***THE PEOPLE SPEAK***

This body of work is a collaborative project engaged by Catholic Church Reform Int’l and the American Catholic Council defining where a global audience rates the effectiveness of Church teaching and its effects on the Baptized. Survey results provide a foundation for a call to action for Grassroots Catholics to actively engage in a culture change in the Church while Pope Francis makes needed structural/systems changes at the top.

Actualizing The New Evangelization in the Jubilee Year

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***Prologue***

Catholic Church Reform International in conjunction with the American Catholic Council has determined to mark the Jubilee Year of Mercy by conducting its own world-wide independent survey. This survey provides Catholics with the opportunity to respond to the *Lineamenta* (Working Document) in preparation for the October 2015 Ordinary Synod of Bishops. This Synod will take place in Rome in October, 2015. Its theme is "the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world.”

The survey was designed to parallel the question strands in the Working Document of the Synod, however the language used is vernacular and not the theological and ecclesiastical language found in the Synod survey questionnaire.There were over two thousand four hundred global respondents to the latest survey. Their responses have been combined with those from participants in group discussions gathered in preparation for the Extraordinary Synod last year. This report, then, offers the results of over five thousand participants.

The methodology employed in framing and processing the Survey focused on key Church teachings along with their rating. Respondents’ views have been recorded in such a way as to reflect both common agreement and divergent views. Respondents were asked to propose solutions to the problems they identified. Almost all of these related to life situations where people encounter intractable difficulties in the relationship between where they find themselves and Church teaching or law. Among the principle conflict areas identified and commented on were: divorce and remarriage without annulment, cohabitation, and issues related to Gay–Lesbian respect and equality.

The survey is an adult document containing the painful stories of people who struggle to maintain dignity and authenticity in situations not honored in Church doctrine or Canon Law. The overwhelming number of the respondents identified themselves as committed, active Catholics. As such, their views should be regarded as a small but authentic expression of the *sensus fidelium*.

It is the expectation of the CCRI-ACC coalition that the integrity of this record of thoughts, feelings, opinions, experiences, and faith of Catholics throughout the world will be heeded, respected, and studied by our leaders from the Pope through to local pastors.

**GLOBAL SURVEY DATA, RESULTS, COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS**

**Summary Results:**

In gathering the results of our survey, we found a distinct call to action in the aggregate global responses. The survey was developed to pose the same thematic questions targeted by the *Lineamenta* questionnaire in more approachable, comprehensible language. The request for responses was enthusiastically answered in **2,368** submissions of mostly reasonable quality by a dominant majority of self-defined “active Catholics.” This is a good sign because we are hearing from committed Catholics, Catholics who want to offer deeply honest, often blunt, opinions and recommendations for a healthy Church. Our prior survey had **1663** individual respondents plus **27** regional gatherings held around the world with anywhere from **5 to 60+** participants. Since the earlier survey and gatherings occurred prior to the Extraordinary Synod (October, 2014), the themes were essentially the same; thus, we are offering comprehensive results from the input of well-over **5000** global participants.

Comments attached indicate that most answered carefully and deliberately, seemingly appreciative of the opportunity to be heard, coupled with the belief that their views would reach the Vatican, on issues relevant to them in their daily lives.

While the survey questions and the call for submissions broadcast on the internet meant that the results were uncontrolled and cannot provide full statistical confidence, the responses can be appreciated for the views of these 5000+people who were devoted enough to provide their opinions. The following comments draw persuasive indications of the situation in multiple geographical segments of the Church.

Respondents were asked to rate the *effectiveness of the pastoral response of the Church* on 14 issues (themes) providing additional comments or recommended solutions, if desired. In our most recent survey, responses, expressed in English, came from **44** countries globally. The largest components (1,559 or 66%) were sourced from the USA. Other significant countries were Australia (268 or 11%), United Kingdom including England, Scotland, Wales, North Ireland and Ireland (152 or 6%) and Canada (125 or 5%). Other national responses were aggregated into loose continental groups as they were quite few. Europe (62 or 3%), Asia (53 or 2%), South America (14 or 1%) and Africa (13 or 1%).

Respondents self-identified as Active Catholics (1851 or 78%), Former Catholics (208 or 9%), Other Christian (18 or 1%), Other (213 or 9%) and Blank, or unidentified (78 or 3%). *This latter 22% of non-active Catholics give a view from outside the structured Church, which, when combined, offer an understanding of the culture of the Church as perceived by the Active Catholic population and a view of the climate of the Church as perceived by those outside the institution. These combined responses offer a two-dimensional understanding of internal and external perceptions*.

We believe that we cannot function like children and forward negative responses to the Vatican and leave it at that. Therefore, we begin our report by listing the “pain points,” wounds, defined through the survey, which serves as a form of a needs assessment. We believe healing can only begin by defining root causes of issues that hurt both the Baptized and the institutional Church.

This paper begins where the people indicate they are and that is where they must be met as Church. We report needs first along with respondent comments that help the reader ascertain the power of their rankings. The undeniable tension that exists between the people and the clerical culture is palpable causing both sides to be relationally unavailable to one another at this time. As effectiveness is rated and comments or stories amplify that experience, respondents offer some views on how to resolve the problem/s as they see it.

We will conclude this paper by looking at the aggregate recommended opinions and solutions and outline a realistic, do-able solution enveloped in mercy to help Pope Francis and his consulters discern best options and best practices as the Jubilee Year of Mercy begins.

The areas of greatest discontent are the issues of:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **Favorable**  **Effectiveness** | **Poor or**  **Ineffective** |
| **Cohabitation** | **9%** | **71%** |
| **Inter-faith Marriage** | **35%** | **38%** |
| **LGBT** | **6%** | **75%** |
| **Contraception** | **12%** | **75%** |
| **Single Parent Families** | **30%** | **40%** |
| **Mixed Family** | **20%** | **29%** |
| **Divorced/Remarried** | **13%** | **80%** |
| **Left the Church** | **15%** | **76%** |
| **Women** | **19%** | **72%** |
| **Troubles in Families** | **23%** | **62%** |
| **Children in Difficult Situations** | **31%** | **37%** |
| **Sex Abuse** | **11%** | **70%** |
| **Violence: Women/Children** | **20%** | **47%** |
| **Marriage Preparation** | **46%** | **26%** |

* Divorced/Remarriage--80% ineffective
* Left the Church—76% ineffective
* LGBT—75% ineffective
* Contraception—75% ineffective
* Women—72% ineffective
* Cohabitation—71% ineffective
* Sex Abuse---70% ineffective

Responses were sorted into Global (major groupings) and the sort depended on their ratings of the Church’s effectiveness in pastoral responses (Very Effective, Somewhat Effective, No Opinion, Poor, or Very Ineffective with provision to leave questions blank if desired). For a clearer understanding, we have grouped the positive statements (Very Effective + Somewhat Effective) and the negative (Poor or Very Ineffective) for a cursory understanding of results.

We are reporting not only on the statistical percentages of responses but we have pulled significant, yet repeated, comments from these global respondents along with their suggestions for potential solutions to the problems with each topical issue. They are presented as a form of a needs assessment, i.e., presenting the topics in order of dissatisfaction among respondents to help identify a prioritized list of needs. In many ways, this is a “bishops’ report card” of sorts because comments range from parish, diocesan, and global perceptions and experiences. If the primary role of bishops is to teach, the students are weary of their treatment and the content of their “education” which misses the mark from their needs.

