

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

*Women and Men Entering Religious Life:
The Entrance Class of 2016*



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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men who formally entered a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States during 2016. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men (postulants and novices), the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of apostolic women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 138 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops 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 the United States since January 1, 2016. CARA then mailed a survey to each new entrant and asked them to return their completed survey to CARA.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 610 of 759 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 80 percent among religious institutes. In all, 93 percent of LCWR superiors, 84 percent of CMSWR superiors, 76 percent of CMSM superiors, and 59 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 502 novices or postulants that entered religious life for the first time in the United States in 2016. The Entrance Class of 2016 consists of 272 men (reported by CMSM superiors), 144 women reported by CMSWR, 66 women reported by LCWR, and 20 new entrants into contemplative communities of women.

Of these 502 identified women and men, a total of 278 responded to the survey by February 2, 2017. This represents a response rate of 55 percent among the new entrants to religious life that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Major Findings

Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

- More than two in three responding religious institutes had no one entering religious life in 2016. One in seven institutes had one entrant and about one in five reported two or more.
- The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2016 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 26 or younger. Nearly six in ten are women and just over four in ten are men. Among the men, four in five expect to become priests and one in five plans to become a perpetually professed brother.
- Most respondents were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most commonly mentioned regions are Asia and Latin America, with Vietnam and Mexico emerging as the most frequently mentioned countries of birth.
- On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 24 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for eight years before entering religious life.
- Seven in ten responding entrants identify as white, just over one in ten identifies as Asian, one in ten identifies as Hispanic or Latino(a), and one in 20 identifies as either African/African American/black or as “other.”
- Nine in ten respondents have been Catholic since birth. Eight in ten come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Almost all respondents of the entrance class of 2016 have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is one, two or five or more. Overall, respondents are typically one of the middle children in their family.
- Altogether, respondents report 34 countries of birth. Members of the Entrance Class of 2016 are slightly more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,¹ 39 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 47 percent among these respondents. Nearly four in ten entrants in 2016 have attended a Catholic high school compared to two in ten other U.S adult Catholics. In addition, entrants are more likely than other U.S Catholics to have attended a Catholic college/university.
- The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2016 were highly educated before entering. Half reported having earned a bachelor’s degree and about two in ten earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Men are more likely than women to have attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute while women are more likely than men to have been home schooled.

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

- Many respondents were active in parish life as well as other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Nearly all respondents participated in at least one of these programs or activities before entering religious life.
- Slightly less than eight in ten respondents participated in retreats. Half participated in a parish youth group, Life Teen, or campus ministry during their high school years. Nearly four in ten participated in a parish young adult group.
- Nearly two in three participated in a liturgical ministry in a parish, such as being a lector. Half reported participating in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or in RCIA and slightly less than half participated in music ministry, cantoring, or in the choir.
- Two in three participated in various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting. One in ten participated in a volunteer program with a religious institute. Slightly more than half participated in campus ministry during college.
- About one-third participated in a Right to Life March in Washington. Men are slightly more likely than women to have had this experience. One in six participated in World Youth Day. Women are more likely than men to have participated in World Youth Day.

Vocational Discernment

- On average, respondents were 18 years old when they first considered 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. More than nine in ten mentioned a spiritual director, members of the institute, other men and women religious, and/or a vocational director/team as at least “somewhat” encouraging to them when they first considered entering a religious institute.
- Between three-fourths and nine-tenths of respondents entering religious congregations report being encouraged at least “somewhat” by these sources outside of their families: people in the parish, friends outside the institute, campus ministers, and people in their school or workplace. Between six and seven in ten report being at least “somewhat” encouraged by their parents, siblings, and other family members.
- Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth and by a sense of call to religious life. Three in four or more were “very” attracted by these.
- About nine in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service and a desire to be part of a community. Between about six and seven in ten say each of these attracted them “very much.”

- About eight in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church. Slightly more than half say this attracted them “very much.”
- About nine in ten women report that a sense of call to religious life attracted them “very much” to religious life, compared to seven in ten men. In contrast, while six in ten men say a desire to be more committed to the Church “very much” attracted them, less than half of women said the same.
- Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. About three in ten respondents report that they first became acquainted with their institute in an institute where members served, through their own internet search, and through the recommendation of a friend or advisor.
- Between one and two in ten respondents indicate that they became acquainted with their institute through the reputation or history of the institute, through a relative or a friend in the institute, through working with a member of the institute and through the web or social media promotional materials.
- Between one in 20 and one in ten respondents report that that they first became acquainted with their religious institute through an event sponsored by the institute, through print promotional materials, through a vocation match or placement service, through a vocational fair, as through a media story about the institute.
- Men are more likely than women to have become acquainted with their religious institute in an institution where members served and through the reputation or history of the institute.

Experience of Religious Life, Attractions, and Challenges

- Entrants were asked how much influence various aspects of their religious institute had on their decision to enter that institute. About nine in ten respondents report community life in the institute, the lifestyles of members and the prayer styles in the institute influenced their decision to enter their religious institute at least “somewhat.” Between half and just over six in ten say these elements influenced them “very much.”
- Men are more likely than women to have attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute while women are more likely than men to have been home schooled. About three-fourths to eight-tenths of respondents report having been influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the types of ministry of its members and its practice regarding a religious habit. About half say these elements influenced them “very much.” More than nine in ten say the following attracted them to their religious institute at least “somewhat”: the community life of the institute, prayer life of the institute, and mission of the institute. Just over six in ten say they were “very much” attracted to these elements.

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 a religious congregation, province, or monastery based 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 2016.

To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men (postulants and novices),² CARA contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of apostolic women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), which includes both apostolic and contemplative institutes. Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 138 contemplative communities of women 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 novice or postulant) in the United States since January 1, 2016. CARA then mailed a survey to each new entrant and asked them to return their completed survey to CARA. For a few of the religious institutes who requested it, CARA emailed a copy of the summary to the major superior who then distributed it to the novices and postulants in that institute.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 610 of 759 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 80 percent among religious institutes. In all, 93 percent of LCWR superiors, 84 percent of CMSWR superiors, 76 percent of CMSM superiors, and 59 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 502 postulants or novices that entered religious life for the first time in the United States in 2016. The Entrance

² There are notable differences among religious institutes in both their terminology and their practices during the first year of initial formation, i.e., following entrance into the religious institute. In most institutes of women religious, those who enter are called "postulants" or "candidates" and the initial phase of formation typically lasts at least six months to a year, although two years of candidacy before the new entrant becomes a novice is not uncommon. Although many institutes of men religious follow similar patterns, some have a much shorter period of postulancy. Among the Dominicans and the Jesuits, for example, men enter and become novices after a postulancy of only two to three weeks. Moreover, some religious institutes, including the Jesuits, use the term "candidate" for those who are considering entering the institute. That is, some institutes call the prospective member a "candidate" before he or she enters while others use the term to describe someone who has entered. This report is about the men and women who entered a religious institute in the United States in 2016 regardless of what they are called or their stage of initial formation.

Class of 2016 consists of 272 men (reported by CMSM superiors), 144 women reported by CMSWR, 66 women reported by LCWR, and 20 new entrants into contemplative communities of women. Of these 502 identified women and men, a total of 278 responded to the survey by February 2, 2017. This represents a response rate of 55 percent among new entrants to religious life that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

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 2016. Part II describes aspects of the vocational discernment of the Entrance Class of 2016. 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

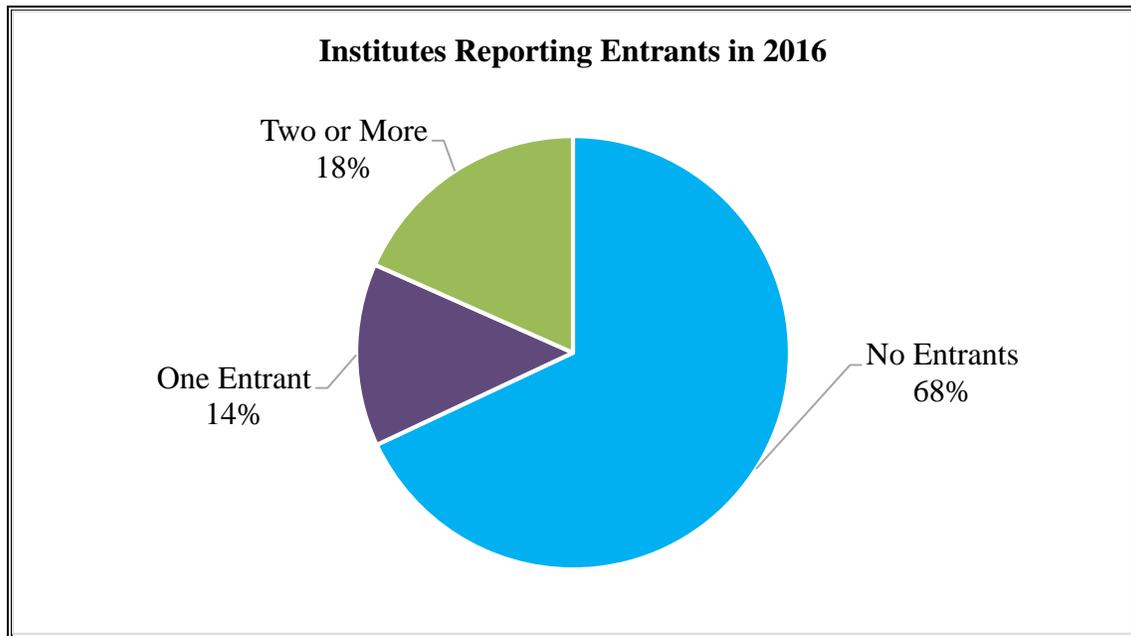
Many of the questions on the survey use four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “poor,” “fair,” “good,” and “excellent”). These scales allow half of the responses to be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“poor” and “fair,” for example) 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 level of support. This is especially useful for this survey 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 percent, as well as the percentage of all respondents that did not respond to each question, separately calculated out of 100 percent 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 percent, this difference is considered notable or important.

Institutes Reporting New Entrants in 2016

CARA asked the 759 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries in the United States that were identified by LCWR, CMSWR, CMSM, or the USCCB to provide the names of women and men (postulants or novices) who entered their religious institute in the United States in 2016. A total of 610 major superiors responded (80 percent) with 502 names of women and men. The Entrance Class of 2016 consists of 272 men (reported by CMSM superiors), 144 women reported by CMSWR, 66 women reported by LCWR, and 20 new entrants into contemplative communities of women.



A total of 425 major superiors (70 percent of those responding) reported that they had no one enter the institute in 2016, another 84 major superiors (14 percent) reported one new entrant, and 101 major superiors (17 percent) reported from two to 22 new entrants. Just seven major superiors reported ten or more new entrants in 2016.

Gender

Among the respondents who entered religious life in 2016 were 156 women from 73 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the 122 men who responded come from 49 different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious.

Age of the Entrance Class of 2016

The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2016 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 26 or younger.

Age of Women and Men Entering Religious Life			
Percentage in each age category			
	Overall	Women	Men
25 and younger	45%	42%	47%
Age 26-35	39	40	40
Age 36-45	11	12	10
Age 46-55	4	4	3
Age 56 and older	2	3	0
Average age	28	29	28
Median age	26	26	26
Range in ages	18-65	18-65	18-50

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Entrance Class of 2016 is 18 and the oldest is 65 years of age. One woman reports entering at the age of 65. Among the men, the youngest is also 18, with one man entering at the age of 50. Regardless of gender, more than eight in ten respondents (84 percent) are 35 or younger.

Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States

Four in five (80 percent) respondents were born in the United States. Nearly one in ten was born in a country in Asia and one in 20 was born in a country in Latin America.

Region or Country of birth			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
United States	80%	82%	79%
Asia	8	6	8
Latin America	6	3	10
Africa	3	3	2
Europe	2	3	0
Canada	2	1	2
Australia	1	1	0

Vietnam and Mexico are the most frequently mentioned countries of origin among respondents who were born outside the United States. Respondents identified a total of 33 different countries of origin.

Respondents who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of eight years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2011 or earlier. Men and women report similar age at entry into the United States.

Entrance to the United States				
	Year	Age at Entry		
	Overall	Overall	Women	Men
Mean	2008	24	23	25
Median	2011	25	24	25
Range	1981-2016	1-52	1-52	8-42

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at the age of 24. Half were age 25 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The oldest woman was 52 while the oldest man 42 at the time they entered the United States.

Race and Ethnic Background

Overall, seven in ten who entered a religious institute report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (71 percent). Women (78 percent) are more likely than men (62 percent) to be Caucasian/European American/white.

<i>What best describes your racial or ethnic background?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
Caucasian/European American/white	71%	78%	62%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	11	9	14
Hispanic/Latino(a)	11	5	18
African/African American/black	4	4	3
Other	4	4	3

One in ten (11 percent) of the Entrance Class of 2016 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian and another one in ten (11 percent) as Hispanic/Latino(a). Only 4 percent identify as African/African American/black or as “other” race or ethnicity (4 percent).

Differences by Country of Birth

- Among those who were born in the United States, slightly less than nine in ten (86 percent) report being Caucasian/European American/white.
- Among those not born in the United States, respondents identify as), Asian/Pacific/Native Hawaiian (38 percent), Hispanic or Latino(a) (23 percent), Caucasian/European/American/white (17 percent), African/African American/black (13 percent), and “other” (8 percent).

Religious Background

Nine in ten respondents (89 percent) have been Catholic since birth.

Catholic Background			
	Overall	Women	Men
Catholic since birth	89%	92%	86%
Became Catholic later in life	11	8	14

Those who came into full communion with the Catholic Church from another denomination came from a variety of faiths: Southern Baptist, Lutheran, United Methodist, generic Protestant, or non-denominational. On average, these respondents became Catholic at age 11.

Just over nine in ten respondents (94 percent) report that when they were growing up they had at least one parent who was Catholic. Eight in ten (81 percent) report that both parents were Catholic.

Religious Background of Respondents' Parents			
	Overall	Women	Men
Both parents Catholic	81%	79%	83%
Mother Catholic, father not	9	8	10
Father Catholic, mother not	4	5	3
Neither parent was Catholic	6	8	5

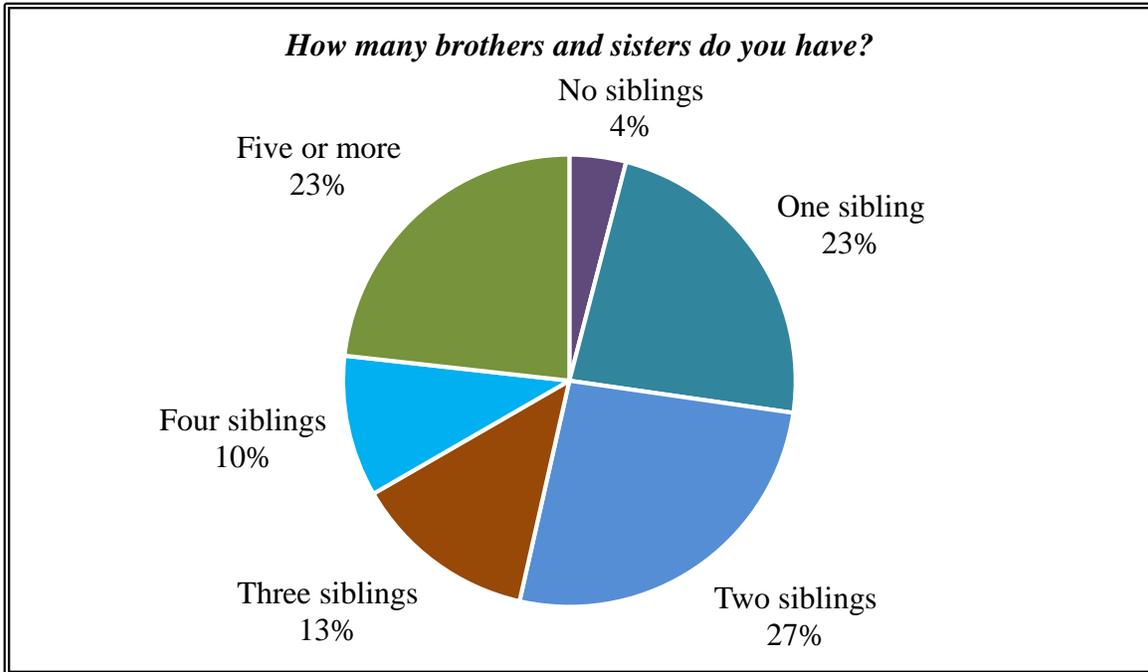
Respondents who had non-Catholic parents report that the parents were either Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Evangelical, Baptist, Buddhist, a generic Protestant, or non-denominational. Regardless of the religious tradition of their parents, just over six in ten (64 percent) respondents report that religion was “very important” to their mothers and half report that religion was “very important” to their fathers.

Two in three (66 percent) report that they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister who was not a family member while they were growing up. Nearly another four in ten have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun.

Familiarity with Priests and/or Religious Brothers and Sisters/Nuns While Growing Up			
Percentage responding "Yes" to each question			
	Overall	Women	Men
Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	66%	63%	71%
Do you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	37	39	36

Family Background

On average, members of the Entrance Class of 2016 have three siblings. The most common response to this question, among women and men, is one or two siblings (50 percent).



- One in 20 says she or he is an only child (4 percent), about a quarter have one sibling (23 percent), and almost three in four have two or more siblings (73 percent).³
- Only four respondents report ten or more brothers and sisters.

³ Those in the Entrance Class of 2016 do not differ significantly from those responding to the General Social Survey, where the percentage of only children in the last 30 years of data have ranged between 4 and 6 percent.

Overall, respondents with siblings are a little more likely to be one of the middle children in their family. These entrants are more likely to be middle children (37 percent) than either the youngest or the oldest children (28 and 31 percent). Women are slightly more likely than men to be a middle child.

<i>What is your birth order?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
Middle	37%	41%	31%
Eldest	31	29	35
Youngest	28	27	30
Only child	4	3	5

Education Level Before Entering a Religious Institute

The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2016 were highly educated before entering. Half report having earned a bachelor’s degree and about two in ten (22 percent) earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute.

<i>What was your highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?</i>			
Percentage responding			
	Overall	Women	Men
High school or less	8%	8%	8%
Some college	17	14	20
Bachelor’s degree	51	53	49
Master’s degree	18	18	18
Doctoral degree	4	4	4
Other	2	3	1

About one in ten (8 percent) of the Entrance Class of 2016 completed high school or less before entering their religious institute. One in six (17 percent) completed some college before entering. Responding men and women are similar in the education they received before entering.

About one in ten respondents (12 percent) report being home schooled at some time in their educational background. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was eight years (an average of eight years for women and eight

years for men). More women than men report being home schooled (16 percent of women compared to 6 percent of men).

Catholic Education Before Entering a Religious Institute

Over six in ten of those responding attended a parish-based religious education program (62 percent) and nearly half (47 percent) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Almost two in five attended a Catholic high school and/or a Catholic college before entering their religious institute. One-third attended a Catholic ministry formation program before entering.

<i>Did you attend any of the following before you entered?*</i>			
Percentage responding “Yes” to each question			
	Overall	Women	Men
Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR	62%	65%	62%
Catholic elementary or middle school	47	50	44
Catholic college/university	39	35	46
Catholic high school	37	37	39
Catholic ministry formation program	32	34	31
Home-schooled	12	16	6

Members of the Entrance Class of 2016 are about as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,⁴ 39 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 47 percent among entrants. Respondents of 2016 are more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (37 percent of respondents, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college/university (39 percent of respondents, compared to just 6 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).

Women and men are about equally likely to have attended a Catholic high school (37 percent for women compared to 39 percent for men) and women are slightly more likely to have attended a Catholic elementary or middle school (50 percent for women compared to 44 percent for men).

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, slightly more than six in ten respondents (62 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 60 percent did *not* report attending a Catholic elementary school and 72 percent did not attend a Catholic high school.

⁴CARA *Catholic Poll*. Summer 2016. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up

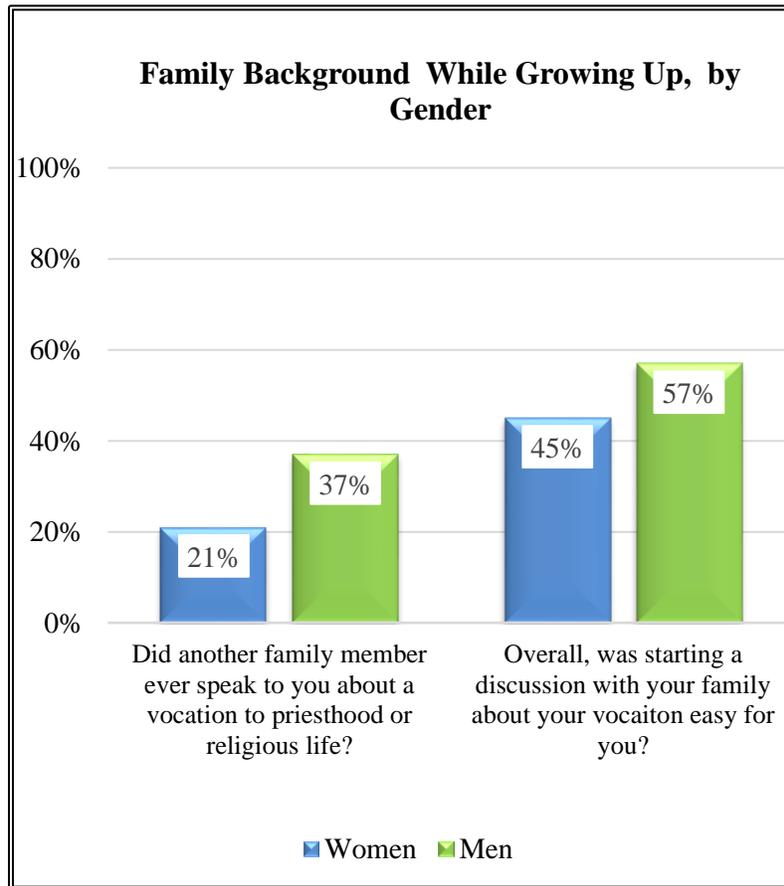
Overall, half (51 percent) say that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation.

Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up			
Percentage responding “Yes” to each question			
	Overall	Women	Men
Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?	51%	45%	57%
Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life?	31	28	34
Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	30	21	37
Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	23	21	23

Three in ten report that their mother (31 percent) or another family member (30 percent) ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life. Nearly one in four (23 percent) report that their father ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Comparisons by Gender

Men are more likely than women to have ever had another family member speak to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life (37 percent for men as compared to 21 percent for women), and to say that starting a discussion with their family about their vocation was easy for them (57 percent for women as compared to 45 percent for men).



