

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
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**Women and Men Entering Religious Life:
The Entrance Class of 2024**

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from an annual national survey of women and men religious who formally entered a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States during 2024. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of men and women religious institutes in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a postulant or novice in institutes that do not have postulancy) in the United States since January 1, 2024.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 533 of 723 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 75% among religious institutes. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 362 members (124 women and 238 men) entering religious life in 2024.

In November 2024, CARA emailed or mailed a survey to 362 identified entrants, asking them to complete an online survey or mail their completed paper survey to CARA. A total of 220 responded to the survey by February 1, 2025. This represents a response rate of 61% among 362 new entrants who were invited and eligible to participate in the survey.

Major Findings

Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

- Four in five (76%) responding religious institutes had no one entering religious life in 2024. Eleven percent reported one entrant and 13% reported two or more.
- Six in ten (58%) are men and four in ten (41%) are women. Among men, more than four in five (84%) expect to become priests and nearly one in five (16%) plan to become a perpetually professed brother.
- The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2024 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 25 or younger.
- Responding postulants were born in 24 countries. Eight in ten (78%) were born in the United States. Among those who were born outside the United States, they were twenty-one years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for nine years before entering religious life.
- Seven in ten of those who entered a religious institute report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (68%). More than one in ten of the Entrance Class of 2024 identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a) (14%) and Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (12%). Two percent identify as African/African American/black. Four percent identify as mixed or some other race or ethnicity.
- Entrants report speaking 14 different languages, with English (79%) most frequently reported, followed by Spanish (8%) and other languages (12%).
- Nine in ten (88%) have been Catholic since birth, with four in five (81%) coming from families in which both parents are Catholic. Almost all (97%) have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is one or two.
- During the most formative part of their childhood, almost all respondents were raised by their biological parents (97%) during that time, with one in ten raised by their grandparents (11%). Two percent were raised by stepparents.
- Nearly six in ten (57%) report that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation. Men (62%) are more likely than women (49%) to say that starting a discussion with their family was easy for them.
- While growing up, six in ten respondents (61%) report that outside of family members, they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun. A third have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun (34%).

- The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2024 were highly educated before entering. More than seven in ten (74%) report having earned at least a bachelor's degree. One in five received a master's degree (22%), including 3% having a doctoral degree.
- The 2024 entrants are considerably more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school (48% compared to 16%), a Catholic high school (39% compared to 8%), and a Catholic college/university (46% compared to 5%).
- Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. More than seven in ten participated in retreats (74%), various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting (64%), and campus ministry during college (51%).
- Before entering religious life, four in five respondents were employed full time (78%) and one in five was employed part time (22%).

Vocational Discernment and Choice of a Religious Institute

- Four in five say they were “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (84%), a sense of call to religious life (84%), and a desire to be part of a community (56%).
- Asked what attracted them to their religious institute, almost all of them report that they were “somewhat” attracted by the charism, mission, and spirituality of the institute (98%). Nine in ten respondents report they are at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the community life, prayer life, example of members, and spirituality of the institute.
- Entrants were asked how helpful selected vocation experiences were to them in discerning their call to their institute before they entered. Nine in ten report those deemed “very” helpful by live-in experience (88%), contact with the vocation director (83%), visits to the Motherhouse (78%), spiritual direction (77%), and vocation or discernment retreat (74%).
- On average, respondents were 20 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life. More than nine in ten received encouragement from a vocation Director/team (93%), a spiritual director (88%), members of the institute (88%), and friends outside the institute (85%) when they first considered entering a religious institute.
- Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. A third report becoming acquainted the

recommendation of a family member, friend, or advisor (36%). A quarter got acquainted through a personal invitation by a member (25%), through the reputation or history of the institute (25%), in an institution where members served, e.g., school (24%), and through their own search (24%).

- New entrants were also invited to respond in their own words to an open-ended question: *“What most attracted you to your religious institute?”* Respondents shared many aspects of what most attracted them to their religious institute. The aspects include mission and ministries, the founder/ess, spirituality and charism of the institute, prayer life and communal prayer, community life, joy of the members, fidelity to the Church, its practice regarding religious habit, religious formation/lifestyle of the institute members, and sense of social justice.

Experience of Religious Life and Religious Institute

- Regarding the types of prayer that are important to them, more than nine in ten say that daily Eucharist (94%) and private personal prayer (94%) are “very” important to them.
- Asked how important five aspects of their community life are to them at present, eight in ten say these are “very” important to them: living with other members (86%), praying with other members (85%), and sharing meals together (80%).
- More than eight in ten (84%) respondents indicate that members of their institute wear a habit.
- In written comments at the end of the survey, respondents shared a variety of challenges that face them in religious life, including community life, maturing into religious life, adaptation to religious life, decreasing access to family and friends, and other challenges.

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The Entrance Class of 2024**

Introduction

In 2014, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an annual survey of women and men who enter religious life each year in the United States. For this project, CARA was asked to gather information about the characteristics and experiences of these women and men in a fashion similar to the survey of perpetually professed that CARA conducts each year for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, which is released each year for the World Day of Consecrated Life in February. CARA designed a questionnaire based on previous CARA research on religious life and reviewed it with a representative from the Hilton Foundation. This report presents results of this survey of women and men of the Entrance Class of 2024.

To obtain the names and contact information for women and men entering religious life in 2024, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of men and women religious institutes in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a postulant or novice in institutes that do not have postulancy) in the United States since January 1, 2024.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 533 of 723 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 75% among religious institutes. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 362 members (124 women and 238 men) entering religious life in 2024.

In November 2024, CARA emailed or mailed a survey to 362 identified entrants, asking them to complete an online survey or mail their completed paper survey to CARA. A total of 220 responded to the survey by February 1, 2025. This represents a response rate of 61% among 362 new entrants who were invited and eligible to participate in the survey.

The questionnaire asked these women and men about their demographic and religious background, education and family background, previous ministry or service and other formative experiences, encouragement and discouragement to consider religious life, initial acquaintance

with their institutes, and vocation/discernment programs and experiences. This report presents analyses of each question from all responding men and women.

This report is arranged in three parts: Part I describes characteristics of the institutes that responded to the request for names as well as characteristics of the Entrance Class of 2024. Part II describes aspects of the vocational discernment of the Entrance Class of 2024. Part III describes their experience of religious life so far and reports, in their own words, what attracts them to religious life and what they find most challenging about religious life.

Interpreting this Report

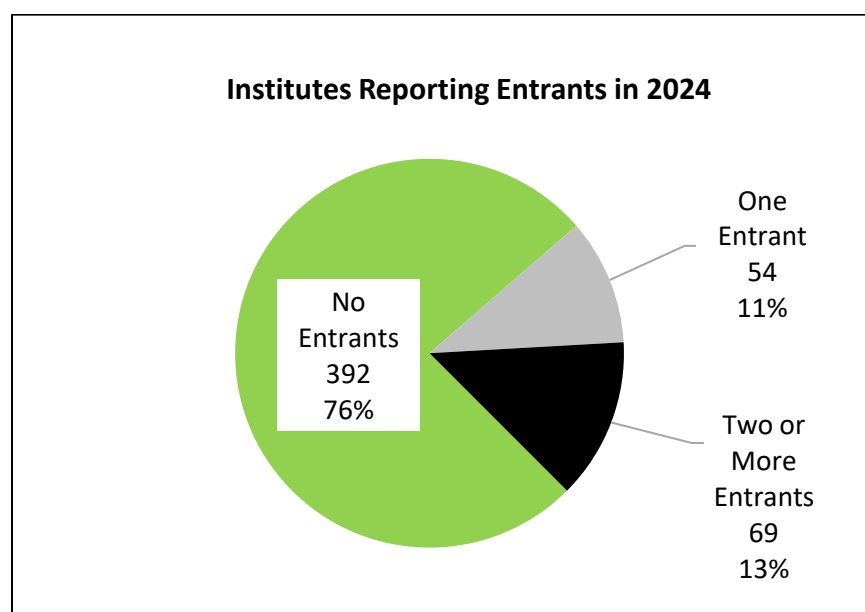
Many of the questions on the survey use four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “poor,” “fair,” “good,” and “excellent”). These scales allow half of the responses to be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“poor” and “fair,” for example) and half as relatively more “positive” (“good” and “excellent,” for example). In parts of the analysis in this report, these responses are combined to allow for clearer comparisons. Tables summarizing responses to questions that use these scales usually report the percentage of those who responded to the two most positive categories combined (e.g., “somewhat” and “very much”), followed by a column of the percentage of those who responded in the most positive category (e.g., “very much”), since the most positive response sometimes distinguishes important contrasts in the level of support. This is especially useful here since many respondents tended to give “positive” responses but not always the most positive responses.

Readers may also wish to compare the difference between the two extreme responses, say “poor” and “excellent,” to compare the level of intensity with which opposing opinions are held. These comparisons and others may be drawn by referring to the actual percentage responses given in Appendix I. That appendix shows the percentage responses for each item, calculated out of 100%, as well as the percentage of all respondents that did not respond to each question, separately calculated out of 100% for clarity of comparison.

In general, in making comparisons between men and women, tables will show the overall percentage who provided a strong response, followed by the percentage of each subgroup (i.e., men and women) who provided a strong response. Whenever the difference in percentages between these groups approaches or exceeds 10%, this difference is considered notable or important.

Part I Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

Institutes Reporting New Entrants in 2024

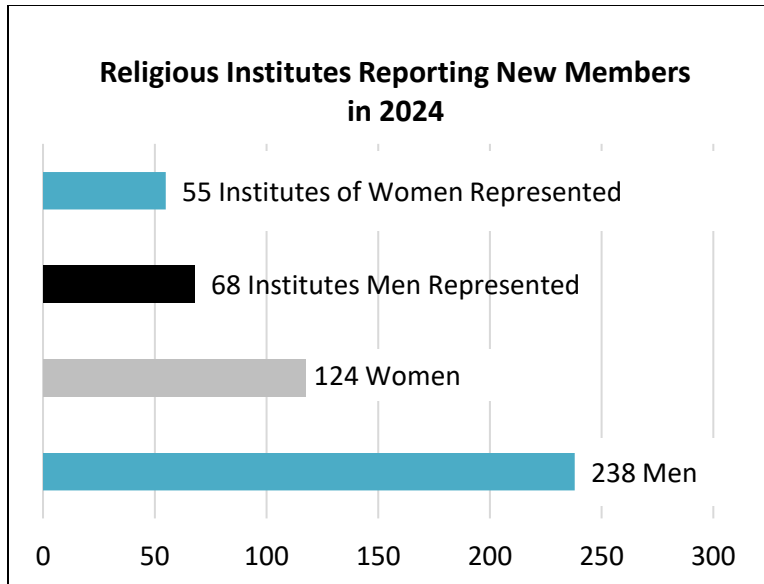


CARA asked the 723 religious institutes, provinces, or monasteries in the United States to provide the names of men and women as postulants who entered their religious institute in the United States in 2024. A total of 533 major superiors responded to the request (a 75% response rate).

A total of 392 major superiors (76% of those responding) reported that they had no one enter the institute in 2024, in which 115 major superiors reported their religious institutes were not accepting new members. Another 54 major superiors (11%) reported one new entrant, and 69 major superiors (13%) reported two or more new entrants.

Among responding religious institutes that reported at least one member entering in 2024, four in five (81%) are active while one in five (19%) is contemplative. Among these institutes, four in ten (43%) are smaller sized (less than 50 professed members), four in ten (40%) are medium sized (51-150 professed members), and two in ten (17%) are larger sized (more than 151 professed members).

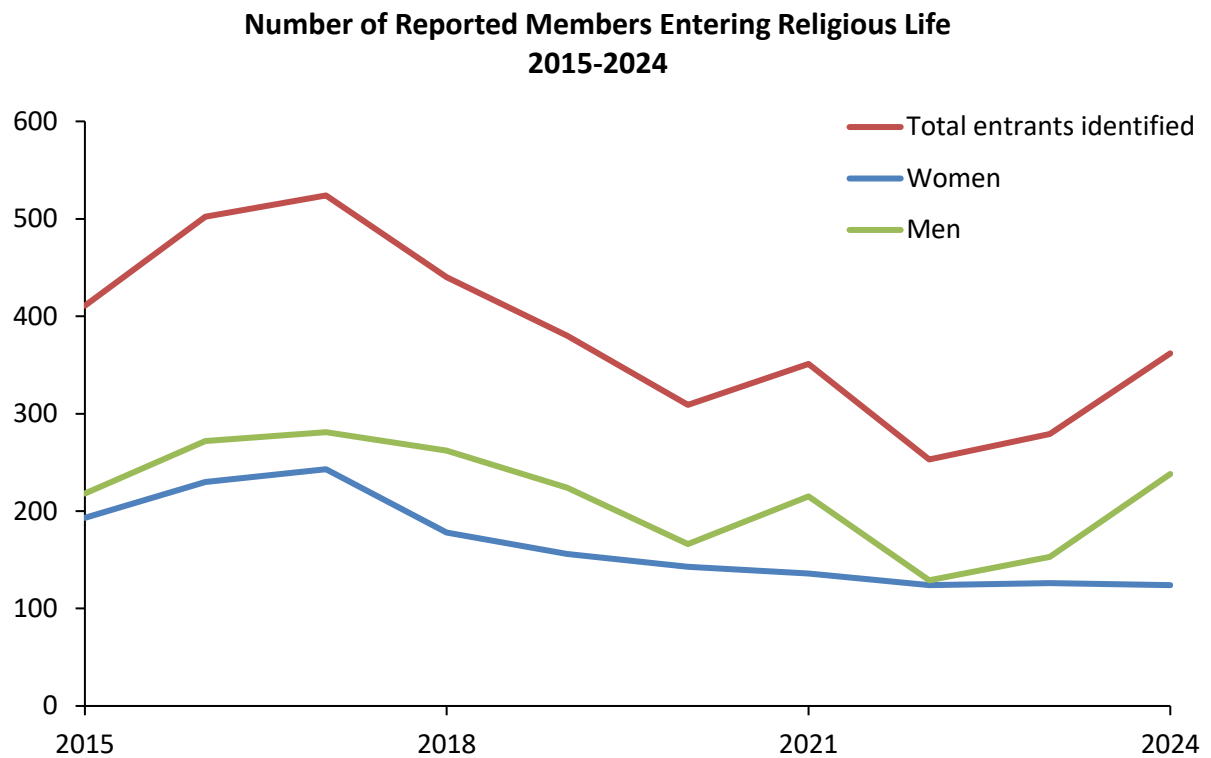
Six in ten of the responding institutes (63%) having new members entering in 2024 have a combination of primary apostolates that include healthcare, education, and pastoral ministry. Two in ten reports their primary apostolate is pastoral ministry (21%) or education (17%).



Among the institutes having members entering in 2024, 45% (55 institutes) are women's institutes while 55% (68 institutes) are men's institutes.

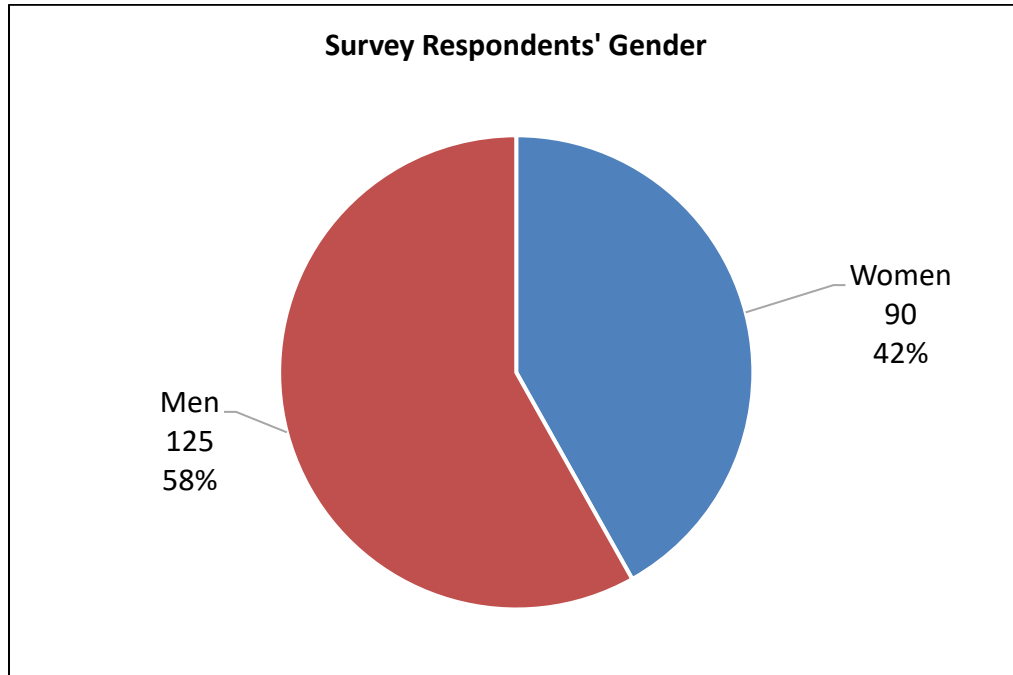
Altogether, a total of 123 responding institutes responded with 362 names of women and men entering religious life in 2024.

As can be seen in the figure below over the last 10 years, on average, there are 381 new members entering their religious institutes every year.



Gender

Among the 215 respondents who completed the survey, three in five (58%) are men and two in five (42%) are women. Among men, over eight in ten (84%) expect to become priests and less than two in ten (16%) plans to become a perpetually professed brother.



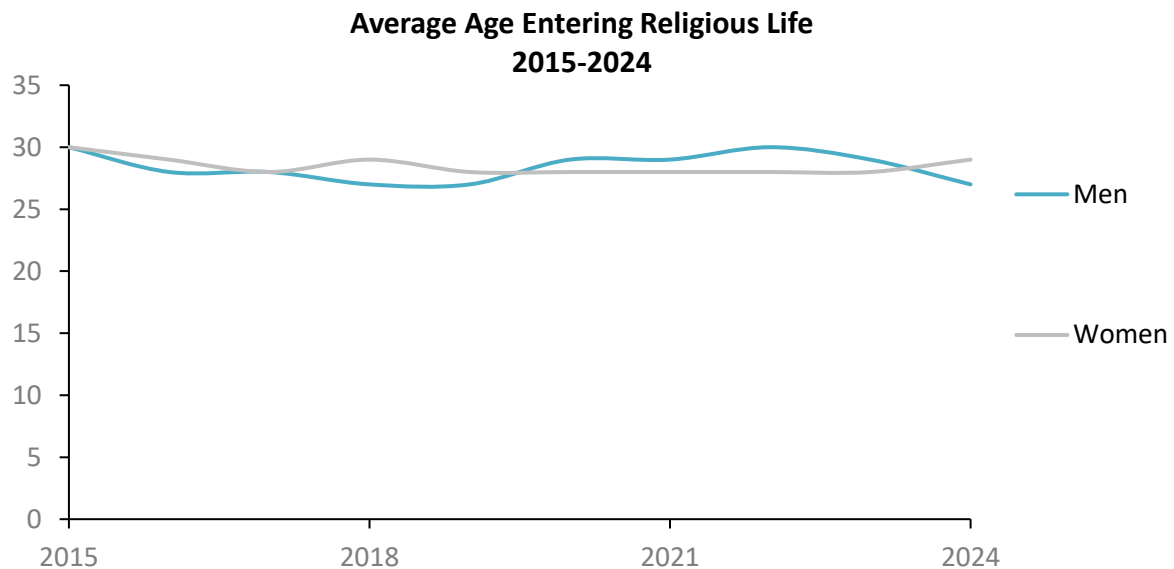
Age of Entrance Class of 2024

Age Entering Religious Life Entrance Class of 2024			
	Men [years]	Women [years]	All [years]
Average	27	29	28
Median	25	26	25
Range	18 - 55	18 - 65	18 - 65

The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2024 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 25 or younger.

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Entrance Class of 2024 is 18 and the oldest is 65. Among men, the youngest is 18 and the oldest is 65. Regardless of gender, almost nine in ten respondents (87%) are 35 or younger.

On average, the average age was 29 and ranged between 27 and 30 during the years the survey has been conducted.



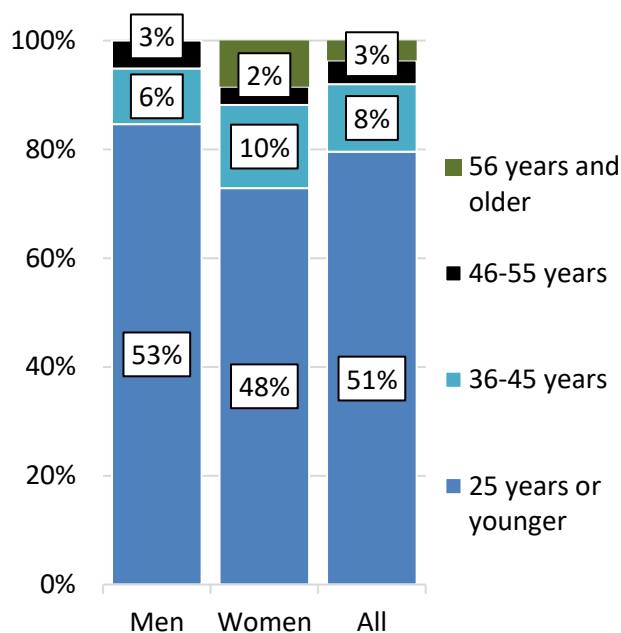
Half of responding entrants (53%) are 25 years and younger when entering religious life. Between 2006 and 2025, their share has averaged 42% and ranged between 36% and 46%.

Ordinands 30 years or younger constituted 42% of ordinands who responded to this question, in 2025. They represented 23% of ordinands in religious institutes and 46% of ordinands to diocesan priesthood (a statistically significant difference). Between 2006 and 2025, their share has averaged 38% and ranged between 22% and 50%.

Ordinands 41-50 years old constituted 9% of ordinands who responded to this question, in 2025. They represented 10% of ordinands in religious institutes and 8% of ordinands to diocesan priesthood. Between 2006 and 2025, their share has averaged 12% and ranged between 6% and 22%.

Ordinands 51 years or older constituted 6% of ordinands who responded to this question, in 2025. They represented 5% of ordinands in religious institutes and 7% of ordinands to diocesan priesthood. Between 2006 and 2025, their share has averaged 8% and ranged between 4% and 13%. If the trend continues, they will constitute 1% \pm 3pp of ordinands, in 2029.

