

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

*The Class of 2017:
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*

**A Report to the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life & Vocations
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**



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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of seminarians scheduled for ordination to the priesthood in 2017. The report is a part of collaboration between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). The purpose of this report is to compile information regarding men who are ordained to priesthood within a particular year.

The data collection for this report involved identifying the responding ordinands to the priesthood in 2017 by contacting all theologates, houses of formation, dioceses, archdioceses, eparchies and institutes of men religious in the United States for the names and contact information of all men scheduled for ordination to priesthood in 2017. The resulting contact list was used to administer the survey.

The survey was administered between March 1 and March 29. The survey invitation was sent by email to 590 ordinands. Two follow-up emails were sent to the ordinands who delayed their response and one follow-up email was sent to major superiors and vocation directors asking for assistance with encouraging the ordinands to participate in the survey. Where email addresses proved incorrect, CARA contacted the respondent by telephone to request a response. A total of 444 ordinands completed the survey (75 percent response rate). The responding ordinands included 343 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (77 percent of all responding ordinands) and 101 ordinands to the religious priesthood (23 percent).

Major Findings

- Over three-quarters (77 percent) of all responding ordinands are preparing for ordination to a diocese or eparchy. Responding ordinands from religious institutes comprise the remaining 23 percent. The biggest group of responding ordinands (one-third) studies at the seminaries in the Midwest. One in ten studies at a seminary abroad.
- On average, responding diocesan ordinands lived in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for 16 years before they entered the seminary, while responding ordinands from religious institutes knew the members of their religious institute for six years before they entered the seminary.

Age

- On average, responding ordinands first considered priesthood when they were 16 years old. On average, responding ordinands were scheduled for ordination 18 years later (at the age of 34).
- Since 1999, the average age of responding ordinands has decreased by approximately two months each year, from an average of 36 in 1999 to the current average age of 34.

Selected Demographics

- The majority of responding ordinands is Caucasian (seven in ten) and was born in the United States (three in four). One in four is foreign-born. By comparison, since 1999, on average, each year, 29 percent of responding ordinands were foreign-born.
- The five most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines, Colombia, and Poland. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 12 years ago at the age of 25.
- Almost all responding ordinands (97 percent) have at least one sibling. On average, responding ordinands have three siblings and they are most likely to be one of the middle children in the family.

Education

- Less than one in ten (8 percent) of responding ordinands reported being home schooled; among those who were home schooled, they report seven years of home schooling, on average.
- Between 40 and 50 percent of all responding ordinands attended a Catholic school for at least some part of their schooling. Three in five responding ordinands (59 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish for seven years, on average.
- Two in five responding ordinands (43 percent) reported that they completed college or university undergraduate degree before entering the seminary. Responding ordinands from religious institutes had completed a higher level of education, on average, than responding diocesan ordinands prior to entering the seminary.

- More than one in seven responding ordinands who attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary studied in one of the following fields: social science, theology or philosophy, business, or liberal arts. Responding ordinands for religious institutes were 50 percent more likely than diocesan ordinands to study social sciences.
- Almost half (46 percent) of responding ordinands entered their seminary program at the pre-theology level. Less than one-third (29 percent) carried educational debt, which averaged \$28,318, at the time they entered the seminary. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were more likely to carry educational debt, but they were also more highly educated and on average their debt was smaller in comparison to responding diocesan ordinands.

Work

- More than half of responding ordinands (57 percent) reported full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in six of those responding ordinands worked in education. Responding ordinands for religious institutes are more likely to have work experience than responding diocesan ordinands (64 percent as compared to 55 percent).
- About one in eight responding ordinands (12 percent) reported that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. One in twenty responding ordinands served in the U.S. Armed Forces themselves. The percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military changes considerably from year to year.

Vocational Discernment

- Almost all responding ordinands were baptized Catholic as infants (93 percent). Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 21. Four in five responding ordinands (80 percent) reported that both their parents were Catholic when they were children. One in three (35 percent) has/had a relative who is a priest or religious.
- Four in five responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic Adoration (77 percent) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, around seven in ten (69 percent) prayed the rosary, almost half (46 percent) attended prayer group/Bible study, two in five (38 percent) went to high school retreats, and about three out of ten attended college retreats (34 percent) or participated in Lectio Divina (29 percent).
- Responding diocesan ordinands were 17 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to participate in the Eucharistic Adoration. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 14 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to attend college retreats.
- In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of responding ordinands participated in parish youth groups (48 percent). About three out of ten responding ordinands participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (34 percent) and Boy Scouts (31 percent).

- In regard to participation in parish ministries before entering the seminary, four in five (75 percent) responding ordinands served as altar servers. Half (52 percent) served as lectors. Two in five served as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (43 percent). A third served in campus ministry/youth ministry (35 percent) or as catechists (34 percent) or confirmation sponsors/godfathers (32 percent). One in four served as a cantor or in some other aspect of music ministry (27 percent).
- Half of responding ordinands (47 percent) reported participating in “Come and See” weekends at the seminary or the religious institute/society.
- Four in five responding ordinands (82 percent) reported being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life (most frequently, the parish priest, friend, or another parishioner). On average, four individuals encouraged their vocation.
- One-half of responding ordinands (48 percent) indicated that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Most often, this person was a friend/classmate or a family member (other than parents).

Introduction

In December 2005, the Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation (now the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an annual survey of responding ordinands to the priesthood. The survey was initially developed by the Secretariat in 1998 and has been administered online since 2005. CARA assumed responsibility for the project in 2006, using the online survey developed by the Secretariat. CARA worked with the Secretariat to improve the online survey and to incorporate it into the data collection process for CARA's annual survey of priestly formation programs. This report presents results from the Class of 2017 survey.

To obtain the names and contact information for the ordinands, in spring 2017 CARA contacted all theologates, houses of formation, dioceses, eparchies and institutes for men religious in the United States to ask them for the names and contact information of all men scheduled for ordination to priesthood in 2017. The resulting contact list was used to administer the survey.

