

Young Adult Catholics and Their Future in Ministry

Interim Report on the
2007 Survey of
The Next Generation
of Pastoral Leaders

Dean R. Hoge
Marti R. Jewell

EMERGING MODELS
OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

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More than a third of the young adults surveyed who are active in the life of the Church expressed an interest in lay ministry, and that number increased with age.

Introduction

The ministry of the Catholic Church depends on those who respond to God's call to engage in ministry. That call may be to lay ecclesial ministry, the diaconate, the priesthood, or life as a vowed religious. With the average age of each of these groups over 50, it becomes very important to understand where the next generations of people in ministry will come from. To find out how the next generations are viewing ministry, the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership project, a joint effort of six national Catholic associations, commissioned us to survey Catholic young adults to get their attitudes about ministry in the future.

We began work in summer 2006. First we decided to do a nationwide survey of Catholic college students. Since we are interested more in Catholics who are active in church life than in a random sample of students, we opted to survey students via Catholic student centers. We asked Catholic campus ministers to provide e-mail addresses for an online survey of a sample from their largest list of Catholic students. We were not interested only in the Newman Center leaders or regulars, but all Catholics who have come to their attention.

In addition, we wanted a nationwide survey of young adults aged 20 to 39 taken from non-campus lists. We decided to contact a random sample of dioceses, one in each Episcopal region, asking young adult ministry staff to work from whatever lists they had available.

This preliminary report contains some main survey results. A full report will be published by Loyola Press in the coming year. This report is organized in five major findings.

Highlights of these findings include:

1. Young adults see lay ecclesial ministry as a call from God.

More than a third of the young adults surveyed who are active in the life of the Church expressed an interest in lay ministry, and that number increased with age. Most believe lay ministry is a call from God that allows a person to help other people. While they have spoken to parents, pastors, and lay ministers about this interest, two-thirds do not see a connection between lay ministry and their gifts, talents, and career interests.

2. Many young adults have seriously considered priesthood and religious life as a way to provide ministry.

Nearly half of the young men surveyed and more than a third of the young women have seriously considered ministry as a priest or religious. While half of the young men who have considered priesthood are interested because it will allow them to preach or provide sacraments, nearly 90 percent believe the main

reason for becoming a priest is to care for God's people. Following other career paths and a desire for marriage are most often expressed as the primary reasons one would not follow this path, although women are more likely also to cite not wanting to be part of a structure dominated by men.

3. How would changing the guidelines for who can become a priest, religious, or deacon impact the attitudes of young adults about these vocations?

The results are somewhat surprising. Opening the priesthood to all people is not something that is of interest to young women. Nearly a quarter of the young men would find the priesthood more inviting if celibacy were not required, but half do not have an opinion about it. Seeing priesthood as a lifelong commitment does not appear to be a deterrent. The diaconate is of interest, but it is seen as an option for later in life.

4. Who are the ministers of tomorrow and what do they think about ministry?

Young adults who are the ministers of tomorrow are active in the Church today! The most significant indicator of interest in ministry was current involvement. There are few differences based on age or marital status. Those who identified themselves as Latino were less likely to be born in the United States and more likely to say they are interested in ministry.

5. Young adults have a strong message for the future direction of the Church.

Young adults call pastoral leaders to more actively engage them in the life of the Church. Those who are involved and active are asking for a more solid catechetical foundation. No one label describes them; some are calling for more traditional practices, while others are calling the Church to relate more to modern life and their personal experience.

Underneath the differences, these young adults exhibit a deep care for their faith and an interest in the future of the Church. How are we going to respond to them? How are we going to engage them in a church for whom discipleship is central and their involvement is crucial? The young adults in this study have given us some interesting ideas to think about, and point to further questions and study. It is an area of concern that affects us all.

The results tell us that the diocesan sample is composed mainly of college-educated persons active in Catholic programs of one sort or another.

Methodology

The college student survey was done on a random sample of 19 colleges and universities nationwide. (We planned on 20, but one dropped out.) Of the 19, three were Catholic colleges or universities and the rest were public or private non-Catholic. We set the sample at 1,000, and we asked the campus ministers for a specific number, based on campus size, from 12 to 100. We paid all the campus ministries a stipend for their participation. In the end, 914 persons were surveyed on-line beginning in February. The survey was in English and Spanish, and it excluded anyone over 39 years of age. We had 421 completions for a 47 percent response rate.

The diocesan sample of young adults was compiled from lists in 13 dioceses, one chosen randomly in each Catholic Episcopal region. We paid the dioceses a stipend for participating and asked them to assemble whatever lists they had available of persons 20 to 39 years old. In March, approximately 1,250 were sent out on-line, and we had 762 responses for a 69 percent response rate. (Anyone younger than 20 or older than 39 was excluded.) The respondents included many current college students, but to avoid confusion, we deleted them. Also, 25 of the respondents told us that they are now full-time lay ministers; we deleted them also. Hence the diocesan sample included only young adults who were not currently students or full-time lay ministers (a total of 444).

The diocesan sample is difficult to describe, since it was pieced together in a variety of ways. Several dioceses had lists of young adults based on past programs such as “Theology on Tap,” and others consulted with their local young adult ministers who had lists to work from. The results tell us that the diocesan sample is composed mainly of college-educated persons active in Catholic programs of one sort or another.

We need to repeat that these surveys were not of random samples of all Catholic college students or all young adult Catholics. Our samples were of Catholics more active than average, and in the case of the diocesan survey, much more than average.

In addition, we interviewed a sample of 37 young adult Catholics in person or by phone, and we ran five focus groups. Those results will be reported later.

