

February 2019

***Women and Men Entering Religious Life:
The Entrance Class of 2018***

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

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men religious who formally entered a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States during 2018. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men (postulants and novices), the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted all major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 135 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a postulant or novice) in the United States since January 1, 2018. CARA then emailed or mailed a survey to each entrant, asking them to complete an online survey or mail their completed paper survey to CARA.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 530 of 753 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 71 percent among religious institutes. Six religious institutes were not interested in participating in the study. In all, 82 percent of LCWR superiors, 72 percent of CMSWR superiors, 71 percent of CMSM superiors, and 44 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 440 members that entered religious life in 2018.

Of these 440 identified women and men, a total of 308 responded to the survey by January, 2019. This represents a response rate of 70 percent among the new entrants to religious life that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Major Findings

Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

- Two in three responding religious institutes had no one entering religious life in 2018. Seventeen percent reported one entrant and 16 percent reported two or more.
- The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2018 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 25 or younger. Half (49 percent) are women and 51 percent are men. Eight in ten responding men religious expect to become priests and two in ten plan to become a perpetually professed brother.
- Three in four (75 percent) respondents were born in the United States. Altogether, respondents report 29 countries of birth. Of those born outside the United States, the most commonly mentioned region of birth is Asia, with Vietnam and Mexico emerging as the most frequently mentioned countries of birth. On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 19 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 11 years before entering religious life.
- Two-thirds of responding entrants identify as white, more than one in ten (15 percent) as Hispanic/Latino(a), more than one in ten (14 percent) identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, and less than one in 20 identifies as either African/African American/black or as “other.”
- Nine in ten respondents have been Catholic since birth. Eight in ten come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Almost all respondents of the Entrance Class of 2018 have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is one or two. Overall, respondents are typically the eldest child in their family.
- Two-thirds (66 percent) report that they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister who was not a family member while they were growing up. Another three in ten have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun.
- The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2018 were highly educated before entering. Half reported having earned a bachelor’s degree and about two in ten earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute.
- Members of the Entrance Class of 2018 are as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR, but they are more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (34 percent compared to 22 percent). In addition, entrants are more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic college/university. Men are more likely than women to have attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute while women are more likely than men to have been home schooled.

- Many respondents were active in parish life as well as other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. More than seven in ten respondents participated in at least one of parish liturgical ministry before entering religious life.
- More than seven in ten respondents participated in retreats. Just over six in ten participated in various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting.
- More than four in ten participated in a parish youth group, Life Teen, or campus ministry during their high school years. Slightly less than half participated in campus ministry during college.
- One in ten respondents participated in a National Catholic Youth Conference. Three in ten participated in a parish young adult group. More than three in ten participated in a Right to Life March in Washington. One in six participated in World Youth Day. Slightly more than one in ten participated in a volunteer program with a religious institute.

Vocational Discernment

- On average, respondents were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life.
- Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. More than nine in ten mentioned members of the institute, a spiritual director, other men and women religious, and/or a vocational director/team as at least “somewhat” encouraging to them when they first considered entering a religious institute.
- Between three-fourths and eight-tenths of respondents entering religious institutes report being encouraged at least “somewhat” by these sources outside of their families: people in the parish, friends outside the institute, campus ministers, and people in their school or workplace. Between six and seven in ten report being at least “somewhat” encouraged by their parents, siblings, and other family members.
- Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth and by a sense of call to religious life. Between three in four or more and seven-tenths were “very” attracted by these. About nine in ten women report that a sense of call to religious life attracted them “very much” to religious life, compared to about eight in ten men.
- About nine in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service and a desire to be part of a community. Between about six and seven in ten say each of these attracted them “very much.”

- About eight in ten were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church. Half say this attracted them “very much.”
- Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. About three in ten respondents report that they first became acquainted with their institute in an institute where members served, through the recommendation of a friend or advisor, and through their own internet search.
- Between one and two in ten respondents indicate that they became acquainted with their institute through the reputation or history of the institute, through working with a member of the institute, through a relative or a friend in the institute, through an event sponsored by the institute, and through the web or social media promotional materials.
- Between one in 20 and one in ten respondents report that that they first became acquainted with their religious institute through print promotional materials, through a vocation match or placement service, through a vocational fair, or through a media story about the institute.
- Men are more likely than women to have become acquainted with their religious institute in an institution where members served and through the reputation or history of the institute.

Experience of Religious Life, Attractions, and Challenges

- Entrants were asked how much influence various aspects of their religious institute had on their decision to enter that institute. Nearly all report that they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the community life of the institute, with seven in ten reporting they were “very much” attracted to this aspect.
- More than nine in ten respondents report the prayer life/prayer styles in the institute, the spirituality of the institute, the example of members of the institute, and the mission of the institute influenced their decision to enter their religious institute at least “somewhat.” Between six and seven in ten say these elements influenced them “very much.”
- Nine in ten or more say the following attracted them to their religious institute at least “somewhat”: welcome and encouragement by members, the ministries of the institute, and the institute’s fidelity to the Church. Two in three or more say they were “very much” attracted to these elements of their religious institute.
- In written comments at the end of the survey, responding entrants mention aspects of community life as both the greatest attraction and the greatest challenge of religious life. Some other challenges include maturing into religious life, adapting to religious life, and decreased communication with family and friends.

Introduction

In 2014, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an annual survey of women and men who enter religious life each year in a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States. For this project, CARA was asked to gather information about the characteristics and experiences of these women and men in a fashion similar to the survey of perpetually professed that CARA conducts each year for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, which is released each year for the World Day of Consecrated Life in February. CARA designed a questionnaire based on previous CARA research on religious life and reviewed it with a representative from the Hilton Foundation. This report presents results of this survey of women and men of the Entrance Class of 2018.

To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men (postulants and novices),¹ CARA contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of apostolic women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), which includes both apostolic and contemplative institutes. Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 135 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a novice or postulant) in the United States since January 1, 2018. CARA then emailed or mailed a survey to each new entrant and asked them to return their completed survey to CARA. For a few of the religious institutes who requested it, CARA emailed a copy of the survey to the major superior who then distributed it to the novices and postulants in that institute.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 530 of 753 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 71 percent among religious institutes. Six religious institutes were not interested in participating in the study. In all, 82 percent of LCWR superiors, 72 percent of CMSWR superiors, 71 percent of CMSM superiors, and 44 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 440 members that entered religious life in 2018.

¹ There are notable differences among religious institutes in both their terminology and their practices during the first year of initial formation, i.e., following entrance into the religious institute. In most institutes of women religious, those who enter are called "postulants" or "candidates" and the initial phase of formation typically lasts at least six months to a year, although two years of candidacy before the new entrant becomes a novice is not uncommon. Although many institutes of men religious follow similar patterns, some have a much shorter period of postulancy. Among the Dominicans and the Jesuits, for example, men enter and become novices after a postulancy of only two to three weeks. Moreover, some religious institutes, including the Jesuits, use the term "candidate" for those who are considering entering the institute. That is, some institutes call the prospective member a "candidate" before he or she enters while others use the term to describe someone who has entered. This report is about the men and women who first entered a religious institute in the United States in 2018 regardless of what they are called or their stage of initial formation.

The Entrance Class of 2018 consists of 262 men (reported by CMSM superiors) and 178 women: 101 reported by CMSWR, 45 reported by LCWR, and 32 new entrants into contemplative communities of women. Of these 440 identified women and men, a total of 308 responded to the survey by January, 2019. This represents a response rate of 70 percent among the new entrants to religious life that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

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

This report is arranged in three parts: Part I describes characteristics of the institutes that responded to the request for names as well as characteristics of the Entrance Class of 2018. Part II describes aspects of the vocational discernment of the Entrance Class of 2018. Part III describes their experience of religious life so far and reports, in their own words, what attracts them to religious life and what they find most challenging about religious life.

Interpreting this Report

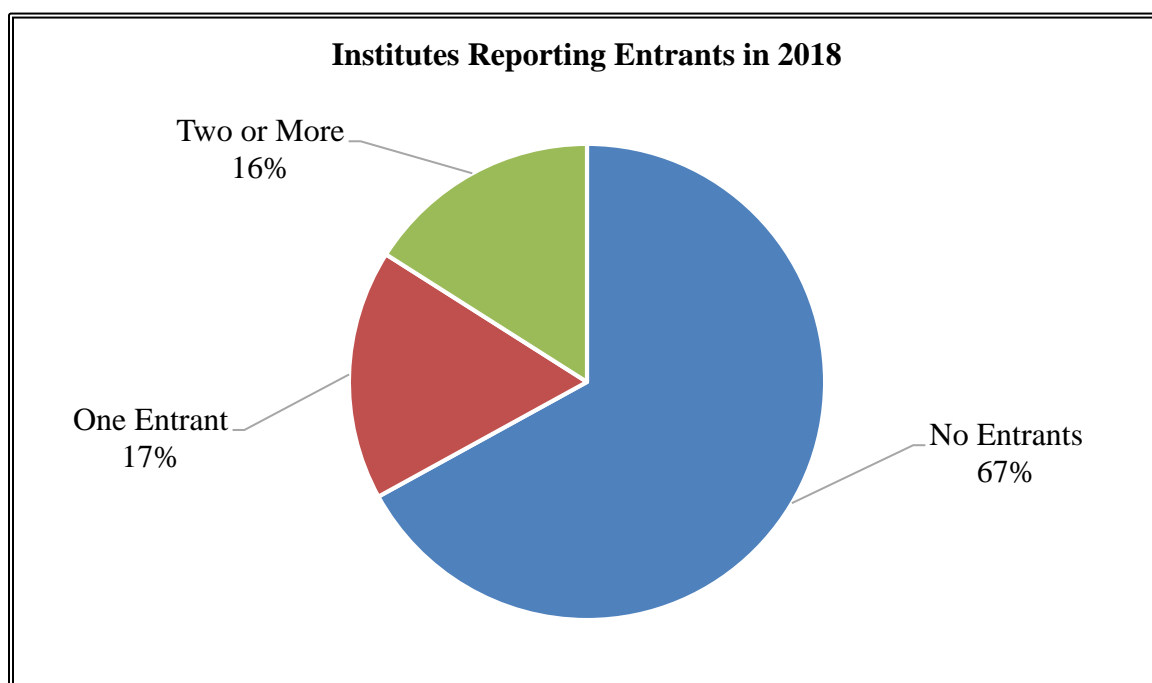
Many of the questions on the survey use four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “poor,” “fair,” “good,” and “excellent”). These scales allow half of the responses to be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“poor” and “fair,” for example)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

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

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

Institutes Reporting New Entrants in 2018

CARA asked the 753 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries in the United States that were identified by LCWR, CMSWR, CMSM, or the USCCB to provide the names of women and men (postulants or novices) who entered their religious institute in the United States in 2018. A total of 530 major superiors responded (70 percent) with 440 names of women and men. Six major superiors responded that they would not participate this year. The Entrance Class of 2018 consists of 262 men (reported by CMSM superiors) and 178 women: 101 reported by CMSWR, 45 reported by LCWR, and 32 new entrants into contemplative communities of women.



A total of 353 major superiors (67 percent of those responding) reported that they had no one enter the institute in 2018, another 86 major superiors (17 percent) reported one new entrant, and 85 major superiors (16 percent) reported two or more new entrants.

Gender

Among the 308 respondents who entered religious life in 2018 were 139 women from around 50 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the 144 men who responded come from 50 different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious. Thus, 49 percent of responding entrants are women and 51 percent are men. Among men, eight in ten expect to become priests and two in ten plan to become a perpetually professed brother.

Age of the Entrance Class of 2018

The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2018 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 25 or younger.

Age of Women and Men Entering Religious Life			
Percentage in each age category			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
25 and younger	50	52	49
Age 26-35	36	31	39
Age 36-45	7	5	8
Age 46-55	4	6	3
Age 56 and older	3	7	1
Average age	28	29	27
Median age	25	25	26
Range in ages	17-66	17-66	18-61

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Entrance Class of 2018 is 17 and the oldest is 66. Among the men, the youngest is 18, with one man entering at the age of 61. Regardless of gender, more than eight in ten respondents (86 percent) are 35 or younger.

Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States

Three in four (75 percent) respondents were born in the United States. One in ten was born in a country in Asia. Four percent were born in Mexico and another 4 percent were born in Latin America.

Region or Country of Birth			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
United States	75	75	75
Asia	10	9	11
Mexico	4	4	4
Latin America	4	4	3
Africa	3	1	4
Europe	3	5	1
Canada	2	1	4
Oceania	<1	1	0

Vietnam and Mexico are the most frequently mentioned countries of origin among respondents who were born outside the United States. Respondents identified a total of 29 different countries of origin.

Respondents who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 11 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2010 or earlier.

Entrance to the United States				
	Year	<u>Age at Entry</u>		
	Overall	Overall	Women	Men
Mean	2007	19	18	19
Median	2010	21	22	21
Range	1963-2018	1-39	2-35	1-39

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at the age of 19. Half were age 21 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The oldest woman was 35 while the oldest man was 39 at the time they entered the United States.

Race and Ethnic Background

Two-thirds of those who entered a religious institute report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (65 percent). Women (75 percent) are more likely than men (56 percent) to be Caucasian/European American/white.

<i>What best describes your racial or ethnic background?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	65	75	56
Hispanic/Latino(a)	15	12	18
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	14	10	17
African/African American/black	3	1	4
Native American/American Indian	<1	0	<1
Other	4	2	5

More than one in ten (14 percent) of the Entrance Class of 2018 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian and more than one in ten (15 percent) as Hispanic/Latino(a). Only 3 percent identify as African/African American/black and 4 percent identify as some other race or ethnicity.

Differences by Country of Birth

- Among those who were born in the United States, four in five (80 percent) report being Caucasian/European American/white.
- Among those not born in the United States, nearly four in ten respondents (37 percent) identify as Asian/Pacific/Native Hawaiian. A quarter identify as Hispanic or Latino(a) (25 percent), nearly a quarter identify as Caucasian/European/American/white (23 percent), one in ten as African/African American/black (9 percent), and 7 percent identify as other.

Religious Background

Nine in ten respondents (89 percent) have been Catholic since birth.

Catholic Background			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Catholic since birth	89	93	86
Became Catholic later in life	11	7	14

Among those who became Catholic later in life, nearly nine in ten (87 percent) participated in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. These entrants came from a variety of faiths: generic Protestant, Lutheran, Christian United Church, Methodist, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, Evangelical/Fundamentalist, Anglican, atheist or non-denominational.

Just over nine in ten respondents (92 percent) report that when they were growing up they had at least one parent who was Catholic. Eight in ten (80 percent) report that both parents were Catholic.

Religious Background of Respondents' Parents			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	80	83	78
Mother Catholic, father not	9	10	8
Father Catholic, mother not	4	2	5
Neither parent was Catholic	8	5	10

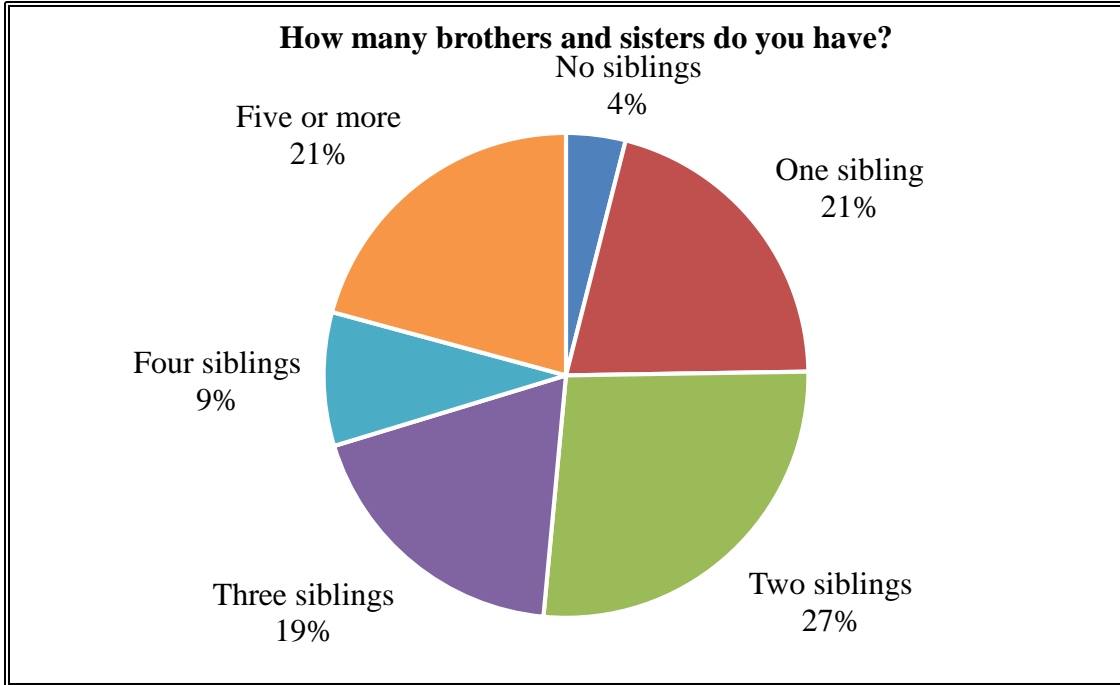
Respondents who had non-Catholic parents report that the parents were either Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, Buddhist, Protestant, UCC, Amish, agnostic, Hindu, non-denominational, atheist, non-religious, Evangelical Protestant, Salvation Army, or none. Regardless of the religious tradition of their parents, two in three (66 percent) respondents report that religion was “very important” to their mothers and slightly less than half (46 percent) report that religion was “very important” to their fathers.

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

Familiarity with Priests and/or Religious Brothers and Sisters/Nuns while Growing Up			
Percentage responding "Yes" to each question			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	66	67	66
Do you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	33	37	30

Family Background

On average, members of the Entrance Class of 2018 have three siblings. The most common response to this question, among women and men, is one or two siblings (48 percent).



- One in 20 says she or he is an only child (4 percent), one in five has one sibling (21 percent), and three in four have two or more siblings (75 percent).²
- Five respondents report ten or more brothers and sisters.

² Those in the Entrance Class of 2018 do not differ significantly from those responding to the General Social Survey, where the percentage of only children in the last 30 years of data have ranged between 4 and 6 percent.

Overall, respondents with siblings are more likely to be eldest child (38 percent) than either the middle or the youngest (33 and 25 percent). Women are more likely than men to be a middle child and men are more likely than women to be the youngest child in the family.

<i>What is your birth order?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Eldest	38	40	36
Middle	33	38	28
Youngest	25	19	31
Only child	4	3	6

Education Level Before Entering a Religious Institute

The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2018 were highly educated before entering. Half report having earned a bachelor’s degree and about two in ten (19 percent) earned a master’s or a doctoral degree before entering their religious institute.

<i>What was your highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?</i>			
Percentage responding			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
High school or less	12	9	15
Some college	19	20	17
Bachelor’s degree	50	50	50
Master’s degree	15	16	15
Doctoral degree	4	4	4
Other	>1	>1	0

More than one in ten (12 percent) respondents of the Entrance Class of 2018 completed high school or less before entering their religious institute. Two in ten (19 percent) completed some college before entering. Responding men and women are equally likely to have attained a bachelor’s degree before entering.

Just over one in ten respondents (15 percent) report being home schooled at some time in their educational background. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was four years (an average of four years for women and five

years for men). More women than men report being home schooled (20 percent of women compared to 11 percent of men).

Catholic Education Before Entering a Religious Institute

Just over half of those responding attended a parish-based religious education program (52 percent) and four in ten (41 percent) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Over a third attended a Catholic high school and more than a third attended a Catholic college/university before entering their religious institute. Three in ten attended a Catholic ministry formation program before entering.

<i>Did you attend any of the following before you entered?*</i>			
Percentage responding “Yes” to each question			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR	52	57	49
Catholic elementary or middle school	41	41	42
Catholic high school	34	29	40
Catholic college/university	35	28	42
Catholic ministry formation program	30	40	29

Members of the Entrance Class of 2018 are about as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,³ 39 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 41 percent among entrants. Responding entrants of 2018 are more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (34 percent of respondents, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college/university (35 percent of respondents, compared to just 6 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, slightly more than half of respondents (52 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 59 percent did *not* report attending a Catholic elementary school and 66 percent did not attend a Catholic high school.

³CARA *Catholic Poll*. Summer 2016. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up

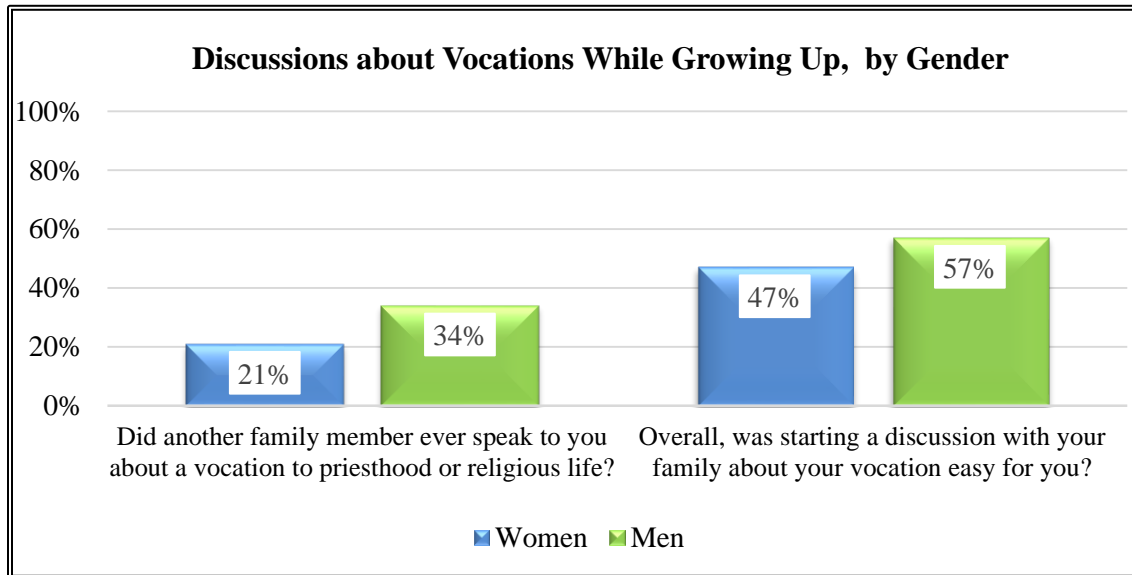
Overall, just over half of respondents (52 percent) say that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation. Men are more likely than women to say that starting a discussion with their family was easy for them.

Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up			
Percentage responding “Yes” to each question			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?	52	47	57
Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life?	37	36	38
Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	28	21	34
Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	22	19	26

Almost four in ten report that their mother (37 percent) and about three in ten report that another family member (28 percent) ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life. More than two in ten (22 percent) report that their father ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Comparisons by Gender

Men are more likely than women to have ever had another family member speak to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life (34 percent for men as compared to 21 percent for women), and to say that starting a discussion with their family about their vocation was easy for them (57 percent for men as compared to 47 percent for women).



Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Nine in ten respondents (91 percent) participated in at least one of the programs or activities listed in the table below before entering.

<i>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of the these before you entered?</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Retreats	72	80	65
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	61	67	56
Campus ministry during college	47	51	43
Parish youth group, Life Teen, or high school campus ministry during high school years	42	47	38
Parish youth group, Life Teen during elementary or middle school years	42	29	22
Parish young adult group	32	36	29
Right to Life March on Washington	33	40	26
World Youth Day	16	18	13
Religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)	9	8	10
National Catholic Youth Conference	9	10	7

- More than seven in ten (72 percent) respondents participated in retreats. More women than men (80 percent compared to 65 percent) are likely to have participated in retreats before entering a religious institute.
- Just over six in ten (61 percent) participated in various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting.
- More than four in ten (42 percent) participated in a parish youth group or Life Teen during their elementary or middle school years. Similarly, more than four in ten (42 percent) participated in a parish youth group, Life Teen, or campus ministry during their high school years.
- Slightly less than half (47 percent) participated in campus ministry during college.
- One in ten respondents participated in a National Catholic Youth Conference (9 percent). Three in ten (32 percent) participated in a parish young adult group.

- More than three in ten (33 percent) participated in a Right to Life March in Washington. One in six (16 percent) participated in World Youth Day.
- About one in ten (9 percent) participated in a volunteer program with a religious institute.
- Women are more likely than men to report participating in many of these programs and activities before entering religious life.

Three in four respondents (74 percent) served in one or more specified parish ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer. The most common ministry service reported was liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister), followed by music ministry.

Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of these before you entered?
Percentage checking each response

	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Liturgical ministry (e.g. lector, extraordinary minister)	57	50	64
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	46	49	44
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	41	44	38

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

- Among the ministries listed on the survey, nearly six in ten respondents (57 percent) report that they served in liturgical ministry roles, such as lector or extraordinary minister of Communion. Men are more likely than women to have served in this capacity.
- Two in five respondents (41 percent) report participating in faith formation, catechetical ministry or RCIA. Slightly less than half (46 percent) report participating in music ministry, cantor, or choir.

Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, respondents were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life. Half were 19 or younger when they first considered a vocation.

Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life			
	Overall	Women	Men
Mean age	19	18	20
Median age	19	18	10
Range of ages	3-61	3-53	3-61

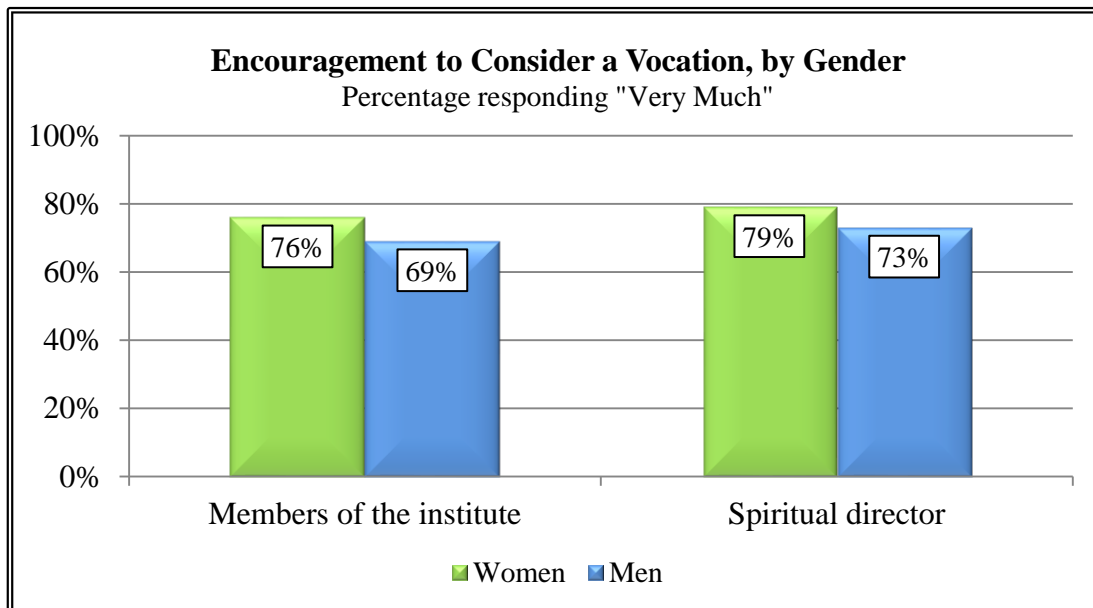
Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. Respondents most frequently mentioned a member of their religious institute (94 percent), vocational director/team (91 percent), a spiritual director (90 percent), or other men and women religious (89 percent) as at least “somewhat” encouraging to them when they first considered entering a religious institute.

<i>How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
	%	%
Members of your institute	94	73
Vocation director/team	91	71
Spiritual director, if applicable	90	76
Other men and women religious	89	64
Friends outside the institute	83	54
People in your parish	82	56
Diocesan priests	77	56
People in your school or workplace	72	44
Campus minister, if applicable	69	51
Your siblings	68	34
Your parents	66	42
Other family members	59	27

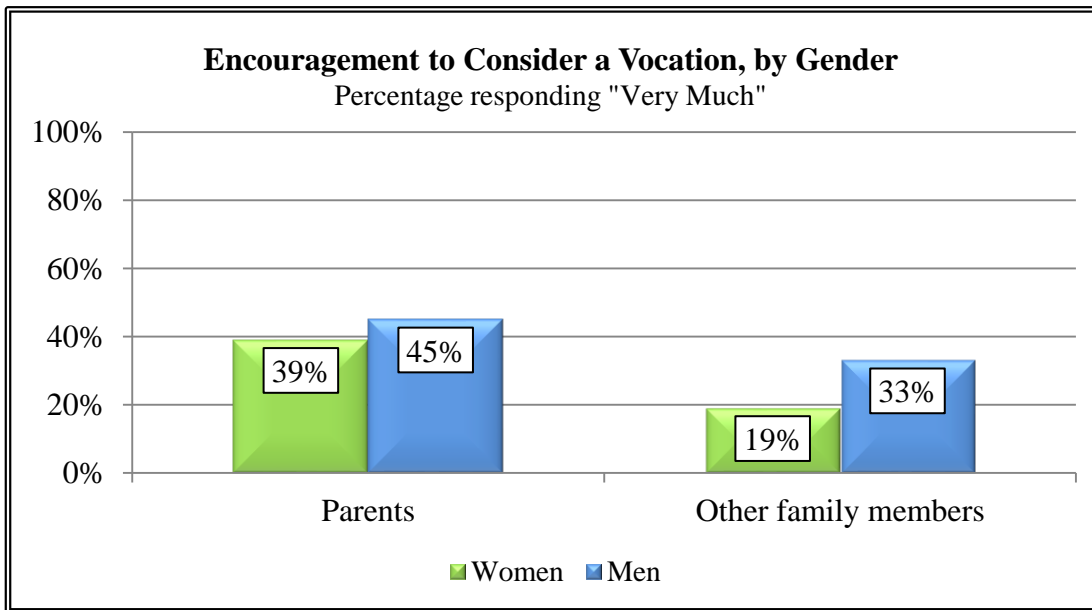
- Four in five respondents entering religious institutes report being encouraged at least “somewhat” by these people: friends outside the institute (83 percent), people in the parish (82 percent), and diocesan priests (77 percent).
- Just over seven in ten (72 percent) received encouragement from people in school or in their workplace. Nearly seven in ten (69 percent) were at least “somewhat” encouraged by campus ministers.
- Six in ten report being at least “somewhat” encouraged by parents and family members when they first considered entering a religious institute: parents (66 percent), siblings (68 percent), and other family members (59 percent).

Comparisons by Gender

Women are as likely as men to report receiving “very much” encouragement from members of their institute and from their spiritual director.



While men and women are equally likely to receive encouragement from their parents, men are more likely than women to report receiving encouragement from other family members.



Attraction to Religious Life

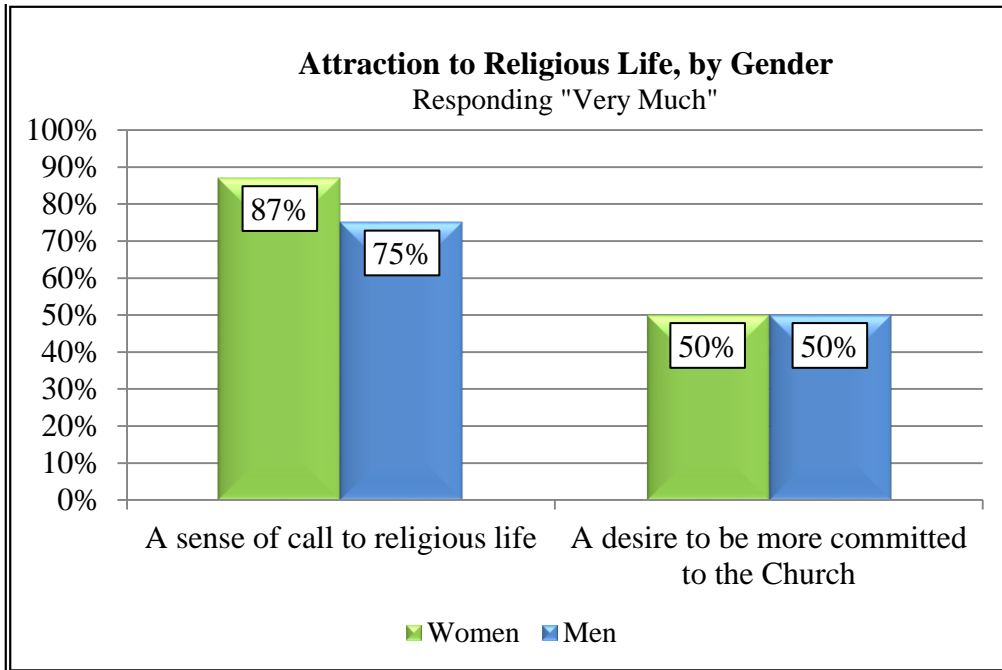
Entrants in 2018 were asked how much various elements attracted them to religious life. Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (97 percent) and by a sense of call to religious life (95 percent). Three in four or more were “very much” attracted by these.

<i>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</i>		
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very Much”		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much” %	“Very Much” Only %
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	97	78
A sense of call to religious life	95	81
A desire to be of service	91	69
A desire to be part of a community	89	57
A desire to be more committed to the Church	84	51

- About nine in ten respondents were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service (91 percent) and by a desire to be part of a community (89 percent). Between about six and seven in ten said each of these elements attracted them “very much.”
- Eight in ten (84 percent) were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church. Half said this attracted them “very much.”

Comparisons by Gender

More women than men report that a sense of call to religious life “very much” attracted them to religious life. Women are equally as likely as men to report that a desire to be more committed to the Church “very much” attracted them.



Attraction to a Religious Institute

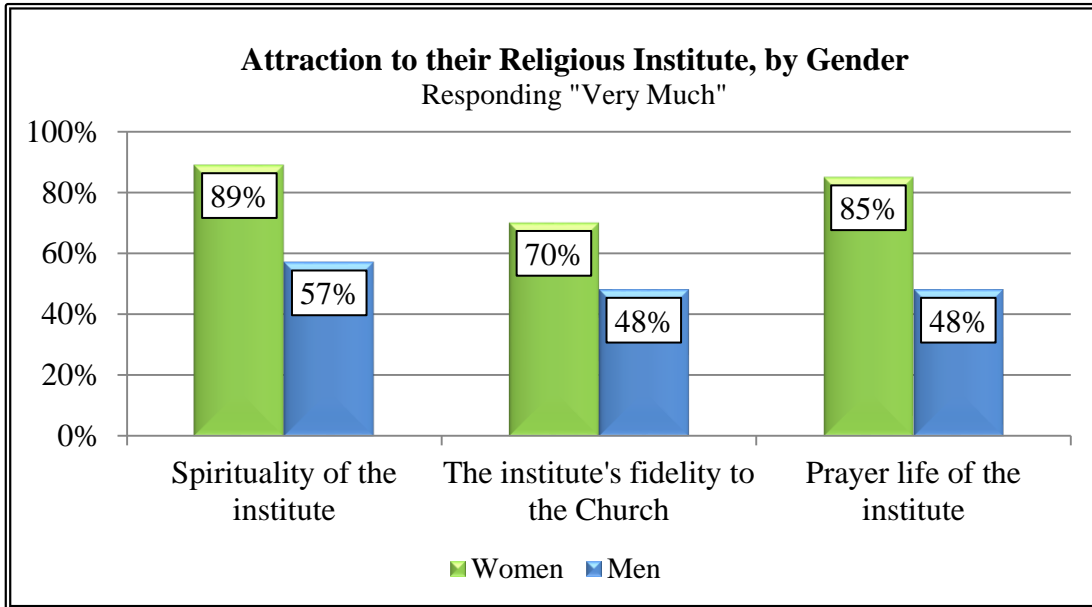
Entrants were asked how much each of several aspects of religious life attracted them to their particular religious institute. Nearly all report that they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the community life of the institute, with seven in ten reporting they were “very much” attracted to this aspect.

<i>How much did these attract you to your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
	%	%
The community life of the institute	95	70
The prayer life of the institute	94	66
The spirituality of the institute	93	73
The example of members of the institute	93	68
The mission of the institute	92	70
Welcome and encouragement by members	89	58
The ministries of the institute	88	58
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	86	58
The life and works of your founder/ress	70	40
A personal invitation by a member	51	29

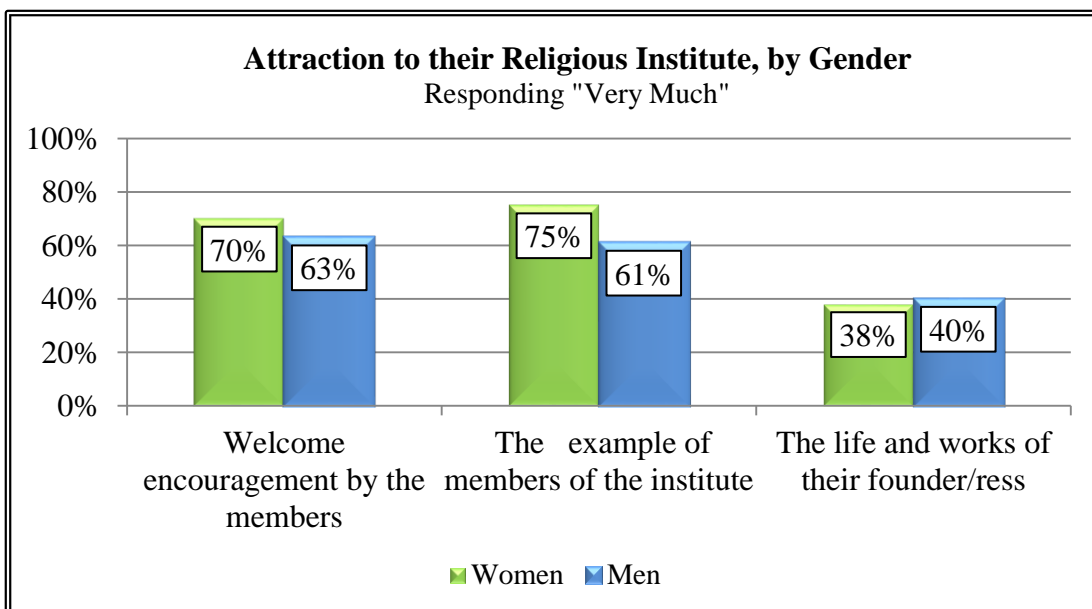
- More than nine in ten respondents report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the prayer life of the institute (94 percent), the spirituality of the institute (93 percent), the example of members of the institute (93 percent), and the mission of the institute (92 percent). Between six and seven in ten say these elements “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.
- Just under nine in ten report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to the religious institute by the welcome and encouragement by members (89 percent), the ministries of the institute (88 percent), and the institute’s fidelity to the Church (86 percent). About six in ten say these elements “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.
- Seven in ten report they were attracted by the life and works of their found/ress (70 percent). Four in ten say this element attracted them “very much” to their religious institute.
- Half report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by a personal invitation by a member (51 percent); three in ten report this element attracted them “very much” to their religious institute.

Comparisons by Gender

More women than men report that the spirituality of their institute, its fidelity to the Church, and the prayer life of the institute “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.



Women are also more likely than men to report they were “very much” attracted to their religious institute by the welcome and engagement of members and the example of members of the institute. Women and men are equally likely to report that the life and works of their founder/ress “very much” attracted them.



Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. About three in ten respondents report that they first became acquainted with their institute in an institution where the members served (32 percent), through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (31 percent), and through their own internet search (28 percent).

<i>How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
In an institution where members served	32	18	45
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	31	36	28
Through your own internet search	28	31	25
Through a relative or a friend in the institute	18	20	17
Through the reputation or history of the institute	17	13	20
Through working with a member of the institute	15	12	19
Through an event sponsored by the institute	11	12	10
Through web or social media promotional materials	11	13	8
Through a media story about the institute or member	8	11	6
Through print promotional materials	6	7	6
Through a vocation match or placement service	6	7	6
Through a vocation fair	5	4	6
Other	20	23	17

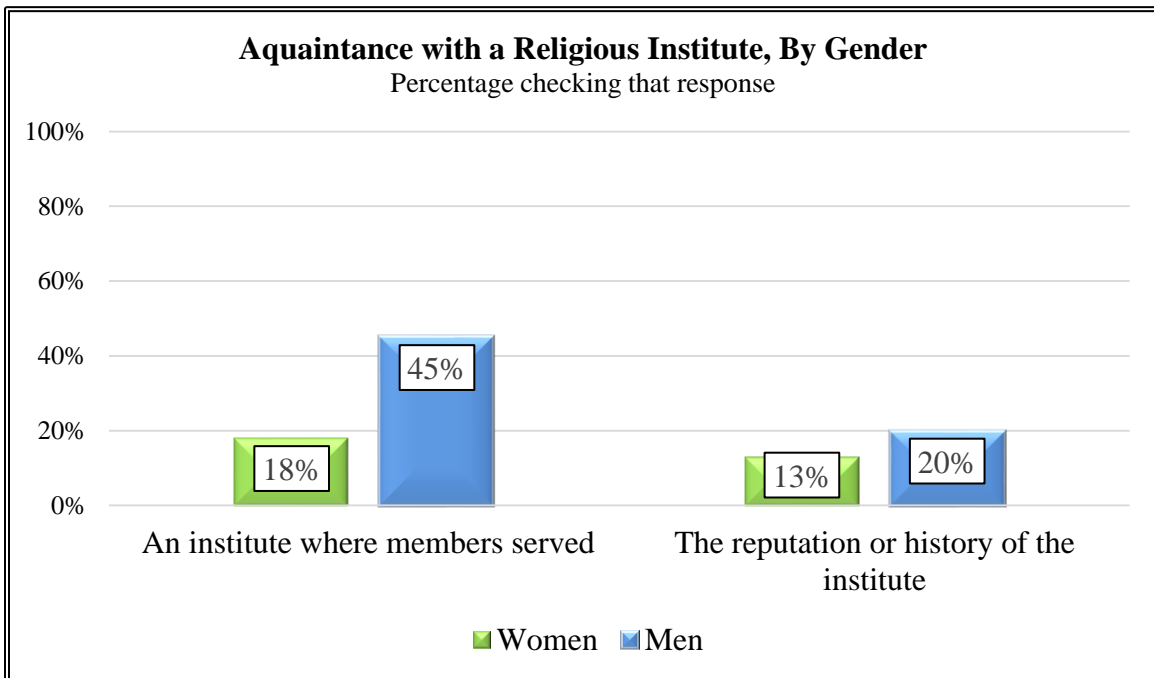
- One in six respondents indicate that they first became acquainted with their institute through a relative or a friend in the institute (18 percent), through the reputation or history of the institute (17 percent), and through working with a member of the institute (15 percent).
- One in ten respondents indicate that they first became acquainted with their institute through an event sponsored by the institute (11 percent), and through the web or social media promotional materials (11 percent).
- Less than one in ten respondents report that that they first became acquainted with their institute through a media story about the institute (8 percent), through a vocational fair (8 percent), print promotional materials (6 percent), and through a vocation match or placement service (6 percent).

- Only 5 percent report that they first became acquainted with their religious institute through a vocation fair.
- Two in ten (20 percent) first became acquainted with their religious institute through some “other” means (often during their college years). The “other” responses are listed below, lightly edited:
 - A priest recommended them to me
 - A retreat on which a member worked
 - Alcoholics Anonymous connection with Ignatian Spirituality
 - Attended classes at the same college as some of the sisters’ biography of the founder
 - Boy's summer camp as a child
 - Catholic education conference
 - Color of the habit
 - Community members visited my university Catholic Center
 - Confession encounters with members of institute
 - Confirmation retreat
 - Dad recommended me to listen to a priest
 - Diocese Monthly Meetings with women religious
 - During a missionary time, I met two of them
 - Focus conference
 - Had attended several retreats (unrelated to discernment of religious life)
 - Holy Spirit and our Holy Mother Mary
 - I had heard and known about our community since I live only 125 miles away
 - I kept running into them in Rome (Divine Providence)
 - I studied theology before I joined, this is where I learned of their existence
 - I was attracted to Franciscan Spirituality
 - Ignatian Spirituality attracted me
 - Through Jesuit Volunteer Corps
 - Through Movies, Magazine and Books
 - Meeting a sister in person
 - Member of community visited school for event
 - Members of institute located near university
 - My Mom invited members to our house
 - My Parish in Mexico run by OFM Friars
 - Nun Run
 - Seeing one of them at Mass
 - Story of founders
 - The institute grants the scholarship
 - They taught me
 - Through a former seminarian of the religious institute
 - Through a Spiritual Exercises program
 - Through an event hosted by another organization that invited the sisters to speak
 - Through friars visiting my previous Parish for a vocation weekend event
 - Through the Holy Spirit Mission Sisters

- Through the vocation director of another community while on retreat with that community
- Vocational retreats
- Vocations' Director came to University Newman's Center
- Volunteer work
- Was a member of the Order 4 years ago in another Monastery

Comparisons by Gender

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



Helpfulness of Discernment Programs and Experiences

Entrants were asked how helpful selected vocation experiences were to them in discerning their call to their institute before they entered. They were most likely to report that contact with a vocation director (87 percent) prior to entering their religious institute or contact with institute members (83 percent) were at least “somewhat” helpful. Around seven in ten respondents report that these contacts were “very” helpful.

