JOYFULLY COMMUNICATING THE LIVING MYSTERY:
A PROFILE OF DIOCESAN OFFICES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

The *National Directory for Catechesis* notes that "Sound organizational structures can ensure that the Gospel will be proclaimed in its entirety and with fidelity." No structure is more central to this proclamation than the diocesan office of religious education. It is "the means which the Bishop as head of the community and teacher of doctrine utilizes to direct and moderate all the catechetical activities of the diocese."[1] How these offices are staffed and resourced impacts both the quality and effectiveness of the Church's formal efforts to joyfully communicate the living mystery of God.

In the fall of 2013, the Notre Dame Institute for Church Life in conjunction with Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology contacted 179 diocesan offices in the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands, inviting diocesan directors of religious education to participate in an online survey. One hundred forty-eight diocesan directors chose to participate, for an initial response rate of 83%. Because 12 cases contain excessive missing data, our survey has an effective response rate of 76%. The purpose of this report is to provide a profile of diocesan offices, their resources, and their staffing, as well as to identify key perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that currently surround the catechetical ministry. Throughout this report, we compare the current situation to that of U.S. diocesan offices in 1998 and 2003, as reported in two previous surveys of diocesan directors of religious education.[2]

Key Takeaways:

Some previous challenges identified by directors have been largely addressed. For instance, three-fourths of dioceses now have certification processes in place for catechists—the absence of these processes was the second most pressing concern identified by diocesan directors 10 years ago. Yet perennial challenges remain. For instance, downsizing of many diocesan offices continues. When such downsizing occurs in dioceses with declining numbers of parishes, it may seem unsurprising. However, downsizing is regularly occurring even in dioceses with growing numbers of parishes. Indeed, 39% of catechetical offices in such dioceses report a decrease in personnel over the past three to five years.

It is illuminating that people are seen as both the greatest strength and the greatest weakness within catechetical ministry. Catechists' dedication and commitment are reported as the ministry's greatest strength, whereas catechists' lack of training is identified as its greatest weakness. The development of certification processes has actually helped illustrate existing weaknesses and challenges in this area. Among diocesan offices with a certification process, only 43% of parish catechetical leaders, on average, are estimated to be currently certified. Whether this is a result of rapid turnover, newness of the certification processes coupled with the time it takes to become certified, or other reasons is not clear from our data. Regardless, our results usefully illuminate the primary importance of human resources for formation and highlight the basic challenge of attempting to improve catechesis with reduced staff. Finding sources of funding to maintain and increase the number of catechists at both parish and diocesan levels continues to be essential for improving catechetical outcomes.

When directors are asked what their first two actions would be upon receiving an immediate increase in their budget, their most common response, by far, is to increase office staff. The next most popular ideas for use of extra funds are upgrading technology and training catechists in the use of technology. This suggests that diocesan offices are interested in utilizing technologies to support and extend the reach of existing staff and to meet ongoing and increasing demands. Indeed, technology emerged as the most often mentioned opportunity within catechetical ministry. Pope Francis recently described the internet as a "gift from God." Building structures to link technological opportunities with positive catechetical outcomes is likely to be one of the more important strategic efforts of diocesan offices in coming years.

[1] National Directory for Catechesis, *pp. 246, 250.*

[2] *Throughout this report, we will reference the following two surveys of diocesan directors of religious education: Walters, T.P., Sinwell, J. P., & Walters, R. T. (1998) National profile of diocesan directors of religious education. Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association. Walters, T. & Walters, R. (2003) 2003 National profile of diocesan directors of religious education. Washington, D.C.: National Conference for Catechetical Leadership.*

Paths to Becoming a Diocesan Director
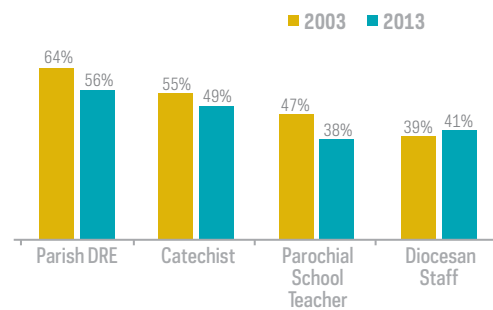
In our survey, we asked directors about their past positions and allowed them to indicate more than one previous position. While diocesan directors' previous work experiences encompass a wide variety of backgrounds, in 2013, as in 2003, serving as a parish director of religious education and/or as a catechist is the ministerial route that the majority of respondents followed in becoming a diocesan director, though those paths are becoming less common. In the previous study 64% of diocesan directors indicated that they had previously served as parish DREs, whereas in the present study, 56% said the same. We also find a drop in the percentage of diocesan directors who had previously been parochial school teachers from 47% in 2003 to 38% in 2013. In contrast, the percentage of diocesan directors who were previously diocesan staff members remained stable over the past ten years, slightly increasing from 39% in 2003 to 41% in the present study.

