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Psychological type profile and temperament of Catholic priests serving in England, Wales, and Ireland

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ABSTRACT

The present study sets the psychological type profile and temperament of 190 Catholic priests serving in England, Wales, and Ireland alongside the profile of 1,298 Catholic priests reported by Ruppert in 1985. In the current study 68% of priests preferred introversion, 61% preferred sensing, 53% preferred feeling, and 84% preferred judging, confirming the findings of other recent studies of Catholic priests in Australia and Italy of a trend towards introversion, sensing, and judging, and away from feeling. In the current study 55% presented as Epimethean Temperament (SJ) and 21% as Apollonian Temperament (NF), also confirming other recent studies that report a move toward the SJ temperament and away from the NF temperament. The implications of these findings are discussed for the expression and experience of ministry within the Catholic Church.

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Introduction

Psychological type theory and temperament theory offer two complementary lenses through which to illuminate the preferred characteristics of those serving in Christian ministry, to map differences among those serving in different denominations, and to chart changes over time, as either the pool of those candidating for ministry changes or the criteria for selecting candidates are modified. Both psychological type theory and temperament theory are rooted within the same conceptual framework as formulated by Jung (1971) and as developed and modified by the psychometric instruments designed to operationalise those theories, including the Keirseley Temperament Sorter (KTS; Keirseley & Bates, 1978), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI; Myers & McCaulley, 1985), and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS; Francis, 2005).

The common building blocks of psychological type theory and temperament theory, as generated by the family of psychometric instruments including the KTS, MBTI, and FPTS, comprise discussion of two core psychological processes concerning perceiving and evaluating or judging, the orientation of psychological energy, and the attitude toward the external world. The distinguishing characteristic of the Jungian approach to discussing

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these four core psychological characteristics (the perceiving process, the judging process, the energy orientation, and the attitude toward the external world) is to consider each of them as presenting in two contrasting modes and to propose that individuals instinctively prefer one of these modes more than the other. It is the preferred mode that is trusted, practised, and developed, to the comparative neglect of the less preferred mode.

The two modes in which the energy orientations are recognised have been styled extraversion and introversion. Those who prefer extraversion tend to be energised by engagement with others. Those who prefer introversion tend to be energised by solitude and inner reflection. The two modes in which the perceiving process operates have been styled sensing and intuition. Those who prefer sensing tend to build their picture of the world by paying close attention to detail and to facts. Those who prefer intuition tend to build their picture of the world by giving priority to the bigger vision and to theories. The two modes in which the evaluating or judging process operates have been styled thinking and feeling. Those who prefer thinking tend to evaluate situations on the basis of objective logic. Those who prefer feeling tend to evaluate situations on the basis of subjective values. The two attitudes toward the external world have been styled judging and perceiving. Those who prefer judging employ their preferred judging function (either thinking or feeling) to operate in the external world, with the consequence that their external world is well structured and organised. Those who prefer perceiving employ their preferred perceiving function (either sensing or intuition) to operate in the external world, with the consequence that their external world is flexible and spontaneous.

What distinguishes temperament theory from psychological type theory is the way in which these common building blocks are put together. Psychological type theory discusses individuals in regard to each of their four dichotomous preferences, sometime taking each preference separately and sometimes combining the four individual preferences into 16 complete types. Applying the notion of type dynamics, these 16 complete types can generate a rich and nuanced account of how individuals perform in different situations. This rich and nuanced account has been applied to clergy by Osborne (2016) and by Ross and Francis (2020). Temperament theory discusses individuals in regard to four specific combinations of type preferences. Keirsey and Bates (1978) distinguished among four temperaments rooted within the perceiving process. They categorised individuals who prefer sensing according to their preferred attitude toward the external world, distinguishing between SJs (the Epimethean Temperament) and SPs (the Dionysian Temperament). They categorised individuals who prefer intuition according to their preferred judging function, distinguishing between NTs (the Promeathan Temperament) and NFs (the Apollonian Temperament). This focused account has been applied to clergy by Oswald and Kroeger (1988).