If you participated in any of the following with your religious institute before you entered, how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?

Percentage responding

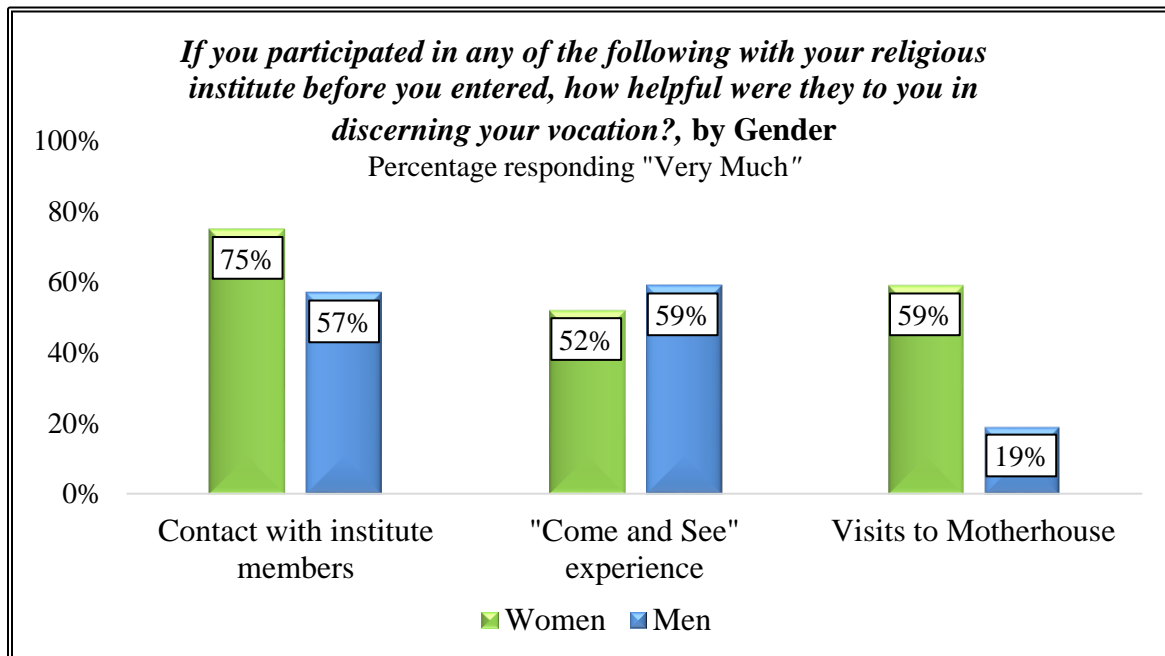
	“Somewhat” or “Very” %	“Very” Only %
Contact with vocation director	87	74
Contact with institute members	83	66
“Come and See” experience	67	55
Spiritual direction	65	52
Vocation or discernment retreat	62	50
Visit(s) to local community(s)	57	40
Live in experience	57	48
Visit(s) to the Motherhouse	48	38
Ministry with institute members	37	25
Social media (e.g. Facebook)	33	16
Mission experience	26	16
Meeting with a discernment group	23	14
“Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run”	8	5

- Two in three respondents found “Come and See” experiences (67 percent) and spiritual direction (65 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their institute and about half respondents found these experiences “very” helpful.
- About three in five respondents report that vocation or discernment retreats (62 percent), visits to local communities (57 percent), and a “live-in experience” (57 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their religious institute, with four to five in ten reporting these experiences are “very” helpful.
- Almost half say visits to the Motherhouse (48 percent) were at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their religious institute, with four in ten reporting this experience was “very” helpful.

- Less than four in ten found ministry with institute members (37 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful. Twenty-five percent found this “very” helpful.
- A third found social media (33 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful before they entered their religious institute and one in six found it “very” helpful.
- Around a quarter report that a mission experience (26 percent) and meeting with a discernment group (23 percent) was at least “somewhat” helpful to them in discerning their call to their institute.
- One in ten reports that an “Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run” (8 percent) was at least “somewhat” helpful. About one in 20 also found these experiences “very” helpful.

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to report that contact with institute members and visits to Motherhouse were “very” helpful in discerning their vocation. Women and men are equally likely to report that a “Come and See” experience was “very” helpful in discerning their vocation.



Influences on Decisions to Enter Religious Institutes

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

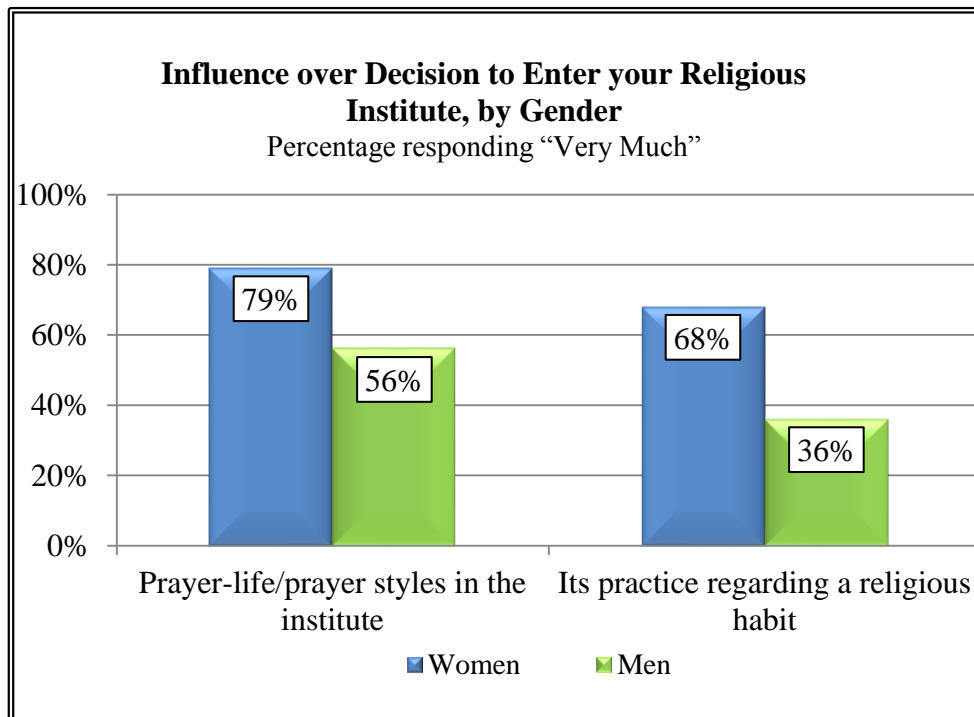
<i>How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
	%	%
Community life in the institute	95	69
Prayer life/prayer styles in the institute	91	67
The lifestyles of members	88	57
The types of ministry of its members	84	55
Its practice regarding a religious habit	68	52
Its internationality	52	32
Its geographic location(s)	46	18
The ages of members	43	16
The size of the institute	39	13
The racial/ethnic background of members	28	14

- Nine in ten respondents report having been influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the prayer life/prayer styles in the institute (91 percent) and the lifestyles of members (88 percent). Six to seven in ten say these elements influenced them “very much.”
- About eight in ten respondents report having been influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the types of ministry of its members (84 percent), with more than half reporting this element influenced them “very much.”
- Seven in ten report the practice regarding a religious habit at least “somewhat” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute, with half reporting this element influenced them “very much.”
- Half indicate that the internationality (52 percent) and the geographic location(s) of the religious institute (46 percent) at least “somewhat” influenced their decision to enter their religious life. Two to three in ten say these elements were “very” influential.

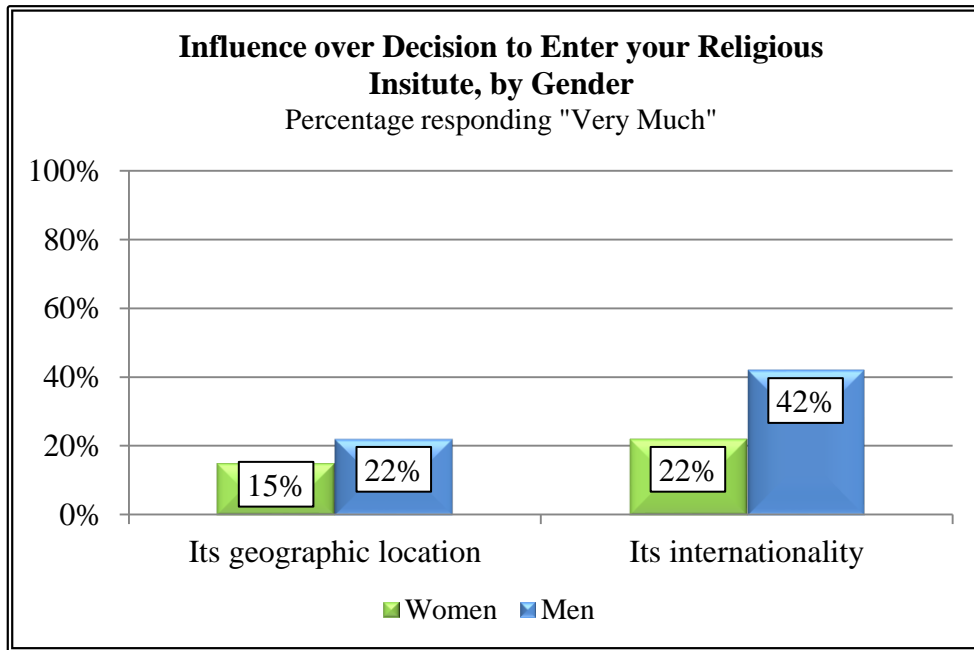
- Three to four in ten indicate that the ages of members (43 percent), the size of the institute (39 percent), and the racial/ethnic background of members (28 percent) were at least “somewhat” influential to their decision to enter their institute. One to two in ten says these elements were “very” influential.

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to indicate that the prayer-life/prayer styles in the institute and its practice regarding a religious habit influenced them “very much.”



In contrast, men are more likely than women to report that the institute's internationality "very much" influenced their decision to enter their religious institute.



Prayer Practices

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

<i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very” %	“Very” Only %
Private personal prayer	99	88
Daily Eucharist	98	92
Eucharistic Adoration	88	73
Liturgy of the Hours	86	63
Other devotional prayers, e.g. rosary	82	50
Faith sharing	72	39
Non-liturgical common prayer	68	28
Common meditation	57	29

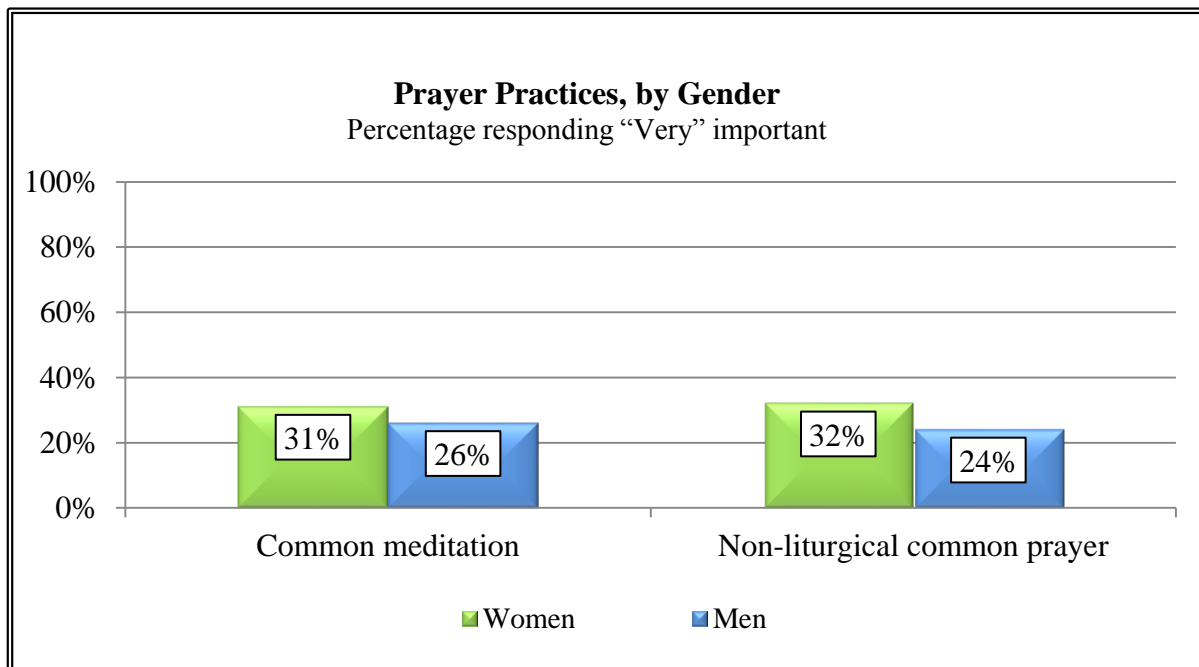
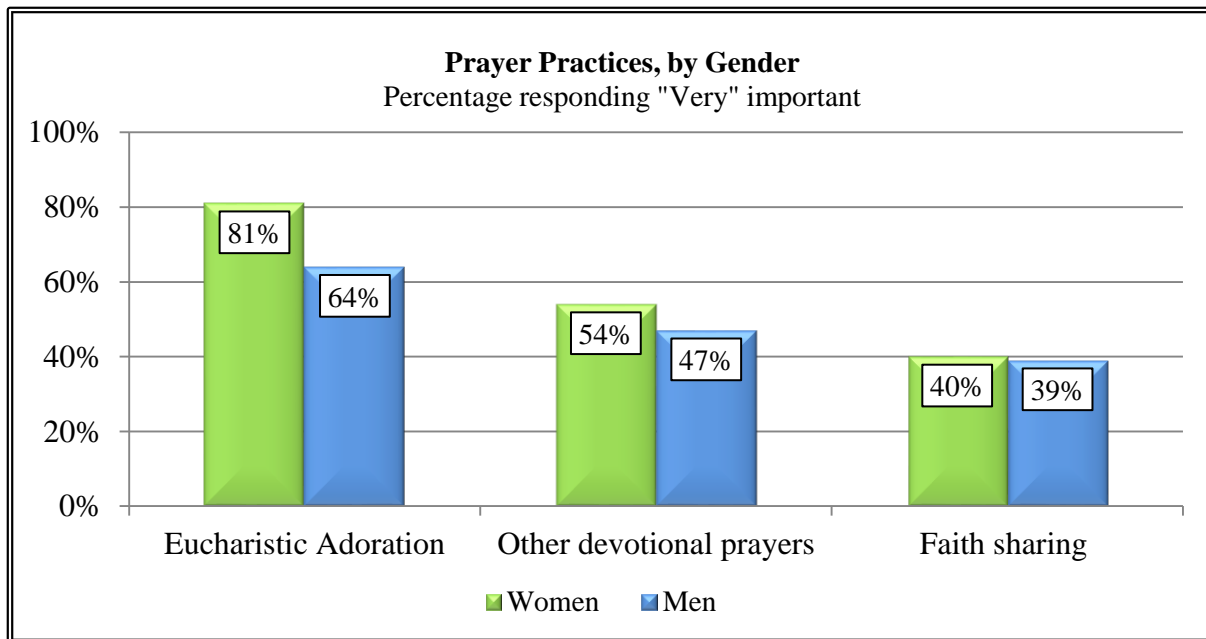
- Nine in ten respondents report Eucharistic Adoration (88 percent) and Liturgy of the Hours (86 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Six to seven in ten say that these elements are “very” important to them.
- Eight in ten respondents report that other devotional prayers such as the rosary (82 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them, with half reporting this practice is “very” important.
- Seven in ten respondents indicate that faith sharing (72 percent) and non-liturgical common prayer (68 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Three to four in ten say these elements are “very” important to them.
- Six in ten report that common meditation (57 percent) is at least somewhat important to them with about three in ten indicating that it is very important.

Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say that the following types of prayer are at least “somewhat” or “very” important to them:

- Non-liturgical common prayer (75 percent for women compared to 60 percent for men)
- Common meditation (64 percent for women compared to 52 percent for men)

We next examine gender differences for those saying a prayer practice is “very important” to them. Women are more likely than men to indicate that Eucharistic Adoration is “very” important to them. Women and men are equally likely to report that other prayer practices shown in the two tables below are “very” important to them.



Importance of Aspects of Community Life

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

<i>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
	%	%
Praying with other members	98	90
Living with other members	98	87
Sharing meals together	96	82
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	93	76
Working with other members	93	73

More than nine in ten respondents report that socializing/sharing leisure time together (93 percent) and working with other members (93 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them. More than seven in ten say these elements are very important.

Comparisons by Gender

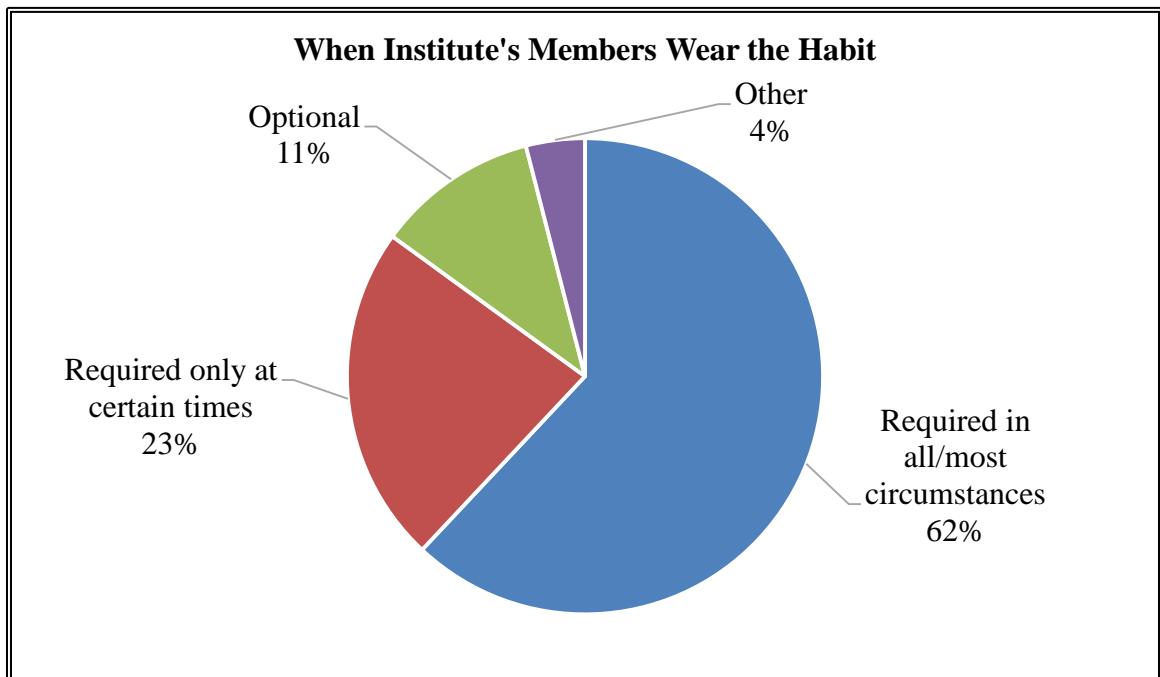
There are no significant differences in how women and men responded to all but one of the questions in this section. Women are more likely than men to report that praying with other members is “very” important to them (94 percent for women compared to 85 percent for men).

Wearing of Religious Habit

New entrants were asked if the members of their institute wear a habit. Eight in ten indicate that members of their institute wear a habit and two in ten indicate that members of their institute do not wear a habit. When comparing by gender, women are more likely than men to say that members of their institute wear a habit.

<i>Do members of your institute wear a habit?</i>			
Percentage responding "Yes" or "No"			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Yes	80	86	73
No	20	14	27

Among those who indicate that members wear a habit, six in ten indicate that the habit is required in all or most circumstances (62 percent).



- Almost one in four reports that the habit is required only at certain times (23 percent). One in ten reports that wearing habit is optional in their institute.

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

Differences by Gender

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

<i>If yes, is wearing the habit:</i>			
Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”			
	Overall	Women	Men
	%	%	%
Required in all or most circumstances	62	84	39
Required only at certain times	23	4	45
Optional	11	7	14
Other	4	5	2

The 11 percent indicating that wearing the habit is optional were asked a follow-up question: “How many members wear it all or most of the time?” Eighty-three responded to the question. Eleven percent of respondents report that none of the members wear the habit all the time, 19 percent indicate that a few members (less than 20 percent) wear the habit all the time, 19 percent report that some (25-49 percent) wear the habit all the time, 12 percent indicate that many (50-74 percent) wear it all the time, and 39 percent indicate that most (75 or more percent) wear the habit all the time.

Among those indicating that wearing the habit is optional, 67 entrants responded to a second follow-up question “How frequently do *you* wear it?” Twenty-eight percent say they never wear their habit, 6 percent say they wear it once in a while, 27 percent say they wear it only at certain times, and 39 percent wear it in all or most circumstances.⁴

⁴ This question only applies to novices, as postulants do not wear a habit and do not have the option to do so.

Aspects of the Religious Institute

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

Almost all respondents report that their religious institute is “good” or “excellent” in its opportunities for personal growth (98 percent), commitment to ministry (98 percent), and faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth (97 percent). Almost eight in ten report that their religious institute is “excellent” in these elements.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Good” or “Excellent”	“Excellent” Only
	%	%
Opportunities for personal growth	98	77
Commitment to ministry	98	79
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	97	79
Welcome and support of newer members	94	77
Fidelity to the Church and its teachings	94	70
Focus on mission	93	73
Opportunities for ongoing formation	91	62

More than nine in ten respondents report that their religious institute is at least “good” in its welcome and support of newer members (94 percent), its fidelity to the Church and its teachings (94 percent), its focus on mission (93 percent), and its opportunities for ongoing formation (91 percent). Six to seven in ten report that their religious institute is “excellent” in these elements.

