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FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING VOCATIONS TO RELIGIOUS LIFE, GO TO WWW.NRVC.NET

VOCATIONS TO RELIGIOUS LIFE FACT SHEET

Prepared by the NRVC, February 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Survey estimates suggest that as many as 350,000 never married men and 250,000 never married women have seriously considered becoming a priest, sister, or brother. Those of the millennial generation (born after 1982) are even more likely than the generation before them to consider a vocation. Surveys also suggest that those entering religious life today are a little younger than those who were entering ten years ago.
- People who attend a Catholic school, know a priest, sister, or brother, or who have been invited by a priest, sister, or brother to enter the priesthood or religious life are more likely to consider seriously a religious vocation.
- Some religious institutes continue to attract and few are experiencing significant growth. About 20 percent of religious institutes have more than five members in formation.
- Those coming to religious life today tend to be optimistic in their outlook, tolerant of differences among people, and positive in their attitudes toward authority. They believe religious life will persevere.
- In 2009 there were over 2,600 men and women in religious formation in the United States. There are more men preparing to be religious priests and brothers (more than half) than there are women preparing to be sisters (less than half). The retention rate is 50% (it is higher for women than men).
- The "face" of religious life is changing in the U.S. Compared to finally professed members who are 94% white Caucasian, newer entrants are more likely to be non-Caucasian: 21% are Hispanic/Latino/a; 14% are Asian or Pacific Islander and 6% are African, Black, or African American.
- Newer entrants are well educated. About 70% have at least a bachelor's degree upon entrance. However, one third of applicants have at least \$20,000 in educational debt when they enter, an increasing financial burden for the communities that receive them.
- Religious institutes are more likely to attract newer members if they have a strong Catholic identity, if they are hopeful about their future, if their members live together in community, and if they have a structured prayer life.
- Although newer members desire ministry (70% were already involved in full or part-time ministry prior to entrance), their primary reasons for coming to religious life are a sense of call, a desire to deepen their prayer and spiritual life, and a desire to live with others who share their faith and values.
- Approximately 160 women and men professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2012. About 110 of these newly professed were sisters and nuns.

QUICK VOCATION FACTS

WOMEN'S RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES

- Average age of entrance is 32.
- Women are more likely to hear about their religious institute through the recommendation of a friend.
- Women who have attended a Catholic primary school are three times as likely as those who did not to consider being a religious sister.
- Women tend to consider a vocation prior to the age of 14.

MEN'S RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES

- Average age of entrance is 30.
- Men are more likely to encounter their religious institute in a school or other institution served by the congregation.
- Men who have attended a Catholic secondary school are more than six times as likely as those who did not to consider a vocation.
- Men who consider a vocation tend to do so during their college years.

VOCATION TRENDS

The NRVC's VISION Vocation Network receives tens of thousands of requests for information each year from men and women discerning a vocation to religious life.

VISION statistics, gathered from completed online reader profiles, give an indication of emerging trends in religious vocations.

NRVC's VISION VOCATION GUIDE READER RESPONSE

30,202 unique readers have completed online Vocation Match profiles in the past five years (2008-2012).

Among these:

- 18,598 ARE WOMEN
- 11,604 ARE MEN
- 90% ARE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING RELIGIOUS LIFE
- 57% ATTENDED CATHOLIC SCHOOL
- 53% ARE UNDER 30
- 31% ARE INTERESTED IN BECOMING RELIGIOUS SISTERS
- 19% ARE INTERESTED IN PRIESTHOOD (BOTH RELIGIOUS AND DIOCESAN)
- 11% ARE INTERESTED IN BECOMING RELIGIOUS BROTHERS
- 27% ARE INTERESTED IN APOSTOLIC/EVANGELICAL LIFE
- 21% ARE INTERESTED IN MISSIONARY LIFE
- 19% ARE INTERESTED IN MONASTIC LIFE
- 17% ARE INTERESTED IN CLOISTERED/CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

From VISION Reader Statistics, available at http://www.VocationNetwork.org/statistics/response_statistics

FOR MORE ON RECENT VOCATION STUDIES: GO TO NRVC.NET

FOR VOCATION TRENDS AMONG VOCATION DISCERNERS: GO TO THE NRVC'S VOCATIONNETWORK.ORG

CHALLENGES FOR THE CHURCH REGARDING RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS

- Being integrated into a Catholic culture increases the likelihood of the consideration of a vocation. There is a correlation that those who attend Catholic schools, participate in parish youth groups, know a priest, sister, or brother, and are invited to think about a religious vocation tend to be more open to a religious vocation. The Church needs to support more structured outreach to younger people so as to ensure their integration into a Catholic culture.
- Educational debt prevents men and women from pursuing a vocation. Every third person who inquires about religious life has an average student loan of \$28,000. We are losing vocations because of this issue. Seven out of 10 communities have turned some inquirers away within the last ten years because of educational debt. One third of communities say that some serious inquirers do not pursue an application because of their debt, while another one third does not complete their application because of their student loans.
- Only thirty percent of newer entrants to religious life indicate that their parents very much encouraged them in their desire to pursue a vocation. The Church needs to provide greater education and structures of support for parents and families in their vital role of vocation promotion.
- Religious life in the United States has traditionally drawn its membership from immigrant populations. Those who may consider a vocation today may be discouraged by their citizenship status or by the educational prerequisites for entrance into a community. The Church needs to look at creative solutions. The National Religious Vocation Conference plans to conduct a study on the integration of men and women from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds into predominately white, Caucasian religious institutes.

The NRVC's Vocation Fact Sheet information compiled from the following studies:

NRVC/CARA Report on Recent Vocations to Religious Life (2009)

USCCB/CARA Report on the Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics (2012)

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

USCCB/CARA Report on New Sisters and Brothers Professing Final Vows in Religious Life (2013)

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

- Most new members acknowledge that the numbers in religious life may continue to decline. Nonetheless, they believe religious life will persevere and that the Spirit can and will move in that diminishment.
- New members are especially attracted to religious institutes that themselves are clear and confident about their identity and hopeful about their future.

—From 2009 NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations, p. 14