

**May 2022**

**Women and Men Entering Religious Life:  
The Entrance Class of 2021**



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

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**Executive Summary**

This report presents findings from an annual national survey of women and men religious who formally entered a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States during 2021. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men, 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 some 100 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 institutes that do not have postulancy) in the United States since January 1, 2021.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 547 of 742 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 74% among religious institutes. Three religious institutes were not interested in participating in the studies. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 351 members (136 women and 215 men) who entered religious life in 2021.

In November 2021, CARA emailed or mailed a survey to 351 identified entrants, asking them to complete an online survey or mail their completed paper survey to CARA. A total of 204 responded to the survey by February 1, 2022. This represents a response rate of 58% among 351 new entrants who were invited and eligible to participate in the survey.

## Major Findings

### Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

- Nearly four in five (77%) responding religious institutes had no one entering religious life in 2021. Eleven percent reported one entrant and 12% reported two or more.
- Nearly half of entrants (46%) are women and more than half (54%) are men. Among men, about four in five (82%) expect to become priests and one in five (18%) plans to become a perpetually professed brother.
- The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2021 is 29. More than half of the respondents (54%) are age 26 or younger.
- Responding postulants were born in 19 countries. Eight in ten (80%) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most commonly mentioned countries are the Philippines (N=7), Vietnam (N = 5), and Mexico (N = 5). On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 22 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for ten years before entering religious life.
- Two-thirds of those who entered a religious institute report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (68%). Approximately one in ten of the Entrance Class of 2021 identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a) (13%) and as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (10%). Four percent identify as African/African American/black. Six percent identify as mixed or some other race or ethnicity.
- Entrants report speaking 15 different languages, with English (79%) and Spanish (8%) most frequently reported, followed by Vietnamese (4%), a language spoken in the Philippines such as Filipino, Tagalog, or Visayan (2%), and Igbo (2%).
- Before entering religious life, more than half were employed in a ministry position (53%). Nearly half were employed full time in a ministry position (45%), with an additional 8% employed part time.
- Slightly less than nine in ten (87%) have been Catholic since birth, with four in five (80%) coming from families in which both parents are Catholic. More than nine in ten have at least one sibling (95%) and the most common number of siblings is one or two.
- During the most formative part of their childhood, nearly nine in ten (88%) respondents were raised by a married couple, living together (88%). One in 20 respondents was raised by one parent who was either separated or divorced (4%).



- Half (51%) report that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation. Men (59%) are more likely than women (41%) to say that starting a discussion with their family was easy for them.
- While growing up, more than six in ten respondents (63%) report that they ever got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun who was not a relative of theirs. About one-third have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun (35%).
- The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2021 were highly educated before entering. Half (49%) report having earned a bachelor's degree, with three in ten having a graduate degree (26% with a master's and 3% with a doctoral degree).
- 2021 entrants are considerably more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school (45% compared to 16%), a Catholic high school (36% compared to 8%), and a Catholic college/university (40% compared to 5%).
- Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Between half and three-quarters participated in retreats (75%), various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting (63%), and campus ministry during college (53%).

### **Vocational Discernment and Choice of a Religious Institute**

- On average, respondents were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life. More than half say they received “very much” encouragement from these sources: vocation directors/teams (78%), spiritual directors (72%), members of their institutes (69%), friends outside of their institute (60%), and other men and women religious (58%).
- At least two-thirds say they were “very much” attracted to religious life by a sense of call to religious life (81%), a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (80%), a desire to be of service (71%), and a desire to be part of a community (66%).
- Men and women entering religious life were asked to indicate how they first became acquainted with their religious institute. A quarter or more report becoming acquainted through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (31%), in an institution where members served such as a school (30%), through their own search (30%), and through the institute's reputation or history (26%).
- Asked what attracted them to their religious institute, two-thirds or more indicate they were “very much” attracted by the mission of the institute (75%), its spirituality (72%), its community life (68%), the example of its members (67%), and its prayer life (66%).

- Entrants were asked how helpful selected vocation experiences were to them in discerning their call to their institute before they entered. Those deemed “very” helpful by at least half are contacts with the vocation director (82%), contacts with institute members (66%), the “Come and See” experiences (63%), vocation or discernment retreats (54%), and spiritual direction (51%).
- Asked to rate how much 13 aspects of their religious institute affected their decision to enter that institute, more than half listed these as having had “very much” of an influence: the Charism of the institute (82%), its community life (69%), its prayer life or prayer styles (63%), and its practices regarding wearing a religious habit (55%).

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

- Asked how important five aspects of their community life is to them at present, at least two-three say these are “very” important to them: praying with other members (84%), living with other members (82%), sharing meals together (78%), socializing/sharing leisure time together (76%), and working with other members (67%).
- Regarding the types of prayer that are important to them, more than half say private personal prayer (91%), daily Eucharist (90%), Eucharistic Adoration (74%), Liturgy of the Hours (70%), and other devotional prayers like the rosary (55%) are “very” important.
- New entrants were asked if the members of their institute wear a habit. Three in four indicate that members of their institute wear a habit (76%), with women (88%) more likely than men (66%) to say so. Among all of those who indicate that their membership wears a habit, six in ten indicate that the habit is required in all or most circumstances (62%) and three in ten that that the habit is required only at certain times (29%).
- Respondents seem pleased with the religious institutes they are entering. Asked about 20 aspects of their institute, all but two receive a “good” or “excellent” evaluation from more than half of their members. The ones most likely to be seen as “excellent” are the opportunities for spiritual growth (78%), its faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth (78%), its opportunities for personal growth (76%), and its welcome and support of newer members (76%).
- In written comments at the end of the survey, responding entrants mention aspects of community life as the greatest attraction to their religious institute, but also as the greatest challenge they are encountering as religious.

## Introduction

In 2014, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an annual survey of women and men who enter religious life each year in the United States. For this project, CARA was asked to gather information about the characteristics and experiences of these women and men in a fashion similar to the survey of perpetually professed that CARA conducts each year for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, which is released each year for the World Day of Consecrated Life in February. CARA designed a questionnaire based on previous CARA research on religious life and reviewed it with a representative from the Hilton Foundation. This report presents results of this survey of women and men of the Entrance Class of 2021.

To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men, 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 some 100 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 institutes that do not have postulancy) in the United States since January 1, 2021. After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 547 of 742 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 74% among religious institutes. Three religious institutes were not interested in participating in the studies. In all, the major superiors provided contact information for 351 members (136 women and 215 men) who entered religious life in 2021.

In November 2021, CARA emailed or mailed a survey to 351 identified entrants, asking them to complete an online survey or mail their completed paper survey to CARA. A total of 204 responded to the survey by February 1, 2022. This represents a response rate of 58% among 351 new entrants who were invited and eligible to participate in the survey.

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

This report is arranged in three parts: Part I describes characteristics of the institutes that responded to the request for names as well as characteristics of the Entrance Class of 2021. Part II describes aspects of the vocational discernment of the Entrance Class of 2021. Part III describes their experience of religious life so far and reports, in their own words, what attracts them to religious life and what they find most challenging about religious life.

### **Interpreting this Report**

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

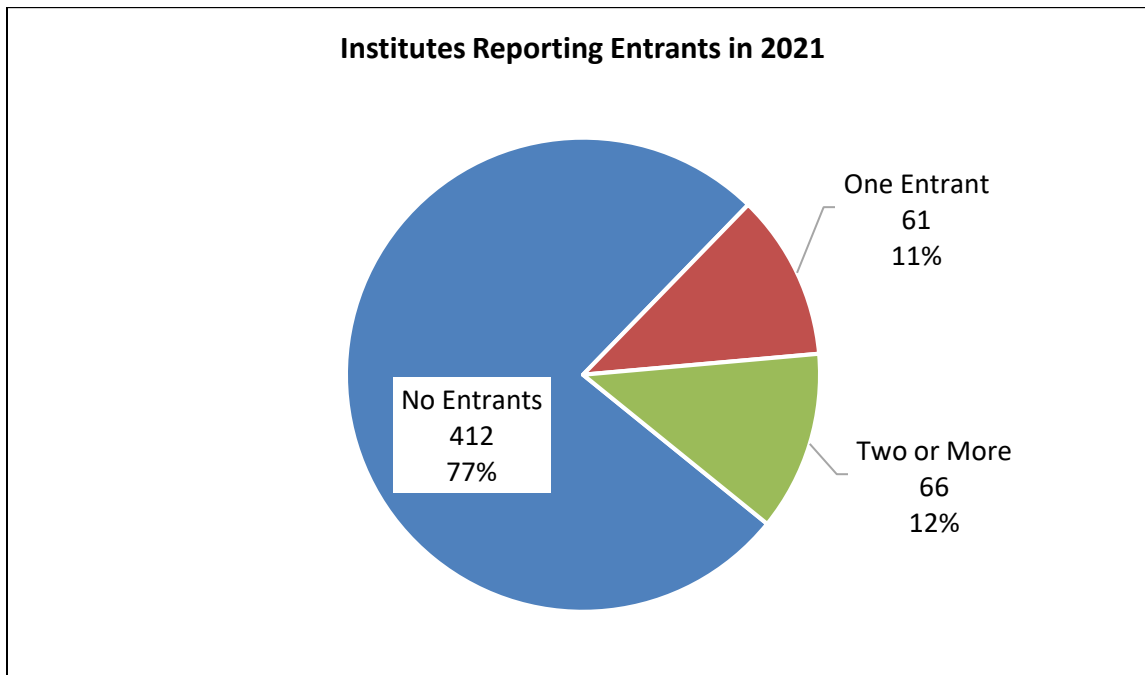
Readers may also wish to compare the difference between the two extreme responses, say “poor” and “excellent,” to compare the level of intensity with which opposing opinions are held. These comparisons and others may be drawn by referring to the actual percentage responses given in Appendix I. That appendix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

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

## Part I Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

### Institutes Reporting New Entrants in 2021

CARA asked the 742 religious institutes, provinces, or monasteries in the United States to provide the names of men and women as postulants who entered their religious institute in the United States in 2021. A total of 547 major superiors responded (a 74% response rate) with 351 names of women and men. Three major superiors responded that they would not participate this year. The Entrance Class of 2021 consists of 215 men (reported by CMSM superiors) and 136 women.



A total of 412 major superiors (77% of those responding) reported that they had no one enter the institute in 2021, another 61 major superiors (11%) reported one new entrant, and 66 major superiors (12%) reported two or more new entrants.

## Gender

Among the 204 respondents who entered religious life in 2021, nearly half (46%) are women and more than half (54%) are men. Among men, four in five (82%) expect to become priests and one in five (18%) plans to become a perpetually professed brother.

## Age of the Entrance Class of 2021

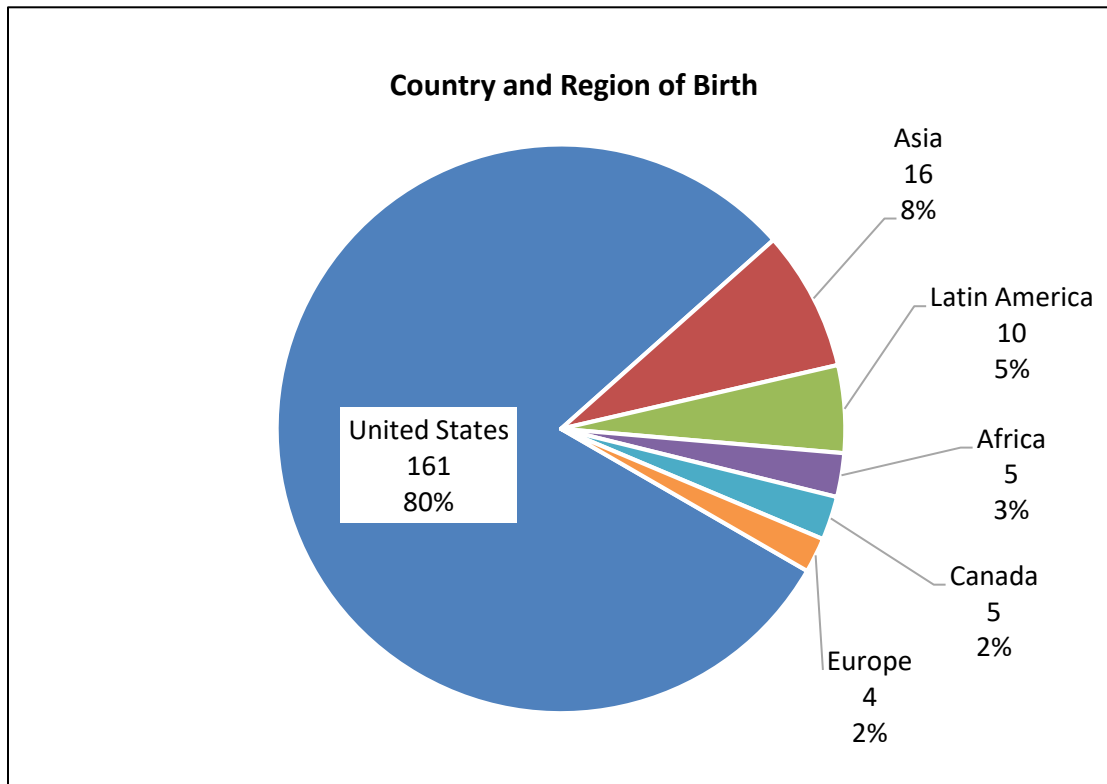
The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2021 is 29. More than half of the respondents (54%) are age 26 or younger.

<b>Age of Women and Men Entering Religious Life</b>			
Percentage in each age category			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
25 and younger	45	43	47
Age 26-35	43	44	43
Age 36-45	7	8	5
Age 46-55	3	3	3
Age 56 and older	2	3	1
Average age	29	29	28
Median age	26	27	26
Range in ages	18-73	18-63	19-73

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Entrance Class of 2021 is 19 and the oldest is 73. Among the men, the youngest is 18 and the oldest is 63. Regardless of gender, about nine in ten respondents (87% to 90%) are 35 or younger.

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

Responding postulants were born in 19 countries. Eight in ten (80%) respondents were born in the United States.



- About one in ten (8%) was born in a country in Asia, mainly in the Philippines (N = 7) and Vietnam (N = 5).
- One in 20 (5%) was born in a country in Latin America, mainly in Mexico (N = 5).
- Five entrants were born in a country in Africa. Another five respondents were born in Canada. Four respondents were born in Europe.

Respondents who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 10 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2018 or earlier.

<b>Entrance to the United States</b>				
	<b>Year</b>	<i>Age at Entry</i>		
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Mean	2011	22	25	19
Median	2018	25	26	18
Range	1973-2021	1-54	3-54	1-50

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at the age of 22. Half were age 25 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The oldest woman was 50 while the oldest man was 54 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 (68%). Women are more likely than men to be Caucasian/European American/white (74% compared to 62% of men).

<b><i>What best describes your racial or ethnic background?</i></b>			
Percentage in each category			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Caucasian/European American/white	68	62	74
Hispanic/Latino(a)	13	15	11
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	10	13	7
African/African American/black	4	6	1
Mixed race	3	2	4
Other	3	2	3
Native American or American Indian	0	0	0

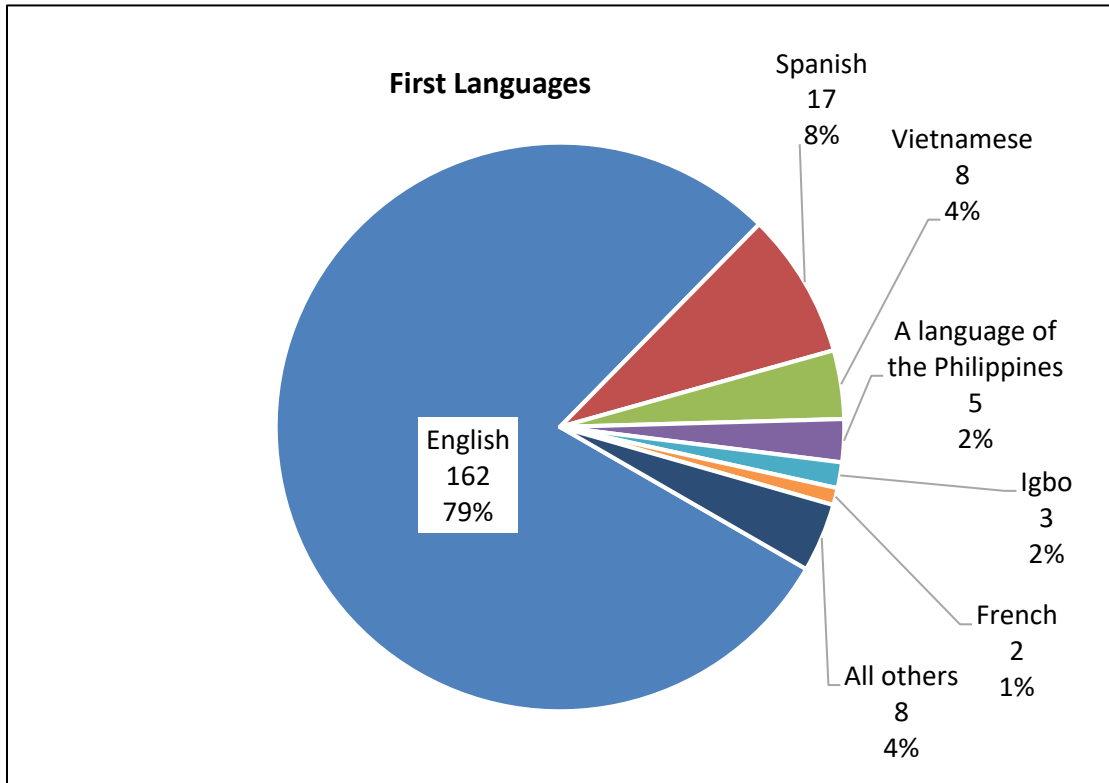
About one in ten (13%) of the Entrance Class of 2021 identifies as Hispanic/Latino(a) or as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian (10%). Four percent identify as African/African American/black, with 6% identifying as mixed or some other race or ethnicity.

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

- Among those who were born in the United States, four in five (80%) report being Caucasian/European American/white. One in ten identifies as Hispanic or Latino(a) (11%).
- Among those who were born outside the United States, slightly more than a third of respondents identify as Asian/Pacific/Native Hawaiian (35%). Less than one in four identifies as Hispanic or Latino/a (23%), Caucasian/ European/ American/white (20%), and African/African American/black (15%).

## First Languages and Fluency

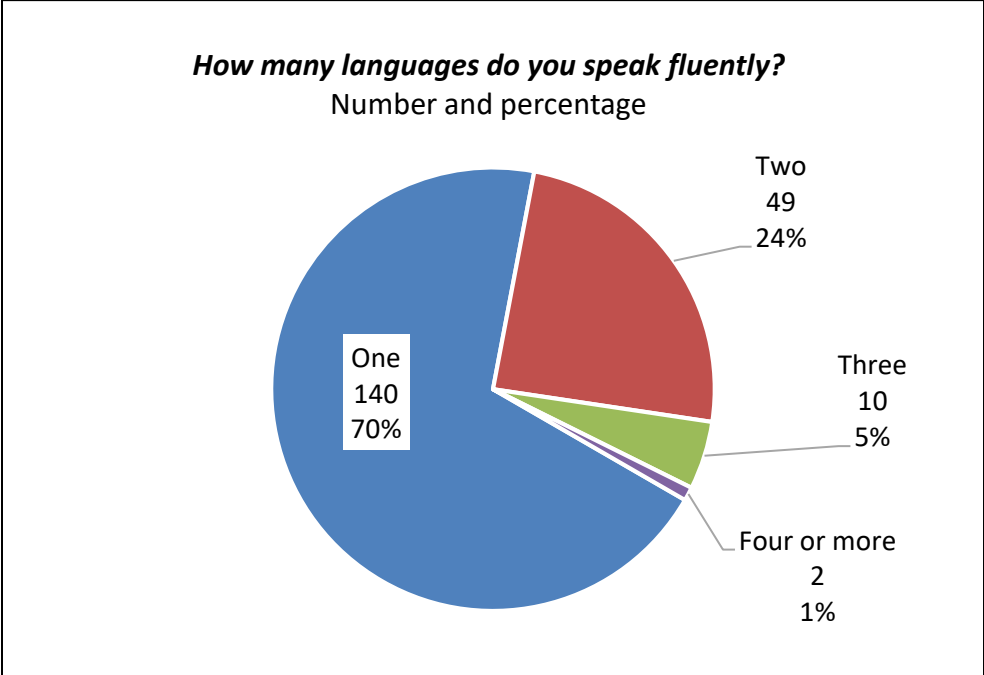
Asked to write in their first language, most wrote in one language (98%), with four writing in two (2%). Four in five report that English (79%) is their first language, followed by Spanish (8%), Vietnamese (4%), a language of the Philippines, such as Filipino, Tagalog, or Visayan (2%), Igbo (2%), and French (1%).



