

# Changes in the Nature and Practice of Leadership and Ministry in American Catholic Parishes

David DeLambo

I've been asked to talk to you about the current states of **parishes** in the United States. Lucky for me, this is a topic I know something about. As a pastoral planner for the Diocese of Cleveland, my job is to track trends in parish life, and as a researcher I keep my finger on the pulse of the latest trends.

What I want to share with you today are three interrelated trends that are changing the nature and practice of leadership and ministry in **American parishes**: intentionality, complexity and vitality.

Other trends, like the increasing cultural diversity of **American parishes** and the lower rates of participation among younger Catholic generations I will leave to Brett Hoover, who tomorrow will be covering these topics in his presentation on the **future** of U.S. Catholic **parishes**.

In describing the reality of **parishes** today, I wish to proceed humbly, knowing that the complexity of parish life and the particularity of parish experience cannot be captured in graphs, data and anecdotes and most certainly not in the time allotted here. The best I can do is provide you with some general, broad-stroke trends based on my knowledge and experience.

## INTENTIONALITY

Let me begin by talking about intentionality. Over the years I've had the opportunity to conduct three national surveys of parish life with the National Pastoral Life Center in

Manhattan: the first in 1990, the second in 1997 and the third in 2005. Since each study was largely a replication of the first, we were able to collect comparable data over a 15-year period.(1)

One trend which surprised us was the degree to which **parishes** are becoming more intentional, organized and participative in their consultation and ministries. Intentionality is a defining characteristic of Catholic life in the United States.

We see this movement toward intentionality through a number of indicators, specifically the increasing use of mission statements, parish pastoral councils and pastoral planning by **parishes** as well as the broadening of consultation with the laity in the exercise of parish leadership.

These indicators of intentionality are also signs that clergy and laity are increasingly sharing responsibility for the mission and ministry of the parish.

Consider the use of mission statements, which are broad statements of the overall direction and purpose of the parish and are helpful in prioritizing pastoral activity and setting goals. In 1990 about one-third (29 percent) of **parishes** had mission statements; by 1997 it was about half (50 percent); and by 2005 it was more than three-quarters (78 percent).

This suggests that parish leaders are being proactive in articulating specific ministry priorities for their **parishes**. While some may question the importance of parish mission statements in the lived experience and practice of parish life, what is undeniable is that more **parishes** have them now than at any other time, and that having a mission statement is a sign of intentionality.



So is long-range planning. By 2005 three-fourths of **parishes** (74 percent) engaged in long-range planning, where only about half (53 percent) did in 1997. Long-range planning - the formulation of goals, objectives and action steps to advance the mission of the parish - is the quintessential indicator of intentionality in parish life.

This emphasis on planning can be directly linked to the shortage of priests and the merging, twinning and clustering of **parishes**. As a follow-up to the planning question, we asked **parishes** in 2005 whether their plans included sharing staff, resources or programs with other Catholic **parishes**. Better than half (56 percent) said yes.

Accompanying the growth in planning is a rise in the number of parish pastoral councils - often the primary agents in parish planning. Though we didn't ask about parish councils in 1990, we found that 92 percent of **parishes** had councils in 2005. Not only do more **parishes** have pastoral councils now than at any other time, some even have multiple forms of councils: one for their parish and one for their cluster. This is a relatively new practice that bears watching.

When asked the primary function of their pastoral councils, four in 10 (42 percent) said pastoral planning. Another 33 percent said consultation and feedback on parish pastoral activities. Add the two together and we find that 75 percent of councils are involved in some form of planning, whether directly through leading the planning or indirectly through providing consultation and feedback on staff initiatives. Clearly, parish pastoral councils are the primary vehicle for the exercise of intentionality in **parishes**.

Another vehicle of intentionality is consultation with parishioners at large when setting pastoral directions and priorities. We provided **parishes** with a list of ways parishioners could be consulted and asked them to indicate how they are consulted in their parish. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1

## Method Most Used for Consultation

Method	Percent
Consult pastoral council	77%
Parish survey	52%
Town hall meeting	40%
Parish leadership assembly	36%
Program evaluations	29%
Personal interviews	22%
Website or Internet	17%
Focus groups	10%
Other	7%

Clearly, consultation comes primarily through parish pastoral councils. Yet better than half of **parishes** (52 percent) conduct surveys, and four in 10 (40 percent) hold town hall meetings. A third (36 percent) gather parish leaders to solicit input, and a quarter conduct program evaluations. And the list continues. In most cases **parishes** employ multiple methods of parishioner consultation. The data clearly show that there is a great deal of collaboration and consultation taking place in **parishes**.

