

# HORIZON



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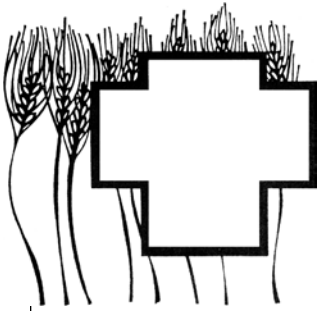
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# HORIZON

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](mailto:nrvc@nrvc.net). Web: [www.nrvc.net](http://www.nrvc.net).

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

## Valuing vocations, connecting continents

**W**HEN I THINK OF GLOBAL interconnections, two images spring to mind: first, a UNICEF card rainbow of people in ethnic dress holding hands and second, the Twin Towers burning. Peace and war. Those two images lead to plenty of questions. How can we share this planet and conduct our arguments fairly and without violence? How will we keep the planet from environmental ruin? How will we arrest the poverty that grinds down more than a third of the world?

Religious communities have much to contribute to and learn from these discussions. Religious have been bridging continents for centuries. They know a thing or two about lifting people out of poverty. They have experience in sitting down to table with people who profess the same beliefs but whose ethnicity, generation, personality or experience is far removed from their own. They've learned how to build community, something that's very much needed at the international level.

As the world rushes toward globalism, the November 2010 convocation of the National Religious Vocation Conference is focusing on global concerns and their connection to vocation ministry. (See the convocation ad on the inside front cover). This edition of *HORIZON* helps readers prepare for that event. Our first three articles have been written by religious from other countries, and they ask questions close to the heart of vocation ministers everywhere. Father Joseph Delargy, OCSO, in "You are God's unshakable hope" asks

what we can learn from an ordinary story of call and response (page 4). Father Paolo Martinelli, OFM Cap asks how we can prepare new members for life in cross-cultural community or ministry settings in "Preparing new members for an intercultural world" (page 8). Judith Eydmann, author of "UK vocation ministry: new ventures and growth," asks what is the context for British vocations ministry and what is working there (page 15).

Our other contributors zero in on issues that vocation ministers from any country will care about. Paul Jarzembowski asks how best to collaborate with young adult ministers (page 21). Most Reverend John M. Quinn articulates what makes priesthood in a religious community distinct (page 28). Sister Charlene Diorka, SSJ points out how membership makes a difference in vocation ministry (page 31). And Avis Clendenen reviews a book that sheds light on the Millennial generation (page 36).

While global issues can seem far removed from the daily concerns of responding to inquirers or delivering vocation talks, in fact, we live and breathe and have our being within my two images of international-connections. Each of us is one of those figures on the UNICEF card. Each of us lost something when the Twin



Towers collapsed. As we move forward in our varied roles in nurturing vocations, we do well to remember how we fit into the bigger planetary picture.

—Carol Schuck Scheiber, editor,  
cscheiber@nrvc.net

The ordinary calling of St. Aelred to religious life centuries ago offers nuggets of wisdom to modern-day vocation ministers.

# You are God's unshakable hope

BY FATHER JOSEPH DELARGY, OCSO

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*Across cultures and around the world there is a basic human desire to nurture hope. Vocations ministers in England and Ireland believe in hope. In that regard they share a common sentiment with their American counterparts, as well as often sharing common congregational roots and similar challenges and blessings. In 2009 many of them gathered in Birmingham, England under the theme of hope in the future. We present the keynote address here.*

**T**HE MINISTRY OF BEING a vocations director can be one of the most blessed ministries in the church today, or it can be one of the most difficult and lonely ones. It can be wonderful to accompany people as they discover their call from God, to help guide them along the path in responding to God's call. On the other hand in those orders and dioceses and congregations that are receiving no vocations, and sadly that can be many of us, it can be a very disheartening job; the vocations director can see little fruit for his or her work, all efforts coming to nothing. As Pope John Paul II said in *Vita Consecrata* (64): "Great spiritual and material energies have been and are being expended in the sphere of vocational promotion, but the results do not always match expectations and efforts."

I have even heard of cases where vocations directors receive hostility from their communities, as if they are to

blame for the lack of new members, or as if they are not doing enough to attract them. Also the vocations director is at the front line, at the interface between the congregation and the broader world. The future of the congregation or order or diocese, to a certain extent, is held in their hands, so there is also the great weight of responsibility.

Today we have gathered to look at ways to revitalize our commitment to vocation promotion, to see the vocations director as a person of unshakable hope, and hope is so important. The Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life meeting in Rome in 1997 said in its final document, *New Vocations for a New Europe*, that those in charge of vocations promotion must have "a hope that is stronger than every fear and doubt."

## Quintessential vocation story

I would like to frame what I have to say within the story of one person's vocation. That person is St. Aelred of Rievaulx. The story of his vocation provides a framework to hang eight thoughts or ideas on for our reflection. I choose St. Aelred for—apart from him being a Cistercian, as I am—2010 is the 900th anniversary of his birth.

St. Aelred was born in 1110 at Hexham in Northumberland. When he was 24, he joined the recently founded monastery of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire. Eventually he became the abbot of that monastery, and it flourished under his leadership, increasing to over 600 monks. He died in 1167. His feast day is the 12th of January.

*St. Aelred's Life* was written by his contemporary, Walter Daniel, a monk who lived with Aelred for the last 17 years of his life. In this work we hear about Aelred's vocation and call

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*Father Joseph Delargy, OCSO has been a Trappist monk of the Monastery of Mount St. Bernard in England for 24 years. He has been abbot of the community since 2001.*

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to religious life. It is not particularly different from anyone's call—that is why I am using it—but I believe by looking at it clearly we are given eight lessons as vocations directors. I would just like to look at that section:

When he was 24 years old, God willed that Aelred, for the welfare and comfort of many, should give himself to the way of holiness. God willed, by his grace, to call Aelred to the laudable and happy state, inspired him to despise the vainglory of this world and to make profession of the religious life. In thinking about this Aelred realized that (for him) the monastic life was the way to receive the heavenly promises, but, fearing to give open expression to his intention, he concealed his wish from those around him.

Shortly afterward he was in the neighborhood of the city of York. By a happy chance he heard a companion telling how two years ago certain monks had come to England from across the sea, White Monks. They venerated poverty, were joined together in charity, spurning vainglory; everything they did was at the motion of the abbot's nod; the humbler one was, the greater he was among his brothers...and so on.... Such was the story which Aelred was told by his friend. At this point he exclaimed "And where, oh where, is the way to those men and that place?" His friend replied, "Don't be disturbed, they are close by at Rievaulx." They then made arrangements to visit the monastery the next day.

The next morning Aelred went to visit the monastery with some companions. He was met by the prior, the guestmaster and the gatekeeper. They took

Aelred to prayers, and after prayers they preached the word of God to him. The power of their talk of spiritual things was almost too great for him

to bear. Yet it was not on that day that the call of the place made Aelred choose it as his home. He returned to his lodgings and spent another night there, and after some talk among the company, he went to bed.

In the morning he called his servants to bridle, saddle and harness the horses for the journey home to Scotland. Now on the way home he had to pass along the edge of the hill overlooking the valley, where a road led down to the gate of the monastery. When he reached the spot, still aflame with the heat of the Holy Spirit and the love of the Lord Jesus, he asked his servant if he would like to go down to the abbey and visit it again. As our father Aelred would tell us later, if the servant had said "no," he himself would not have gone down to visit the abbey again. But the servant wanted to, so they went down and were met by the prior and guestmaster and gatekeeper again. The monks had a shrewd suspicion that the will of the visitor—who had come to visit them again—had been prompted by longing for his well-being, and they were led on to probe his mind with more searching admonitions. I need say no more. Aelred agreed at last to become a monk. There was no more dissembling for him now that his duty had been made clear. He divided all his goods, he abandoned everything that he had and entered the monastery. (Adapted and

We see the importance of what Aelred first hears about the life. It is significant in his decision. How do people hear about our particular way of life today, and what do they hear? What do we say?

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simplified from *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx* by Walter Daniel.)

## Eight lessons St. Aelred teaches us

As we reflect on that passage I believe we can extract eight lessons for us to reflect on in our work as vocations directors.

**1) It was God who called St. Aelred.** It is so obvious, but we do forget that. We do not call people to the religious life, nor do our orders. God calls people; God may use us as a medium, but the call is God's. The person has to respond to that call from God, but so do we. With all our barrage of tests, psychological assessments and checks, we can turn the whole process into a very human thing and forget the aspect of "vocation" that is the call of God. The fact is that ultimately the call, the choice, is God's, which is why it is so important to pray for vocations, and this is a fact stressed in all church documents and papal pronouncements on vocations. In Matthew's Gospel we hear Jesus saying to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." At Mount St. Bernard we have a novena of prayer for vocations each year on the nine days before the feast of St. Joseph.

We are accustomed to speaking about the lack of new members, but there *are* new members. I am just back from Africa, and some of our communities are having to put a temporary stop on applicants because they can't cope with all the people who wish to join. There are vocations, but just not here. God still can and does call people, as we see in Africa or Eastern Europe, calls them dynamically and numerously. So we can hope what he does there he can do here. That is why we must pray for vocations.

**2) God called Aelred "for the welfare and comfort of many."** A person receives a vocation not solely for his or her own benefit but for the benefit of others, "for the welfare and comfort of many." We have to feel that. No religious order is eternal, as Pope John Paul II said, the consecrated life will always exist in the church, but its particular manifestation can and does change. Orders come and go, some have fulfilled their mission, new orders start. But we have to see that we are not just here for ourselves; our vocation is not just for our personal benefit but for the welfare and comfort of many, and that is why we want and need more vocations. We don't just want vocations in order to keep this or that house open, this or that institution going, but rather so that our work, our mission, can continue. We have to turn our attention away from ourselves and our own survival and fix it on the

work that won't be done, the people who won't be helped, the charism that will be absent if we don't survive.

**3) Aelred's call, as with all calls, is the call to follow Jesus. Only secondly is it a call to this or that religious order or vocation.** I think that was probably our experience too; we felt something stirring within us, a desire to give our lives to God, to follow Jesus, and only afterward, after thought and reflection, did the particular way of doing that become clear. As the passage says, "In thinking about this Aelred realized that for him the monastic life was the way to receive the heavenly promises." We have to present our life primarily as a way of following Jesus, a response to his call to "follow me." Our different charisms are just different manifestations, different ways, of following the same call, the call of Jesus to "follow me."

Aelred's first response to his call was hesitancy: "fearing to give open expression to his intention, he concealed his wish from those around him." Again this is a common experience, and it was certainly my experience. **4) When people first feel they have a vocation, they can feel scared, unworthy, not good enough, not holy enough, not clever enough, frightened of being rejected and so forth.** We must be very sensitive to that. When a person first makes an inquiry of us, however tentative, that is a very big step for him or her, an enormous step. It is not something a person does lightly. We should respect that first approach, as we are dealing with something sacred.

Also people are very sensitive to the first response they receive from us. I would add that even in no hope situations (the applications we sometimes receive from married atheists or from psychiatric units) we should still respond with the utmost courtesy and respect, even if our response has to be negative. We should never be haughty. Whilst our assessment of candidates has to be rigorous, especially nowadays, we should also keep the situation in perspective. Some scenarios present the religious house as if it exists in a world solely inhabited by criminals, the mentally ill and abusers all clambering to enter religious life and that it is the principal job of the vocations director to keep these people out. I have encountered unsuitable applicants, but I don't think I have encountered an applicant who is applying in bad faith or with a bad will. It is quite rare.

**5) We see the importance of what Aelred first hears about the life. It is significant in his decision.** How do people hear about our particular way of life today, and what do they hear? What do we say? These are important questions that cover the whole area of vocation Web sites, literature,



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advertising, open days and so forth. In an article in *Human Development* called “A Vocation to What?” by Catherine Harmer, a Medical Mission Sister, she writes:

In putting out our invitation for others to join us, I think it is essential that we convey the core of who we are and why we exist, in both general and specific ways. Some risks are involved. If our picture of ourselves does not attract others, we may need to look at who we are and what we are doing. It may be that our life is unusually demanding, which would tell me that we need to contact women and men who want such a life. If our life is too comfortable, we may need to look at ourselves to see how and when we lost the challenging and demanding elements. I am not sure that a comfortable life would have been very attractive to me when I first looked at a vocational brochure. I was a bit frightened by the challenge but decided I wanted to try. (*Human Development* Volume 22, 2001 p. 11)

**6) We then see how important Aelred’s first contact with the monastery was; it was the welcome Aelred received that struck him.** In the official church teaching this aspect of vocations promotion is stressed so much. In *Vita Consecrata* we read, “The invitation of Jesus, ‘Come and see’ (John 1:39) is the golden rule of pastoral work for promoting vocations, even today.” It is personal contact. *Starting Afresh from Christ* says how prospective vocations have to see “visible signs of joy, communities that are welcoming.” We have to be open to receiving people who “come and see.”

**7) When Aelred visits the monastery, we see that the monks spoke the word of God to him—they believed in the life and transmitted their enthusiasm to him.** At the right moment we shouldn’t be hesitant in speaking about our life or proposing it to others. Once again in *Vita Consecrata* (64) we read:

Following the example of founders and foundresses, this work aims at presenting the attraction of the person of the Lord Jesus and the beauty of the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel. A primary responsibility of all consecrated men and women is, therefore, to propose with courage, by word and example, the ideal of the following of Christ, and then to support the response to the Spirit’s action in the heart of those who are called.

We need to enthuse people with our life. But in an interesting article entitled “Modelling: A Challenge for Formators,” Father Michael Casey, a monk of the same order

as me, speaks about how being appointed or being asked to be vocations director can call us to our own conversion. Maybe we are going through our own period of midlife crisis or lukewarmness, and then the superior asks us to be vocations director. We are asked to look at our own commitment to our life; we have to be convinced of the value of it if we are going to communicate that to others. So a primary task of the vocations director is to rediscover the beauty of his or her own calling and vocation.