**What follows represents Global (whole sample) responses (*raw score*) by number of respondents per topic:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Global** | Very Effective | Somewhat  Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very  Ineffective | Blank | Total |
| Cohabit | 25 | 200 | 379 | 792 | 893 | 79 | 2368 |
| Mixed faith | 64 | 767 | 535 | 597 | 319 | 86 | 2368 |
| LGBT | 25 | 111 | 298 | 568 | 1216 | 150 | 2368 |
| Planned par | 40 | 236 | 221 | 645 | 1146 | 80 | 2368 |
| Single parent | 66 | 642 | 608 | 612 | 333 | 107 | 2368 |
| Mixed family | 68 | 402 | 1090 | 406 | 277 | 125 | 2368 |
| Divorced | 23 | 277 | 109 | 930 | 981 | 48 | 2368 |
| Lapsed | 30 | 323 | 121 | 768 | 1034 | 92 | 2368 |
| Women | 57 | 407 | 110 | 753 | 941 | 100 | 2368 |
| Family | 35 | 526 | 204 | 907 | 580 | 116 | 2368 |
| Children | 66 | 665 | 596 | 556 | 339 | 146 | 2368 |
| Sex Abuse | 31 | 226 | 344 | 661 | 986 | 120 | 2368 |
| Violence | 58 | 432 | 622 | 601 | 521 | 134 | 2368 |
| Marriage prep | 156 | 928 | 549 | 400 | 223 | 112 | 2368 |

**Global Perspective Again but Calibrated by *Percent of Respondents* per topic follows:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Global** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank | Total |
| Cohabit | 1% | 8% | 16% | 33% | 38% | 3% | 100% |
| Mixed faith | 3% | 32% | 23% | 25% | 13% | 4% | 100% |
| LGBT | 1% | 5% | 13% | 24% | 51% | 6% | 100% |
| Planned par | 2% | 10% | 9% | 27% | 48% | 3% | 100% |
| Single parent | 3% | 27% | 26% | 26% | 14% | 5% | 100% |
| Mixed family | 3% | 17% | 46% | 17% | 12% | 5% | 100% |
| Divorced | 1% | 12% | 5% | 39% | 41% | 2% | 100% |
| Lapsed | 1% | 14% | 5% | 32% | 44% | 4% | 100% |
| Women | 2% | 17% | 5% | 32% | 40% | 4% | 100% |
| Family | 1% | 22% | 9% | 38% | 24% | 5% | 100% |
| Children | 3% | 28% | 25% | 23% | 14% | 6% | 100% |
| Sex Abuse | 1% | 10% | 15% | 28% | 42% | 5% | 100% |
| Violence | 2% | 18% | 26% | 25% | 22% | 6% | 100% |
| Marriage prep | 7% | 39% | 23% | 17% | 9% | 5% | 100% |

**Editor’s Note:** It is obvious that there is “good news” in the Church’s pastoral response (seen as effective) in the area of **Marriage Preparation** (see above). The survey question reads “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in their marriage preparation courses?” (46% view it positively to 26% who see it as Ineffective).

Responses are more evenly balanced in the areas of **Mixed Faith** where the survey question reads, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in pastoral care of Catholics in inter-religious families?” (35% to 38% who see it as Ineffective). And **Children** where the survey question reads, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the care of families in difficult situations caring for their children?” (31% saw it as Effective compared to 37% who saw it otherwise).

Less even was the **Mixed Family** response where the survey question reads, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of parents with children from different marriages?” (20% saw it as Effective compared to 29% who saw it Ineffective), and **Single Parent**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of Catholic single-parent families?” (30% saw it as Effective compared with 40% Ineffective). Similarly, **Violence**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in pastoral care when there is violence to women and children in families?” the Church was seen as Effective by 20% compared to Ineffective ratings by 47%.

The gap widens for the following three themes. For **Family**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in understanding the pressing troubles facing families today?” 23% said Effective compared to 62% who said it was Ineffective. And for **Women**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of women in the family and in the Church?” the 19% who judged the Church Effective were countered by 72% who said it was Ineffective, with a significant 40% who said Very Ineffective. Further widening of the gap was for **Lapsed Catholics**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in reaching out to Catholics who have left the Church?” those who saw it as Effective were 15% against the 76% who saw it as Ineffective including a large 44% seeing it as Very Ineffective.

The final five themes were stark in their divergence. **Sex Abuse**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in giving pastoral care to families who have experienced sexual abuse by clergy?” for 11 % who saw the response as Effective, 70% saw it as Ineffective which included 42% who said Very Ineffective. **Cohabiting**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of couples who are cohabiting?” only 9% saw the response as Effective compared to 71% who said Ineffective. For **Responsible Parenting**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of married couples using contraceptives to practice responsible parenthood?” 12% saw the response as Effective compared to 75% as ineffective and this included nearly half (48%) who saw it as Very Ineffective.

The two most strongly stated disagreements with Church responses were found in the LGBT and Divorce themes. For **LGBT**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of LGBT persons and their families?” for only 6% who said it was Effective, 75% saw it to be Ineffective and over half the whole sample (51%) said it was Very Ineffective. The Church approach to those **Divorced**, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the care of persons who are divorced and remarried?” was supported as Effective by 13% and adjudged as Ineffective by 80% (1,911 people of 2,355).

These are all reasonable and persuasive global assessments and we offer these results to achieve three objectives:

1. To find common ground in the problems in the Church that are creating dissention and the loss of many who can no longer tolerate abuse;
2. To encounter one another in a respectful journey together to do what St. Francis was asked to do to “Rebuild My Church” by working together for an agreed upon solution;
3. To collaborate and find merciful solutions opening up common ground opportunities to build a relational Church in the Jesus tradition.

**Understanding Survey Results**

For simplicity, we present results in as clear a manner as possible. We:

* Merged positive ratings on the effectiveness of Church teaching in positive and negative clusters: Very Effective with Somewhat Effective and Poor with Very Ineffective for a comprehensive understanding of polemic respondent opinions.
* Demonstrated where respondents cluster in support of key opinions and where they disagree.
* Provided an opportunity to support their rating with supportive comments for additional clarification.
* Provided an opportunity for respondents to “think outside the box” and offer recommended solutions to problematic issues.
* Wanted to provide a cursory understanding of a macro view on the 14 topics and provide the reader with what the respondent population sees as prioritized needs.
* List global priorities in respondents’ order of needs for all to grasp where “triage,” services (using the Field Hospital analogy), need to focus first.
* Offer concluding solution recommendations intended to engage the silent majority of the Church, the Faithful, to work together to give birth to the New Evangelization around the world as a new Church culture built on relationships, “encounter,” dialogue, love and mercy.

**Divorce/Remarriage--80% Ineffective**

The survey question read as follows: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the care of persons who are divorced and remarried?” was supported as globally Effective by 13% and adjudged as Ineffective by 80% (1,911 people of 2,368).

