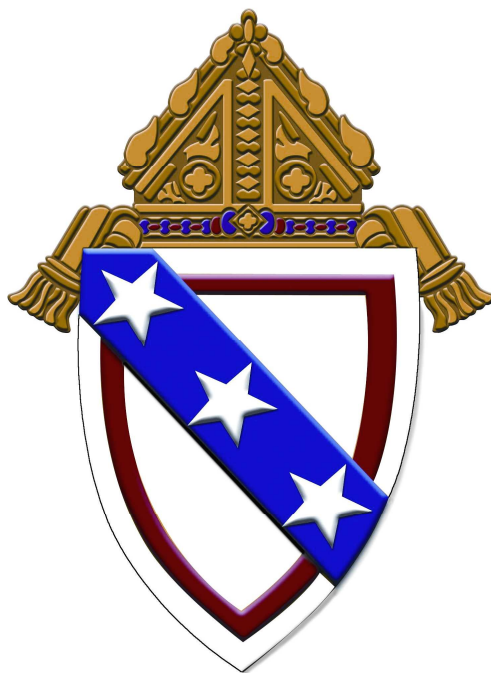


**Catholic Diocese of Richmond**

**WE'VE COME THIS**  
**FAR BY FAITH**



**Prepared by the Diocesan Pastoral Planning  
Commission**

**Update 2011**

To obey in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture. The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.

Sec. 144  
Catechism of the Catholic Church

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Letter from Bishop DiLorenzo</b>	<b>Page 1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Demographic Analysis</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Graphs and Charts</b>	<b>4-7</b>
<b>Values</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Signs of the Times</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>11-12</b>
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>14</b>

# Diocese of Richmond

Pastoral Center • 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, Virginia 23294-4201 • Phone: (804) 359-5661 • Fax: (804) 358-9159



July 1, 2011

Dear Members of the Diocese of Richmond:

I am pleased to share this publication, “Moving Forward in Faith”, with you. After asking the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Commission to undertake an update of the 2002 document titled: “We’ve Come This Far by Faith”, I believe they have developed a realistic picture of the current state of our diocese in terms of what we value, what we do well, the “Signs of the Times” and our current challenges.

As you can see from the demographic snapshot, times change, but we continue to grow. This is encouraging as well as challenging. As your Bishop, I strive to be a good steward of the resources entrusted to our diocese and want to make sure what we have is used effectively. Identifying what we value and believe to be the challenges helps me when making strategic decisions on how best to use our limited resources. We have much to offer and much work to do. Please join with me in praying that, with guidance of the Holy Spirit, we serve God and our brothers and sisters to the best of our ability.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Francis X. DiLorenzo  
Bishop of Richmond

## **INTRODUCTION**

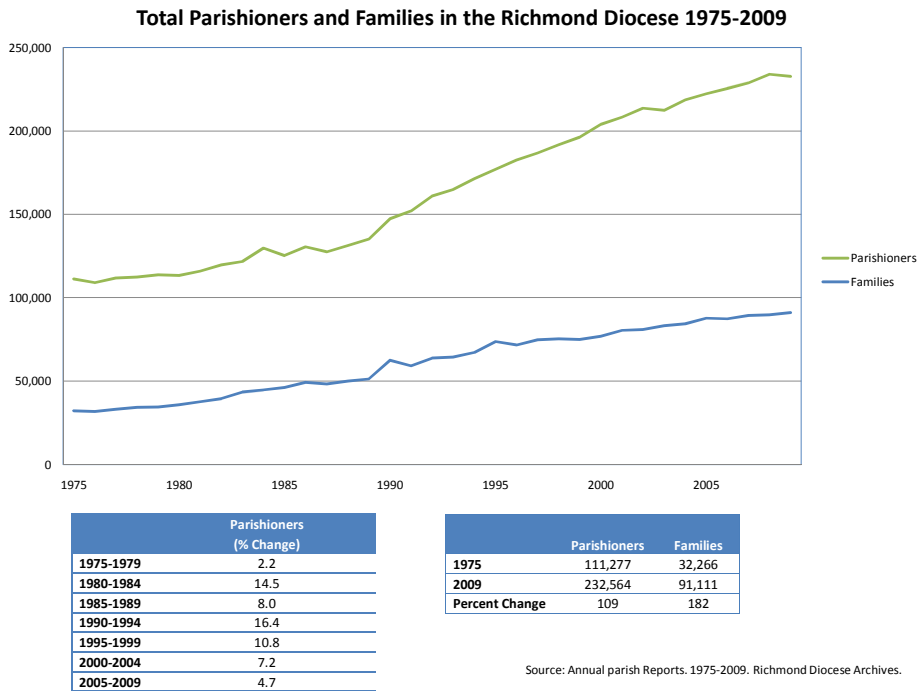
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**Demographic Analysis**