Finally Aelred’s decision, or the way he made it, was not completely rational; it depended on whether his servant wanted to visit Rievaulx again. **8) Somehow we have to encourage those considering a vocation to take the risk.** Much vocation literature today speaks about the inability of the present generation to make a commitment, but I feel it is more a question of an inability of making a decision one can’t guarantee is correct. There is an element of risk in joining a religious order, and often people are reluctant to take the risk. This is paradoxical; for the same people may be from a generation that takes pleasure in extreme sports or gambling or drug taking, where the risk element is part of the attraction and pleasure. Like falling in love or getting married, entering religious life does not always stand up to rational analysis, and sometimes you just have to say that to people.

Like falling in love or getting married, entering religious life does not always stand up to rational analysis, and sometimes you just have to say that to people.

These are the eight lessons I believe we can extract from the story of St. Aelred’s vocation as we think of the role of the vocations director. I would like to conclude with a final thought from the 1998 Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life, *New Vocations for a New Europe*. The authors speak of new vocations and stress that if our novitiates become full, it will be something new, not something old. Often when we speak about vocations and our dream of full novitiates, there can be the unspoken subscript “like it was in the past when I was a novice.” But we cannot go back, we can’t re-create the past; the past has gone. If an influx of novices comes, it will be new, it will be different, it will not be a repeat of the past. This may seem a subtle distinction to make, but it is an important one. We are not looking back with nostalgia; we are looking forward with hope. ■

Many religious communities are deeply affected—both in ministry and membership—by the intermingling of cultures in a globalized world. The new reality has challenges and blessings, especially for new members.

# Preparing new members for an intercultural world

BY FATHER PAOLO MARTINELLI, OFM CAP

*This article is condensed from an address the author gave at the 73rd Semestral Assembly of the Union of Superiors General (USG), held in Rome, from May 27 to 29, 2009, on the theme: “Geographical and cultural changes in Consecrated Life: challenges and prospects.” Warm thanks to the USG for allowing this presentation to be shared with an even wider audience through its appearance here in HORIZON.*

**I**N ORDER TO FIND my way through the topic of interculturality, I take my cue from my personal experience, which I believe is similar to that of many formators. For more than 20 years I have lived in an international formation house of my order, the Capuchins, and for more than 15 years I have taught theology of the states of life at the Antonianum Pontifical University in Rome. In these years I have seen the incredible growth of the theme of interculturality in consecrated life. By interculturality, I mean an openness to different cultures and a willingness to grow from our interaction with them. [The meaning of *interculturality* is discussed in depth on page

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10.] When I arrived in Rome, for instance, the students in the colleges came from different cultures and various areas of the world, but Italians were certainly the majority. Today the Italians among the students are only a sparse minority. The majority come from countries in the South of the world. Thus, the relationships among cultures in consecrated life is first of all a fact we need to be aware of. However, the shift in the geographical gravity of consecrated life does not automatically lead to interculturality, nor to making interculturality a principle of formation. Diverse cultures may coexist without having to interact.

We need to broaden our vision. Ethnic proportions are rapidly changing in consecrated life; the decline in vocations in countries of ancient Christian tradition, though varied, is not a transitory phenomenon. The members of institutes of consecrated life in these areas of the world are quickly growing old. In many institutes the majority of the members belong to places in the South of the world. Above all I would like to note that *persons in initial formation are increasingly people who belong to areas in the South of the world*. All this clearly indicates that in a few years' time the geographical and cultural picture of our institutes will go through profound and unprecedented changes.

Communities often have reservations concerning the shifting of religious in initial formation from one continent to another. However, trouble can even occur during encounters between members from the North and members from the South when those from the South go to help carry on the work of shrinking communities in the North. These difficulties show that although consecrated life has interculturality in its DNA, it still needs to understand it

well and implement it. Of course improving the ability of a religious institute's charism to help people of different cultures and ethnic groups interact with each other is a great way to reach a new stage of consecrated life. Still we all know that this improvement cannot be taken for granted, and it comes tied to a number of painful issues.

## Social changes that affect consecrated life

Before we examine interculturality within religious institutes, let us step back and look at the broad context in which this cultural mingling is taking place. Two phenomena are affecting not only consecrated life but the structure of the planet. **First, I refer to the extraordinary mobility of people that characterizes our time, with people of different cultures and religions dealing with each other at various levels.** Of course, throughout history there have always been migratory movements. But in this third millennium we find ourselves facing the movement of millions of people who move and will continue to move looking for better living conditions, better health conditions, job opportunities and education. Of course these movements and encounters can be regulated, at least partially, but I believe they cannot be stopped. This still does not result in interculturality. But it does raise the problem of a new relationship at a civil and ecclesial level. It is not by chance that the interventions and teachings of the church have significantly increased concerning the topic of migration.

We should also not neglect the growing consensus that the concept of a "mixture of cultures and civilizations" is not an ideal to be pursued but rather a fact that needs to be guided and directed<sup>1</sup>. Although this phenomenon does not

have an immediate effect on consecrated life, it will, however, influence it in the future. Suffice it to cite just one example: in Europe the number of people from non-European cultures who ask to join religious life is increasing.

It is said, and rightly so, that these mixtures of populations from varied cultures especially affect Northern and Western societies. This is true—but this time only partially so. Indeed, this movement of peoples, though it is characterized especially by a movement from the South to the North of the planet, has consequences also in the countries of origin.

And here we come to the second reflection, on the **phenomenon of globalization**. Sociologists note the different levels at which this phenomenon operates. There certainly is globalization at an economic, financial, industrial, political and social level. But its intercultural effect is especially due, in my opinion, to the extraordinary dissemination of the means of mass communication. We are aware of the powerful impact of radios and televisions on the life of people—shaping, for good or for bad, customs and ethics, providing linguistic and cultural codes for interpersonal communications.

A special role in this regard is played—and will increasingly be so in the future—by the Internet and by all that is entailed by placing online a growing amount of information and relationships. Internet communications allow

Persons in initial formation are increasingly people who belong to areas in the South of the world. All this clearly indicates that in a few years' time the geographical and cultural picture of our institutes will go through profound and unprecedented changes.

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an extremely rapid spread of news all over the world, not only at the top of the societies but also at a grassroots level, though there are still differences, especially in the South of the world. The philosophy of networking is free access to data.

In this respect, though, I would like to observe the implications all this has with regard to culture<sup>2</sup>. Indeed people thought, with a degree of naiveté, that such a thing as the Internet was a neutral tool that different cultures

I can no longer live my consecration well in Italy if I am not aware of my fellow brothers living my same charism in India, in Indonesia, or in Pakistan. All these realities intimately belong to each other.

could use to their own ends. Actually many sectors of contemporary reflection on the mass media stress the fact that the Internet tends to shape life, to create a culture and spread cultural codes. There are also philosophical currents, that starting from the representation of the truth online, mention a *semiotic nihilism* mediated by the

Internet, where only what is represented by the media exists. Of course it is not a matter of raising doubts concerning the goodness of an instrument we are all very much willing to use. It is only a matter of making a critical use of it, conscious of its cultural—and moral—implications.

## Think beyond “multiculturalism”

These simple observations about population migrations and globalization of communications should make us understand why the relationship between formation to consecrated life and interculturality becomes more and more crucial. We need to think about formation to our life with an awareness that what is happening in society affects us intimately and requires us to give an authentic and creative response. The phenomenon of globalization challenges our formation; we shall be more and more called to face situations where people coming from different places and cultures will have to live and carry out work together. To think of formation with an intercultural approach is necessary, not only because the situation requires us to work more together, coming from different cultures and sensitivities, but also because today *I can no longer live my consecration well in Italy if I am not aware of my fellow brothers living my same charism in India, in*

*Indonesia, or in Pakistan. All these realities intimately belong to each other. In this sense intercultural formation is not a strategy, it is first of all a request of authentic Christian and consecrated life. It is a renewal of one’s self-awareness.*

## What is interculturality?

It is now necessary to clarify what we mean by interculturality, so that this understanding can be used fruitfully at a formational level. In order to clarify this concept, we need once again to grasp the issue from inside phenomena that affect the society at large and not only consecrated life. First of all we should note that fundamentally interculturality is the focus of an intense theoretical debate in Europe and North America, which are the principal countries receiving mass migratory movements. The problem is more acute in Europe because here we face the growing presence of huge masses of people of different cultures, ethnic groups and religions in quite a weak and uncertain cultural context concerning our own European identity and roots.

I believe it is necessary to grasp interculturality as an attitude toward this mixing of cultures—an attitude located between two extremes that are actually quite weak. These are the models of multiculturalism and assimilation.

We shall start with the latter. The vision of the relationship of assimilation—the predominant school of thought from the time of colonialism onward—sees a fundamental disparity between cultures and the need to overcome this disparity by forcing the stronger upon the weaker. The annexation and social integration takes place to the detriment of the minority cultural identity, with a substantial abolition of differences. The peculiar minority culture may retain some of its traditional monuments, customs, habits, and even languages, but as such it does not play a relational role. With assimilation, the price of belonging to society, therefore, is essentially giving up one’s roots and assuming a new cultural identity. This model, that is only partially overcome, lives and re-lives in situations of cultural crisis. This position does not appear as a solution, but rather as a symptom of the frailty of one’s cultural identity, which perceives diversity as opposition.

In contrast to the perspective of assimilation is the multicultural and multi-ethnic stance. It appears, at least initially, respectful of the diversity of the other—the customs, habits, languages and dialects of the group that comes to a new territory, or which is approached in its own region. This multicultural stance was implemented, as is widely

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known, in Europe in those countries with a vast population of immigrants with extremely well defined cultural and religious traditions. This approach did lead to a form of settlement with the “different.” However multiculturalism did not lead to real integration of immigrants, rather just a low-level sense of tolerance toward them. This approach cemented differences without making different ethnic groups interact with each other. The sociologist Pierpaolo Donati highlights the internal contradiction of this model: “multiculturalism entails no mutual learning processes among cultures, because the claim of a more or less incompatible cultural pluralism legitimates the mere existence of the social fact of difference: in short, multiculturalism forfeits exchange; furthermore, it gives up pursuing good as produced and enjoyed together, with the involvement of all the multicultural subjects”<sup>3</sup>.

The model of multiculturalism often requires treating a culture’s religious expression as something private, that should not interact with the society. In turn the society should be founded exclusively on “secular” concepts, as in “separate from religion.” This approach, which is actually a secularist model, eventually produced the marginalization of Christian faith within societies, but even worse, it is incapable of coping with the Islamic culture, where the relationship between religion and society is extremely strong. Finally we in consecrated life should also be aware that a generically multiculturalist approach has its roots in a certain relativism, which attributes *a priori* an unquestionable equality to all cultural expressions<sup>4</sup>.

Both of these models, multiculturalism and assimilation, are insufficient for our societies today, and in my opinion they are not viable in religious life either. Formation to consecrated life cannot imply the assimilation of diversities into one model. Nor can formation mean that every reality of religious life is maintained in a state of cultural self-reference during formation.

In this regard we need to recall the importance of the concept of *inculturation* within consecrated life and formation. Thanks to inculturation, religious life has been adequately communicated within different contexts. However, in the age of the global village, an intercultural perspective needs to include the progress made by inculturation.

Here I would like to underline a distinction I believe is important from a theoretical and practical-formatinal point of view: the importance of comparing the words *diversity* and *difference*. In the framework of multiculturalism, as in that of a robust inculturation, what is highlighted is often the diversity that exists between one culture and another. The life of the

church and of an institute of consecrated life is characterized in every specific setting by diversities that distinguish one community from another. The word “diversity” itself stresses the fact that certain cultures “diverge,” meaning that they tend to go out into incompatible directions.

In my opinion, on the contrary, the interculturality of formation, though holding diversities in high esteem, should focus more on *differences*. This word expresses more profoundly the fact, as its etymon says, that the same is brought elsewhere: *dif-ferre*. In this sense, the suggestion of intercultural formation drives us to consider the relationship between differences that were originally set in unity. It is the same reality, the same value, the same charism that moves elsewhere, shifting to a different approach that allows it to be enriched. While diversity in principle can lead to respect, but not to mutual integration, the discovery of difference makes us aware that a certain value “moves” and is expressed in different forms that as such can recognize each other in the common value. All this I believe is very important from an anthropological, theological and ecclesial point of view.

In this sense intercultural formation requires us to make Christian life, or our charism, produce a sound evangelization of our culture, and at the same time lead that culture to open up and go beyond itself. Finally, in formation to consecrated life, guided by the principle of interculturality, every member is introduced to the charism with the awareness that it moves through different cultures that are therefore mutually enriched, *opening the way to unprecedented developments for the forms of the charism itself*.

Intercultural formation requires us to make Christian life, or our charism, produce a sound evangelization of our culture, and at the same time lead that culture to open up and go beyond itself.

## The foundations of intercultural formation

We shall now try to identify a few fragments of the fundamental elements of formation to consecrated life when it is guided by the principles of interculturality and difference. As we shall see, there are different ways of experiencing intercultural formation. It is one thing to have

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— Vita Consecrata, 1996

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an intercultural novitiate in Europe where people may be coming from different continents. A completely different thing is an intercultural formation in India, where the novitiate of one region may gather even 40 candidates to consecrated life. Another completely different thing is to have a group of students that gather together for a special period of formation—or ongoing formation—in an international center, who may attend university courses where cultural differences shine in all their light.

However, intercultural concerns are not under the sole authority of international centers, nor only of Western formation houses. They are everyone's business because they call for a new self-awareness in relating to the charism and to all the members of one's institute. In this circumstance I will limit myself to recalling two crucial elements: unity in common human needs and welcoming the other as a means of Christian growth.

## United by common human needs

First of all I believe that in order to be intercultural, formation to consecrated life needs to be able to appreciate, welcome and give value to difference, and at the same time offer a firm education to *recognize what unites*. Our era has sometimes emphasized cultural diversity so much that it has ended up neglecting what cultures have in common.

