



3 July 2007, #124

Capuchin

Vocation Update

Province of St. Joseph

The new interest in religious life

The A&E cable network's "God or the Girl" followed 4 men deciding whether or not to enter the seminary. "The Monastery" on TLC depicted five men bringing their modern struggles to a group of Benedictine monks. All this secular media attention to religious vocations causes many of us to stop and wonder: Is there a changing trend in the number and characteristics of new vocations to religious life and priesthood? The National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) is commissioning a study to answer this question. In the meantime, it asked TrueQuest Communications' executive director, Patrice Touhy, to examine 3,201 profiles completed by VocationMatch.com users within the last year. VocationMatch is a tool for inquirers on the *VISION Vocation Guide* website. She also surveyed vocation directors about trends in their congregations. Patrice's findings were e-mailed to participating vocation directors and then published in the Spring 2007 issue of *Horizon*, the journal of NRVC. Some results follow.

Participating religious communities report a 19% increase in candidates in the past three years.

▲ ①⑨%

⑦①% ▲

71% of the communities polled experienced the increase.

The increased interest is found primarily among younger Catholics. 50% of inquirers are under 30.

▼ 30 & ▲ 50

But inquirers over 50 continue to multiply, in this survey 18% of total.

Left or right?
Conservative or liberal?
Right or wrong?
With it or out of it?

Inquirers defy past categorization.

50% say wearing a religious habit is "very important" or "essential" to their vocation.

AND

85% want to be involved in active ministry including education, social service, campus ministry, parish work, preaching, healthcare, and prison ministry.

Sex is *not* #1!

45% rate restrictions on personal freedom as challenging or the most challenging aspects of religious life.

45% list the discipline of prayer.

For 43%, it's simple living.

41% rate celibacy a significant struggle.

44% of respondents hoped to live in a community of 8 or more people.

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Patrice writes, "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.'"

"While it's true there are still many in their 40's and 50's seeking information about our province, I'm experiencing more younger inquirers including an increased interest at Mt. Calvary and other high schools. Men in their early years of college also are asking about religious life more often. The majority of these are actively involved in their parishes, in volunteer activities and other extra curricular activities. Many are discriminating in regard to the community's charism, spirit and ministries. There is an attractiveness to ministry among the poor.



—John Holly
Midwest Capuchin
Vocation Director

The Midwest Capuchins currently have 43 candidates, the largest number at one time in several decades.

And what about the Midwest Capuchins?
What changes affect us?

In the past 3 years, we accepted 10 postulants.

- 7 made contact through a Capuchin ministry, including 6 from St. Lawrence.
- 1 called because of a parish bulletin ad.
- 1 found us on the Vocation website.
- 1 read about us in a vocation magazine.

There are also changes among the 220 inquirers into the Midwest Capuchins in 2006.

- 47 inquiries (21%) came from the Vocation Office website. In 2003, only 15 came through this website.
- If you include two other websites that refer inquirers to religious orders, we received 113 inquiries (51%) from the Internet. However, of the three sources, only our own vocation website produced any new candidates in 2006: 5 out of 15. That's 33% of the new candidates coming from our vocation website.
- Another 5 of the 15 new candidates (33%) came from contacts with friars, SLS, and CapCorps.

Special thanks to Mike Bertram and Rob Roemer who had the foresight to launch the vocation website when they were vocation directors.

37 people attended the first summer candidate BBQ.
We'd like to see you at the next one!

Chicago Candidate BBQ
Supper served at 5:30pm on Sunday, July 22nd

Please make your reservation with
Vocation Director Bill Hugo

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