

NOTRE DAME STUDY OF CATHOLIC PARISH LIFE

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Report No. 15

POST-VATICAN II PARISH LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES: REVIEW AND PREVIEW

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Scope and Phases of the Study

Since its inception in 1981 the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life has focused on the local community of the faithful as a living body, composed of four types of participants: pastors, staff, volunteer leaders, and members on parish census rolls. All these are people with discernible connections to a local congregation. Our Study is different from general population surveys that examine Catholics subsamples. We began, not with a sample of the adult U.S. population in search of Catholics, but with a sample of Catholic parishes. We wanted to understand the interplay between demographic and ecclesial forces in the life of the post-Vatican II church. Only after identifying the major differences among U. S. parishes did we move to probability samples of parishioners and their identified leaders to understand in microscopic manner their interactions *within* the local parish. Thus, it is important to identify this as a study of *parishes* and *parish-connected* Catholics. There are currently 19,500 parishes in the 190 Catholic dioceses of the United States and they carry 53 million people on their census registers.

Depending on the general population survey, between 25 and 28% of adult Americans call themselves Catholics. Extrapolations from these figures suggest that as high as 70 million Americans can be classified as Catholics. Thus, perhaps another 17 million Catholics are absent from parish lists and are not reported in diocesan and national totals. In one report and in various journal articles, our Study has made comparisons between our sample of parish-connected Catholics and nominal Catholics. But it would involve a misunderstanding of our purposes and design to take generalizations from the Notre Dame Study as though they were accurate to the entire U.S. Catholic population. We studied parishes and the Catholics connected with them. We did so under the assumption that we are all products of the particular, that parochial forces shape Catholics in very different ways, and that different types of Catholics develop different types of parishes. From the outset the parish context was the center of our attention.

The Notre Dame Study has proceeded in three phases, 1981-89, and this Report No. 15 marks the close of an eight-year process.

Phase 1: Broad Probe of 1099 Parishes

With the support of the Lilly Endowment, Inc., the Study began with a broad probe, 1981-82, to discover how a comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth analysis of American parish life as a whole could be undertaken. Ten percent of the nation's 18,500 parishes (at that time) were mailed questionnaires asking about membership, staffing, organizations, programs, etc. Of the 1,850 parishes receiving this request, 1,099 parishes returned usable responses. Since this nearly 60% rate exceeded usual levels of cooperation to mailed questionnaires, it disclosed a first significant trait of American Catholic congregations: openness to being studied and readiness for cooperating in self-evaluation. Modest biases in responses were isolated and adjustments were made in study design.

These responses showed general but uneven adaptation locally to the sweeping wave of change brought by the Vatican Council II, and that the 1,099 parishes differed greatly by region, by religious majority/minority status, by urban/rural location, by ethnicity, size and organizational complexity, and by dynamism of programs and level of loyalties.

Phase II: In-depth Research on 36 Parishes

In order to examine parish life much more deeply as a dynamic community of leaders, members and programs, Phase II of the Study, 1983-85, focused on thirty-six parishes chosen among the 1,099 — six parishes from each of six socio-cultural and ecclesial regions of the country. These 36 parishes were selected as representative of their region, according to criteria of rural, small-town, suburban, and urban; of size and ethnic composition; and by organizational complexity, dynamism of activities, leadership and participation. Parishes with dominant Hispanic membership were not included in the intensive study, because their religious culture merits its own study by its own specialists. Such research has indeed begun, as cited below.

After agreeing to cooperate with the Notre Dame Study, each of these 36 parishes provided its annotated census list. Probability samples were drawn, ranging from nearly half of the adult members of small parishes, to much smaller proportions of the large parishes. The sampling fractions reflected both parish size and homogeneity. Then a long questionnaire was mailed to each respondent, followed by four interventions to encourage response by tardy respondents. Again the degree of cooperation was far above expectation: 2,667 usable responses were returned, 59% of the parishioners having devoted two to four hours each in replying to hundreds of queries in the thirty-four page questionnaire. Our pilot studies with alternate modes of data collection had shown that the most valid responses to soul-searching religious questions came in the anonymous, relaxed atmosphere of the mailed questionnaire. Procedures to identify response bias, of course, showed that those lacking English language skills were less likely to complete all questions and that the respondents were slightly more participatory than non-respondents, but no other systematic biases appeared.

Adapted questionnaires over thirty pages in length were sent to the 36 pastors, 117 paid staff and 262 volunteer leaders, of the 36 parishes being studied. Their rates of response were also very high, 97%, 76% and 77% respectively. They were selected because they occupy key positions in the parish and were thought by others to be highly influential, “able to get things done.”

After a training session at Notre Dame for sixteen field staff chosen from the six regions, a team composed of a sociologist and a liturgist together visited each parish over a weekend for 3 -1/2 days to five days. They each observed liturgical practices and rated sermons during two weekend Masses, made plats of sanctuary and church floor plan changes since Vatican II, and interviewed decision-makers regarding liturgy planning, preparation for sacraments, devotions before and since the Council, and diocesan

guidance. The team inquired about overall activity and specific programs. They also collected parish publications, prepared ethnographies and histories of each congregation, photocopied time samples of parish bulletins and newsletters, conducted interviews with lay leaders, and described the parish's place in the life of the larger local community, including ecumenical relations.

Simultaneously, a major history project was underway. Six historians researched and prepared monographs on the history of Catholic parishes in each of the six US regions: Northeast, Southeast, South Central, Midwest, Intermountain, and Pacific. These regional histories of Catholic parish life, stretching back to the 1850s, have been published in two volumes, as cited later. A second history project, also done with Lilly Endowment support, was designed to fill a historical gap. It traced demographic trends and reform initiatives in the US *prior* to Vatican II, specifically among priests, sisters and laypersons, dating from the 1930s, then placed conciliar reform of parish and ministry in the broader context of changes in American culture as well as Vatican II aggiornamento. These and other publications related to the Parish Study, with their authors as well as staff and directors of the whole process, are listed at the end of this report.

Phase III: Communication and Interpretation

During its final phase, 1984-89, the Study's findings were analyzed and communicated to church bodies and leadership, scholarly circles and the media. This third phase has also fostered interpretation and application of Study findings in pastoral planning and ministry formation, liturgical creativity and theological reflection. The series of fifteen reports, from December 1984 to this final issue, has served as a principal channel of communication, and the medium for analysis and interpretation by a dozen authors and another twenty consultants. Religious and secular media have also featured these reports as they appeared.

In 1985 a major national conference on the Study was sponsored in Chicago by FADICA, the association of Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities. Two anonymous FADICA member foundations joined the Lilly Endowment in underwriting the *Report* series. Many national bodies, academic and church-related, have used the data in their conferences and studies. Dissertations, books, and journal articles continue to be prepared. In 1987 Harper and Row published *The Emerging Parish*, aimed at a general readership; this book on the Notre Dame Study was derived in large part from the first ten reports. Currently video productions are translating the findings into another medium for reflection by parish councils and adult education groups. Details about these publications, their authors, and related data are given below.

This final Report provides an overview of Study findings and trends projected twenty-five years after Vatican II, under six headings: 1) Scope and Phases of the Study, 2) Basic Catholic Facts and Trends, 3) Constituent Elements of Parish Life, 4) Leader Formation and the Future, 5) New and Continuing Research, and 6) Bibliography.

Basic Catholic Facts and Trends

Age and Geography

The adult Catholic population of the 1980's is slightly younger than the adult Protestant population. The post-War II baby boom among Catholics either came later or lasted longer than among Protestants. Thus, by the middle of the decade about 5% more of the adult Catholic population than of the adult Protestant population were in the mobile years of 18 to 29.