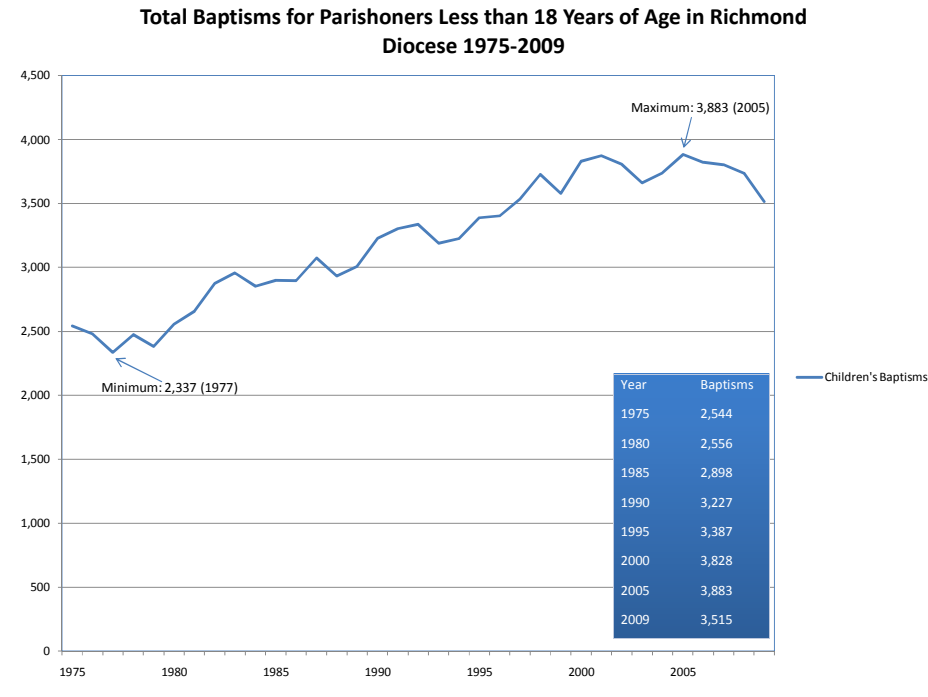
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**Initial Findings:**

The Catholic population in the Diocese of Richmond continues to grow in numbers. Although the growth trend has slowed in recent years, the number of Catholics registered in parishes has continually grown over the past 35 years. According to diocesan parish registration statistics, the number of registered Catholics in the Diocese of Richmond in 1975 was 111,277. By 2009 that number had grown to 232,564, more than doubling the population in 34 years. The largest percentage increase in Catholic population came during the 1990's.

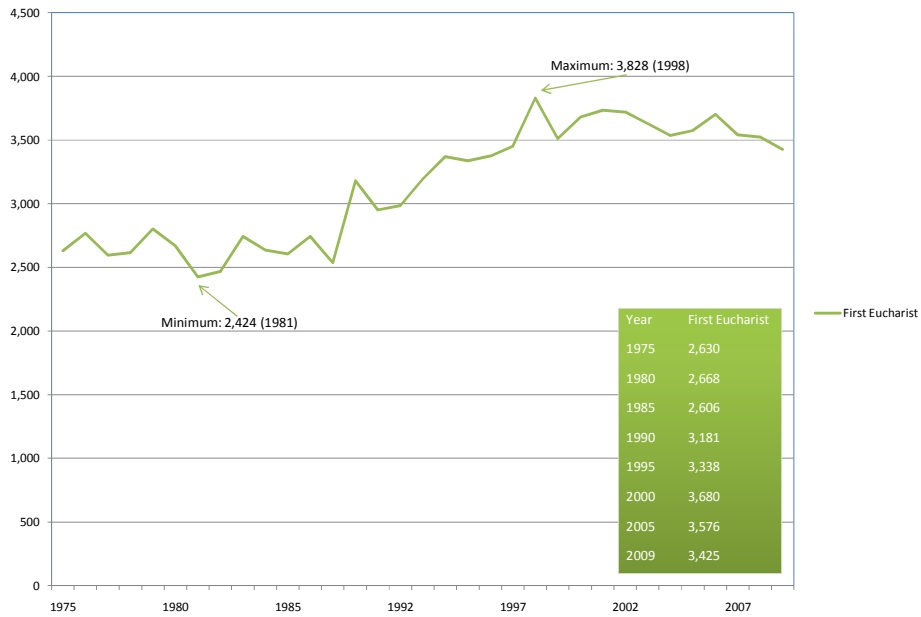


However, national trends have shown that week-end Mass attendance has decreased in recent decades. Week-end Mass attendance counts at parishes in the Diocese of Richmond indicate that trend is true here as well. When we analyze sacramental statistics, we see an overall decline in the number of people continuing sacramental preparation.



While the total number of baptisms has generally increased over time (peaking at 3885 in 2005) for the Diocese of Richmond, the percentage of children being baptized has decreased, almost consistently since 1987. Likewise, the number of children receiving First Eucharist shows a similar percentage decline in the years 1975-2009.

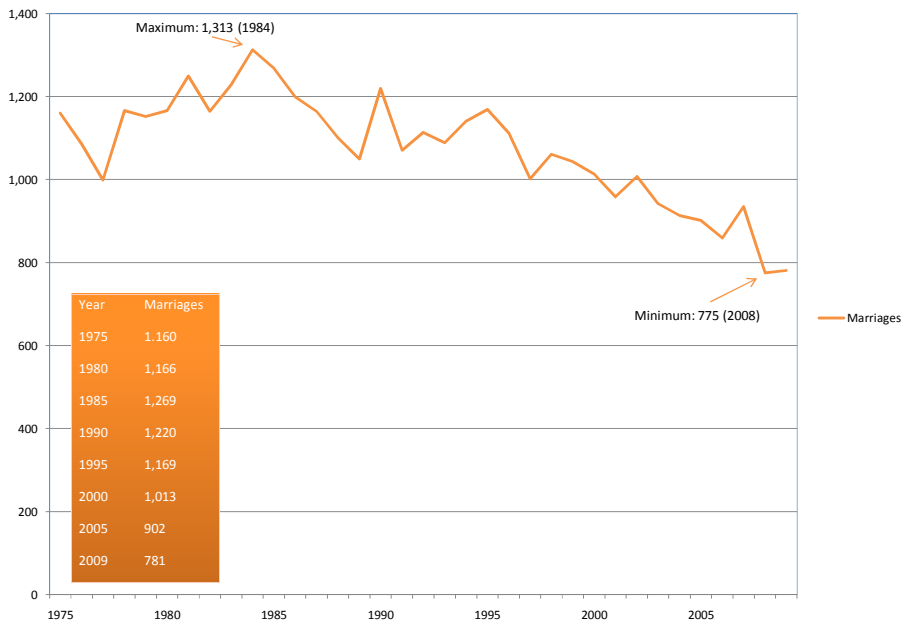
**Total Number of First Eucharists in Richmond Diocese 1975-2009\***



\* Data not available 1987-1988

The Sacrament showing the greatest decline in recent history is Marriage. This is true in the Diocese of Richmond as well as the U.S. as a whole.

