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:

Tier 3

- **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
59 Dioceses
100,000-300,000 Catholics in Dioceses

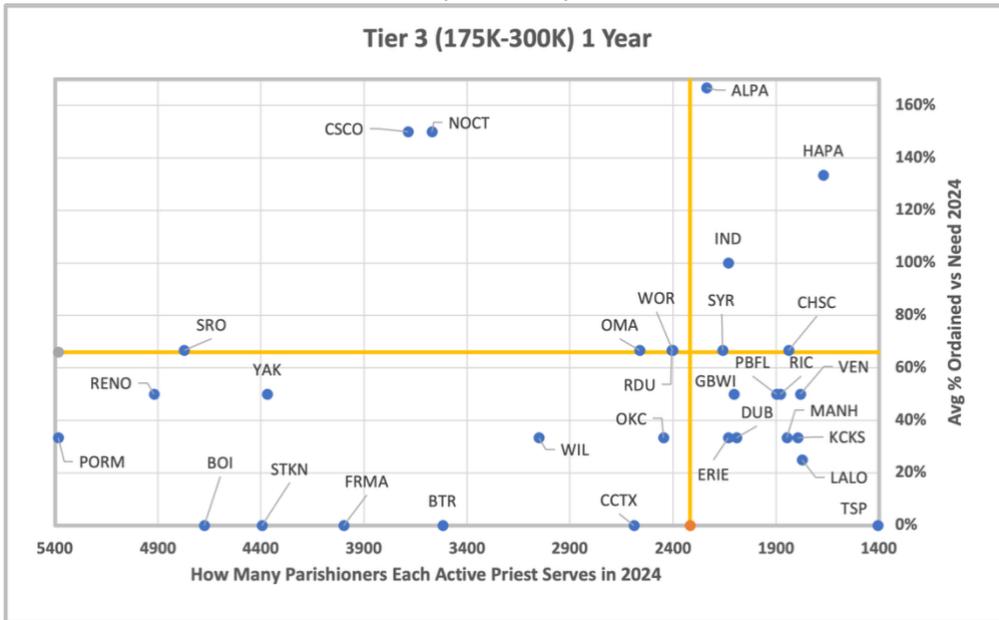| (ARCH)DIOCESE	Diocese Abbrev.	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2024	Total Seminarians 2024	Seminarians Needed 2024**	% of Total Seminarians 2024 vs Need**	Priestly Ordinations 2024	Priestly Ordinations Needed 2024*	On Avg % Ordained vs. Need 2024	Parishioners Each Active Priest Serves in 2024
Allentown, Pennsylvania	ALPA	203,676	11	25	44%	5	2	167%	2,238
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	BTR	211,159	11	20	54%	0	2	0%	3,519
Birmingham, Alabama	BHM	122,754	18	18	98%	0	2	0%	1,615
Boise, Idaho	BOI	271,093	9	23	39%	0	2	0%	4,674
Charleston, South Carolina	CHSC	229,941	26	32	82%	2	3	67%	1,840
Colorado Springs, Colorado	CSCO	191,673	13	18	72%	3	2	150%	3,686
Corpus Christi, Texas	CCTX	209,726	5	24	21%	0	2	0%	2,589
Des Moines, Iowa	DSM	106,556	9	18	50%	2	1	100%	1,366
Dubuque, Iowa	DUB	182,047	14	23	60%	1	2	33%	2,092
Erie, Pennsylvania	ERIE	191,831	8	24	33%	1	2	33%	2,131
Fall River, Massachusetts	FRMA	251,916	5	23	22%	0	2	0%	3,999
Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana	SBN	141,301	16	24	67%	2	2	67%	1,372
Gallup, New Mexico	GAL	107,653	2	13	16%	0	1	0%	2,447
Gary, Indiana	GARY	170,553	10	17	57%	2	1	100%	3,101
Grand Rapids, Michigan	GRMI	179,371	24	21	115%	1	2	50%	2,457
Green Bay, Wisconsin	GBWI	246,376	24	31	77%	2	3	50%	2,106
Greensburg, Pennsylvania	GRPA	108,951	7	18	38%	3	2	150%	1,379
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	HAPA	195,541	10	29	35%	4	2	133%	1,671
Honolulu, Hawaii	HON	124,772	7	19	36%	3	2	100%	1,560
Indianapolis, Indiana	IND	215,311	28	27	103%	3	2	100%	2,132
Kansas City- St. Joseph, Missouri	KCMO	112,932	18	18	99%	2	2	100%	1,467
Kansas City, Kansas	KCKS	181,258	25	25	98%	1	2	33%	1,795
La Crosse, Wisconsin	LCWI	115,785	12	24	50%	1	2	33%	1,025
Lafayette, Indiana	LAIN	101,605	16	16	101%	0	1	0%	1,539
Lafayette, Louisiana	LALO	267,940	24	38	63%	1	3	25%	1,774
Lansing, Michigan	LAN	165,787	29	23	128%	2	2	67%	1,863
Little Rock, Arkansas	LIT	168,758	22	27	81%	1	2	33%	1,467

