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The Future of the Vincentian Charism in the United States: Challenges, Trends, and Opportunities

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The Future of the Vincentian Charism in the United States: Challenges, Trends, and Opportunities

SCOTT KELLEY, PH.D., AND JESSICA WERNER, PH.D.



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With declining membership in many branches of the Vincentian Family looming in the background, a key question emerges: how will the Vincentian mission continue in the United States in the twenty-first century? In 2005, Rev. Edward R. Udovic, C.M., Senior Executive for University Mission at DePaul University, argued that “by 2023 the Vincentians may well have no physical presence, canonical sponsorship role, or governance role at DePaul University.”¹ His conclusion is based on careful observation of the historical membership trends in the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, going all the way back to their arrival in 1816. It is a trend line that steadily increased over decades until it reached a peak in 1965, and which has been on a steady decline ever since.² The membership trends that Fr. Udovic described in 2005 not only pose a challenge to DePaul University, they will also continue to impact virtually every apostolate sponsored by the Vincentian Family in the United States. Despite noted trends of decreasing membership and a corresponding narrative of decline, there are also powerful signs of growth and rebirth, signs that should not be overlooked. The unaffiliated lay Vincentian experience may well be one of those signs of our times, pointing toward seeds of growth and renewal.

In consultation with his confreres towards the end of his life Vincent de Paul wrote the *Common Rules* for the Congregation of the Mission, creating the institutional structures necessary to sustain the mission and to ensure that future generations would share in the profound experience of “being good news to the poor.” As Vincent had learned first-hand, any institution must do two vital things well in order to ensure its long-term viability: establish lasting institutional forms to maintain the integrity of the original charism; and inspire new generations of people to “gather together for the sake of the mission.”³ Future viability, Vincent came to realize, depends not only on the successful cultivation of the *esprit primitif*, the founding spirit, from one generation to the next, but also on the *institutional forms* necessary to sustain the mission from one generation to the next. This paper will analyze the extent to which there has been and continues to be a cultivation of the Vincentian charism in a new generation of lay people in light of decreasing membership in two established branches of the Vincentian Family in the United States. The paper will also identify some basic characteristics of new institutional forms that may sustain the vibrancy, vitality, and effectiveness that has marked the work of the Vincentian Family in the United States over the last two centuries.

¹ Edward R. Udovic, C.M., “Translating Vincent de Paul for the 21st Century: A Case Study of Vincentian Mission Effectiveness Efforts at DePaul University,” *Vincentian Heritage* 23-25:2, 26:1 (2005): 298. Available at: http://works.bepress.com/edward_udovic/6. This poses a particular challenge to DePaul University because its Articles of Incorporation stipulate that “[t]he management of the corporation shall be vested in a Board of Trustees. The number of Trustees may be increased or decreased by the Membership at any of the meetings of the Membership. Trustees shall be elected by the Members in such a manner and for such terms of office as shall be provided in the By-Laws. At least two-thirds (2/3) of the voting Membership of the Corporation shall be members of the religious society called in the Roman Catholic Church, The Congregation of the Mission.” The Articles of Incorporation are available at: <https://secretary.depaul.edu/trustees/articles.aspx> (link expired; accessed 27 March 2015).

² “Personnel Studies and Statistical Analyses,” in Personnel Files, DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Richardson Library, DePaul University, Chicago, IL. Hereafter: “Personnel Studies,” DRMA.

³ Udovic, “Translating Vincent de Paul,” 294.



Fullerton Avenue entrance to the DePaul University campus quadrangle.

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In the case of DePaul University, the future prospect of not having any physical presence of Vincentians on campus or in governance roles is not an intractable, unsolvable problem. In many ways, these challenges are already being addressed in remarkable fashion;⁴ however, there is no guarantee that future generations will engage the Vincentian mission with the same commitment as previous ones. In what manner are new generations of people being inspired by the Vincentian mission? Who are they? What is their current relationship with the Vincentian Family? What kind of relationship do they want with the Vincentian Family in the future? Accurate responses to the questions of *charismatic* cultivation will also help address strategic questions of *institutional form*. The two are mutually interdependent.

Currently, there is no adequate term to refer to this new generation of people inspired by the Vincentian mission in the United States; therefore, this paper uses the term “unaffiliated lay Vincentian” (ULV) to describe young adults ages 18 to 35 who have had a formative experience with the Vincentian mission either as a student at a Vincentian university, as a volunteer in a post-graduate Vincentian volunteer program, or both. They are *unaffiliated* because they do not currently have a formal relationship with the Vincentian Family as members of the Congregation of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, Ladies of Charity, or the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. They are *Vincentian* because they have been formed in and continue to self-identify with the Vincentian mission in profound ways. It is not an exaggeration to argue that Vincentian universities and post-graduate volunteer programs function as a kind of new Vincentian novitiate for Millennials, a period of initial exposure and formation that helps young adults identify a path of life-long commitment to the Vincentian mission. From one perspective it is not surprising that Millennials appear to have little interest in a formal relationship with existing branches of the Vincentian Family, given the broader characteristics, traits, and interests of Millennials. From another perspective, however, there is a unique opportunity to engage unaffiliated lay Vincentians in new ways and to establish new forms of ongoing engagement.

Even though many young adults have had a formative experience in this new novitiate, by and large they leave the experience without a community of like-minded

⁴ Rev. Udovic describes DePaul’s efforts to build “mission capital” in “Translating Vincent de Paul” as cited above. More recently, in 2007, DePaul University, St. John’s University, and Niagara University collaborated to create the Vincentian Mission Institute to develop leadership capacity for mission. For more on this effort, visit: <https://mission.depaul.edu/Programs/vmi/Pages/default.aspx>

and like-hearted people to sustain them, no discernable structure for life-long formation, no rituals to celebrate ongoing commitment, no clear prospects to work professionally in the many apostolates of the Vincentian Family, and no structure of formal membership or ongoing participation in the broader Vincentian Family. They are, in a word, *unaffiliated*.

DePaul University's Office of Mission and Values (OMV) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of unaffiliated lay Vincentians. In addition to collecting basic demographic information, the study sought to understand the degree to which ULV's consider themselves to be spiritual and religious, how the Vincentian mission currently influences their lives, and how they would like to engage with the Vincentian Family in the future. An online survey, consisting of both close-ended and open-ended questions, was sent to 1,734 men and women who had been identified by OMV as unaffiliated lay Vincentians.⁵ As a point of comparison, a total of twenty-eight men and women have joined the Congregation of the Mission or Daughters of Charity in the United States since 2004.⁶ A total of 351 men and women completed the online questionnaire, which equates to a twenty percent response rate.

In addition to data provided by the survey, the study also utilizes data gathered through follow-up interviews conducted with three survey respondents. Interviewees were chosen because their various ages and experiences represented the range of ages, backgrounds, and experiences of the larger ULV community.⁷ "Louise" attended a Vincentian university as an undergraduate student and participated in two different Vincentian volunteer programs. She is in her late 20s, married with two children, working as a full-time stay-at-home mother, and lives in the Pacific Northwest. "Elizabeth" is in her mid-20s and has completed two Vincentian service programs as well, but attended a public university for her undergraduate education. She is currently single and has plans to attend graduate school for occupational therapy. "Vincent" participated in a Vincentian service program and attended Catholic universities for both his undergraduate and graduate education. "Vincent" is in his mid-30s, lives in the West with his wife and currently works as a public school teacher. The interview protocol consisted of fourteen open-ended questions relating to the three primary categories that were also assessed in

⁵ In establishing a working definition of unaffiliated lay Vincentians, it became apparent that any definition would never be exhaustive or perfectly accurate. Selecting programs that did or did not fulfill a set of criteria for "formative experience" posed a difficult challenge. The design of the survey, therefore, was framed more narrowly and not with the aspirations of being comprehensive but merely a representation of a group that is most likely much larger. Because the research was commissioned by the Office of Mission and Values at DePaul University, and relied on the institutional experiences at DePaul, the data is naturally skewed toward the formative experiences of a sizeable group of DePaul students and alumni as determined by well-established programs such as Vincentians in Action that have over a decade of experience. In addition, getting a sufficient number of survey responses so that the findings were statistically valid was challenging, especially on university campuses where "survey fatigue" is a significant problem for institutional researchers. It is important to note these challenges, therefore, and to recognize that the conclusions based on this data must be qualified accordingly.

⁶ Since 2004 in the United States, fifteen women have entered the Daughters of Charity and fifteen men have entered the Congregation of the Mission.

⁷ The names of the respondents were changed to keep their identity confidential.

the survey: demographics, religiosity and spirituality, and current and future engagement with the Vincentian mission.

To better frame the importance of the unaffiliated lay Vincentian experience, it is important to understand the dynamics of diminishment in the Congregation of the Mission and some general trends regarding the spirituality and religiosity of Millennial Catholics. After these background contexts have been described, we will examine the general demographics of ULVs and their possible significance for the Vincentian Family, the nature of the ULV experience with regard to faith, spirituality, and life choices, and the desires of ULVs for more formal, longer-term relationships with the Vincentian Family. We will conclude with some brief suggestions about how the Vincentian Family might proceed in building those longer-term relationships.

The Story of Diminishment

Three factors will play an increasingly important role in shaping the work of the Vincentian Family in the future: diminishment in total numbers in the Congregation of the Mission and the broader Vincentian Family in the United States; generational shifts with regard to Catholic identity; and changing socio-economic and cultural contexts in the broader U.S. Catholic Church.

In 2016 the Vincentian Family in the United States will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the first members of the Congregation of the Mission of St. Vincent de Paul in Baltimore, Maryland, in July of 1816. At the time the total population of Catholics in the United States was below 1.2 million. Over the last 200 years, total membership in the Congregation of the Mission shows a pattern of steady and consistent growth up until 1965, when membership peaked at just over 800 confreres. This was then followed by a pattern of steady and consistent decline that continues to this day.⁸ In 2014 there were as many Vincentians as there were in 1920, but the total Catholic population in the United States has grown from less than thirty-four million around the same time period to over seventy-seven million today.⁹ It is estimated this population could reach between ninety-five and 128 million by 2050.¹⁰ At the same time, and perhaps paradoxically, Catholicism is a “faith in flux” like all other religious traditions in the United States, wherein Americans change religious affiliation early and often. Forty-four percent of the U.S. adult population does not currently belong to their childhood faith.¹¹ While the percent of Americans who were raised Catholic and later leave the faith (32%) is considerably lower than Presbyterian

⁸ “Personnel Studies,” DRMA.

⁹ *Ibid.*; “Pies, damned pies, and statistics: Is the Catholic population growing?” in *Nineteen Sixty-four*, a research blog for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, edited by Mark M. Gray (25 November 2010). Available at: <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2010/11/pies-damned-pies-and-statistics-is.html>

¹⁰ “Pies, damned pies, and statistics,” *Nineteen Sixty-four*. Available at: <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2010/11/pies-damned-pies-and-statistics-is.html>

¹¹ “Faith in Flux,” *Pew Research Center Religion and Public Life* (February 2011). Available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/04/27/faith-in-flux/>

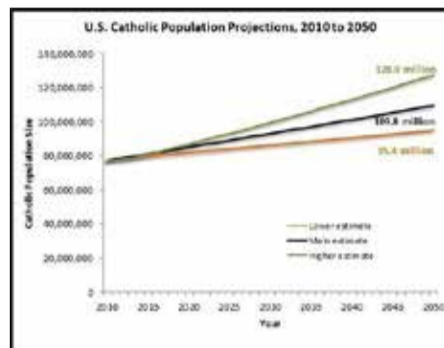
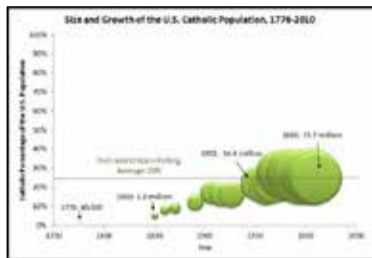
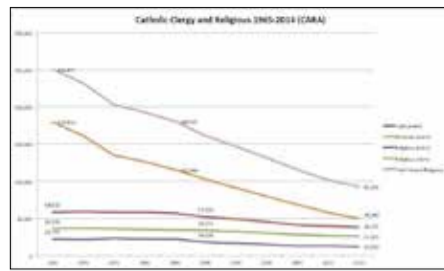
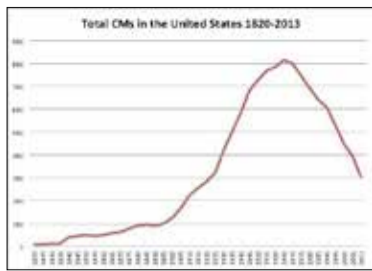


Figure 3.; Figure 4.

Images from Gautier PPT, data from CARA.

<http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2010/11/pies-damned-pies-and-statistics-is.html>

Figure 1. Created by Scott Kelley. Source: Personnel Studies and Statistical Analyses. Personnel Files, DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University.

Figure 2. Created by Scott Kelley based on data from CARA.

<http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html>



(59%), Anglican / Episcopalian (56%), or Methodist (54%), it is still a very sizeable group of people.¹² And so there is a peculiar paradox:

[w]hat is certain now is that the Catholic population in the United States has remained around 25 percent, in part due to sizable immigration of Catholics from Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Meanwhile, some 16 million to 20 million Americans who were born Catholic no longer identify as such.¹³

A simple narrative of diminishment, therefore, does not accurately portray the complex realities of the U.S. Catholic Church overall, only certain aspects of it, particularly the significant decline in religious life relative to the total population of Catholics. In 1965 there were more than 250,000 total vowed religious, but by 2014 there was just over 92,000.¹⁴ Diminishment in the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity is not a unique Vincentian phenomenon, but reflects a similar pattern of decline among nearly all Catholic religious in the United States since 1965.

Diminishment of numbers in religious life poses significant challenges for a Catholic Church that is expected to continue growing well into the twenty first century. It poses challenges for a robust network of well-established Catholic institutions in health care,

¹² “Pies, damned pies, and statistics,” *Nineteen Sixty-four*. Available at <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2010/11/pies-damned-pies-and-statistics-is.html>

¹³ William V. D’Antonio, Michele Dillon, Mary L. Gautier, *American Catholics in Transition* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013. Kindle Edition), locations 140-142. Hereafter, D’Antonio et al., *American Catholics*.

¹⁴ “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” compiled by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University. Available at: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html>

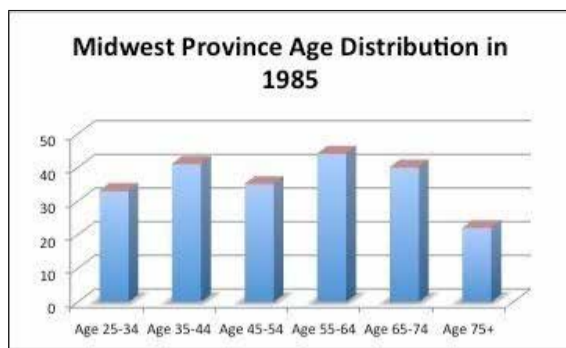


Figure 5. Created by Scott Kelley. Source: Personnel Studies and Statistical Analyses. Personnel Files, DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University.

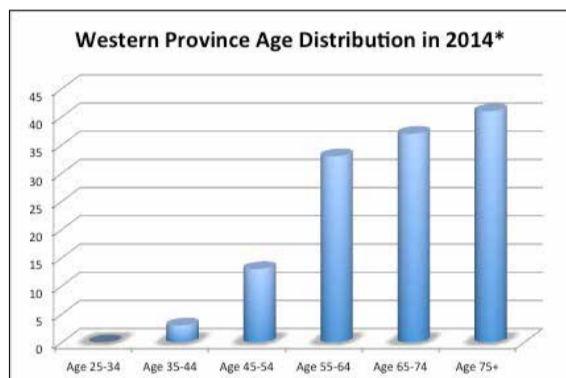


Figure 6. Created by Scott Kelley. Source: Personnel Studies and Statistical Analyses. Personnel Files, DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University.

