

**March 2020**

***Women and Men Entering Religious Life:  
The Entrance Class of 2019***



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

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The Entrance Class of 2019*



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***Women and Men Entering Religious Life:  
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**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who formally entered a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States during 2019. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men (postulants or novices in institutes that do not have postulancy), the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 132 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a postulant or novice) in the United States since January 1, 2019. CARA then emailed or mailed a survey to each entrant, asking them to complete an online survey or mail their completed paper survey to CARA.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 557 of 746 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 75% among religious institutes. Two religious institutes were not interested in participating in the study. In all, 87% of LCWR superiors, 69% of CMSWR superiors, 70% of CMSM superiors, and 60% of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 380 members that entered religious life in 2019.

Of these 380 identified women and men, four institutes reporting a total of 10 postulants were not interested in having their members participate in the survey. Among 370 entrants invited, eight emails were bounced back, two were not interested in participating, and four reported this survey did not apply to them. A total of 186 responded to the survey by February 7, 2020. This represents a response rate of 52% among 356 new entrants were invited and eligible to participate in the survey.

## Major Findings

### *Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants*

- Nearly four in five (77%) responding religious institutes had no one entering religious life in 2019. Eleven percent reported one entrant and 12% reported two or more.
- Half of respondents (50%) are women and another half (50%) are men. Among men, four in five expect to become priests and one in five plans to become a perpetually professed brother.
- The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2019 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 25 or younger.
- Eight in ten (79%) respondents were born in the United States. Altogether, respondents report 29 countries of birth. Of those born outside the United States, the most commonly mentioned region of birth is Asia. Canada and Mexico emerged as the most frequently mentioned countries of birth. On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 22 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 6 years before entering religious life.
- Two-thirds of responding entrants identify as white, more than one in ten (15%) as Hispanic/Latino(a), one in ten (9%) as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, and less than one in 20 as either African/African American/black or as “other.”
- Nine in ten respondents have been Catholic since birth. Three in four (76%) come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Almost all respondents of the Entrance Class of 2019 have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is one or two. Overall, respondents are typically the middle child in their family.
- About half of respondents (53%) say that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation. Men are more likely than women to say that starting a discussion with their family was easy for them.
- Two-thirds (66%) report that they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister who was not a family member while they were growing up. Another three in ten have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun.
- The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2019 were highly educated before entering. Half reported having earned a bachelor’s degree and about one in six (18%) earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute.
- Members of the Entrance Class of 2019 are as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR, but they are more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (34% compared to 22%). In addition, entrants are more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic

college/university. Men are more likely than women to have attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute while women are more likely than men to have been home schooled.

- Many respondents were active in parish life as well as other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Almost all respondents (97%) participated in at least one of parish liturgical ministries before entering religious life.
- Seven in ten respondents (70%) participated in retreats. Two-thirds (66%) participated in various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting.
- Half participated in a parish youth group, Life Teen, or campus ministry during their high school years. Half participated in campus ministry during college.
- Just over four in ten (42%) participated in a parish young adult group. Four in ten (39%) participated in a Right to Life March in Washington. One in ten respondents participated in a National Catholic Youth Conference. One in six participated in World Youth Day. One in ten participated in a volunteer program with a religious institute.

### *Vocational Discernment*

- On average, respondents were 18 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life.
- Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. Around nine in ten mentioned members of the institute, a spiritual director, other men and women religious, and/or a vocational director/team as at least “somewhat” encouraging to them when they first considered entering a religious institute.
- Four in five respondents entering religious institutes report being encouraged at least “somewhat” by these sources outside of their families: people in the parish, friends outside the institute, campus ministers, and people in their school or workplace.
- Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth and by a sense of call to religious life. Seven in ten were “very much” attracted by these.
- More than nine in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service and a desire to be part of a community. Nine in ten (90%) were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church.
- Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. About three in ten respondents report that they

first became acquainted in an institute where members served, through the recommendation of a friend or advisor, and through their own internet search.

- A quarter reports getting to know their institute through web or social media promotional materials (24%). One in four first became acquainted with their institute through the reputation or history of the institute (23%).
- Around one in five report getting to know their institute through a relative or a friend in the institute (19%) and through working with a member of the institute (17%).
- One in ten report knowing their institute through a media story about the institute or member (11%) and through an event sponsored by the institute (9%).
- One in twenty know their institute through print promotional materials (6%) or through a vocation match or placement service (4%).
- Men are more likely than women to have become acquainted with their religious institute in an institution where members served and through the reputation or history of the institute.

### ***Experience of Religious Life, Attractions, and Challenges***

- Entrants were asked how much influence various aspects of their religious institute had on their decision to enter that institute. Nearly all report that they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the charisma of the institute, with eight in ten reporting they were “very much” attracted to this aspect.
- About nine in ten respondents report having been at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the prayer life or prayer styles in the institute (90%), the community life in the institute (89%), and the lifestyle of members (88%). At least six in ten say these elements influenced them “very much.”
- Almost nine in ten say they were at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the types of ministry of its members (85%) with half saying this influenced their decision “very much.”
- In written comments at the end of the survey, responding entrants mention aspects of community life as both the greatest attraction and the greatest challenge of religious life.

## Introduction

In 2014, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an annual survey of women and men who enter religious life each year in the United States. For this project, CARA was asked to gather information about the characteristics and experiences of these women and men in a fashion similar to the survey of perpetually professed that CARA conducts each year for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, which is released each year for the World Day of Consecrated Life in February. CARA designed a questionnaire based on previous CARA research on religious life and reviewed it with a representative from the Hilton Foundation. This report presents results of this survey of women and men of the Entrance Class of 2019.

To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men (postulants or novices in institutes that do not have postulancy), the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 132 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations.

Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a postulant or novice) in the United States since January 1, 2019. CARA then emailed or mailed a survey to each entrant, asking them to complete an online survey or mail their completed paper survey to CARA.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 557 of 746 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 75% among religious institutes. Two religious institutes were not interested in participating in the study. In all, 87% of LCWR superiors, 69% of CMSWR superiors, 70% of CMSM superiors, and 60% of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 380 members that entered religious life in 2019.

Of these 380 identified women and men, four institutes reporting a total of 10 postulants were not interested in having their members participate in the survey. Among 370 entrants invited, eight emails were bounced back, two were not interested in completing the survey, and four reported this survey did not apply to them. A total of 186 responded to the survey by February 7, 2020. This represents a response rate of 52% among 356 new entrants were invited and eligible to participate in the survey.

The questionnaire asked these women and men about their demographic and religious background, education and family background, previous ministry or service and other formative experiences, encouragement and discouragement to consider religious life, initial acquaintance with their institutes, and vocation/discernment programs and experiences. This report presents analyses of each question from all responding men and women.

This report is arranged in three parts: Part I describes characteristics of the institutes that responded to the request for names as well as characteristics of the Entrance Class of 2019. Part II describes aspects of the vocational discernment of the Entrance Class of 2019. Part III describes their experience of religious life so far and reports, in their own words, what attracts them to religious life and what they find most challenging about religious life.

### **Interpreting this Report**

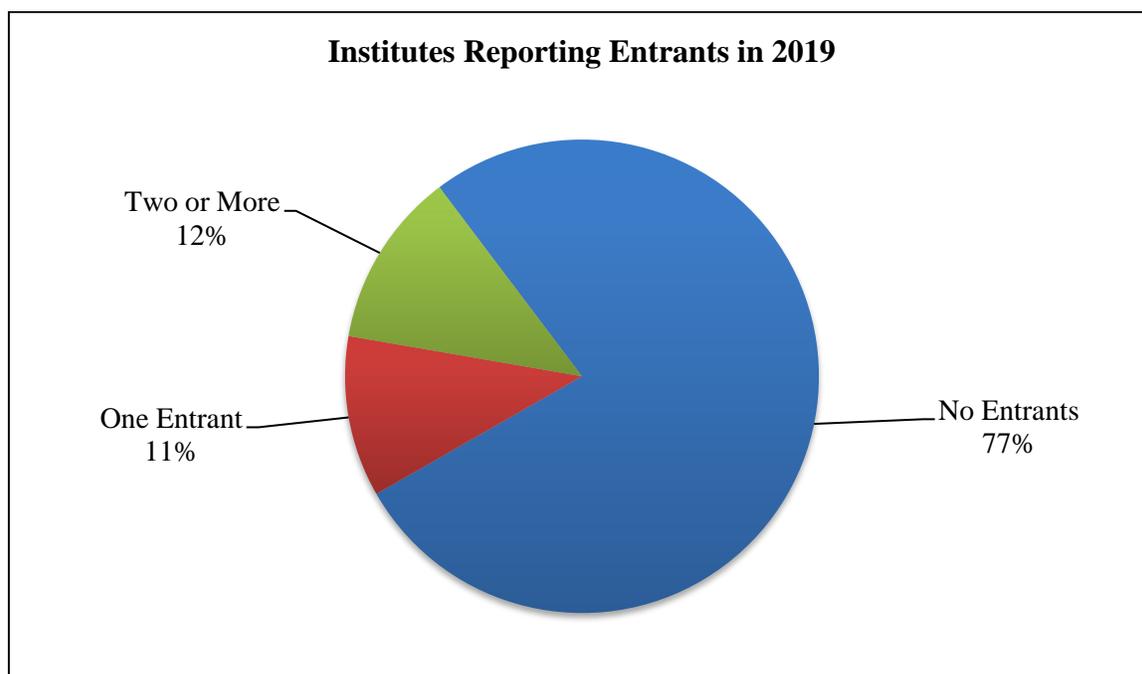
Many of the questions on the survey use four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “poor,” “fair,” “good,” and “excellent”). These scales allow half of the responses to be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“poor” and “fair,” for example) and half as relatively more “positive” (“good” and “excellent,” for example). In parts of the analysis in this report, these responses are combined to allow for clearer comparisons. Tables summarizing responses to questions that use these scales usually report the percentage of those who responded to the two most positive categories combined (e.g., “somewhat” and “very much”), followed by a column of the percentage of those who responded in the most positive category (e.g., “very much”), since the most positive response sometimes distinguishes important contrasts in the level of support. This is especially useful here since many respondents tended to give “positive” responses but not always the most positive responses.

Readers may also wish to compare the difference between the two extreme responses, say “poor” and “excellent,” to compare the level of intensity with which opposing opinions are held. These comparisons and others may be drawn by referring to the actual percentage responses given in Appendix I. That appendix shows the percentage responses for each item, calculated out of 100%, as well as the percentage of all respondents that did not respond to each question, separately calculated out of 100% for clarity of comparison.

In general, in making comparisons between men and women, tables will show the overall percentage who provided a strong response, followed by the percentage of each subgroup (i.e., men and women) who provided a strong response. Whenever the difference in percentages between these groups approaches or exceeds 10%, this difference is considered notable or important.

### Institutes Reporting New Entrants in 2019

CARA asked the 746 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries in the United States that were identified by LCWR, CMSWR, CMSM, and contemplative communities identified by the USCCB to provide the names of women and men (postulants or novices) who entered their religious institute in the United States in 2019. A total of 557 major superiors responded (75%) with 380 names of women and men. Two major superiors responded that they would not participate this year. The Entrance Class of 2019 consists of 224 men (reported by CMSM superiors) and 156 women: 106 reported by CMSWR, 32 reported by LCWR, and 18 new entrants into contemplative communities of women.



A total of 429 major superiors (77% of those responding) reported that they had no one enter the institute in 2019, another 60 major superiors (11%) reported one new entrant, and 68 major superiors (12%) reported two or more new entrants.

## Gender

Among the 186 respondents who entered religious life in 2019, half of respondents (50%) are women and another half (50%) are men. Among men, four in five expect to become priests and one in five plans to become a perpetually professed brother.

## Age of the Entrance Class of 2019

*The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2019 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 25 or younger.*

<b>Age of Women and Men Entering Religious Life</b>			
<i>Percentage in each age category</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
25 and younger	54	55	52
Age 26-35	34	30	37
Age 36-45	6	6	7
Age 46-55	5	7	2
Age 56 and older	2	2	2
Average age	28	28	27
Median age	25	25	25
Range in ages	18-64	18-64	18-61

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Entrance Class of 2019 is 18 and the oldest is 64. Among the men, the youngest is also 18, with one man entering at the age of 61. Regardless of gender, nine in ten respondents (88%) are 35 or younger.

**Region or Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States**

*Eight in ten (79%) respondents were born in the United States.*

<b>Region or Country of Birth</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
United States	79	81	76
Asia	7	4	10
Latin America	4	2	7
Europe	3	4	2
Africa	2	1	3
Canada	2	4	0
Mexico	1	0	2
Oceania	1	2	0

One in sixteen was born in a country in Asia. Four percent were born in Latin America. Respondents identified a total of 29 different countries of origin.

Respondents who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 6 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2017 or earlier.

<b>Entrance to the United States</b>				
	<b>Year</b>	<b>Age at Entry</b>		
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Mean	2013	22	27	19
Median	2017	22	27	19
Range	1995-2019	1-54	3-54	1-33

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at the age of 22. Half were age 22 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The oldest woman was 54 while the oldest man was 33 at the time they entered the United States.

## Race and Ethnic Background

*Two-thirds of those who entered a religious institute report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (67%). Women (76%) are more likely than men (59%) to be Caucasian/European American/white.*

<b>What best describes your racial or ethnic background?</b>			
Percentage in each category			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	67	76	59
Hispanic/Latino(a)	15	14	16
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	9	6	13
African/African American/black	4	1	7
Mixed race	3	2	3
Other	2	1	2

More than one in ten (15%) of the Entrance Class of 2019 identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a) and one in ten (9%) as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. Only 4% identify as African/African American/black and 5% identify as mixed/ some other race or ethnicity.

### ***Differences by Country of Birth***

- Among those who were born in the United States, almost four in five (78%) report being Caucasian/European American/white.
- Among those *not* born in the United States, three in ten respondents identify as Asian/Pacific/Native Hawaiian (31%) and Caucasian/European/American/white (31%). Almost one in four identify as Hispanic or Latino(a) (23%), just over one in ten as African/African American/black (13%), and 3% identify as mixed race.

## Religious Background

*Almost nine in ten respondents (87%) have been Catholic since birth.*

<b>Catholic Background</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Catholic since birth	87	90	84
Became Catholic later in life	13	10	15

Among those who became Catholic later in life, three quarters (75%) participated in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. These entrants came from a variety of faiths: generic Protestant, Lutheran, Christian United Church, Methodist, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, Evangelical/Fundamentalist, Anglican, atheist or non-denominational.

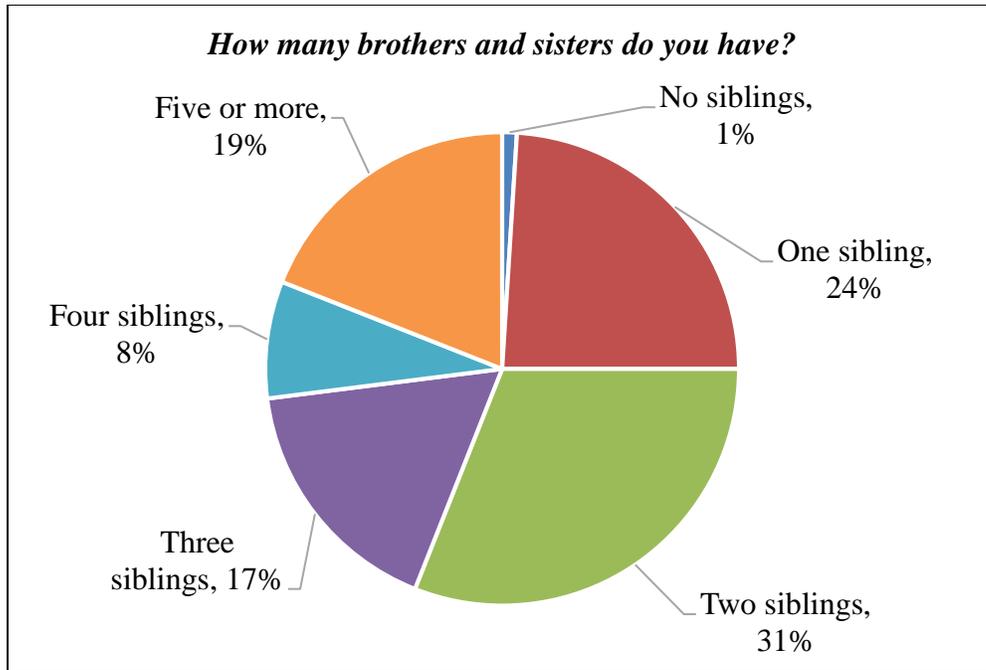
Just over nine in ten respondents (92%) report that when they were growing up they had at least one parent who was Catholic. Three in four (76%) report that both parents were Catholic.

<b>Religious Background of Respondents' Parents</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	76	74	77
Mother Catholic, father not	10	18	87
Father Catholic, mother not	6	7	4
Neither parent was Catholic	8	6	11

Respondents who had non-Catholic parents report that the parents were either Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, Buddhist, Protestant, UCC, Amish, agnostic, Hindu, non-denominational, atheist, non-religious, Evangelical Protestant, Salvation Army, or none. Regardless of the religious tradition of their parents, two in three (65%) respondents report that religion was “very important” to their mothers and half (50%) report that religion was “very important” to their fathers.

## Family Background

*On average, members of the Entrance Class of 2019 have three siblings. The most common response to this question, among women and men, is one or two siblings (55%).*



- Only 1% says she or he is an only child, one quarter has one sibling (24%), meanwhile three quarters have two or more siblings (75%).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Those in the Entrance Class of 2019 do not differ significantly from those responding to the General Social Survey, where the Percentage of only children in the last 30 years of data have ranged between 4 and 6 %.

Overall, respondents with siblings are more likely to be a middle child (37%) than either the eldest or the youngest (34% and 28%). Men are more likely than women to be the youngest child in the family.

<i><b>What is your birth order?</b></i>			
<i>Percentage in each category</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Eldest	34	36	31
Middle	37	40	35
Youngest	28	23	33
Only child	1	1	1

## Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up

*Overall, about half respondents (53%) say that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation. Men are more likely than women to say that starting a discussion with their family was easy for them.*

<b>Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up</b>			
<i>Percentage responding "Yes" to each question*</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?	53	40	66
Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life?	33	27	39
Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	30	26	34
Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	25	17	33
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

One third report that their mother ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life. Three in ten report that another family member had and one quarter report that their father ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Overall, men are more likely than women to report that it was easy for them to talk about vocations to priesthood or religious life, and that their family members ever spoke with them about religious life and priesthood vocations.

Two-thirds (66%) report that they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister who was not a family member while they were growing up. Three in ten have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun.

<b>Familiarity with Priests and/or Religious Brothers and Sisters/Nuns while Growing Up</b>			
<i>Percentage responding "Yes" to each question</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	66	58	73
Do you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	29	32	26

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

## Education Level Before Entering a Religious Institute

*The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2019 were highly educated before entering. Half report having earned a bachelor’s degree and about one in six (18%) earned a master’s or a doctoral degree before entering their religious institute.*

<b>What was your highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?</b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
High school or less	10	8	12
Some college	17	12	22
Bachelor’s degree	51	54	47
Master’s degree	17	19	15
Doctoral degree	1	2	0
Other	4	4	4

One in ten (10%) respondents of the Entrance Class of 2019 completed high school or less before entering their religious institute. One in six (17%) completed some college before entering. Responding men and women are equally likely to have attained a bachelor’s degree before entering.

