



Tier 3

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 serve from 100,000 to 300,000 Catholics, often in mostly rural or less densely populated regions.
- **Challenges:** Limited resources, fewer priests, and reduced visibility of the Church in the broader community.
- **Opportunities:** Smaller communities often foster closer priest-parishioner relationships, enabling priests to personally encourage discernment and vocations.

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 3

61 Dioceses

100,000-300,000 Catholics in Diocese

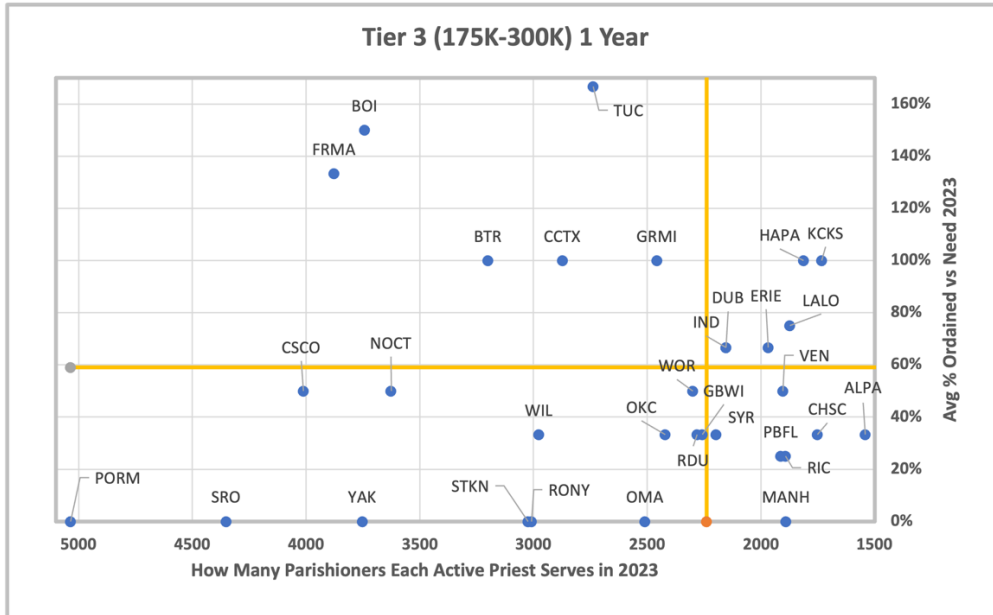
(ARCH)DIOCESE	Diocese Abbrev.	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2023	Total Seminarians 2023	Seminarians Needed 2023**	% of Total Seminarians 2023 vs Need**	Priestly Ordinations 2023	Priestly Ordinations Needed 2023*	On Avg % Ordained vs. Need 2023	Parishioners Each Active Priest Serves in 2023
Tucson, Arizona	TUC	298,483	2	34	6%	5	3	167%	2,738
Rochester, New York	RONY	294,801	5	34	15%	0	3	0%	3,008
Portland, Maine	PORM	287,060	9	34	27%	0	3	0%	5,036
Lafayette, Louisiana	LALO	267,940	24	45	54%	3	4	75%	1,874
Worcester, Massachusetts	WOR	266,700	17	45	38%	2	4	50%	2,299
Venice, Florida	VEN	266,379	11	45	25%	2	4	50%	1,903
St. Petersburg, Florida	TSP	261,705	18	45	40%	1	4	25%	1,415
Fall River, Massachusetts	FRMA	259,785	5	34	15%	4	3	133%	3,877
Green Bay, Wisconsin	GBWI	250,638	17	34	51%	1	3	33%	2,258
Palm Beach, Florida	PBFL	248,748	8	45	18%	1	4	25%	1,913
Wilmington, Delaware	WIL	247,098	11	34	33%	1	3	33%	2,977
Raleigh, North Carolina	RDU	246,213	14	34	42%	1	3	33%	2,280
Richmond, Virginia	RIC	242,264	25	45	56%	1	4	25%	1,893
Omaha, Nebraska	OMA	241,011	22	34	65%	0	3	0%	2,511
Stockton, California	STKN	229,883	7	34	21%	0	3	0%	3,025
Norwich, Connecticut	NOCT	228,520	4	22	18%	1	2	50%	3,627
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	OKC	222,674	18	34	54%	1	3	33%	2,420
Charleston, South Carolina	CHSC	218,929	21	34	63%	1	3	33%	1,751
Boise, Idaho	BOI	217,093	9	22	40%	3	2	150%	3,743
Corpus Christi, Texas	CCTX	209,726	4	22	18%	2	2	100%	2,873
Indianapolis, Indiana	IND	204,537	31	34	92%	2	3	67%	2,153
Santa Rosa, California	SRO	204,513	6	22	27%	0	2	0%	4,351
Allentown, Pennsylvania	ALPA	203,478	17	34	51%	1	3	33%	1,542
Manchester, New Hampshire	MANH	202,178	12	34	36%	0	3	0%	1,890
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	BTR	201,656	10	22	45%	2	2	100%	3,201
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	HAPA	201,186	11	34	33%	3	3	100%	1,812
Colorado Springs, Colorado	CSCO	196,624	17	22	76%	1	2	50%	4,013
Erie, Pennsylvania	ERIE	192,916	8	34	24%	2	3	67%	1,969
Syracuse, New York	SYR	188,955	10	34	30%	1	3	33%	2,197
Dubuque, Iowa	DUB	187,302	14	34	42%	2	3	67%	2,153

