

## 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?***

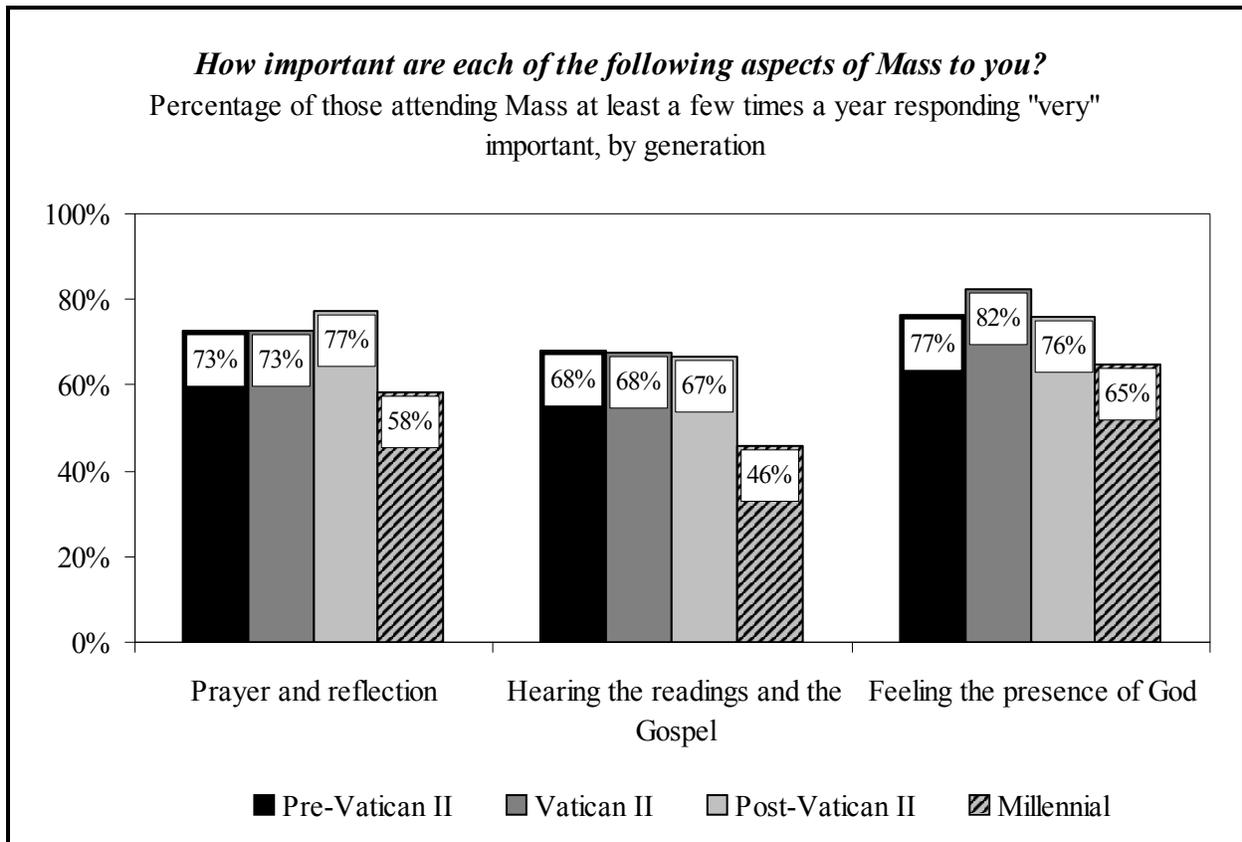
Respondents who attend Mass at least a few times a year responding “Somewhat” or “Very” important

	<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.