In sum, intentionality in ministry has been growing steadily over time and manifests itself in the practice of planning and consultation. As we shall see when we look at the trends toward complexity and vitality, there are a number of driving forces calling for greater intentionality in ministry.

## COMPLEXITY

The experience of parish that is evolving is fundamentally different and more complex than what we have experienced in the past. Here I want to talk about two factors leading to complexity - larger **parishes** and multiple parish staffing - and show how intentionality is in part a response to complexity.

### Larger **Parishes**

Large **parishes** are becoming normative in the United States due to fewer priests and the need to consolidate **parishes** as a result of this fact.

A recent study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate(2) shows that the number of diocesan priests in active ministry declined 35 percent over the last 25 years and is expected to decline an additional 35 percent over the next 25.

Currently, there are roughly 19,000 diocesan priests in active ministry. That's about 1.05 active diocesan priests per parish in the United States; by 2035 it will be 0.84 active priests per parish. If priests were distributed equitably across the United States, today's ratio of 1.05 active priests per parish would not be so challenging. But that is not the case. Nearly two-thirds of dioceses have fewer active diocesan priests than **parishes**.

The reason for the sharp decline in the number of priests is the age structure of the presbyterate. The average age of a diocesan priest is 62 and, according to CARA, half plan on retiring in the next decade. As a point of comparison, the average age of a diocesan priest in 1985 was 51; in 1970, it was 34.

We average about 450-500 ordinations per year in the United States. Therefore, new ordinations can in no way replace the number of priests we lose on an annual basis.

Through a combination of mergers and closures, the United States has experienced a net decline of more than 1,200 **parishes** in the last decade - roughly 7 percent. Seven dioceses have lost 50 or more **parishes** during this time period, including my own.

The number of **parishes** in the United States had been increasing annually from Colonial times through the 1990s, reaching its peak in 1997 at 19,331 **parishes**. Since 1997 we have experienced a steady decline. Today we have 17,958 **parishes** and are quickly approaching the number of **parishes** we had prior to the Second Vatican Council.

As one might expect, when **parishes** close, it is typically the smaller **parishes** that are closed.

When **parishes** merge, it is typically smaller **parishes** that come together to form larger ones. These two practices have led to a shift in the distribution of **parishes** according to size in the United States. (See Figure 2.)[Graph not reproducible in this format, ed.]

This chart shows the distribution of **parishes** by registered households in 2000 and 2010. The category breakdowns ("family," "pastoral," "program" and "megaparishes"), with their corresponding number of households, are not arbitrary. They were developed by Francis Kelly Sheets and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, and correspond with particular parish traits.(3) More on this in a minute.

Notice that in the year 2000 the distribution of **parishes** across size categories is nearly identical, each containing between 24 and 26 percent of all **parishes**. But 10 years later, we see a dramatic change. The number of "family **parishes**" **parishes** with 200 or fewer households drops from 25 percent to 15 percent at the same time that the number of "megaparishes" with over 1,200 households increases from 24 percent to 33 percent.

In my diocese (the Diocese of Cleveland), only 2 percent of **parishes** are family **parishes** with fewer than 200 households; 55 percent are megaparishes. You may ask why this is important. As stated earlier, parish size is directly related to organizational complexity. To illustrate this point, let's take a closer look at the two parish-size categories that are shrinking and growing the most: family **parishes** and megaparishes. What I am about to describe are generalizations about parish types based on Sheet's research. See how they compare with your experience.

Family **parishes** (i.e., **parishes** with 200 or fewer households), says Sheets, require a minimal amount of administrative and relational skills on the part of the pastor. Operating budgets are small (a little over \$100,000). Staff requirements are small as well; a part-time secretary is usually the only paid position. Additional administrative and maintenance work is performed by volunteers.

