

origins

CNS documentary service

Moving Beyond Compliance Toward Conversion: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Archbishop Brunett

"If the primary focus and direction of our efforts is to pass the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops audit, then we are engaged in the work of compliance. If, however, the focus of our efforts is to eradicate child sexual abuse in the church and in society, that is a ministry of conversion," Archbishop Alex Brunett of Seattle said April 8 in the keynote address to the 2008 National Safe Environment Leadership Conference in Seattle. The U.S. bishops' Charter for the

"We must challenge all those we encounter to speak out about the evil of child sexual abuse, to be vigilant to its signs and to end the silence!"

Protection of Children and Young People called for the establishment of safe environment programs to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators and others about preventing child sexual abuse. Archbishop Brunett noted that studies show that at least 20 percent of Americans are victims of some form of sexual abuse by the time they turn 18 and that the abuse occurs in all areas of society. He said the church is working at making its training programs the best in the country. He also said the church's programs can be models for other groups and that the church should encourage other groups to establish similar effective training programs. The archbishop also related a personal encounter he had with a victim of clergy sexual abuse that was a conversion experience both for him and the victim: "I clearly experienced this man as a child of God and a person for whom the church was responsible for much of the pain he had suffered throughout his life. ... This victim's future opened up, this beloved child of God began the process of healing, and he experienced a resurrection, as did I." Archbishop Brunett's speech follows.

It is with great joy that I welcome each of you and extend my personal gratitude for the work that you do. Like any aspect of ministry, I know that it is filled with many joys as well as many challenges.

The work that you do is too often involved with the frailty of the human condition and

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April 24, 2008
Volume 37
Number 45

In February 2003, Kathleen McChesney, then-executive director of the U.S. bishops' Office for Child and Youth Protection, sent a paper to all diocese and eparchies in the U.S. stating that "safe environment programs should be identified, selected and under way by June 20, 2003."

She noted that these programs for protecting children are required under the U.S. bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

"A safe environment program begins with a code of conduct for all adults who work with youth on a regular basis," McChesney explained.

She said that "a safe environment program requires training of parents, ministers, educators, church personnel, volunteers and others regularly involved with minors as to the issue of abuse of children, to include sexual abuse."

McChesney said that training programs for adults should include the following:

"What constitutes child abuse, including sexual abuse? What actions, procedures and policies are used to prevent child abuse in any form? How does an adult identify instances of abuse of a child, including sexual abuse? What signs should an adult look for in a child who may be abused? What signs should an adult look for in a person who may be abusing a child in any way? What actions should an adult take when they believe that child abuse, to include sexual abuse, may be occurring? What are the laws and policies regarding the reporting of abuse, to include sexual abuse, of children?"

She added that "training programs for children and young people should include age-appropriate materials pertaining to personal safety. This includes information about improper touching and relationships.

"Children are not expected to be fully knowledgeable about child abuse or of the laws

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the real presence of sin in our world. As I was preparing these reflections, I thought about the many ways that you in your ministry in the church keep alive your faith as you face many challenges in your roles as safe environment coordinators. You deal with the reality of human frailty, with sin and with many stories of hope and reconciliation.

I would like to share with you some reflections that I hope will be helpful to you. I will begin with a brief overview of the tragedy of child sexual abuse, its scope in our society and the role of child prevention-education programs. Next, I will propose three concrete ways that you as safe environment coordinators can continue to be effective in your ministry. I will conclude by connecting these concrete aspects of your ministry with our Easter season and our mandate to "Move Beyond Compliance Toward Conversion," the theme of this year's conference.

First, a brief overview of the tragedy of child sexual abuse and its scope. A 1994 study by Elliott and Briere found that one in every four girls and one in every five boys are sexually abused by the age of 18. While different studies may reveal slightly different numbers because of the way in which the data is collected, they all conclude that at least 20 percent of our children are victims of some form of sexual abuse by the age of 18.

We all know these numbers, and some of us deal with them every day. They can become that to us: numbers. Let us stop and think about this for a moment. Twenty percent of our children — one in every five children. What would our society do if 20 percent of our children were stricken with a terrible disease that carried lifelong, potentially traumatic and devastating results? Would we be content to sit back and do nothing? No! Would we turn away from addressing the disease because it is ugly and makes us uncomfortable? Absolutely not!

Every politician would be under pressure to provide the funding necessary to address such an unacceptable level of destruction. Every medical research institution would be

under intense public pressure and scrutiny to devote its resources and expertise to address the problem.

The front pages of our newspapers, our magazines and our television news would provide close coverage of any progress against the disease and lament the setbacks. And, without a doubt, we would make every effort to assure that our children were informed and educated about ways to protect themselves from the disease and what to do if they were exposed to it.

Like some of you, I know from personal meetings with victims that the effects of child sexual abuse can be devastating and life changing. I find it absolutely astounding that the public hue and cry, and political pressure, that would erupt in the event of a devastating disease affecting 20 percent of our children is largely absent in the face of the tragedy of child sexual abuse. There is indeed much to be done.

And where is this abuse taking place? It is taking place in families, in child-serving organizations and throughout society. And it has been happening for a very long time.

Many of you are familiar with the work of Dr. Monica Applewhite. Her article in *America* magazine on Sept. 25, 2006, is titled "Putting Abuse in Context." She begins her article by describing the reports that surfaced within the Boy Scouts of America concerning a male nurse who inappropriately touched scouts in 1922, leading to more careful screening of adult leaders in that organization. She references the challenges faced by Big Brothers of America in 1974 as they discovered that they had become a haven for adults seeking sexual contact with children. She discusses the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. And she mentions the epidemic of sexual abuse by teachers in school systems throughout the country.

An Associated Press story from earlier this year reported that 2,500 teachers in a five-year period were punished for sexual assault of students. A recent story on CNN was titled "Cells, texting give predators secret path to kids." A recent newspaper story in Reno, Nev.,

ISSN 0093-609X, *Origins*, CNS Documentary Service, is published weekly (except biweekly during July, August and December's last week) by Catholic News Service, 3211 4th Street N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100. Copyright © 2008 by Catholic News Service/U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Periodical-class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Editor, Edmond Brosnan; Associate Editor, Mary Esslinger; Layout, Emily Thompson; Director of CNS, Tony Spence. Editorial: (202) 541-3284. Circulation: (202) 541-3290 - www.originsonline.com.

Subscriptions: One year, \$114; two years, \$199; three years, \$284; foreign postage additional. Single copy: \$5. Back issues: Inquire for availability and rates. Attach mailing label to change of address requests and subscription correspondence. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Origins*, CNS Documentary Service, 3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100.

Documentation in *Origins* is selected on the basis of interest and usefulness in reference to current issues. Publication does not signify endorsement by *Origins* or its sponsoring body, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

reported that more than 400 children were found working as prostitutes in Las Vegas during a single month last year.

The evil of child sexual abuse is present on our streets, in the Catholic Church, in our schools, in other child-serving organizations, in families and on the Internet. It knows no racial, socio-economic or religious boundaries. It is a major societal dilemma and a major societal tragedy.

“You face adversity, whether from parish personnel that object to training, volunteers who are upset because they believe their integrity is being questioned when a background check is required or parents who are concerned that the prevention education may be harmful to their children.”

As Catholics, we are always in search of the “good news.” And there is some very good news in the fight against child sexual abuse. In his recent article in the journal *Pediatrics*, Dr. David Finkelhor, who will be presenting later this week, quoted two studies indicating a decline in sexual abuse between 1993 and 2004. Another piece of good news from Dr. Finkelhor’s article is the finding from a 1995 study that indicated that children receiving prevention education were more likely to disclose victimization, feel that they had been able to protect themselves and not blame themselves for the abuse.

The results of another study, published by Gibson and Leitenbert in 2000, suggests that “adult women who had not participated in a school prevention program during childhood were about twice as likely to have experienced child sexual abuse as those who had participated in a program.”

We know that child sexual abuse can have traumatic and lasting effects on its victims. We know that approximately 20 percent of our children experience some form of child sexual abuse before the age of 18. We know that child sexual abuse is a problem that is pervasive throughout our society. We know that the frequency of child sexual abuse is declining, and we know that child prevention education has some positive effects on victims and potential victims.

So the question is, What are we to do about

this tragedy? How can you as safe environment coordinators have some impact given the enormity of the problem? What are ways that your ministry can be even more effective so that together we might play some role in reducing the incidence of child sexual abuse from 20 percent to 0 percent?

Let me suggest three concrete ways for you to strengthen your ministry as pioneers, prophets and people of prayer — easily remembered as the three P’s.

