

**August 2009**

***Recent Vocations to Religious Life:***

***A Report for the  
National Religious Vocation Conference***

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

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A Report for the  
National Religious Vocation Conference***

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**Recent Vocations to Religious Life:  
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**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from a study of recent vocations to religious life in the United States that was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). The study is based on surveys of religious institutes, surveys and focus groups with recent vocations to religious life, and an examination of selected religious institutes that have been successful in attracting and retaining new members. The study was designed to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the men and women who are coming to religious life today as well as the characteristics and practices of the religious institutes that are successfully attracting new candidates and retaining new members.

The study is based on four major research components:

- A single informant survey of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life
- A survey of those in initial formation or in final vows/commitment since 1993
- Focus groups with those in initial formation or in final vows/commitment since 1993
- Examination of the characteristics and practices of selected religious institutes

For the first phase of the study, CARA surveyed religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. Using mailing lists provided by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), CARA sent a questionnaire to each major superior with a cover letter from Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, Executive Director of NRVC, and a return envelope addressed to CARA. The cover letter and survey included instructions to respond only for the governance unit (e.g., congregation or province) for which the superior was responsible and, for international institutes or societies, to respond only for members who entered and are based in the United States.

CARA also sent questionnaires and cover letters to superiors of monasteries of contemplative nuns (who do not belong to either LCWR or CMSWR) as well as to superiors of new or emerging communities of consecrated life using mailing lists that CARA compiled for

previous research. The list of emerging communities included some that are public associations of the faithful that are in the process of seeking canonical status as a religious institute or society of apostolic life.

Throughout the report, the term “religious institute” is used for religious institutes, societies of apostolic life, and public associations of the faithful that are seeking canonical status as a religious institute or society of apostolic life.

CARA mailed surveys to a total of 976 entities in spring 2008 and then conducted extensive follow-up by mail, e-mail, telephone, and FAX throughout summer and fall 2008 to achieve a high response rate. CARA received completed responses from 591 religious institutes for a response rate of 60 percent. However, closer examination of the lists and the non-respondents revealed that some of the congregations and provinces on the original lists had merged with others during the course of the research. Other entities on the lists are neither provinces nor congregations, but regions or houses that do not have formation/incorporation in the United States and should not have been included in the survey. Still others, particularly among the contemplative monasteries and the emerging communities, had apparently ceased to exist.<sup>1</sup>

CARA estimates that the total number of units (congregations, provinces, monasteries) in the United States is fewer than 900, which would result in a response rate of approximately 66 percent. However, the responding entities account for 62,250 men and women religious, or well over 80 percent of all women and men religious in the United States. Many of the institutes or other entities that did not respond appear to be either small, mostly contemplative, communities that may not have had anyone in initial formation for some time, or those who are still in the process of becoming institutes of consecrated life.

This initial survey was designed to gather statistics about the membership in the institute, including the numbers in initial formation or incorporation; basic information about vocation promotion and formation in the institute; and basic data about the institute’s ministry, community life, community prayer, and practice regarding the wearing of a religious habit. In addition, respondents were asked to provide the names and contact information for those in initial formation as well as those who had professed final or perpetual vows or commitment since 1993. This list served as the mailing list for the survey of new members described below.

The second phase of the research consisted of a survey of “new members,” that is, current candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows or commitment as well as those who had professed final vows or commitment since 1993. The questionnaires were mailed in fall

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<sup>1</sup> “Reconfiguration” among religious institutes proved to be one of the most challenging issues for calculating a response rate as well as for obtaining historical information about new membership. Responses to questions about reconfiguration in the survey revealed that 19 percent of the respondents were in the process of reconfiguring at the time the survey was conducted in 2008 and another 16 percent had reconfigured since 1990. The number of “units” changed while the survey was being conducted.

2008 and winter 2009 to 3,965 new members, again with a cover letter from Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, and a return envelope addressed to CARA. Some 40 surveys were returned as undeliverable. In addition, closer examination of both responses and non-responses revealed that at least 45 returned surveys are from transfers rather than new members as defined by the study and at least 26 other respondents were formed and are based outside the United States and thus beyond the parameters of the study. When these are removed from the sample, CARA received a total of 1,568 usable responses from new members for a response rate of at least 40 percent.

The survey of new members was designed to identify what attracted these candidates and new members to religious life and to their particular religious institute or society; what they found helpful in their discernment process; what their attitudes and preferences are regarding community life, prayer, ministry, and the wearing of a religious habit; and what sustains and challenges them in religious life. The survey also asked about their background characteristics as well as their experience before entering religious life. In addition, the survey included a question asking the respondent if he or she would be willing to participate in a focus group.

The third and fourth phases of the research, which included focus groups with new members and closer examination of selected institutes, were conducted during spring and summer 2009. CARA conducted three focus groups with new members in Chicago, San Antonio, and Washington, DC. These sites were selected because of the relatively large concentration of new members in each of these areas. Participants were selected from among the survey respondents who indicated that they would be willing to participate in a focus group.

The focus groups explored issues similar to those examined in the survey. Specifically, they were designed to gather insights from newer members about what attracts, sustains, and challenges them in religious life. The discussions were also directed toward understanding the attitudes and experiences of new members and especially toward identifying “best practices” for vocation and formation ministry that would assist men and women in discerning and responding to a call to religious life. A list of the religious institutes of the new members who participated in the focus groups is included in the introduction to the report.

During the final phase of the research, CARA examined selected institutes that have experienced some success in attracting and retaining new members in recent years. At a minimum, this examination included an interview with the vocation director and a review of vocation promotion materials and practices. In most cases, the examination also included interviews with the novice director and/or other formation directors. In a few cases, it included interviews with leadership and interviews or focus groups with new members.

It is important to note that although each of these institutes has enjoyed some success in attracting and retaining vocations, these institutes do not necessarily have the highest numbers of new members. They were selected to represent different types of institutes and to help identify best practices in vocation promotion and retention. A list of the religious institutes that were included in this part of the study can be found in the introduction to this report.

## **Major Findings**

### ***Religious Life Today***

- There is a great deal of variety and diversity in religious life today not only in terms of the spirituality, charism, and mission of religious institutes but also in terms of their size, composition, and presence of new members. Although most religious institutes in the United States are experiencing aging membership, diminishing numbers, and few, if any, new vocations, some continue to attract new members and a few are experiencing significant growth.
- The study identified at least 2,630 men and women in initial formation and nearly 4,000 who are either in initial formation or who had professed final vows within the previous 15 years. The actual number of new members is likely even higher given that some religious institutes did not respond to the survey and/or did not provide information about members who had professed final vows since 1993. The findings from the surveys, and especially those from the focus groups and interviews with new members, confirm that there are still significant numbers of men and women who are responding to a call to religious life and are hopeful about its future.
- Three-fourths of institutes of men (78 percent) and two-thirds of institutes of women (66 percent) have at least one person currently in initial formation (candidate or postulant, novice, or temporary professed). However, almost half of the institutes that have someone in initial formation have no more than one or two. About 20 percent of the responding institutes currently have more than five people in initial formation. Some of these are institutes that recently merged, bringing together several congregations or provinces that separately had no one or only a few in formation.
- Overall, religious are an aging population. Three in four finally professed men (75 percent) and more than nine in ten finally professed women (91 percent) are age 60 and over in 2009. Among both men and women, a majority of those under the age of 60 are in their 50s. While this presents some challenges for new members, especially those who are younger, it has not deterred those who entered from doing so.

### ***Characteristics of New Members***

- Compared to men and women religious in the last century, those coming to religious life today are much more diverse in terms of their age, racial and ethnic background, and life experience. Many come with considerable education as well as ministry and work experience. The diversity among new members presents a number of challenges for formation as well as for life and ministry in many religious institutes.

- According to the survey of new members, the average age of entrance is 30 for men (median 27) and 32 for women (median 29). However, there is a ten-year gap in average and median entrance age between women in LCWR institutes and women in CMSWR institutes. According to the survey of religious institutes, more than half of the women in initial formation in LCWR institutes (56 percent) are age 40 and older, compared to 15 percent in CMSWR institutes.
- Compared to finally professed members, those in initial formation are more likely to come from non-Caucasian/white/Anglo backgrounds: 21 percent are Hispanic/Latino(a), 14 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 6 percent are African/African American. About 58 percent are Caucasian/white, compared to about 94 percent of finally professed members.
- The survey of new members found that about nine in ten were raised Catholic and most (73 percent) attended a Catholic school for at least part of their education. About half attended parish-based religious education. One in seven (14 percent) new members from the Millennial Generation (born since 1982) was home-schooled for at least some of their education.
- Seventy percent of new members had at least a bachelor's degree before they entered. More than nine in ten were employed, usually in a full-time position, and about seven in ten were engaged in ministry, one-third on a full-time basis and about six in ten on a volunteer basis. Many were also involved in various parish ministries and/or other volunteer work.
- More than two-thirds (68 percent) of the new members first considered religious life by the time they were 21, with a little more than half (53 percent) doing so by the time they were 18. Female respondents are a little more likely than male respondents to have thought about a religious vocation at a young age, that is, before the age of 14 (27 percent compared to 19 percent). Men were a little more likely to first consider religious life when they were college-age, that is, between the ages of 18 and 21 (28 percent of men compared to 20 percent of women).

### ***Attraction to Religious Life and to a Particular Religious Institute***

- New members are drawn to *religious life* primarily by a sense of call and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth. More than three-fourths (78 percent) say they were attracted “very much” by the former and almost as many (73 percent) say they were attracted “very much” by the latter. More than anything else, they were attracted to their particular *religious institute* by the example of its members, and especially by their sense of joy,

their down to earth nature, and their commitment and zeal. Some 85 percent say the example of members attracted them “very much.”

- To only a slightly lesser degree, most new members also say they were attracted to *religious life* by a desire to be of service and a desire to be part of a community. They were attracted to their particular *religious institute* by its spirituality, community life, and prayer life. Although the ministries of the institute are also important to most new members, they are less important than spirituality, prayer, community, and lifestyle. Questions about ministry, especially the possibility of a variety of ministries, tend to be more important to men than to women among new members.
- Younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to say they were attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church and to their particular institute by its fidelity to the Church. Many also report that their decision to enter their institute was influenced by its practice regarding a religious habit. Significant generational gaps, especially between the Millennial Generation (born in 1982 or later) and the Vatican II Generation (born between 1943 and 1960), are evident throughout the study on questions involving the Church and the habit. Differences between the two generations also extend to questions about community life as well as styles and types of prayer.
- Newer members in religious life first became acquainted with their religious institutes in many different ways. The most common experience was in an institution, such as a school, where the members served. Other relatively common ways of becoming acquainted with the institute include through the recommendation of a friend or advisor, through working with a member of the institute, through a friend in the institute, and through print or online promotional materials.
- Men are more likely than women to report that they first encountered their religious institute in a school or other institution where the members served. Women are more likely than men to indicate that they learned about their institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor.
- Older respondents are somewhat more likely than younger respondents to have met the institute more directly, that is, through working with a member or through a friend in the institute. Younger respondents, especially those in the Millennial Generation, are more likely to have first heard about the institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor or through print or online promotional materials.
- Some younger members did not know a man or woman religious before they sensed a call to religious life. Many of these young religious first learned about their particular institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor, often a priest, and many found out or learned more about their institute online. Direct experience with the

institute and its members through “Come and See” experiences, discernment retreats, and other opportunities to spend time with members are especially important for this age group.

### ***Vocation Promotion and Discernment Programs***

- Many religious institutes offer a variety of vocation promotion and discernment programs. Most responding institutes report that they use print materials, websites, and or/advertising for vocation promotion, and many report that they target specific age groups, most typically high school, college, and young adults, in their vocation promotion and discernment programs.
- The most common discernment programs are “Come and See” experiences (offered by three-fourths of the responding institutes), live-in experiences and discernment retreats (each offered by a little more than half), and mission or ministry experiences (offered by about a third). New members who participated in these and other programs for vocation discernment generally found them to be very helpful in their discernment process.
- Findings from the survey of religious institutes suggest that using various media (especially websites) for vocation promotion, offering programs (especially discernment retreats, “Come and See” experiences, discernment groups, and ministry/mission experiences) for vocation discernment, and targeting certain age groups (especially college-age and young adults) in vocation promotion and discernment efforts are positively correlated with attracting and retaining new members.
- The data also suggest that having a vocation director, especially one who is engaged in vocation ministry on a full-time basis, and a vocation team are positively correlated with attracting and retaining new members. Although most religious institutes (88 percent) report that they have a vocation director, he or she is full-time in less than half of these institutes (46 percent). Findings from the survey of new members and especially the reflections of participants in the interviews and focus groups suggest that the vocation director and other team members can play a critical role in the discernment process.
- The survey of new members found that the age of the respondent is negatively correlated with how helpful they found most of vocation promotion and discernment resources and programs. Thus, the younger the person, the *more* likely he or she is to say that these resources or programs were helpful in the discernment process. This is especially the case with various types of websites; CDs, DVDs, and videos; and print and online promotional materials. Compared to older respondents, younger respondents are much more likely to report that websites, especially the websites of religious institutes, were helpful to them. They are also considerably more likely to report that discernment retreats and “Come and See” experiences were helpful.

- Although various vocation promotion and discernment programs can play an important role in informing potential candidates about religious life, especially in a particular religious institute, the findings suggest that members themselves play the most important role. New members report that it was the example of members that most attracted them to their institute and that meetings with members and communities were the most helpful when they were discerning. Comments from interview and focus group participants provide further support that it was their experience of members and the way they are living religious life that was most influential in the decision to enter their institute.

### ***Encouragement and Support in Discernment and in Religious Life***

- Many new members did not experience a great deal of encouragement from parents, siblings, and other family members when they were first considering a vocation to religious life. Many also did not receive much encouragement from diocesan priests, people in their parish, or people in their school or workplace. Many report that their parents are now much more supportive.
- Most new members report that they received a great deal of encouragement from members of their institute during their discernment process and that members of their institute continue to be their greatest source of encouragement and support in religious life. Most also report high levels of encouragement from those to whom and with whom they minister.
- Compared to older new members, younger new members are more likely to report that they were encouraged by diocesan priests when they were first considering religious life. They are also more likely to report receiving encouragement from diocesan priests in their life and ministry now. Among other respondents, diocesan priests are *least* likely to be cited as a source of “very much” encouragement.

### ***Prayer and Spirituality***

- Many new members identify common prayer as one of the aspects of religious life that most attracted them and that most sustains them now. When asked about the importance of various types of communal prayer, respondents are most likely to name daily Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours as the prayer types that are most important to them.
- Millennial Generation respondents are much more likely than other respondents – especially those from the Vatican II Generation – to say that daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, and other devotional prayers are “very” important to

them. Compared to younger respondents, older respondents place greater importance on faith-sharing and, to a lesser degree, on non-liturgical common prayer.

- These patterns were reiterated in the open-ended responses as well as in interviews and focus groups in which many younger members mention Eucharist, Eucharistic Adoration, the Divine Office, and Marian devotion as especially important to them.

### ***Community Life and Ministry Setting Preferences***

- When asked about their decision to enter their particular religious institute, new members cite the community life in the institute as the most influential factor in their decision (followed closely by the prayer life or prayer styles in the community). Most new members indicate that they want to live, work, and pray with other members of their religious institute, with the last being especially important to them. Responses to an open-ended question about what most attracted them to their religious institute reinforce the importance new members place on this aspect of religious life.
- When asked about various living arrangements, most new members prefer to live in a large (eight or more) or medium-sized (four to seven) community and to live only with other members of their institute. Younger respondents express even stronger preferences for living with members of their institute in large community settings. Findings from the survey of religious institutes suggest that that new membership is negatively correlated with the number of members living alone. That is, the higher the number of members who live alone, the *less* likely an institute is to have new members.
- When asked about various ministry settings, most new members indicate a relatively strong preference for ministry with other members of their institute and ministry sponsored by their institute. Again, these preferences are much stronger among younger new members. Very few new members, especially in the youngest age cohorts, prefer ministry with a non-Catholic or non-religious organization or even one that is Catholic but not sponsored by their institute.

### ***Evaluation of Religious Institutes***

- Most new members give their religious institutes very high ratings (“excellent”) for their commitment to ministry. Most also give high marks to their institutes for their faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth, the opportunities for spiritual and personal growth, and focus on mission. They give their institutes somewhat lower ratings for community life and relationships, opportunities for ongoing formation, and efforts to promote vocations.

- Compared to new members from other generations, those from the Vatican II Generation tend to give their institutes lower ratings on most of the aspects of religious life about which they were asked. Those from the Millennial Generation tend to be the most positive in their assessment of their religious institutes.

### *Practices Regarding the Religious Habit*

- The responses to the open-ended question about what attracted them to their religious institute reveal that having a religious habit was an important factor for a significant number of new members. Interviews with vocation directors also suggest that many who are inquiring into religious life are looking for the possibility of wearing a habit even in those institutes in which few, if any, members regularly do so.
- About two-thirds of the responding new members are in institutes that wear a religious habit. For a little more than half of those new members (55 percent), the habit is required in all or most circumstances and for another 16 percent it is required only at certain times, such as for ministry or prayer. In the focus group discussions, a few of the participants were either strongly in favor or strongly opposed to requiring habits, while some saw the value of wearing a habit or clerical dress in at least some circumstances.
- Among those who report that the habit is optional, 90 percent of men and 27 percent of women say they wear it at least once in a while, with 14 percent of men and 15 percent of women saying they wear it in all or most circumstances. Among those who report that their institute does *not* have a habit, almost half of the men (48 percent) and almost a quarter of the women (23 percent) say they would wear a habit if they had that option.

### *Most Rewarding and Satisfying Aspects of Religious Life*

- When asked what they find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life, new members offered a range of comments about various aspects of religious life. The most frequent responses were about the communal dimension of religious life. Some mention living, praying, and working together while others focus more on the sense of common purpose and being part of something larger than themselves. The frequency of mentions of community life suggests that this is a particularly important aspect of religious life to most new members.
- Many new members also identify some aspect of the spiritual dimension of religious life, such as the sense of following God's call, deepening their relationship with God and with Christ, and/or personal and communal prayer, as providing the greatest sense of reward or satisfaction. In their responses, many new members specifically mention daily

Eucharist, Eucharistic Adoration, the Divine Office, Marian devotion, and other devotional practices as especially meaningful to them.

- Some new members cite the service or outreach dimension of religious life as most rewarding or satisfying for them. Many of these respondents mention ministry, service, or the apostolate while others comment on being a witness to God for others. The fact that comments about ministry, service, or the apostolate are less frequent than those about community and spirituality suggest that these may be less salient to new members.

### *Challenges in and for Religious Life Today*

- In response to questions about what they find most challenging about religious life, new members identified a range of issues and concerns. Some of these are perennial issues in religious life: the challenges of living in community, overcoming personal weaknesses, faithfully living the vows, and balancing personal, communal, and ministerial responsibilities.
- Some of the challenges identified by new members are more unique to this particular time in the history of religious life in the United States: aging and diminishment in their religious institutes, age and experience differences among new members as well as between new and older members in community, the lack of peers in religious life and in their religious institutes, and differences in theology and ecclesiology, often across generational lines. Some see the polarization within the Church and within religious life as the greatest challenge.

### *Hope for the Future*

- Although many of the participants in the focus groups and interviews expressed concerns about the future of religious life and the future of their religious institutes, most remain hopeful. Most acknowledge that the numbers in religious life may continue to decline and that their religious institutes may be different in the future. Nonetheless, they believe religious life will persevere and that the Spirit can and will move in that diminishment. Some already see signs of hope, especially in a younger generation that they believe is bringing a new energy and optimism to religious life.
- Findings from the qualitative research also suggest that new members are especially attracted to religious institutes that themselves are clear and confident about their identity and hopeful about their future. Some new members are disheartened by the apathy, pessimism, and fatalism they see in some of the members of their institutes.

### ***Best Practices in Vocation Ministry***

- The findings from the study suggest a number of “best practices” for vocation promotion. These include instilling a “culture of vocations” and involving membership and leadership in concerted vocation promotion efforts; having a full-time vocation director who is supported by a team and resources; using new media, especially websites and other online presence; offering discernment programs and other opportunities for potential candidates to meet members and learn about the institute; and targeting college students and young adults as well as elementary and high school students to expose them to the possibility of religious life and inform them about the institute.
- Although these practices can have a positive impact on attracting and retaining new members, the research suggests that it is the example of members and the characteristics of the institute that have the most influence on the decision to enter a particular institute. The most successful institutes in terms of attracting and retaining new members at this time are those that follow a more traditional style of religious life in which members live together in community and participate in daily Eucharist, pray the Divine Office, and engage in devotional practices together. They also wear a religious habit, work together in common apostolates, and are explicit about their fidelity to the Church and the teachings of the Magisterium. All of these characteristics are especially attractive to the young people who are entering religious life today.

## Introduction

This report presents findings from a study of recent vocations to religious life in the United States that was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). The study is based on surveys of religious institutes, surveys and focus groups with recent vocations to religious life, and an examination of selected religious institutes that have been relatively successful in attracting and retaining new members. The study was designed to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the men and women who are coming to religious life today as well as the characteristics and practices of the religious institutes that are successfully attracting new candidates and retaining new members.

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<sup>2</sup> "Reconfiguration" among religious institutes proved to be one of the most challenging issues for calculating a response rate as well as for obtaining historical information about new membership. Responses to questions about reconfiguration in the survey revealed that 19 percent of the respondents were in the process of reconfiguring at the time the survey was conducted in 2008 and another 16 percent had reconfigured since 1990. The number of "units" changed while the survey was being conducted.

The survey of new members was designed to identify what attracted these candidates and new members to religious life and to their particular religious institute or society; what they found helpful in their discernment process; what their attitudes and preferences are regarding community life, prayer, ministry, and the wearing of a religious habit; and what sustains and challenges them in religious life. The survey also asked about their background characteristics as well as their experience before entering religious life. In addition, the survey included a question asking the respondent if he or she would be willing to participate in a focus group.

The third and fourth phases of the research, which included focus groups with new members and closer examination of selected institutes, were conducted during spring and summer 2009. CARA conducted three focus groups with new members in Chicago, San Antonio, and Washington, DC. These sites were selected because of the relatively large concentration of new members in each of these areas. Participants were randomly selected from among the survey respondents who indicated that they would be willing to participate in a focus group.

The focus groups explored issues similar to those examined in the survey. Specifically, they were designed to gather insights from newer members about what attracts, sustains, and challenges them in religious life. The discussions were also directed toward understanding the attitudes and experiences of new members and especially toward identifying “best practices” for vocation and formation ministry that would assist men and women in discerning and responding to a call to religious life.

The focus group participants included at least one new member from each of the following religious institutes (with both their popular and formal names as well as the province, where applicable):

- Adrian Dominicans (Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary)
- Benedictine Sisters (Benedictine Sisters of Chicago)
- Conventual Franciscans (Order of Friars Minor Conventual, St. Anthony of Padua Province)
- Daughters of Charity (Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent DePaul, Emmitsburg Province)
- Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist
- IHM Sisters (Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton)
- Jesuits (Society of Jesus, Chicago, Detroit, and New Orleans Provinces)
- Joliet Franciscans (Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate)
- Marianists (Society of Mary, Province of the United States)
- Missionaries of the Precious Blood (Society of the Precious Blood, Cincinnati Province)
- Oblates of St. Francis de Sales (Wilmington-Philadelphia Province)
- Redemptorists (Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, Denver Province)

- Sisters of Mercy (Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, South Central Community)
- Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George
- Xaverian Brothers (Congregation of the Brothers of St. Francis Xavier)

During the final phase of the research, CARA examined selected institutes that have experienced some success in attracting and retaining new members in recent years. At a minimum, this examination included an interview with the vocation director and a review of vocation promotion materials and practices. In most cases, the examination also included interviews with the novice director and/or other formation directors. In a few cases, it included interviews with leadership and interviews or focus groups with new members.

The religious institutes that CARA examined more closely included (again, with both their popular and formal names as well as the province, where applicable):

- Adrian Dominicans (Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary)
- Divine Word Missionaries (Society of the Divine Word, Chicago Province)
- Ferdinand Benedictines (Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana)
- Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
- Holy Cross Fathers (Congregation of Holy Cross, Indiana Province)
- Marianists (Society of Mary, Province of the United States)
- Nashville Dominicans (Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of St. Cecilia)
- Sisters of Christian Charity (Eastern Province)

It is important to note that although each of these institutes has enjoyed some success in attracting and retaining vocations, these institutes do not necessarily have the highest numbers of new members. They were selected to represent different types of institutes and to help identify best practices in vocation promotion and retention.

## **Organization of this Report**

The report is divided into three main parts:

- Part I provides an overview of religious life in the United States based primarily on the survey of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life.
- Part II presents the results of the survey of new members. It also draws on findings from the focus groups and interviews with new members as well as information gleaned from the study of institutes that have been successful in attracting and retaining new members..

- Part III highlights “best practices” for vocation promotion. This part draws from the findings from the two surveys as well as from the interviews and focus groups that were conducted in the last two phases of the research.

Copies of the two survey questionnaires, with the percentage responses for each close-ended item, calculated out of 100 percent, can be found in Appendix I. The percentage of non-respondents to each item, calculated separately out of 100 percent, is also shown on the questionnaires in Appendix I. A complete transcription of the responses to the open-ended questions that were included in the survey of new members can be found in Appendix II. Copies of the protocol that guided the focus group discussions can be found in Appendix III, which also includes a complete transcription of the proceedings from each of the focus groups.

### **Interpreting this Report**

Most of the questions on the survey used four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “only a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “poor,” “fair,” “good,” and “excellent”). Two of the responses in these scales may be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“not at all” and “only a little,” for example) and the other two as relatively more “positive” (“somewhat” and “very much,” for example). Tables summarizing responses to questions that use these scales usually include two columns. The first column presents the percentage for the combined positive side of the scale, that is, the percentage of respondents saying *either* “somewhat” or “very much,” for example. The second column lists the percentage for the most positive category only, that is, the percentage of respondents saying “very much,” for example, since the most positive response sometimes distinguishes important contrasts in level of support. This is especially useful for this survey 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. These comparisons and others may be drawn by referring to the complete percentage responses for each question, listed on the copies of the questionnaires in the Appendix I.

In addition to summarizing the responses to each question for respondents as a whole, the report also compares the responses of religious institutes and new members from several subgroups. Part I examines institutes of men and institutes of women and, in some cases, compares institutes whose leaders are members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and institutes whose leaders are members of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR). Part II examines differences in responses of men and women as well as those from different generations. Throughout the report, the tables and charts that compare differences between and among these various subgroups typically present only the percentages of those who give the most positive response.

## **PART I: Findings about Religious Institutes**

This part of the report presents findings from the survey of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. As noted in the introduction, the survey was also sent to public associations of the faithful that are in the process of seeking canonical status as religious institutes. Throughout the remainder of this report, the term “religious institute” includes these public associations of the faithful as well as the societies of apostolic life that were included in the survey.

### **Types of Institutes and Societies**

The survey included a series of questions to identify the type of religious institute being surveyed. These questions asked about the gender of members, its canonical status, and its character or lifestyle.

#### **Gender of Members**

About one-fourth of the survey responses are from institutes, societies, or associations of men (27 percent) and three-fourths are from institutes, societies, or associations of women (73 percent). Among the men’s groups, 15 percent include only brothers, 3 percent only priests, and 82 percent both brothers and priests.

#### **Canonical Status**

*The vast majority of respondents are religious institutes of pontifical right.*

<b>Canonical Status</b>	
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>	
Religious Institute	91%
Society of Apostolic Life	4
Association of the Faithful	5
Diocesan Right	12%
Pontifical Right	88

## Character or Lifestyle

Respondents were asked to indicate their character or lifestyle, that is, whether they are apostolic, contemplative, monastic, etc. As the table below shows, about seven in ten responding institutes categorize themselves as apostolic, one-fourth as contemplative, and one-fifth as monastic. Evangelical, conventual, and eremitic groups make up much smaller percentages of the respondents.

<b>Character or Lifestyle</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Apostolic	419	71%
Contemplative	156	26
Monastic	120	20
Evangelical	65	11
Conventual	33	6
Eremitic	14	2

It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, some Benedictine monasteries are monastic and apostolic, while others are monastic and contemplative. Some Franciscans identify themselves evangelical, apostolic, and/or conventual while others use only one of these descriptives. Many of the newer groups describe themselves as both apostolic and contemplative and some use three or four of these terms.

When the respondents are categorized into what is conventionally understood as “active” and “contemplative” communities, about 85 percent are active and 15 percent are contemplative.

## Number of Members

A total of 589 of the 591 responding institutes reported their current number of finally professed members as well as the number in each stage of initial formation (candidates or postulants, novices, and temporary professed). The table below shows the mean, median, and modal number and range in each category as well as the total numbers reported by the responding institutes.

Note that the survey used both “vows” and “commitment” as well as both “formation” and “incorporation” to account for differences in terminology among respondents as well as for differences between religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. In the rest of this report, the terms “final” or “perpetual” “profession” or “vows” includes definitive incorporation into a society. “Initial formation” includes candidates or postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows or commitment. It does not include pre-candidates or aspirants who have not yet entered. (The number of pre-candidates and/or aspirants was asked in the survey but is not reported here.)

The table below illustrates that there are considerable variations in the numbers in initial formation and perpetual profession in the responding institutes.

<b>Number in Initial Formation and Perpetual Vows</b>						
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Total</b>	
Candidates/postulants	.8	0	0	0 – 65	475	
Novices	1	0	0	0 – 70	600	
Temporary vows/commitment	2.6	1	0	0 – 197	1,555	
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	101	53	7	0 – 1,111	<u>59,620</u>	
					62,250	

- The average number of finally professed members in responding institutes is 101 and the median number is 53. This reflects the fact that there are many very small institutes and a few very large ones. One-third of the responding institutes have 20 or fewer members; two-thirds have fewer than 100 members. The largest responding institute (the Mid-Atlantic Community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas) has 1,111 finally professed members (at the time of the survey).

- The survey identified at least 2,630 candidates/postulants, novices, and temporary professed members of religious institutes. Note that some institutes did not respond to the survey, so the actual number in initial formation is likely even higher. The mean, median, and modal numbers reflect the fact that a few institutes have relatively large numbers in initial formation while many institutes have none or just a few. Among the responding institutes, 70 percent have no candidates/postulants, 65 percent have no novices, and 43 percent have no one in temporary vows.

The tables below compare the mean, median, modal, and total numbers in initial formation and final vows for men’s institutes and women’s institutes. These figures, which include only those for institutes that responded to the survey, suggest that there are currently more men than women in initial formation, even though women greatly outnumber men among the finally professed.

**Numbers in Initial Formation and Perpetual Vows, Men’s Institutes**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Total</b>
Candidates/postulants	1.8	0	0	0 – 65	291
Novices	1.7	0	0	0 – 70	276
Temporary vows/commitment	5.2	2	0	0 – 197	829
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	77	51	7	0 – 410	<u>12,472</u>
					13,868

**Numbers in Initial Formation and Perpetual Vows, Women’s Institutes**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Total</b>
Candidates/postulants	.4	0	0	0 - 11	179
Novices	.8	0	0	0 - 29	319
Temporary vows/commitment	1.7	1	0	0 - 51	708
Final/perpetual vows/commitment	110	55	7	0 - 1,111	<u>47,114</u>
					48,320

The tables below show the numbers in initial formation per institute when the categories are collapsed, that is, when candidates or postulants, novices, and temporary professed are combined into a single category of those in initial formation. The first table compares men and women. The second table compares LCWR and CMSWR.

*Seven in ten responding institutes have at least one person in initial formation. Having someone in formation and having more than one or two is more common in institutes of men than in institutes of women.*

<b>Numbers in Initial Formation</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
None	30%	22%	34%
One or Two	33	21	37
Three to Five	18	20	17
Six to Ten	11	18	8
More than 10	8	19	4

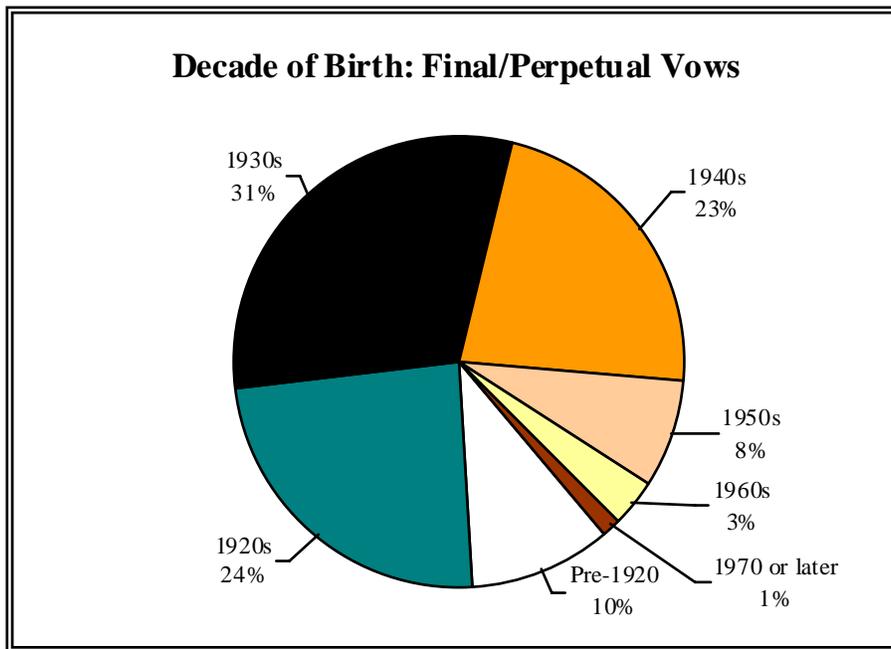
*One-third of responding LCWR institutes and one-fourth of responding CMSWR institutes have no one in initial formation at this time. CMSWR institutes are much more likely to have more than five women in initial formation.*

<b>Numbers in Initial Formation</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All Women</b>	<b>LCWR</b>	<b>CMSWR</b>
None	34%	32%	26%
One or Two	37	41	18
Three to Five	17	17	13
Six to Ten	8	8	15
More than 10	4	1	28

## Age Distribution

The charts and tables below show the decade of birth and age distribution of the perpetually professed members of the responding institutes, first for all religious and then comparing men and women. Later charts and tables show the same information for those in initial formation. The survey asked the number of finally/perpetually professed members born in each decade, e.g., 1920-1929, 1930-1939, 1940-1949, and so forth. The charts show the decade of birth; the tables show the ages in 2009.

*Almost nine in ten (88 percent) men and women religious in final or perpetual vows were born before 1950 and thus are in their 60s or older in 2009.*

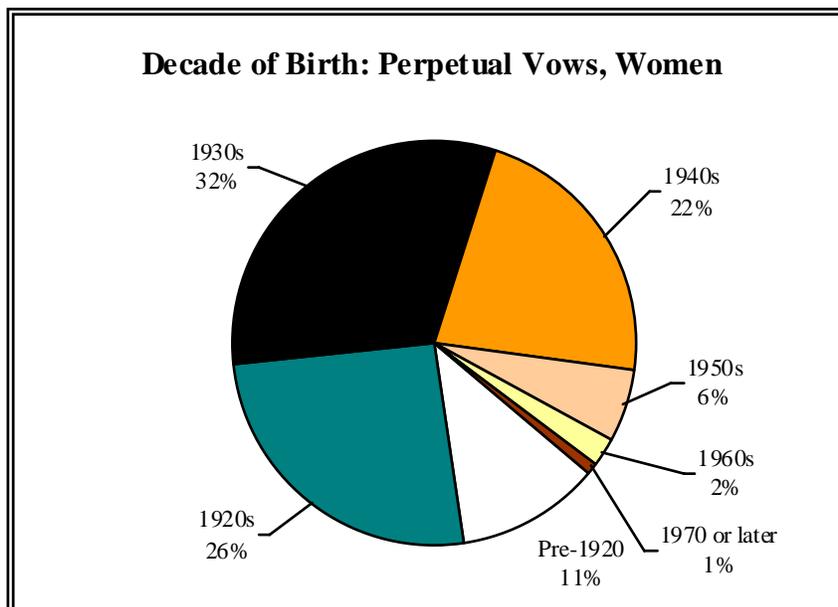
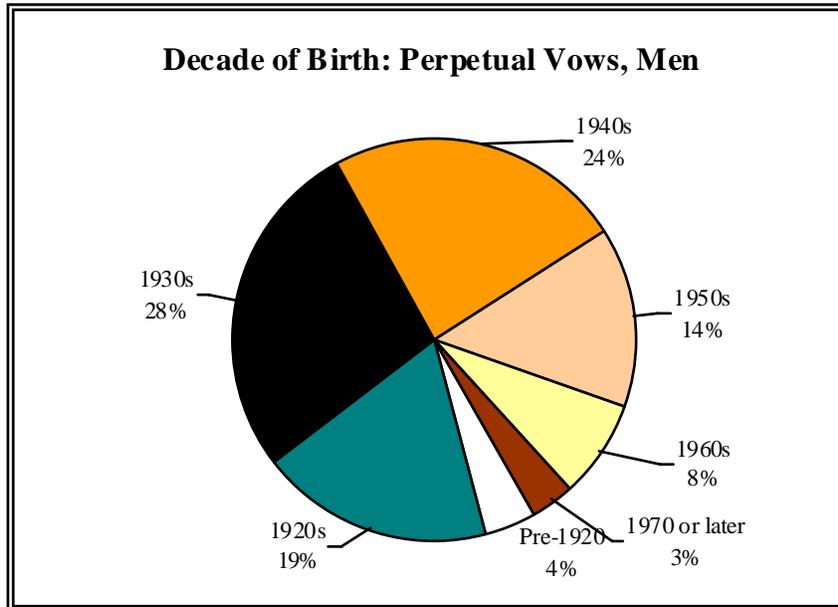


- Three-fourths of finally professed men and women religious (78 percent) were born in the 1920s, 1930s, or 1940s and, therefore, are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s in 2009.

Only 12 percent are younger than 60 while almost as many, 10 percent, are age 90 or older.

The charts below illustrate the age distribution of perpetually professed men and perpetually professed women.

*Compared to women, men have a higher percentage of younger members and a much lower percentage of very old members. One in four finally professed men (25 percent) – compared to one in ten finally professed women (9 percent) – are under age 60.<sup>3</sup>*



<sup>3</sup> Note that the graphs show the proportion of new members in each category. In absolute numbers, women religious outnumber men religious by more than three to one.

The table below shows the same information converted into age ranges in the year 2009. In addition, the table shows the average, median, and modal median age of perpetually professed members reported by the responding religious institutes.<sup>4</sup> This table shows this information for all respondents and then compares men and women religious. The table on the following page compares LCWR and CMSWR.

*As already noted, the vast majority of men and women religious are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s.*

<b>Age Distribution and Median Age: Final/Perpetual Vows</b>				
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	
Under 40	1%	3%	1%	
40-49	3	8	2	
50-59	8	14	6	
60-69	23	24	22	
70-79	31	28	32	
80-89	24	19	26	
90 and over	10	4	11	
Average Median Age	69	65	70	
Median Median Age	71	66	73	
Modal Median Age	75	68	76	

The most common median age is 68 in religious institutes of men and 76 in religious institutes of women, although the mean and median are a little lower.

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<sup>4</sup> The survey asked respondents to report the median age in their institutes. From this information, CARA calculated the mean, median, and modal median ages.

The table below shows the age distribution and the average, median, and modal median age for all responding institutes of women and then compares the responses of LCWR and CMSWR institutes.

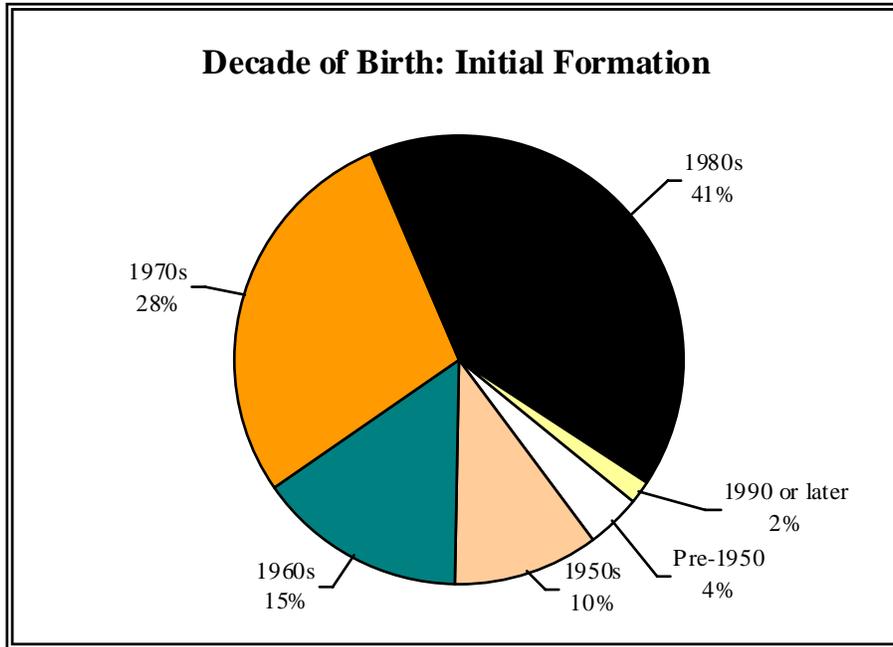
*CMSWR institutes have a more even age distribution and are considerably more likely to have younger members in final vows.*

<b>Age Distribution and Median Age: Final/Perpetual Vows</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All Women</b>	<b>LCWR</b>	<b>CMSWR</b>
Under 40	1%	<0%	8%
40-49	2	1	15
50-59	6	5	16
60-69	22	22	21
70-79	32	33	18
80-89	26	27	14
90 and over	11	13	8
Average Median Age	70	74	60
Median Median Age	73	74	62.5
Modal Median Age	76	76	63

The most common median age in LCWR institutes is 76, compared to 63 in CMSWR institutes.

The following chart show the decade of birth of those in initial formation, that is, of those who are candidates or postulants, novices, or in temporary vows or commitment. The charts on the next page compare men and women.

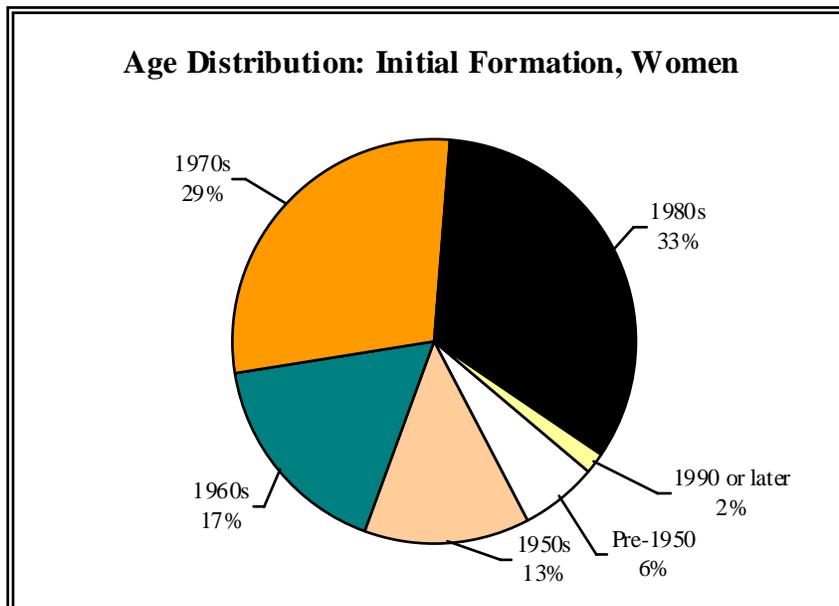
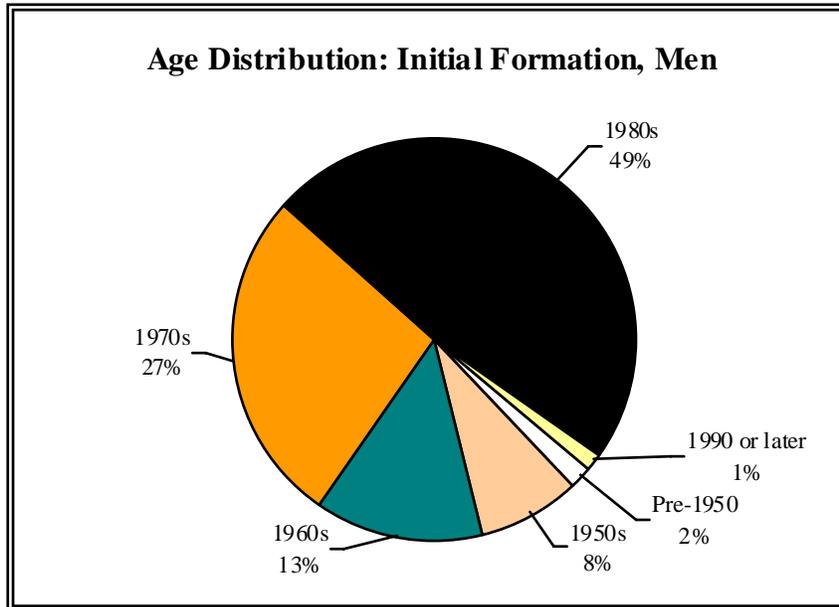
*A little less than half of those in initial formation (43 percent) were born since 1980. Most of these would be considered to be part of the Millennial Generation, usually defined as those born in 1982 or later.*



These data provide some evidence to support the speculation that there are significant numbers of young people entering religious institutes. However, the majority in initial formation are still over the age of 30. As the chart on the next page shows, older candidates are more common among women than men.

The charts below illustrate the differences in the age distribution of men and women in initial formation. It is important to note that, contrary to the pattern among finally professed members, men outnumber women among those in initial formation (at least among the responding institutes). However, data presented later suggest that there is a higher retention rate among women than among men.

*Among men, half (50 percent) were born since 1980 and thus are under age 30 in 2009. Among women, a little more than a third (35 percent) are in this category.*



The tables below show the age distribution of those in initial formation. The first table compares men and women. The second compares women in LCWR and CMSWR institutes. Older candidates are more common among women than among men and are more prevalent in LCWR institutes than in CMSWR institutes.

*Half of the men, compared to a little more than a third of women, in initial formation are under age 30.*

<b>Age Distribution: Initial Formation</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Under 20	2%	1%	2%
20-29	41	49	33
30-39	28	27	29
40-49	15	13	17
50-59	10	8	13
60 and over	4	2	6

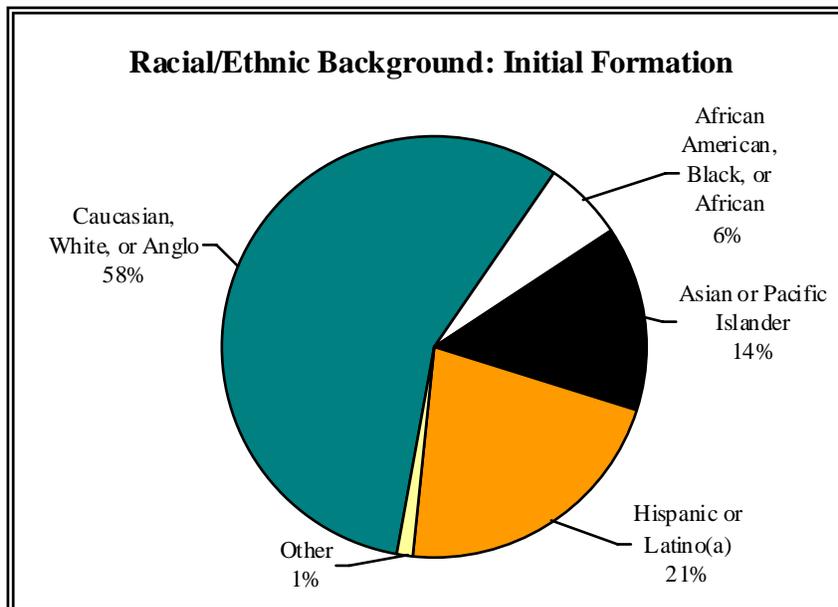
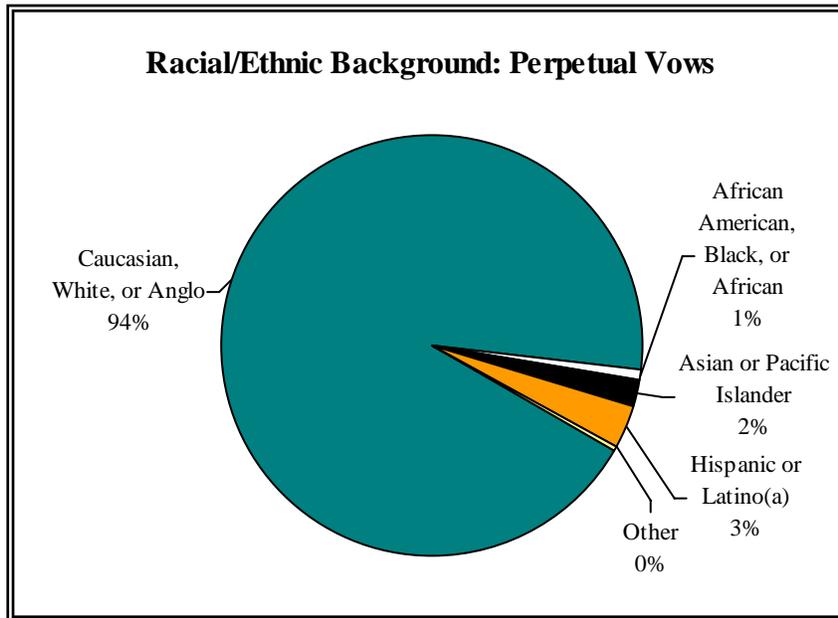
*A little more than half of the candidates in CMSWR institutes, compared to about one in six candidates in LCWR institutes, are under age 30. In LCWR institutes, more than half are age 40 and older, compared to one in seven in CMSWR institutes.*

<b>Age Distribution: Initial Formation</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All Women</b>	<b>LCWR</b>	<b>CMSWR</b>
Under 20	2%	1%	<1%
20-29	33	15	51
30-39	29	28	34
40-49	17	25	10
50-59	13	23	4
60 and over	6	8	1

## Racial/Ethnic Background

The charts show the racial/ethnic background of men and women religious using categories comparable to those used by the U.S. Census Bureau.

*The vast majority of men and women religious in perpetual vows (94 percent), compared to six in ten in initial formation (58 percent), are Caucasian, white, or Anglo. Among those in initial formation, significant percentages come from Hispanic/Latino(a) (21 percent), Asian/Pacific Islander (14 percent), and black, African, and African American (6 percent) backgrounds.*



## Retention Rate and Departures

The survey asked respondents first to report the total number who had entered their religious institute since 1990 and then to report who remained from that number. These numbers were used to calculate a retention rate. It should be noted, however, that only 76 percent of respondents provided sufficient information to calculate a retention rate. Respondents were also asked to report the stage of formation during which those who had departed had done so.

### Retention

*The average retention rate is 48 percent; that is, about half of those who entered since 1990 remain. The median and modal retention rates are also 50 percent.*

<b>Retention Rate since 1990</b>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Mean	48%	42%	50%
Median	50	36	50
Mode	50	0 <sup>5</sup>	50

- Retention rates are somewhat higher in institutes of women than in institutes of men.
- There are no significant differences in retention rates between institutes whose leaders are members of LCWR and institutes whose leaders are members of CMSWR.

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<sup>5</sup> The most common retention rate in responding institutes of men is indeed 0. That is, the most common case is that none of those who entered since 1990 have remained.

## Departure

*For those who entered and then departed from religious life since 1990, the most common time to do so was during candidacy/postulancy. Few men and women religious depart after final/perpetual vows/commitment.*

<b>Departure since 1990</b>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
During candidacy/postulancy	38%	34%	44%
During novitiate	28	27	30
During temporary vows/commitment	29	34	21
After final/perpetual vows/commitment	5	6	5

- Compared to men, women are more likely to leave their institute earlier in the initial formation process. More than four in ten who departed did so during candidacy/postulancy. Novitiate is the next most common time to leave.
- Men who left religious life are also most likely to have done so during candidacy/postulancy. They are almost equally as likely to leave during temporary vows as during candidacy/postulancy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The differences between men and women may be related to the timing of priestly formation and ordination in the formation process. The survey did not ask the number who left during priestly formation or after ordination.

## **Vocation Promotion and Discernment Programs**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their unit has a vocation director and/or vocation team, sponsors or co-sponsors various discernment programs, has used various media for vocation promotion in the last five years, and/or has targeted certain age groups in its vocation promotion and discernment programs. Part III of the report examines whether there are any relationships between providing these resources or offering these programs and activities and attracting and retaining new members.

### **Vocation Director and/or Team**

Almost nine in ten responding religious institutes (88 percent) report that they have a vocation director. In a little more than half of those institutes (54 percent), the vocation director is engaged in vocation ministry on a part-time basis (in 46 percent he or she does vocation work full-time). In 97 percent of institutes, the vocation director is member of the religious institute. In the other 3 percent of institutes he or she is a member of another unit of the institute, an associate, or a lay person who is not an associate.

Some six in ten responding institutes (59 percent) have a vocation team, which was defined on the survey as more than one person directly responsible for vocation ministry. In the institutes that have vocation teams, the average number of team members is four. In most institutes, the team includes members of the institute (91 percent) and in a few it includes associates (13 percent) and/or other lay person(s) who is/are not member(s) or associate(s) (10 percent).

In most cases (95 percent), the vocation director and/or team is responsible only for their unit. In a few cases (4 percent), however, the director or team is responsible for more than one unit of an institute (e.g., for two or more provinces). In a very few cases (1 percent), the director or team is responsible for more than one institute.

## Discernment Programs

*Of the various types of discernment programs about which responding institutes were asked, “Come and See” experiences are the most common.*

***Please indicate if your unit sponsors or co-sponsors the following discernment programs***

Percentage checking each response:

“Come and See” experiences	73%
Live-in experiences	56
Discernment retreats	54
Ministry/mission experiences	32
Discernment groups	26
Discernment houses	12

Three in four responding institutes report that they sponsor or co-sponsor “Come and See” experiences and a little more than half offer live-in experiences and/or discernment retreats. Ministry or mission experiences are offered by about a third of the responding institutes. Discernment groups and discernment houses are less common. As later sections of this report will show, new members who participated in various discernment programs generally found them to be “very” helpful in their discernment process.

## Use of Media for Vocation Promotion

*About nine in ten responding institutes indicate that they have used print materials and/or websites/Internet for vocation promotion within the last five years.*

<i>Please indicate if your <u>unit</u> has used any of the following for vocation promotion in the last five years:</i>	
Percentage checking each response:	
Print materials	91%
Website/Internet	87
Advertising	75
Radio	7
TV	6
Other	16

Advertising is also a relatively common method of vocation promotion. TV and radio are far less common, although they have been used by a few. “Other” responses include DVDs, vocation fairs and vocation talks, conventions and conferences, billboards, and parish bulletins. Some of the respondents also mentioned the importance of personal contact.

## Vocation Promotion and Discernment for Age Groups

*Responding institutes are most likely to report that they target their vocation promotion and discernment programs toward young adults (defined on the questionnaire as people in their 20s and 30s) and, to a slightly lesser degree, toward college-age students.*

***Please indicate if your unit sponsors or co-sponsors vocation promotion or discernment programs specifically targeted toward these age groups:***

Percentage checking each response:

Young adults (20s and 30s)	71%
College	65
High school	56
Elementary school	34
Mature adults (age 40 and over)	27

About two in three responding institutes focus their vocation efforts on college students and/or young adults and a little more than half target high school students. About a third sponsor or co-sponsor programs for elementary schools and about a quarter do so for mature adults (defined on the questionnaire as those age 40 and over). Data presented later in this report indicate that just over half of new members of religious institutes were 18 or younger when they first considered religious life. About a quarter were 13 or younger.

## Admission Requirements and Initial Formation Practices

The next sections examine requirements for admission to candidacy/postulancy as well as several practices in initial formation.

### Admission Requirements

*Almost all respondents report that their institute requires medical assessment for admission to the institute.*

<i>Please indicate if your <u>unit</u> requires the following for admission:</i>	
Percentage checking each response:	
Medical assessment	94%
Psychological testing	84
Background check	75
Behavioral assessment	68

Most institutes also require psychological testing and, to a lesser extent, background checks and behavioral assessment. A little more than half (56 percent) require all four of these while more than three-fourths (78 percent) require at least three of them. Four percent of the respondents (25 religious institutes) did not check any of these. It is not clear if they actually do not have these requirements or if they chose not to respond to this set of questions on the survey.

## Age, Education, and Work Experience Requirements

*Most religious institutes have minimum and maximum age requirements and or minimum education requirement or admission to candidacy/postulancy.*

<i>Does your unit have the following requirements for admission to candidacy/postulancy?</i>	
Percentage responding "Yes"	
Minimum age	89%
Maximum age	76
Minimum education	80
Minimum work experience	49

- The most common minimum age requirement is 18 (reported by 39 percent of respondents). Four percent of respondents would accept a candidate who is younger than 18. Another 48 percent require the potential candidate to be between 19 and 22.
- The most typical maximum age is 45 (reported by 24 percent of respondents). Five percent set the maximum age at 30 or younger and 42 percent set it between 30 and 44. Three in ten (29 percent) have a maximum age higher than 45 (a high as 65). Some institutes noted that they sometimes make exceptions to these age requirements.
- Some 80 percent have a minimum education requirement and half have a minimum work experience requirement. Most institutes require a candidate to have at least a high school education and many require at least one or two years of college and/or work experience. A few require a college degree.

## Length of Initial Formation Periods

The responding institutes were asked to report the typical number of years that are required for each period of initial formation in their institute.

*The most common requirements for initial formation are one year of pre-candidacy or aspirancy, one year of candidacy/postulancy, two years of novitiate, and three years of temporary vows.*

<b>Typical Length of Periods of Initial Formation</b>				
<i>Number of Years</i>				
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Range</b>
Pre-candidacy/aspirancy (before entrance)	1	1	1	<1 – 4
Candidacy/postulancy (before novitiate)	1	1.1	1	<1 – 4
Novitiate	1.7	2	2	1 – 4
Temporary vows/commitment	4.4	4	3	1 – 12

There are some variations among religious institutes in the length of time they require for each stage of their initial formation programs.

- Many institutes indicate that they do not have a formal pre-candidacy or aspirancy program or that they do not have a typical requirement for its duration. Many specify a range, such as six months to a year or one to two years, as typical in their institute.
- On average, the responding institutes typically require a year of candidacy/postulancy before the novitiate, although many indicate that the period is one to two years and a significant number require two years. There is some correlation between a longer candidacy period and higher retention rates, although the relationship is not very strong.
- About two-thirds of the responding institutes (68 percent) have a two-year novitiate, although more than a quarter (28 percent) require only one year. A few require something between one and two years and very few require more than two years.
- The greatest variation among institutes is in their requirements for temporary vows. While the typical requirement is the same as the minimum required by canon law (three years), many institutes require a longer period (often five or six years). Some also report that the period of temporary vows is typically three to six years.

## Community Life, Prayer, and Habit

Respondents were asked several questions about ministry, community life, prayer, and the wearing of a religious habit. The study then looked at whether there is any relationship between these practices and new membership.

*Daily Eucharist characterizes the regular prayer life of a majority of members in nine in ten responding institutes. Liturgy of the Hours is almost as common.*

***Please indicate which of the following characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of members of your unit?***

Percentage checking each

Daily Eucharist	90%
Liturgy of the Hours	85
Faith sharing	53
Non-liturgical common prayer	42
Common meditation	28

There is no significant correlation (in a statistical sense) between any one of these prayer types and new membership. However, the combination of Daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, and common meditation is positively correlated with having new members in initial formation. That is, institutes in which all three of these characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of members are more likely to have men or women in initial formation.

High numbers of members living alone is negatively correlated with new membership. That is, the higher the number or percentage of members who live alone, the *less* likely the institute is to have new members.

Having a habit that is required either in all or most circumstances or at certain times, such as for ministry or prayer, is correlated with having new members in formation as well as with having higher numbers who have entered and stayed since 1990.

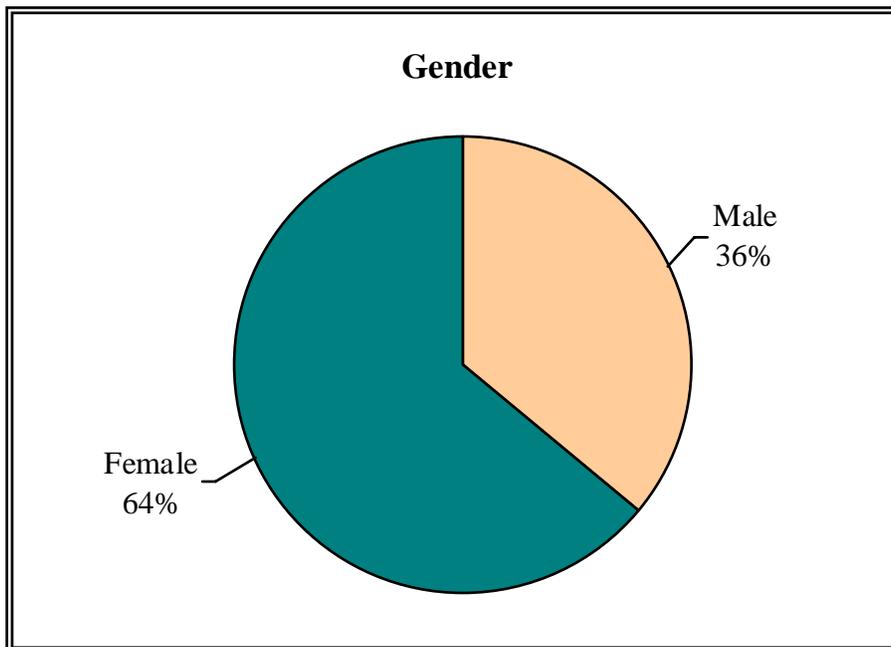
## **PART II: Findings about New Members**

This part of the report presents findings about new members. It is based primarily on responses to the survey of new members (1,568 respondents), but also draws on comments from the focus groups and interviews with new members as well as some of the comments from vocation and formation directors.

### **Background and Characteristics of the Respondents**

This section describes the demographic characteristics and background experiences of the responding new members. These characteristics include their gender, age and generation, racial and ethnic background, previous marriage and children, Catholic upbringing and education, employment and ministry experience, year of entrance and current status in their religious institute, the age at which they first considered religious life, and the age of entrance into religious life. Throughout Part II of the report, comparisons are drawn between male and female respondents and among respondents from different generations.

*Almost two-thirds of the respondents are female (64 percent) and a little more than a third are male (36 percent).*



Data from the *Official Catholic Directory 2009* indicate that women religious outnumber men religious in the United States by more than three to one (59,601 women religious compared to 17,935 men religious).<sup>7</sup> However, data reported in Part I of this study suggest that there are currently more men than women in initial formation (approximately 1,400 men compared to approximately 1,200 women among the institutes that reported these data). This may account for the somewhat higher proportion of men in this sample of new members than in the population of all religious in the United States.

### ***Age and Generation***

Respondents were born between 1924 and 1989 and thus range in age from 20 to 85 in 2009. The average age of the respondents overall is 43 (40 for men and 44 for women), so “new” members are not necessarily “young” members. Their median age for the entire sample is 42 (40 for men and 44 for women). The modal age is 45 for the sample as well as for both men and women.

*Similar to the findings in Part I about those in initial formation, older respondents are more common among women than among men.*

<b>Age Distribution</b>				
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>				
	<b>All</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	
20-29	17%	19%	16%	
30-39	26	29	25	
40-49	28	33	25	
50-59	18	15	19	
60 and over	11	4	15	

For purposes of analysis of differences among Catholics, CARA typically categorizes respondents into four generations based on their year of birth: the Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, Post-Vatican II, and Millennial Generations.

- The *Pre-Vatican II Generation* includes those born before 1943. Its members, those over age 66 in 2009, came of age prior to the Second Vatican Council. They were raised in a Church

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<sup>7</sup> These numbers include only those for dioceses whose bishops belong to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

that changed dramatically after their formative years. Members of this generation played a crucial role in creating and sustaining many of the institutions of 20<sup>th</sup> century Catholic life. They tend to exhibit relatively high levels of loyalty to the institutional Church. Four percent of the respondents to this survey are members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation.

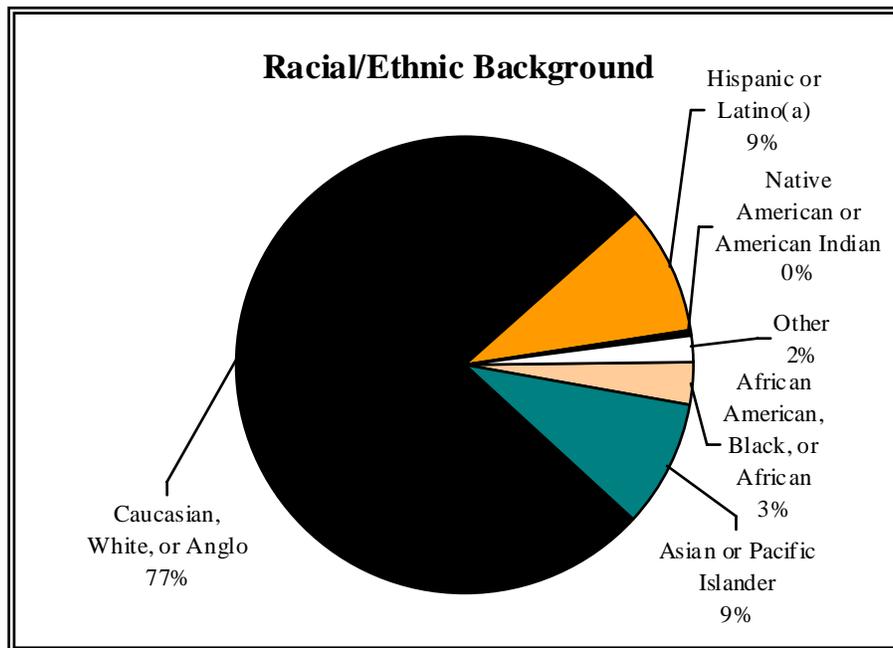
- Members of the *Vatican II Generation* were born between 1943 and 1960 and are between the ages of 49 and 66 in 2009. Members of this generation came of age during the time of the Second Vatican Council and their formative years spanned a period of profound changes in the Church (as well as in society and culture). To a large extent, this generation overlaps with the “Baby Boomers.” In general, members of this generation are more likely to emphasize concerns of individual self-actualization over institutional commitment. A little more than one-fourth of the survey respondents (27 percent) are of the Vatican II Generation.
- The *Post-Vatican II Generation*, born between 1961 and 1981, consists of those who are ages 28 to 48 in 2009. Members of this generation, sometimes called “Generation X” have almost no lived experience of the pre-Vatican II Church. Their religious training occurred primarily during the 1970s and 1980s, a time when religious education patterns and methods were very different from those used up to the late 1960s. Members of this generation are relatively less likely to make long-term commitments, are more pragmatic and less ideological, and are relatively more interested in issues of identity and community than those before them. Close to six in ten survey respondents (58 percent) are of the Post-Vatican II Generation.
- The Millennial Generation, those born in 1982 or later, is the youngest generation of Catholics. The leading edge of this generation is just beginning to reach their late-20s. Members of this generation tend to be community- and service-oriented as well as interested in spirituality and questions of faith. They also tend to be optimistic in their outlook, tolerant of differences among people, and positive in their attitudes toward authority. This generation has come of age under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. On the whole, they are less steeped in the Catholic culture of earlier generations of Catholics and less knowledgeable about their faith. Those who are active in their faith tend to be more traditional in their religious beliefs and practices. Millennials make up 11 percent of the survey respondents.

The range of ages among new members as well as the age differences between newer members and older members that are common in many religious institutes present a number of challenges for these newer members as well as for the religious institutes they have entered. These are described in greater detail in the section on challenges below.

### *Racial/Ethnic Background and Country of Origin*

Consistent with the findings reported in Part I, there is greater diversity in the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the new members than in the overall population of finally professed men and women religious.

*About three-fourths of the respondents describe themselves as Caucasian, white, or Anglo.*



Almost one in ten new members is Asian or Pacific Islander and almost another one in ten is Hispanic or Latino(a). About 3 percent describe their background as African American, black, or African. Note that the racial and ethnic composition of new members presented here is different from the racial and ethnic composition of those in initial formation described in Part I of this report. The new members described here include those who have professed perpetual vows since 1993.

One in five new members (19 percent) was born in a country other than the United States. Male respondents are slightly more likely than female respondents to have been born in another country (21 percent compared to 18 percent).

### *Catholic Upbringing, Faith Formation, and Education*

- About nine in ten respondents were raised Catholic. Among those who became Catholic as adults, a majority did so when they were in their late teens or early 20s.
- A little more than half of the respondents (56 percent) attended a Catholic school for at least some of their elementary or middle school education. A little more than four in ten (44 percent) attended a Catholic high school and about four in ten (42 percent) attended a Catholic college or university. Almost three-fourths (73 percent) attended a Catholic school for at least part of their education. About half (49 percent) attended parish-based religious education, CCD, or RCIA. Only 3 percent were ever home-schooled.
- Compared to other respondents, those from the Millennial Generation are more likely to have attended parish-based religious education, CCD, or RCIA (59 percent) and to have been home-schooled for at least some of their education (14 percent). Vatican II Generation respondents are more likely than others to have attended a Catholic elementary school.
- Seventy percent of respondents had at least a bachelor's degree before they entered their religious institute (46 percent bachelor's, 19 percent Master's, 5 percent doctoral degree). Among those who continued their education after they entered, all but 1 percent have at least some college education and most have at least a Master's degree (14 percent bachelor's, 61 percent Master's, 6 percent doctoral degree).

### *Marriage and Children*

About 7 percent of respondents were once married and about 5 percent have children.

- Previous marriage and children is more common among female than male respondents. Among female respondents, 10 percent were married and 7 percent have children; among male respondents, 4 percent were married and 1 percent have children. Of all new members with children, 90 percent are female.
- Marriage and children is also more common among older respondents. In the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 53 percent have been married and 42 percent have children. In the Vatican II Generation, 16 percent have been married and 12 percent have children. None of the Millennials and only a few from the Post-Vatican II Generation have been married or have children.

### *Year of Entrance and Current Status*

- More than half of the respondents entered since 1999, that is, they have been in their religious institutes for fewer than ten years at the time they completed the survey. Almost a third entered in 2003 or later. Almost 15 percent report that they entered another religious institute before the one to which they currently belong.
- Almost two-thirds of the respondents are finally professed (63 percent) and about a quarter are in temporary vows (26 percent). Only about one in ten is a novice (8 percent) or a candidate/postulant (3 percent).
- Among the male respondents, three-fourths are or expect to become priests and one-fourth are or expect to become brothers.

### *Age First Considered Religious Life*

When asked the age at which they first considered religious life, respondents report being as young as two and as old as 65. The average age was 20 and both the median and modal ages were 18.

*Eight in ten newer members (among those who responded to the survey) were age 25 or younger when they first considered religious life.*

<b>Age First Considered Religious Life</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
13 or younger	24%	19%	27%
14-17	21	21	21
18-21	23	28	20
22-25	12	13	12
26-30	8	7	8
31-40	8	10	8
41-50	3	2	3
51-65	1	<1	1

More than two-thirds (68 percent) considered it by the time they were 21, with a little more than half (53 percent) doing so by the time they were 18.

- Female respondents are a little more likely than male respondents to have thought about a religious vocation at a young age, that is, before the age of 14.
- Men were a little more likely to first consider religious life when they were college-age.

### *Age of Entrance*

The average age of entrance is 30 for men (median 27) and 32 for women (median 29). However, there is a ten year age gap in average and median entrance age between women in LCWR institutes and women in CMSWR institutes. Among respondents from LCWR institutes, the average entrance age is 36 and the median is 34; among respondents from CMSWR institutes, the average entrance age is 26 and the median is 23.5

<b>Age of Entrance</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Under 20	7%	4%	9%
20-29	48	56	44
30-39	24	25	23
40-49	12	11	13
50-59	7	3	9
60 and over	2	1	2

<b>Age of Entrance</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>Women</b>	<b>LCWR</b>	<b>CMSWR</b>
Under 20	9%	3%	16%
20-29	44	32	62
30-39	23	28	16
40-49	13	20	4
50-59	9	14	2
60 and over	2	3	<1

### ***Previous Employment and Ministry Experience***

Almost nine in ten respondents report that they were employed before they entered, most in a full-time position. About seven in ten report that they were engaged in ministry before they entered, about a third on a full-time basis and about six in ten on a volunteer basis.

*A little more than half of the respondents report that they were involved in liturgical ministry and/or in other volunteer work in a parish or other religious setting before they entered.*

<b><i>Were you involved in any of the following <u>before</u> you entered?</i></b>	
Percentage checking each response:	
Liturgical ministry, e.g., lector, extraordinary minister	54%
Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting	51
Retreats	46
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	40
Youth ministry or group	39
Music ministry, cantor, choir	34
Faith-sharing group	33
Young adult ministry or group	31
Campus ministry or group	29
World Youth Day	13
Religious institute volunteer program, e.g., Mercy or Jesuit Volunteer Corps	9

A little less than half were involved in retreats and about four in ten participated in faith formation/catechetical ministry/RCIA and/or youth ministry. One-third participated in a faith-sharing group and a similar proportion participated in music ministry, young adult ministry, and/or campus ministry.

- Compared to other respondents, those from the Millennial Generation are more likely to have participated in retreats (59 percent), youth ministry (56 percent), campus ministry (47 percent), and World Youth Day (27 percent).
- Men were a little more likely than women to have participated in youth ministry while women were more likely than men to have participated in music ministry, volunteer work, and faith-sharing.

## Attraction to Religious Life

*New members are most likely to say they were attracted to religious life by a sense of call and by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth.*

<b><i>How much did the following attract you to <u>religious life</u>?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	96%	73%
A sense of call to religious life	95	78
A desire to be of service	93	67
A desire to be part of a community	89	60
A desire to be more committed to the Church	74	44

When asked how much various factors attracted them *to religious life*, most respondents report that they were attracted “very much” by a sense of call to religious life (78 percent) and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (73 percent). To only a slightly lesser degree, most also say they were attracted by a desire to be of service and a desire to be part of a community. At least nine in ten respondents say they were attracted at least “somewhat” by each of these. About three-fourths say they were attracted “somewhat” (30 percent) or “very much” (44 percent) by a desire to be more committed to the Church.

### ***Gender Differences***

Compared to male respondents, female respondents are more likely to say they were attracted to religious life by a sense of call and by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth. Although the difference is not statistically significant, male respondents are a little more likely than female respondents to report that they were attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service.

### ***Generational Differences***

Younger respondents are more like than older respondents to say that they were attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church. The largest generational differences are between the Vatican II and the Millennial Generations (54 percent compared to 39 percent “very much”).

## ***Responses to Open-ended Questions***

In response to one of the open-ended questions at the end of the survey, which asked respondents what most attracted them to their religious institute, a number of new members described a sense of call and a desire for prayer, community, and ministry that preceded their attraction to their particular institute. A few examples are presented below. The responses about the attraction to a specific institute are summarized in the next section of the report.

*What most attracted me to religious life was community, prayer, ministry.*

*An unwavering hunger for God. The “more.” A sense of call out of an experience of contemplative prayer.*

*I had a strong sense of a call to cloistered religious life. As I pursued this call, my relationship with Christ deepened, and I soon became ready to throw away everything I had to be with him.*

*First a sense of calling from God. Then the attraction to the sisters’ joy, fidelity to the Church, and religious life. Devotion to Mary and the Eucharist, community life and the wearing of the religious habit also attracted me.*

## ***Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews***

In telling their vocation stories, many of the interview and focus group participants described their sense of call to religious life and particularly their desire to deepen their relationship with God and with Christ. Some also talked about particular elements of religious life such as community life, communal prayer, and service. In response to questions about ministry and service, most indicated that “service,” “ministry,” or the “apostolate” are important to them, but are not the primary reason they felt called to religious life or to their particular religious institute. Several of the men also talked about their call to priesthood. For some, the desire for priesthood preceded a sense of call to religious life. For others, discernment of a vocation to priesthood or brotherhood came later. Some of the men talked about their attraction to community life and the possibility of different ministries that would not be possible in diocesan priesthood.

