

April 2006

***The Class of 2006:
Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood***

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

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Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*

**A Report to the Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**



April 2006

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Executive Summary

In December 2005, the Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) engaged the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct the annual online surveys of vocation directors and of ordinands to the priesthood. The survey was initially developed by the Secretariat in 1998 and has been administered online for the past three years. CARA assumed responsibility for the Class of 2006 project using the survey developed by the Secretariat and will work with the Secretariat to improve the online survey and data collection process for future years. This report presents results of the survey of ordinands of the Class of 2006.

Bishop Blase J. Cupich, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Vocations, prepared a letter for vocation directors and a second letter for the vocation directors to distribute to their ordinands. Each letter requested cooperation with the project and provided directions for completing a brief online survey. CARA mailed both letters in December 2005 to all diocesan vocation directors and the major superiors of all clerical and mixed religious institutes, using lists provided by the Secretariat. After repeated follow-ups by telephone, fax, and e-mail, a total of 233 ordinands responded to the online survey. This response represents approximately two-thirds of the 359 potential ordinands reported by vocation directors.

Major Findings

- The average age of ordinands of the Class of 2006 is 37. The average age of ordinands has increased by more than 2.5 years since 1998, the first year for which data are available.
- Two in three responding ordinands are of European or European American ancestry. Ordinands are more likely than the U.S. Catholic population in general to be Asian, but less likely than the U.S. Catholic population to be Hispanic/Latino.

- One in three ordinands was born outside the United States, with the largest numbers coming from Vietnam, Mexico, or the Philippines. The percentage that is foreign-born has increased from 24 percent in 1998 to 30 percent in 2006.
- Nearly eight in ten ordinands have completed college before entering the seminary, and one in three has a graduate degree. The education level of ordinands has increased significantly. In 1998, 30 percent of responding ordinands had less than a college degree before entering the seminary, compared to 22 percent of ordinands in 2006.
- More than half of ordinands attended a Catholic elementary school, as have almost half of all U.S. Catholic adults. Ordinands are somewhat more likely than other U.S. Catholic adults to have attended a Catholic high school. They are much more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic college.
- About three in four ordinands report having full-time work experience before entering the seminary, most often in education. Slightly less than one in ten has served in the U.S. Armed Forces.
- Nearly all ordinands have been Catholic since birth, although 6 percent became Catholic later in life. More than a third reported participating in a World Youth Day. Ordinands have also been active in parish life, with more than half indicating they served as an altar server, lector, Eucharistic minister, or participated in retreats in their parish.
- Two in three ordinands were initially invited to consider the priesthood by a priest. Friends and parents were next most likely to have made that initial invitation. Four in ten ordinands have participated in a “Come and See” weekend, a popular vocation program.
- Relatively few ordinands say that various vocational advertising techniques were instrumental in their discernment. Nearly one in four ordinands say that pamphlets and magazines are effective vocational advertising techniques. One in five says that websites and posters are effective vocational advertising techniques. Fewer than one in ten says that videos, emails, billboards, CD-Rom, or radio or TV ads are effective vocational advertising techniques.

Introduction

In December 2005, the Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) engaged the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct the annual online surveys of vocation directors and of ordinands to the priesthood. The survey was initially developed by the Secretariat in 1998 and has been administered online for the past three years. CARA assumed responsibility for the Class of 2006 project using the survey developed by the Secretariat and will work with the Secretariat to improve the online survey and data collection process for future years. This report presents results of the survey of ordinands of the Class of 2006.

Bishop Blase J. Cupich, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Vocations, prepared a letter for vocation directors and a second letter for the vocation directors to distribute to their ordinands. Each letter requested cooperation with the project and provided directions for completing a brief online survey. The letter for vocation directors explained the goal of the project – to provide positive and accurate information for the media regarding the men who are being ordained – and requested that they complete a brief online survey to inform the Secretariat about the expected number of ordinands as well as other information about aspects of vocation ministry. Each vocation director was also given a copy of a letter from the Secretariat that was written for ordinands. Vocation directors were asked to duplicate that letter and distribute it to their ordinands. The letter requested the cooperation of the ordinands and gave them instructions for accessing a brief online survey for ordinands.

