



2023

The
State of
Priestly Vocations
in the United States



Contents

Introduction	4
Section I: Overview.....	6
Section II: How to Quantify a Crisis.....	11
Section III: Trends	22
Section IV: Fostering the Call.....	28
Section V: Hope for the Future	32
<i>Appendices</i>	
(Notes, Vocation Definitions & Terminology, Formulas).....	36
Credits.....	39

Introduction

This study, conducted by Vocation Ministry, is the fruit of hundreds of hours of work dedicated to understanding the state of vocations to the priesthood in the Catholic Church in the United States today. With shrinking numbers of priests and seminarians nationwide, along with other demographic shifts in both the Church and culture, many diocesan priests report being overworked and with increasingly less support from their local diocese. As the overall number of available priests in active ministry declines, many bishops have to consolidate parishes, cluster regions of parishes, and in some cases close parishes altogether. So, the question everyone asks is “*Why aren’t there more priests?*”

As Catholics, we believe the Lord never stops calling men to work in his vineyard. The same calling is still there. Rather, it is our response to God’s call that has gone missing on many levels. The question does not offer a straightforward answer. On the surface, the most obvious problem is a large number of Baby Boomer generation priests on a steady retirement track that began a decade ago and is only picking up pace. That, coupled with low seminary numbers across the country, leaves an obvious gap. With fewer ordinations year over year, the Catholic Church in the United States is far below replacement level compared to the number of Catholic parishes and registered parishioners.

Additionally, there are other challenges on the individual level whereby men have simply stopped considering a vocation to the priesthood. In a world where young people experience fewer hardships in life and are inundated with materialism, social media pressure, and unlimited access to pornography, a vocation to the priesthood is easily bypassed. As dioceses have consolidated and the duties of priests have increased, many dioceses can no longer spare the priest personnel to serve at Catholic high schools and university campuses - the places where young men are most likely to encounter a priest and be exposed to the priesthood as a life calling. Most Catholic boys in America only see a priest behind an altar once a week (if

they are even attending Mass weekly with their family) with a possible handshake as they leave Mass. Boys can't consider a vocation to a calling and a life they have no exposure to.

So, many questions loom - How did we get here? How long will it take to rebuild the priesthood? How do we reach young men caught in the snare of an increasingly secularized culture? Is this a family life issue or lack of focus on vocations in parishes across the country...or both?

With these questions in mind, Vocation Ministry has set out to explore the answers. This report is written as a summary of key findings and is not intended to offer a comprehensive analysis of the data (for full access to our findings, please visit VocationMinistry.com). This report is an attempt to address the vocational health of the Church in America by exploring what trends rise to the surface as pivotal factors in vocation promotion, noting where the Church is seeing success, and identifying areas that need to be re-evaluated.

The future of the Church and each person's own salvation depends on the presence of a holy priesthood in the world. Vocation Ministry's hope is that this report will shine a light on how the Church fosters vocations more effectively and will bring about a revival of the priesthood.



Vocation Ministry is a non-profit organization that trains, equips, and encourages priests, laity, and educators to light a fire of vocations in parishes and schools through awareness and prayer. It is committed to the goal of creating an environment in every parish, school, and family that encourages and allows men and women to easily say “Yes” to God’s call in their lives to the priesthood, consecrated life, or sacramental marriage. Vocation Ministry has given over 135 diocesan-wide workshops for priests, parishioners, and educators in over 50 dioceses.

Section I

Overview

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

John 20:21

These words of Jesus Christ to his apostles have reverberated throughout history as the catalyst for vocations to the holy priesthood, sending salvific ripples to the farthest corners of the Earth. A priest bears the works of God into the world, bringing forgiveness and grace to a culture without hope through the sacraments. Priests are the foundational mediators between God and humanity, ushering in the practical graces of a life lived with Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sins and the grace of the Eucharist.

"Our great hope and prayer is that this information will be a turning point for the cultivation of priestly vocations in the United States."

Over the next two years, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is calling for a "Eucharistic

Revival" - a renewed focus on the saving power of the Eucharist to counter a growing trend of Catholics who don't believe in the Real Presence. But there is a deeper, perhaps congruent problem at work, even more foundational than lack of belief in the Eucharist. The underlying problem is a lack of Eucharist-bringers - priests themselves. The more priests live a life in the Holy Spirit, the more religious and priestly vocations will flourish.

With this in mind, we have chosen to focus on vocations to the holy priesthood in this report. Though vocations to religious life and the Sacrament of Marriage play pivotal roles in the Church and culture, both are somewhat dependent on the priesthood as the anchor point. At the same time, holy marriages and families are the rich soil for the cultivation of priestly vocations. We are grateful for the organizations that focus their efforts on marriage and family life. However, this report deals with the crisis at hand - the rapid decline in numbers of priests and seminarians nationwide.

A lack of vocations to the priesthood over the last few decades has led to major changes in the way dioceses operate and serve their population. Almost two-thirds of diocesan vocation directors are also pastors of parishes and cannot focus on vocations full time. Bishops are consolidating parishes, closing churches, and moving priests to serve larger and larger communities. This is due to many factors, not the least of which is the less fertile soil in our parishes where a vocation can take root.

However, among the multiple factors that color the lens of vocational discernment among young men, a few factors stand out as foundational to understanding the crisis and should be kept in mind while reviewing this report.

- ◆ Many young boys become disinterested in a priestly vocation before ever being catechized on how to even discern a vocation - any vocation. Since priests are not typically a part of their daily lives and are often only seen behind an altar once a week, boys never get a chance to consider a vocation to the priesthood before it is snuffed out by the glimmers of the world. Yet the community, love, and fulfillment of a vocation are what they desire deep down, even if they are unaware.
- ◆ Our ecclesial/parochial structures in North America are highly focused

upon systematic, sacramental initiation - while giving little attention to vocational discernment as a life pathway for both fulfillment and sanctification. Many of our Catholic faithful have possibly entered into a lifelong vocation, marriage or otherwise, without effectively discerning all possible vocational paths.

“Priests themselves are demonstrably the most effective tool for inspiring more vocations to the priesthood.”

- ◆ Fewer families today have priests in them to serve as role models and offer personal relationships with those they love and trust. At one point in the mid-20th century, many Catholic families could boast a brother, uncle, or cousin who was a priest. Families counted a vocation within the family as a tremendous blessing. Today’s typical families do not share this same value. Due to smaller family sizes, many parents are not open to a son pursuing the priesthood, putting the possibility of future grandchildren and potential career success at risk. Some parents may even steer their sons away from the priesthood due to the ramifications of the priest sex abuse scandal over the past 25 years.

- ◆ And, of course, there are cultural factors that impede being open to discerning a vocation, such as the allure of materialism and career success, a cultural characterization of priests as predators, broken homes where the role of fatherhood is less understood, and a culture that values sex and the consumption of pornography as primary motivators within everyday life.

“Our research finds the lack of priests leads to fewer opportunities to cultivate new vocations, resulting in even fewer priests.”

- ◆ Where there are large numbers of parishioners served by each priest in a diocese, the ability for a priest to build trusted relationships with families and young men showing potential for the priesthood becomes almost impossible. Relationships are necessary for both evangelization and the cultivation of vocations. Our research finds the lack of priests leads to fewer opportunities to cultivate new vocations, resulting in even fewer priests.

As we begin to delve into the realities of this vocation crisis, let us pray for a renewal of faith in each and every heart, including current priests themselves, so that God’s holy commission may be answered.

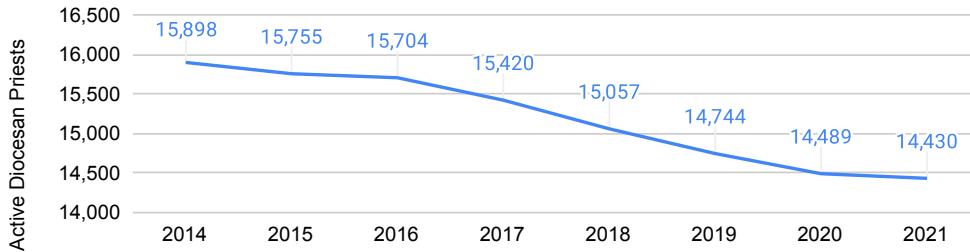
Vocation Ministry’s hope is that this study will be a vital tool for bishops, vocation directors, parish leaders, and families to understand that, although vocations are everyone’s responsibility, priests themselves are demonstrably the most effective tool for inspiring more vocations to the priesthood.

Research Methods

Vocation Ministry began collecting data from the Official Catholic Directory (OCD) in 2015. Each year, dioceses report their overall numbers in every category to the OCD. For this report, Vocation Ministry focused on the ordination and seminarian numbers in the early years and added categories of interest over subsequent years. In addition, interviews were conducted with priests, vocation directors, and seminarians to gather first-hand information to better inform this report. Mass attendance and retirement rate for priests in each diocese are not reported to the OCD and thus not available for use in this report.

Over 500 hours have been spent, not just inputting data, but finding meaningful and new correlations in the numbers and researching the best way to report our findings. Vocation Ministry also recruited the help of vocation directors around the country to verify the numbers of ordinations and seminarians and to provide their first-hand feedback on our process and findings.

