

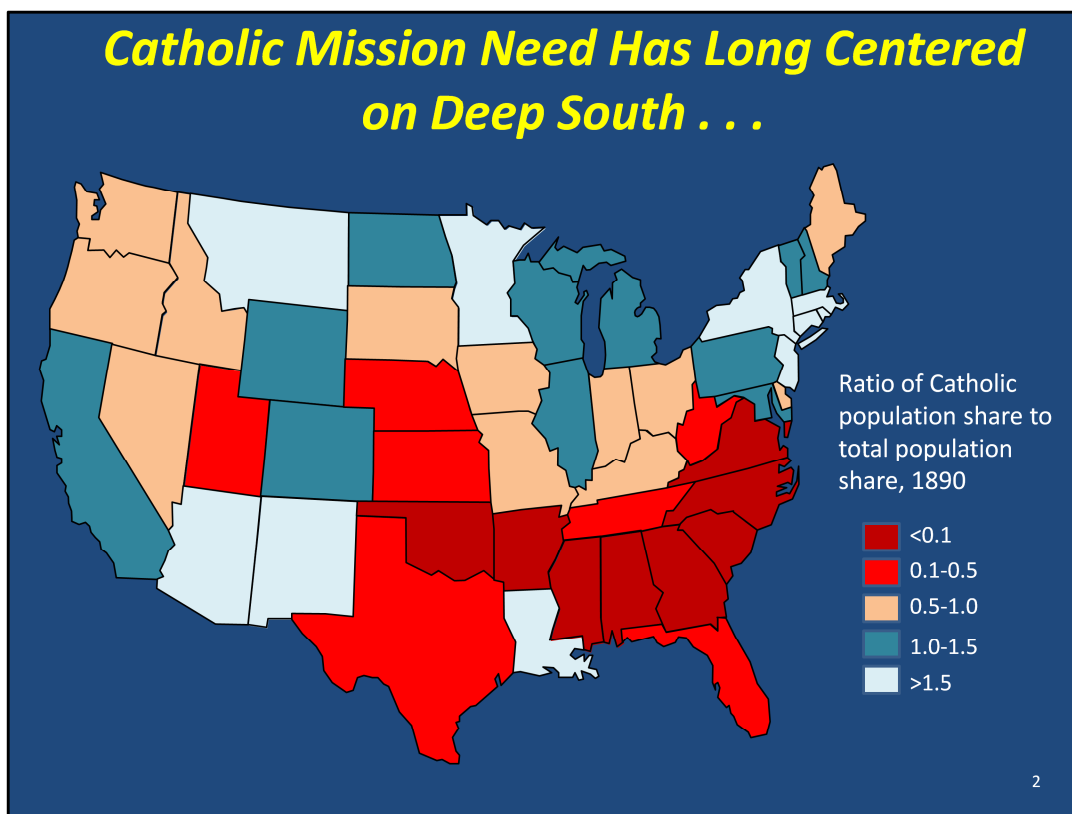
Catholic Home Mission Need: Indicators from the Religion Census

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By enumerating Catholic churches and their adherents by county, Religion Census and similar data can provide insight into home-mission need of the Catholic Church.

