

HORIZON



JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS VOCATION CONFERENCE

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NATIONAL RELIGIOUS VOCATION CONFERENCE



HORIZON



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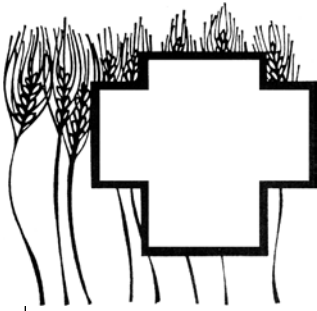
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HORIZON

HORIZON began as a vocation journal in 1975. Today, as a quarterly publication, it serves a readership of more than 2000 in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries.

HORIZON serves as a resource:

- To assist vocation directors in their professional and personal growth as ministers;
- To educate and engage educators, directors of retreat centers, formation personnel, community leadership, bishops, campus ministers, librarians, priests, religious, laity and anyone interested in vocations and their role in vocation ministry.

HORIZON has a threefold purpose:

- To provide timely and contemporary articles relative to vocation ministry;
- To provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas on pertinent issues in the field of vocations;
- To highlight some of the current resources available.

National Religious Vocation Conference

HORIZON is published by the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). The NRVC is an organization of men and women committed to the fostering and discernment of vocations. It provides services for professional vocation directors and others who are interested and involved in vocation ministry. It proclaims the viability of religious life and serves as a prophetic, creative, life-giving force in today's church.

To accomplish this, NRVC provides opportunities for professional growth and personal support of vocation ministers; facilitates regional, area and national meetings for its members; sponsors workshops, seminars, conferences and days of prayer; publishes materials related to vocations for a wide variety of audiences; engages in research, study and exchange on issues of current concern; publishes a quarterly professional journal, HORIZON; maintains a Web site; and cooperates with other national groups essential to the fostering of vocations. For further information, contact: NRVC, 5401 S. Cornell Ave., Suite 207, Chicago, IL 60615-5698. E-mail: nrvc@nrvc.net. Web: www.nrvc.net.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Vocation ministers have what many hunger for

I'M THE MOTHER OF TWO KIDS IN COLLEGE (and one in junior high). When I survey two parts of my life—the world of college campuses where my kids go to school and the world of vocation ministry—I see a big need and I see resources. But I don't always see those resources being used where the need exists.

The need I see is the hunger that young people have for meaning in their lives, for a life direction that brings forth the best within them, for a deeper relationship with God, for an understanding of Christian decision-making. Many college students are making critical decisions about life-direction (what to major in, which internships to pursue, whether this boyfriend/girlfriend is marriage material, etc.). They want to know how to make choices in light of their deepest values.

This is where I see vocation ministers fitting in. Vocation ministers are trained to help guide those making life choices. (The National Religious Vocation Conference helps this training!) Vocation ministers are people with spiritual wisdom about God's call that ideally would

be shared with the very population seeking this wisdom.

In an ideal world, vocation ministers are there making their good spiritual counsel available to those who need it—including the thousands of college students who are seeking meaning and direction in their lives. My hope is that this edition of *HORIZON* can nudge us all a little closer to that ideal world. This edition provides reflection on who college students are, what happens in contemporary campus ministry, and how and why vocation ministers might contribute effectively.

This edition is meant to encourage positive collaboration between these two ministries. It's meant to build that world where vocation ministers are working hand-in-hand with campus ministers. If that can happen, my kids will benefit, other college students will benefit, and maybe the church and world will be a little better place because a few more of us took time to listen for and follow God's call.

—Carol Schuck Scheiber, cscheiber@nrvc.net



UPDATES

News from the vocation world

Attend Summer Institute in Chicago

This summer the National Religious Vocation Conference will offer four workshops focusing on key concerns of vocation ministers. Plan now to attend one or more workshops. Your community's investment in your professional development is an investment in its future.



Participants in the 2011 Summer Institute visit during a break.

BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT I, presenter: Father Raymond Carey, Ph.D., July 16-18, 2012 (The workshop begins at 9 a.m. on Monday and ends at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday), DePaul Center, Chicago, IL.

ETHICAL ISSUES IN VOCATION AND FORMATION MINISTRY, presenter: Father Raymond P. Carey, Ph.D., July 19-20, 2012. (The workshop begins at 9 a.m. on Thursday and ends at noon on Friday.) DePaul Center, Chicago, IL.

ORIENTATION FOR NEW VOCATION DIRECTORS, presenters: Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, NRVC executive director and Sister Deborah M. Borneman, SSCM, NRVC associate director, July 23-27, 2012. (The workshop begins at 9 a.m. on Monday and ends at noon on Friday.) DePaul Center, Chicago, IL.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR VOCATION MINISTERS: ORAL, WRITTEN AND DIGITAL, presenters: Father Vince Wirtner III, CPPS; Jessica Schmidt and Lisa Ripson, July 30-August 1, 2012. (The workshop begins at 9 a.m. on Monday and ends at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday.) DePaul Center, Chicago, IL.

Register online for Convocation

The National Religious Vocation Conference will host its 2012 Convocation in Plano, TX November 1-5, and online registration is now available. This is the premier opportunity for religious community vocation ministers to network, learn, refresh and renew. Register online today at www.nrvc.net.

This year's theme will be "Vocation Ministers as Ambassadors for Christ: A Reconciling Presence." Keynoters will be Archbishop Joseph William Tobin, CSsR, Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and



Sister Kathryn Hermes, FSP; Archbishop Joseph Tobin, CSsR

Sister Kathryn J. Hermes, FSP, author and retreat director. The pre-convocation workshops will be held November 1, 2012 from 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. They include:

RECOGNIZING SUBTLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PERSONALITY DISORDER, presenters Dr. Adeline Boye, PSy.D. and Sister Cindy Kaye, RSM.

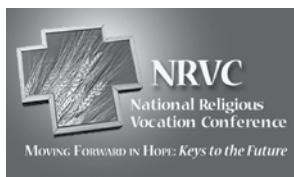
THE VOCATION DIRECTOR'S MARKETING TOOLBOX, presenter Kim Cavallero, director of communications, American Province of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

VOCATION MINISTRY AND THE ISSUES OF CIVIL, CANON, AND IMMIGRATION LAW, presenters: Father Daniel J. Ward, OSB and Anne Marie Gibbons of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network and Legal Resource Center for Religious, respectively.

“Moving Forward” workshop to aid communities with issues surfaced in study

A June workshop entitled “Moving Forward in Hope: Keys to the Future” will be held at the Oblate Renewal Center in San Antonio, TX, in order to train 75 participants to facilitate congregational discussions on community life, communal prayer, visibility, and the celebration of Eucharist.

The days will be facilitated by Sister Lynn Levo, CSJ, who will also provide participants with an in-depth knowledge of the NRVC-CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life. Costs are being underwritten by a grant from the GHR Foundation.



Women religious gathering in November to address key issues

The first gathering of women's communities to address issues raised in the NRVC-CARA study will take place in the Midwest region in November of 2012. Two other later gatherings will take place in the West and in the East.

These gatherings of representatives of women's communities will reflect upon concerns that surfaced in the 2009 NRVC-CARA study of new membership.

Sisters Gloria Marie Jones, OP and Kieran Foley, FSE will serve as facilitators of these gatherings with Sister Mary Johnson, SNDdeN as the keynote speaker. In addition Sisters Anne Walsh, ASCJ and Lorraine Reume, OP will serve as listeners



Planning for gatherings of women religious are (front row, left to right) Sisters Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ and Paula Marie Buley, IHM; (back row, left to right) Sisters Joyce Candidi, OSHJ; Donna Markham, OP; Maureen Martin, ASCJ; Mary Johnson, SNDdeN; and Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, NRVC executive director.

at the three sessions and as writers of a final summary document.

International Eucharistic Congress in June

An International Eucharistic Congress will take place in Dublin, Ireland June 10-17, 2012. The gathering will celebrate the Eucharist and reflect on themes associated with the Eucharist and with Christian living. It has been described as a World Youth Day for people of all ages.

Congresses take place every four years, and the location of the Congress is designated by the pope. A National Eucharistic Congress was held in Ireland in 2011 in preparation for the 2012 Congress. See iec2012.ie for further details.

National discernment festival in England

Vocation leaders in England are hosting Invocation 2012, a national discernment festival for young adults to be held at St. Mary's College, Oscott in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, England, July 6-8, 2012. The event is aimed at young men and women ages 16-35 who wish to deepen their relationship with Christ and seek the knowledge and tools to develop their own personal formation, discernment and understanding of God's will for their lives—including the possibility of priesthood or religious life. Learn more at invocation.org ■



Participants at Invocation 2011.

Catholic Church England and Wales

Be present, take an interest in students' lives, develop a positive working relationship with campus ministers, and follow good "vocation etiquette." These approaches can help bring your ministry to campus.

Campus ministry 101 for vocation ministers

BY SISTER DEBORAH M. BORNEMAN, SSCM

LEAVE YOUR BROCHURES at home. If you want to know what Catholic college students desire most from vocation ministers, it is your presence on their campuses and your genuine interest in their lives. One of the best ways to have regular access to college students is to develop a good relationship with the campus ministry staff before meeting the students. Campus ministers are ecclesial leaders, professionals in higher education and pastoral ministers. They also know which college students are actively involved in living their Catholic faith on campus as dependable liturgical leaders, committed service coordinators and enthusiastic pastoral student leaders. These are the types of students vocation ministers want to meet because they are more likely to be open to vocation

discernment. However showing up unannounced at a Newman house or a campus ministry center not only ruins your chances of being invited back to future events; these actions unfairly stereotype all vocation ministers as single-minded recruiters preying upon college students.

Day-to-day life for campus ministers

A typical campus minister most likely begins ministry later in the day and works evening hours, as most students are either in class, sleeping or working in the morning hours. The day is varied and filled with constant interruptions. The phone rings, the doorbell sounds at both doors and students come to study, pray, talk and text late into the evening. Students come in times of crisis and celebration.

Ministry does not only happen in the Newman house or on parish grounds, but outside on campus as well. Engaging and educating college students about our Catholic faith is a constant challenge. Many college students do not have a religious language to articulate their deepest desires and they are searching for ways to express their encounters with God. The role of the campus minister is to help college students to speak with confidence about living their Catholic faith on campus and beyond graduation. The role of the vocation minister is to promote consecrated life as a valid and valued vocation through on-going relationships with emerging adults. The good news is that both the needs of the campus minister

Sister Deborah M. Borneman, SSCM belongs to the Sister of Saints Cyril and Methodius. She is the associate director for the National Religious Vocation Conference. Prior to this ministry, she served as vocation director for her congregation for a decade. She also served as a CCMA certified campus minister at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania as the associate director for four years. During that time, campus ministry received the CCMA exemplary program award for vocations.



and vocation minister can be met successfully while benefiting students—and without disrupting the comprehensive mission of campus ministry.

Understand the university

How can the vocation minister become involved in campus ministry? One way to learn about campus ministry is to look at the websites of the universities you intend to visit. The academic calendar provides important information about when school is in session and what times to avoid because

Campus ministry priorities

This list is drawn from the 1985 pastoral letter of the U.S. bishops, “Empowered by the Spirit.”

- 1) Forming the faith community
- 2) Appropriating the faith
- 3) Forming the Christian conscience
- 4) Educating for justice
- 5) Facilitating personal development
- 6) Developing leaders for the future



Sister Rose Mulligan, IHM shares a meal with students (left to right) Marie Pier Gascon, Angela Sariago, and Gina McKeehan on the campus of Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.

of midterms, finals or school breaks. From there, visit the Catholic Campus Ministry website to get a sense of what is already offered and what programs are successful. Is a schedule posted with Mass times? Are programs planned by a student leadership team or solely by the campus minister? What service, spiritual and social activities are annual events which may have a larger attendance? Is there a need for a speaker or service site that your congregation might provide? Is there a weekly e-newsletter to learn more about campus ministry at this particular university? With this information in mind, call or e-mail the campus ministry office to set up an appointment to meet with the staff.

