

St. Ambrose Parish

JANUARY 21, 2024
BEEHIVE

DECLINE OF CLERGY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1965

The highest point for Catholic clergy in the United States

59,426
TOTAL PRIESTS

2022

The number of Catholic clergy in the United States today

34,344
TOTAL PRIESTS

1965

Number of diocesan priests

36,467



2022

Number of diocesan priests

24,110

1965

Diocesan priests active in ministry

95%

2022

Diocesan priests active in ministry

66%

The decline in the number of priests, seminarians, and new vocations to the priesthood in the United States appears to be more pronounced in parishes where priests serve more parishioners, according to a report commissioned by the organization Vocation Ministry.

Vocation Ministry aims to train and encourage priests, educators, and the Catholic laity to support and expand vocations programs in parishes and schools. The study found that there are fewer new vocations in large dioceses where priests do not have a chance to get to know their parishioners and encourage budding vocations. The report's authors point out that their findings should be taken into account when considering merging Catholic parishes.

Aging clergy aren't being replaced

The organization's newly released "Creating a Culture of Vocations," provides an analysis of vocations trends and makes recommendations on how to improve the ability of parishes and dioceses to foster vocations to the priesthood.

From 2014 to 2021, the report finds, there was a 9% decrease in active diocesan priests, a 14% decrease in active religious priests, a 22% decline in the number of seminarians, and a 24% decline in total priestly ordinations per year.

Only 30 of 175 dioceses ordained an average number of priests at or above replacement level over the five years from 2016 to 2021, according to the report. Dioceses in which the retirement of many priests is imminent may need to ordain two, three, or more priests to replace retiring or dying clergy.

Smaller parishes tied to more vocations

The Vocation Ministry report separated dioceses by population into four tiers, numbered from 1 to 4. Tier 1 dioceses had more than 750,000 Catholics; tier 2 dioceses had 350,000 to 750,000 Catholics; tier 3 dioceses had 100,000 to 350,000 Catholics; and tier 4 dioceses had fewer than 100,000 Catholics. [*Our Archdiocese of Detroit in 2023 dipped below 1 million Catholics for the first time in 70 years.*]

The tier 4 dioceses with a small Catholic population had the largest ratio of priests to parishioners — and also the best vocation rate. The dioceses with the largest Catholic populations fared the worst, with the lowest ratio of priests to parishioners and the worst vocation rate.

Given that about 70% of priests say their parish priest was the most influential on their vocation and did the most to cultivate their call to the priesthood, the report argues, more priests per parishioner tends to mean more vocations.

Continued on page 2



Continued from page 1

“I was most surprised that we were able to find such strong correlations between how many parishioners each active priest serves and ordinations,” Rhonda Gruenewald, founder of the Houston, Texas-based nonprofit Vocation Ministry, told the *Catholic News Agency* last February. “We actually found the proof to what many suspected: If a priest is placed in a position where he serves 3,000 families, it is difficult for him to build relationships and make time to invite men to discern the priesthood and mentor them. Of course this makes sense, but now we can objectively show that dioceses that have priests serving a high number of parishioners have fewer ordinations,” she said.

This means consolidation of parishes can accelerate a shortage in vocations, as priests are forced to serve more parishioners.

The report draws upon seminarian and ordination data from the Official Catholic Directory, and verifies these numbers with vocations directors. Its analysis draws from interviews with priests, vocations directors, and seminarians.

The Vocation Ministry report emphasizes another key data point about prospective priests: About 75% of newly ordained priests said their call to the priesthood first came before age 18. “This is when they are in catechism class, the parochial school, serving at the altar, and receiving the sacraments,” Gruenewald said. “This should be a wake-up call for bishops, priests, and laity.

“We do not have to accept this decline,” Gruenewald told CNA. “We have seen the number of seminarians increase dramatically when dioceses are intentional about engaging their priests and laity for vocations.”

Fostering vocations: a way forward

The Vocation Ministry report makes recommendations for bishops, vocations offices, and all Catholic laity.

Gruenewald told CNA the Vocation Ministry organization has helped improve vocation numbers, especially in the dioceses of Peoria, Illinois; Ogdensburg, New York; Stockton, California; and Lansing, Michigan. The report offers a few concrete suggestions:

- It questions the rapid turnover rate among dioceses’ vocations directors, who hold that role on average for only three years.
- It suggests that the “sharpest, most capable priests” should not necessarily be assigned to large parishes, where they can become exhausted and less able to foster vocations.

