

The Catholic Family

21st Century Challenges
in the United States

A Special Report by
Mark M. Gray, Ph.D.
June 2015



*The Family That Prays
Together Stays Together*



CARA is a national, nonprofit, 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'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.

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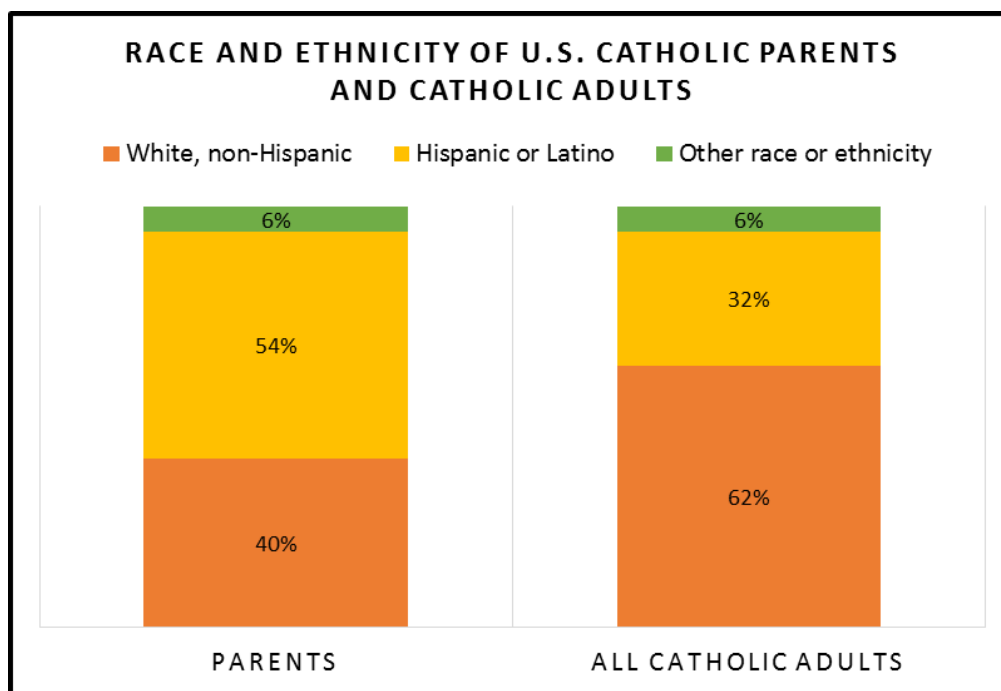
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There are many important changes occurring in Catholic families in the United States. While the number of Catholic infant baptisms in the United States celebrated annually are at levels similar to the period preceding the Baby Boom in the middle of the last century (i.e. about 720,000), the similarity ends there. In the following special report, and the three additional reports to be published, the changes in Catholic families will be outlined. It is important to note that this is a poll of Catholic parents, unlike other recent studies of all Catholic adults.

In fall 2014, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University conducted a national poll of adult Catholics, ages 25 to 45 who are parents of a minor child to explore the 21st Century Catholic family. This survey, completed in September and October 2014, include interviews with 1,014 self-identified Catholic parents resulting in a sampling margin of error of ± 3.1 percentage points. Similar questions to those used in other recent CARA Catholic Polls (CCPs) were utilized making comparisons possible between Catholic parents and all Catholic adults. This research was made possible by Holy Cross Family Ministries.

Demographics

Catholics in the United States today are likely among the most diverse religious groups the country has ever known. Catholic families specifically are even more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse than the overall Catholic population. Thirty-one percent of parents surveyed chose to take the survey in Spanish and more than half of self-identified as Hispanic or Latino (54 percent). By comparison, a third of adult Catholics are Hispanic or Latino (32 percent).

