**Vocation Ministry Publishes Comprehensive Report, Providing Powerful Insights into Current**

**State of Vocations to the Priesthood in the U.S.**

*Careful research into data provided by dioceses nationwide provide accurate analysis and a path forward.*

**Houston, TX, February 27, 2023—** Vocation Ministry, an organization dedicated to supporting and increasing vocations, has published a first-of-its-kind report that details an accurate picture of what the priestly vocation crisis looks like and, more importantly, provides insights that will hopefully propel dioceses toward solutions.

“This report is like looking at the vocation crisis under a microscope. We spent many hundreds of hours researching what could be causing the severe lack of priests that most dioceses experience and how to remedy the problem,” said Rhonda Gruenewald, founder of Vocation Ministry.

It’s no secret that vocations to the priesthood in the United States are rapidly declining, but few dioceses fully understand how to cope with the issue. Many dioceses are struggling to ordain enough to withstand the anticipated incoming wave of retirements, and in 2021, 42 dioceses did not ordain a new priest.

The report highlights common misconceptions, clarity on the dire situation, and policies that compound the problem.

“Some bishops are being forced to consolidate parishes so that one individual priest serves ever-higher numbers of parishioners. This actually exacerbates the issue,” Gruenewald said.

When priests are asked who most influenced and helped them cultivate their vocations, 70% say it was their parish priest. The conclusion is that friendships with priests themselves are the most powerful indicator of vocations. As the number of parishioners each priest serves increases, it becomes more challenging to create an environment that fosters vocations.

Although the statistics presented seem dire, Gruenewald maintains that there is hope. “There are dioceses in the United States that show a steady increase in vocations. These are beacons of hope amidst a sea of bad news. There are concrete steps that diocesan leadership, priests, and lay people can take to turn the tide and create a healthy culture of vocations in their area.”

Vocation Ministry’s mission is to assist dioceses in promoting vocations through prayer and awareness so that there is a generous response from men from their parishes. The vast majority of dioceses that have implemented its intentional step-by-step process to produce or reset a vocation culture have reported concrete increases in their number of seminarians.

“There is so much that a diocese, its priests, and individual Catholics can do to increase vocations,” Gruenewald said. “Christ has not stopped calling men to the priesthood; we have only to cultivate fertile soil for the seeds He sows.”

For more information, to read the full report, and to access a complete press kit, visit <https://vocationministry.com/stateofvocationspresskit/> .

Rhonda Gruenewald is available for comment. To request an interview, contact Carrie Kline at carriek@revolutionizingmissions.com.

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