



*A special report commissioned by The
Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life*

**Future Faithful Families
Project: Successfully
Raising Catholic Children
to be Active Catholics as
Adults**

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CARA is a national, non-profit, Georgetown University affiliated research center that conducts social scientific studies about the Catholic Church. Founded in 1964, CARA has three major dimensions to its mission: to increase the Church's self-understanding, to serve the applied research needs of Church decision-makers, to advance scholarly research on religion, particularly Catholicism. CARA's longstanding policy is to let research findings stand on their own and never take an advocacy position or go into areas outside its social science competence.

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**The Peyton Institute
for Domestic Church Life**

HOLY CROSS
FAMILY MINISTRIES

Created by Holy Cross Family Ministries in collaboration with Pastoral Solutions Institute, The Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life was formed to create a collaborative think tank of distinguished theologians, social scientists, and pastoral ministry professionals noted for their work and writings on family life.

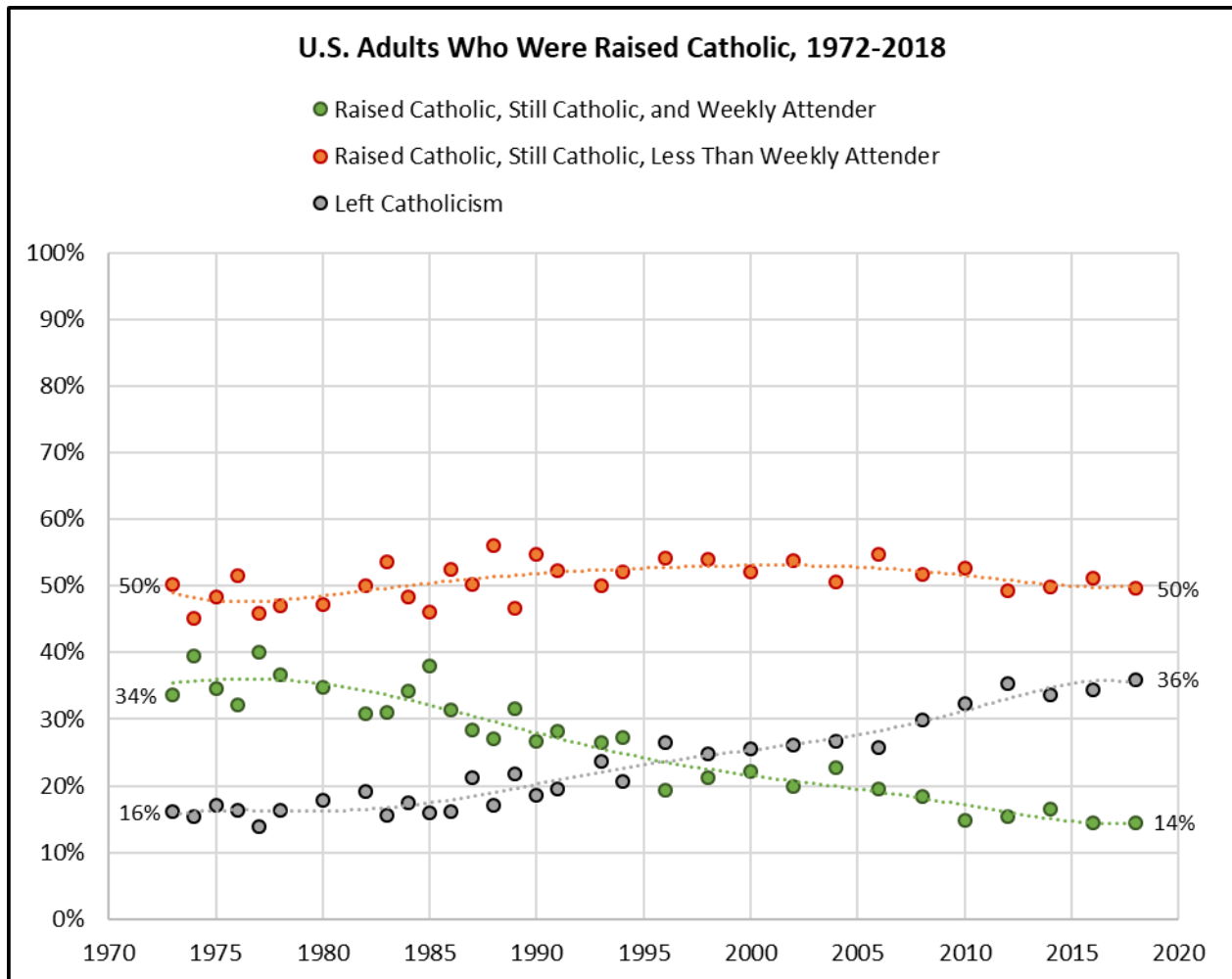
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Raised Catholic: Who Stays and Who Goes?

The General Social Survey (GSS) is a nationally representative survey of U.S. adults conducted since 1973. This survey includes questions about the respondents' current religion, the religion they were raised in, and their frequency of Mass attendance. From this we can identify, the share of Catholic adults who were raised Catholic and stayed Catholic as adults and attends Mass weekly. This is shown in the figure below for the surveys conducted between 1973 and 2018.¹



In the 1970s, an average of 36% of those who were raised Catholic remained Catholic as adults and attended Mass weekly (peaking at 40% in 1977). This average percentage declined to 32% in the 1980s, 25% in the 1990s, and 21% in the 2000s. In the 2010s, this averaged 15% and was 14% in the 2018 study.²

¹ A 2020-21 survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of this report the data for the religion one was raised in was not available. Even if it were, Mass attendance in 2020-21 was not necessarily representative of respondents' pre-pandemic habits.

