"With clear and concise writing, the author demystifies the complex web of culture and religion that characterizes the American Church and illuminates why the variety of ethnic and generational cultures can create a dissonant and polarized ecclesiastic reality. On that foundation, she offers practical and insightful ways for responding to the dissonance and creating a multicultural harmony and communion."

—William A. Nordenbrock, CPPS, author of *Beyond Accompaniment: Guiding a Fractured Community to Wholeness*

"The two major themes of *Catholic Cultures* match exactly the two most trenchant concerns in parishes—shifting ethnic configurations and generational changes among parishioners. Through the lens of culture, Patricia Wittberg briefly traces the history of ethnic groups in the US and explains the current situation. Her cogent description of how generational relationships affect parish life is accompanied by suggestions of 'welcoming practices' designed to incorporate Catholic Millennials. The author offers parish leaders hope and encouragement as they seek to respond to evolving parish contexts."

—Katarina Schuth, OSF, author of *Seminary Formation: Recent History—Current Circumstances—New Directions*

"Sister Patricia Wittberg's new book is essential reading for those who wish to better serve the People of God, and for all those who wish to continue growing as well informed Catholics. Wittberg brings both a rich history of what each culture has brought to Catholicism in times past as well as a modern day awareness of how efforts can be made to see the Church through many different cultural lenses today. Her insightful research illustrates how we can all evolve from a mere tolerance of our differences to becoming enriched by the beauty that each culture brings to our common heritage of faith. I highly recommend this enlightening work to Catholics of all generations, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds."

—Stephen Fichter, CARA Research Associate and co-author of *Same Call Different Men: The Evolution of the Priesthood since Vatican II*

"Finally we have a book a book about parish ministry that doesn't pretend that our parishes have not been radically refigured by immigration, ethnic and racial diversity, and sweeping generational disaffiliation. For too long, parish renewal literature has assumed that cultural and generational differences were only marginal issues in our parishes. Sr. Patricia Wittberg, sociologist and pastoral thinker, rightly identifies these as the central issues of our time. One of the principal strengths of the book is her refusal to underestimate the complexity and challenges of ministry across cultures and generational divides, making use of the sociology of culture to navigate these difficult waters. Another strength is her willingness to look at the ethnic and cultural differences *within* generational groups."

> —Brett C. Hoover
> Assistant Professor of Theological Studies
> Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles

Catholic Cultures

How Parishes Can Respond
to the Changing Face of Catholicism

Patricia Wittberg, SC

Contents

Introduction

> "At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language."
>
> —Acts 2:6

The birth of the church at Pentecost as recounted in Acts reveals a unique difference between Christianity and many other religious traditions. From its very beginning, the Gospel message was announced, not exclusively in the Aramaic language that Jesus himself spoke, nor in Hebrew, nor even in Greek or Latin, but in the native language of each hearer. The Koran, the Talmud and Torah, and the Upanishads are studied and memorized by their respective adherents in the original (and increasingly archaic) languages in which they were first written. Their sacred rituals, too, are often performed with languages, gestures, and symbols that are no longer used or meaningful in everyday life. In contrast, the Good News of Jesus has had its primary impact *when translated into each receiving culture*.

This is not to say that Christianity has been exempt from canonizing an extinct but sacred language, as any Catholic old enough to remember the Latin Mass can attest. Even today, there are varieties of Eastern Orthodox Christianity whose liturgical language has remained unchanged for centuries, if not millennia. Having a sacred language can be beneficial: it sets the time of worship apart from daily, "profane" life and helps the worshipper enter into a spirit of prayer. But in the process, what was fresh and challenging and prophetic to the original followers may become a fossilized set of half-understood rituals. Worse still, if a religious tradition becomes too identified with one particular language, or one particular way to worship, or one particular constellation of saints, festivals, and symbols, its followers may be less willing and less able to spread it to other cultures—or even to retain the next generation of their own culture as it changes around them.

The goal of this book is to explore what it would mean for each parish to take the Pentecost story in Acts seriously. How can Catholics proclaim the Good News in the native language(s) of newcomers whose backgrounds

may be quite different from their own? It may seem difficult—or even impossible—to do so, and dangerous to try. All cultures are human creations, and therefore all cultures are imperfect. Enfleshing the Good News in any human culture will necessarily incorporate some of that culture's imperfections, and it is those outside the culture who will be the most aware of these deficiencies (while simultaneously, of course, being blind to the ways in which their *own* interpretation of the Gospel truths falls short). But Catholics are called—as the apostles were called—to speak the Good News, however imperfectly, in every time and culture. It takes faith and trust in the guidance of the Pentecostal Spirit to do this and not to retreat into our own familiar ways of "being Catholic."

A Brief Introduction to "Culture"

What is "culture" anyway? In popular speech, the word usually refers to some artistic activity: we attend "cultural events" such as a symphony, a play, or an exhibit of paintings at a gallery or museum. Persons living in areas with a recent immigrant population may be exposed to its food, dances, or music at "multicultural" festivals. But "culture" includes deeper and wider dimensions as well.

Very little of what makes us human is inborn in us. From our very first days of life, we are absorbing a culture. Even in the womb, we hear the rhythms and inflections of the languages our mothers are speaking, and tests show that newborns can distinguish the language they heard *in utero* from an unfamiliar one. In early childhood we absorb not only our spoken language but an entire vocabulary of behaviors, values, beliefs, and assumptions that make us think like, act like, and *be* Americans (or Nigerians, Chinese, Brazilians, Italians, etc.). By the time we are adults, our culture has become like the air we breathe—we don't even notice that it is there unless some person (or some event, like moving to another country) makes us conscious of it. The subtle and subconscious aspects of culture are especially hard to notice—and especially hard to change.