Beyond the most prevalent paths mentioned above, some directors previously worked as teachers or administrators in public schools, others worked in campus ministry or as administrators at parochial schools, and still others previously worked for faith-based non-profits. Among the 30% of respondents who did not fit into these categories, which were all asked about directly, were several directors indicating youth ministry backgrounds, and a number identifying as former seminary or university professors. Finally, some directors previously held other appointments or positions within their diocese (e.g., liturgical commission, vocations coordinator, youth ministry director, parish council office).

Gender
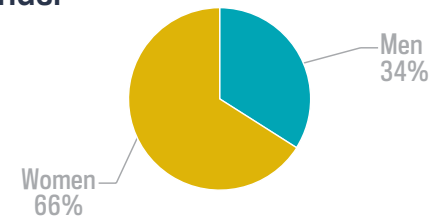
In 2013, 66% of diocesan directors are women and 34% are men. This represents a slight increase in women since 2003 (+3 percentage points) and since 1998 (+7 percentage points).

Race/Ethnicity
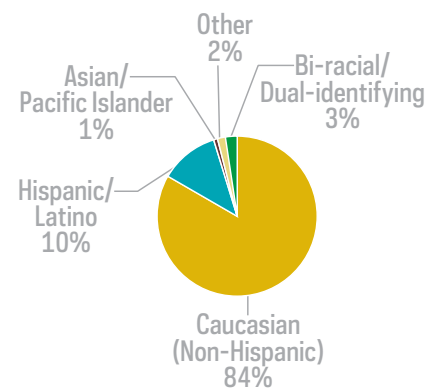
Diocesan directors' racial self-identifications have not altered dramatically from 1998 and 2003, with the vast majority of directors still identifying as solely Caucasian (non-Hispanic). In the current survey, however, several directors chose multiple racial and/or ethnic identifications. Consequently, the share of diocesan directors identifying as Hispanic or Latino (either solely or as a dual-identification) increased to 12%, from 9% in 2003. In all, 5% of directors identified two racial/ethnic designations or selected "other" in response to our initial query. These responses require us to recognize the increasing complexity of racial self-identification in the United States today.

Marital Status
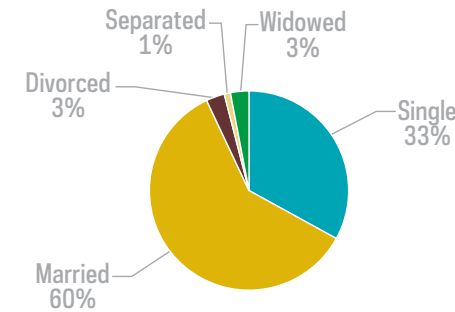
The percentage of married diocesan directors has increased over the years: it was 47% in 1998, 53% in 2003, and is now up to 60% in 2013. This shift is surely linked to the changing ecclesial status of directors.
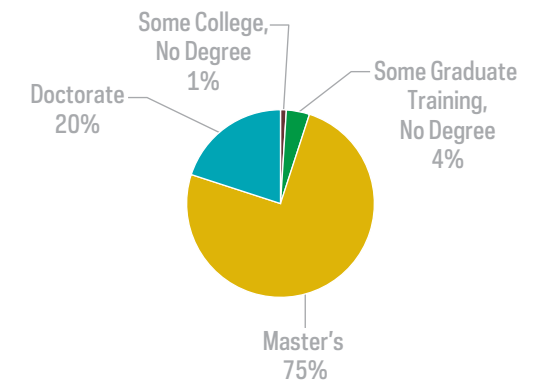
Ecclesial Status
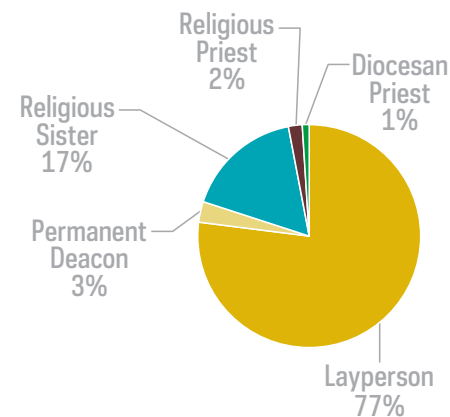
In 2013, 77% of diocesan directors are lay men and women. This is an increase from 1998 (60%) and 2003 (71%).
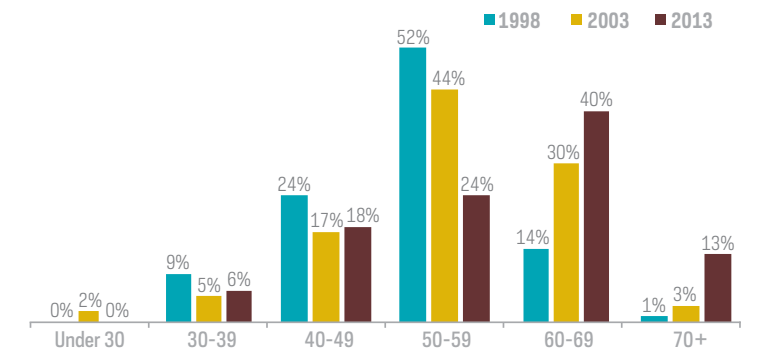
The percentage of diocesan directors belonging to religious orders (sisters and priests) is 19%, which is a decline from 1998, when a larger portion of directors (29%) were members of a religious community.

