

ROOTED IN TRADITION

**The Chamorro Catholics
in the United States**



Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church
Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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Washington, DC

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Msgr. Brian Bransfield
General Secretary, USCCB

Cover Photo: Our Lady of Camarin in front of the Dulce Nombre de Maria Cathedral-Basilica in Agana, Guam, courtesy of Fr. Eric Forbes.

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Foreword

ROOTED IN TRADITION: CHAMORRO CATHOLICS IN THE UNITED STATES

The Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs (SCAPA) continues its mission of evangelization through engagement and accompaniment with the growing influx of migrants coming from the Asian and Pacific Islander countries. In 2011, the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), “*Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*,” SCAPA carried on its ministry of Christian hospitality to our immigrant brothers and sisters by providing pastoral outreach to address their needs as well as to facilitate their ecclesial integration in their faith community. In response to the challenge of welcoming migrants to our faith community SCAPA commissioned writers to come out with a series of small books to inform clergy, ministers, and parishioners of the Catholicism of Asian and Pacific Island communities. This endeavor hopes to help everyone learn and understand their cultural traditions as well as religious values in pursuit of unity in the midst of diversity.

This small book presents a portrait of the Chamorro Catholics who are rooted in their tradition of faith and culture. To those who may not be familiar with the term, the word Chamorro as explained in the introductory part is the name and language of the indigenous people of the Mariana Islands in the western Pacific that includes Guam. Such basic understanding of the identity of the people as Chamorro rather than Guamanian is essential in understanding and respecting one’s culture. This concise resource is replete with other useful information that may be helpful for pastors and other church ministers. It presents insights on the cultural traits and religious life of Chamorros such as strong family ties, the important role of a mother in the family as the primary prayer leader in the home and church, as well as

wedding rituals and baptismal customs to name a few. The information provides readers an interesting glimpse of the Catholic practices that Chamorros live in the US mainland, their new home.

The SCAPA is grateful to Capuchin Friar, Rev. Eric Forbes, OFM, based in Guam who graciously accepted the task of writing on the Chamorro Catholic experience and to the Chamorros who inspire us with their vibrant witness of faith and participation in the Church's mission of evangelization. We also invoke the intercession of Our Lady of Camarin that the blessings of her Son and our Savior be upon the Chamorros and the Church in the United States.

Most Rev. Oscar A. Solis, DD
Bishop of Salt Lake City
Chairman, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Chamorro Catholics in the United States

WHO ARE THE CHAMORROS?

Close to 150,000 people in the fifty states of this country call themselves Chamorros or part-Chamorros, according to the last federal census. It is estimated that at least 80 percent are Roman Catholic. Chamorros are ranked third in number among Pacific Island people in the United States, behind Hawaiians and Samoans, but are probably first among Catholic Pacific Islanders, given the high percentage of Catholics among them.

Yet, many people in the United States, including other Roman Catholics, clergy, and lay people, are not aware of the term *Chamorro* and who it describes.

The Chamorros are the indigenous people of the Mariana Islands, a group of fifteen islands in the western Pacific, north of the equator. These small islands were formed by volcanic activity interacting with the raising of coral rings in the ocean. The Marianas form a crescent with the oldest and larger islands in the south, moving northward with the newer and smaller islands. Guam is the southernmost and largest of the Marianas, as well as the best known. The Marianas are part of the Pacific region called Micronesia (“the little islands”), the other two regions being Polynesia and Melanesia.

The first waves of human settlement of these islands possibly arrived in the Marianas 3,700 years ago (1700 BCE), the earliest human migration into the Pacific, north of the equator. There are many theories about how large the Chamorro population was before contact with Europeans. The most accepted estimates are between 20,000 and 50,000 people. The Chamorro people lived on virtually all the fifteen islands of the chain, in small communities of from fifty to

several hundred people. There was no king for the entire archipelago, nor indeed for any individual island. Villages were ruled by a chief (*maga'lāhe*) and his council of high caste men, though property and social ranking were determined through the mother's line, not the father's. As such, women had their own source of influence.

There were three classes of people in the indigenous Chamorro caste system. The *matua* were the highest, followed by the *achaot*. These two classes formed the *chamorri* group, from which, it is theorized, the word Chamorro is derived. The *mangachang* were the lowest class and were restricted in their activities and movements. They lived in the interior of the islands, away from the *chamorri* who controlled fishing and other skills in their coastal villages. There is speculation that the lowly *mangachang* were from a different group of immigrants who were then subjugated by the *chamorri*.

Linguistic, cultural, and genetic connections suggest that the Chamorros came from Sulawesi (Celebes) in modern-day Indonesia. It is also possible that various streams of Austronesian migrations converged on the Marianas which, in time, produced the single people now known as Chamorros. Chamorros share many similar vocabulary with Indonesian and Filipino languages. Betel nut chewing is also a cultural trait of Chamorros, as it is with many others in Austronesia.

The original Chamorro settlers of the Marianas did not have a defined concept of god. Instead, they believed in a variety of spirits who were responsible for creating the islands and the world. These spirits were to be found in the physical world around them and were to be respected. Intermediaries called *makahna* (also *kakahna*) were asked to keep the peace between spirits and men. They also believed in a kind of hell called *sasalāguan*, overseen by a spirit, who worked the fires there. It wasn't the sinful soul who went to hell but rather the person who died a violent death. The souls of the dead were greatly respected by the indigenous Chamorros. Families sometimes kept the skulls of their dead relatives in the home as objects of veneration.