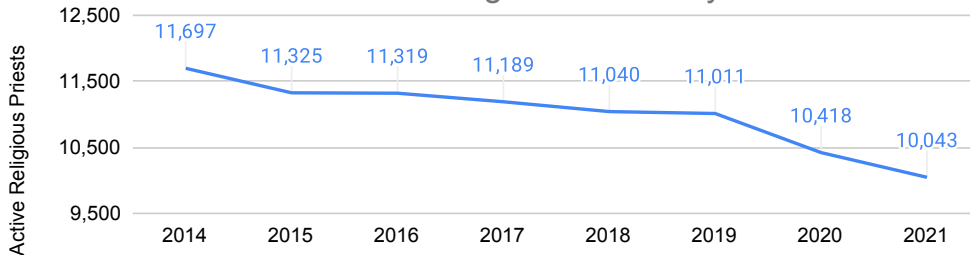
Total Active Diocesan Priests by Year



Change
from 2014-
2021:

-9%

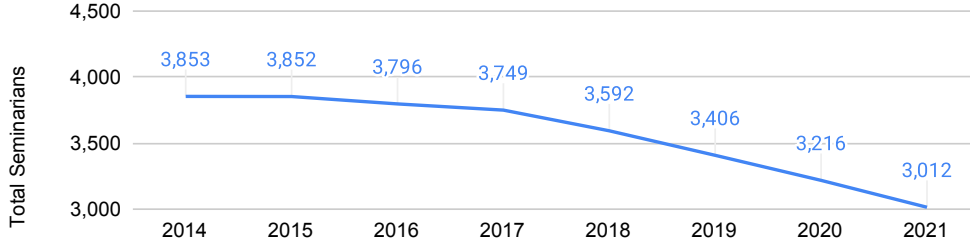
Total Active Religious Priests by Year



Change
from 2014-
2021:

-14%

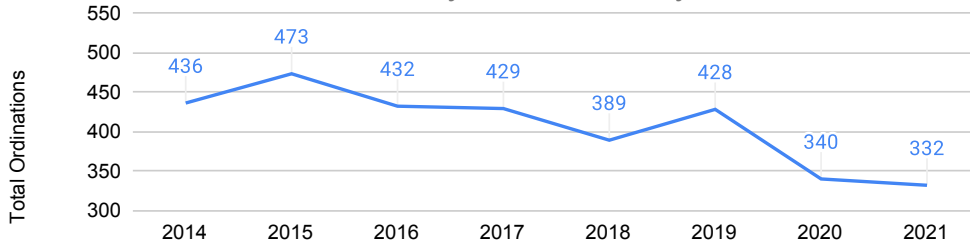
Total Seminarians by Year



Change
from 2014-
2021:

-22%

Total Priestly Ordinations by Year



Change
from 2014-
2021:

-24%

“Let us be quite frank: the ability to cultivate vocations to the priesthood and the religious life is a sure sign of the health of a local Church. There is no room for complacency in this regard. God continues to call young people: it is up to all of us to encourage a generous and free response to that call.”

Pope Benedict XVI in his address to the United States Bishops in 2008



Section II

How to Quantify a Crisis

In order to report a crisis, we have to first prove a crisis truly exists. This depends on the analysis of real data to determine if a crisis actually exists outside of anecdotal information. We often hear about a “priest shortage,” but few have put actual numbers to these anecdotes. This report seeks to bring clarity to the vocation crisis in light of actual data and trends.

Using data from the OCD and to enhance the clarity of the data, Vocation Ministry split dioceses into groups based on the overall Catholic population within each diocese. This enabled us to better compare “apples to apples” among vocation cultivation in dioceses of the same general size in the United States. There were 175 dioceses used as the basis for our research. These have been broken into “tiers” where natural breaks were found based on this population criteria.

Tier 1	Catholic population of 750,000+
Tier 2	Catholic population between 300,000-750,000
Tier 3	Catholic population between 100,000-300,000
Tier 4	Catholic population up to 100,000

Although the largest 21 dioceses—those that report 750,000+ self-identifying Catholics—make up seven percent of the geographic land area in the United States, they constitute half of the overall American population. By contrast, the smallest 53 dioceses are exactly the opposite, having half of the land area but just five percent of the population.

Tier 1 Analysis

Dioceses reporting more than 750,000 Catholics.

Actual Values 2021

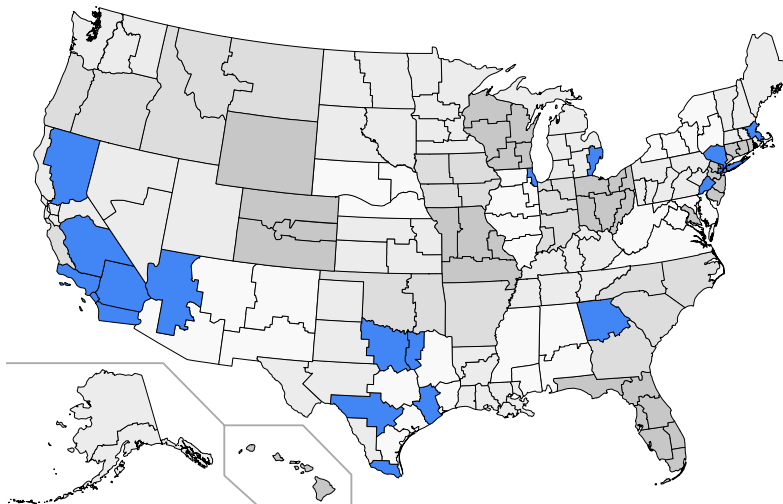
Total Catholics in Diocese	21 Dioceses >750,000
Avg. % Ordinations (2017-2021) of Base Need Ordination Rate*	39.2%
% Total Seminarians vs. Base Need Seminarian Rate*	37.4%
Avg. # of Parishioners Served Per Active Priest	7,099

* See Appendix for formulas used for this report

- ⊙ Los Angeles, CA
- ⊙ New York, NY
- ⊙ Chicago, IL
- ⊙ Boston, MA
- ⊙ Galveston-Houston, TX
- ⊙ Philadelphia, PA
- ⊙ San Diego, CA
- ⊙ San Bernardino, CA
- ⊙ Orange, CA
- ⊙ Rockville Center, NY
- ⊙ Brooklyn, NY
- ⊙ Dallas, TX
- ⊙ Newark, NJ
- ⊙ Atlanta, GA
- ⊙ Brownsville, TX
- ⊙ Detroit, MI
- ⊙ San Antonio, TX
- ⊙ Fort Worth, TX
- ⊙ Phoenix, AZ
- ⊙ Sacramento, CA
- ⊙ Fresno, CA

Characteristics

- ◆ These dioceses are highly urbanized and dominated by large cities and urban sprawl; only seven percent of people live in rural areas.
- ◆ The average parish in these locations has 11,543 parishioners; therefore, large parishes with more than one priest is common.
- ◆ These parishes typically have larger staffs, multiple committees, and large finance councils with annual budgets in the millions.
- ◆ Due to the large population, bishops often find it harder to connect with individual priests, let alone know each seminarian by name. Personalization can be lost or at least harder to maintain.
- ◆ Priests who pursued a life of pastoral care and ministry and who were trained for a vocation steeped in spirituality and theology are increasingly unprepared to run what, in some places, is a small corporation. These large parishes entail administrative duties that include sub-



**Dioceses are listed in order of Catholic population.

stantial budgets, human resources concerns, fundraising needs, and significant facilities maintenance.

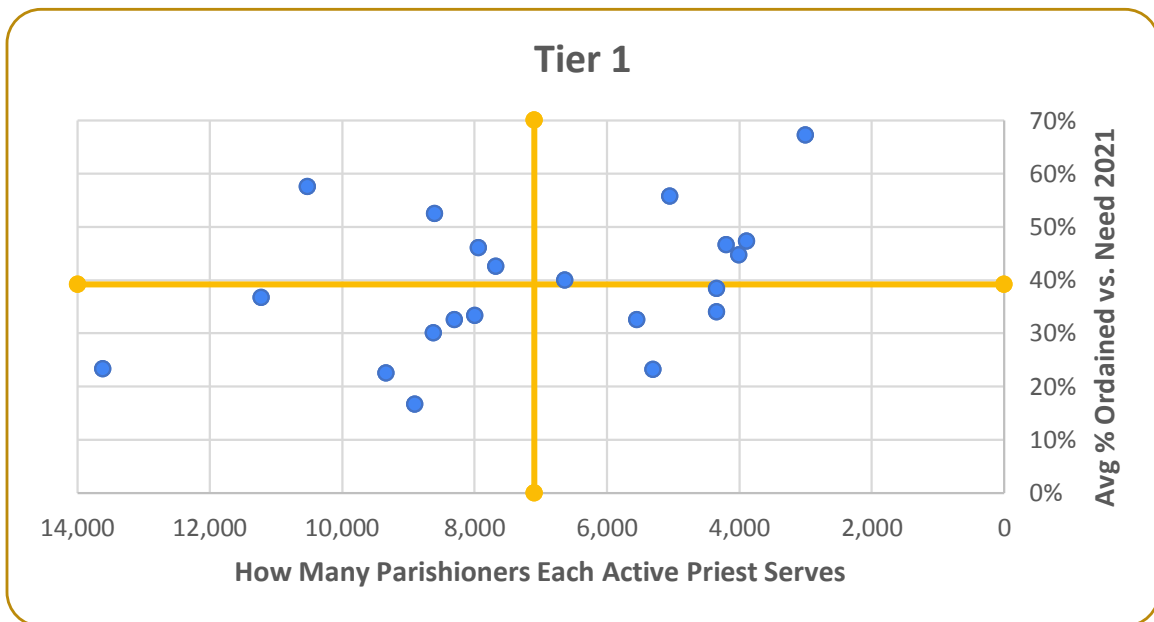
- ◆ Since business administration is still not a routine part of most seminary formation, it nonetheless remains one of the largest challenges for priests in these large

dioceses, contributing to demoralization, undue stress, and burnout.

- ◆ Managing and pastoring a Catholic population in a mega-parish makes it difficult, if not impossible, for priests to build and maintain the number of relationships required to inspire vocations.

The quadrant charts for each tier (see Tier 1 below) are graphs of how many parishioners each active priest serves compared to the average ordination rate versus need.