*I felt the calling and wanted to become closer to God. I do remember talking to one vocation director and she never once mentioned God. I found this strange. I think it’s important for the vocation and formation director to be able to pray and speak openly about building a relationship with God. Many things done by sisters can also be done by lay people, so what’s the difference? Why do it? People are wondering. It’s more than what you do. It’s about what God is calling you to do and how open you are to listening*

*and how closely you are following. Is this addressed when a new member is looking into the community and after she enters?*

*Something about regular prayer...is...as close as I can come to about attracting me to religious life.*

*I think one of the things that attracted me to...religious life was community. I had a very strong experience of it in college in our fraternity...I was kind of looking for a way to continue on with that sense of camaraderie and living together and having a shared history and ideals and all that.*

*The reason religious [instead of diocesan priesthood] was the fact of the variety. I thought there was more variety than the diocesan priesthood in the community. Since I was a little kid I wanted to be a priest. I think I was drawn to the Sacraments really. So for me it was just kind of a natural fit. I really didn't think of anything else. I thought I wanted to be celebrating Mass and the Sacraments, really being with people in their time of joys and sorrows and so forth. That was something that came from when I was a little kid.*

*I initially was with the diocese... I didn't really know anything about religious life but over time I met...[a Member of the Religious Institute] and...I just found myself more and more attracted to the religious life, most particularly the community. I would go there for dinner and they were just a lively group and excited about what they're doing. I thought about it more and more and really I wanted that community experience. The other thing that I found with religious life that attracted me was the diversity of work. The [Members of the Religious Institute] were doing school work, parish work, hospitals, doing all sorts of different things. I thought that would be a great way to serve and to do a diverse amount of things in exciting ways. So that was one of my greatest attractions.*

## Attraction to Their Religious Institute

*New members report that it was the example of members that most attracted them to their religious institute.*

<b><i>How much did the following attract you to <u>your religious institute</u>?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
The spirituality of the institute	91%	66%
The community life of the institute	90	60
The example of members of the institute	89	85
The prayer life of the institute	89	59
The mission of the institute	88	60
Welcome and encouragement by members	85	57
The ministries of the institute	84	51
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	70	47
The life and works of your founder/ess	70	42
A personal invitation by a member	59	35

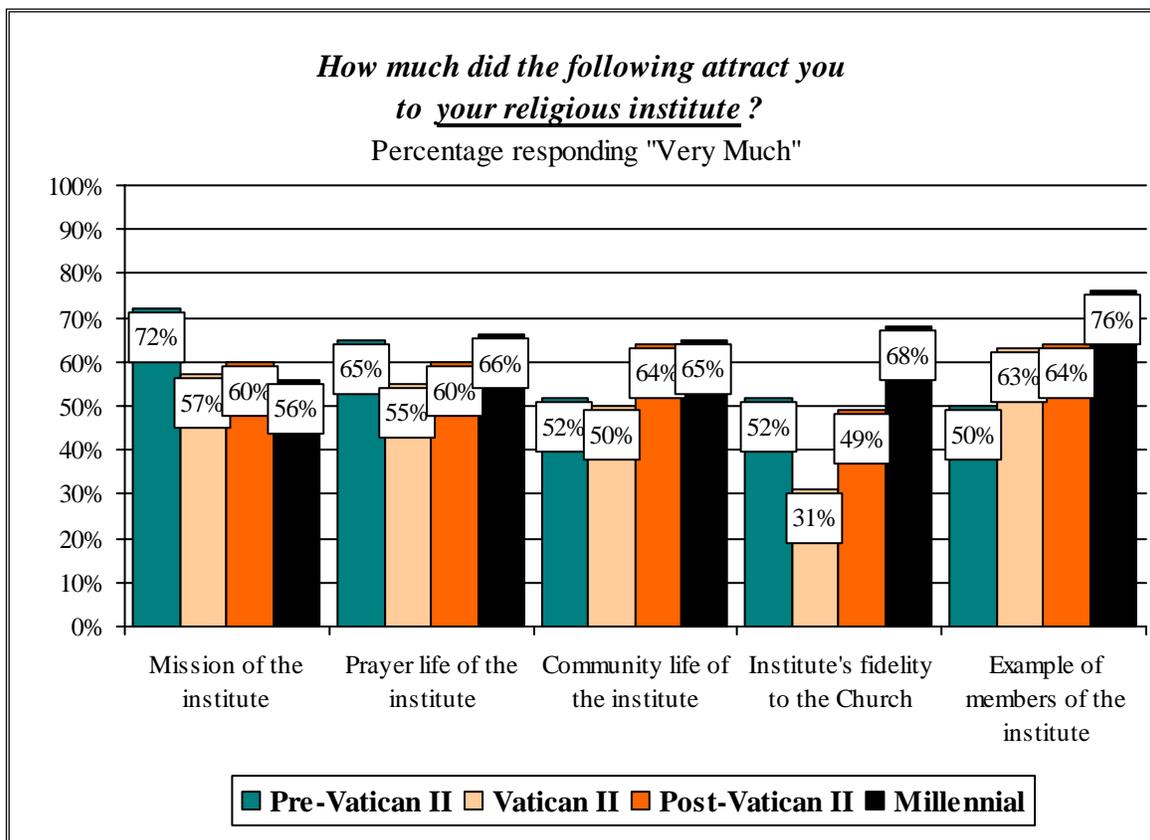
When asked how much various factors attracted them *to their religious institute*, respondents are most likely to cite the example of members and the spirituality, community life, prayer life, and mission of the institute as the aspects of the institute that most attracted them. More than any other single factor, however, it was the example of members that was most likely to attract them “very much” (reported by 85 percent of respondents). The new members were least likely to say that a personal invitation by a member attracted them “very much.” Other factors that are relatively less likely to be named among those that were very attractive are the life and works of the founder/ess and the institute’s fidelity to the Church.

### ***Gender Differences***

- Female respondents are more likely than male respondents to report that the prayer life, community life, and spirituality of the institute; its fidelity to the Church; and the example, welcome, and encouragement of members attracted them “very much.”

- Compared to female respondents, male respondents are more likely to say that they were attracted “very much” by the mission and ministries of the institute as well as by the life and works of its founder.

### *Generational Differences*



- Millennial Generation respondents are more likely than older respondents to report that they were attracted by their institute’s fidelity to the Church and by the example of its members. Fidelity to the Church is much less important among respondents from the Vatican II Generation.
- Compared to other newer members, Pre-Vatican II Generation respondents are more likely to say they were attracted by the mission of the institute and less likely to say they were attracted by the example of its members.

- The community life of the institute was more likely to be “very” attractive to Millennial and Post-Vatican II Generation respondents than to Vatican II and Pre-Vatican II Generation respondents.

### ***Responses to Open-ended Questions***

One of the open-ended questions at the end of the survey specifically asked new members, “What most attracted you to your religious institute?” The most frequent comments centered on the example of members, especially their sense of joy, their down to earth nature, and their commitment and zeal; community life and a sense of welcome and feeling “at home” with members; the spirituality and prayer life in the institute and especially common prayer and certain devotional practices; the spirituality or charism of the founder; and the mission, ministries, and/or apostolate of the institute. A significant number also mentioned their institute’s fidelity to the Church and the fact that its members wear a religious habit. The responses below represent just a sampling of comments on these themes.

*The members of my religious institute all were very happy and joyous men. They liked what they were doing and they liked being together. That really attracted me to religious life. The community also saw prayer and their commitment to Christ as very important as well and this also attracted me.*

*The charism of our patron, the spirit of the members of the community. Their enthusiasm to ministry and their “down to earth” approach.*

*I was most attracted to the [Religious Institute] because of their common ministry and strong community life, Eucharistic and Marian devotion, and wearing of the habit, signifying commitment to traditional religious life and fidelity to the Church. The joy of the members was also a compelling witness, as well as a feeling of being “at home” here.*

*As I began to know the members, I felt that I could be “at home,” be myself, yet also be challenged to grow. As I learned more about our spirituality, our founder and early documents, I knew why I felt this way: There was a resonance between my own spirituality and my community’s charism of unity and reconciliation. Also, I felt and saw that my community members were “real people,” not artificial.*

*When I first began looking at religious life, all congregations seemed to share some basics – prayer, community living and ministry. In the end what attracted me to my particular congregation was the sense of joy and love I experienced among them. Their clear affection for each other and welcoming those around them. I was also attracted by their internationality, global vision, and commitment to ministering among those who are poor and marginalized.*

*It was the whole package: their apostolates were what first attracted me, but their community life is what led me to choose my particular institute. I felt at home in their rhythm of prayer and common life, and I also felt that my perspectives on the faith and the Church would be welcome and honored.*

*Our charism...really drew me. I also was attracted by the order's community and prayer life. Our life in common is a lived reality, not simply words on paper. The prayer life is structured, but not rigid with traditional devotions as well as more contemporary theology.*

### ***Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews***

Similar themes emerged in the focus groups and interviews, although these discussions tended to focus primarily on the example of members of the institute. Some also mentioned the spiritual, communal, and/or ministerial dimensions of religious life in their institute among the things that attracted them.

*There wasn't one particular person who invited me. But I think...my day-to-day interaction with the priests and brothers at the college is what inspired me. Before then, as a Catholic, I went to church on Sundays and was in youth group, but the pastor never once showed up at youth group. But in class I had a priest as a professor, in the dorm there was one of the brothers who lived in the dorm, eating lunch with them. It was that day-to-day interaction that inspired me. Getting to know them, they're regular people...It's that kind of every day interaction that inspired me. But there was never a "you ought to do this or you ought to consider this."*

*I think what attracted me...to my actual community is partly...the authenticity of the members that I interacted with and also the diversity of ministry. We are a very diverse province. We are in a variety of ministries. So that was always appealing to me that there is an opportunity for lots of different kinds of ministry.*

*I will say that I'm in the [Religious Institute] from the day I entered high school and stayed close to a lot of the ones I got to know in high school and college. I was a[n] [Institute] associate for about 15 years....After a certain time in my life things were definitely changing.... So it turned out to be religious vocation....I was very much attracted to the work that the [Members of a Religious Institute] do and certain individual [Members of the Religious Institute]. It was only after I entered that the God quest became very important to me. I wouldn't have really been able to verbalize that before I entered. Now I see that as the real focus of religious life. What I do as a ministry is pretty secondary to the God quest.*

*I think for me at some point in my life I realized that the most interesting, dynamic people I was meeting were all Catholic sisters. The ones that I got to know best, among them were [Members of the Religious Institute]. I found them to have an expansive and profound sense of spirituality that was expansive and also a very also profound commitment to social justice and one that was also – I think “expanding” is a good word for all of these categories – to include not only social justice in terms of the human world but also the other than human world, the whole of God’s creation, expanding that sense of justice to include an eco-justice. I think the sense of the communal was, I think, finally one of the pieces that finally pulled me in was a sense that we are imperiled at this moment on Earth as a species and as a planetary being and that there is a profound need for us to come to an understanding of the common good and of the need for us to collectively, not just individually, but to really come together in that way if we are to overcome the huge problems that confront us as humans and also as earthlings. So I think that sense of women living at the prophetic edge of the Church and society is what really pulled me in...It was really more sort of the character of these particular [Members of the Religious Institute]. But I also saw it in other religious, in [other women religious] that I was encountering.*

*The other thing that attracted me about our community was that we love the Church, that we serve the Church wherever we are asked to go.*

## Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

*The most common way the new members first became acquainted with their religious institute was in an institution, such as a school, where the members served.*

### ***How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?***

Percentage checking each item:

In an institution where members served, e.g., school	36%
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	28
Through working with a member of the institute	19
Through print or online promotional materials	17
Through a friend in the institute	16
Through an event sponsored by the institute	9
Through a vocation fair	5
Through a media story about the institute or member	5
Through a relative in the institute	5
Through a vocation match or placement service	3
Other	22

Newer members in religious life first became acquainted with their religious institutes in many different ways. Besides institutional settings, other relatively common ways of becoming acquainted with the institute were through the recommendation of a friend or advisor, through working with a member of the institute, through a friend in the institute, and through print or online promotional materials. Very few (5 percent or fewer) indicate that they met the institute through a vocation match or placement service, a vocation fair, a media story, or a relative in the institute.

### ***Gender Differences***

- Men are more likely than women to report that they first encountered their religious institute in a school or other institution where the members served (46 percent compared to 30 percent).
- Women are more likely than men to indicate that they learned about their institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (31 percent compared to 22 percent).

### *Generational Differences*

- Younger respondents, especially those in the Millennial Generation, are more likely to have first heard about the institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (35 percent). They are also more likely to have become acquainted with their religious institute through print or online promotional materials (23 percent).
- Older respondents are somewhat more likely to have met the institute more directly, that is, through working with a member or through a friend in the institute. For example, 26 percent of Vatican II Generation respondents, compared to 16 percent of Post-Vatican II and 12 percent of Millennial Generation respondents, met their institute through working with a member.

### *Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews*

The interview and focus group participants provided many examples of finding out or learning more about the religious institute they eventually entered through these various means. In keeping with the findings noted above, the men tended to be more likely to relay experiences of first coming to know priests or brothers while in college or high school, often in a residence hall setting. The women, on the other hand, tended to mention working with sisters and gradually getting to know their communities through them. Many of the younger participants indicated that they did not know a man or woman religious before they sensed a call to religious life. Many of these young religious learned about their particular institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor, often a priest, and some found out or learned more about their institute online. Several of the female participants also mentioned meeting their institute through a “nun run.” The comments below provide examples of each of these.

*When I was a student at [University] I got to know a community that lived right in the residence hall. I was their neighbor and they would invite students over for prayer and dinner several times a week. I admired a number of things that helped me to grow in my own prayer life...Even though at the time I was not serious at all in considering a religious vocation, but I think it planted the seed of the lived examples of the guys, the brothers that I knew at the university.*

*I was doing volunteer teaching...and I met a [Religious Institute] sister. I had not planned on religious life. And as I got to know her, I felt a call to the [Religious Institute], not to religious life per se...[I]t was that sister who was teaching...where I was that did it.*

*I think in my experience when I was teaching in the school...[N]o one was inviting me to enter into the community, but very much introducing me to different people who were not*

*from the school, so getting to know the community at different events or just different things that were going on.*

*How did I meet the [Religious Institute]? After a couple of months under panic about, "What am I suppose to do about this? I really don't want to do this," I went to the chaplain at the church I went to and said, "Here's what's going on and I think I'm crazy." [Laughter] He circled a bunch of [Religious Institute] monasteries in the directory or whatever. He knew me well enough to actually get it right on the first go.*

*What really got me to know my community was a nun run that Father [Name] put on that took four young women around the U.S. during our spring break and visited different religious communities...I wasn't really looking to join a community, but when I visited our community,...it feels like a family, that same resonance. I was just walking up the path with these young novices and I just felt like I fit, like I clicked....*

## Participation in Vocation Promotion and Discernment Activities

*Most newer members (almost two-thirds) participated in spiritual direction before they entered their religious institute.*

***Did you participate in any of the following  
before you entered your religious institute?***

Percentage checking each response:

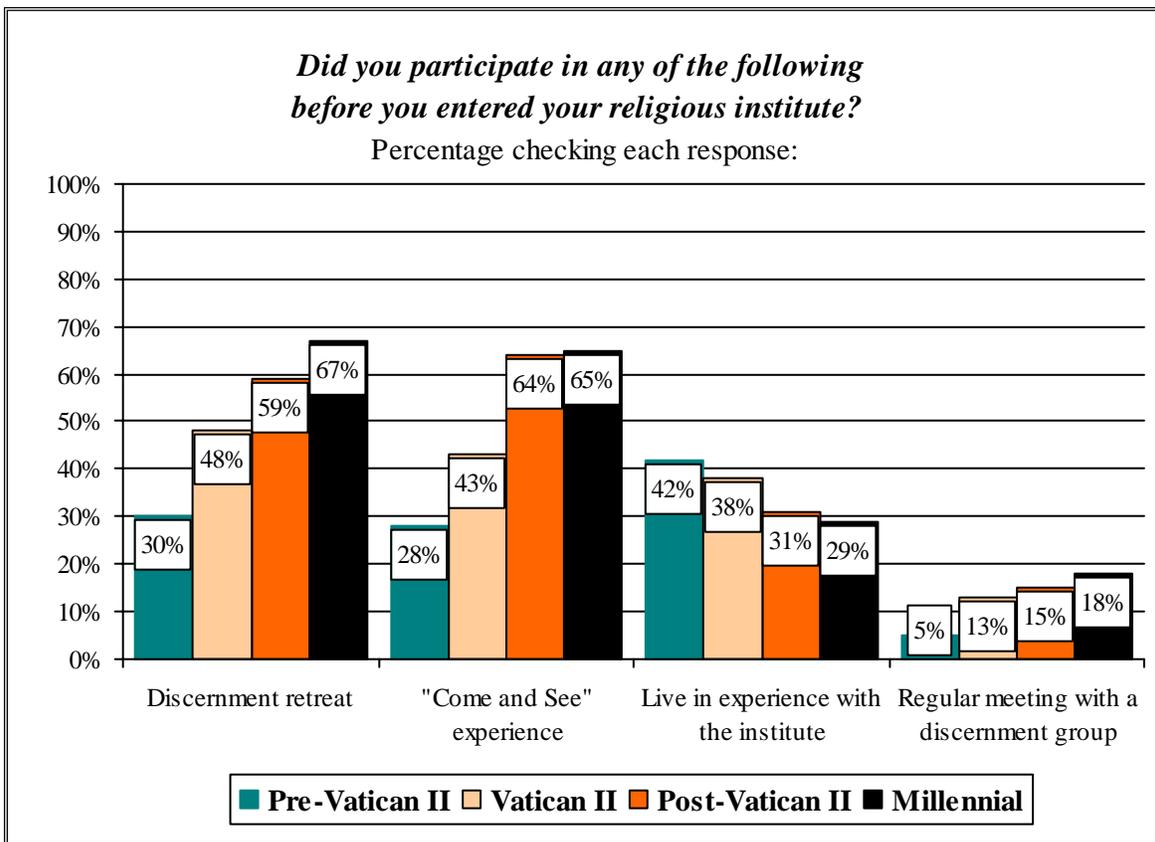
Spiritual direction	63%
“Come and See” experience	57
Discernment retreat	56
Regular visits to communities	41
Regular meeting with a vocation director	39
Regular meeting with a member(s) of the institute	33
Live in experience with the institute	33
Diocesan vocation programs	24
Ministry or mission experience with the institute	22
Regular meeting with a discernment group	14

A majority of respondents also report that they participated in a “Come and See” experience and/or a discernment retreat. About four in ten participated in regular meetings with a vocation director and/or regular visits to communities, while about a third participated in regular meetings with members and/or a live in experience with the institute.

### ***Gender Differences***

The men religious were more likely than the women religious to indicate that they participated in diocesan vocation programs (34 percent compared to 18 percent) and in meetings with a vocation director (44 percent compared to 36 percent). Note that the question did not specify “diocesan” or “religious” vocation director.

*Generational Differences*



- Younger new members were more likely than older new members to have participated in “Come and See” experiences, discernment retreats, and, to a lesser extent, discernment groups.
- Compared to their younger counterparts, Pre-Vatican II and Vatican II Generation respondents were more likely to have participated in a live in experience.

## Helpfulness of Vocation Promotion and Discernment Activities

The table below shows the degree to which respondents found various activities and programs helpful when they were discerning their call to religious life. Note that the table shows the responses of all respondents who answered this set of questions. The table that follows shows the responses of only those respondents who indicated that they had actually participated in these activities.

*Respondents report that meeting with members of the institute and visits to communities were the most helpful activities when they were discerning their call to religious life.*

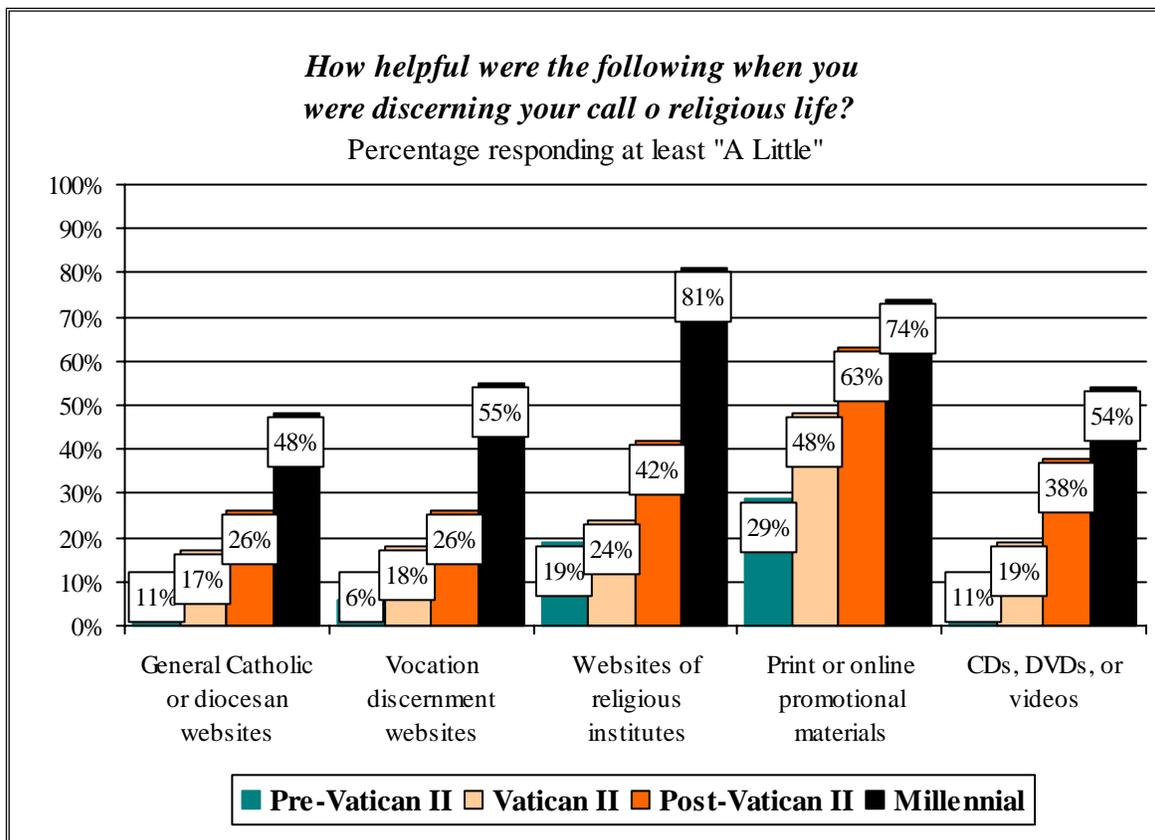
<b><i>How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
Meeting with a member(s) of the institute	86%	63%
Visits to communities	83	65
Spiritual direction	75	54
Meeting with a vocation director	73	48
“Come and See” experience	68	51
Discernment retreat	68	47
Live in experiences	54	44
Ministry or mission experience	50	34
Print or online promotional materials, e.g., brochures, posters, ads	39	16
Newspaper or magazine articles	31	9
Websites of religious institutes	29	15
Meeting with a discernment group	25	12
Diocesan vocation programs	18	8
CDs, DVDs, or videos	18	6
Vocation discernment websites	13	5
General Catholic or diocesan websites	11	4

Almost two-thirds of the respondents say they found meeting with members and visits to communities “very” helpful when they were discerning their call. Other activities or programs

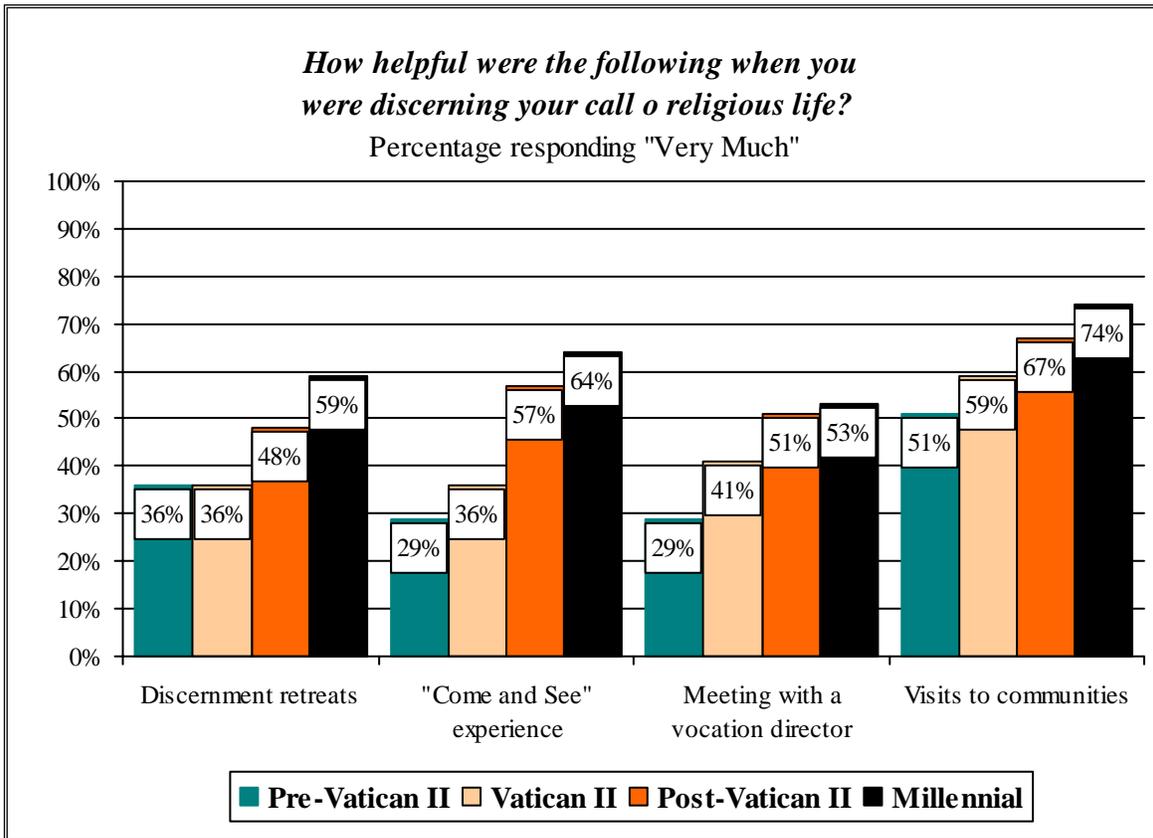
that were also especially helpful include spiritual direction, meeting with a vocation director, “Come and See” experiences, discernment retreats, and live-in experiences. Diocesan vocation programs and various types of media were considerably less helpful to most respondents.

### ***Generational Differences***

The age of the respondent is negatively correlated with the helpfulness of most of these activities or resources. That is, the older the respondent, the *less* likely he or she is to say that these activities or resources were helpful in the discernment process. Note that the chart below shows the percentage who indicate that each of these was at least “a little” helpful in their discernment.



- Compared to older respondents, Millennial Generation respondents were much more likely to report that websites, especially the websites of religious institutes, were at least “a little” helpful to them in their discernment.
- Younger respondents are also more likely to say they found print or online promotional materials and CDs, DVDs, or videos at least “a little” helpful.



- Younger respondents are considerable more likely to say that discernment retreats were “somewhat” or “very” helpful to them when they were discerning their call to religious life (81 percent of the Millennial Generation compared to 47 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation; not shown in the chart).
- Younger respondents are also more likely to report that “Come and See” experiences, visits to communities, and, to a lesser extent, meeting with a vocation director were helpful to them.

### ***Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews***

The interview and focus group participants identified many different things that helped them in their discernment process, including each of the programs and resources listed in the table. The most helpful were those that involved spending time with their institute and its members. A few specifically mentioned spending time with older members, while others mentioned having a mentor with whom he or she met during the discernment and/or formation process. Some found websites very helpful in learning more about the institute and about religious life.

*Discernment retreats were very helpful for me, just having a chance to gather with other guys who were thinking about religious life, so going to numerous ones of those*

*sponsored by the [Religious Institute]. I think the other big one is having a vocation director who knows who you are, knows your history, knows about your family, your likes and dislikes – a very personal vocation director. It was never just, “OK, this guy is calling me.” He would actually, “How are your classes going? What are you doing this summer?” Those kinds of personal touches.*

*Having a spiritual director is also very helpful in at least my discernment process.*

*...I think the most important part of my discernment was my mentor... When we signed up to become a contact, we could also pick and choose our mentor and our community and one of the requirements is like at least once a month you go and visit the community and talk with your mentor. I think it was a very, very important part of my discernment because I didn't know him and he doesn't know me but when we meet it was like we knew each other for years....He was just very, very good with you.*

*And then once I entered, having a mentor was absolutely key....To be able to go to someone, a wisdom figure like her, when the going got rough was just absolutely invaluable to my continuing the journey and deepening it....*

*...[S]omething that really helped me discern my vocation to the [Religious Institute] was spending time with our older sisters. They were just the healthiest, happiest, most loving people I had ever known. And I thought, “If this life can produce this, then it's worth living.” That was very helpful in my discernment.*

*I searched the internet for information about religious life. I found some really good sites, but the [Religious Institute] website was up-to-date, changed on a regular basis, had pictures of the sisters (action shots, group pictures, daily activities). It seemed to speak to me as a scared college student, fearful of the calling, and taking the next “public” step. The website was good because I could do my own searching without anyone knowing. I could go at my own pace and make my own decisions without anyone knowing. The website addressed the fears I had as well as the stereotypes. One quote that I was attracted to was “Just because you don't pray eight hours a day doesn't mean you can't be a nun.” Since it addressed the stereotype and my fear, I felt they understood me. They felt like people I could relate to.*

The table below shows only those respondents who previously reported that they actually participated in these activities before they entered their religious institutes.

*Those who participated in various discernment programs or activities generally found them to be very helpful in their discernment.*

<b><i>How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
Meeting with a member(s) of the institute	97%	80%
Visits to communities	96	81
Live in experiences	95	82
Spiritual direction	93	71
Meeting with a vocation director	93	70
“Come and See” experience	92	73
Ministry or mission experience	92	69
Discernment retreat	90	65
Meeting with a discernment group	89	44
Diocesan vocation programs	48	20

Meeting with members of the institute, visits to communities, and live in experiences were especially helpful to those who engaged in these activities before they entered their religious institutes. With only one exception, all of the vocation discernment activities listed in the table are considered at least “somewhat” helpful by nine in ten respondents who participated in them. Although almost half found diocesan vocation programs at least “somewhat” helpful, only one in five found them “very” helpful.

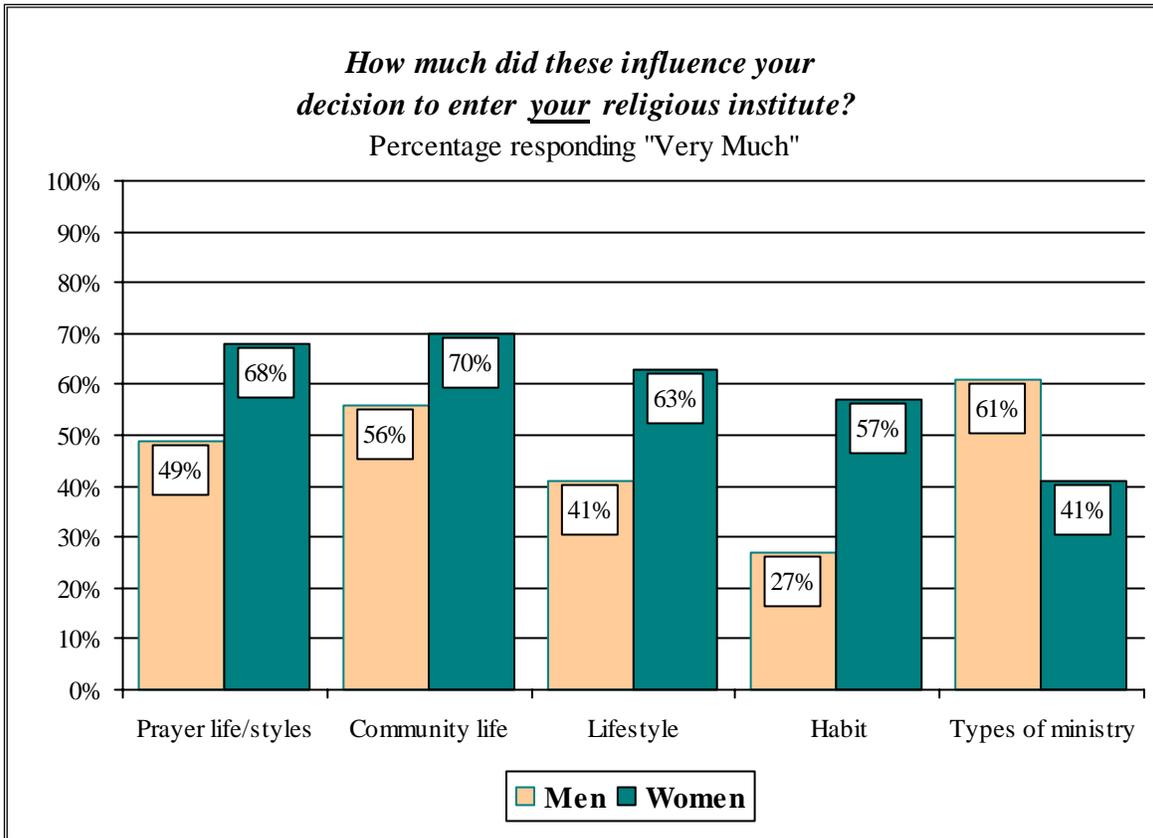
## Influences on the Decision to Enter Their Religious Institute

*When asked how much various factors influenced their decision to enter their religious institute, respondents were most likely to name the community life and the prayer life or prayer styles of their institute as the factors that influenced them “very much.”*

<b><i>How much did these influence your decision to enter <u>your</u> religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
Community life in the institute	91%	65%
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	90	61
The lifestyle of members	85	55
The types of ministry of its members	79	48
Its practice regarding a religious habit	61	46
Its geographic location(s)	51	26
Its internationality, if applicable	45	24
The size of the institute	40	13
The ages of members	36	12
The racial/ethnic background of members	15	5

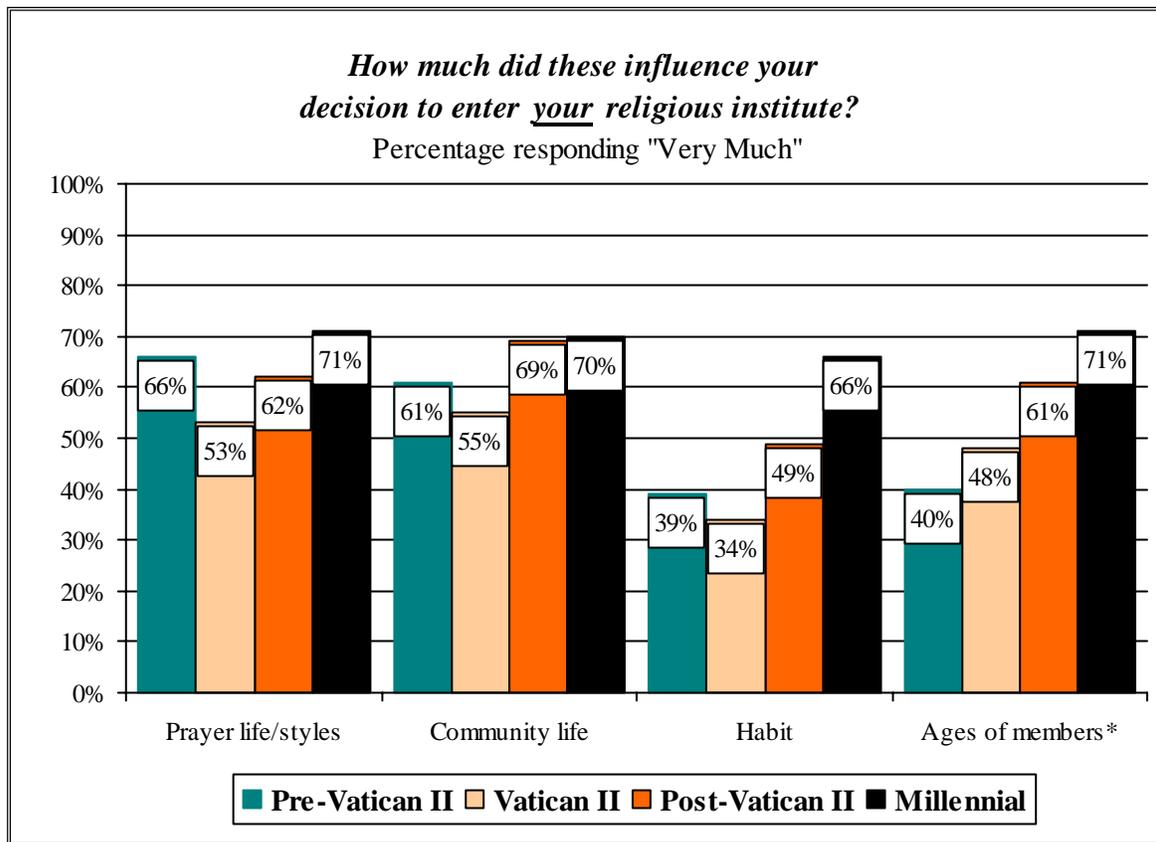
Nine in ten new members say their decision to enter their religious institute was influenced at least “somewhat” by the community life and the prayer life or prayer styles of their institute, with more than six in ten indicating they were influenced “very much” by each of these. The lifestyle of members, the ministries in which they are engaged, and its practices regarding a religious habit were also important for many respondents. This last factor was not influential “at all” to about a third of the respondents (not shown). The size of the institute, its internationality (if applicable), and the ages and racial or ethnic background of members were not important influences for most respondents.

## Gender Differences



- Men are more likely than women to indicate that they were influenced to some degree by the size, the geographic location, and especially the internationality of the institute. Three-fourths of the men (76 percent) compared to less than half of the women (46 percent) say they were at least “a little” influenced by the internationality of their institute. Sixty percent of men compared to 34 percent of women were influenced at least “somewhat” by this (not shown).
- Men are also more likely than women to report that they were influenced “very much” by the types of ministry in their institute (61 percent compared to 41 percent).
- Women are more likely than men to report that their decision to enter their institute was influenced “very much” by its community life, prayer, and lifestyle.
- Women are also much more likely than men to report that they were influenced “very much” by the institute’s practice regarding a religious habit (57 percent compared to 27 percent). One in four women (25 percent) and four in ten men (38 percent) say the habit had no influence at all (not shown).

## Generational Differences



\*Percentage responding at least "a little"

- Compared to older new members, younger new members are more likely to indicate that their decision to enter their institute was influenced by its practices regarding the habit and the ages of its members. Note that "ages of members" in the chart includes all who responded at least "a little." Seventeen percent of Millennial Generation respondents report that they were influenced "very much" by the habit.
- To a lesser extent, the younger respondents are also more likely to say they were influenced by the community life, prayer life, and ministries of the institute they entered.

## Responses to Open-ended Questions

New members elaborate on each of these factors in their responses to the first open-ended questions about what most attracted them to their religious institute. See Appendix II.

## Encouragement for Religious Life

Respondents were asked about the level of encouragement they received from various individuals and groups when they were considering entering their religious institute. A second set of questions, reported below, asked about the level of encouragement they *currently* receive from these and other individuals and groups.

*During their initial discernment, new members received the most encouragement from members of their institute, their vocation director or team, and their spiritual director.*

<b><i>How much encouragement did you receive from the following when you <u>first considered</u> entering your religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
Members of your institute	89%	62%
Vocation director/team	85	60
Spiritual director, if applicable	83	59
Other men and women religious	68	37
Friends outside the institute	68	34
Friends within the institute	67	44
People in your parish	61	31
Your parents, if applicable	57	30
People in your school or workplace	52	21
Diocesan priests	51	28
Your siblings, if applicable	49	22
Other family members	45	17

Friends, both within and outside the institute, as well as other men and women religious were also a significant source of support for many respondents when they first considered entering their religious institute. Parents, siblings, and other family members were among the least supportive. Most respondents also did not receive “very much” encouragement from diocesan priests, people in their parish, or people in their school or workplace.

### ***Gender Differences***

- Although both men and women report high levels of encouragement from members of their institute, women were more likely to report that they received “very much” encouragement (68 percent compared to 53 percent). Women were also more likely to experience encouragement from a spiritual director and from friends in the institute.
- Although neither group received strong encouragement from various family members, men were more likely than women to be report at least “a little” encouragement, especially from parents.

### ***Generational Differences***

Compared to older new members, younger new members are especially likely to report that they were encouraged by diocesan priests, people in their school or workplace, people in their parish, and their parents.

### ***Responses to Open-ended Questions***

In the responses to the open-ended question about what they find most challenging in religious life, some new members commented on the lack of understanding, encouragement, and support for religious life both within and outside the Church. A few also mentioned lack of understanding and support from family and friends. Some of the focus group and interview participants also addressed these issues.

*Many people both within and outside the Church choose not to understand and support those who have given their lives to serve God and His Church.*

*Confusion in the Church about what religious life is, and therefore conflicting images of religious life that do not build up the Church.*

*My family’s reaction. My family was not supportive and my dad still refuses to visit, write, or call. It is very hard to break your parents’ hearts.*

### ***Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews***

Responses to focus group and interview questions about support from family and friends when new members were first considering a vocation to religious life provide insight into these findings. Although some new members experienced a great deal of encouragement and support from parents and other family members, others encountered a great deal of opposition. A few

indicated that family and friends from an older generation were more understanding and supportive than those from a younger generation. Some also described how early surprise or opposition eventually turned into support. A number of participants commented on the general lack of knowledge about and appreciation for religious life among Catholics today.

*...And of course the support of family, friends, which was surprising. I think I put more pressure on myself when I was trying to break the news to my parents, to friends. I almost felt like people would think, "Why are you doing that? That's weird." But surprisingly more people are a lot more supportive than I thought. So a lot of nice green lights help to support my way to consider it and also to stay.*

*For my grandparents' generation of my family it's still kind of a boon to have a religious in the family. Anyone younger than that it was indifference and then some more distant family members it was the kind of "why are you wasting your life?" reaction.*

*Amongst my friends, even the cousins, in my generation, I think they are more skeptical than family in an older generation just because they weren't, I guess, as rooted in the Church or had much more issues with the Church. And the sexual abuse scandal took a real big toll on the way people viewed the priesthood. So I got a little more hostility, I guess, from peers and people about my age, a lot more questioning of my motives and why I was doing that.*

*Mine was either indifference or anger....Only half of my family is Catholic and the other half is Evangelical. So the common reaction was that I was trying to escape from reality [laughter] and escape responsibility for the real world.*

*Believe me that was like absolutely, I mean,...they thought that I had gone insane....So it was complete opposition. Anyway now they are supportive but I would say at the beginning that was like total surprise to them and total opposition.*

*I encountered a lot of opposition too...When I first entered the seminary was when I got the biggest amount of my heat. My parents were furious....[M]y dad was furious. My mom was just irritated...*

*My family wasn't opposed to religious life, but my mom just expressed it as, "It's not something I had imagined for you." There was almost a grieving process they had to go through. I was the oldest, the first child, and my dad's not going to walk me down the aisle, my mom is not going to help me raise my children. So I had to let them grieve that daughter that they were losing. They supported me, but they didn't quite understand...*

*New members identify friends and other members of their institute as the groups from whom they now receive the most encouragement in their life and ministry.*

***How much encouragement do you currently receive from the following in your life and ministry as a member of your religious institute?***

Percentage responding:

	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
Friends within the institute	95%	77%
Members of your institute	94	76
The leadership of your institute	91	71
People to whom you minister	91	69
People with whom you minister	91	67
Spiritual director, if applicable	90	73
Friends outside the institute	87	56
Other men and women religious	84	53
Your parents, if applicable	81	62
Novice/formation director/team	79	60
People in your school or workplace	79	54
Your siblings, if applicable	77	48
People in your parish	74	52
Other family members	72	41
Diocesan priests	59	36

Respondents also report high levels of support from the leadership of their institute, their spiritual director, and those to whom and with whom they minister. In contrast to their responses to the previous question, their parents are also among those from whom they now receive the most encouragement. However, siblings and other family members remain relatively low on the list of those from whom they receive encouragement. Diocesan priests are least likely to be cited as a source of “very much” encouragement.

***Gender Differences***

- Female respondents are more likely than male respondents to report that they receive encouragement from leadership, formators, and other members. Compared to male respondents, female respondents are also more likely to say they receive encouragement from diocesan priests.

- There are no significant differences between men and women in the level of encouragement they receive from various family members.

### ***Generational Differences***

Compared to older respondents, younger respondents tend to report higher levels of encouragement from almost every group about which they were asked. They are especially more likely to indicate that they receive encouragement from diocesan priests and from their novice/formation director or team.

### ***Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews***

While some new members initially encountered opposition when they were discerning a vocation to religious life, some also described family members or others eventually “coming around” and being very supportive, even if they did not really understand religious life. Several vocation and formation directors also remarked about parents initially having reservations about their son’s or daughter’s interest in a religious life but coming around once they realized that he or she was happy.

*I think most folks in my family were kind of surprised, kind of startled, didn’t see it coming. I was dating a girl and I had just broken up with her so there was speculation that I was gay and was running away to the seminary. [Laughter] My mom was supportive but she just admitted to me recently that she prayed throughout my entire novitiate that I would leave the order. But I think she’s come around.*

*But then a year after I entered the seminary my grandfather died and the pastor let me take care of the prayers at the wake and some of the prayers at the graveside. That was the moment, I hate to say it, that people in my family started coming around to the idea of a priest in the family....It was a long process of them getting used to it. And there are even a few of my relatives now that kind of scratch their heads and don’t really understand what I’m about.*

*But they also had a lot of misconceptions about religious life. There are a lot of media-fed stereotypes that they had to get over. Once they realized that I was still going to be [Name]. I wasn’t going to turn into the flying nun or something after I entered. And they saw me happy, they met the sisters, and they understand better now how it fits for me. As long as I’m happy, they’re happy.*

## Importance of Types of Prayer

*Most new members say that daily Eucharist is “very” important to them.*

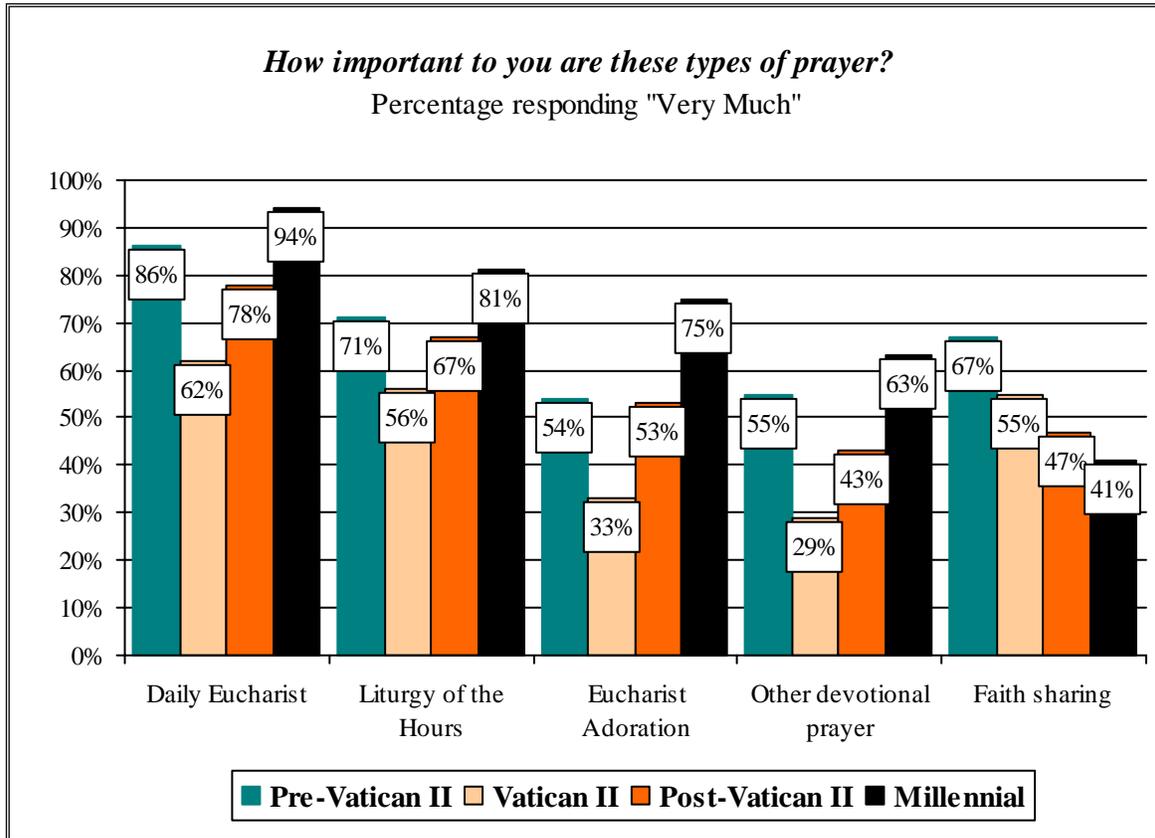
<b><i>How important <u>to you</u> are these types of prayer?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
Daily Eucharist	90%	76%
Liturgy of the Hours	84	66
Faith sharing	80	49
Non-liturgical common prayer	71	38
Eucharistic Adoration	66	50
Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary	65	42
Common meditation	63	42

When asked about the importance of various types of prayer, respondents are most likely to name daily Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours as the prayer types that are most important to them. Eucharistic Adoration and faith sharing are also relatively important to many respondents. Non-liturgical common prayer, common meditation, and devotional prayer are somewhat less likely to be considered “very” important, although two in three respondents indicate that each is at least “somewhat” important to them.

### ***Gender Differences***

Women are more likely than men to say that each of these types of prayer is “very” important to them. The smallest difference is on the importance of the Liturgy of the Hours.

## Generational Differences



- Millennial Generation respondents are more likely than other respondents – especially those in the Vatican II Generation – to say that daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, Eucharistic Adoration, or other devotional prayers are all “very” important to them.
- Compared to younger respondents, older respondents place greater importance on faith-sharing and, to a lesser degree, on non-liturgical common prayer (not shown).

## Responses to Open-ended Questions

As already noted, many new members report that they were attracted to their religious institute by its spirituality and prayer life and, especially, by its common prayer and devotional practices. Many specifically mention daily Eucharist, Eucharistic Adoration, the Divine Office, and Marian devotion. Some also mention other devotional practices that are particular to their institute or the spiritual heritage or traditions of their founder. In response to another open-ended question, many respondents also identify prayer, both personal and communal, as the aspect of religious life they find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life. See Appendix II for examples.

## Importance of Aspects of Community Life

*Praying with other members is an especially important aspect of community life to most newer members of religious institutes.*

### *How important to you are these aspects of community life?*

Percentage responding:

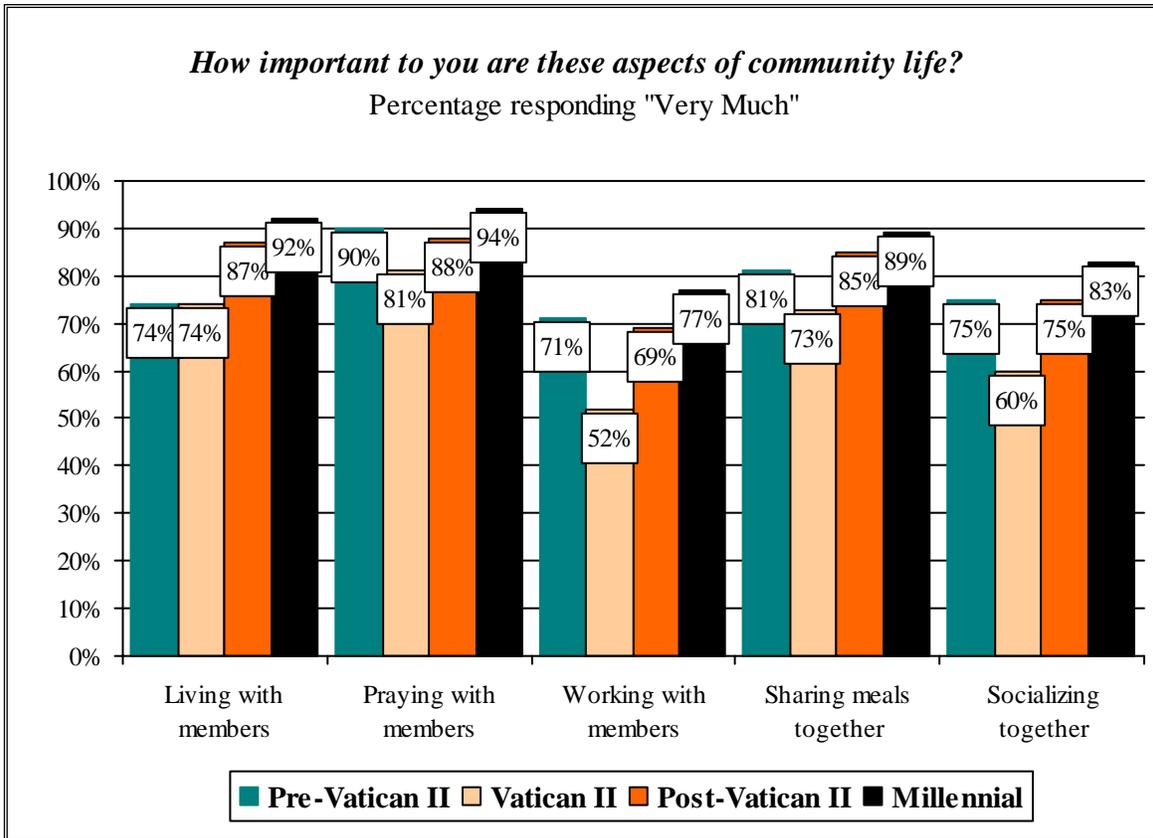
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
Praying with other members	97%	87%
Sharing meals together	96	82
Living with other members	95	83
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	93	72
Working with other members	88	66

All of the aspects of community life about which they were asked are “very” important to most respondents. However, praying with other members, living with other members, and sharing meals together are a little more likely to be considered “very” important than working with other members or socializing with other members.

### *Gender Differences*

Women are more likely than men to say that praying with other members and, to a lesser degree, living and socializing with other members are “very” important to them.

## Generational Differences



- Although most new members indicate that each of these activities is important to them, this is even more the case among younger respondents. Millennial and Post-Vatican II Generation respondents are especially more likely to report that living, praying, and sharing meals with other members are “very” important to them.
- New members from the Vatican II Generation are *less* likely than other new members to consider working with other members and socializing with other members to be “very” important.

### ***Responses to Open-ended Questions***

Many of the responses to the open-ended questions – which asked respondents about what attracted them to their religious institute, what they find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life, and what they find most challenging about religious life – mentioned community life or some aspect of community life. See Appendix II for new member comments on community life.

### ***Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews***

Community life was also a major topic in the focus groups and interviews with new members. As the example below illustrates, many newer members see community life as what is distinctive and most attractive about religious life.

*I think the idea of community life is a big, major, major part of religious life. I think that people can do service on their own; they could do prayer life on their own. Community life is what distinguishes us from somebody else doing that. I mean you can have intentional communities too....But I think community life, how you live it and people share it, if it's lived well, it's joy-filled, it attracts people. If it's lived fully, it attracts. So that is one thing that we need to look at. How religious life, actually my first spiritual director actually told me when I was discerning that it's how you live out your vocation is in how you live in community. My community, we are given to that. We wouldn't live individually. We always live in community.*

## Preferences for Living Arrangements

*Most new members prefer to live in medium (four to seven members) or large (eight or more members) communities rather than alone or in communities of two or three.*

<b><i>How much do you prefer living in these settings?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
In a large community of 8 or more	79%	50%
In a medium-sized community of 4 to 7	78	45
In a small community of two or three	43	17
Alone	19	7
With members of different ages	93	62
With members of different cultures	87	49
With members in different ministries	78	45
With only members of your institute	81	54
With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces	76	39
With members of other institutes	36	8
With associates	29	10

When asked about various living arrangements, respondents are much more likely to prefer living in a large (eight or more) or medium-sized (four to seven) community than living in a small community (two or three) and especially living alone. In terms of the composition of the community, most would prefer to live in communities with members of different ages and in communities that include only members of their institute.

### ***Gender Differences***

- Although not the preference for most, men express greater willingness to live alone. They are *less* willing to live in communities of two or three, however.

- Women are more likely than men to indicate that they prefer to live with members of different ages. Men, on the other hand, are a little more likely to have some preference for living with members in different ministries.

### *Generational Differences*

- The older a respondent is, the more likely he or she is to have at least some preference for living alone and, to a lesser extent, with one or two others. A little more than half of the respondents from both the Pre-Vatican II and Vatican II Generations (52 percent each), compared to less than a third of those from the Post-Vatican II and Millennial Generations (32 percent and 29 percent, respectively), say they would prefer this option at least “a little.”
- The younger a respondent is the more likely he or she is to prefer to live in a larger community, especially one with at least eight members. Two-thirds of Millennials (65 percent) prefer this “very much.”
- There are no significant differences based on age in preference for living with members of different ages and different cultures. However, compared to younger respondents, older respondents express a greater willingness to live with members in different ministries.
- Compared to older respondents, younger respondents express a stronger preference for living with only members of their own institute and, to a lesser extent, members of their institute from other provinces. Older respondents, on the other hand, are more open to living with members of other institutes as well as with associates. Two-thirds of Millennials (67 percent) “very much” prefer living with only members of their institute.

## Preference for Ministry Settings

*Most new members prefer ministry with other members of their institute and ministry sponsored by their institute.*

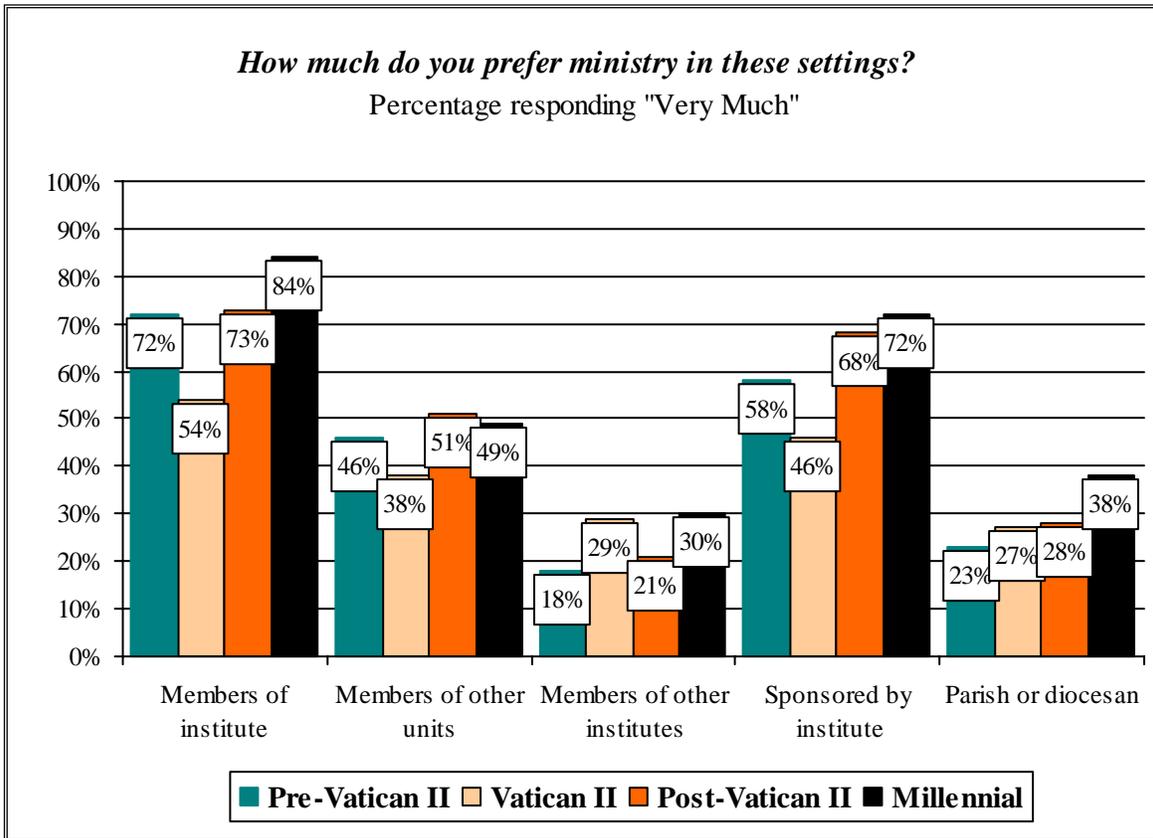
<b><i>How much do you prefer ministry in these settings?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
With other members of your institute	91%	69%
With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces	83	47
With members of other institutes	70	24
In a ministry sponsored by your institute	88	62
With an organization that is Catholic but is not sponsored by your institute	65	22
In a parish or diocesan ministry	61	28
With an organization that is religious but is not Catholic	34	8
With an organization that is not religious	25	8

When asked about various ministry settings, most respondents express a rather strong preference for ministry with other members of their institute and ministry sponsored by their institute. Very few would prefer ministry with a non-Catholic or non-religious organization or even one that is Catholic but not sponsored by their institute.

### ***Gender Differences***

Although both male and female newer members would most prefer to work with members of their own institute, the male respondents are a little more likely to say they would also prefer working with members of their institute from other provinces.

## Generational Differences



- Compared to their older counterparts, younger new members have a greater preference for ministry with other members of their institute. They are also more likely to prefer an institute-sponsored ministry or a parish or diocesan ministry.
- Compared to their younger counterparts, older new members are somewhat more willing to minister in a non-Catholic or a non-religious setting (not shown).

## Evaluation of Their Religious Institute

*New members give their religious institutes the highest ratings on their commitment to ministry.*

<b><i>How would you rate the following in <u>your religious institute</u>?</i></b>		
Percentage responding:		
	<b>“Good” or “Excellent”</b>	<b>“Excellent” Only</b>
Commitment to ministry	96%	69%
Opportunities for spiritual growth	93	62
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	92	62
Focus on mission	91	59
Opportunities for personal growth	91	59
Sense of identity as institute members	88	59
Fidelity to the Church and its teachings	88	56
Response to the needs of our time	88	56
Educational opportunities	87	57
Sense of identity as religious	87	55
Welcome and support of newer members	85	52
Relationships with one another	83	35
Formation/incorporation programs	82	46
Efforts to promote social justice	82	46
Preparation for ministry	82	43
Communal prayer experiences	81	45
Quality of community life	81	39
Opportunities for ongoing formation	80	44
Efforts to promote vocations	79	42

Respondents give their religious institutes high ratings (“excellent”) for their commitment to ministry, their faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth, opportunities for spiritual growth, opportunities for personal growth, and focus on mission. They give their institutes somewhat lower ratings for community life and relationships, opportunities for ongoing formation, and efforts to promote vocations. However, the respondents tended to be relatively positive in their

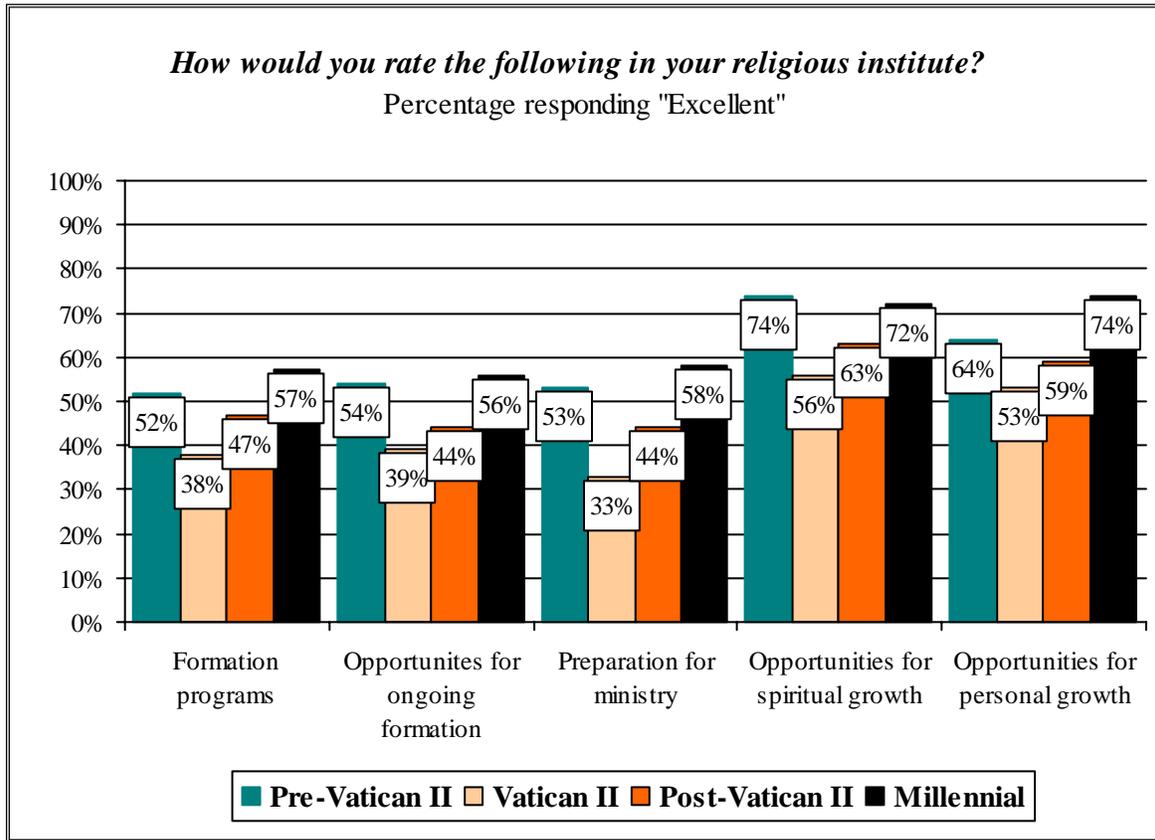
assessment of each of the aspects of life in their institutes about which they were asked, with about eight in ten or more rating each as at least “good.”

### *Gender Differences*

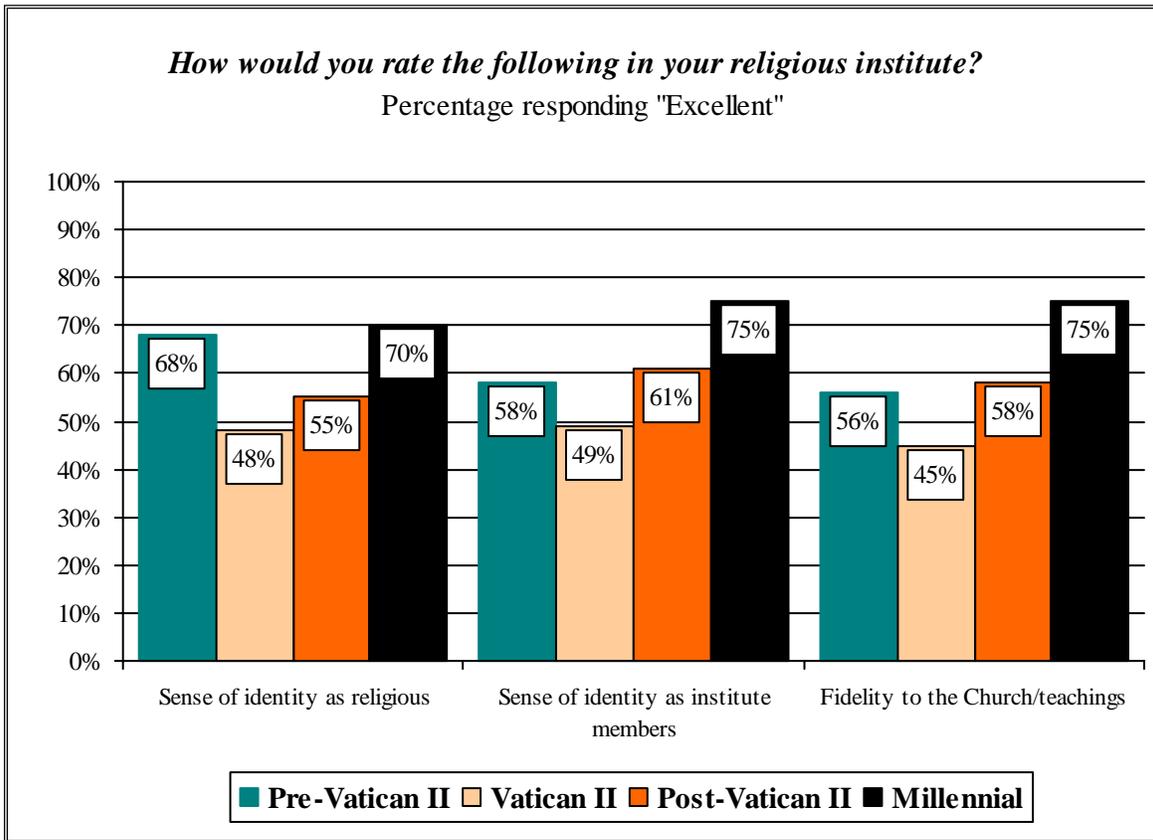
Women tend to be more positive than men in their evaluation of various aspects of life in their religious institutes. The differences between men and women are largest on their assessment the aspects of life related to prayer and spiritual growth – faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth, communal prayer experiences, and opportunities for spiritual growth – as well as on fidelity to the Church and a sense of identity as religious.

## Generational Differences

As the following series of charts illustrate, there are significant differences across generations in evaluations of various aspects of life in their religious institutes. With a few exceptions,



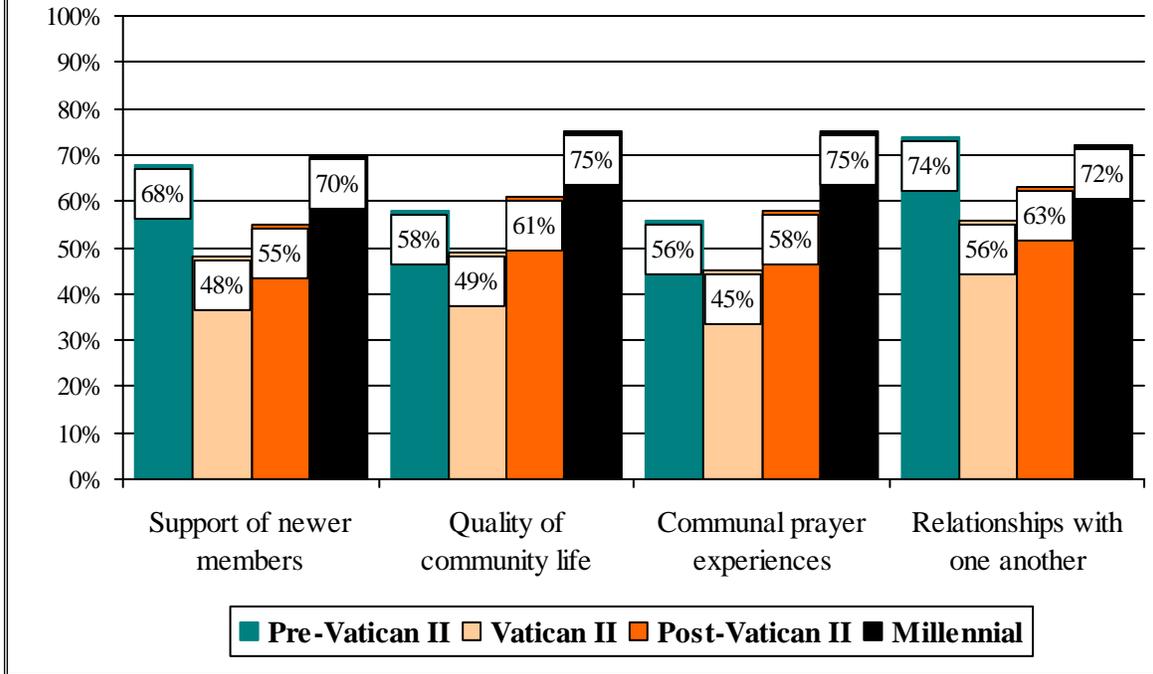
- Respondents from the Millennial Generation and, to only a slightly lesser degree, those from the Pre-Vatican II Generation give their institutes high marks for their formation programs as well as for their preparation for ministry and opportunities for ongoing formation, spiritual growth, and personal growth.
- Compared to other new members, those from the Vatican II Generation tend to be less positive about the formation program in their institute as well as about preparation for ministry and opportunities for ongoing formation, spiritual growth, and personal growth.



- In keeping with patterns noted earlier, the Millennials are the most positive in their assessment of their institute's fidelity to the Church and its teaching. The Vatican II Generation is the least positive.
- Millennials are also the most positive in their evaluation of the sense of identity as religious and as members of the institute.

*How would you rate the following in your religious institute?*

Percentage responding "Excellent"



- The oldest and youngest new members (those from the Pre-Vatican II and Millennial Generations) are more likely than those from the two middle generations (Vatican II and Post Vatican II) to rate support for newer members and relationships with one another as “excellent.”
- Millennial respondents are more likely than other respondents, especially those from the Vatican II Generation, to rate communal prayer experiences and the quality of community life as “excellent.”

## Practices Regarding the Religious Habit

Respondents were asked several questions regarding the wearing of a religious habit. About two-thirds (69 percent) report that members of their institute wear a habit. Among those who responded affirmatively, a little more than half (55 percent) indicate that the habit is required in all or most circumstances and a quarter (25 percent) indicate that it is optional. The remaining respondents report that the habit is required only at certain times, such as for ministry or prayer (16 percent), or provide some other response (4 percent).

Among those who reported that the habit is optional for members of their institute, two-thirds (68 percent) report that either “none” or only “a few” (defined as less than 25 percent) of their members wear it all or most of the time. Only one in seven (14 percent) report that “many” (defined as 50-74 percent) or “most” (defined as 75 percent or more) of their members wear it all or most of the time.

Among those who report that the habit is optional, 39 percent say that they themselves never wear it and 14 percent say they wear it in all or most circumstances. The rest wear it once in a while (14 percent) or at certain times such as prayer or ministry (33 percent).

Among those who report that their institute does *not* have a habit, one-third (32 percent) say they would wear a habit if they had that option.

### *Gender Differences*

- Nine in ten men (90 percent) who report that the habit is optional in their institute indicate that they wear it at least once in a while. A little more than half (54 percent) say they wear it at certain times, while one in seven wear it in all or most circumstances (14 percent). Almost half (48 percent) of the men in institutes that do not have a habit would wear it if that were an option.
- One in four women (27 percent) who report that the habit is optional in their institute say they wear it at least once in a while, with 15 percent reporting that they do so in all or most circumstances. Almost a quarter (23 percent) of the women in institutes that do not have a habit would wear it if they had that option.

### *Responses to Open-ended Questions*

In response to the question about what attracted them to their religious institutes, many of the respondents in institutes that wear a habit mentioned this among the things that were attractive to them. This was the case among both men and women, although it was more

frequent in the responses of women. Only a few respondents cited the fact that their institute does *not* have a habit as something that appealed to them.

*What most attracted me to the religious institute I joined was the community witness in their ministries, that they have a habit, and that they were Franciscan.*

*I was most attracted to the [Religious Institute] because of their common ministry and strong community life, Eucharistic and Marian devotion, and wearing of the habit, signifying commitment to traditional religious life and fidelity to the Church. The joy of the members was also a compelling witness, as well as a feeling of being “at home” here.*

*Our prayer life – our way of praying and our prayers. The visibility and witness shown to others in the wearing of our habit.*

*Strong identity – common prayer, common apostolate, habit, community life. This community knew/knows where it is going.*

*The habit (the fact that they wear one, not the style) and the kindness and joy of its members.*

*I was not originally attracted to community life or to the habit...I consider both of great (very high) value today (16 years later).*

*Although most older friars do not wear habit, those in formation wear it regularly. I consider this a good sign for the future. Fidelity to the Church, especially in younger friars – good sign for the future.*

*I was looking also for a group that did not wear a habit and that allowed members to live in apartments – Basically, I wanted a group that allowed for individuality and personal needs.*

### ***Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews***

Questions about the habit generated lively discussions among some focus group participants. Although most participants were from religious institutes that do not regularly wear habits, many saw some value in them while others were adamantly opposed to requiring them. The women tended to be either strongly in favor or strongly opposed to habits, while the men tended to be more mixed in their views.

*It was designed originally to be what the poor people wore. This was what you bought at J.C. Penney or Sears or what we are wearing. I don't think going back to medieval garb is the way to do it.*

*I appreciate that option, but I don't want to wear a habit and that's because that's who I am. So I didn't join an order that wore habits. Other people do want to wear a habit and that's fine and I wish everyone would just be fine with it. [Laughter] Let go of it already. I think it's more people that are looking at us and it's not us so much within religious life. I don't know if I've got that wrong, but to me it's more that people have this clothing issue, and it seems more coming from outside than from within our own.*

Some view attitudes about the habit dividing along generational lines, with those from younger generations being more open to habits and clerical dress. A few commented on how they were acted differently or were treated differently when wearing a habit or clerical dress.