**Global Comments on Divorce and Remarriage:**

* “I found that the priests do not have the skills to mentor couples nor to be the first line of counseling. Compare this with my experiences with Protestant ministers who are far better trained. Priests spend too much time studying liturgy because that is what they are comfortable with, thus that is what they fall back on. The priests are often embarrassed by issues that couples bring up. Consequently, there is minimal connection.” (Canada)
* “’Care’ is not the mindset of the ‘Church’ (clergy) by and large it is more to make sure canonical processes have been observed, etc. within context of blame, sinfulness and fault.” (U.S.)
* “Embrace them and never deny the Eucharist to anyone... It's a gift from God to all... What power do we have to deny grace from anyone?” (Argentina)
* “Beyond pastoral care, which may actually make things worse by making those affected feel like they are tainted and are being cleansed through counseling, I think the overall messaging and communications needs to reaffirm these people... That the Church understands that nobody takes marriage lightly, that nobody marries with the intention of getting a divorce, etc. but if it does happen, the Church doesn't condemn. The Church should come across as wanting to make the best out of a less than perfect situation. Our God is surely capable of that!” (Singapore)
* “A universal re-examination of policy needs to take place. Too often those who are divorced/ remarried either are or are not invited to communion, sacraments, and various church events. This varies from diocese to diocese. It becomes even more arbitrary as policy enforcement changes from parish to parish. We have created confusion and resentment.” (Nassau)
* “To speak about the sacrament of marriage, to tell young girls especially about their dignity and their bodies’ dignity in the Lord, this starts in secondary schools, so teachers need to be trained.” (Northern Ireland)
* “Annulment is sometimes like harassment, after obtaining the civil divorce. Faster & easier, less messier time-bound annulment of Marriages in genuine cases to facilitate solemnizing re-marriages.’ (India)
* “Divorced and remarried people should not have to go through the humiliating Annulment process especially when they did not initiate the divorce. They should be accepted for communion if remarried. The church has no right to judge others especially in the light of all the sexual abuse by clergy in Australia.” (Australia)
* “Stop denying sacramental care to divorced and remarried Catholics. The state of grace is determined by personal conscience, not the opinion of the priest or bishop.” (US)
* “Divorce happens. It could be for many reasons including physical abuse. My church demands that an annulment take place before admittance to the sacraments is allowed. This can be too painful or expensive. It would also entail admitting that a sacramental marriage never took place when, in fact, the couple knows that at the time of their marriage they were convinced that their union was a sacrament. Is the church expecting them to lie in order to remarry and not look forward to a life alone and without support? I think annulments should be abolished or made easy and free of charge. We have read stories of very wealthy people who manage to get annulments quickly and we know poor people who cannot afford one.” (Canada)
* “Simplify the process. Make it more respectful with personal conscience and not so geared to antiquated doctrinal issues open to the interpretation of the interviewer.” (Peru)
* “Church leaders and clerics, in general, need to drastically reform their archaic mindsets and holier-than-thou attitudes. They act as superiors, not pastors.” (Philippines)
* “Accepting people as they are, if a priest can ask to be dispensed of his duties as a priest, a married couple that realized that the love they had some years back no longer is present, should be allowed to separate and start again. Jesus wants our happiness and a productive and useful life for all of us. The idea of living as a brother and sister that the Church proposes, is the most absurd and un-natural proposal that can be made.” (Argentina)
* “Do away with an antiquated, impersonal, and inhumane annulment process for starters which examines a marriage like a lawyer does a "murder case." Let the pastors submit their canonical reasons for allowing a new marriage to be rubber-stamped by the Tribunal and let the priests then continue with pastoral counseling to help people get on with their lives.” (US)
* “Recognize the pain, stress, and loss incurred in divorce and the time leading up to the decision to part, there should be no exclusion from the sacraments.” (Australia)
* “Under the sign of reconciliation and mercy, allow divorced/remarried Catholics access to the sacraments. In Canada, close to 55% of marriages fail. At the time of a marriage breakdown, that is the time when a person most needs the consolation of the church community. It is cruel to shun these people.” (Canada)
* “Divorce is an extremely painful process. The church's attitude towards divorced people greatly adds to their pain. The Eucharist is one of the healing sacraments and so exclusion from it is quite devastating. Since the divorced can no longer partake in the meal that Jesus instituted, they feel cut off from their community - no longer members of the body of Christ.” (Netherlands)
* “Divorced and remarried Catholics, committed to their faith, and wish to receive Holy Eucharist should be permitted to do so officially. I know people in other parishes where their history is unknown and they already do so. (Canada)

* “Pastors need to accompany the persons involved in the process of divorce and remarriage, provide counseling leading to the happiness of the parties. Need to exhibit courage to go beyond the legal boundaries of canon law. Non-judgmental attitude in the acceptance of the couple is needed.” (India)
* “ The church does not support women who come and seek support for domestic violence, dowry harassment, sexual assault or even if the husband is married but continues to live with his biological family - deserting the wife and children for all financial purposes; though he is often prompt to seek his conjugal rights from his wife, there is no information from the church that annulment is a better choice than court divorces; the church also does not like to get involved in recovering properties and the alimony from the 1st husband, even though churches could set-up help-desks that could coordinate with the available systems within the government set-up. The church seems to profess heaven after death and so the silence around abuse/violence on earth - by continuing to promise the woman heaven, if she can sacrifice and survive earth...” (India)
* “Encourage them rather than 'demote them' to half people and admit them to the sacraments.” (Scotland)
* “If someone is divorced, it should be possible for them to speak to a Priest (maybe in confession) and discuss the reasons for the divorce. During the discussion both the Priest and the divorcee should become aware whether the person has done their best to make their marriage work and whether they are sorry that they were unable to keep their Marriage vows and were extremely sorry for the outcome. In this way the divorced person should then rejoin the laity in being able to receive Holy Communion and become a full member of the Catholic family. If we forgive murderers, why cannot we forgive people who have had failed marriages?” (Wales)
* “First I would like to argue that I cannot see the meaning of remaining in a marriage that is a threat to one’s life. Second, by getting away from this kind of marriage, why should one be punished further by being denied the right to remarry? Improvement lies below the answer to these two concerns.” (Kenya)
* “Adopt the Orthodox understanding and pastoral approach to marriage. While proclaimed with Christ that marriage is forever, still marriages do break down (people change!) and sometimes a second marriage is the correct pastoral answer. ‘Them’ is the facts, and Jesus doesn't invite us to reject facts. Besides, the 8th Canon of the Council of Nicea requires reconciled "holier-than-thou" Fathers to accept the catholic practice of second marriages. (Canada)
* “There are divorced couples though because these are Filipinos married to foreigners where they then take advantage of the divorce allowed to foreign partners. So technically, there are no divorced couples, they simply separate legally or otherwise. The Catholic Church thus does not find the need to care for divorced couples. For the Church, they are nonexistent.” (Philippines)
* “Welcome them into full communion with the Church. Jesus reserved his greatest ire for those who equated religion with rule-keeping...” (U.K.)

* “I am a divorced (not remarried) Catholic. I left with 2 children because he was abusive and becoming violent. At that time, the Archdiocese (Toronto) had an excellent program for families where there had been violence in the home. In fact, through a long study done by a local newspaper, it was rated the best program in the city. The needs of ALL family members were addressed by professional counselors and therapists; the children’s’ therapist was particularly brilliant. Aside from addressing my children’s needs psychologically and emotionally, she spent one session with my daughter (who was 8 at the time) in going over a plaque with St. Francis' Peace Prayer and relating it to my daughter's personal and spiritual needs to gain some peace at the time. However, at the time when I would have wished for an annulment, I was told that money was involved - having spent thousands of dollars on a legal divorce, I did not have the money to pursue an annulment.” (Canada)
* “By recognizing, throughout the Church, that marriages do break down and not try to persuade someone who, for example, has been abused to stay in a bad marriage. If they re-marry then they should be welcomed, as far as possible, into the Family of their Church.” (U.K.)
* “A greater emphasis on "family life" and "inter-personal relationships" within the many parish clubs/societies/activities. On the whole, the present clubs/societies/activities in the parish tend to focus on "organizing activities/actions for successful achievement" while "actual focus on relationships among the members" is very secondary. So also with Basic Ecclesial Communities, the emphasis seems to be on "getting things done" (prayers, devotions, activities, etc.) with little attention on evaluation of relationships, and the practice of charity among the members).” (Malaysia)
* “Just quoting the bible correctly. Jesus was not against divorce. He was against easy divorce or divorce on superficial demands. Most of the divorced people have suffered immensely, especially those who still come to church but are refused communion. If we accept them, we would be living the word of God. The church would be richer with the experience of these people. They could be leaders in the true sense of the word. They could be marvelous marriage counsellors in the church, just as an example.” (Malta)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “Drop the annulment process and reconcile individuals with the church through the sacrament of reconciliation.” (Canada)

“Open all processes to a good mix of married lay folk and specialized clergy - using a template more to do with Gospel values and mercy and the acceptance of a step-by-step journey to wholeness/holiness. On a case-by-case basis, examine all such cases with the presumption that the grace of the sacraments and involvement in the loving community of the church will be the outcome.” (U.S.)

* “Develop a pastoral rather than judgmental attitude. Make them welcome, rather than constantly harping on exclusionary conditions; Jesus welcomed sinners, women, Roman soldiers and tax collectors, Samaritans, lepers, everybody.” (U.S.)