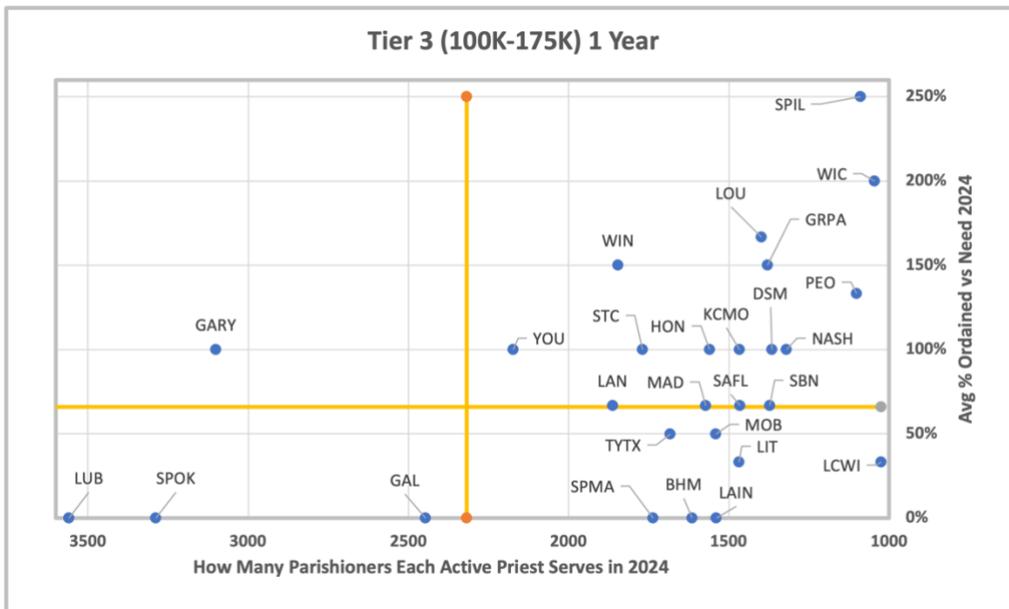**See formulas for calculations in appendix.

