



*Sacraments Today:  
Belief and Practice among  
U.S. Catholics*

**Center for Applied Research  
in the Apostolate**  
Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C.

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## Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University

Putting social science research at the service of the Church since 1964.

CARA is a national, non-profit, Georgetown University affiliated research center that conducts social scientific studies about Catholicism and the Catholic Church. Founded in 1964, CARA has been affiliated with Georgetown University since 1989. CARA has three major dimensions to its mission: to increase the Church's self understanding; to serve the applied research needs of Church decision-makers; and to advance scholarly research on religion, particularly Catholicism.

CARA's longstanding policy is to let research findings stand on their own and never take an advocacy position or go into areas outside its social science competence. All CARA researchers have advanced degrees in relevant social science disciplines. CARA researchers are Georgetown faculty members and are active in the academic community publishing in peer-reviewed journals and presenting research about the Catholic Church at professional academic conferences.

### **The CARA Inspiration:**

*In pastoral care, sufficient use must be made not only of theological principles, but also the findings of the secular sciences, especially of psychology and sociology, so that the faithful may be brought to a more accurate and mature life of faith.*

—The Second Vatican Council Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World  
(*Gaudium et Spes*)

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# ***Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics***

## **Executive Summary**

In December 2007 the Department of Communications of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of adult Catholics in the United States. The focus of the survey is participation in the sacramental life of the Church as well as beliefs about the sacraments.<sup>1</sup> However, the poll also addresses many other issues of importance to the Church, including other forms of participation in Church life and other teachings of Catholicism. A questionnaire was designed by CARA in consultation with the Department of Communications. See Appendix I for the complete questionnaire. The following are among the major topic areas:

- How Catholics have entered the Church
- The general sacramental lives of Catholics
- The Mass and Eucharist
- Reconciliation
- Anointing of the Sick
- Ordinations and vocations
- Religious devotions and practices in daily life
- General Catholic beliefs and attitudes

In February 2008 CARA surveyed 1,007 self-identified adult Catholics from Knowledge Networks large national panel of households, which have been assembled by regular random telephone survey methods (probability sampling).<sup>2</sup> A survey with this number of respondents has a margin of sampling error of  $\pm 3.1$  percent. As a rule of thumb, every 1 percentage point of the total adult Catholic population is equivalent to approximately 500,000 persons.<sup>3</sup> The Knowledge Networks panel is known to closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the U.S. population.<sup>4</sup> The panel is updated on a quarterly basis and those persons who are sampled and asked to join the Knowledge Networks panel receive subsidized Internet access and

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<sup>1</sup> The sacrament of Marriage was studied in a previous poll commissioned by the Committee on Marriage and Family Life of the USCCB. The complete report for this study, *Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics*, is available on the CARA website: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/MarriageReport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> CARA has conducted national Catholic surveys with Knowledge Networks on six previous occasions since 2002.

<sup>3</sup> CARA Catholic Polls (CCP), national random-digit dial telephone polls, consistently estimate that between 22 and 23 percent of the adult population in the U.S. self identifies as Catholic. Taking this proportion of the most recent Census Bureau estimates for the size of the U.S. adult population we estimate that 1 percent of the adult Catholic population is approximately equivalent to 500,000 persons (or more specifically 510,300 as of April 2008).

<sup>4</sup> The Knowledge Networks panel has been shown to be representative to well within 1 percentage point to the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) demographics for gender, age, race and ethnicity, education, and region. See Baker et al. (2003), "Validity of the Survey of Health and Internet and Knowledge Networks Panel and Sampling," Stanford University and Krosnick and Chiat Chang (2001), "A Comparison of Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey Methodology with Internet Survey Methodology as Implemented by Knowledge Networks and Harris Interactive," Ohio State University.

other incentives. For those who do not own computers, Knowledge Networks provides a television-based Internet system (MSN TV) for free. These steps ensure that the Knowledge Networks panel is as reflective as possible of the national population and that it is not biased towards those who have pre-existing access to the Internet.

Throughout the report consistent differences are noted in the responses to the survey made by sub-groups of respondents. The two most important of these subgroups are defined by Mass attendance and generation.

Various social scientific studies of contemporary Catholics have revealed important differences among generations. Older Catholics, especially those who came of age prior to Vatican II, are typically more involved in Church life and attend Mass more frequently than younger generations of Catholics. In general, they tend to score higher on most survey items that measure “commitment” to Catholicism. Knowledge about the Catholic faith also varies by generation and is frequently greatest among older Catholics. However, this depends on the topic. For example, knowledge of Church teachings and obligations is usually higher among older Catholics, but knowledge of the Bible is typically greater among younger generations. Agreement with Church teachings is, again, often relatively high among the oldest Catholics, the Pre-Vatican II Generation (born before 1943). To a lesser extent this is also true of the Millennial Generation, Catholics (born after 1981) currently in their mid-20s and younger. Agreement with Church teaching is typically lowest among the generation of Catholics who came of age during the changes associated with Vatican II (born between 1943 and 1960) and among Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics (born 1961 to 1981) though this too depends on the teaching in question.

Frequency of Mass attendance is a strong indicator of the general importance of Catholicism in a person’s life and of his or her level of commitment to living out the faith. Consequently, analyzing survey responses according to frequency of attendance consistently reveals strong differences among Catholics. In general, the more frequently one attends Mass, the more frequently he or she participates in other Church or religious activities, the greater his or her knowledge about the Catholic faith, the greater his or her awareness of current events in the Church, and the greater his or her adherence to Church teachings.

Major findings of the study are noted below.

## **Major Findings**

### ***Experience of Sacraments***

- Six in ten respondents (61 percent) agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement, “Sacraments are essential to my faith.” More than nine in ten adult Catholics (92 percent) have received their First Communion and 84 percent have celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation. Nearly all weekly Mass attenders and those who have attended Catholic educational institutions have received their First Communion and have been confirmed.

- Older Catholics are more likely than younger Catholics to have celebrated their First Reconciliation, First Communion, or the sacrament of Confirmation. With each generation the percentage having celebrated each of these sacraments decreases. For example, 99 percent of those of the Pre-Vatican II Generation have celebrated their First Communion, compared to 94 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 91 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 85 percent of the Millennial Generation. The differences between generations for the sacrament of Confirmation are even larger. Ninety-five percent of those of the Pre-Vatican II Generation have been confirmed, compared to 91 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 79 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 69 percent of the Millennial Generation.
- Respondents were asked how meaningful each of the seven sacraments are to them. More than eight in ten adult Catholics say the following four are either “somewhat” or “very” meaningful to them: Marriage (89 percent), Baptism (88 percent), the Eucharist (84 percent), and Confirmation (83 percent). Nearly all Catholics (90 percent or more) who attend Mass weekly or more often say *all* seven sacraments are at least “somewhat” meaningful to them.
- Of the seven sacraments, Catholics are *least* likely to say the sacrament of Reconciliation is “somewhat” or “very” meaningful to them. Only two-thirds (66 percent) of adult Catholics responded as such (39 percent “very” meaningful).
- When asked which of the seven sacraments was personally “*most* meaningful” to them, Baptism is selected most often (39 percent). However, weekly Mass attenders are more likely to say the Eucharist is personally “most meaningful” to them (52 percent). Catholics of the Millennial Generation are most likely to select the sacrament of Marriage as being the “most meaningful” (43 percent).
- Respondents with children were asked about the importance they place on their children celebrating their First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation. These parents are most likely to say it is “somewhat” or “very” important that their children celebrate First Communion (81 percent), followed by Confirmation (78 percent), and finally First Reconciliation (77 percent). Nearly all parents who attend Mass at least once a month say it is at least “somewhat” important that their children celebrate all three of these sacraments.

### ***Mass and Eucharist***

- More than three in ten adult Catholics (31.4 percent) are estimated to be attending Mass in *any* given week. This is equivalent to 16.1 million adult Mass attendees per week. Twenty-three percent say they attend Mass *every* week (once a week or more often). This has remained unchanged—within margins of sampling error in the last five years. Mass attendance is highest among Catholics who are older, female, married to another Catholic, who have a college degree or more, and who attended Catholic educational institutions—especially a Catholic college or university.

- Nine in ten or more Mass attending Catholics (attending at least a “few times a year”) say the following aspects of Mass are at least “somewhat” important to them: feeling the presence of God (94 percent), prayer and reflection (93 percent), and receiving Eucharist (92 percent). Aspects of less importance include the music (71 percent) and the Church environment and decorations (66 percent).
- Among Catholics who have celebrated their First Communion, eight in ten (79 percent) who attend Mass at least once a week say they “always” receive Eucharist at Mass. By comparison, 66 percent of those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month receive the Eucharist this often, as do only 31 percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.
- A majority of adult Catholics, 57 percent, say their belief about the Eucharist is reflected best by the statement “Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist,” compared to 43 percent who said their belief is best reflected in the statement, “Bread and wine are symbols of Jesus, but Jesus is not really present.” Among all Catholics, members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation are more likely than all other Catholics to believe that Christ is really present in the Eucharist (70 percent compared to 54 percent). Among Catholics attending Mass at least once a month, those of the youngest generation, the Millennials, are just as likely to believe Christ is really present in the Eucharist as Pre-Vatican II Catholics (85 percent compared to 86 percent). Nine in ten of all weekly Mass attenders (91 percent) say their belief about the Eucharist is reflected best by the statement “Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.”
- Respondents who do not attend Mass weekly were asked about things that might explain why they missed Mass in the last six months. Among Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month, a busy schedule or lack of time (51 percent), family responsibilities (48 percent), or health problems or a disability (41 percent) are the most frequently cited reasons that at least “somewhat” explain why they missed Mass. Among Catholics attending Mass a few times a year or less often, the most common reasons cited that explain at least “somewhat” their missing Mass are that they don’t believe “missing Mass is a sin” (64 percent) and that they are “not a very religious person” (50 percent).
- About a third of respondents (34 percent) agree “strongly” with the statement, “I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.” More than two-thirds (68 percent) agree with this statement at least “somewhat.”
- Eighty-three percent of Mass attending Catholics say it is “somewhat” or “very” important to them that Mass is celebrated in a language they most prefer and 70 percent say it is similarly important that the Mass is celebrated in a way that reflects their ethnic and ancestral culture.
- Only 12 percent of adult Catholics say they “always” attend Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation when these do not fall on a Sunday. Twenty-three percent say they do this “frequently or usually,” 39 percent say they do this “seldom,” and 26 percent say they “never” do this. Forty-one percent of those who attend Mass at least once a week say they “always” attend Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation. Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics are



more than twice as likely as members of any younger generation to say they “always” attend Mass on these days (27 percent compared to 10 percent).

### ***Reconciliation***

- Twenty-six percent of adult Catholics say they participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation once a year or more often (this is equivalent to 13.3 million adults). Only 2 percent of Catholics do so once a month or more often. Thirty percent say they go to Confession less than once a year and 45 percent say they never do so.
- More than six in ten weekly Mass attenders (63 percent) participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation once a year or more often, compared to 37 percent of those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month and only 6 percent of those attending less often.
- Sixty-two percent of Catholics agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement, “I can be a good Catholic without celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year” (33 percent agree “strongly”). Even 54 percent of weekly Mass attenders agree at least “somewhat” with this statement.
- Two-thirds of all adult Catholics agree (67 percent) at least “somewhat” that one must make a confession with contrition for the forgiveness of sins. Forty-eight percent agree similarly that acts of penance or fasting are necessary for this forgiveness. More than half (52 percent) agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that by participating in the sacrament of Reconciliation they are reconciled with God and the Church. One in four Catholics agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement, “The sacrament of Reconciliation is only necessary for the forgiveness of very serious sins” (8 percent agree “strongly”).

### ***Anointing of the Sick***

- Fifty-one percent of respondents have requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at a time of serious illness, either for themselves or for a family member. This is more common among those of the Pre-Vatican II (53 percent) and Vatican II (59 percent) generations than among those of the Post-Vatican II (46 percent) and Millennial (43 percent) generations.
- Forty-five percent of adult Catholics say that receiving the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at some point is “very” important to them. Thirty-one percent say this is “somewhat” important, followed by 14 percent saying this is “a little” important, and 10 percent saying it is “not at all” important to them.
- Sixty-eight percent of Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more often say that receiving the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at some point is “very” important to them. Twenty-five percent say this is “somewhat” important, followed by 4 percent saying this is “a little” important, and only 3 percent saying it is “not at all” important to them.

- Women are more likely than men to say it is “very” important that they receive this sacrament (51 percent compared to 39 percent). Pre-Vatican II Catholics are most likely to say this is “somewhat” or “very” important (88 percent).

### ***Ordination and Vocations***

- Thirteen percent of adult Catholics have attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest. Among weekly Mass attenders the percentage is slightly higher (20 percent).
- Fifty-four percent of adult Catholics agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement, “Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.”
- Sixteen percent of adult Catholic men say they have considered becoming a priest or religious brother. About one in ten adult Catholic men (9 percent) say they considered this at least “somewhat” seriously (3 percent “very” seriously). The percentage of men who say they considered this “somewhat” or “very” seriously is equivalent to more than 2.2 million individuals.
- Catholic men who attended a Catholic college or university are among the most likely sub-groups to say they ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother (40 percent) and did so at least “somewhat” seriously (26 percent).
- Five percent of adult Catholic men say they have considered becoming a permanent deacon (3 percent at least “somewhat” seriously). The percentage of men who say they considered this “somewhat” or “very” seriously is equivalent to more than 760,000 individuals.
- Fifteen percent of adult Catholic women say they have considered becoming a nun or religious sister (5 percent at least “somewhat” seriously). The percentage of women who say they considered this “somewhat” or “very” seriously is equivalent to nearly 1.3 million individuals.
- Catholic women who attended a Catholic college or university are among the most likely to say they have considered becoming a nun or religious sister (41 percent).
- Taking into account men who considered becoming a priest, brother, *or* a deacon, nearly 4 million adult Catholics, male and female, have considered at least “somewhat” seriously a clerical (males) or religious (males and females) vocation in the Church. Frequency of Mass attendance is *not* significantly related to any differences in the past personal consideration of vocations among Catholics.
- One in ten adult Catholics say they have encouraged someone they know to consider one of these vocations. Six percent say they have encouraged someone to become a priest, followed by 4 percent offering encouragement to become a deacon, 4 percent encouraging someone to

become a religious sister or nun, and 3 percent offering encouragement to become a religious brother.

- Catholics' current frequency of Mass attendance is related to differences in the likelihood that they have encouraged Catholic vocations among others. Twenty-eight percent of weekly attenders say they have encouraged someone they know to consider a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, sister, or nun. By comparison, 9 percent of those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month and 3 percent of those attending Mass less often have encouraged someone they know to consider a Catholic vocation.
- About a third of all respondents (32 percent) said they would encourage their own child (regardless of parental status) to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun, or sister. There is no statistically significant difference between the responses of those who have children and those who do not (34 percent compared to 32 percent). A majority of weekly Mass attenders (55 percent) say they would encourage their own child to pursue a vocation.

### ***Lenten Practices***

- Six in ten adult Catholics say they abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays. This is equivalent to 30.6 million individuals. Slightly less than half of adult Catholics (45 percent) typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services. A similar proportion (44 percent) say they try to do something positive (as opposed to giving something up) during Lent. Slightly less than four-tenths (38 percent) say they give up something for Lent.
- Nine in ten adult Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more often (89 percent) abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent. Slightly fewer, 85 percent, say they typically receive ashes on Ash Wednesday. Two-thirds of weekly attenders (67 percent) say they give up something for Lent (besides meat on Fridays) and nearly three in four (73 percent) say they make extra efforts to try to do something positive. Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month are only slightly less likely than weekly attenders to observe Lenten practices.
- Among Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month, those of the youngest generation, the Millennials, are the *most* likely to observe Lenten practices. More than nine in ten of these Catholics abstain from meat on Fridays (91 percent) and receive ashes on Ash Wednesday (91 percent). About three-quarters of these young Mass-attending Catholics (74 percent) also give up something during Lent (besides meat on Fridays). A similar percentage (75 percent) makes other extra positive efforts.

### ***Other Religious Devotions and Practices***

- About six in ten adult Catholics (59 percent) have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home (this is equivalent to 30.1 million adult Catholics). This is most common among Hispanics (67 percent) and among weekly Mass attenders (80 percent).
- About a third (32 percent) say they either wear or carry a crucifix or cross and 29 percent say they wear or carry a religious medal or pin of a saint or angel. Fewer, less than one in four, say the same about rosaries (23 percent), prayer cards or coins (20 percent), and scapulars (9 percent).
- Among weekly Mass attenders, 45 percent carry a rosary and 42 percent say they wear or carry a religious medal or pin of a saint or angel. Fewer, less than four in ten, say the same about a cross or crucifix (39 percent), prayer cards or coins (32 percent), and scapulars (17 percent).
- A majority of adult Catholics, 52 percent, say they pray the rosary. Eight percent pray the rosary at least once a week (4 percent say they do so every day). Women are more likely than men to say they pray the rosary at least once a year (62 percent compared to 42 percent). Pre-Vatican II Catholics are most likely to pray the rosary at least once a year (73 percent). Seventy-two percent of weekly Mass attenders say they pray the rosary at least once a year (23 percent say they do so weekly or more often).
- Nearly half of adult Catholics (47 percent) say that their local parish offers opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration. Six percent say their parish does not offer this and 47 percent say they “don’t know.” Three in ten Catholics (29 percent) with local parishes that they know offer Eucharistic Adoration say they have participated in this in the last year. This is equivalent to nearly 14 percent of adult Catholics or approximately 7.1 million individuals.

### ***Other Religious Beliefs***

- More than three in four respondents (77 percent) agree at least “somewhat” with the statement, “I am proud to be Catholic” (56 percent agree “strongly”). More than half (55 percent) agree similarly that, “I think of myself as a practicing Catholic” (33 percent agree “strongly”). More than eight in ten (81 percent) consider their Catholic faith to be important in their daily life (41 percent say that this is either “among the most important parts” of their life or “the most important part” of their life).
- Eighty-five percent of weekly Mass attenders agree “strongly” with the statement “I am proud to be Catholic” (compared to 70 percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month, and 39 percent who go to Mass a few times a year or less). Eighty-one percent agree “strongly” that, “I think of myself as a practicing Catholic” (compared to 53 percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month and 14 percent who go to Mass a few times a year or less). Nearly all (99 percent) consider their Catholic faith to be important

in their daily life (75 percent say that this is either “among the most important parts” of their life or “the most important part” of their life).

- Eighty-three percent of respondents say that helping those in need is either “somewhat” or “very” important to their “sense of what it means to be a Catholic.” Eight in ten say receiving the Eucharist is equally important (79 percent), followed by receiving Confirmation (74 percent), living a life consistent with Church teaching (73 percent), having devotion to Mary (68 percent), attending Mass (66 percent), having devotion to the saints (63 percent), and going to Confession (56 percent). In addition, two-thirds of respondents (66 percent) agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement, “Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.”
- Those who have attended Catholic educational institutions are among the *most* likely to say that “living my life consistent with Church teaching” is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be Catholic. Fifty-four percent of those who attended a Catholic college or university responded as such, as did 49 percent of those who attended Catholic high schools and 46 percent of those who attended Catholic elementary and middle schools. Overall, 37 percent of adult Catholics say this is “very” important to their sense of being Catholic.
- About eight in ten adult Catholics do not doubt the following creedal statements: “There is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (81 percent), that “Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven” (80 percent) and that “Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary” (79 percent). Nearly all weekly Mass attenders do not doubt these beliefs (97 percent each).
- About three-fourths of Catholics do not doubt that “There is a heaven” (76 percent), that “God, the Father, is creator of heaven, the earth, and all we know of the universe” (76 percent), that “Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculately conceived without original sin” (73 percent), and that “Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead” (71 percent). Nine in ten or more weekly Mass attenders do not doubt any of these beliefs (90 percent, 93 percent, 90 percent, and 91 percent; respectively).
- Catholics are somewhat less of one mind regarding Hell. Sixty-seven percent of all adult Catholics have no doubt that “There is a Hell.” Seventy-eight percent of weekly Mass attenders say they do not doubt this belief.

### ***Parish Life in a Time of Fewer Priests***

- Only 15 percent of adult Catholics have noticed that the number of Catholic priests has declined in recent decades and report that they have been personally affected by these changes (29 percent among weekly Mass attenders). A majority (51 percent) say they have noticed the decline but say that they have not been affected (54 percent among weekly Mass attenders). A third of respondents (34 percent) say they have not noticed a change in the number of priests (17 percent of weekly Mass attenders).

- Respondents were asked about several things that could be done in *their* parish if they did not have a resident priest. Two-thirds (65 percent) say they would support sharing a priest with one or more other parishes, followed by more than half supporting bringing in a priest from outside the United States (56 percent), increasing the use of deacons (56 percent), and asking a retired priest to do more (55 percent).
- A third of adult Catholics (34 percent) report that a priest from outside the United States has come to serve in the parish they attend in the last five years. Hispanic Catholics are more likely than non-Hispanics to say this has occurred in their parish (41 percent compared to 30 percent). Those attending Mass weekly are most likely to say this has occurred (55 percent).
- Of those respondents who have had a priest from outside the United States serve in their parish in the last five years, a majority, 53 percent, say they are “very satisfied” with the ministry of these priests, and another 34 percent say they are “somewhat satisfied.” Thus, nearly nine in ten (87 percent) who have had an international priest serve in their parish in the last five years are satisfied with their ministry. Only 11 percent say they are “somewhat dissatisfied” and 2 percent “very dissatisfied” with the ministry of international priests serving in their parish.

### ***Satisfaction with Church Leaders***

- More than eight in ten adult Catholics (82 percent) say they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI (31 percent “very” satisfied). Among weekly Mass attenders, 93 percent approve of the Pope’s leadership at least “somewhat.”
- More than seven in ten (72 percent) say they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the leadership of the Bishops of the United States (22 percent “very” satisfied). Among weekly Mass attenders, 82 percent approve of the U.S. Bishops’ leadership at least “somewhat.”
- The current level of satisfaction with the leadership of the U.S. Bishops among all adult Catholics is 14 percentage points higher than in a CARA poll four years ago (58 percent).

# *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics*

## **Introduction**

In December 2007 the Department of Communications of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct a survey of U.S. adult Catholics. The focus of the survey is participation in the sacramental life of the Church as well as beliefs about the sacraments.<sup>5</sup> However, the poll also addresses many other issues of importance to the Church, including other forms of participation in Church life and other teachings of Catholicism. The questionnaire was designed by CARA in consultation with the Department of Communications. See Appendix I for the complete questionnaire. The following are among the major topic areas:<sup>6</sup>

- *How Catholics have entered the Church* (whether through baptism as an infant or young person or through adult reception into the Church). The experience of RCIA.
- *The general sacramental lives of Catholics*. Which of the sacraments they have received and which they find most meaningful for nourishing their spiritual lives. The importance they place on their children's participation in the sacraments.
- *The Mass and Eucharist*. The frequency with which Catholics attend Mass and receive the Eucharist. Participation in Eucharistic Adoration and their beliefs about the Real Presence. Availability of and participation in Eucharistic Adoration.
- *Reconciliation*. The frequency with which Catholics participate in Reconciliation and their understanding of this sacrament.
- *Anointing of the Sick*. Whether Catholics or their family members have requested the sacrament. The importance they place on receiving it.
- *Ordinations and vocations*. Whether Catholics have ever attended an ordination ceremony. Whether and how seriously they have ever considered a vocation to the priesthood, permanent diaconate, or religious life. Whether they have encouraged another person to pursue a vocation, and whether they would encourage their own children to do so.
- *Religious devotions and practices in daily life*. Lenten practices. The wearing or carrying of religious objects or symbols on one's person. Frequency of praying the rosary.
- *General Catholic beliefs and attitudes*. Importance placed on various aspects of Catholic faith and identity. Core Catholic beliefs. Awareness of the declining number of priests and support for various forms of parish ministry in the absence of a resident priest. Satisfaction with Church leadership.

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<sup>5</sup> The sacrament of Marriage was studied in a previous poll commissioned by the Committee on Marriage and Family Life of the USCCB. The complete report for this study, *Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics*, is available on the CARA website: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/MarriageReport.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The sacrament of Marriage was studied in a previous poll commissioned by the Committee on Marriage and Family Life of the USCCB. The complete report for this study, *Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics*, is available on the CARA website: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/MarriageReport.pdf>

In February 2008, CARA polled 1,007 adult self-identified Catholics via Knowledge Networks, a leading Internet polling firm. Knowledge Networks has assembled a large national sample of households. Its panel (the set of participating households) has been assembled by regular random telephone survey methods and closely approximates the known demographic characteristics of the U.S. population.<sup>7</sup> The panel is updated on a quarterly basis. Those persons who are sampled and asked to join the Knowledge Networks panel receive subsidized Internet access and other incentives. For those who do not own computers, Knowledge Networks provides a television-based Internet system (MSN TV) for free. These services are supplied in exchange for an agreement that panel members will take part in a number of different Knowledge Networks surveys. These steps ensure that the Knowledge Networks panel is as reflective as possible of the national population and that it is not biased towards only those who have pre-existing access to the Internet. Knowledge Networks collects basic background information from its new panel members in a “core” survey. This includes information on religious identification.

For this survey, CARA requested 1,000 completed questionnaires from a sample of adult Catholics in the Knowledge Networks panel. Typically, Knowledge Networks’ polls that require a two week turnaround time to obtain a response rate of 70 percent. A total of 1,485 panel members previously identified as Catholic were e-mailed the survey on February 1, 2008. The poll was closed on February 20. At the beginning of the questionnaire, Hispanic respondents were asked if they preferred to read the questionnaire in English or Spanish. Eight chose the Spanish version. These eight individuals represent 3 percent of all 239 self-identified Hispanics. Responses were received from 1,007 of these individuals, for an intra-panel response rate of 68 percent. To make the response rate comparable to those from telephone polls, it is necessary to take into account individuals who decline to participate in the Knowledge Networks panel when reached by telephone—and those who cannot be reached by telephone at all. Of the households initially called by Knowledge Networks, 36 percent eventually complete the core survey and join the panel. Taking this into account, the “true” response rate for the present study is 24.5 percent ( $.68 \times .36$ ).

A sample size of 1,007 yields a margin of sampling error of  $\pm 3.1$  percent. In other words, characteristics and attitudes of Catholics responding to this poll can be assumed to be within 3.1 percentage points of those of all Catholics age 18 and over in the United States. It should be kept in mind that margin of sampling error increases when examining a particular subset of respondents because the sample size of the subset is smaller than that of the overall sample. Moreover, sampling error is just one potential source of error in surveys.

Nearly 23 percent of U.S. adults self-identify their religion as Catholic in Knowledge Networks’ panel at the time of the survey. This estimate is unchanged from the results of a 2003

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<sup>7</sup> The Knowledge Networks panel has been shown to be representative to well within 1 percentage point to the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) demographics for gender, age, race and ethnicity, education, and region. See Baker et al. (2003), “Validity of the Survey of Health and Internet and Knowledge Networks Panel and Sampling,” Stanford University and Krosnick and Chiat Chang (2001), “A Comparison of Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey Methodology with Internet Survey Methodology as Implemented by Knowledge Networks and Harris Interactive,” Ohio State University.



CARA telephone poll, the CARA Catholic Poll (CCP 2003). In 2008, this percentage is equivalent to more than 51 million adults.

<b>U.S Adult Religious Affiliation</b>		
	<b>2003</b>	<b>2008</b>
Catholic	22.9%	22.7%
Some other religion	58.2	63.3
No religion	16.3	13.3
Don't know or refused	1.3	0.7

Sources: CCP 2003, Knowledge Networks 2008

As a rule of thumb, every 1 percentage point of the total adult Catholic population is equivalent to approximately 500,000 persons (or more precisely 510,300 as of April 2008).<sup>8</sup>

CARA surveys indicate that there has *not* been any recent increase in disaffiliation from Catholicism and the number of losses experienced by the Church over time is not exceptionally different from those of other religious faiths given the large size of the Catholic population. If the Catholic losses are distinct in any way it is in the relatively *high* retention rate the Catholic Church compared to other faith groups. Only those who were raised Hindu, Orthodox, Jewish, or Mormon are more likely than Catholics to keep their faith as adults as reported in the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's 2007 "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey." Results from CARA surveys on this topic and a review of the Pew study are included in Appendix III.

Results presented in the body of this report have been generated using statistical weights. The weights, calculated by Knowledge Networks, adjust for aspects of panel design and survey methodology that depart from true random sampling. More importantly for current purposes, the weights also adjust results to better reflect estimated demographic characteristics taken from the Census.

Many of the questions in this survey have been used by CARA in previous national-level polls of Catholics. In such cases, results presented in the main body of the report are compared to those from previous polls. Where possible, prior results are taken from polls conducted roughly five years ago (in the range of 2003-2005). However in some cases the relevant questions were not asked during that time period and results are necessarily taken from polls conducted from 2000 to 2002. Many of CARA's previous polls were conducted by telephone. In response to telephone polls, Catholics report higher average levels of religious participation and commitment than they do in the Knowledge Networks formats. This probably reflects "social desirability bias" in the presence of a telephone interviewer (see Appendix II). CARA

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<sup>8</sup> CARA Catholic Polls (CCP) and Knowledge Networks consistently estimate that between 22 and 23 percent of the adult population in the U.S. self identifies as Catholic. Taking this proportion of the most recent Census Bureau estimates for the size of the U.S. adult population we estimate that 1 percent of the adult Catholic population is approximately equivalent to 500,000 persons.

employed weights to make prior results from telephone polls comparable to those from the current survey. However, in some cases, comparisons may be imperfect.

Several series of questions in the survey have four or five-point response scales. For example, possible responses from which participants may select range from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” For sake of simplicity, tables that summarize results for such questions typically present just two columns of percentages. The first column presents the percentage of respondents who choose either of the top two categories, for example the percentage who respond *either* “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree.” The second column presents the percentage who choose the *top* category only, for example those who “strongly agree.” Individual percentages for all response categories can be found in Appendix I.

## Demographic and Background Characteristics

This subsection summarizes background characteristics of respondents. Knowledge Networks has previously compiled a great deal of information on the demographic characteristics of its panel members. Demographic characteristics include gender, generation, race and ethnicity, education, geographic region, and marital status. For these previously compiled factors, the tables show unweighted frequencies (the raw percentage of respondents to the survey) as well as weighted frequencies (percentages that have been statistically adjusted to compensate for higher or lower rates of participation in the survey among various demographic groups in the panel).<sup>9</sup> This section also summarizes respondents' Catholic schooling and the frequency with which they attend Mass.

Several of these demographic and background characteristics are used later in the report to draw comparisons among respondents—for example to compare the responses of Catholics of different generations or different ethnicities. Comparisons on the basis of Mass attendance are presented consistently throughout the report. For all other background characteristics, comparisons are presented only when differences are statistically significant.

### *Gender*

After weighting, 52 percent of the survey respondents are women and 48 percent are men. This greater proportion of women largely reflects higher mortality rates among men.

<b>Gender</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Female	51%	52%
Male	49	48

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<sup>9</sup> After this subsection, the remainder of the report presents only weighted frequencies.

## Generation

The age of respondents ranges from 18 to 97, with a median of 47. Important differences among respondents are often found along generational lines. CARA divides Catholics into the following four generations, reflecting categories used by other researchers.

- *The “Pre-Vatican II Generation,” ages 66 and over in 2008.* The Pre-Vatican II Generation was born in 1942 or earlier. Its members came of age before the Second Vatican Council. After weighting, members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation make up 17 percent of respondents to the survey.
- *The “Vatican II Generation,” ages 48-65 in 2008.* These are the “baby boomers” who were born between 1943 and 1960, a time of great demographic and economic growth. They came of age during the time of the Second Vatican Council and their formative years likely spanned that time of profound changes in the Church. Vatican II Generation parishioners make up 33 percent of respondents.
- *The “Post-Vatican II Generation,” ages 27-47 in 2008.* Born between 1961 and 1981, this generation, sometimes called “Generation X” or “baby busters” by demographers, has no lived experience of the pre-Vatican II Church. Thirty-six percent of respondents are members of the Post-Vatican II Generation.
- *The “Millennial Generation,” ages 18-26 in 2008.* This generation, born in 1982 or later (up to 1990 among adults), have come of age primarily under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Because some still live with their parents, their religious practice is often closely related to that of their families of origin. Fifteen percent of respondents belong to the Millennial Generation.

Generation		
	Unweighted	Weighted <sup>10</sup>
Pre-Vatican II	20%	17%
Vatican II	39	33
Post-Vatican II	30	36
Millennial	11	15

<sup>10</sup> Whenever percentages in a table sum to 99 or 100 (as is the case in the second column), the reason is rounding error.

**Adult Race and Ethnicity**

Because people of Hispanic/Latino(a) origin can be of any race, respondents are divided into those who self-identify as being of Hispanic origin and those who say they are members of each of three racial groups (white, African American, and other) but answer “no” to the Hispanic origin question.

<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Non-Hispanic white	69%	64%
Hispanic or Latino(a)	24	28
African American	2	3
Other <sup>11</sup>	5	5

After weighting, 64 percent of respondents are non-Hispanic whites. Twenty-eight percent are Hispanic or Latino(a).<sup>12</sup> Three percent are African American, and five percent are members of other racial and ethnic groups.

Note that subgroup comparisons later in this report focus on two racial and ethnic groups: non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics. There are too few respondents of other racial and ethnic identities for separate comparison.

<sup>11</sup> These categories represent Knowledge Networks’ summary classification for race and ethnicity. “Other” primarily consists of includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans as well as other racial and ethnic groups.

<sup>12</sup> In CARA’s most recent telephone poll in January 2007, the percentage of Catholics self-identifying as Hispanic or Latino was 35 percent (weighted). On average, Knowledge Networks polls tend to underestimate the percentage of Catholics who are Hispanic/Latino by about 6 percentage points. CARA still prefers using Knowledge Networks rather than telephone polls for the significant reduction in social desirability bias that comes with using the self-administered format (see Appendix II). Across a variety of indicators, CARA has found that telephone polls dramatically over-estimate frequency of Mass attendance, frequency of giving, frequency of going to confession, evaluations of Church leaders, etc. The multiple benefits across many key questions of using the Knowledge Networks format far outweigh this single cost of slightly underestimating the Hispanic/Latino population. Knowledge Networks likely underestimates the percentage of the Catholic population that is Hispanic/Latino due to panel members being recruited through landline telephones followed by eligibility requirements to join the panel that include the household having either a computer or television to complete the survey. CARA created a weight to bring up the percentage of Hispanics/Latinos in the poll to 35 percent from 28 percent. Differences in responses vary by about 1 percentage point or less for each question using this weight. This weighting represents the correct size of the Hispanic/Latino population among respondents, however it does not correct for the attributes of Hispanics/Latinos who are missed that may be related to a lack of telephone or television (or computer) as well as the ability to answer questions in English or Spanish in a text-based self-administered survey. CARA has compared, and does compare in this report, the results of its telephone polls and Knowledge Networks polls. The distortions caused by telephone polling for questions regarding religious attitudes and behaviors (that are strongly affected by social desirability pressures) are significantly larger than those resulting from the underestimation of the Hispanic/Latino population in the Knowledge Networks’ panel. Frequencies for results using the weight that brings the Hispanic/Latino percentage among respondents to 35 percent are available upon request.

**Education**

About one in six adult Catholics have not completed high school. About one-third have a high school diploma. About one-quarter have some college education or an associate’s degree. Slightly less than one-fifth have a bachelor’s degree, and 8 percent have a post-graduate degree.

<b>Education</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Less than a high school diploma	13%	16%
High school diploma	32	32
Some college or Associate’s degree	28	26
Bachelor’s degree	18	18
Post-graduate degree	9	8

Educational subgroup comparisons presented later in this report are generally based on four categories: a high school diploma or less, some college or an associate’s degree, a bachelor’s degree, and a post-graduate degree.

**Catholic Education**

About four in ten adult Catholics attended a Catholic elementary, middle, or junior high school.<sup>13</sup> About two in ten attended a Catholic high school.

<b><i>Did you attend a Catholic...</i></b>	
Percentage saying “Yes”	
Elementary, middle, or junior high school	42%
High school	22
College or university	7
<i>All of the above</i>	3
<i>Earned a degree from a Catholic college or university</i>	4

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

Among all respondents, 7 percent have attended a Catholic college or university, and 4 percent have a degree from such an institution. When limited to respondents who attended

<sup>13</sup> Note that this question does not measure length of attendance.

college, 14 percent have attended a Catholic college or university, with 8 percent having received a degree from a Catholic college or university.

Three percent of adult Catholics attended Catholic educational institutions from elementary school through college.

**Marital Status**<sup>14</sup>

Slightly more than one-quarter of adult Catholics have never been married. About one-third are married to a fellow Catholic and about one-sixth are married to a person who is not Catholic. About one-tenth of adult Catholics are divorced or separated. Six percent each are widowed or living with a partner.

<b>Marital Status</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Never married	23%	27%
Married to a Catholic	37	34
Married to a non-Catholic	16	16
Divorced or separated	13	11
Widowed	7	6
Living with a partner	5	6

**Prior Marriage to a Catholic among Divorced and Widowed Respondents**

Among respondents who are divorced or widowed, about two-thirds have previously been married to a Catholic.

<b>Were you ever married to a Catholic?</b>	
Respondents who are currently divorced or widowed	
Yes	68%
No	32

The proportion who have ever been married to a Catholic is slightly higher among widow(er)s (72 percent) than among those who are divorced (62 percent).

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the marital status of Catholics and their celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage see *Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics* a report based on a 2007 CARA survey commissioned the Committee on Marriage and Family Life of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). This can be accessed at: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/MarriageReport.pdf>

### ***Geographic Region***

The table below summarizes geographic region using categories designated by the U.S. Census.<sup>15</sup> About three-tenths of Catholics reside in the Northeast. Slightly more than one-fifth reside in the Midwest. About one-quarter each reside in the South and the West.

<b>Geographic Region</b>		
	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
Northeast	26%	29%
Midwest	29	22
South	24	25
West	21	24

### ***Frequency of Mass Attendance***

Twenty-three percent of adult Catholics say they attend Mass *every* week (once or more often). Given that those who attend less often have some probability of attending Mass in *any* given week (for the methodology of this calculation see Appendix II), CARA estimates that approximately 31.4 percent of Catholic adults attend Mass in *any* given week (or approximately 16.1 million weekly adult Mass attendees as of April 2008).

One-third of respondents report that they rarely or never attend Mass and one-quarter report that they do so a few times a year. One-tenth each report that they attend once or twice a month and almost every week. One-fifth say they attend every week and 3 percent attend more than once a week.

<b><i>Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?</i></b>		
	<b>2002</b>	<b>2008</b>
Rarely or never	25%	32%
A few times a year	25	24
Once or twice a month	12	10
Almost every week	12	11
Every week	22	20
More than once a week	4	3

<sup>15</sup> The *Northeast* region includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The *Midwest* region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The *South* region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The *West* region includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.



The first column in the table on the previous page shows results for frequency of Mass attendance from a poll conducted by CARA using Knowledge Networks in September 2002. The results in 2002 and 2008 are roughly similar. Except that in 2008, more Catholics report that they rarely or never attend Mass.

Differences between the results of Mass attendance questions from Knowledge Networks survey methods and those commonly found in telephone polls, including CARA's previous telephone polls for the USCCB, are related to the effects of an interviewer.<sup>16</sup> Telephone polls involve a personal interaction between respondent and interviewer. Survey researchers have long understood that the social pressures involved in this interaction can create over-reports of certain activities (such as voting or giving to charity) that are considered socially desirable. Responses to questions regarding attendance at religious services are known to be biased toward estimates higher than actual attendance as measured by head counts or time diary studies.

Knowledge Networks surveys use methods that do not require a human interviewer—respondents are answering questions as they appear on-screen (either through a computer or television). Self-administered surveys, such as this, are known to reduce over-reports for questions that have socially desirable response sets, producing results that more closely reflect actual behavior than estimates derived from telephone polls. For more information about these issues see Appendix II.

Throughout this report, responses to the main survey questions are analyzed according to four categories: all respondents, those who attend Mass weekly or more, those attending less than weekly but at least once a month, and those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often. It is important to keep in mind that Mass attendance is correlated with several of the demographic characteristics that are used for subgroup comparisons in this report—in particular, generation, gender, marital status, education, and region.

- Previous research has consistently shown strong generational differences for Mass attendance and related measures of Catholic commitment. Forty-five percent of members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation report attending Mass at least once a week (64 percent at least once a month). This compares to 24 percent of the Vatican II Generation (42 percent at least once a month), 15 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation (39 percent at least once a month), and 18 percent of the Millennial Generation (36 percent at least once a month).
- Women are more likely than men to attend Mass at least once a month (49 compared to 38 percent).
- Thirty-three percent of respondents who are married to a Catholic attend Mass every week. This compares to 11 percent of those whose spouse is not Catholic. Eighteen percent of Catholics who have never been married attend Mass weekly, as do 16 percent of those who are divorced or separated and 16 percent of those who live with a partner.

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<sup>16</sup> Differences are not limited to Mass attendance and generally are observable for any socially desirable activity from financial giving to frequency of prayer.

Widows are most likely to attend Mass every week (40 percent), although this largely reflects that they are disproportionately members of the Pre-Vatican Generation.

