

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Our population is aging and we are seeing a considerable increase in the number of people age 55 and older. Per Meitler, "The population ages 65 and older will grow by more than 50 percent, offering a pool of talent with years of service available. This population will tend to stay in place more than younger generations, and will tend to have a fixed income. There is a window of time to engage and serve this age cohort while their numbers are growing and before they reach a more elderly stage of life."

The lack of economic opportunity is causing a migration of



our younger people. This is affecting the future of our cities and towns, and of course, our parishes as well. **Per Meitler, "Age cohorts with children and families, particularly the group ages 35 to 49, are declining across the diocese."** Consistent with their decline is a decline among school-age children. For many counties, young people tend to leave upon reaching adulthood, again, driven by economics. The outmigration of young people has a negative impact on employers who face a shrinking labor force; this, in turn, has a negative impact on school districts.

CATHOLIC STATISTICS

- **One-third of Catholics in the Diocese of Erie are not registered in a parish**, or about 80,000 persons.
- The number of Catholic households registered in parishes declined 16 percent, or 11,529 households from 2004 to 2014.
- Across the diocese, almost 40 percent of parishes indicated a very small change or no change in registered households, so the **significant decline has been among 74 parishes/missions** out of a total 137 parishes/missions.
- In the Diocese of Erie from 1995 to 2014, two new parishes were created through mergers, 10 parishes ceased to exist through mergers, four existing parishes were renamed as part of a merger and eight church buildings were closed and are no longer used for worship.
- **The average parish size in the diocese is 437 registered households.** There are 14 parishes with more than 1,000 households and 24 parishes/missions with less than 100 households.

WHAT'S NEXT?



Among the additional topics to be covered in future reports:

- Worship and the sacraments
- Mass attendance
- Catholic education
- How we carry out our mission today
- Parish resources through collections/giving
- Different parish structures and what they mean
- Number of clergy past/present/future
- Number of lay professionals
- Ratios of clergy to people and lay professionals to people
- Key indicators of a vibrant parish
- Key indicators of a healthy school

This is the first in a four-part series of bulletin inserts providing an overview of recent data collected about the Diocese of Erie through the pastoral planning process.

JOIN THE DISCUSSION All parishioners in the Diocese of Erie are invited to take the survey now available at www.meitler.com/erie. The data collected from this effort will be a key component of the parish listening aspect of pastoral planning. **STAY INFORMED** Please visit www.ErieRCD.org/planning.asp for ongoing updates about the pastoral planning process.



Prayer - Planning - Possibilities



PASTORAL PLANNING PROCESS
Report 1 • March 2015

AN INTRODUCTION *to the data*

The Diocese of Erie has engaged in pastoral planning to strengthen parish ministries, enhance the life of parishes and schools, make the church more responsible as a steward of limited resources and create a stronger, more viable and capable church to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ.

Smart planning requires good data.

Over the next few weeks, the Diocese of Erie will release the relevant data that has been compiled by the Meitler firm with the highest level of reliability possible.



Data tells a story: the story of how we are changing, how the environment around us is changing, and who is in the communities where we live and minister. **The data will provide an objective and sober assessment of the current situation and a look at the future in terms of how demographics of communities and parishes could change.**

Extensive data was collected and analyzed from many sources in the diocese and the broader community. Information was collected directly from parishes and schools through a data form all parishes and schools were asked to complete. Interviews were conducted with many Catholic leaders and feedback was solicited through a series of kick-off meetings across the diocese. **More information will be forthcoming from listening sessions, parishioner surveys and parish self-assessments.** Taken together, this larger collection of information will be a vital resource for setting goals and making recommendations.

“Our goals are to revitalize our efforts at evangelization, invigorate our ministry to all the poor and marginalized and proclaim the Gospel more effectively to all, especially to our youth and the varied marketplaces of our diocese,” Bishop Lawrence Persico says. Data informs all of these goals. It builds a common understanding of the current reality and poses many challenges and opportunities going forward.