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. Nearly all respondents (95 percent) 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 these before you entered?</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	Overall	Women	Men
Retreats	77%	81%	75%
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	67	71	66
Campus ministry during college	53	58	50
Parish youth group, Life Teen, or high school campus ministry during high school years	49	54	46
Parish young adult group	37	39	36
Right to Life March on Washington	35	34	39
Parish youth group, Life Teen during elementary or middle school years	28	28	30
World Youth Day	18	22	15
Religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)	10	10	11
National Catholic Youth Conference	8	10	7

- Slightly less than three in ten (28 percent) respondents participated in parish youth group or Life Teen during their elementary or middle school years.
- Half (49 percent) participated in a parish youth group, Life Teen, or campus ministry during their high school years. Slightly more than half (53 percent) participated in campus ministry during college.
- Slightly less than eight in ten (77 percent) respondents participated in retreats. Men and women are almost equally likely to have participated in retreats before entering a religious institute.
- Slightly less than one in ten respondents participated in a National Catholic Youth Conference (8 percent). Nearly four in ten (37 percent) participated in a parish young adult group.
- About one-third (35 percent) participated in a Right to Life March in Washington. One in six (18 percent) participated in World Youth Day.

- One in ten (10 percent) participated in a volunteer program with a religious institute. Two in three (67 percent) participated in various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting.
- Men and women do not differ significantly in their participation in these programs and activities before entering the priesthood or religious life.

Eight in ten respondents (81 percent) served in one or more specified ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer. The most common ministry service reported was liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister), followed by some form of faith formation ministry.

Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of the these before you entered?
Percentage checking each response

	Overall	Women	Men
Liturgical ministry (e.g. lector, extraordinary minister)	65%	62%	71%
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	50	53	48
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	46	50	43

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

- Among the ministries listed on the survey, two-thirds of respondents (65 percent) report that they served in liturgical ministry roles, such as lector or extraordinary minister of Communion. Men are slightly more likely than women to have served in this capacity.
- Half of respondents report participating in faith formation, catechetical ministry or RCIA. Nearly half (46 percent) report participating in music ministry, cantor, or choir.

Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, respondents were 18 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life.

Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life			
	Overall	Women	Men
Mean age	18	18	19
Median age	18	17	19
Range of ages	3-58	3-58	5-39

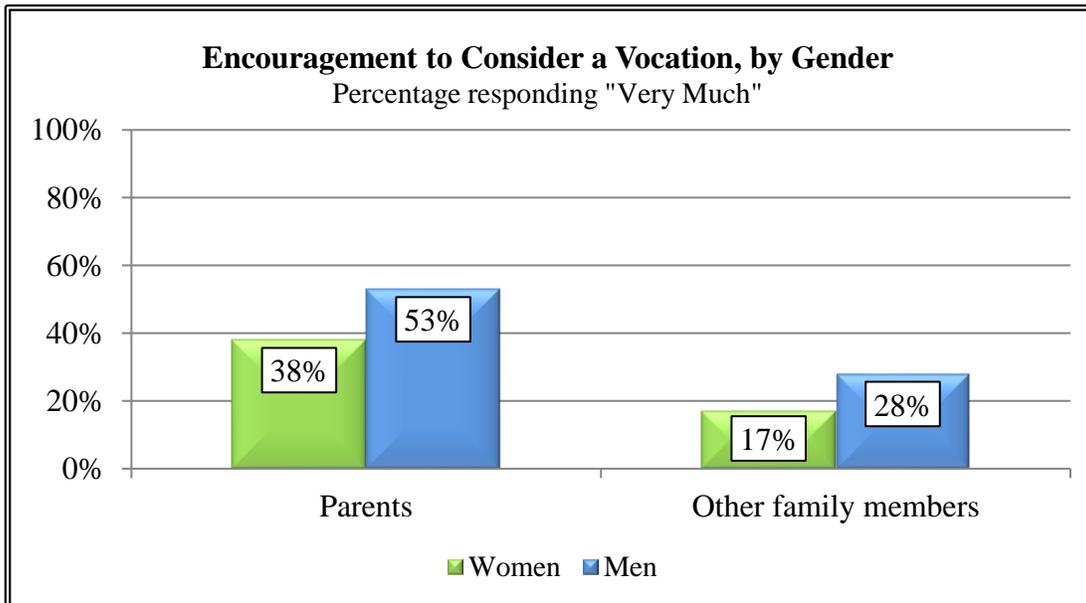
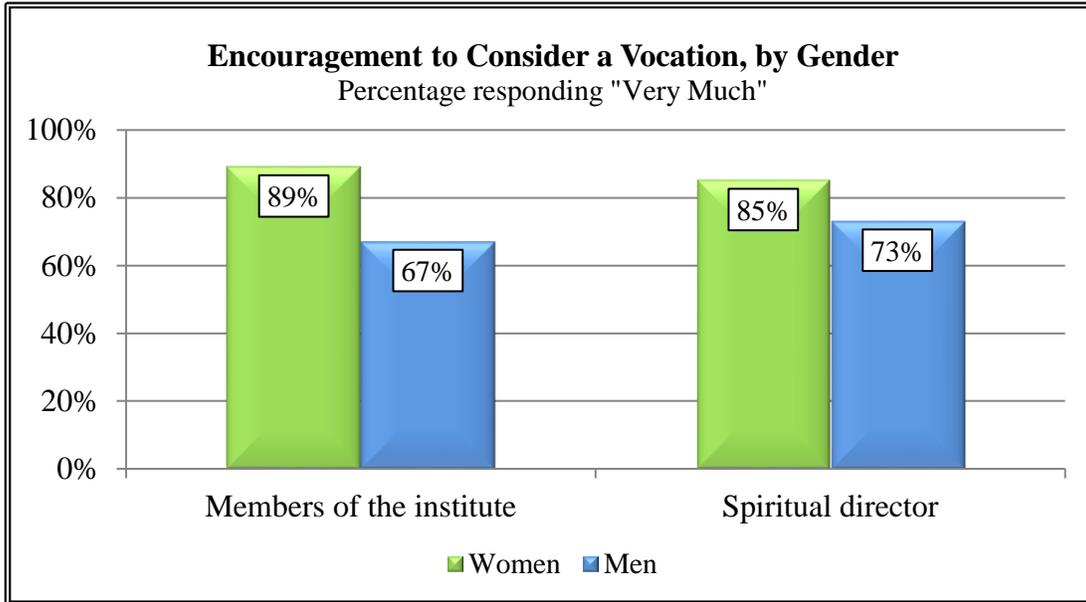
Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. Respondents most frequently mentioned a spiritual director (95 percent), a member of their religious institute (94 percent), other men and women religious (94 percent), and/or a vocational director/team (92 percent) as at least “somewhat” encouraging to them when they first considered entering a religious institute.

<i>How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
Spiritual director, if applicable	95%	73%
Members of your institute	94	67
Other men and women religious	94	61
Vocation director/team	92	76
People in your parish	89	60
Friends outside the institute	84	52
Campus minister, if applicable	82	54
Diocesan priests	78	40
People in your school or workplace	74	42
Your parents	70	53
Your siblings	63	35
Other family members	61	28

- Four in five respondents entering religious congregations report being encouraged at least “somewhat” by these people: people in the parish (89 percent), friends outside the institute (84 percent), and diocesan priests (78 percent).
- Nearly as many (82 percent) were at least “somewhat” encouraged by campus ministers. Three in four (74 percent) received encouragement from people in school or in their workplace.
- Between six and seven in ten report receiving at least “somewhat” encouragement from parents and family members when they first considered entering a religious institute: parents (70 percent), siblings (63 percent), and other family members (61 percent).

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to report receiving encouragement from members of their institute and a spiritual director. On the other hand, men are more likely than women to report receiving encouragement from their parents and from other family members.



Attraction to Religious Life

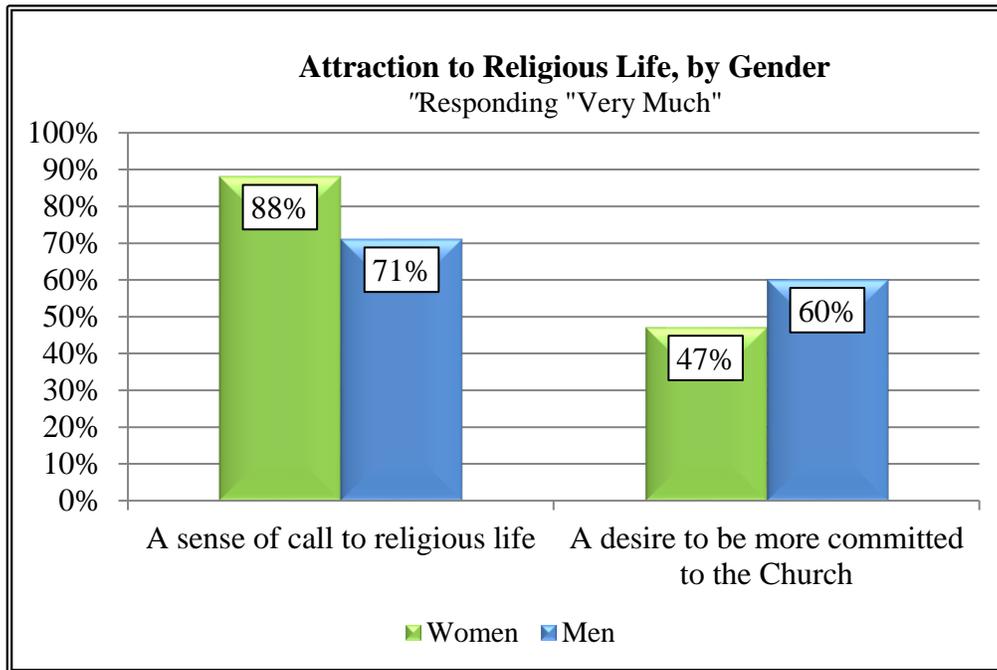
Entrants in 2016 were asked how much various elements attracted them to religious life. Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (97 percent) and a sense of call to religious life (97 percent). Three in four or more were “very much” attracted by these.

<i>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</i>		
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very Much”		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	97%	76%
A sense of call to religious life	97	81
A desire to be of service	91	69
A desire to be part of a community	87	58
A desire to be more committed to the Church	83	52

- About nine in ten respondents were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service (91 percent) and by a desire to be part of a community (87 percent). Between about six and seven in ten said each of these elements attracted them “very much.”
- About eight in ten (83 percent) were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church. Slightly more than half said this attracted them “very much.”

Comparisons by Gender

More women than men report that a sense of call to religious life “very much” attracted them to religious life, while more men than women report that a desire to be more committed to the Church “very much” attracted them.



Attraction to a Religious Institute

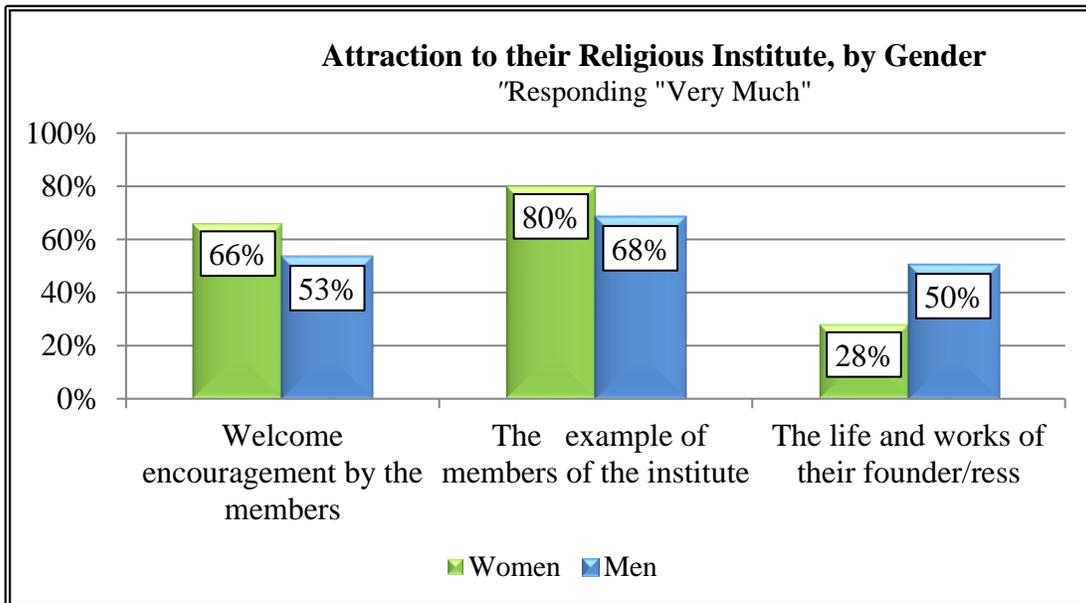
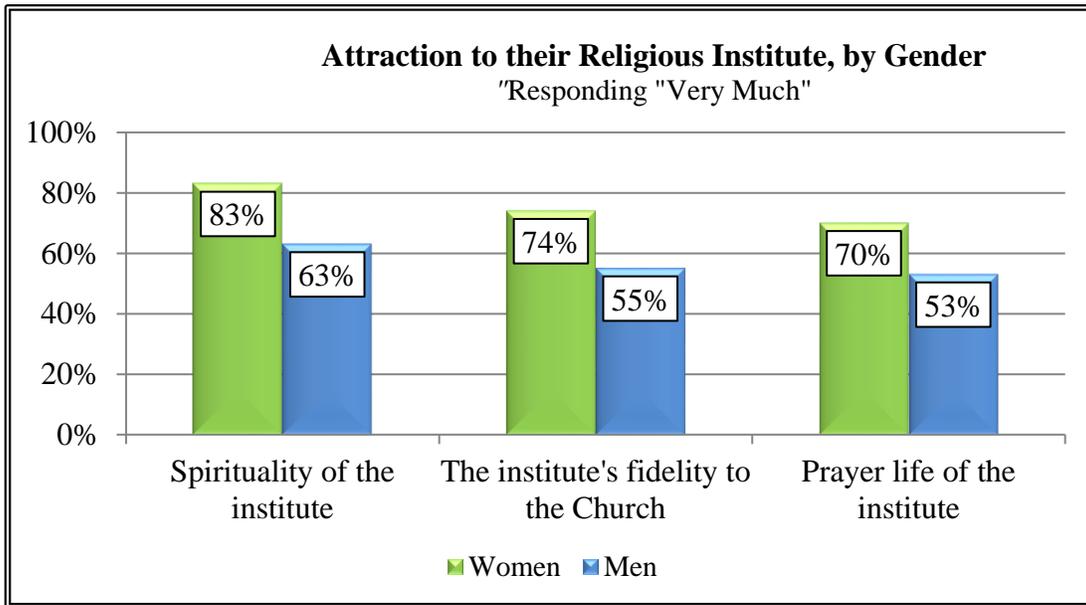
Entrants were asked how much each of several aspects of religious life attracted them to their particular religious institute. Slightly more than nine in ten report that they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the spirituality of the institute and the example of members of their institute. Almost three in four say these elements “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.

<i>How much did these attract you to your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
The spirituality of the institute	94%	74%
The community life of the institute	94	62
The example of members of the institute	92	73
The prayer life of the institute	92	63
The mission of the institute	91	63
Welcome encouragement by members	85	59
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	84	65
The ministries of the institute	81	54
The life and works of your founder/ress	70	38
A personal invitation by a member	56	34

- Nine in ten or more respondents report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the spirituality of the institute (94 percent), community life of the institute (94 percent), example of members of the institute (92 percent), prayer life of the institute (92 percent), and mission of the institute (91 percent). Just over six in ten said they were “very much” attracted by these elements.
- Just over eight in ten report they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the welcome encouragement by members (85 percent), the institute’s fidelity to the Church (84 percent) and the ministries of the institute (81 percent). Between about half and two in three say these elements “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.
- Seven in ten report they were attracted by the life and works of their found/ress (70 percent) and almost four in ten say this element attracted them “very much” to their religious institute.
- Slightly less than six in ten reported they were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to their religious institute by a personal invitation by a member (56 percent). A third reported this element attracted them “very much” to their religious institute.

Comparisons by Gender

More women than men report that the spirituality of their institute, the institute's fidelity to the Church, prayer life of the institute, welcome encouragement by the members and, the example of members of the institute "very much" attracted them to religious life, while more men than women report that the life and works of their founder/res attracted them.



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. About three in ten respondents report that they first became acquainted with their institute in an institute where they served (32 percent), through their own internet search (32 percent), and through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (29 percent).

<i>How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	Overall	Women	Men
In an institution where members served	32%	22%	45%
Through your own internet search	32	31	30
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	29	27	31
Through the reputation or history of the institute	19	10	30
Through a relative or a friend in the institute	16	13	21
Through working with a member of the institute	15	12	20
Through web or social media promotional materials	13	15	11
Through an event sponsored by the institute	9	10	8
Through print promotional materials	8	8	8
Through a vocation match or placement service	7	7	7
Through a media story about the institute or member	6	4	9
Through a vocation fair	6	7	5
Other	24	27	13

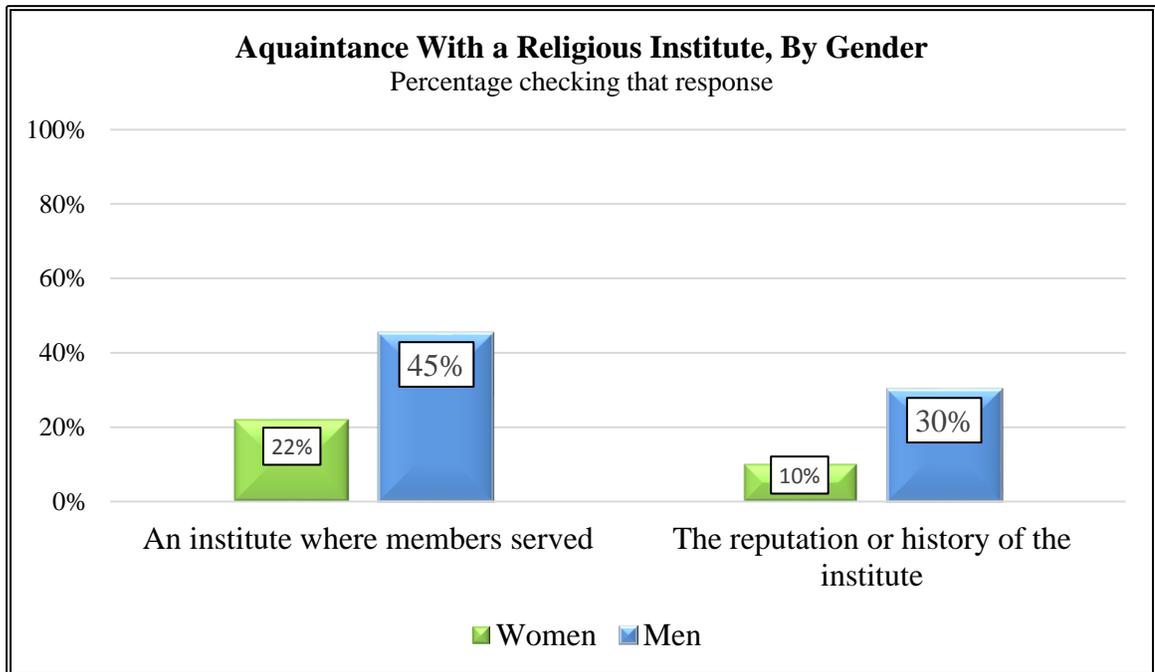
- Between one and two in ten respondents indicate that they became acquainted with their institute through the reputation or history of the institute (19 percent), through a relative or a friend in the institute (16 percent), through working with a member of the institute (15 percent), and through the web or social media promotional materials (13 percent).
- Between one in 20 and one in ten respondents report that that they first became acquainted with their institute through an event sponsored by the institute (9 percent), through print promotional materials (8 percent), through a vocation match or placement service (7 percent), through a vocational fair (6 percent), and through a media story about the institute (6 percent).
- A quarter (24 percent) first became acquainted with their religious institute through some “other” means (often during their college years). The “other” responses are listed below, lightly edited:
 - A Sister studied at my university
 - A visit from members of the institute to my high school

- A women's discernment retreat given by lay consecrated
- After discernment with similar order
- Archdiocese Youth Rally
- At a FOCUS retreat/conference where the Capuchins had a vocation table
- Biography about the Founder, which led to the internet search; the lack of a web presence stood out
- “Come and See” retreat for two weeks
- Community's local presence (grew up near Mother house)
- Coordinated with a Sister to do a service project for the school they worked in; in short, through volunteer work
- Diocesan newspaper
- Diocese of Raleigh web page
- Don't remember
- Falling in love with the spirituality by reading the institute's saints
- Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS)
- Felt God calling me
- FOCUS
- Former monastery's bread pick-up
- Found a flyer and emailed from the website listed on the flyer
- Google
- Holy Spirit
- I went to graduate school ran by the religious community (institution)
- Imagine Sisters Film: Light of Love
- Independent seminar on Thomas Merton
- Initiated email contact after a friend sent me a link to their website
- IRL website
- Knowing some of the sisters before they entered
- Life of the Founder
- Live-in service program offered by community
- Met them in doctor's office and then met them again in a store where I worked
- My Mom
- Nun Run (visit)
- Nun Run hosted by the diocese
- Out in daily life, public event
- Parishioner gave info to vocation's director
- Pilgrimage to shrine where I encountered the Sisters of Life
- Retreat
- Retreat and FOCUS
- Saw their name in a place I volunteered
- Searching for spiritual direction
- SEEK 2015 Conference
- Sent to this institute by my parish for a retreat
- Service with the community (volunteering) and met a priest and brother
- Shared college campus with monastery – required attendance at prayers once for introductory theology class
- Steubenville

- The news letter from the community
- Thomas Merton seminar
- Through a family member
- Through a Jesuit priest
- Through a retreat house
- Through being a lay missionary with the congregation
- Through mission volunteer service with and through a friend(s)
- Through their ministry in my diocese
- Vision survey
- Was employed by the religious congregation
- Word of mouth
- Working a summer camp with a member
- Yearlong volunteer ministry

Comparisons by Gender

Men are more likely than women to have become acquainted with their religious institute in an institution where members served and through the reputation or history 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. They were most likely to report that contact with institute members (86 percent) or contact with a vocation director (74 percent) prior to entering their religious institute were at least “somewhat” helpful. Seven in ten respondents reported contact with vocation director (71 percent), and contact with institute members (69 percent) were “very” helpful.