* On 25 January 2010, the Congregation of the Mission's provinces of the Midwest (St. Louis), South (Dallas), and West (Los Angeles) merged into a new Western province that is headquartered in St. Louis. As a result of the merger, the age distribution data in 1985 and 2014 may not correspond exactly.



education, and social services that were founded and managed by Catholic religious for much if not all of their institutional history. The term “diminishment” in this context is not used to describe influence, impact, legacy or relevance, but merely to describe the decline in total, professed religious membership of sponsoring orders due to deaths, departures, and declining vocations. Many Catholic institutions are not likely to have a significant presence, or any presence at all, of the orders of religious men and women who founded them, raising the essential question about the viability of the various charisms that animated, guided, and shaped generations of religious women and men.

[Click links throughout article to access relevant tables and statistical data]

A decline in total membership is only one dimension of the diminishment challenge; age distribution is another. In 1985 there was a fairly even age distribution in the Midwest Province of the Congregation of the Mission with roughly the same number of confreres in their mid-thirties as in their mid-sixties.¹⁵ By 2014, however, the age distribution is skewed significantly by the numbers of confreres who are 55 or older.¹⁶ In 1985, forty-nine percent of confreres were age 55 or older, but in 2014, eighty-seven percent of confreres are 55 or older. Today, roughly seventy-five percent of members are over the age of 65. This reality has profound implications. Not only are more confreres retired or retiring, decreasing the number of full-time working men and reducing or eliminating the respective incomes that come into community, but members are also entering a phase of life that includes greater demand for health care, hospice care, and all of the other needs associated with aging. The cost pressures of meeting these demands will require difficult decisions,

¹⁵ “Personnel Studies,” DRMA.

¹⁶ It is important to note that confreres from Kenya were not included in this data. This is largely because Kenya is likely to become its own province soon, and many Kenyan confreres do not have primary apostolates in the United States. Including Kenyan confreres in these numbers would mask the phenomenon of diminishment among confreres whose primary apostolate is in the U.S.

and may include alienating property, terminating the formal sponsorship of institutions, or the liquidation of other assets to meet present need. This demographic reality also means that a sizable majority of current members come from an older generation of Catholics who, on the whole, tend to have a different understanding of their Catholic identity in general, and the role of the sacramental life in particular, especially when compared to lay Millennial Catholics.

The vast majority of confreres are in the Pre-Vatican II or Vatican II generation, and are likely to possess different opinions about the fundamentals of Catholic identity when compared to lay Catholics from the Post-Vatican II and Millennial generations. As such, the broader contours of Vincentian culture do not appear to be monolithic, homogenous, or doctrinally shaped, but rather appear to be multivalent, emergent, and dynamic.

For reasons obvious and not-so-obvious, the Catholic Church of 2050 will look very different than it did in 1816 when the Vincentians first arrived. Geographically, new generations of Catholics are less likely to live in cities on the Eastern seaboard or in the Midwest, cities like Boston, Baltimore, or Chicago, that grew considerably as waves of European immigrants came to the United States. As D'Antonio et al., explain:

[t]he changing demography is intensifying the geographical redistribution of American Catholics that has been occurring over the last 50 years. At the same time that younger Catholics were abandoning the old ethnic neighborhoods in the inner cities of the Northeast in favor of the suburbs and moving off the farms and villages of the upper Midwest to follow jobs in the South and the West, many Catholic immigrants from Latin America were also seeking opportunities in the fast-growing suburbs around major cities, particularly in the South and the Southwest. This dispersed the geographical locus of Catholicism away from the Northeast, from the traditional bastions of urban Catholic concentrations in Boston, New York, Buffalo, Detroit, and Philadelphia, to the suburbs in and around Los Angeles, Phoenix, Houston, Dallas, Atlanta, and Miami.¹⁷

European Catholic immigrants built a sizable infrastructure of parishes, schools, and hospitals that tended to serve populations who did not have access to existing resources, infrastructure, or capital. Over the last century, however, changing demographics and geographical redistribution have made Catholic populations in the United States far more diverse in terms of ethnic and cultural identity. Cities like Phoenix, New Mexico, or Los Angeles have seen considerable growth in their Catholic populations, but often lack the same Catholic “infrastructure” that was built over decades on the Eastern seaboard and in the Midwest.

Increasing diversity and generational differences in the U.S. Catholic Church continue to have a profound impact. For Pre-Vatican II Catholics, that is, Catholics born in or before

¹⁷ D'Antonio et al., *American Catholics*, locations 2615-2620.

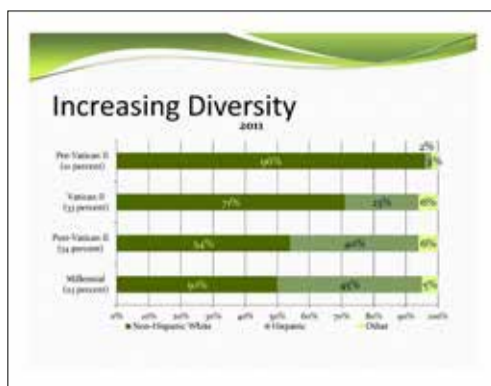
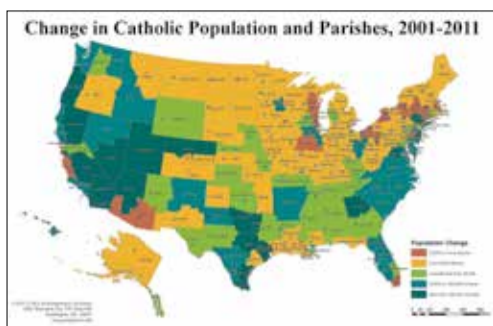


Figure 7. Used with permission from CARA.
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Figure 8., From Gautier PPT.

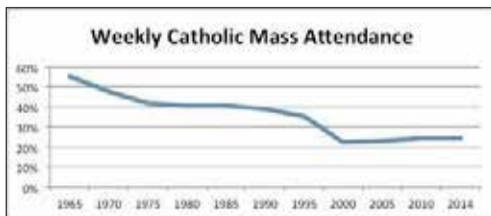
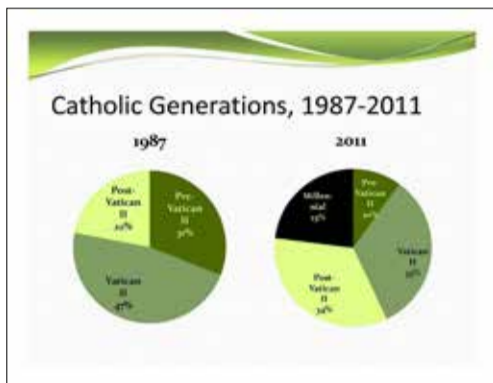


Figure 9., From Gautier PPT.

Figure 10. Created by Scott Kelley from Mass Attendance figures in "Frequently Asked Church Statistics," CARA.
<http://cara.georgetown.edu/caraservices/requestedchurchstats.html>



1940, ninety-six percent are Non-Hispanic white. For Millennial Catholics, that is, Catholics born between 1979 and 1987, fifty percent are Non-Hispanic white.¹⁸ Not only are there major *cultural differences* between Non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics when it comes to Catholic practices and identity, there are also major differences *across generations* concerning marriage, Mass attendance, knowledge of and belief in the Eucharist, participation in parish life, and religious practice beyond the parish.¹⁹

The events of the early 2000s, including September 11th, 2001, and the sex abuse scandal that gained prominence in 2002, had a profound impact on the religious self-understanding and Catholic identity of Millennials.²⁰ Catholic Mass attendance has declined steadily since 1965, when over fifty percent of Catholics attended Mass weekly, to 2014 when just over twenty percent attended weekly.²¹ While the literature on Catholic generations is considerable and far more nuanced, it is sufficient to note that the Millennial Catholics who made up twenty-three percent of the Catholic population in 2011 have a significantly different understanding of their Catholic identity and their relationship with the Catholic Church than the ten percent of Pre-Vatican II Catholics they continue to replace. These differences, for various reasons, are often framed in an overall narrative of decline.

While it is true that the Congregation of the Mission in the U.S. faces some significant challenges, the phenomenon of diminishment is not unprecedented in Vincentian history. Beginning with the sacking of Saint-Lazare in Paris in 1789, and the subsequent suppression of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity until 1816, the Vincentian

¹⁸ See Figure 2.2, "Race / Ethnic Identification by Generation" (2011), in D'Antonio et al., *American Catholics*, location 651.

¹⁹ See "Generational Changes in Catholic Practice" in D'Antonio et al., *American Catholics*, location 1761.

²⁰ William D'Antonio, "Survey reveals generation shift in the Catholic church," *National Catholic Reporter* (24 October 2011). See: <http://ncronline.org/news/survey-reveals-generation-shift-catholic-church>

²¹ See Figure 6.2, "Apart from Weddings and Funerals, About How Often Do You Attend Mass?" in D'Antonio et al., *American Catholics*, location 1809.

Family faced a significant period of diminishment for roughly five decades up to 1843. However, it then saw a considerable period of growth under Jean-Baptiste Étienne, often called the second founder of the Vincentians.²² The refounding of the Vincentian Family in the nineteenth century was ultimately successful because it responded to the needs and realities of the period, not the needs or realities of an era that no longer existed.

Étienne was elected Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity in 1843, and remained in office until his death in 1874. During his time as Superior General, both branches of the Vincentian Family enjoyed a period of rapid expansion, which included the explosive growth of a new branch of lay men who first called themselves the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in 1833. The Congregation of the Mission saw the addition of fourteen new provinces and 120 new houses (fifty in France, seventy elsewhere). Personnel numbers doubled. By 1870, the Congregation of the Mission numbered 1080 priests, 500 brothers, 220 students and seminarians.²³ During this period of recovery and expansion, the Congregation of the Mission developed not just in Europe, but also in North and South America, and in large parts of Asia and Africa.

It is hard to imagine any confrere could possibly foresee an era of growth and expansion in the dark years having witnessed Saint-Lazare, the beloved motherhouse, sacked, looted, and claimed by secular revolutionaries who actively sought to suppress their activities and purge their contributions to French civil society. One could easily parse a narrative of decline becoming a standard way of framing the realities between the years 1789 and 1816. Using a longer historical point of view, however, with the benefit of nearly four hundred years of perspective, one can easily see the paschal rhythms of growth and decline, expansion and contraction, death and new birth that is woven into the fabric of the Christian experience itself. As G.K. Chesterton so eloquently described: “Christendom has had a series of revolutions and in each one of them Christianity has died. Christianity has died many times and risen again; for it had a god who knew the way out of the grave.”²⁴ With this paschal rhythm in mind, it is all the more important to look for the seeds of new beginnings in what appears to be a narrative of decline.

Millennial Catholics and the Narrative of Decline

For Christian Smith, a prominent sociologist of religion, “[t]he story of most previous research on young Catholics, in short, is largely one of decline and loss.”²⁵ The narrative of

²² Edward R. Udovic, C.M., *Jean-Baptiste Étienne and the Vincentian Revival* (Vincentian Studies Institute, 2001). Available at: http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/3

²³ “Jean-Baptiste Étienne” in Famvin’s *Vincentian Encyclopedia*. Available at: http://famvin.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_%C3%89tienne

²⁴ G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (1925). Public domain e-edition, page 160, available at: <http://www.basilica.org/pages/ebooks.php>

²⁵ Christian Smith, Kyle Longest, Jonathan Hill, Kari Christoffersen, *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church* (Oxford University Press, 2014. Kindle Edition), location 100.

decline and loss is understandable, considering the findings that young American Catholics exhibit the following characteristics:²⁶

- they are less well-educated and knowledgeable about their Catholic faith, reporting that they do not understand it well enough to explain it to any children they might have;
- they are more individualistic in their approach to religious authority and beliefs, viewing their own personal subjective experiences and sensibilities, rather than Church teachings, as the arbiters of truth and value;
- they are very selective in what parts of their tradition they decide to believe and practice (e.g., adhering to core doctrinal truths about Jesus' resurrection and the Eucharist, but discarding Church teachings on sex, birth control, abortion, etc.);
- they are more tentative and weak in their affiliation with the Church, described as being "loosely tethered";
- they are less involved in the Church as an institution by irregularly attending Mass, making Confession, or participating in other forms of Parish life;
- they are more liberal-minded about and tolerant of non-Catholic faiths and those who claim no religious identity, viewing the Catholic Church as only one denomination among many in a larger religious system of voluntary participation;
- they may still largely adhere to a general Catholic identity, yet retain the right to define that as they wish;
- they are less likely to place their Catholic identity at the center of their personal identity structures, but rather view it as one among many other competing identities;
- they are unable to articulate a coherent account of what it means to be Catholic.

It should be no surprise that many who study these trends see in them a steady process of decay.

The narrative of decline and loss tends to be framed around two primary concerns: that there is nothing that differentiates young Catholic adults from their non-Catholic peers; and that there is a general erosion of foundational beliefs and practices. Christopher White observed, "among the major findings in *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church* is the fact that Catholic emerging adults over the past four decades are almost indistinguishable in beliefs, practices, and attitudes from their non-Catholic peers. During this same time period, the study found, Catholic emerging adults have exhibited a more dramatic decline in attendance at worship services than their non-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, location 88.

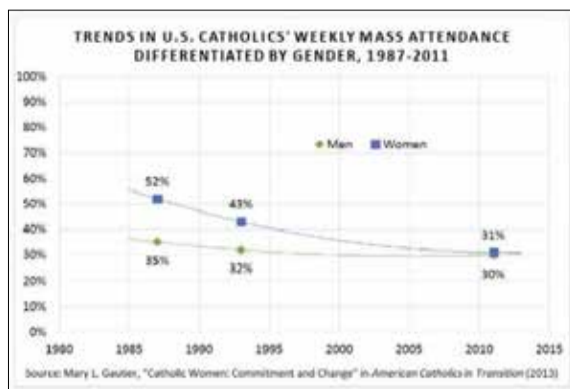


Figure 11.



Catholic peers."²⁷

Beyond decline in Mass attendance, there are deeper concerns about the theological commitments of Millennials. Coined in 2005 by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton in their book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, the term “moralistic therapeutic deism” illustrates both the lack of differentiation of theological commitments among Millennials and the nature of their divergence from Catholic theological orthodoxy. Smith et al. describe the beliefs of the 3,000 teenagers interviewed as follows:

- A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
- The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
- God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.

