

## OLD CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN AMERICA

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### GENERAL STATEMENT

The church bodies grouped under this head, in this consolidated report, represent, in the main, scattered families or small communities which, for one reason or another, have rejected the church authority of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy; while retaining the chief doctrines and customs of the Roman Catholic Church, they are now ministered to by clergy who derive their Orders (since they insist upon Apostolic Succession as the basis of a valid Christian ministry) directly or indirectly from sources whose origins are acknowledgedly Apostolic, though not legal or authorized in the Roman Catholic Church. In this, and in the principal points of doctrine and usage, these people agree with the Old Catholics of Holland, Switzerland, and other parts of Europe. All of them have been connected at one time or another, directly or indirectly, through their leaders, with the authentic Old Catholics of Switzerland or Holland. At the present time, however, none of these American bodies or leaders are connected with or recognized by the Old Catholic Churches of any part of continental Europe, nor are their Orders or Apostolic Successions derived directly, if at all, from European Old Catholic Churches. With this explanation and caution against misinterpretation, the general use of the term "Old Catholic Churches" is justifiable for "The American Catholic Church" and its numerous derivatives, for "The Old Catholic Church in America," and for "The North American Old Roman Catholic Church" and the numerous separated personal leaders derived from its establishment.

The first of these, the American Catholic Church, while identical in doctrine with the Old Catholic Churches of Europe and originally founded upon the work of Old Catholic missionary priests from Europe, derives its Apostolic Succession, upon which it bases the validity of its ministry, from the Syro-Jacobite Church of Malabar. The latter church is under the patriarchal authority of the so-called Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, one of the Lesser Eastern Churches which broke away from the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church centuries ago. The other two, the Old Catholic Church in America and the North American Old Roman Catholic Church, are the result of the visit to America of Prince Bishop de Landas Berghes, of Scotland, and the quarrel between the two men, Carmel Henry Carfora and William Henry Francis Brothers, whom he consecrated bishops for the Old Catholics in America. Bishop de Landas Berghes himself had been consecrated Bishop of Scotland by Arnold Harris Mathew, who was consecrated archbishop for Old Catholics in England by the Old Catholics of Holland. The Old Catholic Churches of Holland and continental Europe later repudiated all responsibility for or connection with the bishops in England and America who derived their consecrations from the consecration of Archbishop Mathew. Likewise, the Syro-Jacobite Church and its Patriarchate of Antioch have no relation or connection with those clergy in America who depend upon consecrations performed by Archbishop Vilatte, the original founder of the American Catholic Church, although he was consecrated by Syro-Jacobite bishops at the order of their Patriarch of Antioch.

The Old Catholics of Holland and Switzerland came into prominence shortly after the Roman Catholic Vatican Council of 1870 which declared papal infalli-

bility a doctrine of the Roman Catholic faith. The Swiss and Dutch communities, led by theologians who refused to subscribe to the decree of papal infallibility, organized the Old Catholic Church. From the same division of opinion numerous scattered families in America, especially in Belgian communities in Wisconsin, fell away from the Roman Catholic Hierarchy and clergy. Left leaderless, the tendency of these people was to reject all church doctrine and life and drift to atheism. Through the influence of Father Hyacinthe Loyson, a Parisian priest closely associated with the Old Catholic movement of Europe, an attempt was made to organize these drifting people into Old Catholic congregations, with Father Joseph René Vilatte, a French priest ordained by the Swiss Old Catholics, as their missionary priest.

As the work of Father Vilatte developed and widened, he sought for a bishop under whom he could place his missions and from whom he could get assistant missionary priests. Such relations with the Protestant Episcopal Church and its bishops were suggested, but were emphatically forbidden by the Old Catholic bishops of Europe, who were careful to preserve their people under bishops who had valid sacramental Orders and Apostolic Succession. The Russian Bishop Vladimir, also, of the Orthodox Catholic Church, found himself unable to accept these communities and permit the continued use of the Roman Catholic rites and customs. Finally, Father Vilatte was consecrated a bishop by the bishops of the Syro-Jacobite Church of Malabar by order of the Syro-Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, Archbishop Francis Xavier Alvarez, assisted by two other bishops, performing the consecration. On returning to this country Archbishop Vilatte organized the Old Catholic Church, with himself as its archbishop and primate. Later he consecrated several bishops without authority for such additional consecrations from the Patriarch of the Syro-Jacobite succession, who therefore does not recognize such consecrations or their derivative consecrations and ordinations.

