

Catholic Beliefs and Attitudes

This section reports results of questions covering a wide array of attitudes regarding being Catholic, core Catholic beliefs, Church leadership, and ministry in a time of fewer priests.

General Beliefs and Attitudes

Three-quarters of Catholics agree that they are “proud to be Catholic.” Over half agree “strongly” with this statement.

<i>How much do you agree with the following statements?</i>		
	Agree “Somewhat” or “Strongly”	Agree “Strongly” Only
I am proud to be Catholic.	77%	56%
I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.	68	34
Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.	66	33
Sacraments are essential to my faith.	61	38
I think of myself as a practicing Catholic.	55	33
Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.	54	27
In deciding what is morally acceptable, I look to Catholic Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form my conscience.	43	18

Respondents were presented with several agree-disagree statements about being Catholic, Catholic beliefs, and Catholic practices. Although six in ten respondents agree at least “somewhat” that sacraments are essential to their faith, about two-thirds also agree that they can be good Catholics without going to Mass every week.

- A little over half of respondents think of themselves as practicing Catholics. One-third agree “strongly” that they think of themselves this way.
- Slightly more than half of Catholics (54 percent) agree that ordination confers on the priest a new status or permanent character making him essentially different from the laity. Slightly more than one-quarter (27 percent) agree “strongly” with this statement. Catholics are more likely to agree with this statement now than they were six years ago.

In 2002, 50 percent of Catholics agreed that ordination confers a new status or permanent character on the priest, with 21 percent agreeing “strongly.”²⁸

- More than two-fifths of Catholics agree that in deciding what is morally acceptable they look to Church teaching and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form their conscience. Slightly less than one-fifth agree “strongly.”

Differences by Mass Attendance

More than eight in ten weekly Mass attending Catholics agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic (85 percent), that sacraments are essential to their faith (83 percent), and that they think of themselves as practicing Catholics (81 percent). Less frequent Mass attenders are less likely to agree “strongly” with each of these statements. This is especially true for those who attend Mass only a few times a year or less often.

<i>How much do you agree with the following statements?</i>			
Percentage of respondents “strongly” agreeing, by Mass attendance			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
I am proud to be Catholic.	85%	70%	39%
Sacraments are essential to my faith.	83	53	14
I think of myself as a practicing Catholic.	81	45	8
Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.	49	43	23
Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.	44	32	17
In deciding what is morally acceptable, I look to Catholic Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form my conscience.	36	24	8
I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.	19	36	39

Among Catholics who attend Mass infrequently, fewer than four in ten (39 percent) agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic and only about one in seven (14 percent) agrees

²⁸ Results are from the 2002 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls. The middle category in the 2002 response scale was “uncertain” while in the 2008 survey it was “neither agree nor disagree.”

similarly that sacraments are essential to their faith. Few Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less (8 percent) agree “strongly” that they think of themselves as practicing their Catholic faith.

- Only four in ten Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less (39 percent) “strongly” agree that they can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday. A similar proportion of those who attend Mass less than weekly but at least once a month (36 percent) “strongly” agree with this statement.
- More than four in ten Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month agree “strongly” that it is a moral obligation for Catholics to help the poor and needy (49 percent of weekly attenders and 43 percent of those attending at least once a month, but less than weekly). By comparison, only 23 percent of those attending a few times a year or less agree as strongly.
- Few Catholics, regardless of Mass attendance, agree “strongly” that in deciding what is morally acceptable they look to Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form their conscience. Weekly Mass attenders are most likely to agree “strongly” (36 percent).
- Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less are *least* likely to “strongly” agree (17 percent) that ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church. Forty-four percent of weekly attenders agree as such, as do 32 percent of those attending at least once a month but less than weekly.

Differences by Generation

The older Catholics are, the more likely that they agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic, that the sacraments are essential to their faith, and that ordination confers a new status on a priest. The oldest generation is more likely than all others to agree “strongly” that they are a practicing Catholic (49 percent), whereas the youngest generation is most likely to agree “strongly” that they can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday (38 percent).

How much do you agree with the following statements?

Percentage of respondents “strongly” agreeing, by generation

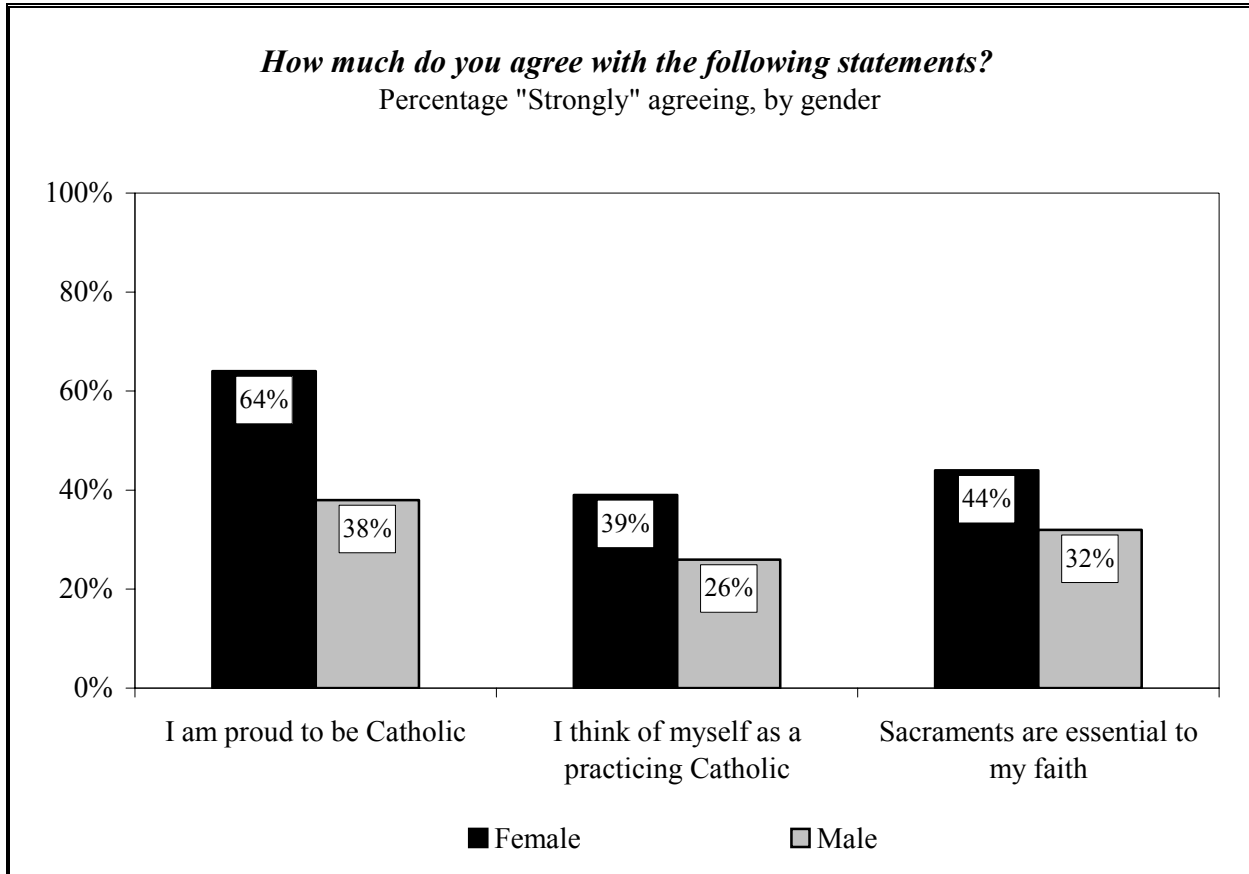
By Generation

	Pre-Vatican II	Vatican II	Post-Vatican II	Millennial
I am proud to be Catholic.	69%	56%	53%	50%
Sacraments are essential to my faith.	58	39	31	32
I think of myself as a practicing Catholic.	49	34	25	30
Ordination confers on the priest a new status or a permanent character which makes him essentially different from the laity within the Church.	39	25	25	21
Helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation for Catholics.	38	36	33	23
I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.	31	35	33	38
In deciding what is morally acceptable, I look to Catholic Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form my conscience.	28	15	14	23

Additionally, the oldest and youngest generations of Catholics are more likely than others to agree at least “somewhat” that they look to Church teaching and statements by the Bishops and Pope to form their conscience.

Differences by Gender

Women are more likely than men to agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic, that they think of themselves as a practicing Catholic, and that the sacraments are essential to their faith.



Even among those who attend Mass at least once a month, women are significantly more likely than men to agree “strongly” that they are proud to be Catholic (84 percent compared to 69 percent).

