

Practice of Faith in the Catholic Family

A Special Report by
Mark M. Gray, Ph.D.
August 2015



*The Family That Prays
Together Stays Together*



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 following is the third of four special reports on how Catholic parents and their families are living, working and praying today. Commissioned by Holy Cross Family Ministries, the reports on the survey data include, where possible, comparisons to findings from other recent national surveys of self-identified Catholic adults. Holy Cross Family Ministries commissioned the survey and reports to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the young families they serve. The findings are central to the development of activities and initiatives to enhance the spiritual well-being of these young families and thus build up the future of the Catholic Church. This study provides invaluable insights, which in some instances, are remarkably different from the studies on Catholic adults as a whole. Holy Cross Family Ministries, through the four special reports, is making the data available to bishops, diocese and other organizations that serve families. (The reports can be downloaded at www.HCFM.org/FamilyResearch.)

In fall 2014, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University conducted a national poll of adult Catholics, ages 25 to 45 who are parents of a minor child to explore the 21st Century Catholic family. This survey, completed in September and October 2014, include interviews with 1,014 self-identified Catholic parents resulting in a sampling margin of error of ± 3.1 percentage points. Similar questions to those used in other recent CARA Catholic Polls (CCPs) were utilized making comparisons possible between Catholic parents and all Catholic adults.

Sacramental Practice and Worship

Infant baptisms in the Catholic Church in the United States have been declining each year since 2002. For a time this could have been, in part, related to declining fertility rates. The total number of births in the country had been decreasing each year from 2008 to 2013 but increased for the first time since the Great Recession in 2014. However, there was no uptick in infant baptisms in 2014. There were 280,000 fewer infant baptisms in 2014 than in 2001—a decline of 40 percent.

At the same time infant baptisms have become less common, the number of children baptized Catholic has been increasing. *The Official Catholic Directory* began recording these in 2007 when, 55,134 children were baptized at some point after their first birthday. In 2014, there were 66,458 children baptized—an increase of 21 percent in the last seven years.

There were 3,985,924 births registered in the United States in 2014.¹ Thus, infant baptisms in 2014 represent 17.4 percent of all these children born. With the Catholic affiliation percentage in national surveys ranging from 21 percent to 26 percent, depending on margin of error, there is an apparent shortfall. Some children born to Catholic parents in the United States are not being baptized as infants. Some of these children are later being baptized as children others perhaps not at all or are entering another faith.²

After baptism, only two-thirds of parents say it is “very important” to them that their children receive their First Communion and 61 percent place the same importance on their children being confirmed. Just under one in ten say this is “not important at all” to them.

Younger, Millennial Generation parents (born between 1982 and 1989) are less likely than Post-Vatican II Generation parents (born 1969 to 1981) to say it is “very important” that their children receive their First Communion (68 percent compared to 59 percent).

¹ Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Osterman MJK, Curtin SC. *Births: Preliminary data for 2014*. National vital statistics reports; vol 64 no 6. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2015.

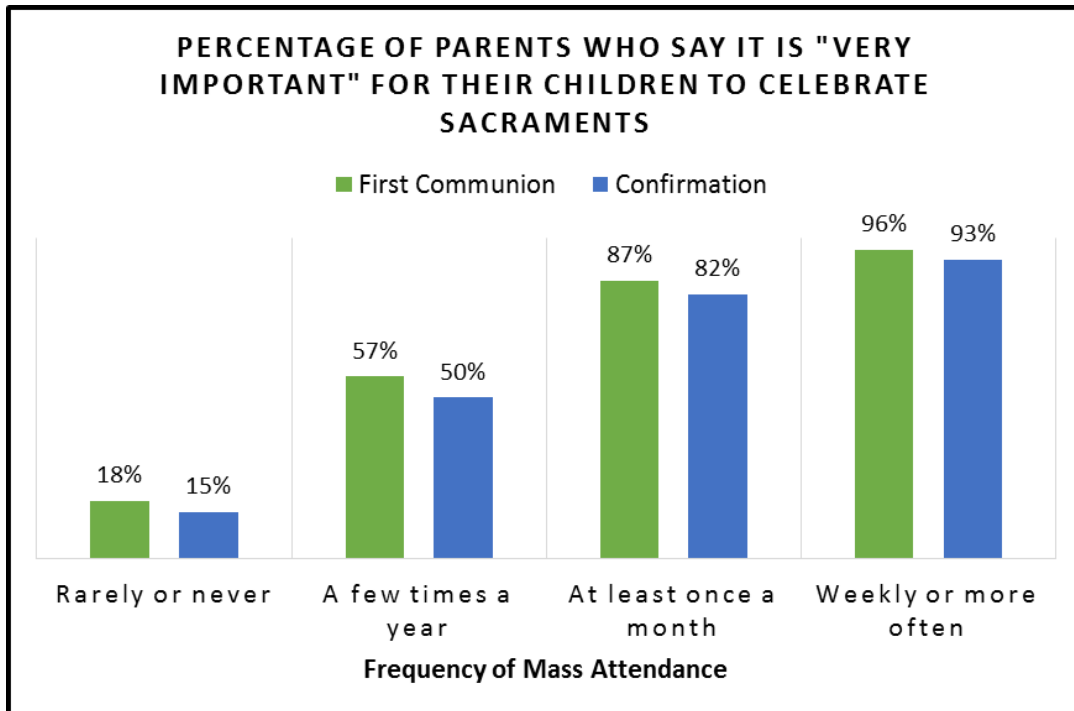
² Seventy-nine percent of parents are married and 13 percent are unmarried but living with a partner. Additionally, 4 percent are divorced, 3 percent never married, 1 percent are currently separated from their spouse, and less than 1 percent are widowed. Seventy-six percent of married parents indicate their spouse is Catholic.

How important is it to you that your child or children have celebrated each of the following sacraments?

	First Communion	Confirmation
Very important	66%	61%
Somewhat important	17	20
A little important	9	10
Not important at all	8	9

Marital status is also important. For example, more than six in ten of those who are married (68 percent) or living with a partner (61 percent) say that it is “very important” for their child or children to receive their First Communion. By comparison, only 47 percent of separated or divorced Catholics and 54 percent of those who have never married agree this is “very important.” Among those who are married, it matters if their spouse is Catholic as well. Seventy-six percent of those married to another Catholic believe it is “very important” for their child to celebrate their First Communion compared to only 43 percent of those married to someone who is not Catholic.

Yet, an even stronger factor remains. As shown in the figure below, the more frequently a parent attends Mass, the more likely they are to say that it is “very important” to them that their children receive their First Communion and are confirmed.



In 2012, CARA surveyed a national random sample of 656 self-identified Catholic teens between 13 and 17.³ In that study, 48 percent had celebrated both their First Communion *and* been confirmed, 18 percent had only received their First Communion, and 34 percent had yet to receive either sacrament. Thus, 66 percent of the teens had received at least their First Communion. This is consistent with the parent preferences observed in the survey of parents.

