



Tier 1

The Tier System:

Vocation Ministry introduced a **Tier System** in the 2023 *State of Priestly Vocations* report to categorize dioceses into one of four tiers based on overall Catholic population size. This system allowed for a nuanced analysis of key metrics related to vocations, such as ordination rates and seminarian enrollment, recognizing that dioceses face different challenges and opportunities depending on their size and resources. The tiers were as follows:

Tier 1

- **Characteristics:** These dioceses, typically highly urban or mostly urban, serve large Catholic populations, exceeding 750,000 Catholics.
- **Challenges:** High number of parishioners for each active priest, administrative complexity, and the need to address a broad range of cultural and demographic factors.
- **Opportunities:** Access to greater financial and pastoral resources, larger pools of potential candidates, and well-established vocation offices.

Purpose of the Tier System:

The tier system was designed to:

1. **Provide Contextual Comparisons:** Comparing dioceses within the same tier helped identify what works for similarly resourced and sized dioceses.
2. **Highlight Best Practices:** The system spotlighted dioceses excelling within their tiers, allowing others to learn from their strategies.
3. **Facilitate Customized Solutions:** Recognizing that a "one-size-fits-all" approach would not be effective, the tier system encouraged dioceses to tailor their vocation efforts to their unique circumstances.

By analyzing data through the lens of these tiers, the report offered actionable insights and practical recommendations that were relevant to dioceses of all sizes

