

## LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

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### STATISTICS

The data given for 1926 represent 39 active organizations of the Liberal Catholic Church, all reported as being in urban territory. The total membership was 1,799, comprising 697 males and 1,102 females. The classification by sex and by age was reported by all of the 39 churches, 29 of which reported members under 13 years of age. No parsonages were reported by this body.

The membership of the Liberal Catholic Church includes persons who have been admitted to the local churches after having been duly baptized and confirmed.

As this is a new denomination, coming into existence in 1915 as a new form of Old Catholicism, no comparative statistics are available.

**State tables.**—Tables 1, 2, and 3 present the statistics for the Liberal Catholic Church by States. Table 1 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches and the membership classified by sex. Table 2 gives for selected States the number and membership of the churches, and the membership classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over. Table 3 presents the church expenditures for 1926, showing separately the amounts expended for current expenses and improvements, and for benevolences, etc., and also gives the data for Sunday schools. Separate presentation in Table 3 is limited to those States in which 3 or more churches reported expenditures, in order to avoid disclosing the financial statistics of any individual church, and for this reason no table is given showing the value of church property and the debt on such property. The States omitted from Table 3 can be determined by referring to the complete list which appears in Table 1.

**Ecclesiastical divisions.**—Table 4 presents, for each diocese in the Liberal Catholic Church, the more important statistical data shown by States in the earlier tables, including number of churches, membership, value of church edifices, debt on church edifices, expenditures, and Sunday schools.

**TABLE 1.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, AND MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH**

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	Number of churches	Number of members	TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
			Male	Female	Males per 100 females <sup>1</sup>
<b>United States</b> .....	<b>39</b>	<b>1,799</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>1,102</b>	<b>63.2</b>
<b>NEW ENGLAND:</b>					
Massachusetts.....	1	33	13	20	
<b>MIDDLE ATLANTIC:</b>					
New York.....	5	210	105	105	100.0
Pennsylvania.....	1	14	5	9	
<b>EAST NORTH CENTRAL:</b>					
Ohio.....	1	60	24	36	
Illinois.....	2	383	136	247	55.1
Michigan.....	4	125	49	76	
Wisconsin.....	2	32	5	27	
<b>WEST NORTH CENTRAL:</b>					
Minnesota.....	3	146	58	88	
Iowa.....	1	9	4	5	
Missouri.....	2	41	16	25	
Nebraska.....	1	37	16	21	
<b>SOUTH ATLANTIC:</b>					
District of Columbia.....	2	30	6	24	
Georgia.....	1	39	17	22	
<b>EAST SOUTH CENTRAL:</b>					
Tennessee.....	1	4	2	2	
<b>WEST SOUTH CENTRAL:</b>					
Louisiana.....	1	11	4	7	
Oklahoma.....	1	11	2	9	
Texas.....	1	15	2	13	
<b>MOUNTAIN:</b>					
Montana.....	1	15	6	9	
Colorado.....	1	44	17	27	
<b>PACIFIC:</b>					
Washington.....	1	95	33	62	
California.....	6	445	177	268	66.0

<sup>1</sup> Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.**TABLE 2.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, BY STATES, 1926: LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH**

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches]

STATE	Number of churches	Number of members	MEMBERSHIP BY AGE		
			Under 13 years	13 years and over	Per cent under 13
<b>United States</b> .....	<b>39</b>	<b>1,799</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>1,533</b>	<b>14.8</b>
New York.....	5	210	25	185	11.9
Michigan.....	4	125	16	109	12.8
Minnesota.....	3	146	27	119	18.5
California.....	6	445	79	366	17.8
Other States.....	21	873	119	754	13.6

TABLE 3.—CHURCH EXPENDITURES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY STATES, 1926:  
LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting expenditures]

STATE	Total number of churches	EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR				SUNDAY SCHOOLS		
		Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.	Churches reporting	Officers and teachers	Scholars
United States.....	39	32	\$47,287	\$43,070	\$4,217	7	16	214
New York.....	5	4	10,965	9,700	1,265			
Minnesota.....	3	3	11,416	11,230	186	2	4	29
California.....	6	5	11,471	9,763	1,708	1	4	120
Other States.....	25	20	13,435	12,377	1,058	4	8	65

TABLE 4.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, VALUE OF EDIFICES, DEBT, EXPENDITURES, AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY DIOCESES, 1926: LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

DIOCESE	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		DEBT ON CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
Total.....	39	1,799	6	\$160,000	5	\$79,243	32	\$47,287	7	214
California.....	6	445		( <sup>1</sup> )		( <sup>1</sup> )		( <sup>1</sup> )	1	120
Great Lakes.....	9	600					6	7,757	2	31
Northwestern.....	2	110		( <sup>1</sup> )		( <sup>1</sup> )			1	14
Provincial.....	22	644	4	84,000	3	58,000	19	23,955	3	49
Combinations <sup>2</sup> .....			2	76,000	2	21,243	7	12,575		

<sup>1</sup> Amount included in the figures shown on the line designated "Combinations," to avoid disclosing the statistics of individual churches.

