



# *Special Report: Parish Life Today*

## *About CARA*

CARA is a national, non-profit, Georgetown University affiliated research center that conducts social scientific studies about the Catholic Church. Founded in 1964, 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
- to advance scholarly research on religion, particularly Catholicism

CARA has more than 45 years of experience in quality social science research on the Catholic Church including a range of research and consulting services for dioceses, parishes, religious communities and institutes, and other Catholic organizations. 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.

## **Overview**

The Catholic population in the United States has changed dramatically in the last 50 years and parish life is transforming as well. The Church is becoming more ethnically and racially diverse, traditional centers of Catholic population are shifting, and the people in the pews have different expectations. These changes, coupled with a decrease in Mass attendance, are evident in many American parishes. What are the characteristics of parish life in the United States today?

To gauge the attitudes of people in the pews, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University presents this special report of findings based on national surveys of random samples of adult Catholics in the United States, surveys of Catholics in more than 750 parishes, and other CARA research.

*Special Report: Parish Life Today* provides a rich portrait of parish life across the United States in a variety of contexts from the small, established, rural parishes of the Midwest to the newer, larger, suburban parishes of the Southwest. This portrait provides a means for comparison for any parishioner or pastor to better understand the life of their parish in the context of a national portrait.

The report focuses on seven areas of parish life: worship, community, leadership, formation, social justice, evangelization, and stewardship.

## About PASS

CARA regularly conducts parish surveys through the Pastoral Assistance Surveys and Services (PASS). PASS is a series of dynamic survey instruments for pastoral planning, including survey data collection, analyses of key stakeholders and demographic groups, and user-friendly reports and products. PASS is designed for use by Catholic institutions, including parishes, dioceses, schools, and other ministry groups. With a bank of nationally tested questions developed over the past 15 years, PASS is robust enough to be used by the largest archdioceses, but flexible enough to be valuable to the smallest of parishes.

From the aggregate data collected through PASS over the past 15 years, CARA has a database of characteristics of parish life gathered from more than 750 parishes nationwide. While this database is not a random sample of parishes, and therefore not necessarily representative of all parishes nationwide, it is the most comprehensive source of data of its kind and covers a broad range of topics important to vibrant parish life. These topics are also able to be compared to findings from CARA's nationally representative surveys of adult self-identified Catholics conducted since 2000.

## Areas of Parish Life

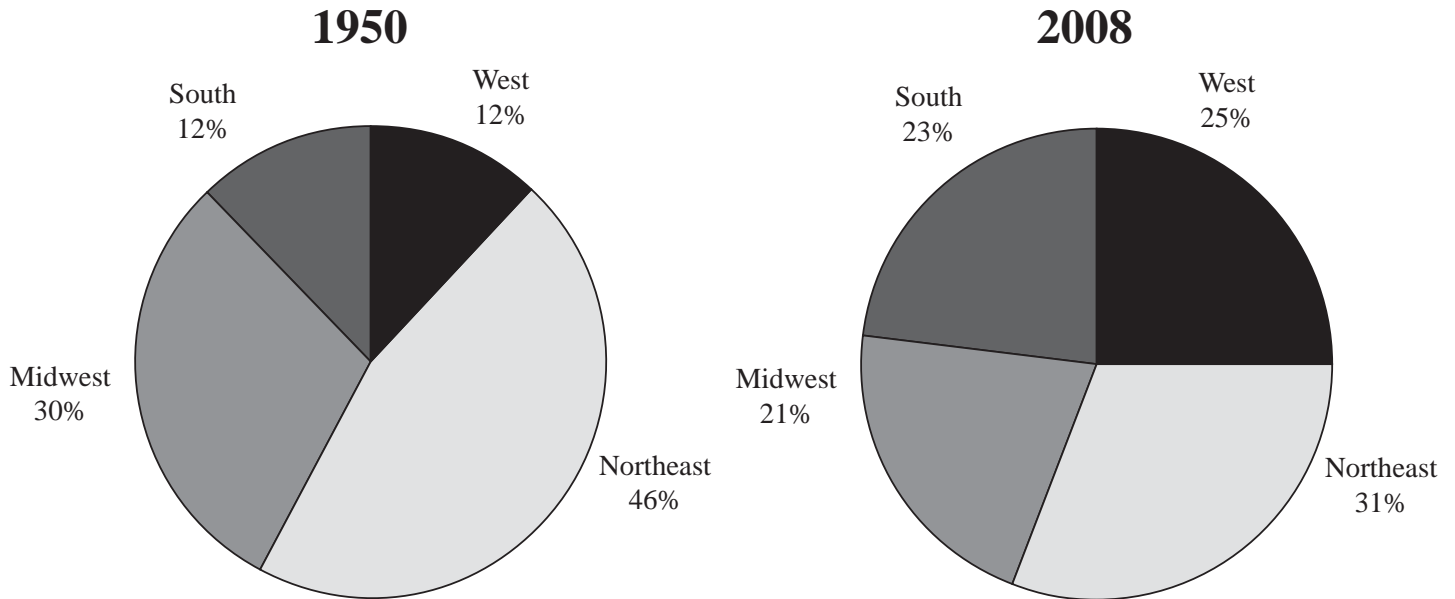
CARA organizes its research for parishes across seven areas of parish life. These seven areas provide a framework within which parish data can be collected and analyzed. They include:

1. **Worship:** This area of parish life relates specifically to the expression of the sacramental and prayer life of parishioners at Sunday liturgies and other ritual forms of sacred celebration in parish life.
2. **Community:** The sense of community within a parish includes the sense of belonging at the parish and how it welcomes people in a friendly, inclusive way. Community, then, has an internal focus.
3. **Leadership:** Leadership includes the leadership of the pastor, pastoral staff, parish council, and key organizations. The organizational structure of the parish and related organizations or activities are also included here.
4. **Formation:** This area includes all aspects of parish life involving explaining, informing, and forming parishioners of all ages in Scripture, Church teaching, and the traditions of the Church. This also includes religious education programs at the parish and school as well as sacramental preparation and adult faith formation programs.
5. **Social justice:** Social justice and social action include all parish work directed at advancing social concerns in the community, nation, and wider world. This area of parish life has an external focus.
6. **Evangelization:** This area of parish life includes all efforts to witness to the Gospel beyond the parish worship community. It focuses especially upon reaching out to the unchurched and non-practicing Catholics. Evangelization has an external focus.
7. **Stewardship:** Stewardship involves challenging parishioners to share their time, talent, and treasure with the parish and the wider community.