Among those listing an “other” language as their first language, one each wrote in:

- American Sign Language
- Arabic
- Cantonese
- Creole
- Malayalam
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Yoruba

Most speak one language (70%), with an additional 24% speaking two.



## Religious Background

Slightly less than nine in ten respondents (87%) have been Catholic since birth.

<b>Catholic Background</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Catholic since birth	87	84	90
Became Catholic later in life	13	16	10

Among those who became Catholic later in life, eight in ten (80%) participated in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. These entrants came from a variety of faiths: Anglican, agnostic, atheist, Baptist, Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Protestant (Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Protestant, Episcopalian, Evangelical, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Judaism, non-denominational, Presbyterian, Protestant, Reform Judaism, Seventh-day Adventist, or United Methodist.

Eight in ten respondents (80%) report that both of their parents were Catholic when they were growing up.

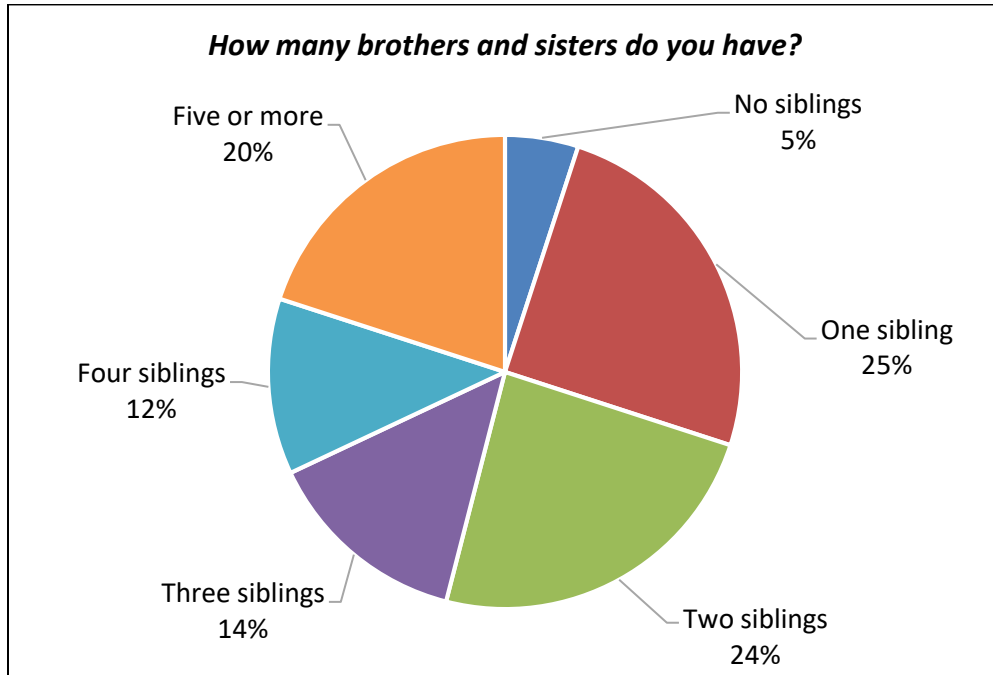
<b>Religious Background of Respondents' Parents</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Both parents Catholic	80	80	80
Mother Catholic, father not	4	3	6
Father Catholic, mother not	7	6	8
Neither parent was Catholic	9	11	6

Respondents who had non-Catholic parents report that their parents were either Assemblies of God, atheist, Church of the Nazarene, Baptist, Buddhist, Christian Episcopalian, Evangelical Protestant, Latter-Day Saint, Lutheran, Methodist, non-denominational, Presbyterian, Protestant, Jehovah's Witness, Syriac Orthodox, United Methodist, or Wesleyan.

Regardless of the religious tradition of their parents, six in ten (59%) respondents report that religion was “very important” to their mothers and more than four in ten (44%) report that religion was “very important” to their fathers.

## Family Background

On average, members of the Entrance Class of 2021 have three siblings. The most common response to this question, among women and men, is one or two siblings (49%). Five percent say he or she is an only child, one-quarter have one sibling (25%), meanwhile seven in ten have two or more siblings (70%).



A third report being the eldest (32%), and another third report being a middle child (33%). Three in ten report being the youngest (30%). One in 20 is an only child (6%).

**What is your birth order?**  
Percentage in each category

	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Eldest	32	29	32
Middle	33	26	41
Youngest	30	34	25
Only child	6	11	0

Women (41%) are more likely than men (26%) to report being the middle child. Meanwhile, men (11%) are more likely than women (0%) to report being an only child.

Entrants were asked to identify who raised them during the most formative part of their childhood. They could select one or more of the options presented in the table below. Slightly more than nine in ten respondents were raised by their biological parents (94%) during that time, with more than one in ten raised by their grandparents (14%).

***Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood?***  
 Respondents were invited to select all that apply

	<b>Both</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Biological parents	94	91	97
Grandparents	14	16	12
Other relative(s)	3	5	1
Step parents	2	2	1
Adoptive parent(s)	2	2	1
Someone else	2	2	2
I prefer not to answer	2	2	1

They were also asked to identify the marital status of those that raised them during the most formative part of their childhood. Nearly nine in ten were raised by a married couple, living together (88%). One in 20 was raised by one parent who was either separated or divorced (4%).

***During the most formative part of your childhood, were you raised by:***  
 Percentage responding

	<b>Both</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Married couple, living together	88	87	89
One parent, separated/divorced	4	4	3
One parent, widowed	2	2	1
Married couple, living separately	2	1	2
Something else	2	2	1
One parent, single/unmarried	1	1	1
Unmarried couple, living together	1	1	1
Unmarried couple, living separately	1	1	1

### Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up

Half (51%) report that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation. Men are more likely than women to say that starting a discussion with their family was easy for them.

<b>Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up</b>			
Percentage responding "Yes" to each question*			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?	51	59	41
Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	26	28	24
Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	26	30	23
Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	19	25	13

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

- A quarter indicate that their mother ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life (26%) and that another family member did the same to them (26%).
- One in five reports that their father ever spoke to them about vocations to priesthood or religious life (19%). Men are more likely than women to report that their father ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life.



More than six in ten respondents (63%) report that outside of family members, while they were growing up, they ever got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun. About one-third have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun (35%).

**Familiarity with Priests and/or Religious Brothers and Sisters/Nuns  
while Growing Up**

*Percentage responding "Yes" to each question*

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	63	64	62
Do you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	35	34	35

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

### Education Level Before Entering a Religious Institute

The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2021 were highly educated before entering. Half (49%) report having earned a bachelor’s degree, with an additional three in ten (29%) receiving a graduate degree (26% with a master’s and 3% with a doctoral degree).

<b><i>What was your highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?</i></b>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
High school or less	6	9	3
Some college	12	13	11
Bachelor’s degree	49	42	57
Master’s degree	26	30	22
Doctoral degree	3	2	3
Other	4	4	4

Responding women (57%) are slightly more likely than responding men (42%) to have attained a bachelor’s degree before entering.

One in six entrants (16%) reports being home schooled at some time in their educational background. More women than men report being home schooled (21% of compared to 11% of men).

<b><i>Were you ever home-schooled?</i></b>			
Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	16	11	21
No	84	89	79
Average number of years home-schooled	9	10	9

Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was nine years.

## Catholic Education Before Entering a Religious Institute

Half of respondents attended a parish-based religious education program (49%). Nearly a half (45%) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school and about a third attended a Catholic high school (36%). Four in ten attended a Catholic college/university before entering their religious institute, with three in ten attending a Catholic ministry formation program before entering (30%).

<b><i>Did you attend any of the following before you entered? *</i></b>			
Percentage responding "Yes" to each question			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR	49	45	54
Catholic elementary or middle school	45	41	50
Catholic high school	36	39	32
Catholic college/university	40	43	36
Catholic ministry formation program	30	28	32

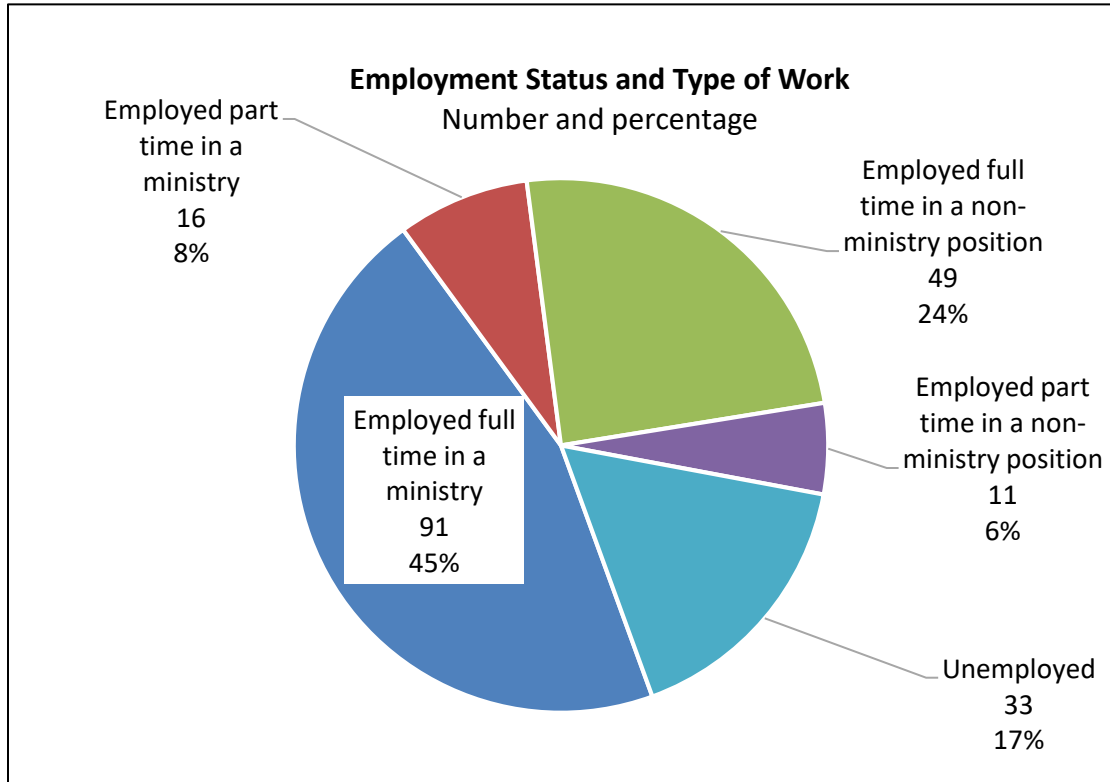
Members of the Entrance Class of 2021 are almost three times more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,<sup>1</sup> 16% of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 45% among entrants. Responding entrants of 2021 are more than four times more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (36% of respondents, compared to 8% of U.S. adult Catholics) and eight times more likely to have attended a Catholic college/university (40% of respondents, compared to just 5% of U.S. adult Catholics).

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, half of respondents (49%) participated in a religious education program at some time in their parish. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 66% did not report attending a Catholic elementary school and 80% did not attend a Catholic high school.

<sup>1</sup>CARA Catholic Poll, 2016. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

## Employment Before Entering

Before entering religious life, just over half were employed in a ministry position (53%). Nearly half were employed full time in a ministry position (45%), with an additional 8% employed part time in such a position.



Male entrants (23%) are more likely than female entrants (9%) to have been unemployed before entering their religious institute.

## Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

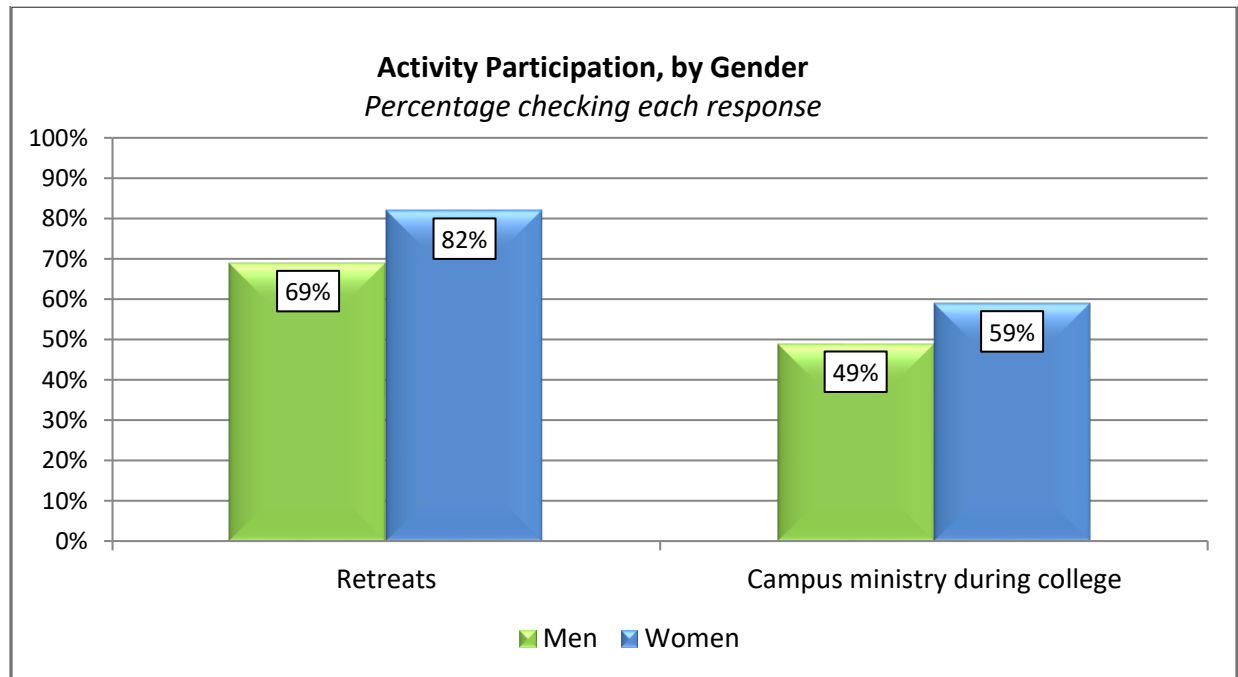
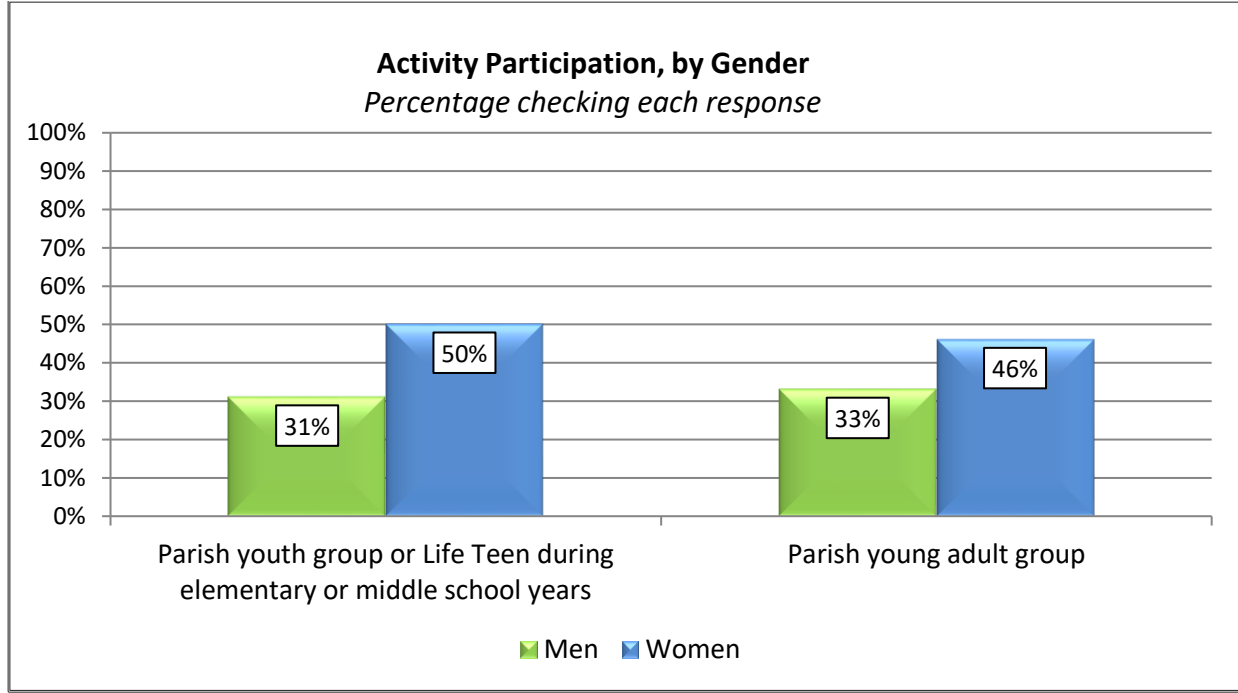
Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Almost all respondents (97%) participated in at least one of the programs or activities listed in the table below before entering.

<b><i>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of the these before you entered?</i></b>			
Percentage checking each response*			
	Overall	Men	Women
	%	%	%
Retreats	75	69	82
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	63	52	75
Campus ministry during college	53	49	59
Parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years	39	31	50
Parish young adult group	39	33	46
Right to Life March in Washington	36	34	38
Campus ministry during high school years	28	28	29
Religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)	14	12	17
World Youth Day	14	14	13
National Catholic Youth Conference	10	6	15
*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.			

- About half to three-fourths respondents participated in retreats (75%) and campus ministry during college (53%). Women are more likely than men to have participated in all three before entering a religious institute.
- Four in ten or slightly fewer participated in a parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years (39%), a parish young adult group (39%), and a Right to Life March in Washington (36%).
- One-tenth to three-tenths participated in the campus ministry during high school years (28%), religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps) (14%), World Youth Day (14%), and National Catholic Youth Conference (10%).

## Differences by Gender

Responding women religious are more likely than men to have participated in the activities shown in the two figures below before entering their religious institute.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> As was noted in the Introduction, only differences of 10 percentage points or more will be treated as meaningful.

It is instructive to examine how many participated in parish programs as adults before they entered religious life. Nine in ten respondents (89%) served in one or more specified parish ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer.

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

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister)	67	71	62
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	63	52	75
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA team	48	46	51
Music ministry, cantor, choir	42	42	42

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

- Roughly two in three entrants report that they served in liturgical ministry roles, such as being a lector or extraordinary minister of Communion (67%) or in some other volunteer work in a parish/other setting (63%) before they entered their religious institute.
- Nearly half participated in faith formation, catechetical ministry or RCIA (48%).
- About two in five respondents report having participated in music ministry, cantor, or choir (42%).

## Part II Vocational Discernment

### 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.

<b>Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life</b>			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Mean age	19	20	19
Median age	19	20	18
Range of ages	4-60	4-50	5-60

Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. Nine in ten or more received encouragement from a vocation director/team (94%), spiritual director (93%), or a member of the institute (90%) when they first considered entering a religious institute. At least seven in ten (69% to 78%) report receiving “very much” encouragement from these people.