“Allow them to receive all the sacraments, especially Eucharist. Set up support groups for the divorced, and divorced and remarried as a peer-to-peer ministry. Remove the stigma of divorce and remarriage from our Catholics.” (U.S.)

* “A Screening Program for acceptance of candidates in the seminary, and a good seminary formation program for the candidates for Priesthood in the Diocesan Seminary. An on-going Renewal Program for priests is a must... A good solid a holistic formation Program in seminaries and renewal program for Priests.” (U.S.)
* “There is a huge need for an open debate and a need to close the gap between stale church doctrine and the realities of married life. There are a huge number of couples who think they are more holy, the more children they have... this is really false humility. To be honest, this question is not as urgent as the need for much more care for married couples who are up against a tide of gay marriage protestors and easy divorce options.” (Northern Ireland)
* “The clergy live in another time and world; the few clergy who understand leave the ministry!” (Vietnamese in So. Australia)
* “1. Accept the responsibility of caring for them. 2. Allow them every means of improving their relationship with their God. 3. Understand that the Church's success or failure in caring for them will probably affect many others.” (Canada)
* “Allow them to stay in the church and receive all sacraments. Provide workshops where divorced or remarried Catholics can meet together and compare/contrast their experiences. Do not exclude them from parish life; allow them to remarry in the church. If you do not, they will go elsewhere for their spiritual needs.” (Canada)
* “Accept that this is a reality for many of us, even if we did not wish divorce on ourselves. In the instance of those who are remarried, the Church can find it in her heart to accept the authenticity of the love and the desire for married life and family that is represented by the remarriage. “ (Canada)
* “By asking them to receive Holy Communion when they come to a mass or Eucharistic Service. The Church forgives murderers so why not forgive those who choose the wrong spouse initially.” (U.K.)
* “Drop the annulment process and reconcile individuals with the church through the sacrament of reconciliation. The sacrament included the couple and Christ, not the hierarchy.” (Canada)
* “By recognizing that no-one seeks a marriage breakdown, but when it has happened, both parties must be cared for by the Church. This includes receiving the sacraments. If children of a second marriage see that their parents are not able to receive the sacraments, this will be a major factor in their leaving the Church.” (New Zealand)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints on Divorce and Remarriage:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Divorced/Remarried** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank | Replies |
| **Global** | **1%** | **12%** | **5%** | **39%** | **41%** | **2%** | **2355** |
| U.S.A. | 1% | 12% | 5% | 39% | 42% | 1% | 1559 |
| Canada | 2% | 17% | 6% | 39% | 34% | 2% | 125 |
| Australia | 0% | 10% | 4% | 38% | 48% | 1% | 268 |
| Europe | 3% | 10% | 3% | 37% | 47% | 0% | 62 |
| U.K. | 1% | 11% | 5% | 45% | 36% | 2% | 152 |
| Asia | 0% | 11% | 6% | 53% | 26% | 4% | 53 |

**Editor’s Notes:** Dissatisfaction with the Church’ position and treatment of divorced people was strong and uniform with six and seven times as many judging it Poor/Very Ineffective as those seeing it as Very Effective/ Somewhat Effective. **Globally**, the ratio was negative 6 (13%/80%), and the undecided (No Opinion/ Blanks) was a very small 7%. Canada was the least satisfied with (19%/73%).

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

USA: 13%/80% Canada: 19%/73%

Australia: 10%/86% Europe: 13%/84%

U.K.: 12%/71% Asia: 11%/79%

America Magazine “Results of Family Synod Survey from South Africa” 4/7/15:

*The highly emotive and sensitive issue of divorced and remarried Catholics being allowed to receive Holy Communion was strongly supported. Eighty percent of Catholics who took the survey said that this should be changed. The current practice, respondent’s felt, unnecessarily marginalize people. The Eucharist is a central part of Catholic identity and denying people this Sacrament is an obstacle to the sensitive pastoral care of marginalized Catholics. It also causes confusion and modeling problems when parents faithfully take their children to mass and encourage reception of Communion but they cannot receive. It contradicts and undermines the message preached.*

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| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| People change. Is the commitment strong enough to deal with the future? What message does that leave to family and friends? | Banning the Eucharist to the remarried is hurtful, judgmental and discriminatory. |
| Compassion, understanding and responsive dialogue during life’s difficult times. | Rules! |
| Collegial relationships. | Feudal, monarchical caste system response |
| Collaborative decision making and problem solving. | Autocratic, doctrinally driven, cool and distant response |

**Catholics Leaving the Church—76% Ineffective:**

The survey question read as follows: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in reaching out to Catholics who have left the Church?” Those who saw it as Effective were 15% against the 76% who saw it as Ineffective including a large 44% seeing it as Very Ineffective.

**Global Comments on Catholics Leaving the Church Issue:**

* “The best way is to concentrate on making parish communities more vital and more welcoming; people go where they feel comfortable.” (Argentina)
* Acknowledge the reality of our time and work to foster greater commitment in all relationships... Remember marriage in the early church was a commitment made between the couple and God alone (no mediator)... See John Boswell's work. (Argentina)
* “It is difficult to know how to reach out to 'lapsed' Catholics since there are many reasons why they have left the church... all categories as listed above - divorced, separated, single parents, cohabiting couples, etc.; the sex scandals within the church; lack of trust; lack of sense of belonging to an understanding & sensitive church; feeling of guilt when led to do things against church teaching.” (U.K.)
* “The attitude is because you left, then you are outside. Usually it is at their deathbed that families insist on the last rites, which the Church readily administers.” (Philippines)
* “I was away from the Church for many years and no one ever reached out to me. Parish priests need to be less authoritative and more down-to-earth in dealing with their parishioners.” (“Atlantic”)
* “If a priest is more empathetic or forward thinking, he is hounded by the bishop. If he speaks up, he is excommunicated and can be left with no job or pension. If he is caught for abuse he is protected from the law and given a "job" in Rome. What’s wrong with this picture?” (Canada)
* “The sole aim is to 'bring them back'. Little understanding or concern why they left in the first place!” (Australia)
* “How can a church – that doesn't support contraception (very much a factor in family economics), rejects the leadership of women and married people, condemns our LGBT brothers/sisters, mothers, fathers, and children; takes on the nuns, exalts celibate life and luxuriates in opulence at the top – begin to understand family life? Clean up the rot, invite in all people gifted with vibrant faith and leadership and people will recognize that the church is finally about service to the people of God, not in the service of an outdated male hierarchy.” (Canada)
* “Many Catholics who left the church have done so for doctrinal reasons - refusal to ordain women; ban on artificial contraception; attitude on homosexuality; attitude to women. In order to reach out to them, church teaching must change. Some people have left the church because they no longer believe in God - but again I think this is largely because they are unable to accept that these church teachings can be related to a God who is loving and merciful and who made women and men in God's image, equally. Bringing people back to faith also requires ditching outdated church doctrine that has no scriptural basis but grew out of patriarchal attitudes.” (U.K.)