See formulas for calculations in appendix.

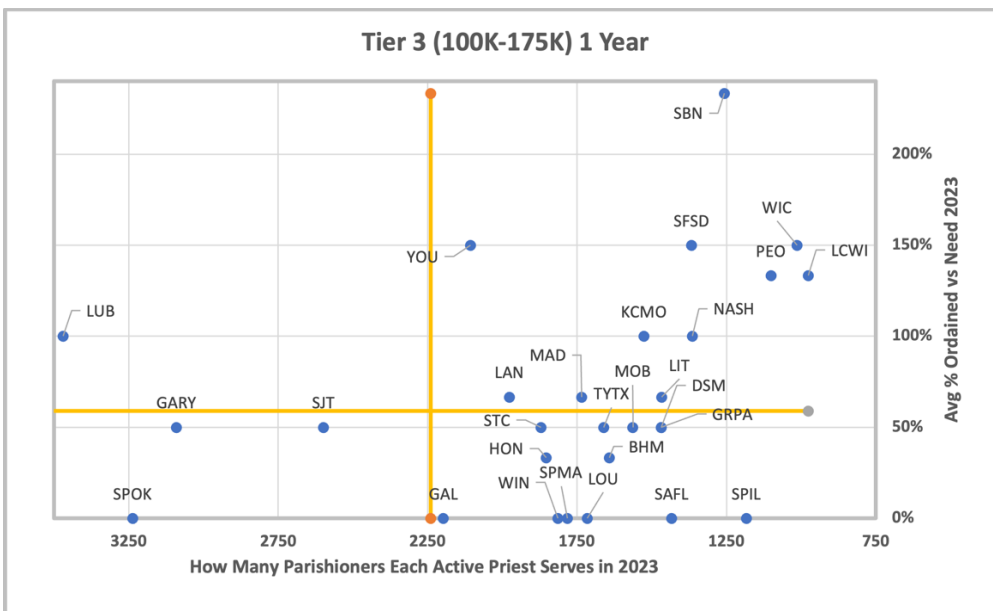
(ARCH)DIOCESE	Diocese Abbrev.	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2023	Total Seminarians 2023	Seminarians Needed 2023**	% of Total Seminarians 2023 vs Need**	Priestly Ordinations 2023	Priestly Ordinations Needed 2023*	On Avg % Ordained vs. Need 2023	Parishioners Each Active Priest Serves in 2023
Yakima, Washington	YAK	180,123	8	22	36%	0	2	0%	3,753
Grand Rapids, Michigan	GRMI	179,371	20	22	89%	2	2	100%	2,457
Kansas City, Kansas	KCKS	178,561	26	34	77%	3	3	100%	1,734
Gary, Indiana	GARY	169,976	12	22	54%	1	2	50%	3,090
Lansing, Michigan	LAN	165,988	27	34	80%	2	3	67%	1,976
Little Rock, Arkansas	LIT	164,324	24	34	71%	2	3	67%	1,467
Louisville, Kentucky	LOU	159,489	16	34	48%	0	3	0%	1,715
Spokane, Washington	SPOK	158,631	9	22	40%	0	2	0%	3,237
St. Augustine, Florida	SAFL	154,781	19	34	57%	0	3	0%	1,433
Springfield, Massachusetts	SPMA	151,546	0	34	0%	0	3	0%	1,783
Madison, Wisconsin	MAD	150,876	19	34	57%	2	3	67%	1,734
Honolulu, Hawaii	HON	140,817	9	34	27%	1	3	33%	1,853
Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana	SBN	139,506	13	34	39%	7	3	233%	1,257
Lubbock, Texas	LUB	138,800	6	22	27%	2	2	100%	3,470
Peoria, Illinois	PEO	129,885	22	34	65%	4	3	133%	1,101
Youngstown, Ohio	YOU	128,486	10	22	45%	3	2	150%	2,106
Birmingham, Alabama	BHM	124,825	19	34	57%	1	3	33%	1,642
La Crosse, Wisconsin	LCWI	124,030	12	34	36%	4	3	133%	977
Tyler, Texas	TYTX	121,212	16	22	71%	1	2	50%	1,660
San Angelo, Texas	SJT	119,518	12	22	54%	1	2	50%	2,598
St. Cloud, Minnesota	STC	115,968	14	22	63%	1	2	50%	1,870
Winona-Rochester, Minnesota	WIN	114,290	24	22	107%	0	2	0%	1,814
Springfield, Illinois	SPIL	113,611	15	22	67%	0	2	0%	1,183
Greensburg, Pennsylvania	GRPA	113,054	10	22	45%	1	2	50%	1,468
Kansas City- St. Joseph, Missouri	KCMO	112,932	18	22	80%	2	2	100%	1,526
Nashville, Tennessee	NASH	110,436	28	22	125%	2	2	100%	1,363
Wichita, Kansas	WIC	108,484	44	22	196%	3	2	150%	1,014
Mobile, Alabama	MOB	107,870	14	22	63%	1	2	50%	1,563
Gallup, New Mexico	GAL	107,653	2	22	9%	0	2	0%	2,197
Des Moines, Iowa	DSM	107,123	13	22	58%	1	2	50%	1,467
Sioux Falls, South Dakota	SFSD	105,189	14	22	63%	3	2	150%	1,366

