

Campaign aims to bring Catholics back to church

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ATLANTA -- A new advertising campaign aims to bring Catholics back to church with ads airing on major television networks Dec. 16-Jan. 8.

The campaign, sponsored by the Atlanta-based organization Catholics Come Home, aims to reach 250 million television viewers in more than 10,000 U.S. cities.

Tom Peterson, the organization's founder, said the campaign's "inspiring messages" are an invitation to Catholic neighbors, relatives, and co-workers to come "to the largest family reunion in modern history."

The ads -- airing in prime time on broadcast and cable channels -- focus on the richness and history of the Catholic Church and highlight Catholic traditions of prayer, education and help for the poor.

"If you've been away, come home to your parish, and visit Catholicscomehome.org today" is part of the ad's message scheduled to air more than 400 times starting before Christmas and going through the feast of the Epiphany.

Since they began their media campaigns in 2008, Catholics Come Home officials say Mass attendance has increased 10 percent in the markets where the ads have shown and 300,000 people have come back to the church.

In its announcement, the organization highlighted the number of Catholics who do not attend Mass, citing a recent study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University that said only 33 percent of U.S. Catholics attend weekly Mass, or put another way, 42.7 million Catholics, or two-thirds, do not attend Sunday Mass.

Other statistics cited included how many hours per week the average American is "consuming media" particularly via TV and the Internet (38 hours); and how many Americans now describe themselves as nonreligious/secular (13.2 percent of the total population, up 110 percent from 1990 to 2000).

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