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*Recent Vocations to Religious Life in Canada:
A Report for the
National Association of Vocation
and Formation Directors*

APPENDICES

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*Recent Vocations to Religious Life in Canada:
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National Association of Vocation Formation Directors*

Appendix I: Questionnaires with Response Frequencies



**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate and the
National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors**
Survey of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life



This survey is part of a study to assist NAVFD and CARA in understanding religious life and religious vocations in Canada today. Please respond for the unit (congregation, province, monastery) for which you are responsible. If the unit is international, respond for Canada only.

Type of Institute or Society

1. Gender of members: 31 1. Men 69 2. Women **NR=0**

2. Canonical Status: **NR=2**
2 1. Public association of the faithful
88 2. Religious institute
9 3. Society of apostolic life

3. Status of the institute or society:
14 1. Diocesan right 86 2. Pontifical right **NR=3**

Character or lifestyle of the institute or society (*check all that apply*):
82 4. Apostolic 0 7. Eremitic
23 5. Contemplative 12 8. Evangelical
8 6. Conventual 11 9. Monastic

Demographic Data

Please indicate the number in each category in your unit.

Avg. NR
54 47 10. Pre-candidates/aspirants (before entrance)
58 46 11. Candidates/postulants (before novitiate)
77 51 12. Novices
2 56 13. Temporary vows/commitment
51 92 14. Final/perpetual vows/commitment

Men's institutes and societies only:

15. Please indicate if your unit includes **NR=69**
15 1. Brothers 11 2. Priests 74 3. Brothers and priests
If a mixed clerical institute or society, please indicate the
Avg. NR *number in each category in your unit.*
71 16 16. Brothers in temporary vows/commitment
2 15 17. Priests/seminarians in temp. vows/commitment
15 22 18. Brothers in final/perpetual vows/commitment
32 23 19. Priests/seminarians in final/perpetual
vows/commitment

Please indicate the number of candidates/postulants, novices, and temporary professed in your unit who were born in each decade:

	Candidates/ Postulants		Novices		Temporary Professed				
	Avg.	NR	Avg.	NR	Avg.	NR			
Before 1940	20.	64	13	27.	47	12	34.	34	12
1940-1949	21.	19	16	28.	16	12	35.	11	14
1950-1959	22.	20	16	29.	14	13	36.	12	14
1960-1969	23.	12	16	30.	11	15	37.	8	17
1970-1979	24.	2	18	31.	1	15	38.	1	19
1980-1989	25.	1	19	32.	66	17	39.	1	21
1990 or later	26.	1	19	33.	57	13	40.	96	16

Please indicate the number of finally professed members in your unit who were born in each decade:

	Avg. NR		Avg. NR
5 39	41.	Before 1920	5 54
15 56	42.	1920-1929	3 39
26 65	43.	1930-1939	2 27
14 68	44.	1940-1949	38 14
5 65	45.	1950-1959	48 13
Avg. NR			
73 63	51.	<u>Average</u> age of finally professed members	
73 51	52.	<u>Median</u> age of finally professed members	

Please indicate the number of members in your unit by their place of birth. Please count each member only once.

	Candidates/postulants novices, temporary professed		Finally professed			
	Avg.	NR	Avg.	NR		
Canada	53.	5	31	60.	52	61
USA or Mexico	54.	2	15	61.	2	28
Africa	55.	5	14	62.	4	20
Central/South America	56.	3	10	63.	4	22
Asia or Oceania	57.	4	20	64.	5	28
Europe	58.	3	15	65.	4	35
Place of birth unknown	59.	2	8	66.	2	8

67. Does your unit have a **vocation director**?
47 1. Yes 53 2. No **NR=5**

68. *If yes to #67*, which best describes the **vocation director**? **NR=54**

- 96 1. A member of your unit
- 4 2. A member of another unit of your institute, society, or federation
- 0 3. A member of another institute or society
- 0 4. An associate
- 0 5. A lay person who is not a member or associate

69. Is the **vocation director** engaged in vocation ministry:

- 24 1. Full-time 76 2. Part-time **NR= 52**

70. Does your unit have a **vocation team**, i.e., more than one person directly responsible for vocation ministry?

- 31 1. Yes 69 2. No **NR= 22**

Avg. NR

- 4 27 71. Number of members of the **vocation team**

If your unit has a **vocation team**, please indicate if it includes the following (*check all that apply*):

- 27 72. Member(s)
- 1 73. Associate(s)
- 3 74. Other lay person(s) who is/are not member(s) or associate(s)

75. If your unit has a **vocation director and/or team**, what is the scope of his/her/their responsibilities?

- 86 1. Your unit only **NR=49**
- 10 2. More than one unit of your institute, society, or federation (e.g., two or more provinces)
- 3 3. More than one institute or society

Please indicate if your unit sponsors or co-sponsors the following discernment programs (*check all that apply*):

- 13 76. Discernment groups
- 24 77. Discernment retreats
- 26 78. "Come and See" experiences
- 9 79. Discernment house
- 20 80. Live-in experiences
- 16 81. Ministry/mission experiences

Please indicate if your unit has used any of the following for vocation animation in the last five years (*check all that apply*):

- 28 82. Social media 42 86. Print materials
- 22 83. Advertising 1 87. TV
- 52 84. Website 1 88. Radio
- 8 85. Other: _____

Please indicate if your unit sponsors or co-sponsors vocation animation or discernment programs specifically targeted toward these age groups (*check all that apply*):

- 6 89. Age under 15
- 15 90. Age 15 to 18
- 36 91. Age 19 to 25
- 29 92. Age 26 to 40
- 9 93. Age over 40

Please indicate if your unit requires the following for admission (*check all that apply*):

- 58 94. Medical assessment 32 97. Behavioral assessment
- 48 95. Psychological testing 40 98. Background check
- 58 96. References

Formation/Incorporation Ministry

Please indicate the number of individuals in each category in your unit. If your unit has been reconfigured since 2000, please include the numbers for the units that are now part of your unit.

Avg. NR

- 4 68 99. Total number who entered since Jan.1, 2000
- 3 53 100. Of the total in #99, number who remain

*Of those who entered and then **departed** since 2000, please indicate the number who departed at each stage:*

Avg. NR

- 2 34 101. During candidacy/postulancy
- 2 30 102. During novitiate
- 2 26 103. During temporary vows/commitment
- 2 21 104. After final/perpetual vows/commitment

Please indicate the typical number of years that are required for each period of initial formation or incorporation in your unit (if less than a year, please specify fraction of a year):

Avg. NR

- 1 43 105. Pre-candidacy/aspirancy (before entrance)
- 1 62 106. Candidacy/postulancy (before novitiate)
- 2 65 107. Novitiate
- 5 60 108. Temporary vows/commitment

Does the unit have the following requirements for admission to candidacy/postulancy?

Yes No NR

- 75 25 38 109. Minimum age (please specify): _____
- 63 37 37 110. Maximum age (please specify): _____
- 66 34 33 111. **Minimum education**
- 38 62 41 112. **Minimum work experience**
- 113. *If yes to #111 and/or #112, please describe:* _____

Do **candidates/postulants** in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from:

Yes No NR

- 50 50 41 114. Other units of your institute, society, federation
27 73 47 115. Other institutes or societies

Do **novices** in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from:

Yes No NR

- 61 39 40 116. Other units of your institute, society, federation
34 66 49 117. Other institutes or societies

Do those in **temporary vows/commitment** in your unit spend all or part of their formation with others from:

Yes No NR

- 70 30 41 118. Other units of your institute, society, federation
32 68 51 119. Other institutes or societies

Reconfiguration

Yes No NR

- 28 72 16 120. Has your unit reconfigured since 2000?
20 80 27 121. Is your unit in the process of reconfiguring?
122. *If yes to #120 and/or #121, please describe:* _____

Ministry

Active/apostolic institutes or societies only (#123-135):

Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:

Avg. NR

- 14 67 123. Active in a full-time ministry
17 62 124. Active in a part-time ministry
30 60 125. Retired from active ministry

Of members who are active (not retired from active ministry), number engaged in the following types of ministry:

Avg. NR

- 3 33 126. Ecological Justice Advocacy
5 59 127. Congregational Leadership
5 42 128. Education
3 35 129. Health care
9 63 130. Pastoral ministry (e.g., parish, campus)
4 44 131. Spiritual direction/retreat work
3 33 132. Social work/social service
3 31 133. Social justice/advocacy
15 45 134. Internal ministry
7 31 135. Number of members serving in a ministry sponsored or co-sponsored by your unit

Community Life and Prayer

Please indicate the number of active members (not retired from active ministry) of your unit who:

Avg. NR

- 8 56 136. Live singly
7 63 137. Live in communities of 2 or 3
9 54 138. Live in communities of 4 to 7
30 53 139. Live in communities of 8 or more

Please indicate which of the following characterize the regular communal prayer life of a majority of members of your unit (*check all that apply*):

- 83 140. Daily Eucharist
80 141. Liturgy of the Hours
35 142. Non-liturgical common prayer
27 143. Common meditation
53 144. Faith sharing

Contemplative institutes only (#145-147):

Please indicate the number of members of your unit who are:

Avg. NR

- 25 21 145. Able to participate fully in prayer life
9 10 146. Able to participate somewhat in prayer life
6 12 147. Unable to participate in prayer life

Religious Habit

Yes No NR

- 54 46 6 148. Do members of your unit wear a habit?
149. *If yes, please describe:* _____

150. *If yes to #148, what are the elements of the habit typically worn by the members? (check all that apply)*

- 41 1. Cross/Medallion/Devotional Scapular/Ring/
Secular Dress
14 2. Tunic
17 3. Monastic Scapular
22 4. Cowl with a veil / a hood
12 5. Other

151. *If yes to #148 is wearing the habit: NR=45*

- 55 1. Required in all or most circumstances
18 2. Required only at certain times (e.g., ministry, prayer)
23 3. Optional
4 4. Other: _____

152. *If wearing the habit is optional*, how many members wear it all or most of the time? **NR=64**

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 37 | 1. None | 6 | 3. Some (25-49%) |
| 18 | 2. A few (less than 25%) | 5 | 4. Many (50-74%) |
| | | 15 | 5. Most (75% or more) |

153. Please describe any special vocation animation or recruitment efforts your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

154. If your congregations are exploring any new and viable models/expressions of religious life, please describe them here. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

155. As part of this study for NAVFD, CARA will survey those who have entered religious institutes and societies of apostolic life in the last 17 years (entered in 2000 or later). Please list the names and contact information (email address, phone number, postal address, city, province, and postal code) for all those **currently in initial formation** (candidates/postulants, novices, and those in temporary vows/commitment) as well as those who **professed final/perpetual vows/commitment in your unit since 2000**. Please attach additional sheets if necessary.

156. Please provide the information below for the person completing this survey so we may contact you for clarifications about your responses:

1. Name and Title: _____
2. Institute/Society and Province: _____
3. Phone, FAX, and E-mail: _____



**Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate and the
National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors**
Survey of New Members



*This survey is part of a study to assist NAVFD and CARA in understanding religious life and religious vocations in Canada today. This survey is intended for members of religious institutes who entered religious life in 2000 or more recently. "Religious institute" refers to the congregation, province, or abbey/monastery to which you belong. **Your responses are very important.** Please respond by marking an "X" in the appropriate boxes. If you do not know how to respond to a question, or if it does not apply, please leave it blank.*

Please use the responses below for questions 1-15.

1=Not at All **3=Somewhat**
2=Only a Little **4=Very Much**

How much did the following attract you to religious life?

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
| 3 | 1 | 7 | 89 | 2 | 1. A sense of call to religious life |
| 0 | 6 | 19 | 75 | 3 | 2. A desire for prayer and spiritual growth |
| 3 | 9 | 32 | 56 | 3 | 3. A desire to be part of a community |
| 2 | 4 | 15 | 79 | 2 | 4. A desire to be of service |
| 3 | 12 | 31 | 54 | 4 | 5. A desire to be more committed to the Church |

How much did the following attract you to your religious institute?

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
| 5 | 11 | 34 | 50 | 1 | 6. The life and works of your founder/ess |
| 2 | 3 | 19 | 76 | 3 | 7. The mission of the institute |
| 1 | 4 | 16 | 79 | 1 | 8. The spirituality of the institute |
| 3 | 11 | 26 | 60 | 1 | 9. The prayer life of the institute |
| 5 | 9 | 26 | 60 | 1 | 10. The community life of the institute |
| 5 | 9 | 32 | 54 | 8 | 11. The ministries of the institute |
| 8 | 20 | 29 | 42 | 3 | 12. The institute's relationship to the Church |
| 6 | 12 | 26 | 56 | 4 | 13. The example of members of the institute |
| 43 | 17 | 11 | 29 | 6 | 14. A personal invitation by a member |
| 11 | 12 | 24 | 53 | 3 | 15. Welcome and encouragement by members |

How did you first become acquainted with your religious institute? Check all that apply. NR=0

- | | | |
|----|-----|--|
| 21 | 16. | In an institution where members served, e.g., school |
| 15 | 17. | Through working with a member of the institute |
| 3 | 18. | Through a relative in the institute |
| 12 | 19. | Through a friend in the institute |
| 33 | 20. | Through the recommendation of a friend or advisor |
| 4 | 21. | Through a vocation fair |
| 3 | 22. | Through a vocation match or placement service |
| 4 | 23. | Through an event sponsored by the institute |
| 5 | 24. | Through a media story about the institute or member |
| 13 | 25. | Through print or online promotional materials |
| 38 | 26. | Other: _____ |

Did you participate in any of the following before you entered your religious institute? Check all that apply.

- | | | |
|----|-----|---|
| 17 | 27. | Diocesan vocation programs |
| 72 | 28. | Spiritual direction |
| 52 | 29. | Discernment retreat |
| 65 | 30. | "Come and See" experience |
| 50 | 31. | Live in experience with the institute |
| 24 | 32. | Ministry or mission experience with the institute |
| 12 | 33. | Regular meeting with a discernment group |
| 31 | 34. | Regular meeting with a vocation director |
| 40 | 35. | Regular meeting with a member(s) of the institute |
| 38 | 36. | Regular visits to communities |

Please use the responses below for questions 37-52.

1=Not at All **3=Somewhat**
2=Only a Little **4=Very Much**

How helpful were the following when you were discerning your call to religious life?

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
| 53 | 23 | 16 | 7 | 16 | 37. General Catholic or diocesan websites |
| 43 | 23 | 18 | 16 | 15 | 38. Vocation discernment websites |
| 27 | 22 | 22 | 29 | 12 | 39. Websites of religious institutes |
| 56 | 24 | 16 | 4 | 17 | 40. Newspaper or magazine articles |
| 41 | 23 | 19 | 17 | 14 | 41. Print or online promotional materials, e.g., brochures, posters, ads |
| 50 | 24 | 16 | 10 | 22 | 42. CDs, DVDs, or videos |
| 73 | 14 | 9 | 5 | 22 | 43. Diocesan vocation programs |
| 9 | 5 | 17 | 68 | 10 | 44. Spiritual direction |
| 21 | 3 | 22 | 54 | 10 | 45. Discernment retreat |
| 17 | 5 | 11 | 67 | 9 | 46. "Come and See" experience |
| 28 | 4 | 16 | 52 | 17 | 47. Live in experiences |
| 31 | 18 | 16 | 35 | 22 | 48. Ministry or mission experience |
| 58 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 28 | 49. Meeting with a discernment group |
| 25 | 7 | 19 | 49 | 14 | 50. Meeting with a vocation director |
| 8 | 5 | 28 | 59 | 14 | 51. Meeting with a member(s) of the institute |
| 14 | 13 | 19 | 55 | 7 | 52. Visits to communities |

Please use the responses below for questions 53-125.

1=Not at All

3=Somewhat

2=Only a Little

4=Very Much

How much did these influence your decision to enter your religious institute?

1	2	3	4	NR	
53	18	20	9	12	53. The size of the institute
28	25	28	19	9	54. Its geographic location(s)
46	13	18	23	19	55. Its internationality, if applicable
4	15	19	62	3	56. Prayer life or prayer styles in the institute
5	16	21	58	7	57. Community life in the institute
8	16	31	53	14	58. The lifestyle of members
61	23	13	3	14	59. The racial/ethnic background of members
46	29	20	4	13	60. The ages of members
14	11	24	51	11	61. The types of ministry of its members
11	23	48	37	7	62. Its practice regarding a religious habit
1	4	5	90	3	63. Institute's charism

How much encouragement did you receive from the following when you first considered entering your religious institute?

1	2	3	4	NR	
5	7	31	56	6	64. Members of your institute
16	10	21	52	16	65. Vocation director/team
10	4	22	65	9	66. Spiritual director, if applicable
17	19	36	28	21	67. Other men and women religious
28	14	23	35	19	68. Diocesan priests
27	12	32	29	11	69. Your parents, if applicable
26	12	37	26	8	70. Your siblings, if applicable
29	22	34	14	12	71. Other family members
26	12	35	27	17	72. People in your parish
36	18	31	14	19	73. People in your school or workplace
38	11	29	22	29	74. Friends within the institute
17	17	41	26	12	75. Friends outside the institute

How much encouragement do you currently receive from the following in your life and ministry as a member of your religious institute?

1	2	3	4	NR	
0	3	10	87	2	76. Members of your institute
32	14	15	38	36	77. Members of your federation
18	7	36	39	17	78. Members of other institutes
2	3	20	75	5	79. The leadership of your institute
10	6	14	70	18	80. Novice/formation director/team
5	0	17	78	14	81. Spiritual director, if applicable
5	7	43	45	14	82. Other men and women religious
23	9	27	41	16	83. Diocesan priests
15	7	21	57	20	84. Your parents, if applicable
11	10	27	53	9	85. Your siblings, if applicable
14	14	33	39	8	86. Other family members

1 2 3 4 NR

19	17	13	51	18	87. People in your parish
33	4	26	37	28	88. People in your school or workplace
12	5	21	63	16	89. People <u>with</u> whom you minister
10	8	22	60	15	90. People <u>to</u> whom you minister
6	5	28	62	15	91. Friends within the institute
9	11	31	49	14	92. Friends outside the institute

How important to you are these types of prayer?

1	2	3	4	NR	
1	3	15	81	1	93. Daily Eucharist
5	11	14	70	2	94. Liturgy of the Hours
6	20	30	44	5	95. Non-liturgical common prayer
6	21	18	54	4	96. Common meditation
0	0	10	90	3	97. Personal prayer/meditation
8	18	19	55	3	98. Eucharistic Adoration
12	16	24	47	5	99. Other devotional prayer, e.g., rosary
6	5	32	57	2	100. Faith sharing

How important to you are these aspects of community life?

1	2	3	4	NR	
3	1	16	80	2	101. Living with other members
1	1	14	84	1	102. Praying with other members
3	8	23	66	3	103. Working with other members
1	5	14	80	2	104. Sharing meals together
0	7	25	68	2	105. Socializing/sharing leisure time together

How much do you prefer living in these settings?

1	2	3	4	NR	
66	13	11	10	12	106. Singly
30	30	24	17	14	107. In a small community of two or three
12	8	24	56	12	108. In a medium-sized community of 4 to 7
12	14	29	45	9	109. In a large community of 8 or more
0	4	30	66	6	110. With members of different ages
1	7	33	59	7	111. With members of different cultures
8	16	30	46	15	112. With members in different ministries
10	16	25	49	10	113. With only members of your institute
8	14	32	45	30	114. With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces
26	35	26	14	24	115. With members of other institutes
44	21	23	13	24	116. With associates

How much do you prefer ministry in these settings?

1	2	3	4	NR	
29	20	31	20	12	117. Individual ministry
2	6	23	68	8	118. With other members of your institute
5	15	36	44	24	119. With members of other units of your institute, e.g., other provinces
8	21	41	29	17	120. With members of other institutes
7	11	34	48	17	121. In a ministry sponsored by your institute
20	19	29	31	19	122. In a parish or diocesan ministry
11	16	46	27	21	123. With an organization that is Catholic but not sponsored by your institute
17	32	34	17	20	124. With an organization that is religious but is not Catholic
31	31	24	14	22	125. With an organization that is not religious

Please use the responses below for questions 126-145.

1=Poor

3=Good

2=Fair

4=Excellent

How would you rate the following in your religious institute?

- | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NR | |
|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 6 | 18 | 40 | 36 | 5 | 126. Efforts to promote vocations |
| 11 | 12 | 42 | 35 | 13 | 127. Efforts to promote ecological justice |
| 3 | 9 | 38 | 49 | 5 | 128. Welcome and support of newer members |
| 3 | 9 | 43 | 44 | 5 | 129. Formation/incorporation programs |
| 0 | 8 | 36 | 56 | 4 | 130. Opportunities for ongoing formation |
| 3 | 7 | 26 | 64 | 10 | 131. Educational opportunities |
| 6 | 16 | 43 | 36 | 13 | 132. Preparation for ministry |
| 1 | 8 | 25 | 66 | 3 | 133. Opportunities for spiritual growth |
| 0 | 10 | 22 | 68 | 3 | 134. Opportunities for personal growth |
| 4 | 11 | 21 | 64 | 3 | 135. Sense of identity as religious |
| 3 | 14 | 19 | 63 | 4 | 136. Sense of identity as institute members |
| 4 | 7 | 32 | 57 | 3 | 137. Relationship to the Church and its teachings |
| 0 | 10 | 31 | 59 | 3 | 138. Faithfulness to prayer and spiritual growth |
| 1 | 2 | 29 | 68 | 8 | 139. Focus on mission |
| 1 | 2 | 29 | 68 | 2 | 140. Commitment to ministry |
| 2 | 6 | 15 | 77 | 4 | 141. Response to the needs of our time |
| 5 | 13 | 37 | 45 | 9 | 142. Efforts to promote social justice |
| 2 | 16 | 39 | 43 | 2 | 143. Quality of community life |
| 2 | 17 | 36 | 45 | 4 | 144. Communal prayer experiences |
| 0 | 18 | 49 | 33 | 5 | 145. Relationships with one another |

Yes No NR

- 61 39 7 146. Do members of your institute wear a habit?
147. *If yes to #146, is wearing the habit* NR=37
- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 67 | 1. | Required in all or most circumstances |
| 9 | 2. | Required only at certain times, e.g., ministry, prayer |
| 16 | 3. | Optional |
| 8 | 4. | Other: _____ |

148. *If yes to #146, and wearing the habit is optional, how frequently do you wear it?* NR=71

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 17 | 1. | Never |
| 0 | 2. | Once in a while |
| 23 | 3. | Only at certain times, e.g., ministry, prayer |
| 60 | 4. | In all or most circumstances |

149. *If you wear the habit, what does it consist of?*

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 40 | 1. | Cross / Medallion / Devotional Scapular |
| 40 | 2. | Tunic |
| 41 | 3. | Monastic Scapular |
| 33 | 4. | Cowl with a veil / a hood |
| 17 | 5. | Other |

150. *If you wear the habit, please describe what role it plays in your identity as a woman/man religious.*

Yes No

NR=4

- 92 8 151. Were you employed before you entered?
152. *If yes to #151, were you employed* NR=20
- | | | | | | |
|----|----|-----------|----|----|-----------|
| 74 | 1. | Full-time | 26 | 2. | Part-time |
|----|----|-----------|----|----|-----------|
- 74 26 153. Were you engaged in ministry before you entered? NR=7
154. *If yes to #153, were you engaged in ministry* NR=31
- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|-----------|---|----|-----------|----|----|-----------|
| 14 | 1. | Full-time | 6 | 2. | Part-time | 50 | 3. | Volunteer |
|----|----|-----------|---|----|-----------|----|----|-----------|

Were you involved in any of the following before you entered? *Check all that apply.*

- | | | |
|----|------|---|
| 28 | 155. | Social and ecological justice |
| 37 | 156. | Youth ministry or group |
| 56 | 157. | Young adult ministry or group |
| 22 | 158. | Campus ministry or group |
| 48 | 159. | Liturgical ministry, e.g., lector, extraordinary minister |
| 32 | 160. | Music ministry, cantor, choir |
| 37 | 161. | Faith formation, catechetical ministry, RCIA |
| 56 | 162. | Other volunteer work in a parish or other setting |
| 38 | 163. | Retreats |
| 35 | 164. | World Youth Day |
| 29 | 165. | Faith-sharing group |
| 8 | 166. | Religious institute volunteer program, e.g., Jesuit Volunteer Corps |

167. What is your current status in your religious institute?

- | | | | |
|----|----|---------------------------------|------|
| 3 | 1. | Candidate/postulant | NR=3 |
| 23 | 2. | Novice | |
| 26 | 3. | Temporary vows/commitment | |
| 47 | 4. | Final/perpetual vows/commitment | |

168. Are you: 31 1. Male 69 2. Female NR=3

169. If male, are you (or do you expect to be) a NR=72

- | | | | | | |
|----|----|---------|----|----|--------|
| 28 | 1. | Brother | 72 | 2. | Priest |
|----|----|---------|----|----|--------|

170. Where were you born? NR=4

- | | | |
|----|----|--------------------------|
| 62 | 1. | Canada |
| 4 | 2. | USA or Mexico |
| 2 | 3. | Africa |
| 1 | 4. | Central or South America |
| 26 | 5. | Asia or Oceania |
| 5 | 6. | Europe |
| 0 | 7. | Place of birth unknown |

If you were not born in Canada, then did you enter your religious institute before or after moving to Canada?