- One in four Catholics (25 percent) with a high school diploma or less attend Mass weekly, compared to 19 percent who attended some college, 22 percent who have a bachelor’s degree, and 33 percent of those with a graduate or professional degree.
- Attendance at Catholic educational institutions also has an effect. Twenty-six percent of Catholics who attended a Catholic elementary or middle school at some point attend Mass weekly compared to 22 percent of those who did not. Those who attended a Catholic high school or a Catholic college or university are especially likely to be weekly Mass attenders (29 percent and 38 percent, respectively).
- Thirty-two percent of adult Catholics in the South say they attend Mass once a week or more (52 percent at least once a month). By comparison, 23 percent of Catholics in the Midwest report this frequency of attendance (49 percent at least once a month), followed by 20 percent in the West (38 percent at least once a moth) and 19 percent in the Northeast (37 percent at least once a month).

***Parish Registration***

Six in ten Catholics are registered at a Catholic parish.

<i>Are you registered at a Catholic parish?</i>		
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>
Yes	60%	61%
No	40	39

Ninety-six percent of those who attend Mass once a week or more often are registered with a parish compared to 85 percent of those who attend Mass at least once a month but less than weekly. Thirty-seven percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often are registered at a parish.

Seventy-four percent of Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics are registered with a parish, whereas 58 percent of younger Catholics are registered. There are no statistically significant differences for registration among Catholics of the Vatican II, Post-Vatican II, and Millennial generations.

Results of a 2005 poll conducted by CARA with Knowledge Networks show similar patterns of parish registration.

## Entry into the Catholic Church

This section summarizes responses to several questions about when respondents became Catholic. Catholics were asked if they entered the Church as infants, children, teens, or adults. Subsequent questions asked about the exact age of entry for those who became Catholic after infancy, the experience of RCIA for adult converts, and the prior religion of those who entered the Church as adults.

### Time of Entry into the Church

*More than eight in ten adult Catholics entered the Church as infants. Eight percent became Catholic as children and 7 percent as adults. Just 1 percent became Catholic as teenagers.*

<i>When did you become Catholic? As an...</i>	
Infant (under age 1)	84%
Child (ages 1 – 12)	8
Teenager (ages 13 -17)	1
Adult (ages 18 and over)	7

#### ***Differences by Ethnicity***

Eight percent of non-Hispanic whites but just 2 percent of Hispanics became Catholic as adults. Though small, this difference is statistically significant.

#### ***Differences by Region***

Ninety-seven percent of Catholics in the Northeast entered the Church before the age of 12. By comparison, 93 percent of Catholics in the West entered the Church by this age followed by 90 percent of those in the South, and 87 percent of those in the Midwest.

## Age at Baptism or Entry Into the Church

Respondents who became Catholic prior to adulthood were asked the age at which they were baptized. The question was asked separately to those who became Catholic as adults.

### Age at Baptism among Those who Became Catholic Prior to Adulthood

*Nine in ten respondents who became Catholic prior to adulthood were baptized as infants. Four percent were baptized from ages one to five and 3 percent from ages six to ten. One percent were baptized from ages 11 to 17. The median age at baptism for those entering the Church before adulthood is 5.*

<b><i>How old were you when you were baptized in the Catholic Church?</i></b>	
Respondents who became Catholic prior to adulthood	
Less than a year old	90%
One to five years old	4
Six to ten years old	3
Eleven to seventeen years old	1
I was baptized in another Christian faith	<1

Fewer than one percent (just five respondents) report that they were baptized in another Christian faith. Among these five respondents, two were baptized as infants, two at the age of six, and one at the age of 15.

## Age at Adult Entrance to Catholicism

*Among those who became Catholics as adults, nearly half did so between the ages of 18 to 29. About one in six did so from ages 30 to 39. About one in five from 40 to 49. Fifteen percent became Catholic at an older age. The median age for those entering the Church as adults is 35.*

### ***How old were you when you entered the Catholic Church?***

Respondents who became Catholic as adults

18 to 29 years old	48%
30 to 39 years old	16
40 to 49 years old	21
50 or older	15

## Participation in RCIA

*Three-quarters of adult converts to Catholicism report that they participated in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).*

### ***Did you go through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), the formal process that brings adult converts into the Catholic Church?***

Respondents who became Catholic as adults

Yes	75%
No	25

## Length of the RCIA Process

*Among respondents who participated in RCIA, nearly two-thirds report that the process was less than a year long in their parish. About one-quarter report that it lasted a year, and about one tenth that it lasted two years or longer.*

<b><i>How long was the RCIA process in your parish?</i></b>	
Respondents who went through RCIA	
Less than one year	66%
One year	24
Two years or more	9

## Prior Religion Before Becoming Catholic

*More than six in ten adult converts to Catholicism were previously Protestant. More than three-quarters say they had “no religion.” Slightly fewer than one-tenth were members of some other religion.*

<b><i>What was your religion before becoming Catholic?</i></b>	
<b><i>[If “Protestant, ”] What Protestant denomination was this?</i></b>	
Respondents who became Catholic as adults	
Protestant	64%
No religion	28
Other religion	8
Orthodox	0
Jewish	0
Muslim	0

## Sacramental Beliefs and Participation

Many of the questions in this survey focus on Catholics' participation in and attitudes about the sacraments. This section of the report provides an overview of general issues related to the sacraments: which sacraments Catholics have personally celebrated, which sacraments they find most meaningful; and the importance they place on having their children receiving the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confession, and the Eucharist.

### Personal Celebration of the Sacraments

*About nine in ten Catholics have celebrated their First Communion/Eucharist or their first Reconciliation. Slightly fewer, 84 percent, have been confirmed.*

#### *Which of the following sacraments have you celebrated?*

Percentage who have celebrated each

First Communion/Eucharist	92%
First Reconciliation or Confession <sup>17</sup>	91
Sacrament of Confirmation	84

In a 2002 survey,<sup>18</sup> 86 percent of Catholics reported that they had received the Sacrament of Confirmation—a proportion very similar to that reported in the present survey.

#### *Differences by Time of Entry into the Church*

- Among those who were baptized Catholic as infants, 92 percent have celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation. This compares to 81 percent of those who became Catholic as adults and 74 percent of those who became Catholic as children or teens.
- Those who became Catholic as children (ages 1 to 12) are *less* likely than all other respondents to have celebrated their First Communion (76 compared to 94 percent) and their First Reconciliation (79 compared to 92 percent).

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<sup>17</sup> In very rare cases, Catholics may have received their First Communion before making their First Confession. This may account for more respondents reporting First Communion than First Confession. The responses to this question were recoded to replace those who answered “No” that they had not celebrated their First Confession but who later in the survey said they do go to Confession with some frequency. This appears to be an issue with a small number of respondents having been confused by the question wording—specifically the “First” in First Confession. A total of 11 respondents (1 percent) say they did not receive their First Confession and that they never go to Confession but that they did receive their First Communion.

<sup>18</sup> The 2002 CARA Catholic Poll (CCP), a national telephone poll. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from the online Knowledge Networks format.

***Differences by Frequency of Mass Attendance***

More than nine in ten Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month have personally celebrated their First Communion, First Reconciliation, or Confirmation. Those attending Mass a few times a year or less often are less likely to have received all three sacraments.

<b><i>Which of the following sacraments have <u>you</u> celebrated?</i></b>			
Percentage who have celebrated each			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
First Communion/Eucharist	96%	98%	89%
First Reconciliation or Confession	97	97	87
Sacrament of Confirmation	93	92	77

***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are slightly *less* likely than non-Hispanic whites to have celebrated each of the three sacraments (86 percent compared to 95 percent for the Eucharist; 83 percent compared to 94 percent for Reconciliation; and 75 percent compared to 88 percent for Confirmation).

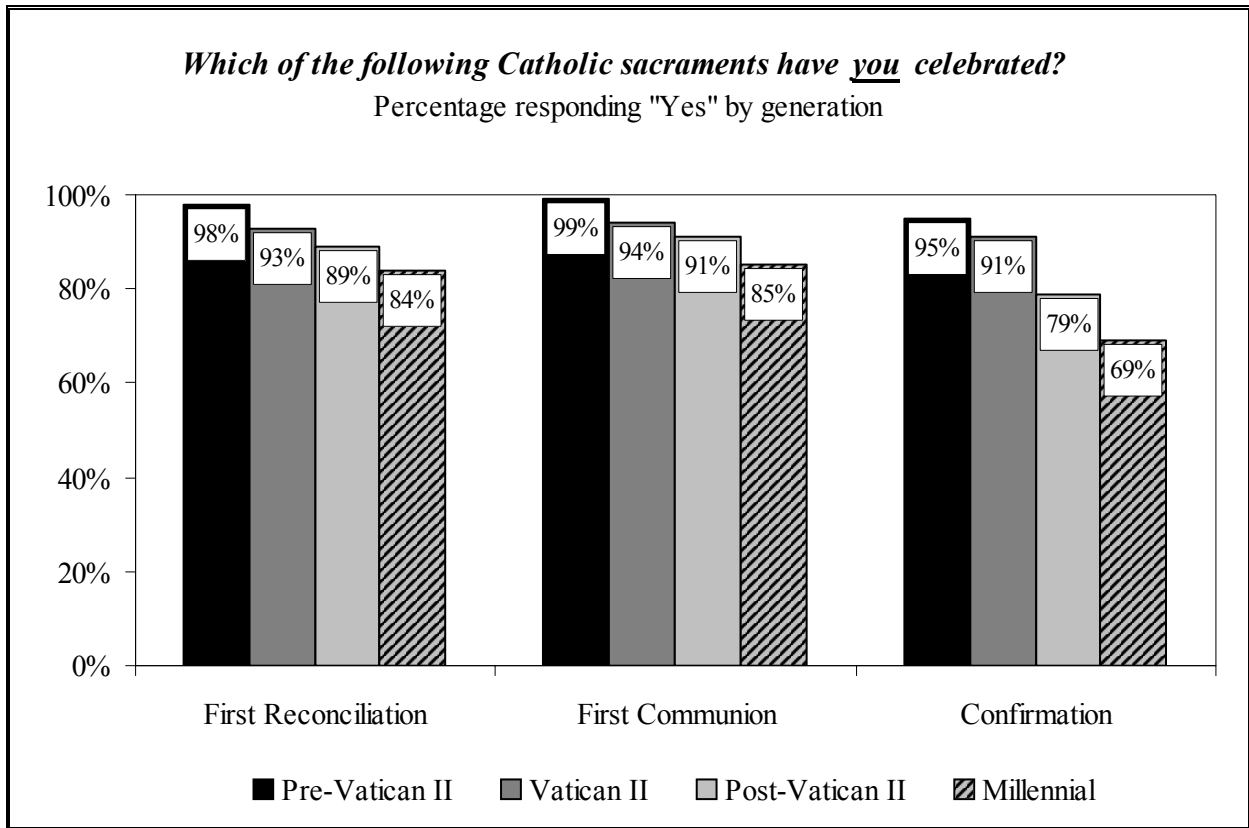
***Differences by Education***

More than nine in ten respondents who attended a Catholic educational institution at the primary, secondary, or college-level have celebrated these three sacraments.



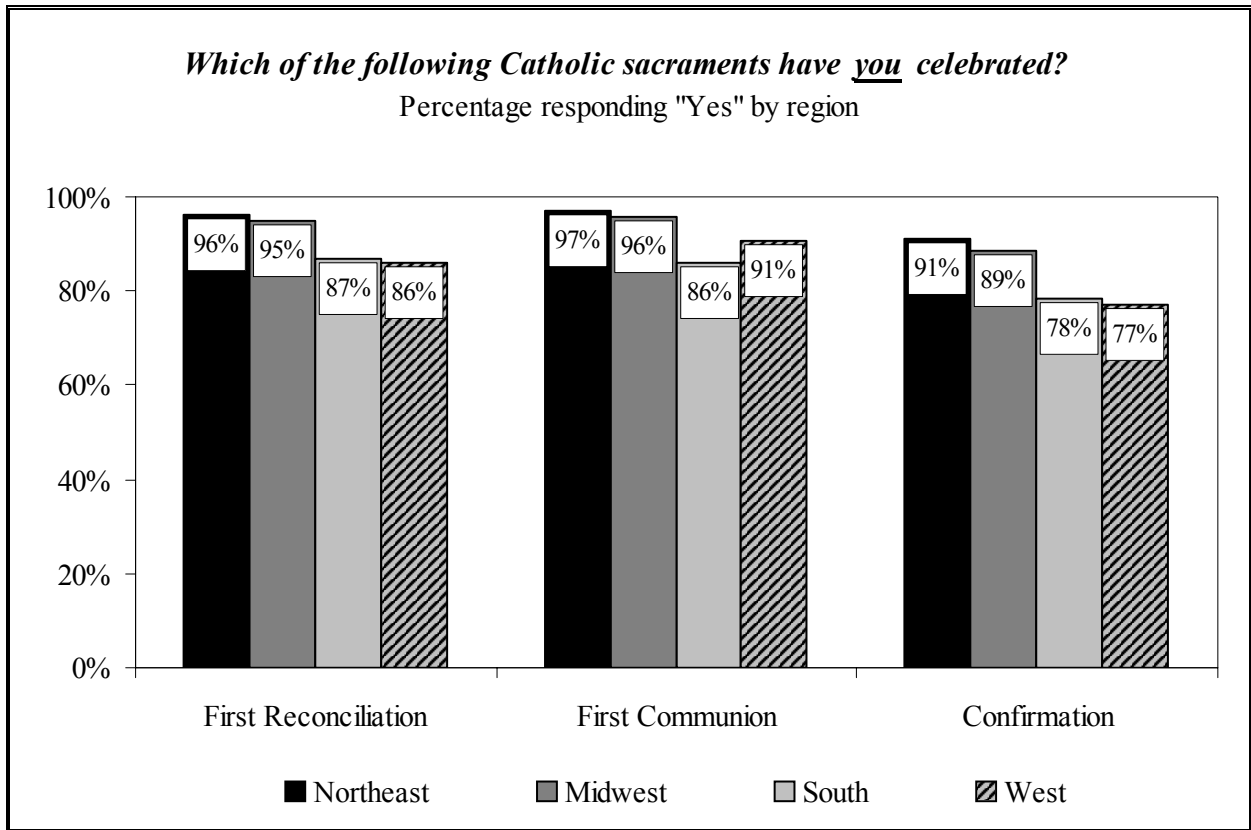
**Differences by Generation**

Older respondents are more likely to have celebrated each of the sacraments. Generational differences are largest for Confirmation.



**Differences by Region**

Catholics in the Northeast and Midwest are more likely than those in the South and West to have celebrated each of the sacraments.



## Meaningfulness of the Sacraments

*About seven in ten respondents report that they find the sacraments of Marriage and Baptism “very” meaningful to them.*

	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very” Meaningful</b>	<b>“Very” Meaningful Only</b>
Marriage	89%	71%
Baptism	88	72
Eucharist/Holy Communion	84	64
Confirmation	83	59
Anointing of the Sick	78	52
Holy Orders/Ordination	71	46
Reconciliation/Confession	66	39

Respondents were asked how meaningful they find each of the seven sacraments, on a scale ranging from “not meaningful at all” to “very meaningful.” As the first column in the table shows, a majority of Catholics find all of the sacraments at least “somewhat” meaningful. Nearly nine in ten Catholics say Marriage and Baptism are either “somewhat” or “very” meaningful to them. About two-thirds find the sacrament of Reconciliation at least “somewhat” meaningful.

- Slightly less than two-thirds say that the Eucharist is “very” meaningful to them.
- About six in ten find Confirmation “very” meaningful and more than half find Anointing of the Sick “very” meaningful to them.
- Slightly fewer than half of Catholics find Holy Orders to be “very” meaningful, and about four in ten find Reconciliation this meaningful.

***Differences by Frequency of Mass Attendance***

Catholics attending Mass at least once a month (including weekly or more often) are more likely than those attending less often to find all seven sacraments “somewhat” or “very” meaningful to them. Also, Catholics attending Mass weekly or more often are more likely than those attending less than weekly but at least once a month, to find the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Reconciliation to be at least “somewhat” meaningful.

***How meaningful for you are each of the Catholic sacraments listed below?  
This includes celebrating, receiving, or living the sacrament yourself  
or in witnessing someone else close to you experience this sacrament.***

Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very” meaningful

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Baptism	99%	96%	80%
Eucharist/Holy Communion	98	97	73
Marriage	97	97	83
Confirmation	97	96	72
Anointing of the Sick	97	88	66
Holy Orders/Ordination	93	84	57
Reconciliation/Confession	90	80	51

***Differences by Gender***

Women are more likely than men to say that each of the seven sacraments is “very” meaningful to them. Differences are largest for Anointing of the Sick (63 compared to 41 percent), Marriage (79 compared to 62 percent), Eucharist (72 compared to 56 percent), and Holy Orders (52 compared to 38 percent).

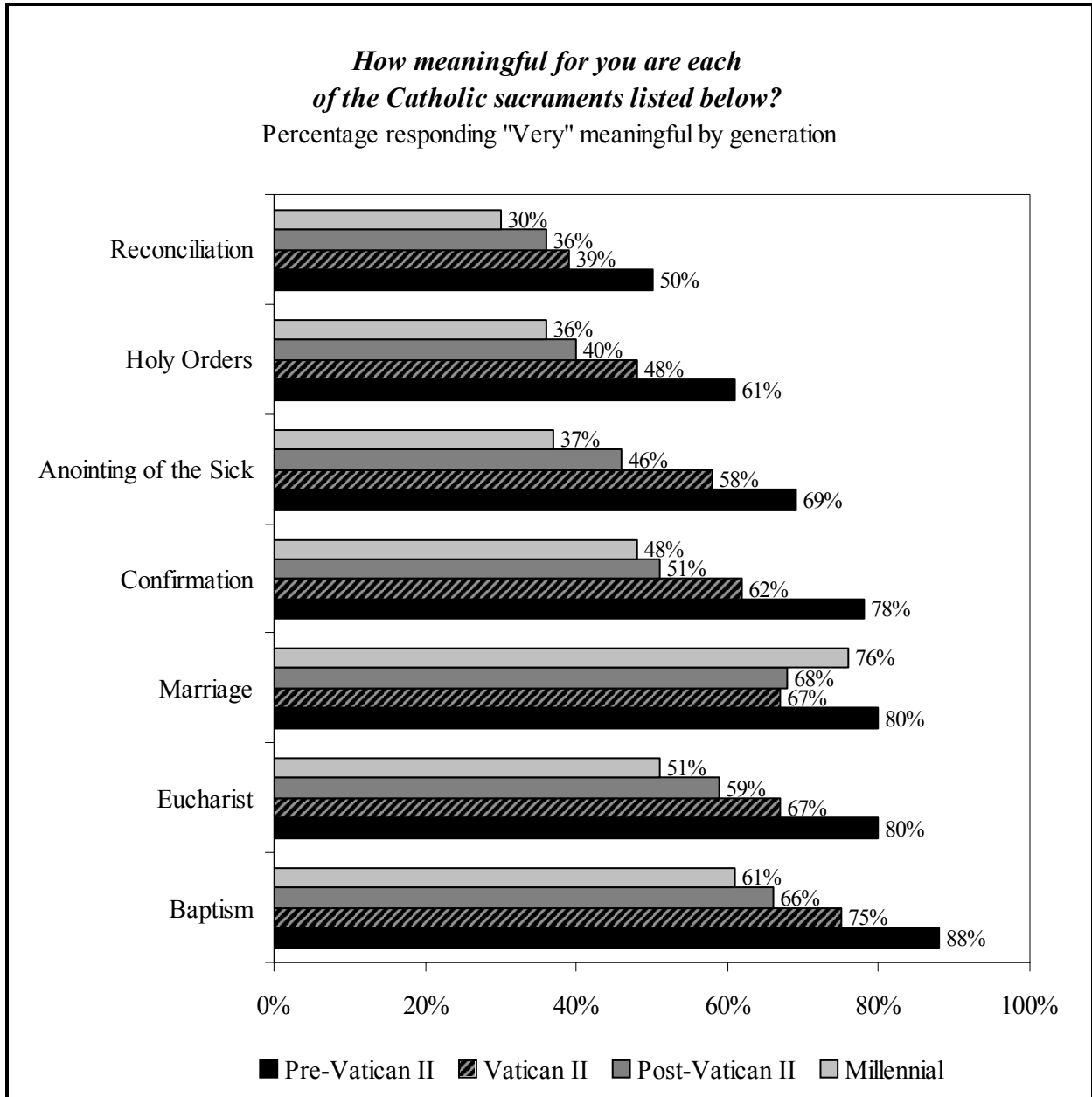
***Differences by Education***

Respondents who attended a Catholic elementary or middle school are more likely than those who did not to say all seven sacraments are “very” meaningful to them. This is especially the case for the Eucharist (71 percent compared to 58 percent).

Respondents who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to say all seven sacraments are “very” meaningful to them. This is especially the case for the Holy Orders (62 percent compared to 45 percent).

**Differences by Generation**

With the exception of Marriage, older generations of Catholics are more likely than their younger counterparts to describe all the sacraments as being “very” meaningful to them. Differences are largest for Anointing of the Sick (69 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation compared to 37 percent of the Millennial Generation) and for Confirmation (78 compared to 48 percent).



## Most Meaningful Sacrament

Four in ten Catholics say Baptism is the “most meaningful” of the seven sacraments.

<i>Which of these Catholic sacraments is the <u>most</u> meaningful to you? Select one.</i>	
Baptism	39%
Marriage	26
Eucharist/Holy Communion	25
Confirmation	3
Reconciliation/Confession	3
Anointing of the Sick	3
Holy Orders/Ordination	1

- One-quarter of Catholics say that Marriage is the most meaningful sacrament and another quarter that the Eucharist is most meaningful.
- Relatively few respondents, 3 percent each, report that Confirmation, Reconciliation, or Anointing of the Sick is the most meaningful sacrament to them.
- Just 1 percent identify Holy Orders as the most meaningful sacrament to them.

### *Differences by Personal Experience of Sacrament*

Those who have had more personal experience of a sacrament are more likely to select it as being most meaningful.

- Thirty-eight percent of those who say they “always” receive the Eucharist at Mass say that Holy Communion is the most meaningful to them, compared to 21 percent of those who receive the Eucharist “frequently or usually,” 13 percent who “seldom” receive it, and 10 percent of those who never receive it when attending Mass (see page 44 for the frequency of receiving Eucharist).
- Eighteen percent or more of those who go to Confession once a month or more often say Reconciliation is the most meaningful, compared to 8 percent who go several times a year, and 2 percent of those who go once a year or less often (see page 57 for the frequency of going to Confession).
- Those who have *not* celebrated their First Communion or who have not been confirmed are most likely to select Marriage as the most meaningful sacrament (39 percent each).
- Thirty-one percent of Catholics who are married select Marriage as the most meaningful sacrament, compared to 27 percent of those who have never been married, 14 percent of

those who are divorced, and 18 percent of those who are unmarried and currently living with a partner.

***Differences by Frequency of Mass Attendance***

Catholics who attend Mass at least once a week are most likely to say the Eucharist is most meaningful to them (52 percent). By comparison, those attending Mass less than weekly are most likely to say they find Baptism to be most meaningful (38 percent of those attending at least once a month but not weekly and 42 percent of those attending a few times a year or less often).

	<i>Which of these Catholic sacraments is the <u>most</u> meaningful to you? Select one.</i>		
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Eucharist/Holy Communion	52%	32%	11%
Baptism	32	38	42
Marriage	11	22	34
Reconciliation/Confession	4	3	3
Confirmation	<1	4	4
Anointing of the Sick	<1	1	5
Holy Orders/Ordination	0	0	1

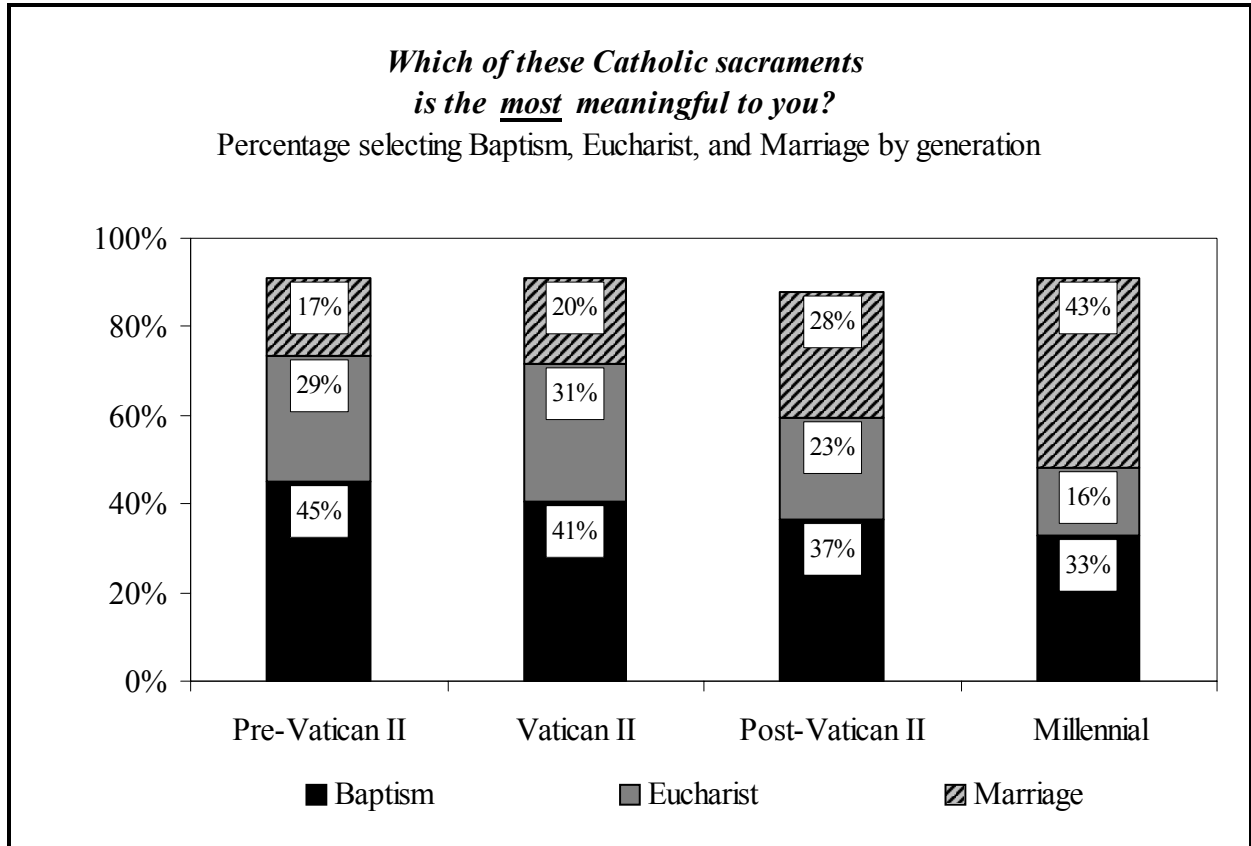
- One in 20 of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less selected Anointing of the Sick as the most meaningful sacrament.
- There is little variation across Mass attendance sub-groups in the percentages selecting Reconciliation as the most meaningful sacrament.
- The only respondents to select Holy Orders as the most meaningful sacrament attend Mass a few times a year or less often.

***Differences by Education***

Those who attended a Catholic elementary or middle school are more likely than those who did not to say the Eucharist is most meaningful to them (36 percent compared to 22 percent). A similar proportions of those who attended a Catholic high school say the same (37 percent).

**Differences by Generation**

Older Catholics are more likely than younger Catholics to perceive Baptism as the most meaningful sacrament. The two oldest generations (Pre-Vatican II and Vatican II) are also more likely to identify the Eucharist as the most meaningful sacrament. In contrast, those of the youngest generation are more likely than older Catholics to declare Marriage as the most meaningful sacrament to them.





## Importance of Having One’s Children Participate in the Sacraments

*Eight in ten Catholics who are parents say it is at least “somewhat” important that their children celebrate their First Communion. About two-thirds say this is “very” important to them.*

<b><i>How important is it to you that your child or children have celebrated each of the following Catholic sacraments?</i></b>		
Respondents who have children		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very” Important</b>	<b>“Very” Important Only</b>
First Communion/Eucharist	81%	65%
Confirmation	78	61
First Reconciliation/Confession	77	60

Slightly more than three-quarters of Catholic parents say it is at least “somewhat” important that their children celebrate First Reconciliation and Confirmation, with six in ten saying each is “very” important.

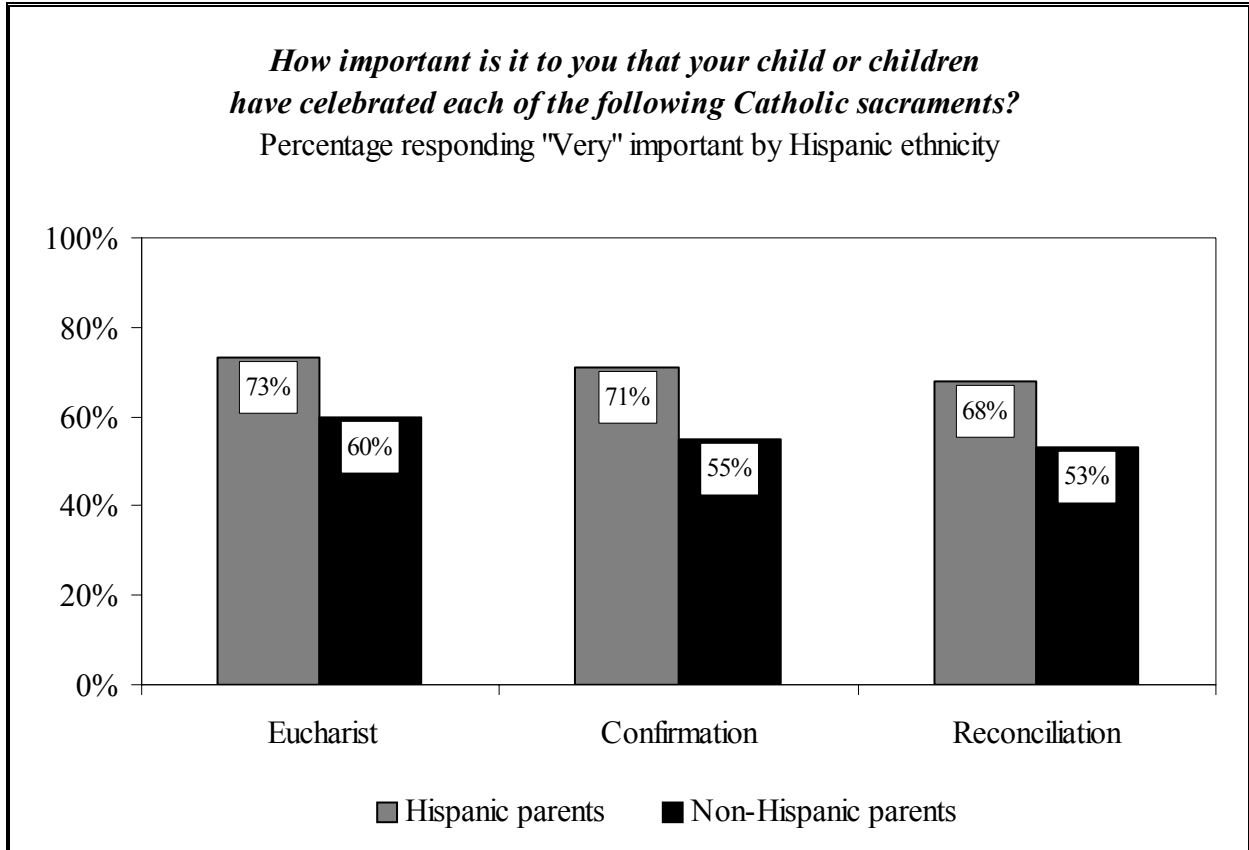
### ***Differences by Frequency of Mass Attendance***

Nearly all parents who attend Mass at least once a month say it is at least “somewhat” important that their children celebrate these three sacraments. By comparison, less than two-thirds of parents attending Mass a few times a year or less often give the celebration of these sacraments by their children similar importance.

<b><i>How important is it to you that your child or children have celebrated each of the following Catholic sacraments?</i></b>			
Those who have children responding “Somewhat” or “Very” important			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
First Communion/Eucharist	97%	100%	65%
Confirmation	97	96	60
First Reconciliation/Confession	95	96	60

***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say it is “very” important that their children celebrate each of these three sacraments.



***Differences by Gender***

Mothers are more likely than fathers to say it is “very” important that their children celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation (68 compared to 53 percent).

## The Mass and Eucharist

This section summarizes responses to questions about Catholics’ participation in the Mass and Eucharist and their attitudes about the Eucharist. Specifically, it addresses the following topics: the importance Catholics place on various aspects of the Mass, the frequency with which they receive the Eucharist at Mass, the frequency with which they attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation, and reasons they have missed Mass in recent months.

### Importance of Various Aspects of the Mass

*Over nine in ten Mass attending Catholics say that feeling the presence of God, prayer and reflection, and receiving the Eucharist are important aspects of the Mass to them. About three in four say each of these three aspects are “very” important to them.*

<b><i>How important are each of the following aspects of Mass to you?</i></b>		
Respondents who attend Mass at least a few times a year		
	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very” Important</b>	<b>“Very” Important Only</b>
Feeling the presence of God	94%	76%
Prayer and reflection	93	72
Receiving Eucharist/Holy Communion	92	74
Hearing the readings and the Gospel	89	64
Hearing the homily	88	52
That Mass is celebrated in a language I most prefer	83	52
Worshiping with other people	76	34
The music	71	28
That Mass is celebrated in a way that reflects my ethnic/ancestral culture	70	33
The church environment and decorations	66	24

Respondents were asked how much importance they place on each of ten aspects of the Mass. A minimum of 66 percent, or about two-thirds, say each of the aspects is at least “somewhat” important to them.

- Hearing the readings and the Gospel and hearing the homily are each at least “somewhat” important to slightly fewer than nine in ten Mass attending Catholics. However, respondents are more likely to say that the former is “very” important to them (64 compared to 52 percent).

- About half of Mass attending Catholics say it is “very” important to them that the Mass be celebrated in the language they most prefer. Fewer, one-third, say it is “very” important that the Mass be celebrated in a way that reflects their ethnic or ancestral culture.
- About three-quarters of respondents say worshiping with other people is important to them, with about one-third describing it as “very” important. Ratings for the importance of music are slightly lower.
- Among the listed aspects of the Mass, the church environment and decorations is least important to respondents, with just one-quarter saying this is “very” important to them. Still, nearly two-thirds say it is at least “somewhat” important.

***Differences by Frequency of Mass Attendance***

More than nine in ten Mass attending Catholics, regardless of how frequently they attend Mass, say that prayer and reflection at Mass is at least “somewhat” important. Nearly the same percentage across these sub-groups say that receiving the Eucharist at Mass is this important to them.

***How important are each of the following aspects of Mass to you?***

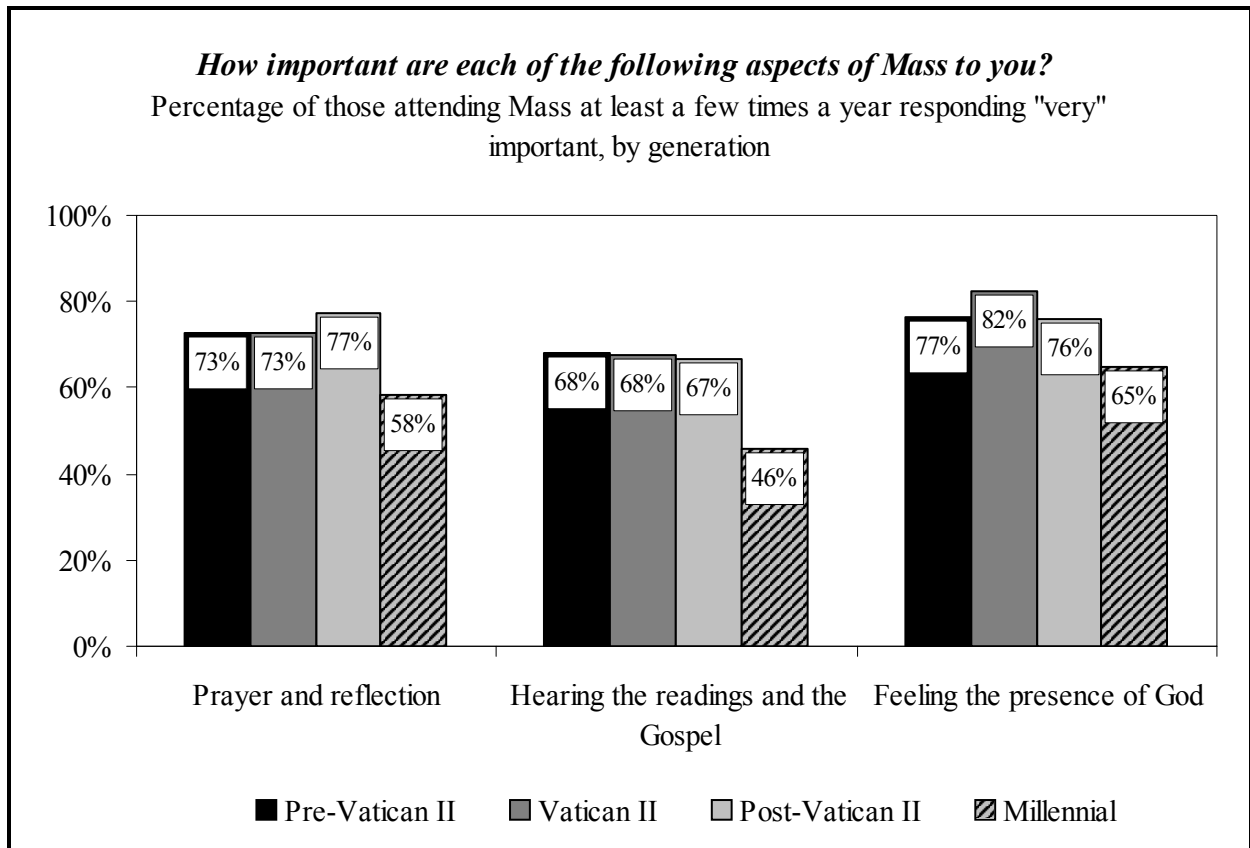
Respondents who attend Mass at least a few times a year responding “Somewhat” or “Very” important

	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year only</b>
Feeling the presence of God	97%	93%	79%
Prayer and reflection	97	92	90
Receiving Eucharist/Holy Communion	97	89	88
Hearing the readings and the Gospel	97	89	83
Hearing the homily	95	90	66
That Mass is celebrated in a language I most prefer	84	82	81
Worshiping with other people	87	80	62
The music	85	60	66
The church environment and decorations	72	64	62
That Mass is celebrated in a way that reflects my ethnic/ancestral culture	69	66	75

Catholics who attend Mass only a few times a year are significantly less likely than those attending at least once a month to say that hearing the homily is at least “somewhat” important to them (66 percent compared to 90 percent of those attending once a month but less than weekly and 95 percent of those attending weekly or more often).

**Differences by Generation**

Members of the Millennial Generation are *less* likely than all other respondents to say that the following aspects of Mass are “very” important to them: prayer and reflection, hearing the readings and Gospel, and feeling the presence of God.

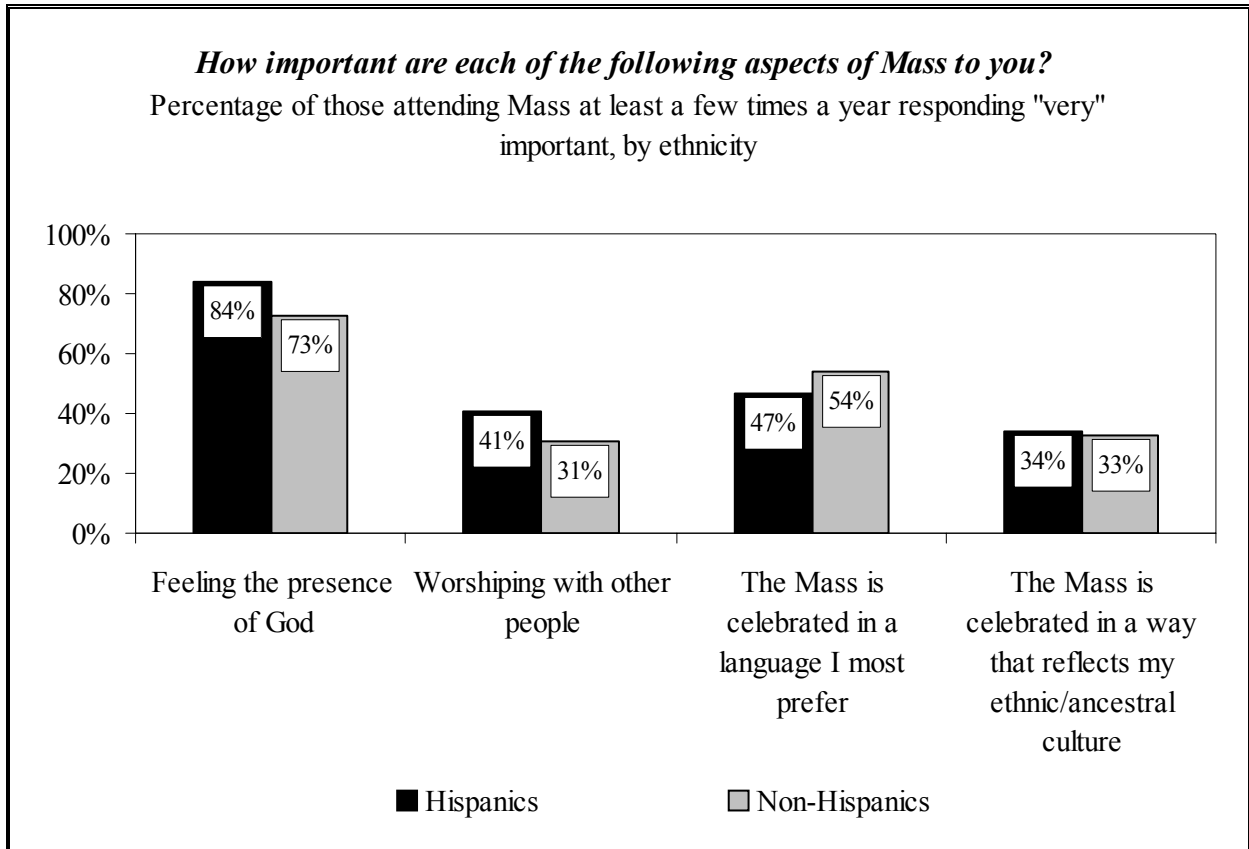


**Differences by Gender**

Women are slightly more likely than men to say that most of the aspects of Mass are “very” important to them: hearing the readings and the Gospel, hearing the homily, the music, receiving the Eucharist, prayer and reflection, worshipping with other people, feeling the presence of God, and having the Mass celebrated in a way that reflects ones’ ethnic or ancestral culture. The gender difference is largest for prayer and reflection (79 compared to 64 percent).

