

Hispanic Catholics: A National Report

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Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the Louisville Institute, The Anderson Foundation, The National Catholic Reporter Publishing Co., Alfred & Kathleen M. Rotandaro, Kevin J. Healy, and the Kathleen Blank Reither Trust for their generous gifts supporting the administration of this survey. Thank you also to the over 1,500 Catholics who agreed to take part in the national survey and share their responses on a variety of beliefs and practices related to Catholicism. We know resources are limited and people are busy, but without your contributions, we would have far less insight as to how to proceed as a Church.

Executive Summary

This report discusses the most recent findings of a national study of American Catholics that takes place every six years, starting in the 1980s (American Catholic Laity Survey). In the latest wave we surveyed over 1500 Catholics. This report compares the 35 percent of Hispanic respondents to all other respondents, providing a helpful sense of the pulse of contemporary Hispanic Catholics in the United States. For those interested in book-length analyses of the data, the full dataset as well as interviews with nearly 60 American Catholic leaders—exploring topics such as Church life, moral authority, race, sex and family, political and civic life, and longitudinal trends—are discussed in *Catholicism at a Crossroads*.¹ The dataset is also used to explore the 53 percent of Catholics who do not attend Mass frequently in *Cultural Catholics*.²

There are three major findings contained in this report:

1. Catholicity for the majority of Hispanic Catholics is relatively strong. Hispanic Catholics are more “orthodox” or thickly embedded in their Catholicism than are non-Hispanic Catholics. They are more conservative in some respects (e.g., sexual teachings) and more liberal in other areas (e.g., social justice teachings), but overall tend to agree with Church teachings more readily than non-Hispanic Catholics. They also show a stronger Catholic identity and more frequently engage in Catholic practices than their non-Hispanic counterparts. Rather than labels of conservative or liberal, it is better to simply understand Hispanic Catholics as more orthodox, more traditional or more deeply embedded in their Catholicism.

¹ Maureen K. Day, James C. Cavendish, Paul M. Perl, Michele Dillon, and Mary L. Gautier, with William V. D’Antonio, *Catholicism at a Crossroads: The Present and Future of America’s Largest Church* (New York: New York University Press, 2025).

² Maureen K. Day, *Cultural Catholics: Who They Are, How to Respond* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2024).

2. Hispanic Catholics tend to be more politically liberal than their non-Hispanic counterparts by a variety of measures and on several issues. The exceptions to this general rule—inferred from findings in the first section looking at agreements with Church teachings—are that Hispanic Catholics are slightly more likely to object to abortion and euthanasia than non-Hispanic Catholics and substantially more likely to oppose same-sex sexual relations than their non-Hispanic counterparts.
3. Hispanic Catholics are more likely to voice experiences of parish life that lack community or belonging. Although the data cannot explain this finding, it could be due to a lack of welcome, inclusion and integration from non-Hispanic parish members who were founding members or the more historically established population of the Church.³ Hispanic Catholics who attend Mass infrequently are more likely to name work or family obligations as a barrier to attendance. They are less likely to support expanding ordination to the priesthood or diaconate to those ineligible than non-Hispanic Catholics, but still, overall, show more agreement with expanding these roles than opposition.

Far from being an exhaustive exploration of Hispanic Catholic life, this report still offers a starting point for thinking through the ways we might improve Hispanic Catholic ministry in the United States.

³ Brett Hoover, *The Shared Parish: Latinos, Anglos, and the Future of U.S. Catholicism* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

Introduction

This report will explore the beliefs, practices and attitudes of contemporary Hispanic Catholics in the United States. This report is based on the sixth wave of the American Catholic Laity Survey (details in the Methods section). Since our first wave in 1987, the Hispanic Catholic population in the United States has grown tremendously. In that first survey, only 10 percent of American Catholics identified as Hispanic; in the most recent wave this has grown to 35 percent. Although this is a growing percentage of the Catholic population, there is not a proportionally increasing amount of social scientific research that looks closely at Hispanic Catholics.⁴ This report is one contribution to help fill this gap, enabling the Church to better minister to this growing population.

To better understand how Hispanic Catholics are situated within the national population as a whole, we will turn to some findings from the Pew Research Center.⁵ Hispanic Americans make up a growing share of the American population. The 2020 U.S. Census revealed that Hispanic Catholics number 62.1 million in the United States, which accounts for 19 percent of all Americans. This is an increase from 50.5 million in 2010, up from a mere 9.6 million in 1970. The Hispanic population in the United States is currently the second fastest growing racial or ethnic population. Hispanic Americans trace their ethnic origins to a variety of countries. As of 2019, 62 percent of Hispanic Americans traced their origins to Mexico, 10 percent to Puerto Rico, and Cubans, Salvadorans, Dominicans, Guatemalans, Columbians and Hondurans each

⁴ For some notable exceptions, see Hosffman Ospino, *Hispanic Ministry in Catholic Parishes: A Summary Report of Findings from the National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2015). Maureen K. Day, “Latinx Catholic Financial Giving and Clergy Responses: Understanding Stewardship Frames,” *American Catholic Studies* 131, no. 2 (2020): 1–24. Hoover, *The Shared Parish*, 2014.

⁵ Cary Funk and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Hispanic Americans’ Trust in and Engagement With Science: Increasing Representation in Science Seen as Important for Attracting more Hispanic People to Science,” Pew Research Center, June 14, 2022, https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/06/PS_2022.06.14_hispanic-americans-science_REPORT.pdf

exceeded one million people in the United States. The number of foreign-born Hispanics peaked at 40 percent in 2000, and now only about one-third of Hispanics living in the United States were born in another country.

Turning to Hispanic Catholics specifically, the percentage of Hispanic Americans who identify as Catholic has been steadily declining.⁶ Although the Hispanic population among evangelical and non-evangelical Protestant and other faiths has been stable, the share of Hispanics who identify as Catholic shrunk from 67 percent in 2010 to 43 percent in 2022. This is intimately linked to the increasing percentages of Hispanics who identify as unaffiliated, which grew from 10 percent to 30 percent in this same period. Younger Hispanic Americans are more likely to be unaffiliated (49%) and less likely to identify as Catholic (30%) than their counterparts aged 65 or older (20% and 54%, respectively). Nearly one-fourth of Hispanics in the United States are former Catholics; twenty-three percent of those raised Catholic have left and only one percent have joined another religion. Forty-six percent of Hispanic Catholics say religion is “very important” and another 36 percent say it is “somewhat important.” These findings provide a look at the broader landscape and will help us better contextualize the findings that follow.

Methods

The dataset that this report draws upon is from a larger, ongoing study of American Catholic life that began in the 1980s, led by sociologist William V. D’Antonio. The most recent survey included D’Antonio as well as sociologists Mary L. Gautier and Michele Dillon and was conducted in April 2017. The survey used a nationally representative sample of 1507 Catholics, including an over-sample of self-identified Hispanic Catholics. Using data from this year has

⁶ Jens Manuel Krogstad, Joshua Alvarado and Besheer Mohamed, “Among U.S. Latinos, Catholicism Continues to Decline but Is Still the Largest Faith: Share of Latinos Who Are Religiously Unaffiliated Continues to Grow,” Pew Research Center, April 13, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2023/04/PF_2023.04.13_NSL-religion_REPORT.pdf

both strengths and limits. First, at the time this is published, the data will be nearly eight years old. For a population that is so quickly growing, we should treat the findings as illuminating helpful insights, but also that they lack the precision that more recent data would enjoy. However, an advantage is that these findings—rather than data from 2020-2022—are not skewed by virtual parish experiences or a poor assessment of Church leadership or decreased Mass attendance due to the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, this report serves as a useful baseline for comparison as we emerge from the pandemic to see the ways Hispanic Catholics practice or think differently about their Catholicism. We hope that this report offers a helpful starting point and inspires much research going forward.

Respondents were first asked their religious affiliation; if they responded that they were Catholic, we continued with the survey. The findings on Hispanic Catholics are compared to non-Hispanic Catholics throughout the book. Owing to the sample size, differences of ten percent or more can be considered substantive. When numbers do not total 100 percent, this is likely due to rounding; if a category was omitted, we will signal this to the reader.

Demographics of Hispanic Catholics

Before looking at the ways Hispanic Americans approach their Catholicism, we will offer a brief demographic snapshot. *The percentages of Hispanic Catholics for each group are in the text; the percentages of non-Hispanic Catholics are in parentheses immediately following each statistic.* In showing the responses of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic Catholics for each question, we can discover not only where Hispanic Catholics stand, but also how they compare with other Catholics. Briefly, the “non-Hispanic” breakdown is 86 percent non-Hispanic white, 9 percent “Other” (which is mainly Asian- or Pacific Islander-American, but also includes those

with multi-ethnic identities and Native American Catholics), and five percent non-Hispanic Black.

