The Catholic Parish in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities

March 4, 2014
Villanova University

Challenges and Opportunities Associated with Pastoral Leadership

Thomas Gaunt, S.J., PhD
Opening, Closing and the Size of Parishes
Number of Parishes in the United States, 1965-2012

- 1960: 17,765
- 1980: 19,705
- 2020: 17,572
Number of New Catholic Parishes Established in the U.S., 1998-2012

829 new parishes have been established in the last 15 years

Source: The Official Catholic Directory, CARA
The average number of registered households per parish in 2000 was 855. In 2010, this had increased to 1,168.
Evaluation of Parish Life

Your overall satisfaction with the parish:

- All respondents: 5% Poor, 36% Fair, 58% Good, Excellent
- All multicultural parish respondents: 5% Poor, 36% Fair, 58% Good, Excellent
- Non-Hispanic White: 5% Poor, 36% Fair, 58% Good, Excellent
- Hispanic: 6% Poor, 33% Fair, 60% Good, Excellent
- Black: 1% Poor, 36% Fair, 61% Good, Excellent
- Asian or Pacific Islander: 5% Poor, 37% Fair, 58% Good, Excellent
- Native American: 1% Poor, 38% Fair, 58% Good, Excellent
- Other: 7% Poor, 37% Fair, 54% Good, Excellent
Evaluation of parish life

Masses and liturgies in general:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All respondents</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All multicultural parish</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation of parish life

**Celebration of the Sacraments:**

- **All respondents:**
  - Poor: 26%
  - Fair: 71%
  - Good: 26%
  - Excellent: 71%

- **All multicultural parish respondents:**
  - Poor: 26%
  - Fair: 71%
  - Good: 26%
  - Excellent: 71%

- **Non-Hispanic White:**
  - Poor: 26%
  - Fair: 72%
  - Good: 26%
  - Excellent: 72%

- **Hispanic:**
  - Poor: 25%
  - Fair: 71%
  - Good: 25%
  - Excellent: 71%

- **Black:**
  - Poor: 17%
  - Fair: 83%
  - Good: 17%
  - Excellent: 83%

- **Asian or Pacific Islander:**
  - Poor: 27%
  - Fair: 70%
  - Good: 27%
  - Excellent: 70%

- **Native American:**
  - Poor: 30%
  - Fair: 67%
  - Good: 30%
  - Excellent: 67%

- **Other:**
  - Poor: 29%
  - Fair: 66%
  - Good: 29%
  - Excellent: 66%
Parish Priests and Deacons: Number and Culture
Priestly Formation and Ordinations

Seminary Enrollment Trends: 1968-2012

Internationalization of the priesthood

Table 1.4
Nativity by Generation
(Percentage in each category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre–Vatican II</th>
<th>Vatican II</th>
<th>Post–Vatican II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born in the United States</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Europe or Canada</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other international</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foreign-born Seminarians in Theologates

- U.S. Dioceses, 62%
- U.S. Religious Orders, 19%
- Non-U.S. Religious Orders, 9%
- Non-U.S. Dioceses, 10%

Catholic Ministry Formation Directory: Statistical Overview (April 2013)
Where do international priests come from?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>184%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>115%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>510%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>141%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>1,859</td>
<td></td>
<td>113%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,491</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,094</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,617</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>90%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent all priests</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent all diocesan</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historical Background

- History of the American Church is the history of International Priests

- Early to middle part of the 19th Century - waves of Catholic immigrants and their priests.
  - EXCEPTION: Foreign-Born Irish (so-called “FBI”) Priests

- From 1950 to 1970 (or so), US is “exporting” priests
Trends and Projections: U.S. Diocesan Priests and Permanent Deacons

- Diocesan Priests (active and retired)
- Permanent Deacons

*If current trends continue...*
# Attitudes about Church Leaders and Parish Life

Percentage “Somewhat” or “Strongly” Agreeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On the whole, parish priests do a good job</strong></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic parishes are too big and impersonal</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most priests don’t expect the laity to be leaders, just followers</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most Catholics don’t want to take on leadership roles in their parish</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing a priest with one or more other parishes</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merging two or more nearby parishes into one parish</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing in a priest from another country to lead the parish</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Attitudes about Parish Leadership Alternatives (cont.)

