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***Catholic Theological Union:***

***The Needs of Recently Ordained  
Priests and Professed Religious in Their First Ten Years of Ministry***



Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
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*White Paper for the  
Catholic Theological Union:*

*The Needs of Recently Ordained  
Priests and Professed Religious in Their First Ten Years  
of Ministry*

**July 2017**



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the work here is to explore the needs of recently ordained priests and professed religious, in the United States with a special focus on those needs that might be well addressed by the education program.

There are estimated 4,292 new religious and diocesan priests in the United States (i.e., those who professed final/perpetual vows/commitment or who were ordained in about ten years). An estimated 585 of the new priests and religious members are at risk of resigning in about ten years since their ordination or final profession.

Needs of new religious members and diocesan priests can be organized into three general groups: personal needs, community needs, and ministry needs. Current literature offers a fragmented view of those needs. Relatively little is known about the needs specific to religious brothers. Future research could help provide more coherent insight into the needs of new religious priests, new diocesan priests, religious sisters and religious brothers.

## INTRODUCTION

**The purpose of the work here is to explore the needs of recently ordained priests and professed religious (collectively referred to as “entrants” throughout the work here, which does not include seminarians and those in initial formation), in the United States with a special focus on those needs that might be well addressed by the education program.**

No single definition of recent entrants could be adapted here. Based on previous research, a new entrant could be understood, for example, as a man ordained to priesthood in the current year, in the last five years, or in five to nine years, as a person who is a member of Millennial generation as well as a person who was ordained to priesthood or made final/perpetual vows/commitment in the last ten years. Where possible, the last definition was used.

An issue further complicating the review of literature is frequently inconsistent use of the unit of analysis in reporting of the results within the same study. The literature reviewed here tends to focus on parish pastors (as opposed to all priests or priest in various ministries), priests in general (again, without consistently distinguishing between diocesan priests and religious priests), and members of religious institutes (without consistently distinguishing between men and women religious or between religious priests and religious brothers). In an attempt to reference the most relevant results from previous work, the description here switches between different units of analysis.

## THE SCOPE AND URGENCY OF THE NEEDS

Based on the most recent figures derived from the literature, there are estimated 4,292 new entrants into religious life and diocesan priesthood in the United States. An estimated 585 of those entrants are at risk of resigning in about ten years since their ordination or final profession. While those estimates require further validation with more up to date research, they provide a general idea

about the scope of the population that could benefit from the education program. The following subsections provide more detailed insight on the trends in number of new entrants and resignations.

## Population's Size

The maximum scope of the need for the education program can be approximated by the size of the population that may experience this need. Noting the limitations of the data, this population can be roughly estimated at 4,292 new entrants. This includes the number of new priests that can be estimated between 3,148 (2,576 diocesan priests and 572 religious priests)<sup>1</sup> and 4,233 (3,304 new diocesan priests and 940 new religious priests).<sup>2</sup> The number of new religious sisters can be estimated at 472<sup>3</sup> and the number of new religious brothers can be estimated at 124.<sup>4</sup>

The urgency of the need can be approximated by the ratio of new to all entrants. This ratio can be estimated at 5 percent for all entrants, at 11 percent for diocesan priests, at 7 percent for religious priests, at 3 percent for religious brothers, and at 1 percent for religious sisters.<sup>5</sup> The smaller the ratio, the more urgent the need to retain the new entrants.

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<sup>1</sup> The lower end estimate was calculated as the percentage of priests (diocesan and religious, respectively) under 40 years of age derived from Hoge and Wenger (2003) and the total number of priests (diocesan and religious, respectively) derived from Official Catholic Directory (2016). This low end estimate does not account for changes in the age distribution of priests since Hoge and Wenger (2003) study was conducted. It also does not consider the time since ordination. According to Kramarek and Gautier (2017), the median age of potential ordinands to religious priesthood in 2017 was 36 and to diocesan priesthood was 31 years old. In order to provide estimate for men ordained for ten years, the estimates for both groups would need to be increased.

<sup>2</sup> The high end estimate was calculated as the number of potential ordinands less 15 percent - the estimated percentage of resignations derived from Hoge (2006). The number of potential ordinands to priesthood can be estimated at 4,980. Kramarek and Gautier (2017) identified 590 potential ordinands in 2017, Gautier and Gaunt (2016) identified 548 potential ordinands in 2016, Gautier and Gaunt (2015) identified 595 ordinands in 2015, Gautier and Saunders (2014) identified 477 potential ordinands in 2014, Gautier and Saunders (2013) identified 497 potential ordinands in 2013, Gautier and Gray (2012) identified 487 potential ordinands in 2012, Gautier and Cidade (2011) identified 480 potential ordinands in 2011, Gautier, Bendyna, and Cidade (2010) identified 440 potential ordinands in 2010, Gautier, Bendyna, and Cidade (2009) identified 465 potential ordinands in 2009, and Gautier and Bendyna (2008) identified 401 potential ordinands in 2008. The number of new diocesan and religious priests was calculated by multiplying the total estimate by the average of percentage distributions of the samples (as opposed to sampling frames) from the ten studies referenced above. This high end estimates do not account for the (unknown) percentage of potential ordinands who end up not being ordained (which would decrease the estimated value), percentage of excommunicated priests outside of the United States (which would decrease the estimated value), and the percentage of incardinated priests from outside the United States (which would increase the estimated value).

<sup>3</sup> This estimate was calculated as the percentage of religious sisters under 40 years of age derived from Bendyna and Gautier (2009) and the total number of religious sisters derived from Official Catholic Directory (2016). This estimate does not account for changes in the age distribution of religious sisters since Bendyna and Gautier (2009) study was conducted. It also does not consider the time since final/perpetual vows/commitment.

<sup>4</sup> This estimate was calculated as the percentage of religious men under 40 years of age derived from Bendyna and Gautier (2009) and the total number of religious brothers derived from Official Catholic Directory (2016). This estimate does not account for changes in the age distribution of religious brothers since Bendyna and Gautier (2009) study was conducted. It also does not consider the time since final/perpetual vows/commitment.

<sup>5</sup> The ratios were calculated by dividing the average of lower and higher estimate for each category (derived from previous paragraph) by the total number of people in each category (derived from the Official Catholic Directory 2016). According to the Official Catholic Directory (2016), there were 88,481 priests and religious in the United States. Out of this number, 53 percent were religious sisters, 29 percent were diocesan priests, 13 percent were religious priests, and 5 percent were religious brothers. The overall ratio is the weighted average of the four sub-group ratios.

The reason for low ratios is, in general, the decreasing trend in the size of the population of diocesan priests and religious. According to the Official Catholic Directory (2016), the number of religious sisters decreased by 74 percent since 1965 (an average of 23 percent per decade), the number of religious brothers decreased by 66 percent (an average of 19 percent per decade), the number of religious priests decreased by 50 percent (an average of 12 percent per decade), and the number of diocesan priests decreased by 28 percent (an average of 6 percent per decade).

The declining trends were a result of negative balance between those who enter and leave diocesan priesthood and religious life. According to Gautier (2009), the number of seminarians in the United States stabilized at about 3,500 a year in the last quarter century and the number of ordinands to priesthood averaged about 450 a year in the last decade. Gautier, Perl, and Fichter (2012) estimated that three times more ordinands would be necessary to replace priests who leave the active service.<sup>6</sup> Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that there was a median of two men religious and one woman religious in initial formation (candidates/postulants, novices, or temporary vows/commitment) as compared to a median of 51 men religious and 55 women religious who professed final/perpetual vows/commitment in religious institutes in the United States.<sup>7</sup> One in five (22 percent) men institutes and one in three (34 percent) women institutes did not have any members in initial formation.

The explanations for declining number of priests and religious focus on the declining number of those who enter. For example, one of the more common and convincing of those explanations states that people desiring life of service to others currently have more options for acting upon their ideals than they did in the past- instead of entering diocesan priesthood or religious life they can pursue secular careers (e.g., in public sector and education) (e.g., Conway 2011, Froehle 1997).<sup>8</sup>

Naturally, an educational program serving the needs of new members could not directly address this and other issues pertaining to the process of discerning vocations. The education program could, however, attempt to alleviate the declining trends by directly addressing the needs of those at the highest risk of resigning.

