



# V ENCUENTRO

DISCÍPULOS MISIONEROS: TESTIGOS DEL AMOR DE DIOS  
MISSIONARY DISCIPLES: WITNESSES OF GOD'S LOVE

# REPORT



## REGION 7 CATHOLIC POPULATION BY RACE / ETHNICITY

## SUMMARY OF REGIONAL AND DIOCESAN ESTIMATES

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Based on 2021 Survey Data and Census Estimates



## V Encuentro Catholic Population Update for 2021

With the arrival of data from the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, there has been widespread interest within the Church for an update on the V Encuentro Catholic population estimates that were published for 2016. Because the U.S. Census Bureau does not track religious affiliation, Catholic population estimates must rely on either sacramental records or large social surveys. With the increasing phenomena of religious switching and disaffiliation among the baptized, social surveys are seen by most sociologists today as the preferred way to develop estimates. The 2016 work for the V Encuentro was pioneering<sup>1</sup> in its development of a statistical model for the Catholic population at the diocesan level, based on several large social surveys that were conducted between 2013 and 2016, and taking into account variations in the demographics of religious affiliation by age, race/ethnicity, and geographic location.

The 2020 Census provides an important update on the underlying population in each diocese. However, it is clear from recent data on attendance at church services that the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on the way Catholics live their faith. This begs the question whether it has also impacted their sense of religious identity and their faith commitment to a religious institution. In order to update the statistical model, it would be ideal to rely on a very large survey that employs best practices in establishing a representative sample of the U.S. population, such as the 2014 Religious Landscape Survey (RLS), which included over 35,000 responses. Unfortunately, no such survey data are currently available. However, the Pew Research Center and the Public Religion Research Institute both produced research from less robust 2021 surveys that showed a significant increase in the Catholic adult population, reversing the long-standing trend of decline.<sup>2</sup>

### **Did the Self-Identifying Catholic Population Grow in 2020-2021?**

Both studies showed that this growth among Catholics took place in sharp contrast to a continuing decline in the Mainline and Evangelical Protestant populations. Although the size and quality of these two studies are not ideal, their close agreement on these data points lend credence that there may be something more than random fluctuations and sampling error here. A closer look at the Pew survey data, which were kindly made available to the V Encuentro research team, reveals:

- The population of older white Catholics experienced a large increase, especially among the 65+ population, which more than offset significant declines among younger white Catholics.

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<sup>1</sup> See the full methodological explanation at: <https://vencuentro.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/VE-Statistical-Reports-Methodology-EN.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.prrri.org/spotlight/prri-2021-american-values-atlas-religious-affiliation-updates-and-trends-white-christian-decline-slows-unaffiliated-growth-levels-off/> and <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/>.

- In contrast, the Hispanic/Latino Catholic population saw roughly proportional losses across all age groups, continuing the trend of gradual disaffiliation over the last 30 years, offset by even faster growth in the overall Hispanic/Latino population, resulting in continued numeric growth.
- Declines in the Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and other Catholic populations did appear, but the differences from the 2014 RLS survey were within the statistical margin of error.

### **A Tentative Update to the V Encuentro Statistical Model**

While it is not ideal to make broad changes to a national statistical model based on a survey with less than 4,000 responses, the shifts in the white and Hispanic/Latino Catholic populations did meet the standard of statistical significance. However, there were not sufficient data to attempt a full revision of the statistical model accounting for racial/ethnic, geographic, and age-related factors. Instead, the following was done:

- The statistical model from the 2016 V Encuentro analysis was incorporated as the starting point.
- The diocesan coefficients for Hispanic/Latino catholicity were multiplied by 0.95 (a 5% reduction).
- The dioceses were ranked according to the age profile of the underlying white, non-Hispanic population from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS 2021) by taking the geometric mean of their rankings in each of the four main age categories (18 to 29, 30 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65+). Coefficients were then applied to the original statistical model, ranging from 0.91 to 1.15, resulting in an overall 3.5% increase in white catholicity, in keeping with the 2021 Pew data.
- No changes were made in the model for the Black, Asian, and other Catholic populations.

