

YOUTH CULTURE  
+  
VOCATION  
PROMOTION IN  
UNIVERSITIES

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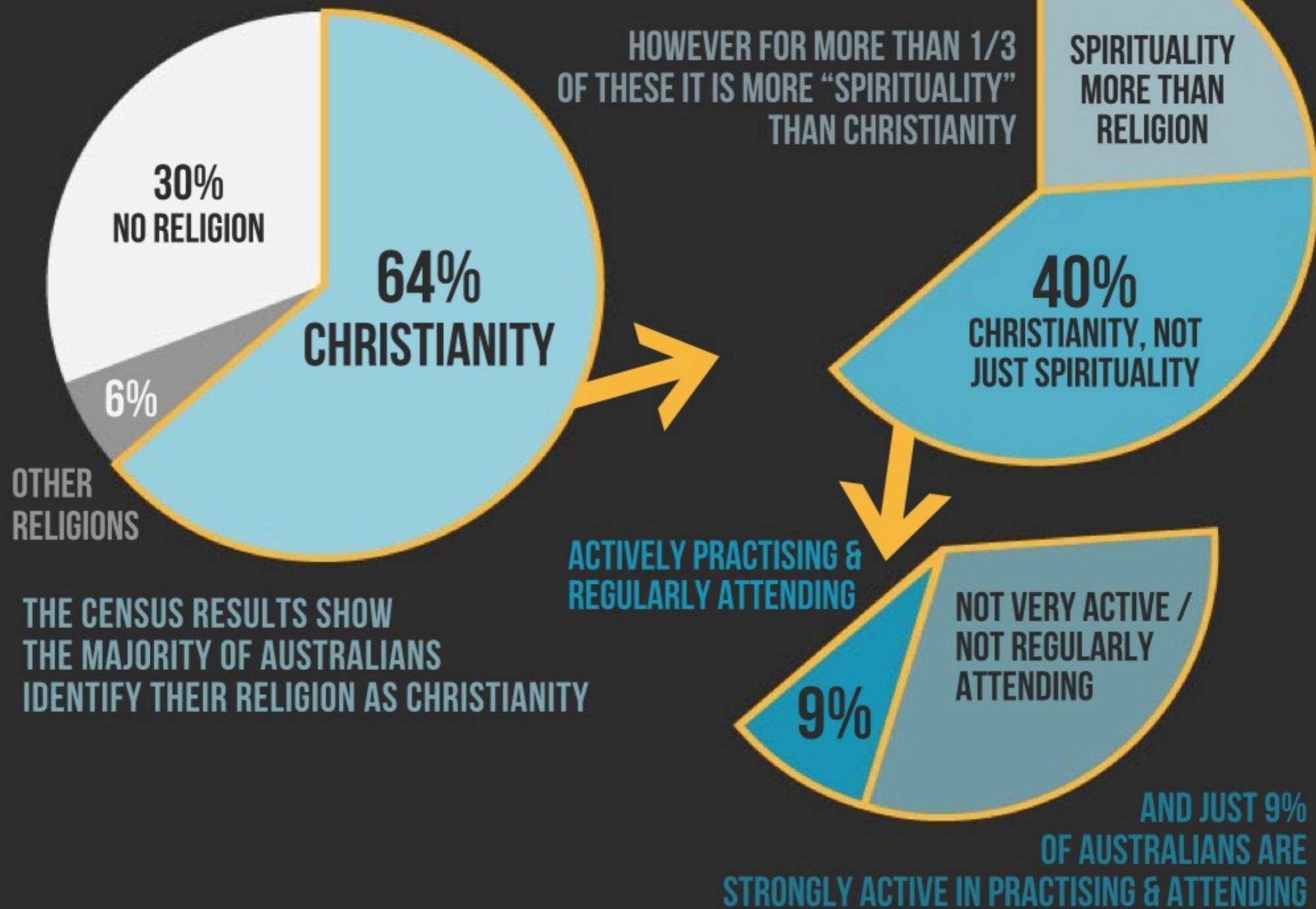
# YOUTH CULTURE

- Constant communicators
- Seek knowledge
- Value control and influence
- Story over statistics

# CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN AUSTRALIA



# CHRISTIANS & CHRISTIANITY DEFINED



# CHURCH ATTENDERS & TOTAL POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

BASED ON AUSTRALIANS  
AGED 15+

% OF 

% OF 

UNDERREPRESENTED  
IN THE CHURCH

6% 

15-19

GEN Z  9%

8% 

20-29

GEN Y  20%

12% 

30-39

GEN X  17%

17% 

40-49

GEN X  18%

19% 

50-59

BABY BOOMERS  16%

17% 

60-69

BABY BOOMERS  12%

21% 

70+

BUILDERS  9%

# MOBILITY

17 JOBS  
15 HOMES  
IN A LIFETIME\*

# TOP NAMES

- |         |   |          |
|---------|---|----------|
| William | 1 | Lily     |
| Jack    | 2 | Chloe    |
| Jacob   | 3 | Isabella |
| Lachlan | 4 | Mia      |
| Oliver  | 5 | Olivia   |

# GENERATION Z

★ BORN 1995-2009 ★

# EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

BB	Verbal	→	Visual
	Sit & listen	→	Try & see
	Teacher	→	Facilitator
	Content (what)	→	Process (how)
	Curriculum centred	→	Learner centric
	Closed book exams	→	Open book world

# EDUCATION

1 in 4  
1 in 3  
1 in 2\*  
UNIVERSITY EDUCATED

# DIGITAL INTEGRATORS

10 HRS 19 MINS  
TECH. USE/DAY

5,100,000,000  
SEARCHES/DAY

4,000,000,000  
VIEWS/DAY

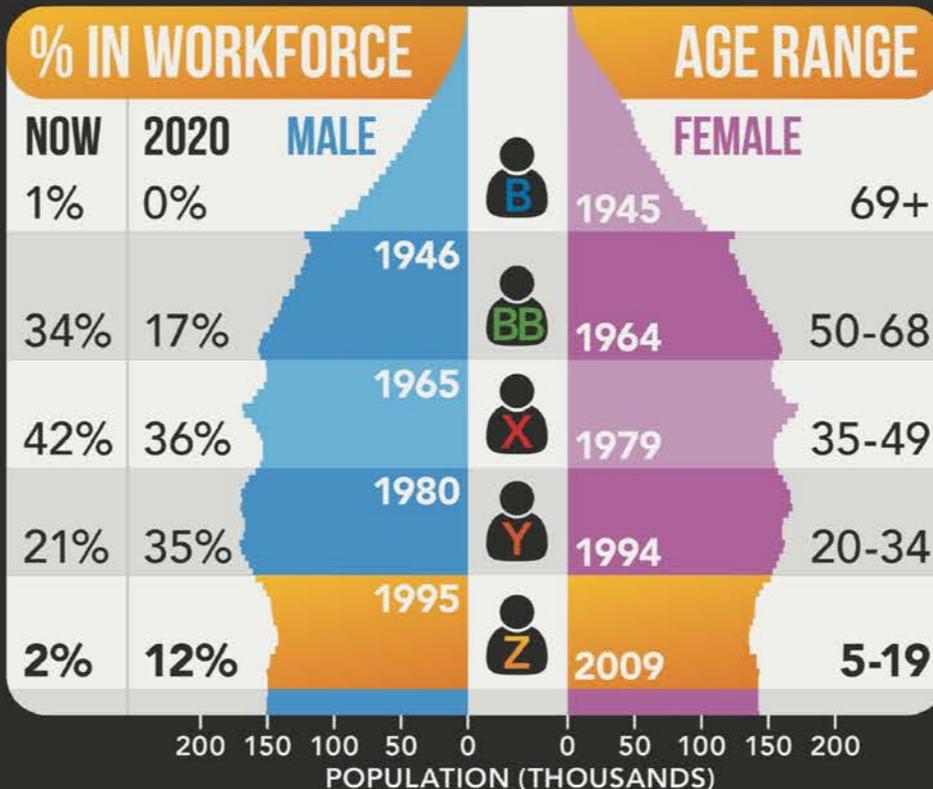
1,000,000,000+  
ACTIVE USERS

500,000,000  
TWEETS/DAY

1,000,000+  
APPS

# WEALTH

Avg. annual earnings in 2063 (as Gen Z retire)\*  
\$222,000  
Average capital city house price (2063)\*  
\$2.5 MIL.



# SLANGUAGE



# HEALTH

77.9 61.8  
% likely to be obese/overweight when all Gen Z have reached adulthood (2027)\*

# GLOBAL GENERATION

2,000,000,000 2 BILLION GEN Zs  
COUNTRIES WITH LARGEST NUMBER  
1 India 2 China 3 USA

# REDEFINED LIFESTAGES



# MOBILITY



# UNI DEGREES



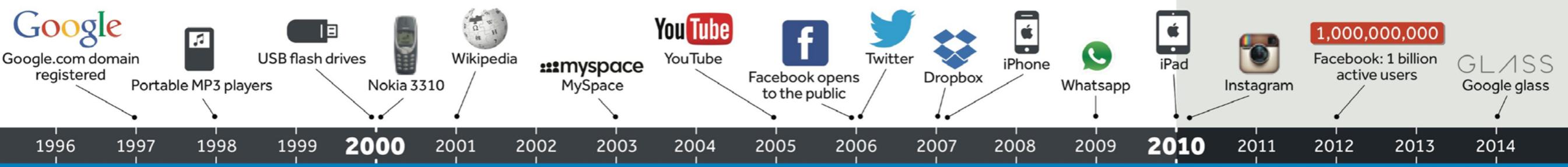
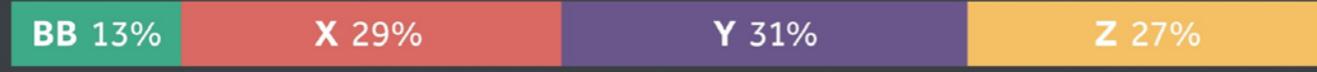
# FAVOURITE TAKEAWAY FOOD



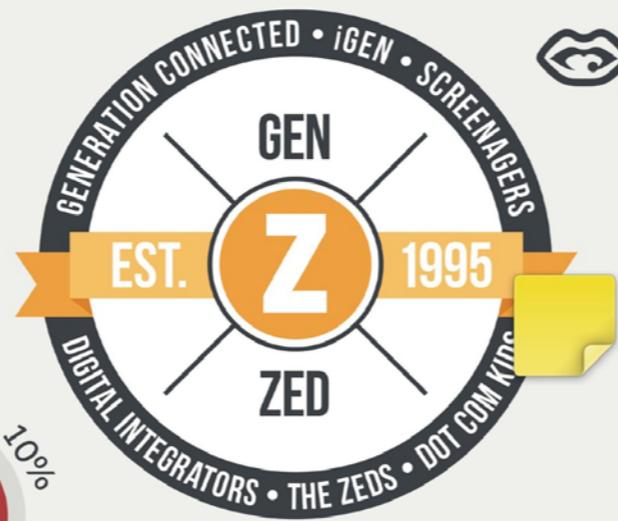
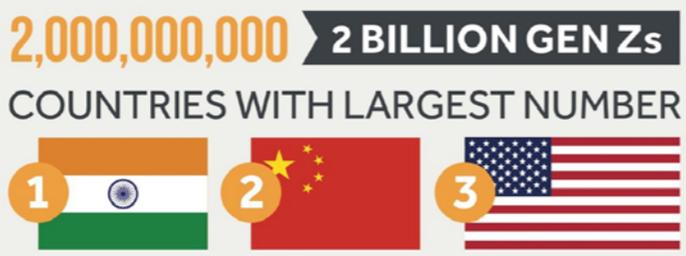
# REDEFINED LIFESTAGES



# WORKFORCE OF 2025



# GLOBAL GENERATION



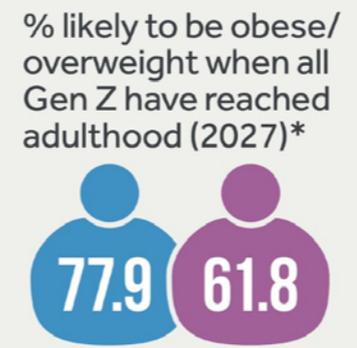
# EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT



# SLANGUAGE



# HEALTH

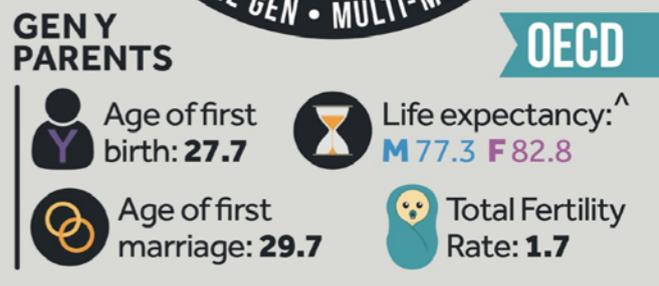
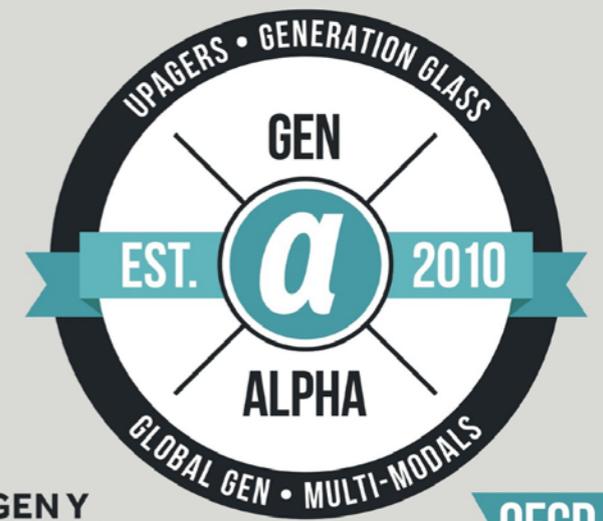


# TOP SPORTS

# TOP NAMES



**2,500,000** Gen Alphas born globally each week



# WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS

	<b>Baby Boomers</b>	<b>Gen X</b>	<b>Gen Y</b>
Values at work	Work ethic	Achievement	Ownership
	Industry focus	Company-centric	Individuality
Motivations for work	Financial security	Career progression	Job variety
	Responsibility	Opportunity	Creativity
Influences over career choice	Parents	Career advisors	Internet
	Authorities	Experts	Peer groups
Shapers of career perception & views	Tradition	Observation	Perception
	Reputation	Recommendation	Experience
Key management tools	Recruiting	Training	Innovating
	Supervising	Promoting	Empowering
Typical training style	Formal	Programmed	Interactive
	Monologue	Dialogue	Multi-modal
Key communication tools	Technical data	Visual examples	Hands-on learning
	Evidence	Demonstration	Participation
Typical leadership style	Control	Coordination	Consensus
	Thinkers	Doers	Feelers
Influencers & values	Local	Regional	Global
	Long-term needs	Medium-term goals	Short-term wants
Management approach	Telling	Selling	Involving
	Yes boss'	What's in it for me'	Here's what I think'

## WHAT TODAY'S EMPLOYEES VALUE IN THE WORKPLACE

Yesterday's employees	Today's employees
Work ethic	Work/life
Bank balance	Life balance
Task focus	Team focus
Commitment	Enjoyment
Authority	Empowerment
Independence	Support
Structure	Flexibility
Tell them	Involve us
Conformity	Creativity
Tradition	Innovation
Regional	Global
Long careers	Many jobs
Learn then earn	Lifelong learning
Loyalty	Variety
Below the line	Above the line
Participation	Ownership

# EMERGING TRENDS.

- BAE                    **B**efore **A**n **E**lse
- FOMO                 **F**ear **O**f **M**issing **O**ut
- STABO                **S**ubject **T**o **A** **B**etter **O**ffer
- TL;DR                **T**oo **L**ong; **D**idn't **R**ead
- KIPPERS              **K**ids **I**n **P**arents **P**ockets  
**E**roding **R**etirement **S**avings

# WHAT DO WE FEAR

# Vocation Promotion in Universities

# 1. Prayer

# 2. The Path to Vocation

# 3. Visibility

# 4. Good Priests, Good Feasts

# 5. Good Things Come in Three

# LESSONS FROM CAMPUS MINISTRY

1. “Jesus ate his way through the Gospels”

# 2. Thirst for Catholic Formation

# 3. Authentic Direction

# 4. Modern Evangelisation

The world promises you  
comfort, but you were not  
made for comfort. You were  
made for greatness.

— Pope Benedict XVI

**EVANGELISTS FIRST;  
VOCATION DIRECTORS SECOND.**

# Youth Culture + Vocations Promotion in Universities

Dony Rodriguez

Campus Pastoral Associate (Students), Campus Ministry ACU.

## Questions (will the answers confirm the findings?)

Why did you become a Priest?

What has surprised you most about your journey?

What could have made your discernment process easier?

## 1. What is Youth Culture?

Understanding youth culture and their characteristics helps us to know what is already present in youth that is conducive to a vocational future as well as understanding how to target our audience and what appeals to them instinctively.

- a. Culture and Church
  - i. Australia has more churches (13,000) than schools (9,500), and more Australians attend a church service each week (1.8 million) than there are people in South Australia (1.6 million) (MCRINDLE RESEARCH).
- b. Culture and information
  - i. We access Wikipedia (web-community-created) more than we access printed Encyclopedias (academics). Ironically, today an electronic document is perceived to have more currency (and therefore accuracy) than the printed page.
  - ii. We seek education and knowledge (1 in 2 uni)
- c. Communication
  - i. We are in constant communication; so much so that we shorten words and throw out grammar.
- d. Influence
  - i. A generation with disposable income because they are eager to start working early.
  - ii. Like being in control. We dictate a lot of household purchases, especially food, we love food.
  - iii. Intend to change the world – make a difference and impact through volunteering whereby social entrepreneurship is a popular career choice
- e. Reason

- i. The age of reason has given way to the age of participation. It's not the era of experts but the era of user-generated opinion. In these post-modern times statistics don't influence with the same power as story. Ironically we have shorter attention spans, their brains have evolved to process more information at faster speeds, and are cognitively more nimble to handle bigger mental challenges. But, getting and keeping their attention is challenging.

## **2. What are we afraid of?**

- a. FOMO
  - i. Career, Sex, Family, Travel
  - ii. Am I living a life worth living, am I adequate...
  - iii. Obligation to upkeep social presence
- b. Fear of ridicule
- c. Fear of commitment
- d. Fear of authority

## **3. Vocation Promotion at its core & in University Settings**

Vocation is God given, our humble question should then be "How do we assist God".

Vocation promotion in universities isn't a new thing, before he passed away, St Ignatius would send in young priests to universities; he knew that there was no substitute for young people having personal contact with priest and religious.

(A lot of statistics and research referred to is from the 'Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, *The impact of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment*, Georgetown University, Spring 2016) A survey of 1,575 men in formation or recently ordained (2012), 883 woman entrants or professed religious (2016).

### **a. Prayer**

- i. The legendary Italian town of Lu Monferrato, just outside of Turin. Beginning in 1881, the mothers of this village of 3,000 began a Tuesday Eucharistic holy hour asking the Lord to give one of their children a priestly or religious vocation. Over the next 50 years, 323 of their sons and daughters had responded, with 152 religious and diocesan priests and 171 religious sisters belonging to 41 different congregations.

- ii. Ask and you shall receive (Matt 7:7-8). Are we making distinct efforts to pray for vocations? Are we asking our parishioners, youth groups, schools, universities to pray for vocations?
  - 1. Novenas, dedicated days, weeks.
  - 2. It's not just about the prayer itself it's about changing the attitude and perception about a vocation among families, teachers, children and young people.
  - 3. Young people will often rise up to answer a worthy and necessary call.
  - 4. Are we just sending impersonalized letters, or are we visiting, are we calling, are we sending useful resources.
- iii. CARA shows that 2/3 considered attending Mass having some influence on their discernment. A majority of respondents would attend Mass weekly on campus. How much are we investing into this? How willing are priests to attend uni and celebrate Mass?

#### **b. The Path to Vocation**

- i. It takes a village to raise a child/it takes a parish or catholic community to raise a priest... Priestly formation begins long before one enters the seminary
  - 1. So what are we doing to support and empower the spaces which are bridges and support structures that make the journey from consideration to ordination more probable.
  - 2. Are we supporting, empowering and investing in youth groups, diocesan events, youth and young adult movements and communities?
  - 3. Complaining about a lack of potential and promising candidates to vocations without injecting our efforts into the formational years of young people – **is like a farmer who's expects a harvest without tending the field, planting the seeds, maintaining the crops or keeping watch.**
- ii. CARA shows that for most, men and woman are first considering vocations between the ages of 13 – 24 (high school/university).
  - 1. A child has enrolled in a Catholic School,
  - 2. Personally known a priest, brother or sister
  - 3. Likely been encouraged to consider vocation
  - 4. Likely to be a member of a regular mass attending family, and active in their parish beyond Sunday mass.
  - 5. Activity in parish youth groups is important

- iii. CARA reveals that among the most significant factors in helping men discern and say yes to priestly vocations were receiving regular spiritual direction, experiencing a vibrant campus ministry, participating in Christian service opportunities, having supportive friends (attitude), going on retreats, having access to daily Mass, Eucharistic adoration, the Liturgy of the Hours and Bible studies.

### **c. Visibility (marketing 101)**

- i. If we aren't vocal in the spaces where our audience is, we simply don't exist.
- ii. However, we don't just need posters, we need people.
  1. CARA reveals that one of the most important factors that impact on consideration to vocation is witnessing the life and work of brothers, sisters, priests.
  2. Good intentions, sophisticated marketing campaigns, and the investment of resources into vocation promotion alone will not attract new members; it is the example of members and the community life, prayer life, and/or ministries of the institute that is most attractive to young people.
  3. READ RESPONSES!
  4. Example of Br Casimir ('Dony, I can't believe you got a real monk to come to our Uni')
  5. Fr Mark Basily – something to learn from Coptic Orthodox 'invitational' method

### **d. Good Priests, Good Feasts**

- i. Good Priests
  1. I want to be a teacher because of the impact a teacher had on me in high school. I want to do the same for others.
  2. And if our Priests are our front line examples of a vocation to our future generations, do they need practical support, or encouragement and renewed passion and energy to be the best role models they can be from vocation directors or bishops etc.?
    - a. Are we placing our priests strategically according to their talents?
    - b. Priests that are equipped to be a strong witness and an evangelist in order to fortify a vocational culture.

3. Just imagine for a second, what if Parish Priests were given an extra week of holidays each year for every parishioner turned seminarian...
- ii. Good Vocation Directors
    1. Good news (CARA Research, 2009).
      - a. Findings from the survey of religious institutes reveal that there is a positive correlation between having a vocation director, especially one who is full-time, and having candidates and new members in initial formation...having some sort of a vocations team is also positively correlated.
      - b. The vocation director plays an important role in the discernment process. Most new members (60 percent) report that the vocation director or team provided “very much” encouragement when they were considering entering their institute (85 percent report that they received at least “some” encouragement from the vocation director) and 70 percent who met regularly with a vocation director found it “very” helpful in their discernment.
      - c. Points of focus:
        - i. Many of the new members commented in particular about how much they appreciated the vocation director responding quickly and personally to an initial inquiry. They were also grateful for the vocation directors who were helpful and supportive without being pushy.
        - ii. Several new members mentioned vocation directors who they experienced as pandering to them or giving them a sales pitch. Examples included promises of opportunities to travel and assurances that they could do anything they wanted in terms of ministry. These new members suggested that this was the wrong mindset and the wrong approach for those with authentic vocations. A few vocation directors also commented on new members wanting

honesty about religious life and about life in the institute and their willingness to be challenged.

iii. Good Feasts

1. If we are promoting vocations to the priesthood, promoting a life dedicated to Jesus and in service of the church, what kind of Church are we inviting them to serve?
  - a. Are we giving them a field of fresh soil and nutrients, or is the field somewhat abandoned and futile
  - b. Are we giving them a church that is well equipped, that is alive.
2. We can't give them a perfect church, because the church simply isn't perfect, but have we acknowledged the challenges that lay ahead, have aired out any fears.
  - a. We need to know what they're getting themselves into, and what they are signing up to serve and defend.