CARA then contacted these men by e-mail to explain the project and to ask them to complete an online survey (in small number of cases, a paper version of the survey was made available). CARA also e-mailed a request to the diocesan vocation directors and to the major superiors of clerical and mixed religious institutes, asking them to encourage their ordinands to participate in the online survey.

CARA administered the survey between March 1 and March 29, 2017. The survey invitation was sent by email to 590 ordinands. Two follow-up emails were sent to the ordinands who delayed their response and one follow-up email was sent to major superiors and vocation directors asking for assistance with encouraging the ordinands to participate in the survey. Where email addresses proved incorrect, CARA contacted the respondent by telephone to request a response. A total of 444 responding ordinands completed the survey (75 percent response rate). The responding ordinands included 343 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood (77 percent of all responding ordinands) and 101 ordinands to the religious priesthood (23 percent).

The questionnaire asked responding ordinands about their demographic and religious background, education, previous ministry and work experience, as well as various aspects of vocation discernment (e.g., people encouraging and discouraging them from considering priesthood, experience with vocation programs). This report describes responses to the questions from all responding ordinands combined as well as separately for diocesan ordinands and ordinands from religious institutes. The report also contains selected trend data since 1999, the first year for which comparable data on both diocesan and responding ordinands from religious institutes are available.

Part I: Ordinands to Secular (Diocesan) and Religious Priesthood

Responding ordinands represent 136 dioceses and eparchies and 36 distinct religious congregations.

The greatest number of men scheduled for ordination to diocesan priesthood in 2017 was reported by the Diocese of Paterson (13 ordinands) followed by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis (11 ordinands) and the Diocese of Wichita (ten ordinands). The greatest number of responses from diocesan ordinands was from the Diocese of Wichita (ten respondents), followed by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis (nine respondents) and the Archdioceses of Miami and Boston (eight respondents each).

The greatest number of men scheduled for ordination to religious priesthood in 2017 was reported by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) with 27 ordinands, followed by the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) with 12 ordinands, and the Order of Friars Minor (Capuchins) with eight ordinands. The greatest number of responses from ordinands to the religious priesthood was from the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) with 26 respondents, followed by the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) with ten respondents, and the Order of St. Benedict (Benedictines) with six respondents.¹

<i>How long did you live in this diocese or eparchy before entering the seminary?</i>		<i>How long did you know the members of this institute or society before entering the seminary?</i>	
Time in years		Time in years	
	Diocesan		Religious
Mean	16	Mean	6
Median	18	Median	4
Range	0-58	Range	0-40

Responding diocesan ordinands report that they lived in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for 16 years on average before they entered the seminary. Half of them reported living in the diocese or eparchy for which they will be ordained for 18 years or more.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes report that they knew the members of their religious institute for six years before they entered the seminary (a median of four years).

¹ These numbers refer only to reported and responding ordinands and do not necessarily mean that these dioceses and religious institutes will ordain the largest number of priests in 2017.

**Distribution of Responding Ordinands
by the Location of Their Seminary**
Percentage of all responding ordinands

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Midwest	24	37	35
South	18	25	22
Northeast	25	14	16
West	22	13	15
USA - subtotal	89	89	88
Abroad	6	10	9
Not specified	6	2	3

Almost one in ten responding ordinands (9 percent) reported studying at a seminary outside of the United States (e.g., Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy). One in three responding ordinands (35 percent) studied at a seminary located in the Midwest. Almost two in five responding diocesan ordinands (37 percent) are studying at seminaries in the Midwest.

Part II: Age

The second part of the report focuses on the age of ordinands when they first considered priesthood and their current age (in the year when they are scheduled for ordination).

On average, responding ordinands first considered priesthood when they were 16 years old. They are now scheduled for ordination 18 years, on average, later (at the age of 34). Responding ordinands from religious institutes are three years older than responding diocesan ordinands, on average, at the time of ordination.

Age When First Considered Priesthood

<i>How old were you when you first considered a vocation to the priesthood?</i>			
Years			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	17	16	16
Median	17	15	15
Range	5-58	4-56	4-58

On average, responding ordinands were 16 years old (a median of 15) when they first considered vocation to priesthood. Notably, the age when first considered a vocation varies substantially, from age four to age 58.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were one year older than responding diocesan ordinands, on average, when they first considered vocation to priesthood:

- On average, responding diocesan ordinands were age 16 (half of them were 15 or older) when they first considered a vocation to priesthood.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were on average age 17 (a median of 17) and their age varied from 5 to 58 when they first considered a vocation to priesthood.

How old were you when you first considered a vocation to the priesthood?

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Elementary (6 through 13)	26	38	35
High school (14 through 17)	23	23	23
College (18 through 21)	28	18	21
Adulthood (22 or older)	20	16	16
Preschool (5 or younger)	4	5	5

The table above provides an alternative description for the same question which is considered in the table on the previous page. Two in five responding ordinands (35 percent) first considered a vocation to the priesthood while they were in elementary school (ages 6 through 13).

Less than a quarter of responding ordinands considered vocation to the priesthood for the first time in:

- high school (ages 14 through 17) (23 percent);
- college (ages 18 through 21) (21 percent);
- adulthood (age 22 or older) (16 percent);
- preschool (age 5 or younger) (5 percent).

Comparing diocesan ordinands to religious ordinands:

- The biggest share of responding ordinands from religious institutes (28 percent) considered a vocation to the priesthood for the first time while in college (18 through 21).
- The biggest share of responding diocesan ordinands (38 percent) considered a vocation to the priesthood for the first time while in elementary school (18 through 21).