At a certain level different cultural developments can be identified according to the fundamental needs of every human being. Intercultural formation, therefore, is fostered by tracing diversity back to a kind of elementary experience<sup>5</sup>. Different cultures attribute different forms and different responses to the same needs. Education to elementary human experiences, therefore, enables us to appreciate our own culture, as well as the culture we encounter. As John Paul II said: "When cultures are carefully and rigorously studied, they very often

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reveal beneath their outward variations significant common elements. This can also be seen in the historical sequence of cultures and civilizations. The church, looking to Christ, who reveals man to himself, and drawing upon her experience of two thousand years of history, is convinced that ‘beneath all that changes, there is much that is unchanging.’ This continuity is based upon the essential and universal character of God’s plan for humanity”<sup>6</sup>.

## Welcoming the “other” allows growth

Intercultural formation is possible through an elementary experience whereby we recognize ourselves in relationship with the other, so that as soon as the other enters our horizon, his or her life, whoever he or she may be, becomes somehow part of our existence, which we cannot do without, unless we pay the price in terms of cultural and anthropological regression. The phenomenon of encounter with the other, and—more generally—of encounter with the world, makes us discover that we exist only in this original opening up. Every encounter, especially with people of different cultures, calls for a rediscovery of oneself. *A non-relational concept of the person forfeits from the outset any kind of intercultural formation.* The best it can do is tolerate diversity and difference but not grow through them. The challenge of interculturality consists in the fact that *otherness, bearer of difference, becomes a factor in one’s growth and one’s own development.* To welcome difference—according to what I have tried to describe above—means to find a new access to the self and a new understanding of one’s experience of encounter with the world.

**Search for God at heart of all cultures** These two foundations of interculturality—recognition of common human need and the embrace of the “other” as a path toward growth—are also linked to the theological foundations of interculturality. First we should observe that consecrated life is a radical revelation of how the human reality, in its full range of diversity, finds its ultimate answers in encountering and following Christ. Christ transcends all cultures and is also capable of nourishing them. The search for God is at the heart of every culture, as was said by Benedict XVI. The desire for and following of Christ purifies every culture, generating it and making it capable of being interested in other cultures, according to the criterion of discernment stated by Paul in the first letter to the Thessalonians: “test everything; hold fast to what is good and beautiful...” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

**God as creator of each person** Furthermore, I firmly

believe that the foundation of interculturality is essentially found in the vision offered by *Vita Consecrata* (66): assimilation to the heart of the Son: “Formation then is a sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women...” Indeed, following Christ means to identify with his relationship with the Father and with the approach by which Christ dwelt in the world and went through it, entering the culture of the Jewish people. More precisely, I would like to say that formation to consecrated life consists in a progressive path of assimilation to the heart of Christ, first of all towards the mystery of the Father, recognized as Creator and origin of all things and every person, and therefore of every positive difference. In this perspective intercultural formation becomes the right approach to understand oneself as a son or daughter in the Son, where every difference is welcomed and brought back to its origin, which is the paternity of God.

Of course, the real theme then is not interculturality as an abstract category, but the person, the brother, the sister, desired and loved by God in his or her concrete conditions. What we ultimately need is acknowledgment of God’s paternity over everything and everyone, so that the other is appreciated with his or her own differences. Welcoming the other, with his or her differences, becomes a path toward the common Father.

Welcoming the other, with his or her differences, becomes a path toward the common Father.

## Suggestions for interculturality

I will conclude with some practical suggestions that stem from my concrete experience.

**Expect hard work** Every formational experience requires sacrifice and work, especially experiences that involve encounter between different cultures. Indeed, if the process of encounter is not constantly embraced and rediscovered, relationships are necessarily spoiled by unavoidable inertia. It is easy to observe how interculturality often tends to become multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity. For instance, after being introduced to each other, in our general curias or our international student houses, people tend to aggregate in groups of similar people: at the tables at

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lunch, during breaks, people tend to gather with those who require the least effort to relate to. Of course, there are forms of proximity that are good and heartening, and prepare for new dialogue, but every specific relationship has its test in the concrete opening up it generates and the docility to encounter the other, bearer of difference, it engenders.

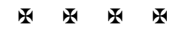
**Allow people to tell their stories** An important instrument to motivate encounter is the introduction of the narrative approach into formation programs. It can be an important step in cross-cultural encounter to help everyone find a form of expression to communicate how the mysteries of the Christian faith, or the forms of the community's charism, are expressed in their own culture. To tell these stories about themselves, members need to be aware of their own history, richness and limits.

**Learn languages** For intercultural formation to be authentic, we need to be truly able to mutually communicate. Therefore, a thorough understanding of languages is an absolute prerequisite. Languages remain a necessary element for every intercultural dialogue, even more so in a formation context. Of course, whoever lives in a local reality must know the local language; intercultural communities need to equip themselves in this respect, too. Every institute should work on this. Those in formation should be introduced to languages through experiences of intercultural encounter. I believe it would also be good, even in initial formation, to provide opportunities for international living and study for significant amounts of time. These experiences allow people to broaden their sense of belonging to intercultural realities.

And if it is good to learn modern languages that permit dialogue and encounter between different cultures, it is also necessary not to forget to recover our roots, which remain the same in every possible intercultural development. So while we encourage our young people to study English and other modern tongues, we should also have at least someone in our institutes who knows the languages the sources of our faith and our charism are written in.

**Come to Rome** I do not want to conclude without mentioning one last necessity. Although intercultural houses can and must be established everywhere, for intercultural networking the city of Rome has a special task. In the past coming to Rome meant conforming to the Roman model. This is not so today. In today's era of globalization, the gathering and networking that takes place in the general curias, international formation houses and pontifical universities of Rome are a necessity that must not be considered superfluous. To carry out studies in Rome, to live a few years together

with fellow brothers or sisters coming from different parts of the world, to meet students and professors—this becomes *a laboratory of intercultural planning that is absolutely essential.*



This article is only a minor contribution to a huge and relevant topic that is both a challenge and a great opportunity. Our future as religious institutes and our capability to support the church in its mission in the world depend on our intercultural capability, rooted in our charisms. As John Paul II said "If you will know how to form new vocations to intercultural dialogue, you can hope to have missionaries who are able to cooperate in unity, even while safeguarding legitimate diversity."<sup>7</sup> ■

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1. Cross-reference in this regard the essay of P. Gomasasca, "Meticciano: convivenza o confusione?" Marcianum Press, Venice, 2009.
  2. Cross-reference Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and the Internet* (22 February 2002); *Ethics in the Internet* (22 February 2002).
  3. Oltre il Multiculturalismo, Laterza, Rome – Bari 2008, 30.
  4. Cross-reference J. Ratzinger, *Fede, Verità, Tolleranza*, Cantagalli, Siena 2003.
  5. See K. Wojtyła, *Persona e atto*, Rusconi, Sant'Arcangelo di Romagna 1999, 35-45; A. Scola, *L'esperienza elementare. La vena profonda del magistero di Giovanni Paolo II*, Marietti 1820, Genova – Milano 2003; R. Guardini, *Mondo e persona. Saggio di antropologia cristiana*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2000; L. Giussani, *Il senso religioso. Volume primo del PerCorso*, Rizzoli, 1997.
  6. Message for the World Day of Peace 2001.
  7. John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, June 1, 2001.



In England and Wales religious communities are moving forward to promote religious life and help individuals of a new generation to discern their calling.

# UK vocation ministry: new ventures and growth

By JUDITH EYDMANN

**V**OCATIONS MINISTRY in England and Wales has been around for nearly a millennium, though in the early days of the church here, as elsewhere, it would not have been called “vocations ministry.” An individual religious, or a group of religious, would have provided guidance to those considering the life. The world has changed a great deal since those early days of religious life here, and today I, a laywoman, serve as development coordinator for the National Office for Vocations, founded in 2002.

Our office was established on the heels of the 1997 European Congress on Vocations to the Priesthood, which published *In Verbo Tuo* (1998), a document that guides our efforts. British vocations ministry has both similarities to and distinctions from its U.S. counterpart, and certainly we can both learn from one another. Modern religious life is, of course, often discussed in a much longer narrative, from the beginning of the 20th century—only 50 years after the Catholic hierarchy was restored in this country—up to the

present day. The surge in the number of religious vocations in the post-war decades is also a common point of interest in these discussions.

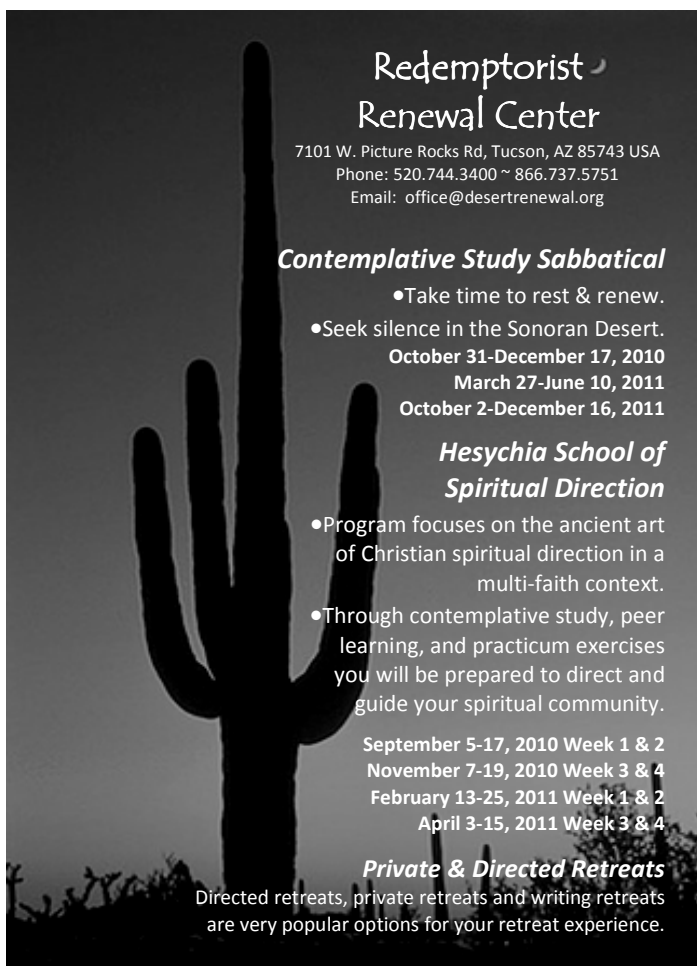
## Young adults lack contact

Speaking personally by the time I started school in 1981, there were only two Marist sisters remaining on the teaching staff at my convent school in the south of England. More than the academic teaching, I remember the Christian values and love of the church they imparted to us with a tremendous amount of dedication. Our head-teacher died less than two years later, and the remaining sister retired from teaching shortly afterward. None of my younger brothers was taught by religious, and their only contact with them was through residential retreats. In his message for the World Day of Prayer for Priesthood and Religious Life, Pope Benedict’s theme was “Witness Awakens Vocations.” He wrote of the witness value of a religious vocation joyfully lived. So the withdrawal of religious from our schools and parishes is often cited as a contributing factor in the decline of religious vocations in much of the developed world.

My parents’ generation, the Catholic Baby Boomers who were young adults during the surge of religious vocations in the 1960s, will remember this fillip in the life of the church. They will recall religious of all ages in schools, parishes and often in their own extended families. However, as time has gone by, they have watched these religious brothers and sisters age and not be joined by young religious in anywhere near the

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same numbers. Yet my contact with religious is to some extent the inverse of my parents' experience. I have early childhood recollections of elderly religious sisters, and now, my role in the Bishops' Conference Vocations Office has brought me into contact with many religious in the same age bracket as myself. This is not such a unique position; many committed young Catholics belong to small but tight networks within the church, and it is not uncommon for my peers to have numerous young religious as friends.

Catholics of my generation (those under the age of 35 and therefore by the church's definition, young adults) have only ever known the church in their native country in decline when measured by statistics such as Mass attendance and the number of people choosing religious life or priesthood. Whilst the wider church has not always been successful as a bastion against secularism, there is a significant young minority of

Catholics who are deeply committed in their faith whilst retaining a place and voice within the secular world. Perhaps the reality of these times has equipped my generation with a robust spiritual toolkit suited to such arduous terrain; after all, we never expected it to be easy.

## Uptick in religious life vocations

A few years ago, the direction of religious vocations in this country changed. The number of men entering seminary formation entered its nadir in 2001 with just 22 new seminarians for the whole of England and Wales. After 2001 the figures slowly began to rise, and by 2006 this had doubled to 44. The number of people entering religious orders has also seen a moderate rise. These increases have been stable for the last few years, leaving us hopeful that this is a long term and sustainable trend. Another interesting development highlighted in our vocations statistics is the average age of those entering formation. A few years ago, the average age of a new seminarian was 35 and for a novice, the average age had crept up into the mid-40s. The average age of a new novice or postulant has now eased back to 32. Of course, we do not place value on religious brothers, sisters, monks and nuns simply because of their youth, and we recognize the value of older vocations. However, this statistic does bury the myth that the religious life is no longer appealing to young Catholics. We will not, in the foreseeable future, return to the numbers of vocations to the religious life seen in the 1960s or 1970s, an anomaly partly borne from the cultural, social and political landscape that cannot possibly be replicated, even were this desirable. However, the visible energy and unwavering faith of the young religious and many other young committed Catholics I encounter convinces me and others working in vocations ministry that religious life will not only survive but will be pivotal in the future of the whole Catholic Church here in England and Wales.

## Attending to churched and unchurched

One of the tensions in the framework in which we operate is that we are trying to nurture a culture of vocations within two distinct populations of young Catholics: the churched and un-churched. Of course this is an over-simplification—new research, published by Catholic Youth Ministry Federation in the UK shows in fact there are several different and often complex typologies of young Catholics. However, only one of these typologies describes a young Catholic who has been

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adequately catechised and practices the faith, and these are in a small minority. Speaking of the “universal call to holiness” to people who are unsure whether they even believe in God may seem like putting the cart before the horse. Similarly, it is challenging to explain that the priestly vocation is to share in the ministerial priesthood of Christ to a young Catholic who has either not been taught or does not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

First and foremost, these young people need to be evangelized. [Editor’s note: see “The call to new evangelization,” by Dave Nodar, p. 21, Spring 2010, *HORIZON*.] In a sense, they cannot grasp immediately the beauty of the poem because they also need to learn how to read and write. But evangelization and vocation can and should be part of a seamless whole. *In Verbo Tuo* describes vocation as “the beating heart of the whole of pastoral work” and also places vocation at “the very heart of the new evangelization on the threshold of the third millennium.”