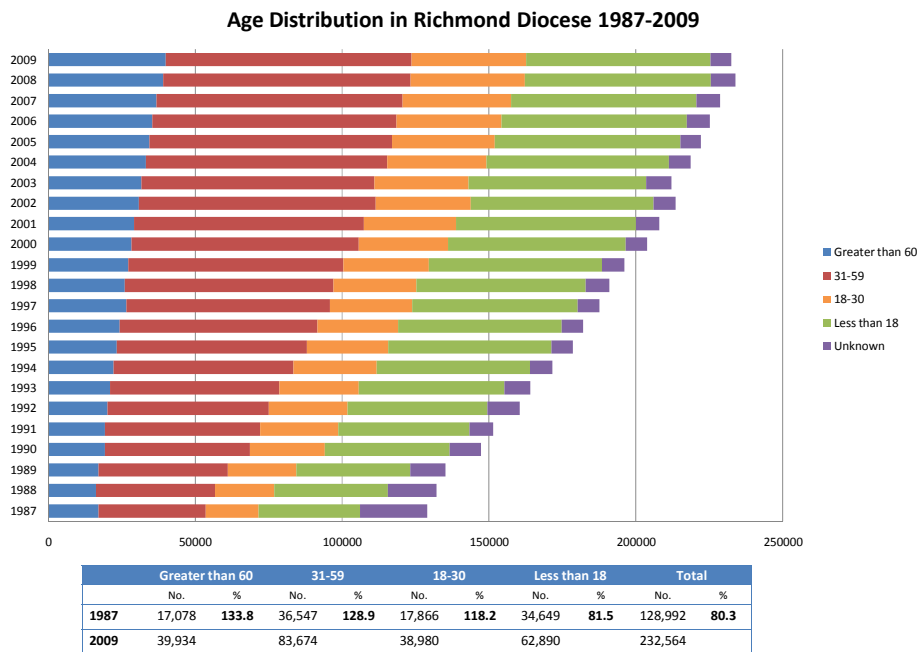
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**Implications:**

If 3880 children were baptized in the year 2000 and the diocese as a whole is staying the same or growing in population, logic would dictate that approximately the same number of children would receive First Eucharist 7 or 8 years later. However, only about 3500 children received First Eucharist eight years later. One could hardly conclude that 10% of Catholic children are moving away after baptism, especially since the population of the diocese has continued to increase. Similar sacramental statistics hold true for Confirmation, only at an even greater decline.



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While all age groups are experiencing growth, the segment growing by the greatest percentage are those over the age of 60. This is not surprising and goes along with what is occurring across the U.S. as a whole.

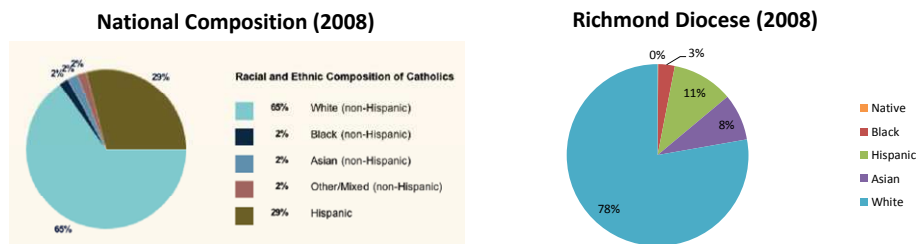
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Furthermore, the Pew Forum’s research concludes that unlike Protestants, who have seen their ranks dwindle as a share of the U.S. population, the findings suggest that the proportion of the adult population that identifies itself as Catholic has held fairly steady, at around 25%, in recent decades. But the Landscape Survey makes clear that this apparent stability obscures a great deal of change in

the makeup of Catholicism in the U.S. An analysis of changes in religious affiliation finds that Catholicism has lost more people to other religions or to no religion at all than any other single religious group. These losses, however, have been offset partly by people who have switched their affiliation to Catholicism, but mostly by the significant number of Catholics who have immigrated to the U.S. in recent decades, primarily from Latin America. The Landscape Survey finds, for example, that nearly half of all immigrants (46%) are Catholic, compared with 21% of the native-born Religious Composition population.

The national trends give some insight into what is happening in the Diocese of Richmond. The Hispanic population growth in our diocese is much slower than the nation as a whole, however, we do have a greater percentage of Asian-born Catholics in the Diocese of Richmond than the rest of the U.S.

## National Racial and Ethnic Composition



	National	Diocese
White	65	78
Hispanic	29	11
Asian	2	8
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With this background we asked the questions of what does the Diocese of Richmond value; what are our strengths; what are the “Signs of the Times”; and what are our challenges.

## **What do we as a diocese value?**

*Across the Diocese as a whole, whether carried out in parishes or other institutions by the people of faith, these values are most clearly evident:*

- **All Celebrations of Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist**

We appreciate good homilies, good music, and meaningful celebrations of the Holy Eucharist.

- **Engaged youth**

We understand the importance of keeping our youth involved in the faith and provide good religious education for them and encourage them to participate in diocesan gatherings with pertinent speakers as opportunities to interact with their peers.

- **Cultural diversity**

We have diversity in clergy, parishioners, parish activities, and liturgy. We understand that being Catholic means being inclusive and recognize we are part of a global Church. We accept and grow when we learn from people of other cultures.

