

Dear Padre,

Are Catholic religious orders dying?

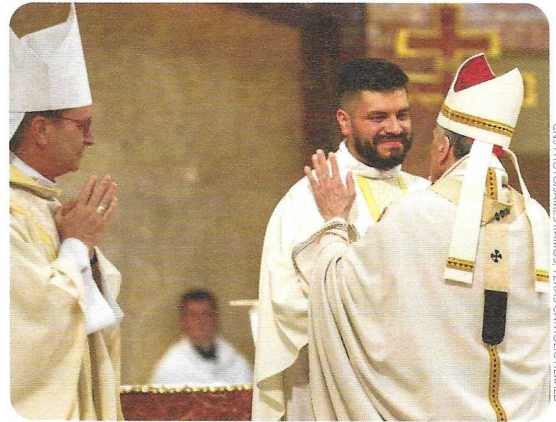
Yes...and no.

In Africa and Asia, some religious orders are vibrant, with orders of men and women religious increasing in number. In the United States, Europe, and Oceania, it's a different story. As many as 300 of the 420 institutes of women religious in the US are in their final decades of existence (*Leadership Conference of Women Religious*, 2019). One-third of all women's congregations in the US have fewer than fifty members. In the US, sisters over age ninety far outnumber those under sixty. Consequently, many communities fall short of the number of active ministers needed to replace their elderly and retiring members. The story is similar for many orders of religious men.

As those in religious orders struggle to remain effective in their mission and ministry for God and humanity, they are reimagining styles of leadership, levels of administration, and, in short, ways of getting the job done. This includes, for example, creative partnerships with laypeople to share in the charisma, community life, and ministry of the religious order.

People are still drawn to Jesus and the work of building the kingdom. Only God knows how this "building process" will look in the future. As in all challenging times, the Church remains hopeful. From crisis comes resurrection! ●

Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR / DearPadre.org



CNS PHOTO/JAMES RAMOS, TEXAS CATHOLIC HERALD

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
March 27	March 28	March 29	March 30	March 31	April 1	April 2
<i>Lenten Weekday</i>	<i>Lenten Weekday</i>	<i>Lenten Weekday</i>	<i>Lenten Weekday</i>	<i>Lenten Weekday</i>	<i>Lenten Weekday</i>	<i>Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion</i>
Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or Dn 13:41c-62	Nm 21:4-9 Jn 8:21-30	Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95 Jn 8:31-42	Gn 17:3-9 Jn 8:51-59	Jer 20:10-13 Jn 10:31-42	Ez 37:21-28 Jn 11:45-56	Mt 21:1-11 Is 50:4-7 Phil 2:6-11 Mt 26:14-27:66 or Mt 27:11-54

Timely topics viewed with a Catholic perspective

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A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

Take away the stone from your heart! Let the Word of God restore life where there is death. Jesus repeats to us: "Take away the stone." God did not create us for the tomb....He created us for life, [which is] beautiful, good, joyful.

ANGELUS, MARCH 20, 2020