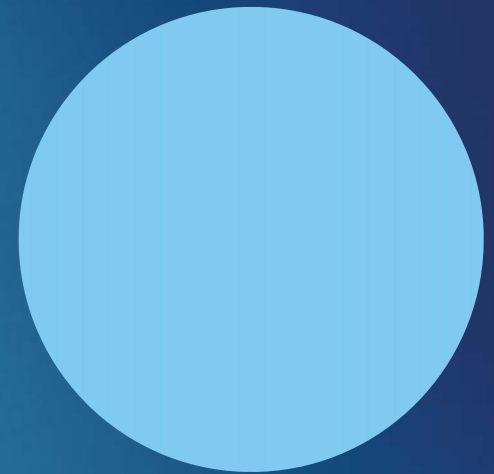


# Transitions

RELIGIOUS LIFE: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE



# Big Picture

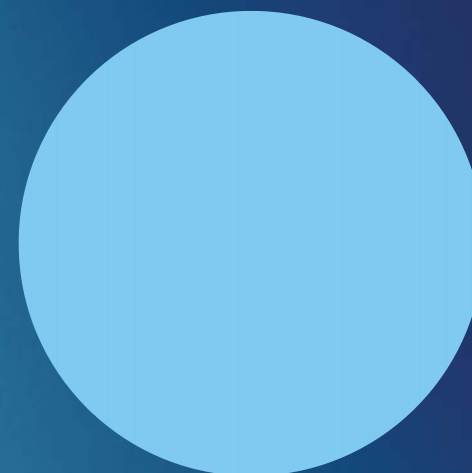
- ▶ Glory Days
- ▶ Glory Fades
  - ▶ Discussion
- ▶ The Way Things Were
- ▶ The Way Things Had to Change
- ▶ The Way Things will be
  - ▶ Discussion





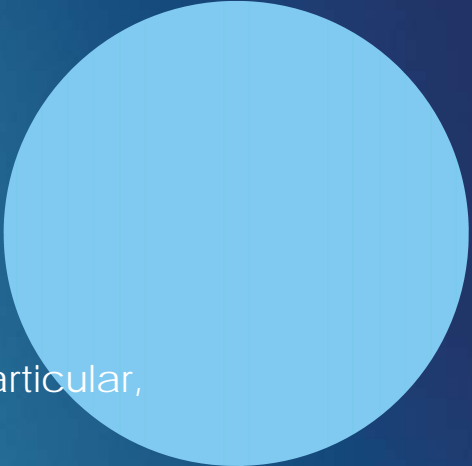
# Glory Days

1920-1960



# We were a generation of builders



- ▶ --Parishes opened on a regular basis
  - ▶ --Catholic school system built from 1880-1970
  - ▶ --Opening of Catholic colleges
  - ▶ --Abundant vocations, even to monastic life
    - ▶ The spurts of vocations occurred after World War I and, in particular, World War II
    - ▶ Thomas Merton, "Seven Story Mountain"
- 

# We were a generation that finally got accepted

- ▶ --Catholics took over the political and labor apparatus of many cities
- ▶ --America no longer questioned our Catholic loyalty
  - ▶ Catholic participation in World War I and World War II
- ▶ Catholics attended Catholic colleges in our larger cities
  - ▶ The GI bill makes a difference in Catholic life
- ▶ Catholics entered the world of business
- ▶ Catholic "information centers" to attract the public

# We were a generation on the cusp of succeeding

- ▶ --Fulton Sheen on the airwaves, along with "The Catholic Hour"
- ▶ --We entered into middle class life slowly through the 1950s-1960s
  - ▶ After 1960, we see Catholics moving to the suburbs
- ▶ --We elected a Catholic president in 1960
- ▶ --We had a world-wide beloved Pope, John XXIII
- ▶ --Catholic now participated in large, state-run universities
  - ▶ The emergence of Newman Clubs

# We developed institutions that seemed immutable

- ▶ --Seminaries and convents being built, especially in the 1960s, because we could not house the people who were entering
- ▶ --Urban Catholics moving to suburbs to build large church buildings
- ▶ --Successful Catholic publishing houses and media
- ▶ --The Catholic School system flourishing in many parishes
- ▶ --Catholic high schools with thousands of pupils