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Diocese Abbrev.	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2024	Total Seminarians 2024	Seminarians Needed 2024**	% of Total Seminarians 2024 vs Need**	Priestly Ordinations 2024	Priestly Ordinations Needed 2024**	On Avg % Ordained vs. Need 2024**	Parishioners Each Active Priest Serves in 2024
Louisville, Kentucky	LOU	145,469	19	24	79%	5	2	167%	1,399
Lubbock, Texas	LUB	138,800	7	13	53%	0	1	0%	3,559
Madison, Wisconsin	MAD	150,882	19	23	82%	2	2	67%	1,572
Manchester, New Hampshire	MANH	199,645	10	22	36%	1	27	33%	1,849
Mobile, Alabama	MOB	107,870	13	22	78%	1	17	50%	1,541
Nashville, Tennessee	NASH	116,127	30	34	150%	2	20	100%	1,320
Norwich, Connecticut	NOCT	228,520	1	22	5%	3	22	150%	3,571
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	OKC	222,674	18	34	70%	1	26	33%	2,447
Omaha, Nebraska	OMA	248,413	19	34	68%	2	28	67%	2,561
Palm Beach, Florida	PBFL	248,641	7	34	21%	2	34	50%	1,898
Peoria, Illinois	PEO	129,885	22	22	86%	4	26	133%	1,101
Portland, Maine	PORM	280,000	6	34	27%	1	22	33%	5,385
Raleigh, North Carolina	RDU	247,794	17	34	58%	2	29	67%	2,406
Reno, Nevada	RENO	186,940	6	34	39%	1	16	50%	4,919
Richmond, Virginia	RIC	246,097	26	34	78%	2	34	50%	1,879
Santa Rosa, California	SRO	267,376	3	34	13%	2	22	67%	4,775
Spokane, Washington	SPOK	161,105	9	22	56%	0	16	0%	3,288
Springfield, Illinois	SPIL	108,893	11	34	51%	5	22	250%	1,089
Springfield, Massachusetts	SPMA	142,342	4	22	20%	0	20	0%	1,736
St. Augustine, Florida	SAFL	164,079	24	34	91%	2	26	67%	1,465
St. Cloud, Minnesota	STC	111,447	15	34	95%	2	16	100%	1,769
St. Petersburg, Florida	TSP	259,843	19	22	44%	0	43	0%	1,405
Stockton, California	STKN	259,276	7	22	31%	0	23	0%	4,395
Syracuse, New York	SYR	181,476	9	22	40%	2	23	67%	2,160
Tyler, Texas	TYTX	121,212	17	22	96%	1	18	50%	1,684
Venice, Florida	VEN	260,183	16	22	44%	2	37	50%	1,782
Wichita, Kansas	WIC	113,970	44	22	188%	4	23	200%	1,046
Wilmington, Delaware	WIL	247,025	8	22	31%	1	25	33%	3,050
Winona-Rochester, Minnesota	WIN	114,450	26	22	165%	3	16	150%	1,846
Worcester, Massachusetts	WOR	266,700	14	22	45%	2	31	67%	2,403
Yakima, Washington	YAK	205,323	7	22	39%	1	18	50%	4,369
Youngstown, Ohio	YOU	117,367	8	22	55%	2	15	100%	2,173

**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 2024	Total Catholics in Diocese in 2024	Total Parishes 2024	Priestly Availability Index**
Allentown, Pennsylvania	91	203,676	78	35
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	60	211,159	64	18
Birmingham, Alabama	76	122,754	56	35
Boise, Idaho	58	271,093	51	11
Charleston, South Carolina	125	229,941	95	52
Colorado Springs, Colorado	52	191,673	39	11
Corpus Christi, Texas	81	209,726	69	27
Des Moines, Iowa	78	106,556	80	59
Dubuque, Iowa	87	182,047	163	78
Erie, Pennsylvania	90	191,831	76	36
Fall River, Massachusetts	63	251,916	69	17
Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana	103	141,301	80	58
Gallup, New Mexico	44	107,653	52	21
Gary, Indiana	55	170,553	57	18
Grand Rapids, Michigan	73	179,371	79	32
Green Bay, Wisconsin	117	246,376	156	74
Greensburg, Pennsylvania	79	108,951	78	57
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	117	195,541	88	53
Honolulu, Hawaii	80	124,772	65	42
Indianapolis, Indiana	101	215,311	126	59
Kansas City- St. Joseph, Missouri	77	112,932	80	55
Kansas City, Kansas	101	181,258	107	60
La Crosse, Wisconsin	113	115,785	156	152
Lafayette, Indiana	66	101,605	58	38
Lafayette, Louisiana	151	267,940	122	69
Lansing, Michigan	89	165,787	71	38
Little Rock, Arkansas	115	168,758	91	62
Louisville, Kentucky	104	145,469	103	74
Lubbock, Texas	39	138,800	60	17
Madison, Wisconsin	96	150,882	97	62

**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**
Manchester, New Hampshire	108	199,645	88	48
Mobile, Alabama	70	107,870	76	49
Nashville, Tennessee	88	116,127	55	42
Norwich, Connecticut	64	228,520	51	14
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	91	222,674	61	25
Omaha, Nebraska	97	248,413	114	45
Palm Beach, Florida	131	248,641	50	26
Peoria, Illinois	118	129,885	155	141
Portland, Maine	52	280,000	48	9
Raleigh, North Carolina	103	247,794	81	34
Reno, Nevada	38	186,940	28	6
Richmond, Virginia	131	246,097	134	71
Santa Rosa, California	56	267,376	40	8
Spokane, Washington	49	161,105	79	24
Springfield, Illinois	100	108,893	129	118
Springfield, Massachusetts	82	142,342	76	44
St. Augustine, Florida	112	164,079	54	37
St. Cloud, Minnesota	63	111,447	131	74
St. Petersburg, Florida	185	259,843	75	53
Stockton, California	59	259,276	35	8
Syracuse, New York	84	181,476	115	53
Tyler, Texas	72	121,212	53	31
Venice, Florida	146	260,183	61	34
Wichita, Kansas	109	113,970	90	86
Wilmington, Delaware	81	247,025	56	18
Winona-Rochester, Minnesota	62	114,450	90	49
Worcester, Massachusetts	111	266,700	86	36
Yakima, Washington	47	205,323	39	9
Youngstown, Ohio	54	117,367	74	34

