



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

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Opinions about the Latin Mass have shifted over time

A Majority of adult Catholics express no opinion on return of older liturgy

Two years ago, Pope Benedict XVI gave permission for the 1962 Roman Rite Mass to be used without a priest first acquiring a bishop's approval.¹ Using the Missal of John XXIII, this Mass is celebrated in Latin with the priest and parishioners facing the same direction toward the altar. It is the last version of the Latin Mass that was first codified following the Council of Trent in the 16th century and is thus often referred to as the Latin Tridentine Mass.² Parish priests have been instructed by the Pope to work with parishioners when there is a "stable group" who are interested in Latin Mass to provide opportunities for this liturgy to be celebrated regularly under the guidance of their bishop.

According to the Mass Times Trust, operators of the popular website, www.masstimes.org, about one in every 250 parishes regularly offer a Mass in Latin in the 117,000 parishes for which listings are available (in more than 200 countries). Although the Mass in Latin is now more widely available, results of a survey conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) indicates that interest is not widespread among adult Catholics in the United States. Instead, it appears that the wider availability of the Latin Mass may have come too late to appeal to the majority of Catholics today who have no memory or experience of this older form of the liturgy.

As you may be aware, Pope Benedict XVI recently eased restrictions on the use of the older Latin Tridentine Mass, as celebrated just before the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960's. Do you favor as an alternative to the newer Mass, bringing back the older Latin Tridentine Mass for those who would prefer this option?

Favor	25%
Oppose	12
No opinion	63

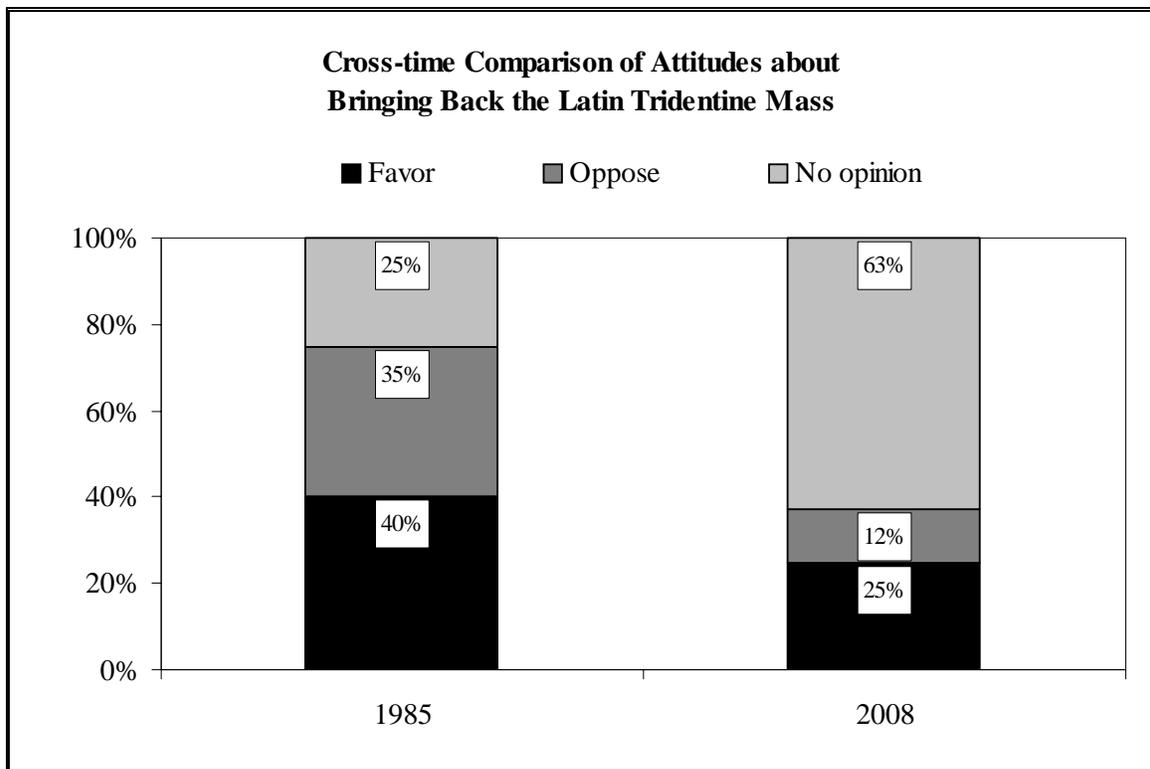
¹ Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XVI, "*Summorum Pontificum*" issued *Motu Proprio* on July, 7 2007.

² Others often use the term Latin Tridentine Mass to refer to other specific previous revisions of the 1570 Rite. However, the Rite has been revised on numerous occasions prior to the 1969 adoption of the Mass of Pope Paul VI, which is now the ordinary expression. The 1962 Missal of John XXIII is now considered the extraordinary expression. The latter is not the only version of Mass that can be celebrated in Latin.

