

Young Adolescent Catholics

Developed/Compiled by Michael Carotta, Ed.D.

Here are some of the findings regarding 263 Catholic junior highers gleaned from the 2004 National Study of Youth and Religion conducted by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton (Oxford University Press, 2005)

For approximately 3 out of 4 Catholic young adolescents :

- There is no parent-teen rift. Family life is favorable.
- Life has meaning and they have adults to talk to. They are emotionally secure. The need to be cool may be overrated.
- Don't drink or use drugs, have not had sex, and are not even dating.
- They care about the poor, believe in racial equality, and claim to have a good idea about right and wrong.

When it comes to God and religion, approximately:

- 8 out of 10 believe in God, pray daily or several times a week, and say that religion is important and that it shapes their decisions (40% say 'somewhat').
- Only 3 out of 10 feel very close to God. 2 out of 10 feel distant. 4 out of 10 somewhat close.
- 7 out of 10 believe in a judgment day and that many religions are true.
- 6 out of 10 say they are spiritual but not religious, talk about religion at least 5 times a month, and don't believe that you have to be involved in your congregation.
- 2 out of 3 have not had a powerful religious experience, have never been on a retreat, and are not in a youth group even if their parish has one.
- 7 out of 10 have never read a spiritual book.
- 7 out of 10 are interested in learning more about their faith.
- 6 out of 10 have participated in the sacrament of confession, prayed to the Saints, and said the rosary within the last year.
- 6 out of 10 say that the Church is welcoming and is also good talking about serious issues, but 5 out of 10 find Church boring.
- 8 out of 10 who attend Church say they will attend the same church as adults.

For Reflection

Which of these statements surprises, pleases, or concerns you?

What might you want to consider doing a little differently in your work among young adolescents?

71% said that they get along with mom and/or dad.

86% feel their parents understand them somewhat or a lot. (50% say a lot)

50% talk often with their parents.

70% say that they have the same beliefs as their parents.

2 out of 3 report being disciplined.

36% talk about religion with family once a week or more. 24% a few times monthly.

78% have adults to talk to.

2 out of 3 report never or rarely being depressed

4 out of 5 never or rarely feel that life is meaningless

2 out of 3 feel that the attacks of Sept 11 changed their life

87% report having a close friend

34% don't think it's important to be cool. 43% somewhat. 23% feel it is very important.

76% care about racial equality

85% care about the poor.

79% don't drink

87% haven't used pot

78% have not had sex and 2 out of 3 believe in waiting until marriage.

82% are not dating.

43% believe people have lost a sense of right and wrong. 55% think it is still clear.

72% have a good idea about what is right and wrong. 1 out of 4 is confused.

54% believe that morality is relative

86% believe in God.

35% feel very close to God. 43% feel somewhat close. 20% feel distant from God.

63% believe that God is a personal being involved peoples' lives.

19% believe God created the world but is not involved in the world.

18% believe God is a not personal but more like a cosmic force

72% believe in a judgment day

60% talk about religion 5 times a month.

48% never read the bible by themselves. 23% once or twice a month. 17% weekly/daily

57% pray once or more daily. 20% a few times a week. 13% a few times a year/never.

59% report never having had a definite answer to a prayer.

83% say religion is important and shaping their decisions. 40% somewhat 17% say not.

60% report being spiritual but not religious.

73% believe many religions are true.

2 out of 3 don't believe that you have to be involved in your congregation.

2 out of 3 have not had a powerful religious experience.

37% have never participated in service

68% have never been on a retreat

1 out of 3 does not attend religious education.

69% are not in a youth group even if their parish has one.

60% have experienced the sacrament of confession over the last year

2 out of 3 have prayed to the Saints or with the rosary over the last year.

73% have never read a spiritual book.

76% are interested in learning more about the faith.

50% have no doubts about their religious beliefs. 32% have a few 14% some 3% many

2 out of 3 find their church to be welcoming.

54% find church boring.

66% say that the Church is good talking about serious issues.

50% say the Church has helped them understand sexuality.

81% of those attending say that they will continue attending the same church as adults.