

From Heritage to Horizon: Revitalizing the PNCC Mission through Enculturated Evangelization

Dr. Mark Koscinski

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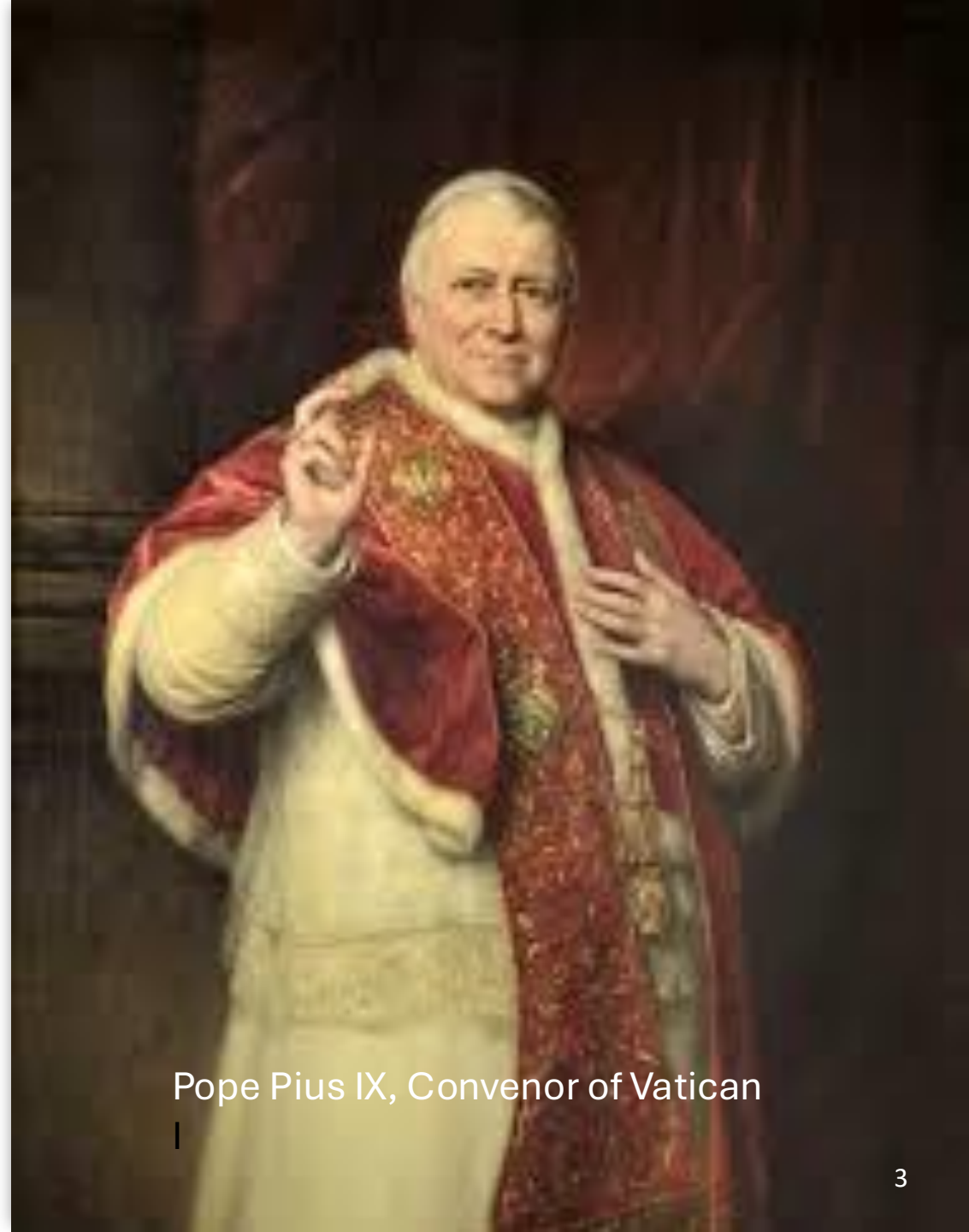
About the Author

- Deacon with the Polish National Catholic Church Central Diocese
- Ordained in 2006
- Minister at Holy Cross PNCC, Woodland Park NJ
- Associate Professor of Accounting Practice, Moravian University SOBE
- CPA, State of NJ
- Three Children and Five Grandchildren.