*One in six respondents (16%) report being home schooled at some time in their educational background.*

<b>Were you ever home-schooled?</b>			
Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	16	20	11
No	84	80	89
Average home-schooled year	8	9	7

Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was eight years (an average of nine years for women and seven years for men). More women than men report being home schooled (20% of compared to 11% of men).

***Catholic Education Before Entering a Religious Institute***

Just over half of respondents attended a parish-based religious education program (54%) and four in ten (44%) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. A third attended a Catholic high school and about a third attended a Catholic college/university before entering their religious institute. Just under one in four attended a Catholic ministry formation program before entering.

<b><i>Did you attend any of the following before you entered? *</i></b>			
Percentage responding “Yes” to each question			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR	54	57	52
Catholic elementary or middle school	44	39	50
Catholic high school	34	31	37
Catholic college/university	36	40	31
Catholic ministry formation program	23	27	18

Members of the Entrance Class of 2019 are about as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,<sup>2</sup> 39% of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 41% among entrants. Responding entrants of 2019 are more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (34% of respondents, compared to 22% of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college/university (36% of respondents, compared to just 6% of U.S. adult Catholics).

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, slightly more than half of respondents (54%) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 67% did *not* report attending a Catholic elementary school and 72% did *not* attend a Catholic high school.

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<sup>2</sup>CARA *Catholic Poll*. Summer 2016. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

## Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

*Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Almost all respondents (97%) participated in at least one of the programs or activities listed in the table below before entering.*

<b>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of the these before you entered?</b>			
Percentage checking each response*			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Retreats	70	77	63
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	66	67	66
Campus ministry during college	51	55	46
Parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years	50	47	52
Parish young adult group	42	42	42
Right to Life March in Washington	39	51	28
Campus ministry during high school years	28	26	30
World Youth Day	17	15	18
Religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)	13	9	17
National Catholic Youth Conference	8	3	12

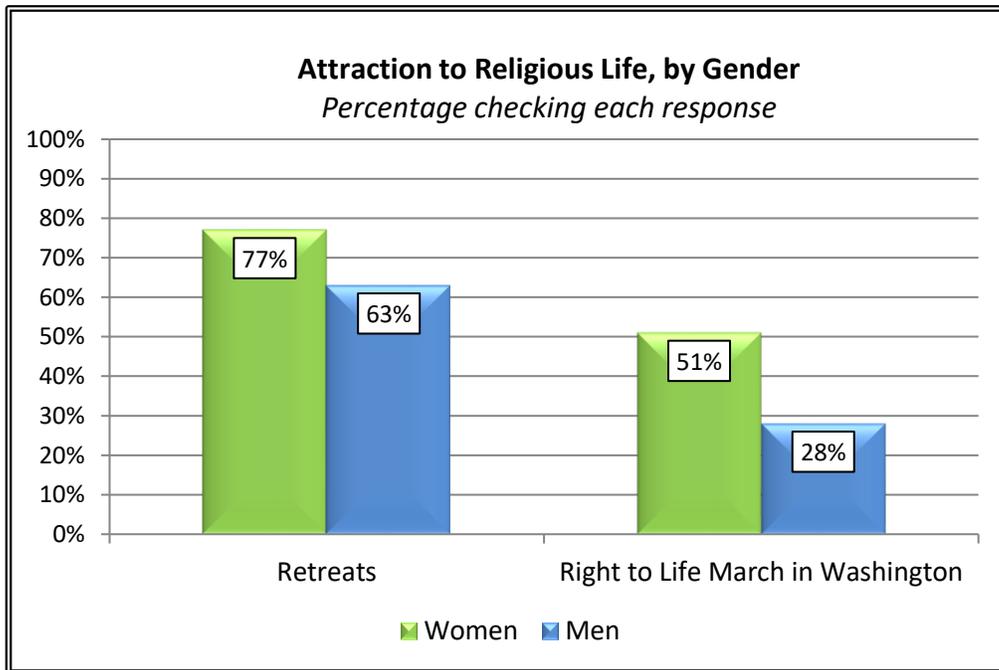
\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Seven in ten (70%) respondents participated in retreats. Women are more likely than men to have participated in retreats before entering a religious institute.
- Two thirds (66%) participated in various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting.
- Half (51%) participated in campus ministry during college. Similarly, another half participated in a parish youth group or Life Teen during their elementary or middle school years.
- Just over four in ten (42%) participated in a parish young adult group. Four in ten (39%) participated in a Right to Life March in Washington.
- Nearly three in ten (28%) participated in the campus ministry during high school years. One in six (17 %) participated in World Youth Day.

- More than one in ten (13%) participated in a volunteer program with a religious institute. Less than one in ten (8%) respondents participated in a National Catholic Youth Conference.

### *Comparisons by Gender*

More women than men report participating in retreats and Right to Life in Washington before entering their religious institute.



*Two-thirds of respondents (65%) served in one or more specified parish ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer. The most common ministry service reported was liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister), followed by faith formation ministry.*

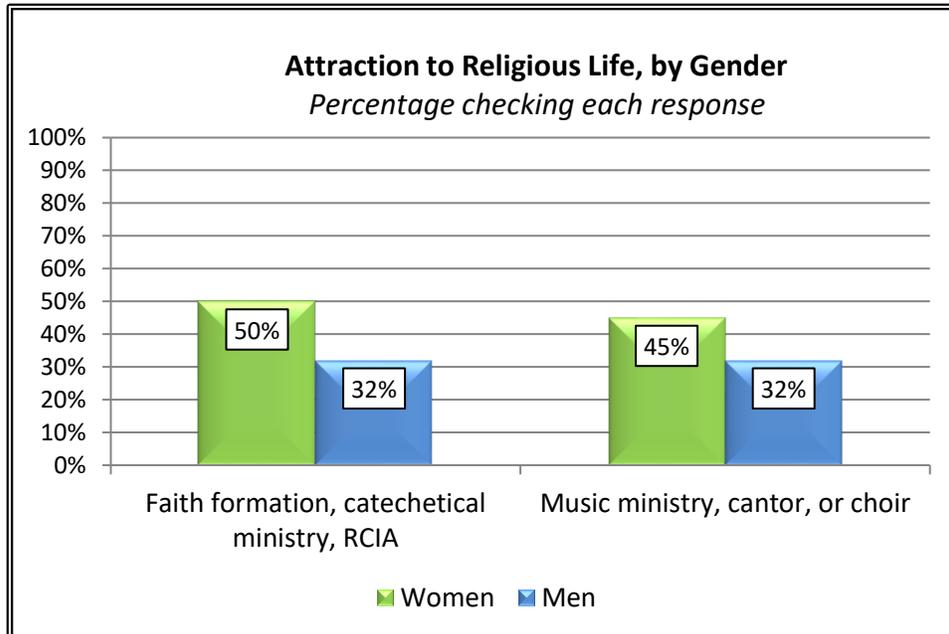
<b>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of these before you entered?</b>			
Percentage checking each response			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Liturgical ministry (e.g. lector, extraordinary minister)	65	68	62
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	41	50	32
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	39	45	32

\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Among the ministries listed on the survey, two-thirds of respondents (65%) report that they served in liturgical ministry roles, such as lector or extraordinary minister of Communion.
- Two in five respondents (41%) report participating in faith formation, catechetical ministry or RCIA. Likewise, two in five (39%) participate in music ministry, cantor, or choir.

### *Comparisons by Gender*

More women than men report participating in retreats and Right to Life in Washington before entering their religious institute.



## Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

*On average, respondents were 18 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life. Half were 18 or younger when they first considered a vocation.*

<b>Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life</b>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Mean age	18	19	18
Median age	18	18	18
Range of ages	2-62	3-62	2-47

Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. Respondents most frequently mentioned a member of their religious institute (90%), vocational director/team (89%), or a spiritual director (86%) as at least “somewhat” encouraging to them when they first considered entering a religious institute.

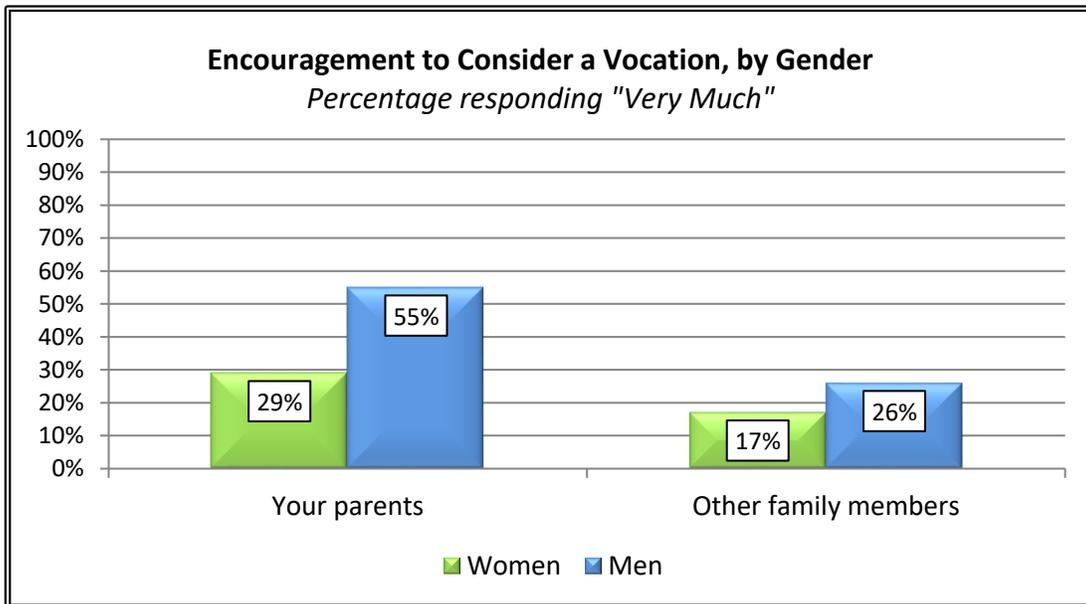
<i><b>How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?</b></i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
Members of your institute	90	69
Vocation director/team	89	70
Spiritual director, if applicable	86	65
Friends outside the institute	85	55
People in your parish	84	54
Other men and women religious	81	56
Diocesan priests	77	44
People in your school or workplace	75	44
Your parents	66	43
Campus minister, if applicable	65	43
Your siblings	56	35
Other family members	53	21

- Four in five respondents report being encouraged at least “somewhat” by these people: friends outside the institute (85%), people in the parish (84%), other men and women religious (81%), and diocesan priests (77%).

- Three quarters (75%) received encouragement from people in school or in their workplace, while two-thirds (65%) were at least “somewhat” encouraged by campus ministers.
- Two in three (66%) report being at least “somewhat” encouraged by parents, meanwhile nearly three-fifth report receiving encouragement from their siblings and other family members, though ranking the least.

***Comparisons by Gender***

Men are more likely than women to receive encouragement to consider a vocation from their parents (55% compared to 29% for women) and other family members (26% compared to 17% for women).



## Attraction to Religious Life

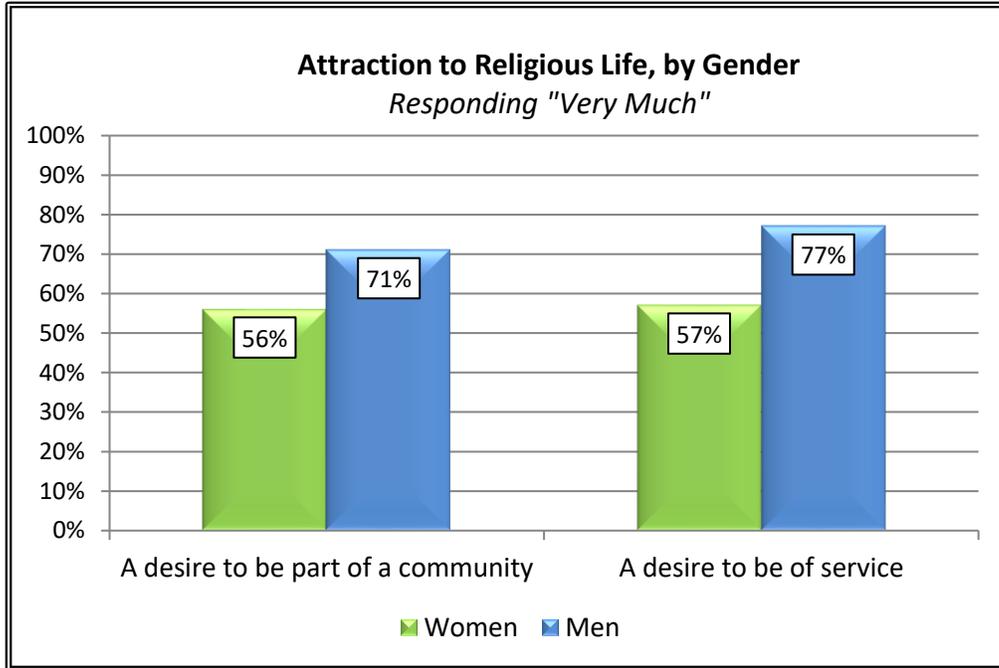
*Entrants in 2019 were asked how much various elements attracted them to religious life. Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a sense of call to religious life (98%) and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (97%). Three in four or more were “very much” attracted by these aspects.*

<b>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</b>		
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very Much”		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
A sense of call to religious life	98	84
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	97	81
A desire to be part of a community	91	63
A desire to be of service	90	67
A desire to be more committed to the Church	88	60

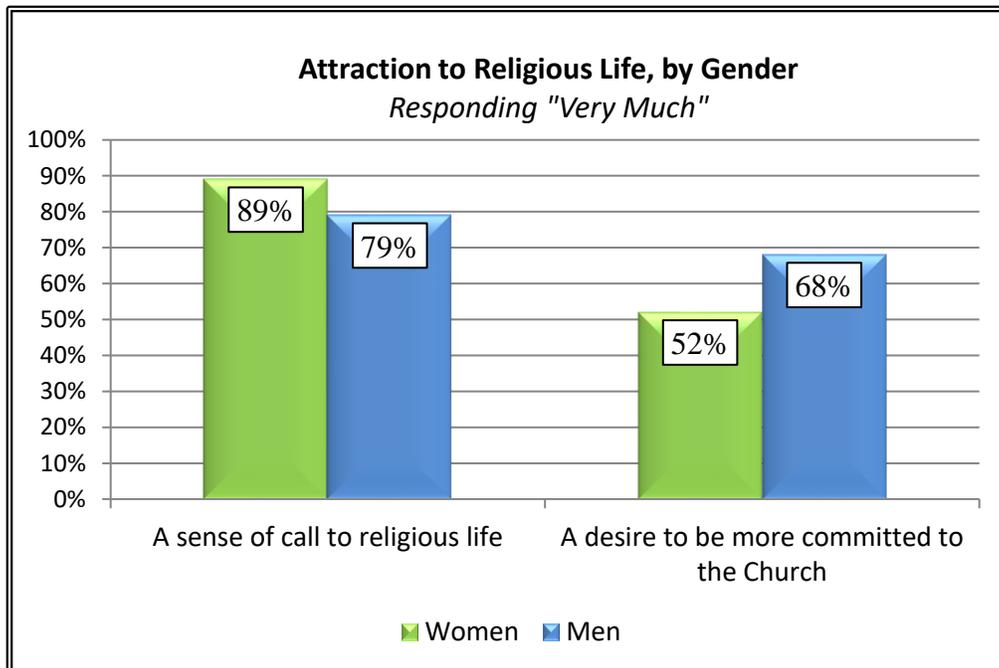
- Nine in ten respondents were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be part of a community (91%) and to be of service (90%), with two-thirds saying these attracted them “very much.”
- Slightly less than nine in ten (88%) were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church. Three-fifths said this attracted them “very much.”

### Comparisons by Gender

More men than women report that a desire to be part of a community and desire to be of service “very much” attracted them to religious life.



In similar vein, men are more likely than women to report that a desire to be committed to the Church “very much” attracted them to religious life. In contrast, more women than men report that a sense of call to religious life “very much” attracted them to religious life.



## Attraction to a Religious Institute

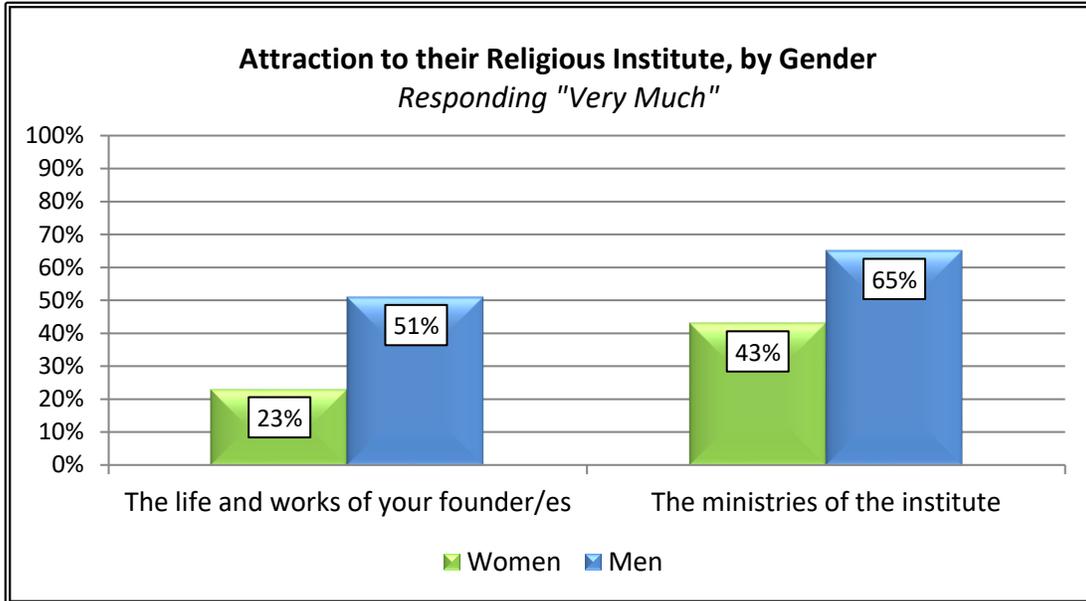
*Entrants were asked how much each of several aspects of religious life attracted them to their particular religious institute. More than nine in ten report that they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the spirituality, the mission, and the community life of the institute.*

<b>How much did these attract you to your religious institute?</b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
The spirituality of the institute	94	71
The mission of the institute	93	70
The community life of the institute	92	64
The ministries of the institute	90	54
The prayer life of the institute	90	60
The example of members of the institute	90	68
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	88	67
Welcome and encouragement by members	84	55
The life and works of your founder/ress	68	37
A personal invitation by a member	54	27

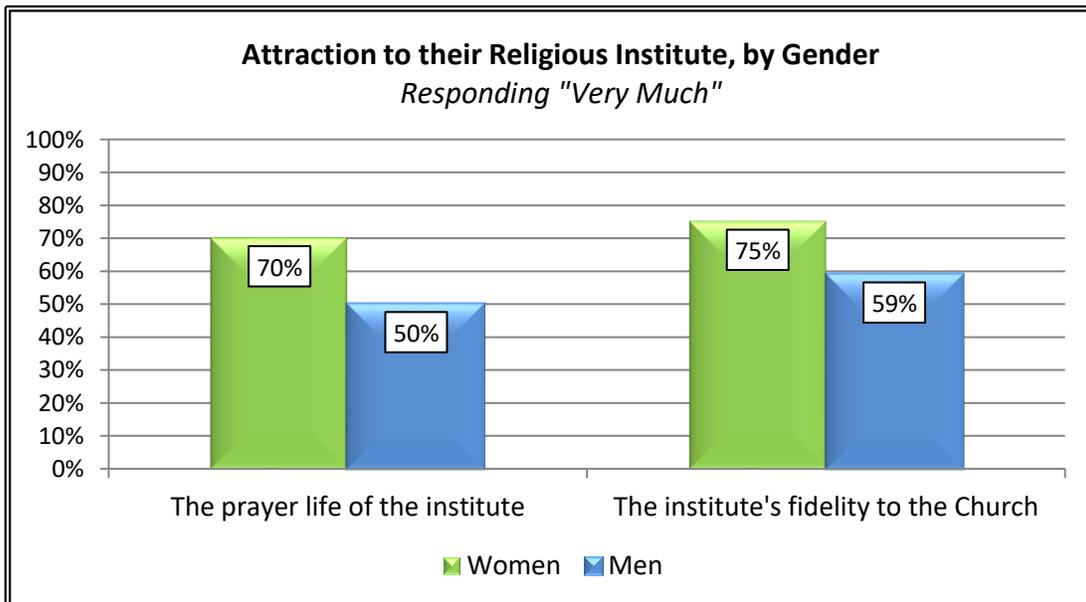
- Nine in ten (90%) report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the ministries, the prayer life, and the example of members of the institute. About six in ten say these elements “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.
- Just under nine in ten report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to the religious institute by the institute’s fidelity to the Church (88%) and the welcome and encouragement by members (84%). About six in ten say these elements “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.
- Seven in ten report they were attracted by the life and works of their found/ress (68%). Four in ten say this element attracted them “very much” to their religious institute.
- More than half report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by a personal invitation by a member (54%). Three in ten report this element attracted them “very much” to their religious institute.

