

HORIZON



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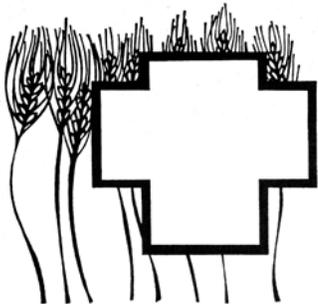
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HORIZON

HORIZON began as a vocation journal in 1975. Today, as a quarterly publication, it serves a readership of more than 2000 in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries.

HORIZON serves as a resource:

- To assist vocation directors in their professional and personal growth as ministers;
- To educate and engage educators, directors of retreat centers, formation personnel, community leadership, bishops, campus ministers, librarians, priests, religious, laity, and anyone interested in vocations and their role in vocation ministry.

HORIZON has a threefold purpose:

- To provide timely and contemporary articles relative to vocation ministry;
- To provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas on pertinent issues in the field of vocations;
- To highlight some of the current resources available.

National Religious Vocation Conference

HORIZON is published by the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC). The NRVC is an organization of men and women committed to the fostering and discernment of vocations. It provides services for professional vocation directors and others who are interested and involved in vocation ministry. It proclaims the viability of religious life and serves as a prophetic, creative, life-giving force in today's church.

To accomplish this, NRVC provides opportunities for professional growth and personal support of vocation ministers; facilitates regional, area and national meetings for its members; sponsors workshops, seminars, conferences and days of prayer; publishes materials related to vocations for a wide variety of audiences; engages in research, study and exchange on issues of current concern; publishes a quarterly professional journal, *HORIZON*; maintains a Web site; and cooperates with other national groups essential to the fostering of vocations. For further information, contact: NRVC, 5420 S. Cornell Ave., Suite 105, Chicago, IL. 60615-5604. E-mail: nrvc@nrvc.net. Web: www.nrvc.net.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Good news and ways to further it

ISN'T IT NICE to get some good news? A 19 percent jump in people preparing for religious life, a 71 percent increase in vocation inquiries—those kinds of facts are a joy to publish. For several months now vocation ministers have been pulling me aside to report with broad smiles that they're getting more contacts than ever. The high school kids are really listening. There's a new openness to the idea of religious life. So enjoy the spring season's rebirth even more by reading Patrice Tuohy's substantiation of this trend on page 10, "The new interest in religious life."

While you're updating yourself on relevant trends, don't miss our reports on emerging religious communities

(page 4) and the ways that today's young Catholics see themselves in the church (page 14).

DVDs and the Internet have been around too long to call trends, but new ways to use them are developing all the time. Savvy vocation ministers know they need to harness these technologies to effectively reach their target audience. This edition of *HORIZON* presents innovative ideas and practical pointers on using the Web and developing and using DVDs. May these articles and the important work that vocation ministers do day in and day out contribute even further to the upswing of interest in religious life.

—Carol Schuck Scheiber, editor,
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What are the new communities like? What do they mean for established religious communities? A sociologist looks closely at emerging forms of religious life and what they might tell us about the future.

Emerging religious communities and lay movements

BY PATRICIA WITTEBERG, SC

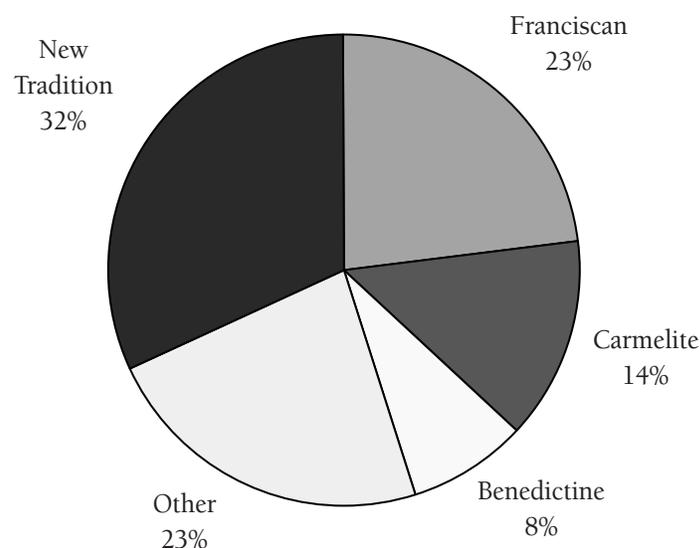
WHAT IS THE FUTURE of consecrated life? What will religious congregations look like in 10, 20 or 30 years? Hints of an answer to these questions may be seen in the numerous new religious communities and lay movements which have been emerging in this country and around the world over the last few decades. The growth or demise of the new groups or, more importantly, which kinds of communities or lay movements grow or die out may indicate where the Holy Spirit is calling religious life in the coming century. This has important implications for established religious congregations and for their vocation programs as well.

In 1999 the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) had compiled the first directory of these new manifestations of God's call. In 2004, the Center received a grant from the Our Sunday Visitor Foundation to conduct a follow-up study. Each of the 195 dioceses and eparchies in the U.S., the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands were contacted, asking for the names and addresses of any new or emerging religious communities or lay movements that had been founded or moved into their jurisdiction since 1965. All but three of the dioceses responded, and over half (109) reported having at least one such group within their boundaries. After contacting the communities directly, CARA was able to eliminate duplications and pre-1965 groups

that had been mistakenly included. As a result, a second edition of the directory is now available, with updated entries on 165 new and emerging religious communities and lay movements.¹ One hundred forty-two of these had been founded in the United States; an additional 23 are local houses or chapters of groups based in other countries.

The directory does not claim to be comprehensive. The communities listed in it are included because a diocese or eparchy identified them, rather than because they correspond to some precise definition of an emerging religious community or lay movement. While the original request to the dioceses had specified that they submit names only of groups with at least three or four members that were founded since 1965, and not branches of communities founded elsewhere, some dioceses recommended groups that did not fit these guidelines. Nevertheless, this is the best available record of the types of new religious communities and lay movements which are being founded in the United States today. Examining the characteristics of rapidly-growing

Patricia Wittberg, SC is a Sister of Charity of Cincinnati and a professor of sociology at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Her most recent book is *From Piety to Professionalism—and Back?* which is about the impact of loosened institutional ties on the religious congregations that once sponsored them.



groups and comparing them to groups that have stagnated or declined since 1999 provides some of the first concrete evidence of the types of religious lifestyles that seem most attractive to new entrants.

Overall findings

While most (75 percent) of the new communities have only female (51 percent) or only male (24 percent) members, one-quarter admit both men and women. In most of the groups, all the members made some sort of vows or promises, but about one-fifth also include non-vowed members. In over three-fourths of the communities, all or some of the members live together and share funds in common.

Most of the communities report following one of the mainstream religious traditions: most commonly Franciscan (23 percent), Carmelite (14 percent), and Benedictine (8 percent). Other traditions include Salesian, Dominican, Ignatian, and Augustinian, as well as various combinations of these. Almost one-third of the communities, however, do not identify with any of the traditional spiritualities and claim instead to have a new vision or spiritual focus.

Each community was asked to choose from a number of adjectives the one(s) which best describe its form of life. As the table on the right illustrates, 52 percent claim an apostolic focus, often in combination with contemplation. Another 17 percent claim an evangelical form of life, again, often in combination with contemplation. Overall, 42 percent of the responding communities claim a contemplative lifestyle, whether in whole or in part.

Analysis of the communities' mission statements and Web sites reveal other common themes. Devotion to Mary, simple lifestyles, support of the pope, evangelization and the Eucharist are the most common. Other themes include the Holy Spirit/charismatic spirituality, working with youth, devotions such as the Divine Mercy chaplet and an emphasis

on orthodox doctrine. The four most common emphases have all increased in popularity since the initial study.²

Of the 137 communities whose mission statements or Web pages listed specific apostolates, relatively few mentioned the traditional ministries (teaching, nursing, social work) that previous religious congregations had performed. Only 19 percent of the communities engage in classroom teaching, whether in parish schools or private academies. Even fewer claim a ministry in health care (9 percent) or in social services (7 percent). Far more commonly the communities listed primary apostolates in contemplation/prayer (27 percent); ministry in retreats, parish missions or prayer groups (23 percent); or catechesis (26 percent).

Community lifestyle

	PERCENT	NUMBER
Apostolic	52%	86
Apostolic -Contemplative	21%	35
Evangelical	17%	28
Evangelical - Contemplative	7%	11
Monastic-Contemplative	16%	26
Eremitic	7%	12
Total claiming a contemplative lifestyle:	42%	69

Note: The percentages do not add to 100%. Several communities claim a combination of lifestyles, while others did not respond to this question.

Common thematic elements in community statements and Web sites

	PERCENT	NUMBER
Devotion to Mary	36%	60
Poverty/Simple Lifestyle	31%	51
Fidelity to the Pope	29%	48
The Eucharist	25%	42
Evangelization/New Evangelization	22%	36
Working with Youth	18%	30
Holy Spirit/Charismatic Spirituality	18%	29
Rosary/Divine Mercy/Other Devotions	17%	28
Orthodox Doctrine/Fidelity to the Magisterium	13%	22
Pro-Life/Anti-Abortion	9%	15
Praying for Priests and Bishops	7%	11
Missing/No response	32%	52

Percentages do not add to 100 percent. Several community responses and Web pages included more than one theme.

Community size and new membership

The size of these new communities also varies considerably. Most, however, have fewer than 7 or 8 full members. As might be expected, eremitic groups are smallest (78 percent have fewer than 7 members).

Most of the monastic groups (70 percent) are also smaller than average. Evangelical and apostolic communities, on the other hand, are more likely to be relatively large: 65 percent of the evangelical communities and 58 percent of the apostolic communities have seven or more members.

When it comes to attracting new entrants, the monastic communities seem to be the most attractive: only 20 percent

report having no one at all in formation. By comparison, one-third of the apostolic and evangelical communities, and 40 percent of the eremitic groups have no one in formation. Among the evangelical groups that do have new members, the number of new members is usually larger. The median number in formation is three for the evangelical communities that reported new members, two for the monastic and apostolic communities, and one for the hermits.

Traditional emphasis and new members

A number of commentators have argued that communities which exhibit traditional practices such as wearing the habit, or which are doctrinally conservative, are more attractive to new members. The evidence supporting this argument from the new communities is mixed. Compared to communities that do not wear habits, those that do are more likely to have new members and to have more than seven in formation. Communities whose mission statements or Web sites contain pictures of or quotes from either Pope John Paul II or Pope Benedict XVI (thus implying that fidelity to the pope is an important part of their lifestyle) are neither more nor less likely to have large numbers of entrants, although they are somewhat less likely to have few or none. Communities emphasizing adherence to, or promulgation of, orthodox doctrine and the magisterium are less likely to have numerous entrants than communities that do not emphasize this, and approximately equally likely to have few or no new entrants.

Percent in formation by conservative indicators

(U.S. Communities Only)

	RELIGIOUS HABIT		LOYALTY TO THE POPE		EMPHASIS ON ORTHODOXY	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No one in Formation	34%	26%	28%	23%	28%	22%
1-2 in Formation	23%	22%	23%	14%	18%	22%
3-6 in Formation	20%	22%	15%	28%	18%	28%
7 or more in Formation	23%	31%	34%	34%	36%	28%
	100%	101%	100%	99%	100%	100%
Number of communities	35	84	47	35	65	18

Percentages do not add to 100 percent due to rounding. Only U.S.-based communities are included in this table, since some of the 23 groups based overseas included their world-wide instead of U.S. membership figures.

Spirituality emphasis and new members

Other writers have argued that communities with a strong emphasis on spirituality and prayer are more attractive to those contemplating religious life. To test this hypothesis, emerging communities whose mission statements and/or Web pages mention a spiritual focus, and those which identify their group as contemplative in the original questionnaire, were compared with those communities that do not do so. The study also looked at various specific devotions mentioned on the groups' Web pages: devotion to Mary, to the Eucharist, to the Holy Spirit, divine mercy, and so on. An overall spiritual emphasis, identifying one's community as contemplative, and Marian devotion all increase the likelihood that a new community has larger numbers of new entrants.

Emphasizing youth and/or poverty

It has also been argued that communities working with young people are more likely to attract new entrants than those that engage in other types of ministry. This argument is only partially supported by the new communities. There was no difference between communities working with youth and those not working with youth in the likelihood of having members in formation. However, communities working with youth are significantly more likely to report having more than seven new members.

