

GLOBAL SURVEY OF ROMAN CATHOLICS



UNIVISION

February 2014

**BENDIXEN
& AMANDI**
INTERNATIONAL

Executive Summary

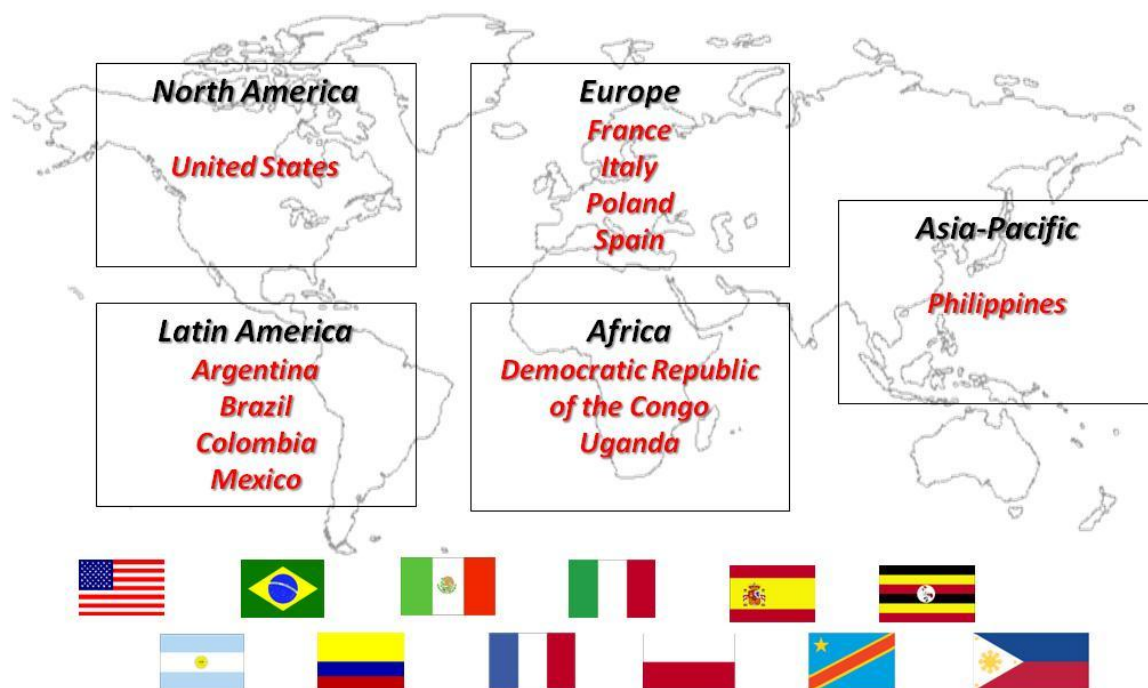
The Vatican's Announcement

In October 2013, the Vatican embarked on a worldwide initiative to gather information in preparation for the October 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization.” A survey instrument was issued to diocese around the world with questions designed to ascertain the changing nature of the church and the challenges faced by priests in their daily stewardship. (See Appendix) The intent of the initiative being to provide data and insight as the Vatican prepares the ‘lineamenta’ for the Synod.

Many in the media have portrayed the Vatican's survey, as an effort by Pope Francis to consider the opinion of the church laity in determining future decisions concerning established doctrine on issues such as abortion, divorce, gay marriage and others; this would be a misunderstanding of the Vatican's efforts. In fact, the Papal questionnaire is not an opinion gathering instrument, but rather an attempt to collect facts and evidence concerning the challenges faced by the modern Church, information to be considered by the Bishops when they convene.

Global Survey of Roman Catholics

While the official Vatican study is not an opinion-based survey of the Catholic laity, the worldwide conversation begun by the Vatican's announcement provided both the inspiration for and a unique opportunity to approach these issues from a different perspective. In this spirit, our research has endeavored to determine where Catholic opinion currently lies on some of the more controversial issues facing the church in the modern era, and specifically the extent to which Catholic public opinion mirrors Catholic doctrine. Our team, working in conjunction with a network of research professionals around the world conducted a scientific poll of more than 12,000 Catholics in 12 countries representing Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America.



The results provided herein, represent an interesting snapshot of current opinion within the body of the church.

FINDINGS

I. An Alarming Trend for the Vatican

The majority of Catholics worldwide disagree with Catholic doctrine on divorce, abortion, and contraceptives. Additionally, the majority of Catholics in Europe, Latin America and the United States disagree with established doctrine on the marriage of priests as well as on women entering the priesthood. Taken together, these findings suggest an extraordinary disconnect between the church's basic teachings on the fundamental issues of family and pastoral responsibilities and the viewpoints currently held by many of the world's more than 1 Billion Catholics. Perhaps more alarming, are the generational divides found in the analysis of the data which show that younger Catholics are even more likely to hold views contrary to church teachings than Catholics as a whole.

II. Gay Marriage

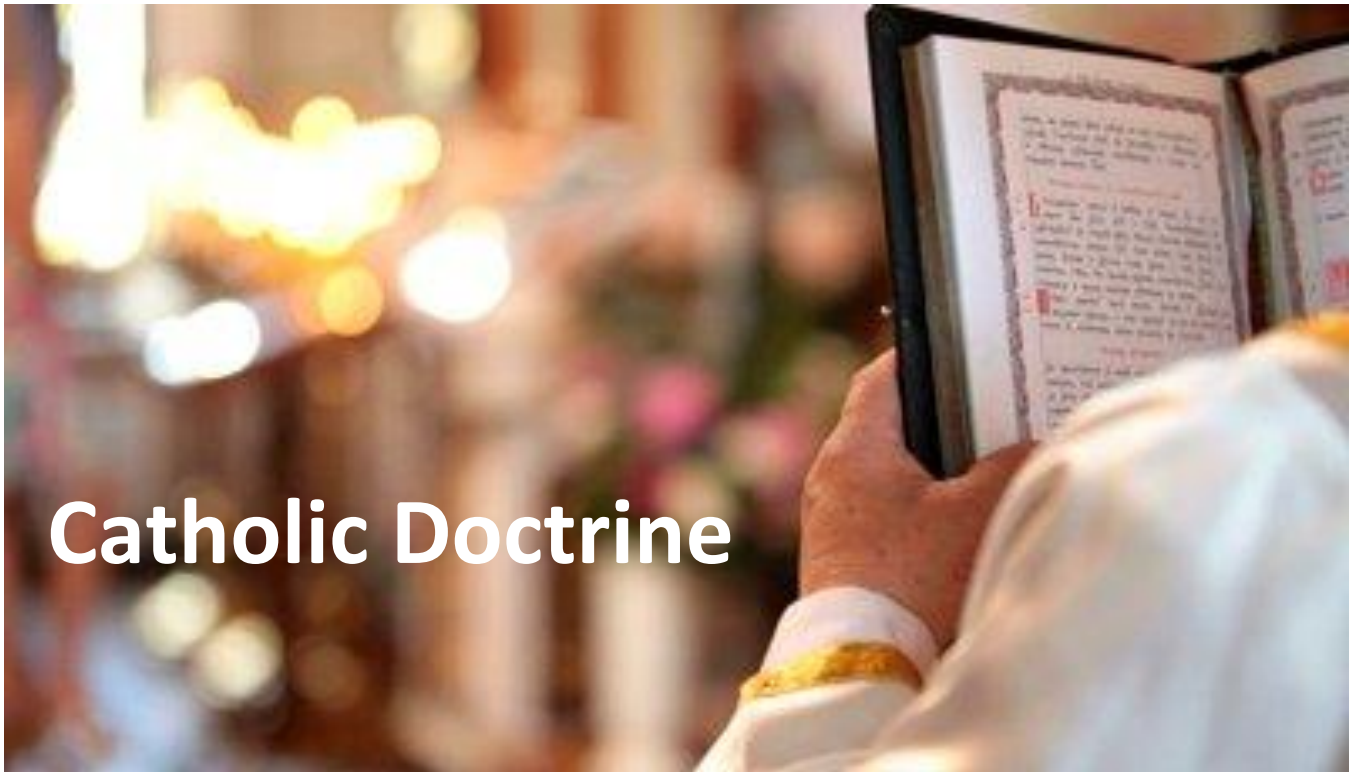
There is one area where public sentiment is more aligned with traditional Catholic teachings and this is in the area of Gay Marriage. With the exception of the United States and Spain, the majority of Catholics worldwide oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex by a margin of roughly 2 to 1. Furthermore, Catholics around the world oppose same sex marriages being performed in the confines of the church by a nearly 4 to 1 margin.

III. Pope Francis

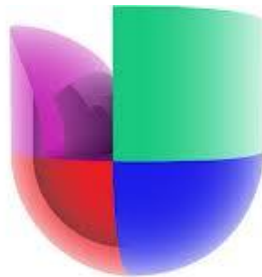
Less than a full year into his Papacy, Pope Francis enjoys almost unanimous positive ratings among Catholics worldwide. The Pope's positive approval rating is well above 80% with negatives generally below 5% in every country surveyed with the exception of Mexico. In Mexico, more than a quarter of respondents indicated they had a negative opinion of the Pope, which could be a statement on the man, but is more likely the result of historical conflicts, both with and within the Catholic church in Mexico.

IV. Church Attendance

Of the more than 12,000 Catholics surveyed, roughly 30% described themselves as infrequent attendees, defined for the purposes of the study as those who attend services only a few times a year such as major holidays, as well as those who never attend services. The data shows a clear divide in opinion on the societal issues tested among those who attend church services on a regular basis and those who choose not to. This finding represents a potentially interesting conundrum for the church going forward to determine whether members are out of step with doctrine because they fail to attend or conversely is a large segment of the membership choosing not to attend because they do not agree with the teachings.



Catholic Doctrine



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GLOBAL SURVEY OF ROMAN CATHOLICS

I. An Alarming Trend for the Vatican

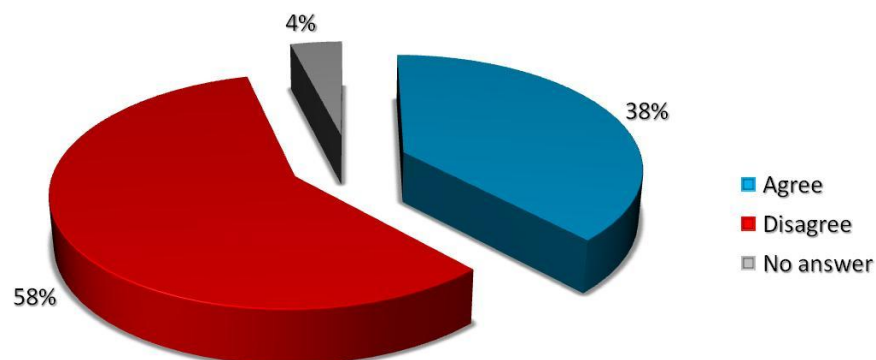
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Taken together, these findings suggest an extraordinary disconnect between the church's basic teachings on the fundamental issues of family, pastoral responsibilities and the viewpoints currently held by many of the world's more than 1 Billion Catholics. Perhaps more alarming, are the generational divides found in the analysis of the data, which show that younger Catholics are even more likely to hold views contrary to church teachings than Catholics as a whole.

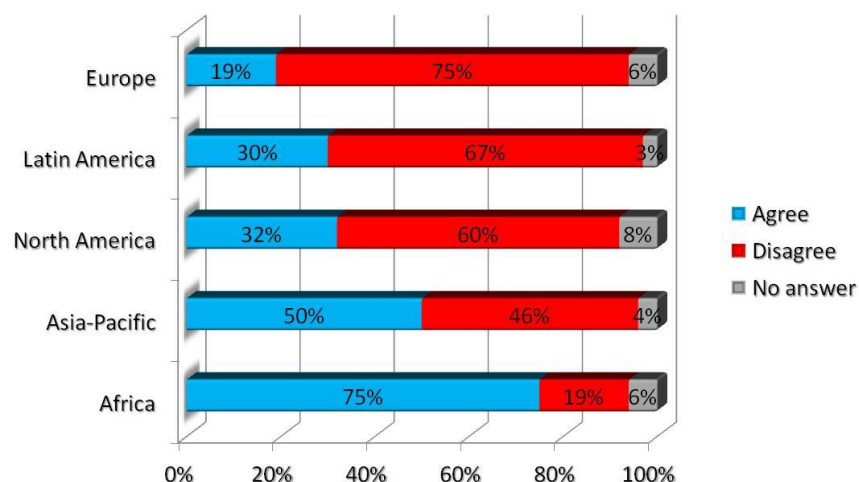
DIVORCE

Do you agree or disagree with Catholic Church policy on divorce that says: "An individual who has divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church, is living in sin which prevents them from receiving Communion"?