Each dot on these charts represents a diocese. The vertical and horizontal gold lines provide the overall averages for all of the dioceses in their tier. Dioceses with more vocational depth cluster in the top right quadrant of the charts.



Findings:

- ◆ Dioceses in the upper right quadrant represent areas where each priest serves smaller numbers of parishioners; thus, more parishioner access to priests and more relationship potential.
- ◆ Dioceses where the average priest serves over 4,500 parishioners were unable to ordain more than 60 percent of the Base Need Ordination Rate (see Appendix).
- ◆ On average, the percentage of men ordained in 2021 versus the Base Need Ordination Rate* across this tier was 39.2 percent.
- ◆ In Tier 1, there was an average of 7,099 parishioners served by each priest; thus, less parishioner access to priests and less relationship potential.
- ◆ The percentage of total seminarians dioceses had in 2021 versus the Base Need Seminarian Rate (see Appendix) was 37.4 percent.

Tier 2 Analysis

Dioceses reporting between 300,000 and 750,000 Catholics.

2021 Actual Values	41 Dioceses 300,000-750,000
Total Catholics in Diocese	
Avg. % Ordained (2017-2021) of Base Need Ordination Rate*	65.3%
% Total Seminarians vs. Base Need Seminarian Rate*	56.9%
Avg. # of Parishioners Served Per Active Priest	3,683

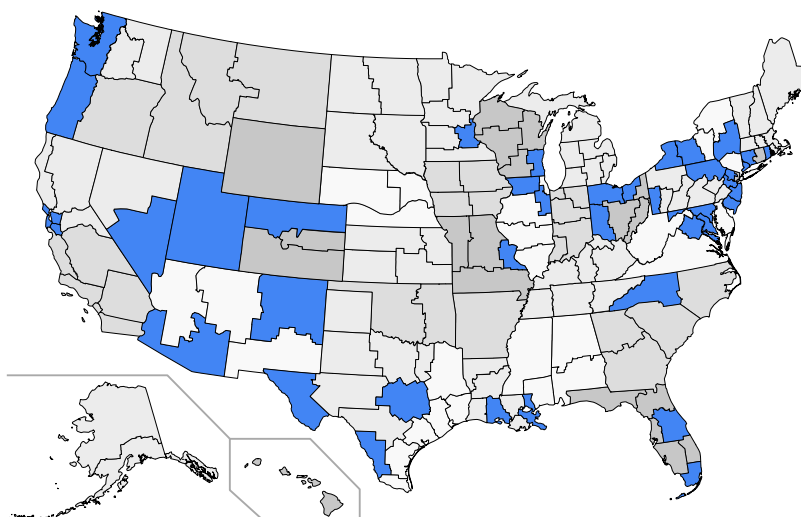
* See Appendix for formulas used for this report

- ⊙ St. Paul/Minneapolis, MN
- ⊙ Seattle, WA
- ⊙ Trenton, NJ
- ⊙ El Paso, TX
- ⊙ San Jose, CA
- ⊙ Washington, D.C.
- ⊙ Austin, TX
- ⊙ Metuchen, NJ
- ⊙ Pittsburgh, PA
- ⊙ Las Vegas, NV
- ⊙ Cleveland, OH
- ⊙ Denver, CO
- ⊙ Providence, RI
- ⊙ Buffalo, NY
- ⊙ Charlotte, NC
- ⊙ Milwaukee, WI
- ⊙ Joliet, IL
- ⊙ New Orleans, LA
- ⊙ Baltimore, MD
- ⊙ St. Louis, MO
- ⊙ Miami, FL
- ⊙ San Francisco, CA
- ⊙ Arlington, VA
- ⊙ Cincinnati, OH
- ⊙ Hartford, CT
- ⊙ Paterson, NJ
- ⊙ Rockford, IL
- ⊙ Bridgeport, CT
- ⊙ Portland, OR
- ⊙ Orlando, FL
- ⊙ Tucson, AZ
- ⊙ Oakland, CA
- ⊙ Laredo, TX
- ⊙ Salt Lake City, UT
- ⊙ Santa Fe, NM
- ⊙ Toledo, OH
- ⊙ Scranton, PA
- ⊙ Albany, NY
- ⊙ Lafayette, LA
- ⊙ Camden, NJ
- ⊙ Rochester, NY

Characteristics

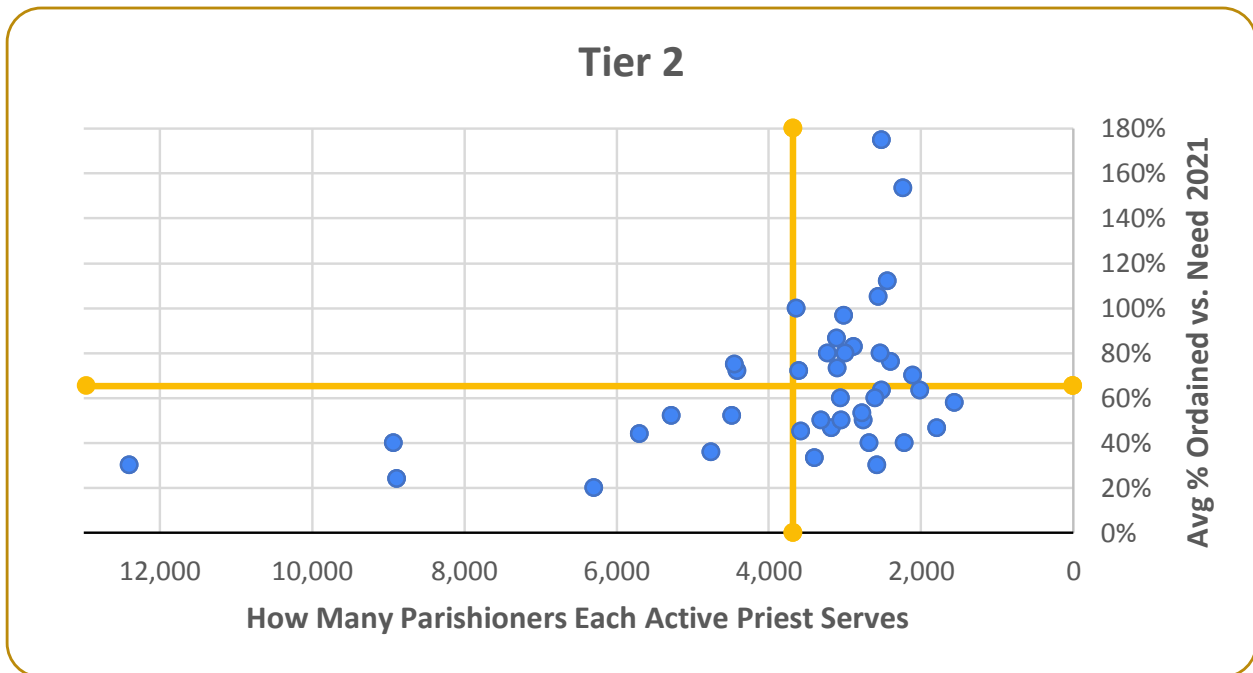
Tier 2 (in most cases) tends to be dominated by a major metropolitan area, with satellite cities nearby and more urban sprawl.

- ◆ The number of Catholics that live in rural areas was double those reported in Tier 1. This is also shown by the fact that this group is covering twice the number of square miles.



**Dioceses are listed in order of Catholic population.

- ◆ Compared to Tier 1, the number of parishioners per parish was cut in half to 5,504, and the number of people each diocesan priest served was cut in half as well.
- ◆ In rural areas, some priests cover multiple parishes.



Findings:

- ◆ Each active priest serves an average of 3,683 Catholics.
- ◆ On average, the percentage of men ordained in 2021 versus the Base Need Ordination Rate (see Appendix) across this tier was 65.3 percent.
- ◆ There are fewer dioceses in the upper left quadrant. Experience shows it is extremely challenging for priests to develop a strong, nurturing vocational environment when each serves so many parishioners. This doesn't mean that individual parish-
- ◆ es can't do this successfully, but dioceses that average high parishioner numbers per priest find it incredibly difficult to generate more than 60 percent of the Base Need Ordination Rate* in this quadrant.
- ◆ Dioceses in the bottom left quadrant represent priests serving large numbers of parishioners and a low percentage of men ordained.
- ◆ The percentage of total seminarians dioceses had in 2021 versus the Base Need Seminarian Rate (see Appendix) was 56.9 percent.

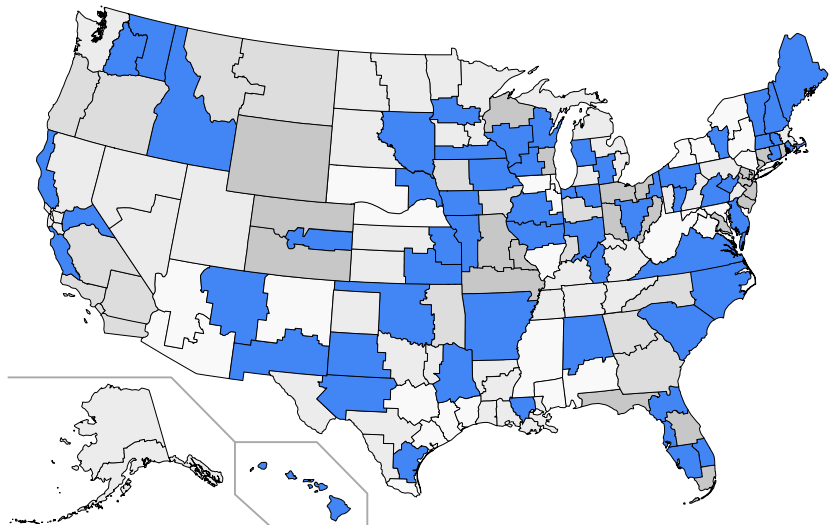
Tier 3

Dioceses reporting between 100,000 and 300,000 Catholics.