² Note that this figure excludes people who were not raised Catholic but who became Catholic as adults and attend weekly. Thus, it is not any representation of weekly Mass attendance for all Catholic adults. Attendance in any

Since 1972, an average of 51% of those who were raised Catholic, remained Catholic as adults but attend Mass less than weekly when surveyed. This was a high of 55% in 2006 and lowest at 46% in 1977. Thus, the raised Catholic population has been shifting over time in the United States with fewer remaining Catholic and having weekly attendance and more leaving the faith all together. Those who remain but attend Mass less than weekly have been a steady percentage at about half the raised Catholic population.

The Pew Research Center’s report *Faith in Flux* (2011) showed that most who decide to leave the faith they were raised in make that decision before the age of 24.³ Among those raised Catholic who leave, about half become religiously unaffiliated and the other half adopts a new religious affiliation. Among those who become unaffiliated the most common reason given was “just gradually drifted away.” The most common reason among those joining another faith say their “spiritual needs not being met.”

A 2018 study commissioned by St. Mary’s Press and conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) surveyed of former Catholics between the ages of 15 and 25.⁴ In many regards, the findings of the study are parallel to the patterns identified earlier by Pew. Yet, the study provided addition details by surveying teenagers. The median age at which these former Catholics said they made the decision to leave the faith was 13. Respondents were asked to describe why they left in their own words. The most common response is they stopped believing in God and/or religion.

From the View of those Raised Catholic

How are those who were raised Catholic and who remained as such and attending Mass weekly as adults differ from those who remained Catholic and attend Mass less frequently and those who left the faith altogether? The GSS provides some important insights. The analysis below focuses on Catholic adults surveyed from 2010 to 2018. This pooled sample allows for sufficient sub-group size and provides a focus on all recent available data from the GSS. The tables below emphasize questions where significant differences between sub-groups are evident.

As previously noted, in the 2010s, the percentage of those who were raised Catholic who remained Catholic and attending Mass weekly averaged 15% and this was 14% in the 2018 study. Below we compare this subgroup to those who remained Catholic but attended Mass less frequently and those who left Catholicism. Women make up a larger proportion of those who remain Catholic and attend weekly than they do among former Catholics (58% compared to 51%).

	Sex		
	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Male	42%	46%	49%
Female	58%	54%	51%
	100%	100%	100%

given week would also include Catholics, some raised Catholic and some not, who do not attend weekly but who by chance are attending the week observed.

³ Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2009/04/27/faith-in-flux/>

⁴ Can be ordered from: <https://www.smp.org/product/5926/Going-Going-Gone/>

Fifty-nine percent of the weekly attenders who remain Catholic are married compared to 50% of former Catholics. Eighteen percent of weekly attenders who remain Catholic are never married compared to 30% of former Catholics.

Marital Status			
	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Married	59%	50%	50%
Widowed	9%	5%	3%
Divorced	11%	11%	13%
Separated	3%	4%	4%
Never married	18%	30%	30%
	100%	100%	100%

Weekly attenders who remain in the faith are twice more likely to have five or more children than those who attend less often or who leave the faith (14% compared to 5% and 6% respectively).

About one in five adult Catholics in 2021 were born outside of the United States. Catholics immigrating to the United States is one of the reasons the Catholic affiliation percentage has remained stable at about 23% for many years even with a declining retention rate for those raised Catholic in the United States. Catholics who were born outside the United States or who had parents or grandparents who were foreign-born make up larger numbers of those who remain Catholic and attending weekly than they do among those who left the faith altogether.

Birthplaces			
	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
R born...			
US	71%	74%	82%
Elsewhere	29%	26%	18%
	100%	100%	100%
Parents born in US...			
Both yes	54%	59%	68%
Neither born in US	38%	34%	24%
	100%	100%	100%
Foreign-born grandparents			
None	27%	34%	41%
All four	49%	43%	31%
	100%	100%	100%

As shown in the table below, weekly attenders who remain Catholic are more likely to have been living with both parents at age 16 than those who attend Mass less often or who left the faith (81% compared to 72% and 63%, respectively).

Among those not living with parents at age 16, a higher proportion of those who left the faith were experiencing a separation or divorce among their parents compared to those who grew up and remained Catholic and attending Mass weekly (63% compared to 53%).

Living with Parents			
	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Parents at 16			
Other	2%	2%	4%
Own mom and dad	81%	72%	63%
Dad and stepmother	1%	1%	2%
Mom and stepdad	3%	5%	7%
Dad only	1%	3%	3%
Mom only	10%	14%	17%
Some other male relative (no female HH)	0%	0%	1%
Some other female relative (no male HH)	1%	2%	1%
Other relatives (aunt, uncle, grandparents)	1%	2%	2%
	100%	100%	100%
Reason Not Living with Parents			
One or both died	24%	22%	16%
Parents divorced or separated	53%	58%	63%
Father absent in armed forces	1%	1%	0%
One or both in an institution	2%	1%	1%
Other reason	21%	19%	20%
	100%	100%	100%

As shown in the table on the next page, those raised Catholic who remained Catholic and attend Mass weekly are more likely than others raised Catholic to not have a working mom when they grew up. Among those who leave Catholicism, 74% had a working mom. Sixty-nine percent of those who remained Catholic but who are not weekly Mass attenders had a working mom. Fifty-eight percent of those who remained Catholic and are weekly attenders had a working mom.