## Resignations

A program focusing on the needs of new entrants could contribute to alleviating the declining trend in the number of those entrants by decreasing the number of resignations and the number of those considering resignation. The rate of resignations may be increasing among those ordained for five years or less, although, it appears to still be lower for new priests than for all

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<sup>6</sup> Gautier, Perl, and Fichter (2012) conducted a 2009 survey based on a random sample of 2,400 diocesan priests and 800 religious priests from every diocese and religious order in the country (for a 30 percent response rate).

<sup>7</sup> Bendyna and Gautier (2009) conducted a 2008 survey based on a final sample of 591 religious institutes (for an approximate response rate of 66 percent) and 2009 survey mailed to 3,965 new members (i.e., those who had taken final/perpetual vows/commitment since 1993) for a response rate of at least 40 percent. Finally, the study included three focus groups (in Chicago, IL, San Antonio, TX, and Washington, DC).

<sup>8</sup> Froehle (1997) conducted analysis based on responses from 1,578 members of religious communities to a 1997 survey on rural and urban vocations. Since the survey was sent to the religious superiors for distribution among their members, the size of the sampling frame (and, consequently, the response rate) is unknown. The survey was sent to every religious superior in the country. A quarter (28 percent) of the all respondents were men. This represented an oversampling of men represented 20 percent of all religious in the United States. The respondents were most concentrated in New York, Illinois, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

priests. According to Hoge (2002), the number of resignations increased between 1968 and 1972, remained stable until 1980's when it has increased again.<sup>9</sup> According to Hemrick and Hoge (1991), estimated 9 to 10 percent of diocesan and religious priests ordained between 1980 and 1984 resigned by 1990.<sup>10</sup> According to Hoge (2006), estimated 14 to 16 percent of the diocesan and religious priests who were ordained between 1995 and 1999 resigned by 2006.<sup>11</sup> Schuth (1999) estimated the rate of resignations at 15 percent. Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that on average 42 percent of those who entered formation in men religious orders since 1990 and 50 percent of those who entered formation in women religious orders were still members of the community in 2009. About one in 20 of those departures (6 percent for men and 5 percent for women) took place after the final/perpetual vows/commitment was made. Assuming, those numbers are still valid today, an estimated 585 of the entrants are at risk of resigning in about ten years since their ordination or final profession.

The potential value of extending support to those who consider resigning is even more apparent when one takes into account that the number of those who consider resigning is approximately equal to the number of those who choose to resign. While the literature does not directly examine this claim, the comparison between above referenced resignation estimates and number of priests who did not say they would enter priesthood again implies it. According to Hoge (2006), 12 percent of the religious priests ordained for five to nine years did not say they would enter priesthood again, 1 percentage point less than in 1990, and 12 percentage points less than in 1970. According to Hoge (2002), 14 percent of active religious priests ordained in five years or less did not say that they would not leave priesthood. According to Gautier et al. (2012), 12 percent of religious priests surveyed in 2009 did not state that they would not leave priesthood.

An education program trying to curtail resignation rates would need to focus on addressing reasons for resignations. According to Shields and Verdieck (1986), the administrators of men's religious communities provided the following frequent reasons why some priests resigned in the preceding years: preference for marriage (mentioned by 69 percent of administrators), problems with celibacy (68 percent), no personal fulfillment (63 percent), and dissatisfaction with community life (61 percent). The authors also found that one in three administrators reported problems with authority (34 percent) and disenchantment with direction of community (33 percent). Those needs and needs reported in other studies can be organized into three general groups: personal needs, community needs, and ministry needs. Each one of these groups is explored in more detail below where possible distinguishing between diocesan priests, religious priests, religious sisters, and religious brothers.

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<sup>9</sup> Hoge (2002) conducted a 2000 survey based on a sample of 365 active diocesan priest (for a 71 percent response rate) and 346 active religious priests (for a 76 percent response rate) who had been ordained between 1995 and 1999 in randomly selected 44 dioceses and 44 religious institutes. The study also included 2001 interviews with convenience, snowball sample of 57 resigned diocesan priests and 15 resigned religious priests who were ordained after 1991.

<sup>10</sup> In 1990, Hemrick and Hoge (1991) conducted a national survey based on the initial random sample of 1,477 diocesan priests (for a 66 percent response rate) and 965 religious priests (for a 57 percent response rate) ordained for five to nine years, serving in the United States and abroad. Hoge (2006) repeated the study in 2005 based on a national survey based on the initial sample of 973 diocesan priests (for a 77 percent response rate) and 420 religious priests (69 percent response rate) ordained for five to nine years. The study also included 16 personal interviews and three focus groups.

<sup>11</sup> In 2005, Hoge (2006) conducted a national surveys based on the initial sample of 949 diocesan and 407 religious priests ordained for five to nine years (with a 75 percent response rate). The study also included 16 personal interviews and three focus groups.

## PERSONAL NEEDS

The first group of needs among new entrants includes needs pertaining to the process of developing and maintaining identity as a priest, as a celibate, and/or as a member of religious order. Furthermore, the need for support of new entrants might be negatively related to their emotional and intellectual ability to meet the demands of their vocation.

### Identity as a Priest

New priests are in the process of developing their identity as a priest. This includes a general question of what priesthood is about. According to Hoge (2006), the share of religious priests who do not know what a priest is really supposed to do decline from 20 percent in 1970 to 12 percent in 1990 and 11 percent in 2005. Therefore, the ambiguity in identity as a priest might be of relatively small and declining importance. But, a few caveats should be added.

The process of developing identity as a priest can be difficult on the conceptual level. According to Hoge, “the prevailing self-understanding of the priesthood in America changed from what Bacik (1999) called the ‘cultic model’ to what he called the ‘servant-leader model’” (2006: 59).<sup>12</sup> The author further observed that the different theological models of the priest have “been the source of unending discussion and dismay among priests and seminary educators” (p. 59).

The process of developing identity as a priest can be affected by the public perceptions. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that the image and esteem of priesthood were a very important issue to 58 percent of the religious priests and 64 percent of diocesan priests.<sup>13</sup> Hoge speculated that “[t]he authority that Americans afforded the clergy and Church leaders in the past (...) has been gradually weakening, so priests today find that they need to earn that authority by their leadership and example; it does not automatically come with the office” (2002: 4-5). Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that 29 percent of religious priests and 22 percent of diocesan priests felt that having more opportunities to discuss theological and pastoral issues in the public forum would be very helpful to their ministry as a priest.

The process of developing identity as a priest has particular challenges in the parish environment. According to Rossetti (2005), a priest-psychologist, the growth in the number of lay ministers serving in parishes may threaten priests’ identity. According to Hoge and Wenger (2003), 24 percent of religious priests believe that it is essential to make the distinction between priests and laity more important in the Church. Furthermore, 64 percent of religious priests and 83 percent of diocesan priests agreed that ordination confers on the priest a new status which makes him essentially different from laity. The authors concluded that “[p]riests of all ages who favor greater lay ministry report more thoughts about resigning, and thus we may expect that the more collaborative

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<sup>12</sup> According to Hoge, “[t]he Cultic Model stresses that the priest is essentially a man ontologically different and set apart whose job is providing the sacraments, teaching the Catholic Church’s doctrine, and being a model of faith and devotion. The Servant-Leader model, by contrast, states that the priest is a leader of the community working in close collaboration with them. His role is to serve the community, elicit the gifts of the faithful, and strive actively with them to address problems in the congregation and in the surrounding community” (2006: 59).

<sup>13</sup> Hoge and Wenger (2003) conducted a 2001 survey on a random sample of priests in 44 dioceses and 45 religious communities (with an overall response rate of 71 percent). The study also included 27 personal interviews and seven focus groups.

priests will resign more often” (Hoge and Wenger 2003: 126) and that priests “need more clarity about their own role [as compared to] the laity and lay ministers” (Hoge and Wenger 2003: 95).

