Young Love: Catholic Marriage and Generational Differences

Mark M. Gray, Ph.D.
Melissa A. Cidade, M.A.
Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics

In Spring 2007, CARA conducted a poll for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to learn more about Catholics’

– General familiarity and specific knowledge about Catholic teaching on marriage

– Consistency of respondents’ own views with various statements about marriage

– View of the acceptability of divorce, both generally and in specific circumstances

– General attitudes about marriage and divorce and influences on these attitudes
Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics

• 1,367 adult Catholics polled
• N = 1,008 (sampling error ± 3.1%)
• 74% response rate
• Majority of respondents reported being currently married

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with a partner</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Generations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Vatican II</th>
<th>Vatican II</th>
<th>Post-Vatican II</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 19% of survey</td>
<td>• 31% of respondents</td>
<td>• 40% of survey</td>
<td>• 10% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td>respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is marriage?

Percentage responding “very consistent with my views”

Marriage is a vocation
- Pre-Vatican II: 44%
- Vatican II: 20%
- Post-Vatican II: 24%
- Millennial: 25%

Marriage contributes to the common good of society
- Pre-Vatican II: 62%
- Vatican II: 40%
- Post-Vatican II: 40%
- Millennial: 39%

The Sacrament of marriage extends beyond the wedding day
- Pre-Vatican II: 75%
- Vatican II: 56%
- Post-Vatican II: 61%
- Millennial: 62%
What is marriage?

Percentage responding “very consistent with my views”

Marriage is a calling from God
- Pre-Vatican II: 43%
- Vatican II: 23%
- Post-Vatican II: 28%
- Millennials: 37%

Marriage is a life-long commitment
- Pre-Vatican II: 73%
- Vatican II: 56%
- Post-Vatican II: 67%
- Millennials: 82%
What is marriage?

Percentage responding

- My Catholic faith has "somewhat" or "very much" informed my view of marriage:
  - Post-Vatican II: 22%
  - Millennials: 26%

- My family experience or background has "somewhat" or "very much" informed my view of marriage:
  - Post-Vatican II: 39%
  - Millennials: 49%

- I am "very familiar" with Church teaching on marriage:
  - Post-Vatican II: 35%
  - Millennials: 31%
### What are the Post-Vatican II and Millennial Generations looking for in a spouse?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage agreeing “somewhat” or “strongly”</th>
<th>Post-Vatican II</th>
<th>Millennial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you marry you want your spouse to be your soul-mate, first and foremost.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage saying “very” likely</th>
<th>Post-Vatican II</th>
<th>Millennial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How likely do you think it is that you will get married at some point in your life? (Asked of those single, never married)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Percentage saying “very” important</th>
<th>Post-Vatican II</th>
<th>Millennial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How important would it be for you to be married in the Catholic Church? (Asked of those single, never married)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are their attitudes on divorce?

Percentage agreeing “somewhat” or “strongly”

- **Couples don’t take marriage seriously enough when divorce is easily available.**
  - Post-Vatican II: 71%
  - Millennial: 84%

- **Divorce because of financial trouble is not acceptable.**
  - Post-Vatican II: 75%
  - Millennial: 79%

- **Divorce because of falling out of love is not acceptable.**
  - Post-Vatican II: 40%
  - Millennial: 35%

- **Divorce is acceptable in all cases.**
  - Post-Vatican II: 19%
  - Millennial: 11%

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University

CARA
Conclusions

• While Millennials may distribute closer to actual Church teachings on marriage than their Post-Vatican II counterparts, they are not necessarily more familiar with Church teachings.

• There are still strong cultural factors at work informing young Catholics’ views of marriage.

• Millennials are markedly different from the Post-Vatican II cohort.
Contact Information

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate
Georgetown University
2300 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC  20007

Mark M. Gray:  mmg34@georgetown.edu
Melissa A. Cidade:  mac288@georgetown.edu