Let’s start with the notion of pioneers. Pioneers were people of resolve, foresight and passion. They set their minds and hearts on a goal and endured incredible hardships in order to achieve that goal. When we think of the journeys they made with no electricity, running water, roads, hotels or modern amenities, it is truly awe-inspiring. That is not to say that they did not sometimes get discouraged, because they did. But they kept going by keeping their vision on the goal. They fixed their vision and directed all of their energy toward the future and toward what they hoped and believed would be a better place to live.

As safe environment coordinators, you deal with different hardships but you are also pioneers. Your positions are relatively new ones, and there are no roadmaps to guide your journey. You learn from and lean on one another. You face adversity, whether from parish personnel that object to training, volunteers who are upset because they believe their integrity is being questioned when a background check is required or parents who are concerned that the prevention education may be harmful to their children.

You will be able to work through this adversity if you, like the pioneers, keep your vision set on the goal of reducing the 20 percent incidence of child sexual abuse to 0 percent. In the midst of the day-to-day challenges and struggles of your work, this goal will provide you with the continued resolve and strength to continue the journey.

A second way to strengthen your ministry is to learn some lessons from the prophets. Our archdiocesan vision statement is titled “A Future Full of Hope,” taken from Jeremiah 29:11. The full text reads:

“For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope.”

Jeremiah, like all the great prophets, had a twofold role. First, he challenged his own community, the people of Israel, by revealing Yahweh’s message to them. He continually challenged them to believe that Yahweh was

governing care of children, but they need to know when they should seek assistance from a trusted adult.”

She explained that children in religious education classes should receive the same basic information as children who attend Catholic schools, but that programs may have to be modified due to time constraints.

She acknowledged that “it may be difficult to ensure all parents in a parish are adequately informed about the issue of child abuse. To reach as many parents as possible, attempts should be made to provide various types of instruction.

“Multiple delivery methods could include formal training sessions led by experienced child-safety professionals, independent reading material, videos or information posted on the diocesan Web site.”

She said that “background investigations of personnel who have regular contact with minors must be conducted. Such investigations are best conducted by a reputable professional agency, law enforcement or social service agency if available in your area.

“Background investigations should include criminal history checks of the employee/volunteer and if lawful in your state, the employee/volunteer should be asked if they have ever been accused of or investigated for an act of abuse or harassment. References must be checked.”

*(“Safe Environment Programs in U.S. Dioceses and Eparchies,” can be found in *Origins*, Vol. 32, No. 40, the edition dated March 20, 2003.)*

*(The original version of the U.S. bishops’ Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People appeared in *Origins*, Vol. 32, No. 7, the edition dated June 27, 2002, and revised versions appeared in Vol. 32, No. 25, the edition dated Nov. 28, 2002, and Vol. 35, No. 7, the edition dated June 30, 2005.)*

*Vol. 37, No. 1, the edition dated May 17, 2007, of *Origins* included a couple of*

texts and margin notes dealing with safe environment programs.

In its report "To Protect and To Prevent," the Catholic Medical Association said that "child empowerment" programs should be "rescinded because they are ineffective and potentially damaging to children and families" and that "analysis of these 'child-empowerment' programs shows them to be ineffective at preventing the sexual abuse of children and inconsistent with the science of the emotional, cognitive, neurobiological and moral development of the child.

"These programs also are inconsistent with the church's teaching on the education of children in matters pertaining to formation in sexual morality."

The CMA made the following recommendations:

"Parents be recognized as the primary educators and protectors of their children and, further, that current resources be redirected to programs that educate and support parents on how better to fulfill this vocation.

"Greater emphasis be placed on character education of children through formation in the virtues. ...

"The church, in particular through the leadership of bishops and priests, take the lead in teaching the importance of a relationship with God and the spiritual treasures of the sacraments in the development of healthy children, parents and families."

In the margin notes of that edition of Origins, Dr. John Brehany, executive director of CMA, said the organization issued the report because "following the implementation of 'child-empowerment' and 'safe environment' programs in many parishes and Catholic schools, parents and pastors raised serious questions about the appropriateness of the methodology and materials these programs used."

Also included in that edi-

present with them, even in exile.

Second, Jeremiah challenged the political leaders of his time. He lived in one of the most troubled times in the history of the ancient Near East. His message was both within his community and to the political leaders in the secular society.

As safe environment coordinators, you are prophets in our modern times. Your ministry, at its best, demonstrates Yahweh's love for those who are vulnerable. At its best, your ministry also challenges our political leaders and secular organizations to take action against the evil of child sexual abuse.

We are raising awareness about the issue of child sexual abuse for our clergy, lay employees, volunteers, parents and students in our Catholic schools and religious education programs. Beyond that, we are hopefully working hard to effect changes to assure that *all* children (not just children in our Catholic schools or religious education programs) receive sexual abuse prevention education.

We must challenge the political leaders and secular society to join the battle against child sexual abuse through education and other prevention strategies. We must challenge all those we encounter to speak out about the evil of child sexual abuse, to be vigilant to its signs and to end the silence! Like the early prophets, our voices may be met with disbelief or even ridicule. And like the early prophets we can make a real difference both within the church and in the broader society.

Modeling your ministry after pioneers and prophets will strengthen and support your daily work and will yield results that may unfold very slowly, only over time. You will have the patience, perseverance and persistence to continue these efforts only if your ministry is rooted in prayer. The passage I read earlier from Jeremiah is part of a letter to the exiles in Babylon. It proclaimed the awesome news that Yahweh was present to the Israelites outside the Holy Land, even in Babylon.

"When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord."

Taking time for daily prayer will give you the strength that is required for your roles. It will renew you and give you the energy you need to continue your efforts. Prayer will bring you closer to the Lord in your work that is directed toward protecting his little ones.

These are the three P's that I propose as ways to strengthen your ministry on a daily basis. Prayer is the foundation that enables

you to be pioneers committed to the goal of eradicating child sexual abuse and to be prophets that speak the truth and challenge the church and secular society toward that same goal.

How do these three P's connect with our celebration of the Easter season? The painful reality of the sexual abuse scandal has touched all of us in ways we probably never could have imagined. Many of the faithful have experienced doubt, despair, darkness and agony, just as Jesus experienced in Gethsemane. Victims of sexual abuse by clergy have had old wounds ripped open and explored their own inner tombs. In the presence of such pain and suffering, it may indeed seem that God has forsaken us.

Yet that is not the end of the story. The mystery of Christ's life, death and resurrection teaches us that affliction and sinfulness can lead to hope, healing and new life. We will continue to acknowledge sexual abuse through a process of prayer, penance and outreach to those who were harmed while in our care. We will also search for new life by taking steps toward eradicating child sexual abuse, both within the church and in our society.

Let me share with you a very moving experience that helped to transform my own ministry in working with victims of child sexual abuse. As you well know, bishops wear many hats besides a miter. One hat that we wear is that of chief executive officer. This includes setting policies, implementing programs and settling claims with victims of sexual abuse by clergy. Working with the victims of sexual abuse by clergy is undoubtedly one of the most challenging and difficult aspects of my ministry.

In every case I make myself available to meet with any person who alleges child sexual abuse. In many cases I do not get to meet the victim directly because they are involved in lawsuits. But in some cases I have been able to meet with victims. I would like to tell you a story of one of those encounters that I believe captures some of the things we have been talking about.

The victim in this case was one of the more severely damaged victims from the late 1950s and early 1960s. This person was in his late 50s when I met him. The sexual abuse he experienced from an extern priest who had been in our archdiocese was severe. As a result of this abuse, he had led a very sad and damaged life. Our lawyers had tried unsuccessfully to mediate the case.

I asked our attorney if there would be a possibility of meeting with this victim. Our attorney contacted the victim's attorney.

Fortunately, he had an attorney who had his client's best interests at heart. The victim was interested in meeting with me, so I traveled to a neighboring state to meet with the victim, accompanied by our attorney and a member of my staff. I met personally with the victim for several hours, while the attorneys and my staff person met in another room.

I clearly experienced this man as a child of God and a person for whom the church was responsible for much of the pain he had suffered throughout his life. The importance of settling the case with him diminished rapidly, and the hope and opportunity for healing became the only goal for me in our encounter, which was a most difficult one. At the same time, the encounter was graced by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

"We are called to assure that our programs are the very best. If we plan to challenge our political leaders, our public schools and our society to join us in increased efforts to eradicate child sexual abuse, we must set an example."

At the end of our time together, not only was the case settled but there was reconciliation and desire for this victim to re-establish his faith. It was a conversion experience for everyone involved. This victim's future opened up, this beloved child of God began the process of healing, and he experienced a resurrection, as did I.

Conversion happens through individual encounters such as I have described. It also happens through systems such as our safe environment programs.

In the Archdiocese of Seattle we have had policies, training and background checks in place for almost 20 years. The procedures have been updated from time to time, and each time we improve upon our previous efforts. We launched our expanded safe environment program in fiscal year 2006-2007.