Divorce – Global Result



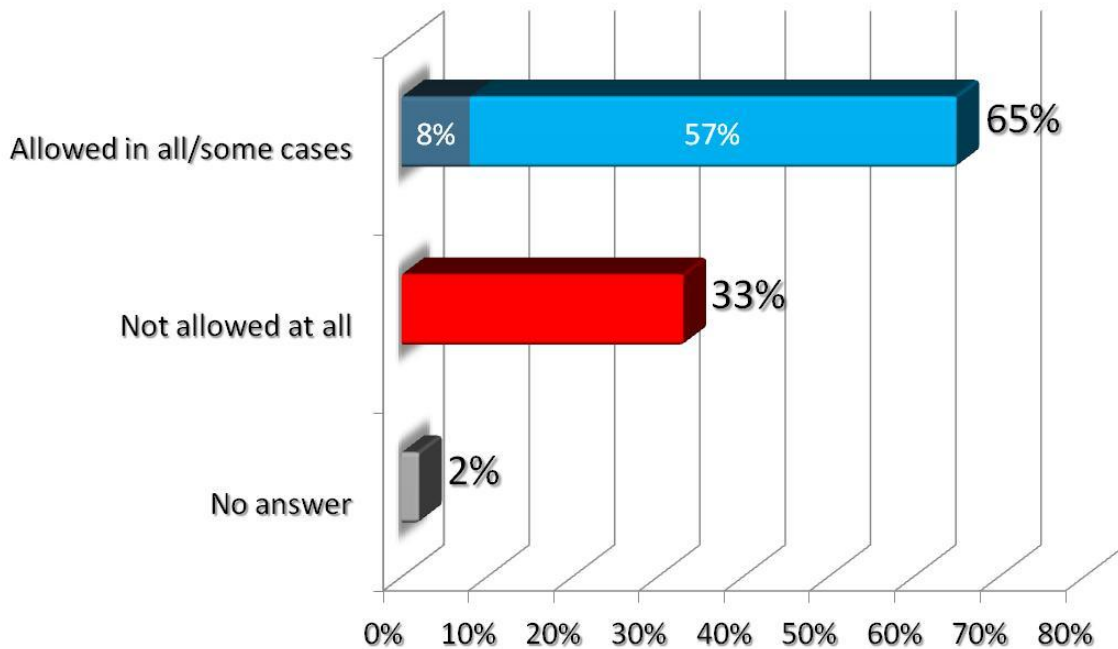
Divorce - Results By Continent



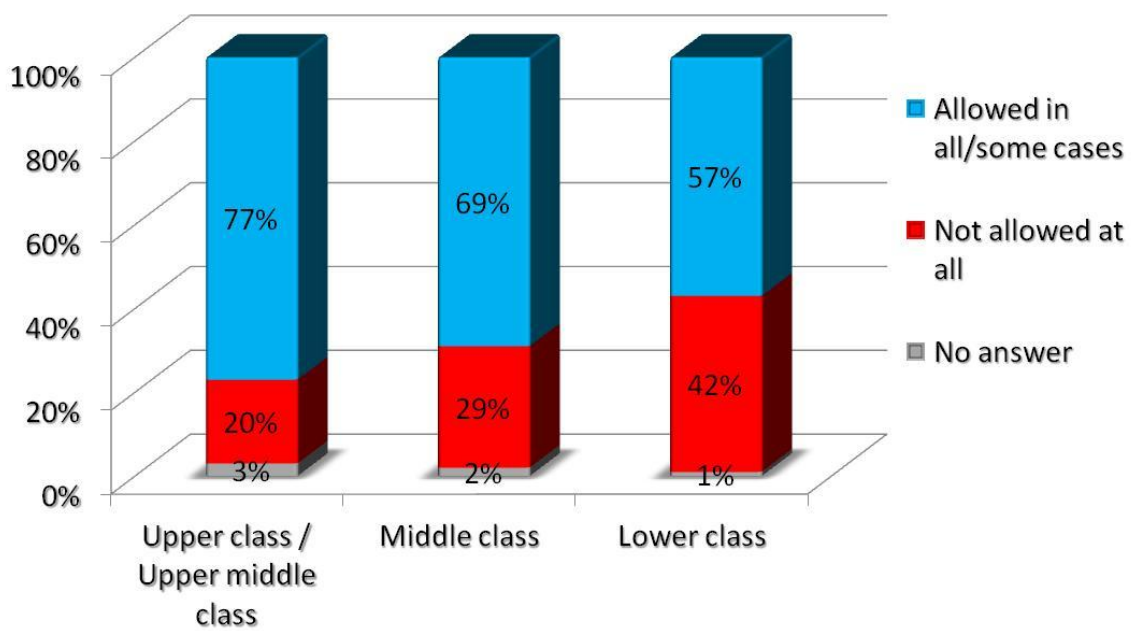
ABORTION

Do you think that abortions should be allowed in all cases, allowed in some cases, or should it not be allowed at all?

Abortion – Global Result



Abortion - Results By Socio Economic Class



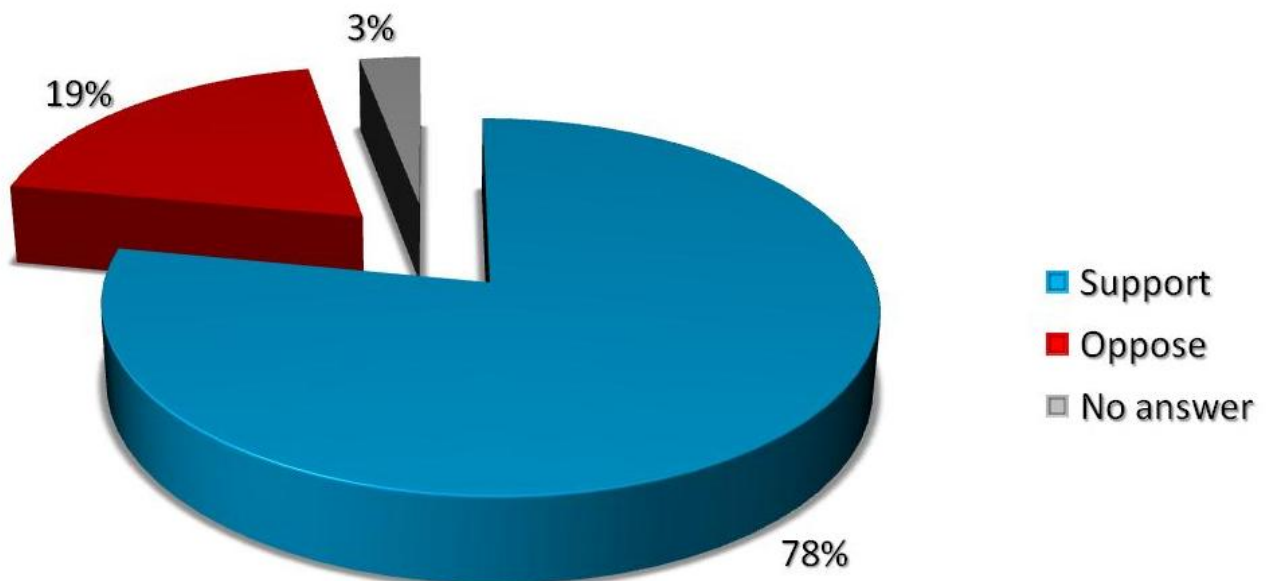
Abortion - Results By Country

	<i>Allowed in all/some cases</i>	<i>Not allowed at all</i>	<i>No answer</i>
France	94%	5%	1%
Spain	88%	8%	4%
Italy	83%	13%	4%
Poland	82%	13%	5%
Brazil	81%	18%	1%
Argentina	79%	20%	1%
United States	76%	21%	3%
Mexico	73%	27%	0%
Colombia	61%	38%	1%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	40%	56%	4%
Uganda	35%	64%	1%
Philippines	27%	73%	0%

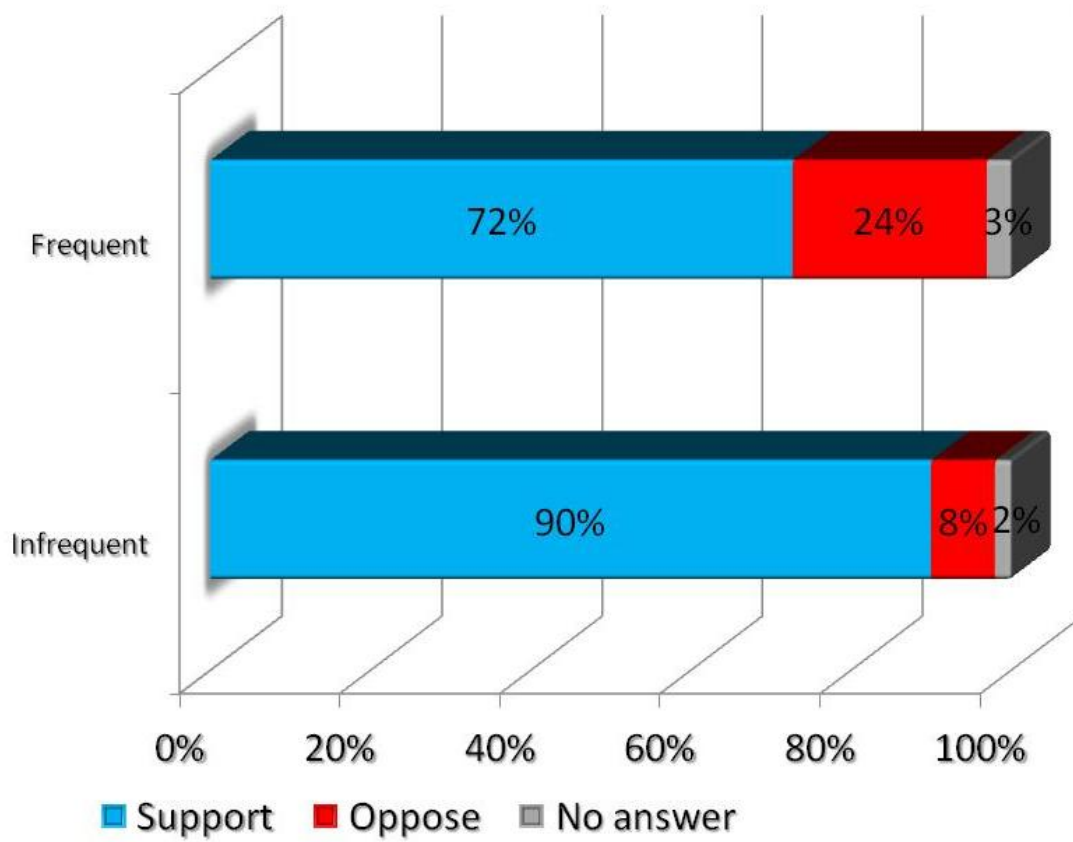
CONTRACEPTIVES

Do you support or oppose the use of contraceptives?

Contraceptives – Global Result



Contraceptives - Results By Church Attendance

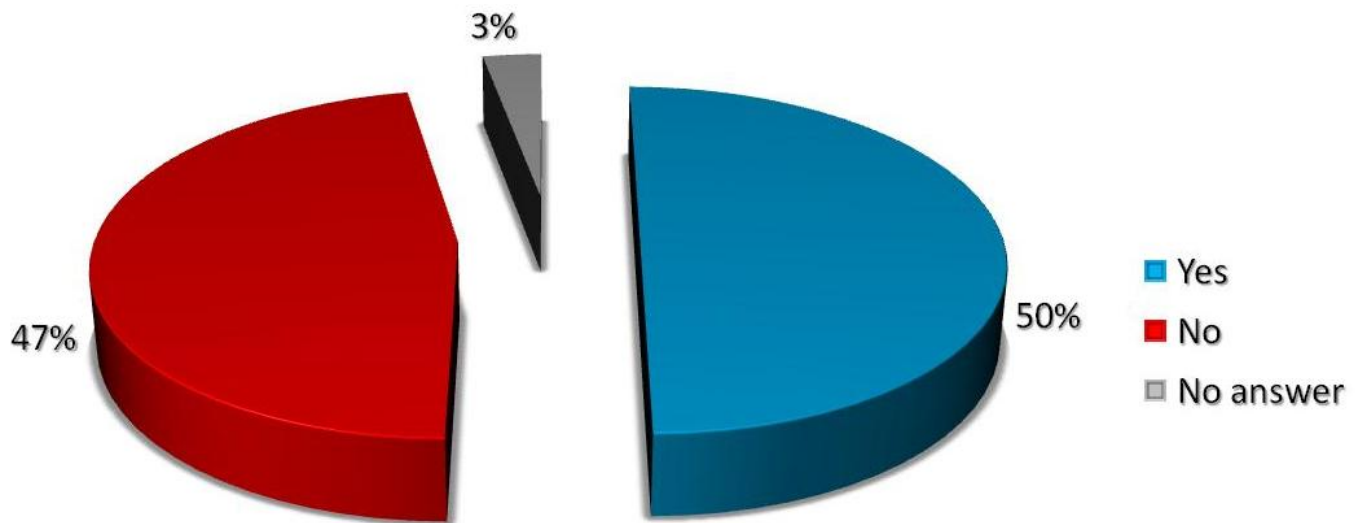


The majority of Catholics in Europe, Latin America, and the United States disagree with Catholic doctrine on the marriage of priests as well as on the issue of women becoming priests.