- Families should participate in a parish-based vocations ministry, while religious education programs for children and teens should cultivate “hearts for Christ.” Young men must receive “a consistent and encouraging message” about vocation discernment.
- Priests should be healthy, holy, and focused, taking the fostering of vocations seriously “throughout parish life.” With the help of other Catholics, they should avoid the dangers of being overworked and make time to focus on sources of vocations in young adult ministries, altar service, and other areas.
- Bishops, the report recommends, should be holy, inspirational, and trusted by their priests and seminarians.

Among the report’s sources is the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), based at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Father Thomas Gaunt, SJ, executive director at CARA, told CNA he agreed with the report’s focus on the importance of a relationship with a priest and of parish activities to encourage and foster vocations.

“Vocations are inspired by relationships,” Gaunt said. He cited a saying popular among Jesuits: “We don’t have Jesuits who are inspired to become a Jesuit because of the president of the school. But we have a lot who were inspired by their English teacher.”

However, he questioned some of the report’s methodology. He voiced “some concern” about the usefulness of the population statistics in the report. “Where there’s a growing population doesn’t necessarily indicate that the Church is any more successful. It just means there are more jobs. Or if there’s a diminishing population, it’s not that the Church is less successful. There are fewer economic opportunities,” Gaunt said.

The bishops and pastors of the Northeast and Midwest face “a very different set of daily issues” than those in the South and West, he said. The former are “maintaining huge facilities where there’s not as big of a Catholic population” while the latter face a situation of such growth that “no matter how many more parking spaces you build, you still have people who can’t get into church. Those are big factors that go on that really impact the measure they use. In these items, take it with a grain of salt,” he said.

Written by Kevin J. Jones for the Catholic News Agency, March 3, 2023. For more info, visit catholicnewsagency.com

All Things Considered

It may be difficult to make out what you are looking at in the photo on this page. What you are seeing is one of two of our sump pumps in its pit in the ARK. Their purpose is to handle any ground water that may find its way into the building. For more than twenty years they performed that duty of keeping the ARK dry – until the “water event” of 2021 when the building was flooded, not by ground water, but by storm water coming into the structure through the doors and skylights.

The original pumps were themselves submerged and burned out during the water event, consequently, they were recently replaced with new ones a little more than a year ago.

We noticed, almost immediately, that these new pumps were working almost continuously, signifying that the water table was higher than before. Then in the late Spring of 2023, we began noticing that the pumps were picking up traces of what appeared to be some sort of petrochemical. By the fall, this was no longer a trace. The sump pump was filling up with an oily substance – at times inches deep.

The photo you are looking at is what the sump pit looks like as of last week. What should be clear ground water is now “gunk.” The pump is still doing what it is supposed to do – moving ground water into the storm system. Only now, that can’t be good.

So, the ARK has become something of the “canary in the coal mine” – we’re picking up something that is not supposed to be there. We alerted the City of Grosse Pointe Park.

The City of Grosse Pointe Park in turn alerted the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy – EGLE – in Lansing. They paid a visit to the ARK and tested the air. Their pronouncement was that although its quality was not perfect, it was not dan-

gerous. They looked at the mess in the sump pit but did not take samples.

We, however, took samples, and keeping a proper chain of custody, we had the gunk from the ARK sump pump tested by an independent laboratory. The results are back and the substance is identified.

As a benchmark, the lab indicated that said substance should not be present at more than 20,000 tg/L at the high end. We tested at 69,000.

I refrain from revealing the exact substance for the moment in order not to unduly influence an investigation into the source. We cannot definitively identify where this stuff is coming from, even though we have some strong suspicions.

At the advise of the lab, we repeated the pit test this past week expanding the search for TPH, BTEX and a Metals Panel.

In the meantime, we will continue to pressure our Archdiocesan attorneys to have EGLE take their own water test and to do a *diligent* search of the area to determine what may be the source of the contaminant leaching into our system.

Right now, we have only a small environmental clean-up on our hands. Depending on the size of the source, it could be a major project, “a potential catastrophe,” as it has been referred to by some. There does not seem to be a lot of urgency being generated in dealing with this.

