

# WORLD & NATION

## St. Faustina is named millennium's first saint

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II declared fellow Pole Faustina Kowalska the first saint of the new millennium, calling her "a gift of God for our time."

At a canonization Mass April 30 in St. Peter's Square, the pope said the humble life of the Polish Mercy sister, who died in 1938 at the age of 33 and whose diary account of visions and revelations inspired Divine Mercy devotion worldwide, "is tied to the history of the 20th century."

The period in which Christ entrusted his message of Divine Mercy to St. Faustina, in the years between the World War I and World War II, is of great significance, said the pope.

"Those who remember, who were witnesses and participants in the events of those years and the horrible suffering of millions of people, know how necessary the message of mercy was," he said.

As archbishop of Krakow, the pope took a personal interest in Sister Faustina, helping to retract a Vatican ban on her diary by demonstrating that it had been based on misleading translations of the nun's revelatory writings.

The ban was lifted in 1978, six months before the current pope's election.

Born Helen Kowalska to a poor peasant family in central Poland, St. Faustina entered the Warsaw convent of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in 1925.

## Lay ministers

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sive Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life.

The new survey found that since 1982:

- Average parish size has grown by 23 percent, from 2,300 members to 2,831.

- Average parish ministry staffing has grown 9 percent, from 4.7 per parish to 5.1 — but lay ministry has grown dramatically while the average number of priests, deacons and religious on staffs has gone down.

- The number of parishes with at least one lay minister on staff has more than doubled, from 30 percent to 68 percent.

- The average number of parishioners per priest has risen 72 percent, from 920 to 1,572; if priests resident in a parish but not assigned there are excluded, the current ratio is 1,887 parishioners per priest.

- The average number of priests in a parish has dropped from 2.5 to 1.8, or, if priest-residents are not counted, to 1.5.

One-sixth of the priests in the parishes covered by the survey were described as "resident," meaning they were living in the parish but retired or holding a full-time outside post. Resident priests often provide important ministerial services in parishes where they live, but like the thousands of deacons, religious and lay people who en-

gage in volunteer ministry, are not staff.

The researchers predicted that with declining numbers of priests and religious, the number and importance of lay ministers in parish staffing and parish life will only grow in coming years.

The number of permanent deacons has been growing significantly, but the parish ministry of most deacons is volunteer. According to the bishops' national office for the permanent diaconate, less than 10 percent of the nation's 13,000 permanent deacons hold full- or part-time jobs in parishes or other church institutions.

Not surprisingly, the study found that suburban parishes tend to be the largest in membership, staff, programs and budget, with urban churches next and rural churches lowest.

Although only 29 percent of the parishes in the survey were suburban, they accounted for 49 percent of the church membership. Rural parishes accounted for 35 percent of those surveyed, but only 16 percent of the church membership.

"Two-thirds of the parishes with fewer than 500 members are rural; two thirds of parishes with 5,000 or more members are suburban," the report said.

It said about two-fifths of the pastors reported that their parishes use e-mail or have a Web site or both. Thirty-one percent reported having their own Web sites, 27 per-

cent said they communicate by e-mail and 17 percent said they use both.

The report said the new survey indicates "a diffusion of ethnic identity since 1982" in U.S. parishes. In the Notre Dame study, the Irish were described as the predominant ethnic group in 23 percent of the parishes; in the new survey only 8.4 percent fit that category.

In both studies, Hispanics were described as the predominant ethnic group in about 8 percent of the parishes. The third most frequently named predominant group, at 7.1 percent, was German.

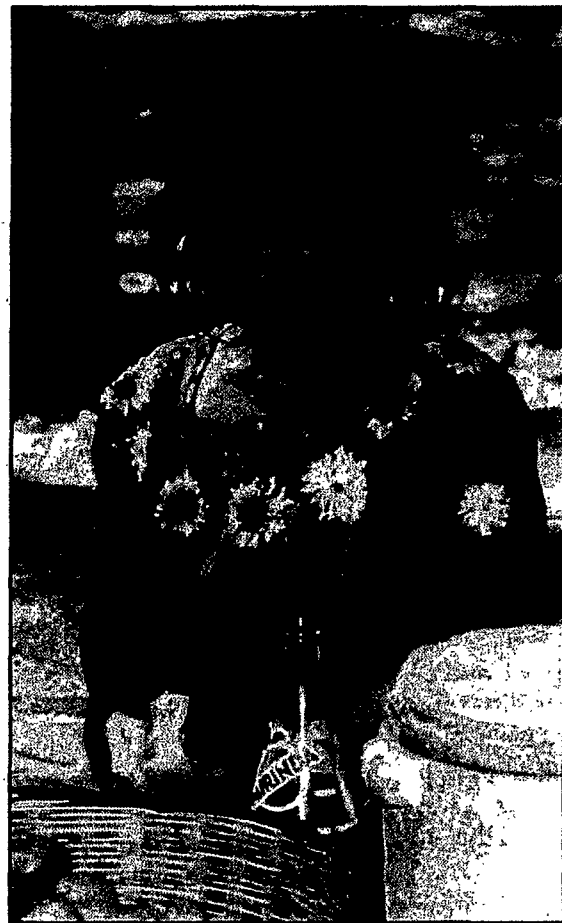
Overall, only 38 percent of pastors surveyed said there was a predominant ethnic group in the parish, and some 40 different ethnic groups — including Luxembourgian, Dutch and "Cajun white American" — were among the groups named.

The new survey found significant increases in some parish programs.

The report said that 81 percent of parishes now have a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program, more than double the 32 percent reported in 1982.

It found that 46 percent of parishes now have evangelization programs, up 32 percent in 1982; 32 percent have social action/advocacy programs, up from 20 percent in 1982; 87 percent have care of the sick programs, up from 71 percent; and 76 percent have adult education programs.

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Archbishop James P. Keleher, Kansas City, Kansas — who sponsors José Muños of Honduras.



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