Be up front, honest and clear about the purpose of your visit. It's good to come prepared with several ideas to assist the campus minister to easily integrate vocation promotion. For example consider offering one or two annual events connected to the six aspects of Catholic Campus Ministry as outlined in the 1985 USCCB pastoral letter, “Empowered by the Spirit.” (See the box on this page.)

These six ministerial functions reflect the general mission of the church on campus and the distinctive situation of higher education today. These priorities provide a rich framework with which to build a culture of discipleship on campus that promotes all vocations.

Be aware that asking a campus minister to gather students for an annual vocation promotion event to talk only about your congregation and consecrated life is often unrealistic and may not fit into the campus ministry priorities.

Forming the faith community

One way to involve passive members of your congregation is to gather a carload and simply participate in weekly liturgies on campus. Choose to sit together and near the students; in the words of the students, “Let us know you’re in the house!” Ask the presider to announce your presence and pew location for any students who may want to speak to you after Mass. Let them know you are praying for them by name. Consider becoming a reliable liturgical minister “substitute” for times when students cannot serve. My own congregation used to have an annual tradition of planning the music, bringing our choir and several instrumentalists for the Thanksgiving weekend Mass. This vocation event gives the music minister a welcome break as stress builds towards the end of the semester. Student choir members have the option of singing with the sisters. Inevitably relationships grow because this is an anticipated annual event with students asking, “Is this the week the sisters are coming?” In other words, the students look forward to our arrival; they don’t run from it.

Offering resources for faith formation is an answer to every campus minister’s dream, and it gives vocation ministers on-going visibility.

Offering resources for faith formation is an answer to every campus minister’s dream, and it gives vocation ministers on-going visibility for their congregations. Consider writing a short article or sharing inspirational quotes for the weekly student e-bulletin. This broader vision of vocation promotion meets the needs of faith formation for college students, is a free source of advertising for the congregation, and regularly supports campus ministry without a huge investment of time from the vocation minister and campus minister.

Appropriating the faith

Young adult faith formation is crucial. Offer to be a presenter or provide presenters from your congregation. Campus ministers can often make use of Scripture scholars, social justice promoters, Catholic history buffs and retired sacrament coordinators who would be willing to give a 30 to 90 minute presentation. Students are curious about the vows of religious;



Matthew Shade plays the violin as Jessica Volk and Amber Frantz sing during a service outing sponsored by the Catholic campus ministry of Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. (See Shade’s reflections on this event on page 18.)

consider a session on the myths and misconceptions of life as a religious. With some ingenuity, students become immersed in your congregational charism through these events. Do not narrowly limit your time to seek out only inquirers and discerners with once-a-year visits; instead, become the “vocation minister of choice” that a campus minister can rely upon to meet the needs of the students in diverse and creative ways, ways that will also promote vocations. Offering resources for faith formation is an answer to every campus minister’s dream, and it gives vocation ministers on-going visibility for their congregations. Consider writing a short article or sharing inspirational quotes for the weekly student e-bulletin. This broader vision of vocation promotion meets the needs of faith formation for college students, is a free source of advertising for the congregation, and regularly supports campus ministry without a huge investment of time from the vocation minister and campus minister.

Forming the Christian conscience

Many campus ministers want to offer programs of Scripture study, *Lectio Divina*, morality and faith sharing, but they do not have time to offer a short, four-week program. Your willingness to lead a small group provides needed catechesis

for students while letting you form relationships with them. Through mentoring and modeling, raise awareness of the need for an active concern for others, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized. Share your lived experiences of a lifelong commitment to serve wherever the need is greatest, offering ways to live Gospel values in a world of diversity and pluralism. Emphasize the need to proclaim Gospel values of peacemaking, healing, limitless love, forgiveness and non-violence. Encourage the students to remain open to mystery, imagination and forgiveness and to let go of certitude, judgment and fear. Teach students to approach discernment and discipleship through the lens of Catholic social teaching and to respect the Spirit of God dwelling in one another.

Educating for justice

Service is very popular, especially with students who need scholarship-related service hours and with those who may have mandated service hours because of misdemeanors. Offer service ideas incorporating the unique charism of your congregation. Help collegians see their Catholic identity with a worldview beyond their campus. The Catholic Church has historically stood with laborers, immigrants, refugees and the underserved. Teach students the vocabulary of social justice and non-violence; use church documents that focus on relevant issues of human injustices and how to be advocates for systemic change.

Share the ministry stories of members of your congregation who serve the poor, the widows and the orphans in areas often neglected by society. Today's college students come with an awareness of global solidarity through experiences of studying abroad, participating in volunteer immersion programs and attending World Youth Days. Encourage them to share these experiences with you by integrating theological reflection into these discussions.

Facilitating personal development

Most college campus ministry programs include a popular weekly dinner for students. There are many variations on this dinner. Sometimes students prepare the meal for service hours; other times volunteers from local parishes donate the meal. Offer to purchase the ingredients for one weekly meal, and if possible, bring along members from your congregation to cook the meal. Students and campus ministers are sincerely grateful for the generosity of the congregation for providing the meal and leading grace. At the dinner teach the students

the language of inclusivity and invitation; they are yearning to belong. They want to have meaningful conversations but quickly will admit they do not always know how to have effective face-to-face conversations. One of the most memorable dinners at one campus included a discussion about professional etiquette. Candy bowls are also popular fixtures at Newman Houses. Offer to sponsor the candy bowl for a week, perhaps during a special feast day, and include information about your congregational patron saints.

Developing leaders for the future

Consider sponsoring Christian leadership seminars to help students become aware of their emerging leadership skills and how to cultivate new patterns of behavior. Encourage ministerial leadership from a mindset of transformative change, abundant generosity, on-going formation and lifelong learning. College students are unaware of the governance of congregations and are intrigued with our counter-cultural method of selecting congregational leadership.

One of the most important things vocation ministers can model for college students is the need to pause, to reflect on God's presence in our lives.

Describe community living and interdependence with a worldview to recognize each other as the people of God. This religious life vision includes a willingness to change, to be creative in taking risks in moving forward and a willingness to ask the deeper questions of discipleship.

Our North American culture encourages all of us to be busy, to multi-task and to be in constant contact. The fast pace of campus life is magnified with iPads, smart phones, Facebook accounts, Twitter and constant motion. One of the most important things vocation ministers can model for college students is the need to pause, to reflect on the presence of God in our lives and to make the time to listen to the movements of the Spirit within our soul. Search for ways to awaken students' desire for spirituality in a world full of limitless choices. Students are enthusiastic about road trips and "bucket lists" (must-dos before graduation). Ask the students to consider evening prayer with your congregation as an awesome invitation and must-do memory before they graduate.

The annual Busy Persons Retreat

For many vocation ministers, the annual Busy Persons Retreat is the first bridge into campus ministry. There are several variations of this popular retreat. This four-to-five day retreat is offered on campus in the style of a directed retreat. Students choose the times they are available to meet with a vocation

Search for ways to awaken students' desire for spirituality in a world full of limitless choices.

minister. The most common schedule is for students to meet with vocation ministers one-to-one for 30 minutes daily over three or four days. Other options include meeting twice for 45 minutes or once for 60 minutes. Stu-

dents are given suggested ways to pray throughout the retreat, most commonly using Scripture and reflection questions.

Some campuses also host evening social, service and catechesis programs connected to Busy Persons Retreats, and these are open to all students.

At Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, the opening night of the Busy Persons Retreat includes the annual tradition of making fleece blankets for hospitalized children as a way to invite students to interact with one another and with the vocation ministers. The second night includes a social justice video and discussion. As the students lead the discussion, vocation ministers are invited to share how their own congregations are addressing the specific contemporary issue being discussed, such as homelessness, clean water, poverty, etc.

A good source for videos and movie discussion guides emphasizing Catholic Social Teaching can be found at the Education for Justice website at educationforjustice.org. Another positive idea is to have vocation ministers and students bring their favorite book for an evening discussion. Afterward, vocation ministers can donate a copy of the book to the campus ministry library with the congregation's contact information in it.

At Bucknell University in Pennsylvania (a private university), vocation ministers are invited to a campus-wide luncheon sponsored by the Catholic campus ministry. The lunch includes the student leadership team, Catholic faculty and staff, the campus ministry advisory board, the dean of students and the university president. This luncheon to promote Catholic identity has included a variety of speakers.

The director of campus ministry has also asked the vocation ministers to speak on contemporary issues in a panel for-



Bliss Fallon, right, (Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2011 graduate) appreciates the opportunity to volunteer with Sister Maria Goretti, SSCM, at the annual summer festival of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

mat in an auditorium. This evening program is an innovative way to promote consecrated life to the entire student body.

Busy Persons Retreat is a campus ministry mainstay for many universities. When vocation ministers are invited, it's important for them to know that their role is to mentor the students, not to recruit them. It is unethical to give promotional items to students while meeting with them. The commonly used, sly technique of giving the students bookmarks and prayer cards can upset students who feel their retreat director has a hidden agenda of recruitment.

Instead of finding ways to give retreatants promotional materials, it's best for vocation ministers to ask for a common table in the student gathering space to display and give away promotional items such as pens, highlighters and bookmarks. This approach gives the students the opportunity to select or decline promotional items which contain contact information. You may want to leave the promotional items behind for students to take after you leave. This way students can more comfortably peruse material outside your presence.

Also be sure to take your personal belongings with you when you depart. There are notorious "Cinderella" vocation ministers who leave behind personal items to come back to the campus to pick up them up later. This deceptive way of making additional visits is never appreciated by campus ministers.

Do's and don'ts around campus

Another sensitive boundary issue centers on soliciting person-

al contact information from college students including phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Vocation ministers should leave their contact information on their promotional items, and then, the student can take the initiative to keep in touch or inquire about further discernment. No student should be placed on a never-ending mailing list or be expected to keep in touch with you after the retreat. If you like to maintain an e-mail list of vocation prospects, ask first and always give people a way to remove themselves from the list.

Stalking students on Facebook is as creepy as it sounds. Rather than seeking out students, let them know you are on Facebook and allow them to “friend” you first, as this will be a more natural and mutually desirable connection. Then respond to their friend request. Send thank you cards, congregational newsletters, and seasonal cards throughout the year to the campus ministry office and allow campus ministers to post your communications for all the students to see. On the same note, it’s good to avoid taking photos of the students unless *they* ask you to pose with them. Some students feel awkward declining your request for photos, yet they may not really want their photo on your website or in your community newsletter.

Vocation ministers can suggest to campus ministers to include in the evaluation a section asking if the student would like more information on vocation discernment. It is also helpful to let students filling out the evaluation know that if they indicate they want more discernment information, their contact information will be shared with all the vocation ministers at the retreat.

More experienced vocation ministers may want to offer to coordinate a Busy Persons Retreat for the campus. An excellent resource for doing so was written by Father William Kraus, OFM Cap: *The Basics of Busy Persons Retreat*. This booklet is available for \$12 from National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). Another great resource for vocation ministers to use with students is: *Bridge Building through Prayer: Spiritual Mentoring of Young Adults*. This excellent resource for \$8 contains suggested Scripture readings and reflection questions for retreat topics. Both resources can be ordered by contacting the NRVC office at (773) 363-5454 or nrvc@nrvc.net.

Lastly be an advocate for your fellow vocation ministers and avoid monopolizing campuses. Take a quick look to see which vocation ministers are present at events—is the same team always there? Are some vocation ministers “blocked out” of campuses because the same congregations have been represented for decades, leaving no room for others to attend?



The author, Sister Deborah Borneman, SSCM, with students Suzanne Schaeffer, Marie Pier Gascon, and Angela Sariego.