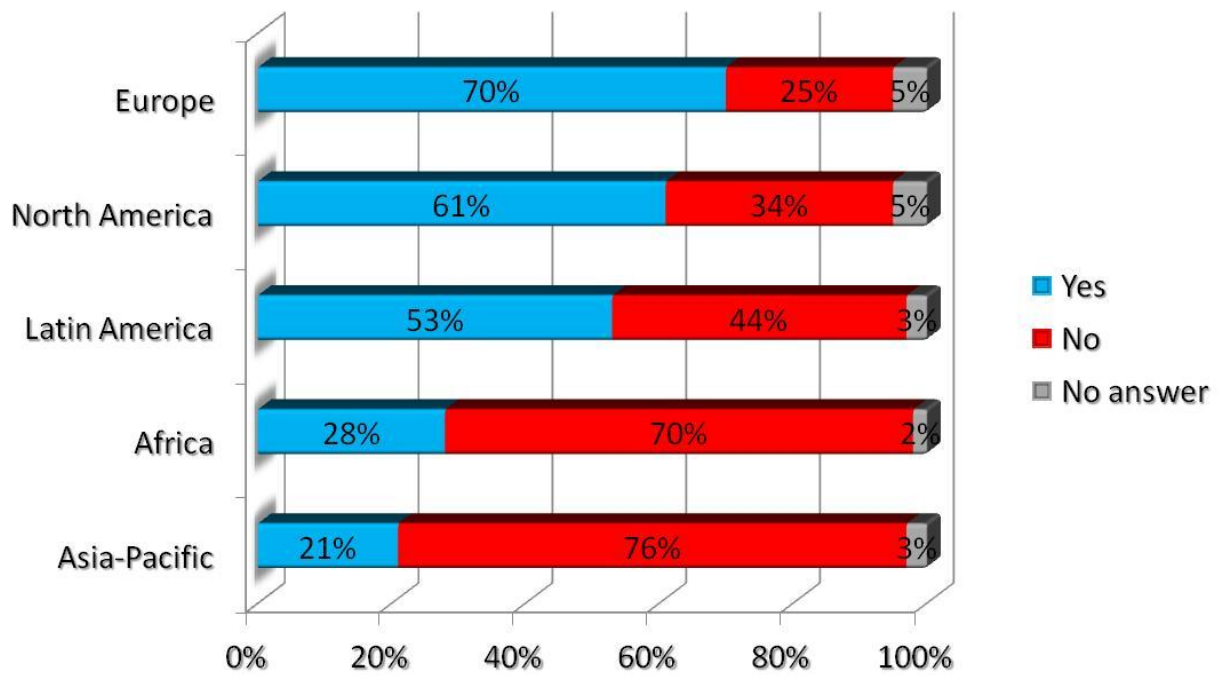
MARRIAGE OF PRIESTS

Do you think that Catholic priests should be allowed to marry?

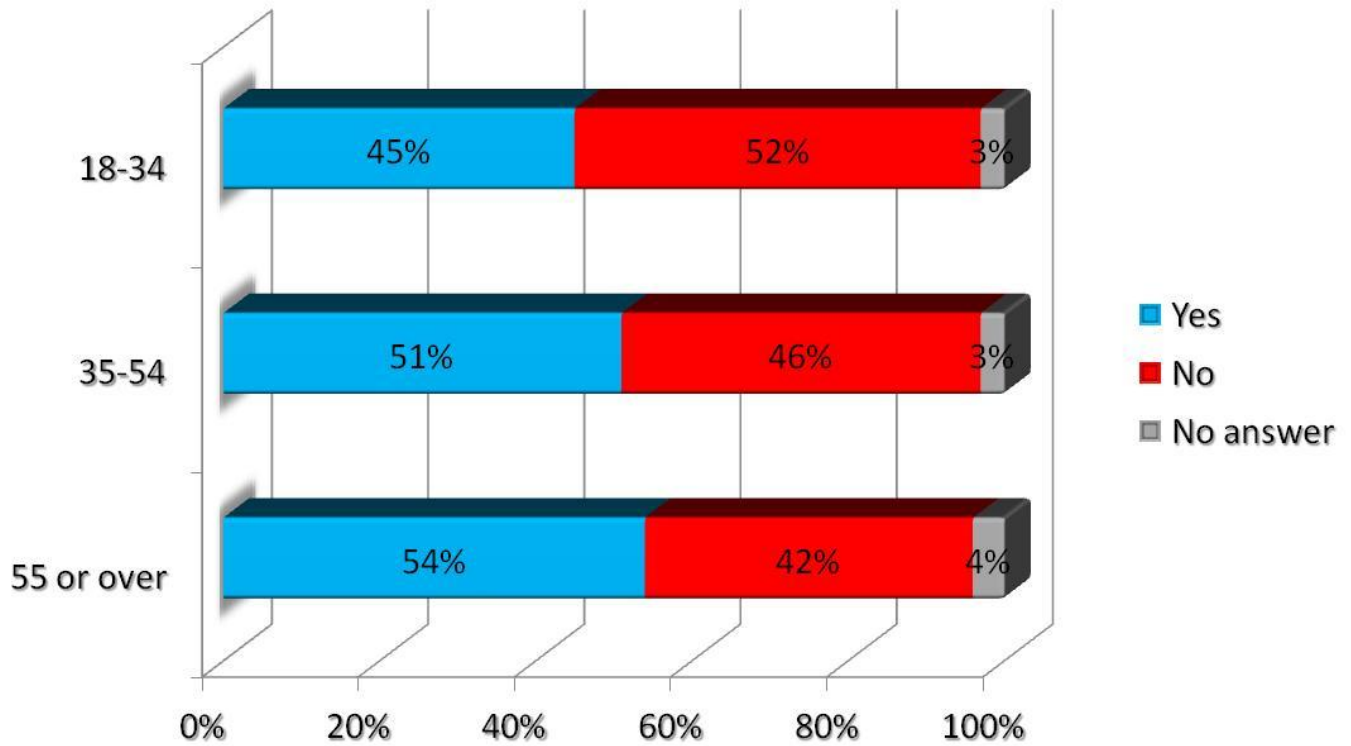
Marriage of Priests – Global Result



Marriage of Priests - Results By Continent



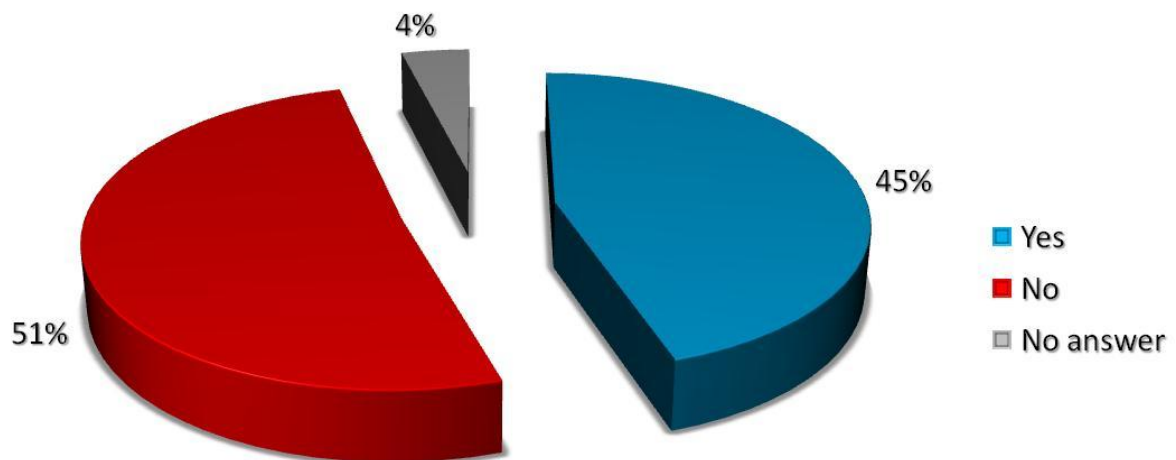
Marriage of Priests - Results By Age



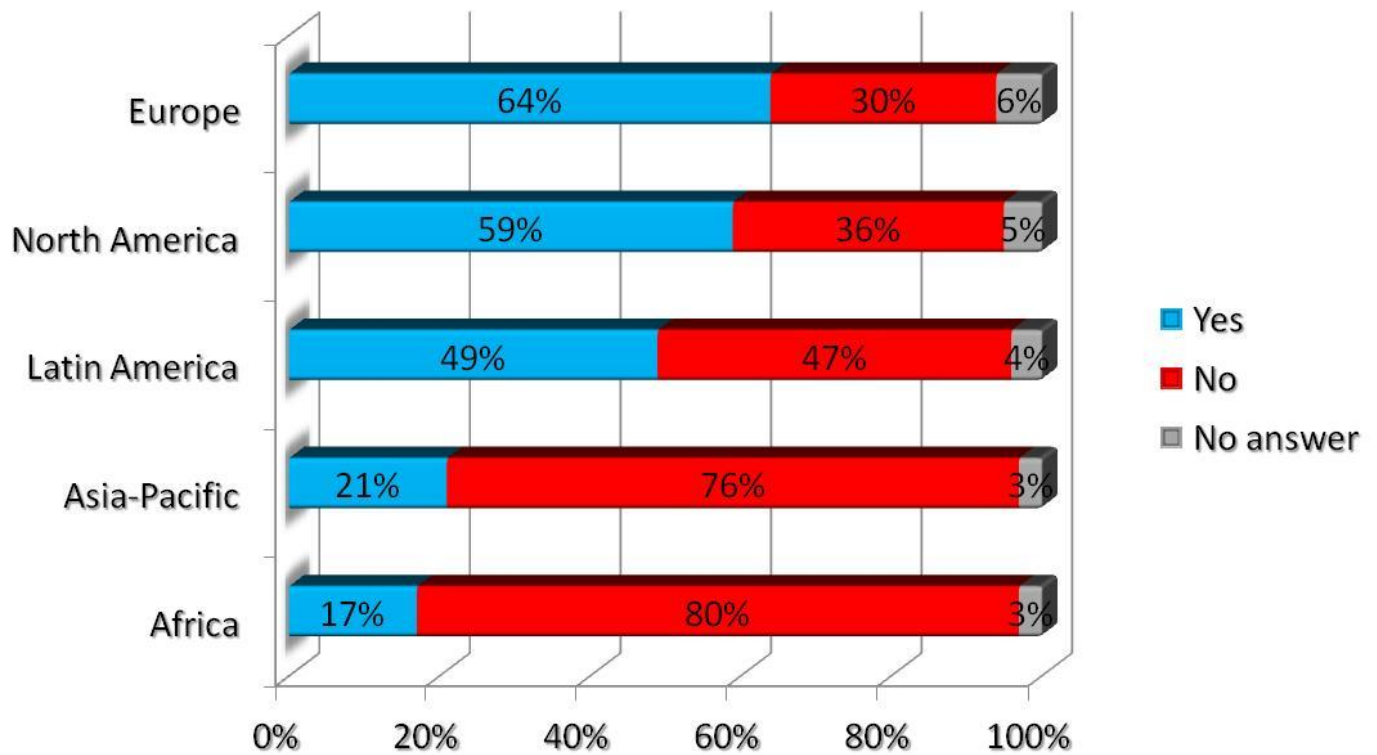
WOMEN BECOMING PRIESTS

Do you think that women should be allowed to become Catholic priests?