Educational Background

Diocesan directors are a highly educated group, with all but one respondent indicating some amount of graduate level training. Fully 95% of diocesan directors of religious education have a graduate degree: 75% have a master's degree and 20% a doctorate. The proportion of directors with doctoral degrees increased from 15% in 2003 to 20% in 2013.

Age Range

As a group, diocesan directors are aging. The percentage of diocesan directors age 60 years or older has increased from 33% in 2003 to 53% in 2013, with the median age for diocesan directors now standing at 60. In 1998, only 15% of diocesan directors were over 60 years of age. Today, 13% of directors are over 70 years of age. This suggests the potential for significant turnover among diocesan directors in the next five to 10 years simply as a result of retirement.

Number of Years in Current Position

Legend: ■ 2003 ■ 2013

Category	2003	2013
First year	15%	9%
2-3	13%	19%
4-5	18%	16%
6-8	14%	18%
9-11	13%	15%
12-15	15%	8%
16+	12%	16%
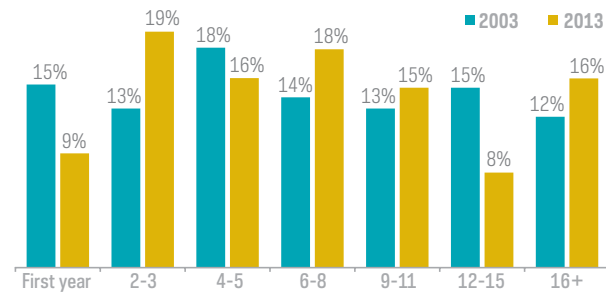
In both 2003 and 2013, more than half of diocesan directors of religious education have served in their position for six or more years (54% and 57% respectively).

Salaries

| Salary Range	%
$100,000 or more	5%
$90,000-$99,999	2%
$80,000-$89,999	9%
$70,000-$79,999	12%
$60,000-$69,999	22%
$50,000-$59,999	25%
$40,000-$49,999	16%
$30,000-$39,999	7%
Less than $30k	1%
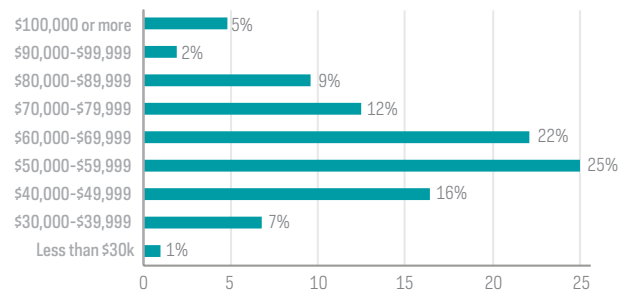
One hundred four diocesan directors (60%) reported their salaries. These salaries range from less than $25,000 to more than $100,000. The median salary is $60,000.

Benefits Received

Benefits	2003	2013
Paid Vacation	91%	94%
Medical Insurance	89%	91%
Retirement Plan	90%	84%
Sick Leave Plan	77%	81%
Dental Insurance	72%	77%
Paid Professional Memberships	79%	74%
Travel	70%	61%
Life Insurance	60%	59%

The preceding chart shows benefits received by at least 50% of diocesan directors in 2013. Though the percentage of directors receiving specific benefits has shifted, these are the same set of benefits that the majority of directors received in 2003.

Performance Evaluation and Written Contract

Year	%
1998	63%
2003	66%
2013	75%

% Who Do Have an Agreed Upon Process
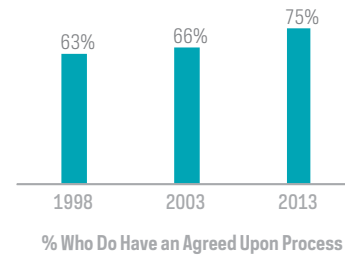
Job performance evaluation continues to be an important part of a diocesan director's professional life. While in 1998 and 2003 nearly two-thirds of the diocesan directors had an agreed-upon process for evaluating their performance (63% and 66% respectively), in 2013 the percentage grew with 75% reporting that they have a job performance evaluation process in place.

Close to three-fourths of directors (72%) do not have written contracts. Of those who do, more than half (55%) have no specified length of time, while 41% have one-year contracts, and the remaining 4% have multi-year contracts.