Basic Characteristics of the Young Adults Surveyed

Table 1 tells us who are in the two samples. Most of the college students are 20 to 29 years old, although some are younger. Of the diocesan sample, half are 20 to 29 and half are 30 to 39. The students averaged about 23 years old and the non-students about 29. The college students are roughly divided between freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, plus a few graduate students (not shown in the table). Almost all of the diocesan sample members have attended college; 96 percent of the men and 96 percent of the women (not shown). Further, 25 percent of the men and 29 percent of the women have graduate degrees. We could name the diocesan sample the “active college alumni sample.”

Table 1
Characteristics of Sample Members (in percents)

		College Sample		Diocesan Sample	
		Males	Females	Males	Females
Number of cases:		(173)	(247)	(157)	(287)
Age:	18 or 19	27	30	0	0
	20 to 29	70	69	55	53
	30 to 39	3	1	45	47
Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino/a?					
Those saying ‘Yes’:		13	13	10	9
In the last six months, have you been involved in any Catholic campus groups for worship, service, or socializing?					
Yes, an officer or leader		26	24		
Yes, a participant		54	50		
Yes, at least one event		9	10		
Yes, an employee		1	0		
No		10	15		

Most of the college students have participated to some extent in a Catholic campus ministry program; only 10 percent of the men and 15 percent of the women have not done so.

Of the college sample, 13 percent considered themselves to be Hispanic or Latino/a. Of the diocesan sample, the figure was about 9 percent.

Most of the college students have participated to some extent in a Catholic campus ministry program; only 10 percent of the men and 15 percent of the women have not done so. Some are officers or leaders, but about half were “participants,” not leaders.

How active are the college students in parishes or dioceses, apart from college campuses? Among the students, 33 percent of the men and 38 percent of the women said they “regularly” are involved in Catholic programs or activities, in addition to Mass attendance. Have they volunteered for service in the past? Yes. 38 percent of the men and 30 percent of the women have been a volunteer in a service organization for a week or more.

Finding 1

Interest in Lay Ecclesial Ministry

Key Findings:

- One-third of college students and nearly half of the diocesan sample of young adults told us they have seriously considered lay ecclesial ministry as a future vocation.
- More than 80 percent feel that lay ministry is a call from God.
- Concern about the inability to support a family is the greatest deterrent to becoming a lay ecclesial minister, along with a lack of understanding of how their gifts can be used.
- When asked what ministry would interest them, the majority indicated youth ministry, followed closely by religious education and teaching in a Catholic school.

Look at Table 2. The first item shows responses to our basic question:

“Here are some questions about your future vocation or occupation. The Catholic Church in America is hiring more and more full-time lay church ministers. Have you ever seriously considered becoming a professional lay minister, such as director of religious education, youth minister, campus minister, music minister, or pastoral associate?”

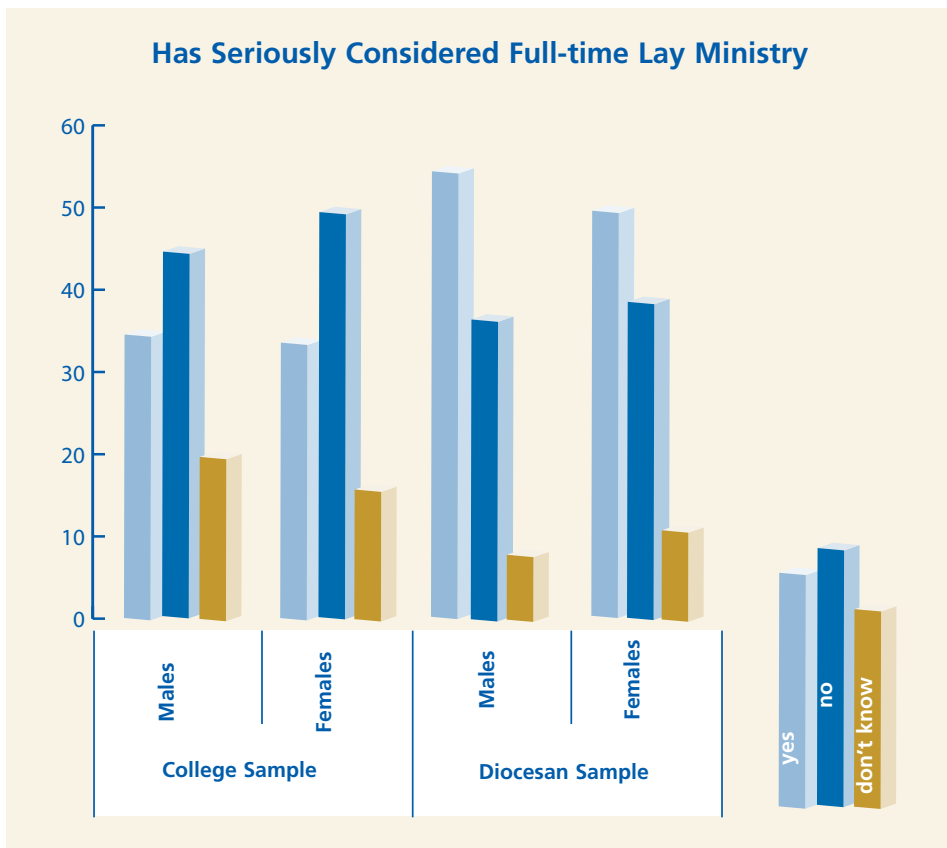
One-third of the college students said yes, as did over half of the diocesan sample.

If they are not interested, is the disinterest only for the time being? The second item suggests that yes, this is often the case. About half of the uninterested persons in both samples said that “I may be interested later, but not now.”

Of the persons who said they are interested, is it for a long-term occupation in ministry, or only a short time? See Table 2, third item. The two samples are different. Among the students, about one-fourth are interested in the long term, about one-fourth are interested only temporarily, and the rest are unsure. In the diocesan sample, over half are interested in the long term. Put briefly: our diocesan sample contains many persons interested in lay ministry as a long-term occupation.