Mother's Employment When R Was Growing Up			
	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Yes, employed	58%	69%	74%
No, not employed	42%	31%	26%
	<hr/> 100%	<hr/> 100%	<hr/> 100%

A plurality of all sub-groups self-identifies their political ideology as moderate. However, those who remain Catholic and attending Mass weekly are more likely than those attending Mass less often and those who leave the faith to self-identify as conservative or extremely conservative (28% compared to 13% and 17%, respectively).

Half of those who remained Catholic and attend Mass weekly believe the ideal number of children are three or more compared to 37% of former Catholics.

What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?			
	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
None	0%	0%	1%
One	2%	2%	3%
Two	38%	44%	50%
Three	29%	33%	25%
Four	17%	10%	10%
Five	3%	1%	1%
Six	1%	1%	0%
Seven or more	0%	0%	1%
As many as you want	10%	10%	10%
	<hr/> 100%	<hr/> 100%	<hr/> 100%

As shown in a table on the next page, weekly Mass attending Catholics are less likely than those who attend less often and those who have left the faith to disagree or strongly disagree that “a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work” (34% compared to 23% and 26%, respectively).

A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.

	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Strongly agree	25%	30%	30%
Agree	42%	47%	44%
Disagree	27%	19%	22%
Strongly disagree	7%	4%	4%
	100%	100%	100%

Weekly Mass attending Catholics are more likely than those who attend less often and those who have left the faith to agree or strongly agree that “a preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works” (43% compared to 33% and 32%, respectively).

A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.

	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Strongly agree	8%	6%	5%
Agree	35%	27%	27%
Disagree	45%	51%	52%
Strongly disagree	12%	17%	16%
	100%	100%	100%

Weekly Mass attending Catholics are more likely than those who attend less often and those who have left the faith to agree or strongly agree that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family” (37% compared to 30% and 26%, respectively).

It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.

	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Strongly agree	9%	6%	5%
Agree	28%	24%	21%
Disagree	47%	46%	47%
Strongly disagree	16%	24%	27%
	100%	100%	100%

Weekly Mass attending Catholics are much more likely than those who attend less often and those who have left the faith to have read or listened to a reading of scripture during the last 12 months (70% compared to 41% and 54%, respectively).

During the last 12 months, have you read or listened to the reading of any holy scripture such as the Bible, Buddhist sutra, Koran, Shruti, Torah, or other religious scripture, not counting any reading that happened during a worship service? (2018)

	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Yes	70%	41%	54%
No	30%	59%	46%
	100%	100%	100%

Among those who are married, weekly Mass attending Catholics are more likely than those who attend less often and those who have left the faith to be married to a Catholic spouse (75% compared to 58% and 12%, respectively).

Married Respondents: Partner's religious preference (2016)

	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
Catholic	75%	58%	12%
Other Christian	22%	21%	30%
Something else	3%	21%	68%
	100%	100%	100%

As shown in the table on the next page, weekly Mass attending Catholic parents are less likely than those who attend less often and those who have left the faith to have both parents working full-time.

Parent Respondents: <i>Did you work outside the home full-time, part-time, or not at all?</i> (2012)			
	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Weekly Attender	Raised Catholic, Remains Catholic, Less than Weekly Attender	Former Catholic
When a child was under school age?			
Worked full-time	59%	72%	71%
Worked part-time	7%	14%	17%
Stayed home	34%	14%	13%
	100%	100%	100%
After the youngest child started school?			
Worked full-time	67%	81%	74%
Worked part-time	5%	12%	14%
Stayed home	28%	7%	13%
	100%	100%	100%
What about your partner? After the youngest child started school?			
Worked full-time	61%	64%	61%
Worked part-time	6%	15%	12%
Stayed home	34%	21%	28%
	100%	100%	100%

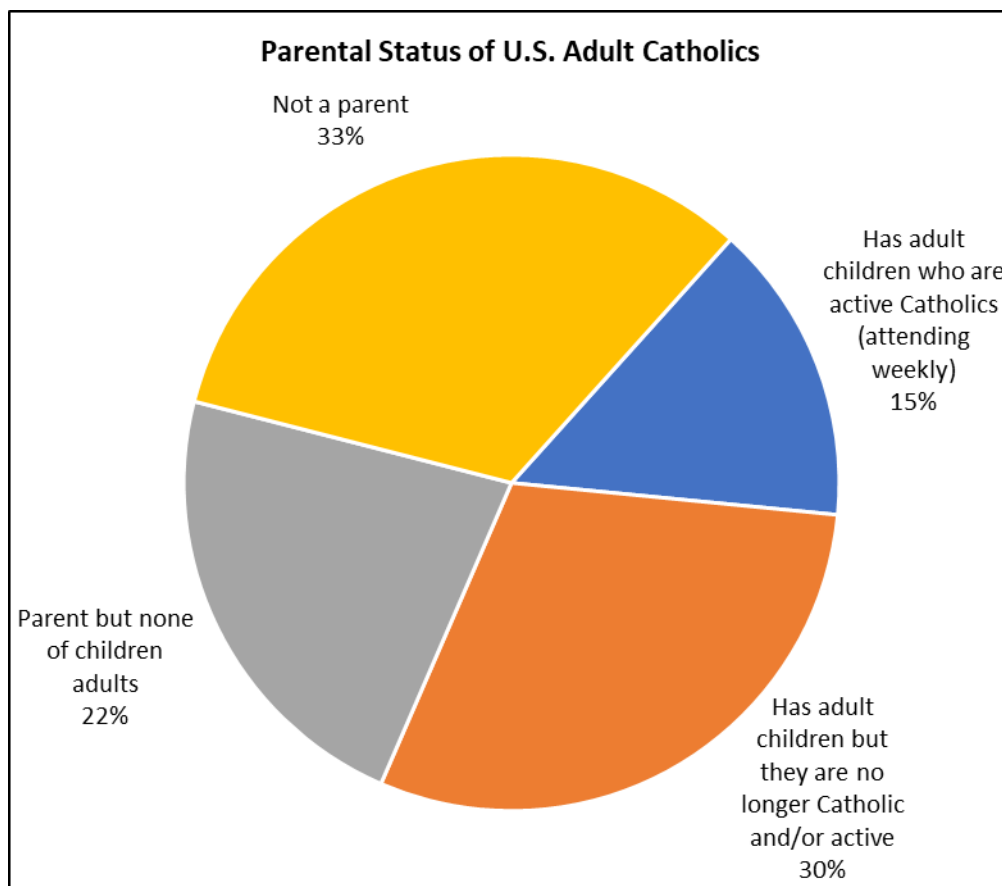
From the View of Catholic Parents in 2022