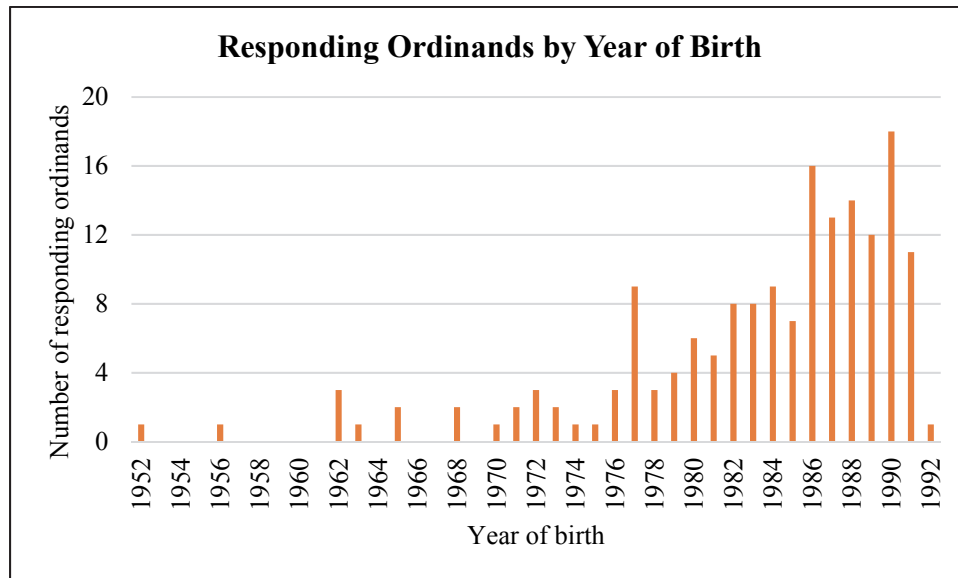
Age When Scheduled for Ordination

Age at Ordination			
Age in years			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	36	33	34
Median	36	31	31
Range	28-49	25-65	25-65

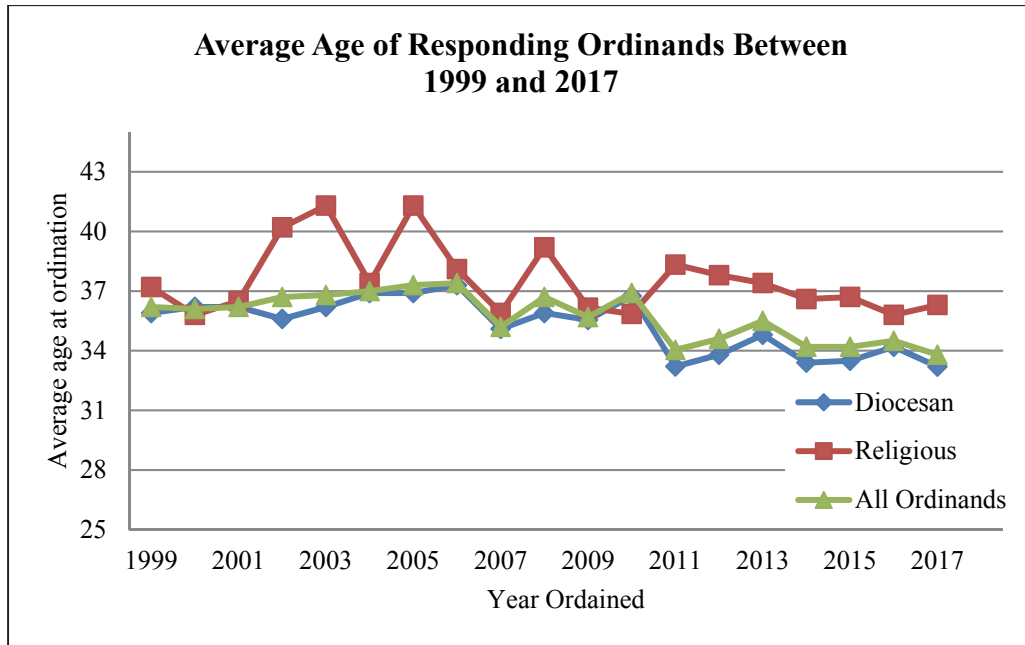
The average age at the time of ordination among all responding ordinands is 34 years old (a median of 31 years old) and varies from 25 to 65 years old. Responding ordinands from religious institutes are on average three years older than responding diocesan ordinands at the time of ordination.

- Responding diocesan ordinands are on average 33 years old at ordination (a median of 31 years old). Their age varies from 25 to 65 years old.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes are on average 36 years old at ordination (a median of 36 years old). Their age varies from 28 to 49 years old.

Ordinands by Year of Birth



About one half of all responding ordinands (51 percent) is 31 years old or younger at the time of the survey. One in twenty responding ordinands (5 percent) is over 50 years old. Two responding ordinands are over 60 years old.



The Class of 2017 follows the pattern in recent years of average age at ordination in the mid-thirties. The average age among all responding ordinands is 34 years old this year (Ordination Class of 2017). By comparison, responding ordinands were 35 years old on average in the previous year (Ordination Class of 2016), and 34 years old on average two years ago (Ordination Class of 2015).

Since 1999, the average age of responding ordinands has decreased by approximately two months each year, from an average of 36 in 1999 to the current average age of 34.

Due to relatively small number of responding ordinands from religious institutes, their average age is relatively volatile from one year to another.

Part III: Selected Demographics

The third part of the report focuses on selected demographics about the responding ordinands including information about race and ethnicity, information pertaining to immigration to the United States (for ordinands born abroad), and information regarding siblings.

The majority of responding ordinands is Caucasian (seven in ten) and three in four were born in the United States.

One in four responding ordinands (25 percent) reported being foreign-born. The share of responding ordinands who were foreign-born increased from 22 percent in 1999 to 38 percent in 2003. Since 2003, the ratio has declined to 23 percent in 2015.

This year, five most common countries of birth among the foreign-born are Mexico, Vietnam, Philippines, Colombia, and Poland. On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 12 years ago and were, on average, age 25 at the time they came.

