

# **NOTRE DAME STUDY OF CATHOLIC PARISH LIFE**

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## **Report No. 1**

### **THE U.S. PARISH TWENTY YEARS AFTER VATICAN II: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

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##### *Parish Life Since the Council*

The Second Vatican Council set in motion substantial reform or "updating" within Roman Catholic parishes in the United States. The Council itself focused on the broad questions of the nature, life and ministry of the Church, on ecclesial relations among the Christian communions and with other faith communities, and on the role of the Church in today's world. Its two principal documents, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*

*(Lumen Gentium)*, and the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, provide theological fundamentals and pastoral principles which have brought significant and continuing changes in the Catholic Church at all levels — global, regional and national, especially among dioceses and within parish communities.

Ten additional documents of Vatican II had a direct impact on the updating of parish life: on Liturgy, Laity, Bishops, Priests, Religious Life, Priestly Formation, Education, Communications, Missions, and Ecumenism.

A major and continuing fruit of the Council is that all these areas of communal and personal faith are increasingly open for self-reflection, prayer, critique and experiment at the local level, the neighborhood level and the parish. Above all, Vatican II has stimulated and enabled much greater participation and leadership of the laity.

Renewal, change and experiment within the 19,000 Catholic parishes serving 52 million Catholics in the U.S. have also been facilitated by collegial initiatives of the American Bishops, through their national and area conferences and within their 180 dioceses. The bishops have been aided in this historic ecclesial movement by the religious communities, and through the multiple national associations of clergy and laity, of educators, canonists and theologians, and by networks of liturgical, social and other ministries.

Where have the twenty years of reform taken the American Catholic parish? Is it a place where people find their God, where they join together in meaningful worship and prayer, where they satisfy their yearning to know God and serve their neighbors? What is the quality of leadership and the nature of participation? What ministries do parishes perform well and where do they come up short of peoples' needs and God's expectations?

The need for an overall study of Catholic parish life at this historic juncture in the American Church received strong impetus from the Vision Statement of the U.S. Bishops in 1980, "The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure" and from resulting programs and publications. Notable among these is *The Parish Self-Study Guide*, prepared by the Committee on the Parish of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) in 1982 (Publishing Office, U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC), Washington, 97 pages.) Simultaneously, several extensive services for parish study, renewal and leader formation have arisen sponsored by dioceses, religious societies, or educational bodies, as well as by professional agencies staffed often by lay specialists. Probably the most comprehensive and intensive effort to understand Catholic parishes two decades after Vatican II is the current Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life. This background paper introduces the Study and signals a series of forthcoming publications and conferences.

### ***Purpose, Procedure, and Phases: 1981-1988***

The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life is an interdisciplinary endeavor to understand better the American parish of the 1980s as a dynamic community. Many

elements of parish life are addressed: organization, staffing, leadership, priorities, and their interrelations; liturgies and sacramental preparation; programs and participation; beliefs, values, expectations, and practices; historical, ethnographic, sociological, and religious-cultural contexts. The Study is proceeding in three phases, 1981 to 1988.

*Phase I, 1981-1982: The Broad View*

To launch the Study a broad probe sought to discover how a comprehensive analysis of American parish life could be undertaken. Ten percent of the nation's 18,500 parishes (at that time) were mailed questionnaires asking about staffing, structure, composition, and programmatic life. Of the 1,850 parishes receiving this request, over 1,100 answered. The respondent for each parish was a pastor or a knowledgeable parish administrator. The 60% rate of usable responses exceeds by far usual levels of cooperation to questionnaires received by mail. It indicated that American parishes are open to being studied and to self-evaluation. These responses also provided preliminary data from which a deeper study could be designed for a smaller sample of carefully chosen parishes.

The results from Phase I suggested a rich mosaic of parish life. There have been substantial but uneven adaptations to the climate of change suggested by the Second Vatican Council. Parish viability was not necessarily related to the incorporation of specific changes. Clearly lay leadership was well begun within the pastoral ministries of the parish but the new mechanisms of governance had not yet clearly formed. Expectations of lay participation in liturgies were widespread but some of the forms — music, responses — left much to be desired.