2021 Actual Values	60 Dioceses 100,000-300,000
Total Catholics in Diocese	
Avg. % Ordained (2017-2021) of Base Need Ordination Rate*	84.8%
% Total Seminarians vs. Base Need Seminarian Rate*	69.8%
Avg. # of Parishioners Served Per Active Priest	2,232

* See Appendix for formulas used for this report

- ⊙ St. Petersburg, FL
- ⊙ Portland, ME
- ⊙ Worcester, MA
- ⊙ Fall River, MA
- ⊙ Green Bay, WI
- ⊙ Omaha, NE
- ⊙ Wilmington, DE
- ⊙ Stockton, CA
- ⊙ Venice, FL
- ⊙ Raleigh, NC
- ⊙ Palm Beach, FL
- ⊙ Norwich, CT
- ⊙ Richmond, VA
- ⊙ Allentown, PA
- ⊙ Columbus, OH
- ⊙ Monterey, CA
- ⊙ Corpus Christi, TX
- ⊙ Manchester, NH
- ⊙ Indianapolis, IN
- ⊙ Harrisburg, PA
- ⊙ Boise, ID
- ⊙ Baton Rouge, LA
- ⊙ Charleston, SC
- ⊙ Erie, PA
- ⊙ Colorado Springs, CO
- ⊙ Dubuque, IA
- ⊙ Kansas City, KS
- ⊙ Oklahoma City, OK
- ⊙ Syracuse, NY
- ⊙ Grand Rapids, MI
- ⊙ Yakima, WA
- ⊙ Lansing, MI
- ⊙ Santa Rosa, CA
- ⊙ Gary, IN
- ⊙ Madison, WI
- ⊙ Louisville, KY
- ⊙ Springfield, MA
- ⊙ Little Rock, AR
- ⊙ Spokane, WA
- ⊙ St. Augustine, FL
- ⊙ Fort Wayne-South Bend, IN
- ⊙ Youngstown, OH
- ⊙ Lubbock, TX
- ⊙ Winona-Rochester, MN
- ⊙ La Crosse, WI
- ⊙ Peoria, IL
- ⊙ Honolulu, HI
- ⊙ Tyler, TX
- ⊙ Sioux Falls, SD
- ⊙ Springfield, IL
- ⊙ Kansas City-St. Joseph, MO
- ⊙ San Angelo, TX
- ⊙ Greensburg, PA
- ⊙ Wichita, KS
- ⊙ St. Cloud, MN
- ⊙ Birmingham, AL
- ⊙ Burlington, VT
- ⊙ Des Moines, IA
- ⊙ Gallup, NM
- ⊙ Las Cruces, NM



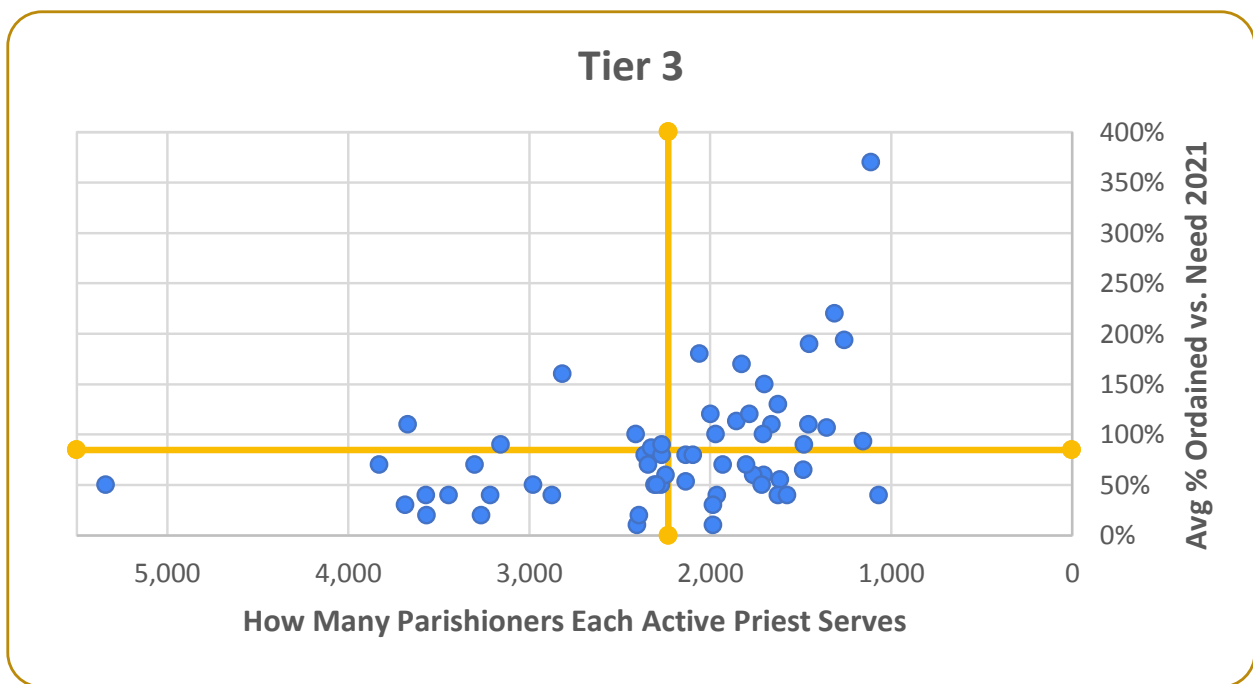
**Dioceses are listed in order of Catholic population.

In Tier 3, there are generally one or two large cities, but city size is beginning to shrink. Occasionally, you have a case where the Catholic population is smaller in a larger city.

Characteristics

- ◆ As in the previous category, the number of square miles of territory each diocese covers doubled.

- ◆ The number of parishioners per parish was cut in half compared to Tier 2.
- ◆ This tier is close to having one priest per parish.
- ◆ Multiple priests were assigned per parish in the larger cities, but it is more common for the priest in the rural area to be covering more than one parish.



Findings:

- ◆ Tier 3 dioceses had the most success in the number of men they ordained versus the Base Need Ordination Rate (see Appendix) at almost 85 percent.
- ◆ The top left quadrant is virtually empty. A diocese where the average priest serves over 4,000 parishioners was unable to ordain more than 60 percent of the men Base Need Ordination Rate*.
- ◆ No diocese where the average priest serves over 4,000 parishioners ordains more than 60 percent of the Base Need Ordination Rate*.
- ◆ At 2,232, the number of Catholics each diocesan priest served was cut in half from Tier 2.
- ◆ The percentage of total seminarians that dioceses had in 2021 versus the Base Need Seminarian Rate (see Appendix) was 69.8 percent.

Tier 4

Dioceses reporting fewer than 100,000 Catholics.

2021 Actual Values

Total Catholics in Diocese

53 Dioceses

<100,000

Avg. % Ordained (2017-2021) of Base Need Ordination Rate*

62.2%

% Total Seminarians vs. Base Need Seminarian Rate*

56.6%

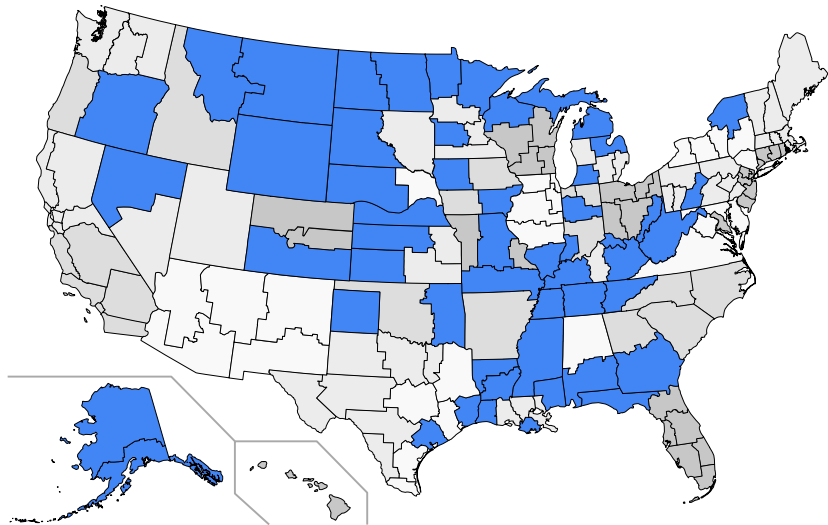
Avg. # of Parishioners Served Per Active Priest

1,139

* See Appendix for formulas used for this report

- Lafayette, IN
- Lincoln, NE
- Covington, KY
- Reno, NV
- Sioux City, IA
- Saginaw, MI
- Mobile, AL
- Davenport, IA
- Nashville, TN
- Houma-Thibodaux, LA
- Kalamazoo, MI
- Belleville, IL
- Savannah, GA
- Jefferson City, MO
- Ogdensburg, NY
- Beaumont, TX
- Evansville, IN
- Victoria, TX
- Altoona-Johnston, PA
- Knoxville, TN
- Fargo, ND
- Wheeling-Charleston, WV
- Springfield-Cape Girardeau, MO
- Pensacola-Tallahassee, FL
- Memphis, TN
- Bismarck, ND
- Superior, WI
- Dodge City, KS
- Marquette, MI
- Biloxi, MS
- Tulsa, OK
- Lake Charles, LA
- Owensboro, KY
- Grand Island, NE
- Cheyenne, WY
- New Ulm, MN
- Pueblo, CO
- Gaylord, MI

- Duluth, MN
- Jackson, MS
- Lexington, KY
- Amarillo, TX
- Shreveport, LA
- Salina, KS
- Alexandria, LA
- Helena, MT
- Crookston, MN
- Steubenville, OH
- Great Falls-Billings, MT
- Baker, OR
- Anchorage-Juneau, AK
- Rapid City, SD
- Fairbanks, AK



In Tier 4, there are generally one or two medium-sized cities. Over 40 percent of the people live in areas independent of a city. The area where Catholics live within the geography of a diocese can also be a factor.