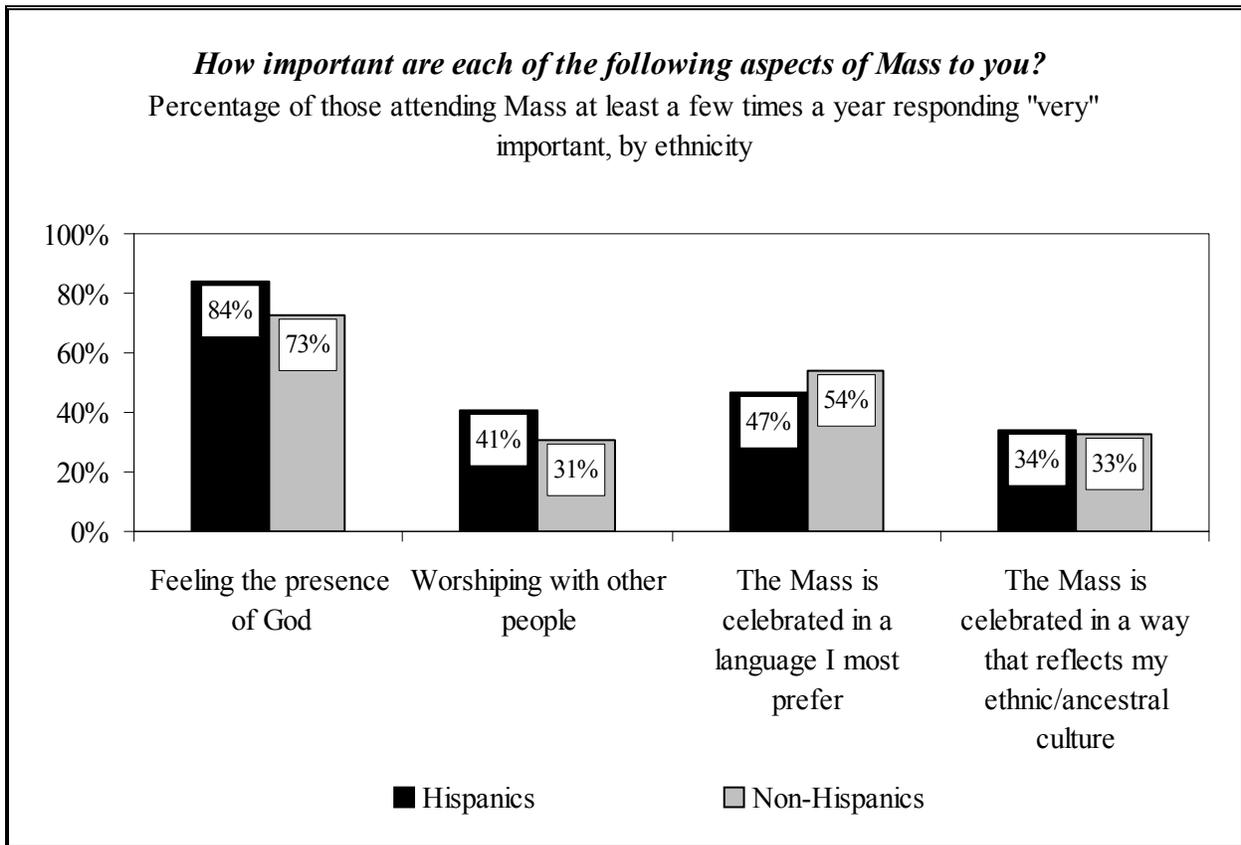


**Differences by Gender**

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.