### Comparisons by Gender

More men than women report that the life and works of their founder/ress and the ministries of the institute “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.



However, women are more likely than men to report they were “very much” attracted to their religious institute by the prayer life of the institute and the institute’s fidelity to the church.



## Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

*Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. One-third of respondents report that they first became acquainted with their institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (35%) and in an institution where members served (33%).*

<b>How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?</b>			
Percentage checking each response*			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	35	34	36
In an institution where members served	33	25	41
Through your own Internet search	29	27	31
Through web or social media promotional materials	24	27	20
Through the reputation or history of the institute	23	19	26
Through a relative or a friend in the institute	19	18	20
Through working with a member of the institute	17	13	22
Through a media story about the institute or member	11	12	10
Through an event sponsored by the institute	9	9	9
Through print promotional materials	6	5	7
Through a vocation match or placement service	4	3	4
Through a vocation fair	3	2	4
Other	18	25	11

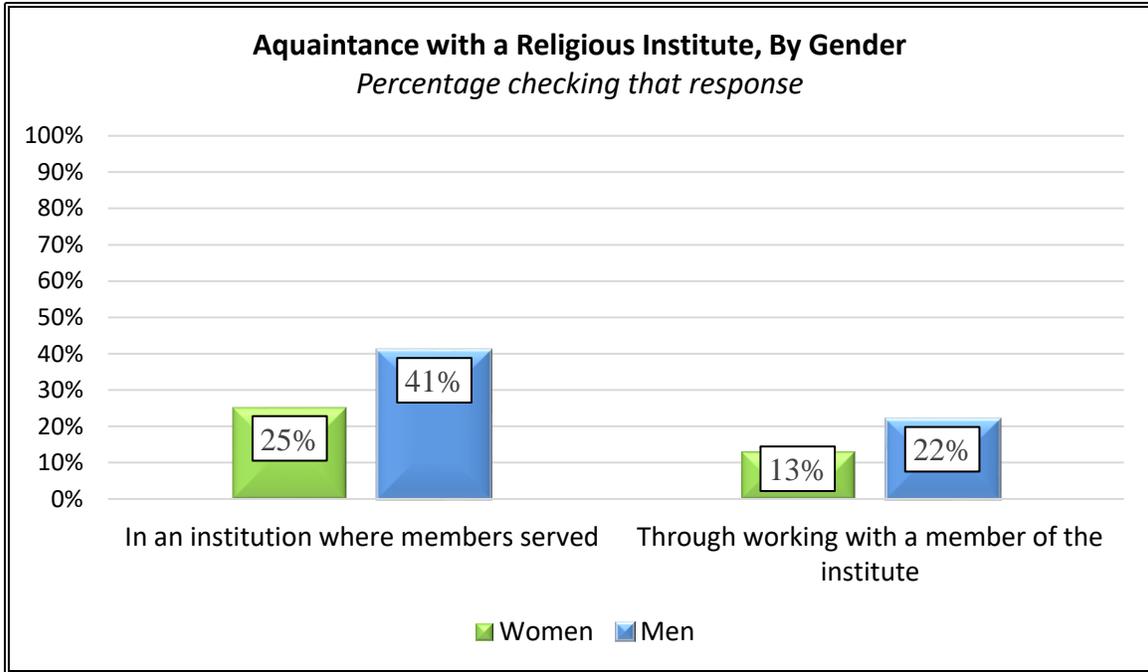
\*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

- Three in ten report being acquainted to their religious institute through their own Internet search (29%). And a quarter report through web or social media promotional materials (24%).
- One in four indicate that they first became acquainted with their institute through the reputation or history of the institute (23%).
- Around one in five report getting to know their institute through a relative or a friend in the institute (19%) and through working with a member of the institute (17%).
- One in ten reporting knowing their institute through a media story about the institute or member (11%) and through an event sponsored by the institute (9%).

- One in twenty know their institute through print promotional materials (6%) or through a vocation match or placement service (4%).
- Only three percent report getting to know their religious institutes through a vocation fair.
- One-sixth (18%) first became acquainted with their religious institute through some “other” means (often during their college years). The “other” responses are listed below, lightly edited:
  - A Dominican friar
  - A movie (non-promotional)
  - A visit to my family by a member
  - A vocations weekend retreat with different religious congregations who made presentations about their orders and answered questions from participants
  - By doing charitable work with a youth group in one of the ministries of the institute
  - Father went to institution where members served
  - Friend invited me Catholic Sisters event where I met sisters. Was not discerning!
  - Going on a pilgrimage and members of the institute also were pilgrims
  - Had a private retreat at the institute
  - Hearing one of the Sisters speak at a Marian Eucharistic Family Conference
  - I was told they had access to a PDF file I wanted to get for my dad. When I talked to them about that, I realized I might also want to discern with them.
  - In other community with one of the monks
  - Lord's Guidance. Heard of order various ways after praying for Lord to reveal the order of his choice.
  - My first visit is an onsite visit without contacting the Congregation
  - My parish is run by the institute
  - National Catholic Student Coalition
  - Novena to St. Joseph
  - Parish
  - People I had just met asking me if I had ever visited this particular monastic community where I am now in formation
  - Random exchange at a Catholic conference
  - Read a book written by a member of the institute.
  - Residential experience program (found out about this online)
  - SEEK conference (FOCUS)
  - SEEK Conference 2015
  - The institute's booth at the San Antonio Catholic Women's Conference in 2017
  - They were guest speaker at my university chaplaincy
  - Through a tertiary group that met at the institute's mother house
  - Through my parents
  - VISION vocation network
  - Vocations Retreat
  - World Youth Day 2016

*Comparisons by Gender*

Men are more likely than women to have become acquainted with their religious institute in an institution where members served or through working with a member of the institute.



## Helpfulness of Discernment Programs and Experiences

*Entrants were asked how helpful selected vocation experiences were to them in discerning their call to their institute before they entered. They were most likely to report that contact with a vocation director (89%) or contact with institute members (87%) were at least “somewhat” helpful. Around seven in ten respondents report that these contacts were “very” helpful.*

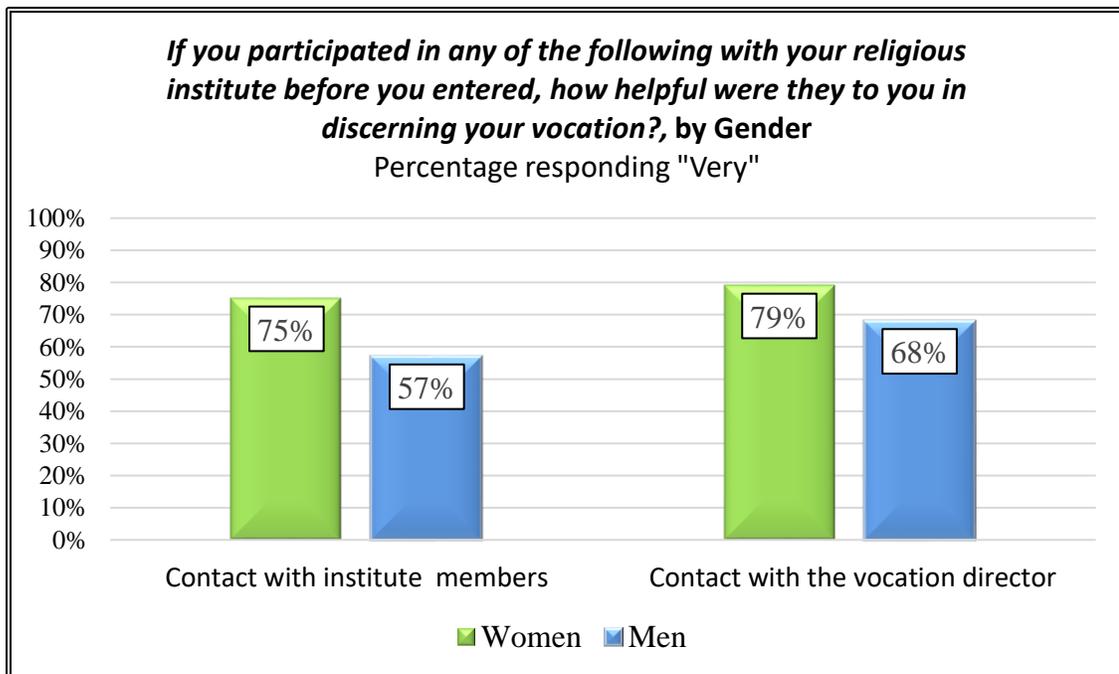
<b><i>If you participated in any of the following with your religious institute before you entered, how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very”</b>	<b>“Very” Only</b>
	%	%
Contact with vocation director	89	73
Contact with institute members	87	69
“Come and See” experience	75	61
Vocation or discernment retreat	69	57
Spiritual direction	63	47
Visit(s) to local community(s)	59	45
Visit(s) to the Motherhouse	55	48
Live in experience	54	48
Ministry with institute members	37	27
Social media (e.g. Facebook)	30	13
Meeting with a discernment group	28	16
Mission experience	26	20
“Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run”	7	4

- Three in four respondents found “Come and See” experiences (75%) at least “somewhat” helpful, while seven in ten found vocation or discernment retreat (69%) at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their institute. Three in five found these experiences “very” helpful.
- Three in five report that spiritual direction (63%) and visit(s) to local community(s) (59%) are at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their religious institute, with half finding these “very” helpful.
- More than half report visit(s) to the Motherhouse (55%) and live in experience (54%) at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their religious institute, with nearly half reporting these experiences to be “very” helpful.

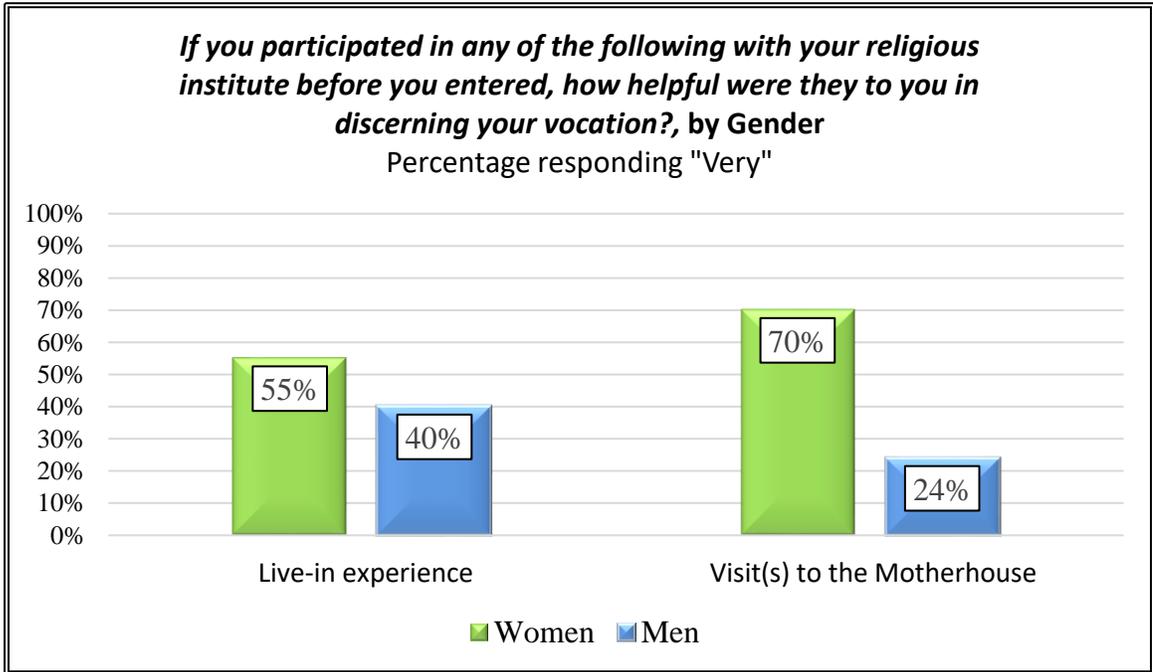
- Less than four in ten find ministry with institute members (37%) at least “somewhat” helpful. Twenty-five percent found this “very” helpful.
- Around three in ten find social media (30%) and meeting with a discernment group (28%) at least “somewhat” helpful before they entered their religious institute. More than one in ten found these “very” helpful.
- A quarter reports that mission experience (26%) is at least “somewhat” helpful to them in discerning their call to their institute.
- Fewer less than one in ten report that an “Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run” (7%) was at least “somewhat” helpful. About one in twenty also found these experiences “very” helpful.

### *Comparisons by Gender*

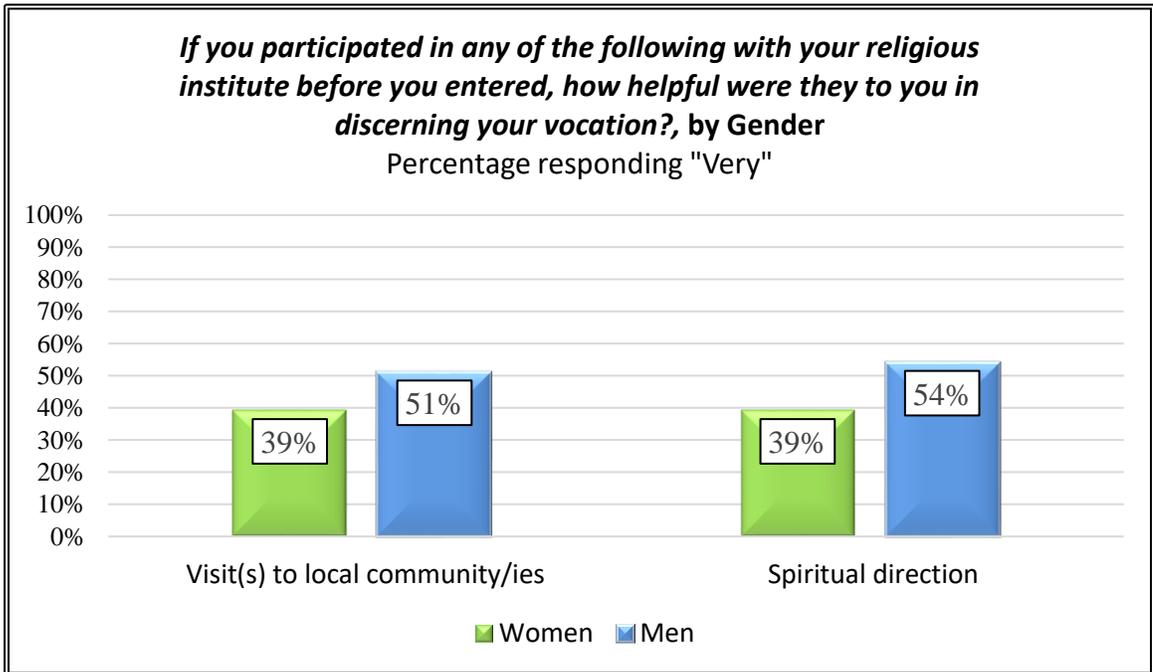
More women than men report that contact with institute members and contact with the vocation director were “very” helpful for them in discerning their vocation.



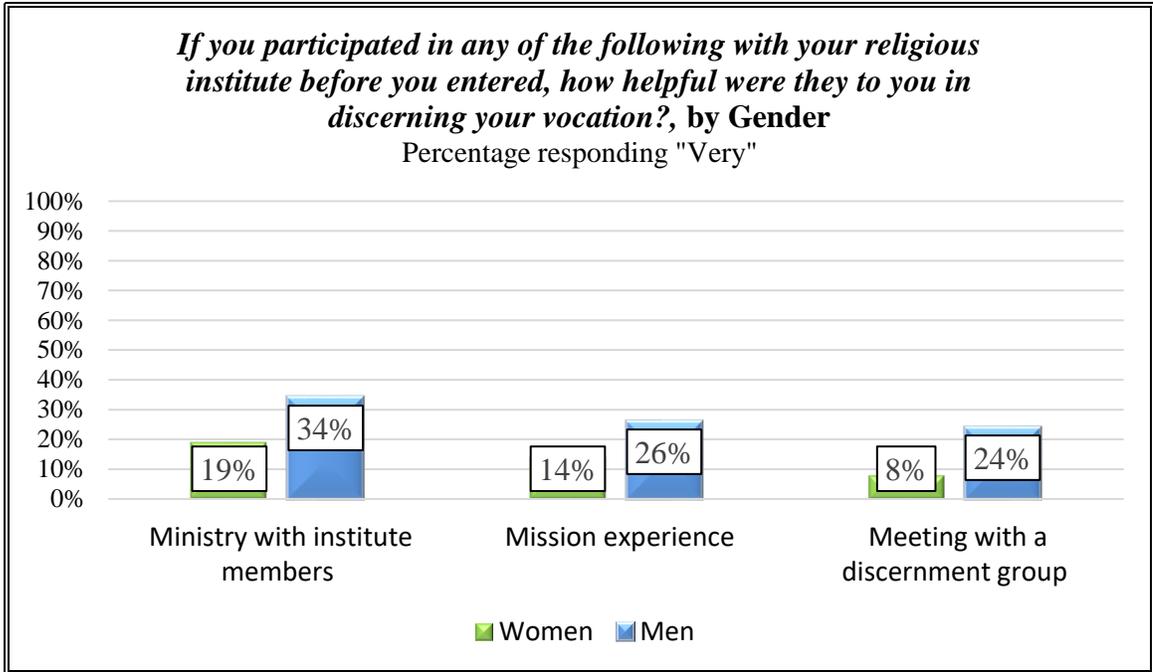
Likewise, women are most likely to report that live-in experience and visit(s) to the Motherhouse were “very” helpful for them in discerning their vocation.



In contrast, men are more likely than women to find visit(s) to local communities and spiritual direction “very” helpful in discerning their religious vocation in their institute.



Similarly, though fewer find the following aspects “very” helpful, men are more likely than women to find that ministry with institute members, mission experience, and meeting with a discernment group “very” helpful in discerning their religious vocation in their institute.



