

Catholic Families and Media Usage

A Special Report by
Mark M. Gray, Ph.D.
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*The Family That Prays
Together Stays Together*



CARA is a national, non-profit, Georgetown University affiliated research center that conducts social scientific studies about the Catholic Church. Founded in 1964, CARA has three major dimensions to its mission: to increase the Church's self-understanding, to serve the applied research needs of Church decision-makers, to advance scholarly research on religion, particularly Catholicism. CARA's longstanding policy is to let research findings stand on their own and never take an advocacy position or go into areas outside its social science competence.

CARA Research Staff

Thomas P. Gaunt, SJ, Ph.D., CARA Executive Director

Mary L. Gautier, Ph.D., Editor, *The CARA Report*, Senior Research Associate

Mark M. Gray, Ph.D., Director, CARA Catholic Polls (CCP), Senior Research Associate

Jonathon C. Holland, M.A., Research Associate

Jonathon L. Wiggins, Ph.D., Director, CARA Parish Surveys, Research Associate

Other CARA Researchers

Sr. Mary E. Bendyna, OP, Ph.D.

Rev. Stephen Joseph Fichter, Ph.D.

Paul M. Perl, Ph.D.

Mary Ellen Fise



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Hugh Cleary, C.S.C., National Director - Family Rosary

David Guffey, C.S.C., National Director - Family Theater Productions

Susan Wallace, Director of Marketing Communications - Holy Cross Family Ministries

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This special report presents results from a national poll of 1,014 self-identified Catholic parents, ages 25 to 45, who have a minor child or children to explore the 21st Century Catholic family. In a previous special report for this project, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) showed that few Catholic parents today have children enrolled in the Church’s school or parish-based religious education programs.¹ Increasingly, the religious education of children is occurring in the household and with media accessed at home. This special report, made possible by Holy Cross Family Ministries, highlights media use and other activities in the Catholic family household today that are important to forming the next generation of Catholics in the United States.

The media use of Catholic parents today is often quite similar to U.S. adults in general. Parents often watch two or three hours of television and use the internet for an hour or less. Most also spend less than an hour listening to audio content and a similar amount of time reading publications. Heavier media users represent minorities of parents. Sixteen percent of Catholic parents typically watch four or more hours of television or video content per day.² Fifteen percent use the internet for four or more hours per day.

On an average day, approximately how much time [hours] do you spend watching, listening, or using the following (including at home, while traveling, or at work or school)?

	<u>Hours per day</u>				
	8+	4 to 7	2 to 3	1 or less	None
Cable, streaming (Netflix, Hulu), or broadcast television	4%	12%	36%	33%	15%
The internet	4	11	26	50	9
Digital or broadcast radio or audio	2	9	13	51	25
Publications	1	4	10	58	27

Television and Film

There is a long tradition of widely-watched Catholic programming on television from Holy Cross Family Ministries’ *Family Theater Productions* to Bishop Fulton Sheen’s *Life is Worth Living* to the many outlets currently available. Yet, the survey of parents indicates religious programming is not a commonly watched genre among Catholic families today.

When watching full-length television programming, majorities of Catholic parents say they “somewhat” or “very” often watch: news (58 percent), sitcoms (57 percent), children’s programming (54 percent), and dramas (53 percent). Of the types of programming listed, parents are least likely to say they “somewhat” or “very” often watch religious programming (18

¹ Resulting in a sampling margin of error of ±3.1 percentage points.

² The American Time Use Survey (ATUS) estimates that Americans, ages 15 and older, watch 2.8 hours per television per day. For more information see: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t01.htm>

percent).³ A majority of parents don't watch any religious programming (58 percent). The size of the parent audience who watches religious programming at least "a little" or more often is about 6.3 million.

When watching full-length shows on television or online how often do you watch the following types of programming?

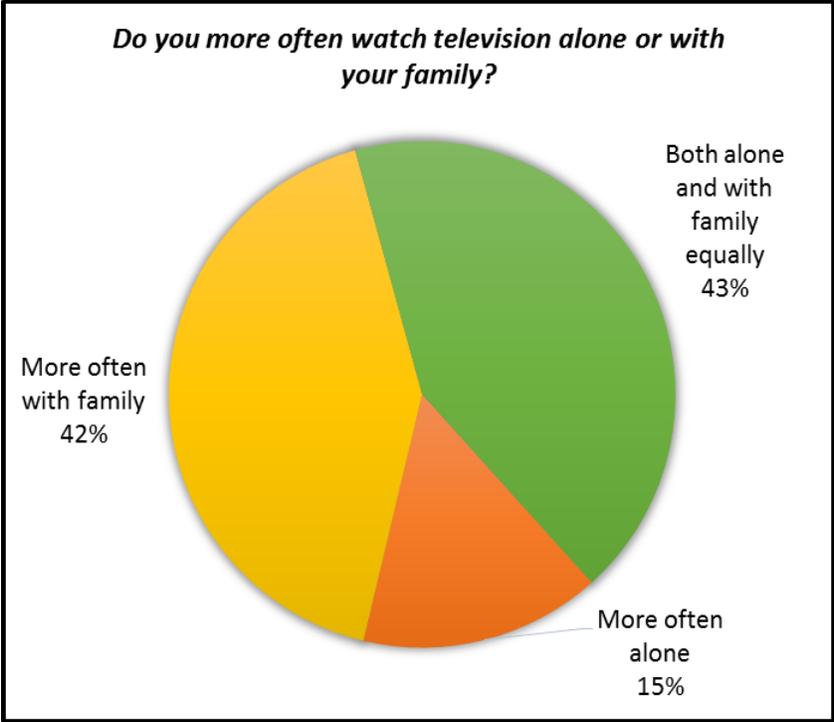
	Very	Somewhat	Only a little	Not at all
News (local, national, 24 hour cable)	28%	30%	32%	10%
Sitcoms or comedy	26	31	32	11
Children's programming	23	31	28	18
Dramas	17	36	32	15
Lifestyle (food, home design, travel, cars, fashion)	14	28	40	18
Documentaries or history	12	30	38	20
Fantasy or science fiction	9	29	34	28
Reality	9	23	36	32
Romance	7	24	38	31
Entertainment competitions (dancing, singing)	7	23	35	35
Religious	3	15	24	58