Characteristics

- ◆ Like each of the tiers before, the square miles covered had doubled, and the number of parishioners per parish was cut in half again to 1,063. As a result, this group makes up

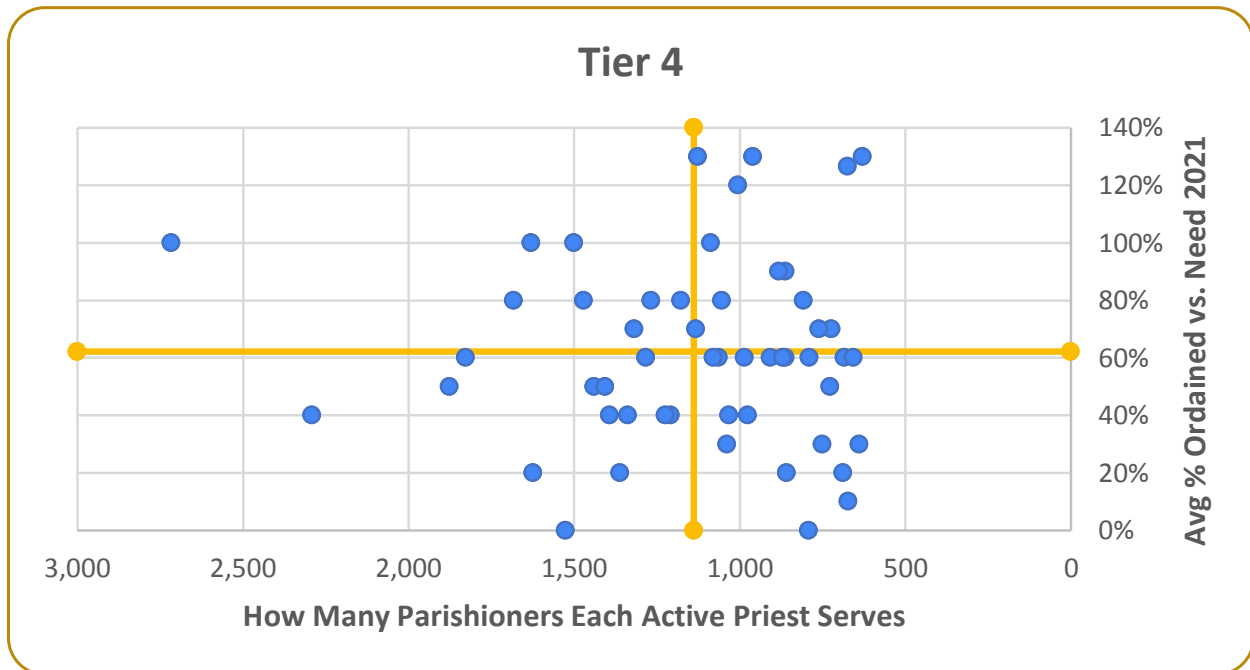
**Dioceses are listed in order of Catholic population.

half of the land area in the United States, but only five percent of the Catholic population in America.

- ◆ This tier has fewer than one priest per parish. If the largest parishes had more than one priest, the rural areas faced a reality of one priest per three parishes or one priest/parish per county in some places.
- ◆ On the flip side, since many of these priests serve multiple parishes, a priest needs to keep up relationships while driving from parish to parish.
- ◆ Priests rely on volunteers at these parishes

to organize committees and functions.

- ◆ In contrast to the challenges of Tier 1, Tier 4 had rural priests with administrative duties at three parishes (possibly miles apart) with three secretaries. In most cases, hospital visits, fundraising for three budgets, and even some of the maintenance duties fall to one priest.
- ◆ In Tier 4, rural priests had fewer parishioners but had a very different job description than their Tier 1 counterparts. They both are stretched thin but in differing ways.



Findings:

- ◆ Compared to the other tiers, these dioceses are more evenly distributed throughout the quadrants; 43 percent of dioceses in this tier are in the upper half of the chart.
- ◆ Each active priest serves, on average, only 1,139 parishioners, allowing them to know their flock in personal and pastoral ways, which is crucial for a culture of vocations.
- ◆ All priests in Tier 4 serve fewer than 3,000 parishioners.

- ◆ As these dioceses in the bottom left quadrant approach high retirement numbers in the next few years, they will need at least 1.5 to two times as many ordinations as dioceses in the top right quadrant.
- ◆ On average, the percentage of men ordained in 2021 versus the Base Need Ordination Rate (see Appendix) across this tier is 62.2 percent.
- ◆ The percentage of total seminarians dioceses had in 2021 versus the Base Need Seminarian Rate (see Appendix) is 56.6 percent.

Summary of Analysis

Tier 1

- ◆ Tier 1 dioceses have experienced the greatest statistical decrease in vocations, thus making this a primary concern, since the largest number of Catholics are in this group.
- ◆ The evidence of this can be seen in recent large-scale consolidation and restructuring efforts by archdioceses like Chicago, IL and Detroit, MI.

Tier 2

- ◆ Based on the Catholic population alone, Tier 2 dioceses are ordaining almost twice as many priests compared to their Tier 1 counterparts.
- ◆ Though Tier 2 dioceses face similar issues as the previous group, their still relatively large Catholic population and locations just outside of large cities often offer stronger financial resources with more priests.
- ◆ Examples of these dioceses would be Cleveland, OH, Bridgeport, CT, and Portland, OR.

Tier 3

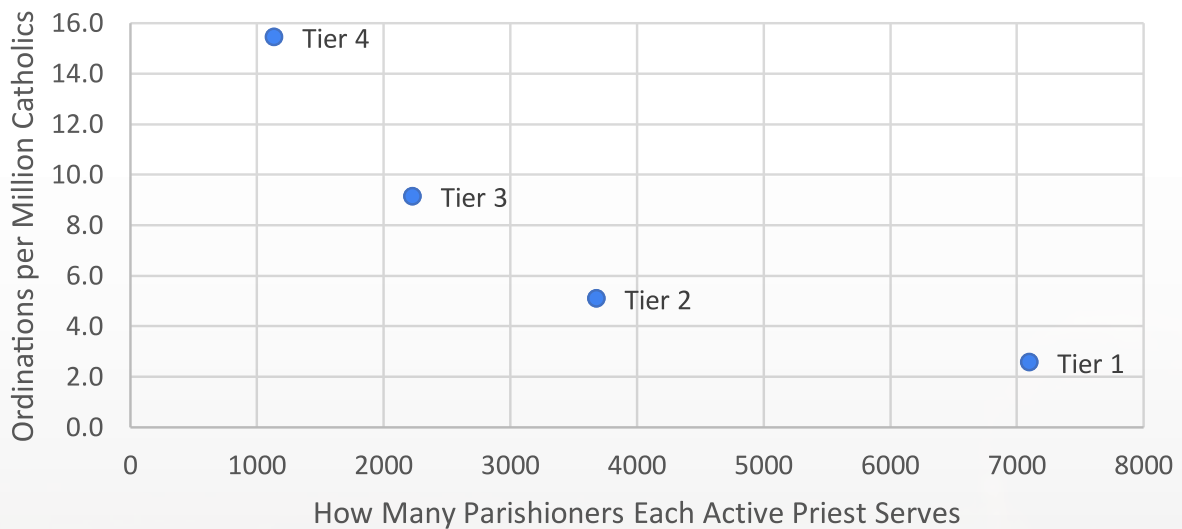
- ◆ Based on the Catholic population alone, Tier 3 ordains 3.5 times as many men as Tier 1 and 1.8 times that of Tier 2.
- ◆ Many dioceses that are generating priestly vocations have parishes with fewer than 2,500 parishioners.
- ◆ These dioceses have a strong mix of urban and rural areas.
- ◆ Examples of these dioceses would be Wichita, KS, and Springfield, IL.

Tier 4

- ◆ Based on the Catholic population alone, Tier 4 is the highest-performing group in terms of ordinations. Tier 4 ordains six times as many men as Tier 1, three times as many as Tier 2, and 1.7 times those in Tier 3. This group demonstrates a greater ability to foster vocations.
- ◆ Active priests in Tier 4 dioceses serve fewer parishioners than other tiers, allowing them the opportunity to mentor young adults in their parishes so that they can have a more generous response to God's call.
- ◆ Examples of these dioceses would be Lincoln, NE, Tulsa, OK, and Reno, NV.

Note: We acknowledge that these four population groups are very diverse. Oftentimes, statistics that ring true for the whole group may not hold true for portions of the groups. It is our hope that by looking at the similarities and differences, we may better understand the challenges that lie before us to create a better environment for vocations and the Church as a whole.

2021 Ordination Data



For full access to the data used for this report and our findings for each tier, please visit VocationMinistry.com.

Section III

Trends

So, what do all these numbers and statistics really mean for the Church in America? We have identified the primary trends that offer insights into the data.

1) **The number of Catholic priests is on a consistent downward trend in the United States, even in dioceses that are doing comparatively well.**

- ◆ Over the past 50 years, both the Church and culture have experienced many shifts in values, priorities, and family life.
- ◆ In 1970, the Church in the United States had more than 59,000 priests, serving just over 18,000 parishes. By 2021, that number had fallen to 34,923 priests, serving 16,579 parishes.
- ◆ Many dioceses, particularly in the North and Northeast anticipate 50 percent of their priests reaching retirement age in less than a decade.
- ◆ Though many priests stay on as pastors beyond retirement age to help alleviate this problem, this is not a long-term solution.

