



# The CARA Report

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## MOST PRIESTS FLOURISHING, BUT CONCERNED ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS WITH BISHOPS, BURNOUT

The Catholic Project of The Catholic University of America brings together clergy and laity to address some of the challenges the Catholic Church faces today. On October 19, it released highlights of the largest study of Catholic priests in more than 50 years, based on three research components: a census of bishops by CARA, which had a response rate of 67 percent; a survey of 10,000 priests (3,516 responses) by Gallup; and in-depth interviews of more than 100 priests, managed by Dr. Tricia Bruce of the University of Notre Dame.

According to the report's introduction, "Priests on the whole are doing well, they report significant levels of well-being. However, younger priests display signs of ministry burnout and diocesan priests are doing less well than those who belong to religious orders. Priests find significant support from their lay friends. When it comes to trust, there is a broad range of answers to the question, 'Do you trust your bishop?' Priests who trust their bishop report higher levels of well-being on all measures, so this is significant. Priests are supportive of the policies the Church has implemented to combat abuse. However, they are concerned about false allegations and being abandoned by the diocese." The following are excerpts from the report, edited for length and clarity.

*See Most Priests Flourishing, but Concerned about Relationships with Bishops, Burnout, page 10*

## General Social Survey Provides Snapshot of Catholic Demographic Data

CARA's senior research associate, Mark M. Gray, has analyzed data from the *General Social Survey (GSS)*, Gallup, and the Pew Research Center to provide two revealing updates on the status of the U.S. Catholic population. The following are excerpted from his original detailed reports, which appear on *1964*, The CARA Blog.

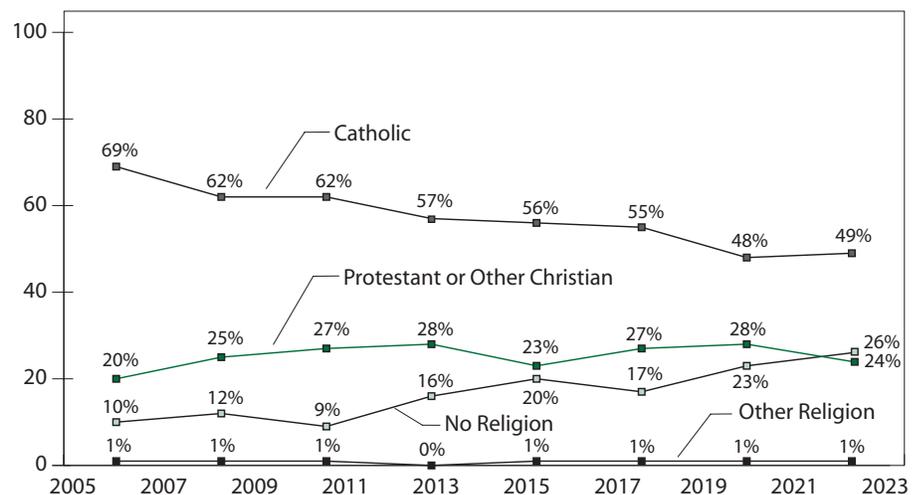
### A Snapshot of Catholics in 2022

The total number of Americans who were Catholic at some time in their lives is about 87.8 million, of whom 73.2 million remain Catholic, and 42 million are registered with a parish. Those who attend Mass at Christmas or Easter number 52.7 million, those who attend Mass monthly or more often number 33 million, and those who attend weekly or more often number 17.6 million. Those who are very involved in parish life outside Mass number 8.9 million.

Another group includes professionals involved in ministry, a total estimated at 141,382. This includes 44,556 lay ecclesial ministers, 39,452 religious sisters, 34,923 diocesan and religious priests (although the latter are less likely to be involved in parish ministry, and both categories include many who have retired), 18,619 permanent deacons, and 3,832 religious brothers.

According to CARA Catholic Polls, 58.3 million Catholics were born in the United States and 14.9 million were born elsewhere. A total of 48 million adult Catholics have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Among Catholic adults, 23 million attended a Catholic school

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF HISPANICS IN THE U.S. 2006-2021



*See General Social Survey Provides Snapshot of Catholic Demographic Data, page 11*

## Nuances in Support of Catholic Causes

A new book project uses data from the 2017 survey of American Catholic Laity as well as extensive interviews of Catholic leaders to explore contemporary U.S. Catholicism. Tentatively titled *Catholicism’s Crossroads: The Present and Future of America’s Largest Church*, the book is under review at New York University Press. Dr. Maureen Day, one of the coauthors, shared a brief excerpt with CARA. Using the Catholic Commitment Index from the previous D’Antonio, et al., series on American

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Catholic Laity, she compared Catholics’ opinions on the U.S. bishops’ positions on important topics according to their level of commitment to the Church.

Questions were asked about agreement with the bishops’ positions on supporting government-funded health insurance, facilitating the immigration process for families, and opposing the death penalty, all of which are considered Democrat-friendly issues. The survey found a clear difference between Republican and Democratic Catholics on these issues. However, they also see greater agreement with the bishops among those with higher levels of Catholic commitment.

The result is that the majority of high-commitment Catholic Republicans (HC Republican, as shown in the figure) agree with the bishops on these Democratically aligned issues. This indicates that high-commitment Republican Catholics are much more likely to support the official teaching on a “blue” issue than are their low-commitment counterparts. In other words, high-commitment Catholics are much more likely to defect from their party when the position conflicts with the teachings of their faith. This is also seen in other studies among progressive Catholics, with many disagreeing with their party on the abortion issue.

For additional information on this book project, presented at the SSSR+RRA annual meeting in Baltimore in November 2022, email Dr. Day at [MaureenDay@fst.edu](mailto:MaureenDay@fst.edu).

AGREEMENT WITH BISHOPS’ POSITIONS, BY COMMITMENT AND PARTY

