

Everything's

Texas is bursting at the seams in every way—size, diversity, independence, pride and Catholicism.

It's **enormous**. In the United States, Texas ranks second in: land area, economy, population and youngest population. One can drive for 13 hours and still be in Texas. El Paso is closer to San Diego, California (passing New Mexico and Arizona) than to Houston. King Ranch in southern Texas is larger than the state of Rhode Island.

If Texas were a sovereign nation, it would have the 14th largest economy by GDP in the world. In producing things, Texas leads the nation in many categories. In the mining industry, including oil and gas extraction, it tops the charts, producing one fourth of our country's total oil and gas. Texas is also #1 in livestock, cotton and

wind energy production, and #2 in agriculture. It produces and consumes more electricity than any state.

Its population is soaring. In the 2013 U. S. census of fastest-growing cities, seven of the top 15 were in Texas. The Catholic Church is booming, too. Catholics are now the largest religious group in the state. And, Brownsville is the most densely Catholic diocese in the country. Even the challenges of this growth are BIG. Among the nation's 195 dioceses with the highest levels of poverty, three are located in Texas—Brownsville, Laredo and El Paso.

Texas is also **diverse**. Its landscape ranges from the desert (although desert is only 10 percent

of land area) to coastal swamps, lush forests, prairies, rolling plains, rugged hills and snow-capped mountains.

Its cities are unique. Houston, the biggest, has the world's largest concentration of healthcare and research institutions and the Space Center. Austin, the capital, has an energetic music and arts scene, plus a high-tech industry that's often called "the Silicon Valley of the South." Beaumont is home to bayous and gator country. The Panhandle has big ranches, Dallas has glitz and glamour, and San Antonio, the state's second largest city, is considered "the sleeping giant." It's a Catholic city with three Catholic universities and the Mexican American Catholic



bigger in Texas...

Diocese of El Paso

College (MACC). The border towns offer a lively mix of Tex-Mex culture that's been thriving for centuries.

There is great ethnic diversity in Texas, with Hispanics being the majority, many with deep roots in the area. But, other ethnic groups are growing. On Sunday mornings in Houston, Mass is now offered in 18 different languages across the diocese.

Texans are **independent**. It's part of their DNA. In its early days, Texas was formerly its own country and the Lone Star state appreciates freedom. It has an interesting history leading up to that independence. Over the years, six flags flew over Texas—meaning six different nations ruled the territory, although it had

eight changes of government until it became the 28th U.S. state in 1845. Even though borders and flags have moved, the people have stayed throughout.

People in Texas are **proud**. They're proud of their history and bravery—"Remember the Alamo!" They're extremely loyal to their state. In school, children recite a pledge of alliance to the Texas state flag just as they do to the American flag. A History of Texas class is required for several grade levels.

Texans rejoice in their sports teams, armadillos, bluebonnets and barbeque. They're proud of their hospitality, too—the name Texas comes from the word "tejas," an indigenous word

meaning "friends."

Texans have a "can-do" spirit. They like to think that anything is possible. They're very future-oriented, dynamic and exuberant. They love Texas. There's nowhere they'd rather be.

As John Steinbeck explained, "I have said that Texas is a state of mind, but I think it is much more than that....For all its enormous range of space, climate, and physical appearance, and for all the internal squabbles, contentions, and strivings, Texas has a tight cohesiveness perhaps stronger than any section of America. Rich, poor, Panhandle, Gulf, city, country, Texas is the obsession, the proper study and the passionate possession of all Texans."

Center of Gravity for U.S. Catholicism

Catholicism has not always been the major religion here—Texas is in the middle of the Protestant Bible Belt and only recently received its first Cardinal appointment, Cardinal DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, in 2007. But currently, there's a surge of Catholics—rather, more like a tidal wave. Since 1990, numbers of Catholics have grown by nearly 60 percent, and they now comprise the largest religious group in the state.