- **Parishes value corporal works of mercy**

Outreach to the poor and marginalized continues to be a hallmark of our diocese, particularly at the local parish level to a variety of people in need.

- **Accountable business practices**

It is important to be good stewards of our resources. We have been entrusted to carry out certain functions with the gifts we are given, therefore we have put checks and balances in place to make sure people act honestly and comply with required reports.

## **What are the “Signs of the Times?”**

*We are a people of this world, living in southern Virginia. The Catholic community finds the following issues, whether locally or globally, impact the Church as we carry our faith forward:*

- **An economically depressed period**

Our nation is still recovering from an economic recession and many people are feeling the results of long-term unemployment. This impacts our parishioners individually and personally as well as causes a strain for our parishes to meet all the outreach efforts. In addition, it impacts the ability of individuals to support the Church.

- **More people are not going to church**

An attitude of “I’m spiritual, not religious” prevails, where people feel it is no longer necessary to worship as a community.

- **Crisis of trust in the Church**

Not only as a result of the sex abuse revelations in the past ten years, but also because of people in authority caught stealing.

- **Decline in the number of priests and religious sisters**

There has been a decrease in the number of priests and religious sisters serving in our diocese and our nation in the past ten years. In addition, those still serving are aging at a faster rate than they are being replaced by new people entering religious vocations.

- **A polarized culture**

There is tension, particularly among ethnic and political groups, which spills into the lives of people as a whole.

- **Eroding moral values**

The breakdown of family structures, particularly with people living together outside of marriage. An increase in violence prevails and acceptance of a violent culture as the ‘norm’.

- **Diminishing middle class**

There is greater income inequality than there was 10 years ago. In addition, there are more people in the U.S. living below the poverty rate than there were 10 years ago.

- **“Going Green”**

People are becoming aware of our “global footprint”. In addition to a willingness to recycle, the cost of gasoline has made it necessary to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Architecturally efficient design of buildings is also important and desired.

- **Implementation of the New Roman Missal**

In November of 2011 new words will be used at Mass. This will present a challenge as people will have to change the responses they are used to saying. In addition, the cost of providing new worship aids will be borne by parishes. Questions will be raised as to why this is necessary or important and potentially some will use this as an excuse to leave regular practice of the faith.

- **War and terrorism**

We are still at war.

## **Strengths**

*In listening and reflecting upon what we do well, the following strengths of the Diocese were identified:*

- **Organization**

There has been more streamlining among offices in the Pastoral Center and beyond – i.e. Virginia Catholic Conference, Pathways, and a successfully run Diocesan Appeal in 2010. The Diocese has made a concerted effort to improve its administrative structure, requiring job descriptions for Pastoral Center and parish employees, a Handbook for Administrative Procedures and a Pastoral Plan.

- **Faith Formation**

Both at the Diocesan and parish levels, effort has been put forth to provide opportunities for education for adults and youth. Pathways has been streamlined and there is a desire to have trained catechists whether they be paid or volunteers. A number of excellent speakers have come to parishes to provide insight into the Catholic faith and a broader understanding of how our faith works in today's world.

- **Inclusion of all People**

The Office of Disabilities has provided outreach and opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in our faith, particularly at the parish level. A concerted effort has been made to make diocesan bodies more ethnically diverse. In addition, recruiting priests to serve in our diocese from other countries, has given the Catholic faithful an opportunity to learn about other cultures from these priests as they serve in our parishes.

- **Diaconate Program**

The current Diaconate Program has attracted a large number of men. It provides an example education and formation format for other dioceses to model. The deacon candidates, with their wives, are learning and volunteering in parishes in a variety of ministries increasing the number of people called and trained for ministry in our diocese.

- **Solidarity with the Poor**

The Diocese of Richmond continues to be recognized for its efforts to aid the poor and marginalized in the U.S. and around the world. Parish and Young Adult Programs (through "Alternate Spring Break" trips, as one example) continue to recruit volunteers to serve the poor in inner cities, in Appalachia, in Haiti, and elsewhere. Most parishes support local food banks and a variety of other local outreach efforts.

## **Challenges**

*Looking at the diocesan and national statistics and recognizing the “Signs of the Times” and the world in which we live, the following challenges seem to be the most pervasive:*

- **How to reach out to “fallen-away Catholics”**

Statistics across the U.S. indicate only about 30% of baptized Catholics regularly attend Mass on Sundays. The Diocese of Richmond is no different. We need to find out why people are leaving the flock and welcome them back in a sincere, generous way.

- **Infrastructure and support of parishes**

Are we going to be able to maintain our parish and school physical infrastructure (buildings) as they age? Many parishes are struggling financially due to a variety of circumstances.

- **Ministering effectively to different types of family structures, cultures, etc.**

In the U.S. the media and dominant secular culture have impacted our family structure and lifestyles. For example, the number of single-parent households has increased. How do we adapt to “living in both worlds”? How do we effectively minister and bring the faith to people living in difficult circumstances?

- **Economic hardship/uncertainty**

The unemployment rate has increased dramatically in the last 10 years. Coupled with that is an increase in economic uncertainty. People with jobs are afraid they will lose them. Companies that employed both skilled and unskilled workers are not hiring new workers and some are closing their doors. Even with an education beyond high school people are having difficulty finding work. People are losing their homes to creditors through mortgage foreclosures. This has multiple impacts on families and the local Church. First the needs are increasing in terms of local social outreach. The demand is much greater in terms of the number of people requesting assistance and it tends to be for a longer period of time. Second, families are not able to contribute financially to support parishes if they no longer have an income.

- **Affordability of Catholic schools**

Catholic education continues to be desired by many parents, but the cost continues to increase. In order to meet state and federal requirements and compensate teachers fairly, tuition has increased to a point where most middle-income families cannot afford to send their children to Catholic Schools. As the number of children attending Catholic schools decreases it further exacerbates the problem of keeping schools open and affordable. Parishes are finding it difficult to contribute their share of the expense of maintaining Catholic schools as well.