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## Geographic Distribution of Catholic Population

The Catholic population in the United States has shifted dramatically in the past 50 years. Catholic immigrants to the United States had originally settled mostly in the Northeast and Midwest. Consequently, many institutions of American Catholic life were also concentrated in these regions, including Catholic primary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions, Catholic health care, and Catholic parishes.



Fifty years later, however, the Catholic population is much more evenly distributed throughout the United States. The greatest growth in the Catholic population since 1950 has been in the West and the South. The box below shows the distribution of parishes geographically. Notice that while the distribution of the Catholic population is almost evenly split geographically, the Midwest and Northeast continue to have the highest concentration of parishes regionally.

### Geographic Distribution of Catholic Parishes

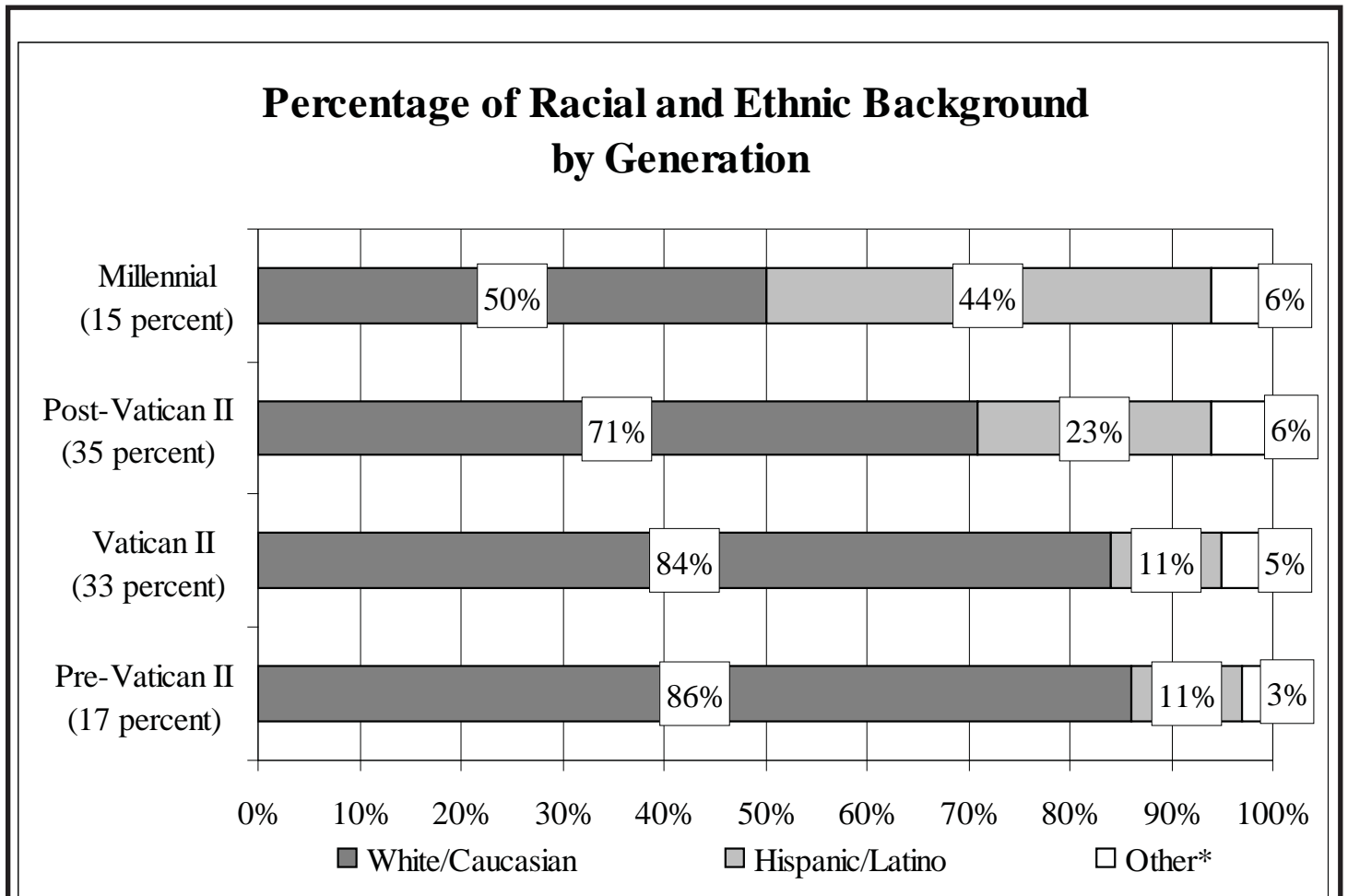
According to CARA's National Parish Inventory (NPI), parishes nationally are still concentrated in the Midwest (36 percent) and Northeast (29 percent), although many of them are merging or closing as the population shifts.

Geographic Region	Percentage Nationally	Percentage of PASS Parishes
Northeast	29%	22%
Midwest	36	6
South	12	16
West	23	56

## Racial and Ethnic Shifts

The Catholic Church in the United States is also experiencing an increase in racial and ethnic diversity, especially among the youngest generations. CARA uses four generational categories: Pre-Vatican II (those born in 1942 or earlier), Vatican II (those born between 1943 and 1960), Post-Vatican II (those born between 1961 and 1981), and Millennials (those born since 1982). Half of all adult Catholics in the United States today have been born since 1961.

Pre-Vatican II and Vatican II Catholics are primarily non-Hispanic white. Post-Vatican II Catholics are more diverse – close to a quarter are Hispanic/Latino(a). Millennial Catholics are the most diverse, with half of this generation being non-Hispanic white and half belonging to a minority group.



