

Holy Family Research Study: Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church

“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him, it is sin”. -- James 4:17

About the Research Study...

► Purpose:

- Assess current attitudes and views on the sexual abuse issue and its handling by Catholic church leadership
- Determine the impact that the issue and its handling has had on people's perspectives and conviction to Holy Family, Catholicism and their faith in general
- Provide unfiltered feedback to the Archdiocese and executive church leadership

► Methodology:

- Quantitative online survey e-mailed to 3500 Holy Family parishioners on November 14, 2018 using Survey Monkey
 - Prompted, multiple choice questions with open ended boxes for verbatim comments
- Very strong response rate:
 - Nearly 1500 (45%) opened the email
 - Roughly 600 of those who opened it (39%) clicked through to the survey
 - Approximately 45% gave open ended comments

► Sample Composition:

- The composition of the respondents generally reflects that of the Holy Family community: skewed toward more senior and longstanding parish members who are also major financial contributors
 - 61% age 55 and over
 - 29% between age 35 and 54
 - 55% between 11 and 30 year members of Holy Family; 15% since its inception

Executive Summary

- ▶ **There is universal anger, distrust and disgust with Catholic church leadership for its mishandling and covering up of the sexual abuse issue.**
- ▶ **Not addressing the issue satisfactorily has, and will continue to have, a direct and material impact on the present and future state of the Catholic church.**
 - ▶ Continuing loss of parishioners and inability to attract new ones
 - ▶ Loss of financial contributions
 - ▶ Active disassociation with, and aversion for, Catholicism
- ▶ **There is a universal demand for swift and dramatic action at all levels within the church - action – not words – is imperative.**
 - ▶ Accountability, prosecution and legal action for offenders and those who covered up or enabled them
 - ▶ Permanent removal of offenders from the church
 - ▶ Transparency and open admission of wrongful handling of the issue, past and present
 - ▶ Overall: a multi-pronged solution that also includes better screening of priests, remedial programs for offenders and victims, and increased lay or third party involvement.
 - ▶ Detailed work is needed to outline and implement a process to source, staff, empower and deploy lay and/or other third party resources
- ▶ **People remain willing to support their local parishes and local programs (financially and otherwise) but not those at higher regional or executive levels within the Catholic church.**
 - ▶ Faith in God to ultimately resolve the sexual abuse issue remains strong.

Implications & Recommendations

- ▶ **Three words summarize what's needed at the leadership level within the Catholic church: Transparency, Accountability, and Action**
 - ▶ Without these, and heightened by today's socio-political climate of activism, the Catholic church will not survive due to a severely tarnished image, growing losses of followers and losses of financial support.
- ▶ **Holy Family is in a better position to minimize its losses, stabilize and potentially grow, due to its scale and foundational legacy as a more progressive Catholic church. People are not ready to give up on their faith; it's renewed and reinforced through their personal experiences at Holy Family.**
 - ▶ Given the lost trust with higher levels of Catholic church leadership (Diocesan up to Vatican) Holy Family is a buffer that enables people to engage in their faith while distancing themselves from problematic executive level behavior.
 - ▶ Holy Family should focus locally on continuing to enhance people's personal experience with their faith, through meaningful service to others that recruits and engages new followers.
- ▶ **Specific Recommendations for Holy Family:**
 - ▶ **Plan on and develop remedial actions for the potential loss of 9-10% of parishioners and 18-20% of parishioner donations.** (note that these rates are based on the survey, represent less than half of the parish community and could be understated)
 - ▶ Through the Strategic Planning process, develop and implement a recruitment plan to counterbalance this. The Unchurched and Millennials – who represent the next generation and who generally seek affiliation with a higher purpose -- represent a key target.
 - ▶ **Scrupulously review all funding requests from the Archdiocese (and any other higher level within the Church) ensuring that full transparency on the purpose and use of the funds is provided.**
 - ▶ Holy Family leadership will need to judge appropriateness of end uses for the "asks" and hold Church leadership accountable.
 - ▶ Parishioners will hold both Holy Family and Church leadership accountable and won't support any program that lacks full transparency.
 - ▶ **Hold open sharing sessions with the full Holy Family parish community to share survey results, actions (specifically; sharing the research results with the Archdiocese; implementing the evangelization focused Holy Family Strategic Plan), and openly review the parish's financials** (Note that the latter was recommended based on prior research surveys).
 - ▶ **Continue to offer and expand ministries, prayer services, support and other programs to help people heal from issues related to sexual abuse.**
 - ▶ **Repeat this research survey on an annual or semi-annual basis to gauge progress and changes**

