

# THE ROLE OF DIOCESAN PUBLISHING IN EVANGELIZATION

**2016 STATE OF THE DIOCESAN PRESS**

*Report and analysis of the state of  
publishing for diocesan newspapers,  
magazines and other media*

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*FAITH Catholic is the nation's leader  
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# THIS IS OUR TIME TO PASS ON THE FAITH

## LET'S MAKE THE MOST OF THE MOMENT.



**“I INVITE EVERYONE TO BE BOLD AND CREATIVE IN THIS TASK OF RETHINKING THE GOALS, STRUCTURES, STYLE AND METHODS OF EVANGELIZATION...”**

- POPE FRANCIS

I heard an amusing story about a lady who was preparing a roast for dinner. Before seasoning and placing it in the oven, she cut off an inch from each end.

Her young daughter asked, “Mom, why do you cut the ends off the roast?”

“That’s how Grandma taught me,” the lady told her daughter. But the question got her wondering about this unusual step in the cooking process.

So when she next saw her mother, she asked, “Why exactly do we cut the ends off the roast?”

“When I got married, my oven was too small and the roast wouldn’t fit unless I cut the ends off,” came the reply. From that point forward, the lady stopped cutting perfectly good meat from her roasts!

How often do we catch ourselves doing things because of routine or tradition? Tradition is essential. After all, our faith is rooted in both Scripture and tradition. Yet, there is a difference between upholding the unchanging truths of our faith versus doing things because “we’ve always done it this way.”

Specifically, we need to make sure the strategies we use to advance our faith meet the moment. And the moment has changed.

A hundred years ago, Catholic immigrants from Europe struggled to find their place in an unfriendly Protestant America. These huddled masses found refuge in their faith. Bishops responded to the needs of the

moment in a variety of ways. In addition to building parish churches, they started charities, schools, hospitals and newspapers.

Thank God they did!

However, today’s most successful and effective Catholic schools, charities and publications look different than those of a hundred years ago. The mission hasn’t changed, but every ministry in the Church needs to employ the best practices of our current age to meet the moment.

Today, Catholics face challenges to religious freedoms every bit as critical as a hundred years ago. However, the moment is different now because Catholics are demographically different than a century ago. The immigrants who built German, Irish or Italian parishes only blocks apart from each other were adherent to the faith. The vast majority of them went to Mass regularly and sent their kids to Catholic schools.

Today’s Catholics are less likely to do either. Instead of being more like the Catholics of a hundred years ago, today’s Catholics seem indistinguishable from Americans overall. Study after study shows they are less adherent and less likely to believe in what the Church teaches. In the 1970s, half of registered Catholics still attended weekend Mass. Now, that number is around 24 percent. That means approximately 76 percent of registered Catholics do not go to Mass each week.\*\*

It has been some time now since St. Pope John Paul II called for a new evangelization. Yet, for most dioceses,

the primary way they communicate has not changed. Currently, three out of four dioceses still publish diocesan newspapers – many for more than a hundred years. If leaders in dioceses stepped back and asked, “What are the needs of our diocese now?” would they start a diocesan newspaper?

I think the answer is, most certainly, no.

The moment has changed, and therefore our strategy must change.

In order for Catholics to care about news from a Catholic perspective, they first have to care about being Catholic. Before they sacrifice to send their kids to Catholic schools, they must share Catholic values. Before our people will fight for religious freedom, they have to first care about their own souls. Before they can go out and evangelize, they first have to know and love the Lord through active participation in the life of the Church.

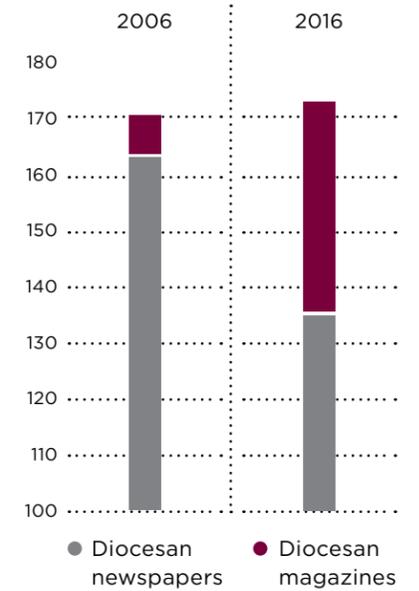
The question before bishops, diocesan leaders and communicators is this: Does a diocesan newspaper meet the needs of the moment?