Like most Catholics, Hispanic Catholics are most likely to have joined the church as infants (under one year of age), with 75 percent (80% of non-Hispanic Catholics) saying this is when they became Catholic. However, notably different from non-Hispanic Catholics, 20 percent (8%) joined between the ages of one and twelve. Showing no difference, very few Hispanic Catholics became Catholic between the ages of 13 and 17 at two percent (2%). Finally, Hispanic Catholics are slightly less likely to have come to the faith as adults than non-Hispanic Catholics, with three percent (10%) becoming Catholic after their eighteenth birthday. Although only eight percent of the total sample became Catholic as adults, it is striking that, of these, Hispanic Catholics are *much* less likely to have entered through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), the formal process that welcomes adult converts into the Catholic Church; only 22 percent (75%) of Hispanic Catholics entered the Church through RCIA.

Twenty-two percent (48%) of Hispanic Catholics attended a Catholic elementary, middle, or junior high school. This drops to 13 percent (23%) for those who attended a Catholic high school and even further decreases to five percent (11%) of Hispanic Catholics attending a Catholic college or university. Eighty-four percent (68%) of Hispanic Catholics are married to a Catholic spouse. Fifty-five percent (63%) of Hispanic Catholics are registered at a parish. There is a significant education and income disparity among Hispanic and non-Hispanic Catholics. A huge percentage—34%—of Hispanic Catholic adults (6%) have not completed high school. Thirty-one percent (30%) of Hispanic Catholics have a high school diploma as their highest degree. Twenty-one percent (28%) have completed some college and fourteen percent (36%) have their bachelor's degree or higher. Turning to income, 47 percent (28%) of Hispanic

Catholic households have an annual income of \$49,000 or less, 45 percent (51%) make \$50,000-149,000, and eight percent (21%) earn \$150,000 or more.

Forty-eight percent (48%) of Hispanic Catholics are men and 52 percent (52%) are women. There are five generations of Catholics in the sample and Hispanic Catholics skew young. Being born 1995-1999 and were 18-22 at the time of the survey, the youngest are iGen, who comprise 7 percent (6%) of Hispanic Catholics; there are very few iGen because most were minors at the time of the survey and were therefore not eligible to participate. Millennials are those born 1979-1994 and represent 38 percent (21%) of Hispanic Catholics. Post-Vatican II respondents were born 1978-1961; thirty-five percent (32%) of Hispanic Catholics fall into this generation. Vatican II are those born 1960-1941 and comprise seventeen percent (33%) of Hispanic Catholics. The pre-Vatican II are the oldest generation and these respondents are born 1940 and earlier; this generation accounts for four percent (8%) of Hispanic Catholics.

The Sections of the Report

This report will compare Hispanic Catholics with non-Hispanic Catholics on a variety of measures. Each section closes with questions to help readers think through how they might apply this to their context, whether that is a parish, school or nonprofit. Each section has its own specific focus. The first section outlines the religious beliefs, sense of Catholic identity and the spiritual practices of Hispanic Catholics. The second section explores the political attitudes and civic behaviors of Hispanic Catholics. The third section examines their parish experiences and thoughts on Church leadership.

Concluding Questions:

- Who are the Hispanic Catholics in your life? What do you know about the similarities and difference in their approach to Catholicism compared to your own? If you are a

Hispanic Catholic, what are the ways that your ethnic background shapes your approach to Catholicism that is similar to or different from Catholics from another region of the Hispanic world? How about similar to or different from non-Hispanic Catholics?

- How do you plan to use the findings in this report? Write down some ways you are hoping to apply the findings here, as well as any other questions that might be surfacing.

Section One: Catholic Beliefs, Identity and Practices

An important point to consider as we begin to move through this data is that Hispanic Catholics, as a whole, appear to be more orthodox and more tightly tethered to Catholicism than their non-Hispanic counterparts. We have heard some people describe Hispanic Catholics as more conservative than most Catholics; this is true insofar as traditional devotional practices and sexual teachings go. We have also heard people describe Hispanic Catholics as more liberal; this is true with regards to the death penalty, care for the poor and similar justice issues. Really, it is more accurate, in this section and in others, to think of Hispanic Catholics as more orthodox and more closely connected to Catholicism. Further, this closeness shines through in questions that do not allow for a liberal/conservative typology, like the importance of Catholicism in one's life or the desire for one's future generations to also be Catholic. In sum, rather than liberal or conservative, our findings show that Hispanic Catholics are simply more orthodox than non-Hispanic Catholics.

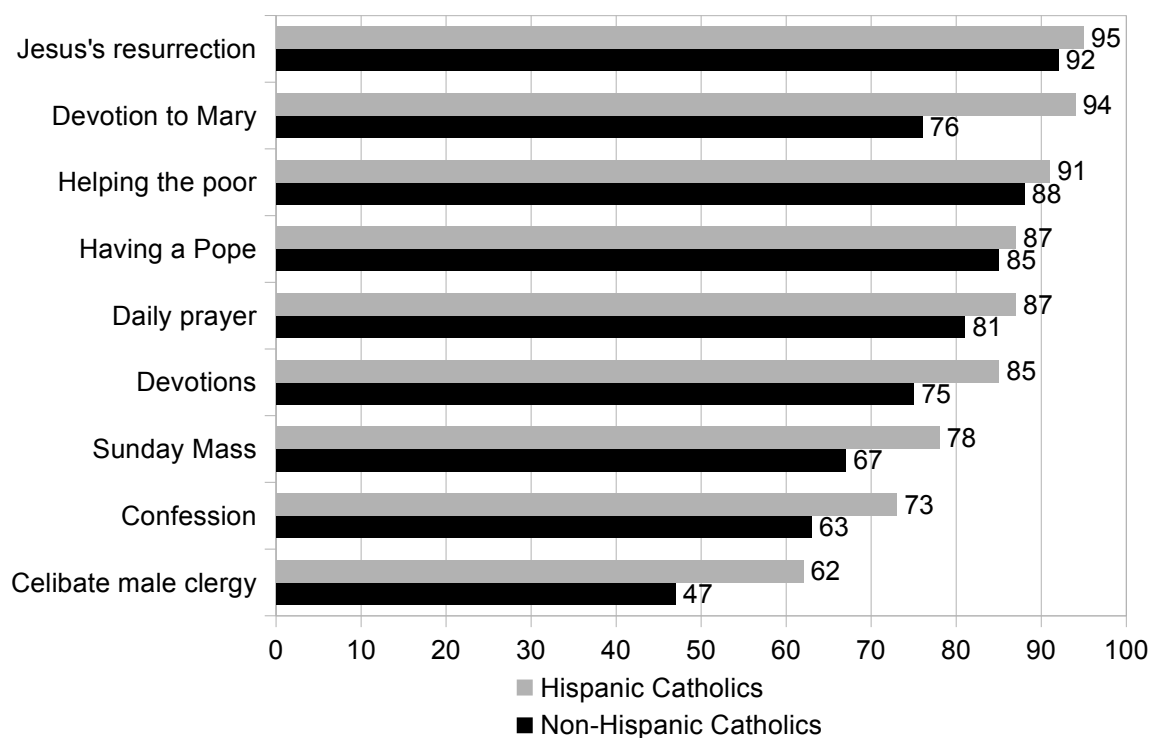
A second point is related. It is important to bear in mind that the "non-Hispanic" sample overwhelmingly consists of white Catholics. So when we are comparing Hispanic Catholics to non-Hispanic Catholics, there are only whispers of API-American, Black, and others' experiences in this group. So, for instance in the next chart, the findings show that Hispanic Catholics are strong in Marian piety and in personal devotional practices generally compared to non-Hispanic Catholics. This might falsely imply that Hispanic Catholics are higher in these than all other non-Hispanic groups; it should not. While Hispanic Catholics *may* be higher in these than all other racial groups, they may be lower than other groups. For example, some ethnicities within the API-American Catholic community have strong devotions to Mary and pray the rosary as part of their cultural approach to Catholicism. All this to say that this non-Hispanic group

skews heavily toward the beliefs, attitudes and practices of white Catholics and any conclusions or implications drawn from the data must bear this in mind.

