the second stage of formation for seminarians that must not last less than two years. It is a systematic and rigorous formation for seminarians that has at its core the goal of growing in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the life of meditation, contemplation, philosophical study, and the training of one's character in Christian virtue.

## **DIVINE OFFICE or LITURGY OF THE HOURS**

The Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours is the official, public, daily liturgical prayer of the Church. It is composed of psalms, hymns, prayers, scripture and spiritual readings. Many religious institutes pray the Divine Office together at set times throughout the day.

## **DOWRY**

A dowry is an amount of money required for entrance to a religious institute. This money was kept by the community and returned if a member left religious life. Similar to wedding dowries, most congregations no longer ask for a dowry.

## **EMMAUS WALK**

An Emmaus Walk is sometimes used in discernment weekends as a way to accompany one another sharing faith, discernment and ponderings of the soul. Like the scriptural story of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, this sharing of our own stories, can help us to encounter Jesus.

## **EVANGELICAL COUNSELS**

The evangelical counsels are the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They are called *evangelical* because they were practiced by Jesus in the gospel (*evangelium*) as the way to become perfect: Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come follow me (Mt 19:21).

## **EVANGELICAL RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Evangelical religious life is a form of consecrate life that prioritizes relationships with all cultures, inclusive of creation. Most Franciscan communities practice evangelical religious life.

## **EXAMEN**

The examen is a prayerful self-reflection on our words and deeds in the light of the Gospels to determine how we may have sinned throughout the day either through omission or action. This examination of conscience is typically prayed one a day and before the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

## **FEAST DAY**

A feast day commemorates the patron saint of a name, religious institute, parish or diocese. Religious institutes have several patron saints and celebrate feast days with special devotions and festivities.

## **FORMATION**

Formation is the process that each religious institute designs to incorporate new members into its religious institutes. Initial formation typically can last up to ten years, whereby an entrant learns the customs, traditions, spirituality, vows, practical elements and history of religious life. Formation directors are appointed to guide new members throughout initial formation. Formation also provides for the lifelong spiritual, human and apostolic development of all its professed members.

## **FRIAR**

A friar is a male member of a mendicant order, such as the Dominicans or Franciscans, although it may be extended to others in the monastic tradition. Unlike monks who work ordinarily within the monastery, a friar most likely works outside the friary.

## **FRIARY**

A friary is the residence where friars live, similar to a monastery for monks or a convent for sisters.

## **HABIT**

A habit is the distinctive religious garb worn by members of some religious institutes as an external sign of consecrated life. Religious institutes have the choice to determine the external signs that symbolize their identity such as a profession ring, crucifix, veil, scapular or pin that is designated as its habit. Some religious institutes choose to wear the habit all the time while others offer various options.

## **HERMIT**

A hermit is a person who professes public vows before a diocesan bishop to live in solitude according to the rule approved by the bishop. This form of consecrated life is commonly called the eremitic life.

## **HOLY MATRIMONY**

Holy Matrimony is one of seven sacraments uniting a woman and man before God through public vows. The vocation of marriage is the most common response to live God's call to holiness.

## **HOLY ORDERS**

In the sacrament of Holy Orders, ordained men are given the role of carrying out Christ's mission as servant to all. Priests become representatives of Christ to the Church—as witnesses of holiness and love, preachers of the Gospel, shepherds of the faithful, and conveners of divine worship. Deacons also receive a special grace through ordination and are called to assist the ministry of bishops and priests in response to God's call to holiness.

## **HOLY RULE or CONSTITUTIONS**

A Holy Rule or Constitutions of a religious institute is the established way of life, in written form, for the community, which are approved by the Vatican.

## **INQUIRER**

An inquirer is someone who is curious about religious life, but still unsure of their vocation. Inquirers spend time gathering information about church vocations and specific religious communities. They make use of print and online resources, such as Vision Vocation Guide and Vision VocationMatch.com, to understand the diversity of religious life and the options that might be right for them. Inquirers have no formal commitment to consecrated life or a specific religious institute.

## **JOURNAL WRITING**

Journal writing is a prayer of writing with the intention of stating honestly what is in your heart, the deep longings in your soul.

