

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLAND CATHOLICS A DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



**Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church
Asian and Pacific Island Affairs**

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Introduction



“The USCCB statement *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters*” was “overwhelmingly approved by the U.S. bishops during the Spring 2018 General Assembly.” This document “will guide the Catholic Church in the United States in addressing the pastoral needs of Asian and Pacific Island communities and provide a framework for dioceses and parishes for creating their pastoral plans or actions specific to their circumstances.”¹

“Asian and Pacific Islanders are now six percent of the overall U.S. population. As migration increases their number each year, Asian and Pacific Islanders are among the fastest growing minority groups impacting American society and the Catholic Church as well. The diversity in language, customs, traditions, and values enriches and at the same time challenges the Church in the pastoral care of Asian and Pacific Island Catholic communities. To better serve these growing communities and to empower them to fulfill the Gospel message in their specific place, a national pastoral response by the U.S. bishops serves as a guide to assist dioceses, pastors, API Catholic communities and those who minister to them”² says Bishop Oscar Solis, D.D., chairman of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs and bishop of Salt Lake City.

Through the pages of this resource that include demographic data and reports from studies, the Asian and Pacific Island Affairs of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church provides a snap shot of and relevant background information on Asian and Pacific Island communities. The document *Encountering Christ is Harmony* is now available online at

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/upload/asian-and-pacific-island-pastoral-response-encountering-christ-in-harmony-2018.pdf>

¹ Most Rev. Oscar A. Solis, “Convocation Letter to participants of the meeting to plan for the dissemination and implementation of the USCCB statement *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sister*.” 30 August 2018.

² Most Rev. Oscar A. Solis “Message from Bishop Solis: Chairman of The Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs.” *USCCB*, 28 April 2017, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/message-from-bishop-solis-chairman-of-the-subcommittee-on-asian-and-pacific-island-affairs.cfm>

***Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander
Race, Ethnicity, & Birthplace Group Estimates, 2013 ²***

	Population	Catholic Population
<i>Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander*</i>	15,584,203	2,976,583
<i>Filipino</i>	<i>3,499,921</i>	<i>2,267,949</i>
<i>Vietnamese</i>	<i>1,779,679</i>	<i>494,750</i>
<i>Chinese</i>	<i>4,107,621</i>	<i>349,148</i>
<i>Korean</i>	<i>1,748,324</i>	<i>204,554</i>
<i>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</i>	<i>553,144</i>	<i>151,009</i>
<i>Indian</i>	<i>3,260,460</i>	<i>149,981</i>
<i>Japanese</i>	<i>1,336,000</i>	<i>57,448</i>

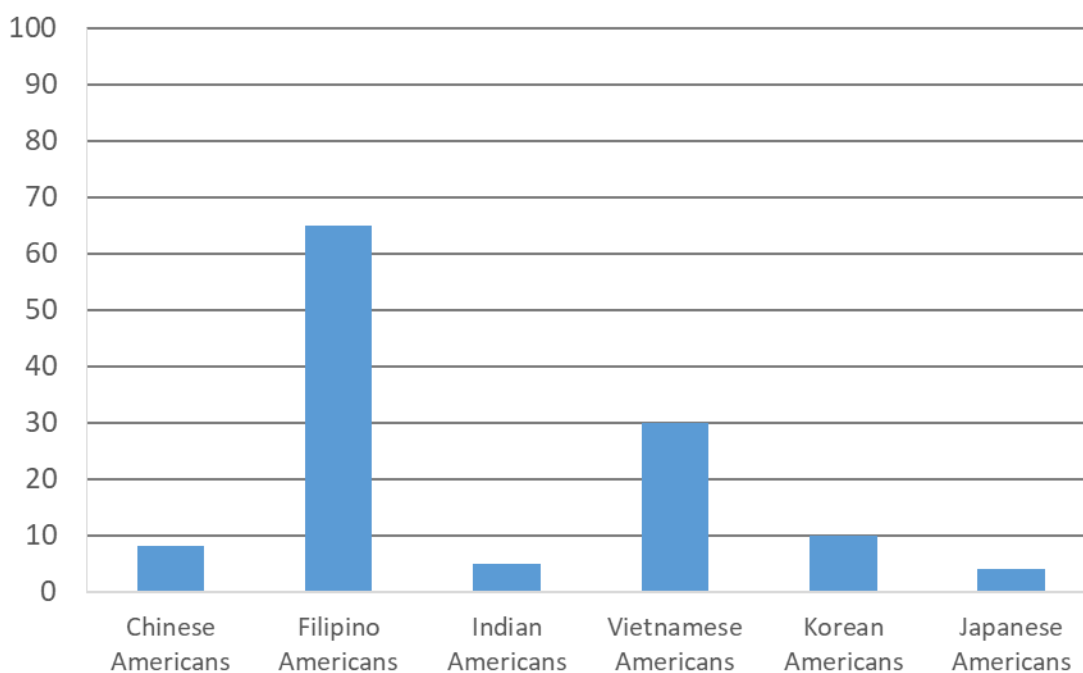
* Due to significant numbers of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Americans having *multiple* racial, ethnic, and ancestral identities, totals for sub-groups do not add to the total Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander group population number.