American Catholic parishes differed greatly by region, by religious majority/minority status, by urban/ rural location, by ethnicity, by size, by structural complexity, and by dynamism of programs and loyalties. What the Study needed was not simply statistical tables summarizing the general findings for the country. Instead it needed to penetrate further into the dynamics of each type of parish.

The Phase I Study directors convened consultations with experts from appropriate disciplines, and more importantly, with persons in varying configurations of pastoral ministries at parish, diocesan, and national levels. These consultants advised on priorities for deeper study, on ways to develop appropriate samples of parishes and peoples, and on methods of data collection.

Phase I had incorporated the vision and ecclesial contacts of Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., president of the University of Notre Dame, and Msgr. John J. Egan, director of Notre Dame's Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry. They added to the team the wide experience and research understanding of Rev. Philip Murnion, former director of "The Parish Project" conducted under the Committee on the Parish of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops from 1977 to 1982, and the skills of Prof. Michael Welch of Notre Dame's Sociology Department.

Armed with the Phase I findings, Murnion and Egan assembled a Phase II research team and acquired major funding from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., which had already supported Phase I. (The Lilly Endowment has been a significant benefactor for the research and theological training efforts of America's religious organizations.)

*Phase II, 1983-1985: In-Depth Study Through Multiple Approaches*

The Parish Study combines in a unique manner several approaches to parish studies. Most previous research surveyed beliefs, attitudes and practices of parishioners. In a few cases parish structure in a single parish or a couple of parishes has been examined. But no study has of yet systematically investigated both basic areas in the context of liturgical practices, and historical developments across a wide variety of parishes.

The first unique quality of the current Notre Dame Study is that it combines analysis of parish structure, leadership and performance with study of parishioners' views and behavior. This is accomplished by surveys and interviews with parish leaders (pastor, paid staff, and volunteer lay leaders), together with scientific sample surveys of members of the same parish. The findings can be correlated in great detail via computer.

A second unique factor is the interdisciplinary character of the research: it involves sociology, history, liturgy, doctrine, and theology, together with organizational analysis, community power studies, and parishioners' beliefs, practices and communal faith experiences, both past and present.

A third significant element is that Phase II's in-depth study focuses on a sample of thirty-six parishes chosen as representative of the 1,100 parishes who responded to our preliminary questionnaires of Phase I. Based on the original findings, the U.S. Church was divided into six socio-cultural and ecclesial regions. From each of these regions six parishes were chosen as representative of that region, according to criteria of rural, small-town, suburban, and urban; size, composition, and organizational complexity; dynamism of activities, leadership and participation; and ethnic background.

Spanish-speaking parishes were not included because Hispanic Catholicism has such unique qualities that a scientific team, field researchers, computer encoders, and others who know Spanish and Hispanic religio-culture would have been needed. Also, Spanish copies of all survey materials would have been necessary. It is hoped that a specific study of Spanish-speaking parishes of the United States might be launched in the near future.

This complex sample design yields sufficient cases to generalize about each of the 36 parishes with a high degree of accuracy. But it also allows for valid comparison of different types of parishes. And through weighting procedures, it generates accurate and valid findings for all non-Hispanic Catholics in the United States *within their parishes*.

Previous national studies of Catholics have relied heavily on general sample surveys of the adult U.S. population. Or, local studies have addressed one or a handful of parishes.

This Study is based on surveys of parish membership lists, that is, people known to be Catholics within each sampled parish. Its results, then, will not be so accurate for inactive or apostate Catholics; however, they will be more accurate than previous national studies for the core Catholic population that each parish serves regularly. An important principle guiding the Study is that understanding Catholics is not merely an exercise in comparing percentages in national survey tables. It requires comparing Catholics *within the context* of their local parishes, for it is within parishes that we are baptized and come to learn about God, we marry and raise families, we enjoy friends and argue about programs, we offer our help or shirk our responsibilities, and we die.

