

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

*Women and Men Entering Religious Life:
The Entrance Class of 2017*



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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a national survey of women and men who formally entered a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States during 2017. To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men (postulants and novices), the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of apostolic women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 136 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a postulant or novice) in the United States since January 1, 2017. CARA then mailed a survey to each new entrant and asked them to return their completed survey to CARA.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 600 of 768 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 78 percent among religious institutes. Five religious institutes were not interested in participating in the study. In all, 93 percent of LCWR superiors, 76 percent of CMSWR superiors, 77 percent of CMSM superiors, and 53 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 524 members that entered religious life in 2017.

Of these 524 identified women and men, a total of 308 responded to the survey by January, 2018. This represents a response rate of 59 percent among the new entrants to religious life that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Major Findings

Characteristics of Responding Institutes and Entrants

- Seven in ten responding religious institutes had no one entering religious life in 2017. Fourteen percent reported one entrant and 16 percent reported two or more.
- The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2017 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 25 or younger. Slightly more than half are women and just a little under half are men. Just over seven in ten responding men religious expect to become priests and nearly three in ten plan to become a perpetually professed brother.
- Most respondents were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most commonly mentioned region of birth is Asia, with Vietnam and Mexico emerging as the most frequently mentioned countries of birth.
- On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 23 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 11 years before entering religious life.
- Two in three responding entrants identify as white, just over one in ten identifies as Asian, one in six identifies as Hispanic or Latino(a), and less than one in 20 identifies as either African/African American/black or as “other.”
- Nine in ten respondents have been Catholic since birth. More than eight in ten come from families in which both parents are Catholic. Almost all respondents of the entrance class of 2017 have at least one sibling and the most common number of siblings is one or two. Overall, respondents are typically the eldest child in their family.
- Altogether, respondents report 23 countries of birth. Members of the Entrance Class of 2017 are as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR, but they are more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (38 percent compared to 22 percent). In addition, entrants are more likely than other U.S Catholics to have attended a Catholic college/university.
- The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2017 were highly educated before entering. Half reported having earned a bachelor’s degree and about two in ten earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Men are more likely than women to have attended a Catholic college before entering their religious institute while women are more likely than men to have been home schooled.
- Many respondents were active in parish life as well as other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Nearly all respondents participated in at least one of a list of religious programs or activities before entering religious life.

- About three in four respondents participated in retreats before entering religious life. Less than half participated in a parish youth group, Life Teen, or campus ministry during their high school years. Four in ten participated in a parish young adult group.
- Just over three in five participated in a liturgical ministry in a parish, such as serving as a lector. A little less than half reported participating in faith formation, catechetical ministry, or in RCIA. About four in ten participated in music ministry, cantoring, or in the choir.
- Three in five participated in various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting. About one in ten participated in a volunteer program with a religious institute. Slightly more than half participated in campus ministry during college.
- Nearly four in ten participated in a Right to Life March in Washington. Women are slightly more likely than men to have had this experience. One in six participated in World Youth Day. Women are more likely than men to have participated in World Youth Day.

Vocational Discernment

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

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

Experience of Religious Life, Attractions, and Challenges

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

Introduction

In 2014, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an annual survey of women and men who enter religious life each year in a religious congregation, province, or monastery based in the United States. For this project, CARA was asked to gather information about the characteristics and experiences of these women and men in a fashion similar to the survey of perpetually professed that CARA conducts each year for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, which is released each year for the World Day of Consecrated Life in February. CARA designed a questionnaire based on previous CARA research on religious life and reviewed it with a representative from the Hilton Foundation. This report presents results of this survey of women and men of the Entrance Class of 2017.

To obtain the names and contact information for these women and men (postulants and novices),¹ CARA contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes that belong to either the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) or the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), the two leadership conferences of apostolic women religious in the United States. CARA also contacted the major superiors of all religious institutes who belong to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), which includes both apostolic and contemplative institutes. Finally, CARA contacted the major superiors of 136 contemplative communities of women in the United States that were identified by the USCCB Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Each major superior was asked to provide contact information for every person who entered the institute (for the first time, as a novice or postulant) in the United States since January 1, 2017. CARA then mailed a survey to each new entrant and asked them to return their completed survey to CARA. For a few of the religious institutes who requested it, CARA emailed a copy of the summary to the major superior who then distributed it to the novices and postulants in that institute.

After repeated follow-ups, CARA received a response from 600 of 768 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 78 percent among religious institutes. Five religious institutes were not interested in participating in the study. In all, 93 percent of LCWR superiors, 76 percent of CMSWR superiors, 77 percent of CMSM superiors, and 53 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 524 postulants or novices that

¹ There are notable differences among religious institutes in both their terminology and their practices during the first year of initial formation, i.e., following entrance into the religious institute. In most institutes of women religious, those who enter are called "postulants" or "candidates" and the initial phase of formation typically lasts at least six months to a year, although two years of candidacy before the new entrant becomes a novice is not uncommon. Although many institutes of men religious follow similar patterns, some have a much shorter period of postulancy. Among the Dominicans and the Jesuits, for example, men enter and become novices after a postulancy of only two to three weeks. Moreover, some religious institutes, including the Jesuits, use the term "candidate" for those who are considering entering the institute. That is, some institutes call the prospective member a "candidate" before he or she enters while others use the term to describe someone who has entered. This report is about the men and women who entered a religious institute in the United States in 2017 regardless of what they are called or their stage of initial formation.

entered religious life for the first time in the United States in 2017. The Entrance Class of 2017 consists of 281 men (reported by CMSM superiors), 162 women reported by CMSWR, 55 women reported by LCWR, and 26 new entrants into contemplative communities of women. Of these 524 identified women and men, a total of 308 responded to the survey by January 8, 2018. This represents a response rate of 59 percent among the new entrants to religious life that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

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

This report is arranged in three parts: Part I describes characteristics of the institutes that responded to the request for names as well as characteristics of the Entrance Class of 2017. Part II describes aspects of the vocational discernment of the Entrance Class of 2017. Part III describes their experience of religious life so far and reports, in their own words, what attracts them to religious life and what they find most challenging about religious life.

Interpreting this Report

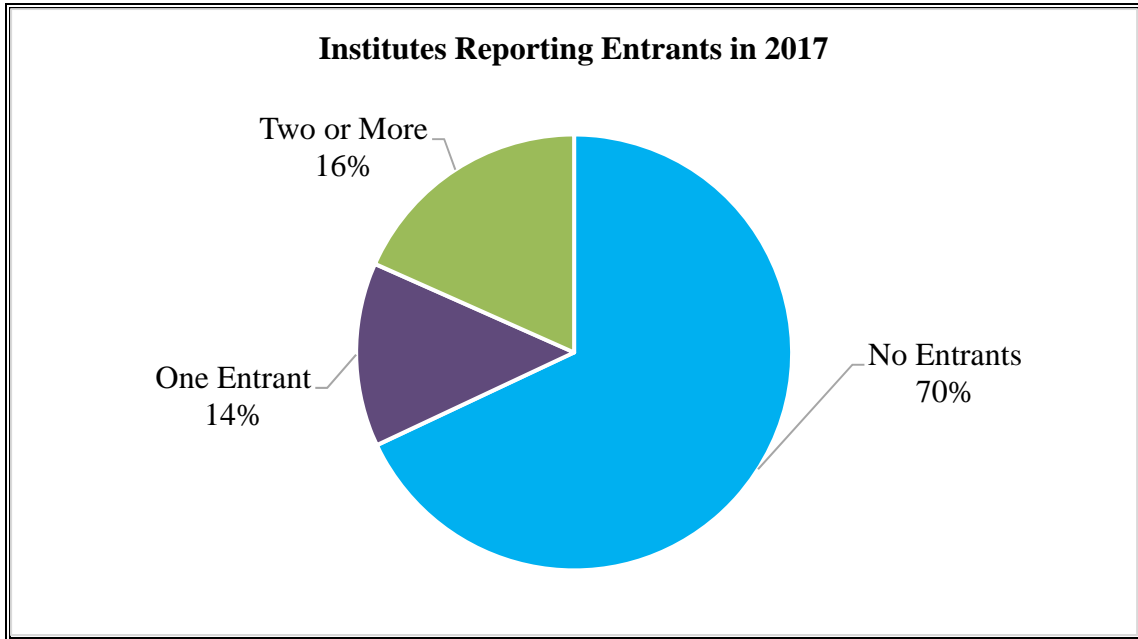
Many of the questions on the survey use four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “a little,” “somewhat,” and “very much” or “poor,” “fair,” “good,” and “excellent”). These scales allow half of the responses to be interpreted as relatively more “negative” (“poor” and “fair,” for example)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

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

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

Institutes Reporting New Entrants in 2017

CARA asked the 768 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries in the United States that were identified by LCWR, CMSWR, CMSM, or the USCCB to provide the names of women and men (postulants or novices) who entered their religious institute in the United States in 2017. A total of 600 major superiors responded (78 percent) with 524 names of women and men. The Entrance Class of 2017 consists of 281 men (reported by CMSM superiors) and 243 women: 162 reported by CMSWR, 55 reported by LCWR, and 26 new entrants into contemplative communities of women.



A total of 423 major superiors (70 percent of those responding) reported that they had no one enter the institute in 2017, another 83 major superiors (14 percent) reported one new entrant, and 99 major superiors (16 percent) reported from two or more new entrants.

Gender

Among the 308 respondents who entered religious life in 2017 were 162 women from 58 religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries. Similarly, the 139 men who responded come from 61 different religious congregations, provinces, or monasteries of men religious. Thus, 54 percent of responding entrants are women and 46 percent are men.

Age of the Entrance Class of 2017

The average age of respondents of the Entrance Class of 2017 is 28. Half of the respondents are age 25 or younger.

	Overall	Women	Men
25 and younger	51%	54%	49%
Age 26-35	35	41	49
Age 36-45	8	9	12
Age 46-55	3	4	3
Age 56 and older	3	5	2
Average age	28	28	28
Median age	25	25	26
Range in ages	18-72	18-72	19-65

The youngest responding sister or nun of the Entrance Class of 2017 is 18 and the oldest is 72. Among the men, the youngest is 19, with one man entering at the age of 65. Regardless of gender, more than eight in ten respondents (86 percent) are 35 or younger.

Country of Birth and Age at Entry to United States

Almost four in five (79 percent) respondents were born in the United States. Nearly one in ten was born in a country in Asia and another 7 percent were born in Mexico.

Region or Country of birth			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
United States	79%	77%	82%
Asia	8	6	11
Mexico	7	9	5
Africa	3	6	2
Europe	1	2	0
Canada	1	2	0
Latin America	1	1	1

Vietnam and Mexico are the most frequently mentioned countries of origin among respondents who were born outside the United States. Respondents identified a total of 23 different countries of origin.

Respondents who were born outside the United States have lived in the United States for an average of 11 years. Half first came to live in the United States in 2009 or earlier. Men are slightly more likely than women to enter the United States at a later age.

Entrance to the United States				
	Year	Age at Entry		
	Overall	Overall	Women	Men
Mean	2006	20	19	22
Median	2009	23	19	24
Range	1977-2017	0-51	1-51	0-39

On average, responding foreign-born religious came to live in the United States at the age of 20. Half were age 23 or younger when they came to live in the United States. The oldest woman was 51 while the oldest man 39 at the time they entered the United States.

Race and Ethnic Background

Two-thirds of those who entered a religious institute report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (67 percent). Women (69 percent) are just slightly more likely than men (65 percent) to be Caucasian/European American/white.

<i>What best describes your racial or ethnic background?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
Caucasian/European American/white	67%	69%	65%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	11	10	14
Hispanic/Latino(a)	17	17	17
African/African American/black	3	3	2
Other	2	1	2

One in ten (11 percent) of the Entrance Class of 2017 identifies as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian and one in six (17 percent) as Hispanic/Latino(a). Only 3 percent identify as African/African American/black and just 2 percent identify as “other” race or ethnicity.

Differences by Country of Birth

- Among those who were born in the United States, more than nine in ten (96 percent) report being Caucasian/European American/white.
- Among those not born in the United States, four in ten respondents (39 percent) identify as Asian/Pacific/Native Hawaiian. More than a third identify as Hispanic or Latino(a) (36 percent), one in ten identify as Caucasian/European/American/White (12 percent), one in ten as African/African American/black (10 percent), and 3 percent identify as other.

Religious Background

Nine in ten respondents (91 percent) have been Catholic since birth.

Catholic Background			
	Overall	Women	Men
Catholic since birth	91%	92%	90%
Became Catholic later in life	9	8	10

Those who came into full communion with the Catholic Church from another denomination came from a variety of faiths: generic Protestant, Lutheran, Christian United Church, United Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelical/Fundamentalist, Anglican, Atheist or non-denominational.

Nearly all respondents (95 percent) report that when they were growing up they had at least one parent who was Catholic. A little more than eight in ten (83 percent) report that both parents were Catholic.

Religious Background of Respondents' Parents			
	Overall	Women	Men
Both parents Catholic	83%	83%	82%
Mother Catholic, father not	6	6	6
Father Catholic, mother not	6	6	5
Neither parent was Catholic	5	5	6

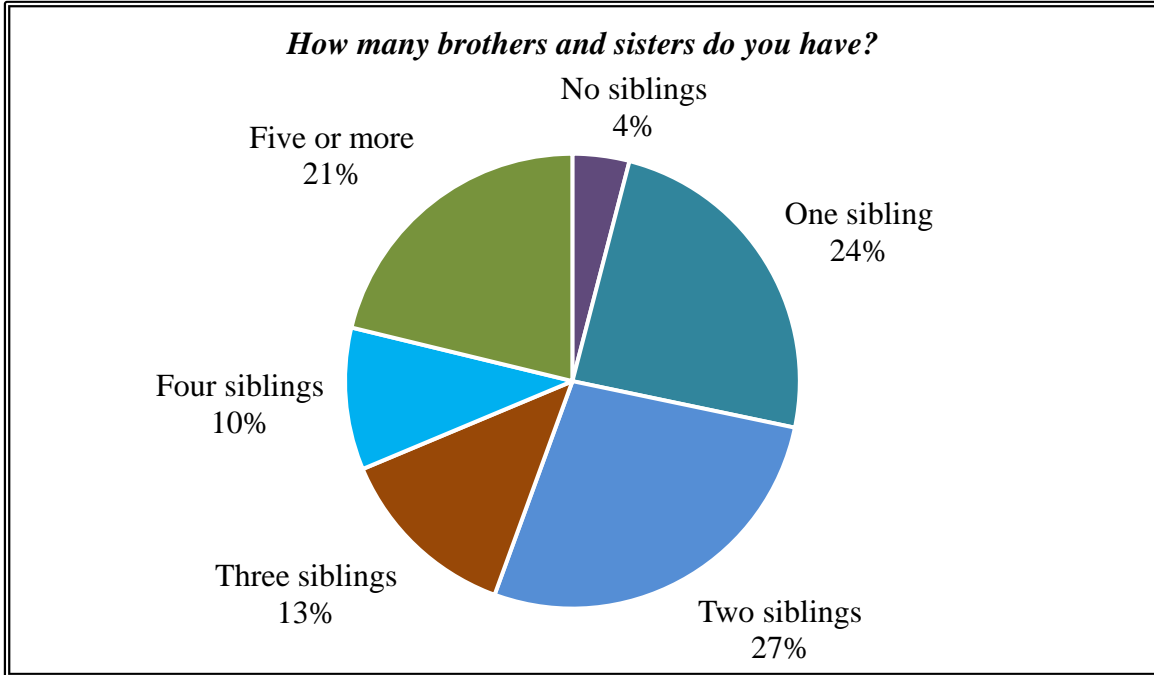
Respondents who had non-Catholic parents report that the parents were either Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Evangelical, Baptist, Assembly of God, Buddhist, a generic Protestant, Anglican, UCC, Secular Jew, Atheist, Mormon, Agnostic, Ancestor worship or non-denominational. Regardless of the religious tradition of their parents, two in three (66 percent) respondents report that religion was “very important” to their mothers and slightly less than half (47 percent) report that religion was “very important” to their fathers.

Two in three (68 percent) report that they got to know a priest or a religious brother or sister who was not a family member while they were growing up. Another three in ten have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun.

Familiarity with Priests and/or Religious Brothers and Sisters/Nuns While Growing Up			
Percentage responding “Yes” to each question			
	Overall	Women	Men
Outside of family members, while you were growing up did you ever get to know a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	68%	65%	71%
Do you have a relative who is a priest or a religious brother or sister/nun?	31	34	27

Family Background

On average, members of the Entrance Class of 2017 have three siblings. The most common response to this question, among women and men, is one or two siblings (51 percent).



- One in 20 says she or he is an only child (4 percent), about a quarter have one sibling (24 percent), and about seven in ten have two or more siblings (71 percent).²
- Three respondents report ten or more brothers and sisters.

² Those in the Entrance Class of 2016 do not differ significantly from those responding to the General Social Survey, where the percentage of only children in the last 30 years of data have ranged between 4 and 6 percent.

Overall, respondents with siblings are a little more likely to be the eldest child in their family. These entrants are more likely to be eldest child (36 percent) than either the youngest or the middle (25 and 34 percent). Women are more likely than men to be a middle child and men are more likely than women to be the youngest child in the family.

<i>What is your birth order?</i>			
Percentage in each category			
	Overall	Women	Men
Eldest	36%	36%	37%
Middle	34	43	25
Youngest	25	16	34
Only child	7	5	4

Education Level Before Entering a Religious Institute

The responding members of the Entrance Class of 2017 were highly educated before entering. Half report having earned a bachelor’s degree and two in ten (19 percent) earned a master’s degree before entering their religious institute.

<i>What was your highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute?</i>			
Percentage responding			
	Overall	Women	Men
High school or less	10%	13%	6%
Some college	15	16	14
Bachelor’s degree	51	52	52
Master’s degree	19	13	25
Doctoral degree	3	5	2
Other	2	1	2

One in ten (10 percent) respondents of the Entrance Class of 2017 completed high school or less before entering their religious institute. One in seven (15 percent) completed some college before entering. Responding men and women are equally likely to have attained a bachelor’s degree before entering.

About one in ten respondents (13 percent) report being home schooled at some time in their educational background. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home schooled was eight years (an average of eight years for women and nine years for men). More women than men report being home schooled (24 percent of women compared to 9 percent of men).

Catholic Education Before Entering a Religious Institute

Just over half of those responding attended a parish-based religious education program (54 percent) and slightly less than four in ten (37 percent) attended a Catholic elementary or middle school. Almost four in ten attended a Catholic high school and just over four in ten attended a Catholic college/university before entering their religious institute. Three in ten attended a Catholic ministry formation program before entering.

<i>Did you attend any of the following before you entered?*</i>			
Percentage responding “Yes” to each question			
	Overall	Women	Men
Parish-based religious education/CCD/PSR	54%	57%	60%
Catholic elementary or middle school	37	42	38
Catholic high school	38	36	41
Catholic college/university	42	32	55
Catholic ministry formation program	29	36	21
Home-schooled	17	24	9

Members of the Entrance Class of 2017 are about as likely as other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2016 national poll conducted by CARA,³ 39 percent of U.S. adult Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 37 percent among entrants. Responding entrants of 2017 are more likely than other U.S. adult Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (38 percent of respondents, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college/university (42 percent of respondents, compared to just 6 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).

Whether or not they ever attended a Catholic elementary or high school, slightly more than half respondents (54 percent) participated in a religious education program in their parish. Among respondents who said they participated in a religious education program in their parish, 60 percent did *not* report attending a Catholic elementary school and 64 percent did not attend a Catholic high school.

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

Discussions about Vocations While Growing Up

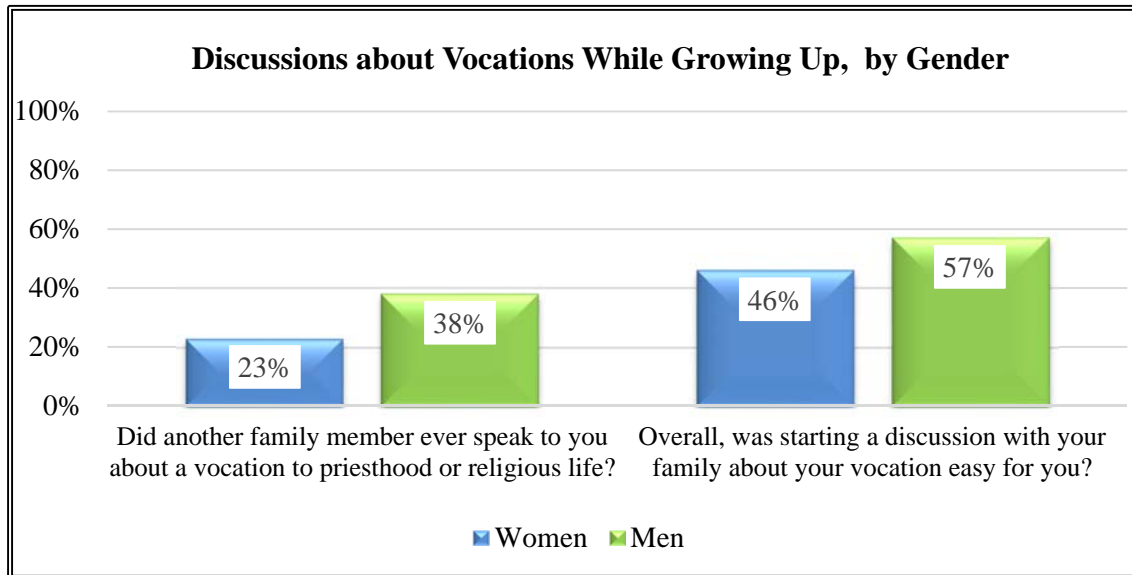
Overall, half of respondents (51 percent) say that it was easy for them to start a conversation with their family about their vocation. Men are a little more likely than women to say that starting a discussion with their family was easy for them.