## Influences on Decisions to Enter Religious Institutes

*Entrants were asked how much influence various aspects of their religious institute had on their decision to enter their institute. Almost all respondents report that the charism of the institute at least “somewhat” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute, with just over eight in ten reporting this aspect influenced their decision “very much.”*

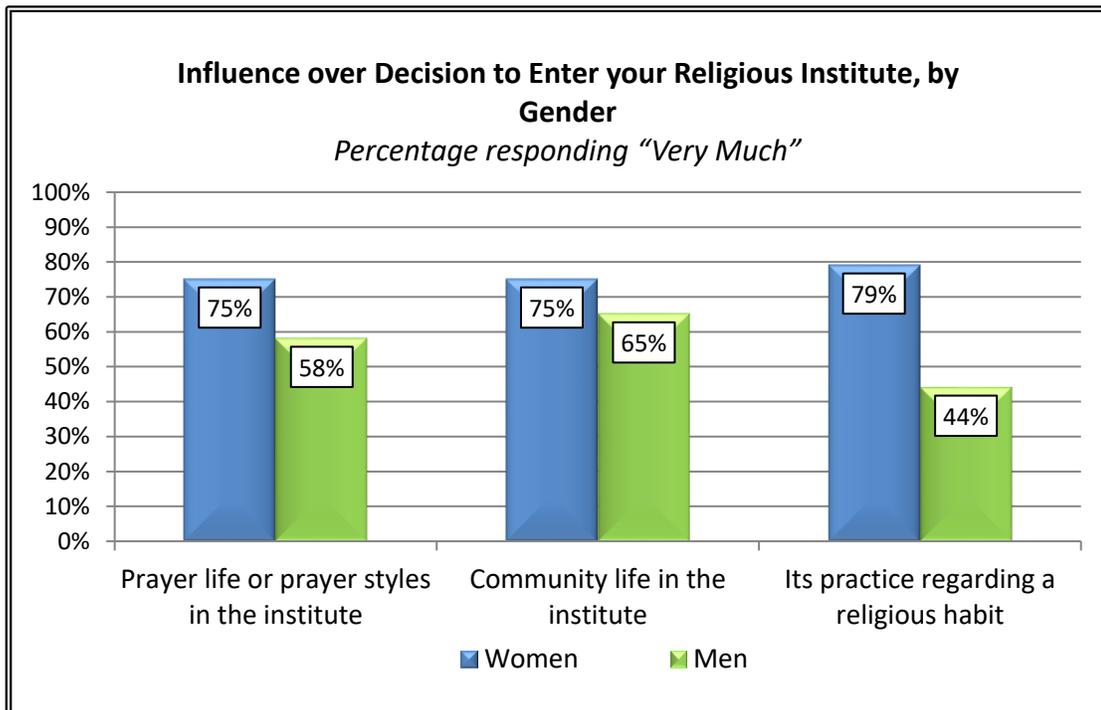
<b>How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?</b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
The charism of the institute	98	83
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	90	67
Community life in the institute	89	70
The lifestyle of members	88	60
The types of ministry of its members	85	48
Its practice regarding a religious habit	74	62
The focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute	61	31
The ages of members	48	17
The size of the institute	47	17
Its geographic location(s)	47	20
Its internationality, if applicable	47	23
The cultural diversity of the members	30	17
The racial/ethnic background of members	17	9

- About nine in ten respondents report having been at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the prayer life or prayer styles in the institute (90%), the community life in the institute (89%), and the lifestyle of members (88%). Six in ten or more say these elements influenced them “very much.”
- Almost nine in ten say they were at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the types of ministry of its members (85%) with half saying this influenced their decision “very much.”
- Three-quarters indicate that they were at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by its practice regarding a religious habit (74%), with three-fifths saying this influenced their decision “very much.”

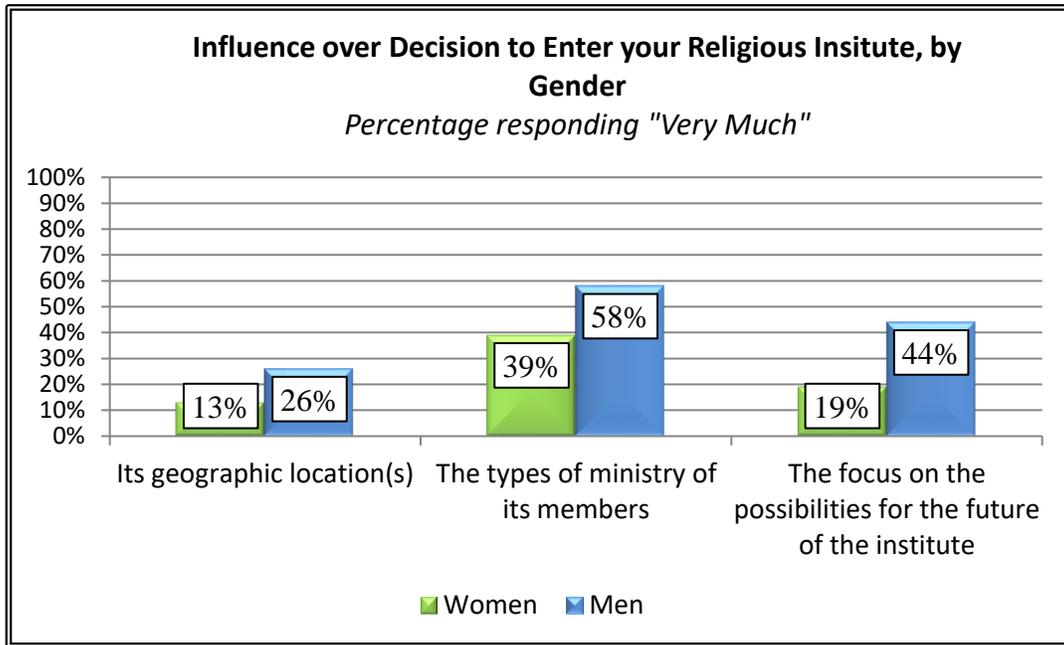
- Three-fifth report having been at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute (61%), with three in ten say this influenced them “very much.”
- Nearly half indicate having been at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the following aspects: the ages of members (48%), the size of the institute (47%), its geographic location(s) (47%), and its internationality (47%). Around one in five say these influenced them “very much.”
- Three in ten say that the cultural diversity of the members (30%) and around two in ten say the racial/ethnic background of members (17%) was at least “somewhat” influential to their decision to enter their institute. One in ten or more say these elements were “very” influential.

### *Comparisons by Gender*

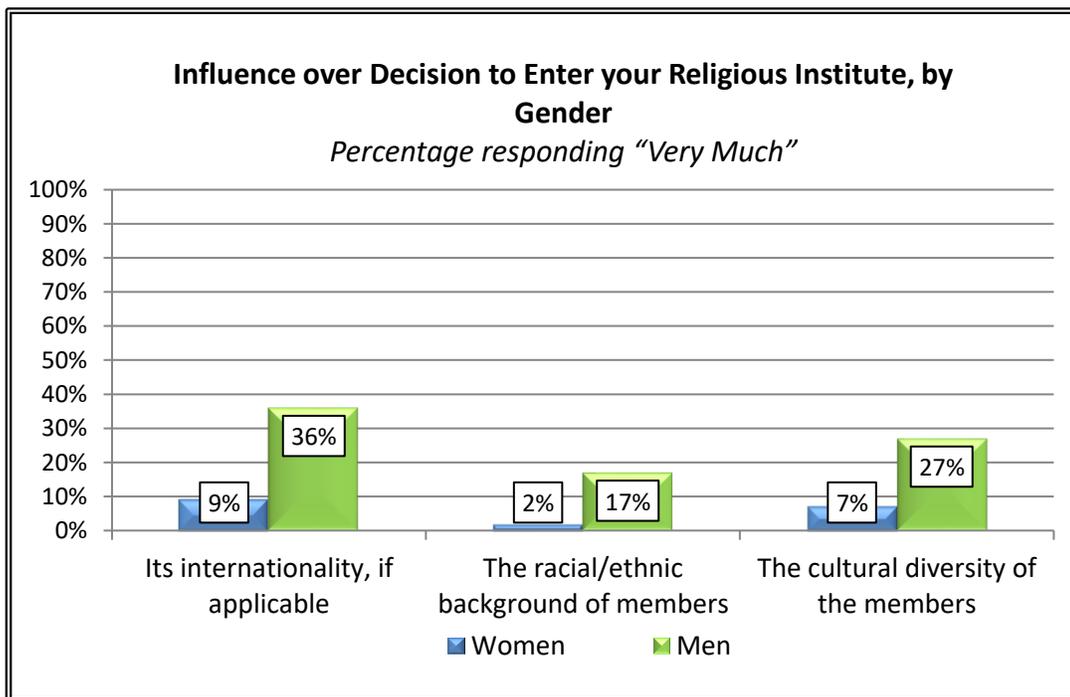
Women are most likely to report that prayer life or prayer styles and community life in the institute as well as its practice regarding a religious habit have “very much” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute.



In contrast, men are more likely than women to indicate that its geographic location(s), the types of ministry of its members, and the focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute influenced them “very much.”



There is a significant difference in the aspects mentioned in the chart below among men and women religious. Men are more likely than women to indicate that the institute’s internationality, the racial/ethnic background of members, and the cultural diversity of the members influenced them “very much.”



## Prayer Practices

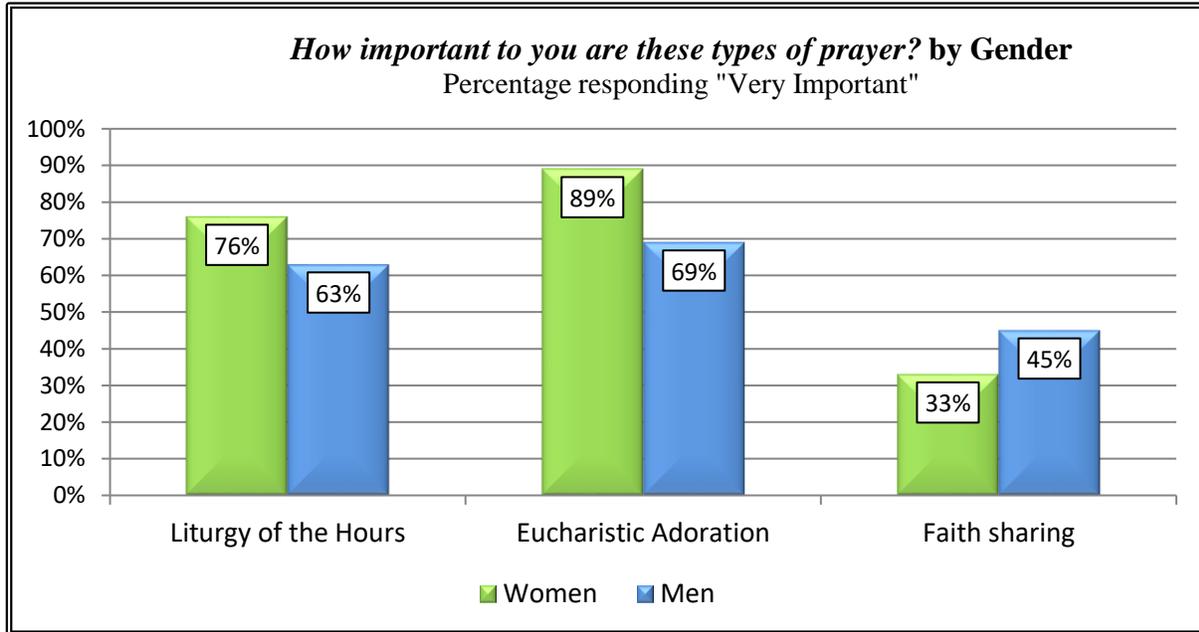
*Respondents were asked to evaluate how important each of these different types of prayer are to them. Almost all respondents say private personal prayer (99%) and daily Eucharist (98%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Nine in ten indicate that these elements are “very” important.*

<b><i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very”</b>	<b>“Very” Only</b>
	%	%
Private personal prayer	99	93
Daily Eucharist	98	92
Liturgy of the Hours	94	70
Eucharistic Adoration	93	79
Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary	84	54
Non-liturgical common prayer	72	29
Faith sharing	71	39
Common meditation	69	40

- More than nine in ten respondents report Liturgy of the Hours (94%) and Eucharistic Adoration (93%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. More than seven in ten say that these elements are “very” important to them.
- Eight in ten respondents report that other devotional prayers such as the rosary (84%) are at least “somewhat” important to them, with half reporting this practice is “very” important to them.
- Seven in ten respondents indicate that non-liturgical common prayer (72%), faith sharing (71%) and common meditation (69%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. At least three in ten say these elements are “very” important to them.

### *Comparisons by Gender*

Women are more likely than men to say that Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharistic Adoration are “very” important to them. However, men are more likely than women to report that faith sharing is “very” important to them.



## Importance of Aspects of Community Life

*Entrants to religious life were asked to indicate the importance to them of various aspects of community life. Almost all respondents report living with other members (98%), praying with other members (98%), and sharing meals together (96%) as at least “somewhat” important to them. Eight in ten or more say these elements are “very” important to them.*

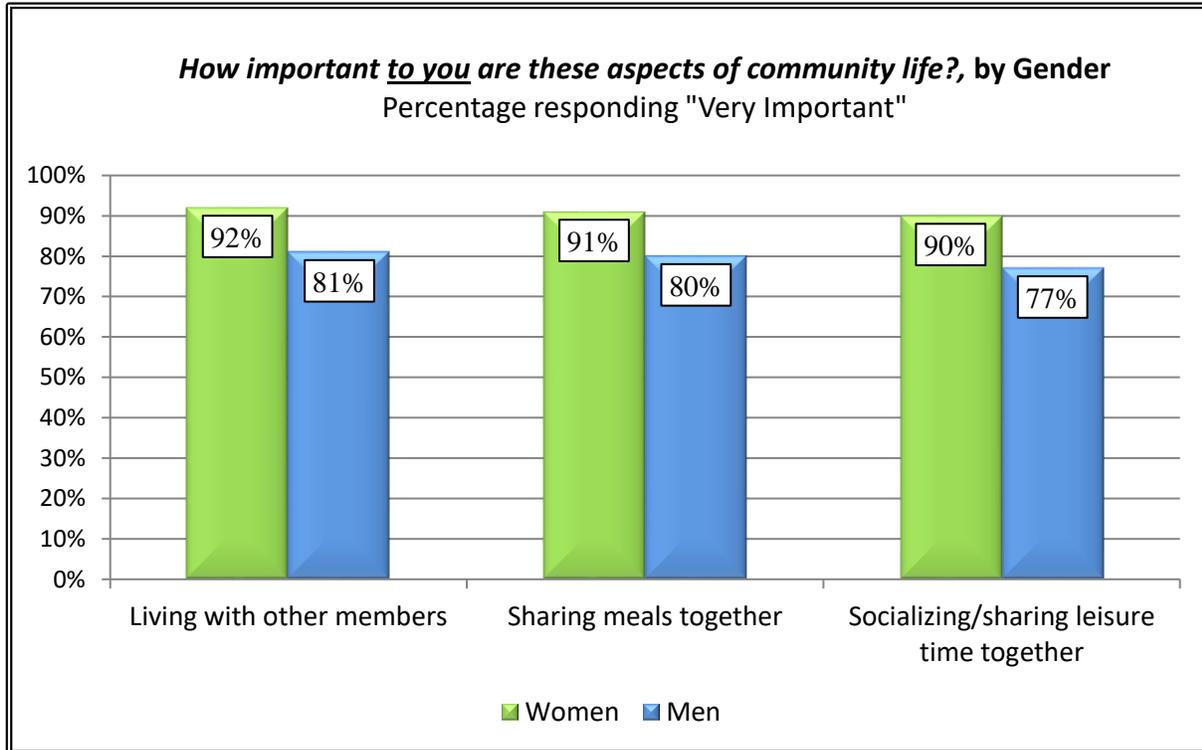
<b><i>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very”</b>	<b>“Very” Only</b>
	%	%
Living with other members	98	87
Praying with other members	98	89
Sharing meals together	96	86
Working with other members	94	76
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	94	83

More than nine in ten respondents report that working with other members (94%) and socializing/sharing leisure time together (94%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Nearly eight in ten say these elements are very important.

### *Comparisons by Gender*

Women are more likely than men to say that the following aspects of community life are “very” important to them:

- Living with other members (92% compared to 81% for men)
- Sharing meals together (91% compared to 80% for men)
- Socializing/sharing leisure time together (90% compared to 77% for men)

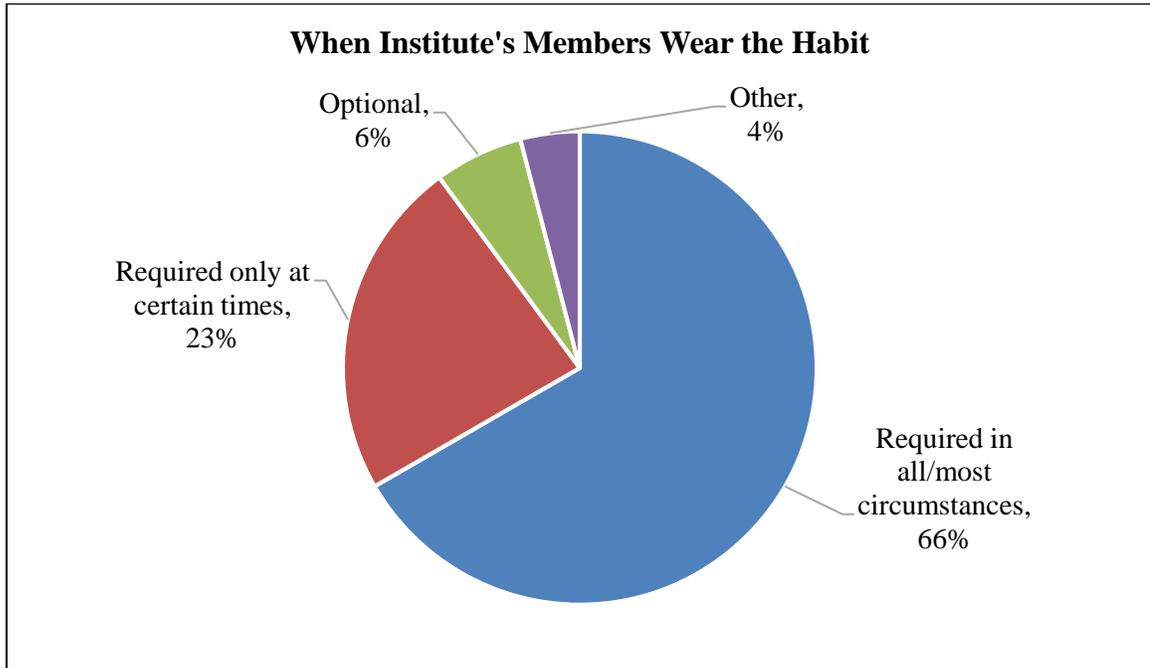


## Wearing of Religious Habit

*New entrants were asked if the members of their institute wear a habit. Around three in four indicate that members of their institute wear a habit. Women are more likely than men to say that members of their institute wear a habit.*

<b>Do members of your institute wear a habit?</b>			
Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	77	87	68
No	23	13	32

Among those who indicate that members wear a habit, two-thirds indicate that the habit is required in all or most circumstances (66%).



