

Encountering International Missionaries:



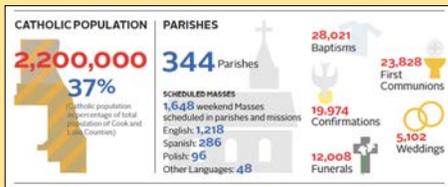
Lessons Learned

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 Vicar for Religious, Archdiocese of Chicago
 April 2018

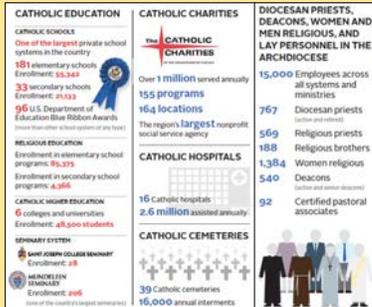
Introduction and Approach to Theme

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AT-A-GLANCE

The Archdiocese of Chicago, pastored by Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, is the third largest diocese in the United States. The Archdiocese includes Cook and Lake Counties, a geographic area of 1,411 square miles.



ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AT-A-GLANCE *Continued...*



Total Number of Religious Communities Represented in Chicago

- TOTAL 162
 - Men 62
 - Women 100
- Religious Communities of Men with International Priests and leadership based outside US, members serving as missionaries 11
- Religious Communities of Women with International Sisters and leadership based outside the US, Members serving as missionaries 21

Ethnicity Men Religious

- Croatia: 13
- India: 5
- Italy: 5
- Mexico: 27
- Nigeria: 2
- Poland: 27
- Vietnam: 29

Ethnicity Women Religious

- Croatia: 2
- Indonesia: 6
- India: 31
- Korea: 10
- Mexico: 35
- Nigeria: 21
- Poland: 75
- Tanzania: 10
- Vietnam: 6

Our International Missionaries

- International Religious Arrive in Three Ways
 - For Ministries in the Archdiocese
 - As Candidates for Religious Communities
 - To Attend Formation Programs and Universities





The Reality of Our World and Our Church

- Increased mobility of peoples
- Broad divisions in church and society
- Growing xenophobia and fear of immigrants

How are we called to be visible signs of God's love for humanity?

- To be bridges with differences among peoples
- To be agents of communion in our Church
- To be forces for unity in society

Three Metaphors

- Encounter
- Accompaniment
- Journey



In the diversity of peoples who experience the gift of God, each in accordance with its own culture, the Church expresses her genuine catholicity and shows forth the "beauty of her varied face". [89] In the Christian customs of an evangelized people, the Holy Spirit adorns the Church, showing her new aspects of revelation and giving her a new face. (EG, 116)

Encounter



Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. (EG, 8)

Encounter with Jesus



I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". [1] (EG, 3)

Encounter with the People of God



- Emergence of unmet needs
- Local reality (parish life)
- Ministries
- Family life
- Co-workers
- Diversity

Encounter with Archdiocesan Staff, Church and Parish Life



Encounter with Different Cultures and Languages



Encounter—Learnings:

- Communication between leadership in home country and Archdiocesan representatives
- Preparation before missionaries come
- Screening
- Immigration process
- Church structures/ employment
- Differences in religious life
- Dominant culture
- Being out of one's "comfort zone"
- Differences in ministerial roles
- Language
- Importance of forming relationships



The individualism of our postmodern and globalized era favors a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. Pastoral activity needs to bring out more clearly the fact that our relationship with the Father demands and encourages a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds. (EG, 67)

Accompaniment

- Clarifying motivations
- Length of Commitment
- Immigration
- Employment
- Language Study
- Acculturation
- Formation Opportunities



In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this "art of accompaniment" which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). (EG, 169)

Accompaniment—Learnings:

- Cultural differences
- Difficult decisions
- Change in vocational status
- Importance of communication, inclusion
- Importance of forming relationships
- Use of available lifelong formation opportunities
- Integration of vocation, community life, and ministry



2017 Ordination Class in Chicago
1 priest born in the US, member of a religious community

Journey

- Lights and shadows
- Mutuality
- Mentoring
- Openness to change
- Ongoing mutual conversion
- Leadership development
- Temporary ministry (# of years)
- New foundations- regional/ US presence
- Path to residency and citizenship