There are some differences among sub-groups of Catholic parents. For example, Hispanic parents are more likely than non-Hispanic white parents to watch religious television at least "somewhat" often (26 percent compared to 7 percent). Because race and ethnicity among Catholics is also correlated with education and income, this also means that parents watching religious programming tend to not have college degrees and earn less than \$50,000 per year. It is also much more common among parents living in the South and West rather than in the Midwest or Northeast.

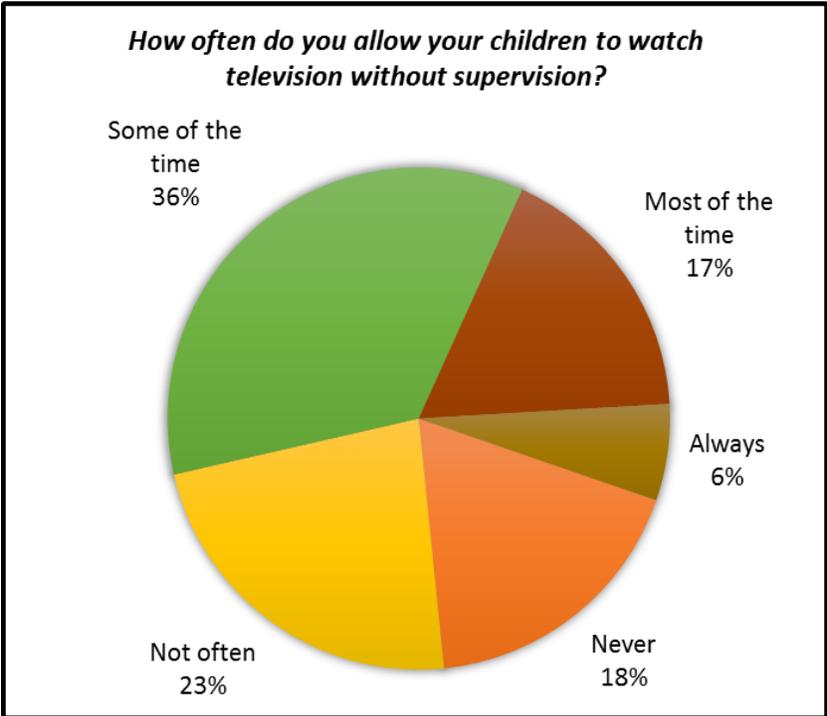
As one might expect, those most often watching religious television content are weekly Mass attenders. Thirty-four percent of weekly attenders watch at least "somewhat" often. Only 5 percent of those who "rarely" or "never" attend Mass watch religious television or video at least "somewhat" often.

Regardless of what they are watching, only 15 percent of parents indicate that they more often watch television alone rather than with family present. Forty-three percent say they watch both alone and with family equally and 42 percent watch more often with family than alone.

³ The list of content is not conclusive. For example, sports content is excluded due to its seasonal nature.

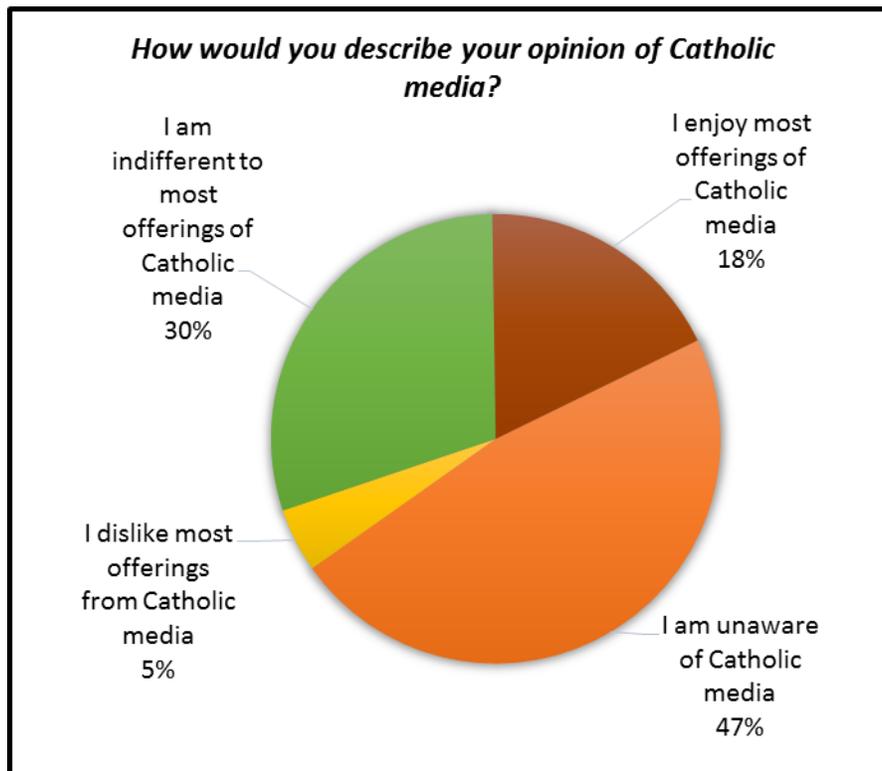


Eighteen percent of parents do not let their children watch television without supervision. Twenty-three percent say they do “not often” allow their children to watch without supervision. More than a third say they allow unsupervised watching “some of the time.” Nearly a quarter allow their children to watch television without supervision “most of the time” (17 percent) or “always” (6 percent). Parents of older children are more likely to let them watch unsupervised.