While many Catholic ethnic enclaves have persisted in the cities, the proportion of Catholics who live in the central cities has declined to the point where it is virtually equal to the suburban proportion. Nearly one-third of Catholic parishioners are neither city nor suburban dwellers but live in the towns under 50,000, the villages, and the unincorporated areas on the fringes of cities. While some are farmers, this is a very heterogeneous population grouping. The "church of town and countryside" is a larger, more varied Catholic presence than many people realize, numbering some 18 million members, larger than either of the two largest Protestant bodies, the Southern Baptists and the United Methodists, and about equal to the combined US membership of the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and the United Church of Christ.

Catholic presence in the United States was once heavily concentrated east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio, but the center of gravity among Catholics is now shifting southward and westward. Whereas only 21% of Catholics lived outside the Northeast and Upper Midwest at the time of Vatican II in the early 1960s, now about one-third of all adult Catholics are outside those concentrations. Part of the reason for the population shift is that most new immigrants are Hispanic and Asian, their point of entry is the Southwest or the Pacific, more often than New York or Miami, and they are about 80% Catholic. Even when the new immigrants are excluded, the movement of the center of Catholic gravity to the South and West is shifting at more than 3% per decade. The American Catholic Church is becoming national, international, and intercultural in ways it never knew as a European immigrant church.

Education and Employment

The average level of education among Catholics has risen very rapidly so that adult white non-Hispanic Catholics are only slightly behind Jews, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians and ahead of Methodists, Lutherans, and Baptists. Higher educational institutions are disproportionately populated by Catholics, partly because of the baby boom bulge in the traditional college-age group, partly because the Catholic women who mothered that generation are now catching up, partly because Catholics link education to upward mobility. Income and occupational status are starting to catch up to the educational attainment of 20-30 years earlier. Boardrooms are open to Irish, German and more recently Italian Catholics, are opening more slowly to Poles and other Slavs, but are

still pretty much closed to Hispanics. It is worth questioning whether the presumed bias against Catholics' reaching the top was not more the function of educational attainment and its relationship to *later* managerial mobility. It takes two to three decades for the latter to catch up with the former.

Marriage and Family

Compared with Catholics in the past, young Catholics marry later, have children much later, and have fewer children. In fact, during the period from 1977 to 1983 there was a gradual shift in fertility data to the point where white Catholic women of child-bearing ages now have fewer children than white Protestant women. The proportion of Catholics, Hispanics and Blacks included, feeling that 4 or more children is the ideal family size had, by 1985, dropped to that of Protestants. The proportion of Catholic women who saw childlessness as the ideal appears to have increased substantially. About the same proportion of Catholics as Protestants use artificial contraceptives.

A much higher proportion of non-Hispanic adult Catholics than Protestants have never or not yet married, 22% to 14%. About 25% of Catholics who have married have experienced at least one divorce or separation; about half that number have remarried. Depending on the interpretation of a variety of family living situations, somewhere between 31% and 44% of all adult Catholics could be considered single. And, a little more than 20% of all married Catholics are married to non-Catholics. The proportion of religiously mixed marriages has increased, not so much because marriage outside the Church has increased although it has, but because fewer non-Catholics are converting.

Income and Political Trends

Average Catholic family income is slightly higher than average Protestant family income, but Catholics are still lower than Jews, Episcopalians and Presbyterians. The differentials, however, are quite pronounced in various regions of the country. In the Northeast, for example, where Catholics make up well over half the churched population, the average Catholic family earns over \$5000 less than the average Protestant family; in the South where Catholics are now about one-seventh of the churched population, the average Catholic family earns about \$8000 more than the average Protestant family. Thus, regional income and population differences may reinforce lingering notions of the Catholic as the "underdog." Furthermore, there is some evidence, although it is not air-tight statistically, that the average Catholic family has more people contributing to household income. We suspect both husband and wife are more likely to work outside the home in Catholic families than in Protestant families.

Linkages that extend parish or ethnic bonds into politics or civic organizations are weakening. Over the last two decades, the country has shifted in the Republican direction and rightward ideologically; while Catholics trail this shift about seven percentage points, they nevertheless have moved at about the same rate as the total population. Only in 1984 did data show a halt in the Catholic shift while others continued. Our Study shows that

registered Catholic parishioners are joiners of all manner of civic and professional organizations, not just the recognizably Catholic or ethnic ones.

The Hispanic Presence and Future

The presence of over 20 million Hispanics in the United States, and their current and future rate of increase, has become a major reality for the Catholic Church and many of its parishes, now and into the future. Over 80% of all Hispanics identify themselves as Catholics; these 16 to 17 million faithful constitute therefore almost one-fourth of the 70 million US Catholics, both active and nominal.

During the decade of the 1980s the number of Hispanics in our country will have increased by over 5,000,000. A rate of increase larger still should be expected during the coming ten years to reach a total well over 25 million Hispanics in the national census of the year 2000, of whom over 20 million will be Catholics. Given the population growth rate of Latin America and the ease of movement northward, especially across the 1800 mile border with Mexico, this continuing increase of Hispanics in the US Catholic Church is foreseeable into the next generation.

Because of distinctive language and other features of their religious culture, the Notre Dame Study excluded Spanish-speaking parishes in its Phase II analysis. Fortunately our Phase I survey of 1,099 parishes did produce valuable data about Hispanic parishes, which we supplement here from other sources. Of these 1,099 parishes surveyed 15% listed Hispanic as the first or second largest ethnic grouping within the parish. Projecting this to all US parishes — 19,500 in 1989 — it appears that over 2,900 Catholic parishes have a significant Hispanic presence. The wide use of Spanish in liturgies and sermons substantiates this estimate. Over 13% of parishes among the 1,099 in our study reported regular Spanish liturgies. We may therefore extrapolate that about 2,500 American parishes do have Hispanic membership numerous enough to warrant use of their language during weekend Masses.

From other sources we know that most of the “Anglo” priests now presiding at the altar and preaching in Spanish learned the language as adults. Since the 1950s scores of dioceses and religious communities organized special courses to prepare English-speaking staff to minister in Spanish and set up centers for adapting and promoting ministry among millions of newcomers of another tongue and ethnic background. By now, of course, ethnic Hispanics are moving into leadership posts, including a dozen bishops from their own culture and thousands of lay leaders. It is very significant that among the nation's 7,000 deacons over one-fourth are Hispanic. The number of priests, however, remains very low. It is unclear whether vocations among Hispanics will rise when vocations among the rest of the Catholic population continue to plummet.

Five areas of the United States have very dense concentrations of Hispanics: Chicago over 800,000, soon projected to be a majority of Catholics in the city of Chicago; New York 1,500,000; Miami and environs 900,000; Texas 3 million; and California 5

million, with about half that number in Los Angeles and environs. The decade of the 1980s, while marked by the increase of immigration from Latin America, is also notable for the rapid awakening of ministries and national movements among and by Hispanics in the United States. Lay leadership especially has deepened and spread through Cursillos de Cristiandad, Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, comunidades de base, and Charismatic Renewal. A series of “Encuentros Nacionales” begun in the 1970s now inter-relate over a thousand local leaders from 130 dioceses and representing 20,000 small groups. Among the “major prophetic lines” programmed by their latest national session for local implementation are the preferential option for the poor, the family as core of pastoral ministry, and promotion of base Christian communities.

In 1983 the US Bishops Conference issued a pastoral letter on “The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment.” Among its many elements the pastoral praised the marvelous Hispanic “sense of community that celebrates life through *fiesta*,” and their deep appreciation for “God's gift of life and an understanding of time which allows one to savor that gift.” The Bishops centered directly, however, on the harsh economic reality: “In general, most Hispanics in our country live near or below the poverty level . . . The Hispanic community as a whole has yet to share equitably in this country's wealth — wealth they have helped produce . . . Hispanic participation in the political process has been limited by economic and social underdevelopment. Thus Hispanics are severely under-represented at decision-making levels in Church and society.” (See pages 93-96, chapter on “The Hispanic Community and the Parish,” pages 75-98, *The Emerging Parish*, Gremillion and Castelli, Harper and Row, 1987.)