Network with Other Diocesan Directors

- Frequently 43%
- Seldom 7%
- Occasionally 50%
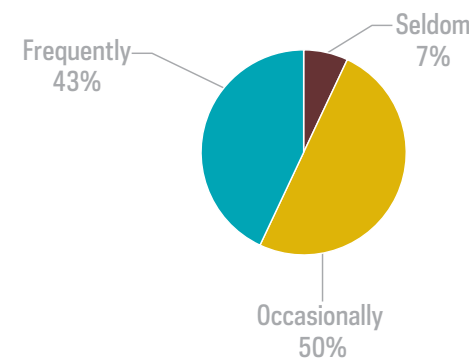
Diocesan directors interact with each other on a consistent basis, as 93% of diocesan directors report networking with their counterparts in other dioceses either frequently (43%) or occasionally (50%).
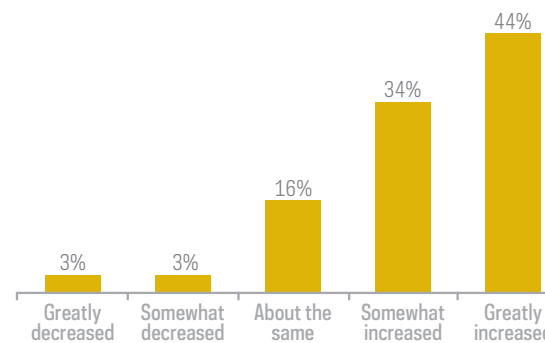
Areas of Responsibility

Diocesan directors are responsible for a wide variety of programming activities in their respective dioceses. At least 50% of diocesan directors indicate direct responsibility for the following areas:

Area	%
Catechist formation	99%
Parish grade school catechesis	98%
Parish junior high catechesis	93%
Parish sacramental programs	93%
Catechist certification	92%
Certification of catechetical leaders	91%
Parish pre-school catechesis	87%
Adult religious education	87%
Parish high school catechesis	85%
Special religious education	82%
Approval of parish catechetical textbooks	78%
Multi-cultural catechesis	67%
RCIA	62%
Certification of Catholic school religion teachers	61%
RCIC	58%
Retreats	51%

Job Responsibilities

| Category	%
Greatly decreased	3%
Somewhat decreased	3%
About the same	16%
Somewhat increased	34%
Greatly increased	44%

Over three-fourths of respondents report that the job responsibilities of diocesan staffs have "somewhat increased" (34%) or "greatly increased" (44%) in the past three to five years.

On a positive note, one respondent wrote that "While general responsibilities have increased, offices are finding ways to carry out those responsibilities more efficiently."

Staffing



- No Change 31%
- Downsized 47%
- Added Staff 22%
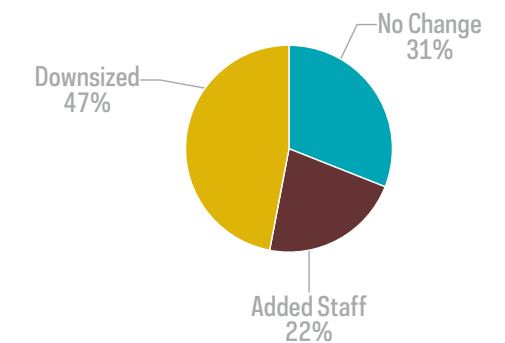
Almost half (47%) of diocesan offices of religious education experienced a reduction in staffing over the past three to five years. Thirty-one percent of the directors indicate that their office has experienced no change in staffing during this period.

While there are more dioceses where diocesan professional and support staff are being reduced to part-time or eliminated entirely, 22% of diocesan offices have been able to add staff. Hispanic ministry, evangelization, and support staff/administrative assistance are the main areas where staff growth has taken place.

Downsizing of staff is not limited to dioceses with declining numbers of parishes. Forty-seven percent of dioceses with shrinking numbers of parishes reported downsizing, but so did 39% of offices in growing dioceses. Furthermore, only 26% of offices in growing dioceses reported adding staff—so downsizing is occurring more often than upsizing even in expanding dioceses.

Adequacy of Staffing

Totally Inadequate 7%
More than Adequate 8%
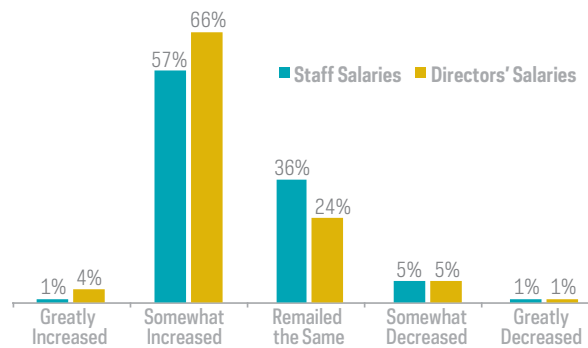**Adequate** 33%
Less than Adequate 52%
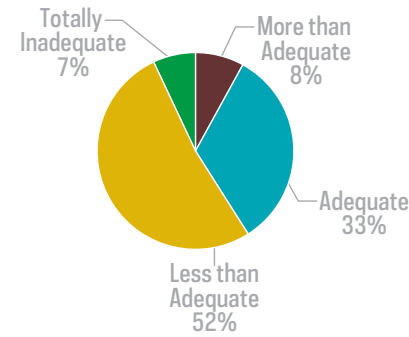
Forty-one percent of diocesan directors indicate that office staffing is adequate or more than adequate to fulfill their responsibilities, and 14% of diocesan directors anticipate adding staff over the next two years.

