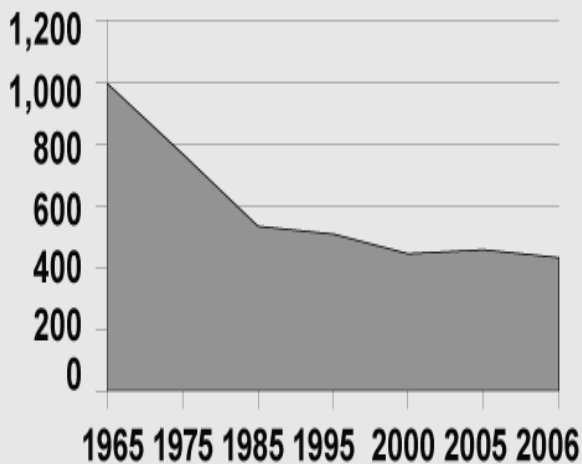


# INTRODUCTION

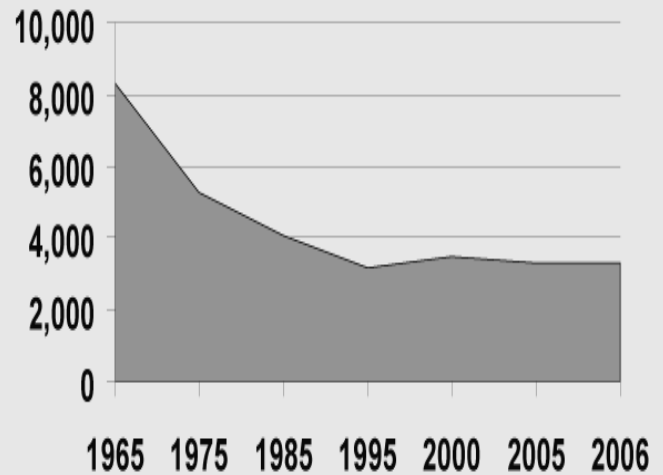
Is there a connection between unhealthy devotions and the current crisis within the Catholic Church? It would appear that ever since the Church has openly embraced alternative forms of spirituality, she has been in a constant state of decline. According to Father Matthias Gaudron, “Thousands of priests have abandoned their office, and thousands of monks and religious have returned to secular life. There are very few vocations in Europe and not many in North America either; countless seminaries, convents, and religious houses have closed their doors. Many parishes lack priests, and religious congregations are obliged to abandon schools, hospitals, and homes for the aged.”<sup>1</sup>

### US Priestly Ordinations (1965-2006)



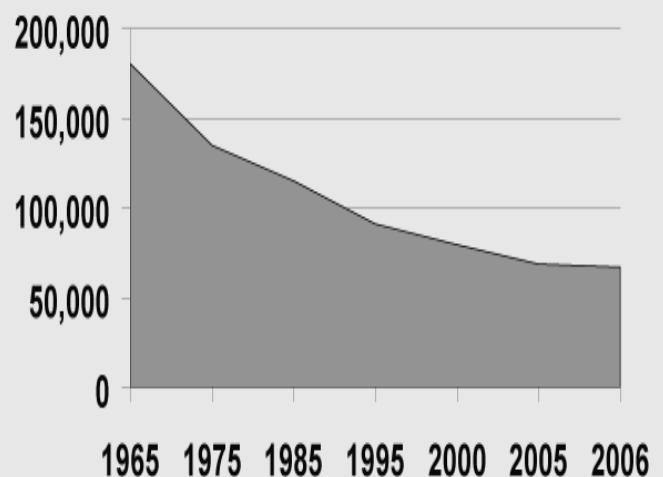
According to an article by Fabrizio de Santis in the *Corriere della Sera* on September 25, 1971, somewhere between 7,000 and 8,000 priests had abandoned the priesthood in Italy over the previous eight years. In the Church as a whole—21,320 priests were reduced to lay status between 1962 and 1972; and from 1967 to 1974, between 30,000 and 40,000 priests abandoned their vocations.<sup>2</sup>

### US Seminarians (1965-2006)



According to the *Index of Leading Catholic Indicators*, 77% of American Catholics in 1999 did not believe that parishioners needed to attend Mass on Sunday to be in good standing. Only 17% of young Catholics in America believe the priesthood should be restricted to males. And only 10% of Catholic elementary school religion teachers agree with the Church’s teaching on artificial birth control.<sup>3</sup>

### US Religious Sisters (1965-2006)



## INTRODUCTION

The fact that the Church is in a constant state of decline is undisputed. The question is why? Some Catholics would like to blame the problems on Vatican II. They think that by introducing musical instruments into the Sacred Liturgy, or by changing the language of the Mass into the common vernacular, that we have somehow grieved God's Spirit to the point where he no longer sustains vocations.

According to a statement by Pope Paul VI in 1968, "The Church today finds herself in a state of disquiet, self-criticism, one might even say of self-destruction...as though the Church were striking herself."<sup>4</sup> In 1972, after experiencing a further decline in the priesthood, Pope Paul VI offered even more insight into the crisis by saying, "Through some crack, the smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God."<sup>5</sup>

This crack can only be explained in one way—the sin of idolatry. According to Sacred Scripture, there is only one way for the Church to destroy herself and it has very little to do with musical instruments. These warnings start in the book of Deuteronomy, and continue throughout the book of Revelation:

*Do not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be set apart for destruction like it. You must utterly detest and abhor it, for it is set apart for destruction.*

—Deuteronomy 7:26

*Cursed be anyone who makes an idol or casts an image, anything abhorrent to the Lord, the work of an artisan, and sets it up in secret.*

—Deuteronomy 27:15

*All these curses shall come upon you, pursuing and overtaking you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the Lord your God, by observing the commandments and the decrees that he commanded you.*

—Deuteronomy 28:45

Whenever God's children have failed to obey the warnings found in Sacred Scripture, the Lord has been faithful to his word in allowing the destruction of his people, his holy temple, and ultimately the souls of those who participate in alternative forms of spirituality. The destruction of the holy temple along with a majority of

the priesthood was prophesied in Ezekiel 6:3–5 and carried out as follows: *I myself will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense stands shall be broken; and I will throw down your slain in front of your idols. I will lay the corpses of the people of Israel in front of their idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars.*

This prophesy was fulfilled in 587 BC when the Babylonian army burned Jerusalem and destroyed God's holy temple. After the second temple was rebuilt by Herod the Great, God allowed it to be destroyed again in 70 AD by the Roman empire, when thousands of additional lives were lost in the process.

In the New Covenant, the penalty for idolatry is eternal separation from God. According to Revelation 21:8, *the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.*

Saint Paul makes the same point in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 by saying, *"Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God."*

Why would God allow the destruction of his people, his temple, and the souls of those who worship false gods? The answer can be found in 1 Corinthians 10:20 where Saint Paul warns us about pagans who were sacrificing food to idols by saying, *"What pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons."* Even though an idol is nothing more than a piece of wood, when a man prays to or worships an idol, his spiritual energy flows through the piece of wood to the demonic entities behind that image.

Because the sin of idolatry involves a very subtle and deceptive interaction with demonic spirits, it's a guaranteed death sentence for the Catholic Church. In an attempt to prevent any more destruction from occurring, the following document has been prepared to help the faithful discern the difference between healthy and unhealthy devotions.