Some campuses have a tradition of only using religious from their own congregation for Busy Persons Retreats. As the vocation minister perhaps you could speak up about inclusion and encourage those involved to widen the invitation list to include a diverse team of spiritual mentors. Give the contact information for other vocation ministers to campus ministers to contact for future retreats. Trust that the exposure to other spiritualities catechizes students about the diversity of consecrated life in the 21st century.

Trust that the exposure to other spiritualities catechizes students about the diversity of consecrated life in the 21st century.

Unlike any other generation, today’s North American emerging adults live in an environment of infinite choices of majors and often spend nearly a decade on career exploration before making lasting commitments. These limitless choices can be overwhelming, hence the need for vocation ministers and campus ministers to offer plentiful spiritual, liturgical and service experiences to create a culture of discipleship. There are many creative ways to evangelize the next generation of believers on our college campuses and to promote consecrated life. Start with a good relationship with the campus ministers, and then meet the students where they are. ■

While human nature is enduring from generation to generation, college students today have distinct habits and characteristics from the college days of most vocation directors.

Profile of contemporary college students

BY SISTER RENÉE DAIGLE, MSC

I AM PRIVILEGED to have the opportunity to work with college-age men and women. They are genuinely delightful, have hearts of gold, are eager to be of service, and are striving for authenticity as they struggle to grow up. My prayer is that each one find his or her true vocation and that we who mentor them can be authentic Christian role models.

Before I begin my reflections on contemporary college students, first a word about my ministry experience, which definitely contributes to my understanding of college students. I have been involved in vocation ministry since 1996. From 2001-2007 my vocation ministry office was housed at our congregation's college in New Orleans, Our Lady of Holy Cross College—a small commuter college with a student population of about 1200 and no student housing. From 2008 until the present I have held a position in campus ministry

Sister Renée Daigle, MSC is the director of vocation ministry for the Marianites of Holy Cross and a campus minister at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, LA. She has been involved with vocation ministry since 1996 and served on the board of the National Religious Vocation Conference from 2001 to 2007.



at Southeastern Louisiana University—a public institution of roughly 15,000 students in Hammond, LA. Today our Marianite Vocation Office is located in the Catholic Student Center at Southeastern since I continue to serve as vocation director, as well.

While I have worked almost exclusively with college age young adults for the past 15 years, it has been mostly with Catholic students and those who have chosen to be involved in some campus ministry opportunity—Busy Students Retreat, mission trip, Catholic college student conference, or activities at a Catholic student center. I have had casual contact with many students here at Southeastern, so that gives me a glimpse of students at a large state university. What I share here are my own perceptions of these students based on my interactions and observations.

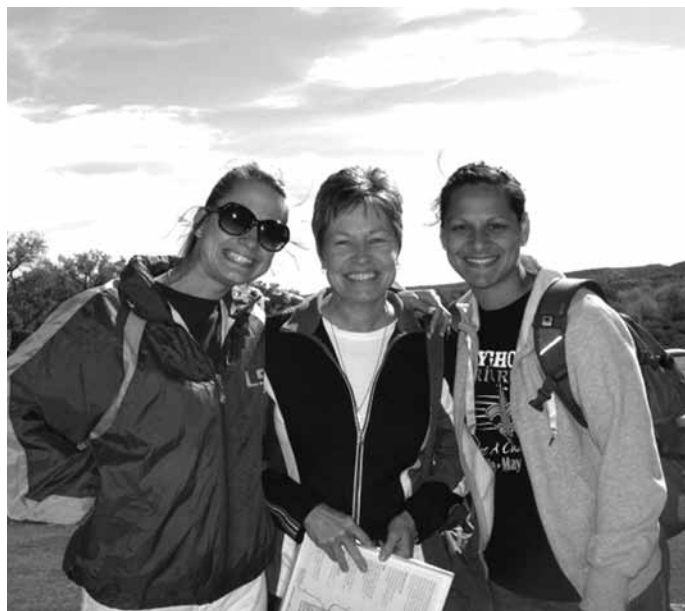
Technology affects social interaction

College students of today live in a different reality from students of just a very few years ago. I may as well begin with the obvious ... technology. Almost every college student today has a smartphone in his or her hands 24/7—not simply a cell phone, but a phone with a good camera, Web access and tons of apps. Almost every time I am in a group of students who are simply relaxing or socializing, the vast majority of them are interacting with their phones.

A few anecdotes: I was driving with four students in the car, on our way to a Christmas social for my congregation, so these were students at least open to religious life. Not only were they all on their phones, they were texting from the front to the back seat. When I asked about it and told them I felt like they were telling secrets, which was rude, they said, “Want us to read the texts to you? They’re not secrets.” I then asked, “If it’s not secret, then why not just talk from the back seat to the front?!” They are that much more comfortable with texting!

Our Catholic Student Association was watching the Saints game one Monday night. There were about 30 students in the room, and at least half of them were doing something on or with their phones. They may have been texting each other, playing games back and forth, or interacting with someone who wasn’t there, but they were all “watching” the game together by choice; yet they were not conversing with each other.

I am sitting in my office writing this article, and six students just walked by my window. (I have a glass wall in my second story office which is great for people watching.) Three of these six were doing something on their phones; one was talking on the phone; one was walking with his headphones on; and one girl was simply walking with no seeming interaction with anyone. Then two girls walked by together, but one of them was on the phone.



Sister Renee Daigle, MSC (center) finds it a privilege to work with college students. She takes a moment for a smile with former students De’Anne McKell (left) and Melissa Fisackerly, who has since joined the Marianites of Holy Cross .

I am not saying that I believe smartphones or any technologies are bad—I have it all myself—but the availability of technology is definitely affecting the way young people relate. When I walk on campus, it’s the exception rather than the rule that I can say a simple hello to someone as I pass them on the sidewalk—most people either are listening to headphones or are engaged in conversations on their phones. I recently heard a presenter say that people (not only college students) are now feeling “phantom vibrations” of their phones in their pockets—the phone is not vibrating but they are so tuned in to it that they “feel” it anyway and are compelled to check it.

Facebook generation

One of the biggest technological influences, in my opinion, is the fact that this generation of college students is the first to have had access to Facebook throughout their high school years. Facebook, as we all know, has had a major impact on society, and its effect on social development has yet to be determined. It seems there is no such thing anymore as a private thought, or an unpublished photo or

student is struggling with something. It is only when I ask him or her about it that he or she will come and talk with me about it. They say themselves that they find it easier to relate via text or Facebook than face-to-face. They even begin and end dating relationships via texting.

Students do not usually have the foresight to think of the lingering ramifications of putting something in writing in a public sphere such as Facebook; yet it is a huge part of their social world. Facebook postings and text messages are often

Somehow communicating through text and Facebook—while at the same time mentoring healthy face-to-face relating—is necessary for all adults working with young people these days.

what they look to for validation and self-esteem, and these are also the cause of much stress, anxiety and hurt. How would that way of relating go over in a religious community?

Implications for vocation ministers
Somehow communicating through text and Facebook—while at the same time mentoring healthy face-to-face relat-

ing—is necessary for all adults working with young people these days. Community members need to be open to these ways of communicating as well (unless social media and technology are not used within that congregation). Consideration of how cell phones, smart phones, computers, tablets, etc. will be used or allowed in formation programs is a relatively new question for formation programs but one that communities now need to address.

Closer ties to parents

I'm not sure if it's because cell phones make it easier to be in touch, or because parents feel like there's so much to worry about, but college students today seem to be in much closer communication with their parents than they were in the past. I asked the question, "Is it the children or the parents maintaining so much contact?" and students insisted that it was parents controlling them. There are students who are on the phone (or texting) with their parents multiple times each day and who have to check in each night at a certain time. Many students have not had the opportunity to make adult decisions because their parents do everything for them. As a campus minister I receive at least a few e-mails or phone calls

each semester from a parent asking how their son or daughter can get involved in the Catholic Student Center. The first thing I tell them is to have their son or daughter contact me! There are now orientation sessions on college campuses for parents—something that was unheard of for my generation, but a normal reality today. Yet I often hear college-age girls say that their Mom is their best friend. Again, I'm not making a judgment on whether or not this is a good thing, it's just very different from what the college experience of most vocation directors would have been—if they attended college before entering.

As far as collegians' relationships with their families are concerned, I think they run the gamut, as do families in general—just about every conceivable family composition seems to be represented on college campuses. I don't think there is a "typical" way that today's college students relate with their families—some are very close and go home often; others seem really distant and independent from their families; others live in different states or countries and there are varying degrees of difficulty, dependence, and connections with family.

Implications for vocation ministers: For candidates whose parents are heavily involved in their lives, vocation ministers might want to discuss early on the question, "How are your parents taking it?" Some vocation ministers invite parents to meet them and the community so as to allay fears and put stereotypes to rest.

Accepting of varied lifestyles

Contemporary college students seem very accepting of all sorts of diversity. Even in smaller communities, people come from all sorts of backgrounds, and today's young people seem more accepting and less judgmental of differences of every kind. College does still seem to be that place where everyone is free to be themselves as they are trying to figure out who they would like to be. We serve free lunch twice a week to 250-300 students (all students are welcome, not just Catholics) and I see all types of dress, nationalities, tattoos, piercings, ear stretching, hairstyles, etc., but I have yet to meet a student who was rude to anyone or ungrateful for the free lunch.

In the area of sexuality today's collegians seem to be much more accepting of diversity as well. The Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality aside, they are extremely accepting of each other whether gay or straight. Sexual activity seems to be a norm for many of them—even some of those who are actively engaged in activities of the Catholic Student

Center. And those who are not sexually active seem to co-exist happily with those who are. Now I admit that this area is not one where they readily reveal a whole lot unless they are having a problem, but once they have established a trust level they can be blatantly honest.

Implications for vocation ministry The “I’m OK, you’re OK” attitude actually allows collegians to be open to religious life, rather than writing it off.

“Busy,” unable to commit

One thing I notice about students today is that they perceive themselves to be much busier than they actually are. They will complain about how much homework they have, how many commitments and how little time; then I’ll hear them playing in the game room or I’ll see their comments on Facebook regarding watching a movie or participating in some other extra-curricular activity. Everyone needs to relax, play, visit, etc. but they do not seem to have the time-management skills to balance all the things they think they have to do. Along with this is the fact that there is so much stimulation all around them that they find it hard to focus on what they are doing, so it probably takes them longer to accomplish each task.

Connected to but not exactly a lack of time-management is a characteristic I find to be pretty common to most collegians I know—not committing until the very last minute or committing and then backing out. It doesn’t seem to matter what the activity is. They either are holding out to choose the best option at the last minute, or they sign up for things they would really like to do until they realize they have over-committed, so they start backing out. It has become almost comical if it weren’t so sad and frustrating at the same time.

I tell them that if they click the “maybe” button on a Facebook event that gives me no information as to whether or not they are attending. I don’t even see the purpose of the “maybe” option on Facebook, except that it might paralyze students to have only yes or no options. Having said this, I truly believe their hearts are sincere and they would love to do it all, but reality catches up with them a little too late at times. We all know how valuable choices are to people today. This generation has grown up with everything personalized and customized, and it seems as if they have a really hard time simply making a choice and sticking with it. This has been fodder for conversations among vocation directors before, but if they cannot or will not commit to smaller things, how much harder will it be to make a life commitment as in a vocation?

Implications for vocation ministers Vocation ministers

may need extra doses of patience to deal with the excuse of “busy-ness” from those who consistently mismanage their time. To address the weak ability to make commitments, some vocation ministers have introduced programming that helps students to make important decisions: discernment skills classes, seminars in how to make life choices, etc. Perhaps the area of decision-making is one arena where the wisdom of religious communities can meet the need of contemporary college students.