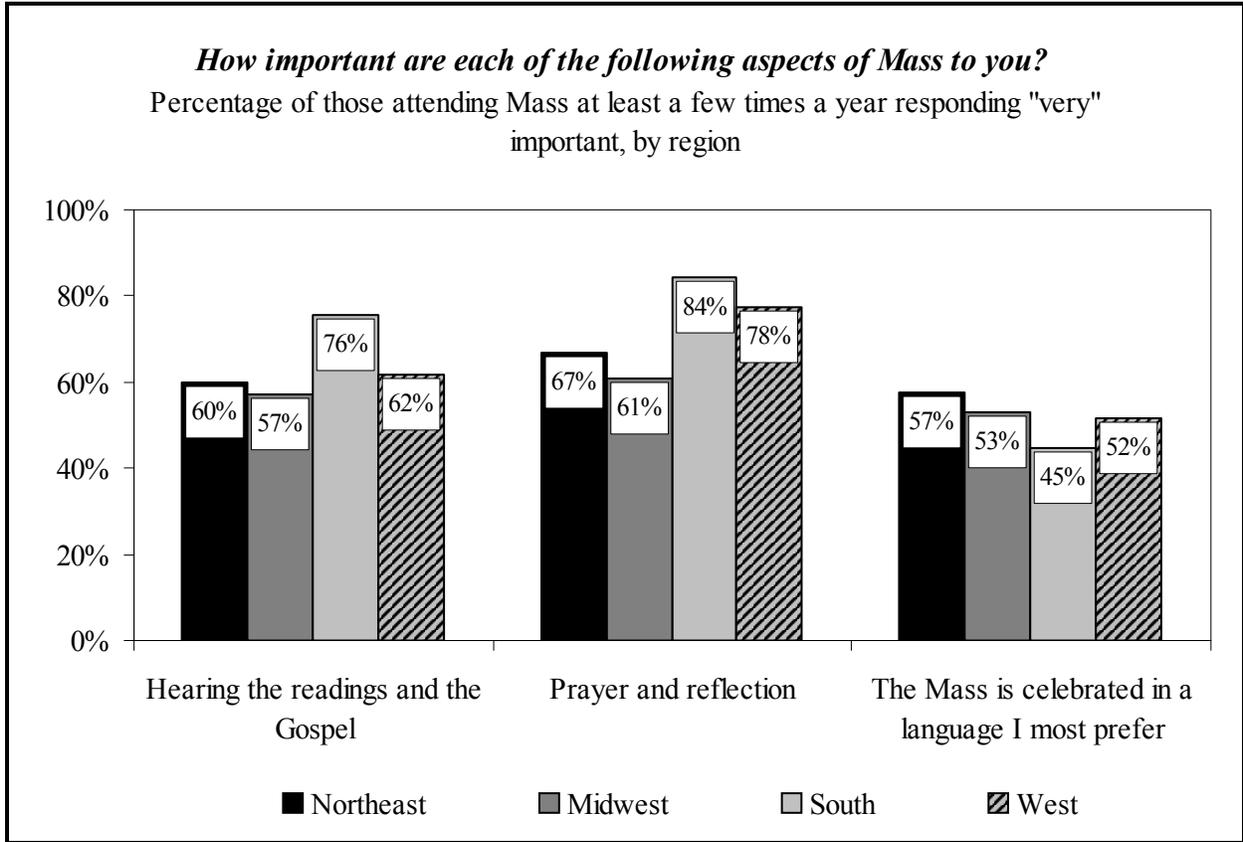


**Differences by Education**

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***

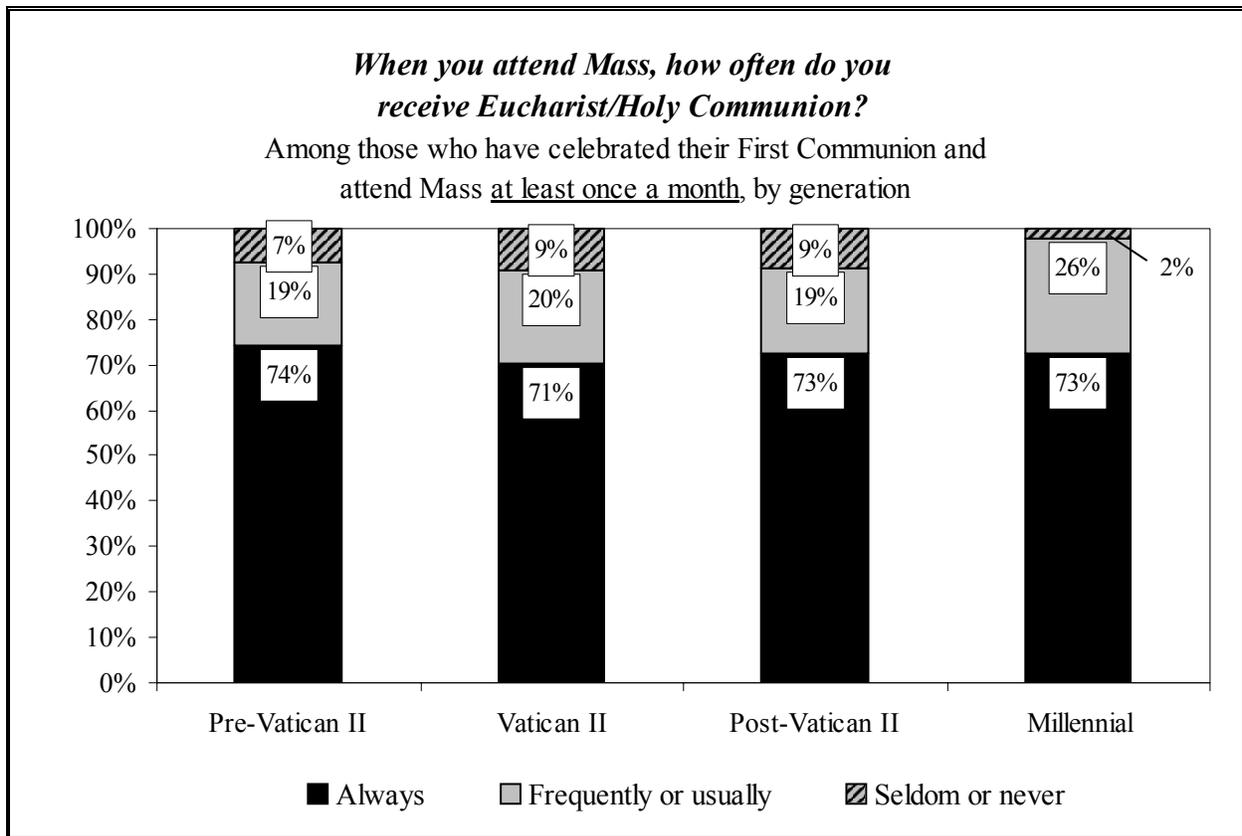
The less often a respondent attends Mass, the less likely they are to say they receive the Eucharist at Mass. Eight in ten weekly Mass attendees who have celebrated their First Communion “always” receive the Eucharist at Mass. Two-thirds