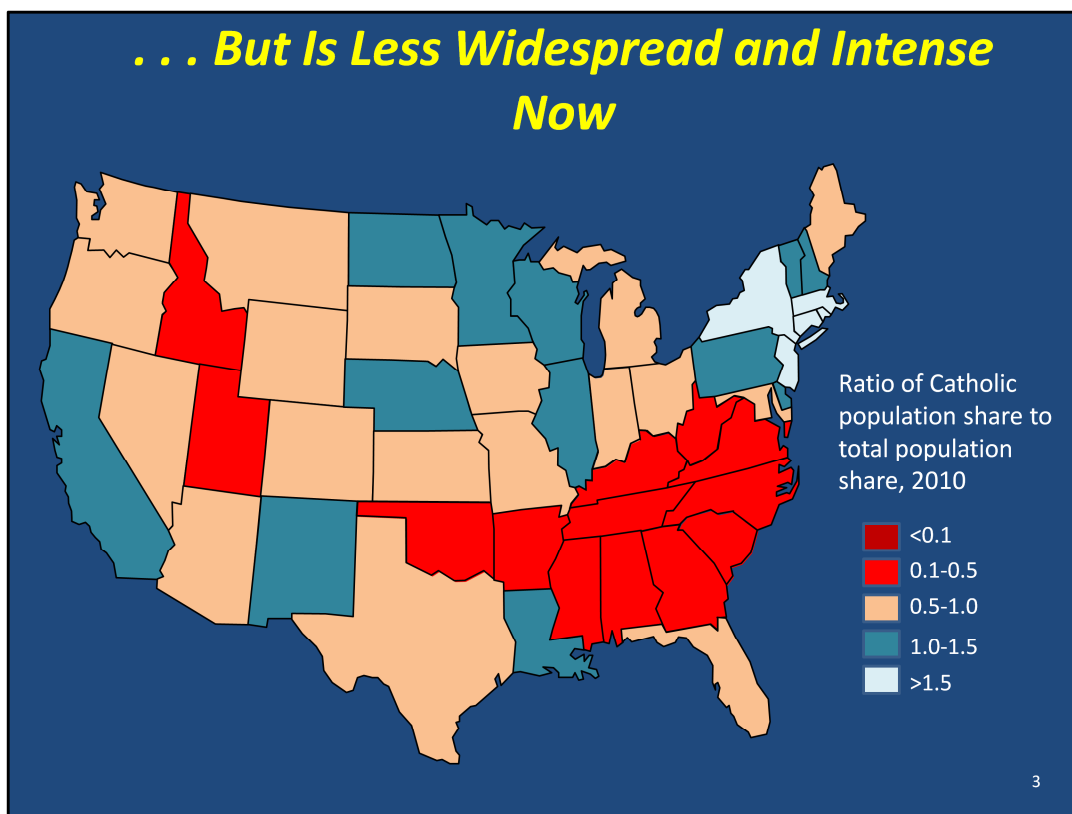
This presentation examines home-mission need in the Catholic Church and how it has changed over time. It relies primarily on data from the 2010 Religion Census of the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, but also examines other sources, such as earlier versions of the Religion Census, to document how home-mission need has changed over time. It also provides some characteristics of home-mission areas and what these might indicate for how the Church should address them.



The 2010 Religion Census is but the latest of a long series of data on local-level religious adherence in the United States. The 2010 Religion Census continues a series that began in 1952 and continued through 1971, 1980, 1990, and 2000. Yet even before the Religion Census series, the U.S. Census Bureau did a series on Religious Bodies in 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936, and even enumerated congregations periodically before then.

The above map is from Census statistics gathered in 1890 on religious congregations and their adherents. It uses a crude measure of home-mission need, dividing the ratio of Catholic population share in a state but its total population share. For example, if a state had 1 percent of the Catholic population and 1 percent of the total population, then its ratio in the map above would be 1.0. If it had 1 percent of the Catholic population but 2 percent of the total population, its ratio would be 0.5, and if it had 2 percent of the Catholic population but 1 percent of the total population, its ratio would be 2.0.

By this measure, Catholics in 1890 were most prevalent in the Northeast and California, but also in Louisiana and the Rocky Mountain states. They were scarce in the South, particularly in a contiguous belt of states from Virginia through Oklahoma, where Catholic population shares were less than one-tenth of total population shares. This is perhaps hardly surprising to observers of Catholicism in the United States, but it does demonstrate how long-standing some home-mission needs have been in the United States, as well as how extreme they once were.



