Perpetual professions and ordinations have increased in the past five years

2016
- 216 women and men professed final vows from 62 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 75 religious institutes
- 497 potential ordinands from 30 religious institutes: 119 arch/dioceses

2012
- 156 women and men professed final vows from 89 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

For more information on vocation trends and statistics and related resources, go to www.NRVC.net.

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP IN VOCATION MINISTRY

1. Prioritize vocation ministry as essential to the growth of the community

The NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life shows that religious institutes that make vocation ministry a priority and work to build a culture of vocations in their congregations attract and retain newer members. For vocation ministry to be effective and successful, it is recommended that those in religious leadership:

- Have a deep commitment to inviting and incorporating new members into the congregation, a belief in the vitality of their institute's charism and a desire to instill this belief in their membership; hope for the future of religious life; and an appreciation that religious vocations are valid, valued, and vibrant.
- Stay abreast of current vocation statistics, especially the fact that men and women continue to be interested in religious life. Two-thirds of women's religious institutes and 80 percent of men's religious institutes have at least one person in formation. In 2016, 502 women and men entered religious life in 122 distinct religious institutes. This was an increase from 2015 when 411 women and men entered religious life.
- Know, recognize, and celebrate major vocation-promotion days: World Day for Consecrated Life (February 2), World Day of Prayer for Vocations (Good Shepherd Sunday), National Vocation Awareness Week (first full week in November), National Catholic Sisters Week (March 8-14) and Religious Brothers Day (May 1).
- Share the responsibility of vocation ministry among religious leadership, vocation ministers, and members of the religious institute.

2. Appoint highly capable people to vocation ministry

- Vocation ministers are entrusted with the privileged and sacred responsibility of accompanying candidates as they discern their baptismal call. Discerners should receive the highest standard of care from highly capable people appointed to this important congregational ministry.
- The NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life indicates that there is a high correlation of newer members with a full-time vocation director supported by a team with resources.
- While those in temporary profession may be part of a vocation team and attend NRVC workshops, it is best to appoint perpetually professed members as vocation directors as it can be difficult for someone who is still being evaluated in initial formation to be assessing the suitability of discerners.
- Select a vocation director who focuses on possibilities not problems; a collaborator not a competitor; and a person of prayer, both personally and communally. Choose vocation team members who are outgoing, resilient, and responsible.

3. Provide your vocation director and team with training, resources, and accountability for their ministry

- Vocation ministry requires education, training, and a commitment to ethical and professional standards. Vocation directors who are given the tools and training they need to succeed remain in the ministry longer.
- As the only professional organization for vocation ministry for religious institutes of women and men in the United States, NRVC provides various opportunities for professional growth through its comprehensive workshops and resources. NRVC strongly encourages vocation ministers to tend to their own vocations, further develop professional competencies, and participate in continuing education. A suggested curriculum is posted at https://nrvc.net/256/article/documents-forms-for-use-in-vocation-ministry-7070.
- Vocation ministers need adequate resources for their ministry, including time, budget, and a network of spiritual, emotional, and professional support. Offer vocation ministers periodic peer supervision.
- The vocation minister should have a clear set of responsibilities written in a job description with established channels of accountability to religious leadership. Likewise, a vocation minister should exhibit a responsible work ethic and be accountable for the resources and time provided for ministry. An annual performance review helps to provide obtainable goals and objectives beyond the number of applicants.
VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT
In 2016, 4,920 discerners created profiles through the NRVC’s Vocation Match service

DEMOGRAPHICS
- 65 percent are under 30
  (24 percent men; 39 percent women)
- 89 percent are Catholic; 4 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.

For more information on vocation trends and statistics and related resources, go to www.NRVC.net.

4. Facilitate a corporate responsibility for promoting the future
   - During canonical visits, ask every member how they are promoting vocations. Ask directly, “When was the last time you invited someone to consider religious life?” Women and men are twice as likely to consider a vocation to religious life when invited 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.
   - Consider a team approach, and expand a single NRVC membership to a license for up to five members so that all five members receive the award winning HORIZON vocation journal, monthly newsletters and updates, and membership discounts on resources and workshops.
   - Encourage vowed members to be present among youth and young adults. Religious institutes that sponsor 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. The average age a person first considers religious life is 18-19 years of age. The average age of entrance to religious life is 30. Half are 25 years old or younger.
   - Attend the biennial NRVC Convocation with your vocation team or send others to support the vocation director at NRVC Member Area events and national workshops.

5. Read and apply learnings from professional studies and research about vocations to religious life
   - NRVC is committed to providing professional studies and reports that accurately track trends in vocations to religious life. The following studies, executive summaries, and accompanying resources are all available at https://nrvc.net/334/article/links-to-studies-reports-1304:
     - 2015 NRVC/CARA Study on the Role of the Family in Nurturing Vocations to Religious Life and the Priesthood
     - 2014 NRVC/CARA Study on Incorporating Cultural Diversity in Religious Life
     - 2014 NRVC Men Religious Moving Forward in Hope Final Report
     - 2013 NRVC Women Religious Moving Forward in Hope Final Report
     - 2013 NRVC Moving Forward in Hope: Keys to the Future Final Report
     - 2012 NRVC/CARA Study on Educational Debt and Vocations to Religious Life
     - 2012 USCCB/CARA Study on the Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life among Never-married U.S. Catholics
     - 2009 NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life
     - The annual USCCB/CARA Profession Class reports and Ordination Class reports, along with the CARA Entrance Class reports.
     - Additional reports and analyses relevant to vocations to religious life.

   - The Culture of Vocations Assessment Tool for Men’s Religious Communities and the Vocation Culture: Reflection to Action Tool are designed to assess and assist religious congregations with their internal vocation culture among members. Both resources are available for purchase at www.NRVC.net/store or can be downloaded by members at https://nrvc.net/329/publication/members-only-resources-4524.

   - The complete digital Vocation Directors Manual contains over 700 articles on topics essential to vocation ministry. All can be accessed online at https://nrvc.net/vocation_directors_manual.


6. Incorporate best practices for vocation promotion in your vocation ministry
   - Install a culture of vocations and involve membership and leadership in concerted vocation promotion efforts.
   - Have a full-time vocation director supported by a team and resources.
   - Use new media, especially websites, social networks, and other online options.
   - Offer discernment programs and other opportunities for potential candidates to meet members and learn about the institute.
   - Target specific groups—college students, young adults, elementary and high school students—to increase awareness and provide information about religious life and a particular institute.

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

Learn more about the National Religious Vocation Conference at www.NRVC.net