The Pew Research Center’s *State of the News Media Report* shows specifically what we all can see – that the newspaper industry continues to be in steep decline. Over the past decade, secular newspapers have seen double digit declines in readership and suffered more than a 50 percent decline in ad revenue. In 2014 alone, more than 100 newspapers were sold off at a fraction of their value. When an investor like Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, buys the assets of these once-great newspapers at a reduced price, it is not a sign of a turnaround for an industry. According to the Pew Center’s Amy Mitchell, “Recent sales of major papers show dramatic devaluation and suggest a tough road ahead for the newspaper industry.”

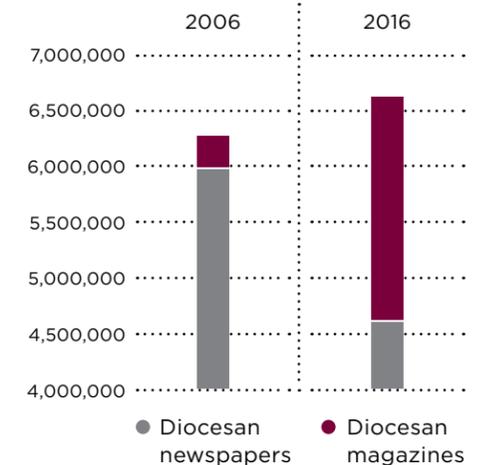
The diocesan press fares no better. Despite talented and dedicated Catholic journalists, the model is in steep decline. Ten years ago in the United States, there were 163 diocesan newspapers with a combined circulation

**WHAT CAN YOUR DIOCESE DO TO REACH THE 76 PERCENT OF CATHOLICS WHO NO LONGER GO TO MASS EACH WEEK WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SUSTAIN THOSE WHO ARE MOST FAITHFUL?**

**NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS:  
U.S. DIOCESAN PRESS (2006-2016)**



**CIRCULATION:  
U.S. DIOCESAN PRESS (2006 TO 2016)**



of 5.9 million. Currently, in 2016, there are 135 diocesan newspapers. Since 2006, they have lost a combined circulation of 1.3 million.## It's no longer enough to continue to produce the same news dominant product, call it evangelization, and then expect a positive change in people's relationship with the Lord.

The moment calls for more than news, it calls for a new evangelization.

It is for this purpose that FAITH Catholic exists – to help connect people with Jesus and his Church. In only the past 15 years, we have grown from one magazine serving a single diocese to publishing about a quarter of the combined circulation of the American diocesan press. Our digital publishing and online services create measurably effective multimedia solutions for dioceses across the country.

Through God's grace, FAITH Catholic has grown. I think the blessing of our growth is because we help bishops with their primary goal to evangelize, as well as form and inform. It is not about us or ideologies. Our work is tied to the bishops we serve. We help a diocese create a local, custom, print magazine and digital solution to achieve its bishop's goals. All along the way we serve their communications teams, who still do most of the work.

Mostly, we are able to prove to the bishops we serve that their magazines work. They evangelize, inform and form. How do we know? Every diocese FAITH Catholic serves receives a readership survey of their publication. The results are compelling, especially when you consider that most dioceses choose to invest in sending the magazine for free to every Catholic home.

The 2016 magazine readership survey results for dioceses served by FAITH Catholic show how they are successfully reaching the 76 percent of Catholics who are not at Mass each week and, at the same time, strengthening those who are most committed:

*82% of recipients are interested in their diocesan magazine*

*83% of recipients under age 50 are interested in their diocesan magazine*

*61% of recipients have read three of the last three issues*

*62% spend at least 15 minutes with an issue*

Recipients say the magazine...