Catholic Beliefs

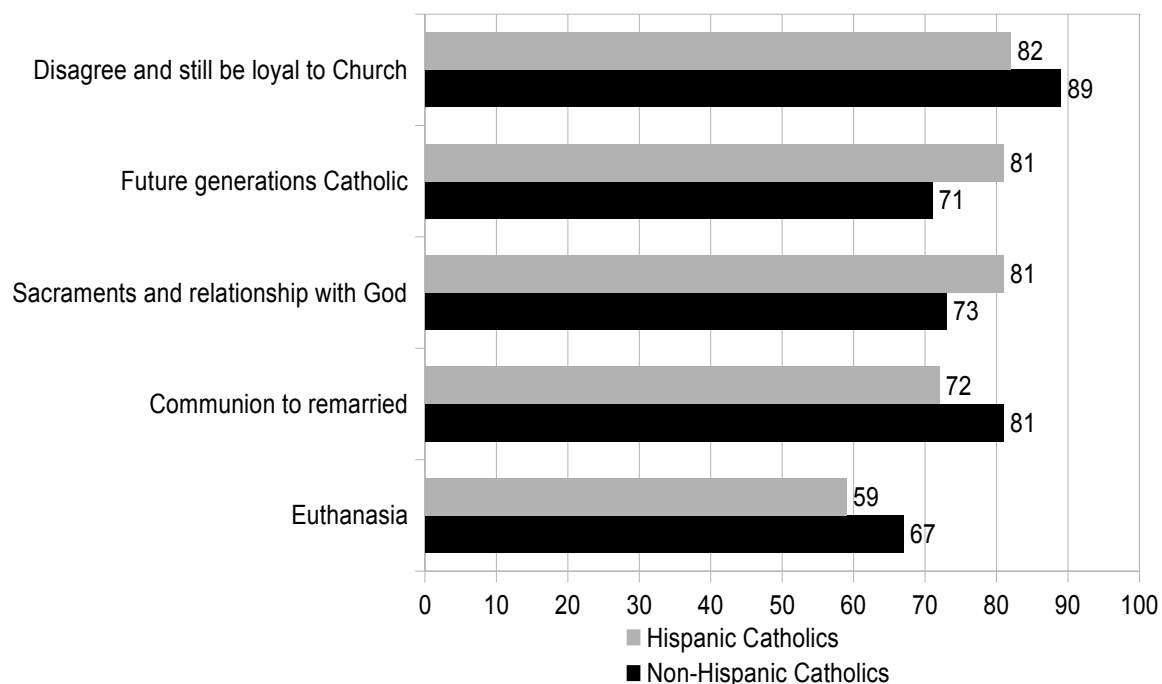
The following chart reveals the most essential elements of the faith for Hispanic Catholics in descending order. There are substantial differences compared to non-Hispanic Catholics for devotion to Mary, devotions broadly (Eucharistic Adoration and praying the rosary were given as examples in the question), attending Sunday Mass, receiving the sacrament of confession and having a celibate, male clergy. These also point to what might be considered “core,” “important” and “peripheral” to Catholicism by Hispanic Catholics; we might suggest that totals of 85 percent or more indicate what is core, 70-84 percent as important, and the remainder as peripheral. Methodologically speaking, using only the responses of “essential,” rather than also including “somewhat essential” as we have done, might reveal different insights for what is core, important or peripheral.

Figure 1.1. Essential Elements of Catholicism. “As a Catholic, how essential is each of these to your vision of what it means to be Catholic? Would you say the following is or are essential to the faith, somewhat essential, or not essential at all?” (“Somewhat essential” and “Essential” combined)



Hispanic Catholics are more likely to want their future generations to be Catholic; all other items show slight differences compared to non-Hispanic Catholics.

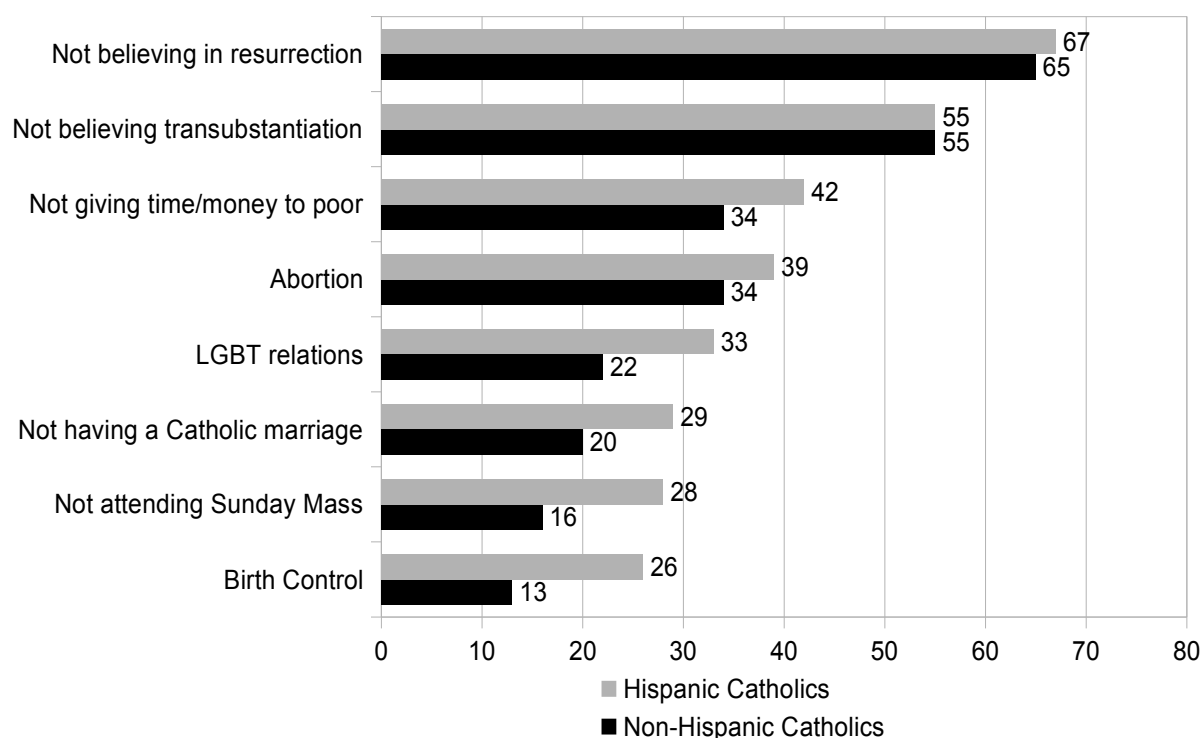
Figure 1.2. Agreement with Catholic Beliefs and Practices. “Please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.” (Strongly and somewhat agree combined)



Catholic Identity

The next set of questions tap into Catholic identity by asking what sorts of beliefs one must hold or behaviors one must practice to be considered a “good Catholic.” These illuminate the ways that Catholics draw boundaries around who is more or less faithful as well as point to what is more or less core to Catholicism (e.g., the belief that Jesus physically rose from the dead and that the bread and wine truly become the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Note that there are not even slight differences on these core issues.). The percentages are much lower here than in the “essential” chart (Fig. 1.1) above. This is likely because people are much more reticent to label someone unequivocally as a “bad Catholic” by dint of one belief or practice. The substantial differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic Catholics are that they are more likely to say one cannot be a good Catholic if they engage in same-sex sexual relations, do not attend Sunday Mass or use birth control. The differences are slight in not giving time or money to help the poor, in procuring an abortion or not having their marriage approved by the Church.

Figure 1.3. Beliefs and Practices Needed to Be a “Good Catholic.” “The following statements deal with what you think it takes to be a good Catholic. Please indicate if you think a person can be a good Catholic without performing these actions or affirming these beliefs. Can a person be a good Catholic:” (Percent responding “No, cannot be a good Catholic.”)