What might be called an undifferentiated theological consciousness, which Smith and Lundquist Denton describe, can be framed as deeply problematic because it does not reference foundational claims in the Catholic professions of faith that are both distinctive and necessary for Catholic doctrine.²⁸ It is not difficult to see the concern that an undifferentiated theological consciousness can devolve into an undifferentiated moral consciousness when it comes to Catholic moral teaching. Coupled with a decline in religious practice, particularly with regard to weekly

²⁷ Christopher White, “Young Catholic America” in *Catholic Pulse: News Catholics Need to Know* (18 June 2014). Available at: <http://www.catholicpulse.com/en/columnists/white/061814.html>

²⁸ Bernard Lonergan uses the term “undifferentiated consciousness” to describe people who have not yet carefully analyzed the habits of mind that constitute a pattern of knowing. Undifferentiated *theological* consciousness, then, describes people who have yet to differentiate the ways in which the content of their beliefs about God can radically shape worldview, outlook, value, and behavior. The Creeds of the Catholic Church and the writing of Vincent de Paul, for example, move well beyond a creator God who “watches over,” and instead upholds belief in a God who *actively participates* in human history, most notably through the incarnation. The category of Providence so foundational to the thought of Vincent de Paul is conceptually incompatible with the kind of uncritical deism that posits a God who passively watches over. The theological principles implied in moralistic therapeutic deism seem to be largely incongruent with the Catholic professions of faith: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/credo.htm

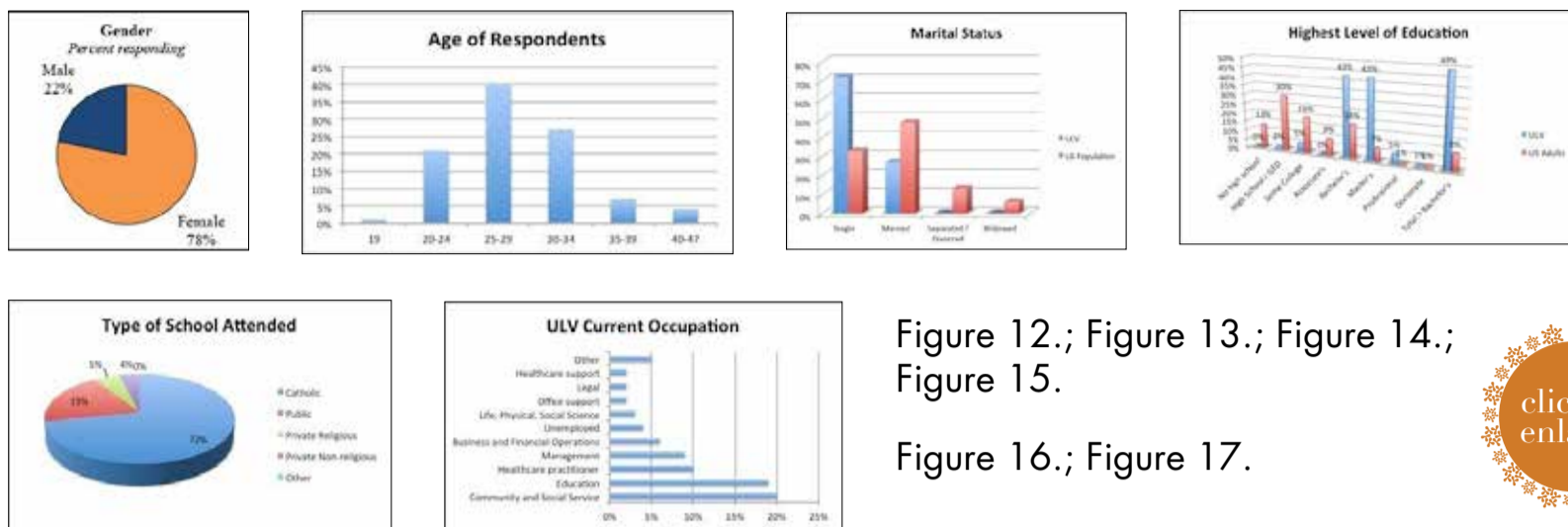


Figure 12.; Figure 13.; Figure 14.;
Figure 15.

Figure 16.; Figure 17.



Mass attendance, it is understandable to see why there is significant concern about the general relevance of the Catholic Church in the lives of Millennials.

Patricia Wittberg, S.C., sees the concern through a different lens, that of the declining role of women in the Catholic Church. In her 2012 article, “A Lost Generation? Fewer young women are practicing their faith: How the church can woo them back” in *America Magazine*, Sr. Wittberg notes that in Western societies like Europe and the United States, women are generally more religious than men. They are more likely to join churches, to participate in worship services, to be more orthodox in their beliefs, to be more devout in their daily religious practices, to be more likely to say that they experienced the presence of God in their lives, and to be more likely to read scripture. While in the mid-1990s Catholic women of Generation X *equaled* their male counterparts in Mass attendance, now, by some polls, Millennial Catholic women are even slightly *less likely* than Millennial Catholic males to attend Mass.²⁹

Compared to men, at least twice as many women have entered religious life. This holds true from the fourth-century Middle East, to twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe, to seventeenth-century France, and to nineteenth-century North America. The greater religiosity of women has been a central dimension of the Christian experience for centuries, up until the mid-1990s when the Catholic women of Generation X (1962-1980) equaled male counterparts in regular Mass attendance. By the 1990s, the Catholic women of Generation X and Millennials (1981-1995) were significantly more likely than men to profess opinions that differed from Church teaching particularly with regard to the ordination of women and matters of sexuality. The generational divides between Catholics are even larger for women than for men. This poses a serious challenge for the Catholic Church, as Sr. Wittberg rightly points out.

The narrative of decline and loss is certainly understandable given the findings of prominent sociologists of religion like Christian Smith and Sr. Patricia Wittberg when it comes to weekly Mass attendance, differing notions of Catholic identity, and the presence and leadership of women in the Church.

²⁹ See: <http://americamagazine.org/issue/5129/article/lost-generation>

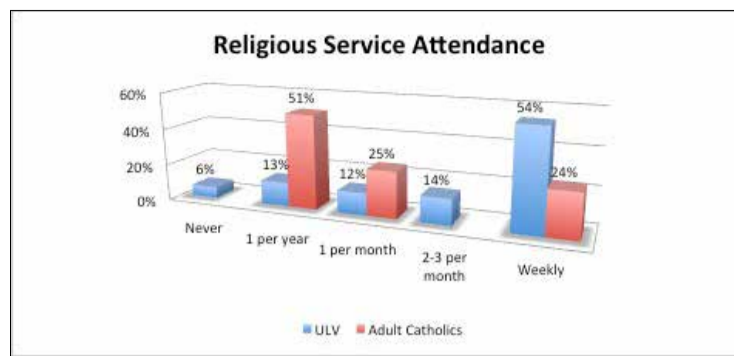
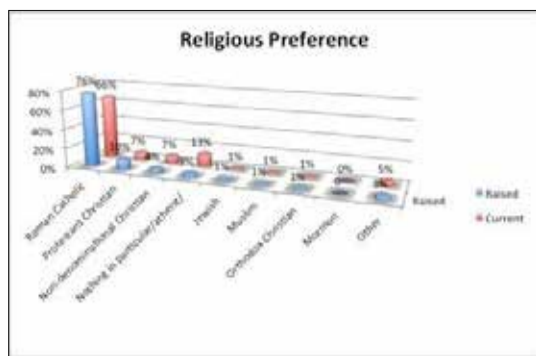


Figure 18.;
Figure 19.



Unaffiliated Lay Vincentians: Demographic Background

The majority of unaffiliated lay Vincentians are highly educated, unmarried young women in their mid-to-late 20s and early 30s who are deeply committed to the Vincentian charism, active in the Catholic church, and likely to have begun professional careers in social service, education, health care, and management. These trends stand in sharp contrast to the broader narrative of decline in much of the literature about Millennial Catholics.

It is striking to note that seventy-eight percent of respondents were female and twenty-two percent were male. U.S. Census Bureau data indicates a common trend of higher rates of volunteerism among women: of the twenty-seven percent of the U.S. Adult population who are reported to volunteer, fifty-eight percent are women.³⁰ A significantly higher proportion of Vincentian volunteers are women (78%) when compared to national averages for volunteer organizations (58%). The high proportion of females in ULV programs is a notable anomaly to the overall decline of religious practice among women since the mid-1990s. This may suggest that ULV programs are one way to enhance the religious and spiritual engagement of women who are more likely to volunteer than their male counterparts.

ULV respondents ranged in age from 19 to 47 years old, and the mean age was 28. Eighty-one percent of the respondents fall into the Millennial age range of 18-32, and nineteen percent are considered members of the Post-Vatican II age range. Although Millennials who are still in college are in a very different state of life than Millennials who are well-established in a professional career, views towards religious identity and practice tend to be more alike when compared to Pre-Vatican II or Vatican II Catholics. Fifty-one percent of respondents identified as being single, twenty-seven percent identified as being married, and fifteen percent of respondents have one or more children. One percent reports having been divorced.

In terms of educational attainment, forty-three percent reported a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education, while another forty-three percent reported a Master's as theirs. Six percent of respondents were terminal degree holders. The comparison of the ULV population to the educational levels of the U.S. population as a whole is meant only to highlight the relative opportunities that ULVs have in light of their education. The vast

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Volunteering Supplement (2012), as quoted in "CARA Volunteer Introspective: A Survey of Former Volunteers of Two Vincentian Volunteer Programs" (2012).

Figure 20.

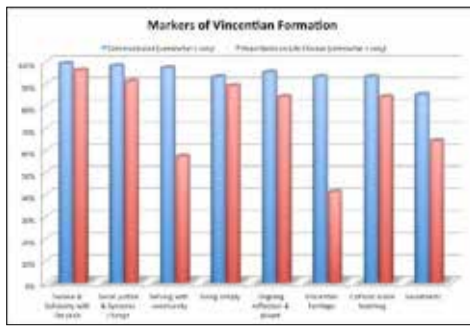


Figure 21.

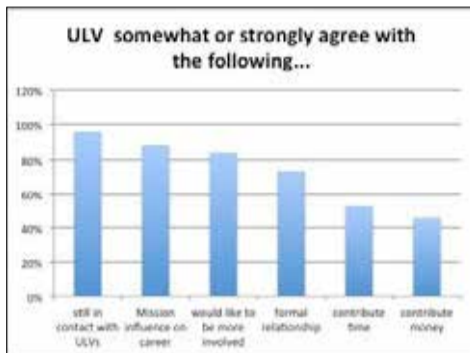
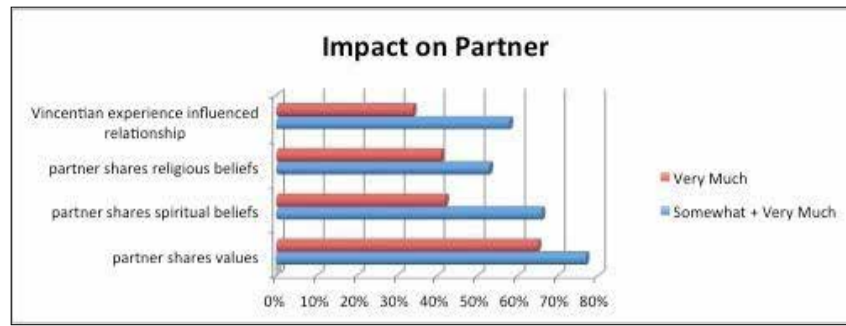


Figure 22.

majority of ULV respondents, seventy-two percent, attended a Catholic university, suggesting that their formative experiences could be understood along a continuum of opportunity and exposure spanning from the college experience or earlier all the way through the post-graduate volunteer experience. It is significant to note that ULVs tend to choose professional fields that could be considered apostolates of the Vincentian Family, including social service, education, and health care.

Unaffiliated Lay Vincentians: religious and spiritual identity

ULV respondents tend to have a well-formed and well-defined spirituality and religious identity that includes a number of distinct markers of formation in the Vincentian tradition. Although seventy-six percent of ULVs were raised as Roman Catholics and only sixty-six percent currently self-identify as Roman Catholic, there are still significant indicators of faith formation and religious practice: sixty-eight percent attend religious services more than *twice per month*, compared to the fifty-one percent of the U.S. adult population that attends religious services *once per year*.

Judging by the results of the survey, the Vincentian mission has had a profound impact on ULVs. Survey respondents were asked how important different aspects of the Vincentian mission were in informing their life choices up to this point. Ninety-six percent of survey respondents said that the Vincentian tenets of “service to, and solidarity with people who are poor and marginalized” has been “somewhat” or “very” important for informing their life choices, including their choice of graduate studies and/or professional careers. Ninety-one percent said that “working for social justice and systemic change to reduce poverty” has been “somewhat” or “very” important for informing their life choices, followed closely by the Vincentian ideals of “living simply” (89% chose “somewhat” or

“very”), and “engaging in ongoing reflection and prayer” (84% chose “somewhat” or “very”).

Respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on their responses to the question “the most important thing the Vincentian mission has taught me is” and 288 people wrote in a response (82% of all respondents). Themes that occurred most frequently in the responses included the importance of showing hospitality to all people, especially the poor and marginalized, valuing all people one encounters as human beings with dignity and worth, seeing the poor and marginalized as teachers, and living simply and in solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

Each of the interviewees said that the Vincentian mission had a significant impact on their current career choices and daily lives.

As “Louise” describes:

[The Vincentian mission] made my faith make sense to me. The whole idea of being poor as incorrect — we are all in this together, we are all equal. [Vincentians ask]... How do we build each other up? How do we fix the problems that everyone is experiencing in different parts of the world, in our own country? It was the missing puzzle piece that made my faith make sense to me.

In “Elizabeth’s” words:

I think it was just learning how to see the inherit [*sic*] dignity in every person. I have always considered myself [to be] a caring and empathetic person, but to see people, and especially the poor in a way you usually don’t get a chance to see — I grew up in a small town, the poor were not very visible, and in college I didn’t really reach out through a spiritual perspective and now I do. For me, now I look at each person and see Christ in them, and think about how God sees them.

“Vincent” explains:

I [learned] that I was best serving people that didn’t have the same upbringing that I was given. So for me that’s my gift now — to find a place where I can be an advocate for these [underprivileged] kids and their families.

The comments from “Louise,” “Elizabeth,” and “Vincent” point to a number of markers of Vincentian formation that were communicated to ULV participants during their programs and continue to be important factors for their life choices. The ULV experience was formative in profound ways. It might even be viewed as a parallel to the formative novitiate experience for members of the Congregation of the Mission or Daughters of Charity at a time when people are discerning what to do, where to live, who to become, and a variety of other existential questions that come into play after the college experience.

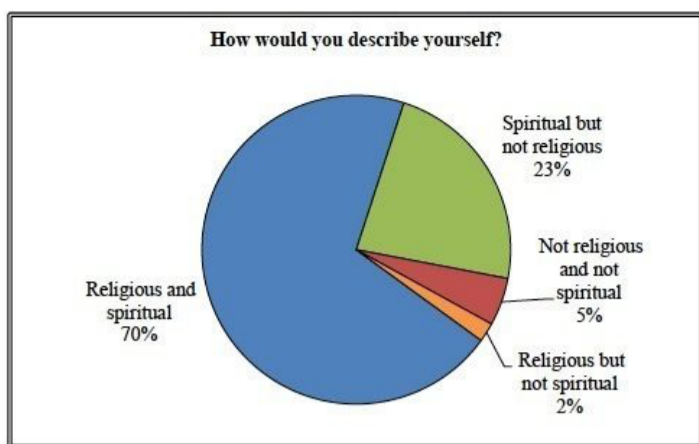


Figure 23.



One of the primary factors bolstering the narrative of decline with regard to the religiosity of Millennials is the recent growth in the number of people who self-identify as spiritual, not religious, or neither spiritual nor religious. There are a growing number of religiously unaffiliated.³¹ The ULV survey asked respondents to identify if they considered themselves to be religious and spiritual, religious but not spiritual, spiritual but not religious, and not religious and not spiritual. It also included an open-ended question for respondents to elaborate. As previously stated, a majority of ULVs self-identify as Roman Catholic (66%), but seventy percent of respondents describe themselves as being both religious *and* spiritual, whereas only twenty-three percent say spiritual but not religious, and five percent say not religious and not spiritual. Post-Vatican II respondents (85%) are more likely than Millennial respondents (66%) to describe themselves as religious and spiritual. Millennials (25%) are more likely than Post-Vatican II respondents (14%) to describe themselves as being spiritual but not religious. Compared to other adult Catholics in the United States, ULVs are more likely to attend Mass weekly and to have considered a vocation of religious life and/or ordained ministry.

Respondents were invited to interpret the terms “religious” and “spiritual” as they saw fit. Some examples of their interpretations of “religious” include the importance of having a formal relationship with religious traditions, believing in the tenets of faith and religious traditions, and attending religious services or participating in congregational life. Interpretations of the term “spiritual” were varied but typically fell into the following categories: having a personal relationship and experience of God outside of a communal one; experiencing God through prayer and/or meditation; experiencing faith in service to others; and finding God and religious truth in more than one religious tradition.

One respondent explained identifying as both religious and spiritual by stating:

³¹ See “Religion and the Unaffiliated,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/non-religious-on-the-rise-religion/> (Accessed 6 February 2015); “‘Strong’ Catholic Identity at a Four-Decade Low in U.S.,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project*, at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/03/13/strong-catholic-identity-at-a-four-decade-low-in-us/> (Accessed 6 February 2015).

I would say I am religious because I attend regular services at a Catholic church. I would say I am spiritual because I believe in experiencing God in all things and it is not necessary for me to attend Mass in order to practice this side of my spirituality.

Another stated:

I find beauty in the Eucharist and Mass as a whole. I also consider myself spiritual in the sense that I find God in nature and yoga and in other religions besides Roman Catholicism.

