

# DO CATHOLICS WANT A MORE INCLUSIVE CHURCH?

A recent Pew Research Center survey of Catholics concluded that they want the Catholic Church to be “more inclusive.” But do they?

No sooner are we told that “Most U.S. Catholics Say They Want the Church to be ‘More Inclusive’” when we learn how seriously qualified that conclusion is. What matters is whether Catholics are practicing or not.

It needs to be asked: If Catholics do not practice their religion, can they really be counted in a poll on Catholics?

As Pew reports, practicing Catholics and non-practicing Catholics have little in common. The former are much more accepting of Church teachings on an array of issues; the latter are not. For example, the majority of Catholics who attend Mass weekly say the Church should not allow women to become priests, and two-thirds say the Church should not recognize gay and lesbian marriages. Those who are not regular Church-goers favor both.

The survey found that 53 percent of U.S. Catholics who attend Mass weekly say the Church should stick to its traditional teachings, even if that means it gets smaller. This was exactly the position taken by Pope Benedict XVI. Indeed, he believed that a smaller Church was a better Church. Commenting on this observation, Pope Francis called Benedict a “prophet” for predicting the Church would become a smaller, but more faithful, institution.

This vision of a smaller but better Church flies in the face of a “more inclusive” Church.

Moreover, three surveys commissioned by the Catholic League

reveal that despite the strong secular bent of the dominant culture, most Catholics—especially those who regularly attend Mass—do not want to belong to a Church that “goes with the flow.”

This contradicts the conventional narrative about Catholics wanting more “inclusivity.” It also contradicts the notion that the Church needs to be more “relevant.” In fact, the more “relevant” any religion is today, the more irrelevant it is in the eyes of its adherents—they are losing members the fastest. Meanwhile, orthodox strains within every religion are doing the best.

Why does it matter so much to survey houses like Pew that they keep on polling Catholics to see if they reject the Church’s teachings, especially on women and sexuality? Because it provides ammo for those who are pressing the hierarchy about the need to change and get with the times.

This smacks more of a political agenda than a scientific enterprise. The latest Pew survey proves it.