

Largest Survey of U.S. Catholics Calls on Bishops to Return to Tradition

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NOTE: Public Opinion Strategies is available for interviews or consultations with individual bishops. Please contact Vicki Yamasaki to arrange.

Today the [Real Presence Coalition](#) (RPC) released the findings of its survey of U.S. Catholics to the general public. RPC is an informal group of influential Catholics working to restore belief in Jesus Christ's Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. Its mission is to provide valuable input to U.S. bishops in their multi-year effort to restore belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

RPC engaged [Public Opinion Strategies](#) (POS) to assist them in the survey design and analysis of its results. The massive survey resulted in nearly 16,000 responses with an 80% completion rate and generated more than 250,000 words of open-ended feedback.

"This appears to be the single largest survey of lay Catholics ever conducted in the United States," said Jim Hobart, a partner with POS. "Survey from organizations like Pew Research and Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) come nowhere close to the number of Catholics participating in this survey."

"The RPC survey did not employ scientific sampling technics," said Hobart. "While the survey was open to all U.S. Catholics, we recognize that most responses were likely generated as a result of RPC members soliciting participation from their constituencies. This definitely resulted in a sample of Catholics more highly engaged in their faith than the general Catholic population, as evidenced by the fact that 97% of respondents said they completely believe in the Real Presence without reservation. Nonetheless, this survey provides valuable insights into the reasons why this population believes there has been a loss of faith in the Real Presence and what to do about it."

The survey revealed that respondents believe the loss of faith in the Real Presence has been caused by a combination of factors, including 1) how the Eucharist is distributed and received; 2) the scandal of offering the Eucharist to public sinners who reject Catholic teaching; 3) a lack of reverence on the part of both the laity and priests; 4) a lack of solid catechesis; and 5) a loss sense of the supernatural.

Respondents offered a number of recommendations to U.S. bishops on how to restore belief in the Real Presence, including: 1) encouraging the practice of receiving the Eucharist on the tongue while kneeling; 2) catechize the faithful; 3) encouraging greater reverence for the Eucharist; 3) eliminating the use of Extraordinary Ministers; 4) withholding the Eucharist from public sinners; and 5) increasing Eucharistic events such as Adoration and Benedictions.

"The overall findings of this survey can probably be best summarized by ancient Latin maxim 'lex orandi, lex credenda'" said John-Henry Westen, a RPC member. "There's currently a disconnect between the way we worship and what we believe. There's no single 'silver bullet' answer to solving this problem. An integrated, multifaceted approach will be required."

"How will we know when there's been a restoration of belief in the Real Presence?," asked Fr. Chad Ripperger, a RPC member. "When the line for confession is at least as long as the line for receiving the Eucharist."

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