The PNCC: The Gathering Storm

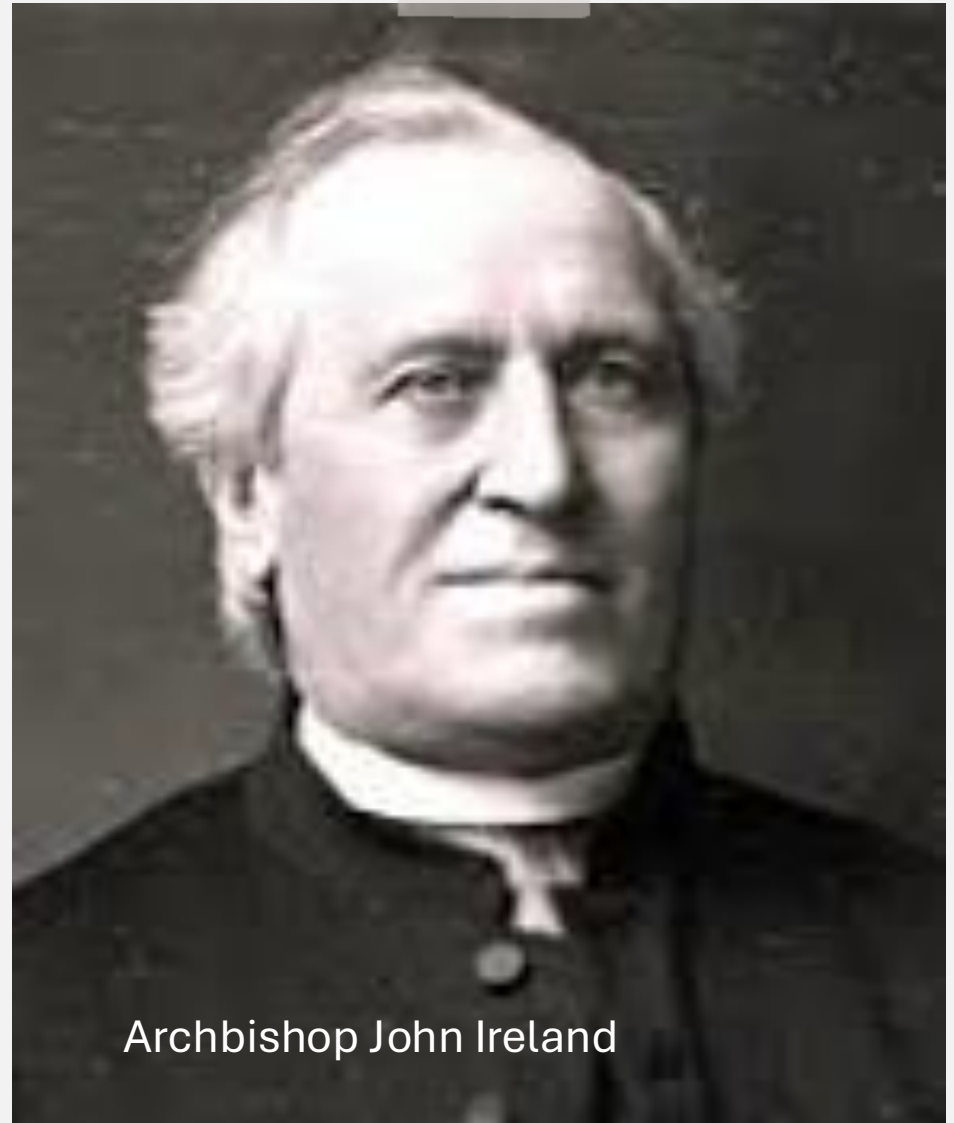
- Nineteenth Century was a time of turmoil for the Roman Catholic Church
- The Papal States are absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy 1860-1870
- Vatican I proclaims the Pope is infallible when speaking ex cathedra in 1870.
- Kulturkampf in Germany and Austria
- Modernism attacks the foundation of Catholic beliefs



Pope Pius IX, Convenor of Vatican

The Storm Breaks in the United States

- The American Catholic Church is influenced by Protestant beliefs and the American culture.
- Vatican condemns Americanism
- Hierarchy composed of Irish and German bishops, many of whom wanted immigrants to integrate into American society
- Polish immigrants are overwhelmingly Roman Catholic but cling to the Polish language and culture