A majority of Catholic parents say they are either “somewhat” (44 percent) or “very much” (15 percent) satisfied with the television and film content about religion, Christianity, and Catholicism that is available to them. About a third say they are only “a little” satisfied (32 percent) with this content and one in ten “not at all” satisfied (9 percent).

Yet, when asked specifically about the Catholic content available to them, parents are less likely to express positive attitudes. To a large extent this is due to a lack of awareness of Catholic media in general. Nearly half, 47 percent of parents, are unaware of Catholic media. Eighteen percent of parents say they enjoy most offerings of the Catholic media. Three in ten are indifferent to these offerings and only 5 percent say they dislike the offerings of the Catholic media.



Groups most likely to indicate that they “enjoy” most offerings of Catholic media are those who attend Mass weekly (37 percent) and those living in a household earning \$25,000 or less per year (35 percent). There is no group that stands out as especially likely to “dislike” Catholic media.

Those most likely to be unaware of Catholic media are those who rarely or never attend Mass (60 percent), those with a baby in the home (55 percent), and those married to a non-Catholic spouse (53 percent). Those most likely to be “indifferent” of Catholic media are non-Hispanic white (42 percent) and those in homes earning \$85,000 or more per year (39 percent).

Respondents who had awareness of Catholic media were asked why they held their opinions about this content in an open ended question, “*Why primarily do you have this opinion of Catholic media?*”

<i>Why primarily do you have this opinion of Catholic media?</i>	
Percent of comments from those who have an awareness of Catholic media referencing the following:	
Not interested	33%
Positive evaluations	20
Catholic bias	17
Don't know	15
Focuses on the negative too much	4
Other	11

A third of parents (33 percent) who are aware of Catholic media say their opinion about this content is based in their lack of interest often coupled with negative opinions. Representative comments include:

- *Haven't found anything interesting.*
- *Don't seek out Catholic media.*
- *It just isn't that entertaining to me and kind of dull.*
- *I am not that interested in Catholic media, but I am glad it exists.*
- *Catholic media is not something I would regularly go looking for.*
- *It is boring.*
- *No urge to find that type of info.*
- *Have very little interest in this.*

One in five parents (20 percent) with awareness of Catholic media responded with a positive evaluation of the content. Representative comments include:

- *Being a Catholic I like to find out info about the church I didn't know.*
- *I find it inspiring and informative.*
- *I enjoy it.*
- *I find peace in it.*
- *Good information and uplifting messages.*
- *I find it interesting and educational.*
- *It's very relevant.*
- *I enjoy hearing about what is going on in the Catholic world.*

Seventeen percent of parents aware of Catholic media note a concern about biases in Catholic media or a lack of trust in what it reports. Representative comments include:

- *Because it is primarily fluff and fails to recognize what is actually happening regarding Church matters.*

- *It is not open minded and inclusive.*
- *I think they can become very one sided.*
- *Catholic media today tends to be more conservative than my beliefs, and have a more rigid world view than I hold.*
- *A lot of times it does not accurately reflect the teachings of the church. Or it is too hard core to be accessible to the general public.*

Fifteen percent of parents with awareness of Catholic media say they don't know why they have the opinions they have. Here respondents often simply indicated:

- *Don't know.*
- *No reason.*
- *Just do.*
- *Not sure.*
- *Nothing.*

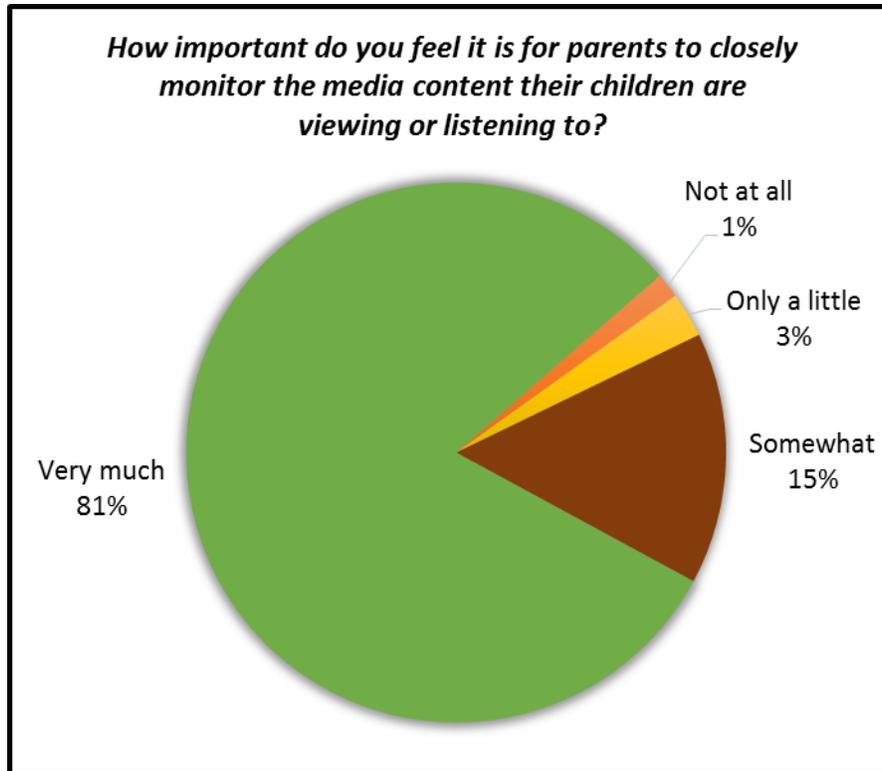
Four percent of parents with awareness believe Catholic media focuses too much on the negatives. Representative comments include:

