



NRVC

National Religious Vocation Conference

An NRVC Resource

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

MISSION OF NRVC

The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) 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.

MISSION OF NFCRV

The National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations (NFCRV), established by the NRVC in 2014, serves as a sign of hope for the future of consecrated life and is dedicated to increasing the number of women and men entering religious communities. NFCRV offers financial assistance to religious institutes so that they may accept candidates who have student loan obligations. For more information, go to NFCRV.org.

VOCATION STATISTICS

The U.S. is home to 759 religious institutes. Each has a distinct charism, mission, and spirituality.

2016

216 final professions from 82 religious institutes
548 potential ordinands from 32 religious institutes; 140 arch/dioceses
502 entered 122 religious institutes

2015

136 final professions from 75 religious institutes
595 potential ordinands from 28 religious institutes; 120 arch/dioceses
411 entered 109 religious institutes

Source: Annual USCCB/CARA Ordination Class Reports and Profession Class Reports

ADDITIONAL NRVC RESOURCES

We invite you to make use of a wide array of resources to promote vocations to religious life found at NRVC.net/store. Also find articles, directories, videos, and interactive features at NRVC's VocationNetwork.org, nationally acclaimed by the Catholic Press Association and the USCCB.

Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly

YOUNG PEOPLE, THE FAITH, AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Preparatory Document Summary prepared by the National Religious Vocation Conference

THE PURPOSE OF THE 15TH ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Through every phase of this Synod, the Church desires to encounter, accompany, and care for every young person, without exception. The Church has decided to examine how to lead young Catholics (ages 16-29) to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, and to ask for their help in identifying the most effective ways to announce the Good News today. • Listening to the aspirations of young people, the Church can glimpse the world which lies ahead and the paths the Church is called to follow. • The Gospel of John, the beloved disciple, can serve as an inspiration for this preparatory process.

I. YOUNG PEOPLE IN TODAY'S WORLD

- 1. A rapidly changing world** • Many societies are increasingly multicultural and multireligious. • The presence of different religious traditions is a challenge and an opportunity. • This sign of our times requires greater listening, respect, and dialogue.
- 2. New generations** • Many young people are experiencing particular material hardships which pose difficulties for them in making life choices because they do not have the possibility to exercise freedom. • Young people do not see themselves as a disadvantaged social group to be protected or, consequently, as passive recipients of pastoral programs. • Many young people wish to take an active part in the process of change, as confirmed by involvement in innovation at the grass-root level. • Young people look for persons of reference—both adults and peers—who are able to express empathy and offer them support, encouragement, and help in recognizing their limits, but without making them feel judged. • Though young people are not in open *opposition*, they learn to live without God and the Church, and instead may rely on alternative and minimally institutionalized forms of religion and spirituality. • The younger generation is characterized by its relationship with modern technologies of communication—"the virtual world"—which has very real effects.
- 3. Young people and choices** • The old approaches no longer work and the experience passed on by previous generations quickly becomes obsolete. • For young people, in both relationships and work, the horizon consists of options that can always be reversed rather than definitive choices. • It is significant that young people propose and practice alternatives which show how the world or the Church could be. • If society or the Christian community want to make something new happen again, they have to leave room for new people to take action. • Devising change for sustainability requires enabling new generations to experience a new model of development—this is particularly problematic in those countries and institutions where the age of those who occupy positions or responsibility is high and slows down the pace of generational change.

II. FAITH, DISCERNMENT, VOCATION

The church must consider ideas regarding ways to accompanying young people beginning with their faith, their vocational discernment, and their fundamental life choices.

- 1. Faith and vocation** • Faith "is no refuge for the fainthearted, but something which enhances our lives. It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love." (*Lumen fidei*, 53). • To believe is to listen to the Spirit and, with all one's powers of mind and emotion, to dialogue with the Word, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and to learn to trust in the Word, embodying it in the concrete instances of everyday life. • To discern the voice of the Spirit from other calls and decide how to respond is the task of each person.
- 2. The gift of discernment** • The focus of this synod is on vocational discernment, that is, "the process by which a person makes fundamental choices, in dialogue with the Lord and listening to the voice of the Spirit, starting with

KEY IDEAS

The purpose of vocational discernment is to find out how to transform our choices, in the light of faith, into steps toward the fullness of joy to which everyone is called.

I. Young people's world

- Multicultural, multireligious societies—a sign of our times—requires greater listening, respect, and dialogue.
- Young people look for persons of reference—both adults and peers—who are able to express empathy and offer them support, encouragement, and help in recognizing their limits, but without making them feel judged.

