

Catholic Trends: Spring/2026 (#2)

Where the U.S. Catholic Population Has Grown the Most

What part of the country has become more Catholic in the last 25 years? By region, would you believe that the South has experienced a net gain of more than 7.4 million Catholics from 2000 to 2025? The West had a minimal net growth, adding 1 million Catholics. At the same time, the Northeast lost 4.4 million Catholics and the lost Midwest 2.3 million. Not surprisingly, both regions experienced the most parish closures or consolidation.

The largest growth in the Southern region was South Carolina which grew by more than 250 percent while the state's overall population growth was 37%. In 2000, Catholics numbered 136,000; in 2025, more than 450,000.

Catholic Gains and Losses

Ten dioceses that gained the most Catholics from 2000-2025

Atlanta, GA	930,000
San Bernadino, CA	878,000
Fort Worth, TX	871,000
Galveston-Houston, TX	749,000
Dallas, TX	691,000
Phoenix, AZ	649,000
San Diego, CA	591,000
Sacramento, CA	571,000
New York, New York	419,000
Charlotte, NC	390,000

Ten Dioceses that lost the most Catholics from 2000-2020

Miami, FL	-340,000
Brooklyn, NY	-335,000
Detroit, MI	-300,000
Hartford, CT	-296,000
Chicago, IL	-231,000
Cleveland, OH	-183,000
Philadelphia, PA	-164,000
Buffalo, NY	-162,000
Syracuse, NY	-149,000
Milwaukee, WI	-137,000

While Catholic Population Holds Steady, Catholic Funerals Show Decline.

While the U.S. Catholic population has increased by just over 9% since 2021, the corresponding number of Catholic funerals have decreased by about 30%. What gives? As you leave your time on earth, why wouldn't you want to be sent off to your final destination via a Catholic funeral? Baptisms and First Communion have also dropped during this same period.

Quo Vadis Notre Dame?

The University of Notre Dame is not only one of America's best institutions of higher learning, but it is also seen, for the most part, as an authentic Catholic institution.

That's why it was so disconcerting to read that a professor, Susan Ostermann, was named director of the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies. She is not someone who happens to be "pro-choice", but she is a pro-abortion zealot.

Ostermann has claimed that the pro-life movement has "its roots in white supremacy and racism," and condemns crisis pregnancy centers as "anti-abortion propaganda sites." Such views would be more appropriate for someone working for Planned Parenthood, which, if one remembers, was founded by a bona fide white supremacist, Margaret Sanger.

The blowback to Ostermann's appointment was ferocious and ultimately, she went back to the classroom. The charge against her was led by the Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Kevin Rhoades, who made the case to reject her appointment. Rhoades was joined by some 20 other bishops, including Archbishop Paul Coakley, president of the USCCB, along with so many students and alumni. So, it ended well, but one wonders why the case even got this far, which reflects that problems remain at Notre Dame.

-The Catalyst

Workforce for the Apostolate, December 31, 2023

<i>Category</i>	<i>Worldwide</i>	<i>U.S.</i>	<i>U.S. Proportion</i>
Bishops	5,430	446	8.2%
Priests	406,996	36,057	8.9%
Perm. Deacons	51,433	18,723	36.4%
Religious Brothers	48,748	3,407	7.0%
Religious Sisters	589,423	35,917	6.1%

Catechists	2,866,966	270,487	9.4%
TOTAL CATHOLICS	1,405,454,000	75,479,000	5.4%

Religious Profiling in Rhode Island; Priests Targeted.

Rhode Island is the latest state to demonstrate a selective interest in combating the sexual abuse of minors. It seems to be only interested in probing the Catholic clergy, having zero interest in other religious denominations. Furthermore, it has no interest in investigating the on-going crisis in the public schools.

What we have is a clear case of religious profiling.

R.I.'s Attorney General, Peter Neronha, issued a report on March 4, 2026, which covered cases of alleged abuse dating back to 1950. It found that 75 accused members of the clergy (66 of whom were priests) were responsible for victimizing 300 minors.

What did Neronha find? 83% of the victims were male, and 74% of them were postpubescent, which indicates that homosexuals were doing most of the damage. To the point: when adults have sex with postpubescent males, it is called homosexuality, not pedophilia, which is having sex with children (namely pre-pubescent). When did these crimes occur? It was during the 1960s and 1970s, the so-called 'Sexual Revolution,' when the lion's share of the offenses took place.

The last time there was a known instance of the sexual abuse of minors by the Catholic clergy in Rhode Island was 15 years ago in 2011. When was the last time a minor was violated in their public schools? Last year, when a school bus monitor allegedly sexually abused three special needs students. One was in kindergarten.

Is Neronha going to tackle the problem in the same way he dealt with Catholic clergy? Don't hold your breath. He should. Major studies on R.I.'s public schools reveal that it is consistently ranked among the worst in the nation in dealing with the sexual abuse of minors.

The AG's report reads as though the sexual abuse scandal is ongoing in the Catholic Church and that Neronha's office did the heavy lifting in uncovering it. Wrong on both counts. We're talking about old cases where the bad guys are either dead or have been kicked out of ministry. *Not one of the 75 members of the clergy mentioned in the report is in active ministry.* Moreover, it was the Diocese of Providence that did most of the data gathering, without which Neronha could not have issued his report.

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