of those attending at least once a month but less than weekly (66 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>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	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

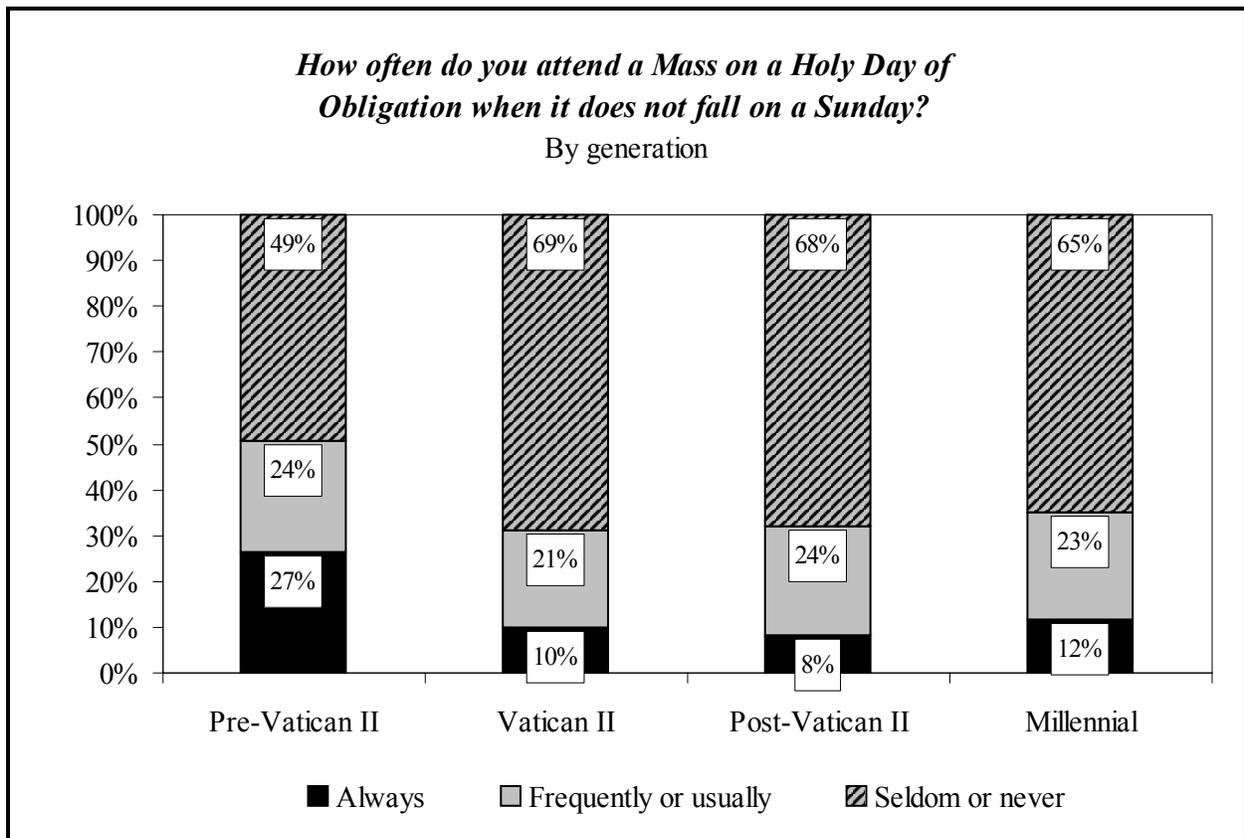
these Holy Days of Obligation compared to 34 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic educational institution.