CARA mailed both letters in December 2005 to all diocesan vocation directors and the major superiors of all clerical and mixed religious institutes, using lists provided by the Secretariat. After repeated follow-ups by telephone, fax, and e-mail, a total of 233 ordinands responded to the online survey by the April 7 cut-off date. This response represents approximately two-thirds of the 359 potential ordinands reported by vocation directors. These 233 ordinands include 206 ordinands to the diocesan priesthood and 27 to the religious priesthood.

Responding ordinands represent 98 dioceses and archdioceses as well as 24 religious congregations. The Archdiocese of Washington had the greatest number of responding ordinands – 12 in all – followed by the Archdiocese of Newark (9 ordinands), the Diocese of Arlington (7 ordinands), and the Archdiocese of Seattle (6 ordinands). All other dioceses had five or fewer responding ordinands. The greatest numbers of responses from ordinands to the religious priesthood were from Jesuits.

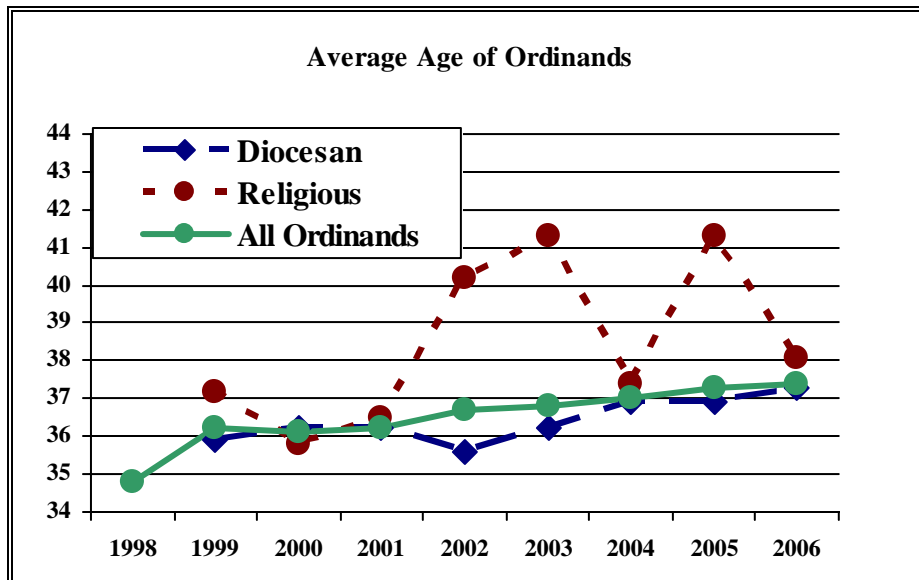
The questionnaire asked ordinands about their age, race or ethnic background, education, academic recognition, religious education and religious background, work experience, invitation to consider the priesthood, and experience with a number of vocation programs. This report presents analyses of each question from all ordinands combined as well as separately for diocesan and religious ordinands. The report also compares this year's responses on selected items to those from 1998, the first year for which comparable data are available.

Age of Ordinands

The average age of ordinands of the Class of 2006 is 37. Half of all ordinands that responded to the online survey are age 36 or older.

| Age of Ordinands | | | |
|------------------|-----|----------|-----------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Age 25-29 | 22% | 24% | 12% |
| Age 30-34 | 23 | 23 | 19 |
| Age 35-39 | 21 | 18 | 46 |
| Age 40-49 | 21 | 22 | 12 |
| Age 50-59 | 9 | 9 | 12 |
| Age 60 and older | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Average age | 37 | 37 | 38 |

The average age of diocesan ordinands is 37, compared to age 38 for religious ordinands. The median age of diocesan ordinands is 36, while the median age for religious ordinands is 37. Diocesan ordinands are more likely than religious to be under age 35 at ordination, although more than one in seven responding diocesan ordinands is over age 50. By contrast nearly half of responding religious ordinands are in their late 30s, and none are over age 59.



The average age of ordinands has increased by more than 2.5 years since 1998, from 34.8 years in 1998 to 37.4 years in 2006. On average, ordinands from religious institutes are slightly older than diocesan ordinands.