**Differences by Ethnicity**

Hispanics are slightly more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say that the following are “very” important to them: feeling the presence of God (84 compared to 73 percent) and worshipping with other people (41 compared to 31 percent). There is *no* statistically significant difference between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites on respondents’ attitudes about the Mass being celebrated in the respondents’ preferred language or on it being celebrated in a way that reflects their ethnic or ancestral culture.

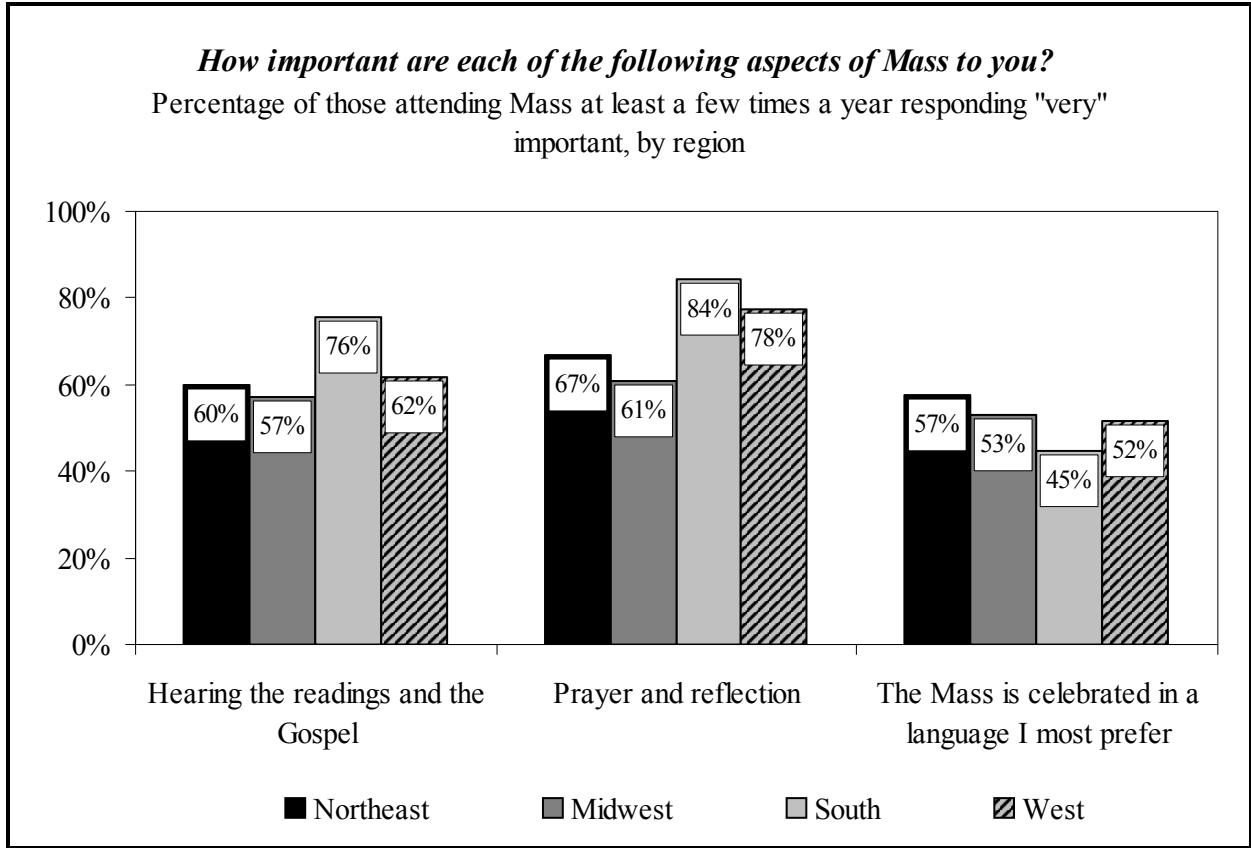


**Differences by Education**

Among those who have attended at least some college, those who were enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who were not to say all the aspects of Mass listed were “very” important to them. This is especially the case for music (42 percent compared to 21 percent) and worshipping with other people (46 percent compared to 28 percent).

**Differences by Region**

Mass attending Catholics in the South are more likely than those in other regions to say the following are “very” important to them: hearing the readings and the Gospel and prayer and reflection. However, those in the South are the *least* likely to say that Mass being celebrated in a language they most prefer is similarly important.



## Frequency of Receiving the Eucharist at Mass

*Half of Catholics who have celebrated their First Communion say they “always” receive the Eucharist when they attend Mass. Seven in ten say they do so at least “frequently or usually.”*

<b><i>When you attend Mass, how often do you receive Eucharist/Holy Communion?</i></b>	
Percentage of those who have celebrated their First Communion responding as such	
Always	50%
Frequently or usually	20
Seldom	17
Never	13

Seventeen percent say they “seldom” receive the Eucharist at Mass and 13 percent say they “never” do so.

### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

The less often a respondent attends Mass, the less likely they are to say they receive the Eucharist at Mass. Eight in ten weekly Mass attendees who have celebrated their First Communion “always” receive the Eucharist at Mass. Two-thirds of those attending at least once a month but less than weekly (66 percent) receive Holy Communion this often, as do 31 percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.

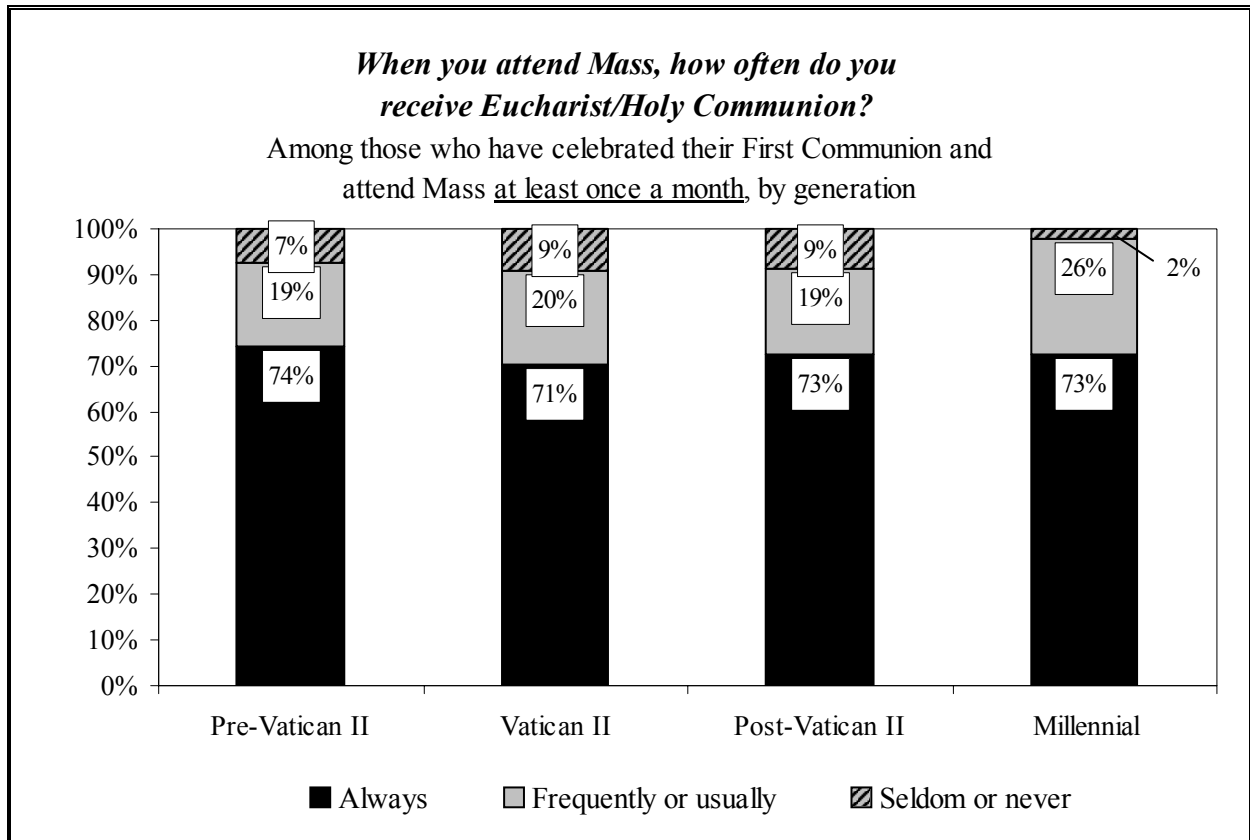
<b><i>When you attend Mass, how often do you receive Eucharist/Holy Communion?</i></b>			
Percentage of those who have celebrated their First Communion responding as such			
<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>			
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Always	79%	66%	31%
Frequently or usually	16	24	21
Seldom	3	8	26
Never	2	3	22



**Differences by Generation**

Among those who have celebrated their First Communion, members of the Millennial Generation are most likely to report that they “always” receive the Eucharist at Mass (61 percent) and members of the Vatican II Generation are least likely to do so (42 percent).

As shown in the graph below, among Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month, those of the Millennial Generation are the *least* likely to say they receive the Eucharist “seldom” or “never” when attending Mass.



**Differences by Education**

Among those who have celebrated their First Communion, 58 percent of those with a post-graduate degree report that they “always” receive the Eucharist at Mass. This compares to 40 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 48 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 49 percent of those with a high school diploma or less.

Fifty-eight percent of Catholics who have attended a Catholic college or university say they “always” receive the Eucharist at Mass.

## Attendance at Mass on Holy Days of Obligation

*Twelve percent of adult Catholics report that they “always” attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation that do not fall on Sunday.*

<b><i>How often do you attend a Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation when it does not fall on a Sunday?</i></b>	
Always	12%
Frequently or usually	23
Seldom	39
Never	26

Slightly fewer than one-quarter “frequently or usually” attend Mass on these Holy Days of Obligation. About two-fifths “seldom” do so, and about one-quarter “never” do so.

### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Weekly Mass attendees are much more likely than those attending Mass less often to say they attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation when they do not fall on a Sunday.

<b><i>How often do you attend a Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation when it does not fall on a Sunday?</i></b>			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b><i>Weekly or more</i></b>	<b><i>Less than weekly but at least once a month</i></b>	<b><i>A few times a year or less</i></b>
Always	41%	12%	1%
Frequently or usually	43	42	7
Seldom	15	44	47
Never	1	2	45

### ***Differences by Education***

Thirty percent of those with a high school diploma or less report that they “never” attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation. This compares to 26 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, 24 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, and 13 of those with a post-graduate degree.

Among those who attended at least some college, half of all those who attended a Catholic college or university (50 percent) say they at least “frequently or usually” attend on

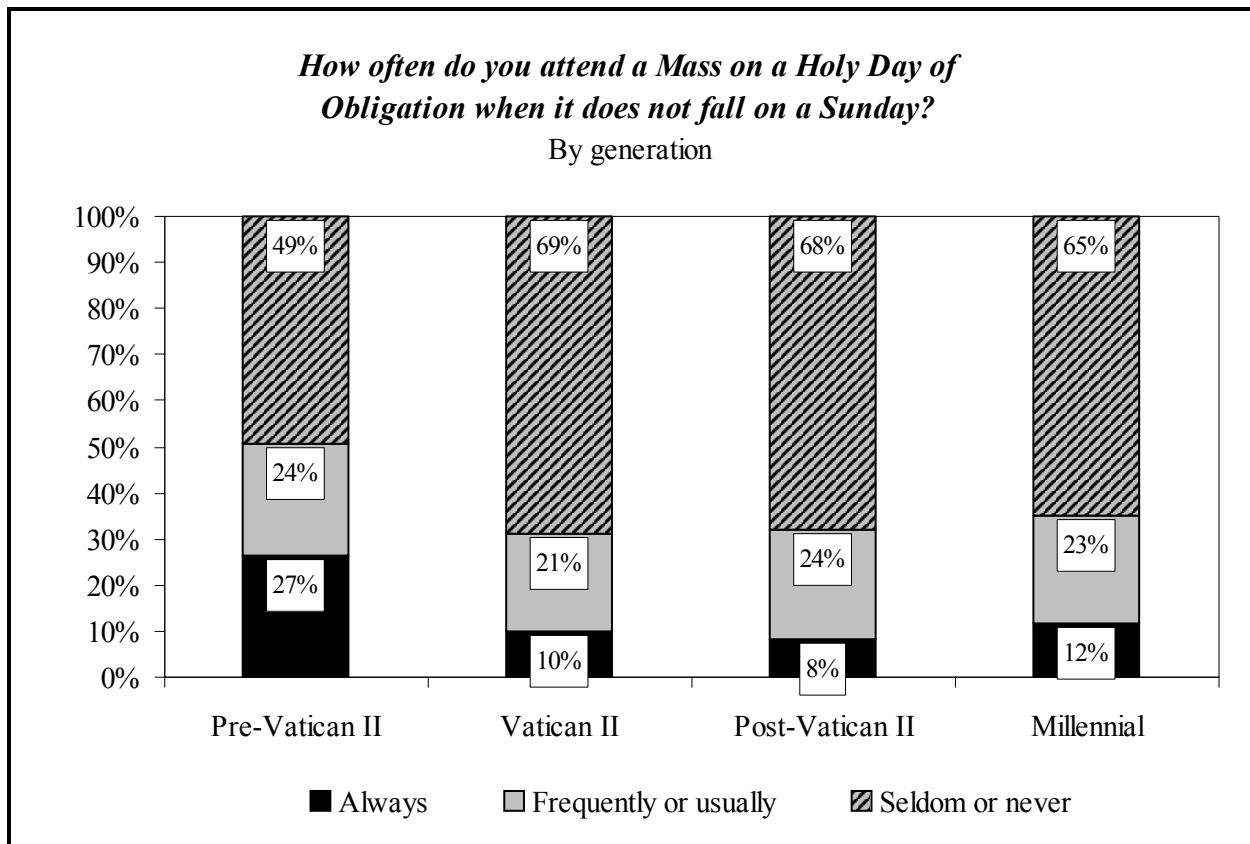
these Holy Days of Obligation compared to 34 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic educational institution.

***Differences by Gender***

Women are slightly more likely than men to report that they attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation at least “frequently or usually” (40 compared to 31 percent).

***Differences by Generation***

Twenty-seven percent of Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics report that they “always” attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation (51 percent at least “frequently or usually”). No more than 12 percent of members of other generations say they “always” attend. Catholics of the Vatican II and Post-Vatican II generations are least likely to say they attend Mass at least “frequently or usually” on Holy Days of Obligation (31 and 32 percent, respectively).



## Reasons for Missing Mass

*More than half of adult Catholics who have missed Sunday Mass in the last six months say that this happened at least “somewhat” because they don’t believe that missing Mass is a sin.*

***If you missed Sunday Mass at least once in the last six months, how well do each of the following explain, if at all, why you missed Mass?***

Respondents who attend Mass less than weekly

	<b>“Somewhat” or “Very Much”</b>	<b>“Very Much” Only</b>
I don’t believe that missing Mass is a sin	57%	30%
Busy schedule or lack of time	44	18
I am not a very religious person	42	19
Family responsibilities	36	15
Health problems or a disability	26	13
Inconvenient Mass schedule	24	7
Conflict with work	19	10

Respondents who do not attend Mass weekly were asked to what extent each of seven possible reasons explains why they missed Mass in the previous six months. Aside from the belief that missing Mass is not sinful, only a minority of Catholics say that each of the other reasons even “somewhat” explains why they have missed Mass.

- Slightly more than four-tenths say that a busy schedule or lack of time or that they are not a very religious person at least “somewhat” explain why they have missed Mass. Slightly less than one-fifth say these factors “very much” explain why they have missed.
- More than one-third say that family responsibilities explain why they have missed Mass. Fewer, about one-quarter, say that health problems or a disability and inconvenient Mass schedules explain why they have missed.
- One-fifth say that conflict with work explains why they have missed Mass, with one in ten saying this “very much” explains why.

***Differences by Frequency of Mass Attendance***

Among Catholics who do not attend Mass weekly, distinct differences in the reasons cited for missing Mass are related to their frequency of Mass attendance. For some it is an issue of schedules, health, or other responsibilities, while for others the reason is related to their attitudes about their faith.

Among Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month, a busy schedule or lack of time (51 percent), family responsibilities (48 percent), or health problems or a disability (41 percent) are the most frequently cited reasons that at least “somewhat” explain why they missed Mass. Among Catholics attending Mass a few times a year or less often, the most common reasons cited that explain at least “somewhat” their missing Mass are that they don’t believe “missing Mass is a sin” (64 percent) and that they are “not a very religious person” (50 percent).

***If you missed Sunday Mass at least once in the last six months, how well do each of the following explain, if at all, why you missed Mass?***

Respondents who attend Mass less than weekly responding “Somewhat” or “Very” Much

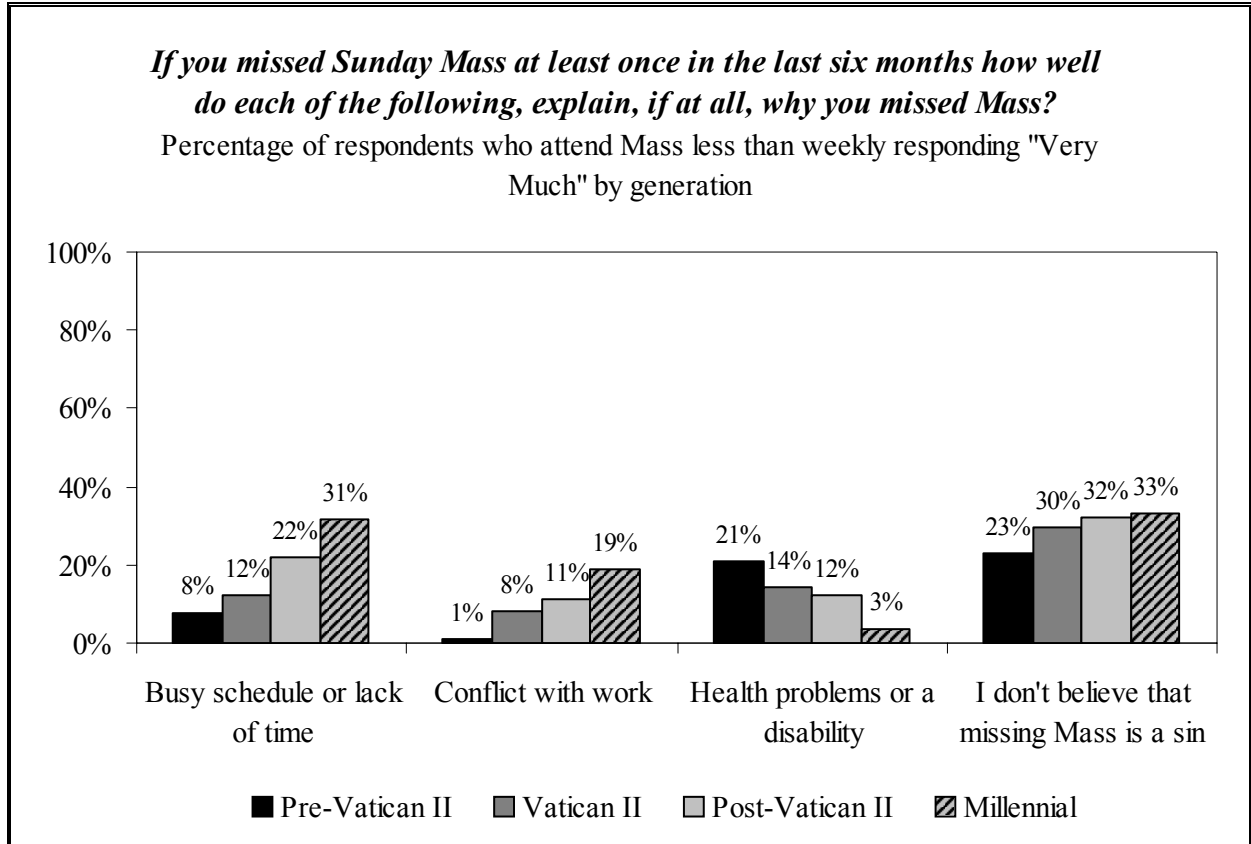
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>	
	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Busy schedule or lack of time	51%	41%
Family responsibilities	48	31
Health problems or a disability	41	21
I don’t believe that missing Mass is a sin	38	64
Conflict with work	26	16
Inconvenient Mass schedule	22	24
I am not a very religious person	21	50

***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say that family responsibilities at least “somewhat” explain why they have missed Mass (45 compared to 31 percent).

**Differences by Generation**

Older Catholics are more likely to cite health problems or disability as being “very much” a reason for missing Mass and the *least* likely to cite that they don’t believe missing Mass is a sin. Millennial Generation Catholics are more likely than those of other generations to cite a busy schedule, lack of time, or conflict with work as a reason that “very much” explains their missing Mass.



## Eucharistic Adoration

Respondents were asked if Eucharistic Adoration is offered by their parish and, if so, whether they have participated in Eucharistic Adoration during the past year.

### Availability of Parish Eucharistic Adoration

*Slightly less than half of Catholics report that their parish provides opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration.*

<b><i>Does your local parish offer opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration where the Eucharist/Holy Communion is displayed and people come to pray and worship?</i></b>	
Yes	47%
No	6
I don't know	47

Only 6 percent of respondents report that their parish does *not* offer opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration. Nearly half (47 percent) do not know whether their parish does so.

### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

The more frequently respondents attend Mass, the more likely they are to say that their parish offers opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration. Seven in ten (69 percent) of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less “don’t know” whether this is offered at their parish.

<b><i>Does your local parish offer opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration where the Eucharist/Holy Communion is displayed and people come to pray and worship?</i></b>			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Yes	83%	59%	28%
No	7	10	3
I don't know	10	31	69

***Differences by Generation***

Fifty-two percent of members of the Post-Vatican II and Millennial generations do not know whether their parish offers Eucharistic Adoration (compared to 46 percent of the Vatican II and 36 percent of the Pre-Vatican II generations). This is perhaps due to the lower frequency of Mass attendance among these younger generations.

**Participation in Eucharistic Adoration**

*Among those who report that their parish offers Eucharistic Adoration, three in ten participated in Eucharistic Adoration within the past year.*

<b><i>Have you participated in Eucharistic Adoration at your parish or elsewhere within the last year?</i></b>	
Respondents whose parishes offer opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration	
Yes	29%
No	71

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

More than four in ten respondents (43 percent) who attend Mass at least weekly at a parish that offers Eucharistic Adoration say they have participated in this within the last year. Those attending Mass less frequently in these parishes are less likely to have participated in Eucharistic Adoration.

<b><i>Have you participated in Eucharistic Adoration at your parish or elsewhere within the last year?</i></b>			
Respondents whose parishes offer opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration			
<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>			
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Yes	43%	35%	8%
No	57	65	92

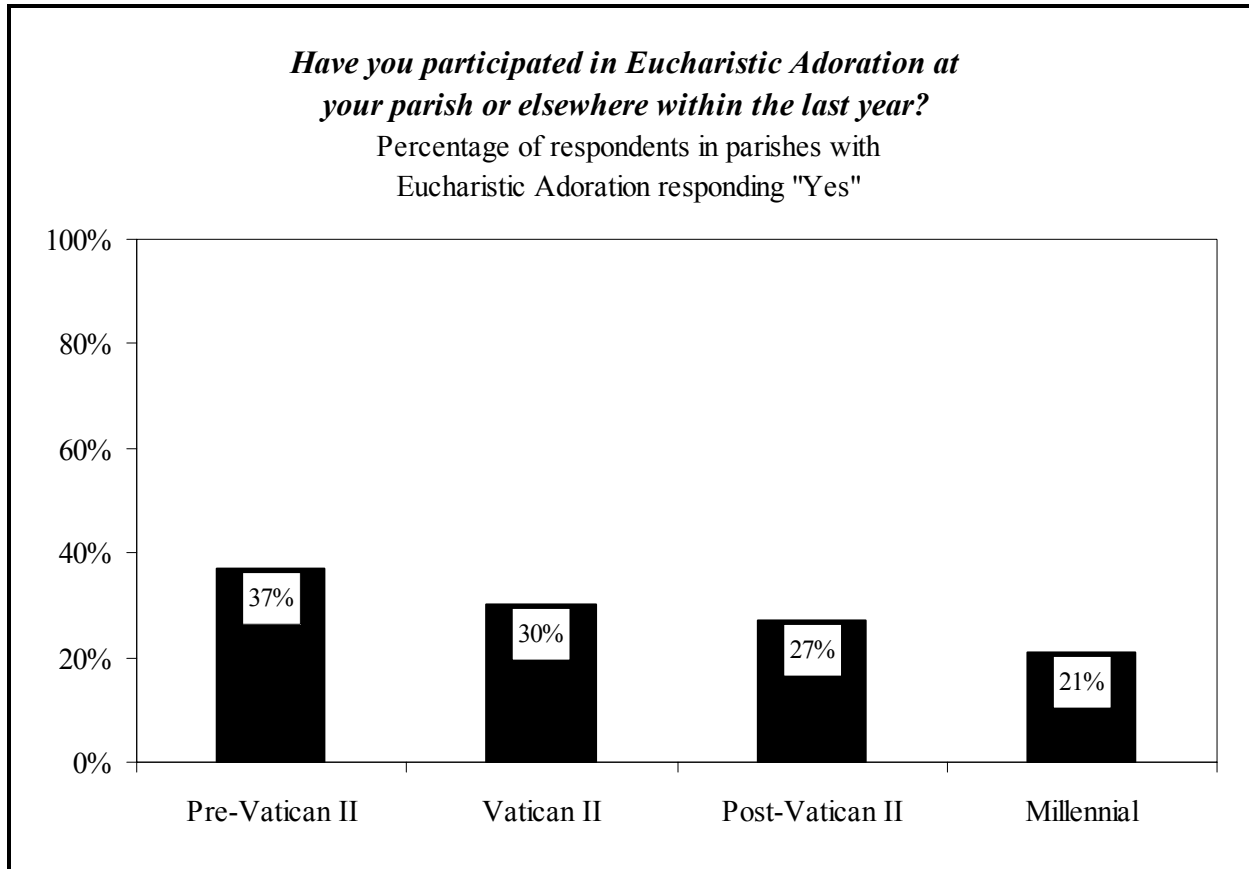


***Differences by Ethnicity***

Among those whose parishes offer Eucharistic Adoration, 37 percent of Hispanics and 26 percent of non-Hispanic whites say they have attended Eucharistic Adoration with the past year.

***Differences by Generation***

Among those whose parishes offer it, 37 percent of members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation have attended Eucharistic Adoration in the past year. This compares to 30 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 27 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 21 percent of the Millennial Generation.



## Belief in the Real Presence

*About six in ten Catholics (57 percent) agree that Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.*

<b><i>Which of the following statements best agrees with your belief about the Eucharist/Holy Communion?</i></b>		
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2008</b>
Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.	63%	57%
Bread and wine are symbols of Jesus, but Jesus is not really present.	37	43

In 2001, slightly more than six in ten Catholics said they believe that Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Nine in ten weekly Mass attendees (91 percent) say they believe that Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist, compared to two-thirds of those who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month (65 percent), and four in ten of those attending Mass a few times a year or less (40 percent).

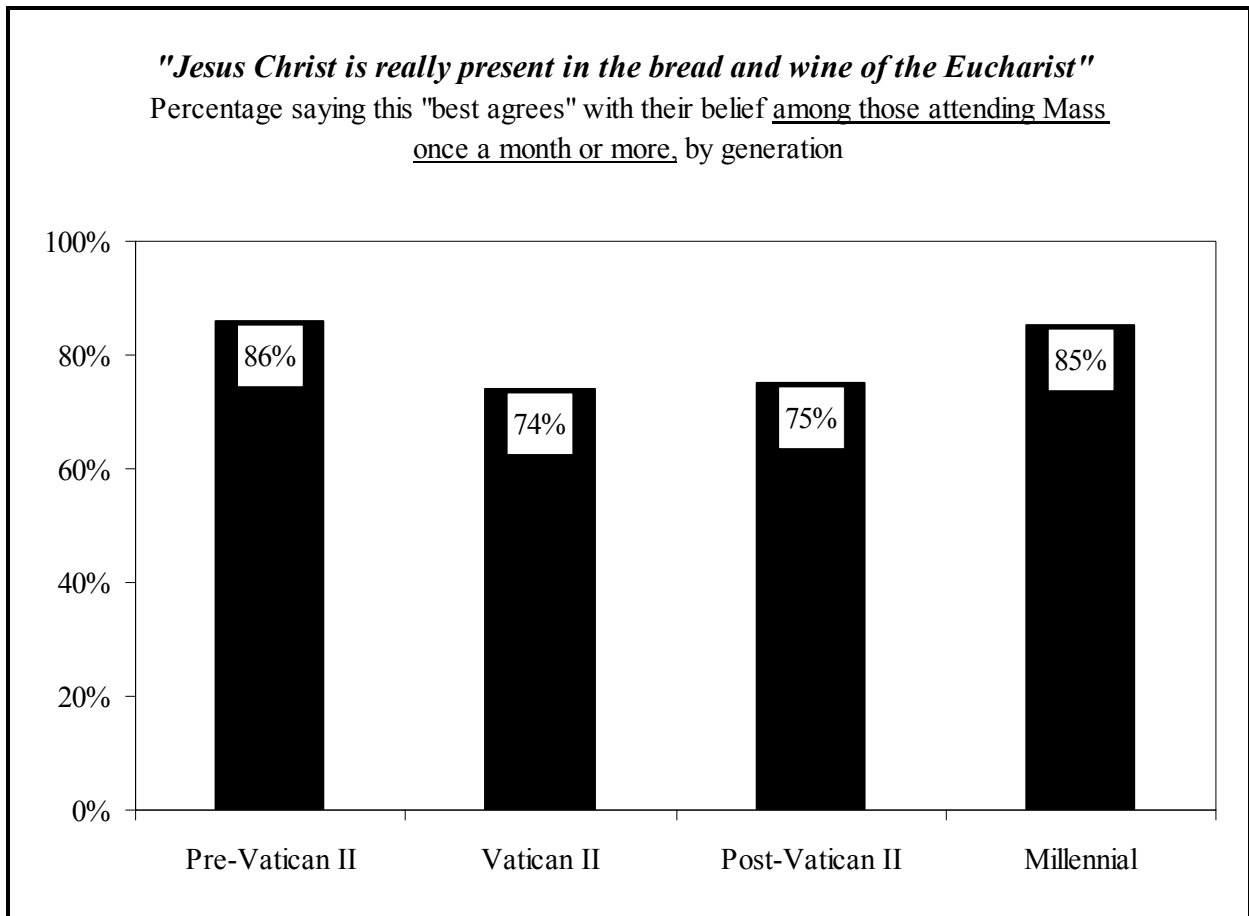
<b><i>Which of the following statements best agrees with your belief about the Eucharist/Holy Communion?</i></b>			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.	91%	65%	40%
Bread and wine are symbols of Jesus, but Jesus is not really present.	9	35	60

<sup>19</sup> This result comes from the 2001 CARA Catholic Poll (CCP), a national telephone poll. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from the online Knowledge Networks format.

**Differences by Generation**

Members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation are more likely than respondents of other generations to believe that Christ is really present in the Eucharist (70 compared to 57 percent of the Millennial Generation, 55 percent of the Vatican II Generation, and 53 percent of Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics).

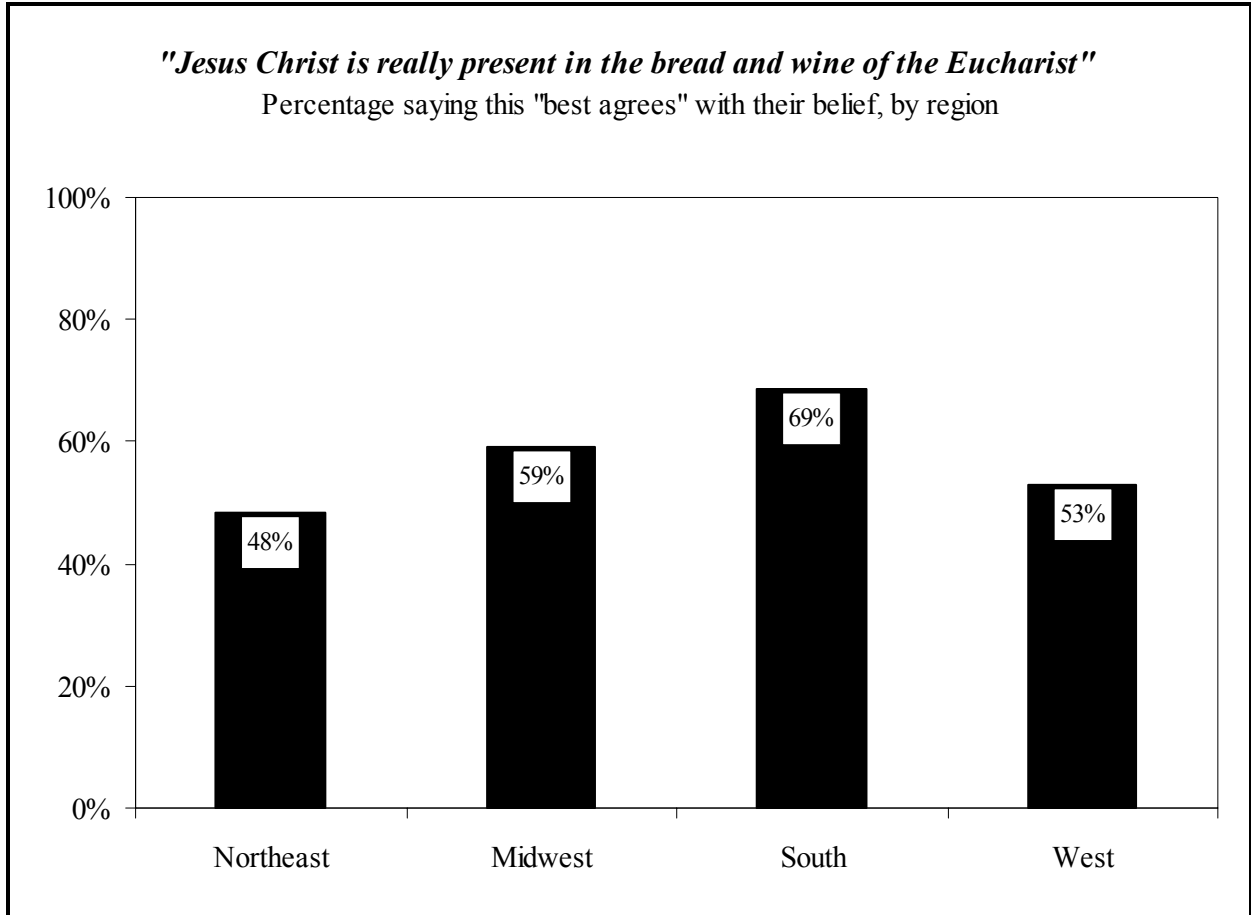
Among Catholics attending Mass at least once a month, Millennial Generation Catholics are just as likely as Pre-Vatican II Catholics to agree that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist (85 percent compared to 86 percent). Vatican II and Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics are about 10 percentage points less likely to believe that Christ is really present in the Eucharist (74 and 75 percent, respectively).



However, Millennial Generation Catholics are *less* likely than older Catholics to attend Mass at least once a month. As noted previously, 36 percent of this youngest generation attend Mass this frequently. By comparison, 39 percent of Post-Vatican II Catholics attend at least once a month, compared to 42 percent of the Vatican II Generation and 65 percent of Pre-Vatican II Catholics.

***Differences by Region***

Catholics in the South (69 percent) are more likely than those in other regions to believe that Christ is really present in the Eucharist. A majority of Catholics in the Northeast (52 percent) say they agree more that the bread and wine are symbols of Jesus, but Jesus is not really present.



***Differences by Education***

Among those who attended some college, respondents who were enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who were not to believe that Christ is really present in the Eucharist (65 percent compared to 55 percent).

## The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Respondents were asked how frequently they participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation and about their beliefs regarding this sacrament.

### Participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

*Three-quarters of Catholics report that they never participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation or that they do so less than once a year.*

	2005	2008
Once a month or more	2%	2%
Several times a year	10	12
Once a year	14	12
Less than once a year	32	30
Never	42	45

About one in eight Catholics (12 percent), participate in Reconciliation once a year and an identical proportion do so several times a year. Two percent report that they participate in Reconciliation at least once a month.

Results of a 2005 poll conducted by CARA with Knowledge Networks show similar patterns of participation in this sacrament.

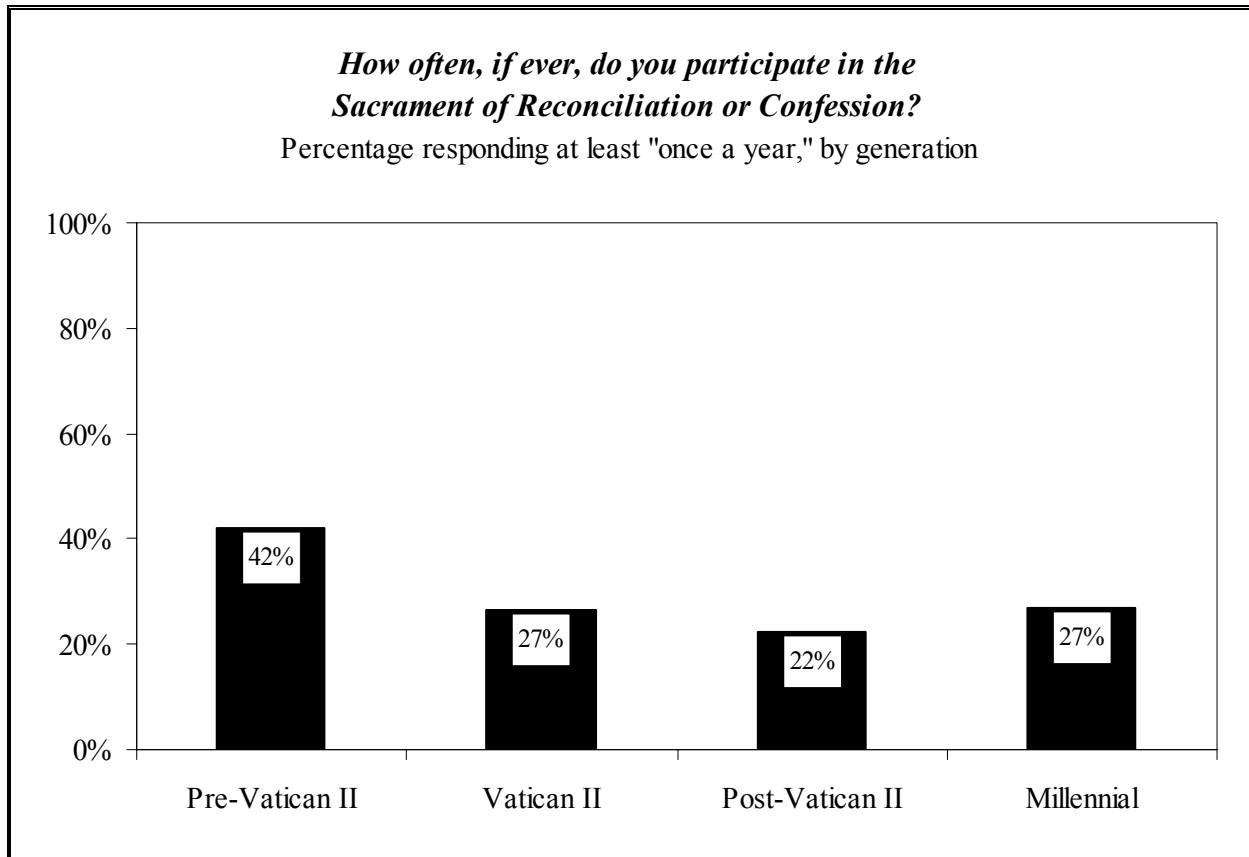
***Differences by Mass Attendance***

More than six in ten weekly Mass attenders (62 percent) say they participate in Reconciliation at least once a year, compared to 37 percent of those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month and only 6 percent of those attending less often.

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Once a month or more	6%	2%	0%
Several times a year	31	17	2
Once a year	25	18	4
Less than once a year	23	41	28
Never	15	22	66

***Differences by Generation***

More than four in ten members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation say they participate in Reconciliation at least once a year.