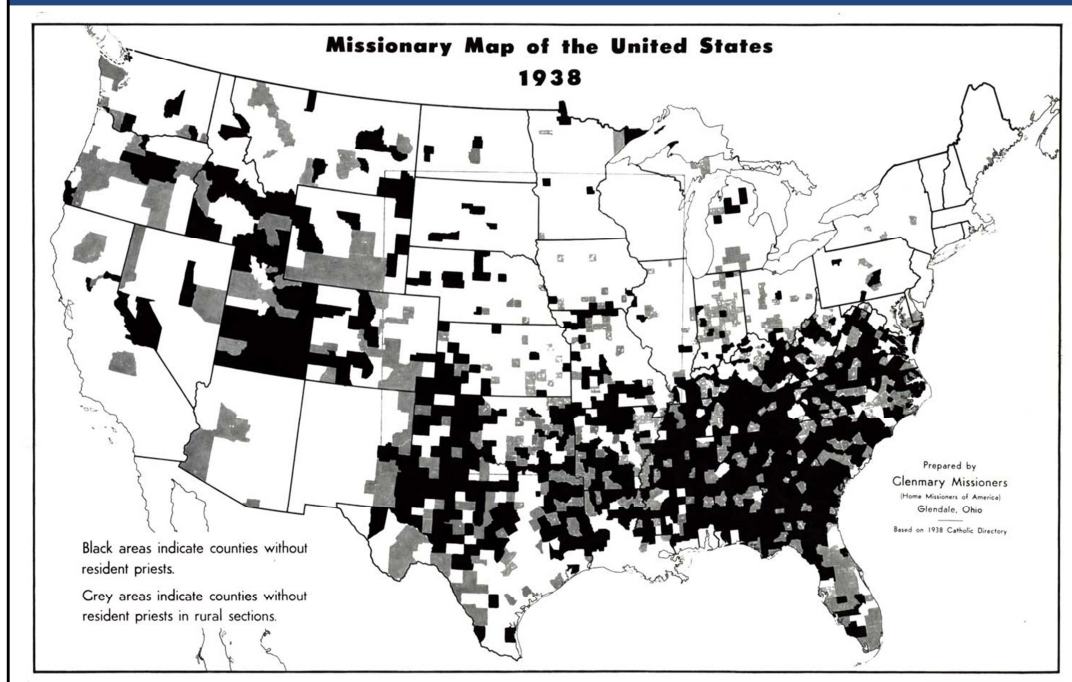
In 2010, the concentrations of Catholics were less dense, and the home-mission needs were less extreme.

In only a few states of the Northeast did the ratio of Catholic population share to total population share exceed 1.5.

At the other extreme, in no state was the ratio of Catholic-population share to total-population share less than 0.1.

Nevertheless, the South did remain the focus of home-mission need in the Church, with most Southern states having a ratio of Catholic-population share to total-population share that was less than 0.5.

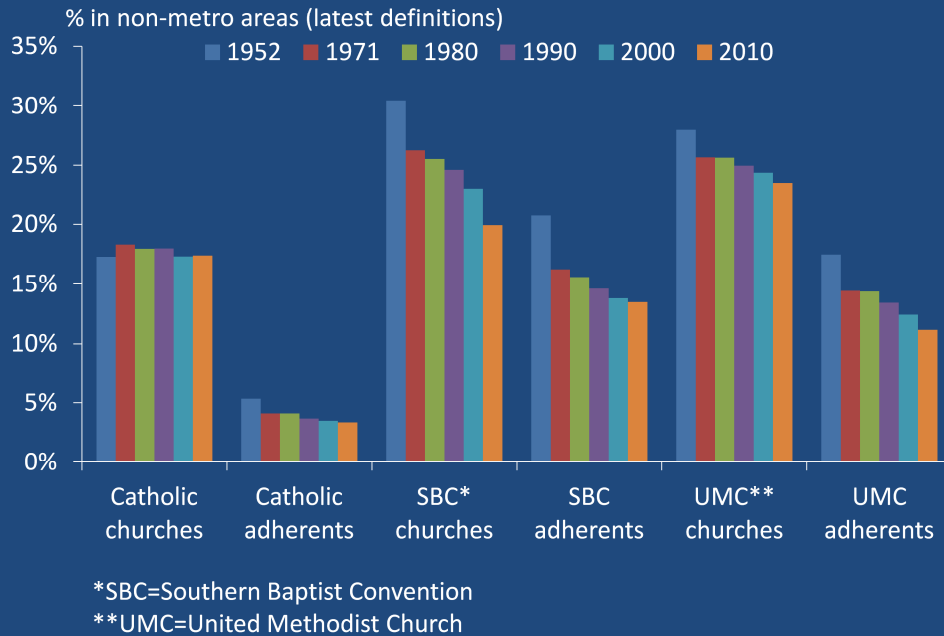
Rural Areas in Particular Have Long Had Catholic Mission Need . . .



The above map, compiled to help demonstrate home-mission need and elicit support for the Glenmary Home Missioners in their work, provides some more local context.

Home-mission need did not necessarily extend statewide, but was concentrated in rural areas. Hundreds of counties in the 1930s did not have any resident priests. Hundreds more had resident priests but none in their rural sections. It was to these areas that Glenmary sought to extend the Catholic Church, or to give it an effective presence where it lacked one.

. . . And Continue to Do So . . .