One may think that our nation's founding churches were in Maryland, but the first churches in the U.S. actually appeared down south. In 1528, Spanish explorers first landed near Galveston, Texas. In 1541, Francisco Coronado and his expedition celebrated Mass in Blanco Canyon (now the Diocese of Lubbock). In 1632, Catholic missions were established near San Angelo and by 1716, in Nacogdoches. In 1750, Spanish missionaries completed San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio—which is still active today—and 27 other mission churches in the state.

The boom continues. While Catholic churches are closing in other parts of the country, there's standing room only for many Catholic churches in Texas. Churches are going up and being expanded everywhere. Seminarians are being trained. Campus ministry programs are going gangbusters.

Of course, Hispanics are the centerpiece of this growth and now represent more than 40 percent of U.S. Catholics. As Professor Tim Matovina, director of the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame, said, "Hispanics were

the first Catholics in Texas and the most recently arrived. They are the past, present and future of the Church here."

Through their sheer numbers as well as their involvement with Catholicism, Matovina believes Hispanics present a historic shift in the central institution of the Church—the parish. Nationally, parishes used to be centered more on singular ethnic groups. "Hispanics are a major force in the ongoing evolution in the U.S. Catholic parish from the ethnic enclave to the shared or multicultural congregation," he said.



Renovation of Immaculate Conception Church in Lopezeville, Texas in 2013

As Hispanics transform American Catholicism, challenges emerge. Hispanics are still underrepresented among priests and bishops. Youth are also a concern, many of whom are caught between two worlds, that of their traditional Hispanic parents and the norms they find in this country. "Hispanics here are young and already comprise more than half the U.S. Catholics under age 25," he said. "How are we going to hand down the faith to those young people, given the culture we live in and the depleted resources we have?"

But there is much to learn from how Hispanics relate to their faith. "Latinos have a deep devotion to Jesus and are very family and

relationship-oriented. They have a faith-based model of community organizing," said Matovina.

In 1972, the Mexican American Catholic College was established in San Antonio as a cross-cultural center of research, theology and pastoral ministry. It is a bridge between the U.S. and Latino cultures and supported by Catholic Extension. "The achievements at MACC have implications for the larger Church in our country."

The intermingling of the U.S. and Latino cultures has been happening in Texas for years. Many Texans have some Mexican heritage, going back for generations. They've always been neighbors with Mexico and appreciate the partnership and mix of cultures. That mix of cultures is who they are. That mix of cultures is who the Church is becoming.

Extension in Texas

Of all the states that Catholic Extension supports, Texas has received the most funding over the years, by a wide mark. Funding to Texas represents nearly 13 percent of all Extension grants.

Our first grants to Texas were on April 16, 1906, to two churches — \$300 to La Lomita and \$250 to Uvalde. Since, we have given a total of 5,358 grants to Texas, totally nearly \$160 million, if adjusted for inflation.

We currently fund nine of the 15 dioceses and archdioceses in Texas, although all 15 have received Extension funding at some point in their history.

Our Texas grants are broad-ranging—including our latest church grant in Texas to build St. Francis of Assisi in Iraan; 25 years of funding to the Tepayac Institute in the Diocese

of El Paso to train more than 20,000 lay leaders; and support for deacon formation in Amarillo, a diocese that has more than 40 deacons, one of the highest deacon-per-capita ratios in the country.

Recently, our attention in Texas has focused on the humanitarian crisis that has emerged with immigrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border. The federal government is overwhelmed and has turned to the border dioceses to help women and children who arrive hungry and stranded, to receive a cot, shower and hot meal. Catholic Extension has provided outreach to these dioceses.

Our response to this crisis at our doorstep is reminiscent of how our

founder, Father Francis Clement Kelley, responded to a crisis at the same border, exactly 100 years ago. At that time, the revolutionary government in Mexico had begun to wage war on Catholics there—Mass was outlawed, priests and sisters were killed, and seminaries were closed. Church leaders poured across the border into Texas. In November 1914, Kelley made a historic appeal to the U.S. Catholic Church (and to 800,000 readers of *Extension* magazine) to help these exiles.