**e. Good things come in three**

- i. CARA studies described the importance of vocational encouragement. Their surveys showed that if a young man has three people encourage him toward the priesthood, he is five times more likely to consider a priestly vocation. The first time one is encouraged, he might laugh it off. The second time, he might think something strange is happening. The third time leads him to ask whether he really ought to consider it.
  1. 94 percent of seminarians and recently ordained clergy testify to how important this encouragement was from priests, family members and friends.
  2. As important as this encouragement is, only five percent of unmarried Catholics say they have ever encouraged anyone to think about the priesthood and a quarter of priests have never encouraged anyone
    - a. one of the reasons why 349 out of 350 young men "very seriously" considering the priesthood never end up entering the seminary.
- ii. What gives our invitation/encouragement weight?
  1. Sincerity, rapport, respect, care for the person (time).
- iii. Encourage the encourages

1. Let's create a culture in which all priests, seminarians and faithful are regularly supporting those who they think might have priestly vocations to seriously consider it.

#### **4. Lessons from Campus Ministry**

##### **a. Evangelism through hospitality 'Jesus ate his way through the Gospels'.**

- i. Connect Groups: one every so often, to once a week, to three times a week.
- ii. Interestingly, CARA suggests that discussions of faith, religion or prayer outside of class were 'frequent' among the respondents.
- iii. Practically speaking, among the 40+ students who attend these groups, at least 3 are seriously considering priesthood as a vocation.

##### **b. Thirst for solid Catholic formation**

- i. Do we even understand our own faith? If young men actually understood the Catholic Faith and what it teaches, I guarantee we would have more men lined up outside your doors ready to take up the call.
- ii. Catholicism Study Series and Study Intensives.
- iii. The generation of Wikipedia and Social Media – where is our formation coming from? How are we playing into these spaces?

##### **c. Bible Study Stats**

- i. Sydney and Brisbane top the list for Bible-engagement across Australia's largest cities, with Biblegateway.com recording 2.67 page views per Sydney resident and 2.54 page views per Brisbane resident
- ii. Bibles can still be found in Australian homes today with 3 in 5 Australians indicated they have access to at least one Bible in their home, and 45% of Australians owning a Bible themselves.

##### **d. Authentic Direction (Quo Vadis? Even if they knew Latin, many have no idea)**

- i. Vocation has been described as "where one's deepest desires meet the world's greatest needs."
  1. It isn't so hard to describe what the world needs... Our problem is that young people don't know how to uncover their deepest desires. In other words, vocation promotion demands that we help people find authenticity and direction in their lives.
    - a. Reason why our generation goes from job to job.

- b. Freedom found in obedience and surrender.

**e. Modern Evangelisation**

- i. Mass communication has never been so easy – yet the Catholic Church, especially the Australian Catholic Church is practically nonexistent.
  - 1. ACESNSION PRESS
    - a. Will pets be with us in heaven – 3K views in 3 hours.
    - b. Why does God let bad things happen – 15k views in 1 week.
  - 2. Bishop Robert Barron
    - a. Averages 200,000 views on his videos.
  - 3. Trap of social media
    - a. Purely promoting your own events = low engagement
    - b. Giving something of value = large viewing audience, sharing, talking about it.

**There is nothing as powerful as happy, fulfilled priests and religious. That is contagious. That attracts.**

**Challenge = be evangelists and witnesses first; vocation directors second.**

**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C.**

*The Influence of College Experiences on  
Vocational Discernment to  
Priesthood and Religious Life*

**September 2012**



**James Cavendish, Ph.D.**

**Melissa Cidade, M.A.**

**Ryan Muldoon**

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**The Influence of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment to  
Priesthood and Religious Life**

**Executive Summary**

This report presents the results of a 2012 CARA survey of men in formation or newly ordained for Catholic archdioceses, dioceses and religious institutes in United States. Commissioned by Boston College and the Jesuit Conference-USA in 2011, the survey was designed to assess the role and influence of Catholic colleges and universities on the vocational discernment of men entering the seminary and religious life in the United States. Between April 2012 and June 2012, CARA distributed the survey to a total of 5,246 men known and identified by church leaders to be in formation or recently ordained. A total of 1,575 men (or 30 percent of those who had been sent surveys) completed the questionnaire, making it one of the largest recent surveys of men in formation and the newly ordained.

The analysis presented here pays particular attention to the ways in which the activities and experiences of men who attended Catholic colleges and universities are/were similar to, or different from, those of men who attended non-Catholic colleges and universities. In making these comparisons, CARA identifies the distinct and identifiable factors at Catholic colleges and universities that influence vocational discernment to diocesan priesthood or religious life. Throughout this report, the term “diocese” is used to refer to both archdioceses and dioceses, the term “religious institute” is used to refer to religious institutes and societies of apostolic life, and the term “college” is used to refer to both colleges and universities.

The survey asked respondents about: the nature of their contact with priests and religious men and women while they were/are in college; their college coursework; the nature and frequency of their involvement with campus ministry, vocational discernment programs, and/or Catholic parishes both on and off campus; the nature and frequency of their prayer, Mass attendance, and devotional practices while in college; their experiences with retreats, spiritual direction, service activities, and peer friendships while in college; the overall religious atmosphere of their college; and the nature and level of involvement in residential life and social activities on campus. After reporting on each of these topics, respondents were asked to evaluate the influence that each had on their own vocational discernment.

## Major Findings

### *Characteristics of Respondents*

- In terms of affiliation (i.e., diocesan or religious) and ordination status, two out of five respondents (or 40 percent) are in some stage of formation for diocesan priesthood, 28 percent are in formation for religious priesthood (i.e., they are affiliated with a religious institute), 23 percent are recently ordained diocesan priests, and 9 percent are recently ordained religious priests.
- Respondents to the survey range in age from 19 to 68, with the majority of respondents in the 25-34 year-old age range. Those affiliated with dioceses (i.e., those who are either in diocesan formation or who are ordained diocesan priests) are slightly younger than those affiliated with religious institutes.
- Over four out of five respondents (83 percent) were born in the United States, two percent were born in Canada or Europe, and 15 percent were born in other countries. Outside of the United States, the countries of birth with the highest representation in the sample are, in order of ranking: Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines, Colombia, Nigeria, Canada, Uganda, El Salvador, and Poland.
- Nine out of ten respondents (89 percent) were baptized Catholics when they were infants, 5 percent when they were children or teenagers, and 7 percent when they were adults.
- The majority of respondents attended either public high schools (53 percent) or private, non-Catholic high schools (three percent). Twenty-two percent attended Catholic high schools run by religious institutes (e.g., by the Jesuits, Dominicans, Christian Brothers, etc.), 16 percent attended Catholic high schools operated by dioceses, and 8 percent attended Catholic independent high schools.
- Two out of five respondents (or 40 percent) attended a Catholic, non-seminary college for all or most of their college years, 8 percent attended a Catholic seminary college for all or most of their college years, and over half (52 percent) attended either a public (40 percent) or private, non-Catholic (12 percent) college for all or most of their college years.
- The most frequently cited reasons that respondents gave for their choice of college are the location, academic reputation, and affordability of the college. Those who attended non-Catholic colleges are the most likely to cite the college's location (74 percent) and affordability (73 percent) as their reasons for college choice. Those who attended Catholic, non-seminary colleges are the most likely to cite the college's religious affiliation (79 percent) and academic reputation (69 percent) as their reasons for college choice.

## *College Activities and Experiences*

To identify the distinct and identifiable factors at Catholic colleges that may influence vocational discernment, CARA examined the ways in which the activities and experiences of men who attended Catholic, non-seminary colleges for all or most of their college years are/were similar to, or different from, those of men who attended non-Catholic colleges for all or most of their college years. (For reasons presented in the report, respondents whose college experiences involved a college seminary are omitted from these analyses and are instead the subject of Appendix I.) These analyses reveal:

- Those who attended a Catholic college are more likely to have been exposed to priests, sisters, or brothers as professors, administrators, and campus ministers during college. While nine out of ten of those who attended a Catholic college report having had a priest, sister, or brother as a college professor (88 percent), college administrator (93 percent) or campus minister (90 percent), substantially fewer of those who attended a non-Catholic college had a priest or religious as a professor (18 percent), administrator (15 percent), or campus minister (59 percent).
- Of those who attended a Catholic college, 91 percent report that Mass was available daily during college, and 90 percent report that they attended Mass at least once a week. Of those who attended a non-Catholic college, less than half (49 percent) report that Mass was available daily, and 79 percent state that they attended Mass at least once a week.
- Those who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report having a regular spiritual direction during college (62 percent to 30 percent, respectively), and to have attended spiritual direction with greater frequency during college.
- Comparing the responses of those who attended Catholic and non-Catholic colleges reveals that 80 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report having participated in a religious retreat during college, compared to 59 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college.
- While four out of five (78 percent) of those who attended a Catholic college report having participated in a service program during college, only three out of five (63 percent) of those who attended a non-Catholic college report likewise.
- Respondents who attended a Catholic college are more likely to report having engaged in a devotional practice during college, and to have engaged with greater frequency in a wider variety of devotional practices, than those who attended a non-Catholic college.

The only exception to this is with respect to Bible study, where non-Catholic college attenders report slightly higher levels of engagement in this particular practice.

- Respondents who attended a Catholic college are more likely to have participated in Campus Ministry activities during college than those who attended a non-Catholic college (72 percent to 58 percent, respectively).
- A Catholic college environment can provide opportunities for students to discuss their faith in an academic setting in ways that a non-Catholic college environment does not. Over half (51 percent) of those who attended Catholic colleges report having discussed faith, religion, and prayer “frequently” during class, compared to only 11 percent of those who attended non-Catholic colleges. Similarly, Catholic-college attenders are substantially more likely than their counterparts to report having discussed these topics with professors outside of class (43 percent to nine percent, respectively), and with students outside of class (62 percent to 40 percent, respectively).
- Those who attended Catholic colleges are more likely than those who did not to report that various groups on their campus expressed “some” or “very much” interest in faith, religion, and prayer. While 70 percent of Catholic college attenders report that the college as a whole showed “some” or “very much” interest in faith, religion, and prayer, only 20 percent of non-Catholic college attenders report likewise.
- Those who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to have lived in campus dorms (84 percent to 74 percent, respectively) and/or to have lived with roommates during college (83 percent to 77 percent, respectively). Those who attended a non-Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a Catholic college to have lived off campus (66 percent to 54 percent, respectively) or at home (42 percent to 23 percent, respectively).

### ***College Experiences Perceived to Influence Vocational Discernment***

Respondents to the survey were asked about the effects that these various activities and experiences in college had on their own vocational discernment. In analyzing the responses, CARA observed the following patterns:

- One of the most influential college experiences in terms of shaping respondents’ religious vocation is having a regular spiritual director. Of those who report having had a regular spiritual director during college, approximately two-thirds (65 percent) overall claim that having spiritual direction influenced their vocational discernment “very much.”

Furthermore, the level of reported influence does not vary much based on the type of college the respondent attended. Those who attended Catholic colleges, although substantially more likely than their counterparts to have a regular spiritual director during college, are only slightly more likely as those who attended non-Catholic colleges to state that spiritual direction was very influential in their vocational discernment (67 percent to 62 percent, respectively).

- Another highly influential college experience in terms of fostering vocational discernment is exposure to priests, sisters, or brothers in the roles of professor and campus minister. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of respondents overall state that a priest/sister/brother *professor* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment, and over half (56 percent) report that a priest/sister/brother *campus minister* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment. Moreover, substantially more of the respondents who attended a Catholic college report that a priest/sister/brother *professor* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment than respondents who attended a non-Catholic college (72 percent to 46 percent, respectively). The same cannot be said with respect to having a priest/sister/brother as a *campus minister*, however; when asked about this, responses from those who attended a Catholic college are not substantially different than from those who attended a non-Catholic college (57 percent to 55 percent, respectively).
- Of those who attended a Catholic college, 59 percent report being encouraged in their vocational discernment by a campus minister, 72 percent report being encouraged by a professor, and 50 percent report being encouraged by a college staff member. Similar figures for non-Catholic college attenders are substantially lower: 46 percent report being encouraged by a campus minister, 25 percent report being encouraged by a professor, and 14 percent by a college staff member.
- Other college activities and experiences that influenced respondents’ vocational discernment, although not as influential as regular spiritual direction, are participation in a variety of prayer and devotional practices. Of those who participated in “other group prayer” (i.e., outside the Mass and Liturgy of the Hours) during college, 58 percent report that the practice had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment. Of those who engaged in Holy Hour devotions during college, 56 percent state that it had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment. Other similarly influential devotions, though not rated quite as high as these in terms of influence, are “other individual prayer/meditation” and Eucharistic Adoration, with 54 and 53 percent, respectively, reporting that these practices had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment. Moreover, respondents who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who

attended a non-Catholic college to state that participating in these devotions during college had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment.

- Following these devotional practices, in the order of reported influence on vocational discernment, are “Come & See” events, participation in Mass, vocations events, vocation support groups, and retreat experiences. Among participants in these activities, 52 percent report that “Come & See” events and the Mass had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment, 42 percent claim that vocations events had “very much” influence, and 39 percent and 36 percent, respectively, state that vocation support groups and retreat experiences had “very much” influence. Furthermore, those who attended a Catholic college are substantially more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report that their vocational discernment was “very much” influenced by Mass attendance (61 percent to 45 percent, respectively). Although a lower percentage of respondents indicate that homilies at Mass had “very much” influence on their discernment (19 percent overall), those who attended a Catholic college are more likely to report that the homilies had “very much” influence than those who attended a non-Catholic college (24 percent to 16 percent, respectively). There is no difference between those who attended a Catholic college and those who attended a non-Catholic college in their assessment of the influence of vocational discernment programs on their vocational discernment.
- Participating in religious retreats and being surrounded by a supportive group of friends during college are also reported to be influential on vocational discernment. Over a third of respondents (36 percent) claim that religious retreats during college influenced their vocational discernment “very much” and 28 percent reported likewise with respect to their friends. Moreover, those who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report being positively influenced and supported by their college friends during their vocational discernment. There is no difference between those who attended a Catholic college and those who attended a non-Catholic college in their assessment of the influence of retreats and service programs on their vocational discernment.
- While 58 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report that a particular college course was “especially influential” on their vocational discernment, only 27 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college report likewise.
- Approximately 40 percent of all respondents claim that an off-campus Catholic parish played a significant role in their vocational discernment. Those who attended a non-Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a Catholic college (46 percent

to 31 percent, respectively) to state that an off-campus parish was a significant factor in their vocational discernment.

- When asked to identify any individuals who have either encouraged or discouraged their vocational discernment, respondents are most likely to report having been *encouraged* in their vocational discernment by friends (72 percent), parish priests (71 percent), parents (58 percent), and campus ministry staff (51 percent). Friends and family are also identified as being among the individuals who have *discouraged* these men in their vocational discernment.
- Compared to those who attended a non-Catholic college, those who attended a Catholic college are: over three times more likely to report being encouraged in their vocational discernment by college staff (50 percent to 14 percent); almost three times more likely to be encouraged by a college professor (72 percent to 25 percent); twice as likely to be encouraged by a religious sister or brother; and substantially more likely to be encouraged parents, siblings, friends, and campus ministers.



## Introduction

In 2011, the Office of Faculty Outreach & Program Assessment at Boston College, in collaboration with the Jesuit Conference-USA, commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a single informant survey of all seminarians, men in formation in religious institutes, and recently ordained priests affiliated with dioceses and religious institutes in the United States. The survey was designed to assess the role and influence of Catholic colleges and universities (hereafter simply referred to as colleges) on the vocational discernment of men entering the seminary and religious life in the United States. Between April 2012 and June 2012, CARA distributed the survey to 5,246 men known and identified by church leaders to be in formation or recently ordained. A total of 1,575 men completed the questionnaire, making it one of the largest recent surveys of men in formation and the newly ordained.

This report examines a variety of factors that are part of a college experience that may influence vocational discernment, with particular emphasis on the distinct and identifiable factors of influence at Catholic colleges that are not found at other private and public colleges. Another CARA report of these data examines the differences between those who attended Jesuit colleges and those who attended other Catholic colleges, as well as the differences between Jesuit and non-Jesuit respondents.

To obtain the names and contact information for men in formation for the priesthood or ordained to the priesthood between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2011, CARA contacted the seminary rectors at the college- and theology-level seminaries or schools of theology that operate under the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Program of Priestly Formation, the major superiors of men's religious institutes belonging to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), and the Vicars for Clergy in the (arch)dioceses in the United States. CARA conducted extensive follow-up by mail, e-mail, and fax between February and April 2012 and eventually obtained responses, including the names and contact information for men in formation and newly ordained, from a total of 52 out of 72 seminary rectors, 147 out of 237 major superiors of men religious, and 133 out of 176 Vicars for Clergy, which together represent approximately 68 percent of all seminar rectors, major superiors, and Vicars for Clergy in the United States. These respondents provided names and reliable contact information for a total of 5,246 men in formation or recently ordained. An additional 196 names supplied did not have reliable or sufficient contact information and so were not included in the sample frame of 5,246 names and addresses. Of these names, approximately 25 percent were supplied by seminary rectors (who mostly identified men in formation for diocesan priesthood), 24 percent were supplied by major superiors of religious institutes, and 51 percent were supplied by diocesan Vicars for Clergy (who reported the names of men recently ordained in their dioceses or archdioceses). Throughout this report, the term "diocese" is used to refer to both dioceses and

archdioceses, the term “religious institute” is used to refer to religious institutes and societies of apostolic life, and the term “college” is used to refer to both colleges and universities.

Beginning in April, 2012, CARA mailed and emailed survey questionnaires to these 5,246 men. After extensive follow-up by email through June, 2012, CARA obtained completed surveys from 1,575 men, for a response rate of 30 percent, which is a respectable response rate for a survey of this nature. Only a small number of respondents (93) completed paper questionnaires; the remainder completed the survey online.

To establish whether these respondents are representative of the target population, CARA compared the characteristics of the men who responded (the sample) with data reported in the *Official Catholic Directory* as well as data that CARA gathers annually through its censuses of seminarians, as reported in its *Catholic Ministry Formation Directory* (2011). These comparisons suggest that the sample fairly represents the population of interest (i.e., men in formation or recently ordained). Respondents to the survey represent 46 different seminaries, 84 different religious institutes, and 109 different dioceses across all regions of the United States. While 83 percent of the men in our sample were born in the United States, CARA’s annual census of seminarians in U.S. theologates reveals that the percentage of seminarians born in the United States ranges from 70-75 percent. Overall, no response biases were detected, but we did observe that a slightly higher percentage of the men listed by major superiors of religious institutes completed and returned the survey questionnaire than men listed by seminary rectors or by diocesan Vicars for Clergy.

All respondents were given an eight-page, 125-question survey to complete either online or in hard-copy form. The questionnaire asked respondents about: the nature of their contact with priests and religious men and women while they were/are in college; their college coursework; the nature and frequency of their involvement with campus ministry, vocational discernment programs, and/or Catholic parishes both on and off campus; the nature and frequency of their prayer, Mass attendance, and devotional practices while in college; their experiences with retreats, spiritual direction, service activities, and peer friendships while in college; the overall religious atmosphere of their college; and the nature and level of involvement in residential life and social activities on campus. Following each of the topics presented on the questionnaire, respondents were asked to evaluate the influence that each of these aspects of their college experience had on their own vocational discernment. The survey also asked respondents about their personal background characteristics and their reasons for deciding to attend the college they attended.

## Organization of the Report

This report is divided into three main parts:

- Part I provides a summary of the characteristics of survey respondents. This summary includes the characteristics of *all* respondents, including those who reported attending a seminary college. However, because the intent of this report is to determine what aspects of the college experience have led men to enter the seminary or formation programs for diocesan priesthood or religious life, CARA removed from the analyses presented in Parts II and III the 143 respondents who report that they attended a seminary college. The rationale for doing this is straightforward: men who report attending a college seminary presumably have already entered into formation for a diocese or religious institute, and because of that, their responses to many of the question items regarding their college experiences are likely to be more extreme (e.g., higher levels of Mass attendance, higher levels of devotional practice, etc.). In the interest of not allowing this subgroup to bias results with respect to the influence of attending Catholic colleges in general, this group has been analyzed separately.
- Part II explores the ways in which attending a Catholic (non-seminary) college may have fostered the vocational discernment of the men in the sample. Specifically, it examines how the activities and experiences of men who attended a Catholic college for all or most of their college years are different from those of men who attended a non-Catholic college (i.e., public or non-Catholic private college) for all or most of their college years. Throughout this report, those who attended a Catholic college for all or most of their college years are referred to as having attended a Catholic college (or “Catholic college attenders”), and those who attended a public or private, non-Catholic college for all or most of their college years are referred to as having attended a non-Catholic college (or “non-Catholic college attenders”).
- Part III focuses on what respondents claim as the effects of these various college activities and experiences (as outlined in Part II) on their own vocational discernment.
- Appendix I presents findings with respect to those who attended a college seminary, and shows how the college activities and experiences of this group of respondents differ from the activities and experiences of other respondents with differing levels of exposure to Catholic college environments.
- Appendix II presents a copy of the questionnaire along with the valid percentage of respondents who answered each response category. Here, readers can see the exact wording of questions and how responses are distributed across response options.

- Appendix III presents all of the answers that respondents provided to the “open-ended” or “free-response” questions which asked respondents to answer in their own words.

### **Interpreting this Report**

Many of the questions on the survey use four-point response scales (for example, “not at all,” “a little,” “some,” and “very much” or “no influence,” “a little influence,” “some influence,” and “very much influence”). Tables summarizing responses to questions that use these scales usually will not include percentages for each response category. Instead, they will usually report the percentage of those who responded in the most positive category (e.g., “very much influence”), since the most positive response sometimes distinguishes important contrasts in level of support. This is especially useful for this survey since many respondents tended to give “positive” responses but not always the *most* positive responses. Readers who wish to see what percentage of respondents selected the other response categories may refer to the copy of the questionnaire in Appendix II.

In general, in making comparisons between those who attended Catholic colleges and those who attended non-Catholic colleges, tables will show the percentage of each subgroup who responded in the most positive category. Whenever the difference in percentages between these groups approaches or exceeds 10 percent, this difference is considered notable or important.

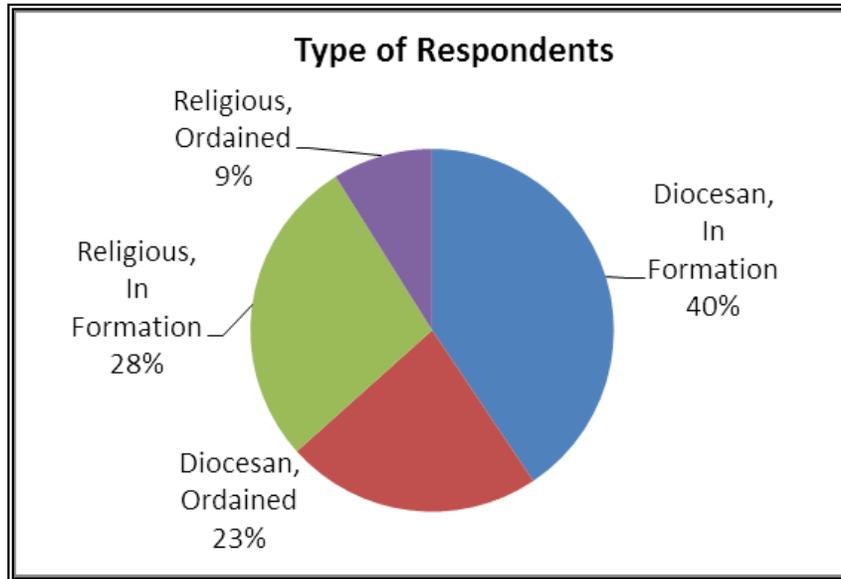
## Part I: Characteristics of Respondents

This section of the report describes the characteristics of survey respondents. This summary includes the characteristics of *all* respondents, including those who report attending (or having attended) a seminary college.

### *Affiliation and Ordination Status*

The 1,575 respondents to the survey represent 46 different seminaries, 84 different religious institutes, and 109 different dioceses across all regions of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Almost four in ten respondents (i.e., 577 of the 1,575 respondents or 37 percent) are affiliated with religious institutes, and over six in ten (i.e., 998 of the 1,575 respondents or 63 percent) are affiliated with dioceses. Of the 1,563 men who responded to the question about their ordination status, 490 (or 31 percent) reported being ordained within the last five years. The other 1,073 men (or 69 percent) are in formation either in the seminary or in one of the other stages of formation for a religious institute, such as novitiate.