The process of developing (or re-developing) identity as a priest can be challenging for new religious priests who received formation abroad. Hoge (2006) found that 13 percent of religious priests ordained between 1995 and 1999 were ordained outside the United States and that 340 priests enter the United States each year. It is likely that those priests have different conception of priesthood than priests formed in the United States.

## Identity as a Celibate

New religious priests may need support in the process of developing identity as a celibate. This includes reconciling one’s personal views with the teaching of the Church. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that 56 percent of priests believe that celibacy should be a matter of personal choice for diocesan priests. Hoge (2002), found that 94 percent of resigned priests felt that celibacy should be an option for diocesan priests (this was the most likely response among nine responses included in the study). Greeley (2005) found that 3 percent of the priests in 2002 stated that celibacy was not relevant to their priesthood and they did not observe it.<sup>14</sup> Hedin (2003) identified examples of priests who considered celibacy optional but not binding and who engaged in long-term sexual relationships.

New religious priests who aspire to adhere to Church’s teaching on celibacy would benefit from support in the practice of celibacy. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that support for celibate life was very important to 53 percent of priests. Gautier et al. (2012) found that 11 percent of priests surveyed in 2009 considered celibacy (or lifelong commitment to chastity) to be a great problem and an additional 23 percent considered it to be somewhat of a problem. Hoge (2002) found that 13 percent of active religious priests ordained in five years or less felt that living a celibate life was a great problem. Greeley (2005) found that 14 percent of priests in 2002 reported that celibacy was a discipline they tried to follow, but did not always succeed. Hoge (2002) found that significantly more priests resigned from priesthood in the first five years since ordination if they did not feel that their theologate prepared them in understanding themselves as a sexual person. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that psychosexual maturity was the most important topic to the religious priests (out of ten topics related to priesthood) and 59 percent of those religious priests identified it as very important to them. According to Hoge (2002), 42 percent of resigned priests reported that their main motivation was wanting marriage or intimate relationship with a woman and 26 percent found celibacy to be a problem.

Notably, priests struggling with celibacy may potentially be a good fit for priesthood in other areas of priestly vocation. According to Greeley (2005), 45 percent of priests who reported that they have been sexually active say they would certainly choose priesthood again.

The need for support in regard to strengthening the practice of celibacy is particularly important for homosexual priests, because those priests are more 2.6 times as likely to struggle with celibacy (although, the group of heterosexual priests who struggle with celibacy is bigger). Greeley (2005) estimated that 16 percent of priests in 2002 were homosexual while 6 percent were

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<sup>14</sup> Greeley (2005) based his analysis primarily on the Los Angeles Times’ poll conducted in 2002 which was based on a stratified random initial sample of 5,000 diocesan and religious, active and retired priests in the United States and Puerto Rico with a response rate of 37 percent.

homosexual, not always celibate. On the other hand, 84 percent were heterosexual while 12 percent were heterosexual, not always celibate.

Finally, the problems related to developing identity as a celibate also include the public perception of religious priests as celibate. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that problems of sexual misconduct by priests were very important to 48 percent of religious priests. According to Greeley (2005), young priests in 2002 were more likely to find the sexual abuse scandal to be a challenge. The author also observed that there was much discussion and limited agreement about the role of celibacy in fostering sexually delinquent behaviors of priests.

Notably, the issue of celibacy in lives of women religious does not appear to receive much attention in the current literature. The open ended responses reported by Bendyna and Gautier (2009) indicate that there are women religious who find celibacy to be the most challenging thing about religious life. However, it is not clear what share of new women religious may need support in the process of developing identity as a celibate and how women's needs may differ from men's needs in this area.

### **Identity as a Religious Community Member**

New men and women religious may need support in the process of developing identity as members of religious community. The needs of new men and women in this area may be relatively low as compared to older generations. Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that the youngest members of men and women religious communities (i.e., Millennial generation) were more likely than older generations to rate their institute as excellent in regard to providing sense of identity as religious and sense of identity as institute member.

An important aspect of the identity as a religious community member is often the religious habit. For example, Bendyna and Gautier found that in men and women religious orders, “[h]aving a habit that is required either in all or most circumstances or at certain times, such as for ministry or prayer, is correlated with having new members in formation as well as with having higher numbers who have entered and stayed since 1990 [until 2009 when the survey was conducted]” (2009: 28). Notably, habit was 30 percentage points less important to men religious than to women religious, but it was 32 percentage points more important to the Millennial generation than to the Second Vatican Council generation.

### **Intellectual Ability**

One consequence of the increasing need for clergy and staff in Catholic organizations is the shorter apprenticeship period and stronger pressure on the new entrants to learn quickly and advance to positions of higher responsibility- a test to their learning ability and intellectual prowess. Religious priests are generally a well-educated group. According to Hoge (2006), 25 percent of the religious priests ordained for five to nine years have earned a master's degree or licentiate while 9 percent have earned a doctorate. According to the same study, 45 percent of the religious priests ordained for five to nine years said that they had engaged in further study (full-time or part-time), a 15 percentage point decrease between 1990 and 2005.

While the results are not conclusive, there is some limited evidence that new priests' intellectual prowess might be declining (e.g., Wheeler 2001). Klimoski, O'Neil, and Schuth (2005)

summarized the views of Keystone Conferences' faculty participants and found that "just over one-third of students includes those who are less qualified for one of several reasons: some have weak educational backgrounds, others come with learning disabilities, and some are older students far-removed from formal education who sometimes find return to studies problematic. Overall approximately, [10] percent fall into each category, but sometimes seminaries will have a larger proportion of one of another of this type of student. In this (...) group are the [20] percent of international seminarians who may lack English language facility. Though many of these students are intellectually above average, they have difficulty with their academic programs because of insufficient knowledge of English. Sometimes, the problem extends to pastoral practice because of lack of experience with American culture" (p. 19-20). New priests would likely benefit from an education program that would help address those shortcomings in learning ability.

## Emotional Skills

While the literature appears inconclusive regarding the emotional aptitude of priests in general, there is some evidence that new religious priests would benefit from guidance on dealing with periods of loneliness, depression, and lack of intimacy.

There seems to be no consensus on the emotional aptitude of priests in general. For example, Kennedy (2002) asserted that priests are emotionally immature. Greeley (2005) argued that priests are mature and capable of intimacy. Nestor (1993) concluded that priests at the Archdiocese of Chicago were more likely to enter into (emotionally) close relationships than married men, and that they were equal or better equipped to enter, develop, and sustain those relationships.<sup>15</sup> He also found that priests were more likely to enjoy providing support, nurturance, care, to others than married men.

In terms of coping with feelings of loneliness, priests themselves rank emotional problems relatively highly in comparison to other problems. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that loneliness of priestly life was considered to be a great personal problem by 14 percent of diocesan priests and 12 percent of religious priests (respectively, 2 and 4 percentage points more than celibacy). Hoge (2002) found that loneliness of priestly life was considered to be a great problem by 8 percent of diocesan priests and 18 percent of religious priests ordained between 1995 and 1999 (respectively, 1 percent and 5 percentage points more than celibacy).

In terms of resignations from priesthood, different emotional problems vary by importance. According to Shields and Verdieck (1986), 24 percent of the administrators of men's religious communities stated that psychological disturbance was frequent or very frequent reason why some priests resigned in the preceding years. Additionally, 23 percent of the administrators indicate that weak formation was the main reason for resignation. Those two items ranked as seventh and eight most likely reasons out of 11 reasons identified in the study. According to Hoge (2002), 46 percent of resigned priests found that loneliness was a great problem. Furthermore, resigned priests were significantly less likely to feel that their theologate prepared them well in terms of handling the problems of loneliness than the religious priests ordained in the last five years.