	Overall	Women	Men
Overall, was starting a discussion with your family about your vocation easy for you?	51%	46%	57%
Did your mother ever speak to you about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life?	34	33	37
Did another family member ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	30	23	38
Did your father ever speak to you about a vocation to priesthood or religious life?	24	17	31

One third report that their mother (34 percent) and three in ten report that another family member (30 percent) ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life. One in four (24 percent) report that their father ever spoke to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Comparisons by Gender

Men are more likely than women to have ever had another family member speak to them about a vocation to priesthood or religious life (38 percent for men as compared to 23 percent for women), and to say that starting a discussion with their family about their vocation was easy for them (57 percent for men as compared to 46 percent for women).



Participation in Religious Programs, Activities, or Ministries

Many respondents were active in parish life and/or other religious programs or activities before entering their religious institute. Nearly all respondents (95 percent) participated in at least one of the programs or activities listed in the table below before entering.

<i>Aside from parish-based religious education, did you ever participate in any of these before you entered?</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	Overall	Women	Men
Retreats	76%	78%	76%
Other volunteer work in a parish/other setting	62	69	54
Campus ministry during college	53	54	51
Parish youth group, Life Teen, or high school campus ministry during high school years	46	52	40
Parish young adult group	40	46	33
Right to Life March on Washington	39	44	34
Parish youth group, Life Teen during elementary or middle school years	34	40	27
World Youth Day	16	19	11
Religious institute volunteer program (e.g. Mercy Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps)	13	11	15
National Catholic Youth Conference	9	12	6

- One third (34 percent) participated in a parish youth group or Life Teen during their elementary or middle school years.
- Slightly less than half (46 percent) participated in a parish youth group, Life Teen, or campus ministry during their high school years. Slightly more than half (53 percent) participated in campus ministry during college.
- Three in four (76 percent) respondents participated in retreats. Men and women are equally likely to have participated in retreats before entering a religious institute.
- One in ten respondents participated in a National Catholic Youth Conference (9 percent). Four in ten (40 percent) participated in a parish young adult group.
- Two in five (39 percent) participated in a Right to Life March in Washington. One in six (16 percent) participated in World Youth Day.
- Slightly more than one in ten (13 percent) participated in a volunteer program with a religious institute.

- Just over six in ten (62 percent) participated in various types of voluntary work in a parish or other setting.
- Women are more likely than men to report participating in many of these programs and activities before entering religious life.

Nine in ten respondents (90 percent) served in one or more specified ministries before entering their religious institute, either in a paid ministry position or as a volunteer. The most common ministry service reported was liturgical ministry (e.g., lector, extraordinary minister), followed by some form of faith formation ministry.

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

	Overall	Women	Men
Liturgical ministry (e.g. lector, extraordinary minister)	63%	54%	74%
Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA	46	45	47
Music ministry, cantor, or choir	42	41	42

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

- Among the ministries listed on the survey, just over six in ten respondents (63 percent) report that they served in liturgical ministry roles, such as lector or extraordinary minister of Communion. Men are more likely than women to have served in this capacity.
- Slightly less than half of respondents (46 percent) report participating in faith formation, catechetical ministry or RCIA. Four-tenths (42 percent) report participating in music ministry, cantor, or choir.

Consideration of a Vocation to Religious Life

On average, respondents were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life. Half were 18 or younger when they first considered a vocation.

Age When First Considered a Vocation to Religious Life			
	Overall	Women	Men
Mean age	19	19	20
Median age	18	18	19
Range of ages	3-70	3-70	3-52

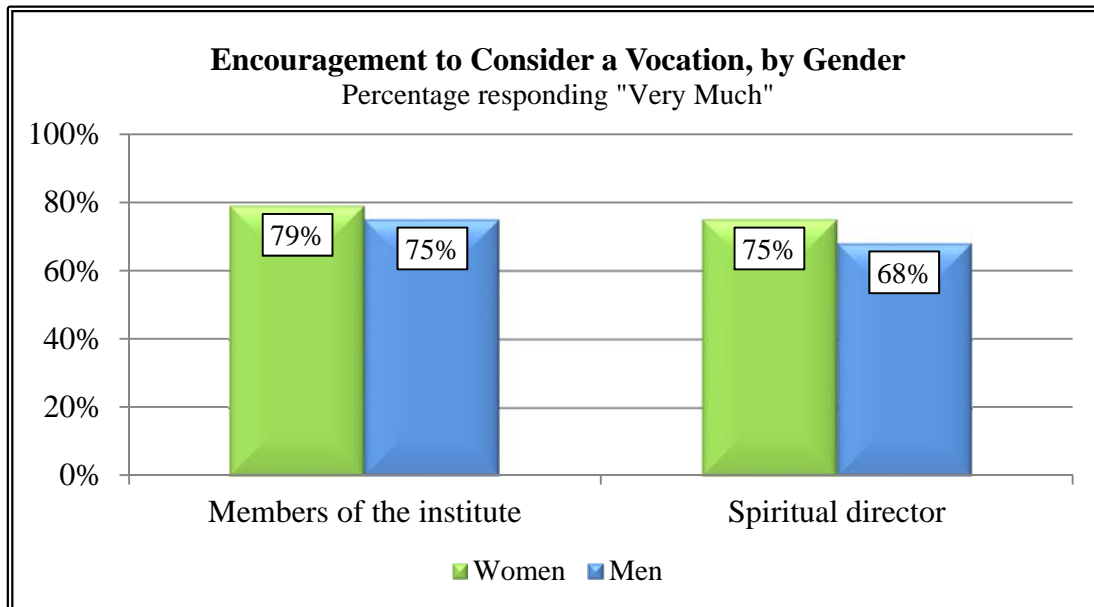
Entrants to religious life were asked how much encouragement they received from various people when they first considered entering a religious institute. Respondents most frequently mentioned a member of their religious institute (95 percent), a spiritual director (93 percent), other men and women religious (92 percent), or a vocational director/team (92 percent) as at least “somewhat” encouraging to them when they first considered entering a religious institute.

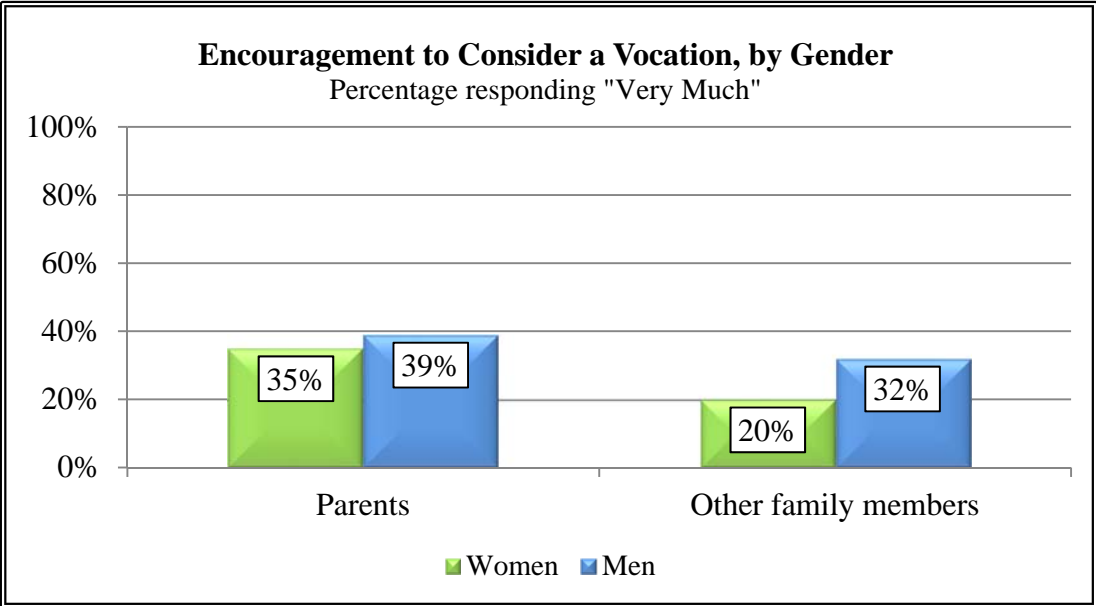
<i>How much encouragement did you receive from these when you first considered entering a religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
Members of your institute	95%	77%
Spiritual director, if applicable	93	72
Other men and women religious	92	63
Vocation director/team	92	77
Friends outside the institute	84	53
People in your parish	82	57
Diocesan priests	79	47
Campus minister, if applicable	74	57
People in your school or workplace	72	41
Your parents	71	38
Your siblings	67	33
Other family members	57	25

- Four in five respondents entering religious institutes report being encouraged at least “somewhat” by these people: friends outside the institute (84 percent), people in the parish (82 percent), and diocesan priests (79 percent).
- Three in four (74 percent) were at least “somewhat” encouraged by campus ministers. Just over seven in ten (72 percent) received encouragement from people in school or in their workplace.
- Between six and seven in ten report being at least “somewhat” encouraged by parents and family members when they first considered entering a religious institute: parents (71 percent), siblings (67 percent), and other family members (57 percent).

Comparisons by Gender

Women are just as likely as men to report receiving “very much” encouragement from members of their institute and from their spiritual director. While men and women are equally likely to receive encouragement from their parents, men are a little more likely than women to report receiving encouragement from other family members.





Attraction to Religious Life

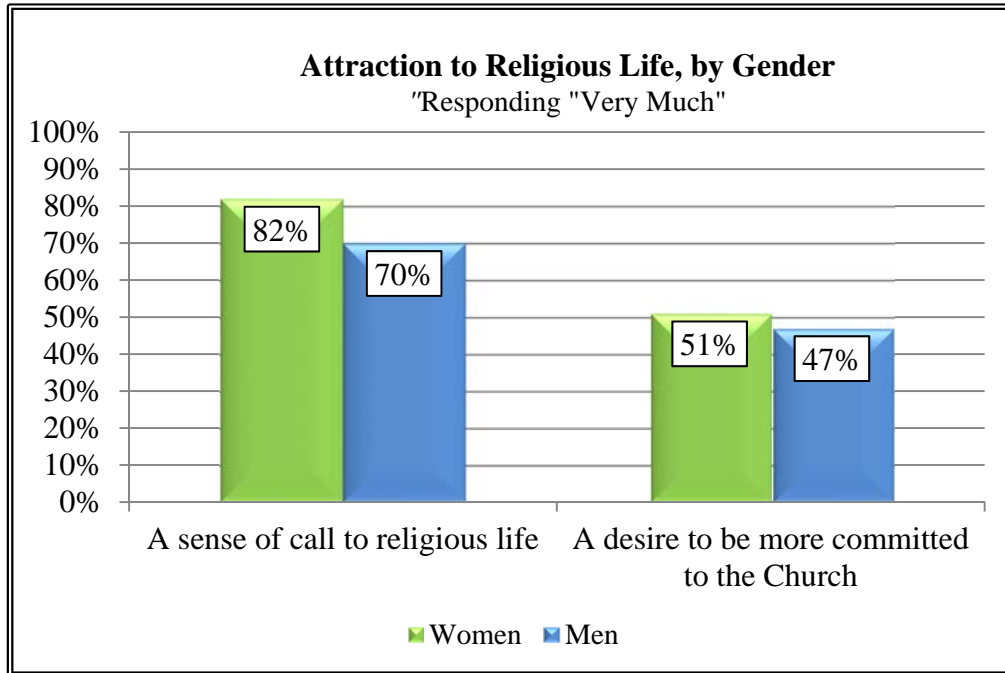
Entrants in 2017 were asked how much various elements attracted them to religious life. Nearly all respondents were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to religious life by a desire for prayer and spiritual growth (95 percent) and by a sense of call to religious life (95 percent). Three in four or more were “very much” attracted by these.

<i>How much did the following attract you to religious life?</i>		
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very Much”		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
A desire for prayer and spiritual growth	95%	76%
A sense of call to religious life	95	77
A desire to be of service	90	67
A desire to be part of a community	87	58
A desire to be more committed to the Church	81	51

- About nine in ten respondents were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be of service (90 percent) and by a desire to be part of a community (87 percent). Between about six and seven in ten said each of these elements attracted them “very much.”
- Eight in ten (81 percent) were at least “somewhat” attracted to religious life by a desire to be more committed to the Church. Slightly more than half said this attracted them “very much.”

Comparisons by Gender

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



Attraction to a Religious Institute

Entrants were asked how much each of several aspects of religious life attracted them to their particular religious institute. Slightly more than nine in ten report that they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the spirituality of the institute and the mission of their institute. More than seven in ten say these elements “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.

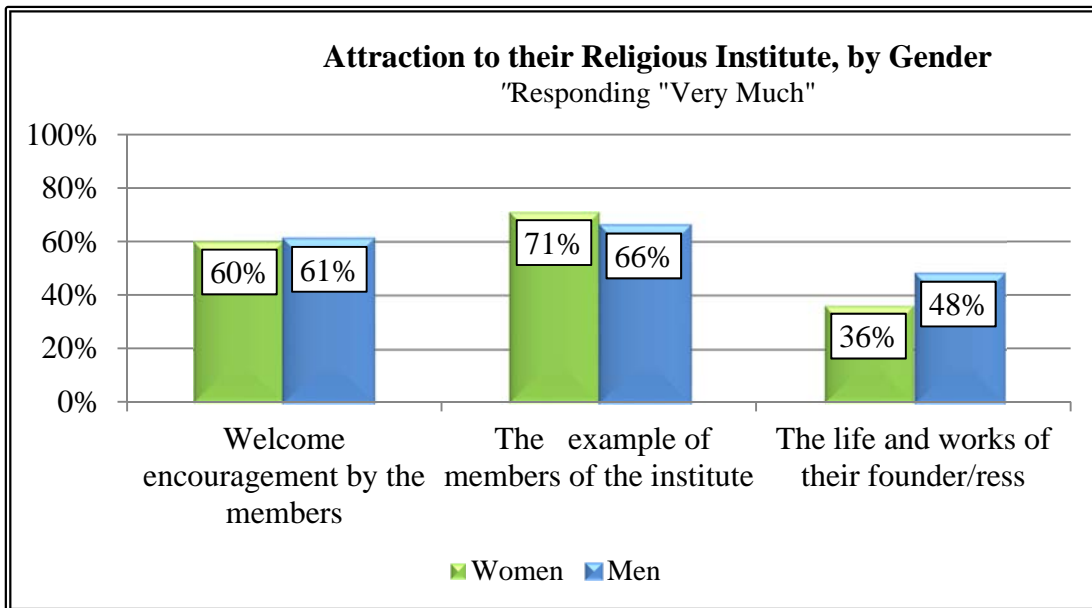
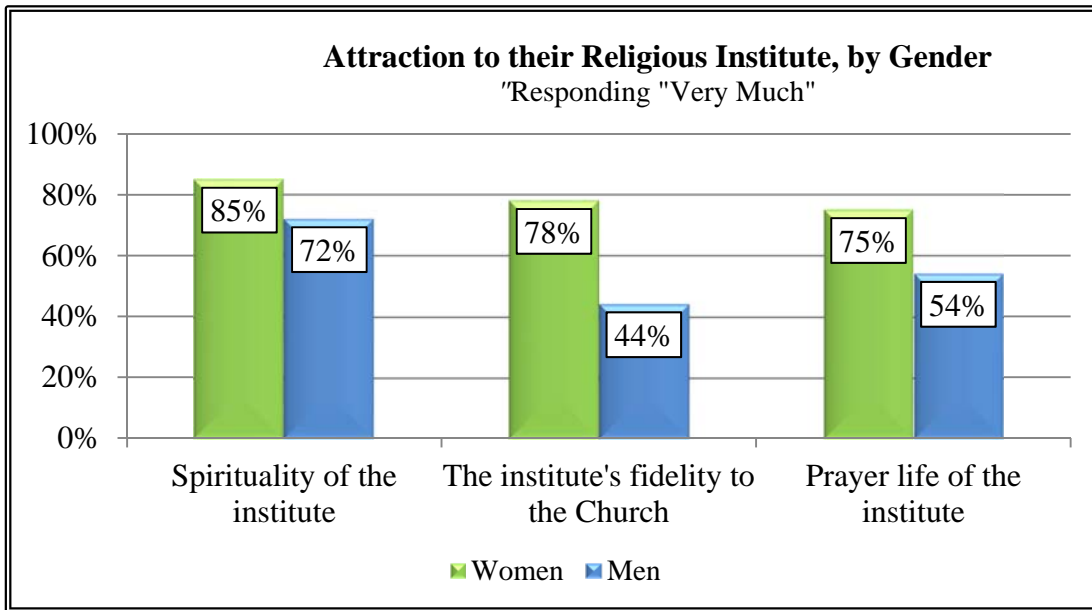
<i>How much did these attract you to your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
The spirituality of the institute	94%	80%
The mission of the institute	94	70
The community life of the institute	93	64
The example of members of the institute	92	68
The prayer life of the institute	90	66
The ministries of the institute	90	56
Welcome and encouragement by members	87	61
The institute’s fidelity to the Church	85	61
The life and works of your founder/ress	73	43
A personal invitation by a member	53	32

- Nine in ten or more respondents report they were at least “somewhat” attracted to their religious institute by the spirituality of the institute (94 percent), the mission of the institute (94 percent), community life of the institute (93 percent), example of members of the institute (92 percent), prayer life of the institute (90 percent), and the ministries of the institute (90 percent). Two in three said they were “very much” attracted by these elements.
- Just under nine in ten report they were at least “somewhat” attracted by the welcome and encouragement by members (87 percent), and by the institute’s fidelity to the Church (85 percent). About six in ten say these elements “very much” attracted them to their religious institute.
- Slightly more than seven in ten report they were attracted by the life and works of their found/ress (73 percent) and more than four in ten say this element attracted them “very much” to their religious institute.

- Slightly more than half reported they were “somewhat” or “very much” attracted to their religious institute by a personal invitation by a member (53 percent). A third reported this element attracted them “very much” to their religious institute.

Comparisons by Gender

More women than men report that the spirituality of their institute, its fidelity to the Church, and its prayer life of the institute “very much” attracted them to religious life. Men are more likely than women to report that the life and works of their founder/ress attracted them.