### **Making Sense of the New Data**

An important question for the V Encuentro research team in this analysis is: does the change in the white Catholic population make sense? The clear external factor that could have played into the trend reversal was the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the white Catholic population has a much older profile than other Catholic racial/ethnic groups and most other Christian denominations, it does make sense that those who may have been most at risk of Covid-19 would do some religious introspection and perhaps return to identifying with the faith of their younger years. This begs the question: will that change last? That is unknown. It is certainly possible that the proportion of white Catholics will soon revert to the historical trendline, reversing the apparent gains seen in 2021. In any case, the trend among younger white Catholics continues to be one of significant disaffiliation. If the overall trends continue, the future Catholic Church in the United States will be smaller and more diverse.

The new diocesan-level Catholic population tables should therefore be taken with a degree of caution. The underlying Census data and the comparative data from 2016 are both shown in

order to help in that process. Keep in mind that the Catholic numbers do not represent people who attend Mass regularly—it is just those who would have identified themselves as Catholic if asked in 2021. They may or may not continue to do so today or next year. Some dioceses may show a large increase in their white Catholic population; that is due to the fact that they have a substantial elderly population that at least at the national level was more likely to identify as Catholic in 2021. That may or may not have been true locally.

Similarly, given the rapid increase in the Asian population throughout the country, some dioceses may see significantly larger numbers in their table for “Asian/Native Am./Other” Catholics. However, if the reality was that a sizeable Chinese or Japanese population arrived, it would have a far smaller impact in the shape of the local Catholic community than if those who arrived had been of Filipino origin.

The bottom line is that the new data provide an essential reference point for pastoral leaders as they develop programs and activities to serve the Church in their area. It is important to take stock of the changes revealed in the Census 2020 data. However, such leaders should understand that these numbers represent a snapshot in time, and the community they are called to serve will continue to change in its demographic composition and numerical size as the years pass. May God bless their efforts!

## EPISOCPAL REGION 7

### Episcopal Region VIII Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	17,883,073	17,329,206	-3.1%	4,474,000	4,473,000	0.0%	25.8%	68.7%
Hispanic/Latino	3,014,347	3,237,437	7.4%	1,641,000	1,672,000	1.9%	51.6%	25.7%
Black/African American	3,000,330	2,996,399	-0.1%	147,000	145,000	-1.4%	4.8%	2.2%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	1,315,551	1,810,320	37.6%	164,000	221,000	34.8%	12.2%	3.4%
<b>Total***</b>	25,213,301	25,373,362	0.6%	6,425,000	6,511,000	1.3%	25.7%	

\* The surveys on which the Catholic population are based were not large enough to generate reliable estimates of the Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, and "Other" Catholic populations separately, so they are grouped together here.

\*\* Overall population estimates are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Surveys (ACS) for each corresponding year.

\*\*\* The Catholic Totals may not add up exactly due to rounding errors. Round numbers are used because these are statistical estimates, not actual population counts.

**Diocese of Belleville**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	675,668	636,385	-5.8%	200,000	210,000	5.0%	33.0%	90.1%
Hispanic/Latino	23,272	25,934	11.4%	12,500	13,000	4.0%	50.1%	5.6%
Black/African American	120,194	106,899	-11.1%	7,500	6,500	-13.3%	6.1%	2.8%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	17,862	38,022	112.9%	1,800	4,000	122.2%	10.5%	1.7%
<b>Total***</b>	836,996	807,240	-3.6%	222,000	233,000	5.0%	28.9%	