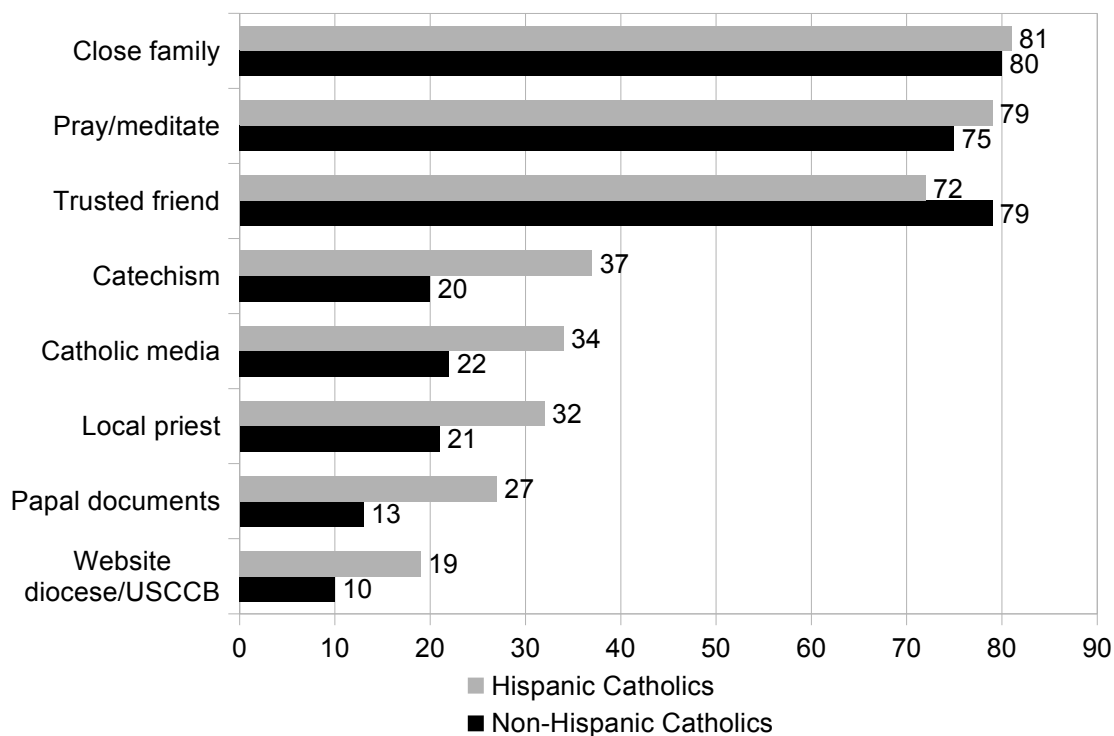
The Catholic Church seems to be more subjectively important to Hispanic Catholics compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts (no figure). Thirteen percent (8% of non-Hispanic Catholics) say Catholicism is “the most important part of my life,” 30 percent (23%) choose “among the most important parts of my life,” 38 percent (39%) report “quite important to me, but so are many other areas of my life,” 14 percent (24%) say “not terribly important to me,” and five percent (7%) respond “not very important to me at all.” When asked about their likelihood

of leaving on a 1-7 scale—with “1” signaling “I would never leave the Catholic Church” and “7” meaning “Yes, I might leave the Catholic Church,” it was impressive that just over half selected “1.” Fifty-three percent (39%) selected “1,” 13 percent (18%) responded “2,” 7 percent (10%) chose with a “3,” 12 percent (14%) selected “4,” 8 percent (9%) said “5,” 4 percent (6%) chose “6,” and another 4 percent (5%) said “7.”

Catholic Practices

One of the things we were interested in was the sorts of moral resources Catholics use when discerning an important decision. The first three sources—family, prayer and friends—are far and away the most turned to sources for all Catholics, with Hispanic Catholics slightly less likely to turn to friends than their non-Hispanic counterparts. Hispanic Catholics were much more likely to utilize Catholic resources when thinking through a decision. Although some of these differences only barely cross the ten percent *absolute* difference threshold we normally look for in order to consider something a “substantial” difference, these are all very high *relative* differences; some Hispanic differences are over twice those of non-Hispanic Catholics. This underscores the importance of having multi-lingual and multi-cultural resources for Hispanic Catholics.

Figure 1.4. Sources Used in Moral Discernment. “When you have an important moral decision to make, which, if any, of the following activities or sources do you usually look to for guidance:” (“Always” and “Sometimes” combined.)



In asking about how often they pray outside of Mass, 11 percent (17%) of Hispanic Catholics pray more than once per day, 44 percent (32%) pray daily, 32 percent (37%) pray “occasionally or sometimes,” and 13 percent (14%) pray “seldom or never.” Confession is more frequent among Hispanic Catholics, with 7 percent (3%) confessing once a month or more, 18 percent (9%) confessing several times per year, twelve percent (12%) confessing annually, 14 percent (18%) confessing “less than once per year,” and 49 (59%) percent confessing “seldom or never.” Although the more frequent rates do not individual hit the ten percent difference we are looking for, like the higher rates of Hispanic Catholics turning to Catholic resources for moral discernment, these more frequent rates show high relative difference. Also, when we consider that the Catholic Church requires Catholics to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once per year, we see that 37 percent of Hispanic Catholics meet this expectation, while only 24 percent of non-Hispanic Catholics do.

Concluding Questions:

- What does this data tell you about the current state—both graces and challenges—of the American Church?
- What are some of the ways you could meet the ministerial and spiritual needs of Hispanic Catholics better? What are the gifts and insights of Hispanic Catholics that might help reinvigorate the Church more broadly?
- How did you learn about the teachings of Catholicism? What were the most important events or who were the most important people for you as you grew more deeply in your faith?

Section Two: Political and Civic Attitudes and Practices

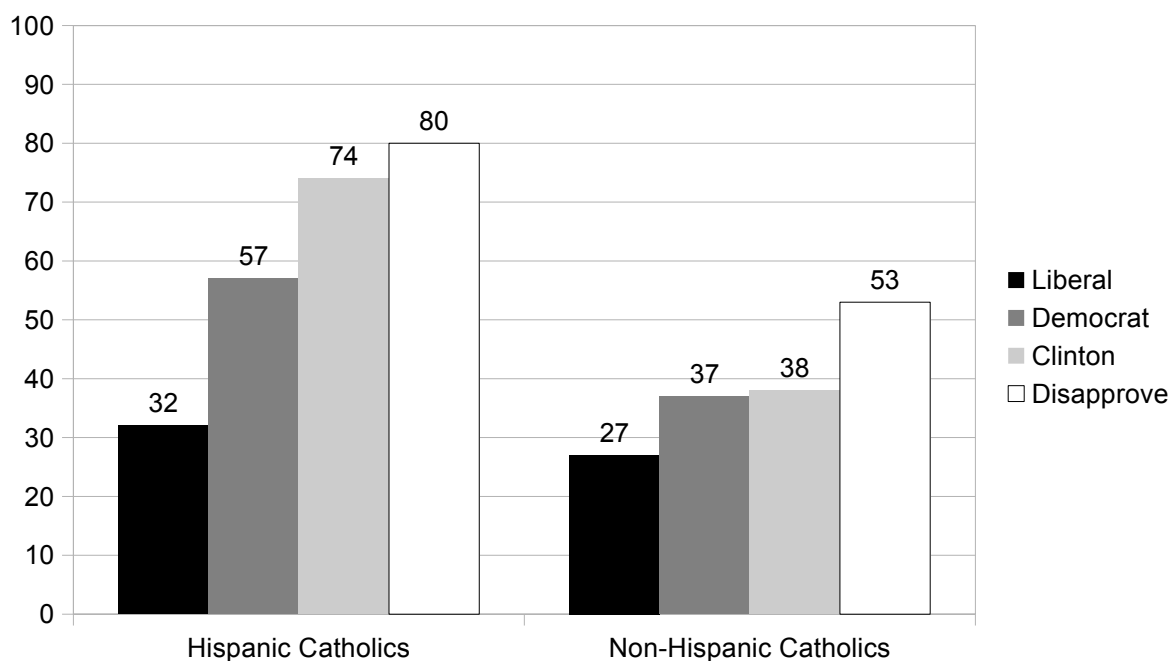
This section begins with a look at the political identity of Hispanic Catholics. Next, it looks at their agreement with Church teaching on some political issues. Finally, it ends by looking at the civic behaviors of Hispanic Catholics.

Political Identity

Media outlets, scholars and Catholics themselves will often weigh in as to how to describe Catholics' political views. The truth is you could make a case for either depending on what sort of measure you use, as Figure 2.1 reveals. Few Catholics identify as liberal; one could use this to make a conservative case. However, most Catholics disapproved of the Trump presidency at the time of our survey, which could be used as a case to put them in the liberal camp. Altogether, Catholic political identity is contested and no single American political label captures the texture and depth of Catholic belief.⁷ Most relevant for our purposes, Hispanic Catholics lean slightly or substantially to the left of their non-Hispanic counterparts.

Figure 2.1. Political Identity. “Which of the following most closely reflects your political position?” (Very and moderately liberal combined) “With which political party do you generally identify?”, “For whom did you vote [in the presidential election in November 2016]?”, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President?” (Percent disapproving)

⁷ See Day et al. *Catholicism at a Crossroads*, 2025.



To unpack these observations in a bit more detail, 12 percent of Hispanic Catholics identify as very liberal (8% of non-Hispanic Catholics), twenty-one percent consider themselves moderately liberal (18%), 35 percent identify as moderate (30%), twenty percent describe themselves as moderately conservative (29%), and thirteen percent are very conservative (15%). As this demonstrates, Hispanic Catholics are symmetrically distributed along this political spectrum (33% identify as liberal and 33% as conservative); this is in contrast with non-Hispanic attenders, a plurality of whom—44 percent—lean conservative.

