



Backgrounder

Papal Transition 2013

prepared by

Office of Media Relations

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 Fourth Street NE · Washington, DC 20017

202-541-3200 · 202-541-3173 fax · www.usccb.org

VOCATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

GENERAL TRENDS

Priesthood (slight but steady increase of seminarians and ordinations since 2006)

- Ordinations
 - 1995: 511
 - 2000: 442
 - 2005: 454
 - 2012: 480
- Major Seminarians
 - 1995: 3,172
 - 2000: 3,474
 - 2005: 3,308
 - 2012: 3,723
- Average age at ordination is mid-thirties and is trending slightly younger.
- Ordinands are more ethnically diversified than in the past (in 2012: 71 percent Anglo; 15 percent Hispanic; 9 percent Asian or Pacific Islander; 3 percent African or African American). However, this trend has not caught up with the increased ethnic diversification in the Catholic population as a whole.
- Between 20 and 30 percent of ordinands to diocesan priesthood for each of the last ten years were born outside of the United States.

Religious Life

- Most religious institutes are experiencing severe challenges in the recruitment of new religious, although some are experiencing a surge of young vocations.
- There is ethnic diversity here as well with a spike in professions from the Asian community (professions in 2012: 69 percent Anglo; 8 percent Hispanic; 15 percent Asian or Pacific Islander; 2 percent African or African American).
- The brotherhood is particularly challenged. The number of brothers in the US has declined precipitously: 6,535 (1995) to 5,451 (2005) to 4,477 (2012).
- The average age of religious of the Profession Class of 2012 was 39.

CONSIDERATION OF VOCATIONS

Good news: the recent survey by the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops reports that over 600,000 never-married Catholics (aged 14-35) have “seriously considered” a call to the priesthood or religious life. The key factors correlated with the consideration of a vocation were all relational.

There was a much greater likelihood for a young man or woman to consider a vocation if they:

- Attended a Catholic school (men who attended Catholic high school were 6 times more likely to consider a vocation)
- Participated in parish youth groups (women who participated in a high school parish youth group were 9 times more likely to consider a vocation)
- Were personally encouraged to consider a vocation
- Personally knew a priest, seminarian, or religious

HISPANIC VOCATIONS

U.S.-born Hispanics are a significant untapped demographic. Less than five percent of the Hispanic ordinands were U.S.-born Hispanics. Yet 70 percent of young Hispanics in the U.S. are non-immigrant.

The percentage of Hispanics who are in seminary, ordained or professed are significantly less than the percentage of Hispanic in the US Catholic population. Hispanics make up 41 percent of all US Catholics born 1961-81 and 48 percent of all U.S. Catholics born after 1981. In 2012, the number of Hispanic ordinands (15 percent) and professed (8 percent) demonstrates the gap.