Communities claiming a poor or simple lifestyle, and those whose ministries include serving the poor, are significantly less likely to have no one in formation. Compared to communities that do not make this claim, these communities are also more likely to have large numbers of new entrants.

Ninety-seven of the communities in the 2006 directory were also listed in the 1999 directory, and 89 of these had provided membership figures for both years. Of these, 21 have decreased in membership, 16 have remained the same size, and 52 have increased in membership.³ Most of these 52 experienced relatively

small growth in the past seven years, but 17 groups have more than doubled in size.

What are the characteristics of the 17 communities with greater than a 100 percent growth rate in only seven years? The majority (10) are lay movements which accept both men and women, married and single, vowed and non-vowed. Few, if any, of the members of these 10 lay communities live in common or share common funds, and they are only about half as likely to profess public vows or promises as the new communities which follow the more traditional model of religious life. Of the remaining seven fast-growing communities, five were so small in 1999 (only one to three members each) that a growth rate of 100 percent or higher might mean simply adding one or two additional members.⁴

It is important to keep these growth figures in perspective. While 17 of the new communities have more than doubled in size since 1999, and another 25 groups have grown more than 25 percent during that interval, these growth rates are far less than had occurred with emerging religious congregations during the 19th century. The table on page 9 gives the growth rates, where they can be determined, of some of the first religious congregations founded in the United States. None of the current groups come close to matching the rates of growth routinely experienced by beginning religious orders in the 19th century U.S.

What the numbers imply

What do the patterns in the emerging religious communities and lay movements imply for established religious

Percent in formation by spirituality indicators

(U.S. Communities Only)

	CLAIM A CONTEMPLATIVE FOCUS		EMPHASIZE MARIAN DEVOTION		ANY MENTION OF SPIRITUALITY	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No one in Formation	34%	21%	30%	21%	41%	20%
1-2 in Formation	21%	23%	28%	15%	24%	21%
3-6 in Formation	16%	27%	18%	24%	13%	26%
7 or more in Formation	<u>28%</u>	<u>29%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>40%</u>	<u>22%</u>	<u>33%</u>
	99%	100%	101%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Communities	67	52	40	47	46	73

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

congregations? This article does not argue that any religious congregation should abandon its own charism or way of life to adopt practices alien to its identity. But it might be worthwhile to explore ways of adapting some of the more salient characteristics of the faster-growing new communities to our own vocation ministries.

- **The importance of prayer and contemplation** Almost half of the new communities claim a contemplative focus, in whole or in part, and communities emphasizing this focus in their literature, on their Web sites, or in their mission statements appear to be more successful in attracting new entrants. This finding supports previous research: the young are interested in a religious life that is deeply and evidently spiritual. Vocation ministers should consider ways of highlighting their congregation's own spirituality and prayer practices when reaching out to potential members.
- **The attractiveness of poverty**, both as a lifestyle for the congregations themselves, and as a ministry. Communities living with and ministering to the poor are more likely to attract new members. Vocation literature should emphasize such opportunities, and congregations might consider immersion experiences for potential entrants in poverty-focused apostolic settings. Established congregations may also wish to examine ways their own lifestyles might give a countercultural witness to poverty.
- **A relative decline in the institutional apostolates** of nursing, social work, and (to some extent) teaching.

Emerging communities are more likely to engage in prayer/contemplation, catechesis, and retreat work than religious communities founded before Vatican II.

- **The continued attractiveness of Benedictine, Franciscan, and Carmelite spiritualities** As in the first directory, these continue to be the most frequently-chosen spiritual traditions. Other spiritualities for religious life, such as Salesian, Vincentian, or Ignatian, are less-frequently represented among the new communities, and religious congregations stemming from the latter traditions may wish to sponsor retreats, publish literature, or set up Web sites specifically focused on making these other religious life traditions more familiar to potential entrants.
- **Mixed indications on the value of traditional models of religious life** While communities whose members wear a religious habit and express fidelity to the pope are more likely to draw new members, communities that emphasize orthodoxy are not.
- **The attractiveness of mixed memberships** Some of the fastest-growing new groups contained both married and single, vowed and non-vowed members. This did not mean that there was no difference between the different types of members; the newer groups usually specified quite clearly the roles and responsibilities of each membership group.

Founding or joining a new religious community is a risky endeavor, since these groups are often quite ephemeral. Over the past seven years, the 1999 directory's communities were more likely to have stagnated, decreased in membership, or dissolved, than to have grown in size. Yet patterns in the types of new communities that are founded, and the types which survive and grow, give indications of what prospective entrants are

Percent in formation by poverty, youth ministry factors

(U.S. communities only)

	WORK WITH YOUTH		POOR/SIMPLE LIFESTYLE		WORK WITH POOR	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No one in formation	26%	26%	31%	19%	28%	18%
1-2 in formation	23%	17%	17%	22%	19%	24%
3-6 in formation	21%	17%	19%	24%	21%	18%
7 or more in formation	30%	39%	33%	36%	31%	41%
	100%	99%	100%	101%	99%	101%
Number of communities	62	84	42	42	67	17

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

seeking. Established religious congregations have an opportunity and a responsibility to address these longings. Combining the experience and grounded stability of established congregations with the enthusiasm and idealism of the newly-emerging groups offers the best promise of a vibrant future for religious life. ■

1. Information about the directory can be obtained from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2300 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Suite 400, Washington DC 20057, (202) 687-8080, CARA@georgetown.edu

2. Devotion to Mary had been expressed by 21 percent of the 1999 communities; the Eucharist by 20 percent, and the pope by 14 percent. Poverty/working with the poor showed the strongest increase: in the 1999 directory, 9 percent of the communities emphasized living and working with the poor, whereas in the 2006 directory, 31 percent claimed a poor or simple lifestyle.

3. An additional 24 communities in the 1999 directory have dissolved or disbanded.

4. The remaining two communities are the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and the Sisters of Life. Both were actively promoted by Cardinal John O'Connor, the founder of the latter community. The active support of the local ordinary is another factor that facilitates growth.

Percent growth in the first 10 years of 19th century religious congregations of women

COMMUNITY	FOUNDED	INITIAL SIZE	SIZE AFTER 10 YEARS	PERCENT OF GROWTH
SC, Emmitsburg, MD	1809	8	94	1,075%
SL, Kentucky	1812	5	84	1,580%
SCN, Nazareth, KY	1822	24	74	208%
OLM, Charleston, SC	1830	3	14	366%
OSP, Baltimore, MD	1830	5	17	240%
BVM, Iowa	1833	5	19	280%
CSJ, Carondalet, MO	1836	4	25	525%
SP, Terre Haute, IN	1840	6	88	1,366%
SC, New York	1850	72	202	180%
SC, Cincinnati, OH	1850	8	75	838%
Holy Cross Sisters	1850	34	120	252%
CSA, Cleveland, OH	1851	4	22	450%
RSM, Hartford, CT	1851	4	10	200%
OP, Racine, WI	1870	19	60	215%
SSJ, Watertown, NY	1880	4	8	100%

From statistics compiled by S. Catherine Ann Curry, PBVM for George C. Stewart, Jr. Privately printed.

Several communities (e.g. the Visitation sisters, the Carmelites, the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Ursulines) are not included here because they routinely split into new congregations when they passed a certain size.

VISION VocationMatch.com recently confirmed what vocation ministers have been talking about: Catholics are turning toward religious life with new vigor. Here is a snapshot of who's coming and what they're looking for.

The new interest in religious life

BY PATRICE J. TUOHY

Religious life enjoyed a media spotlight on new members during the winter of 2006-2007. TV and print media produced a flourish of features about young adults entering religious communities. The National Religious Vocation Conference fielded numerous media inquiries looking for hard numbers about what many in the vocation field were calling a trend of increased interest. While NRVC still hopes to produce a comprehensive, authoritative study on vocational trends, it worked with VISION VocationMatch.com to gather some preliminary findings. The following article is based on 3,200 profiles completed by VocationMatch.com users August 15, 2006 - February 23, 2007, as well as an online survey of 207 discerners and an online survey of 165 vocation directors. The online surveys were conducted February 16-28, 2007.

REVERSING a decades'-long decline, Catholic religious communities have enjoyed a 19 percent jump in the number of candidates preparing for religious life in the past three years, according to the VocationMatch.com Report on Trends in Religious Life, sponsored by VISION Vocation Guide. That upward trend promises to continue with fully 71 percent of communities polled reporting an increase in the number of people inquiring about entering religious life and VISION Vocation Guide reporting through VocationMatch.com a 125 percent increase in the past year in the number of unique readers creating online profiles and requesting information from specific religious communities.

This increased interest in vowed religious life is found primarily among younger Catholics,

Patrice J. Tuohy is executive director of TrueQuest Communications, which produces VISION Vocation Guide and VocationMatch.com in cooperation with the National Religious Vocation Conference.



with over 50 percent of those considering a religious vocation under 30. Catholic vocation directors polled expressed particular delight at the number of inquiries they are receiving from people between 25 and 29 years. But a growing number of Catholics over 50—nearly 18 percent of VocationMatch.com's survey respondents—are also seeking formal affiliation with religious communities, a trend that vocation directors admit surprises and challenges them.

Discerners value Catholic traditions

Those considering religious life identify strongly with the teachings of the Catholic Church, with 66 percent of all respondents saying they are most drawn to religious life by a "desire to live a life of faithfulness to the church and its teachings."

A preference for wearing distinctively religious clothing has also found favor among current discerners. Fifty percent of respondents feel that dressing in a habit is "very important" or "essential" to their vocation. At the same time, 85 percent of those potential habit-wearing priests, brothers, and sisters want to be involved in active ministry in such fields as education, social service, campus ministry, parish work, preaching, healthcare, and prison ministry.

Those considering religious life are very aware of the challenges any life commitment poses. Forty-five percent rate restrictions on personal freedom and the discipline of prayer as challenging or the most challenging aspects of religious life. A slightly fewer 43 percent rate simple living among the most significant challenges they face, and 41 percent rate celibacy as a significant struggle. Discerners also express concern that with so many communities and vocation options available, it is hard to find which community is the "right fit for me."

Some vocation directors note that inquirers seem to have limited knowledge of the Catholic faith and "less exposure to people in religious life than they did in the past."

“Inability to make a commitment” is another area of concern for vocation directors. Indeed, 31 percent of the discerners say they have been considering religious life for six years or more. However, today’s religious vocation discerners are generally well-educated—the majority have college degrees and 10 percent have advanced degrees—and they have diverse work experiences, with backgrounds in business, education, healthcare, social service, nonprofits, and other professions.

Prayer, communal life attract

Vocation discerners report “devotional prayer” and “praying with members of a community” as two of the qualities that most draw them to religious life. Forty-two percent believe living in community to be “essential” to their vocation, which may present a challenge for communities with thinning ranks and members spread far and wide. But in what surely will be favorable news for vocation directors of aging communities, 53 percent of discerners say they do not consider it important to live with people their own age.

Vocation discerners express surprise at “how normal” and “how happy” those in religious life are and express admiration for the “profound sense of joy” of nuns, priests, and brothers and “their heroic generosity.” Discerners are struck by the fact that so many “young people (like me) are interested in religious life,” and how “difficult it is to discern.” Other comments from discerners include: “Communities and their ministries are very diverse”; “There is no typical religious or religious community”; “Priests and sisters are cool”; and “Monks are cool” too.