Initial Acquaintance with the Religious Institute

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

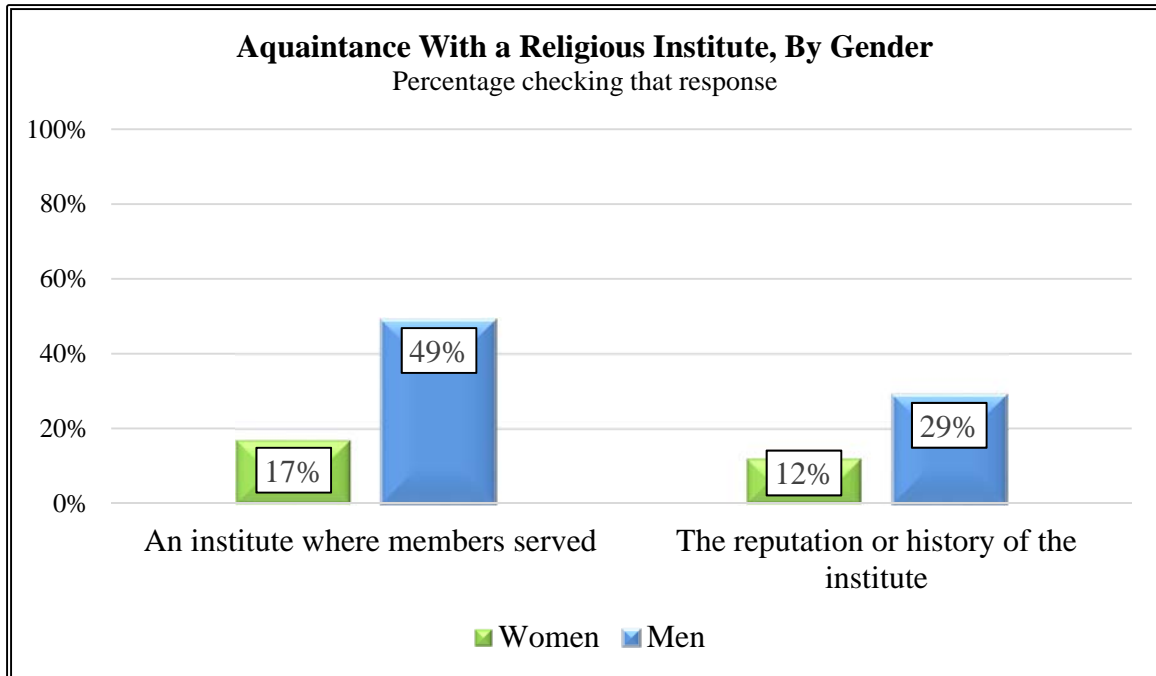
<i>How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute?</i>			
Percentage checking each response			
	Overall	Women	Men
In an institution where members served	32%	17%	49%
Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor	32	39	25
Through your own internet search	31	30	35
Through the reputation or history of the institute	20	12	29
Through working with a member of the institute	19	12	24
Through a relative or a friend in the institute	18	20	16
Through an event sponsored by the institute	15	18	11
Through web or social media promotional materials	10	11	11
Through print promotional materials	9	9	9
Through a media story about the institute or member	8	7	10
Through a vocation fair	8	8	5
Through a vocation match or placement service	7	6	7
Other	11	14	8

- Between one and two in ten respondents indicate that they first became acquainted with their institute through the reputation or history of the institute (20 percent), through working with a member of the institute (19 percent), through a relative or a friend in the institute (18 percent), and through an event sponsored by the institute (15 percent).
- Less than one in ten respondents report that that they first became acquainted with their institute through the web or social media promotional materials (10 percent), through print promotional materials (9 percent), through a media story about the institute (8 percent), through a vocational fair (8 percent), and through a vocation match or placement service (7 percent).
- One in ten (11 percent) first became acquainted with their religious institute through some “other” means (often during their college years). The “other” responses are listed below, lightly edited:
 - Youth Congress (CDJ)
 - A member of the institute visiting my university's women's discernment club
 - At the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress

- Através de uma amiga que faz parte da instituição
- Attended church with the sisters
- Book written by a member
- Books and blogs by members of the institute
- College Catholic ministry where they served
- Focus Conference
- Friend met community at a national event
- Had attended several retreats (unrelated to discernment of religious life)
- House of Formation in Lacrosse, WI
- I am an Oblate found accidentally while looking for a spiritual director
- I kept running into us in Rome (Divine Providence)
- I ran into a sister in Rome and spoke with her. (First actual contact I had with the order)
- I received spiritual direction from a Sister of my religious institute at a retreat I attended
- I was a seminary student of the Mt. Angel Abbey
- Institute's sacred music CD
- It was providence. The last catalyst was a stranger just saying that they were studying to be a third order Carmelite at the right time.
- Looking for spiritual direction
- Met and interacted with me of the Sisters of the "institution"
- My spiritual director
- Parish/Priory affiliated with the Order
- Participating in program sponsored by congregation
- Personal phone calls
- Pre-religious life retreat
- Pro-life events
- Retreat
- Seeing one of them at Mass
- Serving as a mission trip with a friar of our institute / community
- Socializing with members of the community
- Spiritual direction
- Suggestion of the diocesan vocation director
- The Church
- They visited my university
- Thomas Merton
- Through a charity event
- Through a conference on evangelization
- Through an archdiocesan vocation event
- Through an event hosted at the institute
- Through going on retreat at the institute
- Through personal active search and exploration
- Through unexpected personal encounter
- Transfer
- Visited five years ago.
- Worked in one of the institute's homes

Comparisons by Gender

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



Helpfulness of Discernment Programs and Experiences

Entrants were asked how helpful selected vocation experiences were to them in discerning their call to their institute before they entered. They were most likely to report that contact with institute members (86 percent) or contact with a vocation director (86 percent) prior to entering their religious institute were at least “somewhat” helpful. Seven in ten respondents reported that these contacts were “very” helpful.

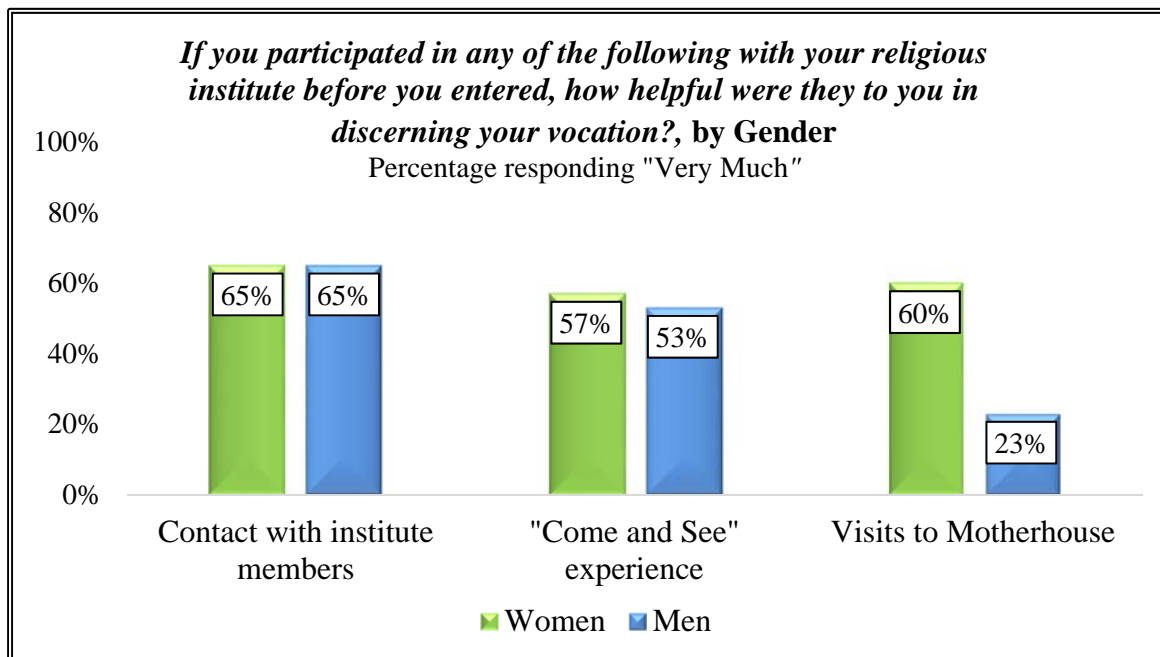
<i>If you participated in any of the following with your religious institute before you entered, how helpful were these to you in discerning your call to your institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Contact with institute members	86%	65%
Contact with vocation director	86	69
“Come and See” experience	69	56
Vocation or discernment retreat	67	55
Visit(s) to local community(s)	62	46
Spiritual direction	62	47
Live in experience	61	51
Visit(s) to the Motherhouse	51	44
Ministry with institute members	42	30
Social media (e.g. Facebook)	33	18
Mission experience	27	19
Meeting with a discernment group	27	17
“Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run”	9	6

- Seven in ten respondents found “Come and See” experiences (69 percent), vocation or discernment retreats (67 percent), visits to local communities (62 percent), and spiritual direction (62 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their institute. About half to six in ten respondents found these experiences “very” helpful.
- Six in ten respondents say that a “live-in experience” (61 percent) and half say visits to the Motherhouse (51 percent) were at least “somewhat” helpful in discerning their call to their religious institute. Four in ten found ministry with institute members (42 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful. Thirty to 50 percent found these “very” helpful.
- A third found social media (33 percent) at least “somewhat” helpful before they entered their religious institute and one in five found it “very” helpful.

- Just over one in four respondents report that a mission experience (27 percent) or meeting with a discernment group (27 percent) were at least “somewhat” helpful to them in discerning their call to their institute. About a fifth reports that these elements were “very” helpful.
- One in ten respondents report that an “Andrew Dinner” or “Nun Run” (7 percent) was at least “somewhat” helpful. About one in 20 also found these experiences “very” helpful.

Comparisons by Gender

Women and men are equally likely to report that contact with institute members and “Come and See” experiences were “very” helpful in discerning their vocation. In contrast, women are more likely than men to say that visits to the Motherhouse were “very” helpful in discerning their vocation.



Influences on Decisions to Enter Religious Institutes

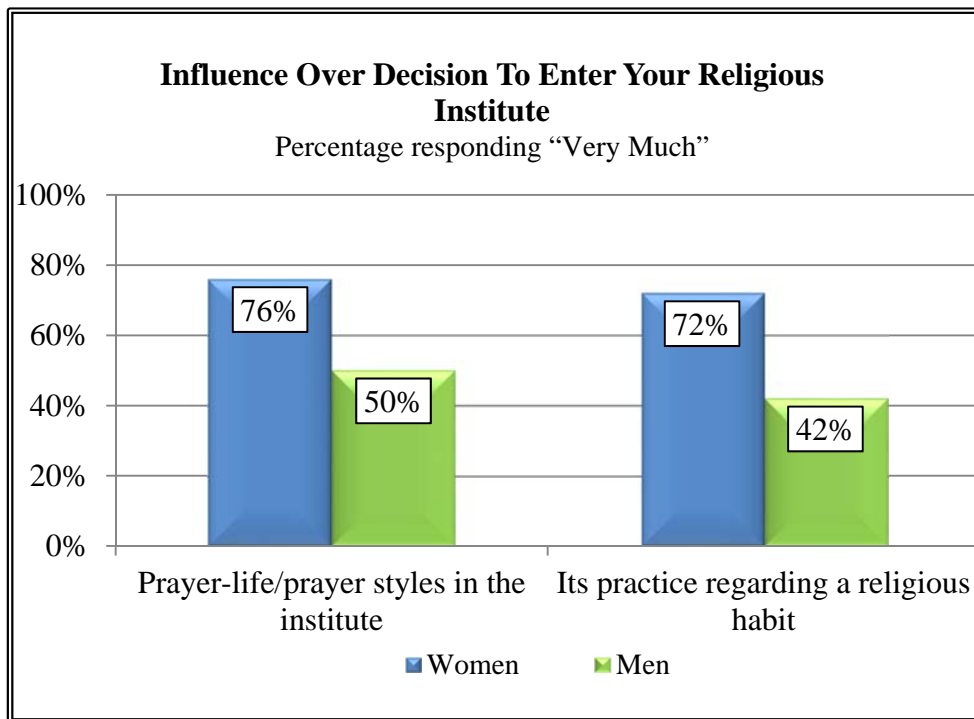
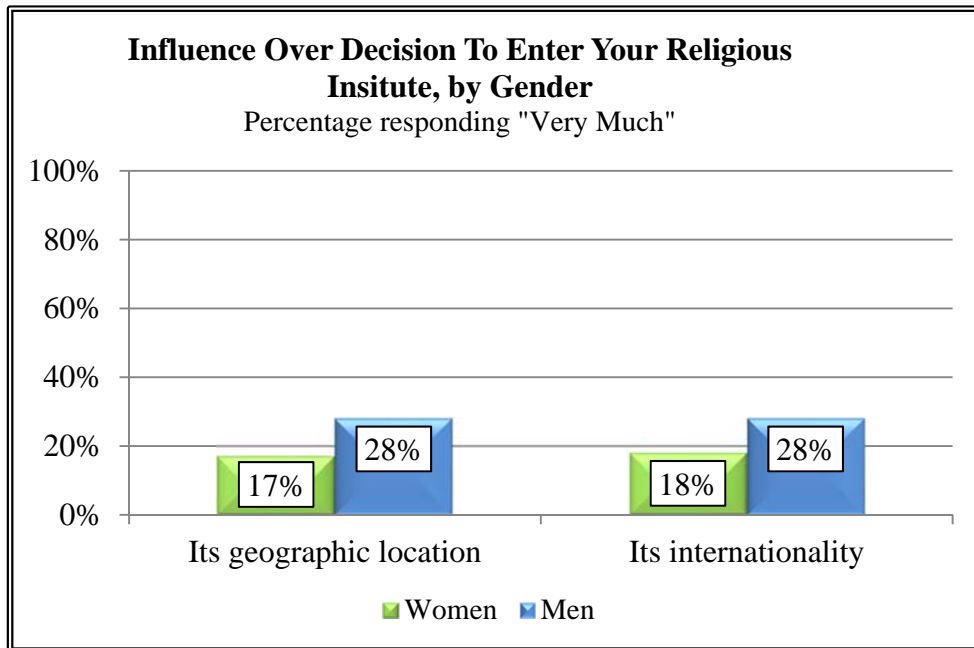
Entrants were asked how much influence various aspects of their religious institute had on their decision to enter that institute. About nine in ten respondents report that the community life in the institute, its prayer styles, and the types of ministry of its members influenced their decision to enter their religious institute at least “somewhat.” Between half and two-thirds say these elements influenced them “very much.”

<i>How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very Much”	“Very Much” Only
Community life in the institute	92%	68%
Prayer life/prayer styles in the institute	88	64
The types of ministry of its members	86	56
The lifestyles of members	85	59
Its practice regarding a religious habit	73	58
The ages of members	50	16
Its geographic location(s)	49	22
Its internationality	49	23
The size of the institute	42	12
The racial/ethnic background of members	23	10

- At least three in four respondents report having been influenced in their decision to enter their religious institute by the lifestyles of its members (85 percent) and its practice regarding a religious habit (73 percent). Almost six in ten say these elements influenced them “very much.”
- Half of the respondents report that the ages of members (50 percent) and its geographic location (49 percent) were at least “somewhat” influential to their decision to enter their institute. Between and about one in six and two in ten say these elements were “very” influential.
- About half and slightly more than four in ten report that its internationality (49 percent) and the size of the institute (42 percent) were at least “somewhat” influential to their decision to enter their institute. About one in four and one in ten says these elements were “very” influential.
- Less than one in four (23 percent) report that the racial/ethnic background of members at least “somewhat” influenced their decision. One in ten says this was “very” influential.

Comparisons by Gender

Men are more likely than women to report that the institute’s geographic location and its internationality “very much” influenced their decision to enter their religious institute. Women are more likely than men, however, to indicate that the prayer-life/prayer styles in the institute and its practice regarding a religious habit influenced them “very much.”



Prayer Practices

Respondents were asked to evaluate how important each of these different types of prayer are to them. Almost all respondents say these types of prayers are at least “somewhat” important to them: private personal prayer (98 percent) and daily Eucharist (94 percent). Nine in ten indicated that these elements are “very” important.

<i>How important to you are these types of prayer?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Private personal prayer	98%	90%
Daily Eucharist	94	88
Liturgy of the Hours	90	70
Eucharistic Adoration	88	71
Other devotional prayers, e.g. rosary	81	55
Faith sharing	69	41
Common meditation	66	36
Non-liturgical common prayer	61	27

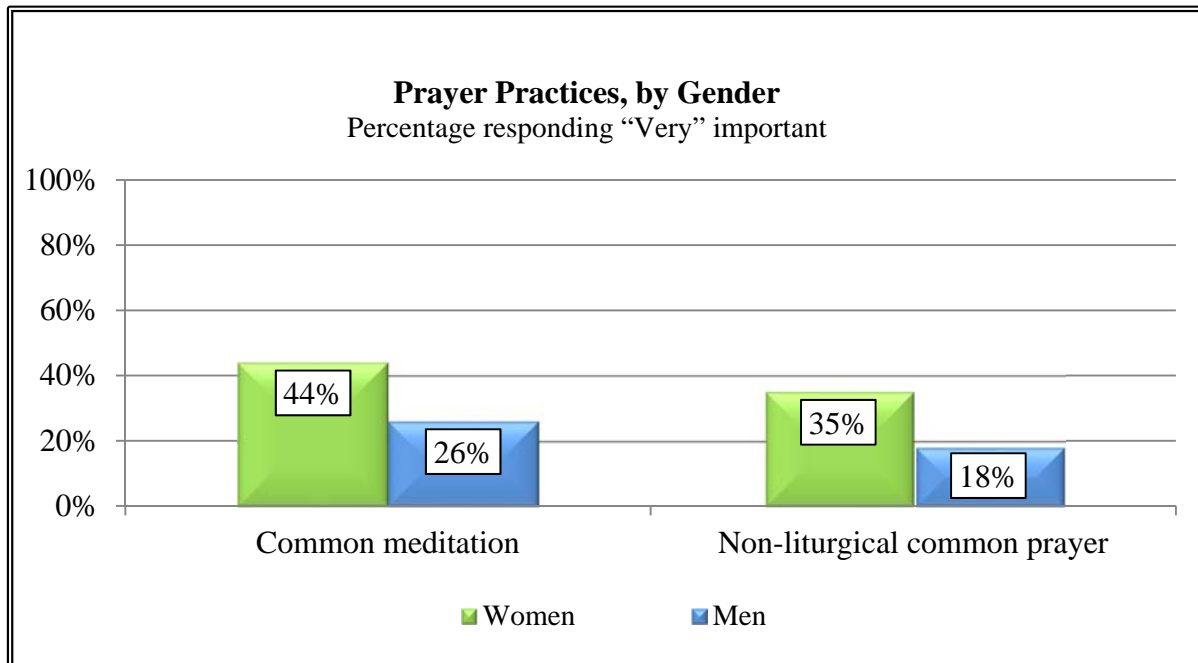
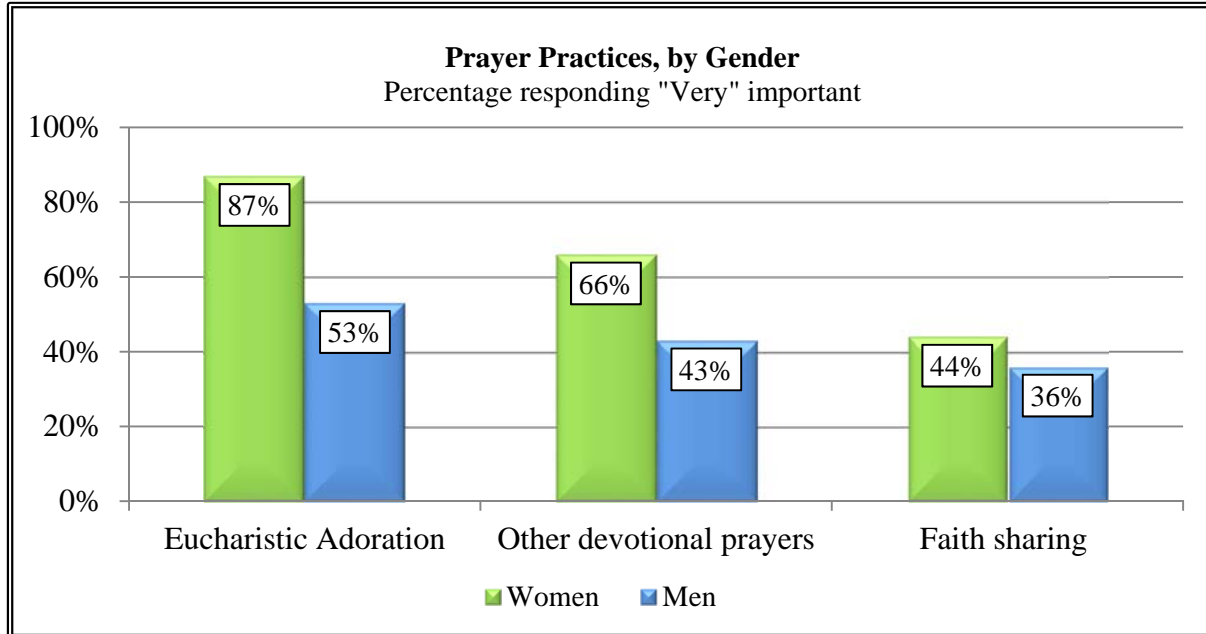
- Nine in ten respondents report that Liturgy of Hours (90 percent) and Eucharistic Adoration (88 percent) are “somewhat” important to them. Seven in ten say that these elements are “very” important.
- About eight in ten respondents report that other devotional prayers such as the rosary (81 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them. More than half say these elements are “very” important to them.
- Six to seven in ten respondents indicate that faith sharing (69 percent), common meditation (66 percent), and non-liturgical common prayer (61 percent) are at least “somewhat” important types of prayer to them. About a quarter to four in ten say these elements “very” important to them.

Comparisons by Gender

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

- Non-liturgical common prayer (77 percent for women compared to 46 percent for men)
- Common meditation (79 percent for women compared to 52 percent for men)
- Faith sharing (75 percent for women compared to 61 percent for men)

We next examine gender differences for those saying a prayer practice is “very important” to them. Women are more likely than men to indicate that Eucharistic Adoration, other devotional prayers, faith sharing, common meditation, or non-liturgical common prayers are “very” important to them.



Importance of Aspects of Community Life

Entrants to religious life were asked to indicate the importance to them of various aspects of community life. Almost all respondents report praying with other members (97 percent) and sharing meals together (97 percent) as at least “somewhat” important to them. More than eight in ten say these elements are “very” important to them.

<i>How important to you are these aspects of community life?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Somewhat” or “Very”	“Very” Only
Praying with other members	97%	86%
Sharing meals together	97	82
Living with other members	96	86
Socializing/sharing leisure time together	93	77
Working with other members	88	69

- Nearly all respondents report that living with other members (96 percent) and socializing/sharing leisure time together (93 percent) are at least “somewhat” important to them. More than three-quarters say these elements are “very” important to them.
- Almost nine in ten respondents report that working with other members (88 percent) is at least “somewhat” important to them. Seven in ten say this element is very important.