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

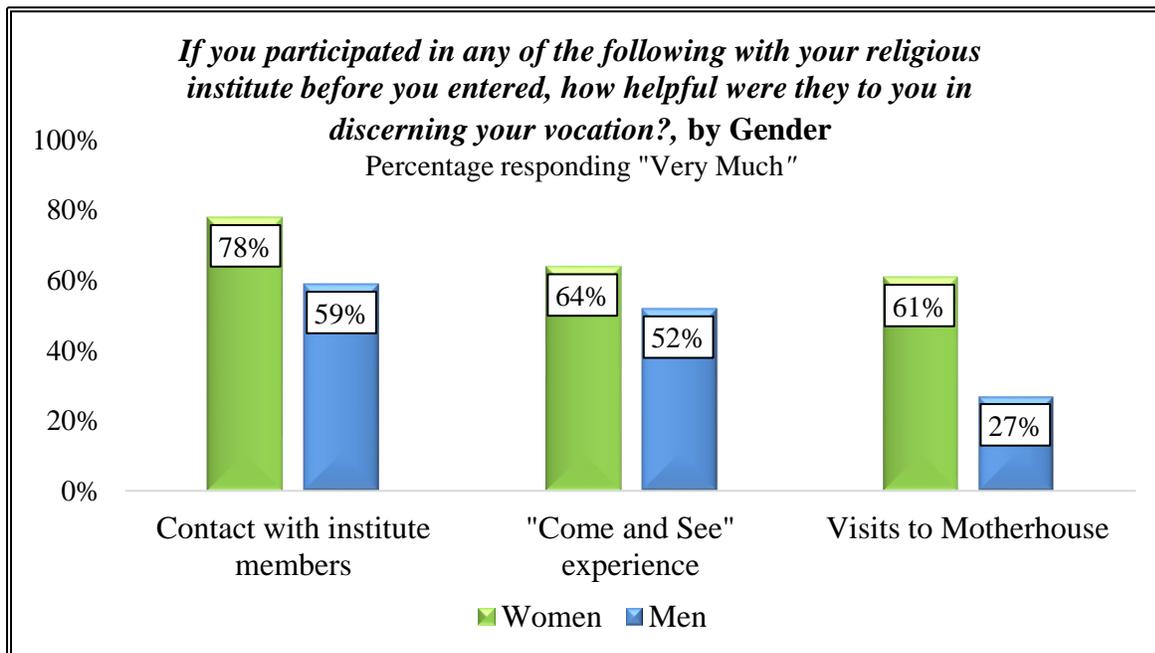
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Contact with institute members	86%	69%
Contact with vocation director	74	71
“Come and See” experience	68	59
Visit(s) to local community (s)	66	52
Vocation or discernment retreat	63	53
Spiritual direction	62	48
Visit(s) to the Motherhouse	56	46
Live in experience	53	47
Ministry with institute members	39	26
Social media (e.g. Facebook)	36	18
Mission experience	24	16
Meeting with a discernment group	23	16
“Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run”	7	5

- About six-tenths to two-thirds of respondents found “Come and See” experiences (68 percent), visits to local communities (66 percent), vocation or discernment retreats (63 percent), and spiritual direction (62 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their institute. About half to six in ten respondents found these experiences “very” helpful.
- More than half say visits to the Motherhouse (56 percent) and a “live-in experience” (53 percent) were at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their religious institute. Almost half found these elements “very” helpful in discerning their call to their institute.
- Slightly fewer than four in ten found ministry with institute members (39 percent) or social media (36 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful before they entered their religious institute. Three in ten say their ministries with institute members were “very” helpful, with nearly two in ten saying the same about social media.

- About one in four respondents report that a mission experience (24 percent) or meeting with a discernment group (23 percent) were at least “somewhat” helpful to them in discerning their call to their institute. One in six respondents reports that these elements were “very” helpful.
- About one in 20 respondents report that “Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run” (7 percent) was at least “somewhat” helpful. One in 20 also found these experiences “very” helpful.

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to report that contact with institute members, the “Come and See” experiences, and visits to the Motherhouse were “very much” helpful in discerning their vocation.



Influences on Decisions to Enter Religious Institutes

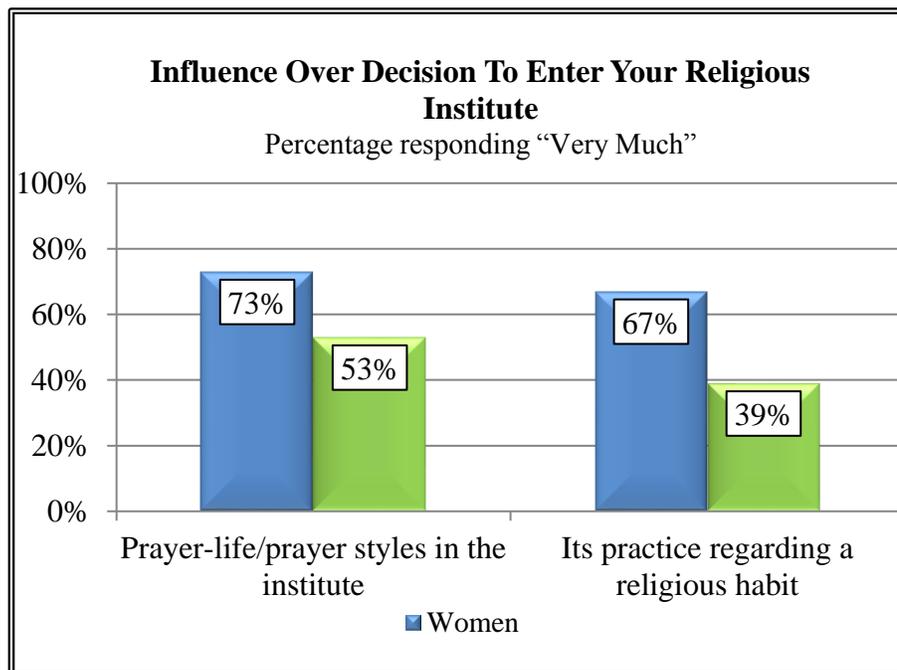
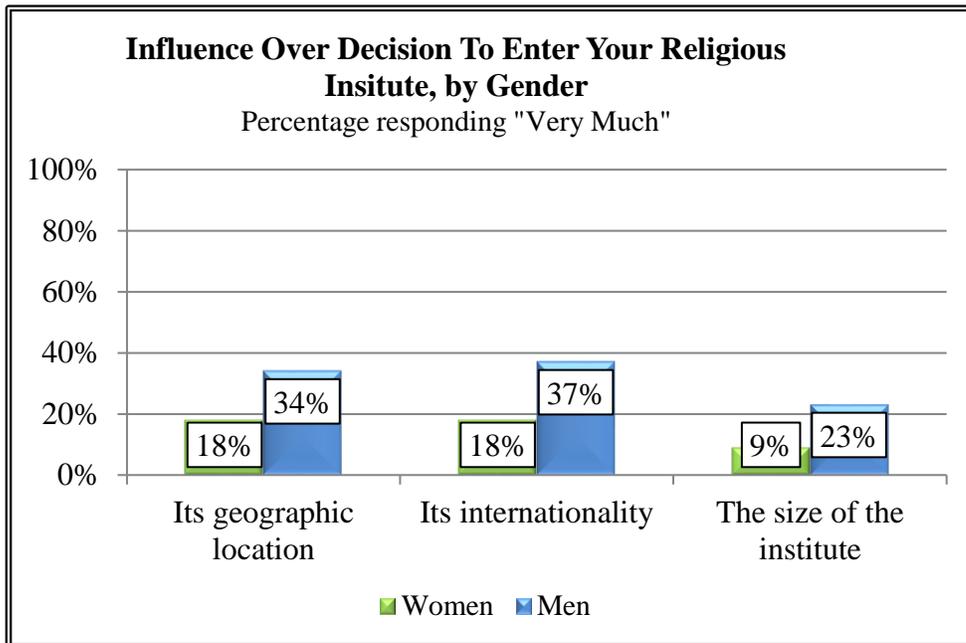
Entrants were asked how much influence various aspects of their religious institute had on their decision to enter that institute. About nine in ten respondents report community life in the institute (94 percent), the lifestyles of members (90 percent), and the prayer styles in the institute (89 percent) influenced their decision to enter their religious institute at least “somewhat.” Between half and two-thirds say these elements influenced them “very much.”

<i>How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
Community life in the institute	94%	66%
The lifestyles of members	90	54
Prayer life/prayer styles in the institute	89	65
The types of ministry of its members	84	54
Its practice regarding a religious habit	76	55
Its geographic location(s)	50	25
The ages of members	46	17
Its internationality	43	27
The size of the institute	42	15
The racial/ethnic background of members	20	10

- More than three-fourths of respondents report having been influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the types of ministry of its members (84 percent) and its practice regarding a religious habit (76 percent). Slightly more than half say these elements influenced them “very much.”
- Between slightly more than two in five and half of respondents report that its geographic location (50 percent) and its internationality (43 percent) were at least “somewhat” influential to their decision to enter their institute. About a quarter say these elements were “very” influential.
- More than four in ten report that the ages of members (46 percent) and the size of the institute (42 percent) were at least “somewhat” influential to their decision to enter their institute. About one in six says these elements were “very” influential.
- Two in ten (20 percent) report that the racial/ethnic background of members at least “somewhat” influenced their decision. One in ten says this was “very” influential.

Comparisons by Gender

Men are more likely than women to report that its geographic location, its internationality and the size of the institute “very much” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute. Women are more likely than men, however, to indicate that prayer-life/prayer styles in the institute and its practice regarding a religious habit influenced them “very much.”



Prayer Practices

Respondents were asked to evaluate how important each of these different types of prayer are to them. Almost all respondents say these types of prayers are at least “somewhat” important to them: private personal prayer (99 percent) and daily Eucharist (96 percent). Nine in ten and above indicated that these elements are “very” important.

<i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Private personal prayer	99%	93%
Daily Eucharist	96	90
Liturgy of the Hours	90	68
Eucharistic Adoration	90	77
Other devotional prayers, e.g. rosary	82	55
Faith sharing	71	40
Common meditation	63	34
Non-liturgical common prayer	63	24

- Nine in ten respondents report that Eucharistic Adoration (90 percent) and Liturgy of Hours (90 percent) are “somewhat” important to them. Between two in three and almost eight in ten say that these elements are “very” important.
- More than seven in ten respondents report that other devotional prayers such as the rosary (82 percent) and faith sharing (71 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them. More than four in ten respondents say these elements are “very” important to them.
- About six in ten respondents indicate that common meditation (63 percent) and non-liturgical common prayer (63 percent) are at least “somewhat” important types of prayer to them. One quarter to one-third say these elements “very” important to them.

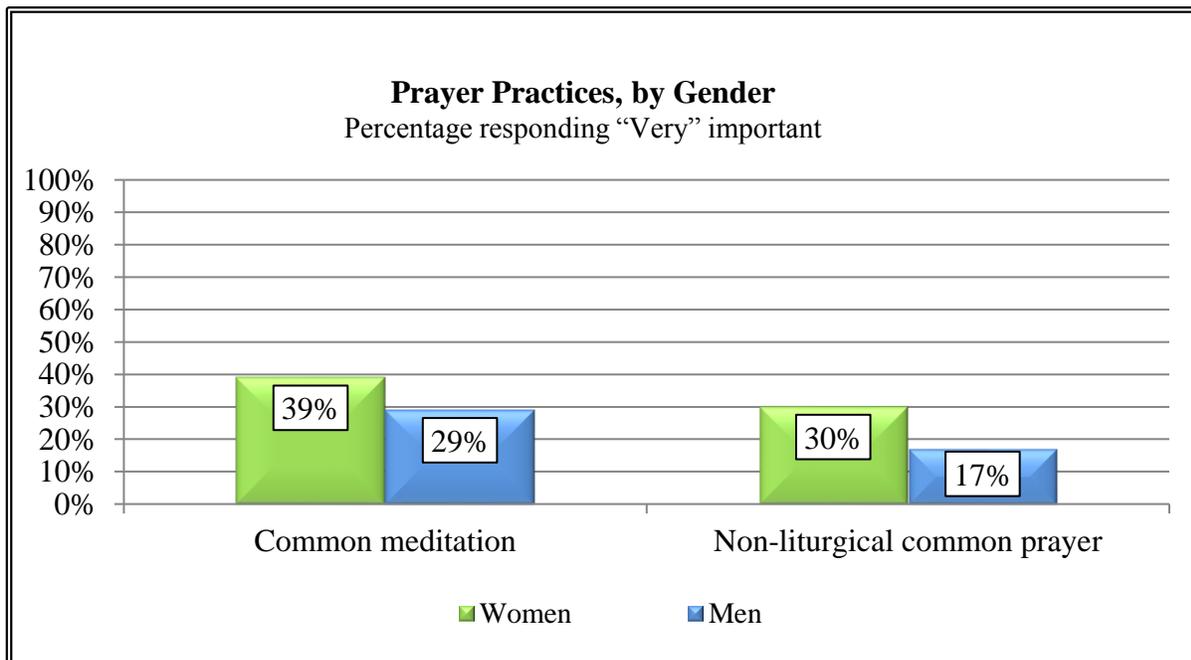
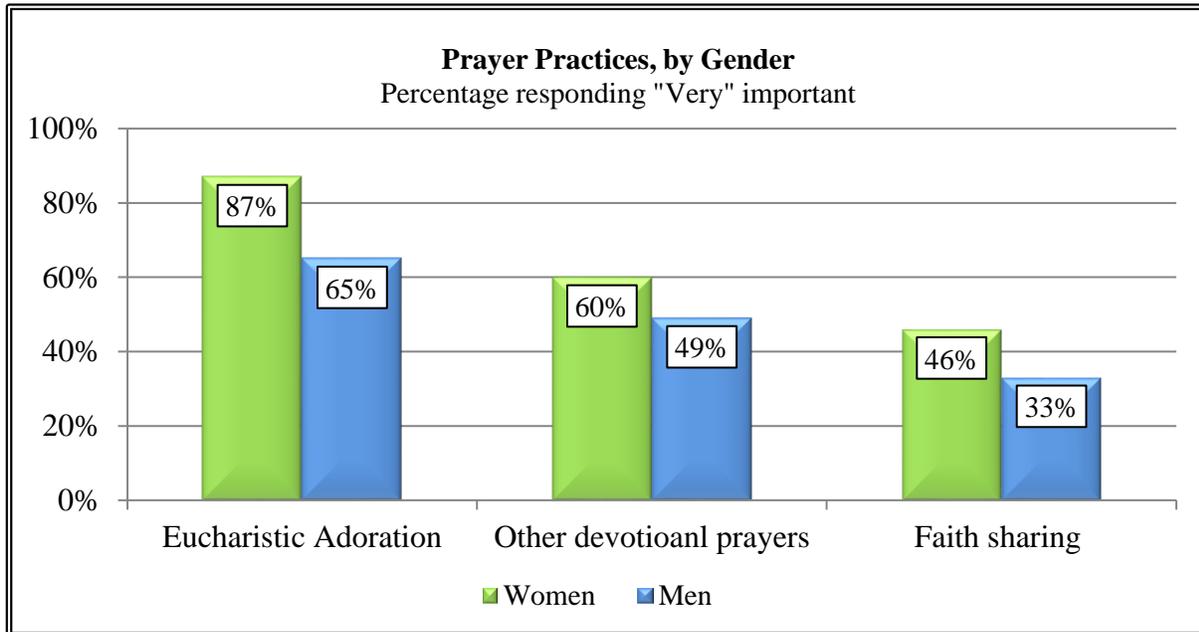
Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say that the following types of prayer are “somewhat” or “very” important to them:

- Non-liturgical common prayer (71 percent for women compared to 53 percent for men)
- Common meditation (70 percent for women compared to 55 percent for men)

- Faith sharing (77 percent for women compared to 63 percent for men)

We next examine gender differences for those saying a prayer practice is “very important” to them. Women are more likely than men to indicate that Eucharistic Adoration, other devotional prayers, faith sharing, common meditation, or non-liturgical common prayers 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 respondents report praying with other members (99 percent) and living with other members (97 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Nearly nine in ten or slightly less say these elements 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	99%	90%
Living with other members	97	86
Sharing meals together	96	77
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	95	75
Working with other members	90	64

- Nearly all respondents report that sharing meals together (96 percent) and socializing/sharing leisure time together (95 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Three in four or slightly more say these elements are “very” important to them.
- Nine in ten respondents report that working with other members (90 percent) is at least “somewhat” important to them. Just over six in ten say this element is very important.

Comparisons by Gender

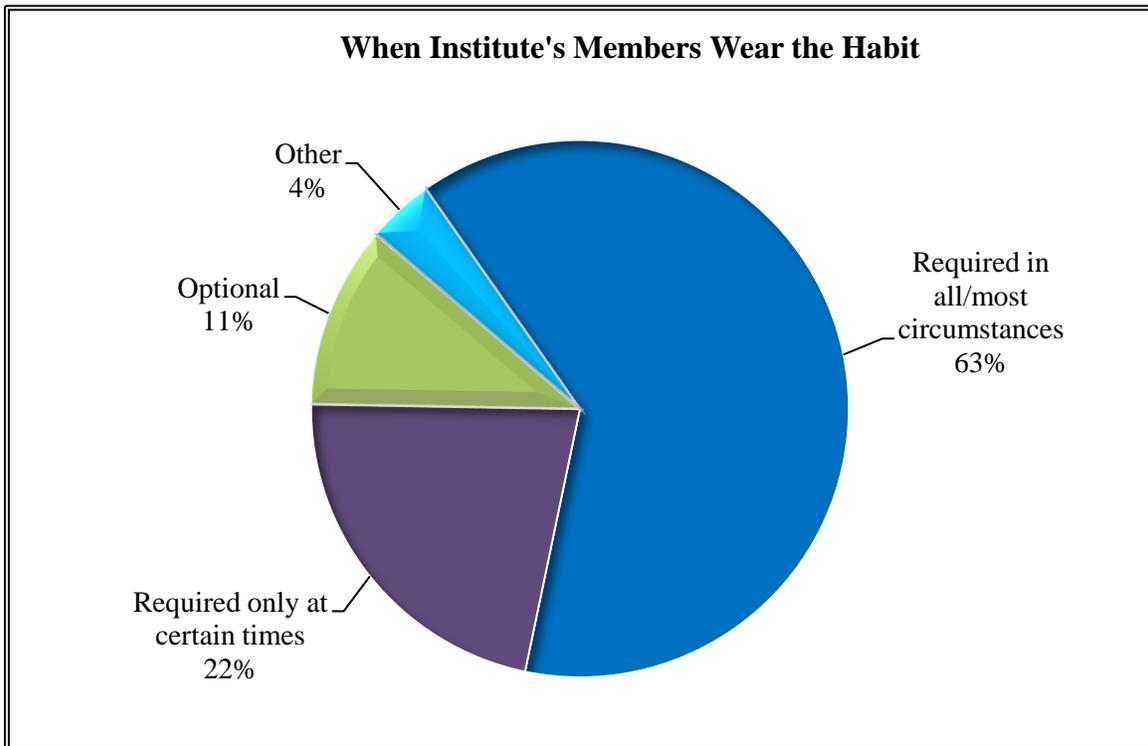
There are no significant differences in how women and men responded to the questions in this section.

Wearing of Religious Habit

New entrants were asked if the members of their institute wear a habit. About eight in ten indicate that members of their institute wear a habit and one in six indicate that members of their institute do not wear a habit. When examining gender, women are slightly more likely than men to say members of their institute wear a habit.

<i>Do members of your institute wear a habit?</i>			
Percentage responding "Yes" or "No"			
	Overall	Women	Men
Yes	83%	86%	78%
No	17	14	22

Among those who indicate that members wear a habit, more than six in ten indicate that the habit is required in all or most circumstances.



- Just over one in five reports that the habit is required only at certain times. One in ten reports that wearing habit is optional in their institute.
- A few respondents report that their members wear habits for other reasons, including:
 - Except hazardous work
 - Hardly ever worn; most brothers resent the habit (brothers 50+age)
 - Modified habits, blue, gray, black
 - New members aren't allowed. Older members who wore a habit when it was required have the option – a few wear modified veils and habits
 - Only for special events
 - Optional and modified, for older members
 - We no longer wear a habit but there are older members who still wear theirs

Differences by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say that wearing the habit is required in all or most all circumstances. Men, on the other hand, are more likely than women to say wearing the habit is required only at certain times or is optional.

<i>If yes, is wearing the habit:</i>			
Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”			
	Overall	Women	Men
Required in all or most circumstances	63%	87%	28%
Required only at certain times	22	5	47
Optional	11	5	20
Other	2	3	4

The 11 percent indicating that wearing the habit is optional were asked a follow-up question: “How many members wear it all or most of the time?” Sixty-four responded to the question. Fourteen percent of respondents report that none of the members wear the habit all the time, 30 percent indicate that a few members (less than 25 percent) wear the habit all the time, 17 percent report that some (25-49 percent) members wear the habit all the time, 8 percent indicate that many (50-74) members wear it all the time, and 31 percent indicate most (75 or more percent) wear the habit all the time.

Among those indicating that wearing the habit is optional, 60 entrants responded to a second follow-up question “How frequently do *you* wear it?” Thirty-two percent say they never wear their habit, 3 percent say they wear it once in a while, 38 percent say they wear it only at certain times, and 27 percent wear it in all or most circumstances.⁵

⁵ This question only applies to novices, as postulants do not wear a habit and do not have the option to do so.

Aspects of the Religious Institute

Nearly all respondents rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” in each of the aspects shown in the table below.

Almost all respondents report that their religious institute is at least “good” or “excellent” in its opportunities for personal growth (98 percent), opportunities for spiritual growth (96 percent) and commitment to ministry (96 percent). More than three-quarters report that their religious institute is “excellent” in these elements.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Good” or “Excellent”	“Excellent” Only
Opportunities for personal growth	98	76
Opportunities for spiritual growth	96	76
Commitment to ministry	96	79
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	96	77
Welcome and support of newer members	96	77
Focus on mission	93	73
Opportunities for ongoing formation	93	63
Fidelity to the Church and its teachings	92	69

- Nearly all respondents report that their religious institute is at least “good” in its faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth (96 percent), and its welcome and support of newer members (96 percent). Slightly less than eight in ten report that their religious institute is “excellent” in these elements.
- More than nine in ten respondents report that their religious institute is at least “good” in its focus in mission (93 percent), opportunities for ongoing formation (93 percent) and fidelity to the Church and its teachings (92 percent). Between just over six in ten and about seven in ten report that their institute is “excellent” in these elements.
- Slightly more than eight in ten report that their institute was at least “good” in its efforts to promote vocations. About half rate their institute as “excellent” in this element.