On the other hand, more than half of diocesan directors (59%) report that staffing is not adequate to fulfill their responsibilities and 3% anticipate further downsizing. A sizeable majority (59%) indicate they do not anticipate changing staff size over the next two years.
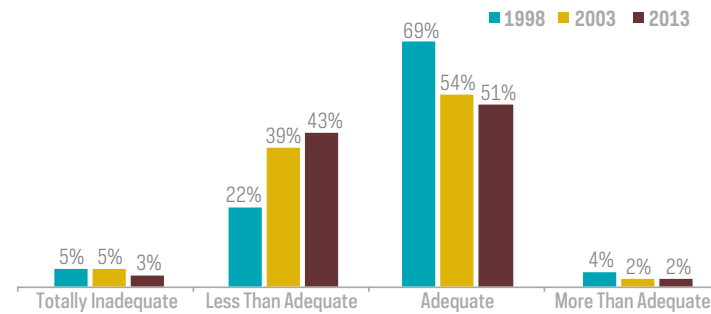
Some diocesan offices that experienced downsizing, reduced support staff, and/or increased office responsibilities indicate that they find themselves unable to adequately serve the outlying areas in their dioceses.

Diocesan Office Salaries

Staff Salaries **Directors' Salaries**

	Greatly Increased	Somewhat Increased	Remained the Same	Somewhat Decreased	Greatly Decreased
Staff	1%	57%	36%	5%	1%
Directors	4%	66%	24%	5%	1%

Overall salaries for both staff and directors have either remained the same (36% and 24% respectively) or increased (58%, 70%) over the past three to five years.

Adequacy of Budget for Funding Responsibilities

1998 **2003** **2013**

|	Totally Inadequate	Less Than Adequate	Adequate	More Than Adequate
1998	5%	22%	69%	4%
2003	5%	39%	54%	2%
2013	3%	43%	51%	2%

Over the years there has been a decline in the perceived adequacy of budgets for the funding of diocesan office responsibilities. Whereas 73% of directors considered budgets adequate or more than adequate in 1998, and, in 2003, 56% thought that to be the case, by 2013 only 53% of diocesan directors indicated that funding was "adequate" (51%) or "more than adequate" (2%).

We asked diocesan directors to tell us the first two things that they would do if their budgets were increased significantly. Their most common response, by far, was to increase office staff. Upgrading technology and training staff to use it were the next most popular responses. More and better use of technology could aid in providing more accessible catechist and catechetical leader training. Professional development for staff and parish catechetical leaders, including bringing in nationally recognized speakers for their formation, was another potential expenditure mentioned by several diocesan directors.

Change in Number of Parishes

Increased 17%
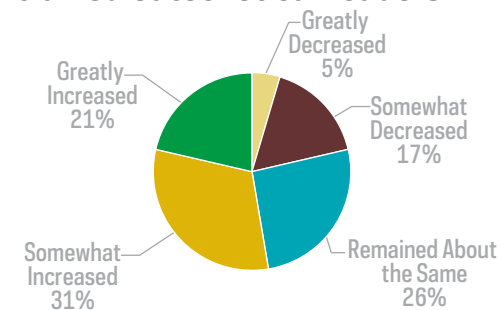**Decreased** 36%
Remained the Same 47%
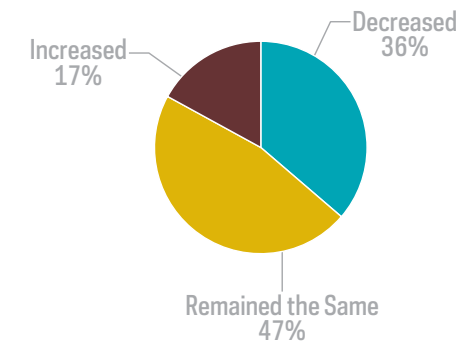
Almost half of all directors report that over the last three to five years the number of parishes in their diocese has remained the same. More than one-third (36%) experienced a decrease in their parish count. Only 17% report growth in numbers of parishes.

Impacted by Parish Consolidations


Yes 27%
No 73%
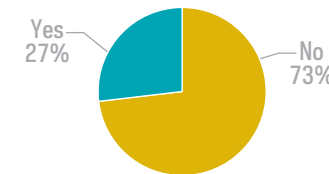
Just over one-fourth of diocesan directors indicate that in the past three to five years their offices have been impacted by parish consolidations. These directors report spending more of their time helping clustered parishes adjust to the new arrangement. An encouraging sign is their observation that consolidated parishes are re-examining their catechetical programs and are able to consolidate their resources to provide better catechetical leadership and programming.

Untrained Catechetical Leaders

Greatly Increased 21%
Greatly Decreased 5%
Somewhat Decreased 17%
Somewhat Increased 31%
Remained About the Same 26%

More than half of diocesan directors report that the percentage of untrained catechetical leaders has somewhat increased (31%) or greatly increased (21%) in recent years, while 26% report that the percentage of trained leaders has "remained about the same." Less than a quarter (22%) indicate a decrease in the percentage of untrained catechetical leaders.