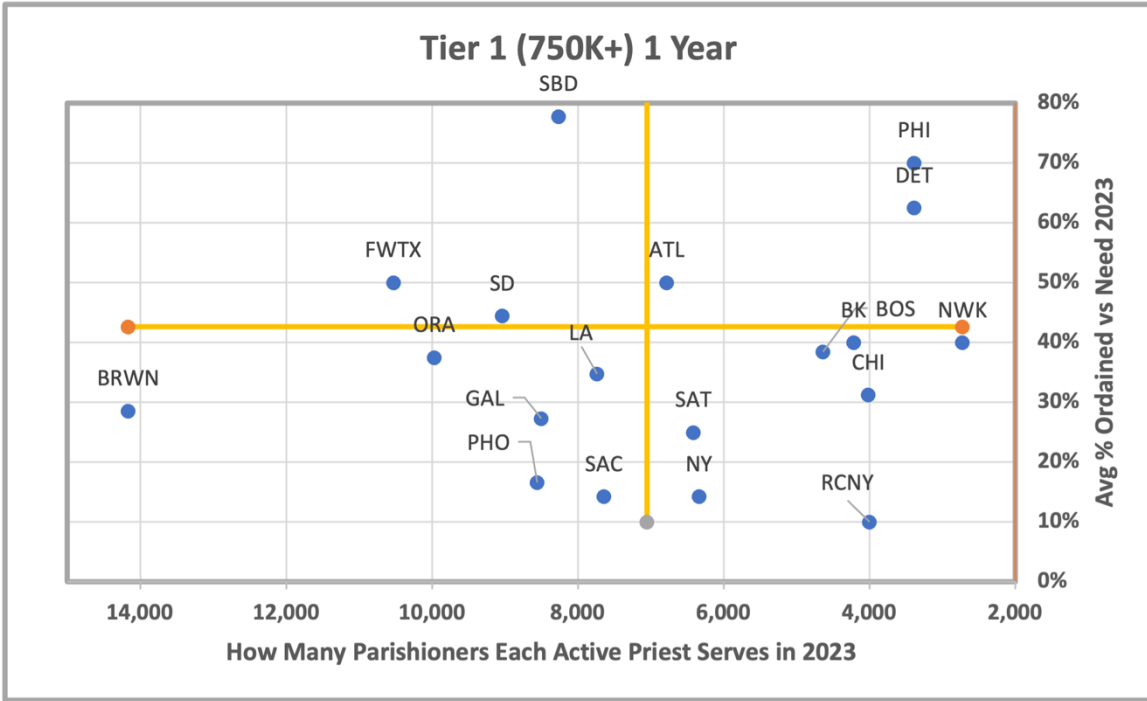


Tier 1
21 Dioceses
750,000+ Catholics in Diocese

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Diocese Abbrev.	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2023	Total Seminarians 2023	Seminarians Needed 2023**	% of Total Seminarians 2023 vs Need**	Priestly Ordinations 2023	Priestly Ordinations Needed 2023*	On Avg % Ordained vs. Need 2023	Parishioners Each Active Priest Served in 2023
Los Angeles, California	LA	3,815,431	51	258	20%	8	23	35%	7,739
New York, New York	NY	3,257,740	62	235	26%	3	21	14%	6,338
Chicago, Illinois	CHI	2,079,000	31	179	17%	5	16	31%	4,014
Phoenix, Arizona	PHO	2,003,046	41	134	31%	2	12	17%	8,560
Boston, Massachusetts	BOS	1,794,260	62	146	43%	5	13	38%	4,636
Galveston-Houston, Texas	GAL	1,700,000	46	123	37%	3	11	27%	8,500
Dallas, Texas	DAL	1,405,560	43	90	48%	8	8	100%	9,898
San Diego, California	SD	1,381,968	13	101	13%	4	9	44%	9,032
San Bernardino, California	SBD	1,371,361	15	101	15%	7	9	78%	8,261
Orange, California	ORA	1,345,328	23	90	26%	3	8	38%	9,965
Brooklyn, New York	BK	1,319,663	43	112	38%	4	10	40%	4,216
Rockville Centre, New York	RCNY	1,309,135	11	112	10%	1	10	10%	4,003
Atlanta, Georgia	ATL	1,200,000	35	90	39%	4	8	50%	6,780
Brownsville, Texas	BRWN	1,189,529	7	78	9%	2	7	29%	14,161
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	PHI	1,172,276	72	112	64%	7	10	70%	3,388
San Antonio, Texas	SAT	1,148,253	17	90	19%	2	8	25%	6,415
Fort Worth, Texas	FWTX	1,063,308	29	67	43%	3	6	50%	10,528
Sacramento, California	SAC	1,054,704	12	78	15%	1	7	14%	7,643
Newark, New Jersey	NWK	1,040,504	31	112	28%	4	10	40%	2,724
Fresno, California	FRE	949,000	23	67	34%	5	6	83%	7,975
Detroit, Michigan	DET	904,110	23	90	26%	5	8	63%	3,386

See formulas for calculations in appendix.

Tier 1 – Quadrant



*Abbreviations of dioceses can be found in the spreadsheet on the previous page.



Tier 1 – Quadrant Analysis

These Quadrant Charts are graphs of “How Many Parishioners Each Active Priest Serves” compared to “Average Ordination Rate vs. Need”. Each dot on these charts represents the data for a diocese. The vertical and horizontal orange lines provide the overall averages for all the dioceses in their group. Let’s define what each quadrant represents:

Upper Right Quadrant-

Current Situation: The dioceses in this quadrant generally have good numbers of active priests and smaller numbers of parishioners that each priest serves. Ordinations are relatively high compared to the other dioceses in the demographic group. Since each priest serves smaller numbers, access to priests is greater, and relationship potential, necessary for developing vocations, is more possible.

Future Situation: The dioceses in this quadrant, even though it may not be ordaining as many as it would like, is in the best situation of all the quadrants heading forward. Since ordination rates are higher, and the replacement of existing priests is ongoing, as we approach the high retirement rates of baby boomer priests, this group will most likely handle this situation the best of the four quadrants.

Upper Left Quadrant-

Current Situation: The dioceses in this quadrant generally have smaller numbers of active priests and large numbers of parishioners that each priest serves. This reason can be different in the tiers. Some dioceses are Catholic population-dense in a smaller geographic area; others may have a small number of priests serving vast numbers of parishioners. Either way, the result is that access to priests is reduced. We generally see very few dioceses in the quadrant, which means developing a strong, nurturing vocational environment is almost impossible. This doesn’t mean that individual parishes cannot do this successfully. Still, dioceses that average high parishioner numbers have found it impossible to generate more than 60% of the ordinations needed in this quadrant.