In England and Wales much successful evangelization is taking place on a peer ministry level. One of the most endearing qualities of committed young Catholics is their passion for evangelization. This is evident in successful projects like St. Patrick’s School of Evangelization in London’s Soho (an area epitomizing secular culture with its historic association with the sex industry and current reputation for shopping and nightlife) and the gap year students who choose to work in Catholic residential centers where they lead retreats for younger teens.

Vocations ministry to these committed young Catholics themselves can be more explicit. Most of them will have already a strong grasp of their baptismal calling. They understand the vocational and sacramental nature of marriage. They will also have a rigorous understanding of the ministry of a priest and also of religious life. Last summer we conducted a survey specifically targeted to this group and discovered that almost two thirds (65 percent) had considered the possibility that they might be called to consecrated life or to the diocesan priesthood.

## Obstacles to responding to call

Our survey asked them what they thought the difficulties were in responding to this call. Some of the answers were unsurprising: the radical and counter-cultural nature of religious life, concerns over celibacy, and general fear that they may find themselves in something to which they are unsuited. Other comments were slightly more unexpected.

One 30-year-old man wrote that when he started serious discernment, after returning to his faith following a long absence, he went on several vocations retreats and found it unsettling to sleep in a single bed for the first time since he had been a student. Perhaps this isn’t simply about getting used to new living arrangements but exemplifies the difficulty highly independent people have in adjusting to a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. In the modern world, older candidates may take time to adjust to loss of financial autonomy, and younger candidates may come from a family that does not practice the faith or even eat meals together. With such diversity, there is not a “one size fits all” model for discernment and formation. A person’s life story might be longer and more complex than is the case with novices who came straight from school or college, but learning to detach from a previous life has always been part of religious life formation, and this should not be a key factor in declining numbers of vocations. In fact, many of the difficulties cited are ones that have existed for as long as religious life itself has.

Some of the difficulties and obstacles identified by our survey participants were a critique of specific religious congregations themselves. This is not always an easy topic to discuss, and our office is committed to supporting all religious communities. Yet it is important that we pass on the reflections of young discerners to help us see where they are so we can help them take the next steps in their journey. As has been unveiled in several other surveys and documented by commentators, our young potential religious are seeking a visible identity, a genuine spirituality and a life of common prayer. Many of the young discerners we surveyed felt they could not see a shared mission or a clear charism expressed through the lives of some religious community members.

Our young potential religious are seeking a visible identity, a genuine spirituality and a life of common prayer. Many ... felt they could not see a shared mission or a clear charism expressed through the lives of some religious community members.

## Scarcity breeds timidity

One final hurdle faced by those we surveyed is evidenced in

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the statistic that only half of those who had considered the call had spoken to another person about this growing sense of religious vocation. One sister describes her first contact with a vocations promoter as follows: “The first few attempts were unsuccessful because each letter I wrote went into the bin rather than the mailbox. Eventually I decided to use e-mail. This was a trying moment; I asked myself questions: Do I really want to send this message? Should I give it some more thought?”

Anyone used to snapping up bargains on the online auction site eBay will know that just before you click the button to bid, you are issued with the following warning: “By clicking on the button below, you commit to buy this item from the seller.” It seems that young people believe there is a similar unseen commitment even in the most tentative e-mail inquiry. In previous decades, the crucial psychological threshold would have been much further along in the process: a first selection interview, a candidate’s retreat or perhaps mailing the application form. This fear of committing to something simply by making contact arises because young people are aware that the numbers entering religious orders are not as high as they were a few decades ago. The diocesan vocations directors noted that if the number of new seminarians each year were divided equally between the dioceses, they would each be accepting two candidates. Applying the same formula to religious, the number of new entrants divided by those orders which are still accepting new postulants would give each congregation 0.07 of a person! Young discerners are aware of their apparent scarcity and are therefore rather wary of being “recruited.”

The challenge is for us to understand that God is calling people as He always has, and that we must adopt a genuine acceptance of wherever He may be calling them.

The challenge is for us to understand that God is calling people as He always has, and that we must adopt a genuine acceptance of wherever He may be calling them. The focus of our vocations ministry should be equipping seekers with the tools to hear and respond to that call. It is desirable to reach a consensus that every community, every religious and in fact every Christian is responsible for nurturing all vocations. We are very blessed that the overwhelming majority of those dedicated to vocations work, discernment and spiritual

direction already operate from this premise. We may not eliminate the fear completely, but we help dissipate it as discerners enter more deeply into the discernment process.

Vocations promotion work remains essential; congregations are responsible for promoting the vocation to their way of life through education, witness and provision of information online and in printed materials. However, good vocations promotion is not directed at particular individuals. At the level of the individual, we must encourage genuine discernment. We can make suggestions to a person and ask whether he or she has considered that they might have a call to vowed or ordained life. Yet, we must remember we cannot hear another person’s call—we can only describe to them what it might sound like, accompany them and help them understand what it is they are hearing.

## Help with discernment is critical

One-to-one spiritual direction and accompaniment is crucial, and yet a survey published by the Italian religious newspaper *Avvenire* uncovered the disconcerting statistic that the majority of those who consider the possibility of a religious vocation cannot identify a single person with whom they can discuss this. Part of the crisis of vocations is, therefore, a crisis of credible guides the analysis concludes. With the ebb of religious in parishes and schools, a key priority for vocations work is ensuring that young Catholics have access to credible, empathetic, knowledgeable guides who understand the new church landscape and have a genuine desire to help young people discover God’s will for their life.

Not only must we strive to put a network of such people and groups in place nationally and regionally, but we must make young people aware of this provision. Availing themselves of the tools of discernment should feel entirely natural and rooted in freedom. We must convince a generation of young people inured to marketing and recruitment drives that spiritual guides are not motivated solely to recruit for their own community or diocese, and moreover, of course, we must ensure such suspicions are not justified.

People at different stages in their discernment need different types of guidance suited to their situation, and I will give some examples of where this is working well here in England. For those open to the idea of consecrated life and priesthood, there will be some who are at the very early stages of discernment. Prayer and even Mass attendance might not feature regularly in their lives. Meeting the needs of those

people with their embryonic sense of being called, several discernment groups have successfully functioned here in the United Kingdom, often facilitated by religious. Known as Samuel Groups, they meet typically on a monthly basis and introduce the participants to Lectio Divina to allow the word of God to speak to them and guide their discernment. Several dioceses and religious communities now use the Samuel Group process, which originally was inspired by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini SJ, while he was archbishop of Milan, Italy. Samuel Groups later migrated to the UK through the Ignatian Spirituality Center in Glasgow, Scotland.

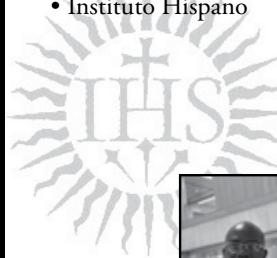
For those who are beginning to gravitate toward a religious or priestly vocation, the importance of peer support features more strongly. Discernment groups that meet on a regular basis are often found within our dioceses. Sometimes these are mixed groups for men and women, and other groups have a focus on the priesthood alone. Whilst a diocesan vocations priest-director naturally provides the space for male discernment groups for the priesthood, it is slightly more difficult for congregations to present such a group as being detached from the host community's vocations promotions work. Many of the groups that are mixed or specifically for women have been spearheaded by the discerners themselves or by several religious communities collaboratively.

The most successful discernment program specifically focused on religious life is the Compass project. The participants of this program tend to be a little farther along the road of discernment than those in Samuel Groups. Compass gives an experience of community living and shared discernment one weekend per month for an academic year, culminating in Holy Week. The project is hosted by Worth Abbey, a Benedictine Monastery. Whilst the discerners participate in the rhythm of the monastic prayer and liturgy, they live in a separate house on the Abbey grounds. Each member is offered personal spiritual support throughout the nine-month period, not just during the residential weekends. In addition to time for discussion, prayer and community living, participants are introduced to the variety of religious orders to be found in the Catholic Church. Compass is sponsored by a comprehensive group of religious communities, and it is this collaboration and good leadership that makes this program a space for discernment in true freedom. Participants are offered the opportunity to explore whether they have a vocation to the religious life while not excluding that they may be called to other ways of life. In its first five years, 24 people completed the residential program, of whom half went on to become seminarians or postulants.

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A more intensive residential program is offered by the Augustinian friars for men considering priesthood or religious life, enabling them to live in community full-time for a year whilst they continue with their work or study. This has seen a similar number (around half) of participants enter novitiates and seminaries. So there are programs and groups suited to those in all stages of discernment. Although places in these programs are often limited, we hope that more discernment projects take inspiration from these success stories. These projects require money (and other material resources, such as a suitable venue) but most importantly, they require time. We need our priests and consecrated people to make vocational discernment a priority.

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will be more inquiries to individual communities. All community members are vocations promoters by living their vocation joyfully; yet it is practical for every congregation or community to have an assigned vocations person who can respond to inquiries, organize “come and see weekends,” keep a Web site updated and meet discerners. Experience has shown that if possible, vocations ministry should be that person’s primary role. It is possible to combine this with other work; indeed some roles, such as university chaplain, harmonize well with vocations ministry. The problem arises when the vocations ministry is neither full-time nor part-time but “spare-time.” If the demands of a person’s varied ministries leave him or her hard-pressed to find time to meet with inquirers, who themselves might have pressures of work or live some distance away, the inquirers are acutely aware and sensitive to this. One comment we received from a young

woman was that, “I just felt I was some way down the list of priorities.” It isn’t that these young people are demanding or egocentric, but rather they know that this journey is the most important thing in their lives, and those who walk alongside them need to acknowledge that reality. If a community cannot make space for an aspirant’s discernment, that aspirant may wonder about the ability to find a home there at all.

There are young Catholics who are open to the call of Christ, and it is our task to walk alongside them so that their vocation flourishes. But it is also important to acknowledge the reality that numbers are still relatively small, particularly when considered in relation to the hundreds of communities in this country. At the present time, given the small number of serious discerners, it is not realistic to think that every single community will be welcoming some of them as novices. Some communities have made the decision not to accept any new members. Also those who discern a religious vocation might not find a congregation with whom they feel they could respond to that call. Some may join a community overseas and others, particularly those who feel called to some form of apostolic life, might instead work in a paid role within the church or charity sector. Others may gravitate to one of the new ecclesial movements such as Focolore, which evidence suggests will also feature strongly in the future vocational landscape.

This summer we are looking forward to inVocation, a weekend discernment festival for young men and women ages 16-35, with camping on the grounds of one of our seminaries. This is explicitly for those who are at least open to the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Already more than a hundred young people have confirmed their attendance, with many more interested. We are confidently preparing for several hundred young Catholics in various stages of vocational discernment. We have organized workshops, keynote speakers and the presence of religious, priests and seminarians to be a visible witness and provide some guidance.

But most critical to the success of the event is to curb self-promotion and information-overload in order to make way for prayerful space where these young people will encounter Christ. When the tents come down, and the coaches, cars and minibuses depart into the summer evening and an uncertain future, those seekers will love the Lord and know that He will sustain them. This is the hope that young adults at InVocation grasp onto. The Lord’s sustenance is also the hope that uplifts vocations ministers in the UK and around the world. ■

Young adult ministers and vocation ministers have much in common. If they reach out to each other for support and collaboration, great things can happen.

# Join hands with young adult ministers

BY PAUL JARZEMBOWSKI

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS of my job each month is heading off to our diocesan vocation association meeting. For vocation directors, it might seem routine; but for a young adult minister like me, it's one of the most enjoyable and most important meetings I can attend.

About two years ago, Father Burke Masters, the Diocese of Joliet vocations director, and the members of the Joliet Area Vocations Association (JAVA) invited those of us in youth, campus, *pastoral juvenil* and young adult ministries to join them each month and contribute to the discussions and planning of vocation events across the diocese.

What I had never realized before that was that vocation ministry and young adult ministry actually share a very common goal: namely, to prepare young adults in their late teens, 20s, and 30s to fully realize and live out their baptismal calling. Even our methods are similar: both ministries accompany young adults on their journey of faith, sowing

seeds and inviting them to go deeper through faith formation, social mission, and prayerful discernment. Where we differ is the point of entry: the young adult minister is usually focused on the evangelization of active, busy or indifferent Catholic young adults; while the vocation leader typically pulls from the already active, enthusiastic and spiritual young adults in the church.

Of course this does not mean that young adult ministers have no relationship with active young adults; it's just that there are so many untapped young people that reaching out to them is a primary issue. Likewise vocation ministers and religious communities are also engaged in the work of evangelization, but the pathway to leadership and ministry should begin with a firm commitment to the faith.

Our teleology, however, remains the same. We all long for young adults to find their calling, and we both work hard at preparing them for that life. One thing I have noticed is that there are too many young people today who lack an intentionality of vocation, whether they are active in their faith or not. Many "fall into" whatever career or lifestyle follows the path of least resistance—instead of being conscious and intentional about their role in this world and in their relationship with God. The end goal of our ministries should be a church filled with intentional, purpose-filled young adults who, inspired by the Gospel and the love of Christ, find and fulfill their life's calling.

## Who are young adults?

Before going on, let us be clear about who exactly we're talking about. Young adults are men and women between

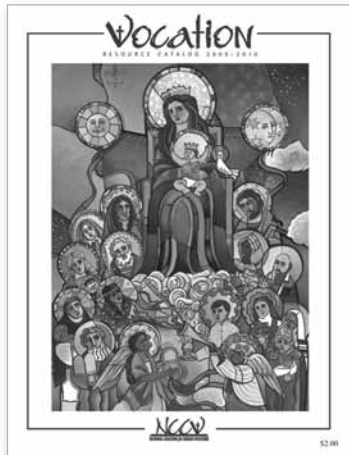
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*Paul Jarzembowski is the executive director of the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association, a resource center and nationwide network for church leaders working with young adults. He is also an advisor to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth. In addition, he serves as the diocesan director of Young Adult Ministry in the Diocese of Joliet, IL and has served in young adult evangelization and ministry in parishes, regional clusters and in diocesan work for the past 10 years.*





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adult's life (a new job, a new city or a new relationship), those questions rise to the surface once more as the young adult discerns how his or her personal identity is wrapped up in the new situation or circumstance before them. Much internal soul-searching happens at this time in the young adult experience.

