

## Dean Hoge in Australia 2006

**Dean Hoge**  
**Professor of Sociology**  
**Life Cycle Institute**  
**Catholic University of America**  
**Washington, DC.**

Dean Hoge's specialty is the sociology of religion and values. He has carried out numerous studies of clergy, youth, church trends, finances of religious bodies, and attitudes of members of various denominations. Dean has also published articles in numerous sociological and religious journals.



Among his authored or co-authored books are:

- *International Priests in America: Challenges and Opportunities* (2006) (co-author)
- *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood* (2003) (co-author)
- *The First Five Years of the Priesthood* (2002)
- *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in a Culture of Choice* (2001) (co-author)
- *American Catholics: Gender, Generation, and Commitment* (2001) (co-author)
- *Laité: American and Catholic: transforming the Church* (1996) (co-author)
- *The Future of Catholic Leadership: Responses to the Priest Shortage* (1987)

Accepting the 'Father Louis J. Luzbetak Award' from the National Institute for the Renewal of the Priesthood in 2003, Dean said that he agreed with the argument by religion writer Peter Steinfels, in his book, *A People Adrift*, that the Catholic Church in the United States is in the midst of a major transition brought on by a number of converging forces, including the growing shortage of priests and religious sisters. He quoted Steinfels: "Leadership by priests and nuns is giving way to leadership by lay people. Nobody can stop it."

He continued: "Not everyone agrees with Steinfels. But after studying the situation for two decades, I agree with him. We do not have the option of keeping things in place as they were prior to the 1970s and 1980s."

He said Steinfels' assessment of the church's increasing reliance on lay ministry for parish life challenges Catholics to "produce the kind of Catholic institutions the world needs."

"A transition is ahead and we should not deny it," he said. "Nor should we fear it. The Gospel is the same and the mission of the Church is the same. Only the social situation is different. We must rethink institutional policies, and we must do it collaboratively, earnestly, with prayer and with as much discernment as possible."

He urged sociologists to show the Catholic leadership what research can do to help them meet such challenges. But he also reminded his listeners that the role of research is limited, like the instrument panel on which an airplane pilot relies. "The information it provides must be reliable, accurate and uncolored by partisan references. If it not reliable and unbiased, the pilot will not trust it."

The topic of Dean's latest book is 'international' priests — priests from other countries — working in the United States. He and his co-author surveyed dioceses and religious institutes about their policies, then surveyed a sample of foreign priests about their experiences and recommendations. The book raises issues about ministry, vocations, missions and finances without attempting to settle them: it is a social science analysis, not a theological one.

"I grew up in Ohio, attended Ohio State University, then Harvard Divinity School. After finishing Harvard Divinity School with an M.Div. degree I shifted to sociology and finished a Ph.D. in sociology at Harvard, where I studied under Robert Bellah. My first job was at Princeton Theological Seminary (a Protestant school). I am a Presbyterian layman, and I have done research on both Protestants and Catholics."

Dean Hoge was elected as the President of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, a position he will take up in October 2007.

**Dean Hoge was recently in Australia as a guest of the Pastoral Projects Office (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference). For more information, please contact Audra Kuncinunas at the Pastoral Projects Office, 03 9953 3458 or [audra.kuncinunas@ppo.catholic.org.au](mailto:audra.kuncinunas@ppo.catholic.org.au).**