Culture has many different dimensions, each of which spans the range from the obvious and known to the hidden and subconscious:

- *The Material Dimension of Culture* includes concrete places and artifacts that can be touched, tasted, or seen. This includes objects such as clocks, automobiles, clothing, and the numerous electronic gadgets that clutter our lives. It also includes the spatial arrangements of our homes, work-

places, and neighborhoods. Some aspects of material culture give obvious messages, but many have a hidden symbolic dimension as well. The kind of car you drive, whether you occupy the corner office or a small cubicle, whether (and where) you sport a tattoo—all give out particular messages about you. The smallest detail signals to others your membership in a given in-group, or out-group.
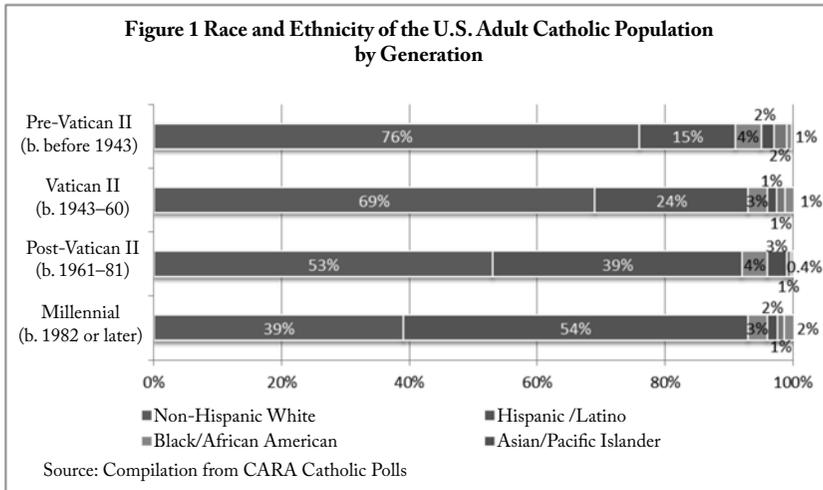
- *The Behavioral Dimension of Culture* includes ways people act. This includes, first of all, norms and rules about the way one is expected to dress, talk, walk, greet others, make eye contact, touch another person (or not!), and so forth. It also includes jokes, gossip, slang, and jargon (and when to engage in them). Finally, behavioral culture includes rituals, both formal ones that mark specific events such as birthdays, holidays, or retirement, and informal ones such as shaking hands upon meeting someone or greeting a colleague in the hallway at work. The behavioral rules may be explicitly expressed or left unsaid, and sometimes the unspoken rules contradict the spoken ones.

- *The Value Dimension of Culture* includes shared definitions of what is right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, desirable or undesirable. This includes preferred personality characteristics (Should women, or men, be shy and retiring? Aggressive? Ambitious? Ruthless? Considerate?) and goals (Should we strive for financial success? Intra-group harmony? Mystical experiences?). It also includes the emotional "tone" attached to situations, objects, words, concepts. In some cultures it is a compliment to call something "new" or "government-run," while in other cultures these attributes are viewed with great suspicion. Being a "liberal" or a "feminist" may be avant-garde at one time or in one place but considered out-of-date elsewhere (or elsewhen).

- Finally, *the Cognitive Dimension of Culture* includes shared definitions of reality. These assumptions are usually so subconscious that we are rarely aware of them, but they form the basis for even the most mundane of our decisions:

  - How do we determine what is true? By pragmatic test? By the wisdom of the elders? By group consensus?
  - What is the nature of time? Is it cyclic or linear? Is linear time progressing toward a better future or regressing toward a worse one? Which is the most relevant aspect of time to consider when making decisions: the past? the present? the future?

- What about human nature? Are humans basically good, neutral, or bad? Is human nature fixed or is it able to be improved? Are outsiders benign or threatening, trustworthy or untrustworthy?

- What or who is to blame when something goes wrong? Why do bad things happen to good people?

- What beliefs "go together"? Can I oppose gun control and still be a feminist? Enjoy watching "Duck Dynasty" and still eat arugula salads? Believe in both global warming and stricter immigration enforcement?

- Finally, cognitive culture includes the shared meanings of words. What specific activities or situations are included in the term "justice"? Or "pro-life"? Or "terrorism"?

From birth, we absorb all of these dimensions of our culture from our surrounding society: from our families, our neighborhoods, our friends, the mass media, school, etc. Cultures therefore differ—to a greater or lesser extent—from ethnic group to ethnic group, from one socioeconomic class to another, and across generations. The more distant another culture is from ours, especially in its behavioral, value, and cognitive dimensions, the more difficult it will be for us to understand each other. This has many implications for Catholics today. To the extent that our parishes are increasingly composed of members from different ethnic groups, ages, or social classes, it may become more difficult for parish staff to translate the Good News of Jesus into languages/values/concepts that speak to each of the parish's different cultures. In addition, Catholic parents today are only too aware of the gap between their own childhood experiences and those of their children, and frequently find that "being Catholic" doesn't seem to be as important to their sons and daughters as it is to them—if, indeed, their offspring are interested in remaining in the church at all.

Ethnic Cultures in the Church

It is vital that church ministers and church members find ways to speak the Good News to these different cultures. In welcoming different racial and ethnic groups, we are emulating the example of the apostles in the Pentecost story of Acts. Additionally, current demographic changes in the American church mandate that we do so, or our parishes will lose the greater part of their membership and vitality. A brief glance at Figure 1 shows why:

Figure 1 Race and Ethnicity of the U.S. Adult Catholic Population by Generation

Generation	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic/Latino	Black/African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	
Pre-Vatican II (b. before 1943)	76%	15%	4%	2%	1% / 2%
Vatican II (b. 1943–60)	69%	24%	3%	1%	1% / 2%
Post-Vatican II (b. 1961–81)	53%	39%	4%	3%	0.4% / 1%
Millennial (b. 1982 or later)	39%	54%	3%	2%	2% / 1%

Legend: ■ Non-Hispanic White   ■ Hispanic /Latino   ■ Black/African American   ■ Asian/Pacific Islander

Source: Compilation from CARA Catholic Polls

We can see that, while three-fourths of the oldest American Catholics are non-Hispanic whites, only 39 percent of the youngest Catholic adults belong to this ethnic group. In contrast, over half of the youngest adult age cohort is Hispanic—something that is true of only 15 percent of the oldest age cohort.