10 171. Entered before moving to Canada

29 172. Entered after moving to Canada

173. If you were not born in Canada, what is your country of birth: _____

174. What is your native language? Please list only one.

Please provide the following information:

- AVG=1973 175. Year you were born
- AVG=2009 176. Year you entered your religious institute
- AVG=2010 177. Year you made your first profession
- AVG=2016 178. Year you professed/expect to profess final vows/perpetual commitment
- AVG=2018 179. Year you were ordained/expect to be ordained to the priesthood
- AVG= 22 180. Age you first considered religious life

Yes No NR

- 18 82 1 181. Did you enter another religious institute before this one?
- 10 3 182. *If yes*, number of years in that institute
- 94 6 4 183. Were you raised Catholic?
- 27 95 184. If you became Catholic as an adult, age you entered the Catholic Church
- 10 90 2 185. Were you ever married?
- 5 95 2 186. Do you have any children?
- 2 98 2 187. Were you ever home-schooled?
- 7 98 188. *If yes*, number of years home-schooled

Did you attend any of the following before you entered?

Check all that apply.

- 35 189. Parish-based religious education/CCD/RCIA
- 55 190. Catholic elementary
- 55 191. Catholic high school
- 27 192. Catholic college or university
- 17 193. Ministry formation program
- 11 194. Other: _____

What was the highest level of education you completed before you entered your religious institute (#195? If you continued your education after you entered, what is the highest level of education you completed (#196)?

#195 #196 195 NR=8 196 NR=42

- 3 8 1. No certificate or diploma
- 14 0 2. Secondary School diploma or equivalency certificate
- 2 10 3. Registered Apprenticeship, Trade certificate or other Trades diploma
- 14 12 4. Community/Technical College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma
- 39 17 5. University undergraduate degree
- 28 53 6. University graduate degree.

197. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group?

198. What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?

199. What most attracted you to your religious institute?

200. What do you find most challenging about religious life?

Appendix II: Responses to Open-ended Questions

Survey of Institutes, Question 153. Please describe any special vocation animation or recruitment efforts your religious institute or society of apostolic life has undertaken in recent years.

“Come and See” weekends. Invitation for high school students to visit our convents. Facebook page, webpage. Vocation talks in parishes. Theology on Tap. Advertising on buses. Full-time vocation promotion person who visited schools, elementary and high school. Advertising materials.

“Come and See”; Formation Blog; Collaboration with other congregations; Talks, presentations, accompaniment

1) Hospitality for university students in our two large houses in Montreal and Ottawa. The aim is to increase the visibility of our type of religious life and apostolic life with people who may question the meaning to be given to their lives. (2) Use of social media to promote significant religious events, important figures in the life of the Catholic Church and other churches, innovative apostolic projects (e.g. work for refugees and migrants). Aim: to reach 20-40 year olds in particular.

1) Participating in “Martha and Mary Gatherings” when possible; 2) Making “Come and See” time available for interested women (i.e., on weekends and/or during the week, and usually on a one-at-a-time basis); 3) Designing, launching, and maintaining our website, “www.pbsisters.on.ca”

A Year for God: 2005-2008. Project in collaboration with the Diocese of Québec in preparation for the Eucharistic Congress 2018. Reception of young girls who wish to experience life in religious communities. A young girl entered a religious community and persevered there. Youth Commission: a group of religious and lay people offering, since 2017, a journey and reflection to 15 years and older, following the General Chapter of 2015. Offered two camps per year until 2014 at various locations of the Province of Quebec. Objective: To help young people find meaning in their lives and nourishment in their spiritual thirst.

Advent, Lent retreats for young adults in parishes; Weekend “Come & See” program; Speaking in high schools and any other venue provided; Celebration of “titulare feast” in all ministry sites.

All our vocation ministry in recent years has been in the United States-Canada Province. The Vocation Team I described covers both countries. Most of the actual events have happened in the USA, as Canada had no formal full-time vocation director for some years, from July 2006 until September 2016. As vocation ministry director, I live in the USA, though I am Canadian. Our members in initial formation all live in the USA.

Animation two weekends per year: 1) Knowledge of oneself and life; 2) Christian life and religious life.

Arrange power point presentation of our life with active sister’s congregation for vocation day in our diocese.

Attached sheets: Meeting with young people. Testimonies from a group of Sisters to a group of youth. Participation in diocesan meetings on pastoral vocation. Participation in organized sessions for people involved in vocational pastoral care. Participation in the homily on the world day of

prayer for vocations. Accompaniment [educational support] of a young person who is thinking about religious life. Attempt to bring together a group of young people to share the Word. Testimonies of religious life / missionary testimony to students, and parish. Testimony of religious life available on the web (Diocese of Montreal) and Radio Ville-Marie. Organization of an afternoon “Doors Open,” a look at the consecrated life, presentation of the Congregation, the Founders, tour guide of the house, followed by three testimonies (calling, mission and community life).

Attend PBVM International Formation Conference for PBVM, in 2016; Attended a gathering of PBVM North America Conference for young religious 2017; Zooming

Avant l'an 2000, participation à l'animation de retraites ignaciennes, accompagnement de retraites de 30 jours.

Because of the Congregational restructuring we have been asked not to have any recruitment in the last few years. We, therefore refer interested individuals to our units in the States.

Brochure

Busy Student Retreats; Companions on the Journey - Meet one weekend and seven monthly Sundays - Underlying theme is discernment

Des interpellations personnelles; Distribution de feuillets en des endroits publics, notamment dans des endroits fréquentés par des jeunes adultes.

Discernment groups. “Come, Taste & See.” Live-in experiences. Use of social media – vocation ads.

Distribution de matériel de promotion (website); Soutient Alaregion Haitiet Vietnam Pout Etutes et vie des Novices et Profes; Recrutement Pour membres dautres Provinces Religieuses de La Congregation; Participation a des evenements promotion vocation.

Putting a vocation ad in The Canadian Register. Individual contacts.

Done on congregational level.

For a few years, our Institute had a vocational committee that brought together high school and CEGEP students for a time of reflection and sharing between young men and women religious. Once these young people left the community for college or work it was difficult to recruit other young people and the committee dissolved. The congregation always takes care of the vocational culture. At the daily community prayer of vespers a prayer is included in response to the Lord's call to ask the Master to send workers to his harvest. Also, the Institute is occasionally involved with the diocesan's vocation committee.

Four of our confreres are pastors in Canada and two are pastors in Tanzania. All are trying to do vocation animation through missionary preaching in their dioceses.

From their occupations, the brothers have contact with young people or groups of young people. Among these groups of young people, there are young people who show a certain interest in our life

as religious brothers. The person responsible for vocations [head of vocations] is then informed and, with the colleagues who are in contact with the young people interested in our way of life, follows up.

Have named some missions as House of Welcome throughout the world. Our mission in Edmonton Alberta is one of them.

In Peru, together with another Congregation of Sisters of Mercy, we had printed materials related to our charism. On 01-02 May 2015, the group called “Marriages for Mary” hosted a Vocation Discernment Retreat in St. John's, NL. Representatives from religious congregations of women and man, and the vocations of marriage and single life made presentations. The Congregation was represented by Sisters Eileen Penney and Maureen O'Keefe who spoke of the Mercy Story past and present, and by Associate, Ms. Catherine Ryan, who explained the nature and purpose of the Associate Relationship.

In recent years, we have abandoned special recruitment efforts, except in Madagascar.

In the last ten years, little has been done in Quebec. Vocations come from Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Just joined the Archdiocesan-organized vocation fair. Talks with young girls about vocation - “girls night out with the sisters”- though parish activity. We are a new community here in Canada. Our formation house is in the Philippines, in case somebody wants to join us, she will be sent to the Philippines for her formation.

La monastère a des enmitages pour l'accueil des retraitants. Des jeunes y viennent en retraite. Por ailleurs, une maïdre est disponible pour l'accueil des groupes de jeunes châticus. Des moniales accompagnent ces jeunes selou leurdemande.

Maintain a website, host university retreat days, attend school vocation days, host sacramental preparation groups, provide prayer days, provide hermitage retreat space, limited spiritual direction for those discerning

Many young women find us online thru our website and social media (many of our Sisters are very active on social media.) We also widely advertise any vocation discernment events/retreats we're having. Young women also meet us when we are out doing ministry and approach us or we invite them to discern with us.

Missionary Sisters of Christ the King for Polonia. Our Congregation arose from the spiritual and cultural needs of Polish Immigrants and was founded in 1959 by Father Ignacy Posadzy, a priest of the Society of Christ in Poland. The call of every Missionary is to boundlessly love God's meter among the Polish Immigrants and a longing to make a sacrifice of oneself with a joyful sacrifice of one's strength, comfort and life for the benefit of Polish Immigrants. In a foreign country we want to strengthen each other's faith and build a piece of our beloved fatherland through spreading the knowledge of the Eucharist, teaching religion and cultivating Polish culture, tradition and language. We conduct choruses, dancing teams, children and youth theatres, scouts and other groups in parishes. We embrace immigrants' families, the elderly, sick and lonely people with love and care. We also serve in parish offices and kitchens. We work in eleven places in Poland and in many places

outside our borders in England, Belarus, Greece, Belgium, Australia, Brazil, Germany, Canada and USA. In Canada, we live and work in Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Ontario and Vancouver, BC. Our Convent House in Canada is located in Mississauga, ON.

Monastic retreats for young people (3-4 days for God, weekend at the monastery, retreat of discernment) with in the center the Word of God (lectio divina), the sharing of our monastic life (work, liturgy, personal prayer, community life) with teachings, times of sharing, adoration.

New website coming on line July 2017

No special animation other than inviting young students for “Come and See” once a month and all those who are interested who find out about us on our Facebook or website.

Notre animation vocationelle n'existe presque pas. ca fais 14 ans q'on na pas eu une vocation. Nous sommes pres a mourir.

Nous avons 5 communautes qui vivent des projets avec les jeunes. Rencontre mensuelle ou animations speciales pour un partage de foi.

Nous avons tenu pendant quelques années des maisons d'accueil d'étudiants à Montréal et à Joliette. L'objectif poursuivi n'était pas spécifiquement le recrutement. Un responsable de la pastorale des vocations a pris l'habitude d'organiser une tournée des deux écoles secondaires dont notre congrégation a la charge. Des interpellations par la bande mais jamais explicite. Nous croyons davantage au témoignage, à l'apprivoisement qu'au prosélytisme vocationnel en contexte canadien (québécois surtout).

Occasional 1-day discernment retreat conducted by a priest. Annual Mass in honour of St. Therese organized by young Catholic adults.

Offer the opportunity of internship [learning experience, residence program] when there is an interest. Welcome for stays of contemplation and discernment.

Ongoing vocational displays in each of our parishes (and updated regularly). Social media connections. Building bridges with youth organizations such as CCO. Collaborating with other religious institutes in vocational outreach. Setting up systems of “accompaniment” (e.g., for spiritual direction, vocational discernment). Pushing the confreres to be “local vocation directors.”

Our community promotes exchanges with young people, with the aim of accompanying them in their lives and not just for recruitment purposes. A nun works full time in the animation of youth groups at Village des Sources – Acadie. A nun animates meetings of young people in a house of fraternity (Fraternité S.E.V.E.). At least three sisters teach catechesis in a parish or school. Two nuns accompany parish choirs of young people. A nun occasionally accompanies young people on a pilgrimage to Taizé, France. The congregation provides some financial support to an internationally renowned youth choir (founded by one of our nuns, but now under lay leadership).

Our recruitment is made by word of mouth. A one week placement to start with, and if there is interest, a discernment is done, see attached sheets.

Parish to Parish visitations and facilitating youth prayer groups and recollections to graduating students.

Participate in Archdiocesan Vocation Fair. Offer one or two discernment retreats per year.

Participation in PRI (intercommunity religious presence). Participation in the formation subcommittee of the committee of contemplatives of the CRC website.

Participation in vocation kiosks under certain circumstances. Distribution of institution publications. Welcome groups of young people.

Posting on social media, keeping website current, newspaper advertising, a member of NAVFD, and vocation awareness days at parishes, brochures, personal interaction.

Prayer for vocations AND social media, websites AND involvement in sharing or religious teaching meetings AND training session.

Prayer for vocations. Welcoming young people on various occasions. Home groups of young people interested in knowing religious life more closely.

Presence often of vocation director in each of our large houses to talk about vocation work; leading of pilgrimages for 18–35 year olds in Toronto and London; invitations for sharing community prayer for women considering entering; teaching a university course on ecology which attracts younger people; Sister working in a University offering retreat evenings

Retreat days for young adults; summer live-in experience; participation in parish/diocesan activities for youth and young adults.

Retreats of silence for brothers and lay people.

Search-ins; Individual Approach/Interview [attached was another sheet with a list of Prayers of the Faithful]

Shadowing program. Young men can come in to spend a full day with the community and with the vocation director to see how a day of a missionary oblate looks like.

Since 2012, two teams of young sisters (7) have come from Poland, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sri Lanka. They work in the parishes for the evangelization of young people. A house is open to accommodate faith-sharing groups of discernment and prayer. Immigrant communities respond to invitations relatively well, inhabitants of Quebec: not at all.

Since several years and due to the aging factor we have had a natural decline in requests and have not accepted vocations. However requests do come in through the internet and one person on the congregational team is designated as Responsible for Vocations. The task is to help those questioning and discerning to connect with congrégations similar to ours in their charism and apostolate and more compatible with age factors in this day and age. We are willing to meet

candidates and help discern where they can go. We still participate in local and national events that relate to vocation ministry in order to be in touch with what is going on.

Sisters Holy Name of Jesus general home is in Poland and all vacation.

Sisters working in Campus Ministry, Spiritual Guidance and Challenge Retreats. We sponsor young people to attend Catholics on Call in Chicago, they return and present some of their experiences to our Sisters. We participate in service learning programs with our street ministry. The diocese of Calgary has a family/youth gathering yearly called One Rock, we have a booth at the vocation display and are present to the participants. We host youth/young adult gatherings whenever we can at our Retreat centers.

Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius.

Strengthen recruitment in Africa.

The activities for recruitment of new members are: "Come and See" retreat about three times a year. Twenty-four hours retreat: young women between the ages of 16-35 come to experience the life of the Sisters on a given weekend. Those who are seriously discerning with our community come for one week long retreat where they learn more about religious life as it is lived in the community of the Sisters of Our Lady Immaculate: spend time with the Sisters and observe their way of life, join us in our communal celebration of the Liturgy of the hours, Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, Daily Adoration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, recitation of the fifteen decades of Rosary of the Blessed Virgin and experience our apostolic life of teaching the Faith and Caring for the Elderly. They also experience our community recreation and other activities. If they are really seriously discerning they may come for more weeks of visits. We also keep contacts with them via email and E-News Letters. Annual Junior Retreat for young women from 11-15 years and Annual Ignite Retreat for young women between the ages of 15-23. On their visits we give them conferences and encourage them to go to Confession, and receive Spiritual Direction.

The community is in decline. That is to say, few newcomers present themselves.

The Roman Congregation of St. Dominic is a small international congregation. The Canadian Vicariate has only eight sisters, seven of whom are removed from Carrefour Providence. In Canada we have given up looking for vocations because of our advanced age. But at the level of the generalate, there is a vocational committee and a committee of initial and permanent formation.

The vocation animator is part of the diocesan vocation team that goes to the Catholic secondary schools on vocation tours. This is a project that allows the Catholic students to learn more about the various vocations in the church.

The Vocation Team has participated in Vocation Days in the Secondary Schools and held Vocation Fairs in parishes. The Congregation held an Open House of the Motherhouse.

The vocational animation was done by the hosting [welcome, reception] of potential candidates for religious life and by discernment retreats for individuals or small groups, in conjunction with those responsible for the vocation training of other congregations.

Through our life of daily prayer for vocations, by leaflets: description of our Charism, our mission, our works, the life of our Founders, published in two volumes, our spirituality. We have a museum, which joins many visitors, contact with the employees who share the philosophy of the Congregation.

Two Archdiocesan Vocations Fairs in the past two years

Two Sisters in the Dominican Republic meet with young women on a semi-regular basis to encourage vocation in response to Baptismal call, not just religious life. In Canada, we made the decision to refer inquiries to other congregations with younger members as we are very much in the stages of completion. In the past thirty years, several women from mid-twenties to mid-forties spent time with us, but all left for a variety of reasons... lack of religious habit, i.e. veil and long dress or because they were thirty years or more younger than most of the Community.

Until 2010, our monastery in Berthierville welcomed to its house (plus or minus 15 bedrooms) group of young people (of all levels) and of adults (men and women) pour stays of solitude, silence, and imitation to prayer or to come across [encounter, experience] monastic life. The reduction of our noble years has forced us to move to Shawinigan in 2012. We continue to welcome on a lesser scale.

Upgraded vocation website. Hearts on Fire retreats (for young adults). Re-branded (Vocations/Development/Communications/Province Logo/Name)

Virtual Brother: Internet Faith-Tracking Network and Accompanying Service. www.saintgabriel.ca has not yielded the expected results.

Vocation discernment retreats AND hiking/snowshoeing (mission: vocational discernment).

Vocational appeals by members working in the parishes, ads on our website, flyers.

We are close to young university students via our “Pastoral Centre for young University Students”, we offer testimonies on vocational encounters organized by the diocese and we do the same things in schools on occasion. A member of the Institute is a member of the group CAMINO who offer young people a process of vocational discernment who are leaving Montreal.

We are reorganizing vocations ministry. Our province has 180 sisters over 80 years old. Another 53 are serving sick sisters in internal service.

We began Search Engine Marketing about two years ago.

We celebrate all of our feasts/ceremonies of establishment, religious anniversaries, & (etc.) in the parish.

We created two years ago a vocation committee with lay people, we participate in vocational fairs. We are working more closely with our parish youth groups.

We give out brochures to some parishes. Our program is on the internet.

We have found that young people are busy, so we need to join them where they already are instead of creating new events for them to attend. We are making efforts to be present at large gatherings of young adults hosted by various organizations such as CCO and Couples for Christ.

We have never done “recruitment.” Since 1986, we have a Discernment House for women. We journey with them so as to help them discover their Baptismal Call. Are they called to marriage, single life or religious life?? We have married many, a few have gone to religious life. We have journeyed with over 500 young women who have lived with us. Many have a good marriage because of the experience, some have gone to other communities and some have come to us. The experience has been very positive. We have created many good relationships, we have many good friends. We also work with young adult men who attend our Discernment Weekends. The mixture is good, the Discernment Weekends are much better with men and women.

We have not accepted a vocation in our community for several years now. But the other provinces of the Institute are active.

We have taken part in the diocesan youth gatherings and made our congregation known by taking up a booth. Also we spoke to groups in our parishes, as well as university. We also left material on our congregation/charism and on our founders in the churches.

We invited young women to a gathering about our congregation.

We join our efforts with those of the diocese in which most of us live by participating in vocation days; speaking in schools and parishes and hosting student visitors at our home, Villa Angela.

We partner with other groups doing Catholic outreach CCO NET OLSOWA

We speak in various parishes, high school presentations, and youth retreats. Spiritual direction; help case of discernment with the TAVADA group in Toronto. We are a member of the TAVADA group and we gather and share resources and ideas and plan for vocation presentations. We provide a centre for young women and they invite other young women to come and visit and get to know us.

Website: charisma, services, history AND Documents: history of the congregation; Missionary implications in other countries

Weekend for young people with a view to [in order to] a vocational discernment in our monastic hostelry [guest house].

Welcome groups of young people at the monastery.

Welcome, listen, lead to other communities, especially contemplative.

Witness Talks. Vocation Display during Vocation Fairs in schools, Church, youth gatherings. High School Visits. Attendance to Youth/Vocation Conferences. Discernment Retreats, “Come and See.” Conversation and follow -up of candidates by skype, phone. Website and Facebook page. Prayer Session with young adults. Attendance to World Youth days with a good delegation of young adults.

8-month Discernment Program called “Duc in Altum.” Personal Contact with youth groups and young adults. Accompaniment Session – monthly.

Survey of Institutes, Question 154. If your congregations are exploring any new and viable models/expressions of religious life, please describe them here.

As for our 2016 General Chapter mandate, we are in the process of restructuring that will make our units have vitality and viability.

Communities of welcome and of accompaniment.

Developing associate formation, program for those interested in our spirituality and charism.

Family Catechesis. Youth Ministry.

In Madagascar only.

In research stage.

Individual invitations of accompaniment [support] are always offered: there are some very nice people who are with us, but there is no direct call to the religious life. These are steps of evangelization.

IPA (International Presentation Association)... 3 people from our unit are traveling to Australia September 2017 for this gathering. Further/on-going development of our associate (J.I.P)

It may be said that what we as a monastery community are is rather unusual. We are no longer a proprietor, but, we rent the premises in the house of apostolic sisters of the same religious family (Dominican). Our prayers are together in the same chapel (except in exceptional cases). Our two resilient communities are putting their forces together for hospitality and fraternity; lay people hold their meetings and retreats here.

Keeping up to date with the changing technical approaches to reaching out. Having conversations with other religious groups to see what is being done.

New expressions of religious life is a difficult concept. Religious life has changed so much that what we are living is leading us to “new models, new expressions.” I don't think we need to create anything new. World events, changes in family life, Church Life, etc.....lead us to “new ways of living religious life.”

New Forms of Consecrated Life – private vows, inspired by our spirituality and charism. Associates – sharing of our spirituality and charism.

Notre communauté donne la possibilité aux sœurs ayant un ministère actif de vivre seules, mais elles demeurent attachées à une communauté normale et y viennent au moins une fois/mois. Une autre possibilité: 3 groupes de 2 sœurs peuvent former une communauté!

Nous expérimentons la “ communauté viatorienne” qui réunit des religieuses de la congrégation et des associés autour du charisme (mission, vie spirituelle, vie fraternelle).

Our congregation is more focused on creating new internal structures that minimize a top heavy leadership/administration due to the increasingly restricted number of sisters able to take on responsibilities.

Though our very active lay associate program we encourage any interested candidates to get involved and that can help them discern. These associates may be a means to new and viable models and expressions of religious life. We support our associates in this Spirit inspired means of helping others, men and women to respond to God's call.

Our congregation is open to have lay associate living with us like in Thailand. They join us in our community life. They are our loyal employees of our schools. We have also lay vocation volunteers. Twinning of communities – due to lack of personnel/sisters.

Our Pastoral Job is focus on the needs of the church: parishes, schools, hospitals, seniors, etc. Since last year one of our sisters is working full time for the Seasonal Farm Workers Ministry in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. We have more than five thousand in BC from Mexico and Guatemala (men). This year one hundred and fifty women from Guatemala.

Our Province is actively developing Oblate Associates. One possibility explored is mixed communities of Oblates and Oblate Associates.

Please see attached sheet. [from attached sheet:] We have a lively network of women in four different areas who are inspired by the life and spirituality of St. Angela Merici, the founder of the Ursulines. These women, who are called “Companions” gather regularly in their own areas to pray, discuss and join their efforts in the works of justice and peace. For over fifty years the Ursulines were involved with the people of Peru. We are no longer physically present but we continue to support the efforts of several groups who carry on the mission of justice in the service of life. The Lay Community of St. Angela, a committed group of Peruvian women, has been in existence for over 30 years. This group continues to expand and develop with an option for the poor and an ever deeper desire to continue discovering and living the charism of St. Angela Merici. Seeds of Hope is a group made up of Canadian lay women and Ursuline Sisters. They work together to deepen their commitment to each other and to the women of Peru. They make concerted efforts to collaborate and communicate with the Lay Community of St. Angela in Peru and the Ursuline Sisters of Chatham.

Renewed focus on the mission of the Society in the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

Scarboro Missions is a Society of priests and lay missionaries (your survey does not give an option to include lay people in the initial questions). 1) LONG-TERM lay missionaries make a renewable 3-year commitment. There are currently 5 long-term lay missionaries (Guyana 3, China 1, Canada 1) but their contracts will end on Dec. 31, 2017, due to the diminishment of personnel in the Society. 2) From 2013-2016 we ran a pilot 1-YEAR MISSION PROGRAM (2 months' formation, 9 months service in Guyana, 1 month re-entry) with little success: 2013: 2 candidates (1 lay, 1 priesthood) left for health reasons; 2014: 4 lay candidates (two left formation, two sent to serve in Guyana); 2015: program not run (only 1 acceptable lay candidate); 2016: 5 lay candidates applied but we cancelled the program due to health concerns about the Zika Virus in Guyana. 3) As noted above in question #122, we decided at our 2017 Chapter to no longer accept candidates to the priesthood due to (i) only 1 inquiry in the past 5 years and (ii) lack of personnel to work in formation. After 1986, there

were only two ordinations: one in 2013 and another in 2015. Both men were in their 40s and with experience in other religious institutes.

Se donner plus à l'apostolat paroissiale plutot que dans l'enseignement.

Share groups to meet bi-weekly.

The 2013 Special General Chapter voted to abolish the Provinces. We became the Territory of Canada - the links with the General Council have been simplified. A general counselor visits us at least once a year. Given our number and age here in Canada, we have gathered in a residence with 15 other religious congregations. The Provincial Council has been replaced by a Board of Directors composed of 2 sisters and 3 lay people who manage the property of the Territory.

