

UNIVISION'S SURVEY OF CATHOLICS

Recently, a worldwide survey of Catholics was conducted by Bendixen & Amadi International for Univision.

The survey of 12 nations yielded some interesting results, but first a note on its methodology. Asking people to identify themselves as Catholic is not a sufficient condition for drawing conclusions: we need to know whether they regularly attend to the sacraments, or not. The survey made no effort to distinguish between practicing and non-practicing Catholics.

Asking Catholics whether priests should be allowed to marry, or whether women should be allowed to become priests, does not tell us very much. Every survey says “yes” to both, but what counts is the intensity of the conviction: few Catholics have their bags packed ready to jump ship. If that were the case then the mainline Protestant denominations would be booming; instead, they are dying. In other words, there is a difference between a preference and a demand. There is no demand for either.

The survey is revealing in ways that the media are choosing not to discuss. On the two most contentious moral issues of our day—abortion and gay marriage—there is little sympathy for the secular perspective.

Only 10.3 percent of Catholics worldwide think abortion should be allowed in all cases. Yet in the United States, for instance, it is legal in all cases. Those who like to lecture the Church about “getting in step with the times” are deadly silent on this matter. In terms of gay marriage, only 31 percent support it; the United States and Spain are the only nations where a majority do. When asked whether the Church should perform marriages between two persons of the same sex,

76 percent say “no.” Had Catholics been asked whether the government should compel the Church to recognize gay marriage, even more would have said “no.”

The media are not reporting these findings; all that is needed is a calculator. And honesty. It is still painfully obvious that Catholics in the developed world need to catch up with those in the developing world, especially those in Africa and Asia, in their support for Church teachings.