Ethnic change, of course, is not new to the American Catholic Church. In the early- to mid-nineteenth century, the extremely small population of English-descended Catholics in the United States (and its largely French clergy who had fled from anticlerical Revolutionary France) was overwhelmed by an influx of Irish immigrants—people with a very different ethnic culture and from a much lower social class. In parts of the Midwest, large populations of German Catholic immigrants lived in an uneasy truce with their Irish neighbors. Bishops and clergy, both in this country and in Europe, fretted that, if these new immigrants' needs for catechesis, education, health care, and social services were not met, they would desert Catholicism for Protestant churches. This fear was the impetus for the founding of separate parishes for each ethnic group, as well as separate Catholic systems of schools, hospitals, and social agencies. It also motivated the political jockeying of Irish and German immigrant clergy for power within the nineteenth-century American hierarchy. In later years, the church absorbed incoming Italians, French Canadians, Poles, Slovenes, Slovaks, and a host of other groups by following the same pattern: establishing parishes and grade schools for each ethnicity that were staffed by communities of religious sisters drawn from the old country.

By the time Hispanic migrants from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other parts of Latin America began to arrive in the mid-twentieth century, however, the church had reconsidered this policy. The 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement had sensitized Catholics to the problems involved in creating "separate but equal" parishes for different ethnic groups. Catholics, both clergy and lay, began to feel that integrating new arrivals into existing parishes was the better option. Critics later charged, however, that this had relegated Hispanics to second-class status: attending Masses in the church basement while Anglos worshipped in the main church, and being excluded from parish decision making. Alternatively, if the Hispanics came to outnumber the Anglos in a parish, Spanish-language liturgies began to be scheduled in the main worship space and at the "best" times, leaving the older, non-Hispanic members feeling increasingly disenfranchised. Things became even more interesting if, in addition to Hispanic and Anglo parishioners, the parish also included Vietnamese, Filipinos, Nigerians, or other groups.

Generational Cultures in the Church

While it is important to consider the challenges that various ethnic cultures pose for Catholic parishes, it is also important to consider *generational cultures*. Many people may not be used to considering members of different generations as separate cultural groups, but the age cohorts in our parishes display behavioral, value, and cognitive differences from each other that may be as pastorally challenging as ethnic differences are. Just as specific experiences drawn from a particular ethnic culture influence the children who grow up in that culture—shaping the language(s) they speak, the food they like, and the value they place on educational achievement, machismo, or close family ties—so, too, the particular time period in which a person is born and passes his/her childhood also leaves an indelible mark. For example, the material artifacts available to a child—radio, TV, cell phones, iPads—will affect how that child relates to others, how quickly he/she becomes aware of the latest fads, and even, according to the latest research, how he/she thinks and learns. The spatial arrangements of material culture—whether, for example, one grows up in an older neighborhood with sidewalks and an interconnected grid of streets or in a gated subdivision of cul-de-sacs separated from other areas by a busy highway— will affect how widely children can explore on their own, as compared to having their parents drive them everywhere. National and international events also leave their mark: growing up in times of scarcity such as the Great Depression of the 1930s or the Great

Recession that followed 2008 had a different impact on children than passing one's childhood in relatively prosperous times such as the 1950s or 1990s.

There are more subtle effects, too. While people typically cannot remember anything that happened in the larger world before they were five or six years old, these events can still influence their cultural outlook *because they influenced their parents and teachers*. Parents who had learned in their own youth that dollars were scarce, or that the United States was always on the good side of any war it engaged in, or that priests and religious were "better" than laypeople in turn gave this message to their children—even if economic, political, or church events had rendered these beliefs less applicable in the child's world.

According to sociologist Karl Mannheim, children and young adolescents typically accept the culture—the material artifacts, the rules and behaviors, the values, and, especially, the basic grounding beliefs and assumptions—that their parents had taught them through their words and unconscious example. The children might not have understood *why* Communists were bad, or *why* they had to be extra polite to priests and nuns, or *why* they spent all their time in CCD making collages and drawing rainbows; that was just the way things were.

Around the age of twenty, however, young adults reach a critical stage of cognitive maturity, when they can evaluate for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of the culture they had acquired in childhood:

- How could America claim to be such a good country when it denied civil rights to African Americans or waged war in Vietnam?
- What was the sense in building up a savings account instead of going into debt, when the inflation of the 1970s was reducing the value of both savings and IOUs?
- Was scientific "progress" really a good thing—as our water and air filled with toxic chemicals, our nuclear power plants melted down, and our space shuttles spectacularly exploded?

Sometimes (but not always) these growing doubts were crystallized by specific events: Pearl Harbor, the Kennedy assassination, the Second Vatican Council, the Challenger explosion, 9/11. At other times, there was no crystallizing event to mark the transition to a new generational mindset, and the generations tended to shift gradually from one to another. Persons born on the "cusp" between generations often do not exactly identify with either one.

According to Mannheim, for the rest of our lives the way we see the world is colored by the experiences and assumptions we unconsciously absorbed as children, and by how we reacted to these experiences as we entered our twenties:

> All later experiences thus tend to receive their meaning from this original set, whether they appear as its verification and fulfillment or its negation and antithesis . . . Any two generations following one another always fight different opponents, both within and without. While the older people may still be fighting one battle, in such a fashion that all their feelings and efforts and even their concepts and categories of thought are determined by that adversary, for the younger people, this adversary may be simply non-existent: their primary orientation is an entirely different one.[1]

The mixture of the unconscious assumptions and values we absorbed in childhood, and our critical reaction to some—*but not all*—of these assumptions when we reach adulthood, gives each generation a particular and unique cultural outlook. Furthermore, generational cultures overlap with ethnic cultures, regional cultures, class-based cultures, and lifestyle cultures. White Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans—or working-class, middle-class, and upper-class Americans—will each display unique generational differences between their old and young members. We cannot assume that young White Americans will experience the same crystallizing events or have the same generational cultures as Hispanics or African Americans their same age.

For Catholicism today, generational cultures may be the most important of all. A given parish may be—and often has been in the past—composed of only one ethnic/racial group or only one social class, but *no parish can be alive and vibrant for very long if it draws its members from only one generation.* As Figure 2 makes clear, Catholics today are increasingly drawn from the Millennial (born after 1982) and the post-Vatican II (born between 1961 and 1981) generations. By definition, they do not remember the Second Vatican Council, much less the pre-Vatican II church that had formed their elders. In addition, a much larger percentage of these young adult Catholics are Hispanic, Asian, or African American. What is the "language" the church needs to use—the catechesis, the prayer forms, the images, the opportunities for spiritual growth—to speak the Good News to them?

