



Tier 2

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:

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- **Characteristics:** These dioceses typically encompass mid-sized metropolitan areas as well as some rural areas and serve Catholic populations ranging from 300,000 to 750,000 Catholics.
- **Challenges:** Balancing resource limitations with the need to reach a diverse range of communities.
- **Opportunities:** Medium-sized dioceses often benefit from a manageable scale that allows for more personalized vocation promotion while still leveraging significant resources.

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.



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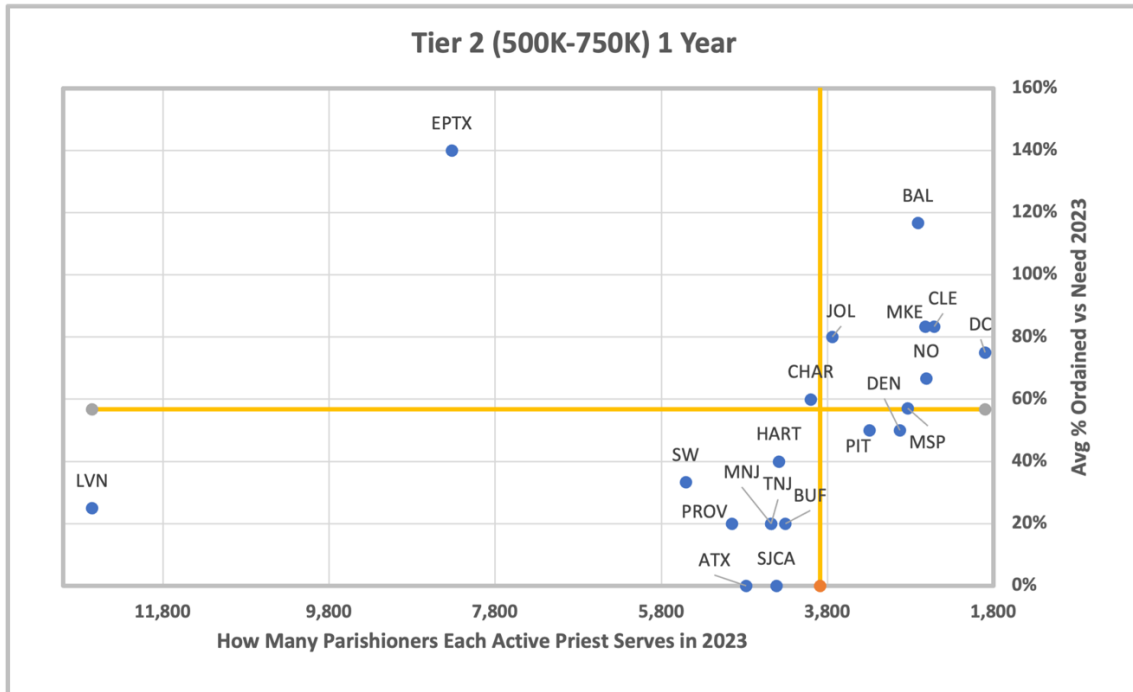
40 Dioceses