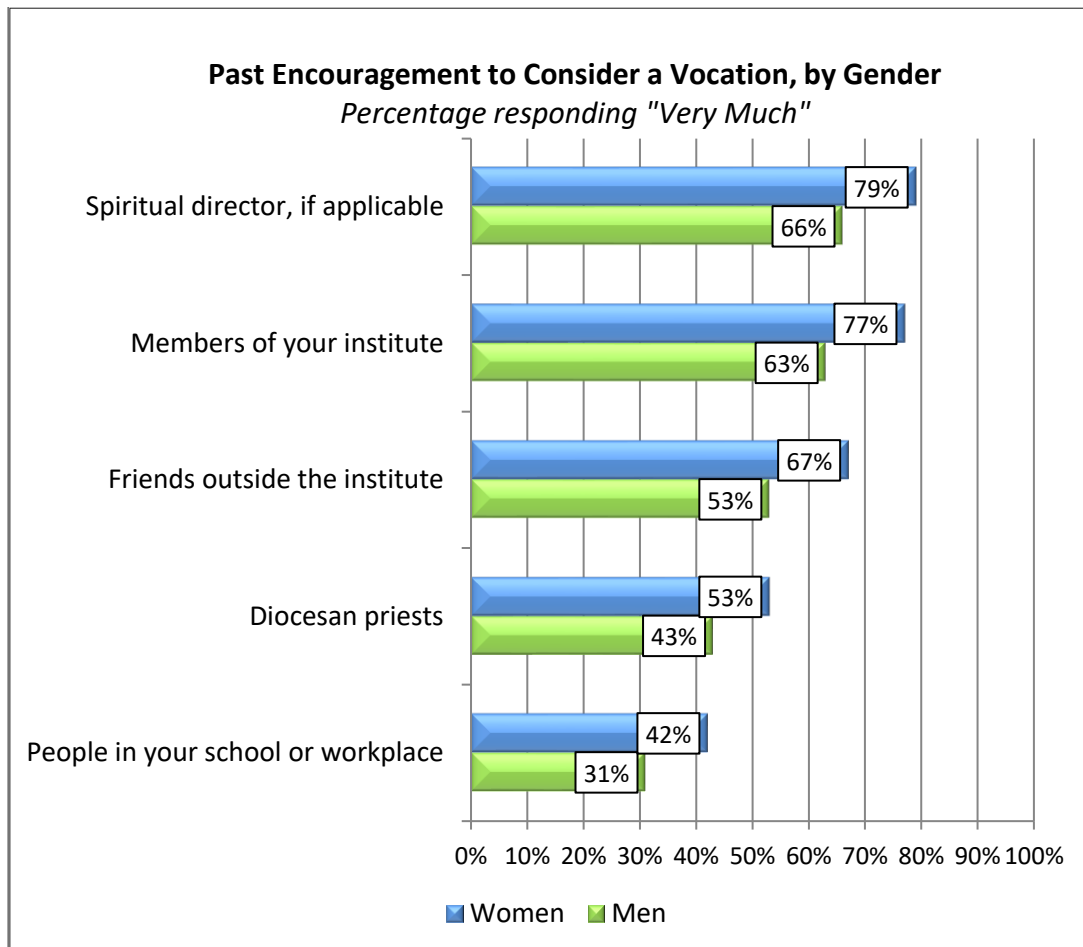
<b><i>How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much” Encouragement</b>	<b>“Very Much” Encouragement Only</b>
	%	%
Vocation Director/team	94	78
Spiritual director, if applicable	93	72
Members of your institute	90	69
Friends outside the institute	86	60
Other men and women religious	81	58
Diocesan priests	77	48
People in your parish	76	49
People in your school or workplace	68	36
Your parents	59	40
Campus minister, if applicable	59	40
Your siblings	58	27
Other family members	49	20



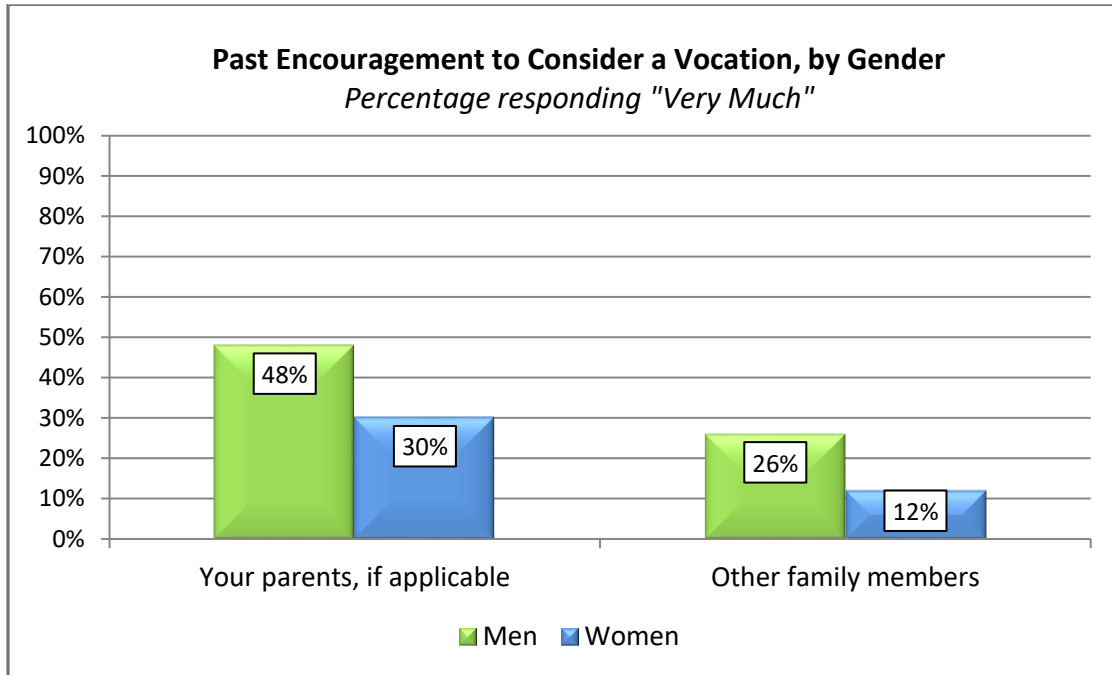
- Nearly nine in ten received encouragement from friends outside the institute (86%). Regarding their other acquaintances as well as their family members, between half and three-quarters received encouragement from people in their parishes (76%), people in their school or workplace (68%), their parents (59%), their siblings (58%), and other family members (49%). The range is much wider for those receiving “very much” encouragement from these persons, from 20% to 60%.
- Eight in ten received at least “somewhat” encouragement from other men and women religious (81%), with almost six in ten receive “very much” encouragement from this group (58%).
- Six in ten or more received encouragement from diocesan priests (77%) and campus ministers (59%). At least four in ten (40% to 48%) received “very much” encouragement from these sources.

### Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to receive “very much” encouragement to consider a vocation from the people in the chart below.



In contrast, men religious are more likely than women religious to have received “very much” encouragement from their parents and other family members.



## 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.

<b><i>How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?</i></b>			
Percentage checking each response*			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	31	28	36
In an institution where members served e.g. school	30	39	19
Through your own search	30	34	26
Through the reputation or history of the institute	26	34	16
Through a relative or a friend in the institute	17	19	15
Through web or social media promotional materials	17	18	16
Through working with a member of the institute	14	21	7
Through print promotional materials	8	7	9
Through an event sponsored by the institute	7	7	8
Through a media story about the institute or member	6	8	3
Through a vocation fair	5	5	4
Through a vocation match or placement service	3	5	1
Other	23	17	29

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

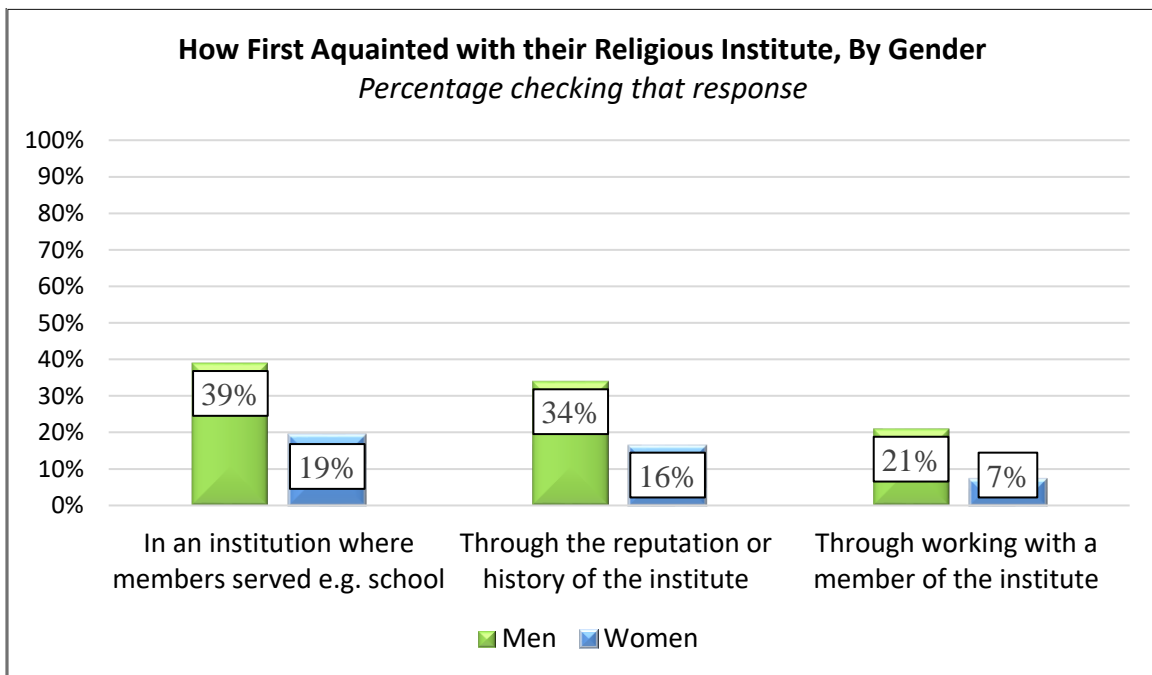
- A quarter or more report first being acquainted with their religious institute through the following:
  - Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (31%).
  - In an institution where members served e.g. school (30%). More men than women say they were acquainted to their institute by this. (39% compared with 19% of women)
  - Through their own search (30%)
  - Through the reputation or history of the institute (26%). More men than women say they were acquainted to their institute by this. (34% compared with 16% of women)
- About one in six report knowing their institute through a relative or a friend in the institute (17%), through web or social media promotional materials (17%), or through working with a member of the institute (14%).

- Less than one in ten became acquainted with their institution through the following:
  - Through print promotional materials (8%)
  - Through an event sponsored by the institute (7%)
  - Through a media story about the institute or member (6%)
  - Through a vocation fair (5%)
  - Through a vocation match or placement service (3%)
  
- Almost one in four (23%) 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 conference for university students
  - An inspiring vocational discernment event for Catholic Young Adults of OKC Arch Diocese.
  - An encounter with a member of the institute in an airport prior to World Youth Day
  - At a focus seek conference
  - Became friends with a member while we were both students
  - Busy student retreat
  - CMSWR Directory and St. Joseph
  - Conferences
  - Encounter Conference
  - Event: World Meeting of Families (Dublin)
  - Focus Conference
  - Focus Conference (SEEK)
  - Focus- Summer Training
  - From Parish Priest
  - God's Adventure Awaits Summit
  - God's providence in showing me the Sisters, and meeting one Sister at a restaurant, discovering ties with my Grandmother to the Institute
  - I lived with them for two years in Canada
  - I saw one of our sisters at Mass at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
  - Institute of Religious Life Directory and then Website
  - Local vocation promotion dinner
  - Met brother at a young adult event and became friends.
  - My parents are friends with many Jesuits, so I grew up knowing them
  - My Parish priest brought me to the monastery that I am now a part of when I was in high school
  - Through a friend who has joined the institute. (Par un ami qui a joint l'institut)
  - Proximity to a shrine operated by the institute
  - RCIA instructor who is a member of the institute
  - Served in my city
  - Thomas Merton's writings
  - Through a campus-ministry-sponsored discernment retreat

- Through a job.
- Through a national Catholic young adult conference event.
- Through a Trinitarian priest who was doing his mission in Saudi Arabia while I was working there
- Through Book Trappist and DVD
- Through conference (SEEK)
- Through Salesian Lay Missioners: Full-time volunteer program
- Through the presence of a friar in habit at a communal penance service & following conversation with the same friar.
- Through the recommendation of another institute
- Through their participation with Focus Fellowship of Catholic University students
- Through their presence at a retreat
- Through one of the vocation directors
- Two members visited my college campus
- Vocation Visit to College Campus
- Webinar on Virtues Religious Edo
- Wikipedia

### Comparisons by Gender

Men are more likely than women to have become acquainted with their religious institute as shown in the chart below:



## Attraction to Religious Life

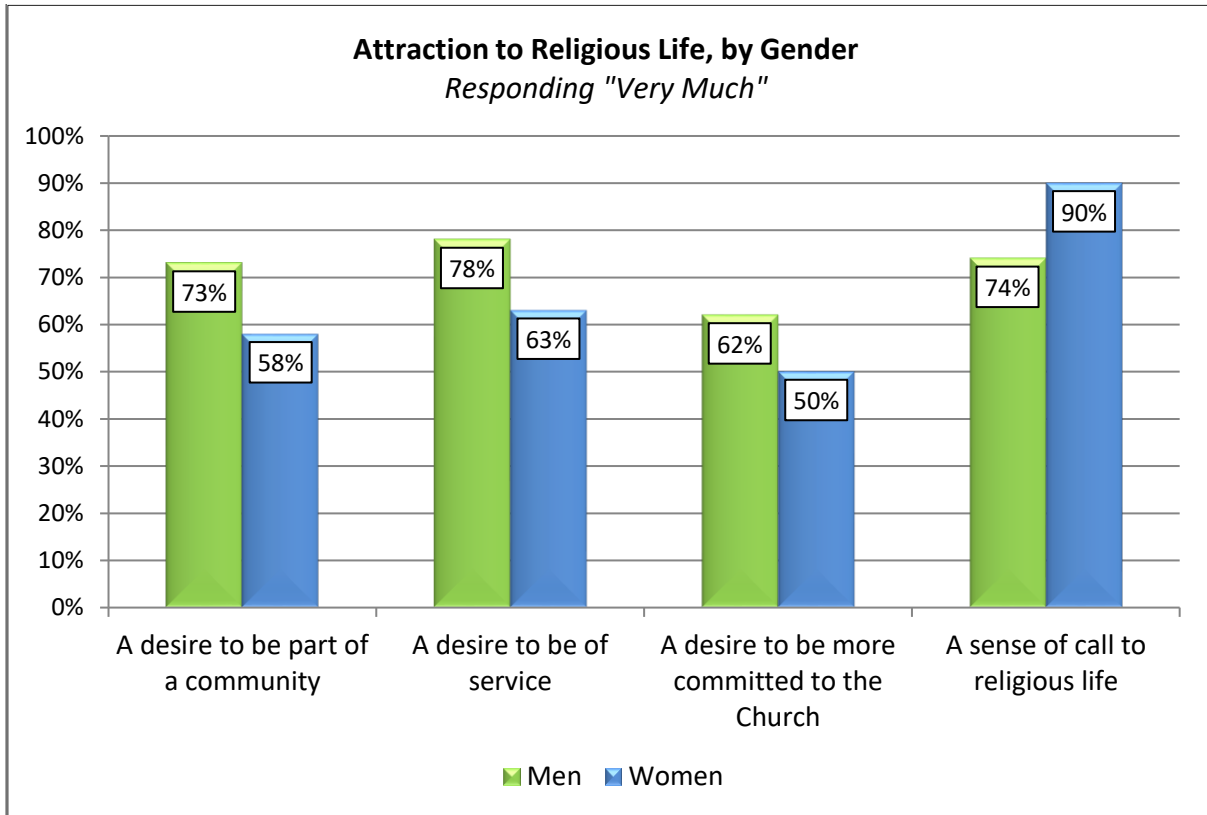
Entrants in 2021 were asked how much various elements attracted them to religious life. Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (99%) and a sense of call to religious life (97%). Four in five (80% to 81%) were “very much” attracted by these aspects.

<b><i>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</i></b>		
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very Much”		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much” Attracted</b>	<b>“Very Much” Attracted Only</b>
	%	%
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	99	80
A sense of call to religious life	97	81
A desire to be part of a community	92	66
A desire to be of service	92	71
A desire to be more committed to the Church	87	56

About nine in ten respondents were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be part of a community (92%), a desire to be of service (92%), and a desire to be more committed to the Church (87%). More than half (56% to 71%) say each of these attracted them “very much.”

## Attraction to Religious Life by Gender

More men than women report being “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire to be part of a community, a desire to be of service, and a desire to be more committed to the Church; meanwhile, more women than men report being “very much” attracted to religious life by a sense of call to religious life.



## Attraction to a Religious Institute

Entrants were asked how much each of ten aspects of religious life attracted them to their particular religious institute. More than nine in ten report that they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the institute’s mission (96%), the example of its members (95%), the institute’s spirituality (93%), and the community life of the institute (93%). Two-thirds to three-fourths (67% to 75%) were “very much” attracted by these four aspects.

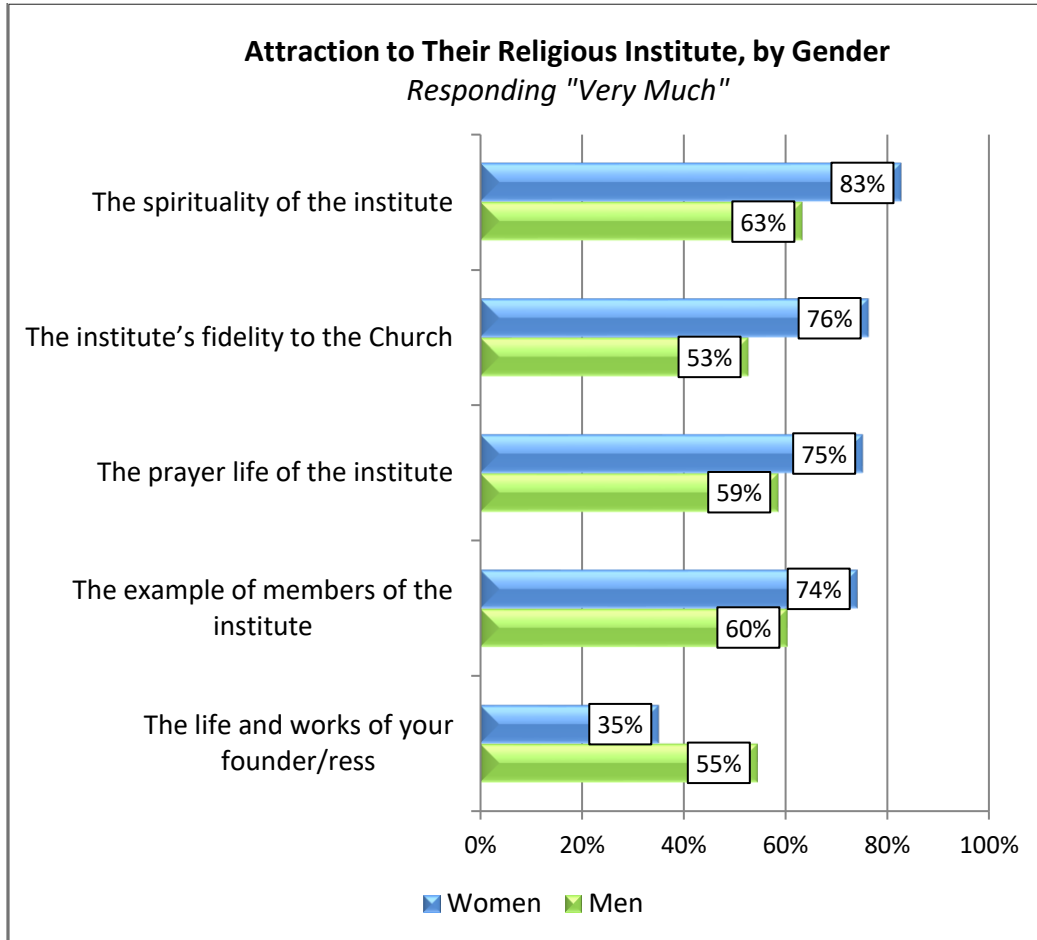
<b><i>How much did these attract you to your religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
	%	%
The mission of the institute	96	75
The example of members of the institute	95	67
The spirituality of the institute	93	72
The community life of the institute	93	68
The ministries of the institute	91	57
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	89	64
The prayer life of the institute	88	66
Welcome and encouragement by members	85	60
The life and works of your founder/ress	77	46
A personal invitation by a member	51	27

- Nine in ten or slightly fewer report they are at least “somewhat” attracted by the ministries of the institute (91%), its fidelity to the church (89%), the prayer life of the institute (88%), and the welcome and encouragement they experienced from the members (85%). Roughly six in ten (57% to 66%) report they are “very much” attracted by these aspects.
- Half to three-quarters were “somewhat” attracted to their institute by life and works of the founder/ress (77%) and by a member’s personal invitation (51%). Less than half (27% to 46%) were “very much” attracted by these two aspects.



## Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to report that the aspects in the chart below “very much” attracted them to their religious 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. This section only reports those who participated in these activities.

Among those who participated in these activities, almost all entrants report that their contact with the vocation director (97%) and their “Come and See” experience (97%) were at least “somewhat” helpful in their discernment to join religious institute. More than eight in ten (84% each) say these same aspects were “very helpful” to them.

<b><i>If you participated in any of the following with your religious institute before you entered, how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very” Helpful</b>	<b>“Very” Helpful Only</b>
	%	%
Contact with the vocation director	97	84
“Come and See” experience	97	84
Live-in experience	94	80
Contact with institute members	93	73
Vocation or discernment retreat	93	76
Visit(s) to local community/ies	92	71
Spiritual direction	91	74
Visit(s) to the Motherhouse	90	84
Ministry with institute members	84	59
Mission experience	81	60
Meeting with a discernment group	72	40
Social media (e.g., Facebook)	58	27
“Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run”	29	29

- Nine in ten or more report the following experiences were at least “somewhat” helpful in their discernment to join their religious institute:
  - Live-in experience (94%)
  - Contact with institute members (93%)
  - Vocation or discernment retreat (93%)
  - Visits to local communities (92%)
  - Spiritual direction (91%)
  - Visits to the Motherhouse (90%)

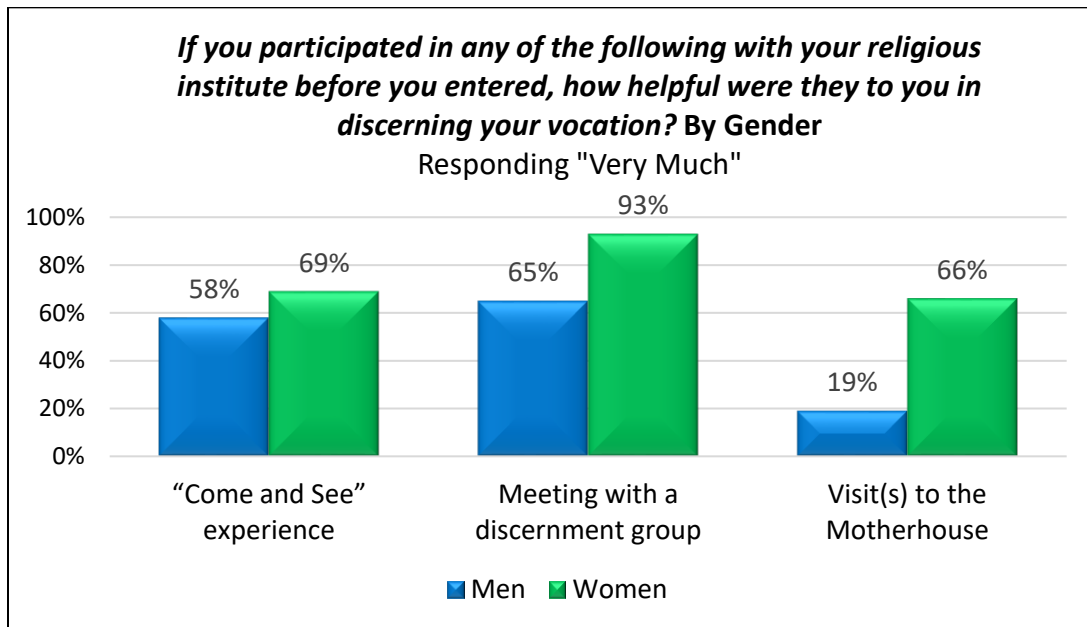
Seven-tenths to eight-tenths (71% to 80%) say these experiences were “very” helpful”

to them.

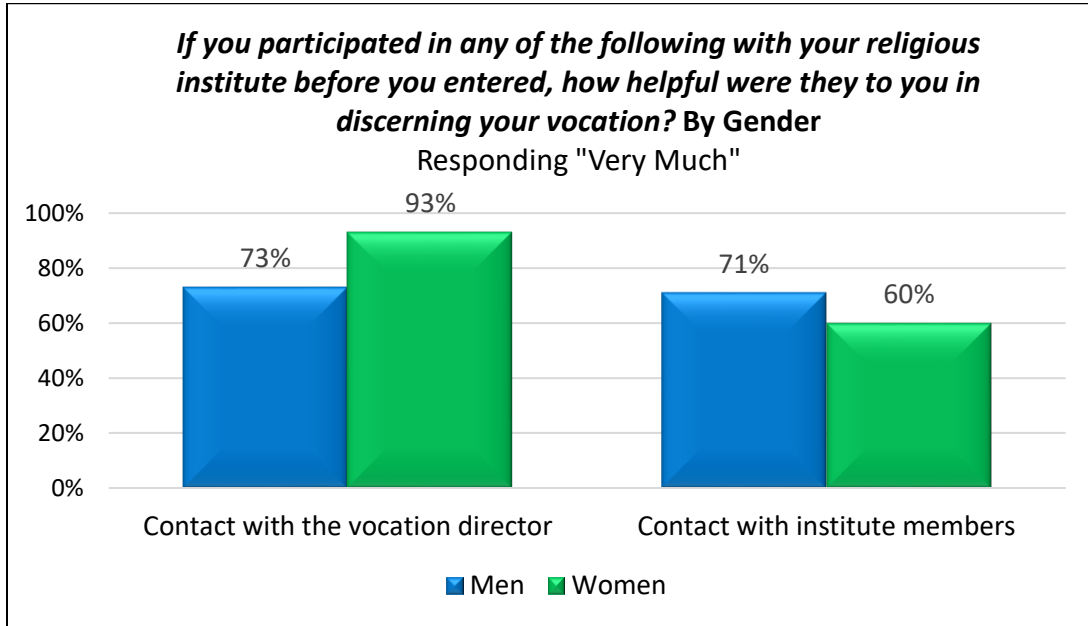
- At least eight in ten indicate ministry with institute members (84%) and mission experience (81%) were at least “somewhat” helpful to them. Six in ten (59% to 60%) say these experiences were “very helpful” to them in discerning their call to their religious institute.
- More than half indicate that meeting with a discernment group (72%) and social media (58%) were at least “somewhat” helpful to them. More than a quarter say that meeting with a discernment group (40%) or social media (27%) were “very” helpful to them.
- Three in ten (29%) report that an “Andrew Dinner” or a “Nun Run” were “very” helpful to them.

### Comparisons by Gender

Woman entrants are more likely than men entrants to report that the three experiences in the figure below were “very” helpful to them in discerning their call to their religious institute.



Women are also more likely than men to report that contacts with the vocation director were “very” helpful to them in their discernment; meanwhile, men are more likely than women to report that they found contact with institute members to be “very” helpful to them in their discernment.



## Part III Experience of Religious Life, Attractions, and Challenges

### Influences on Decisions to Enter Religious Institutes

Entrants were asked how much influence various aspects of their religious institute had on their decision to enter their institute. Almost all respondents report that the charism of the institute at least “somewhat” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute (96%), with eight in ten reporting this aspect influenced their decision “very much.”

<b><i>How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much” Influenced</b>	<b>“Very Much” Influenced Only</b>
	%	%
The charism of the institute	96	82
Community life in the institute	89	69
Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute	86	63
The lifestyle of members	86	53
The types of ministry of its members	84	48
Its practice regarding a religious habit	72	55
The focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute	66	36
Its geographic location(s)	53	23
The size of the institute	53	13
The ages of members	43	14
Its internationality, if applicable	40	20
The cultural diversity of the members	34	17
The racial/ethnic background of members	24	9

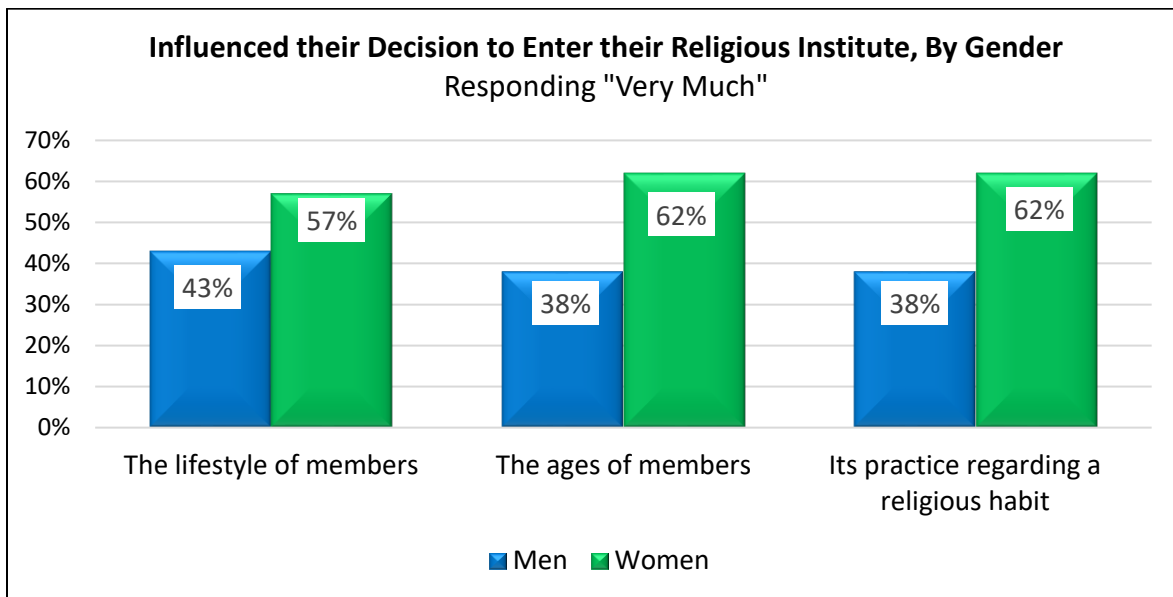
- More than eight in ten entrants report having been at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the community life in the institute (89%), the prayer life or prayer styles there (86%), the lifestyle of members (89%), and the types of ministries of its members (84%). About half to seven-tenths (48% to 69%) report they were “very much” influenced by these aspects.
- Approximately half to seven-tenths indicate that the following “somewhat” or “very much” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute: its practice regarding religious habit (72%), the focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute (66%), its geographic locations (53%), and the size of the institute (53%) While more than half

say its practice regarding a religious habit (55%), “very much” influenced their decision, fewer – between 13% to 36% -- say these factors “very much” influenced their decisions.

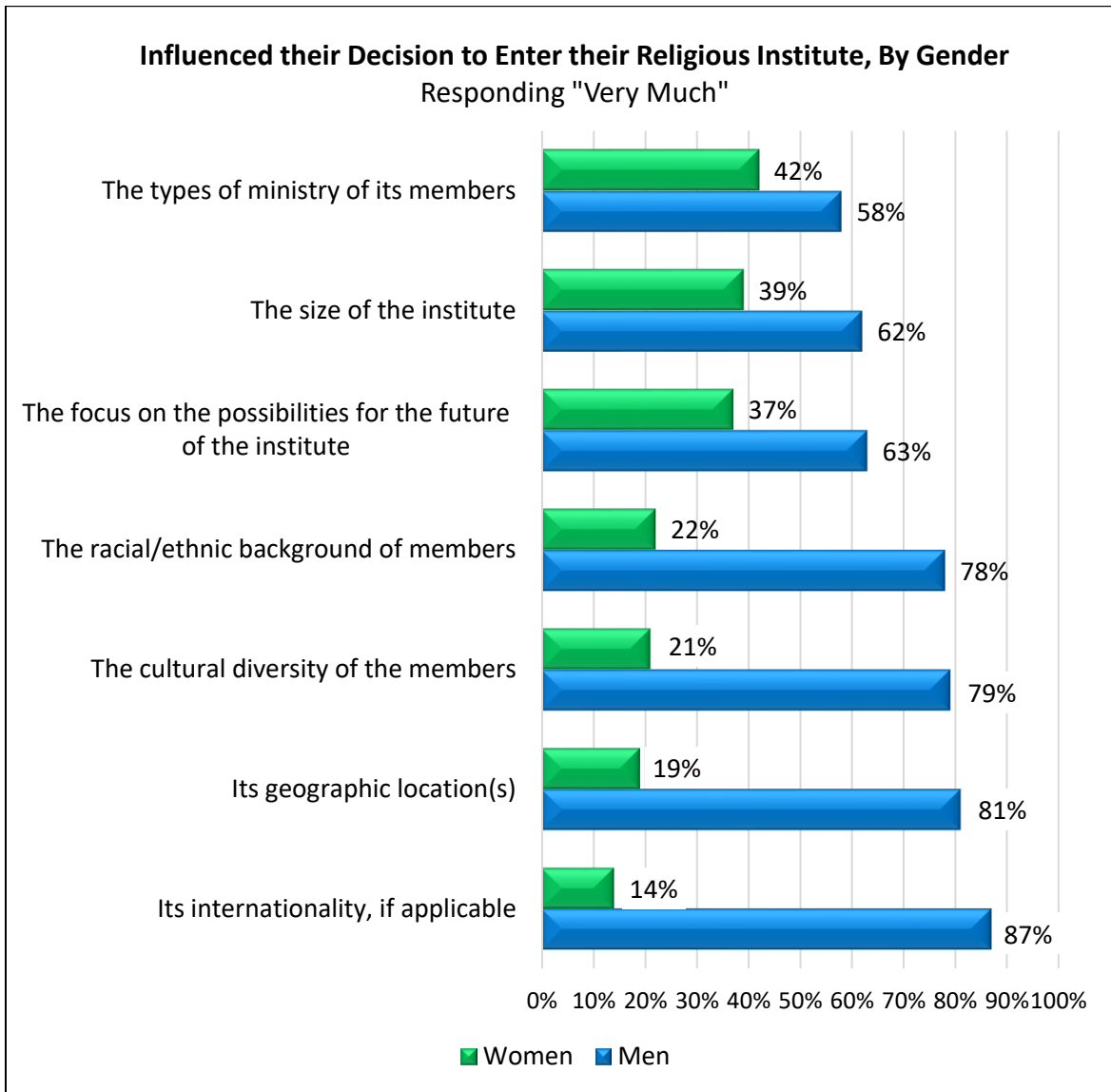
- Two in five say the ages of members (43%) and its internationality (40%) at least “somewhat” influenced their decisions. Two-tenths or less (14% to 20%) say these factors “very much” influenced their decisions.
- A third or less say they were at least “somewhat” influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the cultural diversity of the members (34%) and the racial/ethnic backgrounds of members (24%). Between 9% and 17% say these factors “very much” influenced their decisions to enter their institute.

### Comparisons by Gender

Women are especially likely to report that the lifestyle of members, the ages of members, and the institutes’ practice regarding a religious habit have “very much” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute.



In contrast, men are most likely to be “very much” influenced in their decision to enter the religious institute by the aspects in the chart below.



## Prayer Practices

Respondents were asked to evaluate how important each of eight different types of prayer are to them. Almost all respondents say private personal prayer (99%) and daily Eucharist (99%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Nine in ten (90% to 91%) indicate that these types of prayers are “very” important to them.

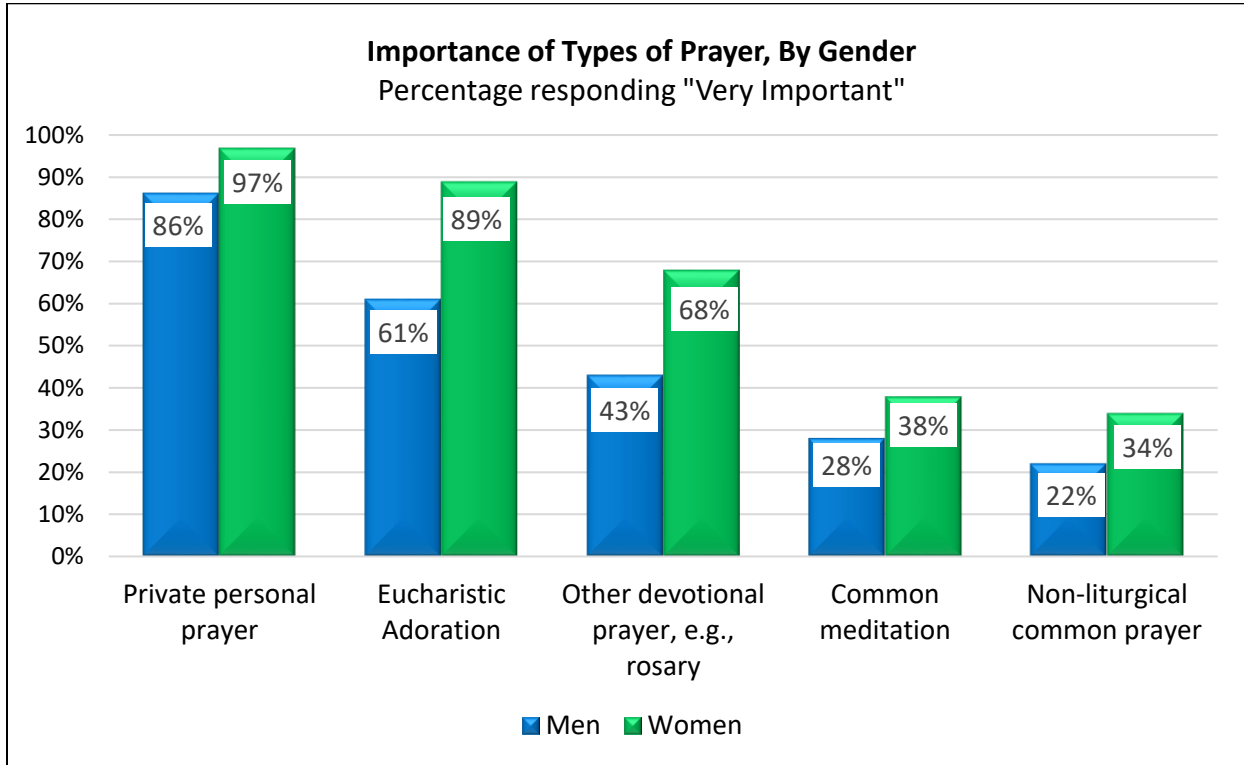
<b><i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very” Important</b>	<b>“Very” Important Only</b>
	%	%
Private personal prayer	99	91
Daily Eucharist	99	90
Liturgy of the Hours	93	70
Eucharistic Adoration	92	74
Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary	86	55
Faith sharing	76	42
Common meditation	67	33
Non-liturgical common prayer	61	28

- More than nine in ten respondents report that Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharistic Adoration are at least “somewhat” important to them. At least seven in ten (70% to 74%) report these types of prayers are “very important” to them.
- Nearly nine in ten report other devotional prayers such as the rosary (86%) are at least “somewhat” important to them, with 55% reporting these types of prayers are “very” important to them.
- Two-thirds to three-fourths indicate that faith sharing (76%) and common meditation (67%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. A third or more (33% to 42%) say these types of prayer are “very” important to them.
- Six in ten (61%) say non-liturgical common prayer is at least “somewhat” important to them, with 28% reporting that it is “very” important to them.



## Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say that the types of prayer mentioned in the chart below are “very” important to them.



### Importance of Aspects of Community Life

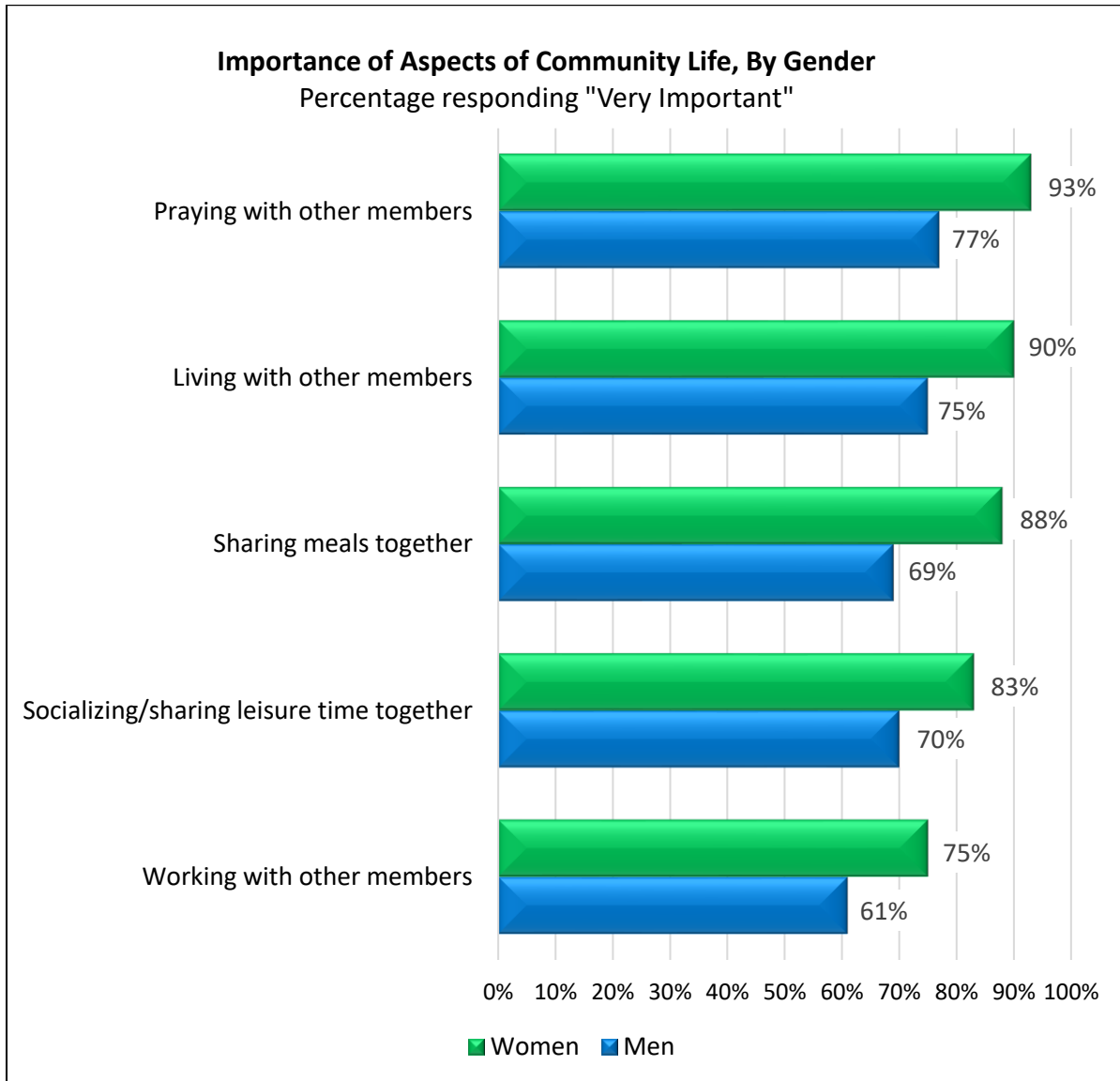
Entrants to religious life were asked to indicate the importance to them of various aspects of community life. More than nine in ten report that praying with other members (96%), sharing meals together (96%), socializing/sharing leisure time together (95%), and living with other members (94%) are at least “somewhat” important to them. Roughly four in five (76% to 84%) say these aspects are “very” important to them.

<b><i>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very”</b>	<b>“Very” Only</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Praying with other members	96	84
Sharing meals together	96	78
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	95	76
Living with other members	94	82
Working with other members	93	67

More than nine in ten indicate that working with other members (93%) is at least “somewhat” important to them. Two in three (67%) say this aspect is “very” important to them.

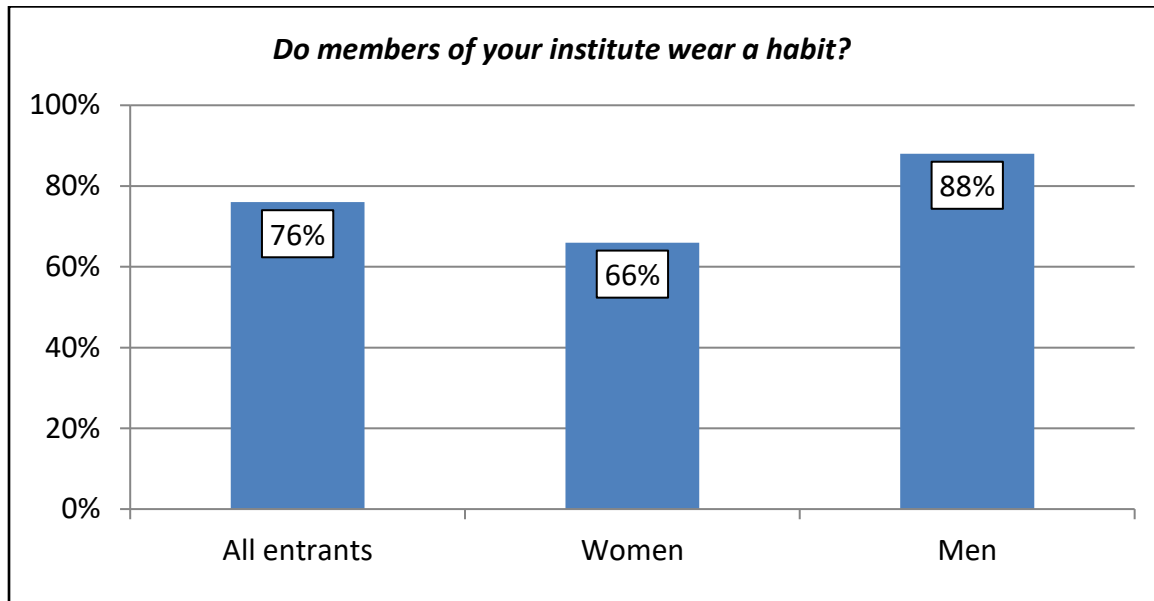
### Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to say that all these aspects mentioned in the chart below are very important to them.

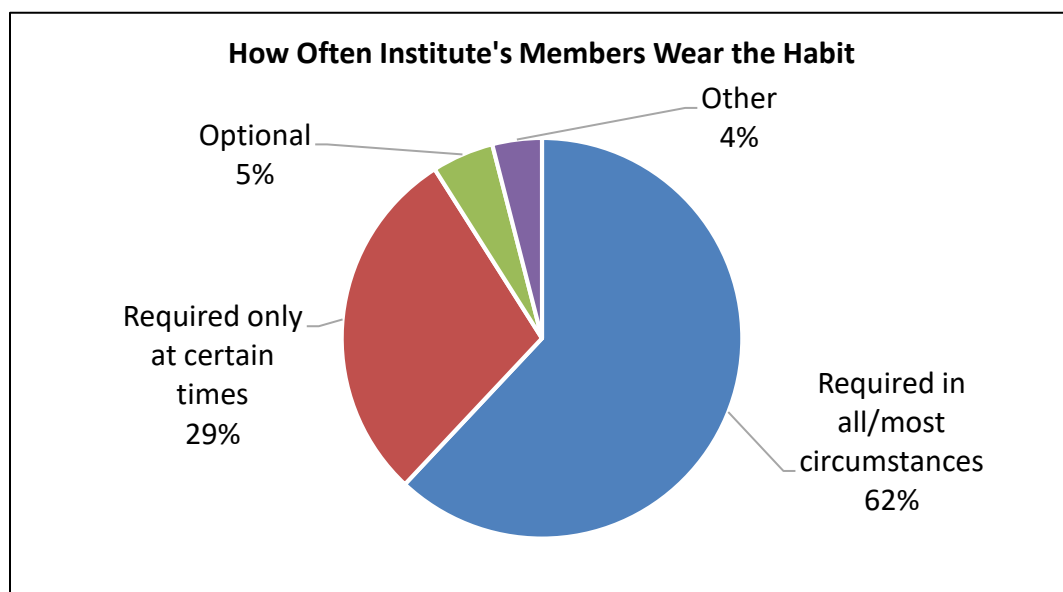


## Wearing of Religious Habit

New entrants were asked if the members of their institute wear a habit. Three-quarters (76%) indicate that members of their institute wear a habit. Women are more likely than men to say that members of their institute wear a habit.



Among those who indicate that members wear a habit, six in ten indicate that the habit is required in all or most circumstances (62%). Three in ten report that the habit is required only at certain times (29%), with one in 20 reporting that wearing habit is optional in their institute (5%).



## Comparisons 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.

<i>If yes, is wearing the habit:</i>			
Percentage responding			
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
	%	%	%
Required in all or most circumstances	62	29	92
Required only at certain times	29	58	4
Optional	5	7	2
Other	4	6	2

## Evaluation of Aspects of the Religious Institute

Besides assessing what attracted them to their religious institutes, entrants were also asked to evaluate their experiences while in their institute. With one exception, more than eight in ten (85% to 97%) rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” in each of the aspects shown in the table below.

<b><i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i></b>		
Percentage responding		
	<b>“Good” or “Excellent”</b>	<b>“Excellent” Only</b>
	%	%
Opportunities for spiritual growth	97	78
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	96	78
Opportunities for personal growth	96	76
Welcome and support of newer members	95	76
Fidelity to the Church and its teachings	95	70
Commitment to ministry	95	68
Relationships with one another	95	59
Sense of identity as institute members	94	67
Quality of community life	94	64
Communal prayer experiences	94	62
Educational opportunities	93	64
Formation/incorporation programs	92	68
Sense of identity as religious	92	67
Focus on mission	92	65
Response to the needs of our time	92	65
Opportunities for ongoing formation	91	59
Preparation for ministry	89	51
Efforts to promote vocations	88	54
Efforts to promote social justice	85	43
Diversity of cultures within the institute	70	39

Examining only those rating an aspect as “excellent” shows the areas where entrants are particularly satisfied. About three in four say the following are “excellent”:

- Opportunities for spiritual growth (78%)
- Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth (78%)
- Opportunities for personal growth (76%)
- Welcome and support of newer members (76%)

About two in three give an “excellent” rating to these aspects of their religious institutes:

- Fidelity to the Church and its teachings (70%)
- Commitment to ministry (68%)
- Formation/incorporation programs (68%)
- Sense of identity as religious (67%)
- Sense of identity as institute members (67%)
- Focus on mission (65%)
- Response to the needs of our time (65%)
- Quality of community life (64%)
- Educational opportunities (64%)

Approximately six in ten rate these areas of their religious institutes as “excellent”:

- Communal prayer experiences (62%)
- Relationships with one another (59%)
- Opportunities for ongoing formation (59%)

Just over half say these areas of their religious institutes are “excellent”:

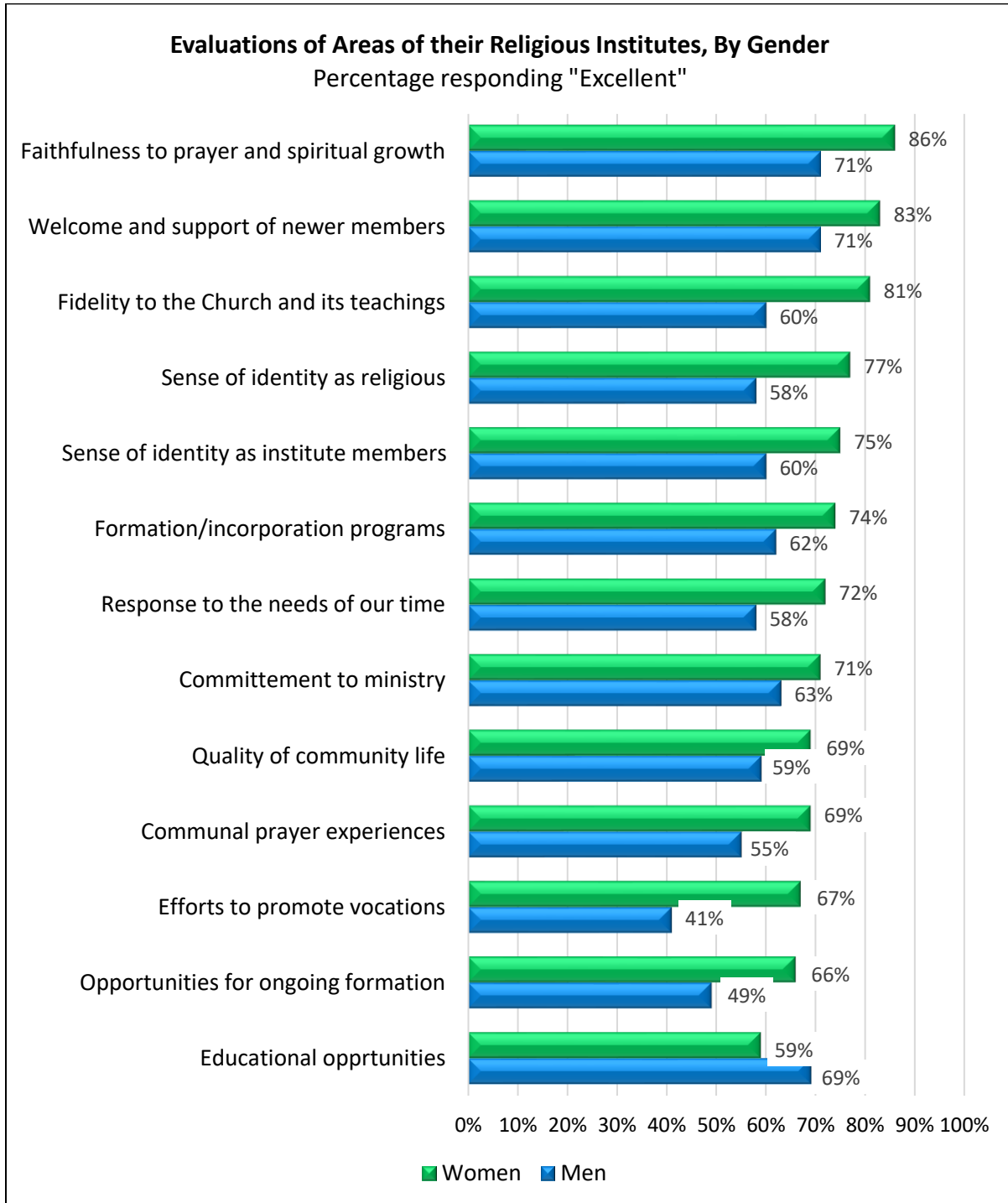
- Efforts to promote vocations (54%)
- Preparation for ministry (51%)

Finally, about four in ten rate these areas of their religious institutes as “excellent”:

- Efforts to promote social justice (43%)
- Diversity of cultures within the institute (39%)

## Comparisons by Gender

Women are more likely than men to rate their religious institute as “excellent” on almost all aspects mentioned in the chart below. Men are more likely than women to rate educational opportunities as “excellent.”





## What Most Attracted Entrants to Their Religious Institute

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

### 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. At least 104 respondents mentioned this aspect. Some of their responses include:

- *Charism of merciful love Authenticity of the members Franciscan spirituality*
- *I was attracted to our sisters, the story of our founder/foundress, the charism, and the spirituality of our congregation.*
- *Charism Ministry Global Nature Family Spirit*
- *The community life, spirituality and charism of founder*
- *The Jesuit charism in its entirety*
- *The Life of the Foundress Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy and her Trailblazer for the poor and the needed. And the Charism most.*

### Sense of Mission and Ministries of the Institutes

One of the common aspects that most attracted respondents to their religious institute is the sense of mission and ministries of the institute. At least 87 respondents indicated this aspect. Some other responses include:

- *The focus on truth, with contemplative prayer leading into apostolic ministry.*
- *What most attracted me to my religious institute is their mission and how they go all around the world to spread the word of God.*
- *Their service to the poor and community living*
- *Mission opportunities, teaching, service to the poor and marginalized, serving as a priest to souls*
- *Lived witness of members serving with most marginalized, their ministry of presence, loving God with their whole lives*

## Community Life

Another dominant element of attraction that the responding new entrants report is the community life of the institute. At least 53 respondents report that community life and community activities very much attracted them to their religious institute. In addition, some of their responses included:

- *Life of community, and life of study (part of the charism*
- *Life of prayer, mission, community, and living a patrimony of faithful elders*
- *Living in community with a common charism. Being able to minister and teach in an academic setting.*
- *Living in community with others who are committed to their founder's Charism. The Apostolate that my Institute takes part in.*
- *The community and getting the opportunity to serve God's children with a loving heart.*

## Prayer Life and Communal Prayer

At least, 48 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:

- *I was most attracted to the life of prayer and penance. The mixture of contemplative & active life, the integration of charismatic worship, the joyfulness of the Sisters, and the apostolate.*
- *Their total commitment to the Blessed Sacrament and drawing people to Him by means of our Lady*
- *The life of prayer and depth and desire of union with God*
- *Beauty, femininity, motherhood, joyful life, way of prayer, youthful, Bridal, beauty of habit, rich liturgy, Eucharistic Adoration, Marian Devotion*
- *Communal life especially in prayer*

## Fidelity to the Church

Fidelity to the Church is another important aspect that at least 42 respondents report attracted them to their religious institute. Some of their responses include:

- *Traditional observances of the Carmelite rule and faithfulness to the Church*
- *Communal and intellectual life; commitment to Church teaching*
- *Faithfulness to the Church's teaching; Hermeneutic of continuity when understanding Vatican II; Serious intellectual pursuit of truth and desire to communicate that, especially with young people.*
- *Their faithfulness to traditional Church teaching and their love for the intellectual life.*

- *Their fidelity to the Church. They are focused on the reality of being the bride of Christ and living in fidelity to this identity. I was also attracted to their public witness in wearing the habit at all times. They are totally given to their spouse in love. Lastly, they are joyful and authentic women. It was attractive to see young women be so authentically feminine and themselves.*

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

In addition, at least 32 respondents were attracted to their religious institute by the joy of the members and their encounter with them. Some of their responses include:

- *The joy that the sisters seemed to radiate. I realized on my first discernment retreat that God can call anyone; he does not just call the equip but he equips the called. Also, their charism of perpetual adoration attracted me. The Eucharist -- the source and summit of our Catholic Faith*
- *The joy of the sisters, perpetual adoration, and Franciscan Spirituality*
- *What most attracted me to my religious institute was the simplicity and joy of all the sisters. Their prayer life is completely centered on the Eucharist. Also, they wear a full habit and follow all the teaching of the church. Lastly, their ministry is focused on serving the poor and evangelization.*
- *The joy of the Sisters and their love for Christ + His Church*
- *At first it was simply just joyful witness of the sisters who I encountered. Their life was so objectively beautiful that when I heard Christ calling me, it was easy to say yes -- I knew it would be good. As the continued I truly felt at home with the Charisms of my community and found myself to be more fully myself.*