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a solid red arrow pointing to the right, positioned horizontally. Behind the arrow and extending upwards and to the right are several thin, dark, curved lines that resemble stylized grass or reeds. The background of the slide is a light, pale green color with a subtle gradient.

Detailed Findings



There is universal anger, distrust and disgust with Catholic church leadership for its mishandling and covering up of the sexual abuse issue.

- **79%** say their trust in the leadership of the church has changed.
- **40%** say their desire to worship in the Catholic church has diminished

Not addressing the issue satisfactorily has, and will continue to have, a direct and material impact on the present and future state of the Catholic church

- **18%** say they have stopped giving financially to the Church
- **9%** are actively seeking another church or source of spiritual fulfillment

Q1: (n= 621) How has the clergy sexual abuse crisis impacted your life? Please check all that apply.



There is a universal demand for swift and dramatic action at all levels within the church

- **91%** want a better system for quickly identifying pedophiles, removing them from ministry and bringing them to justice
- **90%** want to increase bishops' accountability for addressing pedophile priest issues with clear consequences for non-compliance.
- **65%** advocate creating oversight roles for lay leadership at the highest levels of the Church to ensure clergy accountability.

Q3: (n = 621) In order to prevent future issues around clergy sexual abuse, on which of the following topics would you like to see real, constructive and honest dialogue at the highest level of our Church followed by action? Please check all that you would like to see discussed.

Q4: (n = 621) What do you feel should be done about this issue? Please check all that you feel might be helpful.



People remain willing to support their local parishes and local programs (financially and otherwise) but not those at higher regional or executive levels within the Catholic church. Faith in God to ultimately resolve the sexual abuse issue remains strong.

- **31%** say they feel more determined to stay with their faith despite the failures in leadership
- **17%** say they find themselves praying more often; **18%** listening more to the experiences of others.

Q1: (n= 621) How has the clergy sexual abuse crisis impacted your life? Please check all that apply.

Secondary Findings

There is strong support for revising Catholic rules on celibacy and embracing broader roles for women in the church.

- **77%** want to see the option of marriage for priests discussed at the highest levels of the church and actioned
(Note: many commented that sexual abuse, pedophilia and celibacy/marriage for priests are separate and distinct issues)
- **62%** want discussion and action for ordination of women to the priesthood; **59%** for ordination of women to the diaconate

Q3: (n = 621) In order to prevent future issues around clergy sexual abuse, on which of the following topics would you like to see real, constructive and honest dialogue at the highest level of our Church followed by action? Please check all that you would like to see discussed.

Q4: (n = 621) What do you feel should be done about this issue? Please check all that you feel might be helpful.



95% of respondents had not attended a special prayer service (ie; “the Quiet”) focused on the issue of sexual abuse

Reasons cited were primarily due to personal schedules and conflicts, but people support and value being offered services of this nature

There were some notable differences in responses across different age groups and length of time as Holy Family Community members. (See Supplemental Data Tables). There were no significant differences by gender.

There is a clear opportunity to focus on recruiting younger people and a critical need to ensure that those recruited are proactively engaged and retained.

Age groups differ somewhat on the actions they advocate for addressing the issue of sexual abuse, but all parishioners support a multi-pronged approach.