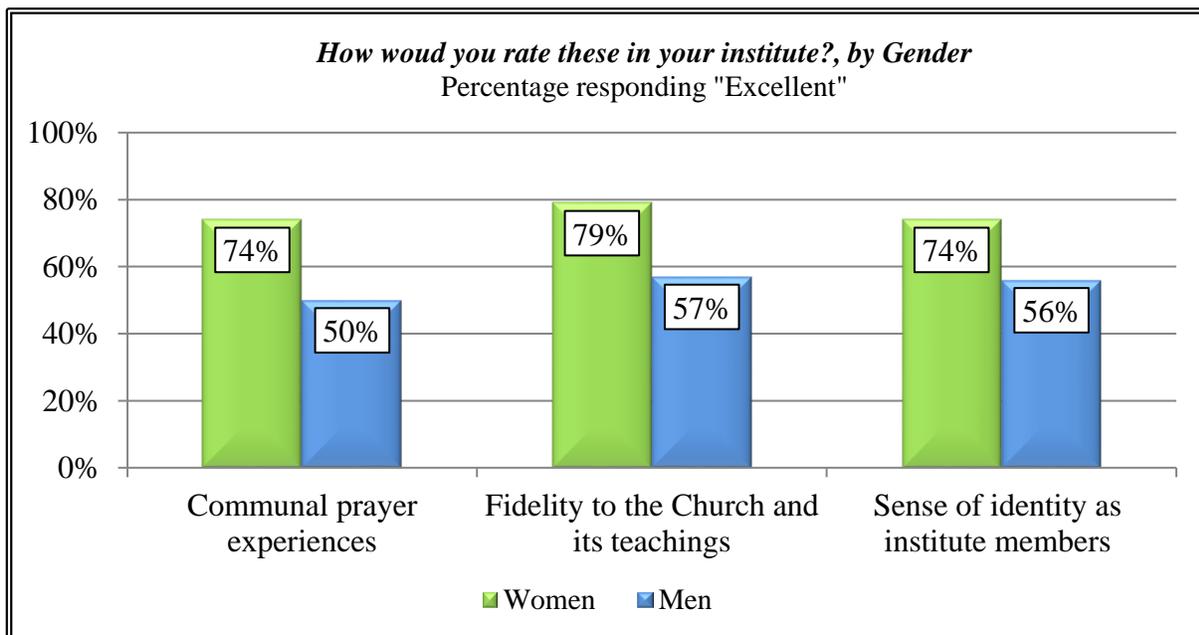
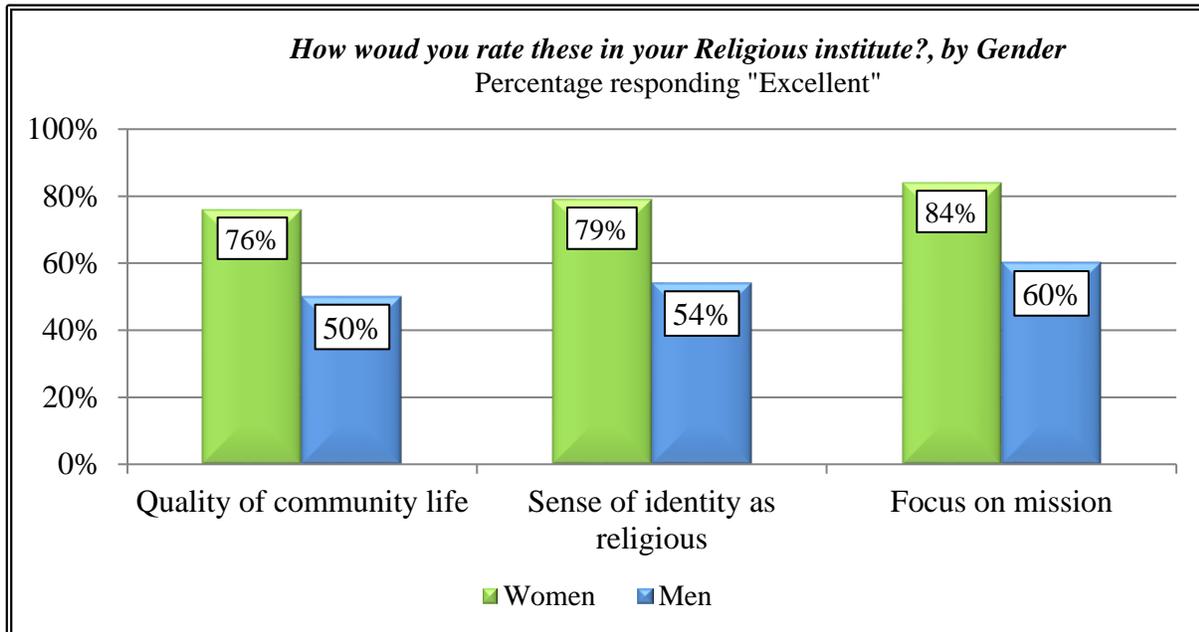
With one exception, at least nine in ten (97 percent) respondents rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” in each of the aspects in the table below.

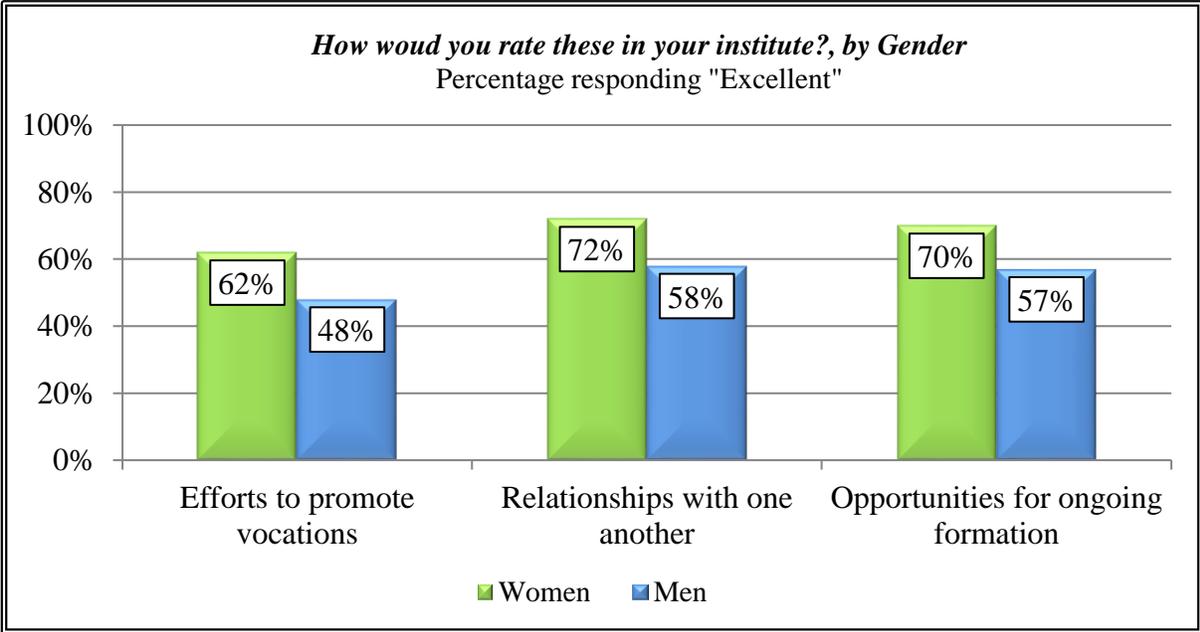
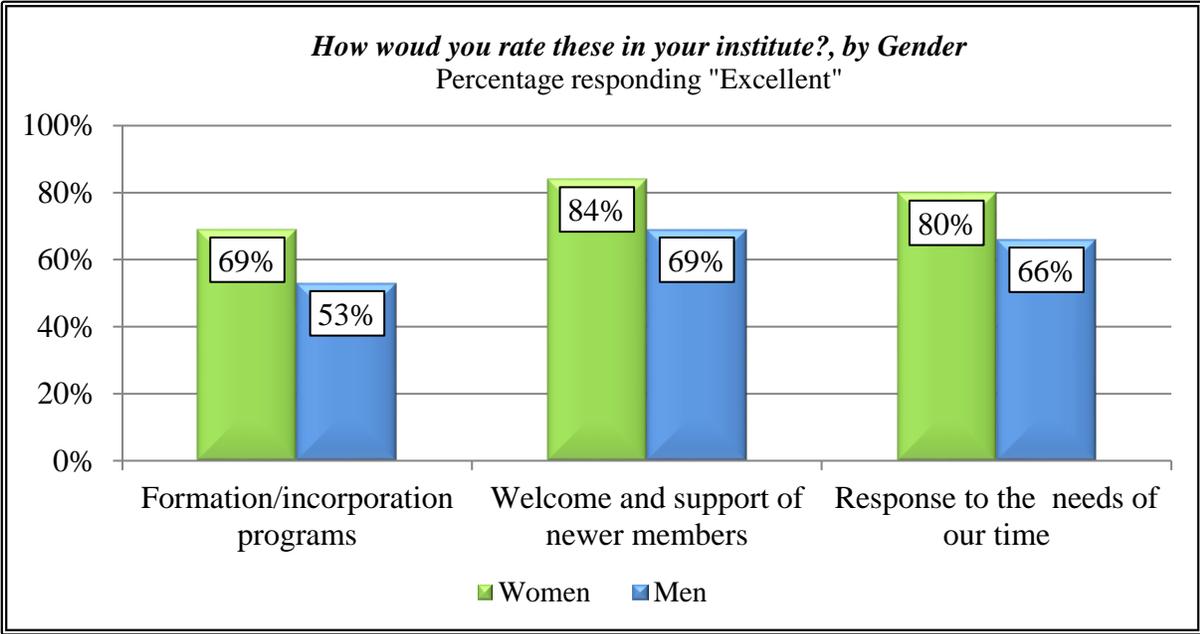
<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Good” or “Excellent”	“Excellent” Only
Efforts to promote social justice	97%	58%
Relationships with one another	96	65
Response to the needs of our time	94	73
Quality of community life	93	64
Sense of identity as religious	92	69
Sense of identity as institute members	92	68
Educational opportunities	92	68
Communal prayer experiences	92	63
Formation/incorporation programs	90	62
Preparation for ministry	90	59
Efforts to promote vocations	84	55

- Between six in ten and three-quarters rate their religious institute as “excellent” in its efforts to promote social justice (97 percent), its relationships with one another (65 percent), and its response to the needs of our time (73 percent).
- Almost three-fourths respondents rate their religious institute as “excellent” in its response to the needs of our time (73 percent).
- About two-thirds rate their religious institute as “excellent” in its sense of identity as religious (69 percent), sense of identity as institute members (68 percent), educational opportunities (68 percent), relationships with one another (65 percent), and quality of community life (64 percent).
- Just over six in ten respondents rate their religious institute as “excellent” in its communal prayer experiences (63 percent).
- Just under six in ten rate their religious institute as “excellent” in its preparation for ministry (59 percent), and efforts to promote vocations (55 percent).

Comparisons by Gender

As shown in the following figures, women are more likely than men to rate their religious institute as “excellent” in the areas presented.





What Most Attracted You to Your 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 prayer life and communal prayer, the founder/ress, spirituality and charism of the institute, mission and ministries, joy of the members, community life, 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 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.

Prayer Life and Communal Prayer

Prayer is the most common element that respondents say attracted 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 the Stations of the Cross. Some of their responses about prayer included:

- *The community’s intense pursuit of union with God through prayer and its commitment toward deepening the spiritual life of all they encountered deeply resonated within me.*
- *The authentic integration of a deeply contemplative life of prayer and a desire to bring the fruits of that prayer to the world.*
- *Also the fact that we pray practically the whole day and are silent (with reservations) for most of the day. The silent prayer time in the dark Church from 3:30 am-6am after vigils to the Eucharist.*
- *Our life of prayer consisting in liturgy, devotions, praise and worship and intercession directed by our life in the Holy Spirit leads to our works of mercy and evangelization.*
- *I was also attracted to them because they have daily Mass, Rosary, Divine Office in community, and a daily Holy Hour.*
- *Devotion to The Blessed Sacrament, devotion to the Blessed Mother, focus on the sacrificial love of Christ on the Cross.*
- *The way they pray – individually and as a community their great depth of communion with the Trinity. And, from their prayer.*
- *They have a deep sense of contemplation that allows them to grow in their relationship with God and the larger world community.*

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. Some of their responses included:

- *I was most attracted by the congregation's charism of perpetual adoration and its fidelity to authentic Franciscan spirituality.*
- *The charism which also includes music, and the silent hours, and community life drew me here specifically.*
- *This order's focus on door-to-door visitation and the beautiful spirit of the foundress to bring back those who have fallen away from Christ is what drew me here.*
- *The charism of life and its manifestations in various apostolates.*
- *The gift of our Charism. How it is integrated within the whole of the mission of Christ and His Church by upholding the dignity of the person, life, love, evangelization, and our life with Christ.*
- *The charism of serving the poor and evangelization.*
- *Felt a real sense of home and belonging as if their charism matched the desires of my heart, the desires of my heart to love and serve.*
- *The joyful spirit of our Foundress, her openness in welcoming people of other countries.*

Sense of Mission and Ministries of the Institutes

Respondents also recognize the sense of mission and ministries of the institute as other attractive aspects that drew them to their religious institute. Some of their responses regarding what attracted them include:

- *I was attracted to the institute by their sense of mission and identity.*
- *Their reaching out to fallen away Catholics and those falling through the cracks, trying to see "Jesus" in those being reached out to and trying to bring "Jesus" to those being reached out to.*
- *It also caught my attention their spirituality and prayer life. Finally, the importance of their service to those most in need.*

- *I also liked that I had the freedom to pursue different ministries and jobs and that I wasn't bound to a particular ministry when I joined the order.*
- *The {Religious institute} not only reach out to people of various ages and states in life, but also help in parishes with various things (youth ministry, teaching religious, and more).*
- *Style of serving (living and working in ecclesial family teams, with priests, sisters, and laity in areas of deepest need).*
- *Diverse ministries, including pastoral work, teaching, preaching, and missionary work. A somewhat (but not excessively) traditionalist ethos.*

Joy of the Institute's Members

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

- *I was most attracted to my religious institute because of the witness of love and joy in the sisters I encountered.*
- *The way the sisters reached out in conversation, how reverent they were in prayer and how bold they were in professing their entire selves to God.*
- *The sense of joy each of the members have while in their apostolate on retreats and camps. They also have a very welcoming approach and hospitable spirit.*
- *The sisters were, and still are so warm and welcoming and willing to take the time to help wherever possible.*
- *The joy its members displayed and how they seemed to genuinely love each other and enjoy being with each other.*
- *The {Religious institute} were attractive to me because of their great joy. This joy was in their charism of "Doing God's will joyfully in imitation of their founder*

Community Life

Another common element of attraction that the responding new entrants report is the community life of the institute. The respondents indicate that community life and community activities very much attracted them to their religious institute. Some of their responses included:

- *Family spirit. Everyone in the community has the same spirit. We are only a group of people who live together but the same spirit we share embrace all of us in the heart of the Lord.*

- *Living together/community life; sharing ministry work; three vows/celebrity; closeness to each other; helping each other as ministry people; sharing each other's burdens, praying together and enjoying together during leisure time.*
- *Very important is the sharing/spending time with the brothers in prayer, meals, etc., while also having that support as well as supporting them in whatever challenges they face.*
- *What attracted me the most is that they were real women, living together in community and called to serve Jesus in the poor.*
- *Working together as a group; opportunities for sharing our background; sharing meals together as we share our stories; to pray together as one family; helping each other; love and care was attractive.*
- *To live in multicultural community and sharing my gifts. Also learning from other through their gifts.*

Fidelity to the Church

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

- *Being in line with the Church and the Pope (being in good standing with the Church).*
- *I am attracted by their faithfulness to the Catholic Church and its teachings and that the life they live is authentic.*
- *Attracted by their faithful obedience and dedication to the Church.*
- *I was most attracted by how our Sisters are both loyal to Christ and his Church and are very real, not trying to fit a mold. The Sisters truly seek to be the best versions of themselves.*
- *Solidarity/faithfulness to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.*

Religious Habit

In addition to the above-mentioned elements, some respondents were attracted by the religious habit worn in their religious institutes. Some of their responses are:

- *I love that they wear a habit and are truly a witness to the world.*
- *They wear a habit (full habit, not the modified or simplified habit that some other religious institutes wear).*

- *The fact that they still wear their habit. I liked that they are a very orthodox Catholic organization.*
- *Seeing that the Institute values a visible religious habit for the members in the USA connected me and attracted me.*

Religious Formation

A number of respondents report having been attracted by the formation that they received in their religious institute. Some of the elements they say impressed them about the religious formation are:

- *For me, the {institute} provided a more holistic approach to growing the individual into a fully formed person not only spiritually, but also psychologically, emotionally, sexually, etc. I saw this as the support I would need if I am going to be successful in living out a possible vocation to priesthood.*
- *An organic formation process that takes into account the complexities of the human person living in the modern world.*
- *Good solid formation, classes on religious life, the vows, etc.*
- *The meetings with the vocation directress. She's a magnet for the Order.*

Social Justice

Other respondents report that their institute's commitment to social justice attracted them. Some elements that were mentioned include:

- *Emphasis on justice/peace/nonviolence attracted me.*
- *Their spirituality and commitment to social justice and education.*
- *Catholic Social Teaching and social justice.*
- *Their ability to inspire people to faith and work for social justice.*

What Do You 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, adaptation to religious life, decreasing access to family and friends, maturing into religious life, formation 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

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 greatest challenge for me is living in a community and loving my Sisters as Christ loves them. Living in community with various personality styles.*
- *Adjustment to community life. Adjustment to poverty and obedience. Adjustment to monastic customs and silence.*
- *Learning to live graciously with so many different types of personalities within community.*
- *Living in community with different personalities and being able to persevere in the daily self-denial and gift of myself.*
- *Living community life and learning how to come into your own gifts while humbly accepting your limitations and appreciating what others bring to the community.*
- *It is difficult, although possible by the grace of God, to understand how the individual diversity fits to make the community whole.*
- *I have always heard that community life is the biggest blessing but also the biggest cross.*
- *That a charitable spirit of a sister is only found in books and movies.*

Adaptation to Religious Life

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

- *It is a challenge for me to keep my heart in all the community activities throughout the day, since I no longer want to live for myself and my preferences, but for God's will.*
- *I had a rather comfortable life before entering religious life, a nice family, the most awesome friends, a promising career, lots of delicious foods etc. I think the most challenging thing so far has been to leave behind all.*
- *The most challenging aspect so far, has been overcoming the ideas of myself that I already had in the secular world, and instead letting myself be seen as who I truly am as a child of God.*
- *I find most difficult being patient with the challenging transition from the world into the life of a religious allowing myself the time and space to allow this growth to happen.*
- *It is also a very physically/emotionally challenging schedule of daily life. It is a stark adjustment from lay life.*
- *Detachment from family and being dependent on superiors for things that were easy before entering (shopping, doctor's appointments, and randomly buying treats).*
- *Inflexible schedule – I feel more like a robot. I must pray on demand and I cannot pray when I have a need or urge because I am doing something else on the schedule.*
- *Shifting from an individual focus to a community focus. Very little individual or "down" time. Also, being so far away from home and family.*

Decreasing Communication with Family and Friends

Another challenge that respondents shared was their decreased communication with their family members and friends. 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. Some of their responses include:

- *I find the separation from my family and friends, and inability to see and communicate with them the way I'm accustomed to, to be one of the hardest things so far*
- *Being apart from family especially in special moments – birthdays, etc.*
- *The most challenging thing for me at this time is detachment from my family/friends and modifying how I perceive life*
- *Homesickness has also been a struggle. It is not just "home" in the sense of my biological family, but also missing friends where I used to volunteer, campus ministry, etc.*

- *The greatest challenge, as I see it right now anyway, is not being an integral part of my family's life anymore,*

Maturing in Religious Life

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 overcoming “myself,” “temptations,” “weakness,” and “sins.” Some of their responses include:

- *What I find difficult is having to let people know what I am doing. I can't just do what I want which is fine. It's a learning process of a team or family.*
- *Sometimes I find it challenging to let go and let - God. I have found it challenging to learn how to re-prioritize my life.*
- *Difficulty of emotional intimacy/loneliness. Living in close quarters with brothers I did not choose and balancing apostolate, prayer, study, and community life.*
- *The most challenging struggle I face is that my time no longer belongs to me but to God, and the people I serve.*

Religious Formation

In addition, respondents described some challenges in their formation program, in discerning their vocation, or in seeking the balance between prayer and ministry life. Some of their comments include:

- *The formation technique. Coming from managing a parish for 25 years – I am used to knowing all the answers. Now I've entered into a world where I have no answers.*
- *Right now the most challenging thing about religious life is learning what is expected and how to balance it all.*
- *What I find to be most challenging at times is human formation. However, as challenging as human formation is, I see the supreme importance in it.*
- *I found it hard to trust my formators and submit myself to their guidance.*

Other Challenges

Other types of challenges that respondents found in responding to the new life style in their religious communities include:

- *At this moment, the most challenging is the language in the USA Context.*
- *What I find most challenging in this particular order, at this time, is the many exceptions to the norm and varieties of ways the monastic life is lived out.*
- *Being attacked by the devil.*
- *The age gap my community has an average age of 77 and I am 23 and that is a major challenge for me.*
- *The biggest challenge I have faced is not being supported by the culture. It's hard to make this sacrifice when family/friends do not understand and support.*

Appendix I: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

Entrance Class of 2016

N= 286

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

Please use the responses below for questions 1-15.

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

How much did the following attract you to religious life?

1	2	3	4	NR	
<1	3	16	81	2	1. A sense of call to religious life
1	3	1	76	3	2. A desire for prayer and spiritual growth
3	11	29	58	3	3. A desire to be part of a community
1	8	22	69	2	4. A desire to be of service
3	15	31	52	2	5. A desire to be more committed to the Church

How much did these attract you to your religious institute?

1	2	3	4	NR	
10	20	32	40	4	6. The life and works of your founder/ress
3	6	28	63	2	7. The mission of the institute
1	6	19	74	2	8. The spirituality of the institute
1	7	29	63	2	9. The prayer life of the institute
1	5	33	61	3	10. The community life of the institute
2	17	27	54	3	11. The ministries of the institute
4	12	19	65	3	12. The institute's fidelity to the Church
2	6	19	73	3	13. The example of members of the institute
21	23	23	34	7	14. A personal invitation by a member
1	12	28	59	3	15. Welcome encouragement by members

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

32	16.	In an institution where members served
15	17.	working with a member of the institute
16	18.	a relative or a friend in the institute
29	19.	the recommendation of a friend or advisor
19	20.	the reputation or history of the institute
6	21.	Through a vocation fair
7	22.	a vocation match or placement service
9	23.	Through an event sponsored by the institute
6	24.	a media story about the institute or member
32	25.	Through your own internet search
8	26.	Through print promotional materials
13	27.	web or social media promotional materials
24	28.	Other: _____

Please use the responses below for questions 29-41.

1=Not at All Helpful 3=Somewhat Helpful
2=Only a Little Helpful 4=Very Helpful
5=Not Applicable/Did not participate

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?

1	2	3	4	5	NR		
1	5	13	71	10	2	29. Contact with the vocation director	
4	1	7	69	11	3	30. Contact with institute members	
4	4	2	5	85	10	31. "Andrew Dinner" or "Nun Run"	
1	3	10	59	28	5	32. "Come and See" experience	
1	2	10	53	34	5	33. Vocation or discernment retreat	
<1	2	6	47	45	5	34. Live in experience	
2	5	14	26	54	8	35. Ministry with institute members	
2	1	8	1	6	73	8	36. Mission experience
4	6	8	16	67	8	37. Meeting with a discernment group	
1	5	14	52	29	6	38. Visit(s) to local community/ies	
2	4	10	46	39	6	39. Visit(s) to the Motherhouse	
8	20	19	18	36	7	40. Social media (e.g., Facebook)	
1	6	13	48	32	5	41. Spiritual direction	

Please use the responses below for questions 42-51.