* “The many “Come Back Home campaigns” that parishes undertake are notable only for the poor response they engender. Let’s look at what they are coming back **to**! To welcome them back home you would need to respect the reasons they left but no one ever gets asked. Respect is lacking.” (Canada)
* “Bishops need to begin with the mindset that many of their parishes and priests have alienated a significant number of Catholics by: focusing too much upon Church dogma and personal sin, rather than a more pastoral, merciful approach and through uninspiring homilies that do not speak to the lives and issues of parishioners. They can then poll and survey parishioners for ideas to entice estranged Catholics back into the fold. For example: encourage knowledgeable parishioners to periodically give the homily.” (Canada )
* “The Church hierarchy should be like a shepherd caring for those who leave the Church. But we see nothing about this in Bangladesh Church.” (Bangladesh)
* “Supporting Pope Francisco who is giving us great examples of how we can reach outside Church areas and activities. Encouraging Catholics to get more involved in politics, social life yet insist on no corruption, beginning with the Church itself.” (Spain)
* “With all the scandals of the past few years, there are many who believe in the overall practice and methods of the Catholic Church but feel the people running the church are way out of touch or down right criminal.” (Germany)
* “They are seen as enemies and left as people about whom no one needs to be concerned. There isn't any discussion on this issue in the Church. We need to have a wider outlook.” (India)
* “A couple of parishes in this diocese briefly ran ‘Come home for the holidays’ type outreach, but they didn't last long. I initiated one when I was on a parish staff, and the response was positive but it didn't survive after I left. More visitations might help. I happened on someone in the hospital, and they said that the visit brought them back. I also tried to make house calls on people we hadn't seen in a long time, just to chat and ask if there were any needs. The Church needs to find out why people left. ASK! One son left years ago, in part because of the women's ordination issue, in part because the Church didn't seem to ‘walk the talk.’ This is a deeply spiritual, prayerful man. Another son left over the annulment process, a daughter because of the legalistic emphasis and over treatment of those with “homosexual orientation” (though she is not one), another daughter because of a priest. These are all people with a strong Catholic upbringing. There are many reasons, so we need to discover and address what we can. The official stance of the Church everywhere needs to soften and the emphasis needs to be on Jesus and the Gospel, not sexual ethics and other 'culture wars.' Pope Francis has done much in this direction and perhaps brought some back. His leadership needs to filter down, to influence bishops and pastors at the local level.” (U.S.)
* “I left and no one cares at all and I am in my mid-70s with a lifetime with the church but if you have anything to say, especially about women's ordination, you are out in the cold and don't count. Luckily I will still be allowed to be buried in the cemetery with my husband because the policy allows that but basically I think I am excommunicated because I believe in justice.” (U.S.)
* “These Catholics are usually "confronted" with their actions and so the negativity is further deepened. Really, no one has any interest in these people anymore. Most of us in the Church are hardly "communitarian" minded in a positive sense. Even the Sign of Peace at the Eucharist is such a burden on so many of us - both in terms of body language and the deep reality of the Sign. I often wonder why we attend the Eucharistic Celebration at all if this small gesture is so much of a burden!” (India)
* “While not personally affected, I am shocked and disgusted by how many millions have been spent to protect the image of the church vs. admitting and protecting victims. It is appalling that none of the convicted pedophile priests have been excommunicated. Why is that? Compare this to the excommunication of priests who dare to publicly support women priests and it is clear that the Catholic hierarchy has totally lost its moral compass and authority.” (South Africa)
* “Christ came to make clear to us that God loves us no matter what. Our church doesn't appear to have heard that message.” (England)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “Welcome, welcome, welcome all. Begin with accepting people where they are at in their lives.” (Canada)
* “Ask ‘How can we make you feel more at home?’ instead of "Here's what you need to do to be forgiven for your mistakes.” (U.S.)
* “A concerted effort should be made to re-evangelize the ‘Second largest Christian group’ i.e., lapsed Catholics. Make them feel welcome back in the fold. Use priestly pastoral visits - as in days of old. When did YOU last have a friendly visit from your parish priest?” (U.S.)
* “Purposefully design homilies and monthly themes that addresses issues faced by each type of family (single parent, nuclear, same sex, etc.) and age group within the family (parents, children, teenagers, grandparents).” (Canada)
* “As long as Church leaders, including pastors, are hyper-focused on sexual issues and on judging and shaming people's life choices that are made in good conscience, Catholics who have left the Church will not come back. Local dioceses need to ensure that perpetrators of sexual abuse are brought to justice. Parish communities need to adopt outwardly hospitable practices in welcoming people. Priests need to give homilies that are relevant and intellectually challenging rather than the simplistic ones I have been hearing lately. Homilies should address the whole of Christian life, not just family life and sexuality.” (U.S.)
* “The church needs deeply to understand the reasons why many persons have left the Church. In many cases there may have been good reasons. We should therefore reach out to them HUMBLY; they may have been wrong - but the church also has often been wrong too and many of our attitudes have been unhelpful.” (Tanzania)
* “Develop an understanding of relationships, human sexuality, and the maturation of responsible adults. Maybe there are as many models of matrimony as there are of family?” (UK.)
* “Be a church of love and of justice and not obsessed with the condemnation of abortion or contraception.” (U.S.)
* “Stop condemning all the time. Draw them in with love!” (India)
* “By being more welcoming, by being seen as a church for all people.” (U.K.)
* “Here in Norway there has occurred a situation of enrolling as many members as possible, even without their consent. This was made purely to get more state funds.” (Norway)
* “Create a caring, welcoming, inclusive church through promoting the message of Jesus [and Francis] not through strict application of 'black and white' rules and regulations.” (U.K.)

* “Stop thinking the Catholic Church is the one true church with all the answers. Look for good pastoral care opportunities working well in other Christian and non-Christian denominations. Have Catholic-married couples of all walks of life in places of authority in the area of pastoral care for families. Celibate men are never going to be good at counselling families; they are very uncomfortable with the subject and the current system does not foster or even allow celibate priests and bishops to relinquish any of their authority in matters that they have not got the training or experience to understand. These clergy in authority cannot even listen in most cases. They feel they are in authority and need to tell us what we must do.” (Canada)
* “Listen to what is needed. Be willing to move into this century where the rest of us live. Set aside the literal translation of ancient writings.” (Canada)
* “Lack of compassionate response to the problems around HIV/AIDS, birth control, poverty and alienation, drug problems, etcetera, places the church outside the area of support of the most vulnerable. Bragging about the extent of material support to victims is no substitute. Be humble, you expect the laity to be humble but not yourselves, the clergy. I was struck by the Gospel reading yesterday at Mass, second week of Lent, Wednesday. My weekly Missal is in my car so cannot quote it chapter and verse at 11pm South African Time. How can the clergy carry on when they act like the Pharisees?” (South Africa)
* “The church should be kinder and less judgmental.” (U.K.)
* “The Church should prepare its priests to try to understand people and should use the laity to welcome and nurture all those in need.” (U.K.)
* “The Church does not listen to Parishioners just throws the rule book at us and leaves. Individual Priests make the effort but those that truly care operate outside the rule book.” (U.K)
* “Here in South Africa our Bishops have made NO attempt to encourage Parish Priests to try and get such lost people back to the Church. I believe that lay people can help to firstly identify such people and then help to encourage such strays to return to the Church. There must be no judging of such people but again they must be treated with love and mercy by both Clergy and fellow lay Catholics.” (South Africa)
* “I've no experience of this happening. We need active congregations to achieve all this pastoral care. With diminishing congregations this becomes harder.” (U.K.)
* “Catholics who left the Church are basically written off and this should not be. Their choice should be respected and they should be made to feel they will always be welcome back home. The attitude of the Church unfortunately is to treat them like traitors.” (Canada)
* “Be more welcoming and less rule oriented. My daughter received Catholic education through college. After spending two years in the Peace Corps, she returned only to find that the Catholic Church didn't provide the community she needed. She has since become an Ordained Minister in the Assembly of God; her gift is in Woman's Ministry and has preached locally and travelled to Ghana and Kenya where she has done work beyond belief. When our children were growing up, I told them that I would rather have them in a Community of Believers than no community at all. Her congregation is made up probably 75% former Catholics who were tired of the "rules" and exclusionary practices of the Catholic Church. They celebrate God's love. I have another daughter living in Ireland who goes between the Church of Ireland and the Catholic Church; the former is attractive because of their utilization of women clergy. As you can see, our children were raised to be independent thinkers and know of God's love for them.” (U.S.)
* “They have very little to offer.” (Canada)
* “Jesus did not go around making people feel guilty; he welcomed those whose lives were broken in one way or another. The church should mirror to the people of our times the mind and heart of Jesus; the church should be characterized by a very welcoming attitude.” (Tanzania)
* “These people must not be judged, but must have a forum in which to discuss their reasons for leaving. Huge parishes make it difficult to have a sense of belonging and consequently people do not feel a part of the parish. Often they drift away rather than make a conscious decision to leave. It is difficult to contact them making them feel welcome. Social media?” (Canada)
* “The reason these folks left the Church is that the Church does not feed them. No point in reaching out if there is nothing to offer. “ (Canada)
* “For the love of God, what could be more obvious than asking them why they left; and being open to the very high probability that the most frequently cited reasons are probably the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us exactly where we are wrong.” (Canada)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Leaving Catholic** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **1%** | **14%** | **5%** | **32%** | **44%** | **4%** |
| U.S.A. | 1% | 16% | 5% | 33% | 42% | 2% |
| Canada | 0% | 13% | 4% | 31% | 50% | 2% |
| Australia | 1% | 10% | 5% | 32% | 50% | 2% |
| Europe | 5% | 2% | 10% | 23% | 60% | 2% |
| U.K. | 0% | 7% | 3% | 41% | 45% | 3% |
| Asia | 0% | 4% | 4% | 40% | 51% | 2% |