***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

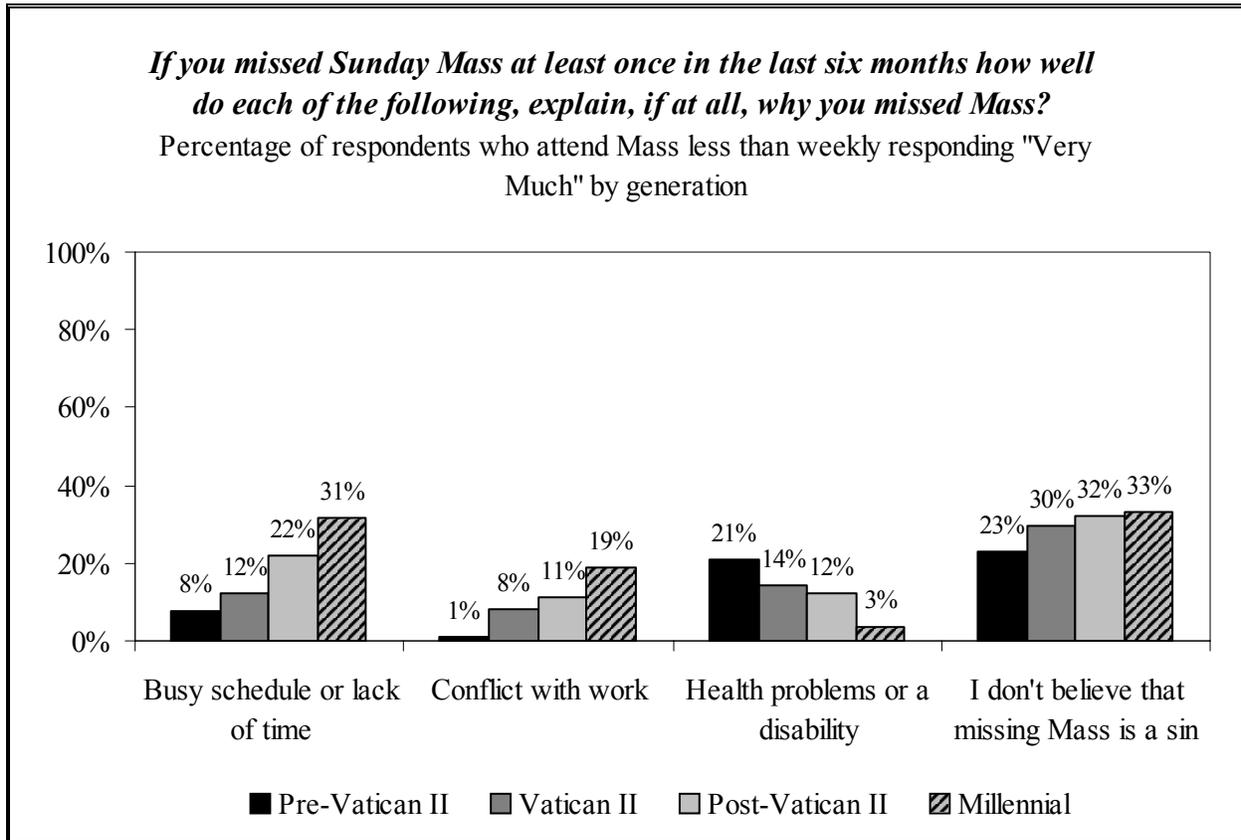
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>	
	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Busy schedule or lack of time	51%	41%
Family responsibilities	48	31
Health problems or a disability	41	21
I don’t believe that missing Mass is a sin	38	64
Conflict with work	26	16
Inconvenient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