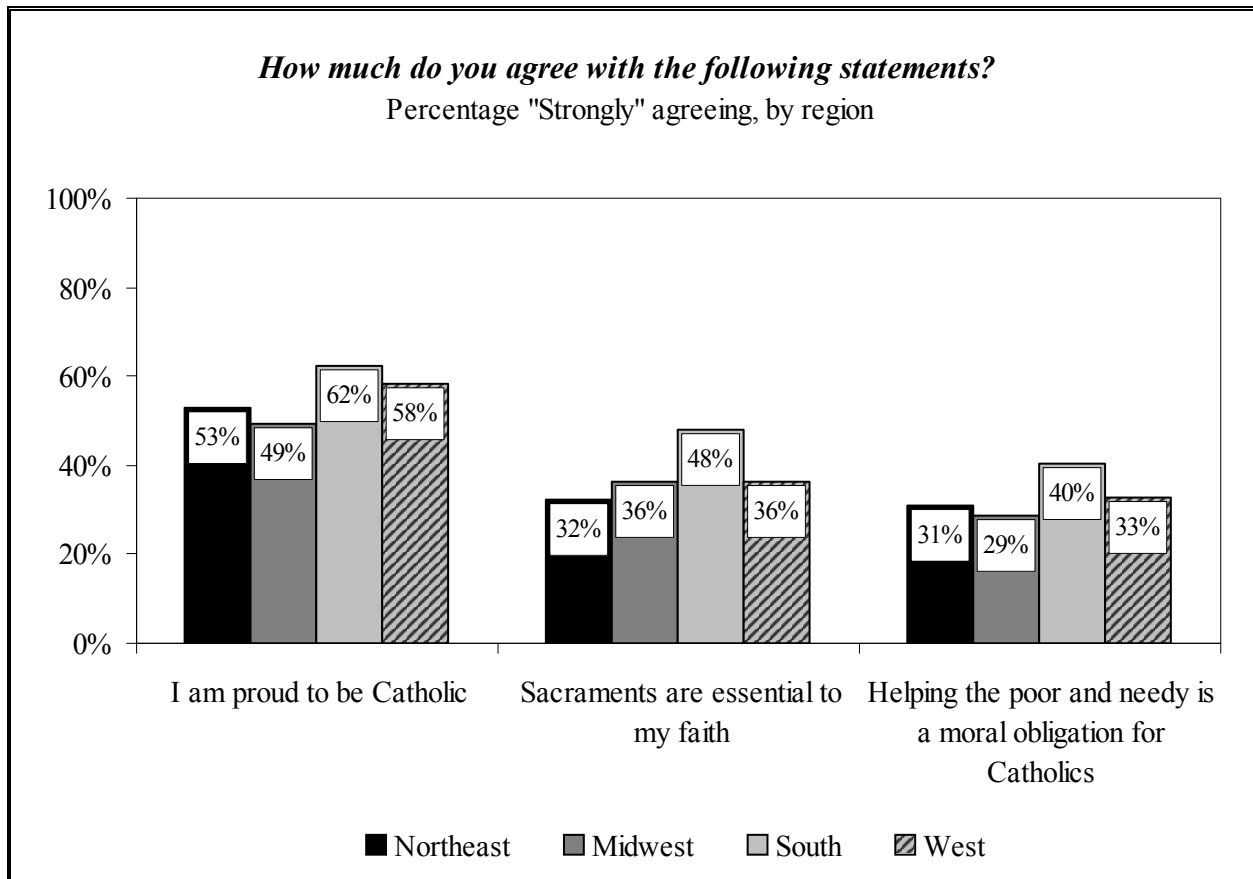
Differences by Education

- The more highly educated Catholics are, the more likely they are to agree “strongly” that helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation (45 percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 39 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, 32 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 30 percent of those with a high school diploma or less).
- Those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to “strongly” agree that they are proud to be Catholic (63 percent compared to 54 percent).

- Among those who attended some college, those who were enrolled in a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who did not to “strongly” agree that they are proud to be Catholic (63 percent compared to 52 percent), that they are a practicing Catholic (43 percent compared to 31 percent), that sacraments are essential to their faith (50 percent compared to 35 percent), and that helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation (56 percent compared to 33 percent).
- Among these respondents who attended college, those who went to Catholic institutions are more likely than those who did not to agree at least “somewhat” that they look to Church teachings and statements made by the Pope and Bishops to form their conscience in deciding what is morally acceptable (58 percent compared to 41 percent).

Differences by Region

Catholics in the South and West are more likely than those in the Midwest and Northeast to “strongly” agree “I am proud to be Catholic.” Those residing in the South are also especially likely to “strongly” agree that sacraments are essential to their faith and that helping the poor and needy is a moral obligation.



Importance of the Catholic Faith in Daily Life

About one in seven Catholics (14 percent) say that their Catholic faith is “the most important part” of their life.

<i>How important is your Catholic faith in your daily life? Is it...</i>		
	2001	2008
The most important part of your life	17%	14%
Among the most important parts of your life	26	27
Important, but so are many other areas of your life	36	40
Not too important in your life	16	13
Not important in your life at all	4	6

Slightly more than one-quarter of Catholics describe their Catholic faith as “among the most important parts” of their life. Four in ten say it is “important but so are many other areas” of their life. About one-fifth say it is either “not too important” or “not important at all” in their life.

In 2001, one in six Catholics described their Catholic faith as “the most important part” of their life.²⁹ Results for 2001 and 2008 are generally similar.

²⁹ The 2001 results come from the 2001 CCP, weighted to adjust for methodological differences from Knowledge Networks polls.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Three-fourths of respondents attending Mass weekly (75 percent) say that their Catholic faith is at least “among the most important parts” of their life. Fifty-six percent of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month agree similarly, as do 21 percent of those attending Mass a few times a year or less.

<i>How important is your Catholic faith in your daily life? Is it...</i>			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
The most important part of your life	36%	15%	5%
Among the most important parts of your life	39	41	16
Important, but so are many other areas of your life	24	40	46
Not too important in your life	1	3	22
Not important in your life at all	0	1	11

Differences by Ethnicity

Hispanics are slightly more likely than non-Hispanic whites to describe their Catholic faith as being at least “among the most important parts” of their life (48 compared to 38 percent).

Differences by Gender

Women are more likely than men to describe their Catholic faith as being at least “among the most important parts” of their life (48 compared to 34 percent).

Differences by Education

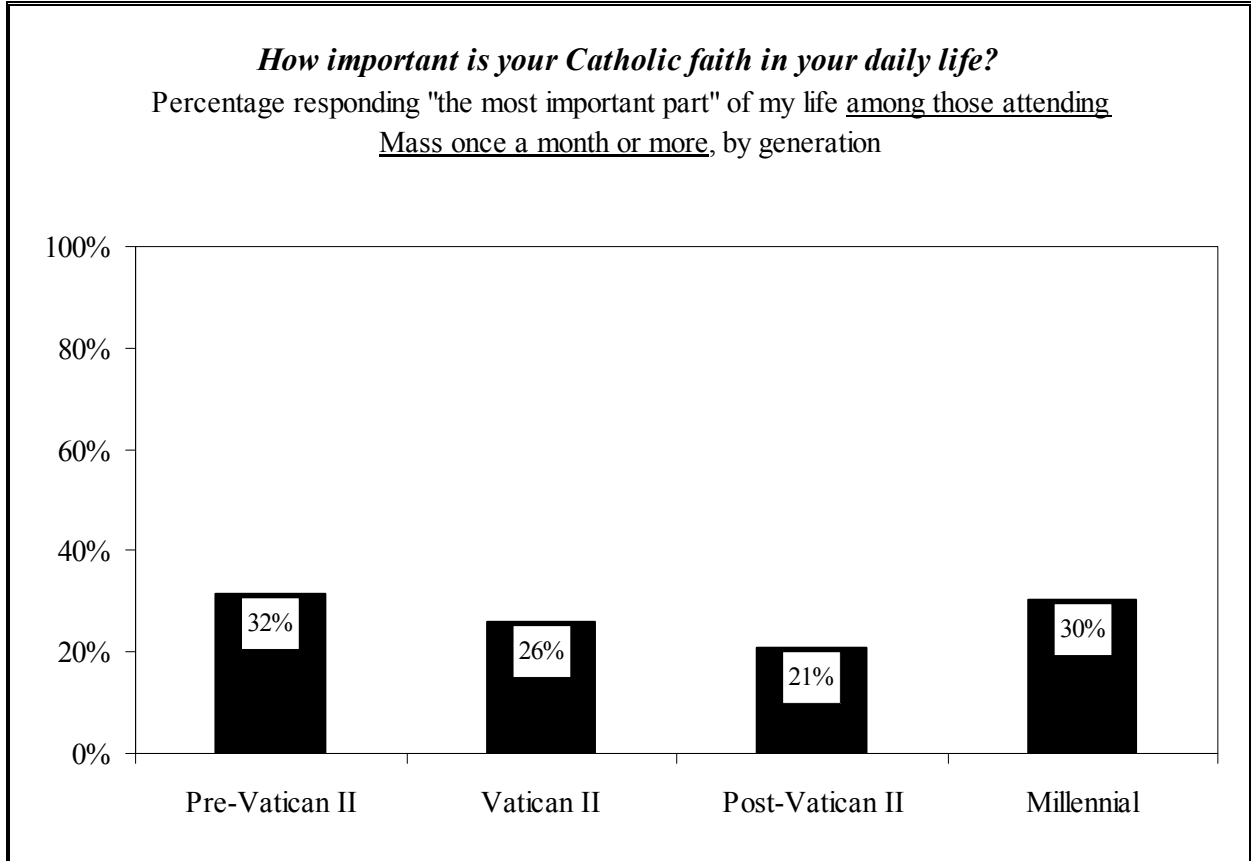
The more educated Catholics are, the more likely they are to describe their Catholic faith as being at least “among the most important parts” of their life (58 percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 44 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree compared to percent, 38 percent of those with some college or an associate’s degree, and 39 percent of those with a high school diploma or less).

Sixty-four percent of respondents who attended a Catholic high school say their Catholic faith is at least “among the most important parts” of their life, compared to 40 percent of those who attended a non-Catholic high school.

Differences by Generation

The older Catholics are, the more likely they are to describe their Catholic faith as being at least “among the most important parts” of their life (49 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 41 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 40 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 34 percent of the Millennial Generation).

However, among Catholics attending Mass at least once a month, Millennial Generation Catholics are also among the most likely to consider their faith “the most important part” of their life.



Importance Placed on Various Aspects of Catholic Faith and Identity

About eight in ten Catholics say that helping those in need and receiving the Eucharist are at least “somewhat” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. About half describe these two factors as “very” important.