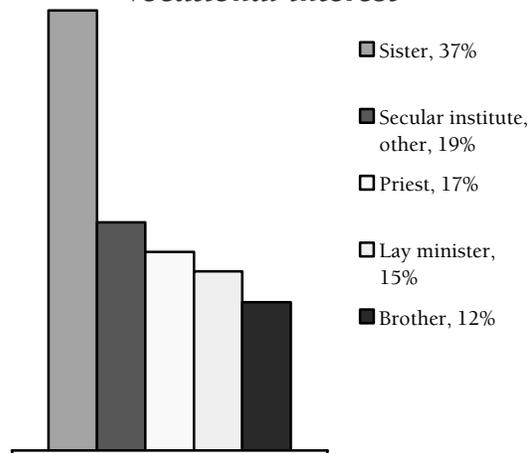
Looking at the numbers

The following charts and graphs are based on a six-month report for VISION VocationMatch.com, an online service matching those interested in religious life with communities

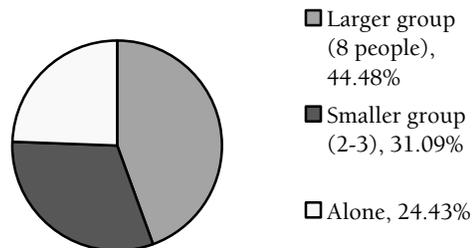
that fit their interests and spiritualities. The data is based on 3,201 profiles provided by people who used VISION VocationMatch between August 15, 2006 and February 23, 2007. Questions don’t always total 3,201, either because a respondent skipped the question or chose several answers within the question. ■

Daniel Grippo, co-publisher of TrueQuest Communications, and Paul Bendarczyk, CSC, executive director of the National Religious Vocation Conference, also contributed to this article.

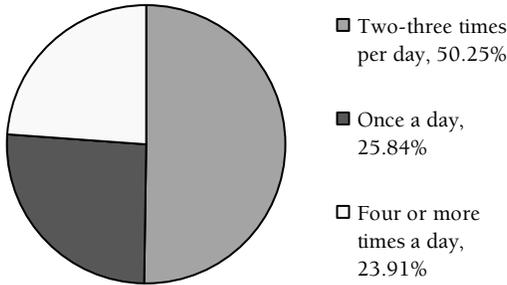
Vocational interest



I’d like to live with a:



I'd like a community that prays



I am interested in the following ministry options 9,929 responses total

	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Education	1515	15.26
Prayer	1440	14.50
Social service	1140	11.48
Youth/campus ministry	1077	10.85
Parish	1062	10.70
Preaching, retreat work	1026	10.33
Foreign missions	777	7.83
Healthcare	694	6.99
Manual labor	628	6.32
Prisons	570	5.74

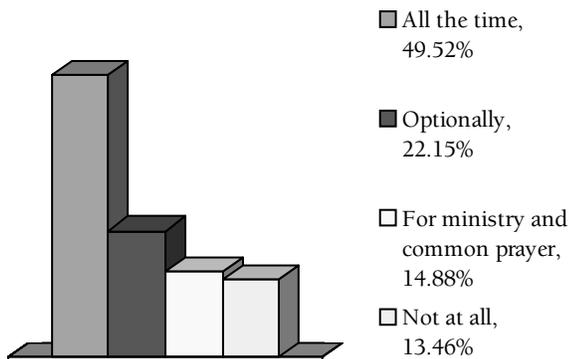
I am drawn to the following prayer styles (10,543 responses total)

	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Daily Mass	2053	19.47
Eucharistic adoration	1574	14.93
Spiritual direction	1529	14.50
Common rosary	1450	13.75
Common meditation	1340	12.71
Liturgy of the hours	1317	12.49
Faith sharing	1280	12.14

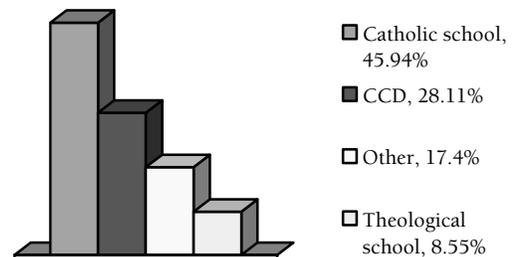
I am drawn to the following types of community 5360 responses total

	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Apostolic	1623	30.28
Monastic	993	18.53
Semi-cloistered, active	972	18.13
Contemplative	896	16.72
Missionary	876	16.34

I'd like a community that wears a habit



Religious training

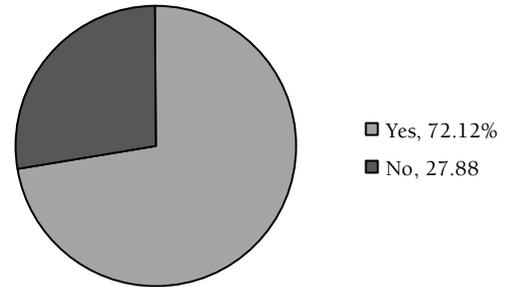


Work experience

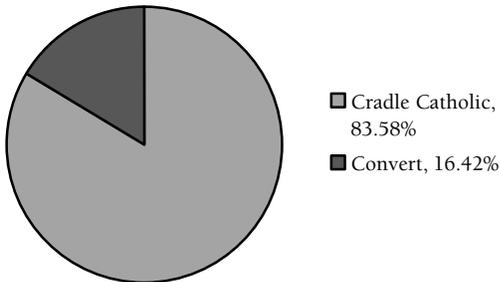
3,060 responses total

	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Education, training	527	17.22
Business	519	16.96
Other	518	16.93
Social, nonprofit work	425	13.89
Lay ministry	332	10.85
Healthcare	322	10.52
Technical, mechanical, electrical work	150	4.90
Ministry - religious	105	3.43
Law enforcement, military	88	2.88
Legal work	74	2.42

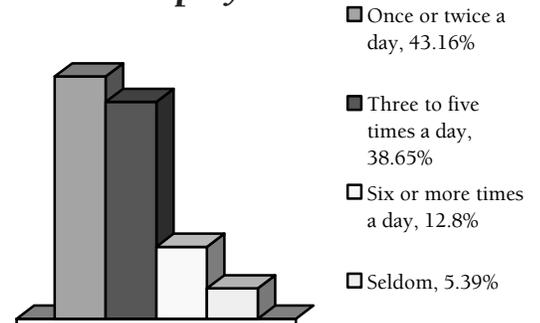
I've done volunteer work or gone on retreats



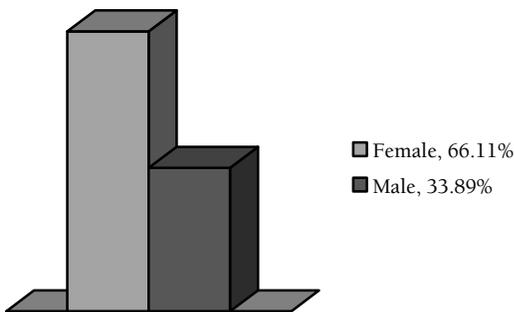
Religion



I pray



Gender



I have considered religious life

	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
For 6+ years	846	31.67
For 0-1 years	712	26.66
For 2-3 years	635	23.77
For 4-5 years	344	12.88
I never considered it	134	5.02

Today's young adults approach the church from widely varying theologies and ecclesiologies. Who is out there, and how can religious communities can welcome them?

How young Catholics see themselves in the church

By ROBIN RYAN, CP

IN AUGUST OF 2006, 43 young adults ages 19 to 33 from around the country spent a week at Catholic Theological Union for the inaugural Catholics on Call Young Adults Conference. Catholics on Call, an initiative funded by the Lilly Endowment, offers programs to young adults who are considering a life of service to the church as ecclesial lay ministers, religious or priests.

I suspect that our experience that week of the young Catholics who participated is at least somewhat emblematic of the experience of vocation directors, campus ministers and others who minister to and with young adults. There is no such thing as a simple profile of “the young adult Catholic.” Young adults reflect the wide-ranging diversity present in the Catholic Church today, particularly in the United States.

During our conference, it was refreshing to interact with these men and women and to listen as they spoke passionately about their desires, hopes and convictions. Among those discerning religious life, some were in close contact with a particular community, while others were at a more incipient stage of consideration. A presentation by Dianne Bergant, CSA on contemporary religious life evoked an enthusiastic response from the participants, even from those who said they were not exploring consecrated life. The talk impelled many to re-think their views about the viability of religious life today.

The conference participants were quite diverse in their backgrounds and their views of church. Most had been actively involved in campus ministry during their college

Robin Ryan, CP is a Passionist priest and an associate professor of systematic theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He is also director of Catholics on Call, an initiative aimed at young adults, www.catholicsoncall.org.



years, and a majority had experience in service activities sponsored by the church. A few spoke of the influence of their parish communities on their faith development. Some were deeply committed to advocacy for peace and justice; they spoke of being inspired by the church's social justice tradition. Their commitment was evident even in the T-shirts they wore. Others had a more traditional spirituality, having been nurtured in their faith by Catholic devotional life.

During the conference, a couple participants asked if we could add a time to the schedule for Eucharistic adoration. Concerned that the schedule was already rather full and not wishing to put activities in conflict with one another, those of us in charge discussed the matter. We decided to offer a simple service of exposition and adoration as an option after evening prayer one night. Most participants stayed for this adoration and expressed appreciation for this experience of quiet, shared prayer after a full day of activity.

This conference, my daily work in Catholics on Call, as well as my experience in seminary and lay ministry formation all lead me to be skeptical when I read descriptions of young adult Catholics based on generalizations that obscure real differences. There is great diversity among young adults when it comes to how they relate to the church.

Typologies of young adult Catholics

Some veteran young adult ministers have offered typologies of the faith expressions of contemporary young adult Catholics. In a conference for vocation directors and campus ministers sponsored by Catholics on Call in 2005, Father James Bacik, noted theologian and veteran campus minister, enumerated seven types of spirituality characteristic of Catholic undergraduate and graduate students.¹ Those with an *eclipsed spirituality* show little or no interest in religious or spiritual matters. They seldom attend Mass or any other campus ministry activities, though they do identify themselves as

Catholics. Young adults with a *private spirituality* also tend to stay away from the sacramental life of the church, though they seek spiritual growth in other ways such as spiritual reading, experiences of nature and private prayer. Bacik identifies another group that has an *ecumenical spirituality*. Their identity is more Christian than Catholic, and they are open to involvement with other Christian denominations if they feel that these groups more effectively meet their spiritual needs. Some have what Bacik calls an *evangelical spirituality*. They are deeply convinced of the truth of Catholic doctrine and loyal to Catholic tradition. They often have an apologetic thrust to their discourse about faith, wishing to defend the truth of Catholic teaching in the face of a hostile culture marked by relativism. Catholic young adults with a *sacramental spirituality* have a deep love for the church's liturgy and a sacramental view of the world as a whole. Their experience of the sacraments empowers them to recognize the presence of the invisible God in and through the visible world. Young adults whose spirituality is *prophetic* are (like our participants with the T-shirts) dedicated to working for peace and justice in the world. Finally, those with a more *communal spirituality* search for fellowship with and the support of others who share similar aspirations and values.

In an article in *America* magazine, Mary Anne Reese, coordinator of young adult ministry for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, offered a different, though not unrelated, categorization of young adult Catholics.² She speaks of the Church in Mission as a group that is committed to service in the name of Christ. This group has similarities to Bacik's prophetic spirituality type. The Church in Search consists of single young adults who are drawn to the church to find friends with similar values. It resembles the group identified by Bacik as possessing a communal spirituality. The Church Youthful is comprised of young adults aged 18 to 23 who are active in college campus ministry activities. The Church Apologist is similar to the group Bacik says has an evangelical

spirituality. Comforted by the clarity of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and responsive to papal pronouncements, this group is dedicated to spreading fervor for Catholicism. Reese identifies another group as the Church Devotional. While they bear outward resemblance to the Church Apologist in their preferences for traditional styles of worship, they are less inclined to join conservative ecclesial movements and not as interested in ecclesial politics or theological debates. These young adults simply find solace and meaning in practices like the rosary and Eucharistic adoration. The group Reese calls the Church Busy consists of young professionals, some of them married, who value their Catholic faith but find extensive engagement in church activities difficult because of their demanding schedules. The Church Creative is not unlike those young adult Catholics Bacik characterizes as having an ecumenical spirituality. They are independent in their thinking and treat parish and denominational boundaries with fluidity. Finally Reese's Church Disconnected is made up of those young adult Catholics who have simply drifted away from the church for a variety of reasons.

Neither Bacik nor Reese understands these types as rigid categories that provide a comprehensive description of adult Catholics. Young adults, like all of us, are complex individuals who defy simple categorization. Moreover, the faith of most young adults has characteristics that relate it to more than one category. For example, among our Catholics on Call participants, those strongly committed to peace and justice also manifested a desire for community and an appreciation for liturgy. Those with an apologetic bent were also aware of

Young adults, like all of us, are complex individuals who defy simple categorization. The faith of most young adults has characteristics that relate it to more than one category.

the rich Catholic heritage of social justice teaching.

