

WORLD & NATION

Study reveals more women in diocesan office positions

By Nancy Hartnagel
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Women hold nearly 47 percent of U.S. diocesan administrative and professional positions, up 2 percent from 1995, according to a survey released by the U.S. bishops' Committee on Women in Society and in the Church.

Data from 1998 show that women hold just over a quarter of top diocesan jobs, 40 to 52 percent of middle management positions, and more than 60 percent of lower-level professional slots where there is no supervision of other professionals but may be supervision of support staff.

Archbishop John G. Vlazny of Portland, Ore., committee chair, said the survey is good news for the church and for women.

"The women who have prepared themselves for these roles and have come forth to accept them deserve our gratitude," he said June 30 in a statement accompanying release of the survey in Washington.

Archbishop Vlazny also praised the bishops for recognizing the "many gifts and talents" of women in diocesan appointments. He added: "The church looks forward to welcoming even more women into lay leadership roles in the parishes and dioceses all around the country."

Last October, in the statement "From Words to Deeds: Continuing Reflections on the Role of Women in the Church," the committee urged that women be appointed to leadership positions, with progress toward that goal tracked and evaluated.

The new survey, conducted for the committee by the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, or NACPA, is titled "Women in Diocesan Leadership Positions: A Progress Report."

Cincinnati-based NACPA noted in the study that it has compiled data since 1990

on the gender of diocesan administrators and professionals as part of a survey of salaries paid to diocesan staff members. The issue of salary is not addressed in this survey.

The survey analyzes data from 1995 through 1998. Over that period, participating dioceses numbered between 77 and 92, with the average of 87 representing half of U.S. dioceses. The survey said a core group of 52 dioceses responded in all four years with an additional 30 responding in three of the years.

The survey looked at 55 specific diocesan positions, ranked at four levels by participating dioceses based on their particular structure.

Generally, level 1 positions represent top diocesan administrators — including the heads of pastoral and community services, chief financial and personnel officers, superintendent of schools and chief of staff — who report directly to the bishop.

Level 2 and level 3 positions — for example, directors of liturgy, evangelization, youth ministry, family life, social action, religious education, vocations, and newspaper editor — typically report to the bishop, curia moderator, chief of staff or someone in a level 1 position.

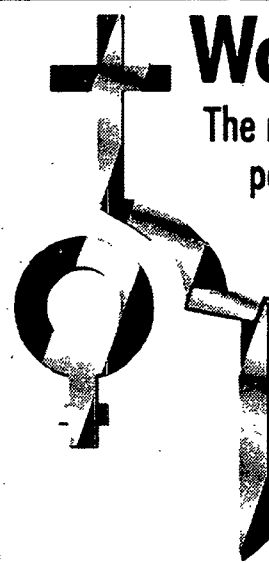
At level 4, diocesan professionals report to an administrator in a higher level, do not supervise other professionals and often have a technical expertise or specialization, for example, in curriculum or computers.

The survey found that the number of women in all 55 positions increased from 44.5 percent in 1995 to 46.6 percent in 1998.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the diocesan percentage is similar to national percentages for 1998, when women made up 46.2 percent of the U.S. workforce and 44.4 percent of executive, administrative and managerial workers.

Women in the Diocese

The number of women working in diocesan positions has increased slightly in the last three years.



Percent of women in diocesan office workforce...

1995 44.5

1998 46.6

Percent of women in U.S. workforce...

1998 44.4

Percent of dioceses with a female director/manager of:

Schools	60	Tribunal	20
Community Services	25	Pastoral Services	53
External Affairs	23	Operations	13
Vocations	04	Finance	6

Source: National Conference of Catholic Bishops

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Diocesan increases from 1995 to 1998, which the study described as "small but steady growth," were recorded at each level:

- Level 1, from 23.5 percent to 26 percent.
- Level 2, from 39.9 percent to 40.1 percent.
- Level 3, from 49 percent to 52.4 percent.
- Level 4, from 60.5 percent to 63.5 percent.

The survey showed that women hold a high percentage of positions in education and human resources, and a low percentage in finances, facilities management and vocations.

Diocesan demographics also were examined by size and region.

Small and medium-sized dioceses of fewer than 350,000 Catholics averaged 47 to 48 percent women professionals, compared with large dioceses of more than 350,000 Catholics, which averaged 42 percent women professionals over the four-year period.

The survey found the South to be the strongest employer of women administrators and professionals, averaging 52.3 percent from 1995 to 1998. Other regional averages were: the West, 50.6 percent; Midwest and Central regions, 44 percent; and the Northeast, 38.2 percent.