Archbishop John Ireland

Enter the PNCC

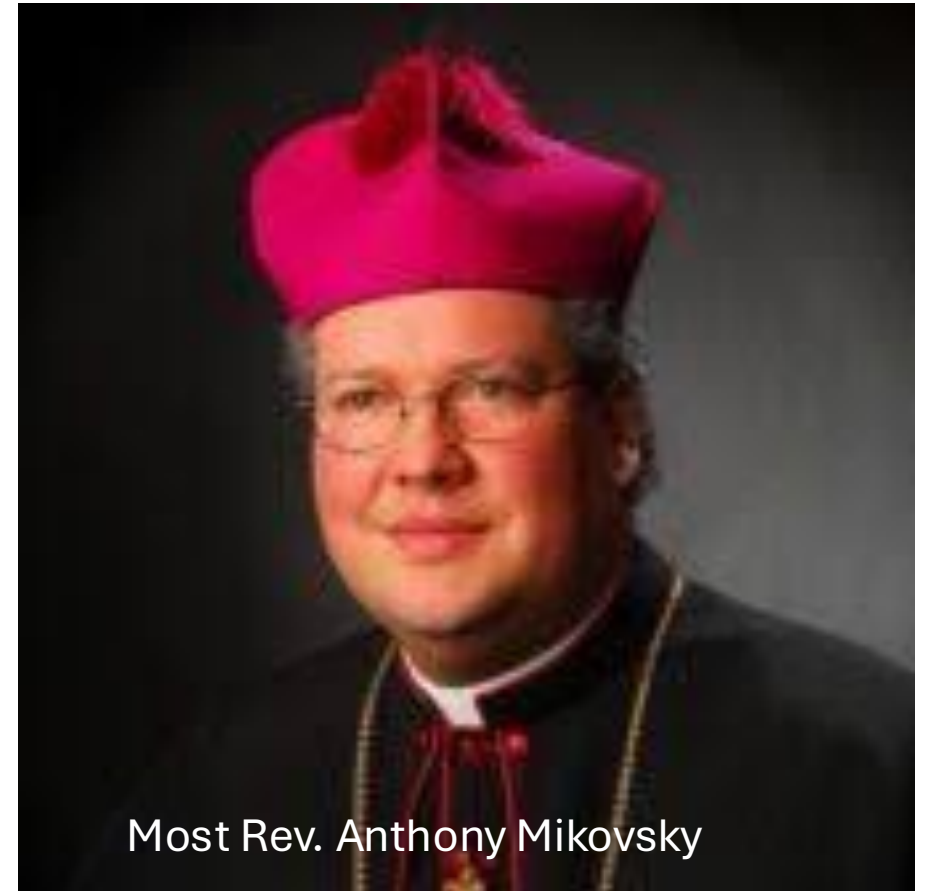
- Fr. Francis Hodur immigrates to the United States.
- Leads many ethnically Polish parishes into schism with the RCC in 1897.
- Seeks and obtains valid episcopal ordination from the Old Catholic Church in Utrecht, Netherlands in 1907
- Charismatic leader who makes the PNCC a part of the American landscape.