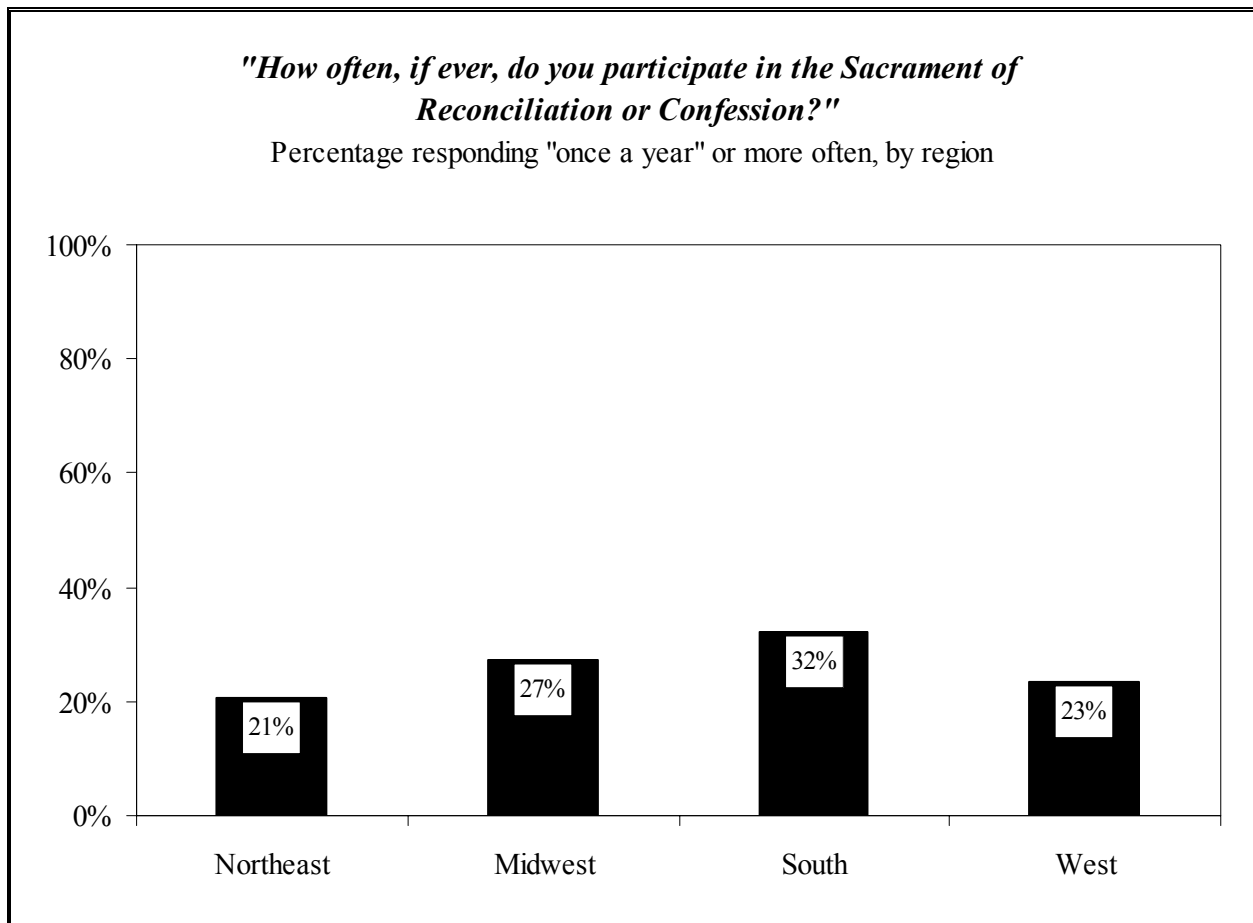


***Differences by Education***

Among those who attended at least some college, 36 percent of those who went to Catholic colleges or universities go to Confession at least once a year, compared to 23 percent who attended non-Catholic institutions.

***Differences by Region***

Catholics in the South and Midwest are more likely than those in the Northeast and West to participate in Reconciliation at least once a year.





## Beliefs About the Sacrament of Reconciliation

*Two-thirds of Catholics agree at least “somewhat” with the statement that “Forgiveness or absolution of a confessed sin requires one to make a confession with contrition.”*

<i>How much do you agree with the following statements?</i>	<b>Agree “Somewhat” or “Strongly”</b>	<b>Agree “Strongly” Only</b>
Forgiveness or absolution of a confessed sin requires one to make a confession with contrition, an internal attitude of sorrow and repentance.	67%	44%
I can be a good Catholic without celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.	62	33
By going to confession and making acts of contrition and penance I am reconciled with God and the Church.	52	26
Acts of penance such as prayer or fasting are necessary to gain forgiveness of one’s sins.	48	22
The sacrament of Reconciliation is only necessary for the forgiveness of very serious sins.	25	8

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of five statements about forgiveness and the sacrament of Reconciliation.

- About six in ten respondents agree at least “somewhat” that they can be a good Catholic without celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation at least yearly. One-third agree “strongly.”
- Just over half of Catholics agree that by going to Confession and making acts of contrition and penance, they are reconciled with God and the Church. One-quarter agree strongly.
- Slightly fewer, just under half of Catholics, agree that acts of penance such as prayer or fasting are necessary for forgiveness of sins.
- Only one-quarter of Catholics agree that the Reconciliation is only necessary for forgiveness of very serious sins, with fewer than one in ten agreeing “strongly.”

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

More than eight in ten Catholics attending Mass at least weekly agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that absolution of a confessed sin requires one to make a confession with contrition (86 percent) and that going to Confession and making acts of penance and contrition reconciles them with God and the Church (80 percent). Just more than half of weekly attenders (54 percent) agree similarly that acts of penance, such as prayer or fasting, are necessary to gain forgiveness of sins. Only a third of these weekly attendees agree at least “somewhat” that the sacrament of Reconciliation is only necessary for the forgiveness of very serious sins.

<b><i>How often, if ever, do you participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession?</i></b>			
Percentage of those agreeing “somewhat” or “strongly”			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Forgiveness or absolution of a confessed sin requires one to make a confession with contrition, an internal attitude of sorrow and repentance.	86%	80%	55%
By going to confession and making acts of contrition and penance I am reconciled with God and the Church.	80	60	36
I can be a good Catholic without celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.	54	62	65
Acts of penance such as prayer or fasting are necessary to gain forgiveness of one’s sins.	54	57	36
The sacrament of Reconciliation is only necessary for the forgiveness of very serious sins.	34	29	19

A majority of Catholics of all levels of Mass attendance agree at least “somewhat” that they can be a good Catholic *without* celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.

Catholics attending Mass less than weekly are generally less likely than weekly attenders to be in agreement with Church teachings regarding the sacrament of Reconciliation. This is especially the case for those attending Mass a few times a year or less often.

### ***Differences by Generation***

The older Catholics are, the more likely that they express agreement with statements that are consistent with Church teachings on the sacrament of Reconciliation.

- Older Catholics are more likely to agree “strongly” that forgiveness requires making a confession with contrition (51 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 49 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 42 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 33 percent of the Millennial Generation).
- Similarly, older Catholics are more likely to agree “strongly” that penance is required for forgiveness (33 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 25 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 18 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 11 percent of the Millennial Generation).
- Members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation are more likely than all other respondents to agree at least “somewhat” that confession and acts of contrition and penance and confession reconcile one with the Church (66 compared to 49 percent).

### ***Differences by Education***

Sixty-seven percent of Catholics with a post-graduate degree agree “strongly” that forgiveness requires a confession with contrition. This compares to 47 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 45 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 39 percent of those with a high school diploma or less.

More than half of those who attended a Catholic elementary or middle school (51 percent) or a Catholic high school (53 percent) “strongly” agree that forgiveness of a confessed sin requires one to make a confession with contrition and repentance, compared to 41 percent who attended non-Catholic schools.

Also, among those who attended at least some college, 58 percent of those enrolled at a Catholic college or university “strongly” agree that forgiveness of a confessed sin requires one to make a confession with contrition and repentance, compared to 48 percent of those attending a non-Catholic college or university.

## The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

Respondents were asked if they or a member of their immediate family have ever requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Additionally, they were asked how much importance they place on this sacrament.

### Request for the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

*About half of Catholics report that they or a member of their immediate family has ever requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at a time of serious illness.*

*As you may know, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick used to be known as “last rites” or “extreme unction.” Nowadays, seriously ill people, not just those who are dying, can receive this sacrament. Have you or a member of your immediate family ever requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at a time of serious illness?*

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2008</b>
Yes	52%	51%
No	48	49

In 2001, a nearly identical proportion of Catholics (52 percent) reported that they or a member of their family had requested Anointing of the Sick.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The 2001 CCP. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls. The wording of the 2001 question was limited to: “Have you or a member of your immediate family ever requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at a time of serious illness?”

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Sixty-three percent of respondents who attend Mass weekly or more say that they or a member of their immediate family have requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. This compares to 54 percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month and 45 percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.

*As you may know, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick used to be known as “last rites” or “extreme unction.” Nowadays, seriously ill people, not just those who are dying, can receive this sacrament. Have you or a member of your immediate family ever requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at a time of serious illness?*

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Yes	63%	54%	45%
No	37	46	55

***Differences by Gender***

Women are more likely than men to report that they or a member of their immediate family have requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (57 percent compared to 45 percent).

***Differences by Generation***

Members of the Vatican II Generation are most likely to report that they or a member of their family have requested Anointing of the Sick (59 percent). This compares to 53 percent of members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 46 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 43 percent of the Millennial Generation.

## Importance Placed on Receiving the Sacrament

*More than four-tenths of Catholics (45 percent) say it is “very” important to them that they receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at some point. One in seven (14 percent) say this is “somewhat” important and about three in ten (31 percent) say that it is “a little” important. Just one in ten say it is “not at all” important to them.*

***How important is it to you that you receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at some point?***

Very important	45%
Somewhat important	14
A little important	31
Not at all important	10

### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

About two in three of those attending Mass weekly or more often (68 percent) say that receiving the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is “very important” to them compared to more than half of those attending Mass less often but at least once a month (53 percent) and a third of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often (33 percent).

***How important is it to you that you receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at some point?***

	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Very important	68%	53%	33%
Somewhat important	25	32	33
A little important	4	11	19
Not at all important	3	4	15

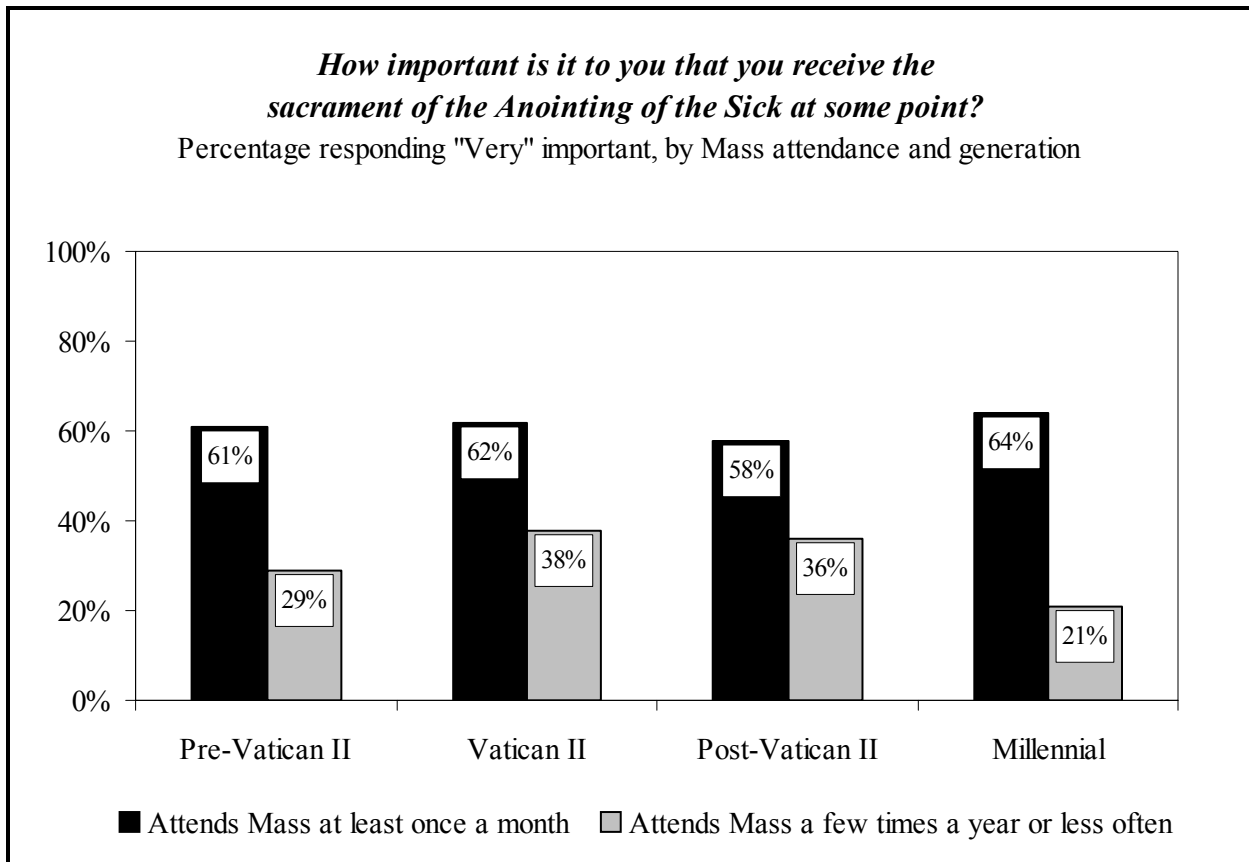
### ***Differences by Gender***

Women are slightly more likely than men to report that it is “very” important to them to receive the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick at some point (51 percent compared to 39 percent).

**Differences by Generation**

Eighty-eight percent of Pre-Vatican II Catholics say receiving the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is “somewhat” or “very” important to them. By comparison, only 60 percent of Millennial Generation Catholics respond as such.

As shown in the graph below, across generations, those attending Mass at least once a month are about equally likely to say that receiving the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is “very” important to them. However, among those attending Mass only a few times a year or less, the oldest and youngest generations are less likely than other Catholics to say this is “very” important to them.



## Ordinations and Vocations

Catholics were asked several questions about ordinations and vocations: whether they have ever attended an ordination ceremony for a priest, whether they have ever considered a vocation to the clergy or religious life, whether they have ever encouraged others to pursue a religious vocation and (if not) their willingness to do so.

### Attendance of an Ordination Ceremony

*About one in eight Catholics (13 percent) have attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest.*

<b><i>Have you ever attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest?</i></b>	
Yes	13%
No	87

#### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

The more frequently respondents attend Mass, the more likely they are to say they have attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest.

<b><i>Have you ever attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest?</i></b>			
<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>			
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Yes	20%	17%	8%
No	80	83	92

#### ***Differences by Education***

Among those who attended at least some college, those enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who were not to say they have attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest (31 percent compared to 13 percent).



## Consideration of Becoming a Priest or Religious Brother

*About one in six Catholic men (17 percent) have ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother.*

<i>Have you ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a priest or religious brother...</i>		
Male respondents		
	<b>2003</b>	<b>2008</b>
Very seriously	5%	3%
Somewhat seriously	6	6
Only a little seriously	6	7
Not seriously at all	2	1
Has never considered	80	83
I am a priest or religious brother	--	<1

Nine percent have of men have “somewhat” or “very” seriously considered becoming a priest or religious brother. A similar proportion, 8 percent, have considered it “only a little seriously” or “not seriously at all.”

In 2003, one-fifth of men reported that they had considered becoming a priest or religious brother.<sup>21</sup> This proportion is just slightly higher than the 17 percent in the current survey.

<sup>21</sup> Results are from the 2003 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Male Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month are most likely to say they have at least “somewhat” seriously considered becoming a priest or brother. Seventeen percent of these men responded as such, compared to 11 percent of weekly attenders and 6 percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.

<b><i>Have you ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a priest or religious brother...</i></b>			
Male respondents			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Very seriously	4%	8%	2%
Somewhat seriously	7	9	4
Only a little seriously	7	10	6
Not seriously at all	2	0	1
Has never considered	79	73	87
I am a priest or religious brother	<1	0	0

***Differences by Generation***

Men of the Vatican II Generation are most likely to have considered a vocation to the priesthood or religious life (25 percent), followed by 17 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 12 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 9 percent of the Millennial Generation.

***Differences by Education***

Men with post-graduate degrees are most likely to have considered the priesthood or religious life (24 percent, compared to 20 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 18 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 12 percent of those with a high school diploma or less).

Among men who attended at least some college, those enrolled at a Catholic college or university are much more likely than those enrolled elsewhere to say they have considered becoming a priest or religious brother (40 percent compared to 17 percent). About one in four men who have attended a Catholic college or university (26 percent) say they have at least “somewhat” seriously considered the priesthood or religious life. Men who attended a Catholic high school are also more likely to have considered this vocation (32 percent overall and 20 percent at least “somewhat” seriously).

## Consideration of Becoming a Permanent Deacon

*Very few Catholic men, 5 percent, have ever given any consideration to becoming a permanent deacon.*

***A permanent deacon is an ordained man, either married or single, who may proclaim the Gospel, preach, and teach in the name of the Church, baptize, lead the faithful in prayer, witness marriages, and conduct wake and funeral services. Deacons are also leaders in identifying the needs of others, then marshalling the Church's resources to meet those needs. Have you ever considered becoming a permanent deacon? [If "Yes"] Would you say you have considered becoming a permanent deacon...***

Male respondents

Very seriously	1%
Somewhat seriously	2
Only a little seriously	1
Not seriously at all	1
Has never considered	95
I am currently serving as a permanent deacon	0

Catholic men who are age 35 or older are *not* more likely than those who are younger to have considered becoming a permanent deacon.<sup>22</sup> Married Catholic men age 35 or older are also no more likely to have considered this.

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<sup>22</sup> The minimum age for ordination as a permanent deacon is 35.

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Regardless of frequency of Mass attendance, Catholic men are less likely to say they have seriously considered becoming a deacon than a priest or brother. Seven percent of men who attend Mass weekly have “somewhat” or “very” seriously considered becoming a permanent deacon. Very few men who attend Mass a few times a year or less have considered this, as have only 2 percent of men who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month.

*A permanent deacon is an ordained man, either married or single, who may proclaim the Gospel, preach, and teach in the name of the Church, baptize, lead the faithful in prayer, witness marriages, and conduct wake and funeral services. Deacons are also leaders in identifying the needs of others, then marshalling the Church's resources to meet those needs. Have you ever considered becoming a permanent deacon? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a permanent deacon...*

Male respondents

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Very seriously	3%	0%	<1%
Somewhat seriously	4	2	<1
Only a little seriously	3	2	<1
Not seriously at all	0	6	0
Has never considered	90	90	99

***Differences by Generation***

Ten percent of men of the Pre-Vatican II Generation have considered becoming a permanent deacon. This compares to 7 percent of men of the Vatican II Generation and 3 percent each of the Post-Vatican II and Millennial generations.

***Differences by Education***

Men with post-graduate degrees are most likely to have considered becoming a permanent deacon (16 percent, compared to 4 percent of all other men).

Among men who have attended at least some college, those enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who were not to say they have considered this (17 percent compared to 5 percent).

## Consideration of Becoming a Nun or Religious Sister

*Fifteen percent of Catholic women have ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister.*

<b><i>Have you ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a nun or religious sister...</i></b>		
Female respondents		
	<b>2003</b>	<b>2008</b>
Very seriously	4%	<1%
Somewhat seriously	5	4
Only a little seriously	6	9
Not seriously at all	2	2
Has never considered	84	85
 I am a nun or religious sister	 --	 0

In 2003, about one in six women (16 percent) reported that they had ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister, a nearly identical proportion as in the present survey (15 percent).<sup>23</sup> However, the percentage reporting that they considered this “very” seriously has declined from 4 percent to less than 1 percent.

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<sup>23</sup> Results are from the 2003 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

More than one in 20 Catholic women who attend Mass at least once a month have “somewhat” or “very” seriously considered becoming a nun or a religious sister (6 percent of weekly attenders and 7 percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month). Slightly fewer (4 percent) of those attending Mass less frequently have considered this.

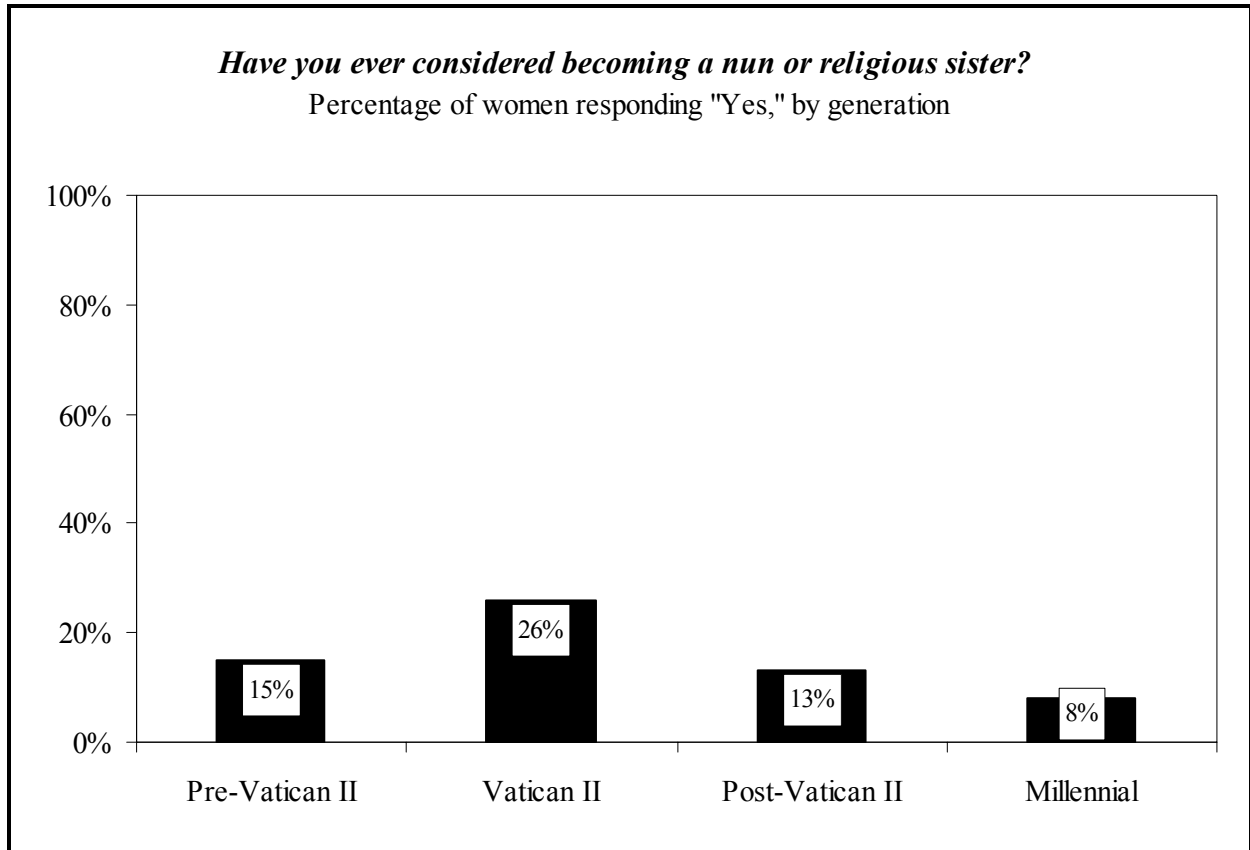
<b><i>Have you ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister? [If “Yes”] Would you say you have considered becoming a nun or religious sister...</i></b>			
Female respondents			
<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>			
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Very seriously	1%	0%	1%
Somewhat seriously	5	7	3
Only a little seriously	11	11	6
Not seriously at all	3	0	3
Has never considered	80	82	87

***Differences by Education***

- Women with no more than a high school diploma are *less* likely than all others to have considered religious life (10 percent compared to 22 percent).
- Women who attended a Catholic high school are among the most likely to have considered this vocation (25 percent overall and 8 percent at least “somewhat” seriously).
- Women who have attended a Catholic college or university are among the most likely to have considered becoming a nun or religious sister (41 percent). Most say they considered this “only a little” seriously (24 percent) rather than at least “somewhat” seriously (6 percent) or “not seriously at all” (11 percent).

***Differences by Generation***

Twenty-six percent of women of the Vatican II Generation have considered becoming a nun or religious sister. This compares to 15 percent of women of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 13 percent of those of the Millennial Generation, and 8 percent of those of the Post-Vatican II Generation.



## Previous Encouragement of Religious Vocations

*One in ten Catholics have encouraged someone they know to pursue a religious vocation.*

<i>Have you ever encouraged someone you know to become a...</i>	
Percentage responding "Yes"	
Priest	6%
Permanent deacon	4
Nun or religious sister	4
Religious brother	3
Any of the above	10

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

Six percent of Catholics have ever encouraged someone they know to become a priest. Four percent have every encouraged someone to become a permanent deacon, and an identical proportion have ever encouraged someone to become a nun or religious sister. Three percent have ever encouraged someone to become a religious brother.



***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Encouragement of vocations is especially likely to come from weekly Mass attenders. One in five weekly Mass attenders (19 percent) has encouraged someone they know to become a priest and nearly three in ten (28 percent) have encouraged someone to consider any of the vocations listed. Those attending Mass less frequently are not as likely to encourage vocations. Respondents are most likely (across all Mass attendance categories) to say they have encouraged priestly vocations.

<b><i>Have you ever encouraged someone you know to become a...</i></b>			
Percentage responding "Yes"			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Priest	19%	5%	2%
Permanent deacon	12	2	1
Nun or religious sister	10	3	1
Religious brother	9	2	<1
Any of the above	28	9	3

## Willingness to Encourage Religious Vocations

*Among Catholics who have not previously done so, one-quarter say they would encourage someone else they know to become a priest.*

**[If respondent has not previously encouraged each type of vocation] Would you encourage someone else you know to become a...**<sup>24</sup>

Percentage of those who have *not* encouraged responding “Yes”

Permanent deacon	28%
Religious brother	27
Nun or religious sister	27
Priest	25
Any of the above	31
All of the above	19

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

Slightly larger percentages (27 to 28 percent) say they would encourage someone else they know to become a permanent deacon, a religious brother, or a nun or religious sister. About three in ten say they would encourage at least one of the four types of vocations. About one in five of these respondents would encourage all four types.

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<sup>24</sup> Respondents were only asked about the specific vocations that they said had not encouraged in the past. Someone who said yes that they had encouraged just one vocation could say that they would not encourage any of the other vocations.

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Among those who have *not* previously encouraged vocations, a majority of weekly Mass attenders (53 percent) say they would encourage someone they know to seek at least one of the vocations listed. Forty-seven percent of weekly attenders in this group say they would encourage a man they know to become a permanent deacon, followed by 46 percent who would encourage a women they know to become a nun or religious sister.

<b>[If respondent has not previously encouraged each type of vocation] <u>Would you encourage someone else you know to become a...</u></b>			
Percentage of those who have <i>not</i> encouraged responding “Yes”			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Permanent deacon	47%	31%	20%
Nun or religious sister	46	28	19
Religious brother	45	29	20
Priest	42	27	19
Any of the above	53	34	22
All of the above	23	21	17

Among those who have not encouraged vocations, those attending Mass less than weekly are *less* likely than weekly attenders to say they would encourage someone to seek any of the vocations listed.

***Differences by Education***

Among the respondents who have not encouraged vocations, 25 percent of Catholics with a high school diploma or less would encourage any (at least one) of the four types of vocations. This compares to 70 percent of those with some college, 59 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree and 56 percent of those with a post-graduate degree.

## Willingness to Encourage One’s Child to Pursue a Vocation

About one-third of Catholics would encourage their own child to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun or sister.

<b><i>Would you encourage your own child to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun, or sister?</i></b>	
Yes	32%
No	68

There is no statistically significant difference between the responses of those who have children and those who do not (34 percent compared to 32 percent).

### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

A majority of adult Catholics attending Mass weekly (55 percent) say they would encourage their own child to pursue a vocation compared to a third of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month (33 percent) and more than one in five of those attending Mass a few times a year or less often (22 percent).

<b><i>Would you encourage your own child to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun, or sister?</i></b>			
Percentage responding “Yes”			
<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>			
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Yes	55%	33%	22%
No	45	67	78

### ***Differences by Education***

Forty-six percent of Catholics with a post-graduate degree would encourage their own child to pursue a religious vocation. This compares to 38 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 33 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 27 percent of those with a high school diploma or less.

## Religious Devotions and Practices

This section summarizes responses to several questions about Catholics' religious devotions and practices in daily life. Respondents were asked about their general level of involvement in religious activities outside of Mass, about what they do during Lent, whether they own or carry religious art or objects, and how frequently they pray the rosary.

### General Involvement in Parish and Religious Activities other than Mass

*Four percent of Catholics describe themselves as “very” involved in parish or religious activities other than attending Mass.*

<i>Besides attending Mass, how involved are you in parish or other religious activities?</i>		
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2008</b>
Very involved	7%	4%
Somewhat involved	18	11
Involved a little	24	21
Not involved at all	51	64

In 2001, one-quarter of Catholics reported that they were at least “somewhat” involved in parish or other religious activities, compared to 15 percent in the present (2008) poll.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This result comes from the 2001 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

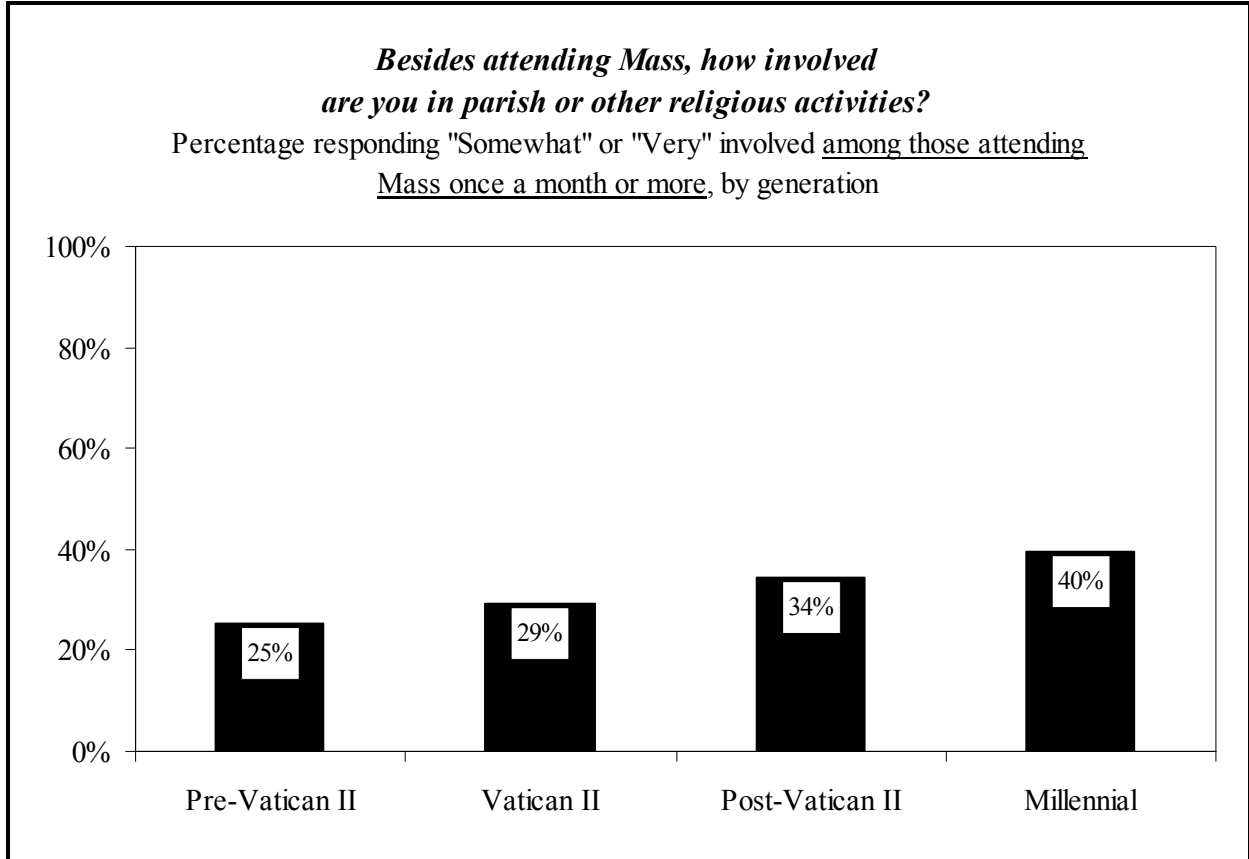
***Differences by Mass Attendance***

The more frequently Catholics attend Mass, the more likely they are to be active in their parish. More than four in ten weekly attenders (42 percent) say they are “somewhat” or “very” involved in parish and religious activities other than Mass. By comparison, only 19 percent of those attending Mass at least once a month but not weekly and 3 percent of those attending a few times a year or less often say they are this active in their parish or other religious activities.

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Very involved	13%	3%	<1%
Somewhat involved	29	16	2
Involved a little	33	38	10
Not involved at all	25	43	88

**Differences by Generation**

Among those attending Mass at least once a month, Millennial Generation (40 percent) and Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics (34 percent) are more likely than older Catholics to say they are at least “somewhat” involved in parish life.



**Differences by Education**

Among those who attended some college, those who attended a Catholic college or university are more than twice as likely as those attending a non-Catholic institution to be at least “somewhat” active in their parish or other religious activities (33 percent compared to 15 percent). Sixty-two percent of those who attended a Catholic college or university report some (at least “a little”) level of activity besides attending Mass.

## Lenten Practices

*Six in ten Catholics say they abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays.*

***Do you do any of the following during Lent, the 40-day period preceding the celebration of Easter?***

Percentage saying “Yes”

Do you abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent?	60%
Do you typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services?	45
Besides giving something up, do you do anything positive, like giving additional money to the needy or trying to be a better person, during Lent?	44
Besides meat on Fridays, do you give up or abstain from anything else during Lent?	38

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.

Catholics were asked if they observe Lent in each of several ways.

- Slightly less than half (45 percent) typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services.
- A similar proportion try to something positive (as opposed to giving something up) during Lent.
- Slightly fewer than four-tenths give up something for Lent (other than abstaining from meat on Fridays).



***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Nine in ten adult Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more often (89 percent) abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent. Slightly fewer, 85 percent, say they typically receive ashes on Ash Wednesday. Two-thirds of weekly attenders (67 percent) say they give up something for Lent (in addition to abstaining from meat on Fridays) and nearly three in four (73 percent) say they try to do something positive, such as giving additional money to the needy or trying to be a better person during Lent.

<b><i>Do you do any of the following during Lent, the 40-day period preceding the celebration of Easter?</i></b>			
Percentage saying “Yes”			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Do you abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent?	89%	81%	41%
Do you typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services?	85	73	18
Besides giving something up, do you do anything positive, like giving additional money to the needy or trying to be a better person, during Lent?	73	63	25
Besides meat on Fridays, do you give up or abstain from anything else during Lent?	67	51	21

Catholics who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month are only slightly less likely than weekly attenders to observe Lenten practices.

Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less are least likely to observe Lenten practices. However, four in ten of these Catholics do say they abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent.

***Differences by Gender***

Women are slightly more likely than men to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays (65 compared to 55 percent). They are also more likely to do something positive for Lent (51 compared to 36 percent) and to receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services (50 compared to 38 percent).

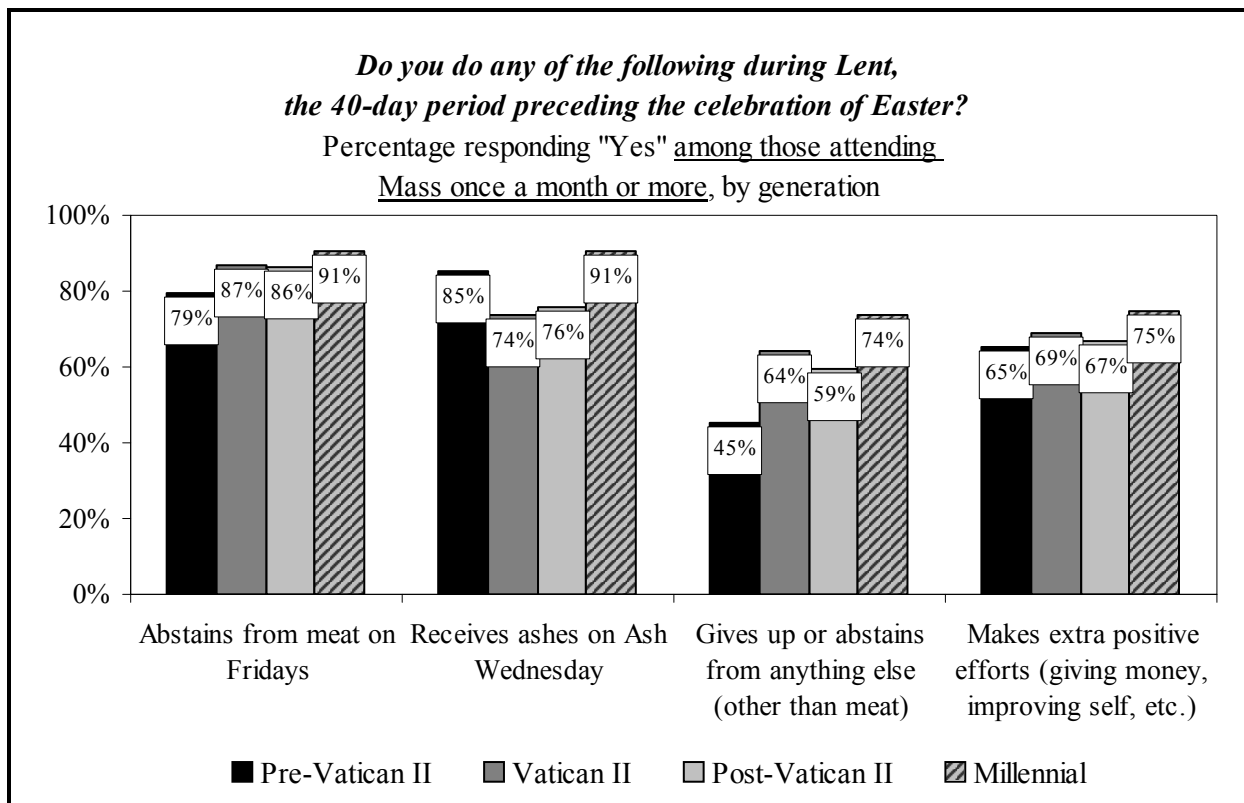
**Differences by Generation**

There is relatively little variation across generations in the observance of Lent. About six in ten Catholics of all generations abstain from meat on Fridays. Pre-Vatican II Catholics are most likely to say they typically receive ashes on Ash Wednesday (58 percent) and that they do something positive during Lent (50 percent). Compared to older Catholics, those of the Millennial Generation are most likely to say they give something up during Lent (46 percent).

<b>Do you do any of the following during Lent, the 40-day period preceding the celebration of Easter?</b>				
Percentage responding “Yes”				
	<b>By Generation</b>			
	<b>Pre-Vatican II</b>	<b>Vatican II</b>	<b>Post-Vatican II</b>	<b>Millennial</b>
Do you abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent?	64%	59%	59%	61%
Do you typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services?	58	40	40	50
Besides giving something up, do you do anything positive, like giving additional money to the needy or trying to be a better person, during Lent?	50	45	41	40
Besides meat on Fridays, do you give up or abstain from anything else during Lent?	33	34	38	46

Catholics of the of Vatican II and Post-Vatican II generations are the least likely to say they typically receive ashes on Ash Wednesday (40 percent). The oldest generation of Catholics is least likely to say they give anything else up besides eating meat on Fridays (33 percent).

Among Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month, those of the Millennial Generation are the *most* likely to observe Lenten practices (see graph on the following page). More than nine in ten of these Catholics abstain from meat on Fridays and receive ashes on Ash Wednesday. About three-quarters of these young adult Catholics also give up something during Lent. A similar percentage make other positive efforts during Lent as well.