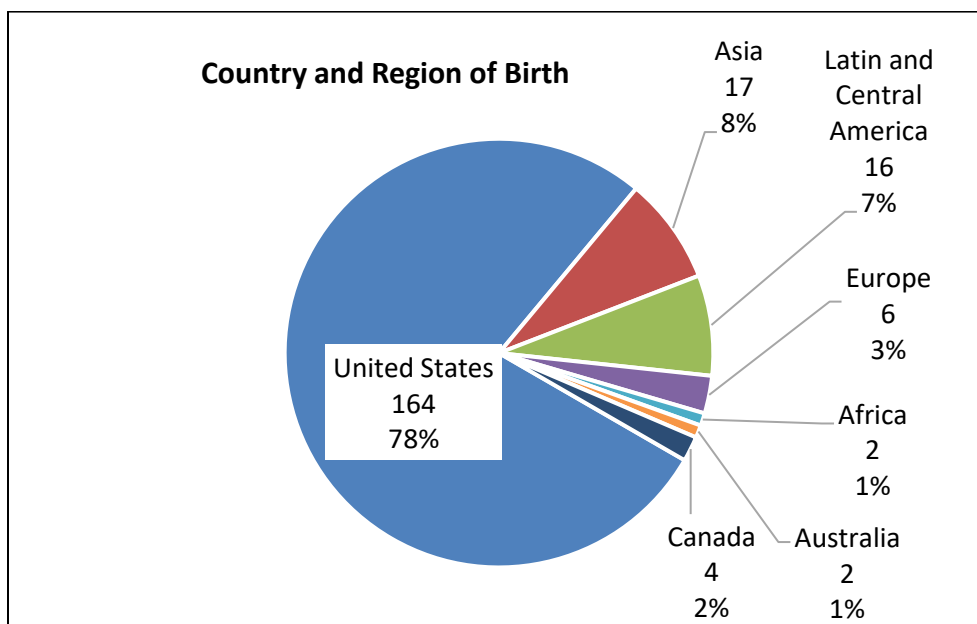
Distribution of Respondents by Age When Entering Religious Life in 2024



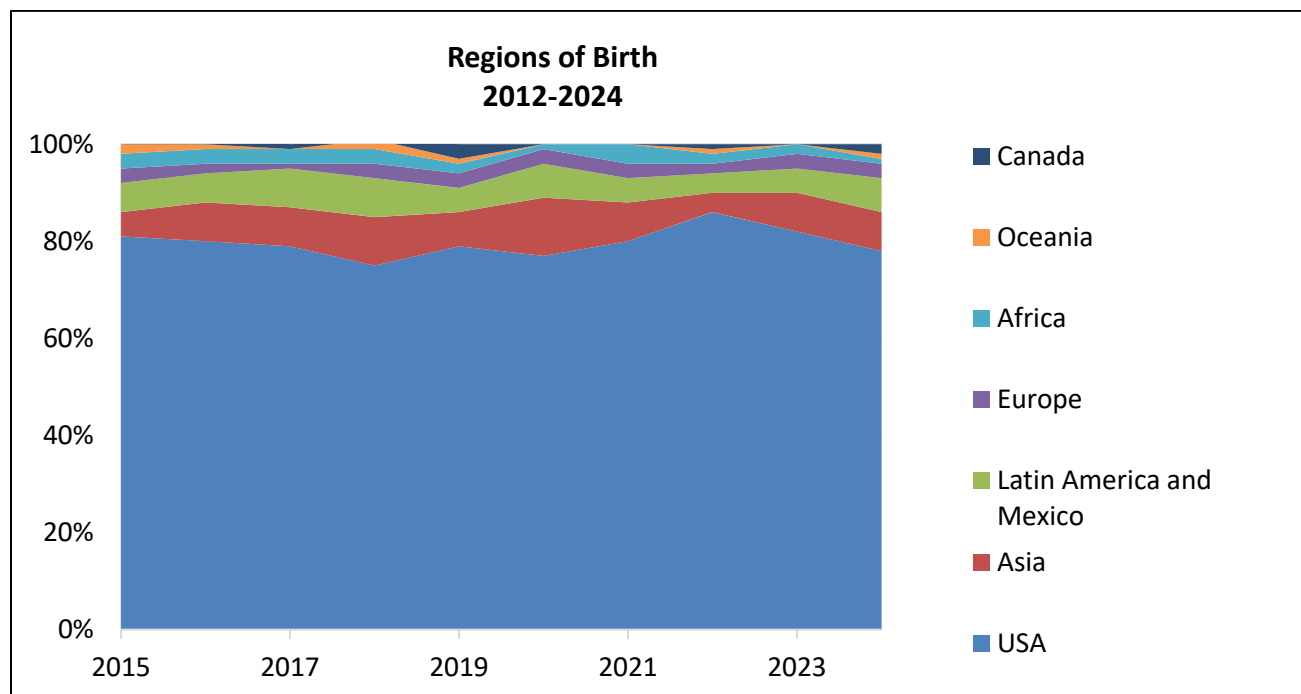
Age of Women and Men Entering Religious Life
Percentage in each age category

	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
25 and younger	51	54	48
Age 26-35	36	37	34
Age 36-45	8	7	10
Age 46-55	3	3	2
Age 56 and older	2	0	6
Average age	28	27	29
Median age	25	25	26
Range in ages	18-65	18-55	18-65

Region or Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States



Responding postulants were born in 21 countries. Nearly eight in ten (78%) respondents were born in the United States. Two in ten was born outside the United States (22%).



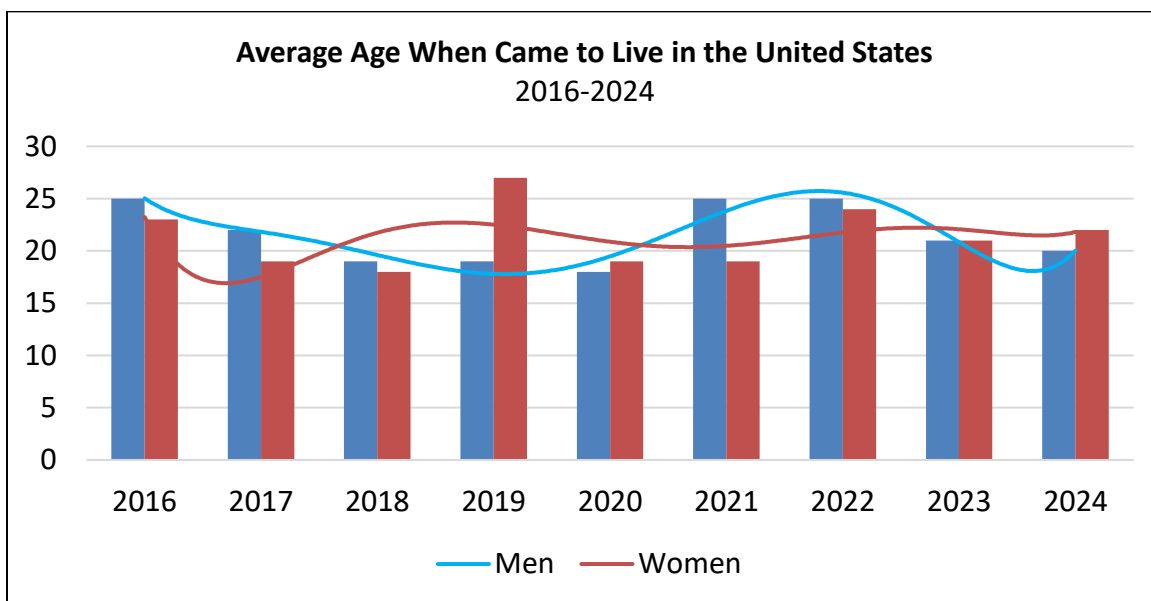
Foreign-born Religious' Age at Entry to the United States

Respondents who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 9 years. Half of them have been in the United States for 4 years or less.

Entrance to the United States				
	<i>Years in USA</i>	<i>Age at Entry</i>		
	Overall	Overall	Men	Women
Mean	9	21	20	22
Median	4	24	24	24
Range	0-36	1-51	1-37	2-51

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at the age of 21. Half were age 22 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The oldest woman was 51 while the oldest man was 37 at the time they entered the United States.

Since 2016, the average age was 21 and ranged between 19 and 25.



Race and Ethnic Background

Over two in three of those who entered a religious institute report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (68%).

<i>What best describes your racial or ethnic background?</i>			
Percentage responding			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	68	71	64
Hispanic/Latino(a)	14	11	18
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	12	11	14
African/African American/black	2	3	1
Mixed race or other	4	5	3

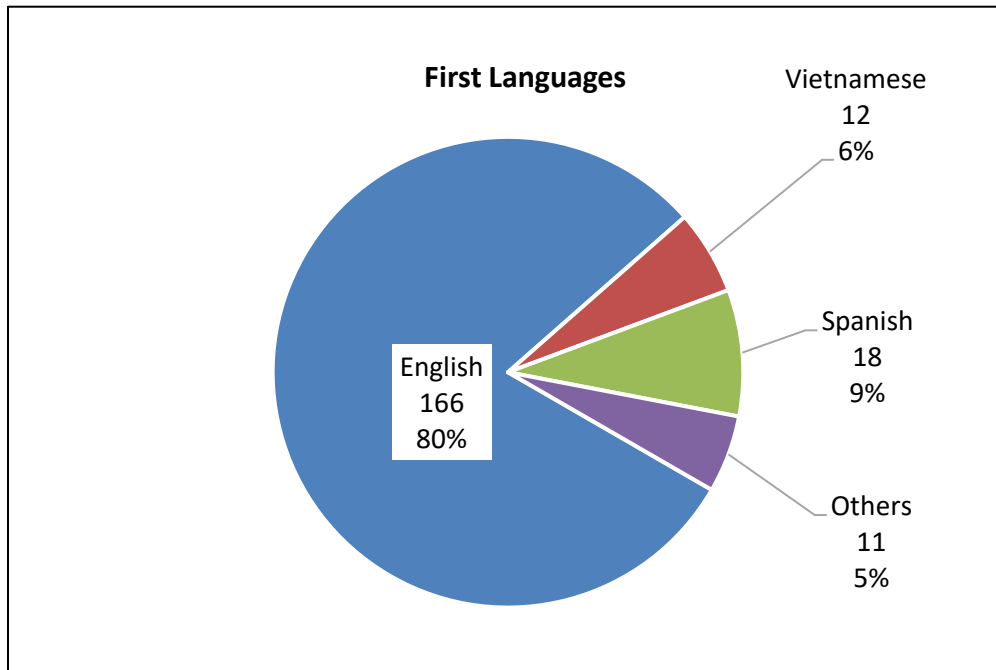
Nearly one in seven people of the Entrance Class of 2024 (14%) identifies as Hispanic/Latino (a). Another one in eight (12%) identify as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian; 2% African American/black; 4% identify as Mixed race or another race/ethnicity.

Differences by Country of Birth

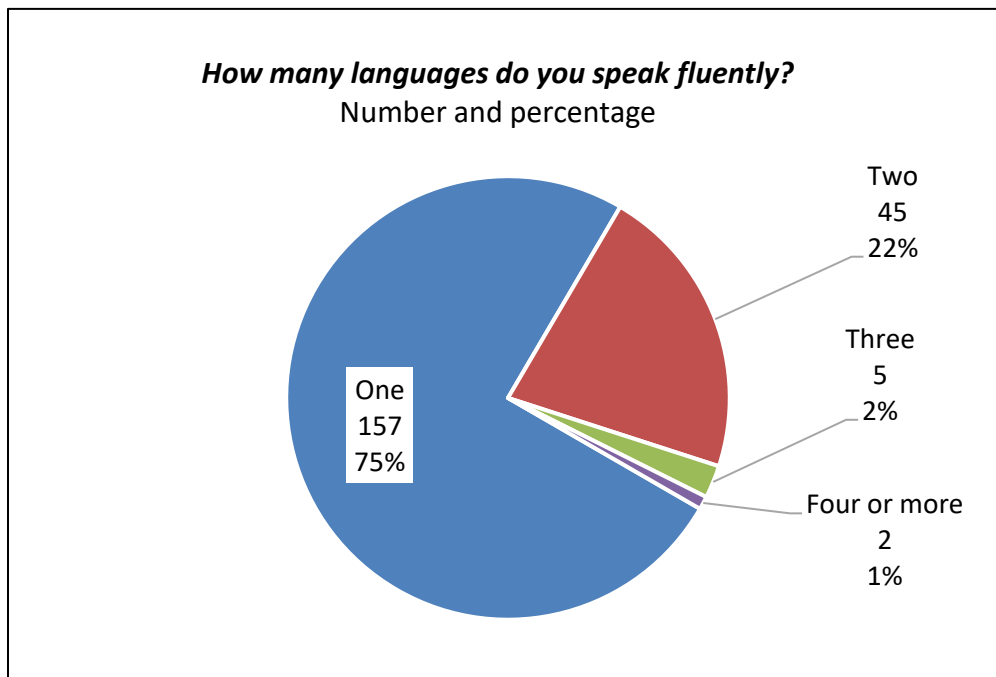
- Among those who were born in the United States, almost eight in ten (81%) report being Caucasian/European American/white.
- Among those who were born outside the United States, two out five were Asian/Pacific/Native Hawaiian (40%). Just over one in five Caucasian or European American or White (23%). Over one in four identifies as Hispanic or Latino (a), (27%). Just over one in ten identifies as African/African American/black (9%). Just 2.1% of respondents identify as mixed and other.

First Languages and Fluency

Responding entrants report speaking 12 different languages, with English (80%) most frequently reported, followed by Spanish (9%) and Vietnamese (6%).



Three-fourth of respondents speak fluently one language (75%), with over one in five (24%) speaking two. Three percent speak three languages or more languages.



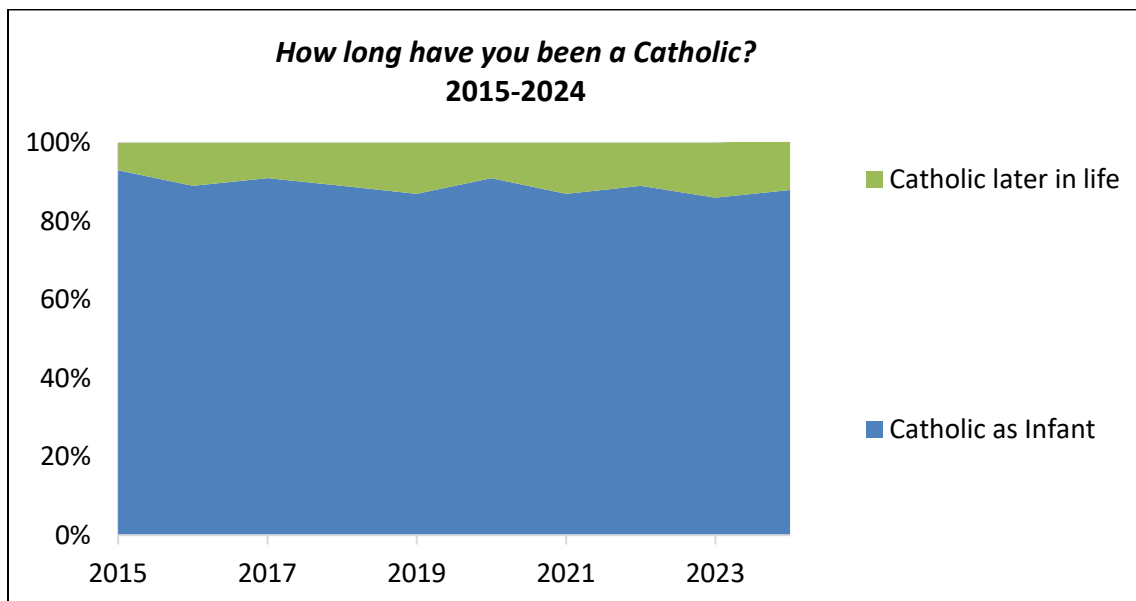
Religious Background

Almost nine in ten respondents (86%) have been Catholic since birth.

Catholic Background <i>Percentage responding</i>			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Catholic since birth	88	84	93
Became Catholic later in life	13	16	7

Among those who became Catholic later in life, 92% participated in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. These entrants came from a variety of faiths: Agnostic/Atheist, Baptist, Christian Church (DOC), Episcopal, Evangelical, Evangelical Christian, Evangelical Free Church, Osteen's Lakewood Church, Methodist, Protestant, United Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Lutheran (ELCA), Protestant, Southern Baptist.

Those who came into full communion with the Catholic Church from another denomination or those who converted from another faith tradition came from a variety of faiths: Baptist, Christian Church (DOC), Episcopal, Evangelical, Evangelical Christian, Evangelical Free Church, Osteen's Lakewood Church, Methodist, Protestant, United Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Lutheran (ELCA), Protestant, Southern Baptist.



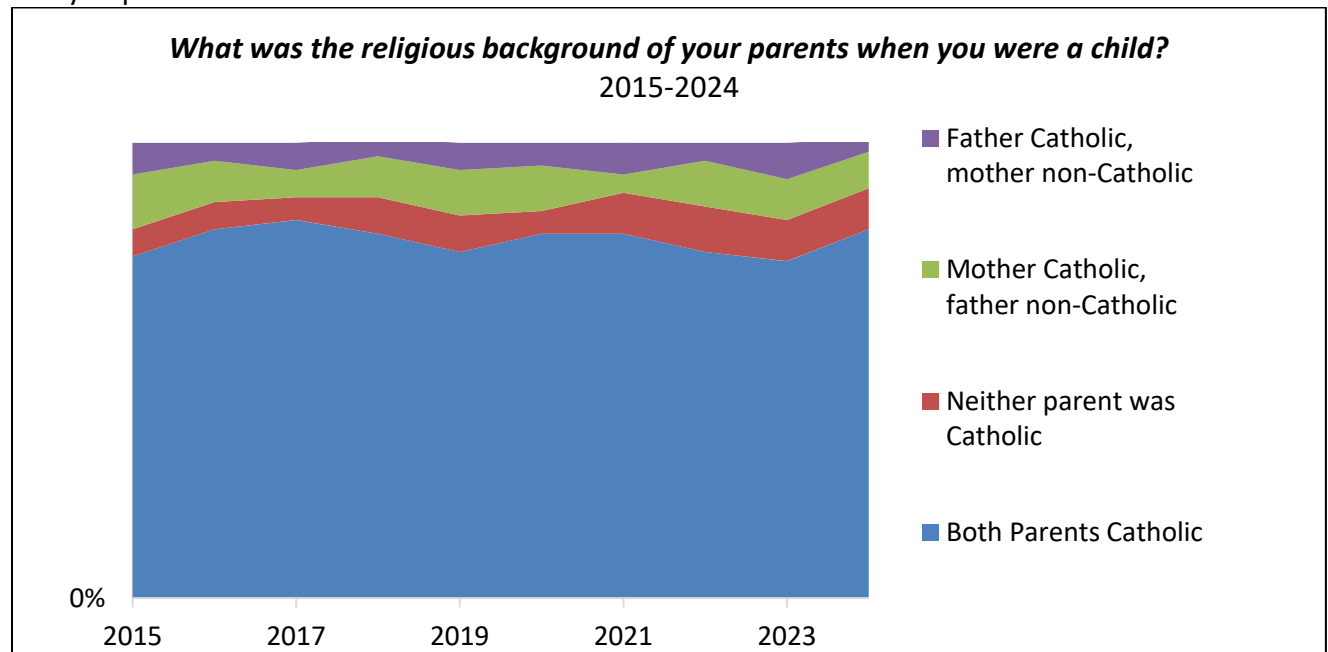
Family Religious Background

Four in five (81%) report that both of their parents were Catholic when they were growing up. Nearly one in ten report either their father or mother was Catholic while they were growing up. Nine percent report neither of their parents were Catholic while they were growing up.

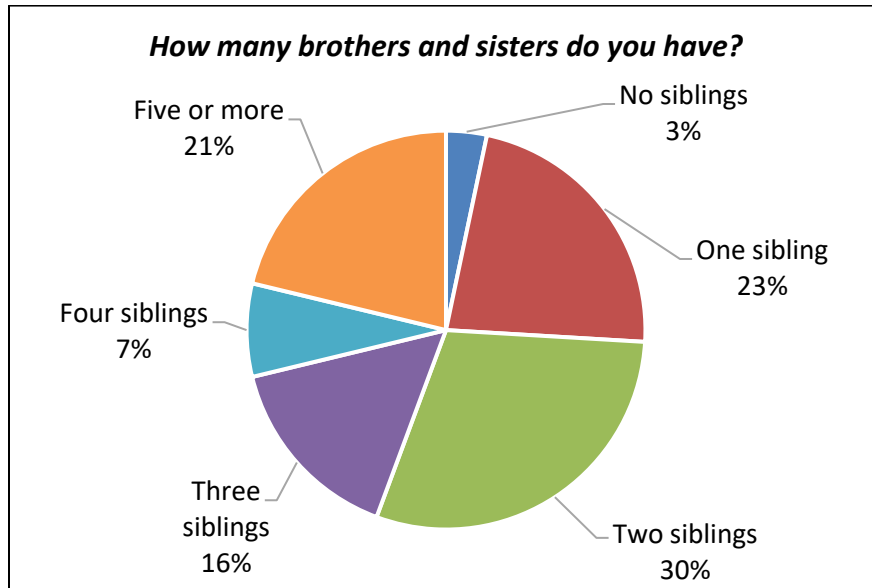
Religious Background of Respondents' Parents			
Percentage responding			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	81	75	89
Mother Catholic, father not	8	11	5
Father Catholic, mother not	3	2	3
Neither parent was Catholic	9	12	3

Respondents who had non-Catholic parents report that their parents were either Baptist, Methodist, Southern Baptist, Lutheran (ELCA), Protestant, United Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, United Methodist, Non-Denominational, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Evangelical Free Church, Pentecostal, United Methodist, Atheist/Agnostic, Testigo de Jehova, Baptized Non-Denominational Christian or Shinto-sympathetic pest.

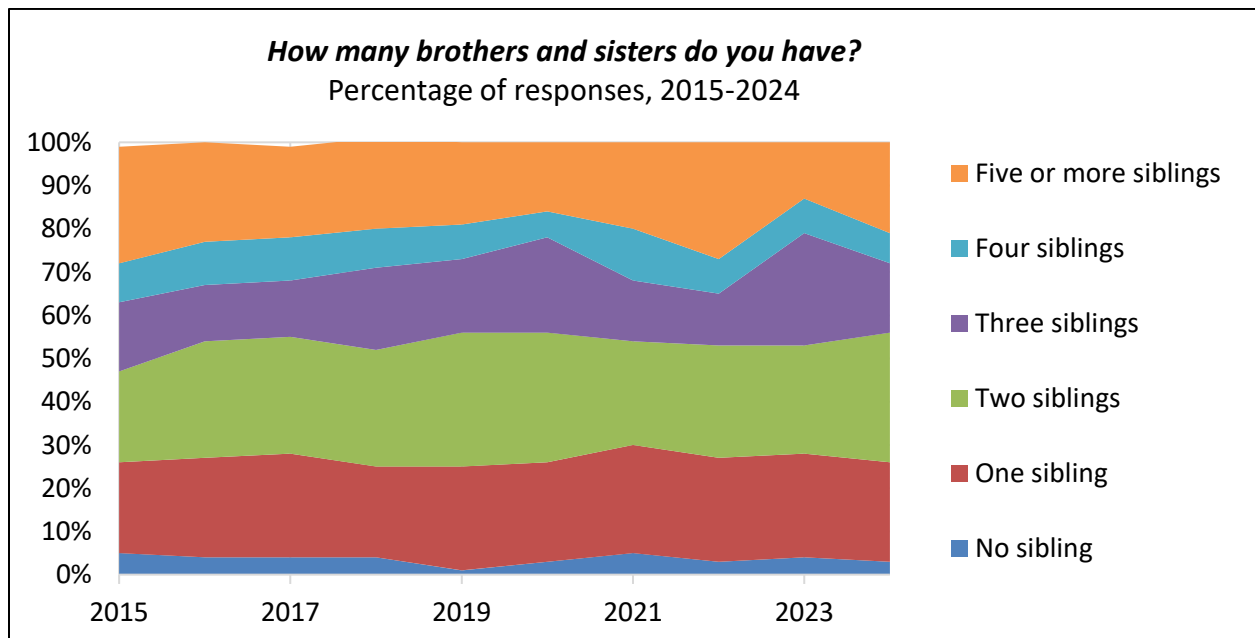
Regardless of the religious tradition of their parents, three in five (60%) respondents report that religion was “very important” to their mothers and 45% report that religion was “very important” to their fathers.