### **Religious Habit**

In addition to the above-mentioned elements, some respondents, 32 of them, were attracted by the religious habit worn in their religious institutes. Some of their responses are:

- *Habit and community life*
- *I love how they wore habits and have a Eucharistic Spirituality.*
- *The charism, the communal living, and the religious habit.*
- *...community life, wearing the habit, engagement with the culture*
- *The habit and zeal for service.*

## What Entrants 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, 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 since it's hard to get along with some people in the community*
- *Different people with different upbringing and cultures living together and the uncertainty of the future assignments (depending on the needs of the community).*
- *Dealing with differing liturgical preferences among the members.*
- *Community life. Age and personality differences. Generational differences regarding Liturgy, theology, worldview*
- *Community Living. Choosing the sacrifice to being loving in the spontaneous moments when the moments arise, versus sticking to my schedule, and my time*
- *Community life, diversity of opinions*

### Living their Vows

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

- *What's most challenging for me is understanding the vow of obedience and the handing over your financial security to the Institute.*
- *Fostering meaningful community life and living out vows of obedience and poverty.*

- *The vows. Although working on it, working with a diverse culture and personality.*
- *Learning obedience and submitting my own will to someone else's. Getting used to all the changes and a new way of living. Confronting my own poverty.*
- *Get out of my comfort zone, live chastity, docility, maintain a constant life in prayer and live in community.*
- *Community living and different understandings of obedience.*

### **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:

- *As much a blessing, living in community with different personalities and approaches.*
- *Self-denial or dying to oneself. This is the moment of detachment. Detachments could be painful. However, this is the grace of God. Without self-denial, I can never live a Christian life.*
- *Growing in virtue as is required by the moment; being totally given in all aspects of my life.*
- *Loving people who are also sinners and wounded*
- *The community life can be sanctifying.*
- *Community life, the most beautiful + tangibly sanctifying experience I've had yet, and it draws me closer to the heart of Christ every day.*

### **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:

- *Finding that my decisions can't be made just by me independently, I have to consider my community I belong to as the consequences to my actions no longer just affect me solely, but now my Sisters as well.*

- *In community life I have to give up many freedoms, which I list from the diocesan priesthood lifestyle. Community is great but it is also very challenging. Those who fantasize religious are a bit naive. Religious community is like a family. You don't choose them and you don't always get along and often there are problems.*
- *Learning to live in community and its purifying fires. Living in community is at once the hardest aspect and the greatest blessing.*
- *The collision of human personalities/individuality with common life together in the house all working towards the same project.*
- *Having recently entered religious life, my biggest challenge is being confronted with my own weakness and faults that were easy to escape from in the world.*
- *So far, the most challenging part is letting go of family and friends. Distancing yourself, but being able to write from time to time is helpful.*

### **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 giving up of certain freedoms in the Novitiate that I had grown accustomed to outside of the Society. Also, the distance from my family.*
- *This is the first time moving out for a long-term from my parents' home, so making that transition is challenging.*
- *The separation from family and friends is most difficult. It is difficult to give up something that is so naturally and inherently good and beautiful. It is a true sacrifice.*
- *Being far, detachment from family members and friends being close. Different forms of prayer than I was accustomed to (no daily Adoration, confession has to be sought out) No spiritual direction.*
- *Changes in relationships with family and outside friends*

## Other Challenges

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

- *In the beginning I find detachment from the world most challenging and the confidence to know everything will work out well.*
- *Having recently entered religious life, my biggest challenge is being confronted with my own weakness and faults that were easy to escape from in the world.*
- *Giving up my old life, but it is also very rewarding!*
- *Having several juniors leave before temporary profession.*
- *My family's negative reaction to my decision to enter.*
- *Everything has been peaceful so far. The main challenge would be dealing with those of different liturgical backgrounds.*

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





- 30 25. Through your own search  
 8 26. Through print promotional materials  
 23 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**

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

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>NR</b>	
1	3	12	82	2	1	29. Contact with the vocation director
2	6	18	66	10	2	30. Contact with institute members
7	2	0	4	88	2	31. "Andrew Dinner" or "Nun Run"
1	2	10	63	24	2	32. "Come and See" experience
3	3	12	54	29	1	33. Vocation or discernment retreat
2	1	7	40	50	1	34. Live-in experience
5	3	12	28	52	2	35. Ministry with institute members
4	2	6	16	74	2	36. Mission experience
4	9	13	17	58	2	37. Meeting with a discernment group
2	4	14	45	37	2	38. Visit(s) to local community/ies
4	1	3	41	51	3	39. Visit(s) to the Motherhouse
10	18	21	18	32	2	40. Social media (e.g., Facebook)
1	6	11	51	31	2	41. Spiritual direction

*Please use the responses below for questions 42-54.*  
**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**?*

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>NR</b>	
27	20	40	13	1	42. The size of the institute
28	19	30	23	1	43. Its geographic location(s)
43	17	20	20	7	44. Its internationality, if applicable
3	12	23	63	1	45. Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute
3	8	20	69	1	46. Community life in the institute
4	10	33	53	2	47. The lifestyle of members
60	16	15	9	2	48. The racial/ethnic background of members
25	31	29	14	1	49. The ages of members
6	11	36	48	2	50. The types of ministry of its members
18	10	17	55	1	51. Its practice regarding a religious habit
1	4	14	82	2	52. The Charism of the institute

47	20	17	17	2	53.	The cultural diversity of the members
15	19	30	36	1	54.	The focus on the possibilities for the future of the institute

*Please use the responses below for questions 55-67.*

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

***How important to you are these types of prayer?***

1	2	3	4	NR		
0	1	8	91	1	55.	Private personal prayer
0	1	9	90	1	56.	Daily Eucharist
1	6	23	70	1	57.	Liturgy of the Hours
10	30	33	28	2	58.	Non-liturgical common prayer
12	22	34	33	3	59.	Common meditation
1	7	18	74	2	60.	Eucharistic Adoration
2	13	31	55	1	61.	Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary
9	15	34	42	3	62.	Faith sharing

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

1	2	3	4	NR		
1	5	12	82	1	63.	Living with other members
0	4	12	84	2	64.	Praying with other members
2	5	26	67	1	65.	Working with other members
1	4	18	78	1	66.	Sharing meals together
1	4	19	76	1	67.	Socializing/sharing leisure time together

*Please use the responses below for questions 68-87.*

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

***How would you rate these in your religious institute?***

1	2	3	4	NR		
4	8	34	54	2	68.	Efforts to promote vocations
1	4	19	76	1	69.	Welcome and support of newer members
1	7	24	68	2	70.	Formation/incorporation programs
1	8	32	59	4	71.	Opportunities for ongoing formation
1	6	29	64	2	72.	Educational opportunities
2	9	38	51	4	73.	Preparation for ministry
0	3	19	78	1	74.	Opportunities for spiritual growth
1	4	20	76	1	75.	Opportunities for personal growth
2	6	25	67	2	76.	Sense of identity as religious

2	4	27	67	2	77.	Sense of identity as institute members
1	5	25	70	1	78.	Fidelity to the Church and its teachings
1	3	18	78	2	79.	Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth
1	7	27	65	3	80.	Focus on mission
2	3	27	68	3	81.	Commitment to ministry
3	6	27	65	2	82.	Response to the needs of our time
2	13	42	43	6	83.	Efforts to promote social justice
2	5	30	64	2	84.	Quality of community life
1	5	32	62	2	85.	Communal prayer experiences
2	4	36	59	3	86.	Relationships with one another
7	23	31	39	6	87.	Diversity of cultures within the institute

**Yes No NR**

76 24 1 88. Do members of your institute wear a habit?

88a. *If yes to #88, is wearing the habit* **NR=26**

- 62 Required in all or most circumstances
- 29 Required only at certain times, e.g., ministry, prayer
- 5 Optional
- 4 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

88b. *If yes to #88, and wearing the habit is optional, how many members wear it all or most of the time?* **NR=97**

- 29 None
- 29 A few (less than 25%)
- 29 Some (25-49%)
- 14 Many (50-74%)
- 0 Most (75% or more)

88c. *If yes to #88, and wearing the habit is optional, how frequently do you wear it?* **NR= 97**

- 43 Never
- 14 43 Once in a while
- 43 Only at certain times (e.g., ministry, prayer)
- 0 In all or most circumstances

**About You**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 89. Year you were born
- \_\_\_\_\_ 90. Age you first considered religious life
- \_\_\_\_\_ 91. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

92. What is your birth order? **NR= 1**

- 6 Only child      30 Youngest
- 32 Eldest        33 Somewhere in the middle

93. Are you: 54 Male      46 Female

- 93a. *If male, do you expect become a*
- 18 Perpetually professed brother
- 82 Priest

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

95. How many languages do you speak fluently? **NR= 2**

70 One 24 Two 5 Three 1 Four or more

**Yes No NR**

84 16 2 96. Were you employed before you entered?

96a. *If yes to #96, were you employed?*

84 Full-time 16 Part-time

61 39 1 97. Were you in ministry before you entered?

97a. *If yes to #97, were you engaged in ministry?*

37 Full-time 12 Part-time 51 Volunteer

98. What best describes your racial or ethnic background? **NR= 1**

4 African/African American/black

10 Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian

68 Caucasian/European American/white

13 Hispanic/Latino(a)

0 Native American/American Indian

3 Mixed race

3 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Yes No NR**

80 20 2 99. Were you born in the United States?

99a. *If no to #99, country of birth:* \_\_\_\_\_

99b. *If no, year you first moved to United States*

87 13 2 100. Were you raised Catholic?

80 20 100a. *If no to #100, did you become Catholic through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)?*

100b. *If no to #100, what was your prior religious affiliation:*

16 84 3 101. Were you ever home-schooled?

\_\_\_\_\_ 101a. *If yes to #101, number of years home-schooled*

**Did you attend any of the following before you entered? Check all that apply.**

49 102. Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR

45 103. Catholic elementary or middle school

36 104. Catholic high school

40 105. Catholic college or university

30 106. 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.**

- 39 107. Parish youth group or Life Teen during elementary or middle school years
- 28 108. Campus ministry during high school years
- 39 109. Parish young adult group
- 53 110. Campus ministry during college
- 14 111. Religious institute volunteer program (e.g., Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)
- 67 112. Liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister)
- 42 113. Music ministry, cantor, choir
- 48 114. Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA team
- 63 115. Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting
- 75 116. Retreats
- 14 117. World Youth Day
- 10 118. National Catholic Youth Conference
- 36 119. Right to Life March in Washington, DC

120. What was the highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute? **NR= 1**

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 6 High school or less | 26 Master's degree |
| 12 Some college       | 3 Doctoral degree  |
| 49 Bachelor's degree  | 4 Other: _____     |

**Family Background While You Were Growing Up**

**Yes No NR**

- 84 16 1 121. Was your mother Catholic?  
121a *If no*, what was her religious preference? \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 122. How important was religion to your mother while you were growing up?  
4 Not at all 26 Somewhat important  
11 Only a little 59 Very important
- 87 13 1 123. Was your father Catholic?  
123a *If no*, what was his religious preference?
- 2 124. How important was religion to your father while you were growing up?  
9 Not at all 34 Somewhat important  
14 Only a little 44 Very important
- 35 66 125. Do (did) you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?
- 63 37 126. Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?
- 26 74 127. Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
- 19 81 128. Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
- 26 74 129. Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?
- 51 50 130. Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?

131. Who raised you during the most formative part of your childhood? *Please select all that apply.* NR= 6

- 94 Biological parent(s)
- 2 Step parents
- 2 Adoptive parent(s)
- 14 Grandparent(s)
- 3 Other relative(s)
- 2 Someone else
- 2 I prefer not to answer

131a. [If selected biological/step/adoptive parent(s)] During the most formative part of your childhood, were you raised by: (Please select one)

- 88 Married couple, living together
- 2 Married couple, living separately
- 2 Unmarried couple, living separately
- 1 Unmarried couple, living together
- 2 One parent, widowed
- 4 One parent, separated/divorced
- 1 One parent, single/unmarried
- 2 Something else
- 0 I prefer not to answer

*Please use these responses for questions 132-143.*  
**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?**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>NR</b>	
5	5	21	69	5	132. Members of your institute
4	3	16	78	6	133. Vocation director/team
6	2	21	72	10	134. Spiritual director, if applicable
12	7	23	58	14	135. Other men and women religious
12	11	29	48	8	136. Diocesan priests
22	20	19	40	7	137. Your parents, if applicable
23	19	31	27	11	138. Your siblings, if applicable
20	32	29	20	9	139. Other family members
13	11	27	49	9	140. People in your parish
13	19	32	36	8	141. People in your school or workplace
35	7	19	40	48	142. Campus minister, if applicable
6	9	26	60	4	143. Friends outside the institute

144. What most attracted you to your religious institute?

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

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

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

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

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

A common way of life centered around seeking God and serving the Church.

A gut feeling of God's call.

A spiritual director that was very close to me inspired me to join my institute.

A sudden experience of God, followed by the history of the institute and the writings of the founder.

After belonging to another institute for 8+ years and then "trying out" the world for the next 6+ years, my longing for God increased exponentially, to the point where I almost could not take it anymore. My religious institute attracted me so strongly I think because I felt that somehow -- I couldn't explain how -- I would be able to find what I was looking for. When I asked Mother Prioress what the charism of their community was, and she responded, "union with God", I just knew: This is it. This is where I am supposed to be.

At first it was simply just joyful witness of the sisters who I encountered. Their life was so objectively beautiful that when I heard Christ calling me, it was easy to say yes -- I knew it would be good. As I continued I truly felt at home with the Charisms of my community and found myself to be more fully myself.

Beauty, femininity, motherhood, joyful life, way of prayer, youthful, Bridal, beauty of habit, rich liturgy, Eucharistic Adoration, Marian Devotion.

Being able to grow closer to Christ and his people by living out the vows.

Charism Ministry Global Nature Family Spirit.

Charism and history.

Charism and internationality.

Charism as Educators in the Faith.

Charism of merciful love authenticity of the members Franciscan spirituality.

Communal and intellectual life; commitment to Church teaching.

Communal life especially in prayer.

Connections I had made with the friars and its ministries.

Charism [El charisma].

Evangelization.

Examples of religious I knew in the institute.

Exposure to Jesuits at the university I attended for undergraduate studies (the president, director of campus ministry, director of the honors program, I was a part of, and my spiritual director were all Jesuits) and further exposure to Jesuit communities when working at Jesuit institutions.

Extraordinary form of the Mass. Bringing the Beauty and Truth and Goodness back into the Faith in a more obvious way.

Faithfulness to church teaching, rigorous prayer life and fairly serious poverty. The biggest thing was this -- my community does not take part in attitudes that view newer, young communities with the habit/politically conservative views as "better" and the older ones with some members who speak against the church teaching as "worse". It seems there is a tug of wars in the U.S. Church between "liberal" and "conservatives" and I do not want any part in it. Yet for myself, I want a community where we do follow Church teaching.

Faithfulness to the Church's teaching; Hermeneutic of continuity when understanding Vatican II; Serious intellectual pursuit of truth and desire to communicate that, especially with young people; Adherence to tradition; Openness to both the traditional Latin Mass and the Novus ordo; Devotion to Mary; Love of the Eucharist; Community life being a priority; Communal office; Willingness to take a stand and preach boldly the Church's teaching even when it is against the zeitgeist.

Faithfulness to the rule and the Charism of the order. Healthy community with good formation in religious life.

Faithfulness to the teaching of the Church, evangelistic spirit in a community setting.

Feelings and experiences that this is where God wanted me and advice from a priest many years previously that God puts you in certain places for a reason. This encouraged me to be contacted learning more locally instead of searching the whole world for the "right fit."

Fidelity to the Church - Strong community life and a common apostolate - The education and teaching apostolate - The apostolic - contemplative life (apostolate is supported by contemplative prayer).

Fidelity to the Church's teachings, orthodox preaching, reverent liturgies (including traditional Dominican rite), devotion to the saints of the Order, choral recitation of the Divine Office, rosary, suffrages for the dead, intellectual conversations on the Faith and other topics, education, silence, the habit, cloister, common life, penitential exercises, evangelical counsels.

Fidelity to the Church's teachings/orthodoxy Clarity of preaching. Clear mission; preach to save souls Beautiful liturgies Lots of young vocations. Significant common life. Charted divine office active/contemplative balance.

Fidelity to the teaching of the Church/Magisterium, wearing of the religious habit, community and liturgical life, and charism.

First of all it is a religious life, that they are missionaries. The Oblate priests and their performance in the different missions, interculturality, community life and its founder. Dedication to the poor and to prayer. [Primeramente es una vida religiosa, que son misioneros, los botos que me parecen atractivos, los sacerdotes Oblatos y su desempeño en las diferentes misiones, la interculturalidad, la vida comunitaria y su fundador; San Eugenio de Mazenod. La entrega a los pobre y a la oración.]

For me stability the charism of monastic life to be vowed to a particular place. The prayer life, the praying of hours in common and with solemnity. The apostolate of the institute-an all-boys high school where I initially worked as a layman.

Fraternity growth in prayer life Care for the poor Care for the environment.

Habit and community life.

History/reputation, especially engagement with the culture and being at the margins. Also, the "Universal Apostolic Preferences."

I am convicted of the truth of the Catholic Church and her teachings, and I desire to spend my life by serving God and helping others to draw closer to God as well.

I am first and foremost attracted to the evangelical counsels as a way of perfection and holiness. Beyond that, the Dominican order has a long and storied tradition of spreading the Gospel in whatever manner is needed at the time. Foundational to this is the two-fold emphasis on prayer and study that forms the nature of the friar or sister in truth such that the motto "contemplare et alii tradere contemplata" springs forth from the wellspring of the Holy Spirit.

I appreciated their way of prayer, and their particular charism is very close to my heart. I also was glad to be close to home, and to have the hope of eventually returning to my home diocese.

I felt at home when visiting. Their way of life (renewing the contemplative aspect of the Franciscan order) was so attractive. The active/contemplative balance seems more balanced to me than in other communities. There is also a great emphasis for wholeness as a person, spiritually/mentally/physically/emotionally. There's also something about our charism that resonates in my heart. Our mission to make known God's merciful love is also so captivating. We also have a devotion to our Lady of Sorrow which I find so beautiful... to be with Mary at the foot of the Cross.

I left diocesan life because I was attracted to communal living, and support, and accountability from the community. I really connected with the spirituality of St. Augustine, in his original writings. The members of the orders were honest with me, and real. I became good friends with an Augustinian priest who became my friend and mentor.

I think that it is the Church role in the world to cultivate and share those things that are true, good, and beautiful. Many institutes can tend to focus on one, but I was attracted to mine because it gives attention to each area: intellectual formation, education, preaching (true),

service at social justice (good) and beautiful, reverent liturgy and cultivation of the world (beautiful).

I think the charism most attracted me to my religious institute. The way they live their life is so aligned to how I wanted to continue to live my life.

I was attracted by the way the sisters love and live their Charism, by the way they delight in each person, by the way they are living forth from a deep communion with God and each other, by the way abundance of grace and miraculous stories occurring in their apostolates, by the way that they make it so clear that all the facts of their religious lives are ordered toward the integration and freedom allowing them to love God and others more and more. All of this together, but ultimately the sense that this is the way my heart was made to love.

I was attracted to our sisters, the story of our founder/foundress, the charism, and the spirituality of our congregation.

I was attracted to the Carmelite way of life, keeping the devotion of the sacred heart of Jesus in and with everything we do. I was attracted to the apostolates and the growing capacity of vision for future service in the community. I was with the community and deep peace following God's will.

I was Attracted to the [name of institute] for their dedication to provide good private education to the less fortunate. I also admire their dedication to be guided by the Holy Spirit to where the poor need help. They try to change with the times and provide the needs of the poor.

I was attracted to the Society's charism, spirituality, and mission.

I was attracted to the vows and to a life of community focused on being on mission for Christ. Some are called to be like Mary and some are called to be like Martha.