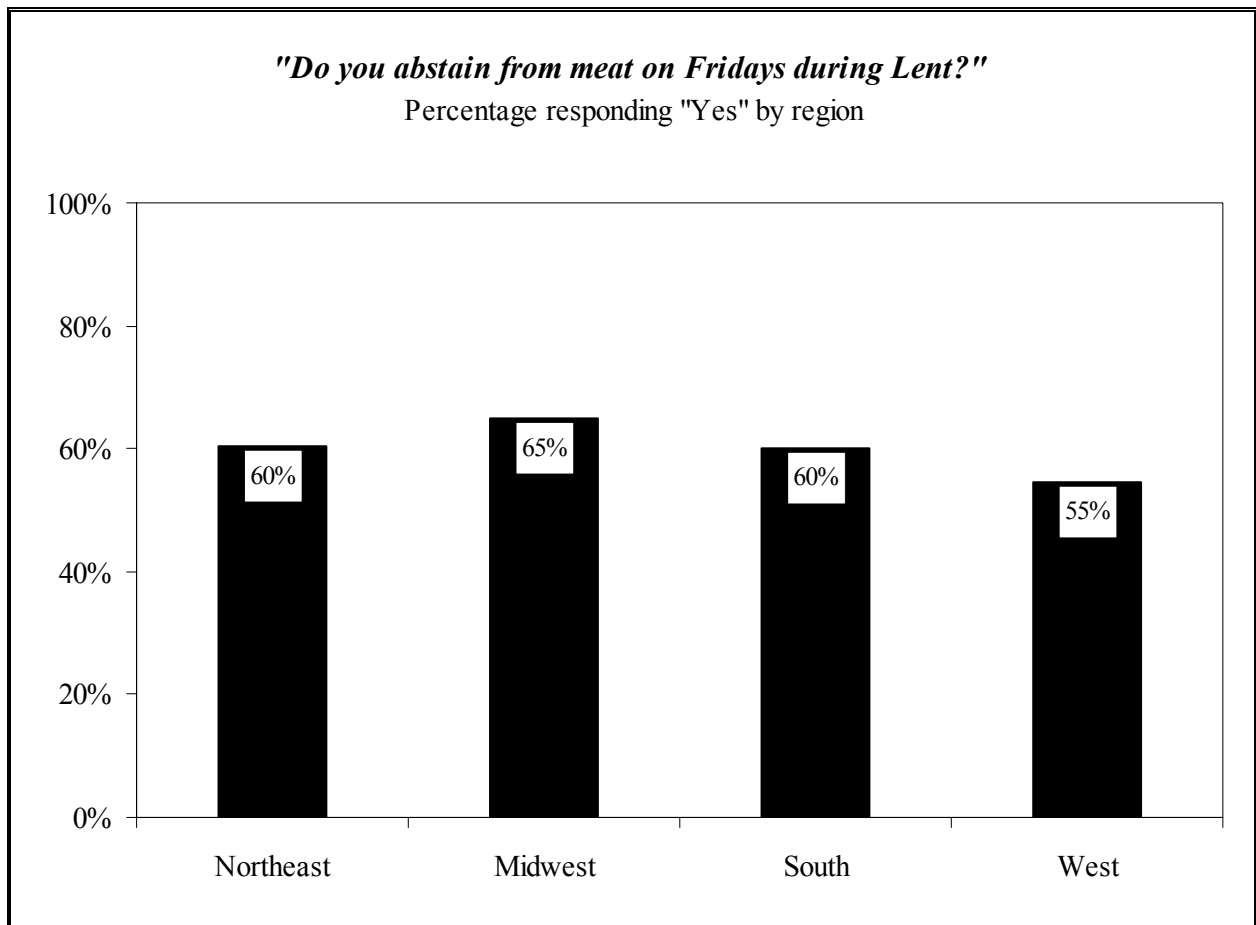


***Differences by Education***

- Fifty-three percent of Catholics with a post-graduate degree give up or abstain from something other than meat on Lenten Fridays. This compares to 41 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 38 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 34 percent of those with a high school diploma or less.
- Fifty-nine percent of Catholics with a post-graduate degree make extra efforts to do something positive during Lent. This compares to 48 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, and 41 percent of all other Catholics.
- Those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays (68 percent compared to 58 percent) and to make an extra effort to do something positive (52 percent compared to 41 percent).
- Among Catholics who attended at least some college, those who enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who did not to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays (74 percent compared to 59 percent), to make an extra effort to do something positive (65 percent compared to 43 percent), and to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday (56 percent compared to 45 percent).

***Differences by Region***

Midwest Catholics (65 percent) are the most likely to say they abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent and those in the West are the least likely to do this (55 percent).



## Religious Imagery, Art, and Symbols

Respondents were asked whether they have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home and whether they carry or wear each of several religious objects.

### Statue or Picture of Mary on Display at Home

*About six in ten Catholics (59 percent) report that they have a statue or picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, on display in their home.*

<i>Some people have religious objects in their homes. Is there a statue or picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, on display in your home?</i>		
	<b>2003</b>	<b>2008</b>
Yes	56%	59%
No	44	41

In 2003, a similar proportion of Catholics (56 percent) reported that they had a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home.<sup>26</sup>

### *Differences by Mass Attendance*

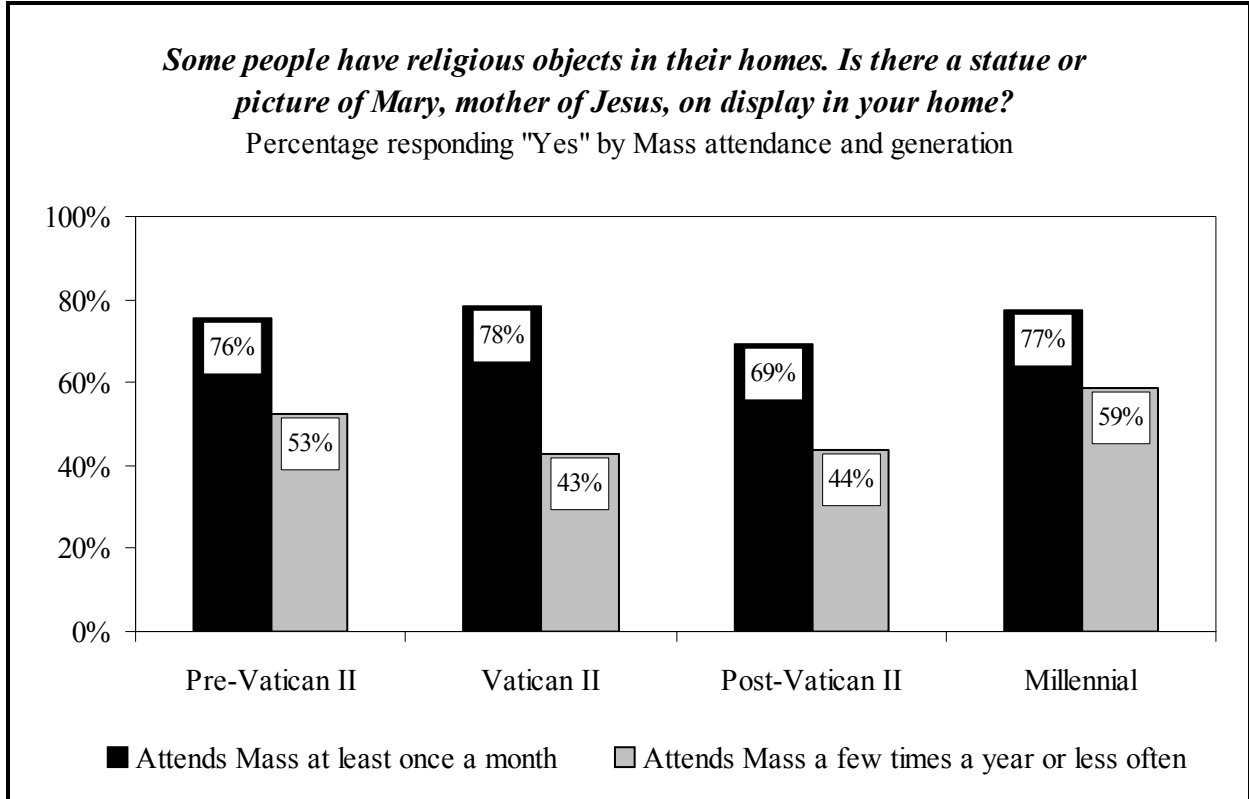
Eight in ten respondents who attend Mass weekly or more have a statue or picture of Mary displayed in their home. Sixty-eight percent of those attending monthly but less than weekly have this, as do 47 percent of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.

<i>Some people have religious objects in their homes. Is there a statue or picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, on display in your home?</i>			
<i>By Mass Attendance</i>			
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Yes	80%	68%	47%
No	20	32	53

<sup>26</sup> Results are from the 2003 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

**Differences by Generation**

Millennial Generation Catholics are among the most likely to have a statue or picture of Mary displayed in their home. This is the case even among those who attend Mass a few times a year or less often.



**Differences by Ethnicity**

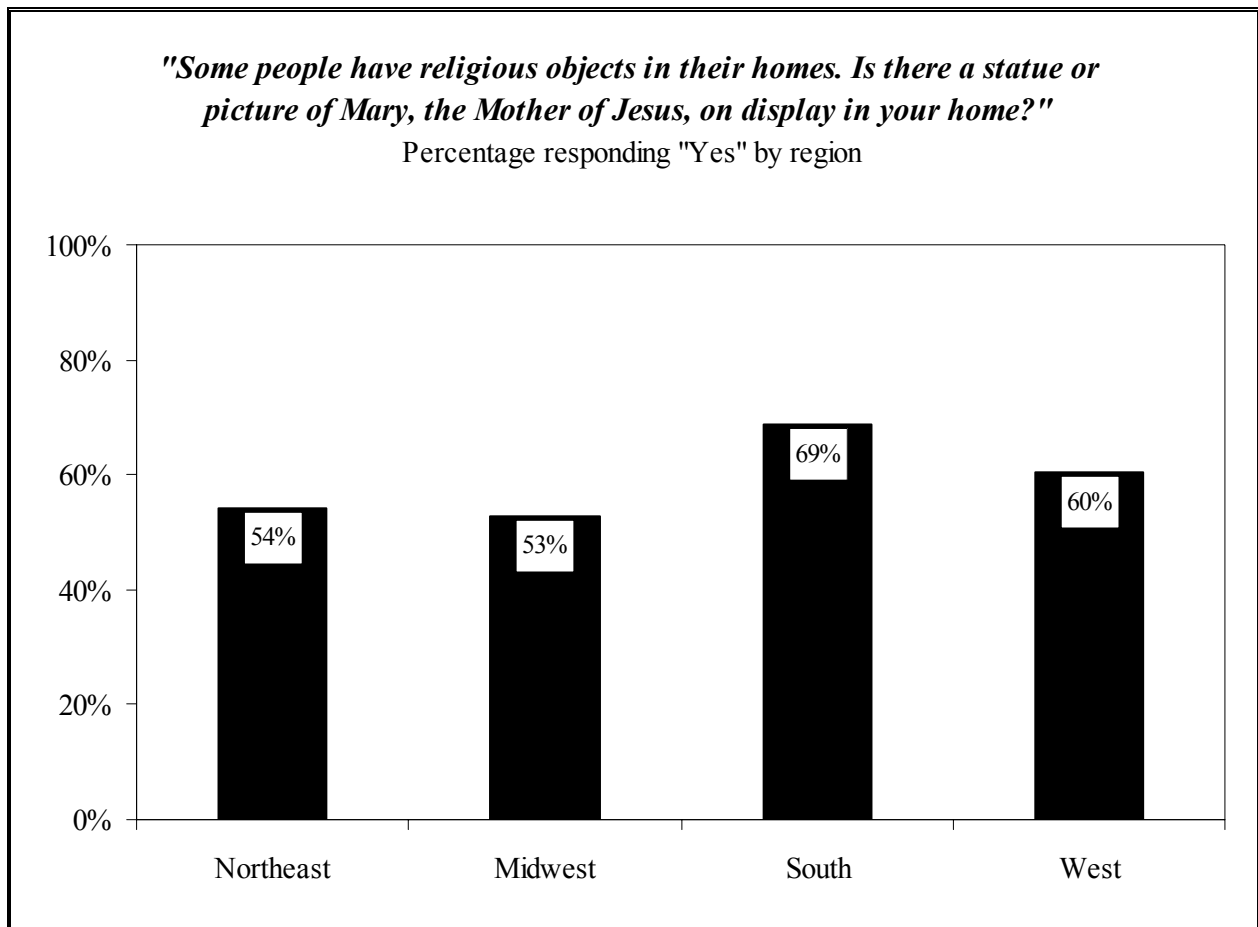
Sixty-seven percent of Hispanics and 54 percent of non-Hispanic whites have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home.

**Differences by Education**

Among those attending at least some college, those enrolled at a Catholic college or university are more likely than those enrolled at non-Catholic institutions to have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home (68 percent compared to 56 percent).

***Differences by Region***

Catholic living in the South and West are more likely than those in the Midwest and Northeast to have a statue or picture of Mary on display in their home.



## Wearing or Carrying Religious Objects

*One-third of Catholics say they typically wear or carry a crucifix or cross.*

<b><i>Do you typically wear or carry any of the following with you?</i></b>	
Percentage saying “Yes”	
A crucifix or cross	32%
A religious medal or pin of a saint or angel	29
A rosary	23
Prayer cards or coins	20
A scapular	9
<p>Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because multiple responses were allowed.</p>	

About three in ten Catholics say they typically carry or wear a religious medal or pin of a saint or angel. Slightly less than one-quarter carry a rosary. One in five carry prayer cards or coins, and about one in ten wear or carry a scapular.

### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Respondents attending Mass weekly are more likely to carry a rosary (45 percent) or religious medal (42 percent) than a cross (39 percent). Catholics attending Mass less often are more likely to wear or carry a cross than any of the other items listed. More than a quarter (27 percent) of those who attend Mass a few times a year or less say they wear or carry a crucifix or cross.

<b><i>Do you typically wear or carry any of the following with you?</i></b>			
Percentage saying “Yes”			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
A rosary	45%	29%	12%
A religious medal or pin of a saint or angel	42	30	23
A crucifix or cross	39	39	27
Prayer cards or coins	32	28	12
A scapular	17	9	6

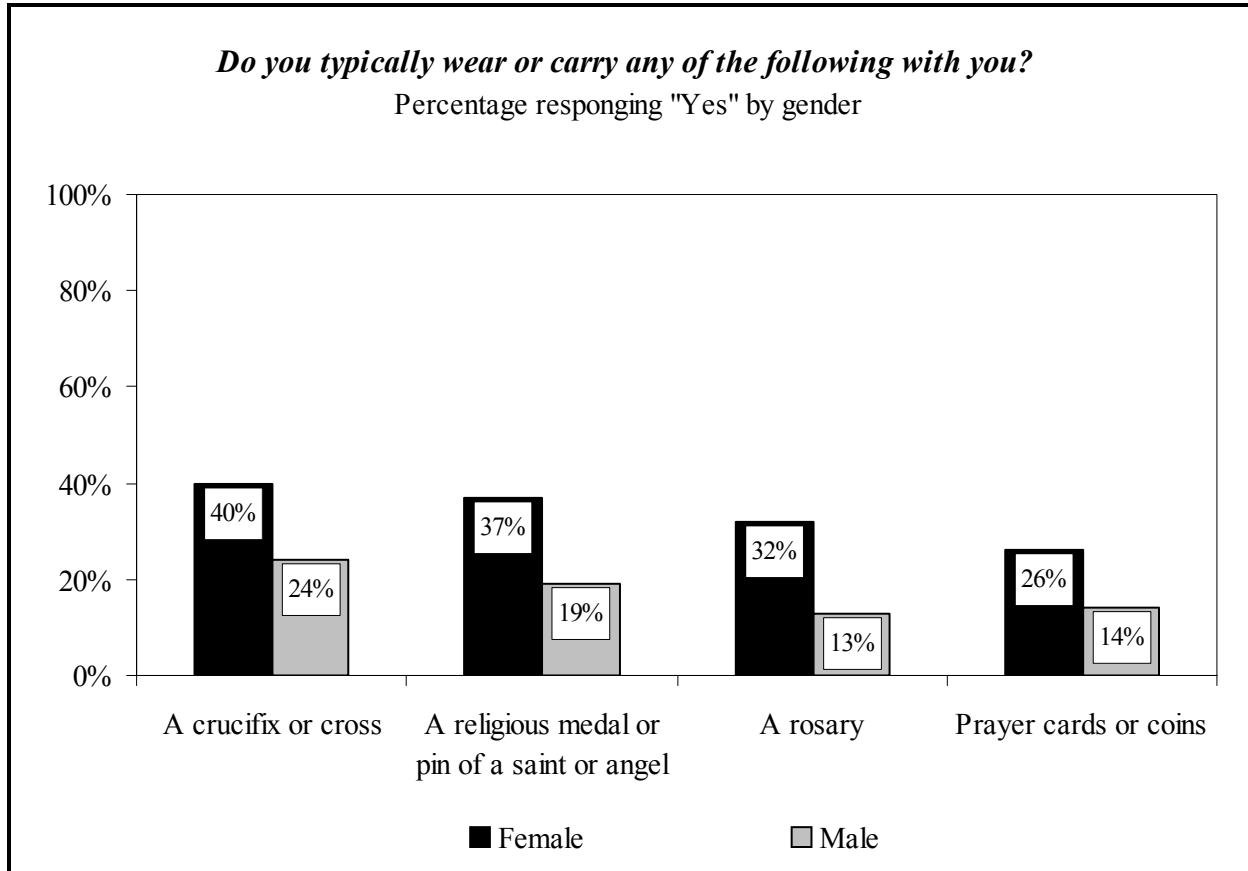


### ***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to carry or wear a crucifix or cross (40 compared to 29 percent).

### ***Differences by Gender***

Women are more likely than men to wear or carry all of the listed items with the exception of a scapular. This trend is especially prominent concerning rosaries, which women are more than twice as likely to carry.



### ***Differences by Generation***

Members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation are most likely to wear or carry all of the listed items. Generational differences are largest for the following:

- A religious medal or pin of a saint or angel (43 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 34 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 21 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 19 percent of the Millennial Generation).
- A rosary (39 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 23 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 19 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 16 percent of the Millennial Generation).

## Praying the Rosary

*Eight percent of Catholics report that they pray the rosary at least once a week.*

	2001	2008
Every day	--%	4%
More than once a week	5	2
Every week	4	2
Almost every week	2	3
Once or twice a month	10	5
A few times a year	23	20
Less than once a year	10	16
Never prays the rosary	46	48

Another 8 percent of Catholics pray the rosary at least once a month, but less than weekly. One in five do so a few times a year and about one in six (16 percent) do so less than once a year. Nearly half of Catholics (48 percent) report that they rarely or never pray the rosary.

In a 2001 CARA poll, more than four-tenths of Catholics (44 percent) reported that they pray the rosary at least a few times a year.<sup>27</sup> This compares to 36 percent in the present survey.

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<sup>27</sup> The 2001 CCP. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls. The 2001 poll did not include the response category of “every day.”

**Differences by Mass Attendance**

Three in ten Catholics who attend Mass weekly say they pray the rosary “almost every week” or more often compared to 13 percent of those attending Mass at least once a month but less than weekly and 4 percent of those attending Mass a few times a year or less often.

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Every day	11%	5%	2%
More than once a week	6	1	1
Every week	6	1	0
Almost every week	6	6	1
Once or twice a month	12	6	2
A few times a year	31	27	12
Less than once a year	12	18	17
Never prays the rosary	16	35	65

Catholics who attend Mass only a few times a year or less are the most likely to say they do not ever pray the rosary (65 percent).

**Differences by Gender**

Women are more likely than men to say they ever pray the rosary (62 compared to 42 percent).

**Differences by Generation**

The older Catholics are, the more likely they are to pray the rosary (73 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 58 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 44 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 39 percent of the Millennial Generation)

## Catholic Beliefs and Attitudes

This section reports results of questions covering a wide array of attitudes regarding being Catholic, core Catholic beliefs, Church leadership, and ministry in a time of fewer priests.

### General Beliefs and Attitudes

*Three-quarters of Catholics agree that they are “proud to be Catholic.” Over half agree “strongly” with this statement.*

<i>How much do you agree with the following statements?</i>		
	<b>Agree “Somewhat” or “Strongly”</b>	<b>Agree “Strongly” Only</b>
I am proud to be Catholic.	77%	56%
I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.	68	34
Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.	66	33
Sacraments are essential to my faith.	61	38
I think of myself as a practicing Catholic.	55	33
Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.	54	27
In deciding what is morally acceptable, I look to Catholic Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form my conscience.	43	18

Respondents were presented with several agree-disagree statements about being Catholic, Catholic beliefs, and Catholic practices. Although six in ten respondents agree at least “somewhat” that sacraments are essential to their faith, about two-thirds also agree that they can be good Catholics without going to Mass every week.

- A little over half of respondents think of themselves as practicing Catholics. One-third agree “strongly” that they think of themselves this way.
- Slightly more than half of Catholics (54 percent) agree that ordination confers on the priest a new status or permanent character making him essentially different from the laity. Slightly more than one-quarter (27 percent) agree “strongly” with this statement. Catholics are more likely to agree with this statement now than they were six years ago.

In 2002, 50 percent of Catholics agreed that ordination confers a new status or permanent character on the priest, with 21 percent agreeing “strongly.”<sup>28</sup>

- More than two-fifths of Catholics agree that in deciding what is morally acceptable they look to Church teaching and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form their conscience. Slightly less than one-fifth agree “strongly.”

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

More than eight in ten weekly Mass attending Catholics agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic (85 percent), that sacraments are essential to their faith (83 percent), and that they think of themselves as practicing Catholics (81 percent). Less frequent Mass attenders are less likely to agree “strongly” with each of these statements. This is especially true for those who attend Mass only a few times a year or less often.

<b><i>How much do you agree with the following statements?</i></b>			
Percentage of respondents “strongly” agreeing, by Mass attendance			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
I am proud to be Catholic.	85%	70%	39%
Sacraments are essential to my faith.	83	53	14
I think of myself as a practicing Catholic.	81	45	8
Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.	49	43	23
Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.	44	32	17
In deciding what is morally acceptable, I look to Catholic Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form my conscience.	36	24	8
I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.	19	36	39

Among Catholics who attend Mass infrequently, fewer than four in ten (39 percent) agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic and only about one in seven (14 percent) agrees

<sup>28</sup> Results are from the 2002 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls. The middle category in the 2002 response scale was “uncertain” while in the 2008 survey it was “neither agree nor disagree.”

similarly that sacraments are essential to their faith. Few Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less (8 percent) agree “strongly” that they think of themselves as practicing their Catholic faith.

- Only four in ten Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less (39 percent) “strongly” agree that they can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday. A similar proportion of those who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month (36 percent) “strongly” agree with this statement.
- More than four in ten Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month agree “strongly” that it is a moral obligation for Catholics to help the poor and needy (49 percent of weekly attenders and 43 percent of those attending at least once a month, but less than weekly). By comparison, only 23 percent of those attending a few times a year or less agree as strongly.
- Few Catholics, regardless of Mass attendance, agree “strongly” that in deciding what is morally acceptable they look to Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form their conscience. Weekly Mass attenders are most likely to agree “strongly” (36 percent).
- Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less are *least* likely to “strongly” agree (17 percent) that ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church. Forty-four percent of weekly attenders agree as such, as do 32 percent of those attending at least once a month but less than weekly.

***Differences by Generation***

The older Catholics are, the more likely that they agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic, that the sacraments are essential to their faith, and that ordination confers a new status on a priest. The oldest generation is more likely than all others to agree “strongly” that they are a practicing Catholic (49 percent), whereas the youngest generation is most likely to agree “strongly” that they can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday (38 percent).

***How much do you agree with the following statements?***

Percentage of respondents “strongly” agreeing, by generation

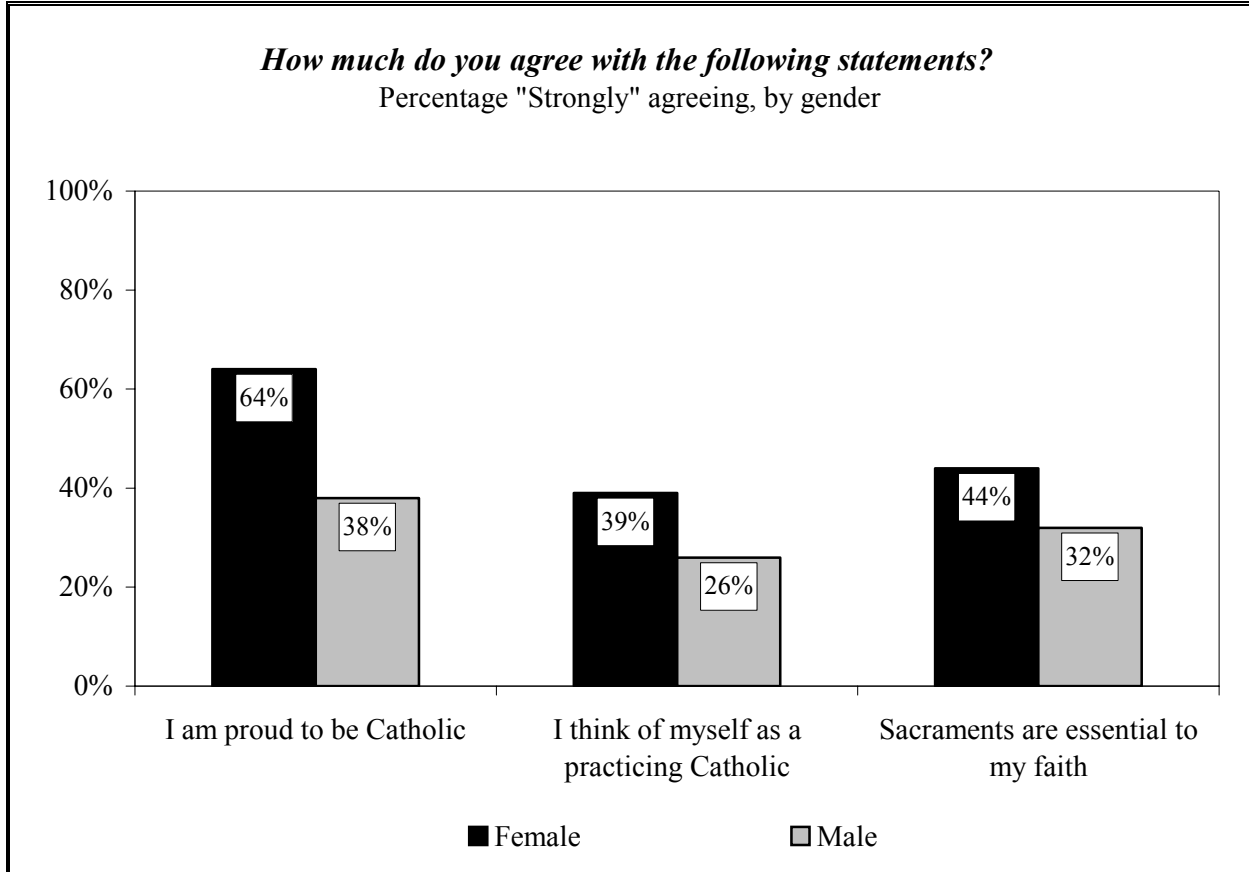
***By Generation***

	<b>Pre-Vatican II</b>	<b>Vatican II</b>	<b>Post-Vatican II</b>	<b>Millennial</b>
I am proud to be Catholic.	69%	56%	53%	50%
Sacraments are essential to my faith.	58	39	31	32
I think of myself as a practicing Catholic.	49	34	25	30
Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.	39	25	25	21
Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.	38	36	33	23
I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.	31	35	33	38
In deciding what is morally acceptable, I look to Catholic Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form my conscience.	28	15	14	23

Additionally, the oldest and youngest generations of Catholics are more likely than others to agree at least “somewhat” that they look to Church teaching and statements by the Bishops and Pope to form their conscience.

### ***Differences by Gender***

Women are more likely than men to agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic, that they think of themselves as a practicing Catholic, and that the sacraments are essential to their faith.



Even among those who attend Mass at least once a month, women are significantly more likely than men to agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic (84 percent compared to 69 percent).

### ***Differences by Education***

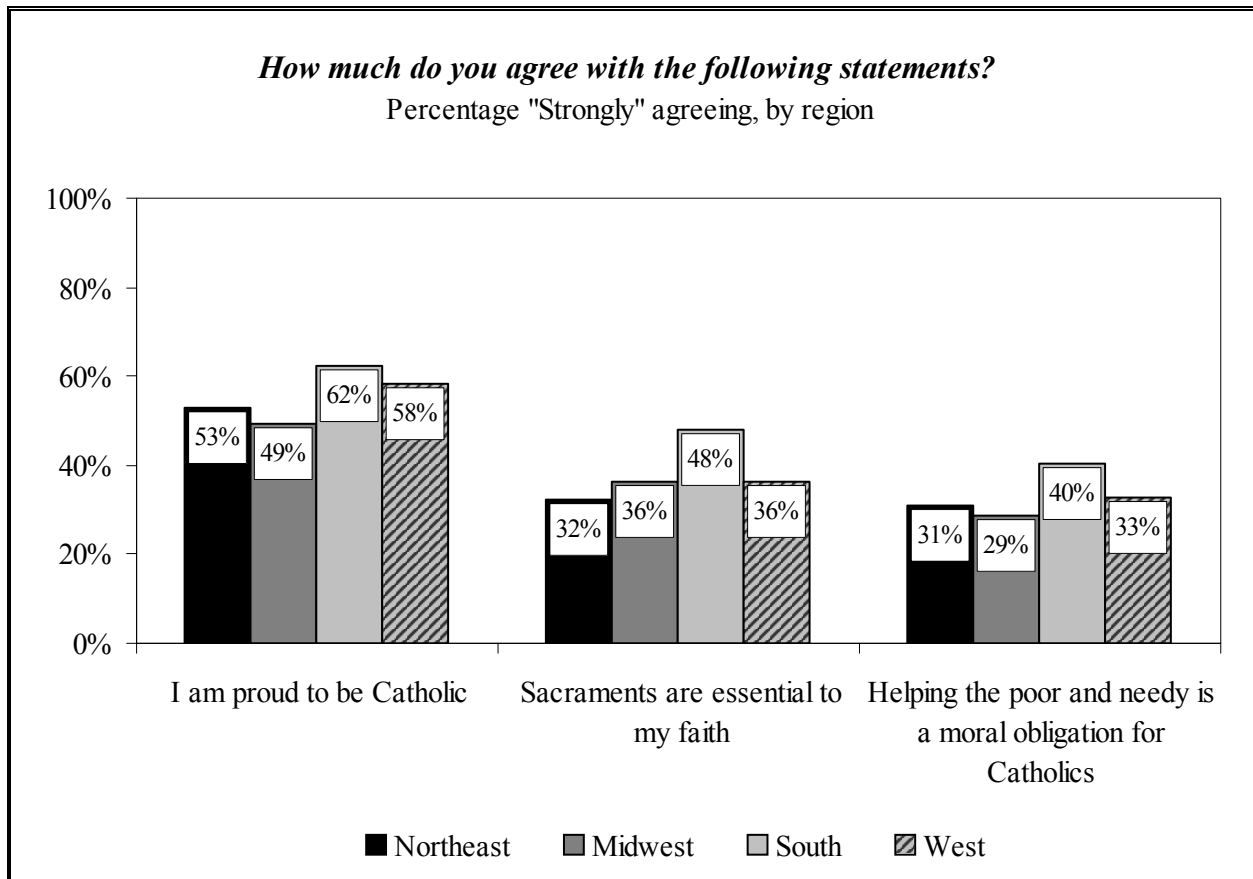
- The more highly educated Catholics are, the more likely they are to agree “strongly” that helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation (45 percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 39 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 32 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 30 percent of those with a high school diploma or less).
- Those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to “strongly” agree that they are proud to be Catholic (63 percent compared to 54 percent).



- Among those who attended some college, those who were enrolled in a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who did not to “strongly” agree that they are proud to be Catholic (63 percent compared to 52 percent), that they are a practicing Catholic (43 percent compared to 31 percent), that sacraments are essential to their faith (50 percent compared to 35 percent), and that helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation (56 percent compared to 33 percent).
- Among these respondents who attended college, those who went to Catholic institutions are more likely than those who did not to agree at least “somewhat” that they look to Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form their conscience in deciding what is morally acceptable (58 percent compared to 41 percent).

**Differences by Region**

Catholics in the South and West are more likely than those in the Midwest and Northeast to “strongly” agree “I am proud to be Catholic.” Those residing in the South are also especially likely to “strongly” agree that sacraments are essential to their faith and that helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation.



## Importance of the Catholic Faith in Daily Life

About one in seven Catholics (14 percent) say that their Catholic faith is “the most important part” of their life.

<i>How important is your Catholic faith in your daily life? Is it...</i>		
	<b>2001</b>	<b>2008</b>
The most important part of your life	17%	14%
Among the most important parts of your life	26	27
Important, but so are many other areas of your life	36	40
Not too important in your life	16	13
Not important in your life at all	4	6

Slightly more than one-quarter of Catholics describe their Catholic faith as “among the most important parts” of their life. Four in ten say it is “important but so are many other areas” of their life. About one-fifth say it is either “not too important” or “not important at all” in their life.

In 2001, one in six Catholics described their Catholic faith as “the most important part” of their life.<sup>29</sup> Results for 2001 and 2008 are generally similar.

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<sup>29</sup> The 2001 results come from the 2001 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Three-fourths of respondents attending Mass weekly (75 percent) say that their Catholic faith is at least “among the most important parts” of their life. Fifty-six percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month agree similarly, as do 21 percent of those attending Mass a few times a year or less.

<i>How important is your Catholic faith in your daily life? Is it...</i>			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
The most important part of your life	36%	15%	5%
Among the most important parts of your life	39	41	16
Important, but so are many other areas of your life	24	40	46
Not too important in your life	1	3	22
Not important in your life at all	0	1	11

***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are slightly more likely than non-Hispanic whites to describe their Catholic faith as being at least “among the most important parts” of their life (48 compared to 38 percent).

***Differences by Gender***

Women are more likely than men to describe their Catholic faith as being at least “among the most important parts” of their life (48 compared to 34 percent).

***Differences by Education***

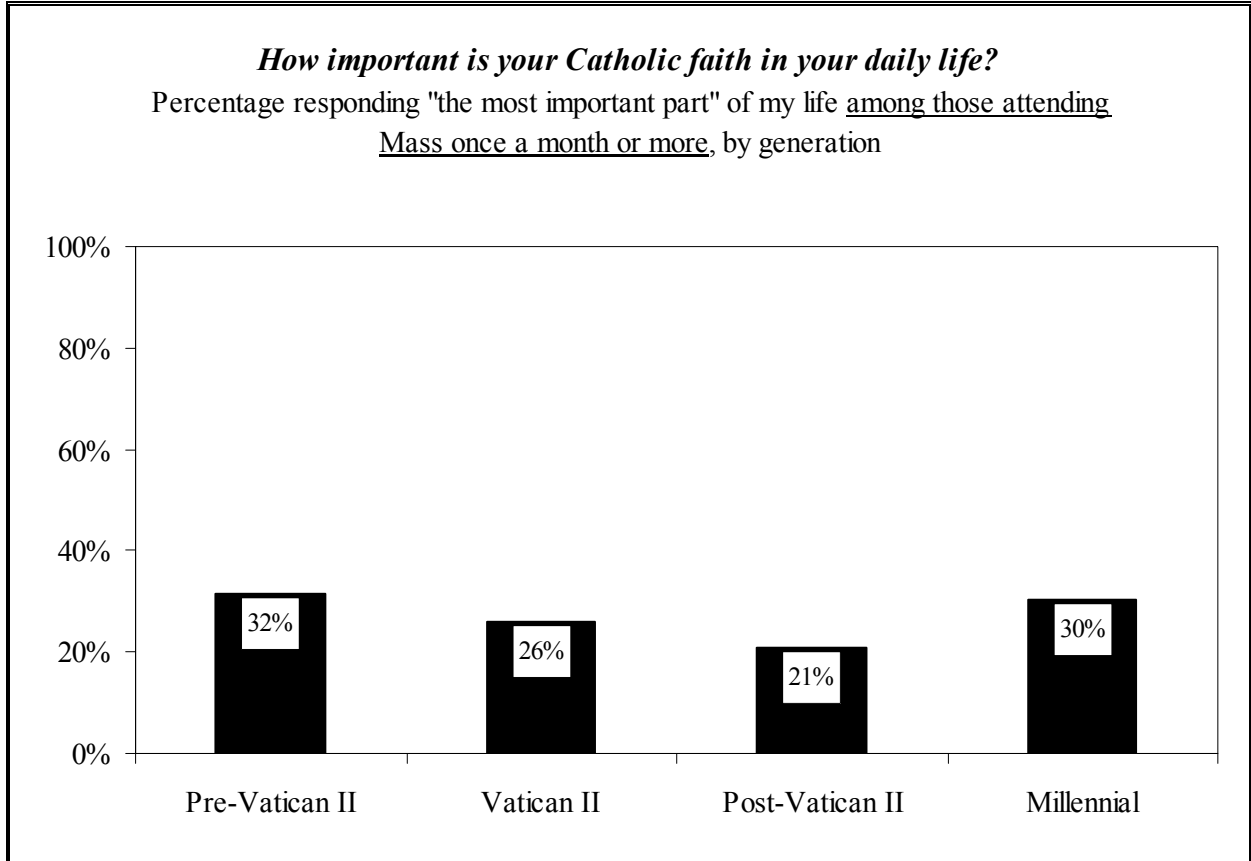
The more educated Catholics are, the more likely they are to describe their Catholic faith as being at least “among the most important parts” of their life (58 percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 44 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree compared to percent, 38 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 39 percent of those with a high school diploma or less).

Sixty-four percent of respondents who attended a Catholic high school say their Catholic faith is at least “among the most important parts” of their life, compared to 40 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic high school.

***Differences by Generation***

The older Catholics are, the more likely they are to describe their Catholic faith as being at least “among the most important parts” of their life (49 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 41 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 40 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 34 percent of the Millennial Generation).

However, among Catholics attending Mass at least once a month, Millennial Generation Catholics are also among the most likely to consider their faith “the most important part” of their life.



## Importance Placed on Various Aspects of Catholic Faith and Identity

*About eight in ten Catholics say that helping those in need and receiving the Eucharist are at least “somewhat” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. About half describe these two factors as “very” important.*

***How important are the following factors to your sense of what it means to be a Catholic?***

	<b>“Very” or “Somewhat” Important</b>	<b>“Very” Important Only</b>
Helping those in need	83%	48%
Receiving the Eucharist/Holy Communion	79	51
Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation	74	44
Living my life consistent with Church teaching	73	37
Having devotion to Mary	68	37
Attending Mass	66	39
Having devotions to the saints	63	29
Going to Reconciliation or Confession	56	28

Respondents were asked the importance of several religious practices to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. After helping those in need and receiving the Eucharist, the greatest importance is placed on celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation and living life consistent with Church teaching. Slightly less than three-quarters say these things are at least “somewhat” important.

- About two-thirds of Catholics say that devotion to Mary and attending Mass are at least “somewhat” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. Slightly less than four-tenths say these practices are “very” important.
- Over six in ten Catholics say that having devotions to the saints is important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic, with three in ten saying this is “very” important.
- Among the list of items, respondents tend to place the least importance on going to Reconciliation. Still, a little more than half describe this as at least “somewhat” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic.

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

About nine in ten weekly Mass attenders say that receiving Eucharist (90 percent) and attending Mass (89 percent) is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. More than seven in ten weekly attenders say that celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation (72 percent) and helping those in need (70 percent) is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. Those who attend Mass less often are less likely to consider these as being this important to their sense of being a Catholic.

***How important are the following factors to your sense of what it means to be a Catholic?***

Percentage responding “Very” important, by Mass attendance

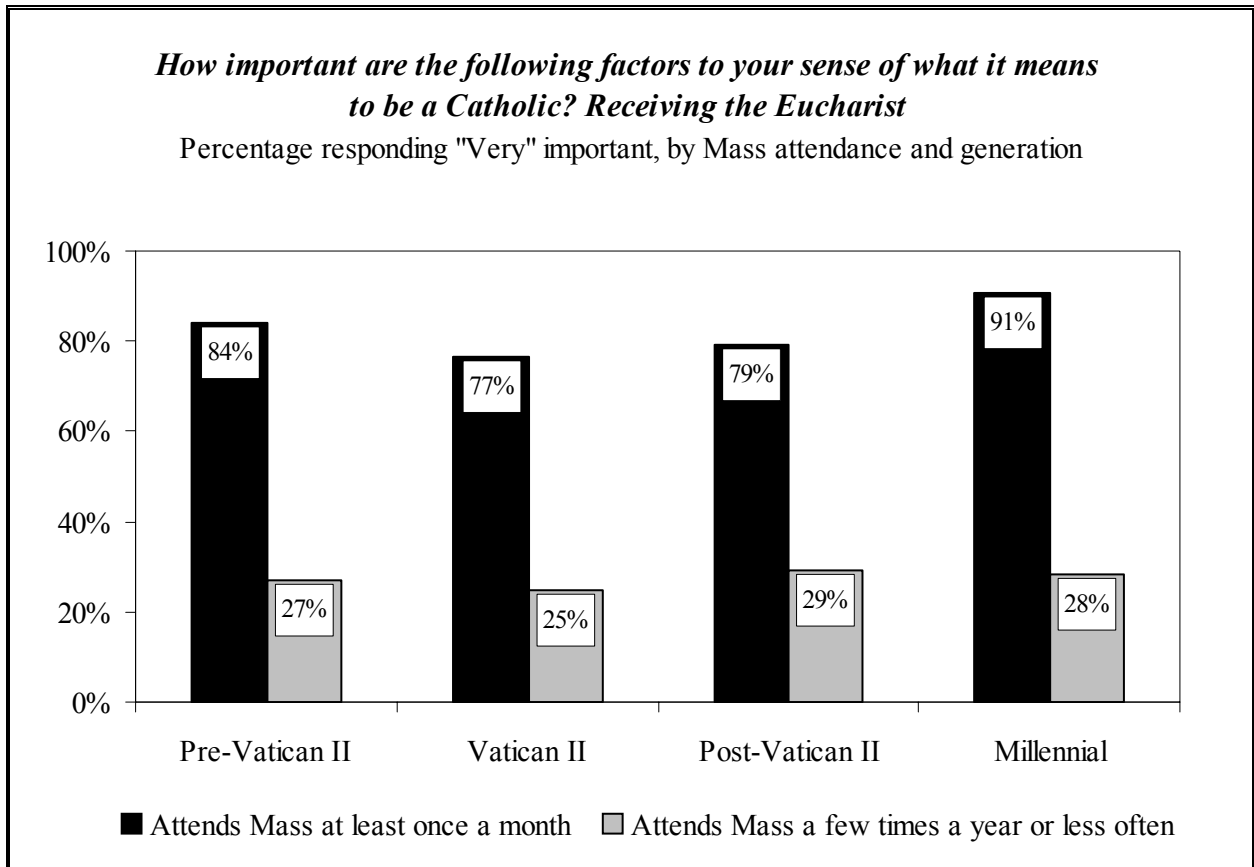
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Receiving the Eucharist/Holy Communion	90%	71%	27%
Attending Mass	89	56	12
Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation	72	62	26
Helping those in need	70	55	36
Living my life consistent with Church teaching	64	51	21
Having devotion to Mary	58	52	22
Going to Reconciliation or Confession	52	40	13
Having devotions to the saints	43	41	18

- More than half of Catholics attending Mass at least once a month say that having devotion to Mary is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic.
- More than four in ten Catholics attending Mass at least once a month say that having devotion to the saints is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic.
- Catholics attending Mass a few times a year or less often were more likely to select helping those in need as being a factor that is “very” important to their sense of being a Catholic (36 percent) more so than anything else that was listed.