A majority—at 57 percent—of Hispanic Catholics identify as Democrats (37%). Eleven percent identify as Republican (38%) and another 26 percent (20%) do not identify with a political party; a handful identified with smaller political parties. Sixty-one percent (84%) of Hispanic Catholics reported having voted in the last election. Of those who voted, 74 percent voted for Hillary Clinton (38%), 17 percent voted for Donald Trump (53%), and 9 percent voted

for another candidate (9%). Eighteen percent (46%) approved of the job Donald Trump was doing as president. Thirty-two percent (27%) identify as very liberal or moderately liberal. In responding to the role of religion in their voting decision, religion plays almost no role. Three percent (5%) of Hispanic Catholics voted for their presidential choice because of the candidate's religious beliefs, ten percent (10%) voted for their candidate because of their own religious beliefs, 1.5 percent (0.5%) voted for the candidate of their pastor's or bishop's recommendation, and a full 86 percent (86%) said religious beliefs played no part in their decision. The percentages for non-Hispanic Catholics are very similar to Hispanic Catholics in this area.

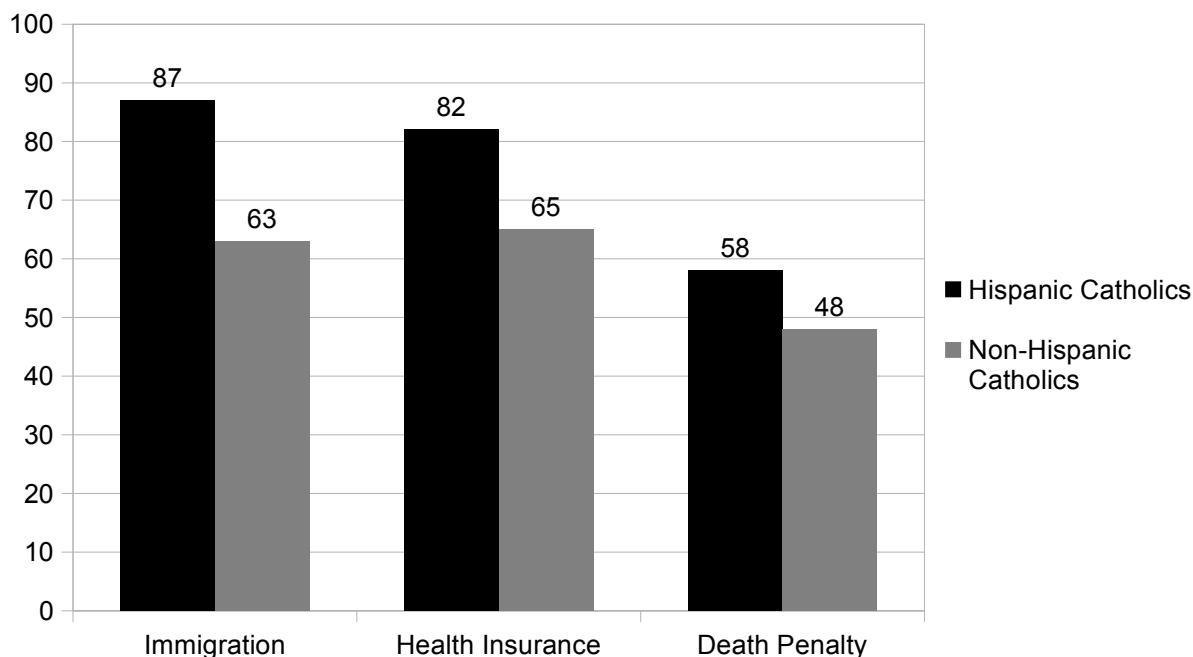
Church Teaching on Political Issues

When asked how the position of the US bishops affects their own thinking on an issue, 52 percent (56%) of Hispanic Catholics say they consider the bishops' positions but ultimately make up their own mind, 37 percent (36%) see the official teaching as irrelevant and 11 percent (8%) say that they try to follow the bishops' guidance on political matters. However, they seem to agree quite strongly with the bishops on three issues we asked about, more so than non-Hispanic Catholics. Eighty-seven percent (63%) of Hispanic Catholics agree with the USCCB's position on making immigration easier for families, 82 percent (65%) agree with expanding government-provided health insurance, and 58 percent (48%) agree with the bishops' opposition to the death penalty.

Figure 2.2. Agreement with Bishops on Immigration, Health Care and the Death Penalty.

“Please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the American bishops on each of the following issues: Support for expanding government-funded health insurance, opposition to the death penalty, support

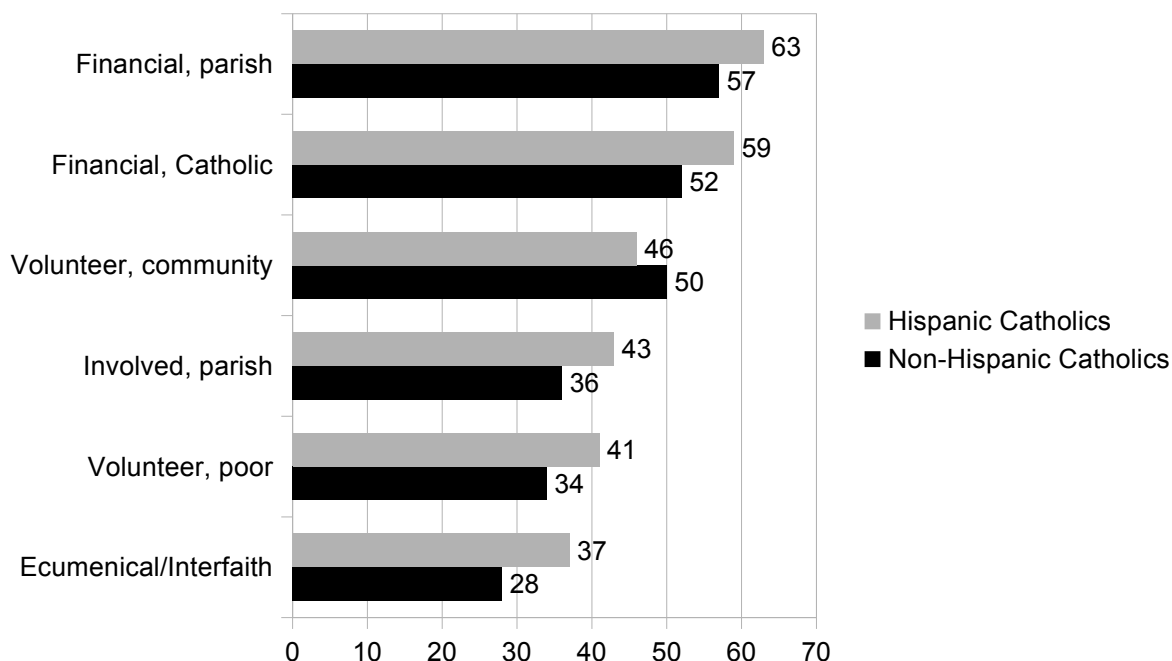
for making the immigration process easier for families.” (Strongly and somewhat agree combined)



Civic Engagement

We asked respondents how often they engaged in certain civic activities; some of these were related to Catholic organizations and others were more general. With the exception of volunteering in their community in which there was no difference, Hispanic Catholics were slightly more likely to “regularly” or “occasionally” be involved in these activities.

Figure 2.3. Civic Engagement. “In the past six months, how often have you engaged in the following activities? Volunteering in my community, giving financial contributions to my parish, financial contributions to Catholic organizations or causes, doing voluntary work with poor people or other vulnerable groups in society, engaging in interfaith or ecumenical gatherings, being involved in my parish beyond attending Mass” (Regularly or occasionally combined).



Concluding Questions:

- How deeply connected are your religious beliefs with your political commitments? If they are not deeply connected, what do you think about that? That is, would you like them to be more deeply connected? If they are more integrated, what are some of the key principles, insights, saints, and so on that shape your Catholic imagination in public life?
- What are some of the issues and concerns that you put your time or money towards? Are these motivated by your faith? What are some issues that you would like to get involved with but haven't? What might this look like at your parish?
- How might Hispanic Catholics be mobilized for greater political or civic engagement in your own Catholic context?
- What are some of the strengths of Hispanic Catholics' engagement with American public life? What does this teach the broader Church? Where are pressing areas of improvement, especially as they affect Hispanic Catholics at your own local level?