I was firstly most attracted to the habits, as they are beautiful, traditional and unique. The Sisters are vibrant, young and in touch with the times of the world, but also are very faithful to the Catholic Faith. Their joy, balanced lifestyle, support for priests, reverence of Our Lord and love of Our Lady and the Church also played a significant role in attracting me to them.

I was most attracted by both the size of the congregation and their charism/spirit. The [name of the institute] is one of three branches in the [name of the institute]. We also have brothers/priests and a branch of lay people. That "big family" style of the congregation, with its three branches made me feel like I was joining a family. Also, our charism of bringing Jesus into the world as Mary did attracted me because the [name of the institute] don't focus on any one aspect of Mary, we strive to embody her in all her facets and I really admired that.

I was most attracted by the relationships between the Sisters, the way they get to develop friendships with priests, and recognizing how much my faith would have been had I known religious women earlier.

I was most attracted to how my community lived out the Gospel radically and joyfully. When I first visited I was immediately struck by the authenticity of each Sister's joy and love of the

Lord. I was also very drawn to my community. Eucharistic centered life and the fidelity to the Church's teachings on consecrated life as a spousal relationship with Jesus.

I was most attracted to my institute by the beauty and the prominence of the Liturgy (both Mass and the full office) as well as by the perpetual adoration. Once I got to know the Sisters I was attracted by their free, humble and witness.

I was most attracted to my religious institute by the commitment to the truth and integration of the Eucharist and Rosary. These devotees and overall fidelity to the Church as well as living a truly non-worldly life with joy drew me profoundly.

I was most attracted to the charism of our community. Once I visited, I was drawn to the prayer life and apostolates. The community life was also attractive and I felt I "fit" best here.

I was most attracted to the Charism of the institution. When I met the sisters, the joy radiated and I knew there was something different about these women. Once I heard about the Charism, I was amazed by the culture of life that radiated from it. I wanted to be a part of sharing who God is and who we are called to be as beloved sons and daughters.

I was most attracted to the life of prayer and penance. The mixture of contemplative & active life, the integration of charismatic worship, the joyfulness of the Sisters, and the apostolate.

I was most attracted to the ministries of education and service to the Church. I love that the Jesuits use education to promote and defend the faith.

I was most attracted to this religious institute by the balance of contemplation & apostolic work that the Sisters joyfully & lovingly engage in.

I was very attracted by how faithfully the Dominican Sisters live out the charism of St. Dominic. I wanted to be with them as faithful daughters of St. Dominic, laying down our lives in complete devotion to our beloved.

Ignatian spirituality.

In response to what God has done for me in the Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, I longed to commit myself more fully to working for his greater glory and the salvation of the souls he has redeemed by his blood. The writings of the founder and his early companions and the lives of the saints of the order moved me deeply to realize God's call to this institute. Moreover, the lives of the members whom I saw confirmed that this spiritual vibrancy is still alive today.

It fulfills the longing: I desired long to live in the House of the Lord all the days of my life and to grace upon Him in the sanctuary.

It was like I walked into the Motherhouse and felt as if I were home. The community life, the joy of the Sisters, the prayer life, the love for the families they teach/serve. I could go on forever, but most of all it was the joy. These are the most joyful people/ bride of Christ, and I couldn't deny that my heart desired to know the same joy I saw in them.

Its charism.

Its charism and spirituality.

Its community life, devotion to Mary and its commitment to beautiful liturgy.

Its fidelity and sanity.

Its' unique charism, the size of the community, its peaceful location that promotes prayer and meditation.

Apostolic ministry to young people, children and families. [Le ministère apostolique auprès des jeunes, des enfants et des familles.]

Life of community, and life of study (part of the charism).

Life of prayer, mission, community, and living a patrimony of faithful elders.

Lived witness of members serving with most marginalized, their ministry of presence, loving God with their whole lives.

Living in community with a common charism. Being able to minister and teach in an academic setting.

Living in community with others who are committed to their founder's Charism. The Apostolate that my Institute takes part in.

Living with other people who are also interested in building their relationship with God and challenging each other.

The most that attracted me is my religious institute is that it gave me the opportunity to get to know God more closely, to learn from the experiences of life and to be able to form myself together with a group or community full of faith and love towards God. [Lo mas que me atrajo es mi instituto religioso es que me dio la oportunidad de conocer a dios mas de cerca ,de aprender de las experiencias de la vida y poder formarme junto con un grupo o comunidad llena de fe y amor hacia dios.]

Lots of little things: - the relative diversity of age and culture within the institute - the existence of peers within the institute (a few members within 10 years of my own age) - the welcoming and relational attitudes of the sisters - the existence of brothers and lay people within our larger religious family - the diversity of ministry options and personalities/interests of members - the prioritization of community life and communal prayer - the balance of ministry and contemplation - the "mission" of the institute going beyond only ministry - a good relationship with the vocations director.

Mary brought me here. I saw the mission and observed the Sisters and felt such joy.

Men, with diversity in backgrounds and personalities, coming together for the common goal of loving God and loving neighbor.

Merton's writings were like nothing I had ever read before (during a college Great Books semester at Notre Dame). I had been introduced to contemplative authors during high school, but only in college did I feel a growing hunger for a more meaningful experience of life. Merton spoke to my longing, his works unencumbered by the typical pious or flowery language associated with many Christian writings. Richard Rohr, Anthony DeMello, Henri Nouwen, Raimon Panikkar, Bede Griffiths, and many others have helped me go deeper into the spiritual journey, enfolded in this monastic life.

Ministry.

Mission opportunities, teaching, service to the poor and marginalized, serving as a priest to souls.

Missionary for all people without any prejudices, stereotypes, or cultures.

My experience of the community as I got to know them.

Not tolerance but acceptance and their willingness to help me improve. The Abbot, and the feeling of fatherly love.

On a logistical level, I was attracted to the various Apostolates of the Dominican Order: campus ministry, teaching parish work, continued studies. I was also attracted to the life of St. Dominic. The first love was the habit.

Our charism and devotion to Eucharistic adoration and the Blessed Mother. The youth of our sisters and the joy they bring everywhere they go.

Our Charism to perpetual adoration, the Franciscan joy of the sisters, and the fraternity between the members.

Our Eucharistic Centered prayer, work flowing from and to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and their life of poverty while also serving the poor.

Prayerful, peaceful and simple life.

Radicality of witness. Dissatisfaction with "worldly" existence. Desire to preach the Gospel intelligently. "To contemplate and to share the fruits of contemplation."

Spirituality and Mission of the Order.

Spirituality, community life, mission/works.

Strong community life, kind of ministry, wore habits.

That they don't pretend to be perfect or overly pious, nor try to expose themselves or how "holy" they are on social media like the majority of communities nowadays. They are men who have committed their lives to the Church who are real and faithful. I didn't feel pressured to fit in or be a perfect "church boy". It was like Jesus when he calls the apostles who were also a mess.



That they live the Chrism well and are faithful to the teaching of the Church.

The active contemplative charism.

The apostolates and spirituality.

The Austere coordination of Liturgical Prayer in this Community, the fraternal aspect of brotherhood, the privacy and solidarity of the individual cells, and the spirituality of reading, studying, and intellectually engaging contemplation.

The call of God. But the things I liked most about it while I was discerning were: its authenticity in its approach to its identity as a religious community; the Sisters' genuine love for Christ and one another; and the flourishing of a life based on the Gospel.

The Capuchins meet the needs of the Catholic Church, no matter what they are" "The Capuchins go places where nobody wants to go" The desire to give everything away and be completely empty except for having Jesus Christ and being available to Him for His purposes. Luke 14:32-33.

The charism.

The Charism (Holding to the Church Teachings), outward joy, and that they wear a habit as an outward sign to the world.

The charism and community life. The way of life. I love how they wore habits and have a Eucharistic Spirituality. I found my time of discernment was stewarded well by the sisters. I felt very revered, and felt very free to make a decision. The process was unique to me and went at a place of grace. I also was attracted to the way the sisters encourage ongoing formation.

The Charism and grace that God has given me. I did not choose it for myself. He's a call.

The charism and ministry life. The community aspect was also influential.

The charism and the example of their members living that charism.

The charism and the fact that they always wear habits.

The charism and the ways in which the sisters live it out in their ministries and day-to-day interactions.

The Charism of bringing everyone to God. helping all creation.

The charism of [name of the institute] and the strong communal prayer life and community life in the institute.

The charism of social justice and hospitality.

The charism, the communal living, and the religious habit.

The charism, the habit, the ability to live a life centered in prayer.

The charism, way of life, and interculturality.

The charism. It is resonated in my heart. So, when I knew God was inviting me to be His Bride as a religious sister and to give my love totally to him, it was only the religious institute I joined that I discerned with because my heart was also so on fire with the charism of my religious institute. For me, it is one and the same, living the charism and being a bride of Christ, because that is how He made my heart to give and receive love. And of what a joy it is to be His.

The commitment to the preaching ministry and the founding charisms. The order adheres to all truths of the Catholic faith and ensures that liturgy is both beautiful and valid. The order is wholly Christ focused and has not been swept by the tides of modern notions of theology not illicit liturgical expressions.

The community and getting the opportunity to serve God's children with a loving heart.

The community and the charism of the order. I was also attracted to their daily practices of communal prayer, Conventual Eucharist-Mass and the fraternal aspect of the community.

The community life, spirituality and charism of founder.

The constant focus on prayer. The focus on solitude and union with Christ. My brothers do not regard Church politics as being important. We are a community of Cisterian monks and position within the hierarchy of the church or world has no meaning for our way of life. Our goal is to be with the Crucified and Risen Christ in heaven.

The contemplative nature of the Trappist life, and the sense of brotherhood among the community.

The conversion story of our founder, St Ignatius of Loyola, the structure of the formation process, and the joy that the Jesuits display in being part of the institute.

The desire for a life of prayer and sacrifice for the salvation of souls and sanctification of priest.

The diversity of ministries that the institute offers as well as the people that I met before joining, including a spiritual director and the vocations director. I also appreciated the simple, humble way of life.

The focus on intellectual formation and truth, and the charism of preaching.

The focus on truth, with contemplative prayer leading into apostolic ministry.

The founder: St. Alphonsus Liguori.

The Franciscan Charism and the ministries out in our world. The acceptance of all kinds of people like disabilities, LBQTG, and all generations.

The Fraternity and life of the Friars. The simplicity and joy that was found naturally in the Capuchin Franciscans.

The habit and zeal for service.

The humanity of its members and their desire for prayer, to serve the Church and the people who come here seeking God.

The intellectual life, evangelical counsels, penance, orthodoxy, young priests in the order, saints of the order, history of the order, Gregorian chant, use of Latin in the office, charism of the order, maintaining traditions of the order, the attempt to interpret Vatican 2 with the pre-conciliar traditions, use of the old rite, formation, opportunities for further study after priesthood, community life, wearing the habit, engagement with the culture.

The Jesuit charism in its entirety.

The joy of the Sisters and their love for Christ + His Church. - Also the history of the order and their Charism and their mission " to preach, to contemplate, the truth for the salvation of souls and to give to others the fruit of your contemplation." - From visiting with our Sisters, I witnessed how it was their prayer life and time for contemplation that fueled their apostolic life. Everything for them began in the chapel, with Christ, this really inspired me. - Their love for their vows also inspired me, and their community life. The love between the Sisters is contagious.

The joy of the sisters, perpetual adoration, and Franciscan Spirituality.

The joy that each member genuinely had and the respect and reverence they had for me as I discerned. The Charism of these sisters aligned so well the desires of my heart and it made sense that this was what the world needs, which led me to be more and more open to the possibility of entering. Also, I learned, and still am learning, how truly beautiful spiritual maternity is through the life of this community.

The joy that the sisters seemed to radiate. I realized on my first discernment retreat that God can call anyone; he does not just call the equip but he equips the called. Also their charism of perpetual adoration attracted me. The Eucharist -- the source and summit of our Catholic Faith

The life of our founder and the method of prayer he gives us.

The life of prayer and depth and desire of union with God.

The Life of the Foundress Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy and her Trailblazer for the poor and the needed. And the Charism most.

The lives of both St. Francis and Padre Pio. I feel like the Lord led me here through the intercession of Padre Pio in ways that were very hard to discount.

The mission and the opportunity it offers.

The orthodoxy that was not at the expense of the visible joy. The charism which breathed life into both the prayer and apostolates.

The Prioress's invitation, offering me a path to sisterhood, while I was here as a "live-in volunteer" and already wishing I could continue to live here.

The silence and simplicity of the monastic life, and its balance between prayer and work

The simplicity of life, the prayer, and the service. The simplicity reveals that one's relationship with God is all that matters everything.

The simplicity of the life, the balance of work and prayer, and the feeling of peace I experienced when I was here.

The sisters express their love for Jesus Christ Crucified in prayer through community life and serving people in ministry.

The spirit of poverty, the Religious Habit and the members in the community.

The spirituality of our founding Father, as well as the humanity they promote in all lives.

The strong sense of brotherhood, structure, and communal activities.

The truth of the Charism, the joy of the members, the needs of our culture of death, the beauty and tradition/orthodoxy of the order, the habit and young sisters. I felt at home immediately.

The two things that attracted me most to St. John's Abbey was my experience getting to know members of this community while I was an undergraduate student and my attraction to the rhythm of work and prayer in this community (first experienced in a different Benedictine community while volunteering for a year).

The Vows.

The way they walk with people and love them in supernatural ways. I struggled (and continue to struggle) a bit with some of their approaches to the faith, but what always comes back to me in prayer is their ability to truly love others with such intentionality that everyone who is involved with them feels cared for, respected, desired, loved, as if Christ Himself was sitting with them in person.

The witness of the priests on campus during my formative undergraduate years. I thought to myself, these are the happiest guys in the world--what do they seem to know that no one else does?

The youthfulness and the charism of the institute attracted me most, mainly living as Diocesan Spiritual Mothers in the Church Parishes.

Their Charism.

Their Charism and History.

Their Charism as international missionaries.

Their charism of fraternity, broad vision of the Gospel and balance of contemplation and work.

Their charism, their religious habit, and their fidelity to the Church and her teachings.

Their dedication to the poor and most abandoned. As well as their authenticity to who they are personally in Christ. The key motive of their mission is what drew me in, to bring the Gospel to all people even on the peripheries. Not being afraid to be counter-cultural. They are very culturally diverse and very international. What was most attractive is the down-to-earth persona they give, one with the people.

Their devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist, commitment to prayer, and their joy in living out their vocation as religious sisters.

Their faithfulness to traditional Church teaching and their love for the intellectual life.

Their fidelity to the Church. They are focused on the reality of being the bride of Christ and living in fidelity to this identity. I was also attracted to their public witness in wearing the habit at all times. They are totally given to their spouse in love. Lastly, they are joyful and authentic women. It was attractive to see young women be so authentically feminine and themselves.

Their ministry in education.

Their mission of service and Ignatian Spirituality.

Their monastic lifestyle and focus on worshiping Christ in the Blessed Sacrament through the Liturgy and Eucharistic Adoration

Their outreach globally and the large capacity for foreign missions work. I was torn between my community [name of the institute] and the SVDs, but I ultimately chose the [name of the institute] because I was promised that I could wear the Habit. I really feel called to foreign missions, especially in Europe and Asia, and my Congregation offers so many opportunities to engage in that ministry. We also have other opportunities in case I find myself drawn to other types of ministerial work during my formation, such as parish ministry or education.

Their service to the poor and community living.

Their total commitment to the Blessed Sacrament and drawing people to Him by means of our Lady.

Their undivided heart for the Lord and the emphasis on common contemplative prayer even or and order with a very active apostolic life. They are very faithful to the Church, in part expressed through the habit, and their love for Jesus and desire for union with Him drew me to them.

There is a place for anyone in my religious institute. I felt that I could be myself with them and that they would best know how to use my gifts.

The love the sisters have for each other, which comes from their relationship, identities, and mission in church as His brides in the church.

There were several things, most importantly the central charism shared the way I've felt the Lord lead me from the time when I just got to know Him and when I first felt a call to religious

life. I was also attracted to the active/ contemplative rhythm of life, the Franciscan spirituality, the charismatic, the emphasis of life & the types of ministry they do.

This is hard to answer. The reason I knew mostly that this was a desire from the Lord is that before (a few years ago) I wouldn't have been attracted to much about the order. But, I was really moved by the beauty here both in the Sisters and in the liturgies.

To be part of a community and his mission.

Traditional full habits with veil that extends fully around face. A beautiful charism that matches my desires and mission. The participation in both Extraordinary and Ordinary forms of the Mass and their promotion of Church unity, while maintaining traditional practices, and a well-ordered mentality of human growth and formation. A joyful young growing community with faithful, humble, caring and trustworthy leaders.

Traditional observances of the Carmelite rule and faithfulness to the Church.

Two of the members of the community that lived and acted as true Gospel persons, which helped me understand what is available, not only for myself, but for any of those that were/are like me at the time I encountered those two members. Also, the very fact of their enduring presence in my life for a number of years, prior to entering community, where they encouraged me to be authentic to who I was, and always open and considering of how God is calling me - whether with a religious community or not. The Charism of the community, in its history and in its application, together with the possibility for its implementation, that is the living of the Charism today, in ways that weren't previously predominant.

What attracted me most to the religious institute where I belong was their charism of redemption and works of mercy. I met the Order when I was working in Middle East. It was great to experience their life in a place where our faith is suppressed.

What attracted me most to the Third Order Regular Franciscans is the great witnesses they gave to me during my college career, coupled with a strong sense of calling from the Lord in prayer. The friars are committed to following Jesus with their whole heart and soul through the example of St. Francis of Assisi. They do so in a way that is joyful and made me curious enough to ask the question if I should become a Franciscan myself.

What attracted me most was the sister's clear witness of being brides of Christ and that everything in ministry/apostolate stemmed from the emphasis placed on that identity.

What first caught my attention was the habits. This curiosity soon turned to a desire to live this undivided life of love and our Lord through the lifestyle of the Sisters and their particular apostolates. They are fearless in proclaiming the truth of who God is, who we are, and the relationship between the eternal and the finite.

What most attracted me to my religious institute is their mission and how they go all around the world to spread the word of God.

What most attracted me to my religious institute was the balanced viewpoint they have of humanity and the spiritual life. They do not expect a perfect person who has no faults but someone who strives to live the way that Christ did while being gracious of others' faults.

What most attracted me to my religious institute was the simplicity and joy of all the sisters. Their prayer life is completely centered on the Eucharist. Also, they wear a full habit and follow all the teaching of the church. Lastly, their ministry is focused on serving the poor and evangelization

What most attracted me to this religious institute was its founder, the Institute name, its mission and charism.

What most attracted me was our charism of a contemplative way of life with a spiritual apostolate and material simplicity as a means to fulfill our call "to be free for God." The influence of St. John of the Cross spirituality as well as the eremitical aspect of our life also greatly attracted me

When I first found my institute, it was the fact that we have adoration every day and the true devotion to Mary and to the Eucharist. It was also that our apostolate is mainly teaching because I was a teacher for 2 years prior to entering. When I visited, I also was attracted by the use of both contemporary and traditional music in liturgy and in adoration as well as the sense of family within the community.

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

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

A big challenge can be the academic studies in the demands of philosophy in the first formation at the University. As well as balancing life in the formation house. Developing a rich prayer life as well as growth and charity among the community and keeping up with studies.

A difficult part of religious life is learning how to die to self, and fully embrace the Lord's will in every aspect of my life. Embracing the invitation to humility that out of love for my Sisters that I place their needs and desires above my own. In short, learning how to be less self-centered and truly become Christ-centered.