A final significant element involves the many methods of data collection utilized during the investigative period from April 1983 to November 1984.

1. Two-person teams, composed of a liturgist and a social scientist, were assigned to each parish for on-site visits. Once recruited, these specialists, sixteen in number, came to Notre Dame for lengthy training sessions in September 1983.

2. Four separate questionnaires were elaborated and field tested: for pastors, paid professional staff, volunteer lay leaders, and parishioners. The number of pages in each instrument, respectively is 37, 38, 37, and 34; completion time ranged between two and four hours each. These were mailed to the thirty-six pastors and directly to 117 staff, 262 volunteer leaders, and 4,555 scientifically selected parishioners at their individual residences. (A pretest had shown that for this type of study, a mailout procedure was more reliable than using the parish as a distribution and collection point.) Volunteer leaders and staff were selected both for the important positions they occupy in the parish structure and for the influence over parish activities they were reputed to exert. Usable responses were encouraged by at least four direct contacts with each sampled individual and are exceptionally high for this type of research: pastors, 94%; paid staff, 76%; volunteer leaders, 77%; and ordinary parishioners, 59%.

3. Three other instruments were prepared for the onsite visits. These helped the liturgist and sociologist to describe the physical layout of the parish church and changes since 1964; to record observations of regular week-end Masses; and to interview decision-makers regarding liturgical planning, sacramental preparation, and guidance from diocesan or other local sources.

4. The field staff members were given guidelines not only for their interviews and observations but also for the collection of historical documents. Visits were made between October and December 1983 by the team, for an average of 7.5 specialist days in each parish. All field staff members have at least a master's degree in their specialties, and many hold the doctorate.

5. Ethnographic and historical accounts for each parish were prepared by the field staff. These were based on time samplings of bulletins and newsletters, school materials, jubilee volumes and other historical records, and interviews with knowledgeable parish leaders. They describe the parish influence structure, the parish's place in the life of the larger local community, and its most positive and negative features in the minds of knowledgeable local people.

6. At the same time a group of six historians, also holding doctorates, were trained to collect other materials for parish life histories in each U.S. region. Each has prepared a 120-150 page monograph on the history of Catholic parishes in their region. The monographs examine such areas as parish locales, size, ethnicity, role of laity, clerical leadership, organizational complexity and parish priorities, popular pieties, religious socialization and education, and ecumenical orientations.

The Program for Research on Religion, Church, and Society of the Center for the Study of Contemporary Society, has been responsible for Phase II of the Parish Study. Dr. David Leege, a political scientist and director of this research Center, exercises overall direction of Phase II, and heads its professional research team of three other specialists: Dr. Michael Welch, Associate Professor, Sociology Department; Dr. Jay Dolan, Director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, and Associate Professor, History Department; and Dr. Mark Searle, Associate Director of the Center for Pastoral Liturgy, 1979-1983, and now Director of Liturgical Studies, Theology Department. In addition to the sociological, liturgical, and historical field staffs, approximately forty Notre Dame graduate and undergraduate students, and religious and priests on sabbatical have been utilized as coders and data analysts.

Msgr. Egan, who is now director of the Office of Human Relations and Ecumenism, Archdiocese of Chicago, and Fr. Murnion, now director of the newly formed National Pastoral Life Center in New York City, remain as active consultants to the Phase II research team.

### *Phase III, 1984-1988: Pastoral Interpretation and Applications*

Msgr. Joseph Gremillion, who in 1983 succeeded Msgr. Egan as director of Notre Dame's Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry, now directs the pastoral interpretation phase of the Study in collaboration with Leege and Murnion. During the past year the three have worked together, in consultation with pastoral leaders around the country, to plan an agenda of analysis, communication, and feedback. A major concern has been the proper interface between research and pastoral interpretation so that Church leaders themselves will draw out the Study's many implications for policy at appropriate levels.

Results will be released and interpreted through a variety of mechanisms.