When we examine the characteristics of respondents in terms of both their affiliation (i.e., diocesan or religious) and their status as ordained or in formation, we find that the largest group are those who are in formation for a diocese. As the figure below indicates, 40 percent of respondents are in some stage of formation for diocesan priesthood, 28 percent are in formation for religious priesthood, 23 percent are recently ordained diocesan priests, and 9 percent are recently ordained religious priests.



<sup>1</sup> These figures are out of 72 seminaries, 237 religious institutes, and 176 dioceses.

## *Age Distribution*

Respondents to the survey range in age from 19 to 68. The oldest respondent reports being born in 1944 and the youngest respondent was born in 1993.

<b>Age Distribution of Respondents</b>					
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>					
	<b>All</b>	<b>Diocesan In Formation</b>	<b>Diocesan Ordained</b>	<b>Religious In Formation</b>	<b>Religious Ordained</b>
Under Age 19	1%	2%	0%	<1%	0%
Age 20-24	15	30	<1	11	0
Age 25-29	27	34	15	35	0
Age 30-34	24	16	40	26	16
Age 35-39	13	4	18	13	38
Age 40-44	7	4	7	5	24
Age 45-49	6	4	8	4	10
Age 50-54	3	2	3	5	5
Age 55-59	3	2	5	1	3
Age 60-64	1	1	1	1	3
Age 65-69	1	1	2	0	1
Average Age	33	30	37	32	41

As the table above illustrates:

- The majority of respondents are in the 25-34 year-old age range (i.e., 27 percent are aged 25-29, and 24 percent are aged 30-34).
- Those in diocesan formation are slightly younger than those in religious formation: 30 percent of the men in diocesan formation are aged 20-24; only 11 percent of men in religious formation are aged 20-24.
- This same disparity in age between diocesan and religious is evident among the respondents who are ordained: 56 percent of the ordained diocesan priests in the sample are below the age of 35; only 16 percent of the ordained religious priests are below that age.

***Country of Birth***

Eighty-three percent of the respondents were born in the United States, 2 percent were born in Canada or Europe, and 15 percent were born in other countries. Outside of the United States, the countries of birth with the highest representation among respondents are, in order of ranking: Mexico, with 48 respondents reporting Mexico as their country of birth; Vietnam with 44 respondents; the Philippines with 22 respondents; Colombia with 18 respondents; Nigeria with nine respondents; Canada with seven respondents; Uganda with five respondents; and El Salvador and Poland, with four respondents each.

<b>Country of Birth</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>Survey Respondents</b>	<b>Priests Nationally<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Seminarians in Theologates Nationally<sup>3</sup></b>
United States	83%	89%	70%
Canada or Europe	2	6	} 30
Other International	15	5	

***Age of Becoming Catholic***

Nearly all respondents (89 percent) were baptized Catholics when they were infants. As the table below indicates, 7 percent of respondents converted to Catholicism as adults.

<b>Age of Becoming Catholic</b>	
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>	
	<b>All</b>
Infant (under age 1)	89%
Child (ages 1-12)	3
Teenager (ages 13-17)	2
Adult (ages 18 and over)	7

<sup>2</sup> These data are drawn from a 2009 survey of a nationally representative sample of Catholic priests in the United States conducted by The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University and reported by Gautier, Perl, and Fichter (2011:9).

<sup>3</sup> As reported in the CARA Ministry Formation Directory (2011).

### ***Parents' Religious Identification***

Nearly all respondents (92 percent) report having a Catholic mother and 86 percent report having a Catholic father.

<b>Parents' Religious Identification</b>	
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>	
	<b>All</b>
Catholic Mother	92%
Catholic Father	86

### ***Type of High School Attended***

The majority of men in this sample report having attended either public high schools (53 percent) or private, non-Catholic high schools (3 percent). Twenty-two percent attended Catholic high schools run by religious institutes (e.g., by the Jesuits, Dominicans, Christian Brothers), 16 percent attended Catholic high schools operated by dioceses, and 8 percent attended Catholic independent high schools. Compared to the percentage of all Catholics who enroll in Catholic schools, the proportion among these respondents is relatively high.<sup>4</sup>

<b>Type of High School Attended</b>	
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>	
	<b>All</b>
Public	53%
Catholic (religious)	22
Catholic (diocesan)	16
Catholic (independent)	8
Private (non-Catholic)	3

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<sup>4</sup> In his recent book *Catholic High Schools: Facing the New Realities* (2011), James Heft, a Marianist priest and educator, estimates that while nearly half of young Catholics went to Catholic schools in 1965, only about 15 percent of young Catholics attend these schools today. Similarly, the 2011 *CARA Catholic Poll* finds that among a nationally representative sample of adult Catholics, 79 percent report having attended a public high school, while 21 percent report having attended a Catholic or private school.

### *Type of College Attended*

Respondents were asked to name the college or university which they attended the longest, to identify whether that college or university was public, Catholic, or other religious affiliation, and in the case that they attended more than one college or university, to name that college or university. Responses to this series of questions reveals that 52 percent attended either a public (40 percent) or private, non-Catholic college (12 percent) for all or most of their college years, and 39 percent of respondents attended a Catholic college for all or most of their college years. Compared to the percentage of all Catholics who enroll in Catholic colleges, the proportion among these respondents is relatively high.<sup>5</sup>

<b>Type of College Attended the Longest</b>	
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>	
	<b>All</b>
Public	40%
Catholic	39
Private (non-Catholic)	12
College Seminary	8

Of those who report having attended more than one college or university, 47 percent report that the additional college was public, 31 percent report that it was Catholic, 14 percent that it was private, non-Catholic, and 9 percent that it was a seminary college.

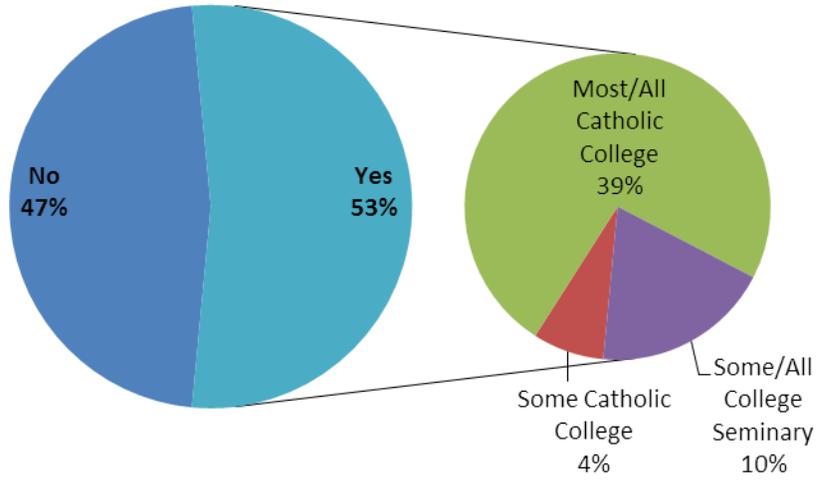
Taking these two questions together, 53 percent of respondents attended a Catholic college for at least some of their college experience, and 47 percent of respondents had no exposure whatsoever to a Catholic college environment. As the figure below illustrates, the 53 percent of respondents who report having at least some exposure to a Catholic college environment can be broken down as follows:

- Thirty-nine percent attended a Catholic college for all or most of their college years.
- Ten percent attended a Catholic seminary college for all or some of their college years.
- Four percent had some exposure to a Catholic college environment, but most of their college years were spent in a non-Catholic context.

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<sup>5</sup> The 2011 *CARA Catholic Poll* finds that among a nationally representative sample of adult Catholics, 93 percent report having attended a public or private, non-Catholic college, while 7 percent report having attended a Catholic college.

### Attended a Catholic College at Any Time



### *Participation in Extracurricular Activities during College*

Respondents were also asked to report on their participation in extracurricular activities during college. The table below lists the activities in which respondents report involvement, ranked from highest to lowest levels of participation.

<b>Participated “Periodically” or “Regularly” in These Activities</b>	
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>	
	<b>All</b>
Clubs/Student Organizations	56%
Athletics or Intramural Sports	48
Campus Ministry	46
Drama/Music	32
Student Government	19
Parish Young Adult Group	18
Knights of Columbus	15
Residential Life (Resident Assistant, Residential Minister, etc.)	15
Academic Fraternity	11
Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS)	9
Greek Fraternity	8
R.O.T.C.	4

As the table reports:

- More than half (56 percent) of respondents report participating periodically or regularly in clubs and student organizations during college.
- A third to about half of respondents report participating periodically or regularly in athletics or intramural sports (48 percent), campus ministry (46 percent), and drama and/or music (32 percent) during college.
- Close to one in five reports participating periodically or regularly in student government (19 percent), parish young adult groups (18 percent), Knights of Columbus (15 percent), and residential life (15 percent) during college.
- A tenth or fewer participated periodically or regularly in academic fraternities (11 percent), Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) (9 percent), Greek fraternities (8 percent), and R.O.T.C. (4 percent).

***Reasons for Choice of College Attended***

All respondents were asked to identify the reasons for their choice of college. Many respondents indicate several factors that weighed upon their decision. The table below summarizes the results from a question about the level of importance several factors played in their selection of a college. Specifically, it shows the percentage of respondents who report whether the factor influenced their choice either “some” or “very much.”

	<b>Reasons for Choosing College or University</b>			
	<i>Percentage in each category reporting “some” or “very much” importance:</i>			
	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>College Seminary</b>
Location of College	68%	74%	62%	55%
Academic Reputation of College	67	68	69	50
Affordability of College	61	73	48	43
Size of College	49	41	61	43
Family Encouragement	42	40	45	42
Religious Affiliation of College	40	7	79	60
Teacher Encouragement	28	27	29	28
Other	78	68	88	93

Examining the responses of all respondents reveals the following patterns:

- Besides the “other” category, the most frequently cited reasons for choice of college are the location, academic reputation, and affordability of the college. Approximately two-thirds of respondents regard one or more of these three factors as being of “some” or “very much” importance for their selection of college. Sixty-eight percent of all respondents state that the location of the college was of “some” or “very much” importance, 67 percent report that the academic reputation was of “some” or “very much” importance, and 61 percent claim that the affordability was of “some” or “very much” importance.
- Almost half of the respondents cite either the size of the college (49 percent), the encouragement of family (42 percent), or the religious affiliation of the college (40 percent) as being of “some” or “very much” importance for choosing their college.
- Less than a third of respondents indicate that their teacher’s encouragement was of “some” or “very much” importance in their selection of college.

Comparing the responses of each of the distinct subgroups – i.e., those who attended non-Catholic colleges, Catholic colleges, and seminary colleges – reveals the following patterns:

- Those who attended a non-Catholic college are the most likely to cite the location of the college (74 percent) and the affordability of the college (73 percent) as their reasons for college choice.
- Those who attended a Catholic non-seminary college are the most likely to cite the college’s religious affiliation (79 percent) and academic reputation (69 percent) as their reasons for college choice.
- Those who attended (or are attending) a Catholic seminary college are the least likely to cite the college’s location (55 percent), academic reputation (50 percent), or affordability (43 percent) as their reasons for college choice, but they were the most likely to report “other” factors (93 percent) as guiding their decision. Often these other factors included such things as: the fact that it was a seminary college; they were assigned there by their bishop, vocation director, diocese, religious superior, or religious institute; the will of God; and the encouragement or recommendation of a parish priest.



## **Part II: College Activities and Experiences**

This part of the report describes the college activities and experiences reported by respondents with varying levels of exposure to Catholic college environments. Specifically, it explores the ways in which the activities and experiences of men who attended Catholic colleges for all or most of their college years differ from those of men who attended non-Catholic colleges for all or most of their college years. This section reports differences in: their exposure to priests and religious on the faculty, administration or staff, and campus ministry teams of their colleges; their access to and participation in Mass, retreats, service, and campus ministry programs; their exposure to an atmosphere of respect for the discussion and practice of faith and prayer both inside and outside of the classroom; and their participation in college courses that reportedly had an influence on their vocational discernment. Part III of the report analyzes what these men said about the effects of these experiences and activities on their own vocational discernment.

As noted in the Introduction, because the intent of this report is to determine what aspects of the college experience have led men to enter the seminary or formation programs for diocesan priesthood or religious life, CARA removed from these analyses the 112 respondents who reported that they attended a seminary college for all or most of their college years, as well as the 31 respondents who indicated that they attended a seminary college for some of their college years. The rationale for doing this is straightforward: men who reported attending a college seminary presumably have already entered into formation for a diocese or religious institute, and because of that, we would expect their responses to many of the question items regarding their college experiences to be more extreme (e.g., higher levels of Mass attendance, higher levels of devotional practice, etc.) In the interest of not allowing this subgroup to bias the results with respect to the influence of attending Catholic colleges in general, this group has been removed from the analyses reported in Parts II and III of this report. Findings with respect to those who attended a college seminary are presented in Appendix I at the conclusion of the report. Throughout Parts II and III of this report, therefore, findings presented in the tables under the category heading “All” refer to findings based on all respondents *except* those who attended a seminary college.

***Exposure to Priests, Sisters, and Brothers in College***

Respondents were asked in separate questions whether any of their professors, college administrators or staff, or campus ministers at their college were priests, sisters, or brothers. Responses reveal that respondents overall are more likely during college to have been exposed to a priest, sister, or brother serving in the role of a campus minister than serving in the role of an administrator, staff member, or a professor. Seventy-three percent of all respondents state that at least one of their campus ministers during college was a priest, sister, or brother, 49 percent report that at least one of their college administrators or staff members was a priest, sister, or brother, and 48 percent indicate that at least one of their college professors was a priest, sister, or brother.

<b>Exposure to Priests, Sisters, and Brothers during College as...</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>Type of College Attended the Longest:</b>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Campus Ministers	73%	59%	90%
Administrators or staff	49	15	93
Professors	48	18	88

As the table above illustrates:

- The least dramatic difference between the subgroups (i.e., between those who attended a Catholic college and those who attended a non-Catholic college) is in terms of their exposure to a priest, sister, or brother on the campus ministry staff, though even here the difference is noteworthy. Nine in ten (or 90 percent) of those who attended a Catholic college report having had a priest, sister, or brother as a campus minister during college, compared to only six in ten (or 59 percent) of those who attended a non-Catholic college.
- Whereas 93 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report having a priest, sister, or brother as a college administrator, only 15 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college report the same.

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout Parts II and III of this report findings presented in the tables under the category heading “All” refer to findings based on all respondents *except* those who attended a seminary college.

- While 88 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report having a priest, sister, or brother as a college professor, only 18 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college indicate the same.

### *Mass Availability and Mass Attendance*

Almost all of those who attended a Catholic college report having had access to a Catholic chapel on campus during college (98 percent), while only one in two (or 50 percent) of those who attended a non-Catholic college report such access. Similarly, 91 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report that Mass was available daily during college, compared to only 49 percent of those who never attended a Catholic college.

	All	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		Non-Catholic	Catholic
College had a Catholic chapel on campus	70%	50%	98%
College had Mass available on campus daily	68	49	91
Attended Mass at least once a week during college	84	79	90

- Of those who reported attending Mass during college (on-campus or otherwise), 84 percent overall report having attended at least once a week.
- This percentage is higher for those who attended a Catholic college (90 percent) than for those who attended a non-Catholic college (79 percent).

***Spiritual Direction***

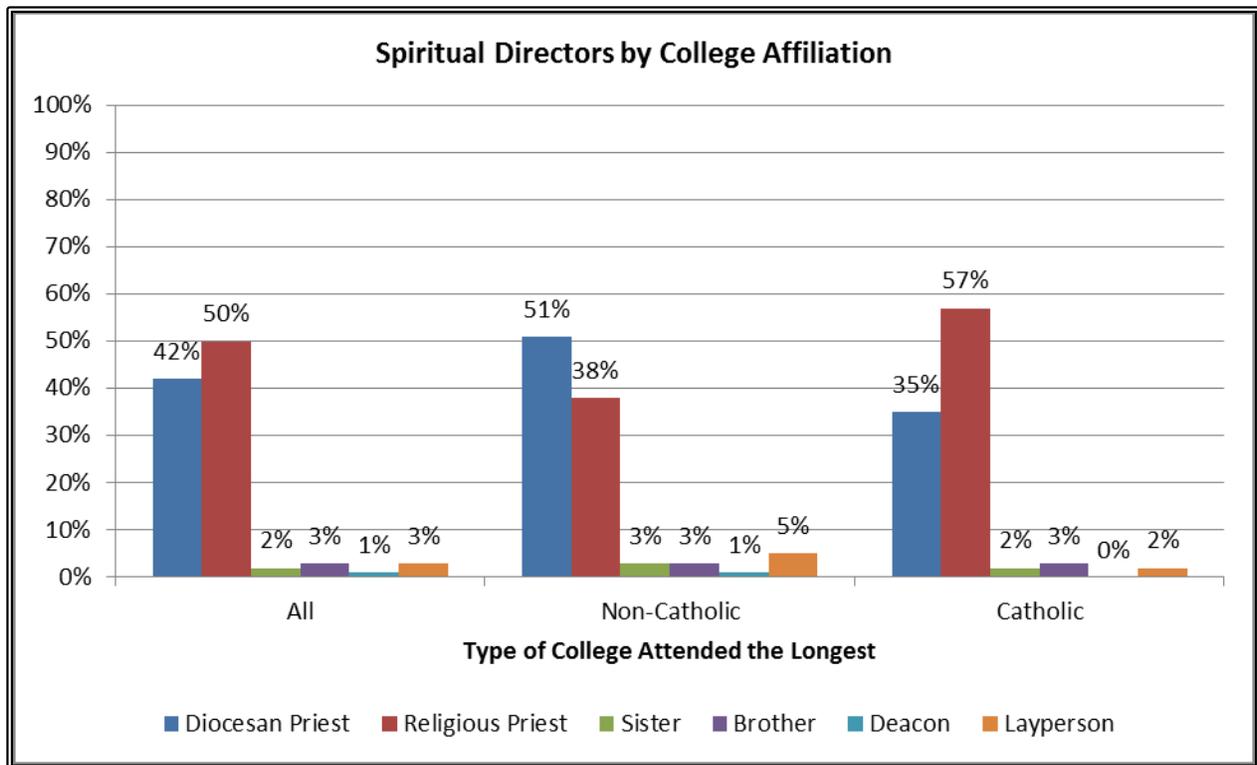
Respondents were asked a series of questions pertaining to spiritual direction during college. Those who identified as having had a regular spiritual director during college were asked about the frequency of their meetings and the canonical status of their spiritual director (i.e., whether he/she was a diocesan priest, religious priest, sister, brother, deacon, or layperson).

<b>Participation in Spiritual Direction during College</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Type of College Attended the Longest:</b>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Had a regular Spiritual Director during college	44%	30%	62%
<i>(Of those who had a Spiritual Director,)</i> met at least monthly with him/her	86	81	89

As the table above illustrates:

- Almost half (44 percent) of those responding report having a regular spiritual director during college, and of those who report having a regular spiritual director during college, over three-fourths (86 percent overall) report having met with him/her at least monthly (i.e., either “monthly” or “more than monthly”) during college.
- Those who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report having sought spiritual direction during college (62 percent to 30 percent, respectively), and to have attended spiritual direction with greater frequency.

Besides asking respondents about the frequency of their spiritual direction during college, respondents were also asked to indicate the canonical status of their spiritual director. As the figure below shows, of those men who report having had a spiritual director during college, 50 percent report that their spiritual director was a religious priest, 42 percent report that his spiritual director was a diocesan priest, and less than 10 percent report that his spiritual director was either a layperson (three percent), religious brother (three percent), religious sister (two percent), or deacon (one percent).



The figure above also illustrates that the canonical status of one’s spiritual director during college is associated with the type of college he attended.

- Respondents who attended a Catholic college are more likely to have had a religious priest as a spiritual director during college. While 57 percent of Catholic college attenders report having a religious priest as a spiritual director, only 38 percent of non-Catholic college attenders report likewise.
- Those who attended a non-Catholic college are more likely to have had a diocesan priest as a spiritual director during college. While 51 percent of non-Catholic college attenders report having a diocesan priest as a spiritual director, only 35 percent of Catholic college attenders reported likewise.

***Participation in Retreats and Service Projects***

Two-thirds of respondents (67 percent) indicate that they participated in a religious retreat during college, and almost three-quarters of respondents (70 percent) state that they participated in service projects during college. As the table below illustrates, of those who attended religious retreats in college, the greatest percentage (56 percent overall) report that they participated in retreat(s) that were two- to three-days in duration, compared to 35 percent who participated in “day(s) of recollection” and 25 percent who participated in retreats that were four- or- more days in duration.

	All	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		Non-Catholic	Catholic
Participated in any Religious Retreats	67%	59%	80%
Participated in any Days of Recollection	35	30	42
Participated in any Two- to Three-Day Retreats	56	48	67
Participated in Any Four- or More Day Retreats	25	17	36
Participation in Service Projects	70	63	78

Comparing the responses of those who attended Catholic and non-Catholic colleges reveals the following:

- Four out of five (or 80 percent) of those who attended a Catholic college report having participated in a religious retreat during college, compared to less than three out of five (or 59 percent) of those who attended a non-Catholic college.
- Similar differences can be observed across all categories of religious retreats: “days of recollection,” two-to-three-day retreats, and four-or-more-day retreats. For all of these categories, those who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report having attended a retreat during college.

- While almost four out of five (78 percent) of those who attended a Catholic college state that they participated in service programs or activities during college, only three out of five (63 percent) of those who attended a non-Catholic college report likewise.

<b>Average Number of Retreats and Service Projects Attended during College</b>			
<i>Average in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Days of Recollection	5.7	5.4	5.9
Two- to Three-Day Retreats	4.9	5.8	4.1
Four- or More Day Retreats	3.4	4.4	2.8
Service Projects	0.7	0.6	1.0

As the table above illustrates, among respondents who report they attended retreats and service programs during college:

- Those who attended a Catholic college participated, on average, in more “days of recollection” (average=5.9) and service programs (average=1.0) than did those who attended a non-Catholic college (average=5.4 and 0.6, respectively).
- Non-Catholic college attenders report having participated in more of the longer duration retreats (i.e., two-to-three-day retreats and four-or-more-day retreats) than Catholic college attenders. Those who attended a non-Catholic college participated, on average, in nearly 6 two-to-three-day retreats, and over 4 four-or-more-day retreats.

### *Devotional and Spiritual Practices*

A section of the survey asked respondents about their devotional and spiritual practices during college. It asked them to indicate whether and how frequently they participated in each of the eight practices listed in the table below. Almost nine in ten respondents (86 percent) report that they participated in at least one these practices during college. Of the various types of devotional and spiritual practices listed on the questionnaire, the most commonly reported practice among all respondents was praying the rosary, with 74 percent of respondents reporting that they had prayed the rosary during college. As the table below reports, the other types of devotional practices reported by respondents, listed by level of popularity, include: Eucharistic Adoration, with 72 percent reporting that they participated in it during college; other individual prayer, with 62 percent reporting; Liturgy of the Hours, with 56 percent reporting; Bible study, with 54 percent reporting; Holy Hour, with 53 percent reporting; Lectio Divina, with 42 percent reporting; and other group prayer, with 15 percent reporting.

<b>Participation in Devotional and Spiritual Practices during College</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<b>Type of College Attended the Longest:</b>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Any Devotional or Spiritual Practices	86%	82%	91%
Rosary	74	69	80
Eucharistic Adoration	72	66	79
Other Individual Prayer	62	56	69
Liturgy of the Hours	56	48	67
Bible Study	54	57	51
Holy Hour	53	47	62
Lectio Divina	42	37	48
Other Group Prayer	15	14	17

As the table above shows:

- Respondents who attended a Catholic college are more likely to report having engaged in a devotional or spiritual practice during college than those who attended a non-Catholic college. Whereas 91 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report having

participated in at least one of these practices, 82 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college reported likewise.

- A similar pattern is evident with respect to each of the distinct types of devotional and spiritual activities, except Bible Study, where non-Catholic college attenders report roughly equal, or slightly higher, engagement during their college years.

One way to explore the extent to which devotions become spiritual habits is to examine whether they are practiced on a weekly or more basis. As the table below indicates, those who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to have developed habits during college with respect to all categories of devotion except Bible Study and “other group prayer.”