*I would also echo what was said earlier about generational differences...It seems like in the Vatican II [Generation] there is a real strong dislike for clerical shirts or cassocks. It's wrapped up in like clericalism and the old way of proceeding in their religious orders. Like [among] Millennials and Generation X, I just don't see that attitude at all. I think when most of us wear clerical shirts in the younger generation, it's because we want to witness to the world that we're ordinary people that love Jesus and believe in all this stuff the Church teaches. We actually buy it. So it's more like the witness value and having that identity. And so whether it's a habit or clerical shirt or whatever, I think that a huge issue is, how do we have some kind of identity out in the world and how are we distinctive?*

*...We have a habit of a cassock and a big mission cross. Some guys wear it on formal occasions; most of us don't. I think with the younger guys, we're more accepting of wearing the cassock and cross...because it doesn't mean the same thing to us that it meant to the guys who were ordained in the '70s and early '80s, when they were high school seminarians and they had to wear it. They were forced to wear it. For us, the younger guys, it's a sign of our larger community because most of the rest of our community worldwide wears it. It's really just the Americans who don't wear it. The other odd thing is our community symbol is this big mission cross...with a big chain. So you profess your final vows and you're given this cross that you hang on a wall as opposed to putting it on, so there's some symbolism there. I think fundamentally the cassock or habit means something different for us than it meant for the older guys.*

*I think...there is something about the generation after Vatican II that really does desire some pretty tangible, concrete aspects...[T]here's an ache for truth...I think they really do respond to things, the sacramentals of tradition, and...whether that be rosaries or bells or what have you...they're sacramentals that are leading people into the Sacraments....[O]ur habits are blessed. We have prayers that we say when we put them on every day. So it certainly is not something that's just...to save money. It's certainly*

*something that helps identify me with the vows and live them ... What is it that as a culture we are needing to help us in this journey in coming to a closer relationship with Christ... How do we look now at are there some essential aspects to it that also our culture is looking toward... [I]f you're doing your research in terms of the future of religious life, I think there has to be some look at that because that also seems to be where some of the growth is really happening is in communities that have some of those things. I don't think that is the essential reason, I mean I didn't join my community because of the habit. I definitely would have picked a prettier color. [Laughter] But I think that's the reality, what's essentially being lived and then how are there aspects of sacramentals or, I don't know what other word to use, but that are really an extension of that.*

*People treat you differently in a positive way. I can remember making hospital rounds...and it's incredibly humbling because you know you aren't yourself anymore. I'm a representative of the Church and of God for better or worse....I'm just conscious that I'm speaking for the Church. That's an incredibly significant experience, I mean, being able to offer reconciliation to people but at the same time a very humbling experience.*

*We actually had two women who never wore the habit, wear the habit to school one day because it was "dress like it's 1942 day." They put on the habit and both of them said that people, mostly the teachers and less the students, interacted with them completely differently than they did on days when they wore whatever they wore. They got a lot of...anger from people....The interaction was almost uniformly not positive....[O]ne of them mentioned that every time she walked into a room somebody criticized her. So just putting on the habit these same two women seemed to change in people's eyes and I think I would find that very difficult.*

*There seems to be two very distinct ways you can conceive of it: habits and habitus from the original. There is a spirituality of this garment and that I put this on, typically I guess more in women religious, where you put it on and that's all you wear. The [Religious Institute], we never had a habit per se, we had a de facto one, but never a real one. I have a cassock. It's up in my closet and if I go into the more conservative reaches, I'll put that on and they'll like me. [Laughter] Otherwise, I have the flannel shirt rather than the clerics or whatever the situation calls for... There's one thing for that kind of witness value and there's another thing that says there is spirituality proper to how I dress. I can see it myself when I am dressed up in clerics, I do find myself acting differently as well. So it seems like it's not for nothing that my body image, my self-image, changes. And it's kind of odd, that transition. I don't swear when I'm wearing the cassock for one thing and that's not true other times. [Laughter] So just even how I hold myself, so it's just, it's kind of an odd...Part of my own self-awareness comes out of what I'm wearing and particularly in ministry. There are different needs for different people.*

## **Rewarding and Satisfying Aspects of Religious Life**

One of the open-ended questions at the end of the survey of new members asked: “What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?” Almost all of the new members responded and offered a range of comments about various aspects of religious life. The most frequent responses were about some aspect of the communal dimension of religious life. Some mention living, praying, and working together while others focus more on the sense of common purpose and being part of something larger than themselves. Many respondents identify some aspect of the spiritual dimension of religious life such as the sense of following God’s call, deepening their relationship with God and with Christ, and/or personal and communal prayer, as providing the greatest sense of reward or satisfaction. Finally, some new members cite the service or outreach dimension of religious life as the most rewarding or satisfying. Many of these respondents mention ministry, service, or the apostolate while other comment on being a witness to God for others.

A few new members, as in the examples below, could not limit their response to a single aspect of religious life.

*There are so many things that I have come to value in my very young religious life: community life, prayer, our apostolate in education, our history. Most of all it is the witness I am able to give with my life. When someone sees me they are reminded of faith and of God’s great love for them.*

*Common prayer, heartfelt discussions about faith and life, ministry and the opportunity to participate in a variety of ministries, opportunity to use my God-given gifts in a way that brings personal fulfillment and joy to other people, prophetic witness, mutual example and inspiration among friars and sisters.*

*(1) Relationship with Christ which grows daily. (2) Community life that aids me in living the vows and growing in holiness. (3) Apostolate in passing on to others the fruits of my contemplation.*

### ***Community Life***

As already noted, many of the respondents identify community life – or some aspect of community life – as the dimension of religious life they find most rewarding or satisfying.

*Living together, praying together and sharing together.*

*The most rewarding aspect of religious life is our community living. In community we pray, live, recreate, and minister together. Our cohesiveness and sense of identity as religious serving others as ministers of the Gospel is wonderful.*

*Fraternity, faith sharing, prayer in common and alone. Sharing the fruit of our life together with people outside of the community.*

*The common life of ministry, prayer, and brotherhood. I feel like I am a part of a common endeavor that is holy and fulfilling God's call to service in the Gospel and in the Church.*

*Our community life and prayer gives us the strength to serve those who are poor and in need. My community has encouraged and challenged me to see beyond my personal expectations. Together we work to make a difference in serving others spiritually and corporally. Community life is rewarding as well as the most difficult aspect of this life given to God in service of the poor.*

*Being connected with others who are committed to living the Gospel. We love, support, challenge, collaborate with one another to bring God's love to those in need, and to do our best to live God's love for all of humanity and creation. Together we can be more effective, in responding to needs and discerning God's actions, than we could as lone individuals.*

### **Common Purpose**

Many of the respondents find satisfaction in being part of something larger than themselves and in sharing in a common life and mission with others.

*I find most rewarding our truly deep desire to seek God together and what it is God is calling us to in this time and place. I find deeply satisfying our communal desire to reach out to those in need among us and the joy of having the opportunity to do that together, either actually ministering together or knowing we have the support of the others. I also deeply appreciate our daily life and prayer that sustains us.*

*Feeling grounded with God better because I am with like-minded women who have given themselves to God and the charism of our congregation. I didn't want to do and be for and with God alone – we make a better witness together.*

*Support of other sisters, shared values, goals and desires for the world. Shared desire to grow in relationship with God and to serve the people of God.*

*That we still live in common and share the mission together.*

*We are all in this together. The same vision/mission.*

*Sense of being part of a larger whole dedicated to a common purpose/values/good.*

*Being connected with others who are committed to living the Gospel. We love, support, challenge, collaborate with one another to bring God's love to those in need, and to do our best to live God's love for all of humanity and creation. Together we can be more effective, in responding to needs and discerning God's actions, than we could as lone individuals.*

*I have a sense of belonging to something big – a sense of purpose. I am convinced the Holy Spirit wants us to exist and carry out a particular role in the Church's mission. I love my sisters.*

*A sense of being part of something larger than myself, being called to take risks and being associated with people who are engaged with life struggles and God until death.*

*Being a part of something greater than myself.*

*Being part of something larger than myself – we can do much more together than we can as individuals.*

### ***Following God's Will***

A number of new members mention the sense of satisfaction that comes from knowing they are responding to God's call and following God's will for them.

*I have always felt called and I know I am where I am supposed to be.*

*The sense that this is who I have been called to be before God.*

*Knowing that I am where God has called me to be.*

*Knowing that I am living out of the vocation God called me to.*

*I know this is where God has led me and I am following the radical call of God in my life.*

*The belief that I am living out God's will for me in the state of life.*

*The knowledge that I'm doing God's will and that He's saving souls through me.*

*The “knowing” of doing God’s will with my life and sharing community with my sisters.*

*Having a sense of commitment and fulfilling God’s will for my life.*

*I firmly believe that this is God’s will for me and I find great peace in that. Doing God’s will, whatever it is, I find most satisfying.*

*Serving others and knowing it isn’t just about me, it’s what God has called me to do.*

*That I am doing God’s will. This brings me a deep joy.*

### ***Deepening Relationship with God***

In a similar vein, many new members describe their deepening relationship with God and with Christ as the most satisfying and rewarding aspect of their lives. Some mention consecration to Christ and being a Bride of Christ.

*Growing more deeply in love with God.*

*Union with Christ, prayer, mission to serve Christ and the Church.*

*Being the spouse of Christ and being able to dedicate every moment of every day as an act of worship.*

*My consecration to God. I am a spouse of Christ.*

*My consecration to Jesus Christ.*

*Belonging totally and completely to our Lord Jesus Christ. Living daily as his bride. And then sharing that love with others.*

*Jesus – His daily invitation to draw close to Him in this way of life through prayer and service to others, and to know I might be helping others come closer to Christ and follow Him in loving service to the Church.*

### ***Personal and Communal Prayer***

Many respondents identify prayer, both personal and communal, as the most rewarding and satisfying aspect of religious life. While some cite specific types of prayer, others comment on prayer life in more general terms.

*Opportunity to attend daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, and other exercises as a part of religious life.*

*The prayer life is the most rewarding. Community and solitary prayer.*

*[What] I find it the most rewarding/satisfying to have such a prayerful religious community. Also, because we are a Eucharistic community, I know that we are always united in the Eucharist...no matter how far apart the rest of our community may be located.*

*Community and personal prayer and friendship with diverse people in the community. As a Benedictine personal prayer means lectio divina.*

*I find most rewarding about my religious life is the time for Eucharistic and contemplative prayer. Our founder used to say: "Be contemplative first, then men of action."*

*The day to day rhythm of prayer and ministry. Sharing insights with people about love of God.*

*What I find to be most satisfying/rewarding about religious life is our common prayer times that compel us to work outside of our four walls with the people of God and yet also knowing that I have some place to come back to.*

### ***Ministry and Service***

Many of the respondents identify ministry or service as a source of satisfaction. Many mention service or the apostolate in the abstract while a few mention specific types of ministry, such as serving people who are poor or working with young people.

*Knowing that my life makes a difference in the lives of those whom I serve. And knowing that I have a whole community behind me who is supporting me in my ministry. I'm not out there by myself.*

*I find that ministry, especially with other members of my institute, in a manner consistent with my institute's history and charism, and the Church's vision of religious life is most satisfying.*

*Ministry – being able to serve others as a visible member/representative of Christ.*

*What I find most rewarding about religious life is serving the Church in various ways.*

*I love my ministry. It's not something I would have been able to do if I hadn't joined.*

*The freedom I have to give my time to people in need. Whatever the ministry.*

*The opportunity to be supported on my God quest and to engage in ministry with other women who share my values and desires. To be part of ministry that is larger than myself.*

### ***Being a Witness***

Many of the new members report that they find a satisfaction in being a witness and calling to mind God's presence for people. Some mentioned the witness value of the habit, while a few maintain that habits are not necessary and that religious life itself is a witness.

*The greatest gift of my religious life is that I am a visible witness and that I call to mind the presence of God when people see me. I have had many opportunities to share in experiences with people because they share their struggles, hopes, and dreams with me because I have been blessed to have this awesome vocation.*

*The opportunity to be part of something larger than myself. The sense that I am responding to God's call in my life. Sharing the dailiness of life with other women who are also seeking God. Our witness to another way of life in our over-sexed, consumerist, individualistic culture.*

*Because I wear the religious habit, I can be a visible witness to Christ and his Church.*

*Giving witness as a religious sister in a full habit!*

*Living in community, praying together, eating together, wearing a habit, which has many people approaching me many times and affirming the habit and also seeing a sister – visibility/witness. I thoroughly enjoy and am elated to serve the people of God in the Church today.*

*The connection with other religious. Religious life is important, a sign of witness. Habits are not needed, today's dress is the dress of the day. I can reach out to people and bring God's love and joy and compassion to many.*

## **Greatest Challenges in and for Religious Life**

The third open-ended question at the end of the survey asked new members: “What do you find most challenging about religious life?” Similarly, the focus groups and many of the interview participants were also asked what they find most challenging both *in* religious life and *for* religious life. Respondents identified many issues and concerns. Some of these are perennial issues in religious life: the challenges of living in community, overcoming personal weaknesses, faithfully living the vows, and balancing personal, communal, and ministerial responsibilities. Some are more unique to this particular time in the history of religious life in the United States: aging and diminishment in their religious institutes, age and experience differences among new members as well as between new members and others in community, the lack of peers in religious life and in their religious institutes, and ideological and theological divisions, often across generational lines. This section highlights some of the comments related to the challenges that are more particular to the present day.

### ***Aging and Diminishment***

Many survey respondents and focus group participants commented on the aging and diminishment in religious life and/or in their religious institutes as a challenge, especially for new members.

*As numbers dwindle, the challenge is to remain alive and vibrant, to be true to our mission regardless of numbers and ages.*

*Dwindling numbers of members, less visibility of religious, religious afraid to envision a new look of religious life.*

*Wondering what direction religious life is heading in the next 5-10 years as the number of professed men and women continues to decline...*

*Being the youngest and uncertainty about how religious life will unfold in the years to come.*

*Living in community where the majority of the other men are much older than me, and knowing that the size of the province is quickly decreasing.*

### ***Future of Ministry***

Some of the respondents express concerns about the future of ministry as their members age and their numbers continue to decline.

*The rapid aging of larger numbers of members; it is eclipsing our ministry and community life.*

*Because we are getting so few vocations, more “internal” responsibilities are falling on me, taking time and energy from my mission. We are being forced to close missions the Church still needs, and pass up missions the Church needs, due to aging membership.*

*Sometimes the Institute’s limits as it faces challenges for the future in...caring for retirement needs of aging members which is very important. I don’t mean to minimize this effort – but there is a desire for creating new ministries and sometimes the realities of numbers and needs hold us back.*

*Sustainability of older members and maintenance of property and issues of sustainability of our congregation and all its ministries.*

### ***Apathy and Pessimism***

Some of the new members perceive apathy and pessimism in their religious institutes, due in part to aging and diminishment. Others are challenged by those who think religious life as dying or dead.

*Apathy among many community members, sluggishness, unwillingness to live and share at a deeper level. Encouraging new members to dare to dream!*

*Fewer ACTIVE people, dwindling numbers and dwindling energy. Who will be left and what will happen? It seems we are just dying slowly, not making a real decision either way – dying by default.*

*Feeling that my community seems willing and resigned to die out rather than get serious about inviting new members.*

*...I find we are in a period of diminishment in terms of manpower – this I can accept. What I find difficult is the sluggishness with which we adapt to this reality in our vision. We seem to go about our business with minimal foresight to changing structures, expectations, etc. My sense is, with a majority of our men over 60 years of age, they are in a period of life where they want to continue and complete what they are settled in. This creates an environment of status quo maintenance as opposed to innovation so we collectively are more interested in maintaining present structures than renewing them...*

*Talking with religious/Catholics who think religious life is dying – trying to remain both traditional (in best sense) and relevant.*

*That some members believe religious life is dead and want to see associates as our future. I am yearning for a revival of what vows mean/can be in the future.*

### ***Differences in Age***

Many of the younger survey respondents comment on the difficulty of being a young member in an aging religious institute.

*I find it the most challenging to live with sisters much older than I. I love them dearly and learn a lot from them, but we come from two different time “eras” and so sometimes our ways of thinking or completing a task will clash. Compromise is usually the most helpful.*

*Aging of the sisters and not enough “younger” or newer members to share experiences. It is very different today than when most of the sisters entered.*

*As a younger member I often feel my voice is not heard because I am always “outnumbered.” I also feel a tremendous sense of loneliness at times. Lastly, I find it difficult always living with the elderly.*

*Being the youngest member is tough especially when most of the people I live with are 20 years older (and this is the “younger” house). Members in different generations other than mine don’t always understand my generation’s motivations.*

*There’s a real lack of understanding or interest in the potential contributions, insights and gifts of newer members within my congregation, and a disturbing and discouraging lack of ability to imagine or plan beyond the lifetimes of the dominant cohort (people currently between 65 and 75 years old). Our communities need to make an “option for the young” a value.*

### ***Differences in Life Experience***

While some new members find it challenging to be a young person in an aging community, many older new members also encounter difficulties because of differences in life experience.

*I entered the community at the age of 42. My life experience is vastly different from those who entered at the age of 18. It is not the difference in age that is challenging; it is the difference in life experience.*

*Experiencing the isolation at times in community due to my lived experiences before I entered. Some sisters can't fathom my lived experiences. Different points of view entering at an older age sometimes causes conflict. Many gaps between sisters my age and myself.*

*I was in a religious community when I was younger. I have been involved in various aspects of Church ministry over 35 years. I lived alone for many years. What has been most challenging is the concept of formation/incorporation for someone older, with theology degrees, ministerial experience, and life experience. It all worked out okay but was difficult at the time. Also for a new person coming in older, it is difficult at times to live with the ups and downs of daily community life.*

*Living with others in community when I lived alone for 25 years. Continuing to have hope in light of our declining numbers.*

*Living alone, being a "sister mom" with three grown sons and two grandchildren and not having other "sister moms" to talk with.*

*Re-entering as an older woman I am stretched in my ministry experiences. As a mother and grandmother I am also stretched to find the balance that works for all.*

### ***Lack of Peers in Religious Life***

Both younger and older new members remarked on the difficulty of not having peers in formation, in community, and/or in religious life.

*The transitions and the isolation experienced at times by a young woman going through formation without peers in her community or sisters that can really relate to her experience.*

*Being the youngest in community and not being able to live with anyone my age or in formation.*

*Not having more younger members to share the experience with...perhaps this is only heightened because there are so many that are significantly older....*

*Few (age) peers within the community and a lack of understanding of religious life among those not in religious life.*

*Lack of peers in religious life.*

## *Integration into the Community*

Some new members – both younger and older – comment on the difficulty of integrating into a community in which older members have long established relationships and know each other well.

*All of the members of my community are much older than me... It is difficult trying to form relationships with other members when the others have been established with particular groups within the community (those who were in formation together have their stories and have maintained friendships).*

*Feeling so out of place in my congregation because I'm so much younger than everyone else. It's difficult to find my niche, and it's hard to develop mutual relationships with older sisters – their friendships are already established.*

*Moving into a situation in which all the other sisters already know each other well and have their ways of doing things.*

One of the focus group discussions addressed the issue of integration and the challenge of entering a community with established relationships and patterns of doing things.

*I think the integration of new people is a challenge. Now maybe because my congregation doesn't have a lot of people coming in, but it seems like everybody is already set. Everybody is in a rut and nobody, in a way, wants to get out of that rut in order to change or to have somebody new come in... I knew one person when I entered. I didn't know the whole rest of the congregation. So I kind of like rotated through different places. It was wonderful to be a guest in people's homes. But, it was really kind of obvious that, "Don't change anything. We already know that we have meatloaf on Wednesday or that this person is the one that can make meatloaf because that's all she can make. So don't try to make meatloaf." It's little things like that that it seems to be kind of a rigidity, you know. "We've worked this out and we don't want to start over again. We want to keep it. Don't make waves."*

*...[P]eople have classes. They came in with a group and then they go through all of life with that group in a way. Like occasionally you'll come in and, "our group is eating together," like at a gathering. I don't know who's in the group. I have no group. [Laughter] I'm totally alone. So... they came in as groups of like 50 or 25 and they were really close. There may be only ten left but those ten still stay in that. They're kind of a cluster.*

## *Cultural Differences*

Many respondents identify other types of differences among members as a challenge, especially in community life. A few specifically mention cultural difference based on race or ethnicity. A few also comment on the lack of diversity and openness to those of other cultures in their religious institutes and in religious life. As noted below, one of the focus groups also addressed this issue.

*What I find most challenging about religious life is the tensions that can arise in having men from very different backgrounds, ages, and styles of life trying to live in one community.*

*Learning to live with different cultures and languages. Learning how to live my ideals in contemporary settings. Adopt new way of life style.*

*The lack of diversity and openness to other cultures.*

*Cultural differences, particularly as the majority of the members in my unit are of the same culture/race, and how that impacts communal relationships.*

*Communal living is the most challenging (especially difficult for minority). Language and cultural differences create more challenges for minority members.*

One of the focus groups engaged in a lengthy discussion about diversity, which they saw as a key issue in religious life today. A few suggested that that, despite good intentions, religious were not prepared to deal with the diversity of those coming to religious life today.

*...[O]ne of the things that I observed, not just in our congregation but in others, is that...religious I don't think tend to do diversity well. I mean diversity in terms of ethnic but also in terms of age. I think when it comes to age, I think it would be wise for vocation people to think about having a sense of recognizing that people in their teens or 20s, it's like it's a different culture than people in their 30s and 40s and 50s and 60s and so on. That you have to, just as you would hope that there would be some cultural sensitivity to people from different nationalities, different ethnicities, and so on and that there would also be that sensitivity when it comes to issues of age.*

*...I think that that diversity piece is a really key one...[W]e have a [House] and so there were [Novices] from all around the country, and so it was an incredibly diverse group of us. But, you know, whenever there's diversity there's more tension. Because if you don't understand each other, whether it's different ages, different cultures...it demands more of you, of everyone, and I think that's an incredible gift that we have today... [W]henver we were gathering from different communities...when those of us who were novices were*

*on one side of the group and our formators were on another. The formators were all middle-aged white men and women and all of us were, you name it, in terms of age, in terms of race, in terms of nationality, mothers and so on. And so our sharing was enriched by that, our life together was enriched by that. It was also challenged, but it forced all of us to go deeper into the journey...I think that's one of the challenges that formators tend to have. Because they're coming from a homogenized group for the most part of dealing with, how do you deal with all this diversity? And everyone loves it in theory, but in practice it means you've got to stretch. You've got to stretch to know that somebody, the way that somebody talks to you, or says something or doesn't say something, might have to do profoundly with their roots – their cultural roots – and not necessarily, you know, you're expecting one way...[T]hat is, I think, one of the huge challenges because I think that is where we're moving as a whole in the United States society but also in terms of the Church. And that's a blessing and it's a challenge. So I think for religious life, and this would be men and women, that that piece really needs to be understood. And I think that older people who, in terms of formators, need to be trained in that. And I would say that for any formator regardless of whether they're a person of color or a white person.*

*...I'm not sure that a lot of religious communities are ready to accept people from other ethnic backgrounds. They may say it's a good idea but there is a clash...I don't know how prepared our religious congregations are for that. It's really changing. In our [Religious Institute] the last four or five years there are a lot of guys joining from other cultural backgrounds. It's very diverse, as you were saying. But are religious congregations prepared for that?*

*...I think that generally the answer probably is that, "No, that we don't know how to really accept and bring in others." I think there needs to be an awareness that the community itself is shaped and changed by everyone who comes in. It has tradition throughout the life but all the more so now because you've got the few numbers that are entering tend to be much more diverse and different. It demands so much more of those who have been in it for so many years and have been pretty much coming from a same kind of middle-class, white background. And so it is a huge challenge but I think congregations need to ask themselves, "If we're accepting this diversity," that means, "How are we going to change and not just how are we going to form these people to be like us, but how are they going to form us? I mean, how are we going to have to shift?" So I think that's a key challenge.*

### ***Theological and Ecclesiological Differences***

Many respondents mentioned theological and ecclesiological differences among members as a challenge in religious life and in their institutes. While some struggle to remain faithful to the Church, others struggle with the lack of fidelity to the Church and its teachings. Many see

these differences in generational terms, primarily as a gap between those from the Millennial and/or Past-Vatican II Generations and those from the Vatican II Generation.

*Generational gaps between younger members and middle-aged or older members. On issues of religious identity, dress, community life, etc.*

*Intergenerational issues such as loyalty to the Church, orthodoxy, seriousness about living the vows, commitment to common life...etc. I find this lacking in many members older than 40 in my community.*

*Navigating the deep generational divisions within the Society – particularly the neuralgic points for the middle-aged and late middle-aged members, including the Church's teaching on sexuality, women's ordination, and devotional and liturgical traditions.*

*Our seeming distance from the "institutional" Church; the generational battle between the Baby Boomers' anti-authoritarianism and their wounds from crippling formation and our younger generations' desire to be what our Institute has claimed and continues to claim to be – loyal sons of the Church.*

*I find the progressive women's communities have become over individualistic and have lost their group edge and voice. Due to demographics, there are a large number who can get very defensive and seem to have difficulty truly hearing anyone who came of age after Vatican II. I think we are trying to respond to the desires of newer members who want to live in community and to be sent, but I fear that the small numbers coming in won't be enough critical mass for the shift we need.*

*Walking the fine line of respecting the administration/leadership/"elders" and challenging with where I feel we are called to grow. The questions of the "young" can be ignored or challenged by those in ages 70-60 especially.*

A few of the new members who are in the generation between the Vatican II and Millennial Generations feel caught in the middle of the generation gap. Some believe the the younger generation is challenging religious to renewal while others want no part of a more traditional style of religious life.

*I'm in a community with many members over the age of 70 and new sisters coming in. There are few of us "in the middle." As formation director my job is to make sure the new sisters have solid formation. At the same time I'm needed to keep the life going, as it were. This tension is often very challenging.*

*I am 40 years old and I have been in final profession of vows for four years. I understand and even have a desire for more intentional religious life. This means a solid community*

*prayer life. It also may mean we embrace our traditions such as wearing the habit again. The problem is religious who are in their 60s are resisting the change. They hold onto ideologies instead of our religious traditions and beliefs. The millennials are challenging us to renewal, possibly even reform but the religious formed in the 1960s and '70s are resisting.*

*Our community has a high elderly population. There are only nine members under 65. There are no peers to relate with (Baby Boomers) and younger people are seemingly looking for more traditional religious lifestyle, which is not something I want to be part of.*

### ***Polarization in the Church and in Religious Life***

While some fall on one side or the other on various theological issues and are frustrated by the other side, some of the new members find the greatest challenge to be polarization within the Church, within religious life, and/or within their institutes.

*The conflict among factions within our Church over ideology and practice.*

*The polarization within the institute and the Church.*

*The politics in Church is frustrating. The traditional and liberal members are at odds with each other and both show favoritism to their group members.*

*Seeing polarization in the Church in which reactionaries from both sides grapple for control, influence and domination. While giving witness through external forms is good, disordered attachment to these external forms (habit, clerical dress, public piety, etc.) disturbs me, especially when any of those forms become absolute.*

*The liberal agenda and conservative banter. We should promote the Gospel and be faithful to Church teaching. Any self interpretation of that in either extreme is terrible.*

*The Church is a challenge – but so is the anti-Church, anti-canonical status movement.*

### ***Desire for Community Life***

A number of new members comment on their desire for a more regular common life and the challenge of trying to find that in their religious institutes.

*Finding others who want to live a more regular common life, especially in my peer group.*

*Finding other religious who are committed to living common life in the community I live in/minister in. Many prefer to live alone.*

*Community life. Newer members are looking for community living/communal prayer. Older sisters are looking in some ways for the opposite.*

*Finding others who want to live more radically among those who need us most, and to live with others who want to pray communally daily.*

*The diminshment of age and the scarcity of community living options with vitality or newness (not just moving in with two residents of long-standing).*

*That we no longer emphasize common life, living together, common good, common prayer. That we are not generally passionate about vowed life. It's a challenge to be faithful in face of a death wish.*

## Hope for the Future of Religious Life

Although many of the participants in the focus groups and interviews expressed concerns about the future of religious life and the future of their religious institutes, most remain hopeful. Most acknowledge that the numbers in religious life may continue to decline and that their religious institutes may be different in the future. Nonetheless, they believe religious life will persevere and that the Spirit can and will move in that diminishment. Some already see signs of hope, especially in a younger generation that they believe is bringing a new energy and optimism to religious life. The following excerpts provide examples of the attitudes of new members about the future of religious life.

*I think there is a future for religious life. It's been there a long time and it will continue in whatever shape that God wants it to be. We won't have the numbers that we used to at one point but I think it will persevere. So that is my hope.*

*My sense is, my hope for the future is that we, it's not a numbers game anymore. We have smaller numbers. It's a reality and I think we should just live with that and recognize that the gifts that people bring, that that's OK. Instead of trying to get more people, we stick with what we have and our life as we all said earlier in terms of what got us here were the people living their lives. We were attracted to that. I think if we do that well, it's going to come. And if it doesn't come, then we die and we recreate or what have you. So that's my thing. I think my hope for the future is that we realize who we are and let go of some of the numbers things and say, "Let's just be who we are" and see if maybe we'll transform hearts.*

*I don't pretend to vision the future, but I think my hope would be the ability for a real intensification of what is the vocation to religious life and priesthood and then really the ability to develop as persons, as integrated persons, into psychology and sexuality and spirituality and all of those things so that we can really be whole persons that can then really be a witness in this, as Francis says, without even preaching, without saying something, but that we can in our bodies, in our actions really we speak the joy of being in union with Christ that would then awaken that in others. That would then awaken others to their own faith or vocation, whatever their vocation may be. But that would really truly be the eschatological sign that we are called to that that would bring people to desire their own union with Christ.*

*I think for me there's a bright future for religious life. But at the same time we need to articulate what religious life really is all about in this present time in the history of our Church. I think we have the solutions to that. But we're trying very hard to hold on to those barriers or institutions that we have. We need to let go of all the stuff that we can't do anymore. We're still hanging on to that and then a lot of times we are, what is the*

right word – “stagnant” – in the old ways of religious life. It’s in the past. We’re having a hard time to look at the present and the future.

...[I]n terms of the future I don’t know,...but in terms of my hope, smaller, more prophetic, certainly more contemplative. For the apostolic orders you’re quite right that jobs did define us. If we don’t become more contemplative, contemplatives in action, then we are going to miss out. By prophetic, I mean prophetic since we are not part of the hierarchy of the Church we can be prophetic both to the society in which we live and sometimes the Church hierarchy needs prophets, as Francis was one.

I always go back to the [Religious Institute] Constitutions...about how the Society was not created by human means and won’t be sustained by human means. I...look at the demographics and with my little mind for statistics, it’s frightening and I mean there’s no way to frame it otherwise, institutionally it will look very different 10, 20, 30 years from now... I just feel like there is a great movement of the Spirit in that and that, oftentimes, the Spirit moves more in diminishment than in exultation. You know, the meek shall inherit the earth, something like that. But there really is great spiritual fruit in being discerning about what the next step is and to say that it’s probably foolish to come up with... a practical grand scheme since really it seems like religious life is not about any of our scheming, except for Jesus’. He can scheme all he wants. [Laughter]

I am hopeful for religious life. I think it’ll change. I think it’ll have to be institutional changings. I’m just thinking about in my community we have affiliated sister communities. There are about three different ones in this country. One of them, I mean the ages are just at that point. There are no new vocations. They’ll have to merge probably with a community that’s not their community, if you know what I mean. Things will have to change in that way. But I think as long as there’s a need for our charism, like in our own case the charism of reconciliation, let’s say, then we will meet that need. What gives me hope, I think, most of all is thinking back to the founding of my own community where our founder, [Name], founded us with like three other guys. We have 200 now. He started with three. I think we can survive. Yeah, we’ll have to give up a bunch of parishes, maybe, but life goes on.

Yeah, I’m hopeful. I am hopeful and I think that diminishment can have a lot of good energy in it and that the Spirit really is at work there...I think in discernment for people if they’re following their call, it’s like a call that you are entering something that you don’t know, a call to what? Someone in our community... wanted a moratorium on taking in any new people. It was like, “please don’t.” And we didn’t. [Laughter] It is one of the real challenges for people. They feel called, it’s like you know you are entering something that could completely, that is going to completely change. I take a lot of heart from the women in our community, this whole group that entered right before Vatican II and within the first years, while they were in formation or just took vows, like everything flipped around and they made it through that very well.

*...[A]s a novice one of the things I have been doing is reading a lot of history. I think when the [Religious Institute] arrived in the U.S., what [Charism] was changed radically and I think that's going to happen again. And I can't even begin to see how and I don't know that anybody can because in my mind it's sort of a matter of finding the direction you need to walk in and keeping walking until all of a sudden you are there and you look back and you go, "Oh, look it's way different than it used to be." I think both the recent changes and the changes in the past, it's going to look different but it's still going to be, we've been around for 1,500 years. We are not going away tomorrow.*

*When I was right out of college and maybe after the first ten years after that, there was very little interest in religious life. I've noticed like in the last ten years that young people seem to have a deeper interest in spirituality and what is their purpose in life. There doesn't seem to be – and this is just my observation – but there doesn't seem to be to me this self-centeredness that was in the, like the "Me Generation" of the '70s and '80s. I don't know what brings that change about, I don't know whether it's the Holy Spirit at work, which I'm assuming that it would be, but there does seem to be a different attitude...I do feel better about the fact that there seems to be a renewed interest, in this country anyway, with people and their faith and their purpose in life.*

*I'm very hopeful as well. Among the [Members of the Religious Institute] we've noticed that our numbers have increased a little bit. I think they've gotten younger as well at entrance day. And also just in generational attitudes. I think in older generations there's sort of fatalism about the future of religious life, I think. I notice in our younger generation, youth seem to be pretty excited about religious life and want to promote it and want to get people to consider it. So it seems to be much more optimism and energy about promoting vocations.*

*Especially since we're reconfiguring the provinces, I mean the [Religious Institute] provinces. That's a lot of new energy to go for it and sort of shake things up.*

*I think I was a lot more hopeful earlier. I have now been in 14 years. I came in '95, and I guess maybe I hoped to see something happen to keep me hopeful, and I haven't seen any change. Everybody keeps saying we're going to reconfigure this, it's going to be different, but it doesn't seem to be happening. So I am kind of wondering if it will. I think the basic Franciscan spirituality is going to exist in some form. I think...there's something very basic about that. But I don't know, no one has given me an idea of what it's going to look like anywhere that I've read. So I'm kind of wondering.*

*...I really think religious life has a future. It's changing. We're no longer going to have the big numbers that can fill bodies at institutions. One thing that I'm looking forward to is, in our own history...we began with the lay people and then the sisters' order came up and then the brother-priest order came up. I think we are going to go back to where*

*there's more lay people and maybe I even envision a house that would be like where there would have a family living here and then a side house that has where the brothers and the sisters live and we are all living in community the way the image, that vision that our founder had. Maybe that's our future, I would hope.*

*...[W]e can talk about how flawed everything is but what I'm hopeful about is the fact that we're all still here as temporary professed. We still can kiss it. We know it's flawed, but we want to be in it because we care a lot about it...But I think for me the way I look at it and here are the two words you talked about earlier, the challenges in religious life and for religious life. One is the integrity piece. How can we still adapt our charism, which we have been given in the Church, our unique way of sharing that with people in the world that sorely needs it without calling up our founders and say, "Hey, is this how we do it today?...What about the other things, the diversity piece? What about the institutions? We can't manage 18 high schools and three universities. How do we incorporate that today?" And that's really how do we maintain our integrity of sharing our unique gifts that we have, maybe even learning to die. Maybe our charism is done. Maybe it's time to move on to something else. Maybe someone is going to have to turn off the lights after the last [Members of the Religious Institute] – God hope not – but maybe we're going to have to end up doing that. But how can we gracefully age that way and also adapt our charism in our time and place facing the varieties of diversity out there?*

### **PART III: Best Practices in Vocation Promotion**

The findings from the study suggest a number of “best practices” for vocation promotion. These include instilling a “culture of vocations” and involving membership and leadership in concerted vocation promotion efforts; having a full-time vocation director who is supported by a team and resources; using new media, especially websites and other online tools; offering discernment programs and other opportunities for potential candidates to meet members and learn about the institute; and targeting college students and young adults as well as elementary and high school students to expose them to the possibility of religious life and inform them about the institute.

Although these practices can have a positive impact on attracting and retaining new members, the research suggests that it is the example of members and the characteristics of the institute that have the most influence on the decision to enter a particular institute. The most successful institutes in terms of attracting and retaining new members at this time are those that follow a more traditional style of religious life in which members live together in community and participate in daily Eucharist, pray the Divine Office, and engage in devotional practices together. They also wear a religious habit, work together in common apostolates, and are explicit about their fidelity to the Church and the teachings of the Magisterium. All of these characteristics are especially attractive to the young people who are entering religious life today.

#### ***Being Proactive about Vocations***

Interviews with vocation directors and others in religious institutes that have been successful in attracting and retaining new members revealed that many of these institutes made a decision at some point to do something about vocations and new membership. In some cases, the decision came from a chapter or assembly and in others it came from leadership. Whatever the case, the institute decided to be proactive and to invest some resources into vocation promotion. This took a number of different forms including appointing a vocation director and/or team to work on vocation promotion, making financial resources available for vocation promotion, educating leadership and/or membership about vocation promotion, and developing a plan of action.

The research also suggests, however, that good intentions, sophisticated marketing campaigns, and the investment of resources into vocation promotion alone will not attract new members. It is the example of members and the community life, prayer life, and/or ministries of the institute that most attract new members.

## *Creating a Culture of Vocations*

Many of the successful institutes are characterized by a “culture of vocations” within the institute. In these institutes everyone – not just the vocation director – has a sense of responsibility for vocation promotion and is involved in and supportive of vocation efforts. This includes leadership and membership as well as support services such as communications and development. In some cases, the institutions and ministries of the institute are also involved in vocation promotion efforts.

Vocation directors described a number of different ways of nurturing that culture such as regularly informing members of vocation activities through newsletters, e-mail correspondence, and at meetings as well as inviting members to participate in vocation fairs, “Come and See” experiences, discernment retreats, or serving as mentors or contacts for those in discernment. Members can also play an important role by praying for vocations, inviting individuals to consider a religious vocation, and by encouraging vocations in whatever setting they find themselves.

Findings from the survey of new members indicate that regular meeting with members and visits to communities are among the activities that new members found most helpful in their discernment process. Comments from new members further support the value to them of spending time with members, in whatever setting, while they were discerning as well as after they entered.

## *Vocation Director and/or Team*

Findings from the survey of religious institutes reveal that there is a positive correlation between having a vocation director, especially one who is full-time, and having candidates and new members in initial formation. Having a full-time director is also positively correlated with having a higher number of members who have entered and stayed since 1990 as well as with a higher retention rate.

Although the relationship is not as strong, having a vocation team is also positively correlated with having new members. Vocation team was defined on the survey as more than one person directly responsible for vocation ministry. The *number* of team members does not appear to have a statistically significant relationship to attracting or retaining new members. However, the review of practices in some of the more successful institutes found that a few have a full-time director and one or two part-time associate or assistant directors or some other configuration that involves more than one person. At least one institute that was studied has two full-time vocation directors.

Findings from the survey of new members also suggest that the vocation director plays an important role in the discernment process. Most new members (60 percent) report that the

vocation director or team provided “very much” encouragement when they were considering entering their institute (85 percent report that they received at least “some” encouragement from the vocation director) and 70 percent who met regularly with a vocation director found it “very” helpful in their discernment (93 percent say it was at least “somewhat” helpful).

Comments from interview and focus group participants also underscore the importance of the vocation director. Many of these new members commented in particular about how much they appreciated the vocation director responding quickly and personally to an initial inquiry. They were also grateful for the vocation directors who were helpful and supportive without being pushy.

Several new members mentioned vocation directors who they experienced as pandering to them or giving them a sales pitch. Examples included promises of opportunities to travel and assurances that they could do anything they wanted in terms of ministry. These new members suggested that this was the wrong mindset and the wrong approach for those with authentic vocations. A few vocation directors also commented on new members wanting honesty about religious life and about life in the institute and their willingness to be challenged.

### ***Use of Media for Vocation Promotion***

According to the survey of religious institutes, using a website or the Internet for vocation promotion has the strongest impact on new membership of the various types of media about which they were asked. That is, those who reported that they use the Internet for vocation promotion are more likely to report having new members. Print materials and, to a lesser extent, advertising and TV also have some influence, although the relationships are not very strong. There is no significant relationship between using radio for vocation promotion and having new members. Using multiple types of media also does not appear to have a significant impact.

Findings from the survey of new members indicate that the younger they are, the more likely they are to say that websites, especially the websites of religious institutes; CDs, DVDs, and videos; and print and online promotional materials were helpful to them when they were discerning their call to religious life. This suggests that those who are discerning a vocation now would be even more likely to find these types of resources helpful.

Anecdotal evidence from new members underscores the importance of using new media, especially websites, to inform potential candidates about religious life and about the religious institute. Many potential candidates, especially those who are younger, have had limited, if any, direct exposure to men and women religious. For some, a website will be their first introduction to a religious institute. For many others, websites and other media such as DVDs and newsletters will help inform and educate them about the institute and about religious life.

Several vocation directors as well as some of the new members themselves raised some cautions about websites and other media. Some of the vocation directors commented that young people today tend to be very media savvy and that they do their homework before approaching an institute. Some of the younger members suggested that that websites or other media should be tested with the target audience whose impressions of what “works” may be very different from those of older members. Both vocation directors and new members emphasized the importance of honesty and authenticity in presenting the institute and suggested that websites and other promotional materials will be for naught if they do not match the reality in the institute. They further emphasized that while media may be helpful in the early stages of discernment, what matters most is personal contact and what the potential candidate encounters when he or she meets the institute and its members.

### ***Discernment Programs***

The survey of religious institutes found that religious institutes that sponsor various discernment programs are more successful in attracting and retaining vocations. In particular, those that sponsor discernment retreats are significantly more likely than those who not sponsor these retreats to have new members in initial formation and to be more successful in retaining new members. Discernment groups, “Come and See” experiences, and ministry/mission experiences are also positively correlated with new membership. Discernment retreats and discernment groups are also correlated with higher retention rates, while live-in experiences and discernment houses are related to having members in initial formation but not necessarily to retaining them. Offering multiple discernment programs is correlated with having new members in initial formation as well as with having higher numbers who enter and stay.

The findings from the survey of new members also show that those who participated in such programs generally found them to be very helpful when they were discerning a call to religious life, although there are some differences across age groups. Younger new members are especially likely to report that discernment retreats and “Come and See” experiences were very helpful. It is important to note again that many young people today have little or no direct contact with men and women religious. Discernment retreats and “Come and See” experiences may be the first prolonged exposure to men or women religious for some of these potential candidates.

### ***Targeting Age Groups***

Results from the survey of religious institutes indicate that institutes that sponsor vocation promotion and discernment programs directed toward college students and young adults are more likely to have new members than those who do not sponsor programs for these groups. Although the relationship is not as strong statistically, targeting high school students also appears to have an impact on attracting and retaining new members.

Interviews and focus groups with new members revealed that many learned about their particular religious institute through a friend or advisor at a Newman Center, campus ministry, or other college or university program. Some of the vocation directors also reported being involved to varying degrees in college and high school retreats and other programs as a way to get to know young people and expose them to religious life.

Findings from the survey of new members show that 40 percent of the men and almost 50 percent of the women first considered a vocation to religious life before they were 18 years of age. More than a quarter of the women considered it before they were 14. These findings suggest that vocation directors might want to consider targeting some of their vocation efforts at those in elementary and high school. Anecdotal evidence from vocation directors also suggests a possible trend toward considering religious life at a younger age than was the case even a few years ago.



**APPENDIX I:**  
**Questionnaires with Response Frequencies**





**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
and the National Religious Vocations Conference**  
*Survey of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life*



*This survey is part of a study to assist NRVC and CARA in understanding religious life and religious vocations in the United States today. Please respond for the unit (congregation, province, monastery) for which you are responsible. If the unit is international, respond for the U.S. only.*

**Type of Institute or Society**

1. Gender of members: 27 1. Men 73 2. Women.

2. Canonical Status:

- 5 1. Public association of the faithful
- 91 2. Religious institute
- 4 3. Society of apostolic life NR=4

3. Status of the institute or society: NR=4

- 12 1. Diocesan right 77 2. Pontifical right

Character or lifestyle of the institute or society (*check all that apply*):

- 71 4. Apostolic 2 7. Eremitic
- 26 5. Contemplative 11 8. Evangelical
- 6 6. Conventual 20 9. Monastic

**Demographic Data**

*Please indicate the number in each category in your unit.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Pre-candidates/aspirants (before entrance)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Candidates/postulants (before novitiate)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Novices
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Temporary vows/commitment
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Final/perpetual vows/commitment

**Men's institutes and societies only:**

15. Please indicate if your unit includes:

- 1. Brothers  2. Priests  3. Brothers and priests

*If a mixed clerical institute or society, please indicate the number in each category in your unit.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Brothers in temporary vows/commitment
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Priests/seminarians in temp. vows/commitment
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Brothers in final/perpetual vows/commitment
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Priests/seminarians in final/perpetual vows/commitment

*Please indicate the number of candidates/postulants, novices, and temporary professed in your unit who were born in each decade:*

	Candidates/ Postulants	Novices	Temporary Professed
Before 1940	20. _____	27. _____	34. _____
1940-1949	21. _____	28. _____	35. _____
1950-1959	22. _____	29. _____	36. _____
1960-1969	23. _____	30. _____	37. _____
1970-1979	24. _____	31. _____	38. _____
1980-1989	25. _____	32. _____	39. _____
1990 or later	26. _____	33. _____	40. _____

*Please indicate the number of finally professed members in your unit who were born in each decade:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 41. Before 1920 \_\_\_\_\_ 45. 1950-1959
- \_\_\_\_\_ 42. 1920-1929 \_\_\_\_\_ 46. 1960-1969
- \_\_\_\_\_ 43. 1930-1939 \_\_\_\_\_ 47. 1970-1979
- \_\_\_\_\_ 44. 1940-1949 \_\_\_\_\_ 48. 1980 or later
- \_\_\_\_\_ 49. Average age of **finally professed members**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 50. Median age of **finally professed members**

*Please indicate the number of candidates/postulants, novices, and temporary professed in your unit in each racial or ethnic category.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 51. African American/Black/African
- \_\_\_\_\_ 52. Asian/Pacific Islander
- \_\_\_\_\_ 53. Caucasian/White/Anglo
- \_\_\_\_\_ 54. Hispanic/Latino(a)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 55. Native American/American Indian
- \_\_\_\_\_ 56. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please indicate the number of finally professed members in your unit in each racial or ethnic category.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 57. African American/Black/African
- \_\_\_\_\_ 58. Asian/Pacific Islander
- \_\_\_\_\_ 59. Caucasian/White/Anglo
- \_\_\_\_\_ 60. Hispanic/Latino(a)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 61. Native American/American Indian
- \_\_\_\_\_ 62. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocation Ministry

63. Does your unit have a **vocation director**?  
88 1. Yes                      12 2. No NR=1
64. *If yes*, which best describes the **vocation director**?  
97 1. A member of your unit  
1 2. A member of another unit of your institute, society, or federation  
0 3. A member of another institute or society  
1 4. An associate  
1 5. A lay person who is not a member or associate
65. Is the **vocation director** engaged in vocation ministry:  
46 1. Full-time                      54 2. Part-time                      NR=1
66. Does your unit have a **vocation team**, i.e., more than one person directly responsible for vocation ministry?  
59 1. Yes                      41 2. No                      NR=6

Mean=4 67. Number of members of the **vocation team**

If your unit has a **vocation team**, please indicate if it includes the following (*check all that apply*):

- 91 68. Member(s)  
13 69. Associate(s)  
10 70. Other lay person(s) who is/are not member(s) or associate(s)
71. If your unit has a **vocation director and/or team**, what is the scope of his/her/their responsibilities?  
95 1. Your unit only  
4 2. More than one unit of your institute, society, or federation (e.g., two or more provinces)  
1 3. More than one institute or society                      NR=3

Please indicate if your unit sponsors or co-sponsors the following discernment programs (*check all that apply*):

- 26 72. Discernment groups  
54 73. Discernment retreats  
73 74. "Come and See" experiences  
12 75. Discernment house  
56 76. Live-in experiences  
32 77. Ministry/mission experiences

Please indicate if your unit has used any of the following for vocation promotion in the last five years (*check all that apply*):

- 75 78. Advertising                      6 81. TV  
87 79. Website/Internet                      7 82. Radio  
91 80. Print materials                      16 83. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate if your unit sponsors or co-sponsors vocation promotion or discernment programs specifically targeted toward these age groups (*check all that apply*):

- 34 84. Elementary school  
56 85. High school  
65 86. College  
71 87. Young adults (20s and 30s)  
27 88. Mature adults (over age 40)

Please indicate if your unit requires the following for admission (*check all that apply*):

- 94 89. Medical assessment                      68 91. Behavioral assessment  
84 90. Psychological testing                      75 92. Background check

## Formation/Incorporation Ministry

Please indicate the number of individuals in each category in your unit. If your unit has been reconfigured since 1990, please include the numbers for the units that are now part of your unit.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 93. Total number who entered since Jan. 1, 1990  
\_\_\_\_\_ 94. Of the total in #93, number who remain

*Of those who entered and then **departed** since 1990, please indicate the number who departed at each stage:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 95. During candidacy/postulancy  
\_\_\_\_\_ 96. During novitiate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 97. During temporary vows/commitment  
\_\_\_\_\_ 98. After final/perpetual vows/commitment

Please indicate the typical number of years that are required for each period of initial formation or incorporation in your unit (if less than a year, please specify the number of months):

- \_\_\_\_\_ 99. Pre-candidacy/aspirancy (before entrance)  
\_\_\_\_\_ 100. Candidacy/postulancy (before novitiate)  
\_\_\_\_\_ 101. Novitiate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 102. Temporary vows/commitment

*Does the unit have the following requirements for admission to candidacy/postulancy?*

**Yes No**

- 89 11 103. Minimum age (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
76 24 104. Maximum age (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
80 20 105. **Minimum education**  
49 51 106. **Minimum work experience**

107. *If yes to #105 and/or #106, please describe:*

Do **candidates/postulants** in your unit spend all or part of their formation with religious others from:

**Yes No**

- 41 59 108. Other units of your institute, society, federation  
28 72 109. Other institutes or societies

Do **novices** in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from:

**Yes No**

- 53 47 110. Other units of your institute, society, federation  
39 61 111. Other institutes or societies

Do those in **temporary vows/commitment** in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from:

**Yes No**

- 55 45 112. Other units of your institute, society, federation  
29 71 113. Other institutes or societies

### Reconfiguration

**Yes No**

- 16 84 114 Has your unit reconfigured since 1990?  
19 81 115. Is your unit in the process of reconfiguring?  
116. *If yes to #114 and/or #115*, please describe:

### Ministry

**Active/apostolic institutes or societies only (#117-127):**

*Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 117. Active in a full-time ministry  
\_\_\_\_\_ 118. Active in a part-time ministry  
\_\_\_\_\_ 119. Retired from active ministry

*Of members who are active (not retired from active ministry), number engaged in the following types of ministry:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 120. Education  
\_\_\_\_\_ 121. Health care  
\_\_\_\_\_ 122. Pastoral ministry (e.g., parish, campus)  
\_\_\_\_\_ 123. Spiritual direction/retreat work  
\_\_\_\_\_ 124. Social work/social service  
\_\_\_\_\_ 125. Social justice/advocacy  
\_\_\_\_\_ 126. Internal ministry  
  
\_\_\_\_\_ 127. Number of members serving in a ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by your unit

### Community Life and Prayer

*Please indicate the number of active members (not retired from active ministry) of your unit who:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 128. Live alone  
\_\_\_\_\_ 129. Live in communities of 2 or 3  
\_\_\_\_\_ 130. Live in communities of 4 to 7  
\_\_\_\_\_ 131. Live in communities of 8 or more

Please indicate which of the following characterize the regular prayer life of a majority of members of your unit (*check all that apply*):

- 90 132. Daily Eucharist  
85 133. Liturgy of the Hours  
42 134. Non-liturgical common prayer  
28 135. Common meditation  
53 136. Faith sharing

**Contemplative institutes only (#137-139):**

*Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 137. Able to participate fully in prayer life  
\_\_\_\_\_ 138. Able to participate somewhat in prayer life  
\_\_\_\_\_ 139. Unable to participate in prayer life

### Religious Habit

**Yes No**

**NR=3**

- 66 34 140. Do members of your unit wear a habit?  
141. *If yes*, please describe:

142. *If yes to #140*, is wearing the habit: **NR=4**  
46 1. Required in all or most circumstances  
19 2. Required only at certain times (e.g., ministry, prayer)  
32 3. Optional  
3 4. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

143. *If wearing the habit is optional*, how many members wear it all or most of the time?

- 8 1. None **NR=1**  
68 2. A few (less than 25%)  
16 3. Some (25-49%)  
6 4. Many (50-74%)  
4 5. Most (75% or more)

144. Please describe any special vocation promotion or recruitment efforts your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

145. Please describe any special formation/incorporation programs your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

As part of this study for NRVC, CARA will survey those who have entered religious institutes and societies of apostolic life in the last two decades. Please list the names and contact information (address, city, state, and ZIP) for all those **currently in initial formation** (candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows/commitment) as well as those who **professed final/perpetual vows/commitment in your unit since 1993**. Please attach additional sheets if necessary.

Please provide the information below for the person completing this survey so we may contact you for clarifications about your responses:

Name and Title:

Institute/Society and Province:

Phone, FAX, and E-mail:

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.**  
CARA/Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University  
2300 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20007  
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**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
and the National Religious Vocations Conference**  
*Survey of New Members*



*This survey is part of a study to assist NRVC and CARA in understanding religious life and religious vocations in the United States today. "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 boxes. 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                      3=Somewhat**  
**2=Only a Little                4=Very Much**

*How much did the following attract you to religious life?*

- |          |          |          |          |           |  |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>NR</b> |  |
| 2        | 3        | 17       | 78       | 2         | 1. A sense of call to religious life           |
| 0        | 4        | 23       | 73       | 3         | 2. A desire for prayer and spiritual growth    |
| 2        | 9        | 29       | 60       | 3         | 3. A desire to be part of a community          |
| 1        | 7        | 26       | 66       | 3         | 4. A desire to be of service                   |
| 13       | 17       | 28       | 42       | 5         | 5. A desire to be more committed to the Church |

*How much did the following attract you to your religious institute?*

- |          |          |          |          |           |   |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|---|
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>NR</b> |   |
| 13       | 17       | 28       | 42       | 5         | 6. The life and works of your founder/ess   |
| 3        | 9        | 28       | 60       | 3         | 7. The mission of the institute             |
| 1        | 7        | 25       | 67       | 3         | 8. The spirituality of the institute        |
| 2        | 9        | 30       | 59       | 3         | 9. The prayer life of the institute         |
| 2        | 8        | 30       | 60       | 3         | 10. The community life of the institute     |
| 4        | 12       | 33       | 51       | 6         | 11. The ministries of the institute         |
| 13       | 17       | 23       | 47       | 4         | 12. The institute's fidelity to the Church  |
| 4        | 7        | 24       | 65       | 4         | 13. The example of members of the institute |
| 25       | 16       | 24       | 35       | 7         | 14. A personal invitation by a member       |
| 6        | 9        | 28       | 57       | 5         | 15. Welcome and encouragement by members    |

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

- |    |     |  |
|----|-----|--|
| 36 | 16. | In an institution where members served, e.g., school |
| 19 | 17. | Through working with a member of the institute       |
| 5  | 18. | Through a relative in the institute                  |
| 15 | 19. | Through a friend in the institute                    |
| 28 | 20. | Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor    |
| 5  | 21. | Through a vocation fair                              |
| 3  | 22. | Through a vocation match or placement service        |
| 9  | 23. | Through an event sponsored by the institute          |
| 5  | 24. | Through a media story about the institute or member  |
| 18 | 25. | Through print or online promotional materials        |
| 23 | 26. | Other: _____   |

*Did you participate in any of the following before you entered your religious institute? *Check all that apply.**

- |    |     |   |
|----|-----|---|
| 24 | 27. | Diocesan vocation programs                        |
| 63 | 28. | Spiritual direction                               |
| 56 | 29. | Discernment retreat                               |
| 57 | 30. | "Come and See" experience                         |
| 33 | 31. | Live in experience with the institute             |
| 22 | 32. | Ministry or mission experience with the institute |
| 14 | 33. | Regular meeting with a discernment group          |
| 39 | 34. | Regular meeting with a vocation director          |
| 33 | 35. | Regular meeting with a member(s) of the institute |
| 41 | 36. | Regular visits to communities                     |

*Please use the responses below for questions 37-52.*

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

*How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?*

- |          |          |          |          |           |  |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>NR</b> |  |
| 74       | 15       | 7        | 4        | 18        | 37. General Catholic or diocesan websites                                |
| 73       | 13       | 8        | 5        | 19        | 38. Vocation discernment websites  |
| 59       | 12       | 14       | 15       | 17        | 39. Websites of religious institutes                                     |
| 48       | 21       | 22       | 9        | 14        | 40. Newspaper or magazine articles                                       |
| 41       | 20       | 23       | 17       | 12        | 41. Print or online promotional materials, e.g., brochures, posters, ads |
| 66       | 16       | 12       | 6        | 18        | 42. CDs, DVDs, or videos   |
| 68       | 13       | 11       | 8        | 20        | 43. Diocesan vocation programs   |
| 17       | 8        | 21       | 54       | 12        | 44. Spiritual direction  |
| 25       | 7        | 21       | 47       | 15        | 45. Discernment retreat  |
| 27       | 5        | 16       | 52       | 15        | 46. "Come and See" experience  |
| 41       | 5        | 10       | 44       | 24        | 47. Live in experiences  |
| 39       | 11       | 16       | 34       | 25        | 48. Ministry or mission experience                                       |
| 62       | 13       | 13       | 12       | 30        | 49. Meeting with a discernment group                                     |
| 19       | 9        | 25       | 47       | 16        | 50. Meeting with a vocation director                                     |
| 9        | 5        | 23       | 63       | 13        | 51. Meeting with a member(s) of the institute                            |
| 11       | 6        | 18       | 65       | 0         | 52. Visits to communities  |

Please use the responses below for questions 53-120.

1=Not at All

3=Somewhat

2=Only a Little

4=Very Much

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

1 2 3 4 NR

- 41 19 27 13 7 53. The size of the institute  
33 16 25 26 5 54. Its geographic location(s)  
42 13 21 24 29 55. Its internationality, if applicable  
2 8 29 61 3 56. Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute  
2 7 26 65 3 57. Community life in the institute  
5 10 30 55 6 58. The lifestyle of members  
69 16 10 5 9 59. The racial/ethnic background of members  
42 22 24 12 7 60. The ages of members  
11 10 31 48 6 61. The types of ministry of its members  
30 9 15 46 5 62. Its practice regarding a religious habit

How much encouragement did you receive from the following when you first considered entering your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 4 7 27 62 5 63. Members of your institute  
8 7 25 60 11 64. Vocation director/team  
11 6 24 59 23 65. Spiritual director, if applicable  
18 14 31 37 15 66. Other men and women religious  
31 17 24 28 13 67. Diocesan priests  
25 17 27 31 10 68. Your parents, if applicable  
28 23 27 22 12 69. Your siblings, if applicable  
29 26 28 17 13 70. Other family members  
22 17 30 31 11 71. People in your parish  
28 20 31 21 12 72. People in your school or workplace  
24 9 23 44 25 73. Friends within the institute  
15 17 34 34 9 74. Friends outside the institute

How much encouragement do you currently receive from the following in your life and ministry as a member of your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 1 6 18 75 2 75. Members of your institute  
3 6 20 71 3 76. The leadership of your institute  
12 9 19 60 17 77. Novice/formation director/team  
6 4 17 73 24 78. Spiritual director, if applicable  
5 11 31 53 10 79. Other men and women religious  
23 18 23 36 12 80. Diocesan priests  
11 8 19 62 16 81. Your parents, if applicable  
11 12 29 48 10 82. Your siblings, if applicable  
13 15 31 41 11 83. Other family members  
15 11 22 52 18 84. People in your parish  
12 10 24 54 16 85. People in your school or workplace

- 3 6 24 67 10 86. People with whom you minister  
4 5 22 69 10 87. People to whom you minister  
1 4 18 77 8 88. Friends within the institute  
3 9 31 57 8 89. Friends outside the institute

How important to you are these types of prayer?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 4 6 14 76 1 90. Daily Eucharist  
7 9 18 66 1 91. Liturgy of the Hours  
10 19 32 39 6 92. Non-liturgical common prayer  
18 19 21 42 5 93. Common meditation  
18 16 16 50 2 94. Eucharistic Adoration  
17 18 23 42 2 95. Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary  
6 14 31 49 4 96. Faith sharing

How important to you are these aspects of community life?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 2 3 12 83 1 97. Living with other members  
0 3 10 87 1 98. Praying with other members  
3 8 22 66 2 99. Working with other members  
1 4 14 82 2 100. Sharing meals together  
2 5 21 72 2 101. Socializing/sharing leisure time together

How much do you prefer living in these settings?

1 2 3 4

- 62 18 12 7 6 102. Alone  
26 31 26 17 8 103. In a small community of two or three  
10 12 33 45 7 104. In a medium-sized community of 4 to 7  
9 12 29 50 5 105. In a large community of 8 or more  
2 5 31 62 4 106. With members of different ages  
3 10 38 49 7 107. With members of different cultures  
10 12 33 45 10 108. With members in different ministries  
9 10 27 54 8 109. With only members of your institute  
10 14 37 39 25 110. With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces  
33 31 28 8 16 111. With members of other institutes  
50 21 19 10 17 112. With associates

How much do you prefer ministry in these settings?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 2 7 22 69 8 113. With other members of your institute  
5 12 36 47 26 114. With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces  
8 22 46 24 14 115. With members of other institutes  
4 8 26 62 11 116. In a ministry sponsored by your institute  
16 22 33 29 14 117. In a parish or diocesan ministry  
13 22 43 22 15 118. With an organization that is Catholic but is not sponsored by your institute  
34 32 26 8 16 119. With an organization that is religious but is not Catholic  
52 24 17 7 15 120. With an organization that is not religious

Please use the responses below for questions 121-139.

1=Poor  
2=Fair

3=Good  
4=Excellent

How would you rate the following in your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

- 4 17 37 42 2 121. Efforts to promote vocations  
3 12 33 52 2 122. Welcome and support of newer members  
4 14 36 46 2 123. Formation/incorporation programs  
5 15 36 44 3 124. Opportunities for ongoing formation  
3 10 30 57 4 125. Educational opportunities  
4 14 39 43 6 126. Preparation for ministry  
1 8 31 62 2 127. Opportunities for spiritual growth  
2 7 32 59 2 128. Opportunities for personal growth  
3 10 32 55 2 129. Sense of identity as religious  
2 10 29 59 3 130. Sense of identity as institute members  
3 9 32 56 2 131. Fidelity to the Church and its teachings  
1 7 30 62 2 132. Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth  
1 8 32 59 4 133. Focus on mission  
0 4 26 69 4 134. Commitment to ministry  
3 9 32 56 2 135. Response to the needs of our time  
3 14 36 46 5 136. Efforts to promote social justice  
4 15 42 39 2 137. Quality of community life  
4 16 36 45 3 138. Communal prayer experiences  
4 13 48 35 2 139. Relationships with one another

Yes No

- 69 31 1 140. Do members of your institute wear a habit?  
141. *If yes to #140*, is wearing the habit NR=3  
55 1. Required in all or most circumstances  
16 2. Required only at certain times, e.g., ministry, prayer  
25 3. Optional  
4 4. Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
142. *If yes to #140, and wearing the habit is optional*,  
how many members wear it all or most of the time?  
7 1. None NR=57  
61 2. A few (less than 25%)  
19 3. Some (25-49%)  
6 4. Many (50-74%)  
7 5. Most (75% or more)  
143. *If yes to #140, and wearing the habit is optional*,  
how frequently do you wear it? NR=4  
39 1. Never  
14 2. Once in a while  
33 3. Only at certain times, e.g., ministry, prayer  
14 4. In all or most circumstances

Yes No

- 32 68 144. If your institute does not have a habit, would  
you wear one if that was an option? NR=7  
89 11 145. Were you employed before you entered?  
146. *If yes to #145*, were you employed NR=6  
82 1. Full-time 18 2. Part-time  
72 28 147. Were you engaged in ministry before you  
entered? NR=6  
148. *If yes to #147*, were you engaged in ministry  
31 1. Full-time NR=3  
9 2. Part-time  
60 3. Volunteer

Were you involved in any of the following before you  
entered? *Check all that apply.*

- 39 149. Youth ministry or group  
31 150. Young adult ministry or group  
29 151. Campus ministry or group  
54 152. Liturgical ministry, e.g., lector, extraordinary minister  
34 153. Music ministry, cantor, choir  
40 154. Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA  
51 155. Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting  
46 156. Retreats  
13 157. World Youth Day  
33 158. Faith-sharing group  
9 159. Religious institute volunteer program, e.g., Mercy  
or Jesuit Volunteer Corps

160. What is your current status in your religious institute?

- 3 1. Candidate/postulant NR=1  
8 2. Novice  
26 3. Temporary vows/commitment  
63 4. Final/perpetual vows/commitment

161. Are you: 36 1. Male 64 2. Female NR=<1

162. If male, are you (or do you expect to be) a  
25 1. Brother 75 2. Priest NR=64

163. What best describes your racial or ethnic  
background?

- 3 1. African American/Black/African NR=1  
9 2. Asian/Pacific Islander  
77 3. Caucasian/White/Anglo  
9 4. Hispanic/Latino(a)  
<1 5. Native American/American Indian  
2 6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes No

- 91 19 164. Were you born in the U.S.? NR=1  
165. *If no to #164*, country of birth:

Please provide the following information:

- Avg=1966 166. Year you were born  
Avg=1997 167. Year you entered your religious institute  
Avg=2004 168. Year you professed/expect to profess  
final vows/perpetual commitment  
Avg=2007 169. Year you were ordained/expect to be  
ordained to the priesthood  
Avg=20 170. Age you first considered religious life

**Yes No**

- 14 86 171. Did you enter another religious institute  
before this one?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 172. *If yes*, number of years in that institute  
91 9 173. Were you raised Catholic?  
Avg=25 174. If you became Catholic as an adult, age  
you entered the Catholic Church  
7 93 175. Were you ever married?  
5 95 176. Do you have any children?  
3 97 177. Were you ever home-schooled?  
Avg= 8 178. *If yes*, number of years home-schooled

Did you attend any of the following before you entered?

*Check all that apply.*

- 49 179. Parish-based religious education/CCD/RCIA  
56 180. Catholic elementary or middle school  
44 181. Catholic high school  
42 182. Catholic college or university  
12 183. Ministry formation program  
6 184. Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
185. What was the highest level of education you NR=1  
completed before you entered your religious institute?  
11 1. High school or less 19 4. Master's degree  
17 2. Some college 5 5. Doctoral degree  
46 3. Bachelor's degree 2 6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
186. If you continued your education after you entered,  
what is the highest level of education you completed?  
1 1. High school or less 61 4. Master's degree  
8 2. Some college 6 5. Doctoral degree  
14 3. Bachelor's degree 10 6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
187. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group?  
65 1. Yes 35 2. No

188. What most attracted you to your religious institute?

189. What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?

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

**APPENDIX II:**  
**Transcription of Responses to Open-Ended Questions**



### **188. What most attracted you to your religious institute?**

The responses below are grouped by active men, active women, contemplative men, contemplative women, and those that could not be classified according to these categories.

#### ***Active Men***

A chance to experience agapic love.

A chance to pour myself out in service. A way, not the only one, for me to be on mission with Christ.

A generous and authentic witness to Jesus and St. Francis. The community life was very down to earth yet deeply focused on our life as religious.

A group of men who were trying to put their money where their mouth is in terms of being committed to the gospel and to Jesus and to one another.

A number of things: 1. The charism of the Order. 2. The movement to a greater fidelity to the teachings of the Church. 3. The movement toward a more faithful form of liturgy. 4. The movement toward a more rigorous living of the vows. 5. The intellectual life. 6. The regular wearing of the habit.

A relationship with the Brothers that continued past high school. They were a constant presence and were always welcoming to me. They encouraged me to consider entering but I never felt pressured by them.

A sense that the men were doing useful and fulfilling work that was directed toward a real purpose; admiration for the educational achievements and efforts of the order.

A spirituality.

A strong sense of identity with purpose. No television but a strong community life. Other young men my own age.

A varied apostolate, thorough spiritual and academic formation.

An openness to older vocations.

Apostolate and then the people and area.

Apostolate tradition. Other physicians

Apostolates, community life, its service/connection to the local area.

At first, long years of studies. Now, it is the spirituality.

Authentic life, prayer life Eucharist centered hand on work with the poor evangelization.

Authenticity, prayer, apostolate, habit.

Benedictine spirituality

Breadth of ministries primarily in urban context.

Broad ministerial opportunities.

Carmelite spirituality.

Celebration of the Divine Office (Benedictine).

Certain individuals within the fraternity.

Charism of founder – Francis of Assisi – as manifested in its members. Sense of acceptance and openness. Warmth and encouragement. Emphasis – at least in theory – on community and fraternity.

Charism of the founder. Family spirit. Mission to the young.

Charism of the order.

Charism, life, prayer.

Charism, missions, travelling.

Charism. Diversity of ministry. Interacting with members of religious institute in parish, retreat house, campus. sense of belonging.

1. Charism/spirituality. 2. Work that we do. 3. Men that I had met in the Society.

Clearly defined mission. Community life.

1. Collaborative style of leadership. 2. Vatican II ecclesiology. 3. Down-to-earth and generally happy members. 4. Formation program that was not “cookie-cutter,” was very holistic. 5. Variety of ministries. 6. Priests, brothers, sisters, and laity.

Combination and interaction between an active and contemplative life.

Coming as a live-in and community support consistency in the day.

Commitment to education. Prayer/spirituality.

Commitment to vibrant community life and mission of forming lay leaders for the Church.  
Variety of ministries with focus on education.

Common apostolate, community life, radical life of vows.

Common life and charism.

Common life and ministry.

Common life, common chanted prayer, preaching ministry.

Common life, common prayer, fraternity, habit, traditional

Common life, rhythm at prayer, beautiful simplicity of the offices, beauty of natural surroundings and vibrance at the apostolates.

Common life, visible sign of commitment – habit. Fidelity to magisterium of Church.

Common prayer life and ministry.

Common spirit; inspiring enthusiasm; strong regard for honor of the Order; evident joy.

Communal life, down to earth spirit of men I met.

Community.

Community (fraternity), fidelity to the Magisterium, prayer life, wearing the habit, the youth of the community, the joy of the community.

Community life and priesthood.

Community life and various opportunities for ministry. The discipleship of equality between the priest and the brothers.

Community life, intellectual life, service.

Community life, our ministries, and the personalities of the community members.

Community life.

Community life.

(1) Community life; (2) Community prayer; (3) Variety of ministry; (4) Commitment of mission.

Community life. Commitment to prayer and evangelization.

Community spirit. "People I thought I could live with." Mission of the community.

Community, family environment, service.

Community, ministry, mission/vision/values.

Community, prayer, mission to education.

Contemplative prayer life. Reciting the full Office (7x) per day (we are monks). No outside apostolate. Peaceful prayer, rural setting. Simple, manual work.

De La Salle. Location of provincialate. Prayer style.

Decidedly Catholic. Habit. Joyful.

Desire to commit my life to service integrated with spirituality. Internationality/diversity of locations and ministries. Social justice ministries.

Desire to educate young women and men in Catholic doctrine, and to minister to the sacramental and spiritual needs of the Church.

1. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist. 2. Wearing the Holy Habit of St. Francis. 3. Community life in Friary. 4. Evangelization and serving the poor.

Direct service to poor.

Diverse and contemporary applications of spirituality

Diversity in all the sense of the word (ministries, members, places, etc.). Promotion of freedom and integration in self and others.

Diversity of ministries: education, parish, direct service to people who are poor, overseas missions, strong community life.

Diversity of ministry, members, locations.

Diversity of ministry. Community life.

Dominican sisters

Don Bosco, youth ministry, mission.

Earthy (down to earth) members. Attractive spirituality. Life-giving apostolates.

Educational ministry.

Eucharistic Adoration and deep prayer life – community life – social justice concerns.

Eucharistic spirituality. Multiple types of ministry. Hospitality of members.

Evidence of commitment to regular prayer and community life. Examples of friars.

Encouragement of friars.

Example and life of founder, mission of institute, ministries engaged in, formation seemed excellent, spirituality.

Example of Franciscans in home parish, especially pastor.

Example of members in the way community is lived and ministry is performed.

Example of members living vowed, religious life who were joyful, spiritual, and dedicated to doing quality work.

Example of the friars.

Faithful to Catholic Church, Franciscan spirituality, charism and call to holiness.

Faithful to Church, and courage to be Catholic and proclaim the Gospel, solid prayer, good fraternity, honesty with each other, not puffed up but real; manly not effeminate.

Faithfulness to Church teaching, counter cultural witness, always wearing the habit, daily

Eucharistic holy hour, daily Mass, work with poor and homeless, work with youth, strong fraternal life in community, ongoing formation, sense of personal identity and individual.

Familiarity and mission.

Feeling that I'm living such a meaningful life. The opportunity to integrate my faith into a life of service. Being with people during significant moments.

Fidelity to Church, Eucharistic Adoration, daily Mass, habit, sincerity of members, balanced view of the human person.

1. Fidelity to the charism of the founder. 2. Orthodoxy. 3. Gospel living/charity.

Fidelity to the rule of St. Benedict, opportunities for personal and spiritual growth in Christ.

Financially sound.

First was the mission (working with/for the salvation of the young). All that we do is aimed at this goal. Second was the spirituality: Salesian spirituality (finding God in the ordinary;

optimism and joy, etc.). And third was the fraternity and community life. Salesian Family spirit is very contagious and a wonderful service of light and strength.

Focus on fraternity; very pleasant spirit among the guys – they were kind to one another and humble. Love of St. Francis and common prayer.

Focus on individual developing potential to the fullest and using it – whatever it is – to the fullest and God’s greater glory.

Follower of St. Francis of Assisi

For me the community was the most important.

Foreign missions.

Founder, community, apostolates, spirituality.

Founder, long history (800 years)

Founder, St. Ignatius. Vibrant young members, attending Jesuit high school and college.

Founder=St. Francis! Web page=long list of Saints! Life of Padre Pio – EWTN – Lives of the saints – life story of Solanus Casey! Web page=other young adults – discernment weekend=many friars=all levels of formation; the friars I meet; Vocation Director; others discerning! Ministry opportunity – wide varied – location of province – NY and NE=my area!

Francis; radical prayer and radical action; community; options for spiritual growth of service.

Franciscan charism, earthiness of friars, ministry with the poor in the inner city, sense of common life and purpose.

Franciscan charism. All brothers. Close to mom in New Jersey.

Franciscan spirituality, community life, ministerial life.

Fraternal life and mission.

Fraternity and chastity and contemplative and ecology.

Fraternity, Gospel based, “incarnational” approach of the friars. The province is open to older candidates if there is a good fit. The friars are real – transparent.

Friars were very down to earth and appeared to have a very healthy spirituality.

General happiness/joy/contentment of members. Variety of apostolates.

Getting closer to God and sharing God to others like St. Francis of Assisi.

Getting to know members of the institute at University.

God's call. Our prayer life: daily Mass, daily Eucharistic Holy Hour, daily Rosary. Zeal for evangelization and for service to the poor and living in poor neighborhoods. Wearing a religious habit.

Growing up in a close knit family I found the religious members to be close knit and loving.

Down to earth and made me feel welcomed.

HABIT, number of vocations, centralized ministry, fidelity to Magisterium.

Happiness of the members.

History, members, works.

1. Holy Cross as educators in the faith. 2. Community life.

Holy Cross is a group of ordinary men doing extraordinary work – middle of the road on most issues, with both exciting corporate ministries and a vibrant community life. It makes me a better man to be a CSC.

Honestly attempting to live a radical, gospel centered Franciscan life.

1. How the friars interacted with people. 2. How they lived their life.

I felt God was leading me here through different circumstances. I met some of the guys in the order and I liked their character. Location – close to home. The charism.

I felt more comfortable/at home with them than with other groups I visited. It was an intangible “gut instinct” thing.

I first found it because I was searching for a religious order that deals with education. The order's focus on living in community and building community as ministry drew me in and led me to consider religious life more seriously.

I found Holy Cross through my desire to be a priest. I find the congregation a joyful way of being a priest.

I grew up as a child around members of the group. They always treated me with respect. I was ordained a diocesan priest and 18 years later joined the institute.

I liked how the friars lived. I liked their lifestyle.

I lived in New Orleans and the Redemptorists have maintained a presence in this city since 1847. I have a devotion to Bl. Francis Seelos who ministered in the city in the mid 19th century. I have always felt drawn to the Redemptorists because of the congregation's commitment to the poor.

I met my community during my first year in grad school because the house of formation was close to my school. I was impressed by the formation team and the men in formation. The prayer and community life in the house were the most attractive aspects of the community. When I learned about the institute's diverse ministries, this was also attractive.

