

SURVEY OF CATHOLICS FOUND WANTING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new survey of Catholics:

The recently released survey of Catholic registered voters conducted by [Real Clear Politics for EWTN](#) has some fascinating data, but it also raises serious questions about its design.

When asked which party the respondent belongs to, 45% said they were Democrats and 34% said they were Republicans. This accounts for the fact that 48% voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016, versus 46% for Trump. This is not in accordance with the 2016 results. According to Pew Research Center, Trump won 52% of the Catholic vote and Clinton won 45%. So to begin with, this survey is skewed toward the Democrats.

Just this week, Rasmussen found that 45% of likely U.S. voters said the country is heading in the right direction. In the poll for EWTN, only 41% of Catholics agreed with this assessment. Democrats tend to be more negative about the future of the country, so this outcome makes sense given how the poll is weighted.

How Catholic are these voters? Are they practicing? Do they even know what the Church teaches about public policy issues?

As it turns out, only 46% either fully accept or mostly accept the Church's teachings, while 44% do not. This reflects the fact that almost a quarter (23%) either go to Mass less than yearly or never. These people are Catholic in name only, making them about as representative of Catholics as carnivorous-eating self-identified vegetarians are of vegetarians.

Almost two-thirds (63%) know virtually nothing about the

Church's teaching on the death penalty. Three in ten (31%) said they were unaware that the Church had a specific teaching on this subject, and another 32% said they were unaware of the specifics.

Some Catholic commentators are making hay over the fact that a majority of Catholics think abortion should be legal in all or most cases. This is deceiving.

Fully 80% are opposed to the standard provided by *Roe v. Wade*: it allows abortion to be legal in all cases. A third (33%) say it should be illegal in all cases save for rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother, and 11% say it should always be illegal. Three in ten (31%) say it should be legal except for late-term abortions.

How do Catholic registered voters feel about President Trump? Many are so ambivalent as to make their responses incoherent. When matched up against Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, Pete Buttigieg, and Mike Bloomberg, Trump loses to all of them. Yet 54% say they are leaning towards voting for him: 34% said they are sure to vote for him; 12% say there is a good chance they will; and 8% say it is possible they will.

On cultural issues, Catholics are mostly conservative. Half (49%) say that current programming from the entertainment industry is mostly unhealthy; 57% want more faith-based programming; and a plurality (42%) say there is an anti-Christian bias in the media.

This survey, contrary to some news reports, did not break down these sentiments by religiosity (or if it did it did not make the results public), so we have no way of knowing how devout Catholics stacked up against non-practicing Catholics. It would have been helpful to include such data.

If this survey tells us anything, it reveals that it is still early in this electoral year, thus explaining the lack of clarity in the Catholic response. Look for their positions to

become more decisive as the year progresses.