Research focusing on new priests provides more nuanced insight into the emotional needs of those priests. O'Rourke (1978) focused on the first year of priesthood and observed that time of

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<sup>15</sup> Nestor (1993) conducted a study based on the random sample of the priests in the Archdiocese of Chicago and a sample of married and unmarried men of same age and education level.

Christmas is for many new priests and religious in pastoral role a time of loneliness and depression. The author attributed those feelings to intimacy crises, “[t]he lack of intimacy [in priest’s] life at a time when intimacy is being celebrated” (p. 138).

## COMMUNITY NEEDS

The second group of needs among new entrants includes needs pertaining to fitting into the shared forms of community life (such as living arrangements, community prayer practice, and ideas about hierarchy), shared values of community life (including common mission) as well as needs pertaining to navigating difference between community members (such as generational differences and cultural differences). Each of those groups is considered in the subsections below.

### Living Arrangements

The problems related to the living arrangement appear to rank relatively low on the list of things new entrants are concerned about. However, the sense of fraternity coming from living together is important to the new religious and women religious in particular.

Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that religious priests ranked problems of community living the least important issues among the 10 problems relating to priesthood as 32 percent considered this problem very important.. Hoge (2002) found that 80 percent of religious priests and 83 percent of diocesan priests ordained between 1995 and 1999 were satisfied with their current living situation.

The issue of satisfaction with living arrangement may be more important for new priests than for all priests, because priests were more less to be satisfied with their first living arrangement than with their current living arrangement. According to Hoge (2002), 73 percent of active diocesan priests and 71 percent of religious priests ordained for five years or less were satisfied with the living situation in their first arrangement. By comparison, 83 percent of active diocesan priests and 80 percent of religious priests ordained for five years or less were satisfied with the living situation in their current arrangement.

Generally, religious priests prefer to have a choice of their living arrangement. Hoge (2002) observed that many newly ordained priests in the early 1980’s and early 1990’s would be more satisfied with their living arrangement if they could make their own choice. Similarly, Hoge (2006) found that 24 percentage points more religious priests ordained between 2000 and 2005 preferred to live in a self-chosen group than actually had that choice. The author also noted that 5 percentage points more religious priests lived in a self-chosen group in 2005 than in 1999.

Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that 19 percent of men and women religious would prefer to live alone. Men expressed greater willingness to live alone and smaller preference for living in small communities (of two or three). This individual desire to live alone can be detrimental to the religious community. The same study found that the higher the number or percentage of members who live alone, the less likely the institute is to have new members. Furthermore, the authors found that community life, prayer life, and lifestyle in the institute were the three most likely items (out of ten listed in the study) to be considered an important factor to the decision about entering religious institute by the new members in men and women communities. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that 51 percent of religious priests felt that greater feeling of fraternity among priests would be very

helpful to their ministry as a priest. Gautier et al. (2012) found that the happiness of religious priests surveyed in 2009 was best predicted by the sense of well-being that comes from working and living common life with like-minded priests. Finally, Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that “[a] number of new members comment on their desire for a more regular common life and the challenge of trying to find that in their religious institutes” (p. 95).

## **Community Life**

New men and women religious may need support in the process of establishing themselves in the life of their religious community. Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that the youngest and oldest men and women religious (i.e., Millennial and pre-Vatican II generations) were more likely than other generations to rate their institute as excellent. More than half of new members in those two generations consider formation programs, opportunities for ongoing formation, preparation for ministry, as well as opportunities for spiritual and personal growth to be excellent.

Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that 91 percent of new members prefer working in ministry with other members of the institute in both men and women religious communities. Furthermore, 88 percent prefer to work in ministry sponsored by their institute.

Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that 51 percent of religious priests stated that greater feeling of fraternity would be very helpful to their ministry as a priest. As such, community life ranked second (after personal spiritual development) as the most important out of 11 areas of potential need.

## **Community Prayer Life**

The indicators of community prayer life tended to increase in recent years. New religious priests may have stronger need for community prayer life than priests of older generations. At the same time, new religious priests are more likely to feel satisfied with their community prayer life.

According to Hoge (2006), 49 percent of religious priests ordained for five to nine years were celebrating Mass at least once a week, 59 percent pray Hours of the Divine Office daily, 20 percent read the Bible every day, 16 percent read books on spirituality every day. Those and other indicators of spirituality either increased or remained on a similar level between 1990 and 2005.

Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that a majority of men and women religious practice daily Eucharist (90 percent), followed by Liturgy of the Hours (85 percent), faith sharing (53 percent), non-liturgical common prayer (42 percent), and common meditation (28 percent). The authors also found that institutes in which Daily Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, and common meditation were practiced regularly by the majority of members are more likely to have men or women in initial formation. Finally, the authors found that nine of ten new members considered all aspects of community life identified in the study to be important to them and the Millennial generation was most likely to consider all those aspects of community life as important.

Bendyna and Gautier (2009) also found that the new members of men and women religious communities of the Millennial generation are more likely than other generations to rate their institute as excellent in regard to support for new members, quality of community life, and communal prayer experiences.

## Hierarchy

In regard to issues pertaining to hierarchy, the literature tends to focus on the differences between priests and bishops as well as priests and the teachings of the Church.

Hoge (2002) observed that some newly ordained priests in the early 1980's and early 1990's were unhappy with diocesan structure, felt left out of communications and decision-making, as well as felt unappreciated. The same study also found that 24 percent of active diocesan priests had at least some problem with the way authority is too lax in the Church, while 17 percent had at least some problem with the way authority is too heavy handed in the Church. Furthermore, 14 percent of active religious priests had at least some problem with the way authority is too lax in the Church, while 51 percent had at least some problem with the way authority is too heavy handed in the Church.

Hoge (2006) found bishop's leadership was mentioned as a cause of tensions within presbyterate by 18 percent of religious priests and 15 percent of diocesan priests ordained between 1995 and 1999. Furthermore, power factions and parties within the diocese (in-group vs. out-group) were mentioned by 11 percent of religious priests and 13 percent of diocesan priests ordained between 1995 and 1999. A special point of tension was the sexual scandal- 24 percent of religious priests ordained between 1995 and 1999 felt that the sex abuse scandal hurt their relationship with their bishop.

Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that 14 percent of all priests had very little confidence in the decision making and leadership of their diocesan bishop, as compared to 20 percent for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 23 percent for presbyterate council in the diocese, 31 percent for the National Federation of Priests' Councils, and 33 percent for the diocesan pastoral council. Diocesan priests were more positive than religious priests about the first two categories and more negative about the later three categories. Furthermore, 10 percent of religious priests had very little confidence in the decision making and leadership of their institute's leader and 35 percent of religious priests felt that the opportunity for greater participation in decision making in their diocese or religious institute would be very helpful to their ministry as a priest. The authors also found that the process of selecting bishops was very important issue for 42 percent of religious priests and 41 percent of diocesan priests. Hoge (2002) found that active religious priests ordained in five years or less were more likely to feel very satisfied with their relationships with laity than their relationships with bishops and superiors.

On the other side, Greeley (2005) found that 36 percent of priests were comfortable going to their bishop or superior with a problem in 2002, 1 percentage point more than in 1993. The author also found that 88 percent rate the pope favorably and 79 percent rate their bishop favorably, an increase of 5 and 7 percentage points respectively relative to 1993.

Based on the data from 1970's, 1990's, and 2000's, Greeley observed that "[m]ost priests do not accept the Church's sexual teaching. On the critical issues of birth control and masturbation even the youngest cohorts do not accept the teaching that those behaviors are always wrong. This dissent (...) can be traced to an ideology based on respect for women and respect for the freedom of the laity" (2005: 116). Hoge (2002) found that 45 percent of active diocesan priests and 17

percent of active religious priests did not have a problem with representing Church's teaching they had difficulty with.