Francis Hodur, Founder of the PNCC

About the PNCC

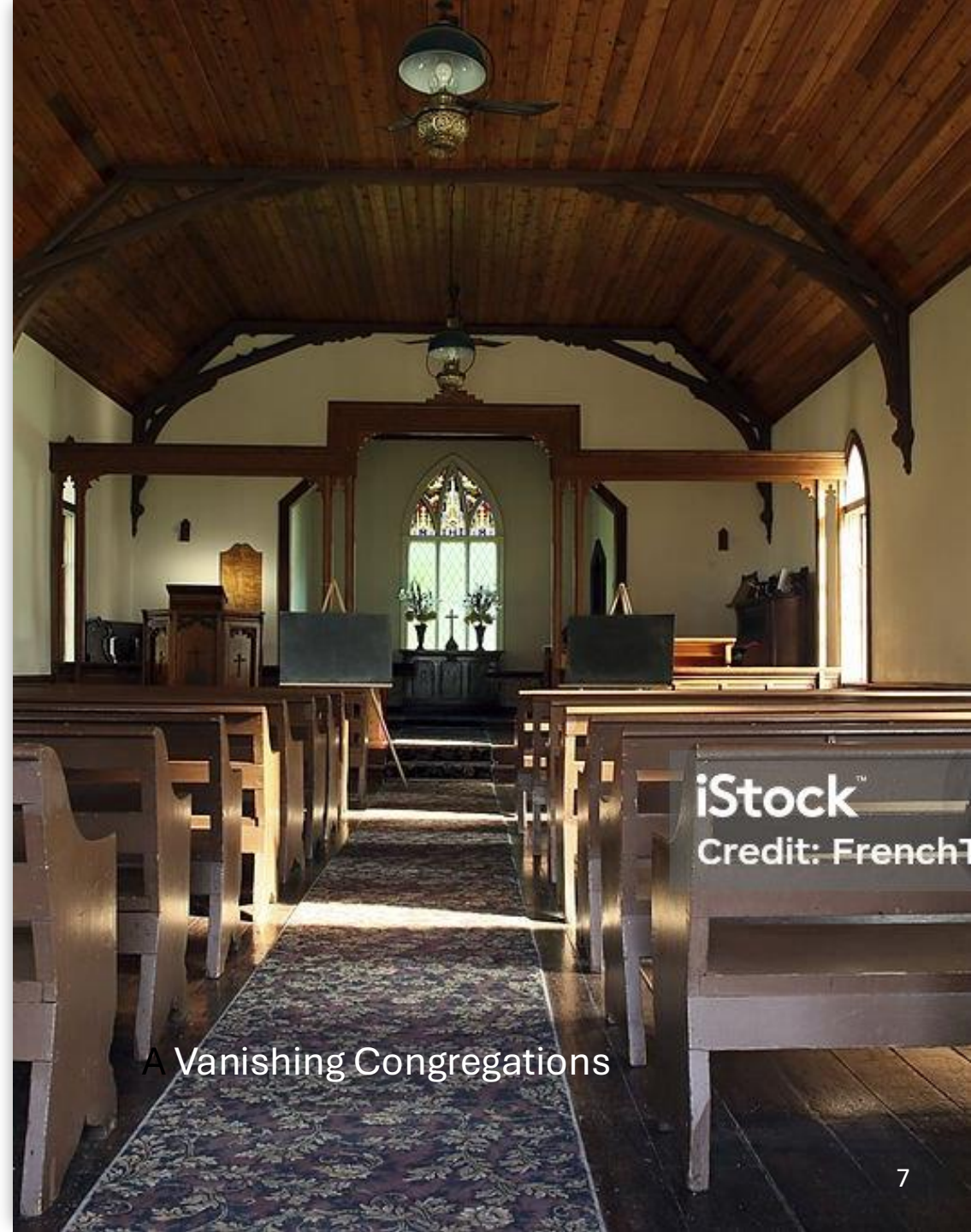
- Retains many elements of the Pre-Vatican II Church and traditional Polish Catholicism
- Married priesthood
- Recognizes primacy but not jurisdiction of the papacy
- Church property owned by Parish committee
- Laity have voice in selection of bishops and local clergy.



Most Rev. Anthony Mikovsky

The Challenges and Thesis

- The adaptive challenge: Ever dwindling church attendance and membership. Closing parishes.
- Church leadership has addressed many of the “technical fixes”.
- **Thesis: There are features of the PNCC that are attractive to new and current members.**



A Vanishing Congregations

Methodology

- Grounded research study unfolding in stages.
- Use a decay rate function to estimate “half-life” of current membership.
- Review church history to generate list of attractive features.
- Combine this list with current PNCC evangelization efforts.
- Calculate estimated attribute sample size
- Produce a survey instrument to be administered with ecclesiastical approval.
- Undertake survey and analyze results
- Determine if the use of Bayesian statistics is appropriate for results.

Useful Summaries Created in Appendices

- Comprehensive timeline of the PNCC, OCC, and BCC concentrating on historical currents near the foundation date (Appendix B)
- Comparison of PNCC, RCC, and OCC doctrine. (Appendix D)
- Statistical Applications to Church Denominations (Appendices E and F)



Bishops of the Old Catholic Church

Decay Rates

- Calculation used to determine atomic half lives, how long it takes money to double, etc.
- Slavic-based Catholic Churches (including the PNCC) appear to have approximately a 2% decay rate per year since 1900.
- That rate is probably accelerating as the overall rate includes periods of immigration.
- This results in a half-life of membership in about two generations.