**Editor’s Note:** Attitudes to the Church’s pastoral approach to Lapsed or Former Catholics was markedly different across the total responses. **Globally** 15% deemed the approach Effective while 76% saw it as Ineffective for a ratio of negative 5.

This was much the same for the U.S.A. (negative 4), Canada (negative 6) and Australia (negative 7), but in Europe and the U.K. it was negative 12, while in Asia it was negative 23 (4% to 91%). In every bloc the total number of respondents rating the Church’s response as Poor/Very Ineffective exceeded three quarters (75%, 81%, 82%, 83%, 86% and for Asia it was 91%! This theme was unmentioned at the 2014 Synod but clearly the paucity of the Church’s response or lack thereof in real experience was and is gravely concerning to most Catholics.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

USA: 17%/75% Canada: 13%/81%

Australia: 11%/82% Europe: 7%/83%

U.K.: 7%/86% Asia: 4%/91%

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| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| A welcoming, inviting spirit in our churches. | A rules-oriented, formal Church honors the past choosing not to discover the present. |
| Understand the reasons behind many leaving the Church. | Those who have left are history. They are no longer of interest. |
| Inclusivity everywhere from different kinds of families to reaching out to those who left families in need of help… | Exclusivity and obedience. Those that leave are considered outsiders, enemies and there is no need to be concerned about them. |
| Compassionate responses to real life; real-time issues of concern to us. | Dogma, doctrine, punitive teaching |
| The Church to enter modern times and recognize the sign of the times | The Church remains rigidly conforming to monarchical structures and doctrine with no scriptural basis |

**LGBT—75% Ineffective**

The survey question read as follows: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of LGBT persons and their families?”, for only 6% who said it was Effective, 75% saw it to be Ineffective and over half the whole sample (51%) said it was Very Ineffective.

**Global Comments on LGBT Issues:**

* "God made me to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next." God made everyone and God does not make junk! Gay or straight, all are alike. Being in the LGBT "category" is not a choice. That has been found to be a fact of science/life. Time to grow up as a Church and 'love one another as He has loved us.' We are all God's children.” (U.S.)
* “The church does not welcome, honor or respect the holy people who are LGBT... Love, show kindness, stop hurting your children.” (Argentina)
* “We must stop judging their behavior, and reach out to them with love and understanding.” (Canada)
* “It behooves LGBT persons to keep that hidden if they want to be accepted in the church.” (Canada)
* “The universe loves diversity, by excluding them from community, the institution is not honoring the co-creative energy which shapes folks attracted to one another in different ways.” (India)
* “As a religious sister doing home visitation, I propagate gender sensitivity. Encouraging parents to open their hearts to the individuality and human dignity of having a LGBT family member. At least there's small development on this issue.” (Philippines)
* “Just as it takes science time to read the laws of nature correctly, so to it takes time for theologians to read the natural law governing sexual morality. Our current condemnation of homosexual activities predates our modern improved understanding of human sexuality, so our previous rules must yield to new understandings. Gay sex is just as natural (in conformity with natural law) as heterosexual activity.” (Canada)
* “LGBTs are still discriminated and stigmatized. The Church should be more welcoming and compassionate. LGBTs are people and children of God who need all our love and support.” (Philippines)
* “I have a gay son who is a better Christian/Catholic than I am but feels alienated and unwelcome in his church.” (Ireland)
* “Considering how many priests are homosexual, the anti-LGBT stance of the church is surprising.” (Canada)
* The Church's "official position" is narrow-minded and completely lacks compassion. To speak of anyone's sexual orientation as intrinsically disordered is shameful and bigoted. (U.S.)
* “Clergy and Parishioners have the Ostrich attitude. So nothing is ever spoken aloud or discussed and so this is not a problem in our church.” (India)
* My daughter’s gay, male friend, brought up in very traditional Catholic family environment, confided that he would not wish his experiences throughout the years of adolescence and early manhood on his worst enemy. There was no meaningful support at his parish level. (U.S.)
* “The church’s language off-the-top is hateful; we are all children of God! I have gay friends and a lesbian step grand-daughter. They are both dear to me and they should be supported. The church says they are merciful but actions show they are anything but merciful!” (Canada)
* “A person's sexual orientation is not a matter of choice, so why should it be seen as a sin? To be trans-gender or homosexual does not make you a pervert, any more than being heterosexual prevents you from being so.” (U.K.)
* “The attitude of branding individuals inordinate, dysfunctional, damned, etc. rather than loved, accepted and welcomed certainly does not mirror the teachings of Jesus.” (Canada)
* “In the Diocese of Rockville Centre, a man who has been openly gay and very active in a south shore parish got legally married in another state. He had been openly cohabiting with this man for years and his contributions of time\talent and money has always been accepted and appreciated. As soon as a complaint, anonymous of course, reached the bishop’s office, he was informed that his service was no longer appreciated. Weak leadership, arbitrary enforcement, and nasty disregard for him as a faithful member. Sad, but I'm sure not an isolated incident across our country.” (U.S.)
* “By the church taking modern scientific & medical evidence on board about LGBT issues of sexuality and accepting & welcoming gay couples without condemning their expression of love for each other.” (England)
* “By recognizing that loving expression in a sexual manner is the glue that holds marriages together, not just a means of procreation. While I would not be without any of my children, it is important to recognize that not everyone is born to be a parent, while some have a genuine belief that the world is already overcrowded and have a responsibility not to add to it. There are many genuine reasons for not having children but people should not be denied the warmth of a loving marriage through imposed guilt.” (Cyprus)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* Listen to the experiences of such people. Remember that each one is made in God's image and likeness, as God intended him/her to be. Assist, support, and encourage such people as they learn to accept self and to deal with the prejudice, hatred, and, at times, violence of others. (U.S.)
* “LGBT persons are not welcome in the Catholic Church. Statements in the press and from previous popes have excluded them from attendance or receipt of the sacraments. Shaming people who are "different" won't work anymore; other Christian religions (i.e. United) are openly accessible to LGBT persons and their families. (Canada)
* Acceptance first. Jesus said this about sexual orientation: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Yes, he said nothing. He said, "Love thy neighbor." There is no adjective in front of neighbor. He also said, ‘Do not judge.’ Stop judging. Many gays and lesbians struggle with their identity. Their orientation is not a matter of choice. Many would indeed change if they could. Stop ignoring REALITY. Accept all. Acceptance is much more likely to lead to a life of holiness on the part of everyone. Take a stance on anti-gay bullying, which has led to too many suicides and assaults. This is a higher priority than judging people for their sexual orientation.” (U.S.)
* “Condemning the LGBT makes an impossible place for the loving families of those people. The hypocrisy of an institution that at the same time shields its own homosexuals and even pedophiles destroys credibility it might otherwise have had.” (Australia)
* “Acknowledge that LGBT people are not ‘intrinsically disordered’ and are good, loving people who happen to be born with a sexual orientation that is different than that of others. They are not a threat to my heterosexual marriage; LGBT people have been berated, condemned, and discriminated against, and hated due, in large part, to the thousands of years of negative actions and behaviors of religious people. It is as though religion condones or turns a blind eye to the evil that has been committed against LGBT people. The pope is trying to change this but much more needs to be done. Recognize same-sex marriage. Welcome them as Christ would welcome anyone seeking God with a sincere heart. Show respect for their families and allow LGBT people to adopt children.” (U.S.)
* “By some church leaders, LGBT is still considered to be an illness that can be cured. The church should understand that also those people are created by God.” (Austria)
* “Recognize the gifts of these persons; be welcoming; encouraging participation. DO NOT JUDGE.” (Canada)
* “The Church needs to be more accepting of alternative lifestyles by welcoming the LGBT family rather than looking on it with disdain. They are good people and God loves all his creatures.” (“Atlantic”)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LGBT** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **1%** | **5%** | **13%** | **24%** | **51%** | **6%** |
| U.S.A. | 1% | 5% | 10% | 26% | 55% | 3% |
| Canada | 1% | 34% | 22% | 30% | 10% | 4% |
| Australia | 1% | 6% | 18% | 18% | 47% | 11% |
| Europe | 6% | 10% | 27% | 16% | 34% | 6% |
| U.K. | 1% | 7% | 20% | 22% | 43% | 8% |
| Asia | 0% | 6% | 19% | 26% | 43% | 6% |

