

# MIDWEST – MIDWEEK

Brothers of Holy Cross –Midwest Province - P.O. Box 460 – Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-0460

May 13, 2009



## The Boarder

A Narrative Reflection on Community  
as Discussed in the Writings of **Fr. Basil Moreau, C.S.C.**  
by Br. Robert Sylvester

Click a following link to view the short story:

[MSW](#)

[PDF](#)

## Alzheimer's Disease Study

I followed **Br Roy Smith's** example and volunteered for a study on Alzheimer's Disease being conducted by the Rush University Medical Center of Chicago. I was interested because both my Mother and Father had Alzheimer's.

The 'Religious Orders Study' was begun in 1994 and is federally-funded. About 1000 Nuns, Priests and Brothers have volunteered. Religious over 65 years of age who do not have signs of dementia and agree to an annual clinical evaluation are eligible. An earlier aging study of the School Sisters of Notre Dame was featured in the 1996 book, "Aging with Grace."

A person doesn't have to go to Chicago to participate. The Rush Medical Center sends investigators to your location to conduct tests and give a physical exam.

The Religious Orders Study is looking for more volunteers. If anyone wants additional information, contact me (LStew101@aol.com) and I'll forward material from their brochure.

**Br Lawrence Stewart**

# Columba Hall House Members Celebrate Jubilees

Brothers:

**Michael Amakyi, Chester Freel, Richard Huber and Maurus O'Malley**



## Vocation Promotion Update:

In the April 15<sup>th</sup> Vocation Promotion Update I shared with you data from the National Religious Vocation Conference's (NRVC) third annual Trends in Catholic Religious Vocations. The tables looked at demographic differences sorted by the respondent's gender. These same surveys also asked discerners to (a) rank helpfulness of vocation materials/resources, (b) rate the support structures existing for discerning a vocation, and (c) to speculate as to the reasons why the number of vocation inquiries appears to be increasing. On these three questions there were minimum differences by gender, thus the findings below represent only the 162 male respondents.

### 2009 Trends in Vocations--Discerners' Survey

**1. Please rank in order of importance what resources you have found most helpful in gathering vocation information.**

	Essential	Very Important or Important	Somewhat or not Important	Rating* Average
Personal contact with a religious, priest, sister, or brother	49.3%	40.8%	9.8%	1.89
Come and See Weekends/discernment	40.4%	45.9%	13.7%	2.12
A religious community's website	32.7%	48.0%	19.2%	2.30
Vocation periodicals, spiritual books, brochures	29.3%	55.3%	15.3%	2.31
Counselor/Spiritual Director	36.6%	41.4%	22.0%	2.34
Vocation Director	33.6%	47.0%	19.5%	2.34
Vocation-related websites	22.9%	56.0%	21.0%	2.45
Parish Priest	31.1%	39.7%	29.2%	2.58
Parents/family	20.8%	36.3%	43.0%	2.99
Friends	18.0%	42.7%	39.3%	3.05
Discerner's blog	10.4%	38.2%	51.4%	3.45
Campus Minister	9.1%	37.1%	53.9%	3.52

\*With all three tables, on a scale of 1 through 5 and "1" is the highest rating, this is the averaged response.

**2. Please rank in order of importance what you would find most helpful in making a decision about your vocation.**

	Essential	Very Important or Important	Somewhat or not Important	Rating* Average
Prayer	84.8%	14.5%	0.6%	1.19
Greater understanding about what community/vocation would be a good fit for me	51.6%	45.8%	2.5%	1.63
Spiritual Direction	53.2%	42.4%	4.4%	1.71
Information about the requirements and steps necessary to enter religious life	51.0%	43.3%	5.8%	1.76
Opportunities to get a taste of community life	42.9%	50.0%	7.0%	1.87
A structured discernment process	36.3%	52.2%	11.5%	2.11
Talking with other seekers like myself	28.4%	58.1%	13.6%	2.24

**3. Overall, communities have reported an increase in inquiries into religious life. To what do you attribute this increase?**

	Essential	Very Important or Important	Somewhat or not Important	Rating* Average
Desire for deeper spirituality	58.7%	38.7%	2.7%	1.57
Desire for community and identity	42.0%	50.0%	8.0%	1.96
Easy availability of information via the Internet	39.3%	48.7%	12.0%	2.07
Improved promotion and recruitment methods	22.3%	56.1%	21.6%	2.55
Desire for economic stability	10.3%	27.4%	62.3%	3.73

After reviewing the tables above, the findings appear to provide some direction for responding to inquiries, and ways to best assist discerners. Here are my thoughts, especially as it relates to the Midwest Province’s Vocation Promotion Plan, and the office’s current and future activities.

- The first table ranks the helpfulness of various resources available as an inquirer gathers vocation and/or discernment information. Not surprisingly, and as underscored in previous Vocation Promotion Updates, personal contact with a vowed religious is the most important factor. Although not stated in these words, a community’s best “promotional tool” is its own

members. Rated as the second most important resource are Come and See Weekend opportunities. I suspect part of the value of such weekends is the personal contact with other members of the invitee's community and/or the ability to decrease myths and false impressions surrounding religious life. A religious community's website and its print materials ranked #3 and #4 respectively. Fortunately for the Midwest Province, in conjunction with the other two brothers' provinces, we just completed revision of these two communication tools, and they are receiving positive reviews by users.

- The second table shows the discerners' response when asked what activity was most supportive when making a vocation decision. Overwhelmingly, highest rated was the act of prayer. Upon review, this suggests that our vocation office might develop additional ways to encourage and support inquirers to be more prayerful. Rated #2 in importance was helping the discerners to find the "right fit" of a vocation and/or community, and #3 in significance was encouraging the use of spiritual direction. In both of these areas the office works hard assisting discerners to discover their vocational calling, and where appropriate the best fit of a religious community, always while recommending the use of a spiritual director as part of the discernment process.
- The last of the three tables shows the discerners' speculation as to why there may be an increased interest in religious life. The top two responses were a "desire for deeper spirituality," and a "desire for community and identity." These same "desires" or human needs are mentioned in many discernment materials and in large part were the catalyst for our establishing the Intentional Christian Community program at Bessette House, and likewise pairing it with the already existing Bessette Discernment Program. These responses (and the positive experiences of the Bessette ICC men this year) support the continuance of Bessette House as a place where young men can find Christian community, faith sharing and prayer, and if God willing, perhaps discern a calling to religious life.

## **Br. Chester Freel**

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