Pastors' Interest in Catechetical Programs

Greatly Increased 4%
Greatly Decreased 2%
Somewhat Increased 33%
Somewhat Decreased 13%
**Remained About the Same** 48%
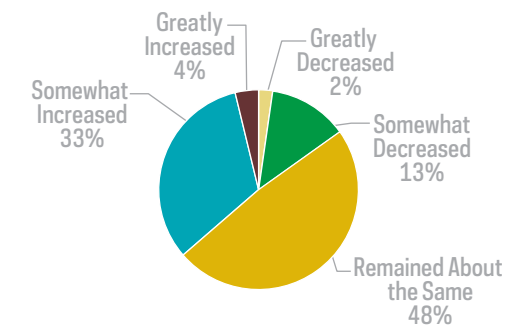
Almost one-half (48%) of diocesan directors believe that pastors' interest in parish catechetical programs has remained about the same over the past three to five years. At the same time a very encouraging sign is that over one-third think that pastors' interest has somewhat increased (33%) or greatly increased (4%), as compared to only 15% who believe it has decreased either somewhat (13%) or greatly (2%).

National Certification - Parish DREs and Parish Catechists

In the 1998 and 2003 surveys, the second most pressing professional concern of directors (indicated by 57% and 55% respectively) was "Certification of Catechetical Leaders." This concern has been addressed in many dioceses. Nearly three-fourths (74%) of responding dioceses in 2013 have a certification process for parish catechetical leaders.

Whether they believe there should be a national certification process is another matter. A slight majority (55%) of responding dioceses are in favor of a national

55% — for Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCLs)

37% — for Parish Catechists
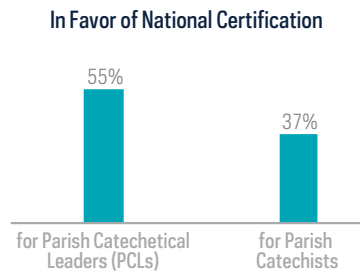
process for certifying parish catechetical leaders. Those who are in favor of such a process remark that it would promote professionalism and uniformity of expectations. The most prevalent concerns of those who oppose a national certification process are that many dioceses have their own processes already in place and that each diocese knows its own people best. They note, "One size doesn't fit all." Whether for or against the process, respondents cite economic issues and concerns about working with volunteers to be important considerations when addressing this issue.

National certification for parish catechists is favored by a little over one-third of the respondents (37%). They note that certification would bring uniformity and that such a process would have to be designed to be completed online. Almost two-thirds of the diocesan directors (63%) are not in favor of a national certification process for parish catechists. They suggest time requirements and costs would be prohibitive. They also point out that a number of dioceses have their own certification processes in place.

Interaction with Colleges and Universities

A large majority of diocesan directors say they collaborate with colleges and universities. They indicate that their collaboration comes in many forms, such as sitting on a college's board, helping with the planning of programs, providing scholarships for parish catechetical leaders (PCLs), and encouraging PCLs to pursue either undergraduate or graduate degrees.

Many diocesan directors note that they collaborate with their local college or university without naming a particular institution. However, a number did name programs that their catechists participate in. The programs most often referred to are: University of Dayton VLCFF, Loyola of New Orleans LIMEX, Notre Dame STEP, Boston College, and University of Dallas. Several dioceses are now working on developing a relationship with a college or university so that their catechetical leaders can pursue a certificate or degree in religious education. Online classes are the most frequently mentioned form of class delivery.

Formal Means for Assessing Effectiveness of Catechetical Programs

Yes 35% — No 65%
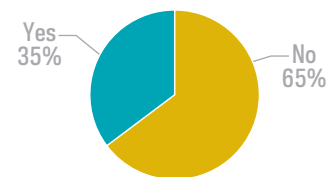
Almost two-thirds of dioceses have no formal means for assessing effectiveness. Of those that do have a means of assessment, by far the most popular evaluation tool is ACRE[3] from the National Catholic Educational Association. Many diocesan directors described less formal means of evaluation. A number include site visits and periodic gatherings with parish catechetical leaders as means of assessment.

[3]*Assessment of Children/Youth Religious Education (ACRE) is the National Catholic Educational Association's integrated approach to faith knowledge assessment (http://www.ncea.org/faith-education/acre-faq).*

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

As in the 2003 survey, diocesan directors were asked in 2013 to identify what they perceive as the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting the current activities and the future of the catechetical ministry in the United States. In each of the following sections, a comparison is made with the 2003 listing, and then the most often cited topics in 2013 are listed with a representative sampling of comments from the diocesan directors.

STRENGTHS

Whereas in 2003 the number-one strength mentioned was "Church documents, catechetical textbooks and resources like Echoes of Faith," in 2013 Church documents and other catechetical resources are seldom mentioned. The strengths most often mentioned in this survey were people: the parish catechetical leaders and catechists throughout the diocese. Strong diocesan offices, support of the local bishop, increase in Hispanic ministry, collaboration among various parish ministries, and growth in intergenerational catechesis followed.

1. **DEDICATION OF PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERS**

   "Strong commitment on the part of prepared parish catechetical leaders—very dedicated to the ministry"

   "Our PCLs are committed to providing quality formation in their parishes, and also to their own professional development."

