

Accentuate Positive, Survey Tells Press

New York (RNS) — A wide-ranging survey of Catholic press readership in the U.S., calling for an emphasis on the "positive trends" now emerging in religion, urged Catholic newspapers and magazines to increase their focus on the family, step up their teaching functions and delve more into ecumenical, controversial and non-religious issues.

The survey, conducted by the Gallup organization of Princeton, N.J., for the Catholic Press Association, pointed out that a "key problem" for the Catholic press is the "decline in young readers" and advised Catholic publications to address issues of greatest

importance to young readers. These issues range from marriage and divorce to drugs and alcohol to "new trends in religion," the survey claimed.

A vast majority of Catholic readers responding to the survey (84 per cent) called on Catholic publications to give greater attention to non-Catholic religions and the ecumenical movement.

The survey, "U.S. Catholics and the Catholic Press," was based on interviews with 1,405 Catholics, 18 and older. It dealt with attitudes toward the Catholic press generally, readership habits and preferences of Catholics

regarding both national and diocesan publications, and changing attitudes and lifestyles of Catholics in the U.S.

The survey presents 20 "key" findings, a lengthy "detailed analysis" of the findings and a "technical appendix" which describes the survey sample, interviews and methods used. It was based on four interview periods during 1977 and is broken down according to sex, educational level, region, age, marital status and attitudes.

In addition to stressing the need for greater focus on family concerns — ranging from economics to raising children — the survey indicated that Catholics today are strongly concerned about "retaining membership" in the Church, about division within the Church and about the declining number of priests and nuns.

It noted that large majorities "disagree" with the Church's position on key questions, such as divorce, and birth control but they are "staying within the Church and in many cases, are among the most devout members." The question of abortion, the survey noted, is one of the top subjects to be dealt with in the Catholic press and Catholics were about evenly divided whether the Church should relax its standards.

Calling upon the Church to be "more ecumenical," 84 per cent of Catholic readers surveyed believe that the Church should endeavor to develop "closer

ties" with non-Catholics. These responses suggest that the Catholic press include more articles on other religions, more articles on the "commonalities" between Catholicism and other religions, more articles by non-Catholics, and discuss and help implement possible "points of contact between Catholics and others..."

The survey indicated that Catholic readers have a growing interest and involvement in "experiential" religious activities outside organized religion, such as Bible study groups, Marriage Encounter, Charismatic Renewal, Cursillo and other less structured programs.

In pointing up the "teaching" function of the Catholic press about half said the most important function is to "provide moral and spiritual guidance" or "to communicate church doctrine and beliefs..."

While the survey found that attitudes toward the Catholic press were "largely favorable," particularly in the matter of spiritual and moral guidance, the chief criticisms were that Catholic publications stress Church and liturgical matters too much and minimize controversial social issues. There is also some feeling that Catholic publications tend to be "house organs."

Both diocesan and national publications were about equally rated in terms of appearance, readability

and "helping people understand Catholicism," but diocesan papers were often viewed as "dull, less objective and adhering too closely to official Catholic Church positions."

Readers surveyed said they wanted more articles

on drug and alcohol abuse and smoking among teenagers, even to the point of the paper sponsoring "symposia" for readers on the questions. Articles on marriage and divorce, education, health, family problems and social issues were urged.

Companion Survey Relax Some Laws, Restore Latin Mass

New York (RNS) — A large majority of Catholics believe that the Church should permit remarriage of divorced Catholics, artificial birth control and the "old style" Latin Mass, according to a Gallup survey for the Catholic Press Association.

On abortion, there was a near-even split, with 47 per cent saying that the Church should not relax its standards and 44 per cent holding a contrary view.

An overwhelming 84 per cent think the Church should try to develop closer relations between Catholics and non-Catholics and 67 per cent said they approved of changes since Vatican II.

The questions and responses, in interviews with a representative sampling of 1,405 Catholics, were:

Divorced Catholics should be permitted to remarry in the Catholic Church: Agree 69 per cent; disagree 23 per cent.

Catholics should be permitted to practice artificial means of birth control: Agree, 73 per cent; disagree 18 per cent.

The Catholic Church should relax its standards forbidding all abortions under any circumstances: Agree, 44 per cent; disagree 47 per cent.

The Catholic Church should permit the old-style Latin Mass: Agree 64 per cent; disagree 26 per cent.

The Catholic Church should become more ecumenical, that is, should try to develop closer relations between Catholics and non-Catholics: Agree 84 per cent; disagree 23 per cent.

In general, I approve of the changes in the Catholic Church since Vatican II: Agree 67 per cent; disagree 23 per cent.



Irish Night

Winnie Lyons, Betty Sheehan and Ann Lambert are heading up the committee planning for the annual St. Pius Tenth parish Irish dinner-dance on Friday, March 17 in the school gym. The Harp's Irish Band will provide music for the evening's festivities. Information is available by calling Mary O'Donnell at 889-2165.



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