\*Includes Black/African American, American Indian, and Asian or Pacific Islander

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## Worship

This section examines parishioner evaluations of worship and prayer life at parishes. Worship, in this context, includes the liturgical aspects of parish life, such as homilies, lectoring, distributing communion, and the art and environment of worship. It also includes the fostering of individual spiritual growth through personal prayer, retreats, and private devotions as well as the sacramental and prayer life of parishioners at Sunday liturgies.

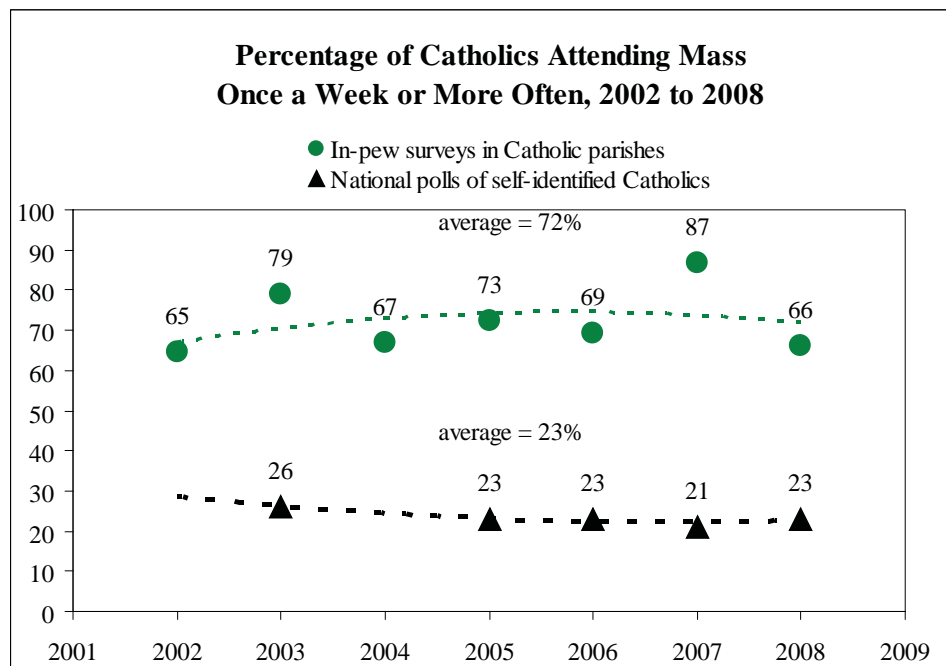
Many express concern about reports that the frequency of Catholics attending Mass has been declining in recent years. CARA's national random polls of adult Catholics also show evidence of this trend. The PASS database is composed of surveys that were distributed to parishioners during

Mass and, therefore, the respondents are far more likely to be regular Mass attenders, registered in the parish, and more regular participants in the sacramental life of the parish. They are in a better position to evaluate aspects of worship and prayer at parishes because they are more engaged in parish life.

This pattern of higher Mass attendance for those answering the in-pew surveys holds true over time, as well. While on average, seven in ten in-pew respondents attend Mass once a week or more, about one-quarter (23 percent) of adult Catholics nationally attend at the same rate.

<i>Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?</i>		
Percentage responding		
	PASS Database Nationally	Adult Catholics Nationally (2008) <sup>1</sup>
Rarely or never	1%	32%
A few times a year	2	24
Once or twice a month	5	10
Almost every week	21	11
Every week	57	20
More than once a week	14	3

<sup>1</sup>Gray, Mark M., and Paul M. Perl. April 2008. *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics*. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. Georgetown University: Washington, DC



# *Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate*

The reasons people give for missing Mass differ only somewhat between adult Catholics nationally and in-pew respondents. In-pew respondents are more likely to point to a busy schedule or lack of time as the reason for missing Mass (63 percent to 44 percent, respectively), while adult Catholics nationally are more likely than in-pew respondents to believe that missing Mass is not a sin (57 percent to 47 percent, respectively). They are also somewhat more likely than in-pew respondents to say that they miss Mass because they are “not very religious” (42 percent to 31 percent).

Other differences between in-pew respondents and adult Catholics nationally are evident in behaviors and attitudes concerning worship and parish life. Not only are respondents in-pew more likely than adult Catholics nationally to attend Mass weekly, they are also more likely to go to confession at least once a year, to believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and to regularly read their diocesan newspaper.