## **JUBILEE**

A jubilee, as it relates to religious life, is the celebration of the anniversary of a person's profession of vows to religious life. A silver jubilee recognizes 25 years of profession of vows and a golden jubilee recognizes 50 years of profession of vows.

## **LAUDS**

Lauds, also known as Morning Prayer, is part of the Liturgy of the Hours and prayed at sunrise to remind those who pray that the first prayers should be praise. Morning and Evening Prayer are the most important hinges of the Divine Office, most often prayed in common.

## **LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTER**

Lay ecclesial ministers are called by God to serve, whether in paid or volunteer ministry in education, health care, liturgy, social services, etc. Most lay ecclesial ministers have gone through formal education and may be certified by the diocese they minister.

## **LAY ECCLESIAL MOVEMENT**

Lay ecclesial movements emerged primarily in the 20th century and are church organizations whose vowed and mostly non-vowed members gather together for a mission and are formed in the spirituality of the movement. These include Catholic Worker Movement, Focolare, the Sant'Egizio Community, L'Arche, Marriage Encounter, and many others. The Vatican's Pontifical Council of the Laity publishes a directory of associations of the faithful at [vatican.va](http://vatican.va)

## **LECTIO DIVINA**

*Lectio Divina* is a meditative, prayerful approach to reading scripture, literally meaning "holy reading." It involves repetitive reading and periods of reflection in private or common prayer.

## **MAJOR SUPERIOR**

The major superior is the elected or appointed leader who is entrusted with the ultimate authority of a religious institute. Terms can be limited to a set number of years or for a lifetime, depending upon the Holy Rule or Constitutions of each religious institute. This person may have titles like abbot or abbess, prior or prioress, president, congregational leader, general superior, superior general, master general, provincial superior or major superior.

## **MEDITATION**

Meditation is reverently placing yourself in God's presence in prayer, often using a word or phrase.

## **MENDICANT ORDER**

Members of mendicant orders have what they call the "privilege of begging." When these orders began to flourish in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, their ideal of poverty was to have no dependable sources of income or property ownership, (like monks or canons regular) but to depend on God and God's people for daily sustenance.

## **MINISTRY**

Ministry is the use of a person's gifts and talents, time and energy, in the service of others. Ministry can be volunteer, paid, full or part time offered through a diocese, religious institute, nonprofit organization, social service agency, and many other ways. Professional preparation is ordinarily required before a person engages in ministry with the People of God.

## **MISSION**

The mission of religious institutes refers to the purpose for which the community exists within the Church to bring the Good News to all and transform humanity. The mission of the community is inspired by and expressed in living the charism of the community and its founder.

## **MISSIONARY**

Missionary communities focus their lives on spreading the gospel globally or areas of their own country in need of evangelization, advocacy and service. Missionaries are very flexible and adaptable, respecting diversities of cultures, races and faith traditions. Some communities not founded to be missionary may also send some members to other countries for similar reasons.

## **MONASTERY**

A monastery is the residence for monks and monastic sisters/nuns who center their life on liturgical prayer, work and common life. Each monastery has its own history and character.

## **MONASTICISM**

American Roman Catholic monasticism is a form of consecrated life focused on *Ora et Labora*, prayer and work. Monastics seek God in common life under the direction of a Prioress (women's communities) or Abbot (men's communities). Benedictines and Trappists are the most known monastics, professing vows of stability, obedience and fidelity/*conversatio* to the monastic way of life, which includes chastity and living simply.

## **MONK**

A monk is a male member of a monastic religious institute.

## **MOTHER HOUSE**

A mother house is a religious house from which other "local" religious houses have sprung. In many cases the first house of an order or congregation in a new country becomes the mother house, the place where leadership is centered and where new members began initial formation.



## **NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF DIOCESAN VOCATION DIRECTORS (NCDVD)**

The NCDVD promotes diocesan priesthood, providing resources for the formation, support, and advocacy of diocesan vocation directors as they work within the Catholic Church to foster a culture of vocations, raising up new priests for the Body of Christ. Learn more at [NCDVD.org](http://NCDVD.org)

## **NATIONAL FUND FOR CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS (NFCRV)**

The NFCRV is dedicated to increasing the number of women and men entering religious communities by offering financial assistance to religious institutes so that they may accept candidates who have educational debt. Visit [NFCRV.org](http://NFCRV.org) for more information.