<b>Participation in Devotional and Spiritual Practices</b>			
<b>“At Least Once a Week” during College</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Other Individual Prayer	56%	52%	60%
Rosary	44	42	47
Liturgy of the Hours	39	27	52
Eucharistic Adoration	37	29	45
Holy Hour	29	21	39
Bible Study	20	23	17
Lectio Divina	16	14	18
Other Group Prayer	9	8	10

***Participation in Campus Ministry***

Multiple questions asked respondents whether and how often they participated in campus ministry related activities during college. Overall, 86 percent of respondents report having a Catholic campus ministry program at the college that they attended. Of those with a Catholic campus ministry program at their college, 36 percent report that the campus ministry program was part of a Newman Center.

<b>Participation in Campus Ministry during College</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
There was a Catholic Campus Ministry Program at the College Attended	86%	80%	95%
The Catholic Campus Ministry was Part of a Newman Center	36	62	7
Participated in Campus Ministry <sup>7</sup>	64	58	72
Participated in the Social Activities of Campus Ministry	64	60	69
Participated in the Service Activities of Campus Ministry	49	43	58
Was a part of a Campus Ministry Leadership Team	29	30	27

As the table above illustrates:

- Nearly two thirds of respondents (64 percent) report that they participated in campus ministry during college. A similar percentage report that they participated in the social activities of campus ministry.

<sup>7</sup> These figures reporting rates of participation in campus ministry, the social and service activities of campus ministry, and campus ministry leadership teams are based on all respondents, including even those respondents who indicated that their college did not have a *Catholic* campus ministry program. This is because many respondents participated in campus ministry regardless of whether their college had a distinctly Catholic program.

- A smaller percentage of respondents (49 percent) report being engaged in the service activities of campus ministry, and fewer still (29 percent) indicate that they were part of the campus ministry leadership team at their college or university.
- Those who attended a Catholic college are more likely to have participated in campus ministry during college than those who attended a non-Catholic college. While 72 percent of Catholic college attenders report having participated in campus ministry during their college years, only 58 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college report likewise. A very similar pattern is evident with respect to the participation in the social activities of campus ministry.
- Although 58 percent of Catholic college attenders report having participated in the service activities of campus ministry during their college years, only 43 percent of non-Catholic college attenders report likewise.
- There is no noteworthy difference in likelihood of involvement in campus ministry leadership teams between Catholic-college attenders (27 percent) and non-Catholic college attenders (30 percent).

*An Atmosphere of Respect for the Discussion and Practice of Faith and Prayer*

Respondents were asked to report how often they discussed faith, religion, and prayer in the classroom and with various people outside of class during college. Twenty-nine percent of respondents indicate that they “frequently” discussed faith, religion, and prayer in class during college. Almost half (49 percent) report that they discussed these things “frequently” with other students outside of class, over a third (37 percent) report that they discussed these things “frequently” with campus ministry staff, and a quarter (24 percent) with professors outside of class.

<b>“Frequently” Discussed Faith, Religion, and Prayer...</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
With Other Students Outside of Class	49%	40%	62%
With Campus Ministry Staff	37	35	41
In Class	29	11	51
With Professors Outside of Class	24	9	43

The table above shows how these percentages differ between those who attended Catholic colleges and those who attended non-Catholic colleges.

- The most dramatic difference between these groups is in terms of discussing faith, religion, and prayer in class or with professors or other students outside of class.
- Over half (51 percent) of those who attended Catholic colleges report discussing faith, religion, and prayer “frequently” during class, compared to only one out of ten (11 percent) of those who attended non-Catholic colleges.
- While 43 percent of the Catholic-college attenders report discussing these topics with professors outside of class, only 9 percent of non-Catholic college attenders report the same.
- While over three out of five (62 percent) of the Catholic-college attenders report discussing these topics with students outside of class, only two out of five (40 percent) of non-Catholic college attenders report likewise.

Clearly, a Catholic college environment provides opportunities for students to discuss their faith in an academic setting in ways that a non-Catholic college environment does not. In fact, the only forum in which non-Catholic college attenders discuss their faith with almost as high a frequency as Catholic-college attenders is in the campus ministry setting. While 41 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report having discussed faith with the campus ministry staff during college, 35 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college report likewise.

The fact that Catholic college environments are more encouraging of the discussion of faith, religion, and prayer is also evident in the respondents’ answers to a series of questions asking about the level of interest various groups in their college (e.g., faculty, administration, fellow students) expressed about these topics. As the table below illustrates, those who attended Catholic colleges are substantially more likely to report that various groups on their campus expressed “some” or “very much” interest in faith, religion, and prayer.

	<b>All</b>	<b>Type of College Attended the Longest:</b>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Campus Ministry	77%	70%	87%
Fellow Students	61	49	78
The College as a Whole	42	20	70
Faculty	39	16	69
Administration	33	10	62

- Among Catholic college attenders, 78 percent report that their fellow students expressed “some” or “very much” interest in faith, religion, and prayer, 69 percent that the faculty expressed such interest, and 62 percent that the college administration expressed such interest. Among non-Catholic college attenders, these percentages are only 49 percent, 16 percent, and 10 percent, respectively.
- The least dramatic difference between Catholic college attenders and non-Catholic college attenders is in the level of interest in faith, religion, and prayer they found among the campus ministry staff. Eighty-seven percent of those who attended Catholic colleges report that campus ministry expressed “some” or “very much” interest in these topics, compared to 70 percent of those who attended non-Catholic colleges.

### *Living Arrangements during College*

The majority of respondents report having lived in college dorms and/or with roommates during some or all of their college years. Slightly fewer, though still a majority, report having lived off campus, and the least common living arrangement is living at home.

	<b>All</b>	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Lived in Campus Dorms	78%	74%	84%
Lived Off-Campus	59	66	54
Lived at Home	33	42	23
Lived with a Roommate (s)	78	77	83

As the table above reports:

- Those who attended a Catholic college for all or most of their college years are the most likely to have lived in campus dorms (84 percent) and/or to have lived with roommates during college (83 percent);
- Those who attended a non-Catholic college for all or most of their college years are the most likely to have lived off campus (66 percent) or at home (42 percent).

## *Summary*

As the findings presented in this part of the report demonstrate, respondents to the survey report significantly different college experiences based on whether they attended a Catholic college or a non-Catholic college. When compared to those who attended a non-Catholic college, those who attended a Catholic college were more likely to:

- be exposed to priests and religious sisters and brothers among the faculty, administration, and campus ministry staff of their college;
- participate in Mass, spiritual direction, retreats, service, devotional practices, and campus ministry programs during college;
- enjoy a college atmosphere in which they could discuss their faith, religion, and prayer openly in class and with professors and fellow students outside of class;
- be surrounded by professors, students, and administrators who express interest in faith, religion, and prayer.

Whether these dimensions of the college experience actually had an influence on the respondents' vocational discernment, however, remains to be seen, and the next section of this report attempts to answer that question. Specifically, in Part III of the report, CARA examines closely what respondents reported as the influence of these different dimensions of their college experience on their decision to pursue a vocation to diocesan priesthood or religious life.

### **Part III: College Experiences Perceived to Influence Vocational Discernment**

This part of the report analyzes what respondents said about the effects of their college activities and experiences on their own vocational discernment. Here, the respondents themselves assess the value of various college activities and experiences in fostering their own vocational discernment. In so doing, these results can help inform college administrators and vocation directors about best practices for encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

#### ***Influence of College Personnel on Vocational Discernment***

As shown in Part II, one of the chief differences between those who attended Catholic colleges and those who attended non-Catholic colleges is their degree of exposure to priests, sisters, and brothers as their college professors, and to a slightly lesser extent, as members of their campus ministry staff. Compared to those who attended a non-Catholic college, those who attended a Catholic college are substantially more likely to have had a professor or campus minister who was a priest, sister, or brother. But what kind of influence did respondents claim this exposure had in terms of their vocational discernment?

Respondents who indicated that they had any professors or campus ministers during college who were priests, sisters, or brothers were asked to report whether “any of them had a significant positive influence on your vocational discernment.” Later in the questionnaire, respondents were also asked to indicate whether any campus ministry staff, professors, or college staff had either encouraged or discouraged their vocational discernment during college. The following table reports the responses of these questions and how they differ based on the respondents’ level of exposure to a Catholic college environment.

As the table illustrates:

- Sixty-four percent state that a priest/sister/brother *professor* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment, and 56 percent report that a priest/sister/brother *campus minister* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment.
- Substantially more of the respondents who attended a Catholic college report that a priest/sister/brother *professor* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment than respondents who attended a non-Catholic college (72 percent to 46 percent, respectively).
- The same cannot be said with respect to having a priest/sister/brother as a *campus minister*; when asked about this, responses from those who attended a Catholic college

are not substantially different than from those who attended a non-Catholic college (57 percent to 55 percent, respectively).

**Influence of College Personnel on Vocational Discernment**

*Percentage in each category:*

	All	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		Non-Catholic	Catholic
“Yes,” a priest/sister/brother professor had a “significant positive influence” on vocational discernment <sup>8</sup>	64%	46%	72%
“Yes,” a priest/sister/brother campus minister had a “significant positive influence” on vocational discernment	56	55	57
“Yes,” a campus minister <i>encouraged</i> vocational discernment	51	46	59
“Yes,” a campus minister <i>discouraged</i> vocational discernment	5	3	7
“Yes,” a professor <i>encouraged</i> vocational discernment	46	25	72
“Yes,” a professor <i>discouraged</i> vocational discernment	12	12	13
“Yes,” a college staff member <i>encouraged</i> vocational discernment	30	14	50
“Yes,” a college staff member <i>discouraged</i> vocational discernment	7	7	7

- Very few of the respondents report being discouraged in their vocational discernment by their campus ministers (5 percent), professors (12 percent), or college staff (7 percent), but substantially more of the Catholic college attenders report being encouraged by these individuals than non-Catholic college attenders.
- Of those who attended a Catholic college, 59 percent report being encouraged by a campus minister, 72 percent report being encouraged by a professor, and 50 percent report being encouraged by a college staff member. Similar figures for non-Catholic college attenders are substantially lower: 46 percent report being encouraged by a

<sup>8</sup> Percentages calculated based on the number of respondents who reported having a priest, sister, or brother in the role of either professor or campus minister.

campus minister, 25 percent report being encouraged by a professor, and 14 percent by a college staff member.

One of the open-ended questions asked those who reported being positively influenced by a professor who was a priest, sister, or brother to describe the positive influence that individual(s) had on their vocational discernment. The most frequent comments center on their being a positive example of priestly or religious life; their example of spirituality and faith-practice; their intellectual and academic contributions; their joy and pastoral care; and their active, positive promotion of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. (See Appendix III for a full transcription of the responses.) The responses below represent a sampling of comments on these themes.

*Father "X" modeled for me the type of man I wanted to become: keenly intelligent, funny, faithful, and filled with joy.*

*They presented the priesthood as a positive choice, and they seemed happy in their vocation.*

*They provided a model of priesthood that I could imagine myself in.*

*They provided a witness of a happy and holy life.*

Another open-ended question asked those who indicated being positively influenced by a campus minister who was a priest, sister, or brother to describe the positive influence that individual(s) had on their vocational discernment. The most frequent comments focus on their general example of priestly or religious life; their active, positive promotion of vocations to the priesthood and religious life; their guidance in spiritual direction; their celebration of the Sacraments; and their presence and availability. (See Appendix III for a full transcription of the responses.) The responses below represent a sampling of comments on these themes.

*The campus ministers were both holy and human. Seeing them made discerning a vocation much easier; it seemed possible both to be in ordained ministry and to love deeply, chastely.*

*Their regular presence on campus every day.*

*Sister provided spiritual direction and support.*

*The on-campus priest offered a weekly Mass that I was able to attend.*

***Influence of Masses and Homilies during College on Vocational Discernment***

As reported in Part II, respondents’ level of exposure to a Catholic college environment is associated with their access to a Catholic chapel on campus, the availability of Mass on campus, and their frequency of Mass attendance during college. Compared to those who attended a non-Catholic college, those who attended a Catholic college had greater access to a Catholic chapel and daily Mass on campus, and higher frequency of their own Mass attendance during college. What influence did respondents attribute to these various factors on their own vocational discernment?

Those who reported attending Mass during college were asked to indicate the influence that attending Mass and listening to the homilies at Mass had on their vocational discernment. As the table below shows, respondents are over twice as likely to report that attending Mass during college had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment than to report that listening to homilies had “very much” influence. Whether this is a reflection of the quality of homilies relative to the Mass cannot be answered with these data, but the results suggest that the Mass in its entirety is perceived to be more influential than just one part of it, that is, the homilies.

<b>Influence of Masses and Homilies during College on Vocational Discernment</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Vocational Discernment was Influenced “Very Much” by Attending Mass during College	52%	45%	61%
Vocational Discernment was Influenced “Very Much” by Homilies at Mass during College	19	16	24

The table above also reveals the following:

- Those who attended a Catholic college are substantially more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report that their vocational discernment was “very much” influenced by Mass attendance (61 percent to 45 percent, respectively).

- Although lower numbers of respondents indicate that homilies at Mass had “very much” influence on their discernment (19 percent overall), those who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report that the homilies had “very much” influence (24 percent to 16 percent, respectively).

### *Influence of Spiritual Direction during College on Vocational Discernment*

As described in Part II, while 44 percent of all respondents met with a spiritual director regularly during college, those who attended a Catholic college were twice as likely as those who attended a non-Catholic college to have a spiritual director during college (62 percent to 29 percent). But what influence, if any, do respondents claim that meeting regularly with a spiritual director during college had on their vocational discernment?

Of those who report having a regular spiritual director during college, approximately two-thirds (65 percent) claim that spiritual direction influenced their vocational discernment “very much.” Twenty-nine percent report that it had “some” influence, and only a small percentage claimed that it had “no” (one percent) or “a little” (five percent) influence.

	Type of College Attended the Longest:		
	All	Non-Catholic	Catholic
Spiritual Direction had “some” influence on vocational discernment	29%	30%	28%
Spiritual Direction had “very much” influence on vocational discernment	65	62	67

As shown in the table above, these strong, positive valuations of the importance of spiritual direction do not vary based on the type of college the respondent attended. Those who attended Catholic colleges are equally likely as those who attended non-Catholic colleges to state that spiritual direction during college was influential in their vocational discernment.

### ***Influence of Retreats and Service Programs during College on Vocational Discernment***

As reported in Part II, two-thirds of respondents (67 percent) indicate that they participated in a religious retreat during college, and over two-thirds (70 percent) state that they participated in service projects during college. Compared to those who attended a non-Catholic college, those who attended a Catholic college are approximately 20 percent more likely to report having participated in a religious retreat during college, and 15 percent more likely to report having participated in a service program. But what kind of influence did respondents claim these experiences had in terms of their vocational discernment?

	All	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		Non-Catholic	Catholic
Retreat experiences had “some” influence on discernment	40%	37%	43%
Retreat experiences had “very much” influence on discernment	36	38	34
Service programs had “some” influence on discernment	35	36	34
Service programs had “very much” influence on discernment	25	23	27

As the table above illustrates, of those who report having participated in these activities during college:

- Over three-quarters, claim that religious retreats during college influenced their vocational discernment “some” (40 percent) or “very much” (36 percent), and three out of five (60 percent) report that participating in a service program during college influenced their vocational discernment “some” (34 percent) or “very much” (27 percent).
- Similar to the findings with respect to the influence of spiritual direction, responses do not differ between those who attended a Catholic college and those who attended a non-Catholic college.

- Respondents are also more likely to report that retreats and service programs had “some” influence on their discernment than they are to report these activities had “very much” influence – regardless of whether or not they attended a Catholic college.

### *Influence of Devotional Practices during College on Vocational Discernment*

As described in Part II, respondents’ level of exposure to a Catholic college environment is associated with the range and frequency of their devotional practices during college. Catholic college attenders not only participate in a wider variety of devotional practices during college, they also engage in them more frequently than those who attended a non-Catholic college. This is true for every form of devotion except Bible study, where non-Catholic college attenders report slightly higher engagement than their counterparts. But what influence, if any, do respondents claim that these devotional practices during college had on their vocational discernment?

	<b>All</b>	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Other Group Prayer	58%	49%	66%
Holy Hour	56	53	59
Other Individual Prayer	54	52	56
Eucharistic Adoration	53	51	54
Liturgy of the Hours	37	31	44
Rosary	32	31	34
Lectio Divina	27	25	29
Bible Study	23	21	26

As the table above illustrates:

- Those who participated in “other group prayer” rate it as one of the most influential devotions for their vocational discernment during college, with 58 percent of those who engaged in this practice reporting that it had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment.
- Other similarly influential devotions were Holy Hour devotion, “other individual prayer,” and Eucharistic Adoration, for which over half of respondents who engaged in these practices during colleges stating that they were very influential on their vocational discernment.

- For every type of devotional practice, respondents who attended a Catholic college are more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to state that participating in the devotion during college had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment.

### ***Influence of College Roommates and Friends on Vocational Discernment***

Part II showed that those who attended a Catholic college are the more likely to have lived in campus dorms (84 percent) and/or to have lived with roommates during college (83 percent). Those who attended a non-Catholic college, on the other hand, are more likely to have lived off campus (66 percent) or at home (42 percent). What influence, if any, do respondents claim that college roommates and friends had on their vocational discernment?

	All	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		Non-Catholic	Catholic
Roommate at college had “very much” influence on discernment	10%	6%	15%
Close friends at college had “very much” influence on discernment	28	22	37
College friends were “very” supportive of vocational choice	56	46	69
“Yes,” friends <i>encouraged</i> vocational discernment during college	72	63	84
“Yes,” friends <i>discouraged</i> vocational discernment during college	26	26	27

As the table above illustrates:

- Only 10 percent of the respondents report that their roommate had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment, and Catholic college attenders are more likely than non-Catholic college attenders to report being influenced to this extent by roommates (15 percent to 6 percent, respectively).
- Over a quarter (28 percent) of respondents report that their close friends had “very much” influence on their discernment, and Catholic college attenders are more likely than non-Catholic college attenders to report being influenced to this extent by their close friends (37 percent to 22 percent, respectively).
- Over half of respondents (56 percent overall) report that their college friends were “very” supportive of their vocational choice. Catholic college attenders are more likely than

non-Catholic college attenders to report this level of support from their college friends (69 percent to 46 percent, respectively).

- Respondents do not assign the same high level of influence (i.e., “very much” influence) to their college friends (28 percent claiming that their close friends had “very much” influence) or their roommates (10 percent) as they do to having a priest, sister, or brother as a professor (64 percent) or campus minister (56 percent).

A central finding of the table above is the fact that those who attended a Catholic college are substantially more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report being influenced and supported by their roommates and friends in their vocation discernment and choice. Compared to those who attended non-Catholic colleges, those who attended Catholic colleges are ten percent more likely to report that their roommates had “very much” influence on their discernment, over 15 percent more likely to report that their close friends at college had “very much” influence on their discernment, and almost 25 percent more likely to report that their college friends were “very” supportive of their vocational choice.

The importance of peers in fostering and sustaining priestly and religious vocations should not be underestimated. Sociologists in general, and sociologists of religion in particular, have long recognized the importance of friendship networks in sustaining belief and practice. Noted sociologist of religion Peter Berger (1967), for instance, spoke of the importance of peer friendship networks in terms of providing what he called “plausibility structures.” “Plausibility structures,” according to Berger, are those networks of like-minded others who, through our participation with them, help to sustain our belief and commitment to things which might in other settings seem implausible to believe.

***Influence of Particular College Courses on Vocational Discernment***

As described in Part II, one of the primary differences between those who attended Catholic colleges and those who attended non-Catholic colleges is the degree to which they felt free to discuss faith, religion, and prayer in their college environment. Respondents who attended Catholic colleges are almost five times more likely (51 percent compared to 11 percent of those who attended non-Catholic colleges) to report discussing faith, religion, and prayer “frequently” during class. They are also substantially more likely than those who attended non-Catholic colleges to report that their college’s faculty, staff, campus ministers, administrators, and students expressed interest in the topics of faith, religion, and prayer.

To better understand the role of college courses on our respondents’ vocational discernment, the survey asked respondents: “In your experience, were any of the courses you took in college *especially* influential on your vocational discernment?”

<b>Influence of Particular College Courses on Vocational Discernment</b>			
<i>Percentage reporting “Yes” in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
“Yes,” college course(s) were “especially influential” on vocational discernment	40%	27%	58%

As the table above reports:

- Forty percent of respondents overall state “yes,” that a college course was especially influential on their vocational discernment.
- Those who attended a Catholic college are over twice as likely as those who attended a non-Catholic college to be so influenced by a college course. While 58 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report having been especially influenced by a college course, only 27 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic college report likewise.

Of those who indicated that one or more of their college courses was “especially influential” on their vocational discernment, respondents were then asked to identify the course name and corresponding academic department for up to three courses. While the course names are widely varied, the most frequently mentioned academic departments were theology,

philosophy, and religious studies. A significant number of respondents also identified classes in history, the social sciences, the life sciences, the humanities (including art, music, literature, classics, and language), and business.

***Influence of College Campus Ministry on Vocational Discernment***

As Part II reported, nearly two-thirds of respondents (64 percent) report that they participated in campus ministry during college, half (49 percent) report that they were engaged in service activities through campus ministry, and almost a third (29 percent) state that they were part of the campus ministry leadership team at their college. Although those who attended a Catholic college were more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to have participated in any campus ministry activities during college, the frequency of involvement does not vary across these contexts. But what influence, if any, did respondents’ participation in campus ministry programs during college have on their vocational discernment?

To answer this question, respondents were asked to report how influential campus ministry programs were on their own vocational discernment. Overall, 23 percent of all respondents state that campus ministry had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment. There is little variation in responses between those who attended a Catholic college and those who attended a non-Catholic college. In both contexts, campus ministry programs reportedly have “very much” influence on vocational discernment for approximately a quarter of respondents.

**College Campus Ministry Having “Very Much” Influence on Vocational Discernment**  
*Percentage in each category:*

	All	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		Non-Catholic	Catholic
Campus Ministry had “very much” influence on discernment	23%	22%	25%

### ***Influence of Vocational Discernment Programs on Vocational Discernment***

Participation in various vocational discernment programs (e.g., “Come & See” weekends, Vocation Support Groups, and Project Andrew) would be expected to have an influence on an individual’s vocational discernment, and respondents who said that they had participated in these kinds of programs were asked to indicate the level of influence that each had on his own vocational discernment. As the table below illustrates, of those who reported involvement in these programs, between 40 and 52 percent state that their experience with one of these programs “very much” influenced their vocational discernment. One in five reports that Project Andrew influenced their vocational discernment as much.

	<b>All</b>	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
“Come & See”	52%	53%	51%
Vocations Event	42	44	39
Vocation Support Group	40	40	39
Project Andrew	20	22	18

There is little variation in responses between those who attended a Catholic college and those who attended a non-Catholic college. The level of influence which these types of vocational discernment programs are reported to have does not depend on whether or not the respondent attended a Catholic college. Across college contexts, these types of vocational discernment programs appear to have similar influence.

***Influence of Any Off-Campus Catholic Parishes on Vocational Discernment***

Respondents were also asked: “During your college years was an off-campus Catholic parish a significant factor in your vocational discernment?” As the table below reports, 39 percent of all respondents claim that an off-campus Catholic parish played a significant role in their vocational discernment.

	All	Type of College Attended the Longest:	
		Non-Catholic	Catholic
“Yes,” an off-campus parish was “a significant factor in vocational discernment”	39%	46%	31%
Parish participation had “very much” importance on discernment	30	33	27

Those who attended a non-Catholic college are slightly more likely than those who attended a Catholic college to state that an off-campus parish was a significant factor in their vocational discernment (46 percent to 31 percent, respectively). For such students, a Catholic chapel or campus ministry program may not have been available to them on campus, so they are more likely to identify an off-campus parish as a source of support and inspiration in their vocational discernment.

Of those who indicated that an off-campus Catholic parish was a significant factor in their vocational discernment, respondents were asked to identify in what ways this parish had been significant. The most frequent comments centered on the influence of the parish priest, their participation in Mass, the opportunity for ministry experience, the support of the parish community, and the opportunity to engage in parish organizations. A significant number indicated that the off-campus parish was their home parish and, very often, the parish in which they had grown up. The responses below represent a sampling of comments on these themes.