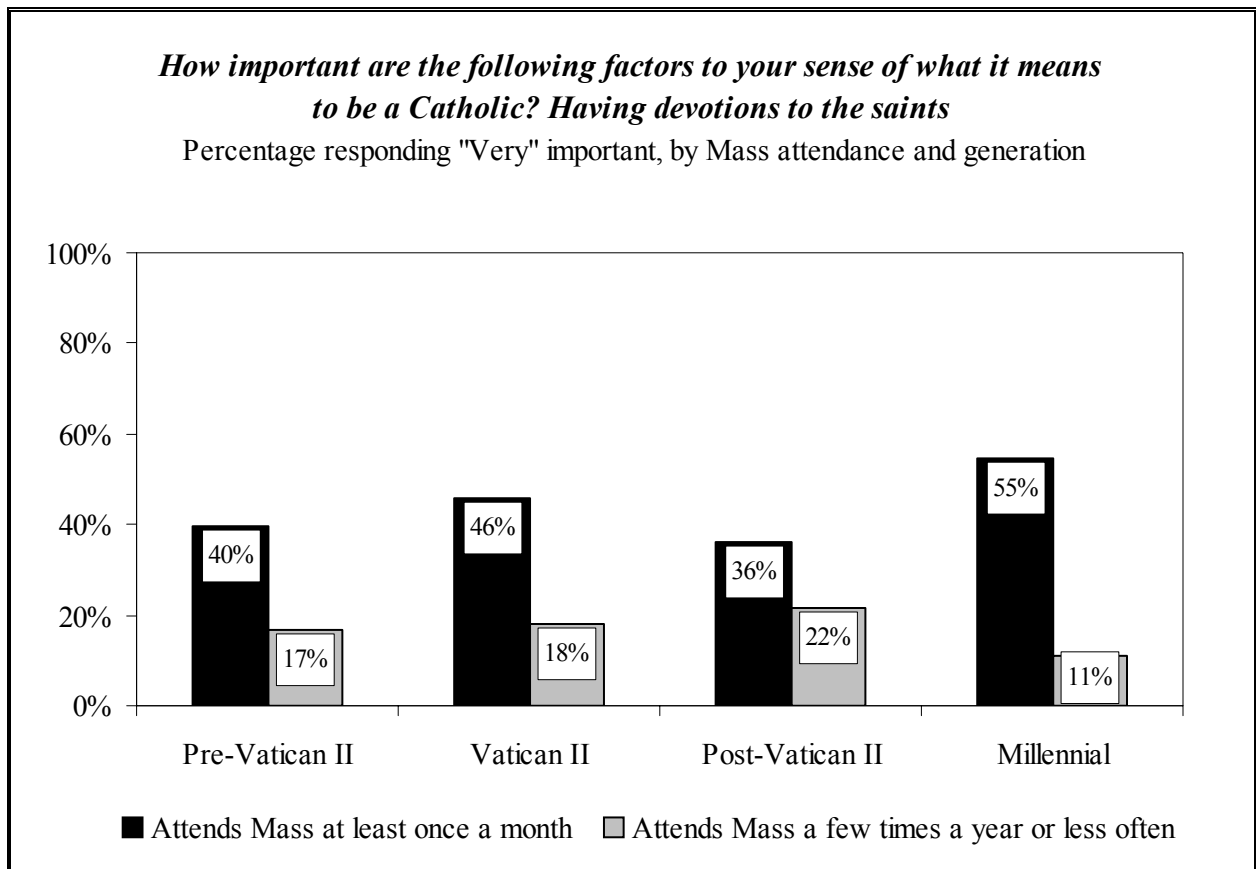
**Differences by Generation**

Members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation are most likely to say that all but three of the listed items are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (the exceptions are devotions to the saints, celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation, and going to Reconciliation). Generational differences are largest for attending Mass (58 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation and 32 percent of the Millennial Generation), helping those in need (52 compared to 34 percent), and having devotion to Mary (49 compared to 31 percent).

However, among those attending Mass at least once a month, Millennial Generation Catholics are most likely to say that receiving the Eucharist is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be Catholic.



Similarly, among those attending Mass at least once a month, the youngest generation of Catholics is most likely to say that having devotion to the saints is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic.



***Differences by Gender***

Women are more likely than men to say that the following are “very” important to their sense of being a Catholic: helping those in need (53 compared to 43 percent), having devotion to Mary (43 compared to 30 percent), and having devotions to the saints (34 compared to 23 percent).

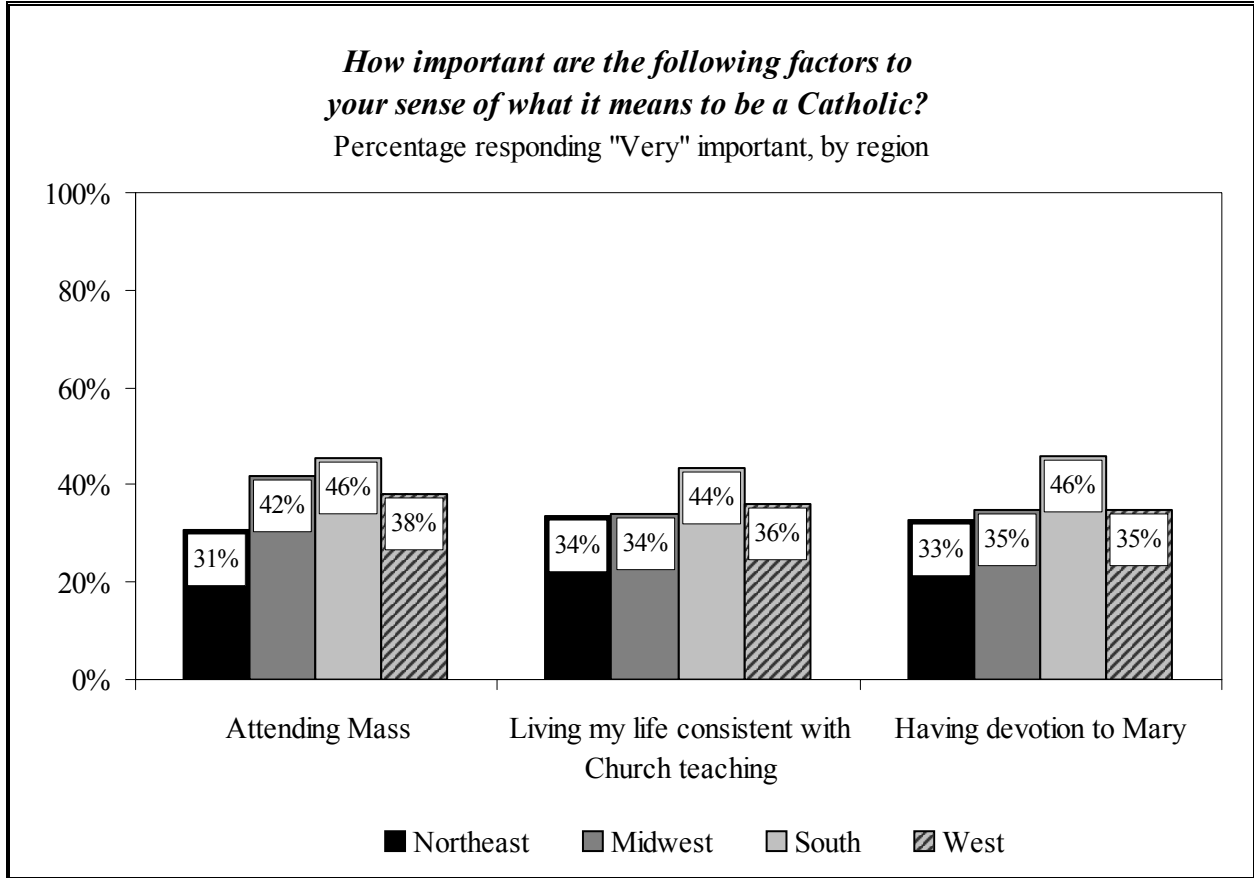
***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are slightly more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say that celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (34 compared to 24 percent).



**Differences by Region**

Catholics in the South are most likely to say the following are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic: attending Mass, living a life consistent with Church teaching, and having devotion to Mary.



**Differences by Education**

- The more education Catholics have, the more likely they are to say that attending Mass is at least “somewhat” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (83 percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 71 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, and 63 percent of all others).
- Similarly, the more education Catholics have, the more likely they are to say that living their life consistent with Church teaching is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (53 percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 44 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, and 33 percent of all others).
- In contrast, the more education Catholics have, the *less* likely they are to say that having devotion to Mary is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (26

percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 45 percent of those with some college through a bachelor's degree, and 41 percent of those with a high school diploma or less).

- Those who attended a Catholic elementary or middle school are more likely than those who did not to say the following are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic: helping those in need (54 percent compared to 44 percent), living a life consistent with Church teaching (46 percent compared to 30 percent), and having devotion to Mary (41 percent compared to 35 percent).
- Similarly, those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to say the following are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic: helping those in need (56 percent compared to 46 percent) ) and living a life consistent with Church teaching (49 percent compared to 33 percent).
- Among those attending at least some college, those who went to Catholic colleges or universities are more likely than those who did not to say the following are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic: receiving the Eucharist (60 percent compared to 50 percent), attending Mass (49 percent compared to 39 percent), helping those in need (65 percent compared to 46 percent), and living a life consistent with Church teaching (54 percent compared to 37 percent).

## Core Catholic Beliefs

*Three-quarters of Catholics (75 percent) say they have never doubted that there is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (81 percent do not doubt this).*

***Indicate your belief about the following.***

	<b>I have never doubted this</b>	<b>I've had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now</b>	<b>I have a few doubts about this from time to time</b>	<b>I frequently doubt this</b>	<b>I do not believe this</b>
There is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.	75%	6%	12%	5%	2%
Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.	73	7	12	5	3
Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.	71	8	13	5	3
There is a heaven.	69	7	18	5	1
God, the Father, is creator of heaven, the earth, and all we know of the universe.	68	8	16	6	2
Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculately conceived without original sin.	65	8	16	6	5
Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.	63	8	18	7	4
There is a hell.	59	8	22	6	5
The Pope and the Bishops of the Church have by divine institution taken the place of Saint Peter and the apostles of Jesus as pastors of the Church.	44	12	24	9	11

Respondents were asked about their belief in each of several core Catholic teachings, many of them taken from the Profession of Faith.

- About eight in ten Catholics have no current doubt about the Holy Trinity (81 percent), that Jesus rose from the dead (80 percent), and that He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (79 percent).
- Slightly fewer, but still about three-quarters do not doubt that God the Father is creator of all the universe (76 percent) and that Mary was immaculately conceived without original sin (73 percent). A similar proportion do not doubt that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead (71 percent).
- Seventy-six percent do not doubt there is a heaven and 67 percent do not doubt that there is a hell.
- More than half of Catholics do not currently doubt that the Pope and Bishops succeed Saint Peter and the apostles by divine institution as pastors of the Church. However, fewer than half of respondents (44 percent) say they have never doubted this.

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Nine in ten or more Catholics who attend Mass at least weekly say they do not doubt any of the beliefs listed, except that the Pope and Bishops succeed Saint Peter and the apostles by divine institution as pastors of the Church (80 percent do not doubt this belief) and that there is a hell (78 percent do not doubt). Nearly all weekly attenders (97 percent) do not doubt beliefs regarding the Holy Trinity, that Jesus rose from the dead, or that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

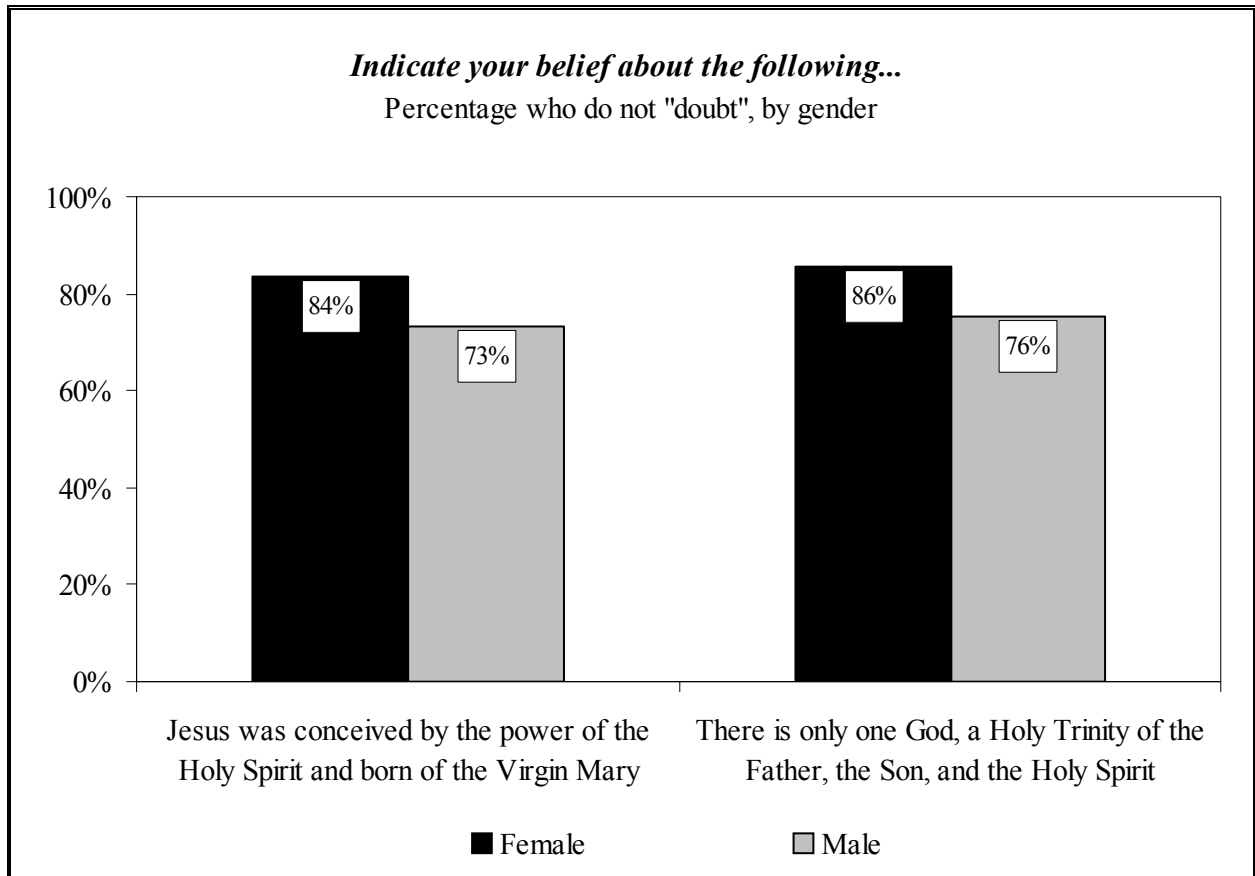
<b><i>Indicate your belief about the following.</i></b>			
Percentage <i>not</i> doubting this now, by Mass attendance			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
There is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.	97%	91%	70%
Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.	97	91	70
Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.	97	89	67
God, the Father, is creator of heaven, the earth, and all we know of the universe.	93	88	64
Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.	91	81	60
There is a heaven.	90	88	67
Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculately conceived without original sin.	90	85	63
The Pope and the Bishops of the Church have by divine institution taken the place of Saint Peter and the apostles of Jesus as pastors of the Church.	80	68	40
There is a hell.	78	77	57

Those who attend Mass less than weekly are more likely than weekly Mass attenders to have doubts about all the beliefs listed. However, those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month are more similar to weekly attenders than to those who attend a few times a year or less often.

**Differences by Gender**

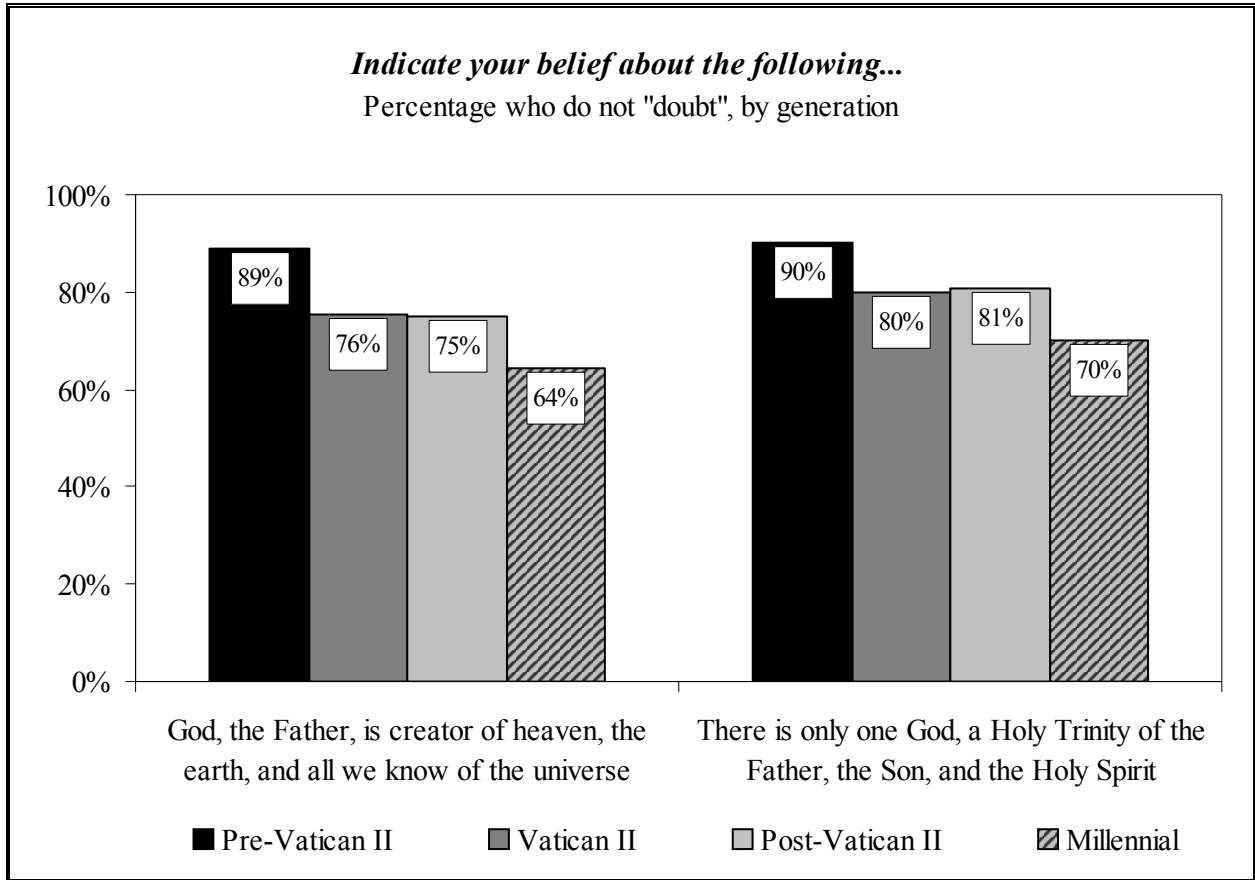
Women are slightly more likely than men to say they have *never* doubted most of the listed beliefs (with the exceptions that there is a hell and that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead).

The differences between female and male respondents is largest for the two beliefs in the figure below (percentages who do not dobt), that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and that there is one Triune God.



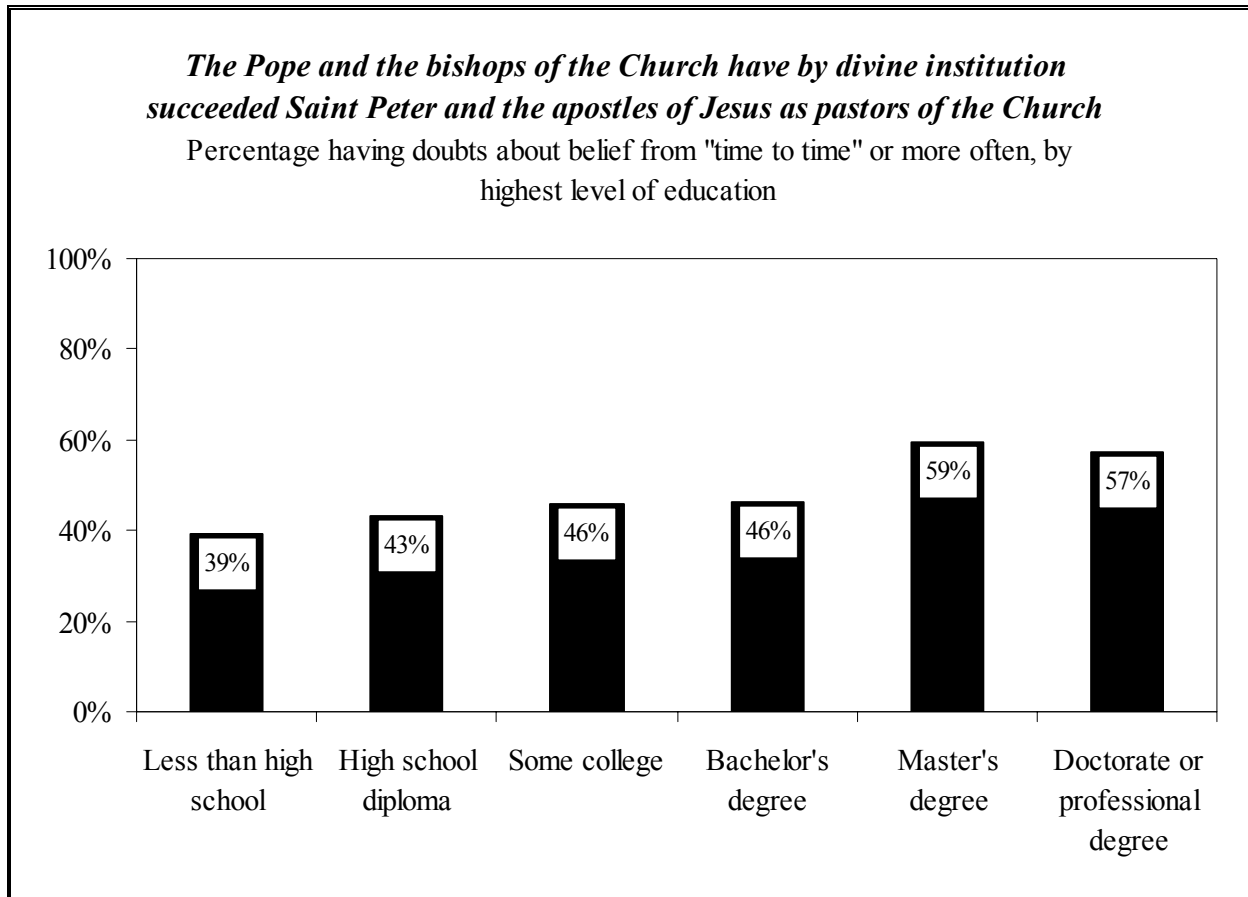
**Differences by Generation**

With the exception of the existence of hell, older Catholics are more likely than younger Catholics to say they do not doubt all the listed beliefs. Generational differences are largest for these beliefs: God the Father is creator of all the universe and that there is one Triune God.



### ***Differences by Education***

Catholics with lower levels of education are *less* likely to say they doubt from “time to time” or more often that the Pope and Bishops are successors to St. Peter and the apostles.



Those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to say they have “*never*” doubted that God the Father is creator of all the universe (75 percent compared to 66 percent).

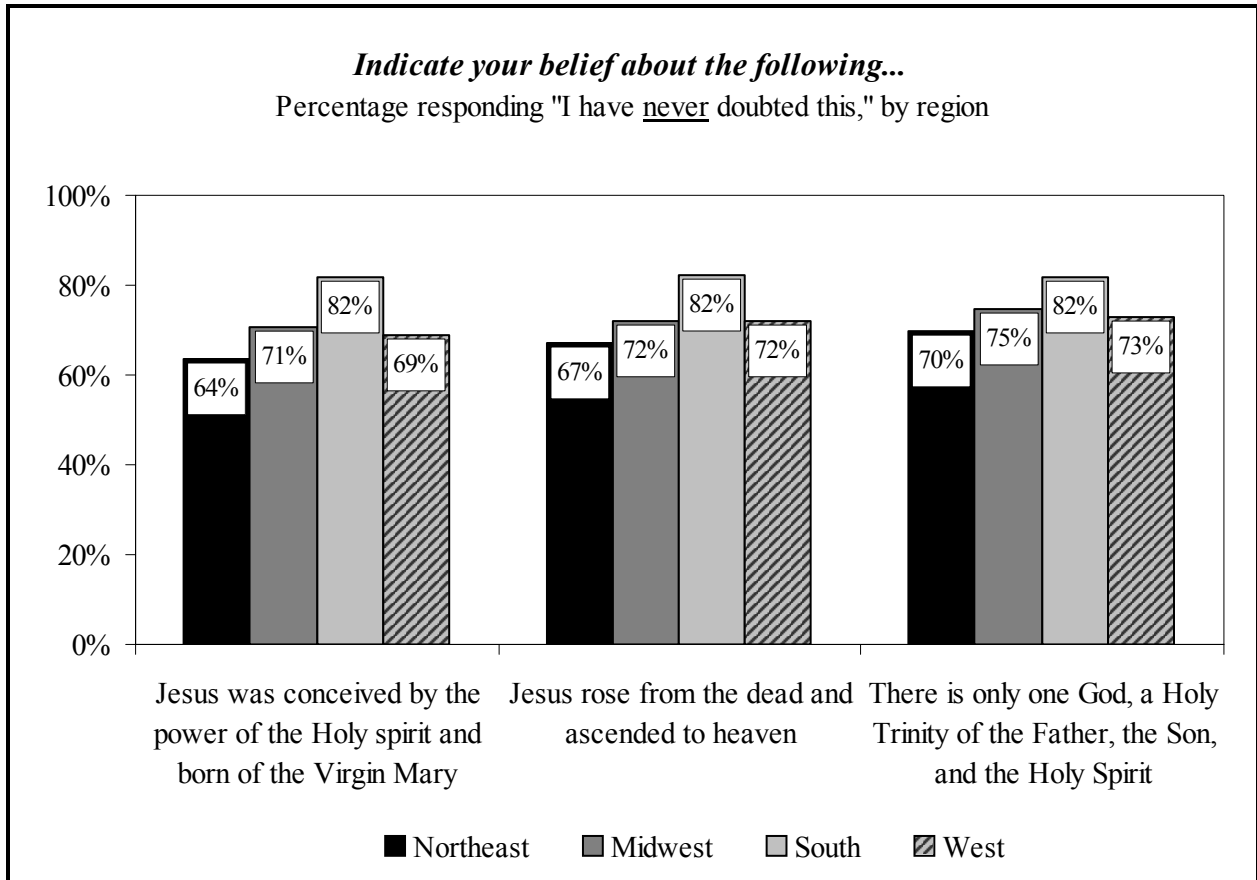
Among those who attended at least some college, those who went to a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who did not to say that they do *not* doubt the following:

- God the Father is creator of all the universe (85 percent compared to 70 percent).
- Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (85 percent compared to 74 percent).
- Mary was immaculately conceived without original sin (83 percent compared to 67 percent).
- Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven (87 percent compared to 77 percent).
- There is a heaven (82 percent compared to 71 percent).
- There is a hell (72 percent compared to 62 percent).
- The Pope and Bishops are by divine institution the successors of Saint Peter and the Apostles as pastors of the Church (61 percent compared to 41 percent).



**Differences by Region**

Catholics in the South are most likely to say they have “never doubted” all the beliefs listed. More than eight in ten Catholics in the South say they have “never doubted” that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and that there is one Triune God.



## Declining Number of Priests

The survey asked respondents if they have noticed the declining number of priests and whether this has affected them personally. They were also asked about their support for a number of possible ways of meeting ministry needs in a time of fewer priests.

### Awareness of the Declining Number of Priests

*Two-thirds of Catholics (66 percent) say they have noticed the decline in the number of priests in recent decades. Half of Catholics say the change has not personally affected them, and 15 percent say it has affected them.*

	2001	2008
<i>As you may know, the number of Catholic priests has declined in recent decades. Have you noticed this change? [If “Yes”] Have you personally been affected by this change?</i>		
Has <i>not</i> noticed the change	30%	34%
Has noticed, has <i>not</i> personally been affected	50	51
Has noticed and has been personally been affected	20	15

In a 2001 CARA Poll, seven in ten Catholics reported that they had noticed the declining number of priests.<sup>30</sup> The results are generally similar, with three in ten respondents in 2001 saying they have not noticed the decline in priests and two in ten saying the change has personally affected them.

From 2001 to 2008 the number of diocesan and religious priests in the United States declined by 8 percent, from nearly 45,000 to just over 41,000.

<sup>30</sup> The 2001 CARA Catholic Poll, (CCP) a national telephone poll. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from the Knowledge Networks online format. The wording of the 2001 question specified “over the last three decades” rather than “in recent decades.”

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Most weekly Mass attenders, 83 percent, have noticed the number of Catholic priests declining in recent decades. However, only three in ten weekly attenders (29 percent) say they have been personally affected by this change. A similar percentage of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month report being affected (22 percent). Very few of those attending Mass infrequently (6 percent) say they have been personally affected by the decline in priests. More than four in ten of those attending Mass a few times a year or less often (43 percent) have *not* noticed a decline.

<i>As you may know, the number of Catholic priests has declined in recent decades. Have you noticed this change? [If “Yes”] Have you personally been affected by this change?</i>			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Has <i>not</i> noticed the change	17%	31%	43%
Has noticed, has <i>not</i> personally been affected	54	47	51
Has noticed and has been personally been affected	29	22	6

***Differences by Generation***

Eighty-three percent of members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation have noticed the decline in the number of priests. This compares to 71 percent of the members of the Vatican II Generation, 59 percent of members of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 49 percent of the Millennial Generation.

***Differences by Region***

Catholics in the West are more likely than those in all other regions *not* to have noticed a decline in the number of priests (39 percent compared to 32 percent).

***Differences by Education***

Awareness of a change in the number of priests is high among those who have attended Catholic educational institutions. Seventy-six percent of those who attended a Catholic elementary, middle, or high schools say they have noticed a decline in the number of priests, as does 75 percent of those who attended a Catholic college or university.

## Support for Various Ways of Meeting Catholics' Needs in a Time of Fewer Priests

*Nearly two-thirds of Catholics would support sharing a priest with one or more other parishes if their parish did not have a resident priest.*

***Listed below are some of the things the Catholic Church is doing to help meet Catholics' need in a time of fewer priests. Would you support or oppose each of the following if the parish you attend did not have a resident priest?***

	<b>“Support” or “Strongly Support”</b>	<b>“Strongly Support” Only</b>
Sharing a priest with one or more other parishes	65%	19%
Bringing in a priest from outside of the United States	56	21
Increasing the use of deacons	56	16
Asking a retired priest to come in and do more	55	15
Increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers (someone who is not ordained, working or volunteering in a ministry at least part-time for a Catholic parish or other Church organization)	47	13
Merging the parish with another nearby parish	44	9

Respondents were asked about their preferences for several possible options if their parish did not have a resident priest.

- A majority of Catholics would support bringing in priests from outside the United States (56 percent), increasing the use of deacons (56 percent), or asking a retired priest to come in and do more (55 percent) if their parish did not have a resident priest.
- Fewer than half (47 percent) support increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers as a way of dealing with the lack of a resident priest in their parish.
- The least favored option is to merge the parish with another nearby parish (44 percent). Only one in ten (9 percent) would “strongly support” this if their parish lacked a resident priest.

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Among weekly Mass attenders, the largest proportions of respondents supported sharing a priest with another parish (76 percent) or bringing in a priest from outside the United States (73 percent) if their parish lacked a resident priest. Slightly fewer support asking a retired priest to do more (71 percent) or increase the use of deacons (68 percent). Those who attend less than weekly but at least once a month indicate similar levels of support for most of the options listed with the exception of asking a retired priest to do more (59 percent compared to 71 percent). Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less support, as a majority, only one option—sharing a priest with one or more other parishes (56 percent).

***Listed below are some of the things the Catholic Church is doing to help meet Catholics’ need in a time of fewer priests. Would you support or oppose each of the following if the parish you attend did not have a resident priest?***

Percentage who “Support” or “Strongly Support” each

	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Sharing a priest with one or more other parishes	76%	78%	56%
Bringing in a priest from outside of the United States	73	67	45
Asking a retired priest to come in and do more	71	59	46
Increasing the use of deacons	68	70	46
Increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers	60	56	38
Merging the parish with another nearby parish	50	51	40

***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say they would “strongly” support bringing in a priest from outside the United States (29 compared to 19 percent).

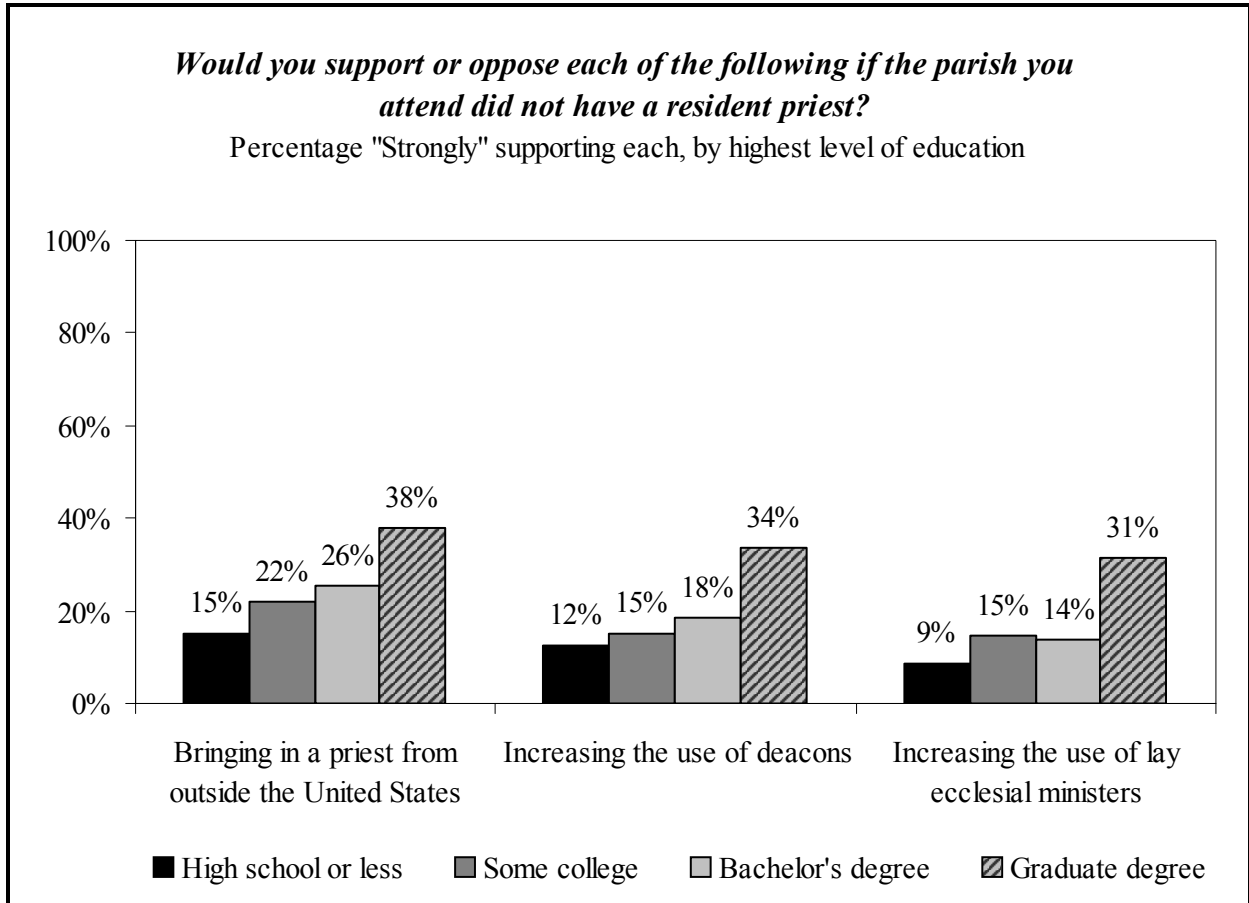
***Differences by Generation***

Older Catholics are slightly more likely than younger Catholics to support asking a retired priest to come in and do more (65 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation compared to 52 percent of all other Catholics).

Older Catholics are also slightly more likely to support merging parishes (52 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 45 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 43 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 37 percent of the Millennial Generation).

**Differences by Education**

Highly educated Catholics are most likely to “strongly” support bringing in a priest from outside the United States, increasing the use of deacons, and increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers.



Those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to support all of the options listed; especially sharing a priest with one or more other parishes (72 percent compared to 63 percent), increasing the use of deacons (65 percent compared to 54 percent), and increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers (61 percent compared to 43 percent).

Those who attended a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who went to a non-Catholic college or university to support the following: sharing a priest with one or more other parishes (81 percent compared to 67 percent), increasing the use of deacons (72 percent compared to 57 percent), and increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers (72 percent compared to 51 percent).

**Differences by Region**

Catholics in the South (65 percent) and West (60 percent) are more likely than those in the Midwest (48 percent) and Northeast (52 percent) to support bringing in a priest from outside of the United States.

## Ministry of International Priests

Respondents were asked if an international priest has regularly served at their parish at any time in the last five years. Those who said “yes” were then asked about their satisfaction with the ministry of that priest.

### Experience of an International Priest at One’s Parish

*In the past five years, about one-third of Catholics have had a priest from outside the United States come to regularly serve at the parish they attend.*

<b><i>In the past five years, has any priest from outside of the United States come to regularly serve at the parish you attend?</i></b>	
Yes	34%
No	66

#### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Fifty-five percent of weekly Mass attenders and 44 percent of those attending less often but at least monthly say a priest from outside of the United States has come to regularly serve in their parish in the last five years.

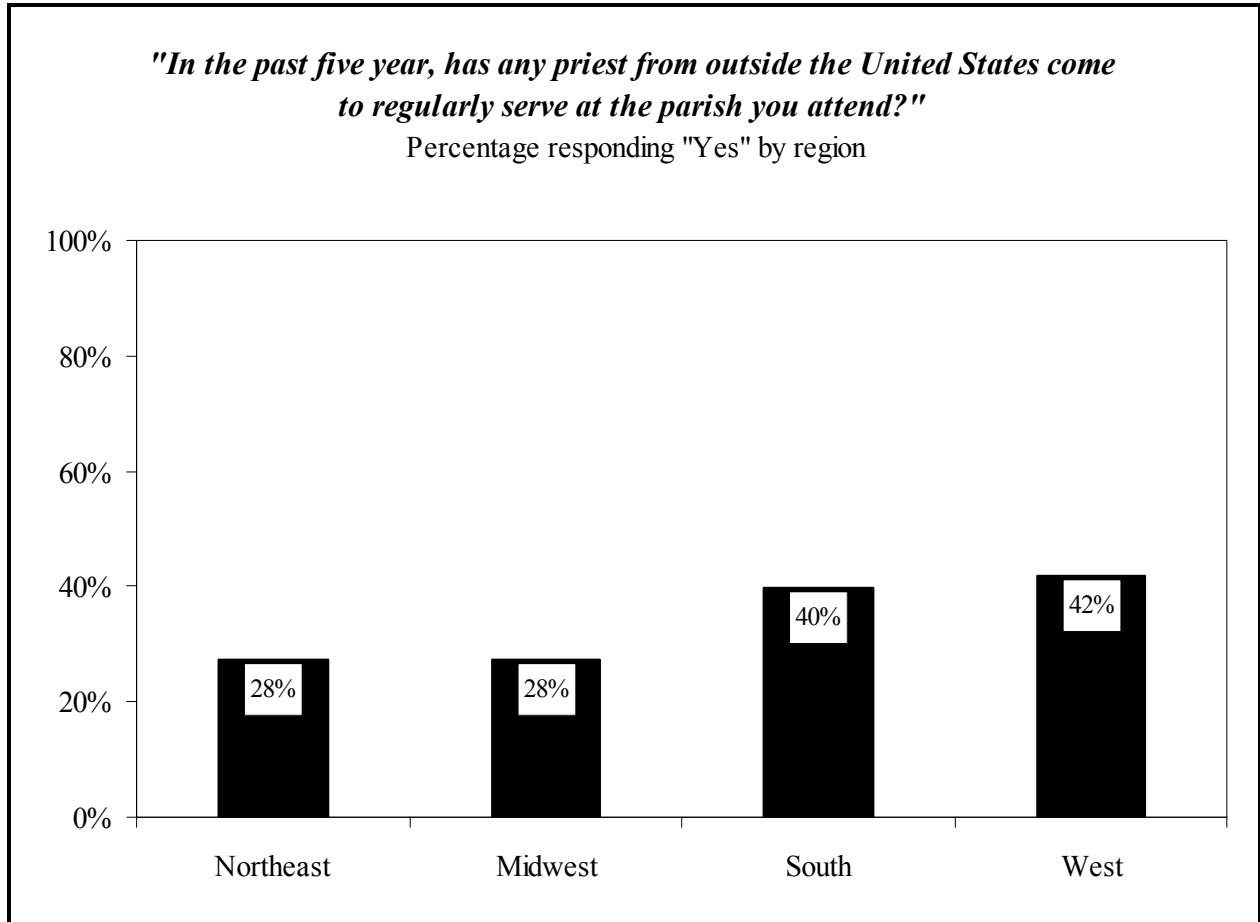
<b><i>In the past five years, has any priest from outside of the United States come to regularly serve at the parish you attend?</i></b>			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
		<b>Less than weekly</b>	
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Yes	55%	44%	21%
No	45	56	79

#### ***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say that an international priest has served at their parish in the last five years (41 compared to 30 percent).