Exponential Decay Formula

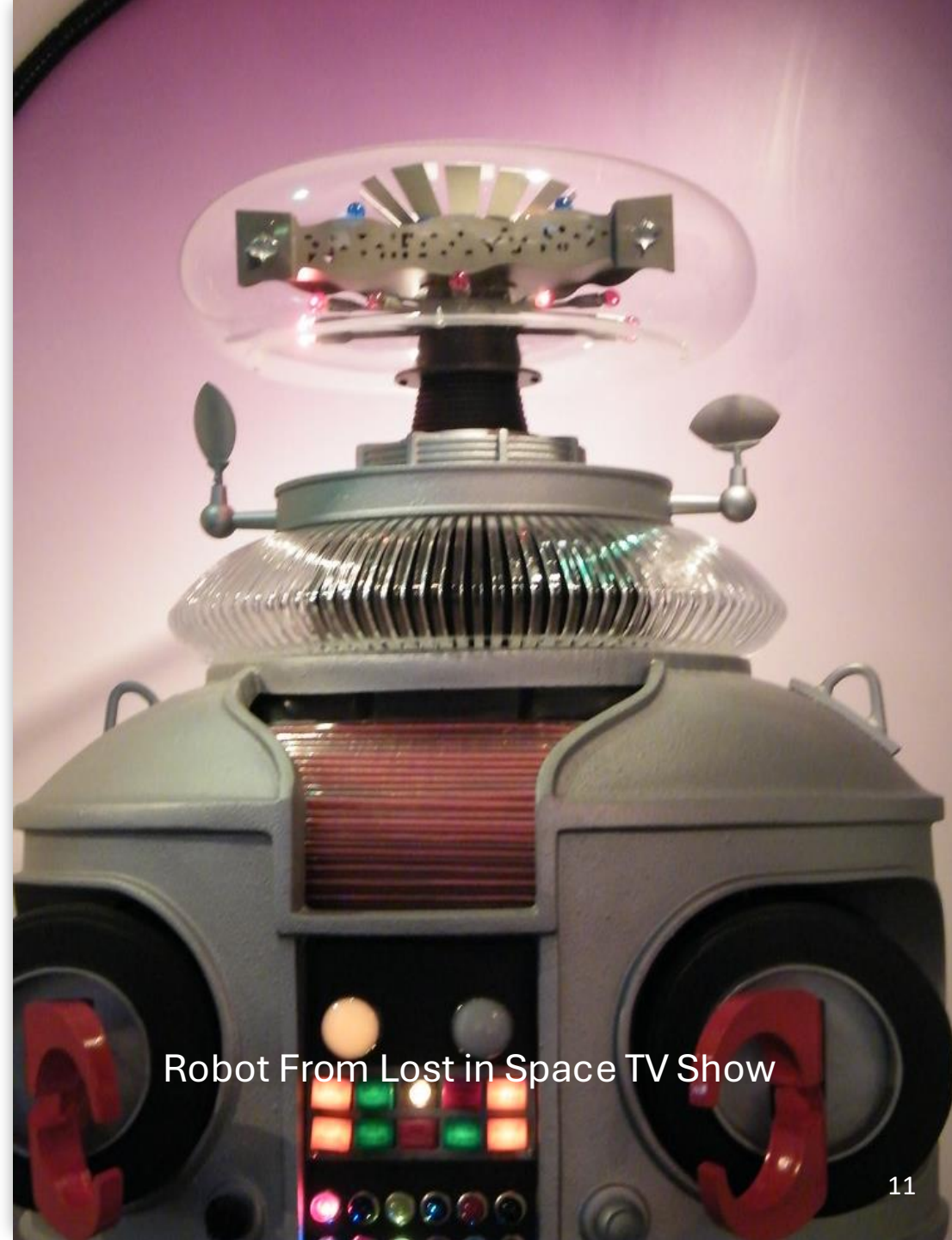
$$x_t = x_0 \times (1 + r)^t$$



www.inhcalculator.com

Danger Will Robinson!

- Any survey generated by this study would not and can not be used to question basic Church doctrine.
- The doctrinal beliefs of the Church can't be voted away or negotiated.
- The intent of the sample is simply to find what features of the PNCC may be attractive to current and potential members.