Figure 2
The Generational Composition of American Catholicism:
1987 and 2011

1987

2011

Post-Vatican II 22%

Pre-Vatican II 31%

Vatican II 47%

Pre-Vatican II 10%

Millennial 23%

Vatican II 33%

Post-Vatican II 34%
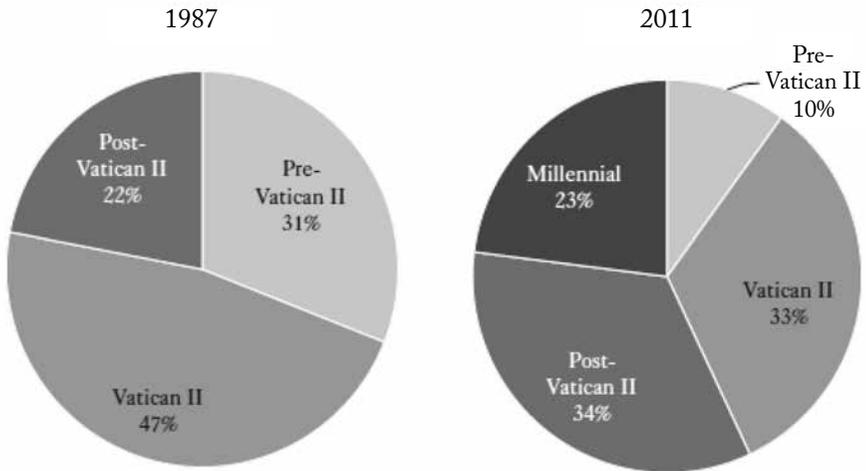
Source: D'Antonio, Dillon, and Gautier, 2013, p. 30.

The Dangers of Cultural Translation

But is this kind of translation really desirable? Jesuit anthropologist William Biernatzki studied how Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity spread from their cultures of origin to the completely different societies of China, Indonesia, and Korea. He noted that translating the worldview and the concepts of a religion into a different cultural context involves difficulties that neither the receiving culture nor the missionary transmitters may be willing or able to surmount. China, for example, never completely adopted Buddhism because the "root paradigms" of Chinese cognitive culture and values—their basic assumptions about the primary importance of filial piety, individual duty, and personal respect (saving "face")—conflicted with Buddhist teachings on monastic celibacy, losing oneself in Nirvana, and begging as a valued ascetic practice. The deeper dimensions of a culture—its values and its basic cognitive assumptions— may be so deeply embedded in the subconscious levels of the hearers' minds as to render the new religious message literally "unthinkable" to them. Even when a foreign culture does adopt the new religion, as Indonesia did Islam, its underlying cognitive culture and values may subtly change the religion's basic "flavor" in a way that the original followers would not approve. "Although Islam 'conquered' Indonesia, it had to surrender much of its Middle Eastern rigor to do so," because Indonesians

looked with distaste on anyone who exhibited too much zeal or enthusiasm, even for the sake of religion.[2] *Can* any religion be accurately translated across cultures without losing its original meaning?

Beyond these cognitive cultural differences in root paradigms, specific symbols may also come to have different connotations when imparted to a different culture. Biernatzki notes that Korean Catholics considered the crucifix a symbol of "ugly suffering" and found it "shocking and repulsive." Similarly, calling God "Father" will have a different meaning in a matrilineal society where it is the maternal uncle, not the father, who lives with and supports the family.

With the inevitability of such changes in meaning and tone, many parishioners and parish staff may hesitate to accept the "foreign" Catholicism of another ethnic or generational culture as equal to their own, familiar one. They will be quick to see the imperfections in the new arrivals' interpretation of Catholic teachings and in their way of living Catholicism. *But they will be less aware that their own culture's version of Catholicism is also imperfect.* It is a basic premise of this book that we all can come to a deeper appreciation of the breadth and length, the height and depth, of the Good News by attempting truly to understand the way other cultures besides our own articulate it in their languages, behaviors, values, and cognitive assumptions.

The book's first part will discuss the various ethnic cultures that comprise the American Catholic Church today. After a brief historical overview of these cultures in chapter 1, chapter 2 will describe and compare some of their culturally-specific articulations of the Good News as they have been manifested in American Catholicism both today and in the past. Chapter 3 will outline some of the challenges that these varied versions of Catholicism pose in a multicultural parish, and will advance some practical suggestions for how they might be met.

The second part of the book will follow the same pattern in discussing generational cultures: chapter 4 will describe the various generational cultures in the United States today. Chapter 5 will explore how each generation experiences Catholicism today and will outline some challenges involved in attracting the younger generation to our parishes and making them welcome when they come. Chapter 6 will give practical suggestions on how these challenges might be overcome.

The birth of the church began with the Pentecost experience described in Acts, but it did not end there. The birth of the church is still ongoing. The Gospel message must be born anew in each ethnic and generational culture, and the Holy Spirit has called us—as the apostles were called—to be its midwives.

I

Ethnic Groups in the Catholic Church—Past and Present

"The great God . . . loves the resident alien, giving them food and clothing. So you too should love the resident alien, for that is what you were in the land of Egypt."

—Deuteronomy 10:18-19

The Catholic Church in the United States has always been a church of immigrants. There were only thirty thousand Catholics in the entire country at the end of the colonial period. This small population was engulfed by waves of Irish immigrants in the early nineteenth century, followed by German Catholics in mid-century, and Italian, Polish, French Canadian, and various other nationalities by the turn of the twentieth century. Over four million Irish migrated to the United States during the nineteenth century, and close to two million Germans—although not all of either group were Catholic. By 1900, close to 100,000 Italians were entering the United States every year, primarily from Southern Italy and Sicily. Each wave of newcomers differed in their social class, in their religious knowledge and practice, and in their educational levels. Over half of the Italian immigrants could not read or write their native language, while the majority of the German and Polish immigrants could. The Irish immigrants who had arrived during the famines of the 1830s and 1840s were largely destitute, poorly catechized in the faith, and afflicted with social and familial dysfunctions. Later arrivals from Ireland, while still poor, were better educated and more fervently Catholic, having been influenced by the "Devotional Revolution" that was sweeping Irish Catholicism at the time.[1]