The search for belonging is similar, focusing more on the community and social aspect of identity. Where do I go? Where is home now? With whom do I belong? Young adults are seeking a community or a group of people with which to identify—and they desire a place where they feel accepted and welcomed and where they have the opportunity to make a difference. Often the people or places that reach out to them the earliest or most genuinely are where they will immediately gravitate and find a home.

The search for purpose flows from the young adult's emerging realization that God has given each person unique gifts, passions, talents and skills. What do I do with my life? How do I use my gifts and passions? What's my role? How will I be remembered? These questions, combined with the reality that, to survive, they need to make a living, bring about young adults' desire to find their purpose in life. Sometimes, due to finances, circumstances or expectations, these decisions can often be made in haste, leading to an ongoing frustration with their initial career and life decisions.

The young adult search for meaning stems from the fact that, up until this point, "meaning" had been spelled out for these men and women by their family, by their educators, by their peers and by the church leaders of their youth. But now, as an adult, this quest begins anew with renewed vigor. What's the point? Why are we here? What does it all mean? Faced with challenging new information in college or in the work they do, young adults start to question the very foundations on which they stood for so long. When these questions go unanswered, or if no one is around to answer, many may turn to other sources or form their own conclusions to satiate the appetite for meaning.

These four marks of young adulthood form the basis for a mature look at the world. What's interesting, though, is that the search for any of these benchmarks of young adulthood takes much longer today than in previous generations. For one, the Millennial young adults are not finding full-time employment and are staying in school longer. From 2006 to 2010, due in large part to the economic recession, the percentage of young adults ages 18 to 30 in full-time work dropped from 50 percent to 41 percent, while the number of Millennials in school rose from 10 percent to 13 percent,

ages 18 and 39. But since we live in a "niche culture" that divides populations into countless demographics, there are many categories of young adults, each needing a unique outreach and ministry—from college students to singles to young couples; from urban professionals to blue collar workers to rural laborers; from Gen Xers in their 30s to Millennials in their 20s. What unites them all is their search for the four key areas of growth: identity, belonging, purpose and meaning. The journey toward a maturity in each of these areas marks a major turning point from adolescence to adulthood.

The search for identity emerges from the fact that they are no longer children or youth, whose identity is wrapped up in their family, but they have yet to carve out a place in their community, career or personal development. Who am I? Who am I meant to be? These are the common questions that all young adults ask. With every new transition in a young



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and those unemployed altogether rose from 18 percent to 22 percent. For this age bracket this is the highest level of unemployment or non-employment in more than three decades.<sup>1</sup>

In addition the average age of marriage today is 28 for men and 26 for women, whereas in 1970, men and women were getting married at ages 23 and 20, respectively<sup>2</sup>. People are having children later as well. The average age of parents having their first child has increased each year in the United States. From 1970 to 2006, the average age of first-time mothers rose from 21.4 years to 25.0 years. And 1 out of 12 first births were from women over the age of 35, compared to 1 out of 100 in 1970.<sup>3</sup>

The search for meaning is also taking longer (and for some, might never come at all). Recent polling shows that one in four young adults (26 percent) in the Millennial Generation is unaffiliated with any organized religion, which is double that (13 percent) of Baby Boomers at a comparable point in their lives.<sup>4</sup> The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University also reports that only 15 percent to 17 percent of young adults under 45 attend Mass on a weekly basis.<sup>5</sup>

While some young adults make rash decisions, many others are delaying their quest—wanting to be certain that they have made the right choice. Some may see the divorce, pedophilia, unemployment and growing cases of loneliness and depression in their families, peers and culture as a warning sign, akin to the advice of the grail knight in the final scenes of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*: “Choose. But choose wisely... for while the true one will give you life, the false one will take it from you.”

For one reason or another, some young adults see the Catholic Church as irrelevant, hateful, hypocritical, boring or unconcerned with them and others their age. Others see it as a place for their saintly grandmother, but not a place for a “sinner like me.” On the other hand, many are incredibly spiritual people who believe in equality for all people, charity to the poor and suffering, and compassion for the earth and other nations.

This is the field vocations and young adult ministry professionals have the opportunity to work and minister in. These are the young adults, both active and inactive, whom we can help to find the next step in their vital life searches.

## The role of young adult ministry

In 1996, seeing a major need for outreach to adults in their

20s and 30s, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops outlined a pastoral plan to address the journey of young adults called *Sons and Daughters of the Light*, saying:

In light of these insights, our ministry with young adults, who make up approximately 30 percent of the total U.S. population, must be intensified. We need to be a Church that is interested in the lives of these men and women and is willing to invite them into our community. We need to be a Church imbued with the missionary zeal for the Gospel. When young adults accept our invitation, we must welcome them; acknowledge their participation; and make room for them in all aspects of church life.

The bishops encouraged all members of the church to invest in the outreach and ministry to those in their late teens, 20s, and 30s. It was important in 1996—and it is even more critical today.

Due to budget cuts and a tough economy, much of the work of young adult ministry today is being done by a collage of people who have stepped up or have been assigned to do it, including but not limited to: adult faith formation leaders, youth ministers, campus ministers, religious educators, wedding and baptism ministry leaders, young adult volunteers, vocations leaders, evangelization teams, pastoral associates, priests, pastors and deacons.

We estimate that over two-thirds of Catholic dioceses have some form of young adult ministry. Many of these offices are combined with youth ministry or campus ministry, and some are housed in the diocesan offices for religious education, family ministries, evangelization, black Catholics, or Hispanic ministry. Only a select few have their own distinct agency or office in their diocese. At the parish level, the young adult ministry efforts might be more difficult to spot (and there may be fewer outreach efforts for young adults);

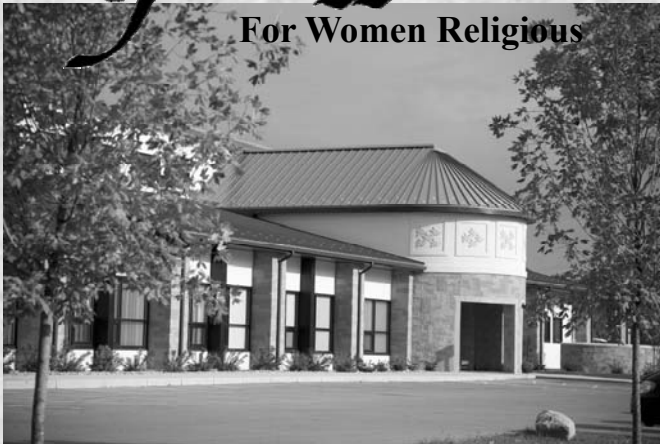
Our ministry with young adults, who make up approximately 30 percent of the total U.S. population, must be intensified. We need to be a church that is interested in the lives of these men and women and is willing to invite them into our community.

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however, it is best to contact either the director of adult faith formation, the youth ministry director, or the director of religious education/faith formation. In some parishes, the people who are most involved with young adults are the marriage and baptism ministry leaders, the welcoming and evangelization committees, and the RCIA teams. However, if vocation leaders continue to struggle to find the right person or the right fit, they can also contact the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association (NCYAMA) and check what is available in their area of the country.

Church leaders who work in young adult ministry might see themselves as missionaries. While pastoral care of young adults is necessary, the vast majority of inactive young Catholics today need missionaries—making the role of evangelization even more important. Their role is, through evangelization and ministry efforts, to connect young adults to four basic elements of the faith experience: to God, the church, the mission of the church in the world, and to a community of fellow disciples.

These church leaders are ambassadors and advocates for the church with young adults—and for young adults with the church. Sadly, though, even though there are more ministers working in the field and the need is greater than ever, young adult ministry is stretched and strained. Combining with other ministries often diminishes the impact a parish leader can have on young adults—and with a lack of resources and publications—the advocacy and ministry can be lost.

Without the people or the resources, the church cannot help young adults in their quest for identity, belonging, purpose or meaning. Without this essential ministry, the church cannot help these men and women understand and fulfill their baptismal call.

A study released in *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: What the Church Needs to Know*, by Dean Hoge and Marti Jewell discovered that many young adults are indeed interested in a life of service to the church, but little structure was in place to help them make the next step.<sup>6</sup> In other words, without good outreach and ministry, these young adults simply fall through the cracks.

### Building connections

This confluence of circumstance, shifting statistics and the reality of young adults in the world today creates a “perfect storm,” one in which both church workers in young adult and vocations ministries are called to work together.

Due to the fact that our goals are incredibly similar,

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given the late commitment of young adults in their search for maturity today, and taking into consideration the reality that the church is lacking in its intentional outreach and ministry for young adults, the time for collaboration has come: neither young adult ministers nor vocation ministers can afford to be alone in their work any longer. In the past, this collaboration might have been strained. Some young adult ministers rejected vocation work because it was perceived as “too pushy” or because a past vocation director once dismissed single or married life as an inferior vocation. It’s good to know of these potential roadblocks so we can navigate them in the future. Below are some steps that vocation leaders and young adult ministers can take as they begin to work together.

## Being present and working alongside

As a young adult minister I am incredibly grateful to the Joliet Area Vocations Association (JAVA) and to the Diocesan Vocations Director for extending an invitation to join them as they vision, plan and evaluate their work. Looking at your local context, who is working with young adults in your area (at a local parish, diocese, campus or organization)? Invite them, as JAVA invited me, into a collaborative relationship—either with your religious community or with a larger diocesan or regional association. You may also consider inviting them to attend one of your already-planned events, especially one aimed at young adults.

This networking works both ways. In addition to you, as a vocation minister, inviting young adult ministers to collaborate with you, you may want to consider being present at or helping organize young adult activities in your area, such as a retreat, social outing, or a specific program like Theology on Tap. Let the organizers know in advance of your interest—and, if you are able, offer to assist them in whatever way you can. (This might be a way to avoid the roadblock of suspicion).

Simply being present and invited goes a long way toward mutual respect and cooperation between vocations and young adult ministry. From your perspective as a vocation leader, the presence of sisters, brothers and priests at young adult activities can be a great way to sow vocational seeds, extinguish myths and open wide the doors of communication.

Here are some examples of how JAVA and I have collaborated. Over the past year or two, I have served on JAVA committees to help plan young adult days of reflection and to develop effective marketing strategies for vocations events and for specific religious communities within the association.

Last year, I led a workshop for JAVA members on how to best use Facebook and other social networking sites to connect with young adults. And at each month’s meeting, I contribute to the discussions, general planning and visioning that takes place throughout the year.

The JAVA members and diocesan and order priests have been present at and helped to plan a number of young adult ministry programs this past year, including weekly young adult Stations of the Cross visits, our annual Holy Thursday Midnight Pilgrimage Walk with our diocesan bishop, as speakers and as participants at the many Theology-on-Tap sessions over the summer, in the planning of our annual Advent Candlelight Vespers Service, and at weekly gatherings of the Spirit & Truth Eucharistic Adoration Communities around the Diocese of Joliet. One religious community was inspired to start a monthly Lectio Divina group through their convent aimed at young adults, which has recently moved online through Facebook as “Scripture Wi-Fi.”

The time for collaboration has come: neither young adult ministers nor vocation ministers can afford to be alone in their work any longer.

These sorts of collaborations could potentially lead to a fusion of ministry efforts, whereby young adult and vocations leaders work together to organize, plan and carry out activities or initiatives for men and women in their late teens, 20s and 30s. What charism does your religious community have? What skills do your members possess that might benefit the church’s outreach and ministry to young adults? Asking questions like these can lead to some potential connections that can be crafted by just being present for one another.

## Outreach beyond high school

Over the years, I have seen vocation ministers do some really great work with children and youth in the parishes and schools around the country, raising awareness and inviting kids to consider a life of service to the church. But what about the next stage of their lives? With the fact that many are waiting until young adulthood to make major life decisions, it makes sense to expand vocation fairs and visitations to young adults as well.

This might involve working together with local young

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adult ministry leaders to set up vocation programs for invitation, formation and discernment, or making sure young adult leaders are invited to join you for these initiatives.

Another area of need among young adults is mentorship. As they search out their identity, as they find a place of belonging, or as they ask questions about their purpose

Whether you provide spiritual direction or companionship or simply your presence to young adults—this [mentoring] is an invaluable connection point between young adults and vocation leaders.

and the meaning of life, a good mentor is good to have. Whether you provide spiritual direction or companionship or simply your presence to young adults—this is an invaluable connection point between young adults and vocation leaders (and others in the religious community). These one-on-one relationships can

help the young adult with his or her questions, in addition to showing positive examples of other generations living out a baptismal call.

Looking beyond high school can also help to more effectively bridge that gap into which many young adults fall. If positive relationships have been established in elementary or high school settings, it makes sense that those continue into college and young adulthood. Those relationships can continue through e-mail and social networking, as well as by arranging to meet up at college, on campus or at young adult ministry activities in the summer or on breaks. If the students attend a local college or university or are already in the working world, they can keep in touch at parish and ministry events year-round.

One effective way to stay in touch is for priests or religious sisters and brothers to arrange to meet up before a ministry event during a contact's college or young adult years—and then attend the event together. Another practical way to maintain contact with university students is through “care packages” during mid-terms or finals weeks. Sending some food, stress relievers and devotional items (because the college students really need some prayer about that time!), along with a personal note of encouragement, is a gesture these young adults appreciate. Such ongoing contact forms an unbroken line of ministry, showing young adults they are important and valuable to the life of the church.

## Use media and technology

It is a given that to reach young adults we must use media and technology. Gen X and Millennial young adults have grown up or have come of age in a global, Google-speed world. In fact, 24 percent of Millennial young adults say that their use of technology defines who they are, just as the Second World War defines adults born before 1945. Even more so, young adults today consume technology much differently than their peers five, 10 or 20 years ago.