The idea was launched but in Canada there was no follow-up.

University presence.

Visiting Palliative Care Institutions.

We are in the process of creating and hiring a position of Charism and Mission Animator/Facilitator/Coordinator. The title is not settled yet. This person would be about creating opportunities in which people can discover the Charism of Gospel Hospitality that we are attracted around, in their own lives. It is part of our Vision Statement to “set free our Charism, risking for the sake of the Gospel.” The leading vision of this new position is to help people see the Charism alive in themselves and where that may lead them to serve, perhaps to Consecrated Life.

We are simply exploring ways to collaborate with lay persons in ministry. This touches on community life but we are not exploring new forms of community life with lay persons at this time.

We continue to adapt our way of religious life as we grow older and fewer in number. We do so in ways which maintain our credibility in and influence on the Church and the society. Through our engagement in new ways in ministry, we continue to have an impact consistent with the call of our charism. (See attached).

We have what we call: familiar, secular or regular. Here in Montreal a secular familiar: she makes private vows (of chastity, poverty and obedience) and a commitment she renews every year. She does not live in community, because of family or professional commitments, but she participates in some liturgies (e.g. lauds and vespers and Mass) with a liturgical and veiling, and she lives our spirituality and shares certain moments of life community according to a rhythm seen with the prioress.

We will become, in 2018, the Jesuit Province of Canada, which will bring together the English- and French-speaking Jesuits.

We will have a general chapter in the summer of 2017 and we are looking at how to lighten our governance structures.

Yes, the General Government and Administration is trying to reorganize the Congregation, provinces and sisters.

Survey of Members, Question 198. What do you find most rewarding or satisfying about religious life?

Being in an environment that is focused on Christ. Developing personally and spiritually. The freedom of openness in changing circumstances.

Finding one's true calling, to become who I truly am, who God has intended me to be. Helping others to achieve the aforementioned.

1) Know God and learn more about prayer more than before. 2) Opportunities for spiritual growth. 3) Surrender every things for God and for God's People.

A shared prayer life and being with people who understand and share in a desire for a deeper relationship with God and for the value and dignity of the other.

Accepting the will of God day after day, which can be negative or positive and keep trusting in the Divine providence that I am not alone in my spiritual journey, but the hand of God is leading me.

Answering God's invitation to live as a Sister of Providence. Knowing that we are all following Jesus each day and doing our best. Working together with a common purpose of serving God's people. The Mission and Charism of our Canadian foundress as it is being lived out today for these times.

Being able to be a tangible witness to others of hope; of Christ's love and mercy. To be able to witness the flourishing of grace in the heart and soul of another. It's a little piece of heaven on earth and to know that I am espoused to the one who poured forth that grace is overwhelming.

Being available for others, particularly to be missioned. Also, daily Eucharist.

Belonging to a large religious family where I discovered unconditional love. This encouraged me to want to propagate this love outside the community, in society where the greatest suffering is this lack of love.

Belonging to God. Also, the living prayer, ministry and day to day community life. Wearing a habit is also very important for me.

Belonging totally to Jesus, living with him in the Blessed Sacrament and in my sisters.

Brotherhood and sharing of knowledge by others

Common prayer and communal living, which is good earth to make that which is best at the bottom of my heart grow with the help of God and of my sisters.

Community and commonality of the life are very important, as are the variety of ministries available.

Community experiences

Community support in ministry. Empowering and enabling me to walk on new paths that I never thought of before.

Discovering more and more the personal love has for me and for each person. I also love the community life and the support in spiritual growth.

Everything. Belonging to something that gives meaning to life, community (sisterhood) rhythm of our day i.e., praise, worship, work, outreach. There is a wholesome balance to religious life that has made it possible to discover who I truly am before God and share the fruits of that discovery with others.

Following the will of God and giving my life to him.

For me, it is a complete Trust in God and in his Divine Providence, because he said 'Do not be afraid to depend solely on the tenderness of God' who for this reason I am the Beloved daughter of the Blessed Mother Mary. When I have a problem or challenges in my spiritual life, I go to him in the Blessed Sacrament and tell him everything, not to solve my problem, but to take it in her hands and help me to accept it. At that moment, it changes everything.

Fraternal Life.

Giving my life completely over to God for His glory and the salvation of souls; as well as, being the spouse of Jesus.

Growing deeper in my prayer and spiritual life within a Community where everyone shares the same mind and heart and desires the same goals. Then being able to go out each day and share this great love and message of Jesus with everyone we meet.

Growth in human and spiritual freedom and in relationship charity.

Growth in my relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit Growth in faith.

Have the time and the favourable conditions to mediate more deeply on the mysteries of God.

I am at peace. I love my Sisters and will do anything for them. I can offer all my sufferings for those in need. Every day is spent for God.

I am the bride of Christ. I am free to follow Him as a poor, chaste, and obedient bride. As His bride, every moment of my day can be an opportunity to gain grace for myself and the universal Church. To know Christ, and to be able to bring others to know Him, is the greatest gift.

I find most rewarding or satisfying about Religious Life is that God is at work in all things and He uses me, this little instrument, to carry out His work. It is a marvel and a mystery that He can use me ... and a gift to belong to Him for His work. It is most satisfying because I know that I am in His hands at all times when I say yes to Him.

I guess I would have to say learning to live with others who are all striving to become saints. We help each other and encourage each other, and most importantly, we love each other in the ups and downs.

I have more time to pray.

I live with Jesus Christ truly present in the tabernacle. My entire day is centered upon my most important priorities. I bring Jesus Christ to others and I need not even say a word.

I love being able to give all my life and love to Jesus. I love spending lots of time with Jesus in prayer, especially the Blessed Sacrament. I love praying and sacrificing for the salvation of souls. I love telling people about God and helping them to come closer to Him.

I love being married to Jesus Christ! I love how this life is totally focused on giving self completely to God. I find it most rewarding belonging to God completely and spreading love of Him to all people. I also love being a spiritual mother...like our Blessed Mother!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I received many good things from God, supported and encouragement from members of communities and family. We live, pray, and play together as a family and also we learn from each other.

I see many blessings in my vocation. God has rewarded me generously, even though I entered only at the age of 55 years. Circumstances prevented me from entering earlier. I am the youngest of 6 children. My father passed away when I was 2 years old and my eldest brother 12 years. I looked after my widowed mother until she died at 96 years in 2002. Now I am very happy that I have given my life to God unreservedly! In His great love and mercy, He gave me the grace to persevere through all the trials in the world, to be faithful to my vocation.

I am very happy to belong to my religious family. The life of prayer that we live, according to Holy Mother St Teresa of Avila's Rule and constitutions is most rewarding. Having a good formation and on-going formation is also a very satisfying aspect of my life. Truly God's mercies are without end.

I think that it's the ministry, because I see the hand of God in all that I do.

I value the structure, discipline, and companionship of Religious life as an aid to my spiritual growth.

I work as a Spiritual Director in Guelph, Ontario, and I stand in amazement of the wonderful mysterious ways God works with every person I direct. It's a very life giving process.

Ignatian spirituality and exploring it as part of a community; community life as a way of getting to know oneself better.

Intimate and ultimate relationship with God that yields relationship and oneness with all others and with the wider creation. Community commitment. A life of prayer that is inextricably linked with mission and ministry. Recognition that this is profound gift of God and is sustained only through God's love and mercy.

It's this space that religious life gives us inside the cloister, despite a hectic life of searching for the face by daily Eucharist. It's the brotherhood and healthy relations with the world in general. It's a place where small virtues are fashionable: patience, brotherly support, service, humility, gentleness, courage, affability, tolerance of our own imperfections, nothing extraordinary but

real and life giving! All of this valorizes our hidden life that intends to be a mysterious evangelist, by this secret apostolic fecundity witnessing, "God is Love."

Jesus Christ and fraternal life and Catholic religious life and loves the church, monastic life.

Knowing I am doing God's will, and living a consecrated life to the Lord and to the Kingdom.

Knowing that I'm consecrated to Our Lord and to the Church in a special way; knowing that I'm a Bride of Christ and as such am united to Our Lord in everything I do.

L'approfondissement dans le quotidien d'un charisme (celui des Frères mineurs) et d'une spiritualité (celle de François d'Assise) ; le travail avec des hommes et des femmes qui sont aux marges de la société et de l'Église ; la prédication de retraite ; la vie fraternelle dans un quartier multiculturel de Montréal.

La vie fraternelle en communauté.

Life in community, sharing prayer, mission, and life together.

Living in a community who follow the same religious charism, and strive to grow in fidelity and love for God Who called us. Also, the Good Lord is being served and all our prayers, sacrifices and good works are offered for the Church and the salvation of souls. Being cloistered, we live a life of faith, firmly believing that Our Lord heeds our requests and prayers for the sake of souls, and His Mystical Body.

Living in God's house, giving my life entirely to Him.

Living my life for God alone.

Meaning to life. Fraternal life. Life given totally for Christ. Fidelity to the call of Christ.

Ministry and following our charism and Foundress ways in life. The ability to share what we have with one another and my relationship with GOD.

Ministry opportunities and community life.

Missions and seeing the young growing up as good person and good Christians.

Opportunities to be of meaningful service to the larger community.

Opportunity to live my ideal of religious life in the service of the church all while remaining faithful to myself.

Personal growth in relationship with God and the world around me.

Praising and Worshiping God. Communion with him in the Eucharist

Pray with others.

Prayer and meeting people who come to mass in our chapel.

Prayer Life. Ministries. Opportunities to grow, become the best person I can be.

Religious life has opened me up to experiencing God's love very strongly in my relationships with the sisters I live/minister with, my family/relatives and friends, as well as the interactions/conversations with the people I encounter in ministry.

Religious life helps me experience a daily encounter with God, with myself, with others and with creation. A life of an on-going experience of growth, discovering the mystery of being called to become what God intends me to be.

Responding to a call that God has given me. Being able to help people in a radical way.

Sense of belonging, community support, common mission.

Shared charism and mission

Silence, the intentional silence and personal time to be with God/

Support and love from other brothers, especially superiors.

That everything I am and all that do is for the Gospel. There are no limits to where i may be called to serve and with whom I serve. I think it is most remarkable that a group of women (or men) can be called together to live, serve and pray together and have very little else in common.

That this is another way to live out the gospel and the challenge to live out the gospel rooted in the vision of our founder. The way I can serve the church. My opportunity to minister with others and the opportunity to create experiences of church.

The ability to help people especially children whom I would not otherwise have been able to reach out to. My daily prayer life is much more fulfilling now and the support of most community members helps to draw me closer to what God is calling me to.

The apostolate next to people in need.

The chance to serve the people of God. Although challenging at times, the vow of obedience stretches us to love God and others, doing “infinitely more than we can ask or imagine”, as St. Paul puts it. Throughout my vocation, I have felt “carried” by God and others who sustain us religious in our faith and commitment.

The community life I have now. The sharing of meals, prayer, ministry. The way we encourage one another. They help me to be all that God created me to be. There are many opportunities to deepen my spiritual life, and to try new ministries even if I feel very uncomfortable. I am easily able to see God's graces. People talk with me because I am a religious, and share of themselves. They would not do that if I was not a religious.

The discipline of prayer that our institute bequeaths us, coupled with the constant opportunities to serve others through this state of life.

The giving all to God.

The grace to continually grow in the love of God forming a deep intimate relationship with HIM. This impels me to share this love to others. The life itself provides the way towards my salvation.

The joy of being consecrated to the Lord, being impelled solely by love of Him in doing all things. As well as living in community with my sisters and serving the young people.

The living out the Charism of my Institute in a life of loving service.

The opportunity to share my gifts with the people I serve, walking with those who are struggling with faith and/or their lives, to see in some of them growth in loving themselves and recognizing they are loved and are gifted.

The possibility of continuing to exercise my profession.

The prayer life and the opportunity to deepen my relationship with God. However, that is deepened by the love I experience and give in community and in mission.

The privilege of being chosen and called to an exclusively spousal relationship to Jesus Christ. Also, the privilege of bringing His love and mercy to others in our apostolates.

The sense of community. We all have the same mission and we all gravitate to that purpose.

The sense of watching and participating in God labouring in our world, with my brothers.

The sense that I am where God has called me to be. Even on the difficult days, I would have a sense that that is still true. Also, the commitment our Sisters to have to mission and everything that supports the mission.

The time and opportunity to explore who I am and learn about myself. Time to spend in prayer. Opportunity to “Be love” and “Be neighbor” to everyone.

To live with the sisters of all ages and to be a witness to their faith until the end. They really carry the mission of prayer of the community and that encourages me and gives me inspiration.

To search together for the will of God, not only for me but also for my fraternity, my province, my order, and the people I meet.

To walk with persons who are trying to overcome personal trauma (sexual, physical, mental, spiritual abused).

We take care of and support each other.

Work, Prayer, Friendship.

Survey of Members, Question 199. What most attracted you to your religious institute?

Charism. Depth (intellectual, spiritual).

The Canadian Martyrs. The notion and spirituality of the mission. Community life and fraternity. Fundamentally, a call from God.

I loved that they wear a habit, pray together, recreate together, and are so joyful.

A community based on perpetual Eucharistic adoration, where Jesus present in the Eucharist is the center of all of life and gives life to everyday.

A desire to work for a higher purpose.

A member of the institute as she worked with the poor and broken with such great love and compassion. She lived the example of Jesus.

A sense of “God in all things” deeply embedded in the charism. Prayer as foundational. The gift of mission and ministry. The witness, joy and openness of some members. As I learned more of our history I was very influenced by the “witness” of those on whose shoulders we stand and grateful.

A true religious life and not a similar religious life.

An interior call to this Order, and also the ministry of the order, the holy and orthodox practice of the community, the graces I received while first staying with the community, and my experiences living with the community members. Also religious habit was also very important for me.

At first, the example of some of the members, their love and openness to traditional forms of liturgical worship and prayer, their youthfulness and joyfulness as well as that they were founded in Canada. I also like that they wore a traditional habit and that it was very becoming. I was attracted to their charism of teaching the Faith correctly and courageously and how they are very faithful to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The fact that they appeared to desire to and that they strove to live their vocations faithfully, their charity, simplicity and their good manners seemed very attractive to me. I was also attracted to their way of prayer and the amount of time spent in community.

Augustinian Charism and Spirituality

Being part of an international institute, the spirituality and vision of the foundress, and the joy of community life.

Charism. Commitment to God. Making a difference in society in a positive way.

Charism.

Charism and mission of our Foundresses: love the poor and answer to the need of time.

Clothing and style or lifestyle.

Commitment to social justice. Ignatian spirituality. Generally progressive stance of Jesuits within the church.

Diversity of Apostolates.

Entering into religious life as a nun, brother or priest is ultimately a 'DECISION OF LOVE'. Like any love on one level, it's a bit mysterious, and hard to express to someone who doesn't share it. If you ask a married couple what made them to decide to get married? They might be able to list one another's qualities, shared interests, and so on, but all that would not be enough to explain in the simple fact that stands at the heart of their relationship; that they love one another. On another level, though it's quite straightforward. If you spend all your time with someone and rearrange your life around them, if you start to share friends and interests, then you might eventually think about marrying them. Entering religious life for me is also an acknowledgement that I had met this kind of life-shaping love, to grow deeper in freedom in the service of others.

Evangelize Chinese people by Chinese culture.

Fraternal life and life of prayer.

Fraternity and charity (Gospel).

Giving all to God through a life of prayer was the first consideration. But meeting the sisters in person and experiencing the way they express community through a live-in really allowed me to witness the authenticity of their joy.

I could use my musical skills (singing, piano, keyboard, theory). The food. Work. Divine office and Mass.

I loved that they were faithful to all the Church's teachings and lived traditional religious life. I liked that they had a devotion to the Eucharist and to the Blessed Mother. I liked that they had a strong community life and lived and prayed and worked together. I liked that they wore the habit.

I was able to go on the website and see what they were doing and I said to myself that I could do that. Our mission is to do whatever a woman is capable of doing. This opens the field of ministry wide open. Also their openness to various ways of ministering to all. Also, location. The motherhouse was in my city. I did look at other institutes: Canada and USA, apostolic and contemplative. I knew there were needs in my own country so I did not feel compelled to go to another country. I did not feel called to be a missionary.

I was an associate and the foundress and the Charism of the order attracted me. The older sisters in there 80's and 90's who were themselves and had nothing to prove to anyone.

I was drawn to the Jesuits because of their ability to be contemplatives in action, living out their prayer in the world. I know many communities have been inspired by our charism, and I hope the Church as a whole continues to grow in that ability not to shun the world, but to embrace it, through our contemplative lens.

I was most attracted to the way we live out family life and how that echoes in our charism. The family upholds the dignity of human life.

Its charism and accomplishments.

Its charism and its ministries with the marginalized.

Its charism and spirituality and knowing it is the will of God in my life.

Its charism which are as follows: reparation, adoration and penance. Its ministry which is prayer, gives me the privilege and opportunity to be in touched with God, with myself, with others and with creation.

Its contemplative nature (silence and solitude)

Its mission and charism.

Jesuit charism, history, Ignatian spirituality

La vie fraternelle et le service auprès des jeunes.

Life for Prayer and Institute's Charism.

Life of prayer and life fraternity. Cistercian Tradition.

Living together, the search for God in the truth [underlined] and prayer.

Many things: Depth of commitment, passion for justice, life of prayer and ability to find God in ordinary people and circumstances of life.

My community, the habit, we call each other Sister....., and not only use the first name. We have Mass and Holy Hour every day.

Our motto: in the simplicity of my heart, full of joy, I have offered everything to God. Joy, simplicity, and offering are central themes. Also the international aspect.

Prayer time.

Prayers.

The aspect of “mission,” which weighed greater in my discernment over “fraternity.” For example, living in fraternal community where things go well is positive, and doing work together is also positive, but neither of these are essential. Hence, it is mission-first for me.

The attitude of the brothers (priests and non-priests) towards the people they meet. I like the brothers' way of being: the human supersedes any other considerations.

The charism - the flavor by which they proclaim the Gospel and live with Christ at the centre of their lives. Living community seemed to be important. The commitment to the ministries and the prophetic witness. It stretched me and yet not so much.

The charism of my Institute – the life and works of our Foundress.

The charism of the Jesuits to be missionaries doing anything, anywhere, at any time for the greater glory of God.

The charism, the joy of the members and the habit.

The charism. We are a new community founded for the protection of human life (1991) and I believe our charism was given to the Church as a response to the needs of our time. It is a

compelling response to the needs of our culture and we are being blessed with many vocations from young women.

The charism. Our charism for life and the dignity of the human person resonated so deeply within my heart when I began to spend time with our community during discernment. It was an experience of coming home, of finding the Lord as I had always known Him.

The charisma and the specific spirit of the institute. In my own particular vocational journey, following health problems, I can now say that my life today corresponds to my ideal of consecrating my life to God and the ultimate.

The contemplative aspect of our life.

The contemplative life because I had experience working but I wanted more in life. I wanted to give my life to God in a special way. I wanted to glorify his love and his love for all. I wanted to serve God by praying for all people.

The contemplative way of praying while in action which echoes the Vincentian spirituality. The ministries where God's love is translated into action.

The fact that the Sisters wore a habit, had daily Mass and Adoration, prayed the rosary three times a day, and each of the Sisters have a spirituality of joy.

The fidelity to the Church and the Pope, a devotion to the Eucharist and Mary, the wearing of the habit, community life, joyful witness of the Sisters, living of the traditional vows and monastic life.

The first Sister that I met and continued to see for spiritual direction at the time. The foundress' story and the charism also were very strong. And a sense of being "home" no matter what community I enter in around the Society.

The founder and the spirituality.

The incredible diversity of works the Jesuits are involved with. There is a place for any possible God-given gift.

The joy of living with the brothers and being in relation to simple people. I was drawn by the simplicity of the brothers and by the quality of the relations they create with people. I was also drawn by a simple and poor way of life, and by assiduous prayer and devotion.

The joy of the sisters and their love for young people.

The joy that emanates from the sisters in general, the beauty of the daily liturgy, the simplicity and the willingness of the sisters to bear witness of their love for Christ in a sincere and humble fashion. The beauty of the monastery compound, the welcoming and peaceful countryside. Then the good sense of St Francois de Sale who knew to give the church prayerful daughters who live out of a spirit that searches for nothing but God and tends continually to unify with him; who live out of a profoundly humble spirit towards God and of a great gentleness towards neighbours. And finally out of a spirit that does not put great emphasis on exterior austerities, the sisters are supplemented by interior renunciation and by great simplicity and joy in communal life. There is also the fact that

the Order of the Visitation accepts older women and those in ill health, this is greatly appreciated, as I am one. I entered at 63 years old, though I enjoy good health.

The legacy of its saints and missionaries, the radicality of the life of the vows as lived in the institute, the open-endedness and variety of mission (that God would deploy me wherever I might best serve, as opposed to my own paltry preferences), the comprehensive spirituality, and robust formation.

The life and the audacity of the founders as well as certain sisters.

The life of our foundress and the prayer life. Secondly. silence and solitude because I love silence.

The life of prayer.

The mission and ministries. The visible happiness and “joie de vivre” of the members. The legacy and history of my religious institute.

The mission of serving young people and helping them on the path of holiness.

The most attracted me to my religious institute is a simple lifestyle of the Mother Foundress, the Sisters, and served the poor.

The need to do God's work on a regular basis. To be able to reach the neglected or over looked in our society. Our charism and how we pray.

The people I met who were members of my Institute before I entered. Observing their lives and hearing their perspectives on faith, culture and spirituality.

The prayer life...the contemplative life. Hidden yet embracing and carrying the whole world.

The relationships with community members – unconditional acceptance, respect, and the joy of many of its members in addition to what was stated in my response to #198.

The resonance of my spiritual life with the rhythm and direction of my community attracted and continues to attract me.

The spirituality and charism of the institute and the life of our founder Blessed James Alberione and co-foundress, Venerable Thecla Merlo.

The Spirituality of the founder and the charism of the institute/congregation.

The spirituality of the Jesuits is what was very attractive to me.

The story and charism of the founder, the example and inspiration of members of the Institute whom I met, the spirituality.

The traditional observance of the Rule and Charism. The Habit, the communal life, the number of its members.

The uniqueness of our founder and his creative ways, the way the brothers live out their vocation. Variety in ministry. Local impact/situation.

The way in which they engaged one another and those with whom they ministered.

Their Eucharistic and Marian Spirituality and the way in which they live religious life.

Their fidelity to the teachings and mission of the Church (specifically the Pope and the Bishops in union with him), the wearing of a distinct religious habit, living in Community, and its prayer life.

Three things: love for the Eucharist, true devotion to Our Lady, and zeal to serve the Church and bring her life-giving teachings to others, particularly children. I also love our habit and authentic witness of joy-filled community life.

To be honest, the main factor was that I felt deeply that this was the institute Our Lord wanted me to enter. Everything else, whether the habit, charism, etc. was secondary to that. For me, a vocation means going where the Lord calls, not where it suits my preferences, although Our Lord can certainly use those preferences to attract a person where He wants them to go.

To see people happy and well with themselves. Presence alongside people and especially the poor.

Very early on in my teenage years I had read this line, "Our lives are God's gift to us; what we make of them is our gift to God". That was my first inspiration to enter religious life from which I never wavered. To enter the Carmelite Order, I was inspired by the sanctity of our Holy Mother St. Teresa and the simplicity of St Therese.

What attracted me to this particular community was the joy of the members and the fact that we have a Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration daily.

What most attracted me to this Religious Institute was the joy of the Sisters and the fact that the patroness of our community is Our Lady Immaculate. I could see that the Sisters radiated with love for Jesus and were striving to give themselves completely to God. I just knew in the depths of my heart that God was calling me to that same joy! May God be praised!!!!!!!

When I visited my institute I met women in love with Christ and obedient to the Church. They lived an authentic life of prayer and community life, faithful to the teachings of the Church and dedicated to sharing the truths and joy of the Gospel.

Witness of Sisters by their lives.

Survey of Members, Question 200. What do you find most challenging about religious life?

1) Vows Obedience and living Community. 2) Between the things what you want and the things what you need. It is not easy.

A big intergenerational gap caused by a long time without vocations in the institute.

Adapting to this counter-cultural way of life. Letting go of my old life and dreams and things.

Aging of the majority of members with few persons entering. Lack of peers close to where I live in my community.

Also community life! And going without a wife and family

As an older person entering it is hard to for some to treat us as adults who have lived life and bring a lot to community from our experiences. Some directors still treat us like we are just out of high school and want us to live the way they had to when they entered many years ago. Our community has progressed so much since those times but the mindset has not. My Candidacy was great with a director who had also entered later in life and worked with us as individuals but this was not the case in Novitiate or at the present time.

As one of the younger members of my community, I find that some members feel insecure with my energy and the degree of enthusiasm and love I have for my ministry. So instead of encouragement, sometimes I feel “jealousy and criticism.” I believe that this is because of diminishment.