Studies maintain priority

I find most students to be fairly conscientious regarding their studies. Many times it is a test or project that they cite as reasons for not participating in certain events. I know I’m referring to students I see on a regular basis, but with tuition what it is, I believe students who are not serious about studying will only last a semester or two before leaving school altogether. They know they will lose their scholarships if they do not maintain the required grade point average, and if they don’t have scholarship money, they usually have loans or parents to answer to. I have heard that most university students change their majors multiple times, and while I have known many of them to do just that, there are also many of them who declare a major, stick with it and graduate in four years. The pressure of deciding a major is a real one, though, and there is such diversity in choice here, too, that the task is daunting, especially for those who have no idea of even a field that captures their passion.

To address the weak ability to make commitments, some vocation ministers have introduced programming that helps students to make important decisions: discernment skills classes, seminars in how to make life choices, etc.

Varying ways to relate to faith

When it comes to religion, I think diversity is the name of the game again. We have all read the studies about young adults and their beliefs and religious practices, and I feel that current college students are more or less congruent with what’s out there on the Millennial generation. The Catholic students

I see most often seem to fall into three categories: those who rarely or never go to church, those who go to Mass on Sundays (or most Sundays) and participate in some activities at the Catholic Student Center, and those who spend every free moment at the Catholic Student Center. Of course these divisions are not clear cut or meant to describe every student, but to give a general idea of who's out there. While the theologies of today's students are all over the place, too, the ones that tend to be most active in campus ministry programs, in my experience, seem to me to be very traditional in their practices. Adoration, rosaries, and liturgy of the hours are the prayer forms they seem most comfortable using, but they also respond to *Lectio Divina*, faith sharing, and guided meditation once they open themselves to those experiences. They tend to embrace practices or traditions that were either enforced or common in years past, but without the understanding of all that the practice meant or symbolized—one example is the student who wears her mantilla to Mass but is also wearing shorts and a T-shirt.

Students today have so much information at their fingertips, and they can often quote encyclicals and church documents that I have never read. They can know a lot about doctrine, church teachings and rubrics, and usually can rattle it off, but they lack the life experience to be able to embrace the same in a non-judgmental way. They can be very protective and defensive of their Catholic faith to the detriment of healthy relationships with non-Catholics.

Again, they mean well, but they often lack compassion and understanding ... until they are in need of it themselves. Personally I think some of the less-involved students tend to have a more balanced approach to life, a more open mind, and a broader perspective than the ones who are super-involved.

Implications for vocation ministers If the healthier students are often those who are less engaged in Newman Clubs and the like, then what does that mean for campus outreach? What can vocation ministers offer that will have wide appeal—beyond the students who show up for everything? One answer may be mission trips. These seem to be more popular now than they were 10 or so years ago; so any type of service project will most certainly draw interest, if not commitment and participation. For those students who are rigidly dogmatic, vocation ministers may want to introduce them to a more nuanced and complex view of the faith. Often, life itself softens the hard edges.

This article by no means gives a comprehensive picture; instead it simply offers my own observations from my admittedly limited perspective. All of us working with college

students need to keep using the tried and true methods and keep exploring new avenues of communicating with young people—inviting them to get to know us, and exposing them to our way of life, encouraging and challenging them in their faith journeys. We need to believe that if God is indeed calling them to join us, God will help us find ways to connect with them and live joyfully with them—and them with us! ■

Books on young adults

- *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*, by Christian Smith, 2011
- *Millennial Momentum: How a New Generation Is Remaking America*, by Morley Winograd and Michael Hais, 2011
- *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, by Christian Smith with Patricia Snell, 2009
- *Seeds of Hope: Young Adults and the Catholic Church in the United States*, by Tim Muldoon, 2008
- *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*, by Jean M. Twenge, 2007
- *Being Catholic in a Culture of Choice*, by Thomas P. Rausch, 2006
- *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice*, by Dean R. Hoge, William D. Dinges and Mary Johnson 2001

From Busy Persons Retreats to service projects, when Catholic college students get to know religious men and women through campus ministry experiences, it opens up a whole new vocational landscape for them.

Young adults share experiences of vocation ministers on campus

BY EMILY NORTON, GINA FANELLI, KIMBERLY HARPST, MATTHEW SHADE AND ALYSSA DELORENZ

Emily: spend time with us

When I was an undergraduate, I always looked forward to the Busy Persons Retreat because it gave me an opportunity to take time to reconnect with God and put my priorities back in order. I really enjoyed talking with the sisters during the retreat because they always had some new insight or perspective I could use to help strengthen my spiritual life. I also had a great time volunteering with the priests and brothers—we worked side-by-side, eating together, laughing together and spending time together. I talked in depth with a couple of them about their spiritual journeys and how they decided on priesthood or religious life. I really enjoyed their stories and faith journeys.

Before college I had never formed a close relationship with a priest, brother or sister. I never went to Catholic school so the only priest I had met was my parish priest, and although he was very nice, I never had a chance to really get to know him. In college, I was fortunate to form several relationships with priests and sisters. I was pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to get to know the priests and sisters. For some reason when I was younger I had a misconceived notion that priests and sisters wouldn't be able to relate to me since they have such a different lifestyle. This was not the case at all!

Emily Norton, Gina Fanelli, Kimberly Harpst, Matthew Shade and Alyssa DeLorenz are all undergraduates or recent graduates who participated in campus ministry during their college years.

I think the best way to promote vocations is to continue to give college students opportunities to interact with priests, brothers and sisters from different congregations in relaxed settings such as dinners, community service events, discussion groups and retreats.

Emily Norton graduated from Bucknell University in 2010 with a major in International Relations and a minor in Latin American Studies.

Gina: service experience opened my eyes

In the summer of 2011, I had the opportunity to volunteer at a school and orphanage in Janampet, India. I stayed with the Filippini Sisters, and I received unconditional love from them the moment I arrived in the village. After living with them for six weeks, I have an entirely new respect for sisters. They give everything they have to those less fortunate. They have devoted their whole lives to helping others, and the amount of humility that each sister bestowed made me re-evaluate my own life. It made me think about how I was only there for six



Gina Fanelli during her service experience with the Filippini Sisters in India.

weeks doing miniscule amounts of work compared to their lifetime devotion and yet I would probably be recognized more than they ever would be.

I respect the life of sisters because I had the opportunity to spend a long period of time with them, and I wish that they were recognized more for their humility, patience, good will and selfless love. I think the best way to promote vocations is for people in religious life to be themselves around college students and to be understanding of the flaws college students have. Talk with students, and guide them by discussion and example. Many students feel they have to be someone else when they are around those in religious life, but I relate best to sisters, brothers and priests when they are simply being themselves.

Gina Fanelli graduated from Bloomsburg University in 2010 with a major in mass communications-public relations. She is currently a graduate student at Bloomsburg University in Instructional Technology.

Kimberly: take an interest in our lives

Since I attended a Catholic college there were not many instances when a religious person unaffiliated with the college came to campus. Most of our activities were organized and run by the Benedictines who resided on campus. In my opinion the best way to promote vocations is just by being present and taking an interest in the lives of students. Sisters, brothers and priests from religious congregations can be more visible by finding out the interests of college students and attending everyday college, like school sporting events and performances. People notice and can tell when individuals care about them. Never underestimate the power of presence; it can leave a huge impression.

Kimberly Harpst graduated from St. Vincent College in 2008 with a major in religious education and a minor in psychology.

Matthew: compassion touched me

I will carry this treasured memory with me until my mind fails me. In September 2008, I was approached by a sister about playing my violin at a Christmas carol event at Emmanuel Nursing Center. I readily agreed as my grandmothers both lived there. However, both my grandmothers passed away that fall. Though it was difficult for me, I honored my commitment and played my violin while the students were singing carols. This sister and a priest really did a lot to put me at ease. I was amazed at their support,

encouragement and appreciation. (My fellow students also were supportive, although they did not know until later in the evening that I had recently lost both of my grandmothers at this facility.)

This service experience helped me to return to Emmanuel Nursing Center to play later that month at Christmas services. In fact, I ended up playing at nine Christmas Masses! That single service opportunity—and the love and support I received—was the catalyst for me to be emotionally able to play violin again.

I think the best way to promote vocations is for priests and sisters to be involved with young people. Greet and talk to students after Mass. Young adults need to know they are welcome at Mass and in the church. The sisters and priests I grew up with gave me a feeling of being unapproachable. What stands out about the priests and sisters I have met during college are their human qualities, their ability to relate and communicate, and this has completely changed my perspective of religious life and priesthood.

Matthew Shade is a senior studying at Bloomsburg University as a business finance major and is a commuter student.

Alyssa: contact busts stereotypes

I think the Busy Persons Retreat is a great way to promote vocations. I know that without it I would never have gone out of my way to seek out discernment. The Busy Persons Retreat gave me the opportunity to explore discernment with a sister that I wouldn't see every day and feel awkward around in the future. She gave me options, ideas, things to think about, and people to talk to in order to help me discern effectively. After all, it is discernment not recruiting.

In terms of what surprised me about religious, I think it would have to be how absolutely happy, peaceful and in touch with current society they are. There are a lot of stereotypes about religious, and unless you have had interaction with them (particularly sisters because they are so hard to come by), then it is incredibly easy to take these stereotypes as reality. I think the main challenge to religious today is to get out in society. I went to Catholic elementary school and I only met one sister before college.

I think the single best way to promote vocations is to simply be more present in our lives. I think if young people can see religious or interact with them closely they will be inspired to more deeply discern religious vocations. *Alyssa DeLorenz graduated from Bucknell University in 2010 with a major in accounting.* ■

College is a time to form one's life direction, a fact that creates a natural connection between campus ministry and vocation ministry.

Campus ministry and how vocation ministry fits in

BY DEE BERNHARDT

CATHOLIC CAMPUS MINISTRY, in its fullness, stands at the crossroads of the church, the world and higher education. As a ministry, it might be likened to the cloud and the pillar which led the Israelites through the desert during the exodus, the star of wonder which led the wise men to the infant Christ, or maybe the fire in the hearts of the travelers to Emmaus which told them, upon reflection, that they had always been walking with Christ on the road. Campus ministers enjoy a very privileged role as living signs for collegians, faculties and staff members who, in the academic arena, seek to find the illumination which only faith can give to reason through their everyday experiences and within their own hearts.

Dee Bernhardt is director of campus ministry at St. Augustine University Parish, serving the University of Wisconsin at Platteville. She also teaches in the UWP philosophy department, chairs the Visionary Catholic Ministry in Higher Education Committee for CCMA and serves on the Executive Board of Casa Romero Renewal Center. Dee holds masters degrees in religious education and Christian spirituality. In 2010, she was awarded the CCMA Charles Forsyth Award, the most prestigious award given by the Catholic Campus Ministry Association.



Catholic campus ministers serve in every type of college and university setting—from large, diverse public institutions to small, private colleges and universities. A campus ministry might be a Newman Center, a university parish, a Catholic campus ministry center or a campus ministry department on Catholic campuses. Their responsibilities include service learning, retreats, justice programming, residence life and/or theology coursework. Variations of great proportion exist across these very diverse settings, yet certain overall goals and dreams remain the same. In the end every campus minister works to animate the campus so that the gospel of Jesus Christ can be embraced and shared in service to the great commandments to love God with our whole beings and to love one another as we love ourselves. Of course this broad mission encompasses vocation ministry because serious disciples will eventually ask themselves vocational questions.

The six priorities

In an effort to assist all of us who serve on campus, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (then, the NCCB), issued a pastoral letter in 1985 entitled “Empowered by the Spirit: Campus Ministry Faces the Future.” The Catholic Campus Ministry Association, in conjunction with the USCCB, relies on the framework developed through “Empowered by the Spirit” to train and orient new campus ministers for work in campus ministry to this day. Although different

settings inspire different uses of this model, excellent ministries consistently operate at every level of it—educationally, spiritually and socially. The letter suggests six aspects of Catholic campus ministry (listed in the box on page 7). Over the years, the last, “developing leaders for the future,” has been split into two, making the seventh implied aspect vocational discernment.