The number of programs operating in a family parish is minimal. Liturgy is typically coordinated by a volunteer organist or pianist who plays and leads the singing. Parish vitality manifests itself at an occasional gathering after Mass. Most operating norms are not written down but reside in the mind of the pastor. As the term family suggests, a strong sense of community is a given in these settings. Now contrast family **parishes** with megaparishes (i.e., over 1,200 registered households). Megaparishes, says Sheets, require a pastor to have well-honed administrative and relational skills. They tend to have operating budgets between \$850,000 and \$1.6 million. Staff requirements are extensive and usually include a pastor, perhaps a parochial vicar and a large pastoral staff of five or more in addition to numerous administrative and maintenance staff - all paid. Having a large, paid staff, the pastor now assumes the role of employer - interviewing, recruiting, hiring and evaluating staff, designing job descriptions and employment contracts - in essence, ordering the ministry of the parish. This is not an issue in family **parishes**, which have little, if any paid staff aside from the pastor. You might say that with megaparishes, the responsibility for staffing **parishes** (aside from priests and deacons) has moved appreciably away from the diocese and the bishop in the direction of the parish and the pastor. This is a key new reality in parish life. The administration of a megaparish is often akin to a large corporation. The pastor is somewhat like a CEO, assisted by "department directors" (i.e., lay ecclesial ministers or deacons) who oversee particular areas of ministry. Megaparishes tend to bustle with activity, sponsoring 40 or more programs to meet the extensive needs of the parish. Decisions are complex, requiring the pastor to work with and through his department heads. The parish pastoral council is responsible for strategic planning and consultation, listening to the broader parish and establishing goals to correlate with the parish mission statement.

Norms are found in policy manuals, since the large number of programs cannot work with unspoken policies.

A particular challenge is creating community and ministerial engagement in a parish of this size. Attempts to create intimacy and relationships through the use of small-group programs (like Christ Renews His Parish or Renew) or movements (like Cursillo) produce limited success.

As one might imagine, moving from a smaller to a larger parish setting requires a very different skill set. A pastor who is successful in a smaller setting may be quite ineffective in a larger one. The keys to success are organization, consultation and planning. In short: intentionality in ministry.

As an aside, I put in this slide of the responsibilities of the senior pastoral staff at my parish, which happens to fit the description of a megaparish. Each staff person acts as a division director overseeing particular areas of parish life. The parish also has:

- 2,878 registered households.
- 10,493 registered parishioners.
- \$1.6 million budget.
- 30+ paid employees.
- 80+ ministries (not all listed here).
- No school.

#### Multiple-Parish Staffing

We have seen how size influences complexity, now let us turn our attention to how multiple-parish staffing leads to greater complexity. One of the significant changes in leadership in **American parishes** is the need for priests to pastor multiple **parishes**. A recent book by Sister Katarina Schuth, OSF,(4) reports that 20 percent of active priests serving in parish ministry (in 2005) had multiple-parish assignments. That's one in five! What's more, the percentage of **parishes** (in 2005) being served by a priest with more than one parish stood at 44 percent.

As a pastor soon finds when placed in a multiple-parish pastoring situation, each parish has its own culture, that is, its own history, traditions, religious practices, operating norms

and celebrations. Each works off a different set of assumptions about how resources are allocated, decisions are made and administrative practices are handled.

Who can write checks? Who holds keys to the parish? Who has a budget? Pastors must understand the assumptions and practices of each setting and learn how to operate in each setting. Standardization of practices is ideal but may take time and meet with resistance.

Appeals to tradition - "we have always done it this way" - abound.

In addition to navigating multiple cultures, the pastor is saddled with multiple consultative groups - that is, multiple parish pastoral councils and finance councils. This may mean multiple sets of meetings in different locales and double the work. Time management is a skill these pastors must cultivate.

I know of a pastor who has been creative in addressing the logistics of multiple meetings by scheduling them all on the same night at the same time in the same location and roaming back and forth between them. It is not ideal, but it works for him. Bringing the multiple parish councils together into one consultative body might be ideal from the pastor's perspective but may take time to develop the requisite relational capacity between the groups to work together effectively.

Another challenge is where the pastor resides among the multiple parish sites. The site where the pastor resides assumes a place of prominence in the minds of parishioners. Parishioners from this site are seen as having greater access to the pastor and subsequently greater influence over pastoral decisions. Those from the other sites feel more vulnerable to closing or consolidation in the **future**. The pastor must go above and beyond to demonstrate his care and devotion to the nonresidential sites - an effort which often proves futile

There is a myriad of issues that must be negotiated carefully in a multiple-parish staffing

situation - more numerous than we can explore here. The point is that with multiple-parish pastoring, as with larger **parishes**, comes greater organizational complexity and a whole new set of pastoral challenges. Greater planning, coordination and attention to relationships are demanded.