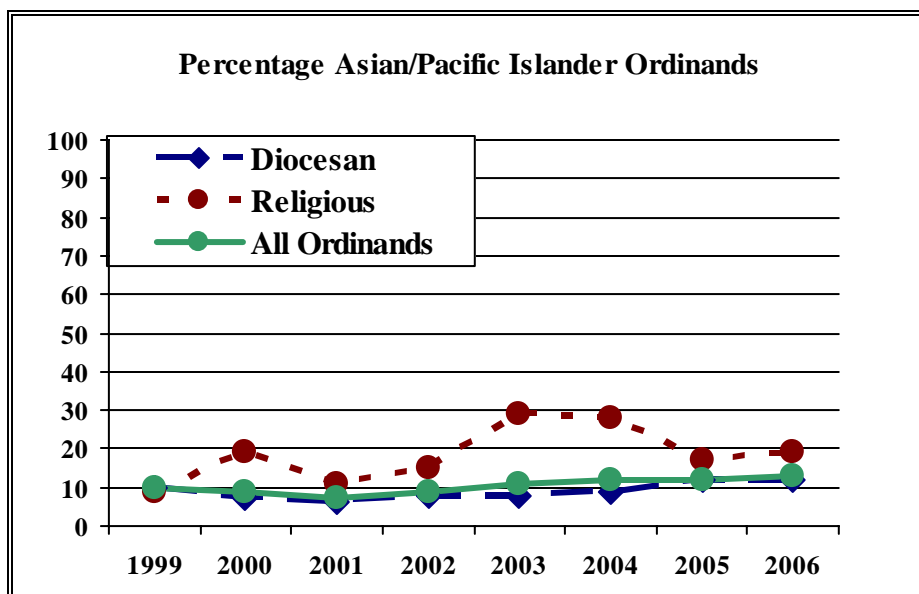
Race and Ethnic Background

Two in three responding ordinands have a European or European American background.

| Race and Ethnic Background of Ordinands | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| European/American | 66% | 67% | 59% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 13 | 12 | 19 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 12 | 11 | 19 |
| African | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| African American | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Native American | <1 | <1 | 0 |
| Other | 6 | 6 | 4 |

Ordinands to the diocesan priesthood more closely reflect the race and ethnic diversity of the U.S. Catholic population overall, while ordinands to the religious priesthood are more likely to be Asian/Pacific Islander or Hispanic/Latino.

Asian/Pacific Islander ordinands are disproportionately represented among survey respondents, relative to their proportion of the U.S. Catholic population. Asians/Pacific Islanders make up less than 2 percent of U.S. Catholics overall but are 13 percent of responding ordinands. By contrast, Hispanics/Latinos make up approximately 28 percent of U.S. Catholics but only 12 percent of responding ordinands and African American Catholics are 4 percent of the U.S. Catholic population but only 1 percent of responding ordinands (CARA Catholic Poll, 2003).