Picture: Multi-generation family of Syro-Malankara Eastern Catholics from Washington, DC leading the Rosary during the 16th Annual Marian Pilgrimage at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC, May 2018

² Mark Gray, Mary Gautier, and Thomas Gaunt, SJ. *Cultural Diversity in the Church* June 2014, 10. Washington, DC: Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), 2014.

Percentage **Catholic** in Major Asian & Pacific Island American Subgroups ³



Fifteen (arch)dioceses with the most API Catholics contain 63% of the total Asian and Pacific Island Catholic population ⁴

Los Angeles	358,525	CA
Brooklyn	154,590	NY
San Jose	142,663	CA
Honolulu	142,008	HI
Oakland	139,228	CA
Orange	135,148	CA
San Francisco	117,073	CA
Seattle	110,184	WA
Sacramento	92,447	CA
San Diego	87,546	CA
Galveston-Houston	75,910	TX
New York	72,425	NY
San Bernardino	67,385	CA
Chicago	66,060	IL
Arlington	53,477	VA
Total	1,814,669	

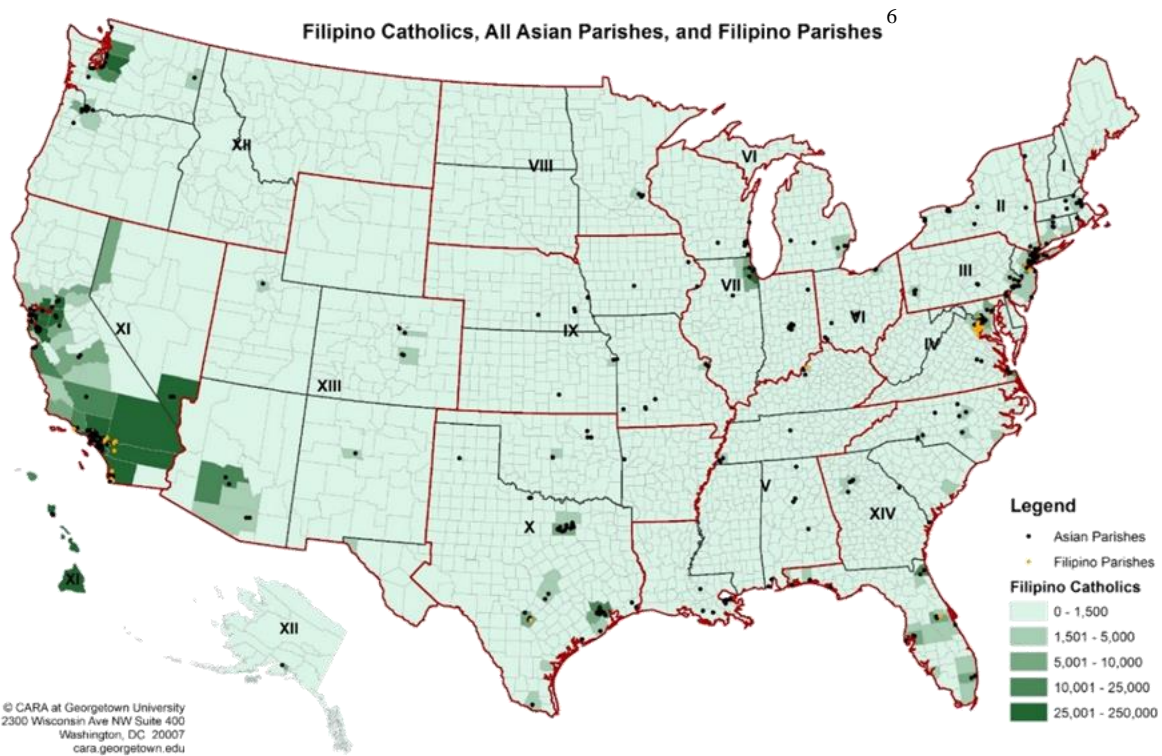
³ Tricia C. Bruce, “National Study of Asian & Pacific Island Catholics: A Demographic Primer” (presentation, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs (SCAPA), St. Louis, MO. June 9, 2015).