Blessed with a bountiful ocean and sufficient land resources, the Chamorros before Western contact lived a good life, equally at home in the sea as well as on the land. They excelled in sailing the high seas on their *sakman* or *proa*, so fast and agile that Europeans called them the “flying proas.” They were described by these foreign observers as the best sailing vessels they had seen in the Pacific. The Chamorros also erected coral stone pillars called latte stones. Long before metallic implements were readily available, the Chamorros cut out pillars and their cap stones from the rock. These pillars were used as grave markers (when small) or as foundations for large houses (when tall). They remain in the islands and serve as the most prominent icon for Chamorro culture. Explorers describe the ancient Chamorro people as a happy but mischievous people; devoid of the worst aspects of human nature. They had a physically active life fishing, building, and planting root crops. Warfare was limited and did not take many lives. Things were shared in common and the people enjoyed their leisure time by singing, dancing, telling stories, and holding competitions among each other.

THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE CHAMORROS

The idyllic life of the pre-contact Chamorros was changed forever with the arrival of the first permanent Spanish settlers. The Marianas are unique among Spanish colonies as having been settled by Spain purely for religious reasons. There was no gold, silver, or Chinese porcelain to obtain. Neither were there large tracts of arable land to make money from coffee or tobacco plantations. The Spanish colonization of the Marianas was due to only one aspiration—the evangelization of the Chamorro people.

That aspiration itself was the dream, initially, of only one man. Bl. Diego Luis de Sanvitores was a Spanish Jesuit priest destined for the Philippines. Ever since Ferdinand Magellan stumbled upon the Marianas in 1521, on his historic voyage to circumnavigate the earth,

the Marianas, especially Guam, were thereafter used when needed as a stopover by European ships to stock up on supplies. Magellan was the first European to land in the Marianas. Due to the theft of a skiff attached to one of Magellan's ships, Europeans called these islands the *Islas de los Ladrones* (The Islands of Thieves).

Miguel López de Legazpi, sent by Spain to advance the Spanish colonization of the Philippines, stopped by Guam on his way there and claimed the *Ladrones* for Spain in 1565. When the galleon trade between Acapulco (Mexico) and Manila (Philippines) started, the galleon usually stopped at Guam or one of the other *Ladrones* islands on its way to Manila. Mother nature was responsible for this route. The ocean current and trade winds in the early months of the year lead the galleon ships right into the Marianas. Though claimed by Spain, the *Ladrones* remained untouched by Spain or any other European country except for the galleons and periodic visits by others.

When Sanvitores' ship, sailing from Mexico to Manila, stopped in the *Ladrones* in 1662, he was inspired to one day return and preach the Gospel in these islands. He recalled the words from Scripture, "*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.*" "He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor" (Lk 4:18).

Since Spain had no commercial interest in the *Ladrones*, Sanvitores had to do a lot of convincing to get the required permission to begin a Catholic mission in those islands. Using his various connections with the royal court, he was able to secure the support of the queen regent of Spain, Mariana de Austria, widow of the late Spanish King Felipe IV and mother of Carlos II, still too young to take office as king. Thanks in large part to her endorsement of the project, Sanvitores was given the permission and the funds to realize his dream.

After recruiting a team of Jesuit priests, brothers, and lay catechists, including Filipinos and Mexicans, Sanvitores landed on Guam in 1668, protected by a small company of armed men. The Jesuit pioneer

renamed the islands the Marianas, in honor of his sponsor, the Spanish queen, and also in honor of the Blessed Mother. Sanvitores met initial success from the curious Chamorros, especially when he won the backing of the chief of Hagåtña (Agaña), Quipuha, whom he baptized with the name Juan. Quipuha was only one of many village chiefs, but Hagåtña was the most influential village on Guam at the time.

Opposition appeared in due time. Some of the high caste Chamorros who had been baptized started to resent the inclusion of lower caste Chamorros into the fold. The native spiritual practitioners, or *makahna*, obviously opposed the missionaries. An influential Chinese shipwreck survivor, Choco, also spoke out against Sanvitores and company. Many things in pre-contact Chamorro culture were incompatible with the new, Christian way of life. What complicated the situation was that many Chamorros gladly embraced Catholicism, even with the sacrifice of old Chamorro traditions.

In time, tensions erupted into physical violence. In the very first year of the Catholic mission, a Spanish and a Filipino soldier were killed by Chamorros on the island of Saipan. The first Jesuit priest, Luis de Medina, was killed on that same island two years later in 1670. Sanvitores himself, alongside his Filipino lay assistant, Pedro Calungsod, were martyred on Guam in 1672.

Almost all of these killings were followed by reprisals led by the handful of Spanish soldiers. These increased to full-scale battles that lasted until 1695. Loss of life occurred on both sides, but greater numbers of Chamorros died due to exposure to diseases for which they had no immunity, due to forced movements of Chamorros from their home environments to new settlements, and finally, due to warfare. Sanvitores was later beatified and Calungsod canonized.