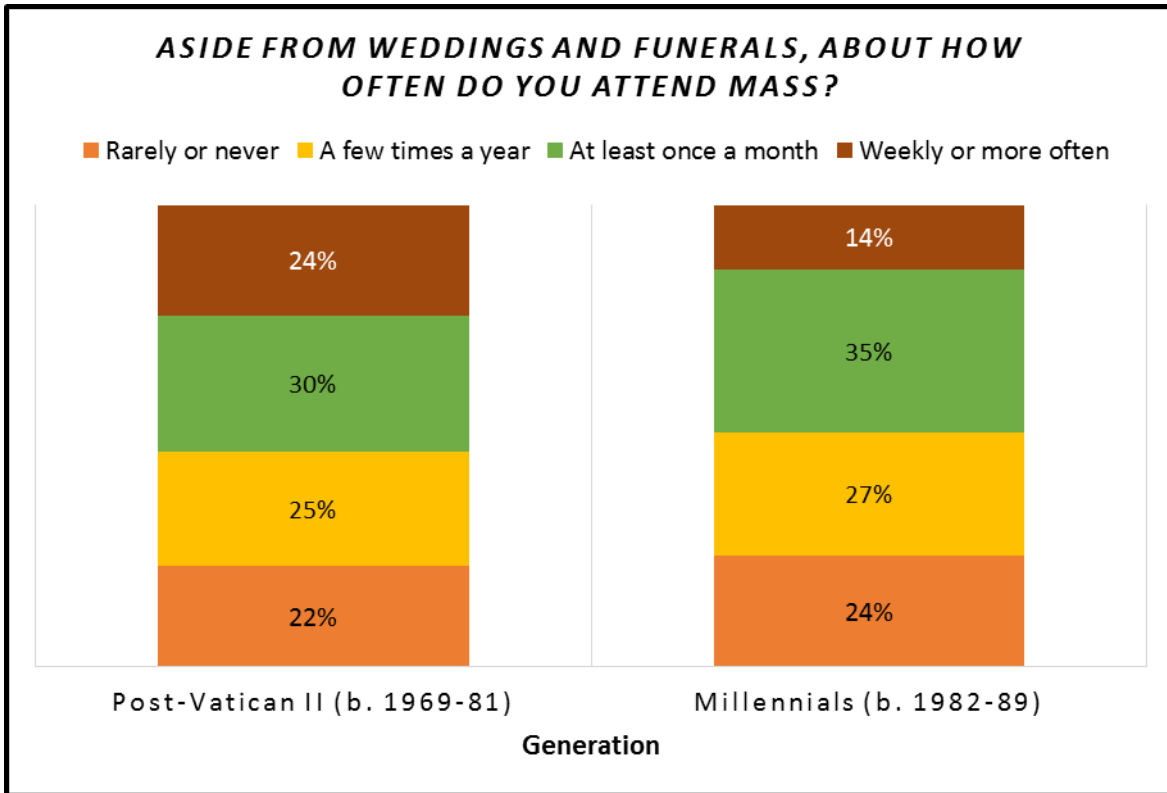
It is apparent that the strongest determinant of whether a parent thinks it is important for their children to receive childhood sacraments is related to their connection to and participation in parish life. Just slightly more than one in five parents are in their parish every week attending Mass (22 percent). The same number say they never or rarely attend Mass (22 percent). One in four attends a few times a year—most likely on Ash Wednesday, Christmas, and/or Easter (25 percent). Three in ten attend at least once a month but less than weekly (31 percent). In total, a majority of Catholic parents, 53 percent, attends Mass at least monthly.

<i>Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?</i>		
	Parents	All adults
Rarely or never	22%	32%
A few times a year	25	25
Once or twice a month	16	9
Almost every week	15	10
Every week	20	21
More than once a week	2	3

The frequency of weekly Mass attendance reported by parents is similar to the adult Catholic population overall, as measured in other recent national surveys conducted by CARA. However, parents are more likely than all adults to attend less than weekly, but at least once a month (31 percent compared to 19 percent) and less likely to say they attend rarely or never (22 percent compared to 32 percent).

Historically, one of the biggest differences in frequency of Mass attendance among Catholics in CARA’s surveys has been generation. Generally, older Catholics have had more regular Mass attendance than younger Catholics—especially Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics (born before 1943). With the limited age range of this survey, we can only compare Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics to the slightly younger adult Millennial Generation Catholics. As shown in the figure on the next page, the older Post-Vatican II Generation parents are indeed more likely to attend Mass weekly (24 percent compared to 14 percent) and less likely to indicate that they attend less than weekly but at least once a month (30 percent compared to 35 percent).

³ Gray, Mark M. and Mary L. Gautier. *Consideration of the Priesthood and Religious Life Among Never-Married U.S. Catholics*. Washington, DC: CARA. 2012.



Historically in CARA’s national surveys, women have reported attending Mass more frequently than men. The survey of parents indicates that Catholic fathers are significantly more likely than Catholic mothers to indicate that they rarely or never attend Mass (27 percent compared to 19 percent). About a quarter of mothers attend Mass weekly (24 percent) compared to 19 percent of fathers.

Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?

	<u>Number of Children</u>			
	Fewer than 3 children	Three or more children		
Rarely or never	24%	16%	26%	18%
A few times a year	28	18	21	24
At least once a month	30	33	35	32
Weekly or more often	18	33	18	26

As table above shows, there are also some variations in frequency of Mass attendance by the number of children and age of children Catholic parents have. Two-thirds of parents with three or more children attend Mass at least once a month (66 percent). By comparison, a majority of those with two or fewer children attend only a few times a year or rarely/never (52 percent). Parents with at least one infant are more likely to attend Mass at least once a month than weekly

(18 percent compared to 35 percent). A majority of parents with teens attend Mass monthly or more often (58 percent).

There are also differences in the frequency of Mass attendance by marital status. Fifty-six percent of married parents attend Mass at least once a month compared to 44 percent of those who are separated or divorced, 30 percent of those who are single and never married, and 44 percent of those who are unmarried but living with a partner. Separated or divorced parents are most likely to say they rarely or never attend Mass followed by those living with a partner (28 percent and 27 percent, respectively).

Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?

	<u>Marital Status</u>			
	Married	Separated or divorced	Single, never married	Living with partner
Rarely or never	21%	28%	21%	27%
A few times a year	23	28	50	31
At least once a month	33	29	15	22
Weekly or more often	23	15	15	20

As shown in the table below, Catholic parents with the smallest household incomes—living at or below the poverty line—are the most likely to attend Mass once a week or more often (26 percent) and the least likely to say they rarely or never attend Mass (15 percent). Majorities of parents of all income groups—except those in the upper income bracket—attend Mass at least once a month.

Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?

	<u>Household Income</u>			
	Living at or below poverty (less than \$25,000)	Below median income (\$25,000-\$49,999)	Above median income (\$50,000-\$84,999)	Upper income (\$85,000 or more)
Rarely or never	15%	19%	25%	27%
A few times a year	28	28	22	24
At least once a month	31	29	34	29
Weekly or more often	26	24	19	20

Religious Education

The family home may now be the most important place to study the transmission of faith because unlike in past generations, most Catholic parents do not currently have their children

enrolled in school- or parish-based religious education. More than two-thirds do not have any children enrolled in any formal religious education.

<i>Do any of your children currently attend...?</i>	
Percentage responding "Yes"	
A Catholic elementary or middle school	8%
A Catholic high school	3
A parish-based Catholic religious education program	21
A youth ministry program	5
None of the above	68

The figure above represents a snapshot in time for the 2014-15 school year. Some of the children not enrolled in a religious education program at that time may have been attending in the past or will be enrolled in the future.