## **NATIONAL RELIGIOUS VOCATION CONFERENCE (NRVC)**

The NRVC is a professional organization of vocation ministers, officially recognized by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that presents religious life as a viable option in the Catholic Church. With over 1,000 members, representing over 350 religious institutes and organizations, NRVC promotes vocation awareness, invitation, and discernment to life as a religious sister, brother, or priest. For more information or to become a member, go to [NRVC.net](http://NRVC.net).

## **NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK**

National Vocation Awareness Week began in 1976 as an annual week-long celebration of the Catholic Church in the United States dedicated to promoting vocations to ordained ministry and consecrated life through prayer and education, and to renew our prayers and support for those who are considering one of these particular vocations. It is celebrated annually the first full week of November.

## **NOVICE**

A novice is a person who is formally admitted to a religious institute to prepare for religious profession. Canon law requires that all new members of religious institutes must have at least one full year of canonical novitiate. This year usually consists of intense prayer, spirituality, scriptural and theological study in the way of evangelical life of the institute. An optional second year, called the apostolic novitiate, is a time of integrating the learning of the canonical year with the lived experience of full-time ministry and local community living.

## **NOVITIATE**

A novitiate is the house where novices live. It also refers to the time during which a person is a considered a novice in a religious community. The novitiate, including canonical novitiate or apostolic novitiate, is the period a community requires of new members to prepare for perpetual profession, or final vows.

## **NUN**

Although the terms nun and sister are often used interchangeably, the Church makes a distinction between the two with nun referring to a woman religious living a cloistered, contemplative life. Nuns devote the majority of their time to personal and communal prayer for the good of the world, and they typically work in and around the monastery.

## **OBEDIENCE**

The word obedience comes from the Latin word to listen. Men and women who vow obedience commit themselves to lifelong attentive listening to God's call, including how it is heard through their elected or appointed leaders and community. Obedience is more than following orders, it is humbly responding with radical availability. Typically, ministerial assignments and congregational responsibilities are in dialogue with the leadership and the member.

## **OBLATE**

Oblates are laypeople or clergy who in their desire to offer themselves to God, affiliate with a monastery. Though they are not vowed monastics and usually live outside the monastery, they commit to following the monastic rule in their life and work as their circumstances allow. Some religious institutes use the word oblate in their name, but their members are actually vowed religious.

## **ORDINATION**

Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, ordination enables a man to act on behalf of the Church to administer the sacraments to the People of God. The three main orders in the Catholic Church are the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate.

## **PERPETUAL PROFESSION**

Perpetual profession, also called final profession, it is the public proclamation of a definitive permanent commitment of vowed communal life until one's death. Through the ministry of the Church, they are consecrated to God for life. The dispensation of vows is reserved to the Holy See if the institute is pontifical and to the local Bishop for diocesan institutes.

## **POPE**

The Pope is the Bishop of Rome and the leader of the worldwide Catholic Church, recognized as the traditional successor of Saint Peter. The word pope comes from the Latin, *papa* and the Greek, *pappas*, both meaning "father." Popes are elected by the College of Cardinals, who are usually ordained bishops appointed by the Pope. Of the 266 popes in Church history, 34 have come from religious communities, including Pope Francis, who is a member of the Society of Jesus.

## **POVERTY**

Women and men who vow poverty commit themselves to living simply, to sharing all things in common and not exercising ownership over things, for the good of their religious institute and its mission in the Church. Poverty calls vowed members to live with abundant generosity and to advocate for systemic changes in structures of social sin. Paychecks, stipends and donations are for the benefit of all members of the religious institute.

## **PRIEST, DIOCESAN**

A diocesan priest is ordained through the Sacrament of Holy Orders to serve the local Church primarily through parish ministry in a specific geographic area known as a (arch)diocese. He is accountable to his (arch)bishop and the people he serves. A diocesan priest makes promises of obedience and celibacy to his bishop. He does not take a vow or promise of poverty or live community life.