## VITALITY

The third and final trend shaping the **American** church is the quest for greater vitality in parish life and ministry. This quest is the impetus behind most parish planning processes and includes the search for best practices and benchmarks for pastoral excellence.

Prior to coming to Germany, I attended a workshop titled "Affirming, Welcoming and Engaging People Into Parish Life." It attracted a huge turnout - well over 350 people. It was the largest turnout for a workshop I'd ever seen in my diocese.

Ever the researcher, I asked a couple of participants during a break why they thought the turnout was so strong. To a person, they replied that they are concerned about the **future** vitality of their **parishes**. The dynamics of parish life have changed. Mass attendance has dropped, their congregations have grayed and young families don't flock to the parish as they did in the past. One woman said:

"We cannot sit and wait for people to come to us. We have to reach out to them, learn their hopes, needs and gifts, and engage them in the mission of Jesus. To do this, we've got to do things differently. Be proactive. We've operated like a lazy monopoly for too long, and we've paid the price. I'm here to learn what we can do differently to be more effective."

This woman was in attendance looking for best practices, things her parish could do to enhance its life and vitality. From a professional standpoint, I was doing the same thing. The job of a pastoral planner, at least in my diocese, is "mission effectiveness" - learning and

disseminating the latest research and best practices in order to keep our **parishes** vital.

In 2005 I was asked to lead a national study sponsored by the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership project seeking to discover the characteristics of pastorally excellent **parishes** and how they differ from other **parishes**.<sup>(5)</sup> Marti Jewell, who is here at this conference, was my primary collaborator in this research.

After reviewing the existing literature on the topic, we created a survey instrument listing 32 marks (or characteristics) of pastorally excellent **parishes** and asked respondents, mostly pastors, to indicate how descriptive each mark was of their parish. Here's what we found.

The five marks or characteristics of pastoral excellence that respondents, on average, said were most descriptive of their parish were:

- Preaching that connects Scripture to daily life.
- Attending to the needs of the sick, homebound and bereaved.
- Having a pastor and staff energized and enthusiastic about ministry.
- Liturgies that are prayerful, reverent and spiritually moving, and
- Engaging in outreach to the poor.

These are the aspects of ministry that **American parishes**, on the whole, feel they do well.

The five areas where **parishes**, on average, report the lowest level of pastoral excellence, starting with the lowest, include:

- The parish emphasizing the building and renewal of adult faith in all its efforts.
- Parishioners receiving training for leadership and ministry.
- Having youth and young adults actively involved in the life of the parish.
- Having parishioners that experience spiritual growth through involvement in small faith-sharing communities and/or parish-based pastoral movements like Renew, Christ Renews His Parish, etc.

-Having parishioners who are eager to become involved in parish leadership and ministry.

Most observers of **American** parish life would concur that these are the greatest areas of challenge in the majority of Catholic **parishes**. Note that each of these areas involves the engagement of parishioners, spiritually or missionally. The engagement of parishioners is a key component of parish vitality.

However the purpose of this research was not to determine which areas of parish life pastors rate as excellent and which areas they do not. The purpose was to discover how pastorally excellent **parishes** differ from the rest.

In this study pastorally excellent **parishes** were defined as those ranking in the top 10 percent of all **parishes** in terms of their average score on the 32-question pastoral excellence survey. We compared these **parishes** against the remaining 90 percent to see if they differed significantly in key areas of parish life.

What we found is that pastorally excellent **parishes** are not significantly different - statistically speaking - from other **parishes** in terms of their locale. They are spread across inner-city, suburban, small-town and rural areas. And while pastorally excellent **parishes** are larger on average, than other **parishes** in terms of registered parishioners (2,808 vs. 2,264) and weekend Mass attendance (1,376 vs. 1,321), these differences are only marginally significant.

But there are several ways in which pastorally excellent **parishes** are significantly different. These differences are, in part, why they experience higher levels of vitality than other **parishes**.

First, pastorally excellent **parishes** tend to be growing **parishes**. They are more likely to report an increase in registered parishioners and average weekend Mass attendance over the past five years than other **parishes**. And with the exception of small parishes, this is true even when controlling for size.

They are also more intentional and organized in their ministries. That is to say, pastorally excellent **parishes** - as a whole - are more likely to:

- Engage in pastoral planning and to have a written mission statement.
- Have a parish pastoral council and provide the council with a formal orientation and/or training related to its ministry.
- Have a viable finance council.
- Promote stewardship (be it tithing, an annual pledge or some other form), and
- Have more parish activities than other **parishes**.