- One in four reports that the habit is required only at certain times (23%). One in twenty reports that wearing habit is optional in their institute.

- A few respondents report that their members wear habits for other reasons, including:
  - Wear it all the time except for work or going in the woods
  - We were told to wear the habit as often or as little as you see fit
  - Some use it more than others
  - Required for our American sisters. After a recent merge with a Canadian province, those sisters have the option and in other provinces it is optional
  - For professed members, optional. For non-professed do not have a habit
  - Each community chooses common dress and one US province requires it during ministry chosen by all.

***Differences by Gender***

Women are more likely than men to say that wearing the habit is required in all or most all circumstances. Men, on the other hand, are more likely than women to say wearing the habit is required only at certain times or is optional.

<b><i>If yes, is wearing the habit:</i></b>			
Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
	%	%	%
Required in all or most circumstances	66	95	30
Required only at certain times	23	3	49
Optional	6	3	11
Other	4	0	10

## Aspects of the Religious Institute

Nearly all respondents rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” in each of the aspects shown in the table below.

Almost all respondents report that their religious institute is “good” or “excellent” in its opportunities for personal growth (99%), opportunities for spiritual growth (97%), faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth (97%), and commitment to ministry (97%). Seven in ten or more report that their religious institute is “excellent” in these elements.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Good” or “Excellent”</b>	<b>“Excellent” Only</b>
	%	%
Opportunities for personal growth	99	79
Opportunities for spiritual growth	97	78
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	97	76
Commitment to ministry	97	71

Nearly all respondents rate the following elements in their institutes as “good” or “excellent”: welcome and support of newer members (95%), relationships with one another (95%), sense of identity as religious (95%), sense of identity as institute members (95%), and response to the needs of our time (95%). Around seven in ten say these elements are excellent in their institutes.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Good” or “Excellent”</b>	<b>“Excellent” Only</b>
	%	%
Welcome and support of newer members	95	76
Relationships with one another	95	63
Sense of identity as religious	95	74
Sense of identity as institute members	95	73
Response to the needs of our time	95	68

Just over nine in ten respondents indicate that the following elements are at least “good” in their institutes: quality of community life (94%), communal prayer experiences (94%), fidelity to the Church and its teachings (94%), focus on mission (94%), and educational opportunities (92%). More than six in ten say these elements are “excellent” in their institutes.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Good” or “Excellent”</b>	<b>“Excellent” Only</b>
	%	%
Quality of community life	94	65
Communal prayer experiences	94	63
Fidelity to the Church and its teachings	94	74
Focus on mission	94	67
Educational opportunities	92	70

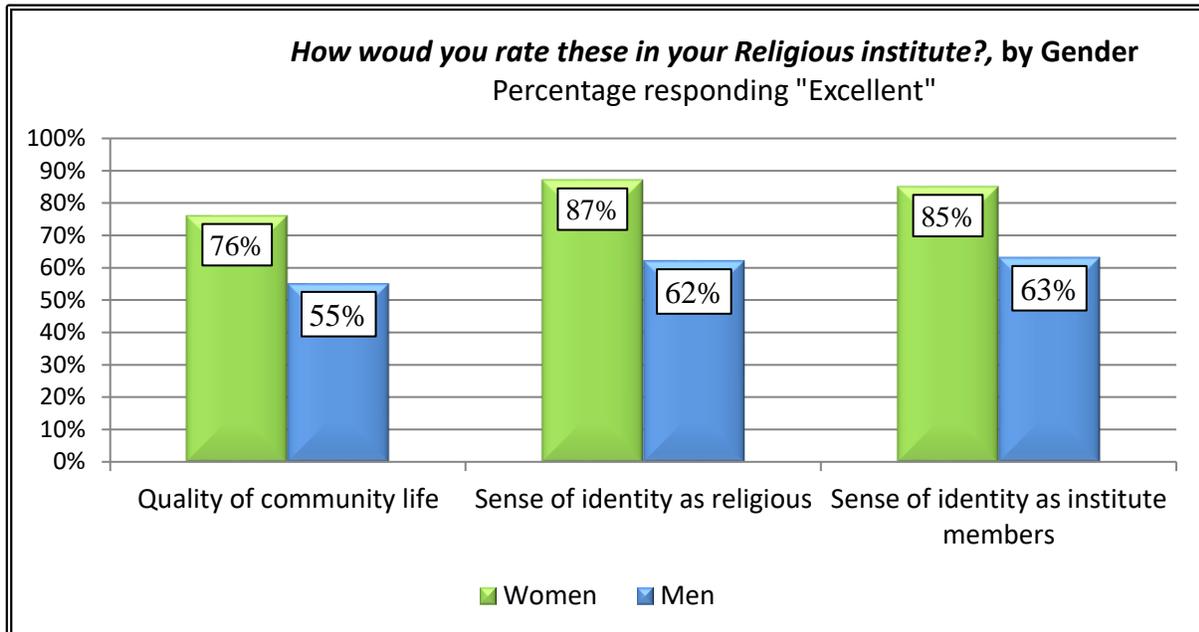
With few exceptions, at least nine in ten respondents rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” in each of the aspects in the table below.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Good” or “Excellent”</b>	<b>“Excellent” Only</b>
	%	%
Opportunities for ongoing formation	91	61
Formation/incorporation programs	91	63
Efforts to promote vocations	89	55
Preparation for ministry	87	55
Efforts to promote social justice	85	47
Diversity of cultures within the institute	79	39

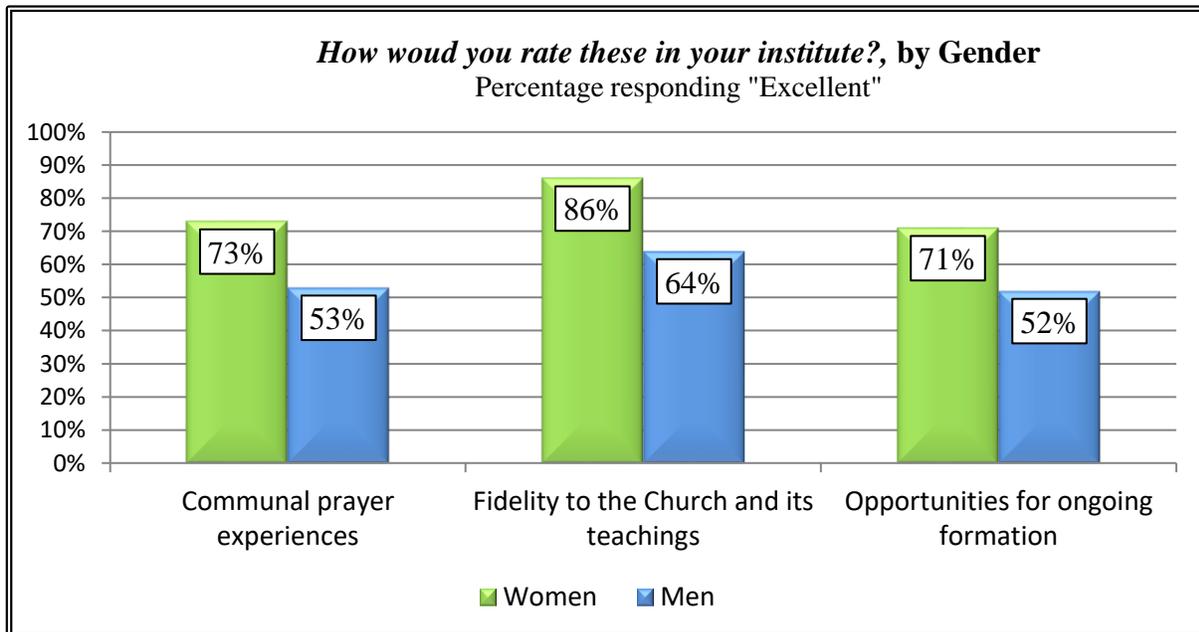
- Eight in ten respondents rate diversity of cultures within the institute in their institute as excellent, with two-fifth sayings this element is excellent in their institute.

### Comparisons by Gender

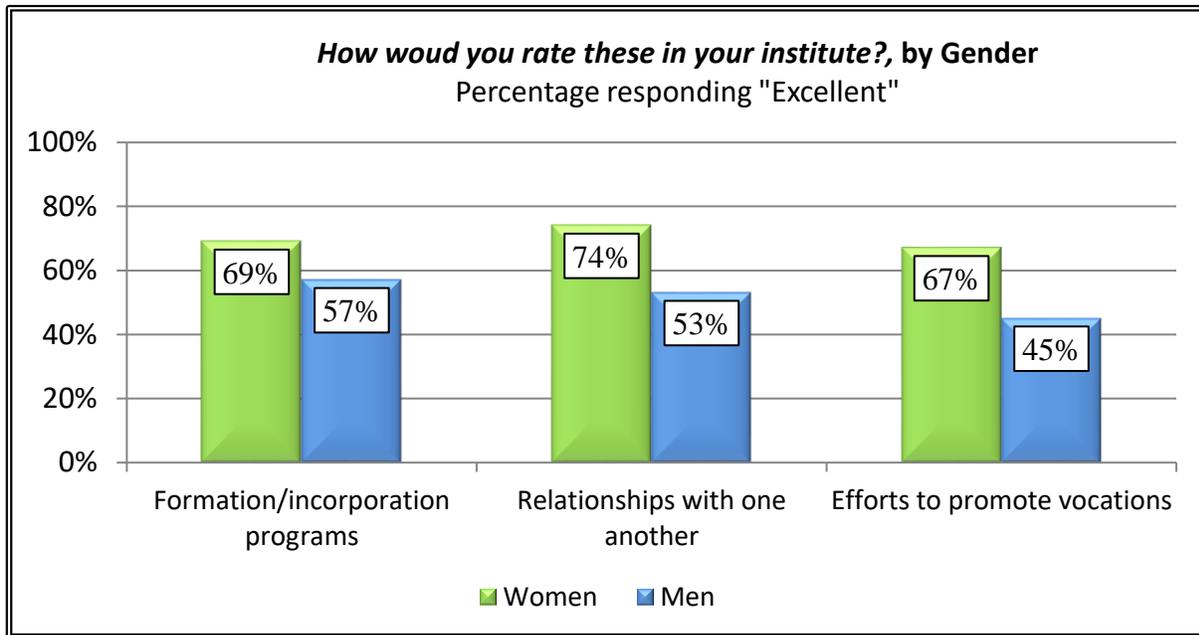
Women are more likely than men to rate their religious institute as “excellent” on a good number of aspects in this section, including the quality of its community life, its sense of identity as religious, and its sense of identity as institute members.



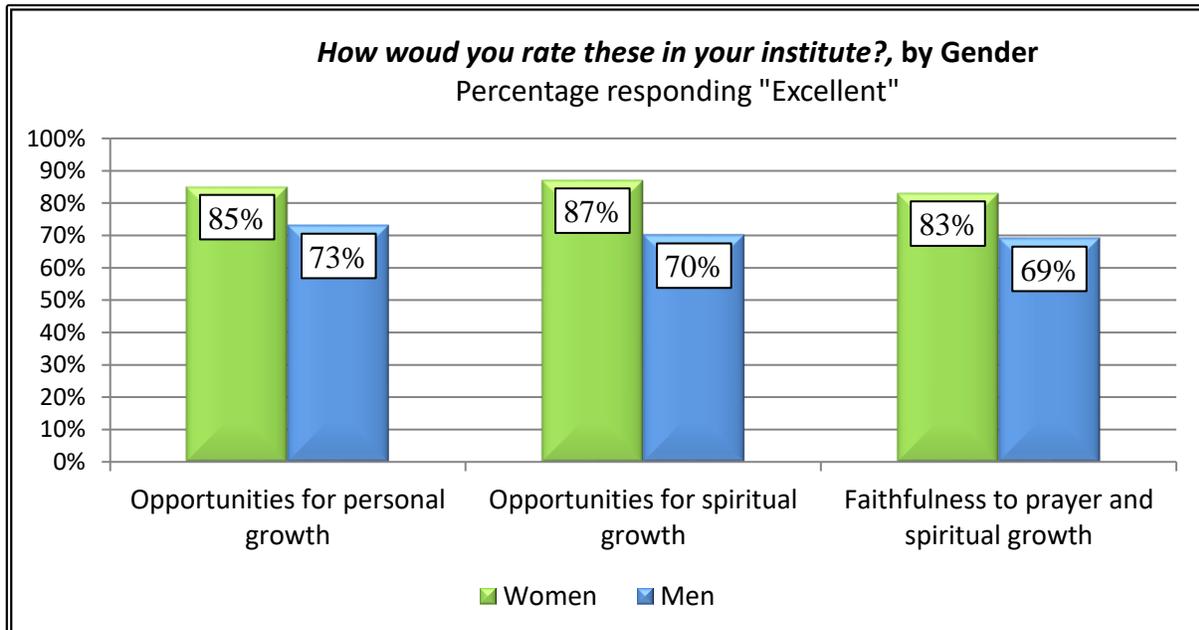
Similarly, women are most likely to rate their institute as “excellent” for its communal prayer experiences, its fidelity to the Church and its teachings, and its opportunities for ongoing formation.



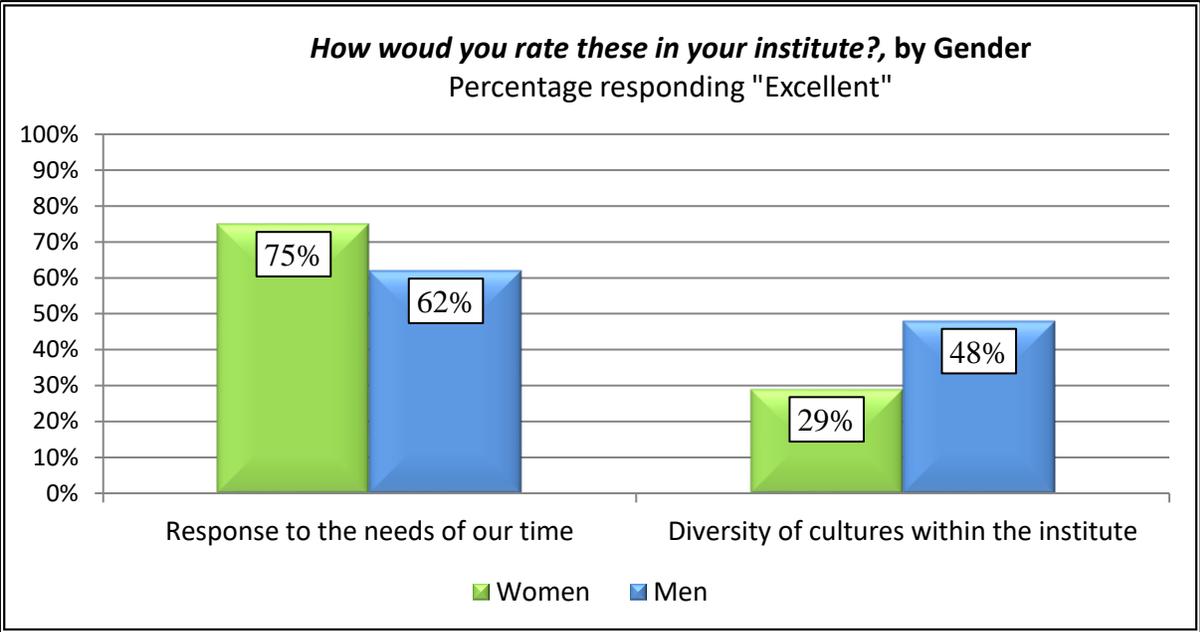
Moreover, women are more likely than men to rate their institute as “excellent” in its formation/incorporation programs, its relationships with one another, and its efforts to promote vocations.



Again, women are more likely than men to rate their institute as “excellent” in its opportunities for personal growth, opportunities for spiritual growth, and faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth.



Finally, women are more likely than men to rate their institute as “excellent” in response to the needs of our time, meanwhile men are more likely to rate their institute as “excellent” in the diversity of cultures within the institute.



## **What Most Attracted You to Your Religious Institute?**

New entrants were also invited to respond in their own words to an open-ended question: “What most attracted you to your religious institute?” Respondents shared many aspects of this attraction, including mission and ministries, the founder/ess, spirituality and charism of the institute, prayer life and communal prayer, community life, joy of the members, fidelity to the Church, its practice regarding religious habit, religious formation/lifestyle of the institute members and sense of social justice. A few of their comments relative to each of these aspects are listed below. A full transcript of all open-ended responses is included in an appendix at the end of this report.

### **Sense of Mission and Ministries of the Institutes**

One of the common aspects that most attracted respondents to their religious institute is the sense of mission and ministry of the institute. Some of their responses include:

- *A mission that focuses on outreach to the peripheries of society, such as ethnic minorities, LGBTQ, women, as well as the potential for ministry that bridges spirituality and social justice.*
- *I saw in each religious I met a sense of urgency and feel for the mission for souls. Christ truly reigned in their lives, and they wanted to make it happen for all peoples of society.*
- *I was most attracted to my religious institute by their desire to be on mission, to be sent anywhere for the gospel, and by their characteristic ministries, especially their educational work.*
- *The desire to do evangelization and to commit my life to the service of God attracted me to my religious institute.*
- *The mission of the order of education of the Catholic and the way the men were living out their vocation and the way they showed such hope within the Catholic Church.*
- *The physical and spiritual beauty that radiated from the mission and members of the congregation, and ultimately from the Lord Himself. That was just so evident upon first meeting the sisters and continued/continues to abound more and more each day.*

### **Founder/Foundress, Spirituality, and Charism of the Institute**

The founder/foundress, the spirituality, and the charism of the institute were other common factors that attracted respondents to their religious institute. They report how much the spirituality of their institute’s founder or foundress inspired them and led to their decision to enter their religious institute. Some of their responses include:

- *I felt strongly the God's call in my life and started responding to Him on applying to this Religious Institute for my priesthood. The charism of this Religious congregation as follows, preserving the Catholic faith among the people especially the poor, abandoned and the destitute, formation of Lay people to become a missionary (Lay Missionary).*
- *Many things, but the biggest 3 things, in order of importance are: their charism of forming apostles to transform culture. All centered around evangelizing, the true sense of brotherhood among the members and the authentic charity that shone forth, the spirituality, centered completely in Christ - the focus on developing a personal relationship with him.*
- *Their spirituality, focused on proper discernment of spirits and interior movements, as well as the primary apostolates being schools and missionary work.*
- *What most attracted me was the religious institute's mission, focus on social justice, living simply, and the sister's personalities (joyful, fun, loving).*
- *Seeing the spiritual fruitfulness of the charism in responding to the present needs of our culture. Learning about the community's way of life, particularly their contemplative-active vocation and their sense of identity as consecrated women; their primary focus on the importance of prayer and union with Jesus, both personally and as a community, and their humility and reliance on God in the apostolate. Witnessing how they live their community life and how they treat everyone with reverence, especially their reverence of my freedom during the discernment process.*

### **Prayer Life and Communal Prayer**

Respondents also recognize prayer as other attractive aspects that drew them to their religious institute. They were attracted by the communal prayers and various types of prayers, including daily Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, daily rosary, and the Stations of the Cross. Some of their responses about prayer included:

- *Eucharist Exposition. Flexibility. International sisters/community life. Rosary and Marian community. To be the spouse of Jesus. The joy between the sisters and their simplicity. Great love for the Blessed Sacrament. Spirituality of St. Claire.*
- *I was drawn to their solemn reverence in prayer. I was captivated when I first visited them and heard the community chanting the Divine Office. Also, the Sisters truly radiate joy, hospitality and a Marian graciousness and I knew that it truly must stem from a real relationship with their Spouse and I wanted that. I wanted to pray like them and love God like them. I was attracted to their way of life and desired to become a part of their family.*