Table 2
Interest in Full-Time Lay Ministry (in percents)

	College Sample		Diocesan Sample	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Here are some questions about your future vocation or occupation. The Catholic Church in America is hiring more and more full-time lay church ministers. Have you ever seriously considered becoming a professional lay minister, such as director of religious education, youth minister, campus minister, or pastoral associate?				
Yes	35	34	55	50
No	45	50	37	39
Don't know	20	16	8	11
If "no" or "don't know": Which of these is closest to your attitude?				
I doubt if I will ever be interested.	28	20	27	28
I may be interested later, but not now.	51	54	49	53
Unsure.	21	26	24	19
If "yes" on the first question: Which of these is closest to your attitude?				
I am interested in a long-term occupation in ministry.	28	24	66	53
I am interested now, but only temporarily, not for the long term.	23	23	9	10
Unsure.	49	54	25	37
If "yes" on the first question: Have you taken any of the following steps to explore this form of ministry? (Check all that apply)				
Spoke to friends about it.	66	68	67	71
Spoke to parents or other relatives.	49	46	51	52
Spoke to a priest, religious or lay minister.	64	38	62	58
Spoke to a career counselor.	8	5	14	10
Looked online for information.	25	44	41	42
Asked for information from a vocation director.	23	10	24	15
Would you be seriously interested in full-time employment in these occupations? (Check all that apply.)				
As a youth minister or young adult minister.	61	77	83	69
As a religious educator.	49	63	70	69
As a teacher or administrator in a Catholic school.	57	73	58	58
As a pastoral counselor or spiritual director.	41	35	52	35
As a pastoral minister or pastoral associate.	25	17	47	32
As a campus, hospital, or prison minister.	34	43	45	34
As a parish business administrator.	16	20	35	20
As a social action minister.	34	46	33	30
As a music minister or liturgist.	31	49	30	25
As a hospital chaplain.	21	10	15	11
As a parish nurse.	2	7	1	6



Have the respondents taken any steps to explore possibilities in lay ministry? For most, yes. The vast majority have spoken to friends, priests, or lay ministers. They have rarely spoken with career counselors or vocation directors.

Which specific kinds of lay ministry are these people most interested in? The bottom of Table 2 shows interest in 11 occupations (arranged in descending order for men in the diocesan sample). The most attractive occupation is youth minister or young adult minister, followed by religious educator and teacher or administrator in a Catholic school. Interest is lower in the other occupations such as campus minister, hospital or prison minister, social action minister, music minister or liturgist, and so on. In sum, a large number of college-educated young adults are interested in long-term lay ministry, especially in the areas of youth ministry, young adult ministry, and Catholic education.

What are the factors encouraging or discouraging young adults when they consider future lay ministry? See Table 3. The top of the table is about encouraging influences, and the bottom is about discouragers, shown in descending order. The main encouragers for everyone were “it is a response to God's call” and “it is an opportunity to help other people.” Next most important were “it is an opportunity to teach and pass on the faith” and “it is an opportunity to live out my faith.” All of these are clearly grounded in Catholic commitment.

Table 3
Reasons For and Against Interest in Lay Ministry (in percents)

	College Sample		Diocesan Sample	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Here are reasons sometimes given for being interested in serving the Catholic Church as a lay minister. How encouraging would they be to you? (Check all that apply.)				
It is a response to God's call.	81	79	76	82
It is an opportunity to help other people.	69	85	70	82
It is an opportunity to teach and pass on the faith.	63	64	68	72
It is an opportunity to live out my faith.	63	75	66	75
It utilizes my gifts and talents.	44	59	63	71
It is very meaningful.	54	65	58	67
It helps me grow in holiness.	49	49	47	57
It provides prestige.	6	10	3	6
Here are reasons people sometimes give for not being interested in serving the Catholic Church as a lay minister. Whether or not you are personally interested, how influential would each of these factors be in discouraging you? (Check all that apply.)				
The wages are too low.	19	16	40	33
I have a different occupation in mind.	65	57	36	40
It does not utilize my gifts and talents.	20	24	30	34
It is only short term, with no long-term future.	14	15	23	24
It has too little job security.	9	14	21	24
It is given too little respect.	4	4	9	9
Too much education is required.	4	5	8	7
I know too little about it to be interested.	13	12	8	9

What are the main discouragers? For the college students, by far the greatest was “I have a different occupation in mind.” It seems they have their career plans in place already.

For the diocesan sample young adults, the main discouragers were “the wages are too low,” “I have a different occupation in mind,” and “it does not utilize my gifts and talents.” In the diocesan sample, fewer people were discouraged by having a different occupation in mind; they are more open to changing careers.

Several other possible discouragers turned out to be unimportant to the respondents, such as “too much education is required,” “it is given too little respect,” and (for college students) “it has too little job security.” They are not big obstacles.

We asked the respondents to write in, using their own words, what encouraged or discouraged them about becoming lay ministers. The main motivations were a desire to share their faith and to teach the faith to others. The deterrents were, primarily, their commitment to other careers, and secondly, the belief that their gifts and talents were best used elsewhere.