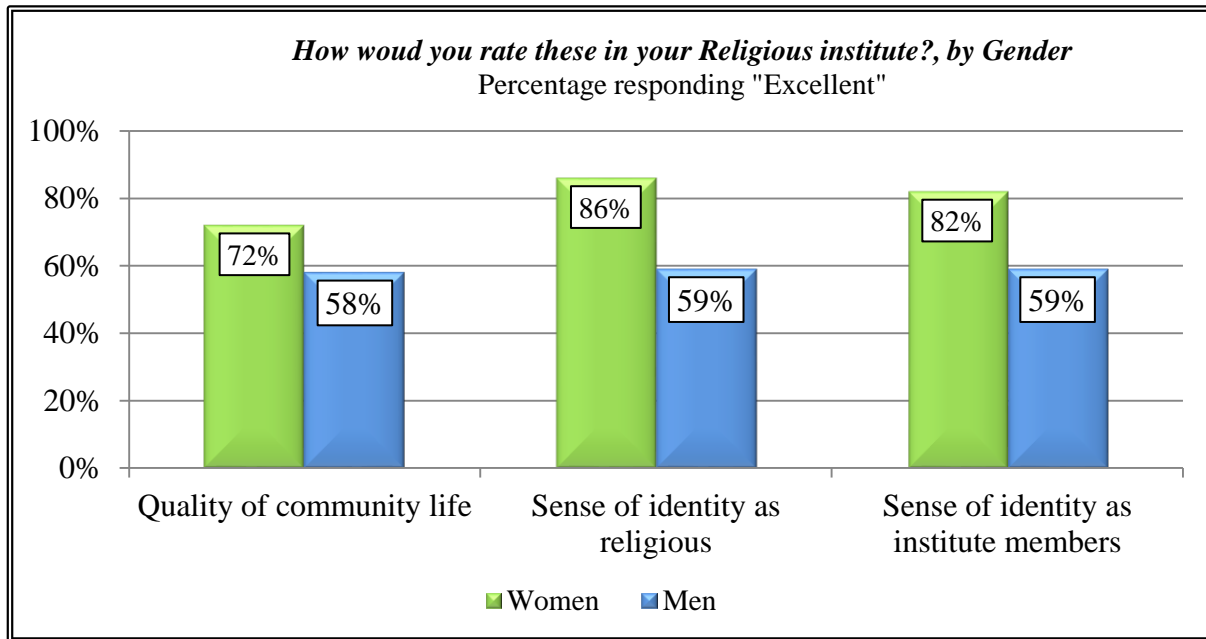
With few exceptions, at least nine in ten respondents rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” in each of the aspects in the table below.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Good” or “Excellent”	“Excellent” Only
	%	%
Quality of community life	95	65
Sense of identity as institute members	95	70
Response to the needs of our time	94	67
Relationships with one another	93	63
Communal prayer experiences	93	63
Sense of identity as religious	92	72
Educational opportunities	91	66
Formation/incorporation programs	90	66
Preparation for ministry	90	55
Efforts to promote social justice	83	49
Efforts to promote vocations	83	57

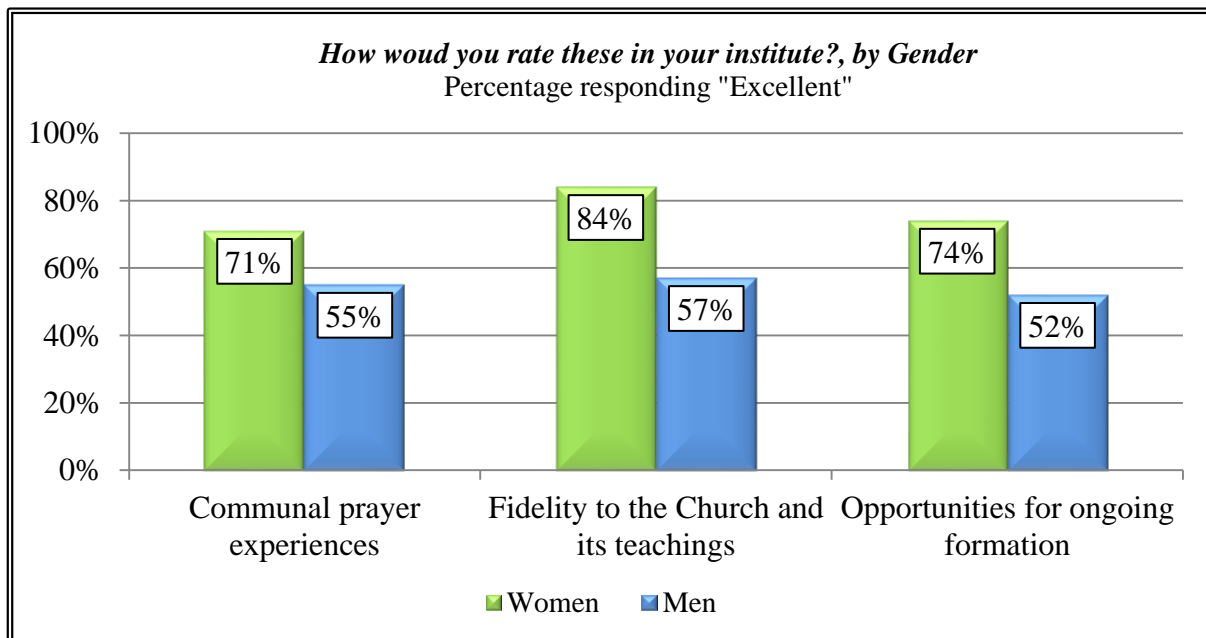
- Almost all report that their institute was at least “good” in its quality of community life (95 percent) and its sense of identity as institute members (95 percent). About seven in ten report these as “excellent.”
- More than nine in ten report that their institute was at least “good” in its response to the needs of our time (94 percent), relationships with one another (93 percent), communal prayer experiences (93 percent), sense of identity as religious (92 percent), educational opportunities (91 percent), formation/incorporation programs, and preparation for ministry (90 percent). About six to seven in ten rate their religious institute as “excellent” in these aspects.
- Eight in ten report that their institute was at least “good” in its efforts to promote social justice (83 percent) and its efforts to promote vocations (83 percent). About half rate their religious institute as “excellent” in these efforts.

Comparisons by Gender

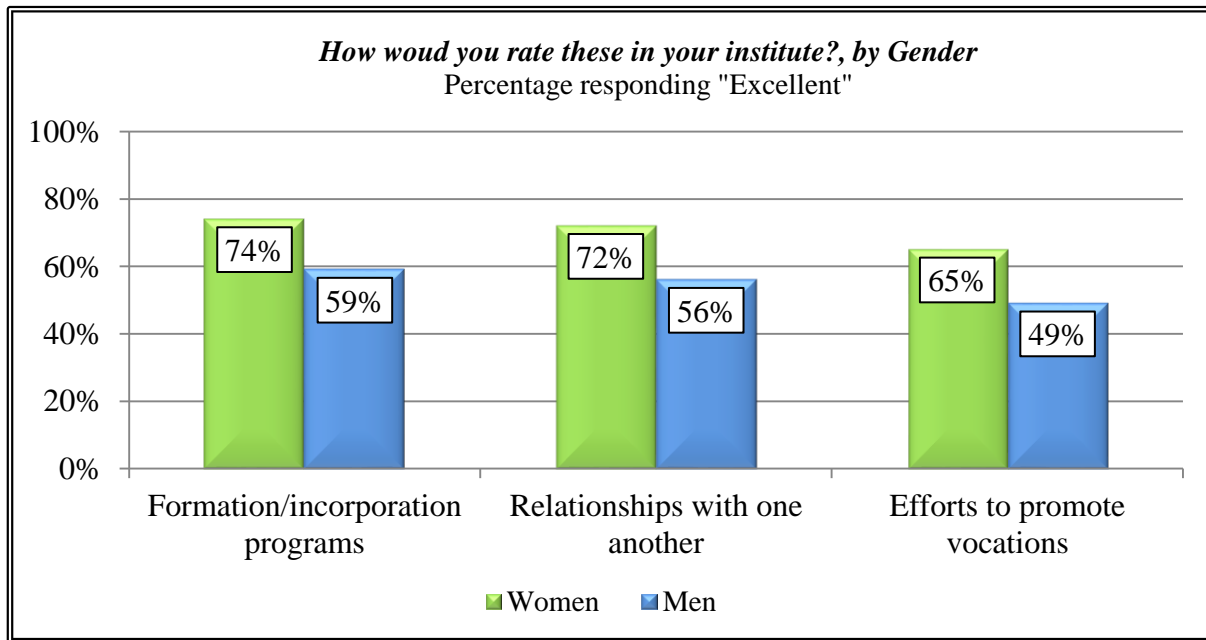
Women are more likely than men to rate their religious institute as “excellent” in the quality of its community life, its sense of identity as religious, and its sense of identity as institute members.



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



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



What Most Attracted You to Your Religious Institute?

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

Sense of Mission and Ministries of the Institutes

- *The mission in Haiti and the life and works of our foundress, Blessed Mary Angela Truskowska, the spirituality and prayer life of the institute.*
- *The mission, strong community life*
- *The mission, charism, spirituality and joy*
- *The mission, apostolate, and their motto of truth (veritas)*
- *The mission to be educators and teach.*
- *The mission of the Redemptorists ("To preach the gospel to the poor and the most abandoned") seems to me to be at the heart of the wider mission of the Church. The importance of the mission is underscored by the significant number of saints, blessed, venerable, and martyrs in the history of the Redemptorists.*
- *The mission of the order, its apostolates and diversity of ministries.*
- *The mission of the institute, its ministry assignments, the observances of the life, the habit, the community life.*
- *The ministry the community does and the closeness of the community life.*
- *The ministry of working with the poor, sick, dying and outcast of society.*
- *The international size of the order provides international opportunities. The members do many different ministries, so I will not necessarily be doing only one type of ministry for the rest of my life.*
- *The flexibility of the types of ministry in response to the needs to the church.*
- *Diversity, commitment to faith, prayer, and social justice, sense of joy*

Founder/Foundress, Spirituality, and Charism of the Institute

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

- *The story of the foundress and her presence connected with my life today. The vow of service as well and the connection of today's issues in the world. The feeling of being at home with myself in company of the sisters.*
- *The story of our foundress attracted me most to my religious community. There were some parallels in her life that I could relate to. I was also struck by the joy, compassion, and community life when I first visited.*
- *The history tradition of the order, the writings of its saints and holy parents and a perfect balance between the active life and prayer.*
- *The history of the Order and the ministry provided to the Church.*
- *The history of the Order and the lives of the Saints of the Order. I felt called by God to become a member of this Order.*
- *A couple things attracted me to my congregation. First was the spirituality of the patrons of our congregations as well as the application of the aforementioned spirituality the inspiration and founder of my religious institute. Secondly, it was how the members of my congregation lived out their lives. It was how they carried in them the joy and presence of Christ in all their actions.*
- *What most attracted me were two things: First being our charism. In our Institute our charism is to evangelize the culture in this way we prolong the incarnation of our Lord. This had particularly struck me when reading about our institute.*
- *Their charism, joy, vibrancy and fidelity to the church*
- *Their charism of unity attracted me and their small size.*
- *The members and the charism of the order. Also, I am very drawn to the Franciscan tradition and have a desire for a closer relationship with God.*
- *I loved their ministry and charism! They have a relationship with the kids that they serve which is undeniably beautiful!*

- *I loved (and still love) the charism of our community, and really felt my heart drawn to belong totally to Christ the King. From the knowledge that I am a daughter of the Father and bride of the King flows the mission of spreading his kingdom to every nation, one student, one classroom at a time. The joy of the sisters, in all circumstances, was also very attractive.*
- *Ignatius spirituality*

Prayer Life and Communal Prayer

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

- *What most attracted me with this religious institute is that we share in common daily Mass, Monthly retreat days in silence*
- *The prayer life, community life, mission of the religious institute.*
- *The prayer life and working with the poor and marginalized.*
- *The prayer life /spirituality and genuine witness and joy of a life given freely to Christ, community also faithful to the church and wear the full habit.*
- *The most thing that attracted me to my religious institute are Eucharistic Adoration and spiritual exercises because these attractions have drawn my attention and desire to live closely with God.*
- *The integration of prayer, work, and customs which lead the community, its members, and the wider Church to cooperate with God's grace and grow in holiness: the constant routine of liturgical prayer which grounds and directs the continual personal prayer and apostate work of the monks in the midst of a community supporting and holding its members accountable by living out a tradition that withstands the test of time (both by the long history of Benedictines and the several generations of monks at Conception Abbey itself).*
- *The importance of prayer life and ministry as well as how welcoming the Sisters were to me.*
- *The intensity of our prayer and the focus on the Eucharist*
- *The devotion to the Blessed Mother*
- *A contemplative life and a desire for silence and solitude*

- *A life of set prayer and worship. A community with a particular spirituality and mission.*
- *Divine Office 3 times/day, teaching apostolate, Franciscan charism, Marian title, felt welcomed, Transparency when I asked questions, felt like I was part of a family*
- *I was most attracted to the Carmelite Order's profound focus on an unceasing and intimate loving gaze on our Lord, constantly remaining at His feet with Mary Magdalene and adoring Him while so many go about in the world ignoring Him. I knew the best way to love our Lord is to imitate the Blessed Virgin, and there is no better way to serve Him than to stay close to our Lady's Heart under her mantle in the Order first dedicated to Her. I was drawn to this particular Carmelite convent due to its diligence in adhering to the traditional rules and constitutions set out by our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus. "Christ yesterday, and today, and the same forever." God does not change; only the whims of us emotional beings change. In celebrating Holy Mass in the extraordinary form, the traditional Divine Office, and keeping the customs of the original Discalced Carmelites. The convent strives its best the laws of Love and Truth rather than the laws of man.*

Community Life

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

- *The sense of community, the ability to live out a Christian life, with it focusing on prayer and the Eucharist, encouragement from other brothers to live a more holy life.*
- *The life of community and common prayer.*
- *Community of young people not afraid of their faith, living together, sharing time, praying together. At first also exterior signs of identity like habit, later it shifted to identity as a part of bigger whole.*
- *Sense of brotherhood; commitment to Catholic education.*
- *Community life, and the call of the Lord. I didn't think of discernment as shopping around to find the one in which my gifts fit most perfectly with their charism. I allowed God to work through the circumstances of my life and followed where that led*
- *Community and Prayer life as well as devotion to the tradition of the Church and the way of life of our Order were key factors which attracted me to the religious state.*
- *Community and Brotherhood and family aspect of the members.*
- *The community life and down to earthiness of my sisters*

Joy of the Institute's Members

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

- *Infinite joy and love for Christ.*
- *What attracted me most to my religious institute was the joyful and orthodox witness the members give, faithful to our charism and the writings of our founder.*
- *The incredible joy and love of the charism brought to its members and everyone they encountered.*
- *The vibrant community I experienced while visiting most attracted me to this community. I saw other young women my age who had taken the leap, so I knew it was possible.*
- *The supernatural joy of making Christ present in our culture in all manifestation of men.*
- *The sisters were (and are) so welcoming and so full of joy.*
- *The simple joy of the Salesian life was very attractive to me. Recognizing the joy of these sisters, the beautiful life of prayer and self-giving that they live, I was immediately interested. Also, their piety connected with a true sense of FUN. That was beautiful to see lived out.*
- *The members were the happiest people I'd met; the authenticity, the rhythm of the life*
- *The joyful, friendly and welcoming attitude of the members and their ministry types.*
- *The joy that permeates from each of my sisters for giving their entire life to our Lord, a complete sacrifice of love to be rooted in the word, and prolong this incarnation to all men, and to all the manifestation of man.*
- *The joy of the members; they were down to earth and relatable. I felt more attracted to this community because I slowly began to see and witness their faithfulness to the sacraments, especially the priority given to reconciliation and the Eucharist. Prayer and meals in common helped me to recognize the sense of lived fraternity which is more than just a label or "natural consequence."*
- *The joy of the members and their commitment to the Church.*
- *The joy I saw and felt the first time I encountered the sisters. The fact that they are a contemplative order. The charism of the order.*
- *The joy and the gift of self-witnessing daily by the sisters. Meeting them was the response to a profound desire I had, but didn't know could be answered because I had never*

encountered anything like it before. The young age of many sisters and their dedication to teaching (their main apostolate) was also very attractive.

- *The joy and love as fruits of relationship with God.*

Religious habit

- *I love the habits. I loved their way of life and how similar it is to my life at home.*
- *I love that they wear the habit all the time, their strong union and following of the Pope and the joy I saw in the sisters.*
- *Full Habit attracted me*
- *The habit which the sisters still wore and the fact that the sisters fought to keep the habit*
- *The habit and missionary lifestyle.*

Fidelity to the Church

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

- *The institute is faithful to the church. Everyone or most everyone understands that their duty as a religious is to be a saint. Prayer is number 1 beginning with the Mass*
- *The institute is authentically Catholic. The professed members are very human as well and while the constitutions and rule are slightly below what I would prefer, the practices of the members of the institute are motivated by the love of Jesus and most people strive for greater virtue despite the areas of the rule which are weaker (Ex: fasting and abstinence, prayers and time set aside for prayer, communal living practices, etc.)*

Religious Formation

A number of respondents report having been attracted by the formation that they received in their religious institute. Some of the elements they say impressed them about the religious formation are:

- *The formation process, the history and story of our community, the foundresses, the hard work and the joy that the sisters portray everyday, the way that they relate to the lay faithful, the way that they incorporate every sister's gifts into their mission.*
- *The formation and distinction of each member. The Legion's spirituality and apostolate are militant and require commitment.*
- *The formation received and the quality of the education*

Social Justice

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

- *The Sisters, their spirituality, works for justice and peace*
- *The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas are women who are not afraid to tackle the issues of the times. They are bold, educated, and tireless women who care deeply for the people on the periphery, especially women and children. They are not afraid to take on the seemingly impossible, and they are not afraid to stand with those who are treated poorly by others.*

What Do You Find Most Challenging about Religious Life?

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

Community Life

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

- *Community life is the most difficult. Prayer practices can be learned. Personal rhythms and habits (i.e, rising time and daily rituals) can be learned. Yet, the relationships that are a necessary aspect of religious life can prove to be difficult at times. You are working with many different members who have their own personalities and brokenness which can provide a challenge as much as an opportunity for grace and humility.*
- *I find it challenging when there is a lack of communication and care for others in the community. What I mean about communication is when there is something important made in advance like a planned event or guests coming over to the community and no one is informed. With care for others, I mean when there may be signs there is something wrong with a member or a member seems to not be their normal self which could include missing prayer, missing community meals, missing mass, or acting strange and no one goes to talk or ask if the person is ok. These things I see as problems or challenges in religious life.*
- *As a more introverted person, I find it challenging the amount of time that we spend in community because it requires even more social interaction after a day of ministry work.*
- *Adjusting to the life style, living with sisters who are different from myself, and cultural differences.*
- *What I find most challenging about religious life is living in community*
- *Community life is the most challenging aspect of religious life. Yet, it is also one of the most rewarding aspects of the life as well.*
- *The community life is very challenging. I hope I will be able to overcome it.*

- *Getting attached to a group before getting to know any individual is a challenge*
- *Community especially since I am new and still learning about everyone. Peoples personalities, etc. Also, starting from the very bottom in a sense - being new and a beginner even if one has lived some life already (I'm 33) and has had responsibilities, meaningful jobs (meaningful in my growth in Christ). it is a hard lesson in humility. But I suppose necessary. Lord help me!*
- *Community! Always the best and hardest (most humbling) part.*
- *At this moment, I find community life are both challenge and beauty at the same time. Learning how to live a religious life in my community also challenges me since I am still learning it during my formative years.*
- *The most challenging about religious life is living in a diverse community*
- *Personal imperfections and foibles that come out into the community. Community as a mirror to my own soul and all my "defects." Learning to put the needs of the community before my own and to be accepting of things when they don't go my way. Letting go and letting God, one could say.*
- *Community. In particular tensions about how the vows are to be lived. There is a need for renewal obviously, but allowing for it to come patiently is of great importance. Some of this revolves around the wearing of the habit obviously, but not all of it. More importantly though when living a place with many others you occasionally find them burdensome and become a burden to them. Working through these things makes it a community that is stronger, but it is not without challenge.*
- *Sisters are human just like everyone else. As such, community life can be challenging at times, yet it also is very rewarding. Also, I think a lot of people don't understand what religious life is all about. Another challenge involves balancing all of my responsibilities (i.e., my ministry, prayer life, community life, etc.).*
- *Living in community is both a very real blessing and frustrating if your community members are unable to talk and to have a dialogue with each other on what is happening in their lives, what's bothering them, etc.*
- *The most challenging about religious life is community life, but on the other hand is great because you can practice certain virtues and strive to grow in holiness.*
- *Community life is the other challenge. We live with many different personalities with varied backgrounds. One day you get a smile and friendliness, and the next...I can sometimes question what I may have done to upset my neighbor? It is a challenge to forget self and truly love the other.*
- *Sometimes the community can be a bit tricky to get along with. You are not going to be best friends with all the sisters, but that just makes it that much more family-like. I have*

already "adopted" many of the sisters, and they have already adopted me as well. In the end, it makes it all worth it to have that sense of connection.