Comparisons by Gender

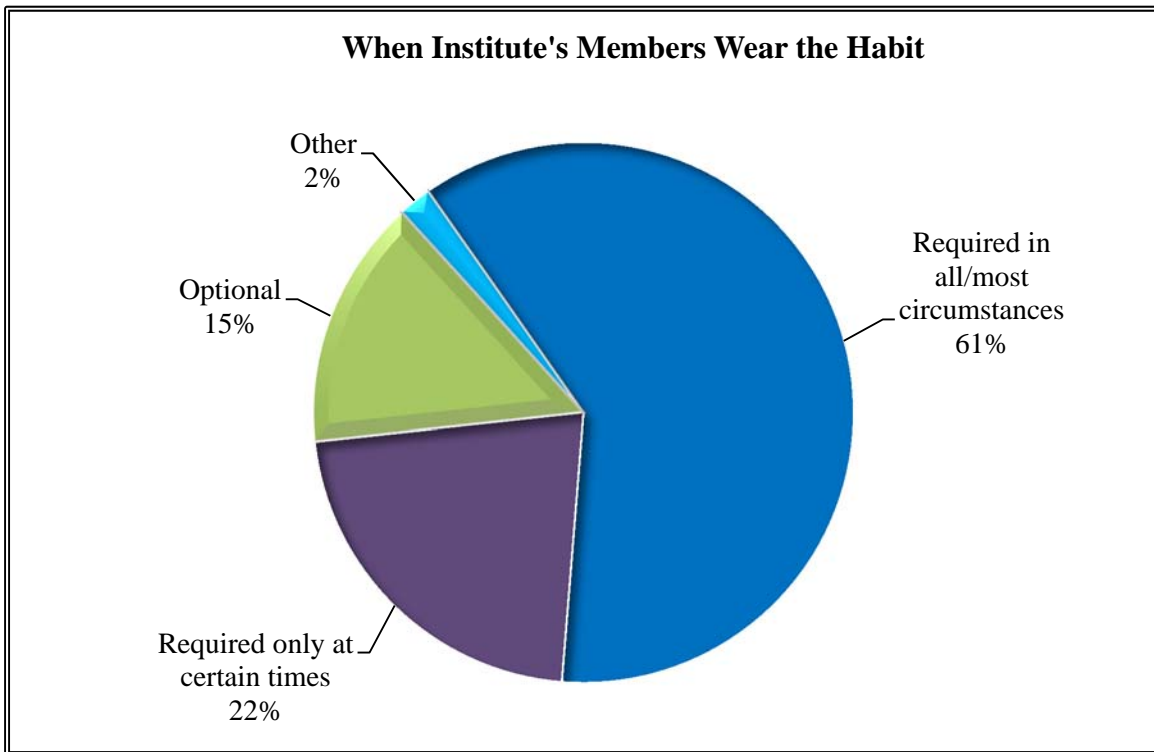
There are no significant differences in how women and men responded to all but one of the questions in this section. Women are more likely than men to report that praying with other members is “very” important to them (92 percent for women compared to 79 percent for men).

Wearing of Religious Habit

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

<i>Do members of your institute wear a habit?</i>			
Percentage responding "Yes" or "No"			
	Overall	Women	Men
Yes	82%	88%	74%
No	18	12	26

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



- Just over one in five reports that the habit is required only at certain times. Slightly more than one in ten reports that wearing habit is optional in their institute.
- A few respondents report that their members wear habits for other reasons, including:
 - Except hazardous work
 - Hardly ever worn; most brothers resent the habit (brothers 50+age)
 - Modified habits, blue, gray, black
 - New members aren't allowed. Older members who wore a habit when it was required have the option – a few wear modified veils and habits
 - Only for special events
 - Optional and modified, for older members
 - We no longer wear a habit but there are older members who still wear theirs

Differences by Gender

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

<i>If yes, is wearing the habit:</i>			
Percentage responding “Yes” or “No”			
	Overall	Women	Men
Required in all or most circumstances	61%	89%	25%
Required only at certain times	22	3	49
Optional	15	8	24
Other	2	0	3

The 15 percent indicating that wearing the habit is optional were asked a follow-up question: “How many members wear it all or most of the time?” Eighty-four responded to the question. Fourteen percent of respondents report that none of the members wear the habit all the time, 24 percent indicate that a few members (less than 25 percent) wear the habit all the time, 16 percent report that some (25-49 percent) wear the habit all the time, 10 percent indicate that many (50-74 percent) wear it all the time, and 37 percent indicate most (75 or more percent) wear the habit all the time.

Among those indicating that wearing the habit is optional, 75 entrants responded to a second follow-up question “How frequently do *you* wear it?” Twenty-one percent say they never wear their habit, 4 percent say they wear it once in a while, 33 percent say they wear it only at certain times, and 41 percent wear it in all or most circumstances.⁴

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

Aspects of the Religious Institute

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

Almost all respondents report that their religious institute is “good” or “excellent” in its opportunities for personal growth (97 percent), opportunities for spiritual growth (96 percent) and commitment to ministry (96 percent). More than three-quarters report that their religious institute is “excellent” in these elements.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Good” or “Excellent”	“Excellent” Only
Opportunities for spiritual growth	97%	77%
Opportunities for personal growth	96	76
Commitment to ministry	96	79
Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth	96	74
Welcome and support of newer members	94	75
Opportunities for ongoing formation	92	58
Focus on mission	91	70
Fidelity to the Church and its teachings	91	70

- Nearly all respondents report that their religious institute is at least “good” in its faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth (96 percent), and its welcome and support of newer members (94 percent). Three-quarters report that their religious institute is “excellent” in these elements.
- More than nine in ten respondents report that their religious institute is at least “good” in its opportunities for ongoing formation (92 percent), its focus in mission (91 percent), and its fidelity to the Church and its teachings (91 percent). Between six and seven in ten report that their institute is “excellent” in these elements.

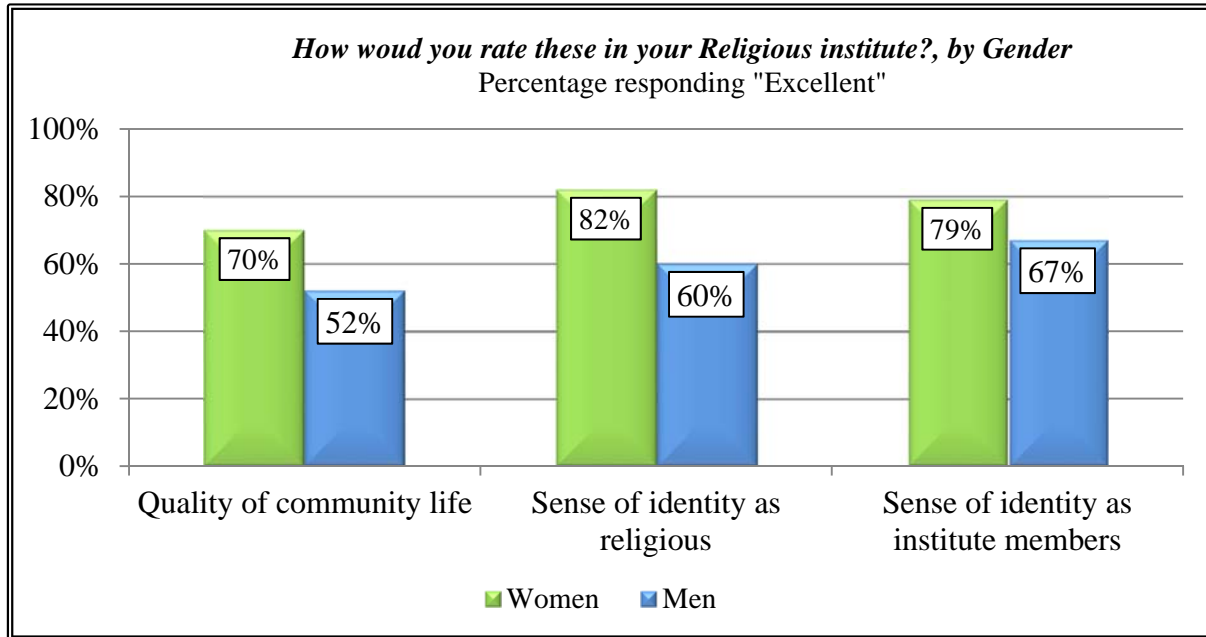
With few exceptions, at least nine in ten respondents rate their religious institute as “good” or “excellent” in each of the aspects in the table below.

<i>How would you rate these in your religious institute?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	“Good” or “Excellent”	“Excellent” Only
Educational opportunities	93%	70%
Relationships with one another	92	58
Formation/incorporation programs	92	61
Response to the needs of our time	91	66
Quality of community life	91	61
Sense of identity as institute members	91	73
Preparation for ministry	91	60
Sense of identity as religious	90	72
Communal prayer experiences	89	57
Efforts to promote social justice	88	53
Efforts to promote vocations	85	53

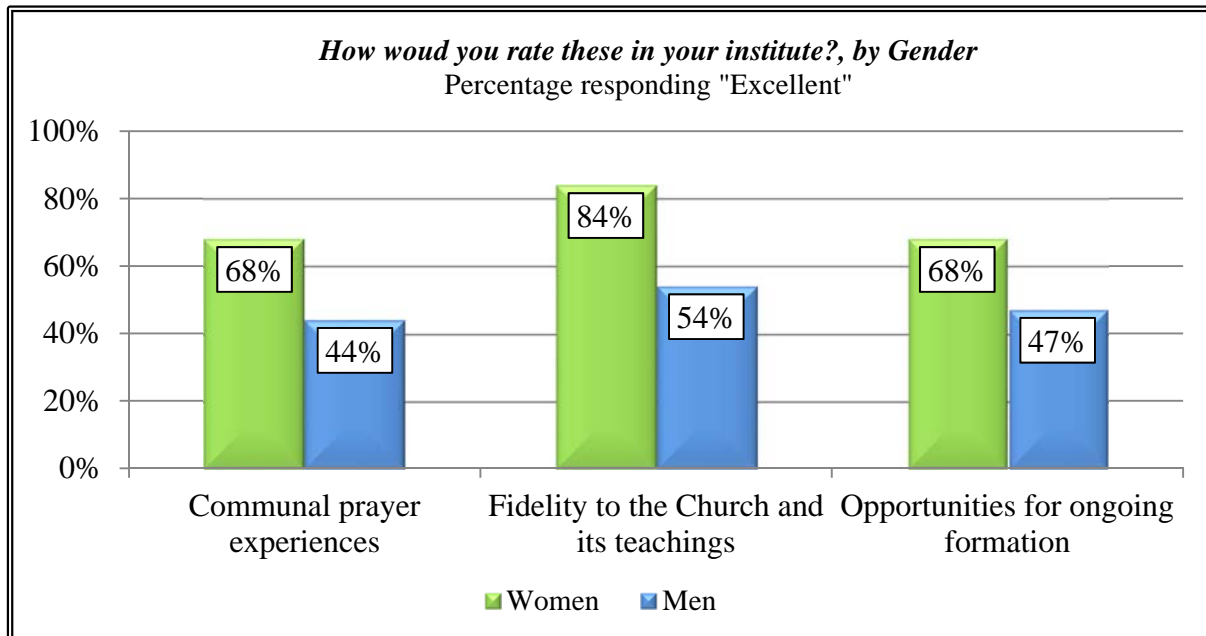
- Seven in ten rate their religious institute as “excellent” in its sense of identity as institute members (73 percent), its sense of identity as religious (72 percent), and its educational opportunities (70 percent). Two in three rate it as highly in its response to the needs of our time (66 percent).
- About six in ten rate their religious institute as “excellent” in the quality of its community life (61 percent), its formation/incorporation programs (61 percent), its preparation for ministry (60), its relationships with one another (58 percent), and in its communal prayer experiences (57 percent).
- Just over half rate their religious institute as “excellent” in its efforts to promote vocations (53 percent) and its efforts to promote social justice (53 percent).
- More than eight in ten report that their institute was at least “good” in its communal prayer experiences (89 percent), its efforts to promote social justice (88 percent), and its efforts to promote vocations (85 percent).

Comparisons by Gender

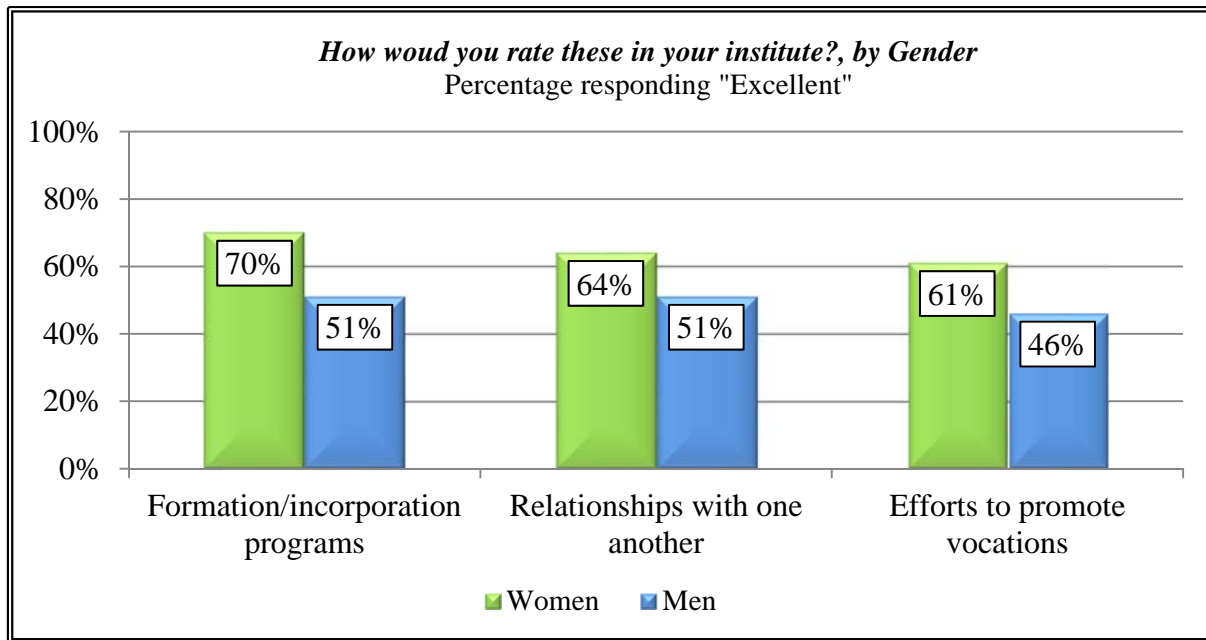
Women are more likely than men to rate their religious institute as “excellent” in the quality of its community life, in its sense of identity as religious, and its sense of identity as institute members.



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



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



What Most Attracted You to Your Religious Institute?

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

Sense of Mission and Ministries of the Institutes

The sense of mission and ministries of the institute is the most common element that respondents say attracted them to their religious institute. Some of their responses regarding what attracted them include:

- *I was attracted by the mission of the institute in helping the young people live out their call to holiness in the everyday.*
- *The life giving and service to people who are in dire need of our crucial services. More importantly the marginalized in our society.*
- *They are very dedicated to their work.*
- *I was attracted by our love of education and the eagerness to sacrifice, to give everything*
- *Diverse ministries, including pastoral work, teaching, preaching, and missionary work. A somewhat (but not excessively) traditionalist ethos.*
- *The way they express their love and concern to the people who are in need. I could sense their true passion in serving others with love and in pure motives. The institute does not only stick to their origin of giving service to other but they are trying to render services to the people as what the demand of times.*
- *Getting the opportunity to develop my personal spirituality through direct service to the world in a variety of apostolates.*
- *The possibility of be sent to mission overseas.*
- *The multiplicity of ministries of this congregation.*
- *Prolife-and-holistic-healthcare-focused*

Founder/Foundress, Spirituality, and Charism of the Institute

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

- *What most attracted me to my religious institute was the charism and spirituality.*
- *The spirituality and mission of our founder which is being recovered and lived more and more intensely.*
- *The radical life and total self-gift of the foundress of my religious institute most attracted me to it.*
- *I was very drawn to the Norbertine Spirituality. I love how we are centered on the Holy Eucharist.*
- *The charism to be a "migrant among the migrants"*
- *The example of the founders and foundress their faith and virtues and dedication that continue and stays alive in the sisters at present.*
- *Don Bosco, kindness, education, family spirit, not many physical penances, tradition, its many saints, working with kids, a Salesian priest who was my spiritual director: his humility, simplicity, joy and zeal, and love for Don Bosco.*
- *The unique charism of the active/contemplative Carmelite life is very beautiful, and our mother foundress, Mother Luisita, really touched and changed my life, and her story continues to shape and mold me. The Sisters truly are her daughters and continue to keep her spirit and her love alive, and that is priceless and something that I long to be a part of here in Carmel.*
- *I was attracted to the joy and authenticity of the sisters they are young and relatable. I also really connected with the charism of making the merciful love of Jesus visible.*
- *Our charism of Healing, Compassion and liberation and our mission statement of believing in the healing and wholeness of the entire individual lead me to look deeper into our congregation and ask questions I had about the community and their everyday living.*

Prayer Life and Communal Prayer

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

- *I was also attracted to their devotion to Mary and the Eucharist. The balance between the active and contemplative life was also a big factor in my decision.*
- *Perpetual Adoration.*
- *The focus on the Eucharist and Marian receptivity, the ESSENTIAL daily Eucharistic Adoration and of course Mass and the Office, the teaching, the JP2 Spirituality, the love of all things beautiful*
- *The balance of a life totally focused on God in prayer (we are cloistered contemplatives and a real sense of family in the community spirit.*
- *The prayer life of the community. I was attracted to the 2 hours of Eucharistic Adoration and other times of meditation. Their identity is in being with the Lord and is not based on their service to others, although that is important.*
- *Structure of contemplative lifestyle. Liturgy of the hours. 7x a day. Fidelity to the community.*
- *Monastic prayer is always what has drawn me the most.*
- *The Divine Office and waking up at midnight to pray Matins*
- *The daily Eucharistic holy hour, mass and Rosary, dedication to saving souls through the truth.*
- *Formal practice of Lectio Divina*

Community Life

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

- *The community life attracted me most to my religious institution. There is unity in diversity in the community which gives me energy to move on and affirmation to my decision that I have made and growth to my vocation as I journey in this life.*
- *I love how community is so family oriented; we are a family.*

- *The internationality of my religious community as well as the intensity it places on community living in our local houses. This sense of community and hospitable, familial atmosphere is something I've experienced in our local communities both in the United States and abroad (Canada, East Africa, India).*
- *The virtues of the community: Simplicity, Charity and Humility.*
- *The community life was the most attractive thing to me. When discerning with the SM I experienced a community lifestyle I could relate too. The brothers really care for each other and this is expressed by their actions.*
- *Community life is balanced with time for oneself as well as being challenged to give of oneself to the greater community in talent, or even simply during recreation.*
- *The common life nourishes me and carries me. Coming from a big family and being surrounded by other guys on sports teams, musical groups in high school and college, I found the community an essential part of my decision to apply. It is the community that helps draw me to and sustain me in prayer, as well.*
- *The gift of communal life and actively reminding the people of God of the identity in Jesus Christ.*
- *Community life and brotherhood. Becoming undivided with God.*

Joy of the Institute's Members

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

- *I was most attracted to my religious institute because of the joy its members displayed and how they seemed to genuinely love each other and enjoy being with each other.*
- *I was most attracted by the joy, vitality, and loving hearts in the sisters I met. They seemed so fully alive.*
- *I was also struck by the love and compassion that they have for each other here in our community and the pure joy that can only come from giving everything to Jesus.*
- *The joy its members attracted me the most. I loved seeing the joy and life of the community members. They know how to simply be brides of Christ.*
- *I was most attracted to my religious institute when I went to visit and saw how joyful and free each sister was.*

- *As I continued to pray for and discern my desired community, God led me to the Salesian Sisters. These Sisters were very different from other religious I had met. They were gentle, joyful, and a whole lot of fun. They offered me their friendship and cordiality, without pressuring me to visit them or enter the Institute, allowing me to decide for myself, if and when I want to enter.*
- *The palpable joy of my community and the peace it brought me reaffirmed my desire to consecrate my life to Christ in the company of these women.*
- *When I first came in contact with my institute I experienced a joy and peace that I had never experienced before. Each member of the community exhibited this joy and peace as well.*
- *The joy they proclaim, the joy that they live out. They work so hard, and give so much of themselves but they are always so joyful*

Religious Habit

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

- *I liked the traditional habits.*
- *Wearing the Habit was also vital to my choice.*
- *The habit attracted me very much because I wanted to enter in a religious institute where they would wear the habit.*
- *The fact that the sisters wear a habit which is so important to be that visible sign in our world today.*
- *I was attracted to many things about the community especially its faithfulness to its own identity and heritage. I saw this primarily in its great love for the habit and for the traditions passed down in the Order for Centuries.*
- *Wearing the visual habits as an obvious statement promoting one's beliefs in Christ.*

Fidelity to the Church

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

- *The doctrine orthodoxy. To be more committed to the Church and Christ Jesus, to continue the Jesus and the discipleship.*
- *Their love for the Magisterium and their joyful desire for sainthood.*

- *Openness of the Order to the full history of the Church (pre/post-Vatican II thought, liturgy, writings, etc.*
- *Fidelity to the Church's teachings and the Magisterium.*
- *Fidelity to the Church and her teachings -esp. dignity of women.*
- *I was also drawn by the fidelity to the Church's teachings and to Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.*
- *It was very important for me during my discernment to find a community that is 100% faithful to Holy Mother Church.*
- *I was most attracted by the friars' fidelity to the Church in the Province of St. Joseph. In what is often a turbulent and confused world, wherein moral and doctrinal issues have become relative, the Order of Preachers is needed to spread the truth of the faith in charity.*

Religious Formation

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

- *The support from novice mistress.*
- *The formation is incredibly thorough.*
- *Personal relationships with the vocation director and my spiritual director (whom my vocation director connected me to). These personal relationships gave me a greater understanding of what it meant to be a Jesuit. Then two Come & See events at the novitiate*
- *A rigorous formation process.*
- *Strengths in formation*
- *Believe that formation process of this congregation and the community life is such for my particular personality that they allow me to individuate into more of who I am not just incorporate me into an extension of who they are. i.e. I think the process will not destroy the uniqueness of who I am.*
- *Its novices and others I'd met through various vocation promotion programs.*

Social Justice

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

- *I was also attracted to the lengthy track record of Jesuits being fierce advocates for social justice.*
- *Strong sense of personal call to religious life and belief that it is very needed in today's world and has something very specific and important to give the world.*
- *Discipleship of equals*
- *I was attracted to the social justice component and the dedication of the sisters to meet the current needs of the world.*
- *The commitment of the OFM friars to environmental ministry and immigration ministry attracted me most to their order. I am a firm believer in social justice and the prominent role of the Church for our poor.*

What Do You Find Most Challenging about Religious Life?