Finding 2

Interest in Vowed Vocations

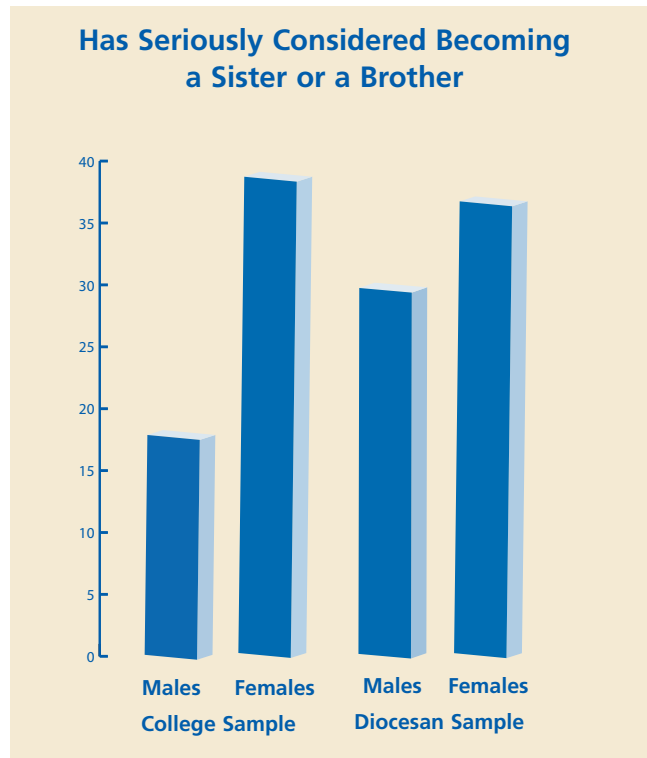
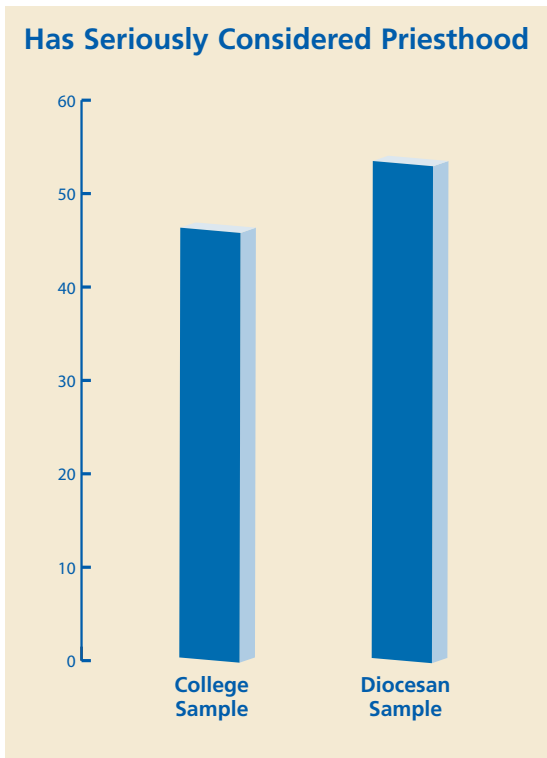
Key Findings:

- Young adult men who are active in their faith do consider the priesthood. Nearly half indicated they had seriously considered this call at one time.
- Nearly 40 percent of active young Catholic women have thought about religious life.
- Speaking with a priest or other pastoral leader as well as friends continues to be the first step taken when considering ministry as a priest or religious.
- Online resources are needed to invite young adults to consider priesthood or religious life.

See Table 4. Have the men ever seriously considered becoming a priest? Half said yes. Have the men and women ever seriously considered becoming a sister or a brother? The figures were relatively higher for the women than for the men: 39 percent of the female students and 37 percent of the non-students, compared with 18 percent of the male students and 30 percent of men in the diocesan sample.

Table 4
Interest in Vowed Vocations (in percents)

	College Sample		Diocesan Sample	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Have you ever seriously considered becoming a priest? Those saying yes:	48	1	54	3
Have you ever seriously considered becoming a sister or a brother? Those saying yes:	18	39	30	37
Has anyone ever encouraged you to consider ministry as a priest, brother, or sister? Those saying yes:	70	33	71	39
If you have considered becoming either a priest, sister or brother, have you taken any of the following steps to explore this form of ministry? (Check all that apply; percentages of anyone saying "yes" to one of the first two questions:)				
Spoke to friends about it.	79	56	79	71
Spoke to parents or other relatives.	62	43	51	61
Spoke to a priest, religious, or lay minister.	81	46	81	62
Spoke to a career counselor.	6	1	9	6
Gathered printed information.	29	24	48	45
Looked online for information.	31	36	44	47
Asked for information from a vocation director.	24	14	49	30



Has anyone encouraged these people to consider ministry as a priest, brother, or sister? A large majority of the men said yes. Who? Mainly priests.

We wanted to know how seriously these young people had considered vowed vocations. Most said they had taken some action. The bottom of Table 4 tells us that the vast majority had spoken to friends, priests, religious, or lay ministers about it. More than half had spoken with parents or other relatives. Generally, the people in the diocesan sample had taken more of these steps than the students, especially gathering information and speaking with vocation directors.

Table 5 assesses the factors encouraging and discouraging interest in vowed vocations. The top shows the encouragers, listed in descending order. The main ones are

“it is a response to God's call” and “it is an opportunity to help other people.”

This was the case in both samples.

The bottom of Table 5 shows the discouragers. Two of them are far ahead of all the others:

“I have a different career in mind” and “not allowed to marry.”

Two more discouragers are moderately important: “too many rules and regulations” and “a life-long commitment is required.”

The women in both samples chose “church structures are too dominated by men” as a discourager much more often than did the men. In the student sample it was 27 percent versus 9 percent, and in the diocesan sample, 33 percent versus 10 percent. Also, the women in both samples, more than the men, said “not allowed to marry” was a greater discourager; among the students, 68 percent versus 60 percent; among the non-students, 59 percent versus 44 percent.