- *It seems so focused on the priest sex abuse cover-up.*
- *Negative attitude towards Catholics.*
- *I try not to reflect on the bad that is being reported about the Catholic Church.*
- *It always seems to be negative.*
- *There is a lot of bad media relating to the on goings in the Catholic Church.*

About one in ten (11 percent) provided a response that could not be coded into one of the categories noted above. Representative comments include:

- *I like to discover sites on my own.*
- *Not enough.*
- *Don't see a lot of it.*
- *It all looks very dated. Seems very low budget. Old school. Very over the top.*
- *Because even if I don't go to Church, I still can have some contact with it.*
- *To know more about religion.*

As shown in the figure on the next page, eight in ten parents agree “very much” that it is important for parents to closely monitor the media content their children are viewing or listening to. Fifteen percent agree “somewhat,” 3 percent “only a little,” and 1 percent “not at all.”

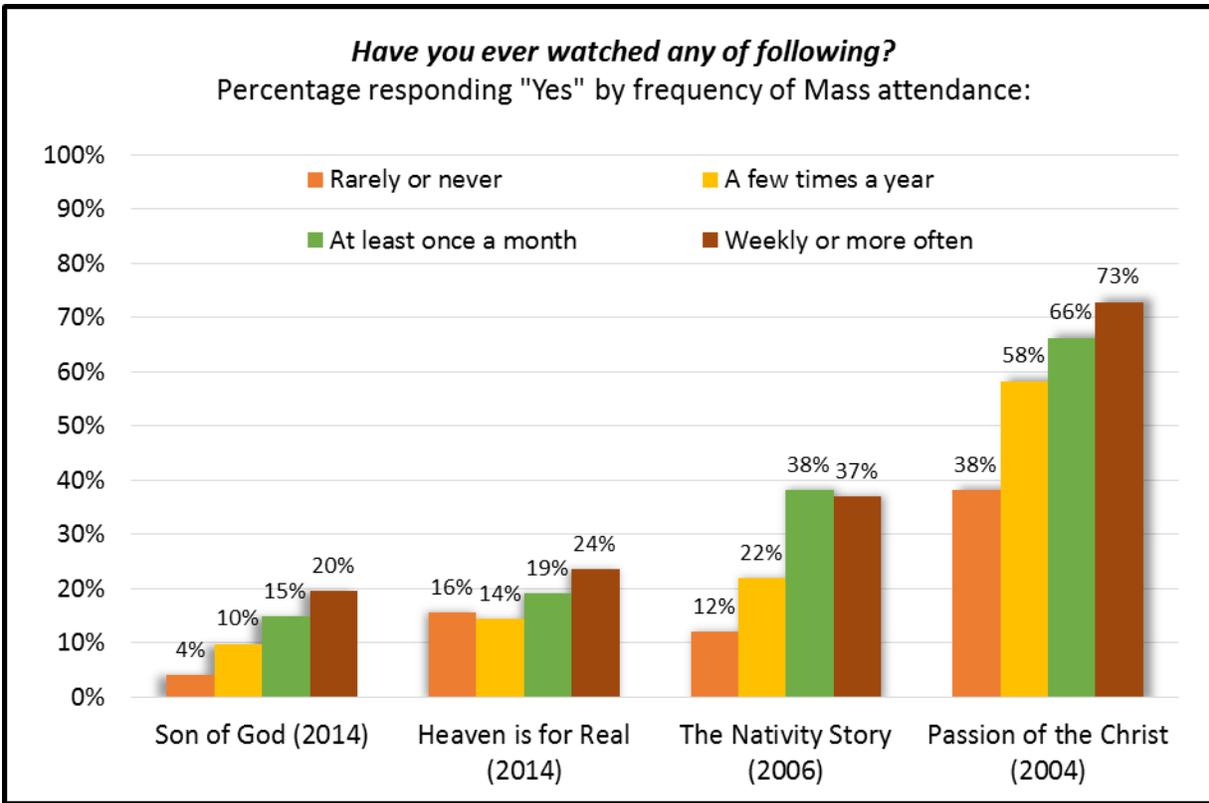


Parents were asked about their viewing of contemporary religious-related films. They are most likely to have ever seen: *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (51 percent), *The Passion of the Christ* (40 percent), and *Noah* (32 percent).

Have you ever watched any of the following?
Percentage responding “Yes”

The movie <i>The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i> (2005)	51%
The movie <i>The Passion of the Christ</i> (2004)	40
The movie <i>Noah</i> (2014)	32
The movie <i>The Nativity Story</i> (2006)	28
History Channel’s miniseries <i>The Bible</i> (2013)	22
The movie <i>Heaven is for Real</i> (2014)	18
The movie adaptation of <i>The Bible</i> miniseries, <i>Son of God</i> (2014)	12

Parents who attend Mass more often are generally more likely to seek out and see religious films.



Hispanic parents are generally more likely than non-Hispanic white parents to have seen all of the films listed. This is especially the case for *The Passion of the Christ* (72 percent compared to 43 percent) *The Nativity Story* (38 percent compared to 15 percent) and *Noah* (43 percent compared to 16 percent).

New Devices and New Media

Because parents are a younger segment of the adult Catholic population, it is perhaps not surprising that they have more eagerly embraced new digital devices and new media. At the same time, even among the younger Catholics traditional media use is widespread.

As shown in the table on the next page, parents are significantly more likely than all adult Catholics to use smartphones, tablets, console gaming systems, and handheld gaming systems. Adult Catholics are more likely than parents to use a desktop or laptop computers and similarly likely to use e-readers. Majorities of parents use a smartphones, computers, and tablets. Approximately 12.6 million parent use a smartphone and 8 million a tablet. Five million use a console gaming system.