2021 Vocation Data

Dioceses that ordained enough for its Base Need Ordination Rate.*	33
Dioceses that had no ordinations.	42
Dioceses meeting the Base Need Seminararian Rate.*	17
Average age of men at ordination.	34
Average retirement age.	71
Average number of years a priest serves in active ministry.	37
Replacements each priest needs to inspire over the next 5-10 years.	1-3+

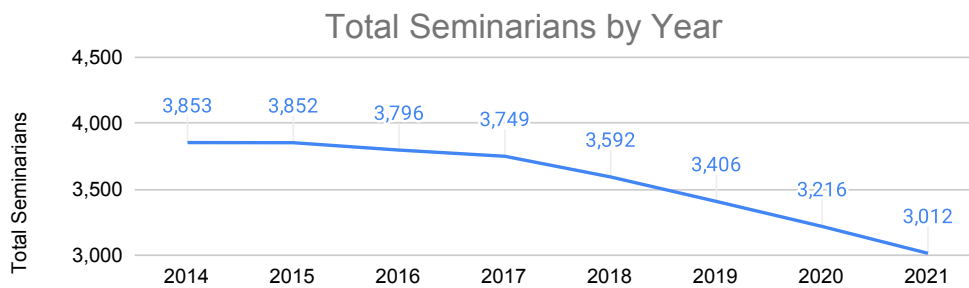
*See Appendix for Replacement Rate of Priests and Base Need Seminararian Rate formulas.

2) The number of ordinations in most dioceses is on a steady decline.

- ◆ In 2021, only 33 of 175 dioceses ordained at or above the number of priests needed to maintain status quo.
- ◆ 30 of 175 dioceses have ordained at or above the number of priests they need over a five-year average (2017-2021).
- ◆ In healthy dioceses with plenty of priests, a replacement rate of 1:1 (each priest is replaced by one other priest) should roughly ensure continuation of sacramental ministry for the faithful. However, in the current state of many dioceses, with imminent high attrition rates due to

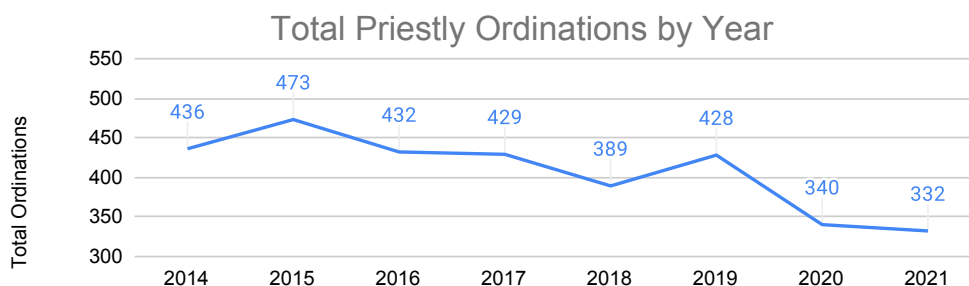
“To ensure the reception of sacraments is available for future generations, each individual priest needs to generate at least three men to be ordained a priest over the course of his average 37 years of active ministry.”

pending retirements, a much higher rate of replacement will be necessary to secure sufficient priests to continue effective ministry. In such cases, within the next 5-10 years each current priest may need to inspire a replacement of two, three, or even more priests.



Change
from 2014-
2021:

-22%



Change
from 2014-
2021:

-24%

3) It is important to establish a Base Need Seminarian Rate as a guide to ordaining the minimum necessary number of priests each year.

- ◆ The Base Need Seminarian Rate was obtained by multiplying the number of ordinands per year by the average length of seminary formation (seven years), then increasing by the average discern-out rate of 30 percent.
- ◆ This formula holds true for most dioceses in the United States, regardless of tier classification.

4) The number of men in seminary formation does not equate to the number of men actually ordained to the priesthood.

- ◆ The seminary formation process is long, an average of seven years depending on the previous education of each applicant.
- ◆ Following the USCCB's Program of Priestly Formation (6th Edition), an initial year of discernment has been added where candidates begin to develop "a life of prayer, study, fraternity, and appropriate docility to formation."
- ◆ Even if a diocese has a large seminarian class, it will be more than a decade before those men will be ready to become pastors.
- ◆ Entering seminary does not mean that a man will be ordained. Sem-

inary is a time of prayerful discernment of the lifelong call to the priesthood, so it is only natural that some men discern out. A seminary or diocese can also prayerfully decide that a man should not be ordained. Hence, the average discern-out rate nationwide is 30 percent. Depending on the diocese, an average of 70 percent of seminarians who begin formation will go on to become ordained priests.

- ◆ In some dioceses that have fewer priests, newly ordained priests no longer have the luxury of being an associate pastor for a few years to gain experience in parish life - not nearly long enough to prepare a priest for a lifetime of service in ever increasingly-larger parishes. The result of this is a new trend of Millennial-aged priests experiencing burn-out within five years of ordination.

5) Events within the Church over the past decade have contributed to the overall decline in the number of seminarians.

- ◆ The Pennsylvania Report was released in August 2018, along with the revelations about the misconduct of former-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick earlier that same summer. The number of seminarians fell from 3,749 in 2017 to 3,592 in 2018 and then 3,406 in 2019.
- ◆ From what some vocation direc-

tors and bishops reported around the country, these factors impacted how seminarians, discerners, and their parents felt about pursuing the priesthood.

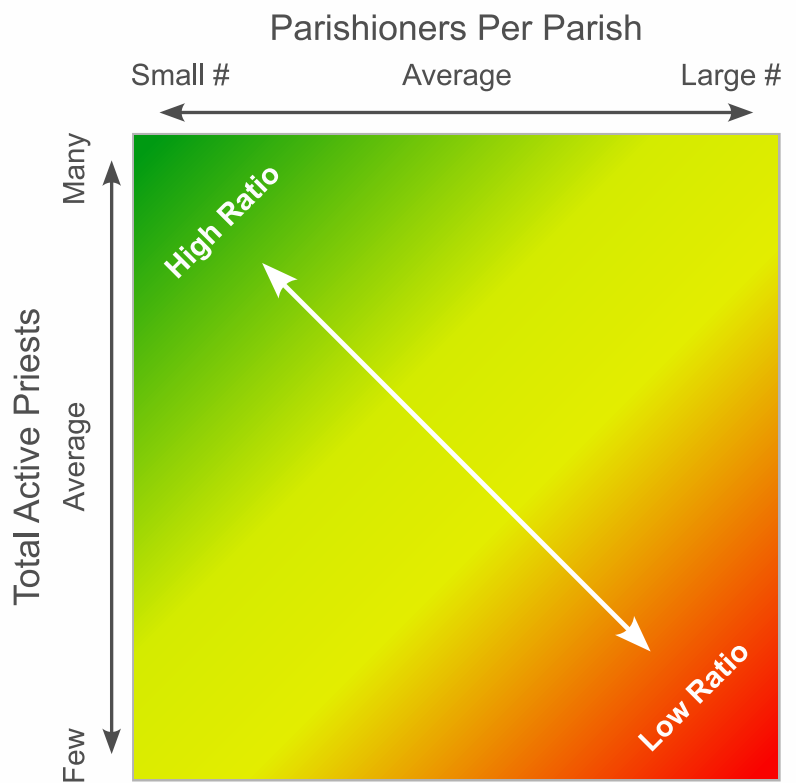
- ◆ With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, another significant decline in seminarians occurred.

6) As the number of total active priests dwindles, a direct negative impact on the cultivation of new priests is observed.

- ◆ The number one indicator that a man will enter seminary is if he has a friendship or some type of regular contact with his parish priest.
- ◆ The higher the priest-to-parishioner ratio in a diocese, the higher the average number of seminarians. The lower the priest-to-parishioner ratio, the lower the number of seminarians.
- ◆ As the number of parishioners a priest serves increases, it becomes more difficult to create an environment that fosters vocations. The ability of a priest to develop meaningful relationships with families (where vocations are born) and with men who show interest in the priesthood is greatly diminished.
- ◆ In theory, increasing the number of

priests should directly increase the number of seminarians within a decade.

7) The number of total active priests is in decline compared to the number of parishioners at each parish.



- ◆ In the chart above, the dark green corner represents dioceses where the number of active priests are many, and number of parishioners per parish are small. Typically, these dioceses ordain more new priests.
- ◆ Because some dioceses are lacking priests, parish mergers and closures are becoming more commonplace. Thus, these dioceses are moving to the right in the chart, further increasing the number of parishioners

at each parish, which weakens the ability of a priest to cultivate personal relationships and foster a vocational environment.

- ◆ Dioceses continue to look for priests in other countries to fill the gap as extern priests, who are not incardinated into a diocese. However, this is not a long-term solution. As the Church in places like Africa continues to grow, fewer extern priests will be available; they will be needed in their home countries. Between 2014 and 2021, the number of extern priests remained fairly constant at 3,600, and only increased by about 1 percent.

8) On average, the number of laity served per priest in a parish is steadily increasing year over year.

- ◆ With the inevitable reality of Baby Boomer priests retiring and fewer replacements available, the average number of parishioners each priest serves will continue to steadily rise.
- ◆ This is felt most in Tiers 1 and 2, but even in Tier 3, where the number of priests-per-parishioner can be as high as one priest per 5,000 parishioners.

- ◆ The lower the priest-to-parishioner ratio, the less opportunity a priest has to minister and accompany his parishioners. As stated earlier, this has a direct effect on vocations. This key relationship between a priest and his parishioners, that fosters a vocational atmosphere, is critical. If this trend continues, it begs the question of how the pastoral relationship between priests and parishioners will be replaced.
- ◆ However, the priest-to-parishioner ratio might be higher when taking into account the unknown number of retired priests who still serve their diocese in various ways.
- ◆ Interestingly, 14 of the 17 dioceses with the largest number of parishioners served by each priest are in California and Texas. The influx of Hispanic Catholics into these states over the past few decades might contribute to this. Hispanic Catholics make up more than 50 percent of Catholics in these two states. Nationwide, the official number of Catholics identifying as Hispanic is 39 percent, but the number of priests identifying as Hispanic is only 5 percent.