These hurried notices of recent awakening to the Hispanic reality begun within the US Church can merely point toward the impact of the large influx expected from Latin America into the parishes of the United States far into millennium 2000. Adequate foresight is probably beyond the scope of current ecclesial awareness and planning for the future. As of now, profound socio-ethnic changes and religious cultural shifts that will continue into the mid-2000s can be but dimly foreseen.

Constituent Elements of Parish Life

Parishes are composed of members who participate actively in programs organized and directed by leaders who now include many laity side by side with clergy and religious. The liturgy as reformed by Vatican II is now central to parish spirituality and community experience; public devotions such as novenas and the rosary have greatly declined. Other parish activities have expanded, with specialized ministries to the aged and the divorced, for social action, and with great emphasis on religious education of adults and their training for ministry and community leadership. Several teachings closely identified with the Vatican magisterium are quietly ignored or openly rejected by significant numbers of parish-connected Catholics, specifically for example, concerning birth control and remarriage after divorce.

In an American society disaggregated by individualism, work patterns, and communications media, parish life as a community-building experience is highly valued. In the ethnic parishes of yesteryear communal identity was inherited. In the parishes of today, composed of more assimilated Americans and less likely to be ethnically homogeneous, building community takes conscious effort. Many Hispanic parishes now go through the nationalist and assimilationist phases lived by early European immigrants — as researched and recounted in the Study's two volumes of parish history since the 1850s.

Membership and Belonging

The first Christian congregation gathered in Jerusalem fifty days after the resurrection of Christ, on Pentecost Sunday around the year 30 A. D. Today, over nineteen and a half centuries later, there are some 1.8 million local congregations throughout the world with an estimated 1.5 billion adherents. Over 380,000 of these local churches are in the United States, 19,500 of them Catholic and over 360,000 non-Catholic.

The Study data show that the average Catholic parish has over 2300 members, a figure about seven times the average size of non-Catholic churches in the US. While infant baptism among Catholics accounts to some degree for this notable size difference, religious cultural factors and ecclesiology provide more likely explanations.

Among these is the territorial criterion by which mere residence within the geographical boundaries of a parish defines most active Catholics as *belonging* to that parish. About 86% of American parishes are by church law *territorial*, while some 10 % are still *national* — open to persons and families of a given ethnic origin. During the four generations from the mid 1800s until World War II, Catholic immigrants from diverse European countries were ministered to in churches using their own languages and following traditional feast days and customs — Irish, German, Polish, Czech, Italian, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and others.

These millions of uprooted strangers, usually quite poor and knowing little English, found community and cultural belonging in these hundreds of national parishes, most of which they no longer need today. In fact many inner-city churches, which originally served European immigrants, become now centers of religious and communal life for the nation's 20 million Hispanics; also sometimes for the 1.4 million Black Catholics, many of whom are converts since migration into Northern metropolitan centers from the Bible Belt of the South. Since the 1960s new Catholic immigrants from Asia, mostly from Vietnam and the Philippines, have settled mainly along the Pacific coast.

The automatic incorporation of new arrivals into a parish's territorial boundaries, and the high numbers in each, have significant effects on the sense of belonging and on participation in parish activities. From our Study's sample of 1,099 parishes, the size of US Catholic congregations may be estimated as follows: about one-third serve 1,000 or fewer

people; one-fourth serve between 1000 and 2500 people; one-fifth, between 2500 and 5000; and another one-fifth serve over 5000 members.

Despite the easy mobility offered by the automobile and public transport, 85% of our sample report that they attend the parish within whose territorial boundaries they live, while the rest cross boundaries in selecting their parish. These “parish-shoppers” explain that the attraction to other churches includes the quality of pastoral care, friendliness of the people, style of worship and quality of preaching. However, despite some fluidity in attendance patterns, the concept of parish as the neighborhood church community remains dominant among American Catholics.

Since parish attachments often relate both to social stability and to stages in the life cycle, it is no surprise that younger people have weaker attachments to parish. Those parishioners most attached are people with their children either just raised or in the secondary schools; some sociologists have argued parish is a surrogate for family. Perhaps the surprising thing — given the breaking of ancestral parish ties for college, first job and apartment in a distant location, later marriage, later children, etc.— is that only one-third of all Catholics under age 30 rarely or never attend Mass. Among our parish-connected sample, only 5% rarely or never attend. A reservoir of religious loyalty remains, even without parish ties; we have every reason to believe it will be tapped when these young people reach later stages in the life cycle. And since there are more young Catholic women of child-bearing age than ever before, even if they have fewer children, we will have just as much need for schools and other facilities.

Programs and Participation

While participation in the weekly Eucharist, on Sunday or Saturday evening, continues as the central relation for Catholics with their parish church, a variety of other programs are now provided. From our sample of 1,099 parishes the following table shows their wide range and the percentage of parishes which offer each. These 22 programs are grouped by eight categories:

**TABLE I
ORGANIZED PROGRAMS IN
U.S. CATHOLIC PARISHES**

<i>Program or Activity</i>	<i>% of Parishes Having Program</i>
1. Religious education	
elementary level	93%
high school level	84
adult	63
parochial school	45

2. Liturgy, sacramental life, spirituality	
liturgy planning group	72
music and cultural activities	49
prayer, reflection small groups	46
ministry training programs	37
catechumenate (RCIA)	32
evangelization	32
parish renewal	29
charismatic renewal	23
3. Special ministry through the life cycle	
care of sick	71
youth	62
aged	59
marriage/family development	48
divorced/separated	20
4. Other social ministry	
social service (individual needs)	52
social action (social change)	20
5. Parish governance, decision making	
parish council	76
parish planning process	34
parish leadership training	27
parish consultant	19

Among these 22 programs, most have come into existence since Vatican II and the 1960s. They and the leadership thereby generated provide a measure of the Council's overall effect on parish life —conjointly of course with socio-cultural changes among the American people as a whole and among US Catholics in particular.

Quick perusal of the eight categories indicates that in general parishes pre-Vatican did have:

- Religious education for the young, but not organized programs for adults.
- Grade schools, in larger number than now and with women religious faculty in great majority; few schools had boards of any sort with prominent lay members; now lay teachers are most numerous, boards with lay participants a normality.

- Choirs, but none of the liturgy or ministry training programs, beyond altar boys, of category 2.
- Sodalitys, rosary societies, and prayer groups, but nowhere near the range of spiritual and evangelistic programs compounded in category 2
- Ministry to youth and the sick, but not to the other groups, especially not the divorced and separated.
- Social service of a sort offered in some parishes, usually through St. Vincent de Paul groups or ethnic betterment societies; but social action beyond opportunity for one's own people, action aimed at reforming societal structures, for promoting justice, peace and human rights — local, national, global — was beyond the concept and scope of almost all Catholic parishes.
- The Parish Council is the key institutional innovation since Vatican II for parish life, through which lay leadership and collegiality are exercised by the most local Church community; in principle, the parish council and the liturgy are the double charisma of Vatican II for parish life into the 1990s.

There is often a mismatch between the characteristics of parishioners and the types of parish programs available to them. Despite the fact that 25% of adult Catholics who married have experienced divorce or separation, only 20% of the parishes in the country have some kind of ministry to the divorced and separated. Despite the fact that the remarried are considerably more likely to attend Mass and re-establish parish ties than the divorced, the remarried continue either to shy away from or be denied the Sacrament. The Church's understanding of the family, its resources for parish-level help to the family, and its sacramental policies that relate to family dissolution received more volunteered comments on our questionnaires than any other matters.