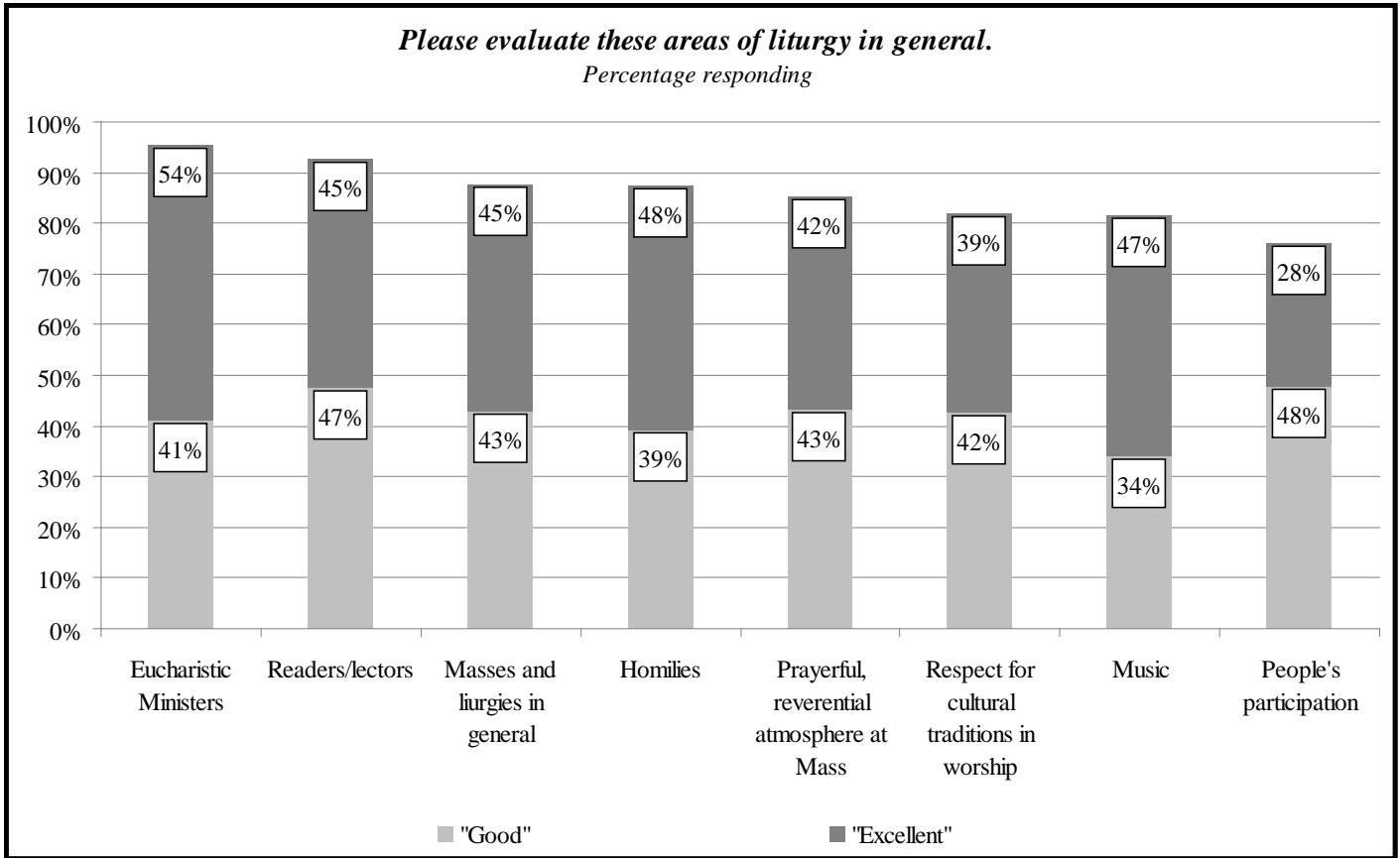
<b>Differences between Adult Catholics in the Pews and Self-identified Adult Catholics in the United States</b>		
	<b>In-pew surveys of adult Catholics, 2001-08</b>	<b>National polls of self-identified adult Catholics, 2005-08</b>
Believes in Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist	98%	57%
Regularly contributes to weekly parish offertory	89	74
Registered with their parish	84	61
Attends Mass once a week or more often	74	23
Regularly read their diocesan newspaper	65	25
Has attended a Catholic school	56	43
Goes to confession at least once a year	44	26
Is a convert to the Catholic faith	17	7

While more than eight in ten in-pew respondents are registered with their parish, about six in ten adult Catholics nationally are registered in a parish. Almost nine in ten in-pew respondents regularly contribute to the weekly parish offertory, while about three-quarters of adult Catholics nationally do so. Catholics responding to in-pew surveys are only slightly more likely than adult Catholics nationally to have attended a Catholic school. However, respondents in-pew are almost 2.5 times more likely to be a convert to the Catholic faith (17 percent of in-pew, compared to 7 percent of adult Catholics nationally).

### *Evaluation of Aspects of Liturgy*

Generally, in-pew respondents are satisfied with their parish liturgies, with close to nine in ten saying that the Masses and liturgies in general are “good” or “excellent.” More than nine in ten say that the Eucharistic Ministers at their parish are “good” or “excellent,” and almost the same number say the readers and lectors at their parish are “good” or “excellent.” Other aspects of the liturgy are rated highly, as well, with more than four in ten giving “excellent” evaluations to homilies, the prayerful, reverential atmosphere, and the music.

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## *Evaluation of Personal Worship and Parish Life*

When asked about parish efforts to foster personal prayer and spiritual growth, eight in ten or more respondents say their parish is doing a “good” or “excellent” job. Almost half (47 percent) rate their parish’s efforts to nurture their relationship with Jesus Christ as “excellent.” Another three in ten rate the parish’s efforts to foster their spiritual growth (34 percent) and personal prayer life (30 percent) as “excellent.”

## **Community**

CARA measures the sense of community among parishioners in two ways in its parish surveys. The sense of community includes both the “feeling” of community, that is, how welcoming the parish is, and how respondents feel about their parish community – and the “action” of community, that is, the respondents’ evaluation of outreach to groups in the parish.

### *Sense of Community*

Nearly all in-pew respondents (90 percent) say that it is “somewhat” or “very” important to be part of a parish community. Likewise, more than half (55 percent) “strongly agree” that the parish community is important in their life. Respondents also point to the feeling of community as something that attracted them to their current parish. More than four in five (86 percent) report being “somewhat” or “very” attracted to their current parish by its open, welcoming spirit. Nine in ten (90 percent) report being “very” attracted to their current parish by the sense of belonging they feel at the parish.

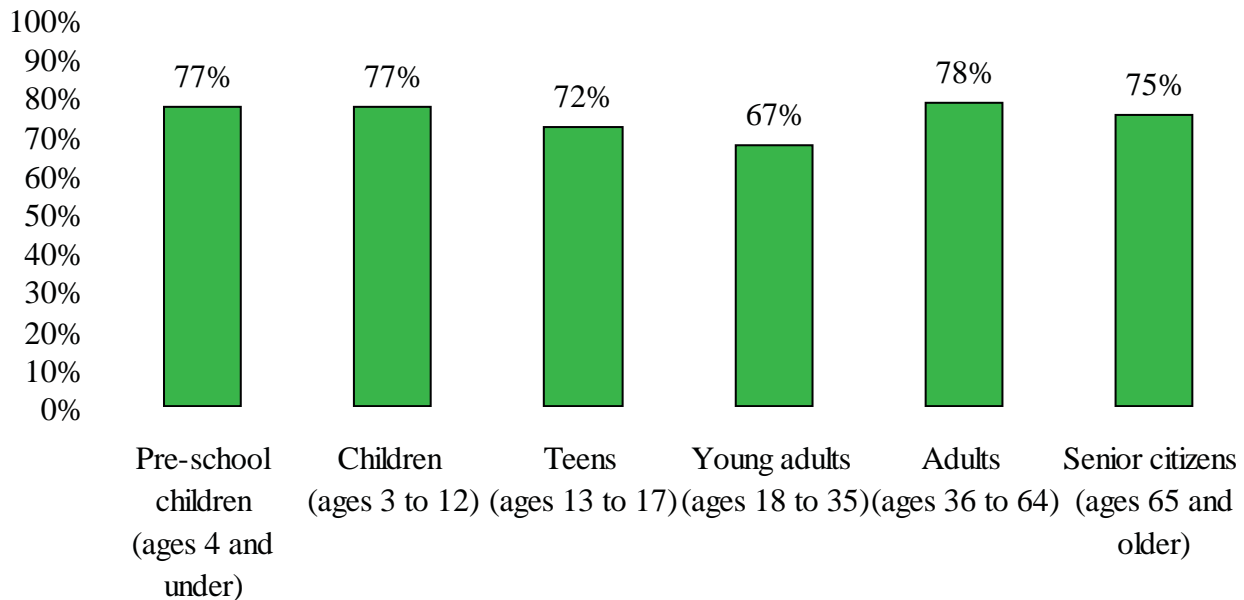
# Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