⁴ Ibid., 7.

Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander Catholics ⁵

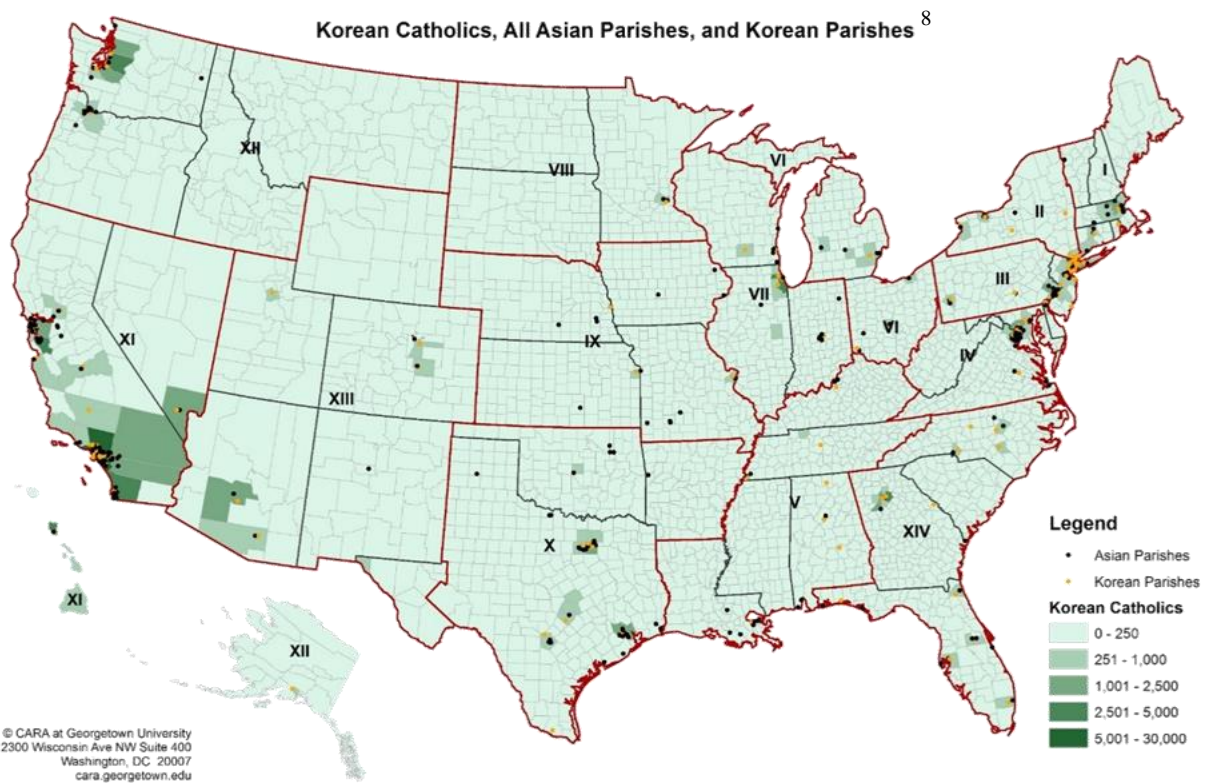
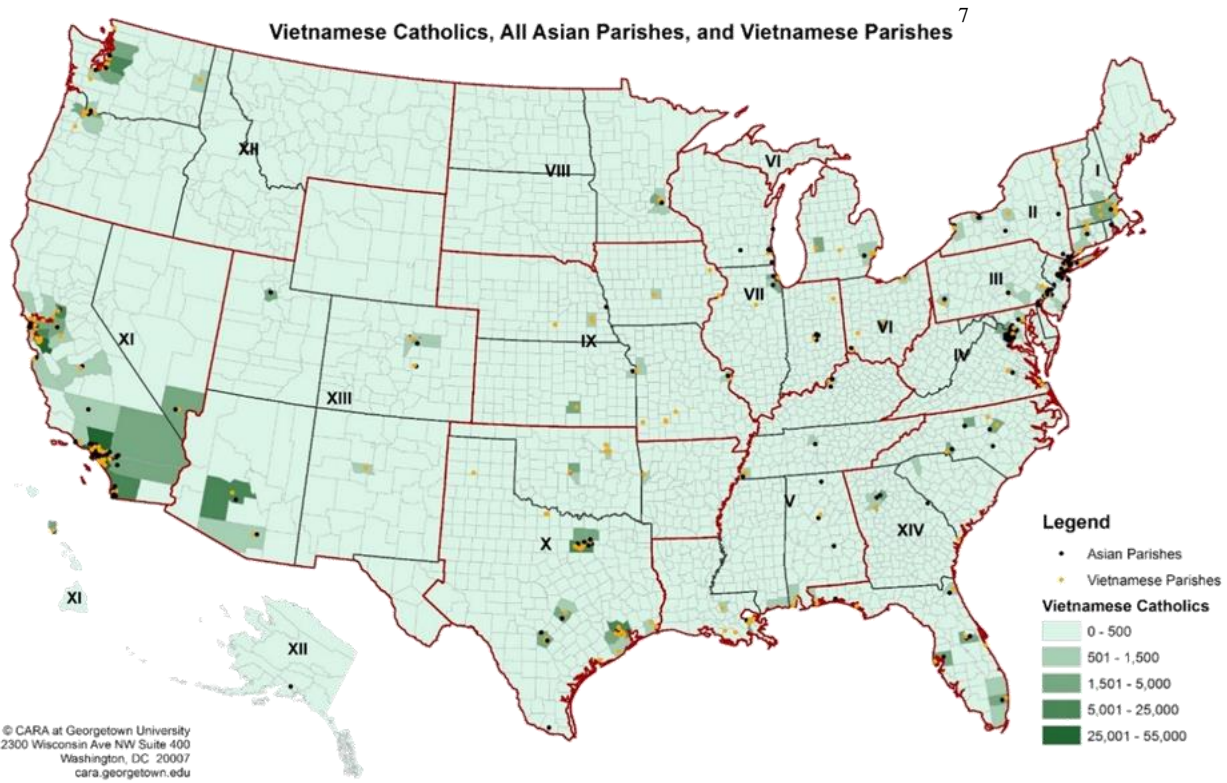
<i>USCCB Region</i>	Population	Parishes Serving Community**	Population per Parish
<i>I</i>	90,758	16	5,672
<i>II</i>	284,373	18	15,799
<i>III</i>	125,319	42	2,984
<i>IV</i>	140,443	34	4,131
<i>V</i>	51,036	19	2,686
<i>VI</i>	78,241	12	6,520
<i>VII</i>	148,009	21	7,048
<i>VIII</i>	41,461	4	10,365
<i>IX</i>	47,079	17	2,769
<i>X</i>	207,312	49	4,231
<i>XI</i>	1,430,779	105	13,627
<i>XII</i>	168,013	19	8,843
<i>XIII</i>	102,597	13	7,874
<i>XIV</i>	180,103	21	8,576

**Many parishes serving Asian Catholics serve *more* than one group (390 parishes minister to 463 communities).



⁵ Mark Gray, Mary Gautier, and Thomas Gaunt, SJ. *Cultural Diversity in the Church June 2014*, 19. Washington, DC: Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), 2014.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.



⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁸ Ibid., 16.

Catholicism among Asian Pacific Islanders in the U.S.⁹

In the following we present findings using data from the Pew Research Center's Asian American Survey 2012 (PAAS). Unlike most surveys, the PAAS was translated into 7 Asian languages to identify APIs with limited English fluency. Out of 3,500 adult respondents surveyed about 700 self-identified as Catholic. This is about 20 percent of the adult API population.