I have to admit to you that we thought we were doing pretty well up until that point, given our rather well-developed programs and procedures. I daresay that some in our archdiocese were even complacent. Many people questioned the wisdom of allocating more resources to new efforts and new staffing. After all, we had been recognized as a national leader in our efforts. Other dioceses

had borrowed our programs and policies. We had provided extended training for our clergy and had a review board in place long before it was required by the Dallas charter.

As we launched the expanded program, a rather amazing development began to unfold. We identified new trainers to lead the new trainings. Their enthusiasm and commitment were contagious. In an environment that included the national scandal in the Catholic Church as well as news stories about teachers and others charged with child sexual abuse, new interest and a renewed sense of concern were evident. Our phones started ringing with parishioners questioning why we were providing such training or parishioners asking why we weren't providing more training. People called asking why our curriculum was so strong, and others called asking why it wasn't stronger. In short, people became more engaged and entered the dialogue about child sexual abuse prevention with an energy that we had not experienced in the past.

Another interesting phenomenon has been increased watchfulness on the part of our clergy, staff, volunteers and parents. We have received numerous telephone calls from individuals involved with programs who report having felt uncomfortable about a particular individual or a certain behavior for a period of time. With the expanded safe environment program and the new publications and resources, they have found the courage and resolve to voice their concerns. We have had more reports of grooming behavior over the last year than ever before. I am convinced that it is not because the behavior is new, but because the awareness of its danger has been significantly increased.

These occurrences are examples of the Easter possibilities that are part of your work and your ministry. I'm certain that many of you have had similar experiences. New life, renewed energy, new callings and new awarenesses have arisen out of the darkness and despair of the tragedy of the sexual abuse scandal.

What began as an expansion of our program to assure continued compliance with the charter and norms has turned into an experience of conversion and a realization that we have an obligation to extend the ministry of safe environment far beyond the boundaries and memberships of our parishes and schools.

We have many important ministries in our church, and I am well aware that we have limited resources. The relatively small investment that we are making in our safe

tion of Origins was the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Safe Environment Work Group report on sexual abuse prevention programs.

The work group included three bishops, two members of the bishops' National Review Board and two experts in education.

Among 12 recommendations, the work group suggested that "children and young people receive safety training annually at each grade level" and that this training be "reinforced with regularity within the program and at home."

The group also recommended that "instructors of safety-training programs receive training in handling disclosures of abuse that may emerge during the training."

In selecting materials for use in safe environment programs, the work group said the following criteria should be used:

"Conforms with Catechism of the Catholic Church; parts of our bodies are considered private, and we respect these in self and others; I am a person loved by God and deserving of respect; there is a difference between safe and unsafe touch; it is all right to say no to violation of personal space; it is important to report abuse of self or others until one is believed; there are strategies to help protect oneself."

The work group had an expert on sexual abuse of children and a moral theologian study CMA's report and responded:

"The work group acknowledges the emphasis that the Catholic Medical Association paper provides on the role and significance of the family."

"Based on the information researched, the work group concluded that there is evidence safe environment programs for children have a positive effect on children, are consistent with the science of child development and are in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church."

environment personnel and programs, however, can have a ripple effect that is felt beyond the church community and throughout the larger society, carrying a tremendous possibility of making a difference in the lives of our children.

It is because we are being watched and because we are experiencing our own conversion in this battle against child sexual abuse that we are called to assure that our programs are the very best. If we plan to challenge our political leaders, our public schools and our society to join us in increased efforts to eradicate child sexual abuse, we must set an example. Later sessions in this conference will focus on “best practices” and ways in which we can assure the effectiveness of our programs.

If the primary focus and direction of our efforts is to pass the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops audit, then we are engaged in the work of compliance. If, however, the focus of our efforts is to eradicate child sexual abuse in the church and in society, that is a ministry of conversion.

It is exciting to be here with you during this Easter season and to witness the sharing of ideas and experiences that helps to bring about new life. I want to thank you for all that you do to help raise awareness and protect children from the evils of child sexual abuse.

Each one of you is a pioneer, with your heart and mind set on an important goal. Each one of you is a prophet, with a message to challenge and transform our church community and our society. And each one of you, rooted in prayer, is making a difference in our world today. You are living and breathing witnesses to the Easter resurrection story by dedicating your significant gifts and talents to move beyond compliance toward conversion. ■

Education in the New Ireland

Archbishop Martin

“I am unhappy when Catholic parents opt out of diversity and send their children to schools precisely because there is less diversity in them. While I recognize

that parents have the right to choose the school they consider best, the exercise of rights must also incorporate concern for the common good,” Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin said April 10 at the annual public lecture at the National University of Ireland in Maynooth. Archbishop Martin noted that he recently established special enrollment measures in some Catholic schools in Dublin to help ensure that the religious and ethnic makeup of the students is similar to the religious and ethnic makeup of the community. But, he cautioned, “there are limits to what social engineering can attain, and it can rebound in unexpected ways. The volume of the racist or quasi-racist mail that I received following that modest decision of mine did not encourage me.” The archbishop said, “I would be very unhappy to find that Catholic schools were being deliberately less open to diversity than others, and where necessary I am prepared to take steps to redress such situations.” He said, however, that in his visits to Catholic schools he generally sees diversity in the student population and that overall Catholic schools have done well in adapting to a growing diversity among the Irish population. He also said that in the new Ireland he fears “that the desire in certain secularist thought to reduce religion entirely to the private sphere may make it harder to welcome fully the strong religious commitment of many of our immigrant communities,” noting that most of the new immigrants to Ireland are Catholic. The archbishop’s speech follows.

For many years I lived in Rome in a German institution where life ran according to a fixed schedule and a well-trying routine. A peculiarity was that when it came to meals, if there were 10 people at table, then 10 slices of meat appeared and only 10, 11 people then 11 slices and only 11.

On one occasion the elderly German nun who managed the dining room mentioned to me that when she had first arrived in Rome in 1937 things had been different, and one could have asked and would have obtained as much meat or as much fruit as one wanted. I asked her what had brought about the change and she looked at me as someone totally out of touch with reality and history, as she answered, “The war.” Our conversation took place however in 1977; 32 years

after the war had ended.

The incident comes to mind because in order to understand the complexities of the current Irish education system one has to go back in history and know something of the complexities of that history. Of my predecessors there were varying views on education.

Archbishop Daniel Murray was one of the few Irish bishops who wished to give strong support to the national school system and to the Queens Colleges; Cardinal Cullen, on the other hand, would have preferred a separate Catholic university, and Archbishop William J. Walsh finally worked toward the establishment of the National University of Ireland and became its first chancellor. The challenge is to understand and appreciate history but not to get caught up in history or, as with my German nun, to allow history to determine the present.

I believe that we are at an important moment in our reflection on the role of education in Ireland. Ireland is changing, and we have an opportunity, indeed an obligation, to think openly, constructively and in a more integrated way about the future of education in Ireland.

But we have to be ready to look at history and learn from it and to recognize how at various times and in various ways ideological, political or narrow religious interests attempted to use our educational system for their advantage. It was something that happened in our history right across the ideological board. We would be foolish to think that similar ideological attempts to gain influence might not still be possible today right across the ideological board. What is really needed today is for all who are really interested in the future of education in Ireland to work together in this task.

When I was given the title of my lecture I was tempted to change it from “Education in the New Ireland” to: “Education Is the New Ireland.” In a knowledge-based society and economy, education is perhaps the crucial factor in fostering progress. At the highest level, investment in research is the key to ensuring that Ireland will be in a technological leadership position in the world. At the other end of the scale, the quality of and access to basic education is the key to inclusion rather than

exclusion, to opportunity rather than marginalization for the least fortunate in our society.

In our knowledge-based world there is a sense in which “education is the economy.” The quality of our education system has been a vital component in Ireland’s economic success. Teachers have done a remarkable job, very often in poor physical conditions, in generating a passion for learning. Teachers have enkindled that passion for learning in our young people, bringing it to the most remote parts of the country, resulting in the ability of communities across the country to furnish a creative and innovative workforce open to the future of a modern economy. In the same way teachers have given our younger generations a new sense of national pride and a passion for an Irish culture which has in its own way copper-fastened a positive self-image of our nation.

Sadly, while education contributed decisively to Ireland’s unprecedented growth and wealth, not enough of the fruits of Ireland’s unprecedented growth and wealth have been poured back into education in a focused way. We still have school buildings which are not up to adequate standards. We have been slow in addressing the needs of our international children. We still have schools with very high class sizes. We have not got the process of planning right. There is very little thought being given to pre-school education for a future in which most grannies, who now do so much child care, will be working grannies.