*I was actively involved in ministry and other types of service.*

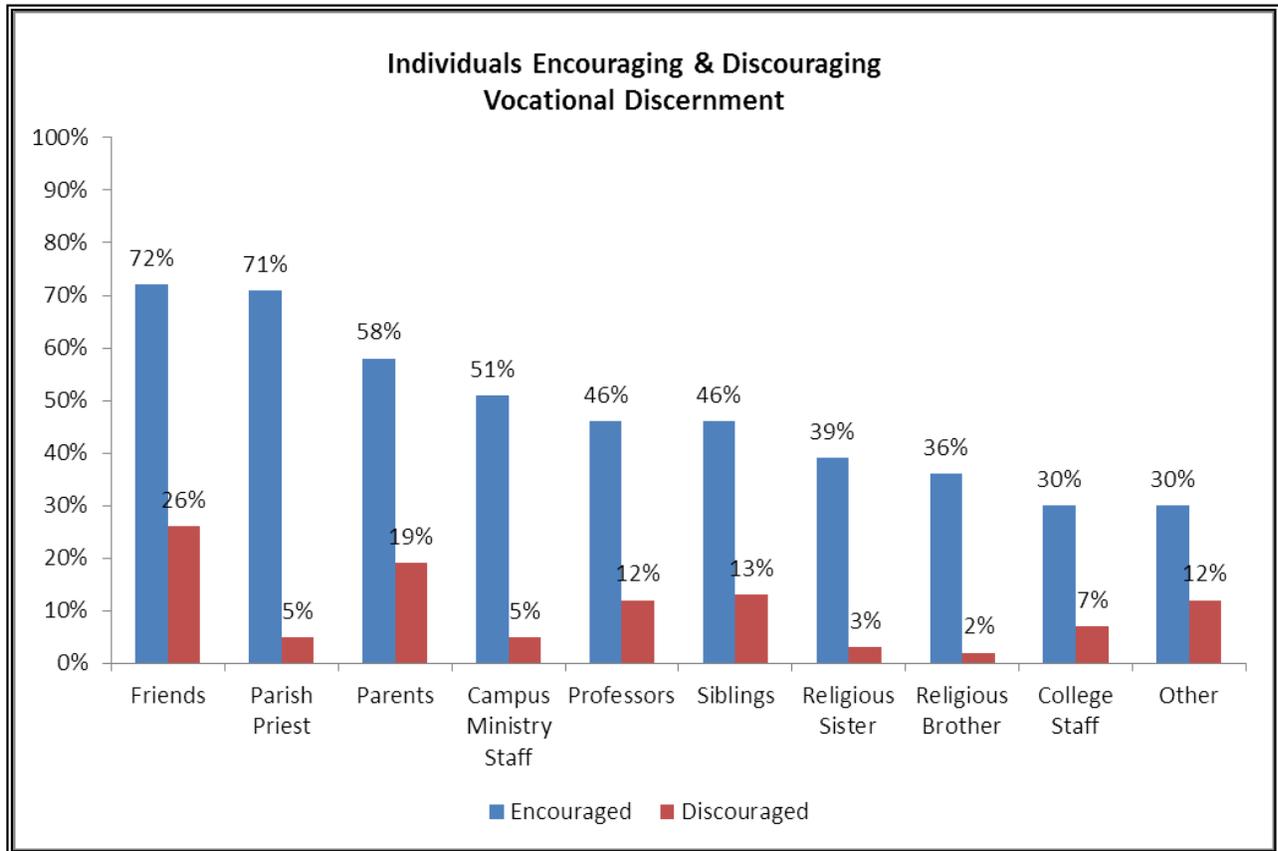
*The parish was welcoming and supportive of me.*

*My hometown parish provided many opportunities for Mass and prayer, as well as supportive priests and parishioners.*

*The priestly ministry of my pastor was a great influence on my vocation.*

### *Comparing the Relative Influence of Various People on Vocational Discernment*

As noted earlier, many individuals have an influence on the vocational discernment of men considering priesthood or religious life during college. The figure below reports the results of a series of questions in which respondents were asked to report whether any of the individuals listed (campus ministry staff, professors, parish priests, etc.) had encouraged or discouraged them in their vocational discernment during college.



As the figure illustrates:

- Respondents were most likely to report having been encouraged in their vocational discernment by friends (72 percent), parish priests (71 percent), parents (58 percent), and campus ministry staff (51 percent).
- Friends and family are also identified as individuals who discouraged these men in their vocational discernment. Twenty-six percent of respondents state that friends discouraged

their vocational discernment during college, 19 percent claim that parents discouraged them, and 13 percent stated that siblings discouraged them.

Comparing the percentage of respondents who claim being encouraged or discouraged by these individuals across different educational contexts – i.e., Catholic or non-Catholic colleges – shows some interesting contrasts.

<b>Individuals Encouraging and Discouraging Vocational Discernment</b>			
<i>Percentage in each category:</i>			
	<b>All</b>	<u>Type of College Attended the Longest:</u>	
		<b>Non-Catholic</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
<b>ENCOURAGEMENT</b>			
Friends	72%	63%	84%
Parish Priest	71	69	74
Parents	58	49	69
Campus Ministry Staff	51	46	59
Professors	46	25	72
Siblings	46	39	55
Religious Sister	39	31	49
Religious Brother	36	25	50
College Staff	30	14	50
Other	30	27	36
<b>DISCOURAGEMENT</b>			
Friends	26%	26%	27%
Parents	19	20	19
Siblings	13	11	14
Professors	12	12	13
Other	12	12	11
College Staff	7	7	7
Campus Ministry Staff	5	3	7
Parish Priest	5	5	5
Religious Sister	3	2	4
Religious Brother	2	2	2

Compared to those who attended a non-Catholic college, those who attended a Catholic college are:

- over three times more likely (14 percent to 50 percent, respectively) to report being encouraged in their vocational discernment by college staff;
- almost three times more likely (25 percent to 72 percent, respectively) to be encouraged by a college professor;
- twice as likely to be encouraged by a religious sister or brother;
- and substantially more likely to be encouraged parents, siblings, friends, parish priests, and campus ministers.

On the other hand, the percentage of respondents who report being discouraged in their vocational discernment from any of these individuals does not vary across these contexts. No matter which type of college the respondents attended, they report similarly low levels of discouragement from these various individuals.

***Comparing the Relative Influence of Various Experiences on Vocational Discernment***

Throughout this part of the report, each section highlighted those activities and experiences during college which respondents claim as having “very much” influence on their vocational discernment. Because most of the questions on the questionnaire asking respondents to indicate the level of influence that various activities and experiences had on their vocational discernment used similar question wording and identical response categories (i.e., they were asked to describe their influence as either being “none at all,” “a little,” “some,” or “very much”), CARA is able to rank, from highest to lowest, those activities and experiences in terms of their levels of reported influence. In the table below, we present the percentage of respondents reporting “very much influence” for each item.

<b>Ranking of College Activities and Experiences by Level of Influence on Vocational Discernment</b>			
<i>Percent reporting “very much” influence:</i>			
	<b>All</b>		<b>All</b>
Spiritual Direction	65%	Rosary	32%
Other Group Prayer	57	Parish Participation	30
Holy Hour	56	Friends	28
Other Individual			
Prayer/Meditation	54	Lectio Divina	27
Eucharistic Adoration	53	Service Programs	25
Mass	52	Bible Study	23
“Come & See” Events	52	Campus Ministry	23
Vocations Events	42	Project Andrew	20
Vocation Support Group	39	Homilies at Mass	19
Liturgy of the Hours	37	Roommate(s)	10
Retreat Experiences	36	Residential Life/ Social Activities	9

As the table illustrates:

- Respondents identify regular spiritual direction during college as the leading influence on their vocational discernment. Two-thirds (65 percent) of respondents report that spiritual direction had “very much influence.” This is higher than the percentage who responded in the highest category with respect to every other college activity or experience asked about on the survey. Clearly, having a regular spiritual director during college matters to

these respondents, and it matters more than practically anything else they were asked about.

- Following spiritual direction, in the order of reported influence, are a variety of prayer and devotional practices, including other group prayer (with 57 percent reporting that it had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment), Holy Hour devotion (with 56 percent), other individual prayer/meditation (54 percent), Eucharistic Adoration (53 percent), and the Mass (52 percent). Three of these five practices – Holy Hour, Eucharistic Adoration, and the Mass – are centered on the Eucharist.
- Following these prayer and devotional practices, in the order of reported influence are a variety of vocation awareness and support programs, including “Come & See” events (with 52 percent reporting that it had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment), vocations events (with 42 percent), and vocation support groups (39 percent).
- Following these vocation awareness and support programs, in the order of reported influence, are Liturgy of the Hours, retreat experiences, praying the rosary, participating in a parish, and having supportive friends.

### ***Factors that Motivated and Discouraged Respondents to Pursue a Religious Vocation***

An open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire asked respondents to identify what kept them motivated in pursuing a vocation to the priesthood and/or religious life during college. The most frequent comments center on their personal prayer life, the example of a priest and/or religious, a sense of being called by God, a desire to serve God, the encouragement of friends, and their participation in the Mass. Some respondents, however, used their response to this question to indicate that they had not yet begun discerning a vocation during their time as an undergraduate, and consequently they could not identify factors in college that motivated them. The responses below represent a sampling of comments on these themes.

*Ultimately, the feeling in my heart that the priesthood was where I was to go. It kept resurfacing and I came to a point where I could not ignore it.*

*Good priests and nuns that lived out their vocation with joy and loyalty to the faith and the church.*

*Prayer, especially the Mass.*

*My prayer life and the support of those who know me well.*

*I was confident this was what God was calling me to do.*

*The desire to serve others and bring Christ's love to them.*

Similarly, another open-ended question at the conclusion of the survey asked respondents to identify what discouraged them from pursuing a vocation to the priesthood and/or religious life during college. The most frequent comments focused on the culture and environment of their college campus, other career ambitions or plans, women and dating, the requirement of celibacy, lack of support from family and friends, and the poor example of some priests, religious, and/or seminarians. As with the preceding question, some respondents indicate that they were not yet discerning a vocation during their time as an undergraduate, so they report that the question does not apply to them. Some respondents also identify issues facing the Church, including the clergy sex abuse scandal, as having discouraged their vocational discernment. The responses below represent a sampling of comments on these themes.

*Giving up marriage and giving up other career opportunities that might not be possible as a religious.*

*The reality, politics, and flaws of the Church. Seeing how the faith was lost by so many.*

*Celibacy and the sacrifice of having children.*

*Nothing in particular; I just wasn't thinking about it.*

*The reaction of my family to my decision to enter seminary. They were very upset with me and tried many times to change my mind.*

## *Summary and Implications of the Findings*

As the findings presented in this part of the report demonstrate, respondents report that a variety of activities and experiences during their college years were influential in their vocational discernment. One of the most influential aspects of their college experience on their vocational discernment, according to the respondents, was participating regularly in spiritual direction. Other aspects of their college experience which respondents identify as influential on their vocational discernment were a variety of prayer and devotional practices, including other group prayer, Holy Hour devotion, other individual prayer/meditation, Eucharistic Adoration, and the Mass. The fact that three out of these five practices – i.e., the Holy Hour, Eucharistic Adoration, and the Mass – are centered on the Eucharist, speaks of the importance that respondents assign to the Eucharist in their own vocational discernment. Respondents also rate a variety of vocation awareness and support programs, including “Come & See” events, as being influential in their vocational discernment.

The analyses presented in Part II reveal that many of these factors which respondents report as being influential in their vocational discernment are more available, more easily accessible, or more frequently practiced in Catholic colleges than in non-Catholic colleges. Compared to those who attended non-Catholic colleges, those who attended Catholic colleges are more likely to have a priest or religious as a professor, campus minister, or college administrator, to participate more frequently in spiritual direction, Mass, certain religious devotions, retreats, and service programs during college, and to report that the staff at their college expressed interest in faith, religion, and prayer. They are also more likely to report being encouraged in their vocational discernment by friends, professors, and campus ministry staff.

Those who attended non-Catholic colleges, on the other hand, match or exceed those who attended Catholic colleges in their participation in Bible studies, individual and group prayer, retreats of longer duration, and campus ministry leadership teams. When asked about the influence of various experiences on their vocational discernment, they are also as likely as those who attended Catholic colleges to assign “very much” influence to meeting regularly with a spiritual director during college, having a priest, sister, or brother who served as a *campus minister*, and participating in retreat experiences, campus ministry, and vocational discernment programs. They are also more likely than their counterparts to identify off-campus parishes as being highly influential.

The differences observed between those who attended a Catholic college and those who attended a non-Catholic college suggest that although Catholic college attenders are more likely to be exposed to, and participate in, a wider array of activities and experiences which they report fostered their vocational discernment, non-Catholic college attenders found support in discerning their vocation through participating actively in spiritual direction, campus ministry programs, retreats, vocational discernment programs, and off-campus parishes during college.

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# Special Report

Placing social science research at the service of the Church in the United States since 1964

Spring 2016

## The Impact of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment

Surveys indicate that most men and women who choose a religious vocation first consider this in their teen years. How does their experience a short time later in college shape their early interest and play a role in their discernment?

This special report presents results from two surveys. The first, a survey of 1,575 men who were in formation or recently ordained priests, was completed in 2012. The second, a survey of 883 women who were new entrants, newly professed, or perpetually professed women religious, was completed in 2015.

In this special report we identify various aspects of the college experience that the respondents tell us were important in their vocational discernment. We find that there are many distinct differences between those who attended Catholic colleges and universities and those who attended other campuses. Foremost, Catholic colleges and universities provide more opportunities for interactions with those who are already living out a vocation as well as more opportunities for discussions of faith and opportunities for formation, worship, and the practice of devotions that respondents tell us were important to them.

### Witnessing Vocations

The likelihood that one knew a priest, sister, or brother while in college depends heavily on the type of campus they attended. As shown in the table here, more than eight in ten men and women religious who attended Catholic colleges or universities had clergy or religious as a professor or campus minister in college. Few of

**HAD A PRIEST, SISTER, OR BROTHER AS A PROFESSOR OR CAMPUS MINISTER BY COLLEGE TYPE**

	CATHOLIC COLLEGES		NON-CATHOLIC COLLEGES	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Professors	88%	83%	18%	8%
Campus ministers	90	84	59	45



those attending other non-Catholic campuses had professors who were clergy or religious. Yet many on non-Catholic campuses did have clergy or religious as campus ministers.

Respondents were asked to describe the influence that clergy and religious on campus had on their vocational discernment. The most common type of response referred in some way to the personal witness of these individuals living out their vocation. Some examples of this type or response include:

- *I had several professors who were sisters and priests. The sisters made me almost envious of what they had. I was attracted by their “normalness” and their joy. They were all amazing! Now I am a member of that congregation and I know that they were a deciding factor.*
- *A Jesuit priest was a mentor, spiritual director, and friend to me in college. He helped give a vocabulary to what I was experiencing and helped me to name the desires moving in my heart. As my spiritual director, he helped me to discern joining the Jesuits.*

- *A Salesian priest taught many of my philosophy classes and it gave me a great example of priestly teaching. I had several monks teach me several courses, and those influenced me to become a monk. I also had a few sisters teach courses, which gave an example of women religious.*
- *Their presence and character inspired me to want to become a religious sister. I was moved by their commitment to the Gospel message and service to the Church and community.*
- *As a person pursuing a degree in biology in college, one of my biology professors who was a priest had a great influence on me. Through his example, I came to understand how God uses the gifts He gives His children.*
- *I thought I had a vocation before I attended college, but various professors and the holy and prayerful way that they studied and taught, made me interested in joining a teaching order specifically.*
- *Only when I look back on it, did I realize there was an impact knowing my college professor was a sister. I had not realized religious women were so educated before.*

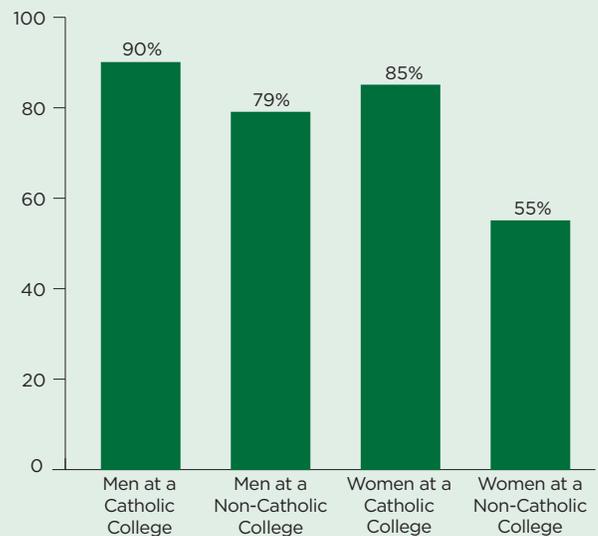
The presence of priests, sisters, and brothers on college campuses is cited as an important factor for those who later chose to follow a vocation in the Church themselves. Results from the studies indicates that declining numbers of clergy and religious in the classroom and within campus ministries would likely have a negative impact on the numbers of men and women discerning a vocation in the future. The larger number of clergy and religious on Catholic campuses also speaks to the importance of these specific institutions in fostering the next generation of vocations. Men and women at Catholic colleges were especially likely to note the positive influence of clergy or religious as their professors rather than as campus ministers.

### Masses, Devotional Practices and Campus Ministry

A majority of respondents indicated attending Mass at least weekly during college. However, this was more common among those attending Catholic colleges and universities. Women attending non-Catholic colleges were least likely to indicate attending Mass weekly or more often. This may be due, however, to Masses being less available on or near their campuses. Only 38 percent of women attending a non-Catholic college reported that Masses were available at a Newman Center on their campus. Half attended Masses at a local parish during college.

Regardless of how often respondents attended Mass during college, about two-thirds or more considered this to be have had at least “some” influence on their vocational discernment. This effect is evident at both Catholic and non-Catholic campuses. CARA research indicates that the typical Catholic college student is much

FIGURE 1. **PERCENTAGE WHO ATTENDED MASS WEEKLY OR MORE OFTEN DURING COLLEGE**



less likely to attend Mass frequently while in college than they did prior to college. Forty-two percent of Catholic students at Catholic colleges report doing so, compared to 31 percent at non-Catholic colleges and universities. The higher frequency of Mass attendance among those who later follow a vocation compared to the broader Catholic student population is likely reflective of the greater religiosity among this population at the time they attend college or university.

Both male and female respondents were more likely to take part in campus ministry and other Catholic programs and activities in college if they were on a Catholic campus. One of the most common experiences is participation in retreats during college, with eight in ten or more of those attending Catholic colleges reporting

### PARTICIPATION IN CAMPUS MINISTRY AND OTHER CATHOLIC PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES DURING COLLEGE

	Percentage reporting participation			
	CATHOLIC COLLEGES		NON-CATHOLIC COLLEGES	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Retreats	80%	86%	59%	63%
Service projects	78	76	63	51
Campus ministry activities and programs	72	76	58	49
Had a spiritual director	62	44	30	24

this experience. For both men and women, the most common type of retreat are two to three day programs—typically on weekends. The most common sponsor for these retreats were campus ministry followed by religious orders. Nearly three in four respondents who attended Catholic colleges also report involvement in service projects and other campus ministry activities and programs. Those attending non-Catholic campuses were less likely to report participation in these.

Sixty-two percent of responding men who attended Catholic colleges said they had a spiritual director during their time on campus. Women on Catholic campuses were less likely to report this (44 percent) as were men and women responding from non-Catholic campuses (30 percent and 24 percent, respectively).

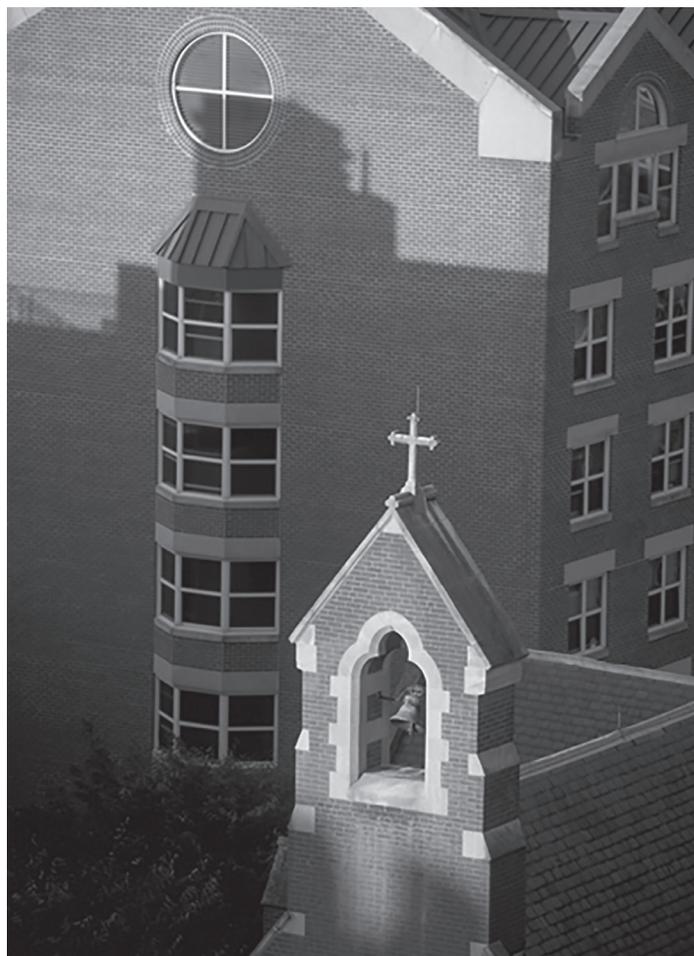
About eight in ten or more of those attending Catholic colleges prayed the rosary and participated in Eucharistic Adoration while they were students. Those attending non-Catholic campuses were less likely to do so. Many at Catholic campuses also prayed the Liturgy of the Hours while fewer than half of those attending college elsewhere did so. About half of respondents participated in Bible study during college. This practice was just as common at non-Catholic colleges as on Catholic campuses.

**PARTICIPATION IN CAMPUS MINISTRY AND OTHER CATHOLIC PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES DURING COLLEGE**

Percentage reporting participation

	CATHOLIC COLLEGES		NON-CATHOLIC COLLEGES	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Rosary	80%	87%	69%	73%
Eucharistic Adoration	79	87	66	67
Liturgy of the Hours	67	71	48	44
Bible Study	51	50	57	51

Of these devotional practices, Eucharistic Adoration had the most influence on vocational discernment. Seventy-three percent of women at Catholic colleges said this had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment, as did 54 percent of women at non-Catholic colleges. Not as many men at Catholic colleges placed the same influence on Eucharistic Adoration. Some 54 percent said it had “very much” influence on their discernment, compared to 51 percent of men attending non-Catholic colleges who responded as such. Significantly fewer, regardless of the type of college they attended, said that other devotional practices had “very much” influence on their vocational discernment.



**Classes**

Respondents were most likely to say they “frequently” discussed faith, religion, or prayer with other students outside of class during college. Majorities of men (62 percent) and women (56 percent) attending Catholic college reported this. Frequent discussion was less common among men (40 percent) who attended non-Catholic campuses and significantly less likely among women there (17 percent).

Many men and women who attended Catholic colleges also report frequent faith discussions in class (51 percent and 41 percent, respectively). Fewer men and women attending other campuses report this (11 percent and 3 percent, respectively). Forty-three percent of men who attended Catholic colleges also report frequent discussions about faith, religion, or prayer with professors outside of class. Women attending Catholic colleges are significantly less likely to report this (18 percent). Less than one in ten men and women attending non-Catholic colleges report frequent discussions about faith, religion, or prayer with faculty outside of class (9 percent and 2 percent, respectively).

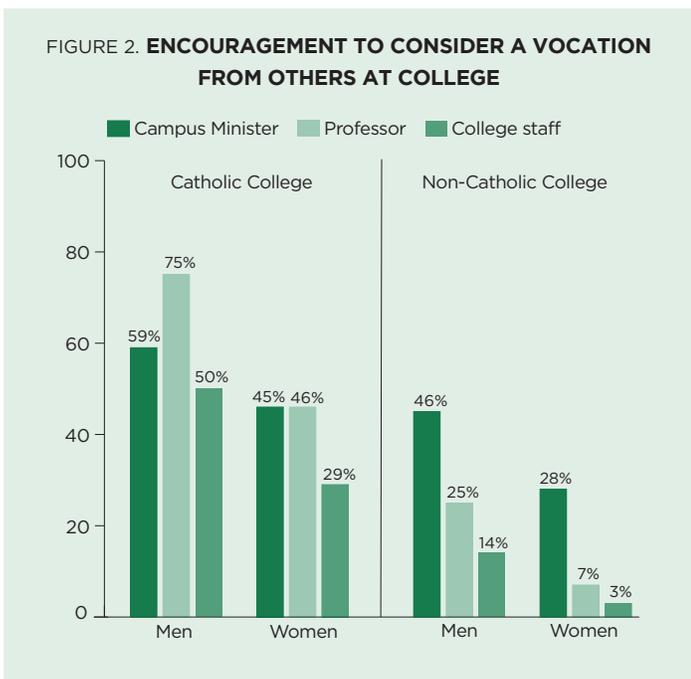
**DISCUSSION OF FAITH, RELIGION, OR PRAYER  
DURING COLLEGE**

Percentage reporting “frequently” discussing

	CATHOLIC COLLEGES		NON-CATHOLIC COLLEGES	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
With other students outside of class	62%	56%	40%	17%
In class	51	41	11	3
With professors outside of class	43	18	9	2

Men who attended a Catholic college were most likely to receive encouragement to pursue a vocation from campus ministers, faculty, and college staff. More than seven in ten indicate that a professor encouraged them. Half or more say a campus minister (59 percent) or college staff (50 percent) encouraged them to pursue a vocation. Minorities of women at Catholic colleges and minorities of both men and women at non-Catholic colleges report receiving encouragement from campus ministers, professors, or other college staff.