When armed struggle against the Spanish missionaries and soldiers ended in 1695, a greatly reduced Chamorro population (down to

around 3,000), concentrated in half a dozen villages, each with a missionary and church, was able to be Christianized rapidly. By the year 1700, all the Chamorros had become baptized Christians. The Marianas were the first Christianized islands in the Pacific. Since 1700, to be Chamorro also meant to be Catholic. When the Chamorros of Guam came under American control in 1898, and when the Chamorros of the Northern Marianas also formed a political relationship with the United States in 1978, exposure to non-Catholic Christian churches and other religions lead some Chamorros to leave the Catholic Church. On Guam, the number of Catholics is now estimated to be 85 percent, and in the Northern Marianas, 95 percent.

In 1769, when the Jesuits were expelled from the entire Spanish realm, the Augustinian Recollects, also Spanish, replaced them in the Marianas. In 1899, these missionaries were expelled from Guam, which had come under American control. For the first time in its history, the Chamorros of the Marianas were divided between Guam and the rest of the island chain, now known as the Northern Marianas.

The Northern Marianas eventually came under the care of the German Capuchins, but it was short lived. In 1921, Spanish Jesuits assumed responsibility for the Northern Marianas. On Guam, in 1901, Spanish Capuchins came to care for the island's Catholics.

Spanish missionaries were eventually replaced by American Capuchins on Guam in 1941 and in the Northern Marianas in 1946 as a result of the American victory in World War II. The American missionaries did not erase all Spanish influence on Chamorro Catholicism. While some of that influence disappeared, a kind of permanent Spanish flavor to Chamorro Catholicism has persisted down to our times.

The Americanization of Chamorro Catholics, in due course, opened up Chamorro Catholics to new ideas and customs. The Chamorro clergy is now largely formed in the United States and brings back to the islands current theological and pastoral ideas and practices.

Chamorro Catholicism can thus be described as a mixture of pre-European cultural values, Spanish influence, and a modern (American) openness to new ideas and practices.

INDIGENOUS TRAITS OF CHAMORRO CATHOLICISM

Many aspects of the indigenous culture found resonance in Catholicism and were absorbed into the new religion. These traits survived colonization and still appear in modern Chamorro Catholicism under new Christianized forms.

1. Remembrance of the dead. Pre-contact Chamorros continued to show love and respect for their deceased family members as much as in death as in life. Before Christianity, the spirits of the dead were believed to surround the home and family. These spirits might also exert some influence, good or bad, on the living. Thus, Chamorros were always mindful of the unseen presence of these spirits and the effect they could have if ignored or disrespected. Catholicism taught the Chamorros to also be mindful of the dead but in a different way—by honoring the saints, offering prayer for the departed, and asking for the saints' intercession on their behalf.
2. Spiritual intermediaries. The indigenous people respected a class of spiritual intermediaries who could intercede for them with the spirits. Thus, the Chamorros were predisposed to accept Christian priests as ministers of divine grace and the cult of the saints as heavenly intercessors.
3. Spiritual objects. Chamorros believed that spirits lived in the physical environment around them, but they also believed that physical objects could have a spiritual role. The skull of an ancestor, for example, could be the point of contact with the deceased. Red objects, salt, and pungent things could ward off spiritual danger. This spiritual tradition facilitated an openness to the use

of Catholic icons and religious objects as a means of grace in the Christian life.

4. Strong family ties. Chamorros were communal people who put the needs of the family, clan, and village at the forefront. Family ties were meant to provide interdependent assistance to individuals within the circle. Christianity introduced new forms of family ties, especially with the role of godparents, where these mutual rights and obligations could continue in new ways.
5. Matriarchy. Men were the chiefs and warriors of ancient Chamorro society, but status and ownership passed through the mothers. Christianity in some ways bolstered patriarchy in Chamorro culture but mothers never lost their reign in the home, especially in enforcing religious rules and obligations. Women also became the primary prayer leaders in the home and in the church. Chamorro veneration of the mother also assumed a new form in the prominent cult of Mary, especially under the title of Our Lady of Camarin, a local, Guam icon.

PILLARS OF SPANISH-CHAMORRO CATHOLICISM

On top of this pre-contact foundation that was open to many aspects of Catholicism, the Spanish missionaries formed a new, Catholic Chamorro people whose religion was built on the following major pillars:

1. Prayer. The religious life of the traditional Chamorro Catholic is one of constant prayer. Under the watchful eyes of the mother or grandmother, everyone in the home prays when waking up, before one leaves the home, at noon, and in the evening. In time, to facilitate this daily regimen of prayer, prayer books in the Chamorro language were amply provided by the missionaries. “Chamorro prayer” became something of an art form that a special class of prayer leaders, called *techa*, advanced. These leaders,

all women with a rare male exception, lead communal prayer in the home and in the church. A *techa* often assumes even more significant roles, such as a source of advice to the family in times of grief, or as the referee of a family in times of conflict.