## Generational Differences

Kramarek and Gautier (2017) found that men in religious communities scheduled for ordination in 2017 were on average 36 years old, a decrease from an average of over 38 in 2011.<sup>16</sup> By comparison, ordinands to diocesan priesthood were on average 33 years old, a similar level since 2011. In 2009, all religious active priests had a median age of 66 years and all diocesan active priests had a median age of 62 years (Gautier et al. 2012). Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that 75 percent of men religious in 2009 were born before 1950, 14 percent were born in 1950's, 8 percent were born in 1960's, and 3 percent were born in 1970 or later. The same study also found that 91 percent of women religious in 2009 were born before 1950, 6 percent were born in 1950's, 2 percent were born in 1960's, and 1 percent was born in 1970 or later.

The considerable age difference between young and old community members can be a challenge to the integrity of religious communities. Bendyna and Gautier found that “[s]ome of the new members [in men and women religious communities] perceive apathy and pessimism in their religious institutes, due in part to aging and diminishment. Others are challenged by those who think religious life as dying or dead” (2009: 88). On the other hand, “many older new members also encounter difficulties because of differences in life experience” (p. 89). Additionally, “[s]ome new members – both younger and older – comment on the difficulty of integrating into a community in which older members have long established relationships and know each other well” (p. 91).

On the other hand, some studies indicate that generational differences are not problematic. For example, Hoge (2002) found that 76 percent of the active religious priests ordained for five years or less were satisfied with help and support they received from priests with more years of service. By comparison, 72 percent were satisfied with the help and support from other priests ordained at the same time. Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that 93 percent of new members prefer living with members of different ages in men and women religious communities. Hoge (2006) found that age differences were mentioned as a cause of tensions within presbyterate by 1 percent of religious priests ordained between 1995 and 1999 (by comparison, bishop's leadership was mentioned most frequently, by 18 percent of those priests).

In a more systematic review of generational differences, Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that the young priests (indirectly defined as those whose views formed in 1980's or later) differ from old priests (indirectly defined as those whose views formed in 1960's and 1970's) in three general ways (for both, diocesan and religious priests). The first difference is in ecclesiology. Old priests struggle to value the young ones, because “[m]any of these older men probably hoped in their hearts that the innovations of the post-council years would be permanent gains in the history of the Church. But for the most part it did not happen. These post-Vatican II priests now find that they represent only one short period in Catholic history, a period whose influence has already waned” (p. 77). On the other hand, the young priests “are not interested in the issues of the post-Vatican years or in any effort to realize ‘the spirit of Vatican II.’ (...) they would rather have a breathing space after the chaos of the last three decades” (p. 69). Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that younger men and

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<sup>16</sup> Kramarek and Gautier (2017) conducted a national survey of 444 ordinands to priesthood in 2017 (with a 75 percent response rate).

women religious were more likely to feel attracted to a religious institute by a desire for fidelity to the Church. Among the four generations distinguished in the study, the differences between the Vatican II generation and the Millennial generation was the most pronounced (37 percentage points).

The second difference between young and old priests identified by Hoge and Wenger (2003) is the theology of priesthood. Young priests would like to see the distinction between lay and priests reconsidered. Young priests are not as enthusiastic about working with lay ministers. On the other hand, old priests see their role in calling forth the gifts of the faithful. According to Greeley, “[t]he younger generation of priests [under 45] are on average very different from their predecessors. Some of them may be seeking the security that comes from a position of status and power and appear narrow and inflexible” (2005: 116).

The third difference between young and old priests identified by Hoge and Wenger (2003) is in liturgy. Young priests would like to re-introduce the more ornate liturgical ritual of pre-Vatican era to restore a sense of sacred while the old priests focus on liturgy that is inclusive. According to Conway, “men who joined the Church’s workforce after the 1960s were more likely to have been conservative than men who joined in earlier periods” (2011: 64-65). According to Greeley (2005), younger priests are far more conservative than older priests.

Some of the generational differences are more specific to religious priests. For example, Froehle (1997) found that the desire for community life was statistically significantly more important for men religious under the age of 35 (in 1997) to their decision to pursue religious vocation than to those in older generations.

### **Racial and National Differences**

The racial diversity in religious communities and among diocesan priests in the United States is increasing. Gautier et al. (2014) found that “[c]ompared to members who entered religious institutes in previous generations, those entering religious life in the last ten years, as well as those who are in formation now, are much more racially and ethnically diverse” (2014: 26). According to Schuth (1999), in 1997, 23 percent of theology seminarians were Latino, Asian, or Black. According to Hoge (2006), the share of religious priests ordained for five to nine years who were Asian (Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Philippine, Indonesian) increased by 10 percentage points (from 1 percent to 11 percent) between 1990 and 2005. U.S. religious communities also saw an increase of 9 percentage points in religious priests who are Hispanic, Portuguese, or Brazilian as well as 9 percentage points increase in religious priests of mixed race or ethnicity. The two groups which decreased the most are religious priests who are German, Austrian, Dutch, or Swiss (7 percentage points) as well as Irish religious priests (6 percentage points). Notably, the Irish still constitute the single biggest group of priests.

According to Kramarek and Gautier (2017), 35 percent of men in religious communities scheduled for ordination in 2017 were not Caucasian. This includes 16 percent of ordinands who were Hispanic/Latino and 14 percent who were Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian. By comparison, 29 percent of ordinands to diocesan priesthood in 2017 were not Caucasian. This includes 14 percent who were Hispanic/Latino and 9 percent who were Asian/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian.

Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that men and women religious in perpetual vows in 2009 were 36 percentage points more likely to be white than those in the initial formation. Among those in initial formation Hispanic/Latino constituted 21 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander- 14 percent, and black- 6 percent. Gautier et al. (2014) found that 58 percent of men religious institutes had at least one member who is black, 66 percent included at least one Asian/Pacific Islander, and 74 percent included at least one Hispanic/Latino.<sup>17</sup> Three quarters of men religious institutes (75 percent) had four or more ethnicities present. By comparison, 53 percent of women religious institutes had at least one member who is black, 69 percent included at least one Asian/Pacific Islander, and 75 percent included at least one Hispanic/Latino. Half of women religious institutes (55 percent) had four or more ethnicities present.

Gautier et al. (2014) constructed a Diversity Index to compare religious institutes in terms of the diversity among entrants in the past ten years. The Diversity Index ranges from 0 (no diversity) to 100 (complete diversity). The authors found that the score for the entire United States in 2012 was 61. They also found that “[a]mong the responding units who supplied information on the race/ethnicity of those who entered the unit in the last ten years, 41 percent have a diversity score of 0, which means that all their entrants in the past ten years are the same race or ethnicity. The highest diversity score among responding units was 75. The average diversity score among units is 27 and half of all units have a diversity score of 28 or greater. Some 20 percent of units have a diversity score of 50 or higher among entrants in the past ten years” (Gautier et al. 2014: 16).

The increasing racial diversity is accompanied by increasing share of religious members who were not born in the United States. Kramarek and Gautier (2017) found that 26 percent of men in religious communities scheduled for ordination in 2017 and 25 percent of ordinands to diocesan priesthood were not born in the United States. The number of foreign-born ordinands to diocesan priesthood fluctuated between 19 and 33 percent while the number of foreign-born religious ordinands has fluctuated between 23 percent and 52 percent since 1999. The most common countries of birth included Vietnam (4 percent), Philippines (3 percent), and Mexico (2 percent). Those findings are generally consistent with Hoge (2006). According to Gautier et al. (2014), three quarters of men religious institutes (77 percent) had at least one fully professed member and 72 percent had at least one entrant in the past ten years who was born outside of the United States. Considering that the sample disproportionately excluded small contemplative institutes, it is likely that the nationally representative ratio would be lower.

The religious members born outside of the United States show various levels of experience and familiarity with American culture. Kramarek and Gautier (2017) found that both religious and diocesan ordinands in 2017 came to live in the United States on average 12 years ago (at an average age of 24). The first ordinand for Ordination Class of 2017 entered the country 41 years ago.

The cultural diversity may be related to tension in religious communities. According to Hoge (2006), cultural and language differences were mentioned as a cause of tensions within presbyterate by 10 percent of religious priests ordained between 1995 and 1999 (by comparison, bishop’s leadership was mentioned most frequently, by 18 percent of religious priests).