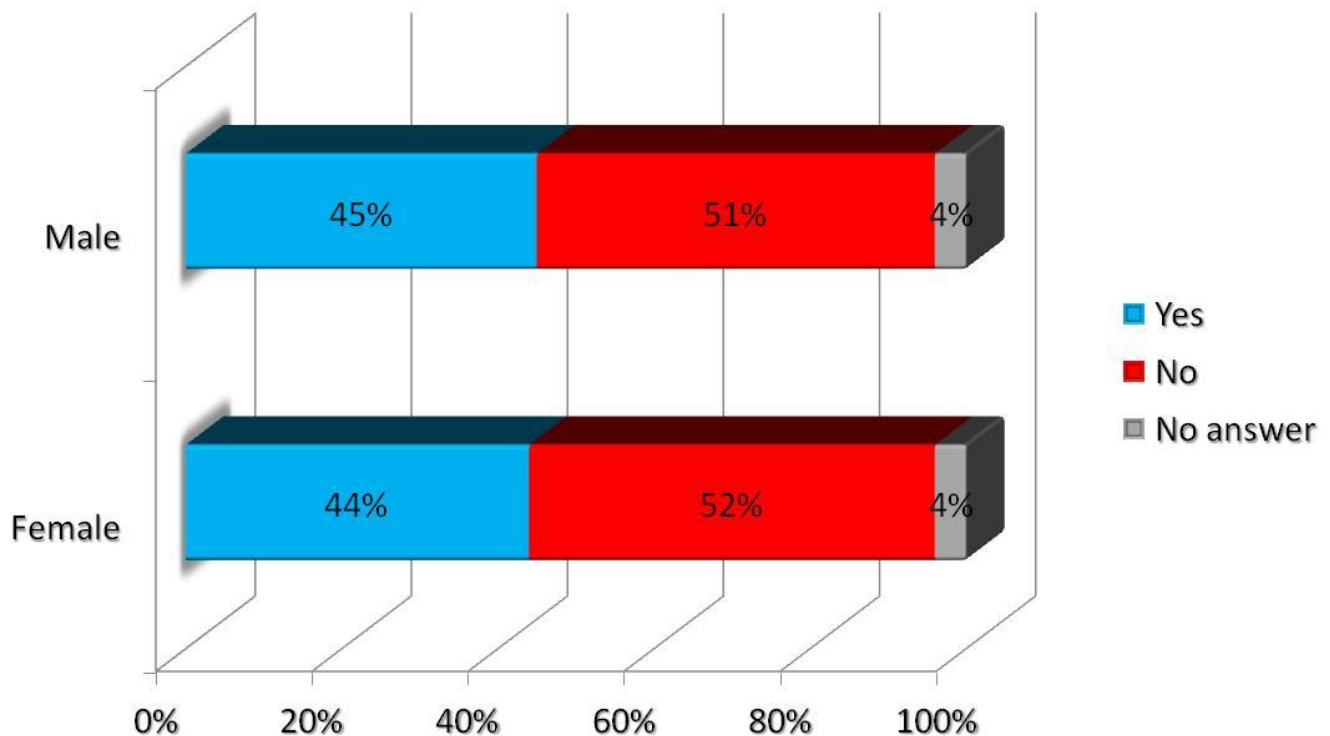
Women Becoming Priests – Global Result

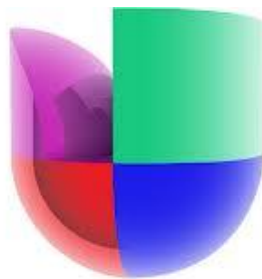


Women Becoming Priests - Results By Continent



Women Becoming Priests - Results By Gender





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GLOBAL SURVEY OF ROMAN CATHOLICS

Gay Marriage

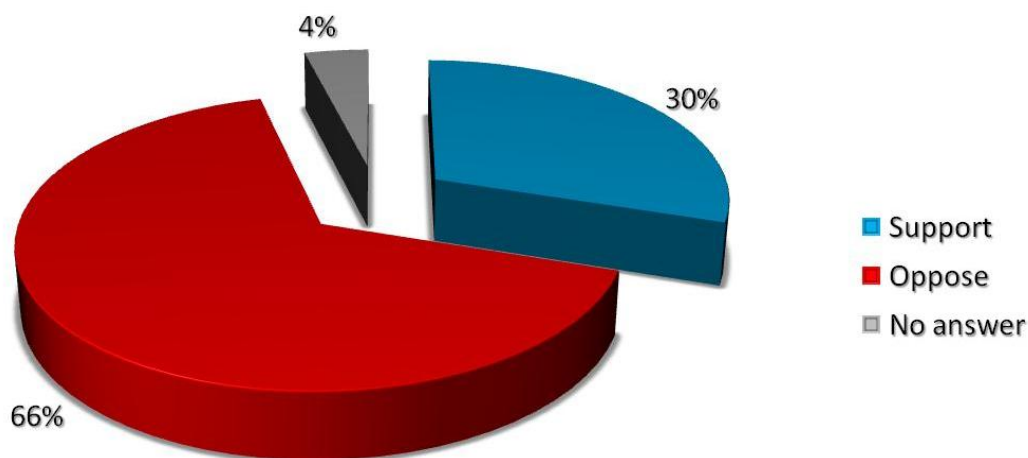
There is one area where public sentiment is more aligned with traditional Catholic teachings, and this is in the area of Gay Marriage. With the exception of the United States and Spain, the majority of Catholics worldwide oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex by a margin of roughly 2 to 1.

Furthermore, Catholics around the world oppose same sex marriages being performed in the confines of the church by a nearly 4 to 1 margin.

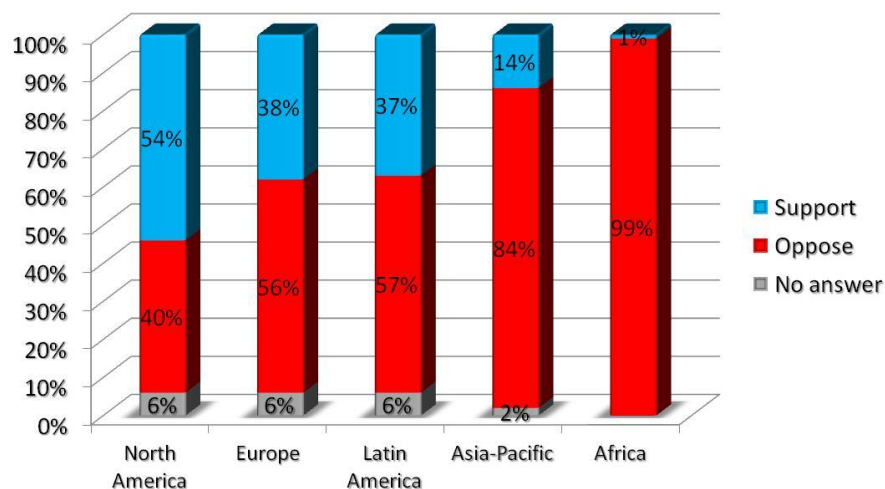
GAY MARRIAGE

Do you support or oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex?

Gay Marriage – Global Result



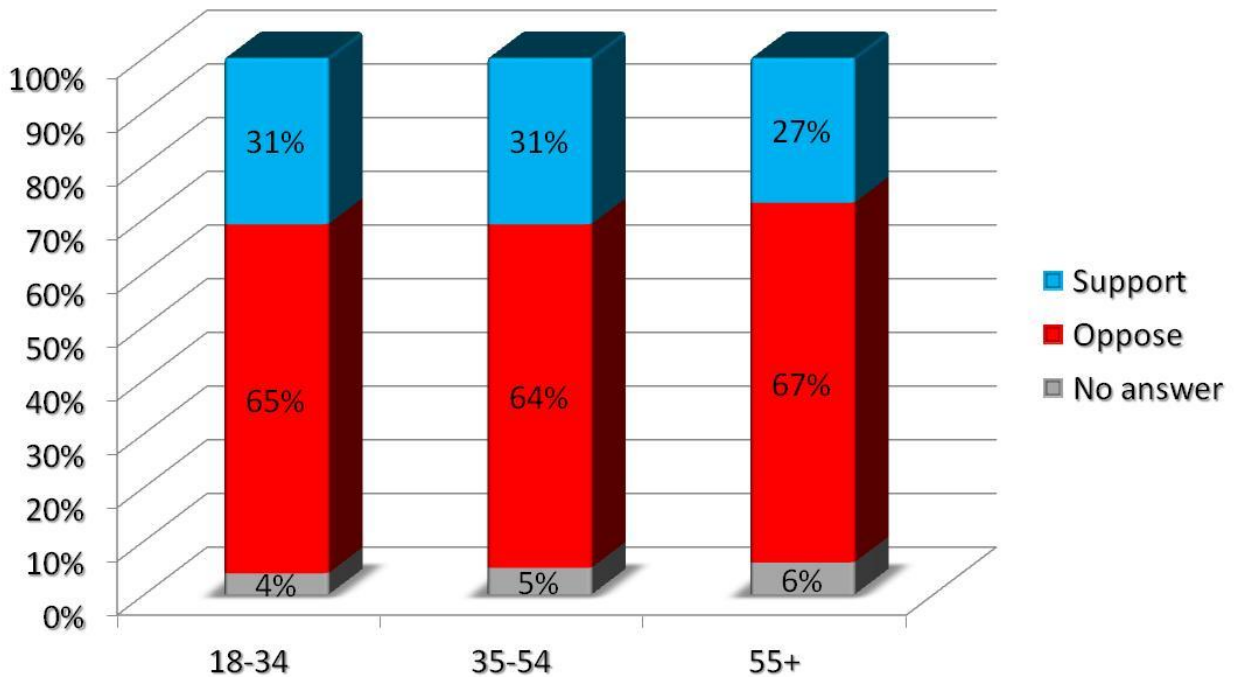
Gay Marriage - Results By Continent



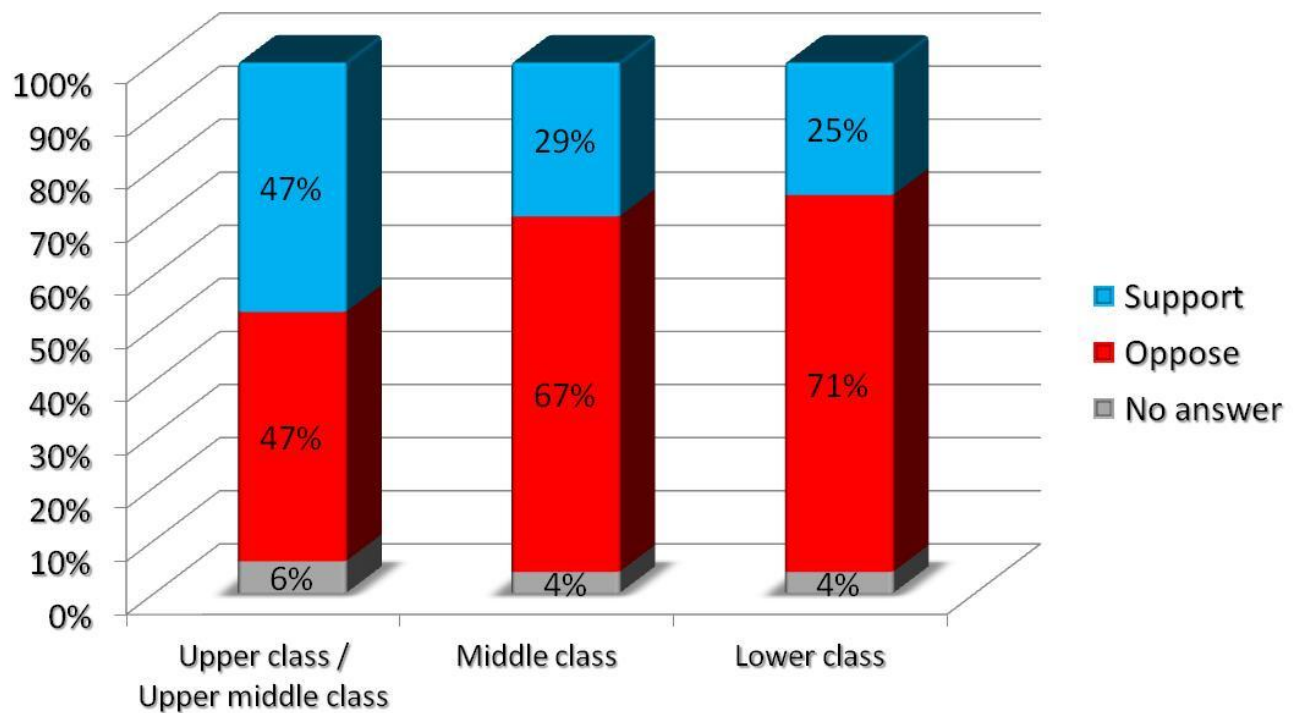
Gay Marriage - Results By Country

	Support	Oppose	No answer
Spain	64%	27%	9%
United States	54%	40%	6%
Argentina	46%	48%	6%
Brazil	45%	48%	7%
France	43%	52%	5%
Mexico	36%	62%	2%
Italy	30%	66%	4%
Colombia	24%	71%	5%
Poland	15%	78%	7%
Philippines	14%	84%	2%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2%	98%	0%
Uganda	1%	99%	0%

Gay Marriage - Results By Age

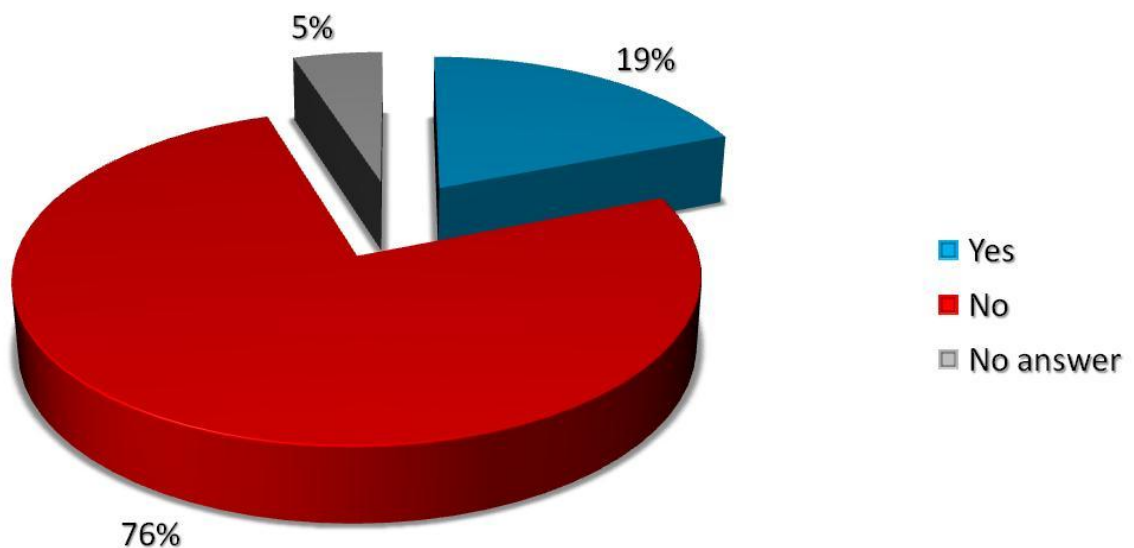


Gay Marriage - Results By Socio Economic Class

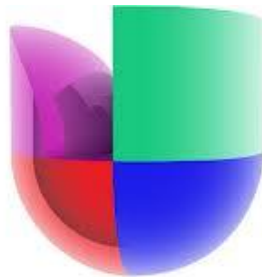


GAY MARRIAGE

Do you think that the Catholic Church should perform marriages between two persons of the same sex?