2. Ritual. Chamorro Catholics are raised knowing standard ritual practices. The Rosary is prayed in a certain way, slightly different from other cultures, and praying the Rosary slightly changes if it is prayed for the deceased. Processions, baptisms, and funeral and wedding customs are all standard and known. These rituals are largely based on old Spanish customs sometimes no longer practiced by the Spaniards themselves. But Chamorros cling to them and feel something is missing if they are not followed faithfully. Rituals usually involve physical objects, such as statues, rosaries, and scapulars. Chamorros enjoy tactile expressions of faith, such as touching and kissing statues. Chamorros traditionally give reverential kisses with the nose, not the lips. Even tepid Catholics will make sure that babies are baptized within a few weeks of birth. First Communion, and less so, Confirmation, is a major event in the life of a Chamorro child.
3. Patron saints. Every village in the Marianas is its own parish, with its own patron saint. The novena to the patron begins nine days before the feast day. The annual celebration, or *fiesta*, of that saint is a communal celebration. Village pride is manifested in these yearly feasts. Arches are built at the entrance of the village. Normally, the local bishop attends the feast day. After the festal Mass, an image of the saint is carried in procession. After the procession, a communal meal is served for several hundred people—including parishioners and outsiders; This is usually done on a Saturday. The following day, individual homes will host a feast and hundreds are invited to the village to any number of homes for the feast.

4. *Promesa*. The devotional life of the Chamorro, especially for the women, was amplified by the *promesa*, a promise to observe a saint's feast in perpetuity. When the originator of the *promesa* dies, usually a daughter will pick up the obligation and so it is passed down from generation to generation. The family will begin a novena to the saint whose image is made prominent on the family altar. The extended family and friends will be invited to the nightly novena. Refreshments will be served. On the final night, a large meal will be served. Sometimes, the honoree of a *promesa* is also made to do some kind of charitable act, such as cleaning the priest's house once a week or sending food to a poor family.
5. Hymns. The Spanish missionaries did bequeath to the Chamorro people a large repertoire of Catholic hymns in their own language. While the melodies are almost always based on Spanish originals, the hymns are in Chamorro. Although they number in the dozens, they are sung frequently so that they are more or less memorized by the time someone is an adolescent. Hymnals are not required, therefore, though a few people in the group, especially the prayer leaders, will have copies of the hymnal for reference. Once the hymn is started, everyone joins in. These hymns, which have been sung for over 100 years, are rooted in the hearts of the Catholic Chamorros. All it takes is a few words of a Chamorro hymn to be sung to bring tears to many eyes. Even if everything else is in English in the liturgy, Chamorros feel especially touched when these standard hymns are sung.
6. Remembrance of the dead. Chamorros never forget their deceased friends and family members. Upon death, nine nights of a public Rosary is prayed, during which crowds of several hundred people attend. Refreshments are served nightly. Mass intentions, called *animas*, are constantly offered for one's deceased loved ones, especially on special days marking the death. If

someone died on the 15th of a given month, the family might offer a Mass intention for that person every 15th day of every month. First anniversaries of death are big events, with nine nights of a public Rosary ending with a Mass of intention for that deceased on the actual day of the anniversary of death. On All Souls' Day, people attend Mass in the cemeteries next to the graves of their loved ones, which have been cleaned and adorned a few days in advance.

7. Godparents. Using the modified Spanish terms *patlino* (godfather) and *matlina* (godmother), godparents in Catholic Chamorro culture carry obligations and enjoy certain rights that are not seen in other cultures. A person has certain obligations to one's godparent for the whole of life. No major decisions are made without the godparent's approval and blessing. The witness at a wedding is always, by custom, one's godparent. The godparent, also, has obligations to the godchild. If parents die, it is not unusual for the godparent to informally adopt the child. The godfather of the groom, also, helps pay for the wedding.
8. The Blessed Mother. The islands were renamed the Marianas, partially in Mary's honor. The first Catholic church in the Marianas was built on Guam, in the historic capital city (since Spanish times) and named after the *Dulce Nombre de María*, or the Sweet Name of Mary. Marian devotion was inculcated into the minds and hearts of the people. Saturday morning Masses were traditionally well-attended because it was the Mass of the Blessed Mother. Many of the churches in the Marianas are named after her under one of her many titles, as are many of the women. For mothers, especially, she is the one to go to when in need or in sorrow. On Guam, the supreme icon of the Blessed Mother is the statue of Our Lady of Camarin. Oral tradition says she was found during the early years of Spanish rule in the waters off the coast of a southern village and then brought to the capital city,

where she was housed in a *camarín*, which could have been either a military barrack or a storehouse. Since then, she has been considered the protector of the island against natural disasters and calamities. Many legends and stories have developed about the statue itself. She is venerated especially on December 8 each year with a grand procession, which is one of the few times in the year that people can touch her image.

CHAMORROS IN THE US MAINLAND

Since Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands are both part of the United States, we shall use the term “mainland” to refer to the fifty states of the Union.

Small numbers of Chamorro individuals have been moving to the US mainland for nearly 200 years, starting with the whaling ships that often stopped in Guam since the 1820s. An unknown number of Chamorro men joined the crews of the whaling ships and many of them never returned to the island, taking up residence instead in the US mainland. The vast majority of them married local women and the Chamorro identity among their descendants was lost.

In 1898, Guam became an American possession. A small trickle of Chamorros moved to the mainland, but now, as wards of the United States. Change occurred starting in the 1930s when some Chamorro immigrants brought their Chamorro wives with them and raised their children in the mainland.