What we know about the substance in our pit is that it is not explosive in its current state, and while it smells bad, it does not present a danger to health in this water mix.

It does not seem likely that it is something that will flush its way out of

the system anytime soon – on its own. More than likely it is going to take some serious environmental remediation.

I am adamant that none of these costs should be born by St. Ambrose Parish. This is not a problem of our making.



Our once clean sump pump, now filled with gunk

I am also concerned that this further moves back the re-opening of the ARK to a date completely unknown. How can we be compensated for the lost financial costs to the parish? Moreover, how can we measure what we are losing in community-building?

Our Infrastructure Committee, formed right after the 2021 water event, worried about a repeat water disaster – we just didn’t anticipate that there would have been an environmental issue that would derail us first. It makes us all the more determined to have a thorough and open review of the aging storm and sanitary systems upon which our campus rests.

St. Ambrose Liturgical Choir

Now under the direction of Josh Bircroff, our Liturgical Choir is reconstituting itself. They sing at the weekly 11:15 a.m. liturgy and major feast days of the Church.

There's lots of great music at Mass that needs to be sung that just cannot reasonably be done by a congregation. By spending the time and effort to rehearse each week, the choir provides a great service to the congregation by opening up the amount of literature the Assembly can be exposed to. Used appropriately, this has significant theological and musical implications, broadening the congregation's experience of the divine. It's a real ministry.

For more information, contact Mr. Bircroff at burcroffjosh@gmail.com. or stop up in the loft before or after Sunday's masses.



Faith Formation Station

Next week the parents of our faith formation students preparing for First Holy Communion will gather to pray together and to learn more about the Eucharist and the ways in which they can best help their children prepare to receive Christ for the first time. Trying to decide what to present at this important meeting is difficult, because so much of our Catholic identity lies in the Eucharist. Our opening prayer will lead us through a guided meditation in which we all meet Jesus who broke bread with us and reminded us that no matter where we go, he will always be there with us in the Eucharist. In addition to an overview of the sacrament, we will discuss how our families are the domestic church and the importance of the sacredness of the ordinary. We will conclude our meeting together with a shared prayer for unconditional love and guidance.

This year, the students spend a lot of time learning about both Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Guided by their faithful catechists, Jessica Kodanko and Tim Zilli, they will come to know about the sacramental origins in the Scriptures. They will come to understand what it means when we say that Jesus Christ is “substantially” present in the Eucharist. They will come to understand how the Mass prepares us to receive this gift of love. They will come to understand the consequences of this love in their family, their community, and their friendships. We are preparing the students to preach the Good News that God is love, that God's love dwells among us, and that God's love calls us to become this love for one another.

Next Sunday, January 28th, 2024, these students preparing for their First Eucharist will participate in a Rite of Enrollment in which they will be called by name to willingly stand before the parish congregation and profess their desire to prepare for and to receive the Eucharist. The students will receive a special blessing and a lapel pin from Fr. Tim. This liturgy recognizes the students' sacramental preparation, which includes practicing at Mass so that the children become comfortable coming up in front of the community. This helps children see the altar as the family table that we are all called to gather around. In a very concrete way, they can see the link between worship and formation in faith.

On the day that their parents had them baptized, they took the first step to having their child initiated into the Body of Christ – the universal Church. The Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation complete that initiation into the Body of Christ. Nowhere is the fullness of the Body of Christ more evident than in the celebration of Sunday Mass as a parish community. A child's First Communion is another step toward completing that full initiation into the life of the faith community. Thus, it is a parish celebration. The parish is welcoming these young people to the Table of the Lord. On Holy Thursday as a family and then again on May 11th, 2024 for Solemn Eucharist these children will be welcomed to join the St. Ambrose parish community – and the universal Church – at the Lord's Table.

As First Communion is a parish celebration, we invite the parish to pray for all of the children who are preparing to receive the Eucharist. Special bookmarks will be in the back of church for anyone willing to take one home as a reminder to pray for one of our program students. Through the wonder and awe of these students, our entire parish will learn again what it means to taste and see the goodness of the Lord dwelling among us. If we open our eyes to witness them in their preparation, we, too, can be converted, evangelized, and transformed. These children are gifts to their families, to our parish, to the entire Church, to the whole world.