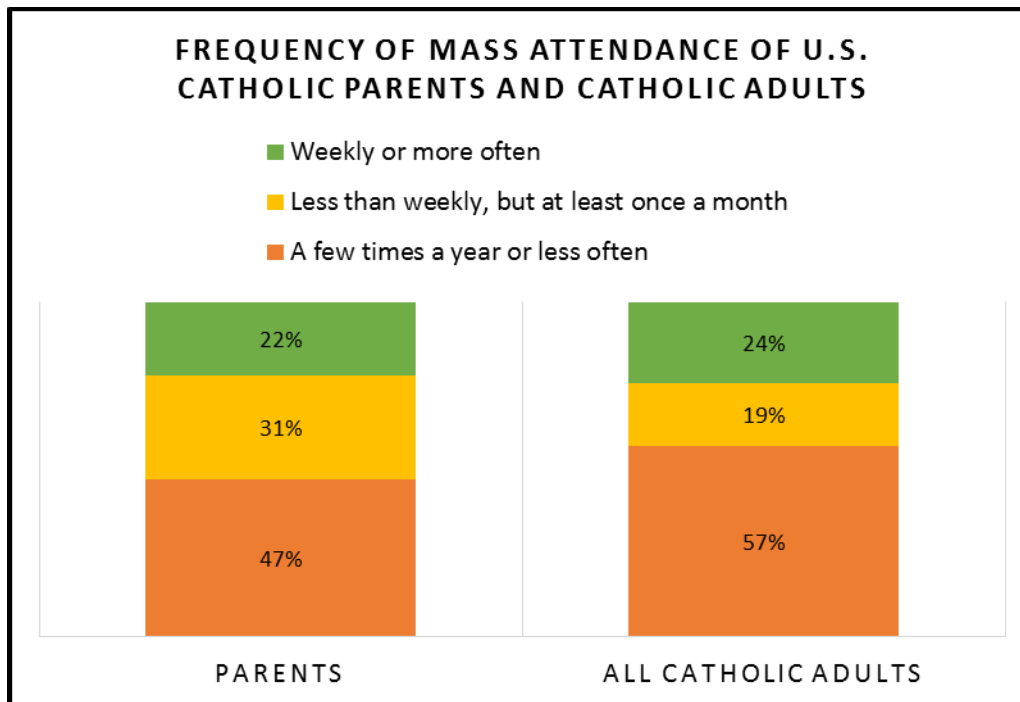


Most Catholic children today are being raised by married Catholic parents. Eight in ten Catholic mothers and fathers are married (79 percent) and less than 1 percent are widowed. Seventy-six percent of married Catholic parents have a Catholic spouse. Three percent of parents are single

and have never married, 13 percent are single and living with a partner. Four percent are divorced and 1 percent are separated. Parents are less likely than the overall Catholic adult population to be single and never married, divorced, or to be widowed.

Mass Attendance

The frequency of weekly Mass attendance reported by Catholic parents is similar to all adult Catholics (22 percent compared to 24 percent). Yet, a larger proportion of parents than all adults attend Mass less than weekly, but at least once a month. Thus, a majority of parents (53 percent) are in a parish at least once a month compared to 43 percent of all adult Catholics.



Among parents, there are some variations in frequency of Mass attendance by the composition of their families. On average, Catholic families have two children in the home. Yet Catholic parents with three or more children are much more likely than those with fewer children to attend Mass at least once a month (66 percent compared to 48 percent).

Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?

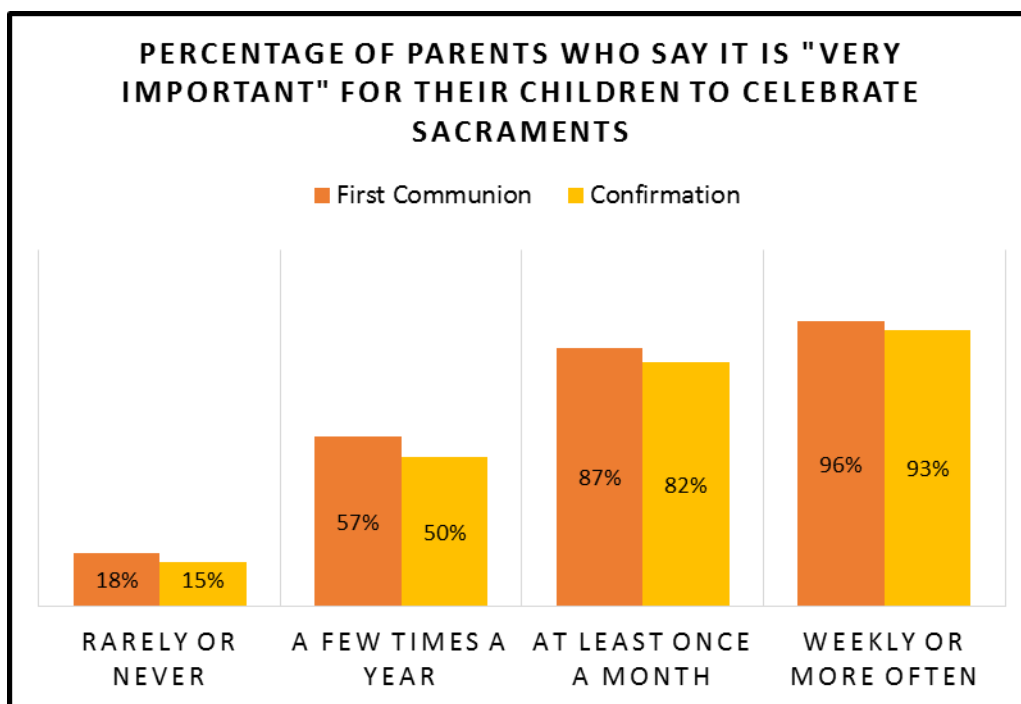
| | <u>Number of Children</u> | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------|------------|
| | Fewer than 3 children | Three or more children | Has an infant | Has a teen |
| Rarely or never | 24% | 16% | 26% | 18% |
| A few times a year | 28 | 18 | 21 | 24 |
| At least once a month | 30 | 33 | 35 | 32 |
| Weekly or more often | 18 | 33 | 18 | 26 |