300,000-750,000 Catholics in Diocese

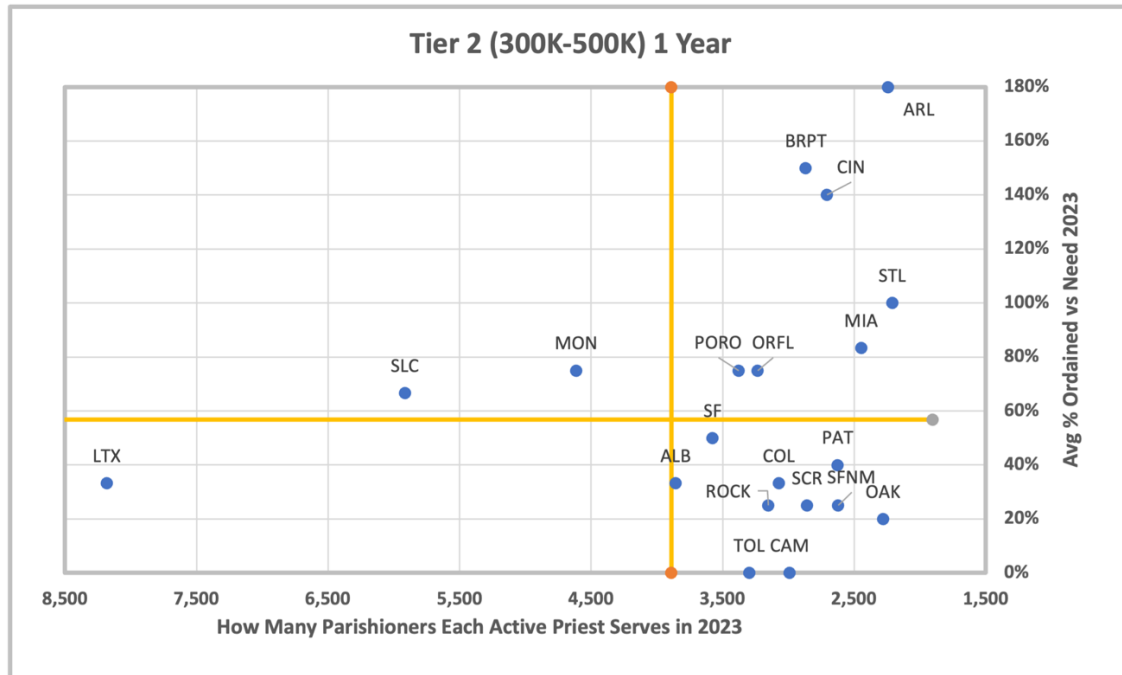
(ARCH)DIOCESE	Diocese Abbrev.	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2023	Total Seminarians 2023	Seminarians Needed 2023**	% of Total Seminarians 2023 vs Need**	Priestly Ordinations 2023	Priestly Ordinations Needed 2023*	On Avg % Ordained vs. Need 2023	Parishioners Each Active Priest Served in 2023
Seattle, Washington	SW	748,212	15	67	22%	2	6	33%	5,502
St. Paul/Minneapolis, Minnesota	MSP	720,000	60	78	77%	4	7	57%	2,835
El Paso, Texas	EPTX	715,654	18	56	32%	7	5	140%	8,322
Austin, Texas	ATX	678,545	40	56	71%	0	5	0%	4,778
Washington, DC	DC	671,187	69	90	77%	6	8	75%	1,901
Trenton, New Jersey	TNJ	640,000	12	56	21%	1	5	20%	4,476
Hartford, Connecticut	HART	622,577	13	56	23%	2	5	40%	4,384
Metuchen, New Jersey	MNJ	622,254	19	56	34%	1	5	20%	4,477
Denver Colorado	DEN	620,036	33	67	49%	3	6	50%	2,925
Las Vegas, Nevada	LVN	620,000	10	45	22%	1	4	25%	12,653
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	PIT	615,659	32	67	48%	3	6	50%	3,292
Providence, Rhode Island	PROV	598,990	15	56	27%	1	5	20%	4,950
Cleveland, Ohio	CLE	596,297	48	67	71%	5	6	83%	2,516
Buffalo, New York	BUF	555,207	7	56	13%	1	5	20%	4,304
Charlotte, North Carolina	CHAR	539,610	51	56	91%	3	5	60%	3,997
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	MKE	529,771	43	67	64%	5	6	83%	2,623
San Jose, California	SJCA	525,000	7	56	13%	0	5	0%	4,412
Baltimore, Maryland	BAL	515,160	51	67	76%	7	6	117%	2,711
New Orleans, Louisiana	NO	508,711	19	67	28%	4	6	67%	2,609
Joliet, Illinois	JOL	501,292	23	56	41%	4	5	80%	3,741
Miami, Florida	MIA	499,015	55	67	82%	5	6	83%	2,446
San Francisco, California	SF	472,000	19	45	42%	2	4	50%	3,576
St. Louis, Missouri	STL	444,118	29	56	52%	5	5	100%	2,210
Portland, Oregon	PORO	442,618	27	45	60%	3	4	75%	3,379
Cincinnati, Ohio	CIN	438,802	54	56	96%	7	5	140%	2,709
Arlington, Virginia	ARL	433,094	40	56	71%	9	5	180%	2,244
Paterson, New Jersey	PAT	420,000	11	56	20%	2	5	40%	2,625
Rockford, Illinois	ROCK	412,867	12	45	27%	1	4	25%	3,152
Orlando, Florida	ORFL	401,212	19	45	42%	3	4	75%	3,236
Bridgeport, Connecticut	BRPT	370,000	24	45	54%	6	4	150%	2,868
Monterey, California	MON	369,000	3	45	7%	3	4	75%	4,613
Oakland, California	OAK	366,991	13	56	23%	1	5	20%	2,279
Scranton, Pennsylvania	SCR	354,259	10	45	22%	1	4	25%	2,857
Salt Lake City, Utah	SLC	337,137	6	34	18%	2	3	67%	5,915
Laredo, Texas	LTX	335,429	2	34	6%	1	3	33%	8,181
Columbus, Ohio	COL	334,881	33	34	98%	1	3	33%	3,072
Santa Fe, New Mexico	SFNM	327,664	13	45	29%	1	4	25%	2,621
Toledo, Ohio	TOL	316,565	11	34	33%	0	3	0%	3,298
Albany, New York	ALB	316,275	26	34	77%	1	3	33%	3,857
Camden, New Jersey	CAM	304,999	8	34	24%	0	3	0%	2,990

See formulas for calculations in appendix.