*Improves my understanding of the mission and teachings of the Church – 84% agree*

*Moves me to be more interested in spiritual growth – 75% agree*



## 91% OF ADULTS READ MAGAZINE MEDIA, AND 94% OF ADULTS UNDER AGE 35 HAVE READ MAGAZINE MEDIA IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS.\*

*Helps me explain my Catholic faith to family and friends – 67% agree*

*Inspires me to use my gifts and talents at my parish – 62% agree*

*Increases my awareness of programs and ministries offered by the diocese – 82% agree*

Because of the growth of diocesan magazines as effective evangelization tools, the circulation of the entire diocesan press in the United States has grown over the past decade by more than 350,000. The three highest-circulation diocesan publications are published by FAITH Catholic diocesan clients who are committed to investing in evangelization. Because of the diocesan magazine, more Catholics are now receiving a publication from their diocese than 10 years ago. And more dioceses are publishing with print than 10 years ago.

Perhaps most telling is that dioceses that invest in a magazine are more likely to send their magazine for free to every home for the purposes of evangelization. In fact, 46 percent of all dioceses that publish magazines send the publication to every home. For FAITH Catholic's client group, 60 percent of dioceses send to every home. However, only 28 percent of dioceses that publish newspapers do the same. ##

FAITH Catholic readership surveys demonstrate how diocesan magazines have a greater level of engagement

than diocesan newspapers. In one of our client dioceses, there was a test of the newspaper model vs. magazine. The staff produced their newspaper one month as usual and then worked with FAITH Catholic on a diocesan magazine the next month. After a year, the survey results showed a double digit increase in interest in the magazine over the newspaper.

Some diocesan leaders may hear that print, whether newspapers or magazine, has passed its time. They may say it is too expensive. They might say we simply need to move to the Web and social media.

Again, we can look to secular media for a trend. Unlike newspapers, the overall secular print magazine industry is growing. The number of secular print magazines is greater than a decade ago. Year-over-year audience growth of magazine media is up 10 percent from 2014 to 2015. If evangelization requires persuasion, the magazine is the clear winner. When it comes to influencing people, magazines are the most effective form of media. Magazines outrank the Internet, newspapers, radio and TV in the ability to reach influential people.

*91% of adults read magazine media, and*

*94% of adults under age 35 have read magazine media in the last 6 months.\**

Secondly, it is true most people are online. However, not everyone is, and most who are online do not follow the Church. In a diocesan media study, CARA found that only four percent of Catholics regularly visit a diocesan website and only four percent of Catholics engage with a religious Facebook post. #

I remember a quote I once heard about diocesan evangelization, "Nobody else will evangelize your diocese but your diocese." One of the most effective, well-known and respected Catholic evangelists of our age is Bishop Robert Barron. He has 89,000 Twitter followers and 812,503 likes on Facebook. In the United States, CARA's survey of self-identified Catholics puts the number around 82 million.\*\* Statistically, one of our top evangelists is directly connected with only one percent of Catholics. And that doesn't even count the 25 million adults who consider themselves former Catholics.

Diocesan social media are not reaching very many people yet. The average diocesan Facebook page only has 2,581 followers. Facebook has made it harder than ever to have a post reach followers without paying. Some reports indicate that only five to 16 percent of followers even have a post appear from an organization they are following. The average number of Twitter followers on diocesan social media is 3,013.