Parents with a teen in the home are more likely to attend Mass weekly than those with an infant (26 percent compared to 18 percent). Parents who have separated or divorced or who are single and have never married are among the least likely to attend Mass weekly (15 percent for both sub-groups).

Sacraments and Religious Education

Although Catholic parents are attending Mass more frequently than others, some parents are less likely than other mothers and fathers to feel it is essential for their children to celebrate sacraments. Only 66 percent of parents say that it is “very” important to them that their children celebrate their first communion. Even fewer, 61 percent indicate the same importance for their children being confirmed. These responses are consistent with Catholic teens self-reporting of having experienced these two sacraments in another recent CARA survey.

The divide between parents expressing importance and those expressing less is their frequency of worship. Less than one in five parents who rarely or never attend Mass consider sacraments for their children to be “very important,” while more than eight in ten parents who attend Mass at least once a month feel that First Communion and Confirmation for their children is “very important.”



Regardless of sacramental practice, most Catholic parents today do not currently have their children enrolled in Catholic school-based or a parish-based religious education program. In all, more than two-thirds, 68 percent, do not have any of their children enrolled in formal Catholic religious education. Here again there are some differences by frequency of Mass attendance with 42 percent of weekly Mass attenders having a child enrolled in a parish-based religious education compared to 27 percent of monthly attenders, an 11 percent of those attending a few times a year and only 4 percent of those who rarely or never attend Mass.

Do any of your children currently attend...?

Percentage responding "Yes"

| | |
|---|----|
| A Catholic elementary or middle school | 8% |
| A Catholic high school | 3 |
| A parish-based Catholic religious education program | 21 |
| A youth ministry program | 5 |
| None of the above | 68 |

Those residing in households with higher incomes are slightly more likely than those earning less to enroll a child in a Catholic school. However, even those in the highest income brackets are still relatively unlikely to enroll children. Among those in households earning \$85,000 or more per year only 14 percent have a child enrolled in a Catholic elementary school and 4 percent in a Catholic high school.

Beliefs

Although differences in worship are evident among Catholic parents today, most still hold core "Creed" beliefs of the Catholic Church without doubt.

Indicate your belief about the following...

Percentage of respondents who currently have no doubts about each:

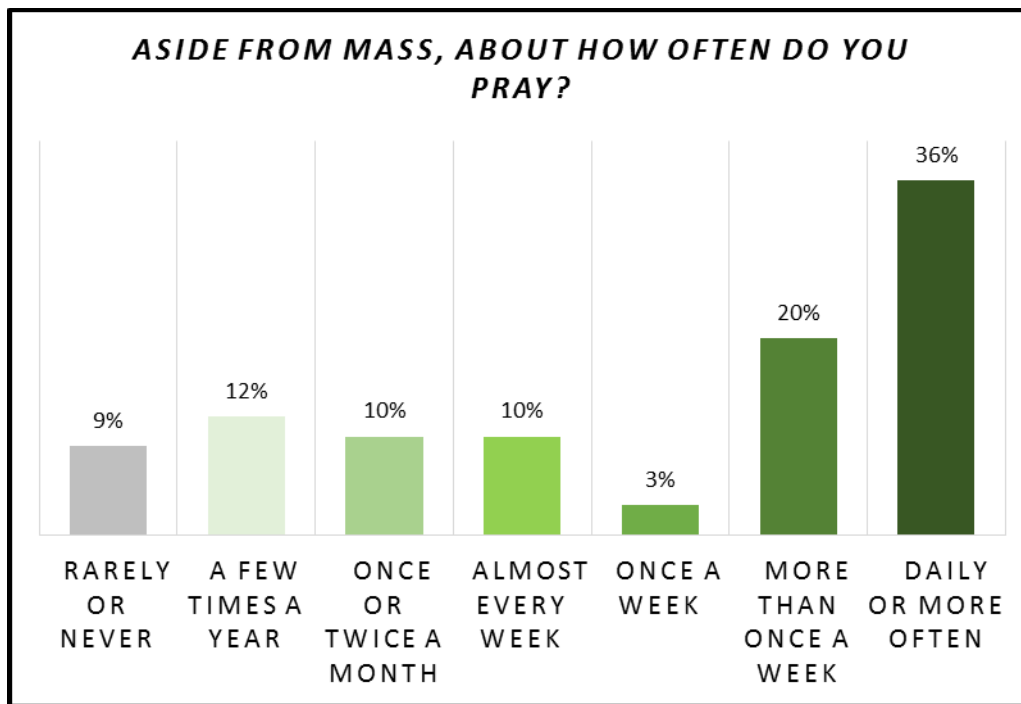
| | Parents | All adults |
|---|----------------|-------------------|
| There is a heaven | 85% | 76% |
| Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven | 83 | 80 |
| There is only one God, a Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit | 82 | 81 |
| Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary | 81 | 79 |
| Angels, spiritual messengers of God, exist | 81 | -- |
| God, the father, is creator of heaven, the earth, and all we know of the universe | 79 | 76 |
| God created human beings in his own image | 79 | -- |
| Prayers are heard and answered | 79 | -- |
| Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead | 76 | 71 |
| Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculately conceived without original sin | 76 | 73 |
| There is a devil | 75 | -- |
| There is a hell | 72 | 67 |