One thing does seem clear. The majority of young adult Catholics in the United States have what Bacik calls an eclipsed or private spirituality. They fit into Reese's Church Disconnected category. This was confirmed for me in a recent telephone conversation with William D'Antonio, prominent sociologist at the Life Cycle Institute at The Catholic University of America.³ In a recent study of young adult Catholics, D'Antonio found that the vast majority of them are not engaged in the church's communal life. One-quarter or fewer young adult Catholics in the United States (combining GenXers and Millennials) attend Mass regularly. Many state that they find the liturgy boring and irrelevant. These young

Most young adult Catholics who are discerning a vocation to the consecrated life have an evangelical, sacramental, prophetic or communal spirituality. Many have a blend.

adults report that Vatican teachings, particularly on moral questions, have little impact on their own points of view. A large number have participated in social service activities, and they place concern for the poor at the top of their list of Christian beliefs. The majority of young adult Catholics in the United States, while identifying themselves as Catholic, do not give evidence of active participation in the

liturgical or catechetical life of the church, though interest in service to others is still important to them.

It appears, then, that young adults who are exploring religious life form a distinct subset of the overall population of Catholic young adults. While they have diverse theological viewpoints, they do find meaning in their faith and have a significant level of commitment to the church. Even those who identify themselves as "progressive" or who have a "prophetic" spirituality, have some appreciation of traditional Catholic teachings and practices. Utilizing Bacik's categories, I would suggest that most young adult Catholics who are discerning a vocation to the consecrated life have an evangelical, sacramental, prophetic or communal spirituality. Many have a blend of these types of spirituality.

Diverse views of the church

These distinctive spiritualities do reflect different views of

the church. Evangelical Catholics place a high value on orthodoxy, esteem traditional practices like Eucharistic adoration, are willing to defend the truth of Catholic doctrine in a society they perceive as mired in relativism, and usually have a hierarchical view of the church. In a world fearful of terrorism, they value the certainty found in the church's tradition. In their study of priests in the United States, Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger suggested that one reason many younger priests today have a more traditional spirituality and ecclesiology (and a "cultic" view of the priesthood) is that they come to the seminary "with a sense of alienation from a wasteland world and a desire to hold to bedrock Catholic doctrine."⁴ This outlook does not necessarily represent a nostalgia for a lost past; rather it reflects "a longing for the time-tested, the true, and the authoritative in knowing God's will."⁵ I believe this group of young adult Catholics presents the most significant challenge to many religious communities today.

Young adults with a sacramental spirituality also affirm Catholic tradition, though their lives are centered on the experience of worship, and they prefer liturgical expression that is contemporary, lively and reflective of diversity. Many at the Catholics on Call conference expressed their appreciation for liturgies that incorporated a variety of cultural expressions. The experience of meaningful communal prayer is the major shaping force in their understanding of church.

Those with a prophetic spirituality understand the church as servant of the world, particularly the poor and marginalized, and they envision church leadership according to a servant-leader model. Their experience of advocacy for the marginalized or protest against militarism forms their vision of what it means to be church. They have a strong sense of the corporate mission of the church. Being a disciple of Jesus requires a willingness to act courageously for concrete change in the world. Many of these young adults have found inspiration in various expressions of liberationist theology. While they can sometimes engage in common pursuits with evangelical Catholics, their theological instincts are different; they are less trusting of official church pronouncements, and they insist on representation for groups in the church whose voices have not been heard, especially women. I suggest that in the years since Vatican II most mainstream religious communities in the United States have adopted a version of this prophetic spirituality, at least in their official statements.

Young adult Catholics with a communal spirituality are searching for strong interpersonal bonds and corporate identity in a U.S. culture marked by individualism. Most

of their peers do not understand their spiritual aspirations, and they need to find people who can empathize with and support them in their desires. Their ecclesiology resembles the famous “sixth model” of church presented by Avery Dulles—the church as community of disciples.⁶ They are not attracted to forms of religious life in which individual living is predominant. They want real structures of communal support. This group, too, presents challenges to many religious communities today.

Common characteristics

How should religious communities respond to these distinct ecclesiologies and spiritualities of young adult Catholics who are possible candidates for religious life? First of all, while acknowledging the real distinctions among them, I would tentatively suggest that there are certain characteristics that are shared in common by these men and women. They did not experience the Catholic subculture in the United States that middle-aged and older Catholics knew so well. They grew up in a period when Catholics in the United States had already become integrated into the mainstream of society and were fast becoming the most affluent Christians of any denomination. Nor did they experience the Second Vatican Council as a moment of renewal and liberation. This is why the labels “pre-Vatican II” and “post-Vatican II” do not shed much light on their spirituality and ecclesiology.

Many young adults claim that they learned little about their Catholic faith in religious education. While I think these complaints may be exaggerated (most of us were not very committed to diligent study of our faith in our junior high and high school years!), the predominance of this claim indicates that the substance of Catholic Christian belief was not communicated in a compelling way to these young adults. This means that many of the traditional practices and spiritual disciplines that older Catholics internalized are external to them. In the discussion that followed Dianne Bergant’s presentation on religious life at the Catholics on Call conference, there was agreement among participants that they are looking for some structure in religious community and that they need help in learning spiritual disciplines that are part of the Catholic tradition.

These young adults come from a society where marriage and family life are in trouble. While there seems to be some difference in this regard between the experience of GenXers and that of Millennials, with the latter receiving more consistent parental support, it is clear that young adults today

live in a society in which permanent commitment between people is under question. Most are quite adept at finding their own apartments, getting a job, establishing a circle of friends, and living on their own. It appears that those attracted to religious life, whatever their ecclesiology or spirituality, want something different from this. They want communities that are characterized by the mutual commitment of real flesh-and-blood people. They want to find ways to share their journeys of faith with others who are on the same path. And they are searching for a sense of corporate mission.

Finally, in today’s church committed young adult Catholics have many ministerial options. The burgeoning of lay ministry and its recent endorsement by the United States bishops in their letter, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, is a marvelous development in Catholic ecclesiology. At the Catholics on Call conference, men and women discerning religious life were seated at tables with mentors and peers who were either already involved

Young adults who manifest an interest in religious life will need to see something distinctive about it—not a vocation that is “better” or “more spiritual” than lay ministry but one that is clearly distinctive.

in lay ministry or seriously considering a full-time vocation as an ecclesial lay minister. They listened to a cogent and compelling presentation on lay ministry given by Sheila McLaughlin and Angie Appleby-Purcell. It seems clear, then, that young adults who manifest an interest in religious life will need to see something distinctive about it—not a vocation that is “better” or “more spiritual” than lay ministry but one that is clearly distinctive. In a keynote address to the 2006 Convocation of the National Religious Vocation Conference, Laurie Brink, OP emphasized this point.⁷ She suggested that religious communities need to focus on clearer articulations of identity and the distinctiveness of the call to consecrated life.

Embrace communion ecclesiology

With these observations about possible characteristics that diverse young adults have in common, I would offer four recommendations to religious communities that are attempting to invite and incorporate them into their life.

First, in an age of widespread theological diversity, it is very important to adopt an ecclesiology and a spirituality of communion. In a recent article entitled, “Journalism and Polarities in the Church,” John Allen, correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*, underlined the significance of the ecclesiology of communion that is meant to characterize the inner life of the church.⁸ He used the term “fragmentation” (rather than “polarization”) to describe the theological situation of the Catholic community in the United States. In a 2001 address to the General Chapter of the Dominicans, Robert Schreiter, CPPS also highlighted the need for a communion ecclesiology and spirituality.⁹ A spirituality of communion represents the antithesis of fragmentation. In

Young adult candidates for religious life place a premium on forming solid, supportive relationships with community members. If religious communities continue to journey down the road of individualism, they will not attract new candidates.

1985, The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops affirmed that communion is the dominant image of the church in the documents of Vatican II.¹⁰ The bishops thought that recognition of this ecclesiology of communion would afford a way beyond the impasse between liberal and conservative readings of the Council’s teaching about the church.

In his illuminating study of various versions of communion ecclesiology, Dennis Doyle enumerates four characteristics of this understanding of the

church.¹¹ First, communion ecclesiology involves a retrieval of the vision of the church held by most Christians of the first millennium, prior to the split between East and West. Second, communion ecclesiology places emphasis on fellowship among human beings and between human beings and God. This view of the church is all about relationship—relationship among believers grounded in a God who is inherently relational. This sense of interpersonal communion has primacy over the legal and institutional dimensions of the church, though it preserves a place for law and institution. Third, “communion ecclesiology places a high value on the need for visible unity as symbolically realized through shared participation in the Eucharist.”¹² Fourth, communion

ecclesiology promotes “a dynamic and healthy interplay” between unity and diversity in the church.¹³ This interplay is most evident in the ways in which communion ecclesiology strives to articulate the relationship between the universal church and the local churches. The church is understood as a communion of churches. As Susan Wood points out, in an ecclesiology of communion “there is a relationship of mutual interiority between the particular church and the universal church.”¹⁴ The universal church is present in and through the local church, while the local church exists as church only in relationship to the universal church.

While the subtleties of communion ecclesiology are not the main concern of religious communities, the spirituality of communion is directly relevant, particularly in the face of the diverse viewpoints found among vowed members and candidates to religious life. As Doyle points out, a spirituality of communion is all about relationship—forging bonds with God and with one another. The formation of new candidates for religious life and their integration into community is a process of establishing and deepening relationships in both of these dimensions. As stated above, it appears that young adult candidates for religious life place a premium on forming solid, supportive relationships with community members. If religious communities continue to journey down the road of individualism, they will not attract new candidates.

A spirituality of communion seeks to preserve and strengthen relational bonds amidst diversity. It does not deny or negate diversity but envisions a unity that is a reconciled diversity. At the same time, it tries to build on common convictions and values. In the life of the church as a whole, this dynamic is evident in the relationship between the local and the universal. It has played out in recent years in efforts to inculturate the Gospel in ways that are faithful to the tradition and genuinely expressive of distinct social locations.

In religious life, this dynamic occurs in the relationships between smaller units of a congregation (provinces, regions) and the life of the congregation as a whole. I believe it also applies to relationships among groups of religious within a community who hold different theological viewpoints. If a younger candidate to a religious community values symbols or practices viewed by many vowed members as “conservative” or even “regressive” (e.g., wearing a habit), it may be that he or she will not find a fit with that community. Nevertheless, before arriving at this judgment, it seems to me that a community needs to explore with the candidate the deeper motivations and desires that underlie these preferences. And both candidate and community need to

identify foundational convictions and values that are shared in common.

Celebrate Eucharist as a community

My second recommendation is directly related to this spirituality of communion; it is articulated clearly by Doyle. A spirituality of communion finds its most intensive visible expression in the shared celebration of the Eucharist. I believe that the most important strategy by which religious communities can face the challenge of incorporating candidates with diverse ecclesiologies is regular celebration of the Eucharist as a community. I realize that some will disagree with this recommendation. Liturgy often becomes the prime battleground for ideological differences, rather than the expression of unity in faith. Moreover, some religious, especially women, find the celebration of the Eucharist to be more an experience of exclusion than one of inclusion. While acknowledging these realities, I would still suggest that the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Christian life, is that place where we are drawn together in communion with Christ and with one another at a level deeper than any other. If we wish to internalize a spirituality of communion in order to overcome fragmentation in our church and our religious communities, the regular, heartfelt celebration of the Eucharist is a *sine qua non*.

Third, as stated above, many young adults interested in religious life seem to be looking for some communal structure and for mentoring in internalizing spiritual disciplines. This may be difficult for middle-aged and older vowed religious to understand, given the fact that they experienced liberation from a religious life of the past that was rigidly structured and replete with compulsory spiritual disciplines. For contemporary young adults, however, religious life does not make much sense if little time is spent praying, eating, talking, and working together. And many of these young adults want help in learning disciplines like meditation, liturgical prayer, silence, healthy forms of penance, etc.