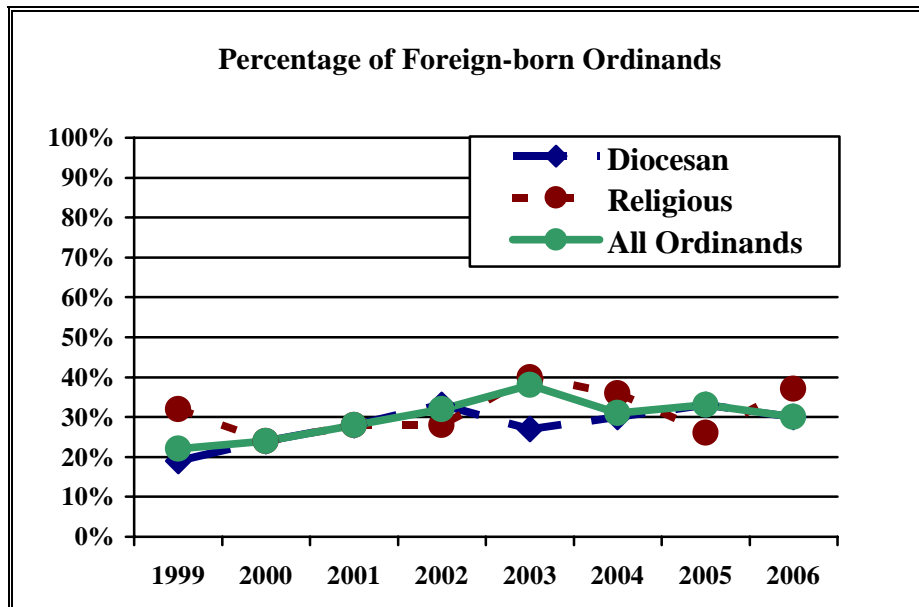


Country of Birth

Seven in ten responding ordinands were born in the United States.

| Country of Birth of Ordinands | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| United States | 70% | 70% | 63% |
| Vietnam | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| Mexico | 5 | 6 | 0 |
| Philippines | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Haiti | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Nigeria | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Poland | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Other countries | 13 | 12 | 18 |

Vietnam and Mexico are the two most frequently mentioned countries of birth among responding ordinands, although no responding religious ordinands were from Mexico. A total of 26 countries outside the United States were identified by these ordinands.



The percentage of ordinands that are foreign-born has increased from 24 percent in 1998 to 30 percent in 2006.

Education

The ordinands are very well educated. On average, nearly eight in ten responding ordinands have completed college before entering the seminary.

| Highest Education Completed Before Seminary | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Elementary | 1% | 1% | 0% |
| High School | 18 | 19 | 7 |
| Trade/Technical School | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Undergraduate | 47 | 49 | 37 |
| Graduate | 31 | 28 | 56 |

Ordinands from religious congregations are more likely than diocesan ordinands to have completed a graduate degree before entering the seminary. In part, this is due to the relatively large number of Jesuit seminarians among religious ordinands. When Jesuits are removed from the analysis, 42 percent of religious ordinands have completed an undergraduate degree and 47 percent have completed a graduate degree before entering the seminary.

The education level of ordinands has increased significantly. In 1998, 30 percent of responding ordinands had less than a college degree before entering seminary, compared to 22 percent of ordinands in 2006.

A number of ordinands indicated that they received recognition for academic achievement. The recognition they received includes:

- Dean's List – 43 percent
- Honor Society (other than Phi Beta Kappa) – 23 percent
- Magna Cum Laude – 15 percent
- Who's Who List of High School Students – 15 percent
- Who's Who List of College Students – 9 percent
- Valedictorian – 6 percent
- Phi Beta Kappa – 4 percent
- Salutatorian – 3 percent

Some of the other state or national awards or recognitions achieved by ordinands include National Merit Scholarship, Rotary Scholarship, NCEA Seton Scholarship, Knights of Columbus Scholarship, Eagle Scout, and the Jacob K. Javits Fellowship.

Catholic Education

Just over half of responding ordinands attended a Catholic elementary school. About two in five attended a Catholic high school and 45 percent attended a Catholic college.

| Attendance at Catholic School* | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Elementary | 52% | 52% | 59% |
| High School | 43 | 41 | 56 |
| College | 45 | 42 | 70 |

*Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select more than one category.

Ordinands are no more likely than other U.S. Catholics to have attended a Catholic elementary school. In a 2005 national telephone poll¹, 49 percent of U.S. Catholics report having attended a Catholic elementary school, compared to 52 percent of ordinands who have done so. By contrast, ordinands are somewhat more likely than other Catholics to have attended a Catholic high school (43 percent of ordinands, compared to 29 percent of U.S. Catholics) and they are much more likely to have attended a Catholic college (45 percent of ordinands, compared to 12 percent of U.S. Catholics). Seven in ten responding religious ordinands reported attending a Catholic college.

Among those who did not attend a Catholic elementary or high school, 77 percent (78 percent of diocesan ordinands and 64 percent of religious ordinands) participated in a religious education program in their parish. On average, they completed the religious education program in the 10th grade.

Only 3 percent of ordinands (all diocesan) report being home schooled at some time in their educational background. Among those who were home schooled, the average length of time they were home-schooled was four and a half years.