Siblings



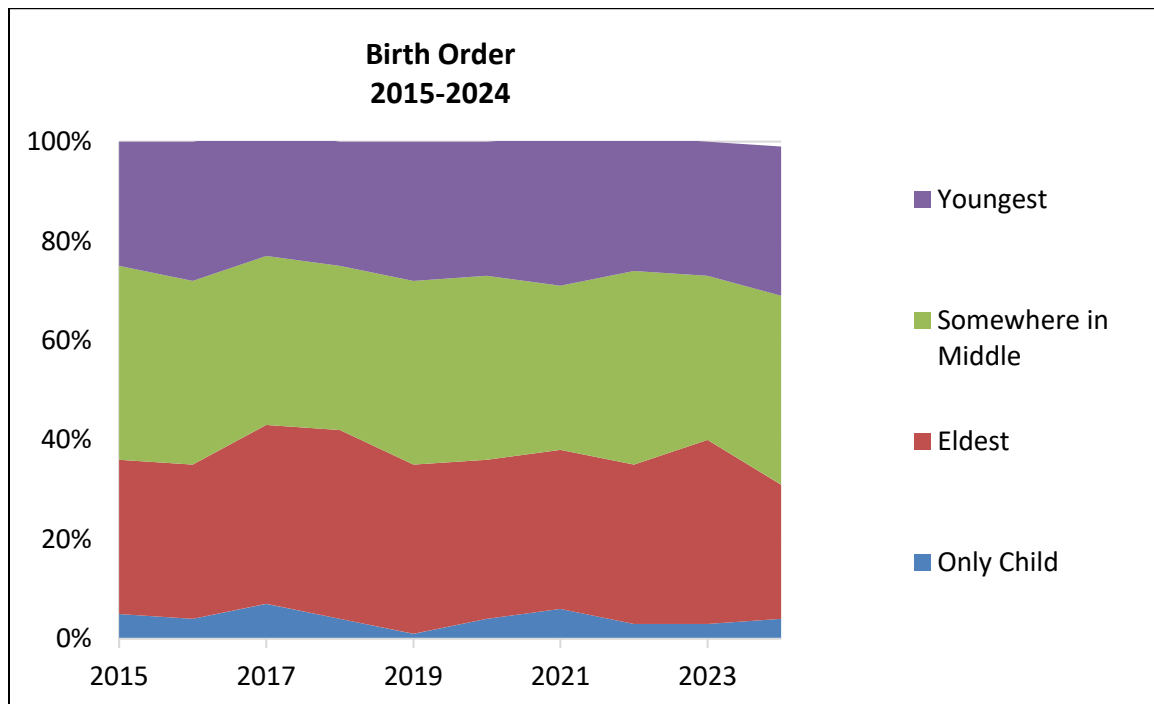
On average, members of the Entrance Class of 2024 have three siblings. The most common response to this question, among women and men, is one or two siblings (52%), three percent say he or she is an only child, nearly one-quarter have one sibling (23%), three out of ten have two siblings (30%), meanwhile more than four out of 10 have three or more siblings (44%).



Birth Order

<i>What is your birth order?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Eldest	27	28	27
Middle	38	37	39
Youngest	30	29	33
Only child	4	6	1

More than one fourth report being the eldest (27%). Nearly four in ten report being a middle child (38%). Three in ten report being the youngest (30%). Four percent report being an only child.



Parentings

Entrants were asked to identify who raised them during the most formative part of their childhood. They could select one or more of the options presented in the table below. Almost all respondents were raised by their biological parents (96%) during that time, with one in ten raised by their grandparents (10%). Two percent were raised by stepparents. One percent was raised by their adoptive parents or someone else whereas four percent were raised by other relatives.

Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood?

Respondents were invited to select all that apply

	Both	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Biological parents	96	95	97
Grandparents	10	10	11
Stepparents	2	2	1
Adoptive parents	1	2	0
Someone else	1	1	0
Other relative(s)	4	5	3

Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up

More than half (56%) report that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation. Men are more likely than women to say that starting a discussion with their family was easy for them.

Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up			
Percentage responding "Yes" to each question*			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?	56	62	49
Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	30	35	23
Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	33	38	27
Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	19	21	17
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

- Nearly three in ten indicate that their mother ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life (30%) whereas only two in ten suggest that their father spoke to them about vocations.
- About one third indicate that another family member (33%) spoke to them about vocations to priesthood or religious life.

More than six in ten of the respondents (61%) report that outside of family members, while they were growing up, they ever got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun. One third have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun (33%).

**Familiarity with Priests and/or Religious Brothers and Sisters/Nuns
while Growing Up**

Percentage responding "Yes" to each question

	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	61	60	63
Do you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	33	31	36

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

Catholic Education Before Entering a Religious Institute

Half of respondents attended a parish-based religious education program (52%). Two in five (42%) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school and Catholic college/university (40%). More than one third attended a Catholic high school (34%) before entering their religious institute, and more than a quarter attended a Catholic ministry formation program before entering (27%).

Did you attend any of the following before you entered? *

Percentage responding “Yes” to each question

	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR	52	48	58
Catholic elementary or middle school	42	42	41
Catholic high school	34	34	34
Catholic college/university	40	40	39
Catholic ministry formation program	27	25	30

Members of the Entrance Class of 2024 are almost three times more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,¹ 16% of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 42% among entrants. Responding entrants of 2024 are almost four times more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (34% of respondents, compared to 8% of U.S. adult Catholics) and eight times more likely to have attended a Catholic college/university (40% of respondents, compared to just 5% of U.S. adult Catholics).

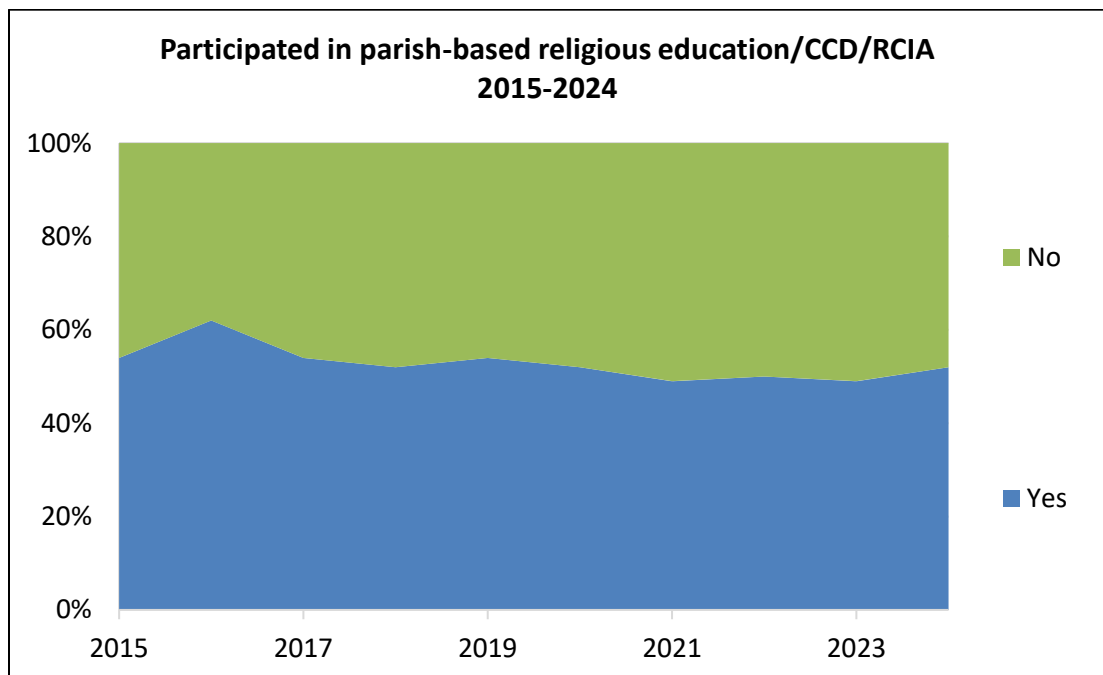
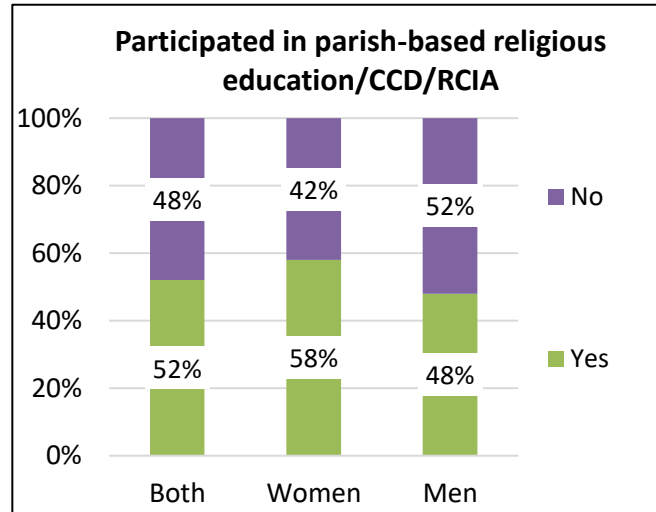
Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, half of respondents (52%) participated in a religious education program at some time in their parish.

¹CARA Catholic Poll, 2016. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

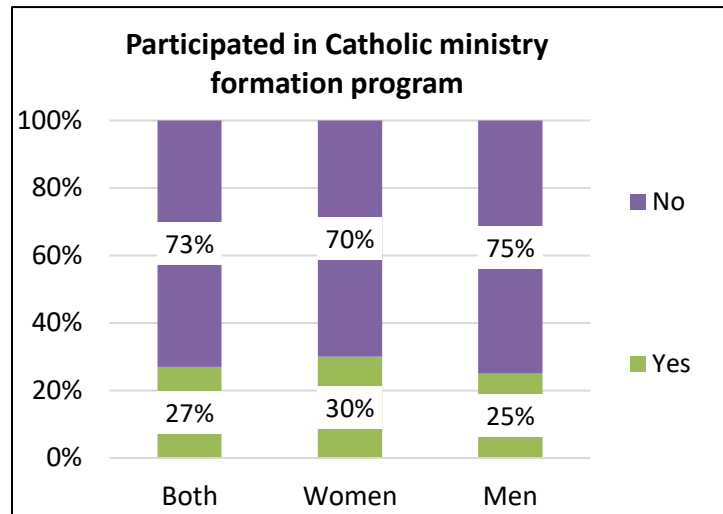
Catholic Religious Education

More than half of the respondents (52%) participated in a religious education program/CCD/RCIA in their parish. Between 2015 and 2024, their share averaged 53% and ranged between 49% and 62%.

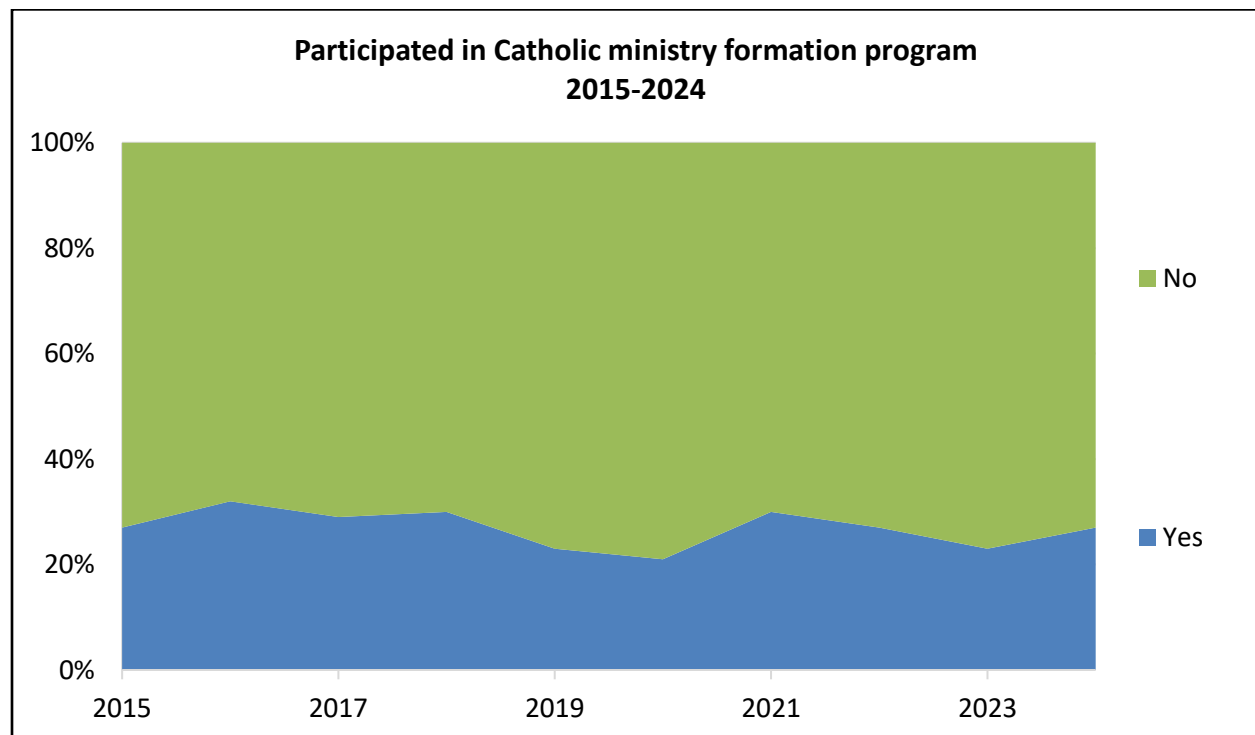
Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 65% did not report attending a Catholic elementary school and 71% did not attend a Catholic high school.



More than a quarter (27%) responding women and men religious report that they participated in a Catholic ministry formation program before they entered their religious institute.



Between 2015 and 2024, their share averaged 27% and ranged between 21% and 32%.



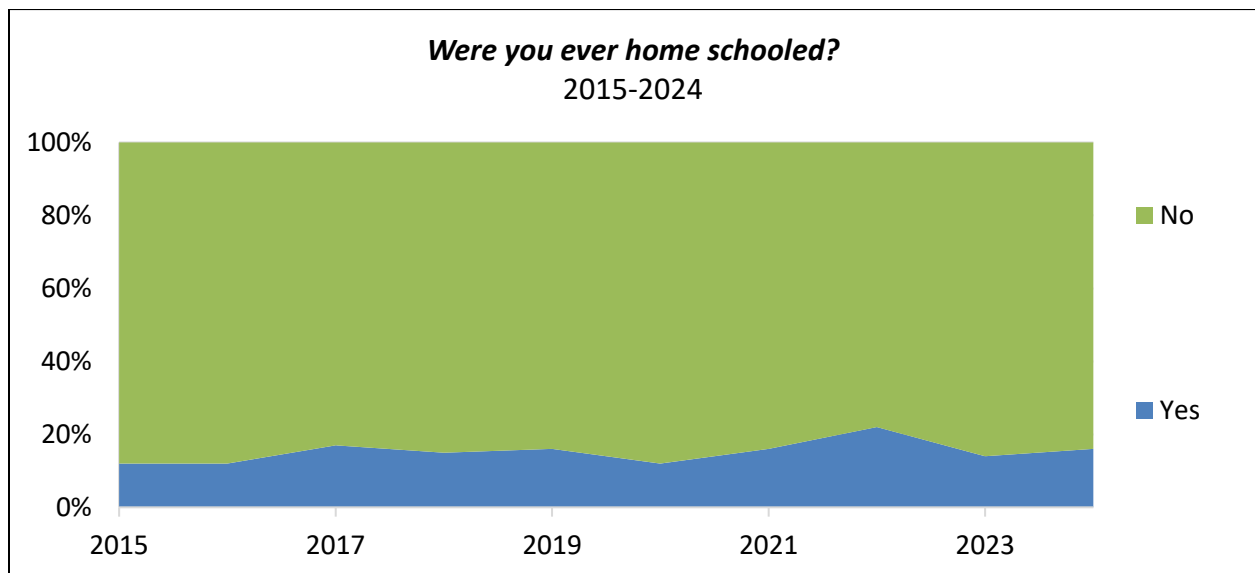
Home Schooling

Less than one out of six responding entrants (16%) report being home schooled at some time in their educational background.

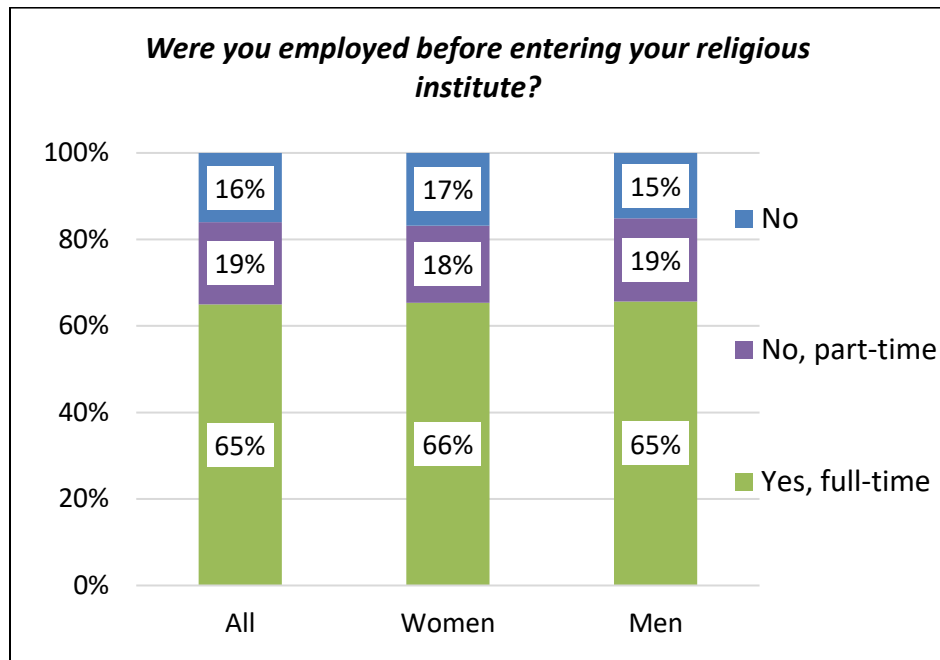
<i>Were you ever home-schooled?</i>			
Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Yes	16	15	17
No	84	85	83
Average number of years home-schooled			
	8	8	8

Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was eight years.

Between 2015 and 2024, their share averaged 15% and ranged between 12% and 22%.

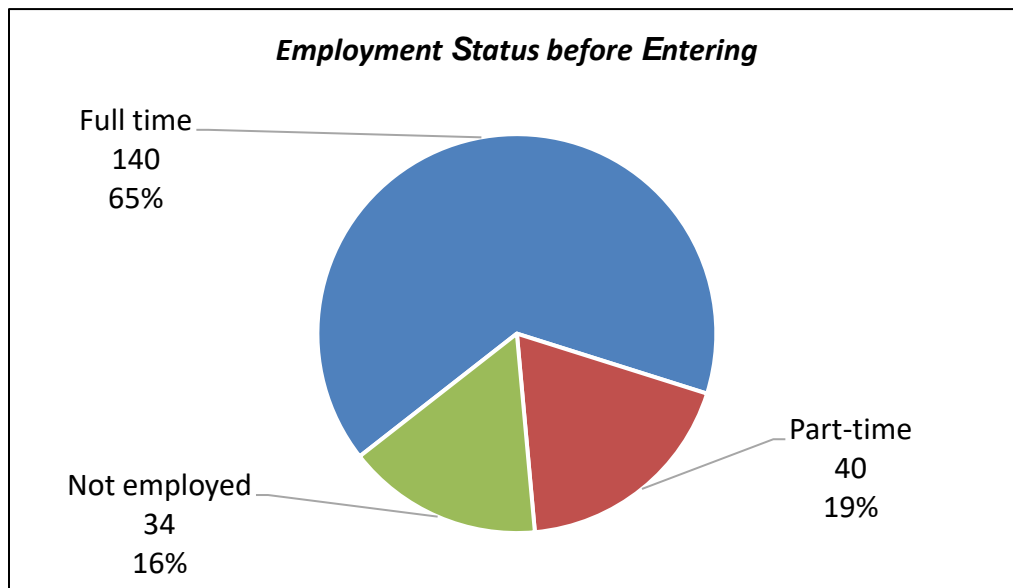


Work Experience



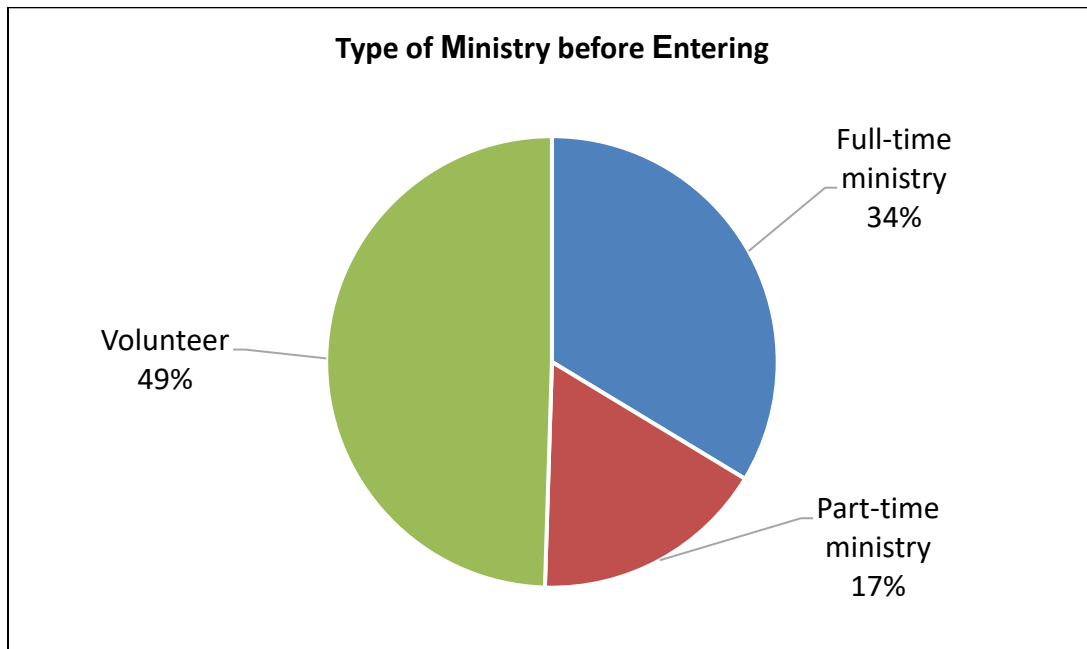
Less than nine in ten (85%) responding religious report some type of work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Nearly two thirds (65%) were employed full-time and one in five (19%) were employed part-time before entering their religious institute.

Respondents were asked if they were employed before entering religious life. Nearly one in six respondents were not employed (16%). Two-thirds were employed full-time (65%) and about one in five was employed part time (19%).