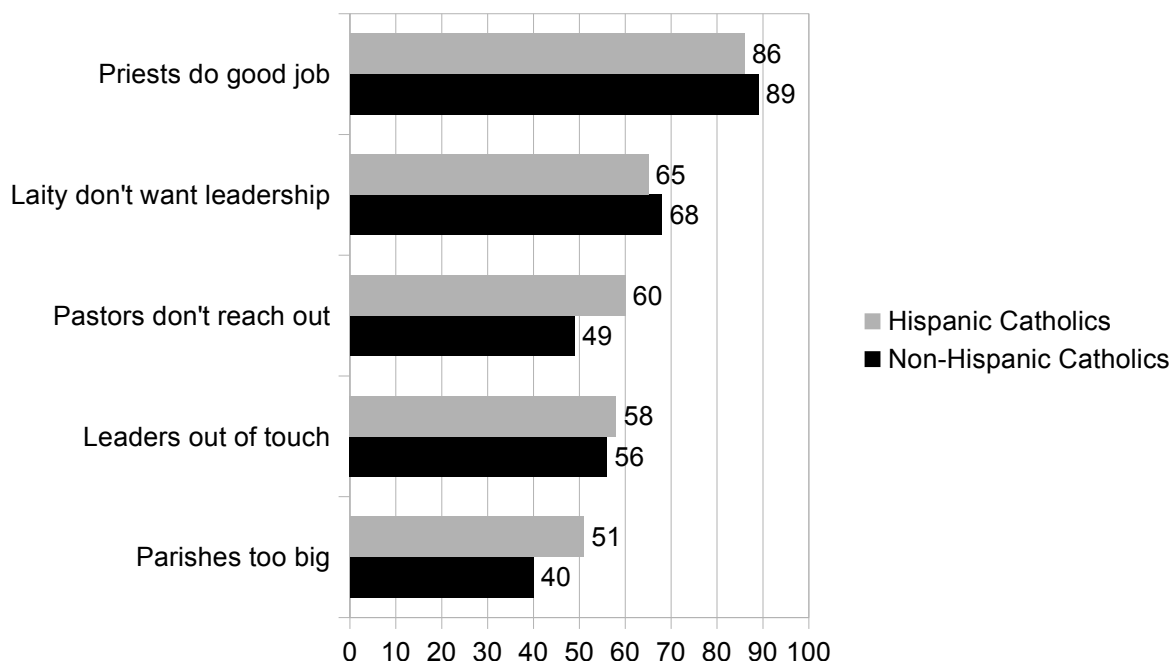
Section Three: Parish Life and Church Leadership

This section starts by examining Hispanic Catholics' experiences with parish life. Next, it asks them their opinions of Church leadership. It ends by exploring the ways they understand and navigate moral authority.

Parish Experiences

Like Catholics broadly, although Hispanic Catholics have positive opinions about their parish priest, they find many aspects of parish life to be lacking. They are substantially more likely to say that pastors do not know how to involve the laity and that parishes are too big and impersonal.

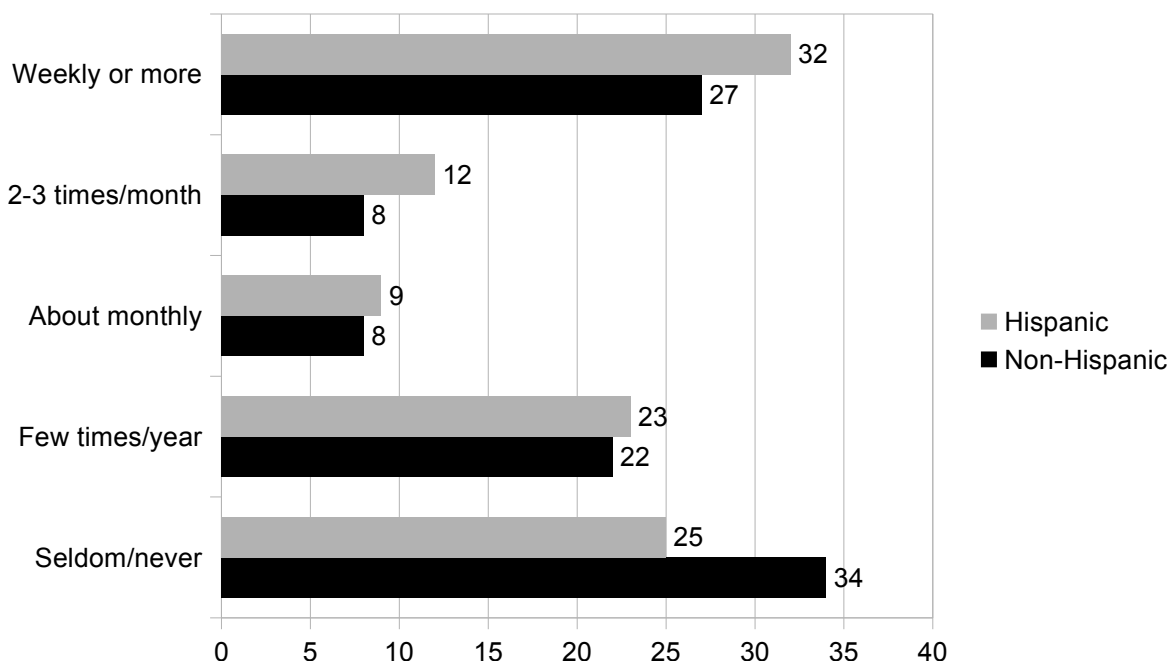
Figure 3.1. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements: On the whole, parish priests do a good job; most Catholics don't want to take on leadership roles in their parish; Catholic Church leaders are out of touch with the laity; most pastors don't know how to reach out to laity to get them involved in parish life; Catholic parishes are too big and impersonal (Strongly and somewhat agree combined).



Hispanic Catholic Mass attendance does not become “substantial” in any of the five frequencies by which we measured this. However, we do see a difference when we aggregate these categories. We think that those who attend at least monthly are somewhat connected to parish life. These Catholics are at least somewhat aware of the various events that are going on at the parish and so are at least somewhat tethered to parish life; we will call these frequent attenders. For those who attend Mass “a few times a year” or “seldom or never,” they are certainly on the peripheries of parish life and likely are less embedded in Catholicism on a variety of measures; we call these infrequent attenders.⁸ With this grouping, we see that 53 percent of Hispanic Catholics (43% of non-Hispanic Catholics) are frequent attenders and 47 percent (57%) are infrequent attenders, a substantial difference using these categories.

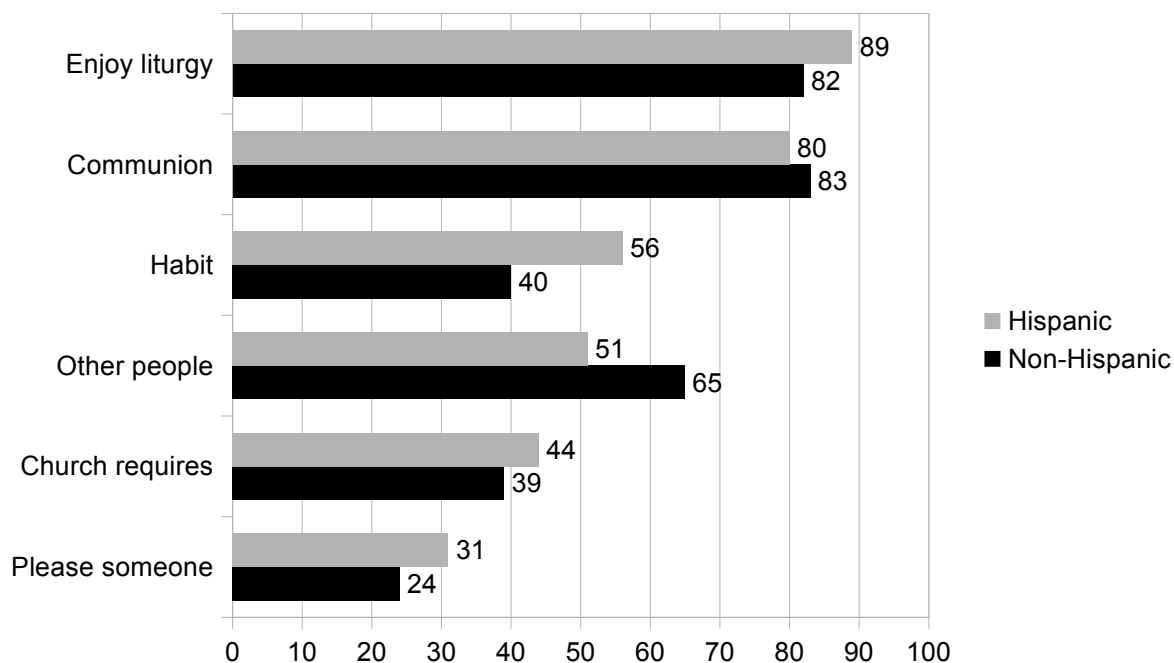
Figure 3.2. Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass? At least once a week, two or three times a month, about once a month, a few times a year, or seldom or never.