Robot From Lost in Space TV Show

Suggested Sample Topics/Questions Based on Historical Research and Current Evangelization Efforts

Topics From Research

- Democratic features of Church government
- Married clergy
- The PNCC as a church of immigrants
- Traditional liturgical practices
- Connection to Polish heritage
- Spanish Liturgy
- Beliefs on family issues

Additional Questions

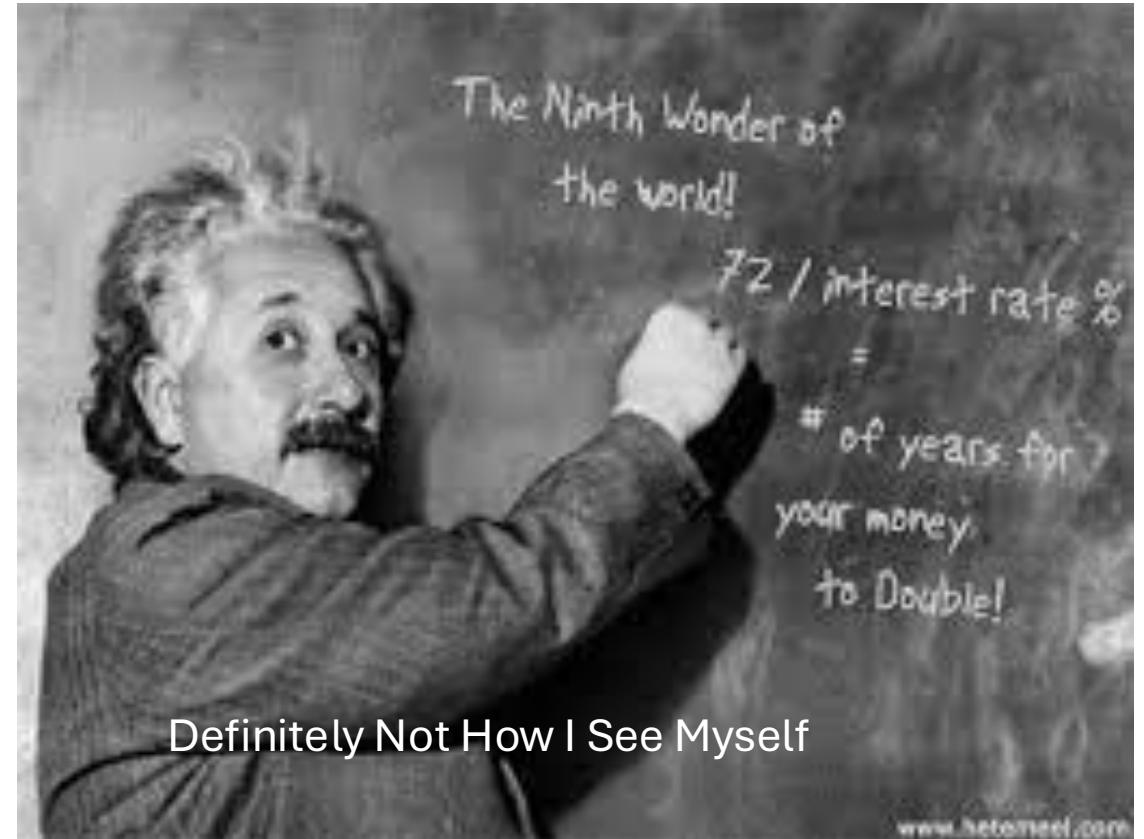
- How did you find the PNCC?
- Is the clergy the most attractive feature of the local parish?
- Convenience of time and location?
- What Faith tradition were you raised in?
- How important is the Veneration of the Virgin and the Saints?

Attribute Sampling

- Requires a binary answer: Yes or No
- Sample size is very small or approximately 96. This could be administered across congregations or through cluster sampling.
- Attribute sampling is used in marketing survey, including
 - A/B testing
 - Lead qualification
 - Customer satisfaction
 - Quality control in direct marketing
- All of these involve a binary answer.