<sup>2</sup> The figures for value, debt, and expenditures represent data for churches in the California and the Northwestern dioceses.

## HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION <sup>1</sup>

### HISTORY

The Liberal Catholic Church is an independent and autonomous body, in no way dependent upon the see of Rome, or upon any other see or authority outside its own administration. It is neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant—but Catholic. It is called Liberal Catholic because its outlook is both liberal and Catholic. Catholic means universal, but the word has also come to stand for the outlook and practice of the historical church as distinct from that of the later sects. The Liberal Catholic Church allies itself with this historical tradition. It aims at combining the Catholic form of worship with the widest measure of intellectual liberty and respect for the individual conscience.

The Liberal Catholic Church came into existence as the result of a complete reorganization in 1915-16 of the Old Catholic movement in Great Britain upon a more liberal basis. This church derived its Orders from the mother-see of the Old Catholic movement, the ancient archiepiscopal see of Utrecht in Holland.

<sup>1</sup>This statement was furnished by Rt. Rev. Irving S. Cooper, regentary bishop for the United States, Liberal Catholic Church.

The Liberal Catholic Church has carefully preserved this succession of Orders, but took its present name for a variety of reasons, because "Old Catholic" is frequently confused with "Roman Catholic," especially in the newer countries, and also to avoid giving offense to the Continental Old Catholic churches by imputing to them principles of liberalism in religion which would be distasteful to them. If this church, therefore, describes itself as "Old Catholic" it does so to indicate the source of its Orders and its essential unity with the historical Church.

The ancient Church of Holland, sometimes called "Jansenist," arose early in the eighteenth century. With characteristic hospitality the Dutch people had given sanctuary to many unfortunate Jansenist refugees who had fled from France and Belgium to escape Jesuit persecution. As a result, the Dutch Church was itself accused of complicity in the Jansenist heresy (an accusation of which it claims repeatedly to have cleared itself), and its Archbishop, Peter Codde, was deposed in 1704. An attempt to impose upon them a successor from outside confirmed the Dutch clergy in their attitude of resistance to Rome, whose interference they regarded as unlawful, and the Church has ever since maintained this position of independence.

Eventually one of their number was raised to the episcopate by a certain Bishop Varlet. The latter had been consecrated as Bishop of Ascalon *in partibus infidelium* and coadjutor to the Bishop of Babylon. On the evening of his consecration he received intelligence of the death of the Bishop of Babylon, whom he therefore succeeded in that see. On his way out to Babylon he passed through Holland, and as an act of Christian charity administered confirmation there to several hundred candidates who, in the absence of a bishop, were awaiting the sacrament. Having incurred the Pope's displeasure by this act, he returned to Holland and spent the remainder of his days there. Bishop Varlet then came to the aid of the Dutch Church and consecrated for it four Archbishops of Utrecht in succession, the first three dying without themselves conferring the episcopate. Varlet had himself been consecrated at Paris in 1719 by Bishop de Matignon, who in his turn had been consecrated in 1693 by the famous Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, the "Eagle of Meaux." Bossuet traced his episcopal lineage through Archbishop le Tellier, son of the Grand Chancellor of France, to Cardinal Antonio Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII. The validity of the consecration conferred by Bishop Varlet was therefore unquestionable, and the Orders of the so-called Dutch Jansenist Church are everywhere acknowledged as valid.

When the Vatican Council of 1870 decreed the infallibility of the Pope, a number of the leading scholars of the Continent of Europe, headed by Dr. von Döllinger, the foremost ecclesiastical historian of the day, refused to accept so serious an innovation in doctrine. Independent congregations were formed, who took the title of "Old Catholic" in contradistinction to the new Catholicism of Rome, and this movement was able to secure the episcopal succession from the Dutch Church, which presently united with it. The Old Catholic Church is therefore a Catholic Church, independent of Rome, having indisputably valid Orders.

#### DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

The Liberal Catholic Church draws the central inspiration of its work from an intense faith in the Living Christ, believing that the vitality of a church gains in proportion as its members not only commemorate a Christ who lived 2,000 years ago, but strive also to serve as a vehicle for the Eternal Christ, who ever lives as a mighty spiritual Presence in the world, guiding and sustaining His people.

It regards the promise of the Presence of the Christ as validating all Christian worship, but it further holds that the Lord also appointed certain rites or sacraments for the greater helping of His people, to be handed down in His church as special channels of His power and blessing. It recognizes seven fundamental Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Absolution, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, and Holy Orders. To ensure their efficacy to the worshipper, it guards with the most jealous care the administration of all sacramental rites and carefully preserves its episcopal succession.