- **Retention of youth/young adults**

While the number of Catholics practicing their faith on a consistent basis is falling as a whole, the most dramatic loss is in the “Under 30” age group.

- **Meeting the pastoral and Sacramental needs of minorities (especially Hispanics)**

The number of Hispanic parishioners living in the Diocese continues to grow. Many times their needs are not being met due to the lack of trained ministers who can speak their language. Integrating minority populations into the greater parish community (rather than having two separate communities within the parish) is desired, but not often accomplished.

- **Caring for an increasing elderly population**

Across the U.S. demographics indicate people are living longer. Sometimes they are living longer, but not necessarily living healthier. This presents a host of problems and many parishes have found the best service they can provide to elderly parishioners is elder care or nursing care.

- **Decline in the number of clergy and supporting clergy**

The number of priests in the Diocese has decreased in the last ten years significantly and the age of our priests has increased. Without the assistance of international priests to celebrate Mass and sacraments parishes would have had to close or go without week-end liturgy.

- **Figuring out how to use technology to the benefit of the Church**

The use of technology presents both opportunities and challenges. For some people the use of technology has increased communication, especially with people living great distances apart, others find it perpetuates a loss of intimacy and difficulty in relationships due to less face-to-face contact. Also, the use of technology presents genuine challenges in terms of accessibility and clarity.

- **Resistance to gathering...the Church is no longer the center of peoples' lives**

People are placing a higher value on other Sunday activities and not committing to regularly attending Mass or participating in other church sponsored events. In addition, people meet and communicate in different ways today than they did even ten years ago. How can we take advantage of the learning opportunities available through technology while still keeping worshipping communities together?

- **Recruitment, training, and support of lay leadership**

There are many people called and willing to serve the Church in a variety of non-ordained roles. Is it reasonable and equitable to expect lay leaders to pay for their own education while those to be ordained are supported by the diocese? Many lay people need training and parish congregations need to be aware that while some people can volunteer, paid ministers are needed as well.

## Next Steps

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

(Matthew 28:19-20)

We, those who are baptized in Christ, receive certain rights within the Church: to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church. Baptism also gives us responsibilities and duties. We are expected to participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God.

There is a desire for justice, for bringing people back to the Word of God and full sacramental participation. This can best be accomplished by a community of believers working together rather than an individual working alone, but everyone must do their part. We all have certain gifts. God calls us to use these gifts to the best of our ability.

We recognize we may not be able to solve all the world’s problems, but we resolve to work together to make a difference in our world and our diocese. The Challenges presented in this document have been shared with various diocesan bodies and pastors of our parishes. We ask these diocesan bodies, staff and laity to commit to working on these Challenges to bring the Word of God to all who seek Him that the Diocese of Richmond may be a shining example of Christ’s presence in this world.

The Diocese of Richmond is making a commitment to “return the lost sheep to the fold”. How this will be done specifically, whether using programs such as “Catholics Come Home” that have been successful in other dioceses, is yet to be determined. In addition, more emphasis will be placed on keeping our youth engaged. And, in order to maintain a sacramental presence in the more rural areas of the diocese we look to establish “twinning” relationships between some small and large parishes.



## REFERENCES

“Religion Among the Millennials” Pew Research Center, February 2010

“Faith in Flux - Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S.” The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, April 2009

“U.S. Religious Landscape Survey - Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic” The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, February 2008