Population studies have made it clear that the common building blocks of psychological type theory are not evenly distributed (Kendall, 1998). In terms of the perceiving process, sensing is preferred by many more people than intuition. Population studies have also made it clear that the common building blocks of psychological type theory are distributed differently among men and among women. In terms of the judging process, thinking is more highly preferred among men, while feeling is more highly preferred among women. For example, the population norms for the UK published by Kendall (1998) show that among men: 53% prefer introversion and 47% prefer extraversion; 73% prefer sensing and 27% prefer intuition; 35% prefer feeling and 65% prefer

thinking; 55% prefer judging and 45% prefer perceiving. Among women: 43% prefer introversion and 57% prefer extraversion; 79% prefer sensing and 21% prefer intuition; 70% prefer feeling and 30% prefer thinking; 62% prefer judging and 39% prefer perceiving.

Clergy temperament styles

In their book, *Personality Type and Religious Leadership*, Oswald and Kroeger (1988) create profiles of how the four temperaments proposed by Keirsey and Bates (1978) shape four very different styles of religious leadership. The Epimethean Temperament (SJ) is styled “the conserving, serving pastor”. SJ clergy tend to be the most traditional of all clergy temperaments, bringing stability and continuity in whatever situation they are called to serve. They proclaim a single and straightforward faith, committed to down-to-earth rules for the Christian life. They serve as protectors and conservers of the traditions inherited from the past. If change is to take place, it emerges by evolution, not revolution. They excel at building community, fostering a sense of loyalty and belonging. They bring order and stability to their congregations, creating plans, developing procedures and formulating policies; and they are keen that these procedures should be followed. They can be trusted for their reliability, punctuality and efficiency. They are effective pastors, showing particular concern for the young, the elderly, and the weak. They are realists who offer practical and down-to-earth solutions to pastoral problems.

The Dionysian Temperament (SP) is styled “the action-oriented pastor”. SP clergy tend to be the most fun loving of all clergy temperaments, possessing a compulsive need to be engaged in activity. They have little need for or interest in the abstract, the theoretical, and the non-practical aspects of theology and church life. They are flexible and spontaneous people who welcome the unplanned and unpredictable aspects of church life. They can bring the church to life with activities for everyone from cradle to grave. They have a flare for grasping the moment. They are entertainers and performers at heart. They are at their best in a crisis and are good at handling conflict resolution. They are fun loving and enjoy working with children and young people. They are better at starting new initiatives than at seeing things through.

The Promethean Temperament (NT) is styled “the intellectual, competence-seeking pastor”. NT clergy are the most academically and intellectually grounded of all clergy temperaments, motivated by the search for meaning for truth and for possibilities. They are visionaries who need to excel in all they do, and they tend to push their congregations to excel as well. They enjoy the academic study and analysis of the faith, and may try to run their church as an extension of the seminary. They make great teachers, preachers, and advocates for social justice. They look for underlying principles rather than basic applications from their study of scripture. They see the value of opposing views and strive to allow alternative visions to be heard. They are more concerned with finding truth than with engineering harmony and compromise. NT clergy need to be challenged in their ministry and to be able to move from one challenge to the next.

The Apollonian Temperament (NF) is styled “the authenticity-seeking, relationship-oriented pastor”. NF clergy tend to be the most idealistic and romantic of all clergy temperaments, attracted to helping roles that deal with human suffering. They want to meet the needs of others and to find personal affirmation in so doing. They can be articulate

and inspiring communicators, committed to influencing others by touching their hearts. They have good empathic capacity, interpersonal skills, and pastoral counselling techniques. They find themselves listening to other people's problems in the most unlikely contexts, and really caring about them. NF clergy tend to be high on inspiration, but lower on the practical down-to-earth aspects of ministry. They are able to draw the best out of people and work well as the catalyst or facilitator in the congregation as long as others are on hand to work with and to implement their vision. They are at their best when leading in people-related projects, such as starting a project for the elderly or for youth. They are most comfortable in unstructured meetings where they are good at facilitating group decision-making processes.

Atlas of type tables

In their classic *Atlas of Type Tables*, Macdaid et al. (1986) drew together the available research at that time regarding the psychological type profile of different groups of people whom they classified within the following categories: art and communication; business and management; counselling and mental health; education; engineering; science and technology; government, justice, and military; health; industry, service, and trade; religion; and students. Within the section on business and management, they assembled 53 type tables that distinguished among different relevant groups. Within the section on religion, they assembled 15 type tables that presented the profiles of: 114 brothers in Roman Catholic religious orders; 1,205 candidates for theology education; 534 clergy defined as "all denominations, except priests"; 50 directors of religious education; 1,147 nuns and other religious workers; 102 ordained Roman Catholic deacons; 219 priests and monks; 1,554 Protestant ministers; 633 Protestant seminarians; 85 Protestants in specialised ministries; 319 rabbis; 79 religious educators, across all denominations; 1,298 Roman Catholic priests; 51 Roman Catholic seminarians; and 2,002 sisters in Roman Catholic religious orders.

