



September 2, 2011

Catholics Use and Prefer Traditional Media for Diocesan and Church News as well as General Religious Content

A new survey from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University estimates that 14.8 million U.S. adult Catholics (26 percent) regularly read their diocesan newspapers and magazines in print. This level of readership is consistent with a similar study conducted by CARA six years ago. A majority of weekly Mass attenders (55 percent) report reading the paper copy of their diocesan publication. Thus, even as emerging electronic media are transforming American media culture, these changes do not appear to be impacting how Catholics access and read their diocesan publications.

A majority of readers (53 percent) of Catholic newspapers and magazines (national and diocesan) agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that having a print version of these publications is important to them. Thirty-eight percent express indifference with this statement and only 10 percent indicate a print version is not important to them.

Just 4 percent of adult Catholics indicate that they regularly read their diocesan newspaper or magazine online. Regular readership is defined as having read at least once in the last three months. Only 1 percent of all diocesan newspaper or magazine readers indicate they read exclusively online during this period (Note: not all dioceses provide online content from their publication).

About eight in ten readers of diocesan newspapers or magazines evaluate these as “good” or “excellent” (26 percent “excellent” only) sources of news, information, and dialogue about their diocese and the Catholic faith. One in five evaluate it as “fair” and just 1 percent say the publication they read does a “poor” job of this.

Of those who have read the print version of their diocesan newspaper or magazine in the last three months, 42 percent indicate they receive the publication from their parish or diocese at no charge. Nine percent indicate their household pays for a subscription and 7 percent are unaware of how they receive it. More than four in ten recent readers (42 percent) do not receive the publication at home and obtain it by other means (e.g., picking it up at their parish).

Respondents were provided a list of 28 national Catholic newspapers and magazines (e.g., *Catholic Digest*, *Our Sunday Visitor*, *St. Anthony Messenger*) and asked about their awareness and readership of these. A majority, 56 percent, were *not* aware of any of the publications listed. Seven in ten Millennial Generation Catholics (those born after 1981) were not aware of a single publication. Compared to 2005, there is less awareness of national Catholic publications in general. When presented with this list in 2005 only 46 percent were *not* aware of any of the publications listed.

Adult Catholics are most aware of the following national Catholic publications (i.e., more than 8 percent or 4.5 million adult Catholics): *Catholic Digest* (32 percent), *Maryknoll* (12 percent), *Liguorian* (9 percent), and *Our Sunday Visitor* (8 percent). Catholics were most likely to be aware of the same four publications in 2005. They are most likely to indicate reading the following national publications *in print* in the last three months: *Catholic Digest* (9 percent), *Maryknoll* (3 percent), *Our Sunday Visitor* (2 percent), and *The Family Digest* (2 percent).

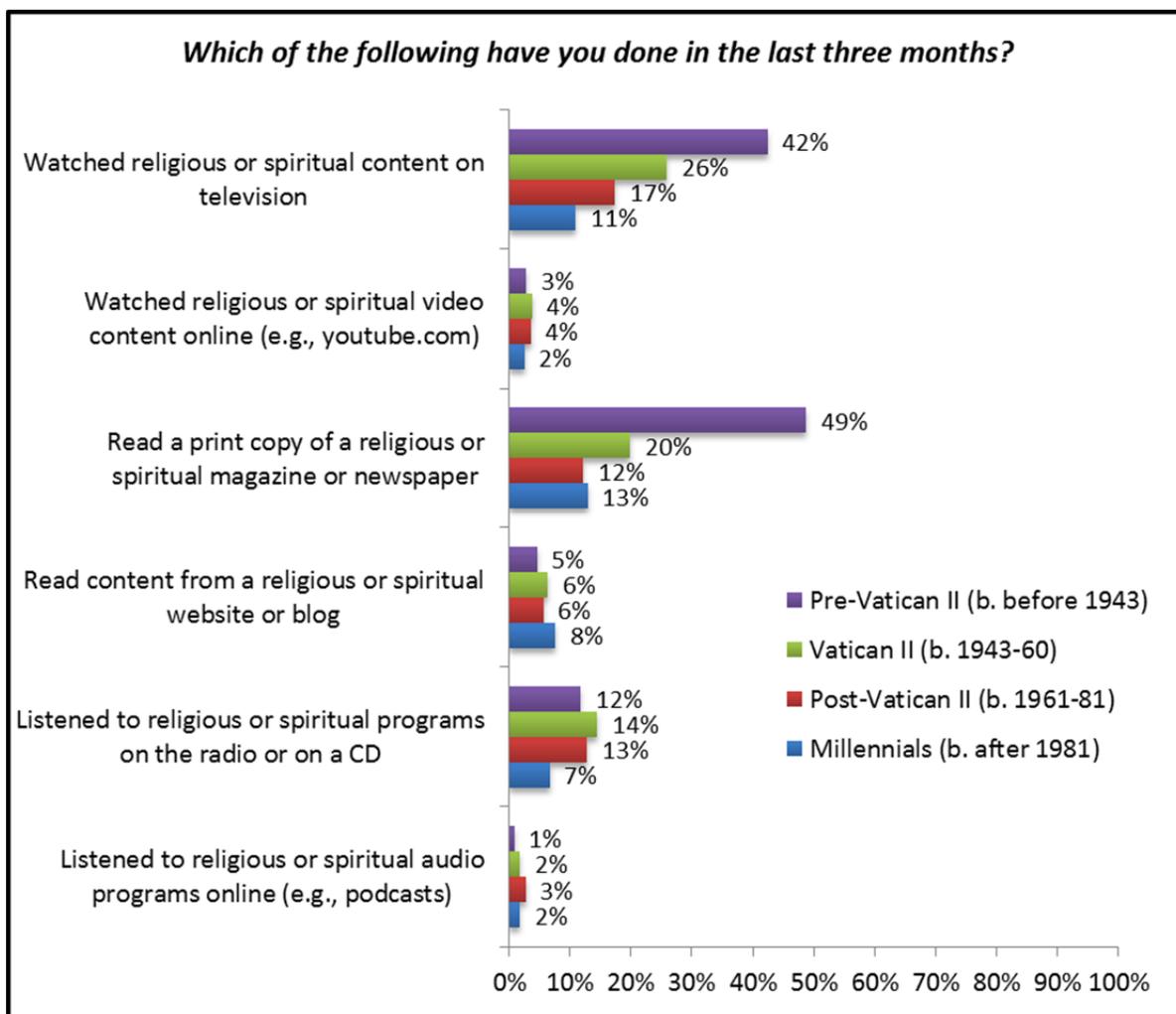
Respondents were asked in an open-ended question, “*How would you feel if print versions of Catholic newspapers and magazines—including your diocesan newspaper or magazine—ceased publication and moved their operations entirely online?*” Only 18 percent of those responding to the question provided a response that was positive about this hypothetical proposition. Most either expressed a negative opinion (39 percent) or a neutral or mixed opinion (39 percent). Four percent provided a comment that could not be coded as positive, negative, neutral, or mixed. Negative comments often referenced a personal preference for print versus online content or a concern that others—especially the elderly and poor—would be unable to gain access to an online-only publication. Positive and mixed comments often cited an online publication as being more environmentally friendly and cheaper for dioceses to produce.