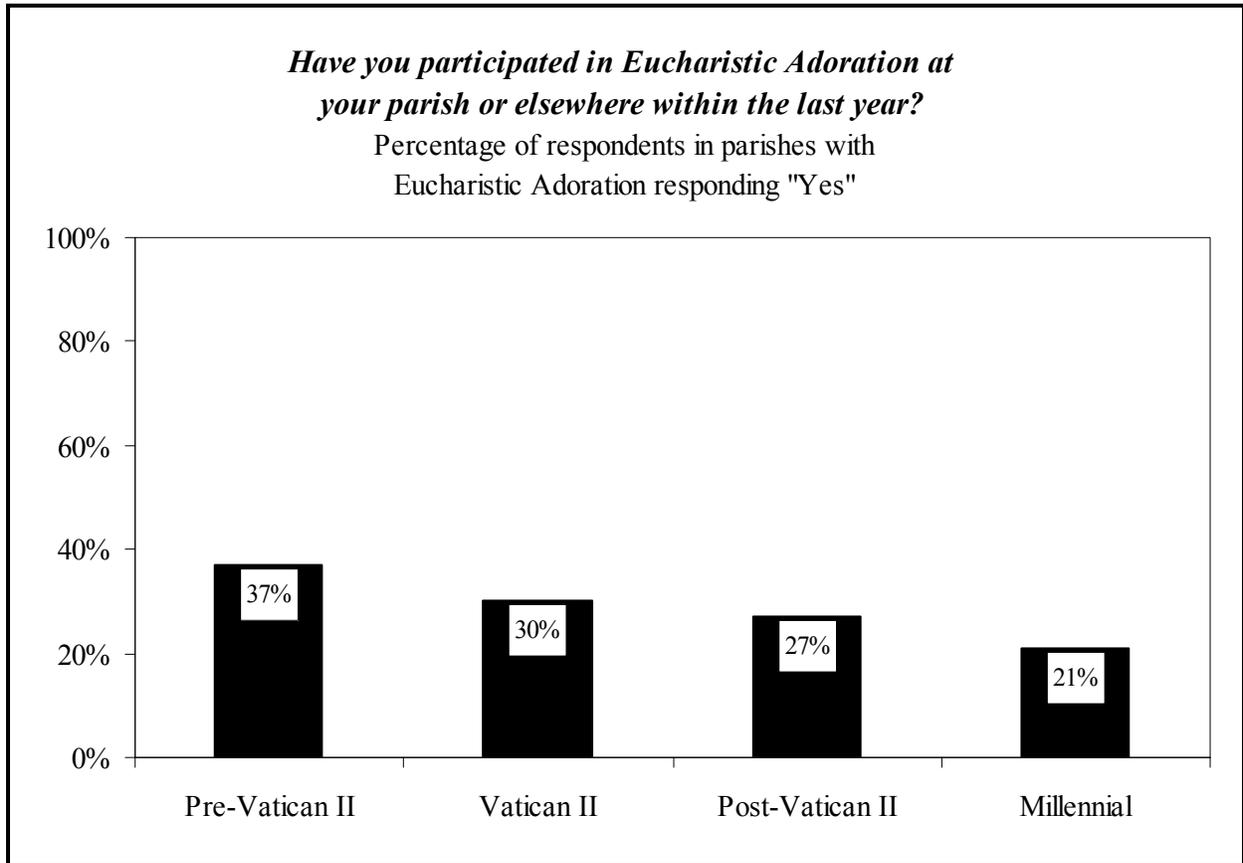
<b><i>Have you participated in Eucharistic Adoration at your parish or elsewhere within the last year?</i></b>			
Respondents whose parishes offer opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration			
<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>			
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A 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).