Engage in theological reflection

Finally, I believe that in order to incorporate young adults into religious communities today, it is important that communities commit themselves to some form of theological reflection. This reflection should not be confined to sessions between formation directors and candidates. Theological reflection is simply reflection on experience in the light of faith. It

allows people to talk about their personal experience of life and ministry, to discern ways in which God is revealing God's presence in the midst of their lives, and to situate this experience within the rich Catholic Christian tradition. In the course of this theological reflection, people's views of God, Christ, the church, and ministry become part of the conversation. Questions and issues will sometimes surface that call for further study and catechesis. If the community engages in this study together, everyone will benefit. Inevitably differences in theological viewpoint will be expressed. But by providing a space for people to share their theological convictions, concerns and questions, communities have a greater chance of being able to live out of a spirituality of communion, rather than a mentality of polarization.

These recommendations are in no way adequate to meet all the challenges of attracting and incorporating young adults with diverse theological perspectives into religious life. I offer them simply as a few ideas that may help meet these challenges. The theological diversity within U.S. Catholicism in general, and among young adult Catholics specifically, often seems confusing and burdensome. I believe, however, that we are invited to view this diversity in a positive light as reflective of the rich heritage that we have as Catholic Christians. While we may not agree with all of the theological opinions and spiritual preferences that candidates bring to us, we are called to listen closely to them in order to discern the values and the concerns that lie beneath the surface. In so doing, we may find that these values and concerns represent a positive contribution to the life of our communities. ■

The most important strategy by which religious communities can face the challenge of incorporating candidates with diverse ecclesiologies is regular celebration of the Eucharist as a community.

1. Mary Ann Reese. "Refracting the Light," *America* (September 22, 2003), 8-12. This article was reprinted in *HORIZON*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Fall 2004), 24-27.

2. *Ibid.*

3. This telephone conversation took place on August 17, 2006. Professor D'Antonio graciously agreed to allow me to

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the Pathways to Ministry

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report on this conversation for this article. His recent research on young adult Catholics will soon be published.

4. Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger. *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood: Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 121. In making this comment, Hoge and Wenger cite an unpublished report given by Mark Latcovich in 2002.

5. Ibid.

6. Avery Dulles, SJ. *A Church to Believe In* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 7-14.

7. This address was published in *HORIZON*, Vol. 32. No. 2 (Winter 2007), 16.

8. John Allen. "Journalism and Polarities in the Church," *New Theology Review* (2006): 24-33.

9. Robert Schreiter, CPPS. "Major Currents of Our Times: What They Mean for the Church," *Origins*, Vol. 31 (August 16, 2001), 189-198.

10. See the discussion of church as communion by Susan Wood, "The Church as Communion," in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology*, edited by Father Peter Phan (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 159-176.

11. Dennis Doyle. *Communion Ecclesiology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 13.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Susan Wood, "The Church as Communion," 166.

Internet technologies make it easier than ever to connect with young adults. Here are tips for using these new forms of communication in your ministry.

Put the Web to work for vocations

BY KATHLEEN WAYNE, RSM

VOCATION MINISTRY is an ever changing, ever evolving adventure! Sisters I have lived with tell of how they went to the motherhouse, met Mother Superior, and shortly thereafter joined the community. Even my experience with a vocation minister during college seems archaic in light of the experiences I have witnessed during nine years in this ministry. As a college student, my initial encounter was with a sister who knew me from my campus community. Today the initial encounter with an inquirer often comes electronically from another part of the country. Over the last five years, approximately 50 percent of the women I have worked with in ongoing discernment have been contacts that originated over the Internet. In addition, because of our use of Web sites and chat rooms, we have seen an increased number of initial inquiries from women. Clearly technology and new modes of communication have changed the face of vocation ministry. And while this is an exciting time, it also raises legitimate questions about how to best respond to electronic inquiries and how to best use technology to spread the word that religious life is a viable life choice today.

I share here what I have learned about new forms of technology in an effort to help us in our common ministry of walking with those who desire to respond to God's call. Let me begin with my own community's experience. The Sisters of Mercy are currently in our fifth year of providing an Internet site that includes information on discernment, our foundress Catherine McAuley, the vows

Kathleen Wayne, RSM is a full-time vocation minister serving in the evolving New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. She has served in vocation ministry for nine years.



and frequently asked questions. The site includes a message board that is very active with prayer requests, reflections on Scripture readings and questions our members pose. In addition, we provide a nightly "chat room" where women come together for support and information sharing. (See "Technology terms" on page 22.)

Many of the women we are in contact with are college students. While a personal encounter is necessary and ideal in this ministry, students may not have the resources or time to physically come together for weekend retreats, book discussions or regular discernment meetings. Online programming is one way we connect inquirers with each other and with Mercy Sisters. Through our nightly "chat room," we have discussions and sharing around topics of importance on the discernment journey.

We have even been known to host an occasional "cyber party"! That is, we come together for a chat with a specific goal to celebrate a specific event in a chatter's life. Everything from the food to decorations is imagined by the chatters. It is pure creativity and simple fun. We have also used the site to host book discussions. Those participating commit to purchasing a specific book. A manager (one of our vocation team members) calls the group together for discussion on specific chapters at designated times. All are enriched in their own corner of the world.

While the chat room is a viable alternative for faith sharing when people are in different parts of the country, we acknowledge the importance of personally meeting inquirers. The current structure of our Institute-wide vocation initiative allows vocation ministers in different parts of the country to meet the inquirers in their region. This face-to-face meeting also helps those who staff the online ministry, because they are in close communication with the regional representatives and regularly meet with them. Structures are also in place for women from the chat room to meet each other at various events throughout the year. The next new online program

we will host is a Busy Person's Retreat. Blending prayer, chats focused on a theme and evenings for open forum has created a contagious energy in the chat room!

We hope that having this functioning structure in place will provide a vehicle for future creativity with podcasting and other initiatives. We want to tap into the gifts our sisters

Ask young adults for guidance. My motivation for doing more with technology has come from asking young people, "How would you do this ministry if you were me?"

have in spirituality, ministry and community to share the good news of Mercy life today. Imagine the possibilities of connecting a person in the rural northwest United States with a Mercy in Santiago, Chile. This gives both the new inquirer—who perhaps is seeking anonymity as she asks her first questions—as well as a person in the formal steps of discernment and application

an opportunity to be enriched by the community. And that enrichment can happen from the comfort of a familiar space.

With this overview of my own community's foray into Internet communications, I offer the following ideas about taking advantage of Web technology in any vocation ministry.

Don't be afraid—explore!

Think of learning and using technology I hit the send button too fast as an adventure that can put you in touch with an audience that is geographically broader and more diverse than you can imagine. Don't let new machines, language or methods intimidate you.

Explore the Internet and all it contains Don't be afraid to try different features on your computer. Don't worry if you make a mistake; some of my most creative moments have come once I attempted to correct things I thought I was doing wrong! I have discovered ways to change fonts, layouts, booklets and even chat rooms. While you might be reluctant to spend time sitting at the computer, seemingly unproductive, remember, the best lessons are taught by practice.

Explore cell phones, iPods, palm pilots and other devices to be familiar with the world of the young people you hope to attract. This familiarity can help you understand how they function in today's society and how they expect to

communicate with others. Spend some time looking at blogs and Web sites such as YouTube, MySpace and Facebook. This will help you to enter into what has become normal daily activity for some. The goal is not simply to collect more

Technology terms

Blog A Web site with entries made in journal style, often including text, photos and links to other sites. Derived from "Web log." Blogs often provide commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news; some function as more personal online diaries.

Chat room A Web site whereby multiple people take part in a typed, real-time discussion.

Instant messaging or IMing is a form of real-time communication between two or more people based on typed text sent over the Internet through a software specifically designed for instant messaging.

iPod A leading brand of portable media players. These hand-held devices, used with earbuds, are mostly used for playing music.

Message board A Web-based written discussion on a particular theme that does not take place in real time but is ongoing. Also called an Internet forum, discussion board, discussion group or bulletin board.

MySpace.com, Facebook.com Social networking Web sites that offer interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and videos.

Podcast An audio file distributed over the Internet.

Text message A written message sent between cell phones. Also know as SMS, or Short Message Service.

YouTube.com A popular, free video sharing Web site. Users can upload, view and share video clips.

gadgets to use in our ministry or car, but rather to come to a new level of understanding of the young people we hope to meet and invite. Some of what seems like pure gadgetry may in fact give us quicker, more effective ways of communicating with them.

Surround yourself with people who know more than you

Talk with other vocation ministers: what works for them? How could new ideas and new technology be incorporated in your programs? Explore Web sites of other communities. Investigate what other people are doing.

Ask young adults for guidance. My motivation for doing more with technology has come from asking young people, "How would you do this ministry if you were me? What should I be doing?" From their responses, my community has developed our chat room, Internet site, blogs, instant messaging and a whole new world of communication! Your presence on the Web is essential for connecting with young adults, so ask them what you can do to keep your site fresh, contemporary and interesting.

Find a kindred spirit (or better yet, a team of them) from your community to share ideas and develop new initiatives. It takes effort to sustain the energy needed to investigate and develop new forms of communication. In addition to being a support in the ministry, a team approach in this area can help you focus on goals and challenge you to explore new initiatives when appropriate. Plus it's fun to share the excitement with someone.

Make equipment, Web access priorities

Understand that certain equipment is necessary for the ministry. While we religious value sharing our material possessions, it will be important for the ministry that you have a computer available for your use. If you are in a position to purchase a computer, consider a laptop. Not only will this provide flexibility (for instance, you can be online and in the community room at the same time), but if you travel, your files will be accessible. If you find yourself stuck in an airport, a laptop lets you use that time productively.

Access to the Internet is critical! DSL or cable Internet service provide high-speed access without frustrating community members who may need to use the phone while you're online. Wireless access provides a great deal of flexibility about where you can work on Internet-based tasks.

Be clear about what you need to do your ministry effectively. Unlimited Internet access at the office and at home is not a luxury in our ministry.

Set clear goals

Be clear about what you are hoping to accomplish. What are the goals of your ministry? How will technology help you to meet these goals? If you view this ministry in terms of connecting with various people in different areas, sharing information about your community and inviting people to meet your community,

you will need to plan how to achieve your goals. As our vocation team planned the goals for our ministry, it was clear that we wanted the majority of our time to be spent meeting and engaging single women. This gave a broad parameter to the "how" of the ministry. The Internet was a viable option in meeting this goal. Creativity and evaluation was key in developing our planned approach.

As my vocation team planned the goals for our ministry, it was clear that we wanted the majority of our time to be spent meeting and engaging single women. This gave a broad parameter to the how of the ministry. The Internet was a viable option in meeting this goal.

What is your purpose in being online or accessible with cell phone, pager or other devices? Who is your target audience? What are the end results you desire? We were clear that we wanted to get the message out that religious life is still a viable option and that the Sisters of Mercy are continuing to respond to the needs of our world. We wanted to invite young women to "meet the Sisters of Mercy."

What support do you need to accomplish your goals? Does your community need to recruit personnel or set up systems for face-to-face meetings with inquirers? Do you need to put systems in place for publicizing retreat opportunities, Come and See events or other types of outreach?

A goal-setting, strategizing period might also be a good time to set policies about identity. It's helpful to clarify how you want to introduce yourself online. A certain amount of anonymity is provided by the Internet. A person can take

to maintain the expectations you have for social maturity and relational skills. Be careful not to lose perspective in this important area. The Internet has also changed how personal boundaries are defined by some. Personal information, for some individuals seems easier to share with “cyber friends,” but is not always appropriately shared. As stated earlier, effective ministry must include the opportunity to become personally acquainted with those who are inquiring about your community and to observe their ability to relate with others.

Develop next steps; evaluate

Once you “meet” an inquirer online, what will happen next? My experience says that initially you let the person take the lead in asking questions. At some point, you’ll want to have a face-to-face meeting, so it’s important to have systems in place

Questions to ask before setting up a chat room

- Who is our targeted audience? What is our purpose?
- Have we considered safety, especially if minors are involved? A diocesan “safe environment program” coordinator can explain guidelines for the safety of minors. (See <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/sepcoord.shtml>.)
- Who is available to support this initiative? Who will be the online managers when the chat room is open?
- What server will we use for this room?
- When will the room be open?
- How will we advertise?
- What screening procedures will we use?
- What will we “do” when we are in chat?
- What is the next step after “meeting” someone in chat?
- What plan is there for face-to-face meetings with chat room participants?
- What type of assessment plan do we need?

to allow for that. The Mercy Sisters have ministers in various parts of the nation who meet personally with inquirers. We develop relationships only with women in the United States at this time. If a person from outside the U.S. makes contact, we refer her to the Mercy community in her country.

