



The Catholic “Man-Crisis” – Summary Points

The New Emangelization Project - Winter 2015

NewEmangelization.com

Unchecked, the exodus of Catholic men from the faith is likely to continue as men become increasingly casual about Catholicism.

- About 11 million adult men in the U.S. were raised Catholic but left the faith¹ and men are under-represented in the Church versus their share of the total population (46% of parishioners are male versus 49% of the population).²

Casual Catholic men lack passion for the faith.

- Men don't believe that Catholicism is unique and essential for a happy life.
 - 8 out of 10 men agree that “how one lives is more important than being a Catholic.”³
 - 4 in 10 men believing that Catholicism does not have a “greater share of truths than other religions.”⁴
 - Only 38% of Catholic men strongly agree that they are “proud to be Catholic.”⁵
 - Only 26% of Catholic men consider themselves to be “practicing Catholics.”⁶
 - Only 34% of Catholic men strongly agree that Catholicism is “among the most important part of life.”⁷
- Men don't believe that the Sacraments and Devotions of Catholicism are important.
 - A large majority of Catholic men (57%) are not certain it is possible to have a personal relationship with God.⁸
 - Only 51% of Catholic men strongly agree that the “Sacraments are essential to their relationship with God.”⁹

¹ Luis Lugo et al., “Faith in Flux,” *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* (April 2009): 1. Estimate based on: a) Pew notes that 9% of U.S. Adults have left Catholicism, b) U.S. Census data that shows there are 250 million U.S. adults and that men represent 49% of adults.

² Luis Lugo et al., “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey,” *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* (June 2008): 63.

³ “Gallup Poll of Catholics, 2005”, Question 18, http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/GALLUP05_CB.asp.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Question 19.

⁵ Mark M. Gray and Paul M. Perl, “Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice among U.S. Catholics”, *Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate – “CARA”* (April 2008): 100.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁸ Lugo, “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey”, 29.

⁹ Gallup, 2005, Question 21.

- Only 32% of Catholic men strongly agree that the “Sacraments are essential to their faith.”¹⁰
- Many men are not moved by the Mass and are less moved than women across the various aspects of the Mass: the readings and the Gospel, homily, music, the Eucharist, prayer, worshipping with other people, the presence of God.¹¹
- 48% of men agree that “Mass is boring”¹² and 55% agree that they “don’t get anything out of the Mass.”¹³
- Only 29% of men believe that weekly mass attendance is “very important.”¹⁴
- Only 28% of Catholic men believe that Confession is “very important.”¹⁵
- Only 31% of men strongly agree that it is “very important” to attend Mass on Holy Days.¹⁶
- Only 39% of men strongly agree that the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is “very important.”¹⁷
- Only 43% of Catholic men believe that it is “very important to help those in need.”¹⁸
- Only 30% of Catholic men believe it is “very important to have a Devotion to Mary” and only 23% believe it is “very important to have a devotion to the Saints.”¹⁹
- Only 37% of Catholic men strongly agree that “daily prayer is important”²⁰ and only 33% of Catholic men pray on a daily basis.²¹
- 49% of Catholic men feel that they “cannot explain their faith to others.”²²
- During the last 20 years, men have become less certain about being Catholic: in 1987, 50.1% men said they would “never leave the Church”²³; in 2005 the number had fallen to 42.3%.²⁴ This means that almost 60% of Catholic men *would* consider leaving the Church; these men have become “Casual Catholics”, Catholics who are casual about the faith.

Catholic men’s ambivalence about Catholicism results in low involvement.

- Only about 1/3 of Catholic men (33%) say they attend Mass on a weekly basis.²⁵
- One third of Catholic men (34%) are not formally members of a parish.²⁶
- A large portion (42%) of Catholic men attend Mass “a few times per year” or “seldom or never.”²⁷

¹⁰ CARA, 2008: 100.

¹¹ CARA, 2008: 41.

¹² “Gallup Survey of Chicago Catholics, 2007”, Question 126, http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/CHICATH_CB.asp.

¹³ Gallup, 2007, Question 130.

¹⁴ Gallup 2007, Question 61.

¹⁵ Gallup 2007, Question 62.

¹⁶ CARA 2008, 47.

¹⁷ CARA 2008, 66.

¹⁸ CARA 2008, 108.

¹⁹ CARA 2008, 108.