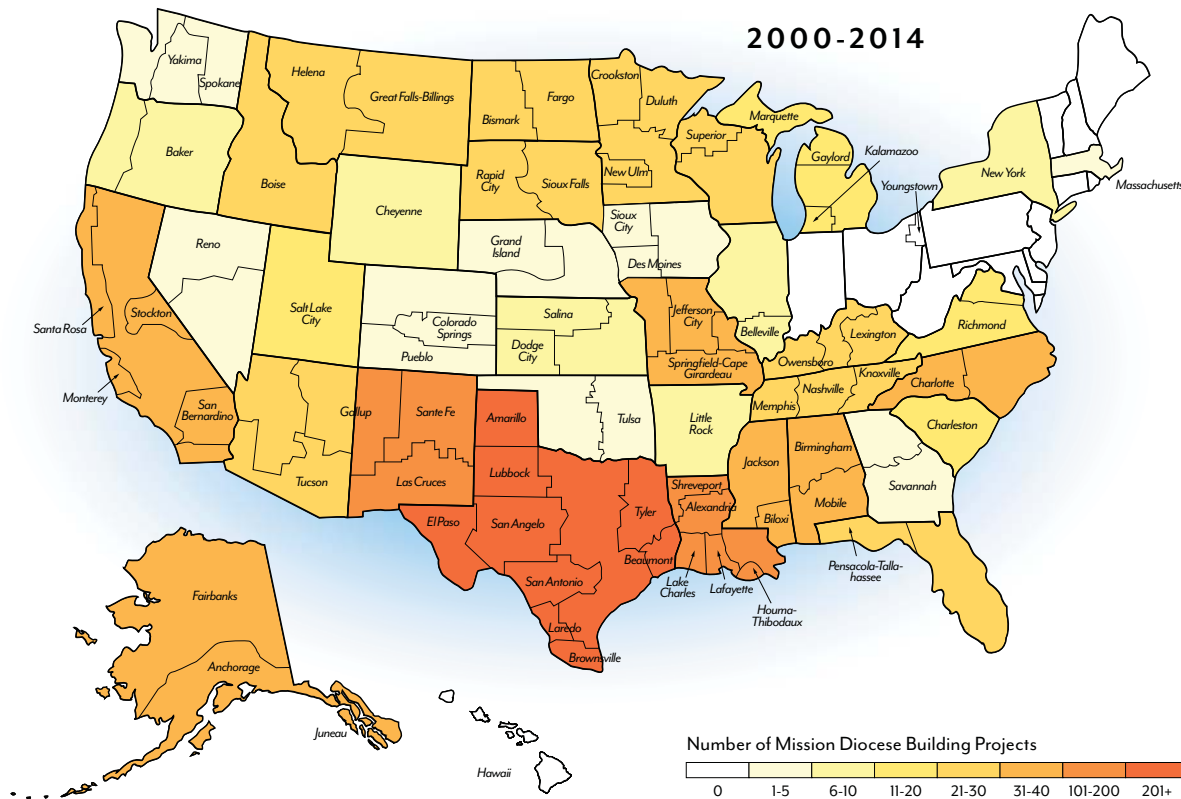
With Catholic Extension support, Father Kelley funded a seminary, St. Philip Neri, in Castroville, Texas, to house the Mexican seminarians. Starting in 1915, 108 seminarians

entered Castroville. By 1918, when they were able to return, half had been ordained as diocesan priests in Mexico. (In a beautiful twist of fate, one of the priests trained at Castroville started a religious order in Mexico, Catechist Sisters of Jesus Crucified, from which four sisters arrived this month as missionaries to serve in the Diocese of Monterey, California, funded by Catholic Extension.)

For more than a century, Catholic Extension has bolstered the Catholic Church in Texas. From our earliest roots, we were present to those on the margins and in the border areas. Big things happen in Texas. Catholic Extension lends a big hand to them. ●

Building Churches and Church Facilities

2000-2014



This map shows Church construction and renovation in the U.S. in recent years. This past century, Catholic Extension has helped build more than 12,000 churches and church facilities in our country. The state with the majority of these church grants—1,839 in all—is Texas.