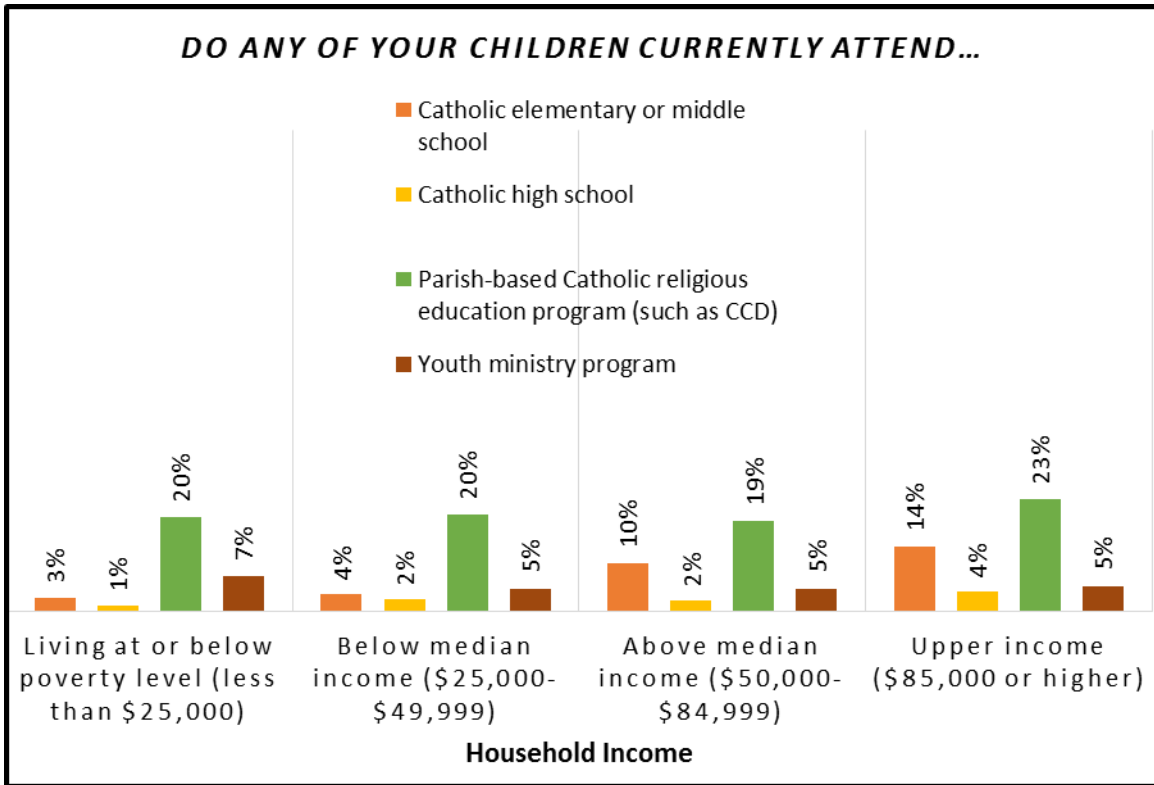
Previous national polls of self-identified Catholic adults show that about half or more of those born 1960 or earlier were enrolled in a Catholic elementary school at some point in their childhood. More than half also report being enrolled in a parish-based religious education as a youth. By comparison, only about a third of adult Millennial Catholics (born 1982 or later) report enrollment in a Catholic elementary school at some point and fewer than half were ever enrolled in a parish-based religious education program.

It is likely that the Catholic children of today, members of yet to be named generation described by our survey, will enter adulthood with less formal, Catholic Church-based religious education than their parents and grandparents.

About 12 percent of parents who attend Mass at least once a month enroll children in a Catholic elementary school. There are no significant differences by Mass attendance for high school enrollments. Forty-two percent of weekly Mass attenders have a child enrolled in a parish-based religious education compared to 27 percent of monthly attenders, and 11 percent of those attending a few times a year and only 4 percent of those who rarely or never attend Mass.

Post-Vatican II generation parents are much more likely than Millennial Generation parents to have a child enrolled in parish based religious education (24 percent compared to 11 percent). Among married parents, those with a Catholic spouse are also more likely than those married to a non-Catholic to enroll a child in parish-based religious education (25 percent compared to 15 percent).

As shown in the figure on the next page, there are income-related differences for enrollment in Catholic schools. Those residing in households with higher annual incomes are more likely than those earning less to enroll a child in a Catholic primary school. However, there are no significant differences in the likelihood of enrolling children in other forms of religious education by income.



Some parents are involved in ongoing formation themselves. More than one in five parents has participated at some point, as an adult, in a Catholic small group for prayer, Bible study, or faith sharing (22 percent). A slightly smaller percentage have participated in Eucharistic Adoration with their family in the last year (20 percent). Adult Catholics are less likely to have done so (14 percent). About one in ten parents (9 percent) belong to a group or organization that encourages devotion to Mary. This is similar to the percentage of all Catholic adults that report this in CARA’s national surveys (11 percent).

Faith Activities
Percentage of respondents answering “yes”

	Parents	All adults
Since you have been an adult, have you ever participated in a Catholic small group that meets regularly for prayer, Bible study, or faith sharing?	22%	--%
Have you and your family participated in Eucharistic Adoration at your parish or elsewhere within the last year?	20	14
Do you belong to any groups or organizations that encourage devotion to Mary?	9	11

Non-Hispanic white parents (16 percent) are less likely than Hispanic parents (27 percent) and those of some other race or ethnicity (30 percent) to say they have ever participated in a Catholic small group that meets regularly for prayer, Bible study, or faith sharing. These differences by race and ethnicity are further reflected in differences by household income and region with those in household earning \$85,000 or more per year (17 percent) and those residing in the Northeast (6 percent) being the *least* likely to participate in small groups.

Nearly half of weekly Mass attending parents (46 percent) have participated in a Catholic small group compared to only 7 percent of those who rarely or never attend Mass.