Almost all responding ordinands (97 percent) have at least one sibling. On average, responding ordinands have three siblings (half have two or more siblings).

Race and Ethnicity

Primary race or ethnicity (Please select only one)			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	65	71	70
Hispanic/Latino	16	14	14
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	14	9	10
African/African American/black	4	4	4
Other (mixed)	1	2	2
Native American/Alaska Native	0	<1	<1

Seven in ten responding ordinands are Caucasian (70 percent). By comparison, Caucasians constituted 66 percent of all responding ordinands last year and 58 percent of all adult Catholics nationally (according to a recent CARA telephone poll of self-identified U.S. adult Catholics).

Less than a quarter of all responding ordinands is:

- Hispanic/Latino (14 percent)

- Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (10 percent)
- African/African American/black (4 percent)
- Other or of mixed race (2 percent)
- Native American/Alaska Native (<1 percent)

Comparing diocesan ordinands to religious ordinands:

- Caucasians constitute the biggest share of responding ordinands from religious institutes (65 percent) and responding diocesan ordinands (71 percent)
- Native Americans constitute the smallest share of responding ordinands from religious institutes (0 percent) as well as from dioceses and eparchies (<1 percent)

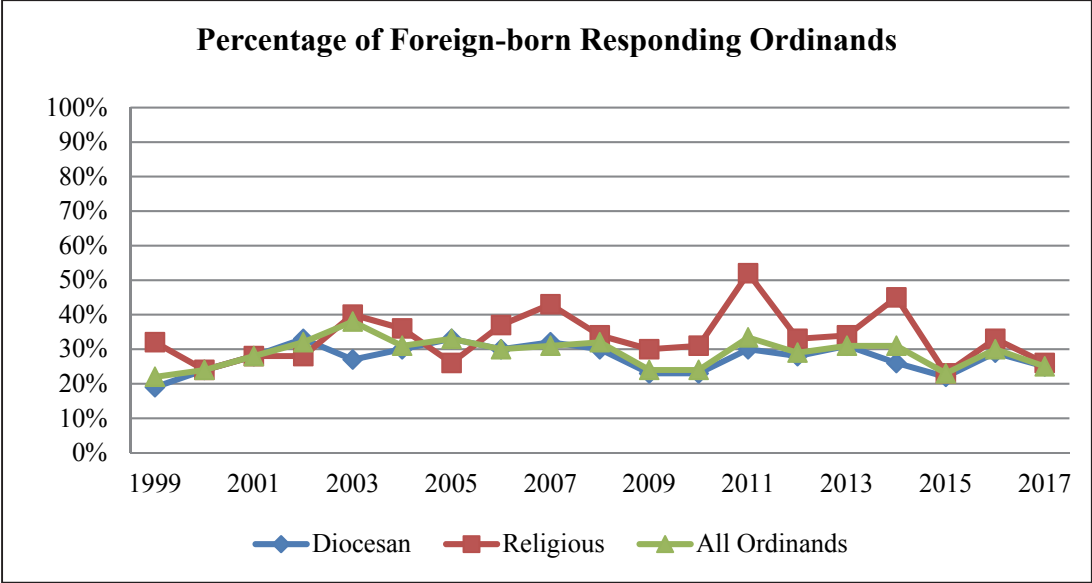
Country of Birth and Year of Entrance into the United States

Top Five Countries of Birth			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
USA	74	75	75
Mexico	2	4	4
Vietnam	4	3	3
Philippines	3	2	2
Colombia	0	3	2
Other	17	13	14

The majority of responding ordinands was born in the U.S. (74 percent of responding ordinands from religious institutes, 75 percent of responding diocesan ordinands, and 75 percent overall).

Four in five responding ordinands were born in the United States (75 percent). The second most common country of origin was Mexico, with 4 percent of ordinands born in that country.

Other countries of birth reported include: Vietnam (3 percent), Philippines (2 percent), Colombia (2 percent), Poland (1 percent), Nigeria (1 percent), Canada (1 percent), El Salvador (1 percent), Germany (1 percent), and India (1 percent). Less than 1 percent of responding ordinands were born in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Haiti, Kenya, Peru, Spain, Togo, Uganda, United Kingdom, Venezuela, Brunei, Chile, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Republic of Korea, and Sri Lanka.



The percentage of responding ordinands who are foreign-born increased from 22 percent in 1999 to 38 percent in 2003. Since 2003, the ratio declined to 23 percent in 2015. In 2017, one in four responding ordinands (25 percent) reported being foreign-born, compared to 30 percent in 2016.

While the percentage of responding foreign-born ordinands from religious institutes has fluctuated somewhat due to the relatively smaller number, since 1999 the percentage of responding diocesan ordinands has remained relatively steady at approximately 20 to 30 percent.

***If born outside the United States,
in what year did you come to live in the United States?***

Year of entry

	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	2005	2005	2005
Median	2007	2009	2009
Range	1992-2016	1976-2016	1976-2016

On average, foreign-born responding ordinands came to live in the United States 12 years ago (a median of eight years ago). The first foreign-born ordinand for the Ordination Class of 2017 entered the country 41 years ago.

- Responding diocesan ordinands came to live in the United States 12 years ago on average (half first came to the United States eight or more years ago). The first foreign-born diocesan ordinand for the Ordination Class of 2017 entered the country 41 years ago.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes came to live in the United States on average 12 years ago (half first came to the United States ten or more years ago). The first foreign-born religious ordinand for the Ordination Class of 2017 entered the country 25 years ago.

**Age at Entry to the United States
of Foreign-born Responding Ordinands**

Age in years

	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	24	25	25
Median	25	26	25
Range	6-39	0-42	0-42

On average, responding foreign-born ordinands came to live in the United States at the age of 25 (a median of 25). Responding ordinands from religious institutes were, on average, slightly younger than responding diocesan ordinands when they came to live in the United States.