From this classic atlas of type tables comparison between the 1,554 Protestant ministers and 1,298 Catholic priests generates some insights into what these two groups shared in common and into ways in which they differed. The striking resemblance between the two groups concerned their shared preference for feeling over thinking. This was the case for 80% of the Catholic priests and for 77% of the Protestant ministers. This finding is of particular significance against the more general finding that men tend to prefer thinking. For example, in the UK population norms 35% men prefer feeling (Kendall, 1998). There was also a shared preference for judging over perceiving, with 71% of the Catholic priests and 68% of the Protestant ministers preferring judging. Differences between the two groups emerged in terms of the orientations, with 57% of the Protestant ministers preferring extraversion, compared with 48% of the Catholic priests. Differences between the two groups also emerged in terms of the perceiving functions, with 62% of the Protestant ministers preferring intuition, compared with 46% of the Catholic priests.

The difference in psychological type preferences were also reflected in differences in temperaments. The difference in temperaments was clearest in respect of the Epimethean Temperament (SJ) which was the position occupied by 46% of the Catholic priests, compared with 32% of the Protestant ministers. This difference suggests a more conservative approach among Catholic priests, compared with Protestant ministers.

Building on the foundation studies archived in the *Atlas of Type Tables* (Macdaid et al., 1986), more recent studies have set out to map the psychological type profile and temperament of religious leaders working across a number of denominations, using the FPT5 (Francis, 2005). These studies include surveys conducted among 134 lead elders within the Newfrontiers network of churches (Francis et al., 2009a), 101 Church of England clergy engaged in ministry as full-time hospital chaplains (Francis et al., 2009b), 1,004 Methodist ministers in Britain (Burton et al., 2010), 231 Anglican clergymen serving in the Church in Wales (Francis et al., 2010), 39 Local Ordained Ministers serving in the Church of England (Francis & Holmes, 2011), 561 clergy serving in the Presbyterian Church (USA) (Francis et al., 2011), 529 clergymen and 518 clergywomen ordained in the Anglican Church in the United Kingdom from 2004 to 2007 (Village, 2011), 164 male apostolic network leaders (Kay et al., 2011), 154 leaders within the Newfrontiers network of churches (Francis et al., 2012c), 144 clergywomen serving in Local Ordained Ministry in the Church of England (Francis et al., 2012b), 306 Catholic priests serving in Australia (Francis et al., 2012a), 56 clergymen and 79 clergywomen serving in Local Ordained Ministry in the Church of England (Francis & Village, 2012), 845 lay church leaders in Australia (Powell et al., 2012), 55 Catholic priests serving in the USA (Burns et al., 2013), 168 bishops, serving or retired, in the Church of England (Francis et al., 2013), 155 volunteer Christian youth leaders in Northern Ireland (Hamill & Francis, 2013), 236 readers serving in the Church of England (Francis et al., 2014), 89 and 26 clergymen serving in the Reformed Church in America (Royle et al., 2015), 117 Singaporean Pentecostal pastors (Robbins & Kay, 2015), 155 Catholic priests serving in Italy (Francis & Crea, 2015), 268 Anglican clergymen serving in the Church in Wales (Payne & Lewis, 2015), 120 clergywomen and 436 clergymen from Protestant denominations in Australia (Robbins & Powell, 2015), 1,480 Church of England clergy, mainly stipendiary (Watt & Voas, 2015), 336 Canadian Baptist youth leaders (Francis et al., 2016), 95 Catholic priests and 61 religious sisters in Italy (Francis & Crea, 2018), 80 male and 62 female Methodist local preachers in England (Francis & Stevenson, 2018), 90 male and female curates under the age of forty serving in the Church of England (Francis & Smith, 2018), 186 serving or retired male archdeacons in the Church of England (Francis & Whinney, 2019), 105 Catholic priests in Italy (Crea, 2021), 434 Salvation Army Officers serving in the UK (ap Siôn & Francis, 2022), and 283 ministers linked to the Baptist Union of Great Britain (Garland & Village, 2021).

Changing profile of Catholic priests

The profile of 1,298 Catholic priests published by Macdaid et al. (1986) in their *Atlas of Type Tables*, and derived from Ruppert (1985) may provide a base line against which

Table 1. Psychological type profile of Catholic priests.