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

Community Life

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

- *The most challenging about religious life is community living where you have to be as you are and to accept your community members as they are. I think that's what I find most challenging.*
- *Early mornings, particularly ornery and grumpy member(s), limited free time*
- *Living with some of the sisters is challenging. Finding how truly I am lacking in virtue is hard but obviously good at the same time. Not being able to eat the foods I want is a challenge as is gaining weight since I entered.*
- *Renouncing my own schedule and plans for the rhythm and flexibility of daily convent life.*
- *Community life, trying to grow in prayer/spiritual life, discerning which ministry/apostolate I can serve God and my religious community best.*
- *Wearing shoes, the whole day. Eating what is provided instead of deciding what I want to eat. Having a set bedtime.*
- *Accepting the pace of the development of community life and adapting the nature of community life that exists before you.*
- *I find the times of silence and formal recreation times the hardest.*
- *Living together in community and finding balance between personal and community time.*
- *Structured communal living. I found obligatory daily Mass, and the Liturgy of the Hours to be too much for me.*

Maturing in Religious Life

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

- *There are many challenges. I think it can be summed up in overcoming self. Things that are difficult; obedience, prayer in desolation, learning humility through mistakes, learning to love in truth. These are difficult because I have to put aside what I think, what I feel, what I want, how I've understood things most of my life. I truly have to die to myself every day. But I rise a new person, a holy person, and the new life within is worth more than every drop of pain.*
- *Growing in the spiritual life requires a total self-gift! This is beautiful but it also requires self-knowledge! Practicality, communication and early meetings are hard.*
- *Sometimes I have some desires to have a wife and family.*
- *Most challenging is fighting that temptation that I could do something else, or return to life in the world, even though God is calling me here.*
- *My own weaknesses shortcomings and pride. Our struggle is not flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the world rules of the present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. (Eph 6:12) I was not ready for how he would attack my thoughts this is serious spiritual warfare! Because we are a contemplative order, dedicated to prayer, so many people send prayer requests so there is a greater relationship with the suffering of the world. This is truly hard to carry sometimes. I feel the weight of it and it pierces my heart. Starting over again in life it is like I am a baby again new name and all. Trusting these people, I hardly know, trusting that Christ has not abandoned me, trusting that no matter what the future holds even if I screw things up, he is in charge, I have entrusted myself to him. Not having spell check.*
- *Try to understand everyone's personalities to maintain a good relationship is challenging. And the vow of obedience is hard to keep at all time.*
- *Learning how to be "little" after living in a culture that values independence and success as the ultimate good for young adults.*
- *Just the constant search for truly understanding Gods call in my life. Whether he is calling me to religious life or to married life, I have to be open to this. It can be hard when you have different things tugging at your heart at one time.*
- *As for the initial interior work, it is the process of recognition of my false self, acknowledging, in a deeper way, my brokenness and imperfections, as well as understand my own behaviors and idiosyncrasies.*

Adaptation to Religious Life

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

- *The lack of understanding how to authentically maintain the integrity of religious contemplative life while making needed changes, modifications for reaching women of the 21st century. Keeping pre-Vatican II norms while having a better understanding and ability to grow psychologically. I believe the change needed is not external, but internal and a mindset.*
- *Giving up my own will in things great and small.*
- *What I found most challenging upon my entrance was adjusting to the routine and pace of schedule. Now all is well.*
- *Living out the evangelical counsels and the life of the order is overall a struggle but one that always brings joy and love and helps me to lead others to Christ and to know his love for them.*
- *The idea of total self-giving is hard to accept as a life-long endeavor.*
- *Adapting from life in the world to quiet, monastic life.*
- *Giving over my will and my desires and relying on others after having lived alone, in a different province than my family for years. It is a challenge but also such a grace and blessing. It is very freeing to be able to depend on others and not just always have to tough it out and take care of yourself as an independent woman.*
- *Living the vows and integrating the charism of the community*
- *The most difficult thing is "re-wiring" my thinking transitioning from a very secular world to a monastic life. In a way, this is also a great gift because I no longer feel uncomfortable making connection between the world and God's grace, whereas in the secular world this is often met with hostility.*

Decreasing Communication with Family and Friends

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

some other relationships and felt that religious life somehow reduces their opportunity for communication. Some of their responses include:

- *Adjusting my time with family and having less contact with them.*
- *Limitations to travel and contact with family and friends.*
- *Giving up / changing relationships with family and friends.*
- *Lack of communication with friends and family.*
- *Relationships are different. I have limited contact with my friends and family, and I am around the same group of people nearly constantly in the novitiate, people from all different backgrounds.*
- *Being so far from home for the first time in my life is a challenge, and also adapting my relationships with family and friends back home, since I don't get to communicate with them as frequently as I did before entrance.*

Religious Formation

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

- *Relinquishing my desire to have things "my way," and also simply to "have" things. As a novice, I'm learning to ask, "Is this necessary, or do I simply want it on a whim?" and I'm learning how to live my promise of poverty well, which necessitates changing my way of life compared to how I was able to purchase / own what I wanted, when I wanted it, before entrance into the order. We all have our various areas of difficulty, and this is mine at the moment. However, I know growth has (and will continue to) come from striving to live this counsel well.*
- *The unexplained or vague stages of formation or formation decisions without any background or context have proven challenging for me. I also occasionally have a difficult time dealing with the varied personalities of my community, but that is to be expected and is minimal. Generally, it is a joy to be surrounded by a variety of people and living in community is truly a blessing.*
- *For me, having lived as an independent adult for many years and having had a career for 5 years, living out obedience in a community as a postulant has been the most consistently challenging, and most consistently rewarding/fruitful, aspect of religious life thus far.*
- *Having a continual and total trust in superiors regarding my formation whereas I would normally decide for myself what ought to be best, and sometimes these come into conflict*

and it is hard to not call this authority into question but to be obedient once again as a child when I am used to being an adult.

- *The same things that are challenging about secular life: all my neuroses and hangups are still there. The only difference is the intensity with which the formation process requires you to face those challenges. Outside of religious life, that is generally something you need to do on your own.*
- *Things can feel a little claustrophobic sometimes, especially now in formation. I do miss adult freedom sometimes. There are instances where I really wish I could get away for a little while, especially when the people I live with drive me crazy, and while the formators are understanding and accommodating as best as they can be, there's only so much of a leash they can let us out on.*
- *Religious life formation is very outdated and treats new members as "children". It can be abusive. Formation is one area this problem is visible - not in touch and tune anymore as we age and turn inward with the changed way a 21st Century world operates and communicates and how religious need to change their "branding" to message what religious life brings to the world that only it has i.e. people in the world don't understand it at all!*
- *For me as a Postulant, an area that is challenging is learning and maintaining self-care in the midst of our busy lives. However, I am getting the help and support that I need and am learning to see it as God's will and His desire for me to practice Poverty in all things He has given me, especially myself!*
- *Canonical year has been challenging because of my age and strictness.*

Other Challenges

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

- *The rapport to keep reflecting on the life experiences and changes, Especially technology and religion.*
- *My challenges are -Learn very good language, English. I want to pray in community like adoration and silence. We pray 20 to 30 minutes together. The congregation only reads the visperas or laudes once a day; there is no contemplative silence or community adoration.*
- *My main challenge is the adjustment to a different lifestyle, in regards to reality of the age demographics (including the major generation gap) and to the differing cultural customs or traditions. I had to adjust especially to living with older and being around*

infirm sisters who, for example, may have hearing deficiencies that makes communicating difficult.

- *I would have to say doing domestic chores the way someone else wants you to do it, when they want you to do it. No longer is it - when I want, how I want, where I want. Learning it's not about me, but the community and God. Obedience and humility in a frame of mind of kindness and gentleness. As I'm about to enter the novitiate, I do see a change in myself though ever so slight. It's a start!*
- *To come from different cultures and have different languages is challenging. But it is also enrichment to learn from other accepted others as a gift from God. The ministry can be also challenging sometimes.*
- *Not being 100% sure that this is where God wants me. It makes it harder to accept the sacrifices that come along.*
- *Luke-warm confreres/the community not living up to the monastic ideal*
- *One of the most challenging things for me is the public witness we provide for those around us.*

Appendix I: Questionnaire with Response Frequencies

Appendix II: Responses to Open-ended Comments

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

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

I was attracted to their focus on bringing truth to others. I was also attracted to their devotion to Mary and the Eucharist. The balance between the active and contemplative life was also a big factor in my decision.

The life giving and service to people who are in dire need of our crucial services. More importantly the marginalized in our society.

I love the spirit and spirituality of the Poor Clares. This is my second try at religious life. My first community of P.C's fell apart. I was 18 now I am 30.

The joy of the sisters and also their dedication to prayer, while still having a fruitful apostolate.

Prayer life, Ministering, The life of the religious, To be more committed to the Church and Christ Jesus, To continue the Jesus and the discipleship, The unity and love of the religious

Their ministries.

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

The sisters are compassionate and loving among them. They are very dedicated to their work. I like the charism and mission of the congregation.

What attracted me most was the simplicity, prayer life and "realness" of the Sisters. There was no facade, no fake front of unapproachable holiness. I felt very welcomed and embraced. God's will was the primary goal in the direction I received from the vocation directress, so I did not feel obliged or pressured. Union with God as the institute's charism attracted me as well.

Their joy and love of the Blessed Mother and the Eucharist. I also love the balance of the life we have here.

What most attracted me to my religious institute was the charism and spirituality.

The community Life attracted me most to my religious institution. I had a restless heart and I found that the Augustinians family is a perfect place I have to be for my life. there is unity in diversity in the community which gives me energy to move on and affirmation to my decision that I have made and growth to my vocation as I journey in this life.

Freedom

It is very traditional and liturgically very beautiful. But in its traditionalism, it isn't extreme and avoids any schismatic tendencies. What I wanted was a life of prayer and authentic spiritual growth towards holiness. This community genuinely and consistently holds holiness as its goal, and despite human nature, I do see men here who are succeeding in that goal. I haven't seen other priests or religious succeeding as much as the men are here. In short, I wanted to be very close to God and this place seemed like it was very close to him. So I came.

1) The doctrine orthodoxy, 2) Emphasis on community life 3) Geographic locations 4) Types of ministries all of these were major factors in my discernment. I wanted to find a place where I thought I would best grow in holiness, my local religious orders and diocese seemed to still be struggling with their identity and many mid-aged members resigned living out their religious charisms of the Church and to the order's ongoing mission. I saw the Dominican here as the best group to lead souls to Christ through following the aforementioned.

The joy and love with which the sisters lived their lives.

St. Augustine is one of my favorite saints. Community life of Augustinians. Some priests I know who were Augustinian, who were very serious about their priesthood and I admired that opportunity to serve the Church.

I was especially struck by their humility and love for each other. I was also very much attracted to the life of prayer. In addition to those, the members themselves really seemed like holy, genuine fun, real people and that was a great attraction for me.

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

Perpetual Adoration and the fact that I knew the community well. (I became first acquainted with the sisters at age 9) Also their love for the Magisterium and their joyful desire for sainthood.

I was attracted by the mission of the institute in helping the young people live out their call to holiness in the everyday. The joy of the Sisters and the simplicity of the life of the institute also attracted me.

I found a community of Dominican sisters who celebrates and exudes the joy of consecrated life, who prayerfully seeks to serve with generosity and practicality, and who strives to live out love in truth and in a good looking habit. I was most attracted to their life as individuals and as community, centered in the spirit of the Dominican Order and focused in liturgy and the prayer of the Church.

I was fascinated to the way they live their prayer life, the way they live their vows as religious and above all the way they express their love and concern to the people who are in need. I could sense their true passion in serving others with love and in pure motives. The institute does not

only stick to their origin of giving service to other but they are trying to render services to the people as what the demand of times.

The daily Eucharistic adoration was almost the entire reason I entered. I also loved the community members. I could see that they were admirable loving people and I hope that I could become like them by living their life. The discipline and asceticism of the order scared me a little, but it also gave me an assurance that this was for real. At the deepest level, I wanted to be formed and taught by the discipline of a monastic tradition, because I knew that it would help me return to God.

The 'down-to-earth'-iness and honesty of the members, the focus on the Eucharist and Marian receptivity, the ESSENTIAL daily Eucharistic Adoration and of course Mass and the Office, the teaching, the JP2 Spirituality, the love of all things beautiful... the affirmation of the sisters.

The Dominican spirituality and prayer life, as well as a sense of freedom to by myself and relate well with the sisters.

An article found in my Catholic Digest featuring older women religious. The nuns in the article gave commentaries on the contemplative life, many were widows and had families. Online I like the beauty of the grounds and its peacefulness. I also liked the traditional habits. When I called, the nun who answered was gentle speaking and after talking a bit I picked up on a sense of humor. She was very welcoming, just how I imagine Our blessed Lady would be.

The witness of joy at prayer and in community most attracted me to this institute. Secondly, though, the institute's specific apostolate drew me as well.

Faithfully living the vows, the charism, community life, the Order's long history, Saints of the Order, integration of all aspects of life (intellectual, spiritual, etc. Openness of the Order to the full history of the Church (pre/post-Vatican II thought, liturgy, writings, etc.

Fidelity to the Church's teachings

What most attracted me to my religious institute is the sister's joy, their life in fraternal community, their prayer life, their spirit of service to the needy, their apostolates and their close and open relationship with lay people.

The style of prayer and community life

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

The mission, spirituality and the ministries of the institute.

Community Life.

I was attracted by the spirituality and the charism of the Sisters of Providence what's to respond to the cry of the poor and vulnerable. I really like the fact that the community is an international intercultural and intergenerational.

Their prayer life, Spiritual growth, How the love to serve other people and the church as a whole. I was also having a desire to become religious and I also realize that giving yourself to Christ is the only way one can be save.

To live chaste, poor and obedient for the kingdom.

Location, accepts late vocations and wearing a habit.

I have always loved St. Francis and Our Lady of Guadalupe, our patrons. I have always had a strong pro-life conviction; we take a fourth vow to uphold the dignity of every human life from conception to natural death. I love how community is so family oriented; we are a family. Our prayer life is what I've always wanted. When I was discerning, my personal prayer life was incredibly similar to the prayer life of this community, without my realizing it at first.

The Dominican charism of contemplation, in Eucharistic and Marian prayer fueling preaching, and the apostolate of teaching the Faith and sharing the beauty of sacred music attracted me to my religious institute.

The charism attracted me to the institute "making the merciful love of God visible." I lived at a house of formation for 2 years and the sisters of the institute I entered ran the house. It was also seeing the "normalcy" of them interact.

The life and witness of many of the members of my institute is what initially attracted me. Plus it was a way to live out the priestly vocation in the context of community, which was something I perceived that I needed.

The spirituality and mission of our founder which is being recovered and lived more and more intensely. Also, the internationality of my religious community as well as the intensity it places on community living in our local houses. This sense of community and hospitable, familial atmosphere is something I've experienced in our local communities both in the United States and abroad (Canada, East Africa, India).

Getting the opportunity to develop my personal spirituality through direct service to the world in a variety of apostolates.

The community charism of serving the poor.

How intensely relational the life we live is. We focus on developing a deep and intimate relationship with the Lord, with the poor we serve and with each other.

The balance of a life totally focused on God in prayer (we are cloistered contemplatives and a real sense of family in the community spirit. Visiting and then doing a live-in showed me the 3se nuns were very "real" and that there were other young women happily living in my community.

There are so many things that attracted me but mostly the charism felt like it matched my heart's desires. There isn't necessarily one thing that I could isolate but the institute as a whole: faithful to the sacraments, zeal for the apostolate and evangelization, fidelity to the Church and her teachings -esp. dignity of women. It was important to me that they seemed "like me" and there wasn't pressure.

I was most attracted by the joy, vitality, and loving hearts in the sisters I met. They seemed so fully alive. I was also drawn by the fidelity to the Church's teachings and to Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. And the habit and fidelity to monastic life as active sisters.

The radical life and total self-gift of the foundress and members of my religious institute most attracted me to it. I knew that if I lived like them I would become one with Christ and be transformed and truly bring Christ to others. However, what really attracted me initially was God's call; through Ignatian meditation on an 8-day silent retreat, God invited me to enter my religious institute.

The love and fidelity to our Lord that I witnessed when I visited really touched me. I was also struck by the love and compassion that they have for each other here in our community and the pure joy that can only come from giving everything to Jesus. As for this particular monastery, the silence and place is beautiful, as well as the natural landscape. It was very important for me during my discernment to find a community that is 100% faithful to Holy Mother Church, and I found that here. Above all, it is there welcoming me here despite my poor health that has filled my heart with unspeakable gratitude. They received me with almost no one else (communities) would wearing the Habit was also vital to my choice and of course the wonderful schedule which includes daily mass and adoration. I cannot say enough about the wonders of this, my earthly home.

The possibility of be sent to mission overseas, the life and spirituality of our founder and foundress, the life's example of some members, the habit.

Their commitment and service to the poor. The virtues of the community: Simplicity, Charity and Humility.

What most attracted me to my religious institute was that it is a congregation that started a long time ago, and also, the habit attracted me very much because I wanted to enter in a religious institute where they would wear the habit. Last thing but not least, apostolates, the missions and the way of living as Saint Francis of Assisi.

The balance between prayer and work.

Charism. Active service and lifestyle. The Founders and the Sisters.

One Heart Many Faces and His Mission, Our Mission are the two quotes that get my attracted. And I like to serve people in need.

I was very drawn to the Norbertine Spirituality. I love how we are centered on the Holy Eucharist. Also, I was very much drawn to the community life.

The community life was the most attractive thing to me. When discerning the diocesan priesthood at an explorer day the priest talked of the loneliness a priest can experience as pastor of a parish in a rural area. I've never been alone. I've always lived with family and been around friends. When discerning with the SM I experienced a community lifestyle I could relate too. The brothers really care for each other and this is expressed by their actions.

I would say it was the community itself. It's a good group of people who truly seek a closer relationship with God. The liturgy and spiritual direction was great too.

I was attracted by the poverty and simplicity and authenticity of my community. I was struck by the witness of the religious habit and the call to liturgy and life of poverty and simplicity that it communicates and that is what first attracted me. As I spent time with them, the life of prayer and service to the poor also very much matched my desires.

I was most attracted by the friars' fidelity to the Church in the Province of St. Joseph. In what is often a turbulent and confused world, wherein moral and doctrinal issues have become relative, the Order of Preachers is needed to spread the truth of the faith in charity.

I was also attracted to the Marian traditions particular to the Order of Preachers. The conviction that Christ was calling me. And the desire to follow him wherever he led me. Because I love him. Then I realized after spending time here that it was as if I was born for this particular way of life, and have been prepared for it my whole life. It is as if for once I know what I was made for, to live my life fully for Christ in this way. Mother, I felt as though in some strange way she was my mother, even though I have a mother of my own. So I guess she is my spiritual mother. Beauty, the way of life. Jesus Christ!

common prayer, religious habit, contemplative aspect, location being in rural area, opportunities for manual labor and intellectual life. Community life is balanced with time for oneself as well as being challenged to give of oneself to the greater community in talent, or even simply during recreation.

