



# NEWS

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## **NEW PRIESTS YOUNGER, INFLUENCED BY PARISH PRIESTS, CATHOLIC EDUCATION, SERVICE AS ALTAR BOYS, SOCIAL, CHURCH ENVIRONMENT**

**Half between 25 and 34 years of age  
Seventy-one percent were altar servers  
Sixty-seven percent attended Catholic college**

WASHINGTON—The average age of men ordained to the priesthood in 2011 is trending younger with the average age for the 2011 class at 34, with more than half between the ages of 25 and 34. This is slightly younger than in 2010, and follows the trend over the past five years of ordinands becoming younger.

These figures stand out in *The Class of 2011: Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood*, an annual national survey of men being ordained priests for U.S. dioceses and religious communities, conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), a Georgetown University-based research center. The entire report can be found at [www.usccb.org/vocations](http://www.usccb.org/vocations) as well as on the bishops' vocation Web site, [www.ForYourVocation.org](http://www.ForYourVocation.org). It is the 15th annual survey of ordinands commissioned by the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Data show that on average, most of the ordination class have been Catholic since infancy, but nearly one in ten became Catholic later in life. Four in five report that both parents are Catholic, and a third have a relative who is a priest or religious. Almost all ordinands have at least one sibling; more than half report having more than two siblings. Nearly a quarter report having five or more siblings.

“One important trend evident in this study is the importance of lifelong formation and engagement in the Catholic faith,” said Archbishop Robert J. Carlson of St. Louis, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. “The role of the family, parish priest, friends, and youth ministry are evident in the results.” He noted that, along with their education and work experience, 71 percent of the Class of 2011 report they served as an altar server. “This seems to indicate that the involvement of youth in the Church's activities, especially the liturgy, has a positive impact for their choice of a vocation.”

“The members of the ordination class of 2011 report that they have had a long-term connection and involvement with the Church,” said Father Shawn McKnight, Executive Director of the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. He noted in particular that 66 percent of the class reported encouragement from their parish priest.

Catholic education also had a significant impact upon this year's ordination class, especially higher education. In comparison to the adult Catholic population in the U.S., the ordination class of 2011 is more likely to have attended Catholic elementary and high school. Particularly remarkable is that among those who attended college before entrance into a seminary, 67 percent attended a Catholic college compared to 7 percent of the adult Catholic population in the U.S.

"When considering the limited resources we have to promote vocations to the priesthood, the campus ministry programs at Catholic and public institutions of higher education deserve special consideration," said Father McKnight. "We must seek new ways to extend the culture of vocations begun at home, in schools and parishes to follow our young Catholics as they graduate from high school, leave home and parish in order to go to college."

Before entering the seminary three in five ordinands completed college, and one in five also received a graduate degree. A third of this year's class entered a college seminary; 45 percent entered a pre-theology program.

The survey had a response rate of approximately 69 percent of the 480 potential ordinands reported by seminaries, houses of formation, dioceses, and religious institutes. They included 275 men being ordained for 128 dioceses and 54 ordinands for religious orders, such as the Jesuits, Dominicans and Franciscans.

In other findings, CARA reported:

- Seven in 10 report their primary race or ethnicity as Caucasian/European American/white (69 percent). Compared to the adult Catholic population of the United States, ordinands were more likely to be Asian or Pacific Islander (10 percent of responding ordinands), but less likely to be Hispanic/Latino (14 percent).
- One-third (33 percent) of the ordination class of 2011 was born outside the United States, the largest numbers coming from Colombia (5 percent), Mexico (4 percent), Poland (4 percent), Vietnam (4 percent) and the Philippines (2 percent). Between 20 and 30 percent of ordinands to the diocesan priesthood for each of the last 10 years were born outside the United States.
- One in five ordinands attended World Youth Day (21 percent), a point of significance given that the last two celebrations were held far away, in Germany and Australia.

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