Glimpse of St. Augustine University Parish

At our setting here in Platteville, WI, we aim to fully employ all seven aspects of this overview for successful ministry. Our university parish serves Catholic students at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville (UWP), providing a home to the Catholic Newman Community (CNC) where faith is nurtured and

When vocation-related programming seeks to attract only students who are entertaining thoughts of religious life, some students will avoid these programs. They fear disclosing their initial interest.

grown among many student and resident parishioners. We are pleased to serve 586 registered student parishioners and 120 registered resident parishioners.

Utilizing the model from “Empowered by the Spirit,” and programming gained through the network of the national Catholic Campus Ministry Association, we currently serve over 30 percent of

the Catholic students on campus. It is our goal to continue to engage and involve the other 70 percent.

The following descriptions from the pastoral letter, along with examples from our local setting, provide a snapshot of Catholic campus ministry as it unfolds here in Platteville.

Forming the Faith Community “The experience of Christian community on campus is important to the life of the whole Church. Students who have such a positive experience and are taught their responsibilities to the larger Church will continue to be a very valuable resource for family, parish, and diocesan life when they leave school” (“Empowered by the Spirit,” no. 43; hereafter referred to as ES).

Here at St. Augustine, we emphasize involvement in the faith community at every level, particularly through providing Mass, liturgical ministry opportunities, catechists’ training and opportunities, and prayer gatherings.



Students at St. Augustine University Parish study together.

Appropriating the Faith “Today we must emphasize [theology’s] continuing power to keep alive the great questions of meaning, purpose, and identity and to provide a coherent vision of life, which serves as a framework and unifying principle for all learning” (ES, no. 52).

St. Augustine has the task of helping its members (both resident and student parishioners) come to a mature and adult understanding of their faith. We allow our parishioners to give a more effective witness to the Gospel through RCIA, adult formation, faith nights and small Christian communities gathered for bible study, catechism and faith sharing.

Educating for Justice “Campus ministry is called to be a consistent and vigorous advocate for justice, peace, and the reverence for all life” (ES, no. 73).

The parish has a strong history of becoming involved in issues of peace and justice, especially on a global and legislative level. We seek to educate our student- and resident-parishioners about social injustices and advocate for those whose have no voice through Bread for the World letter-writing, mission trips involving other cultures, and adult formation opportunities based upon current issues.

Forming the Christian Conscience “The Christian who possesses a conscience structured by the Gospel of Christ and who is guided by the continuing presence of Christ’s spirit in the Church is better prepared to deal with the rapidly changing complexities of the world today” (ES, no. 64).

St. Augustine provides opportunities for personal reflection, faith sharing and conversion of heart through retreats, discussion groups and presentations.

Facilitating Personal Development “When individuals pursue personal development within the community of faith, they are constantly challenged to use their talents in the service of others to stay open to the Spirit, who accomplishes surprising things in us” (ES, no. 85).

The parish seeks to provide our student- and resident-parishioners with opportunities to engage in meaningful relationships with one another, our professional staff and, most importantly, Jesus Christ. Spiritual direction, pastoral counseling, peer ministry and social events help all involved to have a distinct appreciation for both his or her personal gifts, and for the gifts of other members of the community.

Developing Leaders for the Future “Campus ministry has the great opportunity to tap the immense pool of talent in our colleges and universities to help form future leaders for society and the Church” (ES, no. 93).

St. Augustine commits a great deal of time and talent toward preparing students and residents to be adult leaders in the church and in society through the development of our leadership councils and committees, mentoring of leaders and one-on-one leadership development meetings between leaders and staff.

Vocational Discernment “A significant number of collegians seriously consider vocations to the priesthood or religious life. Campus ministers are in an excellent position to promote these vocations” (ES, no. 101).

Collegians at St. Augustine are encouraged to consider all vocations in life, including religious vocations. Due to the lack of religious sisters and priests readily available to us, we offer a Busy People’s Retreat each Holy Week, and we attend national conferences and gatherings where students can meet and strengthen relationships with vocation ministers from across the United States.

Challenges to vocational discernment

Unfortunately our human condition mitigates against relationships between young adults and priests, brothers and sisters. Young people considering religious life or diocesan priesthood often feel estranged from their peers and fear speaking directly about it. Often they do not want to talk directly to people in the vocation they are considering: young women may choose to speak with a priest about religious life, or a young man will prefer to discuss his calling with a woman religious, or they feel more comfortable speaking with lay campus ministers. When vocation-related programming seeks to attract only students who are entertaining thoughts of religious life, some

students will avoid these programs. They fear disclosing their initial interest.

Sometimes tensions exist between some campus ministers and vocation directors due to assumptions on both sides. Campus ministers can assume that vocation directors just want numbers or bring a spirituality or theology to the group which does not line up with their professional goals for the ministry. Campus ministers spend years building up trust relationships on campus, and we are sometimes protective of access to our students.

We can become insular in our understanding of church, and we do not wish to allow others to affect our ministerial outcomes.

Vocation directors can sometimes assume that campus ministers have unlimited access to students and make demands that are simply not possible, like asking for a minimum number for a program or retreat, when that is out of our control. Some of us have been treated disrespectfully by vocation directors who come to campus and criticize or compromise our groups without communicating with us. Sometimes, vocation directors have encouraged students who are active in our ministry leadership groups to disrespect our leadership and/or vision of the church.

In spite of the challenges that exist in vocation ministry on campus, a great deal can be accomplished when both groups of ministers respectfully work in cooperation.

Our job as campus ministers consists of bringing some quiet, some sense, some understanding of the signs [of God] into students’ lives.

Samuel and campus vocation ministry

One of the best descriptions of the work of vocational discernment on a college campus lies in the call of Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-10). Briefly, Samuel resides in the temple, where education and religious training from Eli promises him a career and a future full of hope. Samuel reports to the temple, answers to Eli and goes to sleep. This ordinary, everyday pattern is interrupted by the voice of God, but Samuel misinterprets it. Three times. It takes Eli, his mentor, to help point him in the right direction and encourage him to bravely respond, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”

Our student-, young adult- and resident-parishioners at

the university parish come to the university community in much in the same way as Samuel came to Eli. Everything we do at the campus ministry aims to bring them to the place where, when the voice of God interrupts the routine, they can recognize and respond to it. They often misinterpret the signs or miss the voice altogether in the cacophony of their lives. Our job as campus ministers consists of bringing some quiet, some sense, some understanding of the signs into their lives. It is in this very intimate, very sensitive place that vocation ministers and campus ministers can enjoy mutual effectiveness, when working together as a team.

Ways vocation ministers can contribute

Presuming a good relationship between a campus ministry and a vocation director, one easy way to become involved

As with so many ministerial situations, the best gift vocation directors can give to college campus ministries is presence. Choosing a few nearby campuses and becoming involved with the students on a regular basis really helps to build relationships.

would be during the annual **Busy People's Retreat** on campus. This program, founded by the National Religious Vocation Conference some years ago, involves bringing several vocation directors to the campus ministry site and setting up half-hour slots of time for individual daily spiritual direction for a week, so that participants may learn about prayer and discernment in their lives. These retreats work best when a consistent group of directors continues with a certain

program over several years, as college students make most of their decisions relationally, and if they feel they have an ongoing relationship with a certain director, they are more likely to pursue a religious vocation than when the directors change. We have employed this program for the past six years on our campus, and we have several young people considering vocations to priesthood and religious life because of it.

Another option for vocation directors would be to volunteer to **speak at retreats** on topics such as discernment, knowing your gifts, prayer, the spiritual traditions or other topics in which a vocation director or community member has

expertise. Especially in the case of public and sometimes private universities, precious few theologically educated speakers offer their services to Catholic students who are often hungry for depth in their faith journeys. Our Catholic Newman Community invites area directors to come to campus and speak at retreats or our weekly Newman meetings.

As with so many ministerial situations, the best gift vocation directors can give to college campus ministries is **presence**. Choosing a few nearby campuses and becoming involved with the students on a regular basis really helps to build relationships, which open doors for vocational discernment. At this time we do not have anyone who regularly comes to our campus; however, this approach has served me well at other campus ministry sites which were located closer to some religious houses.

Once a student comes to trust a vocation director, **experiential weekends** do work. Students follow through better on commitments to these weekends when vocation directors ask a small fee for them, are present on campus just before they happen (to strengthen the relational bond), or provide transportation, where possible. Sometimes pairing a current novice or seminarian with a prospective student as a Facebook or other social media "friend" helps to ensure participation.

Lastly, do not underestimate the presence of vocation directors at tables at the **National Catholic Student Coalition** conference, **National Catholic Collegiate Conference** or the Los Angeles **Religious Education Congress**. Students often report great insights gained from conversations at these conferences, and we often choose our Busy People's Retreat directors from those we meet at conferences such as these.

In the end, successful vocational discernment outreach on campus depends upon **relationships**. To function effectively, we will need respect, openness and communication. In Ephesians, Romans and Corinthians, Paul reminds us that we are one body in Christ. Empowered by the Spirit, our ability to meet the needs of today's church and all the peoples of the world becomes transformative. Each of us reflects some small member of this body. To quote William Butler Yeats, "There are no strangers, only friends who have not met yet." To quote Micah, "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

When we reach out to one another in good faith, our leadership recruitment and development all points in the same direction: to the service and the glory of Christ. Then our discernment will point the collegians we both love and serve in the right direction, through the day, through the night, in the hopes of faith and in the very depths of our hearts. ■

What is the social and cultural context for campus ministry and vocation ministry? What are the distinct approaches to faith seen among Catholic college students?

The context of contemporary campus ministry and the students we try to reach

BY FATHER JAMES BACIK

CAMPUS MINISTERS HAVE the challenging task of helping young adults move through the transitions from high school to college and beyond. These transitions have a spiritual dimension which can be described in religious and secular terms. Christian spirituality has to do with submitting to the will of God the Father, putting on the mind of Christ and being attentive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Authentic spirituality has a communal character. Furthermore, the word “spirituality” points to the depth dimension of all human experience and to the Mystery which sustains and encompasses human existence. In more secular terms, spirituality is concerned with the search for meaning in the midst of absurdity, commitment in a society of open options, purpose in an aimless world, depth in a superficial culture and integration in a fragmented existence.

For campus ministers, discussion of spirituality raises

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challenging, practical questions. How can we help collegians pray with greater devotion, get more out of reading the Bible, integrate more completely love of God and neighbor, participate more actively in the liturgy and live their faith more fully in everyday life? Put in less explicitly religious language, how can we help them maintain an inner peace in a stressful world, find their vocation in life, contribute to the common good and work for peace and justice in the world? In helping collegians develop a viable spirituality, we need a theological framework to guide our efforts, and we need specific programs, activities and strategies that are practical.

Resources for campus ministry

In helping collegians manage transitions, Catholic campus ministers have been guided for over 25 years by the U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter, “Empowered by the Spirit.” Effective ministers have found creative ways of adapting the general principles in this document to the needs of their students. The sociological studies of young adults, such as *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice*, by Dean Hoge et. al; *The Search for Common Ground* by James Davidson; and *American Grace* by Robert Putnam and David Campbell (2010) provide helpful data.

I have learned a great deal from my personal interaction with students during 42 years of serving in university parishes. A number of years ago, about 30 of my students who participated in our Christian Leadership Program, filled

out an extensive questionnaire on transitions and spirituality. It was not a scientific survey, but it suggests how our best Catholic students manage these transitions. Over those years, I have been impressed with the great creative ministry offered on campuses throughout the United States and have tried to tap that great fund of practical wisdom. I draw on all these resources as a Catholic pastor and as a theologian heavily influenced by the German Jesuit Karl Rahner. My hope is that my personal experience reflective of the Catholic tradition will be helpful to others.

Cultural influences during transition from high school to college

Students entering college in the 21st century reflect the influence of various

Most collegians have gleaned fragments of their spirituality from various sources, including parish liturgies, youth retreats and religious education classes.

spiritual, religious and cultural factors. These Millennials, as they are sometimes called, have the same spiritual longings as previous generations for meaning and purpose in life. They have to contend with the essential conflict between their infinite longings and their finite capabilities. Their chal-

lenges sound familiar to all campus ministers: forming their personal identity; developing good friendships; finding a life partner; choosing a career; appropriating their religious heritage; cultivating habits of good citizenship; and deciding how to relate to the dominant culture.