Source	Location	N	I	E	S	N	T	F	J	P	SJ	SP	NF	NT
Ruppert (1985)	USA	1298	52	48	54	46	20	80	71	29	46	8	40	5
Craig et al. (2006)	UK	79	62	38	51	49	22	79	66	34	39	11	43	6
Francis et al. (2012a)	Australia	306	58	42	77	23	33	67	84	16	68	9	18	6
Burns et al. (2013)	USA	55	67	33	64	36	51	49	91	9	62	2	24	13
Francis and Crea (2015)	Italy	155	59	41	81	19	40	60	92	8	76	5	12	8
Francis and Crea (2018)	Italy	95	57	43	81	19	46	54	87	13	71	11	8	11
Crea (2021)	Italy	105	59	41	81	19	46	54	84	16	71	11	9	11

more recent studies can be located. [Table 1](#) summarises alongside the foundation study of Ruppert (1985), six more recently published studies of 79 priests in the United Kingdom (Craig et al., 2006), 306 priests in Australia (Francis et al., 2012a), 55 priests in the USA (Burns et al., 2013), 155 priests in Italy (Francis & Crea, 2015), 95 priests in Italy (Francis & Crea, 2018), and 105 priests in Italy (Crea, 2021). The following observations emerge from this table. Since Ruppert's (1985) study the proportion of introverts among priests has increased, the proportion of sensing types has increased, the proportion of judging types has increased, and the proportion of feeling types has decreased.

Since Ruppert's (1985) study, two clear shifts have taken place in respect of temperament types. There has been an increase in the Epimethean Temperament and a decrease in the Apollonian Temperament. Growth in the Epimethean Temperament signals a tightening of the reigns and greater conservatism. Decline in the Apollonian Temperament signals a lowering of pastoral care and a lowering of close personal engagement in the needs of others.

Research question

It is against this background that the present study was designed to examine the psychological type profile and temperament of Catholic priests serving in England, Wales, and Ireland who participated in the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey*. This survey collected information about the psychological profile of priests in order to explore the impact of psychological factors, alongside personal factors like age, in accounting for individual differences in response to the pandemic. The present study is not concerned with the pandemic-related aspects of the survey that have been reported elsewhere by Francis and Village (2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e, 2021f), Francis et al. (2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c), McKenna (in press), and Village and Francis (2020, 2021a, 2021b, in press a, in press b).

Method

Procedure

Following the lockdown in England by the government on 23 March 2020 and the closure of churches by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York the following day, an online survey was developed, using the Qualtrics platform. A link to the survey was distributed through the *Church Times* from 8 May 2020. The link was also distributed through a number of Church of England dioceses and through a number of Catholic dioceses in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland.

Instrument

Psychological type was assessed by the FPTs (Francis, 2005; Francis et al., 2017; Village, 2021). This is a 40-item instrument comprising four sets of 10 forced-choice items related to each of the four components of psychological type: orientation (extraversion or introversion), perceiving process (sensing or intuition), judging process (thinking or feeling), and attitude toward the outer world (judging or perceiving). Recent studies

have demonstrated that this instrument functions well in church-related contexts. For example, Francis et al. (2008) reported alpha coefficients of .83 for the EI Scale, .76 for the SN Scale, .73 for the TF Scale, and .79 for the JP Scale. Participants were asked for each pair of characteristics to check the “box next to that characteristic which is closer to the real you, even if you feel both characteristics apply to you. Tick the characteristics that reflect the real you, even if other people see you differently”.

Participants

The FPTS were completed by 190 Catholic priests serving in England, Wales, and Ireland: 57% from England, 2% from Wales, 6% from Northern Ireland, and 35% from the Republic of Ireland. In terms of age, 5% were in their thirties, 7% in their forties, 28% in their fifties, 36% in their sixties, 22% in their seventies, and 3% in their eighties.

Data analysis

The research literature concerning the empirical investigation of psychological type has developed a highly distinctive method for analyzing, handling, and displaying statistical data in the form of “type tables” (see Macdaid et al., 1986). This convention has been adopted in the following presentation in order to integrate these new data within the established literature and to provide all the detail necessary for secondary analysis and further interpretation within the rich theoretical framework afforded by psychological type. Type tables have been designed to provide information about the sixteen discrete psychological types, about the four dichotomous preferences, about the six sets of pairs and temperaments, about the dominant types, and about the introverted and extraverted Jungian types. Commentary on this table will, however, be restricted to those aspects of the data strictly relevant to the research question.