***Differences by Region***

Catholics in the South and West are much more likely than those in the Northeast and Midwest to report that a priest from outside the United States has regularly served at their parish in the past five years.





## Satisfaction with the Ministry of International Parish Priests

Among those who have experienced the ministry of an international priest at their parish, slightly more than half say they are “very” satisfied with this ministry. Nearly nine in ten (87 percent) are at least “somewhat” satisfied.

***How satisfied were you in the ministry of this priest (or priests) from outside of the United States at your parish?***

Respondents who have had a priest from outside the U.S. regularly serve at their parish

Very satisfied	53%
Somewhat satisfied	34
Somewhat dissatisfied	11
Very dissatisfied	2

One-third describe themselves as “somewhat” satisfied with the ministry of an international priest at their parish. One in ten say they are “somewhat” dissatisfied, and just 2 percent that they are “very” dissatisfied.

### ***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Among those who have had a priest from outside the United States serve in their parish, more than 85 percent of those who attend Mass at least once a month are either “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with this priest’s ministry.

***How satisfied were you in the ministry of this priest (or priests) from outside of the United States at your parish?***

Respondents who have had a priest from outside the U.S. regularly serve at their parish

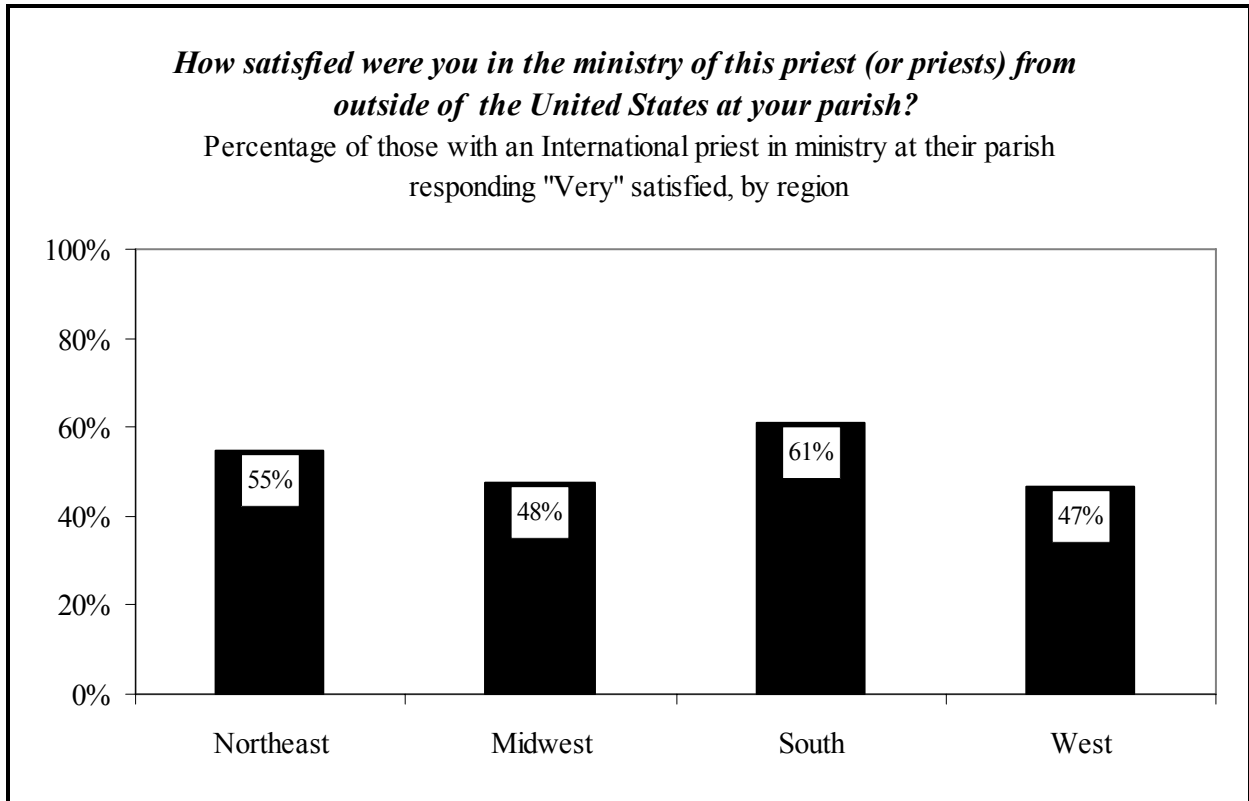
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Very satisfied	57%	57%	43%
Somewhat satisfied	30	29	43
Somewhat dissatisfied	10	11	13
Very dissatisfied	3	3	1

***Differences by Ethnicity***

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say that they are “very” satisfied with the ministry of the international priests who have served at their parishes (64 compared to 45 percent).

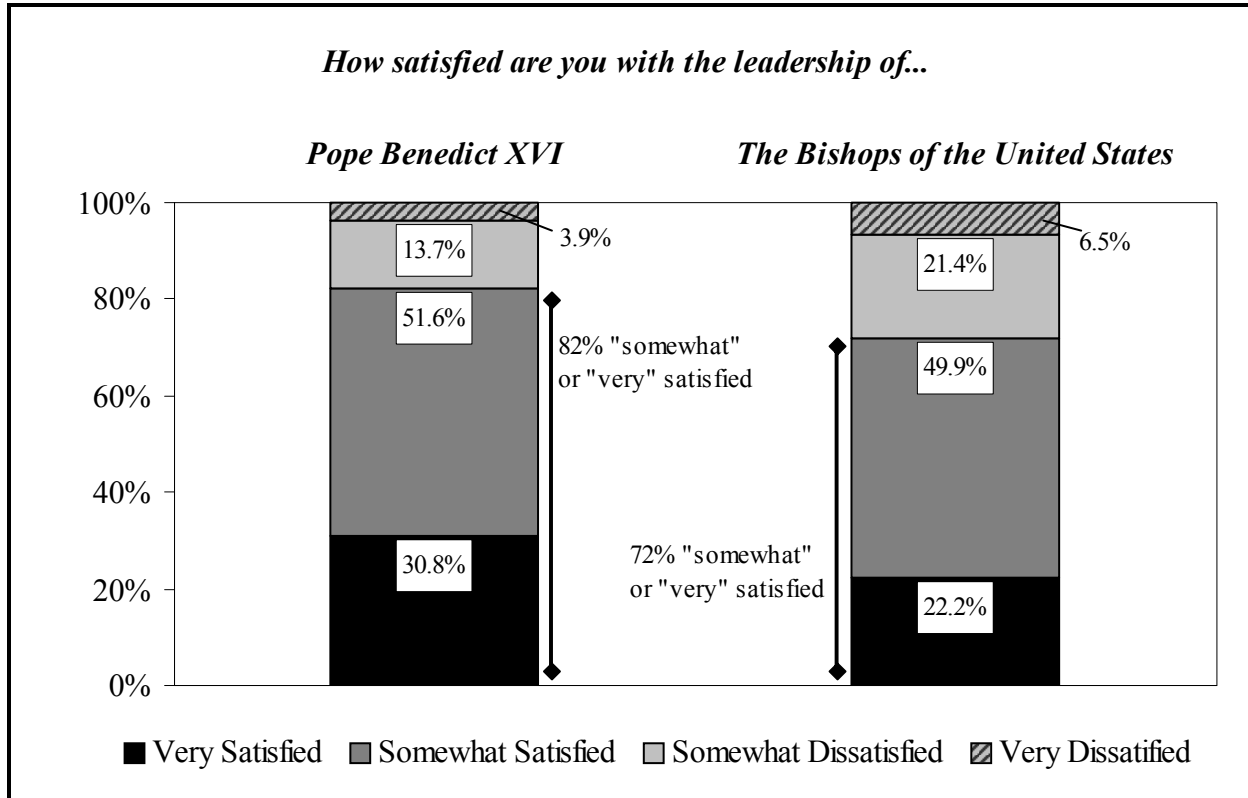
***Differences by Region***

Among Catholics who have had a priest from outside the United States serve in their parish, those most likely to say they are “very” satisfied with the ministry of this priest reside in the South (61 percent) and Northeast (55 percent).



## Satisfaction with Church Leadership

More than eight in ten Catholics (82 percent) describe themselves as “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI. More than seven in ten (72 percent) are at least “somewhat” satisfied with the leadership of the Bishops of the United States.



Respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the leadership of the Pope and Bishops of the United States. About three in ten say they are “very” satisfied with the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI (31 percent). More than one in five (22 percent) are “very” satisfied with the leadership of the Bishops of the United States.

In 2004, 58 percent of Catholics described themselves as at least “somewhat satisfied” with the leadership of the Bishops of the United States.<sup>31</sup> As documented in several CARA polls, the increase in satisfaction with the Bishops since 2004 (+14 percentage points) is part of a larger trend of a recovery in satisfaction with the leadership of the Church since the height of the sexual abuse scandal in 2002.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Results for 2004 come from the 2004 CARA Catholic Poll (CCP), a national telephone poll. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from the online Knowledge Networks format.

<sup>32</sup> See the CARA working paper: *Catholic Reactions to the News of Sexual Abuse Cases Involving Catholic Clergy*. It is available at: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/pubs/CARA%20Working%20Paper%208.pdf>

***Differences by Mass Attendance***

Ninety-three percent of Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more are at least “somewhat” satisfied with the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI. Eighty-two percent of weekly attenders have the same level of satisfaction in the Bishops of the United States.

<b><i>How satisfied are you with the leadership of...</i></b>			
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very” satisfied			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Pope Benedict XVI	93%	84%	77%
The Bishops of the United States	82	76	67

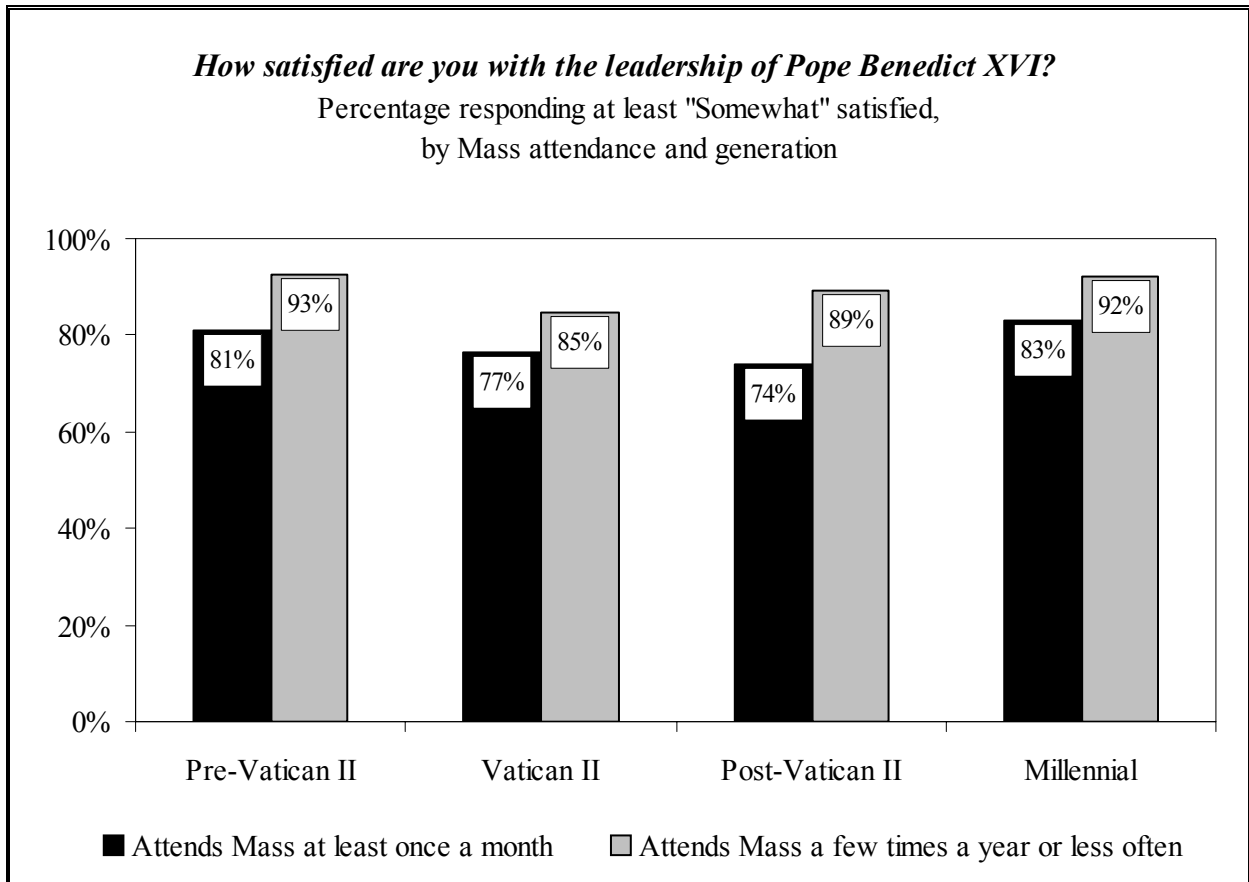
Less frequent Mass attenders are *less* likely to be as satisfied with the leadership of the Pope or the U.S. Bishops, although strong majorities of each group are still at least “somewhat” satisfied.

***Differences by Gender***

Women are slightly more likely than men to describe themselves as “very” satisfied with both the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI (37 compared with 25 percent) and the U.S. Bishops (27 compared to 17 percent).

**Differences by Generation**

Satisfaction with the leadership of the Pope is higher among the oldest and youngest Catholic generations, among both frequent and infrequent Mass attenders.





**Appendix I:**  
**Questionnaire with Weighted Frequencies**

## Questionnaire with Weighted Frequencies

### If Hispanic:

The following survey is available in both English and Spanish. Please choose the version you would like to take. If you choose to complete the survey in Spanish you will not be able to return to the English version.

	Frequency <sup>33</sup>	Percentage
English	275	96.7
Spanish	9	3.3
Total qualified	284	100

This survey is being conducted as part of a Georgetown University academic research project. All of your responses are completely confidential and will only be reported in aggregate statistics.

What is your religion?

	Frequency	Percentage
Catholic	1,007	100
Protestant	0	0
Jewish	0	0
Muslim	0	0
Other religion	0	0
No religion	0	0
Total qualified	1,007	100

When did you become Catholic? As an...

	Frequency	Percentage
Infant (under age 1)	842	83.6
Child (ages 1-12)	82	8.1
Teenager (ages 13-17)	11	1.1
Adult (ages 18 or older)	70	7.0
[No response]	1	0.1
Total qualified	1,007	100

### If not an adult convert:

How old were you when you were baptized in the Catholic Church?

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year old	835	89.3
Age 1 or more (SPECIFY)	94	10.0
I was baptized in another Christian faith.	7	0.7
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	935	100

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<sup>33</sup> Due to weighting, the frequencies are not actually integers but have decimal places (some of the response frequencies may measure less than 1). Therefore, rounding error may lead to frequencies not summing exactly to the number under "total qualified." Additionally, percentages may differ slightly from what would be obtained through calculating "by hand."



**If baptized in another Christian faith:**

How old were you when you entered the Catholic Church?

Range	0-15
Median	6
[No response]	0
Total qualified	7

**If an adult convert:**

How old were you when you entered the Catholic Church?

Range	18-83
Median	30
[No response]	1
Total qualified	70

**If an adult convert:**

Did you go through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), the formal process that brings adult converts into the Catholic Church?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	52	74.5
No	18	1.8
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	70	100

**If an adult convert who went through RCIA:**

How long was the RCIA process in your parish?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 1 year	35	66.4
1 year	13	24.4
2 years or more	5	9.2
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	52	100

**If an adult convert:**

What was your religion before becoming Catholic?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Protestant	45	64.2
Orthodox	0	0
Jewish	0	0
Muslim	0	0
Other religion	6	8.1
No religion	20	27.8
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	70	100

How meaningful for you are each of the Catholic sacraments listed below? This includes celebrating, receiving, or living the sacrament yourself or in witnessing someone else close to you experience this sacrament.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Baptism</b>		
Very meaningful	721	71.6
Somewhat meaningful	160	15.9
A little meaningful	82	8.2
Not meaningful at all	39	3.9
[No response]	4	0.4
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Confirmation</b>		
Very meaningful	582	57.8
Somewhat meaningful	239	23.7
A little meaningful	114	11.3
Not meaningful at all	58	5.8
[No response]	14	1.4
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Eucharist/Holy Communion</b>		
Very meaningful	631	62.7
Somewhat meaningful	196	19.5
A little meaningful	109	10.9
Not meaningful at all	52	5.2
[No response]	18	1.7
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Reconciliation/Confession</b>		
Very meaningful	384	38.1
Somewhat meaningful	272	27.0
A little meaningful	198	19.7
Not meaningful at all	137	13.6
[No response]	16	1.6
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Anointing of the Sick</b>		
Very meaningful	519	51.5
Somewhat meaningful	253	25.2
A little meaningful	141	14.0
Not meaningful at all	77	7.6
[No response]	17	1.7
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Marriage		
Very meaningful	704	70.0
Somewhat meaningful	185	18.3
A little meaningful	69	6.9
Not meaningful at all	38	3.8
[No response]	10	1.0
Total qualified	1,007	100

Holy Orders/Ordination		
Very meaningful	450	44.7
Somewhat meaningful	254	25.2
A little meaningful	171	17.0
Not meaningful at all	115	11.4
[No response]	17	1.7
Total qualified	1,007	100

Which of these Catholic sacraments is the most meaningful to you? Select one.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Baptism	387	38.4
Confirmation	29	2.9
Eucharist/Holy Communion	252	25.0
Reconciliation/Confession	33	3.3
Anointing of the Sick	30	3.0
Marriage	258	25.6
Holy Orders/Ordination	7	0.7
[No response]	10	1.0
Total qualified	1,007	100

Which of the following Catholic sacraments have you celebrated?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
First Reconciliation or Confession		
Yes	882	87.6
No	107	10.6
[No response]	18	1.8
Total qualified	1,007	100

First Communion/Eucharist		
Yes	907	90.1
No	74	7.4
[No response]	26	2.6
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Sacrament of Confirmation		
Yes	827	82.1
No	157	15.6
[No response]	23	2.3
Total qualified	1,007	100

Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Rarely or never	322	32.0
A few times a year	243	24.1
Once or twice a month	102	10.1
Almost every week	104	10.3
Every week	201	19.9
More than once a week	32	3.2
[No response]	3	0.3
Total qualified	1,007	100

**If attends Mass at least a few times a year:**

How important are each of the following aspects of Mass to you?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hearing the readings and the Gospel		
Not at all	14	2.0
Only a little	58	8.5
Somewhat	172	25.2
Very	436	64.0
[No response]	2	0.3
Total qualified	682	100

Hearing the homily		
Not at all	13	1.8
Only a little	72	10.6
Somewhat	241	35.3
Very	353	51.8
[No response]	3	0.4
Total qualified	682	100

The music		
Not at all	62	9.1
Only a little	137	20.0
Somewhat	294	43.2
Very	187	27.4
[No response]	2	0.2
Total qualified	682	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Receiving Eucharist/Holy Communion</b>		
Not at all	15	2.2
Only a little	41	6.0
Somewhat	118	17.3
Very	503	73.8
[No response]	5	0.7
Total qualified	682	100
<b>Prayer and reflection</b>		
Not at all	13	1.3
Only a little	34	5.0
Somewhat	141	20.7
Very	492	72.2
[No response]	2	0.3
Total qualified	682	100
<b>Worshiping with other people</b>		
Not at all	42	6.2
Only a little	120	17.7
Somewhat	287	42.1
Very	229	33.7
[No response]	3	0.4
Total qualified	682	100
<b>Feeling the presence of God</b>		
Not at all	13	1.9
Only a little	26	3.9
Somewhat	122	18.0
Very	520	76.3
[No response]	<1	<.1
Total qualified	682	100
<b>The church environment and decorations</b>		
Not at all	54	8.0
Only a little	177	25.9
Somewhat	286	42.0
Very	161	23.7
[No response]	3	0.5
Total qualified	682	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
That Mass is celebrated in a language I most prefer		
Not at all	31	4.6
Only a little	88	12.7
Somewhat	211	30.9
Very	352	51.6
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	682	100

That Mass is celebrated in a way that reflects my ethnic/ancestral culture		
Not at all	72	10.5
Only a little	132	19.3
Somewhat	250	36.7
Very	228	33.5
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	682	100

**If attends Mass less than weekly:**

If you missed Sunday Mass at least once in the last six months how well do each of the following explain, if at all, why you missed Mass?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Busy schedule or lack of time		
Not at all	299	38.8
Only a little	120	15.6
Somewhat	188	24.4
Very much	136	17.7
[No response]	28	3.6
Total qualified	770	100

Inconvenient Mass schedule		
Not at all	442	57.3
Only a little	125	16.2
Somewhat	126	16.4
Very much	50	6.5
[No response]	28	3.6
Total qualified	770	100

Family responsibilities		
Not at all	339	44.1
Only a little	137	17.7
Somewhat	154	20.0
Very much	111	14.3
[No response]	30	3.9
Total qualified	770	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Health problems or a disability		
Not at all	470	61.0
Only a little	78	10.1
Somewhat	100	13.0
Very much	93	12.1
[No response]	30	3.8
Total qualified	770	100

Conflict with work		
Not at all	537	69.6
Only a little	66	8.5
Somewhat	64	8.3
Very much	76	9.9
[No response]	28	3.7
Total qualified	770	100

I am not a very religious person.		
Not at all	286	37.1
Only a little	153	19.9
Somewhat	170	22.1
Very much	146	19.0
[No response]	15	2.0
Total qualified	770	100

I don't believe that missing Mass is a sin.		
Not at all	210	27.3
Only a little	114	14.8
Somewhat	200	25.9
Very much	229	29.7
[No response]	18	2.3
Total qualified	770	100

When you attend Mass, how often do you receive Eucharist/Holy Communion?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Always	462	45.9
Frequently or usually	186	18.5
Seldom	181	18.0
Never	173	17.1
[No response]	5	0.5
Total qualified	1,007	100

How often do you attend a Mass on a Holy Day of Obligation when it does not fall on a Sunday?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Always	123	12.2
Frequently or usually	228	22.7
Seldom	386	38.4
Never	262	26.0
[No response]	7	0.7
Total qualified	1,007	100

Besides attending Mass, how involved are you in parish or other religious activities?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very involved	39	3.9
Somewhat involved	110	10.9
Involved a little	213	21.2
Not involved at all	641	63.6
[No response]	4	0.4
Total qualified	1,007	100

How important is your Catholic faith in your daily life? Is it . . .

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
The most important part of your life	143	14.2
Among the most important parts of your life	269	26.8
Important, but so are many other areas of your life	399	39.6
Not too important in your life	132	13.1
Not important in your life at all	62	6.1
[No response]	1	0.1
Total qualified	1,007	100

Are you registered at a Catholic parish?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	609	60.5
No	392	38.9
[No response]	6	0.6
Total qualified	1,007	100

Does your local parish offer opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration where the Eucharist/Holy Communion is displayed and people come to pray and worship?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	472	46.9
No	57	5.6
I don't know	476	47.3
[No response]	2	0.2
Total qualified	1,007	100



**If parish has Eucharistic Adoration:**

Have you participated in Eucharistic Adoration at your parish or elsewhere within the last year?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	138	29.2
No	334	70.8
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	472	100

Which of the following statements best agrees with your belief about the Eucharist/Holy Communion?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.	570	56.6
Bread and wine are symbols of Jesus, but Jesus is not really present.	430	42.7
[No response]	7	0.7
Total qualified	1,007	100

How often, if ever, do you participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Never	449	44.6
Less than once a year	296	29.4
Once a year	119	11.9
Several times a year	119	11.8
Once a month or more	18	1.8
[No response]	5	0.5
Total qualified	1,007	100

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Forgiveness or absolution of a confessed sin requires one to make a confession with contrition, an internal attitude of sorrow and repentance.		
Agree strongly	443	44.0
Agree somewhat	228	22.7
Neither agree nor disagree	227	22.5
Disagree somewhat	46	4.5
Disagree strongly	52	5.2
[No response]	11	1.1
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Acts of penance such as prayer or fasting are necessary to gain forgiveness of one's sins.		
Agree strongly	216	21.4
Agree somewhat	257	25.5
Neither agree nor disagree	301	29.9
Disagree somewhat	108	10.7
Disagree strongly	113	11.2
[No response]	13	1.3
Total qualified	1,007	100

I can be a good Catholic without celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.		
Agree strongly	324	32.2
Agree somewhat	289	28.7
Neither agree nor disagree	243	24.2
Disagree somewhat	80	7.9
Disagree strongly	57	5.7
[No response]	14	1.4
Total qualified	1,007	100

By going to confession and making acts of contrition and penance I am reconciled with God and the Church.		
Agree strongly	261	25.9
Agree somewhat	251	24.9
Neither agree nor disagree	308	30.6
Disagree somewhat	86	8.6
Disagree strongly	87	8.6
[No response]	14	1.4
Total qualified	1,007	100

The sacrament of Reconciliation is <u>only</u> necessary for the forgiveness of very serious sins.		
Agree strongly	77	7.7
Agree somewhat	168	16.7
Neither agree nor disagree	341	33.9
Disagree somewhat	191	18.9
Disagree strongly	214	21.2
[No response]	16	1.6
Total qualified	1,007	100

Do you do any of the following during Lent, the 40-day period preceding the celebration of Easter?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Do you abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent?		
Yes	598	59.4
No	398	39.5
[No response]	11	1.1
Total qualified	1,007	100

Besides meat on Fridays, do you give up or abstain from anything else during Lent?		
Yes	376	37.4
No	622	61.8
[No response]	8	0.8
Total qualified	1,007	100

Besides giving something up, do you make extra efforts during Lent, like giving additional money to the needy or trying to improve your personal habits or behavior?		
Yes	433	43.0
No	557	55.4
[No response]	16	1.6
Total qualified	1,007	100

Do you typically receive ashes at Ash Wednesday services?		
Yes	446	44.3
No	554	55.0
[No response]	7	0.7
Total qualified	1,007	100

Some people have religious objects in their homes. Is there a statue or picture of Mary, the mother of Jesus, on display in your home?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	593	58.9
No	413	41.0
[No response]	1	0.1
Total qualified	1,007	100

Do you typically wear or carry any of the following with you?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A crucifix or cross		
Yes	317	31.5
No	667	66.2
[No response]	23	2.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A religious medal or pin of a saint or angel		
Yes	283	28.1
No	707	70.2
[No response]	16	1.6
Total qualified	1,007	100
Prayer cards or coins		
Yes	198	19.6
No	786	78.1
[No response]	23	2.3
Total qualified	1,007	100
A rosary		
Yes	227	22.5
No	765	76.0
[No response]	15	1.5
Total qualified	1,007	100
A scapular		
Yes	85	8.5
No	899	89.3
[No response]	22	2.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

As you may know, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick used to be known as “last rites” or “extreme unction.” Nowadays, seriously ill people, not just those who are dying, can receive this sacrament. Have you or a member of your immediate family ever requested the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at a time of serious illness?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	511	50.8
No	489	48.6
[No response]	6	0.6
Total qualified	1,007	100

How important is it to you that you receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at some point?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not at all important	101	10.0
A little important	136	13.6
Somewhat important	311	30.9
Very important	455	45.2
[No response]	4	0.4
Total qualified	1,007	100

Have you ever attended an ordination ceremony for a Catholic priest?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	126	12.5
No	878	87.3
[No response]	2	0.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

**If male:**

Have you ever considered becoming a priest or religious brother?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	81	16.5
No	404	83.0
I am a priest or religious brother.	<1	0.1
[No response]	2	0.4
Total qualified	487	100

**If a man who has considered becoming a priest or religious brother:**

Would you say you have considered becoming a priest or religious brother...

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very seriously	16	19.9
Somewhat seriously	28	34.9
Only a little seriously	33	40.6
Not seriously at all	4	0.4
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	81	100

**If male:**

A permanent deacon is an ordained man, either married or single, who may proclaim the Gospel, preach, and teach in the name of the Church, baptize, lead the faithful in prayer, witness marriages, and conduct wake and funeral services. Deacons are also leaders in identifying the needs of others, then marshalling the Church's resources to meet those needs. Have you ever considered becoming a permanent deacon?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	26	5.3
No	461	94.6
I am a permanent deacon.	0	0
[No response]	1	0.2
Total qualified	487	100

**If a man who has considered becoming a permanent deacon:**

Would you say you have considered becoming a permanent deacon...

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very seriously	6	22.2
Somewhat seriously	8	31.2
Only a little seriously	7	25.4
Not seriously at all	5	21.2
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	26	100

**If female:**

Have you ever considered becoming a nun or religious sister?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	80	15.3
No	438	84.3
I am a nun or religious sister.	2	0.4
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	519	100

**If a woman who has considered becoming a nun or religious sister:**

Would you say you have considered becoming a nun or religious sister...

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very seriously	3	3.8
Somewhat seriously	22	27.4
Only a little seriously	44	55.3
Not seriously at all	11	13.5
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	80	100

Have you ever encouraged someone you know to become a...?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Priest		
Yes	66	6.5
No	938	93.1
[No response]	4	0.4
Total qualified	1,007	100
Permanent deacon		
Yes	36	3.5
No	963	95.6
[No response]	9	0.9
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Religious brother		
Yes	28	2.8
No	971	96.4
[No response]	8	0.8
Total qualified	1,007	100
Nun or religious sister		
Yes	35	3.5
No	966	95.9
[No response]	6	0.6
Total qualified	1,007	100

Would you encourage your own child to pursue a vocation as a priest, deacon, religious brother, nun, or sister?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	316	31.4
No	675	67.1
[No response]	15	1.5
Total qualified	1,007	100

**Asked for those which respondent has never encouraged:**

Would you encourage someone else you know to become a...?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Priest		
Yes	232	24.8
No	695	74.2
[No response]	10	1.1
Total qualified	938	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Permanent deacon		
Yes	269	28.0
No	683	70.9
[No response]	11	1.1
Total qualified	963	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Religious brother		
Yes	262	26.9
No	699	72.0
[No response]	10	1.1
Total qualified	971	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Nun or religious sister		
Yes	254	26.3
No	701	72.6
[No response]	11	1.2
Total qualified	966	100

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I am proud to be Catholic.		
Agree strongly	556	55.2
Agree somewhat	213	21.1
Neither agree nor disagree	193	19.2
Disagree somewhat	21	2.1
Disagree strongly	13	1.3
[No response]	11	1.1
Total qualified	1,007	100

I think of myself as a practicing Catholic.		
Agree strongly	325	32.3
Agree somewhat	218	21.7
Neither agree nor disagree	177	17.6
Disagree somewhat	148	14.7
Disagree strongly	127	12.7
[No response]	11	1.1
Total qualified	1,007	100

Sacraments are essential to my faith.		
Agree strongly	377	37.4
Agree somewhat	223	22.1
Neither agree nor disagree	240	23.9
Disagree somewhat	64	6.3
Disagree strongly	86	8.6
[No response]	17	1.7
Total qualified	1,007	100

I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.		
Agree strongly	337	33.4
Agree somewhat	338	33.6
Neither agree nor disagree	163	16.2
Disagree somewhat	86	8.5
Disagree strongly	71	7.1
[No response]	13	1.3
Total qualified	1,007	100



	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.		
Agree strongly	332	33.0
Agree somewhat	324	32.2
Neither agree nor disagree	288	28.6
Disagree somewhat	30	3.0
Disagree strongly	20	2.0
[No response]	12	1.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.		
Agree strongly	264	26.2
Agree somewhat	269	26.7
Neither agree nor disagree	378	37.6
Disagree somewhat	40	4.0
Disagree strongly	43	4.3
[No response]	12	1.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

In deciding what is morally acceptable, I look to Catholic Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form my conscience.		
Agree strongly	176	17.5
Agree somewhat	256	25.4
Neither agree nor disagree	352	35.0
Disagree somewhat	113	11.2
Disagree strongly	98	9.7
[No response]	12	1.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

How important are the following factors to your sense of what it means to be a Catholic?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Receiving the Eucharist/Holy Communion		
Very important	508	50.4
Somewhat important	276	27.4
A little important	112	11.1
Not important at all	101	10.1
[No response]	10	1.0
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Attending Mass</b>		
Very important	386	38.3
Somewhat important	270	26.8
A little important	200	19.9
Not important at all	137	13.6
[No response]	14	1.4
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Helping those in need</b>		
Very important	477	47.4
Somewhat important	350	34.8
A little important	126	12.6
Not important at all	39	3.9
[No response]	14	1.4
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation</b>		
Very important	433	43.0
Somewhat important	298	29.6
A little important	158	15.7
Not important at all	96	9.5
[No response]	21	2.1
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Going to Reconciliation or Confession</b>		
Very important	274	27.2
Somewhat important	279	27.7
A little important	242	24.0
Not important at all	195	19.4
[No response]	17	1.7
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Living my life consistent with Church teaching</b>		
Very important	366	36.4
Somewhat important	361	35.8
A little important	158	15.7
Not important at all	109	10.8
[No response]	14	1.4
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Having devotion to Mary		
Very important	366	36.4
Somewhat important	304	30.2
A little important	200	19.9
Not important at all	120	12.0
[No response]	16	1.6
Total qualified	1,007	100

Having devotions to the saints		
Very important	285	28.3
Somewhat important	344	34.2
A little important	229	22.7
Not important at all	136	13.5
[No response]	13	1.3
Total qualified	1,007	100

Indicate your belief about the following...

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
God, the Father, is creator of heaven, the earth, and all we know of the universe.		
I have never doubted this	671	66.6
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	81	8.1
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	156	15.5
I frequently doubt this	62	6.1
I do not believe this	20	2.0
[No response]	18	1.8
Total qualified	1,007	100

Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.		
I have never doubted this	701	69.6
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	72	7.2
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	131	13.0
I frequently doubt this	51	5.1
I do not believe this	29	2.9
[No response]	23	2.3
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculately conceived without original sin.		
I have never doubted this	643	63.9
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	82	8.2
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	160	15.9
I frequently doubt this	56	5.6
I do not believe this	44	4.4
[No response]	21	2.1
Total qualified	1,007	100
Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.		
I have never doubted this	718	71.3
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	70	7.0
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	121	12.0
I frequently doubt this	48	4.8
I do not believe this	23	2.3
[No response]	25	2.5
Total qualified	1,007	100
There is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.		
I have never doubted this	736	73.1
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	61	6.0
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	121	12.0
I frequently doubt this	48	4.8
I do not believe this	22	2.1
[No response]	20	2.0
Total qualified	1,007	100
There is a heaven.		
I have never doubted this	681	67.6
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	70	7.0
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	176	17.5
I frequently doubt this	45	4.5
I do not believe this	13	1.3
[No response]	23	2.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
There is a hell.		
I have never doubted this	573	56.9
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	74	7.4
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	220	21.8
I frequently doubt this	58	5.8
I do not believe this	54	5.3
[No response]	28	2.8
Total qualified	1,007	100

Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.		
I have never doubted this	620	61.6
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	80	8.0
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	177	17.6
I frequently doubt this	66	6.6
I do not believe this	35	3.5
[No response]	27	2.7
Total qualified	1,007	100

The Pope and the Bishops of the Church have by divine institution succeeded Saint Peter and the apostles of Jesus as pastors of the Church		
I have never doubted this	428	42.5
I have had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	113	11.2
I have a few doubts about this from time to time	243	24.1
I frequently doubt this	91	9.0
I do not believe this	109	10.8
[No response]	24	2.4
Total qualified	1,007	100

Do you ever pray the rosary?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	525	52.2
No	478	47.4
[No response]	4	0.4
Total qualified	1,007	100

**If ever prays rosary:**

Would you say you pray the rosary...

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than once a year	159	30.3
A few times a year	198	37.6
Once or twice a month	50	9.4
Almost every week	34	6.5
Every week	20	3.7
More than once a week	20	3.8
Every day	45	8.7
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	525	100

As you may know, the number of Catholic priests in the United States has declined in recent decades. Have you noticed this change?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	660	65.5
No	342	34.0
[No response]	2	0.5
Total qualified	1,007	100

**If has noticed the decline in priests:**

Have you personally been affected by this change?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	146	22.1
No	514	77.8
[No response]	1	0.1
Total qualified	660	100

Listed below are some of the things the Catholic Church is doing to help meet Catholics' needs at a time of fewer priests. Would you support or oppose each of the following if the parish you attend did not have a resident priest?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Bringing in a priest from outside of the United States		
Strongly support	207	20.5
Support	353	35.0
Neither support nor oppose	346	34.4
Oppose	54	5.4
Strongly oppose	35	3.4
[No response]	12	1.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Asking a retired priest to come in and do more</b>		
Strongly support	148	14.7
Support	393	39.1
Neither support nor oppose	363	36.1
Oppose	67	6.6
Strongly oppose	21	2.1
[No response]	14	1.4
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Sharing a priest with one or more other parishes</b>		
Strongly support	192	19.1
Support	455	45.2
Neither support nor oppose	302	30.0
Oppose	34	3.3
Strongly oppose	10	1.0
[No response]	14	1.4
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Increasing the use of deacons</b>		
Strongly support	158	15.7
Support	397	39.4
Neither support nor oppose	380	37.8
Oppose	43	4.2
Strongly oppose	13	1.3
[No response]	16	1.6
Total qualified	1,007	100
<b>Increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers (someone who is not ordained, working or volunteering in a ministry at least part-time for a Catholic parish or other Church organization)</b>		
Strongly support	129	12.8
Support	336	33.4
Neither support nor oppose	409	40.7
Oppose	93	9.2
Strongly oppose	22	2.1
[No response]	18	1.8
Total qualified	1,007	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Merging the parish with another nearby parish		
Strongly support	85	8.5
Support	352	34.9
Neither support nor oppose	420	41.7
Oppose	108	10.7
Strongly oppose	23	2.3
[No response]	19	1.9
Total qualified	1,007	100

In the past five years, has any priest from outside of the United States come to regularly serve at the parish you attend?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	333	33.1
No	648	64.4
[No response]	26	2.6
Total qualified	1,007	100

**If has experienced an international priest serving regularly at the parish:**

How satisfied were you in the ministry of this priest (or priests) from outside of the United States at your parish?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	176	52.8
Somewhat satisfied	112	33.7
Somewhat dissatisfied	36	10.8
Very dissatisfied	8	2.3
[No response]	1	0.4
Total qualified	333	100

How satisfied are you with the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	303	30.1
Somewhat satisfied	507	50.4
Somewhat dissatisfied	134	13.3
Very dissatisfied	39	3.8
[No response]	23	2.3
Total qualified	1,007	100

How satisfied are you with the leadership of the Bishops of the United States?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	218	21.7
Somewhat satisfied	492	48.8
Somewhat dissatisfied	211	20.9
Very dissatisfied	64	6.3
[No response]	23	2.2
Total qualified	1,007	100



Did you attend a Catholic elementary, middle, or junior high school?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	421	41.9
No	584	58.0
[No response]	2	0.2
Total qualified	1,007	100

Did you attend a Catholic high school?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	225	22.3
No	779	77.4
[No response]	3	0.3
Total qualified	1,007	100

**If attended college:**

Have you ever attended a Catholic college or university?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	72	13.8
No	451	86.0
[No response]	1	0.2
Total qualified	525	100

**If attended a Catholic college:**

Did you earn a degree from a Catholic college or university?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	44	61.0
No	28	38.4
[No response]	<1	0.6
Total qualified	72	100

**If has children under 18:**

How important is it to you that your child or children have celebrated each of the following Catholic sacraments?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
First Reconciliation/Confession		
Very important	109	59.0
Somewhat important	32	17.3
A little important	21	11.6
Not important at all	20	10.8
[No response]	2	1.4
Total qualified	185	100

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
First Communion/Eucharist		
Very important	118	63.7
Somewhat important	28	15.4
A little important	18	9.6
Not important at all	17	9.3
[No response]	4	2.0
Total qualified	185	100

Confirmation		
Very important	112	60.4
Somewhat important	30	16.0
A little important	23	12.7
Not important at all	17	9.3
[No response]	3	1.6
Total qualified	185	100

**If married or separated:**

Is your spouse Catholic?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	348	67.9
No	163	31.8
[No response]	1	0.3
Total qualified	513	100

**If divorced or widowed:**

Were you ever married to a Catholic?