At this moment of our history in Canada, I would say that it is how to draw in and preserve the women who knock at the door of the monastery! Given that the Visitation accepts older women, there is always the danger that the motive to enter religious life won't seem essential, and sometimes religious life can become more of a desired vocation than a real call. When I myself entered at 63 years old I had the illusion that my life of prayer and my search for God would be amplified and assured, but I had not considered the daily and practical side of monastic life, full of maintenance, reparations, outings, etc. Accompanying a sister for dialysis at the hospital three times a week and three years of administration for the monastery passed as my years of formation. If my vocation had not been solidly anchored in Christ, this would not have been my reason for entering the monastery. But I believe in miracles since I am always here and I have the responsibility of the community. God has a funny sense of humour!

Being forward thinking as a community. Dreaming new dreams. Challenging my brothers to new life and opportunities. Not getting stuck myself in old patterns that once worked. The need for us to minister well with and for the church.

Being new and not always accepted .The new vision one has and the lack of trust some older sisters have in the younger ones. Not enough put forth for new members (Vocations), always a number we are, rather than what we are. Alive!

Change the forms of evaluation in order to facilitate someone who is in discernment to respond to the call to religious life.

Chastity is a challenge; there is still a part of me that would like to have a wife and kids and sex. Community life can be challenging if two members don't get along and there are arguments and tensions in the house more often than not. Not being to do what I want when I want, like visiting family and friends.

Community life and generational gap within it. Differences on individual focus; ministry vs. community life.

Community life can be challenging, being patient with each other's weaknesses and faults as well as some of the cultural misunderstandings which can occur.

Community life is a joy but it is also a struggle, especially being the youngest member of the Institute and having an average age gap of 40-50 years between myself and the other members. It can be difficult being the only person to experience the initial zeal of religious life while the rest of the Institute is in a period of contraction.

Community life is the greatest blessing but it can also be the most difficult thing.

Community life, that we seem to have a lack of identity in Canada (we are the best kept secret I know of), and rules designed for the few and imposed on the many (here it seems we have a great constitution and norms but end up reducing everything to one line on strict obedience - why bother having the rest then?).

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life.

Community life. It is the greatest challenge and the greatest joy.

Community living is challenging but at the same time it is rewarding as well.

Community living, especially with members of different cultures and intergenerational. But I find this challenge very life giving especially in living and witnessing the Word of God among us.

Community Living.

Currently, I find it challenging to be part of an Institute that seems to have lost its passion for vocation (while this may be understandable given the age and struggles of many members). A deep loss of community: while I recognize that some members may need to live singly for mission and, perhaps for a period of time for mental health reasons, and while I also recognize that people can live "community" while living singly I struggle with accepting the desire and reasons of so many Sisters to live in apartments, often very "affluent apartments. As vocation director and first formation director it is almost impossible to provide inquirers with an experience of healthy community and to find a "home" to meet the desires and needs of new members. I am challenged by my own negative feelings with respect to the above.

Daily perseverance despite routine, conflicts, and doubts, and the silence of God.

Differences in ecclesiology. Individualism.

Discipline.

Each day is a balancing act. Planning is necessary but flexibility is very important because God is full of surprises! Community life is a constant choice to live in charity, to grow in humility, to practice patience, to forgive and ask for forgiveness. Our ministry/apostolate often provides opportunities to go out of my comfort zone. Poverty in all areas of religious life is an on-going invitation to TRUST God more. Growing in trust and confidence in God is always a challenge and most of what I mentioned here involves that.

Evangelical vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

Facing myself, my faults, my personality, learning humility.

Finding the proper balance between action and contemplation.

Formation study is in English (second language).

Fraternity and charity (Gospel).

Geographic separation from family. Sometimes balancing my responsibilities in the community with my apostolic responsibilities.

Getting along with other members who are of a different nationality and don't understand our culture of living....this can be extremely frustrating for them and for myself.

I find that living community life well to be one of the biggest challenges that I have faced.

I find that surrender is most challenging about Religious Life! Whether it be surrendering a goal, mission, project, or the brokenness of that which has been entrusted to me. Even a surrender in prayer – when I don't get the revelation I want or the clarity I need – I must surrender it all to Jesus and let go and give it to Him. And Thanks Be to God for that!

I had a good life before entering, it only became better. The main challenge is that I'm given increasingly more responsibility in community and ministry which in turn moves me to a deeper prayer/reflective life.

I think that the most challenging thing about religious life is to be faithful to our mission and to be patient and understanding to the people with whom I live. It is an everlasting struggle to serve God and to serve the people to whom I live with. But by achieving these two things I am sure that God is always there to guide and support me. He is my Rock.

I thought that when I became a Sister I could be at least externally “perfect” by willing it. Nothing is farther from the truth! I will never be perfect! But I know deeply how much I am loved by the Lord and by my Sisters, despite my imperfection. The hardest thing is living with myself and my weaknesses.

Letting go of my will so that I may more fully embrace His Divine Will.

Living alone in Religious Life is a challenge. The reality that we will be paving new ways. Though that is exciting - there are MANY unknowns. It is sad to see that an emphasis on older traditional models of Religious Life sometimes are given more credibility or recognition by the Church and the world. The challenge for me, is if we could put energy into choosing our vows, community and prayer each day, I truly believe that God will reveal the rest. How we do it and what we do is less important than WHO we are – and I sometimes feel like we are losing the WHO.

Living community life, in constantly overcoming myself to be the best version of myself. Human formation is so integral in formation, so striving to be okay with my humanity and having a Gospel mentality in seeing the events of daily life is a challenge. Most of all, it is a challenge to communicate with the different kinds of people in community... so seeing Jesus in all of them is a challenge... a good challenge!

Living in community, especially in a cloistered community like mine, in which we're in very frequent contact (with no external ministry to serve as an outlet) and in which we come from different backgrounds. But it's definitely worth it!

Living together is not always easy.

Loss. As I develop relationships, the women in my community die.

Maintaining an active prayer life when things get busy.

Many people want things done their way, sometimes several people want it their way = conflict arises at the same time.

My biggest challenge in religious life is dealing with myself and getting myself to become less selfish and giving more of my love to God and others.

Navigating these ambiguous days of transition i.e., letting go of old patterns and models of religious life while discerning new models.

Nothing. As St Francis de Sales says “Obedience is very simple; just do as you are told”. It was in God's plan that I lived my whole life with my mother, “under her authority”, which has certainly helped me in humility and obedience, and respect to my Superiors in religious life. I thank God for the wondrous love He has shown me.

Obedience, I also find it difficult to accept sisters who spend their time gossiping about others, and using the superior's weakness to manipulate her to believe all their lies.

Obedience.

Occasionally, it's the “holy sting” of one or another of the vows. But mainly, I'd have to say it's the lack of unity on basic theological and doctrinal issues, which, our common spirituality notwithstanding, hampers true “koinonia” or union of hearts and minds, and undermines effectivity in the vineyard. It has also resulted in scandal to the faithful. Avoiding so-called “neuralgic issues” to keep a functional peace might be expedient, but communal unity is not as profound as I'd expected. That said, I love my confreres despite differences, and so, “tout est grace”.

One of the challenges in the religious life today is lack of sufficient vocations. As a result of that, there is a risk of admitting quantities rather than qualities in the religious institutes. That creates a lot of problems. It is better to have one person who is serious in her vocation, who understands what religious life is all about and who can allow themselves to be moulded by God, than admitting quantities to fill up the institutes even when it is clearly observed that such candidates need to be told the truth that he or she is not meant for that particular institute.

Perseverance.

Remaining faithful to the founders while adjusting to the reality of today. Always actualizing and bringing to light the spirit and the specific ends of the documents of the church on consecrated life.

Renounce yourself. Cloistered Life.

Sharing in the Passion of Jesus (paschal mystery).

Small community life with aging population. Lack of clear identity. Lack of public understanding. Counter-cultural reality of religious life.

Striving to be charitable to everyone even when we see differently. Also, sometimes dealing with fatigue the level of work or health challenges.

Striving to be faithful day in and day out to the will of God, and the will of my Superiors who represent God to me. Sometimes, fatigue can be a challenge.

The aging of the sisters and the paucity of new entries necessitates reflection to discern how to adapt ourselves to the context of diminution and yet remain faithful to the charisma of the community and keep the care for its radiance.

The balance between the twin commitments to my Institute and to my family. I live in a state of tension between the two.

The call to give up one's will.

The community life....the diversity...myself (wounds and all)...my quest for holiness...and yet all these are will toward carry me to the Eternal Life.

The community living. We are real human beings with feelings and we get cranky at times. It is how are with each other that is important. Let the other have their feelings and not take things personally. I still need to moderate my behaviors. When I moved into the candidacy year, I was treated as an adult. When I moved into the novitiate I was treated as a teenager who could not make any decisions. What I thought was OK, my novice director said I was wrong. When I spoke to my spiritual director about it (same community) she said I was OK in doing what I did. I did not trust my Novice director so I could not be open and honest with her. It seemed everything I did was wrong and I was on tenterhooks the whole time. There was a lot of inner work that we had to do, but I could not help but notice the things she called me out on, where things that she herself seemed to struggle with. I seemed to have been her shadow side, and I don't think she saw that, nor would she have been willing to hear it from me, or even acknowledge that she needed some help herself. I almost quit. It was going away for most of the Canonical year that saved me. My candidacy

directory was preparing us for one kind of novitiate and we were thrust into another kind. We are four different communities that joined into one and each one of the communities have a different culture. Even now when I go to one of the four main residences (former motherhouses) I can feel the difference in the cultures, ways of being with each other, prayer, community. During our two years, when we were not away for the Canonical part, the house only contained the two novices and our director. I think it would have been better if there were more sisters living with us. I think it would have given us a more realistic experience of religious life. During the candidacy year there were two Sisters and two novices living together. Plus there was an extended community of two Sisters who lived and ministered nearby and we had a fair amount of interaction. We had our candidacy in one small city and moved but a much larger city for the novitiate. When I am at one of our main residence, where our senior sisters are, it takes a great deal of effort to break in to a table and sit down and share a meal. Most of the Sisters sit with the same people all the time. I am an introvert so it is hard for me to break in. I am much better with the one on one's. One major challenge was to learn that I needed to consider the other sisters whenever I decide to do something, how will my decision impact the community. Like going to visit my family. Can I get a car, what work will I be leaving behind. Or even letting people know that I am leaving the house or workplace. It is not that people are nosy but concerned. I am no longer on my own. Learning to speak to the person I am having problems with, and not triangulate. Try and resolve the situation with them. Not to be passive aggressive about it. I want to add some additional comments: When I was first considering entering religious life, I did not tell anyone, in case I would not be allowed to join because of my age. Once I was sure I was going to be accepted I was able to share it. Everyone was very encouraging. A Nun's Life Ministry was a very important online community for me during my search and initial discernment. I was able to freely ask questions with no judgements or commitments. I would have liked to have been invited over to other sister's homes for dinner and prayer. I was invited once. I did go to the mother house often, but I was not invited into a small prayer group, which I know they had. Once a month they had Eucharistic Adoration, and again I would have liked to have participated but I was not invited. Yes I could have asked but I was very shy and insecure at the time. I have gained more confidence and now I would have the courage to ask.

The constant call to grow in holiness each day in fidelity to the vows I have professed and to leave no area of my life (human, spiritual, emotional, intellectual) untouched by the Lord's grace.

The daily surrender. Putting aside myself for Him. It can be the most challenging and yet the most beautiful and grace-filled.

The different culture from my own, the way of thinking.

The effort to keep up (make time for) the prayer life.

The futur ! Le contexte de la société occidentale sécularisée.

The future! Our community is aging and there are few vocation inquiries from women under the age of 60. As the youngest member the uncertainty we face is a challenge I struggle with in prayer but also in the day to day responsibilities that need to be met.

The most challenging me is misunderstanding about the languages, the cultures and trust each other and commit myself with God and with one another.

The most challenging part about Religious Life is myself. Learning to love myself even with my imperfections and faults has been the most challenging part for me. But every day, I remind myself of all the blessings that God has granted to me and then I pray the Magnificat as my prayer of praise to God for “He has done great things for me and holy is his name!”

The most challenging part of religious life for me is witnessing, the living out of the evangelical vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in a setting of a community with varied culture, personality, upbringing, educational, religious, economic, political background.

The most challenging thing about religious life is accepting my weaknesses and learning to trust God completely and letting go of my own will and doing His Will.

The most difficult thing for me is finding equilibrium between the life of prayer, the communal life, and ministry. The harvest is abundant but the workers are few in number.

The sense that people expect me to fit into a particular “nun box”. I am my own person, as anyone is, but people are surprised that Sisters drink wine or eat out or dress like normal people or watch the news, etc.

The sometimes poor community life of my order. Also, the constant up-rootedness of ministry that has me living everywhere and nowhere.

The type of work I do remains the same as I did before I entered. Although I recognize it as valuable and ministry, it is administrative work for the congregation. I struggle with the hope that I might someday be involved in a ministry more directly involved in assisting others in their desire for a deeper faith.

To become more and more dedicated to our Blessed Mother.

To find again our prophetic dimension I.e. being capable of denouncing the lies and illusions of consumerist society, of a competitive and elitist culture, of a cult of the superficial etc. by our lives. We shouldn't do it by discourse but by an art of living differently. I find that religious life in Quebec is bourgeois and, in the ecclesiastical context, clericalized. We need to retrieve the radically of life!

To remain significant and signifying for the world of today, I have always felt called to pour into activism as an extension of the religious aspect of life.

Updating and recruitment.

Vow of obedience is never easy but it has stretched me to love and serve God and others beyond what I thought was possible.

We cannot do all the good there is to do. People want us to do so much, not realizing that if we do everything they want us to do we cannot be whom they want and need us to be. There is a constant tension between contemplation and service, and a temptation to allow prayer to suffer.

We need to work more effectively with the Spiritual but Not Religious young people of this age...and I'm not there yet. I still think they have much to learn from us, and I wouldn't be able to respect them and their perspective. Perhaps most challenging about Religious life is knowing how much the Church has to offer, and seeing the world reject that time after time, replacing the morals of the Church with these misguided values that pass for morals in our day in and age. Part of me is fully aware I need to change my perspective on that front. I also still struggle with celibacy. Becoming a Jesuit brother has not made me stop admiring the female body. But I know it's in God's hands!!

Appendix III: Focus Group Transcripts



NAVFD/CARA Study of New Members in Religious Institutes Focus Group Protocol



Introduction

A focus group is a gathering of about 8-12 people for about an hour to 90 minutes to talk about a particular topic in some detail. A protocol, not a questionnaire, is used. The protocol sets out the major issues that the focus group is convened to address, including a variety of probes that the researcher may use as necessary.

Unlike a questionnaire, a protocol is not followed rigorously. While survey research requires consistency every time an instrument is used, a focus group demands flexibility. Thus, not all the probes or other specific questions on a protocol are necessarily asked in a specific focus group experience. Rather, the protocol serves as a starting point for each focus group, and the experience of each focus group varies considerably depending on the issues and experiences surfaced in a particular group.

Advantages and Limitations

Focus groups allow for:

- An intensive understanding of a particular issue.
- A discovery of perspectives and ways of thinking not previously considered or known.

Focus groups do not:

- Provide measures of frequency of certain attitudes, practices, or behaviors.
- Measure a particular set of characteristics in a population.

Scientifically selected random sample surveys are best to fulfill those functions.

Timeline and Sites Selected for this Study

CARA will conduct several focus groups of new members for this study. NAVFD will make all arrangements for gathering participants for these focus groups. The focus groups will be composed of new members, men and women, in religious institutes in Canada. They will be designed to last between 60 and 90 minutes.

Purpose:

The focus groups will help NAVFD and CARA to learn from these newer members about what attracts them to religious life, what sustains them in their vocation, and what they see as the greatest opportunities and challenges for the future of religious life in Canada.

Procedure:

The focus group proceedings will be audio-taped and used by CARA to supplement and nuance the information gathered from the survey of new members. Selected comments from the focus groups may be incorporated into a final report to NAVFD. However, no individual participant will be identified and any information in the discussion that could reveal the identity of an individual participant will not be included in any report of the findings.

National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors

Study of New Members in Religious Institutes

Focus Group Protocol

Introductions and Brief Description of the Project

5 minutes

Hello! My name is _____. I am a researcher from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). CARA is a social scientific research center affiliated with Georgetown University that uses surveys and other social science methods to study Catholic populations and institutions. We have worked with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and the National Religious Vocation Conference, as well as many other groups, on various projects.

You have been invited to this focus group today to discuss aspects of religious life today. In particular, we are interested in learning from you about what attracts, sustains, and challenges you in religious life. We also want to hear from you about the experiences of men and women who are entering religious congregations at this time.

As you may know, a focus group is simply a guided discussion or conversation. It is a way to understand how people think or feel about a particular topic or issue and to get some feedback from them. This is not a test. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the questions we will be asking. I also want to be clear that I am not here to promote any particular policy or agenda. I am here for your honest feedback.

I anticipate this focus group will last between 60 and 90 minutes. We will cover a number of topics, all related to your experiences in religious life. While I encourage your participation in this group, your participation is not required. At times, we may be talking about sensitive information; I ask that you be respectful and honest, and that whatever is said in this room remain in this room. I can assure you that no identifying information – about you or your community – will be included in the results of this focus group.

Any questions? Any concerns? In that case, let’s jump right in!

1) What first attracted you to religious life?

20 minutes

What attracted you to your particular religious community/order/institute?
How did you first become acquainted with your religious community/order/institute?

2) What did you find most helpful in discerning your vocation?

20 minutes

Was there anyone who particularly encouraged you or supported you?
Was there anyone who opposed your decision?

3) What do you like most about being a member of your community/order/institute?

20 minutes

What sustains you in your vocation as a religious?
What are some of the difficulties you encounter as a member of your community?

4) What do you find most challenging about religious life in general today?

15 minutes

5) What are your hopes and fears for the future of religious life in Canada?

10 minutes

What advice do you have for a young person discerning a vocation to religious life?
What advice do you have for vocation ministers/teams in religious institutes?

Focus Group, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, July 18, 2017

Interviewer: I would like to start out by asking you what first attracted you to religious life? Either in general or what attracted you to your particular congregation?

Respondent: I would say the charism discovered in the writings of [the founder of the institute].

Interviewer: Okay. And how did you learn about that?

Respondent: I was going to Mass at an [Institute] House and some of them I had a conversion and some of the men in the house and talking amongst themselves, ‘maybe he has a vocation’. But I thought the [Institute] were grumpy old men. I thought they are not on fire for Jesus they are so old, but it was when one of the members gave me a copy of what we call our preface to our constitutions and rules which basically has the essential charism in it. When I read that I just said, “Wow, I want that; that’s what I want.”

Respondent: I will say that the example that I saw in one of the priests, you know, that attracted me very strong and then later I learned about the community and that helped me to discern.

Interviewer: But it was the example of the individuals?

Respondent: It was the example. Yeah, the first thing. That joy that I can see in that person, in that priest.

Respondent: To me, it’s the possibility of an honest life, so even before joining the congregation, when I finished my high school life, I had the opportunity to read in my room a lot of time so it was the life story [of the founder] that attracted me. So it’s not, and that also attracted me after. Then later, community life and working with poor people, these other two elements that attracted most to our congregation.

Respondent: For me, it was a good example of sisters who were feeding homeless people. So that’s the time that I started thinking about religious life.

Interviewer: Where you working with them?

Respondent: No, I just went to the church, and I saw them feeding the poor. And I felt like I would like this and I wanted to do that.

Respondent: For me, I wanted to serve God alone, and so I went to my parish priest, and he was the one that put me with the congregation.

Respondent: I have been in a diocesan seminary and knew that I wanted to live and work along with these priests. And the communal aspect of the mission and the welcome in the sense of myself, that I found in the [Institute].

Respondent: So I would just say what attracted me to religious life was I had a really profound experience of a personal Jesus, and I really felt attracted to wanting to explore that more and deepen that relationship. And what attracted me to my particular congregation were the women themselves, their spirit, their obvious love for Jesus and for each other.

Respondent: I was just seeing a spiritual director because I wanted something more from my life. I just wasn't satisfied. And kept wanting more and I still wasn't satisfied. So Sister, actually before I saw Sister [Name], the only sister I knew was in our parish who happened to be a Sister of [Institute]. But I wasn't exposed to sisters in my life, so she put me in touch with Sister [Name] who was in a different congregation. So conflict of interests, there. And as the spirituality grew, my yearning grew, I was asked if wanted to be an associate of the Sisters, and I said yes. And I was that for many years. And I just, I'm not satisfied, just want something more. And then I began my search to see what was out there and that was a whole journey in itself. Funny story, I didn't go to [Institute] first because of my mother. My mother used to know so many people [in that congregation], I didn't want them to have a preconceived notion of me because of her. So they were the last ones I contacted. But I love their spirit and I love our charism – that we do whatever one is capable of doing. And that just opens up the field, literally.

Respondent: I was discerning priesthood and considering different orders or dioceses, and it was first the idea of northern Canadian missions that brought me to the [Institute].

Respondent: For me, it was a combination of the initial meetings I had with the sisters when I got that sense of their deep joy; so that first drew me to them. Then also as I looked more about their charism and their mission, that's what did it.

Respondent: When I was first discerning religious life, I was attracted more to the community aspect of it and then the opportunity to live the spiritual life in a deeper way. And then when I was looking at different congregations, what first attracted me to the [Institute] was this internationality. Yeah, the international aspect of the institute and just this opportunity to be part of something even bigger than just in Canada.

Respondent: I grew up with the sisters; they taught me First Communion and they were part of my parish, and so I saw them on a regular basis. And I was attracted to them. And their prayer life. And I wanted that.

Respondent: I was in school, so two of the sisters [of my community] came to give a retreat and seminar. And they spoke about how to become a religious and then they shared the spirituality, the charism, and the apostolate. So I was very much attracted to do work with the [Institute].

Respondent: I've always been attracted to community. It's a very important part of my life. And so I was attracted to that, the element community. And what also attracted me was a deeper life of prayer, so whatever that might be.

Respondent: I was taught by a sister when I was in school, and seeing those sisters involved in the parish, helping all the people and everything. And also, especially one of the sisters, she was, she seemed to be so happy. And I was wondering, what's happy? How can she be that? And something attracted me, so I went and checked and answered the call.

Interviewer: Think about when you were discerning your vocation. What did you find most helpful when you were discerning your vocation? Was there any person or any experience that really clinched it for you?

Respondent: For me, it was actually meeting with the sisters. They were close enough to where I lived that I could go there and join them in evening prayer, and did many retreats with them. That really helped.

Respondent: For me, it was the spiritual accompaniment that I had at the time. Because I was living in a different city than the sisters were in, so I only met them occasionally for a year. But I was led through the 19th annotation of the Spiritual Exercises by my spiritual director, and that was a really incredible experience, opening myself up to religious life.

Respondent: I would say for myself, personal prayer and contradictions that I pushed through, which lead me to make decisions.

Interviewer: Can you explain that?

Respondent: Um, yeah, here's a little example. I went to a monastery to consider, "Who am I, should be a priest? Is that the way? Well I've always had this longing for marriage." And I do admire the Church, I admire the sacraments, I believe in that. And then I was at the monastery, in the common dining room, and these two guys at the other table were trash-talking the Church. Oh the Church is so dumb, the Church is so backward. And something in me shifted, and to myself I said, "Okay, I'm going to serve this wounded, confused, awkward, limping Church." So, what I now understand is what happened in that moment was I had a little experience with the Church, that I was starting to admire, as being abandoned. And that activated what we call, you know, your warrior kind of moment. "I'm going to save this Church; I'll be your hero." And then that's the energy, that's what led me to commit to the process, to the next steps.

Respondent: A couple of things helped me. I was, of course, as all of us, scared to take the first steps and not tell anyone. There was a safe environment in an on-site ministry that Sister [name] invites me to work with her. And I was able to get on their network and be able to talk and share, and there was no push, no nothing. It's just a safe place to be religious, not religious. And that helps fuel the flame and then with the search. And one of the big things that helped me was a live-in experience. I actually had two: one with the [Name] group in [Place] and that really drew me, and then also my week with our sisters in [Place]. And that really helped me solidify the "yes" that I saw and what this charism was and what we could do, what it's all about. So the live-in experience helped me a lot to see that.

Respondent: I think for me, I think it was just having people around me that I could talk to. And not necessarily saying that I was discerning religious life, but to be able to ask questions and get answers to what I was trying to understand, what religious life was like.

Interviewer: These people around you were other sisters?

Respondent: Some were sisters; one was someone from the family who was a priest. And just people I knew.

Respondent: Even the fact that I joined the seminary when I was fifteen years old, so there wasn't a lot of discernment then, before joining the seminary. The real discernment took place for me between minor seminary and my novitiate. So I spent four years before entering the novitiate. So that was the time that I think I made my proper discernment. So before entering the seminary, it was the encouragement at home, especially from my mother because my father didn't want it, because I'm the only other man in the family and my father had other plans. And so, my mother encouraged me and the parish priest and one fellow [Institute] student and a catechist in my parish. So these are the four main people who encouraged me before entering the seminary. But once I entered the seminary, it was the formator and the spiritual director who helped me to discern this call.

Respondent: For me, I grew up with the sisters in our church. So I was around them all the time, and I think as I got older into my teenage years, reflecting back, I had the opportunity to be with them. They lived not far from us, so I was often at the house. I would spend the weekend. And as I got older, I had the opportunity to do a mission with them. A summer mission, I would spend three weeks teaching catechism, teaching catechism in the city, and so I just feel very blessed that from a very young age, I was kind of helped by them, as I discerned, and I'm where I am now.