**Tier 2 – Quadrant
500,000-750,000**



**Tier 2 – Quadrant
300,000-500,000**



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



Tier 2 – 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 2 – Priestly Availability Index

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Active Priests for 2023	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2023	Total Parishes 2023	Priestly Availability Index
Seattle, Washington	136	748,212	136	25
St. Paul/Minneapolis, Minnesota	254	720,000	185	65
El Paso, Texas	86	715,654	58	7
Austin, Texas	142	678,545	102	21
Washington, DC	353	671,187	140	74
Trenton, New Jersey	143	640,000	97	22
Hartford, Connecticut	142	622,577	105	24
Metuchen, New Jersey	139	622,254	90	20
Denver Colorado	212	620,036	124	42
Las Vegas, Nevada	49	620,000	30	2
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	187	615,659	62	19
Providence, Rhode Island	121	598,990	119	24
Cleveland, Ohio	237	596,297	184	73
Buffalo, New York	129	555,207	160	37
Charlotte, North Carolina	135	539,610	76	19
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	202	529,771	187	71
San Jose, California	119	525,000	49	11
Baltimore, Maryland	190	515,160	137	51
New Orleans, Louisiana	195	508,711	112	43
Joliet, Illinois	134	501,292	117	31
Miami, Florida	204	499,015	103	42
San Francisco, California	132	472,000	92	26
St. Louis, Missouri	201	444,118	147	67
Portland, Oregon	131	442,618	125	37
Cincinnati, Ohio	162	438,802	205	76
Arlington, Virginia	193	433,094	70	31
Paterson, New Jersey	160	420,000	107	41
Rockford, Illinois	131	412,867	105	33
Orlando, Florida	124	401,212	80	25
Bridgeport, Connecticut	129	370,000	74	26
Monterey, California	80	369,000	46	10
Oakland, California	161	366,991	82	36
Scranton, Pennsylvania	124	354,259	110	39
Salt Lake City, Utah	57	337,137	48	8
Laredo, Texas	41	335,429	32	4
Columbus, Ohio	109	334,881	97	32
Santa Fe, New Mexico	125	327,664	93	35
Toledo, Ohio	96	316,565	122	37
Albany, New York	82	316,275	126	33
Camden, New Jersey	102	304,999	62	21

See formulas for calculations in appendix.



Tier 2

Marriages in the United States in 2023

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Catholic Marriages	Marriages Between Two Catholics	Interfaith Marriages
Seattle, Washington	873	625	248
St. Paul/Minneapolis, Minnesota	1134	837	297
El Paso, Texas	525	487	38
Austin, Texas	1283	1078	205
Washington, DC	1514	1151	363
Trenton, New Jersey	1179	1027	152
Hartford, Connecticut	674	623	51
Metuchen, New Jersey	681	580	101
Denver Colorado	1131	860	271
Las Vegas, Nevada	427	369	58
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	1008	723	285
Providence, Rhode Island	750	593	157
Cleveland, Ohio	1480	1078	402
Buffalo, New York	651	500	151
Charlotte, North Carolina	746	599	147
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1157	915	242
San Jose, California	660	517	143
Baltimore, Maryland	1110	845	265
New Orleans, Louisiana	1144	928	216
Joliet, Illinois	855	750	105
Miami, Florida	1304	1202	102
San Francisco, California	491	379	112
St. Louis, Missouri	1262	926	336
Portland, Oregon	515	408	107
Cincinnati, Ohio	1250	1025	225
Arlington, Virginia	1325	932	393
Paterson, New Jersey	745	656	89
Rockford, Illinois	789	668	121
Orlando, Florida	827	670	157
Bridgeport, Connecticut	473	390	83
Monterey, California	583	525	58
Oakland, California	1517	538	979
Scranton, Pennsylvania	457	375	82
Salt Lake City, Utah	320	269	51
Laredo, Texas	265	257	8
Columbus, Ohio	601	435	166
Santa Fe, New Mexico	591	520	71
Toledo, Ohio	594	382	212
Albany, New York	414	315	99
Camden, New Jersey	621	461	160

See formulas for calculations in appendix.



Tier 2 - 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 2 – Correlation Findings

40 Dioceses

Tier 2	Priestly Availability Index	How Many Parishioners Does Each Active Priest Serve	Parishioners per Parish	Total Active Priests per Total Parishes
Total Seminarians 2023	0.68***	-0.42**	-0.29	0.21
Seminarian Average 2014-2023	0.80***	-0.53***	-0.41**	0.20
% of Total Seminarians 2023 vs Need**	0.56***	-0.41**	-0.35*	0.03
% of Total Seminarians 2014-2023 vs Need**	0.72***	-0.58**	-0.54*	-0.01
Priestly Ordinations 2023	0.47**	-0.26	-0.12	0.28
Priestly Ordination Average 2014-2023	0.71***	-0.55***	-0.39*	0.27
On Average % Ordained vs. Need 2023	0.31*	-0.18	-0.34*	0.20
On Average % Ordained vs. Need 2014-2023	0.57***	-0.56***	-0.35*	0.03

* 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).