Regardless of the type of college they attended, very few report receiving any discouragement from campus ministers, professors,



or other college staff. About one in ten or fewer report discouragement from these individuals, with professors being the most likely to discourage.

**How College Motivated Pursuing a Vocation**

Respondents were asked an open-ended question, “During college, what kept you motivated in pursuing a vocation to religious life?”

Among men, the most frequent comments center on their personal prayer life, the example of a priest and/or religious, a sense of being called by God, a desire to serve God, the encouragement of friends, and their participation in the Mass. Here is a sampling of their responses:

- *Ultimately, the feeling in my heart that the priesthood was where I was to go. It kept resurfacing and I came to a point where I could not ignore it.*
- *Good priests and nuns that lived out their vocation with joy and loyalty to the faith and the Church.*
- *Prayer, especially the Mass.*
- *My prayer life and the support of those who know me well.*
- *I was confident this was what God was calling me to do.*
- *The desire to serve others and bring Christ’s love to them.*

Among women, the most frequent comments center on a sense of being called by God, devotional practices, friends and family, as well as the culture and community of their college. Here is a sampling of their responses:

- *I converted to Catholicism as a sophomore in college, and my newfound love for Christ in the sacraments drew me to do whatever he wanted—including religious life!*
- *We were living the Catholic culture at my school. To be honest, I was looking to pursue marriage, but I experienced a lot of restlessness, and realized the Lord was calling me to be his alone.*
- *Frequent personal prayer, especially at Eucharistic Exposition, a very strong Catholic family life, and the kind, encouraging letters I received from the Vocations Directress, all greatly helped me to pursue my vocation.*
- *Regular prayer—recognizing my satisfaction/happiness/strength in that in the midst of regular, sometimes stressful, college living.*
- *I had an incredible scholarship and I loved college, but there was always a nagging question in my mind: “why wait?” For me, it was not a question of if but when. My daily attendance at Mass definitely helped keep me motivated.*
- *I had a very strong group of Catholic friends to push and support me in all areas of my faith. This was also when I began to actually spend time just getting to know some religious sisters and seeing how real they are was helpful.*



- *The support of my friends, professors, and friends who were in religious life, especially young Jesuits who were friends of mine.*
- *The constant array of spiritual activities made available by our campus ministry, from excellent retreats, to activities of all kinds being offered every day (“Supper Seminars,” Adoration, Mass, the Rosary, Bible Studies, Prayer & Praise, etc.) all helped me to pray more openly to the Lord every day and listen for what He had in mind.*

### College Aspects that Discouraged a Vocation

Respondents were asked an open-ended question, “*What discouraged you in pursuing a vocation to religious life?*”

Among men, the most frequent comments focused on the culture and environment of their college campus, other career ambitions or plans, women and dating, the requirement of celibacy, lack of support from family and friends, and the poor example of some priests, religious, and/or seminarians. Some respondents indicate that they were not yet discerning a vocation during their time as an undergraduate, so they report that the question does not apply to them. Some respondents also identify issues facing the Church, including the clergy sex abuse scandal, as having discouraged their vocational discernment. The responses below represent a sampling of comments on these themes:

- *Giving up marriage and giving up other career opportunities that might not be possible as a religious.*
- *The reality, politics, and flaws of the Church. Seeing how the faith was lost by so many.*
- *Celibacy and the sacrifice of not having children.*
- *Nothing in particular; I just wasn’t thinking about it.*
- *The reaction of my family to my decision to enter seminary. They were very upset with me and tried many times to change my mind.*

Among women, the most frequent comments focused on family or friends discouraging them, desires for marriage and family, demands of social life and being a student, and their own fears or self-doubts. Here is a sampling of their responses:

- *What discouraged me the most were the people closest to me who kept discouraging me and telling me that I was too pretty to be a nun or that I would make a much better wife and mother than a Religious Sister. They put a lot of doubt into my heart.*
- *Some of my professors tried to persuade me to get a graduate degree before entering—which tempted my ambition—and I was also afraid that I might be making the wrong life choice in entering religious life.*
- *It was a pretty unknown path. I had some friendships with young men that I could have seen ripening into romance, and the idea of marriage was very attractive to me.*
- *The social life! Most of my friends were dating. None of the girls I knew were considering a vocation.*
- *My own lack of self-worth. I honestly believed I wasn’t good enough or holy enough to be a sister. I had this notion that sisters were/are ultra-holy people who never sin. It was an unrealistic view of both sisters and myself.*
- *Fear of being ridiculed by my family, friends, and peers.*

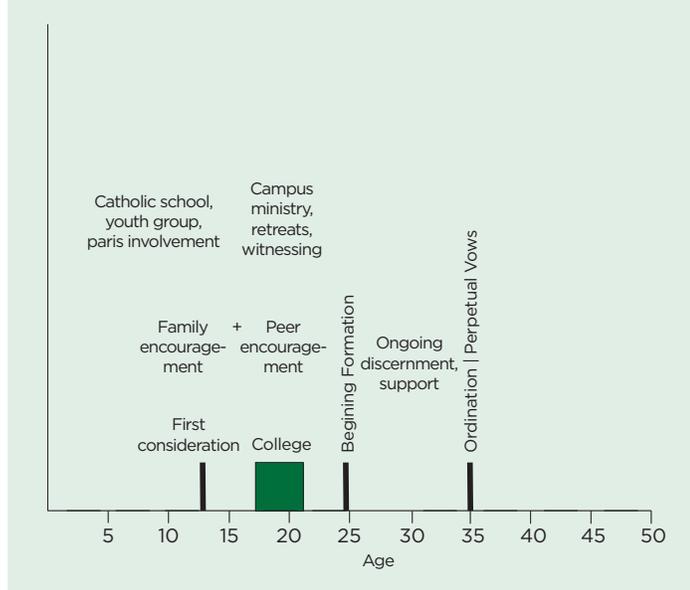
### College Choice

Among the male respondents, the survey asked about the reasons why they selected the college they attended. Among those who chose a Catholic college or university the top three reasons cited as being “somewhat” or “very” important were the religious affiliation of the college (79 percent), the academic reputation of the college (69 percent), and the location of the college (62 percent). Among those who chose a non-Catholic college the following reasons were considered most important: the location of the college (74 percent), the affordability of the college (73 percent), and the academic reputation of the college (68 percent). Only 7 percent of those choosing a non-Catholic college cited the religious affiliation of that college as being “somewhat” or “very” important. Female respondents were not asked about the context of their college choice.

## Mapping the Path to a Vocation: College in Context

CARA research indicates that the path young Catholics take in developing an interest in a vocation, then discerning and seeking out that vocation, and finally completing that journey and living out this choice is very complex. College experiences are important but are also only a link in the typical chain of events.

FIGURE 3. MAPPING THE TYPICAL CATHOLIC VOCATION



About one in ten young Catholics say they have ever considered a vocation (12 percent of males considering priesthood or religious life and 10 percent of females considering religious life). More often than not, the first consideration occurs in the teen years after a child has been enrolled in Catholic schools and has personally known a priest, brother, or sister. They have also likely been encouraged by someone to consider the vocation. They are likely to be a member of a family that attends Mass regularly and is active in their parish beyond these worship services. Activity in parish youth groups also appears to be important.

The average new ordinand or person entering religious life today typically does so in their mid-30s. Many have experience in another career field, often business, education, or health care, before living out the vocation they first imagined in their teens. Between that initial teenage interest and being formed in their vocation in their 30s, lies the college experience. As shown here, it is an important bridge, a support structure that makes the journey to the vocation more probable.

Figure 3 maps the typical experience from early influences to consideration through ordination or final vows. College spans the

important years between initial consideration and the beginning of their formation for a vocation. Arguably, college experiences are actually first steps in that formation. Many report on the importance of being able to discuss religious themes in the classroom and outside of it with faculty and other college staff. Discussions with peers are important as well, but even more essential is the support these peers give when the aspirant expresses their interest in a vocation.

Clearly college retreats, worship, and practice of other devotions during college—often more frequently than their peers—is important as well. Although campus ministries on non-Catholic campuses fulfill many of these aspects well, there appears to be even greater opportunities and support available on Catholic campuses. One of the most important aspects of the college experience for many who later seek a vocation is witnessing the life and work of sisters, brothers, and priests. Spiritual direction during college is also evident as one of the single most important experiences.

Among the questions that are asked of both men and women in the surveys, the college experiences evaluated as being “very important” by those who experienced or participated in them are shown below. Those most likely to be considered as “very important” by participants were spiritual direction, “Come & See” events, Eucharistic Adoration, and Masses. Majorities of men and women participating in each of these recall them as being “very important” for their vocational discernment.

“Only about one in ten young Catholics say they ever considered a vocation.

More often than not, the first consideration occurs in the teen years after a child has been enrolled in Catholic schools and has personally known a priest, brother, or sister. They have also likely been encouraged by someone to consider the vocation.”

Other components of the college experience considered important by some who experienced them include: retreats, vocational discernment or support groups, praying the rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, the influence and support of friends, service programs, campus ministry, and Bible study. Note that questions about the influence of discussions with faculty or knowing clergy or religious on campus were

**RANKING OF COLLEGE ACTIVITIES AND EXPERIENCES BY  
LEVEL OF INFLUENCE ON VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT**

Percentage reporting each as “very important”

	<b>MEN</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>
Spiritual Direction	65%	69%	67%
“Come & See” Events	52%	72%	62%
Eucharistic Adoration	53%	61%	57%
Mass	52%	53%	53%
Retreat Experiences	36%	41%	39%
Vocation Discernment/ Support Group	39%	33%	36%
Rosary	32%	32%	32%
Liturgy of the Hours	37%	22%	30%
Friends	28%	20%	24%
Service Programs	25%	22%	24%
Campus Ministry	23%	23%	23%
Bible Study	23%	10%	17%

not asked in similar enough ways in each survey to be included in the comparison table shown here. Regardless, it is clear that these are recalled by many as very influential as well.

Finally, there is one aspect of the college experience that is preventing some from pursuing their interest in a vocation. In recent years, CARA research has highlighted the impediment of educational debt. Religious institutes receiving inquiries report that about a third of those showing serious interest in religious life have college loans that average more than \$25,000. For some, this level of debt is too high for the order to take on. About a quarter of new diocesan ordinands have educational debt when they enter seminary. On average, this amounts to some \$20,000. It is a challenge for dioceses and religious institutes to manage these debts and in some cases they are unable to do so and the person interested in the vocation is turned away.

The path to a vocation is by no means ensured by the college experience. Many who begin formation end up not being ordained or professing perpetual vows. About half who begin this process do not end up as clergy or vowed religious. Ongoing discernment and support from family, peers and others in Church ministry are essential. Yet without the important college experiences that we now know to be supportive, many would likely never end up in this stage of discernment.

**About The Respondents**

The average age of female respondents to the college experience survey was 37 and the average age for men was 33. Seventy-nine percent of responding women were born in the United States as were 83 percent of the men. Eighty-seven percent of the female respondents entered the faith as an infant as did 89 percent of the men. Nine in ten women had a Catholic mother and 85 percent a Catholic father. Among men, 92 percent had a Catholic mother and 86 percent a Catholic father. Majorities of men and women, 53 percent, graduated from a public high school. Forty-six percent of men attended a Catholic high school compared to 35 percent of women.

**About the Studies**

The survey of men was commissioned by Boston College and the Jesuit Conference-USA in 2011. The survey was designed to assess the role and influence of Catholic colleges and universities on the vocational discernment of men entering the seminary and religious life in the United States. Between April and June 2012, CARA distributed the survey to a total of 5,246 men known and identified by church leaders to be in formation or recently ordained. A total of 1,575 men completed the questionnaire, making it one of the largest recent surveys of men in formation and the newly ordained.

“The survey was designed to assess the role and influence of Catholic colleges and universities on the vocational discernment of men entering the seminary and religious life in the United States.”

The survey of women was made possible through funding provided by from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. In fall 2014, CARA asked major superiors of institutes of women religious in the United States for contact information for entering, newly professed, and recent vocations to their institutes in the United States. These superiors identified 209 new entrants, 114 newly professed, and more than 1,000 perpetually professed women who had entered religious life since 2000. CARA contacted these women and invited them to participate in a survey in January 2015. By March 2015, CARA had received completed surveys from 883 women, for a response rate of approximately 63 percent.

**Thank You**

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### About CARA

CARA is an independent, national, non-profit, Georgetown University-affiliated research center that has more than 50 years of experience conducting social scientific studies about the Catholic Church. Founded in 1964, CARA has three major dimensions to its mission:

1. to increase the Church's self-understanding
2. to serve the applied research needs of Church decision-makers
3. to advance scholarly research on religion, particularly Catholicism

The CARA staff is composed of professionally trained academic social scientists who have earned graduate degrees. CARA's long-standing policy is to be independent and objective, to let research findings stand on their own, and never take an advocacy position or go into areas outside its social science competence.

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CARA was founded by Catholic leaders in 1964 to put social science research tools at the service of the Catholic Church in the United States. For information on CARA and its mission of research, analysis, and planning, contact:

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*The Encouragers*

A SUMMARY REPORT OF THE 2013  
BOSTON COLLEGE  
SUMMIT ON VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD



# College Experience and Priesthood

A SUMMARY REPORT OF THE 2013

BOSTON COLLEGE

SUMMIT ON VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

COMPILED BY

Tim Muldoon, Ph.D.



BOSTON COLLEGE

ALEX

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## Introduction

In January 2012, Boston College and the Jesuit Conference USA commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to assess the impact of Catholic higher education on the vocational discernment of men entering the seminary and religious life in the United States, seeking to determine variables related to what led them to the seminary and/or eventual ordination. In June 2013, Boston College convened the Summit on Vocations to the Priesthood to share and discuss the results of their study, *The Influence of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment to Priesthood and Religious Life*,<sup>1</sup> with members of the Church hierarchy, diocesan and religious order vocation directors, college and university leaders, and representatives from lay organizations whose missions are to support vocations. The goal of the Summit was to communicate new insights into what promotes and what hinders vocations to priesthood, and to facilitate dialogue toward developing a national strategy for fostering such vocations. The collective creativity and imagination brought to bear on the topic of vocations offers a unique opportunity for the Church.

In his opening remarks, Cardinal Seán O'Malley, archbishop of Boston, pointed to the significance of this gathering.

*College students having regular interaction with clergy and religious, particularly as teachers, and having the opportunity to discuss matters concerning faith and religion in the classroom—clergy and religious being present to the young people, engaging them from the perspective of their own vocations, and our lives lived in service of the Church—makes a great difference.*

—CARDINAL SEÁN O'MALLEY

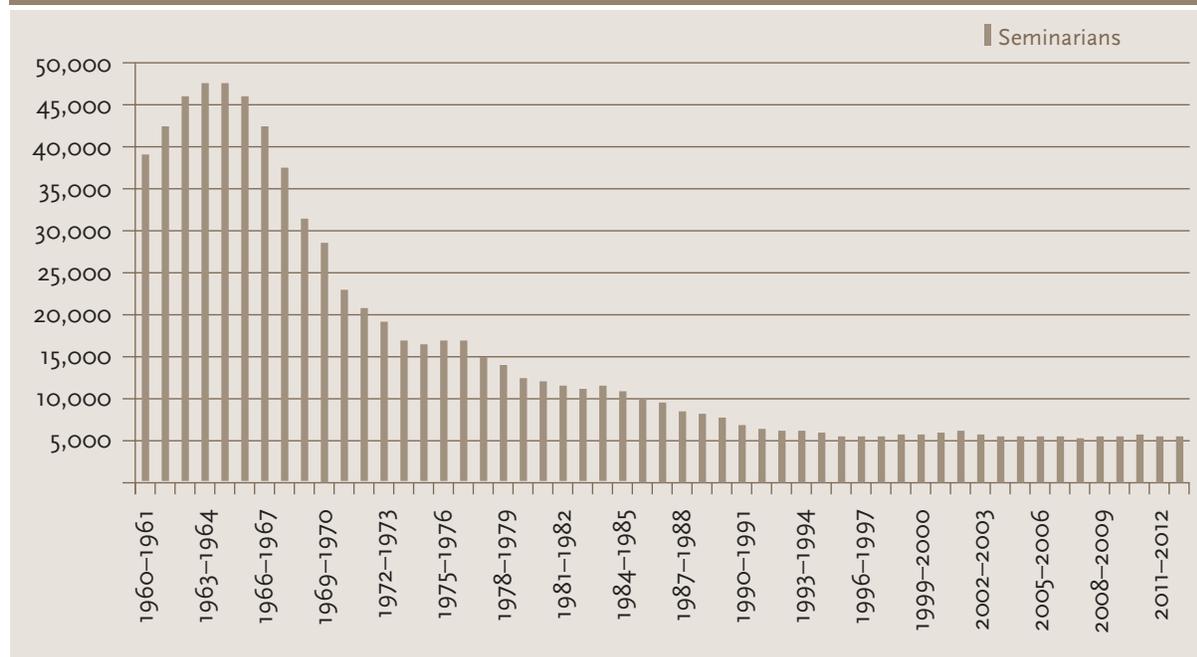
**What follows in these pages is a summary of the Summit proceedings, including:**

- ◆ an overview of past CARA research on vocations to the priesthood, commissioned by the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- ◆ a summary of the new report commissioned by Boston College and the Jesuit Conference USA
- ◆ comments and reflections from experts at the Summit

Our primary audience for this report includes bishops and religious superiors, diocesan and religious order vocation directors, college presidents, mission officers, leaders in student affairs, and directors of campus ministry. As will become clear, a strategy for encouraging vocations to the priesthood must be a collaborative endeavor among these leaders in the Church today.

**U.S. Seminarians 1960–2013**

*Diocesan and Religious, College Level and Above*



Source: *Official Catholic Directory*

1. James Cavendish, Melissa Cidade, and Ryan Muldoon, *The Influence of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment to Priesthood and Religious Life*, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, September 2012. The full report is online at [bc.edu/priesthoodsummit](http://bc.edu/priesthoodsummit).

## Keynote Address

by William P. Leahy, S.J., President, Boston College

A STRATEGY FOR ENCOURAGING VOCATIONS TO PRIESTHOOD

I am convinced there are many young men who are ready to answer the call to priesthood, especially in the United States with its over two hundred Catholic colleges and universities. In the first book of Samuel, the Lord says, “I will choose a faithful priest who shall do what I have in heart and mind” (2:35). The text is a reminder that a priestly vocation comes from God, and so our question is a modest one: How do we assist God? To put it differently, how do we in colleges and universities encourage the inclinations and desires of young men who seriously consider answering God’s call to priesthood?

The challenge we have is multifold, but it really starts with us who are clergy and vowed religious. There is nothing as powerful as happy, fulfilled priests and religious. That is contagious. That attracts. If we are not happy, fulfilled, ready to recruit others, they will not follow us. We know that as a group, priests are happy in their ministry, as the book *Same Call, Different Men* shows.<sup>2</sup> We, as a group, need to live in hope and with faith.

We also need to have perspective. It is incumbent upon us to guard against pessimism. The history of the Church is long and varied. Consider the ravaging effects of the bubonic plague, which in the fourteenth century killed as much as 30 to 50 percent of the population of Europe. It left the Church in dire straits, because many of the people who tended to those who were ill were priests and religious. Consider too the effects of the French

Revolution, which saw the exile or execution of thousands of priests. The Church has faced many difficult days, which remind us that our own situation is not so dire.

There are practical steps that we can take in fostering vocations. It is critical that every diocese, archdiocese, or religious community have a strategic plan for fostering and promoting vocations. I use that word “strategic” because that word is about



William P. Leahy, S.J.

having an honest assessment of current realities and current efforts, asking what are the real priorities of the particular group—diocese, archdiocese, or religious community.

We are well advised to show our strategic plans to a group of lay collaborators, men and women. What will they—who parent future priests, who staff our schools and colleges, who populate our churches—think of this plan? Is it realistic? Does it have the kind of comprehensive scope that it should have? Will they help to implement it?

My experience of a number of communities and dioceses is that they start with a great plan but don't follow through for a period of years. In my world of higher education, strategic plans work when there is clear assessment and clear effort at isolating priorities. Most importantly, there is the step of implementing with personnel and with money. I would ask those of you who are directly involved in promoting vocations: Do you have a plan, is it comprehensive, do you share it, and are you consistent in its implementation?

In our age we've seen three important and beneficial changes that impact the culturing of young people to consider vocations of all sorts: to marriage and family, to vowed religious life, and to priesthood. First, many schools, both non-Catholic and Catholic, have strong emphases on service to others. Many who work with young people in the formative stages of their lives recognize the need for adequate practical and spiritual preparation, and, afterwards, for reflection on the meaning of their experiences. How were they invited to consider the place of God and of Christ in what they saw? What are they going to do about the situations that cause the suffering they see?

A second change is in focused retreat programs. The more we do retreat programs that are serious about engagement of prayer, the person of Christ, and Scripture, the more we are helping students discover vocations. Michael Himes, a priest from the diocese of Brooklyn who teaches at Boston College, asks three questions of students and parents at new student orientations each summer: What are you passionate about? Are you good at it? And, is it needed? If you answer those questions honestly, he says, you will have a great start on a fulfilling life. Retreats can invite young people to consider these kinds of questions seriously, with the help of mentors. Many young men and women have the opportunity to reflect upon this idea of serving God in a very focused, perhaps vowed way. Their reflections ripen like fruit on a tree. They need time, but there comes that moment when people need to be asked

*It is critical that every diocese, archdiocese, or religious community have a strategic plan for fostering and promoting vocations.*

very specifically: "Are you thinking about a vocation, or have you thought about a vocation to a particular religious community or diocesan priesthood?" The fruit needs to be picked at the right time.

The third change is the presence of priesthood support groups on campus. These are often led by the president, lending a certain seriousness to the effort, but they could also be led by a campus minister or a faculty member. Students who are thinking about priesthood often feel isolated. If they can be part of a group that meets once a month, have time for prayer and conversation, and hear the vocation stories of others, they will feel encouraged, and can confirm a sense of direction. Ultimately, there is no substitute for young people having personal contact with members of religious communities and diocesan clergy. That relationship speaks to people in such powerful ways.

Before Saint Ignatius died, he sent young Jesuit priests into university locations, because he wanted them to be in places where there would be individuals interested in the Jesuit mission, and who might consider joining the new order. We have, in the United States, huge opportunities in our colleges and high schools. We have a great network, and we must learn to leverage it for the purpose of finding the right people.

If I were a bishop or a provincial, I would take a cue from Major League Baseball. They must have a plan for what people they want in their minor-league system. They have owners—like bishops—who give time and commitment. They have general managers—like provincials and superiors. They have field managers, similar to vocation directors. Finally, they have tremendous scouts. We need people who will identify individuals who have talent, inclination, and desire, who can be pointed in the direction of priesthood and religious life. And if we would do that as sincerely and as ardently as

we do many other things, I believe we would have more and more vocations.

The vocations are there. God has not left us orphans. We're not alone. In Jeremiah 29, we hear the Lord saying,

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray

to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the LORD.... (Jer. 29: 11-14)

What God says to the Israelites in this text is also what God says to us about vocations. When we're serious about our strategy, when we give the example, when we encourage and invite, we will reap abundant vocations.

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2. Mary L. Gautier, Paul M. Perl, and Stephen J. Fichter, *Same Call, Different Men: The Evolution of the Priesthood Since Vatican II* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2012).