The prayer life of the community and the joy its members attracted me the most. I was attracted to the 2 hours of Eucharistic Adoration and other times of meditation. I loved seeing the joy and life of the community members. They know how to simply be brides of Christ. Their identity is in being with the Lord and is not based on their service to others, although that is important. Service is secondary.

The apostolates align with my interests and gifts. The common life nourishes me and carries me. Coming from a big family and being surrounded by other guys on sports teams, musical groups in high school and college, I found the community an essential part of my decision to apply. It is the community that helps draw me to and sustain me in prayer, as well.

The Sisters were very respectful.

The life, work, and spirituality of our founder, Blessed Basil Moreau. His emphasis on life as an imitation of Christ and education as the work of the resurrection are inspiring and relevant.

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

Life of holiness - the prayer and spiritual life of the institute.

The balance between a contemplative life, and an active life, with a healthy integration of study (which is also seen as prayer, if approached correctly). Community life, liturgical life, and the preaching apostolate (we are the Order of Preachers, Central Province) were also big factors.

I was very inspired by the sister's information when I was discerning they seemed so happy. The prayer schedule was very important and the devotion to mass and the office, our simplistic and poor way of life also consoled me, it was so different than the materialistic focus of secular society. Even though there are a lot of monastic communities that have very similar prayer schedules they didn't have the same simple practices that made me feel peace in this community.

The joy the sisters daily live. They are so confident in who they are as brides of Christ/daughters of God and nobody can take that away from them. I love the work they do and how well they live out community life. I remember meeting them for the first time and thinking, wow, they know they are loved by God.

A call. There's a difficulty to describe it, but I took it for granted while discerning that this community was where I belonged. The year prior to entrance I was able to get to know the community and individuals better, and it made no sense to leave or go elsewhere when my heart was here. The actual rationale was that the order sparked my discernment and this community was closest to home, but I have no doubt that it was the Holy Spirit who led me here. This place is home, and somehow I knew it fairly early on without a reasonable explanation.

Opportunities for spiritual growth, the notion of being a contemplative in action, the Jesuit identity, and commitment to education.

The way they lived their life. It is well-balanced with prayer, community life, and the apostolate. It is also prioritized in that order which I believe is a sign of a healthy order. Also the way they love one another and all person they encounter.

The gentleness of the members.

Structure of contemplative lifestyle. Liturgy of the hours. 7x a day. Fidelity to the community. The authenticity of its members striving to live out the charism in community.

I was called and I responded. There was not much attraction before but when I went to them I felt at home not knowing that a lot of what I had encountered before was a part of their spirituality.
Everything.

Community Life and the relationship between sisters. The personal and community growth space. The multiplicity of ministries of this congregation.

The spirituality, prolife-and-holistic-healthcare-focused

The service for the community With loving and caring attitude. Prayers life.

spirituality, local and international ministries, many various ministries.

The spirituality of the order.

Eucharistic Adoration. I thought the institute was good and beautiful, but that wouldn't have been enough for me to enter because there is also a lot of good and beauty in marriage and the Church in the world. It was only through the gaze of Love in the Eucharistic Lord that "attracted" me. He attracted me. He made me fall in love with him.

I felt like I belonged, like the sisters really cared about me and were trying to live an authentic religious life. I also found the spirituality of littleness and humility to be very appealing. I believe they can help me to be a saint.

I attended a discernment retreat here and I was very much attracted to the spirit of our community. the sisters have such authentic joy! The charism of perpetual adoration is very important to me, as well as the habit. The witness of the sisters as true brides in love with their divine bridegroom continue to inspire me as I continue to understand my own call.

The method of praying the Office.

I studied nursing in college, so initially, I was attracted to our community because nursing is part of our apostolate. Over the years that grew to be so much more. The Franciscan spirituality of the crib, the cross, and the Eucharist really spoke to my heart as well as our Charism to make the merciful love of Christ visible in the world. I also really enjoyed spending time with the sisters and was very comfortable with them. They were extremely hospitable which made me feel at home because my own mother shares that gift of hospitality. I was also attracted to our community because of the prayer life and the fidelity to the Church's teachings, as well as the fact that the sisters wear a habit which is so important to be that visible sign in our world today.

The sense of availability for mission. Worldwide presence and variety of ministries and professions of members. Sense of social concern.

The Charism of life attracted me because it's so radically counter-cultural and a passion that has always been on my heart; in addition, I was drawn to the contemplative/apostolic lifestyle of the order and the visible witness of the habit.

Their joyfulness and focus on ministering to the youth and meeting them where they are so as to bring them to Christ.

The apostolate at the University of Notre Dame; the flexibility to pursue higher studies; community living.

I was most attracted to my religious institute by our fourth vow of Marian devotion, mission, work and family spirit.

I was first most attracted to the beauty of the liturgy and the sanctity of the institute's members. I was most attracted to my religious institute when I went to visit and saw how joyful and free each sister was, and their deep prayer life that was so evident in the way they loved me and when speaking about Jesus. I could tell they had a deep love and intimacy with God that at the time I had never seen before and I knew the Lord was calling me to the same life of prayer and study and community.

First the prayer and study. Now the mission to preach.

The mission of education in the faith and the common life of common prayer (hours) and common table.

I am most attracted by the life of prayer. The ministry of teaching attracted me as well, but monastic prayer is always what has drawn me the most. When I began to pray every day my freshman year of college it was only a matter of time before I would grow in my love for Christ and seek a more intimate friendship with Him.
Living a simple life of common work and prayer.

What attracts me most is the enclosure and the importance of poverty and silence. Also the Divine Office and waking up at midnight to pray Matins.

Spirituality and world mission.

The example of holiness from the older members of my community gives me a lot of hope in the formation process.

Wearing the habit, the daily Eucharistic holy hour, mass and Rosary, dedication to saving souls through the truth.

The poverty, joy, and radicality of the Franciscan Order first led me to me to our community and seeing these things lived so authentically by the sisters attracted me greatly. But what convinced me that this community was the one to which I was called was that they became family from the first hours I met them. When I met the sisters, I met myself too. Nun life showed me so much

about who I was and what it was that I truly desired. The simplicity, depth and centrality of our prayer life, our authentic, intense and joyful fraternity, and the loving wholehearted aspect that we take when serving the poor, our neighbors, all of these things responded deeply within me. When I came, I was home.

For me, I definitely felt a strong calling to join the Marianists. The most appealing or attractive features of this religious institute for me were the Community life, including the connection with other members and the common prayer life. I was also strongly attracted to the mission and charism of educating young people and accompanying them on their faith journey through life.

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

Many good things: beautiful liturgy, especially liturgy of the hours; friendly, relatable, young and diverse people; academic, ministerial and teaching possibilities; excellent leadership; wonderful location; good mix of private/public time and space; good monastic and religious observance without being fussy
Their faithfulness to Church and mission of St. Dominic and beauty and joy of the sisters.

The Charism. The way they love with the heart of Christ to comfort the afflicted, the poor, the needy - it's burns a desire in me to go and do so too!

Daily Eucharistic Adoration, daily mass, habit, active/contemplative charism.

I was most attracted to the spirituality and vitality of this order, and their heart for ministering to people who fall through the cracks using means they can relate to (the media).

Praying the liturgy of the hours.

A sense of the Lord's call to this monastery. The Dominican charism, which fits me well. The property where the monastery is to be built. The support from novice mistress. Contemplative life and prayer which extends to all corners of the world.

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

The community life and its testimony.

The Charism based on St. Francis of Assisi and applied to our current life with the spirituality of our founder.

And the fact that being an institute of active life, our prayer life is very productive because we live that part with a monastic touch. So spiritual life was very important to me.

The common prayer

I think that what attracted me the most to religious life is to be able to live in community. To serve others, especially the poor. However, the most important to me is the charism, the mission, and equality in common.

The great job and family spirit that all the sister have.

What most attracted me to my religious institute would be everything, the prayer life we have and that we have different apostolates. We have the apostolate of education, retreat houses, health care, and missions and many more. I don't see myself doing anything else but serving the Lord and my institute has a lot of work and I just wanted to be part of it. Seeing their joy and happiness of my sisters helps me a lot and with their spirituality attracted me to say yes to God.

Their spirit and charism. It is hard to describe. But their commitment to truth and seeking balance in order to encounter God more deeply and intimately definitely attracted me.

Spirituality, fidelity to the Magisterium, orthodoxy, & community life.

The charism to be a "migrant among the migrants".

The apostolate and the example of the founders and foundress their faith and virtues and dedication that continue and stays alive in the sisters at present.

I was most attracted by my religious institute's spirituality more than their core work. In my search to find the right religious congregation, I asked myself if I could honestly see myself living that congregation's charism and lifestyle, and foster a special love and respect for that congregations founder(s). As I continued to pray for and discern my desired community, God led me to the Salesian Sisters. These Sisters were very different from other religious I had met. They were gentle, joyful, and a whole lot of fun. They offered me their friendship and cordiality, without pressuring me to visit them or enter the Institute, allowing me to decide for myself, if and when I want to enter.

Community life and variety of ministry.

My undergraduate education at a Jesuit school and my experience also working in campus ministry at a Jesuit institution allowed me to get to know the Jesuits very well. It is clear Jesuits are men of great faith, prayer, compassion and it is clear they each possess a strong and intimate relationship with God, which helps them bring others closer to God. The Jesuits are pastorally effective and reach people where they are at in today's world.

I wanted to preach and live the fraternal life. I knew that I could do that as a Dominican. The history of the Order is a great heritage to receive as well.

The ministries they tend to and their community life.

The diversity of apostolates through which they serve the Church and the world.

A desire for a deeper relationship with God, a desire to live in community with other sisters, a desire to engage in more meaningful service activities, and a desire to live Franciscan values; I also was inspired by the Nuns on the Bus and Pope Francis.

Their Joy, they embody joyful hope and live it out in all aspects of their life and service that joy and freedom is something I deeply desired.

God has given me the grace to offer myself completely to Him, and I responded. My religious institute understands that it is all about grace, we adore God in the liturgy and live a life of prayer, we study His truth, we live the common life of regular observance, we keep the vows, and we go forth to preach the Gospel for the salvation of souls. That's why I joined, praised be to God!

The beauty of how they pray their office.

What attracted me most to Holy Cross was the strong community living within the congregation. I was also drawn to the ministries of the community and to the works that the congregation performed. Also, having a strong communal prayer life was extremely important to me.

I was attracted to many things about the community especially its faithfulness to its own identity and heritage. I saw this primarily in its great love for the habit and for the traditions passed down in the Order for Centuries. The palpable joy of my community and the peace it brought me reaffirmed my desire to consecrate my life to Christ in the company of these women.

It is difficult for me to say what most attracted me to my religious institute. The history, the saints, the current members, the community I lived with for a year before entering, the other guys discerning, the spirituality. All of these aspects. Maybe the most reassuring one is the spirituality, which seems to line up well with my own prayer life.
The charism and spirituality.

The Congregation of Holy Cross has always held a special place in my heart ever since I attended a school run by Holy Cross Brothers. Even as a child, I could see how committed the brothers were to the Church, to their mission in education, to our school and to each other. Immediately after feeling a vocational call, my first thought was the Congregation of Holy Cross. I wanted to be a part of the group of holy men that served me, my fellow classmates and the Church so well.

Their charism.

It is a purely contemplative monastery, attempting to live in accord with the rule that the order was founded on and the development of monastic tradition in light of our present circumstance both in the world and in Holy Mother Church. Just as one genuflects before the tabernacle and kneels during adoration and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, here one is able to receive the most holy Eucharist with the same reverent posture. Without sticking out like a sore thumb,

maintaining not only continuity with tradition and the history of the Church, but moreover maintaining a continuity within our own physical postures and the truths we profess.

Their peace and joy and their care for the world around them.

I was a diocesan priest for 25 years, I entered religious life for the common prayer life, and eating meals in community. Over the years I have grown as a preacher, therefore opportunities to be with a community that main focus is preaching has had a real important part of my discernment.

The rich missionary history and the wonderful men who have followed Christ in a radically courageous way. Also, the diversity and quality of ministries. The formation is incredibly thorough.

As you can see from my age, I didn't have much to pick from. I was just grateful that this institute accepted me. I've been here four months now and am very happy as a Novice.

Liturgy of the Hours in choir, mandatory religious habit, academic apostolate, open-minded engagement with intellectual life in the college, fidelity to the Rule of Saint Benedict.

The history and tradition of the order.

The commitment to living in intentional communities and ministering to the surrounding area, coupled with an emphasis on *cura personalis*. I was also attracted to the lengthy track record of Jesuits being fierce advocates for social justice.

A life of prayer and community along with the ministry of education.

The first thing that attracted me to the Jesuits was reading and learning about Ignatian spirituality. I found that in practicing it, it came to me very naturally and deepened both my relationship with God and my understanding of myself. After that, it was personal relationships with the vocation director and my spiritual director (whom my vocation director connected me to). These personal relationships gave me a greater understanding of what it meant to be a Jesuit. Then two Come & See events at the novitiate confirmed that I could be myself and fit in with the Jesuits.

I was attracted by how the sisters in my order interacted with each other and welcomed me when I went to the motherhouse for a retreat. The community really felt like a family, and the motherhouse felt like home. I was also attracted by how my order is using modern technology and social media to spread the Gospel as well as invite young women to visit. We have a YouTube channel, and I would constantly watch the videos while I was discerning.

Prayer, work, and common life.

I was most attracted by the spirituality, a rigorous formation process, and the availability to be missioned anywhere in the world. I want something to be asked of me.

Its sense and practice of mission and spirituality as well as the way in which its communities live and work together.

What most attracted me to our community is their fidelity to the Church, their wearing of the habit, their prayer life, and authentic community life. I saw how they find joy in simplicity and in being with one another. I witnessed the Gospel being lived at authentically and that was what drew me.

When I first came in contact with my institute I experienced a joy and peace that I had never experienced before. Each member of the community exhibited this joy and peace as well. I knew that my heart had been seeking for this joy and peace in other things, but when I continued to have contact and visit the community I had a deep sense that the Lord was confirming that I would find what I was seeking with my community. Part of my community's charism is doing God's will joyfully and the other part is in imitation of Mary and St. Francis both parts were very much who I was, and I was very much attracted in that way. Overall, however, I was attracted by God's grace because it was an unexplainable attraction, much like how a compass points north. If one did not understand magnetism of God's power, then one would not understand how the needle points north.

Firstly, God led me here. That made every flaw seem minuscule. Stability, familiarity, and good leadership are the attractive features. Through ministry, I was formed and educated towards a more active faith. The vow of stability brings forth a genuine community that learns daily to love and care for each other. This order built the structure of the Church in the U.S. by their labor and sacrifice. Now that the structures are built, a true community can be built. The leadership knows the problems our Church faces and has a clear plan in the education of young men and women. The Abbot has turned the community towards more prayer and a deeper relationship with Christ. It is an exciting time to join this community as it revives itself.

I liked the fact that the members of my institute seemed like real people. They joked around, they didn't take themselves too seriously, they did "normal" stuff. They're men following a deep call and they live that out well (for the most part), but they can very easily relate to people outside of religious life.

Focus on preaching, orthodoxy, strengths in formation, versatility in terms of possible ministries.

The gift of communal life and actively reminding the people of God of the identity in Jesus Christ.

The joy of the sisters first attracted me, but as I started spending more time with them, it was the peace that I had being at the convent. The charism is what really spoke to the desires of my heart to radically give myself to Jesus alone and to serve the diocesan Church.

The commitment to the Extraordinary Form Liturgy, the dedication to spiritual motherhood/praying for priests, the full religious habit, and Marian consecration.

An overwhelming sense of peace. A clear conviction in preserving the dignity of the human person, namely victims of abortion and assisted suicide. Wearing the visual habits as an obvious statement promoting one's beliefs in Christ. Being part of an order that is unceasingly sympathetic with others and seeks to work hard and server on their behalf. A shared love of nature and all God's creation. value of prayer and contemplation. The simplicity of life. Community life and brotherhood. Becoming undivided with God. Jesus in prayer told me to enter here.....The prayer life, the habits, the charism, the fidelity to Church, the joy, the formation, the members, the holiness of the members, so many cultures, the missionary adventure, the prayer schedule, Mass, confession, adoration, the religious family, Mary devotion, everything about them was me.....Oh, and they have an active and contemplative branch and I don't know what I'll be yet...

Marian and Eucharistic importance and ministry of preaching Truth.

The inner peace that I had whenever I was on the grounds of our Monastery. This is the one place I've been able to pray in interior silence. This is the one place I feel whole.

Life of contemplation with silence and solitude as a means to seek union with God.

The sense that I fit into the apostolic mission of my order which is a life of prayer and joyful penance for the salvation of souls and to further the mission of the Church.

The example of the saints of our order.

The community's prayer life, communal life, communal customs, and the community itself.

Prayer

Reading the lives the founder of the Order and of the Saints from the history of the Order.

What most attracted me were the charisms of my community, which the Lord had been forming within me before I even found the community. It was a clear affirmation when our charisms matched my spirituality before I entered. I was also attracted to the balanced way of life-our community really caters to the whole person - spiritually, physically, mentally / emotionally. Each day is balanced with times of work, prayer, exercise, fraternal time etc. Lastly, I was attracted to the combination of being an active and contemplative order. Prayer is interweaved throughout the day and fuels our apostolates. Communion with the Lord is always the first priority.

1 Mission and ministry fitting my worldview and who I see myself to be and desire to become more fully. Also has focus on multi-culturalism. 2 The members love me, want me and are willing to support me. I desire to live community life and this seems to be a good community fit for me. 3 Major: Strong sense of personal call to religious life and belief that it is very needed in today's world and has something very specific and important to give the world. 4 Need "container" in my life to really grow my spirituality and relationship with God - the vows are

important to me as an expression of living out a relationship with God and way of being in the world! 5 Believe that formation process of this congregation and the community life is such for my particular personality that they allow me to individuate into more of who I am not just incorporate me into an extension of who they are. i.e. I think the process will not destroy the uniqueness of who I am.

A Strong sense of community, Discipleship of equals, teachings of the founder, Devotion to Mary through the charism.

Living for God alone. Being part of a 900-year tradition. The opportunity to live out my faith in a radical way with integrity, authenticity and in communion with others. The ability to live a life steeped in liturgy. Balance between work and prayer. In the end, though, it was the pull of God on my heart. I knew this was where He wanted me to be and that my greatest happiness would only be possible by doing His will.

The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, the Fraternal emphasis in Community, the Ministries of the Friars.

The uncloistered, and freedom of finding a ministry suitable for myself.

Briefly: Foreign missions, orthodoxy and using an orthodoxy seminary, the excellent quality (joy good preaching, Marian) of members.

They are in different countries. His apostolate that is diverse. Habit was an important factor.

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

The way of life of the sisters.

The combination of prayer and apostolic work in the institute. The community prayer blends itself into the work and then back again. I appreciate living with the people we serve so that we can include them in the family. Since nursing care is part of the work we do, a connection to the community. Aspects of humility and simplicity are valued.

Their joy and how "normal" members are.

The ability to be a brother and be able to minister in any aspect of daily life activities.

Prayer life, community life, no habit, simplicity, down to earth members, less hierarchical, possibility for missionary work in other country, good standard of living provided for its members, some very pious members in the community, opportunity for education.

I was attracted by the institutes total commitment to preaching and how every other aspect of the life is ordered to that. The strong fraternal life was also attractive.

I was attracted to the social justice component and the dedication of the sisters to meet the current needs of the world. I was also attracted to the Franciscan charism and the theological belief that Jesus would have come into the world even without sin.

Happiness displayed.

The balance of the life here. There is an active focus here yet, there is also a strong sense of focusing on the spiritual and interior life.

Silence.

Contemplative.

Serious about the liturgy of the hours.

Formal practice of Lectio Divina.

The vow of stability. Well, I was in seminary for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, in Columbus O.H., I realized the attachment for both the people and land of New Mexico, the realization that for me, I needed to live out, what I feel to my vocation to the priesthood, in the context of community.

The Norbertines were the way for me to go.

The Charism. I'm in this institute because of the charism of the institute. After considering religious life almost my entire life (and running away from it), I met several orders and none felt a fit until I decide to attend a retreat with my institute. I contacted them (something I did not feel like doing with other institutes because of their mission/charisms) only after realizing the charism of this institute resonated with my heart. I cannot imagine living a different charism.....And I did a lot of research and discernment on my own in consultation with a spiritual advisor.

History! The Oblates have a deep history in Texas. But for me it is how they relate to the people.

Just wanting to discern the calling I felt at a very young age. I loved the founder, but most of all I loved the example the priests, brothers, and sisters gave to us young people about loving your vocation and growing closer with God.

Their charism and mission. -the joy of the sisters. -devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. -mission of setting the world on fire Truth. -devotion to Our Blessed Mother. -I had known them for so long, they were already like family to me.

What most attracted me is the mission of my order. My order is dedicated to teaching, and the academic teaching of history is something I really wanted to get involved in beyond the theological teaching of a priest.

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

How it fit who I was so well. I just felt so at home immediately.

The joy among the sisters really made me wonder what they had that I didn't. They are still close to God and give themselves totally to what God asks of them. It is a joy to be a Postulant in my community!