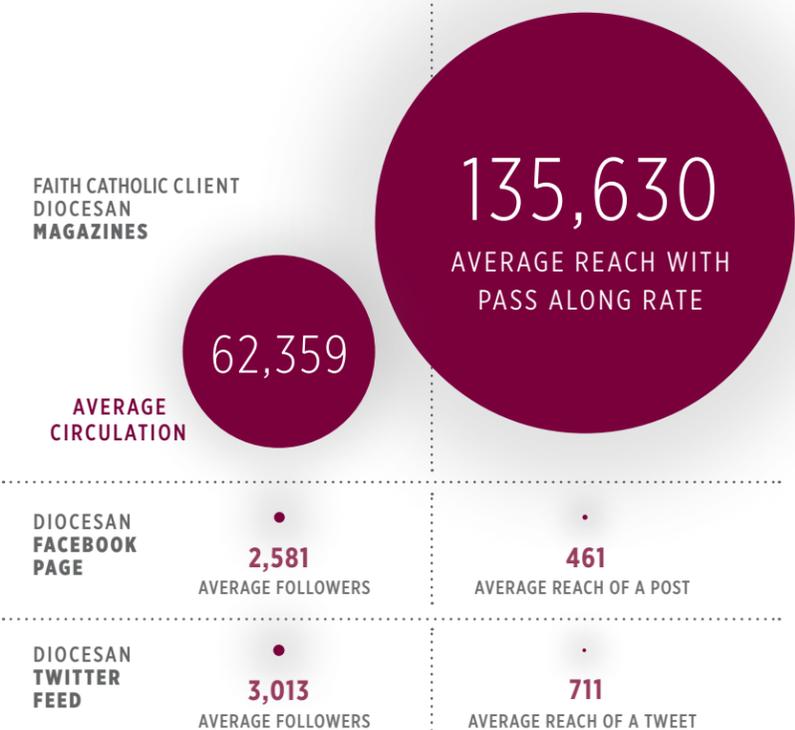
Again, estimates are that only 18 percent of tweets are displayed for followers of organizations without the organization paying. Social media reports in most dioceses will confirm that there are rare instances where a post gets traction organically. ##

Don't get me wrong. I'm not claiming evangelization is as simple as mailing out a magazine. However, I firmly believe from the experience of more than two dozen dioceses, and from the research we have conducted, that there is no more effective way to reach the most number of Catholics with substantive, consistently delivered messages from the Church than a diocesan magazine from FAITH Catholic.

If and when there is a better way to evangelize with content, FAITH Catholic will be there. That brings me to my final point about the type of evangelization this is. The work of the new evangelization is personal. It occurs in small faith groups, at men's and women's conferences, and in ecclesial communities. It happens when disciples bear witness to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

## REACH

### DIOCESAN MAGAZINE REACH DWARFS DIOCESAN SOCIAL MEDIA



There are different types of evangelization. Bishop Barron is a different sort of evangelist than the street evangelist on the corner. The volunteer at a Catholic soup kitchen is a different sort of evangelist than the priest or pastoral minister comforting the family of a loved one. In order to reach the 76 percent of Catholics who are no longer fully engaged in the life of the Church, we need to empower the 24 percent to grow as disciples and give them tools to evangelize.

However, for evangelization to have the scale to reach as many people as possible, it falls to dioceses to produce and deliver content. We call the movement of our approach here at FAITH Catholic something specific, something new. We call it content evangelization. Content evangelization is more than a magazine vs. a newspaper. Content evangelization is when content – articles, columns, images, videos and any form of media – is used to form people who then go out and evangelize using that content. They may not go door to door to evangelize. But, when a parent leaves a magazine on the coffee table for a son to pick up, that's content evangelization. When a secretary forwards a link to a magazine article about forgiveness to a hurting coworker, that's content evangelization. When a neighbor shares a social media post about a moral matter with his 236 Facebook friends, that's content evangelization. For content evangelization to work, dioceses have to produce and deliver content. If they don't, who will?

What can your diocese do to reach the 76 percent of Catholics who no longer go to Mass each week while at the same time sustain those who are most faithful?

Should we continue to do what we've been doing for 100 years? Or should we do something new to engage in the new evangelization? If we do not change our strategy, how will we change this reality? How will we



achieve our mission to “go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” ? MT 28:19

At the end of the day, diocesan leaders may think they simply can't afford to invest in reaching all Catholic homes. Of course, I think you can't afford not to. But, that is easy for me to say. These declines have placed tough choices before many dioceses. However, the smallest dioceses in the country, as well as some of the largest, have made this switch. You can too. It's more affordable than you think.

I make this offer to each of you reading this now: I will make myself personally available for a free consultation for your diocese. We can visit over the phone or I can make a personal visit to you. Our mission is too important to keep doing what we've always done. This is our time to pass on the faith. Let's make the most of the moment.

