A NEW PARISH
EVERY FOUR DAYS:

U.S. Immigration and
its
Catholic Component
AMERICAN IMMIGRATION AND
ITS CATHOLIC COMPONENT

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In the total context of current policy, migration and refugee issues are only some of the many questions facing the Church and its people today. Inevitably, it is difficult for the Church and its people in this time of crisis to focus concern and interest on issues that appear not to arouse the same explosive temperament nor the same vibrant appeal inherent in so many other questions of our time.

Yet migration and refugee issues demand attention. -They, more than any other issue, stand out as a symbol of the essential worth this nation and its people place on the dignity of the individual human being. -They are a clue to our belief that all people are entitled to those "inalienable rights" for which this nation was created. Moreover, they indicate the degree of our humanitarianism, and are an effective gauge of our faithfulness to the high moral and spiritual principles of our founding fathers - to whom people, as the children of God, were the most important resources of a free nation.

Within this context, MRS seeks not only to revitalize traditional concern but also wishes to demonstrate that much of its current activities testify to this nation's promise of opportunity to people who have left their ancestral homeland in search of liberty.

The Migration and Refugee Service finds meaning in the area of service to the immigrant, the migrant and the refugee. It initiates, coordinates and directs programs that are of worldwide and national assistance. The enclosed study, conducted by members of the Center for Migration Studies in New York and a
member of MRS's Washington staff, will show that ONE NEW PARISH, of 2,500 members will be formed every four days through Catholic immigration projected over the next 30 years.

Hopefully, in final analysis, the contribution and the continued effort made by MRS on behalf of the Church will serve to diminish the overwhelming sense of anonymity, alienation and impotence so widely shared by many of those who have had to leave their homeland. There is no single whole cure, but to the Migration and Refugee Service three significant ingredients, - participation, involvement, and a sense of community standout and point the way toward a solution.
Immigration has been one of the most central factors in the development of American society. All U.S. citizens have been immigrants or the descendants of immigrants. A continuous stream of newly arrived peoples has characterized American Society from its earliest beginnings.

President John F. Kennedy, the great-grandson of an Irish-Catholic immigrant, said:

American society is process, not a conclusion. The abundant resources of this land provided the foundation for a great nation. But only people could make the opportunity a reality. Immigration provided the human resources. More than that, it infused the nation with a commitment for horizons and new frontiers, and thereby kept the pioneer spirit of American life, the spirit of equality and of hope, always alive and strong.

Huge waves of immigrants arrived in the United States in the latter part of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century.

From 1881-1890, 5.2 million immigrants arrived, 1891-1900, 3.7 million, 1901-1910, 8.8 million and 1911-1920, 5.7 million. All together, over 42 million people immigrated to this country since the Declaration of Independence.

Periodically, feelings of xenophobia would emerge. Except for Oriental exclusion, Congress ignored nativism until strong isolationism became rampant during World War I. In 1921, the first major law restricting new immigration by establishing an emergency quota system was passed. The law was revised in 1924 and by 1929 a permanent national origins quota system was instituted which attempted to retain the same ethnic balance in immigration that was reflected in the population census of 1920.
Immigration was sharply curtailed by this law. Only some 156,987 quota immigrants were permitted to enter the United States each year. Reflecting the population of the United States in 1920, the system favored immigration from Northern Europe while limiting immigration from Southern Europe and other parts of the world.

The 1924 law combined with the depression resulted in a sharp drop in immigration from 1931-1940. Little more than a half million immigrants came to the United States. During the past three decades immigration began to pick up, but many thousands of quota numbers were left unused by Northern European countries while long waiting lists grew in other parts of the world. (Figure I)

In 1965 a new law was passed to correct this situation. It abolished the national origins quota system substituting one which stressed a first come, first served policy. Now 170,000 immigrant visas a year are available to Europe, Africa and Asia, and another 120,000 to Canada and Latin America and the Caribbean. A ceiling of 20,000 visas was fixed for each country in Europe, Asia and Africa.