In a similar vein, parishioners do not feel their parish can offer skilled services related to alcohol or substance abuse, family economic crises, and similar matters that often lie behind marital dissolution. If the parish offered competent assistance, parishioners in need would be more likely to use these services than a wide variety of programs presently being offered. Nearly every parish-connected Catholic wants to continue and enhance the religious education of children and youth — and just about all parishes have such programs. Yet only two-thirds of the parishes do anything at all with adult education. A not inconsequential proportion of our sample turns ecumenical — in neighborhood churches or living rooms — for fulfillment of their interest in biblical study or group prayer. National data show that nearly one-third of all Catholics claim to have read the Bible in the last month, a sharply rising figure from previous years, and the steepest increase is among the young.

Leaders: Pastors, Staff, Volunteers

Organizing and directing these 22 programs, or even a dozen of them in a medium-size parish, demands a goodly number of specialized skills. Only in very small parishes, typically in town or rural settings with few Catholics, does the priest still try to be “all things to all the people,” as he was exhorted in seminaries a generation ago. And several

hundred of those small parishes no longer have a resident priest—a deacon or woman religious or trained layperson now administers the plant and “ministers” the congregation.

Parishes which are larger or those which have developed a strong sense of community that leads to enhanced financial support are likely to have more paid staff members. Paid staffs may range from a lone pastor upwards to thirty-five staff members where there are many programs in addition to a school. As staff size grows usually the priority posts include a director of religious education (DRE), a director of liturgy, and a secretary-administrator. Most are filled by women, many of whom are religious; some staff are deacons, but a rapidly growing number are lay professionals. Some conduct their work in such a way that the ordinary parishioners are intimidated by their credentials and skills; in a sense they create a “new clericalism.” The more effective paid staff, however, consider it their direct responsibility to recruit and motivate, train and direct volunteer members who actually carry out most of the dozen or more programs of their parish, and launch new ones. Our Study findings as a whole show that since Vatican II, parish staffs (other than priests) have greatly increased, and they in turn have multiplied programs which involve many more volunteer leaders.

This process has called into existence a new type of post-conciliar institution: the center for ministry training and development, of which several score now exist around the country. These provide formation programs at regional and national levels, which serve in turn diocesan offices and prepare parish staff. An overview of this creative follow-up to Vatican II, comparable perhaps in ecclesial significance to the seminary system begotten by the Council of Trent four centuries earlier, is made below in “Leader Formation and the Future.”

The educated Catholic population, both male and female, that has grown in the decades since the GI Bill, can offer many skills to the parish. In the American context, educated people have the expectation that they will be called on to serve, to take on responsibilities. Many have as much or more education than religious, priests, or bishops. They feel they know something about the running of organizations and they expect to be consulted. Our data show that they are slow to volunteer — nearly 70% of the most influential leaders had to be asked by the pastor or staff to serve — but once reaffirmed in their work, they often devote as much or more time to the parish as do paid staff. In our intensive study of the 36 parishes, we found that 83% of those identified as the *top* parish leaders — i.e., those whose organizational savvy is sought and who got things done either from a formal position or informally — are unpaid volunteers.

Almost half of parish-connected Catholics in our sample participate in parish programs beyond religious ceremonies: 21% in one activity, 15% in two, 8% in three, and 6% in four or more. Among members identified as volunteer leaders, 14% limit their participation to one activity, 23% are in two, 20% in three, 18% in four, and 25% in five or more programs. About a fifth of parish-connected Catholics report engagement in religious growth and devotional renewal such as discussion groups, teaching and Bible

study, RENEW, or prayer groups. A comparable number are identified with liturgy-related roles, as rectors, Eucharistic ministers, choir, altar care, ushers, etc.

Ministries to the sick, the elderly and poor draw a combined 9% of parishioners. While *parish-sponsored* programs of social action, justice and peace draw only a minute proportion of members, about 4% do participate in such activities largely through extra-parish groups. Overall, 20% of the parishes do report having such programs, however modest; in the suburbs this figure rises to 27% .

While 30% of parish-connected Catholics are spending an average of five hours a month on activities outside religious rites, another 10% average 15 hours, 3% average 25 hours, and another 2% devote almost all their discretionary time to their parish. Among volunteer leaders, of course, the percentages rise: 22% average 5 hours per month, 25% average 15 hours, 8% spend 25 hours, and 12% devote almost all their discretionary time to parish activities.

Sense of Community

Sense of community derives consistently from several identifiable parish characteristics. Parish size and urban-rural locale show only a modest relationship to sense of community in our 36 parishes. Ethnic homogeneity is an important, but not exclusive factor in development of community; several of the parishes that are quite heterogeneous show the highest sense of community. Rather, sense of community in a parish goes hand-in-hand with parishioners' sense of attachment to the parish, and sense of attachment is a function of: (1) the opportunities to participate in a variety of parish activities and to take on responsibilities for various ministries, (2) the accessibility and caring nature of the pastor and other parishioners, and (3) the celebration of liturgies in a style that makes parishioners cognizant of the community and applies religious values to the present life rather than in longing for the future life exclusively. Community and commitment have far less to do with parishioners' social characteristics (e.g., sex, age, stage in the family life-cycle) and far more to do with the quality of interactions with others in the parish.

The nurture of community and “belonging” should seem much more difficult in Catholic parishes which average over 2300 members than in Protestant congregations about one-seventh that size. In our intensive study, a little over half of the parishioners felt that their own parish had a strong sense of community and they felt personally quite attached to it. Yet, 37 percent of this sample never or seldom had conversations with fellow parishioners and 75% never or seldom had a conversation with their pastor. Furthermore, about three-fourths would not find it upsetting to leave their parish. While one-fourth do participate in parish social activities, improving parish social life is generally ranked as a low priority except among parishioners in small towns.

Observations of liturgies by our visiting researchers suggest that only modest effort is devoted to “gathering” the community in fellowship before or after the Mass. Before Mass, planned opportunities for socializing occurred at less than 10% of the Masses, and

at only one-third of the Masses did people greet each other informally or chat as they came to the liturgy. Ushers are around but seldom serve as “ministers of hospitality.” After the Mass there is more attempt to gather, but there is neither a planned social nor informal chatting going on after over one-third of the Masses. The least effort at socializing follows the Masses in suburban parishes; the most effort is in the town parishes. Perhaps attempts to build parish community through social interaction are unimportant, but our liturgical data show some degree of association between these measures of community and those aspects of liturgical celebration that the constituting documents of Vatican II sought to encourage. Many parishes can no longer rely on ethnic bonds and common pieties as characteristics that will unite their parishioners into a community, but have yet to develop alternatives.

One reason some of the larger parishes among our 36 are able to nurture the sense of community is that they are organizationally complex, i.e., they recognize the heterogeneity of their parishioners, offer many types of ministries and activities in response to their needs, and stimulate a sense of responsibility for parish life, including sharing governance among pastors, staff, and laity. The parishes with the greatest sense of community and greatest parishioner loyalty all had larger cadres of staff and volunteer leaders than parishes of similar size who showed less sense of community. They were also more likely to have a school, just as a higher proportion of the organizationally complex parishes across the country have schools.

While parishes showing the greatest sense of community are not devoid of alienated groups, nevertheless, not only do they have more visible instruments of lay consultation and sharing in governance (e.g., functioning parish councils; programs and staff responsible to committees and councils, in addition to the pastor), but they have pastors who are enablers, who convince parishioners to share the load because it is *their* parish. In parishes with less sense of community, decisions are more likely to lodge in the pastor alone. That does not mean that the parishes with a high sense of community are devoid of conflict in their decision-making circles; competing points of view are encouraged, but fewer people walk away from the conflict with the sense that the pastor or “one side” has “won.” Nevertheless, parish leaders in some positions appear to be more dissatisfied with their parish work and particularly with the pastor; these tend to be women in liturgical and social service roles. Women working as DRE's and school principals are more likely than most other leaders to report conflict with the pastor, but they often manage to work out their differences.