   "The openness of leaders to on-going formation and participation in diocesan in-services/congresses"

2. **DEDICATION AND TRAINING OF CATECHISTS**

   "Formation process for catechists"

   "The strong dedication of catechists and Catholic school teachers and their passion for passing on the faith"

   "The hunger of the catechetical leaders and catechists to know more, learn more and be better"

3. **DIOCESAN OFFICE PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT OF PARISH LEADERS**

   "There is a great effort to certify DREs, catechists and Catholic school educators in the content of the Catechism of the Catholic Church so that they can authentically speak to what the Catholic Church teaches and help promote Catholic identity."

   "Solid curriculum standards that are followed by most parishes"

   "The partnership between our diocesan office and our parishes"

4. **SUPPORTIVE BISHOPS**

   "Our bishop believes that faith formation is important on all levels—children, youth, adults."

   "The support and vision of our bishop"

   "The support of a clear-minded, orthodox bishop who is willing to take steps to improve catechesis in the diocese"

5. **INCREASE IN HISPANIC MINISTRY**

   "The Hispanic population has stepped up to the plate and we now have more Hispanics in our programs than gringos."

   "The upcoming Spanish speaking CREs who are in the process of certification"

6. **COLLABORATION AMONG VARIOUS MINISTRIES WITHIN PARISHES**

   "An increase in collaborative efforts with Presbyteral council, meetings with priests and CLs in vicariates"

   "Collaboration—PCLs and youth ministers work together to meet needs."

   "Collaboration between the Department for Religious Education and the Office for the New Evangelization"

7. **GROWTH IN INTERGENERATIONAL CATECHESIS**

"The openness to family-based catechesis"

"There has been increased attention given to whole community catechesis."

"Parish offering opportunities for faith enrichment programs, etc. for our families"

WEAKNESSES

The lack of trained and qualified personnel—catechetical leaders and catechists—is seen by directors as the number-one weakness of the catechetical ministry in the 2013 survey, as it was in 2003. The second most important weakness in 2013 (third in 2003) is "the lack of adequate budget and resources." In 2003 a "lack of hierarchical/clerical support and appreciation" was noted as a weakness; however, in 2013 lack of support from priests (pastors in particular) was often mentioned, but lack of support from bishops was seldom noted.

1. **LACK OF TRAINED/QUALIFIED PERSONNEL**

   Catechists

   "Parish and school catechists recognizing the need for continuing formation"

   "Catechists still lacking fundamental formation"

   Catechetical leaders

   "Parish leadership that is not professionally prepared for catechetical ministry making decisions from an uninformed or misinformed perspective"

   "Pastors are looking for the cheapest way to do this ministry. They are looking for volunteers instead of paid professionals."

2. **LACK OF ADEQUATE BUDGET AND RESOURCES FOR COMPENSATION OF PERSONNEL, FOR PROGRAMS, FOR FORMATION/TRAINING**

   "Lack of resources in many parishes—for personnel, technology, and programming"

   "Lack of funds for various parish programs"

"Financially speaking there is no commitment to this ministry in parishes so our trained people are getting pushed out."

3. **INADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM PASTORS**

   "Widespread lack of support from all levels of the clergy (with notable exceptions) leading to a 'dumbing down' of PCL ministry in the replacement of qualified with less than qualified persons"

   "The lack of support of many pastors—their lack of compliance with approved textbooks or diocesan guidelines."

   "Each pastor has control of the hiring, etc. of CLs. No uniformity of salary, etc."

4. **LACK OF PARENTAL/FAMILY SUPPORT**

   "The adults are reluctant to be involved with their children's learning and living the faith. We have to do much more to motivate adults to make their homes a primary place for handing on the faith."

   "Lack of family support"

   "Lack of parental involvement in the sacraments and religion instruction"

5. **WEAK SUPPORT OF DIOCESAN LEADERSHIP**

   "A lack of staff at the diocesan level makes it difficult to adequately provide leadership and service in all areas of need."

   "Lack of structured accountability and standards"

   "Difficulty communicating with leaders of 147 parish catechetical programs, some of whom are very engaged in our overall effort, others of whom fly very much under the radar"

OPPORTUNITIES

Diocesan directors responded to this question from two perspectives: 1) What opportunities are presenting themselves now in your diocese? 2) What factors are lacking and therefore present opportunities for growth in your diocese?

There has been a noticeable change in what diocesan directors see as opportunities present now. Technology, which was number four in 2003, is in first place in 2013. "Collaboration with universities/colleges/institutes," "growth in number of young PCLs and youth ministers," and "support of bishop/new bishops and clergy" were not mentioned in 2003, but are numbers two, three and four, respectively, in 2013.

OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT NOW

1. **USE OF TECHNOLOGY, PARTICULARLY IN CATECHIST AND CATECHETICAL LEADER TRAINING**

   "The use of technology, such as webinars and Skype"

   "The Aquinas Program is partially funded by the diocese. Catechists can choose to go to a regional program…or they can engage in online courses."