Siblings and Birth Order

<i>How many brothers and sisters do you have?</i>			
Reported number of siblings			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	3	3	3
Median	2	2	2
Range ²	0-10	0-11	0-11

Almost all responding ordinands (97 percent) have at least one sibling. About half (46 percent) have three siblings or more. On average, responding ordinands have three siblings (a median of two).

<i>What is your birth order?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Somewhere in the middle	30	39	37
Eldest	42	35	36
Youngest	24	23	23
Only child	4	4	4

The responding ordinands who have siblings were asked to identify their birth order.

- Overall, “somewhere in the middle” was the most frequent response (provided by 37 percent of all responding ordinands).
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were most likely to be “eldest” (42 percent) while responding diocesan ordinands were most likely to be “somewhere in the middle” (39 percent).
- About a quarter of responding ordinands (23 percent) is the “youngest” child.
- One in twenty-five responding ordinands (4 percent) is the “only child.”

² One outlier case/observation (reporting 32 brothers and/or sisters) was excluded from the table. This observation could be valid, for example, in a foster family setting.

Part IV: Education

The fourth part of the report focuses on the education experience of responding ordinands. This includes information about the highest level of education completed before entering the seminary, their attained Catholic education, and information pertaining to educational debt.

Less than one in ten responding ordinands (8 percent) report being home schooled. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of their home schooling was seven years.

Between 40 and 50 percent of all responding ordinands attended Catholic education on the K-12 and/or college level. Three in five responding ordinands (59 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish for seven years on average.

Two in five responding ordinands (43 percent) reported that they completed college or university undergraduate degree before entering the seminary. Prior to entering the seminary, responding ordinands from religious institutes had completed slightly more education than responding diocesan ordinands.

Almost half (46 percent) of all responding ordinands entered a seminary program at the pre-theology level and less than one-third of responding ordinands (29 percent) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or religious institute), which was \$28,318 on average.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were more likely to carry educational debt but they were also more highly educated and, on average, their debt was smaller in comparison to responding diocesan ordinands.

Those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary were able to reduce it to an average amount of \$25,830 which is 9 percent less than when they entered (unadjusted for inflation). While the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands from religious institutes decreased by almost half (46 percent), the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands increased by 2 percent (unadjusted for inflation).

Highest Level of Education before Seminary

Nearly six in ten responding ordinands report that they completed an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree before entering the seminary. Diocesan ordinands are more likely than religious to report that they entered seminary either before or during college.

<i>What is the highest level of education you completed before entering the seminary?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Graduate degree	26	14	16
College or university undergraduate degree	60	38	43
Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree	6	24	20
Trade or technical school	0	2	1
High school	8	21	18
Elementary school (K-8)	0	1	1

Overall, two in five responding ordinands report that they completed college or university undergraduate degree before entering the seminary (43 percent).

Overall, less than a quarter of responding ordinands reported that they completed:

- Some college, but not a Bachelor's degree (20 percent)
- High school (18 percent)
- Graduate degree (16 percent)
- Trade or technical school (1 percent)
- Elementary school (K-8) (1 percent)

Responding ordinands from religious institutes tended to have higher levels of education than responding diocesan ordinands prior to entering the seminary.

***If you attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary,
what was your field of study?***

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Social Science	26	17	19
Theology or Philosophy	16	17	17
Business	10	17	15
Liberal Arts	19	12	14
Science or Math	13	8	9
Engineering	5	11	9
Computers or Information Technology	3	5	5
Education	1	6	5
Fine Arts	5	3	3
Medicine	0	3	2
Law	1	1	1
Agriculture	1	1	1

The responding ordinands who attended undergraduate or graduate school before entering the seminary were asked about their field of study.

- One in five responding ordinands (19 percent) studied social science (e.g., history, social work, political science, psychology). Responding ordinands from religious institutes were more likely than diocesan ordinands to study social science.
- Studies focusing specifically on theology or philosophy were second most popular with 17 percent of all responding ordinands committing to this field of study in undergraduate or graduate school.
- Another 14 percent studied liberal arts (e.g., English, Spanish, romance languages, journalism) and about the same percentage (15 percent) studied business.

At what level did you first enter a seminary program?

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Pre-theology	45	46	46
College	24	44	40
Theology	30	7	12
High school	1	2	2

Almost half (46 percent) of all responding ordinands entered a seminary program at the pre-theology level. In comparison to responding ordinands from religious institutes, responding diocesan ordinands are 20 percentage points *more* likely to enter the seminary at the college level and 23 percentage points *less* likely to enter the seminary at the theology level.

Attained Catholic Education

<i>Did you attend Catholic school at any of the following levels? (Please check all that apply)</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Elementary school (K-8)	50	50	50
High school	47	40	41
College	54	36	40

Responding ordinands are more likely than U.S. Catholics in general to have attended a Catholic school at some level (based on a 2016 national poll of U.S. adult Catholics conducted by CARA).

- Responding ordinands are 11 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school (50 percent compared to 39 percent).
- Responding ordinands are 22 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (41 percent compared to 19 percent).
- Responding ordinands are 30 percentage points more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic college (40 percent compared to 10 percent).

Participation in Catholic Religious Education

<i>Did you participate in the religious education program in your parish?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Yes	59	59	59
No	41	41	41

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, three in five responding ordinands (59 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Diocesan and religious ordinands are equally likely to have participated in the religious education program in their parish.

<i>If you participated in the religious education program in your parish, total number of years in parish religious education:</i>			
Years			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	6	6	6
Median	7	7	7
Range	1-13	0-15	0-15

Those who participated in the religious education program in their parish spent on average six years (a median of seven) in those programs. The responding diocesan ordinands spent up to 15 years while responding ordinands from religious institutes spent up to 13 years in those programs. Three respondents who reported participating more than 15 years in the religious education program in their parish, most likely in a leadership capacity, were excluded from this analysis.