I really appreciated their variety of ministries, international apostolates, and presence in the area where I grew up.

I wanted a strong intellectual formation coupled with a concern for justice in the world and in the Church. I wanted to live Matthew 25:31-46 and to love God in my neighbors.

I wanted to integrate my spiritual and intellectual life, and my work and prayer. The Society of Jesus seemed the best approach. In addition, the overall spirituality resonated with me.

I wanted to teach high school and I looked at religious communities that were involved in education. When I was discerning the prospect of returning to religious life, I knew I would be welcome because of the openness of the men to my re-entering.

I was attracted by the charism of preaching. I felt that I was called to be a preacher.

I was attracted by their "ordinariness."

I was attracted to the Salesians after having spent a year with them as a lay missionary in Africa. It was there that I learned that the work I had been doing was very much like theirs along with the mentality and philosophy. After having spent some time with them I learned of my love for God and prayer.

I was inspired by positive examples of my institute's members in the apostolate. I also distinctly heard a call to enter the institute on an eight-day silent discernment retreat sponsored by the institute. Finally, I long desired to be a priest and to profess evangelical poverty, well before I met my institute.

I was most attracted by the vibrant, energetic, and youthfulness of the ministry and work done at our universities in particular. Later I was attracted by the hospitality and welcome of the members and the tremendous communal support offered in our lives.

I was most attracted to the healthy, engaged members of my institute. The members seemed to enjoy ministry and had a special quality of optimism and love that they brought to their ministry.

I was trained to be a missionary and can go anywhere to serve.

I went and lived at our boarding high school. Most all my teachers and deans were monks and I liked them and wanted to be like them.

I'm hearing impaired and our founder sent out three priests to serve deaf and to start a deaf school (SCJ's).

Ignatian charism that seeks to find God in all things. Unity in diversity: a formation that is not based on cookie-cutter, but on dynamic and diverse movements of the Holy Spirit. Diverse ministries according to the needs of the Church and the world under obedience to the Pope.

Ignatian spirituality that embraces various tensions.

Ignatian spirituality.

Ignatian spirituality.

In descending order: 1. a long history of spiritual tradition, tested and renewed. 2. attentiveness to the individual and his unique needs, desires, and gifts. 3. a worldwide network of missions and ministries; global fellowship in learned ministry.

Institute's spirituality, spiritual writings of its members. Spiritual direction and other interactions with institute members in which it was clear that they led fruitful and fulfilling lives of ministry.

Invitation from God through spirituality of founder.

Issues of social justice.

It is a progressive community, steeped in Vatican II, that respects the needs of the individual as well as the dignity and life experience of the people to whom we minister.

It is the only religious order that survived the reformation intact and still has not split.

It was OK to openly desire holiness and to follow the Church's teaching without questions. The Brothers were real. They were normal men in love with Jesus who I loved and love to be around.

It was the whole package: their apostolates were what first attracted me, but their community life is what led me to choose my particular institute. I felt at home in their rhythm of prayer and common life, and I also felt that my perspectives on the faith and the Church would be welcome and honored.

Its apostolate/ministry. The example of its members as my teachers in high school.

Its apostolates/ministries. Friendship with professed members.

Its apostolic life. Its charisms: Evangelization, Reconciliation, Ecumenism.

Its approach to spirituality and its history, mission, and reputation.

Its charism and mission – the spirituality of the Cross – our founders. Eucharistic Adoration.

Community lifestyle.

Its charism and willing to serve wherever it's needed.

Its commitment to and solidarity with the poor.

Its commitment to prayer mission, community. Later, after I had entered, the founder attracted me greatly.

Its down to earth nature and strong community life/prayer life.

Its faithfulness to the Church and to the Pope. Authentic in striving to live out the vows made to the Church.

Its fidelity to the life and example of St. Francis, that despite all personal weaknesses and faults the brothers are striving for holiness and fidelity.

Its formation. Its spirituality.

Its founder's charism

Its history (I'm a Jesuit) and its sense of identity and purpose That is, it knows what it is and what it's supposed to do. It's not a "new" institute coming to understand itself. It was solid, well-formed and therefore free for mission.

Its history and spirituality, diversity of ministries but with educational focus, international character.

Its history, its mission, the works that it engages in, Ignatian spirituality.

Its inclusive character.

Its internationality and its mission.

Its ministry to Croatian immigrants in Canada/USA. The life of its founder.

**ITS MISSION AND SPIRITUALITY.** Priests/brothers to learn and do handy works and most of all willing and open to work with the people to whom we minister. Inclusivity. Less hierarchical status. Promote equality – though it's challenging.

Its mission of education.

Its mission, especially the variety of apostolates. The joy and zeal of the members. My relationship with some of the members.

Its mission, flexibility, opportunities for growth, spiritually and personally, equality and humility, big hearts.

Its mission.

Its prayer life.

Its simplicity and sincerity attracted me.

Its spirituality!

Its spirituality: the Eucharist.

Its work and ministries, especially its reputation for educational excellence.

Jesuit or Ignatian spirituality and the myriad of possibilities of ministries.

Jesuit spirituality, faith development, retreat work. Educational ministry.

Jesuit works and mission, especially its commitment to education and work with the underserved. Creative fidelity to the Church, especially at the boundary of religion and secular society.

Jesuits who I met and were living out their call. Spirituality of St. Ignatius, plethora of mission opportunities. The spiritual potential of community life, vows of obedience and poverty – witness value.

Jesus – Eucharistic Adoration/Daily Mass and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Jesus would be my last name.

Joy of members in community.

Joyful community life, fidelity to Church teaching, common prayer, commitment to study.

Joyful fraternal life and the “down-to-earthiness” of the brothers.

Kind and diversity of ministries. Members were comparatively healthy.

Life of my community’s founder/his values and example of intimacy with God; common life and prayer of communities I visited during my discernment.

Life of prayer. I also like the community life.

Life of prayer. Joyful spirit. Example of the friars.

Lifestyle.

Living and working with ordinary people whom I saw doing extraordinary things.

Living with other men with the same ideas of mine – serving the people of God – Being able to dedicate my life exclusively to serve God as my brothers and sisters.

Living, working and praying as a brotherhood with a common mission.

Longevity/age of the Order. Diverse ministries. Strong community life. Size of Province. That we have a habit and wear it. The members of the Province – the other friars.

Longstanding love for the founder and the ministry of an outstanding spiritual director from my institute.

Meeting its members and seeing their live, humility, prayerfulness, joy, laughter, fidelity to the magisterium, zeal for personal and communal renewal, simplicity, and solidarity with the poor.

The community's commitment to daily Eucharist Holy Hours, and its zeal for evangelization, religious heart and its Franciscan spirituality (Franciscan Friars of the Renewal).

Meeting the members and witnessing their work/life together. The internationality of the society.

Members wearing their habit in public and being authentic witnesses to a joyful, prayerful and poor and austere way of life. Also their ministry to people but especially the materially poor.

Having learned about their founder, St. Francis, I knew this was the way of life God was calling me to.

Members who staffed my parish as a child.

Membership in corporate institute/life.

Ministries, community life, joy in members.

Ministries, international appeal, education, reputation, location of works in my province.

Ministries/intellectual apostolates. Spirituality.

Ministry in education and internationality.

Ministry, lifestyle of members, opportunities.

Mission (ministry). Spirituality. Community life.

Mission and charism.

Mission and spirituality.

Mission of community. Spirituality of founder. Example of community members.

Mission of our religious institute is to serve the people, especially the deaf people. It accepts the eligible deaf and hearing vocations from the whole world. I am deaf.

Mission of preaching for salvation of souls. Common liturgical prayer (especially chanting the Divine Office). Community life and strong sense of brotherhood. Although most older friars do not wear habit, those in formation wear it regularly. I consider this a good sign for the future.

Fidelity to the Church, especially in younger friars – good sign for the future.

Mission of the institute. Apostolates. Spiritual tradition.

Mission stories. Feeling at home when visiting. Vocation Director's regular and personal accompaniment.

Mission, spirituality, heritage, global presence.

Mission, spirituality, history.

Mission.

Mission. Quality of preaching. Ministry settings.

Mission/community life.

Mixed composition – brothers and priests living and working together as equals. Ministry opportunities.

Mobility and diversity of ministry. Intellectual charism.

My experience at their high school as a student.

My pastor's 21st century ministry and performance of his duties. He is brilliant, healthy, polite, helpful and following his own spiritual path. Most illuminating pastor. Also he and I both attended the University of Notre Dame.

On my first visit to the college community, the men were very hospitable and friendly. They related to one another as brothers. This appealed to me very much.

Openness, welcome, simplicity of life, value of community, social justice, diversity.

Our founder, St. Francis, and that it is made up of lay and clerical brothers.

Our mission, charism and the spirituality of the cross.

Our spirituality, the emphasis on education and justice, the members I knew and their example, feeling at home here, being surrounded by real people, such a solid and human formation.

People and ministry.

People, ministry (higher ed.)

Prayer and community living.

Prayer life in community.

Prayer life, commitment to Franciscan ideal, radical witness, community. (I was a diocesan priest for over 25 years before I entered.)

Prayer life, fraternal life and apostolic life, which consists of work with the poor and evangelization.

Prayer life, fraternal life, apostolic life. Overall witness – authenticity.

Prayer life, work among poor, fraternity (communal life), concern by individuals to live out rule of life.

Prayer life. Apostolic life. Community life.

Prayer life. Charism-mission. Common life and ministry.

Prayer, community and being in mission.

Prayer, community, ministry.

Prayer, community.

Prayer, the habit, communal life, and the Franciscan charism.

Prayer. Study. Service

Preaching mission and history of the order.

Principles of the order, habit, sense of fidelity to Church and Marian devotion, especially of the student brothers/up-and-coming generation.

Progressive change. Dynamic ministries.

1. Progressive, faith-filled normal people striving for a similar vision as mine. 2. International reach. 3. Variety of ministries. 4. Social justice emphasis.

Quality of education at University of Notre Dame, the lingering effects of institute on high school, even though my institute was no longer there. The institute's ability to form a strong sense of family and belonging.

Radical fidelity to and love for God and the Church, especially the Eucharist (daily Mass and Holy Hour), Our Lady (daily Rosary) and the Pope. Also the personal joy and love of the members, the spirituality, and prayer life, their youth and enthusiasm, and their lifestyle and work/ministry.

Radical love of God and the faithfulness to the Church of its members.

Radical poverty, prayer (contemplative), living among the poor.

Radical way of living the Gospel.

Reading the accounts of the founder (St. Francis) as a teenager and doing a report on him for religion class in high school.

Relationships with members. Normalcy of members. Higher education apostolates.

Religious life.

Reputation, kind of ministry (education), and camaraderie among members I met at novitiate.

Rhythm of the life, people living together, clear focus of ministry, large community, people my age living there.

Scholastic tradition of St. Thomas, devotion to the Rosary, the common life.

Seeing a family of consecrated men who were striving to become like Christ.

Seeing the work being done by the members, especially in the area of education.

Sense of brotherhood, commitment to justice.

1. Sense of call. 2. Community life. 3. Franciscan spirituality.

Sense of community, its ministry (education).

Sense of community, shared mission and ministry, opportunities to serve in diverse ministries (especially international missions), emotional health of community, diversity of ages, healthy formation program, respected in the Church, balanced theological perspective.

Service to the Church.

Simple lifestyle of the Brothers. I could see and feel the oneness of each brother whether he is superior or not. The brothers have good brothering to the younger people under their care.

Simple/prayerful lifestyle.

Size, habit, fidelity to Church, variety of apostolates.

Small community. Variety of apostolates. Historical age of community (1198).

Social justice focus of institute. International (foreign mission) focus of institute. Humility of first institute members I met.

Social justice, international ministry, variety of apostolic opportunities, community life.

Soldiers in the service of Christ the King under the temporal leadership of the Holy Father.

Spirit of fraternal support, good humor and interdependence of members. Spirit of the institute. Quality and integrity of the members and my peers at the time that I entered.

Spirit of prayer and fellowship.

Spiritual charism and devotion to ministry.

Spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius.

Spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius. Fourth vow – fidelity to the Holy Father. History of zealous service to the Church.

Spiritual tradition and diversity of ministries.

Spirituality and ministry.

Spirituality and mission of founder. Lots of young members. Progressive and open minded – open to dialogue with other faiths/religious experiences.

Spirituality of institute, communal living, sense of fraternity.

Spirituality, community, its members.

Spirituality. Commitment to social justice and integration of creation. Location of the formation community and members whom I had met.

Spirituality. The ministries that focused on education/justice. Excellence.

Spirituality and ministry.

Strong prayer life, fidelity to church teachings, work with the poor, visible religious habit.

That it was an alternative to a life lived in the world, even one which included ministry, and that this could be seen in community members.

That my community invited me and they felt that I did have a religious calling.

That we pray before the Blessed Sacrament. That we pray for the sanctification of the priests. Our spirituality and the lives of our Founder and Foundress who is a mystic in process of canonization.

The “down-to-earthness” of the members. None of them seemed to be “on the pedestal.” They are very relatable and focused on the ministry.

The “Four Pillars” of the Order: Community, Study, Preaching and Prayer.

The ability to maintain an individual identity while working as a whole to serve God. A main charism and mission with the acceptance of each at the stage of life, skill and understanding that they are at and support, love and education offered to improve those gifts and abilities.

The apostolic fruits of their mission, particularly the University which I attended founded by them. Contact with priests in the residence halls and in the classroom. Their accessibility and pastoral care of students.

The aspect that attracted me most to my religious institute was the community life.

The attitudes of the younger members of the institute, in that they showed commitment and focus.

The authenticity of one of our members. Our ministry, my opportunity for ministry in this setting.

The brothers themselves and ministry.

The brothers’ common life, charismatic prayer, religious “family life.”

The charism and faithfulness to the Church. Prayer life, and the wearing of the habit.

The charism and spirituality of the Jesuits.

The charism of our Fr. Founder Thomas Agustin Judge. His vision and mission to make every Catholic an apostle. This vision is for real beautiful. That's one of my most things that attracted me to join our Trinity Missionaries.

The charism of our patron, the spirit of the members of the community. Their enthusiasm to ministry and their "down to earth" approach.

The charism of preaching and the lives of the saints of the Dominican Order.

The charism of preaching the Good News.

The charism of the institute to educate poor urban youth.

The charism of the order. Its commitment to prayer, study, community and ministry.

The charism of the Order; the ability to reach and preach to a wide variety of people; the quality of the members in the Order and in formation.

The charism, community life.

The charism, life of prayer and fraternity.

The charism, ministries and internationality of the institute.

The charism, the faith of the members, the life of poverty, the tradition of the order, and my own gifts.

The charism, the witness of the men, the community, and the opportunities to work in high school ministry.

The charism.

The charisms of higher education (colleges and universities) and mission work in Africa and Asia.

The clear passion for the academic area of the priest and a profound love of God that shined through each of their classes and their homilies.

The commitment of the brothers, their regularity, their prayer and community life (38 brothers in the community when I was a senior in high school – 1967.) The habit and the brothers wearing it whenever we were with them in school or at a function.

The commitment to the ministry of education and the non-clerical composition of the Institute. We are Brothers. Our educational spirituality.

The common life centered around prayer.

The communal brotherhood that is seen when we gather together as the entire congregation on a yearly basis. The variety of different ministries that we are involved in. The members themselves and the common spirituality that we all share in. The mere fact that we are spread throughout the world and not just in one setting.

The community cohesiveness and prayerful aspect of the community life. The genuine friendliness of the community.

The community life and its members.

The community life of the members and the life of our founder.

The community life.

The community was very nice and welcoming. I felt at home when I came to stay for a weekend.

The conviction that Jesus called me to this life and the example of fervent religious life of our friars.

The daily opportunity to share a common goal of spiritual growth, prayer and faith sharing, and mutual support in a community setting. The opportunity to witness to the Gospel in a way that a vowed religious in today's world is able to do.

The desire to serve Christ and his poor with other people who have the same passions.

The desire to serve Jesus in the poorest of the poor by living the contemplative life among them; the call to console His Heart in them.

The desire to teach made parish priest uninviting. Seeing the Brothers teach in college. Also I recalled the sisters in elementary school had a great spirit.

The developed prayer life – Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, Liturgy of the Hours, the reverent fraternal support and interaction, the “hands on” ministry to the poor and evangelization.

The dichotomies in the life and spirituality of St. Francis (e.g., God has high demands/profound invitation but is also merciful) and the fact that my community has Byzantine Catholic members, so that I would not have to become Roman Catholic to join.

The different types of ministry and the members.

The diversity of ministries, and the number of members especially the number of younger members in formation.

The diversity of mission.

The down-to-earth personalities of its members and the simplicity of its prayer life. To religious life in general, the motivation was to live counter-culturally.

The example and charism of the founder.

The example of the Franciscans I knew growing up, the prospect of a life of prayer and community, and the inspiration of St. Francis.

The fact that I had the brothers in high school and worked in their mission as a college intern.

The fact that there were a good number of members who were not ordained and that there was a strong sense of community.

The fact that they founded and worked at the University of Notre Dame, my alma mater.

The familiarity of growing up in the same city as its primary apostolate – knowing I'd be somewhat close to home. I really was taken by the community life and regular prayer – at least that I saw in formation. That has changed now that I'm living in perpetual profession in a small (three guys) rectory.

The family feeling among the members.

The formula of our institute, which summarizes the service I would like to offer God and the Church.

The Founder of my religious order and the spirituality of the order.

The founder, the sense of community, active ministry in my home town. Sense of internationality.

The founder's life and mission to the poor, abandoned young people. The fidelity to the Church and spirituality of the congregation. The balanced, mainstream personalities in the institute. The use of a habit.

The founder's life, prayer life of the order, their saints, the sense that the gifts of the individual are honored.

The founder's life and spirituality. The apostolic works. The vows.

The Founder's vision for the men of his institute (the Jesuits): on the one hand, we must be grounded in doctrine, prayer, and mortification. On the other hand, we must always make ourselves available for mission, to go anywhere and to take on any tasks the Church asks of us. Contemplation in action.

The fraternal community life.

The fraternal life and the life of prayer.

The friendliness of the members and the ability to travel the world and receive Eucharist daily.

The great health and maturity of the members and in the variety of ministries one could be involved in. I also found the spirituality very helpful and engaging.

The history and mission of the community, and the ideal set before us by our founders were what first drew me. The community life is what keeps me.

The history of the founder and our charism.

The history of the Order. The kindness of the men. The humanity of the men. The apostolates of the Order.

The history, charism, spirituality, ministries, and most importantly other members most attracted me to my religious institute.

The history, the mission, and international character and presence.

The history, the saints, the holy men I met, the call from God, the mission of the Society of Jesus.

The holiest, most profound and most effective person in ministry I ever met was a Jesuit.

The holiness I experienced in its members. Desire for priesthood.

The holiness of the abbot and the community. The beauty of liturgy.

The humility, hospitality, and the groundedness of the members most attracted me. They didn't act like their way of life was holier than other ways of life.

The idea of prayer and spiritual growth.

The institute's spirituality.

The internationality of living together in community as brothers from many cultures, witnessing to the unity of all people as children of one God. Also the focus on overseas mission.

The Jesuit community and lay teachers at Strake Jesuit College Prep in Houston, TX from 1976-1980

1. The Jesuits I met. 2. The history of the Society of Jesus. 3. The apostolates (diversity) Jesuits work in. 4. The spirituality.

The Jesuits' commitment to education and to priestly ministry. In the midst of discernment the Salvadoran assassination took place and this event persuaded me to consider an order with an orientation toward serving the poor.

The joy and charism of working for young and poor people.

The joy and family commitment of the friars.

The joy of the brothers, their faithfulness to Church teaching/Magisterium, love of the Eucharist and our Lady, the energy and enthusiasm of the brothers and their fraternity and their love for one another, the simple, authentic living of the life, wearing the habit/public witness.

The joy of the Jesuits I knew in high school and college and their friendship and their sharing of their spirituality.

The joy of the members and their effectiveness in ministry.

The joy, love, peace, hope, kindness, and all the fruit of the Holy Spirit of the brothers. The focus on personal conversion through prayer and penance. The focus on sharing the fruit of religious life with the materially and spiritually poor.

The joy, the masculinity and the spirituality of the brothers attracted me. Also, the brothers were using the gifts and talents that attract the secular and were using them for the Lord. Also, the radical look (beard, shaved head, sandals, habit) were appealing to me.

The joyful witness of faithful Catholic consecrated life, devotion to Eucharist, and the vibrant fraternal life.

The life of Francis, his life and his values.

The life of St. Francis. Serving the poor and marginalized. Serving in a Third World country.

The life, community and ministries of the particular province (OFM-Santa Barbara) AND the Franciscan spirituality and charism.

The life, example and charism of the founder and his early followers.

The life, writings, and vision of the founder as well as the witness of the many saints, martyrs, and blessed of the Society. Also, the tradition of mission work and the special bond of love and allegiance to the Pope through the fourth vow.

The lifestyle and simplicity. At the same time, the relationship of our members and the uniqueness of our ministry.

The members of my religious institute all were very happy and joyous men. They liked what they were doing and they liked being together. That really attracted me to religious life. The community also saw prayer and their commitment to Christ as very important as well and this also attracted me.

The members of the Abbey. The seminary college. Silence and solitude plus time for community interaction. Community living. The prayer (sung office in choir). The retreat programs. General pursuit of holiness.

The members of the community, the life and work of the founder. Prayer life, community living.

The members of the order. They were inspiring, holy, and most welcoming.

The members were and are down to earth, i.e., not overly pious or fake.

The members, their faith, preaching, excitement about who they are.

The men I met who were of the institute already – their kindness, their intelligence and their sense of humor. Also, the possibility of doing service to others.

The men I personally know.

The ministry of teaching and living in community.

The ministry of working with poor young people and the missions.

The ministry or charism-mission.

The ministry, prayer life and members of the community I had met while visiting.

The mission and charism of our order. Our focus and the fidelity to our founder and the constitutions. Our worldwide apostolate.

The mission of St. Francis of Assisi. I read a popular history in one day and was hooked! I had met friars from another province but was not attracted to them – too “Polish.”

The mission of the institution: to preserve the Catholic faith among the immigrants.

The mission of the Order and the witness of our members.

The mission, ideals and identity of the Order, the human sanity of its members, its liturgical and intellectual heritage.

The mission. The Paulist Fathers do their best to stay grounded in the “real” world, so that they can reach out to those outside the church walls – the alienated, the unchurched, those of other denominations and faiths.

The mission/charism “PREACHERS.” I was not originally attracted to community life or to the habit...I consider both of great (very high) value today (16 years later).

The mix of apostolates resonated with my life experience, and the focus on putting God first in everything – prayer and work – appealed to me.

The mixture of the active and contemplative life.

The monks I met while at St. Meinrad College were normal men – men who had good days and bad but knew in all of it – this monastery helps them seek God.

The monks’ commitment to their life of prayer. Their acceptance of those who come to pray, worship, those who come on retreat, those who use the Abbey Center (our programs or theirs) regardless of their race, color, creed or orientation. The monks also had a sense of humor. They could laugh at themselves and engage in repartee.

The name of the institute, its goal – that every Catholic become an apostle, and the fact that it is not a strictly religious or contemplative community.

The need of priests.

The non-clerical and unpretentious life deeply embedded in the congregation’s identity and history of its readiness to buck limits and thinkings for the sake of Christ’s justice.

The openness, “earthiness” and devotedness to mission displayed by the members.

The opportunities for different ministries and the opportunities for spiritual and personal growth.

The Order’s spirituality with its emphasis upon contemplative prayer.

The parish where I grew up.

The people and ministry to education.

The people during my vocation interview weekend – the people and place felt right.

The people I met when I first visited; they seemed happy and normal.

The people in it seemed to have a congruence between their inner and outer lives. They struggled authentically with what the world is and what the Church can say in reply. They were willing to live the questions rather than give answers.

The people who were involved.

The perceived friendly and down-to-earth spirit.

The person and charism of the founder. The institute's spirit and spirituality, its type and style of ministry, and the people at the focus of its ministry (young people).

The person of St Augustine, his spirituality. The order's sense of community, common mission.

The pioneering spirit, the diversity of ministry, the spirituality of the institute.

The prayer and community life of the institute and the dedication and commitment of its members attracted me.

The prayer life and liturgies. The men in the institute. The charism of the order as appropriated by this institute.

The quality of and commitment to prayer and community life.

The quality of this community life, attention to the spiritual and emotional growth and maturity of members and the quality and ethos of their liturgy and prayer. They are fully post-Vatican II, not neo-traditional or rigidly conservative.

The range of ministries (colleges, parishes, chaplains) and the "down to earth" attitude of the members.

The religious who I lived among (in residence hall) and those I studied (professors) under at the University.

The reputation of its apostolates AND the favorable public perception of the corps (FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN). The fraternal interactions among very human members is sincere (FROM WITHIN).

The sense of being a Franciscan reform.

The sense of brotherhood, the joy of its members, and the variety of ministries available.

The sense of community, and regular prayer life, plus the interaction between members.

The sense that I could be the person God is calling me to be in this religious institute.

1. The size and stability of the community. 2. The type and variety of community apostolates. 3. The quality and variety of community members. 4. The overall faithfulness to Rule of St. Benedict.

The Spiritual Exercises.

The spirituality and charism of St. Ignatius, our founder. Though I wished Jesuits were more faithful to Church teaching, that they would wear clerics more often, that they would pray together more, I felt drawn to try to be faithful to those things and to love in the midst of the Jesuits and Church as it is now. The international character and engagement in the world also attracted me.

The spirituality and charism.

The spirituality and faith traditions.

The spirituality and founders.

The spirituality and the charism. Helping Catholics to become apostles.

The spirituality of St. Francis lived out by Capuchins.

The spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi and the example of many friars through the years.

The spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The example of Jesuits whom I encountered as a student and the way they ministered to students.

The spirituality of the cross and the Cross of the Apostleship...Jesus priest and victim.

The spirituality of the institute and the sense of openness experienced in my visits.

The spirituality of the institute.

The spirituality of the institute. The lives of founders and how they received and transmitted the foundational charism. Strong sense of fraternity and family. Strong religious identity (sense of being consecrated).

The spirituality of the teachings of St. Francis de Sales and the guidance of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales.

The spirituality, community life, and our works.

The spirituality, mission and charism.

The spirituality.

The spirituality. The men of the institute. The ability to use my skills and profession that I practiced within the religious institute.

The spirituality: active and engaged, God is found at work in the world, and we are invited/called to be a part of God's project.

The strength of community and the authentic joy that other members of the community witnessed to me.

The strength of its communal life, its apostolates, and the “normalcy” of its members.

The strong community life.

The strong faith, joy and enthusiasm of the members.

The strong fraternal bond between the brothers combined with the contemplative aspect brought by the daily Holy Hour.

The strong sense of community, as well as hospitality to visitors.

The strong spiritual and intellectual formation and the examples of Jesuit saints.

The traditional bent of its liturgy and spirituality, and its happy and wholesome members.

The use of a habit. Prayer life. The way they (we) pray (before the Blessed Sacrament).

The varieties of ministries, the hospitality of members, their moderate to progressive mindset, commitment to community and prayer.

The variety of ministries, especially at colleges and universities.

The variety of ministries, particularly education and mission work. The mission to serve the Church where it needs it most.

The variety of ministries, the formation, the good reputation, the practical spirituality.

The vow of stability wherein we promise to live in a particular house for the rest of our days.

The vows, a total commitment of my life as gift.

The way of life; their ministries; the community; their way of prayer.

The wide varieties of the ministerial opportunities and the idea of coming to know God more closely and following him by serving other people.

The witness and example of the brothers in their ministry and community life attracted me to the community. A personal invitation by one of the brothers was very important for me in exploring the community.

The witness of a particular member. He seemed well-integrated, intelligent, and he understood intercultural dialogue. The Society’s mission.

The witness of the monks in my high school and parish. The desire for union with God – to love God and neighbor.

The work and charisms of the community. I was really attracted to the Capuchins' work with the homeless and poor people.

The work and life of missionary brothers and priests. Internationality.

The work done with the needy/poor.

The work in social justice and the commitment of my spiritual director to his ministry.

The works and mission.

The works of the Society of Jesus; their spirituality; community life; "finding God in all things"; intellectual apostolate; international recognition.

The zeal with which the members lived their vows.

Their ability to preach the Gospel.

Their commitment to service, spiritual life, the genuineness of the friars, and the wide range of ministries. Also the commitment to finding one's own ministry that he can excel in, and the many opportunities to grow spiritually and sociologically.

Their family spirit and their charism. I also really admire my confreres' fidelity to the Church and her teachings.

Their increasing orthodoxy and young membership. They also are very close to their founder.

Their ministry – especially education (high schools and colleges).

Their mission to convert America.

Their sense of community, focus on mission (with a commitment to education but at the same time not limited solely to education) and the sense that the members led healthy, balanced lives.

Their understanding of prayer and spirituality, i.e., connecting God to everyday life.

They had more brothers than priests – so, a serious commitment and value of religious brotherhood. The media ministry. Daily Eucharist Adoration.

They shared a vibrant spirituality, reached out to youths through education and ministry, and were realistic and professional re: their needs to accomplish their goals.

They taught me in high school. I didn't explore other institutes. I like that they teach, that they support each other in community.

They were the only ones who were enthusiastic about taking me, despite my age at entry (47).

Three things: 1. Spiritual tradition. 2. Community life. 3. Commitment to social justice.

To live personally with other guys. To also pray with, support, and to stay in one place.

Two individual friars, the life of St. Francis, and the diversity of ministry (visited a mountain retreat and an urban soup kitchen during consecutive weeks).

Varieties of ministries.

Variety of ministries with the poor.

Variety of ministries, spiritual life, community life, history and accomplishments of members (especially saints).

Variety of ministry, founder, values of members.

Variety of missionary apostolic opportunities

Various types of ministry that members of the institute were involved in.

Wanting to share in the joy of the men of that community.

What attracted me most about my order was the communal life.

What attracted me the most to my institute is its spirituality, which is based on the Eucharist, spiritual dedication, contemplative and Eucharistic prayer, clear understanding and baptismal and ministerial priesthood.

What attracted me to my religious institute was the examples that I saw from the members of my community in the parish I grew up in.

What most attracted me from my religious community was the community life and its practical approach.

What most attracted me to religious life was community, prayer, ministry.

What most attracted me to the Dominicans is the same reason the order was founded "for preaching and the salvation of souls" according to the constitutions. I can't think of a more noble mission to devote my life to than sharing the good news of Jesus Christ by which I am being transformed. The rich history of the order and the Dominican vision are inspiring.

What most attracted me to the religious institute I joined was the community witness in their ministries, that they have a habit, and that they were Franciscan.

Witness members gave to the world. Community life. Apostolate/ministry opportunities.

Working for the poor.

Working in a God-centered profession. Living in community.

Working with the poor and in places where the Catholic presence is less than one percent.

Works, especially educational institutions.

### *Active Women*

A call and a feel of being home. I found women who were prayerful, wacky, and down home, deeply rooted in God.

A community that still wears a habit, values community life, common prayer life, and authentic to the Church.

A deep and concrete sense of God's call within the context of my relationship with the community.

A desire to minister to the poor with other like minded women. The idea of living in community was important as I ministered to others and prayer life within a community attracted me to religious life.

A normal family-like atmosphere and lifestyle. Joyfully living sisters.

A sense of call combined with developing an understanding of myself as Franciscan. The mission of the institute resonated with me the first time I heard it.

A sense of call. I was a co-member which satisfied my desire to be involved in the community's mission and to belong to the community. Co-membership left unanswered what to do with the "God thing" in my life.

A sense of holiness, and a spirit of welcoming. Also, the sisters seemed happy.

A short list of attractions were: the habit; communal prayer; unified apostolate (while not attracted to our education apostolate, I was not interested in diverse apostolates because of the impact on community life and my own venturesome willfulness); faithfulness to Church teachings; feminine genius as opposed to secular feminism. It was upon visiting my institute that I could see it all as lived out in fact and for me, the witness of the elderly sisters together showed the effect of the life lived on the individuals.

1. A strong sense of being called. 2. A certain joy that was apparent in the sisters I met. 3. Fidelity to the Church.

Acceptance of diversity of the person and ministry but prayer comes first and the promotion of prayer and relationship to God and others.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, combined with an apostolic outreach – the combination of contemplative prayer plus being “out in the world.”

After meeting members I felt that I could be myself and not change in order to fit in. I felt the sisters were unique and diverse.

After several years of looking at different communities and participating in a discernment retreat I met these sisters through an Advent retreat. I continued attending programs at the retreat house and recognized that Ignatian spirituality appealed to me.

After the first visit I knew I would be back. It is something I can't explain because there was not anything in particular that I loved or that made me think “this is it.” Just a feeling.

Always had the desire for religious life – and after bringing up my children (4) and being a single mom at age 48 – with ages of children, 10, 13, 17, 19, had always worked. So continued to college-educate 3 of the children. Retired at age 70 with bills paid and became an associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph – volunteered for 2 1/2 years before asking if possible to enter at this late age of 75. It was a year of discernment with community.

An authentic sense of “welcome” in the midst of simplicity and joy! The witness of gospel living touching the lives of many – especially the poor and needy!

An internal “call” experienced as restlessness until I felt “home.”

An unwavering hunger for God. The “more.” A sense of call out of an experience of contemplative prayer.

Another Little Sister of the Poor – watching her care for the elderly with Christ's love and respect.

As I began to know the members, I felt that I could be “at home,” be myself, yet also be challenged to grow. As I learned more about our spirituality, our founder and early documents, I knew why I felt this way: There was a resonance between my own spirituality and my community's charism of unity and reconciliation. Also, I felt and saw that my community members were “real people,” not artificial.

At first the intense community life and the joy and love that each sister is able to express. Then the faithfulness to the Church and the teachings of the Magisterium.

At first their way of dressing, then later when I learned more about them, I was attracted with their warm hospitality, then with their varied apostolate and simple lifestyle.

At first, it was our mission. But once I got to know the Sisters, it was their joy and hospitality. When I would look into their eyes, I knew they had something that I wanted.

At first, simply the fact that the sisters were welcoming and inviting and took an interest in me.

As I continued discernment, it was the fact that Holy Cross is an international congregation, and the “family” aspect of the charism. I also found visiting our motherhouse to be very helpful.

At that time the vocation directors were so active to respond to the questions that were being asked. Two other sisters came to contact me in person where I was. They were very interested to know me more and to know them.

At the death of my husband, I drew closer to God and Jesus. I asked God in prayer to invite me if he wanted me to be a sister. I was invited three days later to dinner and knew this was the community, CSFN.

At the time, it was most center-of-the road of this charism in liturgy. It has since changed. I was also attracted by the presence of a cohort of new members, but more than half of these have new life. I would no longer choose to enter this house, in comparison to others of our type.

Authenticity to gospel values, urgency of living a life of sacrifice.

Balance life between the service and prayers. Focus to serve the poorest. When important decisions are made – the commitment of all to participate.

Balance of contemplative/active rhythm of life. Prayer including Charismatic prayer. Faithfulness to Church. The sisters themselves. That they look at religious life as a relationship with God as your spouse and not simply as a job or lifestyle. Community life.

Before I entered my community I was privileged to work as a nurse’s aide, taking care of our sisters at our infirmary. Although I could not have put into words then how they influenced me, now I can say that the faithful witness of their lives – in joy and suffering – communicated our charism and it resonated so deeply in my heart that I knew I was called to be with them.

Before I even knew about Oblate Sisters I felt called to offer myself to God as a victim for priestly holiness – I was delighted to learn that the charism (Oblate Sisters) is the offering of ourselves as victims to the Justice of God for the sanctification of diocesan priests. We offer our lives totally – even the merits we may obtain for our own sanctification.

Being faithful to the Magisterium, daily Adoration and rosary, and most importantly...I felt called here.

Benedictine/in city of residence/family in city/structured prayer life together/meals together.

Black, full habit. Daily Office said in common three times a day.

Blend of prayer and ministry. With an honesty about questioning some Church beliefs and practices.

Both older and younger members. Youth, vitality and wisdom of members. The particular blend of contemplative/active life we strive to live, with an emphasis on renewing the original way of life (cont/act) in the Third Order of St. Francis. Personally I was most attracted to our contemplative life. Our balance of prayer, work and ministry in a communal setting. Our emphasis on a strong communal life.

By God's grace, I visited my community one weekend. I experienced an instant awe for the community. So first and foremost it was the Holy Spirit. In addition I was struck by the beauty of the habit, the joy of the sisters and the grace-filled communal prayers.

Centrality of the Eucharist. Fidelity to the Church/Holy Father. Marian devotion. Religious habit.

Charism.

Charism – although I was not able to articulate it when I was discerning the vocation. Energy and passion for social justice. Openness to the larger Church and engagement in interreligious dialogue and ministry. Community's "oneness" with the poor as well as the well-to-do – in other words, sisters and associates are "one with" the people.

Charism – making Christ's merciful love visible. Fidelity to the Church. Religious habit. Eucharistic and Marian devotion. Prayer life, especially Liturgy of the Hours. Joy of the sisters.

Charism and life-style.

Charism and ministry to poor. Joy of members I interacted with.

Charism and spirituality of the sisters; God led me here, to an apostolic institute – I was looking for a monastery – good thing I was listening!

Charism and world-wide response to Church's needs.

Charism of evangelization, deep life of prayer and contemplation, faithfulness to the Church's teachings, wearing religious habit, Eucharistic centered, joy of members, poverty, zeal for souls. Basically, read JP II's "Essential Elements." They live it. Although the CMSWR currently only comprises about 10% of the religious sisters in the USA, they are receiving 90% of the new vocations and growing rapidly. If you really want to learn why and how to foster vocations, I honestly recommend speaking with the CMSWR board. Young women want to be Brides of Christ in institutes that fully embrace the Church in all its beauty and religious life that is radically set apart from the world. A young person won't leave everything unless they know that

they will truly find JESUS in an intimate relationship of love beyond compare. Not just social work or ministry, because you don't have to join the convent to do ministry. Young people are attracted to holiness, to authentic Gospel living, to people in love with Jesus. So if you want to promote vocations and foster them in the Church and in the community, then make holiness and intimacy with Jesus #1, and all else will follow accordingly!!!

Charism of foundress and institute and its history. Down-to-earth mindset of members – openness. Hospitality. Lived witness of members.

Charism of peace through justice. Northeast of US. They were real, and fun, and didn't think they knew it all.

Charism, fidelity to Church, common life of prayer and living common life.

Charism, spirit, mission, individuals.

1. Charism supporting the diocesan priesthood in prayer and ministry. 2. Community life. 3. Considerable distance from home. 4. Religious habit.

Charism. Types of ministry. The sisters.

Charism. Mission.

Charism. Prayer life and community life. Apostolate.

Charism: Eucharistic and Marian. Love for the Church and Holy Father. Fidelity to living authentic religious life according to the heart and mind of the Church. Community life very vibrant and strong. Witness of the members of the institute.

Christ did! To be in an intimate relationship with Him as His consecrated bride was an invitation I could not refuse – though I did run away at first.

Church loyalty, Adoration, community life.

Closeness of its spirituality to my spirituality as I had at the time.

Commitment as a community to cross-cultural mission – service to the Reign of God's love, especially with poor.

Commitment to charism/mission. Community life. Sacramental life.

Commitment to justice.

Commitment to peace and justice and action toward this commitment. Commitment to search for truth. Commitment to Dominican values of prayer, study, ministry/service, and community life.

Commitment to peace and justice. Ministries. Personalities of sisters. The way we've been able to connect/engage with each other (Novice director and her director =exceptions). Abilities and energy of sisters. Their general openness to questioning the Magisterium/thinking critically.

Commitment to prayer, ministry, one another.

Commitment to social justice. Their joyfulness.

Common way of life: community prayer life; faith sharing through meals, etc. (eating and sharing God's words together as a community).

Communal life and communal Liturgy of the Hours. Joy they found in their ministries and the work they did for others. Joy they found in loving one another even when they disagreed.

Communal living, a sense of a call to religious life. I always admired the priests who were friends of the family when I was growing up. I couldn't be a priest but I could be a sister.

Communal prayer and community life.

Communication, dialoguing, someone to journey with me. The one on one interest.

Community and hospitality.

Community and prayer.

Community life and social justice activities of my congregation.

Community life and the love the members had for each other.

Community life and vibrancy of the members; authenticity of their mission.

Community life, especially the feeling of being "at home" the first time I visited, attracted me the most.

Community life, faithfulness to the Church, spirit of sacrifice, faithfulness to the original spirit of the founder.

Community life, joy I saw in the sisters.

Community life, Liturgy of the Hours, communal prayer.

Community life, prayer life (especially – Mass – exposition etc.)

Community life, prayer, Mass every day, types of ministry, practice of wearing a religious habit.

Community life, prayer, ministry.

Community life, prayer.

Community life, relationship among members, balance of community, prayer and ministry, joyful presence.

Community life, religious identity. Charism/mission of the Institute, our spirituality, solid liturgical prayer life, loyal to the Pope, love of the Church, Eucharistic-centered, Marian.

Community life, the habit, the prayer life, the joy and love between the sisters.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life. Dedicated prayer focused in Eucharistic Adoration. (spirituality/retreat centers) are part of their ministry and is an area in which I am interested in serving.

Community life. Habit and veil. Prayer. The vows. Joyful witness of sisters. Aligned to the Church teaching and to the authority of the Church, Pope. Eating meals together.

Community life. Mission/apostolate. Our spirituality/charism.

Community life. Spirit of the sisters. Genuineness of sisters.

Community living, prayer life, located in Oregon with local ministries.

Community prayer, joyfulness of the sisters.

Community spirit

Community. Being part of something with like-minded persons. People are happy and helpful.

Composed of authentic individuals! I am somewhat of a different woman religious due to history and circumstances. 1. Entered a community in 1962 and transferred to present community in 1974. 2. Received dispensation from life vows in 1987 from present community. 3. Became an associate member in 1992 of present community. 4. Re-entered 2002 and made temporary vows (3 years) 2004; life vows 2007.

(1) Congregational spirit of prayer. (2) Ease with which the members interacted-they were REAL and I could totally identify with them.

Consecrate my entire life to God.

Contemplative life in cross-cultural, intercultural ministry/mission overseas.

Contemplative spirit, community life, mission as integrated with each other.

Daily Mass and prayer. Simple lifestyle. The witness to the world of the vowed life.

Dedication to God.

Definitely the spirituality. Also feeling comfortable with the sisters.

Devotion to Eucharist and Mary, habit, fidelity to Church, unified apostolate.

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist and to Our Lady. Fraternal charity. Fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church. Communal and private prayer life. Ministry within the Church (education and nursing) (works of charity).

Dominican charism of study and preaching.

Dominican spirituality – love of the Eucharist and the Blessed Mother.

Dominican spirituality, study, contemplative and active life with monastic base – prayer, silence, community, joy.

Dominican spirituality; focus on social justice; prayer life of the congregation. The women in my congregation are forward looking, attentive to the needs of our day; inclusive of those from other backgrounds.

Elizabeth Ann Seton as wife, mother-foundress, convert. Her attraction to the Eucharist.

Embracing my past with its rich experiences and gifts and being encouraged to use those gifts plus develop my whole self spiritually and creatively/intellectually.

Eucharistic Adoration and Jesus Himself. And our charism for life. Without life – none of the other social justice issues matter.

Eucharistic centering, fidelity to Church and her teachings, recognition and nurturing of each person's gift and charism, intensity of community life, habit.

Eucharistic devotion, fidelity to the Church, devotion to Our Lady, joy of the sisters and desire for holiness obvious in the sisters.

Eucharistic spirituality

Eucharistic. Marian devotion. Fidelity to the Church. Common life. Commitment to the spreading of truth and the salvation of souls. Joy and simplicity. Beautiful, full habit. Young and old sisters. 800 year heritage. Traditional religious life. Growing community. Holiness.

Everything I checked in 121-139.

Everything!

Example of sister teachers and priests. Example of sisters in nursing home where I worked as a high schooler and college student.

Faithful to the teachings of the Church. Full habit. Strong religious identity. Common apostolate. Strong community life. Joy. Common prayer life. Unity.

Faithfulness to Church, joy of our members.

Faithfulness to the Church and willingness to work with people where they are at.

Faithfulness to the Church.

(1) Faithfulness to Magisterium of the Church. (2) Sisters wear habits. (3) Spiritual and prayer life of our congregation. (4) Joy of the sisters.

Faithfulness to the Magisterium of the Church, strong community life and commitment to personal and relational development of each sister.

Familiarity with its members and their apostolate.

Family atmosphere and joy of the sisters.

Family like atmosphere, the young sisters respect the old sisters, and superiors are like mothers.

Fidelity to Church and her teaching. Mandatory habit wearing. Strong sense of community. Rich spiritual/prayer life.

Fidelity to Church teachings, community life, connection to charism and traditions of order.

Fidelity to Church, Eucharistic devotion, community life, variety of apostolates.

Fidelity to Church/teaching. Fidelity to Pope. Religious Habit. Religious Name.

Fidelity to Magisterium, the essentials of religious life, Eucharistic Adoration, the habit, the common life, the living of the liturgical year.

Fidelity to the Church and Pope. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist and Mary. Community life. Religious habit and name. Monastic customs. Faithfulness to founder.

Fidelity to the Church, common prayer life. Strong and vibrant community life with the Eucharistic Christ as its center.

Fidelity to the Church, joy of sisters, youthfulness of sisters, growing number of vocations, religious habit, shared community life, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, prayer life in common.

Fidelity to the Church, to the Holy Father, to the Church's teachings. Devotion to our Blessed Mother, daily reception of the Eucharist. Totality, living the life fully with joy as a Bride of Christ.

Fidelity to the Church.

Fidelity to the Church. Joy of the Sisters.

Fidelity to the Church's teachings and authority. Devotion to and community focus on the Eucharist. Devotion to Mary. Common life and religious habit. The joy of the sisters and their deep love for one another.

Fidelity to the Church's teachings, monastic customs, contemplative-apostolic life. Strong community life.

Fidelity to the Magisterium and its teaching on religious life, which means to belong exclusively to Christ in poverty, chastity, obedience.

Fidelity to the Magisterium. Devotion to the Eucharist. The religious habit.

First a sense of calling from God. Then the attraction to the sisters' joy, fidelity to the Church and religious life. Devotion to Mary and the Eucharist, community life and the wearing of the religious habit also attracted me.

First attracted by website. Addressed stereotypes of nuns, was what I was looking for, liked advertisements, slogans, special section for those looking into religious life, website was talking to me, lots of time and interest was given to me.

First of all Jesus. The mission, ministry. Take care of the sick without charging them. The joy the sisters show in their faces. The joy they live, they have and bring to others.

Focus on justice rather than charity. Focus on women's issues. Movement away from hierarchy towards democracy.

Focus on merciful love of Christ. Poverty. Variety of apostolates.

Focus on mission. Compatibility of community with mission.

Following the call – seeing women passionate about life.

Formation program geared to older women. Sense of community and prayer life.

Forward thinking attitude.

Foundress and desire for prayer and service

Franciscan evangelical way of life. Simplistic and sustainable living ways that community affords to a greater degree than I could as a single woman.

Franciscan spirituality, Perpetual Adoration, faithfulness to the Church.

Franciscan spirituality, simplicity, scripture study, ministry to the poor, simple habit, communal life, mercy chaplet, Eucharistic holy hours, rosary, youthfulness.

Franciscan spirituality. Community support.

1. Freedom and peace to be myself (who God made me to be). 2. Centrality of prayer in our life.

Freedom of members. Trust members had with one another. Mission/community focused.

Friendliness of the sisters

Friendly group – they were teachers, worked with children, some sisters were working with Cursillo. That's where I met them – their prayer life and study was very attractive.

Full habit. Fidelity to Church. Community life. Apostolate. Young members.

God kept pushing me, directing me here. The sisters "normal-ness," joy and common life opened my heart to entering the community.

God! He made it clear this was my place.

1. God's call. 2. The radiant joy of the sisters. 3. The service of the poor. 4. The accompanying of the dying. The poverty, and the begging. The community life. The spirituality.

Grace! It was purely providential that I met our sisters. I immediately felt at home when I attended a retreat. The charism and apostolate are clear and I felt that God had designed me to match it. The habit, the sisters' joy, their fidelity to Jesus and love of the Church drew me.

Habit and mission to the elderly poor.

Habit, fidelity to the Church and her teachings, the charism and identity of the sisters as Brides of Christ.

Habit, joy, Eucharist and Marian Devotion, daily Mass, apostolate of education.

1. Habit. 2. Prayer life. 3. Community life. 4. Fidelity to the Church (Pope).

Habit, young members, traditional.

Having the Eucharist as the very center of our life – our ministry, our community life, and our strive for holiness.

Health care ministry in various states as well as proximity of Motherhouse to parents when caregiving role would come about especially as an only child.

Holy Union Sisters as an international congregation, but we are small – and I like that in the United States Province. We really know all our sisters, which I found I really like.

Hospitality. Joy. Franciscan spirituality.

How real and alive the sisters are. They love being with one another at prayer, at leisure, or at work and the love they have for one another and for God is so evident. They wear a habit at all times. They are an active community with all different kinds of ministries.

How the Sisters lived together and cared for one another. Also, their ministering to the needs of others and their care for the earth.

“I am the Way” rules.

I “grew up” in my “institute.” I was very comfortable around religious but what most attracted me was observing the individuals I knew in and with their sisters, in community.

I believe it is the general feel of the membership. Folks are independent and very much original thinkers. I also was very drawn to our focused efforts when it comes to justice. It's even written into our constitution – that we work for justice and act for peace because the gospel urges us!

I believe that it was the joy that I observed coming from each sister. In addition, the importance the sisters put on community life. They always seemed happy to be together.

I belonged to the religious group in my early twenties, left, and just returned. The desire to be a religious never left. I desire the life of service, the prayer, and spiritual aspects.

I cannot point to a single aspect of my religious community that attracted me the most. Deep prayer life, monastic traditions reach community life lived with great fidelity caused the sisters to be the most joyous people I have ever met – I wanted that joy!

I didn't visit, I just wrote some letters then I entered on a set day and it was then I had my first impressions of them. School sisters mostly, wear the habit mostly. Franciscan. After I came: conservative (long habit, not charismatic, “dignified” – quiet, proper, “sisterly” demeanor); established community with long history; quiet joy in most, especially the oldest/the elderly sisters.

I don't know. I came because the Vocation Director encouraged me and I liked the charism. I stayed because of the spirituality and I just felt it was right.

I don't really know. I saw four or five of the sisters leaving a chapel and I knew that I wanted what they had. I saw something visibly attractive about them.

I entered after the unity process in my community. The two former communities unified in 1997. Their desire to continue the mission entrusted to our foundress by walking away from the safe and familiar attracted me. The charism invited me to live my faith more deeply.

I feel I was called here; but if I had to name things that attracted me: the joy of the sisters; the freedom to really love and serve God; a mission that touches the core of the modern human experience; overall, purpose and joy.

I felt called to be Christ's alone and I felt called to this order though I loved other orders as well.

1. I felt it was God's will. Prior to meeting members of my religious institute I had no intention of become a religious sister, but after working with them I felt it was God's will. 2. The joy I saw in their community and ministerial lives – the members of my religious community.

I felt that I resonated with our charism. I was inspired by the way the members treated all people with warmth, dignity and respect.

I first entered after high school in 1958 but stayed only a month. I had a full and rewarding life but always hoped to return. I did – became a postulant – again – 46 years later.

I had a sense that God was inviting me to religious life. While participating in a lay volunteer program, living with the sisters, I realized that the lifestyle attracted me, and that by becoming a religious I could live out my calling to mission, justice, and be who God created me to be. The sisters were inviting and supported my interest. I had little contact with other congregations, and at some level entered my institute because I knew them.

I had been taught by the Sisters of Mercy all my life. The Sisters in my college had a warm, deeply spiritual, down to earth spirit. They were authentic, joyful, compassionate vowed women. The charism of our foundress deeply touched my heart. The more I came to know her the more I felt a sense of oneness with her and a sense of belonging in the community.

I had sisters from my community as teachers in grade school and high school but what attracted me was the joy and happiness I witnessed and experienced with them on my visits and then the sense of community I felt when I did a 5-week mission experience with them before I joined. I had and still do, the sense of being home!

I had sisters from my congregation in elementary school. I wasn't really aware of charism. I just knew I felt very much at home with them.

I just felt comfortable with them. The sisters were in my home parish and I also worked with them for three years.

I knew from my heart that this is the place that the Lord wanted me to be through prayer and deep sense of peace. After having some information and experience my heart was so much at peace I realized that this is what I wanted. They are charismatic, contemplative apostolate. Prayer and evangelization.

I knew I needed to get serious about “the call” and my investigation – (go three places to see), read, talk to people – led me to the community that taught me as a child. Good women, live community – care about mission, gospel.

I knew I wanted a monastic community with the practice of Liturgy of the Hours prayed communally, of daily Eucharist, and time for personal prayer. My community does all of these. My community is also near my original home. I knew I didn’t want to go a long distance to join a community. I also sensed that my gifts and talents could find a place within the work of my community.

I knew the sisters because they served in schools I attended – they were not my teachers but were principals and taught religion or other grades. I liked the sisters and the way they served people. I don’t know that I knew much about their spirit or mission but I appreciated them.

I knew the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood as a high school student, then as a college student and worked in one of their schools from 1984-1989. I also had numerous friends in the congregation. I was always impressed with their educational and leadership backgrounds. They were/are highly intelligent women who were/are hardworking and creative. I wanted a community that lived in community, had corporate ministries where I could be working for and with my sisters. I also wanted people near to my age within at least ten years.

I know God wants me by showing the sign to religious life.

I liked their prayer apostolate for priests; that they were faithful to the teachings of the Church; they wear a habit; were joyful; the community life; the active/contemplative dimensions; the size – not too big, but growing; age and youth.

I love the idea of working and praying for the salvation of souls. This is what God has called me to do.

I loved our spirituality and also the joyful witness of young sisters.

I loved the community life. I loved the balance of work, prayer, and leisure. I liked how the sisters were truly who they were, they cared for each other. I loved how Benedict seemed so human and seemed to know how to deal with human problems.

I met a sister who when she spoke seemed to have a personal relationship and knowledge of Jesus. I desired to know more of how that might be possible for me.

I met my congregation when I was 16 years old. When I would visit them I was profoundly touched by their spirit of prayer, their JOYFULNESS in being a religious, the spirit of hospitality I saw, and their committedness to working with the poor and marginalized. My congregation was “out there” doing what they said they were about!

I met the CSJs in high school. They were wonderful so I joined them. At that time they were young and fun (1963). When I returned to the community I admired their wisdom and their work for justice.

I really liked how the Sisters had a balance between work and prayer. The Sisters seemed to be genuinely joyful.

I saw and felt their community spirit, I thought I would fit/belong with this group of amazing women who dedicated their lives to prayer and the works of mercy. I resonated with their simplicity, small congregation, I felt welcomed and comfortable with their traditional values.

I saw joyful, vibrant women who are not afraid of the public witness their vows call them to live and who are happy to live the essential elements of religious life as a gift from the Church and from God; yet do not hide behind them, thus living a healthy, balanced life in community. I think I was most attracted by the other members – their life, ministry, prayer – as a total package, way of life. Being a part of something bigger than myself.

I think it was the joy and youthfulness of the sisters, even those who weren't so young!

I visited many weekends and felt that the members were living what they said they were about. They were authentic. Many members had private prayer lives (aside from communal prayer) and strove for a closer relationship with Jesus.

I wanted an order that was faithful to the Magisterium of the Church, that wore a habit, and that loves the Eucharist and Mary. God is whom attracted me mysteriously, but very clearly here. I knew I was at home. A supernatural call through prayer.

I was a volunteer there (live in) – liked community living.

I was active in a lay branch of the order. The spirituality of the community (congregation) was attractive. The love with which the members I met, the laughter and joy even while discussing, addressing difficult topics was very attractive.

I was already a Loretto co-member and the call to religious life came three years after I was already involved.

I was attracted because I knew many of the sisters and I felt it was a good fit.

I was attracted by a combination of things – the people, the place, prayer and chanting of the ancient psalms and realizing that the Benedictine tradition is nearly as old as Christianity itself.

Also, that monasticism has survived many centuries and probably will survive in some form, even if individual monastic communities may not. It has a sense of timelessness.

I was attracted by my sisters' joy and prayerfulness and "normalcy." My wish list for a congregation was (in no order) young vocations, well established, a habit (including veil), traditional community structures, teaching apostolate, Marian devotion, Eucharistic devotion and common prayer and the Immac. IHMs had it all.

I was attracted by the community life and prayer life together.

I was attracted by the faithfulness to our primary charism of perpetual adoration. In adoring our Lord exposed in the Blessed Sacrament we aid the Church in a special way by always interceding for those in need.

I was attracted by the habit, fidelity to the Holy Father, dedication to prayer and the apostolate of education. In addition, I appreciated the community life of the institute.

I was attracted by the prayer life, the Benedictine way of life (simplicity) and the emphasis on growth in relationship with God and one another. It seems to me that all ministry flows out from these things. For me, in order to be a faithful witness and disciple of Christ, there must be this balance.

I was attracted by the writings and spirit of our foundress. I also liked the joy and humor among the sisters.

I was attracted by their joy, prayer life, community life, fidelity to the Church, zeal for souls, beautiful habit, history, intellectual life, liturgical and musical traditions, charism, and above all their love for Jesus as Spouse.

I was attracted to my religious institute because of their dedication to education (I have my teaching certificate), and their initial invitation. Many people had seen my religious vocation (including the sisters), much before I was ready to admit my "call."

I was attracted to the charism, prayer life, fidelity to Church, community life, founder.

I was attracted to the obvious joy of many of the elderly sisters I met. I also appreciated the commitment to social justice and the diversity of ministries and expressions of spirituality.

I was attracted to the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary because they had a devotion to receiving daily Eucharist, lived in community, faithful prayer life and wore a habit.

I was attracted to the Sisters' joy and I thought that their joy was related to the way they prayed. So I began to desire that sort of prayer life. Then when I began to pray, I fell in love with the Lord and realized he was calling me to be his Spouse. I also was attracted to the community. The sisters obviously loved one another and enjoyed being with one another.

I was first attracted to my religious institute by the joy-filled presence of the sisters.

I was first drawn by the life of our sisters whom I met on a mission in El Salvador. I was attracted to their availability, their joy, and their desire to be among the very poor, all obviously through their love for Christ. The universality of the Institute also attracted me greatly. I desired a body of sisters with minds and hearts “universal like the Church,” and that is what I found in the Handmaids.

I was in this community 25 years ago. I grew up with this community in school and relatives. After grade school I attended a high school of a different community. Their charism was foreign to me. The charism of Francis and Clare.

I was looking at a nursing profession, then I discovered my vocation and found a congregation dedicated exclusively to the care of the sick and the dying. Once I joined them, I discovered the beautiful richness of our charism and how we serve the poor and suffering in a more profound way.

I was most attracted by the fidelity of our community to the Church and to the fundamentals of our Dominican religious life, the love of our community for the truth of the Catholic faith and passing the faith on to others through the apostolate of Catholic education.

I was most attracted to my religious institute by the joy filled and the welcome of each sister toward me on the first meeting. The way each sister cared for one another.

I was most attracted to the community’s sense of mission – to serve the poor, sick and ignorant of our time, individual sisters’ sense of self and mission, passion and joy and sense of simplicity.

I was most attracted to the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia because of their common ministry and strong community life, Eucharistic and Marian devotion, and wearing of the habit, signifying commitment to traditional religious life and fidelity to the Church. The joy of the members was also a compelling witness, as well as a feeling of being “at home” here.

I was most attracted to the Institute because of the charism, and its sense of fidelity to the Holy Father and a life of deep prayer.

I was most attracted to the joy that I encountered when I would come on live-ins. All of the Sisters were filled with joy which comes from their love of God.

I was most attracted to this religious institute by the peace and fulfillment I found here when visiting. I took that as a sign from God that this is where I belong and through our ministries how I am to serve Him.

I was so struck by the simplicity of the sisters, and I was very attracted to the apostolate near the elderly.

I was taught by the community K thru 8 and then went on to another Catholic school staffed by another community.

I was very much attracted to the spirituality of the congregation. There was also a sense of at homeness.

I was welcome every time when I came to visit this institute even though I didn't talk about my willingness to enter to an institute. Members of the institute were so simply and friendly.

I would say the joy of the sisters, the life of prayer, and the common life. Probably, it would be more accurate to say that there was an overwhelming sense of peace during vespers – that deep in my heart I knew that this was where God wanted me to be for the rest of my life. That was my sophomore year in high school and the sisters had sponsored a weekend trip to sight see and visit the Motherhouse. Though I went along for fun, not intending it for vocational discernment, the Lord rekindled in my heart the fire to pursue religious life.

Identity as “Bride of Christ.” A long and rich history both of Dominican order and individual congregation. Faithfulness to Holy Father. The Habit.

Ignatian spirituality. Daily Adoration. Commitment to spiritual growth. Daily living of the vows=see the purpose of the vows. International community. Saint Rafaela Maria, foundress.

In my community there is a holistic understanding of religious life, that is, all parts are interdependent: the mission, the community life, the liturgy, the religious habit. All parts complement one another.

Individual sisters and their spirit of family and joy.

Individual sisters who modeled the joy of being a sister.

(Initial congregation) Franciscan, Marian. Current Congregation: though a transplant, they accepted me. Between 1984-1994 I was part of a new foundation according to Byzantine Rite. My heart is still there. Its a spirituality appeals to me.

Initially prayer; my family has a deep faith.

Initially, my call to religious life and then the incredible welcoming way the sisters opened their homes and lives to me.

Integration of contemplative/apostolic with strong emphasis on contemplative. Family spirit.

Interior conviction that this was God's will.

Internationality – valued each individual and the people we serve. Image of the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd theology.

Internationality of institute. Charism. Members I met. Prayer. Contemplative and apostolic mix of life style and charism.

Initially it was the women I met through various opportunities, what “sold” me in the process was the charism – to make one – and the desire to help others reach their God-given potential.

Invitation, prayer.

It best fit my desire and personality.

It brought out the best in me.

It felt like home.

It just flowed into reality so beautifully that I was always awed by how great was my vocation with this community.

It was Dominican!

It was the fact that it was a missionary institute. Plus the life and works of my founder, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini.

It was the joy that I witnessed within and among the Sisters.

It was the prayer life on how we say the Divine Office

It was work I was already doing. I like taking care of the elderly.

Its apostolic orientation and commitment to prayer. Also the fact that my gifts in higher education would be respected, valued, and put to use. Finally, I really value Holy Cross’ emphasis on family, and the sense of unity between the men’s and women’s congregations. (I knew, sometimes, it’s more ideal than reality, but it’s a value.)

Its charism for the poor and of being international.

Its charism of preaching; knowing them since I was in first grade. My sense of belonging, it fits me. The women who are committed to social justice, recycling (in the community) their activism and their wisdom.

Its commitment to pursuing personal wholeness through service to God and others, guided by the authority of the Church, and its ability to do this while open to a changing world.

Its geographic location and the charism of the community

Its healing charism/spirituality, strong commitment to justice and shared leadership. I was also attracted to our institute's (society's) wholistic approach to our healing mission and ministries. Internationality.

Its internationality, the level of education of most members, focus on contemplation and ministry.

Its lifestyle. The simplicity and the joy I found in there. And as I was becoming more acquainted with it, our charism and spirituality.

Its location. The fearlessness of its members in calling attention to and seeking to address the systemic roots of social injustices without and outside the Church. The potential for living/ministering with others.

Its members – women living at the prophetic edge of religious life and society.

Its prayer life and its virtues: humility, simplicity, charity.

Its spirituality, strong sense of mission, and joyfulness despite difficulties.

Its women who manifest such joyful, loving, self-emptying service to people. Also, their creativity, spirituality, sense of community, and passion for social justice.

Jesus. When I was 22 years old, I had an encounter in prayer that was the turning point of my whole life. I realized that Jesus is real and that He loved me. I believed that He was offering me the gift of a religious vocation in this institute. That's what attracted me here – the conviction that this is where He wanted to draw me close to Him.

Joy and balance of members

Joy and community life of the sisters and our retreat ministry.

Joy in living the life. Desire for mission in education. Fidelity to the Church. Community. Radical love. Christ centered. Truth in who they were.

Joy of members, desire to be more intentional about my life choices.

Joy of members. They were excited to go home to Motherhouse at every possible opportunity.

Joy of the members and fidelity to traditions of prayer in the Church, the habit.

Joy of the sisters, prayer life, charism (to receive Christ's merciful love and to make it visible). Variety of apostolates, faithfulness to the Church.

Joy, sense of community.

1. Joy. 2. Smell of coffee in main lobby. 3. HARD WORKING. 4. Deep prayer life. 5. Community life.

Joy. Apostolate.

Joy. Flexible apostolate. Personal connection (friend in order).

Joyfilled, intentional women.

Joyful and happy members with what seemed to me to be a clear, corporate sense and purpose.

Joyful service.

Joyful spirit when coming together. History and accomplishments with mission. Diversity of ministries.

Joyful spirit, gospel values, service to all in need.

Joyful welcoming women who accepted me as I was.

Joyful witness of sisters. Sisters interacting with youth. Community and prayer life.

Joyful witness. Community life.

Just as I was called to religious life in general, I was called to my congregation in particular.

Life giving support among members. Commitment to social justice.

Life of prayer and serve the elderly as you serve Christ himself.

Littleness and humility. Service of Jesus and the poor. Poverty and simplicity.

Liturgy of the Hours – God being integrated into my entire day.

Liturgy of the hours – prayer. Living in community.

Liturgy, joy, habit, numbers, orthodoxy.

Lived the gospel the way I understand it, committed to gospel principles. Charismatic, which means they are completely open (or try to be) to the Holy Spirit's workings and frequently call upon Him. Orthodox. Eucharistic. Marian. Pray and eat liturgically. Franciscan.

Location and commitment to community living and diversity of ministry. Care of the sisters and friendships within community. Known to each other.

Love for Christ, joy, fidelity to the Church, common prayer – Eucharist and Marian, strong community life.

Love of the Church, of the Holy Father, well-established institute (not brand new), communal prayer, life, and apostolate, teaching apostolate, young sisters and older sisters, common habit, centered on the Eucharist-Mass, devotion to Mary, the life/spirituality of the founder, American origin (from pioneer women), love of the teachings of the Church, balanced life.

Love of the Eucharist, the Church and Our Lady, that was truly shown in all aspects of the lives of the sisters. When discerning I remember clearly thinking to myself: "See how they love one another!"

Love of truth, desire to know the truth through study.

Many of the ways we pray, that we follow the Church's teachings, we wear a habit.

Meeting a member while involved in volunteer work in Haiti.

Meeting a member who was a person – one with whom I could talk to as a friend – not as one in habit and separated from me – also witnessing her genuine concern for those she ministered to – to whom she was the face of Christ.

Members – prayer life.

Members and their ministries.

Members in the institute. The community life of members. The congregational dedication to ministry and spiritual life.

Ministry and mission. The uniqueness of our sisters/flexibility.

Ministry of the institute. Friendliness and welcome of the members. The authenticity of the members.

Ministry. Community.

Mission and focus on Christ/Christian values most attracted me to religious life.

Mission, focus on women. Prophetic witness, open community life style, focus on social justice.

Mission, ministry opportunities, international.

Mission, purpose, community life, active contemporary members.

Mission. Spirituality – contemplation in action – expansive, inclusive love – mystery.

1. Monastic rather than apostolic. 2. Solid prayer life. 3. Community is important.

Mostly the spirituality. I felt like we were a match, like I was living their way of life as a lay woman but they were living it in a more balanced way. I was also drawn to their youth and playfulness and joy that radiates from their faces.

Motto of “truth.” Stance on social justice. Women who were working for social justice.

My community has maintained perpetual adoration, around the clock, since 1878. Eucharist has continually been my support and total gift. Being a Franciscan community sealed my selection. We are engaged in a variety of ministries, and still growing!

My community is the only one I knew. I met them through a friend in high school. I was most attracted by their community life and their work with the the priesthoods.

My priest director suggested I visit because of the apostolate, but what attracted me upon visiting is the overwhelming sense of being called here. Certainly the joy I saw in the sisters was an attraction, but if it weren't for the personal call from our Lord I heard when visiting, the example would not have been enough.

My religious community is steeped in Vatican II, is committed to the well being of women and promotion of all gifts of women. I was drawn to our international richness and diversity. Members of my community are visionaries and committed to justice, prayer and spirituality.

Not knowing a lot about the community, but, through an example of a member from the religious community that's attracted me.

One of the sisters from my religious institute, the way she lives her vocation.

One of the sisters, who had an amazing joy about her. I thought, “that's what I want. Maybe this is the vehicle.”

Openness to ministry – support from members and leadership.

Other Sisters of Charity – only community I knew – when in intercommunity I kept thinking I was drawn to other communities, but realized over time the charity charism was a fit for me – 12 years of Sisters of Charity schools.

Our apostolate of caring for the sick in their own homes, especially the terminally ill.

Our balance of the beauty of the Catholic tradition with an openness to where the Spirit is leading the Church. Beauty of chant, liturgy, community life. Obvious love for each other. Practicality of Rule of Benedict. A ttraction to founding Saint. Educational ministry balanced with contemplative life.

Our call to serve Christ in our brothers and sisters who are poor.

Our charism and ministry.

Our charism and our educational ministry in the Church.

Our charism of reparation to the Sacred Heart really drew me. I also was attracted by the order's community and prayer life. Our life in common is a lived reality, not simply words on paper. The prayer life is structured, but not rigid with traditional devotions as well as more contemporary theology.

Our charism, commitment to mission of Jesus, balance of prayer and contemplation.

Our fidelity to the Church and to our charism.

Our founder, Cardinal John O'Connor – who preached and worked to protect all human life.

Our foundress Catherine McAuley.

Our hospitaller mission of care to the elderly poor. Prayer life and Eucharistic Adoration.

Our internationality, sense of joyfulness in ministry and focus in education in the broadest sense to spread the good news of Christ.

Our ministry among God's people. Educating a new generation of Catholic leaders.

Our monastic prayer life and horarium.

Our prayer life – our way of praying and our prayers. The visibility and witness shown to others in the wearing of our habit.

Our prayer life and our apostolate.

Our sisters are one branch of a family with priests and brothers, and laity. We really feel like family and we complement one another in our differing gifts. We are like the Marines – we like to go to remote places and take on abandoned work no one else is doing. It's an adventure.

Our sisters, charism, spirituality, love of the Church (fidelity), that we wore a full habit, and our mission in the Church most attracted me to our community.

Parishioners at my church knew sisters at my institute very well. They were in a neighborhood. I am a convert. I knew nothing about religious life. But, I listened to people around me, especially my god-mother and priest, carefully.

People and prayer life of community.

Perpetual Adoration, fidelity to Magisterium of the Church.

Perpetual Adoration, wearing of a religious habit, fidelity to Church.

Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration

Prayer and community life that happily extended from the members of the community I first met.

Prayer and community life. Evident joy and goodness of the sisters. Structure/horarium of their contemplative-apostolic life.

Prayer and Community Life. Hospitality.

Prayer and community life. We spend time together in faith sharing, revision of life – and monthly retreat.

Prayer and community.

1. Prayer life, Divine Office chanted throughout the day. 2. Strong community life, we are usually ten in community, have community time together. 3. Apostolic life – caring for the elderly poor.

Prayer life – Mass daily, rosary, Adoration all daily. Liturgy of the Hours. Habit. Community life – very active, centered on unity and Eucharist. Mission and 4th vow – to protect and enhance the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

Prayer life – spirituality

Prayer life and being a witness that prayer is one and only necessity, to all people who come to our chapel.

Prayer life and being treated as an adult – being allowed to take responsibility in making decisions.

Prayer life, centered on the Eucharist. Joyful, lively community life. The charism and the apostolate.

Prayer life, example of the sisters – their joy.

Prayer life.

Prayer life. Monastic customs. Habit. Community life. Love of Blessed Mother. Solid formation. Joy of the sisters. Fidelity to the Church. Love of Eucharist.

Prayer time, community, study, the apostolate.

Prayer, community life, habit, faithfulness to the Magisterium, type of apostolate (because that was already part of my vocation).

Prayer, Mass, devotions, wearing habit. Community living. Mission and charism.

Prayer. Actually, I just wanted to have a retreat. Never to be a religious.

Prayerful women.

Proclaiming that we are made in the image and likeness of God – unrepeatable.

Profound sense of community and the love members have for one another, our partners in ministry and those whom we serve.

“Real” quality and compassion of the sisters, how hard they worked in their ministries, their professional orientation, their desire for spiritual growth.

Refer to answer of the questions 1-5.

Relationships with each other, very free and loving.

Respect and appreciation for the individual, treated as an adult with maturity. Mission focused on peace and justice issues. Progressive stance in political, social and church issues.

Reverence, prayer, center on Eucharist, friendliness of members, Carmelite spirituality, contemplation, time for private prayer.

Sense of common identity, habit, vibrant joy in living our life as Spouses of Christ.

Sense of community engaged in the ministry of Jesus. Importance of study in charism.

Sense of community, prayer, and commitment.

1. Sense of mission. 2. Focus on women/children/needs not being met.

Sense of peace with life and self.

Service and prayer life and community

Service of the poor.

Service to God is a variety of ministries (however, very much focused on education in all these ministries), their love of God and the Church and its people, genuine concern for the people of God; spirit of community, love for one another, incarnational spirituality.

Service to persons who are poor. Internationality of the company.

Serving the aged poor.

Several aspects of my sisters' life most attracted me: Eucharistic center, emphasis on Holy Scripture, fidelity to the Church, wearing of a uniform habit, and apostolate of teaching and praying for priests and sinners.

Several things. First, the charism – service of the poor. Second, the fact that my community takes annual vows. This challenges me to reflect what my vows mean given the ministry, community, spiritual space, family space, and personal space I'm in each year. I think more about what they ask of me. Third, our community is international. I felt being moved around would challenge me to grow. And I felt, in 1993 and now, that the community would have longevity. Finally my community values living in community. We stayed in community even when trends were to have a lot of solo sisters in others.

Simplicity and gentleness of the sisters.

Simplicity, community, spirit and charism – education for life, internationality, diversity, spirituality.

Simplicity. Worked serving the young. Habit

Simplistic way of life.

Singleness of life, joy of the sisters, God's call saying, "Here."

Sisters were joyful, dedicated, mission-driven and the charism felt like "home" more than other institutes.

Sisters' example of service to others in need. Prayer of the sisters. Community that the Sisters witnessed. The interest that Sisters showed in our (young people's) personal, spiritual, and professional growth. At the time the German Sisters wore a habit (I wanted a habit to show other young people that this life is worth living – be a witness!).

Size (large) and location. The work with social justice issues – a flexible community life style. Initially lived with a small group in active ministry operating at a modern developmental level of consciousness. They were open to varied forms of prayer.

Small community. Rural Setting. Social Justice issue.

Small group prayer, small group living.

Social justice issues – the rights and plights of women and children and commitment to environmental issues. The expectation that members discern the direction of their call to ministry and assume responsibility for their decisions in communication with other community members. And the fact that independence as well as interdependence are valued. Also faithfulness and obedience to perceived calling. Prayer and meditation. Spirit and hospitality and dedication of the women in our community, as well as the founding story.

Spirit of Francis and Clare. Charism of on-going conversion.

Spirit of joy and hospitality/welcome.

Spirit of St. Francis lived out in its members. Purposeful living of the vowed life.

Spirit of the sisters

Spirit. Community. Prayer life.

Spirituality (Alphonsian), joy of sisters, commitment to spiritual and personal growth.

Spirituality and charism of Maryknoll sisters. Commitment and service while sharing gifts with God's people. The ability to see and celebrate our differences yet forming a strong band in mission work.

Spirituality and ministry. Vow of zeal. Mission of reconciliation. International congregation.

Springfield Dominicans were my teachers for eight years of elementary education. They were still at my parish when I graduated from college. They became my friends at this time. As I hungered for a deeper relationship with God, their way of life became more enticing and inviting. I wanted their joyous, hospitable, prayerful, simple way of life.

Stance on peace and justice/care of creation/care of the poor.

Strong identity – common prayer, common apostolate, habit, community life. This community knew/knows where it is going.

Teaching, how my teachers acted toward students.

That it lives and cherishes all the elements necessary for my commitment to heroic holiness – even when I would like to run far away (I wasn't a cheerful discernment retreat attendee at first).

That the institute is international.

That they for the most part lived and prayed as community. That the community was large and in a rural setting. That a variety of ministries were done by the sisters.

That they look happy in their ministry, and their community life. Also that they wear a habit, and their fidelity to the Church.

That they were local – not national/international. That they were teachers. That they wore a religious habit. The people.

That they would consider a 55 year old transfer who had been a United Methodist Pastor. Joined the Church in 1987. Perpetual Adoration – Non Habit – On the cutting edge. Unified in Diversity – Life Giving.