In 2022, CARA, in collaboration with NORC, conducted the national survey using the AmeriSpeak® Panel. The survey was offered in English and Spanish, and it was administered in two modes depending on the preference of the respondent provided during the panel recruitment: 1) self-administered by the respondent online via the Web; or 2) administered over the telephone by a live interviewer. The survey included 1,031 respondents resulting in a margin of sampling error of ±4.45 percentage points. The survey was in the field from July 11, 2022 - August 2, 2022.

In this survey, respondents who had children were asked, “Are any of your children now adults?” followed by “Do any of your adult children self-identify as Catholic and still attend Mass regularly (i.e., weekly attendance).” The section that follows describes sub-groups of Catholics using the responses to these questions.

Sixty-seven percent of the 57 million adult Catholics in the United States are parents (representing 38.2 million people). Of these Catholic parents, 67% have children who are now adults (representing 25.6 million people). Of these parents with adult children, 33% say their adult children self-identify as Catholic and still attend Mass weekly (representing 8.4 million people). Of these parents, 33% currently attends Mass weekly themselves (representing 2,772,000 people or 5% of adult Catholics).⁵

⁵ As of August 2022, which has still been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, among all adult Catholics 16% attends Mass weekly compared to about 24%, prior to the pandemic in 2019. Thus, current attendance levels



Overall, if we look at adults in the United States who self-identify as Catholic, they can be categorized into these four groups in the preceding figure. Fifteen percent have adult children who are Catholic and attending Mass weekly. This is nearly identical to the 14% estimate for the size of this population in the 2018 GSS.

How are these Catholics different than those in other groups? The table on the following page shows differences between the parent groups in terms of the background and religious activity. Of all those parents who have children who are now adults active in the faith, 95% have been Confirmed, 84% are registered with a parish, 52% went to a Catholic primary school, and 43% goes to confession at least once a year. Yet, only a third of this group attends Mass weekly themselves currently. When isolating those who currently attends weekly and who have children who are adults active in the faith, 100% are Confirmed and registered with a parish. Sixty-nine percent of this group goes to confession at least once a year, 60% are “somewhat” or “very” involved with their parish outside of Mass, and 58% attended a Catholic primary school.⁶

may not reflect pre-pandemic levels of attendance—especially among older populations who may be more concerned about being infected in group settings.

⁶ Again, some caution should be made with assumptions about current levels of Mass attendance given the survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic when Mass attendance frequencies may not reflect what is desired or behavior prior to the pandemic.

Differences in Background of Adult Catholics by Parental Status

	Attend weekly and has adult children who are active Catholics	Has adult children who are active Catholics	Has adult children not active Catholics	Has children under 18	Does not have children
Converted to Catholicism	16%	13%	7%	8%	7%
Has been Confirmed	100%	95%	90%	81%	78%
Went to parish-based religious education as a child	52%	40%	44%	38%	46%
Went to Catholic primary school	58%	52%	42%	23%	43%
Went to Catholic secondary school	29%	29%	22%	15%	29%
Went to a Catholic college	14%	9%	8%	7%	7%
Currently registered with a parish	100%	84%	57%	61%	43%
Currently attends Mass weekly	100%	33%	15%	12%	13%
Somewhat or very involved in parish outside of Mass	60%	27%	11%	18%	17%
Attends confession at least once a year	69%	43%	18%	21%	24%

Qualitative Interviews

CARA initially randomly sampled pastors and select bishops in late 2020 and sent them information about the project and a request for any families they personally knew that would fit the sample frame and might be interested in participating in a 30-minute interview. CARA and The Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life also reached out on their social media for any volunteers who were weekly attending Catholic parents of adult children who attend Mass weekly. This occurred repeatedly in 2021 and 2022. A list of a group of potential interview participants was maintained throughout the project. Interviews began in June of 2021 and were completed in February 2023. During that time CARA was also able to interview some of the qualifying participants from the 2022 survey CARA conducted with NORC. All interview subjects received a \$50 incentive. In most cases, CARA interviewed the parents or parent and then asked for contact information for any of their adult children who are Catholic and attends Mass weekly to invite them for an interview.