"--" Question not asked.

Parents are more likely than all adult Catholics to believe in Heaven (85 percent compared to 76 percent). About eight in ten or more parents believe in this without doubt in addition to believing in Jesus rising from the dead and ascending into Heaven (83 percent), in the Holy Trinity (82 percent), Jesus being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (81 percent), that Angels, spiritual messengers of God, exist (81 percent), that God is the creator of the universe (79 percent), that God created human beings in his own image (79 percent), and that prayers are heard and answered (79 percent). In general, weekly Mass attenders and Hispanic or Latino parents are among the most likely to believe core Catholic teachings without doubt.

Prayer

Seventy-one percent of parents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that prayer is essential to their faith (80 percent among weekly Mass attenders) and most parents are regularly talking to God. Thirty-six percent of parents pray at least once a day. Another 23 percent pray less than daily but at least once a week. One in five pray less than weekly but at least once a month (20 percent). Twelve percent pray a few times a year. Only 9 percent say they rarely or never pray. When asked why they may not pray sometimes, parents were most likely to say the following explains their lack of prayer: busy schedule or lack of time (51 percent “somewhat” or “very much”), having missed Mass (39 percent), or that prayer just did not cross their mind (39 percent).



Forty percent of parents pray in Spanish and 59 percent in English. One percent pray in some other language (e.g., Polish, Portuguese).

Most parents, 76 percent, say they more often pray by themselves than with family members. Seven percent say they more often pray with family members than alone and 17 percent pray alone and with family about equally. Parents who pray more alone most often say that they

choose to do so because this is what they prefer (24 percent) or because of timing and scheduling conflicts that prevent them from praying with others (21 percent). In the words of respondents here are some of the reasons cited for more often praying alone than with family:

- *Because I like to do it alone. It makes me feel like I can be more open and honest and closer to God.*
- *My prayers seem like intimate conversations.*
- *Done at night, most of them already sleep.*
- *Kids weren't baptized.*
- *Husband is atheist.*
- *As a child my family only prayed at holiday meals, which is when we do as a family.*
- *Kids are too little.*

Prayer at family gatherings is less common than prayer in other settings and at other times. In descending order, parents are most likely to “always” pray: during times of crisis (42 percent), when feeling anxious or depressed (34 percent), when feeling blessed (31 percent), before bed (26 percent), during Lent (18 percent), during Advent (18 percent), when they wake (13 percent), before meals (13 percent), and at family gatherings (10 percent).

How often are you likely to pray during these times?

| | <i>Always</i> | <i>Most of the time</i> | <i>Some of the time</i> | <i>Not often</i> | <i>Never</i> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| During times of crisis | 42% | 25% | 23% | 7% | 3% |
| When I feel anxious or depressed | 34 | 25 | 26 | 10 | 5 |
| When I feel blessed | 31 | 23 | 26 | 13 | 7 |
| Before bed | 26 | 26 | 25 | 15 | 8 |
| During Lent | 18 | 21 | 28 | 19 | 14 |
| During Advent | 18 | 18 | 26 | 20 | 18 |
| When I wake up | 13 | 13 | 29 | 25 | 20 |
| Before meals | 13 | 13 | 25 | 29 | 20 |
| At family gatherings | 10 | 13 | 29 | 27 | 21 |

When praying, a majority of parents say they “always” or “most of the time” are praying to God the Father (74 percent) or Jesus Christ (59 percent). Fewer indicate praying this often to the Holy Spirit (45 percent), Mary (44 percent), or the Holy Trinity (33 percent). Some pray to or ask the intercession of a guardian angel (31 percent), a deceased family member or friend (26 percent), a

specific saint (22 percent), or saints on their feast days (16 percent), “always” or “most of the time” when they pray.