From the research, it is clear that parish vitality is intimately linked with intentionality in ministry - namely, the use of mission statements, parish pastoral councils and pastoral planning. This is true regardless of the size and locale of the parish.

What we were not able to measure was the role of resonate leadership in pastorally excellent **parishes**. Resonate leadership, in my opinion, is the most important ingredient for creating vital Catholic **parishes**. Resonate leadership is leadership that is in touch with the lives of people in the pew through conversation and consultation, creating plans, programs and engagement opportunities that help parishioners grow in faith, understand their call to discipleship and experience a sense of community in mission with others.

## **The Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes**

Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership and *Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate* (CARA)

More U.S. Catholics are attending Masses at fewer **parishes** staffed by a rapidly declining corps of priests, according to a new report on

"The **Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes**." Produced by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate for the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership project of five national Catholic ministerial organizations, the report documents what it calls the "supersizing" of **U.S. Catholic** parish life. "Bigger **parishes**, more Masses and ministries in languages other than English are becoming the norm," said a news release on the report released July 18. CARA found that the number of Catholic **parishes** has declined by 1,359 since the year 2000 to 17,784 in 2010, representing a 7.1 percent decrease. The 2010 number is roughly equal to the 17,637 U.S. **parishes** in 1965 and 1,836 fewer than the peak number of U.S. **parishes** in 1990. The average number of registered households in each U.S. parish grew to 1,168, and the average number of people attending Mass at Catholic **parishes** was 1,110 in 2010, up from an average of 966 a decade earlier. One-third of all U.S. **parishes** have more than 1,201 registered households, while the percentage of **parishes** with 200 or fewer households dropped from 24 percent in 2000 to 15 percent in 2010. Smaller **parishes** are more likely to be closed or consolidated, but they have a higher proportion of parishioners attending Mass than larger **parishes**. Catholic organizations collaborating in the project are the National Association for Lay Ministry, Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development, National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association and National Federation of Priests' Councils. The executive summary of the report follows.

In 2009 the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership project, a Lilly Endowment Inc.-funded collaboration of five Catholic national ministerial organizations, commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University to conduct a series of three surveys in **parishes** nationwide.

The first of these was a single-informant survey sent to **parishes** to develop a portrait of parish

life in the United States today. This survey was in the field from March 2010 to December 2010. This report includes results from this survey based on a sample of 5,549 U.S.

**parishes**. A total of 846 **parishes** responded, for a response rate of 15.3 percent. The margin of sampling error for the survey is 3.3 percentage points.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

### History, Location and Size

The average year of parish founding is 1920. About a third of **U.S. Catholic parishes** (32 percent) were established after 1950, and another third (33 percent) were erected before 1900. **Parishes** also provided the year of construction for the current church building. Most **parishes** report the current church building was constructed in the 1940s and 1950s.

Thirty-seven percent of **U.S. Catholic parishes** are in the Midwest and 24 percent in the Northeast. More than one in five **parishes** (22 percent) are in the South and only 17 percent are in the West.

The average number of registered households in U.S. **parishes** is 1,168 (median of 761). A third of **parishes** have more than 1,201 registered households. The percentage of **parishes** with 200 or fewer households dropped from 24 percent in 2000 to 15 percent in 2010. **Parishes** with more than 1,200 registered households now make up 33 percent of all **parishes**.

U.S. **parishes** average 3,277 (median of 1,950) individual registered parishioners. In 2000, the average number of registered parishioners was 2,260. This number has risen by 45 percent as the Catholic population has grown and **parishes** in the U.S. have been closed and consolidated.

Smaller **parishes** are more likely than larger **parishes** to be closed or consolidated. Forty percent of all growth in registered parishioners in U.S. **parishes** from 2005 to 2010 was among Hispanic/Latino(a)s.

### Worship and Sacraments

The average number of Mass attenders at Sunday/Saturday vigil Masses on a typical weekend in October is 1,110 (median of 750). On average, this number represents 38 percent of registered parishioners and 47 percent of parish capacity (number of Masses multiplied by seating capacity). Smaller **parishes** have a higher proportion of parishioners attending Mass than larger **parishes**.

Most **parishes** (82 percent) celebrate Mass at only one site. However, 13 percent celebrate Mass at two sites in a typical week, and 5 percent of **parishes** celebrate Mass in three or more sites.