Technology and virtual tools are no longer just fun, as they might have been in the 1980s and 1990s. They compose the paradigm in which we live and breathe today—no longer a toy for kids, but an essential part of the education, business, health, news and entertainment industries. A decade ago, the Internet provided an outlet for people to escape the world; but now, with the rise of social networking sites, technology has broken the concept of individualism as quickly as it created it. Tools such as Facebook and Twitter don't replace the personal touch, but they are making relational ministry more popular than ever. The Catholic Church cannot afford to ignore technology if it seeks to reach out to young adults. We may not be called to be “of the world,” but we must certainly do our ministry “in the world.” These virtual tools can enhance our prayer and worship, provide on-the-go catechesis, and develop communities of faith to support the journey. If young adults are Googling everything else about the world, why not the church?

## Advocate and pray

Finally, we young adult ministers need the prayer and support of vocation ministers. The Catholic belief in the communion of saints and the fact that we all pray for each other (both on earth and in heaven) has been a saving grace for me as a young adult minister. Too often, I as a young adult minister, have felt alone in the struggle to minister to such a vast population. By cutting budgets and ignoring this vital ministry, have we abandoned the young adults and our church's call to reach out to them, as expressed in *Sons and Daughters of the Light*?

If there is a young adult ministry leader in a parish, diocese, campus or organization near you, please take the time to work alongside them in this crucial work as we all advocate for the place of young adults in the Catholic Church in the United States. Support and encourage the

good work they are doing, whether it's full-time or part-time—either by calling them up to let them know you're praying for them or to ask how you and your community can support their efforts. It was people like Father Burke Masters; Sister Lovina Pammit, OSF; Sister Barb Kwiatkowski, OSF; Sister Claire Vandborg, IBVM and Brother James McDonald, CFC and the Joliet Area Vocations Association that did that for me when I came to work for the Diocese of Joliet. And thanks to their support, I am able to do so much more than otherwise for the young adults of our area.

If there is nothing labeled “young adult ministry” near you, consider working with nearby parishes or dioceses to help start something new. Stand as an advocate for young adults and for this ministry because, without it, who knows what the future holds? If you need help, connect with the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association ([www.ncyama.org](http://www.ncyama.org)), a nationwide organization dedicated to helping those who are passionate about outreach and ministry to men and women in their late teens, 20s and 30s.

Speaking of these young adults, one of the best ways for Catholics to make an impact is to pray. Pray for the young adults in their times of transition. Pray for the church that it may live up to its call for evangelization and ministry to this age group. Pray for the young adult ministry that does exist, that it continues to grow and touch the lives and hearts of young adults. Last but not least, pray for all of us engaged in this ministry, whether we are vocation directors or young adult ministers, that Christ may guide our actions and give direction to our work.

Know that many of us young adult ministers are on our own vocational journey: searching for identity as evangelists and ministers of the Gospel; searching for belonging among the other pastoral leaders of the church; searching for the purpose of our work in the face of the harsh reality of emptying pews; and searching for the meaning of the Reign of God, the direction we are all marching toward.

We aren't that different after all, are we? Both vocation leaders and young adult ministers serve the young adults of the church. We are all sitting as disciples before the feet of Jesus, learning from the Master and going out as missionaries to preach the Gospel and set on fire the hearts of young adults. The next step is working hand in hand in His name. ■

1. Pew Research Center, “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next,” February 2010.

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<i>The Sisters of the Holy Family of Fremont, CA are seeking a qualified, full time Vocation Director responsible for coordinating their vocation plan.</i>	
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<p>For more information about the Sisters of the Holy Family visit us on the Web:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.holyfamilysisters.org">www.holyfamilysisters.org</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://facebook.com/holyfamilysisters">facebook.com/holyfamilysisters</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://blog.holyfamilysisters.org">blog.holyfamilysisters.org</a></li> </ul>	<p>Applicants should send a letter of interest, resume and photo to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sr. Carolyn Whited, 245 Magnolia Ave., #96, Manteca, CA 95337</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p>carolyn@ holyfamily sisters.org</p> </div>

2. U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey*, January 2009.
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Delayed Childbearing: More Women are Having Their First Child Later in Life,” by T.J. Matthews, M.S., and Brady E. Hamilton, Ph.D., report from National Center for Health Statistics, *Data Brief*, no. 21, August 2009.
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Priests in religious communities have a special role to play in the church. A bishop pays tribute.

# The gift of religious priesthood

BY MOST REVEREND JOHN M. QUINN

**O**VER THE YEARS priests of religious communities have enriched my life as teachers, spiritual directors, confessors, co-workers, brothers in the priesthood and as friends. I cannot count the exact number of men who influenced my life, but they have left an indelible impression. I am happy to say that my deep appreciation for religious priests continues in my role as bishop of the Diocese of Winona, MN.

When I think about religious priests and their place in the diocesan church, I ponder the mystery of how the Holy Spirit distributes charisms to build up the church. Charisms are the gifts given to a person or a group of persons by the Holy Spirit to assist in building up of church, which is the Body of Christ. A charism is not an award or trophy but a special gift to an individual or group for the purpose of helping the church carry out its mission to all people in every circumstance. The Greek word *charis* means a free gift, a favor.

St. Paul reflects on the relationship of charisms given by the Holy Spirit and the mission of the church in his First Letter to the Corinthians. He makes very clear that charisms are given by the Spirit not for personal gain but for the

common good: “There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

I was ordained a diocesan priest to assist the bishop of the local church in the pastoral care of God’s people. For me and for most diocesan priests, that meant caring for people in parishes, though some diocesan priests are assigned ministry in other settings. As a diocesan priest, I came to know priests who belonged to religious institutes who shared in the same ministries as the diocesan priests. The religious priests were co-workers and brothers to me and to all diocesan priests, as we all used our charisms to build the Kingdom of God.

The presbyterate of most dioceses includes both diocesan priests and priests who belong to a religious institute. Both share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and all cooperate with the bishop. The mission of the church requires that priests remain united in a fraternal way, based on the sacramental bond that flows from the one priesthood of Christ. The *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* states:

The Bishop should also foster good relations between all priests, both the secular clergy and members of religious institutes or societies of apostolic life, since they all belong to the one order of priesthood and exercise their ministry for the good of the particular church. This worthy objective can be achieved through regular meetings at the deanery or vicariate level (or through other groupings of parishes within the diocese), for study purposes, for prayer and for fraternal conviviality.

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*Since 2008 Bishop John M. Quinn has led the Diocese of Winona, composed of 20 counties in Southern Minnesota. A Detroit native, he served in parishes and administration in that archdiocese before becoming auxiliary bishop there in 2003. In addition to other appointments, he currently serves on the U.S. bishops’ Catholic Campus Ministry Committee.*



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## Sharing unique charisms

Each religious institute, whether an order or a congregation, monastic or apostolic, pontifical or diocesan, introduces a distinctive spiritual gift into the life of the presbyterate which adds to the richness of the pastoral care of God's people in the local church. The diocesan church receives these charisms, and the bishop is to welcome religious as his co-workers along with his priests and deacons. The *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* encourages the diversity of charisms and ministries by religious:

The diversity of vocations and ministries which make up the particular Church requires the bishop to exercise his ministry not in isolation, but in close union with his co-workers, the priests and deacons. He is further assisted by members of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, which enrich the particular Church with fruitful charisms and the witness of holiness, charity, fraternity and mission.

While the entire pastoral care of God's people in a diocese is entrusted to a bishop and to his presbyterate, religious priests bring a unique spiritual charism to pastoral work and to a variety of ministries. Perhaps an analogy will help to demonstrate my point. Cooking can be very basic and simple in that food is prepared to provide nourishment and strength. That same basic food, however, can be prepared according to a cultural or ethnic preference. Often, herbs and spices enhance the taste and the enjoyment of food by bringing out distinct flavors. Food is essential for life, and giving food a distinct taste adds to the enjoyment of a meal shared with others.

The pastoral care of God's people is enriched by the

gift of the spiritual legacy, devotional life and the unique charism of religious orders. Each religious order brings a particular way to grow in the life of the Holy Spirit and to seek holiness and union with the Triune God. Like herbs, spices and special flavors, the charisms of religious communities give the church a rich and enticing banquet of spiritual growth in holiness and witness.

Religious priests bring a unique spiritual charism to pastoral work and to a variety of ministries.

## Commitment made concrete

My personal experience taught me to value my brother priests who belong to religious institutes. Several years ago, when I was working in Catholic education and formation at the diocesan level in the Archdiocese of Detroit, it was my privilege to collaborate with the Society of Jesus in starting a high school for boys in the city of Detroit. The discussions were rich and far ranging; they covered the mission of the school, strategies for educating urban youth, the need for a longer school day and academic calendar, and especially the Catholic identity of the school.

In these conversations, I learned about the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the charism of the Jesuits to see God in all things and the Jesuit motto "all for the greater glory of God." I was especially touched by the Jesuit willingness to take on the challenge of founding a new high school at a time when Jesuit personnel were needed in their own institutions and ministries. It became especially evident to me that the Society of Jesus saw the education of urban youth as an application of their charism to the concrete needs of our time. They were faithful to their charism to do all for the greater

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glory of God. In my discussions with Jesuit leadership and personnel about the high school, I was deeply impressed by their willingness to take risks and by their great desire to promote the social teachings of the church by engaging as a community in the works of justice and peace.

It was the firm decision of the Archbishop of Detroit and the Jesuit provincial that the high school was to be Catholic and that it would follow the Ignatian principles of spiritual life in forming administrators, faculty and especially students. Appropriately the name selected for the school was Loyola High School. The school motto is written in large letters

Priests who follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience and who bring that spirit-filled witness ... are a gift.

at the entrance for all to see: "A Man for Others." The archdiocese could not have opened an urban high school without the spiritual foundation and commitment by the Society of Jesus as co-workers in the mission of Jesus Christ. It was a partnership based on a deep respect for the charisms of both the local

church and of a religious community of priests that brought about Loyola High School.

The Jesuits have taught me much over my life, having at different times been my teachers at the university as well as my spiritual advisors, retreat masters and confessors. It was especially as brother priests, co-workers and friends that they awakened in me an even deeper awareness of God's loving presence through their desire to do more. *Magis*, the Latin word for "more," characterizes Ignatian spirituality and the charism of the Jesuit community for evangelization and the growth of the church.

## A charism for preaching

Here in the Diocese of Winona I found another example of a religious priest who has generously helped to build up the life of the local church and to change lives. Father Andrew C. Fabian is a Dominican Friar who came to Winona in 1964 to teach philosophy at his community's novitiate and at nearby Saint Mary's University. While the novitiate no longer exists, Father Fabian remains a valued member of the university faculty where he continues to form hearts and minds in Thomistic philosophy. Father Fabian has influenced thousands over a lifetime of priestly ministry and teaching.

As bishop of the Diocese of Winona, I am particularly aware that he firmly sets the Thomistic philosophical foundation for the college level seminarians at Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary. He has very generously shared the Dominican charism of contemplation and of giving of the fruits of contemplation to others through his preaching, teaching and his pursuit of the intellectual life. In the presbyterate of the Diocese of Winona, Father Fabian is a thread who knits together the generations of priests. He has built up the life of the church in the Diocese of Winona by his generous sharing of the Dominican charism. When the presbyterate of Winona gathers for prayer, fraternity and sociability, Father Fabian is there mixing easily with the different generations of priests. He is clearly a son of St. Dominic and a vital part of the life of our presbyterate.

I have elaborated here on just two examples of religious priests who have been part of my life, but I cannot emphasize enough how important every religious institute of priests is to the presbyterate. I remain grateful for the Franciscan spirit of poverty and the beauty of creation, the Carmelite charism for contemplation and solitude and the purification of the senses, the Benedictine life of prayer, study and work, the Marist charism for the life of discipleship modeled on Mary, the Mother of God.

Certainly I could list even more religious and their charisms that have enriched my life, the presbyterate and the dioceses in which I have served. But for lack of space, I also could list many more examples of the rich spiritual heritage of religious-institute priesthood.

The Holy Spirit distributes gifts for the common good and the building up of the church. Religious life is the work of the Holy Spirit, and priests who follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience and who bring that spirit-filled witness along with their distinctive spiritual legacy to a diocese, are a gift to the local presbyterate and to God's people. As bishop I support the priests in religious orders and institutes, and I welcome them to come and share in the pastoral care of God's people. I especially welcome their initiative in terms of ministries suited to their charism.

The late Pope John Paul II spoke so eloquently in the *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Consecrated Life* (46) of the blessings religious give to the church by their communal life and invitation to experience intimacy with the Triune God: "In a specific way, through the richness of their charisms, consecrated persons help the Church to reveal ever more deeply her nature as the sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind." ■



Key findings from the NRVC-CARA study paired with probing questions illuminate the crucial role members have in forming a future for their community.

# Membership makes a difference in attracting new members

BY SISTER CHARLENE DIORKA, SSJ

**T**HE 2009 NRVC-CARA STUDY of newer members of religious institutes is a gift to the church and to religious life. If we choose to give this study our full attention, it has the power and potential to put vocation ministry and new membership front and center and to make new membership a priority. Religious communities have the choice to put the results of this study into their current of consciousness. When they do that, things happen!

The study reveals that religious institutes that have made concerted efforts around vocations and in some way have given vocations priority status have been successful in attracting and retaining new members. One section of the study looked at characteristics of communities that have succeeded in attracting and retaining new members and reported this:

Many of these institutes made a decision at some point to do something about vocations and new membership. In some cases, the decision came from a chapter or assembly, and in others it came from leadership. Whatever the case, the institute decided to be proactive

and to invest some resources into vocation promotion. This took a number of different forms, including appointing a vocation director and/or team to work on vocation promotion, making financial resources available for vocation promotion, educating leadership and/or membership about vocation promotion, and developing a plan of action.