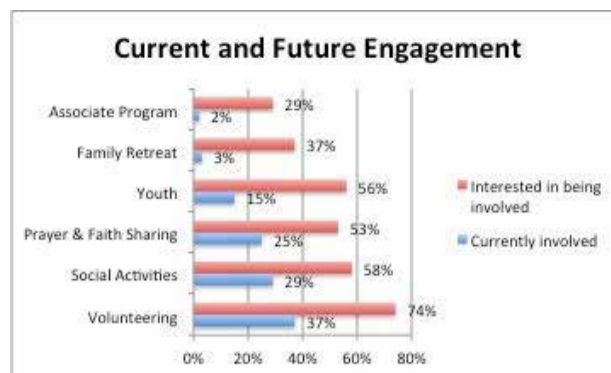
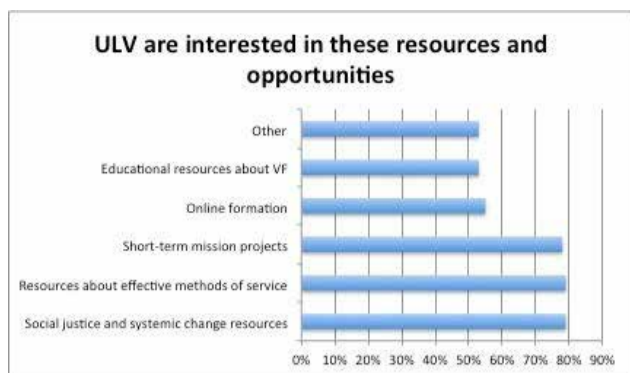
Another described the disconnection between religiosity and spirituality as follows:

I do attend Mass every so often and believe in the Catholic Church — however, I am not overly religious in that I don't attend Mass regularly/go to church for confessionals. I do pray daily (I don't often recite rote prayers) and believe in helping those who live on the margins to the best of my ability in a manner that respects people's dignity and autonomy. I believe in the power of human understanding and human connections that go beyond organized religion.

"Vincent" stated that he felt more spiritual than religious. When asked to explain he replied, "I feel more spiritual in that I can see God in different ways, not just in the Church." "Louise" and Elizabeth," however, chose to describe themselves as being equally religious and spiritual, but said they felt they could do better at both. "Elizabeth" explained:

I feel like the more you dig into your faith, the more you realize there is so much you don't know. The more I work at it [...the less spiritual and religious I feel]. There is so much out there. I could always be doing better.

When examining religiosity and spirituality, ULVs attend weekly Mass more often than their Catholic counterparts and generally describe themselves as being both spiritual and religious. However, the way individual ULVs describe religiosity and spirituality differs considerably from person-to-person. Like others of the Millennial and Post-Vatican II generations, many have begun to differentiate between being active members of the Church because they attend Mass, and being active members of the Church because they live out the tenets of the faith in their daily lives. A complete analysis of this particular question is beyond the scope of this paper, and further analysis would be very beneficial; however, the general trend lines of an active and personal appropriation of religious faith is clearly evident.



One Thing Would Like to See the Vincentian Family Organize in My Area

Respondents were invited to write in a response to finish this sentence: “The one thing I would like to see the Vincentian family organize in my area is...” Some 201 wrote in a response, or 57 percent of all respondents.

While respondents’ answers and descriptions varied widely, these 16 answers appear most often in their responses:

- Short term volunteer opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities for families
- Service with reflection or education
- Social events
- Networking events
- Young adult groups
- Groups for service and faith sharing
- A program for education and formation in the Vincentian tradition
- Young adult conference
- Reunions for year of service alumni
- Retreats
- An SVDP more proactive in raising the profile of the Vincentian mission
- Outreach around existing Vincentian organizations
- Outreach to at-risk children
- Outreach to college students
- Community services like a soup kitchen, food bank or clothes drive

Figure 24.;
Figure 25.;
Figure 26.



Engaging the Unaffiliated

The findings from the survey suggest that the primary challenges facing ULVs is not necessarily ensuring that they understand and live out the tenets of Vincentian spirituality, since that appears to be the case already, but rather it is helping ULVs stay connected to each other and to the Vincentian Family in the future. Only fourteen percent of survey respondents said they are still “very” involved with the Vincentian Family, and thirty-five percent said they were “somewhat” involved. This may be partially due to location. Only fifty-nine percent of respondents said there were Vincentian priests or brothers within 45 minutes of their house, fifty-seven percent near Daughters of Charity, and forty-two percent close to another group or organization committed to the Vincentian mission. The majority of survey respondents are either unaware of Vincentian organizations nearby their place of residence, or there are not Vincentians or Vincentian organizations in close proximity, causing some ULVs to feel disconnected from the mission. Despite these geographic challenges, eighty-four percent said they would like to be more involved with the Vincentian mission.

ULVs generally remain connected to each other and to others with whom they have experienced the Vincentian mission. Ninety-six percent reported staying in contact with people they met through their experiences with the Vincentian mission, and seventy-three percent said that they would like their relationship with others who share the Vincentian mission to be more formal and ongoing.



St. Vincent's Circle. Located next to the Richardson Library on the DePaul University Lincoln Park campus.

Image Collection of the Vincentian Studies Institute



In the form of an open-ended question, ULVs were offered the opportunity to share how they believe the Vincentian mission could address their needs and to help them remain connected to the mission. Respondents were in one of two main categories: those who live near other Vincentians, either lay or religious; and those who live in places where there is no significant Vincentian presence. Those who live in areas that do not currently have a Vincentian Family presence are still eager to stay involved and connected to the mission. Respondents suggested having a specific website for young adults that could serve as a bulletin board for ULVs. The website could include formation materials, information about regional or local gatherings, and service opportunities and updates on the happenings of the Vincentian Family both nationally and internationally. This could be a space where ULVs who live in areas without a Vincentian presence could 'check in' with Vincentians. It would also serve as a way to network ULVs who do live in areas where there is a Vincentian presence but are not sure what is happening or how to connect. Creating a Young Adult-focused, Vincentian E-newsletter was also suggested as another method of communication with ULVs.

Responses varied but several common themes emerged, including the opportunity for service. ULVs are looking for various ways to participate in Vincentian service opportunities, but busy schedules, finances, and geographical location make it difficult. ULVs identified a variety of options for potential participation: longer-term service options (such as the Vincentian Lay Missionaries which offers four week programs), half-day options, weekend-long 'plunge' experiences, and evening gatherings with a service component were all mentioned as viable options that would appeal to ULVs.

In addition to service opportunities, ULVs also suggested formal and informal ways to connect with each other and with the Vincentian Family. This may include local and/or regional day or weekend retreats, social gatherings after Mass in Vincentian parishes, and Bible studies. Many respondents indicated they would appreciate programming that is family-friendly, or has a family option, as more ULVs begin to raise families.

"Louise," who is currently married with children, and "Vincent," who is married and planning on starting a family soon, indicated that family-friendly opportunities are essential, yet are significantly harder to attend due to financial restrictions, location, and the necessity of advanced planning.

As “Louise” describes:

It’s hard, especially with the situation I am currently in, being married with small kids. Since we don’t live close to our family, we pretty much only ever travel to visit family. I think a part of it is just prior planning. The amount of prior planning that needs to go into travel when you’re no longer single — things have to get on the calendar early. Regional stuff is all good, but even when people are in the same city it’s still hard to get together. When you’re not even in the same city, it can be kind of hard to make that happen.

Additional suggestions included more opportunities for full-time, paid, employment in the Vincentian Family, or a mentorship program for recent college graduates or for those who have completed a year of service to have a connection with ULV alumni/ae that have had similar intensive mission-immersive experiences. ULVs also suggested the possibility of creating a formal lay associates program similar to the Jesuit Contemplative Leaders in Action program or Ignatian Associates.

Students and graduates of Vincentian universities indicated they would appreciate learning more about Vincentian community and service opportunities that exist after the college experience. For example, a graduate of St. John’s University moving to Denver could be connected to the Vincentian community there by his/her campus ministers or professors before leaving school.

Conclusion

In many ways, ULVs indicate a strong desire to continue in their formative mission-immersive experience, but do not currently have a community, a structure, or a format for doing so. Considering the findings from the ULV survey, there are three overarching insights for building a stronger relationship with ULVs. First, the narrative of decline and diminishment needs to become a narrative of opportunity, of growth, and of meaningful engagement. If Millennial Catholics are judged by the religious and cultural practices forged by a different generation in a different American cultural context, there will always be an undercurrent of loss, decay, demise. To the contrary, if Millennial Catholics are viewed with an eye that is attentive to the signs of the times and a mind that sees the ways in which the hand of Providence continues “to make all things new,”³² then unaffiliated lay Vincentians may well have an essential role to play in the future of the Vincentian Family in the United States.

Second, it is essential to take into consideration some seismic generational shifts that continue to differentiate Millennial Catholics and Post-Vatican II Catholics from their elders. Changing views on the importance of the sacramental life, evolving patterns of spiritual and religious self-identification, openness and interest in non-Catholic, non-Christian, and

³² Rev. 21:5.

secular traditions, all suggest that the established branches of the Vincentian Family must consider what is and what is not foundational to the Vincentian charism. These are not easy questions. In fact, they may well establish a boundary between what is considered to be authentically and uniquely Vincentian and a compelling form of humanism that marks a broader cultural trend. While this does not suggest that Vatican II and Pre-Vatican II Catholics should downplay the formative elements of their own spiritual and religious identity, it does suggest that new forms of engagement should create a hospitable space for Millennials who do not share the same spiritual and religious self-understanding. Are there some well-established practices that might slowly fade away without losing the *esprit primitif* that all religious orders were called to recover at Vatican II? Are there opportunities to engage religious otherness in ways that are mutually affirmative, yet maintain distinction and difference? Can the Vincentian Family share a common commitment to “search out more than ever, with boldness, humility and skill, the causes of poverty and encourage short and long term solutions; adaptable and effective concrete solutions”? And by doing so, can the Vincentian Family “work for the credibility of the Gospel and of the Church,” as Saint John Paul II asked of the Congregation of the Mission in 1986?³³

Lastly, the findings indicate that the ULV population is interested in opportunities for ongoing formation in the Vincentian charism and wants a closer connection to the Vincentian Family. As more opportunities for engagement emerge, it is vital for older generations to share their lived experiences and their faith experience with a new generation, and to listen attentively to the lived experience, desires, and hopes of a new generation of young men and women who also seek to be good news to the poor.



³³ “Pope John Paul II address to the General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission in 1986” in *Vincentiana* 30:5-6 (November-December 1986), 417. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana/vol30/iss5/>



Fullerton Avenue entrance to the DePaul University campus quadrangle.

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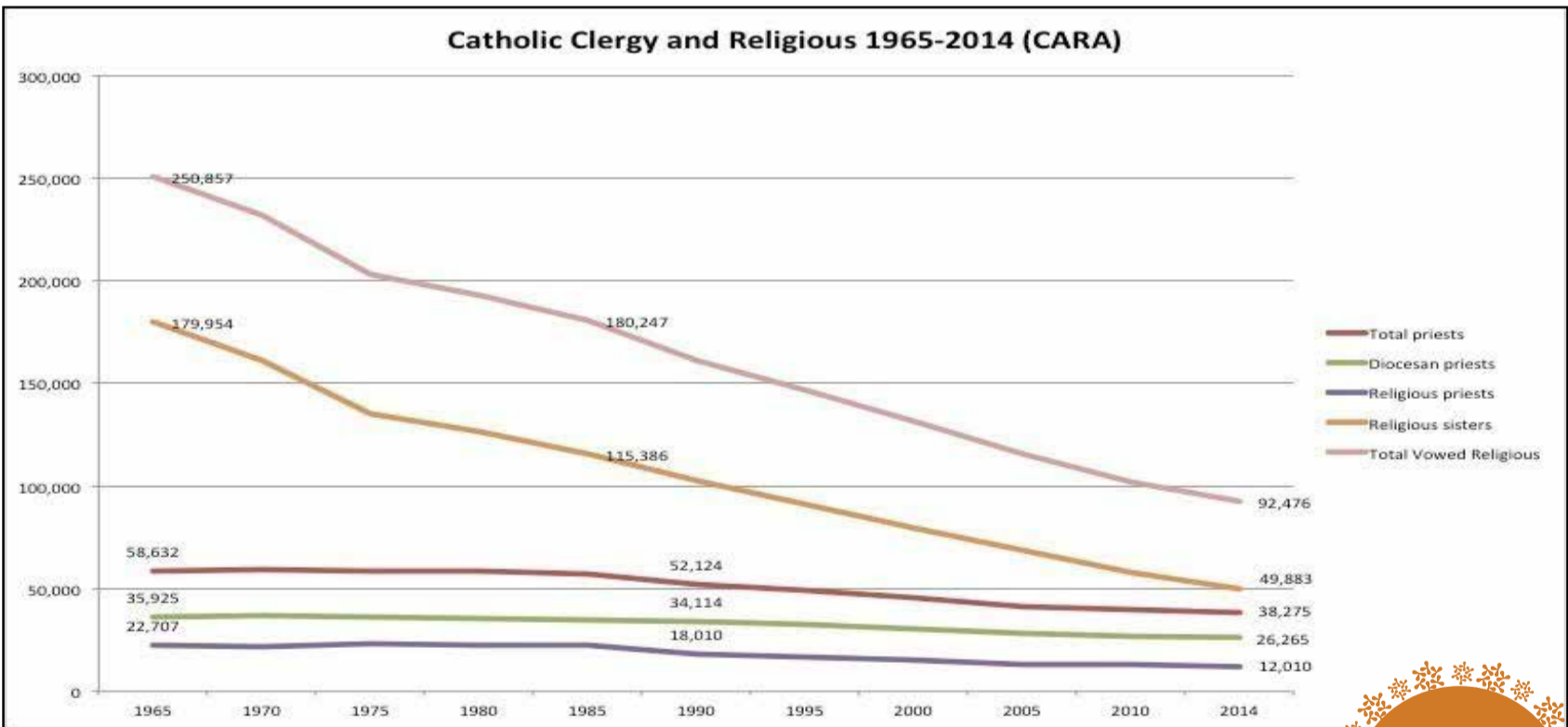
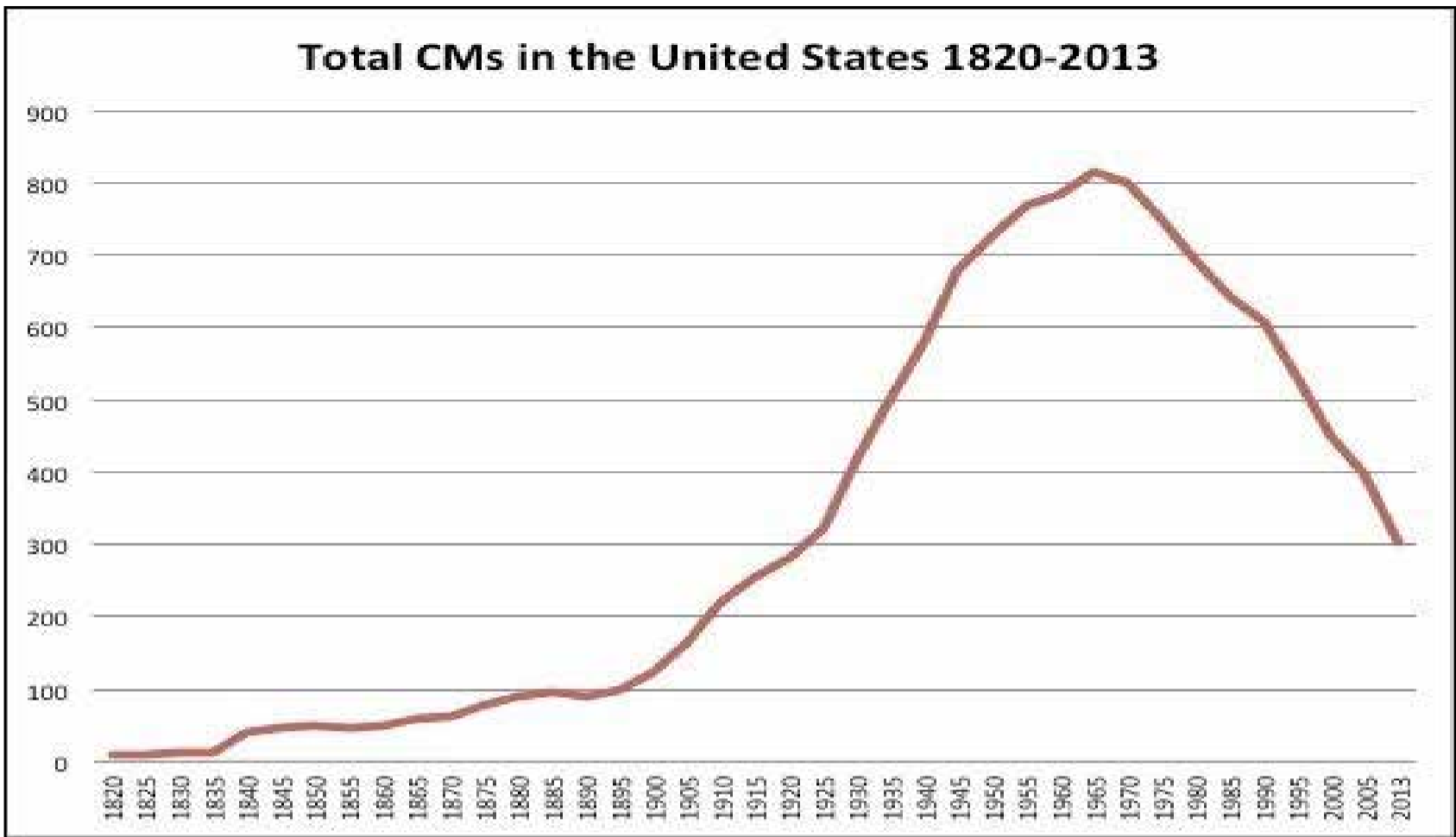


Figure 1. Created by Scott Kelley. Source: Personnel Studies and Statistical Analyses. Personnel Files, DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University.

