

## ***Catholic Trends/Winter (#3) 2026***

### ***Gallup Measures U.S. Morality Attitudes.***

Do you ever wonder what your fellow Americans consider to be moral or immoral? Since the early 2000s, *Gallup's Values and Beliefs* poll has measured opinions on whether certain behaviors are considered right or wrong by American adults. The results, while not surprising, are daunting, which confirms that the moral values of the Catholic Church are a minority alternative view.

- **Morally acceptable to majorities:** Birth control (90% moral/7% immoral, Divorce (79%/19%), Pre-marital sex (68%/29%), Having a baby outside of marriage (67%/29%), Gay or lesbian relations (64%/33%), Gambling (63%/32%), Human embryonic stem cell research (63%/29%), Death penalty (56%/35%), and Euthanasia (53%/40%).

- **Divided view:** Abortion 49% immoral/40% moral, Medical testing on animals (47%/47%).

- **Morally wrong to majorities:** Sex between teenagers (41% moral/51% immoral, Changing one's gender (40%/54%), Pornography (35%/65%), Polygamy (21%/74%), Suicide (21%/71%), and Cloning humans (8%/87%).

According to the report, "The most polarizing issues are changing one's gender, with a 62% gap between Democrats and Republicans, abortion 58 points, and gay or lesbian relations (48%).

### **What do U.S. Clergy Really Believe?**

Do you ever wonder what bishops, priests, and deacons really believe beyond what they preach or say publicly? The results of the *National Survey of Religious Leaders* (conducted in 2019-2020) surveyed a sample of clergy from across the religious spectrum and probed about different aspects of religious beliefs. Some of the findings are the following and the results may surprise you.

- **Share of clergy with certain belief in God:** Black Protestant (90%), *Catholic* (85%), Mainline Protestant (70%), Evangelical (69%), non-Christian (35%).
- **Share of clergy who definitely believe that Adam and Eve existed:** Black Protestant (88%), Evangelical (80%), Mainline Protestant (24%), *Catholic* (23%), and non-Christian (3%).
- **Share of clergy who definitely believe in Hell:** Evangelical (93%), Black Protestant (90%), *Catholic* (70%), Mainline Protestant (45%), and non-Christian (none).
- **Share of clergy who definitely believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection:** Evangelical (99%), Black Protestant (97%), *Catholic* (92%), Mainline Protestant (47%), and non-Christian (none).
- **Share of clergy who definitely believe in miraculous healing:** Black Protestant (92%), Evangelical (84%), *Catholic* (78%), Mainline Protestant (47%), and non-Christian (33%).
- **Share of clergy who definitely believe that "my religion would be the best one for all people, no matter their background or current religion":** Evangelical (99%), Black Protestant (71%), *Catholic* (58%), Mainline Protestant (51%), and non-Christian (37%).

## **Weekly Religious Attendees Oppose Same-Sex Relations and Marriage.**

After ten years, the Supreme Court's *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling made same-sex marriage a U.S. national right. A May 2025 Gallup poll measured the degree of acceptance of this decision among various religious groups. Some of the findings are below:

- In 1997, only 27% of Americans supported same-sex marriage. By 2024, 42% were in favor, in 2017 it was 61%, 71% in 2022 and 2023, and 68% in 2025.

- 81% of those who attend religious services seldom/never consider gay-lesbian relations morally acceptable, as do 56% who attend nearly weekly/monthly, but only 24% of weekly service attenders.

## **Key Findings from the Pew Study on Catholic Life in the U.S.**

A Pew Research Center report took “A closer look at Catholic life in the U.S.”, which we reviewed in a previous *Catholic Trend*. Some other findings include the following:

- 82% of Catholics who go to Mass weekly say they receive Communion every time or most of the time they go.
- 58% of Catholics say it would be extremely or very important to them to receive the anointing of the sick if they were seriously ill.
- 42% of U.S. Catholics say it would bother them either a lot (13%) or a little (29%) if they had a grown child who was not a practicing Catholic; 58% say this would not bother them at all.
- 62% of U.S. Catholics say that reports of sexual abuse and misconduct by priests and bishops reflect “ongoing problems rather than things that happened in the past and mostly don’t happen anymore.”
- At the same time, 68% of U.S. Catholics say sexual abuse and misconduct are no more common among Catholic priests and bishops than among leaders in other religious traditions.

## **Pope Leo is Popular—Has the Highest Rating Amongst International Newsmakers.**

Not to be a triumphalist, but it’s okay to root for the home team! Gallup’s annual newsmaker favorability poll conducted in July 2025 finds that “Among 14 prominent U.S. and global figures, Pope Leo XIV has the most positive image by far, with many more Americans viewing him favorably than unfavorably.” The following are the rankings:

Pope Leo XIV (57%), Volodymyr Zelenskyy (52%), Bernie Sanders (49%), Joe Biden (43%), RFK (42%), Donald Trump (41%), and J.D. Vance (38%).

Also ranked were AOC (34%), Elon Musk (33%), Marco Rubio (30%), and Pete Hegseth (26%).

**Pope tells priests to use their brains not AI to write their homilies.**

In a private Q&A with priests at the Vatican in early February, Pope Leo in response to a question regarding homiletic preparation, “The pope also invited us to use our brains more and not artificial intelligence [AI] to prepare homilies, as he now sees and hears happening,” the priest said. “And here the pope made a strong recommendation regarding prayer: We priests must pray — remain with the Lord, that is — not reduce everything to the breviary or to a few brief moments of prayer, but truly learn again to listen to the Lord.”