

CATHOLICS WANT GREATER ROLE FOR RELIGION

Le Moyne College and Zogby International released a poll today on Catholic trends that caught the eye of Catholic League president Bill Donohue. Here is what he said about it:

“The poll is interesting in many ways, but what is perhaps most striking is the finding that six in ten Catholics (59 percent) say ‘religion does not currently have enough influence’ in public life. Only 15 percent say it has too much sway; 23 percent say it has about the right amount of influence.

“A decade ago, a Gallup Poll found that 24 percent of Catholics thought that religious leaders had too little influence; 50 percent said they had about the right amount; and 22 percent said they had too much influence. That a much higher percentage of Catholics want a more public role for religion today than was true ten years ago may be due to the increased public concern over the status of the nation’s moral health. What is indisputable is that this change has deep ramifications for those running for president.

“In presidential campaigns, it is the Catholic vote that is pivotal: Protestants can be counted on to vote for the Republican nominee and Jews can be counted on to vote for the Democratic candidate. Catholics, on the other hand, have been in flux for the past few decades, and whoever wins their vote wins the White House. The results of this latest poll suggest that Catholic voters will be most responsive to those candidates who support a more public role for religion.

“This cannot be good news for those who have been clamoring for a more private role for religion. The persistent invocation of the need for separation of church and state is

really code for trimming the public role of religion in society. Those who ascribe to this restrictive interpretation of the First Amendment are clearly out of step, at least with Catholics.

“The time is ripe for all candidates to start explaining why the public expression of religion is integrally tied to our nation’s moral health.”