Although general attention to national news among adult Catholics in 2011 remains consistent with attention levels in 2005, the youngest adult Catholics are least likely to say they pay “a great deal” or “quite a bit” of attention to this. Overall, 52 percent of adult Catholics say they pay this much attention to national news, although only 43 percent of Millennials respond as such. The percentage of Catholics who say they subscribe to a print copy of a secular daily newspaper for their local area has dropped from 44 percent in 2005 to 36 percent in 2011. Only 16 percent of Millennials say they have a print subscription to a local secular daily newspaper. Thus, more young Catholics regularly read their diocesan newspaper (22 percent) than subscribe to a secular daily.

Catholics are more likely to report use of traditional media (print publications, television, radio) to access religious or spiritual content than new or electronic media (e.g., Internet, e-reader, podcast). The leading medium for consumption of religious or spiritual content is television. One in five adult Catholics (21 percent) has watched a religious or spiritual program on television in the last three months. Only 3 percent indicate that they have watched religious or spiritual video content online.

Eighteen percent of adult Catholics say they have read a print copy of a religious or spiritual magazine or newspaper in the last three months. Fourteen percent say they have read a religious or spiritual book during the same period. Only 6 percent of adult Catholics indicate they read content from a religious or spiritual blog in the last three months. Fewer indicate reading a religious or spiritual newspaper or magazine online (3 percent), following religious or spiritual pages or posts on Facebook (2 percent), or following religious or spiritual related tweets on Twitter. Only 13 percent of respondents prefer participating on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or online message boards to reading print publications.

Adult Catholics are six times more likely to buy a print copy of a religious or spiritual book than to buy one for use on an e-reader (e.g., Kindle, Nook).



Millennial Catholics are no more or less likely than older generations of Catholics to use new or electronic media to access religious or spiritual content. However, Millennials are less likely than older Catholics to access *any* type of religious or spiritual media content. Two thirds of the youngest adult Catholics (67 percent) reported no religious or spiritual media use in the three months prior to being surveyed. By comparison only 30 percent of Pre-Vatican II Catholics (born before 1943) responded as such and overall, 42 percent of all respondents said they did not use any religious or spiritual media in the three months prior to being surveyed.

The more frequently Catholics attend Mass, the more likely they are generally to report using any type of religious or spiritual media. Because Mass attendance is more likely among older Catholics, religious and spiritual media use is also concentrated among older generations of Catholics.

Many of those who are using new media related to their religion and spirituality do not fit the stereotypical image that might first come to mind. The typical Catholic who uses Facebook for following religious and spiritual content is not a Millennial at all. It is a non-Hispanic white,

divorced, Vatican II Generation (age 51 to 68), woman, living in a home in the Midwest, with an income between \$85,000 and \$99,999 a year.

About this Study

The Catholic Press Association (CPA) of the United States and Canada commissioned CARA to study catholic media use. CARA partnered with Knowledge Networks to conduct the survey in May and June 2011. The survey was completed by 1,239 self-identified Catholics who were 18 years of age or older resulting in a sampling margin of error of ± 2.8 percentage points. Fifty-seven percent of the panel members invited to take the survey completed it. This report includes, where possible, comparisons to a survey conducted by CARA in November and December 2005 for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Department of Communications regarding Catholic media use. This 2005 survey was completed by 1,260 self-identified adult Catholics resulting in a sampling margin of error or ± 2.8 percentage points. For more information about the results contact Mark M. Gray, Ph.D., CARA Researcher: 202-687-0885 or mmg34@georgetown.edu. The full report for the survey is available at:

http://www.catholicpress.org/resource/resmgr/docs/print_study_final_report.pdf

CARA is an independent, national, non-profit, Georgetown University-affiliated research center that has more than 45 years of experience conducting social scientific studies about the Catholic Church. Founded in 1964, CARA has three major dimensions to its mission: 1) to increase the Church's self-understanding, 2) to serve the applied research needs of Church decision-makers, and 3) to advance scholarly research on religion, particularly Catholicism. The CARA staff is composed of professionally trained academic social scientists who have earned graduate degrees. CARA's longstanding policy is to be independent and objective, to let research findings stand on their own, and never take an advocacy position or go into areas outside its social science competence.