1. Over the next two years, approximately every two months a press notice and a background report of about a dozen pages will be released by the University of Notre

Dame's Office of Public Information. The reports will systematically present and interpret findings in the topical areas addressed by the Study. Reports typically will be prepared by Dr. Leege and Msgr. Gremillion with the help of other staff members and consultants. The reports are aimed at interested Church leaders as well as other publics.

2. A wide variety of scholarly papers, journal articles, dissertations, monographs, and books will appear over the next six years. Generally these will be written by the Phase II research staff and their students. They are directed to scientific and professional audiences in sociology, history, theology (both liturgical and pastoral), psychology, and political science. The six historical monographs prepared under Dr. Dolan's direction will be the first to be published. Following the initial phases of data analysis, the study directors intend to open their data archives to sociologists of religion, theologians, and historians located outside Notre Dame so that findings may enter the scholarly mainstream more rapidly.

3. Each parish that participated in the Study will receive a profile comparing the beliefs, expectations, and practices of its people with those of U.S. Catholics across all 36 parishes. The profiles may be helpful to each parish in planning its ministries as well as assisting neighboring parishes. These reports reflect the deep gratitude the Study directors feel to these parishes in opening themselves for serious study and in giving so much of their time for the overall quality of American parish life.

4. Perhaps the most important aspect of Phase III concerns the pastoral interpretation of findings. Msgr. Gremillion and Dr. Leege hope to avoid the usual syndrome of such studies where an expert says, "This is the way it is and the Church had better adjust." Instead we will try to disseminate information in a way that the Church at all levels can provide interpretation of its meaning and draw whatever conclusions are appropriate to its local parish purposes. Thus a large variety of conferences, symposia, and workshops are anticipated. While a small portion of the Lilly Endowment grant will initiate these efforts, many Catholic organizations, dioceses, and foundations will share in the responsibilities of data dissemination and pastoral interpretation.

A. The first major national conference will occur in Chicago in late May 1985 under the sponsorship and direction of FADICA, the association of Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, Inc., with headquarters in Washington, D.C. Similar to recent topical conferences FADICA has convened on vocations and applied research in the Church, this conference will draw implications from the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life for understanding the parish in post-Vatican II transition; changing patterns in leadership style, staffing, structure, and service; changing expectations of pastors; emerging patterns of worship and spirituality; and response to the educational and religious formation mission of the parish. Some of the presenters and panelists will be Study staff members but most will be drawn from the larger Church. FADICA will invite about 100 people including officials within its membership, key bishops and NCCB staff concerned with parish programs, and pastoral specialists from associations, seminaries, dioceses, and parishes. A report summarizing the conference will be published.

B. Following shorter sessions with the leadership of a larger archdiocese and a smaller diocese, a series of regional meetings will be hosted by major dioceses around the country during 1985 and 1986. While attention will again be focused on findings from the Study, interpretations will be offered primarily by people responsible for parish ministries.

C. From 1985 through 1988 numerous Catholic organizations will concentrate portions of their annual conventions, training workshops, reports, and publications on the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life. Those will include organizations concerned with parish leadership, liturgy, social ministry, retreats, priestly formation, education, and many functional ministries.

D. Still other methods for dissemination and pastoral interpretation are being explored. For example, based on its Study experience the research team is seeking ways to develop instruments and friendly computer software for local parish self-study. In the era of microcomputers and personal computers, many parishes are now acquiring technology that could be used for self-study and informed problem-solving, as well as parish censuses, payrolls, and tax reports. The use of video-cassettes and teleconferencing is also under study, since the University of Notre Dame has recently acquired technical means and production staff appropriate to these media.

### ***Topics and Areas of Future Reports***

As the bi-monthly reports are released over the next two years, readers can expect each of the following aspects of parish life to be addressed by one or more reports. Often the reports will offer "different lenses" i.e., contrast the views and approaches of pastors, staff, volunteer leaders, and ordinary parishioners. They will also examine regional, urban/rural, ethnic, and parish size differences.

1. Membership, participation, and activities — relationships in parish life, entry or departure, identification, family and ethnicity, activities beyond liturgies that attract participation, who is and isn't thought to be a Catholic.

