



NRVC
National Religious
Vocation Conference

2022 CONVOCAATION CALL BEYOND BORDERS

HANDOUT TO ACCOMPANY THE VIDEO PRESENTATION BY **FATHER RICKY MANALO, C.S.P.**



Borders, Boundaries and Catholic Identity: Three Approaches to Vocation Ministry

FATHER RICKY MANALO, C.S.P. invites us to reflect on three areas that are informing and impacting vocation ministry today:

1. Ethnicities and cultures within the boundaries of the Church;
2. The spiritual culture of the Nones around the boundaries, and;
3. Our online digital culture beyond the boundaries.

Before/after watching the video on the NRVC YouTube Channel (tinyurl.com/22p22wf7), reflect on the selected topics and quotes below from the presentation to ponder the significance of our own story of call and endless response to go beyond our own borders to “borrow from technology and culture to help us better consider the life of faith, the presence of God, and the vocational invitation to be disciples.”



Scan for
video

Ethnicities and cultures within the boundaries

- We used to think about groups as whole entities unto themselves, and we know now that is wrong. This approach sums up cultures without seeing the overlaps and concludes with generalizations.
- We can learn from and about various ethnic communities and vocation discerners regarding their worldviews, values, rituals, and sensibilities. For instance, it helps to know if their culture relies on written narratives versus storytelling. Storytelling is key in many cultures.
- How do you see yourself? You might right away go to anthropological categories of race and ethnicity. But we have many other social and political categories, and for some people, these other categories are more important. I might argue that for second and third generations of any ethnicity, these other categories are more important. I'm talking about categories like sexual orientation, political affiliation, urban-versus-rural, geographic identity, disability, etc.
- Hopefully we'll get better at dealing with all our differences. But there will always be other social-cultural categories that will splinter what we've known. Right now, we have concerns about the complexity of multiple pronouns: she, he, they. Who knew 50 years ago that this would emerge?

FOR REFLECTION, DISCUSSION

How often do we share our stories of vowed life, ministry, community life, challenges, and joys with others beyond our families and community? What holds us back from hearing the stories of others?

How is toxic polarization affecting your religious community life? How do you respond to prospective members, associates, and community members who position themselves at extreme ideological ends?

As we reflect with members of our congregations, it also helps to remember that in the sea of all these resources, neither technology nor culture has the last word. God does.

—FATHER RICKY MANALO, C.S.P.

(Continued on reverse side)



The spiritual culture of the Nones around the boundaries

- Many different categories and subcategories exist for those who are unaffiliated with organized religion. The term *Nones* is one *Nones* don't usually like; it's a term sociologists use. *Nones* tend to put their emphasis on the concepts of being and becoming.
- Encounters with God may take place anywhere and anytime. Going for walks has become their spirituality. So is going to the Internet, gardening, and praying in the subway amid the chaos. In addition to highlighting already-known "sacred times and spaces," how might we encounter Christ in everyday locations?
- There is a delicate balance. At one end, we have to continue to consider what we believe, how we belong, and how we behave. That's important and I hope we never lose sight of that. But in addition to that, let's look at our everyday lives. Let's look at how we embody the faith, where we offer experiences of prayer and faith, and other ways that our traditions and charisms might be presented to a new generation in a way that resonates. The *Nones* are probably not our target audience in our vocation outreach, but they are affecting—and reflecting—the larger culture of young people today, so they provide insights for us beyond our usual borders.

FOR REFLECTION, DISCUSSION

In what ways is your community "interconnecting" with the broader spectrum and networks of relationships that transpire beyond Church spaces and/or religious community institutions?

What are the current issues and concerns your community encounters with discerners regarding sexual and gender identity? Can our Catholic ethics and morals offer society a countercultural alternative?

How might we learn from what the *Nones* are doing and also be a countercultural presence?

Our online digital culture beyond the boundaries

- The 1.0 world was from roughly 1992 to 2005, when the World Wide Web came into being—the information superhighway. This was when we could create electronic bulletin boards that anyone could see. Most parish websites in the U.S. are still stuck in the 1.0 world, not being interactive, but rather simply providing information.
- The internet bandwidth for most people is much larger now and we're able to do more. The 2.0 websites are much more interactive. They operate smoothly on any device. A phone is where many young and not-so-young people will be viewing and interacting with your website.
- There is a lot of technology and innovation to deal with at a fast pace. Centuries ago the printing press transformed Christianity. Every century or so, there are other technologies that impact the Church. The acceleration of technological change makes it hard to keep up.
- Religious institutes need to be intentionally self-reflective in how they use media and new technology, particularly as they look ahead toward the soon-to-arrive 3.0 world which is going to be one with much more artificial intelligence.
- When it comes to technologies like Zoom that allow for virtual participation, meetings, and education, we know that hybridity is here to stay. There are pros and cons, and we know that right now, proximity matters because you cannot replace the live experience. It is still the most valuable way to interact and communicate.

FOR REFLECTION, DISCUSSION

The scale of change has been immense as has the speed. How does the acceleration affect religious life/vocation ministry? What do you have to offer amid the cacophony? What holds you back?

How often do you stretch yourself to learn more about social media, digital communication, and Artificial Intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT? What collaborative ways exist for using technology for vocation ministry to pool resources most effectively?

With your community's charism, prayer life, vows, and ministry, what counterbalance do you offer to the negative effects of technological acceleration and addiction? Is there a possibility of using technology counterculturally without merely refusing to use it?