The triumphal picture of an assimilated, well-to-do Catholic population participating in staff-rich suburban parishes through lay-enabling models of ministry is far from the reality experienced by many parishioners of town and countryside. Relative to the suburban parishes, seldom do the rural ones get or keep pastors well matched to their religious/ social needs nor understanding their local power structure and viewpoints on Church-related questions. Altogether too often these parishes are an assignment-of-last-resort for pastors ineffective elsewhere, suffering at times from drinking problems or burnout. Some parishes of town and countryside are very vibrant, reflecting the historic

traditions of a dominant ethnic group, or successfully adjusting to lay responsibility for a parish that has little hope of regular pastoral care from an ordained priest. But in many rural and town parishes, the resource base and skills of the people are limited, but worse, they have little vision of what it means to be a Catholic parish in the 1990's. Some experience great conflict because urban deconcentration has brought newcomers to their midst who do have skills and ideas, and soon the parish belongs to the "outsiders." Routinely, the parishes of town and countryside feel they get little attention from a distant diocesan center and what attention they get is often based on models of ministry appropriate to suburban living.

Liturgy and Prayer

Profound reform of the weekend liturgy is by far the most significant change wrought by Vatican II in American parish life. With remarkable rapidity Catholics have grown accustomed to participatory rather than passive worship, accepting lay ministers including women in the sanctuary in most places. A large majority positively like and others have adjusted to Vatican II liturgical changes as a whole. These are clear conclusions from our questionnaires reinforced by personal observations by our teams of professional visitors.

The slowest adjustment is to the communion cup: in the liturgies we observed the cup was not available over half the time, and when available, a majority of the people drank from the cup in only one-third of the parishes. On the other hand, the long campaign for frequent communion is showing success in that in 90% of the Masses we observed, over three-fourths of the congregation received the Eucharist. This is also reflected in our survey data, where 80% of the time people attend Mass they commune. Furthermore, over 95% of sampled parishes use lay rectors for the first two lessons; a little over three-fourths of them have lay Eucharistic ministers with men and women represented in nearly equal proportions. Only about 17% of the parishioners express reservations about lay men as communion ministers and 20% are hesitant or oppose lay women in that role. Thus, parishioners have not only grown accustomed to their own participation in the Mass but to lay persons penetrating sacred space.

In nine out of every ten Masses we observed, there was some congregational singing, more often on Sunday than Saturday evening. Ninety-five percent of the parishioners welcome or tolerate that opportunity. Yet, music and singing are singled out by parishioners as the parts of their parish liturgies most in need of improvement. General participation is weak. A smaller proportion sing when folk songs are used than when hymnody is. Service materials are often confusing. In some parishes, liturgists prefer newness to familiarity. Missalettes seldom generate the participation level found in parishes with hymnbooks. (We do not know which is cause and effect.) Liturgy planners often misunderstand the reasons for using singing in the Common Parts. And the music is often poorly matched to season and lectionary. While most other aspects of ritual prayer are satisfactory to the people, 40% cite singing as requiring improvement.

There are no more pronounced generational differences in the parishes than in prayer life. The Christocentric reemphasis of Vatican II shows in the persons to whom or through whom parishioners pray: 63% address Jesus, 28% address God the Father, 15% address the Holy Spirit, and 46% address prayer to Mary. (Multiple options were possible.) But among people under 40, nearly 60% exclusively selected a member of the Godhead, 25% addressed prayer to a member of the Trinity and Mary, and the remainder prayed to a combination of the Triune God, Mary, and saints. For people over forty, however, less than 25% are exclusively Trinitarian in prayer, another 25% pray to the Triune God and Mary, 30% to the Triune God, Mary, and saints, and 15% do not pray to God at all but rely on intercessory prayer to Mary and the saints. Parish leaders are considerably more likely to address prayers to a member of the Godhead than are rank-and-file parishioners.

Generational differences also show strongly in the practices of Benediction, Stations of the Cross, Novenas, Public Rosary, etc. Private confession is practiced more frequently by the older parishioners, but still about three-fourths of the parish-connected Catholics claim they make confession at least once a year. Communal penance is less likely to be associated with one generation, but it is also a set of rites around which there is considerable confusion among parishioners. Perhaps this is to be expected of rites that, some say, were not enthusiastically introduced by all quarters of the American hierarchy and had never been experienced by most faithful. Strangely, about 90% of our sampled parishes offer one of the communal penance rites at least once a year, yet 50% of our sampled parishioners never participated in a communal penance rite that they recognized as such.

Belief, Morality, and Culture

Increasingly educated and socially mobile Catholics are less likely to accord legitimacy to Church authority because it is traditional, but are more likely to seek a rational basis for it. They have skills and learning; they have moved about; they are accustomed in their jobs and daily life to means-ends calculations. American cultural values have conditioned them to accord absolute authority to no human being and often to stand in loyal opposition to leaders.

Parish-connected Catholics feel no great inconsistency in accepting the central mysteries of the Church while rejecting some of its leaders' teachings of recent decades. Tension between ecclesial bonds and conscientious discretion may in fact be *less* prevalent now than it was in the early *Humanae Vitae* days twenty years ago. because people have simply shut out Church authority over pans of their lives. For example, our data show that while 42% of the parish-connected sample feel the Pope should continue to teach against artificial contraception, 66% oppose that teaching, and 54% feel that it is a matter of individual conscience alone. Similar mosaics but with different individuals appear on disarmament, poverty, race, etc. It is as though Church social teaching is only one component of their pluralistic and tolerant outlook toward several possible viewpoints.

Meanwhile many pastors, unbeknown to parishioners, form a silent opposition to Church teaching on matters such as contraception, married priests, and other issues.

One should not be surprised that increasingly-educated and socially-mobile Catholics would take on other characteristics of the American culture. Such characteristics, however, may be at odds with central values of the Church. For example, when asked to describe the fundamental purpose of a parish, 42% of the parish-connected sample used communitarian imagery such as a “people of God,” “body of Christ,” “fellowship of believers;” 33% placed an emphasis on doing charitable things to help the needy. Yet on a question designed to tap the foundational beliefs of parishioners, 39% were exclusively self-centered in the way they defined the fundamental human problems and the way religion responds to them, 19% were social-centered, and 21% integrated both themes.

This strong thrust of individualism in a communitarian church is reflected in the finding that only 4% of the parishioners report involvement in either parish- or community-based social justice-oriented activities. It is perhaps also a reason why the social teachings of the past century and the recent pastoral on the economy generate mixed reactions among American Catholics. The widespread emphasis on religious individualism may also be the product of centuries of catechesis that stressed personal growth in righteousness, and a prayer life that was interior, even in the corporate Mass.

Parish-connected Catholics are aware of the decline in vocations at the same time that (1) the parish is growing in size and (2) they expect many programs from their parishes. They express concern that their parish may be consolidated, that they may have to share a priest, or that there would be less frequent Masses. Yet they seem to be heavily socialized into American values of pragmatism, and perhaps equality. In our parish-connected sample — bear in mind, older, more likely to be female, more conservative on some church policy questions — nearly 60% accept the idea that married men should be allowed to be priests and 35% feel women should be ordained as priests; two-thirds of the parish leaders support the idea of married male priests; 30% of the parishes nationally already have lay persons on their pastoral ministry staffs; permanent deacons, mostly married, are found in 23% of our sampled parishes.