The “down to earth” lifestyle and spirituality of my community. Lack of a habit. Strong collaboration with laity – love for the Eucharist – a variety of ministries.

The “realness” of the sisters and their openness in sharing their spirituality.

The ability to know of God’s love through the spirituality and charism of the Order.

The apostolate of teaching theology and the sisters themselves.

The apostolate.

The articulated charism as well as the lived charism-my experiences with the sisters.

The authenticity of the Dominican charism to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of our contemplation, fidelity to truth; zeal for souls; and ardent, consuming love for Christ.

The authenticity of the sisters’ life. The sisters seemed to radiate peace and joy as they went about their daily duties, from praying to teaching to cleaning, etc. It was evident that they loved religious life, loved their community and most especially, they loved their Divine Spouse.

The balance between prayer and apostolate and fidelity to the Church.

The beautiful, generous and courageous spirit of some of the members that I became friends with in 1996.

The beautiful, peaceful grounds and the energy and deep faith of the members of my institute. The hospitality and simple life-style too.

The Benedictine balance of prayer and life together while serving others (or in the monastery). The Liturgy of the Hours as a prayer focus.

The Benedictine charism.

The blend of the contemplative prayer and apostolate, full religious habit.

The call to preach the truth in a way that brings life, unified with other committed, thinking women always open to learning more – Dominican.

The Carmelite spirituality.

The catechetical ministry of the congregation and ministry that is personal and not institutional.

The charism.

The charism – commitment to family.

The charism – the spirituality around the Magnificat. Also, some of the ministries sisters were involved in – diverse and while individual pursuits seemed like they connected and networked with each other to support one another's call and/or pursuit of the larger mission.

The charism (devotion to the Sacred Heart, which I already had strongly), a natural feel with the sisters (though I didn't know them well), the openness to any service of the Church (I didn't feel called to one apostolate), and the Franciscan simplicity and poverty. Jesus was the main call though – I felt it was purely His will, not tainted with mine, that I entered here (for example I wasn't entering because I liked the habit.)

The charism and mission institute and the members struggle/joy in living it out. The members were real and invited me to be myself and join them in sharing the gifts of the charism and the mission... Just as I am/was... it didn't matter that I was not a member. Their lives were/are about love in not sacrifice. In a nutshell, relationships.

The charism and spirituality of our community. Being a small but international organization. Community and prayer love; joy. The focus on Jesus as our Redeemer.

The charism and the sense of "home" in the motherhouse. I did not look at any other congregation – my heart knew this was the right place.

The charism of community and common prayer, the monastic life.

The charism of the Dominican Order has always been part of me since grade school and also relationships of friendship with several sisters.

The charism of the founders of the congregation. How hospitable and how caring each sister was for me. How much each sister made me feel at home and were supportive of me while going through RCIA, while my family was not.

The charism of the institute and the visible living out of it. I believe I was born with the charism – an instant attraction I knew when I saw it.

The charism of the institute, the spirituality, love, and fidelity to the Church, to the Holy Father's teaching, the apostolate and community life.

The charism, how the sisters carried it out in their daily life. The charism spoke to how I already viewed my life – allowed that part of me to be cultivated.

The charism, intentionality and ministry.

The charism, mission and ministries that were/are visible in our area. Also the down-to-earth attitude, openness to personal and spiritual development, the Jesuit based spirituality, encouragement to dream God's dream for the world.

The charism, the prayer life, the hope of wearing a distinctive habit.

The charisms and devotions, the life.

The charity, patience and openness of the sisters to those they served, among themselves and to us who volunteered alongside them.

The cheerfulness of the sisters, the holy habit, prayer life and the care they give to the sick.

The cheerfulness of the sisters. The prayer and dedication of the sisters.

The combination of charismatic and contemplative spirituality. The palpable fraternity and sense of family among the members.

The commitment of its members to the needs of the times – being involved in many peace and justice programs – Franciscanism.

The commitment of the three groups (men, women, and lay members) to collaborative existence and collaborative ministry.

The commitment to live in community.

The communal lifestyle and prayer life of the sisters. The charism.

The community – prayer life and location.

The community exhibited a strong religious life, prayer, community living in common fidelity to the Magisterium and wearing of a full religious habit.

The community life of prayer, work and recreation is well balanced. Also the love the sisters show to one another. The peace that is felt here is great. The example of the sisters.

The community life, prayer life, and apostolate.

The community were really enthusiastic about their ministry. They were happy-go-lucky people. Faithful to their commitment as teachers.

The community's charism. The joy of the sisters. My history with the community.

The community's fidelity to prayer, the Divine Office, the Church. It also wears the habit and has intellectual answers for many theological and philosophical questions. It isn't a superficial

“feel-good” group of women, but a joyful, genuine and intelligent group of women who are serious about their consecration to God.

The community’s love of the Eucharist, fidelity to prayer, love of the Church, wearing of the religious habit, devotion to the Blessed Mother, an evident love between the sisters (all ages).

The compassion, openness, and acceptance by the sisters attracted me the most.

The congregation is forward thinking, not tied to old ideas of what religious life is about. They are interested in serving God’s people and enjoying the life we are given. The sisters are committed to a solid prayer life, to preserving Mother Earth, to help women achieve their full potential, and to spread the Good News to all. And the sisters are committed to good, wholesome fun!

The congregation’s joy and fidelity to the Church most attracted me.

The congregation’s mission, commitment to social justice, option for the poor, openness to the laity, incarnational spirituality.

The contemplative-active blend. Their flow of life – the balance of their rhythm between prayer, work, and ministry and the safeguard/amount of time reserved for the contemplative dimension.

The contemplative-active lifestyle coupled with missionary zeal and a charismatic spirituality.

The dedication and joyfulness of members I knew. The mission of my congregation also attracted me as being very actual and something I could really contribute to. But ultimately I felt God was “inviting” me.

The deep joy and commitment between and among the members.

The deep spirituality and radiant JOY of the members.

The desire to be completely consecrated to God and His Church.

The devotion for the Blessed Sacrament. The commitment to prayer despite the fact that we are an active community.

The diversity in ministries and nationalities of the congregation.

The diversity of ministries, spiritualities, and personalities.

The diversity of the women – in age and ministries – the vision statement and the focus on the poor – empowering women – supporting women – and the marginalized. The positive and happy feelings – the desire to be with one another – to pray together – very supportive of diverse ministries-artists! We have wonderful artists!

The Dominican charism of love of truth and the teaching apostolate; but what ultimately tipped the scales and impelled me to enter was the tremendous joy I saw in all the sisters.

The Dominican charism.

The Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia taught at the high school I attended in Baltimore. Their joy, habit, and prayer and community life were what most attracted me.

The educational mission rooted in the Heart of Jesus – I came because of my attraction to above. I stay because of my relationship with God.

The empowering of women through their ministries, their hospitality, and prayer style.

The Eucharist – source and summit of life. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Fidelity to the Church/ecclesial congregation.

The Eucharistic Adoration, community prayer, habit, fidelity to Magisterium.

The evident joy of the members, the sense of common purpose, the youth (median age) of the members, the continuity of an established community with a long history and clear identity.

The example of the sisters.

The experience of community life and the traditions of ministry to the sick.

The fact that I felt comfortable and my best self possible with the community.

The fact that I saw the congregation in a catalog from the CMSWR, the newer national council for religious women in the U.S., the fact that they wore a habit, and prayed in common and that parish ministry fit in the charism.

The fact that the community was proressive and willing to take risks.

The fact that the ministry was given free of charge. The joy of the members of the communities I visited.

The fact that they're alive and real and serious. They're prayerful and progressive – they're concerned with things I care about.

The fact that, as a community we are not called to do stuff, we are simply called to be in community.

The faith, commitment and love lived by its members, especially the senior sisters who are still doing God's work in our convent for sick and aging sisters.

The fidelity to the Church, religious life, charism, and prayer in community. Joy of the sisters.

The first community I entered was very strict – difficult for my family to bear. This community is much more family oriented.

The first thing that attracted me to my religious community was Perpetual Adoration that is our main charism, from that flows our works of mercy in schools and hospitals. The next attraction came from the family atmosphere of our community.

The first time it was to save my soul and the souls of others as I was taught by some very cheerful, friendly, younger sisters. The second time I wanted to participate in community life, especially in the Eucharistic and prayer life in this community. I also felt called to a community whose ministry was all aspects of charity and service.

The first time was the work. The next time, the justice work and the love of God and neighbor.

The focus of their mission.

The foundress' commitment to the poor and vulnerable

The foundress of my community – she felt compelled to start a religious institute to serve people who are poor despite the fact that it was against the law to even practice Catholicism at that time in Ireland.

The Franciscan atonement charism.

The Franciscan focus of its members and community life – working in ministry with other members. The charism of the Founder.

The freedom to be one among many. I didn't have to walk, dress or talk like a duck. I was/am accepted for who I am today!

The friendliness and hospitality of the sisters made me feel I was very welcome.

The friendliness and joy of the members. Their history of ministry in the community.

The friendliness and sincerity of the sisters with whom I worked. They were dedicated and balanced work and prayer and fun.

The genuine love and acceptance I felt when I first met them. Also, their prayer life, rosary, Adoration, meditation. But it was the visible and tangible love that was a draw.

The global vision and concrete practicality of our foundress, St. Manade Mathias. Also, lives of members and their faith practices (lived experience of and with members).

The habit (the fact that they wear one, not the style) and the kindness and joy of its members.

The habit the sisters wore. The happiness they had.

The habit, community life, Eucharist focus, commitment to the Church.

The habit, fidelity to the Church and the Eucharist, teaching apostolate.

The habit, prayer and study.

The habit, the monastic traditions, chanted office in community, devotion to Our Lady and the Rosary – silence at meals with spiritual reading, devotion to the Sacred Heart and Eucharistic adoration.

The habit.

The habit.

The habit. Fidelity to the Church's Magisterium. Love and support for the Holy Father, Bishops, and priests. Devotion to Our Lady. Tradition.

The Habit. Liturgy of the Hours. Community.

The hand of God and a desire to fully serve God and his people in the manner of the growing seed God planted within, to serve God in a fuller manner.

The happiness of the sisters, their simplicity, their habit, their community life. The welcome that they gave me the first day that I visited them.

The history and mission of our congregation. The sisters I met and spent time with. Prayer life and hospitality, positive energy. Felt at home.

The history, charism, and spirituality of the congregation, as well as the joy and "down to earth" nature of our sisters.

The history, mission and works of the Sisters of Mercy. The overall positive attitudes and willingness to risk new things to assist the poor and marginalized.

The holiness of the members. Fidelity to the Church...to the Holy Father. Sisters' witness of great love for their spouse, Jesus Christ transformed religious life to something warm...whereas other religious I had known seemed cold...not in love with a person.

The hospitality of the community, their love and support and the balance between work, prayer, and community.

The hospitality of the sisters and the openness and willingness to share their faith and community. The Franciscan way of evangelical life – following in the footprints of Jesus.

The idea of giving myself in consecration to Jesus.

The Ignatian spirituality of my institute. The charism of my institute. The fact that it is an international congregation. The excellent formation I received as a novice in this country and the personal growth that I experienced as a consequence.

The independence yet *cour unum* in every aspect of our lives.

The inexplicable sense that this is where God wants me. The love the sisters have for one another, their overt loyalty to the Church and the Pope. Their joy and genuine concern, and their expressed desire for others to be as happy as they.

The institute's loyalty to the Church. Our congregation has daily Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, and other prayers in common. We also have other prayers that we pray on our own. We live the religious life in common. I also wanted to enter a community where the habit is worn.

The intensity of the community life. The joy and dynamic energy of the sisters. The ways in which they renewed religious life as a renewal community born out of Vatican II

The interaction between the men and women, brothers, priests and sisters, the internationality and missionary work.

The interaction of the sisters among themselves. Their sense of joy and peace. This view has changed throughout the years – I do not expect a lot from community life anymore.

The internationality and commitment to serve the poor is what attracted me most to my religious institute.

The joy and easy smile and laughter that each member had.

The joy and example of the sisters most attracted me.

The joy and fidelity of the sisters in their life espoused to Christ.

The joy and happiness that the sisters reflect in their faces. The beautiful welcome they gave me the first time I visited them. The habit.

The joy and life that the members with whom I came in contact with shared. They were always so alive and interested in helping others be their best.

The joy and love I saw in the sisters and the feeling of family.

The joy and peace of the sisters, their clear sense of identity, their love for the Eucharist, the Church, Mary, loyalty to the Holy Father and the Magisterium, their true femininity, fidelity to their received charism, desire to evangelize and teach the truth, sense of purpose as a religious,

their community prayer life, clear sense of focus as the only reason for it all and spousal consecration.

The joy and prayer of the sisters.

The joy and respect that I saw among the sisters (group to which I transferred). I was looking also for a group that did not wear a habit and that allowed members to live in apartments – Basically, I wanted a group that allowed for individuality and personal needs.

The joy and vitality of each sister, an emphasis on community life, our habit and fidelity to the teachings of the Magisterium.

The joy and youthfulness of our Sisters. I had also never met Sisters in habit before.

The joy at service, hospitality, openness, simplicity, the fact that Jesus is the center of our lives.

The joy experienced in the Sisters who taught me in school.

The joy filled witness of the Sisters who have given all for the glory of God and for love of Jesus. Most definitely our fidelity to the Church, especially in the wearing of the habit and the communal life.

The joy I found in all of its members (especially its oldest members). The unity among the sisters.

The joy of all the sisters of all ages and the visible witness of living a consecrated life such as communal life and a habit.

The joy of our sisters and great witness of His love. All the sisters are very real

The joy of the members and a common focus on Christ.

The joy of the members of it, and their realization that they are brides of Christ, first and foremost.

The joy of the members, the depth of spirituality and the contemplative emphasis. Franciscan spirituality.

The joy of the sisters and how young they were.

The joy of the sisters and my interest in their apostolate.

The joy of the sisters and the commitment to living in truth...The openness and honesty – a “down to earth” personality but still spiritually deep and rich...the wearing of the habit and the location (close to home).

The joy of the sisters and the fact that they were faithful to the Holy See. Also community life, habit, prayer, apostolate.

The joy of the sisters and the ministries in the apostolate.

The joy of the sisters and their commitment to prayer.

The joy of the sisters and their fidelity to authentic religious life.

The joy of the sisters and their fidelity to the Church as manifest in their devotion to prayer, the sacraments, the Blessed Mother, and the Holy See. Also their wearing of the habit.

The joy of the sisters and their sense of identity as brides of Christ in the heart of the Church; community life, the habit, love for Christ in the Eucharist, common prayer attracted me to my religious institute.

The joy of the sisters and their undivided hearts for the Lord Jesus that was seen by their selflessness.

The joy of the sisters attracted me most to religious life. There was also a strong sense of the presence of God in the house, and I loved the prayer life of the sisters.

The joy of the sisters attracted me to this congregation. As well as the traditions, such as monastic prayer and processions. I felt welcome and at home.

The joy of the sisters I met.

The joy of the sisters in seeking, serving, and loving Christ above all else and in full fidelity to His church.

The joy of the sisters living their consecration as a Bride of Christ!

The joy of the sisters living their life for Christ through prayer, community life, and the apostolate.

The joy of the sisters which sprung out of their love for the Eucharist.

The joy of the Sisters, the habit, the love of the Sisters for God and their students, priority of the Eucharist, devotion to Mary and the Rosary.

The joy of the sisters, their prayer life and faithfulness to the Church and Holy Father and that they wore a habit.

The joy of the sisters. I did love to see them playing guitars and mandalines.

The joy of the sisters. The beautiful, compassionate way they treated others and guests. Contemplative spirit. Commitment to building a holy and just society. I thought, “this is the way religious life was meant to be lived.”

The joy of the sisters. The commitment and practice of prayer, especially devotion to the Eucharist. The large number and variety (personalities from reserved to enthusiastic) of sisters. Our charism.

The joy present in its members, prayer life of the community, fidelity to the Pope/Church teachings, wearing of traditional habit, the focus on the Eucharist and Marian devotion, community life and practices/silence, eating and recreation in common, etc.

The joy that I observed among the Sisters. Their committed service, especially to the poor. Their community life and shared prayer and regular dialogue.

The joy that the members of the institute showed, as well as seeing their everyday community life and traditions during visits

The joy that the Sisters indicated every time I saw them – laughing and teasing each other – in a healthy way. They always worked together as a team. They supported each other. The Sisters gave me a true sense of family. This is very important to me because I grew up with a positive experience of family.

The joy that the Sisters radiated, the religious habit, their fidelity to the Church, the centrality of the Eucharist, the common life.

The joy the members exceeded and how happy they were together, also the fact that there wasn't only focus for ministry.

The joy the members had. Their simplicity and love for each other. Their faithfulness to religious life.

The joy the sisters exhibited, fidelity to the Church and an apostolic zeal for “whatever the Church needs”

The joy, faithfulness to the church and the habit.

The joy, fidelity to the Church and obvious spiritual life of the major superior and the sisters living the life in community with a visible witness to unity in dress and prayer/common life.

The joy of the sisters, fidelity to Church, love of Eucharist, strong community life, devotion to Our Lady.

The joy, prayer and community life of the sisters.

The joy, prayers and ministry of the members. The love they radiated.

The joy, the simplicity, and the almost hidden way of life of the sisters as we work with the sick at night.

The joy/fun that the members had when they were with each other.

The joyful and generous spirit of the sisters.

The joyful and welcoming spirit of the sisters. Also their close and loving relationship they have with people they minister to.

The joyful of lived religious life.

The joyful spirit of the sisters; the hard manual work and the professional work done side by side; the intense community life; the prayerful environments we live in; daily Mass and prayer together as a community.

The joyfulness of the sisters, the prayer in common, the religious habit, fidelity to the Church, the apostolate, the love they have for Jesus and the desire.

The joyfulness of the Sisters, their love for one another, and the simplicity of our lives as Religious.

The joyous spirit of the sisters, they were very comfortable with one another and LOVED what they were doing in their ministries. They were very comfortable with each other and still connected with the real world.

The life and spirit of the members. Their commitment to community living and the spirit that they brought to prayer and ministry. (I was specifically looking for a Franciscan congregation.)

1. The life and works of the foundress. 2. The mission of the Institute. 3. The spirituality of the Institute. 4. The community of the Institute.

The life of prayer and the fact that our Congregation wears the full religious habit.

The life of prayer. The sisters are each their own person. The sisters love each other.

The life of the foundress, the congregation's (exhibited through the member) love of the foundress, community prayer, and love of community, commitment to the poor.

The life story of some sisters in the community.

The life style of the sisters. The spirit of the sisters.

The lifestyle these sisters lived. I had volunteered at an active order and they worked or overworked too many hours a day. I had entered a cloistered community. With the community I

am in now I have a happy medium. I was impressed with all the accomplishments the sisters had done with their lives.

The lived example of the Sisters, especially their sense of joy and purpose, attracted me to my religious institute. In an uncertain world, the community radiated a place on which I knew I could build a life and place it at the service of the Church.

The lives of my religious teachers in elementary school and their encouragement.

The lives of the members; commitment to social justice and to community and to prayer in many forms.

The living witness of the sisters who in sacrificing all for love of God found joy deeper than I had ever seen in anyone I had ever met.

The location and the welcoming community along with the sense of peace I get when I was here for visits.

The love and joy my sisters showed when I met them. Their love for Jesus, our Lady, the Eucharist, the Church, and for the poor and sick people.

The love shown to me by the sisters, their prayerful attitude and kindness and peace; their dedication and life of service and love of Jesus!

The majority are African Americans and I am also!

The members – passionate about God, God's people and justice – radical lifestyle – simple living, i.e., Catholic Worker.

The members I met early on were the first women religious who impressed me as being “reality” based. They made the lifestyle appear “real” as opposed to “fake.”

The members were all very kind to each other and seemed to be happy to see each other, especially at meetings.

The ministries of the institute.

The ministries that the sisters had begun and served through. Their leadership in the Church in the fields of education and healthcare. The corporate nature of our institute and the example of women in leadership dedicated to the poor.

The ministries they were involved in, as well as the prayer life – the individuals I met.

The ministry and the sisters (members) of the institute.

The mission and internationality.

The mission and spirituality of the foundress and the mission of the sisters.

The mission of Mercy was clearly seen in the work at Mercy Retirement and Care Center. The sisters were really alive. The sisters were supportive of each other and their varied ministries.

The mission of the Congregation.

The mission statement. The life story of our founders, her charism “littleness,” humility and the apostolate to the aged poor.

The mission to service of Christ in those who are poor.

The mission.

The name (Faithful Companions of Jesus) that captures the spirituality I was looking for. Its Ignatian roots. Formed by women who are interdependent, open-minded, well formed, very committed, happy.

1. The normal and effortless way the sisters studying with me in Houston were open to a friendship with me. 2. The fact that each of the sisters was evidently “her own person” with a vision of life in common with the others. 3. The fidelity to both personal AND LITURGICAL prayer. It was always evident to me that prayer was first in their lives.

The normalness of the sisters, their joy, feeling of being at home/able to be myself there.

The one thing I had been looking for was a Eucharistic centered spirituality along with faithfulness to the Magisterium.

The openness to one another especially the freedom of formands to sit with professed and talk to them opposite to what I expected in religious life. There’s no seclusion or divisions among different levels of formation and among the senior sisters during community affairs. The togetherness and support. Mercy way of life. Approachable and compassionate and reaches out personally to the needy.

The opportunity to share a common focus on God and to live in a community of other women who share that focus through communal prayer and life in community. The monastic lifestyle was and is very attractive for me.

The people – the sisters – the energy for their ministry and their relationships and care for one another.

The people! I was very impressed with the way the community supported each other. I liked the communal living style I saw here.

The people, prayer and size.

The people, their authenticity, their happiness, their work with the poor.

The people. Once I started getting to know more and more of them the more attracted I became to the community.

The personal connections- the people.

The personality – friendliness, happiness, commitment – of its members – to each other and in their ministry. Their charism and living out of it.

The prayer and community life, striving to live religious life, authentically according to the vision of the church; charism to protect and enhance the sacredness of human life; the joy of the sister and their radiant femininity.

The prayer and community, orthodoxy, charism, religious habit, mission.

The prayer life and charism.

The prayer life and ministry.

The prayer life and our apostolate.

The prayer life and the community aspect of a monastic community. Living, praying, eating all with same women every day – stability.

The prayer life in daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, Rosary, community prayers, Liturgy of the Hours, and meditation. Also the religious habit and joy of the sisters.

The prayer life, community life, religious habit, and the charism to protect human life.

The prayer life, the community gathering for meals, Mass, prayers and the patient care.

The prayer life, the community life, and the monastic practices of my community are among the factors that most attracted me to my community.

The prayer life, wearing of a religious habit, faithfulness to the Magisterium and desire for education to high degrees for education in the faith as well as a means of service to the Church are what drew me to this institute.

The prayer life.

The prayer life. The community life. Their adherence to Holy Mother Church.

The prayerfulness and spiritual life of the sisters.

The pristine spirit of the congregation and its apostolates.

The realness and joy of the first SSJ I met. Later: its members, my community's ability to respect its traditions yet at the same time change with the needs of the times.

The realness, sincerity, openness of the individual members; and the incorporation of the whole person and all of her life experiences into her spiritual life and the life of the community. Also, fidelity to the teachings of the Church in a lived way.

The relationships the sisters had with each other and those with whom they work and serve. The religious habit. The continuity and faithfulness to the Magisterium.

The religious habit was the thing I noticed first. When I came to visit the convent. I liked very much to see the "humanness" of the sisters and the joy and zeal that filled their hearts.

The religious were joyful and obviously showed that they lived God's will in the present moment.

The Rule of Benedict.

1. The Rule of St. Benedict. 2. Monastic life in common. 3. I believed they wanted me. 4. It was Benedictine and had the religious lifestyle that seemed to fit me best.

The Rule of St. Benedict, the large community that was not very far from home.

The sense of belonging and welcome.

The sense of community and relationships among the sisters.

The sense of community/family.

The sense of identity that the sisters had as religious women; their fidelity to their apostolate, to community prayer and recreation, to the Eucharist, to our foundresses, and to the Founder of the Order. The outward sign of their religious consecration by wearing the religious habit was also VERY attractive to me.

The sense of joy and peace experienced by the sisters in their life choice, and the spirituality.

The sense of joy in the members.

The sense of welcome and hospitality, and a strong sense of prayer life. Also, the first sisters I got to know related to me as an adult who already has an existing relationship with God.

The sense that our Sisters truly enjoy being together. Simple, gentle, Midwestern spirit. Deep prayer life of the Sisters. The fact that I felt at home very quickly.

The simple fact that I knew God was calling me there. I knew it wasn't my choice for many reasons. I knew if I wanted control of my life, I could have it, but if I let Him have my life He would refashion me into the person He created me to be. I was drawn also to certain aspects of the apostolate – the privilege of being with people when they die. But it was mostly in the quiet of the chapel at holy hour I felt most drawn. Also the life of our foundress – her courage and devotion to the will of God were so heroic.

The simple life style and values of the sisters as well as their commitment to being a presence to everyone.

The simplicity and joy of the Sisters Servants of Mary. Also, their peaceful and quiet environment in their communities.

The simplicity and joy of the sisters.

The sisters – the way they interacted, the fun they had together, diocesan community, most did not wear a habit.

The sisters – very authentic, committed, absolutely supports the Church, totally given in prayer/community life, habit – loved by the people they serve.

The sisters and their lived expression of spirituality. The charism of compassion.

The sisters I met in my work place-joyful spirit and communal life.

The sisters lived in community; prayed together and served together. The community is world-wide, international bigger than any country or province. Rooted in the charism and spirit of the founders – long lived tradition.

The Sisters of Mercy take a fourth vow of service especially to women and children which was a big attraction. Also the warm hospitality and welcoming of newer members.

The sisters seemed happy and liked one another. They lived out the community; virtues of humility, simplicity, charity.

The sisters themselves and the ministries and lived experiences.

The Sisters themselves, their faith and charism and their love of serving others to bring about the kingdom.

The sisters themselves, who are all different, but are one in their love for Christ, for the Church, and for one another, a love that is evidenced in their joy and sincerity.

The sisters themselves. Franciscan values.

The sisters were going, joyful, and in love with God. They treated each other well and prayed together. They were devoted to the Church and Magisterium and wore the habit.

The sisters were joyful and there were many young sisters. All the sisters wore the habit.

The sisters were joyful! Our sisters wore a habit when I entered but I came in spite of the habit. I figured it was part of the package deal. Mostly it was that the sisters were very down-to-earth and loving people.

The sisters were so full of joy. I loved the habit, Eucharistic Adoration, daily Mass, devotion to our Lady and the rosary, fidelity to the Church. Teaching seemed secondary but still important to pass on the Faith.

The sisters who encouraged me and welcomed me when I went to attend summer chapter meetings.

The Sisters' genuine joy and passion for life was evident to me. The way they related to one another and those they served was attractive to me.

The sisters' joy and enthusiasm.

The sisters' joy, enthusiastic spirit, happiness and fulfillment in their religious life that I saw in them.

The sisters' life and my perception that they all lived simply, loved fully and had lots of fun.

The sisters' love for Christ and the desire to make Him known and loved drew me to religious life. I saw in myself that same desire to belong to Christ alone and to bring the Truth of the Gospel to others.

The sisters' spontaneity and sense of fun. They weren't afraid of the world or of difficult issues, especially of sexuality. They had a spiritual and personal intensity about them that attracted me even though at first I wasn't fired up about the idea of religious life.

The sisters' Franciscan joy was palpable as they worked on the land side-by-side with the laity and I was intrigued by the intensity and beauty of their community prayer life.

The smile and the happiness of the sisters who served the elderly to whom they are not related.

The spirit and camaraderie that I experienced among the women I had as teachers. The charisma that they lived out of. My heart and spirit matching theirs. A deep belief in what we are about. God's call.

The spirit and joy shown by the sisters in community and the vast opportunities for service and growth.

The spirit and openness.

The spirit of foundress and the ministry (teaching for the poor and the needy).

The spirit of joy and prayer that I sensed and experienced in the sisters.

The spirit of the community and their values in ministry.

The spirit of the sisters over the years I have known them. Responding to the needs of the times.

The spirit of the sisters within the then small province in St. Louis. The sisters were very welcoming and I enjoyed being with them.

The spirit the vocation director conveyed about religious life. She was on fire with the Spirit and I caught it!

The spirit, compassion, religious aspect, i.e., prayer life, apostolic work.

The spirit – focus on relationship to each other and the Universe. Emphasis on the contemplative life.

The spiritual development and the charism of our community. The individual members I came to know lived with such a deep desire to love others and serve with compassion.

The spirituality and charism of the institute. Faithfulness to the Church's teachings – truth. The habit – I belong completely to God and want the world to know.

The spirituality and charism. The feeling of being home.

The spirituality of Divine Providence and the Holy Trinity. Knew our priest community for many years and admired their sense of spirituality and dignity.

The spirituality of the Carmelite Order and the Carmelite habit.

The spirituality of the community – its Ignatian roots and the commitment to ministry and the call. More to presence to neighbor than anything else.

The spirituality of the congregation, the faith/prayerfulness of the members, their welcoming spirit/hospitality is so authentic/genuine.

The St. Francis Mission Community was very close to my parents and the sisters were very welcoming when I visited them.

The stable commitment to the Church and the joy that radiated from each member of our community attracted me.

The story of their founding. The aspects of their founding was cutting edge.

The strong commitment to ministry with and for those who are poor with the willingness to be taught/evangelized by them.

The strong sense of community life, including communal prayer, in a spirit of fidelity to the Church.

The teachings of Mother McAuley, service to the poor.

The time of prayer-cloister. The habit, the joy of the sisters. Be in the missions.

The values the community tries to live by are solid gospel values which have been the foundation of our religious order for over 1500 years. They are tried and true.

The values they have matched my own. I felt at home right away.

The variety of ministries, the ability to wear a habit or not and the uniting of three congregations and merging in of another.

The variety of ministries. The lifestyles of the women.

The way sisters greeted one another with kindness. The way people were terribly imperfect – and yet God works through them. Humanity – humility. International. Variety of ministries – yet one mission – to support the needs of families. Devotion to the Holy Family from which we get our charism.

The way the institute has at its heart the needs of the “poor” wherever it is located and the ability of the institution to reach out and help!

The way the sisters interacted with one another, prayed, and ministered.

The welcoming and the openness and the generosity.

The welcoming atmosphere, the sisters’ openness to sharing their life, prayers and own stories.

The wisdom, spirituality, joy of members.

The witness and lives of the sisters. They were joyful, spiritual and communal minded. The community had such an inspiring spirituality, prayer life and communal support that I could see this was the next step to take in growing in the faith and giving to God.

The witness of other members of the congregation.

The witnesses of the religious women who truly love God, others and totally self giving to the young.

The wonderful acceptance and caring that I received when I attended a Sunday liturgy. I felt so welcomed.

The work for the poor.

The work I was doing as a volunteer for this religious institute. The welcome I received from sisters residing here at that time, especially the superior. Mostly because I felt this is where God wanted me to be, for whatever reason.

The work of the institute (pro-life work) as a formed part of the Church, in community

The youthfulness of the group and its hospitality.

Their (our) commitment to Church teaching, their (our) strong community life, their (our) developing of lay faithful communities and relationship with ministerial priesthood, wonderful programs for families, children.

Their Catholic orthodoxy.

Their charism – service to the poor.

Their charism and their spirituality but the most thing was the mission.

Their charism of unity and reconciliation.

Their charism.

Their charismatic spirituality and evangelistic outreach ministry. Faithfulness to the Pope and Church teachings, and wearing a habit, along with what I have come to learn about the Essential Elements of Religious Life.

Their charismatic spirituality and work with youth.

Their commitment to one another, their spirit and that the ads are important.

Their faithfulness to the Holy Father, their prayer life – they were religious. I also felt called to healthcare/service more than teaching so the apostolate also drew me. I love the elderly.

Their faithfulness, as daughters of the Church, and their joy attracted me. I also have a strong attraction to St. Augustine (our rule) and our Carmelite spirituality.

Their fidelity to the Church, their Joy, their charism – especially how the community meets each person and accepts them where they are.

Their Franciscan spirituality

Their joy and love for the Eucharist, and their love and zeal for the Church – and the habit!

Their joyfulness and how welcoming everyone was to me and to each other.

Their loyalty to the Church and the Holy Father and to the Dominican tradition and to the charism of the foundress.

Their loyalty to the Church, the wearing of the habit, living and praying together.

Their ministries. Their way of life. More progressive.

Their ministry (home health) with the sick and dying privately in their homes and at nighttime where there is much peace, solitude and silence which makes prayer favorable. Also their devotion to Mary, their loyalty and fidelity to the Holy Father; Eucharistic prayer and rosary in common. Finally, the religious habit.

Their mission – these are happy women who loved being who they are together.

Their prayer life and their faithfulness to the Church's teachings most attracted me.

Their prayer life being first, which then through prayer and listening (through God, Scripture, community and prioress) leads them to ministry. All is Christ-centered. Their consciousness to work in social justice ministries and simplicity of life, truly lived through St. Benedict.

Their progressive, open stance toward the world; commitment to social justice, warmth, joyfulness and location. Also their openness regarding the congregational struggles. The invitation was to be a part of the journey – warts and all.

Their response to needs of the time. If there was a need identified, there was a response to that need.

Their spirit of joy, the way the sisters seemed to love one another, support one another, and have fun together. The devotion to Mary and daily Eucharist and community life.

Their spirit of joy; their recognition of God's deep love for them and all people, and therefore the desire to help others recognize their goodness and belovedness, and God's.

Their spirit. The relationships. Their commitment to prayer. The community life. The energy shown throughout my discernment. I felt drawn to this community. The size. The diverse ministries. The peaceful/serene surroundings. Daily Mass.

Their spirituality and habit.

Their sponsorship of a university and the opportunity to teach there.

There was an immediate sense of recognition that this group of women shared the passion and Gospel values that I saw in myself, were light-hearted and hospitable, and cared for God's "little ones." They also enjoyed being together.

There were many young Sisters who wore the full Dominican habit, lived a traditional religious life (i.e., in community), and had a strong loyalty to the Holy Father and the Magisterium, and were very joyful about their life.

They are an international community who are both contemplative in prayer and active in mission.

They are very clear about their identity and mission, as well as faithfully committed to all Church teachings. These sisters are dedicated and joyful daughters of the Roman Catholic Church.

They could enjoy each other, laugh, but also were very prayerful.

They were charismatic.

They were faithful to their charism or what the Church had confided to them through their foundress. They didn't change it. Their love and obedience to the Holy Father, prayer life and community life. Total trust in Divine Providence. They also wear a habit.

They were real people who showed a beauty that could only come from placing themselves in front of the Lord.

They wore a habit and witnessed joy and peace.

This was the only religious institute I considered. I had a few sisters during my elementary school years and I had a cousin who was a sister in this institute.

To be part of something larger than myself. The warm welcome I received in my community.

To be very honest, obviously God wanted me in this one and no other – for the simple reason when I would call others upon reading about them in the Vision Magazine, and I was interested in their ministry, they would not offer me the courtesy of an interview – due to my age – 63 (I am a widow).

To experience life with God and to share the love with others inside and outside community.

To live and pray with others who have similar values and who focus on doing good in the world.

To live my life all centered in God, through the charism lived out authentically here and now in the 21st century.

To make a difference, to be a part of a community.

To serve God in serving others especially the poor.

To serve God through SSM community.

To witness of the members toward service with the poor in their ministries and prayer experience.

Traditional habit. Fidelity to the Magisterium. Devotion to the Eucharist. Devotion to Mary. Strong community life. Strong sense of mission, charism, apostolate.

Traditional, obedience to Magisterium, spirituality of community. Solid traditional customs, comprehensive apostolate: teaching, health care, food pantry, shelter for poor.

Two things – personal connections – as I got to know members of my community, knowing them and their commitment to ministry and charism, interest and value of education. And the community's commitment to education, justice, and needs of the poor and oppressed.

Under the direction of the Pope and Magisterium. Habit. Prayer life/community life.

Various ministries using whatever talents they had. Willingness to be open to those who may have left and desired to return from ages 82 to 30.

Visible trust and joy in Christ.

Wearing habit and veil, living in community, life centered in prayer and sacraments, respect, reverence, and obedience to Church, Holy Father, Magisterium, variety of apostolic works, members who were my age (20s), the joy of the sisters I encountered.

Wearing habit. Fidelity to Magisterium.

Wearing the habit, their love for one another, charism of our foundress, the Blessed Sacrament.

Welcome of the members, community life, service.

What attracted me most was our full habit and the joy of the two sisters I first met.

What attracted me most was the charism.

What attracted me most was their total dedication of their lives to God and love for His Church. The sisters are centered on Christ, trusting Him as His Brides, and devoted to the Eucharist and Our Lady.

1. What attracted me to my first religious institute: spirituality of the Founder, prayer life and style; focus on spiritual development. 2. What attracted me to my current religious institute: larger in size, more ministry options, more diversity, spirituality of the institute.

What attracted me was their commitment and dedication to service.

What finally helped me discern where God wanted me to serve Him was seeing the deep prayer life and committed mission (single ministry of caring for the elderly) of the members of the Institute. They seemed to combine a life of contemplation, deep rooted prayer, with apostolic life. This singular ministry strengthens us in serving Jesus Christ. The common life, both in fraternal encounters and during times of prayer, along with wearing a religious habit, attracted me more than other communities who serve in diverse ministries, schedules, garb, etc. I knew I wanted to offer God something more.

What I saw the religious community doing to meet the housing needs of low income persons.

What most attracted me to my religious institute is the fourth vow of hospitality we take in serving the elderly with love and respect. A witness of mercy of God and the compassionate love of Jesus. The Church encourages works of mercy and she considers this exercise of charity as a duty. Also our religious congregation views the Holy Father as our highest superior through the vow of obedience.

What most attracted me to my religious institute was the communal life of the sisters.

What most attracted me to the institute is the zeal of our Foundress that is talked about and emulated among the members.

What most attracted me to this religious congregation was the sense of joy and love in community, devotion to the Holy Eucharist, devotion to the Blessed Mother, wearing the Holy Habit of St. Dominic, and our obedience and faithfulness to the Holy Father.

What most attracted me was the way the sisters treated people – giving them their appropriate importance, recognizing their due importance.

What most encouraged me were the examples of the lived and living experiences. My first introduction was brief during an NCEA conference in New Orleans '97. My interest was/is educational leadership. A SBS presented. She became my mentor in 2004, our paths crossed during the NBSC 2004 in TX. Her invitation to “come and see” made my vocation a reality. I was enlightened by these women’s strength, spiritualness and their love for self and others.

What originally attracted me to religious life was seeing people wholeheartedly committed to ministry and prayer together. I was very taken with how much a person could be available for service and grow in her spiritual life by giving and receiving support in a communal setting.

When I came to the institute's motherhouse for a retreat, I saw women who were the individuals God created them to be. There were no “cookie-cutter” nuns. The women of the institute who

were joyful, realistic women. They were in touch with the reality of life. They were able to converse with, walk with ordinary folks. They were present to people and supportive without being “pushy.” They enjoyed having a good time with us. They loved each other with an affection that was obvious to all.

When I finished my high school I wanted to follow the nursing career and when found out that the Sister Servants are religious and nurses, that caught my attention. Above all as the care for the sick in their homes gratuitously.

When I first began looking at religious life, all congregations seemed to share some basics – prayer, community living and ministry. In the end what attracted me to my particular congregation was the sense of joy and love I experienced among them. Their clear affection for each other and welcoming those around them. I was also attracted by their internationality, global vision, commitment to ministering among those who are poor and marginalized.

When I visited – it felt like home; a sense of identifying with spirit, joy, and prayer life of the institute.

When I visited it just felt right. Felt at home. The Franciscan values; simplicity, love of nature, etc. Charisms, friendliness, hospitality.

Who the sisters are when they are together most attracted me. Their joy-filled response to life and ministry was a strong draw.

Women religious who shared the same ministry, but yet could bring their individuality to the ministry (i.e., cook/dietician, physical therapists, nurses, social workers, bookkeepers, education). Our community is health based.

Women who radiated joy in living community while being involved in a variety of ministries.

Work which our sisters are doing in Brazil (where I was as a volunteer when I first met them). Open-minded attitude of the Brazilian sisters when I requested entrance.

Working with others with like values, a big pond to swim in with many others – many ministry opportunities, global world view.

Young sisters, lots of them, and their joy.

### ***Contemplative Men***

An interior sense of belonging to this place, and a way of life that fits my needs and talents.

Contemplative prayer life lived in community.

Contemplative community.

Contemplative life (prayer life, liturgy including of the Hours, good singing). Sense of community and welcome (and size and wisdom of members). Best of a number I visited over the years (also recommended by mentors).

God's will and his mercy. Is. 54:7-8 (Jerusalem Bible) I did forsake you for a brief moment. But in great compassion I shall take you back. In a flood anger, for a moment I hid my face from you. But in everlasting love I have taken pity on you.

I would attend Mass here sometimes and I found the Church a very good place to pray and to meditate.

Its separation from the world and its regularity.

(Monastery/contemplative institute) The environment was highly conducive to prayer in its Liturgy, silence and beauty – both its natural surroundings and its architecture. I felt God close to me here and was graced with many consolations here. I connected well with the brothers and was greatly inspired by them – I had taken three retreats here before becoming a candidate. The order's specific charism/spirituality matched my own.

Orthodox spirituality based on the Gospels, and Fathers of the Church, and the early ministries. TRUTH-pure, unchanged; I wanted it straight from the source, as Jesus taught and gave it to us – not from a saint who lived in the 11th, 12th century and founded his own order. As I studied the Eastern Orthodox spirituality I was like a house on fire – I couldn't read fast enough. I said over and over "this is it, this is so right, this is the way it should be, this is the TRUTH!"

Prayer and contemplative life in order to be looking for God alone!

Silence and solitude.

Stability: I was with an active order before, but I transferred to a contemplative order. In an active order, one gets uprooted too much with different assignments. However, the monastic life gives me the rootedness that I seek.

Strong community and prayer life.

The life as a contemplative.

The life of prayer. The chanting of the entire Liturgy of the Hours in community. The life of silence and contemplation and a life in community.

The relationship that developed with the novice master while I was on an extended observership program.

The spiritual inspiration offered by the Founders as well as contemporary figures like Thomas Merton, Andre Louf and Michael Casey.

The spirituality of the order.

### *Contemplative Women*

A fidelity the Church, Holy Father, strong leadership and love for the life of the Institute, strong prayer life and community life, excellent formation.

A life patterned to the simple, humble, silent, and hidden, prayerful and charitable life of our Blessed Mother.

Actually, my personal call was too wonderful to condense (but I will do so). He laid a trap and for me and I said yes to His call.

An awareness that God was calling me to this particular community.

Authenticity of religious, contemplative life.

Benedictine spirituality – cloistered contemplative. Full habit.

Call.

Clear sense of God calling me to it first and foremost. Secondary the habit, contemplative, the sisters themselves.

Cloistered life of prayer; full habit; clear sense of mission and purpose.

Contemplative life and carmelite spirituality.

Contemplative lifestyle/authentically lived monastic life.

Contemplative spirit and close proximity to my home.

Desire to be a spouse of Christ. Also, doing everything for the Glory of God.

Eucharist adoration. Living the gospel.

Eucharistic Adoration.

Faith in the power of prayer.

Faithful living out of the Benedictine Rule with the desire to pray and sacrifice for priests, also the idea of being a bride of Christ, also the love of tradition and the Tridentine Mass, also having known the community for several years after my blood sister's entrance.

Fidelity to the Church and our charism.

Gregorian chant in Latin.

Habit. Eucharistic Adoration. Study and intellectual opportunities. Community life. Prayer life. Long tradition.

I am very much drawn to the cloistered, contemplative life of penance for the salvation of souls.

I believe I was just drawn into the place and the people and the customs.

I had a strong sense of a call to cloistered religious life. As I pursued this call, my relationship with Christ deepened, and I soon became ready to throw away everything I had to be with him.

I was attracted by the life, prayer and the opportunity to give myself to God in a deep way.

I was attracted to a cloistered and contemplative prayer life of the institute. I wanted to live a very radical way of following Christ in a hidden way.

I was attracted to the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales – the simplicity and humility especially. As an older vocation, I knew that this community would be more open.

I was most attracted by the joyful witness of total self-dedication that I saw in the members I met in the parlor during my visits before entering.

I was most attracted to how the community preserved being a bride of Christ through prayer and their daily life.

I was most attracted to my religious community by the Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours). In fact, after my visitation I could not stop singing the beautiful chants in my head (especially the Gloria Patri).

Its 100% authenticity, and my absolute conviction that God was calling me here.

Its faithfulness to traditional liturgy with the Mass and Divine Office. Also its faithfulness to prayer, work and penance, even fasting. I admired the wonderful joy of these sisters.

Life of prayer, focus on simplicity of living.

My desire to be a religious, wearing a habit, community life, common prayer and a great love for the liturgy, especially in the Extraordinary Form (which this community has, almost all the time) and a call to be filled, as a Bride of Christ, and being at the service of the Church and the Holy Priesthood.

My desire to make an offering of anything I could of have done in an active apostolate of God – to serve God directly for his own sake in monastic life and in turn reach out to every apostolate that my active brothers and sisters are engaged in.

My sisters fidelity to Holy Mother Church, our Holy Father, and to our poor life. Also, the love and joyous poverty of our Holy order.

Opportunity for silence and solitude within community (10 members now) as a means of following call to deeper life with God was powerful motivator. They allowed my participation as associate so I gained real knowledge of a healthy (psychologically) and devoted community with a charism and spirituality and way of life that was attractive.

Perpetual Adoration and community life.

Prayer life (we are cloistered Carmelites).

Prayer life of the community and respect for community members.

Prayer life, community life, Carmelite charism.

Prayerful environment. Eucharistic Adoration 24/7. Vibrant community. Rural location.

Simple, contemplative life of prayer and silence. Mission of prayer for all in need.

Spirit of the Order – founders.

St. Teresa and life of prayer.

Strong Marian devotion, family spirit and habit wearing.

The balance of its elements of the life: importance of study, the life of the mind. Perpetual Adoration was a big draw. (The habit was a sine qua non.)

The belief this is where the Father called me to draw me closer to Him.

The Carmelite charism and how we live it. The women were all well educated. The community had a vision to the future of spiritual life. They did not wear a habit. Although we are a contemplative community, Carmelites, we share our prayer and liturgical life with our worshipping community. No grills or grates. No sense of oppression.

The Carmelite charism of prayer and cloister.

The Carmelite spirituality and the Rule. The way these are lived out in our community. I was drawn by the strong and historic nature of our particular Carmel. There is freedom to focus on world-wide issues of our day and stand in solidarity of prayer for the world. We can invite everyone to enter into contemplative life and prayer – to share the solitude and silence.

The charism, the spirituality and the way of life.

The Cistercian Spirituality, a life of silent and solitude, of prayer, obedience, and humility. The passing from one self towards God – God center

The contemplative life held a very great attraction for me and the Carmelites are well known for this life. These sisters seemed faithful to the charism.

The Dominican charism of prayer and study; praying for the salvation of souls and especially for priests participating in the Divine Liturgy of the Church through Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.

The fact that they maintained the traditional habit and their sense of joy in living their cloistered community life.

The focus was singularly on God and seeking Him; the good that was/is “accomplished” is a result of this.

The habit and the solitude (I imagined).

The kindness of the sisters

The life of prayer – hidden for the Church

The life of prayer and the idea of “hermits living in community.”

The life of prayer is the most attracted me to my religious institute.

The life option expressed is the commitment to love Jesus totally, absolutely and forever and embody that love in complete and exclusive self-gift of consecrated celibacy.

1. The loving care and family spirit. 2. The perfect balance between the work and prayer.

The name of our Monastery – Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The semi-desert area of New Mexico. The paper of information about this community showing some of the sisters doing art craft with their beautiful habits.

The opportunity to live a contemplative and monastic life.

The order! Mission of preaching for the salvation of souls. I’m a contemplative in an apostolic order (Dominicans). The cloistered nuns are at the heart of the preaching family.

The orthodoxy and fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church. Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration.

Primitive observance to the Poor Clare life. Papal enclosure.

The reverent manner in which the Mass was offered attracted me, and also the members' openness to the Extraordinary Form of Mass. I was also attracted by the candor and simplicity of the Mother Foundress who was at that time Novice Mistress; and the joyfulness of the community with their welcoming attitude.

The simplicity of the environment – poverty – and the authenticity of the foundresses – the fact that it is canonical in union with the Church.

The spirit of self-renunciation, simplicity which leads to union with God for the life/salvation of the world.

The spirituality of the founders (both St Teresa and St John of the Cross) and the life of prayer, intimate relationship with Christ and another.

The traditional Mass, habit, and living of monastic life. Secondly came the desire for spiritual motherhood as is exemplified by our specific charism. What made me discover this and “single out” the order was the ease with which I could pray and discern in the silence and offices chanted throughout the day when visiting the sisters.

The very strong call I felt from God. To my monastery: the orthodoxy of faith and fidelity to the Order's charism that I perceived in this community. To my Order: the lives, works and spirituality of the Founders.

The way of life, fidelity to the spirit of our foundress. It is very traditional.

The way of prayer and community.

The writings of St. Therese. The silence and solitude of the life of Carmel.

Their openness and lovingness.

1. This is a great and loving community. 2. Eucharistic Adoration. 3. Felt a sense of “belonging” here.

This is where I felt God calling me. At the time I would have preferred an active order, but now I've come to understand why I am called to a cloistered contemplative Order and I love it!

Through my spiritual director I knew that this was the place for me so I entered joyfully.

To unite to the universal Church in prayers, Holy Eucharist, Divine Office . . . To pray for the whole world to be gathered into one flock, where Jesus Christ is the head . . .

Traditional, full habit.

What most attracted me here was – besides the Holy Spirits promptings – the faithful way the life is lived in this monastery, to the Church, the intention of our founders, in humble, whole-hearted dedication, with all the traditional practices. St. Francis' example is what drew me to this order.

What most attracted me to this Discalced Carmelite Monastery was the rich spiritual heritage of the Order. Upon visiting this community, I saw how imbued it was with the spirituality of its founder, and how faithfully its members follow the evangelical counsels.

### *Unclassified Women*

A feeling of coming home. I had the Order of Sisters for grade school teachers.

The hospitality and joy of the sisters. The openness to risk with new ways of doing and being women religious.

The sisters I had an experience of working with during a remodeling project, their collaborative spirit and their love of the Church.

### *Unclassified*

A call from God to enter this community/this way of life; their presentation of themselves in a small Vision magazine ad; the impression of an authentic monastic/contemplative life being lived, with respect to values of fidelity to the Church and Her teaching and practice, Scripture and tradition, solid Eucharist and Marian devotion, liturgy and prayer, solitude, obedience, a real charity, and simplicity.

A sense of total commitment to serving the people of God.

At the time I was most attracted by a monastic life style of prayer, communal life and the witness of a religious habit. This has drastically changed over the years of my formation and life experience.

Community prayer life.

Convenience.

Dedication to prayer, the Church, the poor, the fraternal life, and traditional practices.

Eucharist/daily prayer of the congregation/ joy of its members. Identity.

I had spent 10 years in it before. I felt that my service was needed.

I was taught (CCD) by the community. Family (mother) was taught by the community in a parish school. History of the community matches my family history – Polish origin.

International, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic living community.

Its spirituality.

Joy of the members, vibrant prayer and community life, apostolate of teaching, love for Mary, the Pope and the Church, the Dominican charism, the habit.

Ministry support/charism.

My commitment to Christ is forever and I only left my previous order due to corruption within the governing body. My community opened their doors and permitted me to continue my commitment to Christ.

Orthodox, fidelity to the Magisterium, young and vibrant members. A good sense of humor amongst most members, a new order (reform of the Capuchins). Its “hands-on-work” with the poor charism.

Our Foundress, charism – and the collective complete dependence on Divine Providence.

Prayer. Community life.

Prayer/spirituality of the founders as practiced in contemporary times. The inclusiveness of community who espouses global concerns. The simplicity and wisdom of the life, the depths of which it is capable. The transformative process personally/communally at many levels of both.

Spirituality and internationality.

The charism of prayer and spiritual warfare.

The high recommendation of my pastor. After, it was the joyful witness, simplicity and the love of mercy of the vocation minister that sustained my interest.

The joy of the community. Their wearing of the habit. Their prayer life. Community life. Fidelity to the Church and love of the Church.

The life of its founder. The works of the institute. Above all, its glorious heritage of saints.

The Perpetual Adoration and the spirit of poverty of St. Francis and St. Clare and their love to God has really impressed me and attracted me.

The Perpetual Adoration aspect and the mission of the congregation. I was impressed with the wonderful attitude of the members of the congregation and their welcome and acceptance of me as a new member. The members showed humility and respect to others and openly shared their

lived expression of religious life. I was impressed with their faithfulness to the mission and the congregation and the Church.

The variety of ministries, charism – were authentic in living the vows. I was not minimized or treated as though I hadn't lived until I entered the community. Prayer life was reasonable and authentic.

The vision of the Foundation, personal relationship connected with the foundation, the realness of the foundation.

There is no partiality, whoever is technically wrong is reprimanded.

Youth – common vision/focus – love of divine.

### **189. What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?**

The responses below are grouped by active men, active women, contemplative men, contemplative women, and those that could not be classified according to these categories.

#### ***Active Men***

?

A Christ-centered life, never being far from another religious who is striving to hear and discern God's voice and will. Every day the encouragement, love and example I receive from my brothers.

A common spirituality and vision of working toward the manifestation of the kingdom of God.

A common spirituality and vision with my Holy Cross brothers. The bonds that have been forged with my fellow Holy Cross religious.

A deeper prayer life.

A sense of complete commitment to pursuing a holy life, a life of self-giving; a meaningful life in pursuit of something valuable...and communicating this to others.

A sense of spiritual growth and the opportunity to spend time in contemplative prayer are the most rewarding aspects. What is satisfying is the offering of prayer for the Church and the world many times a day.

A sense that this is where I belong, this is what I am called to be/do.

1. A sense "This is where God wants me." 2. A sense of completeness.

A setting in which I can explore the full depths of being human.

A true feeling of closeness to Jesus, following him day to day and serving his Church and world.

Ability to attend daily Mass.

Ability to focus on God; ministry with young people (college age); fraternal life.

All of the above, the possibility to bring all my gifts to fruition, the communal support, and most of all: belonging to God.

All of the above.

All the good things I see us accomplishing.

Always trying to have a better relationship with God and others. I like serving others and helping others who you know appreciate what you do for them.

Apostolic work (I currently teach in a Jesuit high school).

Apostolic work and community life

Balance at work and prayer, meaningful ministry and community life.

Being a presence of Christ to the people I serve.

Being a radical witness to the love of Christ. Allowing Christ to shine through me and see others come to a personal relationship with Him.

Being a young religious in a secular world. Bringing others to Christ and Christ to the world.

Being able to be close to God and give myself to him. Being with a group of guys who want to do the same.

Being able to serve the Lord, grow both in my personal and spiritual life.

Being able to spend a good deal of time working on my relationship with God. The love I have for many members of my province. The ability to enter people's lives at critical moments and help them in their personal/spiritual development.

Being apart and doing work of the Roman Catholic Church! Gratitude for daily Mass and prayer! Fraternal Life and Ministry! Contact allowed with my family! Gives me opportunity to live Gospel Life! Helps support me all ways! Encouragement, of older friars – attempt to carry on their great work.

Being free to exclusively devote time/life to prayer and spiritual growth.

Being liberated from worldly allurements.

Being part of a group who ministers in a common apostolate.

Being part of something larger than yourself.

Belonging to the community

Belonging totally to God and having an intimate relationship of love with him which is supported by a good prayer life, community life and ministry. There is also a great joy in fraternity and ministry.

Brotherhood, fellowship.

Building my life around God along with other people. Serving God's people and spending my life in that service.

Call to holiness, challenge to go deeper in the spiritual life.

Call to love in the name of Jesus. Focus on seeking God and life's meaning in God. Sharing commitment and goals with others. Opportunities to be open to grace, to grow, to mature.

Church teaching. Openness/sincerity. Collaboration in ministry.

Close friends, prayer, ministry, studies.

Closeness of God in daily life.

Collaborating with lay people on projects related to justice, peace and the integrity of creation; presiding and celebrating the sacraments.

Common life, ministry, sometimes common prayer.

Common life: prayer, meals, fraternity together.

Common prayer, heartfelt discussions about faith and life, ministry and the opportunity to participate in a variety of ministries, opportunity to use my God-given gifts in a way that brings personal fulfillment and joy to other people, prophetic witness, mutual example and inspiration among friars and sisters.

Communal impact/identity with national Church and society.

Communal life and prayer; friendships and intimacy inside my community; a sense of being engaged in an important project together with others; building the kingdom of God

Communal life.

Communal living with some of the older Brothers, prayer.

Communal prayer and living. Ministry that is diverse.

Communal prayer.

Communal support and prayer.

Community

Community – prayer

Community and hospitality.

Community and learning to welcome the many trials that arise in formation.

Community and ministry.

Community and personal prayer and friendship with diverse people in the community. As a Benedictine personal prayer means *lectio divina*.

Community and prayer.

Community fellowship.

Community for prayer, support.

Community life

Community life

Community life (especially in the house of studies). Ministry (especially opportunities to preach). Regular prayer life and study. Support of the laity. Long, deep, and rich history of my Institute.

Community life (which also comes with many joys). Communal failure to live up to our ideals.

Community life and fraternity. Study and intellectual side of faith. Common prayer with traditional devotions (Eucharistic Adoration, chant).

Community life and ministry

Community life and ministry.

Community life and prayer. Ministry.

Community life and working the ministry with people who are given seriously to following Christ and faithful to the Church. Having that identity which I was made for.

Community life because here is where I can fully express/live my vows to the Lord.

Community life in the formation program.

Community life is a real blessing.

Community life on a local and international level.

Community life, freedom of the vow of poverty, sense of feeling loved and valued by fellow members.

Community life, living the Gospel with one another.

Community life, prayer and spiritual life, ministry opportunities, educational opportunities.

Community life, prayer.

Community life, variety of ministry.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life. Opportunities to serve.

Community life. People with and to whom I minister.

Community life/prayer. Sharing the faith experience with other members of the institute. The ministry (education of low-income, minority students).

Community life/prayer/meal/social. Young people/member in leadership. Endless possibilities to serve God's people.

Community life; ministry to the youth.

Community life; sense of fulfillment; frequent encouragement and consolation at feeling I'm in the right place.

Community prayer and ministry.

Community prayer, support in ministry from other brothers. Comraderie.

Community support

Community support for spiritual and faith formation.

Community support, coming closer to Christ.

Community support.

Community, family environment, service, meaning, purpose (in life); to be able to see beyond myself.

Community, prayer, mission to education.

Community, support for ministry, openness to others, joy.

Community.

Community. The Augustinian way of life – St Augustine’s understanding of brothers coming together and serving -has always appealed to me, from the first moment I met the founder in highschool. Obviously how I look, feel, etc has deepened my in my own understanding and experience over the years, but the ideal remains and is at the heart of who we are.

Companionship in the Lord with community members and working with the laity.

Company of diversity and rich talent. My skills will be fully used.

Confreres.

Consecration to Jesus Christ.

Continual call to conversion that is implicit in lifestyle/vocation of my community.

Daily intimacy with Christ. Being able to devote all things to Him. Sharing this love in common.

Daily mass is part of my job!

Daily renewal to be more Christ like.

Dedicating self to the Church and belonging to a universal brotherhood of priests and brothers.

Dedication to study/learning as part of the apostolate.

Deep friendship with Jesus Christ and his companions. Deep connection to the poor and marginalized.

Deepening and strengthening my relationship with God.

Deepening my personal relationship with the Holy Trinity and Mary and also our work of spreading the Gospel most especially working and being with the materially poor and children.

Deepening my relationship with Jesus. Serving God and His people.

Deepening understanding of my place in the Church. Knowledge that I am working toward a lasting goal. Rhythm of prayer.

Depth of prayer and Sacraments that feed us, strengthen us to do our ministry.

Diverse ministries. Spirituality. Fellowship. Community.

Doing good for others.

Engagement in the mission, interaction with diversity of believers, connection to the wider Church; engagement in the world with a faith perspective.

Eucharist, prayer, community.

Evenly balanced between prayer and work.

Everything, being ordained a priest, celebrating Mass and the Sacraments, being with the people we serve.

Experiencing God's love more and more every day.

Feeling connected with others who are serving the Lord.

Feeling that I am contributing to others' spiritual growth.

Filling the needs of those around me while growing closer to God.

Finding grounding for my work and prayer.

Focus on interior life; ministry without financial worries; belief in Eucharist.

Following God's will and giving my "yes" to His invitation.

Fraternal life.

Fraternal life/solidarity with the poor/mission.

Fraternal support in living our charism of all sufficiency of Christ. Experiencing fruit of the mission.

Fraternal support in prayer life and ministry.

Fraternity – prayer – serving people

Fraternity, faith sharing, prayer in common and alone. Sharing the fruit of our life together with people outside of the community.

Fraternity, pastoral work/outreach. Spiritual aspect.

Fraternity, Prayer, Ministry.

Freedom to pursue mission and pursuit of perfection

Getting to share in all that drew me to the life.

God graces me with a profound sense of peace in prayer, which allows me to go about my day to day routine. I love studies, especially in theology. I value spiritual conversation and personal intimacy shared with friends in the Society of Jesus.

God. The structure of prayer

Growing in relationship with God and others.

Growing in relationship with the Trinity, especially Jesus, and helping others discover and deepen their path to God.

Growth in holiness. Deepening my union with Christ.

Growth in relationship with God and the sense that I am doing God's will.

Growth in spirituality.

Having a community.

Having a life solely focused on spiritual growth and serving God.

Having people around who share a sense of the importance of ministry and of living always centered on God with Christ as the example. Living with men of varying backgrounds, and sharing with them my life, and essentially enjoying life and our work together.

Helping others as a consecrated man. Passion for God's cause – passion for human dignity and faith. Being profoundly human and deeply spiritual.

Helping others find God in their lives. Devotion to prayer and mission.

Helping people, and living the gospel life.

Helping the young people I serve develop as Christians.

Helping to bring others into communion with God and the Church.

Helps me give myself over more fully to God and allows me to seek God in prayer and whole of life. Members of my order.

I am happy, a better person, and my ministry is valued by others and by God. The chance to help others grow closer to God, and grow closer myself in doing so.

I am most fulfilled by common life, public identification with the Church and Christ, and the opportunities to grow in the spirituality of my institute through common and individual prayer. I am also heartened by the prospect of becoming a priest and thereby extending my service to the Church.

I appreciate the daily opportunity for liturgy and prayer. There is a genuine love and concern for each other.

I appreciate the gift of community, shared prayer, and shared mission for ministering.

I believe it is the education I have received and the opportunity to live in an international community in Europe which has allowed me to better understand what it means to be part of the universal Church, Body of Christ.

I can make the most of my God given gifts by sharing them with others and the experience of continual conversion in my life and deepening of my faith to God as I live my religious life.

I enjoy working with a wide variety of people, both religious and by collaborators. As a Jesuit I engage in sacramental ministry and I try to bring the insights and charism of St. Ignatius into other ("secular") activities in which I am involved.

I enjoy working with those members of my community.

I feel as though this is the best way for me to love others; my brothers empower me to love more freely.

I feel that I'm doing something important and am able to talk about/promote/creatively present Jesus to public.

I find contemplation and the sharing of it with others to be most rewarding.

I find living and praying in community to be the most rewarding things about religious life so far. While school occupies most of my time, I find my limited experience of ministry has been very rewarding as well.

I find most rewarding about my religious life is the time for Eucharistic and contemplative prayer. Our founder used to say: "Be contemplative first, then men of action."

I find myself in the front row to watch God's action in people's life!

I find rewarding our sense of working with the poor as this is to me the root of the Gospel.

I find that ministry, especially with other members of my institute, in a manner consistent with my institute's history and charism, and the Church's vision of religious life is most satisfying.

I find the community and prayer life the most rewarding and satisfying.

I find the guidance of a solid prayer life and dedication to God and neighbor most rewarding.

I have a sense that this is where God desires me to be. Since I entered this order, I have felt the most peace in my entire life!

I like that we continually reflect and update our institute in light of the world's challenges.

I live my faith – everything I do, I do carrying my spirituality with me openly. I never feel like I need to be apologetic about taking faith seriously.

I love ministry and local community.

I love my fraternal house – good natured men. My ministry is challenging and rewarding. My prayer life needs work but I'm being encouraged by my brothers.

I love to study and I find that quite satisfying. I am also a people person. I love to do ministry and serving the Lord sets me on fire.

I truly enjoy the teaching ministry of my institute. I feel it is something we do well – and our contribution – limited as it may be at times – is truly a gift to the Church. The “monastic” environment still offers opportunity for spiritual growth which might be difficult to find elsewhere – even if the overall structure is weak.

Impact on Church and self (person).

In it, each member tries to live out the gospel in his way but receives support through the journey. When problems arise, we are BEST when we say “Don't withdraw; come in instead. We'll work (it) out.”

Intimacy with the Lord.

Interior peace and freedom.

It fits like a glove. I love it all.

It gives me identity to serve.

It has allowed me to more easily “ORDER” my life so that I am very grounded in the “internal” spiritual journey...from which flows ministry. “Community” keeps me grounded in reality but also facilitates a spiritually grounded and Christ-centered life.

It is where and how I believe God has called me to live.

It makes personal sense to me although my non-religious friends could not fully grasp my free choice to live in celibacy and accountability in community.

It provides the space, setting and context to respond to God's call to me.

It seems to be a "good fit" for me and is where God is calling me to. Religious life helps me live a context of simplicity and social justice that I was searching for. I feel supported by the community in my ministry, prayer, and personal life.

It's freedom in the spirit.

It's my calling, and that's all I can say!

It's amazing how much we need to grow and how much more I need to embrace this life, and that each of us youngest to oldest recognizes this too. That we strive to grow and change together in Christ each day.

Its spirituality.

Joy – Peace – Love I experienced in prayer, ministry, community.

Joy. I am not alone. I have people to discern with. I have opportunity to do many things.

Joyful fraternal life.

Knowing I am doing God's will; being a radical witness for my love of Jesus; knowing I live with men thinking as I do and loving Christ, our Lady and the Church; loving and serving the poor; embracing poverty and being detached from distracting material goods; trying to grow in holiness with others desiring to do the same.

Knowing people from different countries and different cultures. It can see the face of God in every single person.

Knowing that I'm where I was born to be: doing ministry with my brothers and bringing others to love the one we love.

Knowing that my work supports the mission and livelihood of the community, and growing closer to God.

Life and community prayer.

Life of prayer and ministry to our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

Life of prayer, commitment to People of God and Magisterium.

Life of prayer, ministry, fraternal support.

Life security

Life structured by prayer = God-centered life.

Living in a faithful and faith filled community that follows the Church and the Pope. Service of the poor is second to that.

Living in community and being known as a Franciscan because of the good works of the entire Order.

Living in community and helping people come closer to our Lord. I find my studies very rewarding as well.

Living in community I could find opportunities for prayer and ministry: it's living in community that can't be found anywhere else.

Living in community, doing a common mission together, proclaiming and living the Gospel in a radical way.

Living in community.

Living out my unique baptismal calling – serving Church – celebrating sacraments. Sense of common purpose.

Living the life with some solitude. Finding time for peace and quiet.

Living the vows.

Living with Jesus and being a sign of His presence and action in the world – wearing the religious habit – all the conversations and prayers with people that would have otherwise not happened; the framework of prayer times throughout every day keeps me more disciplined.

Living with my brothers constantly challenges and helps me grow.

Living with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and also with other men who are in love with Jesus and the Church.

Making a difference in people's lives.

Making a difference in the world and preparing young minds for the future with the support of a community striving to live out our vows.

Meeting God in my ministry. Living with people who have similar goals.

Ministerial opportunities. Community life. Service to God's people.

Ministry – especially preaching, communal prayer (Liturgy of Hours).

Ministry and personal prayer life.

Ministry as a religious.

Ministry satisfaction which is high.

Ministry with people in overseas mission.

Ministry with those in need. Sharing community.

Ministry, community relationships.

Ministry, community.

Ministry, community.

Ministry, especially work with young people.

Ministry, prayer.

Ministry, prayer.

Ministry, working with lay collaborators, partners.

Ministry.

Ministry.

Ministry.

Ministry.

Ministry.

Ministry.

Ministry.

Ministry. Daily opportunity to pray/Eucharist.

Ministry. Mass and Sacraments.

Ministry. Prayer.

Ministry. Supportive community

Mission and spirituality.

1. Mission. 2. Community Life. 3. Prayer Life. 4. Ministry.

Mutual care of community members – we have a strong sense of fraternity and commitment to our life together.

Mutual support in ministry. I could not be a diocesan priest. Access to people's most significant moments in their lives.

My full and public identity as a Catholic and my work with the poor.

My growth in understanding myself and how this understanding of self impacts my relationship with God and other people.

My ministry.

My relationship with the Lord and service to the poor.

My relationship with the Trinity through myself and others. Ministry – being able to serve others as a visible member/representative of Christ. Opportunity for Christian maturity in the living of the life.

My some plans were successful. I am learning the different kinds of problems.

On spiritual growth.

Opportunities for growth – prayer – opportunities to express faith and share the Good News.

Opportunities for prayer and meditation, self-growth, to be of service.

Opportunities to pray with my fellow Salesians and the youth we serve. I love to see kids on fire with their faith.

Opportunities to work in numerous settings, cultures, countries; study, community life, opportunities to make an impact.

Opportunity for prayer; our work; our community members, my relationship with Christ, and the opportunity to serve globally.

Opportunity to draw closer to Christ both personally and with others and to maximize my service to others and the Church.

Opportunity to focus more on spiritual/personal growth, focus on service, ability to live counter-cultural lifestyle.

Opportunity to grow closer to God, develop as human being, live in community, do ministry and be of service in the world, friendships with others in order.

Opportunity to pray and to serve people.

Our Lasallian notion of “together and by association.” The grace of serving God and others through this way of life.

Our mission. Our ongoing ministry to the least of our sisters and brothers.

Our prayer life and commitment to ministry.

Our shared life

Our spirituality and mission asks of us to be men of prayer; only in that way we will be able to help others to grow as persons, Christians and discover their vocation. For the reason we are to be before all: contemplatives and then men of action.

Parish ministry/Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Peace, quiet. Prayer life.

Perseverance in community living (very counter-cultural these days). Increasing reverence/restoration of Sacred in our liturgical life. The growing trend in younger and more stable applicants. Our witness to guests and seminarians.

Personal and community support. Spiritual psychological and intellectual achievements. Ministerial development. Community, life, and prayer.

Personal and spiritual growth.

Personal friendships – our charism and founder. Otherwise I am more satisfied by priesthood than religious life...

Personal growth in holiness and service to God's people.

Personal growth in spiritual life, ministry.

Personal prayer, companionship.

Personal prayer, sense of mission.

Prayer and community living.

Prayer and community.

Prayer and faithsharing/practice.

Prayer and fraternity.

Prayer and our communal prayer life.

Prayer and researches.

Prayer and service.

Prayer and study life, and then telling others about prayer and what I have studied (i.e., preaching).

Prayer life – being close to God and to people.

Prayer life and endless pursuit of spiritual growth.

Prayer life and living in community.

Prayer life and spiritual development.

Prayer life/spiritual work.

Prayer with the community. Doing events together, with community. Helping people in these needs.

Prayer, ability to enter into lives of others at important phases in their lives. Ability to transcend common notions that my job defines what my life has to be.

Prayer, closeness to God.

Prayer, community, serving Christ and the Church.

Prayer.

Prayer.

Prayer. Community life. Work in the community.

Prayer. Community. Ministry.

Prayer. Ministry.

Prayer/communion with the Lord.

Praying. Ministry.

1. Preaching homilies that save people's souls. 2. I'd imagine administering the Sacraments when I'm ordained. 3. Community life.

Presiding at Sacraments and being where the membrane between the human and divine is "oh so thin."

Priestly ministry in a province apostolate. The relationships I have with members.

Pursuit of religious life. Active/contemplative spiritual life/mission.

Regular communal prayer.

Regular prayer, spiritual growth and stability.

Relationship with God is strengthened by relationship with community, relationship with God lived out in collaborative ministry. It has helped me to grow in love and joy.

Relationship with God.

Relationships. Balance. Ministry and faith.

Religious life is the consummation or fulfillment of a vocation, a joyful confirmation of my identity with God in the Church; the conformity to Christ in the vows. Brotherhood and communal support (meals, prayer).

Representing Christ and the Church to so many students and guests, but as a member of a community, so I don't feel like I have to do everything myself.

Representing something good to people; representing the Church and the promise of the Gospel; fraternity; the sense that my life is meaningful and important and appreciated.

Sacramental ministry

Sacramental ministry and being allowed to pursue a ministry in media.

Sacraments.

Self discovery aspect. Enhancing relationship with God.

Sense of being entrusted with the gospel and having opportunities to minister with people, to be with people among their questions about God.

Sense of continuity and common purpose.

Sense of purpose and belonging with community

Sense of purpose and mission; camaraderie of community life.

Sense of purpose, prayer life, community relationships, meaningful work.

Sense of solidarity with one another, in being faithful to our life in community despite the many daily challenges.

Service to God and to the Church, solidarity, prayer.

Service to people, helping them find God's love and freedom in the faith and morals of our tradition; helping them in the process be a blessing in the Church and world. The Jesuits with whom I do share a deep union of heart and mind and with whom I can really talk and pray are among my best friends and consolations.

1. Service to the Church and souls.

Service to the poor, marginalized and inner city youth.

Service/ministry, community life, prophetic witness to Church/society.

Serving a cause that clearly is greater than myself.

Serving Christ in serving others.

Serving the Lord in others is the center of my life. I need not wonder about what I was created for.

Serving the most needed person.

Serving whole heartedly God's people. Seeing lives transformed by grace, the peace and joy that comes from doing God's will in your life, growing closer to Jesus and Mary.

Shared life of prayer, community, mission. Living according to Gospel values.

Shared mission in Christ.

Shared mission, brotherhood, sense of family. A religious away/apart from his/her institute makes as little sense as a father who lives apart from his wife and kids. Our lives as religious only have symbolic power when we are with our brothers/sisters.

Sharing charism and community with others who wish to share that charism with the Church in vibrant ministry.

Sharing experience of ministry and prayer, living in healthy communities.

Sharing ministry with my brothers. Having them to listen to and just enjoy each other's company. For my ministry to serve others.

Sharing the mission and ministry of our order with others; community life; great members, overall, who seem to live what they believe.

Sharing the struggles of people I serve. Sharing people's hopes. Being an agent of spiritual and psychological healing.

Silent meditation and apostolic ministry.

Simplicity, opportunity for prayer, daily Eucharist life centered on and devoted to God.

Spiritual conversation, common prayer and ministering together with others of my institute.

Spiritual conversation, community support, encounters with diverse cultures both within the institute and through ministry.

Spiritual development.

Spiritual growth.

(1) Spiritual growth; (2) Personal commitment to God and the Church; (3) Community lifestyle; (4) Service for other people.

Spiritual support of members, challenging apostolate.

Spirituality and adherence to identity.

Spirituality and ministries.

1. Spirituality in my life. 2. Friendship among so many Jesuits. 3. Incredible experiences of formation. 4. Working in so many different endeavors.

Spreading the Gospels, building up the Church in other countries

Stability (financial) and network for ministries.

Strong interior and prayer life. Increase in apostolic zeal. Sense of being consecrated.

Strong sense of fraternity.

Study, ministry, and community life.

Study. Prayer. Service.

Support and encouragement from the brothers; opportunity to grow in holiness and as a person.

Support and growing the whole person.

Support of individual gifts, talents, creativity.

Support of others. Common life – prayers, meals, Eucharist, fraternity. Charism.

Support of prayer and chance to pray.

Support religious life gives me to support my ministry.

Supportive confreres, strong prayer life and a wide variety of works.

Testimonials from those who have visited us. Community life. Personal growth.

That I can grow as a person through the rough and tumble of community life.

That I may best cooperate with or leave it to God to do whatever He chooses with my life. That in all things God may be glorified. That I may pursue the spiritual life with great fervor and help, such as being in rich soil. That I may make my life a witness to God. That I may be an oblation with God.

That it's bigger than me! I am working to build the kingdom of God with the support, care and love of my fellow brothers. I am enriched by our prayer and community life together.

That religious life continues to flourish. It is a life that challenges our nationalistic and individualistic society.

That there are so many intelligent members of my community engaged in a variety of apostolates – all for the love of Christ.

That we are a FAMILY. There is always a new challenge. There is always an opportunity to grow in every direction.

The “Community” aspect of living, working, praying and serving God and God’s people – together.

The ability to be Christ’s representative and administer the Sacraments.

The ability to celebrate the Sacraments and be involved in a parish with a school.

The ability to enter into the life of the Spirit more deeply.

The ability to preach and teach. The prayer life and community life.

The ability to slow down (solitude) and focus.

