



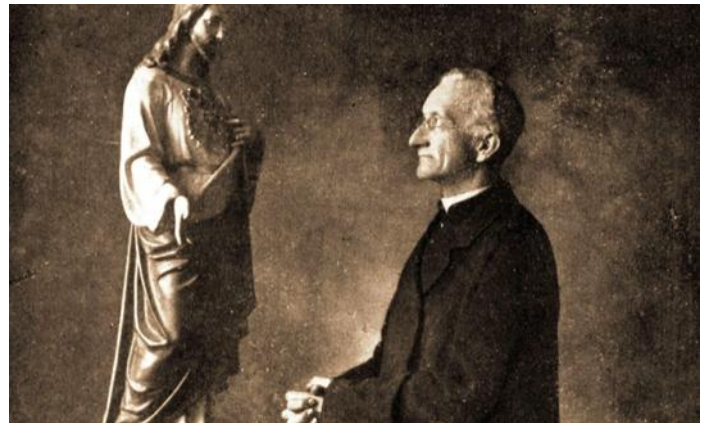
October 20, 2025

Dear Confreres,

At our last Provincial Election, when speaking about vocations, Jim Walters noted the growing “conservative” trend among seminarians in the United States. A similar pattern can be seen among those entering religious communities. Many communities with a more traditional orientation continue to attract strong vocations. This raises an important question: What draws young men and women to these communities? What is it about traditional forms of religious life that speaks to them today?

Several factors seem to contribute to this renewed attraction. Among them are:

- 1. Early Exposure and Familiarity** – Many young people grew up with early exposure to traditional liturgy, such as the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, and media like EWTN, which fosters a sense of connection to the faith.
- 2. Desire for Deep Tradition** – They seek a strong connection to Church traditions and draw strength from a rich liturgical and devotional life.
- 3. Family and Background Influence** – Some come from a Latin Mass community, while others may react to the more disengaged environments in which they were raised.
- 4. Orthodoxy and Fidelity** – A clear embrace of Church teaching and tradition, including wearing the religious habit and living in community, is attractive to many.
- 5. Witness of Members** – Vocations are often inspired by the example of the religious themselves: their joy, down-to-earth attitude, zeal, and commitment.



6. **Community Life and Practices** – Successful communities are those where members live together, celebrate daily Eucharist, pray together, and engage in devotional practices collectively.
7. **Influence of the Institute’s Practices** – For many, the decision to join a particular institute is shaped by its practices regarding the habit, liturgy, and communal life.
8. **Spiritual Hunger in the Modern World** – In a society increasingly distant from religious symbolism, people are hungry for authentic spiritual expression, rich liturgical life, and visible signs of faith.



In 2022, the Catholic Project at the Catholic University of America conducted the most extensive study of US priests in more than fifty years, seeking to understand their experiences, attitudes, and well-being in today’s Church. Three years later, the researchers surveyed the original respondents again to see what, if anything, had changed and to learn more about their current pastoral priorities. Please see the attached document for a brief summary of the key findings. For a more detailed report, you may access the complete

study at the following link: <https://catholicproject.catholic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/NSCPWave2FINAL.pdf>.

I hope future research will include a comparable study focusing on young religious men and women.

As we reflect on these trends and the diversity within our Church, I believe deeply in a plural Church where everyone has a place. My prayer is that we create a community or space that allows each person to be authentically themselves.

Fraternally,