# Glory Fades

1970-2000



# We feel we have experienced sudden decline

- ▶ --The glow of Vatican II turns into the decline of Catholic schools
- ▶ --Thousands leave convents and rectories
- ▶ --Religious Education *outside* of Catholic School becomes the default
- ▶ --Tuition makes Catholic education a more difficult proposition, along with the decline in the number of sisters who could teach in a way to make Catholic Schools affordable
- ▶ --*Humanae Vitae* shows deep ruptures in the Church, not merely around issues of sexuality, but also issues of authority

# Hanging on by our Teeth



- ▶ --Catholic parishes in the Northeast and Midwest cannot merge quickly enough; the West and Southwest explode, but without sufficient clergy
- ▶ --Young generations are tentative about everything, especially church involvement
- ▶ --Most women's religious orders can barely find postulants
- ▶ --Ecclesiologies appear to be in conflict
- ▶ --We bury our most active parishioners weekly and do not see them replaced

# Making Do



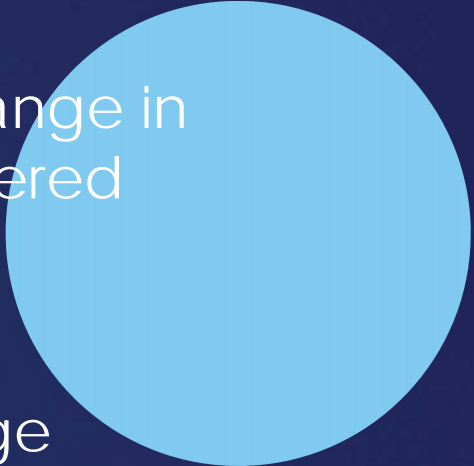
- ▶ --We modify our convents, our provinces, and, sometimes, our constitutions to deal with declining numbers
- ▶ --Vocations seem to come from 3<sup>rd</sup> world continents
- ▶ --We witness parishes merging, mostly for demographic reasons, but also because of the decline of the number of priests
- ▶ --We see new religious societies being formed that combine a variety of callings into one apostolic ideal
- ▶ --We see a surge in people being ordained to the diaconate, and becoming professional ministers in the Church
- ▶ --We see at least 10% of our parishioners involved in ministry in parishes; in many parishes, this is closer to 25%

# Making Do

- ▶ --While we see European-descendent parishes struggling, we see parishes in the Southwest and West burgeoning
- ▶ --We see study after study showing that going to Mass on Sunday is not valued by younger generations
  - ▶ --but we see signs of faith in these younger generations too
  - ▶ --and we see families with children active in parish life
- ▶ --Much of what is happening now is the result of input and muscle from religious 50 years ago
  - ▶ Religious gave stability and vision
  - ▶ We still presume this base, though it is diminishing quickly

# Discussion Questions

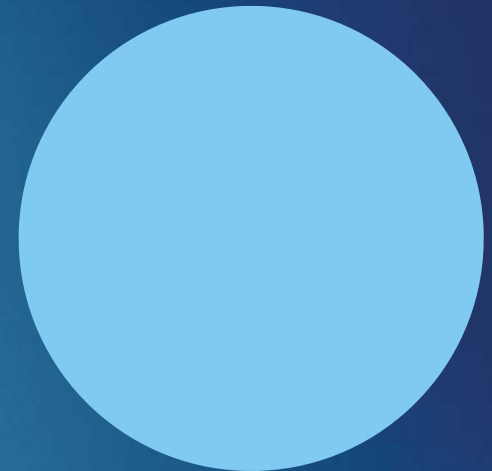


- ▶ How would you describe the biggest change in your life as a religious from when you entered until now?
  - ▶ What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the Church today?
- 



# Transition

2010 . . . AND INTO THE FUTURE



# The Way Things Were-1



- ▶ --We relied on ethnic urban patterns to shape religion
- ▶ --Catholics who came to the US typically gave the parish and school a status far higher than that of their native countries
- ▶ --Catholics worshipped and confessed, but a lot of it was from a motive a fear
- ▶ --Catholics saw worship as an obligation, a silent ritual that they endured watching
- ▶ --Catholics could not use their bibles (if they had them) and dreaded the thought of talking about Scripture
- ▶ --Holiness belonged to the chosen few, or to a few neurotic-seeming saints