The ability to work with other like minded individuals to touch the hearts of youth.

The above, but now: making a difference; and carrying forward our beautiful and inspiring Franciscan tradition and making it available for others, youth.

The apostolate (university professor), having a common mission focus, institution focus on justice.

The availability to know, love and serve God and others in a radical way. Knowing that if I am faithful to my vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience and faithful to the Charism of our founder St. Francis, God will grant me everlasting life.

The brotherhood, especially with the guys in my age group.

The care the institute offers to its members. The ability to minister without worries of bills.

The chance to make a difference in the world.

The closeness I feel to the Lord, and, the way that this translates into my wanting to help others.

The commitment to the common/shared work of the community.

The common life centered around prayer.

The common life of ministry, prayer, and brotherhood. I feel like I am a part of a common endeavor that is holy and fulfilling God's call to service in the Gospel and in the Church.

The common life of the brethren and the prospect of serving God's people as a priest.

The communal support and friendship, the joy of ministering to the People of God as a religious priest.

The community life and especially where I stay! We are all from a very different background, with totally different culture from one another! This is hard sometimes but later it's really rewarding to break those boundaries.

The community life, accountability and praying together.

The community life.

The community life...I enjoy being with other guys...It is very much a support and comfort to me to rely on the brothers when I need it.

The community of brothers and devotion to the Eucharist.

The constant challenge to be better than I am.

The day to day rhythm of prayer and ministry. Sharing insights with people about love of God.

The day-to-day challenge of trying to live as Christ did, and to model that with humility. Education and communal spiritual life are also important, as well as the sense of a higher calling to serve God and His people.

The deep friendships I've developed

The deep growth it calls forth from me. The way it summons all aspects of myself into growing integration. The deep relationship and opportunities to be with people in intimate moments.

The development of my faith and prayer life. The ministries I have participated in. The good friends I have made within the institute. The educational opportunities within institute. The opportunities to travel for ministry and education.

The diversity of its members that reflect the internationality of the order.

The diversity of people and ministries.

The encouragement of laity and their participation in the Church.

The expectation and encouragement to develop a deeper prayer life through retreats, faith sharing, spiritual conversation, study, mass, etc.

The fact that we are called to belong totally to God in a special way, and to witness of His love for the world.

The fact that we as religious help people in different ministries, missions and non-traditional ministries.

The flexibility to serve in a range of ministries.

The fraternal community life.

The fraternal life.

The fraternity shared in community life on a daily basis and fraternity on a larger level within our province.

The freedom it gives me to minister to the “throw aways” of society. A close second: the companionship – I’m not in this alone.

The freedom it provides for ministry. The support of our community.

The growth of my spiritual relationship with a difficult to know God.

The high sense of community and brotherly fraternity.

The intentional, communal commitment to prayer and mission.

The interaction with people, with brothers in community, co-workers in ministry and those we minister to. It is the opportunity to encounter Christ in the world.

The invitation to an authentic interior life, community life, the challenge of fulfilling the virtues of poverty, chasity, obedience, working and living among the poor.

The joy and peace of belonging completely to Christ and of discovering Him and serving Him in my brothers and in the poor.

The joy of being called Brother and all it means and allows me to do in the Church. Daily Mass. The chance to travel and attend retreats.

The knowledge that I have committed my whole self to the Lord and His work.

The knowledge that I’m doing God’s will and that He’s saving souls through me.

The life of prayer and living and working with other friars brings out the best in me.

The life of prayer and service.

The little ways in which I can touch someone’s life. It is humbling to have someone ask to pray for them. Prayer is important to my staying in an intimate relationship with God.

The living out the vows in an authenticy Dominican way in the context of intentional community.

The many oppourtunities for service, in little things and big things, and a deepening of my relationship with the Lord.

The meaning that it has given to my life. All that I am and do is for God and the young. There is no division or conflict between my life of faith and work, or my “home life” and my professional life. God and the young are my reason for everything.

The ministry and the opportunity to live in community.

The ministry I get to do in schools.

The ministry of teaching and celebrating the Sacraments.

The ministry opportunities. Gives vision and meaning to my life. Friendships.

The ministry that I am involved with particularly hospice care. Spreading the spirituality of Francis de Sales to all I come in contact with. The ability to be re-energized when I come back home to a community after a rough day. The ability to share, pray, celebrate things in a communal sense.

The ministry.

The most rewarding aspect of religious life is our community living. In community we pray, live, recreate, and minister together. Our cohesiveness and sense of identity as religious serving others as ministers of the Gospel is wonderful.

The most rewarding element is living in community. I also love serving and working with people and journeying with them in faith.

The most rewarding part for me is the community, common mission, and friendship shared.

The most rewarding thing is experiencing first hand how God slowly heals people and how God truly cares for people, including me. Also I've been in a position to see how people do such beautiful and subtle things for each other.

The occasional small moments when there seems to be a positive impact in someone's life.

The ongoing call to give of myself as part of this group of men who want to go to God alone, together. I am blessed with great confreres who support and challenge me in my thinking and acting.

The opportunities it has provided me to serve and exercise my own particular gifts.

The opportunities to experience life, people, places I could never have imagined. The chance to grow with Christ.

The opportunities to serve God; the support and concern I feel from other members; the rhythm of prayer in our house.

The opportunity for ongoing personal and spiritual growth through the service of others.

The opportunity to be and to bring an awareness of Christ into others' lives, especially in the ordinary moments of everyday. Also the never-ending opportunity for personal growth.

The opportunity to grow as a minister and the various opportunities to do ministries, also prayers and praying in community daily.

The opportunity to grow in holiness and to live the gospel.

The opportunity to live and work with others of a similar goal and values.

The opportunity to make a complete gift of myself to Christ and his people.

The opportunity to meet good people to experience the Divine in so many ways, especially in ministry.

The opportunity to witness the Holy Spirit working in other people's lives.

The people I work with.

The people we serve, the satisfaction and enjoyment, celebrating the Sacraments.

The people whom I serve.

The people whose lives I get to be a part of. The variety of worlds I get to enter and ministries I get to do. The opportunity to become closer to God.

The place or environment where I can offer my time and talents to serve others. The ability to do things and to be who I am.

The prayer life and time spent as a Brother among Brothers

The prayer life and working with those in need of food and shelter.

The prayer, the community life, the life of simplicity, the lives of the older brothers, the shared mission.

The relationships that develop helping people see God alive in their life.

The responses of our lay partners and students to us as Brothers. Our educational spirituality.

The role I play in the lives of my parishioners.

The sense of mission-in-fraternity.

The sense of peace and simplicity of life.

The sense of service and dedication to the Body of Christ by means of personal prayer and sanctification and the communal prayer life of the community.

The sense that this is where God wants me to be. To experience God in others' lives.

The sharing of our faith and missions.

The spiritual freedom to respond to the needs of God's people anywhere and in any circumstance. Sense of belonging to a tiny cloud of witnesses in an ever expanding universe of contradictions.

The spiritual growth and formation as a monk right now. I'm looking forward to the ministry work later.

The spiritual growth.

The strong fraternal bond that we share as brothers in community life.

The support and companionship in growing in holiness. The opportunities for spiritual conversation and prayer.

The support from my confrere and institute.

The support I receive from the members in community, prayer and ministry.

The support of my brethren to seek God and serve the Church.

The support of others as we all work side by side to love the Lord as best we can.

The support of the community.

The support/closeness of the Brothers.

The various ministries.

The vows, commitment to God, and the prayer/ministry which this life allows and supports.

The way it is lived after formation – general lack of ongoing formation/reflection/discussion. Decisions are made at provincial council and chapters (every three years) and little gets discussed or heard if you are not privy to those meetings – the result is work and pray and keep going.

This religious life has brought out the best in me.

Time for prayer/retreat. Ministry to the poor.

Time to pray and the care I receive.

To be actively involved in the mission of the Church in a parochial setting where I can use my talents in a meaningful way.

To be on mission with Christ and my brothers.

To live the dream with a community and a people.

To love Jesus and to make Him loved.

To see people get closer to God by my example.

True fulfillment and interior joy. True peace. Self-emptying.

Two things: community and ministry.

Union with Christ, prayer, mission to serve Christ and the Church.

Varied ministries.

Variety of ministries. Challenge to grow personally and spiritually which community life presents.

We live our mission communally.

What I find most rewarding about religious life is serving the Church in various ways.

What I find rewarding is the freedom that comes from the total self gift to God alone that religious life calls for. There is an immense joy to be found in rejecting the world's promises of wealth, comfort, and pleasure, and embracing Christ through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

What I find to be most satisfying/rewarding about religious life is our common prayer times that compel us to work outside of our four walls with the people of God and yet also knowing that I have some place to come back to.

When opportunities arise to work on a common project, I am satisfied.

Without sounding cliché, growing in my relationship with Christ and His Church. Living for Him! I also find the fraternal relationships a TREMENDOUS blessing!

Witnessing how people, including myself, respond to God and deepen one's relationship with God; accomplishment with "doing nothing" (without strenuous effort) because I cooperate with God's grace; an awareness and gratitude that sometimes God calls me to minister, not just

despite my weakness, but because of my weaknesses; nourishing friendship with some community members through deep spontaneous faith sharing.

Witnessing to youth. Community life. Celebrating the Sacraments daily.

Working and ministering to people

Working with a diverse group of people that both support me and aren't afraid to challenge either. Being part of something bigger than myself is important to me.

Working with and for young people in need as a consecrated religious.

Working with people and especially in pastoral ministry.

Working with people, community life, attempting to make a difference.

Working with people.

### ***Active Women***

A bond with devoted, loving women who spend their lives loving and serving God. It is an honor to be associated with these women.

A deep, close personal relationship with Jesus Christ, my Spouse. Good, spiritual friendship with other religious. Joy in doing God's will in the little things, work and obedience.

A life set entirely on Christ.

A place to live on the call of God with others – across the boundaries of culture, generation, class, congregation, etc.

A place where I can share my life with other women committed to prayer, service and a life together.

A praying community that fosters the ongoing formation as a religious in a changing world.

A profound and intimate relationship with God.

A religious life with a sense of balance, a congregation that opens to the need of the time but not lose the identity of religious life. A religious life that promotes members to use their talents and gifts for the service of the Church and God's people.

A sense of being part of God's design and being nourished daily in my relationship with God, community and the world. I have a heart that embraces the entire world, and so does my congregation.

A sense of being part of something larger than myself, being called to take risks and being associated with people who are engaged with life struggles and God until death.

A sense of belonging to a community that challenges me to be my best self for myself, the community and the world.

1. A sense of connectedness towards the common good. 2. Faith sharing is very important to me.

A sense of meaning and purpose that is worth living for: giving myself completely as an instrument of God sharing Jesus' mission of proclaiming God's love to the world – supported by my prayer life.

A unifying love of God.

Ability to be in full-time ministry.

Ability to give myself.

Able to go to Mass each day. Confession twice a month. Daily Office.

After my ministry – with God's people – I rejoiced in my growth in my relationship with God through prayer and ministry.

1. Again, doing God's will – that really makes me happy. 2. Serving the Church, especially as a missionary in a non-Christian country (Taiwan). I love the work/witness of evangelization we are trying to do. 3. Community life.

All of the above in #188

All of the above, plus growth in prayer and knowledge of Christ as my Spouse, a strong sense of belonging to and responsibility for community, growth in the practice of the vows, deep friendships with my Novitiate sisters and an openness of heart to all the sisters, being at the heart of the Church and her mission, bringing Christ and His truth to the students I teach, personal growth in virtue and self-knowledge.

All that is listed in 188. Just being consecrated to God in a spousal way, as opposed to doing anything in particular – a focus on fruitfulness as opposed to productivity. I highly value the witness value of our way of life (a sign of this would be our poor lifestyle which includes the wearing of a habit), for myself and others. Our communal witness is powerful.

1. Allowing my weakness, my brokenness to be embraced by Jesus and Him working through these experiences to help heal others. 2. The privilege of having a Chapel with the Blessed Sacrament in all our convents (houses).

Always be a need for US.

An all encompassing passion to serve as Christ directs.

An ever growing understanding of communio – that my fidelity to religious life nourishes the Church as it nourishes me.

An ongoing, evolving , ever deepening sense of God's creative energies flowing through the world and being able to catch glimpses of God's love in meeting and working with people.

Be with God all the times and surrender to God's will.

Because I wear the religious habit, I can be a visible witness to Christ and his Church.

Because of the union of the community with the Magisterium, and with the community's encouragement and support, I am able to give vibrant witness in the secular workplace, to the viability of vocations to consecrated religious life in today's world.

Becoming virginal – meaning: integrating all past history and experiences in order to empty self for Christ in the other. Relationship is a gift and in order to become whole we must enter into relationship over and over again.

Being a bride of Christ.

Being a bride of Christ.

Being a member of a community of like-minded women who share the same religious heritage and mission. The common prayer life.

Being a part of a group of women committed to the Lord, living Gospel values, serving the poor. Joining my voice with those of others – together, we can make a difference.

Being a part of an international, multicultural group of individuals, committed to a common mission and steeped in a common spirituality.

Being a part of something bigger than myself – making a difference in the world together.

Being a part of something greater than myself to serve God together and to build His Kingdom.

Being a part of something greater than myself.

Being a spouse of Christ.

Being a witness to others and bringing them closer to Christ.

Being a witness to the world of another way of life – of living out the call of a Christian in a different manner. Then finding out how that witnessing positively affects and impacts other

lives. It is not something that is always apparent to me until someone says something to me. I'm always surprised because I don't think of how I live as being different – I'm just a person, another human being doing what I love.

Being able to attend prayer and Eucharist daily with a community of like-minded persons. Being able to live out a life serving God and others in ways that allows me to become more fully alive (not able to do this in the secular world). Being of and in the world, but living in community of like-minded.

Being able to be a witness of other-worldliness and of the mercy of God.

Being able to be part of a group of women who bring God in contemplative care and presence into the world. I love my ministry being a follower of Elizabeth Aston.

Being able to focus on what truly matters and to give my all to God and his Church as his spouse. Community life.

Being able to grow in freedom by being challenged to grow in the areas in which I am broken.

Being able to help others in need, working with members of my community, getting to know community members in and beyond just the “professional” they've been.

Being able to know of God's love in communion with others who are called to know of it also. Most importantly to respond to it.

Being able to live with various women and use our gifts and talents for the greater of the community and congregation. Being able to minister to various people in various ways. Being able to live community life and learn from one another. Being able to share our faith and compassion for God in each of our lives.

Being able to participate in daily lifting up the world/people around me in prayer and to know I am where God has called me.

Being able to share the gospel message with so many people, communal life, and being a visible witness.

Being able to spend myself for the Lord through the profession of vows.

Being able to work among God's people and help them to learn/know Him better. I love my life as a woman religious and would do it all over again. I value living in community and having the support I need from my sisters to grow in my identity as an SCJ. I love my life with God.

Being able to work together in the name of our community to bring Jesus to those we minister with and to. Sharing my faith life with my sisters and loving one another in a way brought about only by God's grace.

Being about God's work without some of the worldly encumbrances.

Being about something greater than myself and deepening my relationship with God through community life.

1. Being centered in the Holy Eucharist. 2. Community life that helps me to grow spiritually. 3. The opportunity to work with college students, especially on the life issues.

Being chosen by God to be his spouse. The happiness and satisfaction that I experienced when I help sick people, or just being with them when they feel lonely or in pain.

Being completely consecrated to God and His Church.

Being completely given to God's will – the freedom of this. Coming to know Jesus more and more. Giving the joy of friendship with him to others.

Being connected with others who are committed to living the Gospel. We love, support, challenge, collaborate with one another to bring God's love to those in need, and to do our best to live God's love for all of humanity and creation. Together we can be more effective, in responding to needs and discerning God's actions, than we could as lone individuals.

Being consecrated to God and leading souls to Him and His Church.

Being consecrated to the Lord, prayer life (Holy Mass, Divine Office), serving others.

Being espoused to Christ.

Being focused with others on living a life of focus – on "God," on expressing our charism. Also the connection – i.e., we "belong" to each other in community and experience mutual responsibility

Being God's compassionate presence in the world and a voice of truth for change in the institutional Church.

Being in committed community with others in the service of something much bigger than myself/us for the good of the world based in faith.

Being in community. Teaching in our sponsored school. The students that we teach. Prayer life. Community exercises.

Being in the presence of God in all we do.

Being in this thing TOGETHER, walking TOGETHER on the journey and gathering many souls for Christ.

Being one of many; the daily structure and invitation into a deeper prayer life; the guidance and invitation to be more generous and less selfish, the chance to impact lives of others positively.

Being part of a community, spirituality and growth in relationship with/in God.

Being part of a group that strives to make a difference.

Being part of an international congregation of women religious, the sharing of faith and social justice efforts with others.

Being part of our Mission Fund and learning what people all over the world are doing to make the world a better place and helping those efforts. Being able to preach (at various times). The way we celebrate funerals, our commitment to justice.

Being part of something larger than myself – we can do much more together than we can as individuals.

Being part of the mission of the congregation.

Being surrounded by other women on the same journey.

Being the Bride of Christ and truly experiencing the “hundredfold” here and now through this beautiful community and plethora of graces I’ve received.

Being the spouse of Christ and being able to dedicate every moment of every day as an act of worship.

Being the spouse of Christ.

Being together in community.

Being totally committed to the Lord.

Being totally consecrated to God and living out the charism/mission of the Institute.

Being treated with respect and encouraged and love by who I am not by what I do.

Being used by God in whatever fashion He desires. My growing love for God and my own growing sense of self-lessness. My time spent alone with God is very important and precious to me.

Being wholly His.

Being with others who have the same feelings of prayer, spiritual growth, service.

Being with others.

Being with Our Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The Real Presence is most endearing to and for me.

Being with the community. Formation on its focus to spiritual growth. Mission/apostolate.

Believing that where ever my sisters are, I am! I could never do so much alone!

Belonging entirely to Jesus through the vows. The times and places of silence in our life. The many helps to holiness (I need all the help I can get!). Community prayer life. Mutual support of sisters. The grace of obedience – knowing that I am doing God's will when I obey superiors.

Belonging to a group that is proclaiming the kingdom of God and working for justice. Living with those women who do the above.

Belonging to Jesus in a special way through vows. Common apostolate witness. Presence of Blessed Sacrament in our convent.

Belonging totally and completely to our Lord Jesus Christ. Living daily as his bride. And then sharing that love with others.

Belonging totally and only to Jesus.

Bringing Christ to children – spiritual motherhood. My personal relationship with Jesus.

Bringing the world to Jesus truly present in the Eucharist and being a sign of heaven to all I meet.

Building and/or deepening relationships with God and my sisters and others with whom I come in contact is most rewarding for me. I always appreciate the time I have for prayer and the opportunity to learn more about social justice and needs of people and . . .

Building relationships in my community.

Camaraderie – reasonably consistent, values and ideals among membership.

Can do more with others than can do alone. Public witness to the Gospel. I'm more the person God dreams for me to be as a sister.

Caring for Christ in the poor. Having the Eucharist here among us. I can go to him in the chapel anytime I want. Mass every day.

Challenge to living the gospel life.

Christ – as He is found in my sisters, as we seek Him in our daily lives and as we seek to do everything for His greater glory and to serve Him and His people

Christ as my Spouse

Close relationship with Jesus. By the sheer way of life, we always have opportunities to stay close to Jesus. Chapel with Blessed sacrament is in the same house. How many exterior people have that gift! I am edified by those who visit/go to Mass each day!

Closer relationship to God and my ministry as hospital chaplain.

Combination of active apostolate and contemplative dimensions.

Commitment to God and good community life (in local house).

Commitment to something and someone greater than me.

Common focus – vision.

Common focus. Richness of experience of others.

Common life with others, all the while keeping an eye on the real prize – God.

Common life.

Common prayer, common life, interdependence, looking out for each other and being supported/helped in looking out for others in our neighborhood and city. Educational opportunities. I love my ministry. It's not something I would have been able to do if I hadn't joined.

Common sharing. Being with like-minded women, life-giving, professional women. Strong historical roots. Prayer. Broad prayer life. Evolving ministry.

Common vision/values. Ministry. Relationship with those with whom I live/minister.

Communal life when it is lived authentically. Praying with others when it can happen. Ministry and mission to the people of God.

Communal living – international living – shared prayer. Shared life, love and support.

Communal prayer and meditation is rewarding in spiritual growth.

Communal prayer, community life, opportunities for spiritual growth.

Communal prayer, life, apostolate. Living and serving in the heart of the Church. Balanced life. Daily Mass. Frequent Confession. Direction/care of superiors and community leadership.

Communal prayer.

Community all focused on the ministry and praying together, so we have a common connection and purpose.

Community and prayer

Community and prayer life.

Community life

Community life

Community life – just sharing ordinary life with my Sisters. Community prayer – I love the way we pray together. I have found no other place that nourishes me in the same way.

Community life – when I've been part of healthy, supportive community. Regular communal prayer and faith-sharing.

Community life and apostolic work.

Community life and common prayer.

Community life and communal prayer; educational enrichment.

Community life and my own growth in my relationship with God.

Community life and my sisters, also our extended community of associate members.

Community life and our love for each other.

Community life and prayer in a broad sense.

Community life and prayer life is very rewarding to me – and it helps me to grow personally and spiritually.

Community life and prayer time as a support for my ministry and myself personally.

Community life and prayer time. Opportunities to grow in spiritual life through spiritual devotion, retreat, adoration.

Community life and prayer. Wearing the habit always. Living the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.

Community life and prayer/spirituality.

Community life and prayers. Also working in our nursing home.

Community life and praying together. Ministry. Being able to work not just for the pay check, but for the building of the Church.

Community life and the attention given to living community as best we can.

Community life, living in community, community celebrations, faith sharing as part of every day life.

Community life, our teaching apostolate, and our prayer life which is Eucharistic and Marian.

Community life, prayer in community and dedication to our Lord Jesus in a public way. Also being available to others by virtue of being a woman religious.

Community life, prayer, and ministry.

Community life, prayer, ministry.

Community life, prayer, teaching middle school.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life. Freedom. Love and support of my sisters.

Community life. Helping others in ministry when I would not be able to help if I was on my own (the poor) – having a community of like-minded (yet diverse) people behind me.

Community life. Prayer in common.

Community life. Prayer life – especially personal prayer time.

Community life. We often meet with successes and failures in the apostolate, and much of the fruit of our labor we never see, but within community we have the support and a measure of our own growth in holiness. To be able to reach out to a sister whom you never would have chosen for a friend can be very rewarding because you discover true friends in places you never would have looked.

Community life. We support each other. My most rewarding “lesson” since living in community is the importance and freedom of reconciliation.

Community life: Sharing life with women of like basic values. Praying, studying, and playing together. Being supported on those days when I don’t have the energy to go it alone. Loving and being loved by the women in this Congregation.

Community living

Community living, friendships, spirituality, identity, support, being rooted in God and mission. Being Franciscan and Eucharistic.

Community living.

Community living.

Community living. Growth: personal, spiritual. Opportunity to minister to others in ways I never could have imagined.

Community support and prayer. Encouragement of sharing in a larger mission and offering hope in the world. Being able to support others and love them.

Community support in living the vows.

Community support.

Community, prayer, service in my ministry as a religious. As an administrator, the ability to touch so many lives through faith and prayer.

Community.

Community.

Community. Cutting edges. Counter-cultural.

Community. Spiritual growth/opportunities for growth.

Connecting with folks of all types. Being free to touch real issues, God issues.

Consecration as a bride of Christ. Joy in community. Interior peace. Religious witness for Christ (the habit, example, etc.) Security of following God’s call through obedience.

Contemplative in action, prayer is the core that is lived out in ministry. Support in ongoing formation and personal growth. Community life and commonality in spirituality.

Contentment/confidence in response to a felt sense of God's call, as lived out everyday in community, prayer and ministry.

Daily Eucharist and Eucharistic Adoration; liturgical prayers.

Daily Eucharist. Greater opportunities to be of service.

Daily prayer. Opportunities for spiritual growth. Community living.

Dedication to God.

Deepening of my relationship with God and others through communal, prayer and ministry aspects of religious life. Sharing faith and personal experience with other members. I am fortunate to have peers (age and stage of formation) in community and although it was not an initial draw to religious life it has proven to be a great gift of support and faith sharing.

Deepening prayer and closeness to the Lord. Being a witness to the world – an icon of the Church and a sign that there is more than just what the “world” is giving them.

Deepening relationship with Jesus.

Development of spirituality, community, and relationship with God-relationships with community members.

Devotion to my Lord and my community. Being as one and as yet different among ourselves.

Divine Office in community.

Doing God's will and finding peace in it.

Doing God's will and the every moment opportunity to grow in union with Him.

Doing God's will in communion with my Sisters.

Doing God's will.

Doing God's will.

Doing God's will.

Doing something good for others in following Jesus as his disciple. At the end of the day I feel rewarded and fulfilled knowing I am doing God's will. I feel in harmony with God in doing his will. Interior freedom.

Doing something meaningful with my life, our charism, having spirituality and prayer at such a central place in my life.

Doing the will of God, being faithful to Him and His Church

Doing what God wants me to do.

Emphasis on individual and communal spirituality and ministry. I love Franciscan theology; I love this Franciscan group of sisters and associates.

Emphasis on prayer.

Encouragement and support to be the best person God calls me to be. Commitment to being a part of creating a just world.

Espousal to Christ. Evangelical counsels.

Even though there are 50 different women with as many personalities and ideas, it works because God is here and we're journeying together.

Every moment of my life is dedicated to God, and my presence is a sign to others of God's presence and fidelity.

Everyday, God is bringing forth from me talents I never really knew I was capable of – like nursing the retired diocesan priests, or handling the account books. I was a home-mom for 45 years.

Everything – it fulfills me – it helps me be me.

Everything I do in obedience is God's will (and that is everything!).

Everything.

Faith centered.

Faith sharing and community living and our shared prayer and ministry.

Faith sharing ministry.

Faithful, dedicated relationships. Commitment to mission – care for earth and all. Commitment to personal, spiritual growth.

Falling in love with Jesus. The humbling privilege of being used as an instrument of God's grace and love for the salvation of souls. The witness of the habit as a billboard for Jesus... The life of prayer and sacrifice bearing fruit in my own conversion and in the lives of family and friends. The joy of belonging to Jesus entirely.

Feeling grounded with God better because I am with like-minded women who have given themselves to God and the charism of our congregation. I didn't want to do and be for and with God alone – we make a better witness together.

Feeling that I am doing the work of the Gospel by working for justice and human rights.

Finding deep meaning in life's experiences; growing in relationship with God; all the lives I've touched and been touched by. Sharing a mission and hope with other women of the Church.

Finding that falling in love with God can last beyond all emotional highs and lows and that this kind of love makes self-sacrifice easier (not easy, but easier!).

Focus of energy and time to live a God-centered life – support and accountability for this in personal prayer life and personal growth, community living and ministry.

Following God's will and leading a life FOCUSED on Him – What could be better?

Following God's will for my life, living in community, striving for protection, being a witness for the world, serving the needs of the Church and helping others in the path to holiness.

Following God's will, being His Spouse and a spiritual mother to souls, and community life and life of prayer.

Following the Franciscan lifestyle. Staying focused on my faith and spiritual growth through my connection to my religious community.

For me, the ability to bring Christ into people's lives and witness to my relationship with Him. Being a religious means that I am available totally to God and His people.

For me, the most rewarding aspect is the opportunity to make a TOTAL gift of self – through consecration/vows, and in daily religious life and apostolate. This is what draws us so deeply into a personal relationship with Jesus – total surrender. Also – the close friendships among sisters.

Fraternal community life and the apostolic ministry.

Free to love God and serve others. Deepening spiritual life with God. Autonomy/character building.

Freedom in ministering where needed. People and prayer life of community.

Freedom to be of service to others without feeling pressure. Ability to walk in others' shoes and share culture values. Sharing life with the marginalized.

Freedom to serve, to be myself, to do new things and not be held back.

Freedom to witness hope, possibility and call to people in ministry. Living with congregational charisms. Pondering and creating ministerial responses to need and want.

Freedom. If we are truly called to religious life, God gives us freedom in this life. We continually develop; religious life places no limits on that but rather encourages me to grow more and more into the person I'm called to be – greater love, greater enthusiasm and zeal, greater energy for mission, and greater desire for intimate union with God, our great Love.

Fulfilling God's will and salvation of souls.

Fulfillment and union with God.

Fulfillment in ministry. Growth in my personal spiritual life.

Giving my life completely to God and neighbor in service trusting fully in God for the provision of the necessary means to reach out to His creation.

Giving myself totally to Christ.

Giving of self and personal relationship with Jesus.

God constant love and mercy, it is faithfulness.

God's grace.

Grow in spiritual life.

Growing in knowledge and love of self, others, and God through demanding and joyful community life.

Growing in love of Jesus with my sisters and helping my students come to know He is real.

Growing in my relationship with God and my sisters. Becoming a better person – more loving.

Growing in virtues. Growing in spiritual life. Trusting/depending on God. Intimacy with Jesus.

Growing more deeply in love with God.

Growth in love – receiving from Christ, giving to Christ, giving to others.

Growth in my journey with God and my community.

Growth in prayer in a way beyond words. A joy that is from a source beyond me, even in suffering, community life where we learn how to love deeply. They are also my greatest rewards and my greatest challenges and the greatest means of receiving grace.

Growth in prayer/relationship with the Lord; strong community life.

Growth in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Growth through a lived common life. Daily reception and focus on the Eucharist. This witness of joyful consecration and fidelity by my sisters in good and difficult times.

Have time to pray, being with Jesus and the support of my congregation. We come together for the purpose of being with the Lord, then sent out for mission.

Having a constant focus on what's really important in life; being part of a family/team whose goal is to grow in holiness and to get others to heaven; our full life – seizing each day – dedicated to God/not wasting time.

Having a sense of “connectedness” with people who are committed to the Gospel mission!

Having common prayer life, have Jesus in the tabernacle 24-7. Some of the sisters in community.

Having community recreational time, prayer time, and sharing our love and presence at meal time.

Having more time with Jesus which nobody can take from me and also to be free to serve God in the experience of living in a community with sisters who are not my immediate family helps me to understand that all are one in Christ.

Having the opportunity to deepen my relationship with Jesus on a daily basis through prayer so that I can witness Christ as I serve in ministry.

Having the opportunity to give all to Christ, who gave all to us. (Community and the vows really ask something of us – it's not easy or based merely on emotions – we can truly give ourselves to Him through obedience and community life.)

Having the time to pray for others and to serve God's people in whatever way He is asking.

Having time to pray and living with like-minded people who are also seeking God.

Having time to pray and other forms of worship, serving in ministry without worry about how to support myself and having many opportunities for spiritual growth.

Helping souls come to know and love Jesus Christ, and find their way of serving in the body of Christ.

Helping the people most in need.

Here one can give back to God what He has given me. Truly be yourself.

Honest attempt to live the charism.

Hopefully fulfilling God's call for what He made me to become.

Housing enough time and space with the Lord, by being who we are for others and with others.

I am able to be contemplative in a monastic community. My live is normally balanced with prayer, work, study, leisure.

I am able to develop my talents and utilize my gifts in assisting the Holy Spirit in building up or bringing about the reign of God.

I am daily able to give myself as a gift to Jesus and His Church.

I am in awe of God's plan – how it has unfolded and led me to where I am today. During my incorporation, I read that a religious vocation is a mystery and a gift. I find I am most fulfilled when I remember that I am called to witness the viability of Gospel values...to be countercultural. It is our baptismal call and it is lived authentically by lay people as well. When I interact with people in ministry, I often sense their gratitude...the presence of a vowed religious seems to reassure them. It's not about me but rather a "public" sign of God's hope.

I am not alone in my desire to know and be known ... to love and be loved by God. I feel at home in what the vows/call invite me to each day. It is not always easy ... but I find life in the attempt to say "yes" everyday to the vows I made to God and to God's people.

I am not alone in my Incarnational beliefs. I can journey with others in my faith. My community gives me a bigger base in which to keep and nourish my faith within the Catholic Church. I am able to do the ministry I'm called to which demands sharing resources (retreat center).

I am truly at peace here and much accepted, have been able to work informally these past years helping with appointments, teach Special Education Program (adults).

I am who I am because of my institute and its members. I have been encouraged to live the Gospel fully and I can't imagine not being a member. I am deeply grateful.

I appreciate shared prayer and the support given to each other daily.

I believe that I am doing God's will and it has been a privilege and also rewarding to serve His people.

I belong to something greater than myself. I have others who profess the same beliefs.

I can honestly say that my hardest day in religious life is better than my best day before I entered the convent. I say this because I have a peace within me that I didn't have before. A peace that I spent years in search of. As we know, it is in doing God's will that we find our peace.

I can teach about God, I live with those who share my values and faith.

I deeply love the other sisters and their support of each other. We are serious about prayer. As a group we can do much more than I could do as an individual. I truly feel at home in this community.

I enjoy having the freedom to spend time in personal prayer and getting to learn how to develop a personal relationship with Jesus. Having the tools to know how to go about developing this relationship.

I enjoy my community members – they are women of deep faith, prayer, concern for others. I also am grateful for the opportunities for spiritual and psychological growth, retreats, community gatherings (which also influence how I minister to/with others).

I feel a sense of freedom to be who God calls me to be; while being challenged to become more, to use my gifts to the fullest, to use gifts I didn't know I had.

I feel energized in being connected with women who have the same/similar passion.

I feel I am making a difference in the lives of those with whom I minister and come in contact with.

1. I feel it makes life worth living. 2. Never-ending opportunities to be of service to others. 3. The happiness and peace I get when I live it well.

I feel like a part of Christ's team.

I feel like I am growing, learning, and coming closer to God. I am able to reach so many people in my ministry and hopefully I share Christ's love with them and help them to encounter and grow as they learn more about their faith – especially since I'm in a school.

I feel that I make a difference in the lives of so many people, in so many different places since I move from one city to another. I also make a difference in the lives of my sisters. I enjoy moving from one convent to another.

I feel very fulfilled as a religious, I feel I am doing what God wants me to do, what he made me for from all eternity. It is a joy to grow in my relationship of love with Jesus and to serve him in the person of the poor.

I felt drawn to religious life because I wanted to share my life, my love, with more than one person. The communal living and commitment to ministry in making the love of God visible with others at a congregational level is rewarding and satisfying.

I find growing closer to Christ the most satisfying part of religious life. However, community is also very satisfying.

I find it most rewarding to be a Bride of Christ, living my love for Jesus through the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, as part of a Congregation which has a clear sense of identity within the Church.

I find it rewarding to see the impact religious men/women have in society. I enjoy meeting people and to hear what they have to say...to share in their life.

I find it the most rewarding/satisfying to have such a prayerful religious community. Also, because we are a Eucharistic community, I know that we are always united in the Eucharist...no matter how far apart the rest of our community may be located.

I find living in community rewarding. I am grateful for daily Mass in our chapel. Just the fact that the Blessed Sacrament is in the same house (reserved in our chapel) is a blessing.

I find most rewarding about religious life is the belonging to God as a consecrated person. Set aside for Him. While trying to love Him with a pure and undivided heart. And with Jesus as the center of my heart helping me to love and to serve my brothers and sisters with the grace of God so as to continue Jesus' mission spreading the Gospel through charity and with love.

I find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life is a spiritual life and to be part of a community.

I find most rewarding our truly deep desire to seek God together and what it is God is calling us to in this time and place. I find deeply satisfying our communal desire to reach out to those in need among us and the joy of having the opportunity to do that together, either actually ministering together or knowing we have the support of the others. I also deeply appreciate our daily life and prayer that sustains us.

I find my religious consecration most rewarding – that I am a bride of Christ, totally consecrated in Him and His will.

I find our life of prayer and service most satisfying and belonging completely to Christ.

I find that having the privilege to be all His even now is most rewarding – being His bride like Mary.

I find that I am daily encouraged and challenged by our life to grow deeper in love with the Lord and my neighbor. This brings great joy and satisfaction.

I find that I am loved and supported. I find that I am freed by that support to engage in the God quest.

I find the deep commitment to serving others especially, women and children, most satisfying because we do this together all around the world.

I find the deepening of my relationship with God to be the most satisfying element of my religious life.

I find the impact and influence that religious life has in ministerial settings and in the culture to be satisfying and rewarding. On a more personal level I find the opportunity to grow in deeper and deeper relationship with God through my vows – living the vows daily – to be rewarding.

I find the peace I feel and the knowledge that I am a part of something bigger than myself.

I find the rhythm of the life (the communal prayer, work, and sharing) very satisfying as well as living in community. As a means to growing closer to our Divine Bridegroom we are perfected here before meeting our final judgment.

I find the time I have to pray and minister most rewarding about consecrated life. I am grateful for the opportunities to keep in touch and visit my family (which I originally thought would be limited). I am happy and grateful for the many ministry opportunities and am edified by our aged sisters who are wisdom women for me.

I find very rewarding about religious life to serve the most needed.

I have a real sense of not only doing God's will for my own life, but of placing my whole person at the service of others. Beyond a particular "work" I feel that religious life has freed me to give of myself finally.

I have a renewed energy and hope with the newer members coming in today – the desire for community is finally being heard – listening to the needs of all people/sisters in community – the old to the young. The prayer life is the most important to me – to share that with others – share community – to share my life.

I have a sense of belonging to something big – a sense of purpose. I am convinced the Holy Spirit wants us to exist and carry out a particular role in the Church's mission. I love my sisters.

I have always felt called and I know I am where I am supposed to be.

I have been visiting nursing homes, our hospital and many homes to bring Communion and spend some time with our parishoners. They are very happy for the visits and that is my reward.

I have had the opportunity to meet such a variety of wonderful people. It has also helped me become more fully who I am called to be.

I know I am the Lord's and that he will give me all I need to grow in holiness – I have sisters that will help me to focus on growth – I can tell children I teach and adults I work with how much God loves them!

I know that I am following God's will for my life and so I feel satisfied and joyful in the work I do with/for the community, I feel peace at living here, and even when it is difficult, I feel supported by the sisters. I see that I am growing everyday into who God desires me to be.

I know this is where God has led me and I am following the radical call of God in my life.

I live under the same roof with the Eucharistic Lord, attend mass daily, pray the office with my sisters, pray the rosary and participate in scripture sharing. I like doing things with and for the sisters but they are often too tired and worn out. I love running an ESL/literacy program for ladies 18 and older and serving on the parish council, etc.

I love being a bride of Christ and a witness to everyone I meet. I feel the Love of the Lord through life with my sisters and I love our prayer life and the Sacramental life.

I love being in an international institute. The joys and challenges of multiculturalism, of being in a country and culture not my own (I'm in grad school in Spain). The diversity of my sisters and their different outlooks and experiences is very life-giving. I thrive in the rich mix of languages, colors, and opinions.

I love daily Mass and growing in intimate love of Christ.

I love living in community. It's what I was created for! I also love prayer in front the Blessed Sacrament and allowing the Lord to penetrate my being, and all of the healing he has allowed me to experience in the 1 1/2 years I've been here. I love how our community stresses the importance of human/spiritual integration and being a whole person.

I love my community. I love the sense of being united in mission with a common purpose and vision, but having the freedom to be in a variety of ministries. I love that we truly care for one another-and that feeling influences all we do.

I love that our life is centered around God and is always directing us toward Him. I find this more satisfying or rewarding than any job or success before entering.

I love the Eucharist in every convent. Being that close to Jesus everyday is worth everything else, the 999 mile move away from home, the cold weather, the uncertainty and all the new people as family. Love the living in community.

I love the mission and the women who work to spread the mission of "loving God and neighbor without distraction."

I love the sense of community life. I like sharing life with the women within my community. There is a connectedness that I feel with my congregation that I don't feel in any other relationships.

I love when people can see that the Catholic Church and religious life are still alive and thriving. This is very rewarding to me.

I receive back much more from those I minister to than I give to them – very rewarding.

I thought I entered because I loved God but through the years have come to realize that the beauty of the journey is learning how much I am loved by God. Our main apostolate is education. I've grown to love the privilege of helping young people tap into their potential.

I'm grateful for the freedom in obedience. All I want to do is to love and please our Lord, and all I need to do (to fulfill this desire) is fulfill my vow of obedience. I'm also grateful to live in the same house as our Eucharistic Lord.

I'm in seminary still. So far, I love getting close to Jesus and learning new prayer methods and new ways of serving God.

In education, the experience of witnessing the awakening to sacred mysteries in the hearts and minds of children is not only satisfying, but a privilege that in turn strengthens my own commitment to "be about the Lord's business."

In my apostolate when I see the young students connect that God is truly working in their lives. Also it is rewarding when people come up to you in public and ask for prayers – not because I'm so holy but because they see someone living for Christ.

In the monthly retreats, the spiritual exercises, each year as well as spiritual conferences; all of these are strong opportunities to fill ourselves with God and renewal in order to live our consecration to God with greater joy and enthusiasm.

Inner joy and happiness helping others in different ways. Through prayers and through ministry out reached programs. The satisfaction I received when someone you helped was happy and satisfied.

Inner peace, true joy, total commitment to the vows.

Intense discussions with God focused people, God intentioned women trying to build up the Kingdom.

Interacting with those who accept me as I am, give me support, and comfortable around people I can laugh and cry with – not being judged. I feel of daily Eucharist.

Interaction with other members.

Intimacy with Christ.

Involvement at the international level. An increased desire to look for new forms and what is new in religious life. I find others who prefer to have a spiritual practice of meditation and who are generally operating at a post modern developmental level.

It brings joy to my soul or my being

It gives my life grounding, direction, meaning and I've found wonderful companions along the way – in unexpected places. It keeps my life centered – God seeking, prayerful and reflective. It gives me a way.

It is a life I find requires all of me. What I give, I get in return. It is a chance to be about something bigger than me.

It is a tremendous gift to belong totally and radically to Jesus Christ and His Church. Living His own way of life – poor, chaste, and obedient – is a gift and mystery of divine love and mercy.

It is a way of life that helps me live better the gospel values and community life. Freedom intrinsic to the vows that encourages and allows crossing of boundaries – meeting, sharing and working with the community of life, of the earth.

It is most rewarding to me first of all to answer the call, secondly to serve God in all.

It is something to serve – to be “sister” to people, to make a difference in the world and to do that along with my sisters.

It is very heartening to me to know I'm part of a team that is trying to light a candle in the midst of a world that can be chaotic, materialistic, and individualistic. As our community sharpens its focus on systemic change, we're seeing some dynamic programs world-wide for the poor. I have also very much valued my spiritual mentors and opportunities for growth via spiritual and heritage programs. And I deeply enjoy being able to share my faith in my missionary country with simple people of strong faith.

It is who I am. The support I receive in living an authentic, prayerful life. Making a difference with my life.

It is wonderful to know that I can't do everything, but I'm part of an organization that can be involved in so much together.

It makes me a better person – more others-centered. Able to openly live my faith and share my faith.

It nurtures the call I experience within.

It only gets better every year – the adventure of God's grace at work in my life and the lives of others.

It seems to be the place where I “belong.”

It’s a life that supports me in deepening my relationship with God and in living out of that relationship the best I am able in love.

It’s all for the honor and glory of God.

Its counter cultural witness to a life of service to God. Being God’s instrument in service. Jesus – His daily invitation to draw close to Him in this way of life through prayer and service to others, and to know I might be helping others come closer to Christ and follow Him in loving service to the Church.

Jesus Christ as Bridegroom of my life.

Jesus Christ for spouse.

Jesus is everything. Here I seek His will. He calls me and I desire each day to offer him my every suffering and to let him use me to shine his light on the world.

Jesus! Especially prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. There is really no other reason to be a religious...I am – for Him

Joining a group of women who try to live a prophetic life style in lists of the Gospels and social justice.

Journing with like valued companions. Sharing life in many keeps me broaden minded and other focused or open to the spirit for growth, healing, response to each day's call.

Knowing and following God’s will. Striving always to love Him more and become more Mary-like with a group of religious women working together and encouraging each other towards this end.

Knowing I am doing God’s will in all that I do.

Knowing I am following the call Christ has called me to.

Knowing my life is totally given over to God to use as he wishes. God works through each of us to bring souls to Christ.

Knowing souls are being saved through our life of sacrifice.

Knowing that I am called to be the best version of myself within this religious family. I am able to use all that I am for God’s glory and not be put in a box.

Knowing that I am doing God’s will.

Knowing that I am doing God's will. I am His bride, because it is His will that I be so.

Knowing that I am living out a spirituality that is shared/valued by many others and being part of something worthwhile that is bigger than myself.

Knowing that I am living out of the vocation God called me to.

Knowing that I am where God has called me to be.

Knowing that my life makes a difference in the lives of those whom I serve. And knowing that I have a whole community behind me who is supporting me in my ministry. I'm not out there by myself.

Knowing that Our Lord chose this vocation for me from all eternity, and this charism.

Knowing that people will call us and ask for prayers, and every once in a while they call to let us know that they were answered.

Knowing that through me, with me and in spite of me God shares his love with others and brings His Kingdom closer at hand.

Knowing that we are all seeking God's will and fulfilling our deepest desires as persons.

Knowing that wherever I am I represent the community and all are with each other in spirit whatever the ministry. People who understand the ups and downs of community life.

Knowing this is where the Lord wants me – I have so much peace. I feel I am growing spiritually closer to the Lord and as a person, through personal prayer, formation, and healing ministry opportunities with our formation directives and communally. I am growing as a person and feel loved and incorporated into my community.

Learning more about God and seeing how He works in my life and those around me.

Life of prayer, community life, being of service.

Liturgy of the Hours and personal prayer. Love and care of community. Sense of connection with tradition.

Living (and being best friends) with women who want to be holy above all else.

Living a life of prayer and a sense that what I do really helps to build the kingdom.

Living a sense of being where I feel God wants me to be. I also enjoy my ministry as musician and liturgist at our motherhouse in St. Louis, MO.

Living according to the Rule of St. Benedict in a community of women who have a common goal.

Living and working among religious of various ages.

Living and working with people committed to the same goals.

Living in a community that has a common mission and prayer. Ministering with and among the poor.

Living in a community that prays together and goes forth to serve Christ in the poor.

Living in a religious community where each sister is striving to love the Lord and to grow in holiness is a great blessing. It is also humbling to see how the Lord uses our weak efforts to be a means of grace for others.

Living in community and prayer life.

Living in community and praying together.

Living in community and sharing our faith lives. Being encouraged, challenged and supported to pursue my relationship with God.

Living in community with my sisters and sharing in the same apostolate with them.

Living in community, even though it's trying at times.

Living in community, praying together, eating together, wearing a habit, which has many people approaching me many times and affirming the habit and also seeing a sister – visibility/witness. I thoroughly enjoy and am elated to serve the people of God in the Church today.

Living in community.

Living in community.

Living in community. Serving the young. Knowing that God loves me and called me to serve Him in this way.

Living in such a supportive community where I am called on to fall more deeply in love with Christ.

Living in the house of God all the days of my life.

Living in the Lord's will and love and serving Him in whomever He places by me.

Living in the same house with our Eucharistic lord; the encouragement and example of my religious sisters.

Living in unity with Church as when at Mass/Divine Office (even if not in agreement!). Living with others who share same values/outlook. Living in community. Opportunity to be busy at 80! in a meaningful, necessary way.

Living my life for Jesus and knowing that my sisters in community are doing the the same, sharing our life and love for Him with one another and in our apostolates.

Living out my values and my love of our redeemer. Live my faith and grow deeper in my relationship with Jesus and the people I encounter.

Living out our zeal for the souls.

Living the evangelical counsels. Living daily within the religious community.

Living together, praying together and sharing together.

Living with other women who are serious about being good people and doing good.

Living with the support and challenge of others.

Local, national and international community and bonds through prayer and ministry.

Love and kindness of some of the sisters.

Love of the sisters and the ability to be fully one and discover who I am and learning how to offer myself as a self-gift to others.

Loving Jesus, doing His will and serving others in the Church.

Makes me a better person, am discovering who God is calling me to be, very supportive, have grown a great deal, discovered new talents and rubbed off rough edges.

Making my sisters happy.

Meaning in mission. Living and praying in community. Commitment to Gospel living.

Ministering to the poor.

Ministering with people my age. Looking toward the future of religious life.

MINISTRIES. Working together with the people. Accomplishments. Most importantly, seeing God in what we do, in the situations – rough or smooth.

Ministry with support of community life.

Ministry work, being a member of the Institute.

Ministry.

Ministry. Spiritual growth and development. Internationality of institute.

Mission of service to those who are poorest.

More freedom, free myself from a lot of things that tied me up before, for example, anger, forgiveness.

Most rewarding and satisfying is knowing I have a large group of women who supported me in their prayer. It's also wonderful to share and be with my community. We all have the same goals.

Most satisfying is the grace given by God to live this way of life. The most rewarding is the unity with God experienced by engaging in and not refraining from the daily challenge (see #190) of living community life. And the community's prayerful support of everyone's individual and united efforts.

Mostly being a bride of Christ; it is an honor and privilege to be His Bride. I am grateful for our life or prayer and works of charity. I am also grateful for my sisters in religion.

My ability to live simply and to share life with the poor.

1. My actions are not motivated by money, position or what I can get in return. 2. The spiritual and personal growth I've experienced has been incredible. 3. Knowing that what I do is ministry not job.

My belonging to a community of sisters with whom I share a love of God and a life of service to God's children.

My consecration and spousal union with Christ. Living out my vows in a strong and faithful community.

My consecration to God. I am a spouse of Christ.

My consecration to Jesus Christ.

My consecration to Jesus Christ.

My daily relationship with God/my Jesus and my institute's make-up/approach that has been improving over the last few years and supports and encourages me in my overall growth in my religious life; daily Mass, prayer, community life that is open, but properly limited by our

constitution, directory, rule, Gospel way of life, fidelity to the Church, daily Eucharistic Adoration, rosary, ministry that evangelizes on many levels.

My deepening relationship with God.

My ever deepening relationship with Our Lord.

My greatest source of joy as a religious is the knowledge that I belong entirely to God, that the Person of Christ is my Spouse and that by my consecration and obedience to His Will and am participating with Him in the saving of my own soul and the souls of those to whom I am sent, and in a mysterious way, the whole Church.

My growth in my prayer life and my closeness to the Eucharist.

My identity as a religious is linked to my institute.

My life being centered around prayer, Mass, ministry, and community.

My ministry as a pastoral associate in a parish.

My ministry.

My ministry. The different ways of praying. The engagement of my community to listen to the new generations of sisters in my community and their federation.

My personal relationship with Jesus. Belonging to something bigger than myself.

My prayer life and community life/relationships are the most satisfying.

(1) My prayer life. (2) Community life. (3) Apostolate – teaching.

My relationship with God is continuously deepening. I am becoming a better person through discovering the real me and allowing for conversion. The deep, rich, loving, supportive relationships that are being built. My prayer life is ever evolving and my desire for prayer is always growing. Sharing in this journey, this life of struggles and awakenings with its hard lessons and grace-filled breakthroughs and knowing you are never alone, we're doing it together.

My relationship with God.

My relationship with God. My spiritual journey and my commitment to living from the inside out – living from my experience of God – into the call of service.

My relationship with Jesus and finding Jesus in my daily life, in community and mission.

My relationship with Jesus and serving God's people.

My relationship with Jesus has deepened as a religious. My greatest joy is sharing my faith with the children I teach.

1. My relationship with Jesus has grown. 2. The example of the older and younger sisters who are living the vows faithfully and being examples to me in our paths of holiness.

My relationship with Jesus, and the joy of being totally given to Him in and for the Church. I love the joy of living with others who love and are open to the Lord, who are generous and encouraging. I love having a front row seat watching grace and renewal and hope enter people's lives.

My relationships with my sisters, our communal prayer on a bigger group level and our common mission.

My religious life is really a gift! It's very simple, really. I'm in love with my spouse and I belong to him. To be able to live in community, to pray with my sisters, to serve in the apostolate with my sisters is an extraordinary grace and support. As we all help one another and those we serve grow in holiness and in union with God in love.

My time for prayer and a chance for personal and spiritual growth in ever seeking God.

Never a dull moment, always challenged to stretch the heart.

On path to goal to union with God in love.

Ongoing formation to help me grow closer to Jesus and to love others as He does. Set times for praying with the community, eating, and recreating together.

Opportunities and experience of serving in the name of Jesus; opportunity to bring "Spirit" into daily "life."

Opportunities for ministry, opportunities for personal/spiritual growth.

Opportunities for spiritual growth.

Opportunities to discover within me talents and abilities that I would not have otherwise had and to use those talents for the glory of God.

Opportunity to attend daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, and other exercises as a part of religious life.

Opportunity to grow in relationship with God, opportunity to spend time daily in silence before the Eucharist, sisters in community, sacrifices for the salvation of souls.

Opportunity to serve the poor.

Opportunity to serve with others who are also passionate about our mission and charism.

Our community life and prayer gives us the strength to serve those who are poor and in need. My community has encouraged and challenged me to see beyond my personal expectations. Together we work to make a difference in serving others spiritually and corporally. Community life is rewarding as well as the most difficult aspect of this life given to God in service of the poor.

Our community supports one another. Fraternal charity is alive and well . There are many of all ages striving for holiness. It is good to study and work and pray with others who love our Lord and his Church.

Our gift of knowing strong witness in our Foundresses, depth of spiritual life, relationships in and out of community, meeting other religious and lay faithful who share beliefs.

Our prayer life. Community.

Our shared commitment to God through loving and serving people who are poor. Our shared commitment to seeking justice for people and earth.

Our spiritual life as we renew our commitment in daily prayer, Eucharistic Liturgy, monthly recollection, annual retreat, etc. If I am a lay person I would not have an opportunity for all these things.

Our strong life of prayer, strong fraternal bonds within community. The joys and sorrows of spiritual motherhood experienced through our ministries.

Peace about being in God's will, seeing God's work and His love torching people.

Peace in doing God's will

Peace. Knowing about God through other faithful, especially sisters at my community, community life. They have patience with culture difference, even they are aged.

Perpetual adoration, community life.

Personal spiritual growth, commitment to ministry, ongoing study, faithfulness to mission.

Planting God's seeds in pre-school children!

Possibility to serve in total givenness; being an integral part of the Church.

Prayer and community life.

Prayer and community life.

Prayer and community.

Prayer and companionship of other of same interest.

Prayer and service.

Prayer and study.

Prayer life – beautiful example of my sisters being in a close and very special personal relationship with my Jesus, my Love!

Prayer life – opportunities for spiritual growth.

Prayer life – opportunity to be a sign with my life.

Prayer life – the opportunities for spiritual growth – retreat opportunities – working with others in my field (nursing home owned by the Sisters) living in community with like-minded (prayerful) people (sisters).

Prayer life and my relationship with God. With the sisters I will and currently live with and the residents/families/community I have had the honor to serve.

Prayer life and spiritual growth. International community

Prayer life and the privilege to minister in the Church, the loving support from the people of God, through their prayers and words of encouragement. It is most rewarding to feel the love of God through the people in the Church.

Prayer life. Community living.

Prayer life. Community living.

Prayer life. Ministry

Prayer time, better relationship with God and his creation.

Prayer, community and joy.

Prayer, daily Mass.

Prayer, fraternal support, spirituality.

Prayer, Liturgy, community life.

Prayer, Mass, Eucharist – working for the Church – working for souls.

Prayer, our congregation's charism of making Jesus known and loved, witness of members.

Prayer.

Prayer. Communal living. Charism

Prayer. Community life/relationships. Service.

Prayer. Unity and commitment of our community to the Church

Prayers, daily living in common/community life. Eucharistic Adoration. Giving witness as a religious sister in a full habit!

Praying and serving.

Praying life and also I can help a lot of people in the world with my work.

Probably being with the older sisters.

Profession of the evangelical counsels is most satisfying because my vows free me to pursue the perfection of charity, and my eternal reward in heaven. Serving as a teacher in the apostolate can be rewarding, but more importantly it is a gift to do God's will and bring Christ to others.

Protected prayer life and the privilege to work with/for the heroic men and women we serve for life.

Provides an environment for deepening relationships and union with God.

Receiving, as a consecrated religious, Christ's love poured out in the Mass and Divine Office and communicating that love in community and in teaching.

(1) Relationship with Christ which grows daily. (2) Community life that aids me in living the vows and growing in holiness. (3) Apostolate in passing on to others the fruits of my contemplation.

Relationship with God. Community life.

Relationship with sisters and ministry.

Relationships within community. Our celebrations together. Our commitment to serving the poor and responding to needs around us. The many opportunities to participate on committees/boards, etc. for our future.

Relationships, challenge for growth, spirituality, personally, ministerially, ability to make a difference in our world as a community.

Relationships.

Religious consecration to Jesus Christ – belonging wholly to Christ. Ability to share the love and truth of Jesus Christ with other (apostolate of education). Community life – seeing Christ in my sisters and experiencing His love through them.

Religious identity as “Bride of Christ.”

Religious life culture; being able to discuss, talk out, share my God-quest, and the role of religious in culture, society, politics, the Church, etc.

Religious life gives me a structure to focus my life with God through ministry and community. Most rewarding/satisfying – When I experience a moment that affirms that I am furthering the mission of Jesus.

Religious life has allowed me to meet wonderful and diverse people. It is helping me to be in touch with real life. It has nurtured my personal growth, my relationships with the Lord and my relationships with other people. The vows are making me a freer woman to serve and follow the Lord wherever He leads me.

Religious life is a gift from God. If we focus our lives from the plan of God, everything becomes working towards the kingdom. It is a great reward to help people in time of sickness and death. We also work very closely with the family member providing support and rest by helping with the care of their loved one. That is to live what Jesus said: “What you did to one of my little ones, you did it for Me.”

Responding to sense of call. While a struggle, given lack of structures/supports, it is also rewarding.

Rich prayer life/Christ as the center of all. Deep friendships/family bonds with sisters. Encouragement to fidelity as we journey together.

Rubbing elbows with individuals who have persevered in religious life who love God and others.

Sacrifice, community life, perpetual adoration

Seeing conversion in the heart of someone you’ve worked with. Having others to pray with.

Seeking God in a faith community. Studying and attempting to live the Gospel with the support of this way of life (the wisdom of the Rule of St. Benedict.).

Seeking holiness with others who have Christ first in their hearts.

1. Sense of being in mission, common focus. 2. Faith life.

Sense of being part of a larger whole dedicated to a common purpose/values/good.

Sense of being part of something larger than myself. Being a sister challenges me to seek God in all aspects and to be the presence of Christ to others. I could not do the same by myself.

Sense of belonging/being understood. Opportunities for spiritual growth/service alone and with others. The sisters!

Sense of oneness with the group and seeing the group discern directions to move.

Sense of purpose, growing in faith

Service

Service and giving/experience of union with God through prayer and ministry/overwhelming feeling of doing God's will.

Service to/with persons who are poor.

Service, but also the God committed sisters I have around and along the way.

Serving God and neighbor as part of something much larger than oneself. Support for the sake of the mission. Also recognition that I am part of the larger Dominican family and that together, we can serve others. Religious life continues to challenge me to become more of the person God has called me to be/become.

Serving God and the Church without counting the cost.

Serving God's people, community life.

Serving in ministries of the religious community.

Serving others and knowing it isn't just about me, it's what God has called me to do.

Serving others, being with the sisters.

Serving the Lord always.

Shared commitment to living and witnessing to the Gospel.

Shared mission in an apostolic community. Shared values and support.

Shared prayer, meals, work, view of world, service to God's people, love of Church – but ability to see problems. (We are daughters of the Church – but must not be silenced.)

Sharing a common mission – for us its serving the poor. Being part of something larger, bigger – international, provincial, local.

Sharing community life, being one with the poor, support and love of community members.

Sharing community prayer and living. Support in my ministry from international community.

Sharing faith and life together (charism and lifestyle). Serving together (ministry and charism).

Sharing global spirituality and vision with a community of women with a world wide heart.

Sharing in community and helping others find Jesus.

Sharing religious life with my immediate cenacle which includes three other MSBTs. The ministry, the challenge to spiritual and personal growth. Faith sharing.

Sharing to others what I have received in abundance; living a life of gratitude.

Sharing, support or pooling of resources at the spiritual, emotional and financial levels for personal as well as ministerial growth.

Silence. Silence is the #1 thing that helped me discern. It fostered intimacy with God.

Simple life style. Mission.

Simplicity – prayer life.

Solitude, attentiveness to daily private and communal prayer, common life.

Spiritual and personal growth. Being able to help others.

Spiritual graces from God to His spouse, community life/friendships; spiritual motherhood.

Spiritual growth.

Spiritual growth opportunities. The opportunity to “make a difference.” The opportunity to live a witness.

Spiritual growth, e.g., growth in prayer, silence, etc. Knowing myself, and knowing God from day to day. Growing personal relationship with Jesus and on -going conversion. Knowing the goodness of religious life.

Spiritual growth. Daily Eucharist, knowing that Christ has called me in a personal way to be like Him.

Spiritual life, working with children, community exercises, over-all religious aspect.

Support and love of community members

Support for community life and religious life. Freedom for ministry and prayer focus. Knowing it is not just me ... being a part of something bigger than myself.

Support in pursuit of holiness and fidelity to prayer, sharing the fruits of prayer with students.

Support of community in all aspects of life.

Support of community members. Ability to study and opportunities available for personal and spiritual growth.

Support of other sisters, shared values, goals and desires for the world. Shared desire to grow in relationship with God and to serve the people of God.

Supporting each other in ministry.

Teaching in a faith environment, high school level – where exploration of faith possibilities is promoted.

Teaching, living as a spouse of Christ.  
That God can use me for His glory.

That God uses us as we are, weakness and all to bring change into the world – to see the transformation of another simply by our being consecrated.

That I am accepted for who I am – and for whom I'm trying to become.

That I am becoming all that God is calling me to be and that through this community I am able to serve others and do His will for my life.

That I am consecrated to God, to be that witness in the world of his love for each and every soul.

That he gives to me in some way or the other to truly be doing God's work, with that joy and peace within myself.

That I am doing God's will. This brings me a deep joy.

That I am encouraged and directed in a life of holiness through the example and living of a life of holiness. The Gospel is readily lived out in love.

That I am not just a "lone actor" in the world. Life in community.

That I believe that I am living out what I am called by God to live.

That I can be a witness to Christ in the world, our common prayer life and community life.

That in a way I am wasting my life for God and that people sometimes come back to God because we help them.

That it's challenging and causes growth and acceptance.

That no matter what I do, where I am, with whom I am, I am consecrated to God. My greatest joy is to be a spouse of Christ.

That there is still room for individuality – though living in obedience and community – that you are always challenged to find the best you.

That through community I am better able to serve the poor and do God's will.

That through my growing deeper in my prayer life, I am able to make the merciful love of Christ visible to all I encounter.

That together we live pray and serve those who are the poorest in our world. We are always growing trying to live more deeply our relationship with God. I love the radicalness and challenge of the life.

That we are chosen by God. It is a great gift, unique, mystery, a special and radical vocation from God.

That we still live in common and share the mission together.

The "knowing" of doing God's will with my life and sharing community with my sisters.

The ability to dedicate time to growing in relationship with the Lord.

The ability to grow and be myself.

The ability to maintain a focus on spirituality and my relationship with God – and the support of others who are doing the same.

The ability to reach into peoples' lives and hearts at a deeper level than they would generally open up, if I were not a religious.

The ability to serve God's children, whatever their age(s) may be in a way that I never could as a lay person. As a Religious people look at you differently and the Lord uses that to make/have a greater impact in their lives.

The acceptance I have received from my Community and from those to whom I minister. I also work with a very supportive staff.

The belief that I am living out God's will for me in the state of life.

The bond of a group of women, living in community, sharing a common mission, working together to better a world in conflict, and praying together are the most rewarding aspects of religious life.

The call to ongoing growth in God; seeking and finding God.

The caring and loving from the community, family and friends.

The central feature and the most satisfying feature of religious life is my relationship to Christ, which the life allows to grow and mature.

The charity and joy of the sisters, the experience of a rich and full liturgical life, the opportunity to serve in a variety of ways, the opportunity for education/ongoing formation.

The combination of the contemplative/monastic dimension with the active apostolate.

The commitment/vows to continual conversion. Growth in self-awareness and relationship with God.

The communal aspect of religious life – sharing a common life through prayer, meals, living and playing together. Our ministries are a variety, but there is the common bond of being of service to God's people and being of service to each other that keeps me rooted and grounded.

The community life – its regularity of schedule – its prayer/Mass daily – its social structure.

The community life and teaching of souls are such gifts!

The community life and the assurance of knowing that if I live in obedience, I am fulfilling God's will for me at every moment. In His will is my peace.

The community support in seeking God. And the freedom we have to share our spirituality with others.

The companionship and support. Standing together for a greater cause. Praying together.

The confidence I have that God chose me for Himself and will therefore direct all that I do through the grace of the vows is very satisfying. Also, community life is very rewarding after a day in the apostolate. It is rejuvenating.

The connection with other religious. Religious life is important, a sign of witness. Habits are not needed, today's dress is the dress of the day. I can reach out to people and bring God's love and joy and compassion to many.

The constant call to live more deeply for Jesus Christ and to love my sisters and students and to be loved by them as well. Communio.

The constant encouragement and support to grow in union with God.

The daily call to conversion and drawing closer to the Lord in prayer.

The daily opportunities to be of service to others.

The daily trial/rewards of striving to be faithful to the grace of living my vows completely for the glory and honor of God.

The deep experiences of God in prayer and the active demands of service. A sense of meaning and purpose. Simple living.

The deepening of my relationship with God. Deepening in the spirituality and charism of my congregation. Lived out in ministry to my neighbors.

The development of a prayer life centered on the Blessed Sacrament has given me an opportunity for growth in maturity and personal integrity. Classes have given me an understanding of the dignity and responsibility of the religious life; and working with each sister has given me a wide view of how to apply these principles to every day life.

The experience of God and unity of the community toward the same goal.

The fact of being as a religious sister.

The fact that as religious, we belong to God in a spousal union through consecration – that as consecrated religious, everything in what we do and who we are is directed to the worship of him and to the salvation of the souls: the joy found in the above.

The fact that I can live out my calling in ways that bring me peace and at the same time I know I am supported by my congregation mentally, physically, and spiritually.

The fact that I know I am doing the will of God.

The feeling of rightness in where I am. Joy and peace in prayer, community, ministry...

The focus on ministry/connectedness from spirituality/community life and mission.

The focus on the God-quest that permeates the personal, communal and ministry – all aspects of life – integration.

The focus on the spiritual journey, one's relationship with God – the ability to focus on what matters in my life – The freedom to focus my life around spiritual values and ministry – and to be with others with similar values.

The freedom and opportunity to grow in prayer and ministry.

The freedom I have to give my time to people in need. Whatever the ministry.

The freedom to finally respond to God's love with my whole heart.

The freedom to give myself to God and to be one in mind and heart with the members of my institute. The privilege to proclaim the Gospel message everyday with or without words.

The freedom to live an authentic Christian life in response to the call God has placed on my heart.

The freedom to live my faith fully and completely and in union with my sisters who also desire to live their faith fully and loving God completely.

The freedom to respond to the movement of God in my life, and the support I receive from my congregation in that regard. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as a sister in this congregation.

The freedom to serve God's people!

The gift to serve my Lord in serving others to show Him my love in loving others – especially the sick and dying. And the gift of faith – I know this is His will.

The giving of myself in serving my sisters.

The God quest – service to others.

The greatest gift of my religious life is that I am a visible witness and that I call to mind the presence of God when people see me. I have had many opportunities to share in experiences with people because they share their struggles, hopes, and dreams with me because I have been blessed to have this awesome vocation.

The happiness and joy of the people we serve. The complete give of yourself for the good of others.

The honesty with which one is confronted when truly searching for the Will of God, which provides daily opportunity for growth in holiness. Also, the structure of the religious community and its growth continually affirms the truth of our faith and fidelity.

The human-ness of all the sisters. They are genuine!

The hundredfold love and support shown to me as a religious.

The idea of community, purpose and sharing. The feeling of acceptance and understanding as we live our faith and desire to be closer to God.

The immense possibility and the devotion to a life with and for God in service to my neighbors and community.

The internationality of our Congregation.

The intimacy with my Spouse. Religious community life in common. Mission and those we serve.

The journey of sacred Spirit as a human person in this society.

The journey with Jesus and community.

The joy of doing God's will in loving service in community.

The knowledge and experience of sharing this journey with a community who supports me but also is willing to challenge me when needed out of love.

The knowledge that all is not for nothing – all of my trials and sufferings bring about a greater good. The self-knowledge of discovering who God has created and desired me to be, even in all of my weaknesses and short-comings.

The knowledge that I am totally consecrated to God. That He has given to me the gift to live my life totally with Him and to walk through this world as a witness to His existence, His love, and His power to transform us.

The knowledge that whatever I do, even the most simple I do not do it alone. His ever present presence is there. Doing everything for God, with Him, in Him.

The Liturgy of the Hours together every day – the great relationships I've formed with many sisters – the opportunity to learn, grow, develop – my ever deepening relationship with God.

The love and support and encouragement to growth (also a challenge)...the ability to minister to other people and meet God in them...the ability to be free to respond to God's call...to have time and space for prayer...to afforded opportunities to meet and know people (sisters and others) of all backgrounds.

The love of God and I am able to share freely to the young and others this love.

The Love of God in the Eucharist, in the prayers, in my sisters, in my patients, in myself. To be able to serve God with what I am and I do.

The love of God that trusts us and is ever faithful, the fact that the Holy Spirit works through all our fragility and His will is fulfilled no matter what and is so good.

The many blessings the Lord entrusts to us each day. Community life.

The many forms of “built-in” spiritual nourishment.

The many opportunities every day to learn more about my faith, to pray, and to spend time in intimate union with the Lord.

The most rewarding aspect about religious life is Jesus’ availability to me and me to Him 24/7.

The most rewarding aspect of religious life for me right now is the community life. I truly appreciate living and sharing my faith with my sisters. I am so grateful for their support and encouragement and it is life-giving to me to be a support to them. I love my sisters!

The most rewarding aspect of religious life is belonging to Jesus. In experiencing covenantal love, it becomes easier to share that love with others. It is very important to me to exercise the Works of Mercy. In caring for the elderly poor, there are numerous occasions to follow Jesus’ example of being a servant to others, of washing their feet and bringing them healing through words and actions. Prayer life enables me to see Jesus, not only in the tabernacle, but in others and those I serve as well. Living the evangelical counsels is a support, but more often a challenge since the community has changed tremendously over the past 15 years due to an increased median age and a decrease in the number of vocations.

The most rewarding is making present the reality of heaven here on earth. Through faithful religious life and the support and means to be supportive of others in my community.

The most rewarding or satisfying about religious life is the freedom to express Jesus’ love to all.

The most rewarding part is the opportunity to publicly dedicate myself to a life of prayer and to my relationship with Jesus Christ and to see how my dedication to that relationship shapes my life and work with my community and with my work.

The most rewarding thing about religious life is to see how much God can do through our efforts. It is those moments when He lets you glimpse the promised 200 fold.

The most rewarding thing is having God as the center and staying faithful to that calling and also committing my life to other women who want to live the same calling.

The most rewarding things I find in religious life are times spent with Jesus, both in the Sacraments and in studies, and easily approaching and helping others – any time and place.

The ongoing commitment to grow in our relationship with God is something we share and it influences our lives in ways that are sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious, but it colors every aspect of our lives and that is very rewarding.

The on-going growth that I have experienced, which in turn enables me to help others come to wholeness; the depth of relationships that I have been called to with my community and through it.

The ongoing intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through my life of prayer and service with a loving and joyful community.

The opportunities for spiritual and personal development in the context of others who share in a common vision. And a sense of “sisterhood.”

The opportunities for spiritual growth and the chance to live and work with others toward a common goal.

The opportunities to love God with all my being every moment of my life, uniting myself to His Holy Will for his greater glory and salvation of the world.

The opportunity for communal liturgy of the hours. The daily Eucharist. Ministering in my profession as a sister and being a witness. Relationships with some other members of this house.

The opportunity for prayer, time for spiritual renewal, our ministry especially as a spiritual director. I am also pleased with deep friendships with sisters of a wide variety of ages.

The opportunity to be associated closely with so many good women who share my values and support me spiritually. Being part of a community. Being part of something that is doing so much good in the world. Being part of a group that embraces and lives some very counter cultural values.

The opportunity to be part of something larger than myself. The sense that I am responding to God’s call in my life. Sharing the dailiness of life with other women who are also seeking God. Our witness to another way of life in our over-sexed, consumerist, individualistic culture.

The opportunity to be supported on my God quest and to engage in ministry with other women who share my values and desires. To be part of ministry that is larger than myself.

The opportunity to bring others closer to personal fulfillment through a relationship with Christ and the Church. Living a community life, and prayerful life that brings out the essence of who I am called to be in God.

The opportunity to deepening my relationship with God and to be able to serve God's people.

The opportunity to go where God is inviting me to be because I have the support of the wider community and I am not alone. I walk with other women wanting to live the Gospel Message.

The opportunity to live with Sisters from other cultures, different backgrounds, and personalities. And to be able to go beyond those differences to share our love and faith for God. From this experience to “go out” to serve God’s people wherever we are sent.

The opportunity to practice and grow in my relationship with God.

The opportunity to serve Christ in the person of the poor and to be supported in that perspective.

The opportunity to share life and ministry with others. The sense that I am part of a bigger whole.

The opportunity to witness a person's last breath on earth; just like Mary at the Foot of the Cross. There is so much to learn from suffering, you realize that this world is so temporary. I think young people don't realize that until you are faced with death, someone dying. And also the fact that in each convent we have a chapel where I can go visit Jesus anytime.

The opportunity to journey with God's People as one among them – the privilege of being allowed into people's lives – trusted to care as Christ (deeply humbling). The gift of being in community – part of something greater than myself. The opportunity to orient my life around one central relationship: with God.

The peace and contentment I feel internally. I don't have to worry about "things" or "ways" of the world. I am able to concentrate my time and effort on what really matters; my relationship with God and doing all I can to help others know the love and care of God for them. Our simple life is so much easier to live.

The peace and joy that is inherent in doing God's will. I also know that there is always the opportunity to grow, to become more who I am called to be and that my community will always support me in the process.

The peace of knowing I am doing God's will.

The peace of knowing I am doing God's will.

The peace that comes in doing His will.

The people I have an opportunity to know in community as well as met in ministry and the unique relationship our Lord calls us to as religious.

The personal growth I've acquired through sharing life in community.

1. The possibility to grow past any expectation – to grow naturally, spiritually, emotionally; to grow in self-understanding that blossoms into a deeper understanding of God and humanity. All of this is possible because of our life in common. 2. The support of the sisters – even though I am not always sure we understand each other. 3. The fact that complete strangers find in me a promise of prayer – and this because I am identifiable by my habit.

The prayer in community and the opportunities for spiritual growth. The possibility to make a difference in the world as a group which you can't do alone (Congregation's charism and mission). Living with other people (other women who love similar interests and desires to live a life of prayer and service to those in need). Lifestyle of simplicity, prayer, and service to others.

The prayer life and focus on continuing growth (spiritually, intellectually and socially).

The prayer life is the most rewarding. Community and solitary prayer.

The prayer life is what I find most rewarding and satisfying because it takes work and when it works it works well.

The prayer life.

The public commitment to God, Church and congregation of vows, working in ministry with others, and living community with others who have same desire to serve the poor. The Franciscan way of life!

The quiet, prayer life, having the time to learn more of my faith. Having others in community, which is a corporate apostolate(s).

The radical focus in growing to become what we are called to become. Other Christs at the service of the poor.

The reality of the hundredfold Christ promises to those who are willing to leave all to follow Him. This hundredfold takes many forms, including a deep peace and joy.

The reality that I am the Spouse of Jesus and my growing in perfection just by my life as a religious and my intimate relationship with Jesus.

The relationship I have with my sisters in community and the context I have with the public. I love the prayer life knowing in some small way I am making a difference in someone's life. I am so happy to see that we care for our infirm sisters here at the monastery.

The relationship with God and spiritual growth. And personal growth.

The same as above.

The sense of belonging and being committed to God and the Church.

The sense of belonging in unconditional love and encouragement to authentically be who I am. Kindness and love are key virtues along with hospitality.

The sense of belonging to God. The experience of His beauty, tenderness, mercy, unconditional love that moves me to do everything possible to encourage others to know God, Jesus, for them to experience the same I do and be truly happy, free from what keeps them away from Him.

The sense of community – the communal prayer – the esprit de coeur.

The sense of doing God's work, with a group of dedicated women. A good prayer life with others is also satisfying. Knowing that I am living out my vows in a counter-cultural world.

The sense that I am doing what God calls me to and ministry to others – life of service.

The sense that this is who I have been called to be before God.

The simplicity and community life of my congregation.

The spiritual component, followed by community life and ministry.

The spirituality and prayer life.

The spirituality of the institute.

The stabilizing influence of liturgy and prayer life, and the freedom that comes from really trying to live the vows (not without struggle). Also, the amazing things that can happen when the community comes together.

The structure of community prayer, time for personal prayer, and the ministry I am doing this year.