- *Community life. Some of our members are sadly limited in their social skills for various reasons, and it affects the entire community. Our formation director is trying to avoid this in the future by implementing psychology, group discussions and basic conflict management into the formation program, but for members who are already professed and set in their ways, there's little, if anything, that can be done. Most deal with this by avoidance or just keeping conversation light and superficial, but this only maintains a surface calm and inhibits real growth as a community.*

Maturing in Religious Life

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

- *Changing my mentality around my sins and my shortcomings. Coming to a deeper realization that my spiritual growth is a question of progress, not immediate perfection.*
- *A significant challenge of trusting and persevering is seeing the faults in the community, its failures to live up to the ideals of religious life. Despite the imperfections in the community and its practices, I have to trust that this is where God wants me.*
- *My main challenge so far has been recognizing how the ideas of the world have affected the way I think subconsciously. Detachment from these worldly mindsets is certainly a process, but it is so freeing.*
- *At times community dynamics can be a challenge, but I find that most members work hard at trying to develop respectful and meaningful relationships with each other and that these are helpful in promoting growth in the religious life.*
- *The process of God stripping away my ego and selfishness, its challenging but hearing and ultimately freeing*
- *Dying to the old self and putting on the life of Christ.*
- *So far, what I find most challenging is continually submitting my will and obeying with a spirit of faith and trust even when I disagree with something, when it doesn't suit my taste, I would do it differently, or I simply don't understand why it is needed. But life is more blessed, when I am less in control! With God's grace, I know I will receive the humility I need to submit when I am called to.*

- *Leaving old habits. I realized that I had a habit for everything I did. Even when I got sick, I used to do the exact same thing. Now I am leaving my old self, with an open disposition to create new habits and become a better version of myself for God, the church and the Kingdom*

Adaptation to Religious Life

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

- *In religious life I am being pushed out of my comfort zone a lot more than I'm used to. What I find most challenging is the call to constantly and willingly step out of my comfort zone so I can better serve the Lord.*
- *Persevering in daily surrender to Christ and not to self-obsession is what i find most challenging about religious life.*
- *I can't think of anything challenging that I don't find any good reason for doing. Everything in the schedule is there to help us become better apostles and I want that. It really isn't tough. Of those "challenging" things, dependence, depending on my superiors for most things is hard at times, but I know it will help me as a religious.*
- *The most challenging about religious life is the world detachments.*
- *Being obedient to my formator and superiors is hard. It's also hard when I don't agree with how we live out our rule or how specific things are done. Also communication is tough when all the sisters are so different and sometimes we miscommunicate instructions.*
- *Waking up at 5 am 5 days a week.*
- *For right now, the daily schedule of prayer and work as it changes with feasts and solemnities and other changes that need to be made. Also, the closing of my cellphone account is a big change. It has its pros and cons.*
- *Going from a culture that preaches autonomy to entering religious life where you have poverty of your own time was/is a huge challenge.*
- *The most challenging about religious life thus far would have to be the asking for permission in all things especially because once you hit a certain age out in the world, and in my family, I would only let them know where I was going or doing rather than asking my parents if I could or could not go. And living life on a schedule that one has no control over is hard to get used to at first especially because prior to entering I made sure that I always had lots of leisure time throughout my day.*

- *I find that a surprising number of the members do not seem to be taking their religious vocations as seriously as they should. I think the habit should be more commonly worn. We live in houses that are too luxurious and I do not consider them fitting to the life we should be living. There is definitely not enough presence among youth who would perhaps be interested in the order if they knew about it. We do not have a music class in our postulancy program.*
- *I perceive many of my peers and members of the Order to be unfaithful to the teachings of the Church. A number of them want to change the Church's teachings of homosexuality, Eucharist, Holy Orders, the Trinity and so on. Moreover, they often speak ill of those of us who want to remain faithful. Some of the things I considered to be ideals of the Order are laughed at. In general, there is a sense of worldliness that seems present here.*
- *The daily struggle of will. In religious life, there are many opportunities to live out poverty, chastity and obedience, and for me it is a challenge to surrender, getting to choose all the time what I want.*
- *Obedience. The most challenging part is letting go of my own will and control over my life and trusting in God and the Superiors He has given me.*
- *I think it's more with the vow of chastity. As a man coming from a secular world and have worked for a period, have experienced relationship, attraction to opposite sex is challenging. It speaks of self-control and sense of self which I do believe I am on the process of strengthening.*
- *The vows are definitely challenging to keep, but of course it is challenging! It is only accomplished through Faith in God and his graces. Aside from that, community life is a blessing and a curse, which brings out your own faults as you try to deal with living with others' faults. It's also hard to be separated from your family to a certain degree.*
- *Obedience, submitting oneself to the will of God and not one's own individual will. learning and working with brothers' strengths and weaknesses. managing time with prayer and community activities. Embracing chastity. Knowing when to rest/eat when you strongly desire to satisfy individuals' needs.*

Decreasing Communication with Family and Friends

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

- *The most challenging about religious life is being apart from my family and not sharing a dinner meal. That was part of our family life.*
- *The most challenging part for me is not spending everyday with my biological family. After spending every day in their presence it will take some time for me to adjust. However, my spiritual family here brings me much comfort and joy.*
- *The most challenging aspect of religious life for me is living out community life being mindful to cultivate virtues such as patience, understanding, and gentleness. In this institute, there is a very strong sense of community.*
- *Being separated from my family and friends is hard. Also, it was hard to give up the idea of Marriage. However, Jesus tells us that whoever leaves mother and father, children, spouses, lands and possessions will inherit a hundredfold and after this life, Eternal life. I have experienced that my family is closer to God now and closer to each other. Even if it is hard sometimes, following Jesus is worth it.*
- *I find that the distance and limited contact with my family most challenging.*
- *Right now, I would say the most challenging aspect is the sense of separation from family.*
- *The most challenging aspect of religious life is living away from my family and having limited communication with my family.*
- *Being away from family with limited communication has been very difficult.*
- *Leaving those you love. Also, working through challenges with those who like to keep things the same.*
- *I find being homesick most challenging about religious life. It is hard for me not to be able to go home whenever I feel like it or to see my family for holidays and events.*
- *Being the first time living apart from my mom and sister, a challenge has been living in community.*
- *It is challenging to be away from family, the people I have known, love and cherished all my life. Its beautiful to be welcomed into this new family but still hard to be physically away from my family.*
- *Probably the most challenging thing thus far has been the separation from family and friends and the limited communication. I am very close with my immediate family.*

Religious Formation

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

- *Moving to a different city to begin formation.*
- *During the short time of my formation so far, I have found the experience of completely sacrificing my own will to be most challenging. In school and in the workplace, we become accustomed to following rules and directions of others, but only in religious life is every facet of our life placed under the authority of another. (Perhaps it could be argued that this is also the case with marriage). It will take time, I suspect, for me to understand and live obedience in the light of faith.*
- *What I found most challenging about religious life was learning how to adopt and organize myself with the time I was given. Another thing I found challenging was being humble docile to the Holy Spirit's inspiration.*
- *The most challenging part of religious life is yourself. You enter with your old Adam and have to do battle daily with the world, the flesh, and the devil in order to have Christ through Mary to be formed in you. It is a work that only cooperation with grace and the Blessed Mother can purify and make new.*
- *Sacrificing, crucifying, suffering, and dying. Fighting against the demons as a desert dweller in this monastic life as a hermit.*
- *I find it challenging to balance the spiritual academic aspects of the life. At times it feels as if the focus I put on my academic work take my attention off of my spiritual growth and discernment, which is the purpose of my being a seminarian at this point.*
- *One of the things that is part of my formation is taking some college courses. Because I am an older adult joining the community, getting settled back into University life has been a challenge. Nothing specific to the community has been challenging to date. I have been here a little over three months.*
- *The thing I find the most challenging is doing something that none of my friends are doing. All of my friends are having a typical college experience while mine is different, so it makes it hard to relate or fit in sometimes.*

Other Challenges

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

- *Disorganization, lack of cooperation with the laity, and confusion about our mission. Just because a man is a religious priest or brother, doesn't mean he is suited to administrative work in the community. We are not a cloistered contemplative institute, so our failure to partner with more lay faithful is distressing. The urgent need to evangelize millennials, Gen-Xers and Baby boomers makes our work critical, but we seem bogged down by minutia and lack of help.*
- *As the solo 'new person in community' I have found it challenging at times to have 'all eyes' on me ALL the time!!!*
- *The negative perception most people have regarding the Church and religious life*
- *I find it challenging to grapple with the failures of my superiors and other members of the congregation. I know that this is partially because I am insecure about my own failures, and about the ways I still need to grow in virtue in order to be able to fully live the religious life that is ahead of me. However, this is compounded by the reality of serious evil that has been done by leaders in the church, even bishops, in the ongoing abuse crisis and the fallout from it.*
- *Coming to terms with the aging of the Community and the possibility that the Community will be gone in the not too distant future, and working out what that means for continuing our charism.*
- *They don't have a habit, liturgy in mass is not followed correctly and that there are homosexual brothers and priests. Overall it is the liberal agenda the order has adopted which I don't agree with.*
- *Knowing that I will not have biological children*
- *That they don't have a habit, liturgy in Mass is not followed correctly and that there are homosexual brothers and priests. Overall it is the liberal agenda the order has adopted which I don't agree with.*
- *Challenges include: interpersonal conflict resolution with men who have a diversity of backgrounds/perspectives that make it difficult for clear mutual understanding at times (men who may or may not have learned how to have critical conversations and be mature, fair, and even-toned I'm their approach); watching the mistakes/leniency/attitudes of older friars with regards to religious life and practicing the vows in the context of our founders charism (I'm sometimes disappointed with peoples words and actions); the formation house environment is not the same as average friaries, pressures, stressors, and growth pains make the experience more uncomfortable than expected; waiting for other men to finally get with the program or discern-out because of how taxing it is on the formation community, facing uninspected personal growth areas with may require counseling, heavy self-discipline and community support*
- *It's tendency to support Democratic Party candidates in elections despite their position supporting abortion.*

Appendix I: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

Entrance Class of 2018

UnitID: _____

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

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

Please use the responses below for questions 1-15.

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

How much did the following attract you to religious life?

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
| 3 | 3 | 19 | 72 | 2 | 1. A sense of call to religious life |
| <1 | 3 | 19 | 78 | 2 | 2. A desire for prayer and spiritual growth |
| 1 | 10 | 31 | 57 | 3 | 3. A desire to be part of a community |
| >1 | 9 | 22 | 69 | 2 | 4. A desire to be of service |
| 3 | 13 | 33 | 51 | 2 | 5. A desire to be more committed to the Church |

How much did these attract you to your religious institute?

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
| 13 | 17 | 30 | 40 | 3 | 6. The life and works of your founder/ress |
| 2 | 6 | 22 | 70 | 2 | 7. The mission of the institute |
| 1 | 6 | 20 | 73 | 2 | 8. The spirituality of the institute |
| 1 | 5 | 28 | 66 | 2 | 9. The prayer life of the institute |
| 1 | 4 | 25 | 70 | 3 | 10. The community life of the institute |
| 3 | 9 | 30 | 58 | 3 | 11. The ministries of the institute |
| 4 | 10 | 28 | 58 | 2 | 12. The institute's fidelity to the Church |
| 2 | 5 | 24 | 68 | 2 | 13. The example of members of the institute |
| 25 | 24 | 21 | 29 | 6 | 14. A personal invitation by a member |
| 3 | 8 | 30 | 59 | 3 | 15. Welcome and encouragement by members |

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

- | | |
|----|--|
| 68 | 16. In an institution where members served, e.g., school |
| 85 | 17. Through working with a member of the institute |
| 82 | 18. Through a relative or a friend in the institute |
| 69 | 19. Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor |
| 83 | 20. Through the reputation or history of the institute |
| 95 | 21. Through a vocation fair |
| 94 | 22. Through a vocation match or placement service |
| 89 | 23. Through an event sponsored by the institute |
| 92 | 24. Through a media story about the institute or member |
| 72 | 25. Through your own internet search |
| 94 | 26. Through print promotional materials |
| 89 | 27. Through web or social media promotional materials |
| 81 | 28. Other. |

Please use the responses below for questions 29-41.

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

If you participated in any of the following with your religious institute before you entered, how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?

- | | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NR | |
| 7 | 4 | 13 | 74 | 9 | 6 | 29. Contact with the vocation director |
| <1 | 4 | 17 | 66 | 13 | 7 | 30. Contact with institute members |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 83 | 12 | 31. "Andrew Dinner" or "Nun Run" |
| 0 | 1 | 12 | 55 | 32 | 7 | 32. "Come and See" experience |
| <1 | 3 | 12 | 50 | 34 | 9 | 33. Vocation or discernment retreat |
| 1 | 2 | 9 | 48 | 49 | 8 | 34. Live in experience |
| 2 | 2 | 12 | 25 | 60 | 11 | 35. Ministry with institute members |
| 3 | 2 | 10 | 16 | 69 | 11 | 36. Mission experience |
| 3 | 4 | 9 | 14 | 70 | 12 | 37. Meeting with a discernment group |
| 1 | 3 | 17 | 40 | 39 | 9 | 38. Visit(s) to local community/ies |
| 2 | 1 | 10 | 38 | 49 | 11 | 39. Visit(s) to the Motherhouse |
| 9 | 15 | 17 | 16 | 44 | 10 | 40. Social media (e.g., Facebook) |
| 3 | 4 | 13 | 52 | 28 | 8 | 41. Spiritual direction |

Please use the responses below for questions 42-51.

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 | |
| 33 | 28 | 26 | 13 | 6 | 42. The size of the institute |
| 32 | 22 | 28 | 18 | 6 | 43. Its geographic location(s) |
| 34 | 15 | 20 | 32 | 13 | 44. Its internationality, if applicable |
| 2 | 7 | 24 | 67 | 6 | 45. Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute |
| 2 | 5 | 25 | 69 | 6 | 46. Community life in the institute |
| 5 | 7 | 31 | 57 | 6 | 47. The lifestyle of members |
| 59 | 14 | 13 | 14 | 7 | 48. The racial/ethnic background of members |
| 34 | 23 | 27 | 16 | 7 | 49. The ages of members |
| 7 | 9 | 29 | 55 | 7 | 50. The types of ministry of its members |
| 20 | 13 | 16 | 52 | 6 | 51. Its practice regarding a religious habit |

Please use the responses below for questions 52-64.

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

How important to you are these types of prayer?

1 2 3 4 NR
0 1 11 88 5 52. Private personal prayer
<1 2 6 92 5 53. Daily Eucharist
3 11 23 63 5 54. Liturgy of the Hours
10 23 40 28 7 55. Non-liturgical common prayer
15 28 29 29 6 56. Common meditation
3 9 16 73 5 57. Eucharistic Adoration
5 14 32 50 6 58. Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary
12 16 33 39 7 59. Faith sharing

How important to you are these aspects of community life?

1 2 3 4
0 2 11 87 5 60. Living with other members
<1 2 8 90 6 61. Praying with other members
1 6 20 73 5 62. Working with other members
<1 3 14 82 5 63. Sharing meals together
1 6 18 76 7 64. Socializing/sharing leisure time together

Please use the responses below for questions 65-83.

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

How would you rate these in your religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR
3 14 26 57 9 65. Efforts to promote vocations
1 5 18 77 8 66. Welcome and support of newer
members
4 6 24 66 9 67. Formation/incorporation programs
2 7 29 62 11 68. Opportunities for ongoing formation
1 8 25 66 9 69. Educational opportunities
2 9 35 55 12 70. Preparation for ministry
0 4 18 78 9 71. Opportunities for spiritual growth
0 3 21 77 9 72. Opportunities for personal growth
1 7 20 72 9 73. Sense of identity as religious
1 4 25 70 9 74. Sense of identity as institute members
2 5 24 70 8 75. Fidelity to the Church and its teachings
4 3 18 79 8 76. Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual
growth
1 6 20 73 9 77. Focus on mission
<1 2 19 79 10 78. Commitment to ministry
<1 5 28 67 9 79. Response to the needs of our time
2 14 34 49 12 80. Efforts to promote social justice
<1 5 30 65 9 81. Quality of community life
1 6 30 63 9 82. Communal prayer experiences
<1 7 30 63 10 83. Relationships with one another

Yes No NR = 28

70 20 8 84. Do members of your institute wear a habit?

85. If yes to #84, is wearing the habit

62 1. Required in all or most circumstances
23 2. Required only at certain times, e.g., ministry, prayer
11 3. Optional
4 4. Other: _____

86. If yes to #84, and wearing the habit is optional, how many members wear it all or most of the time?

11 1. None
19 2. A few (less than 25%)
19 3. Some (25-49%)
12 4. Many (50-74%)
39 5. Most (75% or more)

87. If yes to #84, and wearing the habit is optional, how frequently do you wear it? NR = 78

28 1. Never
6 2. Once in a while
27 3. Only at certain times (e.g., ministry, prayer)
39 4. In all or most circumstances

About You

88. Are you: 51 1. Male 49 2. Female NR = 8

89. If male, do you expect to become a NR = 54

19 1. Perpetually professed brother 81 2. Priest

AVG NR

1990 14 90. Year you were born

2024 22 91. Year you expect to profess perpetual vows

19 14 92. Age you first considered religious life

3 14 93. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

94. What is your birth order?

4 1. Only child 25 3. Youngest
38 2. Eldest 33 4. Somewhere in the middle

95. What best describes your racial or ethnic background?

3 1. African/African American/black
14 2. Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
65 3. Caucasian/European American/white
15 4. Hispanic/Latino(a)
<1 5. Native American/American Indian
4 6. Other: _____

Yes No NR

74 26 9 96. Were you born in the United States?

97. *If no*, country of birth:

98. *If no*, year you first moved to United States

89 11 9 99. Were you raised Catholic?

87 13 90 100. *If no*, did you become Catholic through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)?

101. *If no to #99*, what was your prior religion:

15 85 9 102. Were you ever home-schooled?

103. *If yes*, number of years home-schooled

AVG 8 NR = 86

Did you attend any of the following before you entered?

Check all that apply.

52 104. Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR

41 105. Catholic elementary or middle school

34 106. Catholic high school

35 107. Catholic college or university

30 108. Catholic ministry formation program

Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of these before you entered? *Check all that apply.*

75 109. Parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years

58 110. Parish youth group, Life Teen, or high school campus ministry during high school years

68 111. Parish young adult group

53 112. Campus ministry during college

91 113. Religious institute volunteer program (e.g., Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)

54 114. Liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister)

54 115. Music ministry, cantor, choir

60 116. Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA team

39 117. Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting

28 118. Retreats

85 119. World Youth Day

92 120. National Catholic Youth Conference

67 121. Right to Life March on Washington

122. What was the highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?

12 1. High school or less 15 4. Master's degree

19 2. Some college 4 5. Doctoral degree

50 3. Bachelor's degree <1 6.

Other: _____

Family Background While You Were Growing Up

Yes No NR

89 11 9 123. Was your mother Catholic?

124. *If no*, what was her religious preference?

125. How important was religion to your mother while you were growing up?

5 1. Not at all 24 3. Somewhat important

5 2. Only a little 66 4. Very important

84 16 9 126. Was your father Catholic?

127. *If no*, what was his religious preference?

128. How important was religion to your father while you were growing up?

12 1. Not at all 24 3. Somewhat important

18 2. Only a little 46 4. Very important

Yes No NR

33 67 10 129. Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?

66 34 10 130. Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?

37 63 9 131. Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

22 78 9 132. Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

28 72 10 133. Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?

52 48 9 134. Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?

Please use these responses for questions 135-146.

1=Not at All

3=Somewhat

2=Only a Little

4=Very Much

BLANK=Not applicable

How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?

1 2 3 4 NR

3 4 21 73 14 135. Members of your institute

4 4 20 71 17 136. Vocation director/team

5 5 16 76 26 137. Spiritual director, if applicable

5 6 25 64 27 138. Other men and women religious

11 12 25 52 25 139. Diocesan priests

18 16 24 42 15 140. Your parents, if applicable

18 24 25 34 17 141. Your siblings, if applicable

21 20 32 27 21 142. Other family members

8 11 26 56 23 143. People in your parish

9 20 28 44 22 144. People in your school or workplace

25 6 18 51 59 145. Campus minister, if applicable

5 13 29 53 14 146. Friends outside the institute

147. What most attracted you to your religious institute?

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

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!
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Appendix II: Responses to Open-ended Comments

Q. 147: What most attracted you to your religious institute?

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

What most attracted me was two things: First being our charism. In our Institute our charism is to evangelize the culture in this way we prolong the incarnation of our Lord. This had particularly struck me when reading about our institute. The second being the family spirit. Everyone in the institute is our family. It doesn't matter if you have known them for five years or five minutes; you are treated as family.

When I first was discerning, it was to become a priest. Later on, as I studied for my congregation, I then discerned whether I was called to join that congregation, which is a missionary congregation by studying another language in another country for two months. My success with that experience is what lead me to believe that I have a vocation to not only become a priest, but also a missionary.

What most attracted me with this religious institute is that we share in common daily Mass. Also the community life we share. For example taking our meals with the sisters and hearing their stories, praying together both morning and evening prayer. Monthly retreat days in silence that help.

What most attracted me was their presence and accompaniment of the young. A priest from the order accompanied me and helped me to have an encounter with Christ in my last year of high school and I wanted the same for all young people.

What most attracted me to this religious institute is the joy and simplicity with which they lived out their prayer life, community life, and mission. Everywhere they went, they radiated joy and peace. In the apostolate, I observed the genuine care with which they ministered to children. I also admired their simplicity and how down to earth they were. I felt as though I could be myself when I first visited them. The same gentleness, warmth, and loving kindness with which they embraced me, I witnessed they shared with each other. That impacted me very much.

What most attracted me to my religious institute was totality in which members give themselves to Christ

What most attracted me about the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity is that this community has a lot of different ministries for the service of the poor. Also, I was attracted by the ministry of education. The Franciscan spirituality of poverty and simplicity was also what I was looking for. There are a lot of more different things that attracted me to this community. But most importantly, I was attracted to have a relationship with Jesus and His promise of salvation.

What attracted me was the charisms, the spirituality, the emphasis on prayer and personal relationship with God, and the focus and the mission of the work/ministry of the sisters.

What attracted me to the Legionaries of Christ was the human formation they received. The saying "first the man then the saint" is clearly believed and lived. The ability to be distinguished and well-mannered and at the same time being able to get their hands dirty and work hard and suffer really impacted me. In their holiness you see their humanity to which you can connect. Some of them are so closed into themselves trying to be fervent that they forget to reach out to souls. This balance and hierarchy of contemplative and evangelizing also attracts me. One aspect that can't be overseen, though is the charity. It is the heart of the spirit of the congregation and it is lived out in the most attractive way possible.

What attracted me the most about my religious institute was that infinite joy and love for Christ. The reverence for sacred liturgy and the faith vow of consecration to our Blessed Virgin Mary. Many more but this one is the top thing that comes to mind.

What attracted me most was their charism. My religious institute offer their lives for the sanctification of priests, which is an important and needed charism. More importantly, I strongly felt God's call for me to live this life.

What attracted me most to the Norbetine's was the devotion to Mary and the Eucharist, fidelity to the Pope, community life, and the Orthodox formation

What attracted me most to my religious institute was the joyful and orthodox witness the members give, faithful to our charism and the writings of our founder. Our community is less than a century old and aggregated to the Franciscan family, which also appealed to me.