# The Way Things Were-2



- ▶ --Sexuality was primarily something of shame, hardly mentioned except in the context of the sixth and ninth Commandments
- ▶ --Catholics saw themselves as exclusive; they rejected any other religious forms of faith as damnable
- ▶ --Catholics saw themselves as the persecuted minority
- ▶ --Catholics lived in fear of hell; "In an emergency, call a priest."
- ▶ --Younger generations were pulling away from strict practice of the faith well before 1960
- ▶ --People saw religious life as hostile to the world; the world was evil



# The Way Things Had to Change-1



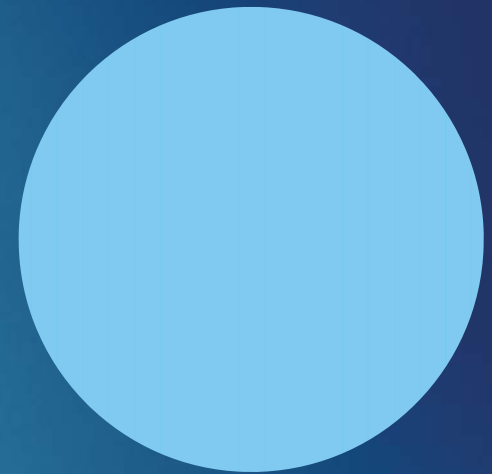
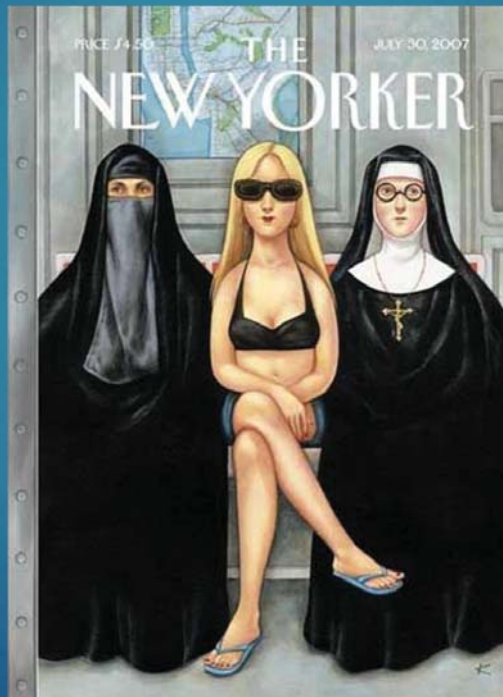
- ▶ --The II Vatican Council was more than a century in the making
- ▶ --Scholars were critiquing Catholic liturgy, catechetics, and biblical ignorance for 100 years
- ▶ --Suburbs were bringing in new patterns of life that never existed before
  - ▶ --life no longer based on urban location, ethnicity, or small town experience
  - ▶ --life was now based on CHOICE
- ▶ --Catholics were joining the middle class and were driven by the values of middle-class life

# The Way Things Had to Change-2



- ▶ --Media opened up images to everyone; we could see, and want to be like, everyone else
- ▶ --Family size is a variant on economic stability; families were getting smaller
- ▶ --Catholics were exposed to other believers through the military and college experience
- ▶ --Sexuality was coming to be seen as something positive and to be accepted
- ▶ --Religious life was no longer based on "*contemptus mundi*," but on service.

# Post-Modernity!



# The Way Things Will be-1



- ▶ --Discipleship will become the prime metaphor of Christian and Catholic belief, providing a way for a common holiness among all the believers
- ▶ --Cultural transmission of faith will continue to weaken; choice will decide the shape of faith
- ▶ --Parish life will vary from what we see today
  - ▶ --less institutional; more relational
  - ▶ --the shape of parish leadership may well change out of necessity
- ▶ --Catholic schools will continue to have a hard time enduring in their present configuration
  - ▶ --Can society allow confessional charter schools?
  - ▶ --If so, who will lead them?