Hispanic Catholics vs. Hispanic Priests

Catholics Identifying as Hispanic: 39%	Catholic Population
Priests Identifying as Hispanic: 5%	Total Priests

9) The reality of Baby Boomer priests on the decline will have a significant impact on the Church in America by 2025.

- ◆ Starting in 2025, the majority of Baby Boomer priests (the largest group of priests in the United States) will start to reach retirement age.
- ◆ Some priests will retire from priestly ministry altogether.
- ◆ Others will go to part-time ministry, presiding over Masses when called upon.
- ◆ Some priests will be told that if they retire from active ministry, their parishes will close and/or their parishioners will not have the same access to the sacraments. This puts an added burden on retiring priests who fear the souls of their parishioners hang in the balance.
- ◆ And, some priests will stay active in ministry as pastors of parishes late into their lives, dependent on health and mobility.



Section IV

Fostering the Call

Regardless of the factors affecting the priesthood today, 75 percent of newly ordained priests, year over year, report having heard the call before 18 years of age. Just based on this, priests need to become vocation promoters at their parishes, cultivating the harvest with boys and young adult men who are in the pews each week, by inviting, encouraging, and mentoring them until they are ready to visit with the diocesan vocation director.

- ◆ **Fact:** The main reason young people do not consider the priesthood or consecrated life is that they have never been personally asked. Yet almost ten percent of young adults have considered priesthood or religious life.
- ◆ **Fact:** Men first consider the priesthood because a priest encouraged them to do so. Year over year, around 70 percent of those ordained report that it was a priest who invited them to consider the priesthood. This fact should not be overlooked. The overall role of priests in fostering vocations is significant.
- ◆ **Fact:** The majority of priests do not encourage men to consider the priesthood. Surveys indicate that

only 30 percent of priests actively invite men to consider the priesthood. If every priest takes seriously the call to invite more young men to consider the priesthood, the number of seminarians would increase.

Were you encouraged to consider the priesthood by any of these people?

(Please check all that apply.)

Percentage of all responding diocesan ordinands

Parish Priest	71%
Friend	48%
Parishioner	47%
Mother	37%
Teacher/Catechist	32%
Father	29%
Grandparent(s)	22%
Other Relative	17%
Youth Minister	21%
Religious Brother/Priest	13%
Campus Minister/School Chaplain	17%
Religious Sister	10%
Bishop	16%
Deacon	13%
Military Chaplain	<1%

The parish priest has proven over and over again to be the number one influence on young men considering the priesthood.

Source: <https://cara.georgetown.edu/publications/NurturingVocations.pdf>

Cultivating Fertile Soil - Everyone's Responsibility

To cultivate fertile soil from which religious vocations can sprout, a culture change is needed in which vocational promotion is considered not the duty of a few specialists but the common responsibility of priests, parishioners, parents, catechists, coaches, siblings, friends, and Catholic school teachers - everyone. The entire Church must encourage each individual's response to God's call. There are four pillars in which a positive environment for vocations to flourish can be built. For each of these pillars, Vocation Ministry provides many resources through its books and website VocationMinistry.com.

Pillar One - Prayer

Prayer is foundational and essential since vocations are always a gift from God. In each parish in every diocese, a vocation prayer campaign is needed to give the laity an opportunity at Mass and during Eucharistic Adoration to ask for the Holy Spirit to call forth men and women. Vocation-related prayers of the faithful and praying Rosaries for vocations should be commonplace. Prayer is the surest way to create that fertile soil.

Pillar Two - Education

Even the most fervent and well-meaning Catholics often do not understand

what it means to foster vocations. It's pivotal that the laity better understands the nature of a vocation and how a vocation is recognized and discerned over time. Education through homilies about acting in accordance with God's will, listening to the Holy Spirit, supporting a child's vocation, and more can be impactful. A vocation is the result of an encounter with Jesus, and sometimes that happens through other people who have already said yes to a vocation. Parishes should include joyful witnesses such as sisters, seminarians, and priests in their activities to interact with parishioners and show how fulfilling it can be to live as God has called.

Pillar 3 - Youth Ministry

Seventy-five percent of priestly callings take place prior to a boy's 18th birthday. With this in mind, parishes and Catholic schools must be deliberate about actively helping young men to begin thinking about the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood. Whether that is through reading stories about priestly saints, playing games like Vocations Jeopardy, participating in an art/essay contest about vocations, or visiting a nearby seminary, young people should consistently encounter vocations at Mass, in Catholic schools, through religious education classes, homeschooling, youth activities, altar serving, and ultimately wherever they encounter their faith.

Pillar 4 - Affirmation

Priests need ongoing encouragement and affirmation as a priestly life includes many obstacles. The devil would like nothing better than to discourage a priest from his pursuit of holiness. The laity should keep their priest in daily prayer as the first layer of affirmation. Then, gestures to show appreciation and affirmation, such as remembering their priest with cards, anniversary remembrances, and receptions can lead to having a more joyful priest, who feels appreciated and loved as a spiritual father. This witness can't help but inspire others to discern a vocation to the priesthood. Seminarians are also in need of affirmation through prayer and material means, too. Each parish can adopt a seminarian, encouraging him during the process of formation.

"What he built (at Christ the King) was a culture of vocations in the parish... He gave the diocese a good example of what are the right things to do to promote vocations."

Msgr. Scott Friend, Diocese of Little Rock vocations director

At Christ the King Catholic Church in the Diocese of Little Rock Arkansas, vocations became a parish mission, a priority. Some initiatives that helped their success in creating a culture of vocations were establishing perpetual adoration and a parish vocation committee. The students at the parish school and in their thriving youth ministry specifically prayed about their own vocations. The pastor and parishioners alike regularly invited young men and women to consider how God may be calling them.

At one time, the parish had 11 diocesan seminarians. Since 2012, 9 men from Christ the King have been ordained to the priesthood: Fathers Andrew Hart (2012), Stephen Hart (2017), Patrick Friend (2018), Joseph de Orbegozo (2018), Stephen Elser (2018), Jon Miskin (2019), Joseph Friend (2020), Ben Riley (2021), Brian Cundall (2021)

Source: *Building parish culture fosters diocese's vocations growth - Arkansas Catholic - January 27, 2020 (arkansas-catholic.org)*



Photo Courtesy of Ashley Valle, photographer for the Diocese of Austin

Section V

Hope for the Future

Just because we recognize downward vocational trends does not mean we have to assume that continued diminishment of the priesthood is inevitable in the Church in America. Where vocation promotion is taken seriously on a regular basis, we are beginning to see an upward tick among otherwise downward trends. In fact, there are actually dioceses reporting increases in new seminarians, and we can look to them for best practices when cultivating vocations.

Recommendations for Offices of Vocations

Vocations are the fruit of a healthy parish. Developing healthy parishes in the United States is vital to our ability to recover from the decline in seminarians and ordinations. Many factors go into what it means to be a “healthy parish,” but there are some basic characteristics from which we can learn.

- ♦ **Holy Parishes.** Is the goal of a parish for each member to grow in sanctity? Or is it simply to have a high-functioning administration? If the goal is to grow in sanctity, a higher rate of vocations will be a natural outcome.
- ♦ **Healthy Priests.** Parish priests continually report being overworked
- ♦ **Holy and Focused Priests.** When a priest takes vocation cultivation seriously throughout parish life, young men receive a consistent and encouraging message to discern their future vocations. Understanding the urgent need to replace himself (in some cases three or more times) should give a priest a clear focus on

by being too consumed with managerial duties, administrative tasks, endless meetings, and facilities maintenance. When priest personnel assignments are made, it is common practice to put the sharpest, most capable priests in large parishes. But this strategy often backfires by exhausting priests and reducing their ability to thrive, further diminishing their ability to foster vocations.

vocation promotion and ministries where vocations originate (youth and young adult ministries, home-school co-ops, altar servers, etc.). Creative solutions need to be found to free up priests to be priests, able to cultivate holy relationships with their parishioners. Parishioners need to see their priest praying in church or praying before the Blessed Sacrament in Eucharistic Adoration.

- ◆ **Heart-Centered Religious Education.** Most religious education programs are focused on systematic sacramental preparation and classroom catechesis and less focused on cultivating hearts for Christ through personal encounters with his love, which has the most significant effect on what happens to young people during Confirmation and beyond. Unlike Catholic high schools and universities given a finite amount of time to impact the lives and decisions of young people, parishes have much more time over the course of eight to ten years and are the most basic un-institutionalized means to grow vocations. If religious education

and youth ministry programs could focus on more children understanding the Kerygma and fostering a personal relationship with the triune God, the vocations crisis would take care of itself within a decade.

- ◆ **Holy and Healthy Laity/Families.** Vocations come from families. One cannot expect a healthy crop of new vocations without the intentionality of planting seeds that can be nurtured over time. Being actively involved in a parish-based vocation ministry will not only teach a layperson how to foster vocations but give them tools and opportunities to do so.