¹ Poll conducted by Gallup, Inc. in May 2005 for a forthcoming book on American Catholic Laity, by William V. D'Antonio, Dean R. Hoge, James D. Davidson, and Mary L. Gautier. Preliminary findings are published in the *National Catholic Reporter*, September 30, 2005.

Work Experience

More than three quarters of ordinands reported previous full-time work experience.

| Prior Full-time Work Experience | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Educator, teacher, professor | 16% | 11% | 52% |
| Skilled labor, farm worker | 8 | 9 | 4 |
| Sales, real estate | 8 | 9 | 4 |
| Manager, supervisor | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Engineer, computers | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| Banking, accounting, finance | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Military | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Artist, musician, designer | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Social worker | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Church ministry | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Attorney | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Government worker | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Clerk, bank teller, bookkeeper | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Counselor, psychologist | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Legal assistant, paralegal | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Scientist | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Reporter, editor, writer | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Physician, dentist | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Other full-time work | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| No prior work reported | 24 | 26 | 7 |

Ordinands that mentioned prior work experience were most likely to report that they were educators before entering the seminary. More than half of religious ordinands said they were teachers or professors before entering the seminary.

Military Experience

One in ten ordinands reports having served in the U.S. Armed Forces (9 percent of responding diocesan ordinands and 8 percent of religious ordinands). Among those who have served, more than a third served in the Navy.

| Service in the U.S. Armed Forces | | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Navy | 35% | 33% | 50% |
| Army | 25 | 28 | 0 |
| Air Force | 15 | 17 | 0 |
| Marines | 10 | 6 | 50 |
| Reserve | 10 | 11 | 0 |
| National Guard | 5 | 6 | 0 |

The table above shows the branch of service among those who reported military service. Ordinands were also asked whether either of their parents was a career military person. Some 14 percent indicated that their father was a career military person – 14 percent of diocesan ordinands and 9 percent of religious ordinands. The table below presents the percentage of those military fathers that served in each branch.

| Father's Service in the U.S. Armed Forces | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Army | 54% | 54% | 50% |
| Navy | 25 | 23 | 50 |
| Air Force | 14 | 15 | 0 |
| Marines | 11 | 12 | 0 |
| Reserve | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| National Guard | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Hobbies and Extra-curricular Activities

Reading is the most frequently mentioned hobby or extra-curricular activity, mentioned by more than three in four ordinands.

| Hobbies and Extra-curricular Activities | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Reading | 77% | 76% | 85% |
| Movies | 66 | 64 | 78 |
| Exercise | 50 | 50 | 56 |
| Music | 48 | 48 | 52 |
| Sports | 47 | 48 | 44 |
| Running | 35 | 35 | 33 |
| Musical instrument | 31 | 31 | 30 |
| Hiking | 30 | 31 | 22 |
| Theatre | 28 | 27 | 37 |
| Cooking | 28 | 27 | 37 |
| Volunteering | 26 | 25 | 33 |
| Writing | 26 | 23 | 48 |
| Camping | 19 | 20 | 15 |
| Cycling | 19 | 20 | 7 |
| Fishing | 18 | 19 | 7 |
| Opera | 14 | 14 | 19 |
| Woodworking | 10 | 11 | 0 |
| Hunting | 9 | 11 | 0 |
| Painting | 7 | 6 | 15 |
| Acting | 6 | 7 | 4 |
| Sailing | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Other | 25 | 27 | 11 |

Movies and exercise are also popular hobbies, enjoyed by more than half of ordinands. Nearly half mention music or sports. A quarter to a third mention running, playing a musical instrument, hiking, attending the theatre, cooking, volunteering, or writing as popular pastimes.

Organized Sports in High School or College

Six in ten ordinands played organized sports in high school and more than one in five played them in college. More than a third played organized sports in both high school and college.

| Organized Sports Played in High School or College | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Soccer | 35% | 34% | 45% |
| Basketball | 30 | 29 | 35 |
| Track and Field | 25 | 24 | 25 |
| Football | 21 | 23 | 10 |
| Swimming | 14 | 13 | 20 |
| Wrestling | 12 | 13 | 5 |
| Tennis | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| Golf | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| Baseball | 0 | 0 | 0 |

More than a third of ordinands who played organized sports in high school or college played soccer. One in three played basketball on an organized team. A quarter participated in track and field and about one in five played football. No ordinands played organized baseball.