When you pray, how often do you pray to or ask the intercession of...?

| | <i>Always</i> | <i>Most of the time</i> | <i>Some of the time</i> | <i>Not often</i> | <i>Never</i> |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| God the Father | 51% | 23% | 16% | 6% | 4% |
| God the Son, Jesus Christ | 40 | 19 | 22 | 9 | 10 |
| God the Holy Spirit | 33 | 12 | 24 | 15 | 16 |
| Mary, Mother of God | 32 | 12 | 22 | 16 | 18 |
| The Holy Trinity | 24 | 9 | 22 | 21 | 24 |
| Guardian angel | 17 | 14 | 22 | 21 | 26 |
| A deceased family member or friend | 14 | 12 | 27 | 20 | 27 |
| A particular saint | 12 | 10 | 25 | 27 | 26 |
| Saints on their feast days | 8 | 8 | 17 | 31 | 36 |

The most common reason for prayer among parents is for the wellbeing of their family. Eighty-three percent do this “most of the time” or “always” when they pray. A majority of parents say they are “always” or “most of the time” saying a specific Catholic prayer (57 percent) or simply talking to God when they pray (58 percent). Fewer than half pray this frequently for their own wellbeing (45 percent) or for world issues (41 percent). Nearly a third say that they reflect on something while praying (32 percent). About one in five meditate (22 percent) or discern something (20 percent). Fifteen percent “always” or “most of the time” participate in religious devotions while praying.

When you pray, how often are you...?

| | <i>Always</i> | <i>Most of the time</i> | <i>Some of the time</i> | <i>Not often</i> | <i>Never</i> |
|--|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Praying for the wellbeing of your family | 52% | 31% | 14% | 2% | 1% |
| Saying a specific Catholic prayer (e.g., Our Father, Hail Mary) | 37 | 20 | 22 | 12 | 9 |
| Praying for the wellbeing of others you know (non-family) | 31 | 27 | 31 | 9 | 2 |
| Simply talking to God | 26 | 25 | 31 | 11 | 7 |
| Praying for your own wellbeing | 24 | 21 | 39 | 13 | 4 |
| Praying for world issues (e.g., peace, to relieve human suffering) | 21 | 20 | 32 | 19 | 8 |
| Reflecting on something | 13 | 19 | 44 | 14 | 10 |
| Meditating | 11 | 11 | 31 | 25 | 22 |
| Discerning something | 10 | 10 | 36 | 26 | 18 |
| Participating in other religious devotions | 8 | 7 | 28 | 28 | 29 |

Parents are most likely to typically use the following while praying: the Bible (41 percent), Catholic prayer book(s) (39 percent), and other Catholic publications including prayers (33 percent). Most often they are using these resources in print rather than in electronic formats.

Twenty-two percent of parents have at some point been involved in a Catholic small group that meets regularly for prayer, Bible study, or faith sharing. Twenty-percent have participated in Eucharistic Adoration.

Sixteen percent of parents indicate that they have invited non-family members to their home to pray with their family at some point. Among those who have done so these instances most often are related to general household celebrations (58 percent), Advent or Christmas (47 percent), or a time when someone in the home or community was ill or passed away (43 percent).

Only 16 percent of parents pray the rosary at least once a month (7 percent at least once a week). Weekly Mass attenders are most likely to pray the rosary with at least once a year (68 percent). Among those who do pray the rosary, half say they typically do so with their family (18 percent of all Catholic parents) and half do not (18 percent of all Catholic parents).

Sixty-four percent of parents do *not* pray the rosary. Among these respondents the most common reasons cited for not doing so were having no desire or need to pray it (39 percent), never learning or forgetting how to say it (24 percent), and time issues (17 percent). In their own words some of the common reasons cited include:

- *It doesn't feel like a meaningful prayer to repeat rote prayers from memory. It doesn't require any thought or communication.*
- *Because I don't know how to.*
- *Would like to start and fit it in my day.*
- *Don't know why, guess I should start.*
- *Don't have one[a rosary].*
- *Seems too old fashioned.*
- *I thought you only did it at funerals.*

Family Life and Media Use

A majority of parents report that they eat dinner together as a family every night (51 percent). More than a third say they do so a few times a week (35 percent). Three percent indicate they only do so on weekend nights and 4 percent once a week. Seven percent say they rarely or never eat dinner together as a family.