### Percentage “Somewhat” or “Very” Acceptable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reducing the number of Masses to fewer than once a week</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing the parish</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having a priest available for visiting the sick</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having a priest available for administering the last rites for the dying</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lay Pastoral Ministers: Number, Generation, and Culture
Collaboration in Pastoral Ministry

Emerging Models Data

Age of Parish Staff and Volunteers

- 18 to 29: 4%
- 30 to 39: 8%
- 40 to 49: 20%
- 50 to 59: 30%
- 60 to 69: 26%
- 70 or older: 11%
- 50 to 59: 30%
- 40 to 49: 20%
Emerging Models Data

Race and Ethnicity of Parish Staff and Volunteers

- White: 81%
- Hispanic/Latino: 13%
- American Indian: 1%
- Asian/Other Pacific Islander: 3%
- Black/African-American: 3%
- Hispanic/Latino: 13%
Emerging Models Data

Ecclesial Status and Sex of Parish Staff and Volunteers

- Diocesan priest: 14%
- Religious priest: 4%
- Deacon: 8%
- Religious brother: 1%
- Religious sister: 3%
- Lay man: 21%
- Lay woman: 49%
Trends and Issues in the Church

Enrollment in Lay Ecclesial Ministry Formation Programs, 1985-2010

Source: Ministry Formation Directory, respective years
Average Age When Parish Leaders Felt Call to Ministry or Service by Generation

Pre-Vatican II (b. before 1943) 34
Vatican II (b. 1943-60) 30
Post-Vatican II (b. 1961-81) 24
Millennial (b. 1982 or later) 29

Source: Perspectives from Parish Leaders: U.S. Parish Life and Ministry, 2012
Age Distribution of Lay Participants

- Under 30, 14%
- 30-39, 19%
- 40-49, 29%
- 50-59, 26%
- 60 and Over, 12%

Catholic Ministry Formation Directory: Statistical Overview (April 2013)
Racial & Ethnic Backgrounds of Lay Participants

- Hispanic/Latino, 43%
- White/Anglo/Caucasian, 49%
- Black/African American, 3%
- Asian/Pacific Islander, 2%
- Other, 3%

*Catholic Ministry Formation Directory: Statistical Overview (April 2013)*
Laity in formation for Pastoral Ministry

- Lay Men, 39%
- Lay Women, 58%
- Religious Brothers, 2%
- Religious Women, 1%

*Catholic Ministry Formation Directory: Statistical Overview (April 2013)*
| Race and Ethnicity of Groups within the Catholic Church in the United States |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| **Clergy**                      | White  | Hispanic| Black  | Asian  | Other  |
| Catholic priests                | 92%    | 3%     | 2%     | 3%     | <1%    |
| Catholic priests born after 1960| 75     | 15     | 2      | 8      | <1     |
| Permanent deacons (active)      | 76     | 16     | 4      | 3      | 1      |
| Ordinands (2012)                | 71     | 15     | 3      | 9      | 1      |
| **Men & Women Religious**       |        |        |        |        |        |
| Men and women in perpetual vows | 94%    | 3%     | 1%     | 2%     | <1%    |
| Women professing perpetual vows (2011) | 66  | 10     | 4      | 17     | 3      |
| Men professing perpetual vows (2011)* | 50 | 0      | 12     | 38     | 0      |
| **Lay Persons**                 |        |        |        |        |        |
| Lay ecclesial ministers         | 88%    | 9%     | 2%     | 1%     | <1%    |
| Adult Mass-attending Catholics (in-pew) | 62  | 26     | 2      | 5      | 5      |
| All adult Catholics             | 58     | 35     | 3      | 3      | 1      |