Over four decades of dealing with collegians, I have been more impressed with the similarities among generations than the differences. Human nature is common. Millennials still fall in love and empathize with suffering loved ones. It is more important for campus ministers to understand the spiritual character of human existence than to know the latest popular songs (cf. *Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery*, by James Bacik, 1980).

As with previous generations, today's collegians are influenced by their parents and family life. They are, however, more likely to come from broken homes and are less likely to experience the sense of security nourished by a stable, lov-

ing family. Some studies suggest that they are closer to their parents than previous generations, more demanding of a secure environment on campus; and more respectful of social conventions and institutions (cf. *Millennials Go To College*, by Neil Howe and William Strauss, 2003). Reflecting on discussions with my students, I am impressed with how often they refer to one of their parents in a positive way as a role model, a spiritual guide, a confidant or a friend. Some universities are responding to this trend by appealing more directly to parents.

American culture continues to exercise great influence on Millennial collegians, often at a preconscious level. Some cultural trends, such as rugged individualism, unbridled hedonism, lavish consumerism and uncritical nationalism are anti-Gospel and harmful to healthy spiritual growth. Other ideals, including authenticity, self-actualization, freedom and volunteerism, when placed in a Christian framework, can promote healthy spiritual development. U.S. collegians grow up in a country where over 90 percent of the citizens say they believe in God and pray periodically, and over 60 percent are affiliated with a religious organization. The Christian entertainment industry generates over \$3 billion a year in movies, concerts and books. Scientific polls in the past have indicated that interest in spirituality among teenagers has increased, a trend which anecdotal evidence suggests continues in college. Our culture is an ambivalent mix of secular and religious currents (cf. *Spirituality in Action*, by James Bacik, 1997).

For the most part, the richly textured Catholic subculture which shaped Catholic spirituality in the past has largely disappeared, although remnants remain in predominantly Catholic areas where the parish is still the prime socializing institution. We still find some students who come from intact Catholic families, went to Catholic schools for 12 years, have only Catholic friends and relatives, and live with the assumption that you go to Mass every Sunday. Most collegians, however, have gleaned fragments of their spirituality from various sources, including parish liturgies, youth retreats and religious education classes. Those who attended Catholic high schools have at least been exposed to resources which can help to integrate these diverse spiritual elements.

Millennial collegians are living through one of the great transition periods in all human history as we move from the modern to the postmodern world. (cf. *Spirituality in Transition* by James Bacik, 1997). They are developing their fundamental spiritual outlook in a world which is post-patriarchal, post-denominational, post-industrial, post-colonial and post-Cold War. Their consciousness and very mode of processing information is shaped by the social media. Millennial col-

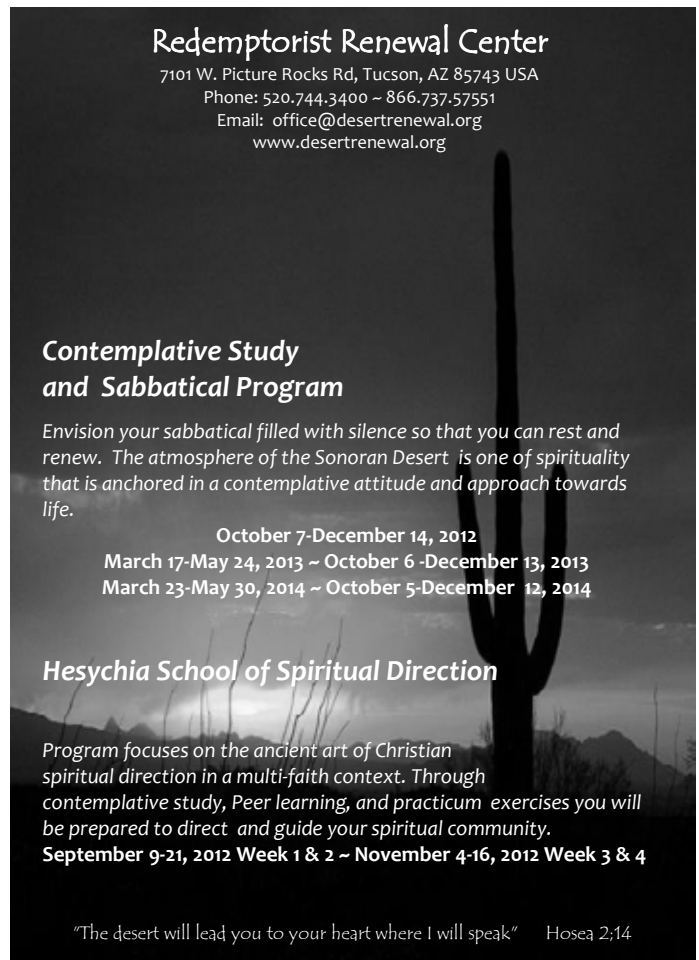
legians sometimes manifest characteristics of the premodern and modern world as well as the postmodern. An individual student may, for example, simultaneously hold a naive, premodern literal interpretation of the Bible, maintain a modern trust in science and technology as the sole instrument of human progress, and function with an unexamined postmodern assumption that any absolute truth claims are absurd and oppressive. All collegians today deal with transitions in their personal lives in the larger context of a world characterized by globalization that fosters change more than stability.

Impact of world and national events

From a young age, Millennials have lived in a world threatened by random, unpredictable violence, symbolized for some by 9/11. Some commentators believe this has produced a sense of “radical vulnerability,” which can lead to a greater awareness of absolute dependence on God. Other scholars have noted that collegians today seldom talk about September 11th and have shown diminished interest in the annual campus commemorations of the terrorist attack. Pearl Harbor directly affected the daily life of everyone in the United States, and the assassination of President Kennedy eventually led many into the civil rights movement. It has been much easier for the Millennial generation to go on with life as usual after September 11, 2001.

The 10th anniversary of 9/11 brought the event back to public attention, but it has had little obvious effect on Millennial spirituality. Perhaps there is a residual sense of vulnerability that will still appear as today’s collegians establish their own families and choose child rearing patterns.

Recent sociological studies of young adults indicate that most Catholic collegians today maintain fundamental beliefs that ground a viable spirituality. Around 90 percent affirm the divinity of Christ and believe that at Mass the bread and wine become his body and blood. They consider helping the poor as important to their faith as believing in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Although most Catholic collegians have no explicit working knowledge of the Second Vatican Council, many have appropriated from diverse ecclesial and cultural sources important conciliar themes. Foremost is the crucial notion that we are the church, that all the baptized are in some way co-responsible for its wellbeing. Most also have a general perception of the communal nature of the liturgy, the importance of religious liberty, the value of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, the expanded role of laity in the church, the unique mentorship of Christ and the need to work for social



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“The desert will lead you to your heart where I will speak” Hosea 2:14

justice. Many students find that the explicit study of Vatican II affirms convictions that already influence their spirituality.

Six Catholic spiritualities on campus

Sociological studies can help campus ministers understand general trends among collegians. We recognize, of course, that not all Millennials are the same and that we serve them best by respecting them as unique individuals. In order to put some order into our pastoral work, however, it is helpful to cluster these unique individuals in categories or types which reflect their dominant spiritual passion or interest. Let us consider six different types of spirituality.

1) Eclipsed

A good number of Catholic collegians show no particular interest in religious or spiritual matters. They do not attend

Mass on campus and seldom pray. Some feel they are too busy or have higher priorities, while others experience guilt feelings which blunt their spiritual longings. Yet they remain religious beings and identify themselves as Catholics in surveys. Their spirituality is not destroyed, but rather eclipsed by their current concerns. We can hope that the ordinary process of maturation or some major events, such as a personal crisis, the death of a loved one, getting married or having a baby, will uncover their latent spiritual needs. The church should keep the door open for these young adults. They need to know we miss them and welcome them if they are interested in returning to church.

2) Private

Some Catholic collegians seldom attend liturgies or participate in church activities, but pursue spiritual goals in other ways; for example, reading religious books, communing with nature, and praying privately. Their private spiritual journey can be fulfilling, but unconnected to traditional wisdom, it is threatened by fads and superficiality. Our hope is that they will discover and tap the rich spiritual tradition of their Catholic heritage. We must challenge the split between religion and spirituality and demonstrate that the institutional Catholic Church is a helpful resource and guide for spiritual growth.

3) Ecumenical

A growing number of Millennials simply assume that the divisions among Christians make no sense, and that we all should unite and work together. Some are loyal to their Catholic heritage, but others have little institutional loyalty and would join another Christian denomination if it brought them closer to Christ and better served their spiritual needs. In this competitive situation, we need vibrant Catholic parishes which will utilize the gifts and meet the needs of today's collegians.

4) Evangelical

A significant group of Catholic collegians manifests a piety that resembles the evangelical Christian groups on campus. They speak easily about their personal relationship to Jesus and gravitate to prayer groups with high emotional energy. Some are charismatic in orientation, emphasizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A few are really fundamentalists, who act aggressively in preserving their Catholic heritage from the threats of the contemporary world. In general, evangeli-

cal Catholics are interested in promoting a clear, traditional Catholic identity, maintaining doctrinal orthodoxy, and vigorously defending the Catholic pro-life perspective in the public forum. They tend to be passionate about their faith and are more likely [than other types of Catholic collegians] to consider a vocation as a priest or vowed religious. The church on campus should make room for the evangelical Catholics and learn how to tap their energy and enthusiasm, while directing them to the essentials of the diverse Catholic tradition.

5) Sacramental

Many Catholic Millennials still love their church and find their spiritual nourishment through regular participation in the official liturgy. They like worshipping with kindred spirits at Mass and are inclined to participate in faith sharing groups. As a result, they are attuned to the presence of God in everyday life and appreciate the sacramental character of the whole world. Some of them report deep spiritual experiences, while others simply trust that God is present in their daily lives. These students often need affirmation that their spiritual intuitions are in accord with the core of the Catholic tradition. In one sense, this spiritual passion highlights the incarnational sense characteristic of all Catholic spirituality. These collegians sometimes need reminders that liturgy and life are connected and that sharing in the Eucharist includes a call to work for justice and peace and to offer assistance to the needy.

6) Prophetic

Most campus ministry programs have a group of students committed to working in various ways for justice and peace in the world. They align themselves with the goals of organizations like Pax Christi and Bread for the World, devote themselves to causes such as racial harmony and environmental health, and try to help those in need. The developing tradition of Catholic social thought can be a great source of guidance and inspiration for them. Campus ministry should provide a variety of Christian service projects that involve personal interaction with those in need as well as theological reflection on their experience.

These categories obviously overlap. For example most evangelical Catholic collegians maintain a sacramental sense of life. Millennials with an ecumenical spirituality may also be committed to helping the poor. Despite their limitations, these

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types are helpful for pastoral planning because each model suggests a passion or interest which campus ministers can tap in planning programs and developing practices. The models also suggest spiritual limitations and weaknesses which require pastoral care. Concentrating on types based on the current interests of collegians moves us beyond the older categories of progressive, conservative, liberal, neo-conservative and reactionary, which represented various responses to Vatican II, but no longer fit the Millennials, who have no experience and little knowledge of the Council.

Students associated with each of the six spiritual types have specific interests and needs. The goal is to help them build on their strengths and rise above their limitations. Those overwhelmed by busyness or guilt need to get in touch with the eclipsed spiritual longings of their hearts. Those on a private spiritual journey need positive experiences of church which suggest that institutional religion can enrich their spiritual quest. Helping ecumenical Catholics develop stronger institutional loyalty is a difficult but worthy goal. Evangelical

Catholics need to concentrate on essentials, not mere accidentals in striving for an authentic Catholic identity. Those with a prophetic spirituality need reminders to nourish their passion for justice by private and liturgical prayer. Catholics who see the world as sacramental often need a stronger sense of social sin. Campus ministry programs should have the general goal of meeting the spiritual needs of diverse groups of students. ■

A recent study shows candidates are regularly turned away from religious communities because of student loans. Others don't seek out communities knowing their debt presents problems.