Faith and Prayer at Home

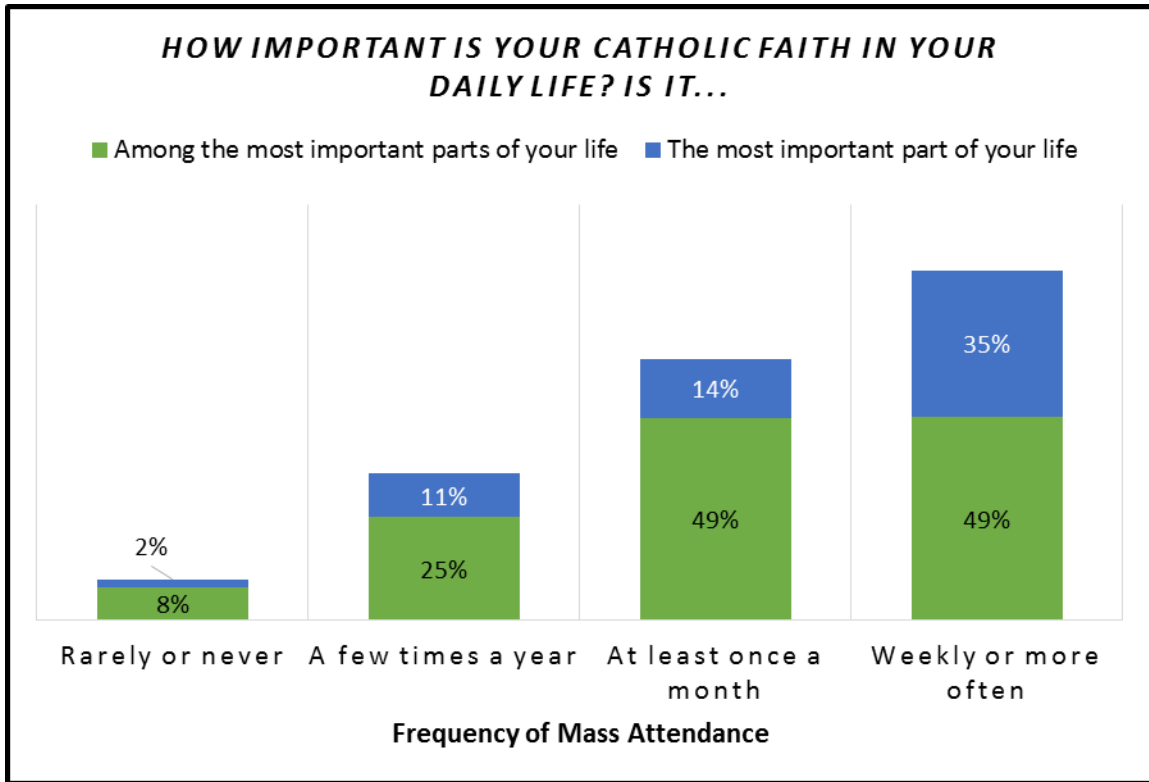
About half of parents (49 percent) say that their Catholic faith is either the most important part of their life or among the most important parts of their life. Parents are slightly more likely than the general Catholic population to respond as such (49 percent compared to 41 percent).

<i>How important is your Catholic faith in your daily life? Is it...</i>		
	Parents	All adults
The most important part of your life	15%	14%
Among the most important parts of your life	34	27
Important, but so are many other areas of your life	39	40
Not too important in your life	9	13
Not important in your life at all	3	6

Parents who have separated or divorced are less likely than those of other marital statuses to consider their faith to be “among the most important parts” of their life or more. Among those separated or divorced only 28 percent respond as such compared to 50 percent of those who are married, 44 percent of those who are single and have never married, and 52 percent of those living with a partner. Fifty-five percent of those married to a Catholic respond as such compared to 32 percent of those married to a non-Catholic.

Mothers are more likely than fathers to consider their faith to be “among the most important parts” of their life or more (52 percent compared to 44 percent). Parents with three or more children are also more likely than those with fewer children to say that their faith is “among the most important parts” of their life or more (64 percent compared to 43 percent).

As shown in the figure on the next page, 84 percent of those parents who attend Mass weekly or more often say their faith is “among the most important parts” of their life or more. By comparison, only 10 percent of those attending Mass rarely or never respond as such.



Fifty-nine percent of parents pray at least once a week (36 percent daily or more often) and only one in ten indicate that they rarely or never pray. Twenty-two percent pray at least once a year but less than monthly. One in ten pray more than once a month but less than weekly.

Aside from Mass, about how often do you pray?

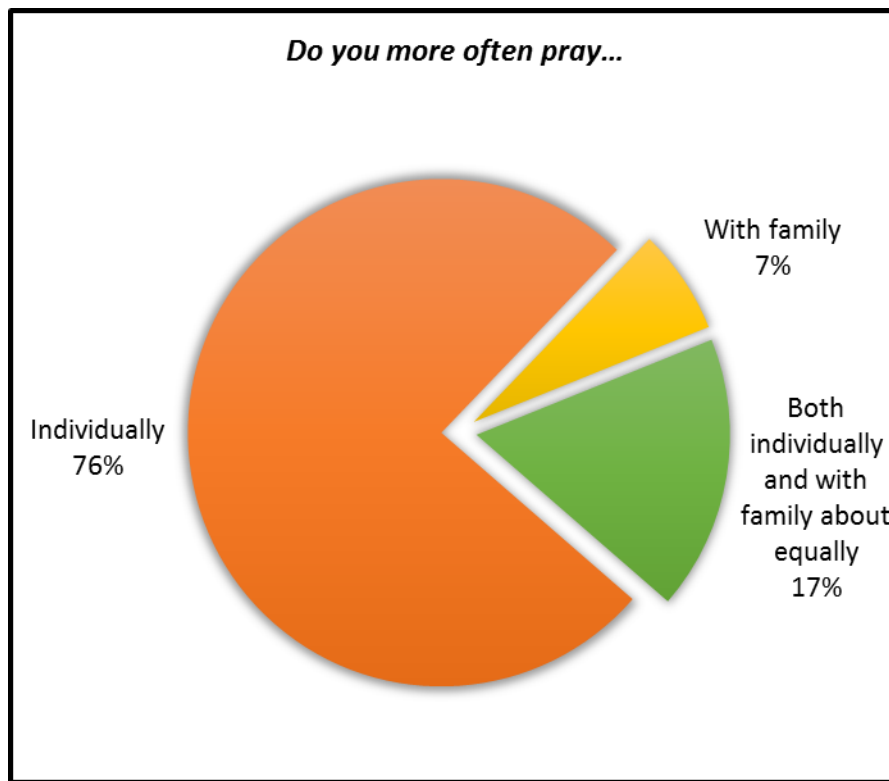
Rarely or never	9%
A few times a year	12
Once or twice a month	10
Almost every week	10
Once a week	3
More than once a week	20
Daily or more often	36

Separated and divorced parents are more likely than others to report daily prayer. Forty-five percent do so compared to 37 percent of married parents, 32 percent of single, never married parents, and 23 percent of those living with a partner. Those married to a Catholic spouse are much more likely to pray daily than those married to a non-Catholic (42 percent compared to 25 percent).

Mothers are more likely than fathers to pray daily than (40 percent compared to 31 percent). There are no statistically significant differences in daily prayer based on race or ethnicity.

As one might expect the best predictor of daily prayer is frequency of Mass attendance. Those who go to Mass at least once a month or more often are more likely to pray than those attending less frequently. Six in ten weekly Mass attenders (59 percent) indicate that they pray daily or more often. Just 12 percent of those who rarely or never attend Mass pray daily.

About three in four parents indicate that they more often pray individually than with family. Nearly a quarter report more prayer with their family including 7 percent who pray more with their family than alone and 17 percent who pray about equally either with family or alone.



The likelihood that parents pray with their family (either more often or equal to the time they pray alone) increases with frequency of Mass attendance. Only 11 percent of parents who rarely or never attend Mass pray with family compared to 42 percent of parents who attend Mass weekly or more often.

Among those who are married, those married to another Catholic are more likely than those married to a non-Catholic to pray with their family (29 percent compared to 13 percent). Parents who are separated or divorced are unlikely to pray with their family (15 percent).

Those in households earning less than \$25,000 per year are more likely than those living in higher income households to pray with their family more often or equal to the time they pray

alone (34 percent compared to 22 percent). Millennial Generation parents are also more likely than Post-Vatican II Generation parents to say they pray both individually and with family about equally (23 percent compared to 16 percent).

Respondents who pray more alone than with family were asked in an open-ended question, “*Why do you not pray more often as a family?*” Responses to this question were analyzed, coded, and compiled. A total of 601 respondents provided an answer(s) to this question.