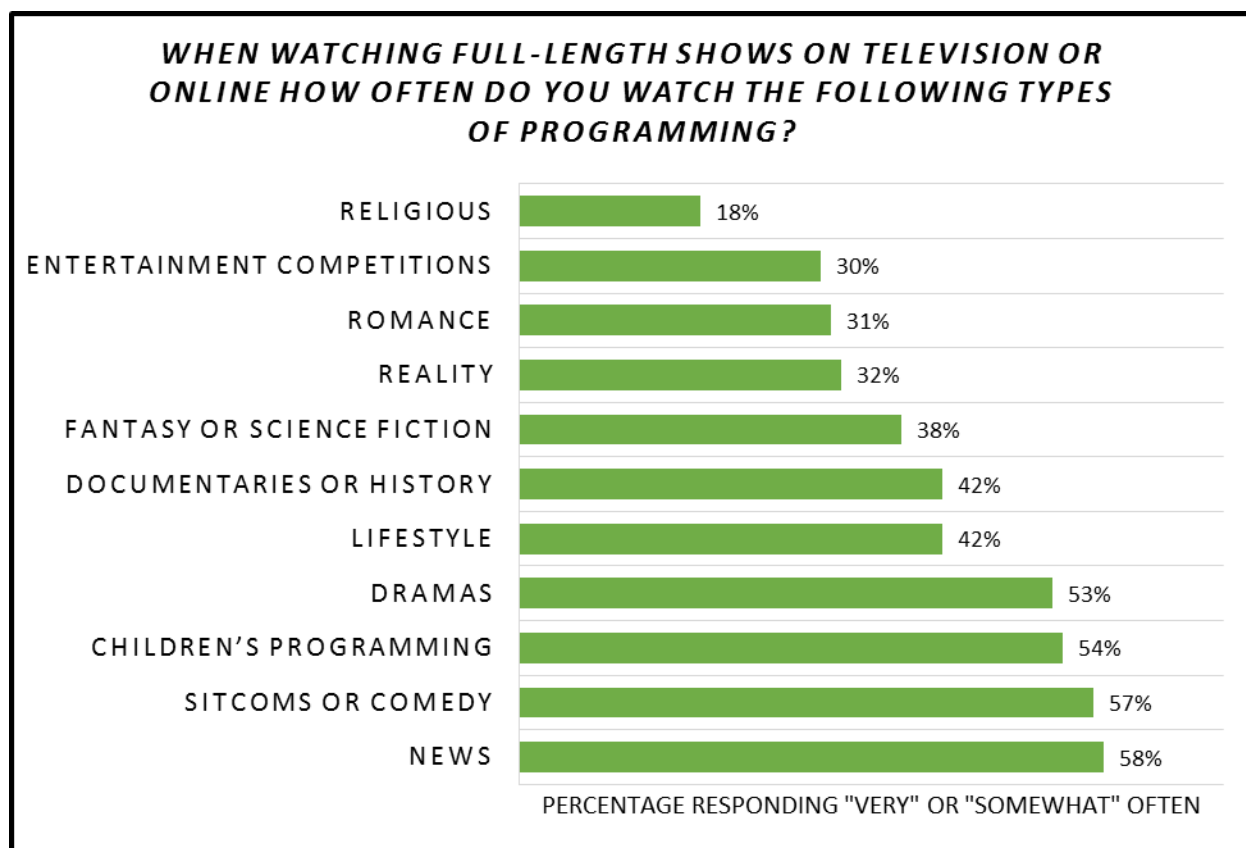
Millennial Generation parents are slightly more likely than Post-Vatican II Generation parents to eat dinner together as a family every night (55 percent compared to 50 percent). As shown below, the more frequently a parent attends Mass, the more likely they eat dinner together with their family every night with weekly attenders being among the most likely to do this (58 percent). Marriage to a Catholic spouse (54 percent) and having a baby (56 percent) and/or three or more children (54 percent) also is associated with eating dinner with family daily.