A February 2008 CARA survey included questions replicating a series from a 1985 Gallup poll. The CARA questions are altered slightly to most accurately reflect changing events.³ Both surveys utilized nationally representative samples of adult self-identified Catholics who were asked whether they favor or oppose bringing back the older Latin Mass as an alternative to the newer liturgy.

In the CARA poll, 63 percent of respondents said they had “no opinion” about bringing back the Latin Mass and those who “favor” bringing back the Latin Mass outnumber those who “oppose” this by more than two to one (25 percent compared to 12 percent).

In the 1985 Gallup poll, only 25 percent of adult Catholics had “no opinion” about bringing back the Latin Mass. By comparison, when restricting the CARA sample to those who are 41 or older, or those who would have been at least 18 years old in 1985, the “no opinion” response today was given by 57 percent. The percentage of Catholics who “oppose” the return of the Latin Mass dropped from 35 percent in 1985 to only 12 percent in 2008. Thus, opinions about the Latin Mass, either positive or negative, have appeared to weaken as time has passed.



³ In 1985, Gallup used the following question, “As you may be aware, Pope John Paul II has authorized the use of the older Latin Tridentine Mass, as celebrated just before the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960’s. The local bishop’s permission is required and certain conditions must be met. Do you favor bringing back as an alternative to the newer Mass, the older Latin Tridentine Mass, without restrictions such as these, and celebrating it as it had been prior to the Second Vatican Council?”

Among the strongest supporters for the return of the Latin Mass in 2008 are weekly Mass attendees (33 percent favor its return). Yet even among these frequent Mass attenders, nearly half (47 percent) still say they had “no opinion” and one in five (20 percent) “oppose” the wider availability of the Latin Mass.

As shown in the table below other groups who show more support the return of the Latin Mass include older Catholics (born before 1961), those who have earned a graduate degree, and political independents—including those leaning toward the Republican Party.

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	Favor	No opinion	Oppose
<i>Frequency of Mass Attendance</i>			
Weekly or more often	33%	47%	20%
Less than weekly, but at least monthly	29	58	13
A few times a year or less often	21	71	8
<i>Catholic Generation</i>			
Pre-Vatican II (born before 1943)	30	46	24
Vatican II (born 1943-60)	32	55	13
Post-Vatican II (born 1961-81)	21	72	7
Millennial (born 1982 or later)	16	78	6
<i>Education</i>			
High school or less	19	68	13
Some college	28	63	9
Bachelor’s degree	28	58	14
Graduate degree	43	45	12
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	23	66	11
Female	28	60	12
<i>Party Identification</i>			
Republican	27	59	14
Leans Republican	33	54	13
Independent/3 rd Party/Apolitical	37	60	3
Leans Democrat	10	71	19
Democrat	24	64	12

Three in ten Catholics who do *not* “oppose” bringing back the Latin Mass say they would attend such a Latin Mass if it was readily available at convenient times and

locations. This is equivalent to about one in ten adult Catholics (11 percent overall) or approximately 5.7 million individuals.

If the Latin Tridentine Mass were made readily available at convenient times and locations, and you were able to attend, would you?

Respondents who “Favor” or have “No opinion” about easing restrictions on the Latin Tridentine Mass

Yes	29%
No	25
No opinion	46

Among those who do not oppose the return of the Latin Mass, interest in attending a Latin Mass is more likely among frequent Mass attendees. More than four in ten of these respondents, who attend Mass at least once a month, say they would attend a Latin Mass if it was available.

If the Latin Tridentine Mass were made readily available at convenient times and locations, and you were able to attend, would you?

Respondents who “Favor” or have “No opinion” about easing restrictions on the Latin Tridentine Mass

	<i>Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Yes	45%	42%	18%
No	20	16	30
No opinion	35	42	52

Survey Methods

The results above are from a February 2008 survey including the responses of 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). A survey with this number of respondents has a margin of sampling error of ±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. The Knowledge Networks panel is known to closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the U.S. population. 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 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.

About CARA

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) is a non-profit, independent and non-partisan research institution at Georgetown University. CARA researchers conduct applied social scientific research related to the Catholic Church in the United States. CARA was created in 1964 and has been affiliated with Georgetown University since 1989. CARA's national polls of adult Catholic have been conducted annually since 2000. To date, CARA has conducted CARA's 19 national surveys of self-identified adult Catholics, including more than 21,000 respondents during the 2000 and 2008 period. For more information about this release contact Mark Gray at 202-687-0885 or mmg34@georgetown.edu. For more information about CARA and the center's research visit: <http://cara.georgetown.edu>.