After World War II, Chamorro immigration to the mainland grew in earnest. Many Chamorro men had joined the US military by then. They, and in many cases, their Chamorro wives, settled in the mainland permanently after military service came to an end. In 1950, Chamorros from Guam were given US citizenship. Little by little, the trickle of Chamorro immigrants became a flood, as many more job opportunities, higher education, and a perceived improved standard

of living were to be found there. The influx of Chamorros to the fifty states continues to this day for the same reasons. The addition of Chamorro immigrants from the Northern Marianas since 1978 has augmented this number. As stated earlier, there are now close to 150,000 people living in the fifty states who consider themselves Chamorro or part-Chamorro. The following points should be emphasized about this population:

1. Chamorros in the mainland are widely dispersed. According to the 2010 federal census, the Chamorros are the most widely dispersed Pacific Island people in the United States. Of these 150,000 Chamorros and part-Chamorros, the biggest numbers live in California, Washington, and Texas, but fully half of all Chamorros in the mainland live in the other forty-seven states. There are pockets of Chamorros in all fifty states. But even within individual states and cities, the Chamorros are widely scattered. Unlike many other ethnic groups, Chamorros have not moved into specific neighborhoods to become the dominant or significant ethnic group in that area. Thus, ethnic Chamorros are, in a sense, hard to find. The heartland, so to speak, of the mainland Chamorro community is San Diego. Because many of the Chamorro immigrants were servicemen, and because of the climate and the proximity to relatives who moved to San Diego in earlier years, many Chamorros chose San Diego as their permanent home. The oldest Chamorro organization in the US mainland was founded in San Diego as early as 1953. It has a club house with daily activities and spacious facilities to hold large events.
2. Chamorros in the mainland highly assimilate into the mainstream culture. While retaining their identification as Chamorros or part-Chamorros, the Chamorros in the mainland tend to assimilate quickly into the mainstream American culture. This process of Americanization began on Guam, especially in the

1950s. All present-day Chamorros speak English. Moreover, the vast majority of Chamorros (from Guam) under the age of fifty speak only English.

The net result of both factors is a lack of interest and feasibility in establishing large religious and social centers for Chamorros, besides the club house in San Diego. There are no Chamorro national parishes or even parishes that are heavily Chamorro. The Chamorro populations outside San Diego are too small to financially support active club houses and centers. Instead, Chamorros in these other locations may use or rent parishes and halls periodically when holding events for the Chamorro community.

A significant number of Chamorros also do not participate much in wider Chamorro community events, preferring to stay within their own families or Chamorro circle of friends.

Practicing Chamorro Catholics move into a city and join the local parish. Some become active in the various parish ministries or parish staff. As they are English-speaking and usually do not form Chamorro organizations, they are not easily identified as Chamorros. Many Chamorros, in fact, are mistaken for Filipinos or Hispanics.

MINISTERING WITH CHAMORRO CATHOLICS

Although Chamorro Catholics in the United States are greatly assimilated, from time to time, something specific to their cultural identity will emerge that touches on their unique religious custom. It may be helpful for pastors and others to have some background on the following religious customs of Chamorro Catholics in the United States.

1. Funeral Customs. Praying the Rosary for the departed is essential for Chamorros. They may begin this prayer soon after the death of the person, in the home or in the hospital. It is not unusual for someone to start the Rosary within minutes of death. If the

family will follow custom, nine nights of public Rosary may take place, where all the family, nuclear and extended, and numerous friends, will attend. These Rosaries, in the mainland context, can be held in a private home, the Guam club house in San Diego, or the mortuary at the public wake or viewing. Chamorros are not afraid of the dead and will often touch and kiss the body of the deceased or take photographs.

2. **Wedding Customs.** Chamorro couples may opt to observe the custom of the special veil, or *belo*, which is pinned to both bride and groom after the *Sanctus* (*Holy, holy, holy*) while they kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer. This veil, often decorated with a picture of the Holy Family, symbolizes the union of husband and wife (under one veil). It is removed after the Nuptial Blessing, so, if it is used, bride and groom normally remain kneeling for the Our Father. This veil is normally pinned by two women. Another custom is to add, besides the rings, coins that are also blessed and handed from groom to bride, as a sign of his promise to provide for the bride and the children to come. The two witnesses are normally the godfather of the groom and godmother of the bride. Finally, at some point toward the end of the wedding Mass, the bride and groom, by custom, kneel before an image of Our Lady and present her a bouquet of flowers while a Marian hymn is sung.
3. **Baptismal Customs.** Chamorros usually have one godfather and one godmother, although it is possible, as Filipino customs have recently influenced Chamorros, to have more than one pair of godparents. When this happens, pastors make a distinction between “primary sponsors,” whose names go into the baptismal record, and “secondary sponsors,” whose names are never recorded. Chamorros normally take great pride in the baptismal gown, or *bata*, and buy or have a very elaborate one made.