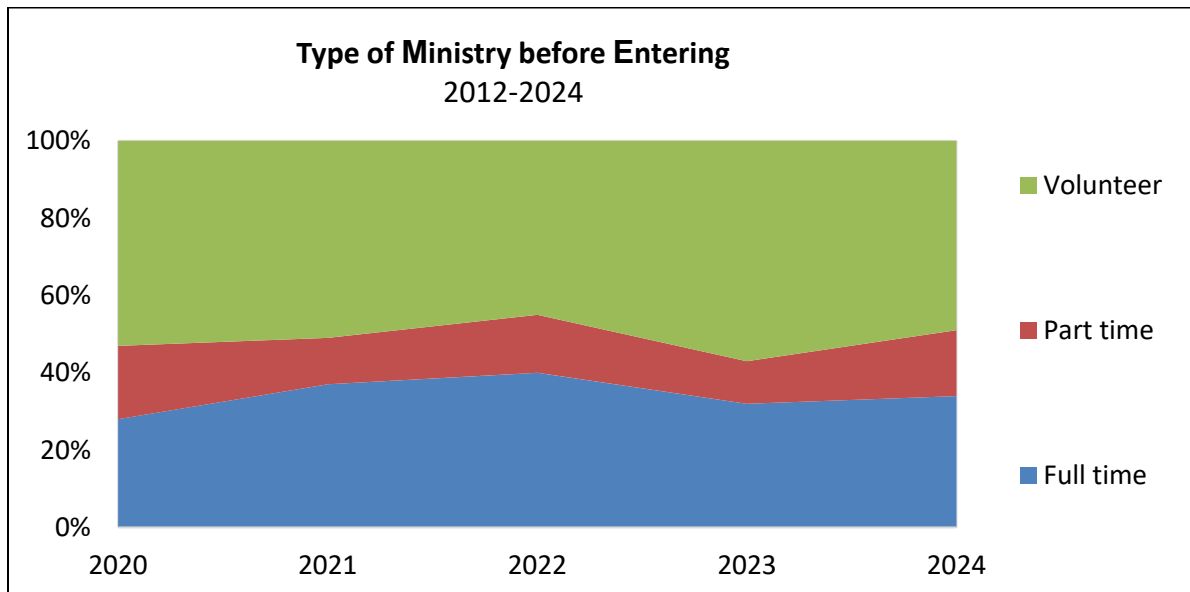


Ministry Experience

Before entering religious life, three in five were engaged in ministry (61%). Among them, more than one third were engaged in full-time ministry (34%), one out of six (17%) in part-time ministry, and nearly half (49%) in voluntary ministry.



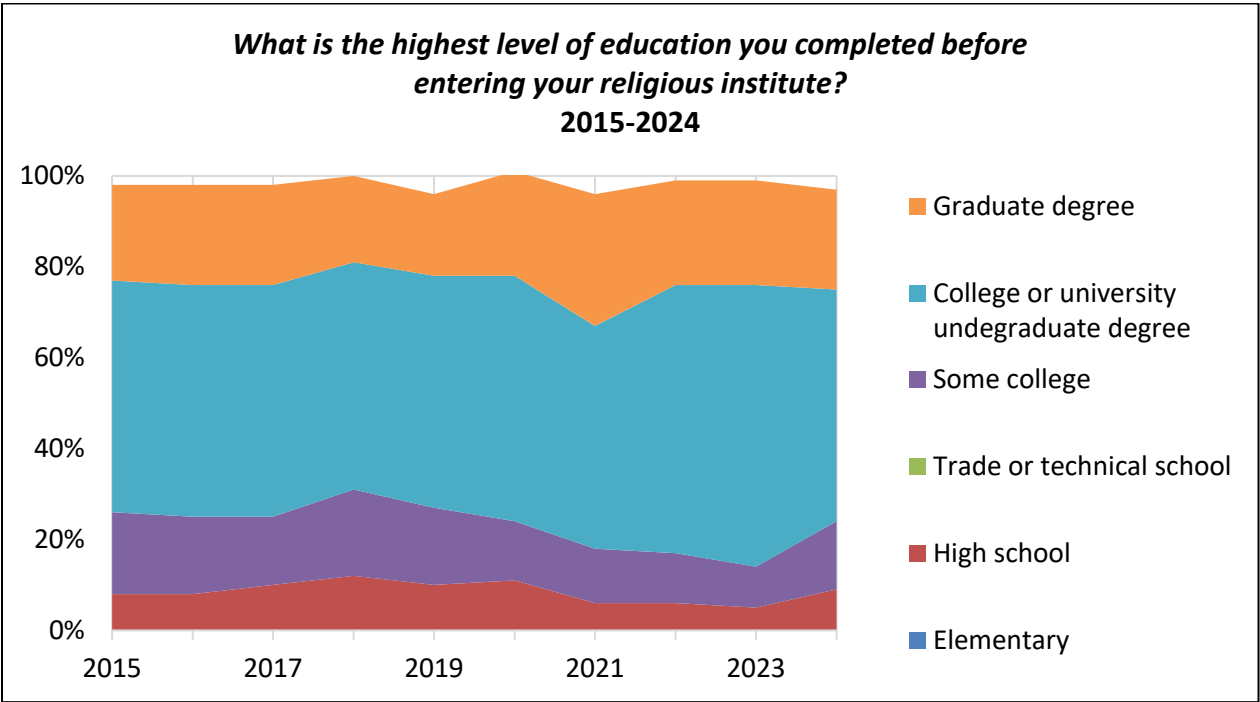
Between 2012 and 2024, their share averaged 49% and ranged between 43% and 51%.



Education Level Before Entering a Religious Institute

<i>What was your highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?</i>			
Percentage responding			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
High school or less	9	10	8
Some college	15	16	14
Bachelor's degree	51	53	49
Master's degree	19	16	23
Doctoral degree	3	3	3
Other	2	2	3

The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2024 were highly educated before entering. Half of them (51%) report having earned a bachelor's degree. Nearly one out of five received a master's degree (19%) and 3% with a doctoral degree.



Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

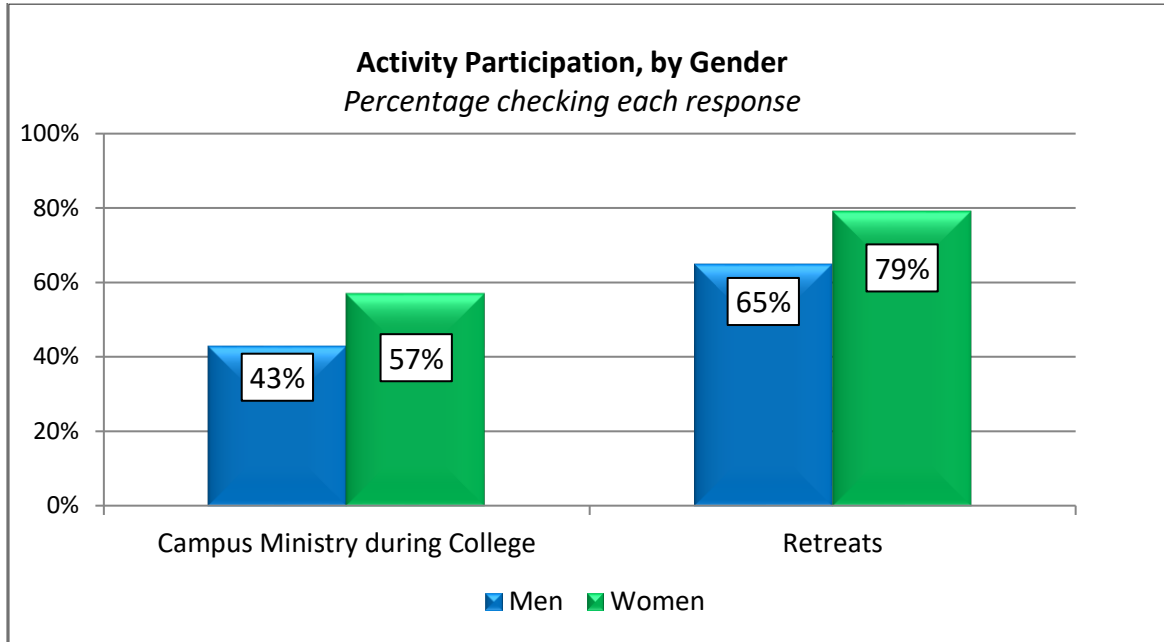
Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Almost all respondents (96%) participated in at least one of the programs or activities listed in the table below before entering.

<i>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of the these before you entered?</i>			
Percentage checking each response*			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Retreats	71	65	79
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	61	57	68
Campus ministry during college	49	43	57
Parish young adult group	47	45	50
Right to Life March in Washington	33	32	34
Campus ministry during high school years	25	22	29
World Youth Day	12	8	17
National Catholic Youth Conference	10	7	13
Religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)	6	7	4
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

- Seven in ten respondents participated in retreats (71%).
- Nearly six in ten participated in other volunteer work in parish /other setting (61%) and half were engaged in campus ministry during college (49%).
- Nearly half of respondents participated in parish young adult group (47%) and one third joined the Right to Life March in Washington (33%).
- One quarter participated in campus ministry during high school years (25%).
- More than one in ten participated in World Youth Day (12%), National Catholic Youth Conference (10%), and 6% participated to religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps).

Differences by Gender

Responding women religious are more likely than men to have participated in the Campus ministry during college, Retreats.²



² As was noted in the Introduction, only differences of 10 percentage points or more will be treated as meaningful.

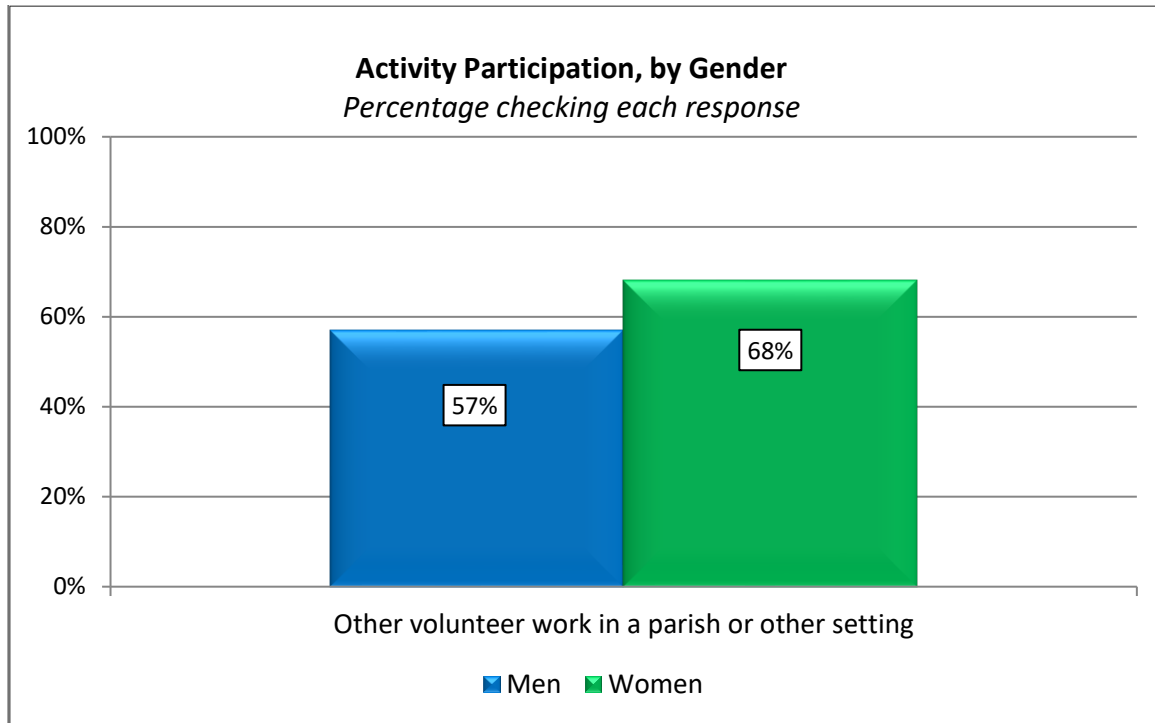
It is instructive to examine how many participated in parish programs as adults before they entered religious life. Nearly nine in ten (88%) served in one or more specified parish ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer.

<i>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of these before you entered?</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister)	61	63	59
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	61	57	68
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA team	43	40	47
Music ministry, cantor, choir	43	42	44
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

- Six in ten entrants report that they served in liturgical ministry roles, such as being a lector or extraordinary minister of Communion (61%) or in some other volunteer work in a parish/other setting (61%) before they entered their religious institute.
- Four in ten respondents report having participated in faith formation, catechetical ministry or RCIA (43%) and in music ministry, cantor, or choir (43%).

Differences by Gender

Responding women religious are more likely than men to have participated in other voluntary work in the parish or other setting before entering their religious institute.



Part II Vocational Discernment to Religious Life

Attraction to Religious Life

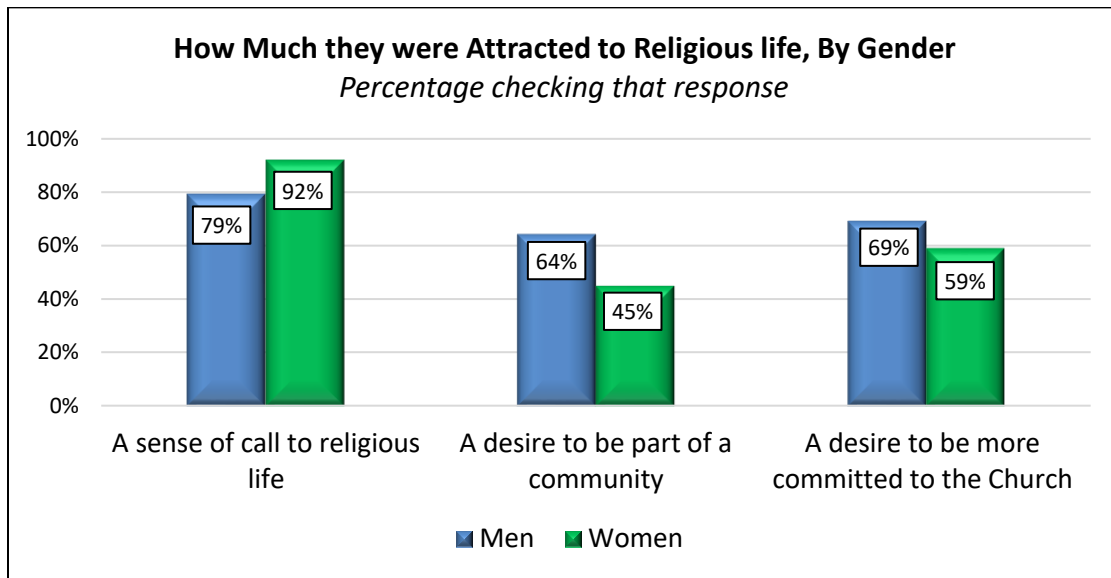
Entrants in 2024 were asked how much various elements attracted them to religious life. Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (98%) and a sense of call to religious life (97%). Four in five were “very much” attracted by these aspects.

<i>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</i>		
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very Much”		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” Attracted	“Very Much” Attracted Only
	%	%
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	98	84
A sense of call to religious life	97	85
A desire to be part of a community	89	56
A desire to be more committed to the Church	88	65
A desire to be of service	92	65

- Nine in ten respondents were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be part of a community (89%). More than half say each of these attracted them “very much.”
- Nearly nine in ten had a desire to be more committed to the Church (88%) and a desire to be of service (92%).

Comparisons by Gender

Men religious are more likely than women religious to be attracted to religious life a desire to be a part of a community and a desire to be more committed to the Church. In contrast, women are more likely than men to be attracted to a sense of call to religious life.



Attraction to a Religious Institute

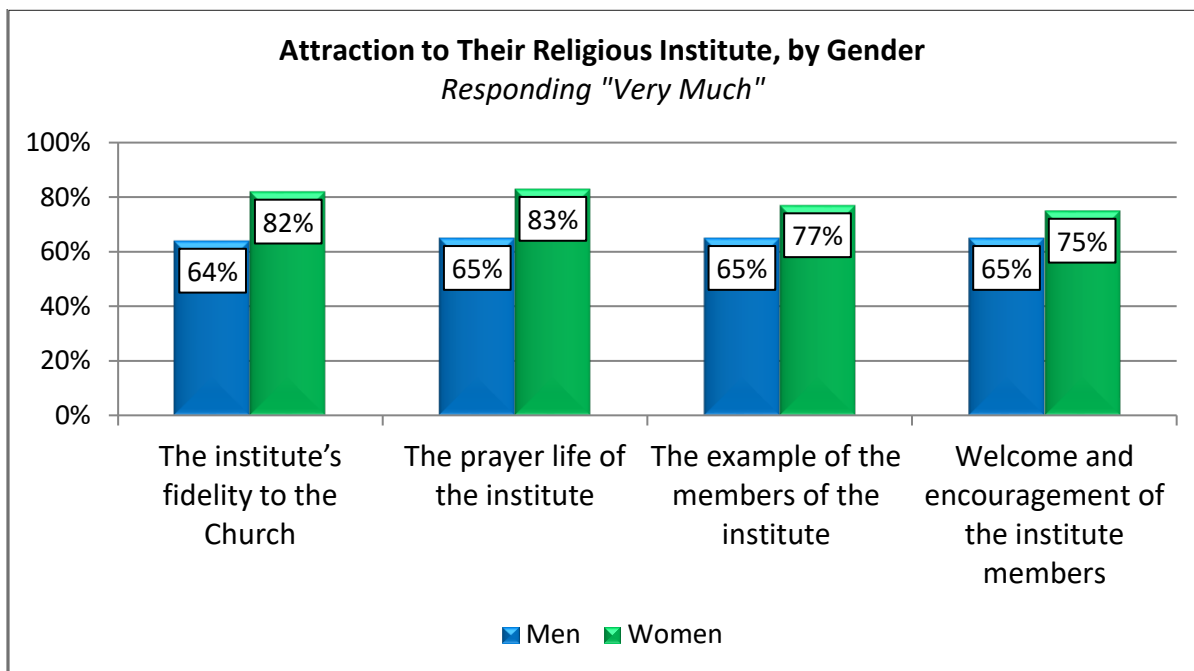
Entrants were asked how much each of ten aspects of religious life attracted them to their particular religious institute. Almost all of them report that they were “somewhat” attracted by the charism, mission and spirituality of the institute (98%), with 84% saying this aspect attracted them “very much.”

<i>How much did these attract you to your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %	“Very Much” Only %
The charism, mission, and spirituality of the institute	98	84
The community life of the institute	91	65
The prayer life of the institute	93	72
The example of members of the institute	94	70
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	90	71
Welcome and encouragement by members	90	69
The institute’s practice regarding a religious habit	81	64
The ministries of the institute	91	53
The life and works of your founder/ress	71	40

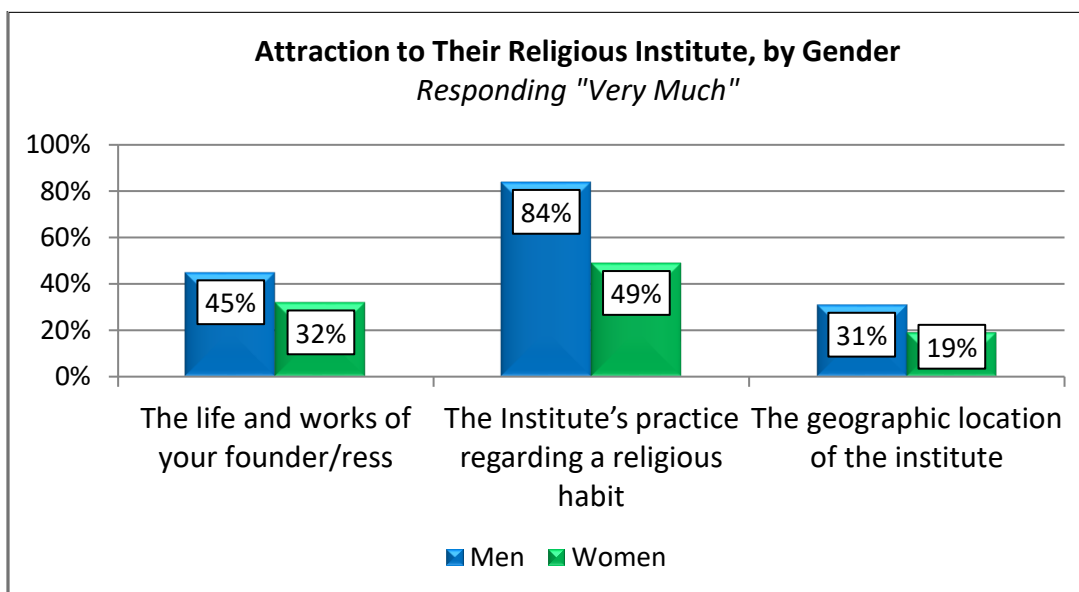
- Nine in ten respondents report they are at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the following, with from six to seven in ten saying these aspects attracted them “very much”:
 - The community life of the institute (91%)
 - The prayer life of the institute (93%)
 - The example of members of the institute (94%)
 - The spirituality of the institute (91%)
 - The institute’s fidelity to the Church (90%)
 - The institute’s practice regarding a religious habit (81%)
- Nearly nine in ten report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the welcome and encouragement by the members (90%) and by the ministries of the institute (91%).
- Seven in ten report they are at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the life and works of the founder/ress (71%).

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to get attracted to their religious institute by the prayer life of the institute, the institute's fidelity to the Church, the welcoming and encouragement of the institute members, the example of the members of the institute.



In contrast, men are more likely than women to be attracted to their religious institute by the life and works of the founder/ress, the institute's practice regarding a religious habit or the geographic location of the institute.



Helpfulness of Discernment Programs and Experiences

Entrants were asked how helpful selected vocation experiences were to them in discerning their call to their institute before they entered. This section only reports those who participated in these activities.

Among those who participated in these vocation experiences, almost all entrants report that they had contact with the vocation director (93%), the vocation or discernment retreat (62%), and “Come and See” experience (78%) were at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning to join the religious institute. About eight in ten say that contact with the vocation director was “very helpful” to them.

If you participated in any of the following with your religious institute before you entered, how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?

Percentage responding

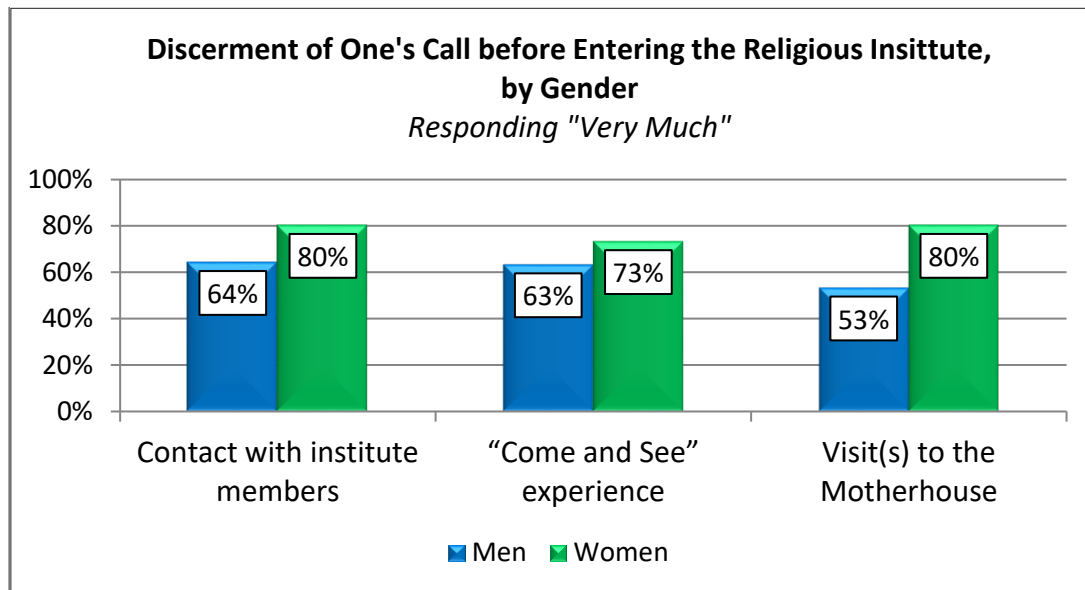
	“Somewhat” or “Very” Helpful	“Very” Helpful Only
	%	%
Contact with the vocation director	93	81
Vocation or discernment retreat	62	51
“Come and See” experience	78	67
Visit(s) to the Motherhouse	77	64
Contact with institute members	89	71
Live-in experience	51	47
Spiritual direction	65	54
Ministry with institute members	40	30
Mission experience	16	12
Meeting with a discernment group	25	12
Social media (e.g., Facebook)	32	14
“Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run”	4	2

- Nine in ten or more report they participated in vocation experiences were at least “somewhat” helpful in discernment to join the religious institute:
 - “Come and See” experience (78%)
 - Visit(s) to the Motherhouse (77%)
 - Contact with institute members (89%)
 - Live -in experience (51%)
 - Spiritual direction (65%)
 - Ministry with the members (40%)

- One in six indicate mission experience (16%) were at least “somewhat” helpful to them.
- About three out of five report meeting with a discernment group (62%) were at least “somewhat” helpful to them.
- Nearly one third indicate that social media (32%) were at least “somewhat” helpful to them. Only 4% report that an “Andrew Dinner” or a “Nun Run” were “somewhat” helpful to them.