**See formulas for calculations in appendix.

Tier 3
Marriages in the United States in 2024

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Catholic Marriages	Marriages Between Two Catholics	Interfaith Marriages
Allentown, Pennsylvania	396	287	109
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	514	384	130
Birmingham, Alabama	441	345	96
Boise, Idaho	386	302	84
Charleston, South Carolina	733	554	179
Colorado Springs, Colorado	216	140	76
Corpus Christi, Texas	246	217	29
Des Moines, Iowa	275	209	66
Dubuque, Iowa	504	334	170
Erie, Pennsylvania	271	188	83
Fall River, Massachusetts	385	327	58
Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana	552	465	87
Gallup, New Mexico	58	51	7
Gary, Indiana	218	177	41
Grand Rapids, Michigan	421	316	105
Green Bay, Wisconsin	495	412	83
Greensburg, Pennsylvania	242	176	66
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	387	243	144
Honolulu, Hawaii	256	196	60
Indianapolis, Indiana	731	560	171
Kansas City- St. Joseph, Missouri	610	457	153
Kansas City, Kansas	767	538	229
La Crosse, Wisconsin	337	235	102
Lafayette, Indiana	318	245	73
Lafayette, Louisiana	650	582	68
Lansing, Michigan	469	363	106
Little Rock, Arkansas	560	409	151
Louisville, Kentucky	385	289	96
Lubbock, Texas	92	92	0
Madison, Wisconsin	363	287	76

(ARCH)DIOCESE	Total Catholic Marriages	Marriages Between Two Catholics	Interfaith Marriages
Manchester, New Hampshire	350	271	79
Mobile, Alabama	276	191	85
Nashville, Tennessee	520	415	105
Norwich, Connecticut	238	205	33
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	493	386	107
Omaha, Nebraska	506	358	148
Palm Beach, Florida	500	443	57
Peoria, Illinois	466	297	169
Portland, Maine	243	180	63
Raleigh, North Carolina	917	674	243
Reno, Nevada	198	163	35
Richmond, Virginia	628	391	237
Santa Rosa, California	335	288	47
Spokane, Washington	181	134	47
Springfield, Illinois	260	169	91
Springfield, Massachusetts	231	202	29
St. Augustine, Florida	494	367	127
St. Cloud, Minnesota	330	256	74
St. Petersburg, Florida	739	520	219
Stockton, California	612	533	79
Syracuse, New York	396	323	73
Tyler, Texas	377	343	34
Venice, Florida	582	502	80
Wichita, Kansas	466	359	107
Wilmington, Delaware	393	282	111
Winona-Rochester, Minnesota	191	146	45
Worcester, Massachusetts	261	226	35
Yakima, Washington	326	298	28
Youngstown, Ohio	281	205	76

Tier 3 - Correlations

Vocation Ministry was interested in knowing if any diocesan information collected from the Official Catholic Directory publications of 2015 to 2024 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

59 Dioceses

Tier 3	Priestly Availability Index	How Many Parishioners Does Each Active Priest Serve	Parishioners per Parish	Total Active Priests per Total Parishes
Total Seminarians 2024	0.43	-0.51*	-0.42	0.03
Seminarian Average 2015-2024	0.52*	-0.56**	-0.46*	0.02
% of Total Seminarians 2024 vs Need**	0.33	-0.46	-0.47*	-0.15
% of Total Seminarians 2015-2024 vs Need**	0.44*	-0.54*	-0.56**	-0.21
Priestly Ordinations 2024	0.42	-0.36	-0.28	-0.07
Priestly Ordination Average 2015-2024	0.56**	-0.55**	-0.45*	0.03
On Average % Ordained vs. Need 2024	0.38	-0.32	0.09	-0.14
On Average % Ordained vs. Need 2015-2024	0.48*	-0.48*	-0.44*	-0.10
* 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 (eight years), then increased by the average discern-out rate of 50 percent.

Priestly Availability Index- ((Total Active Priests)/(Total Catholics in Diocese/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).