II. Faith, Discernment, Accompaniment

- To discern the voice of the Spirit from other calls and decide how to respond is the task of each person.
- Three verbs used to describe the stages of discernment: recognize, interpret, choose.
- Three basic beliefs underlie the process of discernment. The belief that the Spirit of God works in the heart of everyone; the human heart is attracted to different and contrary feelings; every way of life imposes a choice.
- Jesus' encounter with people highlight the profile of the person accompanying a young person in vocational discernment: a loving look, an authoritative word, an ability to become the neighbor, a choice to walk beside, and an authentic witness.

III. Pastoral Activity

- Adopting Jesus' way of encountering people can be a helpful pastoral style: Going out, seeing, and calling.
- Specific places to encounter young people are: World Youth Days, parishes, universities, Catholic schools, volunteer opportunities, spiritual centers, missionary experiences, and pilgrimages.
- The entire Christian community should feel the responsibility of educating new generations.

Source: "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment Preparatory Document," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html. Accessed September 2017.

the choice of one's state in life." • For the believer, the question becomes even more intense and profound, namely, how does a person live the good news of the Gospel and respond to God's call whether through marriage, single life, the ordained ministry, or the consecrated life? • Three verbs used to describe the stages of discernment: recognize, interpret, choose.

3. Paths toward vocation and mission • Vocational discernment is not accomplished in a single act or in isolation. It is a long process unfolding over time with engagement of key figures. • Our Blessed Mother, Mary became aware of her vocation while pondering the words she heard and the events that took place, even those she did not understand. • Contact with poverty, vulnerability, and need are of great importance on the road to vocational discernment. • Members of the formation staff should confirm and foster a willingness to become imbued with the "smell of the sheep."

4. Accompaniment • Three basic beliefs underlie the process of discernment. The belief that the Spirit of God works in the heart of everyone; the human heart is attracted to different and contrary feelings; every way of life imposes a choice. • The Church's spiritual tradition emphasizes the importance of accompaniment. One needs the hard, personal experience of interpreting the movements of the heart to recognize the action of the Spirit, whose voice can speak to the uniqueness of each individual. • Jesus' encounter with people highlight the profile of the person accompanying a young person in vocational discernment: a loving look, an authoritative word, an ability to become the neighbor, a choice to walk beside, and an authentic witness.

III. PASTORAL ACTIVITY

How does the Church help young people accept their call to the joy of the Gospel, especially in these times of uncertainty, volatility, and insecurity?

1. Walking with young people • Accompanying young people requires going beyond a preconceived framework, encountering young people where they are, adapting to their times and pace of life, and taking them seriously. • Adopting Jesus' way of encountering people can be a helpful pastoral style: Going out, seeing, and calling.

2. Agents • Each community is called to be attentive to young people, especially those who are experiencing poverty, marginalization, or exclusion, and lead them to become involved in life. • The entire Christian community should feel the responsibility of educating new generations. In fact, many Christians involved in this work deserve recognition, beginning with those who have assumed this responsibility within ecclesial life. • Everywhere in the world, parishes, religious congregations, associations, movements, and ecclesial realities exist which can devise and offer young people significant experiences of growth and discernment. • Parents and family, shepherds of souls (clergy and those in consecrated life), teachers and others in education: All these people bear witness to the human and Christian vocation, which is accepted and lived with faithfulness and dedication, arousing in those who see them a desire to do likewise.

3. Places • The commitment to listen to the cry of the poor and the earth can be an opportunity to encounter God and the Church and to discover one's vocation. • Specific places to encounter young people are: World Youth Days, parishes, universities, Catholic schools, volunteer opportunities, spiritual centers, missionary experiences, and pilgrimages.

4. Resources • The church sometimes has a difficult time finding the proper language and expressions to speak to young people. • The church needs to get accustomed to the fact that the ways of approaching faith are less standardized. • No discernment is possible without cultivating a relationship with God and sacred scripture. In particular, *Lectio divina* is a valuable method from Church tradition.

5. Mary of Nazareth • The synod process is entrusted to Mary, the first to fulfill this journey to accept God's call to the joy of love and the fullness of life. • Recalling the "great things" which the Almighty accomplished in Mary, she did not feel alone, but fully loved and supported by the "Fear not" of the Angel. • In Mary's eyes, every young person can rediscover the beauty of discernment; in her heart, every young person can experience the tenderness of intimacy and the courage of witness and mission.

QUESTIONS

The Preparatory Document concludes with Questions for the purpose of 1) gathering statistics; 2) evaluating the situation, and 3) sharing activities.

NRVC is committed to providing timely vocation-related resources to its members for use in their ministry.