- *It's orthodoxy and faithfulness to the Church, Eucharistic Adoration/prayer, it's missionary spirit, and its charism that includes families and laity.*
- *Knowing the brothers, and their commitment to sanctity while acknowledging their humanity. Their commitment to prayer, the gospel, and the church.*
- *Perceptual Adoration, the community was both active and contemplative, the faithfulness of the community to the church, the joy found in the members of the community, how normal the sisters seemed.*
- *The liturgy and prayer life were beautiful; The silence and monastic and contemplative aspects of the order; the commitment to tradition, especially their fidelity to the teachings of the church and to the order as St. Dominic envisioned it; Their whole life revolving around prayer and the commitment of each individual sister to grow in holiness.*
- *The Liturgy is simple but solemn, always carried out with planning and care, and more or less according to the rubrics; it is not focused on self-creativity but rather a fitting and beautiful communal worship of our Lord and God.*

## **Community Life**

Another common element of attraction that the responding new entrants report is the community life of the institute. The respondents indicate that community life and community activities very much attracted them to their religious institute. Some of their responses included:

- *Maybe one of the most important points was that the community is balanced; there is no one ideology or political agenda running through it-I have seen the danger of communities that are focused not on Christ alone but also on a certain ideology, and there is a great danger to real growth and freedom in Christ in such a setting. People would say that I am conservative, and this monastery has a mix of people that could fall on the conservative side or liberal side and it is this exact mix which was key for me; it is here that I can rub shoulders with others and truly grow in the Lord and in charity to others and not simply be fitted into a certain mold and pop out the other side 'perfect'.*
- *All the Sisters are truly a family, and throughout their history they have refused to compromise the truth. They prioritize the Eucharist, the Blessed Mother, and the Church's teachings.*
- *Honestly, when first discerning, this wasn't my first choice but I just felt drawn to my order, and it wasn't until I entered that I finally came to realize the beauty of their community and how I fit. The ability to be true to who I am and still live the life of a religious has been a blessing.*
- *was most attracted by community life. The community I now belong to is very strong. Being together, like a family, makes the (name of the religious institute) feel like home.*

- *The community life of prayer, ministry, and recreation. The young age of the sisters and their orthodox traditions (wearing the habit), Praise and worship*
- *The focus the interior life and helping others pray, in the context of community life and apostolate.*

### **Joy of the Institute's Members**

In addition, respondents were attracted to their religious institute by the joy of the members and their encounter with them. Some of their responses include:

- *I loved the youthful and joyful energy of the sisters when serving in the community. Their presence inspired me to take my faith more seriously and that I too could live this way for the Lord.*
- *The joy and holiness of the Sisters was what first attracted me to my community. They were such witnesses to Christ and the Church and I was very drawn to that.*
- *The joy of the sisters and the number of young sisters there. Also, a sense that the Holy Spirit was directing me there.*
- *The sisters hold a great joy when I spent time with them and were a great example of faithfully having their religious life even amidst the schedule of college campus ministry and a parish school.*
- *The sisters' joy, fidelity, and clear love of the Lord in community and radiating out into their ministry. Their authentic witness to relationship with Christ in consecrated life and their faithfulness to bringing his truth and love to all. Their excitement and gratitude for new vocations.*
- *Their joy, that they are educated to a high degree and that they have an intense community life.*

### **Religious habit**

- *Commitment and joy in requirement of the Habit - Joy!*
- *Just in wearing the habit daily is a huge testament to our evangelization. We are joyful, young, attractive, habited women who Love the lord.*
- *The habit, their history, love of the Truth, monastic observances, formation, zeal for holiness not a new order.*

- *Their following the Church's tradition + expectation for religious was essential (prayer at center, wearing habit, daily mass+ orthodox liturgy, etc.)*
- *Their fidelity to Religious Life and the Magisterium (e.g. wearing the habit all the time)*
- *The institutes fidelity to the church, the wearing of the habit at all times, fidelity to the people of our times, and the mission of the order.*
- *Their faithfulness to the magisterium of the Catholic church and her teachings, they wear the habit*
- *What most attracted me to this religious institute was its faithfulness to the Magisterium of the Church and fidelity to the habit appropriate to the order as well as the sister's joy....*

## **Fidelity to the Church**

Fidelity to the Church is another important aspect that several respondents report attracted them to their religious institute. Some of their responses include:

- *The fidelity of the order to the Church and the reverence given to the Sacramental life and tradition of the liturgy.*
- *The institutes fidelity to the church, the wearing of the habit at all times, fidelity to the people of our times, and the mission of the order.*
- *The monks told me that they were faithful to the Church and Church Teaching and I could see this was true.*
- *Their faithfulness to the magisterium of the Catholic church and her teachings, they wear the habit*
- *What most attracted me to this religious institute was its faithfulness to the Magisterium of the Church and fidelity to the habit appropriate to the Order as well as the sister's joy, charity, and peace. Furthermore, the thorough screening process assured me that the sisters were seriously considering my vacation to this Monastery and that I truly had a vocation to the Religious Life and to this Monastery.*

## **Social Justice**

Other respondents report that their institute's commitment to social justice attracted them. Some elements that were mentioned include:

- *I was attracted to the Jesuits way of serving God's people through social justice and their emphasis on studying God's creation through academia. These are two aspects of life that I hold very dear.*
- *Service, Social Justice, Shared Living.*
- *The commitment to social justice and feminist approach to faith and community.*

## What Do You Find Most Challenging about Religious Life?

A second open-ended question invited new entrants to respond in their own words to “What do you find most challenging about religious life?” Respondents shared a variety of challenges that face them in religious life, including community life, maturing into religious life, adaptation to religious life, decreasing access to family and friends, formation and other challenges. A few of their comments relative to each of these aspects are listed below. A full transcript of all open-ended responses is included in an appendix at the end of this report.

### Community Life

Respondents most commonly report that they find community life the most challenging aspect of their religious life experience. They have learned that living in community may involve loss of privacy, as well as struggles in living with the members who have different cultural backgrounds, opinions, ages, temperaments, personalities, and preferences. Some of their responses include:

- *Being held accountable by the Community to be who I truly am and to be the best version of myself.*
- *Community life is a challenge, but the most challenging aspect of living in a Jesuit community is acknowledging the fact that I am not the center all of the time and others of the community are of equal importance and value.*
- *Community living because I am living with people of a diversity of cultures and people from different generations.*
- *Perhaps always getting along with other personalities, although this is not a major challenge and is currently a minimal obstacle. We all get along fairly well.*
- *Probably the most challenging thing in religious life thus far is also one of the greatest joys; community life brings your own faults and imperfections to the forefront and forces you to face them and work on them, which is so humanly uncomfortable, but also so necessary and good for the life of the soul.*
- *The generational differences in opinion about observing church discipline and the role of ecclesiastical tradition.*
- *What I find most challenging about religious life is about living in a diverse community.*
- *Working through my own personal difficulties and shortcomings while living in community with brothers*

## Vows

Respondents most commonly report that they find religious vows the most challenging aspect of their religious life experience. They have learned that living the three vows requires relinquishing the luxurious life they were used to lead. Some of their responses include:

- *Celibacy, far more than any other challenges.*
- *Dealing with my own concupiscence (especially with regards to obedience).*
- *I think the most challenging thing for me, which is also a gift, is how different religious life is to the world. I'm relearning how to live which can be heart at times but also beautiful. It stretches you and you feel like your faults and failures are on display but then you realize that poverty is a key to growing in holiness and union with Jesus. It is also hard because many family members and friends don't understand what I'm doing and balancing these relationships in their new form can be challenging.*
- *It has been challenging, but beautiful, to discover the depth of my poverty and from that to depend wholly on Jesus. Religious life inherently brings me to recognize these things.*
- *Obedience and humility and the realization that I have to change. Persevering in everyday community life.*
- *Obedience is the most painful part for me right now. There are constantly new opportunities to exercise the virtue in preparation for vows--and not all of them are pleasant! But nothing I'm ever asked to do is sinful or bad for me; it's just another opportunity to say Yes to the Lord Who has given me everything.*
- *The sacrifice of getting married and having my own "regular" family and husband, yet that is also the reason why I am here...because I felt called by Jesus to marry HIM and to be a spiritual mother to his (and therefore my) children.*

## Maturing in Religious Life

Respondents also report the challenge of recognizing and addressing limitations in themselves and others, while desiring to grow in religious life. They regularly mentioned their difficulty in overcoming “myself,” “temptations,” “weakness,” and “sins.” Some of their responses include:

- *Determining areas where I need to grow as compared to areas where the community falls short, and keeping sight of God's will for me in the midst of it.*
- *Learning to be patient with myself as I grow to who God is calling me to be.*
- *Staying always vigilant against sins in myself and the community.*

- *The call to continual personal growth!*
- *The daily laying down of one's life and self-denial in order to obtain life more fully*
- *The most challenging has been growing in faith and making personal changes to my thinking and way of relating to others.*
- *What I find most challenging now in religious life, it is how to grow or to mature in such a way that I may preach the Gospel to all peoples without exclusions, yet without losing the roots of our Christian faith as Catholics.*

### **Adaptation to Religious Life**

Respondents found challenges in adapting to the new life style in their religious communities. This adjustment includes daily schedule, new life pace, food, prayer life, community life, among other things. Some of their responses include:

- *After 3 months of postulancy, these are some challenges at this early stage of my religious life: Adjusting to the horarium and new city/culture Balancing/absorbing all that is new; relationships with sisters, prayer life, duties, classes etc.*
- *Having to think a lot more about how I am presenting myself and working on my weaknesses so that I can represent the Church better.*
- *Lack of freedom regarding personal travels*
- *Surrendering to God's will, which is applicable to any Vocation. Each has its joys and hardships, but being where I know God has invited me to be fills me with an abundance of peace, freedom and JOY!*
- *The aspect of loneliness and being away from family and friends.*
- *The transition from the culture of the world into the culture of God's grace and the death to old habits and fostering new better ones has been the most challenging but also where the greatest transformation and joys have occurred.*

### **Decreasing Communication with Family and Friends**

Another challenge that respondents shared was their decreased communication with their family members and friends. The schedule and lifestyle in religious life lead religious to reduce their connections with families and friends. They live far away from their family and friends and that sometimes leads them to homesickness. Some of them also felt that their family and friends did not understand religious life and their decision to enter the religious life. They also missed

some other relationships and felt that religious life somehow reduces their opportunity for communication. Some of their responses include:

- *Adjusting to the shift in relationship with my family and friends from home; not being able to communicate as frequently/by the same means as before entrance*
- *Having a steady call home to friends and family.*
- *Home sick, and a lot to study.*
- *I find the growing distance between myself and my family, who do not support my life in a religious community, to be the most challenging aspect of living out this vocation.*
- *Major life shift, relinquishing my independence & freedom to do what I want, when I wanted.*
- *Not being able to see/talk to family often*
- *Telling people that I'm in formation now, and also communicating with home (I'm not restricted in how often I get to write/talk to/visit with my family, but I still find it difficult to talk to them about what I am doing day-to-day.)*

## **Religious Formation**

In addition, respondents described some challenges in their formation program, in discerning their vocation, or in seeking the balance between prayer and ministry life. Some of their comments include:

- *I find early rising the most consistently challenging. It takes time to adjust.*
- *Novice life is kind of all over the place right now with different experiments - lots of stable instability, hard to really get into a rhythm knowing that you're going to be elsewhere in a few weeks*
- *Structures; some things are a bit anachronistic; being a junior in the system after living life as a professional and independent woman*
- *The most challenging are: 1) Some final professed members, are not having a proper capability to lead a person who was brought up in another culture. 2) My group mate is white, who wants to be general superior while in the stage of candidacy, practice her value of having perfectionism, and always right, have a strong desire to control over others.*

- *To find myself identified as a young man in a community of old men with diverse background.*

### **Commitment to daily prayer and focus to God**

Some find it hard to commit themselves to daily prayers and focus on their spiritual life. Some of their comments include:

- *Commitment to daily prayer, cooperation with others, finding the time to focus on God*
- *I so often fall short of living out our call to holiness; the public witness that is part of religious life raises the stakes. I am adjusting to living in a community of six adult women after about a decade of living in student housing or on my own -- coordinating schedules, planning ahead, more noise and activity around the house.*
- *Lack of unity on some issues of personal importance with other men in formation, lack of unity/consistency among older members in community regarding Catholic orthodoxy.*
- *The beautiful challenge of opening every part of my being and learning to surrender it to the Lord*
- *The Sisters have periods of silence throughout the day. Since I just entered a little over one month ago, I find keeping silence a bit of a challenge.*

### **Other Challenges**

Other types of challenges that respondents found in responding to the new life style in their religious communities include:

- *Facing the unknown as the larger active community becomes smaller due to aging and natural death.*
- *For me the most challenging thing is describing to others, especially non-Catholics, what my experience is and why I have chosen this path of life.*
- *In general, we are in a great need of vocations and to improve on the manner in which we conduct an awareness to vocations.*
- *Knowing that we will be "rewriting the story of religious life" as our numbers decrease. Although it is a challenge, I'm also filled with great hope for the future.*
- *The beautiful challenge of opening every part of my being and learning to surrender it to the Lord*

- *The Sisters have periods of silence throughout the day. Since I just entered a little over one month ago, I find keeping silence a bit of a challenge.*
- *There seems to be some degree of denial within many members that there is a need to adapt to the times to attract new members. Members are very independent from one another, and don't seem to be interested in working together to bring in new members to continue the society.*

## **Appendix I: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies**



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Entrance Class of 2019

Member ID: \_\_\_\_\_

This survey is designed to help us understand the characteristics and experiences of those entering religious life in the United States today and the religious institutes they are entering. "Religious institute" refers to the congregation, province, or abbey/monastery to which you belong. Your responses are very important. Please respond by marking an "X" in the appropriate box for each question below.

If you do not know how to respond to a question, or if it does not apply, please leave it blank.

Please use the responses below for questions 1-15.

- 1=Not at All, 2=Only a Little, 3=Somewhat, 4=Very Much

Please much did the following attract you to religious life?

- 1 2 3 4 NR
0 2 14 84 1 1. A sense of call to religious life
1 3 16 81 1 2. A desire for prayer and spiritual growth
3 6 28 63 1 3. A desire to be part of a community
2 8 23 67 1 4. A desire to be of service
6 7 28 60 0 5. A desire to be more committed to the Church

How much did these attract you to your religious institute?

- 1 2 3 4 NR
16 17 31 37 1 6. The life and works of your founder/ress
1 6 23 70 1 7 The mission of the institute
2 4 23 71 1 8. The spirituality of the institute
2 8 30 60 1 9. The prayer life of the institute
1 7 28 64 1 10. The community life of the institute
5 5 36 54 3 11. The ministries of the institute
4 8 21 67 2 12. The institute's fidelity to the Church
3 7 22 68 2 13. The example of members of the institute
27 20 27 27 3 14. A personal invitation by a member
2 14 29 55 1 15. Welcome and encouragement by members

How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute? Check all that apply.

- 33 16. In an institution where members served, e.g., school
17 17. Through working with a member of the institute
19 18. Through a relative or a friend in the institute
35 19. Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor
23 20. Through the reputation or history of the institute
3 21. Through a vocation fair
4 22. Through a vocation match or placement service
9 23. Through an event sponsored by the institute
11 24. Through a media story about the institute or member
29 25. Through your own search
6 26. Through print promotional materials
24 27. Through web or social media promotional materials
18 28. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please use the responses below for questions 29-41.

- 1=Not at All Helpful, 2=Only a Little Helpful, 3=Somewhat Helpful, 4=Very Helpful, 5=Not Applicable/Did not participate

Please choose "5" if you did not participate. If you participated in any of the following with your religious institute before you entered, how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?

- 1 2 3 4 5 NR
2 3 16 73 6 1 29. Contact with the vocation director
2 3 18 69 8 2 30. Contact with institute members
9 1 3 4 83 3 31. "Andrew Dinner" or "Nun Run"
2 2 14 61 21 1 32. "Come and See" experience
2 4 12 57 26 2 33. Vocation or discernment retreat
3 2 6 48 42 3 34. Live-in experience
5 5 10 27 54 4 35. Ministry with institute members
6 2 6 20 66 4 36. Mission experience
6 8 12 16 59 2 37. Meeting with a discernment group
3 2 14 45 35 3 38. Visit(s) to local community/ies
4 1 7 48 41 3 39. Visit(s) to the Motherhouse
10 19 17 13 41 3 40. Social media (e.g., Facebook)
2 6 16 47 29 3 41. Spiritual direction

Please use the responses below for questions 42-54.

- 1=Not at All, 2=Only a Little, 3=Somewhat, 4=Very Much

How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?

- 1 2 3 4 NR
29 25 30 17 3 42. The size of the institute
28 25 27 20 2 43. Its geographic location(s)
36 18 24 23 5 44. Its internationality, if applicable
3 8 23 67 1 45. Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute
3 9 19 70 1 46. Community life in the institute
4 7 28 60 2 47. The lifestyle of members
63 19 8 9 2 48. The racial/ethnic background of members
32 21 31 17 2 49. The ages of members
5 10 37 48 2 50. The types of ministry of its members
15 11 12 62 2 51. Its practice regarding a religious habit
1 2 15 83 1 52. The Charism of the institute
50 20 13 17 1 53. The cultural diversity of the members
20 19 30 31 2 54. The focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute

Please use the responses below for questions 55-67.

1=Not at All                      3=Somewhat Important  
2=Only a Little                4=Very Important

How important to you are these types of prayer?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 0 1 6 93 2 55. Private personal prayer
- 2 1 6 92 2 56. Daily Eucharist
- 3 3 24 70 3 57. Liturgy of the Hours
- 8 20 43 29 4 58. Non-liturgical common prayer
- 12 19 29 40 4 59. Common meditation
- 3 4 14 79 3 60. Eucharistic Adoration
- 6 11 30 54 3 61. Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary
- 6 23 32 39 4 62. Faith sharing

How important to you are these aspects of community life?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 1 2 11 87 3 63. Living with other members
- 1 1 9 89 2 64. Praying with other members
- 2 5 18 76 2 65. Working with other members
- 1 3 10 86 2 66. Sharing meals together
- 0 6 11 83 3 67. Socializing/sharing leisure time together

Please use the responses below for questions 68-87.

1=Poor                              3=Good  
2=Fair                              4=Excellent

How would you rate these in your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 3 7 34 55 6 68. Efforts to promote vocations
- 0 5 19 76 5 69. Welcome and support of newer members
- 2 7 28 63 6 70. Formation/incorporation programs
- 2 8 30 61 6 71. Opportunities for ongoing formation
- 3 6 22 70 7 72. Educational opportunities
- 2 11 32 55 7 73. Preparation for ministry
- 1 2 19 78 5 74. Opportunities for spiritual growth
- 0 2 20 79 5 75. Opportunities for personal growth
- 2 4 21 74 7 76. Sense of identity as religious
- 1 5 22 73 9 77. Sense of identity as institute members
- 1 5 20 74 6 78. Fidelity to the Church and its teachings
- 1 3 21 76 5 79. Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth
- 1 5 27 67 8 80. Focus on mission
- 1 3 26 71 9 81. Commitment to ministry
- 2 3 27 68 5 82. Response to the needs of our time
- 1 14 38 47 9 83. Efforts to promote social justice
- 1 5 29 65 6 84. Quality of community life
- 2 5 31 63 7 85. Communal prayer experiences
- 1 4 32 63 6 86. Relationships with one another
- 6 15 40 39 8 87. Diversity of cultures within the institute

Yes No NR

77 23 3 88. Do members of your institute wear a habit?