On the return of Archbishop Vilatte to the Roman Catholic Church, one of his bishops, Right Rev. Frederic E. J. Lloyd, assumed the primacy and title of archbishop in the churches which had been reorganized as the American Catholic Church. Of the many bishops that have been consecrated in this group, or by Archbishop Vilatte and his followers, most have assumed other names and titles and founded separate churches for themselves by civil incorporation. For most of these no statistics are published, for the reason that the Census Bureau collects its statistics directly from congregations rather than from the officers of corporations.

One church body which derived its original consecration of bishops from Archbishop Vilatte, and which now has a thriving organization of congregations, is not included in this report under Old Catholic Churches, for the reason that it has never used that title in any form and does not desire any association with Old Catholic Churches, but rather aspires to ultimate association with Eastern Orthodox Churches as a racial or national unit. This is the African Orthodox Church, given in a separate section under its own name.

Of the church organizations in America deriving their Apostolic Succession from the consecration of Arnold Harris Mathew by the Dutch Old Catholics and his consecration of Bishop de Landas Berghes, only the two here included have supplied any congregational statistics. These two are the creations of the two men who now head them and who were consecrated by Bishop de Landas Berghes on successive days. Dissension followed and Bishop Francis (Brothers) was deposed and started the separate body which he now constitutes, while Bishop Carfora organized his group as the Old Roman Catholic Church, to which title the words "North American" have since been added. As archbishop of this latter organization Bishop Carfora is recognized, by the few

remaining Old Catholics in England, as the proper head of the Old Catholics in America.

One of the bishops whom Archbishop Carfora consecrated, Samuel D. Benedict, now of New York City, has announced himself as the sole true head of the Old Catholic Churches in America under the title, "Archbishop and Primate of the Evangelical Catholic Church," but his organization is not included in this report for the reason that no congregations could be located nor any membership statistics secured. Bishop Benedict was deposed by Archbishop Carfora, but nevertheless he consecrated another bishop, named Newmark, who is now independent and has in turn consecrated W. H. Hammond, who is also independent and uses the word "Orthodox" in his title. For neither of these last two men or their incorporated organizations could any congregations be found or membership statistics secured.

Not to be confused with the bodies grouped in this consolidated report, with which it has no ecclesiastical relation, though similar in doctrine, is the Polish National Catholic Church of America, headed by Bishop Hodur and in direct union with the Swiss, Dutch, and Polish Old Catholic Churches of Europe. Similarly separated is the Lithuanian National Catholic Church.

In doctrine all of the churches mentioned above are in substantial accord with the Old Catholic churches of Europe. They accept the Seven Ecumenical Councils of the historic universal and undivided Church, as accepted prior to the Great Schism between East and West in 1054, rejecting the "Filioque" addition to the Nicene Creed, papal supremacy and infallibility, and all union of church and state. They all use a more or less modified form of the Roman Catholic ritual, either in translations or in Latin, and permit the clergy to marry. None of them has any relations or connection with Eastern Orthodox Catholic Churches, for the reason that the Eastern Orthodox can not accept their Orders nor permit their peculiarities of ritual.

The bodies grouped under the name "Old Catholic Churches" in 1926 and 1916 are listed in the table below, with the principal statistics as reported at each period. Direct comparisons between the bodies as reported at the two censuses are impossible, however, because of numerous organic changes.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE OLD CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN AMERICA, 1926 AND 1916

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
<b>1926</b>								
<b>Total for the group</b> .....	47	18,048	30	\$394,865	46	\$132,831	38	4,664
American Catholic Church.....	11	1,367	2	9,430	11	11,046	5	221
Old Catholic Church in America.....	9	1,888	4	37,500	8	19,347	9	997
North American Old Roman Catholic Church.....	27	14,793	24	347,435	27	102,438	24	3,446
<b>1916</b>								
<b>Total for the group</b> .....	21	14,200	17	145,800	19	33,850	15	2,096
American Catholic Church.....	8	475	1	3,000	2	1,700	2	75
Old Roman Catholic Church.....	12	4,700	11	89,300	11	12,150	11	1,271
Catholic Church of North America.....	6	9,025	5	63,500	6	20,000	2	750

# OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AMERICA

## STATISTICS

**Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.**—A general summary of the statistics for the Old Catholic Church in America for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory.

The membership consists of all persons who are admitted to the church through the sacrament of baptism.

**TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926: OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AMERICA**

ITEM	Total	In urban territory <sup>1</sup>	In rural territory <sup>1</sup>	PER CENT OF TOTAL <sup>2</sup>	
				Urban	Rural
<b>Churches (local organizations)</b> .....	9	7	2		
<b>Members</b> .....	1,888	1,436	452	76.1	23.9
Average per church.....	210	205	226		
<b>Membership by sex:</b>					
Male.....	1,025	785	240	76.6	23.4
Female.....	863	651	212	75.4	24.6
Males per 100 females.....	118.8	120.6	113.2		
<b>Membership by age:</b>					
Under 13 years.....	747	531	216	71.1	28.9
13 years and over.....	1,141	905	236	79.3	20.7
Per cent under 13 years.....	39.6	37.0	47.8		
<b>Church edifices:</b>					
Number.....	5	5			
Value—Churches reporting.....	4	4			
Amount reported.....	\$37,500	\$37,500		100.0	
Average per church.....	\$9,375	\$9,375			
Debt—Churches reporting.....	4	4			
Amount reported.....	\$23,600	\$23,600		100.0	
<b>Parsonages:</b>					
Value—Churches reporting.....	1	1			
Amount reported.....	\$10,000	\$10,000		100.0	
Debt—Churches reporting.....	1	1			
Amount reported.....	\$4,200	\$4,200		100.0	
<b>Expenditures during year:</b>					
Churches reporting.....	8	6	2		
Amount reported.....	\$19,347	\$15,297	\$4,050	79.1	20.9
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$16,747	\$13,647	\$3,100	81.5	18.5
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$2,600	\$1,650	\$950	63.5	36.5
Average expenditure per church.....	\$2,418	\$2,550	\$2,025		
<b>Sunday schools:</b>					
Churches reporting.....	9	7	2		
Officers and teachers.....	13	11	2		
Scholars.....	997	807	190	80.9	19.1

<sup>1</sup> Urban territory includes all cities and other incorporated places which had 2,500 inhabitants or more in 1920, the date of the last Federal census; rural territory comprises the remainder of the country.

<sup>2</sup> Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

The data given for 1926 represent nine active organizations of the Old Catholic Church in America, with 1,888 members. The classification of membership by sex and by age was reported by all of the nine churches, all of which reported members under 13 years of age.

While individual churches of this body have been in existence for some years, a reorganization since the census of 1916 makes it impossible to identify the whole group with any of the bodies formerly presented under the head of Old Catholic Churches.

**State tables.**—Tables 2, 3, and 4 present the statistics for the Old Catholic Church in America by States. Table 2 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches classified according to their location in urban or rural territory and the total membership classified by sex. Table 3 gives for selected States the number and membership of the churches, together with the membership classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over. Table 4 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 4 is limited to New Jersey, the only State in which three or more churches reported expenditures, in order to avoid disclosing the financial statistics of any individual church. The States omitted from this table can be determined by referring to the complete list which appears in Table 2.

**TABLE 2.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AMERICA**

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Males per 100 females <sup>1</sup>
United States.....	9	7	2	1,888	1,436	452	1,025	863	118.8
New England:									
Massachusetts.....	1	1		125	125		50	75	
Middle Atlantic:									
New York.....	1	1		141	141		83	58	
New Jersey.....	4	3	1	757	685	72	437	320	136.6
Pennsylvania.....	1	1		350	350		185	165	112.1
East North Central:									
Ohio.....	1		1	380		380	200	180	111.1
South Atlantic:									
West Virginia.....	1	1		135	135		70	65	

<sup>1</sup> Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

**TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, BY STATES, 1926: OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AMERICA**

[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
United States.....	9	1,888	747	1,141	39.6
New Jersey.....	4	757	276	481	36.5
Other States.....	5	1,131	471	660	41.6

TABLE 4.—CHURCH EXPENDITURES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY STATES, 1926:  
OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AMERICA

[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.....	9	8	\$19,347	\$16,747	\$2,600	9	13	997
New Jersey.....	4	4	8,000	7,100	900	4	6	440
Other States.....	5	4	11,347	9,647	1,700	5	7	557

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

The Old Catholic Church in America (sometimes called Western Orthodox Catholic Church) was organized in the United States by Father W. H. Francis (Brothers), in 1914. It claims in full the historic lineage of the old Catholic Churches of Europe and the apostolic succession as derived through the Mathew consecration. Its hierarchy in America comprises one archbishop and five bishops.

The Old Catholic movement was introduced into England by Dr. Arnold H. Mathew, Earl of Llandaff and Thomastown, who was consecrated by the Archbishop of Utrecht on April 28, 1908. The Old Catholic Benedictines, who for years have been engaged in missionary work in the United States, were received into union with the English Old Catholics, on February 4, 1914, and placed under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Mathew until the abbot, Father Francis, who had been elected bishop, was consecrated, on October 3, 1916. Bishop Francis was elected as archbishop and metropolitan by the clergy, January 8, 1917, with his see at New York City.

<sup>1</sup> This statement was furnished by Rt. Rev. W. H. Francis (Brothers), Archbishop and Metropolitan, Old Catholic Church in America.