<i>Why do you not pray more often as a family?</i> Percent of comments referencing the following from those who pray alone more often:	
Prefers to pray alone	24%
Time and schedule	21
Don't know	14
Personal beliefs, infringement	13
Issues with spouse	9
Raised to pray alone	8
Communication issues	6
Children too young	2
Other	3

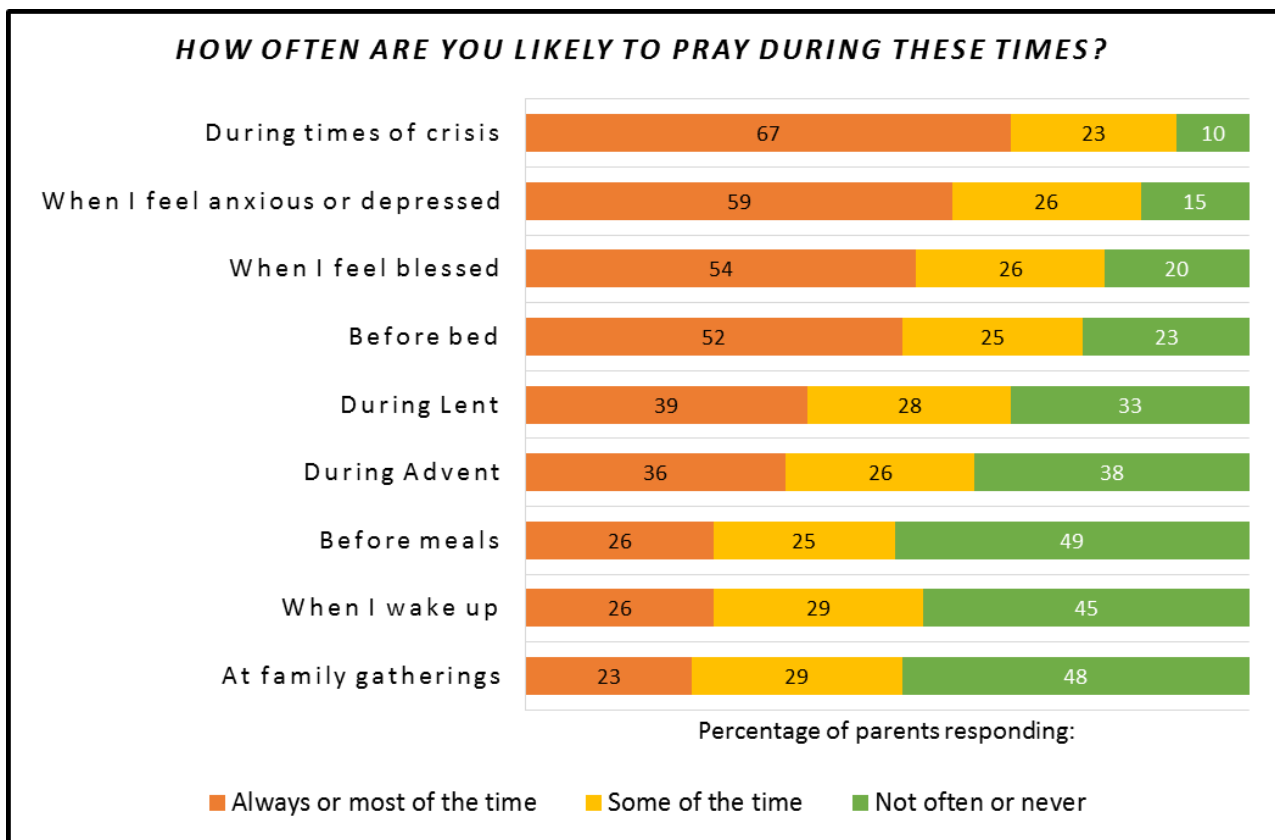
Nearly one in four of those who more often pray alone than with family say they simply prefer to pray alone (24 percent; also 18 percent of all respondents). About one in five noted an issue with scheduling or timing that leads them to more often pray alone (21 percent). Fourteen percent of respondents said they didn't know why they did not pray more with their family. This is not an uncommon response for open-ended questions. Thirteen percent they personal beliefs in the family prevent them from praying more together. One of the most common of these is that family prayer would be an infringement on others.

Nearly one in ten cite an issue with their spouse specifically (9 percent). Most often this is that they do not share their Catholic faith. Eight percent indicate they were taught as a child to pray alone or not to pray in any manner and that this has remained their practice as an adult. Six percent of respondents indicate there are communication issues that prevent more family prayer in their household. Two percent indicate the age of their children or their ability to pray at this time prevents them from praying together more as a family. Some of the examples of respondents' comments, in their own words, include:

- *I am always praying individually for my whole family, friends, and neighbors.*
- *I usually pray before bed or when I'm alone in my car.*
- *My prayers seem like intimate conversations.*
- *Day to day life gets crazy and we just don't.*

- *I work a lot of hours, hardly ever see my family.*
- *Never even considered it.*
- *Everybody in my family has their own way of praying.*
- *Kids weren't baptized.*
- *My kids have not gone to church as I did when I was a child.*
- *Because my husband does not believe in prayer and my son is an infant.*
- *My wife is not as spiritual.*
- *I wasn't brought up that way and don't feel comfortable doing it.*
- *Because I know my prayers in Spanish and my children knows them in English.*
- *Hard to explain concept of God to small children.*
- *Only pray when needed.*

Respondents were asked about praying at specific times of the day, year, and during particular life events. Majorities of parents pray “most of the time” or “always” during times of crisis (67 percent), when they feel anxious or depressed (59 percent), when they feel blessed (54 percent), or before they go to bed (52 percent).



Parents are less likely to report that they pray “most of the time” or “always” during Lent (39 percent), Advent (36 percent), when they wake up (26 percent), before meals (26 percent), or at family gatherings (23 percent).

Mothers are more likely than fathers to report praying “most of the time” or “always” when feeling anxious or depressed (68 percent compared to 47 percent), when feeling blessed (63 percent compared to 42 percent), before bed (60 percent compared to 42 percent), and during times of crisis (74 percent compared to 58 percent).

Millennial Generation parents are more likely than Post-Vatican II Generation parents to say they pray “most of the time” or “always” at family gatherings (31 percent compared to 20 percent).

Many parents who rarely or never attend Mass still say they pray “most of the time” or “always” during times of crisis (46 percent), when they feel anxious or depressed (35 percent), and before bed (32 percent).

Never-married singles (66 percent) and divorced and separated parents (58 percent) are more likely than those who are married (52 percent) or living with a partner (51 percent) to pray “most of the time” or “always” before going to bed. Separated and divorced parents are also more likely than others to pray when they wake up (42 percent), at family gatherings (30 percent), and before meals (30 percent).