Comparisons by Gender

Women entrants are more likely than men entrants to report that the three experiences in the figure below were “very” helpful to them in discerning their call to their religious institute.



Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, respondents were 20 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life. More than half were 20 or younger when they first considered a vocation.

Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life

	Overall	Men	Women
Mean age	20	20	20
Median age	20	20	19
Range of ages	3-55	3-46	4-55

Encouragement to Consider a Vocation to Religious Life

Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. Nine in ten received encouragement from a spiritual director (94%), or Vocation Director/team (92%), members of the institute (89%) and friends outside the institute (89%) when they first considered entering a religious institute. Seven or more said these people encouraged them “very much.”

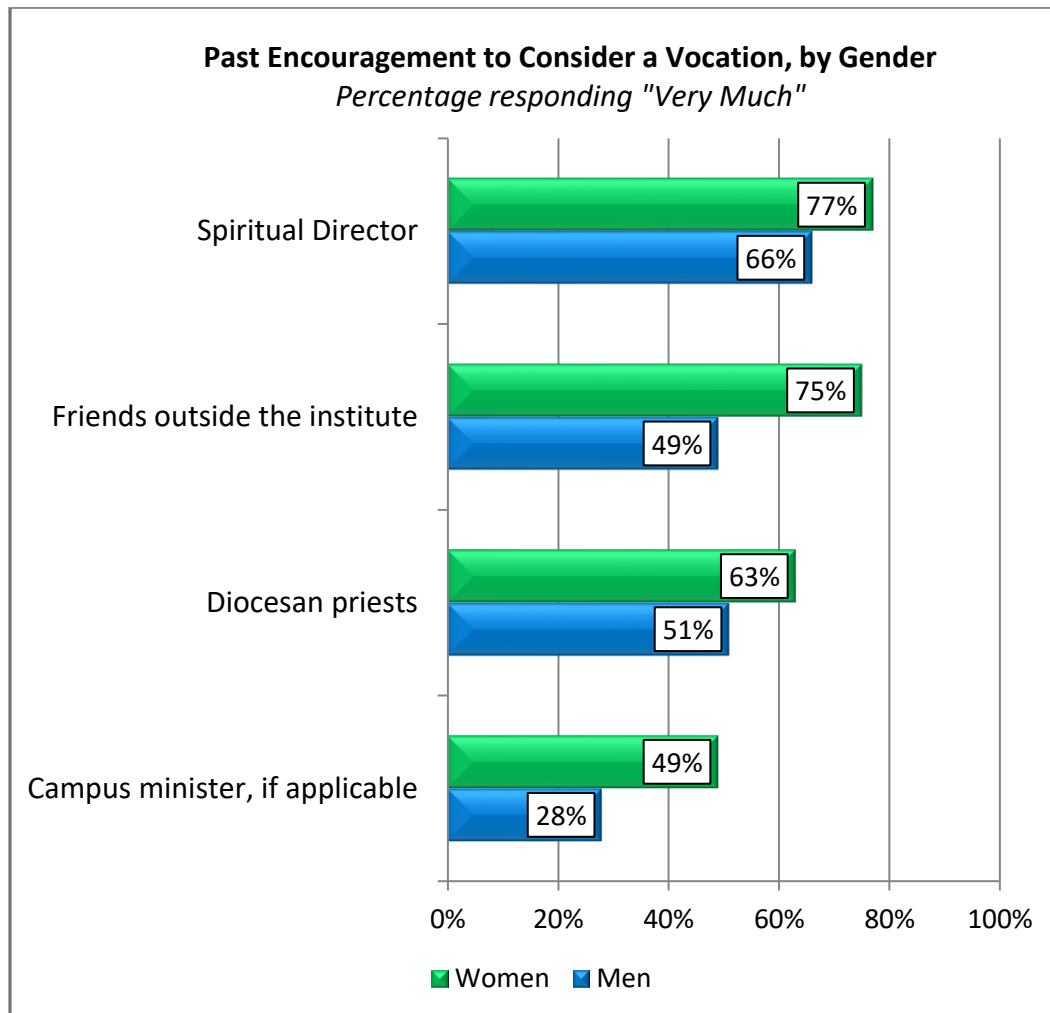
<i>How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” Encouragement	“Very Much” Encouragement Only
	%	%
Spiritual director, if applicable	87	70
Vocation director/team	94	73
Members of your institute	89	68
Friends outside the institute	85	55
Other men and women religious	77	52
People in your parish	76	43
Diocesan priests	80	56
People in your school or workplace	72	43
Campus minister, if applicable	52	35
Your siblings, if applicable	59	30
Your parents, if applicable	67	42
Other family members	52	18

- Nearly eight in ten received at least “somewhat” encouragement from other men and women religious (77%). Half received encouragement from this group “very much.”
- More than three-quarters received encouragement from their parish (76%) and eight in ten from their diocesan priests (80%). Four or five in ten received encouragement from this group “very much.”
- Seven in ten received encouragement from people of their school or workplace (72%) and from their parents (67%).
- Six in ten received encouragement from their siblings (59%).

- Just over half received encouragement from other family members (52%) and from campus minister (52%).

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to receive “very much” encouragement to consider a vocation from the people mentioned in the chart below.



Influences on Decisions to Enter Religious Institutes

Entrants were asked how much influence various aspects of their religious institute had on their decision to enter their institute. Almost all respondents report that the charism of the institute has at least “somewhat” influence on their decision to enter their religious institute (98%), with eight in ten reporting this aspect “very much” influenced them.

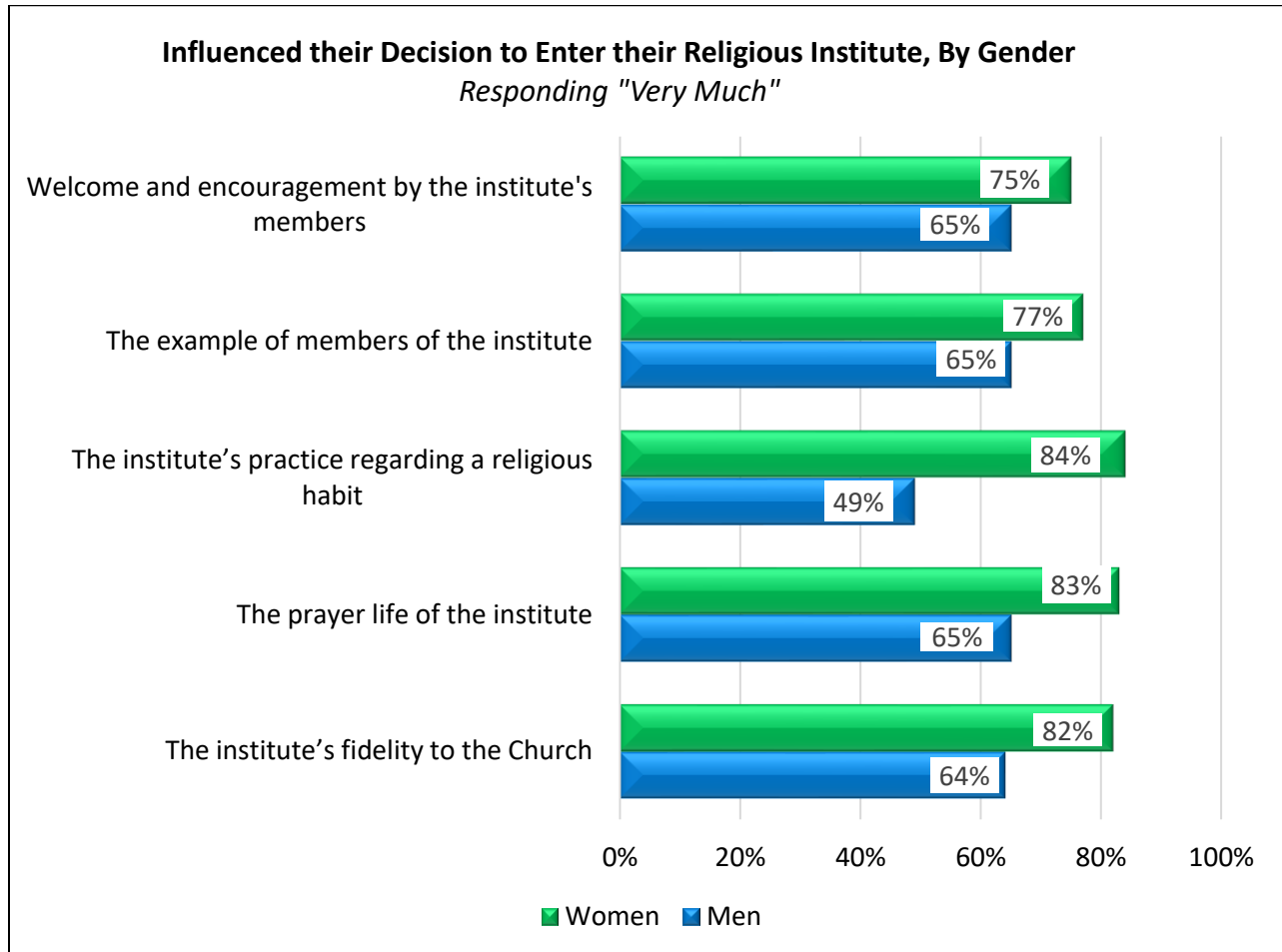
<i>How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?</i>		
	Percentage responding	
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” Influenced	“Very Much” Influenced Only
	%	%
The charism of the institute	98	84
Community life in the institute	91	65
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	93	72
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	91	58
The types of ministry of its members	91	58
Its practice regarding a religious habit	81	64
The focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute	69	37
The size of the institute	59	25
The ages of members	56	20
Its geographic location(s)	55	26
Its internationality, if applicable	47	23
The cultural diversity of the members	33	13
The racial/ethnic background of members	29	9

- Nine in ten report community life in the institute (91%), prayer life or prayer styles in the institute (93%), the institute’s fidelity to the Church (91%), the types of ministry of its members (91%) in the institute at least “somewhat” influenced by their decision to enter their religious institute.
- Eight in ten report having been at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by its practice regarding a religious habit (81%).
- Nearly seven in ten of responding entrants report having been at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute (69%).

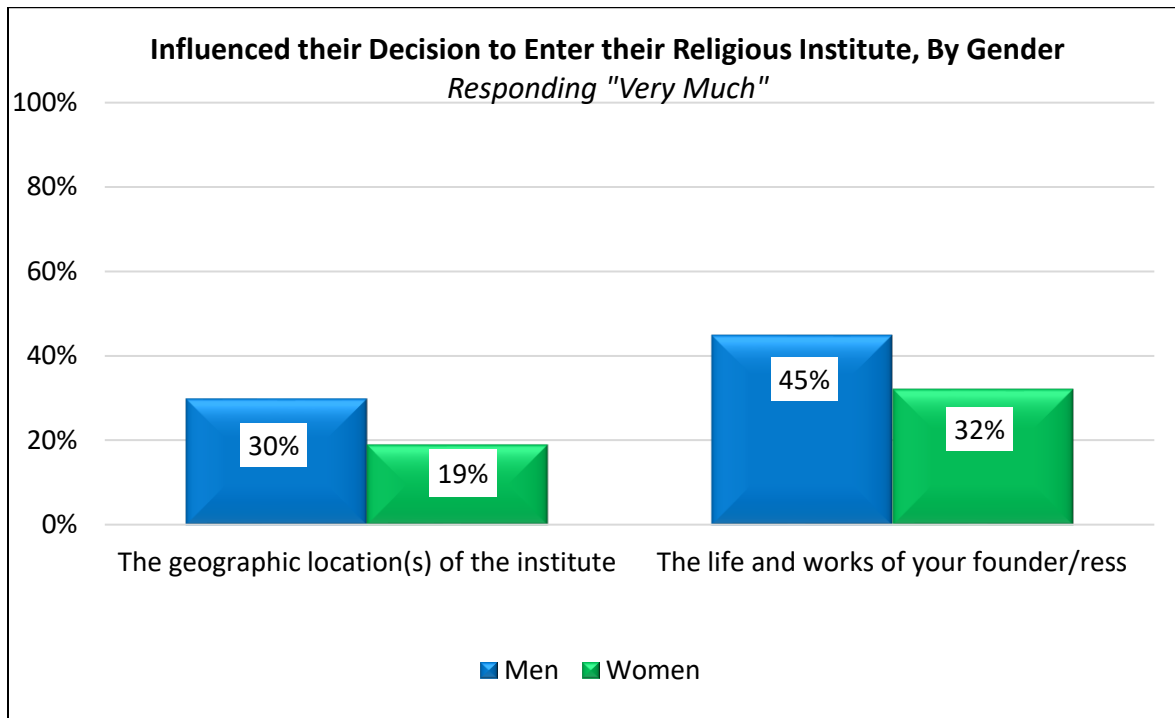
- Nearly six in ten report having been at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the size of the institute (59%), the ages of members (56%), its geographic location(s) (55%).
- Nearly half indicate that the internationality of the institute at least “somewhat” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute (47%).
- One-third say they were at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the cultural diversity of the members (33%).
- Three in ten indicates the racial/ethnic backgrounds of members (29%) at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute.

Comparisons by Gender

Women are most likely to be “very much” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the aspects mentioned in the chart below.



In contrast, men are most likely to be “very much” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the geographic locations of the institute and the life and works of their founder/ress.



Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute.

How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?

Percentage checking each response*

	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Through the recommendation of a family member, friend or advisor	36	32	41
Through the reputation or history of the institute	25	32	14
In an institution where members served e.g. school	24	34	10
Through a personal invitation by a member	24	24	24
Through your own search	23	27	19
Through web or social media promotional materials	20	23	17
Through working with a member of the institute	13	17	7
Through an event sponsored by the institute	9	11	8
Through a media story about the institute or member	6	7	4
Through a vocation fair, vocation match or placement service	6	7	4
Through print promotional materials	4	3	4
Other	20	12	31

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Three in ten report first being acquainted with their religious institute through the recommendation of a family member, friend or advisor (36%).
- A quarter report first being acquainted with their religious institute through the reputation or history of the institute (25%), in an institution where members served e.g. school (24%), through a personal invitation by a member (24%), or through their own search (23%).
- One in ten or more report first being acquainted with their religious institute through the following:
 - Through working with a member of the institute (13%)
 - Through an event sponsored by the institute (9%)

- Around one in twenty became acquainted with their religious institution through a vocation fair, vocation match or placement service (6%), through a media story about the institute or member (6%), or through print promotional materials (4%).
- One in five (20%) first became acquainted with their religious institute through some “other” means (often during their college years). The “other” responses are listed below, lightly edited:

"Right to be Merry"

Adoration chapel run by IVE

Books published by the Province

Came to visit our Newman Center

CMSWR

Diocesan Come and See

Discernment retreat they attended by invitation

FOCUS Fellowship of Catholic university students.

Gift shop

Going to their Masses

Heard about religious institute in elementary school religion class

I made a private retreat at the monastery. After living and praying with them for a week, I wanted to know more.

I met the sister at Target store.

I met them while working at a summer camp by their vacation home

Information I received in another religious institute I was part of before.

met them while I was working at a summer camp near their vacation home

Mission trip in college.

Non-promotional podcasts featuring members

Parish Priest is part of the Congregation

Pilgrimage in High School

Presence on University Campus

Religious sisters at my home parish

Rise Up in Canada

Searching through Vision Vocation Network

Sister's vocation visit to my college where I was studying

sisters of my community at focus staff training

Some members attended my university

students of Jesuit school came to my school to recruit.

Talk given at parish

Talking to a brother that I met after Mass

There is a mission at my parish

They visited my university / through FOCUS

Through a book on different religious groups and discerning a religious vocation

Through a retreat centered on the spirituality of the institute.

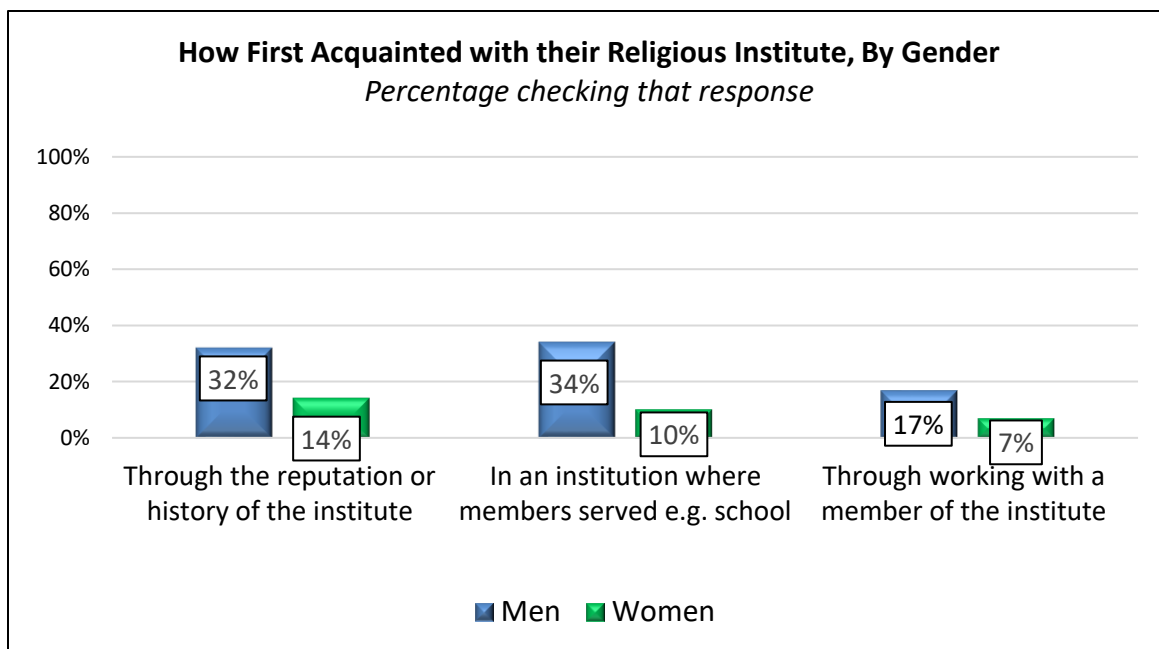
Through a retreat that the Sisters led

Through an evangelization talk given by a member

Through invitation through a faithful lady and later a friar
through spiritual materials example podcasts and books on deepening my Catholic
faith and prayer life
Vocation Network
Vocation Retreat (Fiat)
Volunteering with the sisters
Went on mission trip to do work with the Sisters put together by someone
acquainted with the order.
Youth 2000 Ireland

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to have become acquainted with their religious institute through the reputation or history of the institute, in an institution where members served e.g. school or working with a member of the institute, as shown in the chart below.



What Most Attracted Entrants to Their Religious Institute

New entrants were also invited to respond in their own words to an open-ended question: *“What most attracted you to your religious institute?”*

Respondents shared many aspects of this attraction, including mission and ministries, the founder/ess, spirituality and charism of the institute, prayer life and communal prayer, community life, witness or joy of the members, fidelity to the Church, its practice regarding religious habit, religious formation/lifestyle of the institute members and sense of social justice. A few of their comments related to each of these aspects are listed below. A full transcript of all open-ended responses is included in an appendix at the end of this report.