As pastors nowadays know, women are disproportionately represented among the leadership in the parish, not only in traditional nurture or mercy roles, but more recently in parish governance and visible liturgical roles. We find the parish leadership structure quite decentralized, although three-quarters of the parishes have parish councils and the pastor remains clearly the dominant figure in 9 out of every 10 parishes. However, beyond the pastor it is often the person who gets things done who is seen as influential and, more often than not, that is a woman. Yet there is still a dominance of men in the most important formal leadership roles.

Insofar as Catholics draw informal social boundaries around the church — i.e., they make judgments about who is a “true Catholic” — they are more likely to be

exclusive based on a series of concerns related to human sexuality — abortion, homosexuality, sex outside marriage — then they are about faithful Mass attendance and sacramental life. The most restrictive parishioners are found in town and countryside, where informal social controls are strong. Those least restrictive in their definitions of a true Catholic are the suburbanites. Pastors are more *inclusive* than parishioners, and lay leaders tend to be the most *exclusive* of all — a sobering consideration as we move toward more reliance on lay leadership. Perhaps this difference reflects the fact that pastors minister daily to broken humans, while lay leaders have far less experience with the means of grace except as they lead to their own salvation. The laity too often specialize in building the kingdom through programs and organizations. As Martin Many, upon reading the report, wrote: “Who Is a True Catholic — No Sinner Need Apply.” American cultural values place a premium on evidences of righteousness, not forgiveness and salvation. Interestingly those who are more concerned about ministries of charity, justice and peace are less exclusive in their definitions of a true Catholic.

Leader Formation and the Future

Profound changes in parish leadership have occurred since Vatican II. Above all the omniscient and all-powerful pastor is increasingly replaced by the ministry-team, composed of clergy (priests and deacons), paid staff (lay and religious), and volunteers in most city and suburban parishes. Volunteer lay leaders often include officers of parish organizations and especially members of the parish council.

In larger parishes staff not only include directors of liturgy and of religious education, and a secretary-administrator, but directors of programs for youth or family life, of social action or spiritual growth. They have in large measure replaced assistant pastors, who became fewer in number as priestly vocations decreased and new parishes continued to be formed. Additional staff are also needed to direct the many new programs and growing participation by well-educated parishioners already reported above.

Parish life is now much influenced and enriched by leader formation programs which US dioceses have launched since Vatican II to serve their local faith communities. In its planning and scope our Notre Dame Study did not directly address this historic ecclesial development. Its extent and significance, however, have proved so striking that we feel obliged to point to indirect findings and to suggest that scholars and church leaders undertake funkier research and study of the parish-diocesan leader formation movement in the post-Vatican II parish. Reference will be made here to a few key elements of this historic awakening: 1) Priest Sabbaticals and the National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy, NOCERCC; 2) Diocesan and Other Leadership Programs; 3) Parish Renewal as illustrated by the RENEW Process in 90 US Dioceses.

Priest Sabbaticals and NOCERCC

Prior to Vatican II the sabbatical for priests was almost unknown. It was granted perhaps for reasons of health, and sometimes to deal with a “problem” — such as dependence on alcohol. More seldom some priests took off a year or two to complete a degree, usually in canon law. Suddenly since Vatican II, sabbaticals have become quite the norm, encouraged and even paid for by parish or diocese and religious order. In 1984 the American bishops strongly endorsed sabbaticals for priests.

“Sabbaticals offer priests the opportunity to be renewed through a rest, a change of pace and freedom from the stress of ministry and other concerns. When a priest acquires additional theological understanding, pastoral skills, and personal growth during a sabbatical, there are obvious benefits for the people he serves . . . Periodic sabbaticals are of such importance . . . that diocesan bishops must educate and interpret to the Faithful the need on their part to forego at times some priestly service . . .” (Statement on “The Continuing Formation of Priests,” by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1984.) Short-term sabbaticals of one to six months are offered by twenty US institutions from California to New York and Indiana to Texas. Long-term sessions of 7 to 12 months are offered in eighteen American cities and at the American theologates in Belgium and Rome.

NOCERCC, the National Organization for Continuing Education of the Roman Catholic Clergy, was formed in 1973 by the offices of dioceses and religious institutes which supervise their respective programs. By 1989 NOCERCC is constituted by 158 member dioceses and 80 religious provinces, to which a variety of programs are offered in addition to sabbaticals: 1) convocations of the whole presbyterate; 2) creation of small support groups among the clergy; 3) mentoring relations in which, for instance, an experienced priest cultivates a personal and counseling relation with a young confrere, or mutual support at transitional and problem periods. NOCERCC also provides information and programming references on all elements of this broad field of leader formation among parishes, dioceses and provinces, that has expanded so rapidly since Vatican II.

Diocesan and Other Leadership Programs

In addition to national sessions for priests, almost all dioceses have their own leader formation programs designed for parish staff and lay volunteers. Many dioceses now have full-time staff devoted specifically to leader formation at all levels and for all such programs of the diocese. Often these have their own facilities for accommodating fifty to several hundred participants overnight and even for several days. The Center for Development in Ministry of the Chicago Archdiocese offers an illustration of the wide range of programs available through a diocese or archdiocese.

The Chicago Center was created in 1986 as part of the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois. In its first full year, 1987-88, the Chicago Center had 10,659 participants in 278 programs offered. For its second program year 1988-89, over 20,000 participants have attended or signed up for 310 scheduled offerings. Their focus varies from ministry to the sick and family relations, to programs for spiritual directors, permanent diaconate, parish councils, and “Lay Ministers Formation.” This last phrase is

quoted from the Center's Annual Report of 1987-88, for the express purpose of underlining that lay persons are now frequently designated as “ministers” — a term reserved usually to clergy and occasionally to religious prior to Vatican II. In like manner “Lay Ministry” is now an acceptable usage in the United States.

Ministry in this wide sense runs through the “Mission Statement” of the Chicago Center in its 56-page course catalogue, *Outreach*, for spring-summer 1989. A partial quote states: “The Center for Development in Ministry, with the help of the Spirit of Jesus, seeks to strengthen the talents and gifts of the people in ministry. We believe that people, in giving of their gifts to others, continue the mission and ministry of Jesus. Sensitive to God's compassionate concern for all people, the Center for Development in Ministry fosters the journey of conversion by sponsoring, designing, coordinating, implementing and hosting a wide variety of programs in continuing education and formation. In addition, the Center encourages and supports research into the needs and trends of Christian living. We believe that we are called to minister to ministers . . . primarily called to serve those who are formally designated ministers within the Roman Catholic Church.” This broad range of programs has opened the field to lay persons and women religious as professionals for leader formation at most levels of Catholic life — from parish liturgist to adult education, seminary faculty and diocesan chancellor.

Whereas almost all theological students in Catholic universities and seminaries pre-Vatican II aspired to ordination as priests, many now definitely intend to remain laity; and as women religious, few would hope to be ordained in the current papal period. For instance, of the 320 students at our largest Catholic American theologate, the Chicago Theological Union, only 180 are candidates for the priesthood. The other 140 seeking theology degrees expect to serve the Church in all manner of other ministries, and it is likely that most will devote themselves to leader formation of some type. Probably over a hundred graduates of our nation's forty theological schools now enter the Catholic ministry pool each year as lay persons and women religious, and the number will probably increase.

Parish Renewal Illustrated: RENEW in 90 US Dioceses

A finding of great significance to parish life is that 29% of all parishes report using an organized parish renewal program. The most widely used is RENEW which is found in 20% of the sampled parishes, but there are several other programs in use. Renewal programs are typically adopted for an entire diocese, but the suburban parishes are most likely to use them (38%) and the rural parishes least likely (19%). Two major effects of renewal stand out in our data: (1) parishioners who have participated in renewal programs are more likely to continue Bible study and adult religious education, and to undertake projects that “put their faith to work” in the parish and extra-parish communities, and (2) they are more likely to assume leadership responsibilities for parish programs and ministries. An extended discussion of the most widely used of these renewal programs, RENEW, illustrates how it operates in the parish.

