

Catholics on Notre Dame-Obama Flap

A Pew Research survey shows Catholics approve of the decision by Notre Dame to invite President Obama to give the Commencement address and receive an honorary degree by a decisive margin, 50-28. But the difference between practicing and non-practicing Catholics is profound. Practicing Catholics disapprove by a margin of 45-37 while non-practicing Catholics approve 56-23.

None of this is surprising. Practicing Catholics voted narrowly for McCain over Obama while non-practicing Catholics went big time for Obama. Those who don't go to church too often tend to be pro-abortion and those who go to church on a regular basis tend to be pro-life.

Practicing Catholics, of course, are the ones who pay the bills. By definition, those who rarely go contribute little. Moreover, as Arthur C. Brooks has shown, the data clearly demonstrate that the most generous Americans are the most conservative and the most religious; the stingiest are the most liberal and the most secular. Meaning that even when non-practicing Catholics do go to church, they are not likely to give much.

Perhaps it's time pollsters stopped counting non-practicing Catholics as Catholics. After all, those who rarely attend AA meetings aren't a true reflection of the utility of AA programs. And vegetarians who regularly eat meat—save for occasions when they dine with practicing vegetarians—aren't a true reflection of vegetarian sentiment on any given issue. In other words, non-practicing Catholics are not a true representation of Catholic opinion.