How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?

1	2	3	4	NR	
33	25	27	15	2	42. The size of the institute
30	20	26	25	3	43. Its geographic location(s)
40	17	16	27	14	44. Its internationality, if applicable
2	9	25	65	2	45. Prayer life/prayer styles in the institute
0	6	28	66	2	46. Community life in the institute
<1	10	36	54	4	47. The lifestyle of members
64	16	10	10	5	48. Racial/ethnic background of members
32	22	30	17	3	49. The ages of members
5	10	31	54	4	50. The types of ministry of its members
14	10	21	55	3	51. Its practice regarding a religious habit

Please use the responses below for questions 52-64.

1=Not at All

3=Somewhat Important

2=Only a Little

4=Very Important

How important to you are these types of prayer?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 0 1 6 93 2 52. Private personal prayer
1 3 6 90 2 53. Daily Eucharist
3 6 22 68 2 54. Liturgy of the Hours
11 26 39 24 3 55. Non-liturgical common prayer
10 27 29 34 4 56. Common meditation
2 8 14 76 2 57. Eucharistic Adoration
5 13 28 55 2 58. Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary
8 22 30 40 3 59. Faith sharing

How important to you are these aspects of community life?

1 2 3 4 NR

- <1 2 12 86 3 60. Living with other members
<1 1 9 90 2 61. Praying with other members
2 8 26 64 2 62. Working with other members
1 3 16 80 2 63. Sharing meals together
1 4 20 75 2 64. Socializing/sharing leisure time together

Please use the responses below for questions 65-83.

1=Poor

3=Good

2=Fair

4=Excellent

How would you rate these in your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 4 12 29 55 5 65. Efforts to promote vocations
<1 3 1 77 4 66. Welcome & support of newer members
1 9 29 62 6 67. Formation/incorporation programs
1 6 30 63 7 68. Opportunities for ongoing formation
2 6 24 68 7 69. Educational opportunities
3 7 31 59 9 70. Preparation for ministry
0 4 20 76 4 71. Opportunities for spiritual growth
<1 2 22 76 5 72. Opportunities for personal growth
3 6 24 68 5 73. Sense of identity as religious
2 6 24 68 5 74. Sense of identity as institute members
2 6 22 69 4 75. Fidelity to the Church and its teachings
<1 4 19 77 4 76. Faithfulness to prayer & spiritual growth
1 6 21 73 5 77. Focus on mission
2 3 17 79 6 78. Commitment to ministry
1 6 21 73 6 79. Response to the needs of our time
2 11 29 58 7 80. Efforts to promote social justice
1 6 30 64 5 81. Quality of community life
1 7 29 63 4 82. Communal prayer experiences
0 4 31 65 5 83. Relationships with one another

Yes No NR

83 18 2 84. Do members of your institute wear a habit?

85. If yes to #84, is wearing the habit NR=20

63. Required in all or most circumstances

22. Required only at certain times, e.g., ministry, prayer

11 Optional

4 Other: _____

86. If yes to #84, and wearing the habit is optional, how many members wear it all or most of the time? NR=78

14 None

30 A few (less than 25%)

17 Some (25-49%)

9. Many (50-74%)

31 Most (75% or more)

87. If yes to #84, and wearing the habit is optional, how frequently do you wear it? NR=79

32. Never

3 Once in a while

38 Only at certain times (e.g., ministry, prayer)

27. In all or most circumstances

About You

88. Are you: 44. Male 56. Female NR=3

89. If male, do you expect to become a NR=58

21 Perpetually professed brother 79. Priest

AVG=1988 NR= 2 90. Year you were born

AVG=2022 NR=18 91. Year you expect to profess perpetual vows

AVG=18 NR=10 92. Age first considered religious life

AVG=4 NR=28 93. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

94. What is your birth order? NR=2

4. Only child 27. Youngest

31. Eldest 37. Somewhere in the middle

95. What best describes your racial or ethnic background?

4 African/African American/black NR=2

11 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian

71 Caucasian/European American/white

11. Hispanic/Latino(a)

<1 5. Native American/American Indian

4 Other: _____

147. What most attracted you to your religious institute? **Response = 268**

148. What do you find most challenging about religious life? **Response = 261**

Appendix II: Responses to Open-ended Comments

Q. 147: What most attracted you to your religious institute?

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

I was drawn by their love for Christ, their beautiful and selfless service to others after Mary's example, and their profound witness of self-gift to Holy Mother Church in wearing the habit of Carmel. I felt so loved in their presence and couldn't reason away the deep joy I felt in their presence.

What attracted me to our institute was the community's fidelity to the Church and the beautiful, joyful, vibrant witness of Carmelite Spirituality. The Communities intense pursuit of union with God through prayer and its commitment toward deepening the spiritual life of all they encountered deeply resonated within me. The authentic integration of a deeply contemplative life of prayer and a desire to bring the fruits of that prayer to the world.

Fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church. Life of prayer. Emphasis on detachment of self, poverty of spirit, purity of heart, union with God (Carmelite spirituality). Big/medium sized community – family! Traditional habits – loudest eschatological witness! Mary's order

The intense joy I experienced with my community. It was as if all the desires of my heart were laid out in front of me on the "Come and See" retreat.

The sense of family life. I grew up in a tight-knit family and this is important to me. Additionally, my institute is very much into promoting whatever vocation one is called to. I never felt pressure to enter but it was a free choice. The prayer life is also very well structured and a lot of time and effort is put into personal growth and growth as a community.

I was first attracted to the institute by the members who seemed so holy, yet also very normal. As I learned more about the charism, I became first attracted to the spirituality, as I experienced how God spoke to my heart through the way of prayer of the community. Ultimately, it was through experiencing the wholeness of the charism, of understanding that it could be a real path to sanctity, that attracted me. The charism of the order and especially the traditional aspects (e.g. habit, monastic observances), but yet the energy, joy, and peace of all the sisters. It is faithful to any and all teachings of the Church and places the utmost importance on prayer life and community life.

At first, the youth and joy of the sisters. But as I got to know them on a deeper, more personal level, it was their prayer life and their striving for a deeper holiness. The fact that they wear a habit was a big thing for me as well. Just in every aspect, we are a beautiful religious order.

The Eucharistic and Marian dimensions of our spirituality.

Our Dominican Tradition and all that it includes – zeal for souls, a love for the whole human person, chanting the Divine Office, love for the Eucharist, wearing the habit, a life of study – all for the glory of God.

A chance to use my intellect and my joy in concrete ways for the Lord. I saw the kind of person I wanted to be, and I saw the Lord opening every door and removing every barrier.

*Way of praying. Example of members. Community. Apostolate and study
To contemplate and to give to others the fruits of our contemplation."*

This is how St. Thomas Aquinas described the mission of the Dominican Order of Preachers. It drew me into the charism of Dominican life because I desired a deep contemplative life, but burned with a zeal for souls. The contemplative nature of the Dominicans is meant to overflow into an urgent zeal for the salvation of souls. The Dominicans of St. Cecilia (Nashville, TN) live this beautifully. The charism also includes music, and the silent hours, and community life drew me here specifically

The dedication of its members to loving the Lord in the monastic lifestyle. Mostly the order of living – times of silence, study, prayer, and leisure.

Fidelity to the Churches traditions, prayer life, joyful members, young members, excellent formation, focus on study

I was most attracted to my religious institute because of the witness of love and joy in the sisters I encountered. In their speech, example, and presence, I could really feel how much peace and fulfillment they were living in. More than anything, it was their beauty that impressed and warmed my heart. Beauty, in the sense of the fact that they had given their entire lives totally for love of God; hence there was nothing else that could compare. This beauty took form in the way the sisters reached out in conversation, how reverent they were in prayer and how bold they were in professing their entire selves to God.

The Dominican ideal of integrating both a contemplative life and an active apostolate, and the conviction that truth does not have to be cheapened or dulled down before given in teaching or preaching ministry

Importance on Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. The amount of times for prayer. Mixed life. Wearing of a religious habit. Faithful to the Catholic Church. Orthodox, importance on preaching the truth and joy of the Gospel

I think it was the sense of belonging I had when I visited – every time I visited the local mission I wanted to leave less. I was also very encouraged by the example/witness of one of the sisters there in particular – she was a real role model for me.

The mission and prayer life of the institute.

I was most attracted by how the sisters balanced an active lifestyle with prayer. I deeply need personal prayer, but truly feel called to live a life of more active service. I also felt drawn to the order because they embrace social media and technology. They embrace the New

Evangelization, and having graduated in Communications, I believe Jesus is calling me to also embrace this where He continues to guide me.

The voice in my heart was what led me the most. However, I was also attracted by the range of apostolates, location, habit, prayer, lifestyle, feeling of being at home, and the joy of the sisters.

I was most attracted to our rhythm of prayer and work/ministry. The fact that the entire day is steeped in prayer which makes it ever more possible to really bring the face of Christ to those we minister to and also more deeply enter into the mystery for ourselves. I was also attracted by the charismatic nature of our community. The fact we participate in praise and worship.

What attracted me to the TOR sisters was their Franciscan Spirituality and their contemplative/active rhythm of life. Our life of prayer consisting in liturgy, devotions, praise and intercession directed by our life in the Holy Spirit leads to our works of mercy and evangelization. After visiting our sisters and hearing more about their way of life, I knew that everything they said is what I wanted for my life. I realized after meeting them that I had a Franciscan spirituality for my life. I realized after meeting them that I had a Franciscan spirituality even though I didn't know what that meant. I felt that the desires the Lord placed in me since I was young were all able to be met/fulfilled in the lifestyle of these sisters.

What most attracted me was their spirituality. the work and prayer all flow from this. We seek to make known God's merciful love, through ministries, but also through our life of prayer and penance. All of this, and more, fit with how God was/is leading me in my own spirituality. The balance of contemplative and active rhythm in our life, and the participation we have in the Charismatic Renewal were also key elements. Plus, all the Sisters here are a real hoot! :)

Authenticity; radicalism; faithfulness to the Church; simple prayer life (Eucharistic Adoration, Mass, rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, Lectio Divina); good solid formation, classes on religious life, the vows, etc.; communal life; poverty lived out; joy of the community; witness in the world; beauty, reverence and sacredness of the Liturgy (Still Novus Ordo); apostolate/charism; love of Mary.

I am most attracted by our faithfulness to the teachings of the Catholic Church and deep life of prayer. Faithfulness to Church teaching was a non-negotiable for me when looking at orders but I saw a level of faithfulness in my institution which really drew me. I also saw a deep love for Christ and for prayer which was also very attractive to me.

To live only for God through/in union with Him, through prayers, work, and helping others. Belonging to a good community gives me the foundation and guidance to follow. Especially a community started by a humble saint.

The sisters' joy and their lifestyle of living out holy poverty were two big attractions. The fact that they were the habit was another big factor for me when I was looking into the sisters.

I was attracted to my religious order because it had a focus on being contemplative and missionary in ways that had been in my heart for several years. I felt called specifically to go

out to bring people to Jesus and I felt Christ's deep longing for his sheep who are far from Him, those who may not come to Him on their own without a little encouragement. Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" and when Peter says, "yes," Jesus replies, "Feed my sheep." His sacred heart is constantly thinking of His sheep and going out to bring them to Him became more and more what I knew would fulfill the desire of my heart. This order's focus on door-to-door visitation and the beautiful spirit of the foundress to bring back those who have fallen away from Christ is what drew me here. I was also attracted to them because they wear a habit, live community life in all their convents, are faithful to the teachings of the Church, have daily Mass, Divine Office in community, and a daily Holy Hour.

Various things were important in association with my religious institute. Some things that attracted me to the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate were: the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, devotion to the Blessed Mother, reaching out to fallen away Catholics and those falling through the cracks, trying to see "Jesus" in those being reached out to and trying to bring "Jesus" to those being reached out to, the focus on the sacrificial love of Christ on the Cross, the wearing of a habit, and being in line with the Church and the Pope (being in good standing with the Church). It is also beautiful that the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate not only reach out to people of various ages and states in life, but also help in parishes with various things (youth ministry, teaching religious, and more).

Fidelity to the Church, strong prayer life, devotion to the Eucharist and Mary, strong community life, on-going formation, wearing of the habit, the charism of life and its manifestations in various apostolates, and the vibrancy/growth of the institute (young sisters, new vocations).

I am attracted to the unity within the community. They are truly of one mind and one heart. I am attracted by their faithfulness to the Catholic Church and its teachings and that the life they live is authentic. I am attracted by their joy. I love that they wear a habit and are truly a witness to the world.

First, the Lord. I felt His presence within my heart in His most vibrant form when I was with or prayed with this community. Second, the connection I felt through the founder Cardinal O'Conner, how much we shared the same mission and desires of life. The charism; I finally realized who I am in this charism and suddenly every action I ever took for my life made sense within this stream of this charism.

Eucharistic prayer lives and prayer at forefront. Fidelity to the Church and her teachings. Traditional and visible witness of habit and community living. The Charism: discerning how the Lord made my own heart and realizing it within the gift of our Charism. How it is integrated within the whole of the mission of Christ and His Church by upholding the dignity of the person, life, love, evangelization, and our life with Christ.

The primary focus of their life is as spouse to our Lord, and mother as spiritual mothers. The charism of life.

Firstly, the way they pray – individually and as a community their great depth of communion with the Trinity. And, from their prayer, the way that they love, how they receive and reverence each person before them.

A calling to lay down your life so that others may live, the contemplative/Active lifestyle that allows for us to first rest in the truth of Jesus which we then flow into our activity. I love the community and gift of life we share with each other and others.

Our Foundress Blessed Elizabetta Perzi - her life and her missions - is what most attracted me to my institute. Also, I was (and am) able to completely relate to the spirituality of the Institute because it's who I have always been. Ever since I was a child, I had a deep devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows, Jesus Crucified, and the Eucharist; and this is our spirituality.

The life of virtue that the members (who I knew well) lived and the joy that radiates from their lives - and their faithful obedience and dedication to the Church.

I was most attracted by the congregation's charism of perpetual adoration. I was first attracted to religious life from a desire for deeper prayer so contemplative charism was important. I realized my ardent desire for my entire life to be spent in adoring the Lord was simply His cultivation of our community's charism in my heart before I even knew it. I like all of our members, am here because of the strong Eucharistic charism of our congregation.

The Order's charism of perpetual adoration and its fidelity to authentic Franciscan spirituality, in St. Francis' love for the Eucharist and for Christ crucified, drew me most.

The way that the sisters loved God and their co-sisters and Church family. You can tell their devotion to continual prayer and deep prayer life through the fruits of their ministries and the conversation you have with our sisters.

Family spirit. Everyone in the community has the same spirit. We are only a group of people who live together but the same spirit we shared embrace all of us in the heart of the Lord.

The sense of joy each of the members have while in their apostolate on retreats and camps. Each member is very personal and international to everyone they meet, and they teach/share how personal and relational God is to each individual. They also have a very welcoming approach and hospitable spirit.

The life of prayer

Prayer life and solitude with God.

I believe I was most attracted to the spirituality of the monastery I am in. Dominican spirituality suits me and I feel very comfortable with it. The monastery that I'm in also has a very specialized and focused spirituality, that of the Perpetual Rosary and Adoration which again, I think attracted me to this place. The community is very vibrant and I feel very much at home

with them and there is this sense of freedom that I can be who God wants me to be when I'm in this monastery.

The Holy Eucharist is the "Source and Summit" of the life at this monastery and this seems evident in the lives of the nuns by their reverence in His presence and fidelity to liturgical norms.

I'm not entirely sure, but one thing that did attract me was the peacefulness here. I felt very peaceful there when I was visiting here in the summer of 2016.

Charism of contemplative prayer. Jesus of the liturgy, daily mass, full Divine Office. Scheduled time after vigils for personal prayer, study, lectio, etc. Community lifestyle matches my own. "Clicked" with community on a personal level. Beautiful grounds, woods, fields, etc. that allow for running, walking, for long periods of times; communion with nature is important to me. Daily schedule, walk, prayer, study. Ultimately in God's call to this place :)

Adoration, felt God so strongly here.

I felt at peace and like God was calling me. I was attracted to daily Mass/Adoration, poverty and simplicity of Franciscan spirituality, and the Divine Office (sung and in English). I was also edified by the nuns.

The opportunity to live out sacrificial love by giving my life to our Lord through the combination of what St. Therese of Lisieux said about the value of contemplative life to following St. Francis's life to ideals as closely as I could. Charism; founders and the virtues that the founders stressed; vocational directress; prayer life and meditation and the sacred heart; history of the institute; habit (full habit, not the modified or simplified habit that some other religious institutes wear)

There are many charisms, and religious communities, however, it brings my attention that a wife, mother, and widow was as foundress of the visitation order. After I read St. Jane de Chantal and St. Francis de Sales, I felt in love of their desire to found a religious order that would welcome to women seeking a deep relationship with God, but who for one reason or other reasons could not live with the physical rigors of traditional religious life.

As a mature person, I began to feel the tug to religious life, this time to a more contemplative way of my life.

After I visited the Visitation Monastery, I found that this community is the one that could give me the opportunity to live in a contemplative way that I was looking for.

Prayer, God's call, director support and availability.

What attracted me the most is that they were real women, living together in community and called to serve Jesus in the poor.

Community life, working together as a group; opportunities for sharing our background; sharing meals together as we share our stories; to pray together as one family; helping each other; love and care

The deciding factor for me was the vow of stability Benedictines take. bThis stability is not just to stay in the same community for the rest of one's earthly life. This is a vow to find Christ in your sister. Simply put it is a vow of love. To say to each other each day by our actions; I will love you through the good and the bad and I will help you walk the narrow way. I saw this in other communities but because God the Father wanted me with the Missionary Benedictine Sisters, he gave me the graces to see this love more clearly through my sisters. Simply put, it was God's grace that lead me here.

The joyful spirit, Benedictine charism, commitment to prayer, and friendships with some members.

I am drawn to the charism of preaching and study, the commitment to relationships, the dedication to social justice and a deep spiritual life. The sisters seem joyful.

The sisters' strong devotion to the Eucharist, teaching ministry, and charism of charity attracted me to this community. I also liked the presence of younger sisters and reasonable rules about communication with families and friends.

The women here seem so very down to earth. I found a place that I could see the diversity of personalities and it became real to me that I didn't have to change who I am in order to participate in this life.

The feeling of "home" and "belonging" I had when spending time with the Sisters. The decision just felt right. There was nothing logical about it.

Relationships with current/discerning members. Emphasis on justice/peace/nonviolence. The Sisters were joyful in their ministries and very down to earth. The Sisters were, and still are so warm and welcoming and willing to take the time to help wherever possible. They have a genuine concern for society and a love of God that seems to sustain them. Their dependency on God and their connection and relationship with him continues to inspire me and make me strive to have that same relationship throughout my life.

The prayer life and the balance of prayer, work, and leisure.

Before making any visit, I was attracted to the variety of ministries the members were a part of. As I got to know the community more it was balance that attracted me. A balance between prayer and ministry. A balance between work and leisure. A balance between personal prayer and communal prayer. A balance between community time and personal space. More than anything else it is desire to pursue and find balance in all things that attracted me.

What attracted me the most were the Sisters. The genuine love and care they gave to all they met. Their peacefulness in prayer.

Community life.

Pray

Ministry

Their joy, their love for God, their prayer life and community life, and their mission of catholic education.

The dedication to ministry and helping those are the margins. I witnessed so much creativity from my sisters in how they solved problems. They have a deep sense of contemplation that allows them to grow in their relationship with God and the larger world community. My sisters have taught me how to live as a contemplative in action.

Being part of a support group of women who believe in the same ministry that I was a part of as a teacher and leader of RCIA for children. Spending time in prayer together and being connected through a bond of sisterhood that accepts people where they are and encourages growth.

I was seeking to combine two aspects of my life: my desire to continue teaching, and my desire to share the Gospel with others. At a public school, I was unable to do this easily. Joining my religious institute was a way for me to combine "both worlds," knowing that I could continue teaching down the road, and I could more easily and readily share God's word with those around me. As I got to know the men in this order, I also started to really respect the ministry they did throughout the community. Who they were as people, and what they did day-in and day-out to give to others was really inspiring to me.

What most attracted me was the living of the life of community, and also the ability to love others.

The community life. then the ministry/mission opportunities.

Diversity of ministry; common prayer; common meals; Holy Cross is the order where St. Brother Andre; Blessed Basil Moreau's writings; many younger members are starting to wear their habits.

I was drawn to Holy Cross after witnessing the way they lived in community. I also really like how each member's gifts seemed to be celebrated in their ministry and call.

The brotherhood of the men in formation and of the priests. It reminded me of the brotherhood that I experienced in my family and fraternity. Also, the variety of ministries. I have a love for missions and the other ministries they are involved in. It allows me to know where I get sent is where God wants me to be.

The congregation's community life, its commitment to education in the faith, and the variety of ministerial opportunities attracted me to Holy Cross.

After meeting and working with CSC's as well as a call to the priesthood and religious life, The Congregation of Holy Cross seemed like the natural choice for me. It was a combination of the community life, ministries, and common prayer that really solidified my decision.

The strong sense of community and zeal for the mission.

The mission

The way that they interact with each other

The communal life

Their simplicity of life and that they all spoke my mother language Spanish. Also, the first time I crossed the door of the formation house I felt at home and in peace.

The welcoming of the members. The way they treat each other. It also caught my attention their spirituality and prayer life. Finally, the importance of their service to those most in need.

The example of the members coupled with the mission of the institute most attracted me. I had already been a priest for a few years when I began to fall in love with Carmelite spirituality and the Carmelite Charism (discalced). I began going to the local monastery to pray and met some of the members. Then I saw that they were very similar to myself in outlook and spirituality. Then I received several very strong indications from the Lord, with my spiritual director's guidance, and discerned God himself was calling me. This was the biggest attraction. Then I began to see even more how amazing and needed is the Carmelite Charism and mission. More than anything I want to be of service to the Church through this Charism, and also help the Discalced friars continue for generations to come.

Service with the marginalized; solidarity with the outcasts and poor of society. Community life and communal structure of prayer and Eucharist and Rosary, etc.

Working with addicts in ministry. Location. Habit.

Prayer life.

The charism of my order: contemplative, fraternity, service

Founder. Obvious direction from God through prayer and Providential acts.

The size of order and varied ministries. It was the first community I encountered and did not feel like something was wrong with it.

Material poverty and contemplative prayer, as well as Hispanic ministry attracted me the most. What attracted me the most to my religious institute is the emphasis on community life. The importance of this is sharing/spending time with the brothers in prayer, meals, etc. while also having that support as well as supporting them in whatever challenges they face.

The way that the Franciscan order follow the footsteps of Jesus through their love for ministry and prayer.

Charism - Salvation of souls through study and preaching.

Community life - Friars live in convents, make time to spend together and care for one another .

Spirituality - Meditation on the life of Christ and Mary (e.g. Rosary).

History - 800 years of service to the Church.

Breadth of mission - many varied apostolates.

