

Fr. Nick VanDenBroeke  
The Priesthood Series  
Article 1 – Statistics

*The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)*, from Georgetown University, publishes yearly statistics about the ordination of priests around the United States. We can see great hope in the fact that there were 548 men ordained priests last year! Additionally, 4 men were just ordained this weekend for our Archdiocese. This number has been growing since the year 2000, when only 442 men were ordained priests, but it is still down dramatically from the year 1965 when 994 men were ordained priests.

Please continue to pray for more priests. However, praying for them is not enough, we must also encourage young men (perhaps your own children or grandchildren) to consider discerning a call to the priesthood. The CARA survey said that, on average, 4 people encouraged each of the men who were ordained to consider a vocation. In other words, it is important young men be encouraged not just by one person, but by several people to consider the seminary. The most influential people who encouraged most men to join the seminary were: Parish priests, Friends, Parishioners, and Mothers. Sadly, almost half of the priests ordained last year said they were discouraged by at least two people from entering the seminary. We must be encouraging, not discouraging, of our young people considering a call to the priesthood.

Did you know that priests are among the happiest people in any way of life or vocation in the United States? A large scale survey was conducted a few years ago which determined that priests are remarkably happy, are less likely to be depressed or to suffer “burn-out” than other careers, and are largely at peace with the demands of the priestly life, including the requirement of lifelong celibacy. These findings are published in a book called “*Why priests are happy*”, by Stephen J. Rossetti.

The findings of this study that priests are truly happy is really important to hear, because I think there can be conflicting thoughts in our minds saying, on the one hand, “*we need priests if we are going to have the sacraments*”, and on the other hand, “*I wouldn't want my own son/friend to become a priest because the priesthood is a sad, lonely, and unsatisfying existence*”. That might be what our culture would like everyone to think, but that simply isn't true. The data shows the opposite, that priests are truly happy and satisfied. And I can personally testify to the fact that I love being a priest, and I would encourage any young man who had thoughts of priesthood to look into it further.

Journalist John L. Allen Jr. sums up the findings of the priest survey with these words: “*...It would all boil down to this. The priests of this country obviously love serving you and ministering to you, because otherwise there's no way to explain why they're basically happy, in the teeth of a culture which constantly tells them they're not supposed to be.*”

We need more priests. We need men to give up their lives for Jesus Christ now. Pray for your priests, and pray for more priests. Encourage your sons, grandsons, god-children, nephews, neighbors, friends, and parishioners to consider the priesthood. As Archbishop Flynn says, “*If I had a hundred lives, I'd live every one of them as a priest.*”

To live in the midst of the world,  
Without wishing its pleasures;  
To be a member of each family,  
Yet belonging to none;  
To share all sufferings;  
To penetrate all secrets;  
To heal all wounds;  
To go from men to God  
And offer Him their Prayers;  
To return from God to men  
To bring pardon and hope;  
To have a heart of fire for charity  
And a heart of bronze for chastity;  
To teach and to pardon,  
Console and bless always--  
What a glorious life!  
And it is yours,  
O Priest of Jesus Christ!

-Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, OP

Stay tuned next week for more information on the priesthood...