Supplemental Data Tables

Youngest and oldest parishioners are more determined to hold their trust and stay with their faith despite failures in leadership. Middle aged parishioners are at risk in terms of trust, staying with their faith, stopping their financial contributions and seeking other sources of spiritual fulfillment. **Younger people represent a wonderful opportunity for Holy Family!**

Q1 by Age	N=5 (small base) 18-24	N=14 (small base) 25-34	N=65 35-44	N=111 45-54	N=139 55-64	N=242 65+	N= 616 TOTAL
My trust in the leadership of the church has changed	40%	71%	71%	81%	81%	80%	79%
My desire to worship in the Catholic church has diminished	20%	43%	49%	52%	44%	32%	40%
I feel more determined to stay with my faith despite the failures in leadership	60%	14%	20%	13%	31%	41%	31%
I have stopped giving financially to the church	20%	29%	12%	27%	24%	14%	18.5%
I am actively seeking another church or source of spiritual fulfillment	0%	0%	5%	13%	9%	7%	8%

KEY: Opportunity Risk

Q1: (n= 621) How has the clergy sexual abuse crisis impacted your life? Please check all that apply.

Not surprisingly, the newest parishioners are more likely to trust, worship in the Catholic church, and continue their financial contributions. **However, as tenure with Holy Family increases (up to 10 years) this changes.** Conviction to stay with the faith, despite failures in leadership, quickly decreases. **Holy Family must proactively work to engage and retain newer members.**

Q1 by Tenure with Holy Family	N=9 (small base) < 1 Year	N=74 1-5 Years	N=76 6-10 Years	N=148 11-20 Years	N=188 21-30 Years	N=93 Since the church began	N= 616 TOTAL
My trust in the leadership of the church has changed	67%	76%	76%	81%	83%	77%	79%
My desire to worship in the Catholic church has diminished	22%	47%	38%	40%	40%	37%	40%
I feel more determined to stay with my faith despite the failures in leadership	22%	24%	25%	34%	31%	35%	31%
I have stopped giving financially to the church	11%	11%	20%	20%	21%	15%	18.5%
I am actively seeking another church or source of spiritual fulfillment	0%	1%	7%	9%	9%	12%	8%

 Opportunity
 Risk

Q1: (n= 621) How has the clergy sexual abuse crisis impacted your life? Please check all that apply.

In terms of what should be done to address the issue of sexual abuse, parishioners advocate a multi-pronged approach. Younger parishioners are less committed to improving screening processes at seminaries, holding bishops accountable, expanding roles for women and the option of marriage for priests. Older parishioners advocate oversight roles for lay leadership.

Q4 by Age	N=5 (small base) 18-24	N=14 (small base) 25-34	N=67 35-44	N=111 45-54	N=139 55-64	N=242 65+	N= 621 TOTAL
Develop better system for identifying pedophiles, removing them, bringing to justice	100%	86%	94%	88%	88%	93%	90%
Increase bishops' accountability; clear consequences for non-compliance	80%	86%	90%	84%	91%	92%	90%
Create oversight roles for lay leadership at highest levels	60%	64%	64%	55%	62%	73%	65%
Improve screening processes in seminaries	60%	57%	58%	52%	64%	77%	67%
Offer more programs, support for survivors & their families	60%	57%	72%	59%	62%	66%	64%
Increase the roles for women at highest levels in the church	40%	64%	70%	56%	63%	63%	62%
Offer priests the option of marriage	20%	71%	78%	68%	77%	75%	73%

Vs. Total



Agree more
Agree less

Q4: (n= 621). What do you feel should be done about this issue? Please check all that you feel might be helpful.



Next Steps:

- ▶ January 18 - Presented Detailed Findings to pastors and other clergy within our Deanery
- ▶ January 29 – A lengthy introduction at the All Priest Meeting with Cardinal Cupich covered the abuse crisis as well as a portion of the meeting.
- ▶ The Research Study Presentation and comments shared today will be delivered to the Cardinal this week.
- ▶ February - Provide open access to the Research Study Presentation on Holy Family's Website www.holyfamilyparish.org
- ▶ Monitor the Bishop's February Vatican Summit
- ▶ March 11 – Meeting with Cardinal Cupich regarding our survey and the Summit
- ▶ Continue to collect feedback, input and suggestions

If you'd like further information or get involved, please contact
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Credits

- ▶ This research study was designed and implemented by members of the Holy Family staff and their teams.
 - ▶ Mary Whiteside, Director of Adult Faith
 - ▶ Marcia Adamczyk, Co-Director of Adult Faith
 - ▶ Bernie Schaeffer, Director of Operations
- ▶ Data analysis and interpretation of the study results were provided by Blake West & Co. LLC, an independent strategic marketing consultancy.