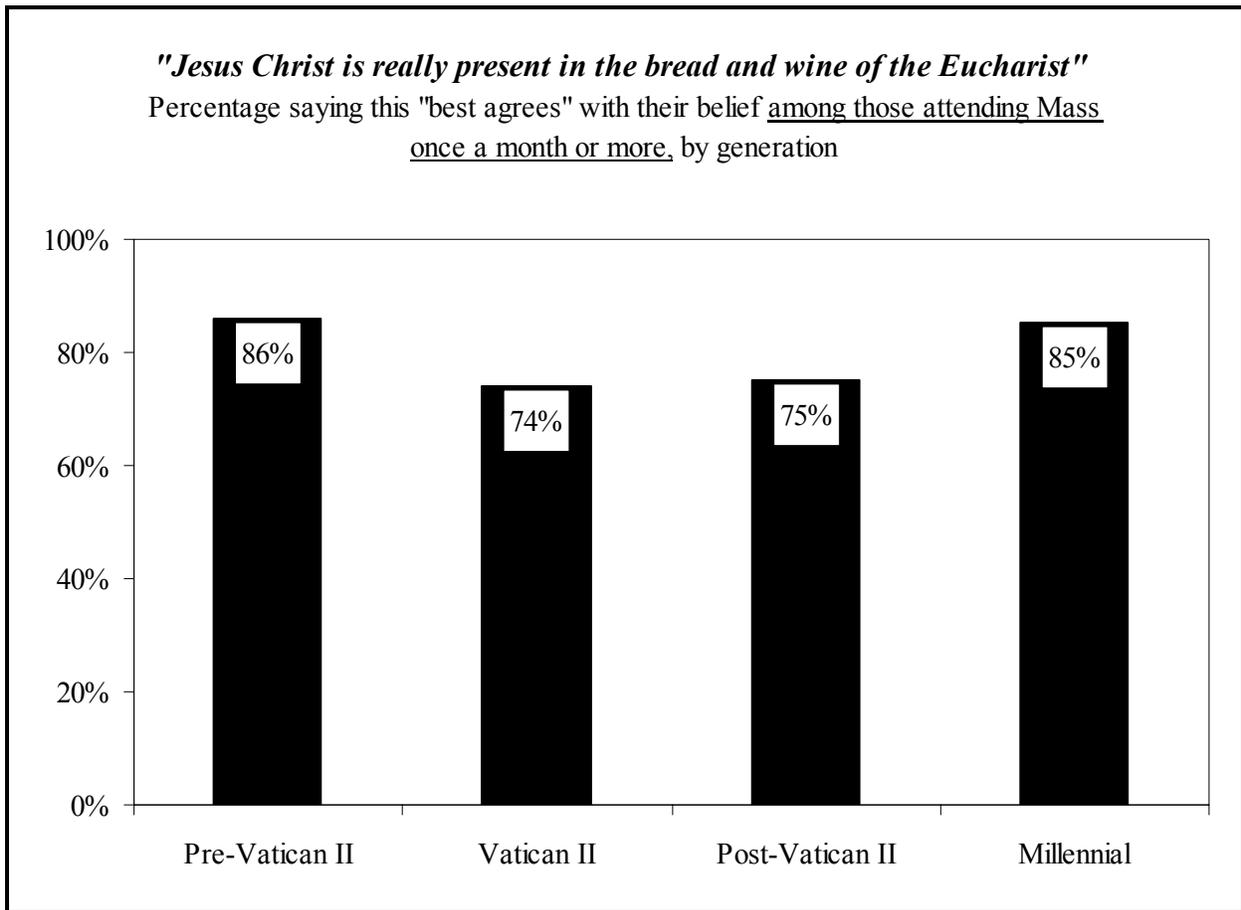
<b><i>Which of the following statements best agrees with your belief about the Eucharist/Holy Communion?</i></b>			
	<b><i>By Mass Attendance</i></b>		
	<b>Weekly or more</b>	<b>Less than weekly but at least once a month</b>	<b>A few times a year or less</b>
Jesus Christ is really present in the bread 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).