Founder/Foundress, Spirituality, and Charism of the Institute

The founder/foundress, the spirituality, and the charism of the institute were other common factors that attracted respondents to their religious institute. They report how much the spirituality of their institute’s founder or foundress inspired them and led to their decision to enter their religious institute. At least 84 respondents mentioned this aspect. Some of their responses include:

- *What most attracted me was the realization that the community's charism and life was something I was already seeking to live in my life as a lay person, particularly their devotion to the pierced Heart of Christ and this Merciful Love. In realizing how much I loved and even lived their spirituality before I knew them, I was attracted to the Community because I could clearly see God's call there.*
- *The charism and the diversity of ministries – [Institute Name]. A community life vision to which there was intentionality in community support - at the same time, a sense of independence in ministry. Richness of spirituality.*
- *The Charism as a whole and the Saints of the Order. A very clear path to holiness within the ordinary. The teaching on the mystical life and God's action in our souls is the only way to understand reality and live authentically.*
- *Its spirituality, flexibility, and focus on education. The tools that the [Institute Name] could provide to help me live out my 'upper case V' vocation.*
- *The life and work of our founder and early members combined with my affinity for our spirituality and apostolates that remain in fidelity to the institute's foundational intent*
- *Their Charism and how the community lived it out -it was vibrant, joyful, and each member I met was striving to live out the charism in totality -to consecrate every moment to Jesus throughout their day. The totality and authenticity of the sisters is what attracted me to their convent.*

Witness and Joy of the Institute’s Members

In addition, at least 58 respondents were attracted to their religious institute by the witness and joy of the members and their encounter with them. Some of their responses include:

- *I could not deny how attracted I was to the freedom, peace, and joy I witnessed in the members of the institute. I was drawn to their beautiful habit, authentic femininity, the way they never put pressure on me and never coerced me in any way in the discernment process, and how they truly desire God's will for me, not just numbers for their community. Also, their fidelity to the Church, the Blessed Sacrament, and the Charism of the Sacredness of Life.*
- *I was most attracted by the way they fully gave themselves over to Christ, but gained a deeper sense of self in that relationship, how human fulfillment is sacrifice. Also, by how much they loved each other, and the joy they brought to the life.*
- *The joy of the brothers that I witnessed during my 5 day visit at their novitiate priory.*
- *The sisters' abundance of joy and peace, as well as their ability to live beautifully with those they encounter. their example of gratefulness and their bridal quality to Christ. Also, the community's focus on study and teaching, as well as the aspect of sacred music being taken seriously was attractive to me. Through the witness and overall joy of the Friars.*
- *Vibrant community life (playing spoons, hiking, etc.) Presence in my home diocese. The sisters being "normal" and easy to talk to while living an integrated life that is radically given to Jesus. 2 Holy Hours in daily horarium.*

Community Life

Another dominant element of attraction that the responding new entrants report is the community life of the institute. At least 26 respondents report that community life and community activities very much attracted them to their religious institute. In addition, some of their responses included:

- *The idea of doing things in common. I've wanted to be a high school teacher since I was in high school. My Institute works in high schools. Some of my fondest memories are going to one of our schools which was local to where I lived and visiting for evening Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, prayer, then dinner. After dinner a member would inevitably say "oh, can you come over to school and help me x, y, and z". While there we'd run into Fr. Principal and Br. Athletic Director in the course of what we were doing. It wasn't like we were praying alone, eating alone, or working alone: we were in it together.*
- *I am with the [Institute Name], and I was most attracted by the ancient history of the Order (one of the first in the Church), its time-honored practice of prayer, work, and study, and that it is the only monastic order present in my archdiocese. I was in priestly formation for my archdiocese immediately after graduating high school, and the [Institute Name] run the archdiocese's collegiate seminary that I attended, so I was immersed in [Institute Name] spirituality and fell in love with the [place] - the community, the physical grounds, the rhythm of the Liturgy of the Hours and lectio, basically every aspect - during my time in seminary. It just felt like home the very first day I stepped foot on the grounds during the seminary's Come & See, and I haven't considered anywhere else to be my home in the 7 years since.*

- *The community and prayer schedule.*
- *Life in common, devotion to the Eucharist, chanting of the Hours, wearing of the Habit, and a focus on the personal and spiritual formation.*

Prayer Life and Spiritual Life

At least 30 respondents also recognize prayer as other attractive aspects that drew them to their religious institute. They were attracted by the communal prayers and various types of prayers, including daily Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, daily rosary, and prayer of the Church. Some of their responses about prayer included:

- *Life of prayer and ministry in equal amounts, ministry very much hands-on working with those in need*
- *The rich and beautiful tradition of the order. The order's liturgical life and reverent celebration of the liturgy.*
- *The example of holiness and love I saw in the priests, formators, and seminarians. The quality of preaching and teaching. The deep prayer life and devotion to the Eucharist and Our Lady.*
- *The depth of prayer life, with a central focus on union with Christ that overflows into a life of apostolic service.*

Sense of Mission and Ministries of the Institutes

One of the common aspects that most attracted respondents to their religious institute is the sense of mission and ministries of the institute. At least 32 respondents indicated this aspect. Some other responses include:

- *What mostly attracted to me to my religious institute was the ministry. The ministry that the sisters do, which is primarily teaching at schools and that is what I felt called, getting to know the sisters and see how they gave themselves so freely in their ministries.*
- *The Critical Concerns of the [Institute Name], and the way they live both social justice and hospitality so well. I had never seriously considered religious life because I felt called to serve the world outside of typical "ministries," especially through my work as an engineer - but the diversity of ministries and work within the Institute spoke so closely to the way I want to love the world. In addition, I saw so many women thriving at all stages of life and was very inspired by the Sisters.*
- *The [Institute Name] mission to serve rural areas of USA, underserved communities deeply resonated with me. Their blend of faith, service, and building inclusive communities is truly inspiring.*
- *It's dedication to the Church, and wide-ranging ministries to the Church and the world at large.*
- *Doing ministry for the poor.*
- *The [Institute Name] were advertised as hospital/medical related order, sponsoring hospitals/medical centers and retirement communities.*

- *The apostolic work in combination with a rich spirituality and institutional identity.*

Habit

- *I was most attracted by my religious institute's fidelity to our founders' ideals, by their beautiful and traditional religious habits, and by the institute's life of prayer.*
- *Our charism and that our religious institute wear a traditional habit.*
- *The Mission of Preaching for the Salvation of Souls, the ministries, wearing the habit, return to orthodoxy.*
- *100% fidelity to the Church; full traditional habit; JOY; daily Eucharistic holy hour; responding to the times with a steadfast love and mercy; support to live a holy life with a community; charismatic living.*
- *The joy and sense of fulfillment of the sisters; the way they spoke about their vocation and about the call to love, the habit, the authenticity and humanity of the members, the charism.*

Fidelity to the Church

Fidelity to the Church is another important aspect that at least 19 respondents report attracted them to their religious institute. Some of their responses include:

- *History, reverence, and fidelity to the Church, mission, charism, etc.*
- *Their emphasis on fidelity to the church and an emphasis on study.*
- *My religious institute (1) is faithful and in union with our Holy Father, Pope Francis, (2) wears the religious habit, (3) seeks to be faithful to the Rule/constitutions, (4) has a devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and (5) has a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. These were the most attractive aspects of my religious institute.*
- *Its fidelity to the Church (orthodoxy).*
- *Reverent and traditional liturgy. The entirety of the Divine Office is prayed daily. Orthodox theology and fidelity to the Magisterium. Young and lively community of men.*
- *The fidelity to magisterium, focus on mission, love for the Eucharist, traditional habit, joy of the members and the love for the way of the cross in order to follow Christ.*

Formation, Living their vows, Adaptation to religious life and others

Several respondents reported that what attracted them to religious institute are formation, living their vows and adaption to religious life. At least 13 respondents indicated the following responses:

- *The evangelical counsels combined with the charism of the institute. The charism collects together into one integrated life many of the pieces of my own life prior to joining the order (preaching, teaching, community life).*
- *The simple, radical living out of the Gospels. Particularly the expression of poverty and service to the poor. As well as the family atmosphere!*

- *Authentic living out of religious life.*
- *The authentic spousal charism lived out in the community, holiness of members, their relatability (geniality), their reverence, and their JOY!*

Others

29 Other respondents report other aspects that are not listed in the categories above.

- *Salvation of souls Relationship between the consecrated and family members*
- *Their authenticity and love for God. The PEACE in this place RADIATES as soon as you step onto the campus/religious institute's/convent's grounds. The PEACEFULNESS sold me :)*
- *Following God's will to be fully fulfilled and help others know him*
- *Ora et labora - That it was a contemplative community that engaged in work to cover its costs.*
- *The sense of being called by the Lord, through mass.*

Part III Experience of Religious Life and Religious Institute

Prayer Practices

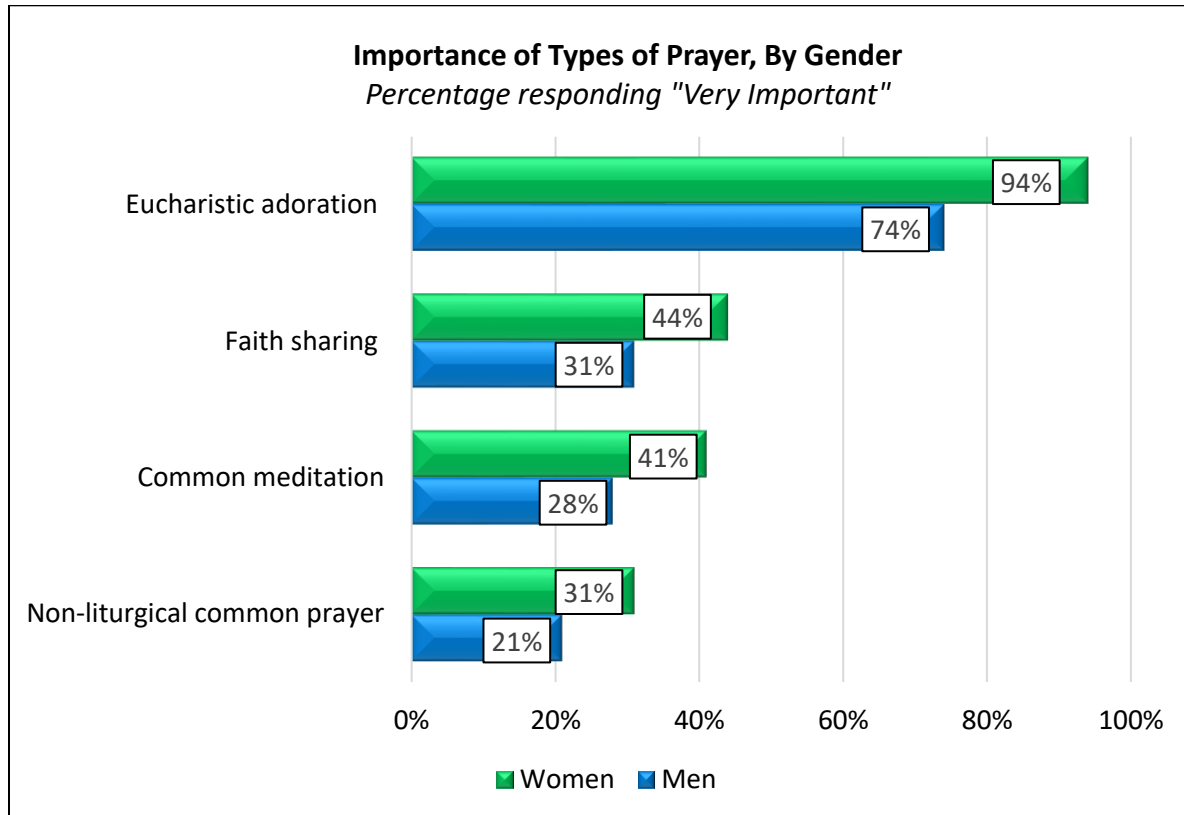
Respondents were asked to evaluate how important each of eight different types of prayer are to them. All respondents say private personal prayer (100%) and daily Eucharist (99%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Nine in ten report that these types of prayers are “very” important to them.

<i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very” Important	“Very” Important Only
	%	%
Private personal prayer	100	94
Daily Eucharist	99	94
Eucharistic Adoration	94	83
Liturgy of the Hours	92	72
Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary	86	60
Faith sharing	73	36
Non-liturgical common prayer	62	25
Common meditation	64	33

- Nine in ten respondents report that Eucharistic Adoration (94%), the Liturgy of the Hours (92%) and other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary (86%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Six in ten or more report that these kinds of prayers are “very” important to them.
- Seven in ten report that faith sharing (73%) is at least “somewhat” important to them.
- Six in ten say non-liturgical common prayer (62%) and common meditation (64%) are at least “somewhat” important to them.

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say that the types of prayer mentioned in the chart below are “very” important to them.



Importance of Aspects of Community Life

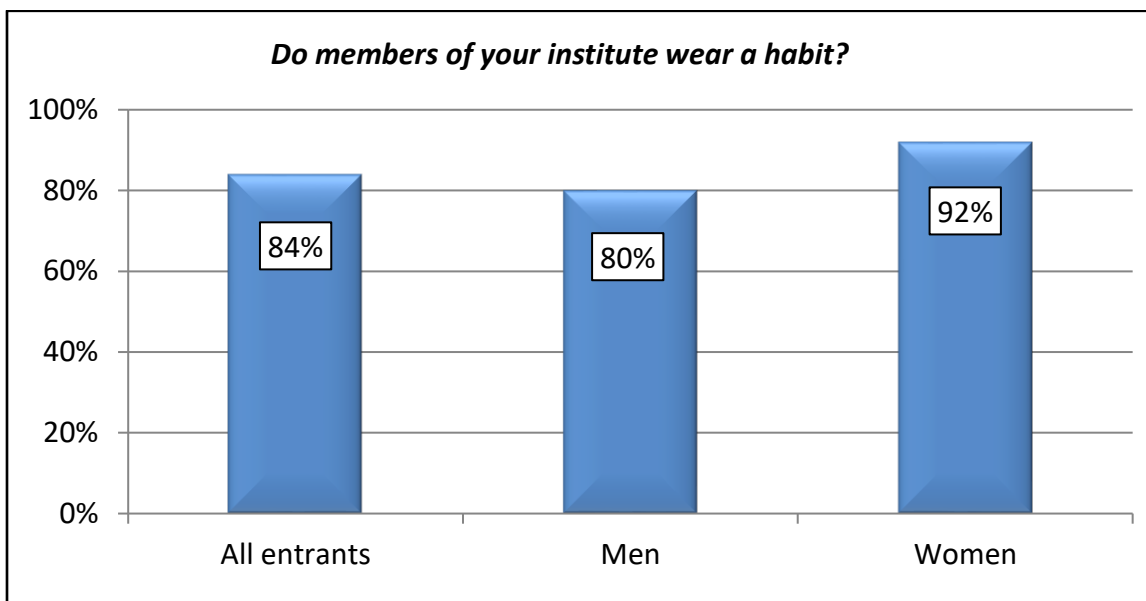
Entrants to religious life were asked to indicate the importance to them of various aspects of community life. Almost all report that praying with other members (98%), living with other members (97%), and sharing meals together (97%) are at least “somewhat” important to them, with eight or more in ten saying these aspects are very important to them.

<i>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very” %	“Very” Only %
Praying with other members	98	85
Living with other members	97	86
Sharing meals together	97	81
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	95	76
Working with other members	95	72

More than nine in ten indicate that socializing/sharing leisure time together (95%) and working with other members (95%) are at least “somewhat” important to them.

Wearing Religious Habit

New entrants were asked if the members of their institute wear a habit. More than eight in ten (84%) indicate that members of their institute wear a habit. Women are more likely than men to say that members of their institute wear a habit.



What Entrants Find Most Challenging about Religious Life

A second open-ended question invited new entrants to respond in their own words to “What do you find most challenging about religious life?” Respondents shared a variety of challenges that face them in religious life, including community life, maturing into religious life, adaptation to religious life, decreasing access to family and friends, and other challenges. A few of their comments relative to each of these aspects are listed below. A full transcript of all open-ended responses is included in an appendix at the end of this report.

Community Life

At least 46 respondents most commonly report that they find community life the most challenging aspect of their religious life experience. They have learned that living in community may involve loss of privacy, as well as struggles in living with the members who have different cultural backgrounds, opinions, ages, temperaments, personalities, and preferences. Some of their responses include:

- *The different often clashing personalities that people may have, this may cause problems such as disagreements and sometimes more difficult with people that have a higher temperament.*
- *I have found community life most challenging. Living among sisters striving for holiness yet with imperfections has made me realize my own shortcomings and lack of virtue. It has been challenging to fully accept myself and accept help from my sisters.*
- *Community life is rather challenging. One because I grew up fairly independent and was able to avoid many problems via just living on my own, can't do that anymore. Another, particularly when interacting with older members of my order is they tend to look down on me because my beliefs tend towards what they call a "retro-Catholic", and rather than accepting me as I am desire instead that that part of my "fixed". It can tend to be rather frustrating.*
- *I find difficult personalities in community life challenging. Distance and separation from family is also quite difficult.*
- *Some of the brothers are cold and unwelcoming and make it clear that they do not like you. The community life is dead.*

Living their Vows

Approximately 25 respondents most commonly report that they find religious vows the most challenging aspect of their religious life experience. They have learned that living the three vows requires relinquishing the previous life they were used to lead. Some of their responses include:

- *Being faithful to the vows of Poverty, Chasity, and Obedience.*

- *Currently, the choice of giving up marriage and an intimate relationship with a life partner has been a big struggle for me. It has been hard for me to reconcile the thought of choosing to give up something as beautiful and biblical as marriage.*
- *Obedience and the spoken/unspoken restraints/responsibilities place onto someone in the religious life.*

Maturing in Religious Life

At least 27 respondents also report the challenge of recognizing and addressing limitations in themselves and others, while desiring to grow in religious life. They regularly mentioned their difficulty in learning how to be open with oneself, superiors, managing all expectations and time management. Some of their responses include:

- *What is most challenging is the daily fight to let go of my self-will, most especially by coming to grips with my sinful past and its continued effects & consequences (especially the psychological toll of certain sins). Configuration to Christ is a noble task, and I know no one said it was going to be easy when I entered. I am glad my brothers in community are very supportive of me and point to our Savior's grace as a major aspect to win the fight, because I am unsure that I could make progress in the face of these challenges on my own.*
- *The endless quest to grow in personal holiness and love for the Lord!*
- *The totality of personal surrender whenever a new attachment is discovered, and the acceptance of my own poverty and patience that is required to grow in virtue.*
- *Perseverance in spiritual trials.*
- *Letting go of control. Letting God take complete control. It's a very humbling experience lol*
- *I find that coming to know myself as God knows me and embracing my weaknesses before my fellow Sisters has been one of the most challenging aspects of religious life. The narrow road that is hand crafted for the each of us is not necessarily an easy one even as we are being fulfilled in following His call.*

Adaptation to Religious Life

About 38 respondents found challenges in adapting to the new life style in their religious communities. This adjustment includes daily schedule, new life pace, prayer life, community life and huge adjustment to religious life among other things. Some of their responses include:

- *I find adapting to a completely new environment as well as living with so many people I don't know to be very challenging because everything is so new all at once.*
- *The total sacrifice required to live this vocation; the renunciation of nearly everything I loved-- my family, my friends, the use of my talents according to my desires. This isn't the most "challenging thing" per se, but I also miss beer... and everything that comes*

with it: cracking a cold one and having some crunchy, salty peanuts with my family on my parents back patio. I really miss that too.

- *Adapting to community life, convent schedule, and doing a lot of physical manual*
- *Finding the balance between prayer and community life is a challenge*
- *Adjusting to our schedule, specifically the early mornings and monotony, have been the most challenging part.*
- *Transition and navigating relationships with friends who don't understand.*
- *Give up even the smallest things in an effort to consecrate one's whole self: hobbies, sports teams, liturgical preferences*
- *Having little time that I can call my own. Waking up early.*

Detachment from with Family, Friends and culture

Another challenge that respondents shared was their decreased communication with their family members, friends and culture. The schedule and lifestyle in religious life lead religious to reduce their connections with families and friends. They live far away from their family and friends and that sometimes leads them to homesickness. Some of them also felt that their family and friends did not understand religious life and their decision to enter the religious life. They also missed some other relationships and felt that religious life somehow reduces their opportunity for communication. At least 28 respondents indicate some of their responses below:

- *Maintaining cultural roots alive and nurtured while living away from home in a different country with people from different places is a challenge.*
- *Being away from family, and knowing how much they miss me.*
- *I have a very close relationship with my family. I frequently have bouts in which I long to be closer to them now and regret not having spent more intimate time with them.*
- *Separation from family and friends as well as from limited social interactions within my institute.*
- *Leaving family and friends*
- *Given up all of the possessions and have given up speaking with my high school friends. And most of all I have given up my family*
- *Distance and separation from family is also quite difficult.*
- *Up to this point, it's been challenging to say goodbye to the things I loved in the world (including friends and family). And living monastically, the silence is more difficult than I thought.*

Generational differences, diversity of background and cultures

About 13 respondents found challenges related to generational differences, diversity of background and cultures. Some of their responses include:

- *When interacting with older members of my order is they tend to look down on me because my beliefs tend towards what they call a "retro-Catholic", and rather than accepting me as I am desire instead that that part of my "fixed".*
- *The most challenging thing about religious life is the age difference, I am 22 the median age of the community is 76 so most members do not know how to relate to me and that has been the biggest is the age and some of the people.*
- *The most challenging about religious life is being the youngest.*
- *This of course has pros and cons and I am not saying that the Order has to bend over backwards to our preferences, but the overt one sided nature of this issue from members over the age of 50 is impossible to miss. Not to mention younger members further in formation than ourselves experiencing the same problem. A spirit of waiting seems to linger among novices, scholastics, and priests under the age of 50.*
- *Being much older than all of my novice brothers*
- *Living in community. Since I entered at 40 for the first time, I came from a different generation and different paradigm of reality from the other sisters who had entered at a young age and was genuinely formed by religious life. I was an attorney who had run my own firm so it was very hard to step into a world where they expected you to be obedient without question. I feel they still view us as 17 years old when my class are all in their 50's and over and were all professional women.*

Liturgical or doctrinal differences

About 4 respondents state that their challenges are mainly related to liturgical or doctrinal differences. Some of their responses include:

- *The liturgical rigidity of the older members*
- *Deafening silence on our members who are openly opposing fundamental Doctrines of the Catholic Church*
- *A certain "bias" on the theological spectrum by many of the members.*
- *The emerging shift in passions and visions of church in other classmates that get caught up in externals of liturgy and prayer practices, the division of "conservative and liberal" church views; this can make this life challenging ...*

Others

About 34 respondents state that they have other challenges. Some of their responses include:

- *The members in my institute are aging and dying quickly. In 14 years it is projected that will be just 44 of us in my province. Many of the 44 will be retired at that point. The other seminarian and I were talking last night: we don't feel that our Province is moving in a specific direction and that worries us. Also, as we grow smaller, the younger members are being asked to take on more and more and that is burning them out.*

- *One of the greatest challenges of my transition into religious life has been taking such a radical step in the midst of a world, and even a Church, that is not open to such vocations. It is very difficult for friends and family to understand why, which can make the initial act of entering very difficult.*
- *Community in the context of working through one's own issues. It is difficult to feel motivated to be obedient and present at times of communal prayer and recreation when dealing with mental health struggles. When life gets messy, it is easy to want to shy away from the rest of my community. It is challenging to show up and be around others, but is the best part of my state of life for growing as a person and experiencing God's love for me.*
- *I am in a missionary order, and moving regularly, uprooting one's life has been the most challenging.*
- *Witnessing my institutes efforts being put into ministries that are not part of our charism.*
- *The terrifying spirit of compromise. Laxity and betrayal of Christ. My worldliness and leaven of the Pharisees.*
- *Lack of peers and a spiritual director in formation.*
- *Fear that I'm making a huge mistake. That I'm giving up a successful, fun career and abandoning my family-- who are the ones who love me the most-- just to find out 5 years after solemn vows that I'm woefully unhappy and unfulfilled.*

Appendix I: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Entrance Class of 2024



This survey is designed to help us understand the characteristics and experiences of those entering religious life in the United States today and the religious institutes they are entering. "Religious institute" refers to the congregation, province, or abbey/monastery to which you belong. Please respond by marking an "X" in the appropriate box for each question below. If any question does not apply to you, please leave it blank. If you prefer completing this survey online, please visit <https://bit.ly/postulant24> using a login code

Please use the responses below for questions 1-21.

1=Not at All 2=Only a Little 3=Somewhat 4=Very Much

1 2 3 4 NR How much did the following attract you to religious life?

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|---|----|---|
| 1 | 2 | 12 | 85 | 1 | 1. | A sense of call to religious life |
| 1 | 1 | 14 | 84 | 1 | 2. | A desire for prayer and spiritual growth |
| 2 | 10 | 32 | 56 | 2 | 3. | A desire to be part of a community |
| 1 | 7 | 28 | 65 | 1 | 4. | A desire to be of service |
| 3 | 10 | 23 | 65 | 1 | 5. | A desire to be more committed to the Church |

1 2 3 4 NR How much did these attract you to your religious institute?

- | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|--|
| 14 | 15 | 31 | 40 | 1 | 6. | The life and works of your founder/ress |
| 0 | 2 | 14 | 84 | 1 | 7. | The charism, mission, and spirituality of the institute |
| 1 | 6 | 21 | 72 | 1 | 8. | The prayer life of the institute |
| 1 | 8 | 25 | 65 | 1 | 9. | The community life of the institute |
| 1 | 8 | 33 | 58 | 3 | 10. | The ministries of the institute |
| 3 | 7 | 19 | 71 | 2 | 11. | The institute's fidelity to the Church |
| 12 | 7 | 18 | 64 | 1 | 12. | The institute's practice regarding a religious habit |
| 11 | 20 | 32 | 37 | 3 | 13. | The focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute |
| 14 | 27 | 34 | 25 | 3 | 14. | The size of the institute |
| 20 | 26 | 29 | 26 | 2 | 15. | The geographic location(s) of the institute |
| 27 | 27 | 24 | 23 | 15 | 16. | The institute's internationality, if applicable |
| 2 | 4 | 24 | 70 | 2 | 17. | The example of members of the institute |
| 1 | 8 | 21 | 69 | 3 | 18. | Welcome and encouragement by the institute's members |
| 59 | 12 | 20 | 9 | 3 | 19. | The racial/ethnic background of members |
| 24 | 20 | 36 | 20 | 2 | 20. | The ages of members |
| 48 | 19 | 20 | 13 | 3 | 21. | The cultural diversity of the members |

Yes How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute? Check all that apply.

- | | | |
|----|-----|--|
| 24 | 22. | Through a personal invitation by a member |
| 24 | 23. | In an institution where members served, e.g., school |
| 13 | 24. | Through working with a member of the institute |

- 36 25. Through the recommendation of a family member, friend, or advisor
 25 26. Through the reputation or history of the institute
 9 27. Through an event sponsored by the institute
 6 28. Through a media story about the institute or member
 6 29. Through a vocation fair, vocation match or placement service
 4 30. Through print promotional materials
 20 31. Through web or social media promotional materials
 23 32. Through your own search
 20 33. Other: _____

Please use the responses below for questions 34-45.