The chilling effect of education debt

A STUDY RELEASED FEBRUARY 22, 2012 revealed that educational debt is derailing the dreams of young people to become religious sisters, brothers or priests. And the problem is likely to get worse: religious institutes report an increase in the number of inquirers with large educational debt, and national averages show record levels of student debt continuing to rise.

The 2012 Study on Educational Debt and Vocations to Religious Life, conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University (CARA) for the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC), finds that seven in 10 institutes (69 percent) turned away at least one person because of student loans. In addition many religious communities ask young people to delay their applications to enter because of educational debt.

"For those entering religious life, the expectation is that they be debt-free," says Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, executive director of NRVC, "but for graduates in today's economy, where education costs have risen by 900 percent since 1978, paying off loans can take years to accomplish. The burden of student debt has become a serious problem for religious communities desirous of welcoming younger members."

Of approximately 15,000 serious inquiries to men's and women's religious institutes in the past 10 years, one in three (32 percent) involved a person with educational debt averaging \$28,000, a figure slightly higher than the \$25,000 national average.

The majority of communities (two in three) show a willingness to work with candidates with educational debt—and

some 42 percent of responding institutes assume educational debt for at least some applicants.

But, the study indicates, the practice of assuming debt places a heavy and growing financial burden on religious communities. Those applying to enter religious life during the past 10 years carried \$3 million in educational debt, and if national trends continue, that overall student debt load will likely rise by 5 percent annually.

Men and women whose educational debt is delaying their entrance into a religious community often develop creative strategies for paying off their loans, such as online candy sales, marathon runs or bingo fundraisers.

Several philanthropic organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus and individual donors or patrons of the institutes, also provide assistance with educational debt. But the study finds that no national vehicle exists for redressing the burden of educational debt on religious vocations.

"Because religious sisters, brothers and priests are vital to the life of the church and provide great service to society," says Bednarczyk, "we plan to bring together key stakeholders to develop strategies to ease this significant and growing barrier to religious vocations."

In response to the study, the NRVC is also producing a handbook on best practices for communities working with inquirers and candidates who have educational debt. The study finds that three in 10 religious institutes have no policy or accepted practice for dealing with educational debt, and another 15 percent say their policy needs updating.

The study was funded by a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The complete study results are at nrvc.net. ■

Quick facts on student debt and religious life

- **Men joining at higher rate** Although women greatly outnumber men among the finally professed, currently about the same number of men as women are in initial formation. Institutes of men are less likely than institutes of women to have no one in initial formation or to have only one or two in initial formation. Institutes of men are more likely than institutes of women to have more than ten in initial formation.

- **One third have debt, average \$28,000** On average, responding institutes with at least one serious inquirer in the last 10 years report that for about a third of these inquiries (32 percent) the person had educational debt at the time of inquiry, with an average of \$28,000.

- **Many with debt turned away** Of those responding religious institutes with at least three serious inquirers in the last 10 years who had educational debt, seven in 10 (69 percent) turned away at least some inquirers because of their educational debt.

- **Third of formal applicants quit due to debt** Religious institutes that have had at least three serious inquirers in the last 10 years who had educational debt at the time of their inquiry report that this debt is having a dampening effect on the institute. A third (34 percent) report that at least some serious inquirers have not pursued the application process because of their educational debt. Three in ten (29 percent) say that formal applicants have not completed the application process because of their educational debt. A fifth (22 percent) say that the unit has experienced financial strain due to the educational debt of candidates or members.

- **Only about half of applicants with debt accepted** Responding institutes report that slightly under half of the formal applicants with educational debt were eventually accepted into candidacy or postulancy.



Sister Kathryn Press, ASCJ (right), now a novice with the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, had prohibitive education debt before entering religious life, but with a combination of work, fundraising and assistance, she was able to pay off her educational debt and enter the community.

- **Debtors on the upswing** Among institutes that have experience in dealing with the issue of educational debt, more than half (55 percent) are experiencing an increase in the number of inquirers with educational debt.

- **Debt delays other life commitments** While the NRVC-CARA study did not examine the effect of student debt on marriage and childbearing, there are signs of a parallel delay in those life commitments, too. As early as 2003, the Nellie Mae Corporation found that 14 percent of borrowers reported delayed marriage and 21 percent delayed childbearing. Other economic analysts have also linked debt with delayed life commitments.

Is it worth learning how to use these new technologies? Yes, says this vocation director. Internet technologies never replace face-to-face contact, but they can enhance your outreach and lead you toward valuable personal contact.

Social media is everywhere: steps to using it in vocation ministry

By FATHER JAMES T. GALLAGHER, CSC

IT IS CLEAR THAT SOCIAL MEDIA has become a dominant way people communicate. No longer is it just a way friends and family keep up with one another. Social media helps companies reach out to customers. It allows institutions to share their stories. It connects groups of people with common interests, and so much more.

With social media becoming a virtual marketplace, it is also a place vocation directors can create a presence. It has become one more place where we can connect with those who are interested in considering a vocation to the religious life or priesthood. Indeed, with the sheer numbers of people connected through social media, especially the percentage of young people, it is basically a necessity that vocation directors be present so that we are available.

Father James T. Gallagher, CSC is a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross and serves as the director of the Office of Vocations for the United States Province of Priests and Brothers. Now in his third year as director and fourth in the vocation office, he lives in residence in a dorm on campus at the University of Notre Dame. Fr. Jim has also served in Campus Ministry and Residence Life at the University of Portland.



The question then becomes how do we do this? How do we create a solid, sustainable, and authentic presence in the world of social media?

Before jumping into my thoughts on the topic, a few disclaimers are in order. First off I am not sure I can be considered an expert in the field; in fact I am a little amazed that I find myself in the position of writing an article on this topic. Personally I appreciate the computer and Internet as useful tools, yet they do not often figure into ways I like to socialize. If I am to interact with an individual, I much prefer spending the time in person or on the phone. When it comes ways to spend a few minutes of free time, I do not think first about checking Facebook. Indeed, my ideal day is one in which I never have to turn my computer on. (Alas those days don't come along too often.)

Social media, then, is not an arena of interaction that I turn to naturally. Yet if I am to be effective in the role that my community has entrusted to me, I need to be attentive to where people are spending their time. I have to offer information where they go looking for information, and I need to make sure that I am as accessible as possible. So I have slowly but surely waded into the world of social media and the Internet. Little by little our office has added to our online presence and figured out what works well for each platform. Our vocation office consists of two full-time religious and three full-



A presence online is just the portion that helps people to connect with us. From there I want to be speaking with them over the phone and visiting them in person.

time lay staff. We have a large staff compared to many other offices, but we are a national office.

What I offer here are a few principles I have developed to help us keep focused and on top of what we have taken on. As well I will look at a few different types of social media and share thoughts about what we have learned in using them.

Five principles for using social media

It is important for vocation ministers to take a step back and think about what they are getting into and how to go about it without overwhelming themselves or becoming distracted from the rest of their responsibilities. Here are a few principles for guidance.

1) Set a purpose

What is it you hope to get out of social media? Consider this in general and then consider what you hope to get out of each individual platform (that is, each type of social media). There are many platforms, and each can do a host of different things. First consider what you want a given type of social media to do for you so you have something to guide your use of the tool. Your purpose can change as you learn more about existing tools, yet it is important to continually have

in mind the reason you are engaging Facebook, Twitter or any other type of media. Without that clear goal in mind, the media itself can take

you for a ride instead of becoming a tool for you to use. If you have it, use it. The one thing worse than not being present in social media is to have an inactive presence. If you have, for instance, a Facebook page that has not been posted on in over a couple of months, it reflects even worse than if you didn't have one at all.

If you put something out there, make sure someone in your community is taking the time to keep it updated. Updates do not need to happen every day, but they shouldn't take place only a couple times a year.

2) Put it in its proper place

The heart of vocation ministry is to work with men and women who are discerning a vocation; it is not to build the best social media outlet available. So while developing a great presence on the Internet is important, it cannot encompass the whole of our efforts. A presence online is just the portion that helps people to connect with us. From there I want to be

speaking with them over the phone and visiting them in person. Creating a good online presence can quickly overwhelm all of our time, so it is important to continually keep in mind that it is only a portion of what we do. It is also not the most important thing that I do. If it comes down to spending the time with a prospect in person or getting the next post out on Facebook, I will take the time with the prospect. So even though I just mentioned that it is important to keep your sites up to date, doing so should not be done at the expense of the prospects that you are already in contact with.

3) Take it one step at a time

Again a whole host of different platforms and tools exist. Trying to get up and running on all of them at the same time can quickly overwhelm and overextend you. Pick one or two platforms (Facebook is a good place to start). If you choose

I recommend keeping what you are doing [with social media] focused on those who are considering a vocation, but not limited to them.

just one tool, become familiar with it, start to use it, and see how that goes.

Once you have that tool working, see if it covers all your needs, and if not, take a look around to see if another platform might serve that need.

Our vocation office is where it is with the platforms we use because we started with a couple and then added as needed and as we were comfortable. Don't try to take on the whole of social media all at one time.

4) Get others involved.

If you have a professional communications staff for your community or one of its ministries, be sure to use them as a resource. But even if you don't have communication professionals, talk to those who use these social media tools. Talk to any youth or members of your community who use Facebook or who Tweet or post on YouTube. If you are not familiar with the tool, talk to those who are, ask how they use it and what they use it for. This way you can have a sense of what the platform can do and what people use it for.

Talking with others can help to focus your plan for each type of social media. Also have other members of your community supply you with pictures, reflections and videos. You

don't have to provide all the content that will go up on the sites. While you may be the manager of the sites, you can have others helping to produce the content, and some members can even have access to post their materials, as well. For example I asked several Holy Cross men if they would help write for our blog. Each of them takes responsibility for one post a month, which then gives the blog at least one fresh post each week.

5) Keep it focused but not too focused

Remember who your target audience is. Sometimes in working with social media platforms we can get caught up in building greater and greater numbers of friends and followers. Yet if those friends and followers are not interested in learning more about a vocation, is it worth the energy and effort to get them?

I would rather have 40-50 followers who are men with a genuine interest in discerning their vocation than have 500 followers, of whom only a handful are actually considering a vocation. Yet at the same time, I don't want to limit my followers to strictly those who are considering a vocation. Sometimes the person following our blog or Facebook postings will be the person to recommend Holy Cross to a prospect or to pass along information to the guy who is considering a vocation. So I recommend keeping what you are doing focused on those who are considering a vocation, but not limited to them.

That should be enough on the principles to help guide the process of dipping into the world of social media. The next step is to wade in. There are many different social media platforms out there. We at Holy Cross have chosen several to help give men who are discerning their vocation an opportunity to get to know us. Below are the platforms we're using.

Connect your website

A standard website does not constitute a social media platform per se, but it is hard to talk about our online presence without mentioning the website. We use it as the meat and potatoes of our presence on the Internet. It is here that we have tools for discernment, information about our community, information about our formation programs and more. Everything else that we do out on the Internet points back to this site. One goal with social media use is to drive traffic to our website.

It is here they will really get the bulk of the information. Once on the website, everything inevitably leads to our contact form encouraging them to let us know who they are so that we can be in more direct communication.

One problem with websites is that they can be much more static than the social media sites. Thus you have to work to keep a website fresh and new. This is where things like embedded news feeds from Facebook or Twitter can come in handy. You embed the feed (Facebook calls it a “social plug in”) on your front page, and then anything you post on Facebook or Twitter shows up on your website as well. (See this concept in action on the NRVC website, nrvc.net.)

