



ASSOCIATION OF U.S. CATHOLIC PRIESTS

Organizational Profile

Abstract

This is a profile of the organization known as the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP). It is based upon openly available sources and is presented without commentary to provide the reader an objective understanding of the organization, its background, composition, and purpose. This profile will be updated semiannually.

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1. AUSCP Origins



The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests (AUSCP) was founded in 2011 by twenty-seven priests from 11 states at St. Mary's Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. The Association promotes change inside and outside the Catholic Church.¹

Our Vision: To be a Priest's Voice of Hope and Joy within our Pilgrim Church.

Members state that, "We are inspired by the teaching of Vatican II and support the continuing pursuit of its implementation." They founded the Association "because they saw a crucial need for a national forum for the nation's priests." AUSCP is based on individual membership where every priest has a vote. The Association has held six national assemblies since 2012, and reportedly has grown to as many as 1,200 members.²

AUSCP cites the dramatic decline in the number of priests as a primary reason why the Association came into existence. AUSCP points to the downward trend of diocesan and religious priests, many of them elderly and toward the end of their ministering lives. They are disturbed by the escalating number of laypeople per priest, the declining number of priests per parish, and the increasing number of resident "priestless parishes".³

Our Mission: To be an association of U.S. Catholic priests offering mutual support and a collegial voice through dialogue, contemplation and prophetic action on issues affecting Church and society.



Figure 1: St. Francis Spirituality Center

AUSCP is based in Tiffin, Ohio and its executive secretary, Sister Jacquelyn Doepker, works at the St. Francis Spirituality Center.

Address: 200 St. Francis Ave., Tiffin OH 44883-3458

Phone: 872-205-5862

2. AUSCP Leadership

During 2016-2017, the Association’s leadership team and officers consisted of thirteen members (five team officers and eight others). On June 22, 2017, AUSCP members at the Sixth Annual AUSCP Assembly elected a new leadership team. The Leadership Core Team Officers for 2017-2018 are listed in the following table. (For team officer biographies refer to [Appendix B.](#))

AUSCP Leadership Core Team Officers: Elected June 22, 2017⁴		
Position	Name	Picture
Chair	Bob Bonnot	
Vice-chair	Kevin Clinton	
Treasurer	Lee Bacchi	
Secretary	Louis Arceneaux	
Executive Secretary	Sr. Jackie Doepker, OSF:^a	

During the welcome address of the 2013 AUSCP Assembly, Jackie O’Ryan, a Seattle-based communications and public affairs consultant, was introduced as the group’s new managing director.⁵ It is unknown if Ms. O’Ryan continues in that position because Faith Action Network (FAN) announced that she had taken the position of FAN Co-Director sometime in 2017.⁶

^a Although Sr. Jackie Doepker was not listed as a newly elected Leadership Core Team member, it is assumed that she continues in the role of Executive Secretary.

3. AUSCP Goals & Resolutions

Since its inception in 2011, AUSCP has presented various lists of goals and resolutions at annual assemblies. The following excerpt from the National Catholic Reporter⁷ (NCR) presents a representative list of topics of importance to the Association in 2013.

The assembly will address the slate of 15 resolutions during its business sessions, Cooper told NCR. He added that a prioritizing effort was underway and it was possible that not all 15 could be considered at the Seattle meeting.

In addition to study of the expansion of ordination, a call for general absolution reinstatement, and an appeal for transparency and local consultation on the selection of bishops, the resolutions also:

- Call for the exercise of church authority to be carried out "in a collegial manner," employing "a consensus decision making process."
- Direct the association to "ask the Holy Father to grant permission to use the 1974 edition of the Sacramentary in the United States where desired."
- Ask the association to support "a comprehensive plan for evangelization in the U.S.A.," including "diagnosis" of reasons Catholics have left the church and study of Christian churches that have seen rapid growth.
- Request that the organization invite the U.S. bishops' conference to appoint a liaison to the association.
- Call for the Seattle meeting's assembly to "decry the annual collection for the Archdiocese for Military Service for its rendering to Caesar what is to be rendered to God."

Much of the coordination, planning, and development of the goals and resolutions is conducted by the following eleven AUSCP "working groups": (See [Appendix C](#) for details.)