The survey asked respondents to write in their own motivations for being interested or uninterested in vowed vocations. These comments showed that the number of young people interested now is much lower than the number who have been seriously interested at some time. The written comments were sometimes cryptic; therefore our analysis is not precise. But we estimate that roughly 18 percent of the college men, 7 percent of the college women, 10 percent of the diocesan men, and 10 percent of the diocesan women are interested in considering a vowed vocation now. Why not more? In their comments they said that by far the biggest reason was that many wanted to be married and have a family.

We have read articles saying that the priesthood receives a low level of public respect. Whether or not that is true, Table 5 shows that a lack of respect is not an important discourager for these respondents. In addition, the view that “church structures are too undemocratic” is not a noteworthy hindrance.

Table 5**Reasons For and Against Interest in Vowed Vocations (in percents)**

	College Sample		Diocesan Sample	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Here are reasons sometimes given for interest in becoming a priest, sister, or brother. Whether or not you are personally interested, how important would each be to you? (Check all that apply.)				
It is a response to God's call.	85	85	89	90
It is an opportunity to help other people.	74	81	82	82
It is an opportunity to preach God's Word.	63	59	72	61
It utilizes my gifts and talents.	49	58	62	64
It is an opportunity to provide the Sacraments.	49	37	58	44
It will help me get to heaven.	24	25	30	35
Here are reasons sometimes given for not becoming a priest, sister, or brother. How influential would each be in discouraging you, whether or not you are personally interested? (Check all that apply.)				
I have a different career in mind.	71	70	46	52
Not allowed to marry.	60	68	44	59
Too many rules and regulations.	20	26	21	23
A life-long commitment is required.	30	32	19	26
People in these vocations are often lonely.	16	17	15	18
Church structures are too undemocratic.	10	17	14	20
Church structures are too dominated by men.	9	27	10	33
I am not spiritual enough.	13	17	9	16
A lack of privacy.	5	10	5	13
This vocation is not highly respected.	1	3	3	7
I know too little about it to be interested.	7	12	3	10

Finding 3

Attitudes of Males and Females about Vowed Vocations

Key Findings:

- Young women do not indicate an interest in becoming priests even if they could, although some indicate a possible future interest in the diaconate if that were made available.
- Priesthood is seen as a lifetime call and would not be more attractive if for a limited period.
- The diaconate is seen as something that older people do.

The survey had additional questions for each gender. The questions put to males are shown in Table 6. First, would they be interested in becoming an ordained priest if celibacy were not required? Among the students, 20 percent said yes, as did 27 percent of the diocesan sample members. Second, would they be interested if they could sign up for a limited time period, for maybe five or ten years? Among the students, 18 percent said yes, and among the non-students, 15 percent. Of the two hypothetical options, celibacy is the more important issue.

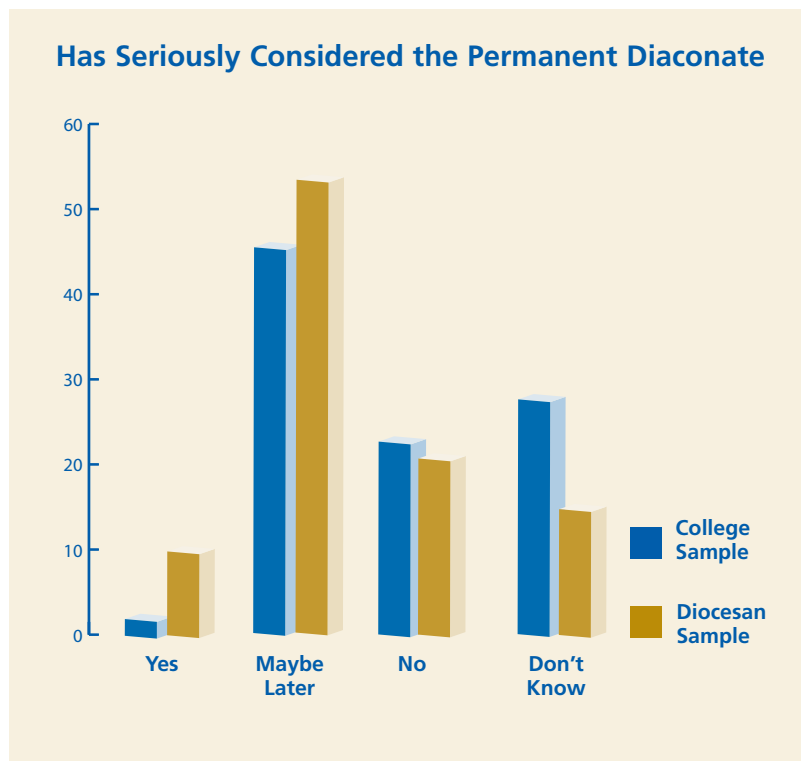
We are unable to estimate how many more seminarians there would be under these two options. The two questions in Table 6 asked, “Would you be seriously interested,” meaning now. The only comparison we have is from the written-in comments, showing that about 18 percent of the college men and 10 percent of the diocesan men are interested now. Yet from other information, we know that in the total United States, not many Catholic men enter the seminary: less than one-half of 1 percent. We also know that the desire to marry is the biggest deterrent. It is reasonable to conclude that both options in Table 6 would produce more seminarians.

Table 6
Men's Attitudes about Vocations (in percents)

	College Sample Males	Diocesan Sample Males
Would you be seriously interested in becoming an ordained priest if celibacy were not required?		
Yes	20	27
No	37	44
Don't know	44	29

Would you be seriously interested in becoming an ordained priest if you could sign up for a limited time period, renewable, for maybe five or 10 years?		
Yes	18	15
No	45	57
Don't know	37	28

Would you be seriously interested in becoming a permanent deacon at some time?		
Yes	2	10
Not soon, but maybe later	46	54
No	23	21
Don't know	28	15



How many men are seriously interested in becoming a permanent deacon? As the bottom of Table 6 shows, very few are interested now, but about half might be interested later. Most of the respondents see the permanent diaconate as something for older men.