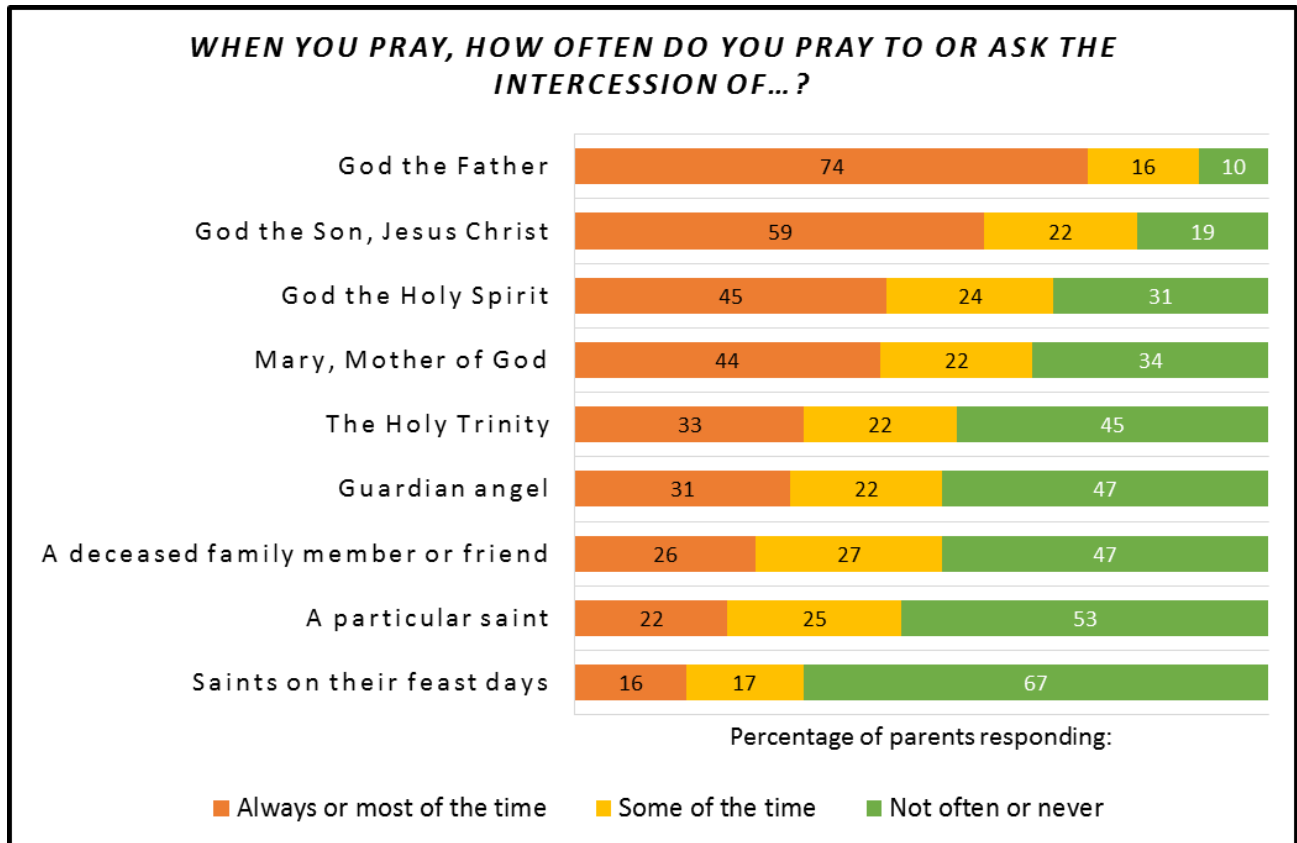
Among those who are married, those married to a Catholic spouse are more likely than those married to a non-Catholic spouse to pray “most of the time” or “always” in every instance the survey asked about. On average, the difference between those married to a Catholic and those married to a non-Catholic is 10 percentage points. This is most evident in praying this frequently during Lent (43 percent compared to 25 percent), before bed (56 percent compared to 41 percent), upon waking (28 percent compared to 11 percent), and during Advent (39 percent compared to 25 percent).

Non-Hispanic white parents are slightly more likely than Hispanic parents to say they pray “most of the times” or “always” before meals (29 percent compared to 21 percent) and at family gatherings (25 percent compared to 19 percent). Hispanic parents are more likely than non-Hispanic white parents to pray this frequently before bed (64 percent compared to 38 percent), when waking up (36 percent compared to 11 percent), when feeling blessed (62 percent compared to 41 percent), during Advent (42 percent compared to 26 percent), during Lent (47 percent compared to 28 percent), when anxious or depressed (67 percent compared to 46 percent), and during times of crisis (72 percent compared to 58 percent). Differences by household income mirror the pattern described above between non-Hispanic white and Hispanic parents.

Parents with a teenager are more likely than those with younger children to indicate praying “most of the time” or “always” when they feel anxious or depressed (69 percent compared to 53 percent). Parents with a baby at home are less likely than those with other children to say they pray “most of the time” or “always” when they wake up (15 percent compared to 28 percent).

When praying, a majority of parents say they “always” or “most of the time” are praying to God the Father (74 percent) or Jesus Christ (59 percent). Fewer indicate praying this often to

the Holy Spirit (45 percent), Mary (44 percent), or the Holy Trinity (33 percent). Some pray to or ask the intercession of a guardian angel (31 percent), a deceased family member or friend (26 percent), a specific saint (22 percent), or saints on their feast days (16 percent), “always” or “most of the time” when they pray.



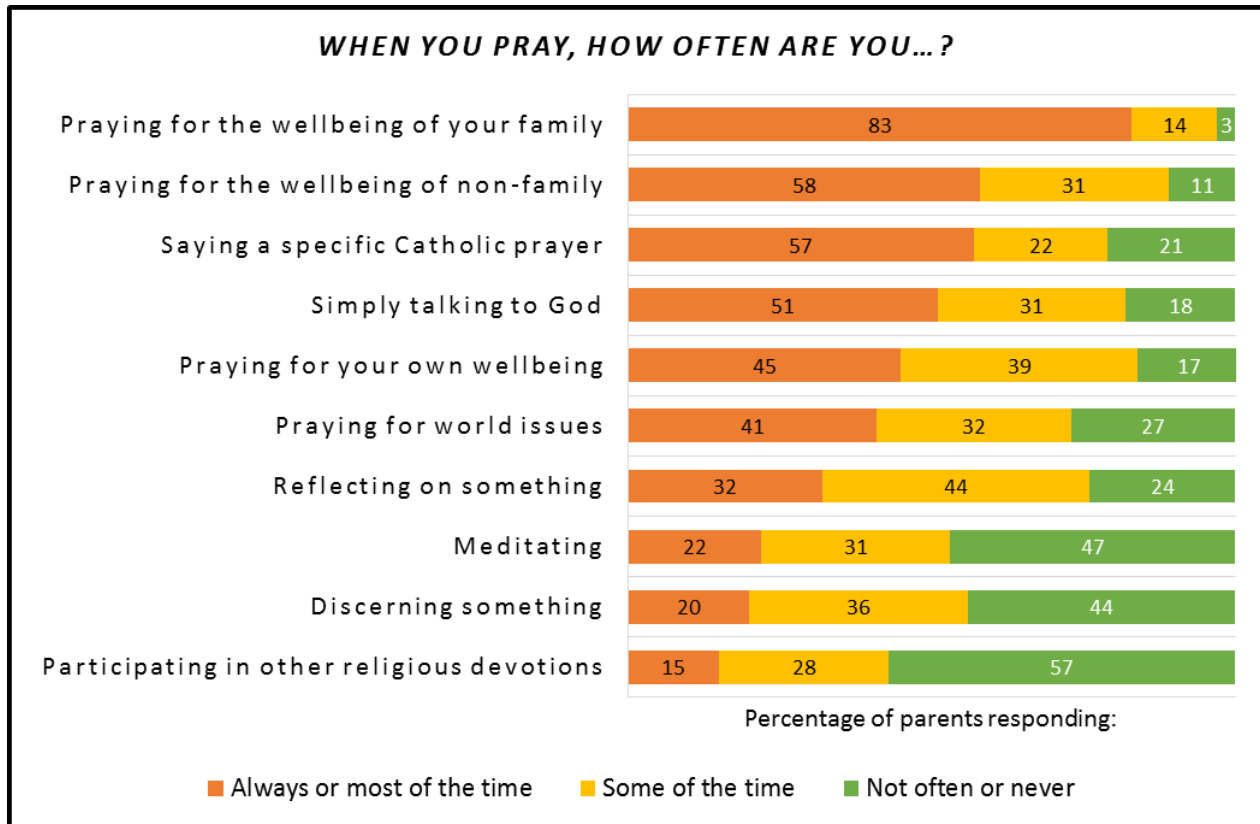
Mothers are more likely than fathers to say they pray “most of the time” or “always” to God the Father (80 percent compared to 66 percent) and to Mary, Mother of God (50 percent compared to 37 percent).