Each group of newcomers tended to settle in different parts of the country, depending on where economic opportunities presented themselves and on where previous migrants from their homeland had settled. Thus, while Irish Catholics were the largest nineteenth-century group overall, there was an equal or greater localized presence of German Catholics in the "German Triangle" stretching between Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Cincinnati. Three-fourths of all the Catholic parishes with German-speaking priests were located within this German Triangle, with the largest proportion in Milwaukee: 40 percent of all Milwaukee parishes were German-speaking. Similarly, while only a tenth as many French Canadian as German Catholic immigrants migrated to the United States, 72 percent of them settled in New England. Poles and other Eastern Europeans arrived between 1880 and 1920 and settled in the burgeoning industrial cities along the Great Lakes. By the middle of the twentieth century, 18 percent of US adult Catholics identified their ancestry as Italian, followed by 16 percent Irish, 13 percent German, 9 percent Polish, 7 percent Mexican, and smaller percentages of other nationalities.[2]

What to do with all of these new arrivals? Initially, the American bishops, who were now predominantly Irish and Irish-American themselves, were wary of constructing separate parishes for them:

> Bishops viewed national parishes as temporary solutions until assimilation permitted a single administrative system and a single Catholic culture, preferably one consonant with that of the Church's Irish majority.[3]

But the immigrants demanded their own parishes, often constructing the church building themselves, and then petitioning the local bishop to provide them with a priest from their nationality group. There were 1,600 explicitly national parishes in the United States by 1912: 346 of which were German, 336 Polish, and 214 Italian.[4] By 1916, almost half of all US Catholics attended a parish where some other language was used—either together with English (28 percent) or as the sole parish language (21 percent).[5] French Canadian parishes grew from fewer than 20 in the 1870s to 178 in 1945. Polish parishes swelled from fewer than 15 in 1870 to over 800 in 1930.[6] "Whereas between 1850 and 1880, only 9% of the new parishes established in the Northeast were national parishes, between 1880 and 1930, 30% were national."[7]

Table 1.1
Parishes Offering Services in Various Foreign Languages, 1916

Language	Number of Parishes	% of Total Number of Parishes	Number of Adherents	% of Total Number of Adherents
French	699	4.6%	1,026,966	6.6%
German	1,890	12.5%	1,672,960	10.7%
Italian	476	3.1%	1,515,818	9.7%
Polish	735	4.8%	1,425,193	9.1%
Spanish	841	5.5%	552,244	3.5%
Bohemian (Czech)	178	1.2%	133,911	0.8%
Lithuanian	96	0.6%	150,227	1.0%
Slavic	113	0.7%	118,264	0.8%
Slovak	109	0.7%	125,687	0.8%
More than one foreign language	839	5.5%	929,719	5.9%
Total # of Ethnic Parishes/Adherents	5,976	39.2%	7,650,989	48.3%
Total # of Catholic Parishes/Adherents	15,163		15,667,700	

Calculated from Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–1990* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 127–129.

Ethnic parishes were valued by their parishioners for several reasons. For one thing, they enabled the immigrants to replicate the village life they had left in their homelands. The German parishes often did this literally, as a large proportion of German immigrants settled in rural areas. Parts of the Midwest are still dotted with small towns clustered around the local Catholic church. Several of these towns are actually named after the church's patron saint: St. Joseph, Indiana, and St. Henry, Ohio, for example. The older inhabitants in some of these areas can still speak the Swabian or Bavarian German dialects of their great-grandparents. In contrast, few of the Irish, French Canadian, or Polish immigrants settled in rural areas, but they were able to replicate their former village life in the city through their parish. "The Catholic parish functioned as a rural village in an urban setting, molding and serving a cohesive social and religious community."[8]

A second function of ethnic parishes, and especially of ethnic parish *schools*, was to pass on the language and culture of the old country to the next generation. For the French Canadian, German, and Polish immigrants, their native languages were inextricably tied with their faith, and they feared losing both in a more secular, Protestant, and English-speaking America. As a result, they constructed their own schools: in 1910 there were 133 French-language schools serving the Canadian immigrants in New England—40 percent of all the Catholic schools in the area.[9] By 1927, there were over 500 Polish Catholic schools, and 73 percent of all Polish-American children were at least partially educated in them.[10] Two-thirds of all German-speaking parishes had constructed schools by 1884, as compared to only one-fourth of the Irish parishes.[11] The pupils in these ethnic Catholic schools learned the history and traditions of their parents' homelands, and at least half of the classes were conducted in languages other than English.[12]

Establishing ethnic parishes also served the interests of the largely Irish-American hierarchy:

> However ingenious the non-English-speaking Catholics proved to be in transforming the national parish into a positive institution of cultural preservation, at the time of its establishment in New York it was intended to separate the pastoral care of the English-speaking Irish and German majority from other Catholics. The practical effect . . . was to keep archdiocesan financial resources at the service of the English-speaking parishes—overwhelmingly Irish. Henceforth, a national parish was virtually orphaned by the archdiocese, left to the financial resources of the religious order [that was staffing it] or the immigrant community, and relegated to a secondary role in archdiocesan attention.[13]

At times, the development of ethnically-homogeneous parishes, schools, and other institutions could be used as a power resource in an immigrant group's interactions with civil and ecclesial authorities. At other times, however, the immigrants keenly felt—and resented—their isolation from the mainstream of the church.