1=Not at All Helpful 2=Only a Little Helpful

3=Somewhat Helpful 4=Very Helpful

5=Not Applicable/Did not participate

*Please choose "5" if you did not participate. If you participated in any of the following **with your religious institute** before entering how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to **your institute?***

1	2	3	4	5	NR	
1	2	13	81	3	1	34. Contact with the vocation director
1	4	18	71	7	2	35. Contact with institute members
6	3	2	2	87	2	36. "Andrew Dinner" or "Nun Run"
1	4	11	67	17	3	37. "Come and See" experience
2	4	12	51	31	3	38. Vocation or discernment retreat
1	1	4	47	46	2	39. Live-in experience
4	3	10	30	53	3	40. Ministry with institute members
3	3	4	12	78	2	41. Mission experience
4	6	14	12	65	2	42. Meeting with a discernment group
1	3	13	64	19	3	43. Visit(s) to the Motherhouse or local community/ies
10	17	18	14	41	3	44. Social media (e.g., Facebook)
2	3	11	54	30	1	45. Spiritual direction

Please use the responses below for questions 46-58.

1=Not at All 2=Only a Little 3=Somewhat Important 4=Very Important

1	2	3	4	NR	<i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i>
	1	6	94	1	46. Private personal prayer
	1	5	94	1	47. Daily Eucharist
1	7	20	72	1	48. Liturgy of the Hours
8	30	37	25	4	49. Non-liturgical common prayer
11	25	30	33	5	50. Common meditation
5	5	12	83	1	51. Eucharistic Adoration
2	12	27	60	2	52. Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary

9 18 37 36 3 53. Faith sharing

1 2 3 4 NR **How important to you are these aspects of community life?**

1 2 11 86 1 54. Living with other members

1 1 13 85 1 55. Praying with other members

1 5 23 72 1 56. Working with other members

1 3 16 81 1 57. Sharing meals together

1 4 18 76 1 58. Socializing/sharing leisure time together

59. Do members of your institute wear a habit? 84 Yes 16 No

About You

60. _____ Year you were born **AVG= 1996 NR=3**

61. Age you first considered religious life **AVG= 28 NR=0**

62. How many brothers and sisters do you have? **AVG= 3 NR= 2**

63. What is your birth order? 4 Only child 27 Eldest 31 Youngest 38 Somewhere in the middle **NR= 1**

64. Are you: 58 Male 42 Female

64a. *If male*, do you expect become a 16 Perpetually professed brother? 84 Priest?

65. What is your first language? _____

66. How many languages do you speak fluently? 75 One 22 Two 2 Three 1 Four or more **NR= 1**

67. Were you employed before you entered? 85 Yes 15 No **NR= 1**

67a. *If Yes to #67*, were you employed? 78 Full-time 22 Part-time **NR= 16**

68. Were you in ministry before you entered? 61 Yes 39 No **NR= 2**

68a. *If Yes to #68*, were you engaged in ministry?

34 Full-time 17 Part-time 50 Volunteer **NR= 41**

69. What best describes your racial or ethnic background?

2 African/African American/black

12 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian

68 Caucasian/European American/white

14 Hispanic/Latino(a)

0 Native American/American Indian

3 Mixed race

0 Other:

70. Were you born in the United States? 78 Yes 22 No

NR= 1

70a. *If No to #70*, country of birth:

70b. *If No to #70*, year you first moved to United States: _____

71. Were you raised Catholic? 88 Yes 13 No **NR= 3**

71a. If No to #71, did you become Catholic through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)?

92 Yes 8 No NR= 88

71b. If No to #71, what was your prior religious affiliation: _____

72. Were you ever home-schooled? 16 Yes 84 No NR= 1

72a. If Yes to #72, number of years home-schooled: _____

73. What was the highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?

9 High school or less

15 Some college

51 Bachelor's degree

19 Master's degree

3 Doctoral degree

0 Other _____

1 NR

Did you attend any of the following before you entered? Check all that apply.

52 74. Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR

42 75. Catholic elementary or middle school

34 76. Catholic high school

40 77. Catholic college or university

27 78. Catholic ministry formation program

Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of these before you entered? Check all that apply.

39 79. Parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years

25 80. Campus ministry during high school years

47 81. Parish young adult group

49 82. Campus ministry during college

6 83. Religious institute volunteer program (e.g., Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)

61 84. Liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister)

43 85. Music ministry, cantor, choir

43 86. Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA team

61 87. Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting

71 88. Retreats

12 89. World Youth Day

10 90. National Catholic Youth Conference

33 91. Right to Life March in Washington, DC

8 92. Marian gatherings (e.g., Marian Days in Carthage, MO)

12 93. Other youth ministries (e.g., Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement, National Spanish Youth Ministry)

Family Background While You Were Growing Up

94. Was your mother Catholic? 89 Yes 11 No
NR= 1

94a. If No to #94, what was her religious preference?

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

5 Not at all 26 Somewhat important

9 Only a little 60 Very important

1 NR

96. Was your father Catholic? 84 Yes 17 No
NR= 1

96a. If No to #96, what was his religious preference?

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

12 Not at all 26 Somewhat important

18 Only a little 45 Very important

1 NR

Yes	No	NR	
33	67	2	98. Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?
61	39	1	99. Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?
30	70	1	100. Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
19	81	1	101. Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
33	67	1	102. Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
56	44	1	103. Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?

104. Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood? *Please select all that apply.*

96 Biological parent(s)	4 Other relative(s)
2 Stepparent	1 Someone else
1 Adoptive parent(s)	0 I prefer not to answer
10 Grandparent(s)	

How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?

Not at All	Only a Little	Somewhat	Very Much	NR	
5	6	21	68	2	105. Members of your institute
1	5	21	73	4	106. Vocation director/team
7	6	17	70	8	107. Spiritual director, if applicable
14	9	25	52	9	108. Other men and women religious
9	12	24	56	8	109. Diocesan priests
13	20	25	42	3	110. Your parents, if applicable
22	19	30	30	9	111. Your siblings, if applicable
23	26	34	18	8	112. Other family members
13	11	32	43	8	113. People in your parish
17	12	29	43	7	114. People in your school or workplace
38	10	17	35	52	115. Campus minister, if applicable
6	10	30	55	3	116. Friends

117. What most attracted you to your religious institute
--

118. What do you find most challenging about religious life?
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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

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Appendix II: Responses to Open-ended Comments

Q. 117: What most attracted you to your religious institute?

Presented here are the responses of the new entrants, slightly edited.

[Institute Name] life, the Brothers' sense of humor, the potential for growth in the province, my love of theology and teaching.

[Institute Name]'s mission to serve rural areas of USA, underserved communities deeply resonated with me. Their blend of faith, service, and building inclusive communities is truly inspiring.

1. The Charism - specifically that it aligned with the song of my soul: to uphold the dignity and sacredness of human life. 2. The sisters' authentic witness of love and joy.

100% fidelity to the Church; full traditional habit; JOY; daily Eucharistic holy hour; responding to the times with a steadfast love and mercy; support to live a holy life with a community; charismatic living.

A contemplative life with the Lord and His Saints.

A very deep sense of peace and feeling that it was God's will for me.

All of my passions and visions of church matched the works and ministries of my religious order. Social ministry works, equitable education, platforms of higher ed as voices for the poor and marginalized. etc...

Apostolic and contemplative balance.

Authentic living out of religious life.

Authentic witnesses of the Faith. Radical comment to Jesus and His church. Evangelical councils. New Evangelization and missionary zeal.

Authenticity, beauty, and traditionality of the Abby. Also, their dedication to the Church and to the Holy Father. Also, the presence of other young people, and the surge of brotherhood. Also, the traditional liturgy, and sense of union with our past.

Being of one mind and one heart on the way to God by the common worship of our Eucharistic Lord as well as the emphasis on personal prayer, which is our relationship with Christ. In other words, we are faithful sisters and daughters of the church, and brides of Christ with Our Lady as our model. Another aspect that attracted me to this community is our close relationship to our male branch who minister the sacraments to us, teach us, and share some of our apostolates.

Being sent out into mission with the young people while living in community.

Call.

Charism / 4th vow to protect/enhance human life. Habit. Orthodoxy to Church teaching/liturgy/prayer life. Clear witness to Marian/ecclesial identity of women religious. Young sisters.

Charism and community life.

Charism and ministry.

Charism, mission and spirituality are the most attractive elements for me.

Charism, prayer life I was an ordained minister for 24 years, becoming part of a religious order fills a hole where my ordination exists.

Charism, prayer life, community life.

Charism.

Charism.

Choral office. Orthodox faith. Communion.

Community Life.

Community.

Doing ministry for the poor.

Each time I prayed, I heard God calling me to religious life. If He asks, how can I say no?

Fidelity to the Church, prayer, traditional practices of religious life (including the habit), [Institute Name] spirituality and intellectual life, and the joy of the community.

First and foremost, the spirituality. It makes so much sense to me and I talk to Jesus in a way I hadn't ever before I encountered it. Second, the charism and mission of the institute. And finally, just getting to know the men and spending time with them.

Following God's will to be fully fulfilled and help others know him.

Getting closer to Christ through its spirituality.

God.

Having attended Notre Dame, I was somewhat familiar with [Institute Name] and hence was attracted to it. I liked that it seemed like a congregation where my background, education, and experience could be put to use.

Hear confession.

History, reverence, and fidelity to the Church, mission, charism, etc.

I am with the [Institute Name], and I was most attracted by the ancient history of the Order (one of the first in the Church), its time-honored practice of prayer, work, and study, and that it is the only monastic order present in my archdiocese. I was in priestly formation for my archdiocese immediately after graduating high school, and the [Institute Name] run the archdiocese's collegiate seminary that I attended, so I was immersed in [Institute Name] spirituality and fell in love with the Abbey - the community, the physical grounds, the rhythm of the Liturgy of the Hours and lectio, basically every aspect - during my time in seminary. It just felt like home the very first day I stepped foot on the grounds during the seminary's Come & See, and I haven't considered anywhere else to be my home in the 7 years since.

I came to my institute because I longed to be a useful member of Christ's Church and I knew that, without the direction of an Abbot of Formation Directory, that would be impossible.

I could not deny how attracted I was to the freedom, peace, and joy I witnessed in the members of the institute. I was drawn to their beautiful habit, authentic femininity, the way they never put pressure on me and never coerced me in any way in the discernment process, and how they truly desire God's will for me, not just numbers for their community. Also, their fidelity to the Church, the Blessed Sacrament, and the Charism of the Sacredness of Life.

I feel called to it by God.

I grew up with them and love the good work they do.

I have always wanted to become a priest and did not know much about religious life until I entered and "came" and "saw." I volunteered at the [Institute Name] soup kitchen in [city name] where a friar invited me to "come and see." It was and has been such an adventure since beginning with a live-in experience and now postulancy!

I just love the [Institute Name] spirituality and life of prayer. I wanted to learn how to pray well and teach others how to do so. I knew that [Institute Name] had the well of knowledge and practice from the three foremost Doctors of the Church on prayer (St. Teresa, St. John, and St. Therese), and these names continued to show themselves in all the works on prayer that I was reading. I thought it was best to go learn under the feet of the masters.

I knew them and by the Lord's grace I thought I could be an instrument of His piece.

I love their Charism and I felt that it pierced my heart. I also saw that the sisters had a great joy.

I was attracted to the monastery because there are many other young vocations here and it is thriving. The monastery follows the Rule of St. Benedict very strictly. We wear the habit which is a sign that we have died to the world and want to give it up completely. We are in union with Rome. there is also a strong sense of brotherhood and prayer which unites us closer to the Lord.

I was initially attracted by their joy that flowed from a deep relationship with and love for Jesus. I desired to live like them in growth in virtue and intimacy with God and let everything I did lead to or stem from prayer.

I was looking for a [Institute Name] community that had some flexibility with their habit, wide variety of ministry opportunities, lived and prayed in common, and seemed sustainable even if their numbers are dwindling.

I was most attracted by my religious institute's fidelity to our founders' ideals. by their beautiful and traditional religious habits, and by the institute's life of prayer.

I was most attracted by the way they fully gave themselves over to Christ, but gained a deeper sense of self in that relationship, how human fulfillment is sacrifice. Also, by how much they loved each other, and the joy they brought to the life.

I was most attracted by their intense devotion to the Eucharist and their devotion to prayer, both personal prayer and community prayer.

I was most attracted initially to our choral singing/chanting of the Liturgy of the Hours and the habit. Later, I was very attracted to the combination of monastic and priestly life.

I was most attracted to the [Institute Name] by the overall synthesis of their charism that can direct a man totally toward Jesus Christ. I hunger to be rooted in prayer and study, and then to share the fruit of these activities with a community and with those in the apostolate. I see this as precisely the way of life that [Institute Name] lead.

I was most attracted to the charism of our community, namely living in imitation of the Blessed Mother in the local Church. The way that charism is manifested in our horarium, prayer, and apostolic activity struck a particular desire the Lord placed in my heart when discerning different communities.

I was most attracted to the itinerant nature of the [Institute Name]. I spent some time with the [Institute Name] in [City Name], KS, but the stability of their life was too much for me. After searching the internet for a religious order that preached, taught, and traveled around the country, I discovered the [Institute Name] Friars. I emailed the vocation director on that day, [Date], and put on the habit on [Date].

I was most drawn by my institute's articulation of their charism. It was clear to me that they knew what the Holy Spirit was about in their midst, and were open and docile to Him leading. I was also drawn to the witness of consecrated love -- never had I met women who so clearly imaged what it means to be "bride." Finally, I knew that everything in my life had to be centered around Mass and Eucharistic Adoration, which is exactly how they lived.

I was not attracted by the congregation's fidelity to the church, the wearing of a religious habit, the initial and ongoing intellectual and human formation, and the faithful witness to religious life of the religious sisters I met in my young adult years.

I would like to follow Jesus closely and wanted to live a holy life.

Ignatian spirituality first and foremost. The missionary zeal the [Institute Name] have. And lastly the community life.

Ignatian Spirituality, specifically finding God in all things

Interior Peace, Daily Eucharist, Eucharistic Adoration and the Radicality of the life. (Honest living of the charism).

It aligns with my personality and goals in life.

It felt like home. I felt the Lord calling me to a deeper prayer life and deeper union with Himself.

It's dedication to the Church, and wide-ranging ministries to the Church and the world at large.

Its fidelity to the Church (orthodoxy).

Its mission of Catholic education.

It's spirit -- the inner, felt experience of the monastic life, especially its principles and wisdom.

Its spirituality, flexibility, and focus on education. The tools that the Society could provide to help me live out my 'upper case V' vocation.

La misión de la [Institute Name] en el mundo hoy

Life in common, devotion to the Eucharist, chanting of the Hours, wearing of the Habit, and a focus on the personal and spiritual formation.

Life in community dedicated to "helping souls". - A long list of wide-ranging apostolates the institute is spearheading I am moved by and would love to be a part of - When I asked myself the question "Who do I look up to? Who is doing impactful, challenging work with a smile on their face?" the people who came to mind were all the [Religious - Institute Name] I met on my journey... apostolic joy.

Life of prayer and ministry in equal amounts, ministry very much hands-on working with those in need

Liturgy of the Hours in common. Emphasis of study and preaching Gospel.

Living a life of obedience with a strong focus on beautiful liturgy.

Living a life of service dedicated to God and offering my life as a radical display of God's love for humanity. The [Institute Name] in particular having a wide range of fields in which they could minister and being able to discern and be missioned were my talents would be most effective.

Lo que mas me atrae al instituto es la invitacion a aprender a vivir mas cercano a Jesus.

Mission, ministry and spiritual life are most attracted me.

My attraction was based on the fact that my institute is not involved in Catholic education (they are involved only in healthcare), so it wouldn't be a given that I would teach (I had spent 14 years teaching prior to entering). I was also attracted by the fact that they didn't specify an age cut-off, which helped get the discernment process started.

My religious institute (1) is faithful and in union with our Holy Father, Pope Francis, (2) wears the religious habit, (3) seeks to be faithful to the Rule/constitutions, (4) has a devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and (5) has a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. These were the most attractive aspects of my religious institute.

Ora et labora - That it was a contemplative community that engaged in work to cover its costs.

Our charism and that our religious institute wear a traditional habit!

Our charism-the grace to know how to work concretely in order to prolong Christ in Families, in education, in the mass media, in the intellectuals and in all other legitimate manifestations of the life of man. It is the gift to make each man like one incarnation of the word by being essentially missionary and [Institute Name] Serious spirituality, atmosphere of joy, missionary creativity.

Our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and the way in which all else flows from receiving Jesus. That it is from reception of our Lord that we are able to go out and to preach the Good News.

Overarchingly, I love that the Carmelite Spirituality is one that brings the "praying Christ" to the world. Our Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles have a special charism in which we are first contemplative, and from this prayer we serve in active apostolates, administering to Christ in our neighbors who live in the world.

Poverty, mission, care for those who are struggling.

Prayer life -- how it was Eucharist-centered. Their simple, hands-on ministry to the poor. Wearing a habit, to be that outward sign of Christ's love for everyone.

Prayer, apostolate, community life and character and history of the [Institute Name].

Radicality in Poverty. Prayer Life. Community Life.

Reverence in mass, beautiful church, location in relation to L.A., habits, Liturgy of the Hours sung, high-quality social media, cloistered and removed from big-town-feel.

Reverent and traditional liturgy. The entirety of the Divine Office is prayed daily. Orthodox theology and fidelity to the Magisterium. Young and lively community of men.

Salvation of souls. Relationship between the consecrated and family members

Sense of belonging and feeling of being at home.

Service to the poor and prayer life.

Service to the poor, Orthodoxy and Charism.

Simply a desire to be fully devoted to Christ in the best way I thought I could be.

Since I was little, I have had a close relationship with baby Jesus. Before my conversion I used to hear his voice telling me to be a priest I just constantly decided to ignore until it became unbearable.

Since Our Father did so much for me all times, like to have a chance to do something for him.

Spirituality and mission, community, future of the province, habit, the brothers etc.

That I believe it is God's desire for me in order to follow Him more closely.

That in it I might conquer my self will and live in the Divine Will.

The [Institute Name] Brothers were advertised as hospital/medical related order, sponsoring hospitals/medical centers and retirement communities.

The [Institute Name] works specifically in Catholic Education and seems to be trending really well!

The ability to lead a coherent, ascetical, contemplative life, in perfect union with the whole Church, centered on the Holy Liturgy.

The apostolic work in combination with a rich spirituality and institutional identity.

The authentic spousal charism lived out in the community, holiness of members, their relatability (geniality), their reverence, and their JOY!

The balance between the contemplative and active life.

The balance of contemplative and active ways of life, with a greater emphasis on contemplation than some other orders I visited, as well as the fraternal community life.

The charism + non-negotiables, clearly outlined.

The Charism and how they live the Gospel.

The charism and Joy! The normality of living radically for sanctity. The ability to give everything to Christ in order to serve others wholeheartedly for him. The sense of service!

The charism and the diversity of ministries - the [Religious Institute Name]. A community life vision to which there was intentionality in community support - at the same time, a sense of independence in ministry. Richness of spirituality.

The Charism as a whole and the Saints of the Order. A very clear path to holiness within the ordinary. The teaching on the mystical life and God's action in our souls is the only way to understand reality and live authentically.

The charism attracted me the most.

The charism of perpetual Adoration, the joyful, familial warmth of the community, and their active apostolates (healthcare and education).

The charism of prayer and age of the order.

The charism of the order dedicated to truth and the witness of joyful fidelity in its members who dedicate themselves to love of God and of their neighbors in building up the church and growing in holiness...

The charism, prayer, way of life and joy.

The charism, spirituality, and daily prayer.

The Charism: "To prolong the incarnation to all men."

The commitment to living the gospel in community and authenticity.

The commitment to service.

The community and prayer schedule.

The community. I loved the guys. I wanted to be with them and pray with them. Secondly, I loved the apostolates that we minister to. I can see myself doing this

The contemplative-active balance and prioritizing of prayer and common life. Its fidelity to the Church. Its charism.

The Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, and the way they live both social justice and hospitality so well. I had never seriously considered religious life because I felt called to serve the world outside of typical "ministries," especially through my work as an engineer - but the diversity of ministries and work within the Institute spoke so closely to the way I want to love the world. In addition, I saw so many women thriving at all stages of life and was very inspired by the Sisters.

The culture of flexibility with regards to arranging each one's prayer and community life in order to meet the needs of the ministerial mission.

The depth of prayer life, with a central focus on union with Christ that overflows into a life of apostolic service.

The distinction of our priests/religious and their reverence and charity.

The emphasis on prayer

The evangelical counsels combined with the charism of the institute. The charism collects together into one integrated life many of the pieces of my own life prior to joining the order (preaching, teaching, community life).

The example of members of brotherhood, intellectual life, and reverent liturgy.

The fact that it was a religious institute.

The family life fostered in community. The men were not weird or gay and were normal. They exemplified being a virtuous man without entirely closing themselves off to the world.

The fidelity to magisterium, focus on mission, love for the Eucharist, traditional habit, joy of the members and the love for the way of the cross in order to follow Christ.

The four pillars of our life - Prayer, Study, Community, the Apostolate.

The freedom and joy of my sisters, the non negotiable elements of our charism, our habit... I love everything about my institute.

The freedom I felt in discernment and the freedom I experienced being myself with the community.

The idea of doing things in common. I've wanted to be a high school teacher since I was in high school. My Institute works in high schools. Some of my fondest memories are going to one of our schools which was local to where I lived and visiting for evening Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, prayer, then dinner. After dinner a member would inevitably say "oh, can you come over to school and help me x, y, and z". While there we'd run into Fr. Principal and Br. Athletic Director in the course of what we were doing. It wasn't like we were praying alone, eating alone, or working alone: we were in it together.

The Ignatian charism and dedication to the poor and marginalized. Being able to share this charism and spirituality with brothers and living in community.

The integration of prayer, work (a teaching apostolate), and the intellectual life.

The intellectual and preaching charism of the [Institute Name] principally attracted me, and the life of poverty attracted me to religious life generally.

The joy and life the Institute exudes is very attractive to me, as well as the history of our charism to redeem captives.

The joy and sense of fulfillment of the sisters; the way they spoke about their vocation and about the call to love; the habit; the authenticity and humanity of the members; the charism.

The joy of its members, the beauty of their liturgy and habit, the beauty of their church and facility.

The joy of the brothers that I witnessed during my 5 day visit at their novitiate priory.

The joy of the community.

The joyful hospitality, the teaching charism, and the community life.

The life and work of our founder and early members combined with my affinity for our spirituality and apostolates that remain in fidelity to the institute's foundational intent.

The Liturgy.

The living of the Gospel in a simple but beautiful way and sharing the Good News and Truth throughout the whole world. Also, the traditions of the order and fidelity to the liturgy and the Pope.

The members of my community. They allowed me to see myself as part of the community already during a live-in program. It was easy to picture myself happy and inspired in that lifestyle.

The men I knew who lived there, who sought to live their entire life as a living sacrifice in response to Christ.

The ministry.

The Mission of Preaching for the Salvation of Souls, the ministries, wearing the habit, return to orthodoxy.

The opportunity to live the [Institute Name] form of the mixed life in a community with a reputation for orthodoxy and a respect for the liturgy.

The Order's charism of study to form preachers of the Gospel for the salvation of souls.