## **PRIEST, RELIGIOUS**

A religious priest is a man who professes vows in a religious institute and is ordained to the priesthood through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. A religious priest, also known as an order priest, is accountable to his major superior and the other men in his community, as well as the local bishop and the people he serves. Religious priests serve in various ministries, such as preaching, teaching, parish ministry, retreat work, social work, chaplaincies, and youth ministries. Religious priests take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and any additional vows of his community.

## **PRIORY**

The priory is the home for monastic communities whose major superior bears the title of “prior” for men or “prioress” for women.

## **PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE**

The first stage of formation and the first time a man is considered a seminarian. This stage should last at least twelve consecutive months but could be extended for a longer period if circumstances require it.

## **PROFESSION**

Profession is the religious rite in which a person formally enters a religious community by making public vows, most commonly poverty, chastity and obedience. Profession follows a formation program of discernment, education, and spiritual development. Typically, a person in initial formation professes temporary vows annually for 3-9 years before perpetual/final profession.

## **PROVINCE**

A province is a geographic grouping of communities of a religious institute. The religious superior of the group is called a provincial or provincial superior. The province must be self-sustaining.

## **RECTORY**

A rectory is the home or residence of diocesan parish priests.

## **RELIGIOUS**

When used as a noun, religious refers to a man or woman who professes public vows and is a member of a religious institute. More specifically, one may speak of a *male religious* who may be a priest or brother, or of a *woman religious*, who may be a sister or nun.

## **RELIGIOUS BROTHERS DAY**

Religious Brothers Day is celebrated annually on May 1, the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. The purpose of this day is to celebrate the vocation of religious brothers and to invite men to consider this vocation.

## **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE**

A religious institute is one of two types of institutes of consecrated life recognized by the Catholic Church (the other is secular institute). Members of religious institutes, both men’s and women’s, publicly profess vows and live a life in common, that is, in community under a common rule. Each religious institute, formerly called an order or congregation, is founded for a specific mission and is involved in ministries based on the charism, or spirituality, of the institute. The current 1983 Code of

Canon Law dropped the 1917 distinction between “orders” and “congregations” by using the single term “religious institute” for all forms.

## **RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Brothers, sisters, and religious priests who profess vows and embrace the spirituality, teachings and customs of their religious institute belong to the category of baptized people called religious life. The hallmarks of religious life are presence and availability.

## **RELIGIOUS ORDER OR CONGREGATION**

A religious institute of men or women whose members profess solemn vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience was called an “Order” whereas religious institutes whose members profess simple vows was called a “Congregation” in the 1917 Code of Canon Law. The current 1983 Code of Canon Law dropped the 1917 distinction between “orders” and “congregations” by using the single term “religious institute”.

## **RETREAT**

A retreat is a period of prayer dedicated to deepening one’s relationship with God. Retreats can last one day, several days or weeks. Most professed members make an annual retreat of at least five days.

## **SACRED SPACE**

Sacred space is a place that is conducive to prayer, it can be inside or outside.

## **SECULAR INSTITUTE**

Secular institutes were recognized by Pope Pius XII in 1947 as a form of consecrated life in which a layperson professes private vows after a period of formation. Members of secular institutes manage their own finances, live alone or with their families, and have no common apostolate. There are over 20 secular institutes in the United States.

## **SEMINARIAN**

A seminarian is a man in the formation process of becoming a priest. He remains a seminarian until he is ordained.

## **SEMINARY SISTER**

A seminary sister is a woman in the initial formation process of becoming a Daughter of Charity.

## **SINGLE LIFE**

A person who chooses the single life as their vocation is called by God to serve generously, love selflessly and live chastely.

## **SISTER**

A sister is a woman religious who professes public vows to an apostolic religious institute according to the charism within a religious institute. Sisters have a long legacy and anticipative future of dedicating their prayer and ministry to serving wherever the need is greatest, particularly with the abandoned, neglected and underserved. There are over 500 religious institutes of women in the United States.

## **SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE**

Members of societies of apostolic life pursue a particular apostolic purpose as defined by the founding charism and mission of their society while living common life. Some, but not all societies, profess sacred bonds, vows, oaths, etc. There are over 20 Societies of Apostolic Life in the United States.

