

## **Religious Profession Class of 2014 Highly Educated, Very Likely To Have Attended Catholic High School, University**

*CARA study finds two-thirds of new religious entered community life with bachelor's degree or higher*

*Study comes ahead of February 2 World Day for Consecrated Life and February 8 nationwide Day of Open House with religious*

*Year of Consecrated Life called by Pope Francis began last November*

January 26, 2015

WASHINGTON—Religious men and women who professed perpetual vows to the nearly 800 communities of religious life in the United States in 2014 are highly educated and more likely than the average Catholic adult to attend Catholic high schools and universities. These were among the findings of the annual survey on new men and women religious conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University.

About four in 10 (42 percent) attended a Catholic elementary school, which is the same as that for all Catholic adults in the United States. They are more likely than other U.S. Catholics, however, to have attended a Catholic high school (31 percent of responding religious, compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (34 percent of responding religious, compared to just 7 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations commissioned the survey and released the results before the annual celebration of World Day for Consecrated Life, February 2. The survey also comes amidst the Year of Consecrated Life, which began November 30, 2014. During this year, Catholics are invited to learn more about religious life by participating in three specially designated days. The first, the Day of Open House with Religious is February 8. Resources for the World Day of Consecrated Life, the Year of Consecrated Life and the entire CARA survey can be found at [www.usccb.org/consecratedlife](http://www.usccb.org/consecratedlife).

“Given the fact that 89 percent of those responding to the recent CARA survey of new religious had participated in some form of a ‘Come and See’ experience prior to entering their religious institute, we know it is important for our youth and young adults to have greater exposure and familiarity with the community life of religious,” said Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Raleigh, North Carolina, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. “I encourage everyone to take advantage of the opportunity to visit local religious communities in their own area during the Day of Religious Open Houses, Sunday, February 8.”

Eighteen percent of responding religious earned a graduate degree before entering their religious institute. Two in three (68 percent) entered their religious institute with at least a bachelor's degree (61 percent for women and 80 percent for men).

Brother Humbert Kilanowski of the St. Joseph Province of the Dominican friars said he “didn’t consider a priestly or religious vocation as a viable option for my life until I was well into graduate school. But even though I couldn’t have foreseen it, I’m happier as a religious than I could be anywhere else, and I thank God for surprising me with his grace.”

“I graduated from Harvard University where I studied sociology and pursued pre-med requirements,” said Sister Ann Kateri Hamm of the Franciscan Sisters of Renewal. “Although I felt called to religious life from a young age I was hesitant to share openly about it. It was not until I was engaged to be married that I knew for sure that God had made my heart to be totally his — and he gave the grace to finally say yes to my religious vocation.”

Most religious did not report that educational debt delayed their application for entrance to their institute. Among those who did report educational debt, however, they averaged one year of delay while they paid down an average of \$15,750 in educational debt. Several of the women, but none of the men, reported receiving assistance in paying down their debt.

CARA received a response from 454 of 799 major superiors, for an overall response rate of 57 percent among religious institutes. In all, 75 percent of Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) superiors, 49 percent of Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) superiors, 66 percent of Conference of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR) superiors, and 27 percent of superiors of contemplative communities provided contact information for 190 members that professed perpetual vows in religious life in 2014.

Of these 190 identified women and men religious, a total of 77 sisters and nuns and 41 brothers responded to the survey by December 21, 2014. These 41 brothers may include some brothers who intend to pursue studies leading to priestly ordination. This represents a response rate of 62 percent of the 190 potential members of the Profession Class of 2014 that were reported to CARA by major superiors.

Among the major findings:

- The average age of responding religious of the Profession Class of 2014 is 37. Half of the responding religious are age 34 or younger. The youngest is 24 and the oldest is 64.
- Two-thirds of responding religious (67 percent) identify as white, more than one in seven (15 percent) identifies as Hispanic, and one in seven (14 percent) identifies as Asian.
- Most responding religious (76 percent) were born in the United States. Of those born outside the United States, the most common countries of origin are the Philippines and Vietnam.

- Among those identifying as Hispanic/Latino(a) two-thirds (67 percent) are U.S. born and one-third (33 percent) are foreign born. Those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian are predominantly (94 percent) foreign born. Nearly all identifying as Caucasian/white (95 percent) are U.S. born.
- On average, the respondents who were born outside the United States were 23 years old when they first came to the United States and lived here for 16 years before perpetual profession.
- Nearly nine in 10 (86 percent) responding religious have been Catholic since birth. More than eight in 10 (83 percent) come from families in which both parents are Catholic.
- Among the 14 percent of respondents who became Catholic later in life, the average age at which they converted was 24.
- Nearly all of the religious of the Profession Class of 2014 (89 percent) participated in some type of vocation program or experience prior to entering their religious institute.
- Most commonly was a “Come and See” experience (59 percent) or a vocation retreat (50 percent). Men were more likely than women to have participated in a “Come and See” experience (66 percent and 56 percent, respectively) or in a vocation retreat (59 percent for men compared to 45 percent for women). Almost nine in 10 (88 percent) had ministry experience, most commonly as a lector (50 percent) followed by ministry in faith formation (47 percent). Four in 10 served in music ministry and over one-third as extraordinary ministers of Communion or as an altar server. Over one-quarter served in a social service ministry, and one in 10 taught in a Catholic school or served in hospital or prison ministry.
- Nearly all (91 percent) regularly participated in some type of private prayer activity before they entered their religious institute. Seven in 10 participated in Eucharistic Adoration or prayed the rosary before entering. More than six in 10 participated in retreats or spiritual direction before entering. Many were active in parish life before entering their religious institute. Four in 10 (42 percent) participated in youth ministry or youth group. Almost a third participated in Catholic campus ministry or a Newman Center. One in five participated in World Youth Day and/or in a young adult ministry or group.
- Nearly all responding religious (88 percent) had work experience prior to entering their religious institute. Of those who were employed, a quarter (27 percent) were employed part-time and just over three in five (61 percent) were employed full-time before entering the institute. Women religious are more likely than men to have been employed in health care, while men religious are more likely than women to have been employed in business and education.
- On average, responding religious report that they were 19 years old when they first considered a vocation to religious life, but half were 18 or younger when they first did so.
- Nearly half say that a parish priest or a religious sister or brother encouraged their vocation (49 and 47 percent). Men were more likely than women to have been encouraged by a parish priest or religious sister or a brother.

- Over four in 10 report that they were encouraged to consider a vocation by a friend. Women are more likely than men to have been encouraged by a friend (48 percent compared to 37 percent).
- Respondents are less likely to report that they received encouragement from their family members than from other religious, friends, or a parish priest. One in four (25 percent) report that their mother encouraged them to consider religious life. Just under a quarter received encouragement from other relatives (23 percent) or their father (15 percent).
- Six in 10 (58 percent) report that they were discouraged from considering a vocation by one or more persons. These respondents are most likely to report that they were discouraged by a family member other than a parent (36 percent) or by friends or classmates (24 percent).
- On average, these religious report that they knew the members of their religious institute for four years before they entered, but half knew them for two years or less. One in three (36 percent) first became acquainted with their institute through promotional material published by the institute. One in five first learned of their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor.

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