

CONFLICTED CATHOLICS?

A recent survey of Catholics conducted by the Pew Research Center highlighted the difference between practicing and non-practicing Catholics. It also tapped into the extent to which Catholics appear to be conflicted on moral issues.

On questions regarding birth control, married priests, women priests, and same-sex marriages, the average approval difference between practicing and non-practicing Catholics was 23 percent. That was an enormous difference. It suggests that non-practicing Catholics have more in common with non-Catholics on these issues than they do with those who attend Mass weekly.

The survey did not distinguish between practicing and non-practicing Catholics on the following: Catholics were asked to assess Pope Francis on his “Standing for traditional moral values.” He received his highest rating on this issue (tied with “Spreading Catholic faith”): 81 percent. It can be surmised that this figure would be even higher among practicing Catholics, but that is not why this matters.

How can Catholics say they are okay with birth control, married priests, and women priests (only a third of practicing Catholics say the Church should recognize gay marriages), yet state that Pope Francis is doing an excellent/good job in “Standing for traditional moral values”?

The strong support for traditional values suggests a continuity in Catholic thought that is typically underplayed, if not totally ignored, by the media.