I was most attracted by the combination of contemplation and ministry, with a clear (if broad) direction for our ministry. I visited several communities and met many men who, at various ages from 25-85, were still so joyful in their vocation, and their example was very helpful to me in discernment.

I wholeheartedly believe that we presently live in a "Dominican Moment." Indeed, the world is plagued by an onslaught of materialistic and secular focus; hence, we desperately need holy and devout preachers of the Word who will tirelessly work for the salvation of souls. Throughout my discernment, I considered a more contemplative community, nevertheless, the tradition and fidelity of the Dominican Order to "Veritas" captured my heart and never let go.

To contemplate and share the fruits of contemplation" (by living a contemplative and active life in a community that is in the heart of the Church).

Fidelity to Jesus Christ and the Church. A strong communal life, especially in prayer. A prevailing ethos of men seeking constant conversion in their own life and a desire to share Christ's saving message with the whole world. A strong intellectual life and charism integrated through and through with prayer.

The particular emphasis on study, with this part at the service of others, especially the idea of sharing the fruits of one's contemplation with others, for the salvation of souls.

Jesus, sanctity, study, community.

The community life of prayer and fraternity attracted me the most. The Augustinian way of life appealed me so much that I joined the Order.

Living together/community life; sharing ministry work; three vows/celibacy; closeness to each other; helping each other of ministry people; sharing each other's burdens' praying together; sharing Holy Eucharist with each other; daily prayer life; enjoying together during leisure time.

It was mostly a combination of the peacefulness I felt whenever I visited and the equally placid nature of the members of the Institute. Prayer life and the cyclic rhythm of the daily schedule was also very attracting to me.

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Prayer life and the cyclic rhythm of the daily schedule was also very attracting to me.

What attracted me to my religious institute is the liturgy and the peacefulness.

What attracted me the most was the life of prayer, the ministries at the Abbey (variety), and the opportunity to grow in my perception of God and my spiritual life. It was also very helpful the openness of my superiors, the fact that I had the vocation director as my friend was awesome too! Living under a Rule and an Abbot really helped me and attracted me. I'm the kind of person that likes to know what's next, so living with a set schedule and with a vow of stability was the answer to what I had been looking for.

Prayer and community life.

Apostolate of Catholic education.

Monastic life in general was appealing because of the routine, communal and personal prayer, and common work. The hinge of my decision rested on the peace and calm I felt whenever I would visit. After vespers, dinner, and recreation, I would leave. After driving but a few minutes, I wanted to turn my car around and go back to the Monastery. In short, I never felt closer to God than when I was praying with monks. Also, the young/old dynamic was appealing. There was a good mixture of both.

Prayer life (common prayers as well as personal prayers), silence and solitude.

Fidelity to the teaching of the Church

- The habit is worn

- The older members appear to be holy and wise

- Fidelity to the full divine office (Vigils at 4 A.M)

The contemplative lifestyle of the community. Its simplicity of life.

What most attracted me to join the Benedictines, are the vows they take, the community prayer, the lifestyle which is based on our motto prayer and work. And I think this is a place where I can deepen my relationship with God, and also a place where I can put to good use the gifts God gave me and glorify God by sharing them.

Its traditions, liturgical practices, commitment to higher education, and possibilities for growing in personal holiness in a community.

The ministries, formation, relationship with God, Spirituality.

The way in which the monastic life was lived out: the simplicity, the silence, the solitude. These things I felt called to, as well as a community life where they were valued. "No speech, no word, no voice is heard. Yet their span extends through all the world."

I felt God call me and so I left home, family, friends, land, climate, food, everything basically and followed that call right to another country, culture, etc. The thing that most attracted me

here to the Genesee was the silent prayer time in the dark Church from 3:30am-6am (after Vigils to the Eucharist). That for me means everything. Also the fact that we pray practically the whole day and are silent (with reservations) for most of the day. The seniors! The old, grey-haired, grey-bearded brothers. Their eyes shine with something I cannot put my fingers on. And boys are the old! 80+yrs!!! The strictness and austerity of the life.

I attended a daylong Merton retreat, which ultimately spurred my interest to visit the Abbey of Gethsemani for the first time in early December of 2011. During my first visit in the winter of 2011, I recognized and was attracted to the profound beauty of the Liturgy of Hours, the silence of the Abbey, but most strikingly the sense of being at home in the monastery.

On September 24th, I attended a daylong Merton retreat, which ultimately spurred my interest to visit the Abbey of Gethsemani for the first time in early December of 2011. During my first visit to Gethsemani in the winter of 2011, I recognized and was attracted to the profound beauty of the Liturgy of Hours, the silence of the Abbey, but most strikingly the sense of being home.

There is a combination of characteristics that attracted me to my religious order. I appreciated that the sisters prioritized living in community and in relationship with each other. I wanted the deep foundation of Franciscan tradition and charism. I looked forward to praying from the Franciscan Liturgy of the Hours with my order. I also liked that I had the freedom to pursue different ministries and jobs and that I wasn't bound to a particular ministry when I joined the order. I appreciated the sense of humor the sisters had and that they treated me as an equal.

The dedication that some members have for reverence in the liturgy as well as traditional practices. The dedication to teaching young people through education is also one of my biggest attractions.

Eucharistic adoration

- Daily Eucharist

- Other devotional. prayer. these parts attract me.

What most attracted me to my religious institute is the daily schedule. We are in church four times a day for prayer and/or mass, and in between those sessions you eat, take classes, and work, but there is also ample down time to spend how you would like to (within reason of course). I find that my institute's schedule has a nice balance of structure and flexibility.

I was attracted to this religious congregation because of their spiritual life. It's very solid and they're also very faithful to the teachings of the Church. The other thing that attracted me to this institute was their poverty and joy.

The peace felt deep in my soul when praying here. God drew me here. Nothing physically/spiritually attracted me, in fact everything was so radically different than that I was looking for but God knew my heart and that I would find peace in this place and I followed His lead. I looked for a community that was not dying out as well.

The way of life and the rising up in the night for martins.

Nothing at first just that they had an open consideration of older vocations and truly letting the Holy Spirit guide. Working from the religious vocations screens and CMSWR screen and the IRL screen they were placed last on my contact list to visit because of being new converts to Rome from the Anglo Catholic. I kept putting first contact aside even away from my other contacts papers and then the Lord, through the Holy Spirit made the contact address just show up in my face. After or rather at the end of a ten-day visit here still not discerning why God called me here I request a formal talk with my now superior and vicar. That meeting was so Holy Spirit lead through the most-warm and welcoming now judgmental conversation with them, that I was later that day so opened to Gods will. He floored me with absolute yes and proof of. Since coming and more then I can explain their is a true sisterly love for each other community and a true zeal to seek to serve God's church faithfully! Fully as Blessed Mary, in Her total hospitality, and visitation of serve to all a real joy to serve and to find it finally in a convert community that I thought I'd find in one new and one over a couple hundred years. I formally belonged to that were Catholic from start.

I had a rather unique encounter with my institute. For eight years, I had been searching for a possible community. I had everything against me: previously married (with annulment), two grown boys, >50. I had received so many no's, I was at the point of giving up. God kept hounding me though. I thought I had it settled in my mind to not look anymore, but then something would trigger that desire to pray more, for peace and quiet, to be out of the crazy, backwards world we live in. I had written to another community and when they wrote back, they could not accept me but they gave me the name of this community and told me they thought they were looking for older applicants. I contacted them, and they said to come stay with them. This was the third community for me to visit. I loved everything about them! They had a beautiful motherhouse on a hill with 95 acres and a river running through the property! I always wanted a stream/river in the backyard. They were vibrant, funny, relaxed, eager and serious about their community. All of that was contagious! Their habit is beautiful and very traditional. I go to follow along a "sister" schedule while I was visiting to get a real taste of how their lives were spent. They are busy and successful and the neighboring communities love them! For me, they had the whole package complete with Liturgy of the Hours and plenty of chapel time and daily Mass. It was everything I wanted to have in a community.

The charism of serving the poor and evangelization is what most attracted me to my religious institute along with the habit which authentically reflected this charism, as well as the joy and witness of the priests, brothers, and sisters I met.

What most attracted me to the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal was their zeal and love for the Church and to serve the poor according to the rule of St. Francis. I was struck by the community's joy and like-mindedness in striving to follow Jesus after St. Francis. I loved their uplifting spirits and desire and look for the good in each person.

The joy of the sisters that come from being a bride of Christ.

I was most attracted by how our Sisters are both loyal to Christ and his Church and are very real, not trying to fit a mold. The Sisters truly seek to be the best versions of themselves.

The way the community lived monastic life. I felt moved to give a radical gift of self and I wanted to participate in all the rich traditions that religious life had to offer

The radiant joyfulness of the sisters, the fact that they wear a habit and that they are a teaching order

What attracted me the most to their particular community was the authenticity of their life, their continued formation, the witness of holy women who truly live their vocation with love and joy enriched community life, and solidarity/faithfulness to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

I was attracted to their sense of mission and identity as consecrated women, they saw themselves as dedicated to God and strove to live it out among each other and every one they met.

The joy of every member of the community that I encountered. The apostolate of the community (education). The community's faithfulness to the Church

The joy of the Nashville Dominicans!

At first, it was the habit. After, I became acquainted with some of the sisters, it was their joy and wit. Once I started seriously looking into the order, it was the traditions and spirituality that finally sold me.

I was most attracted by the idea of giving myself totally to God – to follow His will for my life. I would have followed His will wherever he sent me but I also happen to like: our habits, our commitment to St. Dominic's vision, our charisms of teaching and music, our beautiful traditions, and our commitment especially to prayer and study.

The joy and love that radiated from the Sisters. Not only did I receive the joy and love, but I too wanted what they had. To live a life with so much love and joy and to share it with others.

The holiness and joy of the community and their love for God, the Church, and one another.

The zeal to be a soldier of love for Christ. A profound sense of apostolic mission with a beautiful and attractive spirituality and joy for the Beloved.

Life that sisters have and giving this to others.

What most attracted me to the order is their teaching apostolate. They devote their lives to Christ and sharing Truth. The community is also very joy-filled and does a lot to promote vocations.

The sisters I had for teachers and who were at my Church. Also when I visited the feeling of home that I got was so strong it was almost too much but very welcomed.

I was most attracted by one particular sister who was my college advisor, although I still NEVER considered her order (now my order), because they were older. But it was through a friend with whom I taught religious education that I ended up going on a discernment retreat

with my community and it was a real and profound experience of call that brought me here. It was the unmistakability of that call that caused me to say "yes." But it was the beautiful witness of that one sister that even made me open up to the question to begin with.

I came to my religious institute totally by force of call and not by any particular attraction. It's not that I wasn't attracted to our community, just that I wasn't even discerning our community in my discernment of religious life. My call to this community came as a real surprise to me in that sense, but was unmistakably clear – that's why I came.

The vibrancy of its members

- The sincere interest that its members had in me*
- The joy its members displayed and how they seemed to genuinely love each other and enjoy being with each other*
- Its members are "real" and relatable*

The example of the women in the community, as well as a sense of being at home with this community. Their balance of authentic, solid Catholic spirituality and religious life, paired with an organic formation process that takes into account the complexities of the human person living in the modern world.

The Vow of Consecration to the Immaculate.

The Minnesota background and base. It's where I grew up, the people I love, the sisters know the people I know, priests I know, parishes I know, etc. There's a family atmosphere and home feeling that I love.

Common ministry to provide a home for the elderly poor. My own desire to become a bride of Christ and give everything to him. The "hands-on work" of being in the same facility with the residents being able to solve them until Christ calls them home. I love the residents they bring me face to face with Christ and there is such a joy and peace when I am either serving them or enjoying their friendship. The community has really shown me love and how to love myself and others.

What attracted me to my religious institute was the charism of their order, but also the fact that they still wear their habit. I liked that they are a very orthodox Catholic organization, and that to me was something I was wanting and looking for.

The joy of the sisters and being able to give of my life completely to Jesus.

The peace and joy of the sisters. There was a sense of being at home when I visited and I desired to give my life completely to Jesus in the same way the sisters did.

The {Religious institute} were attractive to me because of their great joy. This joy was in their charism of "Doing God's will joyfully in imitation of founder/ress." I also loved their simplicity of life, they seemed to be living out their vow of poverty. Finally, not only were the sisters joyful and simple, but they felt like family.

I was attracted to my community at first just by seeing their members, who amazed me with their joy and with how much I was able to relate to them. At the time though I was hesitant to consider their community. Finally, I could not deny an attraction to their prayer and charism which so closely resembled the prayer I already had in my heart.

My religious institute (Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco) attracted me by the joy, approachableness, and committed spirit of its members to the Pope and the Magisterium. Also, seeing that the Institute values a visible religious habit for the members in the USA connected me and attracted me. Finally, the personal love for Christ and the youth that my institute has attracted me, as well.

The mission and the love of the sisters.

An authentic charity that exists between the members of the institute which then carries over in how they treat all that they come in contact with. Their charism of mercy.

The charism since I was very young, I have felt a call from God, very specifically, to lay down my life so that others might live. Once I read about the Sisters of Life Charism of life, I realized that my heart was created intentionally for this life, as if God had the Sisters of Life in mind for me already while He knit my heart together in my mother's womb!

The Charism deeply impacted me – to stand in front of another and reveal to them their dignity is a moving and all important act, especially in a cultural so entrenched in death.

The Charism and the way they portray joy. They wear a habit and are faithful to the Magisterium. They are active in social media and are easily seen at Catholic young adult events. They are radically in love with Christ and are obviously striving for sanctity. It felt like home.

Their Charism, and honestly, the fact that I felt Jesus and the Blessed Mother very close to them. I also felt a real sense of home and belonging as if their charism matched the desires of my heart, the desires of my heart to love and serve. Their joy and vibrancy was also very attractive. Also, they are active (play sports!)

Their dedication to affirming the dignity of the human person in an all-encompassing love. Their joy in being brides of Christ. Their fidelity to Christ. Their strong sense of identity in Christ – very refreshing.

The Joy and Reverence they had for me and everyone they encountered. Also, they seemed very rooted in their identities as daughters of the Father.

The charism of life and the way I was received with an outpouring of the charism. The way in which the charism of life is lived and beautifully poured out into the world. The joy of the charism which is supernaturally graced into each of the beautiful consecrated.

All three vocations (priests, sisters, and laity) working together in teams; missionary in nature.

I had felt vaguely called to religious life and strongly called to a life of mission and service when I was in high school. As I began college, religious life was far from my mind until I came out to Belcourt, ND (a SOLT mission) as a volunteer for summer camp. In the summers I served at the mission, I slowly became convinced that Jesus was asking for my whole heart and that this community was home. The SOLT charism and style of serving (living and working in ecclesial family teams, with priests, sisters, and laity in areas of deepest need), the strongly Marian and Trinitarian spirituality, the example and friendships with the sisters, priests, and brothers, and confirmations from God in prayer attracted me to this community and continue to inspire me.

The charism, writings of the founder, and way of life struck a chord in harmony with my own life and spirituality in a way no other religious community did. It was like a reflection of the kind of Catholic I wanted to be.

The warm welcome I received immediately. The meetings with the vocation directress. She's a magnet for the Order. The Sisters' genuineness and warmth during my retreats. "The invitation" to enter. Mother Miriam Rose couldn't be more gentle, loving, and accepting...Always open to communication. Sister Mary Emmanuel is a magnet. She's a beautiful sister with such love for the LORD it radiates from her. Her smile is contagious - and I found myself immediately saying, "I want what she's got!" She's a beautiful vocation directress and novice mistress!

The willingness to go where there was a need. Most sisters didn't just serve one type of Monastery, but changed as the needs of the community changed. They are a missionary order that go out into the world to serve those in the margins.

I was attracted by their commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ and their joyful desire to preach the Gospel!

I think what attracted me most to my religious institute was the acknowledgement that we're not all perfect and they don't try to be. The Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus knows we are broken but knows the merciful love of Christ and impels them to share that love to everyone. Mercy is a strong point w/ the Apostles.

I was most attracted to the Apostles of the Sacred Heart because of the way they live in the world, but not of it. I felt so at home with them in their spirit and charism, and drawn to the joy you see, but I especially appreciate how they seem to have achieved a balance that not all congregations have - of tradition, doctrine and truth, with progress; mercy, and conscience. In this you see much diversity, and the Spirit both grounding and leading.

Chapter 53 of the Rule of Benedict - All are to be welcomed as Christ.

I love the history of this monastery. The women here were strong and had great faith. They did whatever was needed at the time. Also, the hospitality, love and care here is incredible, anyone who comes to visit can sense it immediately.

Living & ministry with others.

The thing that kept me most attracted were the relationships that I built with the sister's during my discernment time. I was also very attracted to the mission and the wide range of ministries within my community.

Their dedication to their life and ministry.

The joyful spirit of our Foundress, her openness in welcoming people of other countries. The charism of the congregation: Leaving with the people and respecting their cultures, the care to the mother hearth and our presence among the poor.

Most attracted me to religious institute was to be a Catholic Religious Sister and to be a missionary. To serve the needy. To learn more about the Church and to grow in Spirituality. To live in multicultural community and sharing my gifts. Also learning from other through their gifts. For my spiritual growth and learning myself in the purpose of God to me in this world.

The desire to please God and to be Holy.

Being a missionary and having a community to help you grow throughout your life spirituality.

I don't know, but I think this is where God wants me to be.

My method of becoming acquainted with my chosen congregation was rather unique - 5.5 years ago I became employed at the Mother House and Ross Hall (retired sisters' nursing home). This allowed me to learn about the congregation and the women comprising it in a rather personal way. I found myself attracted to the order in several ways. Of course, their acts of charity and works of mercy attracted me. I was also attracted by their sense of community, the likes of which I had never witnessed before. However, I think most attractive was: as imperfect humans, these women all heard a call - or summons - from God to live religiously, committed to Him and serving His people.

The simplicity and hospitality in lifestyle of some sisters.

Before I visited, a sister from the community I am in now worked at the parish that I attended. I found her very down to earth and kind. When I first talked to her about religious life, I was not considering this order, because at the time, I did not want to wear a habit, and they are required to. However, when I began visiting the Motherhouse and having liv-in experiences, I found that the qualities I admired in the one sister I knew, were present in the other sisters as well. I began to understand the meaning of charism. The most important thing to the community is living a life of love, as St. Paul describes. While it is beautiful to reflect on, it can be challenging to love as Christ does. I was also happy with being able to work part time as a postulant. I have a small amount of student loan debt and I am happy that I could enter before it was all paid off.

The spirit and communal life of the Sisters.

The sense of community and mission, of joy and peace, and of feeling at home when I am around the Sisters' attracted me to my community.

The respect for individuality both for society members as well as at mission areas. The diverse range of mission work members are permitted to pursue.

I found the community of monks, priests, and teachers to be very attractive. The large percentage of young solemnly professed monks also greatly encouraged/attracted me to the community.

I attended a high school sponsored by the religious institute. The brothers and priests of the Cleric of St. Victor were my teachers and coaches; their example and ability to develop relationships with young people attracted me to join their community and mission.

Holy Cross was most attractive to me because of its focus on Mission work throughout the world, its focus on teaching and education, and its dedication to community life and brotherhood.

The priests I knew.

To serve the poor.

At first, what attracted me to my religious institute was the deep spirituality and focus of the order. Over time I came to see the beauty of the principle behind the life and spirituality of the order, namely action and ministry flowing from contemplation

Their tenacity! They are not afraid of anything that is difficult, different, or complicated. Also, there is a vocation director who is bold enough to help anyone discern their personal vocations no matter what their vocation is. In my case, he noticed that I have discerned with his order in the past when I was pursuing my undergraduate degree. It took a village for me to be where I am at now.

The missionary experience

The thing that most attracted me to my community was the open, welcoming and non-judgmental attitude displayed by members of the institute to others. I was also attracted by the kindness and joy of life I saw displayed by the members I knew.

Wanting to have a sense of purpose to my life.

The mission of the community, especially the ecumenical and reconciliation ministries.

The spirituality, the personalities, openness, warmth of the friars, the care for the marginalized and social justice.

Variety of ministerial opportunities. Seemingly vibrant, successful ministries. The people I met who were already "members."

Their commitment to fraternity, diversity of ministries, and dedication to Catholic Social Teaching and social justice. I first became acquainted with the order while in college, and rapidly became accustomed to their ministries and way of life.

The two biggest ones are the charism of my institute and the men who make up the ranks. As I got to know the individuals in the order, I felt more and more comfortable around them.

the openness of both the Province and the Franciscans at large, the emphasis on relationship and fraternity, and also the approach to ministry attracted me very much. But perhaps what I was attracted to the most was community life – the familial bonds that community can create.

Franciscan spirituality and tradition.

They seemed human. Every moment I spent with them seemed to reinforce the idea that they were not just friends or roommates but brothers. Love really filled the air. They were also human – they had fun, problems, concerns, and real human thoughts. They weren't these overly pious individuals but real people living out God's word.

The life in Fraternity and Community. It's hospitality, their life given to their ministries by full and the option by the most-poor, marginalized and discarded from the society. His life led to the topicality of the times as minor Franciscans.

The way they live the fraternal life; simplicity, how they provide service to people. The joy of the way they do ministry. They were easy to talk to, very relational conversations.

There are many reasons as to what attracted me to joining a religious community like the OFM friars. I will list them as followed:

- 1. The Charism of the community was/is very much on par with my own desires to serve those in the margins of society*
- 2. Having been employed by a diocesan office for a number of years, my close encounter with religious and diocesan priest were present in my own discernment. What won me over to religious life was the sense of community, having opportunities to go beyond sacramental work, a sense of mobility from one geographical place throughout one's religious vocation.*
- 3. Vows + wearing a religious habit.*
- 4. The work of the friars in the community and around the world.*
- 5. Both the heart + mind is equally regarded. Ministry + formal higher education is expected of every friar depending on their needs and no so much imposed on them.*
- 6. Many more...*

The spirit of Francis? I have always had an attraction to the Capuchin way of life. A desire to work with the poor.

I've had a calling for work with the poor since I was old enough to remember. The example this religious group demonstrates with the poor and destitute is part of why I'm still here.

Beyond what drew me to religious life in general (i.e., a relationship with Jesus Christ), what attracted me specifically to the Capuchin Franciscan community was three fold. First, I was attracted by their mission and service to the poor and those in need. Their apostolate was the type of work I desired to do. I had almost entered with another community previously, but I was not drawn to their apostolate. But the Capuchin commitment to the poor, even in foreign missions, drew me. Second, I was moved to see the joy which pervaded their community life. The men were so filled with life, humor, and joy as they lived the Gospel together. Lastly, I found the Capuchin community to be firmly situated in the middle of the spectrum, meaning not overly liberal or conservative. Rather, faithful to the Church and her teachings. The Capuchins still allowed for and were accepting of all people and opinions.

Emphasis on communal life

- Vow of poverty*
- The positive credibility that capuchins have w/ people they served*
- That it was an established order w/ a long history and many members. In other words it was successful and stable*
- Diversity is strong*

I would say their history of an established order, fully knowing their identity and purpose for who they are and who they serve. Also, their varieties of apostolates and varied ways of serving God's people as they feel called to.