Hispanic parents are more likely than non-Hispanic white parents to say they pray “most of the time” or “always” to each of the option listed in the question. On average the gap between these two sub-groups is 22 percentage points.

The more frequently one attends Mass the more likely they are to report praying “most of the time” or “always” to each of the option listed in the question. On average, the gap between weekly Mass attenders and those who go rarely or never is 36 percentage points. The difference is largest for praying this frequently to Mary, Mother of God (69 percent of weekly attenders compared to 15 percent of those who rarely or never attend Mass).

Although many Catholics do not pray together as a family, the most common reason for prayer among parents is for the wellbeing of their family. Eighty-three percent do this “most of the time” or “always” when they pray. A majority of parents say they are “always” or “most of

the time” saying a specific Catholic prayer (57 percent) or simply talking to God when they pray (58 percent). Fewer than half pray this frequently for their own wellbeing (45 percent) or for world issues (41 percent). Nearly a third say that they reflect on something while praying (32 percent). About one in five meditate (22 percent) or discern something (20 percent). Fifteen percent “always” or “most of the time” participate in religious devotions while praying.



The more frequently a parent attends Mass the more likely they are to do each of the things listed “most of the time” or “always” while praying. On average, the gap between weekly Mass attenders and those rarely or never going to Mass is 34 percentage points. Those who rarely or never attend Mass are quite likely to pray for the wellbeing of their families (67 percent) but unlikely to pray for other things often.

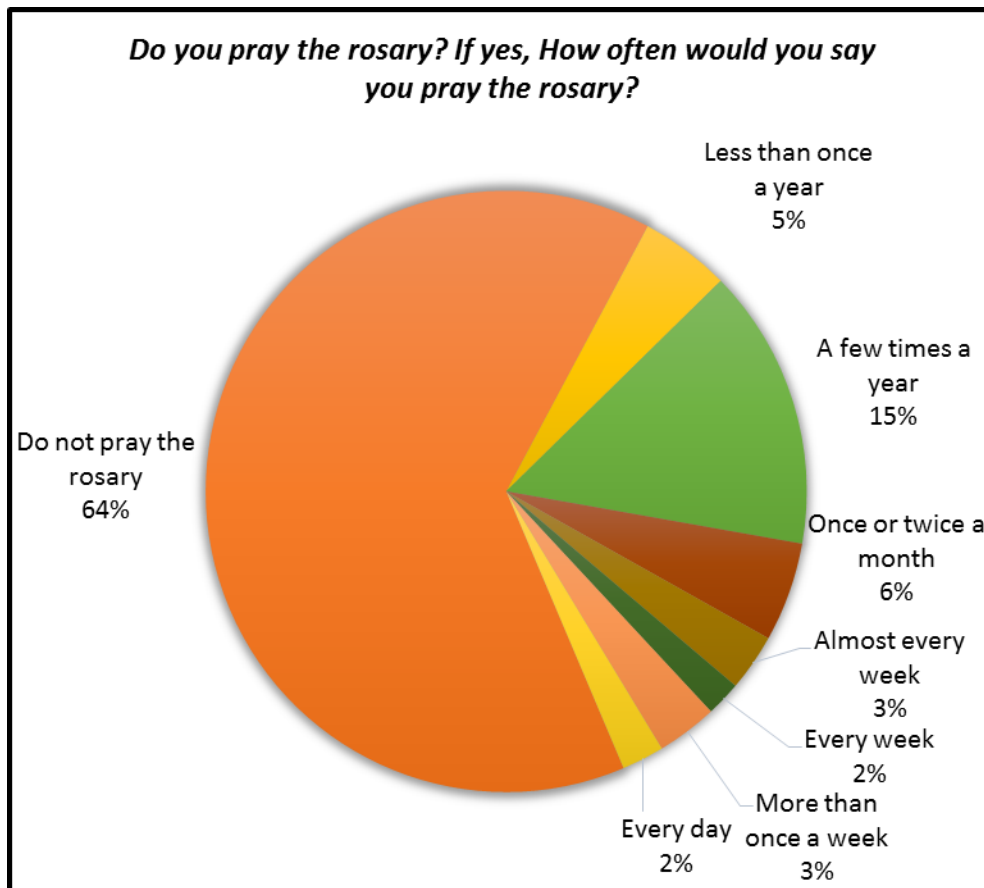
Parents who are married are less likely than others to pray for their own wellbeing. Forty-two percent of married respondents say they “most of the time” or “always” pray for their own wellbeing compared to 60 percent of those who are separated or divorced, 57 percent of those who are single and never married, and 53 percent of those living with a partner.

Single, never-married parents are among the most likely to “most of the time” or “always” meditate when praying (38 percent). Those living with a partner are especially likely to pray this often for world issues (54 percent) or say a specific Catholic prayer (68 percent). Married parents are among the least likely to be discerning something (18 percent).

Among those who are married, those with a Catholic spouse are more likely than those married to a non-Catholic to say they do everything listed “most of the time” or “always” when praying. On average the gap between these sub-groups spans 14 percentage points. The difference is greatest for frequently saying specific Catholic prayers (61 percent compared to 35 percent).

Hispanic parents are more likely than non-Hispanic white parents to say that when they pray they are “most of the time” or “always” saying a specific Catholic prayer (69 percent compared to 41 percent), praying for world issues (52 percent compared to 26 percent), praying for personal wellbeing (57 percent compared to 27 percent), and simply talking to God (59 percent compared to 39 percent).

More specifically, praying the rosary is relatively uncommon among parents. As shown in the figure below, nearly two-thirds of parents do not pray the rosary (64 percent). One in five say it a few times a year or less often (20 percent). Nearly one in ten say it at least once a month (9 percent) and five percent say it at least once a week. Two percent say the rosary every day.



Those most likely to say the rosary with any frequency are weekly Mass attenders (68 percent), those of a race and/or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white or Hispanic (58 percent), those with three or more children (47 percent), and those in a household with an income at or below the poverty level (46 percent).

Respondents who do not ever pray the rosary were asked an open-ended question, “*Why don’t you pray the rosary?*” Responses to this question were analyzed, coded, and compiled. A total of 478 respondents provided an answer to this question.