Home Schooling

<i>Were you ever home schooled?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
No	97	90	92
Yes	3	10	8

Less than one in ten responding ordinands (8 percent) report being home schooled. The responding diocesan ordinands are a more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to have been home schooled (10 percent compared to 3 percent).

<i>If you were home schooled, total number of years of home schooling:</i>			
Years			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	6	8	7
Median	9	8	8
Range	1-9	0-18	0-18

Among those responding ordinands who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home-schooled was seven years (a median of eight years).

Educational Debt

<i>Did you have educational debt at the time you entered the seminary (If religious: at the time you entered your institute/society)?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Yes	37	26	29
No	63	74	71

Less than one-third of responding ordinands (29 percent) carried educational debt at the time they entered the seminary (or at the time they entered the religious institute, for those in religious orders). Responding ordinands from religious institutes were more likely to carry educational debt, but they were also more highly educated (see section on the highest completed education).

<i>What was the amount of your educational debt at the time you entered?</i>			
Dollars			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	\$22,219	\$30,789	\$28,318
Median	\$16,500	\$20,000	\$20,000
Range	2,000-80,000	2,000-180,000	2,000-180,000

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt at the time they entered the seminary was \$28,318 (a median of \$20,000) and varied from \$2,000 to \$180,000. Responding diocesan ordinands were on average \$8,570 more in debt than responding ordinands from religious institutes.

- Responding diocesan ordinands were on average \$30,789 in debt (a median of \$20,000). Their amount of debt varied from \$2,000 to \$180,000.
- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were on average \$22,219 in debt (a median of \$16,500). Their amount of debt varied from \$2,000 to \$80,000.

What is the amount of your educational debt now:

Dollars

	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	\$11,922	\$31,358	\$25,830
Median	\$7,000	\$24,500	\$16,675
Range	0-75,000	0-175,000	0-175,000

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the average amount of debt they currently owe is \$25,830, which is 9 percent less than when they entered (unadjusted for inflation). While the average amount of debt carried by responding ordinands from religious institutes decreased by almost half (46 percent), the average amount of debt carried by responding diocesan ordinands increased by 2 percent (unadjusted for inflation).

***How long were you delayed entrance
by your educational debt:***

Years

	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	0	0	0
Median	0	0	0
Range	0-10	0-8	0-10

On average, those who had educational debt were not delayed entrance. However, in some instances, the entrance was delayed for up to ten years.

***Did you receive assistance from any of these groups
in paying down your debt? (Please check all that apply):***

Percentage of all responding ordinands

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Family members	19	42	35
Religious community	73	1	22
Knights of Columbus Fund for Vocations	5	13	11
Parish	11	8	9
Friends/co-workers	8	6	6
Serra Fund for Vocations	0	3	2
Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations	3	0	1
The Labouré Society	0	0	0

Among those who had educational debt at the time they entered the seminary, the biggest group (35 percent) received assistance from family members in paying down the debt.

Responding diocesan ordinands were twice as likely as responding ordinands from religious institutes to receive assistance from their families.

Almost three quarters (73 percent) of responding ordinands from religious institutes who had debt received assistance from their religious communities.

Part V: Work

The fifth part of the report focuses on the work experience, including full-time employment and military experience, of responding ordinands prior to entering the seminary.

More than half of responding ordinands (57 percent) reported some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. One in six of those responding ordinands worked in education. Responding ordinands for religious institutes are more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have work experience (64 percent as compared to 55 percent).

One in twenty responding ordinands served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military changes considerably from year to year. About one in eight responding ordinands (12 percent) reported that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Employment Background

<i>What was your main full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary, if any?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Education	26	14	17
Business professions	9	12	11
Church ministry, parish life	12	9	10
Sales, customer service	6	10	9
Construction, labor, farming	6	9	8
Health care	0	7	5
Management/administration	3	6	5
Restaurant/food services	5	5	5
Computers, IT	6	4	4
Military	6	3	4
Engineering, architecture	3	3	3
Research/science	2	3	3
Family business	2	3	2
Social work/counseling	6	1	2
Legal professions	2	2	2
Journalism	3	2	2
Clerical	2	1	1
Law enforcement	0	1	<1
Other	2	6	5

More than half of responding ordinands (57 percent) reported some type of full-time work experience prior to entering the seminary. Responding ordinands from religious institutes are more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have prior work experience (64 percent as compared to 55 percent).

The most common category of full-time work experience among all responding ordinands (17 percent) is education.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes who have full-time work experience are 12 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to have worked in education.

Responding diocesan ordinands with full-time work experience, are 7 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to have worked in health care.

Military Background

<i>Have you ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
No	94	95	95
Yes	6	5	5

Five percent of responding ordinands report having served in the U.S. Armed Forces (5 percent of responding diocesan ordinands and 6 percent of responding ordinands from religious institutes).

<i>If you have served in the Armed Forces of the United States, which branch(es)?</i>			
<i>(Please check all that apply):</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Air Force	33	27	29
Navy	50	20	29
Army	17	20	19
Reserves	14	17	16
Marines	0	13	10
National Guard	0	13	10
Coast Guard	0	7	5

Among those with military experience, nearly three in ten (29 percent) served in the Air Force and/or Navy. Since the number of responding ordinands with military experience is relatively small (5 percent of all responding ordinands), the percentage of those with experience in different branches of the military changes considerably from year to year.

***Did either of your parents have a military career
in the U. S. Armed Forces?***

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Yes	16	11	12
No	84	89	88

Responding ordinands were asked whether either of their parents had a career in the military. About one in eight responding ordinands (12 percent) report that one or both parents had a military career in the U.S. Armed Forces. Responding diocesan ordinands were less likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to report having a parent with a military career (11 percent compared to 16 percent).

Part VI: Vocational Discernment

The sixth part of the report focuses on various factors that might have influenced the process of vocational discernment.