Online our managers and vocation ministers are careful to document conversations with “chatters.” When an inquirer requests more information or asks specific questions, she is connected with the vocation minister in her area. Specifics are dealt with in a personal encounter. The Internet is used for general questions, conversation and prayer.

Having these structures in place so that inquirers can take the next step is essential, and it is just as important to have a next step for your overall approach to technology use. That means you’ll need to evaluate what you’re doing. Invite a team of people who support vocation ministry to regularly evaluate your use of technology, especially the Internet. Ask young adults in discernment about your Internet use. What was helpful; what could be made better?

Have fun

Enjoy the energy of the new people you will encounter! Many an evening I sit in the living room of my home and laugh out loud (LOL) at the conversation in chat. I think the women I live with would like to participate just for the opportunity to laugh. I have had the good fortune to meet many of our chatters personally and to connect sisters and inquirers throughout the nation. The online members support and encourage each other. We celebrate important moments in creative ways, even fashioning cyber-birthday parties (no calories!).

You can share this excitement with the larger community. We invited the president of one of our regional communities to be a guest speaker in chat. A new candidate who was an active member of our site helped her learn the “how to” of a chat room. Even our Institute president, Sister Mary Waskowiak, RSM, has come online as a guest speaker. I can honestly say she is amazed at the conversation and fresh hope the women shared with her. To encourage our membership to participate—at least in posting messages on the site in response to the inquirers’ questions—we held a chat over the Internet which was projected in the meeting room of one regional community’s assembly. The sisters witnessed the managers “talking” with the young women and were able to ask questions of the young women. We were the highlight of the assembly! The energy for promoting vocations and

part in different Web sites without revealing an identity. Considering the considerable time and energy it takes to participate in various sites, we have opted to always identify ourselves as Sisters of Mercy. It has been our experience that people who are seeking information about religious life appreciate our being up front about our identity. The title “Sister” and the initials “RSM” give others an opening to ask us questions and give us the opportunity to speak specifically as Mercy Sisters.

Set limits

How will you stay connected with people who are inquiring about your community? It has been my experience that once you connect with people electronically, the relationship needs

to be nurtured and developed. This takes time and energy and does not always happen during “normal business hours.” As ministers, we need to be clear about boundaries on our time, especially when evening time is required.

Know the amount of time you can spend online or on the phone. And be aware of when your target audience is most available. We have found that setting aside an hour nightly for chat works very well. We can manage the site; and the women who chat know the limits and respect that we sisters have a community life outside of the chat room. As ministers we need to take control of our time. Voicemail, e-mail and away messages on the computer are appropriate ways to help inquirers understand that, while important and valued, they are not the center of your life. At the same time, it is important that we do respond to our messages in a timely manner.

There are important limits when developing chat rooms. They fall into two areas: privacy and safety.

Privacy In order to safeguard against abuses that have become more frequent online, systems need to be in place to safeguard the community as well as the people you invite in to chat. The Sisters of Mercy have chosen to develop a chat room site that is listed on a server but is restricted to registered members. If a person asks to join our group, it is the responsibility of one of the site managers, from our vocation team, to screen the person. We have developed an e-mail message that is sent out to the person. It stipulates clearly the purpose of the room and who is eligible for membership. Once the person is approved, she has access to the message board and the chat room.

Safety To be in compliance with our understanding of safety norms set by the United States bishops, we have committed to have one of the site managers in the chat room whenever it is open. Her purpose is to monitor and guide the conversation. In addition, the managers have developed a system of keeping each other informed if inappropriate behavior occurs. As managers we have the right to ban a person from the site. This tactic is employed after conversation with the individual who is abusing the system.

We must not forget the assessment skills that are necessary in this ministry. Being alert to problematic situations and people is extremely important. Keep in mind, too, that Web-based communication has its limits. In some ways it has changed the way people relate to others. It is revealing to discover Internet contacts who speak of “their friends” or “my best friend” in reference to someone that they know only online. Whether online or face-to-face, you’ll want

What discerners say about using the Internet

“During the time I was discerning, I had difficulty finding other young adults to connect with that were going through the same process as me. The chat room gave me the opportunity to connect daily with others who had similar questions about religious life. It gave me the support I needed to begin the next part in my discernment toward religious life.”

—Jenny age 29, Pennsylvania

“The Internet has allowed me to make connections not only with sisters but with others in the discernment process. These connections have allowed me to visit, pray and serve with a regional community hundreds of miles away. The sisters have provided a chat where I can ask questions and learn about community. In addition women in the discernment process have given each other mutual support. This support is critical, as we may not know others in our area asking the same questions. When I first began the discernment process, it helped to acquaint myself with the different religious communities in my area and make initial contact with vocation ministers.”

—Renee age 22, Ohio

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— Vita Consecrata, 1996

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welcoming new members is very high in that community now. The members there are helping the vocation ministers encourage young women to "think Mercy."

As ministers who desire to use every possible way to meet people interested in religious life, it can be exciting to make good use of Web technology. It is a wonderful gift at this time in our history. But it is a gift that must be used wisely. As

with any initiative, we need to honestly evaluate what we are doing and how we are using this tool to better share our story and invite others to join us on the journey. Putting the Web to work for vocations is an ongoing, ever-changing process and a very necessary one in this ministry. Good luck and happy surfing! ■

YouTube, MySpace and Facebook sites are not only free, they let vocation ministers meet young adults on their own turf.

Reach young adults where they are: online video and social networking

By BRIAN HALDERMAN, SM

YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE in a world of information technology. They spend endless hours on the computer, talking on cell phones and posting comments on friends' Web sites. Countless ads and messages compete for their attention. These young people have aspirations and hopes for a fulfilling future. This new marketplace presents young people with many life options, and we need to be among them. Young people must see our life choices to become sisters, brothers and priests as attractive possibilities. It is essential that we share the richness of our lives so young adults can consider this way of life.

To do so, we must meet young people on their own turf. Our role as instruments of God's call—as vocation ministers—means being present within the din of contemporary culture. Religious communities need to have attractive, engaging Web sites. We religious must learn the ropes of social networking through MySpace.com, Friendster.com, Facebook.com and other Web sites that can connect us with young people discussing their vocational call. We need to be posting video clips in YouTube.com where young people can see real-life accounts of religious life and ministries. In a sense, we need to develop our own "reality TV" for religious life.

Recent demographics from the Pew Internet and American Life Project (see <http://www.pewinternet.org/>) tell

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us that 83 percent of young people 18-to-29 years of age are using the Internet on a regular basis. Through additional research we know they are using the Internet for e-mail, instant messaging, reading and writing blogs, downloading music and, more recently, engaging in social networks (MySpace.com and Facebook.com). The latest Pew research on the topic, released in January 2007, indicates that over half of online American teens (ages 12 to 17) use online social networking sites.

The new meeting spaces

What are social networking sites? These sites allow users to create profiles and connect with other profiles in the site to create social networks. It allows for spontaneous, real-time chats or scribbles on a profile's "wall,"— sort of an ongoing Web text to which friends and strangers can contribute. The most popular of these sites is MySpace.com, which was ranked sixth in top sites visited in recent Web rankings of Alexa.com, a company that specializes in Web site traffic rankings. Following closely is Facebook.com, a site in which most users are affiliated with an educational institution, company or particular geographic region. According to its Web site, Facebook now has over 14 million registered users in over 40,000 regional, work, college and high school networks. This growth occurred in just three years since its launch in February 2004.

The potential to reach out to young people from social networking sites is extraordinary. For example, I found in Facebook.com several groups that were established for those discerning a vocational call in the Catholic Church. These include The Vocation Discerners, Vocation Support Group and Prayer Support for Catholic Vocations. Membership in these groups varies from 150 to 450 persons. Vocation ministers can take part in these social networks by contributing to the ongoing conversations in the group forums. In essence,

vocation ministers can serve as experts on the discernment journey. They can also post information about upcoming discernment retreats, share resources, and write personal messages to group members. Recently I responded to a forum posting of a young man struggling with his discernment. He was extremely grateful that I took the time to write him a response and make some suggestions for his ongoing journey. I have found that my engagement with these groups helps put a face on that which they are discerning. Young men and women in discernment need young role models who have “taken the plunge” to assist and support their ongoing

Secrets to success

- ✓ Hire a Web professional, preferably one familiar with the church and religious orders, and build a quality and attractive Web site.
- ✓ Ask donors to support your online outreach. Many are eager to do so.
- ✓ Consider online advertising. Purchase banner ads and use Google Adwords to target specific geographical regions or language groups.
- ✓ Enlist younger members who may be involved with a university to create a Facebook.com account. Engage in the online discernment communities.
- ✓ Set up a MySpace.com page. Anyone can create a profile; the online software will walk you through the process, which is fairly simple.
- ✓ Experiment with video clip interviews or virtual tours, and post some on YouTube.com or your own Web site. Three minutes is a good length, although YouTube allows a maximum of 10 minutes and 100 MB. Posting a digital video clip is rather easy: once you have set up a free account, just follow the steps for uploading video. YouTube offers a great tutorial as well.

discernment. These social networks allow for this dynamic.

MySpace.com has similar groups with comparable levels of membership. In this network I discovered saints’ profiles, such as St. Francis of Assisi. The profile allows users to have St. Francis as their “online friend” and post prayer requests and intentions for St. Francis. You might consider posting a profile for your community’s founder. It’s a creative way for young people to become familiar with your community and mission.

Tap the potential of online video

Another field of opportunity is YouTube.com (the fifth most-visited site on the Internet), which allows you to create a profile and post video clips for free. YouTube videos are searchable by topic and can be shared via their own Web addresses. They can be embedded in user profiles on social networking sites or on your own vocation Web site. Embedding means that your video on YouTube can be inserted into your Web site or other Web sites, allowing it to be viewed without the visitor needing to encounter your profile on YouTube.com. Not only are YouTube video clips an innovative means for sharing your life and charisma, but they can help drive traffic to your Web site for more information.

My community, the Society of Mary (Marianists), began a Web site specifically for vocations in autumn 2001 (<http://www.marianist.com/vocations>). Since that time, we have seen extraordinary growth in the use of our site. Over 60 percent of our inquirers found us through our Web site last year. We quickly learned that we can reach young people in geographical locations where we have no communities or ministerial presence. Almost six years later, we spend the majority of our vocation advertising and marketing budget online. We also have begun assisting our developing regions with their own vocation Web sites. The results have been tremendous. At a recent Come and See weekend in Mexico, over half of the participants contacted us via the Internet. Several candidates in formation in Mexico and in the United States are a direct result of our online outreach.

In 2006, our vocation team made a strategic decision not to invest in making another DVD. Instead, we hired a professional Web designer to help us redesign our site and incorporate video components using Adobe Flash, an animation software. Our site now includes video of a brother sharing the steps of formation and an interactive frequently-asked-questions page. Most recently, we have experimented with posting video clips of vow celebrations and personal

Social network sites

www.facebook.com
www.myspace.com
www.friendster.com
www.orkut.com

Video sites

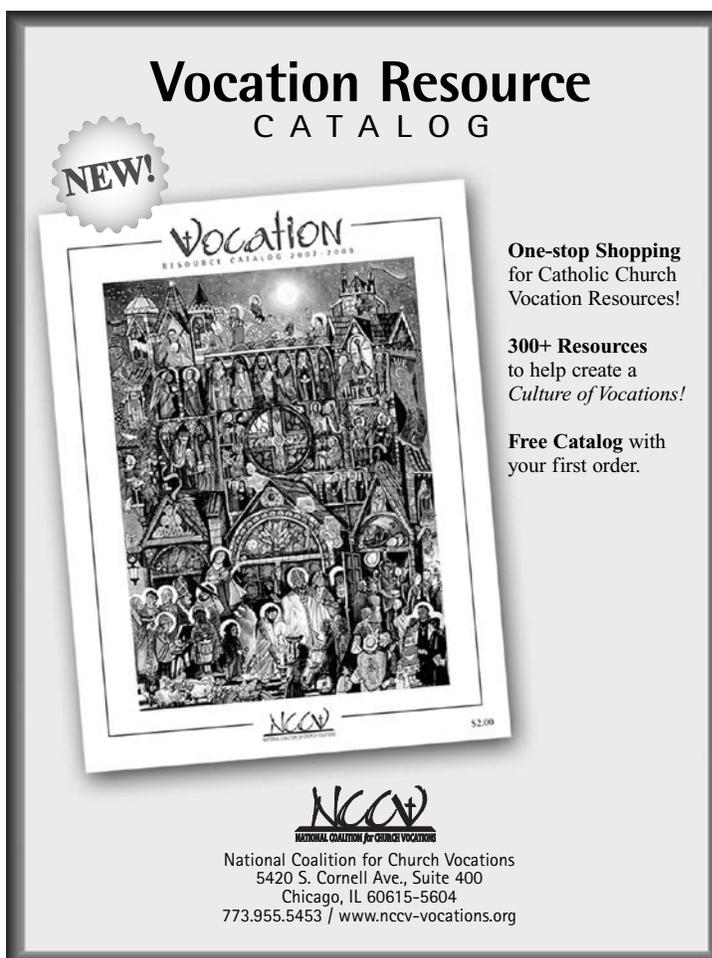
www.youtube.com
video.google.com
video.aol.com

interviews on YouTube.com. One video was viewed 80 times in just three days. Clearly online video will be an important part of our future campaigns.