<i>How important are the following factors to <u>your sense of what it means to be a Catholic?</u></i>	“Very” or “Somewhat” Important	“Very” Important Only
Helping those in need	83%	48%
Receiving the Eucharist/Holy Communion	79	51
Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation	74	44
Living my life consistent with Church teaching	73	37
Having devotion to Mary	68	37
Attending Mass	66	39
Having devotions to the saints	63	29
Going to Reconciliation or Confession	56	28

Respondents were asked the importance of several religious practices to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. After helping those in need and receiving the Eucharist, the greatest importance is placed on celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation and living life consistent with Church teaching. Slightly less than three-quarters say these things are at least “somewhat” important.

- About two-thirds of Catholics say that devotion to Mary and attending Mass are at least “somewhat” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. Slightly less than four-tenths say these practices are “very” important.
- Over six in ten Catholics say that having devotions to the saints is important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic, with three in ten saying this is “very” important.
- Among the list of items, respondents tend to place the least importance on going to Reconciliation. Still, a little more than half describe this as at least “somewhat” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic.

Differences by Mass Attendance

About nine in ten weekly Mass attenders say that receiving Eucharist (90 percent) and attending Mass (89 percent) is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. More than seven in ten weekly attenders say that celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation (72 percent) and helping those in need (70 percent) is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic. Those who attend Mass less often are less likely to consider these as being this important to their sense of being a Catholic.

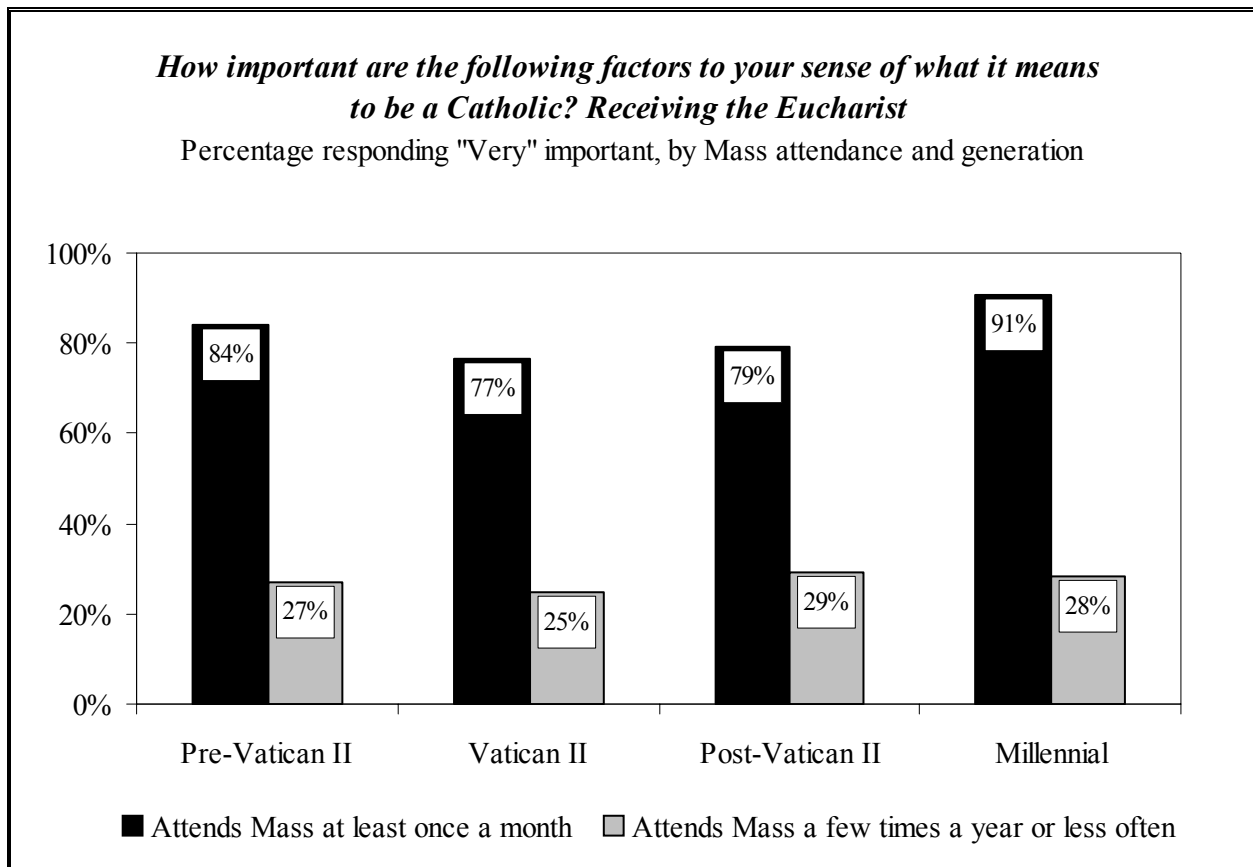
<i>How important are the following factors to <u>your</u> sense of what it means to be a Catholic?</i>			
Percentage responding “Very” important, by Mass attendance			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Receiving the Eucharist/Holy Communion	90%	71%	27%
Attending Mass	89	56	12
Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation	72	62	26
Helping those in need	70	55	36
Living my life consistent with Church teaching	64	51	21
Having devotion to Mary	58	52	22
Going to Reconciliation or Confession	52	40	13
Having devotions to the saints	43	41	18

- More than half of Catholics attending Mass at least once a month say that having devotion to Mary is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic.
- More than four in ten Catholics attending Mass at least once a month say that having devotion to the saints is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic.
- Catholics attending Mass a few times a year or less often were more likely to select helping those in need as being a factor that is “very” important to their sense of being a Catholic (36 percent) more so than anything else that was listed.

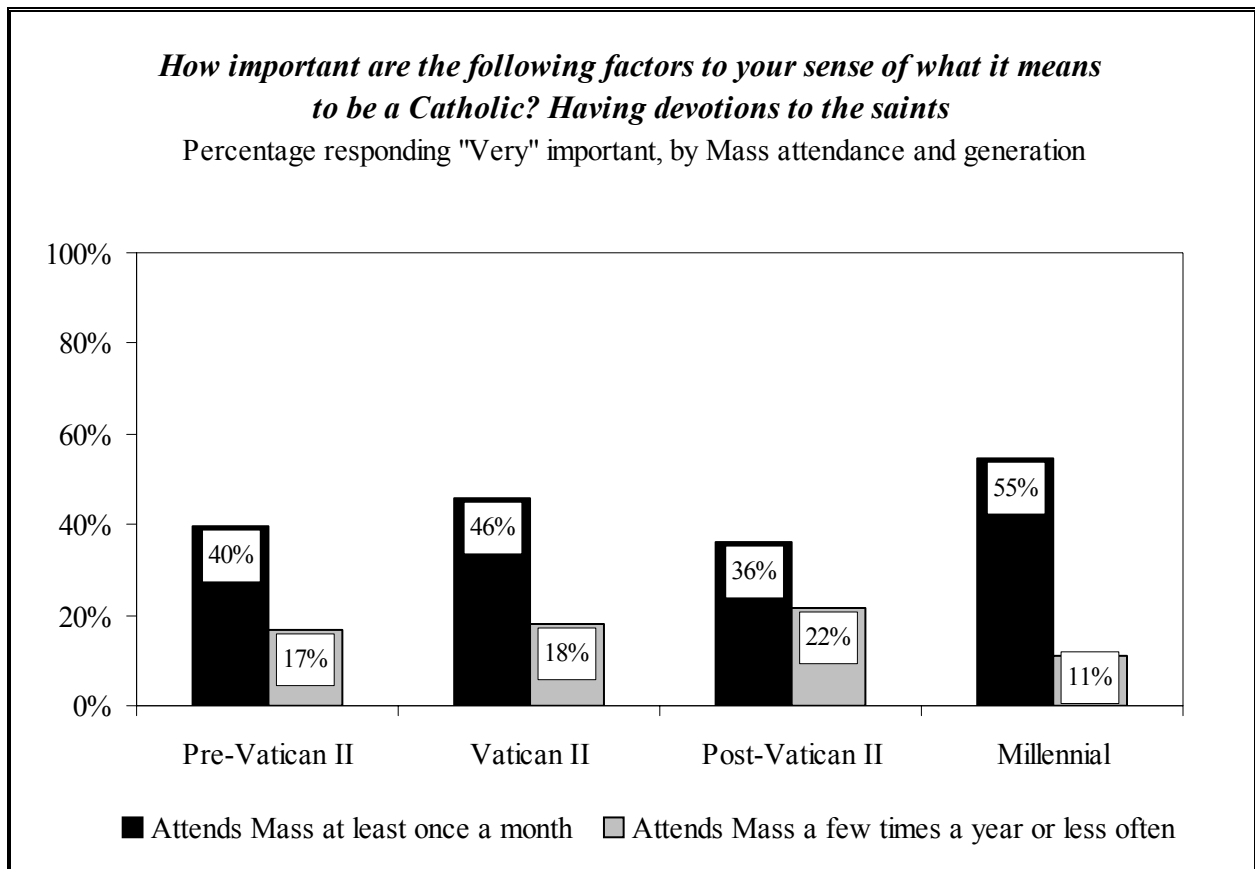
Differences by Generation

Members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation are most likely to say that all but three of the listed items are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (the exceptions are devotions to the saints, celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation, and going to Reconciliation). Generational differences are largest for attending Mass (58 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation and 32 percent of the Millennial Generation), helping those in need (52 compared to 34 percent), and having devotion to Mary (49 compared to 31 percent).

However, among those attending Mass at least once a month, Millennial Generation Catholics are most likely to say that receiving the Eucharist is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be Catholic.



Similarly, among those attending Mass at least once a month, the youngest generation of Catholics is most likely to say that having devotion to the saints is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic.