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<sup>17</sup> Gautier et al. (2014) conducted a survey in 2013 and 2014 based on an initial sample of 835 religious institutes in the United States (for a 42 percent response rate).

The tension in religious communities caused by cultural differences may be aggravated by language barrier. According to Hoge (2006), 68 percent of religious priests ordained between 1995 and 1999 can converse in two or more languages. Over a half (55 percent) can converse in both English and Spanish.

The problems stemming from cultural differences in religious communities include the problems experienced by the foreign priests and the problems experienced by domestic priests. According to Gautier et al., in most dioceses “foreign-born priests are more likely to report loneliness than those born in the United States. This is particularly true among younger priests, those of the post-Vatican II generation” (2002: 63).

According to Gautier et al. (2012), 31 percent of priests in 2009 found it problematic to work with international priests. Young priests (Millennial generation) seem to be about as likely to experience this problem as priests in older cohorts.

Despite those challenges, there is some indication that new religious priests are open to cultural diversity. Bendyna and Gautier (2009) found that 87 percent of new members preferred living with members of different cultures in men and women religious communities. Only a “few [new members in men and women religious communities] mention cultural difference based on race or ethnicity [being a challenge]. A few also comment on the lack of diversity and openness to those of other cultures in their religious institutes and in religious life” (Bendyna and Gautier 2009: 92). According to Gautier et al. (2014), at least nine in ten men and women religious institutes indicated that various constituents were open to welcoming to their religious institutes those in initial formation who are from cultures different than the dominant ethnic/racial cohort. At least eight in ten were open to accommodating customs and practices of new members from cultures different from the dominant ethnic/racial cohort of the institute.

Religious communities developed a number of practices to accommodate minority members. According to Gautier et al. (2014), 52 percent of men and women religious institutes had policies or procedures regarding accepting candidates from outside the United States, 42 percent had policies or procedures for accepting candidates with limited English skills, 53 percent encouraged minority members to share their culture in community life, 30 percent provided an acculturation program for new members from outside the United States, and 14 percent of the institutes sponsored or attended a workshop on racism in religious life.

## **Rural and Urban Cultures**

The literature offered limited attention to cultural differences experienced by religious community members who grew up in rural areas but live in religious communities in urban areas. Froehle (1997) found that 55 percent of men and women religious lived in a largely rural area or in a small city or town in a largely rural area at the age of 11 while 44 percent lived in a major metropolitan area or a suburb of a major metropolitan area. By comparison, the members of religious orders were 22 percentage points more likely to live in a major metropolitan area or a suburb of a major metropolitan area during the majority of their religious life.

Some differences appear to exist between religious community members from rural areas and urban areas. In comparison to men religious from rural areas who were 35 years old and under (in 1997), men religious from urban areas were more likely to have felt that important reasons for

becoming a religious included experience of God's call, attraction to ministry, desire to work with the poor, attraction to community life, attraction to vowed life, as well as attraction to prayer and spiritual life (Froehle 1997).

## Sexual Cultures

In addition to the issue of their own personal celibacy and sexuality (described separately), new entrants may have to deal with the issues related to homosexuality, homophobia, and asexuality when navigating the culture of their religious community.

Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that 38 percent of religious priests and 43 percent of diocesan priests perceived that there likely was a homosexual subculture in their seminary, and 57 percent of religious priests and 54 percent of diocesan priests reported that there likely was one in their religious community or diocese. Greeley (2005) found that 28 percent of priests agreed that such a subculture existed in their seminary and 45 percent felt that it existed in their diocese.

According to Hoge and Wenger (2003), 9 percent of priests reported being homosexual and additional 6 percent stated being somewhere in between, but more on the homosexual side. According to Hoge, “[n]o exact data are available, but persons who know the situation estimate that about one-fourth to one-half of the priests today have a homosexual orientation” (2002: 3). Greeley (2005) estimated that 16 percent of priests in 2002 were homosexual. According to the same study, homosexual priests were 7 percentage points more likely to be aware of the homosexual subculture in the seminary than heterosexual priests and 9 percentage points more like in the diocese.

The interviews conducted by Hoge and Wenger indicated that “[p]riests who clearly identified [homosexual] subculture tended to say it had negative effects” (2003: 103). However, the authors also found that in the view of some homosexual priests, the subculture was to some extent a survival mechanism arising in response to homophobic attitudes.

Overall, Cozzens (2000), rector of the Cleveland diocesan seminary, and Martin (2000) argued that the formation of homosexual subculture in a religious province can be destructive to priestly life and that this subculture can in fact be found in seminaries and dioceses. According to Hoge (2006), sexual orientation was mentioned as a cause of tensions within presbyterate by 11 percent of religious priests ordained between 1995 and 1999.

According to Hoge (2002), 49 percent of resigned priests felt that the Church needs to deal more openly with gay issues and 7 percent of resigned priests felt that they were not understood or supported as homosexual men. According to Greeley (2005), homosexual priests felt less satisfied with priesthood than heterosexual priests, i.e., 23 percentage points fewer homosexual priests would choose priesthood again than heterosexual priests.

Some research indicates that rather than focusing on the homosexual aspects of the clerical subculture, more attention should be given to the overall asexual nature of the clerical culture. According to Kennedy, who treated priests in therapy, “[c]elibacy has created an asexual clerical culture (...) that impedes emotional development, reinforces a patriarchal caste in which some men dominate all other men and abusers can easily hide” (Greeley 2005: 22). According to Greeley, “[c]lerical culture and its blind loyalty to the guys is in the final analysis the cause of the [sexual abuse scandal of early 2000's], not homosexuality or celibacy” (2005: 126).

## MINISTRY NEEDS

The third group of needs among new religious priests includes needs pertaining to developing proficiencies and maintaining productivity in various ministries. This includes developing general practical skills as well as skills specific to different ministries, as well as dealing with fatigue and bureaucracy in ministry work. Each of those groups is considered in the subsections below.

### General Skills

New religious and diocesan priests would likely benefit from more training in administration and leadership (including spiritual leadership).

According to Hoge (2006), religious and diocesan priests ordained for five to nine years made positive assessment of their theologate preparation in most areas. In particular, priests believed that they were well prepared in the areas of theology, scripture, homiletics, and liturgy (between 88 and 96 percent of religious priests as well as between 87 and 92 percent of diocesan priests ordained for five to nine years expressed these views). However, priests' ratings of seminary preparation for church administration, working with multiple parishes, managing church finances and budgeting were relatively low (between 12 and 17 percent of religious priests and between 12 and 22 percent of diocesan priests believed that the theologate prepared them well or very well in those areas).

Other studies provide supporting evidence that priests (and pastors, in particular) do not feel adequately prepared for their administrative duties (e.g., Conway 1992, 2002). According to Hoge (2002), only 24 percent of priests who resigned felt that their theologate prepared them well for church administration. This was the lowest (most concerning) score among 13 items reported in the study indicating that lack of good preparation in church administration could potentially play a more important role in the resignation than any other area of theologate preparation.

Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that less than a third of priests felt that having more opportunities for training in specific leadership skills such as conflict management and communications would be very helpful to their ministry as a priest (27 percent of religious priests and 29 percent of diocesan priests), followed by training in personal skills such as time management and stress management (24 percent of religious priests and 30 percent of diocesan priests), training in more specific organizational skills such as budgeting, investing, insurance (17 percent of religious priests and 25 percent of diocesan priests).

Hoge (2006) found that priests felt that they would benefit from education in administration, leadership, and interpersonal skills, from stronger preparation in prayer life and spiritual formation, from more field experiences, as well as from more pastoral counseling skills and more spiritual leadership skills. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that 58 percent of religious priests and 66 percent of diocesan priests felt that having more opportunities for personal spiritual development would be very helpful to their ministry as a priest. As such, personal spiritual development ranked as the most helpful out of 11 areas which included needs related to community life, education and training.

