



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CMSWR Releases Current Demographic
Data:
Trends in New Vocations Continues**

Washington, D.C., November 10, 2016 – 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 2016 report, prepared for the CMSWR by Sister Mary Bendyna, OP, again shows well over 900 sisters currently in initial formation, with temporary professed as the largest group followed by novices and postulants. The presence of significant numbers of sisters in the initial stages of religious life has continued unabated over the five years this survey has been conducted.

“Religious life is alive and well in the United States,” said Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV, Chairperson of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious and Superior General of the Sisters of Life. “Among CMSWR communities, the number of young women entering religious life has remained consistent over the past five years. Responding to the initiative of God, young women today still desire to commit their lives and their love completely to Christ and at the service of His Church. A call to religious consecration is a blessing not only for the young woman called, but also for the Church, which is witnessing a resurgence of sisters able to serve in dioceses across the country. We remain encouraged by this unfolding story and continue to pray to the Lord of the Harvest for an increase in vocations to religious life.”

Based on data from the 104 responses gathered from major superiors who represent CMSWR’s 120 religious communities, the 2016 report shows that the average age of sisters overall is 57 years old, consistent with previous studies. The average age of postulants is 27 years old, of novices 28 years old, and 32 years old for temporary professed sisters. About 85% of professed sisters are fully engaged in active service, while 15% are retired. The sisters currently serve in at least 137 dioceses across the United States.

The report also shows a wide range of apostolates that span every field and ministry. The most prevalent areas of outreach are education (20%); health care (15%); 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 more than 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 communities represent 120 communities nationwide with almost 6,000 sisters. For more information, visit cmswr.org.

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