I am sure that the minister for education would refute me with a baffling list of figures concerning investment in schools especially in recent years. Credit should be given, yes, for what has been done. But deficiencies still exist. One cannot help feeling that these deficiencies should have been addressed when economic resources were plentiful. They will, unfortunately, not be adequately addressed if or when those resources become less. An economic program which underestimated the value of investment in education clearly misunderstood the nature of a modern economy. Capital investment must include investment in human capital and in the structures which foster social capital.

The presidents of our two largest universities only recently set out their concern about how core funding per

university student has been reduced by over 33 percent since 1995, while maintenance and upgrading of the physical infrastructure of universities has virtually ground to a halt through lack of funding. They assert that student/staff ratios in countries like Scotland or Denmark are now four times better than Ireland, and operating budgets in these countries are between two and three times those available here.

“Sadly, while education contributed decisively to Ireland’s unprecedented growth and wealth, not enough of the fruits of Ireland’s unprecedented growth and wealth have been poured back into education in a focused way.”

They recognized that while the government has invested heavily in research funding for universities in recent years, the parallel reduction in core funding is making it increasingly impossible for Irish universities to compete on equal terms at international level. Virtually every recent review of the Irish third-level sector, in fact, has concluded that there is a major funding deficit by comparison with relevant international competitors.

Education is the economy. Have we fully realized that? Have we also recognized that while education is the backbone which supports the economy, economic activity is only one dimension of human activity? Have we seen that there is more to growth than increased prosperity and that the balancing of books is not just a mere bookkeeping exercise but consists in identifying how outcomes really respond to needs and ensure optimal and sustainable future growth? The heads of the universities rightly note that “education is the key to our future and investment in the creativity, skills and talent of our people will always pay dividends.”

One sees, I might say, a similar failure in health care, where structures have been created and capacity generated which now cannot be used because the question of ongoing resourcing had not

been adequately addressed in advance. Bad planning is bad use of public resources. One can create balanced books through the underutilization of resources or capacity, but what you are really doing is falsely calculating the real costs of health care or education.

Despite investment in education there has been a lack of planning. I feel that local authorities could be doing more. I am not just talking about the situations which arose last year in Diswilstown or in Balbriggan, which have more complex roots than just the questions of school places, of enrollment policies and of patron models.

Ireland is going to have to face a very different religious and ethnic demography in the years to come. To fully understand our pluralist Ireland we need much more research data and much more differentiated research data. We need to look at all the factors involved.

What are the factors which are leading to a concentration of immigrants in certain areas? Why is it that some parishes have large concentration of ethnic diversity and others with very similar socio-economic backgrounds have almost none? Many of the factors leading to an unbalanced concentration and possible ghettos are not educational factors, and you cannot expect schools to address them on their own.

The natural desire of immigrants to be close to their own is at times being hijacked by the mechanisms of our property market, which can drive those on subsidized rents or with limited ability to pay rent to congregate in certain areas or even to move rapidly from one area to another. Ghetto schools, which we all wish to avoid, are not necessarily just the fruits of bad educational policies but of a range of other policies which create ghettos for which the school cannot be held to blame.

Demography is a mathematical science but a mathematical science which studies free and at times not easily predictable human choices. I recently established special enrollment measures in one area of the Archdiocese of Dublin to help ensure that the Catholic schools in that area, while maintaining their Catholic ethos, would establish a realistic mix of religious and ethnic makeup more or less in line with the overall mix of the area. My hope is that this will help avoid some of the prob-

lems which had emerged last year.

Let me say very clearly, however, that the result could possibly be the opposite of what was intended if it is not accompanied by a genuine desire for real integration on the part of the wider community. There are limits to what social engineering can attain, and it can rebound in unexpected ways. The volume of the racist or quasi-racist mail that I received following that modest decision of mine did not encourage me.

Integration requires a positive decision by a community. I have anecdotal evidence that this is not always happening. I hear of parents — even those who might fit into the social categorization of “good Catholic parents” — making decisions with their feet or with their four-wheel drives to opt out of diversity in schools.

In a large urban area like Dublin mobility is a characteristic of our times. There are schools in Dublin where over 80 percent of the children come from an area outside the local parish or community. There are many factors, positive and negative, involved. Schools in an area with an aging population very often aggressively advertise for children from other areas in order to maintain staff size. In many cases parents choose a school near to grandparents who act as child-minders. Parents deliberately choose a school in a socially more favorable area because they genuinely want their children to have a better chance in life. But part of that mobility has been the result of parents opting out of diversity of an ethnic kind or of diversity due to a high incidence of children with special educational needs.

While I recognize that parents have the right to choose the best possible education for their children, I am unhappy when Catholic parents opt out of diversity and send their children to schools precisely because there is less diversity in them. While I recognize that parents have the right to choose the school they consider best, the exercise of rights must also incorporate concern for the common good.

There is also a sense in which government policy contributes to such a flight from diversity when it does not ask all patron bodies to equitably share the burdens and challenges of diversity. One finds situations in which some patrons are allowed to stick to a policy of small

classes and remain small and single stream, and the burden then falls on other schools to accommodate all diversity. I cannot say that things are perfect, but the overall record of the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Dublin in adapting to diversity is excellent.

“Education is the economy.

Have we fully realized that?

Have we also recognized

that while education is the backbone which supports the

economy, economic activity is

only one dimension of human

activity? Have we seen that

there is more to growth than

increased prosperity?”

I would be very unhappy to find that Catholic schools were being deliberately less open to diversity than others, and where necessary I am prepared to take steps to redress such situations. I visit our Catholic schools, and I see the diversity that is present there. I was greeted in a Catholic school only last week by a young pupil who said to me, “You are a friend of my father”; he was the son of the imam of one of our mosques.

I would be unhappy if Catholic secondary schools were to become mainly elitist. The fact that university fees have been abolished means that more people have the money available to invest in the education of their children in fee-paying schools at second level, many of which are the schools which attain best results for entry into university.

Would it not be better to have just one school system for all? Do the community schools at second level not offer a model which could be universalized also at primary level?

I am happy to see the emergence of a new model of patronage linked with the VEC in North Dublin. Not only am I happy, but I am hopeful that these schools will become schools marked by educational excellence. That will be the key to their success. Some have expressed that fear the new “state school” may end up having to take in just those who have not made it elsewhere. The way to avoid

this is to ensure that each school is one to which any parent in the community would be happy to send their child. I am puzzled as to why the system is being rolled out with such caution. The lack of a real pluralism in patronage models is putting unfair pressure on Catholic schools.

On the other hand, I believe that it would be utopian to think that there will ever be a single school model to which all children would be sent indiscriminately. Totally centralized, unified models of education rarely work, and they have rarely existed in their pure form. If we are honest, they did not even exist in totalitarian communist regimes. One of the better hotels I stayed in recent times had been a private clinic for leaders of the local communist party. If those who talked an ideology of equality looked after their health separately, you can be sure that they also looked after their children in the same way.

Pluralism of providers can indeed add edge to quality in education through competition. Pluralism of patrons has been crucial in sustaining a vital Church of Ireland and Protestant community, which in its turn makes a significant contribution to diversity in Ireland. Centralized monopoly educational administrations can be shown to have their own problems.

In many countries where there are broad state school systems, Catholic schools still exist and flourish and are regarded as being in the forefront in providing quality education. In many inner-city areas in the United States the Catholic education system is the one which really offers opportunity to the poor and members of minority communities.

There is no evidence that a totally “religiously neutral secularist society” is the best space in which to foster dialogue between cultures and religions. France, which has perhaps the most secularized school system in Europe, has been particularly marked by racial tensions. There is indeed a sense in which, when it comes down to religious diversity, a more secularist society may not be the best one to be able to understand and guide the phenomenon of religious diversity.

Pope Benedict XVI has noted that “the pathology of religion is the most dangerous sickness of the human spirit.

It exists within the religions, yet it exists also precisely where religion as such is rejected and relative goods are assigned an absolute value." There are forms of secular society in which hostility to religious values forces religious groups into a dangerously narrow perception of their culture and thus sharpens religious differences and misunderstandings in a pluralist society.

Here in Ireland I fear that the desire in certain secularist thought to reduce religion entirely to the private sphere may make it harder to welcome fully the strong religious commitment of many of our immigrant communities. My belief is that interreligious dialogue can best be addressed by people who are strongly rooted in their own faith rather than by people who have a confused religious commitment or by people who are not religious at all. What is important, however, is that we all address the situation with a sense of mutual knowledge and respect.