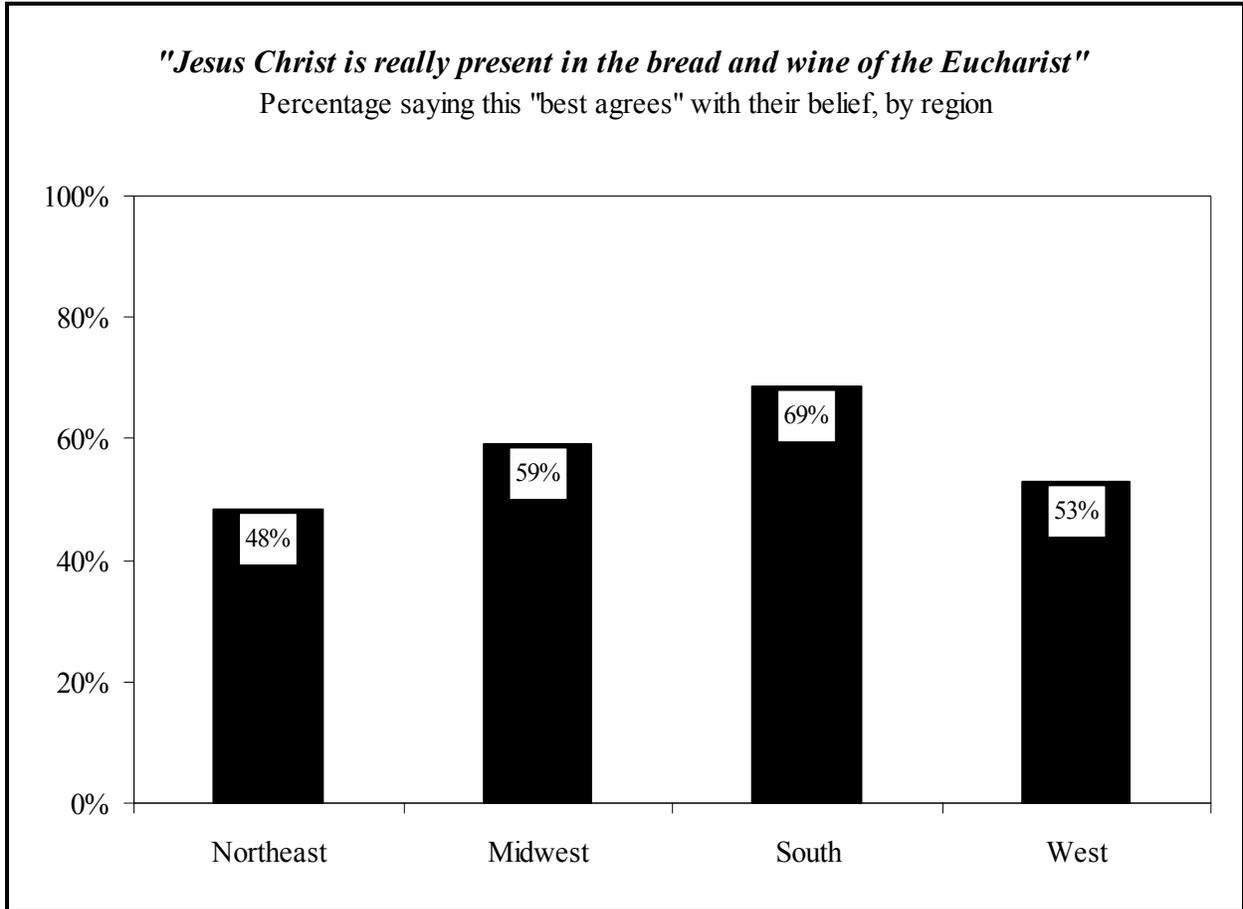
Among Catholics attending Mass at least once a month, Millennial Generation Catholics are just as likely as Pre-Vatican II Catholics to agree that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist (85 percent compared to 86 percent). Vatican II and Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics are about 10 percentage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