



Steady uptick in religious vocations

■ 2018

240 women and men professed final vows from 87 religious institutes

430 potential ordinands from 41 religious institutes; 99 arch/dioceses

■ 2017

208 women and men professed final vows from 101 religious institutes

590 potential ordinands from 36 religious institutes; 136 arch/dioceses

■ 2016

216 women and men professed final vows from 82 religious institutes

548 potential ordinands from 32 religious institutes; 140 arch/dioceses

■ 2015

136 women and men professed final vows from 75 religious institutes

595 potential ordinands from 28 religious institutes; 120 arch/dioceses

■ 2014

190 women and men professed final vows from 62 religious institutes

477 potential ordinands from 31 religious institutes; 114 arch/dioceses

■ 2013

107 women and men professed final vows from 55 religious institutes

497 potential ordinands from 30 religious institutes; 119 arch/dioceses

■ 2012

156 women and men professed final vows from 83 religious institutes

487 potential ordinands from 49 religious institutes; 123 arch/dioceses

■ 2011

122 women and men professed final vows from 60 religious institutes

480 potential ordinands from 54 religious institutes; 128 arch/dioceses

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP IN VOCATION MINISTRY

1. Prioritize vocation ministry as essential to the growth of the community

The NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life shows that religious institutes that make vocation ministry a priority and work to build a culture of vocations in their congregations attract and retain newer members.

For vocation ministry to be effective and successful, it is recommended that those in religious leadership:

- Have a deep commitment to inviting and incorporating new members into the congregation; a belief in the vitality of their institute's charism and a desire to instill this belief in their membership; hope for the future of religious life; and an appreciation that religious vocations are valid, valued, and vibrant.
- Stay abreast of current vocation statistics, especially the fact that women and men continue to be interested in religious life. In addition to regularly published NRVC studies and NRVC's annual VISION discerner statistics posted online, the annual USCCB/CARA Profession Class Report is published in February; the annual CARA Entrance Class Report is published in March, and the annual Ordination Class Report is published in June.
- Know, recognize, and celebrate major vocation-promotion days: World Day for Consecrated Life (February 2), World Day of Prayer for Vocations (Good Shepherd Sunday), National Vocation Awareness Week (first full week in November), National Catholic Sisters Week (March 8-14) and Religious Brothers Day (May 1).
- Participate in the annual CARA surveys and regular NRVC studies to ensure accurate data.

2. Appoint highly capable people to vocation ministry

- Vocation ministers are entrusted with the privileged and sacred responsibility of accompanying candidates as they discern their baptismal call. Discerners should receive the highest standard of care from highly capable people appointed to this important congregational ministry.
- The NRVC/CARA Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life indicates that there is a high correlation of newer members with a full-time vocation director supported by a team with resources.
- While those in temporary profession may be part of a vocation team and attend NRVC workshops, it is best to appoint perpetually professed members as vocation directors as it can be difficult for someone who is still being evaluated in initial formation to be assessing the suitability of discerners.
- Select a vocation director who focuses on possibilities not problems; a collaborator not a competitor; and a person of prayer, both personally and communally. Choose vocation team members who are outgoing, resilient, and responsible.

3. Provide your vocation director and team with training, resources, and accountability for their ministry

- Vocation ministry requires education, training, and a commitment to ethical and professional standards. Vocation directors who are given the tools and training they need to succeed remain in the ministry longer.
- As the only professional organization for vocation ministry for religious institutes of women and men in the United States, NRVC provides various opportunities for professional growth through its comprehensive workshops and resources. NRVC strongly encourages vocation ministers to tend to their own vocations, further develop professional competencies, and participate in continuing education. A suggested curriculum is posted at <http://nrvc.net/256/article/documents-forms-for-use-in-vocation-ministry-7070>.
- Vocation ministers need adequate resources for their ministry, including time, budget, and a network of spiritual, emotional, and professional support. Offer vocation ministers periodic peer supervision.
- The vocation minister should have a clear set of responsibilities written in a job description with established channels of accountability to religious leadership. Likewise, a vocation minister should exhibit a responsible work ethic and be accountable for the resources and time provided for ministry. An annual performance review helps to provide obtainable goals and objectives beyond the number of applicants.

VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

In 2018, 4,438 discerners created profiles through the NRVC's Vocation Match service

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 68 percent are under 30 (28 percent men; 40 percent women)
- 88 percent are Catholic; 7 percent are not yet Catholic; 5 percent are becoming Catholic.
- 45 percent have a college degree
- 80 percent are U.S. citizens
- 24 percent have educational debt
- 63 percent attended Catholic school

ENTRANCE CLASS REPORTS

- 2018
440 Entrants to 177 religious institutes
- 2017
524 Entrants to 182 religious institutes
- 2016
502 Entrants to 185 religious institutes
- 2015
411 Entrants to 143 religious institutes

Source:
2018 NRVC Vocation Match response statistics (VocationNetwork.org)

NRVC's VISION Vocation Guide and VocationNetwork.org are the most comprehensive resources available for those discerning a religious vocation with articles on prayer, discernment, community life, and the call to religious life and interactive features, such as Community Search, Vocation Calendar, and Vocation Match.

MISSION OF NRVC

The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) has a vision to set the world ablaze with the fire of God's love through the prophetic, joyful witness of religious sisters, brothers, and priests as radical disciples of Jesus. Its mission is to serve as a catalyst for vocation discernment and the full flourishing of religious life for the ongoing transformation of the world.

4. Facilitate a corporate responsibility for promoting the future

- During canonical visits, ask every member, "When was the last time you invited someone to consider religious life?" Women and men are twice as likely to consider a vocation to religious life when invited by another person. The effect is additive. People who are encouraged by three persons are five times more likely to consider a vocation than someone who was not encouraged by anyone.
- Consider a team approach, and expand a single NRVC membership to a license for up to five members so that all five members receive the award-winning HORIZON vocation journal, monthly newsletters and updates, and membership discounts on resources and workshops.
- Encourage vowed members to be present among youth and young adults. Religious institutes that sponsor vocation discernment programs directed toward college students and young adults are more likely to have new members than those who do not sponsor programs for these age groups. The average age a person first considers religious life is 18-19 years of age. The average age of entrance to religious life is 28. Half are 25 years old or younger. Post events on NRVC's VISION Vocation Calendar, <https://vocationnetwork.org/en/events>.
- Attend the biennial NRVC Convocation with your vocation team or send others to support the vocation director at NRVC Member Area events and national workshops.

5. Read and apply learnings from professional studies and research about vocations to religious life

- NRVC is committed to providing professional studies and reports that accurately track trends in vocations to religious life. Numerous studies and accompanying resources are available online at <https://nrvc.net/334/article/links-to-studies-reports-1304>, including vocation-related studies on the role of family, incorporating cultural diversity, educational debt, recent entrants, and links to USSCB/CARA reports.
- *The Culture of Vocations Assessment Tool for Men's Religious Communities* and the *Vocation Culture: Reflection to Action Tool* are designed to assess and assist religious congregations with their internal vocation culture among members. Both resources are available for purchase at www.NRVC.net/store or can be downloaded by members at <https://nrvc.net/329/publication/members-only-resources-4524>.
- The complete digital *Vocation Directors Manual* contains over 700 articles on topics essential to vocation ministry. All can be accessed online at https://nrvc.net/vocation_directors_manual.
- NRVC's VISION Vocation Guide and VocationNetwork.org allows religious communities to connect with discerners. Follow VISION reader engagement at https://vocationnetwork.org/en/statistics/response_statistics.

6. Incorporate best practices for vocation promotion in your vocation ministry

- Instill a culture of vocations and involve membership and leadership in concerted vocation promotion efforts.
- Have a full-time vocation director supported by a team and resources.
- Use new media, especially websites, social networks, and other online options.
- Offer discernment programs and other opportunities for potential candidates to meet members and learn about the institute.
- Target specific groups—college students, young adults, elementary and high school students—to increase awareness and provide information about religious life and a particular institute.

7. Understand the unique benefits of the National Religious Vocation Conference to religious institutes and the worldwide church, including

- Promoting a positive and hopeful image of religious life in the Catholic Church and society through all of its programming, services, resources, and outreach.
- Providing opportunities for professional growth, personal support, education, advocacy, and networking for vocation directors.
- Publishing the respected HORIZON journal, the only English-language for vocation directors and those in vocation ministry, consistently recognized for editorial excellence by the Catholic Press Association.
- Offering religious institutes opportunities for extensive engagement with discerners through NRVC special events, resources, social sites, and publications, including VISION Vocation Guide and VocationNetwork.org.
- Collaborating with other national and international Catholic organizations to promote vocations.
- Reporting to and supporting the USSCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations.
- Creating opportunities for research, study, and exchange on issues pertaining to vocation ministry, and widely sharing the information to ensure the wider Church's knowledge of the collective experience of religious life.