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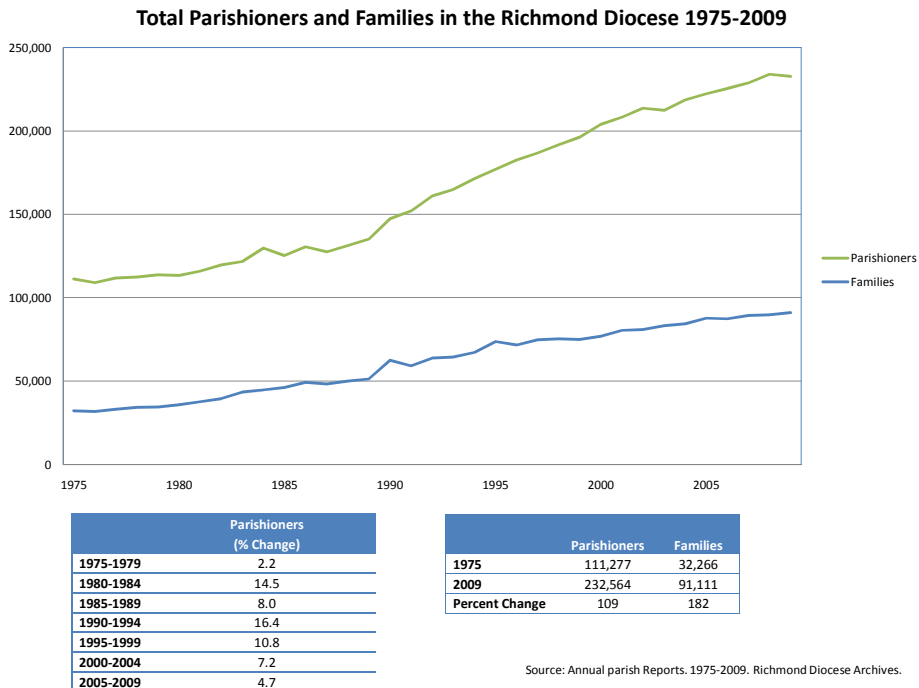
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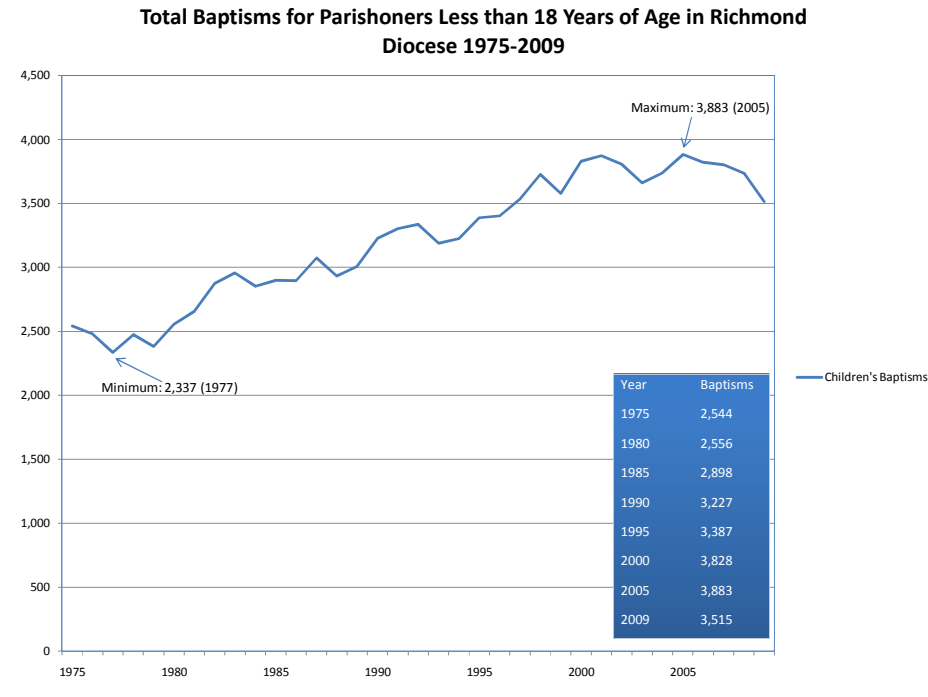
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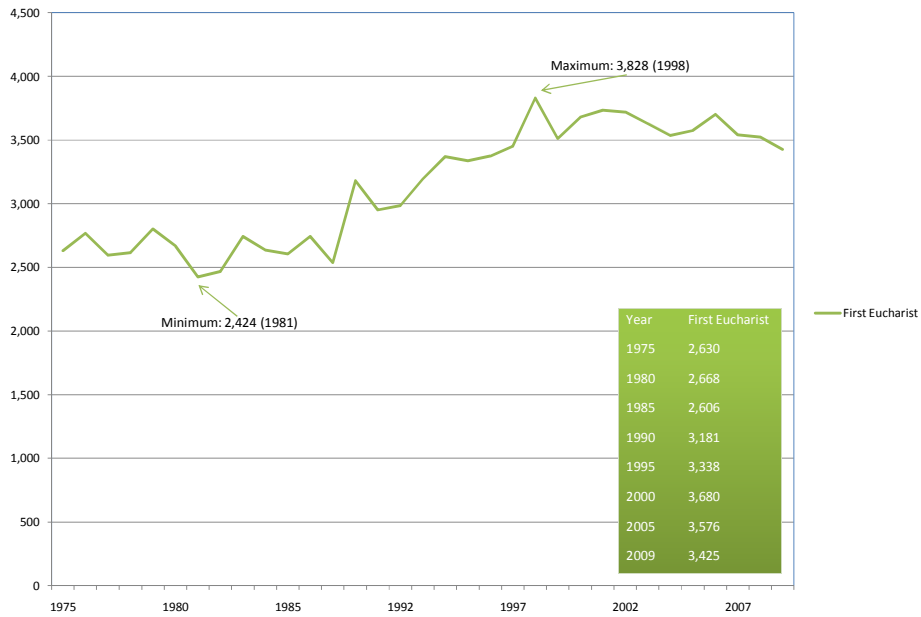