The oneness with the poor. Also, the emphasis on communion with brothers. Sense of purpose in the context of a community where we are all focused on one goal, and that is to become great saints.

The love and joy that the Friars radiate. The transparent fraternity the Friars live. The mercy they have with others, and the humility they lead.

That in their charism, we are called to live the Gospel. We are to serve Christ in whatever ministry we are called to do by God and our institute.

What attracted me to the Order of Preachers is their mission which is "preaching and salvation of souls," as well as the internationality of the order – which provides the opportunity of going out into the "courtyard of the gentiles" and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the thirsty souls.

The fact that we are a group of INDIVIDUALS with an 800- year tradition of excellence, and not just "cookie cutter". There is a great sense of the legitimate diversity of varying opinions here than in other places that I have encountered.

The charism of my religious institute did attract me most.

Sometimes you meet a person in life who shows you what an authentic relationship with Christ looks like. When you see that and don't have it, you want it. I wanted the peace and love that overflowed from this man and when I found an order full of men like him, I wanted in.

2. As a school teacher, I found I could lead my students to truth and even sometimes to Truth. However, I could not deepen their relationships to Christ as I wanted to. I could point them to Christ, but I could not offer Christ to them.

The love of truth and the preaching of that truth for the salvation of souls. I'm the end, though, I can only explain my being here by the grace of God.

Following in the footsteps of St. Dominic and preaching for the salvation of souls. Fidelity to the Church and her teachings. Diverse ministry, including pastoral work, teaching, preaching, and missionary work. A somewhat (but not excessively) traditionalist ethos.

It offers a thriving example of religious life in our times, and is very solid and consistent in their faith practices and their preaching of the Gospel message.

The Order of Friars Preachers, founded by St. Dominic, 'is known to have been established from the beginning, for preaching and the salvation of souls, specifically.'" LCO #1. II Salvation is principal goal for anyone to pursue in this life. The entire life of a Dominican is directed toward making himself useful in this work, both for himself and for others. The Lord has given me the desire for this universally important charism, and I pray that I respond faithfully.

I relate very much to our spiritual founder, our Holy Father St. Augustine.

I am attracted to the wide array of apostolates in which the Augustinians are engaged.

Their community life together.

I went to the high school that is located on the property of the monastery that I have joined. I was diagnosed with cancer at that time, so I didn't think much about religious life then. When I went to college, I started thinking more about it after a conversation that I had with the professor (a nun) after class one day when she noticed me wearing something with the name of the high school on it. I was already thinking of what I wanted to do with my life in college, so I thought religious life, especially where I went to high school, was an interesting answer. When I graduated from college, I went back to the high school to work as a volunteer there, which is how I learned more about this community. After a year of volunteering, I started my formal, or temporary, formation (I made my solemn profession in August of 2016).

The community along with the united desire to be closer to Christ and in His service.

community life

- mission

- territory of the monastery

- use the Latin

I went to a Salesian high school and I was inspired by the work the priests did and how much they cared for the young. This was a big reason as to why I pursued a religious vocation with the Salesians.

I was taught by oblates of St. Francis De Sales and went to OSFS summer camps so I was familiar with both Francis De Sales and John Bosco. After several very public deaths of very young people in the U.S. I finally connected my vocation with the welfare of young people. At the same time, by the grace of God, I had moved close to a Salesian work in Tampa Florida. It was kind of a no-brainer.

Ignatian Spirituality

The Spirituality of the founder (St. Ignatius of Loyola).

The strong sense of spirituality and service.

A good parish friend that is a Sister.

I attended both a high school and college of my religious institute. During my formation at these schools, the spirituality of the institute became my own spirituality in a life-giving way. How my religious institute lives out this spirituality through service was also very attractive?

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius; the Society of Jesus' commitment to education and the life of the mind.

I love the size and diversity of the {Religious institute}. We work in well over 100 countries and in a wide variety of ministries. They have been incredibly well-rounded: smart, down-to-earth, and men of deep thinking and deep faith.

Its history and founding ideals, and its present-day ministries, particularly its educational ministries.

The Society allows us to be 'normal' people insofar as what we do and how we appear to the world, but we strive to be extraordinary Christians because of the vows we intend to profess.

For me, the Jesuits provided a more holistic approach to growing the individual into a fully formed person not only spiritually, but also psychologically, emotionally, sexually, etc. I saw this as the support I would need if I am going to be successful in living out a possible vocation to priesthood. Furthermore, the strong community life within the Jesuits provided me with the levels of human connection and rich relationships that I so deeply desired for my life.

It's rich history and great legacy that is linked to the spirituality. Despite some recent troubles, my institute has done great things for the Church, attracting and forming a great number of Saints. The spirituality encourages this, forming men of strong character and academic prowess who are always seeking the best from all aspects of our life. The undergirding of this institute is incredibly strong, but also quite flexible and able to respond to the challenges of spreading the Gospel in today's world. I want to do ministry on the margins, not in a way that invalidates or calls into questions the rich truths of the Catholic faith, but instead in way that brings them to people who otherwise would not experience them.

That it places Jesus at the center of its life, and works at being transformed by this relationship.

The spiritual vision and charism of the founder and the work being done by the Society internationally.

Missionary work. I can go to different countries, especially poor country to help to spread the Gospel and help them in their lives.

I have a strong call and I have thought of it for years. But, one day after praying on a hill while hiking I heard come work for me. That is my touchstone.

The missionaries and they travel around the world and they share the love of Christ to the poor. To inspire people to faith and work for social justice.

Their spirituality and commitment to social justice and education.

The mission, apostolates, the people within, the general reputation, the literature I read about them, the spirituality

Spirituality and Mission

The charism of serving persons who are poor both spiritually and corporally, with affective and effective love.

Evangelization of the poor and formation of clergy

The charism of the FOUNDING fathers, and the example of the many saints that have gone before me, along with the wonderful hardworking, loving, and orthodox members I've been blessed to meet.

I was most attracted to {Religious institute} because they were willing to speak with me about my religious vocation. Because of my age and newness to the Church, very few institutes were even willing to talk with me. My very first contact was met with encouragement and an openness to dialogue that I hadn't experienced with any other institutes. An equal attraction was how quickly I fit into the community - the rhythm of the monastic day. I feel like I have come home after a long journey.

Ministry of teaching

To be a part of a community whose desires were similar where everyone desires were to bring people back to God. To be able to have conversations of what stirs within each of us. To have the resources available. To have people diverse in their ministries yet still come together at the end of the day. To not be "boxed" in immediately.

MISSION AND ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE CONGREGATION

What attracted me most was the joy of the brethren. I had been to several "Come and See" experiences before I went to the one for my community but none of them had this radiating joy

like this one did. Also, the clarity of mission was great. I felt like I knew what I was getting myself into.

What attracted me most was the joyful atmosphere and the traditional form of monastic life, the faithfulness of the Sisters to their call to serve the Church and the world.

They are social, casual, joyful, and unashamedly themselves. They are orthodox in teaching catechesis. They are an active apostolate. They serve the youth and families. They truly love in word and deed and only want the best for others. It's easy to be with them and be yourself with them.

The sense of joy of the members have while in their apostolate-on retreats and camps. Each member is very personal and international to everyone they meet and they teach/share how personal and relational God is to each individual. They also have a very welcoming, approachable and hospitable spirit

The depth of the charism/how it is so firmly rooted in my community. Also a very strong sense that this was my home.

Q. 148: 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:

Well, stated differences of my past two communities of which the new has disbanded and finding so much less here, I'd say self-teach for herself in many different ways leads to jealousies, pettiness, lack of joy in serving Jesus, God's will in trusting peace. Yes - self worldliness, can breed a unified towards Godliness community life. Truer joy and spiritual respect supports the love of Christ in each community member, for the love and joy of each member working as a unit of God's will in service to and for God, each other, all who we touch in person and prayer. After all we are human and I've heard, seen, and grown in the open joyful spirit here that comes from the enormous faith and struggles in God's will from other communities very beings, foundress.

Wow this is a tough one. There are lots of challenges and things I "missed" during my visit.

- 1. Very difficult to be a low-man postulant after a successful career. I think it would be great to have 2 tracks available for postulants. One would be for the <50 group. The other would be for >50. Some fine-tuning to training could be made based on the rest of my list.*
- 2. Postulants are not to be heard from, really. They are to observe and copy. They may ask questions at the appropriate time. It would be like getting a lactation specialist for the 10th baby and the previous 9 were all nursed. She could give advice to the specialist! By living for 50 years, you automatically gain knowledge and experience in many, many topics – but you can't share it just yet.*
- 3. Having to ask to do anything and everything.*
- 4. No possessions – after raising children, you have a few things.*
- 5. The bleak, impersonal cell – prisoners get a TV! I am a sentimental fool, but my belongings came to me through God's blessings and they remind me of all the things He has done for me. Can you have too many religious articles? No way!*
- 6. Inflexible schedule – I feel more like a robot. I must pray on demand and I cannot pray when I have a need or urge because I am doing something else on the schedule.*
- 7. Total loss of independence.*
- 8. All of the silence is a huge challenge.*
- 9. Wanting to do everything on my schedule while being in pain from fibromyalgia/arthritis. Any other community would have sent me home by now. This group has bent over backwards to try and help me feel better so I can do the work. I feel guilty every time I hurt. I push myself to make sure I do at least something. Honestly I have serious doubts that I will ever function at the level they need me to function.*
- 10. I have had to assist my twin during her illness. Bringing her meals, letting her vent. I am happy to help, but she is often so negative, I want to leave because of her. It is an odd situation, but she really needs TLC!*

It is a great challenge to be separated from my family and only having scheduled times to speak with them. It is also a very physically/emotionally challenging schedule of daily life. It is a stark adjustment from lay life.

The separation from my family is difficult. The conversion required to reverse years of receiving the values put forth by the world that are contrary to the Gospel. Our modern culture stands directly in opposition to the values religious strive to live. The process to uncover areas where I have unknowingly absorbed the thinking of the world is difficult.

Living in community where no one can hide their faults (mine especially!) But this is also one of the greatest joys.

Being separated from my family. Not seeing them or talking with them as often.

The most challenging thing for me at this time is detachment from my family/friends and modifying how I perceive life. In our nation/society, there is an emphasis placed on owning time and being able to do "whatever I want because I want." Although I tried not to give into this attitude, it still makes its way in. There is a paradigm shift in realizing that "my time" is actually and always has been God's time.

I find the separation from my family and friends, and inability to see and communicate with them the way I'm accustomed to, to be one of the hardest things so far. I also find prayers difficult, and learning to live in holy obedience joyfully to be very difficult.

What I find to be most challenging at times is human formation. However, as challenging as human formation is, I see the supreme importance in it and its necessity. I enjoy initial formation because it helps me ease into community after being removed from the world.

The most challenging aspect of religious life is the diversity of community members. Among the individuals, there is a wide age range, there are many cultures, and everyone has different ways of doing every day activities. It is difficult, although possible by the grace of God, to understand how the individual diversity fits to make the community whole.

I think the most challenging aspect is seeing all your own imperfections more clearly and not getting anxious about them, but just turning them over to the Lord.

Finding time to get everything done. At times, it feels as though there aren't enough hours in a day, but in the end God always sorts everything out and often has your "sisters" help you finish whatever needs to be done. Separating from family was a challenge as well, but I pray for them every day and know that they do the same for me.

I have always heard that community life is the biggest blessing but also the biggest cross. It's still early on in the game for me so I haven't experienced as many crosses as I have blessings with my sisters but I know there will be times when it will be difficult.

I found it hard to trust my formatters and submit myself to their guidance. I entered with a lot of baggage and I put up a lot of defenses.

The separation and limited contact with family members and friends.

Being away from my family and friends.

Living community life and learning how to come into your own gifts while humbly accepting your limitations and appreciating what others bring to the community.

Giving myself time to grow. I don't have to be perfect. I can just be myself and give my shortcoming to the Lord.

I think the most challenging aspect of religious life is learning how to deal with myself and all of the eschewed influences that draw my heart away from living an authentic life of truth and holiness without being born down by fear, comparison, and what is considered "socially acceptable" in the world.

Adjustment to community life. Adjustment to poverty and obedience. Adjustment to monastic customs and silence

I have a zealous heart and I wish to be all types of religious at once...missionary, teacher, contemplative cloistered, penitential, all. But I must live by this Rule, in this place, where God has brought me. Sometimes it is hard, because my desires seem good-and they are- but obedience is better, poverty of spirit is more perfect, and God's will be the best of all. It is hard to change the answer from, "I choose all my desires" to "I choose all Your desires, God." but...grace :)

Most challenging aspect is the time of transition and the need for much love and support during it.

Facing the need for interior growth.

Lining the day-to-day honorarium. Separation from family.

*Detachment from the world and worldly pleasures.
Adapting to the monastic customs at first, and patience with myself in the formation process.*

The greatest challenge for me is living in community and loving my sisters as Christ love them.

It is challenging to accept the tension between the contemplative prayer and the apostolate. Sometimes, it is difficult to believe that there is a balance or harmony between the two, especially when some fun days involve lots of talking or activities cause our schedules to change. The size of the congregation also makes it difficult to feel like we're in an intimate family because there are just so many sisters.

I find being away from my homeland most challenging and adjusting to novitiate, communal life.

*Being away from family
being attacked by the devil*

Daily conversion

The need to make myself available to the community needs at any given moment.

The silence, for it reveals incredible amounts of self-knowledge. It is a difficult truth to come to realize: the reality of our weakness and eminent faults, yet being loved infinitely in it all.

Getting used to the schedule. Having time limits for activities including study.

Community life, obedience.

Nothing is terribly challenging. Perhaps being patient with God's timing and plan (particularly in formation) but that applies to all vocations.

That's a toughie...I think it's probably the combination of silence and community life: having a certain amount of talking time a day means that I'm getting to know my sisters more slowly than I was expecting (That being said, I've also seen some beautiful fruits from this combination). Patience and trust are also challenges but they are not specific to religious life.

What I find difficult is having to let people know what I am doing. I can't just do what I want which is fine. It's a learning process of a team or family.

Deepening my prayer life is the most challenging thus far.

Ironically what attracted me to the order has also been the most challenging. There are various obligations, duties, coursework, volunteer work, etc., and it can be a struggle to have adequate time for personal prayer. Thankfully, I have been able to voice this concern, and my schedule will be changing next semester. Homesickness has also been a struggle. It is not just "home" in the sense of my biological family, but also missing friends where I used to volunteer, campus ministry, etc. I am overjoyed to take these steps in the new adventure Jesus has called me to, to enter a deeper, more intimate union with Him. Yet, it truly is a calling to further let go of the past, let go of myself, and embrace a new life.

The age gap - my community has an average age of 77 and I am 23 - that is a major challenge for me, but one that I am learning to embrace. I like bringing young life to our community, and I am learning from the wisdom and experience of our older Sisters as well - but it is still a challenge.

The age gap! It's a challenge as a young person who entered right out of college to be in a community that is much older on the whole. That challenge has been particularly acute as I go through formation – the only one in my "crowd." It truly is the grace of God and the strength of His call that gives me the courage to persevere, and joy in spite of myself.

Living in community with various personality styles.

Saying "yes" to God's will as opposed to my will and desires to seek worldly success
- Being away from family and friends
- Living with people of very different backgrounds and personalities

Shifting from an individual focus to a community focus. Very little individual or "down" time. Also, being so far away from home and family.

Overcoming myself.

I find detachment from my life before the most challenging, at least right now. Learning everything behind is much harder than I anticipated. Going from a culture focused on choice and independence to a community where obedience is essential is also a huge adjustment.

So far the most challenging aspects of religious life for me have been needing (through prayer) to change my ways of thinking and my habits to reflect what I am learning about our faith. The Lord is revealing the truths about Himself and myself more deeply and the challenge is to agree with these truths and live out of them. Obedience to our leaders in community and to our schedule have also been areas of growing/stretching for me as I am still in the first months of formation.

The greatest challenge, as I see it right now anyway, is not being an integral part of my family's life anymore, not getting to be present for all the different moments, big and small. As a consequence, it is also one of the greatest gifts; through it, I have such a sweet offering to give to my spouse! Day in and out though, the greatest challenge as a postulant is growing in ceaseless prayer.

Leaving behind friends and family no knowing when I will get to see certain people and missing them.

At present, choosing poverty. Having a job prior where I could just buy whatever I needed whenever and now choosing to go without can, at times, be hard.

Since I just am starting out, the adjustment and transition is challenging. Most challenging, also is giving up my prayer journal, running shorts, and listening to music during a run or free time. Feeling lonely and misunderstood by many even those in community.

I only just entered, but adjusting to living in religious life I found hard to adjust to, just because I am from a big family and we're really close that it took some time to adjust.

To not be able to be with my family

Being obedient to giving up control of my own schedule.

Giving up control of creating my own schedule and being able to decide what I want to do and when I want to do it.

For me recreation is the most challenging, because it seems like we are wasting time, but it is important for overall health. Home sickness and learning new rules is also hard. When learning the rules one feels like a five-year old all over again so it is very humbling.

Right now the most challenging thing about religious life is learning what is expected and how to balance it all. Detachment from family and being dependent on superiors for things that were easy before entering (shopping, doctor's appointments, and randomly buying treats). Overall it is just a lot of adjustments

The most challenging aspect so far, has been overcoming the ideas of myself that I already had in the secular world, and instead letting myself be seen as who I truly am as a child of God.

What is most challenging is living out and witnessing a life of Radical Discipleship in a world that is more and more against Christ? Today, the culture has become very relative in its perception of truth when the Church points to the true truth of Christ. It is challenging to live this truth and to minister to others when the world fails to recognize truth.

The change of lifestyle. Trying to put God first in all things at all times.

Sometimes it is difficult to have little free time and short phone calls with family, since before I entered my Mom and I were very close and spent typically an hour or so talking on the phone every few days. However, I'm so grateful for my family's support and encouragement as I try to give myself to God. Before I entered, I had a work-and-then-free-time mentality where I could generally do what I liked. In the convent, I am all for God and every activity is God's over my own personal preference. To be specific, I like having time alone away from everyone, since I have somewhat of an introvert nature where a lot of people and activity is enjoyable, but it drains my energy by the end of the day. In that aspect, it is a challenge for me to keep my heart in all the community activities throughout the day, since I no longer want to live for myself and my preferences, but for God's Will. Another example is my preference to sit in the back at Church or be in an empty Church with Jesus alone, but most of our prayer and formation activities is in community. I was more individualistic before I entered unfortunately, and did not have long-term commitments to others. I changed locations, jobs, roommates, and activities. Even something simple like doing the same kind of activities each day and coming up with good conversation starters for the 2 meal recreation hours each day can be difficult. Being aware of those around me first examples of sisters around me. It is a gift to see the love and charity of the community and it shows me many areas I still need to grow in.

Something that I find challenging about religious life is being away from family and friends a good bit of the time, and by corresponding mostly by letter. Thanks Be to God, at least as postulants, we get a call/visiting day once a month. I also understand that there is a two-week home visit between postulancy and novitiate (at the end of postulancy I believe). It seems that at least some family and friends, and myself are not as used to writing letters. I think I may be getting a little more into it, but it seems that we, at least to a certain degree are more used to calling, texting, and emailing. As postulants, we do not email or use the internet and we do not have cell phones. This is challenging being away from family and friends most of the time and

with the different form of communication but it is to focus on God more and to "listen" to him more in prayer, to try to further do His Will.

Having to come to terms with my past and ways I grew up and making changes and finding new and better ways to deal with challenges.

Being separated from family and friends and learning to daily surrender my will to God through acts of obedience and trust in this new way of life.

Poverty of identity, poverty of will.

Learning how to ask when I'm used to acting more or less autonomously, and learning to truly see myself as God sees us.

The biggest challenge I have faced is not being supported by the culture. It's hard to make this sacrifice when family/friends do not understand and support.

Where I am now, it is challenging to work the muscle of total dependence on Jesus. I used to have times in my day that I distracted myself from the Lord and I know am raw with Jesus every second of every day. This is a struggle and my greatest struggle, but of course in this it is hard to say it is a challenge because it also brings the greatest fruit.

Detachment was difficult but it is a radical life and that is one reason I love! Why give up everything for a life half-lived for Christ??

Learning to live graciously with so many different types of personalities within community. Detachment from family and friends, limited contact. Learning how to associate with other Superiors and Professed Sisters as a Postulant.

Being apart from family especially in special moments – birthdays, etc. Challenging myself to say yes to things that are challenging (growing in virtue – this is a good hard!)

Transitioning into the way of life from the world.

I find most difficult being patient with the challenging transition from the world into the life of a religious allowing myself the time and space to allow this growth to happen.

Limited contact with family and friends outside of the religious order.

Detachment from the habits and such so ingrained in a life lived in the world. Less frequent communication with any/all friends and family throughout formation.

Living in the present moment and receiving God's love at every moment.

The time of entrance was challenging.

Thus far, the most challenging thing about sensing the call to religious life and entering religious life has been going through the transition out of the world and into the religious institute.

My vocation is a work in progress, and it will continue to be until the day Jesus calls me home. Sometimes I find it challenging to let go and let - God.

Growing in self-knowledge.

I'm not sure I can really answer that. I am still very new to religious life (only a few months into postulancy) so I am still learning a great deal. Thus far, it is the transition and all that is new which is most difficult. More specifically a great challenge for me is in the death of my own self, desires, control, will. Yet certainly some of this is due to my disposition, tendencies, age, experiences, etc. Further I truly believe this challenge is not solely one of religious life but of the life of faith, the seeking of holiness.

Growing in self-knowledge is an integral but often painful part of religious life.

Living in community with different personalities and being able to persevere in the daily self-denial and gift of myself.

Being away from friends and family, lack of communication with home (restricted) and world outside of convent. Missing former ministry and adapting to new community form of prayer.

The most challenging part of religious life is knowing that people back home, family and friends, don't yet understand why I'm here. In the months leading up to the beginning of formation, it was hard to deal with people's misunderstandings about religious life and what I was doing.

I had a rather comfortable life before entering religious life, a nice family, the most awesome friends, a promising career, lots of delicious foods etc. I think the most challenging thing so far has been to leave behind all that was dear and familiar to me including my most treasured friends.

To do the prayers that I'm not familiar with.

The change from the lay life to the religious life.

Being the only one in the novitiate at this time. Limits on the interaction within the community (<5 min w/ professed sisters allowed; main contact with novice director for spiritual director 1x1week and a monthly meeting with my abbess). Having others in the novitiate would be helpful in this regard. Adjustment to schedule, fasting. Having to ask permission for everything. All these are small issues though in the grand scheme of things!

Community life. I've lived alone for the last 20 years.

Detachment from my old life and from my other plans for my future.

Waking up early obedience, and learning new skills/monastic customs.

Having patience with my difficulties doing seemingly straightforward tasks as I'm supposed to do them. Part of that involves figuring out how obedience works with various seemingly contradictory sources of input. My own expectations, my definitions of words, and my perfectionistic standards introduce most of the contradictions.