4. Patronal Feasts. One custom that seems to be kept alive by Chamorros in the mainland is the observance of the patronal feasts of their home village back in the islands. Whether the feast is held in a parish church, hall, or private residence, Chamorros from that particular village will meet and organize the fiesta. When done annually, they will have a formal fiesta organization, sometimes incorporated with its own bank account. Pastors will be approached to schedule a special Mass or give permission for a Mass to be celebrated in a special place, sometimes by a visiting priest from Guam or the Northern Marianas. A procession with the saint's image will be observed before or after the Mass. After all the religious ceremonies are done, a huge fiesta meal will be served, often with music and dancing.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. "Guamanian." The term *Guamanian* was promoted by the United States government after World War II to identify the natives and the language of Guam. This term was the favored name for both during the post-war period up until the 1970s. By the 1970s, Chamorros started to take exception to the term, and many today regard it negatively. The term strips the Guam Chamorros of their ethnic identity, which is Chamorro, and separates them from their fellow Chamorros who are from the other Chamorro islands of Rota, Tinian, and Saipan. The language is the same for all Chamorros, and should therefore not be identified by one island where it is spoken.

Older Guam Chamorros who were raised in the late 1940s and the 1950s, especially those who moved away from Guam in the 1950s and 60s and were not on Guam to witness the turn against the term "Guamanian" in the 1970s, might very well still use the term today. But the term has fallen out of favor now and may cause offense if used. "Chamorro" is the name of the race and

the language. One can distinguish between Guam Chamorros, Saipan Chamorros and so on, but the race and the language are always “Chamorro.”

When interacting with a group of Chamorros, it might be prudent to find out who are Chamorros from Guam, Chamorros from Saipan as well as the other islands, and be aware of some minor differences among them, but always treat them as one race who speak one language.

Chamorros may be offended when they are called Guamese, Chamorrans, and other modified forms of these words.

2. Carolinians. For 200 years, a non-Chamorro people called the Carolinians have been living on Saipan and are considered integral members of the Saipan community. They speak Chamorro, as well as their own Carolinian language, and know all the Chamorro customs and observe many of them as well. In a Chamorro gathering or event, there may very well be Carolinians present and they should be acknowledged as Carolinians, though linked by long ties with the Chamorros of Saipan. There are also mixed Chamorro-Carolinian families.

The Carolinians are people who hail from some of the Caroline Islands south of the Marianas. Some of their ancestral islands are Satawal, Woleai, and Lamotrek, all in Yap State in the Federated States of Micronesia, an independent country politically associated with the United States. An Austronesian people, like the Chamorros, the Carolinians speak their own language, unintelligible to the Chamorros, and maintain their own customs. In times past, they were masters of the sea and navigated by the stars.

3. Chamorro Cultural Revival. There is at present a resurgence of Chamorro identity, language, and culture. The nexus of this revival is the local traditional dance group. These groups try to recreate pre-Western dance forms and are multiplying in

the islands as well as in the mainland. These members are often very passionate about their dancing and chanting. Unless they meet at the San Diego club house, they meet in private homes, churches, and community centers where a Chamorro club house is lacking. They attract many young Chamorros.

MAINLAND VOCATIONS

The 150,000 Chamorros and part-Chamorros in the United States mainland present a hopeful source of priestly and religious vocations for the Church in the United States, and have indeed already provided a number of vocations.

The current bishop of Reno (NV) is Chamorro, the Most Rev. Randolph R. Calvo. Though born on Guam, he moved, with his family, to California at a very young age. There is also a Chamorro priest in the Diocese of Lincoln, Rev. Joseph Bernardo and another, Rev. Kyle Mangloña, of the Archdiocese of Seattle. There is a Chamorro School Sister of Notre Dame ministering in the Archdiocese of Seattle and several Chamorro permanent deacons serving in a number of dioceses across the nation. Several young women from Guam have joined a Carmelite monastery in New Jersey.

CHART 1. US CATHOLIC POPULATION:
RACE, ETHNICITY & BIRTHPLACE
GROUP ESTIMATES, 2013 ESTIMATES

	Population	Catholic Population
White (non-Hispanic)	201,603,212	43,546,293
Black, African American, African, Afro-Caribbean	39,875,893	2,990,692
<i>Black, African American, African, Afro-Caribbean (non-Hispanic)</i>	<i>38,602,187</i>	<i>2,142,422</i>
<i>Born in Africa</i>	<i>1,280,200</i>	<i>337,973</i>
Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander¹	15,584,203	2,976,583
<i>Filipino</i>	<i>3,499,921</i>	<i>2,267,949</i>
<i>Vietnamese</i>	<i>1,779,679</i>	<i>494,750</i>
<i>Chinese</i>	<i>4,107,621</i>	<i>349,148</i>
<i>Korean</i>	<i>1,748,324</i>	<i>204,554</i>
<i>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</i>	<i>553,144</i>	<i>151,009</i>
<i>Indian</i>	<i>3,260,460</i>	<i>149,981</i>
<i>Japanese</i>	<i>1,336,000</i>	<i>57,448</i>
Hispanic, Latino	51,704,967	30,454,225
<i>Native-born</i>	<i>30,639,814</i>	<i>16,422,941</i>
<i>Foreign-born</i>	<i>21,065,153</i>	<i>14,029,392</i>
American Indian, Alaskan Native	3,003,546	549,649

Chart Source: Thomas Gaunt, SJ, Mary Gautier, and Mark Gray, *Cultural Diversity in the Church* (Washington, DC: Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2014), 10.

¹ Due to significant numbers of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Americans having *multiple* racial, ethnic, and ancestral identities, totals for sub-groups do not add to the total Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander group population number.