Results

Table 2 presents the type distribution of the 190 Catholic priests serving in England, Wales, and Ireland. These data demonstrate clear preferences for introversion (68%) over extraversion (32%), for sensing (61%) over intuition (39%), and for judging (84%) over perceiving (16%), as well as mild preference for feeling (52%) over thinking (47%). The most frequently reported of the 16 complete types was ISTJ that accounted for almost one in every four priests (24%), followed by ISJF (16%). In terms of temperament, the most frequently reported was the Epimethean Temperament (SJ) at 55%, followed by the Apollonian Temperament (NF) at 21%, the Promethean Temperament (NT) at 18%, and the Dionysian Temperament (SP) at 6%.

Conclusion

The aim of the present paper was to report on the psychological type profile and temperament of the Catholic priests who participated in the *Coronavirus, Church & You Survey* and to set this profile alongside the foundation study among 1,298 Catholic priests in the USA reported by Ruppert (1985) and the six subsequent studies reported by Craig et al. (2006),

Table 2. Type distribution for Catholic priests serving in England, Wales, and Ireland.

The sixteen complete types				Dichotomous preferences				
ISTJ <i>n</i> = 45 (23.7%) +++++	ISFJ <i>n</i> = 31 (16.3%) +++++	INFJ <i>n</i> = 15 (7.9%) +++++	INTJ <i>n</i> = 19 (10.0%) +++++	E <i>n</i> = 61 (32.1%)	I <i>n</i> = 129 (67.9%)			
+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	S <i>n</i> = 116 (61.1%)				
+++++	+++++	+++	+++++	N <i>n</i> = 74 (38.9%)				
+++++	+++++							
+++++	+			T <i>n</i> = 90 (47.4%)				
+++++				F <i>n</i> = 100 (52.6%)				
				J <i>n</i> = 159 (83.7%)				
				P <i>n</i> = 31 (16.3%)				
ISTP <i>n</i> = 2 (1.1%) +	ISFP <i>n</i> = 7 (3.7%) +++++	INFP <i>n</i> = 6 (3.2%) +++	INTP <i>n</i> = 4 (2.1%) ++	Pairs and Temperaments				
				IJ <i>n</i> = 110 (57.9%)				
				IP <i>n</i> = 19 (10.0%)				
				EP <i>n</i> = 12 (6.3%)				
				EJ <i>n</i> = 49 (25.8%)				
				ST <i>n</i> = 55 (28.9%)				
				SF <i>n</i> = 61 (32.1%)				
				NF <i>n</i> = 39 (20.5%)				
ESTP <i>n</i> = 0 (.0%)	ESFP <i>n</i> = 3 (1.6%) ++	ENFP <i>n</i> = 6 (3.2%) +++	ENTP <i>n</i> = 3 (1.6%) ++	NT <i>n</i> = 35 (18.4%)				
				SJ <i>n</i> = 104 (54.7%)				
				SP <i>n</i> = 12 (6.3%)				
				NP <i>n</i> = 19 (10.0%)				
				NJ <i>n</i> = 55 (28.9%)				
				TJ <i>n</i> = 81 (42.6%)				
				TP <i>n</i> = 9 (4.7%)				
				FP <i>n</i> = 22 (11.6%)				
				FJ <i>n</i> = 78 (41.1%)				
ESTJ <i>n</i> = 8 (4.2%) +++++	ESFJ <i>n</i> = 20 (10.5%) +++++	ENFJ <i>n</i> = 12 (6.3%) +++++	ENTJ <i>n</i> = 9 (4.7%) +++++	IN <i>n</i> = 44 (23.2%)				
	+++++	+		EN <i>n</i> = 30 (15.8%)				
				IS <i>n</i> = 85 (44.7%)				
				ES <i>n</i> = 31 (16.3%)				
				ET <i>n</i> = 20 (10.5%)				
				EF <i>n</i> = 41 (21.6%)				
				IF <i>n</i> = 59 (31.1%)				
				IT <i>n</i> = 70 (36.8%)				
Jungian Types (E)				Jungian Types (I)		Dominant Types		
	<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
E-TJ	17	8.9	I-TP	6	3.2	Dt.T	23	12.1
E-FJ	32	16.8	I-FP	13	6.8	Dt.F	45	23.7
ES-P	3	1.6	IS-J	76	40.0	Dt.S	79	41.6
EN-P	9	4.4	IN-J	34	17.9	Dt.N	43	22.6

Note: *N* = 190 (NB: + = 1% of *N*).