Demographic Characteristics

- The ethnic group with the largest share of Catholics among Asian Pacific Islanders is Filipino.
- The majority of Asian Pacific Islanders are foreign-born immigrants (about 70 percent), and Asian Pacific Islanders are dominated by members of this first generation (about 71 percent).
- Asian Pacific Islander Catholics are largely first generation compared to other Christian APIs.
- About 64 percent of adult Asian Pacific Islander Catholics are married, a rate comparable to other Asian Pacific Islander Christians and APIs of other religions and no religion.



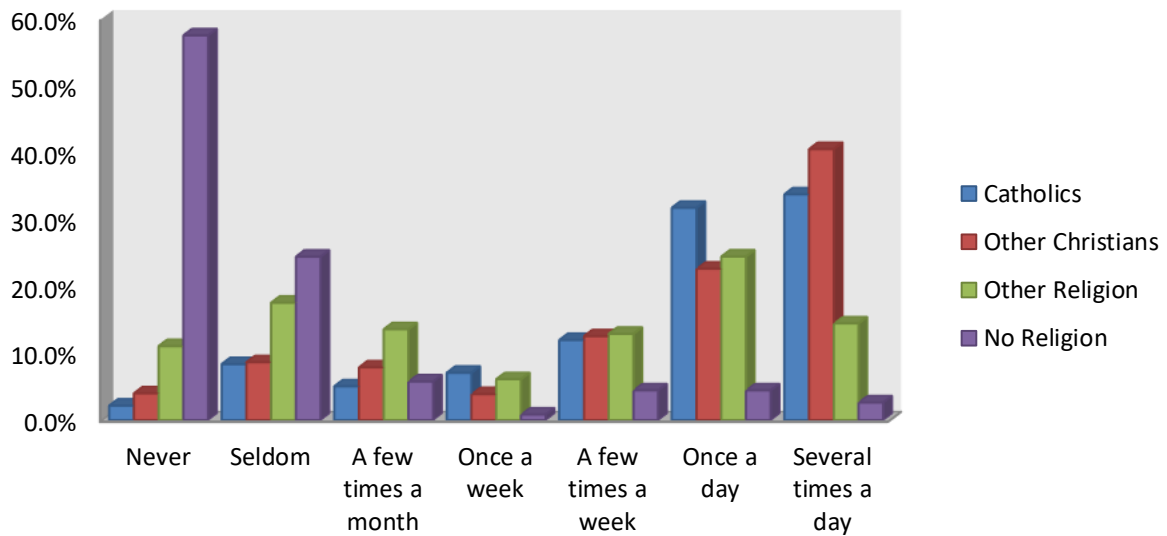
Picture: Vietnamese youth during the 16th Annual Marian Pilgrimage at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, May 2018

⁹ Jerry Z. Park, W. Matthew Henderson, Kenneth Vaughn, Tricia Bruce, and Stephen Cherry. *Asian Pacific Islander Catholics in the United States: A Preliminary Report 2015*, 14-16.

Religious Characteristics

- Asian Pacific Islander Catholics pray frequently; about 65 percent report praying once a day; this is similar to the frequency of prayer of APIs of other Christian faiths.
- Catholicism is very important to Asian Pacific Islander Catholics; over 93 percent of Catholics reported that Catholicism was at least somewhat important to them personally. A majority (over 65 percent) reported that Catholicism was “very important.”

Frequency of Prayer by Religious Tradition¹⁰



Picture: Simbang Gabi Commissioning Mass, Archdiocese of San Francisco, December 2017

¹⁰ Ibid., 20.

Catholicism in Asia ¹¹

- According to analyses of numerous surveys across 26 countries in Asia, the Pew Research Center estimates about 120 million Catholics living in Asia.
- Only 3 percent of Asia's population identifies as Catholic.
- The only Asian nations or territories*** with Catholic majorities are the Philippines (about 81 percent of the Filipino population) and Timor-Leste (98 percent).
- Among the Asian host nations and territories, Catholics make up a majority of Christians in Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, and the Philippines.
- Of the Asian nations and territories, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, and Mongolia have the lowest percentages of Catholics.
- The persecution of minority Christians in several of the Asian host nations have contributed to Asian Christian immigration to the United States.
- About 76 million or 63 percent of Catholics in Asia are from the Philippines. Catholics in China and India take up an additional 16 percent of the Catholics in Asia.