Pope Francis



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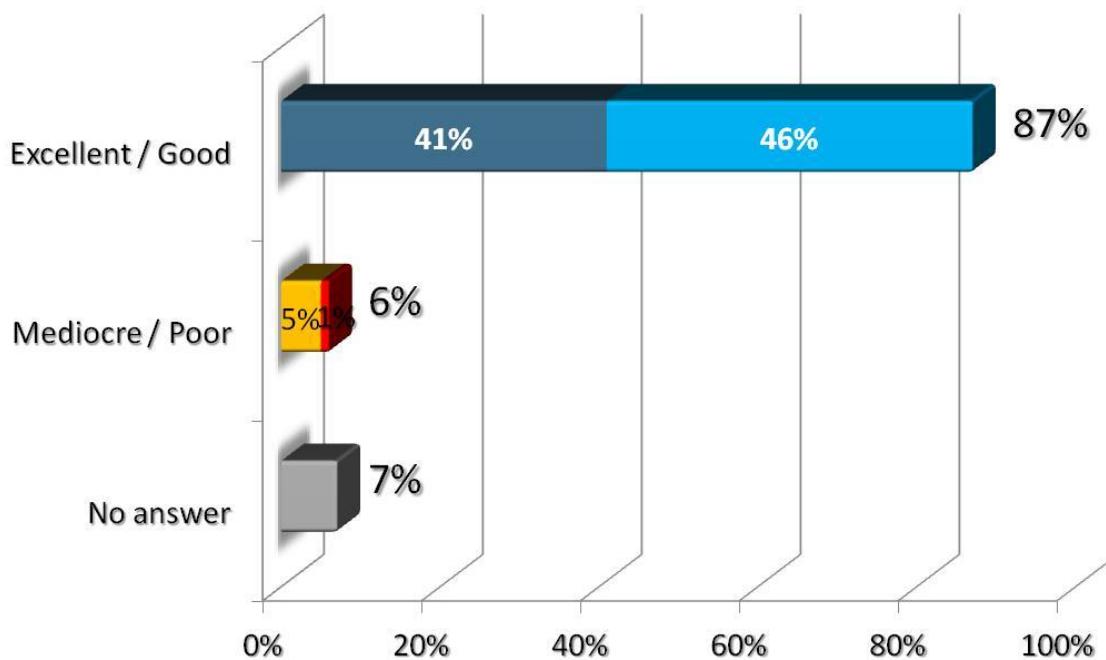
GLOBAL SURVEY OF ROMAN CATHOLICS

Less than a full year into his Papacy, Pope Francis enjoys almost unanimous positive ratings among Catholics worldwide.

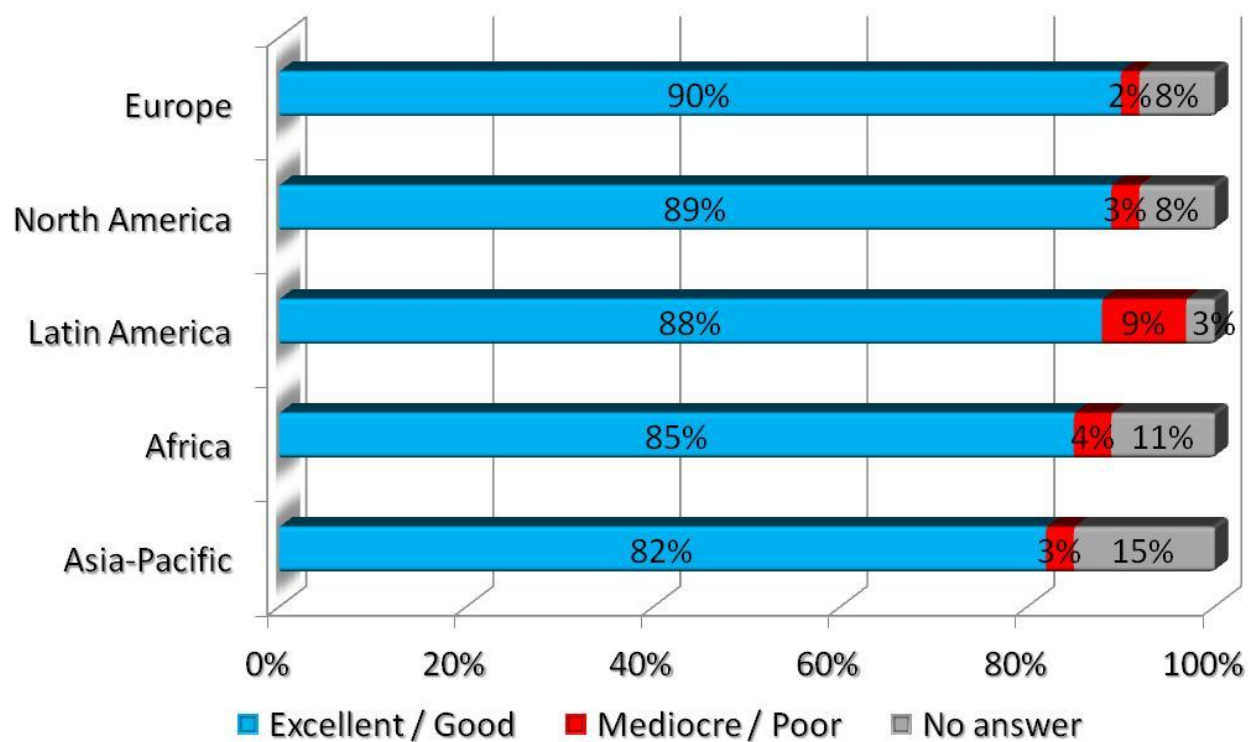
The Pope's positive approval rating is well above 80% with negatives generally below 5% in every country surveyed, with exception of Mexico. In Mexico, more than a quarter of respondents indicated they had a negative opinion of the Pope, which could be a statement on the man, but is more likely the result of historical conflicts, both with and within the Catholic church in Mexico.

POPE FRANCIS

How would you rate the job that Pope Francis has been doing since he was elected Pope earlier this year?

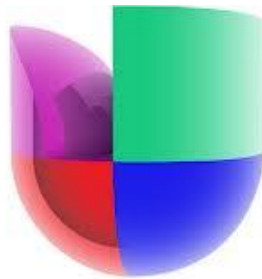


Pope Francis - Results By Continent



Pope Francis - Results By Country

	<i>Excellent / Good</i>	<i>Mediocre / Poor</i>	<i>No answer</i>
Italy	99%	1%	0%
Argentina	97%	2%	1%
Poland	94%	1%	5%
Colombia	92%	3%	5%
Brazil	91%	6%	3%
United States	89%	3%	8%
Uganda	88%	5%	7%
Spain	86%	4%	10%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	82%	4%	14%
Philippines	82%	3%	15%
France	80%	4%	16%
Mexico	70%	26%	4%



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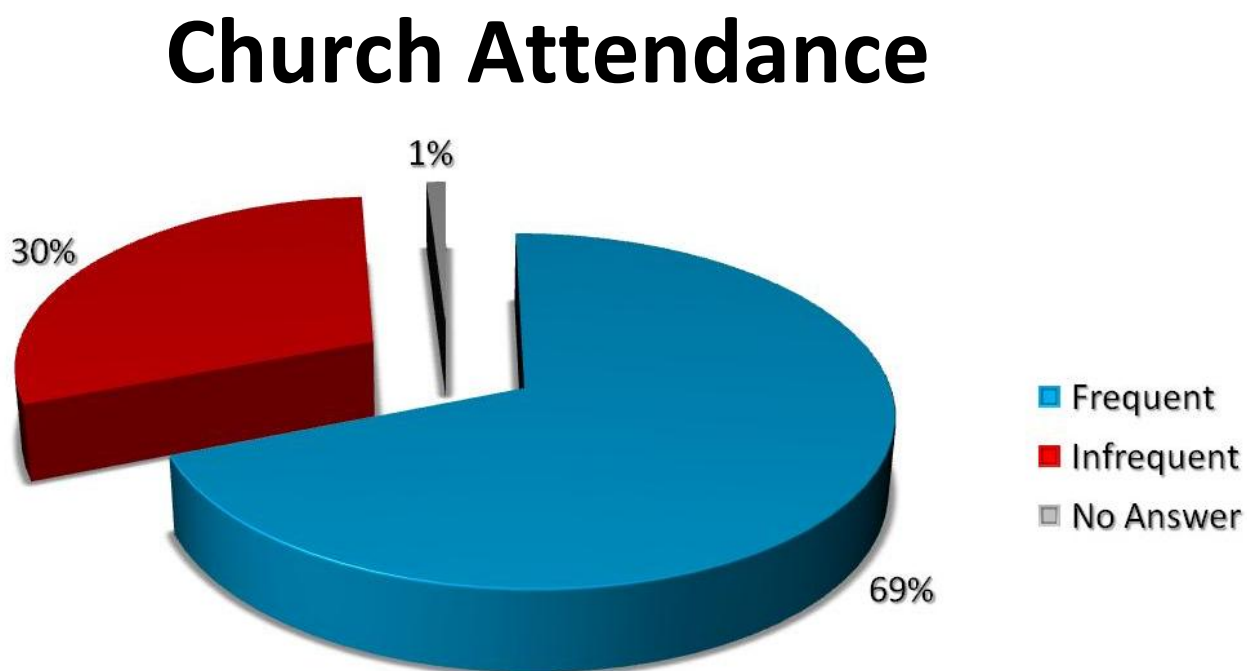
GLOBAL SURVEY OF ROMAN CATHOLICS

Church Attendance

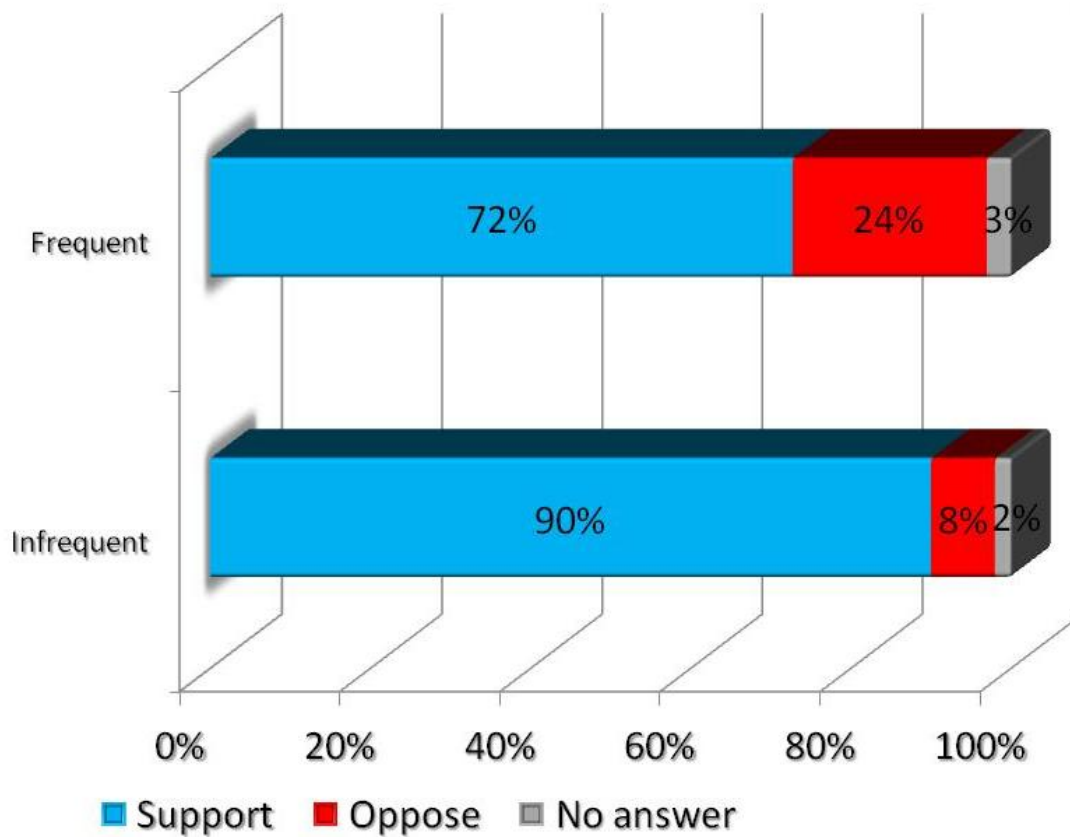
Of the more than 12,000 Catholics surveyed, roughly 30% described themselves as infrequent attendees, defined for the purposes of the study, as those who attend service only a few times a year such as major holidays, and those who never attend services.