The support (support we are to each other to best serve the mission) to focus on spiritual growth (including ministry, service, hospitality, etc.).

The support and example of joyful growth in virtue and holiness and love of God's people.

The support I have from my sisters. Their wisdom in leading me to God. Their ability to assist me in seeing the Divine in those I minister with and to.

The support I receive that enables me to reach my fullest possible potential.

The support of the community – spiritually, emotionally, etc. How it liberates me to minister to anyone, anywhere – with my complete heart and soul.

The support of the community. Invitation to live new challenges. The prayer life.

The support that I receive in living out my vocation and in striving for holiness, and the opportunity to offer that same support to others. Working in the Lord's Vineyard for His honor and glory, and not for my own advancement in material goods or possessions.

The support.

The supportive community members; serving as a Church representative.

The thing I don't think I could ever part with is having our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament within our home. Any time of day I can make a little pilgrimage there to be with Him. Being with those who are dying, seeing them receive all the graces necessary to meet Him face to face is a

call in the model of Mary at the foot of the cross. A call that brings an awareness of one's unworthiness, but gratitude for God's great love.

The time of prayer. Sharing with the sisters – spiritual experience.

The times of prayer, my community life. Working with the dying.

The unique call by Christ to enter into a relationship with Him through the profession of the vows: to be His Bride and to model Mary and the Church. In addition, living in community and having a rich prayer life and serving the Church through the Apostolate of teaching. I love it all!

The vast network of unique women all journeying on the same path to know and love God more each day. There is always someone to discuss any variety of issues with who are willing to talk.

The vows – as a mode of living out the charism and mission in relationship with others – being accountable and interdependent to one another in order to do what we're called to – live out of the Gospel. Living the vows in this time, balancing spirituality and theology and applying it to daily life – in community with others whom we serve and minister with.

The way people share their needs with you asking for prayers. It is very humbling.

The wide variety of opportunities for service and the different possibilities for community life.

The women I live, work and pray with are incredible. I can't say I am the model religious but one comment that students, faculty and others say about me is that I "am real." I love my community, my Church, my ministry – community and faith sharing are very important to me.

The women who commit to share their faith and service to the poor serve as inspiration and support in my work with the uninsured.

There are so many things that I have come to value in my very young religious life: community life, prayer, our apostolate in education, our history. Most of all it is the witness I am able to give with my life. When someone sees me they are reminded of faith and of God's great love for them.

There is a reverence for space needed for communal and personal prayer.

This is the lifestyle that fits who God is calling me to be. I love our charism – especially as I have learned about it and I lived it these years.

Through this institute, in this lifestyle I believe I am growing into my most authentic self. I am called to accountability for this in the group.

The fact that I have enough time to pray, especially assisting in the Holy Eucharist everyday, that I live in a community where I am loved, cared for and accepted for who I am and I can offer something to the Church.

Time and space's respect for prayer – individual and communal. Strength or solidarity for a challenging ministry. Giving life to an ancient tradition in the Church.

Time for prayer – time for meditation is in the daily schedule. Living with women who have the same purpose.

Time to develop relationships, first of all, with God and then with others. You didn't ask about contemplation, but it is a vital part of my life!

To ability to serve and love God wholeheartedly – to give myself to God in community and in prayer and to take that to the people of God and serve them.

To adore Jesus daily in the Eucharist celebration and to seek the salvation of self and others.

To be able to share in all aspects of community living.

To be concerned with the one thing necessary.

To belong completely to Christ is such a joy; a joy that nothing could ever take away!

To experience the joy of daily Eucharist, having a chapel with the Blessed Sacrament. Having a shared vision with my sisters. Ongoing formation. Seeing new members enter and profess vows. The gift and grace of perseverance.

To give my life to God in serving my brothers and sisters in need.

1. To give our life to help the needy and make them happy – I'm more happy and rewarded. 2. To give up money. I have a very satisfying life.

To grow in the spiritual life (our relationship with Christ) and the assurance that He is guiding your life if you are open to Him (through your superiors).

To have the firm conviction that there is nothing small in religious life if we do everything for love of God, and the infinite graces of God which have helped me to overcome difficulties, to accept them and to offer them to the Father, and to persevere in my beautiful vocation as a Little Sister of the Poor.

To see God's powerful presence and love come through members – religious lives when they truly allow God's grace to come through them to reach others.

To see the faith on people's heart and able to help them in difficulties.

To share my gifts and talents and to be the best person that I could.

Together, we, as community, can have a greater impact in people's lives than I could have as an individual!

Total commitment and belonging to Christ, completely at His service.

Total gift of self to God for service of the poor. Living the evangelical counsels, chastity, poverty, obedience.

Total gifts of self to God that cannot otherwise be given with this calling.

Totally consecrated to God-everything is for Him and for salvation of souls.

Truly it is inexpressable. I am so at peace even when there are challenges and difficulties. I suppose the most satisfying aspect could be simply stated as community. To elaborate, I would say I have the knowledge and guidance of all the sisters before me. I have sisters praying deeply when I can not and I pray deeply when they can't. It is knowing that we all strive for holiness together. There is so much and my space too limited.

Two of the most rewarding/satisfying things about religious life are: 1. knowing that I am doing God's will – that this is what He wants of me, 2. fraternal life in community.

Union with God through prayer with the community and personal prayer, as well as working for Christ in the apostolate.

Union with God. Cooperating with God's graces and trying each day to be in a state of grace by frequenting the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist.

Union with God. Good relationships with humanity and the universe.

United with others in service to God for the greater good.

Uniting sufferings to the cross of my spouse. Being united to my sisters through Sacraments and community life.

Unity of prayer, community and mission.

Using talents to be of service to others. Opportunity for prayer in community.

Various ministries that I have been involved in and knowing that I made a difference in people's lives through education and health care for the uninsured.

Vision and faith of community, challenge to be the best person I can be.

We all have the same goal, and can help one another, because through our Rule and Constitutions, we know God's will for us.

We are able to help so many people in their spiritual and physical poverty. I find joy in being God's hands here on earth for Him.

We are all in this together. The same vision/mission.

We are called to serve in the simple and the profound but we never know which is which. Just being able to participate in God's work, love, and plan is challenging, rewarding and humbling.

We are very hospitable. We love each other and that shows in our prayer and in our ministry and in our outreach to others.

We share Gospel values of peace and justice and the Vatican II Church – this is rewarding and satisfying. We are committed to prayer both personal and communal.

Wearing a habit and being stopped and thanked for “being visible”; the ability to reach out to others and help them in their needs; my close and growing relationship to Christ in prayer and through my community.

What I have been able to do as a religious – learn – grow – have TIME to do the things I have done. Time to pray and grow spiritually.

What is most satisfying to me as a religious is knowing that I am doing God's will! Also hopefully leading others to God's great love and mercy!

When community life is at its best I find it very rewarding. It takes a great deal of work on everyone's part. I especially find shared prayer (including faith-sharing) to be life-giving.

When community works it shines God's joy. The opportunity to teach and care for God's children in a way only made possible in religious life.

When I can make people happy by my touching actions.

When I come home after ministry and I pray with my sisters, when I share life and God and food with them.

When we fully recognize that what we do is not a job but who and what we are, and our way of life is a gift of ourselves to the Church. When we have lived fully our founding principles.

With these other consecrated women, I am spending myself for the salvation of souls.

Working and praying together to make a world in which love, truth, and justice is a reality not just a theological concept. I feel my congregation strives to live intentionally the Gospel values we profess – I think we live with integrity and authenticity in as much as we understand it individually as well as collectively.

Working for common good with group of supportive women.

Working for justice and acting for peace in the context of a community dedicated to serving God and God's people.

Working together to accomplish something valuable that I could not do alone.

Working towards a common vision. Mutual support. Being encouraged to use my gifts and talents in community and ministry.

Working with the inner city community.

Working with the people in a parish-sometimes presenting the Body of Christ to the Body of Christ.

Working with the sisters in my community to serve the needs of others.

(Wow! What a question!) The clear commitment to God and the freedom that the life allows to pray, serve, love, commune and be.

You are privileged to see God's grace transforming lives, miracles every day in the lives of those we serve.

### ***Contemplative Men***

A touch of God's finger. Taste and see, how good the Lord is – Happy the men who take refuge in Him (Ps 33:9). They who eat me (wisdom) and will hunger for more. They who drink me will thirst for more (Si 24:21 &29).

Being committed to the Gospel.

Call to personal and communal prayer – As stated in rule of life and constitutions of the order.

Focus on prayer, both communal and individual.

I feel I have improved as a person and have drawn closer to God.

I strongly believe that I am in the will of God for me, for the Church. It is God's life invitation for me and I accepted it and try to live it the best I can, with what I am and have.

Mutual reinforcement on a path.

Our people on retreat. Some say after a week it has changed their lives.

Our prayer life (about 5 or 5.5 hours community prayer and private prayer made). Wearing the habit constantly, community exercises, hospitality, and spiritual comfort for guests, and the “sense” of our Lord’s constant presence in everything.

Regular common prayer as focus: Monastic life gives me the structure I seek in order to give praise and worship to Christ. In an active order, this is not as stable, because the focus is more on outside apostolates.

Serving as a witness to eternal and ultimate realities and sharing the fruits of contemplative life with fellow spiritual (lay) seekers.

Sharing in “the common life” of a community...work, liturgy and *lectio divina* – together. “Witnessing” to the world in a special way...The prayer life...the counter cultural rhythm and value of life. The challenge to grow in faith, hope and love...and experiencing growth in myself and others.

Silence and solitude.

The continuing challenges to grow both spiritually and as a human being.

The prayer and support of the community for prayer.

The sense that I am growing both humanly and spiritually.

The support and challenge provided by like minded people.

To be looking for another contemplative experience.

### ***Contemplative Women***

A life for God; a life to be God’s lover as He is to us. In service for others just as He lived his life.

A life of prayer and being alone with God in the midst of a community.

Availability of Eucharistic Adoration

Availability to God in prayer

Being a bride of Christ; and being surrounded by sisters who share my own goals and ideals.

Being a spouse of Christ. Also, joyful community life.

Being at peace knowing that I am doing God's will and having the support of my sisters.

Belonging entirely to Jesus.

Both # 188 and 190

Brideship in being the spouse of the son of God.

Community life and common liturgical prayer.

Community life, prayer, spiritual reading, schedule silence.

Connection with others who are intent on consciousness and assisting the world to awaken.

Contributing in service on a daily basis. Knowing that I can be truly available to serve others, to serve community and grow personally in love of God and neighbor.

Experiencing God's love and his presence, and uniting my daily activities with the intentions of Holy Mother Church are most rewarding and satisfying about my religious life.

Free from worldly cares to center my heart on God.

Growing more and more in union with my divine spouse and more clearly seeing His face in my sisters. Experiencing the freedom of my weakness and sinfulness; growing in my acceptance of the mystery that my life of prayer touches the whole world.

Having a sense of commitment and fulfilling God's will for my life.

Having our Lord for one's Spouse, and being (hopefully) an instrument of His grace and mercy.

I find deepening relationship with God most rewarding.

I find it very rewarding to know that I can be of service to the Church in a hidden apostolate. I

love being a bride of Christ and wearing the Holy Habit. I am also very pleased with all the opportunities for one to grow in the spiritual life.

I find living with a variety of women all striving for the same goal – to live a deep prayer life in the Church – most rewarding.

I find that living the life of a cloistered, contemplative poor soul and sharing these ideals with those with whom I live is most rewarding. We are all of one mind and heart in serving our Lord.

I firmly believe that this is God's will for me and I find great peace in that. Doing God's will, whatever it is, I find most satisfying. Otherwise I would have to say that it is the sacrifice for others, the self emptying that I find most satisfying.

I have the opportunity to do the will of God and be certain of His will for me.

I love my ministry of working with our elder sisters. The prayer life is enriching and I feel I have grown immensely in so many ways.

I love prayer – living with Jesus in the Eucharist – Adoration – being in service to the Church and people – my sisters make it satisfying.

I'm not there yet, although I participate in about 80% of life in the monastery.

Interior life and community life. Atmosphere of open to the Holy Spirit provides enormous personal growth which gives a huge witness of the power of God to all especially friends and family.

Intimate union with God.

Joy in the possession of God. Living life fully and truthfully and peacefully which comes from daily dedication to the Rule and routine.

Knowing that I am doing God's will through holy obedience. Knowing that I belong entirely to God alone.

Knowing that the monastic contemplative vocation is at the heart of the Church and that our life of prayer and sacrifice is at the service of the Church and the world.

Knowing that you are doing God's will and strengthening the Church at large through prayer and sacrifice.

Knowledge of my consecration to God. Entering more deeply into prayer and love of God. Interior freedom. Growing gradually in charity; service and self-knowledge.

Life of commitment. Liturgy/Eucharistic of Hours.

Life of prayer.

Living for God, giving myself to God totally for benefit of all people

My personal relation with my Spouse.

My satisfaction about religious life is the happiness and the feeling of simplicity, and humility.

My sisters.

Opportunity to live a life of ministry and prayer – the active/contemplative life.

Our apostolic work of intercessory prayer is a great responsibility but gives one a satisfying sense of mission and purpose. Contemplative religious life provides a total and very deep

grounding in the Paschal Mystery and supports development of a rich personal relationship with the person of Jesus. Community life keeps you honest, demanding that you make God's love present to your sisters. My former ministries kept me too focused on busy-ness and production. God called me to “waste” time in silence and prayer.

Our Eucharistic Adoration hour and all the prayer time we have before our Eucharistic Jesus as a community.

Prayer life – community – the intimacy you are able to cultivate with God. My focus is on God. My prayer is for God’s people. Prayer life and relationship with God which reaches out to the world in that mystical way only God knows. Serving my community.

Prayer life.

Prayer. Community life. Work, study

Praying the Divine Office and perpetual rosary, perpetual Adoration and living with Jesus Christ in our midst.

Promoting God’s kingdom here on earth.

Regular daily Eucharist and life in community. Support from my sisters.

Religious life is life lived immersed in God. Religious live in, with, and for God. As God is the sole desire of the human heart, He satisfies those who leave all to follow Him. God. God alone.

Saving souls and becoming closer to God.

Seeing God face to face, living heaven on earth. Heaven on earth is very real. I received a spiritual miracle after our annual retreat last June 2008, this being the 7th year since my monastic entrance. God “rewarded” me for my perseverance in sufferings/major trials despite apparent failures. Pope Benedict XVI's vision of a New Pentecost, a new springtime is being fulfilled, bearing fruit.

Simply being religious and belonging to Jesus as his bride a very united community and excellent superiors and sisters, the life of enclosure, doing God’s will for me, privilege of having the habit and vows.

Staying faithful and focused on the spiritual path as a human being. Putting much of my energy in God centeredness in my life.

That my whole be-ing is for God and my existence a praise of His glory. Our common life of prayer is a great gift/blessing.

That we as a community are here for anyone who needs our prayers. From feed back people let us know how happy they are that we are here and the great comfort they feel because of that.

The best part about this life is its closeness to Christ – indeed it becomes Christ’s life – in the solitude of the cloister, in the ordinary work, and most especially in the interior life, the obscurity of silence.

The Carmelite spirituality and the fact that our community is so much at the heart of the Church and the diocese.

The community life!

The daily Eucharistic Adoration. The life of prayer as a contemplative nun satisfying my calling. The small community where I experience more charity compared with the big community I was more than 800 sisters. Charity was very rare!

The hope that God can use my humble life of prayer to bring about good in the Church and world.

The joy and freedom that it brings.

The joy and support of the other members of the community, and our apostolate of being “behind the scenes” support for priests, (by our encouragement and the work of our hands). The liturgy beautifully and well executed also.

The knowledge that I am fulfilling the will of God for me. Since I love him I wish to do his will. Also life of prayer, spiritual formation.

The love of Jesus.

The most satisfying part of religious life is the being certain of God’s will through the superior.

The most satisfying thing about religious life is the intimacy experienced with our Lord. This intimacy comes from the true Spirit in deep personal prayer but also from communal vocal prayer (the Divine Office).

The opportunity for prayer in the silence of the day. The marvelous balance of prayer and work. Being in a young new religious community, I am continually strengthened and upheld by my fellow young sisters and by my Prioress. We live like a family, urging each other and seeking continual union with God in prayer. In this way, I really have a foretaste of heaven, a life united to God in communion with others. Though new, we are following a tried-and-true, timeless Rule, and continue monastic tradition.

The opportunity to grow in charity using my talents to serve the members of this monastery. The fidelity to our prayer ministry – liturgical and contemplative and the universal dimension of offering our lives for the salvation of all peoples.

The opportunity to say yes to God in an environment that encourages and supports you in that quest.

The peace and joy that comes from doing God's will each day through the gift of myself through the vows.

The personal and liturgical times of prayer. The presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the monastery.

The relationship with God. We have very good religious here but many are, I think, stunted in their emotional development because of when they entered (year and age) and formation that needed more depth.

The same as above plus human interest.

The simplicity – I know what comes next, I know what to wear...I'm freed from thinking, wondering about unimportant details.

The spiritual fulfillment, joys and freedom. Intimacy with God.

The support of praying and living together, working together. The support of each other.

The thought that through my sacrifice others may benefit and be brought to Christ.

Time for intimate relationships with God; time for that relationship to flow out to others in prayer and through spiritual direction, liturgy, and educational efforts.

To be able to live under the same roof of the Lord. Prayer is to the religious life what communication, sustained interaction, and mutual contemplation is to any committed relationship.

To be of one mind and one heart on the same journey in friendship with Jesus.

To be united with Jesus, doing God's will.

To do God's holy will.

Total self-giving for love of God and in reparation for sin and the salvation of all!

Union with Christ in the Eucharist – transformation into Christ for the whole body of Christ – giving witness to God's love and care for all.

Union with our Lord!

What I find most rewarding about this life is the fact that I can be completely God's and every moment of my day is with Him and for Him and united with Him I can help in the great work of redemption, bringing all people closer to Him.

Wholeness-body, soul, spirit (holiness). Union with God in the most holy Trinity through Jesus himself and my sisters, Eucharist, Scripture.

### *Unclassified Women*

Caring for retired and ill nuns.

Communal Prayer. Doing great work with great women who are committed to fullness of life for all people. Give and offer support – receive support from others – mutuality of life together challenge to grow into my God-given gifts – excellence in service – making lives better for those who are poor – even if one person at a time.

The example and support I receive from my fellow sisters is a focus for me as I pray to deepen my relationship with God.

The joy of whole-hearted service to Christ through evangelization in all aspects. Seeing Christ through the sisters and those to whom we minister.

The potential in the founding vision and gift of what possible as a consecrated religious woman.

### *Unclassified*

A loving living relationship with Jesus Christ.

Being involved in something larger than me, wider than family, tribal, national etc. ties were a few of the ideals that attracted me to religious life. While those have not diminished, the daily opportunity to go deeper beyond the beyond the face values of things and continue to prove rewarding in ministry, common life, family life, and personal prayer.

Community prayer life.

Doing God's will.

Franciscan charism, gathering together as community, shared prayer life, support, sharing of ideas and commitments.

Friendship. Brotherhood. Community.

Goal/focus that is bigger than any one person-mission accomplished by many.

God's love for me that I don't have to be afraid.

I truly believe that I was born to be in the religious life. Being able to fulfill God's plan is of utmost importance. The Lord has guided me along the path. He walks with me and I with him. He is my first and only love.

Intimate relationship with Jesus and the opportunity to live and give all my life to the service of others.

Joy that comes from saying yes to God's call and following His will and plan for your life. The daily challenge to grow in holiness.

Living in community with women with a common vision and not so set in our ways that we won't risk something new.

Living with women – who I can share my faith and values with, and that we are there for each other in both happy and sad times.

Ministry.

My relationship with the people, especially in the parish who have such a respect for religious.

Prayer life – practice of silence. Being a spouse of Christ. Living in Home of order with the Blessed Sacrament.

Prayer, community, challenge, religious identity, depth, joy happiness, well-being, peace, love, virtue, purity of heart, gospel values, beauty, concern for others/environment, simple lifestyle.

Praying and living as a Christian

Profound, meaningful, and spiritual friendships in community. Ministry experiences.

Support and care of older members.

Support for spiritual growth.

That I believe it's God's will for me; the benefits of a regular community life, of obedience, of enclosure; the opportunity for communal prayer (especially the Eucharist, the Divine Office) and personal prayer/reading of Scripture; perception of real spiritual growth since entrance (in myself), in love for God and others, in self-knowledge.

The fraternity and support to live openly a life dedicated to Christ and his people. The freedom to take risks.

The growth in my relationship with the Lord, and my service to people.

The ministries my institute are involved in.

The relationships formed – the friendships found – the growth in myself – prayer together.

To be able to devote myself more to God and neighbor.

We share the journey to God. Together we are more than each individual. I am not alone, in community I can be more than myself.

Working with the poor.

## **190. What do you find most challenging about religious life?**

The responses below are grouped by active men, active women, contemplative men, contemplative women, and those that could not be classified according to these categories.

### ***Active Men***

A certain mediocrity in the religious life; insufficient paying of attention to the signs of the times and unwillingness to be more prophetic. Besides, not having children of my own, and a woman with whom I could be not only spiritually but also physically intimate.

A daily living of our prayer life.

A disproportionate emphasis on social justice resulting in the neglect of other equally (or more) important aspects of the Christian life – prayer, a solid foundation in the teachings of the Church, etc. I find generational strains emerge surrounding these issues, in addition to our relationship with the larger universal Church. It seems like we often are fighting old battles and are hemorrhaging young Catholics as a result (direct or indirect).

A lukewarm attitude from those we work with! Some not supportive.

A monastery can be a difficult place to convert. We too can tend to pigeon-hole people. Some members have animosity toward our bishop who is a solid, strong shepherd...some prefer the milquetoast of the past decades.

Abuse scandal; obedience. I am in a “desk” job, mixed community. I live with several men 30 years or older than me.

Achieving zeal. Sometimes a zealous enterprise can be watered down by institutional inertia.

Again, community – biggest blessing, biggest curse! Trying to find common ways and express our sense of religious life.

Age gaps in province membership. Maintenance model leadership as a result of high numbers of retired members.

Aging and diminishment.

Always having to say goodbye.

Always striving to live the counsels.

Ambiguous common identity/communion with the Magisterium.

An inability of many members (including leadership) to address financial, cultural, and demographical issues within the community

Apostolic ministry.

Arbitrary confreres.

Articulating my needs and presenting myself more genuinely to all of the members of my community have been the most challenging parts of religious life.

As a younger community we have fewer older members so the witness value for following is hard to find inside and almost no witness value outside the community especially for male religious with strong community life, although many good individuals.

As much as the “day to day” can be rewarding, it can also become routine.

At the mission experiences.

At the same time, community life can be a challenge.

At times community can be tough. Also giving up “personal freedom.”

At times community life is a challenge to me. I need my quiet time and time to “recuperate” from being with people all day.

At times I do find myself lonely and at times find it challenging dealing with certain members.

At times, community life.

Attachment to the world, flesh, sin, and temptation to doubt and fear. Dealing with past wounds and “baggage.” American work-ethic and drive for perfection.

Attracting younger members to the community who are self initiates and live life passionately. Change in mentality from the “old guard” to allow younger members to take on leadership roles.

Balancing community life and ministry – demands on time. Keeping community prayer vibrant.

Balancing community life with the various cultures and personalities.

Balancing community, ministry, and personal needs.

Balancing everything; living with the tension among community life, prayer, study, and ministry without retreating into myself too much, seeking my own way only.

Balancing ministry with community life.

Balancing prayer with apostolic commitments.

Be faithful to my commitment as religious in this society.

Being “lumped in” with some of the more reactionary/punishing elements of the Church. The fact that not all members of my province are not so concerned about the vows of poverty/chastity.

Being “single.”

Being a public person – handling a public recognition and expectations of those I serve.

Being a public person. Tenuousness of institute’s future. Obligation to support Church teaching with which I do not agree.

Being able to do a good job while being a good monk. The demands (conflicting) on time and energy.

Being alone and moving repeatedly to different assignments. The politics in Church is frustrating. The traditional and liberal members are at odds with each other and both show favoritism to their group members.

Being alone without being lonely.

Being away from family! I am kind of just getting started but imagine the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience will all at times challenge me! Fraternal life = different personalities – looking at myself and acknowledging my many areas of weakness and strength! Perseverance = life long commitment = challenging!

Being counter cultural and a prophetic voice.

Being raised in an uncatechized generation and loving (but also hating) a decidedly “left leaning” order, there is no sense to our “religious priesthood.” In fact, it is pretty vacuous. There is very little reason for our order to ordain men, since there is nothing particularly priestly about our work. We would do just fine as brothers.

Being the youngest member is tough especially when most of the people I live with are 20 years older (and this is the “younger” house). Members in different generations other than mine don't always understand my generation's motivations.

Being transparent and coherent with the call.

Being true to the vows. Getting along well with my brother religious.

Brotherhood can also be a cross; our own sinfulness; unredeemed and unintegrated homosexual orientation and desires.

Busy schedules and lack of time together.

Busyness, difficult to say no.

Can be lonely at times.

Celibacy. Having become more developed in all aspects makes it tempting to want to share that with one person.

Celibacy – obedience.

Celibacy, community life, humility with obedience.

Celibacy, misplaced fear at decline, male competition.

Celibacy, stigma around Catholic priests in light of sex abuse scandals, long process of formation, counter-cultural lifestyle and values.

Celibacy.

Celibacy.

Celibacy.

Celibacy. Diminishment and abandonment.

Celibacy. Living with people you don't get along with.

Challenging prayer life. Sometimes, some challenging personalities to deal with.

Change and reform from within. Maintaining harmony as a celibate.

Chastity and community.

Chastity and the forming of one's life to the complete mirroring of the Gospel mandates. Love is difficult.

Chastity and the maintenance of fulfilling but appropriate relationships in and out of community life.

Chastity. The lack of a lot of vocations to priesthood and religious life. The lack of fidelity of certain members of my institute to the Church and Church teaching. The relatively small number of men my age.

Coming to see how many in religious life are truly damaged and wounded, and how to live in the midst of this. There is a lot that is unhealthy about this life, if lived poorly it can lead to deep loneliness and addictions, and I have come to see this up close.

Common life with its disappointments and annoyances; a certain lack of observance, and dissent. Personally on-going struggle with prayer.

Common life, it's saving my soul.

Common vision. Contemporary incarnation of the charism.

Communal living.

Communal prayer and living.

Community – brothers have sometimes different understanding of things; like living singly, etc.

Community – prayer.

Community and celibacy.

Community and charity

Community and some aspects of decision making process in community.

Community can also be a challenge. At times can get lonely.

Community is both the grace and the challenge. How to be authentic and engaged in the life of the community as best as possible. I would also add living the vowed life in our current culture has its challenges at times.

Community leadership, the seemingly lack of commitment towards vocations and the future, and the further lack of support towards the above of the leadership to encourage prayer, new members and the programs for ongoing formation.

Community life – it brings the best and worst out of you.

Community life (i.e., restricted to follow call within a call – low adaptability/support for extra works that are needed and are consisted with charism).

Community life (yes, same as above).

Community life and common prayer.

Community life and growing deeper in relationship with my brothers. It is often lonely.

Community life and prayer. The growing conservatism among our younger members.

Community life and the invitation to constantly live for Jesus and not for ourself.

Community life at times, culture shock.

Community life dynamics.

Community life is the best and the most challenging part of religious life. The guys I live with force me to be humble, to face my own demons, and how to communicate in a healthy way.

Community life with old brothers.

Community life!

Community life, how to remain prophetic

Community life, leadership/“infantilization” of formation.

Community life, ministry in dangerous places, non traditional ministries.

Community life, which is also the most rewarding, however.

Community life.

Community life. Activism. Lack of rest. Discerning whether new horizons of apostolates are part of our charism and mission. If some ministries have no precedents, and you are a new order, you may think an apostolate is not a part of your mission or charism but at the same time you know that your charism has not yet unfolded or is only beginning to unfold its nature and character.

Community life. Maintaining friendships/relationships inside and outside the order.

Community life. Three vows.

Community life/lack thereof. Celibacy.

Community life/structure of formation, which is often based on power hierarchy.

Community life-dialogue.

Community members and communal decisions when no input is asked of us members of the community.

Community prayer life is minimal; I also live with many older members.

Community! The same thing that attracts and give me life also helps me enhance the community. It is funny how that works. Augustine wisely uses throughout the rule the “each according to need,” which shows the diversity of community life (as well as idiosyncracies of personalities).

Community, secularism.

Community.

Community.

Community.

Community.

Community.

Community.

Community.

Community. Different outlooks/perspectives regarding mission and ministry.

Community. Formation process at my age. Infantilization of novitiate.

Community...we are one big loving and “normally dysfunctional” family. I enjoy a good challenge.

Conservative nature of younger members who don't take the time to learn about our particular life and focus on some non-existent “ideal.” Decrease in vocations which greatly impacts our works.

Constant moving from one city/state to another (almost every 3 years for me). Diminishing membership and withdrawing from current ministry.

Constantly striving to go deeper in holiness and the continual battle against sin and temptation.

Continually striving for independence. Intimacy.

Conversion! Learning to live with and love others!

Critical Brothers. Brothers who have given up prayer. My own selfishness.

Cultural diversity, communal living.

Currently, I live alone – I'd prefer not to be. On a more ongoing basis, I sometimes wonder if I will be “the last one”; other than a young man who recently entered our formation program, I am the youngest member of my province and I'm not that young!

Daily self-dying.

Dealing with disillusionment and sense of weariness on part of many community members. Morale is not as good as it could be – and we need to deepen our sense of “corporate” identity.

Dealing with legalists and those who use terms like “Holy Mother Church.”

Dealing with my own and others' psychological problems.

Dealing with negativity, self-focussedness, laziness, etc. that can manifest itself within community life.

Dealing with non-believers and with people from other Christian denominations who are stubborn and unfriendly.

Dealing with others who have very different expectations of what our life should be like.

Dealing with personalities of community members.

Dealing with pettiness, negativity, shallowness and fakeness in others. My own struggles and failures to grow in holiness. Times of feeling ineffectual, useless, overwhelmed, and unappreciated. Struggles with vows especially obedience and chastity.

Declining numbers of men joining.

Demands of ministry (time-wise) can take toll on the time for prayer and community – But we do fairly well nonetheless.

Despite all of the talk about how my institute is “one big happy family” the fact is that we are a very divided community. The fact that many leaders do not welcome discussion that questions their fidelity to the Church's teachings and seemed more interested in enjoying their self-indulgent life styles rather than serving it and the people of God, is quite disturbing.

Differences between members, especially when living with a member who wants to control others very much.

Differences in views within the community about what our life should look like.

Different attitudes toward Church/ecclesiology.

Differing sexual orientations and how this affects community dynamics and relationships; also abuse scandal.

Differing views on our future.

Difficult people to live with. Loneliness at times.

Diminishing personnel and financial resources which threaten our existence.

Discerning my future ministry in context of what superiors want or need due to reduced numbers.

Disparity between views of the younger students to those of their superior and professors (over 50 years usually). Anti-clerical movements among religious of my own Institute and others who make me feel guilty about wanting to be a priest. Hostile attitudes of my older brothers who judge me before they get to know me.

Disparity of lifestyle. "Poverty" is lived at very different levels in our institute.

Dispersal of peers, small local community/house, growing clericalism.

Disunity among members. Lack of vision. Age disparity (few young members).

Diversity of age, personality and interpretation of the very ideals we hold/value in common.

Divisions among us over the Church, ethics, common prayers...Fewer younger men close to my age, in community...Living celibacy in our culture and finding real conversation and support and prayer together in that regard, except with just a few Jesuit friends...My own need of on-going conversion of my heart to live in the Heart of Jesus!

Divisions within communities, lack of unified corporate identity, tensions about religious dress and manner of life.

Dying to self, living with imperfect people like myself.

Dying to self.

Dysfunctional members.

Earning back trust after the sex abuse crisis. Dealing with people's projected hurts with God or the Church.

Enriching the spiritual life.

Every once in a while, the idea of having a wife and children comes by. It does not last for long, and I am glad I have those thoughts.

Facing individualism and internal politics of the institute and the church.

Faithfulness to my vows.

Fasting and fraternity.

Feeling somewhat separated from those who aren't religious (laity), and in some sense always being expected to have religious/spiritual answers and to live perfect life of holiness (mostly from people beyond the community, though that expectation is found within as well...maybe that is a good thing though!)

Few members my age (relative to overall population of my order).

Few peers my age.

Fewer ordained ministers.

Finding brothers to really challenge me to grow in holiness.

Finding the balance between prayer, work, community life. There are many demands and requests and it is easy to become overwhelmed or burnt-out. Learning to say “no” is difficult as well as discerning what is the best use of my time and energy within the framework of the overall mission of the Society of Jesus.

Finding time to invest in friendships with community members; to interconnect, “link” our individual ministries into a common vision.

“Fishbowl” atmosphere where every move you make, or word uttered is under a microscope. Perceived perversion of Catholic priest due to scandals/celebrity – held by most of general population.

Focusing on the contemporary needs of the Church and world while being true to our Institute.

Formation (initial) – not being treated as an adult.

Formation and community leadership.

Forming friendships with community members.

Fraternal life.

Fraternal life/on-going formation.

Fraternal living and staying liberated from worldly allurements.

Fraternity – prayer – serving people. Walking the talk.

Fraternity!

Frequent moves – letting go of connections and establishing new ones on a regular basis...

Frequent moves.

Gap between rhetoric and reality – especially regarding community life – the impossible to speak of yet ever present tension between straight and gay members in part.

Generational differences, institutional inertia, moral decadence, laxity, middle class lifestyles, noise, irreverence, self-congratulatory institutional attitude.

Generational gaps between younger members and middle-aged or older members. On issues of religious identity, dress, community life, etc.

Getting brothers to find group prayer and Eucharist as a value – (priority).

Getting help and collaborating with others in ministry.

Giving myself fully and unreservedly to community life is a challenge. Obviously community life (I live with eight other friars) does not allow me to escape the messiness of human life altogether; since this is where charity and self-sacrifice are called for. This is sometimes tough in our pull toward INDIVIDUALISM.

Having the patience to take the time to properly develop a more comprehensive world view, and the patience to grow into the Capuchin form of spirituality.

How broken our world and all of us are. How broken the brothers and the people of the Church are. How unfaithful Catholics are. How difficult it is to maintain the proper perspective and balance amid the difficult work and turmoil and distractions.

How to live in community; How to open my heart to my brothers; How to be a religious man in these times.

I am 40 years old and I have been in final profession of vows for four years. I understand and even have a desire for more intentional religious life. This means a solid community prayer life.

It also may mean we embrace our traditions such as wearing the habit again. The problem is religious who are in their 60s are resisting the change. They hold onto ideologies instead of our religious traditions and beliefs. The millennials are challenging us to renewal, possibly even reform but the religious formed in the 1960s and 70s are resisting.

I am a very hard worker, but not always so good at prayer, especially personal prayer. Currently,

I'm in doctoral studies away from Holy Cross, and it is very difficult to be apart from my Holy Cross family.

I am most disedified by members who lack a strong commitment to common life and to the Church and her Magisterium.

I do not like seeing the low morale of men when we have a man in leadership who is not cut out for the ministry.

I find adjusting to life in a different part of the country sometimes leads me to feel separate from the others. This is not unique to me. People who are from south Louisiana do experience greater difficulty adjusting to new surroundings. Culturally we are different.

I find challenging the lack of personnel to do the work we need to do.

I find community life and being without a family of wife and kids most challenging.

I find I am very lonely at times and feel as if I am giving so much, yet not getting some of my needs met. These needs include affection and esteem.

I find most challenging a seeming lack of zeal and excitement about the religious vocation, the sacraments, and the vision of life that Christ, especially through the Church, offers; I see this in a significant group of my peers, especially middle-aged to older members of my institute.

I find most challenging about religious life is being a sign of God's presence in our society today, the promotion of religious life and witness to the growth, and the promotion of the Gospel values to our society in general.

I find personality clashes can be trying.

I have to be mindful to stay in God's presence as I go from task to task throughout the day. To remind myself to live out of a center of humility.

I think it's a huge struggle to find peers. Those that are my peers in the province do not live near me. We don't live in a culture that readily accepts and promotes religious vocation. I feel self-conscious about that.

I wish we had more brothers (lay or ordained).

I, for the time being, find our province communal witness troubling, especially with respect to poverty and option for the poor. I love Hispanic ministry, and we are reducing our commitment.

I'm the youngest and only member of a minority group in the U.S. Likewise, there is a lot of uncertainty about my future work in the congregation.

Ideological quarreling in the Church. This does not create major problems in the community but one still feels the tension.

In Canada/U.S., I find we are in a period of diminishment in terms of manpower – this I can accept. What I find difficult is the sluggishness with which we adapt to this reality in our vision. We seem to go about our business with minimal foresight to changing structures, expectations, etc. My sense is, with a majority of our men over 60 years of age, they are in a period of life where they want to continue and complete what they are settled in. This creates an environment of status quo maintenance as opposed to innovation so we collectively are more interested in maintaining present structures than renewing them. Thank you.

In this day and age I certainly don't suggest at all that some kind of "perfect world" is possible – and, looking for it would be the wrong reason to enter religious life. However, that being said, the biggest challenge I find in RL today is that there are simply too many "options;" everything is negotiable – or so it seems. What are the "essentials"? The documents may be there, but too often they are simply not part of the lived experience. I don't think it's a secret to anyone that in some communities, life-styles, expense accounts, perks, etc., are far beyond what would be permitted in most secular "business agreements." We need to be more honest in the way we present ourselves to those who truly feel called to a life of service to the Church as a consecrated religious. I don't think job security with up-scale room and board attracts many authentic vocations today.

Individualism, secularism.

Individualism.

Insularity among some North American members. Lack of options for living arrangements. The majority of members being elderly.

Integrating religious life with an affirming sense of mission. Its prophetic mission and making this gift more real. Inculturating our charism/mission in ministry.

Intergenerational awkwardness around issues of identity. Lack of real conversation that will lead to a decision.

Intergenerational issues such as loyalty to the Church, orthodoxy, seriousness about living the vows, commitment to common life...etc. I find this lacking in many members older than 40 in my community.

Interpersonal conflicts in community life.

It can be a lonely life.

It is difficult at times to balance the many facets of religious life: ministry, prayer, personal time.

I feel I am pulled in many directions. It can also be hard to find a "peer group" in community as

I live with mostly older men and find it difficult to relate to their formation and experiences.

It seems to have a decreasing relevancy to most people, including Catholics.

Lack of clear mission.

Lack of commitment to the overall psycho-sexual health of its members.

Lack of community. Lack of global awareness. Lack of energy or social conscience.

Lack of independence.

Lack of interest or availability for fellowship with my community members or other religious.

Lack of support for vocation of brotherhood.

Lack of leadership (both formal and informal).

Lack of mission and too much ministry. Ministry is being used as a cover up. Too many men living “alternate” lifestyles – not adhering to vows especially poverty and celibacy. If I challenge this I'll be an outcast. “Don't rock the boat!”

Lack of nourishing community life. That is, I don't find as much emotional support from my communities as I'd like.

Lack of overt fidelity to Magisterium.

Lack of poverty.

Lack of religious identity (i.e., dress/habit), style of liturgies.

Lack of sleep.

Lack of spiritual growth opportunities.

Lack of support and common vision among members of my institute – i.e, we don't share same values, attitudes toward the Church.

Leadership is often lacking or weak. Sometimes I see no vision by provincials. Some rectors have been terrible.

Leadership that is not pastoral. If my leadership were the pastor of my parish I would find a new parish.

Leadership, lack of collegiality between membership and leadership.

Learning to adapt with each other to changing personal interests, changing personnel (age, transfers, etc.) and changing needs of the Church.

Learning to live with different cultures and languages. Learning how to live my ideals in contemporary settings. Adopt new way of life style.

Learning to live with other people. Feeling that we don't live and act as-saints in accord with the ideals of our founder-and waiting to be better.

Less frequent contact with family and friends, especially during the holidays; disciplined personal prayer life.

Letting go. Not being attached to persons and /or things.

Life without a family/spouse. Living the vows with integrity, responding to pedophilic/abuse crisis.

Limits my availability to family and friends. I like to keep up my relationships outside the community, but being together most nights for prayer, dinner is a value for us.

Little time alone. Little time to get away.

Living a life that is credible and serves as a positive force within the Church.

Living among many, the challenge of transition.

Living and working in the same location.

Living as a countercultural witness through the evangelical councils (especially poverty where there are so many interpretations of its practice). Frequent lack of peers.

Living in a large community with so many different personalities and dispositions.

Living in community – it is also a blessing. Living in obedience, i.e., being 45 years old and having to ask for permission.

Living in community – some of these guys don't belong here! Tolerating new members who obviously don't have a vocation and they disrupt the peace and quiet of community – they are often silly and immature.

Living in community can be difficult at times due to the variety of personalities. However at other times this is a rewarding experience that helps me get through the difficult times.

Living in community for day to day household things, i.e., cooking, cleaning, yard work.

Living in community where the majority of the other men are much older than me, and knowing that the size of the province is quickly decreasing.

Living in community with others and having to constantly adjust myself to accommodate other's view points and preferences.

Living in community! Also, I find it challenging to witness as a religious at times because we tend to work to "fit in" and not be different.

Living in community.

Living in community/the spirit of the vows lived with one-another.

Living the vows in a culture which runs counter to them.

Living the vows with integrity, being a consistent witness to holiness.

Living the vows.

1. Living the vows authentically. 2. Community life at times.

Living the vows. Follow Church teaching. Live the Gospel life.

Living up to the expectations of superiors and seniors without neglecting my prayer life.

Living with brothers who are dysfunctional or who have a theological chip on their shoulder.  
Following my conscience when it is at odds with the institutional Church.

Living with difficult personalities. Submitting myself to others – obedience.

Living with difficult personalities...and the loss of prayer and commitment to vows by others...we all need to be faithful to our vows.

Living with men who are mostly twice (or three times) my age. Tolerating sarcastic personalities.

Living with older friars who do not hold similar values – good common prayer, for example, or who have lost their joy/hope.

Living with other cultures and different age groups.

Living with other cultures.

Living with other people.

Living with others who are rigid and closed-minded, judgmental, and angry.

Living with people who are so different in personality though having very similar faith.

Local community life. Living in common which is different than belonging to a larger fraternity. In other words the day to day challenges of living with others.

Loneliness – especially as communities get smaller.

Loneliness and poverty.

Loneliness.

Loneliness.

Loneliness. Communities that are more like boarding houses than a group of men who care about each other, eat together, pray together and support and encourage one another.

Loneliness. Difficulties of a celibate lifestyle.

Long formation process. Community life. Lack of a sense of identity as a religious institute, i.e., solemn vows seem like a formality while one is only considered a full member when he is ordained a priest and pastorally useful.

Maintaining a balance between prayer/work/study. Community life. Personal growth.

Maintaining a regular prayer life while trying to meet the demands of studies.

Making time for personal spiritual growth. Loneliness.

Me.

Meeting the ever-increasing needs of the world with ever decreasing numbers.

Members complaining about Church rules and Church hierarchy.

Mental health issues in communities, aging membership.

Ministering in age of increasing religious illiteracy.

Ministry and community.

Misery.

Moving from a natural way of life to the supernatural and also learning a lot of community dynamics which tend to stifle the familial aspect of the life. Examples might be moving from a very independent life style to a lot of surrender and submission without many of the natural attractions of a family. Many different opinions and difficulty in being oneself or learning to be

truly who God made me to be – not a bad thing just a challenge. Also a lot of good things to do and have, etc., so discerning and choosing only the things God wants of us. God bless you.

Multicultural life and ministry.

My biggest challenge has always been worrying about the future, whether it be my institute or apostolates. This worry sometimes drains my motivation to live the life well.

My brothers' personalities, lukewarmness in some senior members as well as departures from Church teaching (or Church teachings questioned as though there were room for discussion).

My community with cultural differences and age differences.

My own discernment. Communal commitment for renewal and living out the charism with greater zeal. Obedience and poverty of the will/spirit. Communal commitment to living simply/poverty.

My own short comings.

My own weaknesses and fears. Loss of confidence within the institute caused by attrition, death, small number of vocations. Ever-present call to conformity with Jesus Christ.

My sins, the vows, the spirit of secularism in the institute and the community, the hostility to religion, especially Catholicism, in mainstream American and western culture.

Myself.

Myself.

Myself.

Myself.

Navigating the deep generational divisions within the Society – particularly the neuralgic points for the middle-aged and late middle-aged members, including the Church's teaching on sexuality, women's ordination, and devotional and liturgical traditions.

New assignment/new transition.

Normal ups and downs of relations. A certain hostility towards Native American cultural expression and spirituality, lack of inculturation tools or understanding.

Not to give in to temptations of our times to want everything and not sacrifice anything. Living with broken and selfish individuals.

Not all of the communities that could be places of assignment live a strong intentional community life. Also, in the same context the liturgical life of some houses are not faithful to the norms of the Church and/or a hostility toward the wearing of the habit perpetually.

Not becoming complacent, continually seeking conversion of heart.

Not enough time to build community.

Not taking it for granted and remaining grateful.

Novitiate formation. Community life.

Obedience is the most challenging of the vows because I don't always agree with all the decisions, yet I am called to accept these decisions because of the nature of the constitutions as well as the example of Christ whose image I am called to be for others.

Obedience sometimes.

Obedience.

Obedience.

Obedience.

Obedience.

Obedience. It is a great blessing and I would not surrender it for anything but it's not easy.

Obedience. When I think something should be done one way and my superior has another thought in mind. I feel I have much experience. On the flip side, this helps me with my humility.

Occasionally certain members of my community are very hard to live with. At these times, I find it very challenging (but necessary) to find love for those persons and recognize the validity of their own vocations and the genuine nature of their love for God and His people.

Older members who have given up.

Ongoing conversion.

Ongoing fidelity.

On-going re-evaluating of mission and ministry to be consistent with the Gospel and the needs of the world.

Other members.

Our current identity crisis as a Church and a religious order and the way that confusion of identity weakens our formation and community life.

Our future.

Our institute is very small, sometimes co-opted by individualism and materialism. We are dying in U.S.

Our seeming distance from the “institutional” Church; the generational battle between the Baby Boomers’ anti-authoritarianism and their wounds from crippling formation and our younger generations’ desire to be what our Institute has claimed and continues to claim to be – loyal sons of the Church.

Our shared life!

Our spirituality, to be like Jesus “priest and victim” to transform myself in Him.

Overcoming my inclination to judge my brothers; embracing the personality conflicts that makes us unique that may cause me to lose my interior peace or may cause me to judge.

Overcoming my own weakness and sins, and dealing with those of others, especially in my community, as well as the exhaustion of our demanding apostolic work and ministry.

Patience.

Peoples’ expectations of me.

Perseverance.

Personality conflicts with friars.

Philosophy!!!

Polarization. I am an OFM. But recently quite a few, so-called traditionalists emerged in the Franciscan Movement.

Poor liturgical life in communities. Lack of fidelity/enthusiasm for Church from older members.

Poor provincial leadership and malice of members.

Poor sense of Catholic identity, rigidly liberal Baby-Boomers, little efforts to promote vocations.

Prayer and community living.

Precisely because we are so busy in ministry, friendships within the community are a struggle to sustain.

Pride, being able to do what I want when I want. I sometimes look down at myself for trying out this way of life. I sometimes say, “what am I doing here, in a monastery!”

Promoting and upholding a vision of religious life, priesthood and the Church that is authentically Vatican II inspired and not reactionary or neo-traditional in a rigid way, especially when I see the movement and embracing of a tradition and devotional way of life and hierarchical liturgical life.

1. Provincial staff turning into misers whenever there’s a hiccup in the economy.

Reactionary conservatism of newest members.

Really leading that God-centered life!

Remaining connected with other friars as a basis for healthy intimate friendships. “Politics” within the province.

Remaining faithful to values and example of my community's founder in living of my vocation, when other members of my community (including members of leadership) justify their decisions not to do so, particularly decisions regarding celibacy/chastity and socio-economic lifestyle.

Remaining open and honest with brothers when they are hurting or hurtful. Having to confront a brother on a difficult or sensitive issue.

Remembering that all I do is to give praise to God.

Retrenchment and lack of creativity.

Rigorous formation process; efforts at intellectual pursuits sometimes drain energy from spiritual discipline and community interaction.

Sacrificial aspect.

Saying good bye within two or three years of being in one place.

See 189. Also, religious who dissent.

Seeing polarization in the Church in which reactionaries from both sides grapple for control, influence and domination. While giving witness through external forms is good, disordered attachment to these external forms (habit, clerical dress, public piety, etc.) disturbs me, especially when any of those forms become absolute. Desire to invest in relationship in community and ministry competes with fear and sadness of separation due to the mobility/availability of my vocation/our charism.

Seeing loneliness that is often satisfied by overzealousness in ministry. The misunderstanding of its meaning and intent by the larger world fed by negative reporting on stereotypes by media and movies.

Self discovery.

Serving the poor.

Setting limits with ministry so that it doesn't consume religious aspect of life.

Small numbers. Lack of commitment in society and community. Loneliness.

So little time and so much to do, resisting to do all fruitful and wonderful things in God's vineyard.

Solitude, loneliness.

Sometimes community life can be challenging, but it forces us to truly love each other as Jesus wants us to.

Sometimes community.

Sometimes creature comforts are aplenty to the point that outsiders THINK we're upper middle class or better. (It's a perception.) Others fall in the realm of daily frustrations...they're petty, really.

Sometimes it is other members; the shrinking number of religious.

Sometimes particular community living situations are challenging due to personality conflicts. I feel community challenges me to be faithful to the gospel and our charism which is an important and healthy challenge.

Sometimes, not have good examples of people living our spirituality. People who make a lot of noise but little good.

Statements by hierarchical Church that strike me as ill-considered or that fail to respond to pastoral needs of people in pews. Also, community is getting both older and more economically strapped.

Status quo, high average of members (-65 years old), resistance to change, poor quality of health of some members (spiritual, emotional, social and ministerial), not much direct service to the poor/social justice issues.

Struggling with loneliness, obedience, trying not to let myself get lax, or static in the spiritual life.

Submitting my wants, plans, dreams to the needs of the community.

Superiors who are too afraid of making decisions.

Temptations, communication and busy.

That not all religious in the U.S. are on the same page with Rome. Lots of spiritual energy wasted on useless fights. God bless you! Jesus is alive!

The (now-aging) generation that lost confidence in the priesthood, religious life, and the Church, that often causes scandal in/outside the institute through their statements and conduct. Maintaining focus and fidelity in a secular world.

The brethren.

The brotherhood, especially those serving in local superior roles, especially among those who are considerably older. For example, my current pastor who is 28 years older than I am, is my current "thorn."

The challenge of total conversion to the monastic way of life and purity of heart.

The challenge to not stop growing. It is easy to become stagnant and accept the world as it is.

The challenge is to constantly pursue that even deeper, fuller love of God through the Church.

The challenges are many but can seem to be very little depending on how they are dealt with. The declining number of vocations coming in. The longevity of our congregation's presence with in the U.S.A. Finding enough time that can be dedicated to prayer and a healthier lifestyle. The overload of the ministry and the amount of hours that are put into each task.

The challenges culture poses to the vowed life.

The challenges of personal growth and change, the call to continuous conversion in the human/spiritual/relational aspects of life.

The commitment can be challenging for me at times because we commit ourselves to the future and we don't even know what tomorrow looks like. So to live a life of commitment can be a real challenge.

The common life with the appropriate need to defer to others needs.

The community

The conflict among factions within our Church over ideology and practice.

The confused state of the Church; our commitment to ministries that we need to relinquish because we are short on manpower; demographics of religious life.

The culture of death. Politics. Being faithful to the signs of the time and our constitutions.

The current scandal in the Church of abuse of minors and how that has hurt people and reflects on “professional” Catholics.

The current tensions between religious life commitments and the diocesan structures and models of authority.

The demands of my apostolic work.

The difficulties in community life: disparity in ages of community members, guys who don't want to grow or change, guys who aren't open or accepting, not being able to accept others at times, as they are, balancing meaningful relationships outside community while still trying to foster genuine ones inside community, etc.

The difficulties of a house community being able to eat and pray together on a regular basis.

The fact that the wider culture in which we live and minister does not, by and large, share the Gospel values we strive to live by and to which we aim to give witness.

The fear that I'm losing touch with the typical experiences of those not in religious life.

The few numbers of young Brothers. The laxity at times in the work ethic of some members of the Institute. A leadership which plays favorites or is exercised unequally (this hasn't been fully done but could easily happen).

The fraternal life and the consistent horarium.

The greatest challenge for me in religious life has been reconciling the lives of some of the friars with the constitutions of the order and with the rest of our 800 year history. Some friars sometimes act as though poverty means nothing more than sharing your time with others, the habit is embarrassing, truth in religious matters is silly, communal prayer is unimportant, the magisterium is out of touch and to be ignored, and the GIRM is null and void. Living with people that are supposed to share a common mission but in fact have a radically different view of Catholicism and life is very difficult.

The high call to the way of perfection. And the common life.

The huge workload being thrust upon priests.

The immaturity of some of the members and the lack of a solid, consistent formation program.

The impermanence – always the possibility of moving on, falling in love with a place, a work or people and then having to leave them; the uncertainty, with many options, of knowing the right one.

The increasing secularity of the society at large. The polarization within the institute and the Church

The lack of attention to the teaching of the Church and the inadequacy in the training to teach the Church's doctrine.

The lack of communal prayer and feeling like I don't belong, that I am not smart to be on committees or things.

The lack of interest in parish ministry especially in poor settings, sometimes living with difficult community members.

The lack of ministerial and emotional support.

The lack of peers in my age range.

1. The lack of privacy. 2. Unspoken expectations. 3. Integrating after a 20 year career as an attorney into a parish setting in a conservative order and NY archdiocese! AAUGH!!

The lack of sexual intimacy, while freeing on the practical level is emotionally difficult. Meaningful work, prayerful community life, close friendships, faith sharing, and mature, responsive intimacy can make celibacy bearable, but not easy.

The lack of societal support – in today's America, the sense of purpose and support religious used to receive from the larger Catholic community is largely absent – and is absent because the larger Catholic community is absent.

The lack of support and overall general passive-aggressive attitude of the community members.

The liberal agenda and conservative banter. We should promote the Gospel and be faithful to Church teaching. Any self interpretation of that in either extreme is terrible.

The life of the vows

The loneliness that can happen. The temptation to seek unhealthy outlets.

The loneliness.

The membership of religious life is fast declining – age gap is a big factor, cultural differences and understanding.

The missed opportunity to live the life radically. We take the vows and do not use the freedom they provide.

The misunderstandings and tensions that occur in a small religious community when members' communication skills are underdeveloped or lacking.

The monks that stay to themselves are not part of community. Mean old crabby men. The abbot being biased to "the good old boys," they can do no wrong, but the younger monks he gives no slack to and expects us to be perfect and expects us to always be at prayers and on time but older monks do what they want.

The most challenging about religious life is some restriction that prevents us from getting more vocations or that makes seminarians quit. Also the future of our religious institutes!

The most challenging aspect of religious life is our need to be open to all people, both those in our community and those to whom we minister. It is a challenge for us to minister and yet also allow others to minister to us.

The most challenging thing about religious life is living my vows in an American culture that is so opposite my religious institute. It is a battle that I am willing to fight.

The number of friends who leave during the long process of formation.

The number of people who have left during my years in formation has been challenging since there are not too many people in my age cohort in my province.

The occasional complaining of older members with whom I live; I worry about future vocations to our community. Overall, I am blessed in abundance!

The older members who are less orthodox.

The polarization of opinions regarding, e.g., the habit – voices on the fringes (especially "conservative" voices) speak the loudest but do not necessarily represent the diversity of the community, and often symbols/practices like wearing the habit become political statements rather than truly holy practices/prayerful practices. A split between "liturgically-minded" folks and "social justice-minded" folks – people tend toward one or the other, and rarely can a person find a religious openly committed to both.

The psychological problems of the brethren, generational differences, lack of fidelity to Church teaching, limiting education.

The pursuit to surrender to prayer, silence, solitude, giving, service in the quest for spiritual enlightenment.

The rapid aging of larger numbers of members; it is eclipsing our ministry and community life.

The reality of not having a family of my own.

The sacrifices of my perpetual vows.

The small amount of vocations coming into religious communities. Older members and not enough younger people coming into religious life.

The state of the Church in our time and its effects in religious life.

The studies, the slowness of the renewal of the order. Occasionally, members of the order will divide our politics and issues within the Church.

The suspicion that a contemporary religious male is a predator; often I feel as though I have to prove myself to others that I am not a sexual offender.

The temptation to despair over our spotty leadership.

The tensions that exist among the members of the institute. Tensions of ideology, of manner of prayer, of wearing religious dress or not.

The underlying (and unspoken) degree of competition between members and the inability to share life without fear.

The varied personalities are a challenge.

The vow of chastity primarily, and poverty secondarily.

The vow of obedience.

The vow of obedience.

The vow of obedience.

The vows of obedience and identification with the people in the mission.

The work load.

There are not that many of us out there in the world.

There is tremendous amounts of corruption, both moral and spiritual.

Those who come to us to escape (their own immaturity, inability to form relationships), who have poor social skills/self-awareness, who have a sense of superiority, moral elitism, those who think this is the “real” Christian life – the presence is toxic.

Time spent as a Brother among Brothers.

Time/pressure problems (balance of prayer, ministry, common life in the midst of so many demands). Lack of support of religious brotherhood (lay brothers) by clergy and bishops.

Times of lack of sleep = tired. Fraternal life can be a tough school of love – but it's worth it.

To be confronted with my issues in life. To go into my innermost self.

To find a balance between being faithful to the teachings and the tradition of the Church and being pastorally sensitive to the complexity of the people.

To live “simply.”

To work with diocesan priests.

Too much demanding in ministry.

Transcending individuation.

Transition – moving on is tough – but at the same time awesome because the new.

Trusting formators/obedience.

Trying to be faithful to personal prayer and spiritual growth in the midst of a very busy apostolate.

Trying to keep up during the day.

Trying to live in the same house as 6 or 7 others guys who have very different personalities. But also trying to love them no matter what their shortcomings are.

Trying to maintain and grow in prayerfulness and intentionality when routine sets in; in other words, while striving toward holy ideals and constantly experiencing my own weaknesses, the challenge is to rejoice and grow in God's mercy and love and crush pride underfoot, rather than become discouraged. We are called to be like children in faith!

Various theologies, lax in respect for the sacred, giving in to the fast pace of life and missing prayer, unchecked performances, letting members carry on with unhealthy habits, allowing members to misuse money.

Vow of obedience.

Vows of poverty and chastity.

Vows, community life.

We are a small community (three FSCs and two volunteers). Social activities are lacking, we work hard all week, but we do not do anything together on the weekends.

What hinders things in #189 – life is mainly about everyday and mediocrity abounds in myself, the order, Church. Members of my order.

What I find most challenging about religious life is the tensions that can arise in having men from very different backgrounds, ages, and styles of life trying to live in one community.

When the moment comes to let God be in charge I mean, when I have done everything I can and is the moment to turn on the auto-pilot.

When there are many individualistic minded people who stress more their goals than community mission.

Withdrawing from ministries for lack of vocations.

Wondering what direction religious life is heading in the next 5-10 years as the number of professed men and women continues to decline...

Worrying about how all our ministries will be affected by fewer members. On a personal level I'm very happy.

You don't pick with whom you live with.

### ***Active Women***

?

A lack of openness to change, perhaps over-cautiousness for fear of diverting from traditions/customs. Can result in stagnation and lack of openness to the spirit.

Abandonment to Divine Providence.

Accepting each sister as called by God and loving her despite her weaknesses and failings.

Accepting everyone where they are – and accepting me where I am.

Accepting the faults that are revealed by living in community.

Actually I am very happy – perhaps time constraints are the biggest challenge. Often I feel I'm running from prayer to ministry – ministry to prayer all day long. Yet we have a very balanced daily schedule – from dawn to dusk.

Adapting to the varied situations, places, and people to which obedience calls me.

Adjusting my own desires and needs to those of others in the context of demanding community life.

Adjusting to different personalities in community. I have trouble understanding when others in community don't have the desire to pray together or share their spiritual lives. Coping with a few sisters who have a sense of entitlement rather than gratitude.

Adjusting to the aging process of myself and religious sisters.

After 30 years I still love it yet community living has provided some challenges.

After living independently for 15+ years it is an adjustment to grow into interdependence. I was most attracted to community life, and find that most challenging both in how I live it and how what I learned in formation is so far from the lived reality in the wider congregation.

Age issues, concerns; future of the life, no trust for younger members to be leaders.

Aging community members, lack of new vocations.

Aging of the sisters and not enough "younger" or newer members to share experiences. It is very different today than when most of the sisters entered.

All of the members of my community are much older than me (next youngest is 18 years older than I am). It is difficult trying to form relationships with other members when the others have been established with particular groups within the community (those who were in formation together have their stories and have maintained friendships).

Always and forever being part of the minority (age-ism).

Apathy among many community members, sluggishness, unwillingness to live and share at a deeper level. Encouraging new members to dare to dream!

As a 40-year old who has been finally-professed for one year – and as a woman desiring good relationships – I love and am challenged by the experience of living and ministering in another culture (Nicaragua), and doing this while learning the language. Part of the challenge is that we are new community and a new mission – so the layers of challenges and blessings are many. My support system is limited to my local community (three other sisters) for now – and this is difficult! I used to rely on a wider net!

As a constant invitation to grow in union with God, religious life necessarily forces one to face oneself and to deny oneself, sometimes in big things, but especially in the little details of daily life. Sanctification is beautiful, but definitely a challenge.

As a member of a contemplative in action order is to find that balance because I can get carried away working as a nurse and forget that first of all I am a religious woman that the life in the spirit is first.

As a religious woman, I often feel like a second-class citizen. Prayers for vocations seem to center around priests only. Its hard to believe in “the Church” when it fails to recognize the giftedness of at least half its members – because we are female rather than male.

As a small community – many are much older and so we have less resources with which to do unpaid ministry.

As a younger member I often feel my voice is not heard because I am always “outnumbered.” I also feel a tremendous sense of loneliness at times. Lastly, I find it difficult always living with the elderly.

As an institute, I think the most challenging thing is discerning the proper use of media and other technology which can be an asset for our ministry but which could be our demise if we are not careful to uphold and protect our religious life. By nature, I find obedience to be difficult because I tend to be opinionated – perhaps, too highly so. My own personal challenge is to grow in holiness and to help others around me do the same.

As in #189 and continuous changing.

As in any family merging of personalities can be difficult, but it is where we grow the most. Community life brings out the things that you need to change about yourself and that is not always easy to accept.

As numbers dwindle, the challenge is to remain alive and vibrant, to be true to our mission regardless of numbers and ages.

At this point in my life in community I find the conversations, processes...about identity, purpose and mission of religious life most challenging because of the diverse attitudes, experiences, perspectives (ecclesial and theological) among our members.

At times I find “community” hard...personalities, ideas, etc. Also, I do struggle with what the future holds for us – financially especially.

1. At times, living in community. 2. Not having many people in my life that can relate to my lifestyle and choices. 3. Not knowing what the future holds.

Attempting to be faithful to a hierarchial Church that does not acknowledge women’s gifts or value to the Church.

Balance of community, ministry and prayer life. Lower number of sisters – same ministries and work – workload is hard. Polarity of opinions on religious life.

Balance of community, prayer, service.

Balance of prayer, ministry, community life.

Balance with family

Balance!

Balance...

Balancing – community, ministry, personal prayer, and family.

Balancing the apostolate and the spiritual life, keeping in mind that this life choice is not a career.

Balancing between being part of community yet maintaining an individual. Our disconnection with parish life. How to bear witness more effectively. How to make this religious life more attractive to others.

Balancing community living with ministry and formation activities (workshops, etc).

Balancing community needs with those of the apostolate.

Balancing community tasks, committee work, and responsibilities along with full-time ministry and service.

Balancing community, ministry, education.

Balancing demands of ministry with prayer and community life.

Balancing ministry and leisure. And the fact that religious are in a very different place regarding the institutional Church.

1. Balancing ministry and local community commitments. 2. Finding others who want to live a more regular common life, especially in my peer group.

Balancing ministry, common life, family.

Balancing my prayer life, my ministry and my time with my community.

Balancing my schedule.

Balancing my spiritual life and ministry.

Balancing our interior life with our apostolate.

Balancing our teaching apostolate with my spiritual life.

Balancing prayer and apostolic work.

Balancing prayer and work.

Balancing prayer life and ministry.

Balancing prayer life, community life and ministry life.

Balancing prayer, community, ministry.

Balancing prayer, service, community, family, leisure.

Balancing solitude and study with community activities (viz., recreation and leisure).

Balancing teaching/active apostolate with monastic life of Dominican lifestyle.

Balancing the active and contemplative.

Balancing the apostolate with my community life and prayer life and the amount of study we undertake.

Balancing the contemplative and active dimensions of the life is most challenging.

Balancing the stress of life and the apostolate and living in community and learning to allow Christ to love others through it all.

Balancing time between work, prayer and community gatherings.

Balancing time on weekends among community local and congregational, family and friends.

Balancing time, being available for my sisters.

Balancing work and prayer.

Balancing...mind, body, spirit. Balance time-ministry, God, family, community, relationships, self.

Because so many of us are in inserted works, we often do not have the ability to be in charge of our own works so that we could better serve the poor!

Because we are getting so few vocations, more “internal” responsibilities are falling on me, taking time and energy from my mission. We are being forced to close missions the Church still needs, and pass up missions the Church needs, due to aging membership.

Becoming older, perhaps too old for teaching and needing to redirect my ministry ... being patient with God’s offering me opportunities to continue in a meaningful ministry.

Being a good Christian and sister towards my sisters at all times.

Being a new member as an older person, i.e., not being accepted for who I am and what I bring by many of the life-long members.

Being a religious woman and a minority in a public school.

Being a young religious I find it challenging at times to live the present moment. I can find myself at times worrying about the future of my congregaton with so few young members!

Being accepted by outsiders who don’t understand religious life.

Being away from family and friends.

Being away from family/friends. Sometimes the lack of independence is difficult.

Being completely consecrated to God and His Church.

Being faithful every single moment to God’s will. Trying to live with all my heart for Him no matter if I feel His presence or not. To live it because He is pleased with it!

Being faithful everyday to our schedule. We are nurses, I am still a student. So to become a nurse and to follow my community life is what I find most challenging now.

Being faithful to deep and sincere prayer and silence. Finding the joy in suffering in all circumstances. Community life at its best is worth riding out all of the failures.

Being faithful to living my vows when I feel tired/discouraged/alone.

Being faithful to my faith-life. I have had to good fortune of spending most of my career(s) in collaboration with other religious communities.

Being faithful to our schedule. Sometimes community life.

Being in the world, feeling its demands and meeting its needs, yet striving to live supernaturally.

Being one of a small number of younger members among a quickly aging community of much greater numbers.

Being part of a society and culture that individualism is supreme and community is naïve.

Being patient with myself as God shows me areas I need to grow and yet let Him love me in all of that.

Being patient with others who are afraid to take risks.

Being ready to die to yourself and be willing to always see Christ in the other.

Being relevant in today's world while maintaining a faithfulness to the commitment of religious life.

Being the youngest and uncertainty about how religious life will unfold in the years to come.

Being the youngest in community and not being able to live with anyone my age or in formation.

Being younger than everyone else. Feeling that I am not understood or heard.

1. Both challenging/rewarding to live with variety of personalities. 2. The place religious life is now is both challenging and rewarding. It is in a state of change/growth.

Bringing God to a young generation that does not believe they need God. Hard to pass on Catholic doctrine, teachings to parents and their children – very secular.

Building good community. Some of our sisters have “left” without filling out the paper work. . .

Busyness – to find the right balance for myself – it is so much out there.

Celibacy! The lack of a peer group – older sisters care and want to be supportive, but often don't understand what it's like to enter today. It can be lonely and tiring always to be counter-cultural, to try to swim upstream (in terms of culture).

Celibacy.

Challenge to look for a positive side for every member of the congregation, not to be discouraged right away. Challenge to cling to God everyday. Put more faith. THANKFUL AND GRATEFUL being a religious.

Challenges of finding my place in community. Instances in some of community living. Living far away from my family.

Change is occurring.

Changing ministries-fear that we will lose the communal aspect of ministry as sisters seek their own jobs. Sisters burning out-increased concern about monetary issues.

Coming to grips with my own imperfections and inability to love Christ as much as He deserves. We are called to live the perfection of charity, but it takes a life time to fulfill that mission.

Community life.

Communal life – especially after living a single lifestyle for close to 20 years.

Communal life, personal spiritual growth and growth in virtue, the apostolate – teaching.

Communal life. Work of apostolate (I like teaching, but it is very hard work!)

Communal living – especially in dysfunctional situations.

Communal living is the most challenging (especially difficult for minority). Language and cultural differences create more challenges for minority members.

Community

Community (the greatest joy and challenge) as well as the many ways I often seek after my own will rather than the Lord's.

Community dynamics and inner challenges (the inertia that inhibits working for change).

Community life

Community life

Community life – essential to religious life – yes. Easy? No. But ...”My grace is sufficient...”

Community life – Living with integrity.

Community life – my own sinfulness.

Community life – the challenges of living deeply and authentically with one another.

Communication between the generations.

Community life – we are all so different and really have to work at being a real community.

Community life – with a top heavy (aging) group of women – less than 25% are under age of 70. Few peers within my congregation. Little time for friends outside community.

Community life and living with sisters of different nationalities is very enriching but challenging at the same time. The vow of obedience.

Community life and obedience.

Community life and our secular world.

Community life and some of the sisters. Being told what to do. Being treated like a child.

Community life and the “politics” that sometimes creep into the dynamic.

Community life and the plurality of views on how to interpret the mission and charism of the institute.

Community life as well as apostolate life sometimes.

Community life at times. Activity in apostolate as principal and superior.

Community life can be challenging, but is worth the challenge. Describing why I/we do not wear the habit. The seeing of my own growth areas expressed in others.

Community life definitely. When you live with such a large variety of personalities and backgrounds it is challenging to live the virtues day by day. Especially challenging for one who lived alone and has at times a preference for solitude. Each day I have to remind myself that religious life cannot be lived without community and it is precisely there that I am to find Christ in my sisters and to serve Him.

Community life due to conflicts between members’ age differences and personality conflicts and different values.

Community life especially with older members who have not been formed in community life as I have been. Their idea of community life is more individual than communal.

Community life is a great joy and a great challenge at the same time. It’s also a challenge to not all into an “institutional” mentality and foster a “family” spirit (especially in a large community).

Community life is definitely challenging, helping one another grow in holiness.

Community life is difficult. It requires us to be selfless and to get over our little annoyances.

Community life is poor – many sick/dysfunctional members – issues are just ignored.

Community life is the hardest aspect of religious life. I also believe it is the most prophetic witness to live in a world that cries out for compassionate, caring people.

Community life is the most challenging for me, being able to accept the Christ within each other, knowing the diversity of each other with individual strength and weaknesses.

Community life is very rewarding but can be challenging. It requires a lot of prayer, energy, effort. A challenge can be learning about yourself in the midst of learning about others. Community life seems to bring the most challenges, but I see it as the best way for growth in virtue and I also rely on it for its many benefits.

Community life with all older (68-80) sisters. No youth, no spontaneity, physical complaints of old age, etc. There is no balance. The first time we had energy for “fun.”

Community life!

Community life!

Community life, especially when there are sisters who are mentally unstable and choose not to respond to leadership's offers for help. Who am I as an individual yet as a member of the Congregation? Cultural discernment/molding. Formation-still harkens to “the old days” yet the words used are “adult model.” I don’t think people who have been in religious life for 25+ years get what adult model truly means or the nuances of Gen X, Y, etc.

Community life, having to have multiple responsibilities and feeling like I can’t do any of them really well.

Community life, healing of wounds of poor catechesis and pre-convent life.

Community life, my own failings and weaknesses that erode my religious life and contribute to the difficulties of communal life with others and their weaknesses and failings. A daily enthusiasm, sincerity in my striving to be all God asks of me.

Community life, prayer, balancing the communal life and the apostolate, myself.

Community life, the authority given to young Sisters before they have made the community customs, songs, etc. part of their life frequently leads to replacing those traditions, songs, etc. with the younger sisters’ way of doing things. Sometimes the younger sisters mock things that have a place in the heart of older sisters.

Community life, trying to maintain the prayer schedule/order of the day in this fast paced world and within the apostolate, putting prayer before apostolate.

Community life.

Community life. Differences: A constant challenge for growth. This is good but difficult at times.

Community life. Different personalities, ages, cultures, etc.

Community life. During candidacy and novitiate, I had very life-giving community life. I am grateful for those communities beyond words. I entered at age 47 and have adjusted my expectations about community life. I live with women who entered 40-60 years ago. Many of them have lived here for 20+ years. Even after living here for 4 years, I'm learning about "unwritten" rules. I've tried to challenge the rules to no avail. (You can't move the salt shaker). I choose to stay here. My ministry is a 30-minute commute. I take care of my parents on weekends; they live 1 hour from here. As our older Sisters move on to our nursing home, convents will be closing. We will all be faced with changes in our living situations. I realize I have to take responsibility, for finding/forming more life-giving community life. I can't do it right now. I love being a Sister of Mercy. I feel called to be a Sister and that sustains me. Through prayer, the grace keeps me going.

Community life. Insecurities. People look up to you and rely on you. Different personalities of confreres.

Community life. Living with older sisters who complain about others all the time.

Community life. My desire to grow/integral formation.

Community life. Newer members are looking for community living/communal prayer. Older sisters are looking in some ways for the opposite.

Community life. The different cultures in one community.

Community life. The majority of struggles with my vocation have come from within community. Community is a microcosm of society. People bring who they are broken or whole.

I find there are many people in community in need of healing. That either don't want to get help, can't admit they need help. And others that feel there is nothing they can do about it. But what we close our eyes to is eating away at a healthier environment.

Community life. We've become so entrenched in individuality, age/demographic needs, sets/cliques of friends and choice to not address conflict. We lose each and together. In my 21 years, I have sensed what I thought/hoped community to be only about three years. We've kept trying, hoping, believing but have been most challenged the past five years in all areas of community life. The unrealized potential saddens me. Five people have left community in the past three years. I myself am planning to go on leave but parental duties have intervened.

Community life. Learning to live with individual personalities.

Community life/obedience.

Community life; and small daily sacrifices.

Community life; living situations.

Community life...the rubbing of elbows. Balance of prayer and ministry.

Community living – finding healthy/life-giving community. Making time for prayer in a hectic ministry schedule.

Community living – to forgive and forget.

Community living by far is the best and the worst part of living this life. Living with personalities that you wouldn't naturally be drawn to is quite the challenge and then figuring out who you are and what you're willing to give up in order to make life do-able!

Community living is both rewarding and challenging. Keeping faithful to prayer life and spiritual development in the midst of ministry demands.

Community living is challenging also. It is a challenge to take positions in the struggle for justice.

Community living.

Community living.

Community living.

Community living.

Community living.

Community living. Expecting the women to “be friends” – doesn’t happen – the newer women in my community.

Community living. Seeing sisters who are angry, bitter and clearly not happy in religious life and yet stay in community for whatever reason.

Community living: it is one of the greatest joys and one of the hardest tasks. “Relationships take you to the edge of yourself.” Stephen Levine.

Community! I am always being stretched and learning all kinds of things about myself along the way. My sisters help me to grow and strive to love more!

Community.

Community.

Community.

Community.

Community.

Community.

Conflicts; balancing community, prayer, ministry.

Confusion about what it means for our modern world.

Confusion in the Church about what religious life is, and therefore conflicting images of religious life that do not build up the Church.

Constant tension between the many needs of the apostolate and keeping my mind and heart centered on my first Love – the Lord Jesus.

Continual building of community.

Continuing the life of the community in the face of an uncertain future, not knowing if there will be others to follow in our footsteps.

Continuing the vision of our Foundresses, maintaining a Catholic identity in a very secular country/world, hostility to religion and the Magisterium.

Continuous conversion in living valiantly for the Gospel.

Creating and enhancing community life.

Creating good community life (relationships), being who we say we are.

Cultural challenges in apostolate. Apostolate can be physically/emotionally tiring.

Cultural differences and living in community.

Cultural differences, particularly as the majority of the members in my unit are of the same culture/race, and how that impacts communal relationships.

Current, radical transition.

Daily challenges of life – same as in marriage.

Daily conversion. Living in community.

Daily striving to die to selfishness and self centeredness in order to love God with a simple heart and neighbor as self (especially sisters living with and the poor).

Daily struggles of living as a religious in a culture which has contrasting values; desiring to reach out (and trying to find ways to) in an unchurched area.

Dailyness – becomes “ordinary” and routine.

Dealing and working with people of different beliefs, ethnicity, background, and temperaments.

Dealing with certain personalities.

Dealing with my own short comings. The lack of deep, critical thinking and passion about the ills in the world.