- 88a. If yes to #88, is wearing the habit
  - 66 1. Required in all or most circumstances
  - 23 2. Required only at certain times, e.g., ministry, prayer
  - 6 3. Optional
  - 4 4. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 88b. If yes to #88, and wearing the habit is optional, how many members wear it all or most of the time?
  - 11 1. None
  - 33 2. A few (less than 25%)
  - 44 3. Some (25-49%)
  - 0 4. Many (50-74%)
  - 11 5. Most (75% or more)
- 88c. If yes to #88, and wearing the habit is optional, how frequently do you wear it?
  - 56 1. Never
  - 11 2. Once in a while
  - 11 3. Only at certain times (e.g., ministry, prayer)
  - 22 4. In all or most circumstances

**About You**

AVG=1991 89. Year you were born  
AVG=18 90. Age you first considered religious life  
AVG=3 91. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

92. What is your birth order? NR=3  
2 1. Only child 28 3. Youngest  
34 2. Eldest 37 4. Somewhere in the middle

93. Are you: 50<sub>1</sub> Male 50<sub>2</sub> Female

93a. If male, do you expect become a  
21<sub>1</sub>. Perpetually professed brother  
79<sub>2</sub>. Priest

94. What is your first language? \_\_\_\_\_

95. How many languages do you speak fluently? NR=7  
67<sub>1</sub>. One 26<sub>2</sub>. Two 5<sub>3</sub>. Three 2<sub>4</sub>. Four or more

Yes No NR

76 24 2 96. Were you employed before you entered?  
96a. If yes to #96, were you employed?  
71<sub>1</sub> Full-time 29<sub>2</sub> Part-time  
60 40 3 97. Were you in ministry before you entered?  
97a. If yes to #97, were you engaged in ministry?  
33<sub>1</sub> Full-time 15<sub>2</sub> Part-time 52<sub>3</sub> Volunteer

98. What best describes your racial or ethnic background NR=2  
4<sub>1</sub>. African/African American/black  
9<sub>2</sub>. Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian  
67<sub>3</sub>. Caucasian/European American/white  
15<sub>4</sub>. Hispanic/Latino(a)  
0<sub>5</sub>. Native American/American Indian  
3<sub>6</sub>. Mixed race  
2<sub>7</sub>. Other: \_\_\_\_\_



143. What most attracted you to your religious institute?

144. What do you find most challenging about religious life?

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!**

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## **Appendix II: Responses to Open-ended Comments**

**Q. 143: What most attracted you to your religious institute?**

Presented here are the responses of the new entrants, slightly edited. These are:

A mission that focuses on outreach to the peripheries of society, such as ethnic minorities, LGBTQ, women, as well as the potential for ministry that bridges spirituality and social justice.

A sense of family life focused on Jesus

A sense of vocation and personal history with the institute.

Abbess 2. Eucharist Exposition 3. Flexibility 4. International sisters/community life 5. Rosary + Marian community. To be the spouse of Jesus. The joy between the sisters and their simplicity. Great love for the Blessed sacrament spirituality of St. Claire

All the Sisters are truly a family, and throughout their history they have refused to compromise the truth. They prioritize the Eucharist, the Blessed Mother, and the Church's teachings.

Authenticity; commitment to prayer, ministry and community as a lived example; courage and unity in challenging the patriarchal church system and promoting a more inclusive Church model

Being a Bride of Christ

Bringing people's souls to God through priesthood.

Community Life

community life and mission

Community life and the desire to serve people and accompany them on their faith journey.

Contemplation, Community and Covenant with the poor

Daily mass Adoration twice a day Wears a habit Contemplative and active Devoted to Mary Serves as spiritual mothers and brides of Christ in the church

Definitely the joy and selflessness of the first sisters I met in our mission in Scotland. Their sincere charity for each other and above all their love and dedication to the lord was inspiring and desirable. Their fidelity to the church and position for the solution of souls was very impactful and it increased in me the desire to be totally dedicated to God through consecrated life.

Eucharistic and Marian spirituality, prayer/community life, and charism

Everything

Examples of faithful priests and brothers committed to the service of the Church, the possibilities of diverse ministries, international scope, and involvement in universities.

Felt nudged by God at event where I first met sisters...became friends, denied the call...supported me regardless.

First of all, Jesus. He is very present here and initially I was helped to focus all my discernment thoughts and prayers (especially mass and eucharistic adoration) on the question "Jesus are you calling me to love you alone?" Ultimately it seems He is and it is with the Sisters here that I meet Him most intimately. The contemplative-active model of the institute, centered on the Eucharist and supported by strong community life was and is the most attractive element of our institute.

God attracted me to this community the most. First, He fell in love with me and then I fell in love with Him. It was the working of the Holy Spirit that filled/fills me and our sisters with His love. While discerning with our community, the vocation director, sisters whom I had been friends with before I entered emphasized that fact. Relationship with Jesus, Jesus. He is where the answer is. Spending time with Him in the Blessed Sacrament. That is what most attracted me as well as life of prayer and seeing the sisters remain with Him in prayers in their day.

God kept bringing me back to the institute, even in the face of my efforts to look elsewhere. (2) Also, the happiness and individuality of each member of the institute, coupled with a strong community life, strong prayer life, and clear articulation of what religious life was and how it was lived in the Institute

Honestly, when first discerning, this wasn't my first choice but I just felt drawn to my order, and it wasn't until I entered that I finally came to realize the beauty of their community and how I fit. The ability to be true to who I am and still live the life of a religious has been a blessing.

How fully themselves each of the Sisters are.

How the members of the community take care of their elderly. A fun and holy environment.

I always felt called to the mixed life a monastic priesthood. I always felt called to both + so to find them blended together was a Godsend. Also: faithful to the Magisterium, wearing a habit, focus on liturgy, non-optional use of Latin, devotion to chant/sacred music, silence, beauty, devotion to our lady: daily rosary, daily community Eucharistic Holy Hour, Fr. (name), singing of the entire Office, adoption of a religious name, vita mixta, teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas + Augustine, Stability.

I am most attracted to our charism and our way of life. We are parish sisters and desire to be spiritual mothers within our own diocese (living as a community first, of course). We also have 2 Holy hours which is very important. I need prayer time in front of adoration and we get it doubly so. Our community life is very familial and we do all our prayers together which is great to encourage members when feeling a lack of fervor. Being Eucharistic, Diocesan, & New Evangelization for our charisms, I also enjoy being a witness in our catholic schools, youth groups, parishes, etc. Just in wearing the habit daily is a huge testament to our evangelization. We are joyful, young, attractive, habited women who Love the lord. Of course, this will have second-glances and head turns. For we are brides in Christ!

I felt a deep/profound call to be contemplative + cloistered. I wanted to wear the full habit. St. Francis de Sales' teaching on gentleness that we carry out in our spirituality. I feel called to a more traditional way of living the faith (through my order isn't as strict). Prayer has always been something that I can lose myself in and feel called to help the world through.

I felt strongly the God's call in my life and started responding to Him on applying to this Religious Institute for my priesthood. The charism of this Religious congregation as follows; 1. Preserving the catholic faith among the people especially the poor, abandoned and the destitute. 2. Formation of Lay people to become a missionary (Lay Missionary)

I felt very drawn to how fully the sisters live out the Dominican call "to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation and I felt both very at home with the sisters but also that this is somewhere where I will be stretched and grow in holiness.

I had a friar who was a retired priest who presided at the children's mass on Sundays and wanted to imitate him.

I have always had a devotion to Saint Francis, the founder of my institute, and I just knew that a community life centered around prayer, fraternity, and ministry would be exceedingly good for me

I just wanted to become a priest, and I encountered this institute. They gave me an opportunity, I met them little by little and now I am in love with this community and their service working with the poor.

I like the inter-nationality of the society and that they wear a habit. But ultimately it was because God called me here. So, I listened.

I loved the youthful and joyful energy of the sisters when serving in the community. Their presence inspired me to take my faith more seriously and that I too could live this way for the Lord.

I really like the charism of the (name of the religious institute).

I saw in each religious I met a sense of urgency and feel for the mission for souls. Christ truly reigned in their lives, and they wanted to make it happen for all peoples of society.

I was attracted to the charism of the founder, to serving a particular population (rural America) and helping bring the Catholic faith to them

I was attracted to the Jesuits way of serving God's people through social justice and their emphasis on studying God's creation through academia. These are two aspects of life that I hold very dear.

I was attracted to the orthodoxy, tradition, and joy of my community.

I was attracted to this way of life because I have always been looking for a way to integrate my faith more deeply into my life and interactions. As a semi-contemplative community, we

certainly do that, however we also have the opportunity to share the joy of living in Christ with our confreres and guests.

I was drawn by the joy I saw in every member I met, which was different from the joy I saw in people living vocations in the world. In particular, the Dominican mission of contemplation and then sharing the fruits of your contemplation with others attracted me as a very balanced way of religious life rooted first in prayer + relationship with Christ.

I was drawn to their solemn reverence in prayer. I was captivated when I first visited them and heard the community chanting the Divine Office. Also, the Sisters truly radiate joy, hospitality and a Marian graciousness and I knew that it truly must stem from a real relationship with their Spouse and I wanted that. I wanted to pray like them and love God like them. I was attracted to their way of life and desired to become a part of their family.

I was initially attracted by the pure joy of the sisters and a feeling of being known but after getting to know them more I was attracted also to their love for the Eucharist, love for life, emphasis on prayer and community and their many apostolates. Their charism sang the song of my heart.

I was most attracted by community life. The community I now belong to is very strong. Being together, like a family, makes the (name of the religious institute) feel like home.

I was most attracted by the spirit of fidelity to Christ and his church which so clearly enlivens the institute as well as the structure of the day which is centered around relationship with Christ through the Liturgy and the sacraments, especially the Most Holy Eucharist. Finally, I was attracted by the authenticity and love of the sisters which flows out to all whom they serve.

I was most attracted by their ministries in the religious institute.

I was most attracted to Carmel because of their apostolate of prayer for the whole world! I served for 5 years as a Catholic Missionary with the organization (name) and our lord really inspired a zeal for souls. After my first year at (name of the university) I realized I couldn't reach all the souls in working with just one population of people in an active religious order. I wanted all souls through the ends of the world (past, present, and future) to know the transforming love of Jesus Christ. I found that St. Therese of Lisieux had a similar desire after reading her autobiography. And so, after a quick Google search of (name of the religious institute) (where I've lived all my life), I visited this one in (name of the city). I am attracted to the missionary zeal in the heart of the church, hidden but very much advocating the kingdom through a life of enclosed use for souls to be ransomed back to him. The nuns are also very welcoming, warm, and reflect Christ beautifully. They have a beautiful family spirit. Send more vocations our way!

I was most attracted to community life and being able to pursue my talents within the Society.

I was most attracted to my religious institute by their desire to be on mission, to be sent anywhere for the gospel, and by their characteristic ministries, especially their educational work.

I was most attracted to the (name of the religious institute) by their solid foundation on and fidelity to the truth and teachings of the Church, devotion to Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament and to Mary, and by the obvious joy each sister had in her vocation.

I was most attracted to the mission statement of the Dominicans

I was most attracted to the radical joy of living out the evangelical counsels of a religious priest I have met.

I was not really attracted to my religious institute at first. Right now, what I find most attractive is the desire and striving for sanctity that I can see in many of the members of the institute.

Initially, I was most attracted by the sanctity of its members and their totality of life. The formation, emphatic on the interior life, and total self-giving to the Evangelical Counsel attracted me as well.

It has always felt like home.

It is a cloister so there is a lot of time for prayer. I like that it is a hidden life with little distraction from God, while having both of these qualities, it still has a very balanced life with fun, active recreations, time for exercise, lots of time for spiritual reading, enough time to sleep and little gaps in the schedule here and there so you don't feel like you are always rushing. The sisters are energetic, joyful, and welcoming. They are also very knowledgeable and take the intellectual side of religious life very seriously while keeping the main focus on prayer. I also especially love the devotion to the rosary as it is practiced in this monastery.

It is Jesus who brought me here. And it is only by his mercy and grace that I remain here. The life of the Abbey is most attractive as such. The Devil, that liar, does not want me to be in the monastery. And so, he makes the world seem to glitter before my eyes. He says to me, "Go, experience life, have a good time." And I, being a sensate creature, am attracted to living a life of feelings. But the interior life is interior, not exterior. And this world is passing away. For me, to live in Truth, is to live the monastic life. Every day the choice is set before me; Will you live in Truth; will you choose Life? Or will you choose to live in fantasy, will you choose Death? In the monastery, truth is more accessible than it is in the world. Jesus is Truth and Life. Truth and reality rarely feel good and are even less attractive. The truth is, that Jesus invited me to serve, and the reality of service is one of actual sacrifice. Which means the Truth is the cross? Here, the cross is presented to me in very ordinary ways, and will I embrace it, kiss it? can I accept the ordinariness of the cross, this reality? Or will I say, "Jesus, give me a show, give me signs as wonders!" Lord Jesus, increase my faith, and give me a double portion of your spirit."

It was witnessing the personal devotion and fidelity that the legionary priests have to their prayer life and relationships with God. I saw how this holiness mandated into their ministry their interactions with others, myself included.

It's charism and mission

It's internationality and emphasis on Justice

It's mission and apostolic work, especially its focus on social justice.

It's orthodoxy and faithfulness to the Church, Eucharistic Adoration/prayer, it's missionary spirit, and it's charism that includes families and laity

It's radical surrender to the will of God. No half-measure. Its wholeheartedness.

Jesus has given such a clear and beautiful invitation as I have met Him and grown in love of Him in the Blessed Sacrament, and when I visited my religious institute for the first time, the charism matched the call that the Holy Spirit has written in my heart. These women are faithful and they give God permission - living in Christ in this way is what most attracted me

Knowing I was being called by God there. Notable aspects included balance of contemplative and active life, zeal for truth and salvation of souls + charity among sisters.

Knowing the brothers, and their commitment to sanctity while acknowledging their humanity. Their commitment to prayer, the gospel, and the church.

Many things, but the biggest 3 things, in order of importance are: 1.) Their charism of forming apostles to transform culture. All centered around evangelizing. 2.) The true sense of brotherhood among the members and the authentic charity that shone forth. 3.) The spirituality, centered completely in Christ - the focus on developing a personal relationship with him. 5

Mercy Charism, fostering the growth of the individual and using their gifts (especially intellectual)

Mission- vitality, urgency, spirit, rigor, history, focus mission, mission, mission, mission, mission, mission, mission, mission!

Mission, spirituality, vitality, size, and scope

My grandmother was (name) and catechized me; I was interested in active communities, but after 7 years of rejection from contemplative monastic communities, I settled for an active community that prioritized prayer/spiritual growth.

Orthodox practice of the Catholic faith and ministry in healthcare

Orthodoxy, sacred music, their joy, the habit, their history, love of the Truth, monastic observances, formation, zeal for holiness not a new order.

Perceptual Adoration the community was both active and contemplative the faithfulness of the community to the church the joy found in the members of the community how normal the sisters seemed

Poverty and prayer

Prayer and penance

Prayer and work

Radical Active and Radical contemplative life - Daily Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharistic Adoration - Daily Mass and meditations - Commitment and joy in requirement of the Habit - Joy! - Living radical poverty on 100% Divine Providence - The charism, community and friendships - The holiness and authenticity of the members - Devotion to the Sacred Heart, Mary, and the Eucharist

Reverent attention to the liturgy, and a large cohort of young, vibrant vocations in the house.

Service, Social Justice, Shared Living

Since the 8th grade I have attended a high school boarding school seminary for boys discerning the call to religious life in the Legion. So, I lived with about 9 Legionary priests and brothers from 8th to 12th grade, and have been steeped in exactly the Legions spirituality. Because of this many of the things in this survey did not apply to me, and I haven't given thought to many of the things mentioned, because I've just gotten used to doing things like a Legionary. By far the greatest factor attracting me to the Legion was God's call, pure and simple. The next greatest was the charity and unity between all Legionaries. Finally, only started to appreciate other aspects like prayer life, spirituality, etc. since I have become a novice.

St. Francis' devotion to the Gospel

That they are authentic

The ability to enter into religious life again after first being information with the (name of the religious institute) for 2.5 years (August 2013 - January 2016). I had sought to re-enter religious life after feeling the voice of God telling me in the fall of 2016 to try again. After withdrawing from, the Augustinians, being able to return to school to complete by BA degree education and being employed. I was able to re-discern with an Order that followed the Rule of (name), live in an Order which had a strong focus of fraternal community, and would allow me to someday become a servant of the Church. This all led to my discernment application, admission, and eventual entrance as of this September 2019 with the (name of the religious institute).

The charism and influence in my parish

The charism and mission of the founder.

The charism and spirituality

The Charism and the community living of the institute.

The charism and way of life of the community matched well the desires I had in wanting to give myself totally to the Lord. Their following the Church's tradition + expectation for religious was essential (prayer at center, wearing habit, daily mass+ orthodox liturgy, etc.)

The charism of the founder and of the society as well as the example of heroic virtue of the saints of the society.

The charism of the order

The Charism of Unity and Truth

The charism spoke to the depths of my heart and the love of Jesus I found in the Eucharist

The charity of the sisters, Sacred Heart devotion, prayer life centered on Jesus in the Eucharist, devotion to Mary

The charity of those in the institute, and their love and devotion to the faith and the Church. Also, lifestyle.

The Charism: to become images of Christ in the World through a total gift of self so as to be able to form apostles in the Church and spread Christ's Kingdom in the World.

The commitment to social justice and feminist approach to faith and community.

The community

The community life of prayer, ministry, and recreation. The young age of the sisters and their orthodox traditions (wearing the habit), Praise and worship

The community life.

The community, charism, spirituality, prayer life, fidelity to the Church, and ministry.

The community...prayer life, welcoming spirit, commitment to God and to one another.

The Community's orthodoxy and joy in living the life. The charism of the institute and compatibility with my own spirituality.

The Cross has been an important part of my spirituality since I was very little. To learn that there's a group of women who, without rejecting their identity as women, can give themselves fully to abiding at the foot of the Cross, uniting their prayers, works, joys, and sufferings to Christ, and interceding for the whole world at a present-day Calvary--how could I say No to pursuing my Jesus in that radical way?

The desire to do evangelization and to commit my life to the service of God attracted me to my religious institute.

The desire to give myself wholeheartedly to God in all that I am and to use fully all of the gifts that He's given me

The devotion to the Eucharist and Mary combined with Dominican spirituality.

The example of the priests

The fidelity of the Order to the Church and the reverence given to the Sacramental life and tradition of the liturgy.

The focus the interior life and helping others pray, in the context of community life and apostolate.

The Franciscan legacy

The fundamental mission of the (name): to teach and to preach the Gospel Message.

The History, the Size, the Charism, the Presence

The institutes fidelity to the church, the wearing of the habit at all times, fidelity to the people of our times, and the mission of the order.

The joy and holiness of the Sisters was what first attracted me to my community. They were such witnesses to Christ and the Church and I was very drawn to that.

The joy of the sisters and dedication to Jesus Christ and his church; their charism of perpetual adoration.

The joy of the sisters and the number of young sisters there. Also, a sense that the Holy Spirit was directing me there.