2. Leadership — pastoral, staff, and lay leadership: selection, training, roles and styles, parish councils and parish governance, policy-making, pastor-staff-lay consensus and conflict, diocesan relations.

3. Liturgy and spirituality — planning and preparation, styles, participation, music, preaching, religious meaning in rite, liturgical content and pieties, Marian and family devotions, personal prayer life.

4. Parish as community — loyalty and attachment, community as sacrament, popular expectations for parish ministries, priorities, and staff capabilities, social and fraternal organizations, friendship patterns, smaller groups, alienation, communication and networks.



5. Parish and outside community — social ministry and social action, social and political issues, teaching authority of the church on economic and political affairs, culture and politics, ecumenical relations.

6. Religious education, formation, and beliefs — parish educational programs: schools, catechesis, youth, adult education; extra-parish religious education; doctrinal theology and operative theology, foundational religious beliefs, views of God, Jesus, Church, sacraments; views of change in the Church.

7. Budgets and finances — giving patterns and their causes; planning, policy-making and budget authority; financial management.

A standard format will be used for the entire series of reports. Directions for receiving these are given on the title page of this Report No. 1.

### ***Some Striking Features of American Parishes***

If a major purpose of Vatican II was to reinstate the sense that all Christians—lay, priests and religious—are responsible for the corporate life of the Church in the local parish, Vatican II is succeeding in the United States. The American Church is participatory not only in religious ritual but especially in shared responsibility for ministry. Even in ritual, people have noticed how much more active and expressive they are expected to be. Parish policy-making and governance patterns are not yet clearly demarcated but the effort to find parish governance mechanisms as effective or more effective than parish councils continues. The picture of a parish where Fr. O'Brien took care of God, Sr. Cerita ran the school, and the people met their Mass obligations and said "Hail Mary's" would be a woefully inadequate stereotype of U.S. Catholic parishes in the 1980s, if ever.

#### *Lay Responsibility for Ministries*

The first and most striking feature is that unpaid laypersons conduct many of the important ministries of the parish. The Study used three different types of techniques to identify the people in the parish who get things done. These techniques looked both at positions of influence and the people, not necessarily in these positions, who get things done. The Study also probed whether their influence was general or confined to certain areas such as liturgy, schools, religious education, finance, ministry to youth, elderly, etc. The results show that beyond the parish pastor, 83% of the leadership within Catholic parishes, paid or unpaid, are laypersons. Even among the paid staff with responsibilities for key programs, 57% are lay. Among the unpaid leadership who are responsible for central activities in the parish, 94% are lay.

Responsibility for ministries is clearly shared. In none of the parishes in the Phase II sample was leadership exerted by the pastor alone or the pastor in concert with religious

(sisters, brothers). In 36% of the parishes leadership was shared by pastor and laity with no involvement of religious. In 64% of the parishes leadership involved a combination of pastor, religious and lay. Even among the last, laypersons far outnumbered religious in the leadership group. The emerging ministerial teams of the U.S. Catholic parishes are heavily populated by the laity. In fact, in 10% of the parishes it is fair to say that a non-priest — a married deacon — or laypersons themselves are the central figures. The decline of church vocations and the limited supply of priests and sisters have certainly contributed to the changing patterns of responsibility for parish ministries. Into that vocation gap the laity have apparently stepped.

### *Parish Councils*

But lay responsibility does not necessarily bring with it policy control. The American bishops had encouraged the development of parish councils where the people of God — pastor and laity alike — would share governance in parish life. Based on our first sample of 1,100 parishes, we can say that 75% of the parishes currently have parish councils, 5% are forming them, and 7% once had them but they are now defunct. Usually council members are elected by the laity but most councils also include *ex officio* staff members. Several parishes are evolving other mechanisms for popular consultation such as parishioner assemblies, annual surveys, larger advisory councils to a smaller parish executive committee, etc. The issue is not the existence of parish councils but their effectiveness, i.e., whether they have much impact on policy and the shaping of ministries. Within the Phase I sample only slightly over 4% of the pastors identified the parish council as one of the five most important factors contributing to parish life.