Dealing with personalities – some sisters with dementia, some with mental illness, and some with personality disorders. The personality disorders and mental illnesses are the most difficult, especially when they appear to be in a superior. This is really tough to deal with – but I know others have experienced the same as I have, so that makes it easier, in some sense. When I entered, the community was a 1/3 larger than it is today – so those with “mental issues” did not stand out as readily. Now, they do – or at least perhaps I am just more aware.

Dealing with the disappointments. However, I still feel this is where God wants me. Community life here has changed. Having learned more about life styles of some members has been difficult to deal with, lack of equality.

Dealing with the institutional Church – explaining or, more accurately, not being able to explain magisterial actions like excommunicating a faithful priest for voicing support of women’s ordination while taking no similar action for pedophiles (not that I would necessarily support the latter either).

Dealing with the various personalities of the sisters.

Dealing with violence in community life.

Decline of members, few newer members, loss of identity (i.e., not wearing the habit).

Decreasing number of religious and their presence with and among the “average” Catholic and broader community also the hierarchical model of Church and movement by some bishops to limit ministerial roles for laity and religious.

Decreasing number, increasing responsibility, community living.

Demands of the apostolate – balancing it with the spiritual life. Learning to appreciate the differences among sisters and anticipate for these differences. Personally weakness – growing through challenges.

Demands on time. Temptations against chastity.

Desire to grow in holiness vs. personal weaknesses and vices and imperfection!

Detachment – from all that you want to do.

Detachment and fully consecration.

Detachment.

Detachment. The emptying of one’s self and learning to depend on God.

Developing one’s authentic self.

Difficult to answer as I have been seriously ill for the past year, in and out of the hospital (six times since March) major surgery – four weeks in hospital. Another major surgery in December 2008. Has been extremely difficult to live community life and keep up with our prayer life, etc. while being ill. Doing all this without feeling guilty when I can’t keep up.

Difficulties in community life.

Difficulty in making meaningful friendships. Most sisters are committed to those with whom they entered years ago. I was the only person in my band.

Difficulty of living in a large group (large building – too institutional).

Distance from other members (geographically).

Doing God’s will.

Doing God's will.

Dwindling numbers of members, less visibility of religious, religious afraid to envision a new look of religious life.

Dwindling numbers, increasing ages, and the inability/unwillingness of older members to accept their diminishment.

Dying to my selfishness.

Entering a congregation where age peers are few, energy levels of "older" persons (perhaps not "older" in age, sometimes, but longevity in religious life) are lower and people are settled in their ways. Belonging to the institutional Church which is oppressive and yet I love. Having to always be the one to reach out to build relationships. Trying to figure out my identity as a "single" in ministry.

Entering later in life than those I live with, and majority of my institute, I'm continually told "this how we did it, you need to do the same." Experience I have coming in is not accepted by many in the institute. My mentor has to control all I do making my life worse living than my novitiate. I did not enter community with a ministry I could leave the novitiate and getting the education I need in two areas I'm interested in pursuing (CPE+Degree in Spirituality) is not being permitted by my mentor. Told by formation team I need to be doing ministry not going to school.

Experiencing the isolation at times in community due to my lived experiences before I entered. Some sisters can't fathom my lived experiences. Different points of view entering at an older age sometimes causes conflict. Many gaps between sisters my age and myself.

Explaining how my life is when some has perception of their own.

Extremely long hours and a struggle to keep Christ 1st and work 2nd.

Facing my own weaknesses and persevering in the battle against the devil and sin.

(1) Faithfulness to personal prayer. (2) Community life. (3) At times, my apostolate.

Faithfulness to vows and deeper understanding of it.

Fearing to let go of my plans for holiness and to allow the Lord to do as He wills.

Feeling alone in what I am doing. The lack of community life and the lack of other young people.

Feeling so out of place in my congregation because I'm so much younger than everyone else. It's difficult to find my niche, and it's hard to develop mutual relationships with older sisters – their friendships are already established.

Feeling that my community seems willing and resigned to die out rather than get serious about inviting new members.

Few (age) peers within the community and a lack of understanding of religious life among those not in religious life.

Few young sisters. Large gap between age 65 and 45 with lived experiences and expectations.

Fewer ACTIVE people, dwindling numbers and dwindling energy. Who will be left and what will happen? It seems we are just dying slowly, not making a real decision either way – dying by default.

Fewer new and young members (very small peer group within and outside institute) and the uncertainty around how what has been (number of sisters, sponsored ministries, etc.) will transition into what will be.

Fidelity – the world is very enticing still. The life is rewarding but still very difficult. The hardest part is striving for holiness in my weakness. My weakness is my biggest stumbling block.

Fidelity and prayer.

Fidelity in community life – shared stewardship – balancing prayer – community – ministry.

Finding a balance between prayer, community, ministry and leisure.

Finding a balance in spending my free time on personal activities vs. strengthening friendships and/or serving my sisters in community.

Finding other religious who are committed to living common life in the community I live in/minister in. Many prefer to live alone. Also need to continue to keep a good balance between prayer, common life, study and ministry. Ministry can be all-consuming, demanding.

Finding others in initial formation with whom I can share, discuss...

Finding others who want to live more radically among those who need us most, and to live with others who want to pray communally daily.

Finding others with whom to live in healthy, holy community.

Finding the balance between humility and speaking my truth.

Finding the balance between maintenance and mission – being stuck in the old and moving toward the new – caring for members and still having relevant ministry.

Finding time and energy for prayer

Finding ways to balance time with community, self, and others/ministry and also the rubs that come from choosing to live in community.

Focusing efforts.

Following the leadership of others when you are a founding member attempting to protect the prayer life of the institute as well as a balance of work and leisure.

For me everything is a challenge; and every day has a new surprise, a new blessing and a new challenge to live my religious life with the same Love, illusion, joy, energy as I started nine years ago.

For me, the challenge lies in the daily conversion and conformity to the sentiments of Christ, both in the context of community life and the apostolate. However, there is also great joy in this challenge, for this is why we are here!

Forming real community. Finding moments to share deeply and pray together.

General spiritual journey of any Christian is challenging at times.

Generation gap.

Getting along with others can be challenging in community. Everyone is different and we have to make adjustments for each other.

Getting it back on the menu of life's choices. Sisters/religious who have bought into American middle class life – loss of witness and focus – for some.

Getting up at 5 a.m.

Giving my heart instead of just going through the motions; not treating prayer and common life as a mere obligation or checklist.

Giving up my own will.

Giving up my will, seeing others suffer.

Growing in communication within community life.

Growing in my own personal holiness and overcoming personal weaknesses.

Growing in self-knowledge and learning to live well in a community setting. Living well the vow of obedience.

Growing tendency for personal good to take priority over common good.

Growth in love.

Growth in my journey with God and community.

Growth in self-knowledge.

Hard to sustain such active ministry when community living groups are really small (2-3) – larger groups bring life and energy and shared responsibility for life of the community.

Having and maintaining those conversations, and not becoming so focused on work – maintaining balance.

Having joined at a later age and after a previous career the challenge of not being a part of the history as others my age are and being unknown as regards previous life.

Having lived a full life previous to entering eight years ago, I am a delayed vocation. I am challenged by if I could say the activities that some sisters participated in as a committed religious which I left behind in my previous life. It was a bit difficult to detach from “the world” but I am at peace and committed to the God who called me from all this to himself in the gift of my vocation.

Having so little time to self/limited leisure/having such a full schedule; being with people so much/interpersonal dynamics within community; having to ask permission for everything.

Having very few peers in the United States. Being in such a minority age-wise affects just about every aspect of my life and, as supportive as many of our sisters want to be, I’m not sure they can really comprehend what it means to be a younger member of an over-70 community.

Hmm...Me. I seem to get in the way of what God is trying to do. I can be so stubborn on wanting my own way.

How the institution relates to non-institutional people.

How to be creative, flexible and in-tune with the fast changing realities of our world in order to respond to needs. That religious life remains an option that makes sense because of how I live it and witness to my commitment.

How to live and make the charism of our Mother Foundress alive in a broad international community.

Human formation is sometimes difficult to attend to in religious life. It seems that we go from the extremes of spiritualism and psychologism – integration as a religious is a challenge to achieve.

I am 62 – yet I still find celibacy a challenge – I miss the absence of one special person whom I can love and who will love me – that we are committed to growing together especially around holidays, vacation, etc.

I am a Franciscan and want to follow the gospel. I sometimes question where the Church is going. It seems we are going back to pre-Vatican II. I question if we are really following what Jesus would do. Jesus seemed to be more inclusive. As a woman, I feel excluded from the Church or at least a second class citizen.

I am challenged by religious life not being challenging in that our mission is not really lived out in ways that call us to true Christianity. The “motions” are there, however, and our language suggests that mission is kept.

I do not organize or plan my own education and ministry.

I entered the community at the age of 42. My life experience is vastly different from those who entered at the age of 18. It is not the difference in age that is challenging; it is the difference in life experience.

I feel that there just isn't enough time to do all that I think we need to do. Our older sisters are getting sicker or they have died and newer members are few. We are being challenged to think of “new” ways to encourage younger people to enter religious life in a world where “money” is everything.

I find adjusting to the structure of religious life challenging as well as learning to live well in and with community.

I find being apart from my family the most challenging part of religious life.

I find community life the most challenging part of religious life if a sister is unwilling (or unable) to be open, honest, and loving in talking about our life together.

I find giving witness to the values I hold to be challenging – it is so easy to let the world influence me! Living a middle class lifestyle doesn't always give the witness I desire.

I find it challenging to be in the “between time” of religious life in the U.S. Ministry challenges and tending to the health of our older Sisters while looking for new ministries is very challenging.

I find it the most challenging to live with sisters much older than I. I love them dearly and learn a lot from them, but we come from two different time “eras” and so sometimes our ways of thinking or completing a task will clash. Compromise is usually the most helpful.

I find living at a distance from the majority of our community members most challenging. I need to be very intentional about being involved with community.

I find most challenging about religious life is to have fidelity to God and the Church as well as my religious congregation. We as religious are called to be a sign of God's love in the world as well as to be brides to the Church. With such worldly mindedness, less love and respect for God and our neighbor I find it challenging, but also it is a joy to be a presence of God in a world where he is much needed.

I find most challenging about religious life which is the deeper relationship (inter-relationship) among the religious men and women and support each other to go deeper in relationship with God.

I find most challenging new ways to witness good religious life.

I find most challenging things in my religious life is my own will. It is challenging to me, but with God I can do everything.

I find most challenging with living community life and the vows.

I find obedience and community life most challenging, in that I must die to myself and the world daily to find true joy and obedience and loving sisters I may find difficult to live with and love.

I find serving God's people the most challenging.

I find that among some members there is an over emphasis on "personal freedom" which often translates into individualism. We have too many sisters living alone and failing to participate in any but the most basic ways in the life of the province. I have also found that while some are claiming a vow of poverty, they are living middle-class and even upper-middle class lives. Our leadership has tried to reign this in, but this has been met with quite a bit of resistance and complaints of not being treated as adults. I find this hard because we could be leading lives radically committed to the Gospel, but too often we are choosing consumerism and individualism.

I find the newness of our community (founded in 1988) to be very difficult at times, including much evolution in an ongoing way and in a lack of stability. Personally I find communal living to be very challenging and rewarding. Various difficulties/challenges with each of the vows have come over the years, but I have felt supported by my community and others as these challenges continue to unfold.

I find the progressive women's communities have become over individualistic and have lost their group edge and voice. Due to demographics, there are a large number who can get very defensive and seem to have difficulty truly hearing anyone who came of age after Vatican II. I think we are trying to respond to the desires of newer members who want to live in community and to be sent, but I fear that the small numbers coming in won't be enough critical mass for the shift we need.

I find working in the apostolate and living community life well to be equally challenging aspects of religious life, providing much opportunity for growth.

I have concerns about the disparity in age – not in its effects on community life, but because I wonder what will happen in 10-20 years when most of our sisters will not be available to fill all these roles.

I have just been notified that I do not “fit in” with this community by my regional superior. My final vow date has been removed from the calendar. I am devastated and did not see this coming. Although our community advocates for conversation and discernment it doesn’t really practice it.

I love life in community, but it can become dampened by members who have not taken care of their own emotional health.

I tend to be overstretched, and sometimes lonely. Taking care of oneself is very important, but our life in a very poor neighborhood in Latin America is quite demanding. If in a mood of desolation it is easy to get discouraged by the small number of vocations to our life, and concerned about the future. Still most of the time I feel peace, hope and trust in that regard.

I think one of the most challenging things is to be faithful to the totality of religious life without worldly influence creeping in. The need for vigilance is constant.

I think that the life of our community is almost flawless in design – profound, transcendent, a pure gift of God. The challenges, then, are more a result of personal weaknesses, temperament. Mine include some practices requiring regularity of schedule – but I WANT to become stronger.

I was in a religious community when I was younger. I have been involved in various aspects of Church ministry over 35 years. I lived alone for many years. What has been most challenging is the concept of formation/incorporation for someone older, with theology degrees, ministerial experience, and life experience. It all worked out okay but was difficult at the time. Also for a new person coming in older, it is difficult at times to live with the ups and downs of daily community life.

I will try my best to explain this. I find it challenging to identify or be aware of the relevance of religious life in the world today when what I do isn’t any different from others. To keep in the forefront my relationship with God is challenging in a culture of so much material goods, activities, etc. I guess it could best be described as the challenge of living contemplatively in the midst of it all; to be contemplative for action is my deepest desire and also greatest challenge.

I wish leadership had more vision for the future – some are still stuck in decades-old culture wars and don’t put much emphasis in being 21st century women of faith.

I wish that women religious would take greater risks to be a voice for those who don’t have a voice. I wish that women religious would be aware of the need to more visible among the youth and young adults. I wish that women religious would be aware of the need to provide religious formation to the youths and young adults. I see that there is more an emphasis on action which loses sight of being guided by prayer and trust in God. I wish that women religious would

recognize the need to provide greater witness of community life and prayer life as expressed in living together in groups larger than four sisters.

I would never want to live outside of the community, but I must say that living with so many women can be a bit hard at times. :)

I would say that what is most rewarding and satisfying is also the most challenging – learning how to love as Christ does and daily conforming my life to his.

I wouldn't call my life challenging – except in the way that life is challenging to everyone regardless of their state in life and that is responding to the grace in the day-to-day living out of our life of faith. Difficulties arise when I take my eyes off the goal or too much of self gets in the way. My life is not all sweetness, but I do consider my vocation and my congregation to be a true blessing.

I'm older but young in this community, it is a difficult balance.

I'm one of the few younger ones so we don't have a collective voice. In other words, I'm usually out numbered.

In a way, the same thing that is most rewarding: the honesty with which one is confronted. Our personal growth in holiness depends largely upon how honest we are with ourselves in relation to God and to others – a depth of honesty, openness and humility is daily challenging – and daily rewarding.

In community life – to allow each other to be who we are. To accept diversity and see where we can complement each other.

In the six years since I entered religious life, the challenges have changed with (and sometimes within) every step of formation. Currently, as a first-year teacher I'm finding it hard to balance my prayer and active work for the apostolate...but I'm sure this will become more manageable with time.

Increasing ministry demands. Aging issues of membership – decreasing energy. Lack of opportunity to interact with my own age group/younger members.

Individuals who are prophets of doom or question the identity and charism of the congregation.

Individuals with mental illness.

Integrating my life of 45 years, prior to entering, with sisters who have entered at 13, 18, etc. Trying to integrate and share my spirituality into theirs. It seems it's more "their" side and my past is non-existent. Adhering to a formation program for an adult woman wanting to deepen into charism and life, but one who comes with a background and spirituality. Forming new relationship with sisters who have lived together 30-40-50 years. New ministries – non-teaching – sustaining life in monastery too.

Inter-generational issues. 1. Different expectations for community life on a local level. 2. Desire for changes – especially related to governance – on a congregational level.

Interpersonal relationships. Balancing time to effectively meet commitments and needs for self-care.

It is sometimes difficult to remain prayerful or committed to spiritual practices when the rigors of ministry fill the day.

Its so hard to love, understand and be faithful to each other if God doesn't do it in us...

Keep the vows

Keeping a balance between ministry, community and time for prayer.

Keeping a good balance between work/prayer/vocation/school, etc.

Keeping a healthy balance between apostolate and community/prayer life.

Keeping at it, distance from family.

Keeping everything in balance, prayer, ministry, community, family.

Keeping faithful to my daily prayer, living far from my family and the feeling of “giving up” on vocations some of my sisters have.

Keeping focused on what is most important. I came seeking God, but busyness often leaves me forgetting that. So I have to keep remembering what life in a Benedictine monastery is for.

Keeping the community schedule and yet being able to accomplish everything else on my agenda.

Lack of a developmental perspective towards religious life and consciousness growth especially within the institutional Church. The absolutism within the institutional Church in general.

Lack of communal living. Too much focus on aging and health issues. Talking too much about what to do and doing little.

Lack of communication and relationship problems in community.

Lack of focused direction; individuality.

Lack of honesty and courage to talk about the hard issues: community life that has changed – and living the charism in 2008. No encouragement to get involved in current social justice issues in the USA: immigration, Hispanics, politics!

Lack of other people my age/new vocations. Sisters not faithful to Church teaching or community living/prayer.

Lack of peer group. Generational divide on issues. Thankful for our lay associates.

Lack of peers in my age group.

Lack of peers in religious life.

Lack of personal commitment – seem to becoming more individualistic. “My needs are more important than the common good.”

1. Lack of support from the well-situated members of the institute. 2. Lack of identity. Sisters seem invisible both in the Church and the world. Extreme feminist movement.

Lack of support within community.

Large group prayer; being considered “young” even when old enough to have college age children; not being recognized for the gifts you bring.

Laying down my will for the sake of Christ, the good of others and for the common good as well. Putting away the old me and let Jesus take control of my life. Healing my heart and mind so that I might have the mind and heart of Christ, i.e., vices being pruned and virtues being planted.

Leadership and their lack of business professionalism and no management training.

Leadership pool – many of our leaders are not skilled or able to deal professionally with issues. A lot of fear and inability to solve problems – never seem to get along as a group.

Learning enough about the teachings of the Church on current Life Issues as applied to today’s situations, in order to have an accurate and understandable defense when they are challenged by those I encounter with differing views.

Learning how to deal with lay people without being judgemental and authoritative in teaching them about God and his ways.

Learning to balance the intensity of our prayer life with the intensity of our apostolate, and maintaining the first fervor.

Learning to be detached from family and friends. Overcoming my self-will. Daily annoyances in dealing with others/personality differences.

Learning to live in community after living alone for over 20 years – it’s also one of the greatest joys!

Learning to live with so many different Sisters with so many different backgrounds/upbringings.

Learning to live with, and love, first, myself, and then, sisters with whom I may not naturally get along with – yet this is also the great blessing of our life.

Learning to love all my sisters as Christ loves them.

Letting go of my control and letting God be in charge of me. I never really thought that I was a controlling person but I'm learning to let go.

Letting God take away my preoccupations about what holiness is for me and too often it's an image of my own making, rather than his image!

Life in community and self knowledge.

Life in community can be challenging, but it is also rewarding.

Life in community.

Like in every path of life there are challenges sometimes when I can not reach to what the Church and my institute demands of me in fraternal living as concerns charity and in my growth to sanctity.

Living alone, being a “sister mom” with three grown sons and two grandchildren and not having other “sister moms” to talk with.

Living and working among religious of various ages. (I'm the youngest in my house – the next youngest is nearly 30 years my senior.)

Living authentically in community (small). Accepting the difference between the vision/commitment/mission of the community and the actual lived experience, i.e., the human element.

Living closely in community is challenging and most rewarding in learning how to love God and neighbor over self. Learning how to accept setbacks in our mission.

Living community life in large groups. We are sent to a mission, we do not choose our suite-companions.

Living in a community life with so many different personalities.

Living in a community with different races and different in all aspects of life and to the people we are serving (aged persons). We will learn how to love and embrace difficulty. To remain poor while we are abundant materially.

Living in a small community of two or three.

Living in community – being away from family and friends and teaching and especially coaching H.S. sports.

Living in community – not having the time or the “ear,” the interest of others for sharing experiences, stories, etc. People are too busy!

Living in community and having all my failings and short-comings so easily seen to me. Community is the greatest blessing, outside of Jesus, and one of the greatest crosses because I am led to look at myself and change what is not compatible with charity or not Christ-like.

Living in community can be challenging. My Sisters and I are from different cultures and backgrounds. But, I must say that no matter what difficulties I have experienced, there are many more blessings. I have received a deeper understanding of how we are the Body of Christ. We truly share in each others’ joys and sorrows, and help each other to remember our first Love. We help each other to keep our eyes focused on Jesus. We must be convinced of the reason why we are here!

Living in community has been challenging – I am very easy going and get along with everyone – (usually!) but sometimes there is bound to be conflicts – and disagreements.

Living in community is my greatest challenge and greatest joy. Living out my vow of obedience can be very challenging for me.

Living in community with imperfect people! Judgment of some sectors of Church against non-habit-wearing religious.

Living in community with older sisters.

Living in community with other congregations. Choosing a household to live with based on location to ministry rather than personal needs.

Living in community with sisters who see community life very differently than I do.

Living in community with those whose formation pre-dated the changes after Vatican II.

Living in Community! To remain hopeful despite no new people entering today.

Living in community, subjection of will in obedience, sacrifice of a family.

Living in community.

Living in community. Finding common ground with others who may think quite differently from me.

Living in community. The old valued traditions of “niceness” over honesty and transparency of communication.

Living in community. The struggles we often encounter living with one another.

Living in larger local communities and absolving many of the responsibilities as a younger member.

Living in the world (even though in community) but not being a part of it, i.e., keeping myself apart in those life choices which could be positive or negative witness to others.

Living my vows as honestly and with the most integrity possible.

Living out love well in community with our variations on values/their expression.

Living out my profession in the everyday details is most challenging.

Living out my vows.

Living peacefully with 60+ women.

Living together with people who seem to share the same goal with you but not getting along.

Living up to our ideals. The Sisters!

Living up to the call of discipleship – the discipline required of any Christian.

Living with 17 women – moods and irritability of the younger ones – sometimes I feel I have my once teenagers back. Only difference now, as then, is now I have the patience that comes with age to ignore them.

Living with 19 sisters which can be very challenging as well as rewarding!

Living with 20+ other women of all ages and backgrounds in the same house.

Living with 40 other women. Lack of solitude.

Living with 40+ women with different personalities. Learning the unwritten rules and traditions.

Living with coherence what I believe and profess.

Living with different personalities who have their own ideas and views on life.

Living with integrity the particular vows, not compromising or choosing an easy route.

Living with older sisters no longer in the ministry – Their needs are so very different, like the amount of heat they need to be warm, however they also give a sense of faithfulness and stability to us too. Also they have valuable history, experience and wisdom. Some sisters are emotionally unstable.

Living with only one other person. Producing money in order to keep our ministry as the only Catholic institution supporting adults beyond the parish. There are no Catholic high schools nor colleges in this diocese.

Living with other people that may not have good communication skills and exhibit various co-dependent behaviors.

Living with other sisters in a community setting, it is my biggest challenge.

Living with other women who have grown up with such different backgrounds and experiences than me. Sometimes we misunderstand and even hurt one another, perhaps due to such various ways of thinking and responding in daily situations.

Living with others and their personalities.

Living with others in close proximity daily and abandonment to God's Holy Will.

Living with others in community when I lived alone for 25 years. Continuing to have hope in light of our declining numbers.

Living with others, communicating effectively. Living as a witness.

Living with people with whom I have very little in common or whom are poor communicators and base their impressions of me on unverified judgements/opinions.

Living with sisters that I would not choose to live with.

Living with so many varied personalities and trying to live the genuine spirit of communal life.

Living with such diversity in community (different personalities, different cultural backgrounds, etc.). Obedience, at times.

Living within community is both a blessing and a challenge.

Loneliness, distance from family, personal growth caused by formation which is challenging.

Loneliness.

Long incorporation process. Building relationships with fewer members and with many elderly and infirm sisters.

Maintaining a balance between service and self-care.

Maintaining a simple lifestyle while out on a mission amongst many who participate fully in the consumerist lifestyle. If only sharing how to be counter-cultural was as easy as sharing prayer and prayer life.

Maintaining the balance between the contemplative and active dimensions.

Maintaining the balance of being in the world but not of the world and its values.

Maintaining zeal and not falling into mediocrity.

Making deep and lasting friendships with my sisters in community life and loving each and every sister with her faults and failings as I want them to love me with mine.

Making friendship with the different personalities.

Making sense of it in this time, in this world.

Making time to always pray.

Many people both within and outside the Church choose not to understand and support those who have given their lives to serve God and His Church.

Many personalities all trying to work together for a common goal.

Many sisters are too settled and comfortable and really don't seem interested in looking at how middle class/privileged we've become. It's also hard to "break into" the established groups/cliques. Newer members could use more support and direction – we want to serve but it's almost like we're invisible at times.

Many sisters look to the old ways of living and being. This is not the current reality that I see. I think we need to think outside the box if we are to attract others.

Me. Within the great scheme of things and lofty ideals, simply put I must know myself and grown in sanctity. If I am to serve God, the Church and my community I am not disturbed by obedience, poverty, or chastity. They are all three such great gifts. But I must know myself. I may add that being a superior can be a challenge because I must weigh carefully what is best for the sisters I serve.

Meeting the challenges of a culture of death society. Providing for people searching (hungry) for the Truth – God!

Meeting the challenges of today's world from a faith based perspective in light of a world where individuality and moral relativism is the norm and emphasized.

Ministry – at times, balancing work and prayer.

Missing my friends.

Most challenging for me is being away from family and friends.

Most challenging is my personal weakness which at times hinders the great work of God that He would do in and through me. The good thing is that when I surrender my weakness to Him, His power can be made even more manifest in me.

Moving into a situation in which all the other sisters already know each other well and have their ways of doing things.

My inability to love all fellow sisters.

My limited ability to be for others.

My most challenging part of community was coming to community with over 30 years of experience in the secular world. I feel they are becoming more open to new members' experiences.

My own personal shortcomings which become evident as one lives in community.

My own selfishness.

My own sinfulness and unattainable expectations (I set them too high for myself and others).

My own ways.

My own weaknesses: to renew my dependence on the grace of God each daily with total abandonment.

My work, it is difficult and demanding. I can only do it by living a life of faith in God, that this is where He wants me to be now.

Myself and how quickly I can turn my heart away from God.

Myself.

Myself.

Myself. Beyond that, in some ways, it's all a challenge and that's some of the point. It's a challenge to surrender, but that's what I most deeply desire.

Myself. Learning to die to self will, but then I have never known such freedom and peace as I know now.

N/A

Newer members who are focused on turning back the clock, putting us back in habits and living community life as it was. With diverse ministries it is difficult to be "present" when the clock strikes "6." The challenge is finding oneself and loving oneself as a person called by God to mission.

Not all sisters are treated equally. Too much hierarchy control with little to no input from the sisters.

Not always choosing holiness, or seeing needs of my co-sisters before taking care of my own.

Not always having a choice, but putting my life in someone else's hands.

Not being able to help my children and see them as much. Lack of independence in community – too much dependency on leaders.

Not being able to see my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, perhaps when I retire!

Not being free to do as I would like when I would like to do it. Waiting for your superior for decisions that pertain to you. Not knowing what you will be doing until they make a decision then it is brought to you to talk about.

Not being listened to by my higher superiors. I also find obedience hard at times, especially when I don't understand why I am being asked/told to do something.

Not being the saint we're called to be right away. We must be patient with ourselves.

NOT changing as quickly as I would like and following Church teachings – example – no women priests (I'm for it).

Not comparing myself to other sisters.

Not getting personally lazy in my living of virtue and the vows, keeping my whole vision supernatural, the sacrifices that are required to build deep relationships with sisters.

Not having more younger members to share the experience with...perhaps this is only heightened because there are so many that are significantly older. Also, we are not as removed from the "world" as others before us once were. I would not change this at all but it does add to the counter cultural tension. I also think it makes us more real.

Not having sisters around my age. Lack of support or encouragement from members. Older sisters being jealous of the "young sister."

Not having the support of the leadership team. Lack of communication. Not being able to have the means for our ministries (work).

Not knowing how to manage the time-struggling with the word "no." Engage with too much activities outside community to the point that if I am not doing it, nobody will. Wrong perception. The world will still spin without me.

Not letting the secular mindset enter in, keeping a balance, not let the apostolate become the focus.

Not living the life of the world, but striving to live the sentiments of Christ. The world does not understand this and can try very hard to pull you away from fidelity to God and the Church as well as works of charity, especially when the world is out to get what they want. Whatever makes one happy.

Not taking back (in little or big ways) the gift of self freely given as well as certain aspects of community life.

Not to have enough time for studying for the courses that I had started.

Not too much young people is religious recently. The American culture is huge different than Catholic teaching.

Novitiate

Now – the acceptance in the Diocese of women religious – the need to live alone.

Number of members with significant psychological baggage – "ME" attitude of younger generation – young members don't know how or want to work hard.

Obedience – I am a product of the culture I lived in – independent. I struggle to not take back my will which I have given to Jesus by my vows.

1. Obedience is challenging, submitting my will to the will of another. 2. Living in community can be challenging since we all have different personalities, backgrounds, etc. 3. Living a life of chastity, having a pure love for God alone, can be a challenge.

Obedience (but this is also one of the greatest graces). Community life (but this is also one of the greatest graces).

Obedience is very challenging. I often feel very keenly that I am unable to make decisions on my own. I sometimes feel controlled and a lack of freedom. Chastity is very difficult. In spite of the difficulty, the Lord has always given me the necessary grace to be faithful and persevere. I love my consecrated life.

Obedience to His will, and seeing how humans convey it. But “In His will is our peace” (Dante?) Basically, seeing the supernatural with the eyes of faith in the “natural” of community life and apostolate.

Obedience, but also a great joy.

Obedience.

Obedience.

Obedience. All of my challenges revert back to this...and pride.

Obedience. Disconnect and lack of coherence of vision of religious life.

Occasionally, community life.

Offering the sacrifices.

Opposition of the current culture/society, often times we don't experience the immediate fruits/results of our works.

Opposition to the Catholic Church.

Other peoples' expectations of what a Catholic sister should be. I live in Arizona in an area where Catholics are in the minority. The area is predominant Mormons and fundamental conservatives.

Our community has high elderly population. There are only nine members under 65. There are no peers to relate with (Baby Boomers) and younger people are seemingly looking for more traditional religious lifestyle, which is not something I want to be part of.

Our contemplative/active life often brings with it a tension which given our apostolate of education and the seemingly ceaseless “doing” leaves less energy for “being” – which is what was the attraction to religious life in the first place.

Our institutional relationship with the Church and its teachings about women in the priesthood and participatory “rites” of Eucharist are also a challenge due to their inflexibility.

Our profession of stability (I love to travel) and poverty (I’m “Imeldific” – (re: Imelda Marcos) on a monastic budget!)

Our relationship with – and struggle with – the patriarchal, hierarchal Catholic Church.

Our small congregation became part of a new 850 member congregation that has no resemblance to our former community. Now we are, as a corporate body, more concerned with “non-religious” things like saving the earth and “undoing” racism...sadly, the “new congregation” seems to have ceased to be religious.

Overcoming my own self-centeredness and pride in order to give my all to the Lord.  
Community life.

Overcoming my own tendencies towards sin.

Overcoming personal ambition and pragmatism. Obedience.

Over-emphasis on ministry/work. Newer members have little voice in institute because other age cohorts dominate in number.

Patience required in ongoing dialogue. It’s what I most appreciate and what I find most challenging.

Peaceful solutions to conflict management!

People who do not communicate or function in mature authentic ways.

Perfect poverty, perfect chastity, perfect obedience.

Perfecting myself as a member of our religious community.

Perseverance.

Persevering, but faithfully. Secularism can creep into the convent’s window and it is a battle to remain faithful to our vows the way Jesus expects us to. But that is what makes religious life so exciting, the challenge, the opportunity to grow in mature young adult religious women, be authentic, holy.

Personal balance between prayer, study, community, physical well-being (sleep, exercise), and the demands of the apostolate. The vow of chastity requires constant vigilance and prayer, but the struggle is worth fighting to belong totally to Christ and His Church.

Personal faults and failings of my own. Challenge of “time” now culturally affecting everyone.

Personality clash in small community.

Personality conflicts and the struggle to balance a demanding job and a balanced prayer and community life.

Personality conflicts when living together in community.

Prayer – being faithful to it. Community life – that’s where we grow in holiness.

Prayer and balance with mission. Community life.

Probably community life, although I could not exist without it! Living with eight other women of different ages can be trying even though we are all seeking the Lord! Familiarity, also sometimes breeds a lack of encouragement for one another – something I noted in my response to questions. We “expect” each other to be doing “fine.”

Projections onto me about “nuns” from non-religious.

Pursuing my desire in continuing my religious vocation as a nun especially when somebody puts you down, somebody misjudges you that I cannot persevere my vocation since I’m young and have lots of opportunities out there. The temptation of loving someone at your opposite sex.

Pushing myself to sacrifice and dealing with my selfishness.

1. Pushing myself to be self-given to those who may need my help or my time. 2. Being separated from my family. 3. Confronting the world on the life issues.

Rampant radical feminist leadership took over, and is intolerant of all other viewpoints – even though the majority of the house does not hold this view. If it continues this house will close in spite of vibrant ministries.

Reconciling the undervalued role of women in leadership in the Church.

Recreation in community.

1. Relating in a close way to others of different ages and backgrounds, although this is also a blessing. 2. Obeying one another without grumbling. Living in peace with decisions made by the community that I may not have agreed with.

Relationship in community life. Learning to be self gift always.

Relationship with the institutional Church.

Relationships, personal growth, fewer members.

Religious life is so counter-cultural that it's hard to be living in a different lifestyle than most of mainstream America. This is especially true when religious values are being replaced with secularism.

Religious life challenges to grow and to want to be better each day. It means to work everyday about accepting and loving the Sisters with whom I live and work, above all, to be faithful to God in everything I do. As we are having less sisters in our congregation, the younger generations feel more lonely and burnt out because of the responsibilities we are assuming and each year we are fewer in our local places.

Religious life is a call to follow the poor, chaste, and obedient Christ in radical way. I find it most challenging battling the relativism and self centered spirit that keeps people from forgetting themselves and following Christ.

Religious need to live "poverty," to be one with the poor.

Resistance to change. More talk than action.

Respond to the modern needs of our time with modern means.

Right now I find living with sisters much older than I to be my biggest challenge. I find being in active ministry as a Vocation Director to be extremely challenging among women who are retired from ministry and are too tired to see a future for community.

Right now, having just come out of the novitiate, I am working full time at a ministry that I don't prefer and one that is different from almost every sister's at the monastery who mostly minister in the same place. Because of this I am not included in much of what concerns the sisters regarding ministry and it is making the adjustment harder than it needs to be.

Right now, I live alone while at school. At this point, staying faithful to praying the liturgy of the hours and personal prayer is most challenging.

Rubbing off those rough edges is painful and constant. Takes a lot of work on my part. Mess up a lot along the way. God is patient and merciful. Can I be the same for myself?

Sacrifice of marriage and family, obedience.

Sacrifice, community life.

Same as above.

Same as above.

Same as above.

See above (#189).

Seeing the diminishment of my older sisters.

Self! Learning to grown in my capacity to love others unconditionally with Christ's love. Not getting in the way of God's will.

Self-knowledge, the desire to be holy and the suffering it takes to get there.

Self-renunciation, obedience. Understanding American sisters since I am a Japanese convert. I have to make a lot of adjustment to American lifestyle and Catholicism.

Serving God outside the monastery as a family as a family law paralegal.

Sharing community life with members who really have serious issues, but on denial forever.

Sharing community with my sisters. Staying focused on the "real." Dealing with an uncertain future while maintaining confidence.

Since I live alone getting together with other members without always be driving 100 miles to motherhouse. Often expectations of others that I'm somehow more knowledgeable about everything just because I'm a religious.

Since I was born after 1961 – after Vatican II – I tend to question why/analyze. I have grown/developed a peace to believe and not only agree because of the answer to the why.

Since I was employed for many years prior to entering the religious life, I have found adjusting to a greatly reduced income my biggest challenge. But I feel sure that given time, and God's help through my sisters, that I will be able to overcome this difficulty.

Sisters who seem not to comprehend what religious life is really about. Prior to Vatican II too much emphasis on work long hours; obey the superior, (not much room for responsibility in spiritual development nor maturing in a natural aging). Pope John Paul II in Essential Elements tells the truth of what religious life is about. Sisters in secular dress and doing their own life style are failing to witness Our Lord in His Public Life: two or three tunics (habits), company of 12, plain food.

Slow going...

Small number of vocations, uncertain future, to serve a secularized world that doesn't acknowledge any value in our vocation, the aging population among the sisters, community life.

The older sisters do not feel comfortable with faith sharing and spiritual conversation. I go outside my community to share with others about my journey and discernment with the Lord.

Small rules, limited visions, narrow mindedness.

So many different people who have their own ideas about what newest members should be doing and after living on my own taking care of myself, my car and my house, now I have to ask about everything. We're adults though and conversations are worthwhile.

So many feel discouraged about the future – I see it as a challenging time causes us to rethink and re-shape our life. Will religious life continue? Probably in new ways and forms.

So many things to do and so few to do it all . . . This can become rather draining, striving to “do” all you can!

Some of the constraints put on newer members by old traditions of behavior.

Some of the language used by the older sisters.

Sometimes communication is challenging with other members of my community.

Sometimes dealing with different personalities can be tough. People have different wants and needs, and negotiating those and sending signals can be difficult. Misunderstandings can undermine joy sometimes.

Sometimes I am lonely as I live far from some of my closest sisters.

Sometimes it can be challenging to live closely in Community with Sisters who are different from me.

Sometimes it is very hard to proclaim gospel values to young people and at times it is a challenge to receive new vocations.

Sometimes it seems that as religious (at least in my congregation) we are trying to do more and more with fewer people. I fear burnout. Our strong commitment to comply with the hierarchical Church sometimes creates challenges especially when I question that particular teachings seems incongruent with my understanding of God and gospel. It is challenging to be a religious at this time, especially when much is likely to change and some seem to want to hold tightly to what has always (at least in their lifetime) been.

Sometimes living in community is difficult because you have to learn to work intimately with so many different kinds of people. Sometimes the schedule is difficult and you may think you're never going to make it through the week but somehow the grace is supplied. Asking permission and being obedient can also be difficult at times.

Sometimes our actions do not match our words. We have become very much a part of the culture – (US) first world – and not counter-cultural as Jesus was/is. We need to stay at the edge with those who are marginalized – the poor.

Sometimes the Institute's limits as it faces challenges for the future in...caring for retirement needs of aging members which is very important. I don't mean to minimize this effort – but there is a desire for creating new ministries and sometimes the realities of numbers and needs hold us back.

Standing firm in an institute's charism when outsiders "attack us" with "shoulds" and expectations according to their agenda. Maintaining the balance when the apostolate becomes very demanding.

Staying faithful to a Church which seems to be more and more out of touch with the Catholic faithful.

1. Staying recollected – spiritual vision. 2. Daily dying to self – I'm still human and fall but get back up again.

Surrendering my own will to embrace that of Christ. Abandoning personal faults in exchange for virtue. How little one can accomplish in a day, disorganization, the politics of finding out who to ask first. Being genuine in every aspect of my person. Being away from family and home surroundings.

Surrendering to the will of God in religious obedience. The separation from family. Patience with myself in conversion and growth and weaknesses that can only be overcome by grace. Dying to self.

Surrendering my own will and living on a supernatural level.

Sustainability of older members and maintenance of property and issues of sustainability of our congregation and all its ministries.

Talk of returning to more traditional, conservative practices. The inequality of women in Church structures. The daily challenges of living in community and balancing the rest of life – i.e., ministry, family, prayer, leisure, study.

Talking with religious/Catholics who think religious life is dying – trying to remain both traditional (in best sense) and relevant.

Tension in living vowed commitment, especially poverty.

That I am not free to go and do as I would want. I am bound in charity which is always a joy and a struggle.

That it is increasingly secularized. That we no longer emphasize common life, living together, common good, common prayer. That we are not generally passionate about vowed life. It's a challenge to be faithful in face of a death wish. The Church is a challenge – but so is the anti-Church, anti-canonical status movement.

That some members believe religious life is dead and want to see associates as our future. I am yearning for a revival of what vows mean/can be in the future.

That the actual culture sometimes tries to get inside religious life. And don't understand the real meaning, so we have to walk against it.

That the schedule doesn't always promote "much" free time. Struggle with finances and vocations entering. How long/process it takes for things to happen or change.

That there are few younger/newer members who have experienced the formation process. In other words, we don't carry the stories of the past, didn't experience Vatican II (we live it), and we have a different background of experiences that can sometimes be dismissed or overlooked.

That there never seems to be enough hours in the day to complete all that needs to be done.

That we don't choose each other, hurt each other.

The "tired faith" of so many other religious brothers and sisters; the divisions in the Church, especially of those communities that do not follow the teachings of the Magisterium; reaching out to young people who do not believe in a perpetual commitment.

The "we've always done it this way" mentality and the fear of dying, if changing and not truly trusting the Spirit.

The "work" it takes at times to come to consensus corporately at times I am overwhelmed by the number of meetings.

The "world" can be a powerful temptation and is hard to leave.  
The affective area. To keep focus in Jesus like your true loving Spouse.

The age difference and the bitterness about the Vatican II changes that some members have.

The age difference.

The age disparity and the seeming discomfort with embracing the identity of Catholic and Sister by others.

The age of our community members. We have 62 members, but only seven of us are under 70. It is very hard to accept that I will see most of my community die within the next 10-20 years. I also have a hard time with the very tiny monthly stipend with which we are to get all clothing and necessities except food and medicine.

The age/culture gap – most sisters are well over 30 years older than me – we are mutually challenged by our differing customs, eating habits, the way we speak (esp. the speed!), what we do for entertainment, some our values, etc.!!

1. The aging of our membership is difficult because we are not able to continue to minister as we have in the past. This requires restructuring. 2. The sense of individualism, entitlement and “needy-ness” that are more a part of our lives now. 3. Respectful and honest dialogue needed for authentic community discernment.

The aging population and the apparent disappearance of religious life as a life form.

The apparent refusal to change with the times. Things like cell phones and credit cards are not typical in the USA province of my institute. There’s a huge demographic hole (25 years separates my entrance from the next-older sisters’s entrance) and a suspicion of anything “new.” Hugely irritating and at times infantilizing.

The balance of contemplative and active life.

The balance of prayer and work.

The balance of work and prayer is a challenge.

The balance of work and prayer is what attracted me to the Sisters. However, I find it hard in my life to balance them both most of the time. Community life in general is harder than I thought it would be. Not feeling supported and/or heard is hard.

1. The beauty and the possibility for growth that results from our life in common having been noted, our life in common is also a huge challenge – clash of generations, clash of CULTURES (urban v. rural, south v. north, closed v. open mentality) even within the same country. Incapacity to relate maturely – seeming lack of interest in learning to relate maturely. 2. Administrators/superiors more concerned with ministry than with sisters who minister.

The biggest challenge is balancing the demands of work with the need for prayer and time with the community, in a non-work related setting. Second, the biggest challenge is to deal with conflicts among members of the community in a constructive way.

The blessing and the challenge are the same – community life. Our apostolate of education is increasingly demanding.

The call to be faithful to prayer, to continuing to discern the Spirit’s lead in our times rather than become too comfortable or used to routine. Other challenges – to respect the needs of community members when these needs are different from my own. It is also a challenge (especially with a charism of unity) to be seen as “different” or treated differently in the workplace because I’m now “sister.” Another difficulty is balancing time commitments –

community meetings, formation days, retreat, family visit all within two weeks of paid vacation plus an additional week for which I negotiated.

The challenge now is at 84 my mind wants to do more but find my body doesn't cooperate, seeking a deeper prayer life, and learning how to meditate. They are very good in giving me time with my children as some live near me.

The challenges vary over the years. In my 30s and 40s, the vow of chastity was the most challenging. As I enter my 50s, I'd say the most challenging aspect is the vow of obedience.

The change from independent, "self-sufficient" living to learning the beauty and challenge of community life.

The communal aspect. Leadership trying to fit everyone into a box.

The complacency and apathy of many members.

The compromise with living with other people. I am accountable to people of my comings and goings. I have been independent for so long, it is an adjustment. There is more flexibility than I had thought and much more freedom. Not sure how this is different from the real world.

The constant call to greater perfection and generosity.

The constant conversation about "aging." It is almost like an excuse sometimes to slow down and opt out of things.

The constant enticement to be lured into the consumeristic mindset of our society.

The continual challenge to nurture and deepen my God relationship – a challenge for which I am deeply grateful.

The daily challenge to love more selflessly.

The daily challenges of doing God's will – but this is not a negative thing, it is what makes us saints.

The daily gift of self to others.

The day to day "yes." Keeping all in proper perspective.

The delicate dance with the institution which I believe we serve best when we love and minister but are not blind to issues or silenced. This life empowers us to be positive energy for the Church, world, people of God. But to do all in love.

The demand of ministry and the constant effort to balance prayer and ministry.

The demands of the apostolate – much to do with limited time, resources, etc.

The demands of the apostolate and balancing my time. When I live with a “difficult” co-sister.

The development of virtue – becoming holy, dying to self.

The differences of opinion that members of my congregation seem to have about: attracting/inviting newer members, community living, lifestyle, our future as a congregation, relationship with the Church, various social justice issues (legal abortion, undocumented immigration being the two biggest ones that members seem to differ on).

The different takes (personal opinions) of how we are called to live this life – the inability to differentiate between essentials and non-essentials. I think this just boils down to communication and how older Sisters are afraid of the word “dialogue” with reason.

The difficulties come from my own selfishness and weaknesses, in relating with those around me with charity, yet when I bring my failures and difficulties to Jesus, he bears them with me.

The difficulty of balancing our community life with prayer life. Sometimes it is challenging to fulfill the obligated prayers and at the same time give the needed time to the apostolate.

The difficulty of having only two sisters on the missions. Not being able to open new houses because of few vocations who are teachers.

The diminshment and reality of the community. We are struggling with refounding.

The diminshment of age and the scarcity of community living options with vitality or newness (not just moving in with two residents of long-standing).

The disconnect between the life/the needs of the times and the Church.

The distance between who I am and who I ought to be – the drama of human life – is also the challenge of religious life. It is a path of exclusive dedication to Jesus, entailing renunciation of self and putting on Christ. What a beautiful call!

The diversity of the members in religious values, in living situations, in prayer importance.

The dwindling numbers – the lack of new members – I wonder about our future.  
The endless meetings.

The fact that I am so much younger (by about 20 years) than anyone else in the community, or any other sisters in other communities in our city. Nobody is currently in formation in our community (as a postulant or novice).

The fear of the future held by so many that seems to make us more careful than willing to take the risks we could be taking to meet the needs of God’s people.

The focus on work to the exclusion of quality community time.

The gap between ages. Community life. Cultural differences. The struggle to try or do something new or different (prayer, food, celebrations, etc.).

The great challenge (and gift) of religious life is a constantly deepening knowledge of one's own weaknesses and faults. Another challenge is finding balance between action and contemplation.

1. The healthy tension between desire for prayer and desire to spend more time in the apostolate.
2. In bigger communities it is easy to let others carry the load.

The holy perseverance.

The inability to help financially my poor cousins in the Philippines.

The inconsistency of living in the 21st century, yet operating or using formation ideas from the 19th/early 20th century.

The inner divisions in the Catholic Church, where the most challenge comes from religious, clergy, theologians, etc. who do not support the Magisterium, the truths of the faith and outwardly criticize or reject Church teachings, and fail to witness to the profound call to be an eschatological sign; or live as one ontologically changed in ordination.

The institutional Church, i.e., the hierarchy. Community life.

The journey with Jesus and community.

The judgmentalism of the Religious Right. The support given to the "more conservative" newer religious communities in our diocese by our bishops after our sisters' years of free service to the Church as parish teachers.

The lack of a unified vision and purpose...the challenge of diversity.

The lack of acceptance and support from my family and the distance from family and friends.

The immigration issues involved in my staying here. Confronting the real me. Lack of spiritual direction. The growing busyness of a big home and its responsibilities while our community dwindles in size. Having directors that may not want to be in their position or who aren't suitable for their assigned position.

The lack of common goals and mutual support that can exist within a community or between religious congregations.

The lack of community, the complacency among members and the diminishment of members is most challenging for me. Our congregation seems to be paralyzed by fear for the future instead of facing the future with enthusiasm, creativity, and outrageous optimism.

The lack of diversity and openness to other cultures.

The lack of interpersonal skill of the members for living within community. The rapid pace of life/culture that work against a humane focused contemplative life.

The lack of newer members – peer support.

The lack of support for “newer” members in terms of continuing education, preparation for leadership roles. We are in a “maintenance” role and support and providing for senior sisters but nothing is done to support us and prepare us for the future.

The lack of support, especially of major superiors. The bad example of some sisters. The lack of true community, and the emphasis on works and not on the person (spiritual growth and development, struggles, etc.).

1. The large distance from my family, 680 miles. 2. Living with people old enough to be my grandmother yet they behave so differently from what I was taught. 3. THE FUTURE: If I stay in religious life, who will push my wheelchair? If I leave religious life, who will push my wheelchair? Future uncertain – and that makes it difficult! 4. I am the only sister in this community to have made final vows in the last 10 years.

The little ways God calls me to step outside of myself in order to grow in relationship with Him.

The loneliness of our lifestyle.

The loss of earlier mentors through death has been hard. Not being among peers with whom you have a shared historical experience also is a challenge. It can be challenging to continually live with older sisters. They are dear wisdom figures. But the reality is you have to juggle many things – you can feel as if you need to support them (physically, spiritually, emotionally) at the same time you stretch yourself in a ministry where there used to be so many more sisters. Other challenges are the Church’s sexism, the frustration of seeing the effects of the sex-abuse scandal in the States, and the personality differences which can arise in community. We also need to get better at sharing our deepest experiences of God.

The loss of everything else.

The many challenges the Lord entrusts to us each day! Community life.

The most challenging about religious life, for me, is that the members of my congregation do not have “common” understanding of the secondary values of our life, such as wearing a habit or doing ministry together in a common project.

The most challenging aspect of religious life is the activity. It is very difficult to maintain a balance between prayer and apostolate.

The most challenging aspect for me right now is finding the balance between work, prayer and personal time, which is different for each person.

The most challenging aspect of religious life has been losing some of the independence I once enjoyed. However, this challenge has also been a blessing as I have found a much more expansive freedom in striving to follow God wherever and however He calls.

The most challenging aspect of religious life is community life. This is the most beautiful thing – but also the most challenging.

The most challenging aspect of religious life is the dying to self on a daily basis in living out my vows.

The most challenging aspects of religious life is that of the older sisters not always valuing the importance of our rule and being a visible witness. They feel sometimes they have served their time and somewhere they have lost that spark of when they said that first “yes!”.

The most challenging is how to love the religious vows to the fulness so I can be fully united to Christ and be an animated witness for others.

The most challenging part of community life for me is helping some of the older sisters understand that I can't always relate to “how things used to be”! Sometimes dealing with communication conflicts.

The most challenging thing about religious life for me is being able to attain holiness. Yes, it is a constant striving, but being holy and thinking about God without distractions is challenging.

The most challenging thing about religious life is a prayer life but also community living. It is difficult because you (I) have to give up my will and wants for the common good of all.

The necessary separation from my family is, at times, quite difficult and was one of my greatest challenges when I first entered.

The negativity of people as well as some religious.

The negativity of the older sisters. They have nothing to do all day. They need something to bring them out of themselves.

The Novitiate as it exists now in my congregation. The declining numbers of our congregation/declining numbers of active/able members.

The pace and demands of our apostolate of teaching.

The patience to wait. God is in control of my life and I must be open to His desire and movement in all things. The waiting is very important for reorientation of life in becoming a consecrated religious.

The persons in leadership who do not take into account – the experiences, age and needs of a religious who is older and re-entering a congregation. Leaders who do not welcome a person as members of congregation have – The conflict within the Church between bishops and religious women.

The pessimism about the future of religious life.

The picky – cutting – unsupportive shaming – belittling – cutting down of others – gossip – power ploys – cliques – women just being women and not rising above the petty stuff to our higher callings.

The prayer life.

The process of decision-making. I look at a problem, make a decision and move on – in community, the process is long and tedious – I work hard at being patient with people who need to process forever.

The rate at which members are dying due to age vs. numbers entering.

The restrictions in regards to “social” life.

The sacrifice of self – I don’t belong to me, I belong to the Church. It is something I have to remind myself of often.

The same things that are challenging in other Christian vocations, that is the challenge of growing daily more self-less and giving. It is a beautiful life.

The schedule at times. Loving others the Lord uses to purify you.

The schedule since it always seems so busy. The balance of a healthy lifestyle. Missing out on having fun by playing sports on a team or at least another person. The many meetings you are required to go to and the various people that you need to sit down and meet with.

The seemingly constant changes permitted to take place.

The silence.

The slow but necessary progress of going from “I” to “we” in my general attitude and daily opportunities for sacrifice and charity.

The spiritual battle of fighting the enemies of self-pity, unforgiveness, misdirected anger, bitterness, resentment is the most challenging. It’s so easy to fall into these temptations and to

think my enemies are other people or my sisters – but the only real enemy is the devil and his weapons of destruction.

The struggle to be authentic, faithful and open to God's spirit and at the same time not get caught in the "doing" that goes along with apostolic life.

The tension between those with a contemporary (adult) formation and those who were formed in a hierarchical parent/child formation.

The transitions and the isolation experienced at times by a young woman going through formation without peers in her community or sisters that can really relate to her experience.

The true labor of love in developing and seeking to maintain sisterly relationships so as to remain a true "community" and so as to give witness to the world of the work of unity which is the one mission of the Church – the mission of Jesus Christ who came to earth to draw all people to Himself.

The vow of obedience – internally accepting all that is daily asked of me without questioning the other's motives and without complaining. I pray daily for docility to God's will.

The vow of obedience.

The vow of obedience.

The vows are challenging in a community going through an identity crisis in fear of not getting more members. Some members dilute the significance of the vows as a way to commit to each other and the mission. A lot of talk about non-canonical or doing away with the vows but no theological or thoughtful conversations on what that means or is it in the best interest of the institute? Ministry in an age of diminishment where focus is no longer on mission but survival. Finding ways to belong to an established group not necessarily interested in welcoming newer members.

The vows can be challenging at times, of course, but not overly so.

The vows, community life, self awareness, openness in relationship with God.

The vows.

The way of the cross, overcoming obstacles to being a pure instrument of the Holy Spirit.

The world cannot make sense of our life and I think at times, in order to make our life seem less shocking, we attempt to make it look more like everyone else's life. Yet that robs the world of the religious witness. I think the challenge is to remain true to our religious life and not be afraid to let our lives give witness to Christ.

The youthful, joyful members (my own contemporaries) have not remained in religious life over the years. Our institute does not seem to encourage its younger members enough, nor is there sufficient means of ongoing formation or training in the area one is asked to contribute. Since the incoming number of vocations has diminished, there needs to be a balance between expecting too much and activism so that the spiritual and founding mission are not jeopardized. There is too much of an age difference between us of first vows or perpetual vows and the jubilarians we live with. Some sisters within the same community are 35, 40 or more years our senior; over half the members of the community are golden jubilarians. The actual living out of our consecrated life in an aging community tends to be watered down at times or is adjusted to accommodate our senior members, thus forcing us to fend for ourselves. We younger sisters are a minority; we need support and must continually stimulate ourselves so as not to be complacent or get stuck in a routine. Our particular institute cares for the elderly in the apostolate. Our convents are attached to our facilities and now we care for the elderly sisters in our convents as well since there is no retirement center. Another challenge is that not enough opportunity is given to our generation for furthering education or even simply using our gifts. It may be helpful to offer more workshops, conferences or enrichment programs to Sisters who are not only Major Superiors or Formators so that we too may grow spiritually.

There are not a lot of younger members so it is harder to bond at times with older members. The challenge is to speak for myself and my needs instead of being “mothered” all the time.

There is no respect from laity people like it used to be. The respect and reverence for priests, religious are no longer.

There is not enough time to be alone.

There really isn't anything that difficult. I think it is all in how you look at things and the acceptance of what God is asking of you at that time in faith.

There seems to be a crossroads now – the Joshua generation! The younger generation will never be heard if the old ways cannot be let go of. To be heard – to have a voice – community is a struggle when so many are “tired” don't want to “do-it” anymore. To hear the past hurts still being voiced and sort of projected on the stronger ones – treated as if I was a child when I am over 50 in such an older population. **HAVING A VOICE!**

There still seems to be some confusion on the role of religious life – even among religious! The division and debates are a challenge.

There's a real lack of understanding or interest in the potential contributions, insights and gifts of newer members within my congregation, and a disturbing and discouraging lack of ability to imagine or plan beyond the lifetimes of the dominant cohort (people currently between 65 and 75 years old). Our communities need to make an “option for the young” a value.

These are challenging times in every way. The median age in my community is 75 and we spend lots of time talking about assisted living and budgets – that's a downer for me. People are willing to listen to me about ideas and dreams but my leadership team has failed to “show me the

goods.” I am overworked in my ministry (partly my fault) because I have to fulfill expected goals and then try to make real the programs and dreams I have for my ministry. I am also the sole caregiver for my mother. On another note the diocese I live and work in is almost bankrupt, parishes are closing and things are just a mess. We have a bishop who is not a big fan of lay leadership and thinks deacons are the answer to everything. Shall I go on?!

Thinking of the future and the financial responsibility we as younger members will have to support the community and the lack of support from the Church.

Those times when the sisters sit around and talk about the “good old days” I feel as though my formation experience is not always honored or there is no interest to know what it was like.

Time for personal prayer with busy schedule.

Time management-balance.

Time pressure problems.

Time! For it all.

To attract young ones to religious life and promoting vocation. By adapting the advanced technology, be knowledgeable, use it properly with lots of discernment to reach out the prospective candidates to religious life, use it for evangelization and proper communication. To be better or best every new day. To be most close to Jesus, Mary, and the continual education.

To be credible witnesses of the Gospel, to have a clear charismatic identity.

To be faithful for my religious life and my small and big (institute) communities and give myself totally in ministry to others.

To be free enough as to be able to give to God what belongs to God, and to the world what belongs to the world. In other words, to have God as the center of our life, to live for Him and in Him, and not be afraid to give ourselves to others, to the world, but not letting the world’s way of thinking and attractions deceive us.

To be seen as an adult, to be respected for who I am. Community life. Hard to enter into communities with sisters being close friends for years.

To be what we are supposed to be. To really feel consecrated people to God in all circumstances. To be complete humans.

To control self when not feeling well or stressed out so as not to act in a manner that may scandalize someone.

To daily die to self so not to take back the gift I offered to God – not to take back or desire things I gave up for the love of God.

To empty myself in following Jesus in order that he really prevails over all I am and do and his grace could act more freely in loving as he does each person to be a real witness of his redemption.

To give more...live generosity to the fullest sense.

“To give God what is his and to Cesar what is Cesar.” I think sometimes we (religious) forget for what we came to religious life. We need always to go back and think how God loved us first and do not forget his love for us and his mercy.

To guard and grow in my consecration by not letting myself be absorbed with “the things of the Lord” but with the Lord of all things, in this world of ours that is always “on the go” and asking for results and accomplishments.

To live a life of fidelity and responsibility in the contemporary and consumeristic world.

To live a spirit-filled life – to be a messenger of peace in an active ministerial life – to adhere to Christian tenets of justice. Thank you.

To maintain healthy balance of self-care, ministry, community engagement and prayer life, including spiritual and intellectual, personal enrichment (which is on-going formation, but expected to self initiate and not always supported time-wise and financially). Also lack of trust among sisters to engage in healthy faith sharing.

To read the signs of the time, and its culture. To incorporate contemporary theology into daily life; include daily renewal of my vows to the language of love, commitment and service.

To remain faithful to love every moment of everyday – to keep our eyes on God at all times.

To strive to a greater donation of ourselves to the Lord in radicalism which is nothing else than holiness. I believe that the Church today needs to see the true light in us religious. Our world is searching for God and they want to see Him in us as consecrated. I feel that my way will be to fill my self completely with God and bring light to all souls in order to bring them to Him.

To try and balance contemplation and action.

Trying to balance work and prayer.

Trying to defend the “indefensible” in the institutional Church.

Trying to form relationships with others in community.

Trying to get along with sisters I find most challenging to live with. It's hard to bear one another's weaknesses in mind and body. It's challenging to make ends meet with an allowance of \$40 a month for the last 10 years.

Trying to help others understand that joining our community and being a religious is awesome.

Trying to incorporate varying opinions on religious identity into our common life together, accepting one another and yet not losing one's own ideals and sense of call from God for a purpose.

Trying to live a balanced life with relationships, prayer, community, apostolate is a challenge.

Trying to live the life of poverty – keeping the focus of Christian living in sight – trying to be kind to others – when I'm tired – understanding some of the ways of behavior of other members in my congregation.

Trying to love and understand the Sisters I work with and following my vow of obedience.

Trying to mend wounds and misunderstandings among laity and priests about religious life, often caused by religious who were/are antagonistic toward legitimate authority within the Church and toward the Church's teachings. Also, my own weaknesses are a source of great challenge.

Walking the fine line of respecting the administration/leadership/"elders" and challenging with where I feel we are called to grow. The questions of the "young" can be ignored or challenged by those in 70-60 especially.

Watching my own community's leadership and a number of the membership (in the province) just as so many women's communities in the U.S., become so liberal. Almost as if they no longer wish to remain Catholic.

We are seen to be invisible. I live with sisters from one of our hospitals. I work in Hospice as a chaplain so I do not work in our institution. I can not tell you how many people tell me "there are no nuns at that hospital." In reality there are eight but people don't identify them.

We heard something about self-care in the novitiate. What in the world is that? I am challenged by trying to balance caring for my aging parents with community life, ministry, nurturing friendships inside and outside of community, continuing formation and formal education, as well as caring for a personal chronic medical condition. Both of my parents were "healthy" when I entered seven years ago. They have declined significantly since that time.

We need to be firm in our faith and our calling. The world and its views are all over, and we need to be careful in keeping the Church's teaching and living our own charism to the fullness. Sometimes all the world's thinking infiltrate in our religious communities, making life harder and more superficial. We need to be completely identified with our vocation and in the place we have in the Church.

Wearing too many hats – amazed able to do more than I thought.

What I find most challenging is the conflict I experience between 1) my desire to welcome women to join us in service to God's people, and the Church (knowing the wonderful gifts we have received from God through Christ and the Church). And 2) my hesitation to invite women when women in our Church are still considered second-class citizens in the Church in areas of ministry like preaching or presiding or sharing the sacraments.

What I find most challenging is the fidelity on a daily basis to living our religious life well. I am very aware that the preservation of the fidelity to the religious life and to the Church that first attracted me to this Congregation depends on my fidelity. It is hard at times to live the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience well amid the constant temptations of a secularistic/materialistic /individualistic culture (outside the institute).

What I find most challenging right now is the difficulty in balancing the many needs of ministry, the daily community and prayer time and the numerous province meetings/activities. There are fewer active sisters to sit on the committees and yet the work seems more these days as we look at restructuring with other provinces and meet to continue to nurture the life and spirit of our congregation.

What I find rewarding is also what can be challenging in that you need to "work" continually on keeping the lines of communication open when you live this lifestyle – to accept the humanness of each other and most importantly yourself can be challenging at times.

When I first entered the distance between the motherhouse and my family home (over 1,000 miles) was the most challenging thing. Now the most challenging thing is being in relationship with the institutional Church, particularly as the Church is so exclusive of women.

When I focus on the weakness of a Sister, I see the negative, and I struggle in accepting the weakness and how to build up the spirit of communion.

1. When the members in different culture. 2. When we transfer to other community or places (in same institute).

When there is lack of unity about the living together, wearing the habit, praying together in the same community.

While community life is one of the most rewarding and enjoyable parts of religious life, living, eating, praying together is a gift, but human relationships can also be challenging.

Wondering if I am doing enough. Questioning my decisions about living simply, what more can I do? I don't always understand or relate to actions or decisions made by others in my community. I wonder where the motivation for such originates.

Working and living with a group of women of all different personality types is definitely the most challenging for me.

Working through my own self-knowledge.

Working with a growing base of conservative clergy in parishes within the Institute. The dynamic judgement as to what is considered a “legitimate staple” of community living. The witness value of “group.” Finding sisters who want to invest in additional deeper relationships.

Worldly allurements and the temptation to go in for cheap discipleship.

Your life is not your own – it is not a matter of likes/dislikes but God’s will.

### *Contemplative Men*

1. Adaptation to the new style of life. 2. That even though I have several brothers around, the searching for God is a personal effort. 3. Is not easy to find a spiritual director.

After 17 years, my vocation remains a mystery for me. But I live it in complete faith – trust in God that He is leading me in and through this mystery. Individualism – lack of communal understanding of common vision is probably what discourages most newcomers and makes community – religious life very challenging.

As a novice, navigating different personalities with a tight-knit community.

Community life and an abbot who seems to me to be ruled by fear.

(1) Community life. We all need “healing.” It is challenging but also a blessing in disguise. (2) Newcomers to our life. They lack a childlike spirit that accepts formation in faith. They analyze, criticize, and judge according to their own experience, ideas, and accept or reject as they see it. They lack simplicity to believe without seeing or understanding. They lack faith, thanks to our secular, materialist society.

Community living.

Living in community under obedience in all things.

Living in community.

Living its prophetic dimension amid current crisis, within and without, with hope.

Living with people who are unhappy and who manifest no sign of vocation.

Manual labor due to my aging stage.

Other people: However, I am aware that the challenges that others give me are crosses that Christ wants me to bear to lead me to sanctity.

Silence and solitude.

Spiritual growth (i.e., not getting distracted by others' fervor or tepidness).

The declining number of vocations. Lack of a real cohort group in formation. An aging and aged community where the next closest to me in age is twelve years older than I. Increasing work loads and stress due to declining numbers (either from death, departures, lack of new entrants).

1. The failure to confront issues pertaining to healthy community living and a tendency to capitulate to problematic and domineering personalities in the interests of maintaining "peace."
2. Living with members with significant personality disorders who nonetheless are entrusted with positions of influence and responsibilities.

The separation from family and friends was the most challenging thing in my early years. Now I feel challenged to keep improving my spirituality and not become too complacent.

Time and work required to keep a community going which is often at odds with the simple life aims to live. Diversity of opinion. Different formations as to how life is meant to be lived.

### *Contemplative Women*

Accepting correction with humility. Being detached.

All the challenges of living 24-7 around 15 other women. The dailyness of the demands. Keeping centered and balanced about life and living "the life" in a mindful, aware way.

As a superior. Temporal concerns. Living of spiritual.

As religious life seeks perfection, remaining faithful to choosing God instead of self in all circumstances is difficult. The battle is interior. There are too those external circumstances, living and working with others, that can be challenging. "Your hair shirt may be sitting next to you." Fr. Carapi

Being a good religious in community life that is I find myself most challenging.

Being faithful to the constitutions and living a virtuous, Christlike life.

Challenge of growth in close community life.

Changing from the self of the world to a generous lover of Christ.

Community life and obedience, though these are the sources of most growth.

Community life is the greatest challenge since in a monastery we pray, play, work, and eat together. It is an intense enclosed life which severely limits the breadth of options for both relationship and distraction. We do go out (shop, take classes, visit family) but life is focused in a small group of people – all wounded and imperfect trying to live in love with God and each other. As a mother of three sons it is hard to be absent from formerly very important holiday celebrations of which I was the hostess.

Community life, living with a wide range of people from different backgrounds, 24 hours a day in close quarters, requires a great deal of self denial and sacrifice. Also, living a frequent spiritual life that requires constant vigilance and effort, in order to keep from slipping into the mediocrity or living on the natural plane.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community living – being patient with the various personality types, different styles of communicating, ways of being, etc.

Community problems (division, relationship problems, lukewarmness). Aging in my community. Uncertainty about the future. Demands of obedience. Societal misunderstandings about religious life.

Community, but I couldn't live without it. Sometimes the most challenging thing is yourself!

Cooperating with grace of God to overcome love of self and be an obedient child of the Father.

Death to self, life to God.

Detachment from family.

Doing things at the scheduled time.

Exactly! The flip side of the coin. Living with others who are very different – 24 hours a day – fun really, but quite challenging at times. Also keeping with the flow and the change.

External distractions as we are contemplatives. Coping with the aging process in myself.

Faithful to the commitment. Community living.

Finding young women willing to make commitment and who are balanced.

I find it very challenging to give up my own will and judgment to that of my Superior.

I find obeying superiors all the time most challenging.

I miss my family and home very much. However, I can call/write and we have a home visit each year. I find the “scheduling,” “structure” of monastic life challenging – would like more free time.

I must decrease and the Holy Spirit must increase.

I think it is community life and the differences of cultures.

I’m in a community with many members over the age of 70 and new sisters coming in. There are few of us “in the middle.” As formation director my job is to make sure the new sisters have solid formation. At the same time I’m needed to keep the life going, as it were. This tension is often very challenging.

In living with such a variety of women, sometimes we are not always “on the same page.”

In my community they haven’t a vocation that stayed in 30 years. So they’re very comfortable with each other – at times feel left out – or informed by traditions, etc.

In order to live, we all must die. The stripping of self is the most challenging aspect of this life, but it is by this means that we become united to Christ. By decreasing, He increases.

Ironically, the most challenging is the same as the most rewarding aspects. As part of a young, new religious community, large responsibilities must be taken on by us young ones rather than by seasoned, experienced religious as is usually done. It is remedied by time, patience, and perseverance, I know. Also being new, we must be careful about whom we admit, and discern with them. Charity is a great blessing, but difficulties in personalities always arise. We just persevere and grow together.

It seems that we are too busy for cloistered nuns. Also the community is aging.

Lack of orientation/religious spirit, poor leadership, irregularity at prayer and other community exercises, lack of ongoing formation and sense of mission.

Listening to one another and compromise with each other. Communication.

Living in cloistered community.

Living in community with those with various other backgrounds.

Living in community.

Living in community.

Many things are challenging in religious life and also in life in the world.

Me!! “Though the will to do good is in me, the power to do it is not...” Romans 7:19. This life demands a lot of faith to see beyond the daily grind to the supernatural aspect of life, and to not despair of our and other's failings.

Mediocrity among many religious (not referring to my own community, just a general observation that challenges me about my identity as a religious).

My family's reaction. My family was not supportive and my dad still refuses to visit, write, or call. It is very hard to break your parents' hearts.

My personal lack of virtue.

My sisters.

Myself, overcoming myself.

Myself.

Personal conversion in community life, a challenge which is an immeasurable blessing.

Pretty much everything; but: The intangibility and otherness of Him who has called us. It's a lonely life. Not keeping back for myself ANYTHING – handing all over to the Lord. This is hard.

Purifying motives (doing all for Love). Giving up everything entirely without trying to take anything back ever, thus perseverance, obedience, selflessness, generosity. There are many “hard things” but I want it so.

Relationships in community, striving for total selflessness.

Relationships with others in community. The English language is still difficult for me and this becomes a difficulty when communicating with others in community.

Relationships.

Relationships/community life: life lived with different characters, temperaments.

See above.

Separation from my family and limited contact with them; coming face to face with my own self and my concupiscence; learning to live in community and see Jesus in all my sisters and in the

people who ask us for our prayers; sometimes not knowing if my prayers are having an effect. And realizing that cloistered contemplative life is virtually ignored by the media and by organizations like CARA – gearing everything towards “active” life and ministry/apostolate and forgetting about us nuns who pray for the salvation of the world.

Striving for personal sanctity, a good challenge.

The 24/7-at all time and in every place you must be a nun lest you scandalize people.

The call to live the highest spiritual perfection; naturally speaking, this is the most challenging because it requires constant effort and self-denial – putting down the “old,” natural self and striving to be continually attentive and docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

The common life; interpersonal relationships. (In the first years it was enclosure, and separation from my family.)

The community life!

The concern about vocations and how to attract new members.

The lack of vocations and younger members in our community.

The most challenging aspect is probably our limited contact with our family.

The most challenging aspect of religious life, for me, was adjusting to the radical change in lifestyle. Coming from our modern culture of noise and activity it was hard, in the beginning, to be silent, prayerful and interior.

The most challenging element of religious life is never feeling worthy of being chosen by God for this life, yet knowing the great responsibility I have.

The need to be constantly and ever more completely self-emptying.

This life, there is the constant practice of living in perfect faith and confidence alone in God which will yield to the practice of all the virtues, most especially of charity to the purest and perfect love of Him alone.

1. To always have fraternal charity. 2. To accept and do well the responsibility given by your Superior. 3. To be cheerful despite hardships and trials.

To live the rule perfectly for the glory of God and salvation of souls.

To take personal responsibility for fidelity to my vows and to my rule Constitutions in areas where others may not be living them as I feel called to.

Transcending the weaknesses and frailties of my sisters in an intense cloistered environment!  
They are my biggest penance and my biggest joy!

Trying to get everything done in the time allotted. I must daily choose priorities and be flexible in adjusting my schedule to meet upcoming needs or events of the day.

What is most challenging for me is homesickness – just plain homesickness. I love being here and I would never leave, but I do miss my family, friends, activities, places to go, etc. very much. All for Jesus though; it is worth it for Him!

Within the cloistered setting accepting my own limitations and weaknesses as well as those of my sisters.

Witnessing fidelity to the Pope and the Magisterium.

### *Unclassified Women*

Being with sisters who think religious life is dying and live through an attitude of entitlement. This, for me, deadens community life. I don't believe that this is attractive to women who are searching. Finding healthy living communities to place candidates with. Also, healthy community living groups for myself. People often live alone or live in settings that become dysfunctional.

Re-entering as an older woman I am stretched in my ministry experiences. As a mother and grandmother I am also stretched to find the balance that works for all.

### *Unclassified*

Alone.

Balancing activity and prayer – I take time for prayer throughout the day. Work times are in small periods.

Balancing work and prayer/contemplation and action. Letting go of my selfish self-will and responding in love to others.

Being as close to God as possible.

Community.

Community dialogue. Relationships with a great variety. Miss family. Solitude – both a desire/need, but also how to balance it for self/others. Miss cerebral input – "brainfood" have been a scholastic forever. Finding my way in these challenges evokes the need for a good mentor who inspires and encourages.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life-some people hard to live with. There are so many expectations and responsibilities. So many things we have to do, meetings etc. Sometimes it gets in the way of individual spiritual development. Humility – I am too prideful. Fear about difficult obedience being asked of me.

Finding community to live with – most are well established and leave little/no room for newer members.

Finding that Western values and practices are always the yardstick in all areas of religious life. Trying daily to be faithful to the spirit of the gospel and finding for myself what the core of religious life is while trying not to get caught in trappings.

Inability to allow the young members of community a voice.

Institutionalism, strictness of common law, hierarchial church behaviors.

Lack of apostolic zeal. Dissent from teachings of the Church whether in a passive-aggressive way or by open defiance – as if the gospel were the problem. My own sinfulness.

Lack of younger generations in my institute. Its poor attitude to the larger Church (relationships of dioceses, attitudes towards Church teaching of some older members).

Living community with fewer members in active ministry and so many different ministries – finding time to be with community members.

Living in community with people of different ages, backgrounds, social-class, and nationality.

Living in community. Especially in my community that is very controlling and hierarchical.

Living religious obedience in a spirit of faith; growing in humility, allowing myself to be formed and directed; accommodating my own ideals and ideas about religious life to my superiors'/community's, also to the practical application in the concrete situation on the community.

Looking to the future how will we as a community continue our vision and mission with fewer members. We are currently engaging many affiliates with us in many aspects – boards, positions, ministry, etc. Perhaps this is the cycle of religious life – the dying and the rising.

Not having control of my own time.

Not much. There are challenges in all walks of life and the religious life is no different. Challenges make us stronger. They form us and help us.

Not to take the gift of a religious vocation for granted and to fall into the habit of routine in the schedule of daily life.

Obedience and dying to self.

People come or came and left. How will we look in another 10 years? How to seek out vocations when religious life is in a ready stance to look and be different?

Pressing/carrying/birthing the vision of the Foundation within the dynamic of many opting for less.

Self-knowledge.

That our practices don't seem to live up to our documents. That people from the 70s are so afraid of some practices like kneeling and Eucharistic Adoration. When these were normal practices for me before I entered.

The big challenge in my new community now is to learn this new language, customs, tradition and many other things which are different from my former community and in my country.

The fraternal life: the greatest blessing and heaviest burden.

The religious that have no obligation to be in active ministry. The religious that want to retire at age 65. The challenge in living with, caring for these religious. I have never been so happy in all my life. I am doing what Jesus did.

The support of each member – adaptive to their idiosyncracies like me.

Various ideas of what religious life should be and a focus on age rather than relationship with Christ and one another. We need a vision to work toward and grow into. This isn't an age issue.

We have become too middle class and worry too much about retirement.