Differences by Gender

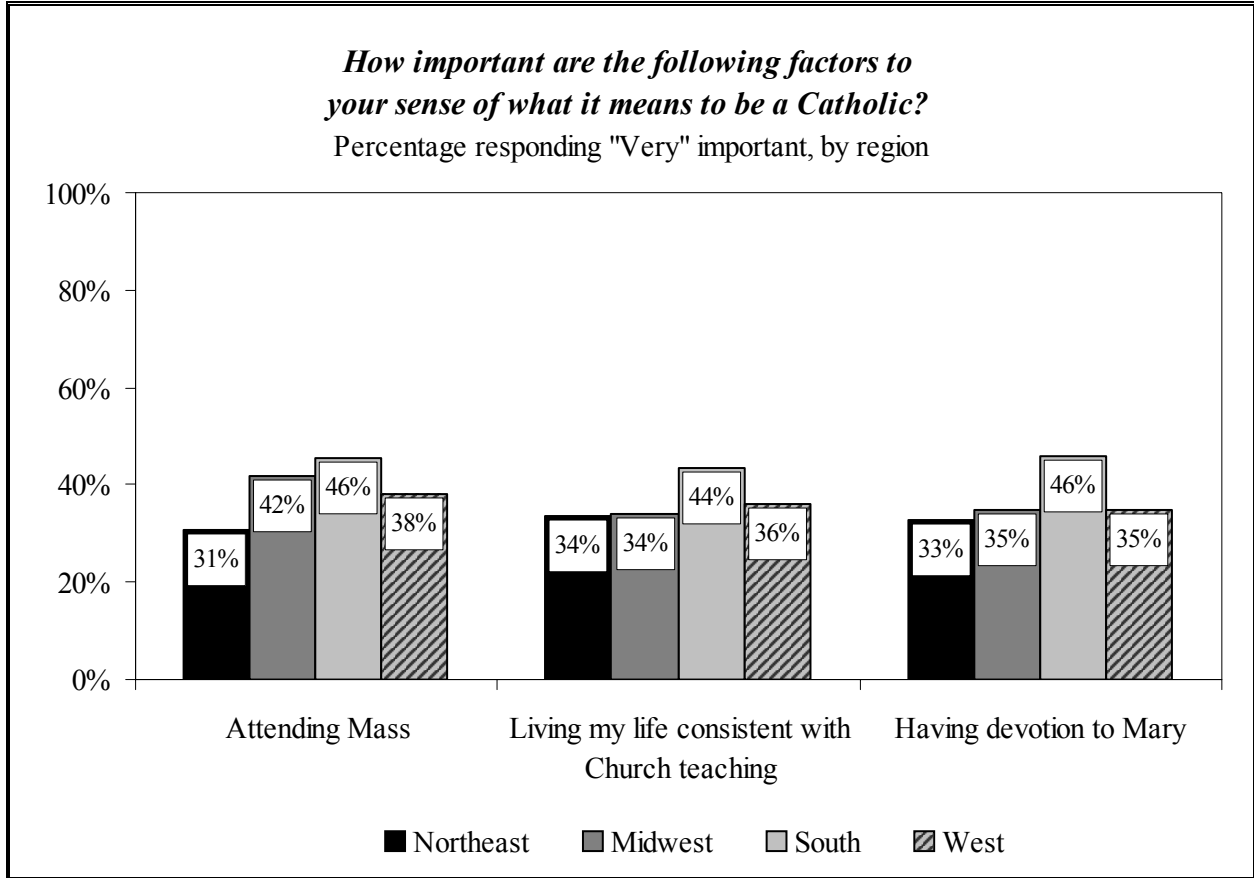
Women are more likely than men to say that the following are “very” important to their sense of being a Catholic: helping those in need (53 compared to 43 percent), having devotion to Mary (43 compared to 30 percent), and having devotions to the saints (34 compared to 23 percent).

Differences by Ethnicity

Hispanics are slightly more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say that celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (34 compared to 24 percent).

Differences by Region

Catholics in the South are most likely to say the following are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic: attending Mass, living a life consistent with Church teaching, and having devotion to Mary.



Differences by Education

- The more education Catholics have, the more likely they are to say that attending Mass is at least “somewhat” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (83 percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 71 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, and 63 percent of all others).
- Similarly, the more education Catholics have, the more likely they are to say that living their life consistent with Church teaching is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (53 percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 44 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree, and 33 percent of all others).
- In contrast, the more education Catholics have, the *less* likely they are to say that having devotion to Mary is “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic (26

percent of those with a post-graduate degree, 45 percent of those with some college through a bachelor's degree, and 41 percent of those with a high school diploma or less).

- Those who attended a Catholic elementary or middle school are more likely than those who did not to say the following are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic: helping those in need (54 percent compared to 44 percent), living a life consistent with Church teaching (46 percent compared to 30 percent), and having devotion to Mary (41 percent compared to 35 percent).
- Similarly, those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to say the following are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic: helping those in need (56 percent compared to 46 percent)) and living a life consistent with Church teaching (49 percent compared to 33 percent).
- Among those attending at least some college, those who went to Catholic colleges or universities are more likely than those who did not to say the following are “very” important to their sense of what it means to be a Catholic: receiving the Eucharist (60 percent compared to 50 percent), attending Mass (49 percent compared to 39 percent), helping those in need (65 percent compared to 46 percent), and living a life consistent with Church teaching (54 percent compared to 37 percent).

Core Catholic Beliefs

Three-quarters of Catholics (75 percent) say they have never doubted that there is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (81 percent do not doubt this).

Indicate your belief about the following.

	I have never doubted this	I've had doubts about this in the past, but I have none now	I have a few doubts about this from time to time	I frequently doubt this	I do not believe this
There is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.	75%	6%	12%	5%	2%
Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.	73	7	12	5	3
Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.	71	8	13	5	3
There is a heaven.	69	7	18	5	1
God, the Father, is creator of heaven, the earth, and all we know of the universe.	68	8	16	6	2
Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculately conceived without original sin.	65	8	16	6	5
Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.	63	8	18	7	4
There is a hell.	59	8	22	6	5
The Pope and the Bishops of the Church have by divine institution taken the place of Saint Peter and the apostles of Jesus as pastors of the Church.	44	12	24	9	11

Respondents were asked about their belief in each of several core Catholic teachings, many of them taken from the Profession of Faith.

- About eight in ten Catholics have no current doubt about the Holy Trinity (81 percent), that Jesus rose from the dead (80 percent), and that He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (79 percent).
- Slightly fewer, but still about three-quarters do not doubt that God the Father is creator of all the universe (76 percent) and that Mary was immaculately conceived without original sin (73 percent). A similar proportion do not doubt that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead (71 percent).
- Seventy-six percent do not doubt there is a heaven and 67 percent do not doubt that there is a hell.
- More than half of Catholics do not currently doubt that the Pope and Bishops succeed Saint Peter and the apostles by divine institution as pastors of the Church. However, fewer than half of respondents (44 percent) say they have never doubted this.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Nine in ten or more Catholics who attend Mass at least weekly say they do not doubt any of the beliefs listed, except that the Pope and Bishops succeed Saint Peter and the apostles by divine institution as pastors of the Church (80 percent do not doubt this belief) and that there is a hell (78 percent do not doubt). Nearly all weekly attenders (97 percent) do not doubt beliefs regarding the Holy Trinity, that Jesus rose from the dead, or that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

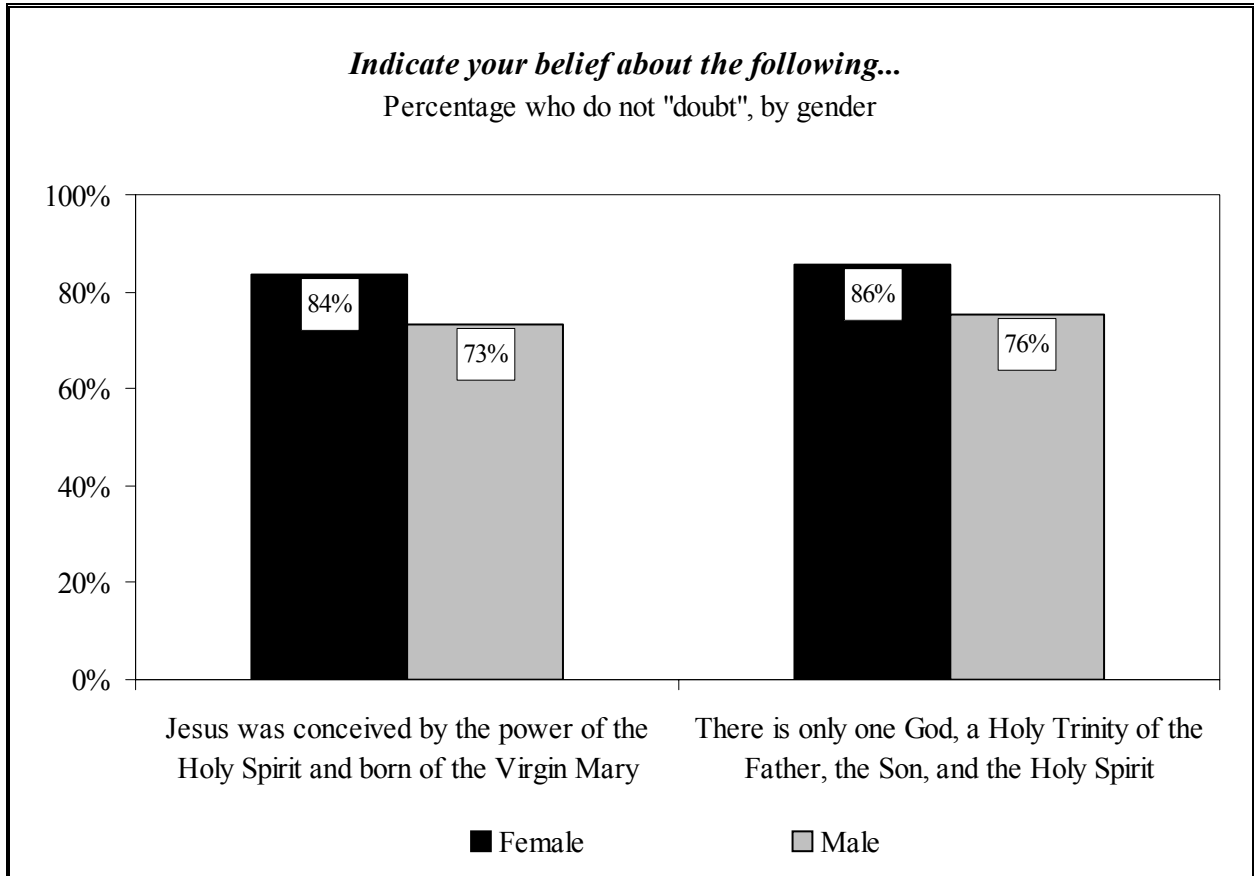
<i>Indicate your belief about the following.</i>			
Percentage <i>not</i> doubting this now, by Mass attendance			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
There is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.	97%	91%	70%
Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.	97	91	70
Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.	97	89	67
God, the Father, is creator of heaven, the earth, and all we know of the universe.	93	88	64
Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.	91	81	60
There is a heaven.	90	88	67
Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculately conceived without original sin.	90	85	63
The Pope and the Bishops of the Church have by divine institution taken the place of Saint Peter and the apostles of Jesus as pastors of the Church.	80	68	40
There is a hell.	78	77	57