| <i>How often do you eat dinner together as a family?</i> | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| | <i>Rarely or never</i> | <i>Once a week</i> | <i>Weekends only</i> | <i>Few times a week</i> | <i>Every night</i> |
| Generation | | | | | |
| Post-Vatican II (b. 1969-81) | 6% | 4% | 3% | 37% | 50% |
| Millennial (b. 1982-89) | 6 | 3 | 6 | 30 | 55 |
| Mass Attendance | | | | | |
| Rarely or never | 10% | 6% | 4% | 37% | 43% |
| A few times a year | 6 | 6 | 3 | 37 | 48 |
| At least once a month | 5 | 3 | 2 | 35 | 55 |
| Weekly or more often | 4 | 2 | 4 | 32 | 58 |
| Marital Status | | | | | |
| Married | 6% | 3% | 3% | 34% | 54% |
| <i>To a Catholic spouse</i> | 7 | 3 | 2 | 34 | 54 |
| <i>To a non-Catholic spouse</i> | 3 | 5 | 5 | 35 | 52 |
| Separated or divorced | 8 | 13 | 2 | 49 | 28 |
| Single, never married | 6 | 12 | 9 | 32 | 41 |
| Living with a partner | 6 | 6 | 7 | 37 | 44 |
| Children | | | | | |
| Fewer than three | 4% | 5% | 4% | 37% | 50% |
| Three or more | 12 | 3 | 2 | 29 | 54 |
| Has a teen | 10 | 6 | 4 | 38 | 42 |
| Has a baby | 11 | 2 | 5 | 26 | 56 |

Outside of meals, 62 percent of parents say that their family gathers together outside of dinner at least once a week for a game night, movie night, family discussions, or family prayer. Parents who attend Mass at least once a month (69 percent) or weekly (74 percent) are especially likely to indicate that their family gathers together outside of dinner. This is also most common among those with three or more children (68 percent) and among Hispanics or Latinos (67 percent). It is least common among those who rarely or never attend Mass (45 percent).

Eighty-one percent of parents say that it is “very” important that parents closely monitor the media content their children view or listen to. However, only 18 percent of parents say they “never” let their children watch television without supervision. Fifteen percent of parents more often watch television alone than with family. Forty-two percent watch more often with family and 43 percent watch about equally alone and with family.

Fifty-three percent of parents watch two or more hours of television per day. Forty-three percent use the internet for this length of time. While watching television, the most common types of content viewed includes news, sitcoms or comedies, children’s programming, and dramas. Religious programming is not frequently watched by large numbers of parents. Eighteen percent responded that they watch this “somewhat” or “very” often.



Twelve percent of parents with digital devices have at least one Catholic-related application or “app” on this device that they use regularly. This is equivalent to an estimated 1.6 million parents using a Catholic or faith-related app on one of their digital devices. Fourteen percent of parents regularly read or follow at least one Catholic-related blog online. This is equivalent to 2.1 million parents reading or following Catholic or faith-related blogs. Weekly Mass attenders are among the most likely to do both of these things.

Nearly three in four parents have a Facebook profile (73 percent) and about a quarter have a profile on Pinterest (24 percent). About one in five have profiles on Instagram (21 percent) or Twitter (20 percent). Few use Tumblr (2 percent). Parents are more likely than all Catholic adults to use each social network—especially Pinterest (24 percent compared to 7 percent). Seventy percent of parents with a social network profile visit their most frequently used site at least once a day.

Do you have a profile on any of the following social network sites?
Percentage responding “Yes”

| | Parents | All adults |
|-----------|----------------|-------------------|
| Facebook | 73% | 62% |
| Pinterest | 24 | 7 |
| Instagram | 21 | 17 |
| Twitter | 20 | 13 |
| Tumblr | 2 | 1 |
| Other | 3 | 1 |

Eighty-five percent of parents report use of YouTube. Among these parents, the most frequently watched content is: music videos (61 percent), comedy content (40 percent), viral videos (38 percent), educational content (33 percent), and content from movies and television (23 percent). Only 9 percent of YouTube-using parents say they regularly watch religious content on the site (19 percent among weekly Mass attenders).

Use of Church media sources among parents is similar to all adult Catholics. Parents are most likely to use: their parish bulletin (42 percent), their parish website (12 percent), and their diocesan newspaper (10 percent). About half (49 percent) use none of the Church sources listed.