## Evaluation of Outreach to Parishioners

One way to learn about outreach to parishioners is to ask respondents to evaluate how well the parish reaches out to various age groups. When asked to evaluate parish outreach to different groups of parishioners by age, outreach to adults (ages 36 to 64) is rated as “good” or “excellent” by the most respondents (78 percent). Notice that outreach to younger children – pre-school children and children ages 3 to 12 – is also evaluated highly. However, satisfaction with outreach to teens and young adults is somewhat lower. While 77 percent of respondents evaluate outreach to children under the age of 12 as “good” or “excellent,” the evaluation of outreach to teens (72 percent) and young adults (67 percent) is a little less positive.

### Please evaluate parish outreach to the following...

Percentage responding "good" or "excellent"



### Community and Mass Attendance

Community, or lack of community, is sometimes a reason for missing Mass. One in seven respondents (16 percent) say their infrequent Mass attendance is “somewhat” or “very much” because they feel alienated from the Church. One in five (21 percent) say that their infrequent Mass attendance is “somewhat” or “very much” because the parish is not welcoming enough. However, half of all respondents (49 percent) “strongly agree” that they feel included in parish life.



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## *Evaluation of Outreach to Other Groups*

Parishioners are also regularly asked about parish outreach to other groups within the parish. Most parishioners evaluate outreach to visitors and guests, families in crisis, and the sick and homebound as at least “good.” On average, about three in four say that parish outreach to immigrants, those who are grieving, and those with disabilities is also at least “good.” About a third say their parish outreach to these groups is “excellent.”

On the other hand, parishioners tend to say that parish outreach to other groups is less apparent. For example, parish outreach to new parishioners, to those in financial need, and to gays and lesbians is reported as at least “good” by about two in three respondents. Fewer respondents, however, report that outreach to inactive Catholics, to single parents, and to those with addictions is “good” or “excellent.”

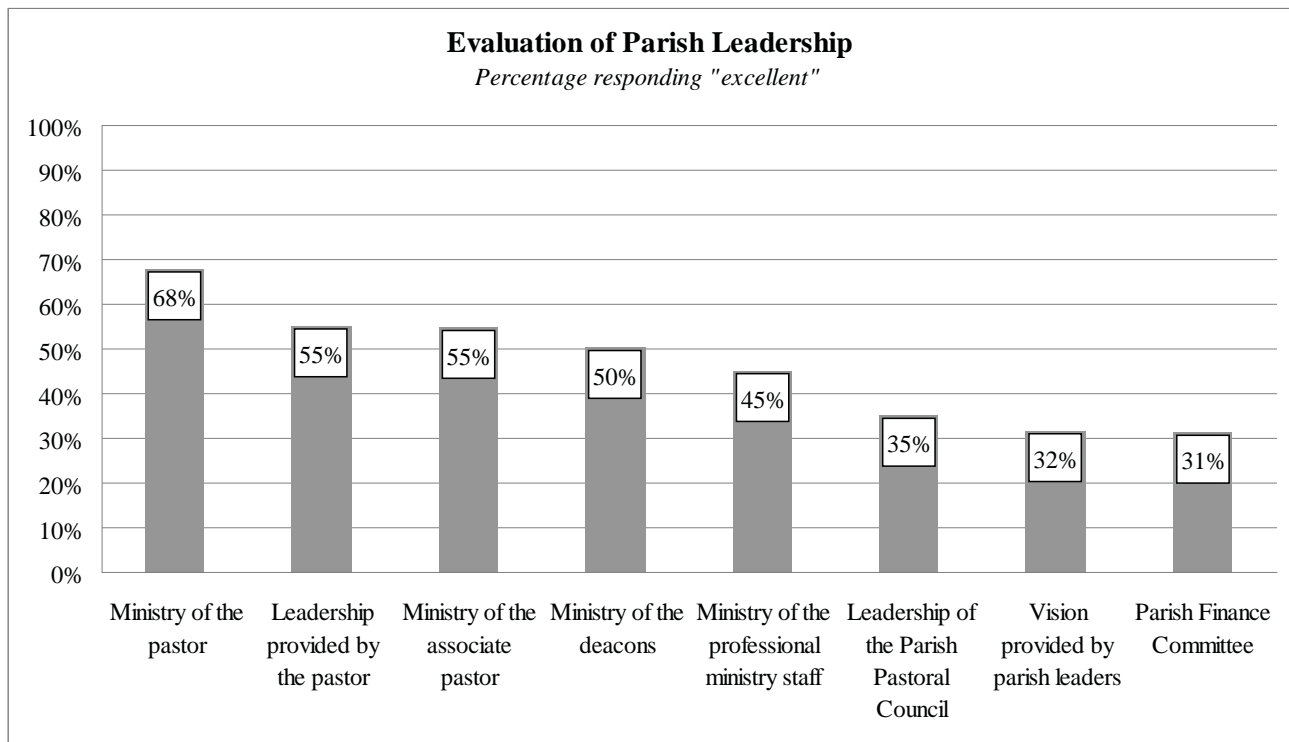
<i>Please evaluate parish outreach to the following...</i>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Excellent”</b>	<b>Combined</b>
Visitors and guests	43%	39%	82%
Families in crisis	39	42	81
Those sick or homebound	42	38	80
Recent immigrants to the area	42	36	78
Those who are grieving	41	31	72
Those with disabilities	40	32	72
New parishioners	41	29	70
Those in financial need	41	28	69
Gays or lesbians	40	28	68
Inactive Catholics	36	19	55
Single parents	35	17	52
Those with addictions	33	15	48