According to Hoge (2006), the majority of priests ordained for five to nine years made efforts to acquire additional skills after ordination in particular in relationship to personal

development (developing a personal prayer life, living a celibate life, identifying and maintaining boundaries, and self-discipline need to accomplish work).

## **Ministry and Scientific Treatment**

At the beginning of twentieth century, the role of religion in various areas (such as education, care for sick and rehabilitation) was challenged as a result of increasing scientific positivism and rationalism which led to increasing professionalization. In consequence, the role of priests and religious community members was challenged by social workers, psychologists, and educators whose efforts were not informed by theological ideals but rather by ideals of effective, science-based treatment. Furthermore, the role of priests and religious in institutions striving to serve increasingly diverse populations at the lowest cost possible was threatened by volunteers who are arguably better able to meet the diverse religious needs of many populations and do so at very low monetary cost to the institution. Historically, priests and religious serving in the affected ministries responded by, among other things, becoming professionalized themselves (e.g., by receiving training in Clinical Pastoral Education and by obtaining advanced degrees in fields such as social work) and joining professional treatment teams.

Currently, priests and religious in some ministries are classified as treatment personnel and serve on subcommittees as well as treatment teams alongside behavioral consultants (i.e., psychiatrists and psychologists). In the context of prevalence of conservative attitudes about the role of priesthood and religious vocation among new entrants, those entrants may benefit from support in reconciling their attitudes with the above described developments.

## **Ministry-Specific Skills**

The skills needed by new religious priests are largely a function of a specific ministry in which they serve. Froehle (1997) found that men and women religious were most likely to consider education in the ministry most identified with their order (74 percent made such selection) followed by parish work (28 percent), health care (27 percent), social work (17 percent), and contemplation (14 percent). Hoge (2002) found that active religious priests ordained for five years or less were most likely to serve in parish ministry (7 percent as pastors and 35 percent as parochial vicars), following by educational apostolate (28 percent), full-time administration (7 percent), ministry with a special group (7 percent), and hospital or prison chaplaincy (1 percent). The remaining 15 percent served in other ministerial positions. The same study found that religious priests ordained for five to nine years were most likely to serve in educational apostolate (21 percent), followed by full-time internal religious order work (16 percent), full-time pastor without special work outside the parish (16 percent), and full-time associate pastor (13 percent). Notably, educational apostolate saw the biggest decline (6 percentage points fewer religious priests served in this ministry in 2005 than in 1990) and the work as full-time pastor without special work outside the parish grew the most (by 9 percentage points). According to Gautier et al. (2012), 38 percent of religious priests surveyed in 2009 served as pastors or associate pastors, 21 percent served in educational apostolate, 17 percent in other non-parish ministry, 12 percent in administrative duties. The remaining religious priests served in other areas such as helping out in a parish, social service apostolate, as well as prison and hospital chaplaincy.

As part of developing the skills necessary to serve in their ministry, new religious priests could benefit from identifying and dealing with the needs of the population they are supposed to

serve. According to Gautier et al. (2012), 53 percent of priests surveyed in 2009 felt that unrealistic demands and expectations of lay people were a problem and 18 percent felt that this was a great problem. Furthermore, 28 percent found it problematic to deal with conflicts with parishioners or laity. According to Greeley, “[p]riests are surprisingly insensitive to their laity. (...) Very few priests seem to sense that the laity are massively dissatisfied with the quality of priestly ministry (which indeed they are)” (2005: 116). This might be a result of priests communicating with only a small portion of their constituents. According to Hoge (2002), 67 percent of active religious priests and 73 percent of active religious priests ordained in five years or less felt very satisfied with their relationship with the laity with whom they work.

The skills needed by new entrants are also a function of the characteristics of the populations they serve. According to D’Antonio et al. (2001), there is a trend of increasingly liberal beliefs among the Catholic population in regard to priesthood, ecclesiology, and liturgy. On the other hand, the young priests tend to show relatively conservative attitudes on those matters (Hoge and Wenger 2003). Hoge (2002) speculates that increasingly liberal attitudes on sexuality in the mainstream culture (in particular, in regard to cohabitation and pre-marital sex) and the consequent increasing deviation from Church’s moral teaching makes pastoral work increasingly difficult.

The skills needed by new entrants may include the ability to operate in multicultural environments. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that multiculturalism and race relations in general (as opposed to, specifically in regard to community life) were a very important issue to 49 percent of religious priests and 34 percent of diocesan priests. They also found that 24 percent of religious priests felt that having more opportunities for training in multicultural leadership would be very helpful to their ministry as a priest. According to Gautier et al. (2012), 66 percent of priest in 2009 felt that there was an important need for open discussion in the area of ministry in ethnic or multicultural parishes.

### **Ministry in Bureaucracies**

Some new entrants carry out their ministries within predominately secular bureaucracies (such as state school systems, hospital systems, prison systems, etc.). Those institutions are governed by secular authorities whose objective may not align with ministry objectives of the entrants. This can lead to conflict between the entrants and secular authority. For example, for prison chaplains the conflict may arise from the observation that they, at the same time, represent two professions: professional clergy and prison staff. “As professional clergy chaplains are supposed to preach and act in accord with the notion of universal brotherhood” (Ritzer and Walczak 1986: 212). As prison staff, they are supposed to maintain control and help contribute to punishing the prisoners. The two roles are not equal in that chaplains have to respond first to the demands of the prison supervisors before acting on the expectations towards professional clergy. This may lead to conflict, if the chaplains feel that the demands of the prison supervisors are forced upon chaplains at the expense of time that would be spent on clergy work which is closer to chaplains’ expectations, and which chaplains seem more likely to embrace (Kramarek 2016).

New entrants who serve in predominately secular bureaucracies may need support in developing skills in navigating between the competing sources of authority (bureaucracy-based, professionalization-based agency authority on one side and a religious authority based on the supernatural on the other side). New entrants in those institutions may need to develop strategies for

dealing with challenges specific to public service professionals directly working with clients (Lipsky 2010).

## Fatigue

There are indications that priests in general are at a higher risk of overworking and burn out than they were in the past. For example, according to Hoge (2002), the number of parishes remains on a similar level, but the parish size has growing by about 10 percent a decade since 1980's. On the other hand, the supply of priests is decreasing: ordinations stand at 30 to 40 percent of replacement level. Consequently, the number of faithful per priest is increasing: the priest-to-laity ratio doubled between 1950 and 2000.

Hoge (2002) observes that newly ordained priests in the early 1980's and early 1990's were primarily stressed out as a result of overwork and over responsibility. According to the same study, 24 percent of active religious priests ordained in five years or less felt that too much work was a great problem for them which was the most likely great problem to be reported out of 15 items included in the study. Hoge and Wenger (2003) found that 43 percent of religious priests considered the problems of overwork to be a very important issue. According to Gautier et al. (2012), 27 percent of priests surveyed in 2009 felt that shortage of priests was a great problem (the second most likely area to be considered a problem out of the 13; the first one was the way authority is exercised in the Church). Furthermore, 17 percent of priests felt that too much work was a great problem (the fourth most likely area to be considered a problem out of the 13).

Gautier et al. (2012), found that the problem of too much work has been increasing steadily from 8 percent in 1970 to 11 percent in 1985, 15 percent in 1993, 16 percent in 2001, and 17 percent in 2009. This shows the most consistent trend out of all problems examined in those five time periods. However, the same study found that young priests (Millennial generation) were less likely to consider the shortage of priests to be a problem than older cohorts. This may be potentially a result of Millennial generation being more optimistic, less fatigued by years of work, or by them holding positions of lower responsibility and relatively less stress than priests in older cohorts.

Work fatigue may be related to a number of problems including reduced work satisfaction, conflicts with other priests, and diminished overall well-being. Hoge (2002) found that 18 percent of active religious priests ordained in five years or less felt very satisfied with their personal time schedule which is the lowest reported satisfaction level out of ten items included in the study. Overwork may lead to the sense of resentment towards other priests, the sense that laypeople have unrealistic expectations (Gautier et al. 2012). Gautier et al. identified three areas of priests' concern related to workload: "that important things such as vision are lost amid more immediate demands; that [priests] do not have enough time to meet all of the needs of the people they serve; and, most frequently of all, that overwork takes a toll on their own well-being and sense of balance in life" (2012:56).