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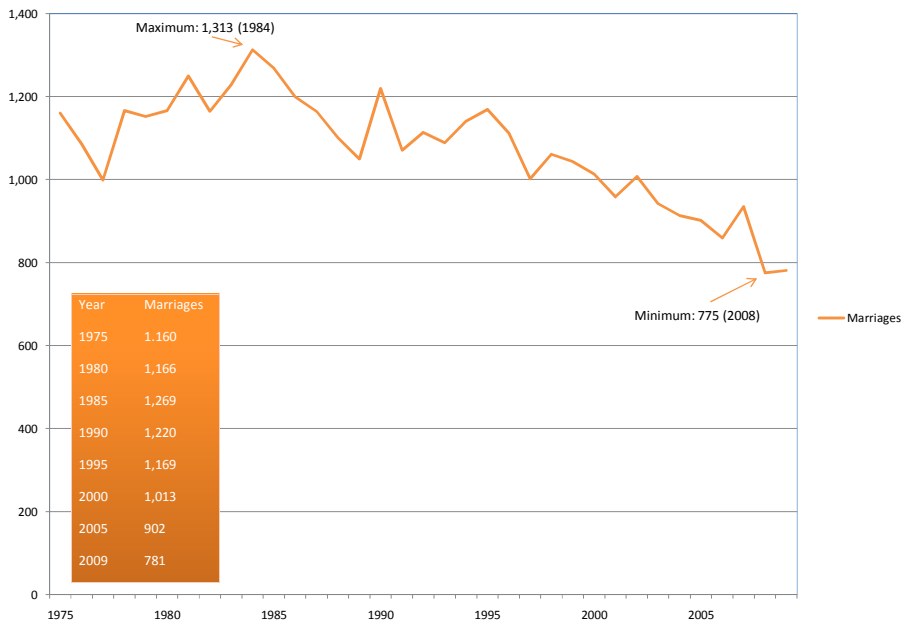
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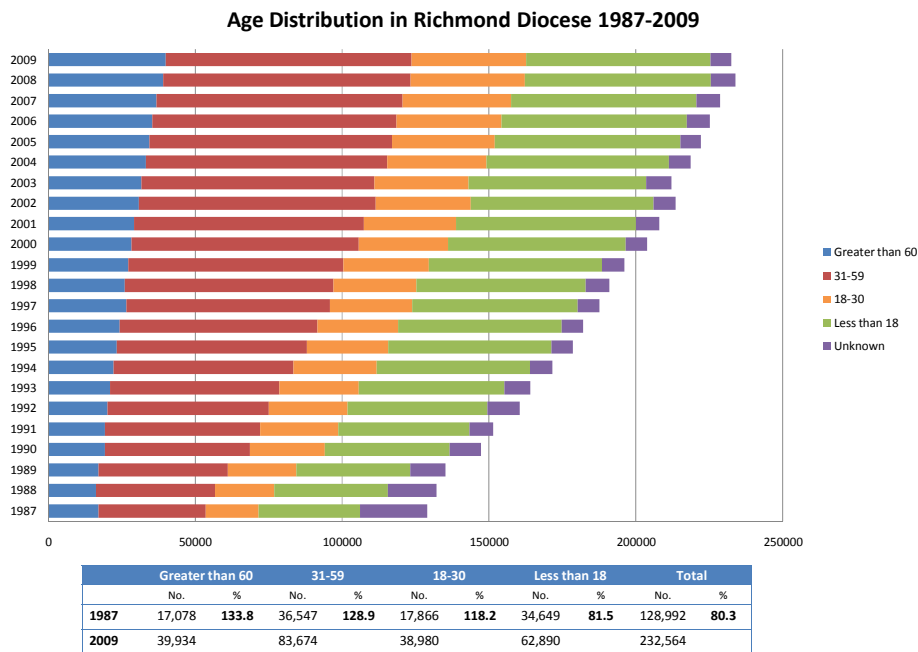
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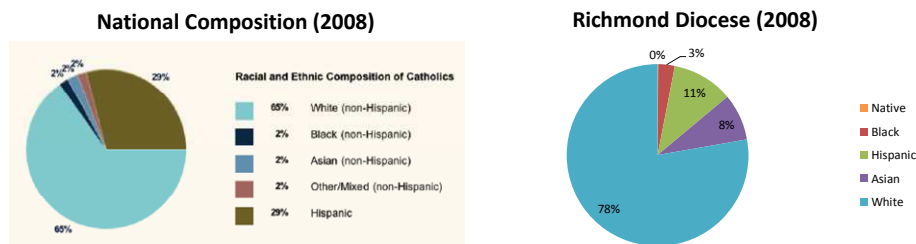
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*We are a people of this world, living in southern Virginia. The Catholic community finds the following issues, whether locally or globally, impact the Church as we carry our faith forward:*

- **An economically depressed period**

Our nation is still recovering from an economic recession and many people are feeling the results of long-term unemployment. This impacts our parishioners individually and personally as well as causes a strain for our parishes to meet all the outreach efforts. In addition, it impacts the ability of individuals to support the Church.

- **More people are not going to church**

An attitude of “I’m spiritual, not religious” prevails, where people feel it is no longer necessary to worship as a community.

- **Crisis of trust in the Church**

Not only as a result of the sex abuse revelations in the past ten years, but also because of people in authority caught stealing.

- **Decline in the number of priests and religious sisters**

There has been a decrease in the number of priests and religious sisters serving in our diocese and our nation in the past ten years. In addition, those still serving are aging at a faster rate than they are being replaced by new people entering religious vocations.

- **A polarized culture**

There is tension, particularly among ethnic and political groups, which spills into the lives of people as a whole.

- **Eroding moral values**

The breakdown of family structures, particularly with people living together outside of marriage. An increase in violence prevails and acceptance of a violent culture as the ‘norm’.

- **Diminishing middle class**

There is greater income inequality than there was 10 years ago. In addition, there are more people in the U.S. living below the poverty rate than there were 10 years ago.

- **“Going Green”**

People are becoming aware of our “global footprint”. In addition to a willingness to recycle, the cost of gasoline has made it necessary to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Architecturally efficient design of buildings is also important and desired.

- **Implementation of the New Roman Missal**

In November of 2011 new words will be used at Mass. This will present a challenge as people will have to change the responses they are used to saying. In addition, the cost of providing new worship aids will be borne by parishes. Questions will be raised as to why this is necessary or important and potentially some will use this as an excuse to leave regular practice of the faith.

- **War and terrorism**

We are still at war.

## **Strengths**

*In listening and reflecting upon what we do well, the following strengths of the Diocese were identified:*

- **Organization**

There has been more streamlining among offices in the Pastoral Center and beyond – i.e. Virginia Catholic Conference, Pathways, and a successfully run Diocesan Appeal in 2010. The Diocese has made a concerted effort to improve its administrative structure, requiring job descriptions for Pastoral Center and parish employees, a Handbook for Administrative Procedures and a Pastoral Plan.

- **Faith Formation**

Both at the Diocesan and parish levels, effort has been put forth to provide opportunities for education for adults and youth. Pathways has been streamlined and there is a desire to have trained catechists whether they be paid or volunteers. A number of excellent speakers have come to parishes to provide insight into the Catholic faith and a broader understanding of how our faith works in today's world.

- **Inclusion of all People**

The Office of Disabilities has provided outreach and opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in our faith, particularly at the parish level. A concerted effort has been made to make diocesan bodies more ethnically diverse. In addition, recruiting priests to serve in our diocese from other countries, has given the Catholic faithful an opportunity to learn about other cultures from these priests as they serve in our parishes.

