



Perpetual professions and ordinations have increased in the past five years

#### ■ 2016

216 women and men professed final vows from 80 religious institutes

548 potential ordinands from 32 religious institutes; 140 arch/dioceses

#### ■ 2015

136 women and men professed final vows from 75 religious institutes

595 potential ordinands from 28 religious institutes; 120 arch/dioceses

#### ■ 2014

190 women and men professed final vows from 62 religious institutes

477 potential ordinands from 31 religious institutes; 114 arch/dioceses

#### ■ 2013

107 women and men professed final vows from 55 religious institutes

497 potential ordinands from 30 religious institutes; 119 arch/dioceses

#### ■ 2012

156 women and men professed final vows from 83 religious institutes

487 potential ordinands from 49 religious institutes; 123 arch/dioceses

#### ■ 2011

122 women and men professed final vows from 60 religious institutes

480 potential ordinands from 54 religious institutes; 128 arch/dioceses

## STATISTICS ON RECENT VOCATIONS TO RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THE PRIESTHOOD

### The majority of women's and men's communities have at least one person in initial formation

- Since 2009, the majority of religious institutes have at least one person in formation: 66 percent of women's institutes and 80 percent of men's institutes.
- Since 2000, 93 percent of all religious institutes have had at least one serious inquirer and 79 percent of all religious institutes have had at least one formal applicant since 2000.

### Characteristics of ordinands and those newly professed to religious life

#### AGE

*Average age for discernment is 19 and for entrance 30*

- The average age a person first considers a vocation to religious life is 19 years of age, fluctuating between 17-20 years of age. Half are 18 or younger when they first considered a vocation.
- The average age of entrance to religious life is 30. Additionally, almost half are 25 years old or younger.
- The average age of women and men making perpetual profession is 39 years old. The majority of those professing final vows are under age 39. In the Profession Class of 2016, only 5 percent were over the age of 60.
- The average age of potential ordinands is 24 years old with the majority being ordained under age 35. In the Ordination Class of 2016, only 3 percent were over the age of 60.
- Religious institutes that sponsor vocation promotion and vocation discernment programs directed toward college students and young adults are more likely to have new members than those who do not sponsor programs for these age groups.

#### ETHNICITY

*More diverse, reflecting the increasing diversity in the U.S. Catholic population as a whole*

- Among those professing final vows in 2016, 66 percent are Caucasian/European American/White; 16 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian; 11 percent Hispanic/Latino(a); 4 percent are African/African American/Black; and 3 percent self-identify as other.
- More than six in ten institutes report having at least one entrant in the past ten years born outside the U.S. Institutes of men are particularly likely to have had someone from outside the U.S. enter in the last ten years.
- Among the challenges for integrating new members into institutes are isolation, age gaps, language and communication skills, difficulties with the regulations of Immigration and Naturalizations Services, and a lack of understanding of each other's culture.
- The majority (80 percent) of those entering religious life were born in the United States. From those who were born outside the United States, women and men self-identified 33 different countries of origin, with the most frequently mentioned country of birth is Vietnam and Mexico.

#### EDUCATION

*The majority of those entering religious life are highly educated*

- The majority of those entering religious life attend public schools and universities, yet compared to the national average, they are more likely than other U.S. Catholics to attend Catholic schools and universities. Twelve percent report being home schooled at some time in their educational background.

## VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

*In 2016, 4,920 discerners created profiles through the NRVC's Vocation Match service*

### DEMOGRAPHICS

- 63 percent are under 30 (24 percent men; 39 percent women)
- 89 percent are Catholic; 4 percent are becoming Catholic; 7 percent are not yet Catholic
- 44 percent have a college degree
- 80 percent are U.S. citizens
- 28 percent have educational debt
- 62 percent attended Catholic school

### DESIRED VOCATION

- 34 percent drawn to apostolic/evangelical communities
- 29 percent drawn to missionary communities
- 20 percent drawn to monastic communities
- 17 percent drawn to cloistered/semi-cloistered communities

Source:  
2016 NRVC Vocation Match response statistics (VocationNetwork.org)

NRVC's *VISION Vocation Guide* and *VocationNetwork.org* are the most comprehensive resources available for those discerning a religious vocation with articles on prayer, discernment, community life, and the call to religious life and interactive features, such as *Community Search*, *Vocation Calendar*, and *Vocation Match*.

## MISSION OF NRVC

The National Religious Vocation Conference is a professional organization of vocation ministers that presents religious life as a viable option in the Catholic Church. NRVC promotes vocation awareness, invitation, and discernment to life as a religious sister, brother, or priest. NRVC reflects all forms of religious life and offers its members educational opportunities, resources, and other supportive services for spiritual, professional, and personal growth.

- Among those entering religious life, 74 percent earned an undergraduate or graduate degree before entering (up from 70 percent in 2009). Among those entering seminary 59 percent earned at least a bachelor's degree before entering. Religious ordinands were more likely than diocesan ordinands to have an undergraduate degree (45 percent compared to 39 percent).
- Among religious institutes, 54 percent have at least one member working on a college campus. Such a presence is wise considering the number of entrants with undergraduate degrees.
- The impact of educational debt upon entrance to religious life is still an issue for some entrants. The average length of time required to pay off educational debt before entrance is four years and the average amount of educational debt is \$29,100. The National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations has assisted candidates with educational debt since 2015. For more information, go to [NFCRV.org](http://NFCRV.org).

## PARISH LIFE

*The majority participated in parish ministry prior to entering formation*

- Women and men are equally likely to have served in parish ministry. The most common ministry experience prior to entrance in order is: Lector, Altar Server, Music Ministry, and Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist. Over one-third participated in youth ministry and college campus ministry before entering.
- Before entering religious life or the seminary, one in six participated in World Youth Day. Women were three times more likely than men to have participated in World Youth Day.

## FAMILY SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY INFLUENCE

*Entrants lack familial support; influenced by a sense of call, example, and encouragement of others*

- Only 27 percent of mothers and 18 percent of fathers encouraged their son or daughter to consider a vocation to religious life prior to entering. Potential ordinands received slightly more encouragement with 42 percent of mothers and 38 percent of fathers encouraging potential ordinands to consider priesthood before entering the seminary.
- Families have misconceptions and worries about vocations, such as concerns that their child/sibling may be lonely, overworked, or unable to be with family. The 2015 NRVC/CARA Study on the Role of the Family outlines ways families can support vocation discernment.
- While spirituality, community life, prayer life, and the mission of the religious institute are factors that attract newer members to their respective institute, the example of professed members has been most likely to attract newer members "very much" since 2009.
- For members of the Entrance Class of 2016 the decision to enter their religious institute was "very much" influenced by the community life in the institute (66 percent), the prayer life/styles (65 percent), the lifestyle of members (54 percent), types of ministries (54 percent), and its practice regarding a religious habit (55 percent).
- Although Catholics do not typically see it as their role to encourage vocations, women and men are nearly twice as likely to consider a vocation when encouraged by another person. The effect is additive. People who are encouraged by three persons are five times more likely to consider a vocation than someone who was not encouraged by anyone.

Sources:

2016 USCCB/CARA Ordination Class Report and Profession Class Report and prior year reports

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

2015 NRVC/CARA Study on the Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations to Religious Life

2014 NRVC/CARA Study on Incorporating Cultural Diversity in Religious Life

2012 USCCB/CARA Study on the Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life among Never-married Catholics

2012 NRVC/CARA Study on Educational Debt and Vocations to Religious Life

2009 NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life

*NRVC is committed to providing professional studies that accurately track trends in vocations to religious life in service to the Church.*