A "Family unity" policy also came into effect giving priority to relatives of United States residents. The combined effect of the new law was to increase the numbers of people eligible to come to the United States and to use all 290,000 quota numbers. The law has also changed the composition of the immigrant groups. Countries like Italy, Mexico, Portugal and the Philippines have gained by the new legislation. These are countries with large proportions of Catholics.

While immigration has played a strong part in our past, the 1965 law has guaranteed that it will continue to play a very
significant role in the future. The purpose of this short
analysis is to examine how the changes in the law will effect
Catholic immigration in the future.

II Immigration Between 1960-1969

Between 1960-1969, some 3,213,749 immigrants were admitted
to the United States. Net arrivals from Puerto Rico, from 1960-
1970 were 152,000, while refugees admitted on parole or as con-
ditional entrants numbered some 479,000. This latter figure
included the Cuban refugees.

The numbers of immigrants as well as the pattern of immi-
gration changed substantially as the result of the new immigra-
tion law in 1965. For example, total immigrants admitted to
the United States in 1965 numbered 296,697 compared to 454,448

Table I shows the changing pattern of immigration in the
United States as indicated by the top ten countries in the
world sending immigrants to the United States in the fiscal
year 1965 compared to the fiscal year 1970. Increasing propor-
tions of immigrants came from Southern Europe, Asia and the
West Indies. While Southern Europe was contributing 9.5% of
total immigration from 1961-1965, in 1969, Southern Europe con-
tributed 19.6%. Asian immigration, a significant part of which
is Filippino, changed from 7.2% to 20.3%. West Indian immigra-
tion increased from 8.2% to 14.8% with a significant proportion
of black French speaking Catholics from Haiti.

The countries which benefited most by the new legislation
are predominantly Catholic, such as Italy, Philippines, Mexico,
### Fiscal Year 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>40,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>37,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain &amp; No. Ireland</td>
<td>29,747</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>26,357</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
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<td>Dominican Republic</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Colombia</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
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<td>Argentina</td>
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</table>

### Fiscal Year 1970x

<table>
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<th>Immigrants</th>
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<td>Mexico</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Italy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>16,684</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britain &amp; No. Ireland</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>12,263</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(x--Preliminary figures for the fiscal year 1970 are based on visas issued rather than actual admissions, which could be slightly lower because of admittance subsequent to the fiscal period in which visas were issued.)
Haiti, Spain and Portugal. The increase of migration from these countries can be explained by stronger family ties and larger families.

III Catholic Immigration

On the basis of existing sources of information, the number of nominally Catholic immigrants has constantly accounted for more than 50% of immigration during the past decade. In 1960 the percentage of total immigration that was Roman Catholic was 54.5. By 1968 it reached 62.4.

During that period total annual immigration increased by 71%, from 264,814 to 453,387; while Roman Catholic immigration rose by 96.5%, from 144,460 to 282,926.

IV Projections of Immigration and Population

Net immigration after July 1, 1969 should remain at the 350,000-450,000 level annually, and will reflect the priorities outlined in the 1965 Immigration Act, which stresses the preferences given to relatives and specialists, while abolishing the national preference quotas. This act, by permitting greater in-migration of relatives of citizens and resident aliens has resulted in an increase in immigration. Indeed, the present backlog of relatives requesting visas will very possibly keep immigration well above the 400,000 level for the next few years.

In order to project the numbers and proportions of Catholic immigrants in the future some basic assumptions must be maintained: 1) the present legislation regulating migration will be retained and that: 2) the present
character of the immigrant movement will not be substantially modified.

Immigration will continue to be directed primarily to urban areas and will, at least in part, reduce the decline of central city areas. From the standpoint of the Catholic Church, the inflow of immigrants will partially slow down the decline of urban parishes, provided the immigrants join the territorial parishes, and will enable the survival of some national parishes, at least for a brief period. The existence of old immigrant neighborhoods and parishes is even today a strong point of attraction for potential immigrants.

In conclusion, the above analysis indicates that we will have an average of 660 new Catholic immigrants entering daily. In concrete terms these figures spell out practically a new parish of 2,600 persons every four days.
REFERENCES