Increasingly, as households drop cable subscriptions, they often use other devices to stream video content to televisions. One of these options is a console gaming system that may have been bought for their children to play games but now is also used to access Netflix, YouTube and other video content providers for the whole family. Millennial parents are more likely than Post-Vatican II parents to regularly use a console gaming system (42 percent compared to 31 percent).

<i>Do you regularly use...</i> Percentage responding “Yes”		
	Parents	All Catholic adults
A cell phone or a Blackberry or iPhone or other device that is also a cell phone	84%	52%
A desktop and/or laptop computer	80	90
A tablet computer such as an iPad, Samsung Galaxy, Motorola Xoom, or Kindle Fire	53	17
A console gaming system such as an Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, or Nintendo Wii	33	14
A handheld device made primarily for e-book reading, such as a Nook or Kindle e-reader	16	10
A handheld gaming system such as a PSP, PS VITA, or a Nintendo DS/3DS	15	2

Of the parents who use digital devices that include applications or “apps,” 12 percent indicate that they use at least one app related to the Catholic Church or Catholicism on these devices. By comparison, 8 percent of all adult Catholics with digital devices indicate this. An estimated 1.6 million parents use a Catholic or faith-related app on one of their digital devices. More than a quarter of weekly Mass attenders (with digital devices) uses a Catholic-related app (26 percent).

Similar to the total U.S. adult population, nearly three in four parents have a Facebook profile (73 percent). About a quarter have a profile on Pinterest (24 percent). About one in five have profiles on Instagram (21 percent) or Twitter (20 percent). Few use Tumblr (2 percent). Parents are more likely than all Catholic adults to use each of these social networks—especially Pinterest (24 percent compared to 7 percent).

<i>Do you have a profile on any of the following social network sites?</i> Percentage responding “Yes”		
	Parents	All Catholic adults
Facebook	73%	62%
Pinterest	24	7
Instagram	21	17
Twitter	20	13
Tumblr	2	1
Other	3	1

Seven in ten parents with a social network profile visit at least once a day (34 percent) or multiple times per day (36 percent). By comparison, a minority of all adult Catholics with a profile visit once a day or more often (47 percent).

About how often do you visit your most frequently used social network site?

	Parents	All Catholic adults
Less than once a month	7%	15%
At least once a month	5	9
At least once a week	7	15
Two or three times a week	11	15
At least once a day	34	27
Multiple times, every day	36	20

Millennial parents are more likely than Post-Vatican II parents to have a profile on Facebook (84 percent compared to 70 percent), Instagram (37 percent compared to 16 percent), and Pinterest (34 percent compared to 21 percent). Mothers are more likely than fathers to have a profile on Instagram (27 percent compared to 13 percent) and on Pinterest (36 percent compared to 8 percent). Having a baby in the home increases the likelihood that a parent will have a profile on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Non-Hispanic white parents are more likely than Hispanic or Latino parents to have profiles on Facebook (77 percent compared to 69 percent), Twitter (28 percent compared to 14 percent), and Pinterest (33 percent compared to 17 percent).

Eighty-five percent of Catholic parents use YouTube. Fourteen percent visit at least once a day and 56 percent visit less than daily but at least once a month. Parents are more likely than Catholic adults to use YouTube (85 percent compared to 67 percent).

Do you ever visit YouTube? How often?

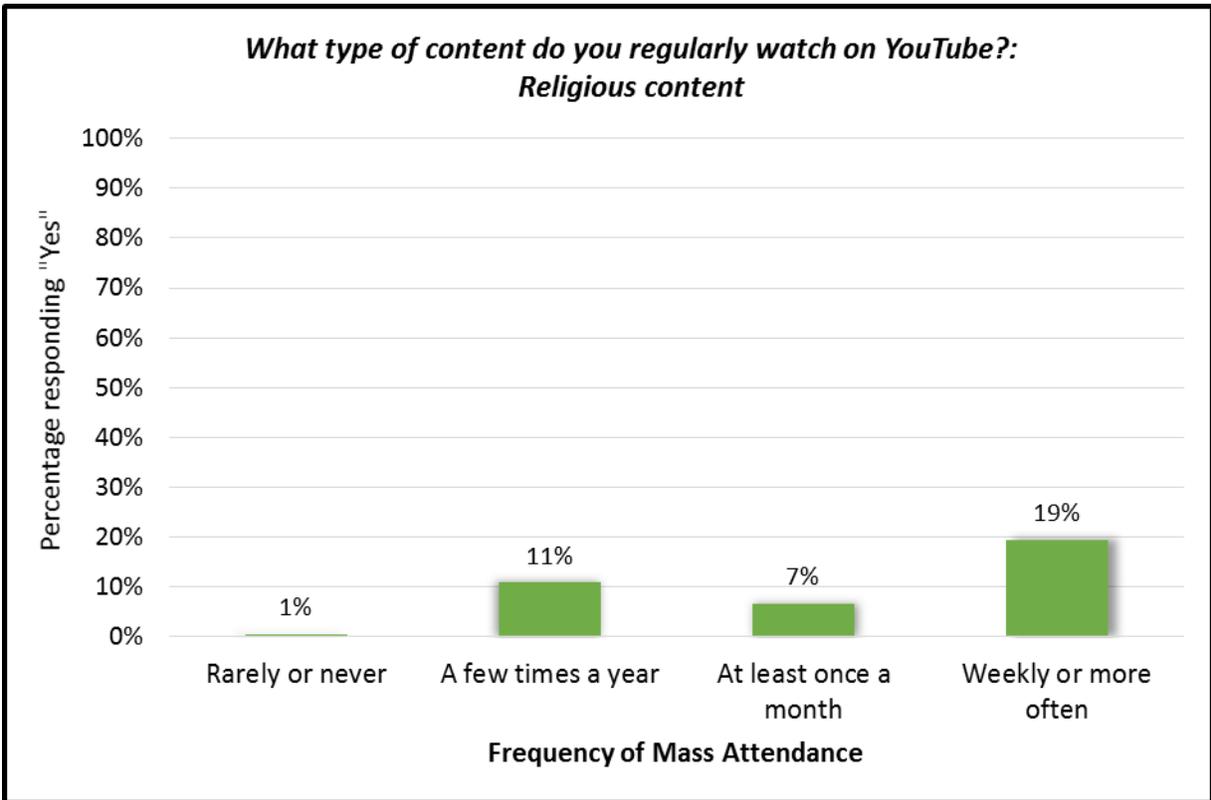
	Parents	All Catholic adults
Do not visit YouTube	15%	33%
<i>YouTube user visiting...</i>		
Less than once a month	15	22
At least once a month	19	16
At least once a week	18	13
Two or three times a week	19	10
At least once a day	9	4
Multiple times every day	5	2

