

America magazine Releases Most Comprehensive Survey of U.S. Catholic Women Ever Conducted

Groundbreaking Research Confirms Catholic Women are a Political Powerhouse; along with a Wake-Up Call for the Catholic Church

(New York, New York – January 17, 2018) -- *America* magazine, the Catholic review of faith and culture published by the Jesuits of the United States, released today the most comprehensive survey of U.S. Catholic women ever conducted. Over 1,500 women participated in the survey, sharing their beliefs, practices, experiences and attitudes about being Catholic. Along with detailed data points comes a revealing, often surprising portrait of a powerful segment of our population.

“There are two major takeaways from this unprecedented survey,” said Rev. Matt Malone, S.J., editor in chief of *America* magazine. “First, U.S. Catholic women are a political powerhouse. If they vote in the numbers they say they will, they may turn the tide in the mid-term elections. Second, while they remain affiliated with the church, they are disengaged and disengaging. The survey is a wake-up call for politicians of both parties, as well as the U.S Catholic leadership.”

According to the survey, 74 percent of U.S. Catholic women intend to cast a vote in the 2018 elections. And their views on the most important issues do not align neatly with either party. Among those surveyed, care for the environment (83 percent), migration and the treatment of refugees (77 percent), and abortion (76 percent) top the list of most important political issues.

At the same time, Democrats have an advantage among these voters. Nearly 6 out of 10 Catholic women identify as, or lean Democratic, and 38 percent identify as, or lean Republican. “One thing that the survey results as whole indicate is that in certain congressional districts with this population, a pro-life Democrat would be competitive in a general election,” said Father Malone.

Results also show that Catholic female voters are independent thinkers who care deeply about the environment and people living in poverty. They also receive their information from a variety of sources, especially nightly local and national television (40 percent) and the internet (18 percent). They are technically savvy; the majority (75 percent) are on Facebook, 34 percent on Instagram, and 25 percent on Twitter.

While the overwhelming majority of U.S. Catholic women believe in God (98 percent, including those with some or frequent doubts), the numbers of those who attend Mass (24 percent attend at least weekly) or participate in sacraments such as confession are dwindling. Younger Catholic women are least likely to attend Mass. “This research is a real wake-up call for the Catholic Church to focus harder on its millennial outreach and to engage them in new and creative ways,” said Kerry Weber, executive editor of *America*, who oversaw the project.

Respondents said that a perceived lack of female role models, especially among the church’s visible leadership, is an impediment to further engagement. Accordingly, six out of ten Catholic women would welcome the ordination of women to the permanent diaconate, an idea currently under review by a commission appointed by Pope Francis in 2016. Twenty-one percent said they may support female deacons but want to learn more first. According to Fr. Malone, adding more women to positions of leadership requires the church to de-couple power and the priesthood. “The church needs to ask whether every non-sacramental leadership role currently held by a priest needs to be held by a priest. If not, then these positions should be open to laypeople and the appointment of women to such positions should be a priority.”

The study was commissioned by *America* magazine and conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University. In addition to the survey qualitative data, there is an extensive section devoted to demographics that paints a more complete picture of today’s Catholic women – their age, income, marital status, education and more. The research is featured throughout the January 2018 edition of *America* magazine. <https://goo.gl/iXJiXz>

For the full research results and charts, contact Linda Rigano at rigano@americamedia.org.

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