- Immigration,
- Roman Missal Translation Concerns,
- National Plan for Priestless Parishes,
- Re-Commitment to Gospel Non-Violence,
- Elimination of Racism,
- Ordination of Married Men (Viri probati),
- AUSCP Membership Diversity,
- Bridges to the Laity,
- Caring for our Common Home (Laudato Si'),
- Church and Labor, and
- Emerging Pastoral Issues.

The goals and resolutions prepared for presentation at the 2017 AUSCP Assembly were previewed by both the Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) and AUSCP on their respective Websites. Although the two versions agree in most respects, the VOTF version provides more detail. There are notable differences in emphasis and concern when the 2017 list is compared with the 2013 list.

Proposed Goals for Presentation 2017 AUSCP Assembly	
Voice of the Faithful Site List	AUSCP Site List
CLERICALISM: Explore the impact of a negative clerical culture and assist in the development of positive initiatives for clerical growth.	(Mentioned in passing)
SEMINARY FORMATION: Establish an AUSCP work group to contribute to the USCCB's current project of reviewing the Program of Priestly Formation.	(Mentioned in passing)
ORDAINING MARRIED MEN: Encourage our Bishops and the USCCB to engage in an open discussion in considering the ordination of married men (<i>virī probati</i>).	Married priests: The proposed goal is to "Encourage U.S. bishops to engage in an open discussion in considering the ordination of married men" as priests. (The AUSCP has previously taken a similar stand in regard to the ordination of women as deacons.)
IMMIGRATION: Assist in the development of support systems for comprehensive immigration reform.	Immigration: The proposed goal is to "Assist in the development of support systems for comprehensive immigration reform" and support study, prayer and action at the local level. The goal also includes a call to cooperate with "our fellow Christians and with Muslims and Jews and other religions" and to "work together with pro-reform organizations" such as lawyer groups and secular social service agencies.
NON-VIOLENCE: Actively support, both as a national priest association and personally as priests, the re-commitment to Gospel non-violence proposed by the USCCB's World Day of Peace 2017.	(Mentioned in passing)
YOUTH SYNOD: Develop AUSCP input for the upcoming Youth Synod.	(Mentioned in passing)
LABOR: Protect and enhance the human dignity of Catholic ministers and workers in US Catholic institutions	(Mentioned in passing)

Proposed Resolutions for Presentation 2017 AUSCP Assembly	
Voice of the Faithful Site List	AUSCP Site List
PRIEST-LESS PARISHES: Approve at the Assembly the letter to be sent to all US Bishops on Priest-less Parishes.	Priestless Parishes: One proposed resolution could lead to more lay leadership in "priestless parishes." If adopted, the resolution would urge the U.S. bishops "to ensure that pastoral leadership, ordained or lay, will be provided" for Catholic parishioners.
DEACONS ANOINTING: Request the USCCB to petition the Holy See for Deacons to administer the Sacrament of Anointing.	Sacramental Anointing: A second resolution concerns the Catholic practice of the Sacrament of Anointing – part of what previous generations often referred to as the "Last Rites." The priests say many hospital patients are being denied this sacrament because of inadequate priest-chaplain coverage. If adopted, the resolution would ask the U.S. bishops "to petition the Holy See for Deacons to administer the Sacrament of Anointing."

4. AUSCP Networking

As noted in Section 3, VOTF is closely aligned with AUSCP. Likewise, FutureChurch, an organization that “seeks changes that will provide all Roman Catholics the opportunity to participate fully in the Church life and leadership”, is the third member of closely knit trio of organizations. An example of this tripartite relationship is DeaconChat,⁸ a “joint initiative of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, FutureChurch, and Voice of the Faithful” with the goal “to bring the ordained and the laity together in conversation to continue to learn and discern together” with regard to opening ordination to the diaconate to women.



Figure 2: DeaconChat Announcement on the VOTF Site

AUSCP maintains close ties with several “related” and “other organizations inspired by Vatican II.” (Please refer to [Appendix D-1](#) and [Appendix D-4](#) for details.)

The many relationships AUSCP maintains with similarly thinking groups are not confined to the United States. AUSCP also maintains working relationships with at least three international priest organizations. (Please refer to [Appendix D-2](#) for details.)

AUSCP maintains a loose association with the International Church Reform Network (ICRN). In the ICRN way of thinking, “Networking means that everybody is self-responsible for their action. Yet we are connected and sometimes cooperate for certain events, publications or happenings. If appropriate we ask each other for solidarity.”