Parents who use YouTube have similar viewing preferences to all adult Catholic users preferring to watch music videos, comedy content, and viral videos most. About one in ten parents regularly watch religious content on YouTube compared to 6 percent of all adult Catholic YouTube users. Approximately 1.2 million parents regularly watch religious content on YouTube.

What type of content do you regularly watch on YouTube?
Among those who use YouTube

	Parents	All Catholic adults
Music videos	61%	56%
Comedy content	40	43
Viral videos	38	42
Educational content	33	21
Content from movies and television	23	21
Religious content	9	6
Vlogs (video blogs and commentaries)	8	7

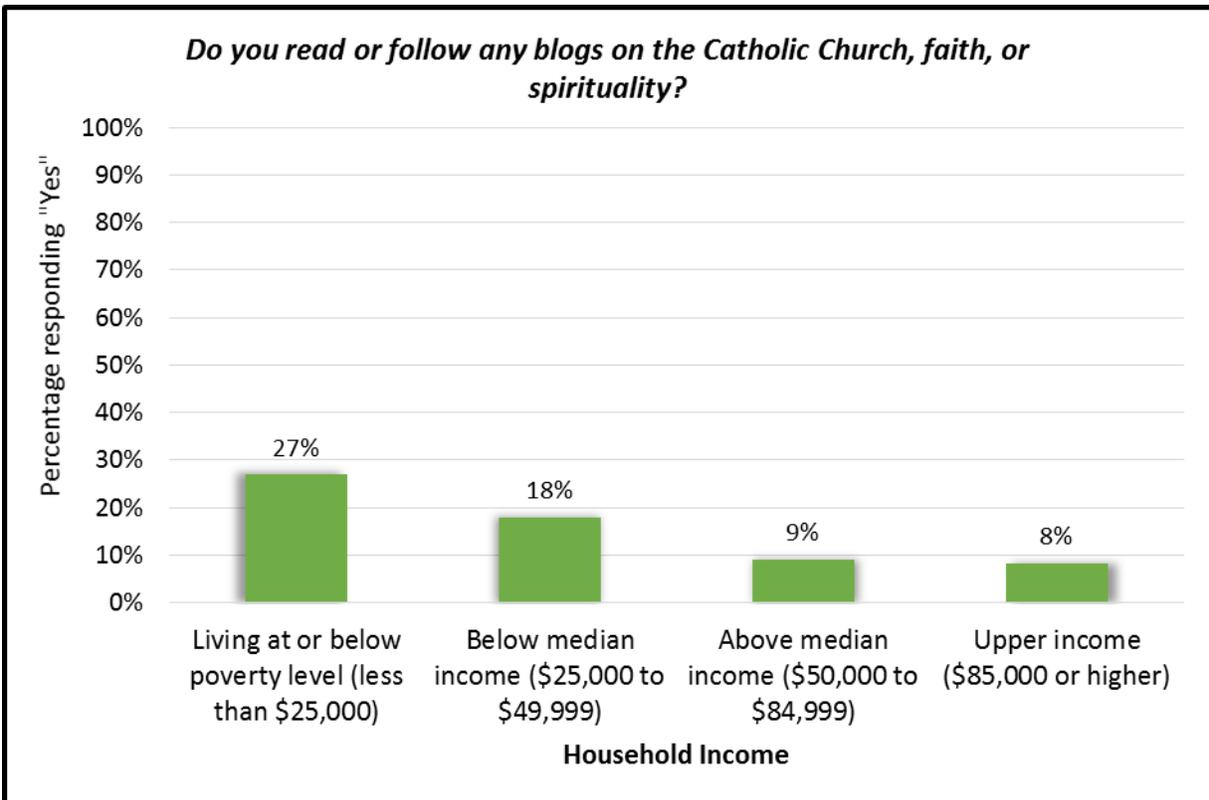
Among YouTube users, parents who rarely or never attend Mass are unlikely to use religious content. Weekly Mass attenders are most likely to do so (19 percent).



Among YouTube users, Millennial Generation parents are more likely than Post-Vatican II Generation parents to regularly watch music videos (68 percent compared to 59 percent). Fathers who use YouTube are more likely than the mothers who do so to regularly watch comedy content (50 percent compared to 32 percent) and viral videos (45 percent compared to 33 percent). Moms are more likely than dads to watch educational content (38 percent compared to 27 percent) and religious content (12 percent compared to 5 percent).

Parents in lower income households are just as likely as those in upper-income households to use YouTube in general. Among those who do visit the site, those in households living at or below the poverty level (i.e., less than \$25,000 a year) are significantly more likely than those in households earning \$85,000 or more per year to report watching religious content on YouTube (23 percent compared to 4 percent).