²⁰ Gallup 2007, Question 63.

²¹ Gallup 2007, Question 137.

²² Gallup 2005, Question 23.

²³ “Gallup Poll of Catholics (1987),” Question 48, <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/GALLUP87.asp>.

²⁴ Gallup 2005, Question 75.

²⁵ Gallup 2005, Question 59.

²⁶ Gallup 2005, Question 5.

²⁷ Gallup 2005, Question 94.

- 75% of Catholics go to Confession “less than once a year” (30%) or “never” (45%).²⁸ While data is not available for men’s participation, is likely worse given that men are significantly less likely to believe that Confession is very important.²⁹
- Almost half of Catholic men do not engage in a routine of prayer; praying only “occasionally or sometimes” or “seldom or never.”³⁰
- 83% of Catholic men rarely or never participate in a parish activity outside of the Mass.³¹

For comparison, Catholic men are less passionate about faith than other Christian men.

- Less than half of Catholic men (48%) feel that “religion is very important in their lives; this compares to 74% for Evangelical men.”³²
- Only about 4 in 10 Catholic men (43%) have an absolutely certain belief in a personal God; this compares to 69% of evangelical men.³³
- Less than half of Catholic men (48%) pray outside of worship services, which compares to 71% of Evangelical men.³⁴ Clearly, there is a “passion problem” among Catholic men.

The prevalence of so many Casual Catholic Men matters, for it will further weaken the Church in future years.

- Catholic parents are doing a poor job at passing along the faith to their children,³⁵ especially fathers.³⁶
- Indeed, less than 50% of men (47.5%) strongly agree that it is important for their children to be Catholic.³⁷
- This is troubling since younger people are becoming increasingly vulnerable to leaving the Catholic Church, particularly young men. In 1987, 41.6% of 18-29 year olds agreed with the statement “I would never leave the Church”;³⁸ by 2005, only 17.8% of those 18-30 years said they’d “never leave the Church.”³⁹ This means that an astounding 82.2% of young people *would* consider leaving the Church.
- 42% of emerging adults have “very or somewhat different” religious beliefs as their Catholic fathers.⁴⁰
- Males are particularly vulnerable to leaving the Church; 15% of the U.S. population have left religion and are now “unaffiliated”; the largest portion of this growing group are males who were formerly Catholic.⁴¹

²⁸ CARA 2008, 57.

²⁹ CARA 2008, 38.

³⁰ Gallup 2005, Question 60.

³¹ Gallup 2007, Question 157.

³² “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008),” 24.

³³ “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008),” 29.

³⁴ “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008),” 46.

³⁵ Christopher Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 114.

³⁶ “Souls in Transition,” 129.

³⁷ Gallup 2005, Question 22.

³⁸ Gallup 1987, Question 48.

³⁹ Gallup 2005, Question 75.

⁴⁰ Smith and Snell, 128-129.

⁴¹ Barry A. Kosmin, et al., “American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population,” *American Religious Identification Survey* (2008): 5,7.

The loss of Catholic men and the growing numbers of Casual Catholic men have other negative effects on parishes and the Church.

- Fewer men reduce the pool for priestly and religious male vocations.
- Lower levels of active adult men also influences young men to become disengaged from the Church. The “face” of the Church is feminine; men are underrepresented in the pews (only 37% of regular mass attendees are men).⁴²
- Further, a Notre Dame study shows that 70-90% of catechesis, service, bible study activities are led by women, causing the authors to suggest that “young males...assume that serious religious studies are a women’s business,” resulting in greater numbers of younger men being disengaged.⁴³
- Men are needed for healthy and growing parishes; research shows that congregations with greater portions of men are more likely to be growing.⁴⁴
- Men are much more influential in the conversion of their families than women. Research shows that when a woman converts to Christianity, 17% of the time the whole family converts. When a man converts, 93% of the time the whole family converts.⁴⁵

⁴² Gallup 2005, Question 75.

⁴³ David C. Lege and Thomas A. Trozzolo, “Participation in Catholic Parish Life: Religious Rites and Parish Activities in the 1980s,” *Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life*, Issue 3 (1985): 14.

⁴⁴ C. Kirk Hadaway, “Facts on Growth,” *Hartford Institute for Religion Research* (2006): 4.

⁴⁵ Attributed to evangelist, Sid Woodruff: www.e-n.org/2790-A-man%27s-influence.htm.