The questions we put to the females are shown in Table 7. If women could be ordained, would these respondents be interested in becoming priests? Not a large number: 13 percent of the women students and 10 percent of the diocesan sample.

If the permanent diaconate opened up to women, would these respondents be seriously interested? Very few would be interested now (as was the case with the men), but 25 percent of the female students said “not soon, but maybe later,” as did 22 percent of the diocesan sample.

Table 7
Women's Attitudes (in percents)

	College Sample Females	Diocesan Sample Females
If women could be ordained, would you be interested in becoming a priest?		
Yes	13	10
No	65	71
Don't know	22	19
If the permanent diaconate becomes available to women, would you be seriously interested?		
Yes	4	7
Not soon, but maybe later	25	22
No	43	52
Don't know	28	19

Finding 4

General Attitudes about Lay Ministry and Priesthood

Key Findings:

- Young adults do believe that ordination confers a special character or status to the priest, although this belief is held more strongly by men.
- More than half of the young adults surveyed believe the Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry.

Do these respondents believe the Catholic Church should move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry? See Table 8. The first item shows that a slim majority is in agreement.

Table 8
Attitudes on Lay Ministry and Priesthood (in percents)

	College Sample		Diocesan Sample	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
The Catholic Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry.				
Those who 'Strongly or somewhat agree':	52	54	59	61
Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the church.				
Those who 'Strongly or somewhat agree':	63	56	76	59

We have comparative data from priests on these two statements. The first statement, that the Catholic Church needs to move faster in empowering lay ministry, was put to a random sample of American priests in 2001 (Hoge and Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, p. 51). Seventy-three percent agreed. Religious priests agreed more than diocesan (79 percent versus 70 percent). There were large age differences among the priests, with younger priests agreeing less than the older ones. Of priests age 35 or younger, 54 percent agreed; of those age 36–45, 65 percent; of those age 46–55, 75 percent; of those age 56–65, 86 percent; and of those age 66 or older, 69 percent. The respondents in our survey had the same opinion as the younger priests in 2001.

The second item in Table 8 emphasizes the difference between priests and laity. The majority of both samples agreed that ordination confers a new status. This identical statement was also used in the 2001 priest survey, when 77 percent of the priests agreed. The diocesan priests agreed much more than the religious: 83 percent versus 64 percent. As on the first statement, the 2001 priests varied by age: of priests age 35 or younger, 95 percent agreed; of those age 36–45, 84 percent agreed; of those age 46–55, 73 percent; of those age 56–65, 69 percent; and of those age 66 or older, 78 percent. Our respondents have attitudes similar to priests age 46–65 years old in 2001—not to the youngest priests. We have no more precise information on their attitudes. We did not, for example, ask them to describe their understanding of this new status or permanent character.

Effect of Backgrounds

Age

We looked for age differences in each sample. Were younger respondents different from older ones? In the college student sample, age differences were small. The only differences we found were that older students potentially interested in lay ministry or vowed vocations had taken a few more steps of exploration; this is probably explainable by being a few years older. In the diocesan sample, there were no important differences by age.

Latinos versus Others

See Table 9, which includes the questions on which Latinos and others differed by 10 points or more. Latino respondents were less likely to have been born in the United States (in the diocesan sample, 67 percent versus 96 percent of the others) and less likely to have attended college.

Latino respondents are more interested in lay ministry than other Catholics, partly because they do not have other occupations as clearly in mind. Other differences in Table 9 are small.

Table 9
Differences between Latinos and Non-Latinos (in percents)

	College Sample		Diocesan Sample	
	Latinos	Others	Latinos	Others
Number of cases:	(54)	(364)	(42)	(400)
Were you born in the USA?				
Those who answered 'Yes':	81	95	67	96
Have you ever attended college?				
Those who answered 'Yes, four-year degree or more':			43	84
Have you ever seriously considered becoming a professional lay minister, such as director of religious education, youth minister, campus minister, music minister, or pastoral associate?				
Those who answered 'Yes':	39	34	71	50
<p>Here are reasons people sometimes give for not being interested in serving as a lay minister. Whether or not you are personally interested, how influential would each of these factors be in discouraging you?</p> <p>Those who answered the following reasons were 'Very influential':</p>				
I have a different occupation in mind.	45	63	22	40
It does not utilize my gifts and talents.	12	24	27	34
It is only short term, with no long-term future.	13	15	32	23
Too much education is required.	0	5	17	6
I know too little about it to be interested.	19	12	17	8
Has anyone ever encouraged you to consider ministry as a priest, brother, or sister?				
Those who answered 'Yes':	39	49	60	49
<p>Here are reasons sometimes given for interest in becoming a priest, sister, or brother. Whether or not you are personally interested, how important would each be to you?</p> <p>Those who answered the following reasons were 'Very important':</p>				
It is an opportunity to provide the Sacraments.	44	42	65	47
It is an opportunity to preach God's Word.	54	62	81	63
It utilizes my gifts and talents.	60	53	76	62
<p>Here are reasons sometimes given for not becoming a priest, sister, or brother. How influential would each be in discouraging you, whether or not you are personally interested?</p> <p>Those who named the following reasons as 'Very influential':</p>				
Not allowed to marry.	65	65	41	55
Too many rules and regulations.	35	22	17	23
A life-long commitment is required.	40	30	16	24

Table 9 (cont.)
Differences between Latinos and Non-Latinos (in percents)

	College Sample		Diocesan Sample	
	Latinos	Others	Latinos	Others
Here are reasons sometimes given for not becoming a priest, sister, or brother. How influential would each be in discouraging you, whether or not you are personally interested?				
Those who named the following reasons as 'Very influential':				
Not allowed to marry.	65	65	41	55
Too many rules and regulations.	35	22	17	23
A life-long commitment is required.	40	30	16	24
(If male) Would you be seriously interested in becoming an ordained priest if celibacy were not required?				
Those who answered 'Yes':	36	17	a	26
(If male) Would you be seriously interested in becoming a permanent deacon at some time?				
Those who answered 'Yes, now or later':	39	50	a	63

a = too few cases.