A gathering of ICRN associated groups took place in October 2016 in Chicago. The conference was hosted by AUSCP, FutureChurch, and VOTF, once again demonstrating the close alliance of the three organizations. (Please refer to [Appendix E](#) for a summary of the “Chicago 2016” conference and a listing of organizations that participated.)

Appendix A – Abbreviations & Acronyms

AUSCP	Association of U.S Catholic Priests
FAN	Faith Action Network
ICRN	International Church Reform Network
NCR	National Catholic Reporter
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
VOTF	Voice of the Faithful

Appendix B – AUSCP Leadership Core Team Officers

AUSCP Leadership Core Team Officers: Elected June 22, 2017 ⁹		
Position	Name & Biography ¹⁰	Picture
Chair	Bob Bonnot: Re-elected to the Leadership Team, elected to serve a fourth term as Leadership Team chair. Bob, now retired, brings experience as a priest and pastor in the Diocese of Youngstown. He has background and experience, locally and nationally, in administration, planning, communication and forward thinking. "As much as possible I plan to spend my time, talent and energy in service to AUSCP's vision and mission, priests, the presbyterates of the United States. I support the efforts of Pope Francis and our bishops to continue the evangelizing of our people and our world through implementation of Vatican II and the guidance of the Holy Spirit."	
Vice-chair	Kevin Clinton: Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis, re-elected by as vice-chair of the Leadership Team. Kevin serves the AUSCP out of a conviction that "the movement of the Holy Spirit in Vatican II asks all priests to minister with courage and openness to the dynamism of the Spirit's presence in the here and now." He is enthusiastic about and committed to the mission of the AUSCP and wants to help create a significant pastoral voice that comes from years of US priests' pastoral experience. Kevin, with 43 years as a diocesan priest with parish and archdiocesan responsibilities. He is a charter member of the AUSCP who has attended all annual Assemblies.	
Treasurer	Lee Bacchi: Chaplain, Edward Hospital, Naperville; St. John Vianney Villa, 1464 Green Trails, Naperville, IL 60540 ¹¹	
Secretary	Louis Arceneaux: Elected to the Leadership Team in 2016. He is a member of the Congregation of the Mission, Western Province USA, ordained in 1966. He names his strengths as knowledge of and passion for liturgy of Church; knowledge and passion for peace and justice in Church and society. His experience includes years of teaching liturgy and sacramental theology in seminaries after receiving a doctorate in theology from San Anselmo in Rome; being active on liturgical committees in dioceses; working with the AUSCP Roman Missal Task Force; heading the Peace and Justice Committee for his Vincentian province; being a long time member of Pax Christi USA and participant in peace demonstrations at the School of Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia.	
Executive Secretary	Sr. Jackie Doepker, OSF: ^b A Tiffin Ohio Franciscan, has served as AUSCP's Executive Secretary since 2014 after having served as the President of her congregation for a second time. She is a strong advocate for Justice and Peace, having worked in the past on such concerns for the Diocese of Cleveland.	

^b Although Sr. Jackie Doepker was not listed as a newly elected Leadership Core Team member, it is assumed that she continues in the role of Executive Secretary.