## **Leadership**

A third area evaluated in parish life surveys is the leadership of the parish community, which includes the pastor, pastoral staff, and the parish council. Leadership involves forming a vision for the parish, planning for the future, and evaluating the success of parish efforts. Feedback from these surveys is meant to encourage the parish leadership and provide areas of improvement for those directing the parish.

While two-thirds of respondents say the ministry of their pastor is “excellent,” about half rate the ministry of the associate pastor and the ministry of the deacons as “excellent.” More than half of respondents say the leadership provided by the pastor is “excellent.” In a nationally representative poll of adult Catholics in 2007, about two in five (39 percent) say they are “very” satisfied with the leadership of the pastor.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> CARA Catholic Poll. 2007. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University.



## Faith Formation

Questions on faith formation in the parish – both through formal programs and through other means – give feedback to parish leaders about which programs are well received and which are not, as well as the priorities of the people in the pews as to formation needs. Formation in the parish includes all aspects of parish life involving explaining, informing, and forming parishioners of all ages in Scripture, Church teaching, and the traditions of the Church. This includes religious education programs at both the parish and school (when applicable), as well as Sacramental preparation programs and adult faith formation programs.

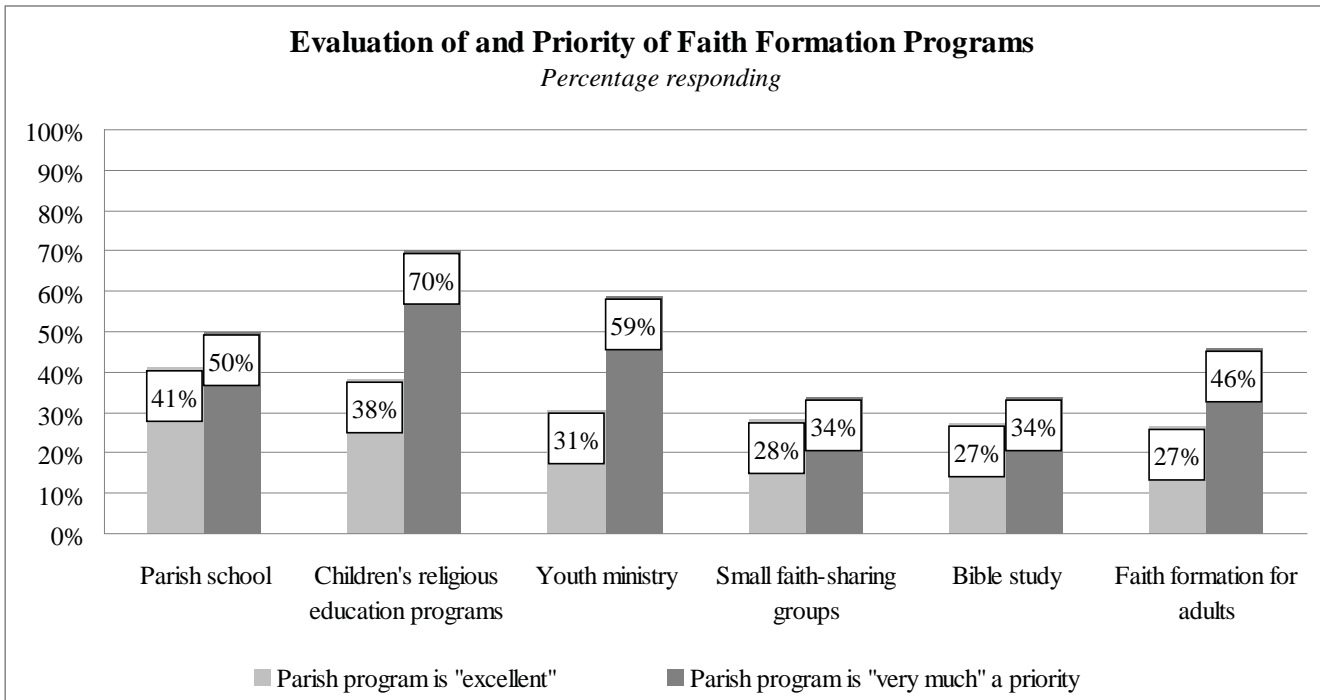
### *Faith Formation Programs*

In-pew respondents see the need for faith formation and place a high priority on that aspect of parish life, but fewer report that their parish does an “excellent” job of providing faith formation. When asked to evaluate the faith formation at their parish, at least one-quarter rate each program as “excellent.” Likewise, at least one-third of respondents say that faith formation programs should be “very much” a priority for the parish.

In parishes that have a school, two in five respondents say their parish school is “excellent,” and half of all respondents say the parish school is “very much” a priority. Seven in ten evaluate that the parish school “somewhat” or “very much” attracted them to the parish. However, although seven in ten name children’s religious education programs as “very much” a priority, just two in five say that their parish’s religious education for children is “excellent.” Three-quarters of respondents say that the children’s religious education programs “somewhat” or “very much” attracted them to the parish.

The same large gap is present for youth ministry: while six in ten say that youth ministry is “very much” a priority, half as many evaluate their parish’s youth ministry as “excellent.” Likewise, while almost half name faith formation for adults as “very much” a priority, only about a quarter say that their parish’s programs for faith formation for adults are “excellent.” However, two-thirds say that the parish’s adult faith formation programs attracted them at least “somewhat” to the parish.