Level of Involvement in Campus Ministry

See Table 10. Because of the method of selecting students for the survey, we got a fairly large percentage of persons active in Catholic campus ministries. Only 10 percent of the men and 15 percent of the women said they had not been involved in campus ministry at all. These 10 percent and 15 percent are useful to study, since they represent the majority of Catholic college students today. That is because the majority of Catholic students are not involved in Catholic campus ministry programs.

The rightmost column in Table 10 can be seen as approximating a random sample of Catholic college students, while the leftmost column represents the most active Catholics. When we compare the two, we see that the active persons are clearly more interested in future ministry, either lay ministry or vowed vocations.

Table 10
Attitudes of College Students at Three Levels of Involvement in Campus Ministry
(in percents)

	Officer or leader	Participant	Not involved
Number of cases:	(106)	(260)	(55)
In the last six months have you been involved in any Catholic programs or activities in a parish or diocese, besides Mass attendance?			
Yes, regularly	60	32	11
Yes, occasionally or at least once	31	40	14
No	9	28	75
Have you ever seriously considered becoming a professional lay minister, such as director of religious education, youth minister, campus minister, music minister, or pastoral associate?			
Those saying 'Yes':	52	32	16
Here are reasons people sometimes give for being interested in full-time lay ministry. Whether or not you are personally interested, how important would each be to you?			
Those saying the following reasons were 'Very important':			
It is a response to God's call.	85	80	71
It is an opportunity to help other people.	83	79	69
It is an opportunity to teach and pass on the faith.	70	62	62
It is an opportunity to live out my faith.	79	68	60
It utilizes my gifts and talents.	62	50	51
It is very meaningful.	61	62	51
It helps me grow in holiness.	48	48	55
It provides prestige.	7	7	16
Here are reasons people sometimes give for not being interested in full-time lay ministry. Whether or not you are interested, how influential would each be to you? ("very influential")			
I have a different occupation in mind.	61	60	62
It does not utilize my gifts and talents.	26	21	22
The wages are too low.	18	17	15
It has too little job security.	14	11	15
It is only short-term, with no long-term future.	12	14	22
Too much education is required.	6	4	6
It is given too little respect.	5	3	9
I know too little about it to be interested.	11	11	22
Have you ever seriously considered becoming a priest?			
Those saying 'Yes':	25	20	13

Table 10 (cont.)

**Attitudes of College Students at Three Levels of Involvement in Campus Ministry
(in percents)**

	Officer or leader	Participant	Not involved
Have you ever considered becoming a sister or brother?			
Those saying 'Yes':	43	27	22
Has anyone ever encouraged you to consider ministry as a priest, brother, or sister?			
Those saying 'Yes':	61	45	33
Here are reasons sometimes given for interest in becoming a priest, sister, or brother. Whether or not you are personally interested, how important would each be to you?			
Those saying the following reasons are 'Very important':			
It is a response to God's call.	90	85	72
It is an opportunity to help other people.	79	79	78
It is an opportunity to preach God's Word.	67	58	62
It utilizes my gifts and talents.	61	52	50
It is an opportunity to provide the Sacraments.	47	43	31
It will help me get to heaven.	25	24	28
Here are reasons sometimes given for not becoming a priest, sister, or brother. How influential would each be in discouraging you, whether or not you are personally interested?			
Those saying the following reasons are 'Very influential':			
I have a different career in mind.	68	72	69
Not allowed to marry.	61	66	65
A life-long commitment is required.	23	34	35
Too many rules and regulations.	18	26	24
Church structures are too dominated by men.	16	20	25
People in these vocations are often lonely.	12	18	20
Church structures are too undemocratic.	11	16	12
I am not spiritual enough.	11	15	26
A lack of privacy.	7	8	8
This vocation is not highly respected.	2	2	2
I know too little about it to be interested.	3	10	20
(If male) Would you be seriously interested in becoming an ordained priest if celibacy were not required?			
Those saying 'Yes':	16	23	11
(If male) Would you be seriously interested in becoming an ordained priest if you could sign up for a limited time period, renewable, for maybe five or 10 years?			
Those saying 'Yes':	16	19	11

Table 10 (cont.)**Attitudes of College Students at Three Levels of Involvement in Campus Ministry
(in percents)**

	Officer or leader	Participant	Not involved
(If male) Would you be seriously interested in becoming a permanent deacon at some time?			
Those saying 'Yes, soon or later':	58	48	28
(If female) If women could be ordained, would you be interested in becoming a priest?			
Those saying 'Yes':	17	13	5
(If female) If the permanent diaconate becomes available to women, would you be seriously interested?			
Those saying 'Yes, soon or later':	41	28	11
The Catholic Church needs to move faster in empowering lay persons in ministry.			
Those who 'Strongly or somewhat agree':	56	55	42
Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.			
Those who 'Strongly or somewhat agree':	68	57	48

To see which are most likely to be tomorrow's lay ministers, look at the leftmost column. They are now active in campus ministry and parish life. About one-fourth of the men have once seriously considered becoming priests, and the issues of celibacy and a life-long commitment do not seem important to them. Also, these men are strong candidates for becoming deacons, and the women would also be candidates if the diaconate were to become open to women.

The active Catholics in the first column are relatively more in favor of an expansion of lay ministries in America, and at the same time they hold a more traditional, cultic theology of the priesthood.

