

WHY THE PARTISAN DIVIDE ON MORAL ISSUES?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the results of a new Gallup poll:

Gallup has been tracking values and beliefs for many years, and its latest survey reveals that Americans continue to be dismayed with the state of moral values. Indeed, more than 84% call them “only fair” or “poor,” and two-thirds believe conditions are getting worse. Interestingly, the way Republicans and Democrats see things are demonstrably different, the former being much more critical than the latter.

A record-high 66% of Republicans say our moral values are “poor” and 92% believe matters are getting worse. Yet only 30% of Democrats think our moral values are “poor” and just 49% say conditions are worsening.

In previous surveys of this nature, such as the one Gallup did in 2007, it asked about specific moral concerns. For example, it asked respondents if they morally approved of such issues as the death penalty, gambling, buying and wearing clothing made of animal fur, doctor-assisted suicide, abortion, homosexual relations, and so on. The latest poll takes a more macro approach, thus making it somewhat more difficult to analyze.

The poll’s results suggest that both Republicans and Democrats are at least somewhat guided in their response by who the White House occupant is. Thus, under Trump Republicans were not as pessimistic as they are now under Biden; the reverse is true for Democrats. However, there may be more in play than just this factor.

It is plausible to assume that among the reasons why

Republicans are less happy about the state of our moral values are such issues as crime, race and sexuality. Homicides have risen sharply across the nation, and in some cities they are at record levels; urban riots have also plagued the nation. Critical race theory in the schools, along with the transgender agenda, have generated even more concerns.

To be sure, Democrats are not happy with surging crime rates as well, though it must be said that it is in cities run by left-wing members of their party where the situation is most out of hand. Moreover, critical race theory and the transgender movement are viewed in a mostly positive light.

No doubt there are issues where both sides could come together. Road rage, texting while driving, rudeness, belligerence, self-centeredness—these are just some moral issues where a partisan split is unlikely.

President Biden was elected, in part, because he said unity was his goal. But it is hard to see how this can be achieved when those fomenting division remain largely unaccountable. Perhaps the real question is how much unity really matters.