What attracted me most to my religious Institute was the incredible joy and love of the charism brought to its members and everyone they encountered. Also how Eucharistic centered we are being that we are contemplative/active

Well, to be honest I wasn't looking for a religious order. I had discerned before, but thought I was called to marriage. God essentially dropped my order into my lap and said "Here, this is what I made you for" After visiting and seeing how joyful they were, how faithful they were, and how much their spirituality resonated with me, I prayed in earnest about entering the order. In prayer, God repeatedly confirmed the decision to enter.

Ultimately, what drew me to the Dominican Order the most was the order's charism/mission to "preach for the salvation of souls."

Ultimately, I believe that what attracted me to my particular religious institute was learning about the charism of the congregation and seeing it lived out faithfully by the sisters I encountered. I was attracted to their humility and their love for the poor and I recognized that these were the fruits of a deep love for Christ cultivated and nourished in prayer. If they did not live this Christ-centeredness, did not have vibrant lives of Eucharistic prayer, and were not faithful to the church, I could not have taken this step.

To live for Jesus in the poorest of the poor and to be one with him living like them

To be a missionary, to experience a new culture and people. To be adventurous.

This community has endured for hundreds of years, has produced a bunch of great saints, and is structured such that it's hard for one charismatic personality to take over and steer things in some wild new direction. Perhaps most importantly, I felt at home here and felt good enough about the community's state not to worry about being the only "young guy" and getting promoted away from active ministry prematurely.

Their spirituality, specifically their devotions to the Sacred Heart, reparation, and redemptive suffering.

Their spirituality was Franciscan and I have a strong devotion to Saint Francis. Also they are charismatic and I felt free to pray and worship the way God created me. Also the love the sisters have for each, and the sense of fraternity was the best I've experienced.

Their spirit of love above all else. Compassion understanding of the human condition and their utmost dedication to our creator and redeemer present in one another and all they serve and meet. Their respect and love for the dignity of the human person fueled by their study of and meditation on the Gospel, the person of Jesus Christ. I feel it is a good combination of contemplative life and active/apostolic life.

Their mission of systemic change in service to the poor. I also appreciated the long history, inter-nationality, and modified habit.

Their genuine way of life, and its ability to meet people where they are in current times yet still holding onto its core beliefs and customs.

Their dedication to Franciscan Spirituality and authentic welcome and support.

Their charism, joy, vibrancy and fidelity to the church

Their charism of unity attracted me and their small size.

The zeal in which they live out the gospel and their charism.

The work with the laity and its love to be with the people.

The vibrant community I experienced while visiting most attracted me to this community. I saw other young women my age who had taken the leap, so I knew it was possible.

The vibrancy of the community life and the serious spirituality; the joy of the sisters.

The variety of ministries, an emphasis on personal prayer and active ministry, social justice issues. The level of education involved in formation to become a Jesuit priest.

The unique and personal formation of future Basilian priests. Also, the Basilian community and spiritual atmosphere.

The things that most attracted me were our charism, having adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each day along with Mass, our formation of members, the most beautiful and attracting after the Mass and adoration in our institute's charity, joy and family spirit.

The thing that most attracted me to religious life is the opportunity to give God my whole self and serve Him with my entire being. I deeply desire to be 100 in and the world could not offer me that. In the Eucharist Jesus gives Himself to me, to us... and I wanted to respond in a total gift back to Him.

The thing that attracted me most to my religious institute was that it was forming men who were alive. They want to form leaders to spread Christ's kingdom in the world through the Church. This kingdom in the world is transmitted into the society. The kingdom we wish to transmit is that of Christ's peace.

The supernatural joy of making Christ present in our culture in all manifestation of men.

Awe intense prayer life and missionary spirit.

The freedom and authenticity each sister embraced in their own vocation.

The freedom that comes from falling in love with Christ which you could see in each sister.

The strong community life that stems from a common prayer life. Also their charism that values each person and delights in him/her as unique and unrepeatable.

The strong community life of the Order of Preachers and the choral office. The emphasis on preaching for the salvation of souls and balance of active and contemplative life. The strong sense of identity and wearing of the habit.

The story of the foundress and her presence connected with my life today. The vow of service as well and the connection of today's issues in the world. The feeling of being at home with myself in company of the sisters.

The story of our foundress attracted me most to my religious community. There were some parallels in her life that I could relate to. I was also struck by the joy, compassion, and community life when I first visited.

The spirituality, they are growing, they wear the habit, my sister is a sister there.

The spirituality, the entire life from entering to the grave, the formation, the daily program

The spirituality of hope described in the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Holy Cross is what most attracted me.

The Sisters, their spirituality, works for justice and peace, Sponsored Ministries. How the Sisters interact with others.

The Sisters Of Mercy of the Americas are women who are not afraid to tackle the issues of the times. They are bold, educated, and tireless women who care deeply for the people on the periphery, especially women and children. They are not afraid to take on the seemingly impossible, and they are not afraid to stand with those who are treated poorly by others.

The sisters love to all

The sister were (and are) so welcoming and so full of joy. The Franciscan contemplative life matches the inner sense of my vocation. The sisters are good listeners and supportive. I came to know them over several months through attending Mass, a two week immersion experience and then a time of candidacy

The simplicity of the lifestyle; how REAL all of the sisters were (they weren't already floating on some cloud); the love in the community (they are devoted to the Rule, yes, but always allow love to be THE guiding rule, which accounts for so many of our human weaknesses); the Eucharist - here Jesus is exposed almost perpetually. During my first live-in experience an enormous peace flooded my soul. It was as if He had made this community for me and I for the community and now He was opening up His arms saying, "Here you go, my Beloved."

The simple joy of the Salesian life was very attractive to me. Recognizing the joy of these sisters, the beautiful life of prayer and self-giving that they live, I was immediately interested. Also, their piety connected with a true sense of FUN. That was beautiful to see lived out. The Sisters themselves also really loved me, from the moment I walked in; Not for what I have or what I have done, but because I am a child of God. This truth was so evident in all of their actions, hospitality, and joy.

The service and bond of the community.

The sense of social justice that the community has along with an international presence. The sponsored ministries have the same values that I find to be important. The values of community are mirrored in my own personal values.

The sense of prayer, spirituality and calling into a life of service.

The sense of community, the ability to live out a Christian life, with it focusing on prayer and the Eucharist, encouragement from other brothers to live a more holy life.

The real experience of the Grace of God; He led me to this community. I was lost in sin and looking for meaning and purpose, and He came in to my life in a way that gradually I opened up to Him, even though I had spent years cursing His Name, and it was through this community that I found Him pursuing me constantly. And the more I pursue Him in return, the more I feel called to serve within this institution!

The priests and religious I met from the institute. They are so alive, full of passion and very distinguished. When you talk to them you knew they had a great formation and a big concern for you. I also related a lot to the charism because I grew up with them.
the prayer life, community life, mission of the religious institute.

The prayer life and working with the poor and marginalized.

The prayer life /spirituality and genuine witness and joy of a life given freely to Christ, community also faithful to the church and wear the full habit.

The personalities of the friars.

The most what attracted me was that the sisters worked with children. Our mission in Haiti and the life and works of your foundress, Blessed Mary Angela Truskowska, the spirituality and prayer life of the institute.

The most thing that attracted me to my religious institute are Eucharistic Adoration and spiritual exercises because these attractions have drawn my attention and desire to live closely with God.

What most attracted me to my religious institute is Community- Sisters in our community are joyful.

The mix of contemplative and active life with strong emphasis on common life. Examples of and being good friends with members of the institute showed me real examples of life as a religious in the institute.

The mission, strong community life

The mission, charism, spirituality and joy

Everything really

The mission, apostolate, and their motto of truth (veritas)

The mission to be educators and teach.

The mission of the Redemptorists ("To preach the gospel to the poor and the most abandoned") seems to me to be at the heart of the wider mission of the Church.

The importance of the mission is underscored by the significant number of saints, blessed, venerables, and martyrs in the history of the Redemptorists.

The mission of the order of and its apostolates. The Constitutions of the community.

The mission of the institute, its ministry assignments, the observances of the life, the habit, the community life, the fact that there are friars, nuns, sisters, and laity associated with the institute,

The mission and charism

The ministry the community does and the closeness of the community life.

The ministry of working with the poor, sick, dying and outcast of society.

The men whom I encountered at Notre Dame, the charism of education in the faith, the evangelical counselors, the special role that Holy Cross can play in providing catechesis and education that is so desperately needed in the Church and what it was founded to bring to the Church.

The men who were a part of it. The way they lived their lives so virtuously, but also so relateably.

The members were the happiest people I'd met; the authenticity, the rhythm of the life
The members of the institute and family aspect of the members. The habit and missionary lifestyle.

The members and the charism of the order. Also, I am very drawn to the Franciscan tradition and have a desire for a closer relationship with God.

The life of community and common prayer.

The kindness of some of the members.

The joyful, friendly and welcoming attitude of the members and their ministry types.

The joy that permeates from each of my sisters for giving their entire life to our Lord, a complete sacrifice of love to be rooted in the word, and prolong this incarnation to all men, and to all the manifestation of man.

The joy of the members; they were down to earth and relatable. I felt more attracted to this community because I slowly began to see and witness their faithfulness to the sacraments, especially the priority given to reconciliation and the Eucharist. Prayer and meals in common helped me to recognize the sense of lived fraternity which is more than just a label or "natural consequence."

The joy of the members and their commitment to the Church.

The faith of the members and their love for the truth.

The ministry of the Institute.

The joy I saw and felt the first time I encountered the sisters. The fact that they are a contemplative order. The charism of the order.

The joy and the gift of self-witnessing daily by the sisters. Meeting them was the response to a profound desire I had, but didn't know could be answered because I had never encountered anything like it before. The young age of many sisters and their dedication to teaching (their main apostolate) was also very attractive.

The joy and love as fruits of relationship with God.

The joy and fidelity of the members and seeing the need for their mission in the world also the beautiful habit.

The international size of the order provides international opportunities. The members do many different ministries, so I will not necessarily be doing only one type of ministry for the rest of my life. The importance of the fraternity among the members was very attractive. I like the members, and I wanted to be with them. I think my skills and talents could flourish and they could become useful for the kingdom of God if I am a member of the order.

The interculturality of the Congregation.

The integration of prayer, work, and customs which lead the community, its members, and the wider Church to cooperate with God's grace and grow in holiness: the constant routine of liturgical prayer which grounds and directs the continual personal prayer and apostate work of the monks in the midst of a community supporting and holding its members accountable by living out a tradition that withstands the test of time (both by the long history of Benedictines and the several generations of monks at Conception Abbey itself).

The institute is faithful to the church. Everyone or most everyone understands that their duty as a religious is to be a saint. Prayer is number 1 beginning with the Mass

The institute is authentically Catholic. The professed members are very human as well and while the constitutions and rule are slightly below what I would prefer, the practices of the members of the institute are motivated by the love of Jesus and most people strive for greater virtue despite the areas of the rule which are weaker (Ex: fasting and abstinence, prayers and time set aside for prayer, communal living practices, etc.)

The importance of prayer life and ministry as well as how welcoming the Sisters were to me. The history of the order, the writings of its saints and holy parents, a perfect balance between the active life and prayer.

The history of the Order and the ministry provided to the Church.

The history of the Order and the lives of the Saints of the Order. I felt called by God to become a member of this Order.

The history and tradition of the order.

The growth in freedom, desire, and peace- a sense of home- that I perceived in me when I arrived and began living the life of prayer here for a week-long visits. The growth was perceptible in my heart but it was also a surprise. It was clear I was not generating it. This was to me a clear sign of an encounter with Christ and so it was reasonable to keep following this.

The group is rooted in Perpetual Adoration while living lives of mission. They also have a strong community full of unique individuals. This acceptance and thriving of "all sides" successfully was very attractive to me.

The greater glory of God and the help of souls

The gentleness of the members.

The founder and the way the Order works!!! And also the community life!!!

The formation received and the quality of the education

The way the priest will give his retreats

The humor and joy the priest brought to people through their retreats and their ability to go deep into topics

The formation process, the history and story of our community, the foundresses, the hard work and the joy that the sisters portray every day, the way that they relate to the lay faithful, the way that they incorporate every sister's gifts into their mission.

The formation and distinction of each member. The Legion's spirituality and apostolate are militant and require commitment.

The focus on the Eucharist

The devotion to the Blessed Mother

The Authentic Franciscan way of life

The intensity of our prayer

Fraternal life and Ministry

The flexibility of the types of ministry in response to the needs to the church.

The first thing I noticed about the sisters was their radiant joy. As I grew to know the community I fell in love with prayer life, fraternal life and study, but it was always that the joy and love of Christ shone through all they did.

The fact that I believe our Lord called me here

- . The super Orthodox environment
- . The solemnity and respect for the liturgy
- . The devotion of our lady and the Blessed Sacrament
- . The fraternal charity and kindness of the conferees

The down to earth mentality of the other guys, diversity, vast availability of ministries and Franciscan charismas

The Dominican spirituality, community life, and the Dominican Sisters of Mary's contemplative and apostolic heart in the Eucharist.

The Dominican charism of preaching the Good News combined with the need to listen first to people and their circumstances, something I believe the Dominicans do very well.

The discipline lifestyle according to the schedule of prayer, study, work, exercise, and recreation was very attractive to me. Even more essentially, the militant charism expressed in the faces of the young men in formation drew me. There is something here of a readiness to be sent anywhere and do anything needed for Christ's Kingdom with the full force of one's mind will, talents, like a soldier under command of a general that he believes and trusts in.

The deep and Eucharistic prayer life as well as the charism and apostolate.

The continuity of their missionary challenges, bringing justice to the needed, helping them in ways that sometimes others do not want to do, their beliefs, roots, their rules etc...

The community life and the prayer life of the institute. I saw women searching together for an authentic relationship with Christ in a way that seemed to speak to my own soul.

The community life and its testimony.

The community life

The community aspect and flexibility of ministry work

The communal life is what attracts me to this community. The vigorous intellectual

Thomistic formation and devotion to the Eucharistic are large causes as well.

The cherish and welcoming attitude of their members and their sense of celebration and family in Christ.

The charisms, youth and joy of the sisters, and the spirituality.

The charism to protect and enhance a sense of the sacredness of all human life expressed in a deeply Eucharistic and Marian spirituality and mission

The Charism of the institute and the fact that they wear the religious habit.

The charism for truth and desire of zeal for souls which was so evident. The practice of daily Eucharistic, Adoration, daily Mass, and the practice of total consecration to Mary through St. Louis DeMontfort's method were the key points that attracted me to this community over other Dominican communities

The charism and the community life.

The charism and spirituality attracted me most to this institute, especially seeing it lived out by various priests, brothers, and sisters on mission.

The charism and spirituality

The charism and spirit of the institute.

The charism " They shall make the Merciful Love of Christ Visible" and "Seeking to make the Merciful Love of Christ visible,"

The joy of the members and their fidelity to the Church and to their Franciscan identity.

The charism and call from our founder truly inspired me.

The centrality of our common life of prayer, faithfulness to the Magisterium of the Church, the joy and wonderful personalities of the members, devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist and Rosary/Our Lady, and the intellectual formation

The call to holiness is for all of us. I knew I wanted to give God my life and have holy superiors to instruct me. This faced me with hundreds of possibilities. So, I turned to Mary. Mother certainly presented this convent to me, which I didn't know very much about. However, my intention to enter was made stronger when I learned they had a daily TLM (Latin mass), which I wasn't raised in. They had no pictures on line of the nun's faces and kept this strict Papal enclosure.... so this besides the habit designed by the BVM herself, told me that this convent in full union with our Holy Mother Church, lived their rule and constitutions. Though I had had no Latin growing up. I am picking it up alright for the extraordinary form of the Divine Office and Mass. The sisters are very sweet and our mother mistress is very holy. Blessed be God for ever.

The call of God attracted me to the Missionaries of Charity Contemplatives. I experienced a call from God, in October of the year 2016, to pursue religious life in this society. The promise of God, to continue and to fulfill what He had begun in me, was what attracted me to the Missionaries of Charity Contemplatives.

The balance between works and prayers, and the range (age) of the members in the community.

That a vocation to this order would allow me to explore and integrate all my spiritual and intellectual interests, be involved in ministry and service, and be freed from the obligations to marriage or single life. It was also attractive to have brothers to be my support and to keep me in my toes with daily community happenings. The appeal of traveling to different friaries in other states/regions/countries and working to respond to needs within the order and the wider church and not just stuck in one place.

St. Augustine and the Augustinians I met prior to entering formation.

Serving Christ at the margins, giving myself directly to God for the service of the Church Service and mission ministry

Sense of brotherhood community.

Seeing the joy and zeal of members, and their mission oriented spirituality.

Religious institute that I had the most experience with.

Really, just that it was a nearby religious institute. Although, I had looked into a few others, but mine seemed the most approachable. I think the other institutes I looked into kind of scared me off with their websites going long into detail about psychiatric evaluations and such, but this one kind of took it one step at a time.

I think that helped me decide on this one.

Reading about my institute's founder and its great saints, reading about its history, and looking at its mission as laid out in its Formula.

Personalities of members, diversity of ministries, dedication to prayer

Our order's spirituality and prayer style is what attracted me the most.

Our mission of connecting neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God and our spirituality.

Our institute wears the habit. I also was attracted by the authenticity of the sisters I had met from our institute.

Our charisms attracted me, especially our charism to pray for the souls in Purgatory. It's unusual and unique enough that it really spoke to me. Also the small size of the community, although our current rate of growth will make our small size not so small in a few years.

Our charism and the joy that comes with it. I was attracted by our love of education and the eagerness to sacrifice, to give everything. It was also very attracted by our devotion to our Blessed Mother and the religious habit.

Orthodox teaching and lifestyle.

Spiritual depth.

Spirituality.

Opportunity to serve the Church and live in community.

Opportunity to focus on prayer life and living in contemplative life. As praying before the Blessed Sacrament to intercede for the Church's needs gives glory to God and also helps me to grow in Loving God and others.

No habit, ability to have a social life outside of the institute and ability to work as I please.

My primary attraction to my institute came from a powerful experience of God I had at the Motherhouse. All that followed was a confirmation of the consolation I received in that moment; ministry, community, and the good witness of the men I met all led me to the novitiate.

My community was the first sisters/nuns that I had ever met. They host a Holy Week Retreat ever year that I attended. I was intensely drawn to the sisters and how they seemed like a family. Their faithfulness to the Church and to their Czech heritage was extremely appealing. Overall, their charism of doing God's will joyfully was what drew me in.

My institute's charism was the most attractive consideration. I must also note that communal life is also something I hold to highest importance, but it was the charism which made me select this one rather than a more monastic community.

Ministries and the history of the foundress attracted me the most.

Location, ministries, types of work we do, size of community, vow of stability, community life, easy going nature of the monks. Getting to know the individual members of the community was helpful in determining compatibility. Once we got to know each other a bit, they showed genuine interest in me, which was important for me in my discernment.

Lifestyle

Jesus in prayer told me to enter here.....The prayer life, the habits, the charism, the fidelity to Church, the joy, the formation, the members, the holiness of the members, so many cultures,

the missionary adventure, the prayer schedule, Mass, confession, adoration, the religious family, Mary devotion, everything about them was me.....Oh, and they have an active and contemplative branch and I don't know what I'll be yet....

Jesuit spirituality and the ministries that we are involved with.

It's the spirituality, the teachings of our founder Bishop Dominic Maria Ho Ngoc Car, and we are under one Superioress - Mother Mary, her tender love, guidance and protection, and the most powerful prayer - Holy Rosary

Its spirituality, its long tradition and profound sense of prayer, its hospitality, its openness, how welcoming the members were.

Its reputation for excellence.

Its missionary zeal to prolong the incarnation to all men. The institute tries to the best of its abilities to send missionaries all over the world and especially to those difficult places that no one wants to go; this allows us to reach those people who have probably never heard of God. Another great thing that attracted me to this religious institute was the celebration of the liturgy. The mass is celebrated with so much solemnity in all things, especially the music and it really elevates the soul.

Its mission and spirituality, particularly the way in which members of the institute incorporate the vows into their daily lives and apostolic work.

Its fidelity to the magisterium, as well as an overarching sense of joy and charity that lives in the sisters and our surrounding community. In each of them, I see the face of Christ, but in unique ways. Each sister gives me a new perspective which helps me grow.

Its fidelity to the Church

Its focus on prayer and liturgy

I was inspired by some members who are very holy

Its appreciation for beauty

It's way of working and rule of life

It's spirituality

It was the only one I was familiar with. I've never had much contact to anything else, besides parish priests, and I didn't feel called to pursue diocesan life.

It was the mission, charism and the community life of the Order.

It is Eucharistic spirituality and deep fidelity to its charism and the Church

It is as Catholic of a place as I could find, and as free of the Modernist heresy as I could find.

They wear the habit and focus on living the monastic life as much as possible

They were not afraid to say that they seek to live a penitential life and that they exist to become saints of God and save souls.

It is a living prayer with my community, share our experiences for each of us about the prayers, the philosophy, the theology, and CCD.

It attracted me that they still wear the habit at all times. They follow the spirituality of Saint Clare of Assisi and Saint Francis. The sisters are very welcoming, joyful and caring. The peaceful silence of the cloister.

Intellectual Apostolate and its spirituality.

Initially it was most drawn to their prayer life. After visiting and living with the sisters, I felt most comfortable during times of prayer, and then the attraction to the charism and community life flowed from this.

In all my interactions with my community I was struck by their special joy as well as a clear sense of their humanity and each being themselves. These attributes attracted me to this particular community. In addition to the more general attributes I was attracted to contemplative monasticism. Once I did a line-in observer-ship, the silence and choral office were very attractive to me as well.

I went where God called. I loved the Dominican spirituality and the emphasis on perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

I was mostly attracted to their charism, which is evangelization. I was also attracted to the fact that they are charismatic and support the Charismatic Renewal.

I was most attracted to the Jesuits because of fantastic individual Jesuits I had met, the order's focus on teaching and intellectual work, their great tradition and history, and their global presence.

I was most attracted to the fact that my religious community was formed in response to Pope St. John Paul II's call for the new Evangelization.

Secondly, that my religious institution wears the habit, is faithful to the teachings of the Church and is young and vibrant in the Holy Spirit.

Finally I was attracted because they are Dominicans and give to others the fruits of their contemplation. (They are both contemplative and apostolic)

I was most attracted to the charism and the dedication to study and community life.