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## *Faith Formation through Parish Life*

Respondents in-pew also report that parish life helps them with their individual faith formation. Nine in ten (91 percent) “somewhat” or “strongly” agree that the parish helps them develop their spiritual life. Similarly, 90 percent “somewhat” or “strongly” agree that the parish helps them understand the true meaning of the Sacraments. Eight in ten (83 percent) agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that the parish helps them to understand their baptismal responsibilities. Finally, eight in ten in-pew respondents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that they would like to learn more about their faith, with two in five “strongly” agreeing.

## **Social Justice**

Social justice and social action at parishes is often expressed through other aspects of parish life, such as community, evangelization, and formation. However, several questions specifically ask respondents to evaluate the social justice works at their parish as well as list priorities for social justice at the parish.

### *Evaluation of Parish Social Justice Activities*

Overall, respondents in-pew evaluate their parish’s social justice efforts as “good” or “excellent.” Eight in ten respondents find the parish’s efforts to respond to parish concerns as “good” or “excellent,” and another eight in ten find the parish’s efforts to respond to local community concerns “good” or “excellent.” Similarly, 80 percent say that the parish’s efforts to offer a Catholic view on current issues are “good” or “excellent.” About three-fourths (74 percent) find the parish’s efforts to promote social justice “good” or “excellent,” with about one-fourth (28 percent) saying those efforts are “excellent.”

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## Priority for Social Justice

Almost all respondents say that helping the poor and needy should be “somewhat” or “very much” a priority for the parish, with two-thirds saying it should be “very much” a priority. Three-quarters of respondents are “somewhat” or “very” likely to give service on behalf of the poor. Learning more about social justice issues is also important to many respondents. Almost nine in ten say that they are “somewhat” or “very” interested in learning more about contemporary social issues.

<b>Priority for Social Justice</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>“Somewhat”</b>	<b>“Very”</b>	<b>Combined</b>
<i>How likely are you to...</i>			
Give service on behalf of the poor	38%	34%	72%
Participate in community efforts to create a more just society	37	30	66
<i>What priority do you give to parish efforts...</i>			
Helping the poor and needy	31%	64%	95%
Providing opportunities to help the needy	35	52	87
Being a resource for community issues	38	45	83
<i>How interested are you in learning more about...</i>			
Contemporary social issues	37%	52%	89%
Issues of social justice and equality	41	42	83

## Familiarity with Catholic Social Teaching

In a CARA Catholic Poll of adult Catholics in 2007, fewer than one in ten respondents say they are “very familiar” with Catholic social teaching. About half of respondents say they are at least “a little familiar.”

### Familiarity with Social Justice Concepts

*Percentage responding*

	<b>Very familiar</b>	<b>Somewhat familiar</b>	<b>A little familiar</b>	<b>Not too familiar</b>	<b>Not at all familiar</b>
“Catholic social teaching” is a group of principles that provide guidance on a wide variety of social, economic, and political issues. How familiar are you with Catholic social teaching?	8%	21%	21%	23%	27%
Global solidarity is a term that has been used by the Catholic bishops to emphasize the interdependence of people around the world and their responsibility for one another. How familiar are you with the concept of global solidarity?	4	13	23	30	30

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## Evangelization

This area of parish life includes all efforts to witness to the Gospel. It focuses especially upon reaching out to the unchurched and non-practicing Catholics. Evangelization also encompasses efforts at ecumenism and those directed toward building relations in the broader community. Evangelization has an external focus.

### *Evaluation of Parish Evangelization Efforts*

Evangelization receives a mixed evaluation from respondents in the pews. Generally, four in ten respondents say that their parish's efforts to spread the Gospel and evangelize are "excellent," and another four in ten rate these efforts as "good." Between seven and eight in ten respondents say that outreach to Catholics in the Church, such as new members, visitors, and guests, is "good" or "excellent." However, outreach to

those not in the Church is evaluated less positively. About one-third of respondents evaluate outreach to the unchurched and inactive Catholics as "good." Another two in ten rate this outreach as "excellent."

While three-quarters of respondents evaluate parish efforts to reach out to the neighborhood around as "good" or "excellent," about six

in ten find the parish efforts to reach out to those who do not belong to a faith community are as good. About half of respondents evaluate parish efforts to reach out to area Catholics who do not come to Mass regularly as "good" or "excellent."

<b>Evaluation of Parish Evangelization Efforts</b>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
<i>Parish efforts in...</i>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Combined</b>
Spreading the Gospel/evangelizing	44%	40%	84%
Outreach to visitors and guests	43	39	82
Outreach to new parishioners	41	29	70
Outreach to inactive Catholics	36	19	54
<i>Parish efforts to reach out to...</i>			
The neighborhood around	54%	20%	74%
Those who do not belong to a faith community	35	26	61
Area Catholics who do not come to Mass regularly	35	20	55