Drive traffic to your Web site

While you may have a great Web site, it will succeed only if you get people to visit it. Here are a few tips to encourage traffic. First, print your Web address on everything possible—from pens to T-shirts—and give them away at youth conferences and other events. Second, get the institutions, ministries and dioceses where you have a presence to link to your site. E-mail other Catholic Web sites and ask them for a link, too. The more links, the higher your ranking on Google's search results pages. Google is now a verb. It is the monster of all search engines, and using it is key. Third, explore Google Adwords. It is an amazing advertising mechanism that allows you to focus your ads on people who search for key words in specific geographical regions and language groups. Fourth, consider banner advertising on major Catholic Web portals. Last, engage in online social networking sites and YouTube.com, and be sure to create links to your own Web site in these arenas. All of these steps will help increase traffic to your site.

It takes time and money to be successful in the vocational marketplace of the 21st century. Those of us in religious life must keep up with the new means of communication and portray our way of life as a viable option. We must share our successes and failures and learn from each other as the technology changes and evolves. If we hope to harvest crops with abundant fruit, we must continue to plow ahead planting seeds in the vocational marketplace. Ultimately, we must view our work as one part of a greater plan—one that takes trust and patience. ■



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Today more and more messages get delivered via film, including those about religious life. Before you begin a streaming Web video, a DVD or a mini-CD, read what this experienced producer has to say.

The 10 commandments of DVD production

By JUDY ZIELINSKI, OSF

MORE AND MORE vocation directors are using live-action videos/DVDs to share their community's story with men and women investigating a call to religious life. A DVD—including interviews and footage of your brothers or sisters, their places of ministry, scenes of your provincial house and shots of community events such as jubilees, professions, chapters and liturgies—can convey a sense of energy, enthusiasm and excitement, putting people and places on the screen that cannot possibly be conveyed in a brochure, a PowerPoint or a lecture. A fresh, inspiring and upbeat program can do wonders to energize the talk you present at a vocation fair, a classroom visit, a parish gathering, or a young adult retreat. A DVD is also a wonderful resource to drop in the mail or put in the hands of a vocational prospect. A live-action program is also a tremendous resource to put on your Web site, allowing surfers to stop and check out your community at any hour of day or night.

However, creating a DVD that captures your community's charism, mission and spirituality with excellent writing, camera work, music and editing takes involvement and dedication. It isn't luck or magic that makes it happen but hard work and attention to detail.

Over the past five years I have found myself intimately involved with a number of men's and women's congregations,

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working with them to create media pieces that effectively reflect their vocation messages. The final programs have ranged from mini-CDs to half-hour cable TV broadcasts. Each community's message was unique, as was each end product. In all of these projects, I empathized as a fellow-religious, understanding the concerns and priorities of the vocation minister (and the leadership team and community standing behind him or her.) I also wore the hat of a professional writer/producer intent on creating programs that were cost-effective as well as breathtaking. My own expertise, coupled with the collaboration of the clients, has served these projects well. All of us together have done great work. However, I have also been privy to mistakes and problems that communities have experienced as they ventured into the expensive and potentially-dangerous area of production. Hence I share this article, offering basic information that may make DVD production a safer and more positive experience for vocation ministers.

1. Thou shalt decide what thou wantest. You don't need to know everything up front, or all at once, but do spend some time addressing basic questions: Why do you want or need a DVD? How will it help you? Will it serve vocations only or have other uses? Will it include a history of your province or order? What language will be used in the master? Will it be duplicated as DVDs or simply used live on your Web site? It will be helpful to brainstorm basic questions with leadership personnel or a small production committee. Choose three or four people to walk with you through this process. They might be your vocation team, but if you don't have this structured support, ask a few good people to fill this role. You will need intelligent feedback, straight talk, and instinctive reactions to many issues as you proceed. Don't try this all alone. As the process continues, this group will serve as critics, confidantes and supports. Keep them close.

2. Thou shalt determine an available budget. Video production costs money. Like the biblical king who

determines if his military might is sufficient to go to battle against his rival, you need to assess if you have enough money (or can raise enough) to produce your project. For years the benchmark number often used for production was “\$1,000 per finished minute.” That figure is actually closer to \$1,500-\$2,000 a minute these days. I find that most average vocation projects running under 10 minutes fall into the \$35- \$45,000 cost range. For longer programs or projects with multiple parts, that figure increases. Many factors fall into the mix: How much travel is involved—multiple cities across the US? How many days of shooting are called for? What is the length of the finished program? To what degree does the project require special shots (say, from helicopters) or substantial post-production (with special effects)? The best advice is probably to “blue-sky” your project and then crash back to reality when the cost is more than your budget can handle.

But creative approaches to financing also abound: Can costs be spread across two fiscal years, across departments, or even across provinces? Can costs be reduced by shooting in one or two locations as opposed to five? Can costs be consolidated by shooting footage that will be used for completely different purposes? (I have done this successfully for several communities’ fund-raising and vocational projects and literally halved their shooting costs.) If all arithmetic fails, and you are nowhere near what a DVD project will cost, it may be time to seek out sponsors to underwrite the project or talk to your leadership. Remember, too, that a good program will last at least 5-7 years, so the production cost should be amortized over that entire period and not considered as a one-year expense.

3. Thou shalt imagine thy project on screen before you pick up the phone. It’s important to do some homework even before you do research on agencies and production companies. Try to imagine your program: Whom do you see on screen? Do you want to feature only young professed? Or a mix of temporary and finally-professed? Do you

want to emphasize certain ministries? Geographies? Or tape everyone in one location? Do you want people’s stories to mesh or to be told individually? Will the featured members

be interviewed? On what topics? Again, during the creative process, these ideas will be fluid and shift many times. But thinking about them early on will discipline you and your committee to select the best people in the best places for the best reasons—usually a mixture of time, travel, money and message. And remember, it’s not always the province’s good-looking “George Clooney” or attractive “Nicole Kidman” that make the best candidates. Think about the person’s ability to speak convincingly about his or her vocation, commitment, spirituality, love for ministry, etc. Authenticity counts—it’s not easy to fool the camera.

4. Thou shalt seek wisdom and decide if thou needest an agency—or not. When a business needs a TV commercial, it often hires an advertising or public relations agency. The agency person will meet with you; listen to your ideas and discuss them until they feel they understand you; create a concept and a script for your program; and then hire a production company to *execute* the shooting and editing. In this scenario, you will end up paying *both* the agency and the production company. At times this step is needed if you cannot work with the production company alone to bring your ideas to fruition. Agency personnel can also be helpful if you plan on creating an entire campaign with a new logo, print pieces, and other kinds of advertising (Web, radio, bus posters, billboards, etc.) The agency contact will coordinate the design and layout, buy the air time you need, manage deadlines, serve as the liaison with the production

Choose three or four people to walk with you through this process. You will need intelligent feedback, straight talk, and instinctive reactions to many issues.

company, and act as the “point person” you need to call about everything. If, however, you can find a production company that understands your vision, “gets it,” and can deliver what you need without the presence of a third party, it is perfectly acceptable to eliminate the “middleman” agency. But be sure that the production company can shoot the material, write the script, and deliver a finished DVD according to your specifications and deadlines. Otherwise, you can find yourself in a strange land with no translator or guide.

5. Thou shalt distinguish between the “sheep and the goats” so as to bring this project to safe pasture. The person who will be most intimately involved in bringing

The most consistent fault I see religious make in television production is attempting to stuff as much content as possible into their shows.

your project to the TV screen is your producer. Assuming you do not involve an agency, he or she must have the ability to listen to you and your team; take notes; reflect back to you at every stage what you are seeking; explain the schedule and process that will be followed in detail *before* the shooting starts; establish

a rapport with everyone to be taped; bring visual imagination to the story; interview the featured members with intelligence, empathy and thoroughness; know how to work and behave in religious environments; write a script that balances content and interest; stay on deadline; stay on (or under) budget; and finally, deliver a program that is simultaneously beautiful, inspiring, human and spiritual. Selecting the producer is a critical step. This person will serve in a role akin to a confessor/ lawyer during the months of production. You need to feel safe, trusted, respected and included in the relationship.

It is not enough of a credential that the producer is Catholic. Ask to see samples of the producer’s work. Be sure you see programs that include interviews and location shooting—not simply studio “talking heads.” While he or she may not have produced vocation materials per se, look for evidence that this person can deliver what you are looking for. Check references. If you have a willing contact at the local news station, remember that newscasters and local reporters generally do not work on longer-form pieces; their reports usually last under a minute. Think twice about hiring

a reporter, a student, or an inappropriate person to produce your piece in the interest of saving money. (One client hired a man whose total video production world consisted of taping legal depositions on 1980’s-era equipment!)

Finally, check on the equipment the producer plans to use. Digibeta, Beta SP or SX tape are still the broadcast industry standards for professional shoots; if the format mentioned is ½ inch or ¾ inch tape, beware. These are inferior and quite archaic. Digital video (DV or mini-DV) cameras are very popular and accessible now from every Circuit City or Best Buy. However, they are inferior to broadcast standards and do not produce the sharpest, brightest footage. Desktop computer-based editing programs are also all the rage. These are certainly capable of creating a program out of your footage, but the quality will largely depend upon the artistry of the editor. Ask how and by whom the program will be edited. You should know if it’s going to be done by a high school student in his or her bedroom— fine, as long as that’s what you are expecting and paying for. In general, ask yourself if you want your program to be a professional investment worthy of hundreds of dubs, seen and circulated as far as possible, or if you will be satisfied with a consumer-level “home movie” production donated by a friendly parishioner. The answer will dictate whom you hire and what you pay.

6. Thou shalt admonish, instruct and illuminate the chosen producer as to the vision of your heart. Plan to spend lots of time with the producer. He or she may be a creative, gifted and successful commercial creator, but remember that you are not selling widgets but inviting persons to explore a spiritual prompting and to “come and see.” The producer may need a crash course in religious life, and *you* will be the designated tutor! Concepts such as vows, ministry, charisma, prayer, community, solemn profession, etc may require explaining and examples. Further, it will be your responsibility to name the people you want interviewed, the places where ministry taping should occur, etc. By all means listen to objections or concerns the producer raises, and be willing to consider any alternative approach, but the bottom line is that *you* will be answering to the community long after the producer has disappeared. So don’t be intimidated: talk, talk, talk together; borrow a few vocation DVDs you admire and watch them with the producer; meet with or conference-call the featured members; go over the questions and concepts you want covered in the interviews. You are the supervising producer, so take the responsibility seriously.

7. Thou shalt not insist that every chapter

document, all of the founder's writings, and a detailed history of the order be included. Television is *not* print. It is not meant to be read and digested on a quiet, personal level. TV is fluid, momentary, ephemeral. It moves and flows. It is best at leaving people with broad strokes, the gestalt, a quick impression: Yes, I'll try that soft drink; No, I won't vote for him; Wow, that's a cool car; Gee, those religious look happy! The most consistent fault I see religious make in television production is attempting to stuff as much content as possible into their shows. We have to mention the latest chapter decree.... Is there enough in there about our charisma? What about our congregational history? Are we representing every ministry? Remember your audience: They don't need to see or hear too much at this point. Yes, you clearly want to include enough information to identify your group, introduce your people, and make your impression. You also want to leave Web site information and a contact phone number or address. But don't overload your viewers. You will lose them and leave

a negative impression in the interest of "getting your money's worth."