Those who attend Mass less than weekly are more likely than weekly Mass attenders to have doubts about all the beliefs listed. However, those attending Mass less than weekly but at least once a month are more similar to weekly attenders than to those who attend a few times a year or less often.

Differences by Gender

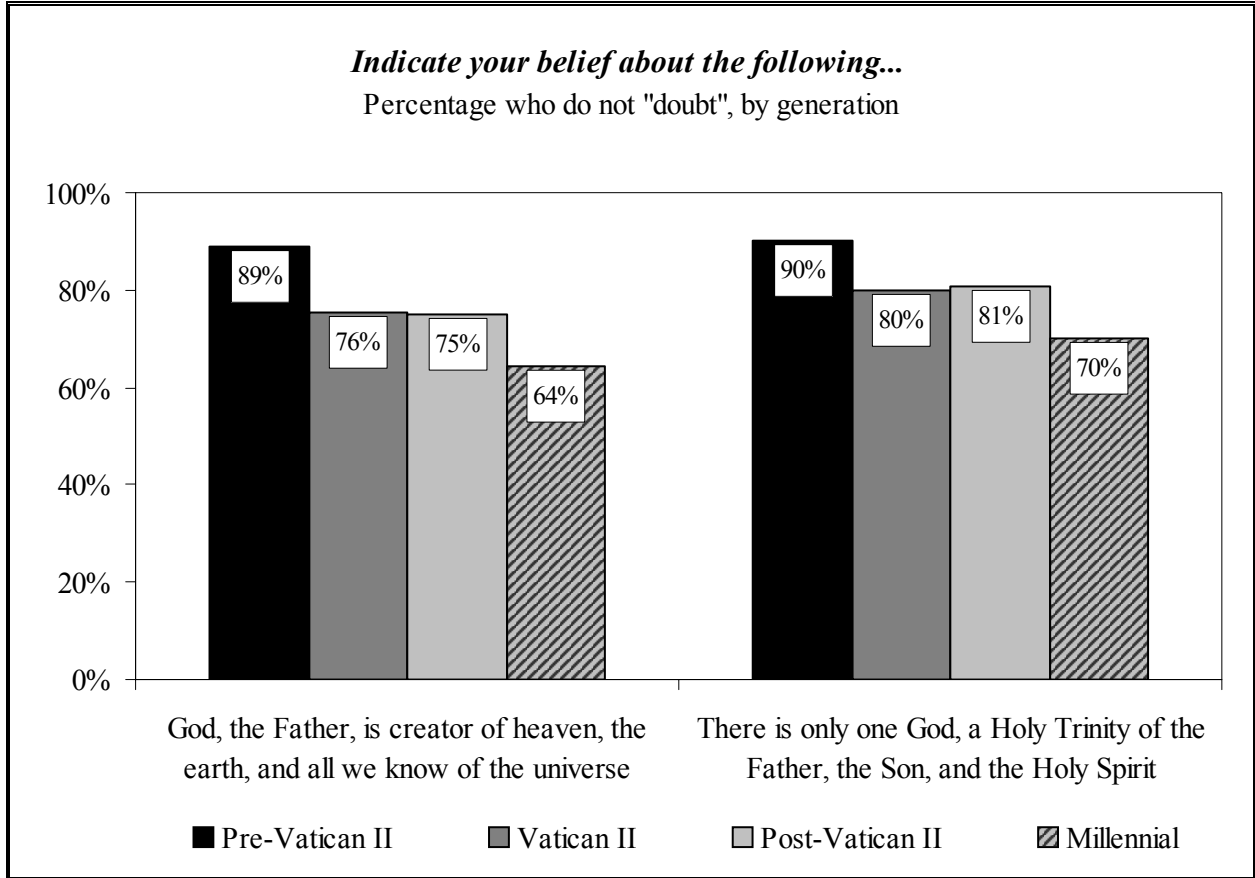
Women are slightly more likely than men to say they have *never* doubted most of the listed beliefs (with the exceptions that there is a hell and that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead).

The differences between female and male respondents is largest for the two beliefs in the figure below (percentages who do not dobt), that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and that there is one Triune God.



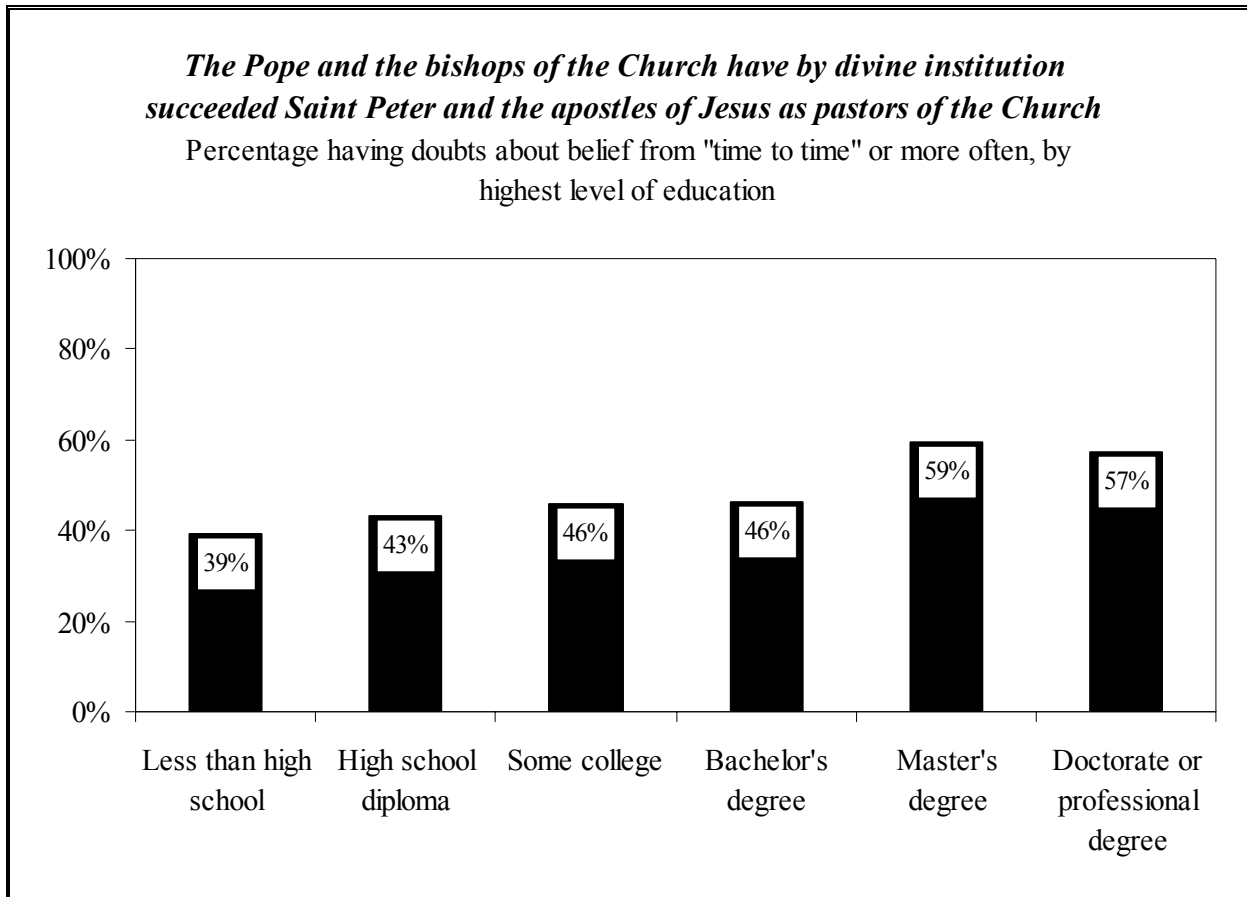
Differences by Generation

With the exception of the existence of hell, older Catholics are more likely than younger Catholics to say they do not doubt all the listed beliefs. Generational differences are largest for these beliefs: God the Father is creator of all the universe and that there is one Triune God.



Differences by Education

Catholics with lower levels of education are *less* likely to say they doubt from “time to time” or more often that the Pope and Bishops are successors to St. Peter and the apostles.



