



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Religious Vocations Continue to Blossom within the
United States**

CMSWR Releases Current Demographic Data

Washington, D.C., November 9, 2017 – The Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR) released findings from its annual survey of the communities whose major superiors (or those analogous to a major superior) are members (or associate members) of CMSWR. The data confirm an encouraging trend in the number of young women who are choosing consecrated life. The 2017 report, prepared for the CMSWR by Sister Mary Bendyna, OP, again shows over 900 sisters currently in initial formation, with temporary professed as the largest group followed by novices and postulants. The number of sisters in the initial stages of religious life has remained steady throughout the six years this survey has been conducted, continuing an encouraging trend among CMSWR members and their communities.

“Religious life continues to blossom in the United States,” said Mother Mary McGreevy, RSM Chairperson of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious and Superior General of the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma. “Amongst responding communities, 165 new postulants were welcomed in 2016. These same communities also received 137 sisters as novices and celebrated 103 first professions and 72 perpetual professions. These numbers indicate that young women today are hearing and responding to God’s call for a total gift of self. This encouraging trend is a blessing not only for the individual communities but for the entire Church.”

The survey also asked respondents to indicate the country of birth of each sister who made perpetual profession in 2016. The data showed that the majority of newly perpetually professed sisters (62.5%) were born in the United States. The next most common countries of origin this year were Mexico (7%) and the Philippines (6%).

The average age of the sisters overall is 58 years old, consistent with previous studies. The average age of postulants is 28 years old, of novices 28 years old, and 32.5 years old for temporary professed sisters. About 85% of professed sisters are fully engaged in active service, while 15% are retired because of age or infirmity. The sisters currently serve in at least 137 dioceses across the United States.

Based on data from the 108 responses gathered from major superiors who represent CMSWR’s 120 religious communities, the 2017 report shows a wide range of apostolates that span every field and ministry. The most prevalent areas of outreach are education (20%); health care (16%); and evangelization, catechesis, and religious education (12%). Because the survey asked respondents to count each sister only once, using the category that best describes her primary apostolate, these figures do not reflect the much higher numbers of sisters who actually serve in these and other apostolates. The sisters serve in well over 400 educational institutions and nearly 200 health care facilities, as well as in almost 300 parishes, 50 retreat or spirituality centers, and numerous other institutional and non-institutional settings.

Located in Washington, D.C., the CMSWR was founded in 1992 with the canonical approval of St. John Paul II. The sisters of the CMSWR members represent around 120 communities nationwide with almost 6,000 sisters. For more information, visit cmswr.org.

###

Media contact: Hillary Theriault, Director of Communications at communications@cmswr.org

Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious

415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20017 | Phone: 202.832.2575 | Fax: 202.832.6325 | www.cmswr.org