CHART 2. ESTIMATED ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF PACIFIC ISLANDER CATHOLICS (2010)

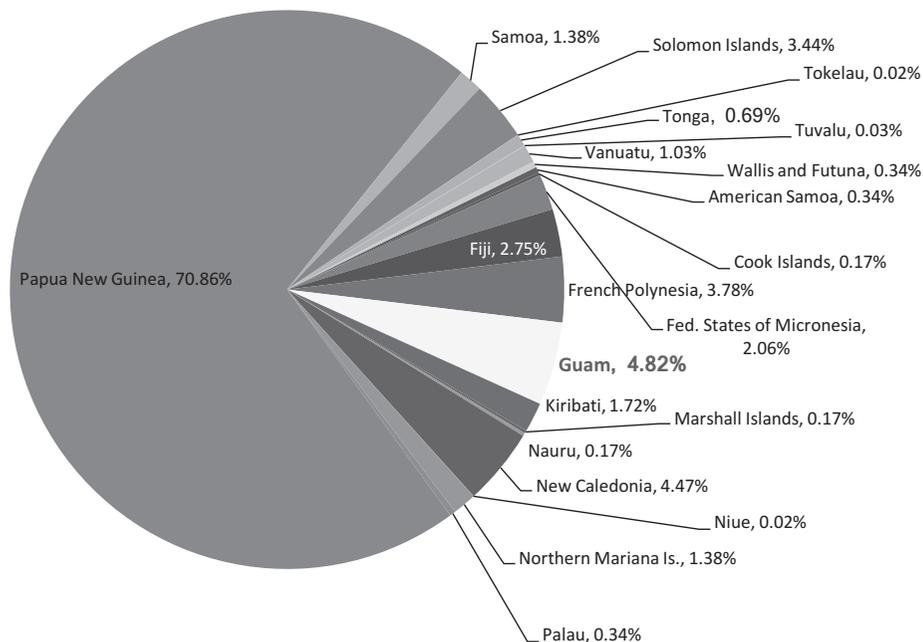


Chart Source: Tricia Bruce, Stephen Cherry and Jerry Z. Park. *Asian Pacific Islander Catholics in the United States: A Preliminary Report*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015), 11.

CHART 3. ESTIMATED SIZE AND PERCENTAGES OF
PACIFIC ISLANDER CATHOLICS (2010)

Country or Territory of Origin	Estimated Catholic Population	Percent Catholic	Catholic Percent of all Pacific Island Catholics	Catholic Percent of all Asian & Pacific Island Catholics	Estimated National Population
American Samoa	13,790	19.70%	0.47%	0.01%	70,000
Cook Islands	4,600	23.00%	0.16%	0.00%	20,000
Federated States of Micronesia	57,970	52.70%	1.99%	0.05%	110,000
Fiji	78,260	9.10%	2.69%	0.06%	860,000
French Polynesia	107,460	39.80%	3.70%	0.09%	270,000
Guam	135,000	75.00%	4.64%	0.11%	180,000
Kiribati	55,000	55.00%	1.89%	0.04%	100,000
Marshall Islands	4,200	8.40%	0.14%	0.00%	50,000
Nauru	3,320	33.20%	0.11%	0.00%	10,000
New Caledonia	127,000	50.80%	4.37%	0.10%	250,000
Niue	990	9.90%	0.03%	0.00%	10,000
Northern Mariana Islands	38,460	64.10%	1.32%	0.03%	60,000
Palau	11,020	55.10%	0.38%	0.01%	20,000
Papua New Guinea	2,058,000	30.00%	70.79%	1.67%	6,860,000
Samoa	35,280	19.60%	1.21%	0.03%	180,000
Solomon Islands	102,600	19.00%	3.53%	0.08%	540,000
Tokelau	3,360	33.60%	0.12%	0.00%	10,000
Tonga	15,900	15.90%	0.55%	0.01%	100,000
Tuvalu	50	0.50%	0.00%	0.00%	10,000
Vanuatu	33,120	13.80%	1.14%	0.03%	240,000
Wallis and Futuna	9,520	95.20%	0.33%	0.01%	10,000

Chart Source: Tricia Bruce, Stephen Cherry and Jerry Z. Park, *Asian Pacific Islander Catholics in the United States: A Preliminary Report* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015), 31.