The data shows a clear divide in opinion on the societal issues tested, among those who attend church services on a regular basis, and those who choose not to.

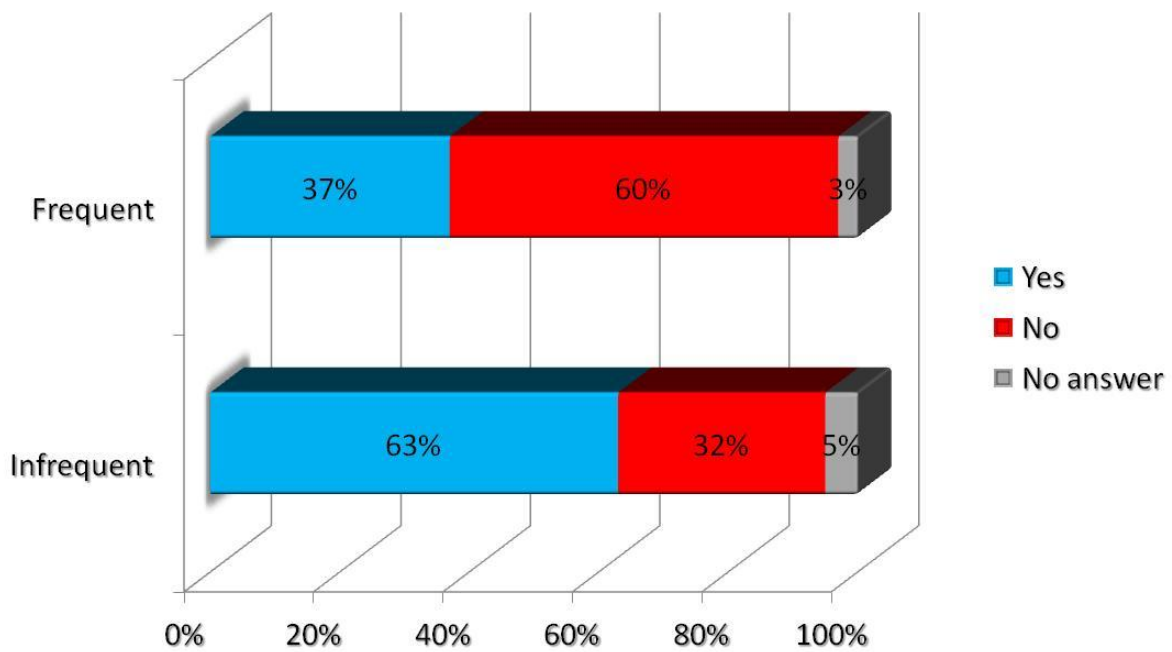
This finding represents a potentially interesting conundrum for the church going forward to determine, whether members are out of step with doctrine because they fail to attend, or conversely is a large segment of the membership choosing not to attend because they do not agree with the teachings.



Contraceptives - Results By Church Attendance



Women Becoming Priests - Results By Church Attendance



APPENDIX



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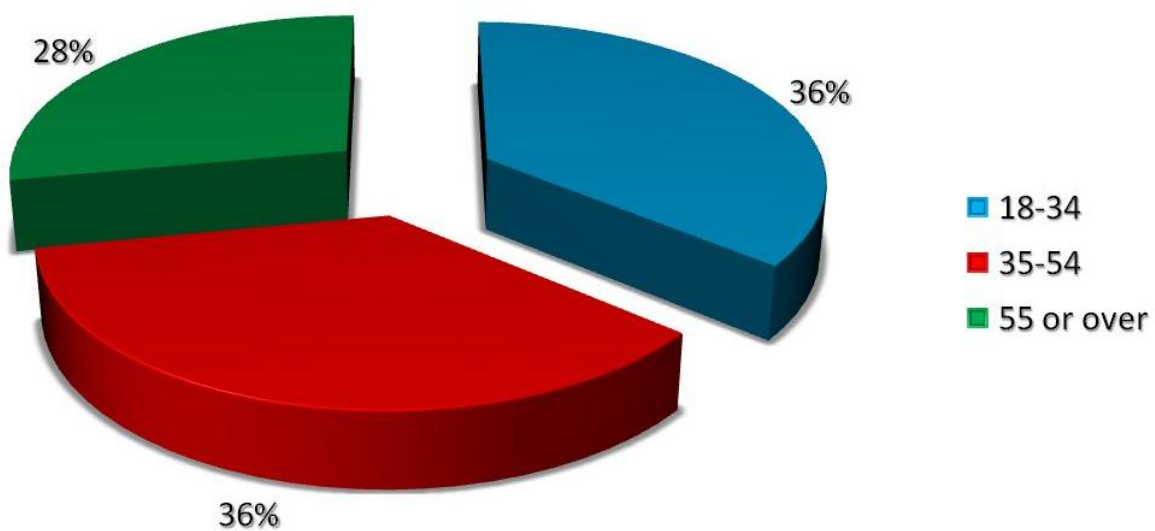
GLOBAL SURVEY OF ROMAN CATHOLICS

DEMOGRAPHICS

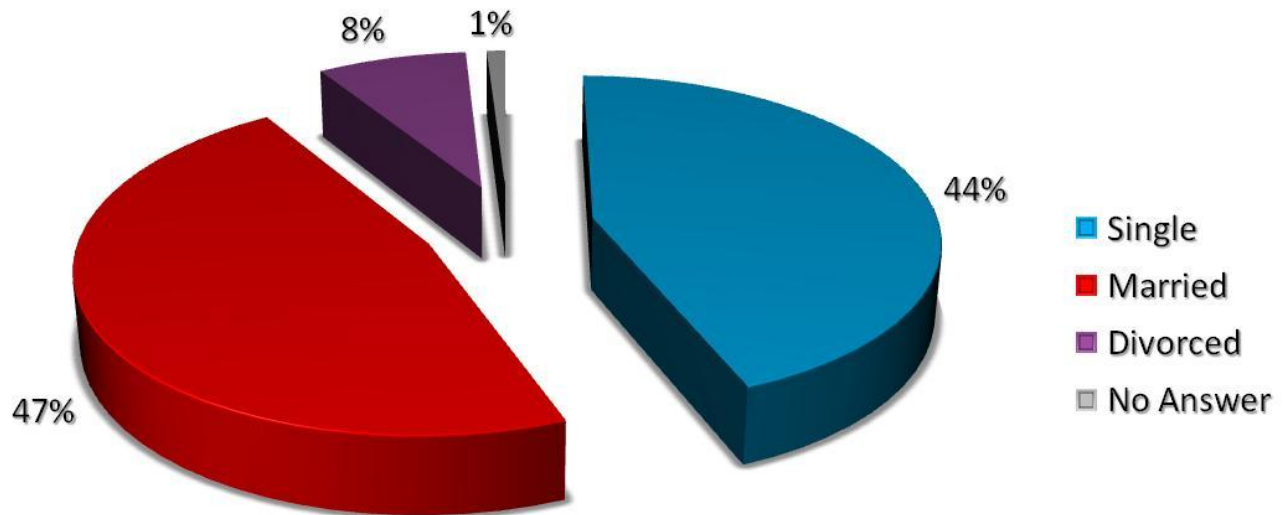
Gender



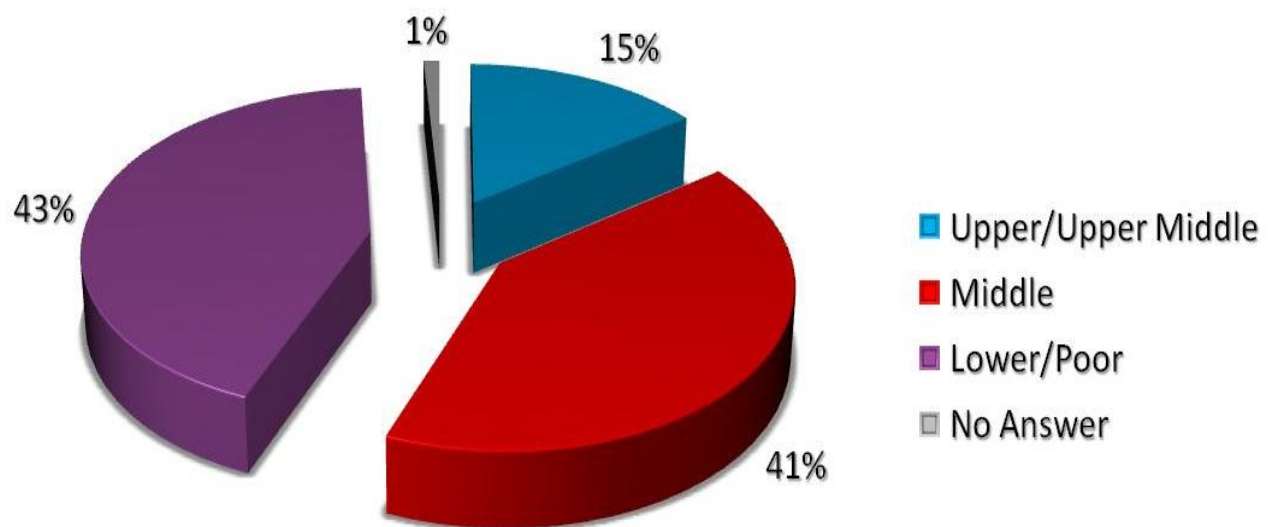
Age



MARITAL STATUS



SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS



ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM

Bendixen & Amandi International is a full-service research and communications consulting firm specializing in qualitative and quantitative public opinion research. B&A is a US-based company founded in 1984 and since that time has grown into one of the world's foremost opinion research firms.

B&A has worked with a prestigious list of clients including the United Nations, the World Bank, The White House, Inter-American Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, African Development Bank, as well as major foundations, global corporations and U.S. and international presidential candidates.

B&A has developed a national and international reputation for particular expertise in the area of multilingual and multicultural research. The firm has conducted studies on five continents, in nearly 20 languages in countries including:

- *Argentina, Aruba, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Bonaire, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Georgia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Moldova, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Uganda, United States and Venezuela.*

The firm has conducted numerous projects that have employed nearly every type of new data collection research method, including: polling, focus groups, in-person executive interviews (or in-depth interviews, IDIs) and economic impact analysis. B&A has the capability to develop representative samples at the town, county, state and national levels for both the general population as well as specific sub-groups. Beyond developing the sample and methodological approach for each research project, B&A also manages the field operations, prepares progress reports, cleans and analyzes data and prepares final written reports.

The firm has also been at the forefront of setting new standards for multilingual research and has developed and employed unique sampling methodologies that ensure representativeness of the sample or sub-sample.

For more information on the firm please visit: www.BendixenandAmandi.com

FIELD PARTNERS

Due to the global nature of the project, B&A has assembled a team of top-notch professionals around the world to assist with the logistics of conducting the research. In addition to our own staff of experienced researchers, we have enlisted the expertise of in-country polling research partners who assisted in the data collection process.

- Ales Market Research
- Efficienc3
- Field-LinQ
- Hugo Haime & Asociados
- IMAS International
- Latin Field
- Prestige Research
- SDR Consulting
- Smart Outcome Services



PHOTOGRAPHS DOCUMENTING THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS OF THE GLOBAL SURVEY OF CATHOLICS.



METHODOLOGY FOR MULTI-COUNTRY POLL OF CATHOLICS

Univision Communications, Inc. commissioned Bendixen & Amadi International (B&A), a professional market research firm located in Miami, Florida, to conduct a representative study of Catholics that would be global in scope. The content of the poll would focus on the intersection of specific social issues and Church doctrine. The methodology was designed to be as representative as possible of the world's Catholic population, while taking into consideration practical realities including, but not limited to: cost considerations, accessibility, timing, infrastructure and security. The end result of this significant undertaking is a comprehensive survey of over 12,000 self-identified Catholics, conducted in 9 languages, across 5 continents and in 12 countries. Ten organizations and over 100 research personnel throughout the world partnered to carry out this research initiative.