## The Emerging Picture

The Summit began with a picture of those men who seriously consider vocations to the priesthood, drawn from work that CARA researchers Mark Gray and Mary Gautier have done for the Committee on Consecrated Life and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.<sup>3</sup> Following are summaries of their presentations.

### HOW AND WHEN DO YOUNG MEN SHOW INTEREST IN A PRIESTLY VOCATION?

Gray began by underscoring the difficulty that the Catholic community faces in regard to encouraging vocations to priesthood: “There are too few Catholics who realize they play an important role in ensuring that priests can be there now and in the future.” Among never-married U.S. Catholics, for example, very few have themselves ever encouraged someone to become a priest (5 percent), brother (3 percent), or sister (3 percent). Many respondents to their survey (31 percent) indicated that it was an individual decision. And the great majority of never-married Catholics were never themselves encouraged to consider life as a priest, brother, or sister.<sup>4</sup>

While not conclusive, these data are indicators that communities of faith must make particular efforts to reach out to young people to propose ideas for their vocational consideration, rather than assume that membership in a rich Catholic subculture—a fea-

*There are too few Catholics who realize they play an important role in ensuring that priests can be there now and in the future.*

ture of mid-twentieth-century Catholicism, but less common today—will suffice. Gray put it starkly: “We need about 200 more ordinations per year to return to stability.” We need, to take the point a step further, thousands of people willing to identify young men who will seriously consider priesthood. Who are these young men? According to the studies, they are, Gray observed, likely to have the following profile:

Active in a parish youth group. Attendance at a Catholic high school. Was encouraged to consider vocation by one or more people. Personally knows clergy and religious. And attended World Youth Day or National Catholic Youth Conference.

Gray noted that one of the keys to creating more vocations is not just encouraging young men to consider becoming a priest. His “favorite finding of the whole study” is that what is essential is encouraging the encouragers. Of those who responded to the study, only 6 percent reported no encouragement from others, meaning that most men who enter the seminary have at some point been encouraged to do so by a family member, teacher, pastor, or someone else. The study makes this point clearly:

Respondents who have one person encouraging them are nearly twice as likely to consider a vocation as those who are not encouraged. Each additional person encouraging these respondents increases the likelihood of consideration. The effect is additive. Respondents who had three persons encourage them would be expected to be more than five times more likely to consider a vocation than someone who was not encouraged by anyone.<sup>5</sup>

*Respondents who had three persons encourage them would be expected to be more than five times more likely to consider a vocation than someone who was not encouraged by anyone.*

Gray described the encouragement of three people as “the sweet spot.” He described the phenomenon of encouragement this way:

You can imagine: One person encourages you, and you think, “Where did that come from?” Two people encourage you, and you think, “That’s weird!” Three people encourage you, and you begin to say, “I’ve got to think about this....” And that appears to be exactly what happens. Now, it just seems to be that, in our culture today, there are not three or more people around many young Catholic men encouraging them to do this.

Much of the conversation during the Summit focused on this finding, and many people present observed that it emphasized the importance of one-to-one contact with those considering priesthood. Use of technology and social media may help cast a wide net,<sup>6</sup> but more important is cultivating an understanding that all Catholics have the potential of either encouraging or discouraging a vocation.<sup>7</sup>

Gray pointed to sources of potential growth in numbers of religious and ordained vocations within the Church. He observed that high school is the period when many young men report thinking seriously about priesthood, and that college seems to be an “amplifier” to these earlier experiences.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, he pointed to some good news: among never-married Catholic men, 1.4 million consider a vocation to priesthood or religious life at least a little or more, and 350,000 have “very seriously” considered it.

At present, the ethnic profile of priests does not match the ethnic profile of all Catholics in the United States. Hispanics are particularly underrepre-

sented, especially in view of the fact that they will in the near future comprise a near-majority of U.S. Catholics.<sup>9</sup> Only 14 percent of students in Catholic schools today are Hispanic, meaning that the majority of Hispanics miss that potential source of vocational encouragement. Consider further that at present there is a gross disproportion in the ratio of Hispanic Catholics to Hispanic priests: only about 15 percent of priests ordained in 2014 are Hispanic. There are about 3,000 priests of Hispanic descent to some 34 million Hispanic Catholics in the United States (averaging one priest for every 11,333 people).<sup>10</sup>

The good news about young men who seriously consider priesthood, Gray reported, is that there is no variation by race and identity, meaning that over time we will likely see priests coming from every racial and ethnic group in the Church. In his opening remarks, Cardinal O’Malley stated it well:

The days of our clergy and religious coming particularly from Irish or Italian heritage are long behind us. The universal Church is very much in our midst here and now, and we must provide opportunities for these young people to consider a vocation.

*350,000 never-married men have “very seriously” considered being a priest or religious brother.*

A challenge facing vocation directors is to find ways to reach Hispanic youth in settings other than Catholic schools: parish youth groups, Newman Centers, and others. The same challenge exists in reaching out to young men from areas with significant Catholic migration to the United States: Mexico, Vietnam, the Philippines, Poland, Colombia, and Nigeria, among others.

#### **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN WHO ANSWER THE CALL TO PRIESTHOOD**

Mary Gautier turned to address the characteristics of both the young men entering priestly life and those who are encouraging them to do so. Most significant, she said, is that the average age of entrance is older than it was a generation ago, evidenced by the fact that many college seminaries have closed over the past several decades.<sup>11</sup> The average age for

## Forty-four percent of ordinands attended a Catholic college.

diocesan ordinands in 2013 was 35.5, and for religious order ordinands it was 37. But these ordinands report that they first considered a vocation to the priesthood at 17.

Many men enter the seminary after college, and as a result, many enter with educational debt. Over the past 10 years, the men's and women's religious institutes in the United States have had more than 15,000 serious inquirers (averaging 38 per institute), and a third of those had educational debt that averaged some \$30,000. On average, four applicants per institute were accepted with educational debt.<sup>12</sup>

The men who entered priestly formation were just as likely as the broader Catholic population to have attended Catholic elementary or high schools, but they are significantly more likely to have attended a Catholic college. Forty-four percent of ordinands attended a Catholic college, in contrast to only about 7 percent of the overall U.S. Catholic population.

Who encouraged them to become priests? Two-thirds say it was a priest, and almost as many report-

ed that friends were encouragers. On the other hand, half reported that friends or classmates discouraged them from becoming priests, and four in 10 reported that a family member discouraged them.

Gautier drew from her work in *Same Call, Different Men* to describe the priests who are encouragers. These men are predominantly of an earlier generation: averaging 63 years old, white, non-Hispanic. Over a fifth are already retired or semi-retired. Most are parish priests, meaning they were very possibly the first to invite a young man to consider priesthood, at least outside his family.

More than a quarter of priests have never encouraged someone to consider priesthood. But younger priests—those ordained since 1992—are much more likely to say they've encouraged someone to consider priesthood within the last six months. Gautier concluded her remarks by emphasizing the point that priestly vocation requires encouragement:

A vocation is formed through multiple contacts with different role models in parishes, the pastor, in schools, in the family, and in the community. This vocation, this nascent vocation, this idea about becoming a priest, is forged and solidified then through college experiences.

In the next section, we'll examine more specifically what those college experiences look like.

3. Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier, *Consideration of Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics*, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, September 2012, at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/survey-of-youth-and-young-adults-on-vocations.cfm>. See also the profile of newly professed religious, including studies of college loan debt, in *New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2013* at <http://www.usccb.org/vocations>.
4. Gray and Gautier, pp. 63-72, 91-93.
5. Gray and Gautier, p. 4.
6. A related datum is the point raised by Msgr. John McLaughlin in a later panel at the Summit. Citing his work with the Military Archdiocese, he reported that even with a sophisticated website, the vast majority of serious inquiries came through recommendations by chaplains who had individual contact with inquirers.
7. Gray and Gautier also report on the "discouragers" in their study (Gray and Gautier, p. 70).
8. Compare to the 2011 CARA Catholic poll: "CARA's surveys have found that Catholics attending a Catholic high school or Catholic college are much more likely to say they have ever considered a religious vocation. This effect is particularly strong for Catholic college attendance. About four in 10 men (40 percent) and women (41 percent) who have attended a Catholic college report having considered a vocation at some point. Online at <http://cara.georgetown.edu/CCP.pdf>.

9. <http://www.pewresearch.org/key-data-points/u-s-catholics-key-data-from-pew-research/>
10. See the US Bishops' report on the ordination class of 2014 at (<http://www.usccb.org/news/2014/14-080.cfm>). See also "Hispanics in the United States and the Catholic Church," at <http://www.usccb.org/about/leadership/holy-see/benedict-xvi/upload/Papal-Transition-2013-Hispanics.pdf>, and Hosffman Ospino, "Hispanic Ministry in Catholic Parishes," at <http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/stm/pdf/2014/BC-NatlStudyParishesHM-Rep1-201405.pdf>.
11. See Mary L. Gautier, *Catholic Ministry Formation Enrollment: Statistical Overview for 2012-2013* (Washington: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2013), at <http://cara.georgetown.edu/Publications/Overview2012-13-FINAL.pdf>. See also Robert Anello, *Minor Setback or Major Disaster: The Rise and Demise of Minor Seminaries in the United States, 1958-1983* (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 2011), at [http://aladinrc.wrlc.org/bitstream/handle/1961/9702/Anello\\_cua\\_0043A\\_10235display.pdf?sequence=1](http://aladinrc.wrlc.org/bitstream/handle/1961/9702/Anello_cua_0043A_10235display.pdf?sequence=1).
12. It is worth observing in parenthesis that there are now examples of men and women "crowdfunding" their entrance into a religious institute, using social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. They ask friends to contribute to a fund to pay down their educational debt in order that a religious institute may welcome them without an accompanying debt burden. See <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/fundraising-boot-camp-helps-those-called-to-religious-life>.



## The CARA study: *The Influence of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment to Priesthood and Religious Life*

Between April 2012 and June 2012, CARA distributed a survey to a total of 5,246 men known and identified by church leaders to be in formation or recently ordained. A total of 1,575 men (or 30 percent of those who had been sent surveys) completed the questionnaire, making it one of the largest recent surveys of men in formation and the newly ordained.<sup>13</sup>

In his presentation at the Summit, Tom Gaunt, S.J., executive director of CARA, pointed to the significance of undertaking this study:

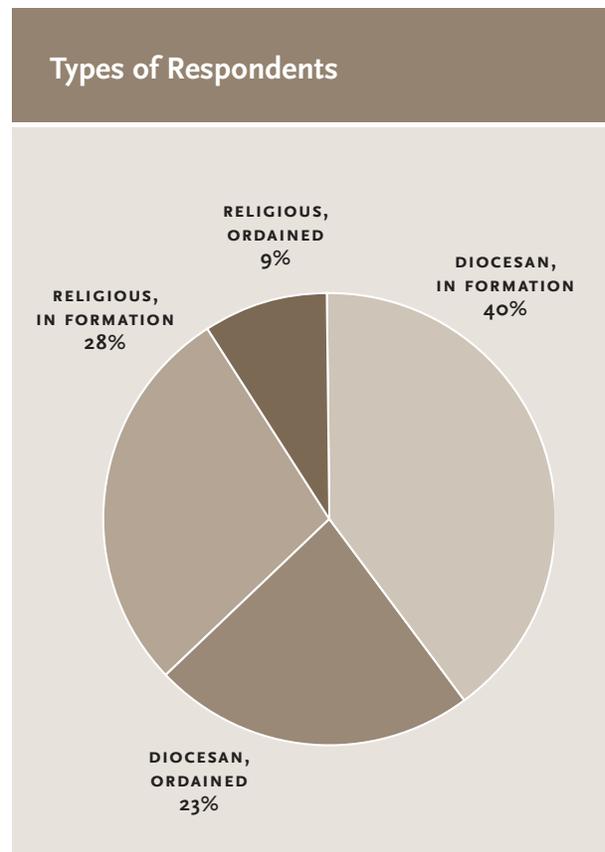
The participation in Catholic elementary and high schools was about the same for all adult Catholics as it was for men entering the seminary or recently ordained. But what we saw, clearly, was this huge difference for the number of men who had gone to Catholic colleges and universities.

Mark Gray had suggested earlier that college experiences “amplify” experiences in elementary and high school; and in light of his observation that the presence of three encouragers in a young man’s life seems to represent a vocational “tipping point,” Gaunt’s observation about the difference college makes is not surprising. Simply put, if a Catholic college provides more experiences of encouragement of vocation to priesthood, it is likely that such encouragement will bear fruit.

Gaunt invited lead researcher James Cavendish to explain the results of the study. Cavendish began by pointing to the population who responded to the initial survey, thanking the hundreds of contacts—bishops, superiors, and vocation directors of dioceses and religious orders—who made it possible. The sample is representative of all priests in the United States, though there is a slightly higher representation of religious order priests:

- ◆ Two out of five respondents (or 40 percent) are in some stage of formation for diocesan priesthood.

- ◆ 28 percent are in formation for religious order priesthood (i.e., they are affiliated with a religious institute).



- ♦ 23 percent are recently ordained diocesan priests, and 9 percent are recently ordained religious order priests.

He went on to describe the content of the 125-question survey:

They were asked about the nature of their contact with priests and religious men and women while they were in college. They were asked about their college coursework, the nature and frequency of their involvement in campus ministry, their involvement in different vocation discernment programs, whether they participated in Catholic parishes off campus. They were asked about the frequency of their prayer, their Mass attendance, their devotional practices, their experience with retreats, spiritual direction, service activities, and also a lot about their peer friendships, and just the overall religious atmosphere of the college they attended. So they were asked a wide variety of things about their college experience, and then asked to reflect on what influence they thought those had in their discernment to become priests.

What follows below, for the sake of brevity, is a

list of the types of questions asked in the survey, with a summary of responses. Readers who wish to see the entire study can access it online at [bc.edu/priesthoodsummit](http://bc.edu/priesthoodsummit).

### WHERE ARE RESPONDENTS FROM, AND WHAT STAGES OF FORMATION ARE REPRESENTED?

- ♦ Most (83 percent) were born in the United States, and nearly all (89 percent) were baptized as infants. Almost all come from families in which both parents were Catholic.
- ♦ The 1,575 men represent 46 of the 72 seminaries in the United States, 84 of the 237 religious institutes, and 109 of the 176 dioceses.
- ♦ 490 (or 31 percent) report being ordained within the last five years. The other 1,073 men (or 69 percent) are in formation either in the seminary or in one of the other stages of formation for a religious institute, such as novitiate.

### WHAT ARE THEIR AGES?

On average, the men in religious formation are older than those in diocesan formation.

## Age Distribution of Respondents

Percentage in each category:

	ALL	DIOCESAN IN FORMATION	DIOCESAN ORDAINED	RELIGIOUS IN FORMATION	RELIGIOUS ORDAINED
UNDER AGE 19	1%	2%	0%	<1%	0%
AGE 20–24	15	30	<1	11	0
AGE 25–29	27	34	15	35	0
AGE 30–34	24	16	40	26	16
AGE 35–39	13	4	18	13	38
AGE 40–44	7	4	7	5	24
AGE 45–49	6	4	8	4	10
AGE 50–54	3	2	3	5	5
AGE 55–59	3	2	5	1	3
AGE 60–64	1	1	1	1	3
AGE 65–69	1	1	2	0	1
AVERAGE AGE	33	30	37	32	41

## Reasons for Choosing College or University

Percentage in each category reporting “some” or “very much” importance:

TYPE OF COLLEGE ATTENDED THE LONGEST:

	ALL	NON-CATHOLIC	CATHOLIC	COLLEGE SEMINARY
LOCATION OF COLLEGE	68%	74%	62%	55%
ACADEMIC REPUTATION OF COLLEGE	67	68	69	50
AFFORDABILITY OF COLLEGE	61	73	48	43
SIZE OF COLLEGE	49	41	61	43
FAMILY ENCOURAGEMENT	42	40	45	42
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF COLLEGE	40	7	79	60
TEACHER ENCOURAGEMENT	28	27	29	28
OTHER	78	68	88	93

### WHERE DID THEY GO TO COLLEGE? HOW DID THEY CHOOSE A COLLEGE?

- ◆ 53 percent had some experience in a Catholic college. Of these, most matriculated for most or all of their college experience.
  - ◆ 10 percent attended a seminary college.
  - ◆ 4 percent had some exposure to a Catholic college but spent most time at a different kind of college.
- ◆ Those who attended a non-Catholic college are the most likely to cite the location of the college (74 percent) and the affordability of the college (73 percent) as their reasons for college choice.
- ◆ Those who attended a Catholic non-seminary college are the most likely to cite the college’s religious affiliation (79 percent) and academic reputation (69 percent) as their reasons for college choice.
- ◆ Reasons for their choice of college varied. For many, location, academic reputation, and cost were important. The most striking difference in the table above is that most of those who attended a Catholic college did so precisely because of its religious affiliation.

## Participated “Periodically” or “Regularly” in These Activities

Percentage in each category:

	ALL
CLUBS/STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS	56%
ATHLETICS OR INTRAMURAL SPORTS	48
CAMPUS MINISTRY	46
DRAMA/MUSIC	32
STUDENT GOVERNMENT	19
PARISH YOUNG ADULT GROUP	18
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS	15
RESIDENTIAL LIFE (RESIDENT ASSISTANT, RESIDENTIAL MINISTER, ETC.)	15
ACADEMIC FRATERNITY	11
FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (FOCUS)	9
GREEK FRATERNITY	8
R.O.T.C.	4

## WHAT ACTIVITIES DID THEY ENGAGE IN AT COLLEGE?

- ♦ A majority of respondents were active in various clubs and student organizations on campus.

## WHAT WAS THEIR EXPOSURE TO PRIESTS, BROTHERS, AND SISTERS?

- ♦ Those who attended Catholic colleges were much more likely to encounter priests, brothers, and sisters. Of particular note is the fact that 88 percent of them had a priest as a professor, in contrast to only 18 percent of those at non-Catholic colleges.
- ♦ Six in 10 of those who attended non-Catholic colleges encountered priests, brothers, or sisters in campus ministry, compared with nine in 10 of those who attended Catholic colleges.
- ♦ 15 percent of non-Catholic college attendees encountered them as administrators, compared with 93 percent of Catholic college attendees.

## Exposure to Priests, Sisters, and Brothers during College as...

Percentage in each category:

TYPE OF COLLEGE ATTENDED THE LONGEST:

	ALL*	NON-CATHOLIC	CATHOLIC
CAMPUS MINISTERS	73%	59%	90%
ADMINISTRATORS OR STAFF	49	15	93
PROFESSORS	48	18	88

\*Findings presented in this and the following tables under the category heading “All” refer to findings based on all respondents except those who attended a seminary college.

## WHAT PRACTICES NOURISHED THEIR FAITH WHILE AT COLLEGE?

- ◆ Those who attended Catholic colleges had much more access to the Mass on campus.
- ◆ Half of non-Catholic college attendees and just about all Catholic college attendees had a Catholic chapel on campus.
- ◆ Similarly, 49 percent of non-Catholic college attendees, compared with 91 percent of Catholic college attendees, had Mass available on campus daily.
- ◆ Many at non-Catholic campuses had to go off campus to attend Mass: 79 percent reported attending Mass at least once a week, even though only half of them had a Catholic chapel on campus.
- ◆ Access to spiritual direction—one of the key indicators of a future vocation—differed significantly between the two groups. Only 30 percent of non-Catholic college attendees had a regular spiritual director, compared with 62 percent of Catholic college attendees. Of the spiritual directors:
  - ◆ 50 percent were religious order priests;
  - ◆ 42 percent were diocesan priests;
  - ◆ the remainder were laypeople (3 percent), religious brothers (3 percent), religious sisters (2 percent), or deacons (1 percent).

*“If we rank those reasons that respondents reported as having very much influence on their vocational discernment, what we see is that spiritual direction is at the top of the list, followed by their Mass attendance.”*

—JAMES CAVENDISH

- ◆ Two-thirds of all respondents participated in a religious retreat.
  - ◆ 59 percent of non-Catholic college attendees, compared with 80 percent of Catholic college attendees.
- ◆ 70 percent of all respondents participated in service projects.
  - ◆ 63 percent of non-Catholic college attendees, compared with 78 percent of Catholic college attendees.
- ◆ Participants engaged in a number of devotional practices during college. (See table below.)

## Participation in Devotional and Spiritual Practices during College

Percentage in each category:

TYPE OF COLLEGE ATTENDED THE LONGEST:

	ALL	NON-CATHOLIC	CATHOLIC
ANY DEVOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL PRACTICES	86%	82%	91%
ROSARY	74	69	80
EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION	72	66	79
OTHER INDIVIDUAL PRAYER	62	56	69
LITURGY OF THE HOURS	56	48	67
BIBLE STUDY	54	57	51
HOLY HOUR	53	47	62
LECTIO DIVINA	42	37	48
OTHER GROUP PRAYER	15	14	17

Note that Catholic college attendees participated more in all these types of devotions except Bible study, perhaps because those on non-Catholic campuses were more likely to avail themselves of devotions common among Protestants.

### DID THEIR COLLEGES PROMOTE A RESPECT FOR FAITH?

There is a significant difference between Catholic and non-Catholic colleges in attendees' perception of the respect accorded to faith, religion, and prayer.

Note in particular the academic dimension of the question: discussions of faith in class or with professors on non-Catholic campuses are rare. The campus ministry setting on non-Catholic campuses offers some opportunity for the discussion of faith.

The difference between Catholic and non-Catholic campuses is evident too in the tables below.

Taken together, these two tables show that Catholic campuses are much more likely to cultivate an environment in which discussions of faith are welcome.

*“Of those devotional activities that respondents noted were especially influential, three out of four of the practices—that is, Holy Hour, Eucharistic adoration, and the Mass—were centered on the Eucharist, which speaks of the importance that respondents assigned to the Eucharist in their vocational discernment.”*

—JAMES CAVENDISH

### “Frequently” Discussed Faith, Religion, and Prayer...

Percentage in each category:

TYPE OF COLLEGE ATTENDED THE LONGEST:

	ALL	NON-CATHOLIC	CATHOLIC
WITH OTHER STUDENTS OUTSIDE OF CLASS	49%	40%	62%
WITH CAMPUS MINISTRY STAFF	37	35	41
IN CLASS	29	11	51
WITH PROFESSORS OUTSIDE OF CLASS	24	9	43

### Level of Interest Expressed in Faith, Religion, and Prayer by...

Percentage in each category responding “some” or “very much” interest:

TYPE OF COLLEGE ATTENDED THE LONGEST:

	ALL	NON-CATHOLIC	CATHOLIC
CAMPUS MINISTRY	77%	70%	87%
FELLOW STUDENTS	61	49	78
THE COLLEGE AS A WHOLE	42	20	70
FACULTY	39	16	69
ADMINISTRATION	33	10	62

## WHO ENCOURAGED THEM TO CONSIDER PRIESTHOOD?

A key college experience in terms of fostering vocational discernment is exposure to priests, sisters, or brothers in the roles of professor and campus minister. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of respondents overall state that a priest/sister/brother *professor* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment, and over half (56 percent) report that a priest/sister/brother *campus minister* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment. Moreover, substantially more of the respondents who attended a Catholic college report that a priest/sister/brother *professor* had a “significant positive influence” on their vocational discernment than respondents who attended a non-Catholic college (72 percent to 46 percent, respectively). The same cannot be said with respect to having a priest/sister/brother as a *campus minister*, however; when asked about this, responses from those who attended a Catholic college are not substantially different than from those who attended a non-Catholic college (57 percent to 55 percent, respectively).

*Exposure to priests, sisters, or brothers in the roles of professor and campus minister is important.*

Compared to those who attended a non-Catholic college, those who attended a Catholic college are: over three times more likely to report being encouraged in their vocational discernment by college staff (50 percent to 14 percent); almost three times more likely to be encouraged by a college professor (72 percent to 25 percent); twice as likely to be encouraged by a religious sister or brother; and substantially more likely to be encouraged by parents, siblings, friends, and campus ministers.

Those who attended a Catholic college are over twice as likely as those who attended a non-Catholic college to be so influenced by a college course. While 58 percent of those who attended a Catholic college report having been especially influenced by a college course, only 27 percent of those who at-

*Experts have long recognized the importance of friendship networks in sustaining belief and practice.*

tended a non-Catholic college report likewise. While the course names are widely varied, the most frequently mentioned academic departments were theology, philosophy, and religious studies. A significant number of respondents also identified classes in history, the social sciences, the life sciences, the humanities (including art, music, literature, classics, and language), and business.