RENEW is a participative process of communal awakening within parishes and their dioceses, developed during the late 1970s in the Archdiocese of Newark. It spread nationwide to ninety dioceses during the 1980s, and into seventy more dioceses of Canada, Britain, Africa, India and the South Pacific. The full “process” of launching RENEW in a diocese extends over three years, during which each parish of the sponsoring diocese creates a “core group” of a few committed leaders who, after a special retreat together and formation sessions, supervise development of ten to twenty “small groups” within each parish. These parochial groups each have about a dozen members to provide between one to two hundred lay participants per parish depending on its size.

Meeting weekly six times during each of five successive Fall and Lent seasons extending over two and a half years, each group cultivates a sense of communal belonging nourished by shared faith and religious feeling. This sharing of religious feeling so basic to the RENEW process is cultivated by the group's facilitator (RENEW avoids the term leader), who encourages each parishioner “to tell the story” of their lives with faith-related incidents. The group provides the sympathetic listeners who understand that few have exceptional gifts, but all do have several decades of lived experience which become their own stories. Ensuing discussion relates these personal stories with biblical accounts through which God reveals himself through human history, then and today.

The sense of parish and wider responsibility awakened by such extended communal sharing finds expression through a variety of ministry programs. Step by step these groups team up with the whole diocese whose offices and staff provide their specific *content* of liturgy, religious education, social action, etc., which they combine with the ecclesial network formed by the RENEW *process*. An example of such diocese-wide animation was the Parish Social Ministry Convocation held midway through the RENEW process in Hanford, Connecticut, in 1985. Under the stimulus of RENEW it was co-sponsored by the archdiocese's several offices of Catholic Charities, Urban Affairs, Pro-Life, Marriage and Family. Over 900 RENEW parishioners participated in workshops on hunger, housing, unemployment, the elderly, the handicapped, and family services.

Monsignor Thomas Kleissler, founder and still director of RENEW, in a telephone interview May 1989, commented on today's basic pastoral question: “What kind of parish life will be effective in our present secular culture? In the past we could expect that the ethnic and family background of Catholics and their neighborhood relations would bind people close to their parish and church life. All of these elements have changed radically during the past generation. RENEW tries to respond to the challenge: How can the parish be effective in our post-modern age? We believe RENEW works because it offers people group experiences through scripture, prayer and personal belonging, which connect their faith to daily demands through *bite-size* community nourishment. This gathers parishioners around the liturgy and they bring their bite-size experiences of belonging into the worshipping and sharing community.”

The staff of RENEW has grown to fifteen professionals during the past dozen years, of whom nine are “on the road” among the 160 dioceses worldwide where the

“process” is underway. About 9,000 parishes in 90 dioceses of the United States have become participants.

In Nigeria nine dioceses have begun the program and 25 more will take exploratory steps next year. Monsignor Kleissler and two other staff members will spend January to March 1990 in Nigeria, devoting a few days to each diocese, holding regional convocations, recruiting and training Nigerians to assume full responsibility for a RENEW program adapted during coming years to their own religious culture. The long-term development of RENEW, in North America and worldwide, could profoundly affect Catholic parishes especially among English-speaking peoples. Parish renewal merits continuous study.

New and Continuing Research

It would be myopic to view the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life as the last word on the American parish or on American Catholics. It isn't. As a systematic, comprehensive, cross-disciplinary study it takes its place within a panoply of Catholic and Protestant studies of congregations and religious life. It is only one slice in time, the early to the mid '80s. The Study permitted reliable generalizations across American parishes, and comparisons of both the internal life of types of parishes and the values and behaviors of parish leaders and parish-connected Catholics — for a time.

We might think of parishes through the physical properties we observe so vividly at sunrise and sunset. All of the forces remain present day after day, as Teyve in “Fiddler on the Roof” sings “sunrise . . . sunset,” but any given configuration of the sun and atmospheric conditions leads to vastly different snapshots of color. We became painfully aware of the impact that key personnel have on parish life when seven parishes were revisited to produce a videotape called “The Dynamic Parish,” just five years after our original data collection. In six of the seven the pastor had changed. In four of five changes — large to medium-sized parishes — parish life was similar to what we had described earlier, with occasional important changes. In the parish where a pastor remained, a small one, life was virtually the same. In two of the six changes, both small parishes, the presence of a reassigned pastor had virtually destroyed both the sense of community and a functioning lay organizational network. Once again we were reminded about the insulation of larger parishes to personnel change, but the vulnerability of the small ones, particularly when a new priest arrives who is uncomfortable with lay responsibility.

In sum, we think we have captured many of the forces operating in US Catholic parishes. Yet, we do not know whether these are forces of the '80s or whether they will endure into the '90s. We do not know whether the configuration of forces resulted from the 36 parishes we selected so carefully for intensive study. We have perhaps established a temporal baseline and a point of comparison for other studies. That is why we have stressed in our *Report* series as well as public presentations, that those who turn to the Study for insights and planning purposes also consult other national studies on related

topics, consult diocesan studies, where available, and initiate local studies customized to their purposes.

Certainly a rich heritage of Catholic sociological research is available. Early classic studies of parishes, schools, and leadership were undertaken by Joseph Fichter. Utilizing national and special purpose surveys Andrew Greeley directed a wide range of empirical studies and trained cadres of students who have carried on the tradition such as William McCready, Richard Schoenherr, Kathleen McCoun, Teresa Sullivan, and many others. Classic studies of priests, vocations, and seminary training by Raymond Potvin, Schoenherr, or others, have been updated to include not only priestly leadership and training, but also lay ministry; these studies have been directed by Schoenherr, Dean Hoge, Eugene Hemrick, and others. Earlier studies of Hispanics by Joseph Fitzpatrick, Ruth Doyle and the New York archdiocese have been joined by a recent study by Roben Gonzalez and Michael La Velle. Nearly 40 of the dioceses have effective research and planning offices that undertake empirical studies of nearly all topics addressed by our *Report* series, and more. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) has conducted scores of studies that bear on similar topics. The Institute for Pastoral Studies of Loyola University in Chicago has addressed religious institutions through organizational sociology assumptions. The Parish Evaluation Project has studied parishes empirically while consulting on their effectiveness. The Glenmary Research Center continues to map American religious trends with special attention to Catholics. The Josephite Pastoral Center remains a major source of data regarding Black Catholics. As documented by the *American Catholic Studies Newsletter* of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, many religious orders, dioceses, and educational institutions maintain archives and sponsor historical studies. And professional organizations of educators, catechists, canon lawyers, ethicists, social ministry and social action facilitators, religious communities, and virtually every other profession related to the Catholic church have commissioned major studies that are cited from time to time in *Origins* or *Crux*.

One should not look only to Catholic sociology and history. The Lilly Endowment, which funded the Notre Dame Study, has at the same time funded a wide variety of studies of congregations. These have been concentrated at certain centers, in particular the Hanford Seminary, the McCormick Seminary and the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, Candler School of Theology at Emory University, and elsewhere. Reports under the names of such scholars as Jackson Carroll, James Davidson, Carl Dudley, John Hope Franklin, Dean Hoge, C. Ellis Nelson, Manin Many, William McKinney, Wade Clark Roof, David Roozen, Allison Stokes, Douglas Walrath, James Wind, and others have emerged from the Lilly Endowment's initiatives. Interaction and cross-fertilization among scholars addressing Catholic parishes and Protestant congregations has progressed to the point where a *Handbook for Congregational Studies* was published in 1986; a newsletter entitled *Congregation* was recently begun; a Festschrift honoring Roben W. Lynn, the Lilly Endowment officer who stimulated so many of these studies, will shortly appear; and special academic programs developing competence in congregational studies are under discussion. Thus, our Study represents a modest contribution to such networks.