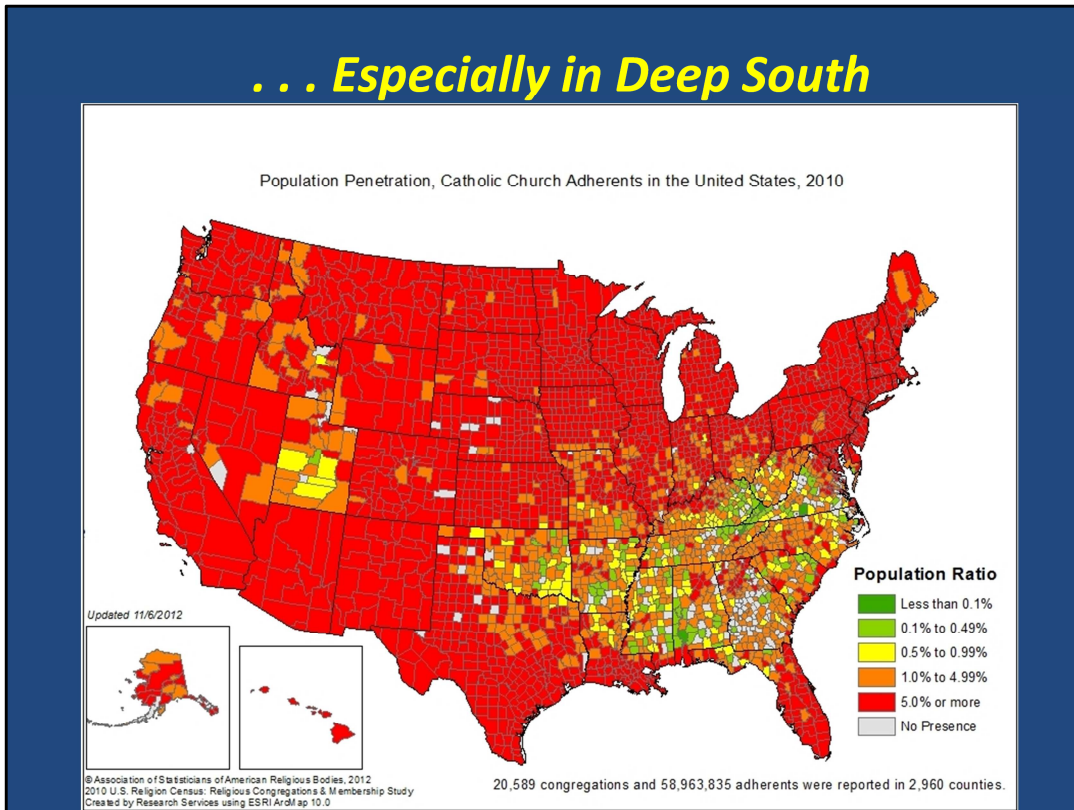


Home-mission need in rural areas continues to this day. The above figure shows, for the six years the Religion Census series has been conducted, the share of churches and adherents in non-metropolitan areas (using the latest definitions at the time of this presentation) for the Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the United Methodist Church. For example, it shows that, in 2010, 17 percent of all Catholic churches in the United States, and 3 percent of all Catholic adherents, were in non-metropolitan areas.

Over the past six decades, the Catholic Church has had about one-sixth of its churches in non-metropolitan areas. Yet the proportion of its adherents in non-metropolitan areas has continued to decrease.

Both the Southern Baptist Convention and the United Methodist Church have seen sharp decreases in their number of churches and adherents in non-metropolitan areas. Both, however, also have far larger proportion of adherents in non-metropolitan areas, even as their proportion of adherents decreases.

