

New Report on Catholic Attitudes Towards LGBT Issues

Michael Sean Winters | Mar. 22, 2011 | Distinctly Catholic

The Public Religion Research Institute this morning released a new survey of polling data regarding Catholic attitudes towards same-sex issues. The report indicates that Catholics are more supportive of same-sex marriage and other gay rights than other American Christians.

According to the report, which was based on several surveys, 43% of Catholics support same-sex marriage and another 31% support civil unions, while only 21% of Catholics oppose all legal recognition of same-sex unions. By comparison, 16% of white evangelicals, 23% of black Protestants and 36% of mainline Protestants support same-sex marriage.

The survey also found that if the pollsters specified that same sex marriage would be defined as a civil marriage (?like you get at city hall?), support among Catholics increases to 71%. As well, the survey indicates that Latino Catholics, the fastest growing part of the Catholic population, are even more supportive of gay rights than their Anglo co-religionists.

?American Catholics will be surprised by these findings,? said Professor Stephen Schneck on a press call organized by PRRI. Schneck said the results rebut the ?stereotype that Catholics are more conservative on social issues.? He noted that a ?striking feature? in the report is the higher interest in civil unions among Catholics. ?Catholics seem to like civil unions as an alternative to same-sex marriage.? This is true even more among those RCs who attend Mass regularly.

Schneck also expressed surprise at the higher levels of support for same-sex marriage among Latino Catholics. He noted the ?prevailing understanding is that Latino Catholics are much more supportive of traditional Catholic teachings on social issues.? He called the polls findings on Latino Catholic attitudes an ?eye opener.?

As in most surveys, those who attend religious services more regularly tend to take more conservative stands on gay rights issues. This tracks with data that shows higher rates of church attendance among older sectors of the population and attitudes towards gay rights are hugely conditioned by age, with younger people much more accepting of gay rights.

Professor Michelle Dillon of the University of New Hampshire, who was also on the press call, said, ?Catholics, even frequent Mass attenders, make up their own minds on these matters.? Dillon noted that many surveys have indicated that, ?for Catholics, same sex issues are seen as personal matters of morality. Just as Catholics have made up their own minds about divorce and contraception, they view this issue in that arena of socio-sexual issues.? Robert P. Jones, the president of RPPI, noted that in a 2008 survey, Catholics were asked, ?Can you be a good Catholic even if you disagree with official Church teachings?? 80% said responded in the affirmative.

The entire survey has been posted at the PRRI website [here](#) [1].

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[1] <http://www.publicreligion.org/>