Appendix C – AUSCP Working Groups as of July 5, 2017

AUSCP Working Groups as of July 5, 2017¹²	
<u>Immigration</u>	
Purpose: To inform members about Immigration issues and to support the efforts of the USCCB to promote and advance Comprehensive Immigration Reform thru public actions and support of positive initiatives.	
<u>Roman Missal Translation Concerns</u>	
Purpose: To collect and voice the complaints of priests and laity about the awkward grammar and diction of the new Roman Missal's "English translation" so as to move the USCCB Committee for Divine Worship to hear the concern and take steps to improve the texts used for our most important liturgical prayer.	
<u>National Plan for Priestless Parishes</u>	
Purpose: To express alarm at the lack of a clear, realistic and viable plan to provide pastoral leadership in priestless parishes and to research and, with others, formulate a proposal for presentation to the USCCB.	
<u>Re-Commitment to Gospel Non-Violence</u>	
Purpose: To invite and occasion personal and organizational re-commitment to Gospel Non-Violence in response to the "Appeal to the Catholic Church" issued in April, 2016 by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace together with Pax Christi International.	
<u>Elimination of Racism</u>	
Purpose: To advance the elimination of racism in our church by fostering interracial dialogue, inter-faith exchange, homiletic resources and parish prayer service models, and the formation of friendship with people from various racial backgrounds.	
<u>Ordination of Married Men (Viri probati)</u>	
Purpose: To encourage the American Bishops to petition the Pope to change the present law requiring celibacy of all Roman Catholic priests by opening ordination to married men of proven quality (<i>virī probati</i>).	
<u>AUSCP Membership Diversity</u>	
Purpose: To develop a more diverse AUSCP membership in terms of race, ethnicity, age, and geography. Associated objectives include similar diversity of speakers, facilitators, and forms of prayer and worship; liaisons with national ethnic priests associations and individual bishops; and responses to diversity issues in church and society.	
<u>Bridges to the Laity</u>	
Purpose: To define, develop and welcome appropriate involvement of persons and organizations in pursuit of AUSCP's Mission.	
<u>Caring for our Common Home (Laudato Si')</u>	
Purpose: To promote knowledge and reception of Pope Francis' 2nd encyclical through provision of homily helps for every Sunday of the three year liturgical Sunday and to support other efforts by AUSCP members and others.	
<u>Church and Labor</u>	
PURPOSE: To foster among priests continuation of the Church's long tradition in the United States of supporting working men and women and to bring the Church's Social Teaching and U.S. Labor Law to bear on one another.	
<u>Emerging Pastoral Issues</u>	
Purpose: To engage AUSCP members and other priests in dialogue and survey responses aimed at identifying pastoral issues and challenges that are emerging as U.S. society and culture change.	

Appendix D - AUSCP Networking Links

As noted in Section 4, AUSCP sees a need for networking at the local, national, and international levels. Early on, the Association listed Web links to:

- Appendix D-1: Related Organizations,
- Appendix D-2: International Priest Organizations,
- Appendix D-3: Individual Blogs & Sites,
- Appendix D-4: Other Organizations Inspired by Vatican II, and
- Appendix D-5: Publications & Presentation.

Appendix D-1 – Related Organizations Inspired by Vatican II

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS inspired by Vatican II	
<u>Catholic Common Ground Initiative (a partner organization)</u>	A call for dialogue among Catholics w. differing perspectives
<u>Conference of Major Superiors of Men</u>	
<u>LCWR - Leadership Conference of Women Religious</u>	
<u>National Federation of Priests Councils</u>	
<u>National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy</u>	
<u>US Conference of Catholic Bishops</u>	

Appendix D-2 – International Priest Organizations

INTERNATIONAL PRIEST ORGANIZATIONS	
<u>The Priest Initiative in Austria</u>	Only partly in English
<u>National Council of Priests of Australia (NCP)</u>	
<u>Association of Catholic Priests of Ireland (ACP)</u>	

Appendix D-3 – Individual Blogs & Sites

INDIVIDUAL BLOGS & SITES
<u>Dr. Richard Gaillardetz website, 2012 AUSCP keynote speaker</u>
<u>Fr. Norm Langenbrunner's Blog (an AUSCP Member)</u>
<u>Misguided Missal</u>
<u>Pray Tell - Fr. Anthony Ruff OSB's Blog (a 2012 Assembly keynoter)</u>
<u>Whispers in the Loggia</u>

Appendix D-4 – Other Organizations Inspired by Vatican II

Other Organizations Inspired by Vatican II– As of as of March 13, 2016	
<u>American Catholic Council</u>	
<u>Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church</u>	
<u>Authority in the Catholic Church</u>	A blueprint for the functioning of authority in the Church
<u>Catholic Church Reform International</u>	A global network seeking renewal of the Church
<u>FutureChurch</u>	Seeking changes that will provide all Roman Catholics the opportunity to participate fully in Church life and leadership.
<u>Vatican II Catholic</u>	A Forum to Promote and Defend the Vision of Vatican II
<u>Voice of the Faithful</u>	Seeking to Keep the Faith, Change the Church
<u>Catholics of the Arlington Diocese</u>	//No longer active// A group of Arlington Catholics who seek to have lay participation in the selection of their next bishop.