A total of 171 indicated interest through a link provided on the social media sites or through contacts generated by pastors. Additionally, 21 individuals from CARA's survey of adult Catholics who met the criteria of being a parent to an adult active Catholic indicated their willingness to be interviewed.

One issue in generating the list that was of concern was that some of those who responded to the social media invitations were subjects living outside of the United States but who were presenting themselves as in the United States.⁷ Interviews were not conducted with these individuals. The second issue of concern was a greater lack of response from the adult children than the parents who had been interviewed. It is well known in the social science research fields that it is often easier to recruit participation from older adults than young adults and this was evident in this study.⁸

Six interviews were conducted among the 21 recruited from the survey. Other could not schedule an interview or did not respond to inquiries. Two declined to be interviewed after expressing interest. Twenty-two interviews were conducted from the social media and pastor recruits and their family members. The total number of participants interviewed was 28 when the decision was made by the Peyton Institute for Domestic Church Life to close data collection.

The excerpts from the interviews provided in this section were lightly edited. For example, we remove repeating words or phrases (keeping only one use), uses of words like "um" and "like" that do not provide insight, and any identifying information about an individual. Also unrelated tangents are removed from within some comments—especially when these include identifiers. Some of the simplest questions elicited the exact or very similar response from more than one participant. These are in some cases limited in the examples to avoid repetitiveness. These do not represent a full transcript of the interviews. Instead, these are organized examples of comments that reflect the qualitative analyses of the interviews.

⁷ These messages of interest would come all at once in blocks of as large as 15 individuals. Their IPs were checked. Some were using VPNs and appeared as being in New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Interviews were scheduled with some of those appearing in the United States. When these began, the participant would not turn on their camera, and audibly appeared to be in a call center setting. They were thanked and told the interview could not continue. Eventually it became easy to identify these blocks of interest and they were then avoided.

⁸ Parents were actively showing interest in being a participant by responding to the invitations to do so by email, social media, or survey question. These parents supplied contact information for adult children who were not equally as interested in participating.

Social Context

Participants were asked about how Catholic the community or communities were that they raised their children in. No consistent pattern is evident among participants with some living around many Catholics and others around few, if any, Catholics. Others note that they often sought out other Catholics or were around Catholics due to their schooling choices. Representative examples:

- *I would say a Catholic majority.*
- *We're in a pretty rural area so I would say more non-Catholics.*
- *I think we made that choice consciously if not unconsciously but we tended to put more effort into the relationships that we made at church or through our social context in our Catholic circles. We have relationships with people who are not Catholic but we don't foster them as much. I guess we don't spend as much time with them or we're not as drawn to them.*

Respondents were then asked to reflect on the Catholics they were describing in the previous discussion and recall if those who they still knew remained Catholic. Most indicated some had remained Catholic but that others left the faith. This is consistent with prevailing trend in retention nationally. Some noted more success among Catholic parents that they know. This likely reflects differences between communities in which the families resided.

- *It was probably 50/50. Some left. Some stayed.*
- *I would say the majority of them [parents], like 90 percent, have kids who've left the faith. It's sad but yeah that's what we observed.*
- *I think like one or two maybe left of faith but I think for the most part they're still Catholic.*

General Faith Formation

Parent participants were asked to describe their role in their children's faith formation and adult children were asked to describe their parent's roles in this. Some homeschooled their children, others worked in a Catholic school or in a parish as a religious educator. Most indicated at some point, but not necessarily in the response to this query that living the faith at home in the community as an example to their children was important to them. Mothers were more likely to indicate playing a central teaching role. Such as,

- *I came to understand that I was the heart of the home and that heart had to lead to God. I was always hungry for the faith so I pursued it and I brought my kids along. As a mother our job is to show the way to the father in the natural realm but also in a supernatural realm. So everything I do is pointed that way. I was their primary educator. My husband supported the homeschooling but he wasn't very involved [in the homeschooling]. Whether they are homeschooled or they were in public schools we were taking advantage of parish religious education as well. I started to see the value in creating community in the church that we weren't necessarily getting because we were homeschooling and they were only hanging out with other homeschool families. I started to see an elitist attitude so we began becoming more involved in the parish formation programs.*

Fathers tended to be limited somewhat by work and travel and more often see themselves as living a life that can be a role model for their kids. Such as,

- *I think we both [father and mother] shared in it [faith formation]. She was the driver and I was the support factor. It was the same in my family. With my military background [and travelling] it was the same with my dad who was in sales you know so he travelled an enormous amount of time. So there are some limitations to it.*

Some also indicate being inspired by how they were raised and emulating this when they began to raise children. Such as,

- *I always had to make sure faith was not some separate category. I modeled the way we raised our kids very much after the way I was raised. Being Catholic is part of our identity. It doesn't fit into a box on Sunday or prayer time in the evening. You can't contain it that way. We're breathing, we are living our faith. It comes out in conversation. Whether it's a current event or a relationship or something going on in school, you are always looking to present it through the lens of faith. Not being explicit about it. I don't think things need to be rubber stamped "Catholic." This was one of the greatest gifts my parents gave me and I tried to do the same along with my husband. The truth exists and we know it. What a beautiful thing. What a counter-cultural thing to tell your kids, that there is a right and a wrong. There is an absolute and we can know what these are and we can discover them together. You may not know all the answers but we can explore. We can seek truth together.*

