

Polls show Catholics disagree on certain issues, respect pope

By NC News Service

Three surveys attempting to take the pulse of U.S. Catholics just before Pope John Paul II's visit to the United States indicate that many U.S. Catholics disagree with the Church on specific issues but maintain personal respect for the pope.

Time magazine, the Los Angeles Times and the Detroit Free Press all conducted polls in August. Generally they found that Catholics disagree with Church teachings on remarriage by divorced Catholics, married priests, women priests, abortion and artificial birth control, while agreeing with teachings on homosexual behavior.

The surveys also found strong respect for Pope John Paul and his message for peace and against materialism.

The poll conducted by Time magazine found that 75 percent of Americans who consider themselves Catholic see the pope as an important world leader, but that 93 percent of them believe they can disagree with him and still be good Catholics.

The Time poll was conducted by phone Aug. 17-19 with 860 U.S. adults, including a special sample of 425 Catholics. Results were published in the Sept. 7 issue.

Asked if it is permissible for Catholics to "make up their own minds" on such moral issues as birth control and abortion, 78 percent of Catholics responded "yes."

According to the Time poll, 76 percent of Catholics favor permitting remarriage in the Church for the divorced; 53 percent favor permitting married priests; and 52 percent favor women priests.

Only 24 percent said they consider artificial birth control wrong and 29 percent said they believe premarital sex is always wrong.

The poll found that 68 percent agree with the pope that homosexual acts are morally wrong. Fifty-four percent report that they attend Mass weekly or nearly every week.

A majority, 53 percent, believe that the pope is infallible when formally pronouncing such doctrines as the divinity of Christ, while only 37 percent accept the infallibility of the pope's teachings on moral issues.

Catholic opinions on abortion do not differ much from those of Protestants, according to the Time poll. Only 14 percent of Catholics agreed with the Church's teaching that abortion should be illegal in all cases, compared to 12 percent of Protestants. Fifty-seven percent of Catholics and 52 percent of Protestants would allow abortion under certain circumstances, such as rape or to save the mother's life.

Twenty-seven percent of Catholics and 34 percent of Protestants believe that a woman should be able to get an abortion no matter what the reason.

Time reported that 76 percent of Catholics and 56 percent of Protestants think that "Americans in particular should pay attention" to Pope John Paul's message on materialism. Fifty-six percent of Catholics and 33 percent of Protestants say the message is relevant to their lives.

Time also reported that "large majorities see him as a 'man of peace' and 'an important leader on the world scene.'"

The Los Angeles Times poll found that most U.S. Catholics disagree with the Church's ban on women priests but that most Catholics and other Americans agree with the Church's stance that homosexual behavior is sinful.

The Los Angeles poll findings were published in the newspaper Aug. 23. The poll was based on responses to telephone questionnaires of 2,040 U.S. adults, including 957 Catholics.

Opposition to the Church's ban on women priests was registered by 60 percent of the Catholics surveyed. By a ratio of more than

2-to-1, Catholics support the teaching against homosexual activity.

What respondents admired most about Pope John Paul is his "efforts for peace" followed by "the fact that he travels widely." His least liked quality is the belief that he is "out of step with American Catholics," according to the Los Angeles Times poll.

Overall white fundamentalists had the least favorable impression of the pope of all religious groups the survey covered. Eleven percent regarded him negatively, but more than four times that many gave a positive reaction.

By a 10-to-1 ratio Catholics said a Church member may disagree with Church teachings and still remain Catholic. Only one in five polled believe that a member must follow all of the Church's teachings to be considered faithful.

The Gallup Organization conducted the survey for The Detroit Free Press, through a mail canvass of priests and nuns in the Archdiocese of Detroit.

The survey was mailed to 940 priests and 1,605 nuns, some of whom called the survey offensive.

Jay Berman, spokesman for the archdiocese, said 15 priests and nuns contacted his office with objections. The Free Press reported that about 20 called the newspaper office, with about half objecting to the survey.

The Detroit Free Press reported Aug. 30 that "in many ways, the survey of religious men and women mirrors the findings of a telephone survey of Michigan lay Catholics

conducted by Gallup for the Free Press between July 22 and Aug. 4. Both groups face conflicts between Church doctrine and their own beliefs.

"Although Detroit's religious community holds the pope in even higher regard that the laity does, majorities of the 345 priests and 469 sisters responding to the survey disagreed with several key Church teachings," according to the Detroit newspaper.

Half of the priests and nuns surveyed disagree with the ban on artificial birth control and half said women should be allowed to be ordained priests.

More than 60 percent said priests should be allowed to marry, according to the poll.

But an overwhelming majority — 91 percent of priests and 81 percent of nuns — agreed with Church teaching that abortion is wrong.

Soviet press reports visions

Rome — Government-controlled Soviet newspapers have reported that alleged Marian apparitions are drawing thousands of people to the western Ukrainian village of Krushiv. Reporting of religious activity not approved by the government is rare in the Soviet Union.

The articles, obtained by Ukrainian Catholic officials in Rome, have a derisive tone but indicate that increasing numbers of visitors are arriving as word of the alleged apparitions spreads. Most are curiosity seekers, while others are people of dubious moral character, said the articles. Police are allowing the visits, the newspapers stated.

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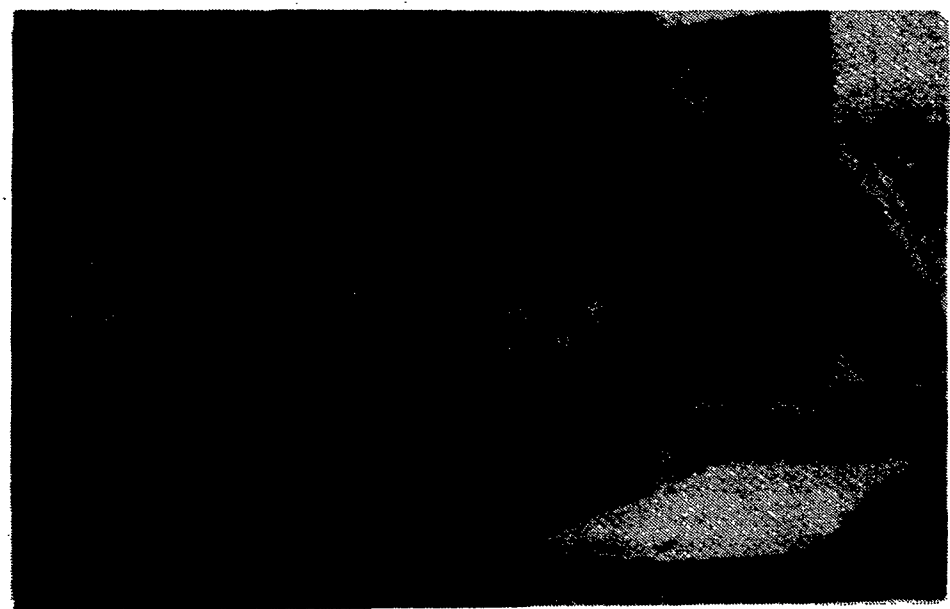
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