The joy, wisdom, and contemplative spirit I saw among the Sisters. Their commitment to bring Christ's light to the world and to be led by the Spirit. Our Dominican charism "to contemplate the truth and share the fruits of our contemplation," as well as the four pillars of prayer, study, community, and ministry. Our mission to be peace, build peace, and preach peace. I could see that our congregation has women entering regularly from diverse cultural backgrounds and living in multicultural, intergenerational communities.

The liturgy and prayer life were beautiful; The silence and monastic and contemplative aspects of the order; the commitment to tradition, especially their fidelity to the teachings of the church and to the order as St. Dominic envisioned it; Their whole life revolving around prayer and the commitment of each individual sister to grow in holiness.

The Lord called, and I answered. It was while praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament here in the Abbey Church that I felt a profound peace and knowledge that this was where the Lord wanted me. It took about 8 years after that moment for me to come to the point of seeing why it was such a good place for me, why it made sense, and to then ask to enter. I saw a strong monastic community dedicated to the worship of God, and dedicated to its mission of college education. There is stability of life and dedication to contemplation, but also the active ministry of the college. There are over 5 young vocations, which from the outside told me it was a healthy community, and once meeting the men I could see myself living with them. The Liturgy is simple but solemn, always carried out with planning and care, and more or less according to the rubrics; it is not focused on self-creativity but rather a fitting and beautiful communal worship of our Lord and God. The monks told me that they were faithful to the Church and Church Teaching and I could see this was true. The desire to teach at the college level was also a clear factor, and even more so was the realization that the call I have felt from an early age to the priesthood has ample room to be answered here if the Lord wills it. Maybe one of the most important points was that the community is balanced; there is no one ideology or political agenda

running through it - I have seen the danger of communities that are focused not on Christ alone but also on a certain ideology, and there is a great danger to real growth and freedom in Christ in such a setting. People would say that I am conservative, and this monastery has a mix of people that could fall on the conservative side or liberal side and it is this exact mix which was key for me; it is here that I can rub shoulders with others and truly grow in the Lord and in charity to others and not simply be fitted into a certain mold and pop out the other side 'perfect'. It is

The love that each of the sisters learn for our fond and this Holy Church, and the great zeal for the truth and the life of prayers. Also, the balance between contemplative and active life.

The mission and charism of the institute

The mission and giving my life fully to Christ. As well as the sense of an invitation from Christ to give him everything.

The mission of the order of education of the Catholic and the way the men were living out their vocation and the way they showed such hope within the Catholic Church.

The mission, the charism, and the community life.

the mission/charism of the order. If the Dominicans were not preaching I would not have looked into them. Also, the chanting of the psalms. I love to chant the psalms.

The missionary spirit and intercultural aspect of my religious institute.

The missionary works our community does in the United States and around the world. The devotion to loving Our Lady and growing in relationship with Jesus as she does. The happiness of other members I knew before I entered.

The monastery did wear a habit at all times, they relied completely on divine providence, and they hold firm in traditional Catholic Theology. Most of all it was the joy of the Sisters. They trust in the Lord with all their needs, and even though they're cloistered, they care so much for the community around and outside the monastery, and vice versa, their devotion to their vow of poverty, in which they don't even consider their bodies to be their own, but a gift from God, is something I want to learn to embrace.

The opportunity to give love in a deeper way, to give my all to everyone for the love of God.

The physical and spiritual beauty that radiated from the mission and members of the congregation, and ultimately from the Lord Himself. That was just so evident upon first meeting the sisters and continued/continues to abound more and more each day.

The prayer life, orthodoxy in the Catholic faith, beautiful reverent liturgy, teaching apostates, and peaceful atmosphere of the abbey.

The selflessness of the members and the charism.

The sense of welcome and patience with me learning English; the prayer life; the ministries and mission of the Congregation; the patience and love which I experienced.

The simplicity of my brothers and the life of prayer.

The simplicity, joy, fervent love for Jesus and Mary, missionary spirit, poverty, sitting and kneeling on the ground instead of pews or chairs.

The sisters hold a great joy when I spent time with them and were a great example of faithfully having their religious life even amidst the schedule of college campus ministry and a parish school.

The sisters' joy, fidelity, and clear love of the Lord in community and radiating out into their ministry. Their authentic witness to relationship with Christ in consecrated life and their faithfulness to bringing his truth and love to all. Their excitement and gratitude for new vocations.

The sisters, their love for the Lord and our foundress

The spirituality and its Christ centeredness along with the person to person approach in the apostate.

The spirituality and language used to describe God.

The spirituality and life of the founder

The spirituality and the balance of the life, as well as the silence, cloister area, etc. The contemplative aspect.

The spirituality of the founder, the witness of a particular priest in the congregation, and the opportunity to be involved in a variety of ministries.

The spirituality, and way of St. Francis of Assisi as a life of brotherhood, service to the poor and a distinct emphasis on contemplation.

The unity with God, present in the Holy Eucharist in the center of all the humans of the institute

Their authentic care and gentleman-lines. The seemingly perfect formation and their mission for the world.

Their charism

Their faithfulness to the magisterium of the Catholic church and her teachings, they wear the habit

Their fidelity to Religious Life and the Magisterium (e.g. wearing the habit all the time) 2. Prayer life - mass, Eucharistic Adoration, Liturgy of the Hours, are non-negotiable. They were a must for me. The Sisters emphasized that prayer is FIRST, and service comes second as an outpouring from prayer. 3. Their JOY! They clearly personally knew and were in love with Jesus

as His brides in discernment, Eucharistic Adoration was crucial, especially access to the 24/7 Adoration Chapels. The more time you spend with Him, the more He can speak to your heart and invite you to His will for you.

Their joy rooted in the Eucharist and Mary.

Their joy, that they are educated to a high degree and that they have an intense community life.

Their ministries.

Their patient and structured approach to formation and the example of their members, particularly those I interacted with during my undergraduate.

Their spirituality, focused on proper discernment of spirits and interior movements, as well as the primary apostolates being schools and missionary work.

Their way of living

There are many small things that attracted me to my religious institution: wearing the habit, strong community life, devotions to our Blessed Mother and the Holy Eucharist, the teaching apostolic, the witness of the joyful and fully alert sisters, the monastic and apostolic aspects of the life, the virtues of saint Dominic, and so much more! However, above all what most attracted me to this Order was the Holy Spirit's whisper in my heart saying, "This is it!" I will follow whenever the Lord leads me.

Thing that most attracted me to my religious institute is the Spirit and ministry.

Throughout my search for my vocation, I was seeking ways I could be involved in mainly three things that I felt essential to my own personal, holistic growth and health. These were: fraternity, strong sense of spiritual life/founded in prayer, and ministry to others outside our walls of the monastery, so to speak. I felt that with the (name of the religious institute), I would receive formation and be adequately challenged in all these three areas of development, to cap it all off, this was confirmed for me upon my first visit to our monastery in (name of the location); I immediately felt the peace, as if I were coming back home, even though I had actually never even visited or seen pictures of it before. The brothers were very welcoming as well.

Total dedication to Jesus Christ as Bridegroom and selfless service to the dignity of every person from conception to natural death.

Trappist austere, simple, prayer

Values and ideals. Ministry too

What attracted me most to my religious institute was the Charisma and Lifestyle of the order. In addition, the genuineness of the sisters' love for the Lord was one of the defining factors in my discernment. I just wanted to love God with all my heart and I felt that the sister was striving to do the same. The Charisma was so beautiful and I felt as God was calling me to love in that way too. Also, their lifestyle was a perfect fit for me. It was not too intense but focused on simplicity

and healthy balance. Overall, I love my community and couldn't say enough good things about the community God has blessed us with.

What most attracted me to my religious institute was the joyful witness of its members.

What most attracted me to the (name of the religious institute) was their charism - part of which is to contemplate God and give to others the fruits of that contemplation. To have a close friendship with Christ and to be able to share that love with others is one of the aspects of their charism which attracted me the most.

What most attracted me to the (name of the religious institute) witnessing the way they knew and talked about our Lord. I wanted to know him and respond with same joy and love they did. The way they live the life and pray just fit very naturally to what I desired.

What most attracted me to the (name of the religious institute) was the sense of peace. Also, the beauty of the wilderness, and most of all was the community spirit. All the sisters are always hospitable and cheerful.

What most attracted me to this religious institute was its faithfulness to the Magisterium of the Church and fidelity to the habit appropriate to the Order as well as the sister's joy, charity, and peace. Furthermore, the thorough screening process assured me that the sisters were seriously considering my vocation to this Monastery and that I truly had a vocation to the Religious Life and to this Monastery.

What most attracted me was the religious institute's mission, focus on social justice, living simply, and the sister's personalities (joyful, fun, loving).

Witnessing the holiness and joy of the sisters Seeing the spiritual fruitfulness of the charism in responding to the present needs of our culture Learning about the community's way of life, particularly their contemplative-active vocation and their sense of identity as consecrated women; their primary focus on the importance of prayer and union with Jesus, both personally and as a community, and their humility and reliance on God in the apostolate Witnessing how they live their community life and how they treat everyone with reverence, especially their reverence of my freedom during the discernment process

Working with the novices who were passionate about what they were doing, working directly with immigrants from Central America.

Working with the poor and all those whose condition cries most in the society.

**Q. 144: What do you find most challenging about religious life?**

The following is a presentation of the responses of new entrants on what they find challenging about religious life. Slight editing has been done. Their responses include:

A recognition that it is dying and the spiritual tepidity of the culture.

Adapting to another culture as I go to do mission in another country.

Adapting to the monastic life

Adjusting to a new way of living out friendships, detachment with relationships

Adjusting to the shift in relationship with my family and friends from home; not being able to communicate as frequently/by the same means as before entrance

After 3 months of postulancy, these are some challenges at this early stage of my religious life: Adjusting to the horarium and new city/culture Balancing/absorbing all that is new; relationships with sisters, prayer life, duties, classes etc.

Balancing community time and my own time

Being away from family and limited contact with them.

Being held accountable by the Community to be who I truly am and to be the best version of myself.

Celibacy and it's rigorous nature

Celibacy, far more than any other challenges.

Commitment to daily prayer, cooperation with others, finding the time to focus on God

community

Community life

Community Life

community life

Community Life

Community life is a challenge, but the most challenging aspect of living in a Jesuit community is acknowledging the fact that I am not the center all of the time and others of the community are of equal importance and value.

Community life/formation

community living because I am living with people of a diversity of cultures and people from different generations.

Dealing with my own concupiscence (especially with regards to obedience).

Denouncing my will

Determining areas where I need to grow as compared to areas where the community falls short, and keeping sight of God's will for me in the midst of it.

Dying to self. Denying my own desires and learning how to live for Christ (and Him in others) is a daily challenge.

Early mornings with no coffee.

Facing the unknown as the larger active community becomes smaller due to aging and natural death.

Finding a way to be patient and compassionate to my confreres when they do something I wouldn't choose to do has been the most challenging thing so far.

For me the most challenging thing is describing to others, especially non-Catholics, what my experience is and why I have chosen this path of life.

Getting along with members of the community.

getting up at 5 am.

Having a steady call home to friends and family.

Having no possessions and belonging in a very public way to an institutional Church that I so often vehemently disagree with.

Having to think a lot more about how I am presenting myself and working on my weaknesses so that I can represent the Church better.

Home sick, and a lot to study.

How different we are

Humility.

I find early rising the most consistently challenging. It takes time to adjust.

I find it hard to give up many things, personally. My car, my clothes (namely blue jeans), my apartment, my own schedule, my own way of doing this or that... It is difficult because it is supposed to be. I didn't come because I thought it'd be easy. Jesus does make it easy because

he is the reason we do these things. The enemy (whom I find difficult) suggests I need this or that by suggesting many alternatives to this life. He is difficult to catch these as temptations... it is difficult to say... "no even though a night at home eating ice-cream and watching a movie is what I want right now. No... I give this up for you, Jesus. I invite you to into my life as I fear not having this my way or to my liking." This prayer sums it up... basically to embrace poverty, chastity and obedience is the most counter-cultural thing one can do right now. It is very hard because even through I've worked many years not to let a 'culture of death' affect me... I am affected! We are all affected by the sin.

I find the growing distance between myself and my family, who do not support my life in a religious community, to be the most challenging aspect of living out this vocation.

I so often fall short of living out our call to holiness; the public witness that is part of religious life raises the stakes. I am adjusting to living in a community of six adult women after about a decade of living in student housing or on my own -- coordinating schedules, planning ahead, more noise and activity around the house.

I think the most challenging thing for me, which is also a gift, is how different religious life is to the world. I'm relearning how to live which can be heart at times but also beautiful. It stretches you and you feel like your faults and failures are on display but then you realize that poverty is a key to growing in holiness and union with Jesus. It is also hard because many family members and friends don't understand what I'm doing and balancing these relationships in their new form can be challenging.

In general, we are in a great need of vocations and to improve on the manner in which we conduct an awareness to vocations.

It has been challenging, but beautiful, to discover the depth of my poverty and from that to depend wholly on Jesus. Religious life inherently brings me to recognize these things.

#### Itinerancy

Knowing that we will be "rewriting the story of religious life" as our numbers decrease. Although it is a challenge, I'm also filled with great hope for the future.

lack of freedom regarding personal travels

Lack of organization.

Lack of unity on some issues of personal importance with other men in formation, lack of unity/consistency among older members in community regarding Catholic orthodoxy.

#### Language

Learning more each day that my time is not my own.

Learning to be patient with myself as I grow to who God is calling me to be.

Leave everything my work my friends

Leaving myself to Gods divine will

living in community

Living with 20 other men.

Living with 22 other people with their preferences and sensibilities can wear on the nerves sometimes...

Living with others.

Loss of independence

Major life shift, relinquishing my independence & freedom to do what I want, when I wanted.

Moving from one state to another.

My shyness and slowness to learn new things.

Myself

Navigating community life with so many different personalities can be difficult at times.

Not being able to see/talk to family often

Novice life is kind of all over the place right now with different experiments - lots of stable instability, hard to really get into a rhythm knowing that you're going to be elsewhere in a few weeks

Obedience

Obedience

Obedience

Obedience and humility and the realization that I have to change. Persevering in everyday community life.

Obedience is the most painful part for me right now. There are constantly new opportunities to exercise the virtue in preparation for vows--and not all of them are pleasant! But nothing I'm ever asked to do is sinful or bad for me; it's just another opportunity to say Yes to the Lord Who has given me everything.

Obviously, community living is always going to be hard at times, but I think the biggest thing has been realizing that especially in terms of ministry, this life isn't all about me and about what changes I can enact, rather about what God wants to do through me.

## Patience and trust in the Lord

Perhaps always getting along with other personalities, although this is not a major challenge and is currently a minimal obstacle. We all get along fairly well.

perhaps the schedule, which is a major component and sometimes is wonderful, but often proves to be challenging. Before religious life, prayer was "nice" to get in amongst the work day and week. Now it is the reason for my rising and that which centers my whole day. Before religious life I had more independence to schedule my day how I pleased, but now I go to prayer, or meals, or whatever at the assigned time regardless if I want to or not, if I'm tired or not, excited or not, or would prefer it at another time. So, the submission to the will of the superior and schedule along with the consistent prayer are most challenging at the present moment. And don't get me wrong, prayer is also one of the best things--but to contrast it again with my prior life, there was a certain mentality of "balancing the scales" or "good enough" where I would tell myself "I prayed a holy half hour yesterday, I can take a day off. Most working men in their 20s aren't praying at all, so I'm good". Where now each day is its own. What I prayed, how much I prayed, how long mass may have lasted, doesn't count for the next day. And being only 3 months into religious life the task of prayer can still be burdensome at times and requires a certain spiritual "fitness" that I am still getting in shape for.

## Poverty

Probably the most challenging thing in religious life thus far is also one of the greatest joys; community life brings your own faults and imperfections to the forefront and forces you to face them and work on them, which is so humanly uncomfortable, but also so necessary and good for the life of the soul.

Separation from family.

Some doubts.

Some members in the community is sometimes hard to get along with, but also the schedule of religious life.

Staying always vigilant against sins in myself and the community.

Structures; some things are a bit anachronistic; being a junior in the system after living life as a professional and independent woman

## Studies

Surrendering to God's will, which is applicable to any Vocation. Each has its joys and hardships, but being where I know God has invited me to be fills me with an abundance of peace, freedom and JOY!

Telling people that I'm in formation now, and also communicating with home (I'm not restricted in how often I get to write/talk to/visit with my family, but I still find it difficult to talk to them about what I am doing day-to-day.)

The amount of information received before entering

The aspect of loneliness and being away from family and friends.

The beautiful challenge of opening every part of my being and learning to surrender it to the Lord

The call to continual personal growth!

The daily laying down of one's life and self-denial in order to obtain life more fully

The generational differences in opinion about observing church discipline and the role of ecclesiastical tradition.

The interaction with a whole new and different reality, for me it is the first time interacting everyday with people living in difficult situations.

The lack of prayer and the lack of encouragement to pray as a community. Much prayer is done individually on our own and in private. There is only an occasional evening Liturgy of the Hours, Mon-Fri (weekday recital is not consistent). They tend to watch more television and play cards and do other activities more frequently as a community than pray. The discrepancies of ages among those in formation and those in charge of us. There's a huge age gap! Most of our sisters are 75+ and very impatient and hostile toward new comers. There's a huge need for better communication and listening and better clarification/communication of expectations. Expectations must be patiently and clearly taught and explained, instead of huffing and puffing, being rude, hostile or aggressive, raising voices, shaking or pointing fingers in someone's face and rolling eyes.

The most challenge is to live in a community life.

The most challenging are: 1) Some final professed members, are not having a proper capability to lead a person who was brought up in another culture. 2) My group mate is white, who wants to be general superior while in the stage of candidacy, practice her value of having perfectionism, and always right, have a strong desire to control over others.

The most challenging has been growing in faith and making personal changes to my thinking and way of relating to others.

The sacrifice of getting married and having my own "regular" family and husband, yet that is also the reason why I am here...because I felt called by Jesus to marry HIM and to be a spiritual mother to his (and therefore my) children

The Sisters have periods of silence throughout the day. Since I just entered a little over one month ago, I find keeping silence a bit of a challenge.

The transition from the culture of the world into the culture of God's grace and the death to old habits and fostering new better ones has been the most challenging but also where the greatest transformation and joys have occurred.

the transition to formation

There can be a sense of bureaucracy and many layers of "permissions" in order to get something accomplished. - The worry about having to pay off personal and educational debt while no longer making a salary, and the contribution or participation of the religious institute may not be assured. - The compromises to health for the common good of the community, for example the burden it puts onto the community if I might have a specialized diet for health reasons might change the meal options for the entire house or it might put on a burden to those preparing meals to make a separate dish to accommodate a need.

There seems to be some degree of denial within many members that there is a need to adapt to the times to attract new members. Members are very independent from one another, and don't seem to be interested in working together to bring in new members to continue the society.

Time management

To find myself identified as a young man in a community of old men with diverse background.

Transitioning from such an independent life to total dependence on God and my community has been very challenging, but Jesus is with me in the valleys.

Trying to remain indifferent.

What I find most challenging about religious life is about living in a diverse community.

What I find most challenging now in religious life, it is how to grow or to mature in such a way that I may preach the Gospel to all peoples without exclusions, yet without losing the roots of our Christian faith as Catholics.

Working through my own personal difficulties and shortcomings while living in community with brothers

Your day/schedule being out of your control while in Formation. Trusting that your discernment is accurate and you really are doing what you are called to do. Comparing yourself to other members who seem to have it more together than you.