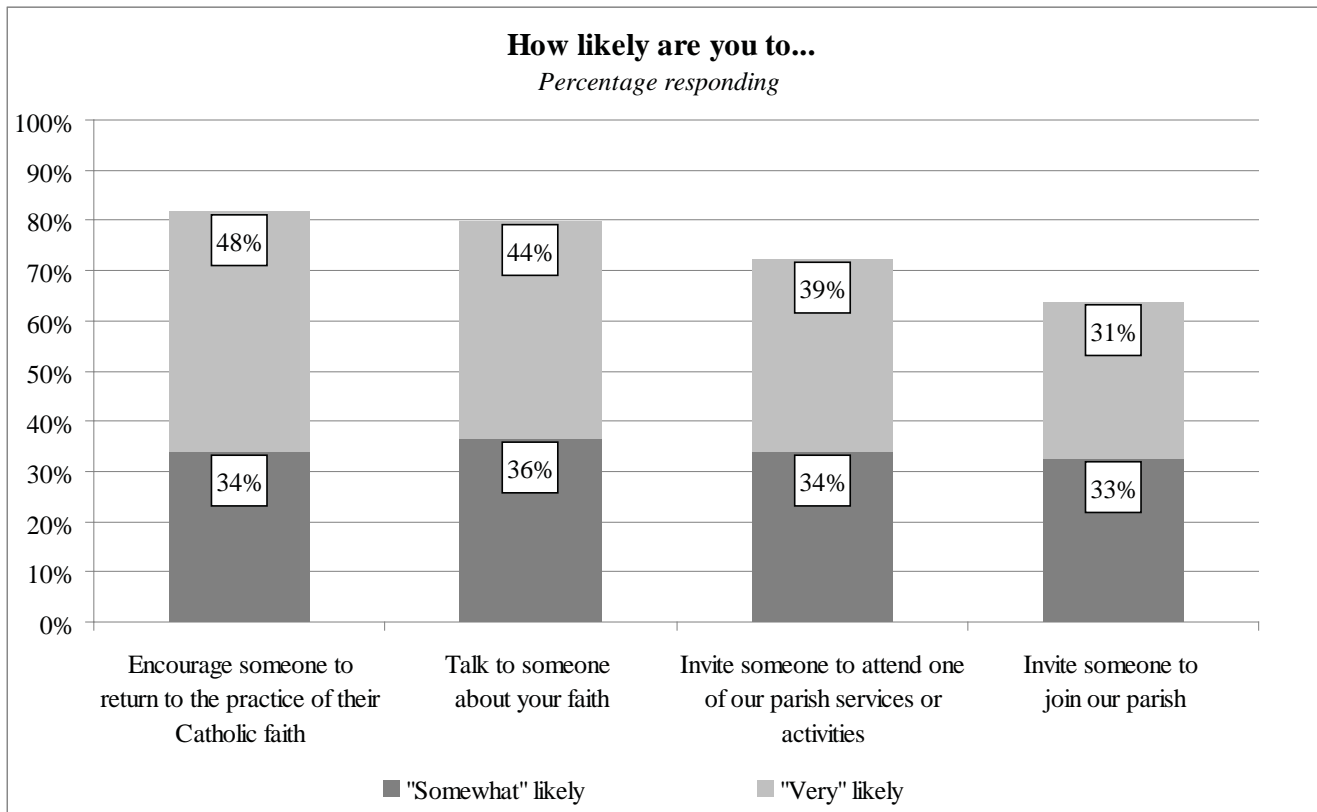
### *Priority for Evangelization*

Respondents place high priority on evangelization. More than nine in ten (96 percent) say that passing on the faith to the next generation is "somewhat" or "very" important. Three-fourths (73 percent) say that outreach to inactive Catholics is "somewhat" or "very" important, with one-third (35 percent) saying it is "very" important. Additionally, eight in ten respondents (84 percent) say that they are "somewhat" or "very" interested in learning more about how to share their faith with others, with almost half (45 percent) saying they are "very" interested.

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## Likelihood of Evangelization

When asked about the likelihood of engaging in evangelizing behavior, respondents are more likely to use conversation as an evangelization tool. Almost half are “very” likely to encourage someone to return to the practice of their Catholic faith, and more than four in ten report being “very” likely to talk to someone about their faith. However, respondents are less likely to invite others to participate in parish life. About four in ten are “very” likely to invite someone to attend a parish service or activity. Likewise, about three in ten are “very” likely to invite someone to join the parish.



## Stewardship

Stewardship involves challenging parishioners to share their time, talent, and treasure with the parish and with the community. Time and talent includes any volunteering parishioners do either directly for the parish or in parish-related activities. As such, these aspects of stewardship are commonly interconnected with social justice, community, evangelization, and formation in parish life. Stewardship also asks for parishioners’ treasure; the treasure of the parish refers to the amount of money contributed to the parish as well as its current buildings and properties.

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## *Evaluation of Parish Stewardship Efforts*

Generally, respondents evaluate parish stewardship efforts positively. More than eight in ten say that parish efforts to promote responsible stewardship, encourage parishioners to share their time, talent, and treasure, and manage parish finances are “good” or “excellent.” About three-quarters find the parish fund raising activities to be “good” or “excellent.”

Two in five respondents (44 percent) are “very” likely to contribute generously to the support of the parish. Another 20 percent are “somewhat” likely to contribute generously to the support of the parish. Almost nine in ten (89 percent) regularly contribute to the weekly collection. The average amount contributed to the weekly parish collection is about \$20.00. In a national poll of adult Catholics in 2007, about half (56 percent) had regularly contributed to the collection at their parish. Of those who regularly contribute, the majority (68 percent) contributed \$500 or less over the preceding 12 months.

### *Attitudes about Stewardship*

More than eight in ten respondents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that stewardship is important to them and that they understand the concept of stewardship. About three-quarters (72 percent) of respondents are “somewhat” or “very” interested in learning more about stewardship. Likewise, 76 percent are “somewhat” or “very” interested in learning more about the concept of tithing (not in table).

About eight in ten agree that they are satisfied with the spending priorities of the parish. Fewer, however “somewhat” or “strongly” agree that they feel adequately informed about parish finances, and only about two-thirds agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that they understand the parish spending priorities. About two in five agree that parish financial appeals are excessive.

<i>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</i>			
<i>Percentage responding</i>			
	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Combined</b>
<b><i>Stewardship</i></b>			
Stewardship is important to me	39%	47%	86%
I understand the concept of stewardship	34	51	85
<b><i>Parish Finances:</i></b>			
I am satisfied with parish spending priorities	43%	39%	82%
I feel adequately informed about parish finances	38	37	75
I understand what parish spending priorities are	38	30	68
Parish financial appeals are excessive	28	14	42
<b><i>Giving</i></b>			
My contributions are all that I can afford	36%	53%	89%
I would help support a fund raising program for the needs of our parish	38	49	86
I contribute financially to the parish	41	33	75
I prefer to give to specific projects rather than a general fund	35	27	62
I contribute my time and talent to the parish	35	25	60
I would be more inclined to remember the parish in my will if I knew it would go to a permanent parish endowment	30	13	44

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If you would like more information about PASS services for your parish, contact Melissa Cidade at [mac288@georgetown.edu](mailto:mac288@georgetown.edu) or by calling (202) 687-1290.



## Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

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### **The CARA Mission:**

*“To discover, promote, and apply modern techniques and scientific informational resources for practical use in a coordinated and effective approach to the Church’s social and religious mission in the modern world, at home and overseas.”*

### **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).