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

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

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

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

Source: V National Encuentro Research Team

Decades of Change

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<tr>
<th>Average Catholic population per parish</th>
<th>Number of parishes without a resident priest pastor</th>
<th>Number of parishes in the U.S.</th>
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<td>2,628 4,039 17,000 18,224 18,000 17,500 17,000 16,500</td>
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Source: CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate)
**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.

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All illustrations by David Sankey.

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