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	110	68.1
No	52	31.9
[No response]	0	0
Total qualified	162	100

**Appendix II:**

**Notes on Weighting of Data  
from Prior CARA Telephone Polls**

## Methodological Notes

Differences between the results of Mass attendance questions from CARA's Knowledge Networks polls and telephone polls are strongly related to the effects of an interviewer.<sup>34</sup> CARA's surveys with Knowledge Networks consistently show lower levels of Mass attendance than what is exhibited typically in CARA's telephone polls. Survey researchers have long understood that the personal interaction between interviewer and respondent can create over-reports of certain activities (such as voting or giving to charity) that are considered socially desirable. Responses to questions regarding attendance at religious services are known to be biased toward estimates higher than actual attendance as measured by head counts.<sup>35</sup> Below we show varying estimates of Catholic weekly attendance using telephone polls and other methods such as head counts and time diaries.

### Recent Published Estimates of the Percentage of U.S. Catholics Attending Mass Weekly

#### Telephone Polls

Barna Research Group (2006): 55%

Gallup (2004): 45%

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2007): 41%

CARA (2005): 35%

D'Antonio et al. (2007) 34%

*Average= 42%*

#### Other Methods (sampled counts & time diaries)

Chaves and Hadaway (1993): 28%

Hadaway and Marler (2005): 25%

Hadaway et al. (1998): 24%

Presser and Stinson (U.S. adults, 1998): 26%

*Average=26%*

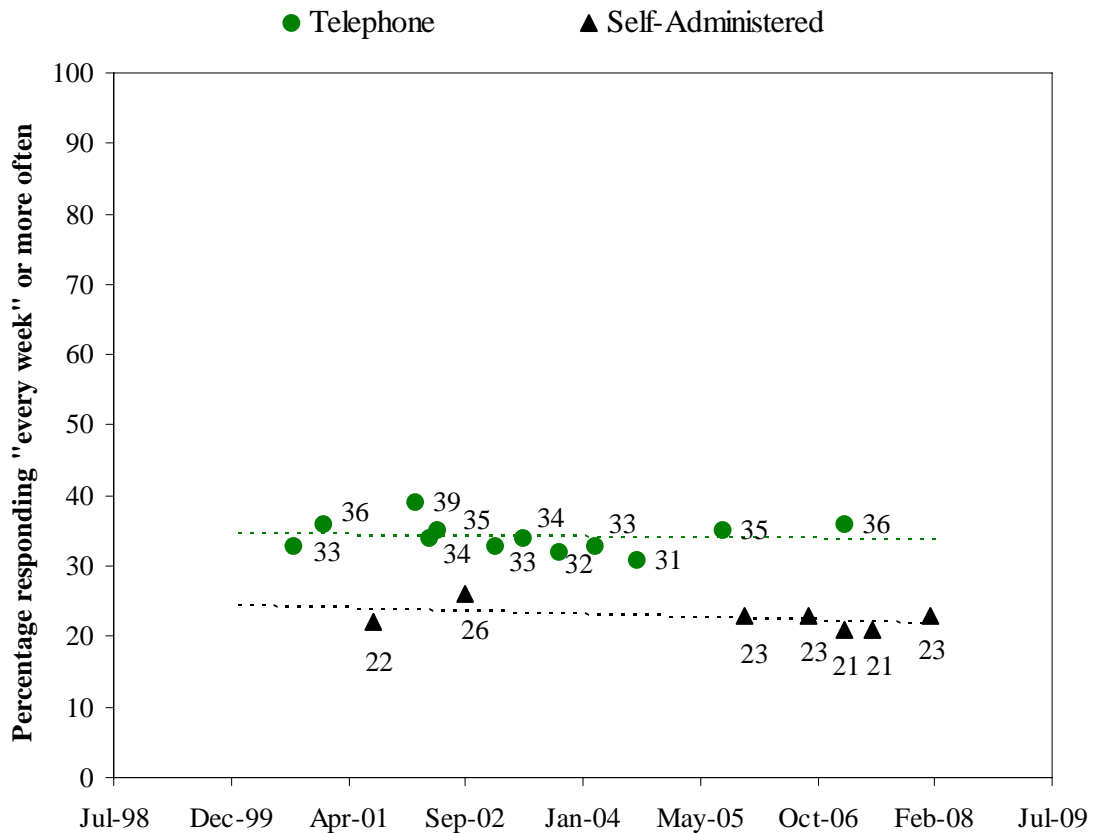
The Knowledge Networks survey uses methods that do not require a human interviewer—respondents are answering questions as they appear on-screen (either through a

<sup>34</sup> Differences are not limited to Mass attendance and generally are observable for any socially desirable activity from financial giving and frequency of prayer and confession.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Chaves and James C. Cavendish. 1994. "More Evidence on U.S. Catholic Church Attendance." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 33: pp. 376-381.

computer or television). Self-administered surveys, such as this, are known to reduce over-reports for questions that have socially desirable response sets (encompassing attitudes people believe they “should” have or behaviors they feel they “should” do), producing results that more closely reflect actual behavior than estimates derived from telephone polls.<sup>36</sup> The estimated percentage of Catholics attending Mass every week using the responses to the Knowledge Networks surveys are more consistent with what is found in estimates of the attendance of Catholics derived from other methods, such as sample-based head counts and time diary studies.<sup>37</sup> As the figure below shows, results from 12 CARA telephone surveys and seven CARA-Knowledge networks surveys (including the survey for this study), produce no statistically significant changes in weekly Mass attendance between 2000 and 2008 by either method of polling.<sup>38</sup>

**Weekly Mass Attenders in CARA's Catholic Telephone and Self-Administered Surveys, 2000-2008**



<sup>36</sup> Stanley Presser and Linda Stinson. 1998. “Data Collection Mode and Social Desirability Bias in Self-Reported Religious Attendance.” *American Sociological Review*. 63: pp. 137-145.

<sup>37</sup> C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler. 2005. “How Many Americans Attend Worship Each Week? An Alternative Approach to Measurement.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 44: pp. 307-322.

<sup>38</sup> All variations are within the sampling margin of error. The difference between the two methods of polling is consistently about 8 to 14 percentage points for those who say they attend weekly or more often.

In this report, we have attempted to make results from prior CARA telephone polls more comparable to results from the present Knowledge Networks survey through statistical weighting. Weighting in survey research is a general process by which researchers adjust results to place greater or lesser emphasis on the answers of various respondents. We use reported Mass attendance as the basis for determining how to weight answers. Mass attendance questions are asked in all CARA's polls. Additionally, frequency of Mass attendance is a very good (though certainly not perfect) indicator of Catholics' general level of commitment to their faith. It is strongly correlated with most other religious practices and with many religious beliefs.

As a baseline, we chose a Knowledge Networks poll with Mass attendance results in the middle of the range (*i.e.*, 23 percent of respondents reporting weekly attendance). We then weighted results from older CARA telephone polls to produce an equivalent level of attendance. This means that comparison results from these older telephone polls, used in this report, have more statistical emphasis placed on answers of respondents who attend Mass infrequently and less statistical emphasis is placed on answers of those who attend more frequently.<sup>39</sup> The overall level of attendance in the older telephone polls is deflated by this weighting, and this causes a corresponding deflation in answers on other questions where responses are correlated with attendance. This process works reasonably well in bringing telephone poll results for most religious behaviors in line with Knowledge Networks results.<sup>40</sup> This method allows for the removal of much of the effects of social desirability response biases that are present in data collected through telephone (or in-person) interviews. This weighting produces estimates and comparisons that are known to be more reflective of the observed behaviors of Catholics in these earlier CARA polls.

The CARA Mass attendance question, in telephone and Knowledge Networks polls is identical, asking respondents about their general level of attendance (from which we estimate the percentage of those who attend Mass *every week*), whereas some other surveys, such as those conducted by Gallup, ask about religious service attendance in *any given week* (*e.g.*, the last seven days). In the table on the following page, we convert the responses from the CARA question and estimate the percentage of Catholics that attend Mass in *any given week*. This is estimated to be 31.4 percent.

By chance one might expect about 2 percent of those who say they "rarely or never" attend Mass to have attended Mass in any given seven-day period (odds of 1 in 52). If one takes the 32 percent of Catholics responding in this manner and multiplies it by 2 percent, one can estimate that 0.6 percent of Catholic Mass attendance in any given week is made up of those who say they "rarely or never" attend Mass. This same calculation can be done for each category of responses that indicate less than weekly attendance.

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<sup>39</sup> This type of weighting is *not* needed nor used for the results of the Knowledge Networks poll produced for this study.

<sup>40</sup> However, levels of praying the rosary remain lower in the current poll than in telephone polls, even with weighting.

**“Converting” the CARA Question to Gallup Format:**  
*Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?*

	Percentage responding as such	Odds of attending <i>any</i> given week	Total estimated percentage attending in <i>any</i> given week
Rarely or never	32.0%	1 in 52 or less	0.6%
A few times a year	24.1	1 in 17	1.4
Once or twice a month	10.1	1 in 12 or less	0.8
Almost every week	10.4	1 in 2	5.2
Every week	20.0	1 in 1	20.0
More than once a week	3.3	1 in 1	3.3

**Total: 31.4%**

Note: totals can add to  $\pm 0.1$  due to rounding error.

## **Appendix III:**

### **The Impact of Religious Switching and Secularization on the Estimated Size of the U.S. Adult Catholic Population**



## **The Impact of Religious Switching and Secularization on the Estimated Size of the U.S. Adult Catholic Population**

How many Catholics have left the faith? In February 2008, The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life released results from their “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey” partially addressing this important question. Pew’s report for this study and many of the media stories<sup>41</sup> that followed it highlighted the following statements regarding the U.S. adult Catholic population:

*“Catholicism has experienced the greatest net losses as a result of affiliation changes. While nearly one-in-three Americans (31%) were raised in the Catholic faith, today fewer than one-in-four (24%) describe themselves as Catholic. These losses would have been even more pronounced were it not for the offsetting impact of immigration”* (p. 6).

*“...the Catholic share of the U.S. adult population has held fairly steady in recent decades, at around 25%. What this apparent stability obscures, however, is the large number of people who have left the Catholic Church. Approximately one-third of the survey respondents who say they were raised Catholic no longer describe themselves as Catholic. This means that roughly 10% of all Americans are former Catholics. These losses, however, have been partly offset by the number of people who have changed their affiliation to Catholicism (2.6% of the adult population) but more importantly by the disproportionately high number of Catholics among immigrants to the U.S.”* (p. 7).

The Catholic Church has indeed lost the most in terms of total population but it is important to remember that the Catholic Church is also the single largest faith in the United States and proportions matter. In the discussion of those who leave their faith, the Pew study did not highlight some important results in their “Summary of Key Findings” regarding the varying *likelihoods*, by denomination, that one will leave the faith they were raised in. As bad as the Catholic losses are, they would have been even worse if the Church was losing its young faithful at the same *rate* as every other U.S. Protestant denomination.

Retention rates are reported by Pew in two separate tables in the report. The first is on pages 30, including Catholics, and the other is on page 31, including Protestant denominations.<sup>42</sup> The table on the following page combines these Pew results and ranks retention rates for all faith groups that account for at least million adult members. The Pew study indicates that the Catholic Church has retained 68 percent of those who grew up Catholic.

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<sup>41</sup> For example: *The Washington Times* story was titled, “Catholic tradition fading in U.S”, the *Chicago Tribune* went with “Many US Catholics, Protestants leave their churches”, and the *Orlando Sentinel* highlighted “Study: Immigrants keeping American Catholic Church afloat.”

<sup>42</sup> The only retention rates reported in the summary of key findings were for the “unaffiliated population” and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

By comparison, 60 percent of those raised Baptist are still Baptists as adults and the retention rates are lower for Lutherans (59 percent), Methodists and Pentecostals (both 47 percent), Episcopalians (45 percent), and Presbyterians (40 percent). Of all the faith groups in the United States that have at least 3 million adult members, only those who were raised Jewish or Mormon are more likely than Catholics to keep their faith as adults (76 and 70 percent, respectively). Among smaller faith groups—with less than 3 million U.S. adult members—those who were raised as Hindu or Orthodox also have higher retention rates than those raised Catholic (84 and 73 percent, respectively).

**Keeping the Faith: Percentages of U.S. Adults  
Staying With the Religion They Were Raised In**

Among faith groups with an estimated 3 million or more adult members

	<b>Retention</b>	<b>Childhood Religion</b>	<b>Adults Leaving</b>	<b>Adults Staying</b>
1. Jewish	76%	1.9%	-0.5%	1.4%
2. Mormon	70	1.8	-0.5	1.3
<b>3. Catholic</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>-10.1</b>	<b>21.3</b>
4. Baptist	60	20.9	-8.3	12.6
5. Lutheran	59	5.5	-2.3	3.2
6. Methodist	47	8.3	-4.4	3.9
7. Pentecostal	47	3.9	-2.0	1.9
8. Restorationist	46	2.3	-1.2	1.1
9. Anglican/Episcopal	45	1.8	-1.0	0.8
10. Presbyterian	40	3.1	-2.0	1.1
11. Protestant, nondenominational	44	1.5	-0.8	0.7
12. Protestant, nonspecific	Not reported	3.4	-2.1	1.3

Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey” (pgs. 26, 30, and 31). Retention rates based on respondents who reported staying with their childhood faith.

It is the case that more “Protestants stay Protestant” (80 percent) overall, but this statistic lacks some meaning when one is actually measuring religious switching and only serves to mask the large volume of switching *between* Protestant denominations. The ease with which this occurs does not mean that this switching is somehow less relevant. For all they have in common, each denomination still has its own unique customs, rituals, traditions, and teachings. Switching from one to another brings change for the individual and the memberships of the Churches involved. Although the measurement of “Protestants staying Protestant” may have a sociological and historical meaning, this concept lacks similar relevance in the real world. Researchers may choose not to recognize a respondent’s change of faith group as a “real change” but this does not

mean the individuals making these responses—or the Churches losing or gaining their membership—share this interpretation.<sup>43</sup> Also, if one accepts the notion that changing from one Protestant denomination to another is not a real change, the Pew report still indicates that 11 out of 100 adults in the United States were raised in any Protestant denomination and no longer identifies with any Protestant denomination today (p. 26). This formerly Protestant population is slightly *larger* than the one in ten former Catholics identified and highlighted by Pew. If one includes changes between Protestant denominations as real changes, *one in four* U.S. adults no longer self-identifies with the Protestant denomination in which they were raised. Pew researchers selectively use definitions to highlight that there are more former Catholics than any other faith (by comparing to each individual denomination) and that Protestant retention rates are better than those for Catholicism (by comparing to all denominations as a whole).

More serious, a methodological issue in Pew’s Religious Landscape Survey, which was not noted in the summary of key findings or in the press coverage of the results, leads to an underestimation in the size of the Catholic population as well as the Catholic Church’s retention rate. Pew researchers discuss this measurement issue over three pages in the body of the report (pgs. 41 to 43). The Religious Landscape Survey estimated a smaller proportion of Latinos self-identifying as Catholic compared to other surveys (*i.e.*, where Spanish or bilingual interviewing is used), including other recent Pew studies. The Pew authors note:

*“The number of Latinos in the Landscape Survey who identify themselves as Catholic (58%) is considerably lower than in a major survey of Latinos the Forum conducted in 2006 with the Pew Hispanic Research Center, where more than two-thirds (68%) identified as Catholic”* (p. 41).

Latinos in the Religious Landscape Survey disproportionately identified themselves as “unaffiliated.” The earlier 2006 Pew estimate of 68 percent Catholic affiliation among Latinos is consistent with CARA’s estimates reported in a meta-analysis of poll results that was recently published in a peer-reviewed academic journal.<sup>44</sup> Out of concern for these results, Pew conducted a follow-up survey for comparison in January 2008. This new poll confirmed that the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey had indeed underestimated Latino Catholic affiliation. Although the Pew study included more than 35,000 interviews, resulting in a margin of sampling error of just  $\pm 0.6$  percentage points, sampling error is just one type of error that can affect surveys (others include measurement, non-response, non-coverage, and selection error). Pew notes that the underestimation may be related to these other sources of error possibly through the question wording, sampling, and the language options used.<sup>45</sup> The Pew researchers conclude that:

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<sup>43</sup> This may be best reflected in the tendency for respondents to report a specific denomination name or family for their religious affiliation in open-ended questions rather than generically using the term Protestant.

<sup>44</sup> “What Proportion of Adult Hispanics Are Catholic? A Review of Survey Data and Methodology” by Paul Perl, Jennifer Z. Greely, and Mark M. Gray in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45 (3): 419-436.

<sup>45</sup> Some of these differences noted by Pew include the availability of bilingual interviewing and the inclusion of the following italicized text in the “Landscape Survey” question wording: “What is your present religion, *if any*, Are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox such as Greek or Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, *atheist, agnostic*, something else, or *nothing in particular*?”

*“This means the Landscape Survey underestimates the proportion of Latinos who are Catholic. By extension, it may also slightly underestimate the proportion of the U.S. Catholic population that is Latino and marginally underestimate the proportion of the U.S. population that is Catholic”* (p. 43).

The Pew report does not provide estimates for the impact of this underestimation on the measurement of the U.S. adult Catholic population or for the number of those who have left the Catholic faith. This issue results to some degree in the underestimation of the Catholic population *and* the overestimation of the number of those who were raised Catholic but who now consider their religious affiliation to be “nothing in particular.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), the adult population in 2006 was approximately 221.6 million. If one conservatively estimates that 12 percent of these adults self-identifies as Latino or Hispanic and further only 58 percent of these Latinos self-identify as Catholic, as found in the Pew Religious Landscape Survey, then there are an estimated 15.4 million Latino adult Catholics in the United States.<sup>46</sup> If one were to use the 68 percent estimate found in the 2006 survey by the Pew Hispanic Research Center, the estimated number of Latino adult Catholics in the U.S. is nearly 18.1 million. The difference between the 58 percent and 68 percent affiliation among adult Latinos is equivalent to 2.7 million U.S. adults (or 1.2 percent of the total U.S. adult population). To put it in Pew’s comparative terms, the 2.7 million adult Latino Catholics “missed” in the Religious Landscape Survey are equivalent to or larger than all but ten of the specific religious faith groups identified in the Pew study (it is also equivalent to 5 percent of Pew’s estimated size of the adult Catholic population).<sup>47</sup>

Pew researchers also widely note that immigration is an important factor in keeping the percentage of U.S. adults Catholics stable over time. What is not clear from the results reported is the proportion of foreign-born among those who were raised Catholic but who no longer consider themselves Catholic. As other Pew researchers have noted in a previous report, “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion,” a measurable number of Latino Catholics (both foreign- and native-born) do switch faiths. There is no published estimate by Pew for the proportion of the -10.1 percent of the population that is formerly Catholic that is related to immigrants raised Catholic in a Latin American country, where the religious marketplace is not nearly as competitive, but who adopt a new faith upon immigrating to the United States.<sup>48</sup> It is possible that immigration may not only be an important component

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<sup>46</sup> Census estimates for the Latino/Hispanic percentage of the total U.S. population, including children, are greater than 14 percent. Pew’s unweighted survey results indicate 9 percent of the U.S. adult population self-identifies as Catholic but after weighting this increases to 12.1 percent compared to the 12.4 percent in the U.S. adult population that is estimated to self identify as Latino/Hispanic.

<sup>47</sup> See page 24 of the Pew report. These are: Catholic (23.9%), Baptist (17.2%), Methodist (6.2%), Lutheran (4.6%), Pentecostal (4.4%), Presbyterian (2.7%), Restorationist (2.1%), Mormon (1.7%), Jewish (1.7), Episcopalian/Anglican (1.5%). These exclude the more non-specific classifications that are larger than 1.5%: “Nondenominational” Protestants (4.5%), “Protestant, nonspecific (4.9%), as well as non-believer or questioner groups such as Atheists (1.6%), and Agnostics (2.4%).

<sup>48</sup> CARA inquired about these results after the release of the Pew report. An emailed response on April 22, 2008 to CARA from Luis Lugo, Director of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, indicated the following “Immigrants are included in our estimates of religious change. We do find that immigrants who were raised Catholic are somewhat more likely to still be Catholic as compared to native-born adults who were raised Catholic, though the differences are not huge.”

in explaining the stability of the Catholic faith in the United States, but also in understanding its losses.

In many regards, most of Pew’s Catholic results are consistent with recent findings of CARA’s national random-sample telephone polls.<sup>49</sup> For example, in the 2003 CARA Catholic Poll (CCP), 22.9 percent of the U.S adult population self-identified as Catholic (compared to 23.9 percent in the Pew study). CARA estimates that 20.9 percent of U.S. adults said they were raised Catholic (compared to 21.3 percent in the Pew study) and 2.0 percent converted to Catholicism as an adult (compared to 2.6 percent in the Pew study).

<b>Comparing Poll Results:<sup>*</sup></b>		
<b>Catholicism and Other Religious Affiliations in the U.S. Adult Population</b>		
	<b>CARA 2003</b>	<b>Pew 2007</b>
<b>Adult Catholics</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>23.9%</b>
-Raised Catholic	20.9	21.3
-Adult converts to Catholicism	2.0	2.6
<b>Adult “Other religion”</b>	<b>58.2%</b>	<b>59.2%</b>
-Other religion, raised Catholic	4.2	5.7
<b>Adult “No religion”</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>
-No religion, raised Catholic	3.7	4.4
<b>Don’t know/Refused</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
-Don’t know/Refused, raised Catholic	0.2	-- **
	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Raised Catholic, but no longer Catholic:	-8.1%	-10.1%
Catholic Retention Rate:	72%	68%
Latinos identifying as Catholic:	64%	58%
<p><sup>*</sup> CARA’s interviews for CCP 2003 were conducted in English and Spanish (margin of sampling error: ±1.6 percentage points). Pew’s interviews were conducted in English or Spanish (margin of sampling error: ±0.6 percentage points). All results were produced with the use of post-stratification weights.</p> <p><sup>**</sup> The Pew report of findings for combines “don’t know” with “other religion”</p>		

However, a slight difference between the polls is in the estimated size of the population that is formerly Catholic. CARA estimates that 8.1 percent of the U.S. population was raised Catholic but no longer identify as such, compared to 10.1 percent in the Pew study.<sup>50</sup> The

<sup>49</sup> Since 2000, CARA has conducted 19 national random sample surveys of adult Catholics including more than 21,000 respondents.

<sup>50</sup> In a 2001 CARA survey, CCP 2001, CARA estimated the number of persons raised Catholic who no longer identifies as such to be 6.2 percent of the U.S. population among those ages 14 and older. This study’s smaller

CARA data indicate that 4.2 percent of the U.S. adult population was raised Catholic and have now converted to another religion (compared to 5.7 percent in the Pew study).<sup>51</sup> CARA estimates a retention rate among Catholics of 72 percent. This may be similar to what Pew would have estimated if the Religious Landscape Survey did not underestimate Catholic affiliation among Latinos.

One aspect that was not addressed in the Pew study was *when* former Catholics stopped considering themselves to be Catholic. Social scientists have long understood that some of those who no longer consider themselves to be a member of the faith in which they were raised, especially those who currently say they are “unaffiliated,” will return to that faith later in life.<sup>52</sup> Michelle Dillon and Paul Wink’s recent book, *In the Course of a Lifetime: Tracing Religious Belief, Practice, and Change* (University of California Press, 2007) provides a review of important religious lifecycle patterns. Because the Pew report provides no insight into when a person left his or her faith, some have asserted that these Catholic defections likely occurred relatively recently and may be caused in part by the sex abuse scandal or by a continuing shortage of priests.

CARA’s findings from the 2003 poll, shown in the table on the following page, indicate that a more than half of former Catholics stopped considering themselves Catholic before 1988 (54 percent). Respondents had a tendency to cluster responses to this open-ended question, “About how many years ago did you stop thinking of yourself as Catholic?” in round numbers, such as one, five, ten, 15, and 20 years ago rather than intervening years. Overall, 6.9 percent of those who have left the Church did so in 2002 (“last year” or “a year ago”), the year before this poll was conducted (January 2003).<sup>53</sup> Respondents were more likely to say they stopped considering themselves Catholic in five of the last six of these five-year increments (i.e., 7.5 percent in 1992, 7.3 percent in 1987, 9.0 percent in 1982, and 7.1 percent in 1977). Former Catholics were more likely to say they left “30 years ago” than any other response (10.7 percent in 1972). Some 5.1 percent say they stopped considering themselves to be Catholic in 1997, “five years” before the survey being conducted. This is slightly fewer than reported for 2002 (6.9 percent), yet the difference is not statistically significant.

The median age at which former Catholics stopped considering themselves as Catholic is 21. This median age is consistent with research that indicates that these religious changes may

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estimate of Catholics leaving the faith is to be expected given the presence of respondents age 14 to 17 in the sample. It is not possible to select out former Catholics who were between the ages of 14 and 17 as they were not asked the age question. Respondents were selected within households by the instruction, “May I please speak with the person in your household who is at least 14 years old who most recently celebrated his or her birthday.” In a 2001 study, American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), the number of persons raised Catholic who no longer identifies as such was estimated to be 4.6 percent of the U.S. adult population. This estimate, even lower than the results of CARA or Pew’s surveys, may be a result of this survey being limited to English language interviewing only.

<sup>51</sup> Also, CARA estimates that 3.7 percent of U.S. adults who were raised Catholic no longer affiliate with any religious faith (compared to 4.4 percent in the Pew study).

<sup>52</sup> The authors of the Pew study note, “Nor do they [the study results] include people who changed religious affiliation at some point in their lives but then returned to their childhood affiliation” (page 22).

<sup>53</sup> Respondents could also say they left “this year” which would have been 2003. Interviews were conducted in January 2003. Any such responses are included in the totals for 2002 given that no estimate for 2003 could be made on the basis of a few weeks.

often coincide with the young adult stage of life where separation from family, relocation, increased mobility, and marriage are common.<sup>54</sup>

<i>About how many years ago did you stop thinking of yourself as Catholic?</i>	
Respondents who were raised Catholic but who did not identify as Catholic in January 2003	
	<b>Percentage of all those who have left the Catholic Church</b>
2002; “last year” or ”a year ago”	6.9%
1998 to 2000	7.1
1997; “five years ago”	5.1
1993 to 1996	6.5
1992; “ten years ago”	7.5
1988 to 1991	4.8
1987 “fifteen years ago”	7.3
1983 to 1986	4.0
1982 “twenty years ago”	9.0
Prior to 1982	33.9
Don’t know	1.1
Refused	<u>6.8</u>
	100.0%

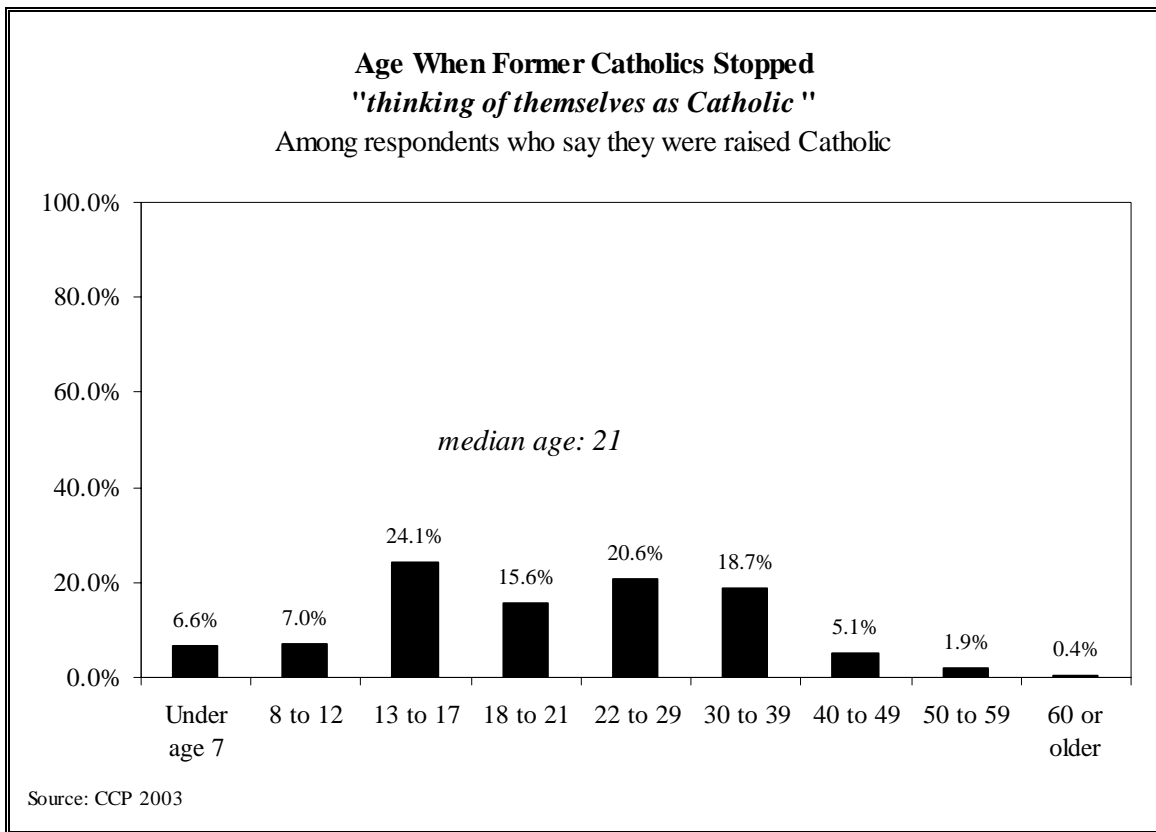
Source: CARA’s CCP 2003  
 Note: Responses of number of “years ago” are recoded to reflect calendar years.

As shown in the figure on the following page, 38 percent of those who said they were raised Catholic and later left the faith said they stopped considering themselves to be Catholic *before* reaching the age of 18 and 6.6 percent said they did so before even reaching the age of 7, which is often used as the standard within the Catholic Church for the age of reason/discretion. Only 13.6 percent of former Catholics say they stopped considering themselves to be Catholic after the age of 35.

Recalculating CARA’s estimate for the size of the population that was raised Catholic but who no longer identify as such using a standard that one must have reached the age of 16 as

<sup>54</sup> Respondents were not asked directly about the age at which they stopped considering themselves to be Catholic. Instead, this is calculated using the number of years ago they stopped considering themselves as such and the respondent’s self-reported age/birth year. The median age for having left the Catholic faith has increased by decade from 17 from 1953 to 1962, to 22 from 1973 to 1982, and 26 from 1993 to 2002. These increases may be related to young adults waiting longer to marry. It is also possible that some of those identified as leaving the Catholic faith as a child accurately reported the number of years ago they stopped considering themselves to be Catholic but then also under-reported their age.

Catholic to be considered having been “raised Catholic,” the percentage of the U.S. population made up of former Catholics is 6.1 percent rather than 8.1 percent, resulting in a 77 percent retention rate for those who self-identified as Catholic at age 16 or older in CARA’s 2003 poll.



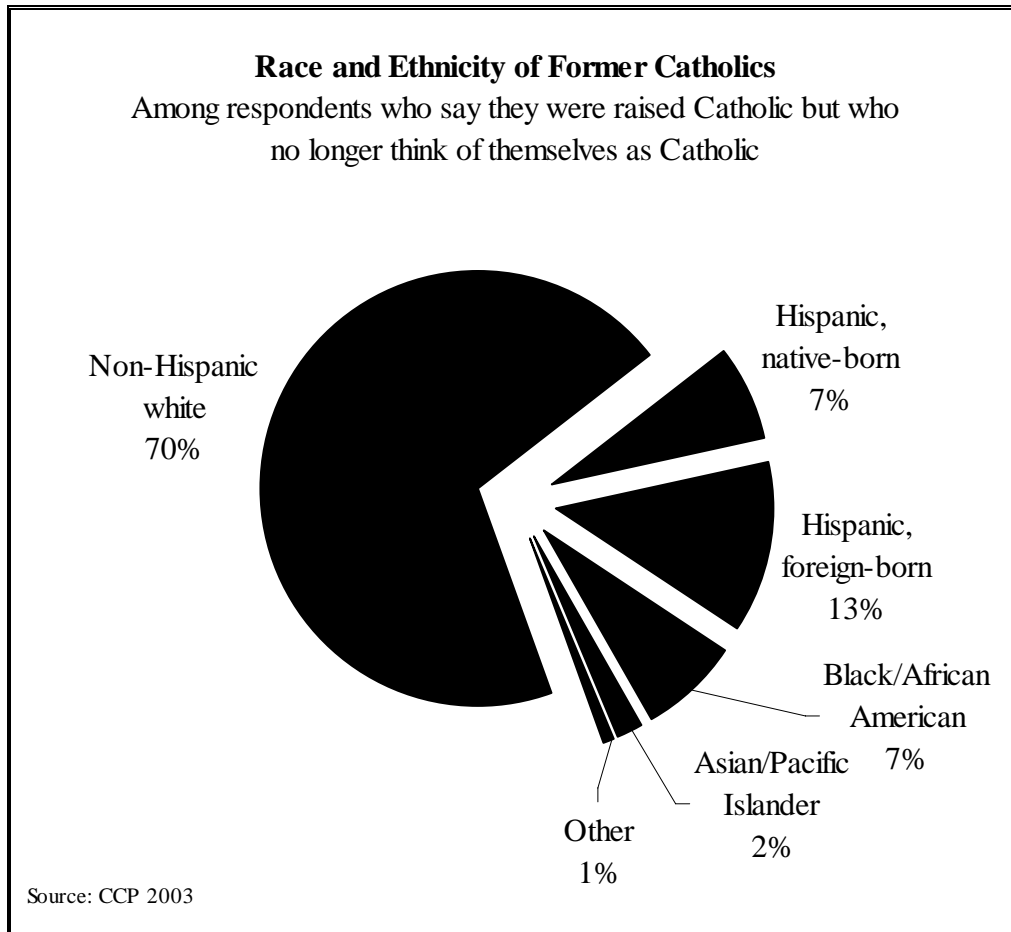
As shown in the figure on the following page, seven in ten former Catholics self-identify their ethnicity as non-Hispanic and their race as white. Two in ten former Catholics self-identify as Hispanic or Latino—7 percent native-born and 13 percent foreign-born. Seven percent self-identify as Black or African American, 2 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1 percent as some other race or ethnicity.

As noted above, most former Catholics left many years ago when the demography of the Catholic Church was quite different. The race and ethnicity of former Catholics generally reflects the race and ethnicity of Catholics during the last several decades. Thus, it cannot be said that those who have left are either disproportionately Hispanic or disproportionately non-Hispanic white.

In recent decades, through the combined forces of generational change (mortality and fertility) as well as immigration, the racial and ethnic make-up of the Church has shifted. At the time of CARA’s 2003 poll, 82 percent of Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics (born before 1943) self-identified as non-Hispanic white. By comparison, 77 percent of the Vatican II Generation (born 1943 to 1960) self-identified as non-Hispanic white and only half of the Post-Vatican II Generation (born after 1960) indicated this racial and ethnic identity. Each year the adult



Catholic population becomes more diverse as some in the oldest generation pass on and younger Catholics come of age.<sup>55</sup>



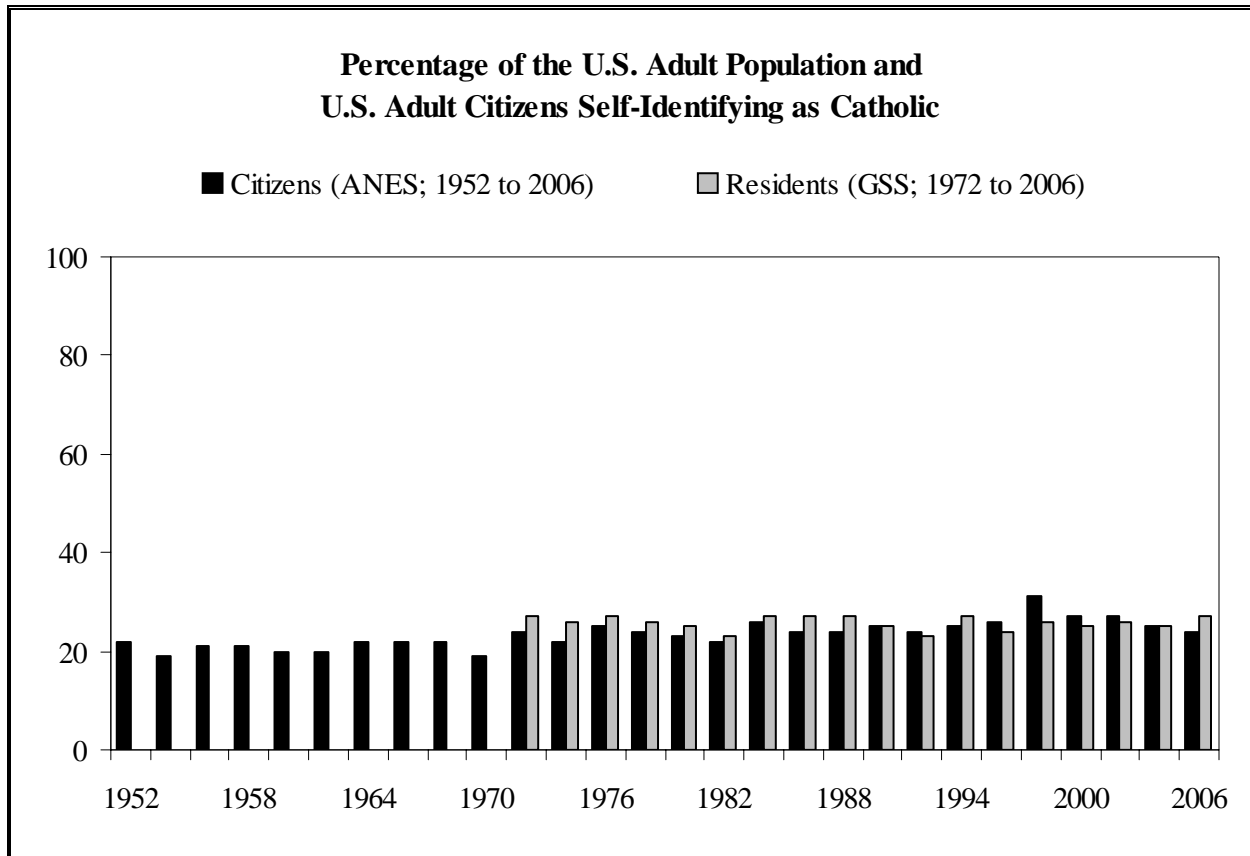
Pew researchers reference the stability of the percentage of U.S. adults self-identifying as Catholic in the General Social Survey (GSS) since 1972. About a quarter of the population typically self-identifies as Catholic in this national survey of U.S. residents. Because many immigrants are Catholic, Pew researchers make the assumption that this trend could only remain stable if native-born Catholics are leaving the faith in great numbers.

However, as shown in the figure on the following page, another widely used academic survey, the American National Election Study (ANES), indicates there has also been great stability in the percentage of U.S. *citizens* self-identifying as Catholic all the way back to 1952.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> According to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB), the total fertility rate, the average number of children per woman, is the highest in the United States for Hispanics (nearly 3 children per woman) while the fertility rate for non-Hispanic whites is below “replacement” (less than 2 children per woman) the level needed for parents to replace themselves in the population. When many people in a specific population have smaller families, population loss occurs and this can happen rapidly when fertility rates fall below replacement. Through a combination of immigration, higher fertility rates, and generational replacement the number of Hispanic Catholics has grown while the non-Hispanic white Catholic population has declined in number.

<sup>56</sup> The highest ANES estimate for Catholic affiliation among citizens is 31 percent in 1998. However, this coincides with the lowest Protestant affiliation estimate (51 percent) as well and appears to be an outlier result.

About a quarter of U.S. adult citizens self-identify as Catholic, similar to the percentage identifying as such in the general population.<sup>57</sup>



In summary, there is no reason to believe that there has been some recent mass exodus from the Catholic faith nor are those who have left disproportionately among any specific racial, ethnic, or citizenship group. Retention rates are the most valid measurements of the magnitude of religious change. The absolute numbers of members lost, given the different sizes of U.S. faith groups, is less meaningful. Without this context, the Pew study may have left the impression that a vast number of Catholics recently got up and left the faith and that these losses were worse than those experienced by any other faith. In relative terms—as the percentage of those who retained the affiliation of their childhood—the Catholic Church has been among the most successful faiths in the United States. The changes that have occurred in the Catholic population have been incremental and have occurred most often among young adults and teen Catholics. These demographics should be a primary area of future study and would be a good focus of efforts to reduce future losses among the Catholic faithful.

<sup>57</sup> Immigrants are among the most difficult sub-groups to survey in the U.S. population, especially those who have immigrated without legal status. They are generally more reluctant than other potential respondents to be interviewed by survey researchers and are also less likely to be reached by a landline phone and may be unable to answer a survey if the appropriate language options are not available to them. These issues are known to create undercounts of immigrants in surveys and even in the U.S. Census. It is not unreasonable to assume, given the results of the ANES, that the Catholics “missing” from the GSS trend are more likely to be recent immigrant Catholics rather than native-born Catholics who have left the Church. It is also reasonable to assume that the percentage of the U.S resident population that is Catholic is generally underestimated in surveys.