Journey—Learnings

The Church's closeness to Jesus is part of a common journey; "communion and mission are profoundly interconnected". [20] In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear. (EG, 23)



Implications for Persons

- Identify roles and expectations for ministry
- Listen to the experience of international religious versus what we think we know
- Acquiring proficiency in English remains an ongoing challenge for religious who work with new immigrants
- Religious working alone without a support system should be an exception
- Support and accompaniment must be ongoing

Implications for Diocese

- Programs for international religious should be systemic and intentional
- New collaborative structures are necessary for placement of international religious
- Invite religious to diocesan events to meet other religious
- Promote educational opportunities to assist with acculturation, language and certification for ministry
- Need to respond in a timely manner when things are not working out
- Importance to respect community life
- Importance to respect the dignity and human rights of religious in our ministerial settings (just policies for employment)

Implications for Church and World

- Openness to reaching new peripheries in mission
- Promotion of collaboration at all levels
- Openness to constant change and new models of community life
- Fostering the process of acculturation without losing our identity as religious

Some Recent US Experiences with International Sisters and Priests



Catholic Extension Society: US-Latin American Sisters Exchange Program

2014-2019



Asociación de Hermanas Latinas Misioneras en América (AHLMA)

Vision
To be a bridge among cultures, congregations and associations to carry out the mission of the Catholic Church and everything that promotes life and brings forth the Kingdom of God.

Mission
To serve the Latino Sisters who have been sent as missionaries to minister in the Church of the United States.

Key Objectives:
To create a space of encounter to build relationships, interchange experiences, ongoing formation and acculturation

To raise awareness nationally of the contributions the sisters make and the challenges they face



Trinity Washington University/ CARA Study:
International Sisters in the United States
by Sr. Mary Johnson, SNDdeN, Ph.D., Mary L. Gautier,
Ph.D., Patricia Wittberg, SC, Ph.D., Thu T. Do, LHC, M.A.
2017 (Published 2019)



US Experiences—Learnings

- Necessity of Grant Assistance
 - Hilton Fund for Sisters
 - GHR Foundation
- The need to raise awareness about international religious
- The need for collaboration among various organizations that serve religious life:
 - MACC
 - UISG
 - LCWR
 - CMSWR
 - NRVC
 - RFC
 - AHLMA
 - NCVR
 - CMSM

African Conference of Catholic Clergy and Religious in the United States (ACCCRUS)



Examples from Archdiocesan Life

Three established congregations of Polish sisters have shared resources for formation and mutual support. Each one has developed new ministries to meet unmet needs: with women and children at risk, in early childhood education, pastoral care and nursing of the elderly.

Examples from Archdiocesan Life

A religious order priest from Eastern Europe with limited proficiency in English began working in a parish. He was unable to understand cultural cues, did not appear to work well with women, and had a very different approach to youth catechesis and ministry. In this case, the parish staff was also not prepared to receive him. It ended with him leaving the parish after a difficult experience of 6 months.

Examples from Archdiocesan Life

International missionary priests from India arrived 18 years ago. One priest became pastor and mentored two of his brother priests, first as associate pastors to learn how our parishes work. Though they do not live together, they provide support for each other in a challenging pastoral situation.

Examples from Archdiocesan Life

A group of sisters from a teaching community in Mexico responded to a pastor's request to establish a mission school in an immigrant community. The area had become violent and the people lacked the opportunity for Catholic education for their children. These sisters agreed to learn English and to attend a major Catholic university to become certified teachers. After years of study and some pastoral experience in the parish, they achieved certification. Two sisters have become certified as principals. The neighborhood has stabilized, violence is reduced. It is a success story coming from struggle, sacrifice, and commitment of resources.

Examples from Archdiocesan Life

Three African sisters arrived in mid-2016 without any previous communication from them, their community, or the local parishes who had invited them. In this instance, immigration was not an immediate concern. They had already established themselves in another archdiocese. One sister eventually took a position in a parish school and two others—one, a nurse, and another with experience in ministry took positions in elder care through Catholic Charities. We put on hold an immigration request for another sister to arrive from Africa. In this situation we learned how important it was to articulate local needs. We decided not to put process over people. What had happened was not their fault. They have been gifts to our ministries and to this Archdiocese. We have begun working on an agreement between their congregation and the Archdiocese at this time.

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