Below is a representative comment from one of the adult children that echoes the sentiments above:

- *[About mother] I think it [mother's role] was obviously important. I went to Mass with her. She was very on top of us. I would say my dad's role was probably strongest. My dad wasn't on top of us but he prayed the Rosary every day out loud. He went to daily Mass. He prayed the Liturgy of the Hours out loud so we could all hear it. It was a little bit different than my mom who was more involved in a way but that could sometimes go wrong if she got too involved. My dad was just a more steadfast presence.*

Rite of Christian Relationship

Participants were asked to describe the amount of time they spent together as a family. Some of the most common elements noted by parents was an emphasis on Sunday being oriented toward Mass. On weekdays, it is common for the participants' family to eat dinner together with prayer before the meal, and focusing on religious practices at home. Many reported spending more time together than the average family. However, there is a mixture of responses regarding the amount of time they were able to spend together. The primary limitation was related to parent work schedules. Some representative excerpts:

- *Sunday would be a day that was totally dedicated to going to Mass. Making it a family day and leisure. We didn't work on Sundays unless the plumbing broke or something and I had to do it. It was a day that we really tried to keep separate. We do it to this day.*
- *I spend a lot of time with my family once I'm back from work. We would sit together at the table and we would say some prayers before eating. Also say some prayers before we go to bed. I would say I spent a lot of time with them once I was back from work. I spent two to three hours with my family together with my wife. If they were less busy we could sit together and they could tell me about the day and how the day was. I could try to educate them to guide them. I know they need a lot of counseling.*

- *Dinner time is important. Regrouping every day. Maybe not getting the quality time with having so many kids but you know we definitely have lots more time together. I'm praying the Rosary every day. Gathering for that it was our time.*

Participants were asked to describe the degree of affection, affirmation, and/or warmth of their home. Participants generally evaluate their household as warmer and more affectionate than the average family. Multiple participants indicated they are “huggy.” Fewer said they were more affectionate vocally but not physically. In some homes this is more common for the mother to express warmth than the fathers who sometimes have a more detached and stern approach to parenting. None of the participants described their household as less affectionate or warm than the average family home. Some examples:

- *We had a very affectionate home. We were huggers.*
- *For me, I would say I was affectionate towards them. But for them, I could hear a couple of times when they told my wife that I was a bit strict to them. That was because I was trying to make them not to make some mistakes in life.*
- *We were strict parents but we were loving parents.*

Participants were asked about the ability of children to speak to parents and feel like they are genuinely listened to and supported socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Most indicated very good communication. The adult children were a little less likely to indicate there was as much communication as parents indicated. Often there were indications that mothers were easier to speak with while fathers were quieter or avoided because they were seen as an authority figure by the child.

- *Our household is a very verbal household. I deliberately bring up controversial things all the time. We debate. It drives my wife crazy because she sees it as she sees it as kind of strife. But I see it as let's talk about these things. Let's debate. I want to honor your side. I might think you're wrong. I think we're very verbal about those things and I always like say you know if there's something that is challenging let's apply critical thinking on this whole thing. We have those constant conversations on a one-to-one basis.*
- *Going back to the way I was raised I can look back now and say we were encouraged to ask anything we wanted. There was no shame in asking a question or not understanding something. And that was part of the gift that I think my parents gave to us was you could talk about anything and the church actually has the answers that you're looking for. You can ask any questions you want and if I didn't know the answer well, we can we can look into that together you know and kind of learn that together. Especially with regard to kind of less culturally popular Church teachings like on same-sex marriage or that kind of thing. With my teenagers they would come home. Especially the ones that ended up going to school and you know they were hearing different things at school and I remember one of my sons asking me saying it just feels mean like to tell people that that's wrong. So that was a real opportunity to look into like why does the Church teach this? It's not just a set of rules and the goal of the Church and ultimately the goal of God is our happiness. So looking at why the church teaches particular things that maybe aren't very culturally popular I mean in that in that light like the church wants what's good for us and it wants us to be happy and this is not something that's going to lead to our happiness or the happiness of that kid that sits next to you in class that thinks this is okay. So just always trying to frame it in that way but also with that that openness. Not that we have all the answers and but just knowing it's not about a set of rules. It's about a path that is for our own good.*

Participants were asked to what degree a loving-guidance approach to discipline (i.e., modeling, teaching, encouraging, and supporting good behavior) over more heavy-handed or punitive approaches to discipline (i.e. spanking, yelling, removing privileges, grounding, etc.) was used in raising children. Commonly, participants indicated using a mixture of these two approaches. Sometimes they were more heavy-handed when their children were young and became more loving-guidance when their children were teenagers. Often, the fathers were more disciplinarian than mothers but not always. Some did indicate using spanking. There is no one pattern or description that seems to be overwhelmingly common.