Conflicts

Combining so many different ethnic versions of Catholicism in one church, therefore, was anything but smooth. Conflicts routinely erupted, both within parishes, between different ethnic parishes, and with priests and bishops. On the intra-parish level, a single German, Italian, or Slavic

congregation might contain multiple subcultures, each with different linguistic dialects and different devotional customs. Among German Catholic immigrants, for example, 21 percent came from Bavaria, 42 percent from newly-annexed Prussian regions of Westphalia and the Rhineland, and 10 percent from northern German states. One observer noted that "the Saxon does not like the Swabian, nor the Prussian the Bavarian, and the Westphalian would . . . devour the poor Badenser alive, and so conversely."[14] Another historian wrote that German parishioners frequently quarreled with one another over which hymns to sing and where to build their churches. One dispute over hymns became so heated that one side burned down the church building![15] Other ethnic groups, too, were not exempt from intra-parish quarrels. The first Slovak Catholic immigrants came to the United States from Hungary, where they had been an oppressed minority group. After spending their hard-earned money and time building their own parishes here, they resisted a later influx of Hungarian immigrants who wanted to worship there in the Magyar language of their former oppressors.[16]

Inter-parish tensions existed as well. Pastors of territorial parishes that were predominantly Irish nevertheless resented the "poaching" of their non-Irish parishioners by national parishes. Catholic laity and priests accustomed to their own devotional practices were often less than appreciative of the devotions common in other ethnic groups, especially if such activities were performed in public where unsympathetic Protestants might see them: "Members of a German parish might have been shocked to observe 'tongue dragging' by women in Italian parishes, a feast day practice in which especially pious women dragged their tongues on the floor as they crawled or were carried down the aisle to the statue of the Madonna. Italians, in turn, might have been puzzled as to the religious significance of the huge, quasi-military pageants and processions held in German parishes to mark each of the major holy days."[17] Irish Catholics considered Italians' religious *feste* "rowdy," and were dismayed by their religious ignorance and lack of Mass attendance. In 1913, Archbishop James Quigley of Chicago complained that "the Italians who come from Southern Italy and Sicily are unexcelled in their ignorance of religion." A similar complaint was made in 1886 by the bishop of Burlington, Vermont, concerning the French Canadians in his diocese: they had, he said, "complete ignorance of religion . . . [and] knew not either confession or communion."[18]

Ethnic parish members also often engaged in conflict with the clergy and hierarchy. Some of the misunderstandings stemmed from cultural differences in respect for priests: the Irish, Germans, and Poles held the

clergy and hierarchy in high esteem, while Italians were less impressed. The Irish hierarchy therefore stereotyped Italians "as anticlerical enemies of the papacy, unlikely to make good Catholic Americans."[19] A serious source of conflict erupted whenever bishops attempted to assign to an ethnic parish a pastor who was not of the parishioners' ethnicity. In 1884, for example, one New England bishop attempted to name an Irish pastor to a French Canadian parish: the resulting furor resulted in the parish being placed under a two-year interdict, until the bishop relented under Vatican pressure and allowed a French Canadian curate to assist the Irish pastor. Similar clashes between French Canadian parishes and Irish-American bishops occurred in Danielson, Connecticut (1894–96), Brookfield, Massachusetts (1899), Brunswick, Maine (1906), and Woonsocket, Rhode Island (1921–28).[20]

Ethnic parishes clashed with bishops over other issues as well. Having arrived first of all the ethnic groups, Irish Catholics dominated the hierarchy. Two-thirds of the American bishops in 1900 were of Irish descent, a proportion far exceeding the percentage of American Catholics with Irish backgrounds. In contrast, Germans, who comprised some 37 percent of all the Catholics in this country at that time, could boast of only 11 percent of the bishops.[21] Poles, Italians, and other ethnic groups had even less representation. "Justifiably, other ethnic groups have complained of Irish arrogance and insensitivity to their cultural needs and expressions."[22] Many Irish bishops wanted Catholics from other countries to assimilate to "normal" American Catholicism as quickly as possible and were less than sympathetic to the desires of French Canadians or Germans for preserving their own cultures. This led, one author charges, to "a sense of inferiority" among non-Irish Catholics.[23]

Conflicts also erupted over control of parish finances and governance. French Canadian, German, and Polish Catholic laity were accustomed to controlling the administration of their parishes: having collected the money to build and maintain them, they felt they should have a say over how they were run—including over who would be appointed pastor. The bishops, of course, resisted this "trusteeship" system and fought to wrest control from the parishioners. The struggles between French Canadians and the New England bishops mentioned above were fought at least partly over this issue.

Assimilation

According to the "melting pot" ideology common in the early twentieth century, the immigrants were expected to relinquish their former national

identities and become Americans—if not in the first generation, at least in the second. Despite the fears of Protestant critics (and, for that matter, of some of the American Catholic hierarchy) that ethnic parishes and schools would prevent assimilation, the immigrants' institutions were, in fact, key factors in helping them adapt to middle-class American culture:

> The Irish parish in Chicago was a powerful force in transforming peas-ants into devout, disciplined urban dwellers. In the early years, it eased the burden of dislocation for immigrants and provided working-class Irish with models of middle-class behavior.[24]

Parish men's, women's, and youth societies also engaged in specific activities that fostered their members' Americanization. During World War I, for example, one parish's Young Ladies' Society helped America's soldiers by knitting socks and sweaters for them. The parishes "also introduced English plays, that further expanded their neighbors' horizons during the 1920s."[25] As Father Joseph Fitzpatrick, a Jesuit sociologist, noted, a strong community such as an ethnic parish was a key factor in the successful assimilation of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigrants.[26]

The gradual Americanization of the immigrants was reflected in the priests who served in the parishes. By 1926, 79 percent of the clergy in Chicago's Irish parishes, 68 percent of the clergy in its German parishes, and 53 percent of the clergy in its Polish parishes had been born in the United States.[27] To retain the younger generation, parishes began to offer Masses with English homilies, as well as parish missions, novenas, and other devotions entirely in English.

External events also accelerated the immigrants' assimilation into Amer-ican culture. Protestants had become more suspicious of Catholics' loyalty after Pope Leo XIII's condemnation of "Americanism" in 1899, so American bishops balanced their fervent adherence to Rome on doctrinal matters with ostentatious displays of patriotism in other things:

> [Cardinal] Mundelein, for example, aligned himself with the "100 per-cent" attitude toward ethnic assimilation in America . . . . He believed that the transitional phase of immigrant accommodation in ethnic parishes had lasted long enough and that new immigrant groups should be nudged toward full assimilation.[28]

As soon as he arrived in Chicago, Mundelein appointed a new central school board that required all Catholic schools in his diocese to teach their pupils

in English. In other parts of the country, it was the state legislatures that required English instruction. Whether because of ecclesiastical or state dictates, mandating English in the schools attenuated the ethnic culture of the immigrants' children and grandchildren. An additional national event that particularly influenced German Americans' assimilation was World War I. Anti-German patriotic fervor caused many German-language clubs, newspapers, and other groups to close, and many formerly German-language schools to switch to English.