Respondent: I think that I would agree that accompaniment, spiritual accompaniment, has been integral for me. Particularly with the religious, and religious not with the community that I was discerning with. And probably, in making connections with people; significant connections with other religious and just having the conversations that mattered.

Respondent: Okay, for me, it was personal prayer. Because I grew up in a family that was not a religious family, and around me there wasn't a lot of sisters or church. But when I saw the sisters, and I wanted to be one like they are. So I started praying, so I prayed for two years. I had special prayer in the morning and the evening, so that. And the other thing was, I couldn't share with anyone because in sharing that I was thinking to be nun, everyone said "it's impossible." I was so extroverted, such an outgoing person that no one would think that I would ever, ever be a nun. Even when I entered, everyone was thinking that eventually I would leave.

Interviewer: Did anyone else have discouraging experiences or people? And how did that influence your vocation?

Respondent: Yeah, so one of the discouraging experiences for me was when I was in the seminary. When I would go home for vacation, my friends used to say “Why would you want to be a priest, you’re not really going to do that? Because you can do a lot of stuff here, you know, in engineering, some other studies, medicine, you know, stuff like that.” So some of the guys, you know, in my peer group, said “it’s not real” and even among my family members, they were like, “no, no, you are not going to remain there for a long time, it’s not for you.” So yeah, that’s a discouraging experience, you know?

Respondent: I knew that my father was going to object. He’s got a brother who is a Trappist monk. And he just has one tunnel vision of what it looks like. But his first reaction, when I told him, and I didn’t tell him until I knew that I was going to be accepted, was “I don’t want my money going to the convent.” I said, “Dad, your money doesn’t have to go the convent.” But he had some objections, and then, I tried to waylay them. And now, he’s like, “yeah, you belong there.” So it’s been very encouraging.

Respondent: Well, my family was totally against it. I was the caretaker for my mom, and it took three months before I told my family. And as soon as I told my mom, “Don’t tell anybody!” And she said, “Well I’m happy for you.” And when I told my older brother, he said, “Well, what are you doing with Mom?” And I said, “No, what are the three of you doing with Mom?” So it was a struggle, and even now, when I go home, it’s touch and go on some subjects.

Respondent: Me? I cannot go along with what you just shared, you know. Because I’m very extroverted and nearly all the conversations that I have among the priests and other seminarians, and my other friends, is that I belong here, you know? But all those comments, all those ideas that they have make me stronger, you know? Because I am following my heart and what I feel is just that I am following what the Holy Spirit is telling me to do. So, in a way it hurts, but at the same time, it gives you some kind of strength to continue and to pursue it. Whatever you believe, that is your call.

Respondent: My mom gave up on me for almost four years. So when I entered, she stopped talking to me, and she said that she lost her daughter for like three years. It was very hard.

Interviewer: Okay, this one is an easy one. What do you like most about being a member of your community? Or your institute?

Respondent: What do you like most?

Interviewer: Yes, what do you like the most? So think about what sustains you in your vocation.

Respondent: I think there’s just a real understanding in the congregation that there’s nothing more important than that personal relationship with God. And, that they are going to do everything they can do to support me, and I’m going to do everything that I can to support my community and my congregation. And deepening that relationship. And yeah, that’s what I’d say I appreciate the most.

Respondent: What supports me most in my vocation is personal prayer, study, growth in transformational scripture, and that whole field. And what I like about being in my institute is that this, the ministry of the institute, complements those things which are most important to me personally. So, I experience most support in life through the interior world of the spirit, and what I appreciate most about the order is that I get to share that with other people.

Interviewer: And it's important to them, too.

Respondent: Yeah.

Respondent: What was the question again? I wasn't here for that.

Interviewer: The question was what do you like most about being a member of your community or your congregation?

Respondent: I just joined, but I think I was attracted to the charisma and the idea of missions but I think since being there it's been the people I have met. The most inspiring thing.

Interviewer: So you feel like you fit?

Respondent: What I like about my mine, it's the openness of the community for accepting me. Being an older member, an older person, it's the openness of the community, which mean they are open to new things, new future. And also, when we gather to pray together, our retreats and so on, you know, our special times.

Respondent: Being from an amalgamated community, I think it's having the opportunity to be with our sisters wherever they are, and feel a warm welcome in wherever we go.

Respondent: I feel sustained in my life and in the community that I'm living with and working with, in their willing to share our struggles and our hopes, and we have good conversations, the difficult conversations. We try things and fail, and that's okay. And we build each other up. And that's so important, and I appreciate our prayer times together. And I appreciate the love and support. I recently lost a very dear sister friend of mine, and it was difficult, and I didn't know how to cope. So [Name] said, "Do you want to pray together?" This was in the morning. And I said "yes." So now, whenever we can, we pray together in the morning because usually you are by yourself, praying. And that strengthens me, and I look forward to when we do pray together in the morning to start our day. That's community-building, and the support and the love that we have for each other.

Respondent: For me, it's the other sisters, the other members of my community, and the love that I see they have for God and for each other and for the people they work with. And also, they're progressive and open to new things, new ways and changes.

Respondent: One of the major things for me, the most important is in our communities, the international living. You're from Africa, right, and we have others from seven different countries.

Seven foreign countries, it's something really engaging and interesting. It has its own challenges, but it's really a richness. And also, I appreciate the outreach of the community in working with youth, with immigrants, and with poor and abandoned people. So that's something that I appreciate about my congregation.

Respondent: I appreciate that, you know, we all do different things in our communities. We do it differently and we see things differently sometimes, but I think what I really appreciate is the fact that we're rooted in Jesus and Mary. And that, you know, whether it's our sisters in [Place] or in [Place] or in [Place] that there's that peace that we share.

Respondent: For me too, the internationality. Like, when I did my novitiate, there were others from twenty countries. And it's like each culture was enriching me, and I like that.

Interviewer: Did you say over twenty countries?

Respondent: Twenty.

Interviewer: Wow. How did you manage the languages?

Respondent: We got a common language which was Italian, and then, we all speak different languages. At least, in my village, we speak maybe five [languages], or some seven.

Interviewer: So was your novitiate in Rome, in Italy?

Respondent: Yeah.

Respondent: I would just say that it's the sense of belonging, no matter what. It's your house, it's your community. Even in the event of any problems, it's your house, it's your community, and it's your family. And the second thing is just what Fr. [name] said, is the opportunity to serve people, especially those in the margins.

Interviewer: And maybe, would you say, the opportunity to serve, but in a way that you wouldn't be able to do as an individual?

Respondent: No, I totally am able, but I mean in different parts of the world, in different contexts and stuff like that. I can do it in Mexico and the United States. But now, here, it's the opportunities, the vast opportunities that you have. Different contexts.

Interviewer: How about some of the rest of you? Some of you have been very quiet. I know that everybody has something that they really, really like about their community. You wouldn't be in it, if you didn't like something about it, right?

Respondent: For me, it was the prayer life and the understanding of the community members. Also, the sharing of our elderly sisters, listening to their stories, their experience.

Interviewer: Are there a lot of elderly sisters in your community?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And learning from their experience?

Respondent: Yes.

Respondent: I've always found the [Institute members] to be there for me, wherever I go. And they have a good sense of humor, you know, maybe that's something that's everywhere, but I certainly do find it with the [Institute]. And then the connection to that international, corporate mission.

Interviewer: Is that everyone?

Respondent: I would like to say that I like the charism of this community, it's set in love. And also, support and prayer together. Encouragement.

Respondent: I appreciate that each sister is given the freedom to be who she is. The individual gifts and talents and strengths are nurtured. And as a result, sisters have had different ministry experiences, different life experiences, in community but also sometimes separately. And I just think that's beautiful because it allows each person to thrive as God has created them.

Interviewer: What would you say are some of the difficulties of living in community?

Respondent: Ooh la la....

[Several people laugh.]

Interviewer: I thought he said the food.

Respondent: Oh.

Respondent: I think one for myself is the age gaps, between the young and the old.

Interviewer: Yeah, talk about that a little bit.

Respondent: I am in a house where there are sixteen of us and eleven are over the age of 85. And so, although I know that their intentions are good, and I know that they love us, they love me, but it's difficult. It's difficult to build that community, too. But I just was reflecting and I think that when it comes down to it, I know that they have my back and that they would do anything for me. So that's what important for me. I have to learn to respect where they're at in their life. As do they, they are learning very well to respect where I am in my life. And so through that, I trust that we'll be able to build some stronger bonds.

Respondent: Where I am at, it's more like a retirement residence. So after supper, everyone goes to their room. It's like, "it's too early. It's only six o'clock!" So it is a struggle that way, even though I'm in community, sometimes I don't feel like I'm in community. There's no bond.

Respondent: For me also, it's the age and the cultural differences. And they're not big challenges, but just small things. So, when I first moved in, they pushed back dinner to have a late dinner at six o'clock, because normally they eat at five. But because I'm working and I was still at work at five, so that's why they pushed back the dinner hour for me. And it was a struggle to leave work at five, to be home for six, for supper at six. And very often, I used to come in after they were all sitting. And also, I used to eat at eight, eight-thirty, so to eat at six o'clock was a big challenge for me. And also the food, I like my food spicier, the food is very bland. They all know, I carried my hot sauce here. So the food is bland. I think, they do try to add a little bit more spice in their food, but to them, pepper is a spice. And, it's just different. But nothing big, I do get a chance to cook my own meals. So I do that, I do that on weekends.

And the age factor is also a challenge in the sense that when I was living on my own, I was used to having music playing. But here, nobody plays music. Or if they do, it's more religious hymns that are playing, and I feel like I'm intruding on silence or intruding on their time if I play anything else. And I'm not used to going around the house with my earbuds on. I just like music playing in my room, but the walls are so thin, so I know I disturb other people. The other thing is my family is in India and because of the time difference – there's an eleven hour difference. So when I talk to them, it's after ten at night, and everyone else is in bed. So I'm very often whispering on the phone. Yeah, so it's small things. And the sisters are accommodating and they don't complain about things, but I'm always sensitive about the noise and about the floor creaking when I'm walking around.

Respondent: For me, it's the age gap, but also different personality types and learning to work with different personality types. And some are more sensitive than others. You have to be careful what you say and what you do. Where I work, there are three sisters at the retreat house, and one staff. I want to learn everything, but it feels like when I'm doing the learning, I'm stepping on the other sister's toes because that's what she does. And we've had some interesting conversations about this: "Well, I'm just learning because when you're gone, I need to know how it's done. I'm not trying to take over." We've come to some understandings, especially at meal times and clean ups that I say, "Is there anything else?" and if she says "no," then I respect that and I step back, even though I know that there's more I could do to help her out so that she could relax a little sooner. But you've got to respect the boundaries and find those boundaries, and that can be difficult as well.

Sometimes, you can change the status quo, but other times you can't. You can ask the question: "Why do we do this?" "Well, we always do this." "Well, why?" You know, they kind of threw that at me. "Why can't we do this?" "Well, we never have." "Well, can we try it?" "Sure..."

Interviewer: We tried it once.

Respondent: "We tried it once. It didn't work out." But that was fifty years ago, so now we no longer change the dishes. Sorry, it didn't work. So it's living with the different personality types and learning how to live with the different personality types. That's a challenge.

Interviewer: Other challenges?

Respondent: In the smaller communities, like mine, the men were usually older. One of my challenges is, I become the go-to person for everything: errands, yard work, and fixing stuff. And because they're older and that's the natural thing, they're like, "Oh, those young fellows, they can do that." And then, I find myself getting frustrated, because I work out of the house, and therefore I'm always there. They think, "Oh, you're at home, so you're not doing anything, can you fix this, look at this?" So I find, personally, that's one of my challenges. And I'm generous, so immediately, I'm like, "Oh yeah, I can help you with that." And then after, I say, "Why am I spending two hours of the morning, when I should be writing, fixing this thing, or running across the city to buy this?"

Respondent: There's an openness to be nurtured, but there's a lack of energy to do something about it in many of our men. And tied to that is a reaction against the younger generation of religious. Many who are considering religious life today would seem, to our men, who are either moderate or somewhat progressive ecclesologically. They have some apprehension about a more conservative younger active Catholic, and I suppose that would be one of my real struggles.

Respondent: And for me, it's always a racism that people have. I read this the other day, it's like religious life has to transcend and look at that internationality and the Body of Christ. And also those people that have a superiority complex and that think they always know everything, and they want to throw those people around.

Respondent: I think for me, it's having a community life that's life-giving. Like we have a lot of sisters who have lived in the same place for a long time, and there's a lot of groups that are kind of closed off [among themselves]. So we wouldn't send a younger member, or anyone really, because they would have a hard time living in some of the houses because they're so used to living together that it's hard to bring somebody new in. And, so actually communal living is one of the great things, and one of the hardest things. When it's going well, that's the best part. And when it's not going well, it's very difficult. And so, I've had an experience of both.

Respondent: Right now, living in a different community, the experience I'm having is that it's an angry community. There is a lack of true dialogue and trust by each other. It's not only because some of them are there together since ten years, they also have unreconciled problems and issues. And then you come and you also become the battle. So clearly, you know, that is hard, and that brings on a lot of stress. And you don't know what happened, how it happened. And what, thrown into that, and you have to swallow certain events. So therefore, lack of trust and lack of transparency and true dialogue is a problem. And also a lack of preparation of those who live here to receive others. Because sometimes, those who come from outside, we undergo a number of preparations, and those who live here, okay, nothing. So we have preparation for entering congregations, and it's a problem for those who receive us without being prepared for other cultures and other people. So it's always two sides. And it's a really big challenge. And another thing is a lack of real presence of local people. Because we are seven and only one is Canadian, and he's completely an African because he lived almost 35 years in Africa. And so, he, ontologically he has changed into another person. And so we don't really have a reference point for someone going to Canada, because all of us from other cities, even though maybe we have lived here for twelve or

fifteen years, but they have their own ideas and views. So I think the lack of local people is a problem for us. We feel abandoned, like orphans. So that, I feel, is vital so that we can understand the situation.

Respondent: I think the challenge of living community is constantly trying to be, choosing to live it when you're not under one roof. So, when I'm living alone, always being aware and mindful of how to keep nurturing that. What's my part in that, what am I doing? So it's just that it's, the challenge is to be constantly aware of it because I think that if it slips, other things have the potential to fill.

Interviewer: And I suspect that that's a challenge for a lot of folks with this being such a large country with relatively smaller number of religious. So, there's not really huge concentrations, many people in ministry are spread out, is that correct?

Respondent: Yes and no. I mean, in [Place] where we have our novitiate, we've got sisters who live on their own in these two-bedroom apartments. And yet, there's only one sister and two novices living together as a community in the novitiate. And it seems, my interpretation is that nobody wants to leave their comfort zone, to be able to make a really good, fuller experience with more sisters to see what this community life is like. So they are comfortable in their one's and two's. That's, that's hard. You know, that here we are, we're entering religious life, and nobody wants to give up their apartment to come live the change.

Respondent: And another challenge is that, since we are active members and we work in different ministries, sometimes we make excuses for ourselves by saying "I have to work in the parish" and another says "I have to work in my ministry." That's a big challenge, how to reconcile both and be present and involved with others in community. And staying involved in the mission and incorporating the other members of the community.

Respondent: I think the big challenge in our community is choosing leadership for each local community. You know, you get stuck in a rut and choose the same person again and again and again and again. And, it becomes like a death trap.

Interviewer: I'd like to move us broader now, so rather than thinking just about your personal community, what do you think is most challenging about religious life today in Canada in general?

Respondent: Beyond our own congregations?

Interviewer: Right, not challenges about living in community. What are the biggest challenges of religious life in general?

Respondent: I'm not sure if this is it, but I'm thinking maybe just the hope that we can go on, in general. Because a lot of people have negative perceptions, and all that.

Interviewer: Sure. You hear the negative before you hear the positive, don't you?

Respondent: Sometimes, relevance because a lot of the areas in which sisters, brothers, and priests have been working in, if they have apostolic ministries, they've been taken over by other organizations like the government or sometimes just other kinds of ways of working. So there can be a problem of what to do? If I become a religious, like you don't want to be a contemplative necessarily, but what kind of ministry will I have?

Respondent: Yeah, the traditional ministries of nursing and pastoral care, all of those traditional roles are gone. We built the hospitals, we built the parishes, we built the schools, and now they're taken over by the government. So okay, what do sisters do now? Or brothers, or priests?

Respondent: But it's a challenge to say, well, how do you minister to people? I mean, our ministries, as you know, we're looking more at integral ecology and all of the people. We're looking at the spiritual needs of people which are not being met. And how do we do all that, working with the systemic justice issues in ecology and caring for our home? There are other challenges, too, you can't see. I can pray at home. This is the conversation I have with myself. I was doing good works, I was praying at home, I was attending church, I was doing all the right things. But there was something missing in my life, something else that I needed. I know one sister who was doing all of that, she made final vows, and then she left, to get married. Because she said, "I can do all this, and I don't have to be a religious." So what's the attraction? Why are we here? It's a question I continually ask myself. I haven't made final vows yet. I could easily walk away and be well taken care of, it's not a problem. Not that I want to be taken care of. But it's, we need people to understand that you doing something that's bigger than yourself. Bigger than your own home communities, it's really the whole world. Living a prophetic life.

Respondent: I would say, the biggest challenge for religious in general, but particularly for orders of priests is being parochialized. We're not doing so much our specialized charism ministry, we're taking care of the parish. And then you start to think like a pastor, you start to think like a priest in a diocese. And your horizons shrink to this parish, and to the budget, and you need a new roof and how are we going to do that? And then the mission and the prophetic stuff, there's just no energy, no time for it. For the [Institute], historically, we sacrificed our community of living in order to send missionaries out to all these distant places who then became more or less parish priests. They came back for meetings, etcetera, but we sacrificed our communal salt for that work, which was doing the work of what priests should be doing out there. But as religious we lost a lot.

Interviewer: Is that, that like a contemporary issue as well?

Respondent: Well, the truth is that we don't have the priests to keep sending any more. So there's no more, so the ones who live in remote areas, real remote areas, are younger. But it's in the arctic, it's almost like that's a region, so it's a little different than just having [Institute] priests in all these little country parishes in more established dioceses. I think another thing that's a challenge to our religious life is what Francis called the rapidification of society in general, particularly in the Western world. There's so much information continuously coming at you, so many things to be on top of. And there's fewer, maybe church people, or maybe fewer religious, so we're covering more ground,

we're covering more areas. So you have to know everything that's going on in the diocese, but you also have to know all that's going on in the province. You also have to know everything that's going on in your particular expertise area whether it's vocation work, or chaplaincy, or you're a professor. There's just so many things, and it's all flowing, it's all coming at you.

Interviewer: What was the word that you used?

Respondent: It's from *Laudato Si'*, it's called rapidification.

Interviewer: Alright, I thought I heard that.

Respondent: It's a word, I don't know if it's in another language, but it's kind of a coined word that Francis uses. And what I notice then is, just like young people with their saturation for media, their media saturation. They've got tremendous, maybe length or surface, but their depth is sacrificed. And that's happened to us, too. The superficiality, in a certain sense, is the result of that.

Respondent: I also wonder if sort of the decline in reputation of the Church in Canada, I think, really affects religious life. I mean, we have problems with fallout from the child sexual abuse scandals, there's the legacy of the residential schools in Canada. There are a lot of people who have been wounded by the Church, and they've kind of passed that down I think, to the next generation. And so there's a hesitancy to even have a relationship with your local parish. So how can you even go beyond that to considering religious life and kind of being an emblem for the Church? You know, there's a lot of tension, I think, in society, in between the Church and regular families.

Respondent: And I would like to share now that I came from Europe almost a year ago. So in Europe, you may notice that other religious life is different than here. So for me, for example, I'm a little bit scared, but I'm hearing that sisters entering community life, and then they decide to live on their own. So they're doing their own schedules of how they pray, when they're going to Mass, something like that. So, for me that is forbidden, where is the community? If you're living on your own, as a young person, for example, I'm not seeing the point. Why did they enter religious life, some kind of community, I can live by myself and not be a nun. And I can volunteer, I can do good things. So I'm seeing that probably in that area, we need to change some things to show that we are a little different than just a nun living on her own, supporting ourselves, and so on. That's my kind of challenge, I just can't understand it. And it does not attract me at all. So I'm sorry if I hurt someone.

Respondent: No, that's a very important conversation. It's, how do you make a community when you're living on your own? Sometimes you have to because of the ministry you're involved in, but how do you make community? How do you be a community in a group of sixty where everybody goes to their bedrooms after supper? That's not community, you know. You need to be able to do things together, have some time together. It's tough, and there are some who just want it but can't live community, and they're on their own. And it's a conversation we have at home all the time, about what it is.

Respondent: I would say this. The big challenge I see, is being spiritual, mystic, and prophetic. What people seek, as I have observed here, is not that you are doing some volunteer work. Now anyone can do that and younger guys are much better at that. And they go to different countries and they can do one week, two weeks, or one month of missionary work as long as you are happy. So how to be more grounded in Christ and how to be motivated by the spiritual lessons. How to be a good spiritual mystic. That, I think, is a big challenge. And how, also, to live a mature sexual and affective life.

Respondent: For me there seems to be all these stereotypes about religious and a lot of them are around religious being unhappy. We are living in a secular, sexualized world so it is difficult for people on the outside to reconcile how you can be celibate and still be happy. And that is a question I get thrown at from all my friends even those who have accepted that I am joining and are supportive. They keep coming back to celibacy and it's like, "Why? Why do you want to be? And how do you do that?" and "Why do you join a community to do the work?" It's like the spiritual aspect gets overlooked. Because it's more than the mission, it's more than that.

Interviewer: I have one last question for you. And this one is kind of future oriented. What I would like to hear from you is what are your hopes and your fears for the future of religious life in Canada? What do you see into the future?

Respondent: Working with young adults in a college setting and having that privilege to view, with pastoral conversations and other means, you see young adults who are maybe taking steps to actualize their faith. How much they even struggle with commitment, self-esteem, just staying on task, perseverance. The capacity to do something hard for a long time. That really concerns me. When we dream in these meetings and stuff, about new forms of religious life and I still think, I don't think the young adults today have enough parts per million of perseverance, resilience, joy, faith, to really live a vowed life. I don't care what form it is, whatever new form it is, there is going to be vows and there is going to be community. And I honestly really, I don't know what is going to happen. I almost think, and maybe this is the hope, that there will be some catastrophe that will force two generations of people to get back to a more mature-producing rhythm of life.

Respondent: My hope is that if we can keep a healthy, broad understanding of vocation and within vocation understand religious vocations, marriage, and the ordained and single life. If we can have a healthy perspective of that and not be so concerned about self-preservation, we will continue. I am finding often in my own language and those that I either work with or are in ministry with, I really challenge us, or me, when I use just the word vocation in the context of religious vocation. When I mean religious vocation, but I just call it vocation. I think it's because the more we can help the people of God to see that we all have a vocation. How is God calling you to be most in love with God? And then move from there. That is where I find hope. Because I think if we keep that language alive and the actions that accompany it, there for me is the hope that people will be invited to respond to whatever that vocation is and if it is a religious vocation, we will be there ready to welcome them.

Respondent: One of my [Institute] professors said that as numbers shrink in religious life that it is a tremendous opportunity for there to be bridge building between different congregations. Ironically, the [Institute] are probably the worst at that, but that is a whole other story. But like things like this, like bringing different congregations together, in different contexts, working together. We have found this to be such an enriching opportunity. And I mean there is already so much going on around the world. I know in the South Sudan there is a lot of inter-congregational community building and work going on. I think that can only be for the good. So I think there is a lot of hope in that.

Respondent: I am hoping that each of us we can live our vocation with joy. Because if we do that then others are going to see that we made a good decision; that the Lord is with us; that the Lord is working in us. Because sometime we forget so much, we are so distracted, and we don't live our vocation with joy. So then people see the leaders of the Church with these [grim] faces and not so much joy. That is what we need. We need to go back to that peak that we feel when God is with us and we don't forget that. Because he comes to us from the start, he comes from many other things. We become his ministers and we became very cold and very dark. And so I hope that all of us can get in touch with that very moment that we experienced God and then share that with others. That is my hope.

Respondent: My fear is that the maintenance and the administration will dominate the lives of younger religious as we become smaller. My hope is that religious will make choices today around institutional commitments and that sort of thing that will allow those few remaining members to perhaps get back to the essentials. To focus beyond, if they wish, to focus beyond the needs of the long-standing commitments, pursuing the needs of today in ways that best respond to those needs.

Interviewer: What do you say to young people today that you meet that you think might be discerning?

Respondent: This is a great life.

Respondent: Give it a try.

Respondent: Follow what's in your heart.

Respondent: Trust God.

Respondent: I encourage them to talk to a spiritual director and go through the process of discernment. There are a lot of discernment tools which are available out there and they are not always people available to talk to. And some have even heard of the word discernment. Just encourage them to talk, and talk to other people.

Interviewer: Well our time is about up does anyone have any last minute profound thoughts they would like to be included? Or not profound?