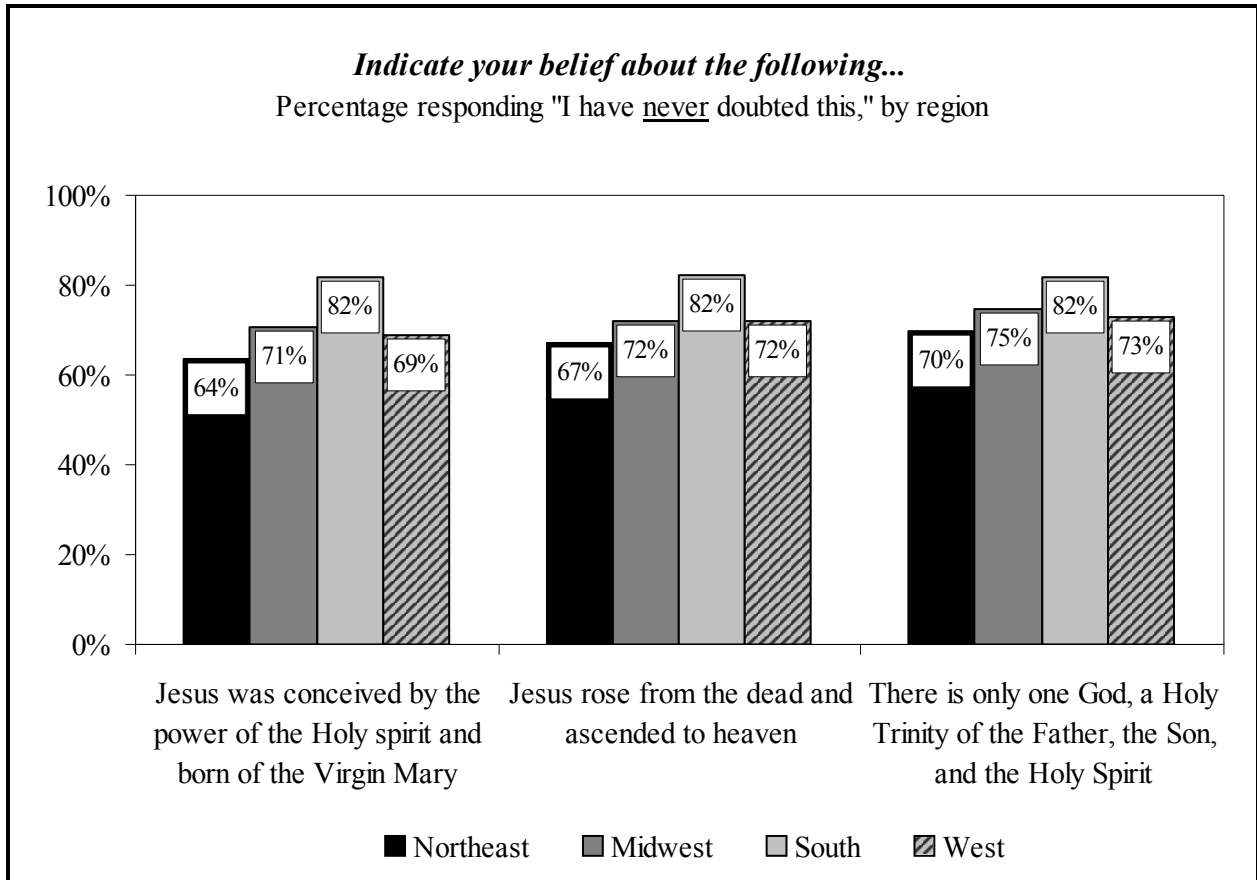
Those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to say they have “*never*” doubted that God the Father is creator of all the universe (75 percent compared to 66 percent).

Among those who attended at least some college, those who went to a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who did not to say that they do *not* doubt the following:

- God the Father is creator of all the universe (85 percent compared to 70 percent).
- Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (85 percent compared to 74 percent).
- Mary was immaculately conceived without original sin (83 percent compared to 67 percent).
- Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven (87 percent compared to 77 percent).
- There is a heaven (82 percent compared to 71 percent).
- There is a hell (72 percent compared to 62 percent).
- The Pope and Bishops are by divine institution the successors of Saint Peter and the Apostles as pastors of the Church (61 percent compared to 41 percent).

Differences by Region

Catholics in the South are most likely to say they have “never doubted” all the beliefs listed. More than eight in ten Catholics in the South say they have “never doubted” that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and that there is one Triune God.



Declining Number of Priests

The survey asked respondents if they have noticed the declining number of priests and whether this has affected them personally. They were also asked about their support for a number of possible ways of meeting ministry needs in a time of fewer priests.

Awareness of the Declining Number of Priests

Two-thirds of Catholics (66 percent) say they have noticed the decline in the number of priests in recent decades. Half of Catholics say the change has not personally affected them, and 15 percent say it has affected them.

*As you may know, the number of Catholic priests has declined in recent decades. Have you noticed this change?
[If “Yes”] Have you personally been affected by this change?*

	2001	2008
Has <i>not</i> noticed the change	30%	34%
Has noticed, has <i>not</i> personally been affected	50	51
Has noticed and has been personally been affected	20	15

In a 2001 CARA Poll, seven in ten Catholics reported that they had noticed the declining number of priests.³⁰ The results are generally similar, with three in ten respondents in 2001 saying they have not noticed the decline in priests and two in ten saying the change has personally affected them.

From 2001 to 2008 the number of diocesan and religious priests in the United States declined by 8 percent, from nearly 45,000 to just over 41,000.

³⁰ The 2001 CARA Catholic Poll, (CCP) a national telephone poll. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from the Knowledge Networks online format. The wording of the 2001 question specified “over the last three decades” rather than “in recent decades.”

Differences by Mass Attendance

Most weekly Mass attenders, 83 percent, have noticed the number of Catholic priests declining in recent decades. However, only three in ten weekly attenders (29 percent) say they have been personally affected by this change. A similar percentage of those attending less than weekly but at least once a month report being affected (22 percent). Very few of those attending Mass infrequently (6 percent) say they have been personally affected by the decline in priests. More than four in ten of those attending Mass a few times a year or less often (43 percent) have *not* noticed a decline.

<i>As you may know, the number of Catholic priests has declined in recent decades. Have you noticed this change? [If “Yes”] Have you personally been affected by this change?</i>			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Has <i>not</i> noticed the change	17%	31%	43%
Has noticed, has <i>not</i> personally been affected	54	47	51
Has noticed and has been personally been affected	29	22	6

Differences by Generation

Eighty-three percent of members of the Pre-Vatican II Generation have noticed the decline in the number of priests. This compares to 71 percent of the members of the Vatican II Generation, 59 percent of members of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 49 percent of the Millennial Generation.

Differences by Region

Catholics in the West are more likely than those in all other regions *not* to have noticed a decline in the number of priests (39 percent compared to 32 percent).

Differences by Education

Awareness of a change in the number of priests is high among those who have attended Catholic educational institutions. Seventy-six percent of those who attended a Catholic elementary, middle, or high schools say they have noticed a decline in the number of priests, as does 75 percent of those who attended a Catholic college or university.

Support for Various Ways of Meeting Catholics' Needs in a Time of Fewer Priests

Nearly two-thirds of Catholics would support sharing a priest with one or more other parishes if their parish did not have a resident priest.

Listed below are some of the things the Catholic Church is doing to help meet Catholics' need in a time of fewer priests. Would you support or oppose each of the following if the parish you attend did not have a resident priest?

	“Support” or “Strongly Support”	“Strongly Support” Only
Sharing a priest with one or more other parishes	65%	19%
Bringing in a priest from outside of the United States	56	21
Increasing the use of deacons	56	16
Asking a retired priest to come in and do more	55	15
Increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers (someone who is not ordained, working or volunteering in a ministry at least part-time for a Catholic parish or other Church organization)	47	13
Merging the parish with another nearby parish	44	9

Respondents were asked about their preferences for several possible options if their parish did not have a resident priest.

- A majority of Catholics would support bringing in priests from outside the United States (56 percent), increasing the use of deacons (56 percent), or asking a retired priest to come in and do more (55 percent) if their parish did not have a resident priest.
- Fewer than half (47 percent) support increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers as a way of dealing with the lack of a resident priest in their parish.
- The least favored option is to merge the parish with another nearby parish (44 percent). Only one in ten (9 percent) would “strongly support” this if their parish lacked a resident priest.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Among weekly Mass attenders, the largest proportions of respondents supported sharing a priest with another parish (76 percent) or bringing in a priest from outside the United States (73 percent) if their parish lacked a resident priest. Slightly fewer support asking a retired priest to do more (71 percent) or increase the use of deacons (68 percent). Those who attend less than weekly but at least once a month indicate similar levels of support for most of the options listed with the exception of asking a retired priest to do more (59 percent compared to 71 percent). Catholics who attend Mass a few times a year or less support, as a majority, only one option—sharing a priest with one or more other parishes (56 percent).

Listed below are some of the things the Catholic Church is doing to help meet Catholics’ need in a time of fewer priests. Would you support or oppose each of the following if the parish you attend did not have a resident priest?

Percentage who “Support” or “Strongly Support” each

	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Sharing a priest with one or more other parishes	76%	78%	56%
Bringing in a priest from outside of the United States	73	67	45
Asking a retired priest to come in and do more	71	59	46
Increasing the use of deacons	68	70	46
Increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers	60	56	38
Merging the parish with another nearby parish	50	51	40

Differences by Ethnicity

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say they would “strongly” support bringing in a priest from outside the United States (29 compared to 19 percent).