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**Archdiocese of Chicago**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
<b>White, non-Hispanic</b>	2,638,780	2,509,073	-4.9%	781,000	705,000	-9.7%	28.1%	42.1%
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	1,469,401	1,510,864	2.8%	822,000	803,000	-2.3%	53.1%	48.0%
<b>Black/African American</b>	1,302,767	1,267,855	-2.7%	84,000	82,000	-2.4%	6.5%	4.9%
<b>Asian/Native Am./Other*</b>	492,772	596,164	21.0%	68,000	82,000	20.6%	13.8%	4.9%
<b>Total***</b>	5,903,720	5,883,956	-0.3%	1,755,000	1,673,000	-4.7%	28.4%	

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**Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	1,035,394	1,025,150	-1.0%	171,000	174,000	1.8%	17.0%	71.9%
Hispanic/Latino	106,204	121,833	14.7%	55,000	60,000	9.1%	49.2%	24.8%
Black/African American	109,711	108,324	-1.3%	1,700	1,600	-5.9%	1.5%	0.7%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	45,531	70,559	55.0%	4,000	6,500	62.5%	9.2%	2.7%
<b>Total***</b>	1,296,840	1,325,866	2.2%	232,000	242,000	4.3%	18.3%	

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**Diocese of Gary**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	513,282	506,424	-1.3%	87,000	91,000	4.6%	18.0%	55.5%
Hispanic/Latino	115,794	130,284	12.5%	62,000	66,000	6.5%	50.7%	40.2%
Black/African American	141,039	135,863	-3.7%	2,700	2,600	-3.7%	1.9%	1.6%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	17,191	36,209	110.6%	2,000	4,000	100.0%	11.0%	2.4%
<b>Total***</b>	787,306	808,780	2.7%	153,000	164,000	7.2%	20.3%	

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**Diocese of Green Bay**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	889,411	892,153	0.3%	243,000	275,000	13.2%	30.8%	87.9%
Hispanic/Latino	49,476	58,300	17.8%	25,000	28,000	12.0%	48.0%	8.9%
Black/African American	20,614	28,229	36.9%	600	800	33.3%	2.8%	0.3%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	52,620	72,139	37.1%	7,000	10,000	42.9%	13.9%	3.2%
<b>Total***</b>	1,012,121	1,050,821	3.8%	276,000	313,000	13.4%	29.8%	

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**Archdiocese of Indianapolis**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	2,105,941	2,081,316	-1.2%	346,000	333,000	-3.8%	16.0%	76.0%
Hispanic/Latino	147,823	173,733	17.5%	76,000	85,000	11.8%	48.9%	19.4%
Black/African American	340,021	371,824	9.4%	5,500	6,000	9.1%	1.6%	1.4%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	94,013	147,751	57.2%	8,500	14,000	64.7%	9.5%	3.2%
<b>Total***</b>	2,687,798	2,774,624	3.2%	436,000	438,000	0.5%	15.8%	

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**Diocese of Joliet**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	1,314,497	1,238,642	-5.8%	387,000	382,000	-1.3%	30.8%	65.4%
Hispanic/Latino	291,009	320,328	10.1%	155,000	162,000	4.5%	50.6%	27.7%
Black/African American	164,923	172,391	4.5%	9,000	9,500	5.6%	5.5%	1.6%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	175,302	222,636	27.0%	23,000	29,000	26.1%	13.0%	5.0%
<b>Total***</b>	1,945,731	1,953,997	0.4%	574,000	584,000	1.7%	29.9%	

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**Diocese of Lafayette in Indiana  
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates  
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

<b>Racial/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Census Estimated Population in 2016**</b>	<b>Census Estimated Population in 2021</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>Estimated Catholics in 2016</b>	<b>Estimated Catholics in 2021</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>% Catholic</b>	<b>% of Catholics</b>
<b>White, non-Hispanic</b>	1,157,537	1,149,261	-0.7%	186,000	180,000	-3.2%	15.7%	78.9%
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	65,014	77,964	19.9%	33,000	38,000	15.2%	48.7%	16.7%
<b>Black/African American</b>	69,147	68,587	-0.8%	950	900	-5.3%	1.3%	0.4%
<b>Asian/Native Am./Other*</b>	54,748	93,163	70.2%	5,500	10,000	81.8%	10.7%	4.4%
<b>Total***</b>	1,346,446	1,388,975	3.2%	225,000	228,000	1.3%	16.4%	