**Editor’s Note:** The Church’s approach to same sex or LGBT community was one of the most clearly seen failures, with the Global Satisfaction Ratio over negative 12 (6%/75%), and 51% of the whole survey sample rated the approach as Very Ineffective.

**Globally** and in most country/region blocs, the proportion of opinions of Very Ineffective was about or exceeded 50%, a significantly consistent assessment. Canada was particularly dismayed with a ratio of -26! Here 3% of the sample said the response was Very/Somewhat Effective compared with 79% expressing that the response was Poor/Very Ineffective, and with 56% rating it as Very Ineffective, the second highest concentration of opinion. This also was an obvious area for the Synod to consider respectful exploration and discussion.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

USA: 6%/81% Canada: 35%/40%

Australia: 7%/65% Europe: 16%/50%

U.K.: 7%/65% Asia: 6%/69%

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| Love, support and compassion for the LGBT community | Condemnation, name calling, rejection, controlling |
| Listen to them; hear (not just listen) to their stories | Avoidance behavior |
| Open acceptance but settle for “Don’t ask, don’t tell” | Stern enforcement contrary to Jesus’ teaching |
| Welcoming, encouraging participation. Recognize their giftedness. | Unwelcoming, discouraging despite the number in the clerical culture who fall into this category. Hypocrisy! |

**Contraception—75% Ineffective:**

The survey question read as follows: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of married couples using contraceptives to practice responsible parenthood?” 12% saw the response as Effective compared to 75% as ineffective and this included nearly half (48%) who saw it as Very Ineffective.

**Global Comments on Contraception Issues:**

* “1)By removing the rule of celibacy for priests - Jesus would not have approved of it being mandatory. 2) By recognizing that the success of a marriage depends on the faithful happiness and fulfillment of husband and wife conjugally, freed of the worry of bringing another baby into the world, and that an all-male, all-celibate group of people are in no position to either understand this, or pass judgment on it. Also a recognition that those of us with the benefit and luxury of education are confident that this is a matter for our own conscience, whereas others are forced to believe that this comfort and gift from God is sinful.” (U.S.)
* “Helping these couples to choose a good way to practice responsible parenthood; the Church should be open to their suggestions, maybe even if it means using contraceptives. The point is to be reasonable and not insist on methods that are too impractical.” (Brazil)
* “1.) Get over the idea that sex is acceptable only if procreation is its primary purpose. It is also important and right for the couple to physically express and reinforce their love for each other. God made us with bodies as well as souls; laity are not lesser beings! Priests should preach, teach, and behave accordingly. 2.) Married people should provide the preponderance of input on topics of sexuality, even be the primary source of leadership, in determining appropriate church attitudes and actions.” (U.S.)
* “Recognizing that couples are best able to judge whether they are in a position to bring a child into the world. Teach that reproductive carelessness is the real sin.” (Canada)
* “Almost no one recognizes the bishops and priests as competent on this matter. It is a question of privacy of the couple. The catholic doctrine on the subject is obsolete.” (Portugal )
* “It makes no sense; if contraception were allowed, then we wouldn't have the issue of abortion in many instances. Abortion is worse because life has already started. With contraception life does not begin. This is an over-crowded planet as it is.” (U.K.)
* “Actually, worse than very ineffective – counterproductive! *Humanae Vitae* is the poster child for a teaching that is invalid because it has never been received or accepted by The Church, the body of all the baptized, the *Sensus Fidelium*. Married couples, young and old, don't believe it, which comes as no surprise to anyone who has actually read *Humanae Vitae*, understands its "rationale", and knows the true context of the Papal Commission on Birth Control. Continued insistence on this teaching, that has no credibility outside the hierarchy, merely further undermines the moral authority of the hierarchy. They are a group of out-of-touch, anti-science, anti-intellectual, uncaring old men more intent on control and discipline than pastoral care.” (U.S.)
* “The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* was a disaster that has for the past 48 years either been ignored by Catholic couples (my late wife and I included) who have followed their conscience, or has been one of the reasons why so many young people left the Church. This teaching must be reversed as it has no basis in Scripture.” (Canada)
* “Church leaders and clerics, in general, need to drastically reform their archaic mindsets and holier-than-thou attitudes. They act as superiors, not pastors. Moreover, they seem mostly clueless regarding the challenges of pregnancy and raising a family.” (Philippines )
* “The 'dialogue *des sourds*' between clerics and married couples using contraceptives has eroded the respect that normally should exist between these parties. It has not resulted in anything resembling care. The doctrine involved was never received by those that are most affected and is, therefore, null for all practical purposes.” (Canada)
* “By repealing *Humanae Vitae* as unscientific and very harmful for the health of women and children.” (Portugal)
* “The church needs to ‘get out of the bedroom’ and focus on more important issues such as poverty, violence, cruelty. Continued preaching against contraception undermines credibility that the church has ANY understanding of pressures of family life.” (U.K.)
* “When I was a young Jesuit novice in 1963, my father came to visit me. We walked through the grounds of a beautiful orchard and, after an initial greeting and cordial exchanges, my father broke into tears, sobbing. I was shocked. I had never seen my father crying. In my amazement, the only thing I was able to say was: ‘What’s the matter? Why are you crying?’ I believe that my black Jesuit cassock gave him permission to cry. After a long pause, he said: ‘This morning I went to confession. I told the priest that I enjoyed sexual intercourse with your mother but I cannot permit another pregnancy. I am having a hard enough time supporting five of you. I know we are living in poverty already.’ At first I was shocked at his brutal honesty from my father at my tender age of 22. ‘The priest said he could not give me absolution because my sexual act was not intended for procreation and that was against the Church’s teaching. The priest closed the screen separating us and I was left with utter disgust with myself not knowing what to do. I knew there was something wrong here, not with me, but with the priest who handled my confession so cruelly in the name of the Church.’” (Croatia)
* “Today education and awareness of responsible parenthood has grown. Celibates should not be the judges.” (India)
* “There is a huge need for an open debate and a need to close the gap between stale church doctrine and the realities of married life. There is a horrible level of couples who think they are more holy, the more children they have...this is really false humility. To be honest, this question is not as urgent as the need for much more care for married couples who are up against a tide of gay marriage protestors and easy divorce options.” (Northern Ireland)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “Accept that adult human beings are capable to make responsible decisions regarding the use of birth control. We are not children who need to be told what to do; we'll take our chances with God, while taking responsibility for our choices. On my Catholic mother’s deathbed, she was still trying to make peace with the fact that she chose to use birth control after her eighth child was born in her 40's.” (U.S.)
* “Married couples today need to learn discipline and to make sacrifices for the children they bring into the world. Granted, our parents didn't have access to the scientific advances that are available today, but I believe that the "Rhythm" method of family planning was the most successful, albeit not necessarily the most convenient. People today are too much creatures of comfort and pleasure willing to give up sacrifices in order to grow.” (Canada)
* “Admit ‘*Humanae Vitae*’ was wrong.” (Australia)
* Again -- the science. First, pro-life necessarily means that we are fully responsible for not over-populating the planet, and for taking care of the people already here. Secondly, countries with pro-active stances toward women's reproductive health (not to mention individual states in the U.S.) have the lowest proven rates of abortion. Thirdly, stop tossing around the term "abortifacient" when it comes to hormonal contraceptives. Be aware that a blastula (clump of cells) can divide (twins!) and then re-combine before entering the embryonic cell-differentiation stage. Is it one soul, then two souls, then one soul??? Did God just discard a soul? Fourthly -- barrier methods: why on earth does the Church deny condoms and diaphragms (and