I was most attracted to the Carmelite Order's profound focus on an unceasing and intimate loving gaze on our Lord, constantly remaining at His feet with Mary Magdalene and adoring Him while so many go about in the world ignoring Him. I knew the best way to love our Lord is to imitate the Blessed Virgin, and there is no better way to serve Him than to stay close to our Lady's Heart under her mantle in the Order first dedicated to Her. I was drawn to this particular Carmelite convent due to its diligence in adhering to the traditional rules and constitutions set out by our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus. "Christ yesterday, and today, and the same forever." God does not change; only the whims of us emotional beings change. In celebrating Holy Mass in the extraordinary form, the traditional Divine Office, and keeping the customs of the original Discalced Carmelites. The convent strives its best the laws of Love and Truth rather than the laws of man.

I was most attracted to our religious institute by the whole heartedness with which the Carmelite life is lived and by the beauty of its particular charism to pray for families. I was most attracted to my religious institute by our fourth vow of Marian devotion, mission, work and family spirit.

I was most attracted by the combined spirituality and action of my institute. That the spirituality is oriented towards both engagement and contemplation.

I was most attracted by the holiness of the members, charity, intelligence, devotion to the Pope and the Church militant spirit, charism and so forth. I also saw the fraternal life as a major attraction, as well as the various apostolates.

I was most attracted by the great love for our Lord which the sisters manifested through their great devotion to prayer and to service of those whom they serve. It is clear that everything that the sisters do is for love of Him and this is their great joy - to give themselves to Him with all their heart.

I was most attracted by the common life that the sisters live and by their faithfulness to the Church and Christ. Their joy (all the time) but especially when sharing the faith with people was very beautiful and an exciting thing I had never encountered before meeting this community. I also sensed an incredible freedom among the sisters that I was able to get to know as a college student from our congregation, that was very attractive to me.

I was most attracted by my sisters' prayer and community life and the charism of the community, especially being spiritual mothers to the local Parish family

I was first attracted by the spirituality of the Desert Fathers which I encountered on the Order's regional website. Then when I visited I was very attracted to this place, the rhythm of work and prayer, the church itself and the liturgy and the community used saying. "God and Love" to describe our motivation.

I was chiefly attracted by their commitment to Truth Himself in all His beauty. A life devoted to contemplating, adoring, and loving Him for all those who do not, and prayerfully interceding that they may come to Him seemed the answer to the needs I was becoming more aware of in the Church and in my own heart. For all those who do not take the time to come before His Merciful Eucharistic presence, we keep our hours of guard before the Blessed Sacrament. For all the ugliness in the world, particularly for the lack of reverence towards Him, we offer Him the heavenly prayers of the Divine Office, employing our whole selves in the appropriate postures and chants that express the beauty and solemnity of our worship. For all Our Heavenly Mother's children, both those who know and love her, as well as those who don't, we offer our Perpetual rosary, binding ourselves to her service with the sweet chain of our Hours of Guard and our Aves throughout the day, so that she might bring us and all souls to her divine Son. For all those who ignore Truth, we devote our minds and hearts to studying and contemplating Him, (particularly through lectio divina with Sacred Scripture) and to serving Him in each other, consecrating our very lives to His holy will, because there is truly no greater person or service to give them to.

I was attracted to the way the Sisters prayed the liturgy of the hours. I was also attracted to the missions the community work in.

I was attracted to the joy and intentionality with which the sisters worked with young people at camp and at school, and how they trained others in the Salesian preventive method of reason, religion, and loving kindness. I loved how they treated each other and me.

I was attracted to the Charism, the prayer life, and community life of my religious institute

I was attracted by the simplicity of their lives and the prayer lives

I was a member of another community before coming to where I am now. It was essential for me to find a similar spirituality. As I spoke to These Sisters, it was the spirit of the founders and virtues of the life that pulled me in. Once I started researching and visiting, it was the history of the Order, the experience and the other Sisters that played a significant role in this choice. They were open and welcoming. It brought a sense of home. The Sisters were also not afraid to show you how it is living this life. They lived the life, and it was such an excellent example for me. It taught me the spirituality, and I found it was very similar to what I had before and much more. God kept pulling me in with this way of life. Everything was necessary for confirming the process of coming here.

I loved their ministry and charism! They have a relationship with the kids that they serve which is undeniably beautiful!

I loved (and still love) the charism of our community, and really felt my heart drawn to belong totally to Christ the King. From the knowledge that I am a daughter of the Father and bride of the King flows the mission of spreading his kingdom to every nation, one student, one classroom at a time. The joy of the sisters, in all circumstances, was also very attractive.

I love the mission and spirit

I feel they really have passion, zeal, joy, discipline, and place in their service and relationship with God.

It is a big family environment

I love the habits. I loved their way of life and how similar it is to my life at home. It is extremely orthodox and truly has Christ as its center. Their beautiful devotion and consecration to Mary are awesome also. And their love for families and its flexibility.

I love that they wore the habit all the time, their strong union and following of the pope and the joy I saw in the sisters.

I had been discerning for almost five years before I first met this institute. I visited having already developed an idea of what I wanted to see in the prayer life, the ministry, and the community life. I saw everything I wanted and more - and what's more than that, I just knew. The most perfect peace was enveloping my heart and I knew that I'd finally found where God was calling me to be.

I found, and continue to find, the fidelity of our institute to the Church and to the ideal of our mother-foundress the most attractive aspect. As a part of that fidelity, I was greatly attracted to the full religious habit. Moreover, every member of this community seems to emanate this incredible, deeply rooted joy that springs forth as fruit of their zeal and authenticity. I find that religious life helps me to grow deeper in my relationship with God and others. Also, it is helping me to love my spiritual life better.

The prayer and silence of the monastery especially in the prayer of the liturgy of the hours. I chose them because I was denied by others, so not much. But I've been pleasantly surprised with the one I'm in now.

I am attracted to the Society of Jesus for four main reasons: 1) Ignatian Spirituality, 2) Jesuit education, 3) Jesuit works and social justice ministries, 4) the lives of Jesuits that I have met.

How welcoming the community was and how they balanced prayer and ministry

How they described their spousal relationship with Christ, their charism and apostolate, the joy of the sisters, and the history of the order

How they are committed to service.

Honestly there was little about the community or their life per se that "attracted" me initially -- I knew one of the members through my family, and it was only through getting to know him personally that I was introduced to the institute. I had no intention of discerning with the institute until a particular visit (after several prior non-discernment visits) during which I felt a strong sense that I was being drawn to the place. That feeling only increased the more I

visited. So my experience was probably a bit unusual, in that I was not really "attracted" to the place, but then the Spirit just pulled me in!

God's call to me to come was strong and clear, and He gave me the grace of a great desire to answer it- and His call was particularly clear in wanting me to come here.

Generosity, sincere, and joy in serving others "being a hands of Christ to others". Living the Paschal Mystery to follow the Crucified Christ through love and Sacrifice.

Full Habit, Divine Office 3 times/day, Teaching apostolate, Franciscan charism, Marian title, Felt welcomed, Transparency when I asked questions, Felt like I was part of a family Francis of Assis - Go rebuild my Church

Focus on meeting people at margins, focus on modern ways of sharing message of the gospel, sense of community that embraces individuality while still working to be united in mission.

First of all, the religious of the Legionaries of Christ attracted me because they were young and full of energy. They clearly loved what they did. Secondly, they were fun and showed me that you don't have to be boring to be holy. Thirdly, their human formation was impeccable. The Legionaries seemed to me to be perfectly balanced and alive missionaries. I felt an undeniable desire to be like them.

First and foremost, the Lord attracted me to this community

- Authenticity to the Gospel

- Fidelity to the Church/ witness of the Habit

- Rich prayer life anchored in the Eucharist

- Beautiful fraternal life rooted in charity and unity

- Ministry to the poor

- Obvious joy and love of the members and a radiance of truth, goodness and beauty that is so far beyond what the world offers.

Experiencing freedom, joy and rest when visiting (Personal graces in prayer)

Everything.

Every sister I met from my community was sincere and genuine in their live for Jesus and others, and this was shown in a humble, simple normal way, yet was so evident in their peace and joy.

Doors opened in a way that you would have to be blind and deaf not to know that it was God's doing.

Diversity, commitment to faith, prayer, and social justice, sense of joy
Diversity of ministries.

Communal life.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Intense community life

Serious spirituality, especially their celebration of the Mass

International missions

Wearing the habit

Desire to follow God's will

Contemplative life

Confidence that most of the members of my order would be faithful to the Church's teachings, and that their apostolate is needed in today's society. Also, the members seemed to know what they believed and why they believed it, while being down to earth at the same time. The joy and the sense of humor that I saw in the brothers helped me picture myself within the order too.

Community Prayer and was able to apply at the age of 50

Community of young people not afraid of their faith, living together, sharing time, praying together. At first also exterior signs of identity like habit, later it shifted to identity as a part of bigger whole.

Community Life.

Sense of brotherhood; commitment to Catholic education.

Community life, and the call of the Lord. I didn't think of discernment as shopping around to find the one in which my gifts fit most perfectly with their charism. I allowed God to work through the circumstances of my life and followed where that led

Community life and ministry

Community and Prayer life as well as devotion to the tradition of the Church and the way of life of our Order were key factors which attracted me to the religious state.

Community and Brotherhood.

Coming from a country of former slaves, I was struck by the history of the Divine Word Missionaries in the U.S. especially by their ministry among African Americans. I really like

the Social Justice and Intercultural realities that exist in the (Society of the Divine Word (SVD). For example, the SVDs were the first religious order to accept Black Americans in the segregated South. The variety of cultural backgrounds of our members are signs of God's Kingdom on earth!

Charism, spirituality, and ministries

Benedictine spirituality, strong community life and wearing the habit.

Being able to be a part of a community where there are likeminded people who are also seeking to grow in the faith and spirituality and having these others to help me along the way.

To be able to minister to the young people here at the University. Being able to serve others. Seeing other young men living a life of service.

At first, I would say it's charism. Everything they did, to me, was amazing. After that, their community life, how much they trusted each other, and the gentleness with which they treated us. I couldn't believe it.

Now that I'm a member and I can say I do enjoy all of these things, that now I have experienced firsthand, I cannot be more than grateful with God, the order and my community. At first I was most drawn to my institute by their prayer life especially the choral celebration of the full divine office and by their reverence for tradition while embracing what is good in the new. After that, the most significant attraction to this community was their faithful following of their rule. Lastly, this community attitudes towards poverty and penance were crucial to my discernment. Until I saw it here, I had never even thought about how important mortification, especially fasting is to religious life.

Aside from feeling called through prayer, I knew I fit in very well with the spirituality of the order and could relate a lot to the girls in formation. I could see the institutes' fidelity to the church and to the truth which is non-negotiable for me. I can see myself working in their apostolate, and the balance of community life is very fitting for me.

As a younger teen, I had written a description of my "ideal monastery," thinking that I'd never find a place that matched that description. But when I visited the Passionists in Whitesville . . . there it was! My list had included the following: contemplative life, traditional habit, sung Liturgy of the Hours, daily Mass (in the early morning), fidelity to the Church, and reverent use of the Ordinary Form (all the good monasteries seemed to only have the Extraordinary Form, which is fine, but not my first choice). As I went on retreats and live-ins, I felt enormously welcomed, especially by the Mother Superior. The way the Sisters lived their monastic life just felt "right." And as I've gone farther information, the charism of promoting devotion to and grateful remembrance of the Passion of Christ really opened up for me. Truly, it is in a sense THE charism, the center of all Christian life!

But if I had to pick just ONE thing that most attracted me, I would say the way I witnessed

monastic life at St. Joseph's lived. The Sisters know their vocation deeply and live it to the full!

An overwhelming sense of peace. A clear conviction in preserving the dignity of the human person, namely victims of abortion and assisted suicide. Wearing the visual habits as an obvious statement promoting one's beliefs in Christ. Being part of an order that is unceasingly sympathetic with others and seeks to work hard and server on their behalf. A shared love of nature and all God's creation. value of prayer and contemplation. The simplicity of life. Community life and brotherhood. Becoming undivided with God.

An open door; there are too many options that I knew of before entering the order, I was most attracted to diocesan priesthood, and the only advertised come and see retreats were diocesan. So for the vocation director to not just suggest a few come and see experiences but to properly assess how much of a viable candidate I was from the get go, where I felt entering into even the first years of the order was possible greatly lifted my spirits. Whereas on a diocesan level, there were so many viable candidates other than myself that I was never seriously considered even after several attempts to show my readiness and desire to join. I believe this was the case for the religious order because they are deciding on whether or not I am a good family member before considering what I have to contribute.

A life of set prayer and worship. A community with a particular spirituality and mission.

A desire to give myself entirely to contemplative life and the ability to live out this vocation authentically both in orthodoxy and fidelity to the Church. Additionally, it was a community with younger vocations and a real sense of Christ's life rather than austerity for the sake of it. I also really wanted to be clothed in the habit.

A desire to follow Jesus, to grow in intimacy with Him, and to give all of myself to Him and the reasonable conviction that He called and lead me to this monastery.

A couple things attracted me to my congregation. First was the spirituality of the patrons of our congregations as well as the application of the aforementioned spirituality the the inspiration and founder of my religious institute. Secondly, it was how the members of my congregation lived out their lives. It was how they carried in them the joy and presence of Christ in all their actions.

A contemplative life

A desire for silence and solitude

A commitment to the local Church and to serving the people entrusted to them. As well as having a relatively large group of other young men join the last few years making the community much more vibrant and lively.

A Christ-centered life of intentional community that takes seriously intellectual formation and global mission.

A chance to meet and know people from different countries

The charism of perpetual adoration

The joy and peace that the sisters had and shared with each other

The joy of community life

The several young vocations

The habit which the sisters still wore and the fact that the sisters fought to keep the habit

I had it as a call to holiness

I see my prayer life as a gift of God to me

I surrender myself to God's will

To have my prayers that increasing in my knowledge and understanding of God's word

Fidelity to the church

Dominican charism... Study, contemplation and apostolate (teaching)

Eucharistic adoration daily

Mary-consecration

The community life and down to earthiness of my sisters

Q. 148: What do you find most challenging about religious life?

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

I find it challenging when there is a lack of communication and care for others in the community. What I mean about communication is when there is something important made in advance like a planned event or guests coming over to the community and no one is informed. With care for others, I mean when there may be signs there is something wrong with a member or a member seems to not be their normal self which could include missing prayer, missing community meals, missing mass, or acting strange and no one goes to talk or ask if the person is ok. These things I see as problems or challenges in religious life.

The most challenging about religious life is being apart from my family and not sharing a dinner meal. That was part of our family life.

Moving to a different city to begin formation.

Trying to put into words my vocation call to religious life to others.

The most challenging part for me is not spending everyday with my biological family. After spending every day in their presence it will take some time for me to adjust. However, my spiritual family here brings me much comfort and joy.

The thing I find the most challenging is doing something that none of my friends are doing. All of my friends are having a typical college experience while mine is different, so it makes it hard to relate or fit in sometimes.

The most challenging aspect of religious life for me is living out community life being mindful to cultivate virtues such as patience, understanding, and gentleness. In this institute, there is a very strong sense of community. As a more introverted person, I find it challenging the amount of time that we spend in community because it requires even more social interaction after a day of ministry work.

Persevering in daily surrender to Christ and not to self-obsession is what I find most challenging about religious life.

Being separated from my family and friends is hard. Also, it was hard to give up the idea of Marriage. However, Jesus tells us that whoever leaves mother and father, children, spouses, lands and possessions will inherit a hundredfold and after this life, Eternal life. I have experienced that my family is closer to God now and closer to each other. Even if it is hard sometimes, following Jesus is worth it.

Adjusting to the life style, living with sisters who are different from myself, and cultural differences.

I can't think of anything challenging that I don't find any good reason for doing. Everything in the schedule is there to help us become better apostles and I want that. It really isn't tough. Of those "challenging" things, dependence, depending on my superiors for most things is hard at times, but I know it will help me as a religious.

The most challenging about religious life is the world detachments.

In religious life I am being pushed out of my comfort zone a lot more than I'm used to. What I find most challenging is the call to constantly and willingly step out of my comfort zone so I can better serve the Lord.

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

Disorganization, lack of cooperation with the laity, and confusion about our mission. Just because a man is a religious priest or brother, doesn't mean he is suited to administrative work in the community. We are not a cloistered contemplative institute, so our failure to partner with more lay faithful is distressing. The urgent need to evangelize millennials, Gen-Xers and Baby boomers makes our work critical, but we seem bogged down by minutia and lack of help.

I find that the distance and limited contact with my family most challenging.

Right now, I would say the most challenging aspect is the sense of separation from family. I've only been in the convent three weeks though, so we'll see what other challenges arise.

Community life is the most challenging aspect of religious life. Yet, it is also one of the most rewarding aspects of the life as well.

During the short time of my formation so far, I have found the experience of completely sacrificing my own will to be most challenging. In school and in the workplace, we become accustomed to following rules and directions of others, but only in religious life is every facet of our life placed under the authority of another. (Perhaps it could be argued that this is also the case with marriage). It will take time, I suspect, for me to understand and live obedience in the light of faith.

Physical separation from family and parents

The community life is very challenging. I hope I will be able to overcome it.

Getting attached to a group before getting to know any individual

How little free time I have

Being obedient to my formator and superiors is hard. It's also hard when I don't agree with how we live out our rule or how specific things are done. Also communication is tough when all the sisters are so different and sometimes we miscommunicate instructions.

Community (especially since I am new and still learning about everyone. Peoples personalities, etc. Also, starting from the very bottom in a sense - being new and a beginner even if one has lived some life already (I'm 33) and has had responsibilities, meaningful jobs (meaningful in my growth in Christ). it is a hard lesson in humility. But I suppose necessary. Lord help me!

Living intergenerationally.

The studies at first

Balancing prayer, common life and personal spirituality in a healthy way.

I wouldn't pinpoint on any one thing. Being holy is hard, but nothing is impossible with God so we have nothing to fear

Understanding when, how, and at what point to share my opinion and thoughts.

Adjusting to a different lifestyle than I am used to living.

Getting used to living with different personalities.

Being away from family with limited communication has been very difficult.

Giving up the independence that I had in the world; being obedient in seemingly unimportant things.

Community! Always the best and hardest (most humbling) part.

Seeking to help people understand the difference between diocesan and religious life.

The great challenge about religious life and any vocation is to become a saint.

The most challenging aspect of religious life is living away from my family and having limited communication with my family.

What I found most challenging about religious life was learning how to adopt and organize myself with the time I was given. Another thing I found challenging was being humble docile to the Holy Spirit's inspiration.

The most challenging part of religious life is yourself. You enter with your old Adam and have to do battle daily with the world, the flesh, and the devil in order to have Christ through Mary to be formed in you. It is a work that only cooperation with grace and the Blessed Mother can purify and make new.

Detachment from disordered attachments.

Living in community and the vow of obedience. Not being able to do what I want and when I want; at the same time it is one of the most beautiful parts of consecrated life.

Leaving those you love. Also, working through challenges with those who like to keep things the same.

I find being homesick most challenging about religious life. It is hard for me not to be able to go home whenever I feel like it or to see my family for holidays and events.

Waking up at 5 am 5 days a week.

Sacrificing, crucifying, suffering, and dying. Fighting against the demons as a desert dweller in this monastic life as a hermit.

I find it challenging to balance the spiritual academic aspects of the life. At times it feels as if the focus I put on my academic work take my attention off of my spiritual growth and discernment, which is the purpose of my being a seminarian at this point.

Community Life, living with many women, not having any peers.

Learning to be interdependent rather than independent.

Learning to ask for help or advice, rather than having to solve / fix everything myself.

As the solo 'new person in community' I have found it challenging at times to have 'all eyes' on me ALL the time!!!

We have others living in the Mother House

Too busy

For right now, the daily schedule of prayer and work as it changes with feasts and solemnities and other changes that need to be made. Also, the closing of my cellphone account is a big change. It has its pros and cons. Lastly, learning the life of the community and how they approach the work. Where the pots and pans, where does this bowl go, etc. So I guess I would say most challenging are the practical aspects of the life. I deeply love our liturgy of the hours and daily Mass.

Myself. I am my biggest obstacle. Really, I'd be tempted to say community life, but when you get down to it the reason I am challenged by that aspect is because I am 'the one to blame'; I do not have enough love! Or better, I do not have enough of His love. Dying to myself has proven to be a more difficult task than I anticipated! Haha. But God is so good and His grace has taken me SO FAR in such a short amount of time. Really, I have nothing to worry about since it is He Himself Who will be my sanctity. I just need to become little (i.e. a smaller 'obstacle' so as not to be an obstacle at all!).

It is difficult to quiet myself from all of the noise of the world, being that I was so accustomed to so much of that. However, the more time that I spend in prayer, the easier it is to find Christ moving throughout my day, in the quiet and sometimes not so quiet. Also, the emptying of self that must be done is difficult; Allowing Jesus to help me sort through all of my wounds is certainly challenging, but He is with me.

Knowing how to phrase your words during important discussions, for even if you speak the truth it can cause problems.

Living inter-generationally has proven difficult. I sometimes feel like I am looked down upon because I am young and do not bring the wealth of experience that others members have. I also find the length of formation to be long. I have been part of community for 3 years and just became of novice. I have about a year and half left before making first vows and then another 5-7 years before making final vows.

Leaving my former life as a high school teacher.

Not having as much freedom, eat, sleep or do what I would like.

Structure, perhaps clericalism. Concern that we might boast of our own relationship with God rather than His grace in deigning to come to us, as He desires of every single one of our neighbors. In other words, pride in our station, seeking praise from people and not from God.

Leaving old habits. I realized that I had a habit for everything I did. Even when I got sick, I used to do the exact same thing. Now I am leaving my old self, with an open disposition to create new habits and become a better version of myself for God, the church and the Kingdom

Community life

The negative perception most people have regarding the Church and religious life.

Letting go of what my family thinks and giving them time to see and understand how beautiful this life is.

Constantly having to negotiate when it is appropriate to speak my mind and when it is appropriate to remain reserved for "the greater common good."

I am not sure.

At this moment, I find community life are both challenge and beauty at the same time. Learning how to live a religious life in my community also challenges me since I am still learning it during my formative years.

the most challenging about religious life is living in a diverse community

Personal imperfections and foibles that come out into the community. Community as a mirror to my own soul and all my "defects." Learning to put the needs of the community before my own and to be accepting of things when they don't go my way. Letting go and letting God, one could say.

Navigating generational differences

Waking up real early

Time limitations

Being the first time living apart from my mom and sister, a challenge has been living in community.