- *We were definitely in the former category which was more nurturing, talking, loving whatever. Not that I didn't raise my voice occasionally but I would never do the other stuff. Spanking no or any type of disciplinary action no. Yeah we didn't really need to, which was awesome.*
- *Time primarily in the room sometimes grounding, taking away privileges. It was isolation from the family you know for several minutes or just privileges. I guess mostly privileges just trying to make some consequence and allow them to be take an action. Hopefully it sinks in that you know it's not worth doing.*

Rite of Family Rituals

Participants were asked about the importance of family rituals such as family meals, family prayer. Game nights, family days, holiday traditions, celebrations. Participants were also described who was responsible for planning and maintaining these rituals. Participant families often have their own cultures and routines. Some of this is dependent on the parent's careers. Some live-in rural communities, others are in the military and lived in many places, some have work schedules that made some routines challenging. Youth sports are noted as a complication by some. However, a near constant in the responses about rituals were shared meals and prayer. Many also indicated having game nights, travel routines, and get togethers with relatives and other families. Most indicate, no matter what the routines, that faith was a part of them. Some representative examples:

- *Family dinner was every day. We would try not to even sign our kids up for sports or activities that would interrupt supper. Not to say that that never happened every once in a while we were gonna have to eat a late dinner when we get home. We hardly ever ate out. I fixed supper every day. We were always sitting at the table together. We didn't really have game nights but we would just kind of spontaneously say you know let's play games or something.*
- *There were a lot of family rituals. I could remember a couple of times we took breakfast together as a family and also in the evening we took dinner as a family. I would ask them to say a prayer before we take our meal. We pray together as a family most times. It was mostly in the evening before we go to bed. We did a lot of holiday trips together. We would go visit grandparents on the other side of the state. We did a lot of family rituals and holidays and all of that together.*
- *We were always having get togethers at home. We were always in tune to our kids as they were growing up with friends and families to invite. We were always having gatherings. We went vacationing. Going away with the kids and implementing our faith with that. It [faith] was just always there.*

Participants were asked how often their family worked on household chores or projects together (as opposed to individually). Many of the participants have large families with older children who have started their own families while still having some of their children at home currently. Some of the discussion of chores covers what these younger children in the parent households currently do. Most assigned chores and there were shared responsibilities that rotated. Fewer note doing chores

collectively as a family. Others exclusively did assigned chores. A small number did not give their children chores and instead had them focus solely on schooling and getting good grades. Examples include:

- *We did a lot of yard stuff together. Raking leaves together. When most of them were younger we would all get out there to wash the car together. It wasn't something just one person would do. We had a neighbor comment "do you all do everything together?"*
- *We would do some of the cleaning together. Both rooms and the kitchen.*
- *We had a chore list on the fridge and we had little magnets so every week we would swap my brother and I. I mean there were just normal day-to-day chores. We did I guess a few projects together.*

Participants were asked to describe how they had fun together as a family. Some participants previously described this in their comments on family rituals. Most include things like outdoor activities, vacations, watching movies together, and playing games. Examples include:

- *We went on vacations. We just had fun being together. We could laugh as the night went on. We would start supper time and we'd start talking. Then they would do their homework. We would all sit together. We did things like amusement parks.*
- *We did a lot of outdoor stuff. We would go on hikes together. All four of us all over hiking and camping and that's one of the things that we've always done together. We would do family little short trips. We jump on the train and go somewhere for the weekend.*
- *We go places together but I would say we really like cooking food together. I would say that my kids really enjoy that. Sometimes we'll throw on some classic rock music or whatever and then cook together.*

Participants were asked to describe how they prayed together as a family. Some participants previously described this in their comments on family rituals—especially prayer before family meals. These were often referred to as well in describing parental roles in faith formation. Nearly all participants reference prayer before meals. Some said the Rosary frequently and some note prayers before bed time. Prayer routines seem to vary with the age of the children. Examples include:

- *Our family prayer life has always been a part of what we do. Part of our every day. But what it looked like has definitely changed through the years. When all the kids were little it was easy. Just everybody come sit right now we're gonna do this right now. Sometimes the Rosary. Not always the Rosary. Then we found we had to get more flexible in fact it was sort of a mind shift that I had to make. At one point when our kids were older and they were doing sports or involved in school activities or jobs I was kind of waiting for the perfect moment everybody's home and everybody's ready to pray right now. That never happened. So when I realized that it was like okay we need to just have a set time each day where this is happening.*
- *When the boys were in high school we were saying a Rosary not daily but we were saying Rosaries in the evenings a couple times a week. Sometimes we'd miss it depending on how things went. We started saying Rosary before Mass. We did that every Sunday but we rotated through all the different Mysteries. Pretty soon we had a large group of people saying the Rosary with us so we've always kind of done things like that.*

- *Oh yeah, there's prayer before meals. If the kids are awake you know, like if I'm leaving, we'll do the morning offering together. In the evening we'll do prayers together. We might take on a special devotion every once in a while.*

Participants were asked how often their family made a point to have intentional conversations about faith, life, and the way they related to each other as a family. Some participants previously described this in their comments on parental faith formation roles, family rituals, as well as their descriptions of family prayer. Participants described different variations in which they discussed faith. The most common were discussions at dinner. Others did so on a case-by-case basis. Examples include:

- *We have these kinds of conversations. We talk about bringing the faith into our lives. About morals and values. We've had some tough situations as a family. The kids have had doubts and questions. They will ask, "Why does this happen?" I have to explain to them that they can't lose their faith.*
- *Earlier in the evening if they had a problem, they could talk with me and I'd teach them. I would try to get them true. I would try to make them understand why the disciples did this and why in this place. So that would help them build up their faith and all of that.*
- *I remember from a pretty early age we would like over dinner discuss faith stuff or I mean just kind of everything. Faith would come up pretty often um and I mean that was all throughout my life. I can't really pinpoint an exact conversation and say this is what we talked about but I remember having lots of conversations like that I mean usually they were over dinner.*

Participants were asked about the importance placed on attending Mass weekly in their family. At this point in the interviews, most participants had already described their frequency of Mass attendance and the importance of it when discussing faith formation roles, prayer, and rituals. A few chose to add additional context. In the comments below and in responses to previous questions all participants emphasized the importance of weekly attendance and going to Mass on other days of obligation.