The median number of Sunday/Saturday vigil Masses each week in U.S. **parishes** is four (average of 3.8). One in 10 **parishes** (10 percent) celebrates only one of these Masses per week. Twenty-eight percent celebrate five or more. The median number of weekday Masses in **parishes** is five (average of 5.3).

One in three **parishes** (29 percent) celebrates Mass at least once a month in a language other than English. This is an increase from 22 percent of **parishes** in 2000. Most of these Masses, 81 percent, are in Spanish. Overall, about 6 percent of all Masses (weekday and weekend) are celebrated in Spanish.

Thirty-seven percent of **parishes** indicate that they have some special observance for particular cultural or ethnic groups in the parish. By far, the most common of these is a celebration for the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Twenty-one percent of all U.S. **parishes** indicate a special observance of this day.

The typical U.S. parish has 57 infant baptisms, 58 first communions, 44 confirmations, 14 marriages and 29 funerals each year. Smaller **parishes** tend to have more sacramental activity per registered parishioner than larger **parishes**. However, in all but the smallest **parishes** (those with 200 or fewer registered households) the ratio of infant baptisms to funerals is on average 2 to 1.

On average, respondents indicated that the proportion of parishioners who are non-Hispanic white has decreased in the last five years as Catholics of other races and ethnicities make up a larger part of registered parishioners. **Parishes** in the South and West are more racially and ethnically diverse than those in the Midwest and Northeast.

## Finances

In the average American parish, the total operating revenue of about \$695,000 exceeds expenses of \$626,500. The average surplus is 4.3 percent of revenue. However, 30 percent of **parishes** indicate that their expenses exceed their revenue. Of those **parishes** reporting a deficit, the average size for the shortfall is 15.8 percent of revenue.

Total weekly offertory is about \$9,200 or \$9.57 per registered household. Offertory has grown in the last five years, on average, by more than 14 percent. Smaller **parishes** generally collect more per registered household in offertory than larger parishes.

## Programs and Ministries

**Parishes** are most likely to have programs and ministries for sacramental preparation, religious education, and for the infirm and homebound (86 percent or more). Majorities have youth ministry (76 percent), ministry to seniors (64 percent), social services to meet individual needs (59 percent) and ministry to the bereaved (54 percent).

A majority of **parishes** (56 percent) report some sort of commitment to a Catholic school. Twenty-four percent indicate that they have a parish school, 25 percent support a regional school and 8 percent indicate a combination of these commitments.

## Staff

The total number of people on parish staffs in the United States is estimated to be 168,448. This total includes ministry staff and volunteers as well as nonministry staff and volunteers (including parish bookkeepers, groundskeepers, cooks, etc.). The average parish has a total staff size of 9.5 members, with 5.4 individuals in ministry positions.

The estimated number of lay ecclesial ministers (paid in ministry for at least 20 hours per week) in the United States is approximately 38,000 (2.1 per parish). Fourteen percent of these individuals are vowed religious, and 86 percent other laypersons. Overall, 80 percent are female and 20 percent male. Seven percent are under the age of 30. Eleven percent are in their 30s, and 22 percent in their 40s. Thus, four in 10 lay ecclesial ministers are estimated to be under the age of 50. It is estimated that the U.S. church is adding about 790 new lay ecclesial ministers to parish ministry staffs each year.

Nearly half of all individuals on parish staffs are laywomen (49 percent). Including religious sisters (3 percent), parish staffs in the United States are 52 percent female. Priests account for 18 percent of parish staff members, and deacons make up 4 percent. Religious brothers are 1 percent of parish staff members, and other laymen make up 21 percent of all parish staff members.

Among ministry staff specifically, laypersons are fewer in number and clergy are more prevalent. One in four ministry staff is a diocesan priest (24 percent). Fourteen percent of ministry staff are deacons, 6 percent are religious priests, 5 percent are religious sisters and 1 percent religious brothers; half are other lay ministry staff. Fifty-six percent of all parish staff members are between the age of 50 and 69. Fifty-five percent of ministry staff is of this age.

Ninety-three percent of U.S. **parishes** indicate that they have a pastoral council, and more, 97 percent, say they have a parish finance council.

More than one in four **parishes** (27 percent) are utilizing multiparish ministry where the parish is

most often "clustered" or "linked" (among other arrangements) to another parish. A third of these **parishes** (33 percent) indicate that this is a relatively new development, beginning sometime after 2004. These **parishes** are most likely to share sacramental preparation ministries (54 percent), Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (53 percent) or religious education and faith formation for children (51 percent).