Recommendations for Bishops

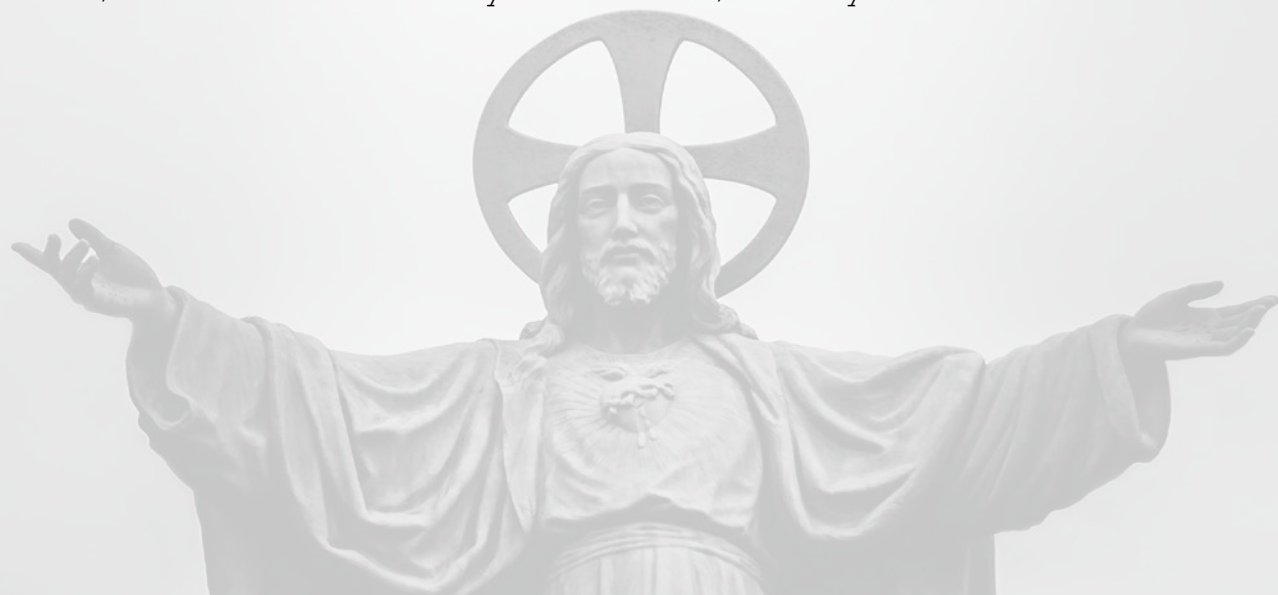
◆ **Healthy Offices of Vocations:** It's not enough for a diocese to appoint a vocation director and then expect him to be able to remedy the crisis single-handedly, even with an assistant or small team. Finding the right full-time vocation director is essential. Appointing a priest to this office who has a variety of experiences as an associate pastor or even pastor will likely be more effective in mentoring discerners than a newly ordained priest. Furthermore, avoiding "transition poverty" is paramount. The average diocesan vocations office changes their director about every three years. So, just as a vocation director gets his feet wet, develops trusted relationships, and is finally understanding how to put best practices in place, another new vocation director is appointed, and the process repeats. This is ineffective in almost all cases, and dioceses need to be aware of the effects frequent changes have on vocation cultivation. Lastly, to continue to foster the relationships with discerners that are vital in discernment, the transition from one vocation director to another should be accomplished over the course of six months to a year instead of overnight.

◆ **Holy and Inspirational Bishops:** Fatherhood in our culture is in rapid decline, and many young men do not understand how to be a father or see the importance of the role a strong father plays in the life of a young person. When priests and seminarians have a trusted, fatherly relationship with their bishop, it can fill a fatherly void and model how to be an inspirational and encouraging father, which young men today need in order to prepare themselves for fatherhood as a priest. Young men throughout a diocese need to be challenged and invited to consider a vocation to the priesthood through a bishop's homilies, especially at Confirmation Masses and youth conferences. Also, parents need encouragement to pray for and speak with their children about seeking God's will in their lives.

These roles require deliberate action and difficult decision-making that could take resources from one part of the diocese and reallocate them to focused vocation work. Priorities need to change, and Catholic leaders can't be afraid to give up things in one area to benefit another.

Conclusion

The data presented in this report might be difficult for some to digest. But the point must be made...just because the trends head downward, this does not mean Catholics have to accept them as inevitable. The data does reveal that an impending crisis has already begun. But let's not let it continue. We don't have to accept the decline. We can always work to mitigate it by openness to new ideas, new solutions, and new methodologies that go beyond the status quo over the past 50 years. The Church in America - diocese by diocese - needs to commit to creating an environment where vocations can be initiated, discerned, and fostered all the way to ordination, and beyond.



“The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Christ’s presence in the world was, is, and always will be. He has not stopped calling men to the priesthood. What is clear is that we must foster a culture of responsiveness to God’s path for each individual. God is calling many men to the priesthood. Will you be the one to ask *“Have you ever considered the priesthood?”*

For more information on cultivating a culture of vocations in your diocese, visit VocationMinistry.com.

Appendix A

Notes:

Official Catholic Directory 2015-2021

Ordination Class of 2021 CARA Report - March 2021

Census-urban vs. rural-from 2010

Without Vocations, There Will Be No Eucharistic Revival| National Catholic Register (ncregister.com)

For full access to our findings, please visit VocationMinistry.com

Appendix B

Vocation Definitions and Terminology

Bishop—A bishop, by divine institution, carries on the work of the apostles. By reason of episcopal consecration, he shares in the triple apostolic function of the teacher of doctrine, priest of sacred worship, and minister of church government. Bishops are responsible for the pastoral care of their dioceses. In addition, bishops have a responsibility to act in council to guide the Church.

Diocese—Standard term for a territorial division of the Church, entrusted to a bishop who rules in his own name as local ordinary and not as a delegate of another. The chief diocese of a province is an archdiocese. It is headed by an archbishop. A diocese is usually limited to a definite territory so that it comprises all the faithful who inhabit that territory. (Cf. cc 369 and 372, #1)

Diocesan Priest—A priest is ordained to preach the Gospel and celebrate the sacraments. When a man receives the sacrament of Holy Orders at ordination, he makes three promises: to pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily, to obey his bishop, and to live a celibate life. Diocesan priests serve the people of a particular geographic region.

Discern-Out—Either a diocese or a seminarian prayerfully discerns that priestly formation should not continue.

Discernment—The process of prayerfully discovering over a period of time whether or not a person is called to a particular vocation.

Extern Priests—Priests who have not been incardinated or formally accepted into a diocese in which they are currently working and residing.

Holy Orders—The sacrament by which men become deacons, priests, and bishops. The mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the church through prayer and the laying on of hands. By receiving Holy Orders, men's souls are marked with a permanent, sacramental character.

Religious Life—Men and women who make public vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and who live this permanent state of life in a community recognized by the Church. This includes sisters, nuns, brothers, and monks. Some religious men have also been ordained priests and are pastors and associate pastors at parishes.

Retired Priest—Although a priest may retire from administrative duties and from the demands of a full-time assignment, such as a parish pastor or administrator, he continues the lifelong priestly ministry to which he dedicated himself at ordination. For this reason, a man in this status is referred to as an emeritus priest.

Seminary—A place where a young man goes to prepare for the priesthood. Seminaries have four areas of formation: spiritual, intellectual, human, and pastoral. A man would typically attend seminary for eight years after high school. If he goes to seminary after college, the length of study is on average seven years.

Vocation—A calling or summoning. A vocation is God's invitation to love and serve him and his Church in a particular way of life. It is a call to live on earth in a way that will impact eternity. The word itself is derived from the Latin word *vocare*.

Appendix C

Formulas Used for This Report

Base Need Ordination Rate—To determine how many ordinations are needed by dioceses, Vocation Ministry used the average of two factors:

1. Population Factor equals one ordination per 120,000 Catholics in a diocese
2. Replacement Rate of Priests (see below).

Replacement Rate of Priests—The replacement rate of priests is the number of ordinations needed annually simply to replace the current number of priests in a diocese. The rate used in this report is 2.7 percent. This rate was arrived at by determining the average years of ministry for priests in the US.

Subtracting the average ordination age of priests (34) from the average retirement age (71), the average length of ministry is 37 years. Considering a priest's length of ministry to be a unit, divide that unit by the number of years. Thus, the annual rate of replacement necessary to retain the current number of priests over a given time period ($1/37 = 0.027$ or 2.7%).

Thus, if a diocese has 83 priests, each year they will need to ordain an average of 2.241 ($83 * 0.027$) new priests yearly just to replace the current number as they retire.

Depending on a diocese's particular need, a higher replacement rate may be necessary. This calculation does not include other factors of attrition which may cause a decrease in priests, such as a higher than the average normal rate of retirement.

Base Need Seminarian Rate—To determine the number of seminarians needed, the Base Need Ordination Rate was multiplied by the average length of seminary formation (seven years), then increased by the average discern-out rate of 30 percent.

Credits

Our work at Vocation Ministry is led by the Holy Spirit, and I am grateful that He has brought inspiring people to help us produce this informative report.

We would not have ventured down this path with such a monumental undertaking if not for the willingness of one generous soul, Mr. Terry Foley, who has a heart for vocations and a mind for numbers and spreadsheets. He spent hundreds of hours in 2022, finding underlying trends and correlations of what actually affects the number of men entering seminary and the number of those ordained each year. I am thankful for his time and efforts in this ground-breaking endeavor.

Our team at Vocation Ministry has given their all to this project, and we are blessed to have worked with Revolutionizing Missions and Impressus Art to bring this report to life.

Thank you to the bishops, vocation directors, and other diocesan leaders who have trusted our organization to help them create an environment in their diocese where men and women can easily say “Yes” to God’s call.

Vocation Ministry offers this report and its data free to all, which is only possible because of generous Board of Directors and donors who want to positively impact vocations for generations to come.

Lastly, to the men who serve us and the Church as priests of Jesus Christ, thank you. Our prayer is that you see hope in this report. You have the greatest possibility of inspiring others to answer the call to the priesthood by your witness and invitation.

St. Alphonsus Liguori, pray for men discerning their vocation.

Rhonda Gruenewald
Founder and President of Vocation Ministry



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www.VocationMinistry.com