<i>Why don’t you pray the rosary?</i>	
Percent of comments from those who do not pray the rosary referencing the following:	
Have no desire or need to pray it	39%
Never learned or forgot how	24
Time issues	17
Don’t know	11
Don’t own a rosary	5
Not comfortable	2
Funerals only	2

About four in ten respondents who do not pray the rosary and answered the open-ended question indicate that they have no desire or need to pray it (39 percent; 18 percent of all respondents). This includes those who do not believe in the prayer, those who do not like saying it, and those who just never think to. About one in four who don’t say the rosary indicate that they either never learned how to say the prayer or once did know but have forgotten this now (24 percent). Seventeen percent of those who do not pray the rosary say they don’t because of time-related issues. Eleven percent of those who don’t say the rosary say they don’t know why. Five percent say they don’t have a rosary. Two percent indicate they are not comfortable praying the rosary or feel out of place doing so. Another 2 percent indicate they only pray the rosary at funerals. Some of the examples of respondents’ comments, in their own words, include:

- *Doesn’t occur to me. My prayers or for my family and specific.*
- *I think one Hail Mary is as good as ten.*
- *It doesn’t feel like a meaningful prayer to repeat rote prayers from memory. It doesn’t require any thought or communication.*
- *My mother does it for me.*
- *Because I don’t know how to.*
- *Would like to start and fit it in my day.*
- *I never seem to have the time or think about doing it. Now I feel guilty!*
- *It takes too long.*
- *I don’t currently have one [a rosary].*
- *Seems too old fashioned.*
- *I only pray the rosary at funerals. I had not thought to pray the rosary at any other time.*

Among those parents who say the rosary, about half typically say it with their family (18 percent of all respondents) and half do so typically individually or with non-family members (18 percent of all respondents).

In addition to rosaries, some parents report use of other materials for prayer. Forty-one percent of parents typically use a Bible while praying (32 percent in print, 2 percent digital, and 7 percent both print and digital). Thirty-nine percent use a Catholic prayer book (31 percent in print, 2 percent digital, and 6 percent both print and digital). Few parents use any of the materials listed in a digital format. This finding is consistent with other recent surveys on media use conducted by CARA. It's not that parents don't use digital devices to read. However, they have yet to use them broadly for religious content. Forty-seven percent of parents said they do not use any of the items listed when praying.

<i>Do you typically use the following, in print or digital copies, when praying?</i>				
	Print	Digital	Both	Neither
Bible	32%	2%	7%	59%
Catholic prayer book(s); including novenas and devotionals	31	2	6	61
Other Catholic publications including prayers	24	2	7	67
Saint of the Day book	18	2	4	76
Other Christian, non-Catholic, publications including prayers	15	2	4	79
Liturgy of the Hours	13	1	4	82

As one would expect, those more frequently attending Mass are more likely to use materials while praying. On average the difference between weekly Mass attenders and those who rarely or never attend Mass is 42 percentage points. For example, 63 percent of weekly Mass attenders use Catholic prayer books while praying as does 52 percent of those who attend Mass at least once a month. Only a third of those who attend Mass a few times a year use these. The least likely to utilize Catholic prayer books are those who rarely or never attend Mass with just 5 percent of this sub-group indicating use. Among weekly Mass attenders, 61 percent report using a Bible, 54 percent use Catholic publications that include prayers, 40 percent use a Saint of the Day book, and 34 percent use the Liturgy of the Hours.

Parents were also asked about the times when they do not pray. Fifty-one percent of parents say that if they pray infrequently or not at all for a time it is "somewhat" or "very much" because of their busy schedule or lack of time. About four in ten say it is at least "somewhat" because they missed Mass (39 percent) or because prayer did not cross their mind (39 percent). Thirty-seven percent say that is "somewhat" or "very much" because they are not a very religious person. A quarter indicate they did not have anything to pray for at the time and 23 percent because they don't feel like they know how to pray. Only one in ten say that this is at least "somewhat" caused by a lack of belief in prayer.

If there has been a time recently when you did not pray often or at all, how well do each of the following explain why this happened?

	Very much	Somewhat	Only a little	Not at all
Busy schedule or lack of time	21%	30%	19%	30%
I missed Mass	15	24	21	40
Prayer just didn't cross my mind	13	26	25	36
I am not a very religious person	11	26	19	44
I don't believe in prayer	9	9	9	74
I don't feel like I know how to pray	7	16	19	58
I didn't have anything to pray for at the time	6	19	16	59

About seven in ten parents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that prayer is essential to their faith (71 percent; 49 percent agree “strongly”). One in five neither agree nor disagree with this statement (19 percent). One in ten disagree “somewhat” or “strongly” that prayer is essential to their faith.

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Agree somewhat or strongly	Neither agree/disagree	Disagree somewhat or strongly
Prayer is essential to my faith	71%	19%	10%
There have been times recently when I have struggled with my faith	35	27	48
I am very concerned about my child/ children not remaining Catholic as they age	30	33	37

Thirty-five percent of parents agree that there have been times recently when they have struggled with their faith (11 percent agree “strongly”). Nearly half disagree with this statement (48 percent) and 27 percent neither agree nor disagree.

Three in ten parents agree “somewhat” or “strongly” that they are concerned about their child or children not remaining Catholic as they age (11 percent agree “strongly”). A third neither agree nor disagree with this statement and 37 percent disagree “somewhat” or “strongly.”

Conclusion

Many Catholics raising children today in the United States are infrequently attending Mass. They are in many cases even less likely to have their children enrolled in formal religious education. Children who are baptized but who do not later celebrate their First Communion and confirmation are more likely to leave the faith in their teens and early twenties. Thus, what is happening in the homes of Catholic parents today is of critical importance to the future of the Catholic faith in the United States.

The Catholic Church is often facing an individualized culture in many Catholic households that seems to limit the sharing of faith between family members. About six in ten parents pray at least once a week. Yet, only one in ten rarely or never pray. Parents are still talking to God, but this conversation is most often a personal connection. Only 24 percent of parents pray at least as often with their family as they do alone. The most common reason given for this is a simple preference for individualized prayer.

In their own words, parents often describe a prayer life that is them talking to God. Something that happens in their minds at traffic stops and in the moments before they fall asleep. Only 16 percent pray the rosary at least once a month. Many note this is not possible for them because they do not own a rosary or know how to pray with it.

Although many Catholic parents are not praying with their family they most often are praying *for* their family. No other activity is done more often than praying to God for the wellbeing of family members. It is also the case that separated and divorced parents are less likely than married parents to attend Mass, to think childhood sacraments are “very important” for their children, and are less likely to consider their faith to be among the most important parts of their own life, but they still pray. They are among the most likely to do so daily before they go to bed, when they wake, and before meals.

No matter what the demography of the family is there is one consistent thread keeping the Catholic family connected to the faith and that is prayer. The challenge to the Church is to amplify this connection and reconnect it more to parishes and the Church’s educational institutions and programs. In the next special report, for release in September, we explore how the Church can best communicate with Catholic parents in the United States.

CARA’s survey of Catholic parents reveals much about Catholic family life today. Two reports have been published and one additional special reports from this research will be released as noted below.

Holy Cross Family Ministries and The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) will be releasing four Special Reports:

- First: The Catholic Family: 21st Century Challenges - overview report
- Second: The Catholic Family Today - Demographics
- Third: Practice of Faith in the Catholic Family
- Fourth - Sept 2015: Catholic Families and Media Usage



To subscribe to the Reports or for more information: www.HCFM.org/FamilyResearch or use the QR code provided.

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