Figure 2. Created by Scott Kelley based on data from CARA.
<http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html>



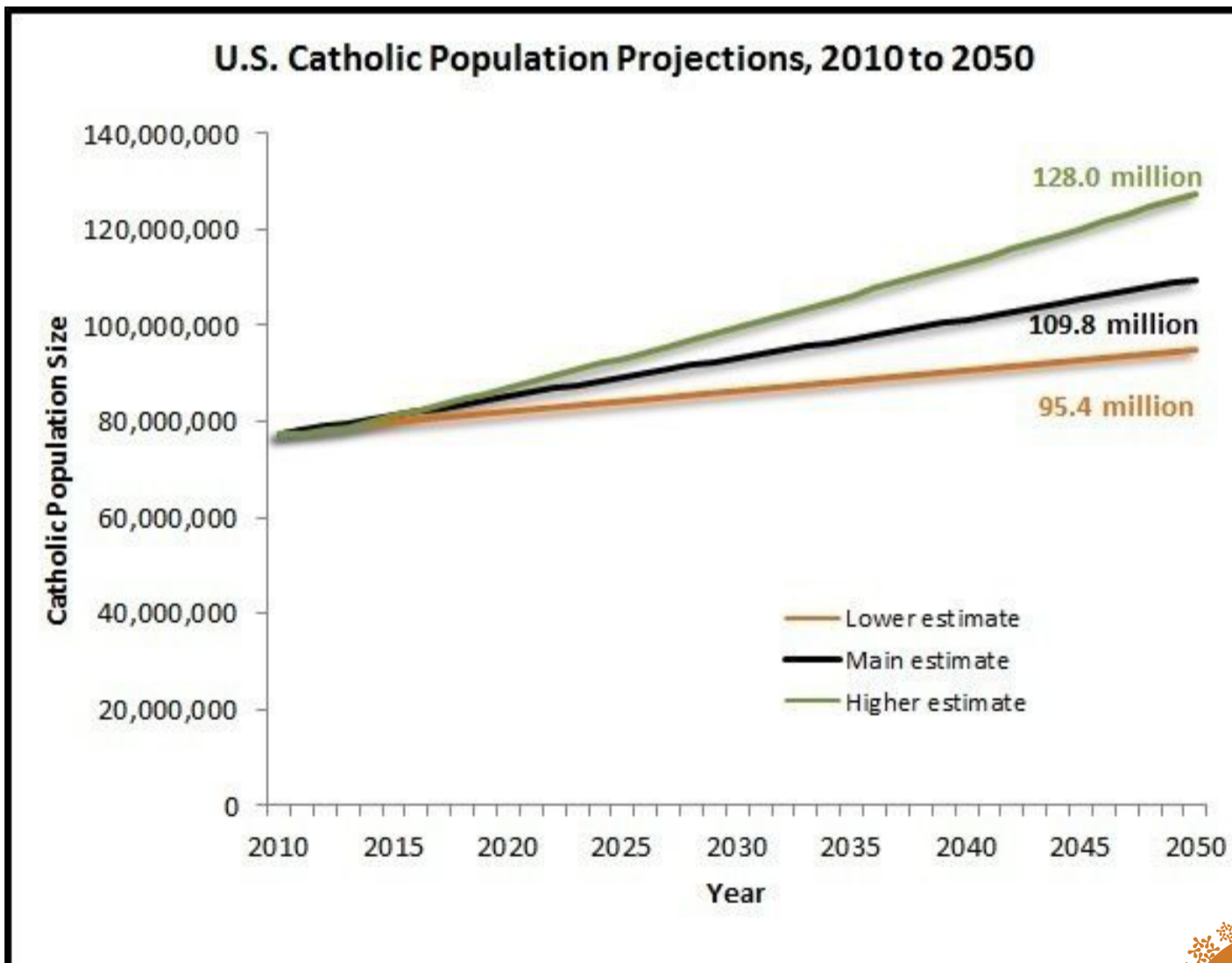
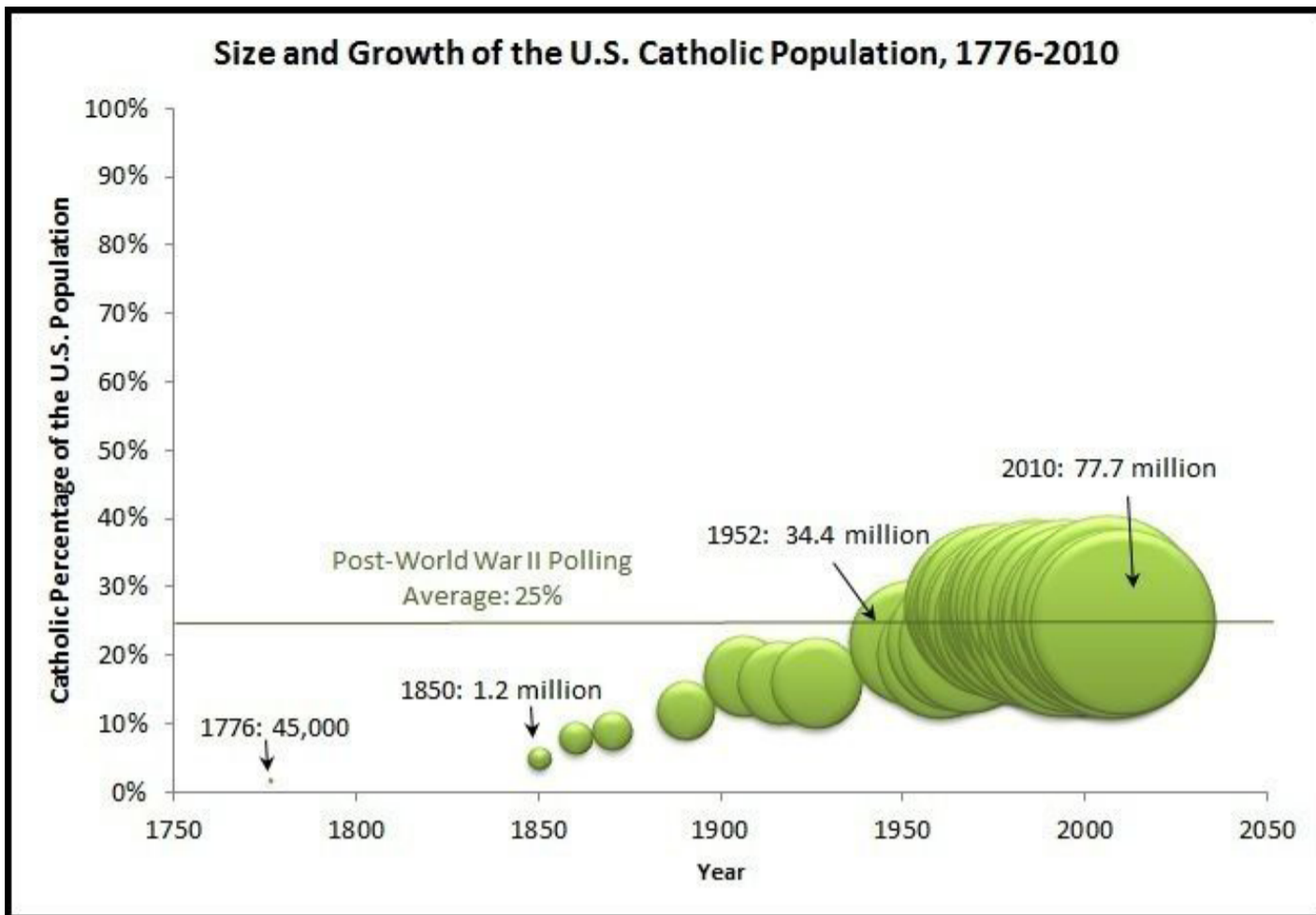
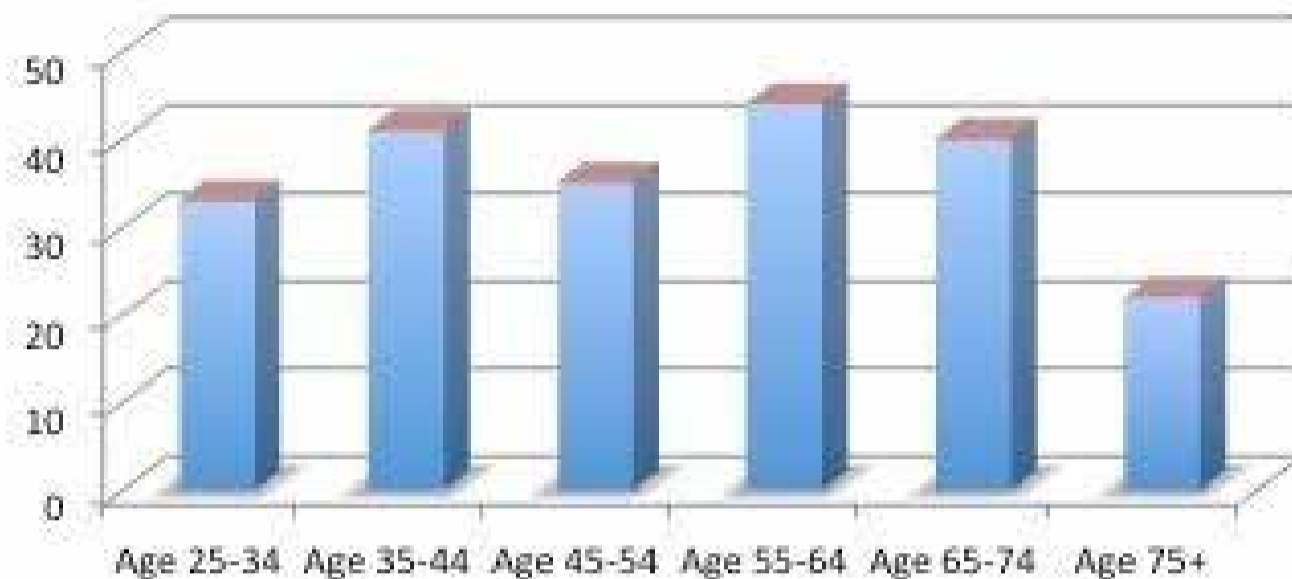


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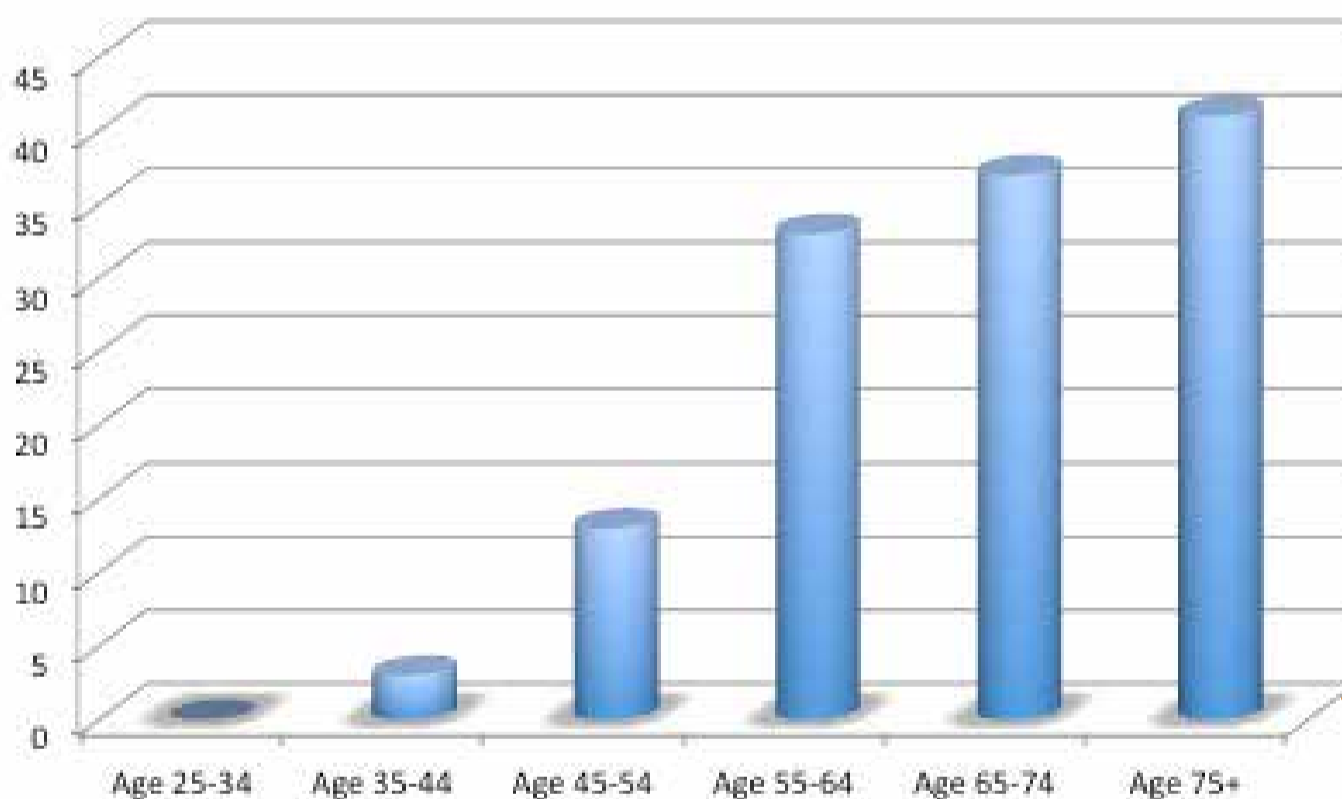
Images from Gautier PPT, data from CARA. <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2010/11/pies-damned-pies-and-statistics-is.html>



Midwest Province Age Distribution in 1985



Western Province Age Distribution in 2014*



[click to go back to article](#)

Figure 5. Created by Scott Kelley. Source: Personnel Studies and Statistical Analyses. Personnel Files, DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University.

Figure 6. Created by Scott Kelley. Source: Personnel Studies and Statistical Analyses. Personnel Files, DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University.

* On 25 January 2010, the Congregation of the Mission's provinces of the Midwest (St. Louis), South (Dallas), and West (Los Angeles) merged into a new Western province that is headquartered in St. Louis. As a result of the merger, the age distribution data in 1985 and 2014 may not correspond exactly.