The formation technique. Coming from managing a parish for 25 years - I'm used to knowing all the answers. Now I've entered into a world where I have no answers. I'm expected to learn as I go along. They have no "expectations" for me to know what I'm doing. They've made that quite clear; but I'm uncomfortable with the unfamiliar and have been hard on myself unfairly. I'm loving St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal more with each passing day and their call to "gentleness" - especially with oneself. That's been a very difficult teaching to put into practice but I'm learning.

Dealing with very strong and unique personalities of various members. Giving warm and caring emotional support and recognizing the challenges in the newcomer's perspective is very helpful. Solving the problem is not the issue sometimes. The emotional support means recognizing and being compassionate to the emotional distress that the new comer naturally has in the beginning of her new religious life as part of her acculturation to the institute in the new comer's shoes. Most of the times, a compassionate statement such as "Oh it must have pained you" or "No wonder why you feel hurt" would be enough so that the new comer can feel that she is understood and that she's not alone. As the new comer gets adjusted to the community life, this would go away. However, the emotional support in the beginning of her religious life is very important. In addition, when assigning an angel (the helper) to a postulant, choosing a sister who is warm, compassionate, and gentle and respectful will make a big difference.

For me the most challenging about my religious life is the English language.

Moving from my current ministry with Navajo peoples.

Community living in an inter-generational community. There are 4 of us living together. I am the youngest at 26, then the next youngest is 67, then 76, and 86...that's 60 years between the youngest and the oldest. It is difficult at times to relate to each other.

I have found it challenging to learn how to re-prioritize my life. My schedule is now more determined by my Congregation than by my family, so that I'm spending Christmas, for example, with my sisters, and not with my family of birth.

The most challenging struggle I face is that my time no longer belongs to me but to God, and the people I serve. yes, I have personal time to pray alone to God, but I no longer live for me so I can't just do whatever I want whenever I want. For example, I can no longer just take a vacation to whatever destination I want to go to or take a sick day just because.

With only two months of experience, I would say the tempo of the life can be difficult, with each day being so full, and sometimes lamenting limited time for non-obligations. There are small

sacrifices to be made quietly and without notice all day, regarding community living also. The greatest gifts of the lifestyle can also provide the most challenges, but then I remind myself that the Christian life is full of paradoxes, and that we keep only the love we give away.

-Poor and arbitrary instruction/training.

-Failure to communicate with mature adults entering religious life with diverse and broad life - experiences.

-Respect for the experience you bring.

What I find most challenging in this particular order, at this time, is the many exceptions to the norm and varieties of ways the monastic life is lived out. It's difficult to find exactly what "fidelity to the monastic way of life" looks like and what exactly is expected of me.

Being among the youngest in my community, I feel like a guppy in a fish bowl. I feel like other sisters are watching me. A typical day involves some kind of questioning from a Sister.

The most challenging thing about religious life currently is the lack of support from people outside of my religious community. Most family members and friends were not supportive of me entering religious life, and has created tense relationships.

Community life.

The most challenging thing about religious life is feeling disconnected from family.

At this moment, the most challenging is the language in the U.S.A Context. The challenge to know one another.

In fact, I am still learning. May be I can say language is a challenge for me. Thank God I am learning/studying slowly I will be good in language.

Language, different culture, different ages – for these I find challenging because it brings misunderstanding; different character.

To bear witness to Christ in a world threatened by terror and relativism.

The hardest part in transitioning into the religious life is letting go of control. Realizing that I am not the only one living in the Monastery and trying to let go of little things so that I can better serve my sisters in love. So the accepting, the diverse personalities of the sisters, and letting go of some of the control I used to have has been the hardest part in living in community.

After living in the outside world and having freedom to do what I want then coming here and being obedient to your superiors.

Forgoing companionship within the context of marriage.

The high level of activity / lack of solitude time.

The age difference between myself and the majority of the members - bridging the generational gap.

I find most challenging the transition to living in community in a full house after having lived alone for several years. I think that communities should encourage or maybe even require extended visits in order to acquaint themselves with their potential new housemates before making the move. I also find entering the congregation alone challenging, because the next newest members live far away, so that I sometimes feel alone. It might help for various congregations to have casual meetings of some sort geared towards the new members.

Living the vowed life.

The vow of chastity and the sacrifice of marriage and motherhood.

I lived on my own for 2 years prior to entering, and I was a working professional. I did not have to really answer to anyone. I was responsible and did what was required. But now, I am required to follow a schedule, all the time. And certain things take a lot more steps than they used to. More permission is needed and more people need to be taken into account.

I find it beautiful that the Sisters are some of the most resourceful people I've ever met. I have always wanted to be this way which is why I hold on to "stuff" because it can be useful later or re-purposed or given away for a good cause. This struggle is between the need to help and my possession of "stuff" which is a perfect metaphor to the balance of how my spirituality is growing too. I am working on the practice: while it is great to give one's all to ministry, there must be self-care in order to remain a whole, functional person. This challenge of balance is difficult, but worth it.

Letting go of my illusion of control. I like to think I control things and between following my call and the vow of obedience there is a lot of re-learning for me to do.

I've only been in 2 months, so I don't know that I can answer that question. So far, perhaps, inter-generational community and representing more than just myself in the world.

For me, the challenge at the moment has been adjusting to living with others again. For the past four years, I've had my own space and it has taken some adjusting on my end, but the experience has taught me so much. The sisters have been such a blessing throughout this transition for me, and have been so helpful through it.

Relationships.

Right now I find being away from my home in Jamaica, and family and friends most challenging. However, a close second is learning to interact with 100 different personalities.

I know there will be more challenges down the road but for now I feel I have come to the place I have been searching for and feel at home.

That a charitable spirit of a sister is only found in books and movies.

The formation program has been the most challenging and yet an amazing blessing for me so far in religious life. Through formation, I am learning and growing in so many ways. I am becoming the best version of myself and who I feel God is calling me to me. It is intense and difficult at times, but I wouldn't change it for anything in the world. Despite all of this, I am filled with immense joy and happiness. I am becoming more and more my true self every day.

The rigor and intensity of our formation program, sometimes community life.

I believe the age difference to be the most challenging. Also, many of our sisters live alone so there aren't many opportunities for community living outside the formation houses.

What I find most challenging are those in community who are unmotivated. This has been a constant prayer of mind since I entered. Lord, life up those who need your gentle touch oh, Lord. Amen!

I lived by myself while I worked after college. I became very accustomed to my independence, and being able to make all of my own decisions. Not only does religious life require living in community and giving up a variety of freedoms as a "free agent," but specifically being a novice brought with it all sorts of changes and "dampeners" on my independence.

This change from independent "free agent" to a member of a community where everything is shared has been the hardest challenge and transition.

Understanding the practically of:

- 1. the long formation period*
- 2. community life*

I find being away from my family and friends most difficult.

Balance. Finding balance is challenging with the demands of ministry and studies. Finding time for personal prayer is challenging with a busy schedule.

The most challenging part can be the living of the life. One must find joy and happiness but find a balance to the life you live.

The busy nature of it. School, ministry, formation, community...really can add up and be tough to keep up with.

At this point the most challenging part is keeping up with my studies when I would rather be in active ministry.

Obedience can often be the most challenging, but also staying on top of all aspects of development that are required of us in formation.

Religious life tends to draw people who are very idealistic, this can make them opinionated and not open to views, especially about the faith, outside their own.

Knowing that myself and my brothers aren't perfect. To know that we are here to help each other towards perfection and to not become impatient.

Being busy is good, but it can sometimes lead to neglecting other important things, such as prayer

Currently, trying to develop and grow my spiritual life amidst so much study

Although it is a great blessing, it can be difficult to handle other members of the community at times.

Having to immerse slowly into it rather than diving into it in its fullness (I know it is for my own good that I am immersed slowly, but it drives me crazy still).

That they may ask me to do some ministry which I consider difficult to do it.

The community life. Where we are from different nationalities. We are all very different, different personalities, desires and ideas.

The language - I have to learn it in order to have conversation with all the members and to do the ministries.

I can't be independent, but I dependent on the community.

Trying to understand the apparent apathy among members regarding the vocation crisis and our growing median age is what is most challenging.

What is most challenging is fighting the desire to do things well for the sake of the good opinion of others in the community, instead of pleasing God alone?

So far it has been beautiful but I only start postulancy on November 1st! Can't show of any challenges just yet :)

Living with brothers who constantly criticize the magisterium and the Pope. Also there's a huge division among liberals vs conservatives in our church today. And, just like the middle class in the United States of America, moderates are dying out in the Church. Hence, there are two extremes left OR right and it effects religious life in a big way – in my opinion.

Being in the unknown and having to acknowledge a very important reality. That reality is that not all personalities click well together. This was shared with me through various priests in the congregation.

To work against a culture of clericalism.

As a novice, the thing I have found most challenging is the sense of on-going discernment as to whether or not I fit in with the community I have chosen. It is challenging in the sense that, given the community's approach towards prayer/fidelity to church teaching being different from my own approach (among other reasons), I am questioning whether or not it is the right community for me. Given the number of existing communities, it is difficult to know where to start when discerning which community would be the best fit for me. Moreover, the thought of transitioning from one community to another and "starting over" is difficult. Obviously, the ideal thing would be to select one community and stay with it forever, however the reality of the discernment process has been, at least in my case, a bit messier and more difficult than that.

Not being in a relationship.

Community life.

Community life.

Vows.

Formation is slow. Uneven participation in community – some of us participate more than others as a late vocation, the lack of independence and disposable income.

Community transitioning from an independent life to living with 15-20 people with an environment of continuous engagement with each other. I miss having more personal space.

Communal prayer obligations (Liturgy of the hours). Emphasis on sharing meals together. Less independence.

Being an introvert, I am going to have to get use to surprises, large amounts of people, and different people's personalities and styles of my brothers.

Having to explain to friends or family members outside of the order what we do/who we are. So much of society doesn't really understand or appreciate religious life and that can be hard.

What I find most challenging is that a part of me still feels like I want to marry and have children – I feel that this is hindering my ability to engage as fully. Also, community can of course be very challenging, but this is good because it leads to growth. The different personalities and communication styles are what invite the most growth for me.

To live far away from family. All my family lives in Costa Rica. I am the only one in the U.SA.

The thought of not having that intense companionship of marriage. Being adopted into a new family is great, but it will never be the same as having a wife and kids of your own, for better or for worse.

The integration of them members level of deputized between if, its integration in very well accepting one to the other, but of profound welcome to word forming in can see certain judgments and prejudices by his role and nationality.

I think that more than living the vows is the way how to build community and how we can help each other to grow mature and in faith. I think that more than living the vows is the way how to build community and how we can help each other to grow mature and in faith. I think that there is a tendency of living the religious life in an individualistic way where we become indifferent to each other.

Since I been in formation for 3 months now, I cannot give a full assessment of overall challenges. However, thus far in my formation somethings that have come up have been around living in a community, following a day to day schedule filled w/ activities, and looking inward to acknowledge my own person and trying to embrace this way of life. Some of the challenges that religious are facing today of getting smaller in numbers is very apparent during our visiting of ministry sites so that is something we hear repeatedly. Despite this reality, the challenge is well received by men my age (20's) to embrace this life and find a great sense of mission and looking to our founder to reinvigorate our charism(s).

Living material poverty in community is the most challenging thing.

Letting go of old habits.

The most challenging aspect about religious life to me is thinking about my life before entering about the comforts I had, my family and friends, etc. Not only do I think about my past, I think about the future. This is challenging because it's still awhile till I make solemn vows or even ordination for priesthood and anything can happen. It's the uncertainty that challenges me as well.

Community life is the most challenging part of religious life so far.

This list could not fit in a box this small, but I will try to be concise. Community life is definitely difficult, and it tries my patience daily. Obedience is also very difficult. My adult life was characterized by a freedom of movement that I no longer have. City living is also hard... Virtually all of our friaries are urban, and I truly dislike cities. Beyond that are the typical struggles: The desire to date; missing my family and friends back home, etc.

Seeing the faults of the friars. Realizing they aren't perfect.

- Being pulled away from your loving communities you've been part of to be in formation to form yourself to a loving community of friars.

Getting used to a life lived in common in a different setting than I grew up in.

Not truly knowing what the lifestyle would be like. For example, what level of austerity, communication with parents, what novitiate regulations are.

Perseverance during times of dryness/dullness.

I am not always in the mood to pray, but I have to regardless. Living in community can be difficult at times, but it's necessary as iron sharpens iron. The different ministries I serve can be overwhelming and sloppy because people and situations are unpredictable.

The most challenging of religious life is community life and the way that the liturgy is celebrated in some of the friary's.

I would say learning to give up my ego to serve others.

Being in the United States away from my family created a challenge to me! But didn't Jesus ask us to leave everything and follow him?!

Most challenging is the age gap with most of the brothers and getting used to that.

*Difficulty of emotional intimacy/loneliness
Living in close quarters with brothers I did not choose
Balancing apostolate, prayer, study, and community life
Ideological disagreements*

Two things: first is the nitty-gritty of community life, learning to love and not merely live with my brothers. The other is the sacrifices required e.g., living away from family and friends, personal poverty, etc.

I think the most challenging when you become a religious is vow of obedience.

Silence and stillness. In a world of noise and motion, I have had so little experience with it that I struggle to rest in it. I must learn to quiet my heart and mind so that the Divine surgeon can do as he wants.

I find that I am just beginning to journey the immense caverns of my soul. In other words, I have now realized how little (and one should add that this will likely continue to endure) I know of the spiritual life prior to my entering novitiate. Only when one accustoms himself to the language of God, i.e. silence, thereby removing the noise of worldly attractions, can one truly see himself as God sees him. This, then, a rediscovery - or just discovery - of what it means to be humble is a challenge and an abrupt contrast to life in the world.

It has been such a joy for me I don't really know how to answer. Satan surely doesn't want us here, so overcoming him and the flesh and the world - in short sin - is the greatest challenge.

Conforming myself to Christ crucified.

learning to see every instant as an opportunity to grow in charity, especially when living in a large community and having a superior.

Maintaining fraternal charity in the face of each other's faults and weaknesses.

Some of the new lessons associated with living in religious community with superiors, especially power dynamics.

The sacrifice of obedience, both to one's superior and to the community, is very difficult. Even when one agrees with a command or practice, one must act (or learn to act) from an obedient heart: otherwise one merely obeys oneself.

Please pray for me and my brothers.

My relationship with my family, who are completely against my vocation. We have always been close, so the time apart during the retreat-like novitiate and their lack of support have been difficult.

Cooperating with grace and riding self of self-love.

The community life I found most challenging in the beginning. But later I discover that there is unity in diversity. Now, I enjoy living in the community where the members are of different age and ethnic background which helps me to grow more and to enrich my understanding of knowing and respecting others.

Celibacy life; doing what God has called us for; doing against the law of God.

The difficulties that can arise with living in common.

Surrendering over your expectations and pre-conceived notions of what religious life should and shouldn't be.

Always living in close quarters with several very diverse personalities. Some are easier to get along with than others but that is to be expected. Some days are easy, some are a bit of a challenge.

Always living in close quarters with several very diverse personalities. Some are easier to get along with than others but that is to be expected. Some days are, easy some are a bit of a challenge.

Living with others

To me there are basically five elements:

- 1. Community life (communication in a high level).*
- 2. Lack of effort to promote vocations.*
- 3. Lack of ideas for ongoing formation at home.*
- 4. Balancing community life and ministry.*
- 5. Working - and feeling - as a whole family or religious order.*

But the root of all these is certainly the lack of communication and the "eternal issue" of not knowing what fraternal correction means.

I find the most challenging aspect about religious life now (I believe this answer changes over time, and when you ask the question, which is definitely true with me) is figuring out what I want to do with my life here. Now that I have completed my formal, or temporary, formation, I have started the period of my informal, or solemn/perpetual, formation. There are jobs that I still do in the monastery that I have done during my formal, or temporary, formation that I am not really interested in doing anymore. I am also interested in doing more in the school now based on my interests. Not only is figuring this out a challenge for me, but figuring out how to do this in my community, based on who we have and what we do, is also a challenge.

Being a novice class of I made things lonely at times.

The asceticism and the straying away from worldly things such as music and chewing tobacco.

Community life can be both supportive and a cross. Living with monks with the same view of Church is a blessing, but not all monks possess a unified view of the Church. That in itself can be very challenging. On top of that, every monk has his own personal foibles that can grate on the community over time.

Living with other members of the community.

Obedience

- schedule of prayers

Dealing with members who are lukewarm about their faith and vocation

- letting the superiors deal with the aforesaid members (being patient)

- facing my own darkness

- combating rumors and gossip within the community

Community life.

What I find most challenging in the time I've been in my religious community, is being the youngest and only novice in my community.

Some people's apathy toward my joining the community; the lack of communication about community expectations to newer members; generic feedback.

What I find most challenging about religious life is living in community. Community is a blessing and a curse. It allows for shared spiritual growth, but there can also be members who you may not get along with. It challenges me to grow in acceptance and getting to know new people.

So far learning to be humble is the most difficult thing for me. I am considerably older than the other candidates, so it is difficult for me to relate to them. I often find myself...rather proud...or...judgmental of their maturity level. I suppose the irony is the lack of humility on my part. I have always enjoyed communal living. I have yet to profess, even temporarily, but I anticipate a joyful struggle with the vow of obedience.

Balancing between community life and spiritual life.

To be able to surrender myself completely before God.

Adjusting to community life.

Freedom of money.

I find adapting to poverty and living in a large community to be the most challenging, although, they have been wonderful opportunities to grow.

I often disagree with my brothers about the mission and ministry of our institute.

Living the vow of chastity while not retreating from the world is certainly a challenge, but the Society of Jesus (or my novitiate, at least) encourages open and honest discussion about this and other challenges we face, both among novices and between the novitiate staff and individual novices.

Community life is sometimes difficult, particularly in interactions between older and younger members of the community.

Time. I do not enough time for ministry.

We are in the world but not of the world, and so temptations can easily settle in. The only way to save the world is to enter it, but holiness can become obscured and cloudy. As a religious, if we fail to fulfill our vows, the labors we have done and sacrifices we have offered to God become in vain. It is a thin tightrope we Jesuits walk.

It is extremely difficult to live out obedience - to vow to follow the orders of another flawed human being. In American culture in particular, we greatly value a sort of radical freedom, and to sacrifice that in religious life is extremely difficult. In general, all three vows provide a challenge to young people today, because of their extremely counter-cultural nature.

The fear of the future; i.e. I am committing to something so momentous and life-changing, what if I eventually feel burned out or that I am no longer called? Did I waste my time? did I waste the resources of my Institute? Did I discern wrongly?

The different stubborn perspectives and ideals present in community.

The tensions between younger members seeking more traditional elements of religious life and older members who have embraced a more independent ministry-centered lifestyle.

intercultural life. living in with many different people from different cultures.

Learning to live in community with others.

The daily conversion to Christ. Especially when lived out in community. "Many are the trials of [the just] man, but from them all the Lord will rescue him." -Growing Pains, Pangs of Birth.

The fact that I'm from another country/skin color and the other postulants here and one of one of superiors here rub it in quite often.

Prayer! It's the most beautiful thing about this life but also the most wretchedly difficult. Fighting temptations: mental (anger and lust), emotional (thoughts to get married), physical (wanna beat up some of the monks here). Boredom (at times). But, all the challenges combined and raised to their highest degree do not in the least rob me of the peace and joy of this vocation. That's where I think God is present. I don't know but to believe.

The most challenging aspect of religious life is acknowledging my weaknesses and shortcomings, opening up to my brothers, and coming to terms with the realization that it is through my community, not alone, that I will grow closer to God.

The most challenging aspect of religious life is opening up to my brothers and coming to terms with the realization that it is through them that I will grow closer to God.

My family does not approve. I feel being the only novice is hard also. But, my formation classes have others. It is also hard that I have to travel so far to get to the classes. There is nothing. We can do about it. We have talked about it.

Religious life is challenging knowing that we are so far from our families.

Chastity.

Growing into my vows.

The ever changing dynamics of community life and the fact that I left all of my family and friends behind to be here.

Community Life.

Being away from family and friends during holidays and other important events; intergenerational living and different experiences of church across the generations.

Lack of young adults, people my age, who are in formation or who I know is discerning a call.

Getting along with other members in your community.

Community life.

Self shyness among us especially the white men don't like us (the black people). They say this is the place of them not us, so we should go back to Africa.

Getting used to the new schedule was difficult at first. You also come face to face with uncertainty and doubt that religious life is for you. And, although I have not yet experienced it, I would imagine some degree of loneliness is a challenge all people in religious life must face.

The recent history and reputation since the mid-1960's has been a huge turn off, and the influence of those men - along with the somewhat fruity and liturgically/theologically lazy things they've inspired - hasn't fully left the society.

The most challenging aspect of religious life for me has been obedience. Having lived out in the world for over fifty years - running my own household, coming and going as I please - I have found the total abnegation of self to the authority of others to be a challenge. But given time, patience and the examples of my sisters I am hoping to persevere and become a good member of community.

Living with other people.

How to have more conversations of the heart. It is cultivated in the young adult group (Christus Ministries), yet I find it very lacking in community life. I understand that the history of the congregation restricted such conversation at one time and it is part of the transition ... of learning how to speak without getting hurt.

The fact that I have been with the congregation for almost 30 years as a lay missionary and this is not recognized in the canonical steps towards membership nor has there been an equivalency established.

The most challenging part is how schedule my life has become. I tend to be more of a "go with the flow" type of person, so it has been quite an adjustment to have not only my day scheduled to the minute but also to have a schedule for months from now. These last few months definitely have made it easier but it's still against my nature.

We still live in the same environment as other people but the way of living can be totally different as the others. There are times I can't really make my family members understand about how the religious life attracted me and I desire to belong to the Lord completely.

The drastic change in lifestyle. Not having too much of my own time but going with the timing and schedule of the community. Lack of constant communication with friends and family.

What is the most challenging for me is the call to surrender, to give all to the Lord? But my hope is that He will not fail to give me the grace I need to live out the beauty of total surrender.

Time, management. Community living with other women. Sacrificing my desire for marriage and family while also serving children and females. Waking up early. Communicating more which leads to being more vulnerable. Missing my friends and coming to the realization that I'll be spending little to no time with them. Loneliness some times and other times suffocated by not having enough alone time. Being pulled in so many different directions away from religious life because of the negative societal view of religious life. Focusing on the needs of others instead of focusing on self.

I entered a community that was small (12 Sisters) with a median age somewhere in the 60s or 70s. Defining not what I expected God to ask of me. I run into issues of generational gap and loneliness regularly though a new postulant arrived a week ago which may change this Detachment; physically and spiritually. And in our cloistered community, detachment from family and friends, Detachment from the worldly life/used to lead. Mortification/dying to self. The discipline of silence in the cloister. Obedience because of dying to self.

Overcoming myself within religious life: the act of overcoming myself has taken new meaning and in many ways this is the greatest challenge.