Respondent: I guess just going back to what we were saying about fears, I guess I do have one fear about where religious life could go. And what I do worry about and [Name] talked a little bit about the more conservative candidates coming in to some of the congregations. I guess what I worry about is, I really believe that that the Church has evolved a lot in the last 2,000 years and it will continue to evolve. And as numbers fall, I worry that people will read that as we need to go backwards, rather than maybe doing a bit more of a deeper discernment of what needs to change. You do see some bishops, in certain areas, spouting that – that we need to go back to how things were. That really bothers me when I hear that.

Respondent: One thing that I am working with in my vocation approach to people is, because there is a little bit of admiration and identification with Church or vocation, but there is all these doubts. And I have been finding ways to say, “Give the Church the benefit of your doubt. So you don’t feel 100 percent certain, the Church, the kingdom needs you to maybe just try and go beyond your doubt.”

Interviewer: I like that a lot. Well thank you all, this has been extremely helpful. I really appreciate your time and your openness. If you have any further reflections or anything else that you feel you didn’t get a chance to say, please contact me at CARA.

Focus Group, Montréal, Québec, August 12, 2017

Interviewer: I would like to hear from you about what first attracted you to religious life? Look back and think about what was it that seemed attractive to you? You can start with just religious life in general and then we will move in a little bit more to what attracted you to your institute.

Respondent: I think first off the sense of community. My context was a little different. I was working at L'arche and it's the first place I met [Institute]. But even then in the L'arche experience itself, even though I was raised Christian and Catholic, this was a very intentional community and kind of intense in many ways. I thought, "Wow, the people here, this is very meaningful." I didn't want to be at L'arche my whole life, but it was a turning point. The religious I was meeting there were committed and joyful and interesting, engaging and were having meaningful lives. And it was in the context of a community.

Respondent: I got to know the order by working for them. We mentioned grocery shopping earlier, I used to work at [Place] where the novitiate was based. So I was a student at that time, so I was a receptionist during the evenings and during the summer I would mow the lawn and do all kinds of chores, wash the dishes. I began slowly going back to Mass, speaking with the fathers there. What I appreciated was the diversity of the community; that everyone's charism was respected and was trying to fulfill that. If somebody had some aptitude in teaching then he was encouraged to be that, and not everybody was the same. I was fearing about being "in a mold" and really acknowledged that. They were very nice to me and I got to have a sense that this may turn out to be what I was longing for, without knowing it beforehand. So living with them and learning our way of proceeding, so to speak, I really enjoyed that and that was a very good experience. During the summer months, we have a lot of time to reflect, and going to Mass, and getting to know the [Institute] that were passing through the community, was very formative for me.

Interviewer: And how about you?

Respondent: My attraction to religious life began very young age. As [Name] knows, I didn't grow up and I wasn't raised in Canada I was raised in many different places. But I was hosted by [Institute] in a convent. They were not Ignatian but they had an Ignatian spirituality and from a very young age I was very attracted to their spirituality. But then in my undergraduate, I moved to Canada and got involved in L'Arche, with the [Institute] Sisters. And I realized at that point, through L'Arche, that I needed to do something with my life. So I started to refer to [Name] and I got to know him on a personal basis during my undergrad. I went to have an experience with the [Institute] in [Place] in my last year of university. Working there with them was nice. And because of L'Arche and my experience with the Sisters there I realized that I did indeed want to join religious life.

Interviewer: So how old were you when you first felt a strong sense that God was indeed calling you to a vocation?

Respondent: I think it happened in stages. I think I had been thinking during my teens but I couldn't tell the difference between priesthood and religious life. And I didn't see the urgency of it. And then this contact with L'Arche I was twenty-three but I didn't actually join until ten years later. It was a long process.

Respondent: I would say for myself, in my early twenties. There was a link in going to school and trying to figure out a profession. What will I be doing with my life? I am speaking in religious terms, who will I be serving? I wasn't thinking in those terms back then. [My life] needed to have a purpose and it needed to be with people – that, I knew. I was always more happy in hockey team, baseball team, or a school setting than being alone or by myself. So realizing that, in the realm of a religious community, it made sense for me. I belong to a group, I was part of and that's very important for me. A sense of community, which is much bigger than myself and with the [Institute], I hit the jackpot so to speak. [laughter]

Respondent: For me at a young age wanting to be a religious even wanting to be a priest from a very early age. But it was during my undergrad when I was studying that I just began to have a sense that I wanted to do more with my life. What I was doing was not enough, so it was about at the age of eighteen I think that I really started to discern religious life in a more directive way and I decided to enter. I entered the [Institute] at twenty-one. And so I think it was that. It was an accumulation of life experiences and getting to know the [Institute] on a really personal basis because I think at that time when I was around eighteen I could have gone with many different religious communities but I was getting to know the [Institute] as peers, actually as friends. Actually, I was on a canoe trip when I decided to enter. [laughter] That is when I decided that I really wanted to belong to the [Institute].

Interviewer: It sounds to me like each of you were attracted to your particular community, the congregation that you entered through their ministries, through interactions with the actual members. Had you explored other possibilities? Had you done any work with other congregations? Or considered any others?

Respondent: The first contact was with [Institute] at L'Arche and through friends. They were there as part of their formation and those were personal connections. As I went through that long discernment afterwards, I looked at [Institute] because I wanted to be a missionary overseas. So [Institute] was very much into that. A friend of mine is a [Institute] and was trying to encourage me to join them, and I didn't really feel the chemistry there. So I did look at other things but really the [Institute] were the ones that...probably because I had that personal connection in my early twenties. I think that it really left an impression.

Respondent: For myself, I was not shopping around for a religious community when I met my [Institute] colleagues. I felt right at home and I could see the difference when people from different orders would come and chat or speak. It's not good or bad, but I felt more at home and it fitted. So there was a strong sense that I belonged to that group and remembering the parish priest that was helping out in the high school and stuff like that, I felt more belonging to the religious rather than to

the diocesan clergy, that was more clear for me. A sense of loneliness associated with diocesan clergy that I saw, or thought that I was seeing. Perhaps that is not the case, but I felt more at home there.

Respondent: I was really only attracted to religious life so I didn't consider diocesan [priesthood] but I did look briefly at the [Institute]. And then during my time in [Place], I was in contact with others from the [Institute]. But I realized in my interaction with [Institute] was it was the only thing I really felt called to. I think with the [Institute], what was really attractive to me, was the way they have of encouraging the intellectual life, spirituality, and justice. I think all the other communities have that to a certain degree, but in terms of my character and my interaction, I felt it was mostly the [Institute] in which I was able to live that.

Interviewer: Thinking back about when you were discerning your vocation, when you were going through that discernment process was there anyone that particularly supported you or encouraged you?

Respondent: I would say that the support that I got was from the community, not that my family was not supporting that decision, but it took a while before I spoke about my desire to enter a religious community. So I was on my own, so to speak with my spiritual director and the choice, the invitation was clear and it was my decision and I didn't feel that I needed to have approval with all my closest friends, so that I was making the right decision. I didn't live or have enough to live that insecurity that some people may happen to be going through. But the people that were close to me knew about my desire and I felt very at ease, even though I was a bit nervous because it was a big step and I was saying, "well okay I'm taking a step and I don't know where my foot will land." That is my story.

Respondent: I would say something similar. My close friends and family knew and were supports. Spiritual direction was helpful. The local [Institute] communities where I would go for dinner, they were very supportive. The other thing is that because it is such a big step, I really took advantage of all the opportunities like to visit the novitiate, there's a six weeks of [Institute] program in [Place], that I did, during my novitiate. All of these things so that I could really get a sense of what I was about to do. And all the people that I met on all those things were very supportive. Like the other candidates who were discerning like me, I kept in touch with them. So I think that was....we didn't really have a discernment group, I don't think, but that kind of how that operated. There were other people my age who were also doing this, and we kept in touch.

Interviewer: Well there used to be discernment groups and that was much more common in the past but it's not so common today, I hear.

Respondent: In Montreal, there is one of these groups that operates among the people, who are helping younger people to discern. They have kind of different opportunities for them to visit the [Institute], the [Institute], the [Institute], or women's religious orders. So it's kind of a buffet style image.

Respondent: I wasn't part of a discernment group. I really didn't tell my family until just before I entered and knew that they would be opposed as it were. But they came along very well, actually and they were supportive. But I think a great support for me was the personal support of friends. I was very fortunate that one of the Sisters that I grew up with went into the infirmary, and I don't know if it was good for her, but it was good for me, in Canada. So she was like my spiritual grandmother, giving me advice on religious life. Also my personal interaction with [Institute], my confrere at L'Arche were very supportive, and they were a good kind of sounding board for me. I would say that's how I sort of discerned, with other people. I think it was basically a personal decision or a personal discernment, but I had different people I could try it on or talk to and everyone was very supportive.

Interviewer: Let's talk about the other side of it. The people who, either you hesitated to talk to because you knew they would be opposed, or the people who while you were discerning said, "I don't think this is a good idea." Did you have any opposition or any resistance either internally, certainly, or mostly from others?

Respondent: It's funny that, as you are talking about this, the people who were actively dissuading me from this – telling me that I was making a big mistake with my life – were former religious. So these are people who had a bad experience of religious life. They actually went out of their way to say, "You don't know, and you are making a big mistake." So obviously that was something that they were projecting on me, based on their own experience. And there weren't many of those, but I do remember a couple who were warning me. And then the rest would be people who may not be religious, didn't really understand why I would be doing this, didn't come from the faith context. So for them I would just say, "Well I am following my heart" and that was something they could kind of understand. But I didn't really encounter any active opposition otherwise, from people saying, "No, this is a bad thing." Plus I was older, you know, I entered at thirty-three. So people were like, "Okay that sounds interesting. We don't know too much about what that really means, but..." But they weren't actively opposing it. Except for the couple of former religious that I experienced.

Respondent: There is a lot of similarities. I would say more [discouragement] in the realm of people that I was living or interacting with. There was lots of ignorance or "How does it work?" "You cannot do this", "You need to go to bed at seven in the evening" and "It's like entering the military, in a way." So the ignorance went as far as asking, "Is it a sect? Is it part of the Catholic Church?" There was a lot of misinformation. But they could relate to following a desire for a sense of belonging, that you could follow your heart. And they were in agreement with that. But they didn't know the structure and where it will lead and the path that I was undertaking and the different steps of formation. So there was a lot of ignorance so to speak, even to this day.

Respondent: I have friends, I still do who are former religious, at the time and they seriously asked me if I knew what I was getting into. And they told me their own experience about why they left, and sometimes it put chills on my back about if I wanted to do this or not. But they were helpful, actually. It was a good way to test my desire, in fact. Also there was opposition from family, especially from my mother and my sisters, about entering. But again that is no longer the case. But

they had a very hard time understanding that. But for the most part I felt quite well supported. That people felt, “Well, it is your decision. It’s how you choose to serve.” And somehow it fit into how people saw my personality.

Interviewer: We have heard from others that, unlike a few generations ago when young people were often times not forced into religious life but strongly, strongly encouraged, particularly by their families, that it's maybe in some ways the opposite now. That families are more discouraging than encouraging. And maybe I am reading too much into this, but I just was wondering what your perspectives are on family encouragement.

Respondent: In my own case, I didn’t sense a strong encouragement or discouragement. I was brought up in a Catholic family, so obviously they are pleased that their son is [entering religious life]. But I didn’t sense any pressure. Just this week I was talking to a person who was a candidate. His friend happens to be French Canadian and his parents were quite anti-Church because of the history of the Church here. And they actually cut all ties with him. I thought, “Wow.” I didn’t experience anything like that. That must be very difficult. I mean that is an extreme case. I think you’re right. I think, you know, families are smaller now, the parents want grandchildren. I think the abuse crisis too, that is why people think, “Well why would you want to be a priest given all the bad publicity, you’ll have to deal with this the rest of your life, do you really want to deal with this?” I have known of cases of people like that. I didn’t feel from my family, from my parents, anyway, they were not saying that. And I was older too. By that point they were like, “Well whatever you decide we are going to support you.” Yeah that is the way it was.

Respondent: When I announced that to my father and my mother, they felt that because I was so calm in announcing that news, that it was compelling to them. It was not like I was all over the map. And so they didn’t understand why, but they felt that in the way I was explaining it, they felt comfortable and they were respecting my decision. In the work that I am doing now, when I speak with a candidate and their family, one thing that is worrisome for the parents is not having a say in what will be the vocation of their son, which is normal. So for example, he is studying chemistry, “Will he be able to continue and become a doctor in chemistry?” And having the notion that somebody else will decide and it will be the will of God and not the will of the mother or the father – who is actually the will of God. [laughter] So two wills of God competing, that’s a bit difficult. They want the best for their children, which is quite normal. But we need to put that in the perspective of a spirituality and their relationship with Jesus and God and the trust that goes with it. We are shifting gears. So maybe he is talented in chemistry, but he can also become an English teacher, or something else. So what’s for the good of the man? What’s the need of the Church? How do you combine those?

Interviewer: Does that resonate with your experience?

Respondent: Yeah it does. So when I decided to enter I went to my family. I first worked on my father and he was the easiest to work on. I think because one of his closest friends was a religious. And once I had him on board, the support of the religious who was his friend, then we went to my

mother. I think my mother wanted grandchildren. It wasn't in opposition to the Church, but they wanted family, they wanted this and that for me, they had these ideas. Because I was so young, I had ideas about what I wanted to do with my life, but it wasn't a decision against them. And so I think that took a while. I think it took even after vows, but once they were able to appreciate it, I think they were able to see it as it's nothing against them. I have always wanted to say that it was nothing against anyone. So that was that, and the only other thing that I would hear from people while I was discerning was, "Do you want to associate yourself with an organization like the Church that has been complicit with sexual abuse?" and that sort of thing. That actually took some thinking, but fortunately my personal experience was very positive and I was able to say there was much more than this very dark spot.

Respondent: Where I am from in [Place], in Canada there was a history of abuse and even the bishop was implicated, so the moral was so low. When I got ordained I thought "Well I should do one of my first Masses there, just for that reason. Because people were thinking, "Oh there is no future in this, like what is this?" When these things happen in places like Boston and other places, people's faith is undermined and they are disappointed, they are angry. You know a whole range of those emotions. I thought, "Okay, it's time to do something good here." And you know people told me, "Thank you for doing this. It's given us some hope." I was thinking along those lines of what you are describing.

Respondent: I grew up where the Church is very happy, so a very different experience. When I moved to Canada I was about eighteen, and I started to go to Mass and all that. I was in a little bit of culture shock to see that experience of how the Church had been hit, by abuse. I am sure it happened where I came from it's just we didn't talk about it, maybe, or there's a different reality of living Church. And that experience really shocked me. But I think it probably made me want to own up a little bit more and be more committed to being Catholic and becoming a religious because we didn't have that experience. We had a very happy Church and I didn't necessarily want to live in Canada afterwards. But I knew that I wanted to make some sort of contribution to what I saw as a somewhat depressed Church. Especially because the parish I went to as a university student ended up having a really bad scandal with the parish priest and that was sort of a wakeup call for me. So yeah, the experience of changing culture was a factor that caused me to wake up a wee bit.

Respondent: I was aware that there were some scandals with religious and priests but it didn't impact me, at least in my imagination or my realities that much. But entering religious life and studying in [Place] during the time of Cardinal [Name], I kind of discovered a broader spectrum. I was reading it in the newspaper every day. People were speaking out and I felt a part of them. And I felt that that my own responsibility was... And I felt a sense of belonging, in religious life and in the [Institute], you grow into that. When we do something great, well we all celebrate. And when something goes wrong, well we are all in that realm together. But the impact of the sexual scandal in [Place], well I can't say it never happened, but it was less than in other [Institute] provinces. So what impacted us in French Canada had more to do with the Quiet Revolution and the ultimate place the Church took in the political realm, the educational realm, and things like that. So there was a lot of

constraints on the Church, but not specifically on the religious, and not as a result of sexual misconduct, which happened and is affecting men and women and groups of people. But in a lesser way, the scale is not the same. People were hurt, they were suffering, but the scale was not as big as in other places. It doesn't mean that we don't need to work on it, but it has a different impact on my story.

Interviewer: I would like to hear from you, what do you like most about being in your community, we can start there, your particular community, or in your province, or being in the [Institute] in general. What do you like most about being a member?

Respondent: We just had a meeting recently in [Place] to talk about all those recently ordained and one person said it well, "We are most a priest when we are ourselves." And I would say it's a chance to be who you truly are or called to be. So [Name] touched earlier on diversity and I really feel that in the [Institute] that it's not just diversity of profession, you can be a teacher, or a lawyer, or whatever. That's great too, but also there is no one way of being a member. When people come and see that they are kind of intrigued because I think people have this image of a cookie cutter that all the [Institute] are the same. And then, you start to realize that, "Oh my gosh! These two or three or four, they are so different!" So I guess that's identity and uniqueness that is acknowledged and valued, enhanced and encouraged, actually. For me that was very consoling because I was a bit like [Name], I was like "Oh my gosh, I am going to have to be somebody else to be this." It's a fear, that you will have to surrender your identity, or try to be like somebody else, and that hasn't been the case. And with that, the other fear I had was, "Oh, I am going to retreat into this Catholic ghetto. I won't be able to have non-Catholic friends. I won't be able to go to Protestant services or hang out with Muslims or Jews or Buddhists." Again that has not been the case. Because of the individuality, uniqueness, this openness to finding God in the other, whoever that might be. It is a pretty... There is an openness to explore that. So there are many ways in promoting Catholic identity and the [Institute] way, I find very freeing. You don't have to put it on like a raincoat and everyone has to be the same. It's letting it come from within. I have really enjoyed that. And the people I work with, I work with young people in the university, and I think they sense that. That they don't have to change who they are to be part of this community. And not just [Institute] community but even our [Institute] college. They don't even have to be Catholic. I mean we have Muslim students, we have all types of students, just come and be yourself. And explore what that means at a deep level.

Respondent: My favorite thing about being a religious are [Institute]. I love being a member, I couldn't imagine being anything else and I love that knowing my fellow men as [Institute]. I find that it has a massive effect on me. And one thing I have noticed, I do a lot of work in interreligious dialogue especially with Muslims but a little bit with Jews, but mostly with Muslims. And of course I grew up in a Muslim country, but I find a better way for me to know how to be in dialogue is to know how to be in dialogue with [Institute]. I remember when I entered, one thing that I found quite daunting was all the stages of formation. I am still in formation in many ways. I might be a priest, but I see myself always in formation. That is a gift, I think. I see our formation as qualitative

and not quantitative. And I see that we have so much to learn, especially from those for whom we are very different from in the order. Or guys who I meet, my personality might struggle with them a wee bit – those are the people to pay attention to because they are the men who can teach me so much more about myself than about others. In their difference or in my resistance, and so for me the [Institute] is sort of like a school of life. I think about Paul the Sixth and the School of Nazareth, well it's the same thing. It's the school of life of the [Institute]. How we get to know each other, but get to know ourselves through each other. It helps us in our ministry, in our public life and so I have to thank all those people. And you picked it up, I noticed that many other members share that same view as I do. That we are there to help each other learn. In our difficult interactions, there is a great blessing. It is not spiritualizing it, it's not being pious. There is a real practicality of it. So I very much appreciate that.

Respondent: For me it took several years to realize that what I like the most is that the actualization of the [Institute] happens with each and every new member that enters the order, we need to start the process all over again. Even though we have our Constitution and we have our charism, by welcoming a man in the community, everything shifts. Not dramatically, but we need to be open and realize that it will change and we cannot be stuck. And we never have the ideal way of working. I realize that it was going to be like that and that I accepted it, because when you have a good year it works like that, we have a winning solution then, let's go forth and continue. Keep that and we need to constantly refocus, adapt to the needs of Father so and so, or this particular member, and this and that. And when we are all comfortable in that, because it is our spirituality and the member that gets on my nerves may be the one touching my growing spot, where I need to live. It seems to be easier said than done, but when you realize it and you are open to it, things work out. I am fortunate because in my community we have several men from different countries, from [Place], from [Place], from [Place], from Canada, and different age groups as well. So all the steps of formation more or less are in the community. So am I going to grow up as a grumpy [Institute] or a happy [Institute]? And so we learn from all the countries. It makes me more aware when I read the newspaper or listen to the newscast of what is happening elsewhere in the world. In my country, in my city where I live, in different countries to pay attention to my fellow [Institute]. So I never hear the news as I know other people from several countries, so my attention span is broader. And I can welcome your comment, and my comment will have an impact as well on their lives, so there is a reciprocity.

Respondent: While you were talking, the image that comes to mind is a [Institute] once told me, “you know putting [Institute] into community together because we are all so different it's like taking all these rocks with sharp edges and putting them in a blender. [laughter] You rub off each other and in a while they become well rounded.” I thought, “Well if I had been living alone I would have missed this.” I mean not that it's always easy. I mean it can be pretty painful to live with people that you didn't choose to live with, these people. Well you chose to join the order but you didn't choose to live with so and so who is driving you up the wall. I think that it does round out those sharp edges somehow.

Interviewer: I would like to hear a little bit more about this because I think this is critically important. Particularly for many of the women's congregations who haven't been getting vocations for many years. So when there is a new person that comes in, it sometimes is very, very challenging, because you have not only extreme age differences but really extreme culture differences as well. So can we talk about some of the challenges of living in community?

Respondent: Something that is key in our spirituality is to serve men and women in the geographical place we are in. So it cannot be the same as in [Place] or in [Place]. So we need to hear, to listen to the needs of the Church, and how can we bring our specificity, how can we help. And that will change from place to place. So we don't have a magic formula but we need to be aware and in contact with people. So if we shut the doors we are not actually doing what we are supposed to do. And we enter people's lives from the place that they let us enter in to. So we need not to say, "Well this how you should be doing things," but it emerges from relationship, from spending some informal time with people, so we can build bridges and be more of a companionship and welcome people of all walks of life. And they don't even need to be Christian. Somebody who is honestly searching for happiness, I will translate that into [searching for] the will of God, well fine "Let's go down that road. How can you be more a, become a human person and touch on your strength and discover who you are and who you are called to be?" When I say those phrases, I often have the sense that I am imposing my religious way of speaking to another realm. I welcome that contradiction, but I don't want to impose on them becoming part of the [Institute] team. It's about becoming who you are.

Respondent: Again, it's a spirituality. I think religious communities have to be discerning communities. So in other words, if there is no flexibility, if we only do this ministry, all we do is teach, all we do is hospitals, and we are trained this way, then there is a problem. Because the world has changed and you know, we don't need sisters setting up hospitals anymore. We don't need religious running schools, setting up schools, the way it was. Like for me, one of the most empowering moments for me as a person in formation was when our provincial, we had a new provincial and he came in and he has a meeting of all the [Institute] fifty-five years of age and under. He said, "I'm the new provincial and everyone is asking me what my plan is." And he said, "Now I finally realized what my plan is." He says, "My plan is you." I thought, "Wow that's discerning!" He's not like "Oh well, let's just fit this guy in this slot and this person in this slot." It's "Who has God sent us? Who is the Holy Spirit sending us?" And let's discern among this group and what the needs are and what they might be doing and what's going on within that person too. So we are not there to plug holes in an institution. There are those needs out there but there is also what is going on within the person. So be able to discern that and not fit people into things, I think that is where the problems start.

Respondent: I would say I very much echo the sentiments of when a new member comes in the community, the community changes. So when a member leaves the community changes. I have noticed for myself almost a grieving process. When someone comes there is a little bit of anxiety or fear and then grieving when the person leaves. The person has a big impact on the community and

I think it's a very, very good thing. That is how I have begun to understand community as mission. But I believe that very much. There is a reason why we are together, when we are together, and I believe that strongly and I have lived in communities as small as four and I have lived in [very large] communities. I see that, in different ways, it works out. But I have come to understand the [Institute] as a giant tent. All sorts of people can be accommodated, not just accommodated; all sorts of people can make contributions, in a way. And I have learned to say to myself, "So and so, I might think, I don't understand what he has to offer in his life." But then I will be challenged to see how he has impacted other people's lives; this is the way he is. But I wouldn't have been able to do what he has done, because of the way that I am. And so it goes beyond just praying for the person and saying, "Lord help me to understand." No, you have to go beyond being selfish that way. I think that kind of piety is selfish. I think we have to challenge and let the other person present themselves to us, and not demand anything of them. Just let them live their life. And we see how they touch so many people's lives. And then at the same time how other people who are not religious have a big impact on us, in our communities, through friends, through ministries through whatever interactions we have. Because I think it's a false sense of humility to think [Institute members] are going around making things better. I think we enter the [Institute] for the salvation of our souls. We are not entering the [Institute] for the salvation of other people's souls; that's secondary. I think we have to understand that religious life is not just apostolic. It is for the perfection of our own lives. So we are benefiting. And so the differences between [Name] and I is, whatever I bug [Name] about is making him better and whatever bugs him about me, makes me better. So I think we enter for our own good and I don't think we can be misguided by thinking that we are going out and changing the world, but no, the world is changing us. Other people are making us better and that is what attracted me to religious life and I am only beginning to slowly understand this. I don't think I totally appreciate it yet. But I think that's the journey of life.

Interviewer: I like that; that is very profound.