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## PENETRATION

### DIOCESES GET INTO A MUCH HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF HOMES WITH PRINT

- 60%** Percentage of FAITH Catholic client dioceses publishing a magazine that reaches all parishioner homes <sup>\*\*</sup>
- 28%** Percentage of dioceses publishing newspapers that reach all parishioner homes <sup>\*\*</sup>
- 17%** Percentage of all Catholics who regularly read diocesan print media <sup>#</sup>
- 7%** Percentage of all Catholics who regularly watch Catholic television <sup>#</sup>
- 5%** Percentage of all Catholics who regularly listen to Catholic radio <sup>#</sup>
- 4%** Percentage of all Catholics who regularly visit their diocesan website <sup>#</sup>
- 4%** Percentage of all Catholics who follow religious pages or posts on Facebook <sup>#</sup>
- 1%** Percentage of all Catholics who follow religious related tweets on Twitter <sup>#</sup>

CONTENT EVANGELIZATION IS WHEN CONTENT – ARTICLES, COLUMNS, IMAGES, VIDEOS AND ANY FORMS OF MEDIA – IS USED TO FORM PEOPLE WHO THEN GO OUT AND EVANGELIZE USING THAT CONTENT.



#### SOURCES

<sup>\*\*</sup>FAITH Catholic research included publishing information from the 2006 and 2016 Catholic Press Association directory. Since the Catholic Press Association directory no longer contains complete information on the diocesan press, FAITH Catholic's own research included publishing data from diocesan websites, diocesan publication websites, and diocesan social media.

<sup>#</sup>GfK MRI, Spring 2014 The Association of Magazine Media 2015 report. Category influentials are defined as people who have a great experience in this topic and whose advice on this topic is trusted by friends and family members.

<sup>\*\*</sup>CARA Frequently Requested Church Statistics

<sup>#</sup>CARA Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate 2012 Catholic New Media Use.

<sup>\*\*</sup> 2016 FAITH Catholic research on U.S. Latin-rite dioceses and archdioceses,

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>adsonline.com

#### U.S. DIOCESAN PRINT VS. SOCIAL MEDIA

Average FAITH Catholic client diocesan magazine circulation	<b>62,359</b>
Average diocesan newspaper circulation	<b>34,551</b>
Average number of diocesan Twitter followers	<b>3,013</b>
Average number of diocesan Facebook followers	<b>2,581</b>