Another external factor that encouraged assimilation was the sequential replacement of ethnic groups in urban neighborhoods. As Polish immigrants moved into Irish areas of a city, for example, they did not attend the Irish (territorial) parishes. Instead, they constructed their own churches—often only a block or two away. In Chicago, they built their St. Mary of the Angels Church and its school complex on an entire city block, "practically in the shadow of" the Irish Annunciation Church. "Saint Mary of the Angels soon became the center of a flourishing Polish neighborhood. The effect on Annunciation parish was immediate: church membership and school enrollment declined dramatically as Polish newcomers displaced older Irish residents."[29] Most of the Irish had been renters rather than homeowners, so it was easy for them simply to leave. When they did, they tended to move to outlying, predominantly Protestant, neighborhoods instead of reconstituting an Irish-American "ethnic village" elsewhere. This dispersion necessarily affected the "Irishness" of their Catholicity. "By 1920, a large segment of the Chicago Irish population had repudiated an ethnic identity in favor of a strictly Catholic identity,"[30] naming their fraternal organization the Knights of Columbus, for example, rather than the Knights of Columbanus as was current in Ireland. Another force for assimilation was intermarriage: third-generation Irish, Germans, and (later) Italians increasingly married across ethnic lines.

Immigrant Catholics Today

To what extent is this pattern—group migration to specific parts of the country, initial concentration in ethnic parishes, tensions and conflicts with previous immigrants, and gradual assimilation—prevalent today? According to a 2013 survey, the most common ancestry now cited by Catholic adults under age 65 is Mexican (19 percent). Mexican and Mexican-American Catholics are joined by Hispanic immigrants from other Latin American countries and the Caribbean, as well as by Puerto Ricans (who are US citi-

zens by definition), and by the Hispanos and Chicanos of the Southwestern United States, whose ancestors have lived in this country longer than most Anglo Americans. Hispanics count for 71 percent of the growth in the US Catholic population since 1960.[31] Overall, 38 percent of US Catholic adults under the age of 65 claim a Hispanic or Latino ethnic identity. Among the youngest generation of Catholic adults—those in their twenties—the percentage exceeds 50 percent.[32]

As with earlier immigrant groups, Hispanics are concentrated in particular parts of the United States. Most Mexican and Central American immigrants tend to reside in the southwestern states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado, but growing populations can also be found in North Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, Florida, and Kansas, as well as in Chicago, Detroit, and other urban areas. More than 500,000 Puerto Ricans came to New York City between 1946 and 1964; they now comprise "the largest single ethnic group in the city boroughs of the Archdiocese of New York," and 41 percent of the Catholics in the entire Archdiocese.[33]

In addition to Hispanic/Latino and non-Hispanic white Catholics, the church in this country also includes almost three million Filipino, Korean, Indian, and other Catholics from Asia and the Pacific islands (4 percent of the total number of Catholics in this country), and over two million African American, African, and Afro-Caribbean Catholics (3 percent of the total). While their percentages may seem small, these populations, too, are often concentrated in a few dioceses. Most Asian-American Catholics live in the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas of California, along the New York-Washington corridor, in Chicago and Seattle, and along the Gulf Coast. African American Catholics, African immigrant Catholics, and Afro-Caribbean Catholics can be found in the large urban areas of the Northeast and Midwest, in the urban and rural South, and along the Pacific Coast in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. A sizeable population of Afro-Caribbean Catholics can also be found in South Florida and in the New York City area.

Have these new concentrations of Catholic immigrants had the same church experiences as previous groups? While there have been some similarities, there have also been many differences. To begin with, Hispanic immigrants have usually not had specific parishes constructed for them. The 1918 codification of Canon Law required special permission before immigrants could construct their own parishes, that twentieth-century bishops were less willing to grant: "Therefore, when Spanish-speaking newcomers arrived from Mexico, the Catholic Church in Chicago did not welcome them

as openly as it had previous immigrants from Europe."[34] Cardinal Mundelein did reluctantly authorize two national parishes and one storefront mission church for Mexicans, but

> this fell far short of meeting the religious needs of the immigrant community. In some ways the existence of a few national parishes made the religious status of Mexican Catholics more ambiguous. When Mexican parents found their way to the nearest Catholic church to arrange a baptism for their child, the English-speaking pastor often told them to "go to the Mexican parish," that might be miles away in a strange neighborhood.[35]

In other areas, such as New York City, a single "Spanish parish" was founded to serve all Catholics speaking that language—some twenty different ethnic groups. This often reduced the sense of ownership and the feeling of being "at home" in what was really an amalgam of different cultures.[36]

Like the Italians before them, Mexicans and other Hispanic migrants had practiced a largely home-based and folk version of lay Catholicism in their home countries. Religion was infused into the entirety of their daily lives:

> Religion in that mountain town of my childhood was part of daily life despite the fact that some of us saw the priest and visited the town church sparingly. The day would always begin with my mother opening up the windows and doors and proclaiming: "May God's grace enter upon this house and those therein and may it remain with us always." When we left home to help in the fields or go to school, we always asked for a blessing from our parents. The same was done upon returning . . . . A statue or an icon of the Blessed Mother made the rounds of the dwellings of the mountain town, where it was kept overnight. There was a prayer to greet the statue and a prayer to take leave of it. We prayed the holy rosary promptly after sunset every night, and no one in the family was excused from this obligation.[37]

Home rituals such as these were, in some cultures, supplemented by lay-led church activities. People in many parts of Latin America, especially in the rural areas, had been "thinly pastored" since the early 1800s. Missionaries in the twentieth century, therefore, attempted to train lay leaders for the local churches that the priests could visit only rarely. In Guatemala, for example, "The lay leaders who went through the Maryknoll training programs began a tradition of initiative and self-reliance in church matters that is still operative today. Each village has a prayer leader, teachers for adult religious education, and

a choir."[38] Immigrants who were used to actively creating their own religious practices, whether at home or in church, were not attracted to the more passive, "church-on-Sunday" Catholicism practiced in many North American parishes.[39]