Besides perpetuating these sacramental rites, Christ's immediate followers handed down in His Church a body of doctrine and certain fundamental principles of belief and conduct which are to be found in the Holy Scriptures, the creeds, and other traditions of the church. In the formulation of this body of doctrine and ethics, the Liberal Catholic Church takes what in some respects is a unique position among the churches of Christendom. Moving within the orbit of Christianity and regarding itself as a distinctively Christian Church, it nevertheless holds that the other great religions of the world are divinely inspired and that all proceed from a common source, though different religions stress different aspects of this teaching and some aspects may even temporarily drop out of existence. It therefore does not seek to convert people from one religion to another and welcomes to its altars all who reverently approach them. As a working basis of fellowship, it asks of its members not the profession of a common belief, but their willingness to worship corporately through a common ritual, and permits to its lay members (though not, of course, to its clergy) entire freedom in the interpretation of creeds, Scriptures, tradition, and liturgy. It takes this attitude not from any indifference to truth or revelation, but because it has so high a regard for them. A truth is not a truth for man, nor is a revelation a revelation, until he sees it to be true for himself; as he grows into spirituality, so will he grow into the perception of truth. While certain of the higher teachings must remain within the category of revelation, because so far beyond human grasp and attainment, others less remote are capable of verification and even of development by those who have unfolded within themselves the necessary spiritual faculties. Man being in essence divine can ultimately know the Deity whose life he shares and, by gradually unfolding the divine powers that are latent in him, can grow into knowledge and mastery of the universe, which is the expression of that divine Life.

The Liberal Catholic Church uses a revised liturgy in the vernacular, wherein the essential features of the various sacramental forms are preserved with scrupulous care, but the prevailing tone is one of devotional and joyous aspiration. The endeavor has been throughout to place no sentiment on the lips of priest or congregation which they can not honestly and sincerely mean, or reasonably be expected to carry out in practice. The fear of God and His wrath, the oft-repeated appeals for mercy and other forms of petition which are survivals of a primitive people, together with the haunting fear of everlasting hell—all these have been eliminated from the ritual as derogatory alike to the idea of a loving Father and to the men whom He created in His own image. For while the essential truths of religion are changeless, the presentation and setting of these truths must vary as the races advance into fuller enlightenment.

Auricular confession is entirely optional, and its frequent and systematic practice is not encouraged. Believing, however, that the grace of Absolution is one of the gifts of Christ to His people, the Church offers this aid to those who desire it; this is not to be regarded as enabling one to escape the consequences of wrongdoing, but rather as a reheartening and a restoration of that inner harmony of nature which has been disturbed by the wrong conduct.

Candidates are admitted to the churches by baptism, or (if that has been duly performed) by confirmation. If the candidate has received both baptism and confirmation in complete form, then a simple form of admission is used, in which a blessing is invoked on the religious aspirations of the candidate. The essentials of its baptismal rite are: The proper use of water (by process of ablution, at least) and the usual trinitarian formula, together with the application of the oil of catechumens and chrism. The essentials of its confirmation rite are: The imposition of the bishop's hand with proper formula, and the use of chrism. When persons who wish to join the Liberal Catholic Church have received these sacraments according to any less complete form, it is usual to repeat them "conditionally."

The Liberal Catholic Church neither enjoins nor forbids the marriage of its clergy. No fee may be exacted for administering the sacraments or for other spiritual work and the finances of each church are managed by its laity wherever practicable.

#### WORK

This Church lays great stress on the corporate aspect of Christian life and worship, believing that as a system of ethics, philosophy, and worship, Christianity was chiefly intended to help men to grow into the love of Christ, and in so doing to solve the many difficulties which beset the path of human brotherhood—that brotherhood which must be the corner-stone of all truly religious life. It does not, as a body, enter into politics or sociology, but feels that it should rather make itself a motive power behind social and political amelioration, by inspiring its members with the love of humanity and the desire to serve their fellows, while leaving them free to select their own aims and methods. It helps its members to develop spiritual vision and gain first-hand knowledge of truth by providing opportunities for growth through worship and explaining to them the ancient science of unfolding the divine potentialities which exist in every one.

Special attention is given to healing. In the great revivifying power of the Holy Spirit and the various sacraments the Church has a means of grace which should immeasurably fortify the methods of the newer medicine. The time has surely come when the healing and priestly functions may be seen to be in a measure complementary the one to the other, for on all hands there is a growing recognition that bodily ailments are in many instances the outcome of inner maladies of the soul, and in any case can best be remedied when the soul is at peace. The Church will endeavor to restore these ministrations of healing to their rightful place in the economy of life.

The Liberal Catholic Church aims at combining the traditional Catholic form of worship—with its stately ritual, its deep mysticism, and its abiding witness to the reality of sacramental grace—with the widest measure of intellectual liberty and respect for the individual conscience. It brings into alliance with the worship of the church all that is good and true in the modern renaissance of thought, which is finding expression in the newer "borderland" science, mysticism, new thought, psychical research, and other kindred movements. It welcomes to all its activities members of other churches, but its chief appeal is addressed to the thousands who stand outside the existing church organizations and religious societies and are bereft of the help they could otherwise receive. Its congregations are mainly composed of men and women who had ceased to attend church.

The national headquarters of this body is St. Alban's Pro-Cathedral, 2041 Argyle Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif.