

THE AMERICANS

A survey finds surprises about our religious attitudes

Have you ever wondered how important freedom is to us as Americans? Or religion? If we regard ourselves as happy?

Wouldn't it be interesting to see how our choices compare with those from other nations? For instance, do Americans take more pride in their work than do those from other nations? Do Americans have more or less faith in institutions?

Well, CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) had just such curiosities and the Catholic agency did something about it. It hired the Gallup organization to conduct a major, international survey of 16 nations to compare fundamental values on such areas as attitudes toward work, life satisfaction, family, political, moral, religious and spiritual values.

In Europe, some 15,000 one-hour interviews were conducted; in the U.S., more than 2,000, including special samples of blacks, Hispanics and young people.

According to Religious News Service, CARA was trying to develop "the kind of research capabilities that would enable it to take a more meaningful place in a rapidly changing society." The president of CARA, Father Cassian Yuhaus, told RNS that a long-range goal of the project is to "build bridges and understanding" between Third World and industrial countries, based on their similar beliefs.

And what are some of these beliefs, with attention focused on Americans?

The survey reports that we are happier, more religious, prouder of our work and country and more willing to fight for it than Western Europeans and the Japanese.

If Americans had the choice between freedom of the individual and equality (no strong class differences), we, more than any other of the 16 nationalities surveyed, would choose freedom.

We Americans take more pride in our national identity than anyone else.

As a society, we are more religious, and American blacks, more than all other groups, say God is extremely in their lives.

Some of the detailed results:

Given a choice, 72 percent of Americans would opt for personal freedom rather than equality, chosen by only 20 percent. Britain, in this respect, was almost identical to America, with 69 percent choosing freedom compared with 49 percent in Europe overall. A surprise was raised in Germany, Italy and Spain, where equality was preferred.

While only 43 percent in Europe and 22 percent in Japan said they would be willing to fight for their country, 71 percent of Americans expressed the willingness to do so. Of all the European nationalities, the British were significantly more willing to fight (62 percent), perhaps indicating why the British have responded as they have in the South Atlantic war.

Perhaps the result which most startled researchers was the high place Americans give to God and religious values. Asked whether they believe in God, 95 percent answered yes, placing them at the head of the list along with Ireland. In comparison, only 39 percent of the Japanese said they believed in God and 75 percent of the Europeans affirmed a deity.

Except for Italians, Americans also scored highest on whether they considered themselves "religious," independent of church attendance.

Eighty-one percent of Americans claimed to be religious persons, compared with 63 percent in Europe and 25 percent

in Japan. In Europe, 83 percent of the Italians said they are religious, followed by the Irish (64) and the Spanish (63).

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how important God is in their lives. Americans, more than any other nationality, rated the importance of God in their lives as 10 (48 percent), with 70 percent of American blacks and 64 percent of American Hispanics giving the 10 rating. Americans were the highest of all countries in overall score — 8.21. The lowest were France (4.72), Denmark (4.47) and Sweden (3.99).

Father Yuhaus said he was encouraged by the results: "One of the conclusions I'm drawing from the study is that the Church is not really taking as much advantage of the attitudes and beliefs that are present among the people... What the study is pointing out is the strong relationship of religion to life and happiness. We've always said that... but now we have empirical evidence."

Local Agency Aids CARA Activities

John Foley Associates, a consulting and fundraising firm headquartered in Rochester, has been working behind the scenes for many months to support CARA's activities on behalf of the accompanying study.

According to John J. Foley, president, "We welcome the publication of the preliminary results of this study, because it serves to make U.S. citizens much more aware of the very active and vital role that CARA is playing in the formation and direction of activities of the Catholic Church in decades to come."

"While the Values Study is the single largest undertaking of its kind ever conducted, CARA has moved forward on a number of other significant activities. Its scope encompasses research for dioceses and religious communities, including study of challenges in the areas of vocation, the health ministry, care and fulfillment of the aged, changing religious attitudes and a host of other topics of concern to the American Catholic Church."

Foley Associates has for some months been assisting CARA in the areas of long-range planning and fundraising and provides the business acumen that enables CARA to concentrate on its primary mission, namely, that of conducting meaningful research with significant impact on the Church's future.

Sarah Child



All in the Family



TRAVELOG — Kodak multimedia presentation of the Alps. A discovery in Pictures, 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 2, at Harley School's Wilson Arts Center, 1981 Clover St. For free tickets contact Betsy Peed at 442-1770.

PICNIC/FESTIVAL — Sponsored by The Irish

National Caucus, Rochester Chapter, 1-8 p.m., Sunday, June 13, at St. Catherine's Church pavilion, Rts. 64 and 251, Mendon. Admission free. For further information, call Sean Hanley, 225-3486.

GALLERY EVENT — Guided tour, 2 p.m., Sunday, June 6, Memorial Art Gallery. Free to members and free to non-members with gallery admission.

RED CROSS — A three-hour-workshop on time management skills, 1-4 p.m., Thursday, June 10, 50 Prince St. To register call Red Cross Training Office, 275-9800, ext. 242 by June 4.

NFP SESSION — Sponsored by Natural Family Planning Education, 7:30-9 p.m., Monday, June 7, Kearney Building, St. Mary's Hospital.

SENIOR MATINEE — "Harry and Tonto," starring Art Carney and Ellen Burstyn, 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 3, George Eastman House.

FESTIVAL — 2-4 p.m., Sunday, June 13, Monroe Community College, 1000 E. Henrietta Road. Contact John LaRue evenings at 473-1489 for further information.

Do As I Say, Not As I Do

Much has been said and written about example being the best method of bringing up one's children. And yet, how easily the adage is forgotten.

- I plead with them over the mess in their bedroom and then take a long look at the state of my own closet.

- Bemoan the TV fare they prefer and then cast an eye on the escapist reading I do every night.

- Tell them they are not properly concerned with their spiritual life, then notice the fine dust on the bedside Bible.

- Scold them for eating between meals and realize I've "checked" the beef stew for supper three times.

- Admonish them for their materialistic attitude right after extolling the lifestyle of some wealthy acquaintance.

- Complain about the junk food they consume and then ask a friend for the recipe for something called Triple Fudge Delight.

- Yell about overdue homework when this column is almost always turned in a day late.

- Point out that they haven't written their grandparents when I can't seem to make it to the telephone to put in a long distance call.

- Decry their spendthrift tendencies when it comes to dwindling allowances yet every payday takes longer to get here than the last.

- Accuse them of always wanting to have the last word when it's clear to all who know me that I seldom yield the floor.

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



EDWIN SULEWSKI
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

How can I help a young widow who has children?

The young widow has a great deal of responsibility in addition to her grief. She must deal not only with her own feelings but also help her children manage their sorrow. Friends can help out by taking care of some household responsibilities while the young widow gets her affairs in order, goes to school, seeks employment, or begins a new social life. It is helpful to avoid rushing a widow into a new lifestyle before she has a chance to assess the impact of the death of her spouse. She and her children will have to handle many new responsibilities and pressures while respecting each other's needs.

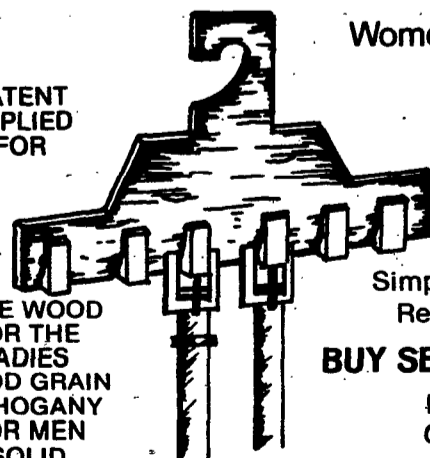
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