Change in Catholic Population and Parishes, 2001-2011

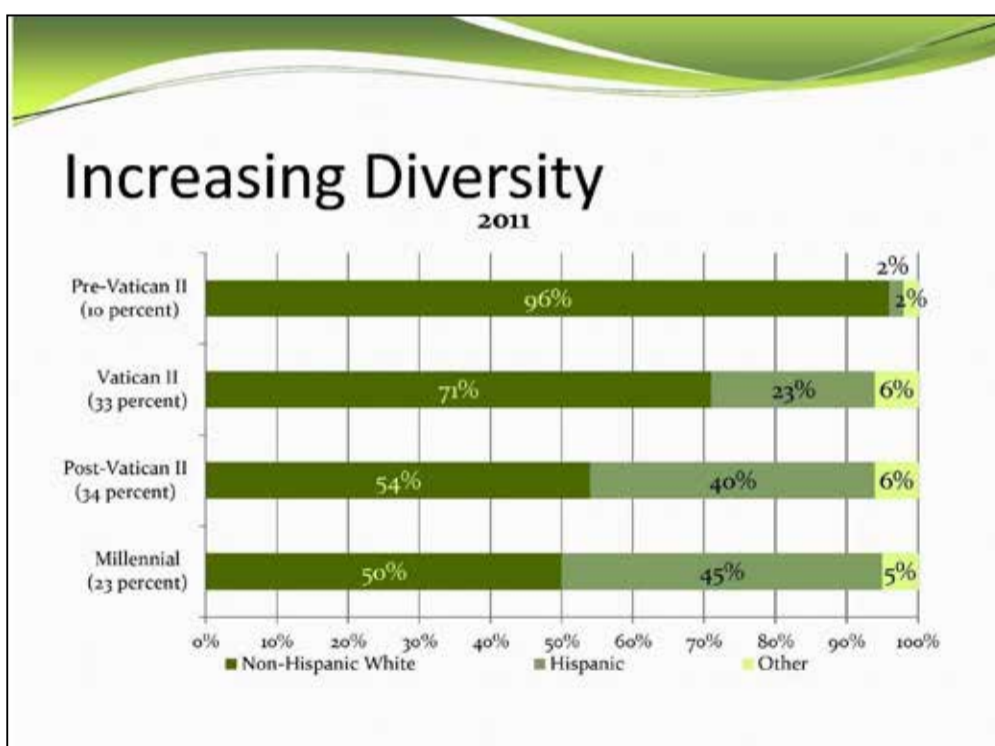
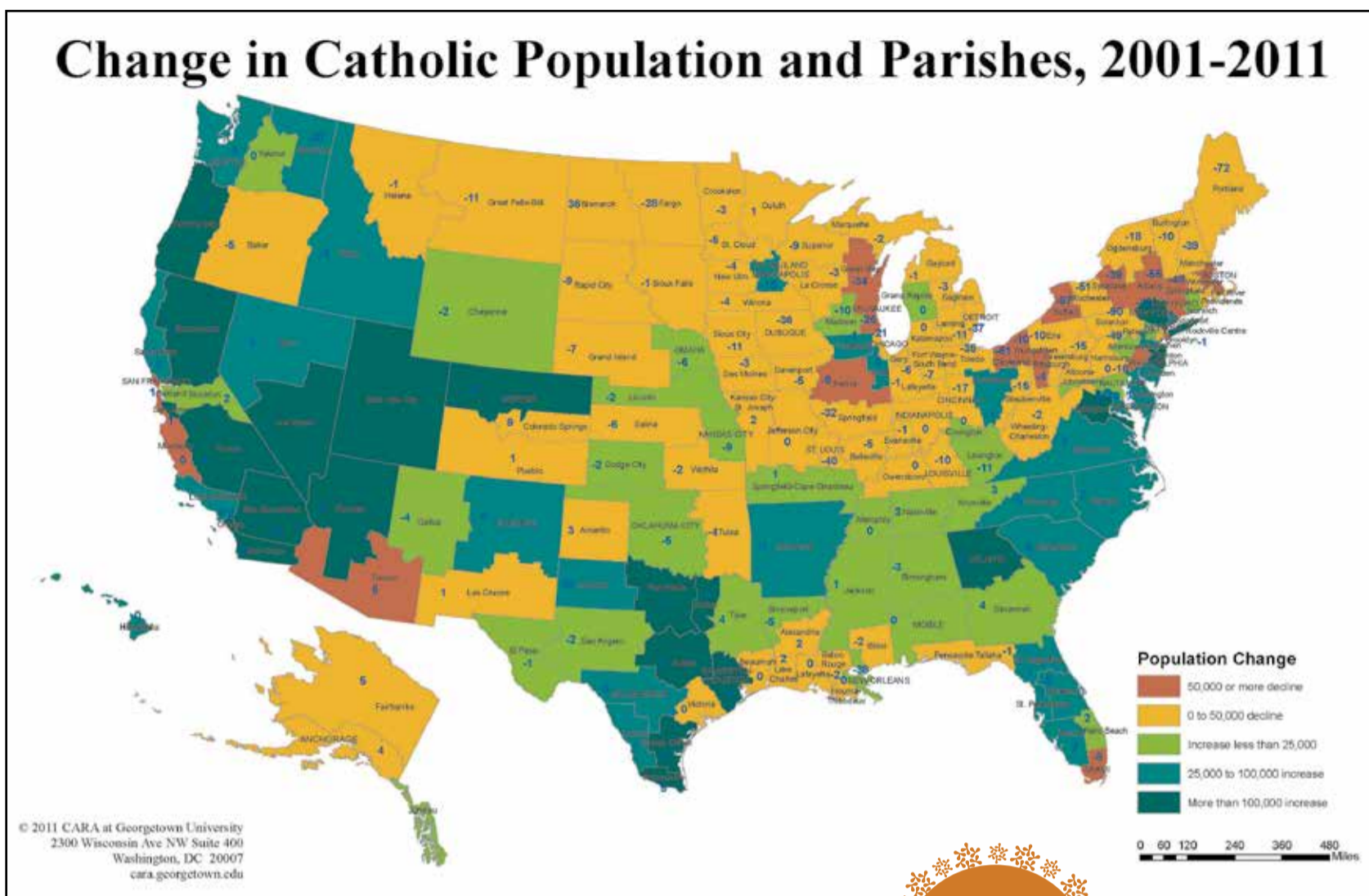


Figure 7. Used with permission from CARA © 2011 CARA at Georgetown University. <http://cara.georgetown.edu>

Figure 8. From Gautier PPT.

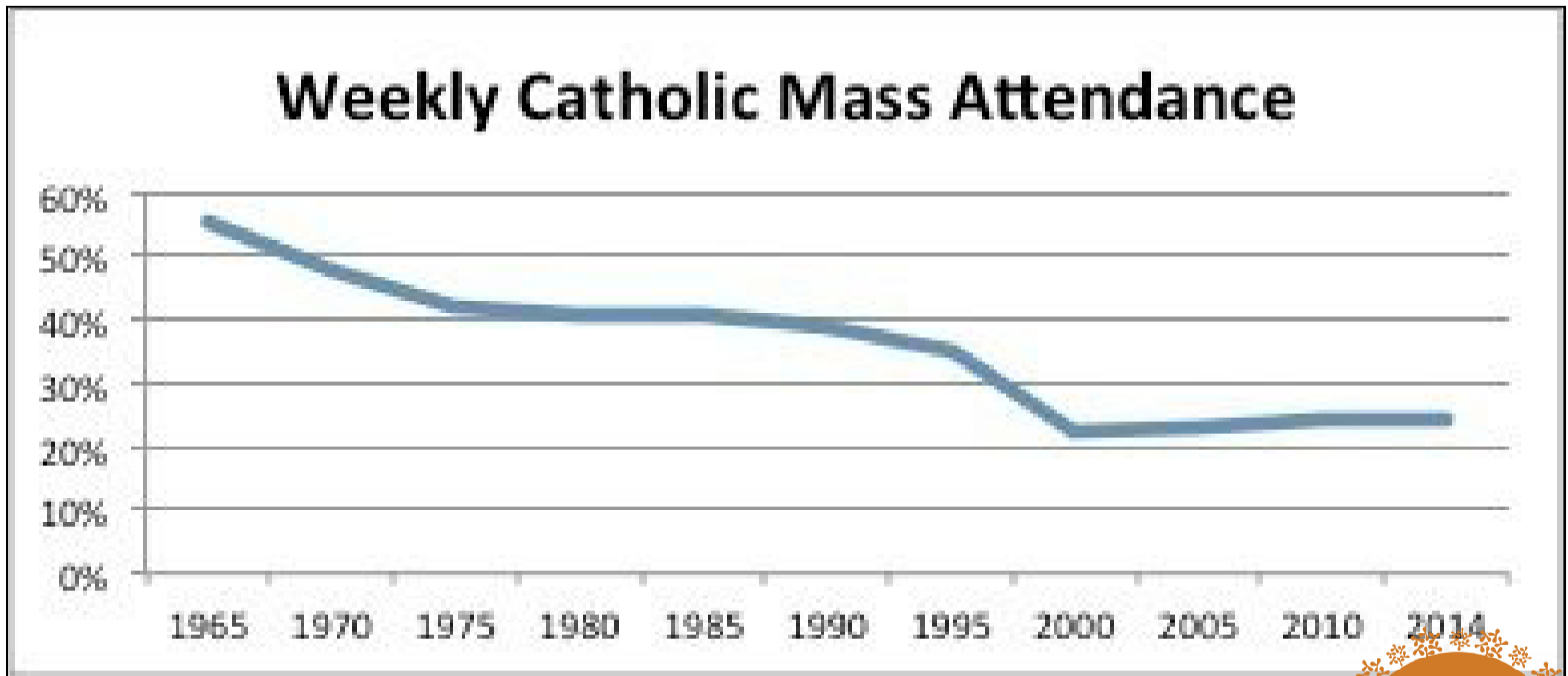
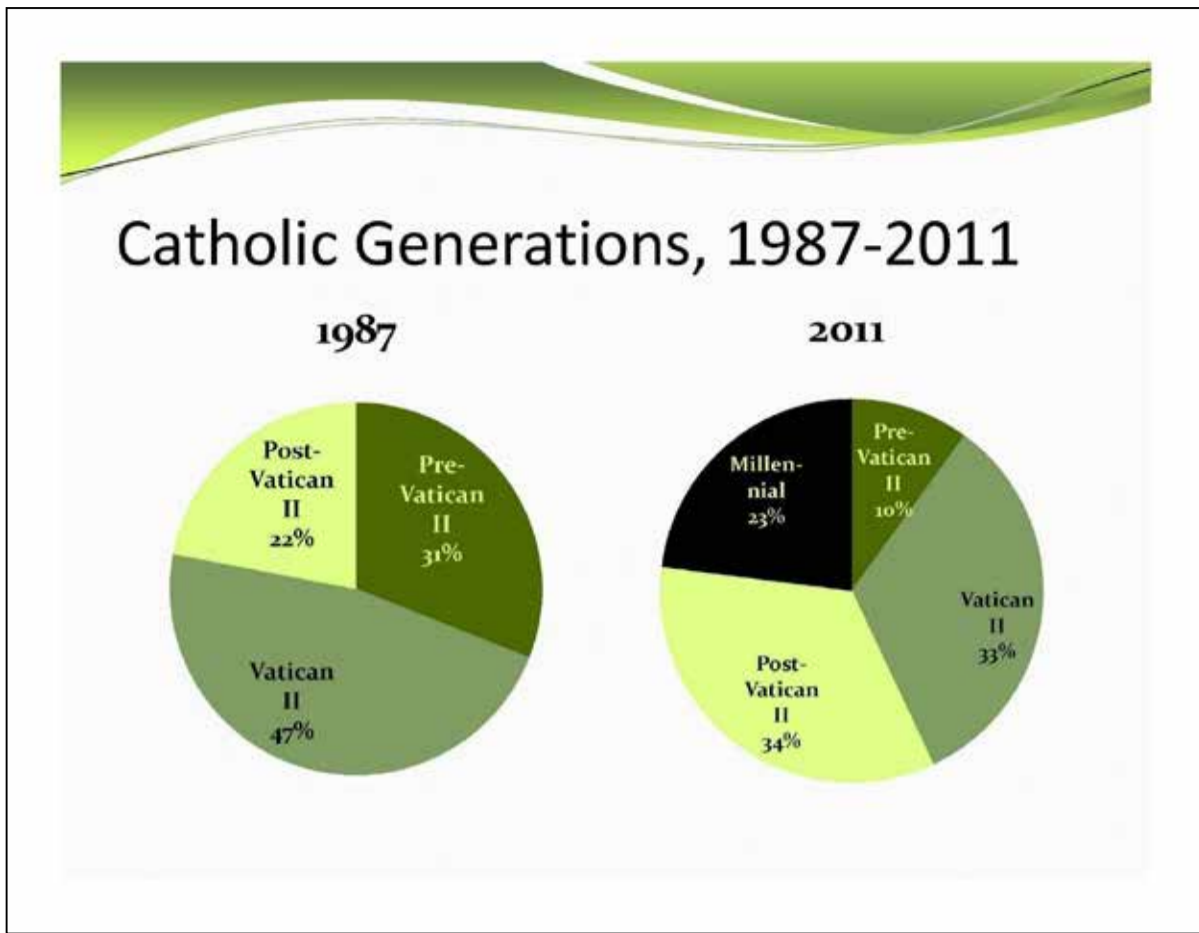


Figure 9. From Gautier PPT.

Figure 10. Created by Scott Kelley from Mass Attendance figures in "Frequently Asked Church Statistics," CARA.
<http://cara.georgetown.edu/caraservices/requestedchurchstats.html>



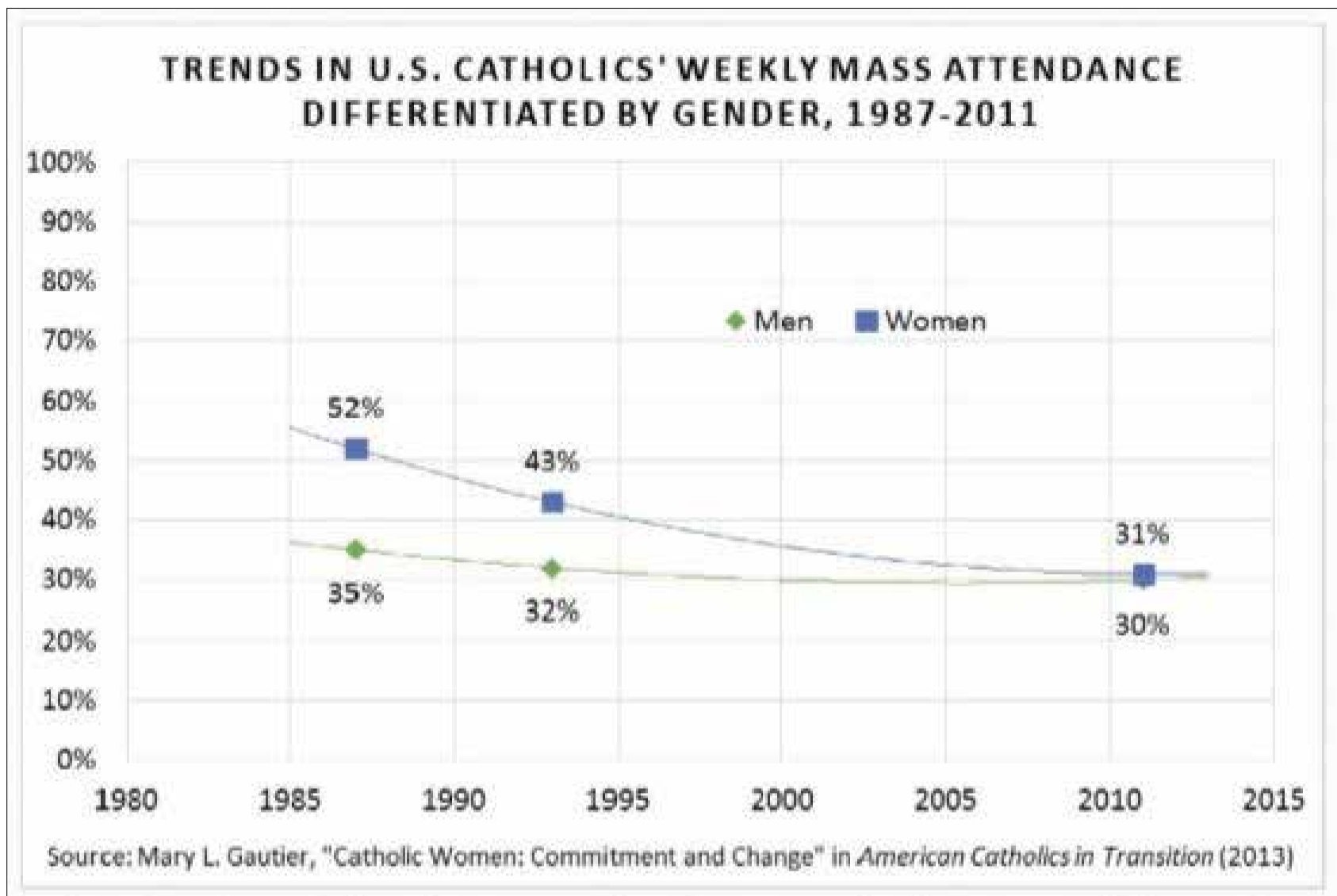


Figure 11.