*** Territories refer to disputed territories and culturally distinct or governmentally autonomous areas that are under the governance of another nation.



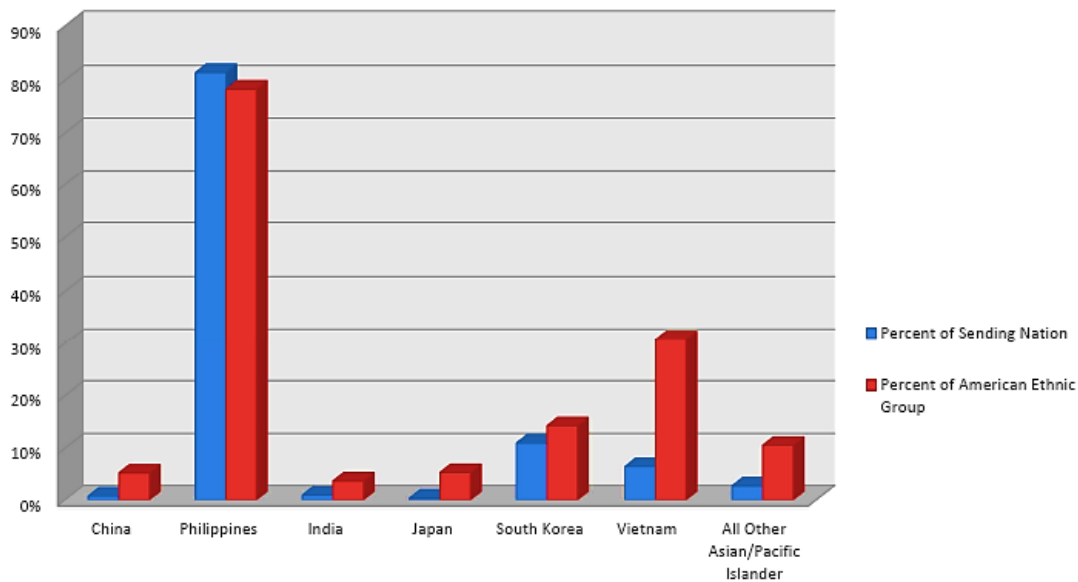
Picture: Semana Santa (Holy Week) celebration in Flores, Indonesia. The statue of the Sorrowful Mother, Tuan Ma, is carried by devotees to the cathedral during the Good Friday Procession.

¹¹ Ibid., 4 & 6.

Catholicism in Migration: From Asia to the United States ¹²

- Migration to the U.S. tends to be “pro-Christian.” Even in countries where Christianity is not the dominant religion, immigrants from those countries are disproportionately Christian.
- With the exception of Filipino immigrants to the US, Asian immigrants are disproportionately Catholic compared to their presence in their countries of origin. For example, while less than 7 percent of Vietnam is Catholic, more than 30 percent of Vietnamese immigrants identify as Catholic.
- Showcased below is the comparative difference between the percentage of Catholics in specific Asian sending nations and the percentage of Catholic immigrants from those countries.

Percent of Catholics in Sending Nations and among First Generation Asian American Ethnic Groups ¹³



¹² Ibid., 12.

¹³ Ibid., 13.