New religious priests (and potentially, religious sisters and brothers) may benefit from developing strategies in coping with increasing workloads. Hoge (2002) distinguished four types of satisfied active priests. One of those types was a priest coping well under the pressure while another one- a priest successful in overcoming difficulties. Froehle (1997) found that men religious in 1997 felt that the emphasis on greater personal responsibility and decision making deepened their vocations. Furthermore, this was the most important of seven items listed in the study. It was also

statistically significantly more important for men and women religious 35 years old and younger than for older generations.

## **EDUCATION PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS**

As described above, current literature helps identify and approximate specific needs of new entrants. Similarly, the literature offers some suggestions for how those needs might be best met. This section provides a list and a brief description for different formats and other considerations that might be helpful in designing an educational program serving the needs of new entrants.

### **Mentoring vs Classroom Programs**

Mentoring programs have long been recommended for new priests and appear to be successful. For example, O'Rourke (1978) recommends a program that matched a new priest with a mentor outside the parish. According to Hoge (2002), 20 percent of active religious priests in the first five years from ordination were involved in a mentoring program and 91 percent of them found the program helpful. According to Hoge (2006), 27 percent of the religious priests ordained for five to nine years had participated in a formal mentoring program after ordination. Furthermore, based on this research, one of the main recommendations for improvement in religious orders was to assign each newly ordained priest a mentor (recommended by 24 percent of priests).

### **In-person vs Online Programs**

Online programs may create less time demand on the often overworked new entrants. Those programs may also have the benefit of scaling easier, especially in a geographically dispersed population.

On the other side, online programs may present a higher barrier to entry for entrants who do not have the necessary know-how and/or equipment. According to Hoge (2006), 46 percent of the religious priests ordained for five to nine years were using Internet weekly or more often for preparing homilies in 2005. According to Kramarek and Gray (2016), 94 percent of women religious used Internet and 51 percent participated in Internet-based classes, webinars, or videoconferences.<sup>18</sup>

In-person educational program may have qualities difficult to replicate in the online program. This is particularly relevant if the role of education program is to go beyond teaching and into other areas such as facilitating the development of personal support networks.<sup>19</sup> Hoge (2006) found that one of the main recommendations among priests ordained for five to nine years for improvement in religious orders was to encourage more gatherings of newly ordained priests and more priest support groups in general (recommended by 12 percent of priests).

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<sup>18</sup> Kramarek and Gray (2016) survey was based on 6,833 valid responses from women religious in 561 religious institutes. The methodology did not allow to directly calculate the response rate. The survey was conducted in 2016. The sample included women religious residing in each of the 48 contiguous states as well as in the District of Columbia, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. The sample also included women religious currently residing abroad (assuming that they belong to the units based in the United States).

<sup>19</sup> According to Hoge (2002), resigned priests were significantly less likely to feel that their theologate prepared them well in terms of developing personal support networks than religious priests ordained in the last five years.

## Academic vs Applied Programs

While traditional, academic education should be familiar to most priests, most new priests also experienced and valued applied education. According to Hoge (2006), almost all religious priests ordained for five to nine years (97 percent) experienced field education during seminary, and half (52 percent) rated it as helpful to them. According to Foster et al. (2005), seminaries amalgamate classroom learning and experiential practice in successful effort to train well-educated practitioners.<sup>20</sup> According to Bleichner, a former seminary rector, “[t]he seminary must endeavor to train men not just as priests but as pastors almost from the start” (2004: 58).

When reflecting on priest’s need for more administration, leadership, and interpersonal skills, Monroe (2006) concluded that deep leadership development requires linking creative educational strategies and workplace transformations. Similarly, O’Keefe explored to what extent seminaries “can or should be the principal or primary agent of such preparation” (2006: 168).

## Programs for Clergy vs Mixed Gender Programs

In some opinions, programs including women students may be beneficial because the majority of parish work involves women and 80 percent of lay ecclesial ministers are women (DeLambo 2005). On the other hand, only 5 percent of priests reported difficulty in working with women (Gautier et al. 2012).

## Program Needs by Region

The program needs may differ by region based on the distribution of new entrants. According to Gautier et al. (2012), in 1950, the Catholic population was mostly concentrated in the Northeast (45 percent) and Midwest (30 percent), while South (12 percent) and West (12 percent) were underrepresented. In 2009, the distribution became more even with the biggest group of the Catholics still residing in Northeast (30 percent), followed by Midwest (22 percent), South (23 percent), and West (25 percent).

## Cost of Educational Program

When pricing an educational program aiming to serve new entrants, it is worth considering their current educational debt. Kramarek and Gautier (2017) found that 37 percent of religious ordinands and 26 percent of diocesan ordinands in 2017 had educational debt at the time they entered the institute/society/seminary. Among those who had educational debt, the average amount of debt was \$11,922 for religious ordinands and \$31,358 for diocesan ordinands at the beginning of the graduation year. Ordinands from religious institutes were 11 percentage points more likely to carry educational debt than diocesan ordinands, but they were also more highly educated.

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<sup>20</sup> Foster et al. (2005) conducted a survey of faculty, students, and alumnae for a cross section of 18 Jewish and Christian seminaries, conducted focus groups and interviews with faculty, students, and administrators, as well as engaged in participant observation.

## New Program vs Improvements to Current Programs

An alternative consideration to developing a new educational program might be to build on currently existing, successful ongoing formation efforts. According to Hoge (2006), the majority of religious priests ordained for five to nine years (75 percent) felt that the ongoing formation provided by their diocese or religious order is useful and relevant.

## Other Considerations

An educational program aiming to serve new entrants of different cultures could benefit from considering the best practices developed in religious communities for approaching cultural diversity. Gautier et al. (2014) found that among those men and women institutes that reported success in accommodating new members of different cultures the following practices were identified: requiring formation staff to be bilingual and open to many different cultures; making new members feel more at home by adapting the foods available, celebrating the cultures' saints and holidays, and adapting the furnishing; providing language tutoring and English as a second language to new members; enrolling new members in programs or workshops of enculturation; creating bilingual or multilingual celebrations/liturgies/devotions/holidays; rather than one process for enculturation, adapting the program to the needs of the individuals; intentionally not making distinctions among those of various cultures from others; requiring members to all be bilingual or encourage them to learn a second language; encouraging community discussions about culture and cultural issues among the members; having someone from a culture mentor a new member from the same culture.

Gautier et al. (2014) also found that in order to develop or encourage cultural awareness, 61 percent of men and women institutes encouraged members to learn another language, 67 percent used music from another culture in prayer, 59 percent displayed art from another culture, 53 percent contacted someone from another culture about a vocation to religious life, 48 percent sponsored or attended a mission trip to another culture, 48 percent shared cultural traditions in holiday celebrations, and 41 percent used a prayer practice from another culture.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

The research on priesthood (both diocesan and religious) spiked in 1970's following the Second Vatican Council and in early 2000's after the sexual abuse scandal. The studies tend to focus on pastors, diocesan priests and priests in general (often inconsistently distinguishing between diocesan and religious priests) or focus on the members of religious communities (often inconsistently distinguishing between men and women religious, brothers and priests). The research on religious sisters and religious brothers is relatively limited.

The body of research explored here generally appears to produce a fragmented picture of priesthood and religious life. The main value for future research could lie in helping to provide insight in three main areas. First, future research could confirm already identified trends for some sub-groups of entrants. Second, future research could provide more nuance on the needs and attitudes of new (as opposed to all), religious (as opposed to religious and diocesan) priests and

religious in various roles (e.g., educators, pastors). Future research would also benefit from employing regression analysis to isolate (and thus better assess) various attributes and attitudes of new entrants. Third, future research could explore various forms of treatment to address the identified needs.

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