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**Diocese of Madison**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	898,166	899,855	0.2%	237,000	231,000	-2.5%	25.7%	83.1%
Hispanic/Latino	60,077	70,629	17.6%	33,000	37,000	12.1%	52.4%	13.3%
Black/African American	48,880	56,367	15.3%	1,800	2,100	16.7%	3.7%	0.8%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	49,951	72,431	45.0%	5,500	8,000	45.5%	11.0%	2.9%
<b>Total***</b>	1,057,074	1,099,282	4.0%	277,000	278,000	0.4%	25.3%	

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**Archdiocese of Milwaukee**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	1,691,171	1,623,252	-4.0%	462,000	460,000	-0.4%	28.3%	73.1%
Hispanic/Latino	244,291	270,059	10.5%	130,000	137,000	5.4%	50.7%	21.8%
Black/African American	322,112	323,870	0.5%	15,000	15,000	0.0%	4.6%	2.4%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	101,000	141,134	39.7%	12,500	17,000	36.0%	12.0%	2.7%
<b>Total***</b>	2,358,574	2,358,315	0.0%	620,000	629,000	1.5%	26.7%	

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**Diocese of Peoria**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	1,220,556	1,156,950	-5.2%	355,000	353,000	-0.6%	30.5%	84.9%
Hispanic/Latino	82,561	91,552	10.9%	43,000	46,000	7.0%	50.2%	11.1%
Black/African American	129,409	125,223	-3.2%	7,000	7,000	0.0%	5.6%	1.7%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	64,148	90,378	40.9%	7,500	10,000	33.3%	11.1%	2.4%
<b>Total***</b>	1,496,674	1,464,103	-2.2%	412,000	416,000	1.0%	28.4%	

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**Diocese of Rockford**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	1,069,289	1,005,400	-6.0%	316,000	319,000	0.9%	31.7%	64.8%
Hispanic/Latino	283,817	299,336	5.5%	156,000	156,000	0.0%	52.1%	31.7%
Black/African American	95,740	96,553	0.8%	5,500	5,500	0.0%	5.7%	1.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	58,137	84,489	45.3%	7,500	11,000	46.7%	13.0%	2.2%
<b>Total***</b>	1,506,983	1,485,778	-1.4%	485,000	492,000	1.4%	33.1%	

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**Diocese of Springfield in Illinois  
Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates  
for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	970,412	917,514	-5.5%	292,000	307,000	5.1%	33.5%	93.0%
Hispanic/Latino	28,069	29,755	6.0%	14,500	14,000	-3.4%	47.1%	4.2%
Black/African American	90,266	85,792	-5.0%	5,000	4,500	-10.0%	5.2%	1.4%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	22,688	43,334	91.0%	2,000	4,000	100.0%	9.2%	1.2%
<b>Total***</b>	1,111,435	1,076,395	-3.2%	313,000	330,000	5.4%	30.7%	

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**Diocese of Superior**  
**Overall Population and Catholic Population Estimates**  
**for 2016 and 2021 by Race / Ethnicity**

Racial/Ethnic Group	Census Estimated Population in 2016**	Census Estimated Population in 2021	% Change	Estimated Catholics in 2016	Estimated Catholics in 2021	% Change	% Catholic	% of Catholics
White, non-Hispanic	398,373	405,746	1.9%	111,000	130,000	17.1%	32.0%	93.5%
Hispanic/Latino	7,902	11,548	46.1%	4,000	5,500	37.5%	47.6%	4.0%
Black/African American	4,818	4,623	-4.0%	125	100	-20.0%	2.2%	0.1%
Asian/Native Am./Other*	19,729	29,643	50.3%	2,600	4,000	53.8%	13.5%	2.9%
<b>Total***</b>	430,822	451,560	4.8%	117,000	139,000	18.8%	30.8%	

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