The Phase II data suggest that while shared responsibility symbolized in parish councils is important, effective decision-making is either more centralized-in the pastor-or decentralized to the level of those laypersons and staff especially interested in a particular type of ministry or program. Conflict does not appear to be any more likely between pastor and council than between pastor and staff or staff and council. And generally people active in parish leadership feel so strongly about their parish-particularly if they "share its ownership"-that they find ways of resolving disputes amicably.

### *Loyalty to Parishes*

Despite all the talk about parish-shopping and parish-hopping, parish boundaries continue to orient the parish life of most U.S. Catholics. About 86% of American parishes are territorial and 10% are nationality parishes. About the same percentage of Catholics in our sample claim to attend the parish within whose territorial boundaries they live, while slightly under 15% cross boundaries in the selection of a parish. About 60% cite the territorial definition as the factor that "attracts" them to their parish; slightly under 20% claim that what attracts them is the quality of pastoral care and slightly over 10% refer to the friendliness of the people. About 6% refer to the style of worship and 4%, the quality of preaching. Only about 15% of the Phase II sample perceive major differences between the Catholic parishes in their locality.

Given these findings it is not surprising that about 1 out of every 15 of our respondents actually attend Mass regularly at a parish other than the one that lists them as a member. Another 45% are occasionally attending liturgies elsewhere and about 1 in 10 is doing it at least once a month. The most common reasons for attending elsewhere are convenience, travel, or visits to relatives or friends. Thus, even though there is considerable fluidity in attendance patterns-to the point where about 1 out of every 14 persons at a given parish's Sunday Mass are from another parish-nevertheless the notion of parish as neighborhood church remains dominant for American Catholics.

### *Parish Size*

Catholic parishes in the U.S. are very large and probably growing. Within our 1,100 parish sample, we find that a little over one third of all parishes serve 1,000 or fewer people, a little over one-fourth serve between 1,000 and 2,500 people, a little over one-fifth serve between 2,500 and 5,000 people, and the remainder serve well over 5,000 people. It comes as no surprise that many laypersons, not only priests and religious, conduct the ministries of these parishes, that some parishes experience difficulty developing social life and a sense of community, but that many activities are available for parishioners.

### *Lay Participation in Activities*

Besides Mass in what ways do Catholics participate in their parishes? The second striking feature about lay participation is that so many do participate and they do so in a wide variety of liturgically and religiously significant ways. Almost half of the respondents in our Phase II sample are participating in one or more parish activities beyond Mass. While social and charitable activities- bake sales, bazaars, women's societies-attract about 18% of our respondents, and fraternal activities - Knights of Columbus, etc.-attract about 7%, the real changes have come in other activities. Fully 24% of our sample are involved in spiritual renewal programs or prayer groups, studying the Bible in their parish or in outside groups, or instructing the catechumenate. Lay Catholics are visible in liturgies: 4% of our sample are eucharistic ministers, 3% are lectors, 3% are choir members. Finally 5% are serving on parish councils or equivalent parish governance mechanisms.

For many Catholics, religious practices in the parish cannot be likened to pulling up to a service station on a Sunday and gassing up with holiness. Religion involves a sustained effort to serve and learn. Gone are the days when learning was left to the abbey and serving was left to the priests and sisters. They are sufficiently satisfied with the parish's program and their involvement in it that over 85% of our respondents feel their parish meets their spiritual needs well.

### *The Parish as Social Community*

Whether contemporary American parishes are meaningful social communities is another matter. Within our 36 parish sample, over half feel their parish has a strong sense of community, but nearly half do not feel very attached to their parish. 75% would not feel very upset about the prospect of leaving their parish. Despite the larger proportion who feel the parish meets their spiritual needs well, 45% claim that it fails to meet their social needs very well. While nearly half have frequent conversations with fellow parishioners, about 1 in 3 do not list any of their five closest friends as being from their own parish.

