

US Catholics growing more critical of pope

Catholic News Service | Apr. 12, 2010

WASHINGTON -- A new Pew survey shows that while Catholics are still more positive than Americans in general about Pope Benedict XVI's handling of the abuse scandal, they have grown more critical of how he has addressed the issue.

In a telephone survey of 1,001 adults conducted April 1-5, more than one in 10 Americans, or 12 percent, said the pope has done an excellent or good job in handling the abuse scandal and 71 percent said he had done only a fair or poor job.



Out of all the Catholics in the survey group, 32 percent said the

pope has done an excellent or good job, but 59 percent rated his handling of the scandal as fair or poor. Of Catholics who said they attend Mass weekly, 44 percent gave the pope a rating of excellent or good, while 49 percent said he was doing a fair or poor job.

In April 2008, when the pope was visiting the United States, a Pew survey showed that 39 percent of Americans in general said the pope was doing an excellent or good job of handling the abuse scandal, and 48 percent gave him a rating of fair or poor. Among Catholics, 49 percent said his handling of it was excellent or good, 40

percent called it fair or poor.

The survey results were released April 7 by the Washington-based Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. The margin of error was plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Asked if they had heard about Pope Benedict, most Americans, or 74 percent, said they had heard either a lot about him (29 percent) or a little (45 percent). Their awareness of the pope was almost as high as when he was visiting the U.S., when 84 percent of Americans had heard something about him, the survey said.

In recent months clergy sex abuse scandals in Europe have made headlines worldwide. A series of reports by The New York Times and other media in late March and early April criticized the pope for alleged "inaction" on sex abuse cases.

In response Vatican authorities have emphasized that it was the pope who, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, pushed for harsher measures against abusers and made it easier for the church to defrock them.

In a lengthy commentary April 9, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, strongly defended Pope Benedict as a credible leader on the issue of priestly sex abuse, saying the pope's respect for truth and transparency stand against the "criticism and unfounded insinuations" of recent weeks.

The priest said the recent disclosures of past cases of abuse of minors by priests had demonstrated that the wounds in the church run deep, and require greater pastoral attention.

Source URL (retrieved on 01/31/2015 - 01:23): <http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/us-catholics-growing-more-critical-pope>