Respondent: Just to add, there is the contemplation aspect and the apostolic aspect that go hand in hand. I don't expect everybody to be working ten jobs and saying twelve Masses per day and stuff like, but at the same time we need to realize the gift that is people who are more contemplative. The subsequent message is that they are not working enough: that's my bias. So when I accept that again, there is something that can come out of it. But when I want to accept them only in my own way, I am missing the point. That tension is not as easy to live, as I am able to present it. There is some challenge that comes from that and because we are constantly aiming for the good of all – to give to the best of our capacity – so how do you measure that? I don't have any tools, so am I going to expect that I can write a paper like [Name] or speak twelve languages like [Name] or [Name] or stuff like that. So that may be challenging because [Name] will not be myself or [Name], so I need to acknowledge who I am and the gift that I bring and be happy with those. So when I am trying to be somebody else, I may not fail but will be disappointed. But I created my own disappointment, not the [Institute], not my colleagues.

Respondent: It's a good question that you ask because in our last general congregation they came up with a phrase that [Name] just used, community as mission. And for the longest time and we like a lot of religious just thought, "Oh well, we all have our mission out there in the apostolate. And then we come home and the community is just where we relax and sleep and eat." And no, no, no the two are linked. We have had that where [Institute] who have been really fantastic in their mission out there and then come back and neglect the community. I think that as we get smaller and we've lost numbers we need to pay attention to community, because if we are not nourished there we can't do anything in the apostolate, really. A sharp division between the two is not a healthy thing. I am really glad that came up in the last general congregation that we had. I think we are paying attention to community much more than we ever have. And even to the point that we are doing communal apostolic discernment, where communities get together and reflect on how the spirit's is moving in the apostolate. You know, we still have superiors obviously and they will make decisions, but they are getting that as input. Like what's coming up in the community.

Interviewer: I would like you to think in a very broad scale now. Tell me what do you think is the most challenging thing about religious life today, being a religious today?

Respondent: Good question.

Respondent: I feel that in [Place] there is a lot of indifference towards religious people. So how do I keep at it, being who I am, being happy, trying to bring different types of projects, getting to have people working together? And how do I continue that with the indifference of the world around? I don't know, that is a lot of questions. It won't stop me from persisting and being happy with what I am doing, the different types of projects. That's for me one of the different challenges. But now I am taking now only [Place], well next year the provincial may say, "Well you are going to [Place]." Okay, I'll be in a similar way in [Place], but if I go to [Place] it will be different. So I don't know.

Respondent: When you asked the question, the first word that leapt to my mind is the biggest challenge to the Church, too, is relevance. Relevance. We live in a world where probably the majority of people really don't care what the Church is saying. We don't live in a society any more where everybody is eagerly awaiting the next announcement from the bishops on something. You know, so the world has moved on. I think Pope Francis is trying to make the Church relevant again, but the Church has something to offer. So what I find is, in the Catholic world one response is movements that are sheltering themselves from secularism. And in secularism the Church doesn't really matter very much. So the response is we will just hide from it and come in here where it's nice and safe and warm. Or give up on it. Whereas with [Institute] we are very at home with secularism, we are not afraid of it. We engage it. Knowing that it eventually is incomplete. That it will not give people happiness, true happiness, because we believe that that is rooted in something deeper. So how do we remain relevant? I think we are relevant, but to do that we have to be connecting with people and with questions that are relevant to them. The questions that are relevant to them are things like, "Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? Where am I going? What is the meaning of life?" And the challenges to that are, you know busyness, technology we are constantly...we are too busy to stop and think and reflect on some of these basic questions. I think

quite frankly a lot of people live their lives trying to avoid these questions. It is not until they are sick, or facing the end of their lives, or lost a loved one, or some tragedy where they start to wonder what is the point of life. I think you know at those moments and all the way through that, we should be there with people on that journey. And that is how we remain relevant. But for me I really feel it's a question of relevance somehow.

Respondent: The next Synod in 2018 will be addressing youth ministry, discernment, and vocation. So are we relevant to younger people? And the fundamental questions that are being asked by youth from sixteen to twenty-nine years old have to do with meaning. The Pope is interested in the opinions of everybody in that age group because youth is not a disease but it's a step in life. So everybody was young at one time and it changes from generation to generation. So how can we be more meaningful to younger people? I hope that we will have lots of insight from that document. It's not in-depth, but it is a good insight to do that survey [that is being distributed to youth].

Respondent: I feel that my words were sort of taken away from me. I can give you my thoughts on relevance as well, because I was thinking there was an address the Holy Father gave a year or two ago to priests. And he said, "The challenge to you is to be relevant to people's lives." I think that is very much the question. Are we relevant? Do we have something to offer? Do we participate in the conversation of life? And I tend to think that, I don't mean this at all in a pessimistic way, I'm not pessimistic. But I tend to think that we are at the beginning of something, historically. I think the world has changed quite a bit, especially in the geopolitical way. Something is going on and it's not just to look at things politically, but to look at things spiritually. Where are we in terms of consumerism? Where are we in terms of our response to others less fortunate? Where do we stand? What do we think about? How do we live well together? Or are we going to be people who are selfish? I think that the Church will have a lot to say in that conversation, but I think it's a conversation that we are not yet having. I don't mean this pessimistically. I don't think we have the data yet. But I think the [Institute] is always had a great tradition of intellectual reflection and listening. Most importantly listening. I think of other congregations, other parts of the Church. We have the greater society, civil society, so every conversation we have has to be reaching out to other religions and groups and saying "Well what's going on?" It's not saying "How can we name it?" But how can we accompany society? How can we accompany people, all of creation, in this? I think it's a great time, actually, to be in religious life. Because of that, because it's an opportunity for us to be relevant. I think we struggle too much with what it means to be relevant because we think in terms of institutional relevancy. I don't think the Church needs a bunch of men running around who are identifiable as priests in all this to be relevant. I don't think that's the matter. I don't think we should count it by the amount of people who are in the Church or not, I don't think that matters. I think it's listening and accompanying, I think that is the most important thing. That is what we are being called to do. That actually excites me.

Interviewer: I like the connection you made to accompaniment. Not in terms of institutional relevance but relevance to the individual, which is accompaniment. That's a good insight.

Respondent: Thank you.

Interviewer: I have one last question for you we need to wrap this up. What are your hopes and fears for the future of religious life in Canada? So if you were speaking to a young person what advice would you give them? If you were a formation director, what advice do you have for them?

Respondent: I think, like what we just talked about with relevance, it's not about numbers. It's not about saving an institution or saving a community. It's about being true to the charism of that community. And being present to people in their struggles and their journeys. My hope is that, you know we were asked to do that at Vatican II, to go back to our original charism. And I think, in other communities as well, but in [Institute] we have done it a lot on that. And so I think we have been very intentional about who we are. And the communities that are intentional about who they are and know who they are, are the ones that are attracting vocations. If you don't know who you are then you don't know what you have to offer.

Respondent: And the [Institute] is helping men in formation in doing that. Also by providing them the opportunity to study abroad. So when you leave your hometown you go to a different country you get to understand a new language, you are able to say who you are and what you miss about home. And those back and forth from formation steps, which during the time it seems like an unending formation. At the end of the day, it's very helpful because you are able to listen to other people who are entering. And with the movement of people throughout our planet and our country, while there is the, how can you be? I cannot be Colombian, I cannot be Japanese, but if I am able to feel your difficulty in integrating into another country, then I can relate to those people. It will not be my own experience, but I will have a sense, a little taste and appreciation of them. So I am very grateful for that because we are removing ourselves from our place of comfort and being uncomfortable in a setting and trying to be comfortable. So there is back and forth. We need to be aware of that and not being stuck in one language or culture going back and forth. So we are able welcome who we are, with my ethnic background, so I can welcome the other and leave the same amount of space for that person.

Respondent: A difficult question...I think of it in terms of the world. I can't think of Canada, it's not my thing. I mean it's the particularity, but I think the question is universal anyhow. It should be to be open – for religious life to remain open and not to become mechanical. So not to think we have to find fixes by doing things in a precise way, even discernment, I think can be very dangerous if it is made to be purely mechanical. I think we have to remain open but I think we are open. I think if are not open, we will be forced to be open. The Lord is so strong, so I think that we can't force things, and if we try to force things we will experience resistance and frustrations, but still the Lord's will, will be done. And again, it's openness that is most important, I think.

Interviewer: Great answers, all. Any last thoughts? All right well I would like to thank you all, this has been extremely helpful.

Focus Group, Toronto, Ontario, September 21, 2017

Interviewer: What I would like to start with is I would like to hear from you what was it that attracted you to religious life? Think back to the beginning of your vocation.

Respondent: For me, one of the things that initially attracted me to religious life was a sense of integration of religious belief and faith and the world and science and technology and culture. My experience of the [Institute] before I was a member, was very much of a couple of other religious who were very engaged in culture and technology, engineering and they could articulate their faith and could also connect that with kind of a broader sense of what's going on in the world. And that was kind of one of the initial attractions to religious life for me.

Interviewer: So your attraction to religious life was very much tied to a particular institute, a particular charism?

Respondent: Yeah for me the first religious that I met happened to be the [Institute]. In some kind of deeper way, that was the first group that I really connected with and that is kind of where I ended up.

Respondent: For me, what attracted me was to see from a distance some religious and I don't know, something in me, I wanted to learn more about them, but then I had my youth group was very close to the religious family that I belong to. We were in another parish and we went down and we saw them and what initially attracted me was the joy that I saw in that group of religious. Young religious who were just joyful and so that is kind of what started it, just seeing religious...

Interviewer: Actually, acting religious and liking it.

Respondent: I would say there was two steps. The first was really a conversion to Christ and it was a consolation to me and that was really huge. But I was a bit deaf, I wanted to get married. Then I had a second call when I was near 40 so it was very clear [to me] that the call was just what I heard before, and I was sorry and very astonished that I heard the call again that I had ignored before. But then I would say I was attracted by a congregation, I guess they were apostolic women, Ignatian women, because during all that time I've been a part of Ignatian groups and so for me that was really important. And what I liked in the [Institute] Sisters was their freedom, the freedom there. And also their love of the world. I am a person who was a bit afraid of the world and had the temptation just to withdraw [from the world] because it is too hard. I could see these women really embracing the Church and also very active in the city. So it really affected me and it was really a way of saying "I don't know what is ahead" but I trust in God.

Respondent: I think for me, at least at first, it was just the idea of being a way of completely following Christ. It was a means that I saw of giving myself completely and of serving. That was a big part of the call – service.

Interviewer: So tell me how you got attracted to this particular community?

Respondent: They were in my parish as a kid, they were who I knew at first and I also in addition to knowing the sisters and growing up with them, I liked their flexibility and their willingness to do whatever God called, whatever the need is the greatest.

Respondent: I am not sure I was ever attracted to religious life, I am not sure I am attracted to it now, [laughter] but I did feel for a long time the call to this life, so regardless how I felt about it. And then within that I could speak certainly about how and why the [Institute] in particular, although I feel like that might be the next question.

Interviewer: No, that's fine...

Respondent: Okay well personally I met the [Institute] through the [Institute] Volunteer Corps. So I spent a year doing volunteer work at a time when I was not actively discerning a religious vocation. I came also to learn their spirituality, so that was really central, that really connected with me on a deep level. Their commitment to social justice was very important as well. Also the intellectual tradition of the order and at least as a volunteer more so than being a member the commitment to simple living and lifestyle, that was very attractive. From that moment forward and that would have been eight years before I began seriously discerning a religious vocation, but from my time as a volunteer, forward where I did feel that call to religious life was very tied up with the [Institute]. So then ultimately, I was not really a matter of doing any discernment between religious orders, it was just whether or not to apply to the [Institute].

Respondent: Mine was kind of in different stages because I can resonate with the fact of not necessarily being attracted to religious life per se, because I grew up with religious and I always thought, "That's not for me." But the attraction was more to having that deeper relationship with Christ. Having that spirituality, having that devotion, and that love and that personal relationship. It's hard to describe unless you actually have it. – that intimacy. And yet I had a feeling that somehow I was going to be affiliated with the Church but not in the Church, somehow. So when I started to pursue this a little more, and this call that God seemed to have for me more than I had for it. It just seemed that anywhere that I looked at different congregations because other people had the idea more than I did. It clicked in this particular community. What clicked with the [Institute] was that it was really the foundress and having that active apostolate, there is no way I could be in a cloister. I wanted to be a missionary and all this kind of stuff and she has that. And I wanted to be a contemplative at the same time and all this kind of stuff and there's this contemplative in action that our foundress has, and it was something that the more that I spent with the sisters the more I entered my relationship with Christ. That was the attraction, was that these women have that communal call and that desire to work together in this central purpose. That was the attraction even more so, each of us growing in our own individual, spiritual path yet united for the same purpose is what really drew me and yeah, it was two-fold: Christ and my congregation's foundress that just sucked me in. And then that resonates, that love and that sisterly love develops and so you fall in love and the attraction grows from there.

Interviewer: Let's think back about when you were discerning. What did you find that was helpful to you when you were discerning a vocation? So who and or what circumstances helped you in your discernment?

Respondent: For me I think one of the biggest helps was reading the Lives of the Saints. They inspired me to go for it and to live out the life of Christ in an extreme way and really follow God. But in a practical sense also when I was discerning I looked on the Internet at lots of different congregations, different spiritualities, I started reading more religious books, as well as paying attention in religious classes in schools and churches and stuff like that. Not as much talking to people because I was a shy teenager, so, it was a little bit of that, but not as much.

Respondent: Well for me during this sort of active discernment period, which I would distinguish from the period that started laying the groundwork for that, so I would tell you the most important was having a regular spiritual director and so that was a [Name]. So given that way and having that direction to help myself through that discernment was absolutely key. Related to that and in the years before that my personal prayer life had sort of waxed and waned, but during that active discernment time I was much more disciplined and serious about having a more regular daily prayer routine, which was also very helpful. And then it culminated with an eight day silent retreat at a retreat house which was where I eventually made the decision to begin the application process and that was very helpful. And then during that time as well the other pieces that were there for me were my spiritual reading, conversations with family and friends, and things like that.

Respondent: Yeah I found for me during the active part of discernment when I realized that God was a little more serious with me [laughter] he wasn't going to leave me alone, that no matter where I went that this was not going away, so you just face the reality, I was like "alright, you got me." That it became the more time I spent with the Sisters and just not in a sense of having to get to know them or wanting to be... There was a desire, just wanting to know them. Just to spend time and just to be friends with them and that's kind of what I did in the beginning. But I also did that with other congregations, just to get a general sense and a general feel. I did speak with like my parish priest about stuff. I didn't have much of the family support, so to say, even though my family was really Catholic. They are very traditional and so when I surprised them with this, they were like "What??" [laughter] And friends, of course, did not see me fit this role. So it was kind of more of a personal inward discernment that I had to kind of go through which was a good thing. God was kind of stripping and pruning me in a special way to prepare me for it. I had too many coincidental things happen where I even had strangers come up and start random conversations and say, "did you ever think about religious life?" And it was like, "Who are you and where did you come from?" "How are you reading my thoughts?" But it's this...spiritual reading came into play, but I did look on the Internet as far as vocations things and how you pursue discernment. And a lot of the stuff that was in the States did not seem largely Canadian discernment. There is a Canada discernment thing here and there that I did find but I started looking that way, because some communities weren't open to receiving. Some kind of just tell you to stick with the one you are kind of applying for. I found it kind of rough. If you knew of an order that you were going to join, then they were

really gung ho with, “Come and See,” and all this kind of stuff. But if you were kind of like waning, they were not really open to help support a vocation. It’s almost as if you want to keep that person for yourself, almost. Well the reality is that vocations are in a decline. It’s counter cultural now to do such a thing. So for me it was personal prayer and really spending time with other sisters and just talking about it openly. My big thing came about after World Youth Day and having that encounter.

Interviewer: Did you participate in World Youth Day?

Respondent: I did participate in World Youth Day and that was my big decision, I had a big moment there and it didn’t get more concrete than that as far as myself. I asked for a sign and I got one. But it was just being in that dynamic with people and being supported by clergy and parishioners and stuff like that, in that environment, that kind of helped keep the coals burning.

Respondent: Two things that I can put my finger on for helping me in my discernment. One was my proximity to the [Institute] as a student in [Place] and having access to the [Institute]. And seeing religious life in all of its ups and downs within the community. That was something that really helped open the door for me in some ways. Just seeing how normal life was as a religious and how it very quickly pulled back “veil of perfection” that I expected from looking [at religious life] from a distance and seeing how an actual community functions. And their welcome and just the being at their home and always hearing “Come by, the door’s open, stop by for Mass, and stop by for supper.” So that ultimately was very important in that ability just to get to see what a community was like. The second thing was having a spiritual director who I could work through things with but who could also, when he felt was right, pushing a little bit to take the next step and to move forward as I was being called. That was, alone, looking in the world, having that kind of person to kind of be able to keep me a little bit grounded and keep me focused and reflective on the process I was going through.

Respondent: I wish there was a priest that I had as a spiritual director. We had a youth group and my parents let the priest him know that I discerning. He supported it but he didn’t do anything. I didn’t go see him maybe more than twice. So for three years it was just really hard to actually get, or accept, the call from God. You don’t see it very clearly. God, he shows a way of saying yes. So it took a long time to discern and I wish I had spiritual director because it helps. What I think did support my vocation was the few events that our order did, but not directed to youth and vocations but just in general, youth events or family events. So I could see the religious I could approach and ask them questions. But I didn’t look for a spiritual director and I didn’t go look for the superior of the house, actually the order was not here yet. So, I think that would have helped so much. It took me so long to say yes. I prayed. My family, my dad supported, my mom didn’t, it was hard for her but when she saw me happy, she accepted it. I did my undergrad here at [Place] I didn’t go to [Place] so I wasn’t in the school of Catholics here. If I did all those things, I think it would have helped.

Respondent: And for me after this very clear call I went and asked the priest and he told me about a group which is organized each year by [Institute] Sisters. It is four session program and it is

Ignatian religious life. For me it was really helpful, because it was a presentation of religious life and Ignatian life so it helped for me to discern, even if I was very sure about it because Ignatians are very prudent. So I went to see the video because I have known them for eight years now and they said, “Ok, no problem.” They said, “Go during the weekends, just to see that they have. Go and meet all of the congregation.” So my first love was [Institute], actually, because I could see them in the community. So I go for the weekend and spend the weekend with the community and see the vocation director. But the group was very useful, the Ignatian group. All women, wondering about Ignatian religious life.

Interviewer: And led by...

Respondent: Led by sisters, by sisters of several congregations and the team is renewed perhaps every three years or something like that. So there have been some [Institute] Sisters, this year there wasn't. It was other sisters, with other religious or a priest or coming to share with us their experience and so it was on vows and we could share together, we could ask questions.

Respondent: I just wanted to...I did the [Place] retreat, but just over the weekend, so three days.

Interviewer: Oh Ignatian retreat.

Respondent: Yes, Ignatian retreat, I did two of those and that helped to see more clearly my vocation.

Respondent: And to make a brief addition to what other people have spoken about. Spiritual direction was certainly key to me. My spiritual director was in no way pushing towards a particular vocation. It was to support me just in my discernment and wherever that may lead. And I'm a little bit sorry to hear that maybe, in some cases there may be some religious who weren't as interested in supporting your vocation or the discernment process unless you are somewhat in their group already or discerning with them – just to highlight how important that was for me. That would have been enormously off-putting if I ever felt that this sort of direction, accompaniment was in any way contingent on interest in this group, yeah I would have been gone quickly.

Respondent: Well you know on that I have had women tell me that. That when other sisters have been too forward, or too jokey, or too pushy, or priests or whatever it just totally deters them. It's a fine line for discerning to know where to cross. It's one thing to support and kind of plant the seed but it's another line to...I have had spiritual directors over the years that have been phenomenal and you need somebody that is going to challenge you as well. You don't want someone that is going to hold your hand and say “There, there, yeah you are right.” I'm in no way, shape, or form definitely right in a lot of things what I say to my director. So it's important to have that, to be like, “wow think about what you are saying here.” Unfortunately, I didn't have a director during my discernment but I had sisters from a different community that said, “Well I don't see why you're not joining our community, like you were raised with us so why don't you join ours?” And I am like, “because that is why” [laughter] They tried to kidnap me.

Respondent: It was nice. When I approached the priest and told him that I want to enter, I have a vocation, the first thing he said, “Okay where would you like to enter?” It was a priest from our order and he said, “Where do you want to enter?” I said, “You have sisters, I want to go there.” And he said, “But there are other orders.” He didn’t say, “Join this community.” It was like, “Take a look around.” But I just knew that’s where I wanted to go. It was a nice thing; I didn’t expect to hear that. But he just said, “Okay where would you like to go?”

Respondent: My first response from the sisters – granted I was in my early teens when I started talking to the sisters and thinking about this. And I talked to the two sisters at my parish at one point. They said a few words of encouragement, but they didn’t talk to me, they didn’t follow up with me. Later on, I found they were trying to give me time and waiting for me to approach them, but I was too shy to approach them. So, on one side, I needed a little extra push. It took me a few years before I got there, in terms of approaching them physically again. I was more inclined to look up everything I could find about that community on the Internet before I would physically approach.

Interviewer: I think that is very common with your generation. How about anyone that was challenging or actively discouraging your discernment?

Respondent: What, the effect that it had?

Interviewer: Yeah, I mean you spoke more than anyone about the particulars.

Respondent: I had a lot of counter arguments as to why this was not a good idea. Or not the thing to do. But I also had to take into account, where is this coming from? So as far as parents coming from, you have to, I have to look and accept the fact that the generation as to where and how they grew up and they grew up with a very traditional sense of what the religious is and how a religious should be. So my grandparents were taken as war prisoners and my parents grew up in labor camps in Germany. They grew up with strict religious in religious habits all the time and had this strict religious sense, and it was priests and sisters had the ultimate word. They are on this pedestal and you don’t challenge and you don’t say nothing and so that is how we were raised. So when it came to this millennia, you know I was telling them about the community, and they knew the sisters and stuff like that and they were like “They don’t always wear their habits and the priests aren’t always wearing their collars and how can you go to this kind of community?” And I said, “Well listen, the garment doesn’t make the religious, yes it presents them. But it doesn’t mean to say that A) I won’t wear it or B) that it’s an option as to whether or not, but that is just one facet.” It didn’t stop me or you from accepting or not accepting. And I had friends that said, “Well it’s a waste of your time” and they had a misconception of what religious life was, of what you can and cannot do. Like you are going to be poor and begging on the street and asking for money type of a thing. Or it’s going to be like Sister Act. [Laughter] or things like that, that’s not the thing. And so the best kind of analogy that I could give was I had a friend who was studying for medical school and I got really annoyed with people kind of telling me that this was not the thing to do. He said, “You are wasting your time.” And I said “Okay what are you studying?” And I said, “How long is going to take you?”

“Over eight years.” And I said, “Okay what is the difference between becoming a doctor and becoming a religious? I said, “What is the difference?” He said, “Well I am going to be helping people.” And I said, “What do you think I am going to be doing?” The difference is you are going to be getting a six figure salary and I am not. And you will have the possibility of having a family and things like that. My family is going to be the community that I live with, the children that I teach and those that I encounter with. I have already accepted with that aspect, that to me is not a priority and that’s not my calling so and when I set to explain it to him that way it’s kind of like “oh”. So that is, even when I talk with children and they have all these ideas and try to make that relationship to say, “Hey listen, there is no big difference, unless you are looking at the monetary sense. And that’s unfortunate in this day and age, where a lot of people are looking at this life like your freedom is taken away, how can you follow all these rules and regulations and live together and share things and what not? And so I ultimately had to not allow others to get in my way. We live in a culture that is so individualized, it’s all about I. So what can I do and you are entitled to this and you should have this and you should have that. Whereas I already had in my own nature and it’s in me engrained is to just be helpful and do and give. I wanted to be able to do that and share my talents in a community of women that had the same charism and the same abilities to do that and in a faith-based community.

Interviewer: How about others of you, people or events or circumstances that discouraged you, challenged you maybe but eventually helped you firm up your discernment?

Respondent: My parents, for instance, at first they were very reluctant. And Mom had read a book from a former religious who talked about negative experiences in the community. She also had a friend who was a priest wife because we were Eastern Catholic and that is part of our tradition. So when I told her I wanted to be a sister she said, “Why don’t you become a priest’s wife? You marry this boy and I think he may be interested in becoming a priest.” And I am like “No.” And so she was worried about me maybe being abused, or the family having to support me because of the vow of poverty. And my father was very nervous as well, but my mom was just the mouthpiece between my parents. It was kind of funny, even though for the first few years that she was very nervous. My dad spoke up and my dad’s words were really nice, “As long as you are happy.” And the clincher my parents ended up being so supportive that one sister asked if it was them who wanted it. They didn’t know that it was my parents that discouraged me in the beginning. I did have people like more secular friends especially, who were asking, “Oh are you doing this because you are gay?” You could understand that person who was outside of the tradition, he didn’t understand, and things like that.