Parishes differ a lot on these attachment measures. Those in the heavily Catholic areas of the country seem to generate less attachment than those where Catholics are in a minority. Regardless of majority/minority status, Catholics in suburban parishes report feeling far less attached to their parishes than do Catholics in rural areas, inner cities, and small towns respectively. The suburbanites have fewer "closest friends" from their own parishes and report fewer conversations with fellow parishioners. Suburban Catholics feel their parishes are slightly less likely to meet their spiritual needs and substantially less likely to meet their social needs than do Catholics in other types of parishes. Curiously the suburban Catholics do not express any strong desire for improving the social life in their parishes; rather it is Catholics in the smaller towns who think their parish should direct considerably more attention to its social life. Apparently parish size and the functionally specialized nature of suburban life have their effects on Catholic community values.

### *Changes Since Vatican II*

Change has been a way of life in Catholic parishes in the last two decades. Nine out of every ten parishioners in our sample have noticed one or more changes in their parish since they came to it-and a quarter of them have been in their current parish less than a half dozen years. Changes they mention usually have to do with liturgy or the role of laypersons. For example, 20% make general references to liturgical change, 21% specifically name increased congregational participation in responses and singing, 20% note lay participation as communion ministers, 14% refer to the change from Latin to English and 13% notice lay persons as lectors.

With regard to lay leadership, 18% cite increased expectations generally; 10% refer to specific leadership obligations on councils and ministries; and 5% notice more organizational activity. 13% refer to a change in pastoral leadership as something significant in the parish, usually signaling changes in liturgy and/or lay involvement. Only 3% notice racial changes and 4% refer to ethnic assimilation. More than three-fourths of the people expect change to continue and they usually cite increased responsibility of the laity as the change that will accelerate.

### *Liturgy Changes*

Opposition to liturgical changes is not great now, but when it is mentioned it has a touch of uneasiness about what laypersons should be doing: 20% feel uneasy about women communion ministers, 17% don't like lay communion ministers, and 15% don't like

the communion cup. (For another 25% the cup is not offered in their parish). Prayers, ritual, and readings in their parish liturgies generally get high marks; homilies are viewed more positively than negatively; 94% are pleased that hymnsinging has been added but 34% feel the music generally needs to be improved and 40% cite singing as most in need of improvement.

It is striking, we think, that such a high proportion of our sample cite increased expectations that they participate in responses and singing as the change that sticks out in their minds, that nearly all of them welcome hymnsinging, but such a high proportion feel that their parish does it poorly or feel ill-equipped to participate. Finding ways to teach and involve the great body of parishioners meaningfully in liturgical musical expression is a great unmet need of the American Catholic church of the 1980s. Other areas of liturgical change, on the other hand, have progressed well.

### *Skilled Services and Social Issues*

Catholics in our sample parishes generally seek ministerial programs that serve themselves or their families, although there are some signs of awakening to larger community issues of social service, justice, and peace. They turn to the parish for spiritual guidance, religious education for both self and children, premarital counseling, and to a surprisingly lesser extent, comfort in sickness and death, and occasional marital assistance. If the parish were to offer skilled services they would like to turn to it for psychological, family, and health counseling of all kinds, especially for help with alcohol dependency, (nearly 50% claim there is a need for skilled parish help in this area) and for problems brought on by lack of money or unemployment. They worry about inadequate religious education for teens, preteens, and to some extent adults, about insufficient efforts on evangelism and conversions, and about limited help for poor people within the parish.

Over half see the parish as a good outlet for their need to serve others but about 15% want more opportunities to serve. About 15% don't attach any priority to poverty outside the parish, ecumenism, economic reform, or political activism, but over twice that number, particularly in areas where the Catholic church is in the minority or where the parish is predominately Black, feel their parish should give greater priority to these matters. Ecumenism is an especially high priority of parishioners in smaller towns. Parish involvement in economic reform is a lower priority in suburban and rural areas.

The political viewpoints of Catholics vary greatly, and it is no surprise that Catholics respond differently to the authority of church social teachings depending on their personal views on specific issues. Future reports from the Study will examine the reactions to Church guidance on disarmament, the economy, sexuality, etc., as a function of individual Catholics' most deeply held beliefs about the nature of God and humankind, personal political ideology, and public policy options.