Selection Process for Countries Included in the Study

First, the global distribution of Catholics was considered and analyzed. Utilizing information from the latest data available¹, B&A analyzed the Catholic population by population and by concentration. Through this process, it was identified that the five major regions where Catholics reside throughout the world (Latin America (39%), Europe (24%), Sub-Saharan Africa (16%), Asia-Pacific (12%) and North America (8%)) were each represented by at least one of the top eleven countries with the highest population of Catholics. Additionally, upon further investigation of these numbers, it became clear that considering concentration alone (without also considering population) would be an insufficient method for designing the sample. There are many countries, for example Andorra, which have a highly concentrated Catholic population (88% for Andorra), but still a very small relative population of Catholics at (Andorra's Catholic population is ~70,000). It was therefore determined, that total Catholic population, not concentration, would be the primary factor for determining the population from which to sample.

Next, the five major regions were considered in order to be sure that a sufficient number of countries were included to represent each region. The countries with the top eleven highest populations of Catholics provided adequate representation of 4 of the 5 regions. Only Sub-Saharan Africa was under-represented. In determining which country, in addition to the Democratic Republic of Congo, would be included in the study, concentration as well as population was taken into account. Nigeria has a population of ~20 million Catholics, but these Catholics are dispersed throughout the country and only represent 13% of the total Nigerian population. Uganda, on the other hand has concentrated population of ~\$14 million Catholics, which account for 42% of the total Ugandan population. For these reasons, Uganda was selected as the second country to represent the Sub-Saharan Africa region. The twelve countries that were ultimately included in the study represent 61% of the world's Catholic population, they are:

Region/Country	Catholic Population	% of Country Pop. (Concentration)	Rank
<i>Latin America</i>			
Brazil	133,660,000	69%	1
Mexico*	96,330,000	85%	2
Colombia	38,100,000	82%	6
Argentina	31,020,000	77%	11

¹ Population and concentration information utilized to create the sampling scheme is based on 2010 data from the Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life Project (<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/>).

Europe			
Italy	50,250,000	83%	5
France	37,930,000	60%	7
Poland	35,290,000	92%	8
Spain	34,670,000	75%	9
Sub-Saharan Africa			
Democratic Republic of Congo	31,180,000	47%	10
Uganda	14,100,000	42%	17
Asia-Pacific			
Philippines	75,940,000	81%	3
North America			
United States	74,470,000	24%	4

*Mexico is considered part of the Latin America regional sample rather than the North America region due to the cultural representation (primarily of Central American countries) it brings to the Latin America region.

Sample Selection & Field Process

In five of the countries (Italy, France, Poland, Spain and the United States) included in the study, telephone penetration was sufficient to allow for telephone sampling. In these countries, the sample was selected via random digit dialing (RDD) in order ensure the representativeness of the sample. In each country, B&A worked with a field partner who carried out the interviewing process. All interviews in these five countries were conducted by professional, trained interviewers at a central location in each country using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). B&A research staff oversaw all aspects of the interviewing process (training, monitoring, etc.).

In the remaining seven countries, where telephone sampling was not possible (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda), face-to-face interviews were conducted using traditional Paper and Pencil Interviewing (PAPI). A field partner and team of local field experts were hired in each of the countries to carry out the interviews.

The samples in each of these seven countries were based on multi-stage stratified random sampling through respondent selection. The stages are as follows:

Stage 1: Sampling points (SPs) were determined in each country after stratifying each country's population by region, level of urbanization and population density. SPs were then randomly selected within each stratum in each country, that were Proportional to the total country population.

Stage 2: Using the random route method, households were selected within each SP. This method involved selecting an address (or household) in each SP at random as a starting point. Each interviewer was given instructions to identify additional households by taking alternate left and right turns and stopping at every nth household.

Stage 3: For each selected household, individual respondents were chosen using a Kish grid. In a Kish grid, the interviewer must first ask for the ages and genders of every household member before conducting the interview (only persons aged 18 or older were eligible for selection). The individual to be interviewed was then chosen based on a random number in the grid. If the chosen respondent was not available, two more attempts were made to reach that person. If the selected respondent was not able to be reached by the third attempt, a substitution for another adult household member may have been made.

Once all surveys were completed, all data for each country was collected at a central location for processing. Each completed survey was checked for logic and accuracy, was then entered into an electronic file which was sent to B&A for analysis. The field period for the survey was December 18, 2013 through January 15, 2014.

Mode of Interview/Languages/Sample Size

The table below details the mode of interview, language or languages the interviews were conducted in, and the total sample size (number of completed interviews) for each country.

Country	Sample Size	Mode of Interview	Language(s)
Argentina	1000	PAPI	Spanish
Brazil	1003	PAPI	Portuguese
Colombia	1004	PAPI	Spanish
DRC	1006	PAPI	French
France	1014	Telephone (RDD/CATI)	French
Italy	1000	Telephone (RDD/CATI)	Italian
Mexico	1007	PAPI	Spanish
Philippines	1000	PAPI	Tagalog, English, Spanish
Poland	1001	Telephone (RDD/CATI)	Polish
Spain	1000	Telephone (RDD/CATI)	Spanish
Uganda	1003	PAPI	Luganda, Kinyankole, English
United States	1000	Telephone (RDD/CATI)	English, Spanish
Total	12038		

The field teams B&A partnered with to carry out the field operations were: *Ales Market Research, Efficienc3, Field-LinQ, Hugo Haime & Asociados, IMAS International, Latin Field, Prestige Research, SDR Consulting, and Smart Outcome Services.*

Analysis and Reporting

The final report includes data at the country, regional, and global levels. The global data reflects the data from all 12 countries (N=12,038) in aggregate. These results are weighted by region, in order to give accurate weight to each region, based on the proportion of the total global Catholic population that each region represents. Numerous weighting scenarios were tested in order to test for changes to the results and to ultimately select the most accurate weighting solution. The exercise of testing the impact of multiple weighting options, resulted in minimal changes to the data (1 to 3 points in some cases and one response to one variable in one weighting scenario that shifted 4 points). Based on these weighting exercises, we can be confident that the regional weight applied to the global data does not vary significantly from any other weighting option that could have been employed. The regional weights B&A used provide the most accurate representation of the distribution of Catholics by region.

The margin of error for the global aggregated results is 0.9% at the 95 percent confidence level.

GLOBAL TOPLINES

Bendixen & Amandi International
Social Issues Study
December 2013 – January 2014

12038 Completed Interviews

SCREENS

1. Age

1. Under 18	TERMINATE	
2. 18 to 34	CONTINUE	36%
3. 35 to 54	CONTINUE	36%
4. 55 or over	CONTINUE	28%
9. Refused	TERMINATE	

2. Is your religion Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim or is it another religion?

1. Catholic	SKIP TO Q4	97%
2. Protestant	TERMINATE	
3. Jewish	TERMINATE	
4. Muslim	TERMINATE	
5. Another religion	TERMINATE	
9. No answer	CONTINUE	3%

3. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be Catholic?

1. Yes	CONTINUE	100%
2. No	TERMINATE	
9. No answer	TERMINATE	

4. How would you rate the job that Pope Francis has been doing since he was elected Pope earlier this year – excellent, good, mediocre, or poor?

1. Excellent	41%
2. Good	46%
3. Mediocre	5%
4. Poor	1%
9. No answer	7%

ISSUES

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about important issues that are being debated in Catholic communities all over the world.

Divorce

5. Do you agree or disagree with Catholic Church policy that says: “An individual who has divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church, is living in sin which prevents them from receiving Communion”?

- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| 1. Agree | 38% |
| 2. Disagree | 58% |
| 9. No answer | 4% |

Celibacy / Priesthood

6. Do you think that Catholic priests should be allowed to marry?

- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 50% |
| 2. No | 47% |
| 9. No answer | 3% |

7. Do you think that women should be allowed to become Catholic priests?

- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 45% |
| 2. No | 51% |
| 9. No answer | 4% |

Abortion

8. Do you think that abortions should be allowed in all cases, allowed in some cases for example when the life of the mother is in danger, or should it not be allowed at all?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Should be allowed in all cases | 8% |
| 2. Should be allowed in some cases | 57% |
| 3. Should not be allowed at all | 33% |
| 9. No answer | 2% |

Contraception

9. Do you support or oppose the use of contraceptives?

- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| 1. Support | 78% |
| 2. Oppose | 19% |
| 9. No answer | 3% |

Gay Marriage

10. Do you support or oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex?

1. Support	CONTINUE	30%
2. Oppose	SKIP TO Q12	66%
9. No answer	SKIP TO Q12	4%

11. Do you think that the Catholic Church should perform marriages between two persons of the same sex?

1. Yes	19%
2. No	76%
9. No answer	5%

DEMOGRAPHICS AND CODES

12. How often do you attend Mass or other religious services – frequently (every week / a few times a month) or infrequently (only during Christmas and holidays / never)?

1. Frequently (Every week / A few times a month)	69%
2. Infrequently (Only during Christmas and holidays / Never)	30%
9. No answer	1%

13. Which of the following best describes your current marital status?

1. Single, never married, widowed, or living with partner	44%
2. Married	47%
3. Divorced, separated	8%
9. No answer	1%

A. Gender

1. Male	48%
2. Female	52%

B. Size of community

1. Large city (Urban)	43%
2. Small city or town (Suburban)	36%
3. Rural	20%

C. Socio-economic status

1. Upper class / Upper middle class (A, B)	15%
2. Middle class (C)	41%
3. Lower class / Poor (D, E)	43%
9. No answer	1%

PAPAL SURVEY

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

III EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PASTORAL CHALLENGES TO THE FAMILY IN THE CONTEXT OF EVANGELIZATION

Preparatory Document

Vatican City

2013

I. Synod: Family and Evangelization

The mission of preaching the Gospel to all creation, entrusted directly by the Lord to his disciples, has continued in the Church throughout history. The social and spiritual crisis, so evident in today's world, is becoming a pastoral challenge in the Church's evangelizing mission concerning the family, the vital building-block of society and the ecclesial community. Never before has proclaiming the Gospel on the Family in this context been more urgent and necessary. The importance of the subject is reflected in the fact that the Holy Father has decided to call for a Synod of Bishops, which is to have a two-staged itinerary: firstly, an Extraordinary General Assembly in 2014, intended to define the "*status quaestionis*" and to collect the bishops' experiences and proposals in proclaiming and living the Gospel of the Family in a credible manner; and secondly, an Ordinary General Assembly in 2015 to seek working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family.

Concerns which were unheard of until a few years ago have arisen today as a result of different situations, from the widespread practice of cohabitation, which does not lead to marriage, and sometimes even excludes the idea of it, to same-sex unions between persons, who are, not infrequently, permitted to adopt children. The many new situations requiring the Church's attention and pastoral care include: mixed or inter-religious marriages; the single-parent family; polygamy; marriages with the consequent problem of a dowry, sometimes understood as the purchase price of the woman; the caste system; a culture of non-commitment and a presumption that the marriage bond can be temporary; forms of feminism hostile to the Church; migration and the reformulation of the very concept of the family; relativist pluralism in the conception of marriage; the influence of the media on popular culture in its understanding of marriage and family life; underlying trends of thought in legislative proposals which devalue the idea of permanence and faithfulness in the marriage covenant; an increase in the practice of surrogate motherhood (*wombs for hire*); and new interpretations of what is considered a human right. Within the Church, faith in the sacramentality of marriage and the healing power of the Sacrament of Penance show signs of weakness or total abandonment.

Consequently, we can well understand the urgency with which the worldwide episcopate is called upon to gather *cum et sub Petro* to address these challenges. For example, by simply calling to mind the fact that, as a result of the current situation, many children and young people will never see their parents receive the sacraments, then we understand just how urgent are the challenges to evangelization arising from the current situation, which can be seen in almost every part of the “global village”. Corresponding in a particular manner to this reality today is the wide acceptance of the teaching on divine mercy and concern towards people who suffer on the periphery of societies, globally and in existential situations. Consequently, vast expectations exist concerning the decisions which are to be made pastorally regarding the family. A reflection on these issues by the Synod of Bishops, in addition to it being much needed and urgent, is a dutiful expression of charity towards those entrusted to the Bishops’ care and the entire human family.

II. The Church and the Gospel on the Family

The good news of divine love is to be proclaimed to all those personally living this basic human experience of couples and of a communion open to the gift of children, which is the family community. The teachings of the faith on marriage is to be presented in an articulate and efficacious manner, so that it might reach hearts and transform them in accordance with God’s will, made manifest in Jesus Christ.

The citation of biblical sources on marriage and family in this document are essential references only. The same is true for documentation from the Magisterium which is limited to that of a universal character, including some texts from the Pontifical Council for the Family. It will be left to the bishop-participants at the synod to cite documents from their own episcopal assemblies.