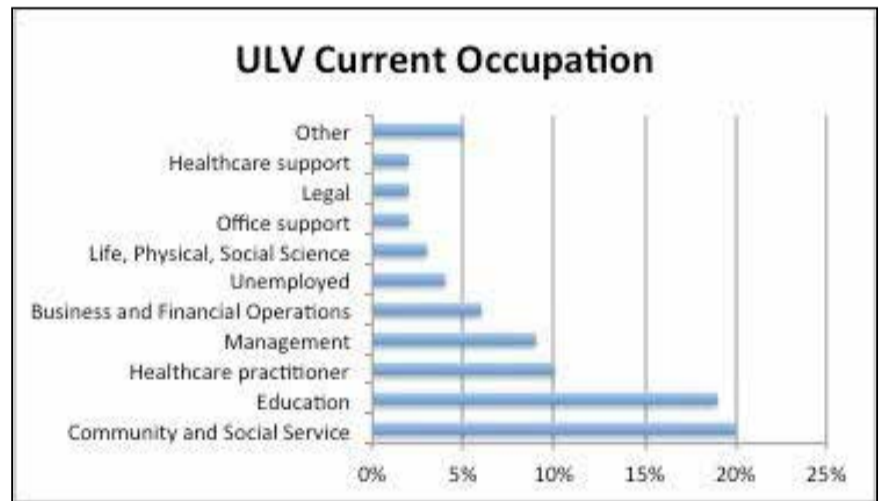
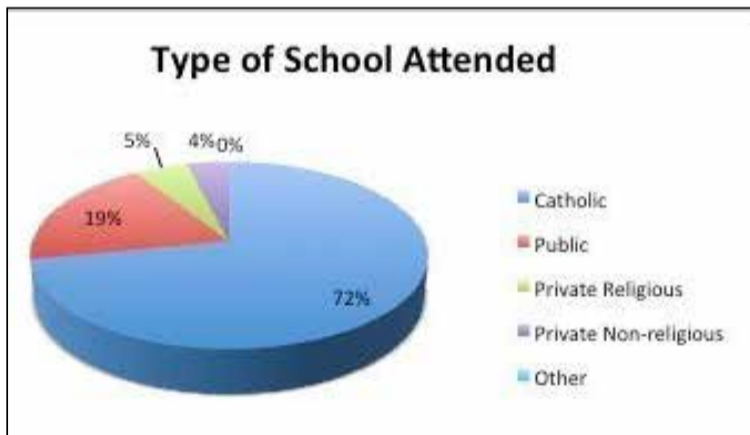
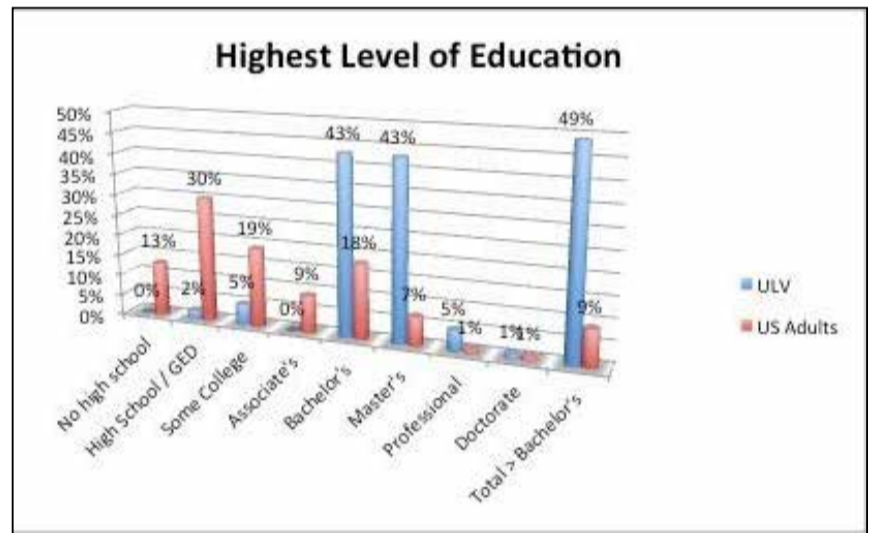
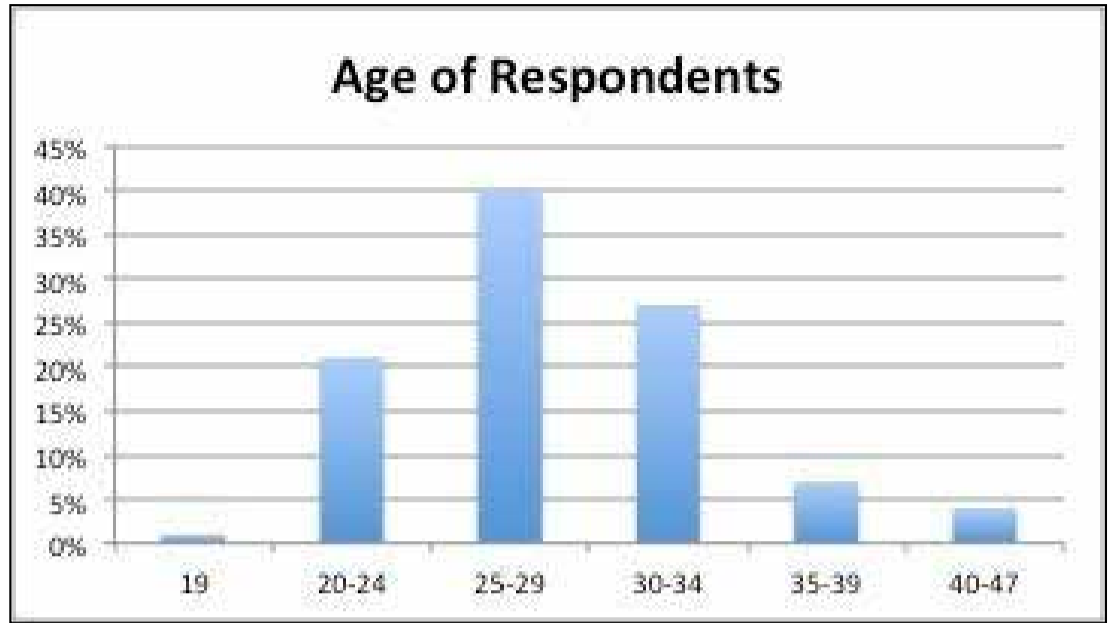
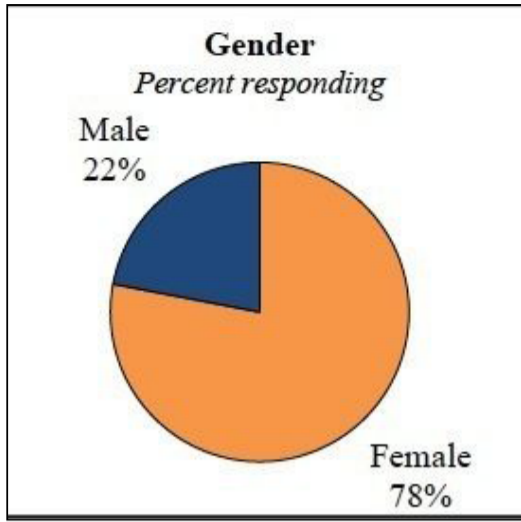


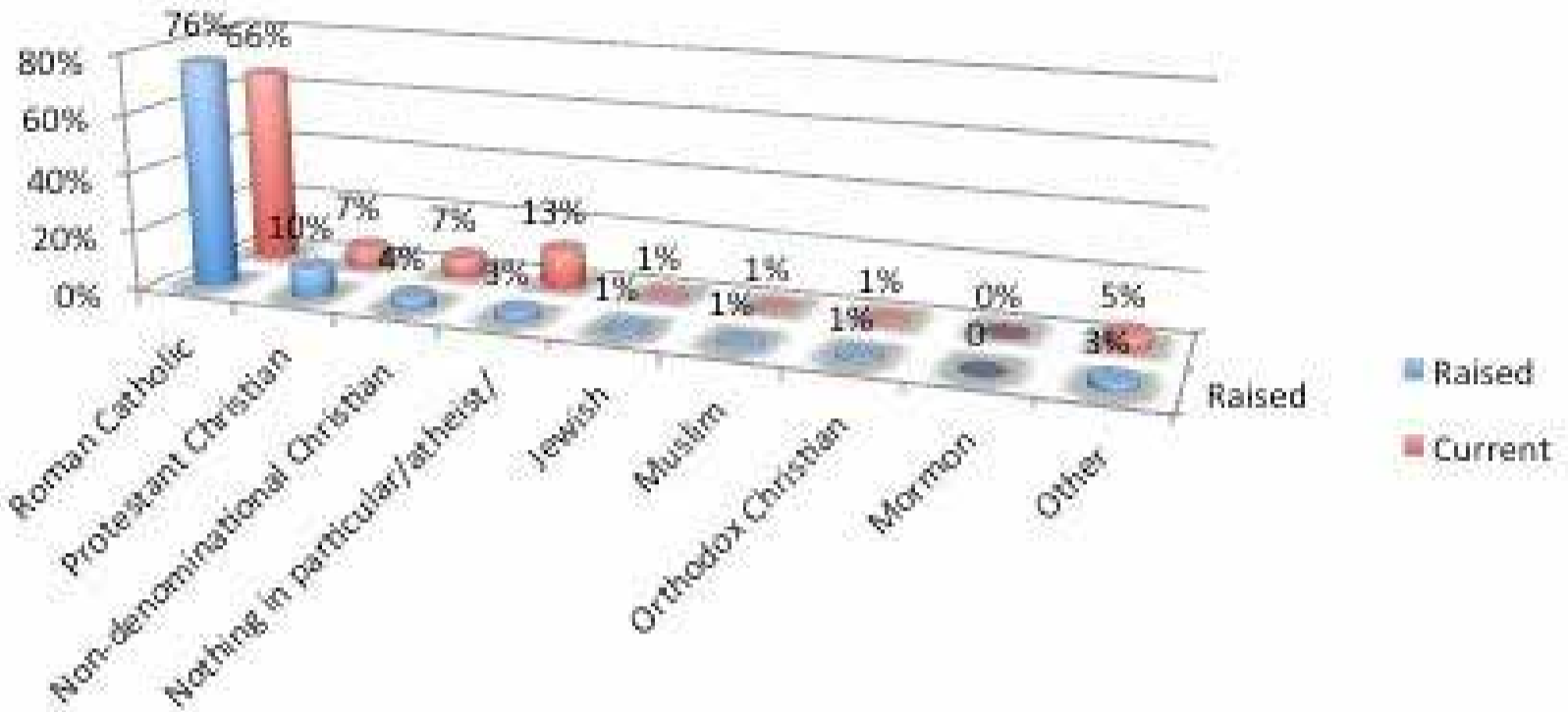
Figure 12.; Figure 13.

Figure 14.; Figure 15.

Figure 16.; Figure 17.



Religious Preference



Religious Service Attendance

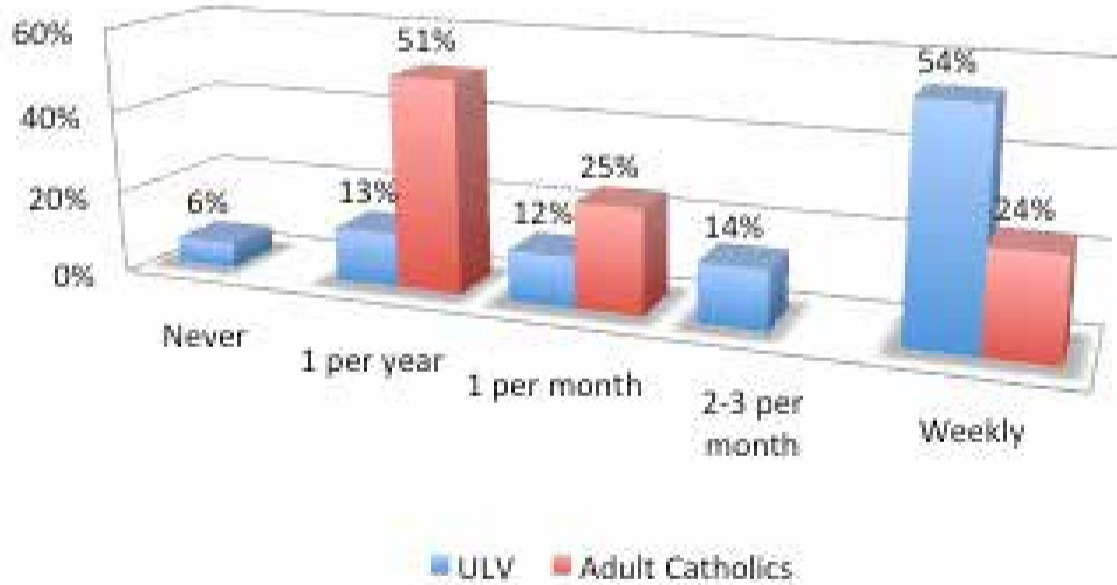


Figure 18.; Figure 19.



