

U.S. Catholic Population at Record High

New York [RNS] — The nation's Roman Catholic membership increased by 180,037 in 1975 to reach a new high of 48,881,872 Catholics living in a record high 18,531 parishes in the 50 states. Catholics now make up 22.78 per cent of the population.

Significantly, both infant baptisms and the number of converts to Catholicism increased in the former case reversing a downward trend that began in 1962. Recorded Catholic marriages, however, decreased by 15,896 in 1975.

Knights Answer Criticism Of \$100,000 Altar Gift

By MICHAEL GRODEN

Costs for the 41st Eucharistic Congress Aug. 1 to 8 in Philadelphia, particularly a \$100,000 donation from the Knights of Columbus to build an altar, have drawn criticism from many parts of the country.

Here in the Rochester diocese, the Northwest Region Executive Committee has raised the issue with Auxiliary Bishop John E. McCafferty, episcopal adviser to the congress, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Priests Council, Sisters Council and the Knights of Columbus.

Elmer VonFeldt, editor of the Knights official magazine, *Columbian*, told the *Courier-Journal* that the \$100,000 donation was in response to a specific request from Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia.

John W. McDevitt, Supreme Knight of the K. of C. said that the criticism is understandable up to a point. In a statement sent to the *Courier-Journal*, he said, "There is some validity to the statement that funds should not be squandered in view of the needs of the poor and starving through the world. But such a position, if taken to the

These statistics and trends were among the highlights found in the 1976 Official Catholic Directory published by P.I. Kennedy & Sons, New York. The figures are compiled as of Jan. 1 each year. The directory, first published in 1817, reflects about 275,000 yearly changes and additions and includes a General Summary of Statistics for 1976, tabulating some 13,419 statistics in 63 categories for easy comparison.

As opposed to 1974 when it recorded an increase of over 2,000 priests, the directory shows that in

extreme, can be very myopic and simplistic."

In his statement, McDevitt asked the critics to recall the incident in the Gospel where a woman from Bethany used an expensive jar of oil to anoint the feet of Christ as a sign of her love and admiration of Him. The apostles complained to Jesus that the oil could have been sold and the money used for the poor.

McDevitt said, "As you recall Christ replied, 'Why do you criticize this woman? It is a good deed she has done for me. The poor you always will have with you but you will not always have me.'"

McDevitt stated, "Any kind of international tribute to our Eucharistic King will involve a considerable expense. But should we reject all special honor to God because it might be expensive? We do not think so."

"It is our conviction that we must both show special honor to our Eucharistic King as well as minister to the needs of the poor. This seems to be what Christ meant to teach us through the incident at Bethany. This is the course we have set for our international association of Catholic men," he said.

1975 there was a decrease of 62, bringing the total of ordained priests to 58,847 — 36,175 diocesan and 22,672 religious order clergy. The diocesan priests increased by 170 and the religious order priests decreased by 232.

Professed religious personnel include 8,563 Brothers, a decrease of 62, and 130,995 Sisters, a decrease of 4,209. Significantly over the past 10 years, the clergy has decreased by only a few hundred from 59,193 in 1966 to 58,847 in 1976, but the religious Brothers have declined by almost 4,000 and the nuns have decreased by more than 50,000.

The 1976 directory lists 315 members of the hierarchy, an increase of two over the previous year.

There are now 17,826 parishes with resident pastors, and 705 parishes without resident clergy — an increase of 16 for a record total of 18,531. Also listed are 4,007 missions — up 156, 1,597 stations — up 94 and 10,127 chapels — down 154.

The directory shows 894,992 recorded baptisms, an increase of 18,686 over 1975 and a reversal of the downward trend that began in 1962. The number of converts was 80,035, an increase of 4,912 over last year. Marriages, on the other hand, decreased by 15,896 to 369,133.

Directory statistics cover the Catholic population in all 50 states, including 32 archdioceses and 135 dioceses (not including the most recently established Diocese of Orange, Calif.). The 32 archdioceses reported a growth of 25,799 Catholics, and the 135 dioceses increased by 154,238.

Chicago remains the largest archdiocese, with 2,466,300 Catholics, followed by Los Angeles,

with 2,208,989, and Boston, 2,012,533. Other archdioceses over 1 million are New York (1,880,788), Detroit (1,509,277), Newark (1,426,034) and Philadelphia (1,377,469).

Brooklyn continues as the largest diocese with a Catholic population of 1,210,185, followed by Rockville Centre, N.Y. (Long Island), with 1,017,837.

Communion in Hand Approved for England

London [RNS] — Roman Catholics in England and Wales will soon be able to take Holy Communion by hand as well as by the familiar practice of receiving the host on the tongue, as a result of a Vatican decision.

A statement from the Bishops' Conference said diocesan bishops would request parish clergy to prepare their people for the change through careful instruction.

"Then Catholics will be free to choose to receive Holy Communion either on the tongue, as at present, or in the hand. At all times both ways of receiving the Sacrament will remain legitimate alternatives for any communicant," the statement added.

The Catholic Information Office said the bishops of England and Wales had discussed many times in recent years the advisability of asking the Holy See for this permission but it was not until last fall that they decided to do so. Their request has been granted.

The statement recalled that in the early days of the Church Holy Communion was given to the people by placing the host in the hand of the recipient, who then transferred it to the mouth. Until the present day a similar method of receiving Holy Communion has

The largest increases were noted in Los Angeles (up 109,240); Orlando, Fla. (72,505); Newark (55,569); Cleveland (53,427); Washington, D.C. (45,668); Syracuse, N.Y. (33,510); and Brooklyn (27,671). Data on the newly formed Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Fla. split off from the St. Augustine diocese, is included in the new edition of the Directory.

continued in Eastern churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, but in the West this practice continued until about the ninth century when the present custom of receiving on the tongue gradually took its place and became universal. In recent times the ancient practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand has been revived in many countries with the permission of the Holy See.

In Dublin, meanwhile, it was announced that the Irish bishops would discuss Communion in the hand at their June meeting.

2 Named Bishops At Consistory

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — Two U.S. Roman Catholic priests, both Cathedral rectors who studied in Rome, were named bishops during the May 24 Vatican consistory called by Pope Paul to install 20 new cardinals.

They are Msgr. Stanley J. Ott, rector of St. Joseph's Cathedral, Baton Rouge, La., who was appointed auxiliary to Archbishop Philip M. Hannan of New Orleans, and Father George A. Fulcher, rector of St. Joseph's Cathedral, Columbus, Ohio, who was appointed auxiliary to Bishop Edward Hermann of Columbus.

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