   "Video conferencing workshops"

2. **COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITIES/ COLLEGES/INSTITUTES, PRESBYTERATES AND WITHIN DEANERIES**

   "University of Dayton's VLCFF and our Foundations program through collaboration with Saint Mary's University of Minnesota"

   "We have collaboration with the Congar Institute that offers us wonderful speakers to present study days and days of spiritual formation."

   "We have just partnered with My Catholic Faith Delivered to offer online classes for catechists."

3. **GROWTH IN NUMBER OF YOUNG PCLS AND YOUTH MINISTERS**

   "The training and formation of young adults to pursue a professional degree in catechetical ministry"

   "Young PCLs and youth ministers—first career ministers—entering positions within the archdiocese"

   "The diocesan lay ministry formation program"

4. **SUPPORT OF BISHOP/NEW BISHOPS AND CLERGY**

   "A dedication to improving catechetical ministry by our new bishop"

   "Meetings with priests and CLs in vicariates, both coming about thanks to the initiative of the local ordinary"

   "Permission of bishop to do a summit on catechesis focused on youth and young adults."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

1. **INCREASED TRAINING OF CATECHISTS AND CATECHETICAL LEADERS**

   "Most of our catechetical leaders and catechists are not certified."

   "We have few paid parish catechetical staff (DRE, YM, RCIA) and thus their formal background is not typically in theology/catechetics. The lay leadership needs to learn as they go."

   "Catechists still lacking fundamental formation"

2. **INCREASED PASTORAL SUPPORT**

   "Not all pastors understand or value the importance of the formation of their catechists and catechetical leaders."

   "Pastors with school see no reason to put money or effort into those in the parish program."

   "Lack of support from pastors to lead catechetical programming or encourage catechist certification"

3. **INCREASED FUNDING**

   "Lack of an adequate budget"

   "Pastors are underfunding their religious education program and hiring poorly formed PCLs. They are unwilling to spend money on their continuing formation."

   "Decreasing resources, especially money"

THREATS

Again in 2013 as in 2003, financial considerations are seen as the chief threat to the catechetical ministry. Diocesan directors emphasize the need for pastors who appreciate the catechetical ministry and consider their lack of support an important threat to the ministry. Apathy of parents and untrained catechetical personnel are also seen as threats to the ministry.

1. **FINANCES**
   Inadequate budgets on parish level

   "Major financial difficulties for many of our parishes"

   "Parish budgets and pastors who do not understand the role of catechetical formation in their parishes"

   "Reduced and falling budgets on both parish and diocesan levels"

   Lack of funding to support professional parish personnel

   "Not sufficient money in the parishes who are firing the full-time paid certified CLs for the uncertified volunteers"

   "Lack of sufficient funding on the parish level to justly pay qualified catechetical leaders"

   "Hollowing out of parish staffs due to lack of financial resources"

2. **PASTORS/PRIESTS**
   Lack of understanding of catechesis

   "Ambivalence of some pastors and those who are taking leadership know nothing about catechesis"

   "Newly ordained seem to have little interest and little understanding of needs of the folks"

   "Pastors who want to use the Baltimore Catechism or something similar"

   Lack of support of catechesis

   "The non-commitment of pastors to require ongoing training of their catechetical leaders"

   "Pastors appointing untrained people and not requiring any certification, particularly in the area of RCIA"

   "Lack of interest and support by some priests"

3. **APATHY**
   On part of parents

   "No willingness by Catholics to take the time to renew their faith and grow in that faith"

   "General apathy of a majority of parents and adults who do not take advantage of the opportunities offered"

   "Lack of parental involvement in the sacraments and religion instruction"

   On part of pastors/priests

   "Parishes in maintenance mode, no visionary, passionate leadership"

   On part of diocesan leadership

   "Lack of interest in catechesis on the part of diocesan leadership"

4. **UNTRAINED PERSONNEL**
   Parish catechetical leaders

   "Overseen by a person without any theology education or parish/school experience"

   "Lack of clear knowledge of doctrine, but mostly [of] how to assist children/youth/adults to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ"

   "Professional catechetical leaders being replaced with volunteers"

   Catechists

   "The idea that any warm body will do"

   "Lack of qualified teachers in our classrooms"

   "80% of the children in the diocese are being formed in programs where the leaders have little to no background."

5. **CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES**

   "I worry that catechesis is being more and more perceived as indoctrination as opposed to guiding Catholics to think theologically and to be formed as intentional disciples."

   "Various groups/movements who insist that theirs is the only answer, the only way. There should be room for healthy diversity and mutual respect."

   "The continued presence of a number of catechetical leaders and catechists (both in parishes and schools) who are not in line with the mind of the Church. This makes it difficult to move forward with a common vision."

In Conclusion

In this report, we presented the findings of our survey without much commentary. We tried to convey accurately what diocesan directors of religious education told us they experience in their professional lives and in their daily efforts to communicate effectively and joyfully the living mystery of faith. We've also consolidated their perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the catechetical ministry in their various dioceses. Together their perspectives provide a portrait of the catechetical ministry as it exists today. It is our hope that this composite picture of their thoughts and observations helps in moving the catechetical ministry forward in dioceses, parishes, and schools throughout the United States in coming years.