***Which of the following do you regularly use or visit
(typically once a month or more often) to get information,
news, or other types of content about the Catholic faith?***

| | Parents | All adults |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| My parish bulletin (print or online) | 42% | 41% |
| My parish website | 12 | 9 |
| My diocesan newspaper or magazine (print or online) | 10 | 17 |
| Facebook accounts associated with Catholics or Catholic institutions | 9 | 4 |
| A secular newspaper or magazine (print or online) | 4 | 6 |
| A Catholic news website (e.g., Catholic News Service) | 3 | 2 |
| The Vatican website (vatican.va) | 3 | 1 |
| My diocesan website | 2 | 4 |
| A website for a Catholic educational institution | 2 | 2 |
| The website for the U.S. Bishops (usccb.org) | 2 | 1 |
| A website of a Catholic charity or social service agency | 2 | 1 |
| Twitter accounts associated with Catholics or Catholic institutions | 1 | 1 |
| None of the above | 49 | 49 |

Similar to all Catholic adults, parents are not using online or digital sources for religious or spiritual content as frequently as they use traditional media to access this material.

| <i>Which of the following have you done in the last three months?</i> | | |
|--|----------------|-------------------|
| | Parents | All adults |
| Video | | |
| Watched religious or spiritual content on television | 18% | 23% |
| Watched religious or spiritual video content online (e.g., YouTube) | 9 | 6 |
| Reading material | | |
| Read a print copy of a religious or spiritual magazine or newspaper | 10% | 18% |
| Read a print copy of a religious or spiritual book | 10 | 12 |
| Read content from a religious or spiritual website or blog | 8 | 6 |
| Purchased a print copy of a religious or spiritual book | 4 | 7 |
| Read a religious or spiritual magazine or newspaper online | 3 | 3 |
| Read a religious or spiritual e-book (e.g., for Kindle, Nook) | 2 | 2 |
| Purchased a religious or spiritual e-book (e.g., for Kindle, Nook) | 1 | 1 |
| Audio | | |
| Listened to a religious or spiritual programs on the radio or on a CD | 11% | 12% |
| Listened to religious or spiritual audio programs on a mobile device or online | 4 | 4 |
| Online participation | | |
| Commented on a news story or blog online about religion and spirituality | 2% | 3% |
| Participated (read or posted) in an online forum about religion and spirituality | 2 | 2 |
| None of the above | 62% | 57% |

Parents are more likely to watch religious or spiritual television than watch religious or spiritual video content online (18 percent compared to 9 percent). They are more likely to read a print religious or spiritual book than the same type of content in an e-book (10 percent compared to 2 percent). They are more likely to listen to religious or spiritual audio using radio or a CD than on a mobile device or online (11 percent compared to 4 percent). Sixty-two percent of parents indicate that they have *not* used religious or spiritual-related media content (print, video, or audio) in the three months prior to being surveyed.

Only 15 percent of parents are “very much” satisfied with the available television and film content about religion, Christianity, and Catholicism. Forty-four percent are “somewhat” satisfied with this and 32 percent are only “a little” satisfied. Nine percent are “not at all” satisfied.

Parents were asked to describe their opinion of Catholic media. Forty-seven percent said they were unaware of Catholic media and 5 percent said they dislike most offerings from Catholic media. Thirty percent said they are indifferent to most offerings and 18 percent said they enjoy most offerings of the Catholic media.

Conclusions

Without family the Catholic population cannot grow. Being a Catholic parent comes with obligations and among these is the commitment to raise children Catholic. A majority of parents attend Mass at least once a month. More than four in ten regularly read their parish bulletin. Parents are just as likely as older Catholics to believe the Church's core teachings without doubt.

Yet, the survey results also indicate that many 21st Century parents do not have their children enrolled in the Church's religious education programs. For many religious education appears to happen at Mass and perhaps in the home. But how is this happening? Catholic parents are rather unlikely to use Catholic media—especially online. They are also infrequently praying with their children. Perhaps most distressing, some express indifference about their children celebrating their First Communion.

The Catholic children being raised today are of a yet unnamed generation following the Millennials. They have never used a television without hundreds of channel options. They have no memory of a time before the internet. Many have coexisted with the creation of YouTube, Twitter, iPhones, the Xbox, and the widespread adoption of Wi-Fi. They are inclined to believe they will come of age during a time of virtual and augmented reality devices, self-driving cars, and intelligent robots. How does an institution that is nearly 2,000 years old connect with them in this rapidly evolving digital environment? Will they choose to be a member of a local brick-and-mortar institution and attend its services weekly? How will they come to know what their faith is about? Wikipedia? Siri? Will they pray the rosary? Marry in the Church? Pass the faith on to their own children?

CARA's survey of parents reveals much about Catholic family life today. Three additional special reports from this research will be released as noted below. At the same time the results generate many new questions, challenges and opportunities for the Church in the 21st Century.

Three additional Special Reports will be released:

- July 2015: The Catholic Family Today - demographics
- Aug 2015: Practice of Faith in the Catholic Family
- Sept 2015: Catholic Families and Media Usage
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