### *Diversity Among Parishes*

What is readily apparent from the study is that on all aspects of parish life and its consequences for the religious and social behavior of its members, American Catholic parishes differ considerably by region of the country, urban-rural locale, ethnic traditions and other historical factors. It is one Church but there are many manifestations of it on the American continent. Sometimes those factors have led to the embrace of post-Vatican II changes; some have closed the door on further change. Sometimes the response to Vatican II is precisely what has given new life to a parish; sometimes it is the factor that has torn the parish asunder. And for still others, beyond the change to English and the celebration of the Eucharist with priest facing people, Vatican II never really happened — and they are doing quite well, thank you.

*The richness of this mosaic — the American Catholic parish — will be the subject of these reports for months and years to come. We hope to untangle what it looks like in the 1980s, where and why it succeeds, where and why it fails. As human beings stumble and falter toward a loving God, so the American parishes try to adapt their many traditions to further our individual and collective journeys.*

#### STAFF SUMMARIES

DR. DAVID C. LEEGE is senior research director for the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life. A political scientist and consultant to governments and universities, Leege is professor of Government, director of the Program for Research on Religion, Church and Society, and primarily, director of the Center for the Study of Contemporary Society at the University of Notre Dame. Leege offers a wide range of publications including religion and politics, research methods and measurement, voting behavior, and higher education administration and policy. Active in church affairs, Leege has served on several church commissions on ecumenism, social ethics, research and planning.

MSGR. JOSEPH GREMILLION is director of Notre Dame's Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry since July 1983, and directs Phase III of the Parish Study. While pastor in his native Diocese of Alexandria-Shreveport, he published *The Journal of a Southern Pastor* (Fides 1957) and wrote his master's degree thesis on "The Parish as a Natural Community." Other books include *The Gospel of Peace and Justice* and *Food, Energy, and the Major Faiths*, both by Orbis, 1976 and 1978. Gremillion served as Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, Vatican City, 1967-1974; and as Director for Socio-Economic Development, Catholic Relief Services- USCC, New York, 1960-1967

DR. JAY R DOLAN, assistant director for historical studies on the Parish Study, is associate professor of History at the University of Notre Dame and directs the Charles and Margaret Hall Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism. One of his principal areas of research is the history of Roman Catholic parish in the United States and he has written two books which deal with this topic during the era of the immigrant church.

MSGR. JOHN J. EGAN, as director of the Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry 1976-1983, played a major role in initiating the Parish Study. A nationally known priest and social action leader, Egan now directs the Office for Community Relations and Ecumenism in his native Archdiocese of Chicago. Earlier in that Archdiocese he initiated a number of outstanding programs, ranging from family life to neighborhood organization.

REV. PHILIP MURNION is director of the Pastoral Life Conference, the office for continuing education of the clergy, archdiocese of New York. He also directs the National Pastoral Life Center, recently established to offer pastoral ministry and leadership services in all areas. Murnion directed the Parish Project of the NCCB, 1978-1982, and his publications include: *The Priest and the Changing Structure of Pastoral Ministry in New York, 1920-1970* (Arno, 1979), *Parish Life in The United States* (USCC, 1983), *Parish Self-Study Guide* (USCC, 1982), and *Catholics and Nuclear War* (Crossroads, 1983). Murnion directed Phase I of the Parish Study and is an active collaborator on Phases II and III.

DR. MARK R. SEARLE, assistant director for liturgical studies on the Parish Study, is an associate professor of Theology and coordinator of the Graduate Program in Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He is past president of the North American Academy of Liturgy and was formerly associate director of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy. His research interests focus upon interdisciplinary approaches to the study of liturgical practice.

DR. MICHAEL R. WELCH, assistant director for social and organizational studies on the Parish Study, is an associate professor of Sociology at Notre Dame. He has published numerous articles in journals such as *Social Forces*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Review of Religious Research*, and other social science journals. He recently served as program chair for the 1984 Annual Meeting of the Religious Research Association.