With the Facebook news feed social plug-in, you have a free, ready-made way to keep information on your website fresh. Learn more about this capability in the Facebook “Help” section. (Go to your Facebook page and find the Help menu on the far right side, next to “Home.”)

Blog for sharing reflections and photos

Our blog is the venue for sharing reflections about our life in Holy Cross. When we first began we used it primarily to post quick little updates about the community or notices about events. That was really all we had time to do. Now we are posting longer, 500-word reflections that give insights into our common life and work. We have not found more time to write; rather we are spreading out the responsibilities. Several members of our community write once a month, with others writing reflections for special occasions. This provides us with plenty of material to post and a range of insights to share.

Another key to running a blog is to find a way to get the blog posts to people. Personally I am not one to go from blog to blog to see what other people are writing, so with people like me in mind we also connected our blog to a service called Feedburner. This allows individuals to sign up to have the blogs emailed out to them. This way they don’t have to come looking for us, each reflection pops up in their e-mail inbox. Take a look at our “subscribe” button on our blog at <http://vocation.nd.edu/blog/>.

Facebook and using a “Page”

Currently Facebook is the place to be when it comes to social media. The problem is that it is a very public venue. Before diving in, I was concerned about whether it would be a worthwhile tool. In my experience many discerners can be a bit shy about identifying themselves as someone considering a vocation. We discovered that developing a Page on Facebook was the way to go for our office. People are able to “like” a Page (making themselves known), or they can visit and see what is happening without even being a member of Facebook.

Facebook as a “Page”—which is distinct from a personal Facebook profile that belongs to an individual—allows a business or organization to have a public Facebook presence. The other benefit of a Page is that several people can serve as administrators, so it is not just up to a single person to post and manage the Page. Being an “administrator” is a good way for others in your community to be involved in public outreach and a good way for you not to have to do everything.

A Page (and you will probably want it to be an “organization Page” when Facebook asks you to select your Page’s identity) lets you post pictures (of community members—not discerners!), publicize events, and share links to other Pages or articles or videos.

The Holy Cross priests use our Page for all of the above, but primarily we post little bits of information that we want people to be aware of. If there is anything newsworthy about our community, we post it there and add a link to wherever people might find more information. Any new posts to our blog or videos added to YouTube are mentioned there along with a link so people can click straight into it.

To get a sense of how you might want to organize a Facebook Page, go to the Pages of other religious communities and see what they are doing. There are many different approaches. Much to the chagrin of other organizations on Facebook, we do not use our Page to generate conversations there on Facebook.

I figure that those who will really benefit from the conversation are the ones who will not necessarily enter into a public conversation about vocations. In my mind our Facebook posts keep us on the radar of those who are following us. They are there on their Facebook accounts on a regular basis; if we are posting on a regular basis, then we are showing up on their radar, and sooner or later, when they are ready, they will ask for the conversation.

Twitter for keeping up

We use Twitter as an extension of our efforts on Facebook. Many young adults use Twitter as a way to keep up with what is going on in the world. They subscribe to people they know and organizations that they want to keep up with. Then with a quick scroll through the tweets they can see what is happening. Most tweets will contain a link to more information, so if as they are scrolling through they want to know more, they just have to click the link and read on.

As with Facebook, if this is where people are looking for information, I want to be sure I show up from time to time

when they are scrolling through. What is great here is that we have Facebook and Twitter connected such that when we post on Facebook, it will automatically go out on Twitter and vice versa. So using Twitter was just a matter of setting up the account and connecting it with Facebook. One can learn how to do this by typing “connect Facebook to Twitter” into Google.

YouTube delivers visual impact

People like watching videos. It gives them a chance to go beyond reading about us to seeing and hearing us. It can create a very personal, emotional connection between your community and viewers. Videos posted on YouTube can also easily be posted on Facebook as well as embedded in a website. The difficult thing is that producing professional videos can be time intensive and expensive. Here again we try not to do all of the work ourselves. These days many of our institutions and members are making little videos about all sorts of things. When I see one that gives a good look at our community life or one of our institutions, I ask to have a copy of the video and load it up onto our free YouTube channel. Anyone can sign into YouTube and establish a channel.

On the other hand, people do not expect professional quality when it comes to videos on YouTube. So all of your videos don't need to be studio quality; sometimes it is a matter of having a flip camera with a video option or a low-end camcorder that allows you to record and share events.

Flickr for sharing photos

We entered into Flickr—a photo storage and sharing site—as a way to store and sort through our photos. We also wanted to give members of our community access to photos in case they would like to include them in their website or print material. As it turns out we actually have had people from outside of Holy Cross who search Flickr for stock photos ask us if they can use our pictures for a projects. Flickr is not a key part of our online presence, but it is part of it.

Google Alerts to track news

This is not a social media platform, but it is a handy tool for generating content to post on Facebook and Twitter. We set up an alert so that once a day Google runs a search of the term “Congregation of Holy Cross” within news-related websites. Then Google sends me an e-mail with the results. This helps me be aware of when our members or institutions are in the

news. When the e-mail comes in, I give it a quick scan, and if there is anything of interest I will pull up Facebook and make a quick post. It is a fast and helpful way to produce content to post. Note also: you need not get a daily e-mail as I do; Google allows you to get these updates on a weekly or “as it happens” basis. See google.com/alerts.

What I've written here is simply an attempt at recording what one vocation ministry office is doing in the big world of social media. What is working in social media—at the moment—for Holy Cross may be different from what is right for your community. There is no single right way to be present in social media. You don't need to know all the latest techniques before you attempt to establish a presence. The important thing is to step into this world, familiar or unfamiliar, and begin seeing how you can spread the good news of your community—and the good news of Jesus Christ—to the world. ■

Our social media sites

Web: www.holycrossvocations.org

Facebook:
<http://www.facebook.com/holycrossvocations>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CSCVocations>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/cscvocations>

Blog: <http://vocation.nd.edu/blog/>

Flickr:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/45324663@N08/>

BOOK NOTES

Good news for the church: most priests are happy

BY FATHER JIM KENT, OFM CONV.

SOMEONE I KNOW retired before he was 50. It was one of his life's goals, and he retired comfortably to a life of sun, water and leisure. He was afforded this by having a stellar career for a major corporation where he had great personal and organizational success. His last day, after he had cleaned out his desk and office, he made a stop to the dumpster where he threw all the awards and plaques and other honors such a career had earned him. They had only been a means to an end and no longer meant anything to him. He has been very successful but not necessarily happy, except to retire young.

Happiness is so often elusive. There are those with money, power and celebrity who don't seem happy at all. And even for those who are apparently successful, happiness can be difficult to sustain.

Why, then, are priests happy? For many years various studies have indicated priests were some of the happiest people in any profession. These include studies con-

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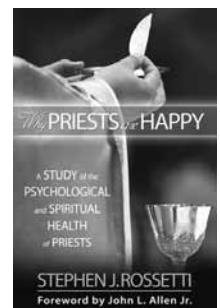


ducted by the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Hartford Courant*, the National Federation of Priests' Councils and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), all of which found priests to be "happy" to "very happy" in a range from 88-94 percent. Despite the sexual abuse scandal and public and media misconceptions about the priesthood—especially celibacy—priests are overall a happy cohort in a pressure-packed profession.

But what makes them so? Monsignor Stephen J. Rossetti tells us in great detail and nuance in his book, *Why Priests are Happy: A Study of the Psychological and Spiritual Health of Priests* (Ave Maria Press, 2011). He is a priest of the Diocese of Syracuse, former president and CEO of Saint Luke Institute, a licensed psychologist, and lecturer and author of a number of articles and several books, including *The Joy of Priesthood*. He is now a clinical associate professor of pastoral studies at the Catholic University of America.

His findings are based on a survey conducted in 2008-2009 (referred to as the 2009 survey) of 2,482 priests from 23 dioceses in the United States, of whom 13.6 percent were religious priests, and augmented by a 2003-2004 survey (the 2004 survey) of 1,242 priests conducted in 16 dioceses of whom 15.1 percent were religious priests.

Rossetti begins with a summation of his findings.



This overview enables the reader to easily focus on any area of specific interest and, therefore, allows his work to also be used as a reference book. While the whole has great value, certainly vocation and formation directors will be drawn to specific parts that most apply to their ministry.

Priests who describe themselves as happy have some common elements that help lead to this happiness: 1) a sense of inner peace; 2) a sense that celibacy is not merely a requirement but a lifestyle to which God has called them; 3) a strong personal spiritual life, including commitment to the liturgy of the hours and sacrament of reconciliation; 4) a good relationship with their bishop (or religious superior) and with other priests; 5) close personal friendships; 6) devotion to the Blessed Mother. Good physical and psychological self-care are also key factors.

Conversely, priests who report to be unhappy are likely to feel unappreciated and lonely, and they fail to sustain some or all of the elements mentioned above. This tends to lead to a downward spiral, burnout and, for some, departure from the priesthood. While all priests experience frustrations, difficult assignments, personal and professional set-backs, those inclined to be happy overall work through these times. Rossetti notes that this is in part due to the fact priests have an understanding of and appreciation for the redemptive value of suffering, which helps get them through dark periods.

The 2009 and 2004 surveys also point to some commonalities and differences in cohorts of priests. Younger priests (“new priests”) and older priests (“grandfathers”) had more common responses than the middle cohort (Vatican II priests). New priests and “grandfathers” more often share similar theological perspectives and spiritual practices. The middle cohort values the “spirit of Vatican II” and are also likely the ones who shoulder more responsibilities in ministry, e.g., pastor of larger or multiple parishes, which thereby tempered their responses to certain questions in the survey. There are also definite nuances between cohorts, at times, rising from generational experiences.

Recommendations for vocation ministers

Based on his findings, Rossetti offers recommendations to bishops and other leadership, to priests themselves and to formators and vocation directors. To this latter group he suggests screening candidates for things that will make priesthood too challenging, including: obesity, dysfunctional childhood, history of sexual problems, and difficulty in developing close relationships. Vocation and formation directors should also

help dispel the negative myth of priesthood, especially around celibacy, which most priests find life-giving. They should tout that “priesthood is a very fulfilled and happy vocation.”

As a priest who has served for 13 years as a vocation minister and now as minister provincial, I found much of what Rossetti has to share right on target. Certainly those who are happy as priests or religious have a committed relationship with God and prayer, are well rooted and balanced between ministry and community life and have developed some intimate friendships. While the manner of prayer and devotion may vary, it’s the commitment to nurture these varied relationships that often leads to happiness.

I must admit that I’ve experienced my priesthood and religious life as a happy one. It’s had moments of challenge, but I’ve never regretted God’s call for me. Many years ago, Father Ray Carey (Archdiocese of Portland) encouraged a group of us vocation ministers to start a file of “Gratitudes,” which I did. These are cards, letters and e-mails from people who have written to thank me for something I’ve done in ministry or life, many of which are quite touching and powerful. It was a comfort to find an appropriate way to retain these words of thanks, and an even greater comfort to know they are there in a file that is ever growing. I rarely go through and reread them, but just knowing they are there has gotten me through some difficult times. And I must add, the person I know who retired early once told me if he had had such “gratitudes” to take with him from his job they certainly would not have ended up in the dumpster.

By and large, priests are a happy and fulfilled group of people. The entire church needs to shout this good news from the mountaintops. Rossetti’s research and book will give this voice greater volume and pitch. ■

Man Seeks God, by Eric Weiner

After hearing Eric Weiner in a radio interview, I originally got this book for the chapter about the time he spent living with the Franciscans of the Renewal in the Bronx. Weiner, a secular Jew, records his visits with practitioners of eight different faiths as he seeks a spiritual home for himself. I ended up relishing the entire book. Vocation ministers, too, may enjoy this book, not only for the interesting insights the author has about Catholic religious life, but also for its good humor and its rich exploration of that most human of urges: to find and connect to God’s presence. —Carol Schuck Scheiber



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