⁸ Day, *Cultural Catholics*, 2024.



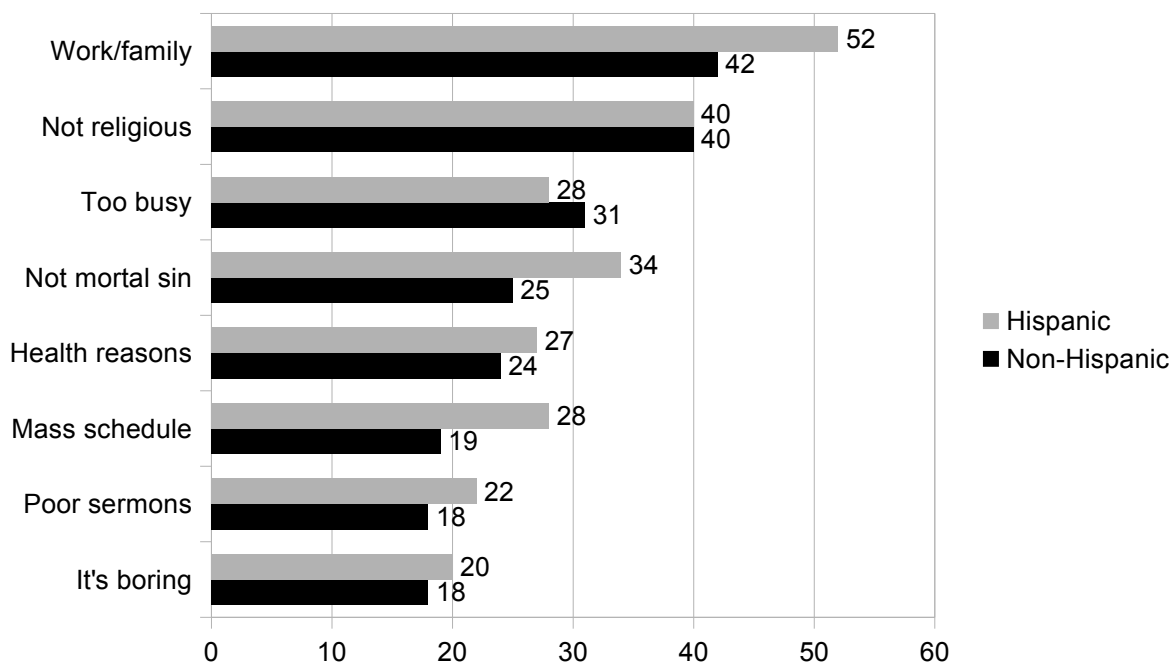
We asked only the frequently attending Catholics why they personally attend Mass. They were able to select multiple reasons. Hispanic Catholics are significantly more likely to attend out of habit. They are slightly more likely to attend because they enjoy participating in the liturgy, because the Church requires it or to please someone close to them. They are significantly less likely to name being with others in their parish.

Figure 3.3. People go to Mass for different reasons. Please indicate whether or not each of the following is an important reason you go to Mass: I enjoy taking part in the service itself and experiencing the liturgy, I feel a need to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion, mainly it's a habit, I enjoy being with other persons in our church, the Church requires that I attend, I want to please or satisfy someone close to me, like a spouse or parent (respondent could choose multiple reasons).



We asked infrequently attending Hispanic Catholics why they do not attend Mass more often and they could also choose multiple reasons. They were significantly more likely to cite work or family obligations and slightly more likely say (mistakenly) because it is not a mortal sin to miss Mass or that they had a conflict with the Mass schedule.

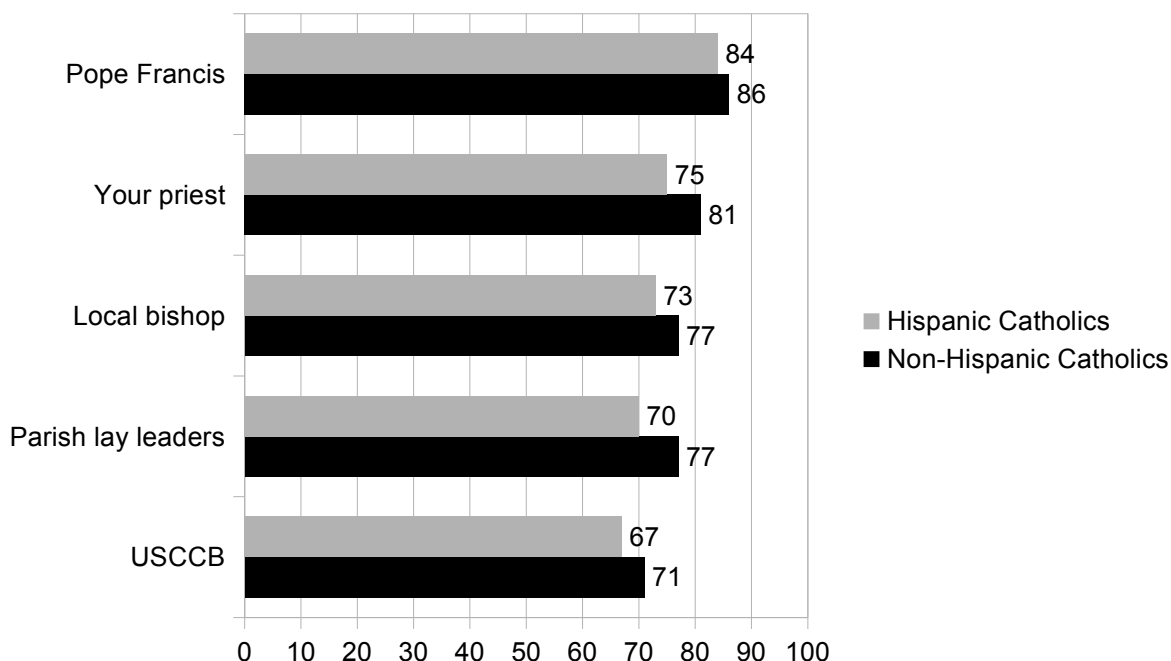
Figure 3.4. Is there a particular reason why you don't go to Mass more often? Please indicate whether or not each of the following is an important reason you don't attend Mass more often: Work/family responsibilities; just not a religious person; I'm too busy; it's not a mortal sin to miss Mass; health reasons; inconvenient Mass schedule; sermons are poor; it's boring (respondent could choose multiple reasons).



Church Leadership

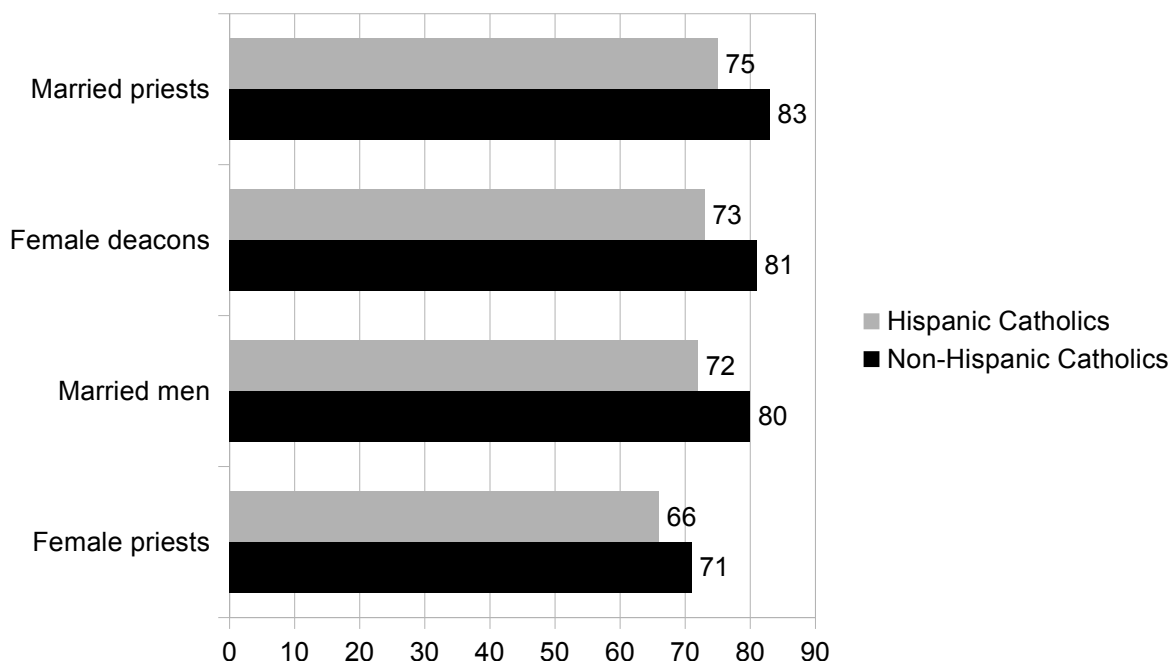
Although overall approval is quite high, Hispanic Catholics are slightly less likely to approve of the leadership of their parish priest or the lay leaders in their parish.