Future Situation: Since there are very few dioceses in this quadrant, with many parishioners that each priest serves and a high ordination rate, it’s hard to see a model that shows us what success looks like.

Bottom Right Quadrant-

Current Situation: The dioceses in this quadrant generally have good numbers of active priests and smaller numbers of parishioners that each priest serves. Ordinations are relatively low compared to the other dioceses in the demographic group. Since each priest serves smaller numbers, access to priests is greater, and relationship potential, which is necessary for developing vocations, is more possible.

Future Situation: If the addressable steps are taken, it will take time to see positive change in these dioceses because of the number of years needed for priestly formation. But this group has all the tools and inputs necessary for revival.

Bottom Left Quadrant-

Current Situation: Dioceses in this quadrant struggle in many cases with a lack of existing priests, and each existing priest serves large numbers of parishioners. Ordination rates are very low compared to the other dioceses in their demographic group. With all the demands of handling these large parishes, priests find it very challenging to create a vocational environment to develop sustaining numbers of vocations to the priesthood. Therefore, very few ordinations are fostered in these dioceses.

Future Situation: The question is what changes can be made to make it possible to create a more vocational environment. The first step is awareness. Changes of some priorities from administrative to vocational are possible. Defining roles where religious priests, lay people, and retired religious can fill gaps to alleviate the situation outlined can help create a vocational environment.



Tier 1 – Priestly Availability Index

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Active Priests for 2023	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2023	Total Parishes 2023	Priestly Availability Index
Los Angeles, California	493	3,815,431	288	37
New York, New York	514	3,257,740	277	44
Chicago, Illinois	518	2,079,000	216	54
Phoenix, Arizona	234	2,003,046	94	11
Boston, Massachusetts	387	1,794,260	250	54
Galveston-Houston, Texas	200	1,700,000	146	17
Dallas, Texas	142	1,405,560	69	7
San Diego, California	153	1,381,968	96	11
San Bernardino, California	166	1,371,361	92	11
Orange, California	135	1,345,328	57	6
Brooklyn, New York	313	1,319,663	175	42
Rockville Centre, New York	327	1,309,135	132	33
Atlanta, Georgia	177	1,200,000	93	14
Brownsville, Texas	84	1,189,529	72	5
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	346	1,172,276	214	63
San Antonio, Texas	179	1,148,253	135	21
Fort Worth, Texas	101	1,063,308	92	9
Sacramento, California	138	1,054,704	102	13
Newark, New Jersey	382	1,040,504	212	78
Fresno, California	119	949,000	87	11
Detroit, Michigan	267	904,110	212	63

See formulas for calculations in appendix.

Marriages in the United States in 2023

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Catholic Marriages	Marriages Between Two Catholics	Interfaith Marriages
Los Angeles, California	5096	4635	461
New York, New York	2914	2554	360
Chicago, Illinois	3400	2900	500
Phoenix, Arizona	864	723	141
Boston, Massachusetts	1426	1172	254
Galveston-Houston, Texas	2432	1992	440
Dallas, Texas	1699	1398	301
San Diego, California	1215	1037	178
San Bernardino, California	1550	1381	169
Orange, California	1891	1619	272
Brooklyn, New York	1337	1254	83
Rockville Centre, New York	2453	2112	341
Atlanta, Georgia	1443	1171	272
Brownsville, Texas	758	704	54
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	2611	1866	745
San Antonio, Texas	1245	1057	188
Fort Worth, Texas	785	625	160
Sacramento, California	889	709	180
Newark, New Jersey	1418	1267	151
Fresno, California	1832	1615	217
Detroit, Michigan	1695	1223	472

See formulas for calculations in appendix.



Tier 1 - Correlations

Vocation Ministry was interested in knowing if any diocesan information collected from the Official Catholic Directory publications of 2014 to 2023 could be contributing factors affecting vocations to the priesthood and, if so, how significant the effects may be. Understanding these trends may help all understand what creates a more favorable environment to foster vocations.