Finding 5

Young Adults on What Should Be the Direction of the Catholic Church in the Years Ahead

Key Findings:

- Young adults are diverse. No single label can describe them.
- Whether self-identified as traditional or liberal, young adults want to know more about their faith.
- Young adults call pastoral leaders to more actively engage them in the life of the Church.

In the survey we asked, “Catholic leaders are interested in hearing the views of many people. In your opinion, what should be the direction of the Catholic Church in the years ahead? What should the Church stress, and how should it move?” Respondents wrote in their ideas, sometimes in a phrase and sometimes in a paragraph. We reviewed them all and grouped them into themes.

The topics varied, telling us that young adult Catholics are very diverse. They are neither liberal nor traditional; some are each, and no single label can describe them.

The main three recommendations given by the college students were: (1) more focus on youth and young adults (this was ahead of all others); (2) go back to tradition; reject modern teaching; don't water down the faith; and (3) relate more to modern life and changing times. The second and third are contradictory, but both were strongly present in the responses. The students are diverse.

Here are a few examples of recommendations regarding youth and young adults:

As a young adult, I am so proud of my Church, and I think that the Church has done a great job. However, if there is anything I would like to see, it would be to see more ministries available to

young adults ages 20-30. It almost seems as if sometimes we are excluded. Other ministries are either too young or too old.

As Pope John Paul II said, we must look at the future of our Church. Helping young individuals at the college and high school level grow closer to God is essential in the expansion of the Catholic Church. During this period I believe many people choose to grow farther away from God because of all the temptations, and there are no parental figures to look over you really. Being engaged in activities with followers of God takes the temptations away from these adolescents and young adults.

I believe the Catholic Church really needs to focus on the young adults in the church. We lose so many young people to other religions because of lack of energy in music, sermons, social activity, everything!! If we were to focus on our young adults, the faith of the Catholic Church would be more deeply planted in young people, therefore causing more devout relationships to God as well as with people.

I think that the church needs to invest more time in the youth. Working with high school students in the summer, I've noticed over the past few years how they are not as excited about their faith as I was at their age. And so many students lose their faith entirely when they come to college because they didn't practice it very well during high school.

Here are a few examples of ideas regarding going back to tradition:

Keep to tradition. We are the only faith that can trace roots back to the Apostles, and we have to keep those roots intact. Popular opinion may say things like, allow priests to marry and allow ordination of women, but the Church needs to be clear that we protect tradition, not create it. The most important aspect of our faith in relation to other Christian groups is our rich, unchanged, documented tradition.

Stress the values and quit trying to “conform” to the viewpoint of the liberal or secular ideas. You have to stand for something, and Catholics should stand on principle and the Bible, not rampant interpretations by people looking for loopholes.

Strongly, boldly, and compassionately proclaim the teachings of Christ and his Church. A return to orthodoxy is needed by priests, religious, seminarians, then the lay people will follow when we see it lived out by those God has chosen to lead. Bishops need to be appointed who are strong moral leaders and are not shown in their proclamation of the truth of the Church.

The authority of the Catholic Church should not be weakened by becoming a democracy in any format. God has empowered the Pope

and the Church through the magisterium, and it must remain that way as God established it as such. The Catholic Church should become more orthodox, focusing on the Sacraments rather than the will of the people (which is often misled by a secular society).

Here are examples of ideas regarding lay ministry and empowerment of laity:

Lay leadership. Lay ministries should be supported by the leadership of the Church and paid better salaries.

Increasing the involvement and power of laity would be an important step. This Church does not belong to Rome or to men in vestments. This Church belongs to all of us. The more we act like we understand this, the better.

If we do not embrace the gift of laity as equal ministers, we are losing a major component of the Church.

Get women involved. They have a lot to offer. Allow lay people a larger role; priests are overwhelmed, and there is clearly a shortage. Prevent this potential crisis by allowing lay people leadership roles. They can bring people in that priests may not be able to get to because they are so burdened!

Due to fewer priests in our churches, I feel now that there is more responsibility on parishioners for upholding and continuing our faith. We can no longer let the priest do the majority of the work. I feel it is a partnership with the priest and the higher orders.

I think the church needs to move into the 21st century. If that means lay leadership, then that is what should happen. There are not enough priests to minister to all the Catholics out there.

These young people have definite ideas about how the Church could carry out its ministry better. In particular, they urge more efforts to minister to youth and young adults, more lay ministry, and more empowerment of laity.

Summary

This study shows what active Catholic college students and young adults think about possible future ministry. The basic finding is that many of these young people are available for lay ministries. The diocesan sample especially has a large number. The specific roles most attractive to them are youth minister, religious educator, teacher in a Catholic school, or administrator in a Catholic school.

These are quite active Catholics. If any of them are not interested in future lay ministry, why not? The diocesan sample members, who are somewhat older, have concerns about wages. In addition, some already are committed to another profession or they see a poor fit between their own personal gifts and the tasks of ministry.

The number interested in vowed vocations is smaller, mostly because they hesitate to make a commitment to celibacy. A second factor is that many are already committed to another career.

These young people have definite ideas about how the Church could carry out its ministry better. In particular, they urge more efforts to minister to youth and young adults, more lay ministry, and more empowerment of laity. They are of two minds about whether the Church should go back to tradition and reject modern teaching. One faction advocates holding fast to tradition and avoiding watering down the faith, while another faction urges the Church to relate more to modern life and changing times. We cannot say which group is larger. Similarly, one faction recommends married priests and women priests while another is opposed, and one faction stresses reaching out to all people, including homosexuals, while another rejects all homosexuality.

These young people want institutional innovations and new energies while holding fast to the core of the tradition. They are ready and willing to minister in the Church. It is up to us to engage them and make them welcome.

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