## **SPIRITUAL DIRECTION**

Spiritual direction is the process for individuals to facilitate spiritual growth. It usually consists of periodic meetings with a spiritual director who listens to a person's experience of God, helps them to recognize God's presence in their lives, and suggests readings, prayers, and practices that can deepen their faith. A spiritual director is a priest, sister, brother or layperson who is trained in spiritual direction.

## **STABILITY**

Stability is a vow unique to those who follow the Rule of St. Benedict. These monastics vow to live with others for a lifetime in a specific monastery.

## **TEMPORARY PROFESSION**

Temporary profession is typically the first vows women and men religious take following their novitiate preliminary to perpetual profession. Those in temporary vows spend three to six years living in community and are engaged in full-time ministry. Most often temporary vows are renewed annually after evaluation and mutual discernment with the formation director and religious leadership.

## **VESPERS**

Vespers, also known as Evening Prayer, is part of the Liturgy of the Hours and prayed at sunset. The word *vespers* come from the Greek and Latin words meaning *evening*. Morning and Evening Prayer are the most important elements of the Liturgy of the Hours and are usually prayed in common.

## **VISION VOCATION GUIDE**

VISION Vocation Guide, a publication of the National Religious Vocation Conference, is the most comprehensive resource available for those discerning a religious vocation. It is available in print and digital editions and online at [VocationNetwork.org](http://VocationNetwork.org). Since 1987 VISION has provided information about religious life through first-person accounts, profiles, photo stories, and articles about discernment, community life, vows, ministry, and Catholic teaching.

## **VISION VOCATION MATCH**

Vision Vocation Match ([VocationMatch.org](http://VocationMatch.org) and [EncuentroVocacional.org](http://EncuentroVocacional.org)) is a popular, award-winning online service of the National Religious Vocation Conference that helps those considering religious life understand their vocation preferences and narrow their search for the right vocation.

## **VOCATION**

The word *vocation* stems from the Latin verb *vocare*, which means to call. Thus, a vocation is a calling from God to a way of life such as marriage, single, consecrated or ordained life. A vocation is more than your career choice or occupation. It is a response of one's baptism call to follow Jesus in a life of holiness and sacred service.

## **VOCATION DIRECTOR**

Working for a diocese or religious institute, a vocation director is the agent of the bishop or religious superior to promote priesthood or religious life and accompany inquirers to discern their vocation. A vocation director is professionally competent to screen discerners and assess applicants for entrance to religious formation. If a person is considering a vocation, it is best to meet a vocation director on a regular basis for discernment.

## **VOCATIONAL SYNTHESIS STAGE**

This is the fourth and final phase of formation for seminarians. The Vocational Synthesis Stage is distinct from what has been commonly referred to as the “pastoral year.” The purpose of this stage for seminarians is to allow transition and integration into the life of a cleric, incorporating the entirety of the formation he has received from the moment of Baptism until his reception of Holy Orders. The primary formator of the newly ordained deacon during the Vocational Synthesis Stage is now either the pastor of the parish where the deacon is assigned, or someone delegated by the bishop or major superior who serves in their diocese, institute, or society.

## **VOW**

A vow—solemn, public, or private—is a public promise to God made freely and deliberately. A man and woman make a solemn vow to one another before God in the sacrament of matrimony. A member of a religious institute, a priest, sister, and brother profess vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Some communities add a fourth vow related to their charism. Because the Rule of Saint Benedict was written centuries before poverty, chastity and obedience became the standard vows, Benedictines vow stability, *conversatio* and obedience.

## **WOMEN RELIGIOUS**

Women religious refers to both nuns and sisters who as members of a religious institute, take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. There are over 500 institutes of women religious in the United States

## **WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE**

In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life. This celebration is attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2. However, it is observed in parishes on the Sunday after February 2 in order to highlight the gift of consecrated persons for the whole Church.

## **WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

The purpose of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations is to publicly celebrate vocations to ordained ministry and religious life in all its forms. Many parishes and religious institutes commemorate this day with prayer for vocations and vocation promotion events. It is celebrated on Good Shepherd Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Easter.