

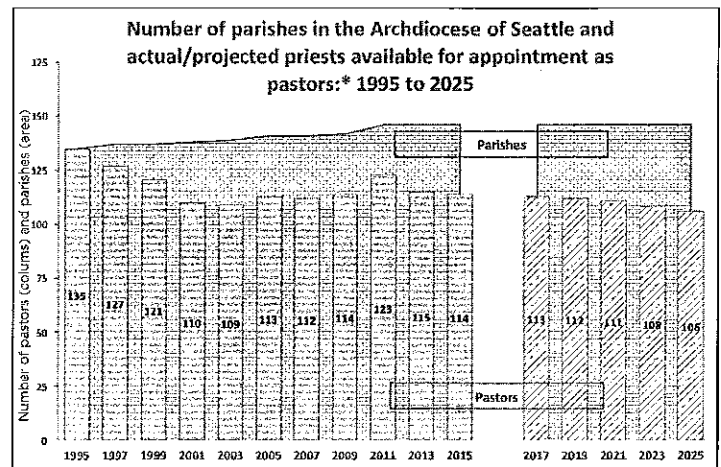
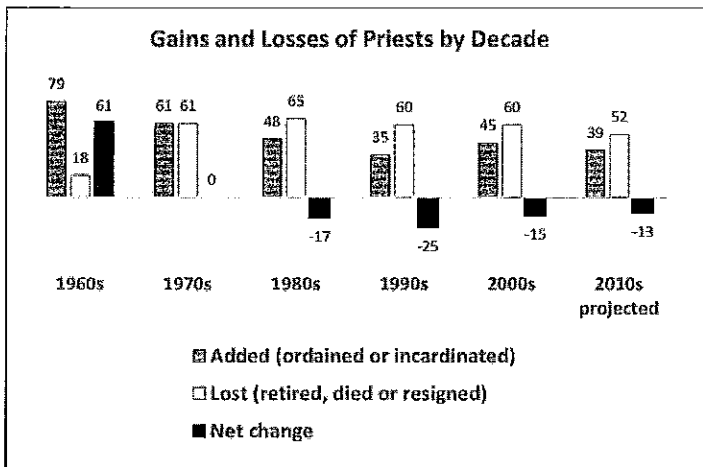
# Pastoral Planning in the Archdiocese of Seattle

For Catholics the parish is a unique spiritual home. Consequently, Archbishop Sartain, priests and parish leaders are considering how best to ensure that the Word of God is heard and preached, Christ Jesus is received in holy Communion and the people of God are sent forth to live out our Catholic faith in service and love. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy every Catholic is called to greater witness and sharing of the saving love of Jesus Christ. The Archdiocese of Seattle has initiated a planning process to ensure that the people of God have access to pastoral and spiritual care in order to be missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

## Current Challenges

To live out the church's mission—our mission—we must effectively address some very real challenges. Our population is growing and there are a limited number of priests. The Archdiocese of Seattle currently has more parishes and fewer priests than it did 35 years ago.

- In 1980 there were 130 parishes and 35 missions in the Archdiocese served by 130 pastors and assisted by 74 parochial vicars (a total of 204 parish priests).
- In 2015 there are 146 parishes and 27 missions served by only 111 pastors assisted by 49 parochial vicars (a total of 160 parish priests).



\*Includes diocesan, religious order and extern pastors and priest administrators but not priest ministers.

## The Planning Process

The planning process must look at priests assigned to parishes, Mass schedules and the diverse needs for pastoral care. We must look beyond the one-pastor-one-parish model of leadership for our parish communities. In the coming months pastoral leaders will be looking at new models to better align priestly leadership with current realities. One concern that must be addressed is that many priests are currently stretched too thin. One opportunity is maximizing lay leadership in service to the Catholic faith community and our parishes. Another possible model would involve parishes working more closely together under one pastor or a pastoral team (priest and lay leaders) serving multiple parishes.

In coming weeks and months you will learn more and be invited to give your thoughts on ways to best serve all Catholics. With prayer and open hearts, with wisdom and thoughtful analysis, we will confront these challenges together and live out our call to be missionary disciples.

**As Pope Francis writes:** *"The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community.... It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach."* (Joy of the Gospel, #28)