May God continue to bless the sacramental journey of our first communicants: **Connor Bunch, Jack Campbell, Amelia Coppola, Brooks Daniell, Edward Girodat, Tate Hartung, Charlotte Kolar, Teodoro Lachuk, Matilda McKenzie, Valentina Paonessa, Eva Seng, Marietta Smith, Andrew Wachler, May Wilborn, and Julia Woodside.**

Kelly Woolums

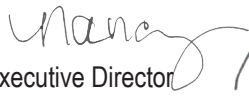
From Pregnancy Aid

I wanted to extend our deepest gratitude for including us in your Christmas Giving Tree project again this year. As you know, we receive no government funding, so the generosity from our community is important to us.

This year's gifts were particularly delightful. I can't express enough how enjoyable it was for our volunteers to unpack all the bags and boxes. Today, we successfully integrated the new clothes, diapers, and baby equipment into our boutique and storage areas. These donations will sustain us throughout the entire year!

Your donations do not just benefit the unborn and their families; they also serve as an inspiration to our dedicated volunteers. Your example reaffirms their belief in the importance of our cause and motivates them to continue their efforts to make a positive impact in the lives of others.

Nancy Anter, Executive Director




Praying with Gothic & Netherlandish Art

This semester the team at MANRESA Jesuit Retreat house will be praying with the artworks of several Gothic or Early Netherlandish artists, focusing each evening on a different artist. They'll begin with Duccio, the final evolution in Italy of the icon tradition, and then, with Giotto, move into the beginnings of modern art.

We'll also pray with the works of the Limbourg brothers, Rogier van der Weyden, Dieric Bouts, Hans Memling and Juan de Flandes. Join us for this spiritually enriching visual program which takes place on Tuesdays, 7:00–8:30 P.M. – Feb. 13, 27 | Mar. 12, 26 | Apr. 9, 23 | May 7. Instructors are Fr. Peter Fennessy, SJ of the Manresa staff and Carole Sugrue, docent from the Detroit Institute of Arts. There is a fee of \$100. Register at manresa-sj.org/021324-art or phone 248.644.4933 Ext. 0.

Ghirelli Rosaries

Six different custom designed rosaries were made by hand in Italy expressly for St. Ambrose Parish. The bead collection ranges from hard woods to various semi-precious stones.

The crucifix is modeled from the Ark Plaza sculpture and the center piece depicts the First and Second Coming of Christ from our sanctuary. The "Pater" bead is taken from details in our stained glass windows.

A Ghirelli Rosary is a perfect Christmas Gift, for someone joining the Church, or for a First Communion keepsake

To order, please visit our website, use the QR code below, or visit the parish office.



The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the St. Ambrose Catholic Community Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

Priest in Solidum: Rev. Timothy R. Pelc
Pastoral Minister: Charles Dropiewski
Religious Education: Kelly Anne Woolums
Minister of Music:
Office Manager: Peggy O'Connor
Secretary: Mary Urbanski

Sacramental Celebrations

Masses: On the Lord's Day –

Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:30 & 11:15 a.m.

Baptism: Arrangements for both adults and infants to be made by contacting the rectory.

Penance: As announced and by appointment.

Marriage: Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.

Funeral: Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased's passing.

Directory

Parish Office: 15020 Hampton

Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230

Tel: (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838

Email address: stambrose@comcast.net

Religious Education: (313) 332-5633

Pastoral Ministry: (313) 332-5631

Ark Scheduling: (313) 822-2814

Parish Website: stambrosechurch.net



NAME _____

HOME PHONE _____

WORK PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

- ☐ I would like to learn more about the Catholic Faith.
- ☐ I would like to prepare for Baptism.
- ☐ I would like to join the Catholic Church/Community.
- ☐ I would like to complete my initiation into the Catholic Church by celebrating my Confirmation and Holy Communion.
- ☐ I would like to return to the Church and to a more active practice of my faith.
- ☐ I would like to learn more about becoming a sponsor for a new Catholic.
- ☐ I would be willing to help with the details of this year's R.C.I.A. program
- ☐ Call me for my other needs, requests, questions, etc.

Return this to the Parish Rectory or in the Sunday Collection basket.