- *On Sundays it is absolutely non-negotiable. We are there [at Mass] like absolutely. Sports. Yes, for sure that's a challenge. But I found that that this was a really great opportunity for us to communicate to our kids our family values. You're probably the only kid on the team who's not going to make that game or not going to make that practice. We would if we could. We'd accommodate it and try to go on Saturday evening or whatever but that wasn't always possible.*
- *That was important. You know attending. We would never dream of missing Mass. I mean I know so many people now that call themselves Catholic but don't go to Mass. They don't get it you know. That was very important no matter what their ages were so they get the most out of it. We didn't believe in the cry room. They go to communion and confession. We took them to confession regularly and they did that at school too.*
- *I think the only time I ever missed Mass as a kid I cried and it was because my mom was too sick to drive. I didn't understand it. I was maybe in fifth grade. I was like "we're missing church" and she was like "yeah but I have the flu." I think my dad was out of town doing something for work so she's like "we're not going" One of like the bizarre events of my childhood that we had one of those it might have been Easter though. It flooded really bad in Corpus and we tried to go and we got like halfway to church and my dad was like "yeah the water's halfway up the car door and we're turning around." I do remember that. But we tried to go to church and I was older so I understood that one a bit better. We went every Sunday. It wasn't really a choice. Even when traveling or anything we would always go to Mass.*

Rite of Reaching Out

Participants were asked about how often they brought meals to others, or donate clothing and other items to those in need. They were also later asked how often their family engaged in charitable service and/or ministry together as a family (as opposed to engaging in separate, individual service or ministry) in their parish or community. The responses below are from both inquiries. Many covered everything they had to say in the first question. Almost all participants report doing service and/or giving to charity. Many did so through their parish or other Church-related organizations. Some chose to do something as a family such as helping refugees or locals who needed assistance on their own.

- *We do a lot of donating of clothing. We also do service. Serving meals to those in need.*
- *We brought meals to people in need. Volunteered at a soup kitchen. We donated clothes. Volunteered at a men's shelter.*
- *Our kids have to do service hours for different things at the church so there's always opportunities. We have an organization that helps unwed moms or singles. Yeah, so we've helped with our services there and continue to fundraise for them. So there's always opportunities at the church. It's always there and we're trying to do our part to help.*

Participants were asked about how often their family hosted other people/families in their home. (e.g., dinners, barbecues, games, etc.). Again, this was near the end of the interviews and some participants had already shared about doing this. It was very common for participants to host family, friends, and clergy over for dinners and faith-related activities.

- *We hosted Bible study here and I don't even know what else. I mean we were involved in all kinds of groups. Liturgy planning. All that kind of stuff. I would host people here a lot of times for that and Bible studies.*
- *We still do that. Even during the pandemic, we have what's called small groups in Charlotte so about 18 people that have been coming to our home for the last three years, every week, four times a year. That is very important for families to nourish their own spirituality and nourish their children's. The children have to see it.*
- *Every Sunday, after Mass, we had another family that we helped who would come over sometimes. Then other families from church. Families from our robotics club. We would have them over and have a dinner or watch a movie. Or just hang out. They're typically all Catholic and we would pray together at the end of the night. We'd be like "hey let's say an Our Father Hail Mary, or Glory Be before we go our separate ways.*

Participants were asked about how much emphasis was placed on practicing good manners (e.g. saying please thank you, excuse me, I'm sorry, etc.) both in the home and when the family went out to restaurants, activities, church, etc. Many discussed this previously in discussing their parenting styles related to discipline as well as their roles in faith formation. All commenting here indicated the importance of manners.

- *Absolutely. We always stressed than. They learned to say things like "yes sir" and "no sir," and "thank you."*
- *Quite a bit. That's one thing that's always annoyed [wife] and I is how children, the whole please thank you treating people with respect. That means a lot. We always emphasize that because we*

see that's something that's just it's not a part of the world anymore. It's emphasized pretty heavily. We just think it's respectful.

- *I was brought up with good manners and holding doors for people, being of service to people. What can you do to contribute to a situation that makes it better? Just being a light, I think is important and a good manner says a lot to do with that.*

Conclusions and Implications

Youth raised in the Catholic faith have increasingly either left the faith as adults or remained Catholic but with infrequent Mass attendance. Today, approximately 15% of those raised Catholic can be expected to be Catholic adults who attend Mass weekly.

Most often those who remain Catholic and weekly Mass attenders grew up in a household with both their married parents. They likely were raised in a home where one of their parents were at home with them in childhood. Their parents were likely to have been raised in Catholic educational institutions—in Catholic schools or parish religious education. They likely grew up attending Mass every Sunday with their parents and continue doing so as adults.

In addition, at attending Mass regularly in their youth, adults active in their faith also were likely to eat dinner as a family with their parents and siblings whenever possible. Their prayer life with their family was likely active, before dinner, at bedtime, and rosaries, when possible.

When Catholic youth had doubts or issues with their Catholic faith, their parents likely sought out what the Church teaches and why it teaches this with their children. They were likely to take a loving-guidance approach in most cases with their children rather than relying on a heavy handed or punitive approach to discipline. Those who remain in the faith and active in the Church as adults were also likely raised in a warm and affectionate home where they spent time with their family in fun, prayer, and service to others.