Respondent: For me the call to religious life that happens at the end of retreats, just at the end when you have to receive the fruits. It was the spiritual director, a sister was my spiritual director. She said, “Okay, but perhaps we have to do another retreat and this one a discernment retreat.” So I said “Okay.” It was during the summer so I made a retreat – it was a tough one. I was accompanied by another sister not from the [Institute] and at the end of the retreat she told me, “I don’t feel you have the call to religious life anymore” and I totally broke down. This retreat was a

good thing because I really had to discern, because the call had been so sudden. When I started the retreat it wasn't to discern religious life at all. I had had a long year. I had a new job so I had to work a lot. I was a human resources director in a law firm. And after this year they were happy with me and so now I wanted to take care of me. So I did this retreat and it just it came. So I was, during the whole retreat I have been open to the Spirit and this gift at the end and I was pretty sure until then. Hearing this sister tell me "I don't feel any religious calling" was you know very hard for me to understand. Actually it took me time to regain my footing. At the beginning, it was kind of revolting and it was the first time I could feel that. Not against the Church but against the situation. So now when I was quiet and I go and see this [Name] and I say now I am ready to discern. I want to say it okay, to obey like a child. She told me, "Okay it's not my call." So I started again. It was peaceful, but it was just a shock to have this plain statement. "What? This is a big mistake!" That was hard.

Respondent: For me there is one kind of circumstantial thing and one other thing that came into play for me right as I was getting my acceptance to enter the [Institute]. That same week I got an offer from the university to come back to do a master's degree within 24 hours of each other. The prof that I had been working for came up, like that day and said, "I have this offer for you. I want you to come back and work for me." And it was stuff I was interested in, it would be having a good position with a government contract attached to it, with the possibility of employment afterwards. It was really just kind of this great offer. My friends were kind of looking at me like "What are you doing?" And they thought I was throwing away what was a great opportunity. So it was really kind of like having to make a decision between two very good things. It was very clear that there were two options here and both had great potential. It was definitely circumstantial – that moment of contention when it happened, right as I was about to plunge into this to this. "What am I going to do?" The other thing that was kind of a check for me was the local parish priest that was attached to the university community, he was the vocation director for the diocese. And before he had taken over as the parish priest, I was already quite involved in my discernment to be a religious. And that was evident and I was kind of open with him about that. There were points that, and one particular point I remember during the Mass, I was serving Mass for him and just before that he had had a vocational discernment with a group of young people discerning with the diocese. And in the Mass he makes a big deal saying, "Oh look at these young men, discerning how important they are." And I'm standing right behind him and there is no mention, no other acknowledgement of something other than the diocese. And throughout that whole interaction with him he never acknowledged the fact that I was discerning religious life. And so it became very discouraging in some ways to see a vocation director telling me, "It's great that you are involved in the parish, great that you are engaged, but I really don't have any interest in you." And in some ways I felt like he saw it [religious life] kind of like a secondary vocation or lesser vocation. Thank God I was very confident in my own discernment and the support of the local community but it was kind of a ...is this a secondary vocation? Is this kind of not as important to the broader Church? It was kind of a harder thing to kind of traverse.

Interviewer: Kind of like what you were saying if you are not going to play on my team....I'm not going to....

Respondent: I had a lot of personal doubts and questions of my vocation in a lot of different ways and I didn't really need much external discouragement which I was a little surprised by. Most of my friends including my closest friends were agnostic, Atheist. I didn't have many Catholic or Christian friends so I was expecting maybe some push back from them but it didn't turn out that way. They were actually very supportive.

Respondent: I have to be careful who I told. I learned not tell people. It's just once you start talk about it there is discouragement so and I didn't really want to talk to my mom about it. So I learned to just not talk about it. I mean, I was discerning it and because I knew somehow, in my experience, that if I talked about it, people would just discourage me. And so many good things happen when you say yes. There is the call, doing things, adjusting, and so on. But I knew I had to say yes. But actually, I had my sister who is also a religious, it worked out really nicely. For her, it was funny, she was engaged to be married and a half a year before the wedding she did an Ignatian retreat for three days and there she was thinking, she prayed for her marriage and she heard God's call. She had to pray for a lot of strength, because she had to say no to her fiancé. They had been dating for seven years, she was a teacher at a local school, and for her the discouragement came from him and his family. After that, they broke off the marriage but it all worked out okay and she's very happy.

Interviewer: Let's shift gears just a little bit. I would like to hear from you what do you like most about being a member of your community, of your congregation, of your institute? What is special about that? What helps sustain you in your vocation?

Respondent: The first thing that comes to mind for me is that even in this era of declining vocations, and when our provincial has to make very difficult decisions about closing some apostolates, even in that climate, certainly from the provincial now and from the previous one, they are very open to new ventures. And that has been extremely supportive. To me, I would find it very distressing as a religious if I felt like my whole role was going to be to shore up these institutions that were founded a long time ago. But by contrast we have had a number of new things since I entered including [New Initiative], which is a huge undertaking. The [Institute] volunteer program, which has recently come back to Canada, which is again an awful lot of time, and working on issues going into that, but that's been pretty life-giving for me. We just started this retreat program in [Place], actually a retreat center. We offer retreats for men who experience homelessness and recovering from addiction, that's been a big initiative. So there's an attentiveness to where is the Spirit moving? And now where's the energy at now? And so the possibility of being part of that has been one of the most life-giving things. Also a similar sort of thing, but in my own stages in formation, which is work in between religious study, traditionally that's a time where we teach especially teach high school. That was not anything I felt called to and it wasn't where I was sent, right? So the fact that there was an openness among the superiors to a more tailored individualized formation process, has also been very, very important to me. And yeah I felt like, at each point it was just, this is what you have to do because this is what you do in year five as a religious. You know I am not sure I'd still be here if that were the case. Those were a couple things that were very important to me.

Respondent: What has been very important for me, life-giving for me, was as sense of unity and diversity and an experience of fraternity within that. I always kind of marvel at our community when I look around the room and there are people from many different countries, with many different interests. They have backgrounds in engineering, science, liberal arts. Different perspectives on the world, different political views: the ability to have that kind of fraternal love and support in that and not have everyone thinking the same way you are thinking. I couldn't be in a community where everyone had the same perspective on everything. So to find that support and that community but also know that there's a difference of opinions that can challenge and open and broaden you own horizons. Having that openness to say I'm thinking about this or have different people from different perspectives offer their wisdom, but at the same time feeling cared for in that environment.

Respondent: For me the big thing is that the sense of community is that sisterly bond that we have even though I am one of the youngest in Canada, and then it just kind of shoots up from there. But to have such a diversity as far as demographics and age and yet have such a commonality in the basis of a faith-based charism that just draws us together. We see things, some of us see things very differently, but I have learned very quickly to not to grow up, but to be child-like in different ways, to help them to remember, "Hey, differences." It's that sense of community that's existing, that support that's important. And to be able to have the communication between the authority and the sisters, the open lines of communication. Because I think if it was closed off and just "This is how it is," it would not be good.

Respondent: When I first entered the community, I learned that community life was very important. It is beautiful to see our charism in the way they live their lives; even in the missions it is the same way. So when I go to [Place] with the same apostolate, the same work, I feel at home. And also we keep all our houses with a very strong prayer life. We have, all of us, daily Mass, adoration, holy rosary, community morning and evening prayer, and listening to podcasts. The smallest community that we have is three sisters. It's just like a rule so that there is community. Also, our order is divided into provinces, so every summer we try to get together, all of the provinces from [Place] and [Place] and [Place] for like two weeks. We play volleyball, we have a vacation together. So this way we get to meet our new sisters and we make our bonds stronger. We are missionaries. We stay three, four, five years and we're moved around. Our superiors decide, "We need you here." They are open to see what you think, if you think there may be some difficulty. They want to be generous too, so if you disagree they will listen to you. We also have our faith and they have the same charism so our spiritual directors are our religious. So to have them I don't think all of our sisters have spiritual directors, so that is a good thing.

Respondent: Yeah, I like that fact that we, on an international level we connect with our sisters through Facebook. We can connect to sisters in other countries, there aren't many chances but if I ever meet them, great. "Hey, Facebook we are in the same community, how's it going?" It's kind of that uniqueness to be able to have that interaction the chances of either them coming—we're in 18 countries—and the chances of international travel right now are pretty slim and stuff like that but it's just amazing to me to be part of that social aspect also. I remember when I did my novitiate I

was one of one. And I tried to reach out to other novitiates in our community. So I reached out to Brazil, I reached out to like all the novitiates internationally, just to have some sense of community to understand me, “hey there is another novice here” in North America by myself like I need somebody to interact with. Because when I entered, it was like the first one in like ten years or 15 years so it was kind of like, I didn’t have anyone else to kind of understand and at that point I was the youngest one in the community. So it was important to have that network and that bond with the sisters, which was really important.

Interviewer: Can we talk about that just a little bit, because I think that is an experience that I hear many of the communities in the US but also here in Canada sharing. And that’s the challenge of being a very small number, particularly during formation, not in a cohort of thirty or being welcomed into a community of fifty or two hundred. Can we talk about that challenge just a little bit?

Respondent: It was interesting for me because when I entered, I entered alone. So I was the only novice in my area but there was another novice a year ahead of me. And so I had a year of there being only two novices in our novitiate. But really, one of the structures that helped in that, right from day one of our novitiate there wasn’t just a novice master and two novices. There was a community that was built around that. So our superior was working in the curia office and there are associates. So we had a fuller community that spanned the age range, which would fairly quickly gave me a sense of dynamism. But also the reality of being a religious in our context is that all of our communities for the most part are always going to have large gaps and spread out age group. And being alone but also having an opportunity to kind of to engage novices from other novitiates in North America, so there's five, four novitiates in North America, something like that, yeah. And so on a regular basis we had trips to [Place], once or twice a year with the novices there. And having a group so that when I was in my second year in novitiate there was a group of first-year novices who were seven. So all of a sudden there were a bigger group of novices. So seeing both worlds of being one or two, or being eight or nine, and the big difference between that and having a stronger fraternal group dynamic seeing that we are in this together. But that was also very important, too. So I kind of got lucky and had the best of both worlds.

Respondent: I had already another sister who was one year professed when I had entered as a postulant, so when I entered there were two of us. One who was a later vocation, so she was in her fifties and I was in my twenties, thirty years apart. And she was European and she didn’t know English coming into Canada. And so there were just two of us and also the cultural dynamics, in addition to the smallness, that was a big factor for me. Well, I knew a little bit of [Language] and that was the language she spoke, primarily, and we are an Eastern Catholic community, and that is the mother tongue, I guess, of our community. Although in North America, we primarily speak English at home because we all know English. And so I had to learn a lot more, I could read and write, but I didn’t know what I was reading and writing. So, I had to learn to speak, and I had to make up words, guessing what I think that I heard this person saying, this word, in this context. So I really had to give up that fear [of learning a new language] and it was crazy. Because I was the

youngest person in the house by thirty years and there was a fourth sister in the community other than the two of us entering, and the novice mistress, and an elder sister who was herself going through a transition and a few years later she was officially diagnosed with Alzheimer's while I was still a novice. So her going through the initial stages of that when I first entered and she had just come to that house from another community and another province that same time I did. So that was a big transition for all four of us. And it was very difficult.

Respondent: I didn't have the experience so much. I was fortunate that there were five guys entering in my year and five guys a year ahead of me. Ten novices in the novitiate, which is uncommon in Canada these days, but it was a blessing for me. But the one thing I did feel was missing, I felt for a long time, the lack of connections with young women religious, primarily because there was so few. And in particular in the orders that were traditionally very close to the [Institute], the [Institute], [Institute], and so on. So that was always something I felt was missing. We had some connections through the novitiate program in [Place], which were great, but those were mostly sisters that were semi-cloistered, so outside of actually seeing them in class there was no opportunities to interact. Something that I would have appreciated more of. There is a limited chance here at [Place]; there are a few women religious here I know of, but not many, that's for sure.

Respondent: I think that's the same thing, too, not having other younger religious around. My novitiate was in [Place]. I had friends; actually a friend of mine was in the [Institute] and so sometimes we would get together and stuff like that. And I had a [Institute] friend in [Place] so we started trying to converse with people that I knew that had entered, on my own, to kind of have some connections. But nothing that was set as far as a national program or any kind of a gathering. Sometime I would go to [Place], but again set up in an area where you're placed with (this is going to come off the wrong way) older generations of religious than you are with younger vocations or things like that. At least in [Place], I have seen more younger religious here and there. But then again, it's also who can get to a function or to a specific parish event or things like that. There's yet to be some kind of younger gathering, or some kind of event that calls communities to kind of come together to socialize. Sometimes we have a religious social, I think it's a BBQ, I can't remember what it's called.

Respondent: I remember, through the [Institute]. I went two years ago. There's also this religious and young adults meet and greet, I haven't seen it this year. But it was really nice to go to. I went that year and you were in small groups at the BBQ, sitting with people in different communities. That's where I met people in your community, your sisters, and along with young people who were lay people. They would ask you questions, you would ask people from other religious communities questions. Some of the religious were elder religious and some were younger, and it was very informal and relaxed atmosphere to just meet and understand each other.

Respondent: Yes, it happened the last couple of years. It didn't go on this year, but it has been organized in the past.

Respondent: Just from the [Institute] perspective, we live in this little bubble. Between our theologate community, our philosophate community, we have something like 30 young [Institute] all studying here. They are all like 20-something, so the entirety of the perspective is that we have a large number of young religious all together. I think it's harder for us in community to get perspective rather than a community of 12. We're all studying, we're all in a slightly different dynamic.

Interviewer: It's not exactly the norm.

Respondent: No.

Respondent: My own perspective. When I did my novitiate we were two, and then four, and then two again. There were always people entering. And I was 40, there were some who were much younger. In my community, we were the last ones not to do the inter-novitiate. The year after that, the new mistress, the person in charge of the novitiate, decided to enter the Ignatian inter-novitiate, so that was with the Jesuits and all the Ignatian female congregations. We didn't do it but I think it's a great thing, the communalization and the Ignatian and that bond we can share: brothers and sisters, already.

Respondent: We have a novitiate in the [Place] but when I entered, I asked to go to [Place]. So, I was in [Place] and we had the novitiate, so I went as a postulant for some time. And in the novitiate that year we were very small: one from the [Place], one from [Place], and me. But, we also have our formation house which is for three years. Everyone goes there and I think it has over 50 of our sisters, from all around the world. The vocations from [Place] go there, and our sisters from different parts of the world go for their third year there. So, then, I was in a very large community. In [Place], they have novitiates, I think there are 15, and they are there for three years.

Interviewer: But it's one of the very few?

Respondent: Right. It's only when we go to the missions that we are three, four, five, six sisters.

Respondent: If I could just add a word. We have three first-professed at the moment. Two were in [Place]. We have a combined novitiate for part of it: nine months is [Place] and [Place] federations combined. We all go to the [Place] for nine months. One of us is also on the planning committee for the novitiate.

Interviewer: Good. I want you to think toward the future. I want you to think about what is it about religious life that's most challenging today? And we will work from that to what are your hopes and dreams or fears for the future of religious life in Canada? So, we've talked about the positives, let's talk about the challenges and then move into what are your hopes? What's the future of religious life in Canada?

Respondent: Speaking in a general sense, I think one of the dangers that religious communities can get into is not being open to new apostolates and new missions. And that being said, being stuck in nostalgia for what was, and what we used to do, or what we've always done, or where we used to be,

can be a limiting factor for people who are desiring to enter any particular community. The other thing I've noticed from young people that I've spoken to, whether they be male or female, there is a desire for a witness. More of the religious garb, which is kind of shocking. Not shocking, I guess to some. I guess there was a time when we were like, "We've got to get out of this," and it was like, "We can't talk to religious or approach them," because it was too distant. People, young women especially in the United States, are entering into religious communities that are actually wearing their habits more. Having more of a presence and being comfortable and able to open up. Having more of a closed-off mindset with regards to the apostolate and ministries is very dangerous for communities. I think it is important to keep in mind for the charism as far as being open to, like the [Institute], to explore and take risks. It's a fine line to be very attentive to the Holy Spirit and see where the needs can be. Because with human nature we can always kind of tweak that and say, "It's either this or it's that." And there's always risk involved when opening any kind of a mission but it seems to me that we need to be more open as to our approach. I think there needs to be a revamping as far as how vocations are approached and marketed because there isn't a lot out there. I know that I've looked at several communities' websites and I say "Really? It doesn't look like this has been updated since I don't know when." It's just having more of a presence. I've found that even at the retreat center where I work, having young school groups come in and I've heard them say, "There's a nun coming!" And I turn around and say, "Where?" So, coming up to them and approaching them to break that stigma, because it's already like, "What is a sister?" They have no idea but somehow getting out there more in the public. I get heads turning all the time if I'm on the subway wearing my veil, and I don't normally wear my veil every day, but I'm also comfortable wearing it. It's just having a more open approach, because I think if we shy away from that then it's going to close off. The spirituality—we have to be very free to be ourselves and open. The Catholic Church has always been persecuted, regardless, but you see different religions, Muslims, they have no problem being comfortable with themselves and praying publicly and doing things. Yet sometimes we tend to shy away and hide in this world of ours. It is, it's a spiritual war that's going on. But there needs to be an openness. You look at other countries, [Place], they're very spiritual. It's a different mindset. Vocations are on the rise there. You go to third world countries and they're booming for different reasons. There's obviously something that is drawing people to the [Institute], to your community in numbers, that men and women are looking at, that other communities aren't having. It's not necessarily that people aren't being drawn to that charism or that founder. It's that there's something that we're missing – that each community is closed off, or something. I think it has to do with a cultural thing, a norm, we have to be able to accept it. It starts at home too. Families aren't promoting this. I've had people tell me all the time, "How come the sisters don't do this, why aren't there sisters in the parish, how come the sisters don't do that?" I simply say, "Are you promoting? Are you asking your sons and daughters to enter?" The reality is, do you promote this also at home? That's what used to happen. You foster that—it starts at home. We don't necessarily see younger people. Yes, some communities don't have the means to do that kind of fellowship and stuff. I think that presence is really important, to even having more youth and young religious gatherings. It's an inter-congregational thing. Having an open to the public thing, opening the doors. We have our Founder's Day. It's a day of prayer, we have posters that we send out to our

parishes, and we say, “Come pray with us! Come join us in prayer! We have a whole day, the chapel’s open, come join the sisters in prayer.” Just having things like that to promote is important. We need to start taking more risks in 2017.

Respondent: One of the biggest challenges that I see right now is managing our diminishment and maintaining a sense of community in that. I think the [Institute] is an example of that: we’re spread from coast to coast. Our average community size is shrinking and we have communities that were once ten people are now five people or four or three. How do we manage that diminishment while maintaining a sense of community? And the sense of being involved in making those decisions, “What are we going to close? Where are we going to be?” Because we can’t be everywhere we are now, we can’t be there ten years from now, in those same cities. We can’t be in all those same apostolates. One of the biggest challenges for me is having to live in a smaller community. Right now that community has twelve people and it’s great, but living in a community with four or three, that’s pretty hard to find a lot of support. So, how do I manage that, how do I find support in those situations? The hope for the future is the sense of not being stuck in the nostalgia of which apostolates and which cities. What were our locations and having some of the flexibility to say, “Right now we’re in seventeen cities doing these things.” Having the freedom to say, “In ten years, we’ll only be in three cities or four cities in order to meet our personal capacity to do ministry.” Personally, I don’t think I could ever live in a community of two or three people and be effective in ministry in the long term. Short term, here or there, as the transition happens, sure, but in the long term, no. My hope is that as we live this diminishment, we find a way to maintain our ability to live in community.

Respondent: I want to echo some of those challenges. The primary challenge is the dropping number of young people in religious life, particularly in apostolic religious life, particularly in the women’s orders. At the same time we see people going into more traditional, contemplative orders. That’s a vicious cycle too, right. I’ve talked to a number of young women who say, “If the [Institute] accepted women, I would be a [Institute].” I say, “There’s lots of great Ignatian women’s orders. The [Institute] and others.” They say, “Well yeah, but there’s only two sisters under 50.” That kind of thing is a very real hurdle towards entering. Personally, my hope would be for a huge amount of outside-the-box thinking on these things. For instance, why do we have so many different vocation directors to go through? Why not get a number of communities with like-minded charisms to have a single really strong vocation team that would support young people discerning vocation, wherever that vocation may be. Even at the point of formation: why do we all have to be in separate novitiates? Why can’t there be a common novitiate? It’s great when you can come together across national boundaries. Why not across congregational boundaries? There are a lot of historical differences in the roots of the different congregations, but some may even come together in some type of way into the future. Why not come together in active apostolic communities. If there are only two [Institute] members in [Place], why can’t they live with some of the other religious orders, including in some cases some men’s and women’s communities combined and working together and having closer connections, or having different houses on the same street, or having meals together a few times a week? I feel like there are a thousand things that could be done to work more closely

together to support one another in our religious vocations but the [Institute] are bad at this. We're among the worst and it's partly because we do have that sort of critical mass that we can do things on our own. In Chicago, there are 21 different congregations that make up the Catholic Theological Union there, and they send people there for studies. Why not work together far, far more than we are now? I would personally find that extremely enriching and it would give me more hope for the future. Like [Name], I have fears of being sent somewhere alone, where there's not a good community.

Respondent: It is my dream that we could show the world how fun it is to be religious. We usually say it in my community that, "Religious life is the best kept secret, why keep it secret?" I realize that right now it is a tough moment and we do not have ideal numbers, but religious life is so rich. My dream is that people could hear that we are happy. It's a life worth living. We are from a small community in [Place]. We want to grow roots together. We are not down-sizing, we just want to advance. But I think that in the same vein like [Name] said, a project like having religious apostolic life together, sharing housing and such, this is a good idea. Perhaps because we are so small and we are not Canadian for the moment. There is no Canadian sister. To grow roots, we need your help too, and I think gathering like we have here to have twice or three times a year just to chat and gather would be worth it also.

Respondent: Our communities are also having trouble, they're not having as many vocations. But they don't have to seriously think about closing novitiates because it's not a problem to have small novitiates because we already have very small communities. I think it's something that superiors have to see and ask the Holy Spirit, "Where do we cap, where do we reinforce?" So a challenge [for religious life] is the lack of vocations. A solution is, I don't see the witness of our lives. If we lead our religious life the way we should, following our constitutions and our rules, we might not see the fruits right away. And we may not see young people entering where we are, but somewhere else in the world God will be working because we are loyal to what God has called us to do.

Respondent: Amen to that. That's a tough thing to answer. That's a question that's been asked for years, probably everywhere. My community is in a place where the reality is that we are probably 63 of us across Canada and our numbers say that in the next ten years, we'll be much less than that. Our homes are closing, that's the reality now. We have homes of two, homes of one. We have one sister who has been in [Place] for thirty-three years by herself. On and off there has been someone wanting to close that home and people revolted! We're celebrating our 15 years this year in Canada and 125 since our founding. What do you do? It's crunch time. Prayer is the only thing.

Respondent: Actually, in that context, how do we experience the youthfulness of the religious life when we're in a context of caring for the elders of our community? When the majority of our sisters are preparing for death and preparing to meet God. They're giving up their ministries. Even the simple things, like chores around the house, they're starting to give up things like that, those who can't. We need to fit ourselves into that and take up those things that they did but how do we take up new things when there's all these things. Sometimes it feels like there's pressure to take on the things given up by others, when maybe God is calling us to do something new.

Respondent: There's one thing I have to say that I admire about our senior sisters, something that's been quite amazing and that's been prayer. A number of sisters who aren't capable of active ministry are engaged in prayer. You want to see active prayer and women of prayer, and wisdom, you go to them there. We have one sister that's 104 going on 105 and that woman is with it! There's such wisdom there. They have daily Mass. I can't have daily Mass in my chapel because priests aren't available, but to be able to have that as a witness, in itself, is something that is strengthening to me as a younger religious. I want to be able to live that life and do that for the people that come after me. I don't have that constitution. I wasn't raised on a farm or in that novitiate carrying mattresses on a train or doing things across Canada. The rest of the stuff almost doesn't matter. It's not so much the things that we do that draws people, but how we are and who we are in the relationships that we have with one another and with Christ in how we interact. That draws people. You're talking about your experiences within the society and with [Name] and the spirituality. That's what's drawing people. And we need to give witness to that joy and seeing the religious and that interaction. I don't think people are getting enough of now, in this day and age, unless they have interaction with the sisters, whether it's youth groups or things like that. That needs to be in revival. Maybe we need to plug onto rather than EWTN – plug in onto some kind of religious commercial of like, “Look at us!” We need to be outside the religious channels because people aren't necessarily looking on those. Throw up a billboard someplace. A subway advert. Think outside of the box.

Respondent: A source of hope that I've had, not within my community, but in the general [Place] community, when I started working at [Place], which is an organization for adults with special needs. We provide a place for them to go to, a house for them to do things during the day. It's a secular organization, a not-for-profit in [Place]. My supervisor, coming in, now I have two supervisors because we have two locations but the first one, she's a Muslim women, a very devout Muslim in conservative dress. Her break is spent in prayer in the mid-afternoon and it was very multicultural. It was just one other Catholic out of the six of us in our location. So, just experiencing that multicultural, multi-religious atmosphere, she was the one who understood the most. The Muslim, who was not afraid or ashamed of her faith, understood my expressiveness of my faith. When I dressed conservatively, she was the one who understood. People might say something or ask questions. We would ask questions about our respective religions in a respectful way and there was such mutual respect. I found that very heartening.

Interviewer: I hate to cut off the discussion but we have come to the end of our time. This has been marvelous and I want to thank all of you for sharing and coming. I wish you all the best and my prayers are with you. Thank you very much!