# Multiculturalism

*The diversity in the parish is reflected in the diversity in the parish staff:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All respondents</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All multicultural parish respondents</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- **Blue**: strongly disagree
- **Red**: disagree
- **Green**: somewhat agree
- **Purple**: strongly agree
Communicating within a Parish
How often do you read the weekly bulletin from your parish? U.S. Mass attending Catholics responding as such:

Frequency of reading:

- Every week: 37%
- Less than weekly, but at least once a month: 31%
- A few times a year or less often: 32%

Source: Catholic Media Use in U.S., 2011
In the last three months have you read a print copy of your diocesan newspaper or magazine (i.e., on paper rather than online)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Percentage respond &quot;yes&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Vatican II</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatican II</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Vatican II</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Catholic Media Use in U.S., 2011
I would prefer to get my diocesan news online rather than in a print publication

Readership of Diocesan Newspapers/Magazines (prior 3 months)

Source: Catholic Media Use in U.S., 2011
Which of the following do you regularly use or visit (typically once a month or more often) to get information, news, or other types of content about the Catholic faith?

- Parish bulletin
- Diocesan newspaper or magazine
- USCCB website
- Parish website
- Diocesan website
- Vatican website

**Percentage responding "yes"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Pre-Vatican II (b. before 1943)</th>
<th>Vatican II (b. 1943-1960)</th>
<th>Post-Vatican II (b. 1961-1981)</th>
<th>Millennial (b. 1982 or later)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parish bulletin</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USCCB website</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish website</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocesan website</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatican website</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emphasis on Vision & Opportunities for Spiritual Growth

- Evangelical Protestant: 63%
- Mainline Protestant: 62%
- Catholic: 41%

“Unleashing Catholic Generosity,” CSPRI, Notre Dame 2013
Emphasis on Needs & Scarcity

“Unleashing Catholic Generosity,” CSPRI, Notre Dame 2013
Parish Does an Excellent Job Communicating its Mission

 Evangelical Protestant: 49%
 Mainline Protestant: 32%
 Catholic: 18%

“Unleashing Catholic Generosity,” CSPRI, Notre Dame 2013
Feel Part of the Planning of the Vision & Mission of the Parish

- Evangelical Protestant: 25%
- Mainline Protestant: 16%
- Catholic: 6%

"Unleashing Catholic Generosity," CSPRI, Notre Dame 2013
Leadership

*I feel I have a role in the decision making of the parish:*

- **All respondents**
  - Strongly disagree: 11%
  - Disagree: 29%
  - Somewhat agree: 42%
  - Strongly agree: 18%

- **All multicultural parish respondents**
  - Strongly disagree: 11%
  - Disagree: 28%
  - Somewhat agree: 42%
  - Strongly agree: 19%

- **Non-Hispanic White**
  - Strongly disagree: 10%
  - Disagree: 33%
  - Somewhat agree: 43%
  - Strongly agree: 14%

- **Hispanic**
  - Strongly disagree: 14%
  - Disagree: 26%
  - Somewhat agree: 37%
  - Strongly agree: 23%

- **Black**
  - Strongly disagree: 18%
  - Disagree: 25%
  - Somewhat agree: 35%
  - Strongly agree: 22%

- **Asian or Pacific Islander**
  - Strongly disagree: 5%
  - Disagree: 18%
  - Somewhat agree: 51%
  - Strongly agree: 26%

- **Native American**
  - Strongly disagree: 8%
  - Disagree: 28%
  - Somewhat agree: 42%
  - Strongly agree: 22%

- **Other**
  - Strongly disagree: 11%
  - Disagree: 26%
  - Somewhat agree: 44%
  - Strongly agree: 19%
Strategies for Parish & Diocese

- Creative ways to use the Sunday Bulletin and Diocesan newspaper to communicate vision and opportunities...

- Creative ways to use Sunday Bulletin and Diocesan newspaper for planning and engagement...

- Ways I can emphasize “vision & opportunities” rather than “just paying the bills”...