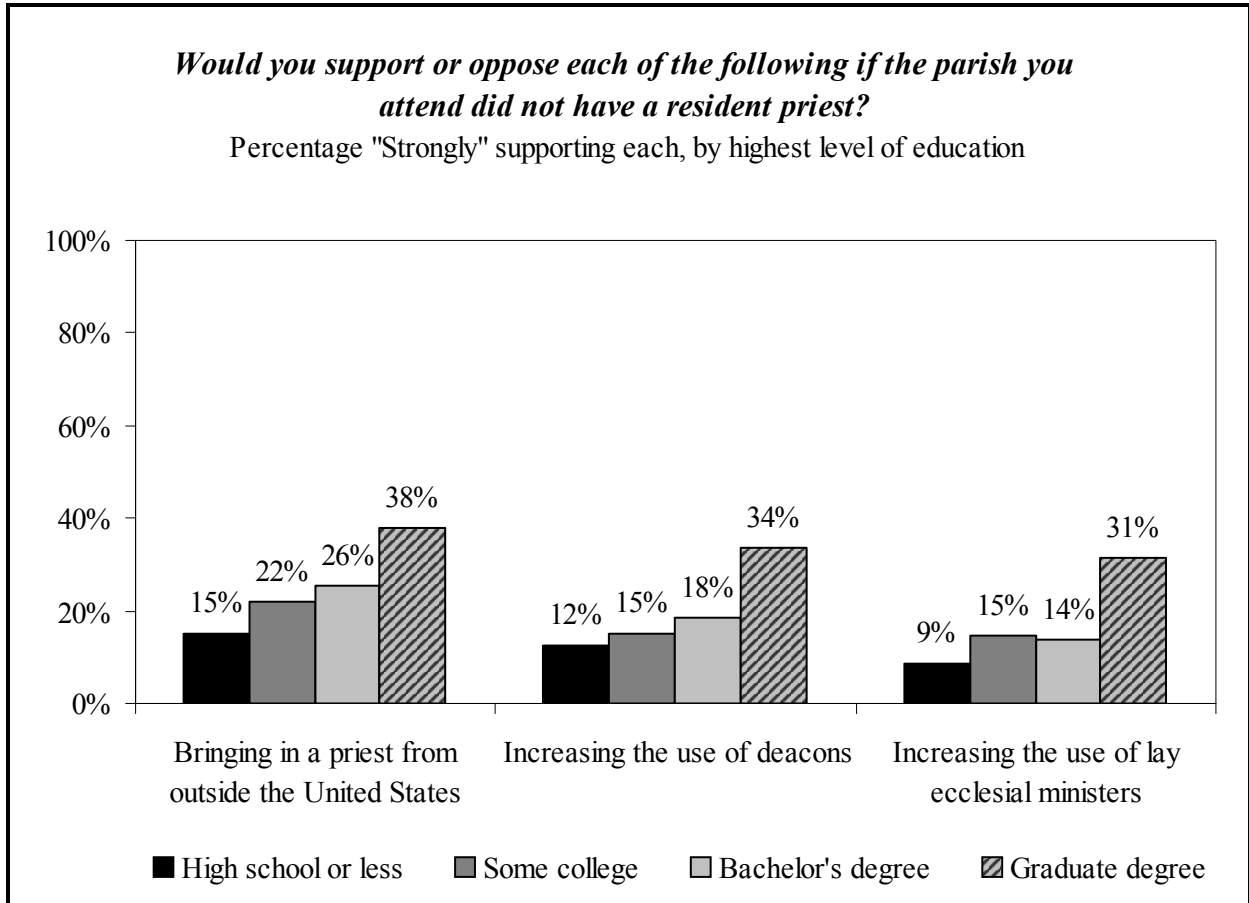
Differences by Generation

Older Catholics are slightly more likely than younger Catholics to support asking a retired priest to come in and do more (65 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation compared to 52 percent of all other Catholics).

Older Catholics are also slightly more likely to support merging parishes (52 percent of the Pre-Vatican II Generation, 45 percent of the Vatican II Generation, 43 percent of the Post-Vatican II Generation, and 37 percent of the Millennial Generation).

Differences by Education

Highly educated Catholics are most likely to “strongly” support bringing in a priest from outside the United States, increasing the use of deacons, and increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers.



Those who attended a Catholic high school are more likely than those who did not to support all of the options listed; especially sharing a priest with one or more other parishes (72 percent compared to 63 percent), increasing the use of deacons (65 percent compared to 54 percent), and increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers (61 percent compared to 43 percent).

Those who attended a Catholic college or university are more likely than those who went to a non-Catholic college or university to support the following: sharing a priest with one or more other parishes (81 percent compared to 67 percent), increasing the use of deacons (72 percent compared to 57 percent), and increasing the use of lay ecclesial ministers (72 percent compared to 51 percent).

Differences by Region

Catholics in the South (65 percent) and West (60 percent) are more likely than those in the Midwest (48 percent) and Northeast (52 percent) to support bringing in a priest from outside of the United States.

Ministry of International Priests

Respondents were asked if an international priest has regularly served at their parish at any time in the last five years. Those who said “yes” were then asked about their satisfaction with the ministry of that priest.

Experience of an International Priest at One’s Parish

In the past five years, about one-third of Catholics have had a priest from outside the United States come to regularly serve at the parish they attend.

<i>In the past five years, has any priest from outside of the United States come to regularly serve at the parish you attend?</i>	
Yes	34%
No	66

Differences by Mass Attendance

Fifty-five percent of weekly Mass attenders and 44 percent of those attending less often but at least monthly say a priest from outside of the United States has come to regularly serve in their parish in the last five years.

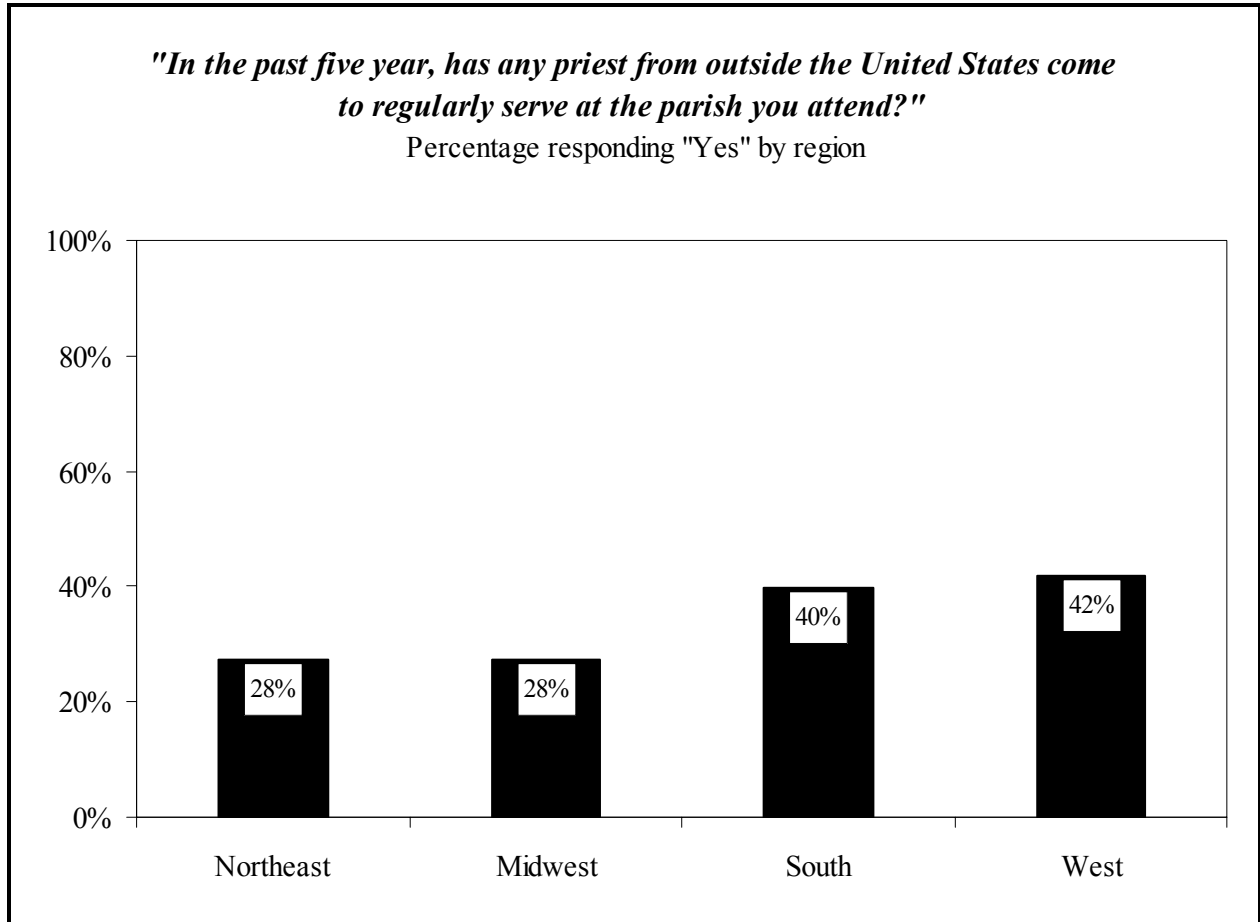
<i>In the past five years, has any priest from outside of the United States come to regularly serve at the parish you attend?</i>			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Yes	55%	44%	21%
No	45	56	79

Differences by Ethnicity

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say that an international priest has served at their parish in the last five years (41 compared to 30 percent).

Differences by Region

Catholics in the South and West are much more likely than those in the Northeast and Midwest to report that a priest from outside the United States has regularly served at their parish in the past five years.



Satisfaction with the Ministry of International Parish Priests

Among those who have experienced the ministry of an international priest at their parish, slightly more than half say they are “very” satisfied with this ministry. Nearly nine in ten (87 percent) are at least “somewhat” satisfied.

How satisfied were you in the ministry of this priest (or priests) from outside of the United States at your parish?