In every age, and in the many different cultures, the teaching of the Pastors has been clear nor has there been lacking the concrete testimony of believers — men and women — in very diverse circumstances who have lived the Gospel of the family as an inestimable gift for their life and their children. The commitment for the next Extraordinary Synod is inspired and sustained by the desire to communicate this message with greater incisiveness, in the hope that “the treasure of revelation, entrusted to the Church, more and more fill the hearts of each person” ([DV](#), 26).

The Plan of God, Creator and Redeemer

The beauty of the biblical message on the family has its roots in the creation of man and woman, both made in the image and likeness of God (cf. *Gen* 1:24-31; 2:4-25). Bound together by an indissoluble sacramental bond, those who are married experience the beauty of love, fatherhood, motherhood, and the supreme dignity of participating in this way in the creative work of God.

In the gift of the fruit of their union, they assume the responsibility of raising and educating other persons for the future of humankind. Through procreation, man and woman fulfill in faith the vocation of being God’s collaborators in the protection of creation and the growth of the human family.

Blessed [Pope John Paul II](#) commented on this aspect in *Familiaris consortio*: “God created man in his own image and likeness (cf. *Gen* 1:26, 27): calling him to existence through love, he called him at the same time for love. God is love (cf. *1 Jn* 4:8) and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion (*Gaudium et spes*, 12). Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being” ([FC](#), 11).

The plan of God the creator, which was disrupted by original sin (cf. *Gen* 3:1-24), has revealed itself throughout history in the events of the chosen people up to the fullness of time, when, with the incarnation of the Son of God, not only was the divine will for salvation confirmed, but also the redemption offering the grace to follow this same will.

The Son of God, the Word made flesh (cf. *Jn* 1:14) in the womb of the Virgin Mother, lived and grew up in the family of Nazareth and participated at the wedding at Cana, where he added importance to the festivities with the first of his “signs” (cf. *Jn* 2:1-11). In joy, he welcomed his reception in the families of his disciples (cf. *Mk* 1:29-31; 2:13-17) and consoled the bereaved family of his friends in Bethany (cf. *Lk* 10:38-42; *Jn* 11:1-44).

Jesus Christ restored the beauty of matrimony, proposing once again the one plan of God which was abandoned because of the hardness of the human heart, even within the tradition of the people of Israel (cf. *Mt* 5:31-32; 19:3-12; *Mk* 10:1-12; *Lk* 16:18). Returning to the beginning, Jesus taught the unity and faithfulness of the husband and wife, refuting the practice of repudiation and adultery.

Precisely through the extraordinary beauty of human love — already celebrated in a heightened manner inspired by the *Song of Songs*, and the bond of marriage called for and defended by the prophets like Hosea (cf. *Hosea* 1:2, 3.3) and Malachi (cf. *Mal* 2:13-16) —, Jesus affirmed the original dignity of the married love of man and woman.

The Church's Teaching on the Family

Even in the early Christian community the family appeared as the “domestic church” (cf. CCC, 1655): In the so-called “family canons” of the Apostolic letters of the New Testament, the great family of the ancient world is identified as the place of a profound solidarity between husbands and wives, between parents and children, and between the wealthy and the poor (cf. *Eph* 5:21-6:9; *Col* 3:18-4:1; *1 Tim* 2:8-15; *Titus* 2:1-10; *1 Pt* 2:13-3:7; cf. also the *Letter to Philemon*). In particular, the Letter to the Ephesians recognized the nuptial love between man and woman as “the great mystery”, making present in the world the love of Christ and the Church (cf. *Eph* 5:31-32).

Over the centuries, especially in modern times to the present, the Church has not failed to continually teach and develop her doctrine on the family and marriage which founded her. One of its highest expressions has been proposed by the [Second Vatican Council](#) in the Pastoral Constitution [Gaudium et spes](#), which, in treating certain pressing problems, dedicated an entire chapter to the promotion of the dignity of marriage and the family, as seen in the description of their value for the constitution of society: “the family, in which the various generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life, is the very foundation of society” ([GS](#), 52). Particularly striking is its appeal for a Christ-centered spirituality in the spouses’ life of faith: “Let the spouses themselves, made to the image of the living God and enjoying the authentic dignity of persons, be joined to one another in equal affection, harmony of mind and the work of mutual sanctification. Thus, following Christ who is the principle of life, by the sacrifices and joys of their vocation and through their faithful love, married people can become witnesses of the mystery of love which the Lord revealed to the world by his dying and his rising up to life again”([GS](#), 52).

After the [Second Vatican Council](#), the successors of St. Peter enriched this teaching on marriage and the family, especially [Pope Paul VI](#) with the Enyclical [Humanae vitae](#), which offers specific principles and guidelines. Subsequently, in his Apostolic Exhortation [Familiaris consortio](#), [Pope John Paul II](#) insisted on proposing the divine plan in the basic truths of married love and the family: “The only ‘place’ in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage, the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God himself (cf. [Gaudium et spes](#), 48) which only in this light manifests its true meaning. The institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form.

Rather it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love which is publicly affirmed as unique and exclusive, in order to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator. A person's freedom, far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom" ([FC](#), 11).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gathers together the fundamental aspects of this teaching: "The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament [cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, [Gaudium et spes](#), 48; *Code of Canon Law*, 1055, 1]" (CCC 1660).

The doctrine presented in the *Catechism* touches on both theological principles and moral behaviours, developed under two separate headings: *The Sacrament of Matrimony* (nos. 1601-1658) and *The Sixth Commandment* (nos. 2331-2391). An attentive reading of these sections of the Catechism provides an updated understanding of the doctrine of faith, which supports the Church's work in the face of modern-day challenges. The Church's pastoral ministry finds inspiration in the truth of marriage viewed as part of the plan of God, who created man and woman and, in the fullness of time, revealed in Jesus the completeness of spousal love elevated to the level of sacrament. Christian marriage founded on consensus is also endowed with its own effects such as the goods and duties of the spouses. At the same time, marriage is not immune from the effects of sin (cf. Gen 3:1-24), which can cause deep wounds and even abuses to the dignity of the sacrament.

The recent encyclical of Pope Francis, [Lumen fidei](#), speaks of the family in the context of a reflection on how faith reveals "just how firm the bonds between people can be when God is present in their midst" ([LF](#), 50). "The first setting in which faith enlightens the human city is the family. I think first and foremost of the stable union of man and woman in marriage. This union is born of their love, as a sign and presence of God's own love, and of the acknowledgment and acceptance of the goodness of sexual differentiation, whereby spouses can become one flesh (cf. *Gen* 2:24) and are enabled to give birth to a new life, a manifestation of the Creator's goodness, wisdom and loving plan. Grounded in this love, a man and a woman can promise each other mutual love in a gesture which engages their entire lives and mirrors many features of faith. Promising love for ever is possible when we perceive a plan bigger than our own ideas and undertakings, a plan which sustains us and enables us to surrender our future entirely to the one we love" ([LF](#), 52). "Faith is no refuge for the fainthearted, but something which enhances our lives. It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love. It assures us that this love is trustworthy and worth embracing, for it is based on God's faithfulness which is stronger than our every weakness" ([LF](#), 53).

III. Questions

The following series of questions allows the particular Churches to participate actively in the preparation of the Extraordinary Synod, whose purpose is to proclaim the Gospel in the context of the pastoral challenges facing the family today.

1. The Diffusion of the Teachings on the Family in Sacred Scripture and the Church's Magisterium

a) Describe how the Catholic Church's teachings on the value of the family contained in the Bible, [Gaudium et spes](#), [Familiaris consortio](#) and other documents of the post-conciliar Magisterium is understood by people today? What formation is given to our people on the Church's teaching on family life?

- b) In those cases where the Church's teaching is known, is it accepted fully or are there difficulties in putting it into practice? If so, what are they?
- c) How widespread is the Church's teaching in pastoral programmes at the national, diocesan and parish levels? What catechesis is done on the family?
- d) To what extent — and what aspects in particular — is this teaching actually known, accepted, rejected and/or criticized in areas outside the Church? What are the cultural factors which hinder the full reception of the Church's teaching on the family?

2. Marriage according to the Natural Law

- a) What place does the idea of the natural law have in the cultural areas of society: in institutions, education, academic circles and among the people at large? What anthropological ideas underlie the discussion on the natural basis of the family?
- b) Is the idea of the natural law in the union between a man and a woman commonly accepted as such by the baptized in general?
- c) How is the theory and practice of natural law in the union between man and woman challenged in light of the formation of a family? How is it proposed and developed in civil and Church institutions?
- d) In cases where non-practicing Catholics or declared non-believers request the celebration of marriage, describe how this pastoral challenge is dealt with?

3. The Pastoral Care of the Family in Evangelization

- a) What experiences have emerged in recent decades regarding marriage preparation? What efforts are there to stimulate the task of evangelization of the couple and of the family? How can an awareness of the family as the "domestic Church" be promoted?
- b) How successful have you been in proposing a manner of praying within the family which can withstand life's complexities and today's culture?
- c) In the current generational crisis, how have Christian families been able to fulfill their vocation of transmitting the faith?
- d) In what way have the local Churches and movements on family spirituality been able to create ways of acting which are exemplary?
- e) What specific contribution can couples and families make to spreading a credible and holistic idea of the couple and the Christian family today?
- f) What pastoral care has the Church provided in supporting couples in formation and couples in crisis situations?

4. Pastoral Care in Certain Difficult Marital Situations

- a) Is cohabitation *ad experimentum* a pastoral reality in your particular Church? Can you approximate a percentage?
- b) Do unions which are not recognized either religiously or civilly exist? Are reliable statistics available?
- c) Are separated couples and those divorced and remarried a pastoral reality in your particular Church? Can you approximate a percentage? How do you deal with this situation in appropriate pastoral programmes?
- d) In all the above cases, how do the baptized live in this irregular situation? Are they aware of it? Are they simply indifferent? Do they feel marginalized or suffer from the impossibility of receiving the sacraments?
- e) What questions do divorced and remarried people pose to the Church concerning the Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation? Among those persons who find themselves in these situations, how many ask for these sacraments?
- f) Could a simplification of canonical practice in recognizing a declaration of nullity of the marriage bond provide a positive contribution to solving the problems of the persons involved? If yes, what form would it take?
- g) Does a ministry exist to attend to these cases? Describe this pastoral ministry? Do such programmes exist on the national and diocesan levels? How is God's mercy proclaimed to separated couples and those divorced and remarried and how does the Church put into practice her support for them in their journey of faith?

5. On Unions of Persons of the Same Sex

- a) Is there a law in your country recognizing civil unions for people of the same-sex and equating it in some way to marriage?
- b) What is the attitude of the local and particular Churches towards both the State as the promoter of civil unions between persons of the same sex and the people involved in this type of union?
- c) What pastoral attention can be given to people who have chosen to live in these types of union?
- d) In the case of unions of persons of the same sex who have adopted children, what can be done pastorally in light of transmitting the faith?

6. The Education of Children in Irregular Marriages

- a) What is the estimated proportion of children and adolescents in these cases, as regards children who are born and raised in regularly constituted families?
- b) How do parents in these situations approach the Church? What do they ask? Do they request the sacraments only or do they also want catechesis and the general teaching of religion?

- c) How do the particular Churches attempt to meet the needs of the parents of these children to provide them with a Christian education?
- d) What is the sacramental practice in these cases: preparation, administration of the sacrament and the accompaniment?

7. The Openness of the Married Couple to Life

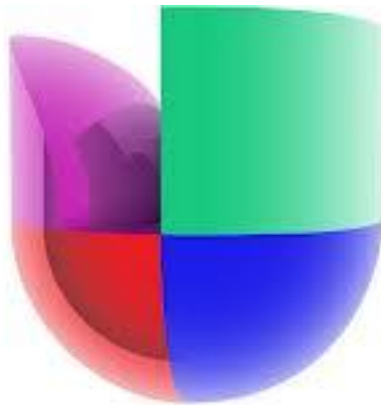
- a) What knowledge do Christians have today of the teachings of [*Humanae vitae*](#) on responsible parenthood? Are they aware of how morally to evaluate the different methods of family planning? Could any insights be suggested in this regard pastorally?
- b) Is this moral teaching accepted? What aspects pose the most difficulties in a large majority of couple's accepting this teaching?
- c) What natural methods are promoted by the particular Churches to help spouses put into practice the teachings of [*Humanae vitae*](#)?
- d) What is your experience on this subject in the practice of the Sacrament of Penance and participation at the Eucharist?
- e) What differences are seen in this regard between the Church's teaching and civic education?
- f) How can a more open attitude towards having children be fostered? How can an increase in births be promoted?

8. The Relationship Between the Family and the Person

- a) Jesus Christ reveals the mystery and vocation of the human person. How can the family be a privileged place for this to happen?
- b) What critical situations in the family today can obstruct a person's encounter with Christ?
- c) To what extent do the many crises of faith which people can experience affect family life?

9. Other Challenges and Proposals

What other challenges or proposals related to the topics in the above questions do you consider urgent and useful to treat?



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