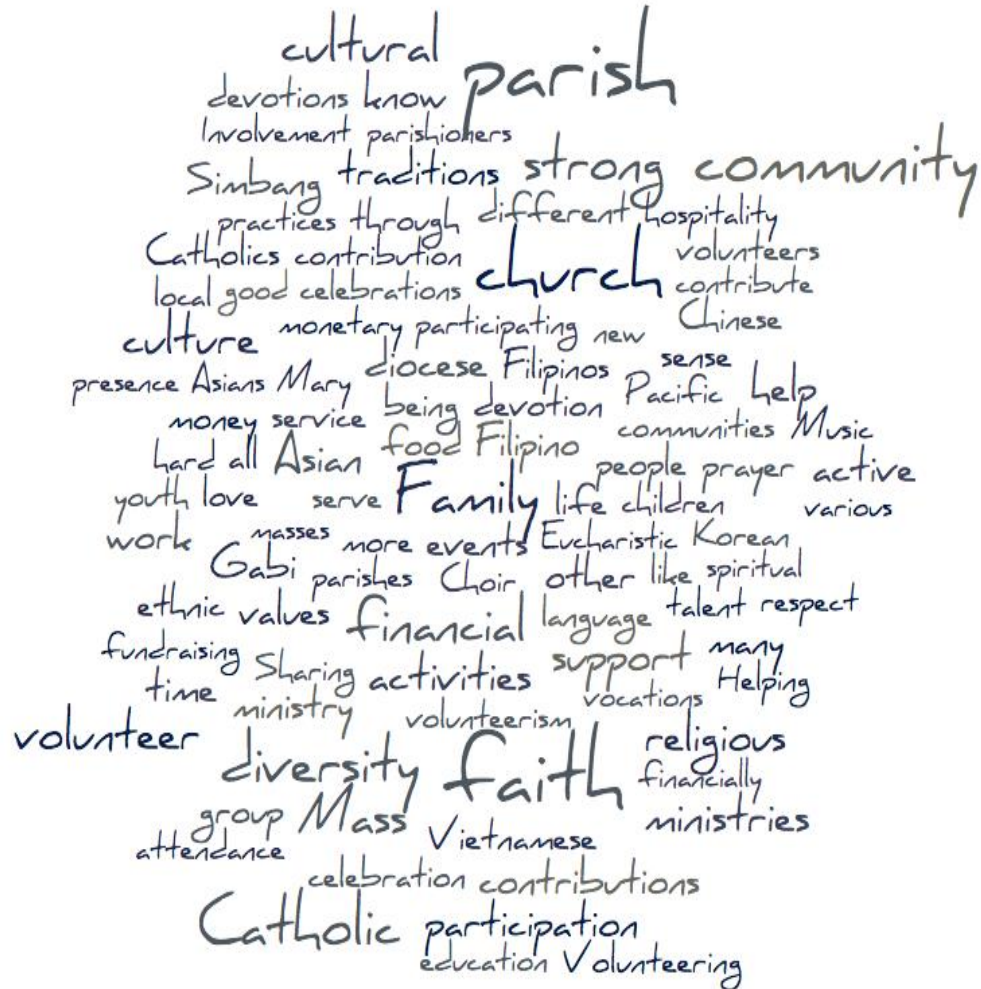
Catholicism in the Pacific Islands ¹⁴

- The Pacific Island nations and territories have a much higher percentage Catholic than do the Asian host nations and territories.
- Of the estimated 9.9 million people in 21 major Pacific Island nations, about 2.9 million or 29 percent identify as Catholic.
- In the Pacific Islands, Catholicism is the dominant religion of seven nations including the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Kiribati, New Caledonia, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, and Wallis and Futuna.
- Of the Pacific Island host nations, Wallis and Futuna has the highest percentage of Catholics at 95.2 percent.
- Of the Pacific Island nations and territories, Tuvalu has the lowest percentage of Catholics at 0.5 percent.
- Papua New Guinea is the largest nation by population among the Pacific Island nations. As such, the 2 million Catholics comprise 71 percent of the Catholics of the Pacific Islands.
- The Catholics of French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands constitute another 17 percent of the Pacific Island Catholics.
- The remaining 13 percent of Pacific Island Catholics come from 16 other countries in the Pacific region.



Picture: In Samoan culture, Ifoga, “a public atonement of a wrongdoing” is an expression of an apology for any wrong done by one family against another. In this tradition, one or two people representing the community kneel in front of the altar while draped with a fine mat. The sign of acceptance is shown when this fine mat is removed.

¹⁴ Ibid. 8 & 10.



The word cloud above was generated from open-ended responses to the question, “What are the three biggest contributions Asian and Pacific Island communities make to your parish?” The more frequently the word appears among responses, the larger the size of the word within the image. Tricia C. Bruce, “National Study of Asian & Pacific Island Catholics: A Demographic Primer” (presentation, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs (SCAPA), St. Louis, MO. June 9, 2015

To see full reports and more demographics, please visit our website at:
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/asian-pacific-islander/demographics/index.cfm>