8. Thou shalt not bail out at this point! Once major decisions regarding people and schedule are made, you cannot sit back and abandon the process and the producer. Go along on all the shoots; watch what's being recorded; encourage the "stars" to relax and be themselves; confer with the producer. Listen carefully to the interview questions as well as the *answers*. What the person is saying, what they don't say, how they respond, whatever their comments—will live forever on tape. If an interviewee doesn't say something useful to the program during the interview, the moment is forever lost. You will not be re-shooting this. If you want it and need it in the program, this is the moment to ask for it. Quietly pull the producer over and relate your concern. If necessary, include the interviewee and share what is bothering you: Tom, I just don't hear you saying anything about what role prayer plays in your life. Joan, can you explain again how your ministry flows

Digital vocabulary

VIDEO The medium used to shoot and edit your program, usually on professional beta SP or SX tape. Once a video master is created, the show can be delivered in any other medium.

VHS TAPE The half-inch size cartridge tapes used for years in videotape players. Since the arrival of DVD, VHS has eroded as a playback medium, but it is still readily available.

DVD A 4½-inch full-size DVD disk holds about 2.0-2.5 hours of video content. DVDs play full-screen from any DVD drive—either a computer or DVD player. Onscreen menus allow the user to select the chapters or programs to watch. DVDs can auto-start if no menu is needed.

DVD MASTER The original DVD disk created to marry the video material to computer programming commands so that every subsequent DVD disk will "obey" orders to play, rewind, eject, etc.

DVD DUBS All other DVDs stamped or burned from the DVD master. Since DVDs are digital, the quality never

degrades; the millionth disk is exactly like the first.

CD A computer-based 4½-inch disk can hold about 74 minutes of video playable in a small window on screen—not full-screen. CDs are usable from any CD/DVD drive; they can also have menus.

MINI-CD A computer-based 3-inch disk that can hold about 8-9 minutes of video which will play back in a small window on screen—not full-screen—from any CD or DVD drive. Can also auto-start or use menus.

WEB VIDEO Your entire video (or selected scenes) converted into a file for use on a Web site. Files are usually prepared for use with Windows Media Player, QuickTime players, Real Players—or all three—allowing users to watch the video from your site.

POWERPOINT A computer-based "slide show" that plays from a computer drive and can be stored on a CD. PowerPoints are usually used with groups; a live operator, a large screen and a projector are needed.

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Any day now you will receive a call to “come and see” yourself. When you finally screen a rough cut of the show, watch it critically: Are there scenes that were shot that don’t even show up in the program? Why not? Where are they? What happened to that great comment about celibacy you remember someone making? Hmmm ... the show seems to bog down there and get too serious....They misspelled her name or got his title wrong. Remember that committee you set up at the beginning of the process? Keep them involved. Watch the show with them and note their impressions. You will be hearing these soon enough from everyone else in the province! Deal with their objections. At this point, you really *are* the last line of defense for your congregation: talk to the producer/ editor and insist that things be changed to your satisfaction. Your congregation is paying the bills; it’s *your* product. Be sure you can live with this program for a long time.

10. Thou shalt maximize and multiply your Good News. The producer will most likely hand you ONE video master or DVD master of the program. After that, get the show out there: dub copies, upload it to your Web site, show it at gatherings, take it to schools and vocation fairs, arrange dinners at which to screen it, mail copies away. Now you ought to have a show that you and your community are proud of. May it last through the years of your own vocation ministry—until the next director is appointed to produce a new one! ■

out of your vow of poverty? Then let the interview continue. Once scripting starts, stay involved. The producer may write the script or may hire another writer for the task. Do not volunteer for this yourself no matter how persistent that voice in your head becomes. Leave it to a professional screenwriter who knows how to balance soundbites from different speakers, create narrator transitions and find good “sound-ups” from the footage. However—*do* insist on reading the text to be sure it reflects the language you want, includes the essential concepts, and creates a positive, engaging, inspiring picture of your community. Be disciplined as you read. If the script omits a major concept (say, novitiate or community) it will cost you time and money later on. Get it right before editing begins.

9. Thou shalt now relax during editing. This is the time to let the professionals work—getting transcripts done of the interviews, making selections of the best comments, writing narration, sorting through the footage, picking the best shots, logging these, and finally going into editing.

BOOK NOTES

Best bets in discernment books, understanding teen faith

BY CAROL MUCHA, RSM

THE FOCUS OF JOHN NEAFSEY'S book, *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience* (Orbis Books, 2006) is broad, interdisciplinary and ecumenical in its view of vocation. The author seeks to assist those engaged in the process of personal discernment and self discovery. For these reasons alone, this book is a valuable tool for vocation ministers and others who are responsible for the formative years in religious life. It is also an effective tool for those in the midst of their own discernment regarding life choices.

What is unique to the book is the author's ability to weave the theological, psychological and social elements of one's personal and communal call to be of service to humanity. In the time in which we live that calls for an awakening of our social consciousness. Neafsey outlines the ways in which one can distinguish between an authentic calling and the competing voices in our culture.

Neafsey further describes a path to living "where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet," in the words of Frederick Buechner. He suggests ways to listen with the heart and to listen in this fashion with

Carol Mucha, RSM is a Sister of Mercy of the Chicago Regional Community. She has been in new membership ministry for 12 years. Currently Sister Carol is a co-minister in the Institute New Membership Office, founded in 2005, in St. Louis, MO.



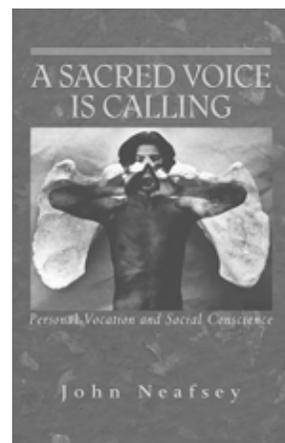
regard to the needs of our world. He intersperses wise writings and sayings of saints and sages throughout the book, thus enhancing his thesis.

Communities need to form both ministers and new members who are capable of responding effectively to the needs of our time in regard to social sin and social virtue. This book offers a good basis for such formation. In a recent article in *Information*, Luisa M. Saffiotti, writes, "We need to form ministers for attention to our world ... and for the capacity to respond meaningfully to it." And one might add that we need to form new members in the same way.

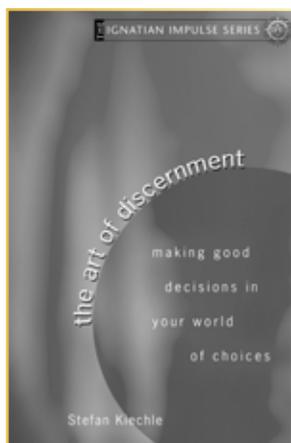
Vocation ministers can confidently add this book to their libraries and know that it is useful for personal learning. It is also worth recommending to those exploring religious life or simply wondering how they might contribute to a better world. For apostolic religious communities this is an indispensable new aid for all members.

The Spiritual Exercises for beginners

Stefan Kiechle takes on a similar theme in *The Art of Discernment: Making good decisions in your world of*



choices (Ave Maria Press, 2005). This book is simple in style and helpful in content. The author's goal is to assist the reader in making good personal decisions. Based on the discernment process of Ignatius of Loyola, Kiechle introduces a spiritual pedagogy to assist people in making sound decisions that could influence the rest of their lives. He acknowledges,



however, that the language and imagery of Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises are difficult and antiquated at times. Thus the book aims to make the exercises understandable for those struggling to make good decisions in our time.

This book is the second in a series in which a clear description of the holistic process of discernment is defined. Chapters deal with the pros and cons of possibilities, the use of the imagination,

attention to the movements of the heart, and prayerful seeking of the inner freedom to do what is best. At the beginning of each chapter, Kiechle sets up a scenario that describes a decision that requires the discernment process. He then proceeds to show how the Ignatian process can be used to arrive at a decision with confidence.

In addition the author addresses the emotional complexity, anxiety and uncertainty that come into play during serious decision making. He is sympathetic to the difficulties encountered in discernment and identifies the psychological issues and "traps" in which the discerning person could get caught. Of significance for those discerning religious life is the fact that this book is clearly focused on a spiritual approach to making good and right decisions.

A word of caution to vocation ministers who might recommend this book to those in the discernment process. The book is simple in its presentation, and some discerners might be more advanced and knowledgeable about the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. They may have already experienced a 30-day retreat or had other opportunities that supersede the information in this book. This book is best suited for a beginner in the guiding principles of discernment.

Substantive research on teen religion

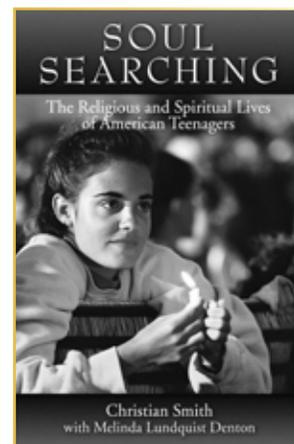
Shifting gears from the discernment process to the discerners

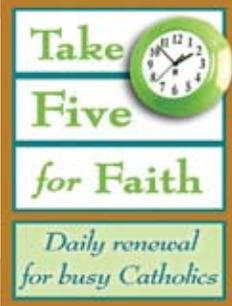
themselves, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton (Oxford University Press, 2005) is a "must read." Vocation ministers and all who care for or touch the lives of today's youth will gain much from this book. It is based on a nationwide telephone survey of teens and their parents, and it includes the results of face-to-face interviews with more than 250 survey respondents.

Soul Searching provides not only an unprecedented understanding of adolescent religious practice and spirituality but also an important window through which to observe and assess the future of American religion, since teenagers point toward future trends. For those in vocation ministry this book is significant in discovering what might be needed to prepare the way for those whom God may be calling to religious life. While the study demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between religious commitment and positive social behavior, there are also disturbing trends related to this theologically illiterate generation of teens who primarily think of God as their private servant.

Chapter 6, "On Catholic Teens," is important. It outlines clearly what is wanting in our church that could facilitate the faith life of the young. By reading this chapter alone, the vocation minister can see what suggestions might be made for involving community members in vocation promotion. This chapter also shows the need to create a culture of vocation for the younger members of our church and to ground them in the spiritual and religious life of the faith community.

The authors offer a number of concrete suggestions that will be of value to those who work with youth or who are serious about vocation efforts on behalf of religious congregations. It would seem that includes each of us men and women religious. This book deserves our attention since the research is pertinent, sound and comprehensive. ■





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FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER; GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY; WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

OF SHEEP AND SHEPHERDS

The parable of the Good Shepherd is one of the most comforting in the Bible—God will find us when we're lost—and also one of the most challenging—God will not allow one of us to be lost. "To leave the 99 in favor of the one," writes Sister Helene Hayes on the Sisters of the Good Shepherd website, "is to understand our universal kinship with all human beings. It is to understand that our salvation and liberation are intertwined in a profound way with the salvation and liberation of the 'stray ones,' the poor, the ostracized." Listen to the Good Shepherd's voice and you will know unconditional love; follow in the Good Shepherd's footsteps and you will share that unconditional love with others. That is the vocation of every Christian: to listen and follow.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts of the Apostles 13:14, 43-52; Revelation 7:9, 14b-17; John 10:27-30*
"My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me."

MONDAY, APRIL 30 FEAST OF PIUS V, POPE

POOR IN SPIRIT

Even though the man who was to be Pope Pius V (1504-1572) would become a university professor, head of several houses of the Dominican order, a bishop and cardinal, a grand inquisitor, and eventually pope who had to implement the reforms of the Council of Trent, it seems he never forget where he came from. Born of impoverished Italian nobility, as a boy he worked as a shepherd. After becoming pope he lived a simple and prayerful lifestyle, built hospitals, and opened the papal treasury to care for the poor, with whom he was personally involved. He kept wearing his Dominican habit, establishing the custom of popes wearing white. Prayer and service, worship and works of mercy will keep you close to God and the gospel, whatever else you do.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts of the Apostles 11:1-18; John 10:1-10*
"The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us."

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