See formulas for calculations in appendix.

**Tier 3 – Quadrant
175,000-300,000**



**Tier 3 – Quadrant
100,000-175,000**



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



Tier 3 – 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 3 – Priestly Availability Index

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Active Priests for 2023	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2023	Total Parishes 2023	Priestly Availability Index
Tucson, Arizona	109	298,483	77	28
Rochester, New York	98	294,801	86	29
Portland, Maine	57	287,060	48	10
Lafayette, Louisiana	143	267,940	122	65
Worcester, Massachusetts	116	266,700	89	39
Venice, Florida	140	266,379	61	32
St. Petersburg, Florida	185	261,705	75	53
Fall River, Massachusetts	67	259,785	69	18
Green Bay, Wisconsin	111	250,638	156	69
Palm Beach, Florida	130	248,748	50	26
Wilmington, Delaware	83	247,098	56	19
Raleigh, North Carolina	108	246,213	81	36
Richmond, Virginia	128	242,264	135	71
Omaha, Nebraska	96	241,011	122	49
Stockton, California	76	229,883	35	12
Norwich, Connecticut	63	228,520	51	14
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	92	222,674	63	26
Charleston, South Carolina	125	218,929	95	54
Boise, Idaho	58	217,093	51	14
Corpus Christi, Texas	73	209,726	69	24
Indianapolis, Indiana	95	204,537	126	59
Santa Rosa, California	47	204,513	40	9
Allentown, Pennsylvania	132	203,478	78	51
Manchester, New Hampshire	107	202,178	88	47
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	63	201,656	64	20
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	111	201,186	88	49
Colorado Springs, Colorado	49	196,624	39	10
Erie, Pennsylvania	98	192,916	83	42
Syracuse, New York	86	188,955	122	56
Dubuque, Iowa	87	187,302	163	76

See formulas for calculations in appendix.

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Active Priests for 2023	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2023	Total Parishes 2023	Priestly Availability Index
Yakima, Washington	48	180,123	39	10
Grand Rapids, Michigan	73	179,371	79	32
Kansas City, Kansas	103	178,561	107	62
Gary, Indiana	55	169,976	58	19
Lansing, Michigan	84	165,988	72	36
Little Rock, Arkansas	112	164,324	91	62
Louisville, Kentucky	93	159,489	102	59
Spokane, Washington	49	158,631	80	25
St. Augustine, Florida	108	154,781	54	38
Springfield, Massachusetts	85	151,546	75	42
Madison, Wisconsin	87	150,876	102	59
Honolulu, Hawaii	76	140,817	65	35
Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana	111	139,506	81	64
Lubbock, Texas	40	138,800	61	18
Peoria, Illinois	118	129,885	155	141
Youngstown, Ohio	61	128,486	81	38
Birmingham, Alabama	76	124,825	56	34
La Crosse, Wisconsin	127	124,030	156	160
Tyler, Texas	73	121,212	53	32
San Angelo, Texas	46	119,518	45	17
St. Cloud, Minnesota	62	115,968	131	70
Winona-Rochester, Minnesota	63	114,290	95	52
Springfield, Illinois	96	113,611	129	109
Greensburg, Pennsylvania	77	113,054	78	53
Kansas City- St. Joseph, Missouri	74	112,932	81	53
Nashville, Tennessee	81	110,436	54	40
Wichita, Kansas	107	108,484	90	89
Mobile, Alabama	69	107,870	76	49
Gallup, New Mexico	49	107,653	52	24
Des Moines, Iowa	73	107,123	80	55
Sioux Falls, South Dakota	77	105,189	120	88