In a recent article in *Human Development*, “Refounding Religious Life,” Ted Dunn observes something similar:

“Regardless of the odds, communities at a crossroads stand a better chance if their choices are proactive. The road ahead may be challenging, and the statistics daunting. Each community must decide if it will be among the 75 percent that become extinct or will be among the most courageous and innovative communities risking it all to claim a future full of hope.” The focus on making a choice reminds me of the passage in Deuteronomy 30:19: “I have set before you life and death...choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live.”

## More than marketing

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

Sister Charlene Diorka, SSJ is associate director of the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) and a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph. She was a vocation minister for her community for six years and a sister-resident in Elizabeth House for several years prior to joining the NRVC staff.



## ***NRVC-CARA study of new members***

In August, 2009, the results of a study of new membership to U.S. religious institutes were released. The study was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate and was commissioned by the National Religious Vocation Conference. The research had four components: a survey of roughly 1,000 religious institutes, a survey of approximately 4,000 members in initial formation or who had been in final vows since 1993, focus groups chosen from the same 4,000 members, and an examination of religious institutes that have experienced some success in attracting new members. The survey results can be found online at [www.nrv.net](http://www.nrv.net).

This is where members come in! Membership makes a difference. A poignant finding from the NRVC-CARA study is that more than anything else, new members were attracted to their particular religious institute by the example of its members, and especially by their sense of joy, their down-to-earth-nature, and their commitment and zeal. Some 85 percent of newer members said the example of members attracted them “very much.” This finding reminds us that we, the members, are the greatest asset to our religious institute and its future. We are not only responsible for our own vocation but for attracting and nurturing the future of our institutes in the vocations of those who will come to us.

The role that membership plays in attracting new members was noted by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in its 2002 document, *Starting Afresh from Christ: a Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium* (17):

Care for vocations is a crucial task for the future of consecrated life. Every community and all its members of the institute are called to take on the tasks of contact with youth, of an evangelical teaching of the following of Christ and of handing on the charism. Young people are searching for others who are able to propose styles of authentic evangelical life and ways of arriving at the great spiritual values of human and Christian life.

Further emphasis on the crucial part that we as membership play comes from the 1996 *Vita Consecrata* (109):

An impassioned love of Jesus Christ is a powerful attraction for those other young people whom Christ in his goodness is calling to follow him closely and forever. Our contemporaries want to see in consecrated persons the joy which comes from being with the Lord. Consecrated women and men, old and young alike, live faithfully your commitment to God, in mutual edification and mutual support! Despite the difficulties you may occasionally encounter, and despite the lessening of esteem for the consecrated life in certain quarters, you have the task of once more inviting the men and women of our time to lift their eyes, not to let themselves be overwhelmed by everyday things, to let themselves be captivated by the fascination of God and of his Son's Gospel.

We members are critical to the future of religious life. We are the greatest and the best resource that a congregation has. By tending to the findings of the NRVC-CARA study, there is power, with God's grace, to renew religious life by rediscovering the unique gift of this form of life. Again, we find a valuable perspective in the 2002 document *Starting Afresh from Christ: a Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium* (13).

The difficulties and the questioning which religious life is experiencing today can give rise to a new *kairos*, a time of grace. In these challenges lies hidden an authentic call of the Holy Spirit to rediscover the wealth and potentialities of this form of life.

## **Questions prompted by the study**

Let's take a look at the findings of the study and see what they might invite us to as members—as the greatest resources that our congregations have for attracting new people. Perhaps you'll want to take some time to reflect on these questions in light of information that the study revealed.

**What was your age at time of entrance?** According to the survey of new members, the average age of entrance is 30 for men (with a median of 27) and age 32 for women (with a median age of 29).

**What is your race and ethnic background?** Compared to

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finally-professed members, those in initial formation are more likely to come from a background other than white or Anglo: 21 percent are Hispanic or Latino; 14 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and six percent are African or African American. About 58 percent are white or Anglo, compared to about 94 percent of finally-professed members.

**At the time of entrance, what was your experience in education, life, ministry and work?** Seventy percent of new members had at least a bachelor's degree before they entered. More than nine in 10 were employed, usually in a full-time position, and about seven in 10 were engaged in ministry, one-third on a full-time basis and about six in 10 on a volunteer basis. Many were also involved in various parish ministries and/or other volunteer work.

Compared to men and women religious in the last century, those coming to religious life today are much more diverse in terms of their age, racial and ethnic background, and life experience. Many come with considerable education, as well as ministry and work experience.

#### **CHALLENGES AND ACTION POSSIBILITIES FOR MEMBERS**

*The diversity among new members presents a number of challenges for formation as well as for life and ministry in many religious institutes. How will we meet these new members? How will we make ourselves visible to them? Will we reach out to invite them? Will we make room for them in our communities so that they feel welcome and feel that they belong? Will we make room for them so that their gifts and talents can be revered and used? Will we show that we care to know about them and what interests them? How are we willing to bridge the gap (in age, ecclesiology, etc.) between new membership and current membership?*

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**Were you raised Catholic? Did you receive a Catholic education or attend a parish-based religious education program?** The survey of new members found that about nine in 10 were raised Catholic, and most (73 percent) attended a Catholic school for at least part of their education. About half attended parish-based religious education.

#### **CHALLENGES AND ACTION POSSIBILITIES FOR MEMBERS**

*Since the study shows that Catholic education has made an impact on many of those discerning a vocation, how can and do we members connect and collaborate in Catholic environments, be they schools, campus ministry programs, volunteer*

*programs, youth and young adult opportunities, etc.? These are opportunities to make our presence known and valued as consecrated religious men and women.*

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**When did you first consider religious life?** More than two-thirds (68 percent) of the new members first considered religious life by the time they were 21, with a little more than half (53 percent) doing so by the time they were 18. Female respondents are a little more likely than male respondents to have thought about a religious vocation at a young age, that is, before the age of 14 (27 percent compared to 19 percent). Men were a little more likely to first consider religious life when they were college-age, that is, between the ages of 18 and 21 (28 percent of men versus 20 percent of women).

**Was there a particular person from your congregation or an experience that you had with the congregation that attracted you?** New members are drawn to religious life primarily by a sense of call and a desire for prayer and spiritual growth. More than three-fourths (78 percent) say they were attracted "very much" by the former and almost as many (73 percent) say they were attracted "very much" by the latter. More than anything else, new members were attracted to their particular religious institute by the example of its members, and especially by their sense of joy, their down-to-earth nature and their commitment and zeal. Some 85 percent of newer members say the example of members attracted them "very much."

**What part did spirituality, community life and prayer play in your attraction to religious life and in particular to your religious institute?** To only a slightly lesser degree, most new members also say they were attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service and a desire to be part of a community. They were attracted to their particular religious institute by its spirituality, community life and prayer life. Although the ministries of the institute are also important to most new members, they are less important than spirituality, prayer, community and lifestyle. Questions about ministry, especially the possibility of a variety of ministries, tend to be more important to men than to women among new members.

#### **CHALLENGES AND ACTION POSSIBILITIES FOR MEMBERS**

*Members are attracted, often at a young age, by the example of members. What opportunities or occasions do we have to actively participate in promoting vocation awareness? How do*

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we give witness to the fact that we are happy and fulfilled in our lives as consecrated religious? Do we recognize and engage each encounter with someone as an opportunity to offer a positive image and witness to religious life?

Given the significance of prayer to those who participated in the study, when and how do young adults see our contemplative side, our prayer life? Do we connect with them on these levels, and do we provide prayer and contemplation opportunities as ways for them to come to know us? Do our current communal lives of prayer sustain us, let alone our new members?

Community life holds great significance for newer members. How are we willing to accommodate healthy community experiences for them? How can we be creative in passing on our charism, spirituality, mission and tradition of prayer in new and engaging ways to new members?

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**How did you first come to meet your religious institute? How many religious men or women did you know or were you aware of when you entered religious life?**

The study showed that newer members in religious life first became acquainted with their religious institutes in many different ways. The most common form of first contact was through an institution, such as a school where the members served (36 percent). Other relatively common ways of connecting were through the recommendation of a friend or advisor (28 percent), through working with a member of the institute (19 percent), through a friend in the institute (16 percent) and through print or online promotional materials (17 percent).

Men were more likely than women to report that they first encountered their religious institute in a school or other institution where the members served. Women are more likely than men to indicate that they learned about their institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor.

Older respondents were somewhat more likely than younger respondents to have met the institute more directly, that is, through working with a member or through a friend in the institute. Younger respondents, especially those in the Millennial generation, were more likely to have first heard about the institute through the recommendation of a friend or advisor or through print or online promotional materials.

Some younger members did not know a man or woman religious before they sensed a call to religious life. They acquired direct experience with the institute and its members through “Come and See” experiences, discernment retreats and other opportunities to spend time with members. Direct experiences were especially important for younger members.

#### CHALLENGES AND ACTION POSSIBILITIES FOR MEMBERS

Where do we minister and volunteer our time, talent and treasure? Where are we present so that young adults might meet us and come to know us? Do we make time to be available? Where can we be proactive in making our mission, charism and presence clear, visible and identifiable? How are we visible and identifiable to young adults? Are we willing to be seen and known as consecrated religious? Are we comfortable being known as father, sister or brother?

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#### What have been your living situations since you entered religious life? What have been your ministry experiences?

When asked about their decision to enter their particular religious institute, new members cite the community life in the institute as the most influential factor in their decision (followed closely by the prayer life or prayer styles in the community). Most new members indicate that they want to live, work and pray with other members of their religious institute, with community prayer being especially important to them. Responses to an open-ended question about what most attracted them to their religious institute reinforce the importance placed on communal life.

When asked about various living arrangements, most new members prefer to live in a large community (eight or more) or medium-sized (four to seven) and to live only with other members of their institute. Younger respondents express even stronger preferences for living with members of their institute in large community settings. Young men and women considering religious life today are not interested in living alone. In fact findings from the survey of religious institutes suggest that new membership is negatively correlated with the number of members living alone. That is the higher the number of members who live alone, the less likely an institute is to have new members.

When asked about various ministry settings, most new members indicate a relatively strong preference for ministry with other members of their institute and ministry sponsored by their institute. Again, these preferences are much stronger among younger new members. Very few new members, especially in the youngest age cohorts, prefer ministry with a non-Catholic or non-religious organization or even one that is Catholic but not sponsored by their institute.

#### CHALLENGES AND ACTION POSSIBILITIES FOR MEMBERS

Young adults want to give their lives to something bigger, greater and significantly worth their whole life. They want a life that

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*offers them something and expects something of them. What is the quality of our life together? Do we actively live together and share in the joys and sorrows of one another's lives?*

*In terms of ministry, will we listen to them and what they desire for fruitful ministry? In order to choose life we will need to let go of what no longer gives life. Are we willing to let go of places, ministries and relationships to which we were once called but now are no longer life giving?*

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**What kind of support (from parents, family, friends, priests, etc.) did you have when you entered religious life?** Many new members did not experience a great deal of encouragement from parents, siblings or other family members when they were first considering a vocation to religious life. Many also did not receive much encouragement from diocesan priests, people in their parish, or people in their school or workplace. Many report that their parents are now much more supportive.

Most new members report that they received a great deal of encouragement from members of their institute during their discernment process and that members of their institute continue to be their greatest source of encouragement and support in religious life. Most also report high levels of encouragement from those with or to whom they minister.

Compared to older new members, younger new members are more likely to report that they were encouraged by diocesan priests when first considering religious life. They are also more likely to report receiving encouragement from diocesan priests in their life and ministry now. Among other respondents, diocesan priests are least likely to be cited as a source of "very much" encouragement.

#### **CHALLENGES AND ACTION POSSIBILITIES FOR MEMBERS**

*Support of newer members is critical. How do you reach out to newer members? How do they make a way in our community? Friendships, vacation plans, leisure and recreational activities are often already established within a community. New members need to be welcomed with openness and a hospitable outreach that acknowledges that it makes a difference that they are among us. When they enter in fewer numbers or alone, how can they experience the richness of community and ministry?*

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It is clear that a new and unique generation stands before us, and we have a choice to meet them where they are and to invite them to enrich our communities. They, like us, are

coming to pray, minister, live a life in community and unite themselves to Jesus through the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. Isn't that why you came? Hopefully it's also why you stay. I know that it is why I came, and it is my challenge and prayer every day to live this life authentically and with passion and joy. At this moment, we are being invited to grow in understanding, appreciation and reverence for contemporary vocations. These newcomers may look different to us, but at the heart they may be experiencing very genuine calls. Will we meet those who are called where they are? And moreover, will they find us attractive?

In one of my favorite poems, "The Summer Day," poet Mary Oliver asks the question, "What are you going to do with your one wild and precious life?" There is no doubt in my mind that young people today are asking this question, and in response some are even discerning consecrated religious life. With what we have come to know through this study, what are we willing to do as members of religious institutes to help young adults live their one wild and precious life within our institutes so that they feel a sense of welcome, belonging, identity, diversity, support, life-giving and fruitful ministry and community—so that they, too, can live the dream that God dreams in them? If we want new membership, it just may cost us everything!

We stand in a graced moment, a moment in which God beckons us to grasp the grace that is being offered and prosper. *Vita Consecrata* (64) describes this moment:

Some might ask: Have we lost the capacity to attract new members? I think we must have confidence in Jesus who continues to call men and women to follow him. We must entrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit, who inspires and bestows the charisms of the consecrated life. We must also pray unceasingly to the Lord of the harvest. In addition to prayer, a primary responsibility of all consecrated men and women is to propose with courage, by word and example, the ideal of the following of Christ, and then to support the response to the Spirit's action in the heart of those who are called.

When we live the gift of consecrated life with authentic witness, passion and joy, the fidelity and wisdom of current membership can unite with the energy, enthusiasm and optimism of new membership, and we might know the truth of the Gospel where Jesus says, "I came to light a fire on the earth, and how I wish it were ablaze." Let us go forth renewed and committed to the gift of our vocation and to the future of religious life. ■

# BOOK NOTES

## Nuanced portrait of young adults points to hopes, challenges

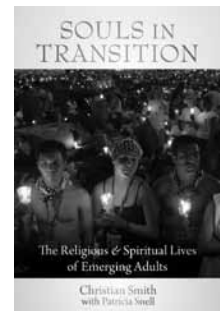
BY AVIS CLENDENEN

**N**OT LONG AGO I concluded an undergraduate course entitled Theology of Ministry with a ritual adapted from the diaconal ordination, whereby the ordinand places his hand on the Bible while the bishop says: “Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.” The reply is, “I will with the grace of God.” My students, all emerging adults, were standing in a circle and I went to each one holding the Bible. They placed their right hand on the Bible while I offered the charge. Each replied. I then asked one of the students to do the same for me. She took the Bible from me and stood in front of me and said, “Believe what you want . . . oh, I forgot the rest.” At first blush this was simply a humorous moment; deeper reflection suggests something more.