Fourteen percent of Catholic parents read or follow a blog about the Catholic Church, faith, or spirituality. They are more likely to do so than the adult Catholic population in general (14 percent compared to 5 percent). In all, about 2.1 million parents read or follow Catholic or faith-related blogs. As shown in the figure below, lower-income parents are more likely to be readers or followers of Catholic-related blogs.



A quarter of weekly Mass attenders read or follow a Catholic-related blog (25 percent). One in five monthly attenders do as well (19 percent). However, only 10 percent of those who go to Mass a few times a year and 2 percent who rarely or never attend read such a blog.

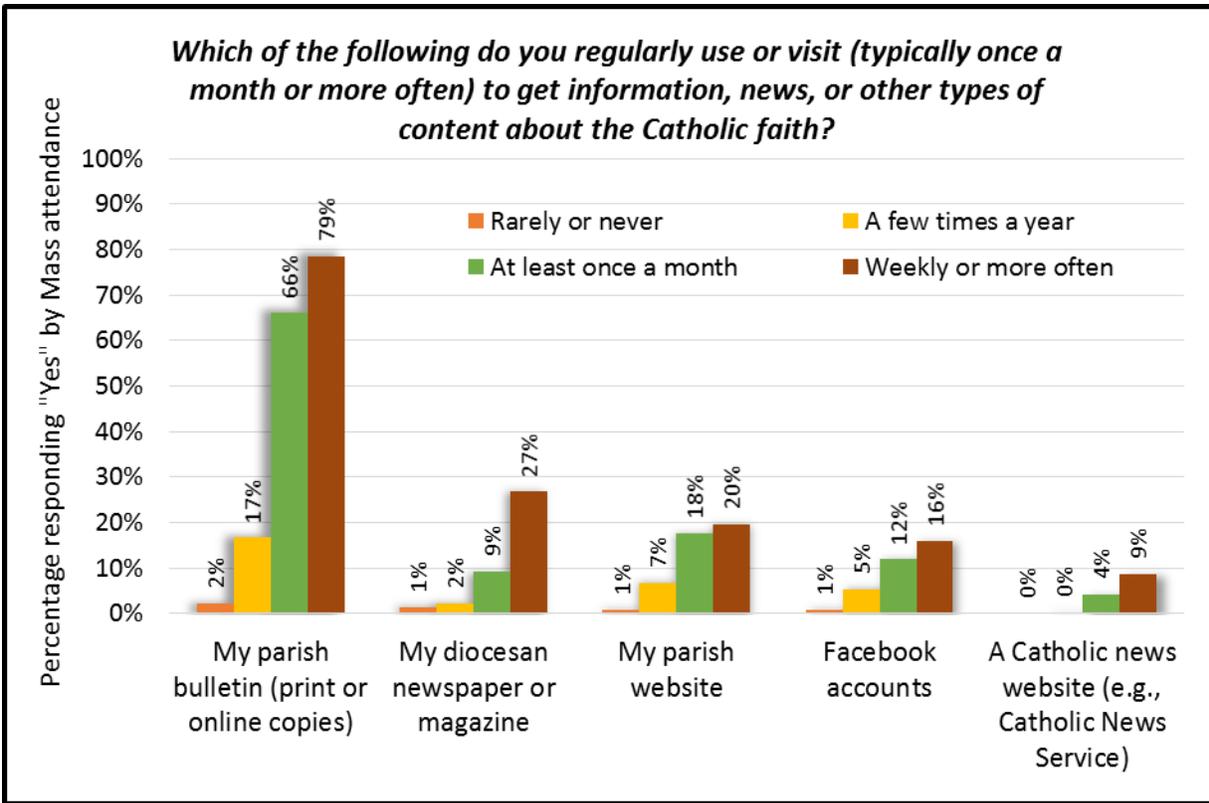
Catholic parents use similar sources for Catholic content as those used by the general adult Catholic population. The most common source of information for both groups are parish bulletins (42 percent and 41 percent, respectively) followed by parish websites (12 percent and 9 percent, respectively) and diocesan newspapers or magazines (10 percent and 17 percent, respectively). Nearly half of all parents and the general Catholic adult population do not regularly use any of the listed sources to obtain information, news, or other types of content about the Catholic Church.

Which of the following do you regularly use or visit (typically once a month or more often) to get information, news, or other types of content about the Catholic faith?

	Parents	All Catholic adults
My parish bulletin (print or online)	42%	41%
My parish website	12	9
My diocesan newspaper or magazine (print or online)	10	17
Facebook accounts associated with Catholics or Catholic institutions	9	4
A secular newspaper or magazine (print or online)	4	6
A Catholic news website (e.g., Catholic News Service)	3	2
The Vatican website (vatican.va)	3	1
My diocesan website	2	4
A website for a Catholic educational institution (schools, colleges, seminaries)	2	2
The website for the U.S. Bishops (usccb.org)	2	1
A website of a Catholic charity or social service agency	2	1
Twitter accounts associated with Catholics or Catholic institutions	1	1
None of the above	49	49

Parents are more likely than Catholic adults to use parish websites (12 percent compared to 9 percent) and less likely to use diocesan newspapers or magazines (10 percent compared to 17 percent). Fathers are more likely than mothers to say they don't regularly read or use any of the content sources listed (56 percent compared to 44 percent).

Nine in ten parents who rarely or never attend Mass do not read or use any of the content sources listed (91 percent). Seven in ten of those who go to Mass a few times a year also use nothing listed (69 percent). By comparison, only 27 percent of those who go to Mass at least once a month and 12 percent of weekly Mass attenders do not use this content either. As shown in the figure on the next page, parents who attend Mass more frequently are more likely to regularly use many sites and publications about the Catholic faith.