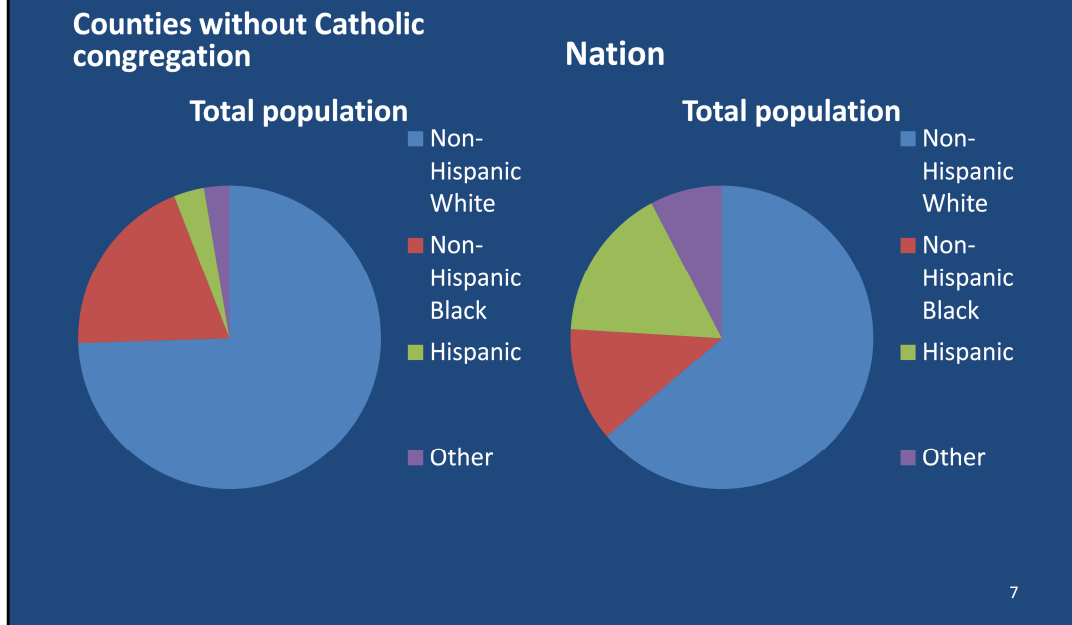
. . . Especially in Deep South



Catholic home-mission need remains greatest in rural areas of the Deep South. In most counties of the United States, Catholics are at least 5 percent of the population. That is, in most counties of the United States, the Catholic Church claims a population percentage greater than what all participating bodies but one in the Religion Census claim nationwide.

Yet there are nearly 200 counties in the United States with no Catholic church, and nearly 200 more with only one church with fewer than 100 adherents. Most of these are in the South, the historical core of Catholic home-mission need.

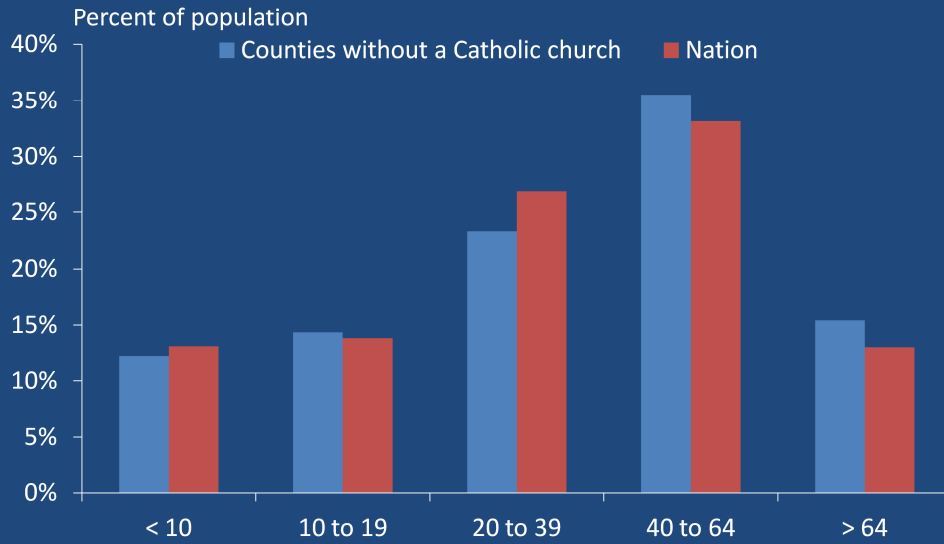
Counties Without a Catholic Church Are More White . . .



Counties with Catholic home-mission need differ from others in their characteristics. The above figure shows the distribution of population by four race and origin groups—non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, and other non-Hispanic—in counties without a Catholic congregation and all counties in the United States.

Counties without a Catholic congregation have higher proportions of both non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic blacks than are prevalent in the nation.. They have low proportions of Hispanics and non-Hispanic persons of other races.

... Older ...



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Counties without a Catholic church are also older than the nation. Their proportions of persons less than 40 years of age is lower than that of the nation, while their proportions of persons greater than 40 years of age is greater than that of the nation.