CHART 4. ESTIMATED PERCENT CATHOLIC PER PACIFIC ISLAND NATION

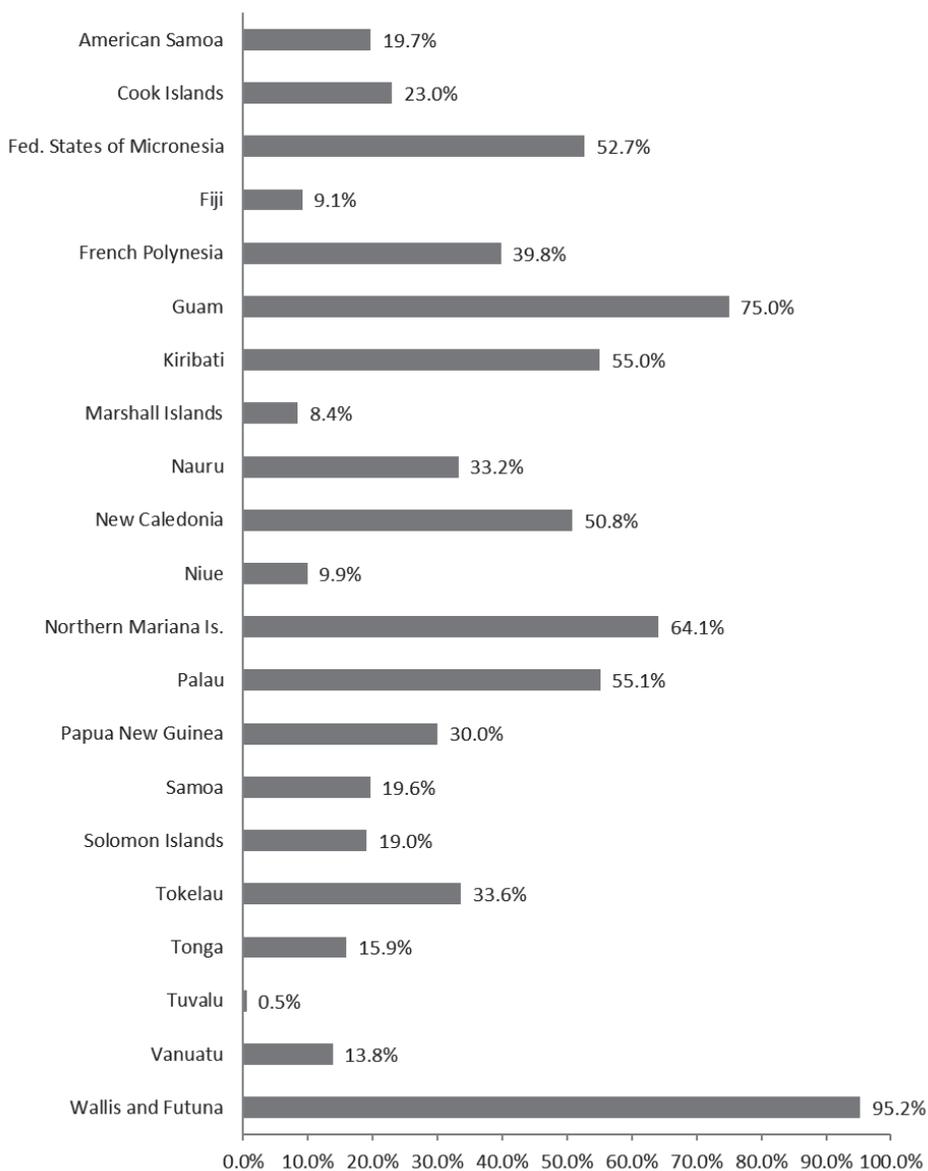


Chart Source: Tricia Bruce, Stephen Cherry and Jerry Z. Park. *Asian Pacific Islander Catholics in the United States: A Preliminary Report* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015), 9.

CHART 5. ASIAN AMERICAN, NATIVE HAWAIIAN, OR
PACIFIC ISLANDER CATHOLICS

<i>USCCB Region</i>	Population	Parishes Serving Community	Population per Parish
<i>I</i>	90,758	16	5,672
<i>II</i>	284,373	18	15,799
<i>III</i>	125,319	42	2,984
<i>IV</i>	140,443	34	4,131
<i>V</i>	51,036	19	2,686
<i>VI</i>	78,241	12	6,520
<i>VII</i>	148,009	21	7,048
<i>VIII</i>	41,461	4	10,365
<i>IX</i>	47,079	17	2,769
<i>X</i>	207,312	49	4,231
<i>XI</i>	1,430,779	105	13,627
<i>XII</i>	168,013	19	8,843
<i>XIII</i>	102,597	13	7,874
<i>XIV</i>	180,103	21	8,576

Chart Source: Thomas Gaunt, SJ, Mary Gautier and Mark Gray, *Cultural Diversity in the Church* (Washington, DC: Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2014), 19.

Resource Page

1. Chamorro culture, history, language

Guampedia: www.guampedia.com

Paleric Blog: paleric.blogspot.com (Blog of the Capuchin Friars on Guam)

2. Catholic Church on Guam

Archdiocese of Agana, Guam: www.aganaarch.org

3. Catholic Church in the Northern Marianas

Diocese of Chalan Kanoa: <https://rcdck.org/>

4. Chamorros in the US mainland

Sons and Daughters of Guam Club: sdguamclubinc.org
(San Diego, CA)

Guam Society of America: guamsociety.org (Washington, DC)

5. Facebook

Chamorro People on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/
groups/205241626199602](http://www.facebook.com/groups/205241626199602)

A people indigenous to the Mariana Islands in the western Pacific, the Chamorros have a strong Catholic heritage, which they brought with them to the United States. The Chamorros are the third largest group of Pacific Islanders in the United States, but perhaps the biggest group of Catholic Pacific Islanders.

The number of Chamorros in the United States grew rapidly in the mid-1900s, immigrating from the Mariana Islands, in particular, Guam. They brought a unique cultural heritage and Catholic traditions that had taken root in the Pacific Island nations since the time that Spanish missionaries evangelized in the 1700s.

This portrait of the Chamorro Catholics in the United States reveals the character and strength of their Catholic faith. This faith is rooted in centuries-old social, cultural, and religious traditions that enhance the richness of Church in the United States.

Visit us at www.USCCB.org.



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