The community life and the commitment to our charism through our ministry.

I admired the relational and Gospel life lived by the sisters and the spirit imbued in the students of our school through the living of their charism. Their humanness and attention to others was paramount and made all the difference; values and character-building, BEING Christ to others and taking that out the door with you every day.....great role models for everyone there --- all of these things made it a joy to go to work every day!

The members of my community have a inclusive language for God, and they are committed to bringing about a spirit of inclusivity to the church and the world. They are deeply committed to right relationship with the Earth, local and global communities, and practicing nonviolence. They also view education as a touchstone for change, and not just in the classroom setting. The communal and ministerial life reflect these values.

The commitment of the OFM friars to environmental ministry and immigration ministry attracted me most to their order. I am a firm believer in social justice and the prominent role of the Church for our poor.

The way of life. Prayer throughout the day and work which is balanced with relationships in the community.

The life style and vocation of being a priest, teacher, and monk.

The people. They seemed easy going, down-to-earth and it was refreshing to be around them.

The charism and the holiness of the sisters. I was also very attracted to the fact that the sisters wear habits, have both young and old sisters and is a rapidly growing community.

The charism and its reputation for excellence. Its open-mindedness. Its seriousness of purpose. Its spirituality. Its novices and others I'd met through various vocation promotion programs.

The joy they proclaim, the joy that they live out. They work so hard, and give so much of themselves but they are always so joyful.

The charism and spirituality of the order and how it was lived out in the lives of several of the men who I got to know in my discernment. I also was attracted to the joy of the members of the community and the bond of charity between them.

I found that the community is really well formed with the members embracing fully their vocation of being love in the heart of the Church while maintaining a beautiful organic continuation of sacred tradition with the creed, sacred liturgy, way of life and in prayer.

I was first attracted by individual Brothers, especially their humanity and the diversity of their personalities. This drew me to explore the charism that held them together as Brothers.

I was most attracted by their spirituality and charisms as well as their prayer life and flow of their day.

What attracted me to my religious community was the joy and peace, the sisters with whom I had met contained an immense joy - their desire for the salvation of souls through the apostolate of teaching. This simplicity is profound and their witness to Christ's love.

I grew up around the Jesuits from when I was a child until application, due to my father working in one of their institutions (Saint Louis University). The ability for Jesuits to relate well to the average person has always been an important factor for me. Additionally, a commitment to deepening their grasp on the reality they are immersed in for their apostolic work so that they can better serve those they are with is something really important to me. Jesuits, in my experience, do not shy away from challenging moments/places, but discern how best to respond in the midst of the challenges, which I really appreciate and which attracted me.

They were our in many ways a very warm and welcoming group that has a great work ethic. They are hard working and determined in most areas of monastic life. At the same time, they are patient with those who are a little slow or lax in their own approach to the life. They also have a great sense of humor. They know how to find joy in all aspect of life.

My first experience with an member of my religious institute was on a Mission Trip. Seeing the broad scope of what this institute did showed me I could really do anything and still live out my vocation.

I also enjoy that the Habit is not required and they still live normal lives.

I was attracted by the institute's focus on community and how it was shown in the welcome they continue to give me. The institute puts a big emphasis on living in community.

Initially it was my familiarity with the institute as well as our size and scope (international and somewhat large). Additionally, being an order of all brothers was a plus for me.

Franciscan values and way of life.

The Benedictine way of life.

What attracted me to my religious institute were the charisms and ministries that we partake in. These attracted me because it is closely related to my spirituality already and the apostolate is what I am passionate about.

The Practical spirituality of the institute and the practical way they live out their common life.

The missionary vocation.

A call from God specifically to the institute. The unique charism few -men's contemplative orders.

A Greater bond, an intimacy with Jesus Christ so to be wed to Him and all He wants for myself and for His children.

Greg boyle.

The way we are in community with one another and with God. Being able to pray deeply, and also enjoy a movie or TV show provides balance. The mission of the ministry to education is extremely important to me.

The religious community has a strong spirituality of gratitude and the authenticity of the sisters' gratitude and accompanying joy was very attractive to me. Because this gratitude was so obviously a fruit of a real fidelity to Christ and knowledge of his goodness. I was also attracted to the intentionality of the community in how the life is ordered.

Don Bosco, kindness, education, family spirit, not many physical penances, tradition, its many saints, working with kids, a Salesian priest who was my spiritual director: his humility, simplicity, joy and zeal, and love for Don Bosco.

it was the fact that we had daily adoration to the Holy Eucharist. I learn early on that Jesus is truly present and that where I surrender myself to His will. The Congregation exist in many place in the world and perhaps God is calling me to be a missionary. I believe the congregation has the resources to help many who are in need.

I was first most drawn to have consecration to our Lord was lived (the intimacy of the sisters w/ Jesus that overflowed) and then to the charism of life, which each sister I encountered embodied. I felt the charism of life welling up in me in a way that I could only respond with a wholehearted "yes!" by the charism and it sent me out to then go and strengthen others becoming more fully myself and alive.

I was attracted by the charism of preaching for the salvation of souls. And that preaching isn't limited to a pulpit, although I would like to be a pastor eventually, we preach through our work in campus ministries, as chaplains, teaching and in more ways. The ministries and the variety interest me as well as the life in community and its organization of governments.

A call to ongoing monastic prayer life and daily conversion in an urban setting working in education with the disenfranchised.

It's Charism and spirituality and the way in which its member lived these out.

I believe my Order's focus on prayer and a relationship with God before engaging in ministry is important for me.

The unique charism of the active/contemplative Carmelite life is very beautiful, and our mother foundress, Mother Luisita, really touched and changed my life, and her story continues to shape and mold me. The Sisters truly are her daughters and continue to keep her spirit and her love alive, and that is priceless and something that I long to be a part of here in Carmel.

I was attracted to the joy and authenticity of the sisters they are young and relatable. I also really connected with the charism of making the merciful love of Jesus visible.

I had discerned a call to religious life in high school, but didn't know of any communities locally that seemed to fit. When I met my institute while volunteering, I was immediately attracted to their community life, sense of mission, and their spirituality. I also was attracted to the vision of their founder which included priests, sisters, and laity serving in the missions together.

What most attracted me to religious life was the community life. I didn't know that one could live such a way before.

The Joy of the sisters and they always seemed at peace. Their absolute acknowledgment of the fact that they are beloved as brides of Christ. Their individuality and uniqueness - they aren't in any mold, they are purely special in the way God created them. Also, their fidelity to the Catholic Church was also really striking and beautiful.

The community life.

Devotion to Mother Mary.

The priest and religious brothers.

The Habit.

I came to retreat. I knew I was on a "spiritual journey," and my priest recommended I come here. Through the year, I visited, attended some of the functions. I experienced life in a monastery, prayers, meals, conversations, Q&A's and more. I found peace within these walls and with the sisters. The monastery has a Volunteer Program and I asked to stay for a while. I became a Volunteer Affiliate. No pressure and allowing the Holy Spirit to gently give directions was most meaningful. I did not come here with the thought of becoming a sister. It was not on my radar--but it is obvious it was on the Lord's. He continues to lead me and has surrounded me by his women of Christ. Here I am learning a deeper relationship with my God and the things of God. The Rule of St. Benedict is truly a "game changer." It speaks and spoke to my soul on the very first visit and continues to unravel its profound truths daily. The monastery is also in the state I have lived in for the past 7 years and have a few family members close by.

What attracted me FIRST to this particular religious institute is the variety of ministries of its members! The first member that I met was a Sister studying to be an acupuncturist. What attracted me MOST was the spirituality and charism devoted to the Holy Spirit. I felt welcomed as I began to know the members as I continued sharing time with the older sisters. I felt the desire to help them, in different ways. I observed their simple way of living and I liked it.

When I visited I felt that part of my heart stayed here- it was where I felt I could know more about the heart of the Father and enter into deeper relationship with him. I loved their joy, that they wore a habit, and prayer life and how active and vibrant their community was.

The authenticity to the mission, example of sisters serving outside the church in unconventional ways, the boldness of the foundress, example of members living what they preach.

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

Community members' ministry and my relationship with them is like family.

Ministry according to everyone's giftedness and their flexible way of life.

The charism, the strong women, the Benedictine spirituality and the diversity of membership.

The joy of the sisters, their witness of living communal life and loving one another. They also had a beautiful website that I saw before I had ever visited and it was a major tool of the Holy Spirit in my discernment as they explained their mission and charisms in detail. Their charisms also really attracted me to them, as well as the variety of ways that they serve the community. Their life of incorporating penance in various ways as prayer.

Our charism of Healing, Compassion and liberation and our mission statement of believing in the healing and wholeness of the entire individual lead me to look deeper into our congregation and ask questions I had about the community and their everyday living.

The charism of perpetual adoration, the joy of the sisters and strong life teaching is one of the community's apostolates.

The strong sense of community combined with rich apostolic mission.

- 1- Joyful sisters who were normal, fun and loved Christ in a very real, beautiful way.
- 2- Community life.
- 3- Age of sisters.
- 4- Location/charism of the community.

The vows.

Community life, commitment to prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, spirituality of the Sisters, life and works of the foundress.

The fact they take care of the elderly poor. I knew I wanted to do something in my future with the elderly and was praying and asking the Lord to please reveal to me how he wanted me to use that.

The members of the institute and family aspect of the members. The habit and missionary lifestyle.

It's where I feel most at home and where I feel the most love. Where there is Love then there must be God.

The things that attracted me most to my religious institute is the emphasis on the balance between work and prayer and recreation. As well as the spirit of joy ever present.

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

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

It is difficult being separated from family.

The rapport to keep reflecting on the life experiences and changes, Especially technology and religion.

The lack of understanding how to authentically maintain the integrity of religious contemplative life while making needed changes, modifications for reaching women of the 21st century. Keeping pre-Vatican II norms while having a better understanding and ability to grow psychologically. I believe the change needed is not external, but internal and a mindset.

Giving up my own will in things great and small.

Inculturation.

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

My challenges are -Learn very good language, English. I want to pray in community like adoration and silence. We pray 20 to 30 minutes together. The congregation only reads the visperas or laudes once a day; there is no contemplative silence or community adoration.

I would like to wear a habit. I think the habit help to people to remind God, live poverty and identify the sign of the congregation. When I felt the call and I saw congregation wear habits my heart felt a big desire to answer the call.

Most challenging is being open to change within oneself, and opening my mind and heart to letting go of my preconceived expectations.

Not getting frustrated with my faults.

The life in community.

The most challenging about religious life is also community where you have to be as you are and to accept your community members as they are. I think that's what I find most challenging.

Freedom

The challenges, so far are the same as before: Over-coming my own personal vices like judgementalism and gluttony and organizing priorities. Coming from a large family I find it perfectly easy to live at close quarters with my brothers here.

Living out the evangelical counsels and the life of the order is overall a struggle but one that always brings joy and love and helps me to lead others to Christ and to know his love for them.

Honestly, because of illness, we had to get a new Postulant Directress. It was very hard to have the other one leave. She had become very dear to us and her leaving was painful!

Conflict within community. Not being able to date females as a younger person in formation.

Early mornings, particularly ornery and grumpy member(s), limited free time, Obedience and submission without complaint or complaining is difficult but very good for me.

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

Renouncing my own schedule and plans for the rhythm and flexibility of daily convent life.

The most challenging thing about religious life is letting go of my own will, plans, and desires and allowing God's plans to take place through it's manifestation in those around me and circumstances I am in.

My main challenge is the adjustment to a different lifestyle, in regards to reality of the age demographics (including the major generation gap) and to the differing cultural customs or traditions. I had to adjust especially to living with older and being around infirmed sisters who, for example, may have hearing deficiencies that makes communicating difficult.

For me all aspects of being a religious matter the most, all aspects of being a religious should be given much importance as we are being developed holistically from prayers, living the vows and

even community service are all essentials. All systems or factors of being religious will be affected if one aspect is not given emphasis. All aspects in living religious life are essentials and a challenge to live in because they are all interconnected to one another.

We observe monastic silence for most of the day. This makes my days very lonely. If I am troubled or upset, I have to cope with it on my own. I also miss my family, and find it difficult to accept that I will not see them again, except once or twice a year through a grille.

Myself. I am my greatest obstacle to holiness.

In all honesty, that is true. There is adjusting of course to the regularities of life here, but after the first month or so it becomes easier. Throughout that there's an impatience to 'fit in' and do things 'right' (i.e. as ultimately you will be expected to, even if you aren't expected to now), even a certain scrupulosity that accompanies the first few months. But then, there's also no shortage of affirmation from my fellow sisters, my community as a whole, and my superior, not to mention the Holy Spirit's consolations.

The separation from family and friends.

I would have to say doing domestic chores the way someone else wants you to do it, when they want you to do it. No longer is it - when I want, how I want, where I want. Learning it's not about me, but the community and God. Obedience and humility in a frame of mind of kindness and gentleness. As I'm about to enter the novitiate, I do see a change in myself though ever so slight. It's a start!

The most challenging part about religious life is the separation from friends and family, especially not being able to console my family who are not as supportive of my vocation.

Living in community.

Older members being less faithful to Church teaching and to beautiful liturgy

The English language, being humble, charitable and obedient.

Adapt to new environments and systems of new communities.

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

The corrections from other profess sisters that are not the formation mothers and to see the division between some of the professed sisters.

Daily routine, dryness in prayers.

To come from different cultures and have different languages is challenging. But it is also enrichment to learn from other accepted others as a gift from God. The ministry can be also challenging sometimes.

How to live community life is my most challenge.

Finding a place that accepts members 50+

There are many challenges. I think it can be summed up in overcoming self. Things that are difficult; obedience, prayer in desolation, learning humility through mistakes, learning to love in truth. These are difficult because I have to put aside what I think, what I feel, what I want, how I've understood things most of my life. I truly have to die to myself every day. But I rise a new person, a holy person, and the new life within is worth more than every drop of pain.

The adjustment is gradual, but I was sort of lazy before I entered religious life and now that I have entered the structure of my life does not allow for laziness. However, that is a beautiful thing and a blessing I do not take for granted.

I find most challenging is giving up my will in order to live this life I need to not want my will. but God's will. Obedience is definitely an area the Lord is working in my life.

Living up to the calling of my vocation, and constantly striving to be the best religious I can possibly be.

Community life, trying to grow in prayer/spiritual life, discerning which ministry/apostolate I can serve God and my religious community best.

Retraining myself to make decisions based on different values from the secular world (like not considering money, prestige, location, etc., but only considering God's will for my life).

Declining numbers.

Dying to myself each day through the submission of my will. However, I am also experiencing the most fruit and growth from it as well.

Giving up and external ministry and sense of fulfillment in that. I was extremely involved in the Church before entering (EMHC, music ministry, helped run high school YG, president of my college Newman group, etc.) and I found a lot of fulfillment in this, and in seeing that I was making a difference. As a contemplative, I don't see the fruits of my labor in the same tangible way, so I just have to trust in God that he hears and answers my prayers. It's very humbling in a good way.

Growing in the spiritual life requires a total self-gift! This is beautiful but it also requires self-knowledge! Practicality, communication and early meetings are hard.

Living in the present, trusting God with each moment, and truly loving my sisters and myself. Abandoning my will in all things

Radically leaving my family and friends has been really challenging. Being so radically obedient is also very hard, but I know I want and need that if I truly want to imitate Christ who was truly obedient unto death....talk about radical!

When something or someone bothers you, you can't just run away from it. Here in the cloister, you really have to come to terms with your own shortcomings as well as those of others.

Lacking of vocations, aging of members in the different institutes.

Adjusting my time with family and having less contact with them.

What I find most challenging about this life is to live in a community where you have to live with different people, that you don't know and that you must learn from them, what they like, what they don't like, to respect them, love them as your new family, so you won't hurt them or make them feel bad. But also and the first challenging thing about religious life would be me, myself, because I am learning how to be a different person and it is hard fighting with myself so I will be a good sister for my community.

Limitations to travel and contact with family and friends.

Vows. Community Life.

Sometimes I have some desires to have a wife and family.

The hardest part for me is seeing myself for who I really am; a sinner, and realizing that even though I am living the religious life, I am still very much in need of a Savior.

I believe that prayer has been challenging. Switching to a more organized schedule can be hard but it has been very rewarding. I have found the hour of daily contemplative prayer to be the most difficult. I don't always succeed but again this is very rewarding. I look forward to being better at it.

Sometimes managing the dry periods and trying to get everything done. It is possible though because we have a good support system.

Most challenging is fighting that temptation that I could do something else, or return to life in the world, even though God is calling me here.

I find community life the most challenging aspect of religious life, in large part due to my introverted tendencies.

My own weaknesses shortcomings and pride. Our struggle is not flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the world rules of the present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. (Eph 6:12) I was not ready for how he would attack my thoughts this is serious spiritual warfare! Because we are a contemplative order, dedicated to prayer, so many people send prayer requests so there is a greater relationship with the suffering of the world. This is truly hard to carry sometimes. I feel the weight of it and it pierces my heart. Starting over again in life it is like I am a baby again new name and all. Trusting these people, I hardly know, trusting that Christ has not abandoned me, trusting that no matter what the future holds even if I screw things up, he is in charge, I have entrusted myself to him. Not having spell check.

Allowing myself to become docile to the spirit and an instrument in the hand of God; being compliant to God and patient with His work in me. Settling down after the initial joys of embracing a different lifestyle are shed off; being content with the joy of God's love at the present moment of every day. Keeping my sights set on Heaven instead of the immediate worries and anxieties of community life and vocational discernment.

Not being 100% sure that this is where God wants me. It makes it harder to accept the sacrifices that come along.

The sense of 'giving up' other relationships and opportunities.

Being in a new and different place where relationships and expectations are other than what I have been used to for the entirety of my life.

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

Giving up / changing relationships with family and friends.

Relinquishing my desire to have things "my way," and also simply to "have" things. As a novice, I'm learning to ask, "Is this necessary, or do I simply want it on a whim?" and I'm learning how to live my promise of poverty well, which necessitates changing my way of life compared to how I was able to purchase / own what I wanted, when I wanted it, before entrance into the order. We all have our various areas of difficulty, and this is mine at the moment. However, I know growth has (and will continue to) come from striving to live this counsel well.

This question is so difficult I have just entered my community and have been here for less than a month. SO the most challenging part is not losing sight of our Lord, to keep trusting him. But also when praying together I am so focused on what book or page that I do not reflect very much on the holy prayers that we say. It is also a challenging confusing concept to try and be one in mind, heart and act when I feel so different and am familiar with different practices some do not matter what we do but other things are more important to do the same and I am still learning how to tell the two apart so that can be frustrating.

Wearing shoes, the whole day. Eating what is provided instead of deciding what I want to eat. Having a set bedtime.

My own personal conscience. I start realizing that living religious life is the answer to my heart's desires, but that I'm not as able to live as a virtuously or fully embracing every aspect of the life, just being a sinful person like everybody else.....growing in virtue - has it. (Which is the hardest part of anybody's life anyways....).

Accepting the pace of the development of community life and adapting the nature of community life that exists before you.

Lack of communication with friends and family. The intensity of community life.

Interpersonal communication which is hampered by hearing loss and dementia.

The quiet.

The Obedience (Benedictine Rule).

The best and most challenging are community.

I think encountering the truth about myself is most challenging and sometimes frightening to see my short comings and discover fears but I trust in God and continue to do my best at serving Him.

Community life and relationship between sisters.

Secularization with individualism.

Try to understand everyone's personalities to maintain a good relationship is challenging. And the vow of obedience is hard to keep at all time.

living community life with different cultures.

Some people can be difficult to live with.

The culture has trained me to be self-reliant and that my value comes from "doing" things." Whenever I try to do things in religious life "for God" instead of allowing him to love me and do his work in me, I fail. Whenever I surrender to his love and receive it as Mary did, the challenges suddenly diminish and instead grace abounds.

Being away from home and family and all this is familiar.

Giving up my will, my time, my usual pursuits, letting go of a lot of my identity (what I liked/disliked, wore, ate, did, read watched, etc.) because it's not really applicable anymore. You have to empty yourself in ways I didn't understand before I entered.

Relationships are different. I have limited contact with my friends and family, and I am around the same group of people nearly constantly in the novitiate, people from all different backgrounds. I am still learning the nature of the "sister" relationship as my before - convent relationships are changing.

Ensuring that "community" extends to all members of the house.

Going deeper and higher and coming to know more fully who I truly am in Jesus so that he can fill me completely and that can spill over to all I encounter. This is both the most challenging and most beautiful!

It is difficult to narrow my sense of the Church to one religious institute or community or spirituality. I'm always left wondering if there is a community that fits my own personality and spirituality better.

Being so far from home for the first time in my life is a challenge, and also adapting my relationships with family and friends back home, since I don't get to communicate with them as frequently as I did before entrance.

Community life, though a great joy, is very challenging because many people of many different personality types have to learn to live and work together, and we need to do that charitably and with joy which is sometimes just hard.

Community life; absence of families from day-to-day life.

Distance from family.

I am somewhat introverted and find developing relationships with the community a little challenging. I am also challenged by discipline in the study - a key aspect of Dominican Life.