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I recalled this story while reading the very substantive *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, by Christian Smith, with Patricia Snell (Oxford University Press, 2009). The 2009 book won the Best Book in Christianity & Culture Award from *Christianity Today*. No doubt this memory from my theology class surfaced precisely because *Souls in Transition* documents that emerging adults are the least religious adults in the United States today, struggle with concentration, and generally indicate that religious tradition matters little to most of them.



At more than 300 pages, *Souls in Transition* is a tour de force. The authors analyze and interpret the data gleaned from the third wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), a broad study of U.S. young people and their religious beliefs and engagement. The first wave of the study, begun in 2003, included a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 13-17 year olds, followed by personal interviews with 267 of them in 45 states. The findings were published in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual lives of American Teenagers* (2005). In 2005, a second telephone survey was conducted with most of the same subjects, and 122 of the respondents were re-interviewed. *Souls in*

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*Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* is the companion to *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual lives of American Teenagers*. Candid interviews with the same sample of young people first studied in *Soul Searching* appear in these pages, with these men and women having grown up into *emerging adulthood*—a newly recognized phase in the life cycle extending from 18-29 years of age.

## The new reality of “emerging adulthood”

The starting point for the entire inquiry and book is the challenge of taking seriously the emerging adulthood phase of young American life that has developed over the last four decades. It is important to note that like the life stage known as *teenager* or *adolescence*—a 20<sup>th</sup> century invention—emerging adulthood is a 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural construction of a distinct phase of development between the teenage years and autonomous adulthood. The authors identify four macro social changes that have combined to create this new life phase. First, is the growth of young people participating in higher education. A “huge proportion” of American 18-year-olds extend formal schooling well into their 20s. Jeffrey Arnett in *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (2004) notes that college enrollment among 18-21 year olds in the United States rose from less than 5 percent in 1900 to more than 60 percent by 2000. Second is the documented delay in making a life commitment. Half a century ago most youth exited high school, married, settled down, had children and started their independent life. Today there is at least a decade between completion of high school and making commitments; the time is spent exploring life’s options, and emerging adults do so with unprecedented freedom. Third, an unstable economy and job market contribute to the rise of emerging adulthood. The focus on gaining marketable skills and sorting through long-term career direction pushes youth toward extending schooling and postponing commitments. Fourth are parents who are keenly aware of the resources needed to establish an independent life and who are increasingly willing to continue financial support of children, subsidizing the freedom many emerging adults enjoy well into their 20s.

The book’s principal author, Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith notes:

Studies agree that the transition to adulthood today is more complex, disjointed, and confusing than in past decades. The steps through and to schooling,

the first real job, marriage and parenthood are simply less well organized and coherent today than they were in generations past. At the same time these years are marked by a historically unparalleled freedom to roam, experiment, learn, move on and try again. The features marking this stage are intense identity exploration, instability, a focus on self, feeling in limbo or in transition or in between, and a sense of possibilities, opportunities and unparalleled hope. These are accompanied by large doses of transience, confusion, anxiety, self-obsession, melodrama, conflict, disappointment, and sometimes emotional devastation.

Evidence now suggests that participation in higher education may actually decrease the risk to loss of faith, compared to not attending college.

## College no longer where faith dies

Interestingly Smith notes, “Some researchers conclude from their fieldwork on religion at college campuses that at least certain campuses have actually become ‘a breeding ground for vital religious practice and teaching.’” It would seem, then, that a quality student campus life provides an anchor in the time of transition, as well as an educational path and discipline that holds the potential to be an antidote to the confusion and disorientation that accompanies the journey toward adulthood. In addition *Souls in Transition* documents the finding that going to college does not increase the “risk” of rejecting religion or falling into religious apathy as it did in the not-too-distant past. Evidence now suggests that participation in higher education may actually decrease the risk to loss of faith, compared to not attending college.

That being the case, the engagement of vocation ministers on campus, such as via Busy Person Retreats, inserts an interesting vehicle for nourishing a possible call to religious life or priesthood. Certainly the consideration of church vocations fits into a time of identity exploration coupled with a sense of possibility, opportunity and hope.

I am reminded of the final words of Pope Benedict’s address to Catholic educators during his trip to the United States in April 2008. He concluded with this profound reminder:

To all of you I say: bear witness to hope. Nourish

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your witness with prayer. Account for the hope that characterizes your lives (1 Peter 3:15) by living the truth which you propose to your students. Help them to know and love the One you have encountered, whose truth and goodness you have experienced with joy.

Vocation ministers will no doubt agree that such a habit of mind and heart is greatly needed in ministry with

The distinctive features of individual religious traditions hold little import for many members of this generation. What is the difference anyway between real presence or symbolic presence in

emerging adults because of the uncomfortable unevenness that generally typifies this period of life. Imagine the number of forces influencing them: mass-consumer capitalism, youth-targeted marketing, economic transformations, new career imperatives and strategies, mass education, rapidly-evolving

communications technologies, proliferation of media programming, moral pluralism, continuing waves of sexual revolution and global instability (281). All this is going on within a cultural milieu where the post-modern self is central. *Souls in Transition* documents the difficulty for emerging adults to see an objective reality beyond the self. Their worldviews are shaped by personal subjective experiences where they are the most reliable reference point.

## Anything goes tolerance

*Souls in Transition* takes note of the highly developed tolerance for difference that exists among emerging adults. As Smith writes, “Emerging adults can exhibit a very impressive ease in associating and getting on with people of different races, ethnicities, appearances, and other attributes that more easily separated people of former generations.” Some of these dispositions arise from a post-modern orientation that abandons absolutes and challenges claims about truth. The terms duty, responsibility and obligation can feel somehow vaguely coercive to emerging adults. “One of the apparent effects of this culturally relativistic view,” according to Smith, “is speech in which claims are not staked, rational arguments are not developed, differences not engaged, nature

(as in natural world) is not referenced, and universals not recognized” (51). The distinctive features of individual religious traditions hold little import for many members of this generation. What is the difference anyway between real presence or symbolic presence in the Eucharist?

Or consider the implications of what might be referred to as a narcissistic altruism, which seeks ways in which one can do good and also get something for it. A statement from one of the interviews captures this reality when the interviewee responds to a question on factoring in time for serving others: “I feel like if I’m going to do something good for the community, I might as well get paid for it too.”

Emerging adults need trusted adults in their lives who can challenge this logic and invite them to “open the Book, which the strange, difficult, beautiful church has given us,” as poet Mary Oliver writes. She goes on to add, “To Matthew. Anywhere.”

Indeed evidence suggests that emerging adults are the least religiously observant adults in the United States today. Only about 20 percent attend religious services at least once a week, a 22 percent decline from the NSYR survey of the same group of young people five years prior. The practice of tolerance in a post-modern sensibility has the unintended consequence of minimizing the importance of religious particularities and has led to encouraging emerging adults to see religious practice as kind of homogenized, non-obligatory, non-crucial function in life, at least during the emerging adult era. Therein, “believe what you want...oh, I forgot the rest” reveals a characteristic worthy of our attention. The relativism of post-modernity is irreversible.

Holding young adults in a network of faith-based relationships is truly a countercultural approach. Such an approach might involve one-on-one mentoring or small-group meetings where growth in self-understanding, self-discipline, and intentional living guide choices about work and relationships.

In tandem with reading *Souls in Transition*, I encourage vocation ministers to turn to the poem “The Second Coming” by William Butler Yeats. Yeats is writing in the aftermath of World War I, yet his words strike a chord today about the swirling within which we live where, “The falcon cannot hear the falconer; things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.” Amid the swirl of choices and competing truth claims confronting emerging adults, the fully engaged vocation minister can indeed witness to a Centre that holds. All of us, young adults included, need a story in which to be held. Be the story.



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## Over-wired generation?

The momentum of daily living with its complexities of schedules and unpredictable variables in each family members' life simply did not exist 40 years ago. Living in "lifestyle enclaves"—private networks of technologically managed intimates and associates—was simply inconceivable even 20 years ago. Smith notes that "technologies of communication" preoccupy the lives of emerging adults. Some interviewees could not focus on the interview for an hour without checking vibrating cell phones or pausing, without excusing themselves, to text someone. Smith summarizes:

In short, emerging adults are keen on gadgets that facilitate their interpersonal communications. And managing personal relationships turns out for many to be not a distinct task reserved for routinely scheduled times of the day or week, but rather a ubiquitous, 24/7 life activity. The instant feedback and stimulation from friends and family about every choice and action and emotion they make and feel seems to be very satisfying to them, sometimes perhaps addictive. Yet all of these relationship-managing activities and private communications distractions seem to make it difficult for emerging adults to pursue tasks that require full concentration or patient dedication.

More than 20 years ago, Allan Bloom, in his critically acclaimed *The Closing of the American Mind*, foreshadowed Smith's concern about a possible consequence of living too deep within virtual reality. Bloom predicted, "As long as they have the Walkman on, they cannot hear what the great tradition has to say. And, after its prolonged use, when they take it off, they find they are deaf" (Bloom 1987, pages 80-81). Most emerging adults have no idea what a Walkman is, but one could easily remove that word and insert such an array of terms (iPod, Blackberry, smart phone, etc.) that the mind goes numb. If Smith is correct that 24/7 communication technologies rob young adults of the ability to concentrate, reflect and forestall immediate gratification, then the growing inner deafness within many young adults means they cannot hear the inner critic suggesting that something may be amiss or that something may need their undivided attention. How will people hear the quiet nudging of the Spirit?

## Optimistic findings

What's the good news in this documented story of decline

in religious engagement among emerging adults in America today? I found it refreshing to learn that the myth of being spiritual but not religious does not bear out in the research. "For most, when subjective, private, internal religious life is strong, so also is the external, public expression of and participation in religion. Conversely, when external expression is weak, in most cases, so is their subjective, private, internal religion." Emerging adults do not experience themselves as once religious and now spiritual. This is good news because those for whom religious faith and practice was substantial in their younger years typically continue to build upon that as they move toward adulthood; those religiously indifferent or disconnected as youth remain so into emerging adulthood.

Among Millennials who are actively engaged in religious practice the intensity of that affiliation is similar to previous generations. The minority among the minority of emerging adults who enter discernment regarding religious life are most likely those for whom faith and practice have had a consistent place in their human and spiritual development.

Vocation ministers may find interesting and helpful the five distinct factors that create a "life recipe" for sustaining religious commitment in the emerging adult years.

I'm supposing that vocation ministers ought to be involved in local Catholic high schools' Kairos retreat programs and collegiate Quest retreat programs as venues ripe to introduce the vowed life. This minority within the minority is most likely found connected to a parish or diocesan-based faith community that intentionally reaches out to young adults. They may be serving in various religious or national service programs. They are the ones hanging out in campus ministry lounges, Newman Centers or intentional living communities on college campuses across the country. Perhaps vocation ministers want to look for the leaders within these communities—the ones who possess the maturity to bear the vocation. As we know, religious life can attract those unconsciously seeking a haven from their own adulthood.

While I found *Souls in Transition* a Disneyland of detailed research and data perfect for the mind with statistical aptitude (which mine is not), I did carefully note the "life recipe" discovered in the research, which illumines what makes the faith of some young people durable. Vocation ministers may find interesting and helpful the five distinct factors that

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Recently I read a letter that depth-psychologist Carl G. Jung wrote to a pastor in 1945. In this letter Jung was challenging the pastor to do the hard work of making new wineskins. Jung wrote:

Nowadays people want to understand and not just be harangued in an edifying manner. I hear over and over again: “Well, I knew ages ago what the parson says about it, but that’s no help to me.” Why do the young complain that not a flicker of light comes from the Church? This question cannot leave anybody cold who still has some truck [involvement] with Christian civilization. The theologian today must know a bit more about the human soul if he wants to address it. I once told Archbishop Temple: “Send me an intelligent young theologian. I will lead him into the night of the soul so that one of them at least may know what he is actually dealing with.” But nobody came. Naturally they knew it all already, and much the better. That is why the light has gone out. (Jung, Letters 1, 17 July 1945, to Pastor Max Frischknecht, pp. 372-373)

There is no way to sidestep the challenge Jung posed long ago about the danger of failing to be the source of light you wish to spark in others. *Souls in Transition* is a great-souled book, one that I recommend that vocation ministers read. It documents the flickers of light that all those who care about the faith and future of emerging adults must tend. Otherwise we all may face a time approaching when what we hear is, “Believe what you want . . . oh, I forgot the rest.” ■

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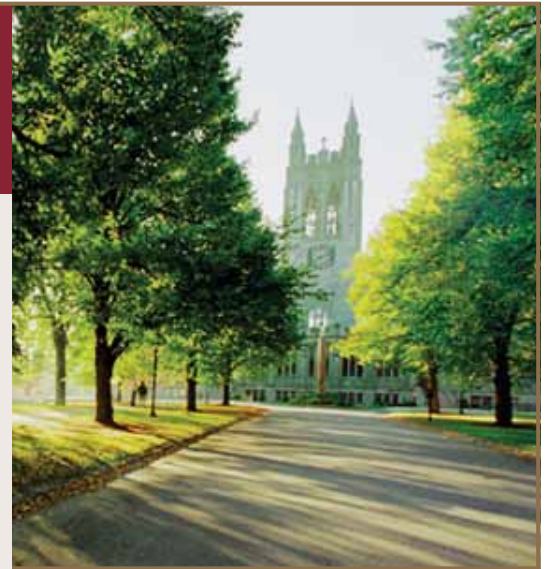
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