Respondents who have had a priest from outside the U.S. regularly serve at their parish

Very satisfied	53%
Somewhat satisfied	34
Somewhat dissatisfied	11
Very dissatisfied	2

One-third describe themselves as “somewhat” satisfied with the ministry of an international priest at their parish. One in ten say they are “somewhat” dissatisfied, and just 2 percent that they are “very” dissatisfied.

Differences by Mass Attendance

Among those who have had a priest from outside the United States serve in their parish, more than 85 percent of those who attend Mass at least once a month are either “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with this priest’s ministry.

How satisfied were you in the ministry of this priest (or priests) from outside of the United States at your parish?

Respondents who have had a priest from outside the U.S. regularly serve at their parish

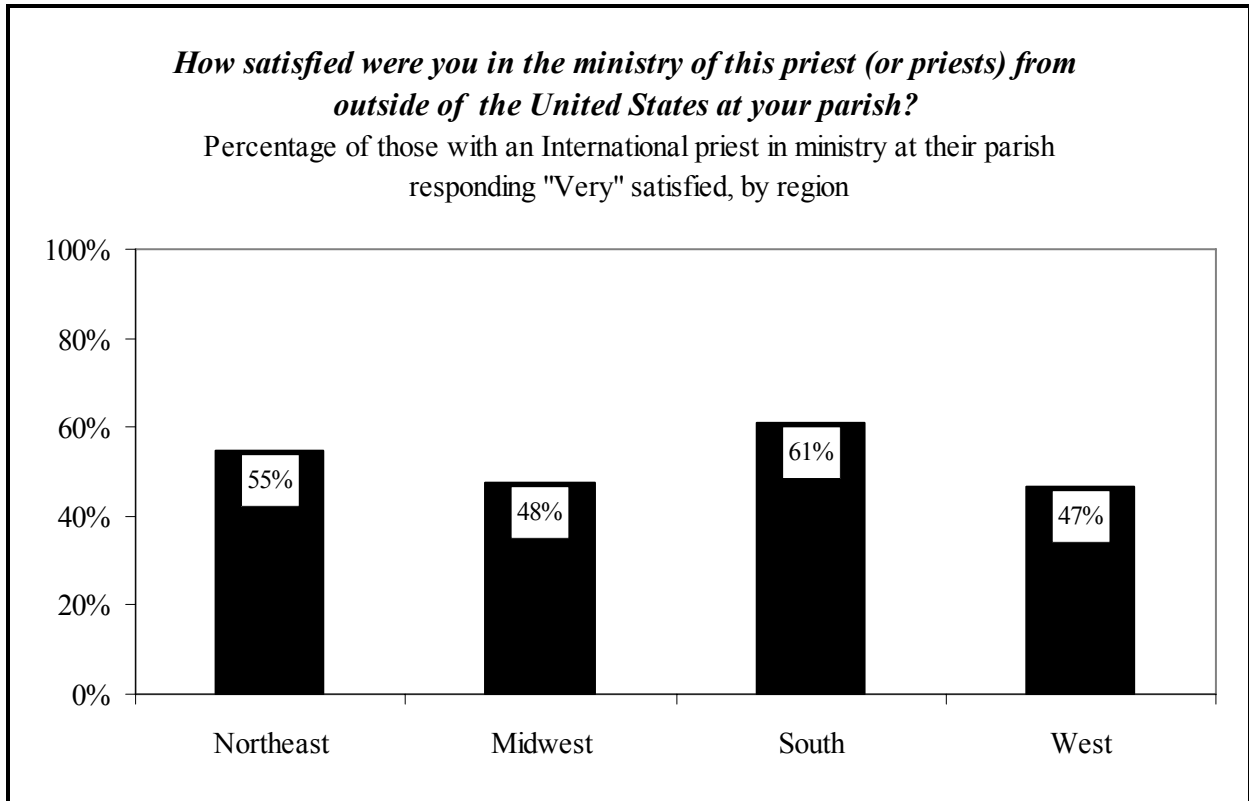
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Very satisfied	57%	57%	43%
Somewhat satisfied	30	29	43
Somewhat dissatisfied	10	11	13
Very dissatisfied	3	3	1

Differences by Ethnicity

Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to say that they are “very” satisfied with the ministry of the international priests who have served at their parishes (64 compared to 45 percent).

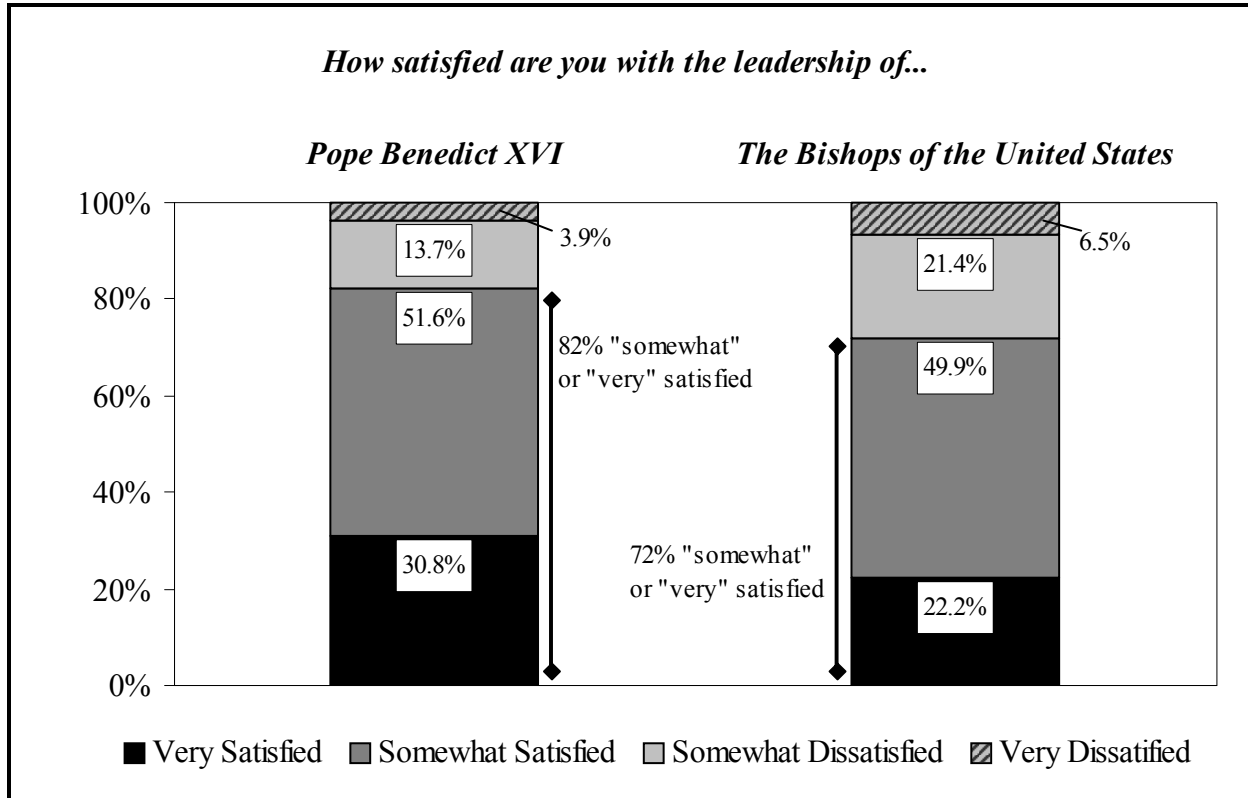
Differences by Region

Among Catholics who have had a priest from outside the United States serve in their parish, those most likely to say they are “very” satisfied with the ministry of this priest reside in the South (61 percent) and Northeast (55 percent).



Satisfaction with Church Leadership

More than eight in ten Catholics (82 percent) describe themselves as “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI. More than seven in ten (72 percent) are at least “somewhat” satisfied with the leadership of the Bishops of the United States.



Respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the leadership of the Pope and Bishops of the United States. About three in ten say they are “very” satisfied with the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI (31 percent). More than one in five (22 percent) are “very” satisfied with the leadership of the Bishops of the United States.

In 2004, 58 percent of Catholics described themselves as at least “somewhat satisfied” with the leadership of the Bishops of the United States.³¹ As documented in several CARA polls, the increase in satisfaction with the Bishops since 2004 (+14 percentage points) is part of a larger trend of a recovery in satisfaction with the leadership of the Church since the height of the sexual abuse scandal in 2002.³²

³¹ Results for 2004 come from the 2004 CARA Catholic Poll (CCP), a national telephone poll. Results have been weighted to adjust for methodological differences from the online Knowledge Networks format.

³² See the CARA working paper: *Catholic Reactions to the News of Sexual Abuse Cases Involving Catholic Clergy*. It is available at: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/pubs/CARA%20Working%20Paper%208.pdf>

Differences by Mass Attendance

Ninety-three percent of Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more are at least “somewhat” satisfied with the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI. Eighty-two percent of weekly attenders have the same level of satisfaction in the Bishops of the United States.

<i>How satisfied are you with the leadership of...</i>			
Percentage responding “Somewhat” or “Very” satisfied			
	<i>By Mass Attendance</i>		
	Weekly or more	Less than weekly but at least once a month	A few times a year or less
Pope Benedict XVI	93%	84%	77%
The Bishops of the United States	82	76	67

Less frequent Mass attenders are *less* likely to be as satisfied with the leadership of the Pope or the U.S. Bishops, although strong majorities of each group are still at least “somewhat” satisfied.

Differences by Gender

Women are slightly more likely than men to describe themselves as “very” satisfied with both the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI (37 compared with 25 percent) and the U.S. Bishops (27 compared to 17 percent).

Differences by Generation

Satisfaction with the leadership of the Pope is higher among the oldest and youngest Catholic generations, among both frequent and infrequent Mass attenders.