All faiths have to avoid any form of fundamentalism: fundamentalism in their own faith, fundamentalism about the role of religion. Religions are obliged to respect the legitimate autonomy of the secular order and of reason. I quote from an earlier writing of Benedict XVI where he notes that "imposing a specific political program in the name of God is to make yourself into God. ... Whenever a religiously motivated moralism side-steps this often irreducible pluralism, declaring one way to be the only right one, then religion is perverted into an ideological dictatorship whose totalitarian passion does not build peace but destroys it."

Curiously one could build up a historical argument to say that the original national school system introduced in Ireland in the 19th century as a single unified system to cope with religious diversity actually had a tendency to eliminate diversity. The then-chief secretary of Ireland set out three aims for his system: the education of the poorer classes in Ireland; the prevention in state schools of the proselytism which had vitiated the previous systems; and the establishment of a system of "mixed education" in which Protestants and Catholics would be brought up together in the same school.

The aim was indeed a noble one, and the honorable purpose of its author was

beyond doubt. But the consequences were not exactly what was set out. One prominent member of the original board noted:

"The education which is being supplied by the national board is gradually undermining the vast fabric of the Roman church. I believe, as I said the other day, that if we give up the national system we give up the only hope of weaning the Irish from the abuses of popery. But I cannot venture openly to express this opinion."

"Ghetto schools, which we all wish to avoid, are not necessarily just the fruits of bad educational policies but of a range of other policies which create ghettos for which the school cannot be held to blame."

Today a system of education which excludes religious values from the school in the name of tolerance can easily in fact become an instrument for excluding full citizenship in education to those parents who wish their children to have an integrated religious education and for undermining of their full right to choose.

There is a tendency to forget that the multicultural new Ireland of today is perhaps more religious than its immediate predecessor. Immigrants have brought with them not a more secular society but religious revival. The majority of our current immigrant population appears to be Roman Catholic, and let it be said not just white Roman Catholic. These immigrants have brought enrichment not just to our labor market and to Irish culture but also to our parishes and faith communities.

Immigrants of other Christian churches have equally enhanced and brought numerical increase to existing Christian denominations or have brought a completely new dimension to the Christian life of our country such as that of the free African church communities. Ireland now also has for the first time strong Orthodox communities. We now have large Islamic worship

communities.

When I visit our Dublin Islamic communities at the close of Ramadan, I am constantly thanked for the manner in which Catholic schools provide a tolerant religious environment to which Islamic parents are happy to entrust their children. They do not want to send their children to a school which has no religious ethos.

Our educational experience should reflect this reality. The question is how to do it.

Eighty-seven years ago precisely this week Dublin was in mourning for the loss of its archbishop and the National University was in mourning for the loss of its first chancellor, Archbishop William J. Walsh. Daire Keogh kindly sent me an advance copy of an interesting article on Archbishop Walsh as chancellor which will be published as part of the centenary celebrations of the National University of Ireland. What is striking is the manner in which an archbishop-chancellor respected the independence of the university, recognizing its Catholic roots and composition but refusing as Keogh notes to "baptize" it. Walsh rather encouraged the establishment of a university true to the origins of the concept of university, that of being at the service of the thirst for knowledge and of the truth.

Our pluralist new Ireland needs a new theory of pluralism, and the university is the typical space where pluralism can be nurtured. Pluralism requires open and honest dialogue. The truth is never served by mere polemics. We need a society where people who believe, people who are searching, people who doubt and people who reject religious values can live in a new mature relationship of dialogue and seeking.

Enlightened secular society does not need to fear dialogue with men and women who believe or vice versa. The questions which belief proposes in society are fundamental questions and cannot be passed over. The challenges of the message of Jesus Christ are challenges to all.

Such dialogue seems easier in continental European countries than it is in Ireland. Pope Benedict took up this question of the dialogue between reason and faith in a very interesting address which he had intended to read at the Roman University La Sapienza

and which I heartily recommend to your reading. Unfortunately the pope was unable to pronounce what is a truly challenging address because of groups whose theory of tolerance did not embrace listening to a challenge of the pope written in the true style of university intellectual dialogue.

“There is no evidence that a totally ‘religiously neutral secularist society’ is the best space in which to foster dialogue between cultures and religions. France, which has perhaps the most secularized school system in Europe, has been particularly marked by racial tensions.”

Our pluralist new Ireland needs a new theory of pluralism. Our young people need to be helped to attain the science of intellectual searching and dialogue on the deeper questions for life and society. The young person in the new Ireland is called to grow toward responsibility within the realities of the culture of the day, influenced by ideas, by lifestyles, by the basic self-understanding of this concrete society. The young person must learn how to discern within that world where true progress is to be found in his or her own personal life and in society as a whole.

At the same time the young person has to learn that society is not an abstraction or a force which is absolutely determinant regarding his or her own values and lifestyle. Education will take place in a particular context, but all of us have the ability and indeed the responsibility to change the context within which education can take place.

This challenge of discernment and verification of values begins for young people today at a much younger age than heretofore. The young person is challenged already at second-level education to draw the connections between what he or she has received (tradition) and his or her evolving life. This occurs at a moment in which parents and teachers today often feel that

their efforts are not having success. It is very often precisely at this age that many parents lose their nerve in speaking about faith with their children.

In such a situation it is easy to revert to playing safe. Yet faith requires risk; enhancing freedom entails risk. Rather than engaging in dialogue, parents and teachers can feel that it is best to leave it up to the young person alone to find his or her way regarding faith. Parents lose their nerve, perhaps also because the church has let them down by providing very few services to help them in their task or because society adopts a policy of hostility or at best agnosticism to the fundamental questions about truth. A society which loses the nerve to educate can easily find itself adrift.

A truly pluralist, multicultural society will be genuinely tolerant and respectful to all forms of search for the truth. It has to do so not within the cultural context of the past, but in the context of the new challenges and opportunities of today.

I am reminded once again of that kind German nun to whom I referred at the beginning of my talk, who 30 years after the war had ended had failed to see that there were no good reasons for continuing wartime measures in a different era. All of us, believers and secular society alike, have to waken up to the realities of our day and leave aside the prejudices of the past. I must say, as a duty of honesty, that that same German nun despite her restricted vision on some matters was a truly extraordinary person who looked after allies and representative of the democratic resistance in Rome during the German occupation.

I make no claim that what was done in the name of the Catholic Church in education in the past was always what should have been done. In some cases I am ashamed of what happened. But I am also proud of what has been achieved, and I am genuinely open and enthusiastic about seeing that the wealth of that achievement can be integrated into a future Ireland built up on a new understanding of dialogue and respect.

Inevitably, if you ask an archbishop to give a convocation address you will get a lecture which focuses on religious issues. I apologize to those who may be disappointed at the aspects of education for modern Ireland on which I have

not touched. Religion, however, is not removed from life. The true believer, as opposed to the ideologue, challenges reason and society not to close itself in on its own thought framework and thus not to degenerate into positivism.

I quote again from Pope Benedict's address to Rome's university, “The human journey never simply comes to an end; and the danger of falling into inhumanity is never totally overcome as is only too evident from the panorama of recent history.”

Universities in particular will change in the new Ireland. New dimensions of knowledge will emerge. Faith and the Christian tradition — along with the tradition of other beliefs — have much to bring to the debates around these new issues. The university is the place where this debate can find a privileged space.

I am hopeful that this debate in our universities can take place and that universities will renew themselves in open thought and open dialogue for the good of the new Ireland and all its citizens. May the National University of Ireland continue to use all its institutions to foster such a vision. ■

Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice Among U.S. Catholics

CARA

A new study of the sacramental beliefs and practices of U.S. Catholics finds big differences among Catholics of different generations about participation in and attitudes about the sacraments. The study, commissioned by the Department of Communications of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University in Washington, was released April 13. The study divides respondents into four generations in relation to the Second Vatican Council: pre-Vatican II, comprised of those born before 1943; Vatican II, born between 1943 and 1960; post-Vatican II, born 1961 to 1981; and

millennial Catholics, born after 1981. The survey finds that for each succeeding generation the percentage who have made their first Communion and first confession and received the sacrament of confirmation declined. The percentage of Catholics who have made their first Communion ranges from 99 percent of the oldest generation to 85 percent of the youngest generation. While 95 percent of Catholics in the pre-Vatican II generation said they have been confirmed, only 69 percent of millennial Catholics said they have received the sacrament of confirmation. Overall, only 2 percent of Catholics say they participate in the sacrament of reconciliation once a month or more, 12 percent said they do several times a year, 12 percent said they do once a year, 30 percent say less than once a year and 45 percent say they never make a sacramental confession. CARA notes, "Of the seven sacraments, Catholics are least likely to say the sacrament of reconciliation is 'somewhat' or 'very' meaningful to them." The executive summary of the survey follows. The full report can be found at <http://cara.georgetown.edu>.