Liturgy Schedule

Monday, January 22

Weekday 3rd week in Ordinary Time

Tuesday, January 23

St. Vincent, deacon;

St. Marianne Cope, virgin

8:30 a.m. – Rev. Gerard Cupple;

Joseph & Agnes Majer;

Wednesday, January 24

St. Francis de Sales, bishop & doctor

Thursday, January 25

The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle

7:00 p.m. – Mass – Rev. Frank Surtel;

Stan & Bernice Phillips

Friday, January 26

Sts. Timothy & Titus, bishops

12:00 p.m. – Mass – Eugene Martin

Saturday, January 27

St. Angela Merici, virgin

4:00 p.m. – Mass – For All People

Sunday, January 28

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

8:30 a.m. – Mass – For All People

11:15 a.m. – Mass – For All People

Scriptures for the 3rd Week of Ordinary Time

January 22

2 Sm 5: 1-7, 10

Ps 89:20-22, 25-26

Mk 3:22-30

January 23

2 Sm 6:12b-15, 17-19

Ps 24: 7-10

Mk 3: 31-35

January 24

2 Sm 7: 4-17

Ps 89: 4-5, 27-30

Mk 4: 1-20

January 25

Acts 22: 3-16 or 9: 1-22

Ps 117: 1-2

Mk 16: 15-18

January 26

2 Tm 1: 1-8 or Ti 1: 1-5

Ps 96: 1-3, 7-8a, 10

Mk 4: 26-34

January 27

2 Sm 12: 1-7a, 10-17

Ps 51: 12-17

Mk 4: 35-41

January 28

Dt 18: 15-20

Ps 95: 1-2, 6-9

1 Cor 7: 32-35

Mk 1: 21-28

Third Sunday of Ordinary Time January 20th & 21st

Reference # in our Breaking Bread Hymnal or on your iPhone using the QR code.

Entrance: The King of Love My Shepherd Is #470

Responsorial: Psalm 25: I lift up my soul #761

Preparatory: Lord of All Hopefulness #412

Communion: The Summons #387

Recessional: To Jesus Christ, Our Sovereign King #736



To participate electronically, go to: facebook.com/stambroseparish or better yet, to
You Tube at www.youtube.com/channel/UCbymbGIXqUF6UqPct5xFg

Your Envelope Speaks ... the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... \$10,100.00

On Sunday, January 14, 2024

in envelopes we received \$3,198.00

in the loose collection..... \$2,379.00

in electronic donations..... \$3,698.23

for a total of \$9,275.23

Under budget for the week..... \$824.77

Number of envelopes mailed 621

Number of envelopes used 43



Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized:
Pat Blake, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Matthew Elias, Mary Martin, Emilie Kasper, Anna Noto Billings, Eileen O'Brien, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Charmaine Kaptur, Frank Gregory, Alex Billiu, Jackie Walkowski, Maria Simcina, Sharif Hannan, Shirley Whelan, Ricardo Hernandez Montoya, Albina Checki, Judy Sivanov, Matthew Brown, Lily Faith, Patty Freund, Janis Ramsey, Colette Gilewicz, Al LaHood, Valerie Hudson, Jeanene Maples, Angela Hansen, John Freund, Kevin O'Connor, Tiffany Saine, Nick Piccione, Ann Billiu, and Nicole Lefevre-Wilson.

Statements for 2023

Financial statements for your donations given to St. Ambrose calendar year 2023 for IRS 2023 purposes are currently being prepared by our front office. You should be in receipt of it before the end of this month. Should you need that information before then, please call 313-822-2814 or email us at stambrose@comcast.net and we will expedite things for you. Please remember that if you made a donation to the Catholic Services Appeal 2023, you should receive a separate statement directly from the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Now is an excellent time to sign up for electronic giving. Go to stambrose.net and click on the online giving icon at the top of the page.

52 Sundays

Reclaim Sundays as a day of rest, service, and time for your family in 2024. Begin this new year with creative help for you and your young family with resource called "52 Sundays."

The content is free and fully accessible online, with the option to print each week's resources. The resource also gives you the opportunity to connect with other families like yours.

Subscribe today to have the content for each Sunday sent right to your inbox every week! Go to the Archdiocese of Detroit website, and/or try this shortened URL address: <https://shorturl.at/nyA39>



Confirmation 2024



Photography for St. Ambrose by Christine Semmler.
For more photos in color, go to facebook.com/stambroseparish.

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