The Notre Dame Study has stimulated much other work on Catholics. Currently project planning for parish research in Australia, West Germany, Belgium, and Kenya reflects our research experience. About two dozen studies of Catholic parishes across the US have adapted our instruments to local needs.

Since the Notre Dame Study was a pioneer of systematic empirical research on liturgical practices, our personnel have consulted widely regarding the strengths of our Study, but especially about its weaknesses as a first effort. Among these efforts have been committees of the North American Academy of Liturgy; a major study of hymnody and identity among Methodists and Episcopalians directed by Linda Clark and Roof; a sixteen-parish comparison entitled "Colloquium on Liturgical Renewal, 1963-1988: A Study of English-speaking Parishes in the United States" initiated cooperatively by the four Catholic pastoral liturgy centers in the US; the continuing research agendas of the liturgy centers; and a doctoral dissertation involving an intensive study of RCIA. Mark Searle, the scholar most responsible for this work is currently on study leave in the Netherlands, hoping to apply semiotics to the shaping of identity through liturgy.

As a result of the historical studies, Jay Dolan identified a gap, described earlier, in the understanding of ecclesial and cultural forces that preceded the post-conciliar adaptation of American parishes. With the assistance of the Lilly Endowment that study will soon be published. One of the scholars from that project has now been commissioned to do a local study of Natchez, Mississippi, and we anticipate other diocesan historical studies will follow.

Even though the Notre Dame Study has joined similar studies or stimulated a wide variety of new research, there are some areas that are not yet being systematically addressed but compel scholarly attention:

(1) *Ethnic transitions.* In mid-1985 the chancellor of an archdiocese told us: "I don't care what else your Study finds. If it can't tell us something about ethnic transitions in parishes it will miss our agenda for the '80s." He was faced with a massive transition from Eastern and Central European parishes to Hispanic parishes. In the larger cities, we could offer case studies of two recent transitions from Eastern European to Black, of one from Irish to Black to gentrified white professionals, of one from Irish and German to substantial minorities of Blacks, Filipinos, Koreans, and Vietnamese, and one of a Polish parish trying hard to ignore the 95% Puerto Rican population in its neighborhood. We had a few other ethnic transitions but they were not in the cities. That is not a sufficient sample for anything the chancellor had in mind. We would like to encourage systematic inquiry with similar designs addressed to ethnic transitions across several dioceses, undertaken by both diocesan and academic-based scholars, and disseminated both to the dioceses and in scholarly journals or anthologies.

(2) *Cross-parish collaboration and circuit-riding leadership.* The apostle Paul was probably the most famous circuit-rider. But his ministry was in an era of expansion, while many ministries are now conducted at a time of contraction and population displacement.

Faced with such social forces, current answers are attentive to ecclesial order, assignment of parishioners by lines on a map, and the closing or merging of parishes. Our Study did not directly address cross-parish collaboration or twinning. How many suburban parishes, for example, share pastors or staff or financial resources or volunteer leaders, or ordinary parishioners with an inner-city parish from which they may well have descended? How many affluent parishes approach such situations with a sense that they will benefit from the spiritual identity of the poverty-impacted parish rather than that the inner-city will benefit from their noblesse oblige? Over two dozen dioceses now have regulations governing parish administrators or pastoral coordinators who are responsible for a parish in the absence of an ordained priest. In what ways are these administrators/coordinators functioning fully as pastors and what kind of oversight does the priest supervisor or canonical pastor, like Paul, exercise? Our data suggest that in rural churches with several mission stations and chaplaincy duties for their pastors, the pastor was often absent but had trained and overseen a local “pastor.” There is a wide ranging empirical research agenda here that addresses not only the situation of the rural church but of the Detroit and Chicago, and others.

(3) *Parish finances.* Although we collected data on giving patterns of parishioners, we did not collect systematic records of parish finances nor did we directly study parish finance committees. Greeley and McManus have written about the former, and Hoge, Carroll, and Scheetz have partially addressed the latter. What we need is a series of systematic case studies that merge the two. We know that parishes characterized by a stronger sense of community have larger staffs, more lay volunteers, and average giving that is higher than parishes with less sense of community. (This appears to be the case to some extent even when we control for parish income and education levels.) We simply do not know what the mechanisms are that relate each, which is cause and which is effect. Although we have data similar to Greeley's regarding parishioners' giving patterns, we have deliberately not published from them. Catholics of European origin, as members of a “state-supported” church in most countries, did not bring a tradition of tithing; only one of our 36 intensively-studied parishes in the US relied on tithes. For most Catholics, giving, instead of coming off the top, comes from the bottom, the discretionary pan of income. While Catholics have higher family incomes than Protestants, we would argue that they have lower discretionary incomes: (a) since a higher proportion of Catholics than Protestants live in more expensive locales — large cities and suburbs — less is available for voluntary gifts; (b) since a higher proportion of Catholic children than Protestant children attend schools charging tuition, less is available for voluntary gifts; and (c) since the current generation of middle-aged Catholics is more likely to be in extended family situations where the college education costs of children and the declining years of grandparents collide, less is available for voluntary gifts. Yet, wholly apart from their parishioners' attitudes toward the hierarchy's teachings, some parishes generate more income than others. That phenomenon needs systematic non-ideological study.

(4) *Social ministry, local ecumenism and adult education* have become fields of *parish* concern in most cases only since Vatican II. The same could be noted about many dioceses. Most dioceses, however, have now created departments with professional staff

to promote these ministries, under stimulus of conciliar decrees, social encyclicals, national movements and awakening lay leaders.

In these three fields multi-parish planning and participation are the usual practice, because geographic extension for such ministries often exceeds the boundaries of specific parishes; also the structure and scope of civil and religious bodies being addressed — such as a township, city or county, state or nation, and collaborative religious organizations — such as the Episcopal diocese, Methodist district, or the citywide council of churches — does not normally “match-up” with a single Catholic parish.

Therefore since Vatican II, dioceses, religious orders, universities, retreat houses, and lay movements have created scores of departments, institutes and networks which provide staff and stimulus to parishes, singly or as associated projects. This significant ecclesial development should be studied soon, to understand the parish of tomorrow and its relationship to other components of the Church as a whole.

(5) *The study of dioceses.* Since Vatican II the 190 Catholic dioceses of the United States have probably changed even more than their 19,500 constituent parishes. The Council's updated theology and fresh vision of church and world were formally communicated and applied to these parishes through diocesan programs and staff, with fundamental effects on each diocese as well. The Vatican regularly sends its decisions and critique to American parishes and 53 million members through the bishop and diocesan offices. In most cases the diocesan staff has doubled or quadrupled since Vatican II — maybe increased at times tenfold.

Lay persons and women religious now hold key posts. A recent USCC survey showed that women hold the key administrative position of chancellor in 16 dioceses, and in 8 more women serve as vice-chancellors. Other key diocesan leadership posts held by women include 59 school superintendents, 65 directors of religious education programs, 39 directors of family life offices, 28 editors of diocesan newspapers, 26 heads of charities, and 26 directors of communication.

Many consultative and a few decision-making bodies have now had a dozen or more years experience at the diocesan level, creating an updated genre of ecclesial consciousness. During the 1990s, a comprehensive empirical study should examine staff selection, development, projects and relationships with the parishes of the 190 Catholic dioceses of the United States.

In due time a comprehensive empirical study should be made of another product of Vatican II: the national and regional conferences of bishops, now numbering about one hundred ecclesial bodies. CELAM, the Episcopal Conference of Latin America, and NCCB, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, USA, are prime examples of these new religious entities, which exercise growing influence both for Church and *extra ecclesiam* — for the future of society and culture of both Americas, into millennium 2000 AD.

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