In December 2007 the Department of Communications of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of adult Catholics in the United States. The focus of the survey is participation in the sacramental life of the church as well as beliefs about the sacraments.¹

However, the poll also addresses many other issues of importance to the church, including other forms of participation in church life and other teachings of Catholicism. A questionnaire was designed by CARA in consultation with the Department of Communications. See Appendix I for the complete questionnaire. The following are among the major topic areas:

- How Catholics have entered the church.
- The general sacramental lives of Catholics.
- The Mass and Eucharist.
- Reconciliation.
- Anointing of the sick.
- Ordinations and vocations.
- Religious devotions and practices in daily life.
- General Catholic beliefs and atti-

tudes.

In February 2008 CARA surveyed 1,007 self-identified adult Catholics from Knowledge Networks' large national panel of households, which have been assembled by regular random telephone survey methods (probability sampling).² A survey with this number of respondents has a margin of sampling error of ± 3.1 percent. As a rule of thumb, every one percentage point of the total adult Catholic population is equivalent to approximately 500,000 persons.³

The Knowledge Networks panel is known to closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the U.S. population.⁴ The panel is updated on a quarterly basis, and those persons who are sampled and asked to join the Knowledge Networks panel receive subsidized Internet access and other incentives. For those who do not own computers, Knowledge Networks provides a television-based Internet system (MSN TV) for free. These steps ensure that the Knowledge Networks panel is as reflective as possible of the national population and that it is not biased toward those who have pre-existing access to the Internet.

Throughout the report consistent differences are noted in the responses to the survey made by subgroups of respondents. The two most important of these subgroups are defined by Mass attendance and generation.

Various social scientific studies of contemporary Catholics have revealed important differences among generations. Older Catholics, especially those who came of age prior to Vatican II, are typically more involved in church life and attend Mass more frequently than younger generations of Catholics. In general, they tend to score higher on most survey items that measure "commitment" to Catholicism.

Knowledge about the Catholic faith also varies by generation and is frequently greatest among older Catholics. However, this depends on the topic. For example, knowledge of church teachings and obligations is usually higher among older Catholics, but knowledge of the Bible is typically greater among younger generations.

Agreement with church teachings is, again, often relatively high among the oldest Catholics, the pre-Vatican II generation (born before 1943). To a lesser

extent this is also true of the millennial generation, Catholics (born after 1981) currently in their mid-20s and younger. Agreement with church teaching is typically lowest among the generation of Catholics who came of age during the changes associated with Vatican II (born between 1943 and 1960) and among post-Vatican II generation Catholics (born 1961 to 1981), though this too depends on the teaching in question.

"A majority of adult Catholics, 57 percent, say their belief about the Eucharist is reflected best by the statement 'Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist,' compared to 43 percent who said their belief is best reflected in the statement 'Bread and wine are symbols of Jesus, but Jesus is not really present.'"

Frequency of Mass attendance is a strong indicator of the general importance of Catholicism in a person's life and of his or her level of commitment to living out the faith. Consequently, analyzing survey responses according to frequency of attendance consistently reveals strong differences among Catholics. In general, the more frequently one attends Mass, the more frequently he or she participates in other church or religious activities, the greater his or her knowledge about the Catholic faith, the greater his or her awareness of current events in the church and the greater his or her adherence to church teachings.

Major findings of the study are noted below.

Major Findings

Experience of Sacraments

—Six in 10 respondents (61 percent) agree "somewhat" or "strongly" with the statement "Sacraments are essential to my faith." More than nine in 10 adult Catholics (92 percent) have received their first Communion and 84 percent

have celebrated the sacrament of confirmation. Nearly all weekly Mass attenders and those who have attended Catholic educational institutions have received their first Communion and have been confirmed.

—Older Catholics are more likely than younger Catholics to have celebrated their first reconciliation, first Communion or the sacrament of confirmation. With each generation the percentage having celebrated each of these sacraments decreases. For example, 99 percent of those of the pre-Vatican II generation have celebrated their first Communion, compared to 94 percent of the Vatican II generation, 91 percent of the post-Vatican II generation and 85 percent of the millennial generation.

The differences between generations for the sacrament of confirmation are even larger. Ninety-five percent of those of the pre-Vatican II generation have been confirmed, compared to 91 percent of the Vatican II generation, 79 percent of the post-Vatican II generation and 69 percent of the millennial generation.

—Respondents were asked how meaningful each of the seven sacraments are to them. More than eight in 10 adult Catholics say the following four are either “somewhat” or “very” meaningful to them: marriage (89 percent), baptism (88 percent), the Eucharist (84 percent) and confirmation (83 percent). Nearly all Catholics (90 percent or more) who attend Mass weekly or more often say all seven sacraments are at least “somewhat” meaningful to them.

—Of the seven sacraments, Catholics are least likely to say the sacrament of reconciliation is “somewhat” or “very” meaningful to them. Only two-thirds (66 percent) of adult Catholics responded as such (39 percent “very” meaningful).

—When asked which of the seven sacraments was personally “most meaningful” to them, baptism is selected most often (39 percent). However, weekly Mass attenders are more likely to say the Eucharist is personally “most meaningful” to them (52 percent). Catholics of the millennial generation are most likely to select the sacrament of marriage as being the “most meaningful” (43 percent).

—Respondents with children were asked about the importance they place on their children celebrating their first

reconciliation, first Communion and confirmation. These parents are most likely to say it is “somewhat” or “very” important that their children celebrate first Communion (81 percent), followed by confirmation (78 percent) and finally first reconciliation (77 percent). Nearly all parents who attend Mass at least once a month say it is at least “somewhat” important that their children celebrate all three of these sacraments.

Mass and Eucharist

—More than three in 10 adult Catholics (31.4 percent) are estimated to be attending Mass in any given week. This is equivalent to 16.1 million adult Mass attendees per week. Twenty-three percent say they attend Mass every week (once a week or more often). This has remained unchanged — within margins of sampling error in the last five years. Mass attendance is highest among Catholics who are older, female, married to another Catholic, who have a college degree or more and who attended Catholic educational institutions — especially a Catholic college or university.

“About a third of respondents (34 percent) agree ‘strongly’ with the statement, ‘I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.’ More than two-thirds (68 percent) agree with this statement at least ‘somewhat.’”

—Nine in 10 or more Mass attending Catholics (attending at least a “few times a year”) say the following aspects of Mass are at least “somewhat” important to them: feeling the presence of God (94 percent), prayer and reflection (93 percent) and receiving Eucharist (92 percent). Aspects of less importance include the music (71 percent) and the church environment and decorations (66 percent).

—Among Catholics who have celebrated their first Communion, eight in 10 (79 percent) who attend Mass at least once a week say they “always” receive Eucharist at Mass. By comparison, 66

percent of those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month receive the Eucharist this often, as do only 31 percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.

—A majority of adult Catholics, 57 percent, say their belief about the Eucharist is reflected best by the statement “Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist,” compared to 43 percent who said their belief is best reflected in the statement “Bread and wine are symbols of Jesus, but Jesus is not really present.”

Among all Catholics, members of the pre-Vatican II generation are more likely than all other Catholics to believe that Christ is really present in the Eucharist (70 percent compared to 54 percent). Among Catholics attending Mass at least once a month, those of the youngest generation, the millennials, are just as likely to believe Christ is really present in the Eucharist as pre-Vatican II Catholics (85 percent compared to 86 percent). Nine in 10 of all weekly Mass attenders (91 percent) say their belief about the Eucharist is reflected best by the statement “Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.”

—Respondents who do not attend Mass weekly were asked about things that might explain why they missed Mass in the last six months. Among Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month, a busy schedule or lack of time (51 percent), family responsibilities (48 percent), or health problems or a disability (41 percent) are the most frequently cited reasons that at least “somewhat” explain why they missed Mass.

Among Catholics attending Mass a few times a year or less often, the most common reasons cited that explain at least “somewhat” their missing Mass are that they don’t believe “missing Mass is a sin” (64 percent) and that they are “not a very religious person” (50 percent).

—About a third of respondents (34 percent) agree “strongly” with the statement “I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.” More than two-thirds (68 percent) agree with this statement at least “somewhat.”

—Eighty-three percent of Mass attending Catholics say it is “somewhat” or “very” important to them that Mass is celebrated in a language they most

prefer, and 70 percent say it is similarly important that the Mass is celebrated in a way that reflects their ethnic and ancestral culture.

—Only 12 percent of adult Catholics say they “always” attend Mass on a holy day of obligation when these do not fall on a Sunday. Twenty-three percent say they do this “frequently or usually,” 39 percent say they do this “seldom” and 26 percent say they “never” do this. Forty-one percent of those who attend Mass at least once a week say they “always” attend Mass on a holy day of obligation. Pre-Vatican II generation Catholics are more than twice as likely as members of any younger generation to say they “always” attend Mass on these days (27 percent compared to 10 percent).