Figure 3.5. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the leadership of each of these: Pope Francis; the bishops of the United States; your local bishop; your parish priest; lay leaders in your parish (Very and somewhat satisfied combined).



Recalling findings from the first section, Hispanic Catholics are more likely to say that the celibate, male priesthood is essential to Catholicism. This sentiment shines through in their thoughts on expanding the ordination of deacons or priests. Hispanic Catholics are slightly less likely to support expanding ordination to any of the groups we asked about.

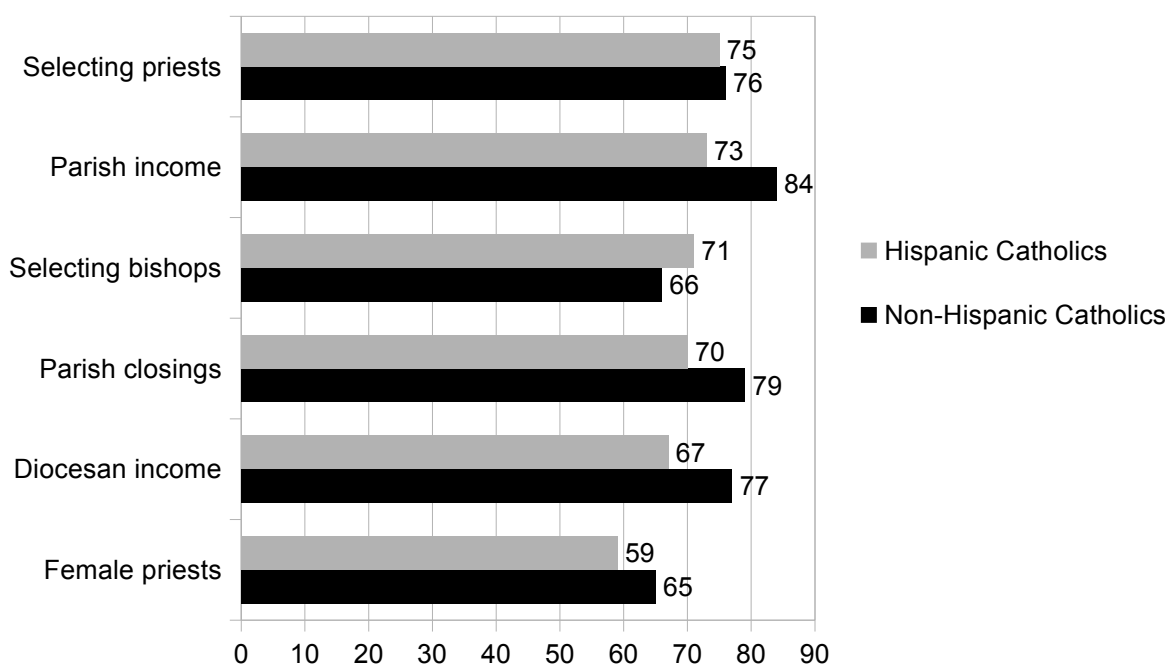
Figure 3.6. Here are four statements about the priesthood. After each, please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree: It would be a good thing if priests who have married were allowed to return to active ministry; it would be a good thing if women were allowed to be ordained as permanent deacons; it would be a good thing if married men were allowed to be ordained as priests; it would be a good thing if women were allowed to be ordained as priests.



Lay Decision-Making and Moral Authority

In asking about the areas of Church life in which they would like more decision-making authority, Hispanic Catholics—like most Catholics—would like greater input on a variety of levels. However, this varies somewhat from non-Hispanic Catholics. Hispanic Catholics are slightly more likely to want to weigh in on who serves as their bishop. They are slightly less likely to desire input on parish closings and whether women should be ordained as priests. They are substantially less likely to want to offer their thoughts on how parish or diocesan income is spent.

Figure 3.7. For each of the following areas of church life, please indicate whether you think the Catholic laity should have the right to participate or should not have the right to participate: Helping select priests for their parish; deciding how parish income should be spent; deciding about parish closings; deciding how diocesan income should be spent; helping select bishops for their diocese; deciding whether women should be ordained to the priesthood (responding “should”).



We also wanted to better understand how Catholics approach moral authority. For each of these issues about who should hold moral authority, respondents were able to say “church leaders, such as the pope and bishops,” “individuals taking church teachings into account and deciding for themselves” or “both individuals and leaders working together.” Hispanic respondents are remarkably similar to non-Hispanic respondents in this regard. The exceptions are that they are slightly more likely to say that whether one has an abortion is up to the individual, slightly less likely to say that sex outside of marriage is under the purview of Church leaders and slightly more likely that this is a matter for individuals to determine.

Figure 3.8. We are interested in your opinion on several issues that involve the moral authority in the Catholic Church. In each case we would like to know who you think should have the final say about what is right or wrong. Is it church leaders such as the pope and bishops, individuals taking church teachings into account and deciding for themselves, or

both individuals and leaders working together? A divorced Catholic re-marrying without getting an annulment; a Catholic using contraceptive birth control; a Catholic who is considering having an abortion; a Catholic who engages in gay or lesbian sexual relations; sexual relations outside of marriage.

		Hispanic Catholics	Non-Hispanic Catholics
Divorced Catholic remarrying without annulment	Church leaders	18	16
	Individuals	46	46
	Both	36	38
Catholic using contraceptive birth control	Church leaders	9	9
	Individuals	70	66
	Both	22	25
Catholic considering having an abortion	Church leaders	11	15
	Individuals	59	52
	Both	30	34
Catholic who engages in gay or lesbian sexual relations	Church leaders	11	14
	Individuals	60	57
	Both	29	29
Sexual relations outside of marriage	Church leaders	11	16
	Individuals	62	56
	Both	27	29

Concluding Questions:

- What are the ways that your parish's Hispanic ministry (or the Hispanic ministry you are hoping to launch) is strong? What are some growing edges?
- How might you increase a sense of personalism and community in parishes for Hispanic Catholics?
- How can you better serve the needs of frequently attending Hispanic Catholics? What about infrequent attenders?
- What sort of additional training would help your organization's leadership—both paid and unpaid—better serve Hispanic Catholics?

Conclusion

This section will be brief. This is because there is no cookie cutter response to Hispanic ministry. Hispanic ministry, like all ministry, begins with a firm sense of the hopes, needs, challenges and graces of the community and person under the minister's care. The findings here provide a very broad and general overview of the Hispanic Catholic experience in the United States. Rather than an ending, this conclusion should be treated as a beginning.

This concise report outlines the similarities and distinctions of the national Hispanic Catholic population as a whole. It does not take a deep dive, or even a glance, at so many of the other facets that characterize Hispanic Catholic communities, such as feast days, specific devotions and other cultural traditions. It admittedly does not address the ways different ethnic communities vary from the pan-Hispanic community explored here, or how generation of migration, age or gender might also shape the ways Hispanic Catholics engage their faith. However, it provides a beginning, a basic foundation, from which conversations might emerge.

Catholic institutions—whether these be parishes, schools, lay apostolates or other organizations—would do well to think about the ways they might better serve, integrate and learn from the Hispanic Catholics within their contexts. Ministerial leaders can hold listening sessions, create collaborative partnerships, pool resources and more in ways that meet the needs of a growing demographic of the Church. Diocesan-wide leadership can help with coordination that is implemented at the parish or other more local level. Only as we learn and we listen can we become bridge-builders and better accompany as well as be accompanied by our brothers and sisters in the faith.

Concluding Questions:

- What were some of the findings here that are most relevant for your own context?

- What are some ways you can begin to have local listening sessions, become more aware of the needs or other asset-based assessments of the state of Hispanic Catholic ministry in your area?
- Are there findings here that will help you better advocate for Hispanic Catholics?
- What are some of the questions for conversation, projects or other ideas that you have after reflecting on these findings?
- What can you commit to doing as a step toward strengthening Hispanic ministry in your context within the week? Within the next month? In the coming year? Who are the key people and organizations that would make for good partners in these efforts?