#### DIOCESAN MAGAZINES FROM FAITH CATHOLIC REACH THE MOST PEOPLE WITHIN A DIOCESE

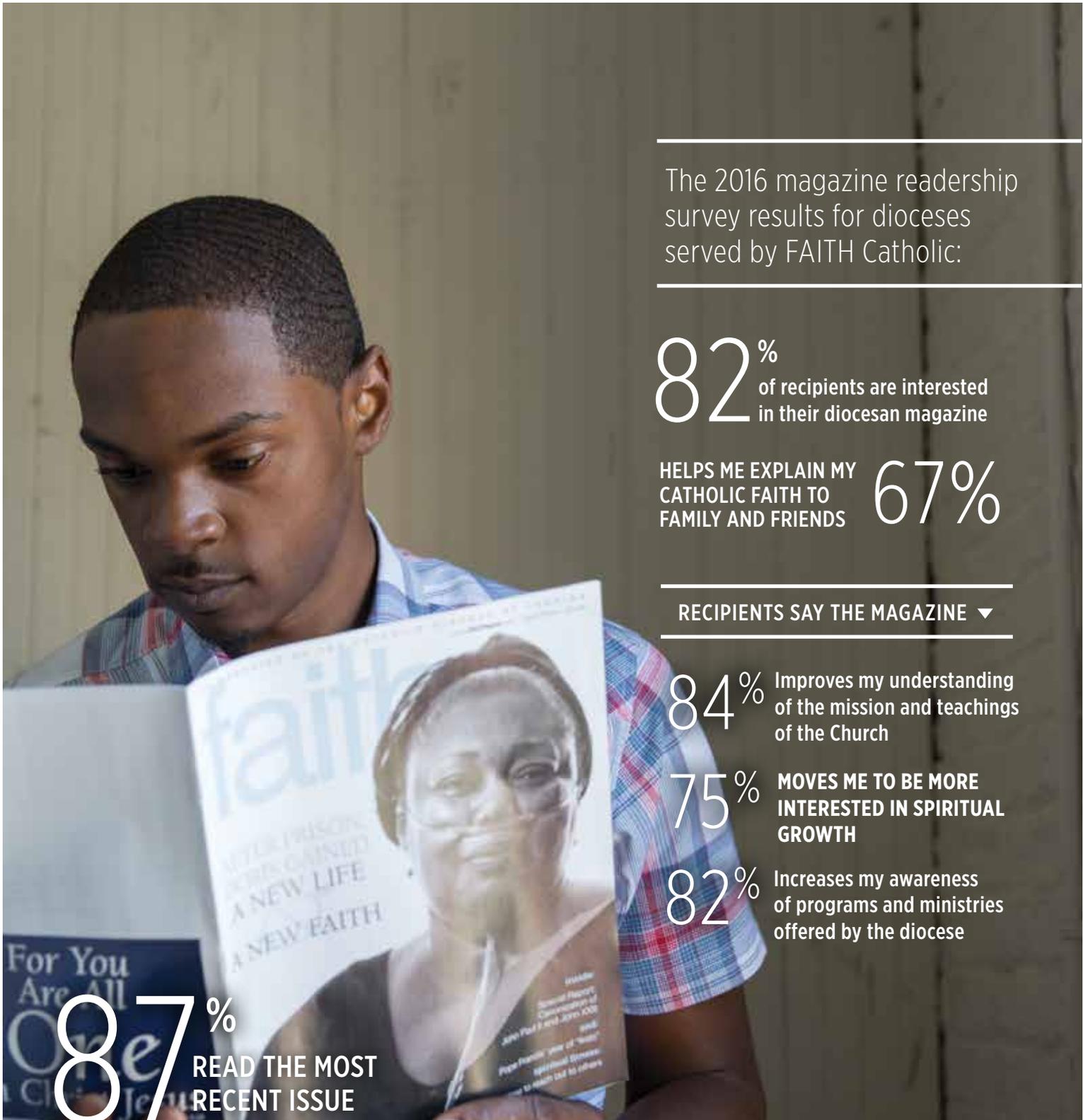
Average FAITH Catholic client diocesan magazine circulation	<b>62,359</b>
Reach: Percentage reading the most recent issue	<b>87%</b>
Average number reading the most recent issue	<b>54,252</b>
Average pass-along rate is 2.5 people <sup>***</sup>	<b>250%</b>
Total average number of people reached per edition	<b>135,630</b>

#### DIOCESAN TWITTER

Average number of diocesan Twitter followers	<b>3,013</b>
Reach: organic reach per post for Twitter (2014 Forrester)	<b>18%</b>
Average number of followers who will potentially see tweet	<b>551</b>
Average retweet or comment rate (Sysomos)	<b>29%</b>
Total average number of people reached per tweet	<b>711</b>

#### DIOCESAN FACEBOOK

Average number of diocesan Facebook followers	<b>2,581</b>
Reach: organic reach per post for organizations (Edgerank Checker)	<b>16%</b>
Average number of followers who will potentially see post	<b>413</b>
Average post engagement – likes, repost, or comment (Social Times)	<b>11.6%</b>
Total average number of people reached per post	<b>461</b>



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The 2016 magazine readership survey results for dioceses served by FAITH Catholic:

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**82%** of recipients are interested in their diocesan magazine

HELPS ME EXPLAIN MY CATHOLIC FAITH TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS **67%**

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RECIPIENTS SAY THE MAGAZINE ▼

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**84%** Improves my understanding of the mission and teachings of the Church

**75%** MOVES ME TO BE MORE INTERESTED IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

**82%** Increases my awareness of programs and ministries offered by the diocese

**87%** READ THE MOST RECENT ISSUE

BECAUSE OF FAITH CATHOLIC AND THE DIOCESAN MAGAZINE, MORE CATHOLICS ARE NOW RECEIVING A PUBLICATION FROM THEIR DIOCESE THAN 10 YEARS AGO.