Appendix D-5 – Publications & Presentations

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS	
<u>Elephants in the Living Room</u>	A collection of talks sponsored by a Detroit group
<u>Resurrection Communications</u>	Order CDs/DVDs of talks given at 2012, 2013, 2014 Assemblies
<u>Robert Mickens, Vatican reporter (on YouTube)</u>	A pre-Francis 2013 talk on the Vatican's implosion and its meaning for US Catholics
<u>The Swag</u>	Publication of the Australian National Council of Priests
<u>Upturn</u>	Publication of Chicago Association of Priests

Appendix E – ICRN “Chicago 2016” Conference

The following are excerpts from the story entitled “*International Catholic Priest Movements and Reform Groups Urge Church Progress on Key Issues during October meeting*” as it appeared on the Women’s Ordination Conference Website on October 21, 2016:¹³

From October 17 – 20, 2016, forty priests and lay persons from ten countries gathered in Chicago to develop strategies supporting reform in the Catholic Church. The group called for progress on: full equality for women in the Church; rights for LGBT Catholics; fundamental rights for all Catholics; and developing emerging models of parish ministry such as the Bishop Fritz Lobinger model.

The conference was hosted by FutureChurch, the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests and Voice of the Faithful.

According to the International Church Reform Network, conference participants included:

Chicago 2016 Conference Participants	
Country	Organization
Australia	National Council of Priests of Australia
Australia	Catholics for Renewal Inc
Austria	Pfarrer Initiative Österreich
Austria	Wir sind Kirche / We are Church Austria
Ireland	Association of Catholic Priests ACP
Ireland	We are Church Ireland
Germany	Wir sind Kirche / We are Church Germany
Great Britain	a call to action ACTA
	International Movement we are Church
	International Women Ordination Worldwide
Italy	Noi siamo Chiesa – we are Church Italy
Slovakia	Society for open Christianity for the 21st century OK21
Switzerland	Pfarrei-Initiative Schweiz
USA	American Catholic Council
USA	Association of US Catholic Priests AUSCP
USA	Call to Action
USA	CORPUS
USA	Dignity USA
USA	FUTURE CHURCH
USA	New Ways Ministry
USA	RAPPORT
USA	Voice of the Faithful
USA	Women Ordination Conference

Endnotes

- ¹ *Priests group based in Tiffin*, Seth Weber, The Advertiser-Tribune, March 3, 2017, accessed March 3, 2017, URL: <http://www.advertiser-tribune.com/news/local-news/2017/02/priests-group-based-in-tiffin/>; ID: 20170303135543
- ² *AUSCP – About*, captured April 5, 2016, URL: <http://www.uscatholicpriests.org/about/>; ID: 20170304105040
- ³ *Frequently Requested Church Statistics*, CARA, accessed July 5, 2017, URL: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>; ID: 20170705203931
- ⁴ *2017 Assembly — Association of United States Catholic Priests*, election results, URL: <http://www.uscatholicpriests.org/assembly/>; ID: 20170704082119
- ⁵ *Association of U.S. Catholic Priests considers resolutions on church renewal*, Dan Morris-Young, National Catholic reporter, URL: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/association-us-catholic-priests-considers-resolutions-church-renewal>; ID: 20170706145331
- ⁶ *Jackie O’Ryan is new Co-Director of FAITH ACTION NETWORK*, URL: <http://fanwa.org/codirector/>; ID: 20170706145217
- ⁷ *Fledgling national priests’ group to tackle broad agenda*, Dan Morris-Young, National Catholic Reporter, June 6, 2013, URL: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/fledgling-national-priests-group-tackle-broad-agenda>; ID: 20170311143216
- ⁸ *Catholic organizations launch new effort, ‘DeaconChat,’ to initiate dialogue on women deacons*, VOTF, URL: <http://www.votf.org/>; ID: 20170729082522
- ⁹ *2017 Assembly — Association of United States Catholic Priests*, election results, URL: <http://www.uscatholicpriests.org/assembly/>; ID: 20170704082119
- ¹⁰ *Biographies adapted from Leadership Team and Officers, 2016-17*, URL: <http://www.uscatholicpriests.org/leadership/>; ID: 20170311113739
- ¹¹ *Priests of the Diocese of Joliet*, accessed: July 5, 2017, URL: <https://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/siteimages/cr/docs/PriestPhotoDirectory.pdf>; ID: 20170705064839
- ¹² *AUSCP Working Groups*, accessed July 5, 2017; URL: <http://www.uscatholicpriests.org/>; ID: 20170303052503
- ¹³ *‘International Catholic Priest Movements and Reform Groups Urge Church Progress on Key Issues during October meeting’*, Women’s Ordination Conference, October 21, 2016, URL: <http://www.womensordination.org/2016/10/23/international-catholic-priest-movements-and-reform-groups-urge-church-progress-on-key-issues-during-october-meeting/>; ID: 20170708214739