Accustomed to organizing and leading their own religious rituals, Hispanic immigrants did not bring their own clergy with them when they came, as the Germans, Poles, Irish, and French Canadians had done. The American hierarchy, therefore, needed actively to lure the new arrivals into a parish-centered and clergy-run Catholicism. This had been one of the reasons for founding national parishes in the past:

> when the Italians came to Chicago, the archdiocese actively promoted the formation of national parishes and subsidized them indefinitely. It did not leave them wandering about looking for a parish community that would welcome them, as it did [later] with the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Preoccupied with suburban growth, Catholic authorities after World War II forgot that the ethnic parish was a tried and true institution of immigrant adjustment and neglected to promote it among the Spanish-speaking.[40]

By the 1950s and 60s, it was assumed that simply allowing the new migrants to attend the local parish and training the already-existing English-speaking pastors and parish staff to accommodate to their needs would insure that Hispanics "would not be ecclesiastically isolated but involved immediately in the life of the local parish."[41]

In practice, this was less successful. Many pastors and parish staff resisted learning a new language and culture. There was also a tendency to assume that all immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean shared the same "Hispanic" culture. This was, and is, not the case: Maya Catholics from Guatemala, for example, do not necessarily even speak Spanish, and the root paradigms of their culture are profoundly different from other Latin Americans.[42] Attempts to include all Latin American cultural groups in a single parish, or in a single "Hispanic" parade or fiesta, often ended by alienating all of them.[43] Additionally, by the time that many Hispanics arrived in the urban areas of the Northeast and Midwest, Catholic schools were either closing or becoming too expensive for them to afford to send their children there. Thus, Hispanics were often denied the opportunity for Catholic schools to help them integrate their own cultural versions of Catholic identity with the American version.

In spite of these initial difficulties, many parishes in the United States today do have substantial Hispanic populations, while others serve various

Asian or African groups. In 2013, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to conduct a study of the cultural and ethnic diversity of Catholics in this country. In addition to counting the number and percentage of Catholics self-identifying as belonging to a particular ethnic group, the study also attempted to count how many parishes were serving them. CARA identified a total of 6,332 parishes that were known to serve one or more racial, ethnic, cultural, and/or linguistic groups—35.9 percent of all the parishes in the United States.[44] Of these 6,332 parishes, 72 percent serve Hispanic/Latino Catholics; 13 percent serve Asian or Pacific Islander Catholics; and 2 percent serve Native American Catholics. The remaining 13 percent (831 parishes) continue to serve older European ethnic groups such as Italians, Poles, or Ukrainians.

Table 1.2 **Parishes Offering Services for Ethnic Groups, 2010**				
Ethnic Group	Number of Parishes	% of Total Number of Parishes	Number of Adherents	% of Total Number of Adherents
Hispanic/Latino	4,544	25.8%	29,731,302	38%

Asian, total
  Filippino
  Vietnamese
  Korean
  Indian
	463
	NA
	232
	130
	NA
		2.7%
		NA
		1.3%
		0.7%
		NA
			2,905,925
			2,200,000
			483,600
			199,698
			146,400
				4.0%
				2.8%
				0.6%
				0.2%
				0.2%

Native American	101	0.6%	536,601	0.7%
Sub-Saharan African	NA	NA	330,000	0.4%
European (Italian, Polish, etc.)	831	4.7%	NA	NA
Percentage of Ethnic Parishes		35.9%		
Total # of Catholic Parishes/Adherents	17,638		78,240,268	

Source: Mark Gray, Melissa Cidade, Mary Gautier, and Thomas Gaunt, SJ. "Cultural Diversity in the Catholic Church in the United States," Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), Georgetown University, 2013, 11.

With the exception of this last 14 percent, however, the majority of today's ethnic parishes were not specifically established to serve the particular ethnic population that currently attends them. Bishops have been reluctant to approve new ethnic parishes today, assuming that the eventual assimilation of the founding ethnic group's children would render such parishes superfluous. No bishop wants to be saddled with another crop of overlapping churches, each holding a remnant of elderly immigrant parishioners:

> [Cardinal] Spellman generally worried about the wisdom of retaining nationality parishes, not only because they seemed to retard assimilation and to perpetuate the image of the church as a foreign institution, but also because they were so temporary. By the third generation, the English-speaking grandchildren of German, Slavic, and Italian immigrants were heading for the suburbs, leaving behind huge nationality churches with a few dozen elderly members . . . . Why not move instead to integrated, mixed parishes serving elderly immigrants of an earlier generation as well as the young immigrants of the latest group?[45]

Few parishes today, therefore, have been specifically founded for a particular ethnic group. Those few that were so founded are often not full-fledged parishes but rather "centers" or missions—a subordinate status that one Korean-American priest decries: "being labeled something other than actual parishes suppress[es] the necessary and healthy development as a U.S. immigrant and ethnic church, thus stifling any contribution to the universal Church."[46] This lack of their "own" parish has been seen by critics as a crippling deficiency:

> Today, as in the past, people migrating to the United States bring their religions with them, and gathering religiously is one of the ways they make a life here. Their religious identities often (but not always) mean more to them away from home, in their diaspora, then they did before, and those identities undergo more or less modification as the years pass.[47]

The inability to found, and to take subsequent responsibility for, their "own" parish hampers today's immigrants in the preservation of their own culture, as well as in their smooth adaptation to Catholicism as practiced in this country. Less than 10 percent of the pastoral leaders surveyed in 2014 by Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry said that Hispanic parishioners are "fully" integrated into their parishes.[48]

For better or for worse, the majority of today's Hispanic, Asian, and African immigrants attend parishes with other ethnic groups. This means that the average "Catholics in the pew," of all races and ethnicities, are confronted

with these cultural differences much more intensively than Catholics experienced in the nineteenth century, when they attended separate, monoethnic parishes. This could open the door for more misunderstanding and conflicts, but it could also provide a unique and precious opportunity for enriching the Catholic (that, after all, means "universal") identities and practices of all involved. For this to happen, however, we need to understand how the deeper dimensions of culture—its value and cognitive dimensions as well as its material and behavioral ones—operate to shape Catholic belief and practice. This is the task of the next chapter.