A few things: - This is probably most true at the beginning, but: learning how to (re-)navigate relationships in this new situation, especially when friends/family might not understand what the guidelines/expectations are for me as someone in religious life (and I'm still in the process of learning them myself). Similarly, trying to navigate dual relationships unlike anything I've experienced before (like being a sister AND a ministry partner AND a housemate AND a directee of the same one woman). - This is also true of any deliberately-chosen vocation, but: the constant see-saw between "this life is an incredibly honor and privilege that I daily fail to live up to, and I can only hope, with God's grace, to live it as well as I can" and "this is just...regular daily life...I'm not striving for anything, I'm just doing the dishes and chatting with my sisters and going to classes and meetings and normal mundane things like that."

Accepting the fact that it is not about me anymore. Its challenging but I love it. It is definitely a daily work but God provides you with all the grace you need regardless to how challenging the task is.

Adapting to lack of control and executive decision making, and getting used to making a lot smaller sacrifices.

adjusting with classes schedules sometimes classes are 8am to 9pm.

Adjustment to being away from home.

After living as a young adult in the culture of the world, it is challenging at times to be obedient to new ways of life, but there is so much grace given that helps move the heart to want the new way rather than your old way. Learning to love others who are very different from you can be a challenge, but a good challenge.

As a postulant who has been in community for a few months, the most difficult part so far has been the amount of change that has occurred within the time I've entered. I'm learning a whole new way of life, from getting up to a daily holy hour to learning how to cook. There's been a lot to learn, especially when it comes to understanding how exactly the Lord is calling me to share my gifts and talents with the community.



As much a blessing, living in community with different personalities and approaches.

At the moment, it is challenging to navigate the new distance from my family. It is hard to see that this is difficult for them. I pray that God is pouring out grace to support them in this journey.

At this moment, the most challenging thing is not being close to my family.

Balancing time between prayer, work, and common life.

Balancing work and prayer.

Being away from family and friends and not always being able to respond to them right away when I receive letters or emails from them.

Being away from family and friends and the lowered ability to use time as I would like to (ie more external demands on my time outside of normal "9-5 business hours").

Being away from family and friends.

Being far, detachment from family members and friends being close. Different forms of prayer than I was accustomed to (no daily Adoration, confession has to be sought out) No spiritual direction.

Being the youngest and constantly learning a new way of being.

Being uprooted from all that I knew and coming to an unknown environment is obviously very hard. Not having established a relationship to fall back on within the community is very hard especially when the time to mature a relationship is so little. It's hard to "start over" so to speak with relationships in general and having to re-learn how to show love, receive love, and respect differences in how others relate/love. Essentially, feeling isolated among many because relationships are still being built.

Being without Mocha lattes! Not being able to visit home whenever I went to.

Celibacy.

Changes in relationships with family and outside friends.

Chastity.

Coming to understand that when you enter into a large community it is a challenge since no one knows anything about you and you are beginning again to build relationships. I have realized that perceptions can be really challenging.

Communal life, living and working together.

Community and obedience/much less autonomy.

Community life.

Community life & sharing things in common (but I also love community life).

Community life and general life balance.

Community life since it's hard to get along with some people in the community.

Community life, diversity of opinions.

Community life, horarium, obedience.

Community life, the most beautiful + tangibly sanctifying experience I've had yet, and it draws me closer to the heart of Christ every day.

Community life.

Community Life.

Community life [La vida comunitaria]

Community life. Age and personality differences. Generational differences regarding Liturgy, theology, worldview.

Community Living.

Community living and different understandings of obedience.

Community Living. Choosing the sacrifice to being loving in the spontaneous moments when the moments arise, versus sticking to my schedule, and my time.

Community. Not just encountering disparate personalities, but learning to navigate low-level hostilities from other members that may not be totally mentally healthy. At times, it can feel like I am in a Behavioral Medicine annex of a hospital. Of course, this is not unlike the experience of many extended families. Still, Trappist life, in my search, has been the only Order that has taken contemplative prayer seriously enough to incorporate it in its overall community life, and join it with a balance of physical work and private study.

Complete surrender of your daily & yearly life is particularly challenging when you are 27 & used to calling the majority of the short. Not knowing when or if I will be able to talk to or see the dear friends I have found over the years is probably the most difficult part of the surrender.

Dealing with differing liturgical preferences among the members.

Dealing with some members who I have different opinions of the church with.

Different people with different upbringing and cultures living together and the uncertainty of the future assignments (depending on the needs of the community).

Discernment.

Discouragement from current state of religious life in United States and lack of other vocations.

Dissatisfaction on daily basis.

Everything has been peaceful so far. The main challenge would be dealing with those of different liturgical backgrounds.

Feeling like I am worthy or good enough.

Finding that my decisions can't be made just by me independently, I have to consider my community I belong to as the consequences to my actions no longer just affect me solely, but now my Sisters as well.

Formation to a new role in life challenges. Also, not having the support of my parents has been a big challenge. Also not being able to do whatever I want with my own time.

Fostering meaningful community life and living out vows of obedience and poverty.

Fraternity.

Generation gap, lack of commitment to community, lack of diversity.

Getting asked questions about our faith and having to explain it to people who don't know God

Getting used to more prayer time with fewer interactions in the world, not having to find Scripture passages as easily as before.

Giving up home, family, and friends.

Giving up my old life, but it is also very rewarding!

Growing in virtue as is required by the moment; being totally given in all aspects of my life.

Have only been in formation 3 months -- meeting new personal weakness and vulnerability in community life, absorbing/retaining information in classes and formation -- finding time to read and assimilate it all

Having only been in the institute for 60 days as a postulant, there really aren't any issues that I find challenging or troubling. I am comforted by the fact that I can talk to the prior or any of my brother monks at any time and they have afforded me the time to do so.

Having recently entered religious life, my biggest challenge is being confronted with my own weakness and faults that were easy to escape from in the world.

Having several juniors leave before temporary profession.

Having to be far away from family and friends is the most challenging part of religious life.

How to balance between praying and fulfilling my daily responsibilities.

I actually came from a missionary community that was very good and very formative and worked really hard in their apostolate and it has been hard to not compare with my past

formation experience and to believe that I will actually receive formation worthwhile with my religious institution.

I am in a monastic setting - it will be hard not to see my family and friends, especially during the holidays.

I am new to the institute. [unable to read REST].

I do find it difficult to be placed in positions that I am not adequate to take. It could be my lack of self-confidence but I am also nervous that I won't be able to fulfill my duties as well as someone who has more experience than me.

I find it challenging to not have my biological family nearby. I have never moved out of the house before, so now being 26 hours away from my hometown is quite a life change. Learning how to interact with others as a religious, learning to develop friendships with the Sisters, the business of the lifestyle, and perhaps most of all, being patient with myself as I learn more, all present some form of a notable challenge.

I find living in community the most challenging thing about religious life because I lived alone for a few years before I entered.

I find the schedule of life and lack of free time challenging. I also find the separation from the world/family difficult but I see the purpose.

I miss my family and every day I come face to face with the fact that the path to heaven is not easy and requires continual sacrifice especially in the discipline of monastic life. (But I know without a doubt it is all going to be worth it).

I think making the transition and learning a new way of life (routines, expectations, etc.) in some ways and leaving behind friends and family is most challenging.

I think the most challenging part of religious life for me is community life.

In community life I have to give up many freedoms, which I list from the diocesan priesthood lifestyle. Community is great but it is also very challenging. Those who fantasize religious are a bit naive. Religious community is like a family. You don't choose them and you don't always get along and often there are problems.

In the beginning I find detachment from the world most challenging and the confidence to know everything will work out well.

Initial Formation - the reality of having and choosing to detach of past pleasures of not only pleasures, but also changes in relationship.

It is challenging to change my mindset from a culture that focuses on "Doing" to a new mindset of living as a daughter of God. Living in obedience is not a practice of our society so that has been a challenge, learning to as permission, eat at certain time, follow order, but it is so necessary and refreshing to live that way.

It is most challenging to be apart from my parents and siblings.

It was hard to leave my family, but God has given me a lot of peace.

It's only been 2 months, and so far, the challenges have been resolved. Thank you.

Learning obedience and submitting my own will to someone else's. Getting used to all the changes and a new way of living. Confronting my own poverty.

Learning to be okay with not being perfectly seen/understood by each sister.

Learning to blend the natural with the supernatural in all area of life.

Learning to live in community and be dependent on my sisters. It has been challenging to learn what fraternal charity looks like in religious life and trust that in my poverty the community will take care of me. It has been one of the most rewarding and challenging things growing in being less self-reliant as I learned living in society.

Learning to live in community and its purifying fires. Living in community is at once the hardest aspect and the greatest blessing.

Learning to open up to the other sisters.

Learning to put myself third, after God and others.

Learning to surrender completely to the Lord and trust in time alone. The lord does not ask for more of me, He asks for all of me.

Leaving all behind and the lack of knowledge.

Leaving the past behind.

Letting go of my ambitions and growing distance from my close-knit family.

Living in community.

Living with different age groups and prayer not always consistent in group.

Living with many different opinions and comfort levels.

The most challenging thing that I have been able to find in religious life is how to persevere and in the same way to do it with love and telling how Jesus is leading me in this life through different situations or experiences that over time make you clarify that yes to this It's what you're called to do for him. [Lo mas desafiante en que e podido encontrar en la vida religiosa es como perseverar y de la misma forma hacerlo con amor y dicierniendo como jesus me va llevando en esta vida por diferentes sotuaciones o experiencias que con el tiempo te hacen clarificar que si que a esto es a lo que estas llamado hacer por el.]

Loneliness.

Loving people who are also sinners and wounded.

My family's negative reaction to my decision to enter.

My lifestyle before the convent was late nights and early mornings, so new being in the institute, I am still adjusting to the early mornings; but no challenge comes without its joyous rewards!

My own intention! There is so much worldliness still in me and the life of silence & prayer allow it to surface and it can be overwhelming. I am learning to not be a perfectionist while striving for more perfect love. To receive love is much more challenging than I thought!

Myself.

Myself.

Navigating various personalities, dealing with conflicting opinions of politics/church politics.

Not having a close friendship(s) with member(s) of the opposite sex.

Obedience.

Obedience.

Opening my mind to new ways of doing things and the new cultures that I encounter within my community.

Overcoming myself.

Patience with my weakness and shortcomings.

Prayer and obedience.

Prayer schedule, and studying at the Catholic University of America.

Prayer. And not letting it fall into just a routine. That even though you are living in a religious community and going to mass and prayer daily it is very easy to fall into a routine. Meaning if you are not intentional during community prayer or mass it can very easily fall into a routine to where you are just doing the motions and not really thinking about it or being intentional about it. If you are caught up doing something before prayer it's so easy to say "I'll pray my rosary later or I'll do my evening prayer later." Knowing full well you might actually forget about it and not even do it later. Very easily your prayer life can slip away, if you don't discipline yourself. You can't let your work get in the way of your prayer life. As soon as the bell rings stop what you are doing and go, whatever you are working on can be saved for later. It's not more important than prayer. It's so easy to get distracted during mass or community prayer in your head and just starting thinking about the list of things you need to get done. Next thing you know mass or community prayer is done. And you don't remember a single thing that happened because you were so distracted. Same goes for your personal prayer life. It can very easily slip and fall away if you don't make it a priority. It's so easy say "oh ill pray later or I'm too tired."

Probably the vows.

That this apostolic ministry with young people and children cannot be exercised as much as I would like, particularly because of the pandemic, but also because of the parish ministry which has been added and which now takes up a lot of space in our vice-province. [Que ce ministère apostolique auprès des jeunes et des enfants ne puisse pas s'exercer autant que je le voudrais, notamment à cause de la pandémie, mais aussi à cause de du ministère paroissial qui s'est ajouté et qui prend maintenant beaucoup de place dans notre vice-province.]

Reduced privacy and occasional thoughts of how nice it would be to have a girlfriend.

Relationships.

Right now, as a novice, COVID is still very much coloring my world as a religious in formation. I haven't been able to go to as many events, meet as many people in religious life or in the Marianist world, or visit my family as much as I would like.

Get out of my comfort zone, live chastity, docility, maintain a constant life in prayer and live in community. [Salir de mi zona de confort, vivir la castidad, la docilidad, mantener una vida constante en oración y vivir en comunidad.]

Self-denial or dying to oneself. This is the moment of detachment. Detachments could be painful. However, this is the grace of God. Without self-denial, I can never live a Christian life.

Senior members of the community and formators lacking kindness, overbearing on small matters, and having strong opinions on very trivial things; Lack of communication with family and friends outside the order; Older members having less traditional understanding of liturgy and getting very angry when more traditionally ideas are suggested (not necessarily Latin mass, but even elements within the Novus ordo to make it more reverent); Frustration at beautiful traditions that have been stopped.

Separation from family.

Silence. It is a joy to talk with my brothers on numerous topics. While I appreciate the need for silence in the life, it is difficult coming from a world of constant noise.

So far everything is good for me here at the formation house now. From the beginning is it a little challenged to live with different personalities but as times go I get to know them better and able to understand the sisters more. Religious Life is good now. Thank You.

So far studies are challenging, I felt the books long time ago, but so far I am good.

So far the most challenging part is letting go of family and friends. Distancing yourself, but being able to write from time to time is helpful.

So far, being away from friends and family and experiencing the grief of not having a spouse or children.

So far, I find the hour of profound silence in the middle of the day to be most challenging. The normal silence of work, study and prayer during the rest of the day is appreciated.

So far, the mundane daily tasks; prefer to be more active in ministry to others outside the community.

Some disconnect with senior members (liturgical preferences; seeing elements like adoration/patterns as "offensive").

Sometimes the pretenses of myself and my brothers in the community. Uncertainty about the future.

Spiritual Poverty. Turning zeal to wisdom.

Staying awake for all Holy Hours when I am tired.

Still learning.

Such a great diversity of liturgical preferences and theological leanings can present a challenge at times.

Surrendering to the Lord in every opportunity.

The apostolate.

The challenging part is balancing my own work with spending time with my religious institute.

The collision of human personalities/individuality with common life together in the house all working towards the same project.

The community life can be sanctifying.

The current tension and transition period between what religious life has been and what it will look like in the near future.

The daily surrender to God in all the little ways He invites us to become more and more intimately united to Himself. It is challenging -- a daily death to self -- but a source of great joy because it is also a place of the greatest Life -- Him. So the challenge is a gift because I long for nothing more than to give Him permission at every moment of my life. All for His honor and glory.

The discipline.

The disconnect between the older and younger generation when it comes to liturgy, sacredness, reverence, tradition, and the use of Latin. The older generation can be a bit stuck in their ways and are at times unwilling to accommodate the younger generation's desire for more beautiful and traditional forms of prayer used by the Church for hundreds of years. Seemingly harmless and simple ways of improving the liturgy such as ad orientem, the use of patens, and Latin hymns are quickly shot down and are taken as almost offensive suggestions.

The Fraternity but also the adapting to the aspects of religious life which are countercultural to how I've been living before.



The giving up of certain freedoms in the Novitiate that I had grown accustomed to outside of the Society. Also the distance from my family.

The greatest challenge is also its greatest strength: Community life. My brothers are both comfort and crowd as an only child (and having lived on my own for a number of years), I have to work on overcoming my selfish impulse.

The greatest personal challenge has been transitioning from the professional world to being a postulant. It has taken time to adjust to the schedule and detaching from parts of life before the convent.

The internal emotional and spiritual work that needs to be done in order to grow and be formed well. This is especially difficult when it involves confronting childhood traumas.

The life itself is challenging. Having any life it for 3 months, the hardest + adjustment for me is the surrender of all things.

The martyrdom of change that is constant to conform by soul to God's will and bear the cross of the displeasure of myself in humility in all my mistakes.

The moments of "being alone."

The most challenging about religious life is community life because we come from different cultures and backgrounds. However, we have to integrate our own culture into the congregation's culture, which is we are one family.

The most challenging part is allowing Jesus to transform and conform my heart to His.

The most challenging thing about religious life is the different ways the members are called to live out their vows and how that affects community decisions.

The most prominent is the generational divide. There are a great many older members in my Congregation's US province that are incredibly hostile to those of us who are younger and find value in traditional aspects of our faith. The most objectionable of these being my Novitiate class' desire to wear the habit during and after our profession. They invoke the pain they suffered when they had to wear it but remain ignorant of the pain we suffer in being punished for desiring to. I try my best to understand where they come from, but it hurts even more given that I was promised that I could when I entered. There are some members of the Congregation who support us, but they are few and very quiet.

The number of foreigners who are admitted to the community, who have little to no experience with the catechism of the Church, the English language or liturgical practice. Thus lack of understanding brings with it an agenda that undermines the purpose and spirituality of community living, especially in houses where community life is integral to the charism of the institute.

The obvious sacrifices of living a "super-natural" life. Definitely the Call to obedience to the Rule of St. Benedict and Fidelity to the Abbot, and the restrictions. Knowing that I am going to be a

so called "public figure of the Church" and Monastery. Knowing that if I persevere in the life and make solemn Vows my schedule will stay the same. Not knowing what the future could lead to.

The practicalities of the high age of our community and the difficulties in conceiving of multiple futures with an energy that is equal to and similarly creative as my own. The inherited accretions of the muted experiences of many members by the community/leadership stifling of their initiatives (inner drives) and a consequent reactive collective dissatisfaction and limited expectation of new, creative and life-giving future. The high level of criticism of the members. The lack of personal transparency and sharing. Members tend to be reserved in how they communicate, other than the traditional understandings of leadership and "top-down" ministerial conceptions. This lack of sharing leads to perpetuation of roles, rather than fraternal relationships that build and grow on all levels - to support and evidence the life we are called to live. The lack of solicitude from leadership... most markedly a lack of appreciation and encouragement or support for newer and younger members to contribute in ways that are "outside the box". In other words, too much of a classical conception of obedience rather than a welcoming in conversation for a mutual future, driven by new thoughts and processes with the support of those who have lived the life for decades.

The process of growing through interpersonal relationships within the context of an enclosed community.

The process of learning to embrace reality and gradually letting go of ideas.

The radical change from life "in the world" to a life that is "in the world but not of the world" That being said, it is a good kind of difficult.

The sacrifice of romantic intimacy.

The schedule.

The sense of community life at times seems to be lacking, as the older members are often involved in a lot of ministry and tend to regularly miss common prayer and some common meals and such.

The separation from family and friends is most difficult. It is difficult to give up something that is so naturally and inherently good and beautiful. It is a true sacrifice.

The separation from family/ friends/ home.

The separation from friends/ people most important to you. Four good but hard process of surrendering, and giving and receiving.

The silence and the solitude of the Trappist life, and not eating meat.

The thousand times a day where I get to choose to love despite my own personal preferences (i.e. what time to sleep, eat, pray, have fun). It is both the most challenging but rewarding aspect.

The total commitment it requires at every hour.

The vows. Although working on it, working with a diverse culture and personality.

The vulnerability required in our intense community life can be challenging as well as learning that who I am is more precious to God than what I do.

This is the first time moving out long-term from my parents' home, so making that transition is challenging.

To trust that living for heaven and being willing to share in Jesus cross is not a waste of my life -- so many will say, just get married, have lots of friends, the most fun, the best experiences -- you do not know there is a heaven so just live for today. But to put our hope in God's promises...it is joyful yet challenging.

Total abandonment to the will of God.

Transitioning from a position of professional leadership to a postulant.

Transitioning from working full-time, the travel components of formation, and the constant moving around that will occur when being sent on different assignments.

Upon arriving, learning about how many members of the institute have come and gone. Experiencing a lack of zeal for the prayer life demonstrated by habitually missing of the office, not much formation about keeping up with the hours privately, and not much of devotional life among members of the institute. The divisions among the community but especially the lack of action (I perceive) on the leadership to mend those division.

Very little so far! Probably the early rises every morning and learning to live with new people, many different personalities and temperaments.

Vow of obedience.

Vow of obedience.

What I find most challenging is persevering in the commitment to live, work, and pray here while there might be several other attractive ways one could be living. As one continues living and grows accustomed to such a regular schedule of daily life, it will be necessary to find new motivations that reaffirm their commitment to monastic life.

What I found challenging about religious life is having time to study for school.

What's most challenging for me is understanding the vow of obedience and the handing over your financial security to the Institute.

When politics enter community life.