The American Parish: By the Numbers

Where They Were & Where They Went

Regional distribution of U.S. Catholics (as a percentage of total U.S. Catholic population)

1950
- Northeast: 46 percent
- Midwest: 30 percent
- South: 12 percent
- West: 12 percent

2017
- Northeast: 24 percent
- Midwest: 19 percent
- South: 32 percent
- West: 26 percent

Source:
CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate)
City Living

U.S. dioceses with the largest increase in Catholics (in thousands), 2008–2018

Duluth: +346.8
Fort Worth: +389.6
San Diego: +410.2
Sacramento: +470.8
Orange CA: +479.7
Atlanta: +500.0
San Bernardino: +500.5
Phoenix: +564.4
Galveston-Houston: +705.4
Fresno: +883.0

Detroit: -332.4
Miami: -291.9
Chicago: -161.0
Milwaukee: -137.4
Los Angeles: -136.8
Las Vegas: -116.0
Pittsburgh: -115.4
Hartford: -113.3
Honolulu: -101.8
Nashville: -98.4

U.S. dioceses with the largest decrease in Catholics (in thousands), 2008–2018

Source:
CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate)
THE AMERICAN PARISH: BY THE NUMBERS

Catholic marriages, 1970-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Marriages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>426,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>143,082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infant baptisms, 1970-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Baptisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,089,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>615,119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: CARA

There are 3 million African-American Catholics in the United States. Of Roman Catholic parishes in the U.S., 798 are considered to be predominantly African American.

About 76 percent of African-American Catholics are in diverse or shared parishes and 24 percent are in predominately African-American parishes.

25 percent of U.S. parishes intentionally serve Hispanic/Latinx Catholics.

Sources:
The Catholic Church: By the Numbers, USCCB Office of Media Relations (2012); CARA Report, Black Catholics in the United States (August 2019, updated January 2020)

Hispanic Ministry in Catholic Parishes: A Summary Report of Findings from the National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry
The Church Today

Race/ethnicity of U.S. Catholics

- **White**: 52.2 percent
- **Hispanic/Latinx (1st generation)**: 18 percent
- **Hispanic/Latinx (2nd generation)**: 12.8 percent
- **Hispanic/Latinx (3rd generation and higher)**: 9.4 percent
- **Asian/Native American/Other**: 4.6 percent
- **Black/African American**: 3 percent

Decades of Change

Average Catholic population per parish
- 1970: 2,628
- 2017: 4,039

Number of parishes without a resident priest pastor
- 1970: 571
- 2017: 3,363

Number of parishes in the U.S.
- 1970: 18,224
- 2017: 17,007

Source:
- V National Encuentro Research Team
- CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate)
THE AMERICAN PARISH: BY THE NUMBERS

Elements that Attract Parishioners to a Parish

- Its open, welcoming spirit: 68 percent
- The sense of belonging you feel there: 64 percent
- The quality of the preaching: 62 percent
- The quality of the liturgy: 60 percent

25 percent of the 17,000 U.S. parishes are operating at a financial deficit

30 percent of Catholics attend a parish other than the one closest to their home.

THE PARISH ISSUE OF COMMONWEAL has been supported in part by a grant from the William E. Simon Foundation. Individual articles were supported by Commonweal’s John Garvey Fund, and the Paul Sarviers Fund for Coverage of the Church’s Future. We are also grateful to Fr. Thomas Gaunt, SJ, and his colleagues at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate for their help assembling many of the data elements used throughout this issue. All illustrations by David Sankey.

SOURCE: Zech et al., Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century (Oxford University Press)