Similar to all Catholic adults, parents still rely more on traditional media than newer digital or online media for religious and spiritual content. As shown in the table on the next page, the most commonly used mediums for religious and spiritual content are television (18 percent reporting use in the last three months), audio programs on radio or CDs (11 percent), print copies of magazines or newspapers (10 percent), and print copies of books (10 percent). Sixty-two percent of parents do not report the use of any religious or spiritual media content in the three months prior to being interviewed. Weekly Mass attenders are the most likely to have done all of the listed items during this time period.

Hispanic parents are more likely than non-Hispanic white parents to have done the following in the three months prior to being interviewed: watched religious or spiritual content on television (21 percent compared to 12 percent) and listened to religious or spiritual content on the radio or a CD (14 percent compared to 7 percent).

The heaviest consumer of religious and spiritual content are also those in homes with incomes of less than \$25,000 per year. Fifty-one percent of those in these households had done one or more of the things listed in the three months prior to being interviewed. Only 35 percent of those in homes with more household income had done one or more of the things listed. Low income households are especially likely to watch religious or spiritual content on television (22 percent), watch religious or spiritual content online (16 percent), listen to religious or spiritual content on the radio or a CD (15 percent), and read a print copy of a religious or spiritual book (15 percent).

Which of the following have you done in the last three months?

	Parents	All Catholic adults
Video		
Watched religious or spiritual content on television	18%	23%
Watched religious or spiritual video content online (e.g., YouTube)	9	6
Reading material		
Read a print copy of a religious or spiritual magazine or newspaper	10%	18%
Read a print copy of a religious or spiritual book	10	12
Read content from a religious or spiritual website or blog	8	6
Purchased a print copy of a religious or spiritual book	4	7
Read a religious or spiritual magazine or newspaper online	3	3
Read a religious or spiritual e-book (e.g., for Kindle, Nook)	2	2
Purchased a religious or spiritual e-book (e.g., for Kindle, Nook)	1	1
Audio		
Listened to a religious or spiritual programs on the radio or on a CD	11%	12%
Listened to religious or spiritual audio programs on a mobile device or online	4	4
Online participation		
Commented on a news story or blog online about religion and spirituality	2%	3%
Participated (read or posted) in an online forum about religion and spirituality	2	2
None of the above	62%	57%

Parents were asked about the religious content they would be interested in getting on a website. As shown in the table on the next page, parents are most interested (“somewhat” or “very”) in content about: prayers (41 percent), history of the Catholic Church (40 percent), information about saints (40 percent), educational and catechetical resources (37 percent), and answers to moral questions (36 percent). Parents are more likely than the general adult Catholic population to be at least “somewhat” interested in content related to prayers (41 percent compared to 36 percent).

Mothers are more interested than fathers in all of the content listed. Interest also increases with frequency of Mass attendance. Parents who are living with a partner and parents with three or more children also exhibit higher levels of general interest than those of other marital statuses and family sizes. Finally, both Hispanic parents and those living in households earning less than \$25,000 per year are generally more interested in the content listed than others.

The sub-groups most broadly interested in resources are weekly Mass attenders and those residing in households earning \$25,000 or less. Single, never-married parents are among the most interested in resources about resolving disagreements (29 percent). Those living with a partner are especially interested in resources about marriage and family life (41 percent).

A majority of Catholic parents say they eat together as a family every night (51 percent). Thirty-five percent say they do so a few times a week. Three percent only do so on weekends. Four percent eat together as a family one night a week and 7 percent rarely or never do so. Eating together every night is especially likely among those who attend Mass weekly (58 percent), those who reside in households earning less than \$25,000 per year (58 percent), and those with a baby (56 percent).

In addition to eating together, more than six in ten parents (62 percent) report their family gathers together at least once a week for a family game night, discussion, or prayer. Parents who attend Mass at least once a month (69 percent) or weekly (74 percent) are especially likely to indicate that their family gathers together as such. This is also most common among those with three or more children (68 percent) and among Hispanics or Latinos (67 percent). It is least common among those who rarely or never attend Mass (45 percent).

Conclusion

With Catholic parents today being much less likely than their own parents and grandparents to have their children enrolled in formal religious education or preparing for childhood sacraments, the Catholic Church must hope that the faith is being passed on well at home. When the living room becomes a classroom, many parents must rely on television, books, audio, and the internet as resources to teach the faith to their children. Yet the survey of parents indicate these devices and sources are more often being used for entertainment.

When it comes to faith, parents most often turn to the internet in a utilitarian fashion. They use parish and diocesan websites as well as parish bulletins to get information. But they aren't often watching a religious documentary on YouTube.

Many are unaware of existing Catholic media. Yet, there is also evidence of untapped interest in religious content among Catholic parents in the survey. Forty-one percent of parents are "somewhat" or "very" interested in internet content about prayer. Similar shares are this interested in content about Church history, the saints, and educational resources. No type of media is better able to reach a wider share of Catholic families than movies.

The 21st Century Catholic Church can assist the parents of today by more often adopting 21st century tools. Reaching out to parents on social networks, developing faith-related applications, and producing and promoting educational content might help bridge the gap that now exists between Catholic children and important steps in their faith formation.

CARA's survey of parents reveals much about Catholic family life today. Four special reports from this research are available:

- The Catholic Family: 21st Century Challenges - overview report
- The Catholic Family Today - Demographics
- Practice of Faith in the Catholic Family
- Catholic Families and Media Usage

To download the Reports or for more information:
www.HCFM.org/FamilyResearch or use the QR code provided.

For media interviews contact: Susan Wallace - swallace@hcfm.org - 800-299-7729 - 508-982-1056