I find most challenging about religious life is the adjustment to living a radically different way of life than is possible in the world and learning how to enter into the spirit of the community in a unique way the Lord is calling me to.

Looking inward and dealing with myself.

My confreres (on occasion); desire to marry and have children.

Obedience and community are the most trying aspects of religious life. I think this is mostly the case because it rubs against the grain of my pride so often and in such a clear way. That is why these aspects are so good for me, but it certainly doesn't make things any easier. Nonetheless, I joined monastic life so that I would have someone to be obedient to, who would teach me how to be a saint. And I joined because I wanted to live in a community among others who were striving for holiness. These two aspects of religious life are simultaneously the most challenging and the sweetest.

Religious life is time demanding especially while I complete my studies at the university while entering into this life.

The continual encounter with myself; my faults and weaknesses. The silence and solitude, though beautiful, can be challenging in that regard.

Uncertainty of the future.

The idea of total self-giving is hard to accept as a life-long endeavor.

Right now, I find facing my own limitations, weaknesses, and sinfulness to be the most challenging thing about religious life. To be seen in such a place of vulnerability is challenging as well, but I am finding it to be a healing experience as well. To be known as I am in all of my frailty is difficult, but to be loved in it is immensely freeing.

The unexplained or vague stages of formation or formation decisions without any background or context have proven challenging for me. I also occasionally have a difficult time dealing with the varied personalities of my community, but that is to be expected and is minimal. Generally, it is a joy to be surrounded by a variety of people and living in community is truly a blessing.

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

I don't find it very difficult. Continuing spiritual growth is always challenging. I am impatient to take on more responsibilities. I have many imaginary problems that you don't need to know about.

I find the times of silence and formal recreation times the hardest.

Detachment. Always being willing to leave if my Superior desires to move me.

For me, having lived as an independent adult for many years and having had a career for 5 years, living out obedience in a community as a postulant has been the most consistently challenging, and most consistently rewarding/fruitful, aspect of religious life thus far.

At the moment, my parent's reaction to my entrance. They are convinced this is the wrong decision for me.

Community life. facing every part of myself: the good, bad and indifferent. Adapting from life in the world to quiet, monastic life.

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

The promotion of justice for all as community.

To find the way to live my own conversion, to make worthy my way in this life.

And to find a spiritual guide both inside my congregation and outside.

The language for me.

I think that life in community.

The detachment of my little siblings and my parents.

Well, nothing its hard when you ask God for his grace and just have an open mind. But indeed religious life is challenging because you have to die your old self and be a new one for god and others. So that is hard also accepting everyone how they are, think and act, for we all come from different places and have different stories. That is what is challenging for me because the rest God will help you with.

Giving over my will and my desires and relying on others after having lived alone, in a different province than my family for years. It is a challenge but also such a grace and blessing. It is very freeing to be able to depend on others and not just always have to tough it out and take care of yourself as an independent woman.

Living the vows and integrating the charism of the community.

Community life and the vows.

The vow of obedience, and living apart from my family.

The vow of obedience.

Having worked full-time for several years before entering, it is challenging to not be in control of my own time and continually following the schedule that is dictated for us. The vow of obedience also entails us not having control of our placements regarding apostolic ministry.

I find living the communal life the most challenging.

The vows of obedience and poverty since I had a professional prior to coming in.

At this point, I would say giving away the possibility of starting a family.

fewer new members; living in community is life-giving, but can be difficult at times; the politics of the church.

Prayers. For so long my discernment was a big part of my prayer life. Now that I've acted on my discernment and am living the next step of God's will, I've found difficulty in not praying about a decision and trying to simply be with him. It's a challenge to be still in his presence to not "move forward" with anything specific.

I am a sinner living with other sinful men. That's where God's mercy and the mercy of the brothers comes in. This is why we go to Confession frequently.

Luke-warm confreres/the community not living up to the monastic ideal.

One of the most challenging things for me is the public witness we provide for those around us. Especially being a Brother, most people have no idea what it means to be a religious brother. So upon introduction it always requires some explaining. You also want to have the 'seamless garment' where my life is no different in the community, or when I am not with community members. I desire to live the religious life to its fullest extent and hopefully I will be able to do so.

The most difficult thing is "re-wiring" my thinking transitioning from a very secular world to a monastic life. In a way, this is also a great gift because I no longer feel uncomfortable making connection between the world and God's grace, whereas in the secular world this is often met with hostility. Religious life has deeply renewed my hope in the Lord and allowed me to see more fully the beauty of his creation.

Again it is hard to say, as I have only been in religious life for a few months. One tough thing for me is to be open with my superior and fellow novices. It isn't because my superiors are not welcome and friendly but it has to do with my own personality and in some ways fears.

Becoming harder to relate to friends not in religious life.

Community Life yields many blessings, but it can also be a point of stress and difficulty.

Detachment.

Having a continual and total trust in superiors regarding my formation whereas I would normally decide for myself what ought to be best, and sometimes these come into conflict and it is hard to not call this authority into question but to be obedient once again as a child when I am used to being an adult.

I think that this will change over time, but right now, striking a balance between prayer, community, work, etc. (This is not unique to religious life.

I was very independent so for my last 1-15 years, so being under obedience and conforming to community life, I expect to be my greatest challenge. Having less freedom will be an adjustment embracing poverty will also be challenging.

It is hard to notice men who have long ways to go still in surrendering their own wills over to Christ and to the Society of Jesus.

It's pretty much what I expected. I've had many years to read up about it and learn about it, so I'm not having difficulties with obedience etc. They are very kind here.

Loss of personal autonomy.

Obedience.

The daily rituals that are part of religious life in community can become tedious, but I am learning how to adapt as I grow in appreciation of different perspectives my brothers in this community have toward them.

The lack of fidelity to the teachings of the Church among members in the Institute. The struggle between the ideal and reality.

The most challenging aspect is relinquishing control and sharing my life with others after putting so much value in my independence and self-reliance.

The most challenging part about religious life is finding balance among all of the obligations and duties, as well as working on personal growth while realizing it's not all about you. Ultimately, this vocation is all about Jesus. We have to keep our eyes fixed on Him in order to truly grow.

The people I live with; they're so damn annoying.

The same things that are challenging about secular life: all my neuroses and hangups are still there. The only difference is the intensity with which the formation process requires you to face those challenges. Outside of religious life, that is generally something you need to do on your own.

The separation from non-religious institution family and friends.

The transition from the world to the convent is challenging. It's difficult to let old relationships go and work to form new ones. We came face to face with our weakness and then let the Lord meet us there which is humbling, but difficult, but beautiful and freeing as well, what a gift this life is.

There are so many gifts and graces within the religious life but the religious life does pose challenges, it is in these challenges where the graces usually are usually found. I think the most

challenging aspect of religious life for me in the postulant stage is the sacrifice of having a physical spouse and one's own family and the intimacy that they contain when lived out well. However, this challenge has been an opportunity to grow in intimacy with our Lord, in ways I never imagined.

There are so many voices speaking. So many reflections in one day. So many people to pray for. Every older member of the community wants to help guide you, pass on the tradition, cultivate friendship and spiritual fatherhood. These things are good and I desire them. There is a sensory and advice overload, and I'm going to have to learn to say no to many good things.

Things can feel a little claustrophobic sometimes, especially now in formation. I do miss adult freedom sometimes. There are instances where I really wish I could get away for a little while, especially when the people I live with drive me crazy, and while the formators are understanding and accommodating as best as they can be, there's only so much of a leash they can let us out on.

It is difficult having limited contact with family and friends but I know and trust that the distance allows me to enter more fully into the life. I have found that each time I receive a letter or see them at an event that it is a great gift for me.

Personal formation and growth.

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

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

Detachment from friends and family is definitely the hardest part for me. I have to remind myself constantly that they're in God's hands now, and that he is the best of fathers.

Different perspectives on the current cultural situation and the proper response/action of the Church to further evangelization - these differing perspectives mostly come from age and generation gaps in the community, it can be hard to find a way to patiently and openly listen to perspectives that seem extremely rigid and "old school". Though we all agree of course on upholding all the teachings of the Church, the outlook on culture and the mission of the Church can differ greatly. I find myself able to grow easily impatient by hearing pessimism, cynicism or harsh condemnation of certain aspects in these areas. Conversations on these can be fruitful though if we reach out to understand each other.

I think the most challenging thing about religious life is having to work with the many different ideals of the community members.

Religious life itself is blissful. I am grateful to God for this vocation. I do have some difficulties with the way some member of the Order, especially those who have been solemnly professed for at least 15 years, celebrate the liturgy. I sometimes disagree with their view on certain issues outside the liturgy as well. I would also like to see more members of the Order wear their habits more often.

Most challenging thus far has been obedience with my schedule. I no longer have the freedom to do what I want when I want. For example, I cannot snack during the day and can only eat what is given to me. Saturdays are now work days. I have to be in bed by a certain time each night, etc. Though it's challenging to conform my will to this way of life, I've also experienced great freedom in it and a greater attentiveness to the Lord throughout the day.

1 Religious life formation is very outdated and treats new members as "children". It can be abusive. Current institutions are very challenged about how to appropriately and effectively bridge in new adult members into their ranks! They need to Listen more to newer members! 2. Formation is one area this problem is visible - not in touch and tune anymore as we age and turn inward with the changed way a 21st Century world operates and communicates and how religious need to change their "branding" to message what religious life brings to the world that only it has i.e. people in the world don't understand it at all! 3 As congregations age and diminish they have become more insular and self-enclosed. We want as new members to be going out to others beyond the ministries of this particular institution and that is still not encouraged much. The future will be the "charism of Religious life" and beginning to create more cross-congregational living and ministering opportunities will help us to be prepared for that transition. 4 We need to be not so scared of moving away from an institutional focus to a horizontal networking focus. Allow the restructuring to occur as it is throughout much of secular society.

Keeping my focus on discernment and my prayer life instead of focusing more on the ministry and mission.

We live in a secular, post-Christian society. One of the biggest challenges is perseverance in a time and culture when religious life is not valued. At the same time, that only underscores the prophetic witness of monastic life.

Community (as an Introvert, this is something I am trying to find a balance for) and Liturgy of the Hours (the repetitious nature or rather the pre-written nature is hard for someone who comes from a tradition of spontaneous prayer).

Living together in community and finding balance between personal and community time.

This order is extremely disorganized, half the members have different ideas about what the charism is / isn't, obedience, lack of consistency among members (i.e. attending liturgy of the hours, vigils, community gatherings, wearing of habit, spiritual exercises, and living of "rules" and constitution about challenges facing the order, lack of living in the material poverty (priests watching tv, nice food all the time, nice houses, etc.)

Life in community, and understand my superior.

The most challenging about religious life is the world detachments.

Community Life.

Accepting the authority of another and learning the mannerisms of the community which seems so foreign to me.

Learning how to be "little" after living in a culture that values independence and success as the ultimate good for young adults.

Prayer, Sacrifice, Obedience and Devotion.

Community life, vow of chastity/celibacy.

For me, the biggest challenge is learning to renounce my own wants and desires whenever they conflict with the good of the community. And learning to expect that they will be fulfilled as God sees fit, not as I want.

The most challenging part of religious life thus far has been moving into the motherhouse and feeling that many of the sisters have become institutionalized. Intergenerational differences are more pronounced. I don't feel that some of the sisters have a sense of the greater world and I have disrupted their routine.

Community and lack of applicability in theological implications.

Obedience. This is difficult for me. Religious always said that obedience was the most difficult out of the vows and I have experienced the truth of this statement. These words of St. Gregory ring true in my discernment so far here in the monastery: "But for a man to give up himself, to immolate what is most precious to him by surrendering his entire liberty is a much more arduous work: to forsake what one has is a small thing; to forsake what one is, that is the supreme gift."

Obedience

All white community.

Gather around the altar for Mass once a week.

Not sure I will make it to final vows.

As of yet I can honestly say that every day I have spent at the Abbey I count as a blessing. I have only felt frustrated by the decisions by my superiors. Nothing I would call a challenge.

Several things are challenging: -Liturgy of the hours (leaning and praying/singing in 2nd language) -Exchanges / daily events in my second language (misunderstandings). -Practicing patience with people light hygiene standards. - Diet: More fat, sugar, lactose than I am used to eating. - Depending on others to make decisions for me, when I was used to be independent.

The internationality in respect to how there can be a learning curve.

Just the constant search for truly understanding Gods call in my life. Whether he is calling me to religious life or to married life, I have to be open to this. It can be hard when you have different things tugging at your heart at one time.

Learning to live with other personalities.

I so amazed by the virtues of my sisters that I find my imperfections to be even more obvious than ever, but God continues to bless me with knowledge of my weaknesses and trust in His merciful love. He gives me the graces needed to do His will, and I am filled with joy!

Learning to become completely economically reliant on my order has been a challenge. Money gives one a certain freedom to buy whatever you want or go wherever you want if you have enough money. Being economically reliant on the order means that my ability to travel or buy something is severely limited.

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

Not having as much one-on-one attention as I was used to growing up in a small family and having a close-knit group of friends in college.

It is most challenging accepting failure. In the world, I could control my success more easily. Here, I am going to make mistakes and it is an opportunity to grow in virtue, which isn't always easy.

A developing a sense of common identity as an institute

Being a part of a small group of younger members within an institute that is predominantly 70+

I find the slowness of the institutional church to live the Gospel very disheartening. In today's world so many clergy reflect the materialism of the day, the power attitude of government, and the disinterest of being servants to God's people.....the Pope can't even get things going but is a tremendous example of the difference one person can make and what faithfulness to Christ's call really means. I think sometimes that the church is its own worst enemy and should look in the mirror for answers to the lack of vocations and active Catholics in our parishes.

Community life has always been intergenerational, so I find it disheartening when members talk about how the numbers are "so few" and "things aren't like how they used to be," as if it's somehow a negative thing that evolution has taken place in the last 50 years since Vatican II. It is challenging to move forward when it feels like we're trying to keep the institution alive instead of reshaping our vision of what religious life could look like in the future.

I find life in community to be the most challenging aspect of religious life thus far.

Living in community.

Living under a superior.

Structured communal living. I found obligatory daily Mass, and the Liturgy of the Hours to be too much for me.

Adjusting to postulancy from a loud and secular world.

Balancing the contemplative life with the apostolic life and all that happens in between.

Blending the charism and mission of the community into the secular workplace. The reality of the call to be that witness for others.

Community life and the initial interior work of the soul.

As a confrere said, "Community is the sandpaper which grinds us to holiness". I have found it occasionally challenging with adjusting to the different personalities and backgrounds of the members of my community.

As for the initial interior work, it is the process of recognition of my false self, acknowledging, in a deeper way, my brokenness and imperfections, as well as understand my own behaviors and idiosyncrasies.

Continually being a witness with a pure and undivided heart and offering myself fully to the demands of humility and obedience.

Endless transitions during Initial Formation.

Deaths of beloved Brothers.

Lack of an age-related peer-group within the institute.

For me, the most challenging part is adjusting to not being able to just go out and buy coffee or a pastry what have you whenever I want- so basically, both embracing poverty and obedience. Its kind of weird sometimes not being in control of decisions.

Good question - honestly, there are small difficulties of letting go of the unknown and in the beginning, silence was a challenge b/c I like to talk, but even that has become something beautiful.

Honestly, there are pretty wide differences within our novitiate community when it comes to experiences of the church and ideologies that are in the church at large. How to reconcile those is

something I find challenging about our life. How to engage in complex issues from the perspective of faith within a community where there are very different viewpoints.

Additionally, getting used to community life after being an adult with a job in the world and having done ministry prior to entrance for 5 years.

I am a very schedule oriented person and struggle to adapt to the carefree needs of the community when they pep-up.

I find the lack of physical contact hard and the inability to properly explain it to others outside of religious life. I generally find myself feeling very lonely inside the group.

I have a certain way I want to live my holiness, which can of course be at odds with different people. I value a more orthodox approach: adherence to the Liturgy of the Hours each day, the wearing of the habit, a conservative approach to the teachings of the Church, etc. Sometimes I am challenged to be more gentle with my approach.

It is a constant effort to educate broader society and even members of the church about religious life and especially religious brothers. It seems that most people only know or experience the church in parishes. So it is an uphill battle to explain the role of religious in the church.

Learning the dynamics of our community at first.

Not being in total control of my own life, as I was before entering.

The most challenging aspect about religious life so far has been keeping silence at different hours of the day. I didn't realize how much noise I was consuming before community. Although it's been challenging, it really value its purpose and it has made me grow in my relationship with God and also practicing temperance and self-discipline.

There are days where community is very difficult.

Obedience.

Character of some who entered when discernment criteria were poor in some regard--i.e. psychological/ maturity issues.

The great fears of my weaknesses, disordered attractions to sin, and living with only a few religious who share my views and ideals about virtually everything.

the catechism

Breaking habits from before religious life, such as spending money or how to spend my weekends.

The discipline and routing of the life is very selfless and adjusting to that is hard.

Companions who are not happy.

Sometimes the feeling of loneliness or homesick, we must lose or give up our familiarity for His kingdom, sometimes I feel as there is no one to talk too in a physical presence. Am I good enough comes up sometimes along with, can I perform academically?

I would say keeping pace with grace and not trying to run away from my own poverty. I find myself trying to skip steps whenever I experience my areas of weaknesses. But desiring to grow in letting him be my savior who breathes new life and mercy into my poverty.

So far I find it difficult not comparing myself to my novitiate brothers in our knowledge s, skills, etc. We live together and help one another, but I don't feel that I'm contributing as much as they are with their talents.

Putting aside one's own will in favor of obedience.

Community life, separation from family and friends keeping a more or less routine schedule (not being able to choose what you would like to do when / how). Silence (in the beginning this was the most difficult for me, although I appreciate it now)

Seeing members of my Order who do not follow the teachings of the Church, who do not respect Her traditions, do not wear the habit etc.

For me as a Postulant, an area that is challenging is learning and maintaining self-care in the midst of our busy lives. However, I am getting the help and support that I need and am learning to see it as God's will and His desire for me to practice Poverty in all things He has given me, especially myself!

I find it most challenging to grow in patience. It is difficult to have your faults pointed out to you and to realize you are not perfect. I see this so much more living in community. But I realize so much more how community life is most beneficial! I am humbled but also encouraged to grow in holiness and by my own sisters.

The most challenging part about religious life has been communicating with family and friends who find it difficult to understand how beautiful and fulfilling this life is for those called to it. It has been difficult to not be able to fully share my joy with them.

The people.

Learning to be myself among people I just started living with, but it's all just about adjustment slowly. Also to give others the benefit of the doubt.

Waking up in the mornings.

Diet.

Being faithful to the vocation.

Oh gosh, it is funny the things I thought most challenging in the beginning months, have changed. Which leads me to believe what I find challenging at this moment will also fade away. As I grow, learn and listen to become right-sized!

1. It takes a bit of time to deal with the various personalities. Remaining patient and looking closely to find the Christ in them has helped. Some of the sisters have been with one another for decades and decades.

2. Age difference--seemed so large in my mind in the beginning. Currently, not so much. I need them and try to look at the deeper picture: there is no age, as we are living in eternity already.

3. Wishing there was others going through formation with me. There was one, but she was asked to leave. That was sad. I guess the bright side would be, "I get undivided attention." The Rule: "The Workshop where we are to toil faithfully at all these tasks is the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the community." So I will continue.

Trying to schedule everything as a full-time working, mature adult who is also care-taking for an elderly parent remains a major challenge. I am very blessed that my religious institute has the flexibility to work with me (and several other mature career women) individually and that my religious institute offers different options for living out religious life in association with the community.

The challenge in religious life is relating to very different personalities.

The most challenging thing was detachment and separation from material items I had (that I didn't think I was attached to!!) And not being able to see and talk to my family whenever I wanted too and moving to a different country. But God is so good and his grace is so there and present and I am so thankful to be there and all he has taught me in the short 2 1/2 months we have been here! Praise God!

Adapting from living independently for 16 years - financially, from an obedience perspective, learning how to live with people after so many years alone, and discovering how to learn again. Challenging but certainly not insurmountable. Just new and different.

I am not sure.

Poverty.

Always being far away from one's family members.

Living in community with women who are culturally different due to age and life experience.

Being away from family and friends and not being able to communicate as I would have before entering, the hardest part of this is that I know what a challenge it is for my family and friends.

In our community the majority of Sisters is older and live on their own. This creates a unique in and finding their place at the table.

It is challenging to be away from my family and to be patient with myself as I learn this new way of life.

When outside my community, it is difficult to be in the world and realize how radical my life is compared to the average life.

Leaving Family and friends / less contact with them.

Community living and liturgical/theological differences within the community.

The most challenging is "fitting" into community life. Canonical year has been challenging because of my age and strictness.

Getting up early and trying to comprehend various aspects of how religious life works. Also, not having much communication with my family.

Having people tell me what to do and how to do it. And focusing during prayer.

What I find most challenging about religious life is learning how to be charitable to other members of the community who came off to me the wrong way. I also find it challenging to communicate with others who understand things vastly different from how I understand things.