# The Way Things Will Be-2



- ▶ --Catholicism will continue to stress the way it connects with others (faiths, the world) more than the way it is separate from others
- ▶ --Children will continue to be raised with the sense that they have to “construct their own identity” rather than “they have to receive their identity from others
- ▶ --Catholic identity will arise from experience in parish, small groups, service groups
- ▶ --Small, relationally-based groups, will become more essential in parish and Catholic life

# The Future



# Religious Life . . . Future



- ▶ --There have always been differentiations in discipleship based on
  - ▶ --specific vocations
  - ▶ --specific ideals
- ▶ --Religious life will continue to model the possibilities of all discipleship
  - ▶ --Just as in the New Testament certain groups emerged, so this will continue
  - ▶ --General ideals (i.e., discipleship) need specificity

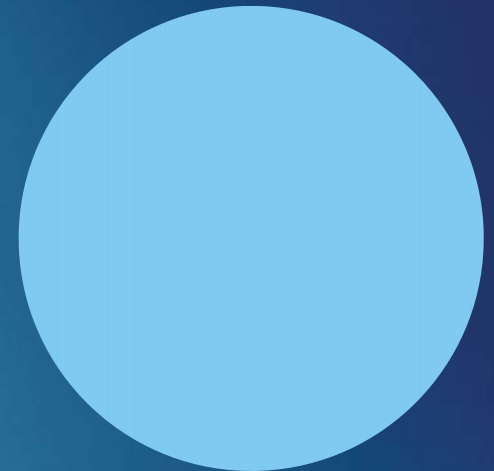


# Religious Life-Future



- ▶ --The vows will not necessarily be separators from the world, but ways to call a broad culture (secular) and a broad discipleship into ongoing critique of values and assumptions
  - ▶ Poverty: What is wealth for?
  - ▶ Chastity: What does commitment look like?
  - ▶ Obedience: Where does power really come from?
- ▶ --Societies of Apostolic life will model what it is like to give one life for a specific value of the Kingdom
- ▶ --Religious life will be sustained because of the way it points to a Kingdom already coming into experience, and religious life is part of its spearhead





# The Privilege-1

- ▶ --We are witnessing the seeming decline of forms that emerged, and expanded, , in the twentieth century
- ▶ --The present decline in no way negates what we have accomplished as religious
- ▶ --We have a need to care for our own and sow the seeds of the endurance of our charisms
  - ▶ --We have the need to extend those charisms into a variety of vocational forms
  - ▶ --Such amplification will only augment the power of what we have lived for
- ▶ --The thousands of gestures of kindness and grace that have characterized the life of almost any religious order stand as an enduring testimony to the Kingdom of God and the share in eternal life by the religious woman or man



We cannot now see what will be in the future;  
we live by faith

# The Future



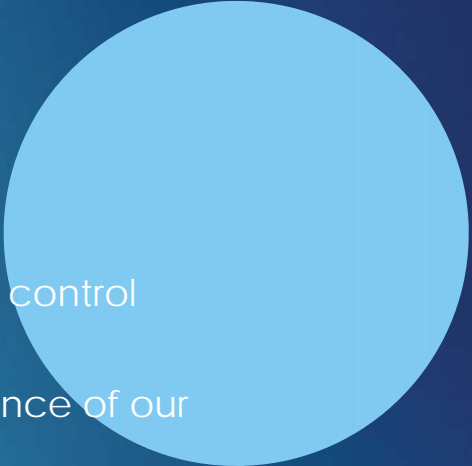
- ▶ --But we can serve the outlines of what will be . . .
  - ▶ --Discipleship more intensely and consciously lived
  - ▶ --Lending our spiritual and human experience to others into the future
  - ▶ --Fostering those people whom we encounter with a desire to live for the Kingdom
  - ▶ --Helping believers grasp the Word of God and the conversion it leads to
  - ▶ --Serving to increase faith experience in families and youth
  - ▶ --Forming forums for young adults and young parents

# The Future




Seeing time as something God unfolds, not something we control

Teaching the broader Church to trust in the Spirit's guidance of our  
lives and history



# Discussion Questions



- ▶ What kind of witness can religious give to the emerging Church?
  - ▶ What gives you strength as you look ahead?
- 

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