Reconciliation

—Twenty-six percent of adult Catholics say they participate in the sacrament of reconciliation once a year or more often (this is equivalent to 13.3 million adults). Only 2 percent of Catholics do so once a month or more often. Thirty percent say they go to confession less than once a year, and 45 percent say they never do so.

—More than six in 10 weekly Mass attenders (63 percent) participate in the sacrament of reconciliation once a year or more often, compared to 37 percent of those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month and only 6 percent of those attending less often.

—Sixty-two percent of Catholics agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement, “I can be a good Catholic without celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation at least once a year” (33 percent agree “strongly”). Even 54 percent of weekly Mass attenders agree at least “somewhat” with this statement.

—Two-thirds of all adult Catholics agree (67 percent) at least “somewhat” that one must make a confession with contrition for the forgiveness of sins. Forty-eight percent agree similarly that acts of penance or fasting are necessary for this forgiveness. More than half (52 percent) agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that by participating in the sacrament of reconciliation they are reconciled with God and the church. One in four Catholics agrees “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement “The sacrament of reconciliation is only necessary for

the forgiveness of very serious sins” (8 percent agree “strongly”).

Anointing of the Sick

—Fifty-one percent of respondents have requested the sacrament of the anointing of the sick at a time of serious illness, either for themselves or for a family member. This is more common among those of the pre-Vatican II (53 percent) and Vatican II (59 percent) generations than among those of the post-Vatican II (46 percent) and millennial (43 percent) generations.

“Forty-five percent of adult Catholics say that receiving the sacrament of the anointing of the sick at some point is ‘very’ important to them. Thirty-one percent say this is ‘somewhat’ important, followed by 14 percent saying this is ‘a little’ important and 10 percent saying it is ‘not at all’ important to them.”

—Forty-five percent of adult Catholics say that receiving the sacrament of the anointing of the sick at some point is “very” important to them. Thirty-one percent say this is “somewhat” important, followed by 14 percent saying this is “a little” important and 10 percent saying it is “not at all” important to them.

—Sixty-eight percent of Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more often say that receiving the sacrament of the anointing of the sick at some point is “very” important to them. Twenty-five percent say this is “somewhat” important, followed by 4 percent saying this is “a little” important and only 3 percent saying it is “not at all” important to them.

—Women are more likely than men to say it is “very” important that they receive this sacrament (51 percent compared to 39 percent). Pre-Vatican II Catholics are most likely to say this is “somewhat” or “very” important (88 percent).

Ordination and Vocations

—Thirteen percent of adult Catholics have attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest. Among weekly Mass attenders the percentage is slightly higher (20 percent).

—Fifty-four percent of adult Catholics agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement “Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the church.”

—Sixteen percent of adult Catholic men say they have considered becoming a priest or religious brother. About one in 10 adult Catholic men (9 percent) say they considered this at least “somewhat” seriously (3 percent “very” seriously). The percentage of men who say they considered this “somewhat” or “very” seriously is equivalent to more than 2.2 million individuals.

—Catholic men who attended a Catholic college or university are among the most likely subgroups to say they ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother (40 percent) and did so at least “somewhat” seriously (26 percent).

—Five percent of adult Catholic men say they have considered becoming a permanent deacon (3 percent at least “somewhat” seriously). The percentage of men who say they considered this “somewhat” or “very” seriously is equivalent to more than 760,000 individuals.

—Fifteen percent of adult Catholic women say they have considered becoming a nun or religious sister (5 percent at least “somewhat” seriously). The percentage of women who say they considered this “somewhat” or “very” seriously is equivalent to nearly 1.3 million individuals.

—Catholic women who attended a Catholic college or university are among the most likely to say they have considered becoming a nun or religious sister (41 percent).

—Taking into account men who considered becoming a priest, brother or a deacon, nearly 4 million adult Catholics, male and female, have considered at least “somewhat” seriously a clerical (males) or religious (males and females) vocation in the church. Frequency of Mass attendance is not significantly related to any differences in the past personal consideration of vocations among Catholics.

—One in 10 adult Catholics say they have encouraged someone they know to

consider one of these vocations. Six percent say they have encouraged someone to become a priest, followed by 4 percent offering encouragement to become a deacon, 4 percent encouraging someone to become a religious sister or nun and 3 percent offering encouragement to become a religious brother.

—Catholics' current frequency of Mass attendance is related to differences in the likelihood that they have encouraged Catholic vocations among others. Twenty-eight percent of weekly attenders say they have encouraged someone they know to consider a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, sister or nun. By comparison, 9 percent of those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month and 3 percent of those attending Mass less often have encouraged someone they know to consider a Catholic vocation.

—About a third of all respondents (32 percent) said they would encourage their own child (regardless of parental status) to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun or sister. There is no statistically significant difference between the responses of those who have children and those who do not (34 percent compared to 32 percent). A majority of weekly Mass attenders (55 percent) say they would encourage their own child to pursue a vocation.

Lenten Practices

—Six in 10 adult Catholics say they abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays. This is equivalent to 30.6 million individuals. Slightly less than half of adult Catholics (45 percent) typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services. A similar proportion (44 percent) say they try to do something positive (as opposed to giving something up) during Lent. Slightly less than four-tenths (38 percent) say they give up something for Lent.

—Nine in 10 adult Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more often (89 percent) abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent. Slightly fewer, 85 percent, say they typically receive ashes on Ash Wednesday. Two-thirds of weekly attenders (67 percent) say they give up something for Lent (besides meat on Fridays) and nearly three in four (73 percent) say they make extra efforts to try to do something positive. Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at

least once a month are only slightly less likely than weekly attenders to observe Lenten practices.

—Among Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month, those of the youngest generation, the millennials, are the most likely to observe Lenten practices. More than nine in 10 of these Catholics abstain from meat on Fridays (91 percent) and receive ashes on Ash Wednesday (91 percent). About three-quarters of these young Mass-attending Catholics (74 percent) also give up something during Lent (besides meat on Fridays). A similar percentage (75 percent) makes other extra positive efforts.

Other Religious Devotions and Practices

—About six in 10 adult Catholics (59 percent) have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home (this is equivalent to 30.1 million adult Catholics). This is most common among Hispanics (67 percent) and among weekly Mass attenders (80 percent).

—About a third (32 percent) say they either wear or carry a crucifix or cross, and 29 percent say they wear or carry a religious medal or pin of a saint or angel. Fewer, less than one in four, say the same about rosaries (23 percent), prayer cards or coins (20 percent) and scapulars (9 percent).

—Among weekly Mass attenders, 45 percent carry a rosary, and 42 percent say they wear or carry a religious medal or pin of a saint or angel. Fewer, less than four in 10, say the same about a cross or crucifix (39 percent), prayer cards or coins (32 percent) and scapulars (17 percent).

—A majority of adult Catholics, 52 percent, say they pray the rosary. Eight percent pray the rosary at least once a week (4 percent say they do so every day). Women are more likely than men to say they pray the rosary at least once a year (62 percent compared to 42 percent). Pre-Vatican II Catholics are most likely to pray the rosary at least once a year (73 percent). Seventy-two percent of weekly Mass attenders say they pray the rosary at least once a year (23 percent say they do so weekly or more often).

—Nearly half of adult Catholics (47 percent) say that their local parish offers opportunities for eucharistic adoration. Six percent say their parish does not

offer this, and 47 percent say they “don’t know.” Three in 10 Catholics (29 percent) with local parishes that they know offer eucharistic adoration say they have participated in this in the last year. This is equivalent to nearly 14 percent of adult Catholics or approximately 7.1 million individuals.

Other Religious Beliefs

—More than three in four respondents (77 percent) agree at least “somewhat” with the statement, “I am proud to be Catholic” (56 percent agree “strongly”). More than half (55 percent) agree similarly that “I think of myself as a practicing Catholic” (33 percent agree “strongly”). More than eight in 10 (81 percent) consider their Catholic faith to be important in their daily life (41 percent say that this is either “among the most important parts” of their life or “the most important part” of their life).

—Eighty-five percent of weekly Mass attenders agree “strongly” with the statement “I am proud to be Catholic” (compared to 70 percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month, and 39 percent who go to Mass a few times a year or less). Eighty-one percent agree “strongly” that “I think of myself as a practicing Catholic” (compared to 53 percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month and 14 percent who go to Mass a few times a year or less). Nearly all (99 percent) consider their Catholic faith to be important in their daily life (75 percent say that this is either “among the most important parts” of their life or “the most important part” of their life).