- **Diaconate Program**

The current Diaconate Program has attracted a large number of men. It provides an example education and formation format for other dioceses to model. The deacon candidates, with their wives, are learning and volunteering in parishes in a variety of ministries increasing the number of people called and trained for ministry in our diocese.

- **Solidarity with the Poor**

The Diocese of Richmond continues to be recognized for its efforts to aid the poor and marginalized in the U.S. and around the world. Parish and Young Adult Programs (through “Alternate Spring Break” trips, as one example) continue to recruit volunteers to serve the poor in inner cities, in Appalachia, in Haiti, and elsewhere. Most parishes support local food banks and a variety of other local outreach efforts.

## **Challenges**

*Looking at the diocesan and national statistics and recognizing the “Signs of the Times” and the world in which we live, the following challenges seem to be the most pervasive:*

- **How to reach out to “fallen-away Catholics”**

Statistics across the U.S. indicate only about 30% of baptized Catholics regularly attend Mass on Sundays. The Diocese of Richmond is no different. We need to find out why people are leaving the flock and welcome them back in a sincere, generous way.

- **Infrastructure and support of parishes**

Are we going to be able to maintain our parish and school physical infrastructure (buildings) as they age? Many parishes are struggling financially due to a variety of circumstances.

- **Ministering effectively to different types of family structures, cultures, etc.**

In the U.S. the media and dominant secular culture have impacted our family structure and lifestyles. For example, the number of single-parent households has increased. How do we adapt to “living in both worlds”? How do we effectively minister and bring the faith to people living in difficult circumstances?

- **Economic hardship/uncertainty**

The unemployment rate has increased dramatically in the last 10 years. Coupled with that is an increase in economic uncertainty. People with jobs are afraid they will lose them. Companies that employed both skilled and unskilled workers are not hiring new workers and some are closing their doors. Even with an education beyond high school people are having difficulty finding work. People are losing their homes to creditors through mortgage foreclosures. This has multiple impacts on families and the local Church. First the needs are increasing in terms of local social outreach. The demand is much greater in terms of the number of people requesting assistance and it tends to be for a longer period of time. Second, families are not able to contribute financially to support parishes if they no longer have an income.

- **Affordability of Catholic schools**

Catholic education continues to be desired by many parents, but the cost continues to increase. In order to meet state and federal requirements and compensate teachers fairly, tuition has increased to a point where most middle-income families cannot afford to send their children to Catholic Schools. As the number of children attending Catholic schools decreases it further exacerbates the problem of keeping schools open and affordable. Parishes are finding it difficult to contribute their share of the expense of maintaining Catholic schools as well.

- **Retention of youth/young adults**

While the number of Catholics practicing their faith on a consistent basis is falling as a whole, the most dramatic loss is in the “Under 30” age group.

- **Meeting the pastoral and Sacramental needs of minorities (especially Hispanics)**

The number of Hispanic parishioners living in the Diocese continues to grow. Many times their needs are not being met due to the lack of trained ministers who can speak their language. Integrating minority populations into the greater parish community (rather than having two separate communities within the parish) is desired, but not often accomplished.

- **Caring for an increasing elderly population**

Across the U.S. demographics indicate people are living longer. Sometimes they are living longer, but not necessarily living healthier. This presents a host of problems and many parishes have found the best service they can provide to elderly parishioners is elder care or nursing care.

- **Decline in the number of clergy and supporting clergy**

The number of priests in the Diocese has decreased in the last ten years significantly and the age of our priests has increased. Without the assistance of international priests to celebrate Mass and sacraments parishes would have had to close or go without week-end liturgy.

- **Figuring out how to use technology to the benefit of the Church**

The use of technology presents both opportunities and challenges. For some people the use of technology has increased communication, especially with people living great distances apart, others find it perpetuates a loss of intimacy and difficulty in relationships due to less face-to-face contact. Also, the use of technology presents genuine challenges in terms of accessibility and clarity.

- **Resistance to gathering...the Church is no longer the center of peoples' lives**

People are placing a higher value on other Sunday activities and not committing to regularly attending Mass or participating in other church sponsored events. In addition, people meet and communicate in different ways today than they did even ten years ago. How can we take advantage of the learning opportunities available through technology while still keeping worshipping communities together?

- **Recruitment, training, and support of lay leadership**

There are many people called and willing to serve the Church in a variety of non-ordained roles. Is it reasonable and equitable to expect lay leaders to pay for their own education while those to be ordained are supported by the diocese? Many lay people need training and parish congregations need to be aware that while some people can volunteer, paid ministers are needed as well.

## Next Steps

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

(Matthew 28:19-20)

We, those who are baptized in Christ, receive certain rights within the Church: to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church. Baptism also gives us responsibilities and duties. We are expected to participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God.

There is a desire for justice, for bringing people back to the Word of God and full sacramental participation. This can best be accomplished by a community of believers working together rather than an individual working alone, but everyone must do their part. We all have certain gifts. God calls us to use these gifts to the best of our ability.

We recognize we may not be able to solve all the world’s problems, but we resolve to work together to make a difference in our world and our diocese. The Challenges presented in this document have been shared with various diocesan bodies and pastors of our parishes. We ask these diocesan bodies, staff and laity to commit to working on these Challenges to bring the Word of God to all who seek Him that the Diocese of Richmond may be a shining example of Christ’s presence in this world.

The Diocese of Richmond is making a commitment to “return the lost sheep to the fold”. How this will be done specifically, whether using programs such as “Catholics Come Home” that have been successful in other dioceses, is yet to be determined. In addition, more emphasis will be placed on keeping our youth engaged. And, in order to maintain a sacramental presence in the more rural areas of the diocese we look to establish “twinning” relationships between some small and large parishes.

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