I find it challenging to grapple with the failures of my superiors and other members of the congregation. I know that this is partially because I am insecure about my own failures, and about the ways I still need to grow in virtue in order to be able to fully live the religious life that is ahead of me. However, this is compounded by the reality of serious evil that has been done by leaders in the church, even bishops, in the ongoing abuse crisis and the fallout from it.

How little people outside of religious life understand the what and why of religious life. It's difficult to stay connected with others because of how radically different the life is.

Busyness of the life, not enough time to process what is going on in the life.

Community

Coming to terms with the aging of the Community and the possibility that the Community will be gone in the not too distant future, and working out what that means for continuing our charism.

Being 54 years old and living in community

Occasional struggles with loneliness, being patient with others while living in community.

Community. In particular tensions about how the vows are to be lived. There is a need for renewal obviously, but allowing for it to come patiently is of great importance. Some of this revolves around the wearing of the habit obviously, but not all of it. More importantly though when living a place with many others you occasionally find them burdensome and become a

burden to them. Working through these things makes it a community that is stronger, but it is not without challenge.

Obedience

Sisters are human just like everyone else. As such, community life can be challenging at times, yet it also is very rewarding. Also, I think a lot of people don't understand what religious life is all about. Another challenge involves balancing all of my responsibilities (i.e., my ministry, prayer life, community life, etc.).

That they don't have a habit, liturgy in Mass is not followed correctly and that there are homosexual brothers and priests. Overall it is the liberal agenda the order has adopted which I don't agree with.

Religious life in general is awesome. The challenge is to understand the group where I am.

Dealing with conflict with other members, balancing between the personal life and communal life, and having a firm commitment to personal prayer life.

The vows which I will take require a complete and daily death of self, the most challenging but also must beautiful part of or way of life; a way of perfection.

It accelerates the death of "the ego" or individualism. It is hard to surrender personal desires, spiritual perspectives, ideas about ministry, for the sake of the greater good of the community at times. Lack of authenticity and vulnerability among other men is a challenge, too. I also worry about men that seem less likely to wear their habit, or those that seem to make their ministry, or even their vocation more akin to a career than a lifestyle.

My feeling of unworthiness

At this point I have not found anything challenging.

Being far away from home and family is definitely hard, but letter writing has proven very grace-filled and fruitful. Perhaps the prospect of not seeing my family so often in the next few years during the Novitiate is the most challenging.

Community life and ministries

Not being able to do little things like go to McDonald or eat a cookie whenever I want.

I find that a surprising number of the members do not seem to be taking their religious vocations as seriously as they should. I think the habit should be more commonly worn. We live in houses that are too luxurious and I do not consider them fitting to the life we should be living. There is definitely not enough presence among youth who would perhaps be interested in the order if they knew about it. We do not have a music class in our postulancy program.

Leaving family and home country.

Learning to answer and/or live with uncertainty: accepting the sacrifice of other good vocational paths and the unknown future of the monastery (particularly in regards to number of future members).

Waking up in the morning, eating schedule, and a desire to be more independent.

Getting up early every morning at 5 am is the most challenging. Otherwise just normal transitional things, since its a big lifestyle change from college.

Being able to speak fluently English and to get used into this new society.

The constant presence of others.

I perceive many of my peers and members of the Order to be unfaithful to the teachings of the Church. A number of them want to change the Church's teachings of homosexuality, Eucharist, Holy Orders, the Trinity and so on. Moreover, the often speak ill of those if us who want to remain faithful. Some of the things I considered to be ideals of the Order are laughed at. In general, there is a server if worldliness that seems present here.

Obedience.

Balancing engaging in the fraternal life with dedicated personal time to study, prayer, etc. Also, finding healthy, humble, obedient ways to engage or disengage with various levels of maturity among the men in formation as needed to keep growing in my own maturity here.

One of the things that is part of my formation is taking some college courses. Because I am an older adult joining the community, getting settled back into University life has been a challenge. Nothing specific to the community has been challenging to date. I have been here a little over three months.

Knowing that I will not have biological children

Interpersonal communication which is hampered by hearing loss and dementia.

Pressures from community, and also in prayer life too!!!!

Being away from my family is definitely the toughest challenge. After that I would say possibly community life

Community life allows you the opportunity to learn about yourself, and about how to best relate to others through the eyes of faith.

Obedience. I thought it would have been chastity or poverty but by far it is obeying my superiors.

Not to stop growing

Not to get comfortable but to walk towards heaven

For me it is also challenging to live in a new culture, new language, in a foreign country - but the Lord blesses it!

Adapting certain habits prior to entering religious life to a communal life style is a challenge.

So far I have found most challenging letting down the barriers that I put around my heart in the world, and opening up to the life of prayer and to the community. It takes time to change the way you have been formed by the world.

Leaving friends and family in the world behind

Balancing community life and ministry with personal alone time.

Transitioning from a very worldly life to a life of the evangelical counsels.

Living in community is both a very real blessing and frustrating if your community members are unable to talk and to have a dialogue with each other on what is happening in their lives, what's bothering them, etc.

So far, what I find most challenging is continually submitting my will and obeying with a spirit of faith and trust even when I disagree with something, when it doesn't suit my taste, I would do it differently, or I simply don't understand why it is needed. But life is more blessed, when I am less in control! With God's grace, I know I will receive the humility I need to submit when I am called to.

The Holy Spirit calls you, but you do not know what you are going to do, or where you are going, and sometimes can be scary, but then we need to trust in Him. Religious life is a way that allow me to work and serve others, especially when persons are seeking God, also because uncover myself in living a community life, transforming my life with others. A religious life is God-oriented but with some particularities and I find my life nurtured in seeking more to God, and living God's love in community and with serving others.

I miss my family, but I am not sure that is just a quality of religious life or part of growing up in general. The large age gap between me and the next youngest sister can be challenging, but honestly it provides growth for both me and the sisters.

The promotion of justice for all as community.

The community life

Waking up early

The renunciation of family life and one's will is what I find most challenging. Separation from dear friends is difficult too.

The clashing of cultures.

Going from a culture that preaches autonomy to entering religious life where you have poverty of your own time was/is a huge challenge. Detachment from family and friends is also very difficult.

Being less present to my family

The most challenging about religious life is community life, but on the other hand is great because you can practice certain virtues and strive to grow in holiness.

What I find most challenging is the need to shed the false identities that we have (illegible)

I find some forms of prayer very hard to connect with God in

Dying to myself by being charitable to the other sisters in my community.

My own weaknesses

One issue I find very challenging is learning to bring decisions to the community for mutual discernment, after living as an independent adult, used to making decisions on my own.

The daily struggle of will. In religious life, there are many opportunities to live out poverty, chastity and obedience, and for me it is a challenge to surrender, getting to choose all the time what I want.

The disconnect from family and friends.

Obedience. The most challenging part is letting go of my own will and control over my life and trusting in God and the Superiors He has given me.

Desiring God, only God and God's face in all things.

Ave Crux, spes unica!

As it is that I am only as Aspirant in this Society, the most challenging aspect of religious life is the feeling of having never fully arrived. This can be enjoyed but more often it is a challenge.

The community life. Some personalities from the community are hard to live with.

Challenges include: interpersonal conflict resolution with men who have a diversity of backgrounds/perspectives that make it difficult for clear mutual understanding at times (men who may or may not have learned how to have critical conversations and be mature, fair, and even-toned in their approach); watching the mistakes/leniency/attitudes of older friars with regards to religious life and practicing the vows in the context of our founders' charism (I'm sometimes disappointed with people's words and actions); the formation house environment is not the same as average friaries, pressures, stressors, and growth pains make the experience more uncomfortable than expected; waiting for other men to finally get with the program or discern-out because of how taxing it is on the formation community, facing uninspected personal growth areas with may require counseling, heavy self-discipline and community support

Community life, especially being patient

Surrendering control of my life to God, especially via my superiors

New ways to bring youth to the church

Waking up for morning prayer.

The amount of faith required to live ordinary life.

Attempt to live a vow of poverty in very comfortable surroundings.

Finding out that phrases like "emptying oneself" and "purgation" aren't just buzzwords. They're not as abstract as I thought! Learning that all my problems came here with me, and that they need to be worked out and put into order, through prayer and discipline. It's far more real than I thought, and I thought I had a good idea already.

Feeling doubt about whether our leaders are sufficiently bold during this time when the Church is growing increasingly irrelevant, feeling doubt about the effectiveness of our ministries in regards to our institute's foundational mission, feeling doubt about whether formation is rigorous enough to suit the demands of our times.

Being away from family and friends

Communal life can be a source of challenge; challenges me to be vulnerable, open and to think more positively with others.

Newer members on fire with the gospel and passion for community life must expend far too much energy navigating and surviving long-unaddressed issues of unhealthy behaviors in local communities, while concurrently trying to bridge generation gaps through outdated notions and processes of formation.

It is challenging to be away from family, the people I have known, love and cherished all my life. It's beautiful to be welcomed into this new family but still hard to be physically away from my family.

Dealing with various difficult personalities and passive superiors/formators who seem not to deal with them.

What I found most challenging upon my entrance was adjusting to the routine and pace of schedule. Now all is well.

Identifying my personal spirituality and mission amongst my brothers and I.

Living in community.

Self-denial as an ongoing spiritual growth.

Community life

Tempering my penitential urges.

Detachment to the things of the world and to our own desires (both big and small) has been the most challenging. I know that in my 2 months living in the convent, I have not even begun to fully detach myself from the things of my life outside the convent. Another challenging thing is learning to rely on and trust God for everything. Knowing that He is our supreme good and wants our absolute best but trusting Him with our desires and our fears and not allowing those to weigh us down.

I do not believe I have been a member long enough to fairly answer this question. Perhaps it is, at least of now the difficulty of transitioning into a community where I have no particularly deep relationships.

Cultural difference and community life are the most challenging.

I have a hard time balancing all the community functions with my personal interests; finding time to do what I want while doing all that I am expected to do. Also, learning to live with everyone peacefully, letting go of little annoyances, being quick to forgive, etc.

community life

Being so far from my friends....but really that's not too bad because I love my sisters and Jesus so much.....

To live out the spirituality, as the most distinguished character and ID for FM SR. This includes community life, and chastity towards each and every one.

Being far from my family

Patience in formation. I'm eager to be fully equipped for the apostolate

The most challenging about religious life thus far would have to be the asking for permission in all things especially because once you hit a certain age out in the world, and in my family, I would only let them know where I was going or doing rather than asking my parents if I could or could not go. And living life on a schedule that one has no control over is hard to get used to at first especially because prior to entering I made sure that I always had lots of leisure time throughout my day.

Adjusting to living in a larger community and finding some quiet time for myself.

Encountering the depth of my sins and failings. Consequently, I also come face to face with the mercy of God, and I must also learn to trust that my sisters will forgive my failings and love me nonetheless. It's a journey of total trust and, even though its joyful, it's terrifying in the best possible ways.

Living in community

Not knowing what the future will look like. There are many older members in our community, but not many young ones. We will probably have to quit some of our apostolates in the future because there aren't enough young members to work.

Combatting stereotypes

Having less opportunities to spend time with friends and family

Leaving behind my family and friends.

I think it's more with the vow of chastity. As a man coming from a secular world and have worked for a period, have experienced relationship, attraction to opposite sex is challenging. It speaks of self-control and sense of self which I do believe I am on the process of strengthening.

Seeing that there are older solemnly professed members who seem to have lost their zeal and lack an appreciation for the liturgy.

The most communities have one thing happened that brothers misunderstand when they worked together that is a problem for uncomfortable when they lived in a community.

Waking up at 5:00 am and learning to pray the liturgy of the hours. There is always a sister willing to come to me and help me to go back on track.

It's tendency to support Democratic Party candidates in elections despite their position supporting abortion.

The most challenging aspect of religious life so far is adjusting to living the way of life, as it is initially very foreign to any previous experience.

In my short three months, the two main challenges have been adjusting to our schedule (we rise at 3 am) and the interior struggle against temptations and overcoming my false self.

Having patience with the process and giving the Holy Spirit time to move. A house doesn't become a home in a day. It takes time to build relationships.

It had been difficult for me to have to answer to the instruction of others and also that majority of the day is spent in silence and contemplation.

One of the biggest difficulties is that I do not see eye to eye with everyone in the institute on what it means to be a Jesuit. There are, one might say, ideological differences between different members of the institute, and at times I feel as though I have to hide my opinions on certain things even things that ought to be acknowledged by all believing Catholics. While this is an opportunity for learning and growth, I also experience it as a challenge.

I find that it is challenging when the world or friends misunderstand what it is and have many stereotypes. They do not understand the joy, freedom and fulfillment of a religious vocation.

I think the most challenging aspect of religious life thus far is reconciling differences among members while trying to live a common life.

I find dying to myself and living only for God to be the most challenging aspect of religious life. If I truly offered my whole self as a spouse of Christ and separated myself from all attachments, there would be no challenges for everything would be readily accepted as a manifestation of God's Holy will.

I believe one of the best challenges of religious life is that of learning to grow closer to go by many personal shortcomings.

Distance from family.

The departure from my life before--moving, changing professional goals, leaving friends.

I would not say that any aspect is overly challenging. I am still getting used to the separation from home.

Here we are equipped with all that we need for this life.

Currently, one of the most challenging aspect is not being able to be with my family as often as I was before entering.

Another challenging aspect, but a challenge which hopefully leads to growth, is learning to trust in the Lord in all things and constantly offer him every aspect of the day for love of Him and for souls.

Probably the most challenging thing thus far has been the separation from family and friends and the limited communication. I am very close with my immediate family, so going from daily in-person communication to 2 letters a month has been tough.

Separation from family has been the most challenging adjustment so far.

Relating to Superiors is the most challenging thing for me. There is no direct equivalent relationship to a Novice director or Abbess in the world with which to compare/draw on for assistance with this either. The superior is not "mom" nor boss, nor professor, nor friend, nor sister exactly, for she is /can be all of these and yet the vision of faith is more than that too.

The most challenging aspect of religious life I've encountered so far has been learning to have patience with the time it takes to grow in this life, to become accustomed to a different mode of thinking and living, to learn how to conform to the community's way of life in a dynamic way, and not get frustrated or discouraged with my own slowness or deficiencies.

I have not found anything really challenging yet. I embrace each day.

Getting to know myself while living with a whole new set of people that I didn't choose, nor did they choose me. Missing my friends. But this aspect has helped me grow and love more.

I find it challenging in following rules and being obedient.

The disposition to cope with the different mentality and culture of persons.

I believe that there are two things that I find challenging. the first is coming from the world and entering into 'another'. One really needs to let go of everything. It is a life of sacrifice each day and moment. You have to ask yourself "What am I holding on to?" This can be challenging at times because the world today is focused so my on self.

Secondly, as many religious would say, community life is the other challenge. We live with

many different personalities with varied backgrounds. One day you get a smile and friendliness, and the next...I can sometimes question what I may have done to upset my neighbor? It is a challenge to forget self and truly love the other.

Sometimes the community can be a bit tricky to get along with. You are not going to be best friends with all the sisters, but that just makes it that much more family-like. I have already "adopted" many of the sisters, and they have already adopted me as well. In the end, it makes it all worth it to have that sense of connection.

I am the only postulant in formation (no novices, either), so there is at times a sense of loneliness, feeling like I am the only one who doesn't know what she is doing. Being the only one in formation is also a challenge because formation classes are a one-on-one deal, which can be tiring as well. However, the Lord has really blessed this time and opened my heart to console Him on the Cross with these feelings of loneliness.

The most challenging thing about religious life is not having that much time to rest. Always active.

Living with some of the sisters is challenging. Finding how truly I am lacking in virtue is hard but obviously good at the same time. Not being able to eat the foods I want is a challenge as is gaining weight since I entered.

Getting used to being in silence has been hard coming from the culture where there is always something grabbing your attention to periods of quiet has been an interesting experience. It is hard but rewarding.

I'm finding that sometimes when you live with people who come from different backgrounds and are with them all the time, very little things can drive you crazy. Things like how to load a dishwasher properly and whether or not a teabag that fell on the floor should still be regarded as "clean." You learn to laugh and adapt yourself. Protect your boundaries on the big things, but don't make little things bigger than they are!

The most challenging aspect has been orienting myself to the practices of obedience. That is, the mustering up of humility to genuinely discern or ask if this or that, which I might have done as a matter of routine or else on a whim at any old time before entrance, is His will for me at this time of day or even on a particular day.

I find that community life is hard sometime since we all come from different backgrounds. But through prayer, I will be able to see how indispensable community life help you to grow better relationships with other people that you will meet in your ministry.

Community life and the virtue of obedience and renounce my own will.

Not having a wife and children

Permissions. Or, more broadly stated, "obedience."

Waking up at 5 am every weekday and transitioning from college to religious life at times because they are very different lifestyles

The separation from family. I have noticed the biggest difficulty for them is that communication is limited to biweekly letters. Bearing their sorrow at the separation is in turn a suffering for me, although God has already brought about much good from it.

Various aspects of community life.

Community life. Some of our members are sadly limited in their social skills for various reasons, and it affects the entire community. Our formation director is trying to avoid this in the future by implementing psychology, group discussions and basic conflict management into the formation program, but for members who are already professed and set in their ways, there's little, if anything, that can be done. Most deal with this by avoidance or just keeping conversation light and superficial, but this only maintains a surface calm and inhibits real growth as a community.

The schedule is rigorous and has required me to sacrifice a lot on my time I was formerly accustomed to.

Willingness to let God's purifying fire to work within me. Fidelity to God in all circumstances.

Not being able to write back to friends who have written me letters, Not having instant information and communication, Staying healthy (food, exercise)

The challenges of change, Renewal, and Restructuring Religious life in the Church

Change in way of life from living independently to community life was challenging in some ways, but a blessing in others. Celibacy continues to be something I discern and a challenge to understand though I know this will take time.

Constancy. Our schedule varies little and sometimes this is hard because change is exciting. To live the same hours of prayer, work, and study day in day out can be a challenge. However, it is in this regularity that I know holiness and spiritual growth.

The process of God stripping away my ego and selfishness, its challenging but hearing and ultimately freeing

Lack of support from family, friends and the world even those in the church

Dying to the old self and putting on the life of Christ.

Forming new authentic friendship amidst all the changes that occur when you enter, especially the limited contact with family and close friends

Limited contact with family and close friends. Missing events in their lives, etc.

Limits on freedom I used to have (especially to travel at will to see family, friends, etc) - but it's a very small price to pay!

Community (the best and the worst; it keeps you humble.)

Realization that I should have entered sooner

Not making own choices

Necessity to forget self

Being the new person

Daily schedule

What our future holds with fewer vocations and aging members....

The vows are definitely challenging to keep, but of course it is challenging! It is only accomplished through Faith in God and his graces. Aside from that, community life is a blessing and a curse, which brings out your own faults as you try to deal with living with others' faults. It's also hard to be separated from your family to a certain degree.

community can be hard at times, also expressing why I wear a religious habit and the importance of it to the older brothers who seem to have lost interest in it. other than that its been very fulfilling so far.

Management and focus on all rather than on individuals.

Fundamental philosophical differences between members.

Community life with younger guys.

Cultivating a strong interior prayer life.

Irregular hours of work; studying philosophy that seems irrelevant to my prospective life and ministry; lack of emphasis on fun/leisure; pressure to be/appear holier than I am

education

At times community dynamics can be a challenge, but I find that most members work hard at trying to develop respectful and meaningful relationships with each other and that these are helpful in promoting growth in the religious life.

Poverty and how deep I'm meant to go into it.

To me, it is when fellow members failed to understand our differences and they start judging others.

finding a balance of prayer life, community life, and ministry responsibilities.

Living in a community of 40 women ranging in age from 23-94.

It can be lonely at times. Members of my community seem to always be busy with work or other things. You can kind of get lost in the crowd here with such a large community (about 120).

It is hard to see that a good number of members do not attend community prayers, meals, and social gatherings.

In my opinion, one of those things is actually connecting with each other and becoming one, just like the apostles. All the other things come with time, but that one, needs our efforts.

Right now, the greatest difficulties are in persevering and trusting that God is working everything for the best. When I trust in God, all the other challenges become much easier.

A significant challenge of trusting and persevering is seeing the faults in the community, its failures to live up to the ideals of religious life. Despite the imperfections in the community and its practices, I have to trust that this is where God wants me.

My main challenge so far has been recognizing how the ideas of the world have affected the way I think subconsciously. Detachment from these worldly mindsets is certainly a process, but it is so freeing.

Myself! I've always struggled with some anxiety, but in contemplative life you can't run from problems like that. I've had to face that and other shortcomings in myself head-on.

Obedience, submitting oneself to the will of God and not one's own individual will. Learning and working with brothers' strengths and weaknesses. Managing time with prayer and community activities. Embracing chastity. Knowing when to rest/eat when you strongly desire to satisfy individuals' needs.

Lining up my schedule with my other brothers. Unfortunately, I feel first called to serve the people of God and to be "married" to the church in form of a congregation before my brothers; as a result, I often desire to give priority to the people of God without considering that my brothers are part of the people of God as well. I need to find a balance of who I give myself to.

The different theologies of the members. What appears to be doubt regarding the future of the community; e.g. lack of new members (vocations), the age and health of the community, lack of a clear mission.

Enclosure and the sacrifice of access to the outside world and separation from genuine goods. Also the adjustment to community life.

I can be quite socially anxious and deeply self-conscious, so there is a craving for acceptance.

Changing my mentality around my sins and my shortcomings. Coming to a deeper realization that my spiritual growth is a question of progress, not immediate perfection.

Community life is the most difficult. Prayer practices can be learned. Personal rhythms and habits (i.e. rising time and daily rituals) can be learned. Yet, the relationships that are a necessary aspect of religious life can prove to be difficult at times. You are working with many different members who have their own personalities and brokenness which can provide a challenge as much as an opportunity for grace and humility.

To learn not only to live with only one other person but with an entire community of other people, and that even as a community we are all individuals.

Personal growth, spiritual growth, ministry and community life

Being far away from home

The balance of community life and determining how I fit in and place myself at my sisters' service while also realizing my own personality and spiritual development

Adjusting to a new schedule and way of doing things

Life in the religious way is interesting and full of challenging and crosses. Praying seven times a day and meditation is not easy

-Sometime temptation and difficulty come your way but if it happened do not have any doubtful time

Lack of one's planning

Myself and my faults and the discouragement that can come in the spiritual life. But honestly that has many remedies here and the trials are

nothing compared to the joys