See formulas for calculations in appendix.



Tier 3

Marriages in the United States in 2023

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Catholic Marriages	Marriages Between Two Catholics	Interfaith Marriages
Tucson, Arizona	518	481	37
Rochester, New York	378	305	73
Portland, Maine	245	184	61
Lafayette, Louisiana	698	639	59
Worcester, Massachusetts	229	201	28
Venice, Florida	583	496	87
St. Petersburg, Florida	754	548	206
Fall River, Massachusetts	455	386	69
Green Bay, Wisconsin	483	375	108
Palm Beach, Florida	591	502	89
Wilmington, Delaware	398	277	121
Raleigh, North Carolina	865	631	234
Richmond, Virginia	634	421	213
Omaha, Nebraska	778	571	207
Stockton, California	671	571	100
Norwich, Connecticut	245	212	33
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	434	333	101
Charleston, South Carolina	707	525	182
Boise, Idaho	368	294	74
Corpus Christi, Texas	235	192	43
Indianapolis, Indiana	755	551	204
Santa Rosa, California	337	312	25
Allentown, Pennsylvania	394	66	328
Manchester, New Hampshire	320	251	69
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	534	399	135
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	311	195	116
Colorado Springs, Colorado	194	137	57
Erie, Pennsylvania	226	157	69
Syracuse, New York	410	328	82
Dubuque, Iowa	504	334	170
Yakima, Washington	315	294	21
Grand Rapids, Michigan	428	322	106
Kansas City, Kansas	633	405	228
Gary, Indiana	299	256	43
Lansing, Michigan	466	352	114
Little Rock, Arkansas	407	297	110
Louisville, Kentucky	384	310	74
Spokane, Washington	203	168	35

See formulas for calculations in appendix.

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Catholic Marriages	Marriages Between Two Catholics	Interfaith Marriages
St. Augustine, Florida	424	308	116
Springfield, Massachusetts	236	204	32
Madison, Wisconsin	328	257	71
Honolulu, Hawaii	271	215	56
Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana	532	430	102
Lubbock, Texas	51	51	0
Peoria, Illinois	466	297	169
Youngstown, Ohio	330	226	104
Birmingham, Alabama	443	328	115
La Crosse, Wisconsin	328	234	94
Tyler, Texas	314	298	16
San Angelo, Texas	300	206	94
St. Cloud, Minnesota	340	251	89
Winona-Rochester, Minnesota	218	156	62
Springfield, Illinois	265	185	80
Greensburg, Pennsylvania	309	228	81
Kansas City- St. Joseph, Missouri	497	325	172
Nashville, Tennessee	462	342	120
Wichita, Kansas	462	322	140
Mobile, Alabama	311	196	115
Gallup, New Mexico	75	58	17
Des Moines, Iowa	286	218	68
Sioux Falls, South Dakota	393	245	148

See formulas for calculations in appendix.



Tier 3 - 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 3 – Correlation Findings

61 Dioceses

Tier 3	Priestly Availability Index	How Many Parishioners Does Each Active Priest Serve	Parishioners per Parish	Total Active Priests per Total Parishes
Total Seminarists 2023	0.43***	-0.48***	-0.41***	-0.06
Seminarist Average 2014-2023	0.53***	-0.56***	-0.45***	-0.03
% of Total Seminarists 2023 vs Need**	0.34**	-0.40**	-0.42***	-0.18
% of Total Seminarists 2014-2023 vs Need**	0.45***	-0.48***	-0.49***	-0.19
Priestly Ordinations 2023	0.34**	-0.22	-0.22	-0.07
Priestly Ordination Average 2014-2023	0.51***	-0.47***	-0.39**	-0.04
On Average % Ordained vs. Need 2023	0.28*	-0.18	0.15	-0.16
On Average % Ordained vs. Need 2014-2023	0.45***	-0.46***	-0.45***	-0.16

* 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).