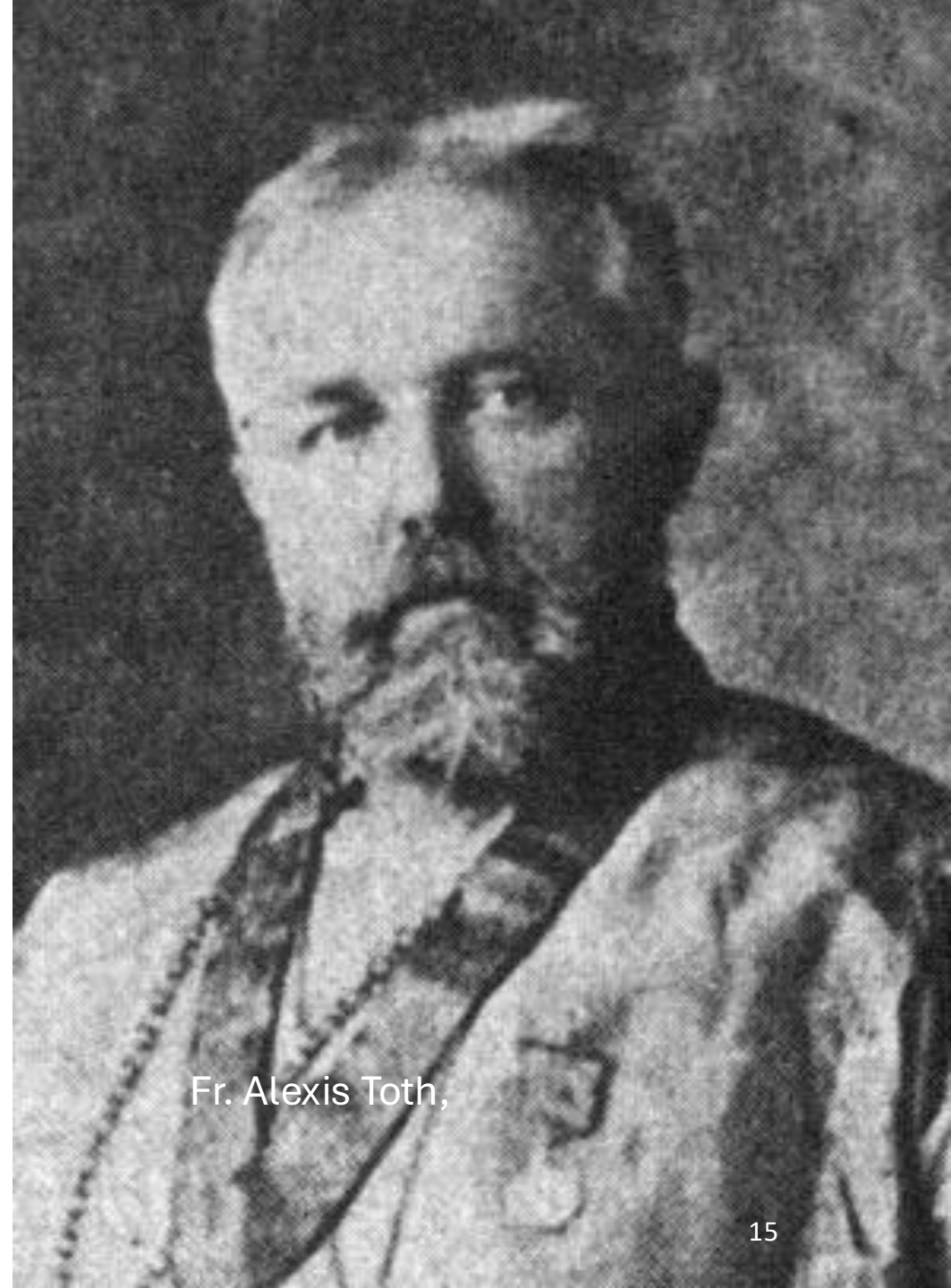
Next Steps

- Research why decay rates of Slavic Catholic Church are so similar. Consider other national churches.
- Further refine statistical techniques and survey instruments. Determine sample size and administer sample.



Other Interesting Questions

- Alexis Toth and Francis Hodur were active in Scranton at the same time. Was there awareness or influence on each other?
- Did the Old Catholic Church influence Heidigger?



Fr. Alexis Toth,

Regrets, I Had a Few... Too Few to Mention...

- I had planned to perfect the survey instrument and actually conduct the planned survey.
- Unfortunately, personal circumstances prevented from having the necessary time to do so.
- This required me to restrict my scope to finish.



My Personal Journey

- This project has deepened my commitment to my Church and telling its story.
- I am currently discerning whether to apply to attend seminary for ordination to the priesthood. That is a conversation for another day