Catholic Background and Participation in Parish Life

Nearly all responding ordinands have been Catholic since birth. Among those who became Catholic later in life, the average age of their conversion was 31.

| Catholic Background | | | |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Catholic since birth | 94% | 93% | 96% |
| Converted | 6 | 7 | 4 |
| Average age at conversion | 31 | 31 | 31 |

More than a third of the responding ordinands have participated in World Youth Day. Among diocesan ordinands, 35 percent have participated and among religious ordinands 28 percent have participated.

Ordinands have also been active in parish life. The table below shows the percentage that reported participating in a number of parish programs.

| Participation in Parish Life | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Altar Server | 72% | 70% | 85% |
| Lector | 65 | 63 | 82 |
| Eucharistic Minister | 61 | 59 | 82 |
| Retreats | 52 | 50 | 67 |
| Knights of Columbus | 45 | 48 | 26 |
| Devotions | 43 | 44 | 41 |
| Youth Minister | 31 | 28 | 56 |
| Boy Scouts | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Right to Life | 20 | 21 | 15 |
| Parish Council | 20 | 20 | 19 |
| Rosary Society | 9 | 10 | 4 |
| St. Vincent de Paul | 9 | 8 | 19 |
| Men's Club | 8 | 9 | 0 |
| Eagle Scouts | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Serra Club | 6 | 6 | 0 |

Invitation to Consider Priesthood

Two in three responding ordinands were initially invited to consider the priesthood by a priest. Religious ordinands are more likely than diocesan ordinands to say they were influenced by religious sisters and brothers.

| Initial Invitation to Consider Priesthood | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Priest | 67% | 68% | 63% |
| Friend | 24 | 23 | 26 |
| Mother | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Father | 12 | 13 | 7 |
| Parishioner | 9 | 10 | 4 |
| Religious Sister | 9 | 8 | 19 |
| Teacher | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| Seminarist | 7 | 8 | 0 |
| Grandmother | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Religious Brother | 6 | 5 | 15 |
| Deacon | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Military Chaplain | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Grandfather | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Youth Minister | 2 | 2 | 4 |

Almost one in four responding ordinands say they first received an invitation to consider the priesthood from a friend. Parents were the next most likely person to make that initial invitation. About one in ten says they first received the invitation from a parishioner, a religious sister, or a teacher.

Vocation Programs and Vocational Advertising Techniques

“Come and See” weekends are most likely to be mentioned by responding ordinands as a vocation program that they have experienced. Fewer than half have experienced any of the listed vocation programs, however.

| Vocation Programs | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Come and See weekends | 42% | 41% | 52% |
| Parish vocation programs | 13 | 15 | 0 |
| Grade school/CCD voc. programs | 13 | 13 | 15 |
| High school vocation programs | 13 | 13 | 15 |
| Operation Andrew | 7 | 8 | 0 |
| Traveling Cup/Cross programs | 5 | 5 | 0 |

Parish, elementary school, and high school vocation programs were experienced by about one in seven ordinands. Less than one in ten have experienced Operation Andrew or the Traveling Cup/Cross programs.

Ordinands also rated the effectiveness of a variety of vocational advertising techniques. Relatively few ordinands say that various vocational advertising techniques were instrumental in their discernment. The table below displays the percentage that said that each technique was instrumental in their discernment.

| Vocational Advertising Techniques | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | All | Diocesan | Religious |
| Pamphlets | 23% | 23% | 22% |
| Magazines | 23 | 22 | 33 |
| Websites | 22 | 23 | 19 |
| Posters | 22 | 23 | 11 |
| Advertisements | 12 | 12 | 15 |
| Newsletters | 12 | 12 | 11 |
| Videos | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| Emails | 7 | 7 | 11 |
| Billboards | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| Radio Ads | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| Interactive CD-ROM | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| TV Ads | 2 | 2 | 0 |