**... And of Lower Socioeconomic Status
Than the Nation**

	Counties without a Catholic church	Nation
Educational attainment		
Did not graduate high school	24%	15%
High-school graduate	38	29
Some college	24	28
Bachelor's or higher degree	13	28
In poverty	18%	14%
Management, business, science, or arts occupation	26%	35%
"Blue-collar" occupation	35%	22%

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Counties without a Catholic church have lower socioeconomic status than the rest of the nation. More than three in five persons living there have no education beyond high school; nationwide, nearly three in five have at least some college education. Counties without a Catholic church have a higher poverty rate than the nation. Their workers are less likely to be in a management, business, science, or arts occupation, and more likely to be in a "blue-collar" occupation.

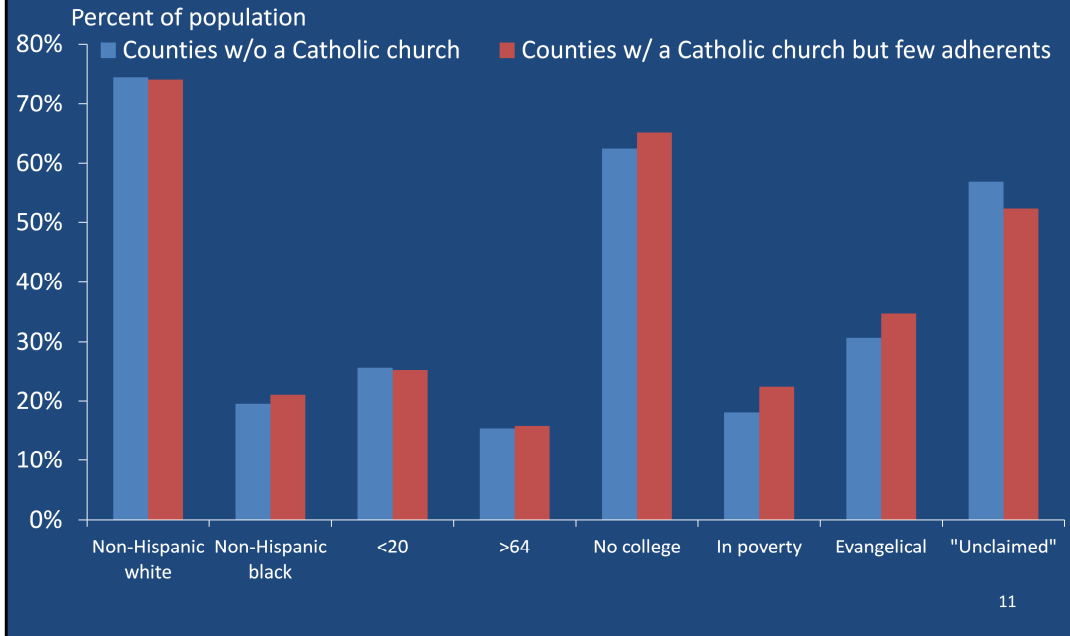
Evangelical Protestants Prevalent in Counties Without Catholic Church

	Counties w/o Catholic church		Nation	
	Congregations	Adherents as % of population	Congregations	Adherents as % of population
Evangelical Protestant	3,520	30.7	191,112	16.2
Black Protestant	500	3.4	17,754	1.6
Mainline Protestant	1,448	7.5	77,760	7.5
Orthodox	16	0.1	2,551	0.3
Latter-Day Saints	68	1.1	14,393	2.0
Muslim	4	0.3	1,320	0.7
Jewish	0	0	3,066	0.7
Other	79	0.1	10,012	0.8

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Counties without a Catholic church may have other churches. In particular, Evangelical Protestants are nearly twice as prevalent in such counties as they are nationwide. Adherents of historically black Protestant churches (e.g., National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.) Black Protestant churches are also more prevalent in counties without a Catholic church than they are elsewhere.

Other Counties with Church But Strong Mission Need Have Similar Characteristics



Other counties with minimal Catholic presence—i.e., where there is only one Catholic church with fewer than 100 adherents—have similar characteristics, and can perhaps be approached in similar ways. Like counties with no Catholic church, they have higher non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black populations than the nation. Their age structures are similar to counties without a Catholic church. They also have lower socioeconomic status and high proportions of Evangelical Protestants and persons unclaimed by other bodies in the Religion Census.