Friends and roommates are also reported to be influential in vocational discernment. Those who attended a Catholic college are substantially more likely than those who attended a non-Catholic college to report being influenced and supported by their roommates and friends in their vocation discernment and choice. In contrast to those who attended non-Catholic colleges, those who attended Catholic colleges are 10 percent more likely to report that their roommates had “very much” influence on their discernment, over 15 percent more likely to report that their close friends at college had “very much” influence on their discernment, and almost 25 percent more likely to report that their college friends were “very” supportive of their vocational choice.

Summarizing the findings, Cavendish pointed to a basic logic in the phenomenon of encouragement:

The importance of peers in fostering and sustaining priestly and religious vocations should not be underestimated. Sociologists in general, and sociologists of religion in particular, have long recognized the importance of friendship networks in sustaining belief and practice. Noted sociologist of religion Peter Berger (1967), for instance, spoke of the importance of peer friendship networks in terms of providing what he called “plausibility structures.” “Plausibility structures,” according to Berger, are those networks of like-minded others who, through our participation with them, help to sustain our belief and commitment to things which might in other settings seem implausible to believe.<sup>14</sup>

What this means is that in the context of cultural forces that sometimes are not supportive of religious vocational discernment, it is important to foster “plausibility structures,” which in this context means a “culture of vocations” in small communities like parishes, schools, and colleges.

Cavendish concluded his talk with recommendations: make priests available for spiritual direction;

offer Mass, Eucharistic adoration, and Holy Hours; assign priests to teaching roles. Those who oversee campus ministries on non-Catholic campuses can offer these opportunities, or point to off-campus parishes where they might also be available.



## DISCUSSION

In the discussion that followed the presentation, Gaunt highlighted the fact that there are a number of non-Catholic campuses with vibrant campus ministries, such as Texas A&M, the University of Kansas at Lawrence, and George Washington University. Such places show conscious effort to create a Catholic environment, such that conversations about faith can emerge easily.

Turning to Catholic colleges and universities, Cavendish pointed out there are many different types, with differences in size, population, selectivity, and even relationship to the Magisterium. The current study does not specify such differences, suggesting avenues for further research. Gaunt commented that respondents from Jesuit institutions were more likely (among other differences) to be drawn to an intellectual apostolate within the context of a religious order. But looking further, he observed that no Catholic institutions stood out as generating a disproportionate number of graduates who later entered the seminary.

One of the Summit participants raised a question about non-campus-related ministries, such as the Fellowship of Catholic University Students and the Newman Connection.<sup>15</sup> His question focused on the sharing of information between parishes and campus ministries, so that Catholic students might inhabit a culture of vocation early in their college experiences—those “plausibility structures” that Cavendish had cited in his presentation. Gaunt

pointed out that other CARA research showed how the key factor in declining religiosity among Catholic teens has to do not necessarily with the influence of college life *per se*, but rather the fact that Mass attendance declines when a young person leaves home. In an unrelated study of Jesuit volunteers,<sup>16</sup> CARA found that they were going to Mass less often when they finished the program, but that former volunteers five, 10, 15, and 20 years later were going to Mass almost twice as much as their peers. The phenomenon of declining religiosity, in other words, is a function of adolescence, not college attendance. Cavendish went on to point out that some public colleges refer students to the various campus ministries, and that it would be interesting to study further the characteristics of colleges that seem to foster interest in priesthood and religious life.

Another question related to the proportion of religious and diocesan priests. Gaunt observed that the number of future religious order priests is still in decline, but the number of men in diocesan seminaries is on the rise. He went on to observe that the Catholic population has shifted geographically, while very many Catholic colleges are in the old Catholic strongholds of the Northeast. Many young men attracted to vocations are in places where there are no Catholic colleges, suggesting perhaps the need for establishing campuses in areas of large Catholic populations currently unserved by Catholic colleges.

13. The numbers represent a more than sufficient completion rate to make a correlation to the general population.

14. Cavendish et al., *The Influence of College Experiences on Vocational Discernment to Priesthood and Religious Life*, p. 49. Cf. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967). Berger writes, “Beliefs become plausible if they are supported by the people around us. We are all social beings, we were created as social beings and much of what we think about the world depends on support by important people with whom we live.” See also “Rethinking Secularization: A Conversation with Peter Berger,” at [http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/10/11/rethinking-secularization-a-conversation-](http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/10/11/rethinking-secularization-a-conversation-with-peter-berger-2/)

[with-peter-berger-2/](http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/10/11/rethinking-secularization-a-conversation-with-peter-berger-2/).

15. See <http://www.focus.org/> and <http://www.newmanconnection.com/>.

16. See <http://cara.georgetown.edu/publications/workingpapers/Number7-JVCpaper.pdf>.



## The State of Vocations Today: *Views from the Top and from the Ground*

The Summit involved two panels of those whose roles give them a particular ability to be encouragers of priestly vocations. The first panel was a view “from the top”—that is, of leaders who make decisions about how to deploy people and resources for the sake of cultivating vocations in the Church. The second was a view “from the ground” of those involved in the recruitment and formation of future priests.

### VIEWS FROM THE TOP

The first panel was comprised of Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services of the United States; Francesco Cesareo, president of Assumption College; and Rev. Thomas O’Hara, C.S.C., provincial of the U.S. Province of Priests and Brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Cross. Rev. Richard Lennan of Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry moderated the discussion.

In response to Lennan’s question about how discernment of a vocation to priesthood takes place, Broglio observed that fully 10 percent of priests in the United States served in the military at some point in their lives. The single most important factor, he said, was a personal invitation and encouragement from one of the chaplains. Cesareo echoed that observation, but went on to say that in addition to a personal invitation, there must be an institutional invitation, by which he meant structures and programs that invite young people into reflection and discussion. He observed that many young people do not have a strong sense of what the priesthood really is, and so it is important for members of a religious community to share the joy of their vocations.

O’Hara amplified these points, speaking both as a provincial and as a former college president. He shared observations from having spent 23 years in the residence halls at King’s College, suggesting that the critical factor is having relationships

with the “whole student,” not only as a professor or campus minister. He shared the example of simply watching ESPN with a student in the residence hall, and starting a conversation that later turns to larger questions about what the student wants out of life.

All the panelists agreed that contact with priests is critical. In response to Lennan’s question about how students today perceive priests, O’Hara noted that what they really desire is authenticity: a good and holy person worthy of admiration. Later in the conversation, he observed that college life is a particularly apt situation in which formative conversations can take place. Over four (or more) years of a developmentally critical period in a young person’s life, a college offers opportunities for many types of conversations with faculty and staff.

The panelists noted challenges facing those who wish to cultivate vocations to the priesthood. Broglio, for example, noted the norm of “trophy culture,” the phenomenon of rewarding kids for simply showing up to play. There may be a general fear of commitment to any kind of vocation. O’Hara went on to observe that there are candidates who approach priesthood or religious life with serious psychological issues that demand professional evaluation. Lennan raised a third issue in a question about the effects of the sexual abuse crisis, to which O’Hara responded that among other things, it demands transparency in the formative process.

Lennan pointed to the work of Christopher Jamison, O.S.B., director of the National Office for

Vocation in the United Kingdom,<sup>17</sup> who emphasizes that a total culture of vocation involves all people, not only those called to priesthood or religious life. O'Hara agreed that such a vision of vocation means understanding the reality of people's lives—a theme he saw, for example, in Pope Francis's homily at the Chrism Mass in 2013.<sup>18</sup> Cesareo agreed, indicating that at Assumption College there is an effort to promote this "total culture," in an effort known as the Sophia Initiative.<sup>19</sup> A critical component of this total culture is spiritual direction. O'Hara noted that it takes specific training, and Cesareo echoed the point, indicating that college leaders needed to provide opportunity for campus ministers and others to undertake that training. Broglio observed that the Society of Jesus was in a privileged place to be of service in this regard, with their history of spiritual direction and the gift of Saint Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*.

A last point that Lennan asked the panelists to consider was the question of student debt that emerged from the CARA studies. O'Hara suggested that student educational debt was different from personal debt, and that it was important for religious institutes and dioceses to find ways to help with student debt. He indicated that in his institute, there were donors ready to help in this regard.

Several people responded thoughtfully to the panel. One bishop asked rhetorically whether the Church challenges and inspires young people with a vision of what God calls them to do. Another bishop shared the story of the large numbers of seminarians his relatively small diocese has generated in recent years, because of coordinated efforts by the bishop, the vocation directors, and the other priests in the diocese to create a culture of talking and praying about vocations to the priesthood. Broglio echoed this point, indicating it was critical to pray for vocations today. O'Hara concluded on a practical note, saying that leadership was important, and that having a strategy was necessary.

## VIEWS FROM THE GROUND

The second panel included three men who work directly with those in early stages of priestly formation. Rev. Jason Jalbert is the director of vocations in the Diocese of Manchester, and Rev. James Prehn, S.J., is the vocations director in the Chicago-Detroit Province of Jesuits. They were joined by Monsignor John McLaughlin, Jr., the director of spiritual direction at Saint John's Seminary in Boston. Rev. James Gartland, S.J., of the Faber Jesuit Community at Boston College, moderated the discussion.

In response to Gartland's question about how

the CARA studies impacted the ways panelists thought about their work, Jalbert began by pointing to the difference in his perception of promoting priestly vocations today compared with his own ordination in 2003. Flush with enthusiasm, he imagined a large response to the energy and passion he brought to his work. Over time, as the reality became clearer, he shared a sense of what it was like to work with real people. But he noted how important was the support of other priests, including those in religious orders at colleges like Saint Anselm in his diocese. The example of their lives, he said, was still inspiring.

McLaughlin pointed to the importance of spiritual direction, noting that in his previous work in the Military Archdiocese, spiritual direction was critical in part because it helped young people grow beyond the limited views of God they had developed as youths, especially in circumstances where their catechesis was poor. He also underscored the importance of encouraging the encouragers, something he himself did with military chaplains. His hope was that more priests would understand the need to encourage young people to think about vocations.

Prehn was struck by the finding that college experiences amplify (or perhaps drown out) earlier experiences. As a former high school principal, he understood the institutional commitment to send good people into formative roles where they will have abundant contact with young people. He commented further on the need to encourage the encouragers, indicating the importance of friends generally and female friends specifically. The lack of female friends, he offered, may be a clue to the kind of person a candidate is. Lastly, he was struck by the questions that emerged from considering the characteristics of the millennial generation. Archbishop Broglio's comment about "trophy culture" struck him as insightful, and he wondered further what that observation might mean for the Church in the United States.

Gartland picked up on the baseball analogy that Father William Leahy had used in his keynote address,<sup>20</sup> asking whether there were "scouts" and spiritual directors meeting the needs of vocation directors. Jalbert noted the discrepancy between the demonstrated efficacy of encouragement, on the one hand, and the actual numbers of priests doing the encouraging, on the other. He went on to indicate that raising the need for encouragers and asking for specific prayers for vocations to the priesthood is important. Manchester has seen a rise in the number of seminarians, which Jalbert attributes in part to a larger number of people praying for voca-

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tions. But he also noted the need for spiritual directors. McLaughlin agreed, but also pointed to the fact that military chaplains are very good about forwarding names to the “head scout,” the vocation director. Prehn added that it was useful to recruit high school teachers as encouragers, asking them to identify young men whom they or their children would go to if he were a priest. He shared how welcome a task it was to tell students that their teachers thought of them in this way.

Responding to Gartland’s question about prayer and the perhaps distracting effects of social media use, Jalbert reaffirmed the need for one-to-one contact. McLaughlin amplified this point, telling of his attempts to persuade young people to avoid constant digital distraction in order to hear the whispers of God—citing the story of Elijah at the cave (1 Kings 19: 11-13). Prehn’s response illustrated the earlier point about understanding priestly vocation against the backdrop of a total theology of vocation. He told of the example of one young man with whom he had been in contact a few years earlier, but from whom he had not heard in some time. The young man indicated that he stopped praying about priesthood *per se* and instead starting praying about his vocation; and after a time, he described how priesthood kept emerging in his mind and heart. Prehn described him this way: “This young man saw the wisdom of just praying for his vocation, and the Lord revealed to him that he has an inclination towards the priest-

hood.” What helps, Prehn added, is hearing the real stories of seminarians who have undergone similar discernment experiences.

Gartland asked the panelists to return to the question of a strategic plan for vocations to the priesthood, and they agreed that doing liturgy well was a necessity. McLaughlin shared his experience at Boston University, where he introduced the Liturgy of the Hours, with prayer throughout the day. He invited a spiritual director to be a regular part of Catholic Center life, so students could get to know him. And over time, over a dozen men showed interest in thinking about priesthood. Jalbert agreed that making liturgy beautiful—citing the writings of Pope Benedict XVI—was important, but that in some places this means overcoming a kind of parochial lethargy. Prehn added that the only way to make liturgy a priority is having the right people. They must be made available to serve.

In the question-and-answer session that followed, several speakers pointed to specific ways that it’s possible to build a more positive culture of priestly vocations: using ordinations to name priests who influenced men to enter the seminary; using college graduations to identify men and women entering religious life or diocesan priesthood; sending letters to thank people who served as encouragers to men entering the seminary. One person pointed to the summer conferences run by Franciscan University of Steubenville for teens,<sup>21</sup> while another pointed to the Vianney Vocations Program<sup>22</sup> for its consulting work with vocation directors.

On the question of how to leverage social media for helping young men to consider vocations, there was ambivalence: the panelists described it as time-consuming with modest return. Jalbert indicated it might help with first contact, but McLaughlin emphasized it was still critical to get back to inquirers within 24 hours, especially since some are sensitive in a naïve way to whether or not there is a “sign from God.” Prehn pointed to the fact that it’s possible to drive traffic to a website and use Google Analytics just to keep the vocation question on readers’ minds. In the end, though, all agreed that social media is a tool but the important thing is to foster individual contact with both encouragers and those they would encourage.

17. See <http://www.ukvocation.org/>.

18. See <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-homily-for-christ-mass-full-text>.

19. This discernment program for sophomores involves classes and co-curricular elements in a shared residence hall. See

<http://www.assumption.edu/academics/programs/sophia-initiative>.

20. See above, page 8.

21. See <http://www.steubenville.org/>.

22. See <http://www.vianneyvocations.com/>.



## New Directions and Emerging Strategies

The concluding segment of the Summit was a review of the proceedings and a look forward at what the research and findings suggest for the future of priestly vocations in the Church. Rev. James Burns, I.V.D., then interim dean of the Woods College of Advancing Studies at Boston College, and Rev. Shawn McKnight, executive director of the Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, organized the strategies into four main areas: for bishops, for vocation directors, for university leaders, and for cooperation and further study.

### FOR BISHOPS

The primary recommendation that emerged from the Summit was that every diocese have a strategy for promoting vocations to the priesthood: a pastoral plan for developing a culture of vocations on college campuses including key leaders, such as religious superiors, vocations directors, and college administrators (especially presidents). This plan might mean, for example, releasing talented priests, brothers, and sisters to teach courses, mindful that the influence of a priest/brother/sister professor was important for many of the young men surveyed in the *Influence of College Experiences* study.<sup>23</sup> Since many of the men in the College Experiences study also reported the influence of campus ministry—on both Catholic and non-Catholic campuses—another recommendation is to give attention to developing a vibrant and welcoming campus ministry program, attending to the people and resources necessary for its implementation.

A second recommendation is to foster collaboration among vocation directors, campus ministers, parishes, and the wider church. Perhaps one way to facilitate this kind of collaboration is to develop a pool of qualified ecclesial ministers for one-to-one conversations with those expressing interest in any kind of vocational discernment, mindful of the thrust of so much post-Vatican II theology that emphasizes the universal call to holiness. Other ideas include creating vocation committees involving re-

ligious and laity; assigning diocesan priests to college campuses; and encouraging catechesis on all vocations in the Church, mindful of the young man that James Prehn had met whose priestly vocation emerged more clearly after prayer about where God was calling him.<sup>24</sup>

The study on college debt pointed to the need for bishops to consider what strategies they will implement in order that debt not be an obstacle to priestly vocation.<sup>25</sup> One bishop in the audience described how his diocese took on a seminarian's debt with the understanding that the young man would pay it off if he chose not to continue to ordination. This and other strategies may assuage the concerns of those who delay ordination due to student debt.

A final strategy for bishops is to preach vocations everywhere, and, following the lead of the Manchester Diocese as described by Fr. Jason Jalbert,<sup>26</sup> develop specific requests to faithful Catholics to pray for future priests.

### FOR DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS ORDER VOCAATION DIRECTORS

Burns and McKnight turned next to their recommendations for vocation directors in dioceses and religious orders, emphasizing that their cooperation was critical. Both groups have interests in communicating with campus ministers and others on college campuses who are in positions to help young men discern calls to the priesthood. A key recommenda-

tion, then, is that vocation directors foster ongoing relationships with campus ministers, beyond single vocation talks. Monsignor John McLaughlin's experience at Boston University provides a model: inviting a vocation director to be an ongoing presence on campus, as a celebrant at Mass, a spiritual director, and a presence on retreats. Similarly, relationships with a priest at a local parish can be helpful, especially at non-Catholic colleges and universities.

Of particular interest is the encouragement of vocations within the Hispanic community. Burns and McKnight suggested the importance of evaluating current communication and outreach efforts in Hispanic communities, and recruiting people from within these communities to be part of diocesan and parish pastoral work. Large events such as World Youth Day and the National Catholic Youth Conference are opportunities to make connections to young people who may show evidence of vocations.

#### **FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LEADERS**

College presidents, campus ministers, and leaders within offices of student life or mission can help to create a culture of vocations on their campuses. Campus liturgies, the use of the arts, and the development of cultural programming can enhance student perception of support for all forms of life within the Church, including priesthood. These leaders are in positions to invite and collaborate with local vocation directors, to develop programs which integrate the various dimensions of young adult formation, including: devotional and liturgical practices, service programs, leadership opportunities, opportunities for quiet discernment, and development of community. One specific suggestion was the creation of a forum for faculty, staff, and administrators to cultivate vocations. This forum can ensure that the campus itself might have a strategic plan for promoting all types of vocations, including vocations to the priesthood. Such a forum might consider intellectual programming to explore vocations. It might also help increase awareness of local

diocesan and religious communities, ensure Eucharistic devotion opportunities (Mass, adoration, etc.), and make recommendations for mission-centered hiring.

On a broader level, many colleges and universities are in positions to offer their resources for the continuing formation of local priests. Meeting space, the expertise of faculty, and perhaps even money can be put to the service of the local diocese or sponsoring religious order. Some universities are also in positions to create and publicize programs to train spiritual directors from the local diocese, offer programs for the formation of lay leaders (especially in the Hispanic community), or reach out to non-Catholic campuses with few resources.

#### **FOR COOPERATION AND FURTHER STUDY**

Burns and McKnight pointed to a general theme that emerged from the Summit: namely, the need for cooperation among different members of the Church community to encourage vocations to the priesthood. What is needed in this networked age are better networks dedicated to promoting vocational discernment. Youth ministers at parishes, for example, are in positions to let campus ministers know of new students on their campus. Diocesan directors might reach out to campus ministers to develop shared visions and even materials to encourage vocations. Regular communication is important, and perhaps even leveraging social media. Over time, it will be possible to develop best practices that foster vocations.

Burns and McKnight concluded their presentation with suggestions for further study. One example is the need for a better understanding of campuses (Catholic, public and private) that seem to be successful at generating vocations to the priesthood. More national surveys of Catholics will also be helpful; thankfully, CARA has developed many over the years that offer further data to mine. A greater understanding of strategies to recruit English-speaking Hispanics is also needed.

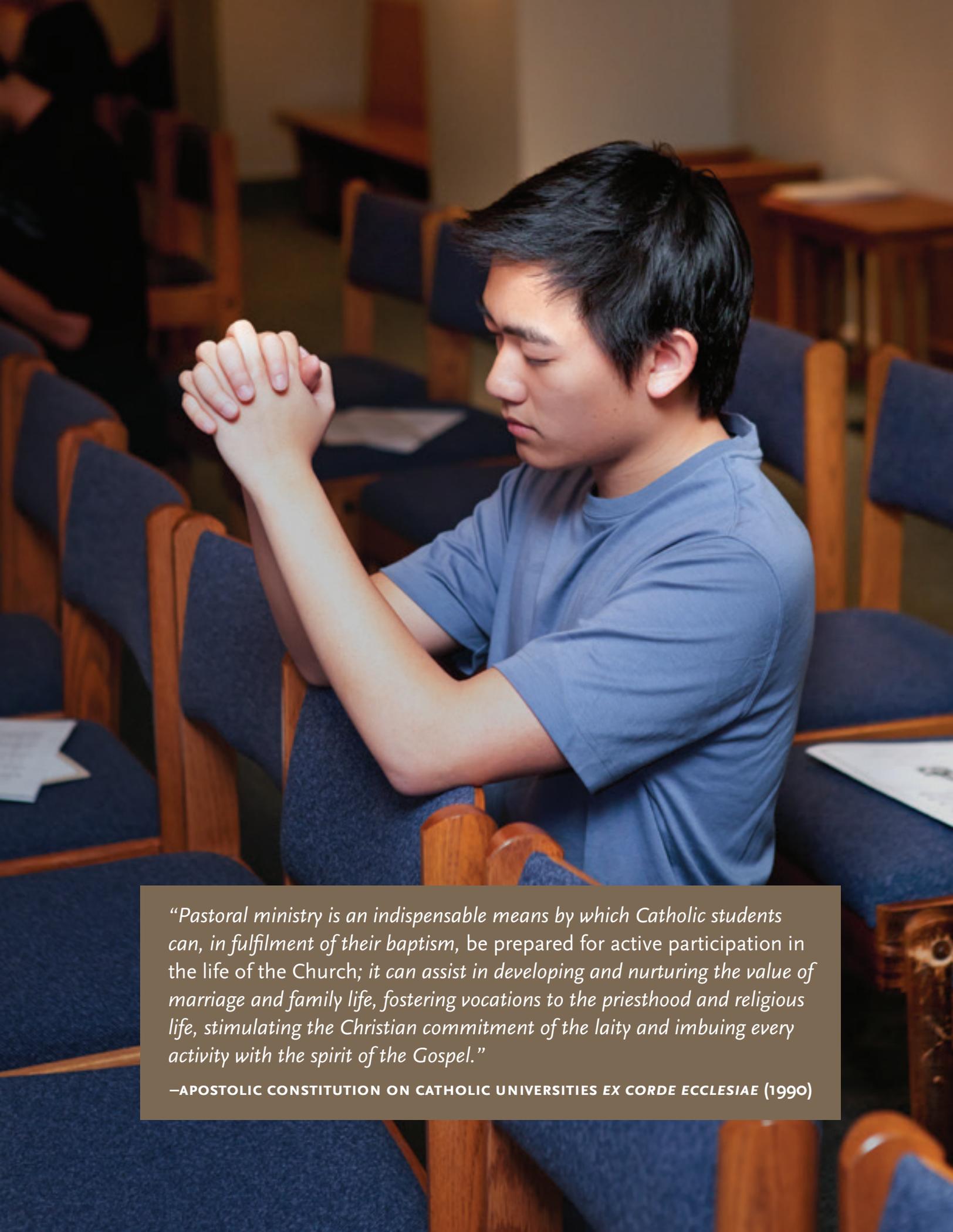
23. See above, page 18.

24. See above, page 27.

25. Gray and Gautier write, "Shepherding more of these individuals on the path to seeking a vocation would likely require a combination of greater outreach from the Church, encouragement from others, assistance in obtaining educational

prerequisites, and dealing with other issues such as student loan debt and citizenship status." On the issue of debt, see the CARA report *Is Educational Debt Affecting Vocations?* at <http://cara.georgetown.edu/publications/religiouslife.html>.

26. See above, page 26.



*“Pastoral ministry is an indispensable means by which Catholic students can, in fulfillment of their baptism, be prepared for active participation in the life of the Church; it can assist in developing and nurturing the value of marriage and family life, fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life, stimulating the Christian commitment of the laity and imbuing every activity with the spirit of the Gospel.”*

**—APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION ON CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES *EX CORDE ECCLESIAE* (1990)**

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*The CARA study makes clear that clergy and religious meeting with young people in a variety of settings and activities allows them to be more open to the possibility of a vocation, and to consider taking the next step to enter formation.*

**CARDINAL SEÁN O'MALLEY, ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON**



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