

Administration of Space

Learning Outcome 6.3.6

Compare the administrative organization of hierarchical and locally autonomous religions.

Followers of a universalizing religion must be connected in order to ensure communication and consistency of doctrine. The method of interaction varies among universalizing religions, branches, and denominations. Ethnic religions tend not to have organized, central authorities.

HIERARCHICAL RELIGIONS

A **hierarchical religion** has a well-defined geographic structure and organizes territory into local administrative units. Roman Catholicism provides a good example of a hierarchical religion.

LATTER-DAY SAINTS. Latter-day Saints (Mormons) exercise strong organization of the landscape. The territory occupied by Mormons, primarily Utah and portions of surrounding states, is organized into wards, with populations of approximately 750 each. Several wards are combined into a stake of approximately 5,000 people. The highest authority in the Church—the board and president—frequently redraws ward and stake boundaries in rapidly growing areas to reflect the ideal population standards.

ROMAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY. The Roman Catholic Church has organized much of Earth's inhabited land into an administrative structure ultimately accountable to the

Pope in Rome (Figure 6-40). Here is the top hierarchy of Roman Catholicism:

- The *Pope* is also the bishop of the Diocese of Rome.
- *Archbishops* report to the Pope. Each heads a province, which is a group of several dioceses. The archbishop also is bishop of one diocese within the province, and some distinguished archbishops are elevated to the rank of cardinal.
- *Bishops* report to an archbishop. Each administers a diocese, which is the basic unit of geographic organization in the Roman Catholic Church. The bishop's headquarters, called a "see," is typically the largest city in the diocese.
- *Priests* report to bishops. A diocese is spatially divided into parishes, each headed by a priest.

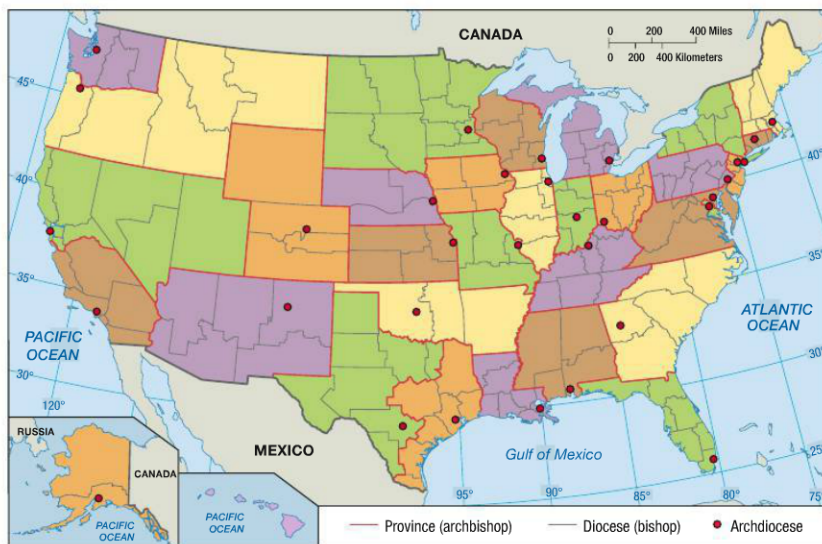
Pause and Reflect 6.3.6

What are the different spatial units of administration in the Roman Catholic Church?

The area and population of parishes and dioceses vary according to historical factors and the distribution of Roman Catholics across Earth's surface. In parts of Europe, the overwhelming majority of the dense population is Roman Catholic. Consequently, the density of parishes is high. A typical parish may encompass only a few square kilometers and fewer than 1,000 people. At the other extreme, Latin American parishes may encompass several hundred square kilometers and 5,000 people. The more dispersed Latin American distribution is attributable partly to a lower population density than in Europe.

Because Roman Catholicism is a hierarchical religion, individual parishes must work closely with centrally located officials concerning rituals and procedures. If Latin America followed the European model of small parishes, many would be too remote for the priest to communicate with others in the hierarchy. The less intensive network of Roman Catholic institutions also results in part from colonial traditions, for both Portuguese and Spanish rulers discouraged parish development in Latin America.

The Roman Catholic population is growing rapidly in the U.S. Southwest and in suburbs of some large North American and European cities. Some of these areas have a low density of parishes and dioceses compared to the population, so the Church must adjust its territorial organization. New local administrative units can be



▲ **FIGURE 6-40 ROMAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY IN THE UNITED STATES** The Roman Catholic Church divides the United States into provinces, each headed by an archbishop. Provinces are subdivided into dioceses, each headed by a bishop. The archbishop of a province also serves as the bishop of a diocese. Dioceses that are headed by archbishops are called archdioceses.

created, although funds to provide the desired number of churches, schools, and other religious structures might be scarce. Conversely, the Roman Catholic population is declining in inner cities and rural areas. Maintaining services in these areas is expensive, but the process of combining parishes and closing schools is very difficult.

LOCALLY AUTONOMOUS RELIGIONS

Some universalizing religions are highly **autonomous religions**, or self-sufficient, and interaction among communities is confined to little more than loose cooperation and shared ideas. Islam and some Protestant denominations are good examples.

LOCAL AUTONOMY IN ISLAM. Among the three large universalizing religions, Islam provides the most local autonomy. Like other locally autonomous religions, Islam has neither a religious hierarchy nor a formal territorial organization. A mosque is a place for public ceremony, and a leader known as a *muezzin* calls the faithful to prayer (Figure 6-41), but everyone is expected to participate equally in the rituals and is encouraged to pray privately.

In the absence of a hierarchy, the only formal organization of territory in Islam is through the coincidence of religious territory with secular states. Governments in some predominantly Islamic countries include in their

bureaucracy people who administer Islamic institutions. These administrators interpret Islamic law and run welfare programs.

Strong unity in the Islamic world is maintained by a relatively high degree of communication and migration, such as the pilgrimage to Makkah. In addition, uniformity is fostered by Islamic doctrine, which offers more explicit commands than other religions.

PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS. Protestant Christian denominations vary in geographic structure from extremely autonomous to somewhat hierarchical. The Episcopalian, Lutheran, and most Methodist churches have hierarchical structures, somewhat comparable to the Roman Catholic Church. Extremely autonomous denominations such as Baptists and United Church of Christ are organized into self-governing congregations. Each congregation establishes the precise form of worship and selects the leadership.

Presbyterian churches represent an intermediate degree of autonomy. Individual churches are united in a presbytery, several of which in turn are governed by a synod, with a general assembly as ultimate authority over all churches. Each Presbyterian church is governed by an elected board of directors with lay members.

ETHNIC RELIGIONS. Judaism and Hinduism also have no centralized structure of religious control. To conduct a full service, Judaism merely requires the presence of 10 adult males. (Females count in some Jewish communities.)

Hinduism is even more autonomous because worship is usually done alone or with others in the household. Hindus share ideas primarily through undertaking pilgrimages and reading traditional writings.

▼ **FIGURE 6-41** CALLING MUSLIMS TO PRAYER, CAIRO, EGYPT
Muslims are called to prayer by a muezzin, who recites the *shahadah*.



CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 3

Why Do Religions Organize Space in Distinctive Patterns?

- ✓ Religious structures, such as churches and mosques, are prominent features of the landscape.
- ✓ Some religions encourage pilgrimages to holy places.
- ✓ Ethnic religions are more closely tied to their local physical environment than are universalizing religions.
- ✓ The calendar typically revolves around the physical environment in ethnic religions and the founder's life in universalizing religions.
- ✓ Some religions have hierarchical administrative structures, whereas others emphasize local autonomy.