Mission Territory Characteristics Vary by State

State (and number of combined mission counties)	Non-Hispanic white	<20	>64	No college	Poverty	Evangelical	Unclaimed
Alabama (20)	64.1%	25.7%	16.3%	64.8%	20.5%	41.5%	43.0%
Arkansas (18)	75.7	25.4	16.7	63.7	20.4	39.3	49.7
Georgia (58)	69.9	27.1	13.9	63.2	19.0	34.2	55.3
Kentucky (30)	96.0	25.5	14.7	70.1	26.0	31.7	62.0
Mississippi (20)	56.4	27.9	14.9	62.0	25.5	41.5	43.3
Oklahoma (15)	70.3	27.3	16.9	60.1	19.5	51.0	40.3
Tennessee (26)	90.4	25.0	16.0	70.0	20.8	35.1	57.3
Virginia (32)	81.2	23.2	17.0	59.6	14.2	24.8	61.6

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While most counties without a Catholic church or with only a minimal Catholic presence are in the South, even within the region they can vary considerably.

For example, Kentucky counties with minimal Catholic presence have populations that are overwhelmingly non-Hispanic white. They also have low levels of educational attainment and high proportions of persons who are unclaimed by other bodies in the Religion Census.

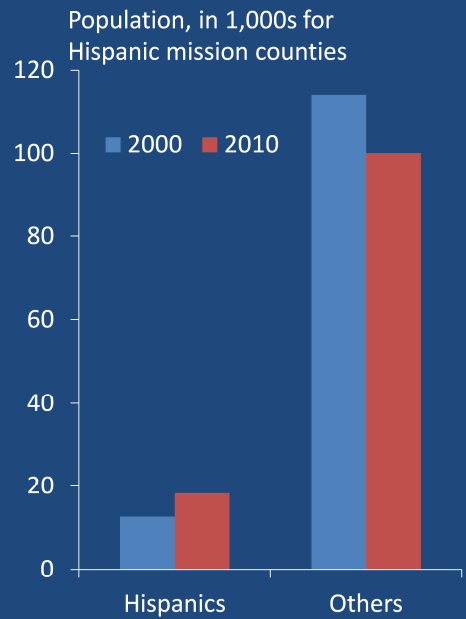
Mississippi counties with minimal Catholic presence have more diverse populations, with nearly half the persons living there being of other origin than non-Hispanic white. Their populations are also quite young, with 28 percent being less than 20 years of age.

Oklahoma counties with minimal Catholic presence do have representation of other religious bodies. More than half the persons living in such Oklahoma counties are Evangelical Protestants, and only 40 percent are unclaimed by any body participating in the Religion Census.

Virginia counties with minimal Catholic presence are older than the populations in the mission territory of other Southern states; more than one in six are at least 65 years of age. (Many Virginia counties with minimal Catholic presence may be adjacent to independent cities with a church, or be independent cities adjacent to a county with one.)

Fifteen Mission Counties Have Hispanic Populations of at Least 10 Percent

Population Characteristics, 2010	Hispanic mission counties	Other mission counties
Non-Hispanic White	67.1%	74.6%
Hispanic	15.4	2.3
Speak Spanish at home	10.9	1.8
<20	28.5	25.5
>64	11.2	15.7
No college	62.6	63.8
Poverty	18.1	20.2
Evangelical	23.8	32.9
“Unclaimed”	67.8	54.3



The Religion Census data can also help prioritize how to meet home-mission needs. For example, 15 counties without a Catholic church or with only a minimal Catholic presence have a Hispanic population of at least 10 percent. Addressing the mission needs of such counties would appear to address another mission need of the Church in the United States, that of growing Hispanic populations.

The characteristics of Hispanic mission counties are similar to those of other mission counties in some ways, including their relatively low levels of education and relatively high levels of poverty. They differ in some predictable ways such as percent speaking Spanish at home.

They also differ in their religious characteristics. Evangelical Protestants comprise a smaller share in Hispanic mission counties than they do in other mission counties, and persons unclaimed by other bodies comprise a higher share in Hispanic mission counties than they do in other mission counties.

Hispanics are also growing in total numbers in these counties. By contrast, persons of other race and origin groups are decreasing in numbers. This may lead other religious bodies to move away from these counties. But the Catholic home-mission need there is likely to continue to increase.

Combining Religion Census data with other data can help illustrate other characteristics of home-mission counties, including the priority the Catholic Church may wish to give them.