—Eighty-three percent of respondents say that helping those in need is either “somewhat” or “very” important to their sense of what it means to be Catholic. Respondents were more likely to cite this as being this important than receiving holy Communion (79 percent), receiving confirmation (74 percent), living a life consistent with church teaching (73 percent), having devotion to Mary (68 percent), attending Mass (66 percent), having devotion to the saints (63 percent) and going to confession (56 percent). In addition, two-thirds of respondents (66 percent) agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement “Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.”

—Those who have attended Catholic

educational institutions are among the most likely to say that “living my life consistent with church teaching” is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be Catholic. Fifty-four percent of those who attended a Catholic college or university responded as such as did 49 percent of those who attended Catholic high schools and 46 percent of those who attended Catholic elementary and middle schools. Overall, 37 percent of adult Catholics say this is “very” important to their sense of being Catholic.

“Only 15 percent of adult Catholics have noticed that the number of Catholic priests has declined in recent decades and report that they have been personally affected by these changes (29 percent among weekly Mass attenders).”

—About eight in 10 adult Catholics do not doubt the following creedal statements: “There is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (81 percent), that “Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven” (80 percent) and that “Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary” (79 percent). Nearly all weekly Mass attenders do not doubt these beliefs (97 percent each).

—About three-fourths of Catholics do not doubt that “there is a heaven” (76 percent), that “God, the Father, is creator of heaven, the earth and all we know of the universe” (76 percent), that “Mary, the mother of God, was immaculately conceived without original sin” (73 percent) and that “Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead” (71 percent). Nine in 10 or more weekly Mass attenders do not doubt any of these beliefs (90 percent, 93 percent, 90 percent and 91 percent, respectively).

—Catholics are somewhat less of one mind regarding hell. Sixty-seven percent of all adult Catholics have no doubt that

“there is a hell.” Seventy-eight percent of weekly Mass attenders say they do not doubt this belief.

Parish Life in a Time of Fewer Priests

—Only 15 percent of adult Catholics have noticed that the number of Catholic priests has declined in recent decades and report that they have been personally affected by these changes (29 percent among weekly Mass attenders). A majority (51 percent) say they have noticed the decline but say that they have not been affected (54 percent among weekly Mass attenders). A third of respondents (34 percent) say they have not noticed a change in the number of priests (17 percent of weekly Mass attenders).

—Respondents were asked about several things that could be done in their parish if they did not have a resident priest. Two-thirds (65 percent) say they would support sharing a priest with one or more other parishes, followed by more than half supporting bringing in a priest from outside the United States (56 percent), increasing the use of deacons (56 percent) and asking a retired priest to do more (55 percent).

—A third of adult Catholics (34 percent) report that a priest from outside the United States has come to serve in the parish they attend in the last five years. Hispanic Catholics are more likely than non-Hispanics to say this has occurred in their parish (41 percent compared to 30 percent). Those attending Mass weekly are most likely to say this has occurred (55 percent).

—Of those respondents who have had a priest from outside the United States serve in their parish in the last five years, a majority, 53 percent, say they are “very satisfied” with the ministry of these priests, and another 34 percent say they are “somewhat satisfied.” Thus, nearly nine in 10 (87 percent) who have had an international priest serve in their parish in the last five years are satisfied with their ministry. Only 11 percent say they are “somewhat dissatisfied” and 2 percent “very dissatisfied” with the ministry of international priests serving in their parish.

Satisfaction with Church Leaders

—More than eight in 10 adult Catholics (82 percent) say they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the leadership of

Pope Benedict XVI (31 percent “very” satisfied). Among weekly Mass attenders, 93 percent approve of the pope’s leadership at least “somewhat.”

—More than seven in 10 (72 percent) say they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the leadership of the bishops of the United States (22 percent “very” satisfied). Among weekly Mass attenders, 82 percent approve of the U.S. bishops’ leadership at least “somewhat.”

—The current level of satisfaction with the leadership of the U.S. bishops among all adult Catholics is 14 percentage points higher than in a CARA poll four years ago (58 percent). ■

Notes

- ¹ The sacrament of marriage was studied in a previous poll commissioned by the Committee on Marriage and Family Life of the USCCB. The complete report for this study, “Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics,” is available on the CARA Web site: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/MarriageReport.pdf>.
- ² CARA has conducted national Catholic surveys with Knowledge Networks on six previous occasions since 2002.
- ³ CARA Catholic Polls (CCP), national random-digit dial telephone polls, consistently estimate that between 22 percent and 23 percent of the adult population in the U.S. self-identifies as Catholic. Taking this proportion of the most recent Census Bureau estimates for the size of the U.S. adult population we estimate that 1 percent of the adult Catholic population is approximately equivalent to 500,000 persons (or more specifically 510,300 as of April 2008).
- ⁴ The Knowledge Networks panel has been shown to be representative to well within one percentage point to the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) demographics for gender, age, race and ethnicity, education, and region. See Baker et al. (2003), “Validity of the Survey of Health and Internet and Knowledge Networks Panel and Sampling,” Stanford University and Krosnick and Chiat Chang (2001), “A Comparison of Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey Methodology With Internet Survey Methodology as Implemented by Knowledge Networks and Harris Interactive,” Ohio State University.



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May 29-June 1

Consultation of the Coalition for Ministry in Daily Life. Host: National Center for the Laity. Theme: "Working From the Soul: From Paycheck to Transformation." The Cenacle in Lincoln Park. Chicago, Ill. www.dailylifeministry.org

May 29-June 1

College Theology Society Annual Convention. Theme: "Catholic Identity and the Laity." Salve Regina University. Newport, R.I. www2.bc.edu/cts

June 5-8

Catholic Theological Society of America Annual Convention. Theme: "Generations." Hyatt Regency Hotel. Miami, Fla. www.ctsa-online.org

June 8-9

Catholic Social Workers National Association Inaugural Conference. Sponsors: St. Vincent Health and Catholic Health Association. Theme: "Catholic Social Work: Living the Mission." Eberhardt Center. Grand Valley State University. Grand Rapids, Mich. www.cswna.org

*June 11-13

International Conference on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education. Sponsor: St. Thomas University John A. Ryan Institute of Catholic Social Thought. Theme: "Business Education at Catholic Universities: The Role of Mission-Driven Business Schools." University of Notre Dame. South Bend, Ind. www.stthomas.edu/catholicstudies

June 11-14

American Academy of Fertility Care Professionals Annual Meeting. Sponsors: Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Creighton University Medical Center. Augustinian Conference Center. Rome, Italy. www.aafcp.org

*June 12-14

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Spring Meeting. Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Hotel. Orlando, Fla. www.usccb.org

*signifies new entry

On File

Aboard the plane bringing him to the United States Pope Benedict XVI said he hoped to help heal the wounds of priestly sex abuse during his visit to the U.S. and promised steps to ensure that such acts do not happen again. Asked what he would have to say about the clerical sex-abuse scandal in the U.S., the pope said the church should work for justice and help the victims as much as possible. "We are deeply ashamed and will do all possible that this cannot happen in the future," he said. "Really, it is a great suffering for the church in the United States and for the church in general and for me personally that this could happen," he said. "If I read the histories of these victims, it's difficult for me to understand how it was possible that priests betrayed in this way their mission to give healing, to give the love of God to these children," he said. The pope cited new norms approved by U.S. church leaders for dealing with sexual abuse, and he noted a recent visitation of all U.S. seminaries. Seminaries today are being much more careful about making sure that "only really sound persons" are admitted to the priesthood, because the church recognizes that "it's more important to have good priests than to have many priests," he said. He drew a distinction between homosexual priests and those who commit sexual abuse. "I will not speak in this moment about homosexuality but about pedophilia, which is another thing. We will absolutely exclude pedophiles from

the sacred ministry. This is absolutely incompatible," he said. The pope said the entire church should be involved in the process of healing, assistance and reconciliation. "This is a big pastoral engagement, and I know also all the bishops and priests and all the Catholic people of the United States will do what is necessary to help, to assist and to heal and to see that in the future these things cannot happen," he said. "We hope that we can do and have done and will do in the future all that is possible to heal this wound," he said.

Archbishop Alfred Hughes of New Orleans announced the second phase of a major restructuring for parishes, schools and ministries in the archdiocese. Although it affects dozens of parishes, the plan results in a small overall decrease in the number of Sunday worship sites. The current 117 parishes and five missions comprise 122 Sunday worship sites. After the plan takes effect, there will be 108 parishes, nine missions and two university campus ministry sites, a total of 119 sites for Sunday Mass. Archbishop Hughes said the biggest challenge he faced in deciding on the plan was the prospect of adding another burden to Catholics already laboring to recover from Hurricane Katrina. "The losses in the Katrina and post-Katrina experience have been a very difficult cross for people to carry, and the last thing in the world I want to do is to complicate that for people," the archbishop said.

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