The practice of reverent liturgical prayer in common, e.g. Liturgy of the Hours, the Mass.

The rich and beautiful tradition of the order. The order's liturgical life and reverent celebration of the liturgy. The example of holiness and love I saw in the priests, formators, and seminarians. The quality of preaching and teaching. The deep prayer life and devotion to the Eucharist and Our Lady.

The sacraments and the possibility of offering my talents in many different ways for the service of God, this is teaching, spiritual accompaniment, parish work, missionary work.

The sense of being called by the Lord, through mass.

The simple, radical living out of the Gospels. Particularly the expression of poverty and service to the poor. As well as the family atmosphere!

The simplicity of it all, truly you work and live for the greater glory of God in service of your fellow brothers. That to me is absolutely beautiful.

The sisters' abundance of joy and peace, as well as their ability to live beautifully with those they encounter. their example of gratefulness and their bridal quality to Christ. Also the community's focus on study and teaching, as well as the aspect of sacred music being taken seriously was attractive to me.

The Sisters radiate joy and an undivided heart for Christ.

The spirituality and the openness to all kind of people.

The spirituality I charism and the apostolate.

The spirituality. Also their fidelity to the Church while at the same time balance and measure of how the community operates and understands their vocation. Along the same lines, I perceived that my community has been and remains remarkably "healthy." Also, I have trust, confidence, and great reverence for the leadership -- particularly Mother [Institute Name].

The thing that attracted me most was their hospitality and their focus on balance. Every time I was with them, I felt a sense of peace in an otherwise chaotic world.

The thing that attracted me the most was the feeling and notion of being at home.

The thing that most attracted me was the job of the sisters that found its source in the Eucharist. It is true and authentic.

The total giving of your life.

The Traditional Mass of the Roman Rite. (Tridentine liturgy). Also, the traditional recitation of the Psalter and the ability to take the vow of obedience.

The way of life -- balance between prayer, ministry, and fraternity - especially the emphasis on contemplative prayer, with fraternity as also very important.

The way of life and the type of men who were living it.

The way of life with a combination of contemplative and active life as well as a focus on fraternal life.

The way that the priests lived their priestly vocation; they had a deep understanding of the faith and love for the Lord that I didn't see as much in other priests. Also, the common pursuit of holiness within the whole community was a powerful thing to witness, and something I desired.

The way they live out the Carmelite spirituality

The witness of the [Institute Name] running my University Newman Center as well as the charism of the [Institute Name] to preach for the salvation of souls

The witness of the current friars, their love for the Church and for Christ, was what attracted me the most.

The witness of the lives of the current [Institute Name] religious.

Their authenticity and love for God. The PEACE in this place RADIATES as soon as you step onto the campus/religious institute's/convent's grounds. The PEACEFULNESS sold me :)

Their Charism and how the community lived it out -it was vibrant, joyful, and each member I met was striving to live out the charism in totality -to consecrate every moment to Jesus throughout their day. The totality and authenticity of the sisters is what attracted me to their convent.

Their charism.

Their dedication and love for the Lord. Commitment to Him. Their joy.

Their emphasis on fidelity to the church and an emphasis on study.

Their faithfulness to their vocation (including their charism and spiritual heritage), their joy, life of prayer, community life, habit, formation, love for Our Lady, the Sacred Heart, and the Church.

Their healthcare apostolate and their deep prayer life with daily adoration and the celebration of the Eucharist. Their willingness to accept me as a late vocational postulant.

Their joyful fidelity.

Their ministry location, laidback-ness.

Their spirituality and their joy in being together. It felt like a family immediately.

Their spirituality, community life, and apostolate

Their spirituality.

They weren't "nunny" or pious. Just real people that were joyful. I loved that the Holy Spirit was the center of our focus. I was called to social justice ministries and felt very passionate about it. The [Institute Name] spirituality was a good fit for me.

Through the witness and overall joy of the Friars.

To give my life completely to God in living the evangelical counsels and in serving the poor. The way we live poverty. Prayer life.

Vibrant community life (playing spoons, hiking, etc.) Presence in my home diocese. The sisters being "normal" and easy to talk to while living an integrated life that is radically given to Jesus. 2 Holy Hours in daily horarium.

We have freedom in every sense.

What attracted me the most was how the liturgies were done and the charism of the order.

What attracted me the most was the joy the sisters had.

What attracted me to my religious institute is the charism and hospitality when I first came and also the love that was shown to me.

What most attracted me about our institute was, first, the way that the sisters were. They were fun, free, normal, loving, welcoming, and authentic. I felt at peace around them. Second, the charism, which has been a big theme in my life. Third, the way they live [Institute Name] Spirituality and devote themselves to the Sacred Heart.

What most attracted me to my religious institute was the community life in the Abbey, the liturgical charism of the order, and that Liturgy of the Hours was celebrated everyday as a community.

What most attracted me was the charism/ministry and finding that participating in the charism through a volunteer service year was life-giving. The more I learn about the amazing work that other sisters do, the more excited I feel for the possibility of being able to work in something similar. Now, as a postulant, I have a growing sense of connection with the community, which is also very life-giving and attractive.

What most attracted me was the realization that the community's charism and life was something I was already seeking to live in my life as a lay person, particularly their devotion to the pierced Heart of Christ and this Merciful Love. In realizing how much I loved and even lived their spirituality before I knew them, I was attracted to the Community because I could clearly see God's call there.

What mostly attracted me to my religious institute was the ministry. The ministry that the sisters do, which is primarily teaching at schools and that is what I felt called, getting to know the sisters and see how they gave themselves so freely in their ministries.

While I was at University, the community of brothers and I formed a really good relationship. The way they welcomed me and everyone else was very inviting. The more that I hung out with them the more I could see myself living my life as they do.

Q. 141: What do you find most challenging about religious life?

The following is a presentation of the responses of new entrants on what they find challenging about religious life. Slight editing has been done. Their responses include:

1. Community living and adjusting to convent culture. 2. Speaking up my needs/wants and learning to obey and follow the leadership of a superior.

A challenge for me is the way that prayer has changed compared to when I was in the world.

A life with perseverance and discipline.

Absolutely nothing! I feel that I was born to live this life and dearly wish it had not taken me so long to figure that out.

Accepting my personal shortcomings, which religious life brings into my view much more clearly than life in the world did.

Adapting to community life, convent schedule, and doing a lot of physical manual.

Adjusting to all the sitting and kneeling and time of day for prayers (e.g., 4:30 pm is not when I would choose to sit and pray for an hour and a half, but it is what we do every day and it took adjusting to). In general, adjusting to having to ask and wait for anything needed or wanted.

Adjusting to community life.

Adjusting to our schedule, specifically the early mornings and monotony, have been the most challenging part.

As much as I thrive off internationality and interculturality of my current religious community, maintaining cultural roots alive and nurtured while living away from home in a different country with people from different places is a challenge.

At this time, leaving behind biological family.

At times, community life, learning to get along and embrace our differences.

Battling with my bad inclinations and thought patterns amidst a community with various personalities. It's easy to mistake others intentions.

Beginning stages of living in community.

Being a "public person" at all times.

Being away from family, and knowing how much they miss me.

Being away from family.

Being faithful to the vows of Poverty, Chasity, and Obedience.

Being intentional in every little thing, silence, and detachment from many things of the world.

Being much older than all of my novice brothers.

Being patient with realities of the life in spite of my ideals and being charitable toward those with a different worldview and perspective on religious life.

Celibacy and detachment.

Celibacy. I love pretty much everything else.

Cloistered life is a huge and tremendous adjustment from the current world. I was a young professional living in [City Name] before I entered. Religious communities need to be a bit flexible with formation to account for the adjustment. I found my community to be very flexible (allowing me to have a storage unit, access to my cell phone for necessary banking, keep my old pillow and favorite Knick knacks, allowing me to have a financial advisor to handle my affairs and meet with her annually, access to counseling to help with all the changes). Without this flexibility and gentleness, it may have not been possible.

Common life, missing family.

Communication with the brothers.

Community divisions/dissensions.

Community in the context of working through one's own issues. It is difficult to feel motivated to be obedient and present at times of communal prayer and recreation when dealing with mental health struggles. When life gets messy, it is easy to want to shy away from the rest of my community. It is challenging to show up and be around others, but is the best part of my state of life for growing as a person and experiencing God's love for me.

Community life and celibacy.

Community life is challenging for my personality, but I feel that I am given every support that I need to grow in love and holiness. Interior growth in knowledge of our goodness and belovedness takes time, healing, and perseverance in prayer and love.

Community life is rather challenging. One because I grew up fairly independent and was able to avoid many problems via just living on my own, can't do that anymore. Another, particularly when interacting with older members of my order is they tend to look down on me because my beliefs tend towards what they call a "retro-Catholic", and rather than accepting me as I am desire instead that that part of my "fixed". It can tend to be rather frustrating.

Community life is the most challenging in the religious life.

Community life, study.

Community life.

Community life.

Community Life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community Life.

Community Life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community members - learning to live with each other. Community members' insecurities. A certain "bias" on the theological spectrum by many of the members.

Community.

Cooking.

Countering boredom, overcoming desire for a wife.

Currently, the choice of giving up marriage and an intimate relationship with a life partner has been a big struggle for me. It has been hard for me to reconcile the thought of choosing to give up something as beautiful and biblical as marriage.

Custody of heart. Retaining a habitual docility towards God and superior.

Dealing with some of the lay employees working for the institute.

Demanding ordo but it's very fulfilling.

Detach from family relations and responsibilities.

Detaching myself from the conveniences I had in the world. The transition from life in the world to life in the [Institute Name].

Detachment from family and friends.

Detachment from the world.

Disfunction, communication, leadership.

Distance from family. The vulnerability of discernment.

Distance from my previous life.

Dying to self.

Entering community at a time of fast change for the Sisters and many of them grieving the necessary changes. I anticipated that upon entering and thought that most of the grief was isolated to certain regions, but I'm learning that all Sisters are always transitioning and grief is a part of that.

Fear that I'm making a huge mistake. That I'm giving up a successful, fun career and abandoning my family-- who are the ones who love me the most-- just to find out 5 years after solemn vows that I'm woefully unhappy and unfulfilled.

Finding myself by giving myself away.

For me, the most challenging thing about religious life is the feeling of being alone, resulting from separation from family and friends as well as from limited social interactions within my institute.

Generational differences.

Giving up my own will, especially for small things.

Growing and living in loving obedience to superiors after having lived and served in the world for quite a while post college (9 years).

Growing in self-knowledge.

Having little time that I can call my own. Waking up early.

Homosexual members of the community.

How different it is from life in the secular world.

How different it is from the world and the silence.

I am in a missionary order, and moving regularly, uprooting one's life has been the most challenging.

I do not know. I have only been here for two months.

I feel very criticized by my formators and struggle with obedience. They love the Lord, though I have to pray much to persevere and not get discouraged at my little mistakes. Finding the balance between prayer and community life is a challenge.

I find adapting to a completely new environment as well as living with so many people I don't know to be very challenging because everything is so new all at once.

I find difficult personalities in community life challenging. Distance and separation from family is also quite difficult.

I find fighting human nature to be challenging, especially falling into distractions or temporal attachment.

I find navigating relationships with my peers difficult when they have a tick or habit that is not sinful, but I find irritating.

I find that coming to know myself as God knows me and embracing my weaknesses before my fellow Sisters has been one of the most challenging aspects of religious life. The narrow road

that is hand crafted for the each of us is not necessarily an easy one even as we are being fulfilled in following His call.

I find the rigorous schedule hard to manage sometimes. You have to be very disciplined and intentional.

I have a very close relationship with my family. I frequently have bouts in which I long to be closer to them now and regret not having spent more intimate time with them.

I have found community life most challenging. Living among sisters striving for holiness yet with imperfections has made me realize my own shortcomings and lack of virtue. It has been challenging to fully accept myself and accept help from my sisters.

I have given up all of the possessions and have given up speaking with my high school friends. And most of all I have given up my family and my dear parents. Many temptations seek to turn me back to the world, but through Christ's strength, they can be conquered.

I'm from [foreign country name] so moving to [Name of U.S. City] and being in an American order can be a challenge. But I know God wants me here and He'll give me the grace.

I'm not sure. Maybe learning to let go of the false need to do things perfectly.

In the 90 days since I have put on the habit, the most challenging aspect of my new life so far, has been dealing with my new brothers. People assume that celibacy would be the biggest problem for a religious, but it's not. Obedience and poverty tend to be the most difficult. Poverty, in the sense, that we do not get to choose who we live with, and Obedience, in the sense, that we have to live with them despite the many personal differences we may have. We much choose to accept the brothers we are given.

Intergenerational dynamics can be challenging at times. Also, there are differences of opinion within the community on how to live out the charism of the order.

It is all for my good, but having my life/schedule determined by my superior, missing good things and people from life before entrance, and grieving my desire for married life... but God is so faithful and there is true joy and hope in this glorious will.

It is challenging to have one's ideals about the charism encounter the lived reality of religious life.

It is difficult for me to be away from my family because I am very close with them. Also, being an only child, I am trusting in the Lord that my parents will be provided for when they are elderly.

La vida comunitaria.

Lack of free time and waking up early.

Lack of free time, in the sense of not being able to get enough things done that need to get done.

Lack of peers and a spiritual director in formation.

Learning a new way of life while adjusting to being more separated from my family.

Learning obedience, after being a professional for so many years.

Learning to let go of my expectations of sanctity and embrace the sacred in the little, hidden moments of daily life in the convent.

Learning to live community life (common table, living generously with my time vs being self-centered).

Learning to live in community.

Learning to live with novice brothers who are close minded and come from sheltered backgrounds.

Learning to love and live in Holy silence after living in a world of great noise and distraction.

Leaving family and friends. Learning how to integrate into a new community while remaining true to myself but also being formed by the people around me.

Leaving family and hometown.

Letting go of control. Letting God take complete control. It's a very humbling experience lol.

Like anything else, there are growth pains. Living in community with other men from various backgrounds, cultures, perspectives, and worldviews is no different, as one would expect. At times, there are feelings of being slighted or treated wrongly/unfairly, but through good communication and prayer those things can also be overcome. But overall, with all of its ups and downs, being in community with this group of men is one of God's greatest gifts to me.

Living in community.

Living in community. Since I entered at 40 for the first time, I came from a different generation and different paradigm of reality from the other sisters who had entered at a young age and was genuinely formed by religious life. I was an attorney who had run my own firm so it was very hard to step into a world where they expected you to be obedient without question. I feel they still view us as 17 years old when my class are all in their 50's and over and were all professional women.

Living the vows well.

Living with individuals who are at different stages of their spiritual journey.

Loneliness and the lack of deep personal relationship.

Maintaining priorities.

Mental surrender that is, letting go of my ideas, will, and desires in order to freely love God who is all in all.

Missing home and my friends. It is difficult to be separated from the support structures which got me to this point in my life.

Moving to another country to enter the community has its challenges, in particular, adjusting culturally. However, the community is very accommodating.

Multi-generational common life.

My life has been full of change all the time. Learning how to sit still and be less busy is really challenging for me, as I felt like being less busy made me less adequate.

My own imperfection-more particularly, being made more aware of my imperfections in light of the life Jesus is calling me to.

My own weaknesses, which are made clear living in community life. Each day, we have our own mountains to climb, but with God's grace it is possible.

My prayer and spiritual life were always very private and individual. Common prayer and having a prayer routine established for me occasionally feels inhibitive to praying well.

Navigating different personalities.

Not being able to marry.

Not being able to talk regularly with my friends and family

Not being fully supported.

Not seeing family as often.

Nothing is too challenging with the grace of God.

Nothing with the grace of God!

Now that I am here, I discovered that they are not involved at all in these ministries but are trying to find a new direction, so I am disappointed that we cannot minister or work at [Institute Name] Medical Center. Some of the brothers are cold and unwelcoming and make it clear that they do not like you. The community life is dead.

Obedience and the spoken/unspoken restraints/responsibilities place onto someone in the religious life.

Obedience.

Obedience.

Obedience.

Obedience: the possibility that I will be given a mission that I did not choose.

One of the greatest challenges of my transition into religious life has been taking such a radical step in the midst of a world, and even a Church, that is not open to such vocations. It is very difficult for friends and family to understand why, which can make the initial act of entering very difficult.

Patience with my brothers.

Perseverance in spiritual trials.

Poverty to self/letting go of that which I don't need but have grown accustomed to

Purification.

Relationships.

Religious life.

Remaining virtuous in the face of constant internal trial is very difficult. You are sort of in a fishbowl, magnified by a slower pace of life and frequent interaction with the brothers, so it is much easier to see where you are lacking in virtue and love. It can be overwhelming to realize your inadequacies.

Renunciation of my own will. Parents' reactions/difficulty with accepting my vocation.

Rooting out my behavioral habits of disorganization, and also of procrastination on certain kinds of tasks, that inhibit me from meeting the expectations of a novice in our house.

So far it has been balancing interior prayer life and the life in common.

So far one of the most challenging aspects of religious life is learning how to navigate relationships, both within the community and those you have from before entrance.

Relationships simply look different in religious life.

So far, not been able to the things I want at the times I want to play instruments, sports, sleep, adoration, etc. Getting along with sisters from different backgrounds during mandatory retention can also be challenging.

So far, not much. Probably just the strictness of the daily and weekly schedule but it is honestly quite good.

Sometimes, the community life.

Staying awake and focused during morning common meditation.

Staying consistent (discipline); community life (difficult but also a great source of joy).

Staying hopeful day to day, not letting challenges overwhelm me but patiently keep moving forward with what I'm called to do.

Studying.

Surrendering my will to the Will of God.

Surrendering one's own will and working with others in the little things in common life.

Surrendering time spent with family and friends. The obedience of our daily schedule (letting go of control) confronting my own faults as magnified by close living in community life.

Taking that first "leap of faith" and trusting that the Lord really is calling me since there's a cloud of uncertainty in these initial stages.

The age gap between myself and the other members.

The age gap between solemnly professed monks and me.

The challenge in religious life is balancing personal needs with the constant call to serve others. Staying joyful and faithful during tough times can also be difficult but leads to deeper growth.

The continuous sacrifice of one's own time to the daily needs of the community.

The daily commitment to putting aside my own will.

The daily invitations to die to my preferences (i.e. what we eat, what we do, etc.); letting Jesus be the true center while all my other relationships take backstage. But it's all beautiful!

The daily yes to God and the community.

The different often clashing personalities that people may have, this may cause problems such as disagreements and sometimes more difficult with people that have a higher temperament.

The emerging shift in passions and visions of church in other classmates that get caught up in externals of liturgy and prayer practices, the division of "conservative and liberal" church views; this can make this life challenging ...

The endless quest to grow in personal holiness and love for the Lord!

The fixed schedule and limited communication with friends outside of the convent during initial formation.

The formality; the small things that seem for me to be a bigger deal than they need to be, in my grappling to receive and understand the life; the interior formation/purification within community which is intensely vulnerable.

The full schedule and early mornings are the most challenging part as well as learning to work with a wide variety of people in different settings.

The hardest part about religious life is making the Lord my best friend and letting Him be my comforter. I have friends and family, but I will never have a spouse that knows 'everything'. Jesus is my spouse, and I have slowly been growing more comfortable and confident in that reality. Though, I know it is hard to always know this. Loneliness can strike at any time.

The liturgical rigidity of the older members (not the way you think) where anything is permissible other than anything remotely historically Catholic. Most of the young members, including myself, feel that we have to hide and stay quiet about what helped form us. This of course has pros and cons and I am not saying that the Order has to bend over backwards to our preferences, but the overt one-sided nature of this issue from members over the age of 50 is impossible to miss. Not to mention younger members further in formation than ourselves experiencing the same problem. A spirit of waiting seems to linger among novices, scholastics, and priests under the age of 50. The lack of any grounding in any form of objective truth in matters concerning spirituality e.g. discerning things that contradict Dogma. The deafening silence on our members who are openly opposing fundamental Doctrines of the Catholic Church and the Order's implicit assent to an extreme universalism.

The members in my institute are aging and dying quickly. In 14 years it is projected that will be just 44 of us in my province. Many of the 44 will be retired at that point. The other seminarian and I were talking last night: we don't feel that our Province is moving in a specific direction and that worries us. Also, as we grow smaller, the younger members are being asked to take on more and more and that is burning them out.

The monotony of the schedule as a novice.

The most challenging about religious life is being the youngest.

The most challenging aspect about religious life is the daily "dying of oneself" to follow Christ more closely.

The most challenging part of religious life is my impatience with myself and with my brothers in community over small things. I also lack complete trust in Our Lord. I ask Him to give me more trust.

The most challenging part was learning to pray and meditate as well as doing things I've never done before.

The most challenging thing about religious life is the age difference, I am 22 the median age of the community is 76 so most members do not know how to relate to me and that has been the biggest is the age and some of the people.

The most challenging thing for me has been homesickness. In particular, missing my family and home.

The most challenging thing in religious life is not being able to contact my family and friends whenever I wish.

The personal periods of purgation where the soul is in darkness and I begin to question my call to the religious life.

The schedule and practical demands of ministry.

The separation from friends and family which is entails.

The surrender of my will in obedience to the schedule, but I know it is good for me.

The terrifying spirit of compromise. Laxity and betrayal of Christ. My worldliness and leaven of the Pharisees.

The total sacrifice required to live this vocation; the renunciation of nearly everything I loved--my family, my friends, the use of my talents according to my desires. This isn't the most "challenging thing" per se, but I also miss beer... and everything that comes with it: cracking a cold one and having some crunchy, salty peanuts with my family on my parents back patio. I really miss that too.

The totality of personal surrender whenever a new attachment is discovered, and the acceptance of my own poverty and patience that is required to grow in virtue.

The vow of obedience has always been the most intimidating to me, as someone who has always been extremely independent. I am definitely realizing how much of my life as a young professional in particular has been handling things on my own, and how unused I am to having to account for other people in everyday decisions!

The way that one has to give up even the smallest things in an effort to consecrate one's whole self: hobbies, sports teams, liturgical preferences, etc.

There aren't really any days off or days that you can sleep in.

There is not any one thing that sticks out to me as more challenging than others. From time to time, it is hard to stay focused on Christ in the business of the activities going on. Community life can be challenging at times. Being faithful to all my responsibilities and doing them with joy is often hard to do.

Time management.

Transition and navigating relationships with friends who don't understand.

Up to this point, it's been challenging to say goodbye to the things I loved in the world (including friends and family). And living monastically, the silence is more difficult than I thought.

Vivir los votos en la cultura norteamericana.

What I currently find most challenging about religious life is the transition out of a community in my parish and my relationships there and kind of "starting over" in a new place. The religious community is wonderful and very welcoming but moving somewhere new and beginning to get to know new people can be a hard part of the transition.

What I find most challenging about religious life is (not to break the rule) difficulty in keeping the rule as stated in our rule book.

What I find most challenging about religious life is the clash between cultures. I am from a Latin American background, which is highly communal. I was surprised to find that so many sisters in

my majority white American community live alone. That is not what I want at all for myself. Right now, I live with one other sister, who lived alone for several years, and so the transition has been challenging, but we are making it work. Thankfully, I know other younger members also do not want to live alone and want to live in community. So we'll see.

What is most challenging is the daily fight to let go of my self-will, most especially by coming to grips with my sinful past and its continued effects & consequences (especially the psychological toll of certain sins). Configuration to Christ is a noble task, and I know no one said it was going to be easy when I entered. I am glad my brothers in community are very supportive of me and point to our Savior's grace as a major aspect to win the fight, because I am unsure that I could make progress in the face of these challenges on my own.

Witnessing my institutes efforts being put into ministries that are not part of our charism.