
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Priests Offer Advice after Community's Surge in Vocations **New book *A Living Sacrifice* offers guidance for men discerning religious life**

WASHINGTON, DC, APRIL 4, 2019 - When Fr. Benedict Croell was vocation director for the Eastern Dominican Province of St. Joseph, over one hundred men entered his province in just eight years.

By any measure, that is a phenomenal figure. In some years, the Dominicans had more men entering formation than some of the largest archdioceses in America.

Fr. Benedict Croell has teamed up with Fr. Andrew Hofer, who oversaw formation at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC, to author a new book, *A Living Sacrifice: Guidance for Men Discerning Religious Life*. Such a book is much-needed, given the state of men's religious life in the United States. In the past fifty years, the number of religious brothers and priests has declined by more than half, from about 33,000 in 1970 to about 15,000 today.

The book comes from their experiences in vocations and formation work. "We have an attractive life—we're out preaching the gospel for the salvation of souls," said Fr. Benedict. "When it comes to vocations, we were very cautious; we didn't let in just anyone. We worked hard to find men who were healthy and balanced."

Working with hundreds of men from various backgrounds gave Fr. Benedict a unique perspective. Over time, he began to see patterns—healthy and unhealthy—in how men approached their vocations. "Maybe I didn't see it all, but I feel like I did," laughed Fr. Benedict. It was this broad range of experience that led to *A Living Sacrifice*, which offers a clear pathway for men who may be confused about their call.

A professor of the Church Fathers, Fr. Andrew Hofer assisted men during their student years of Dominican formation. "My great joy has been to see these young men say yes to the Lord," said Fr. Andrew. "They could have done so many other things, and they have accepted Jesus' invitation to live for him in poverty, chastity, and obedience."

A Living Sacrifice is a compendium of the real-life advice that Fr. Benedict and Fr. Andrew gave young men in their college and young adult years. With clear language, engaging examples, and solid theology, the book tackles big questions about chastity, how to know if you're called, which community to join, what religious life is really like, and a host of other topics.

Importantly, the book also contains a survey of many forms of religious life in America today, as well as wisdom from religious men in the Jesuits, Norbertines, Franciscans, Holy Cross, Benedictines, and others. Fr. Andrew says, "Fr. Benedict and I want this book to be useful for the broad spectrum of men's religious life today."

Initial readers have been enthusiastic in their praise of *A Living Sacrifice*. Popular Catholic author Scott Hahn said it could spark "an increase of holy and worthy vocations to religious life worldwide." The book has even gained attention at the highest levels of the Vatican, with Cardinal Robert Sarah saying that it will "prove invaluable in helping young men respond in a confident and trusting way to the promptings of the Holy Spirit."

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About the Authors of *A Living Sacrifice*



Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P.

Among his assignments, Father Benedict Croell served as novice master for four years in Kenya and as vocation director for eight years for the Dominican Province of St. Joseph in Washington, DC. He presently heads the development and mission advancement office at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas—the Angelicum in Rome.

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Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P.

Among his assignments, Father Andrew Hofer served in formation for eight years at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC, after earning his doctorate in theology (specializing in patristics) from the University of Notre Dame. He continues to teach on the Pontifical Faculty at the Dominican House of Studies.

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2017-18 Dominican Student Brothers with Formators, Washington, DC

The Dominicans were blessed with many vocations during Fr. Benedict Croell's time as Vocation Director. After men entered the novitiate and professed their first vows in Cincinnati, they came to Washington where Father Andrew Hofer oversaw their student years of formation at the Dominican House of Studies.

Number of U.S. Religious Priests & Brothers, 1970-2017

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017
Religious priests	21,920	22,771	18,010	15,092	12,811	11,424
Religious brothers	11,623	7,941	6,721	5,662	4,690	4,007

Based on CARA figures: <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics>

Praise for *A Living Sacrifice*

“I commend Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P. and Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P..... Here young men as well as Vocation Directors will find solid material.... This book will undoubtedly prove invaluable in helping young men respond in a confident and trusting way to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as they discern God’s call.”

Robert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect, Congregation for Divine Worship

“*A Living Sacrifice* is an inspiring book, but also intensely practical. The authors lead us through sensible stages in discernment, clearing away obstacles and distractions—what to do and what not to do—but they never lose sight of the tremendous mystery at the heart of vocation. It’s the Trinity, and they dare to say it.... If this book gets into the right hands, we can expect to see an increase of holy and worthy vocations to the religious life worldwide. Since many *are* called... many *should* read this book!”

Scott Hahn, Catholic Apologist and Scripture Scholar

“I highly recommend this book to those men discerning the religious life and to those vocation directors devoted to helping them!”

Curtis Martin, Founder of FOCUS

“An extremely valuable resource for young men... especially in a world that so desperately needs more holy priests and religious.”

Fr. Sean Sheridan, T.O.R., President, Franciscan University of Steubenville

“*A Living Sacrifice* is for men discerning a vocation to religious life in all its forms. It is theologically sound and written in a style that is attractive and easily understood.”

Fr. Thomas Nelson, O. Praem., National Director, Institute on Religious Life

“The Church finally has a book it so desperately needed at a time so many young men are searching for how they can genuinely offer themselves to the Lord.”

Fr. Mark Padrez, O.P., Executive Director, Conference of Major Superiors of Men

“This book is a ‘must read’ for any man considering the religious life. Practical, accessible, and packed with information, it is also a work of profound wisdom, a theologically rich and spiritually challenging book that presents and explains the religious life in the ultimate context of Trinitarian life and love.”

Carl E. Olson, Editor of Catholic World Report

“If the Lord is calling you to this privileged life of belonging totally to him, then this book will give you the foundational principles and real-life examples to help you respond with generosity and trust.”

Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Saint Paul and Minneapolis

“This book asks the fundamental question of the discernor who is genuinely seeking holiness, ‘Am I called to live for Jesus alone as a living sacrifice?’ Every man discerning the priesthood should read this book. It will give clarity to the vocation God has created him to live in this world, whether that is religious life or diocesan priesthood.”

Fr. Jeff Eirvin, Vice-President, National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors

A Living Sacrifice: Guidance for Men Discerning Religious Life
by Fr. Benedict Croell, O.P., and Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P.

Softcover, 304 pp, \$22, available at www.vianneyvocations.com

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