Ordination of a Priest

Potential Impact on the PNCC and Other Denominations

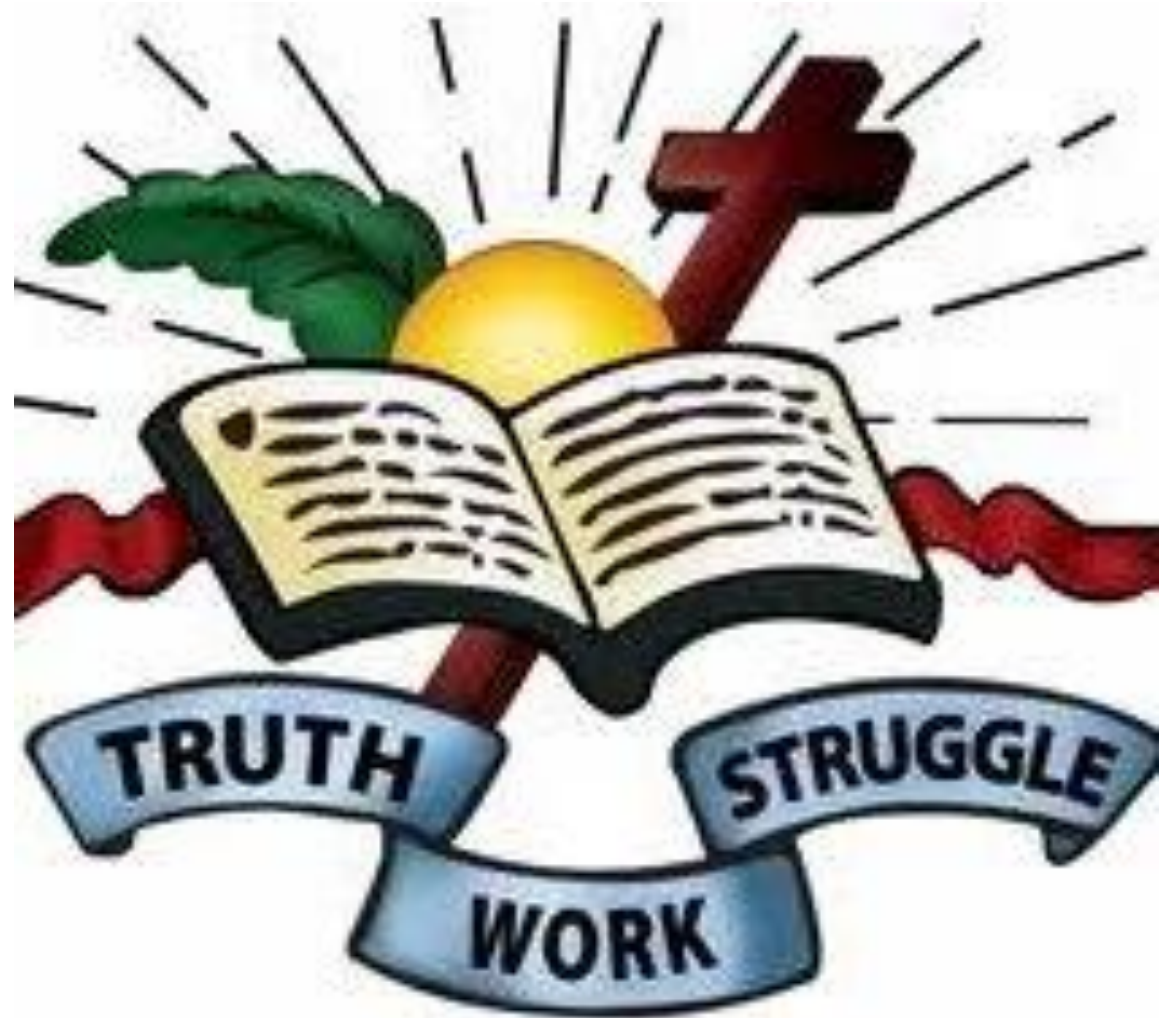
- Our judgements and estimations of situations are affected by confirmation bias and the overconfidence effect.
- Attribute sampling is a cost- effective way to challenge our assumptions about what is really happening in the pews.
- Small sample size is easily attainable.
- Methodology can be used for similar denominations.



Suggested Reading

- Andrews, Theodore. *The Polish National Catholic Church in America*. SPCK, 1953.
- Dunaetz, David. “Sampling Methods and Sample Size in Church-Based Research.” *Great Commission Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (2024): 5–18.
- Hodur, Franciszek. “Eleven Great Principles of the Polish National Catholic Church | Central Diocese.” October 31, 2009. <https://www.centraldiocesepncc.org/faith/eleven-great-principles-of-the-polish-national-catholic-church/>.
- Joint Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Joint Commission. “Road to Unity.” Joint Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Commission. Polish National Catholic Church, Various Dates.

PNCC Emblem





Thank You For Your
Time and Attention!

Questions?

Special Thanks To...

- My colleagues at SOBE
- The faculty of the Moravian School of Theology, especially to Rev. Drs. Barrett, Jodrey, and Kuchma
- My family and my friends, especially Sharon
- And course, my beloved wife Sue, of blessed memory who encouraged me to finish.