Pearson correlations are a way to measure the direction and strength of the relationship between two variables. The direction of the effect is indicated by a “+” or “–” sign in front of the reported number. For instance, a “–” sign would indicate the two variables move in different directions, i.e., as one increases, the other decreases. A “+” indicates the two variables move together in the same direction, either higher or lower.

The reported number indicates the strength of the relationship and how perfect it is. All reported numbers are between “0” and “1.0”. An ideal relationship would be 1.0, which rarely occurs, and no relationship at all would be “0”. To understand the range of reported numbers and their indications, see the table below to describe relationship strengths. While no individual trait should be expected to represent all the variations, those significant ones can be taken as direct contributing factors.

> -0.8	Very High Negative Correlation		> +0.8	Very High Positive Correlation
-0.6 to -0.8	High Negative Correlation		+0.6 to +0.8	High Positive Correlation
-0.4 to -0.6	Moderate Negative Correlation		+0.4 to +0.6	Moderate Positive Correlation
-0.2 to -0.4	Low Negative Correlation		+0.2 to +0.4	Low Positive Correlation
0 to -0.2	No Correlation		0 to +0.2	No Correlation

Tests of significance using *p-values* (*probability values*) of .05, .01, and .001 were applied and are designated as *, **, ***, respectively. To understand the statistical significance, a *p-value* of .05 would indicate a 1 in 20 chance of this outcome being exceeded by chance alone, .01 would indicate 1 chance in 100, and .001 would indicate 1 chance in 1000. Thus, confidence in results increases as reported correlations are strong (in either direction), and *p values* get smaller.

Tier 1 – Correlation Findings

21 Dioceses

Tier 1	Priestly Availability Index	How Many Parishioners Does Each Active Priest Serve	Parishioners per Parish	Total Active Priests per Total Parishes
Total Seminarians 2023	0.46*	-0.35	-0.18	0.1
Seminarian Average 2014-2023	0.56**	-0.42	-0.2	0.22
% of Total Seminarians 2023 vs Need**	0.2	-0.2	-0.15	-0.1
% of Total Seminarians 2014-2023 vs Need**	0.25	-0.23	-0.13	0.02
Priestly Ordinations 2023	0.25	-0.14	-0.04	0.02
Priestly Ordination Average 2014-2023	0.79***	-0.64**	-0.44**	0.24
On Average % Ordained vs. Need 2023	-0.07	0.07	-0.05	-0.17
On Average % Ordained vs. Need 2014-2023	0.62**	-0.57**	-0.43*	0.09
* P <.05, ** p <.01, *** p <.001				



Appendix

Formulas Used for This Report

Base Need Ordination Rate—To determine how many ordinations are needed by dioceses, Vocation Ministry used the average of two factors:

1. Population Factor equals one ordination per 120,000 Catholics in a diocese
2. Replacement Rate of Priests (see below).

Replacement Rate of Priests—The replacement rate of priests is the number of ordinations needed annually simply to replace the current number of priests in a diocese. The rate used in this report is 2.7 percent. This rate was arrived at by determining the average years of ministry for priests in the US.

Subtracting the average ordination age of priests (34) from the average retirement age (71), the average length of ministry is 37 years. Considering a priest's length of ministry to be a unit, divide that unit by the number of years. Thus, the annual rate of replacement necessary to retain the current number of priests over a given time period ($1/37 = 0.027$ or 2.7%).

Thus, if a diocese has 83 priests, each year they will need to ordain an average of 2.241 ($83 * 0.027$) new priests yearly just to replace the current number as they retire. Depending on a diocese's particular need, a higher replacement rate may be necessary. This calculation does not include other factors of attrition which may cause a decrease in priests, such as a higher than the average normal rate of retirement.

Base Need Seminarian Rate—To determine the number of seminarians needed, the Base Need Ordination Rate was multiplied by the average length of seminary formation (seven years), then increased by the average discern-out rate of 40 percent.

Priestly Availability Index- $((\text{Total Active Priests})/(\text{Total Catholics in Diocese}/\text{Total Parishes in Diocese})) * 1000$

Total Catholic Marriages—To determine the number of total Catholic marriages, the number of marriages between two Catholics is added to the number of interfaith marriages (one spouse is Catholic, and one is of a different faith).