Almost all responding ordinands reported being baptized Catholic as an infant (93 percent). Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 21. Four in five responding ordinands (80 percent) report that both their parents were Catholic when they were children.

Four in five responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic Adoration (77 percent) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, around seven in ten responding ordinands (69 percent) prayed the rosary, almost half (46 percent) attended prayer group/Bible study, two in five (38 percent) went to high school retreats, about three out of ten responding ordinands attended college retreats (34 percent) and/or Lectio Divina (29 percent).

Responding diocesan ordinands were 17 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to participate in Eucharistic Adoration. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 14 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to attend college retreats.

In regard to participation in various activities before entering the seminary, half of all responding ordinands participated in parish youth group (48 percent) before entering the seminary. About three in ten responding ordinands participated in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (34 percent) and Boy Scouts (31 percent).

In regard to participation in parish ministries before entering the seminary, four in five (75 percent) responding ordinands served as altar servers before entering the seminary. Half (52 percent) served as lectors. Two in five served as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (43 percent). One in three served in campus ministry or youth ministry (35 percent) and a similar proportion served as catechists (34 percent) or confirmation sponsors/godfathers (32 percent). Just over a quarter served as cantors or in some other aspect of music ministry (27 percent).

In regard to participation in vocation programs before entering the seminary, half of responding ordinands (47 percent) reported participating in “Come and See” weekends at the seminary or the religious institute/society.

Four in five responding ordinands (82 percent) reported being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life (most frequently, the parish priest, friend, or another parishioner). Responding ordinands indicate that, on average, four individuals encouraged their vocation. One in three responding ordinands (35 percent) has/had a relative who is a priest or religious.

One-half of responding ordinands (48 percent) indicated that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons. Most often, this person was a friend/classmate or a family member (other than parents).

Family Religious Background

<i>How long have you been a Catholic?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Baptized Catholic as an infant	90	93	93
Became a Catholic later in life	10	7	7

Almost all responding ordinands report being baptized Catholic as an infant (93 percent). Responding diocesan ordinands are 3 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to be baptized Catholic as an infant.

Among the 7 percent of all responding ordinands who became Catholic later in life (32 responding ordinands), the majority belonged formerly to a Protestant tradition (e.g., Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist). Two responding ordinands were formerly members of an Orthodox Church. Six responding ordinands were raised without a faith tradition.

<i>How old were you when you became a Catholic?</i>			
Age in years			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
Mean	20	22	21
Median	21	21	21
Range	15-25	4-50	4-50

Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of conversion was 21 years old (a median of 21) and varied from 4 to 50 years old. Responding diocesan ordinands were on average two years younger than responding ordinands from religious institutes when they became Catholic.

What was the religious background of your parents when you were a child?

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	82	80	80
Mother Catholic, father non-Catholic	10	13	12
Neither parent was Catholic	6	5	5
Father Catholic, mother non-Catholic	2	3	3

Four in five responding ordinands (80 percent) reported that both of their parents were Catholic when they were children.

Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or a religious?

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Yes	42	33	35
No	58	67	65

One in three responding ordinands (35 percent) has (had) a relative who is a priest or religious. Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 9 percentage points more likely to have (had) a relative who is a priest or religious.

Prayer Practices

Did you participate in any of these prayer practices or groups on a regular basis before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):
 Percentage of all responding ordinands

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Eucharistic Adoration	63	80	77
Rosary	57	72	69
Prayer group/Bible study	46	46	46
High School Retreats	30	40	38
College Retreats	45	31	34
Lectio Divina	29	29	29

More than three in four responding ordinands participated in Eucharistic Adoration (77 percent) on a regular basis before entering the seminary, around seven in ten responding ordinands (69 percent) prayed the rosary, almost half (46 percent) attended prayer group/Bible study, two in five (38 percent) went to high school retreats, about three in ten attended college retreats (34 percent) and/or Lectio Divina (29 percent).

Responding diocesan ordinands were 17 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to participate in Eucharistic Adoration.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 14 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to attend college retreats.

Participation in Faith-Related Activities

<i>Did you participate in any of these programs or activities before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Parish youth group	35	52	48
Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center	40	32	34
Boy Scouts	29	32	31
Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver	17	25	23
Parish young adult group	21	22	22
Right to Life	21	20	20
Charismatic Renewal	15	13	13
Cursillo	5	6	6
Volunteer program associated with CVN	11	3	5
St. Vincent de Paul Society	5	4	5
Serra Club	3	1	2

Half of all responding ordinands participated in a parish youth group (48 percent) before entering the seminary.

- Responding ordinands from religious institutes were most likely than diocesan ordinands to participate in Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center before entering the seminary (40 percent compared to 32 percent).
- Responding diocesan ordinands were most likely to participate in parish youth groups before entering the seminary (52 percent compared to 35 percent).

About three in ten responding ordinands participated in:

- Catholic campus ministry/Newman Center (34 percent)
- Boy Scouts (31 percent)

Less than a quarter of responding ordinands participated in:

- Knights of Columbus/Knights of Peter Claver (23 percent)
- Parish young adult group (22 percent)
- Right to Life (20 percent)

- Charismatic Renewal (13 percent)
- Cursillo (6 percent)
- Volunteer program associated with the Catholic Volunteer Network (5 percent)
- St. Vincent de Paul Society (5 percent)
- Serra Club (2 percent)

***Did you participate in any of these events before entering the seminary?
(Please check all that apply):***
Percentage of all responding ordinands

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
World Youth Day	11	17	15
Franciscan University of Steubenville			
High School Youth Conference	3	16	13
National Catholic Youth Conference	6	7	7
Marian Days	3	5	4

One in seven responding ordinands (15 percent) participated in a World Youth Day before entering the seminary. Responding diocesan ordinands were more likely than ordinands from religious institutes to participate in each of the four listed events.