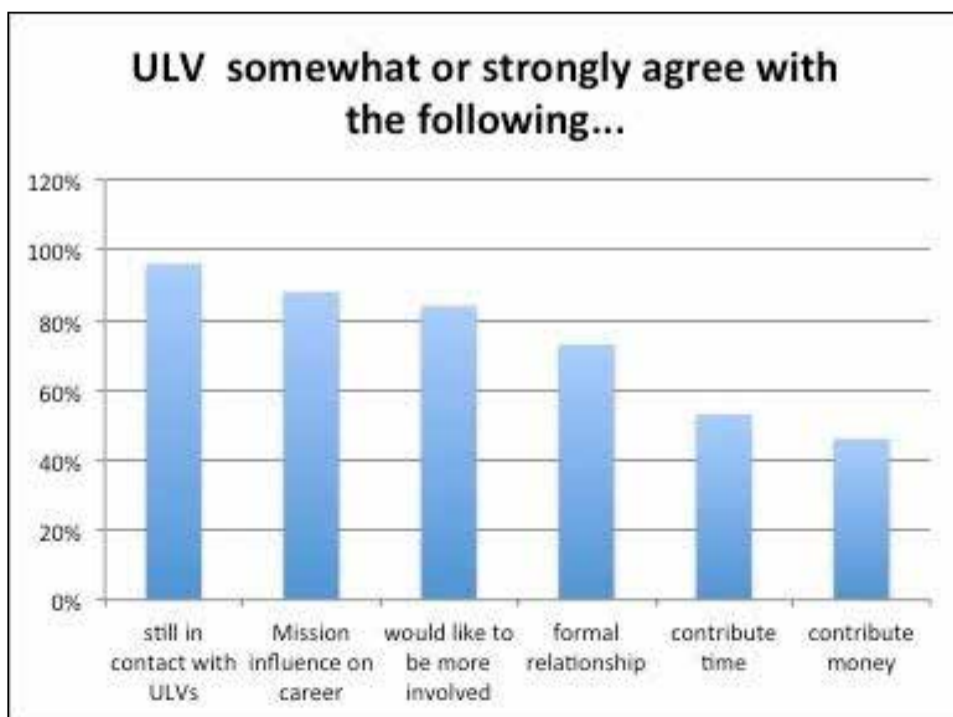
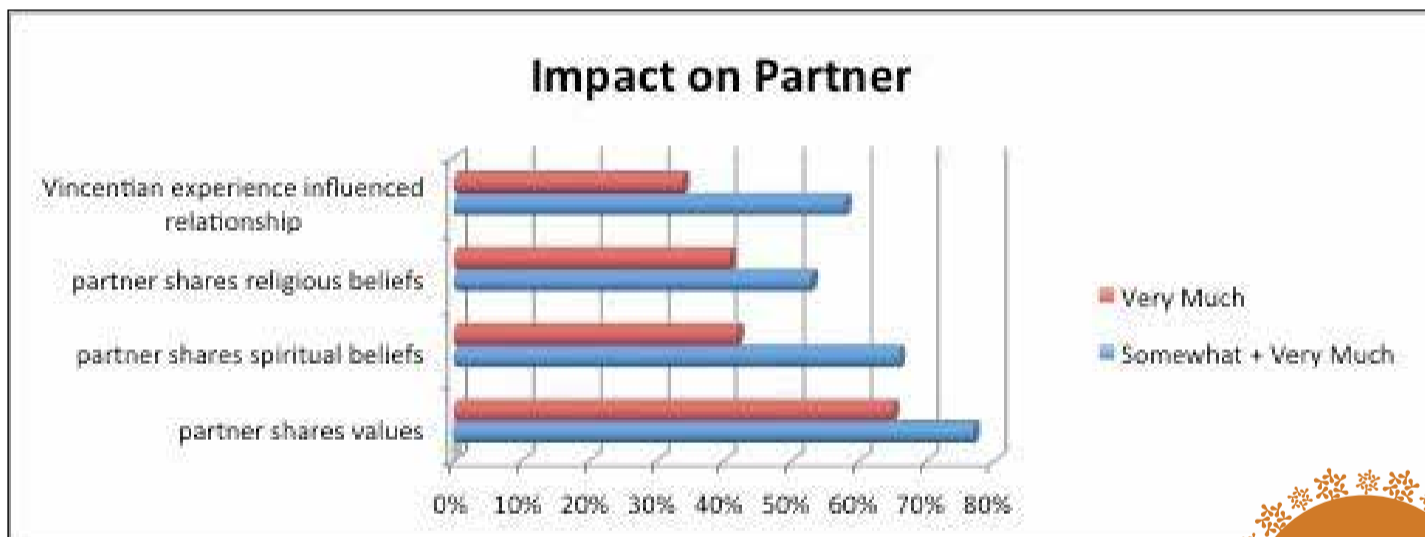
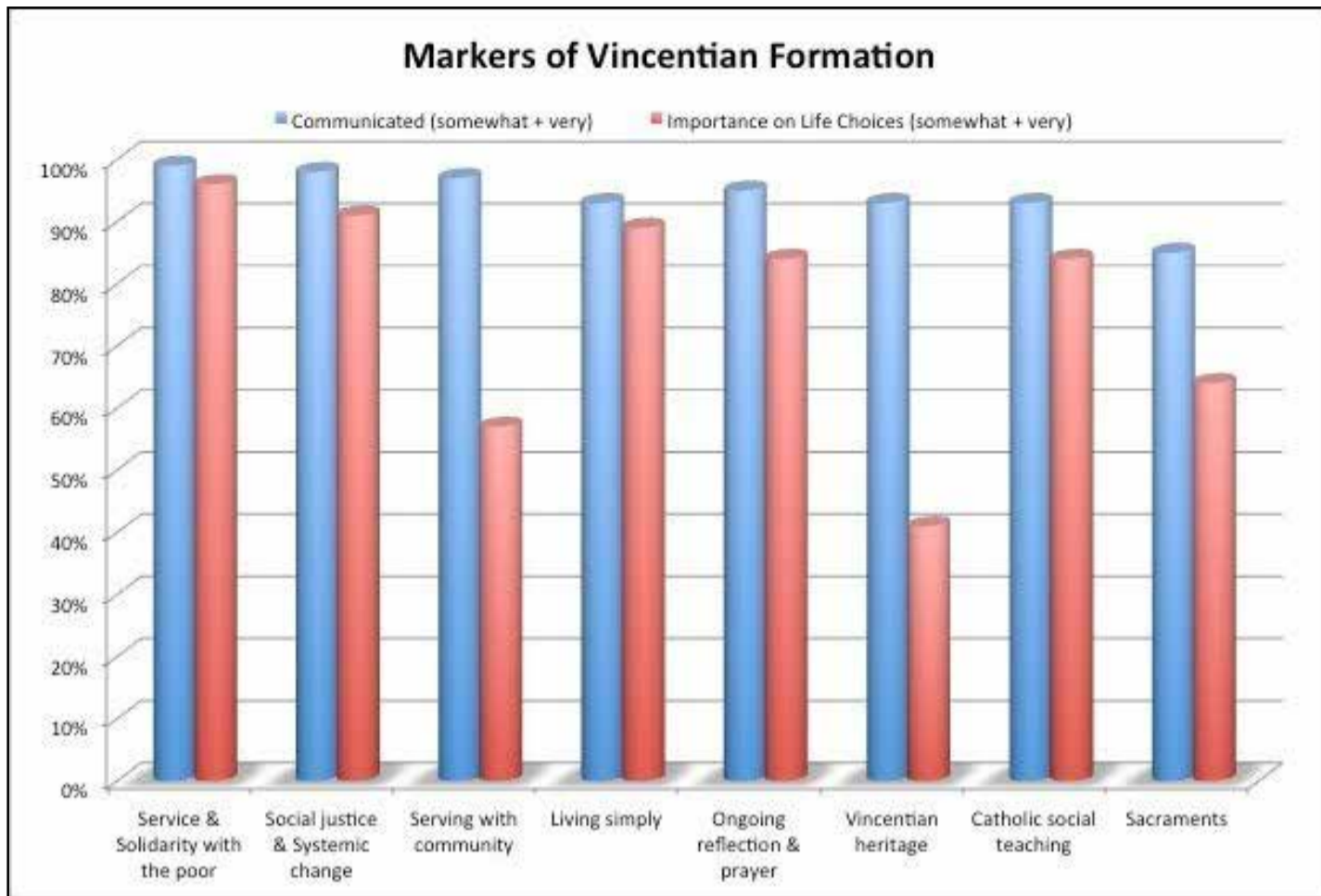


Figure 20.;
Figure 21.;
Figure 22.

How would you describe yourself?

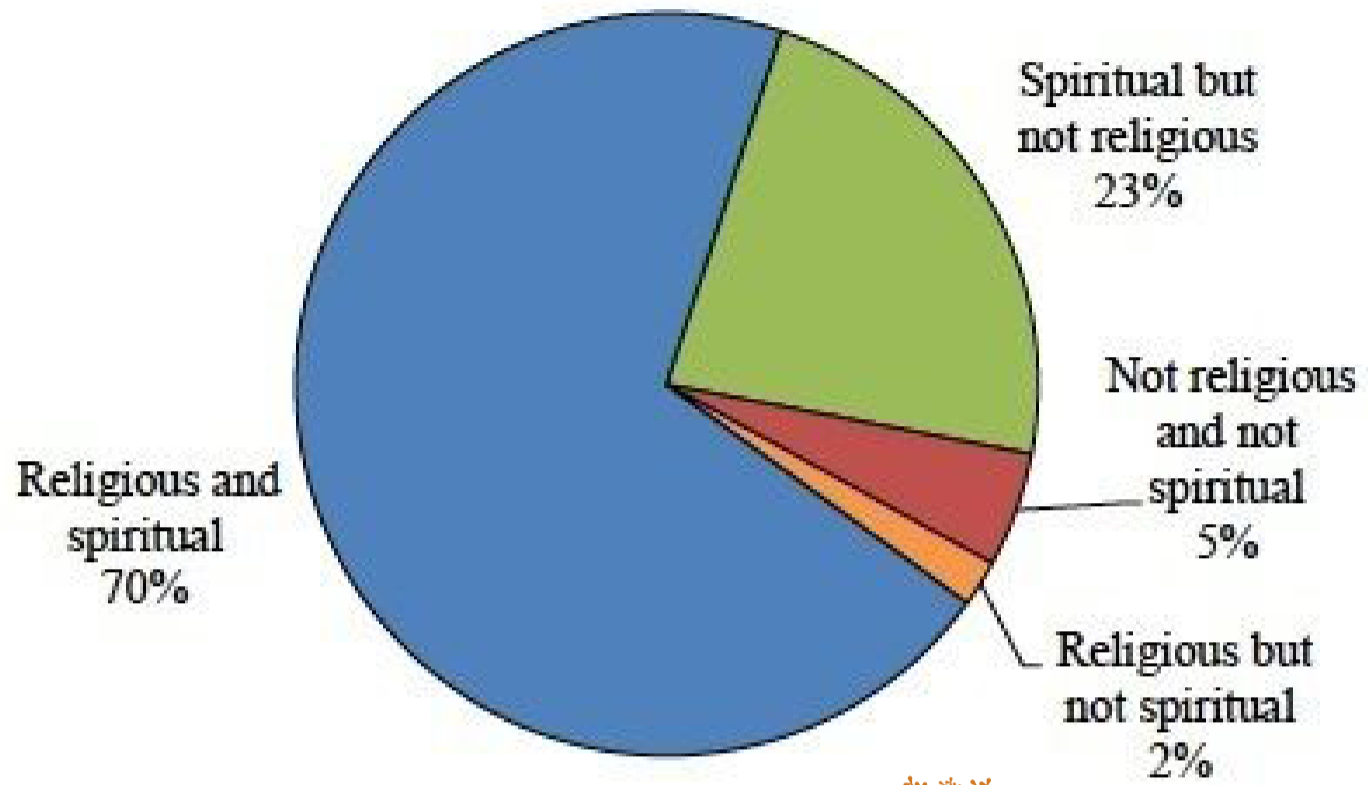


Figure 23.

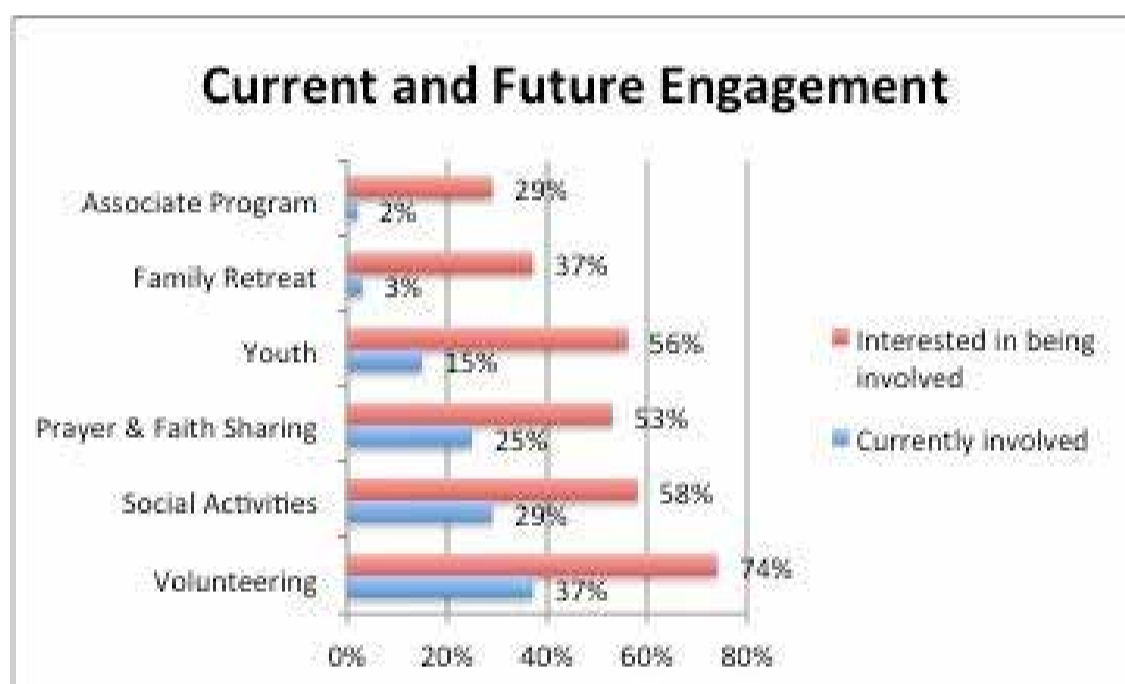
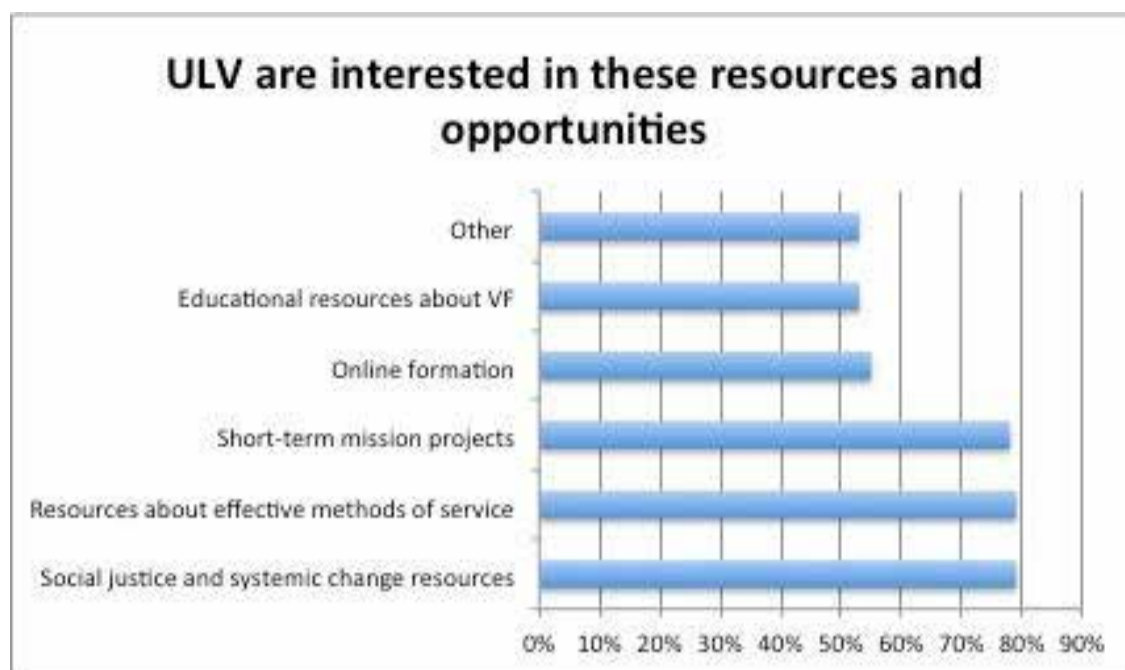


Figure 24.;

Figure 25.;

Figure 26.

One Thing Would Like to See the Vincentian Family Organize in My Area

Respondents were invited to write in a response to finish this sentence: “The one thing I would like to see the Vincentian family organize in my area is...” Some 201 wrote in a response, or 57 percent of all respondents.

While respondents’ answers and descriptions varied widely, these 16 answers appear most often in their responses:

- Short term volunteer opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities for families
- Service with reflection or education
- Social events
- Networking events
- Young adult groups
- Groups for service and faith sharing
- A program for education and formation in the Vincentian tradition
- Young adult conference
- Reunions for year of service alumni
- Retreats
- An SVDP more proactive in raising the profile of the Vincentian mission
- Outreach around existing Vincentian organizations
- Outreach to at-risk children
- Outreach to college students
- Community services like a soup kitchen, food bank or clothes drive





St. Vincent's Circle. Located next to the Richardson Library on the DePaul University Lincoln Park campus.

Image Collection of the Vincentian Studies Institute