And, in comparing the latest figures to those from a similar four-year period in the early 1990s, NACPA officials noted increases in level 1 and level 4 positions, but said middle management positions at levels 2 and 3 "show no statistical change between the two periods."

Pope reiterates hope to make Middle East pilgrimage

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — One of Pope John Paul II's hopes for his Middle East pilgrimage is that it will not be given any political significance.

The pope said June 30 his visit "would be an exclusively religious pilgrimage in its nature and purpose, and I would be saddened if anyone were to attach other meanings to this plan of mine."

But unfortunately, the pope's dream of walking in the footsteps of Abraham, Moses and Jesus has long stumbled over the reality of the region's politics.

Wars, civil strife and a lack of religious freedom in various countries have kept the pope out of the Middle East, except for a brief trip he made to Lebanon in 1997.

Even that trip had been planned and then postponed for three years because of ongoing violence. And some Lebanese worried that an official visit of the pope to a country with zones controlled by Syria and by Israel would be read as a blessing of its partition.

The fear was not that Pope John Paul would say he approved the partition, but that just by kissing Lebanese soil some people would assume that he did.

For all the emphasis on the pastoral nature of papal trips, the pope is a head of state and an internationally recognized moral authority. Where he goes, what he says and who he meets with all are subject to political interpretation.

Because he is head of Vatican City State, diplomatic protocol requires him to meet the president or head of state of the countries he visits.

If he manages to make his hoped-for pilgrimage to the birthplace of Abraham, in modern-day Iraq, it is almost certain he will meet Saddam Hussein.

The meeting — seen against the backdrop of repeated papal and Vatican calls on the United States and the international community to lift the economic embargo on Iraq — would raise the eyebrows of Western leaders and diplomats.

In fact, the U.S. State Department has told the Vatican a papal meeting with Hussein would be "ill-advised." A U.S. diplomat said the fear was that Hussein would use as papal visit to lend legitimacy to his rule.

Five years ago, in one of the pope's first public references to his hope to visit the Holy Land in the year 2000, he acknowledged the political factors at play.

"It is my desire to walk in the footsteps of the Apostles, of the people of God, the children of Abraham," he told reporters during a January 1994 visit to the Vatican press

office.

The likelihood of an eventual trip increased, the pope had said, with the signing of a "fundamental agreement" between the Vatican and Israel, which led to full diplomatic relations, and with progress made at the time in talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"We have been waiting for this moment since 1994," said Boaz Modai, an official at the Israeli Embassy to the Vatican. "The issue of the pope's visit has been brought up constantly since diplomatic relations were established in 1994."

The Israeli government had wanted diplomatic relations and a clear Vatican acknowledgment of Israeli statehood before it would push for a papal visit. Once that happened, invitations were frequent and insistent.

But some segments of the population in Israel and in the territories under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority still

have hopes and fears with a political edge: Will the pope acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel? Will he call again for international statutes to protect its identity as a holy city? Will he acknowledge the Palestinian-administered territories as independent from Israel?

"I think it is possible to avoid politics, but it will require hard work," Modai said. "I hope that those elements who want to use the visit for political purposes" will refrain in order to make the trip a reality.

Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the Vatican nuncio to Israel, told Vatican Radio that the religious character of a papal pilgrimage would have been more recognized if Israel and the Palestinians had already come to a definitive and complete peace agreement.

"In the current situation, there will be strong efforts, on both sides, to make a political interpretation of every word, every step and every gesture," the archbishop said.

Bill requires focus on religion's role in U.S. history

By Stephen Steele
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — A bill that would require public school educators to emphasize the role religion played in the founding of the United States passed in the New York Senate June 16 by a 55-6 vote.

However, the legislation sponsored by state Sen. John J. Marchi of Staten Island faced likely defeat in the Assembly, according to John M. Kerry, executive director of the New York State Catholic Conference.

"We certainly support the bill. At this

point so late in the session, it's probably a one-house bill. But the measure deserves full consideration from the Assembly," Kerry said.

In promoting the bill, Marchi, a Republican, spoke of the need for a return to the appreciation of the spiritual dimension of the nation's founding.

"Decades of assault on traditional American values have helped create the climate of permissiveness and amorality, which figures in acts of inhumanity like the recent mass murders in a Colorado school," he said in a statement.

The bill states that during classroom discussion of the Declaration of Independence, teachers must emphasize the importance of the words "creator" and "supreme judge."

The bill also mentions the preamble of the New York State Constitution, which reads, "We the people of the State of New York, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure its blessings, do establish this Constitution."

Kerry noted that the bill received bipartisan and interreligious support in the Senate.