Participation in Parish Ministries

<i>Did you serve in any of these parish ministries before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Altar server	67	77	75
Lector	54	51	52
Minister of Holy Communion	47	42	43
Campus ministry/Youth ministry	39	34	35
Catechist	26	36	34
Confirmation sponsor/godfather	31	32	32
Cantor or music ministry	28	26	27
Usher/minister of hospitality	15	17	16
RCIA team member/sponsor	17	12	13
Parish pastoral council member	9	12	11
Liturgy committee member	9	10	10
Full-time parish/diocesan employee	5	8	7

Three in four (75 percent) responding ordinands served as altar servers before entering the seminary. More than half (52 percent) of all responding ordinands served as lectors. Two in five responding ordinands served as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (43 percent).

One in three responding ordinands served:

- in campus ministry/youth ministry (35 percent)
- as catechists (34 percent)
- as Confirmation sponsors/godfathers (32 percent)

One in four responding ordinands served as cantors or in some other aspect of music ministry (27 percent). Less than a quarter of responding ordinands served as:

- Ushers/ministers of hospitality (16 percent)
- RCIA team members/sponsors (13 percent)
- Parish pastoral council members (11 percent)

- Liturgy committee members (10 percent)
- Full-time parish/diocesan employees (7 percent)

Responding diocesan ordinands were 10 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to serve as altar servers and/or catechists.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 5 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, campus ministers/youth ministers, and/or RCIA team members/sponsors.

Influence of Others

Four in five responding ordinands (82 percent) report being encouraged to consider the priesthood by someone in their life. Responding ordinands indicate that, on average, four individuals encouraged their vocation.

Were you encouraged to consider the priesthood by any of these people? (Please check all that apply):			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Parish Priest	50	76	70
Friend	45	45	45
Parishioner	35	47	44
Mother	32	42	40
Father	25	34	32
Teacher/Catechist	27	28	28
Grandparent(s)	22	23	23
Campus Minister/School Chaplain	30	16	19
Other relative	18	15	16
Youth Minister	9	18	16
Religious Sister	18	15	16
Bishop	9	13	12
Religious Brother	23	9	12
Deacon	7	8	8
Military Chaplain	5	2	3

Around seven in ten responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by a parish priest (70 percent).

Half of responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by a friend (45 percent).

Two in five responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by a parishioner (44 percent) and/or by their mother (40 percent).

About three in ten responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by their father (32 percent), and/or teacher/catechist (28 percent).

Less than a quarter of responding ordinands reported being encouraged to consider priesthood by grandparent(s) (23 percent), campus minister/school chaplain (19 percent), other relative than parents (16 percent), youth minister (16 percent), religious sister (16 percent), bishop (12 percent), religious brother (12 percent), deacon (8 percent), and a military chaplain (3 percent).

Responding diocesan ordinands were 26 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to be encouraged to consider priesthood by a parish priest.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 14 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to be encouraged to consider priesthood by campus minister/school chaplain and/or religious brother.

<i>Did anyone discourage you from considering priesthood as a vocation?</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
No	40	55	52
Yes	60	45	48

One-half of responding ordinands (48 percent) indicate that they were discouraged from considering the priesthood by one or more persons.

Who discouraged you
(Please check all that apply):
Percentage of all responding ordinands

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Friend or school classmate	37	29	31
Other family member	22	23	23
Mother	20	11	13
Father	10	11	11
Colleague or coworker	13	10	10
Priest or other clergy	6	7	7
Teacher	4	6	6
Someone else	5	3	3
Religious sister or brother	4	1	2
Youth/campus minister	0	1	<1

One quarter to one third of the responding ordinands report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by a friend or school classmate (31 percent) or “other” family member (23 percent).

About one in ten responding ordinands reported being discouraged to consider the priesthood by their mother (13 percent) or their father (11 percent), by a colleague or coworker (10 percent), by a priest or other clergy (7 percent), or by a teacher (6 percent).

Responding ordinands were least likely to report being discouraged to consider the priesthood by “someone else” (3 percent), by a religious sister or brother (2 percent), or by a youth minister or campus minister (<1 percent).

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 9 percentage points more likely than diocesan ordinands to be discouraged by their mothers and 8 percentage points more likely to be discouraged by a friend or school classmate.

Participation in Vocation Activities

<i>Did you participate in any of these vocation programs before entering the seminary? (Please check all that apply):</i>			
Percentage of all responding ordinands			
	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Come and See weekend	72	40	47
Quo Vadis retreat/Discernment retreat	6	15	13
College vocation program	21	8	11
High school vocation program	13	9	10
Operation Andrew	2	11	9
Other parish vocation program	5	8	8
Elementary school or CCD vocation program	4	7	7
Traveling Chalice/Cross/Statue for vocations	2	6	5

Half of responding ordinands (47 percent) reported participating in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society.

About one in ten responding ordinands reported participating in a Quo Vadis retreat/discernment retreat (13 percent), in a college vocation program (11 percent), in a high school vocation program (10 percent), in Operation Andrew (9 percent), in some “other parish vocation program” (8 percent), in an elementary school or CCD vocation program (7 percent), or in a traveling chalice/cross/statue for vocations (5 percent).

Responding diocesan ordinands were 9 percentage points more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to participate in Quo Vadis retreat/discernment retreat or in Operation Andrew.

Responding ordinands from religious institutes were 32 percentage points more likely than responding diocesan ordinands to participate in a “Come and See” weekend at the seminary or the religious institute/society and 13 percentage points more likely to participate in a college vocation program.

***Did you see the DVD “Fishers of Men,” published by the USCCB,
before entering the seminary or religious life?***

Percentage of all responding ordinands in each category

	Religious	Diocesan	All
	%	%	%
Yes	58	77	73
No	42	23	27

In addition to the vocation programs listed above, nearly three in four responding ordinands (73 percent) have seen the vocational promotion DVD “Fishers of Men,” published by the USCCB. Responding diocesan ordinands are more likely than responding ordinands from religious institutes to have seen the DVD (77 percent compared to 58 percent).