Francis et al. (2012a), Burns et al. (2013), Francis and Crea (2015, 2018), and Crea (2021). These six subsequent studies had identified six trends in the changing profile of Catholic priests.

The first trend suggested a shift toward a greater concentration of introverts in the priesthood. In Ruppert’s (1985) study, 52% of priests preferred introversion, while the proportions reported in the subsequent six studies were 57, 58, 59, 59, 62, and 67%. The findings from the present study are consistent with this trend: 68% of the priests from England, Wales and Ireland preferred introversion.

The second trend suggested a shift toward a greater concentration of sensing types. In Ruppert’s (1985) study, 54% of priests preferred sensing, while the proportions in the

subsequent six studies were 51, 64, 77, 81, 81, and 81%. The findings from the present study are consistent with this trend, although the move toward sensing was not as marked as in some of the other recent studies: 61% of the priests from England, Wales, and Ireland preferred sensing.

The third trend suggested a shift away from a preference for feeling. In Ruppert's (1985) study 80% of priests preferred feeling, while the proportions in the subsequent six studies were 79, 67, 60, 54, 54, and 49%. The findings from the present study are consistent with this trend: 53% of priests from England, Wales, and Ireland preferred feeling.

The fourth trend suggested a shift toward a greater concentration of judging types in the priesthood. In Ruppert's (1985) study, already 71% of priests preferred judging, while the proportions in the subsequent six studies were 66, 84, 84, 87, 91, and 92%. The findings from the present study are consistent with this trend: 84% of priests from England, Wales, and Ireland preferred judging.

The fifth trend suggested a shift toward a greater concentration of the Epimethean Temperament (SJ) in the priesthood. In Ruppert's (1985) study 46% of priests presented as SJs, while the proportions in the subsequent six studies were 39, 62, 68, 71, 71, and 76%. The findings from the present study are consistent with this trend, but not so extreme: 55% of priests from England, Wales, and Ireland presented as SJs.

The sixth trend suggested a shift toward a lower presence of the Apollonian Temperament (NF) in the priesthood. In Ruppert's (1985) study, 40% of priests presented as NFs, while the proportions in the subsequent six studies were 43, 24, 18, 12, 9, and 8%. The findings from the present study are consistent with this trend, but not so extreme: 21% of priests from England, Wales, and Ireland presented as NFs.

These six trends all have implications for the ways in which ministry may be expressed by Catholic priests and for the way in which ministry may be experienced with Catholic congregations and Catholic parishes. With the shift toward a greater concentration of introversion, there may be less visibility of the Catholic priest in public and social engagement. With the shift toward greater concentration of sensing types, there may be less vision for shaping the future among Catholic priests. With the shift away from such concentration on feeling toward greater emergence of thinking, there may be less concern for promoting harmony in the parish and in the congregation and a greater appetite to tackle tougher issues. With a shift toward a greater concentration of judging types, there may be a growing sense of rigidity in church life, with decreasing opportunities for flexibility, spontaneity, and fun.

Added nuance to the cumulative impact of these four trends considered separately comes with consideration of the two main shifts in the concentration of temperaments. The increased presence of the Epimethean Temperament (SJ) among priests may add important stability and conservatism during a period of church decline, with an appropriate emphasis on palliative care rather than a resurrection hope and expressions of fresh life. The decreased presence of the Apollonian Temperament (NF) may deprive the Church of the creative innovation (that comes from intuition) coupled with salvific care (that comes from feeling) when dealing with the painful experience of restructure and reshaping for life in increasingly secular and post-Christian societies.

The clear limitation with the present study is that it was based on secondary analysis of an online survey designed to explore the responses of clergy and laity to the pandemic. There is no guarantee that the Catholic priests who participated in the survey are really

representative of the priesthood today. In spite of this limitation what is remarkable is the way in which the findings of the present survey fit so well with the trajectory mapped by the set of six previous studies, compared with the foundation study reported by Ruppert (1985). Perhaps the findings are sufficiently intriguing to justify a more systematic replication study among Catholic priests serving in England, Wales, and Ireland.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee for the School of Humanities, Religion and Philosophy at York St John University (approval code: HRP-RS-AV-04-20-01). All participants had to affirm they were 18 or over and give their informed consent by clicking a box that gave access to the rest of the survey.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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