AT A GLANCE

Facts and figures about the Diocese of Erie

	2003-04	2013-14	
TOTAL POPULATION	874,057	836,164	
TOTAL CATHOLIC POPULATION	225,934	225,000	
REGISTERED PARISH HOUSEHOLDS	71,491	59,962	-16%
PARISHES	126	117	
MISSIONS	19	20	
CHURCH BUILDINGS		142	
ACTIVE PRIESTS	159 (2005)	121 (2015)	projected: 36 (2025)
RETIRED/SICK/ABSENT PRIESTS	46 (2005)	53 (2015)	
WOMEN RELIGIOUS	476 (2007)	295	
DEACONS	29	63	
SEMINARIANS	24 (2005)	14	(additional 6 studying in Erie for other dioceses)
INFANT BAPTISMS	1,801	1,033	-43 %
FIRST COMMUNIONS	2,455	1,527	-38 %
CONFIRMATIONS	2,194	1,411	-36 %
CATHOLIC STUDENTS (Preschool - 12th grade)	9,051 (2009)	7,961	-12% in 6 years
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STUDENTS	14,944	10,466	-30%
MARRIAGES	797	502	-37%
DEATHS	2,660	2,360	-11%
OFFERTORY	\$27,108,735	\$28,506,318	+5%
AVERAGE WEEKEND MASS ATTENDANCE	65,858 (2006)	48,696	-26%

319
Masses offered each Sunday

153
Average Mass attendance

46,798
One-time seating capacity in all diocesan churches

THE DIOCESE OF ERIE: *A snapshot*

The Diocese of Erie offers more than 90 ministries and services to people of all faiths throughout its 13 counties. In its 2013 annual report, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie alone noted having served nearly 78,000 children, adolescents, adults and seniors. While some people received multiple services, the outreach ranged from providing food and clothing to counseling and mental health services, social support services and assistance with transitional housing.



The generosity of the people of the Diocese of Erie continues to be an inspiration. Special collections for people affected by natural disasters consistently raise hundreds of thousands of dollars. In addition to their weekly offertory contributions, parishioners donate more than \$6 million each year to the Catholic Services Appeal, supporting vital operations and outreach efforts for those in need.

Resources provided by the Catholic Church—including schools which save Pennsylvanians more than \$50 million in taxes each year—are vital assets in their communities.

But it's not just treasure: People give of their talent and time as well. *Faith* magazine and *FaithLife* newspaper are filled with stories of people whose volunteer efforts are nothing short of heroic. Whether it's the men and women of Sacred Heart Parish in St. Marys who have raised over \$1.5 million through their renowned bake sales, catechists in every parish dedicated to passing on the faith, the sisters of the Community of Anawim serving the working poor through their free medical clinic in Frenchville, or deacons meeting with the incarcerated, the people in every corner of the Diocese of Erie are going above and beyond to serve their brothers and sisters in the name of Christ.



DEMOGRAPHICS *Population trends and their impact on the Diocese of Erie*

general population

836,164

The population of the 13 counties that comprise the Diocese of Erie, down from 874,957 in 2000 (Source: P.A. State Data Center and U.S. Census Bureau)

26%

of the population self identifies as Catholic, higher than the national average of 19%. In Erie County, it's 34% while Elk County is 70% (Source: 2010 U.S. Religion Census, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies)

11 of the 13 counties that comprise the Diocese of Erie lost population from 2000-2010. Erie County was an exception, holding mostly steady.

PROJECTIONS INDICATE

THE DIOCESE OF ERIE AS A

WHOLE WILL SEE *little population growth over the next 20 years, perhaps 4 percent over the entire period.*

The two counties with notable growth in number of persons are Erie County, forecast to grow by 25,000 persons over 20 years, and Mercer County, forecast to grow by 4,700 persons over 20 years. Four other counties are projected to have further shrinkage in their populations and five other counties are projected to see very small growth.