surgical solutions) to loving couples in committed marriages who have made a determination that they are not in a position to support a(nother) child? (U.S.)

* “The Canadian bishops (when we had an effective hierarchy) admitted the primacy of conscience in this matter. Today our bishops are branch managers and are simply mouthing whatever Rome states.” (Canada)
* “Gone are the days of big families with rules long past outdated. The church has no idea of the energy, money, etc. that it takes to raise a family! These rules come from old boys who never had to struggle for employment, worry about how they are going to buy their kids their winter clothes and a pair of skates for Christmas. Women need the right and control over their bodies. Take the little blue pill away from boys and see the noise they will make.” (Canada)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Contraception** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **2%** | **10%** | **9%** | **27%** | **48%** | **3%** |
| U.S.A. | 1% | 9% | 9% | 27% | 52% | 1% |
| Canada | 3% | 12% | 15% | 30% | 37% | 2% |
| Australia | 1% | 13% | 8% | 30% | 46% | 2% |
| Europe | 6% | 16% | 6% | 26% | 45% | 0% |
| U.K. | 1% | 11% | 11% | 26% | 45% | 5% |
| Asia | 4% | 15% | 15% | 34% | 28% | 4% |

**Editor’s Note:**

The **Global** tally of respondents on this issue was clear. 12% Effective compared to 75% Ineffective, a Satisfaction Ratio of negative 6. The U.S.A. was comprehensive with 10% Effective to 79% Ineffective, which included 52% of the 1,559 respondents rating the pastoral response as Very Ineffective. The other zones were more even-handed with Satisfaction. Ratios of negative 3 (Europe 22%/71% and the Far East 19%/62%) through Canada (negative 4 with 15%/67%), Australia (negative 5 with 14%/71%) and the United Kingdom (negative 6, with 12%/71%). Overall a clear and consistent viewpoint.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 10%/79% Canada: 15%/67%

Australia: 14%/76% Europe: 22%/71%

U.K.: 12%/71% Asia: 19%/62%

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| The couple to decide if they can support and care for children | Rules! |
| Couples ignore the church’s teaching in this area making the teaching contrary to the wisdom of the people | Despite the fact that 90% of Catholics do not adhere to this teaching, it remains as if it were accepted. |
| Recognition of the real lives of families and the challenges of raising a family today (U.S. statistics in 2014 named the average cost of raising a child as $245,000). | Teaching based on no reality |
| Understanding why the clerical culture is overly interested in sex. | A voyeuristic interest in sexual matters and delivers opinions that have little to no realism. |

**Women---72% Ineffective:**

The survey question on **Women** read: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of women in the family and in the Church?” the 19% who judged the Church Effective were countered by 72% who said it was Ineffective, with a significant 40% who said Very Ineffective.

**Global Comments on Women’s issues:**

* “‘Make those babies, honey, and you'll be right with God and the Church. Otherwise you are useless to us.’ Until women are seen as equal to men in all aspects of the Church, it's all a joke. I don't want or need pastoral care; I just need respect and equality.” (U.S.)
* “Women and men should have equal levels of authority in the Church. All elements of pastoral care should be developed by women and men so the methods of careful respect meet the needs of both.” (Canada)
* “The church is mainly aware of women as "servants" for practical things to be done, not as equal to men. What theological reason is there that women can't do exactly the same thing as men?” (Germany)
* “The church needs urgently and seriously to revise its attitudes towards women. Concrete steps need to be taken to counteract the patriarchal attitudes and structures of our church.” (Tanzania)
* “The church has not really allowed women effective leadership roles. Even congregations of women religious must answer to men (look at the recent Vatican visitation of women religious in the U.S.) The attitude toward women is best summarized in the phrase, "created second and the first to sin". For many women, they are searching for communities that appreciate their gifts and talents.” (Canada)
* “Women have always been second class citizens in the church. No women priests and now they are looking for deacons but only Males need apply. It really doesn’t matter if said male is a wife beater or abusive to his family; he can still be a deacon but NO women! Women are the heart of most families but the church only regards them suitable for minor tasks. It isn’t that long ago when women had to be 'churched' after having a child - need I say more. Without women, the church would not exist - is it not time they recognized that fact.” (Ireland)

* “While the women in religious communities feel somewhat comfortable, the pastoral care of women needs thorough revisiting. It is not enough for women religious to distribute communion alone. Women, well equipped to be decision makers, must find their assigned place in the offices of the church. An authentic and progressive theological outlook must provide space for married women to be trained for ordination and episcopacy and of course in time for papacy as well.” (India)
* “1) The services of women are used in many capacities, including teaching children, cleaning the church, hosting social events, fund-raising, secretarial and administrative work, and the like. However, when women express the sincere conviction that they believe God is calling them to ordained ministries, the Church refuses to believe them. 2) Stop the male chauvinism, patriarchy, and clericalism.” (U.S.)
* “Women around the world are still regarded as second class citizens and the church, with its insistence on an all-male clergy, is one of the main offenders in this respect. The church should come to terms with the fact that many women have a genuine call to ministry. The church's attitude means that the body of Christ is cut off from the many charisms women have to offer.” (Netherlands)
* “The fact that there are no women priests is sinful. That we cannot even discuss it is occasion of sin. Some women who have Pope Francis' respect need to speak up and loosen his somewhat dated ideas on women.” (Scotland)
* “I am the mother of 5 daughters. It is impossible for me to defend a Church that treats them as unequal, a hierarchy that is all male and revels in exclusivity and medieval attitudes toward half of humanity. I want a church where women and men serve God in EVERY capacity.” (Canada)
* “Accept fully the gifts of women and regard them as full and complete equals. The freedom to choose how they will live out the Gospel includes the priesthood. No more talk about a theology of women! I am confused about why we need a separate theology.” (U.S.)
* “Women are seen as second-class citizens; they have no rights. Patriarchy is very much operative. A deeper and thorough study and implementation of gender justice is required.” (India)
* “Women should be allowed to become priests. In many of our sister Christian churches, as the Anglicans, women can also become priests. I do not see any objection; it was only a historical development during centuries of male domination. Not so long ago also women could not vote or become physicians or study at a university. This needs change!” (Netherlands)
* “As the backbone of the Church (non-institutional), they take care of themselves as well as everyone else. Recognition of the amazing works both Women Catholic Religious and Lay do by giving them a Voice which is acknowledged, listened to, and sorted out. Women’s wisdom has not as yet been acknowledged.” (England)
* “Both our Catholic Church and that of our barangays (shanty communities) have programs for women and their families. But it will be more effective if our Priests could allot some funds to support community-organizing formations.” (Philippines )
* “As a woman in the Catholic Church, I feel totally demoralized and sad every time I go to Church. I really don't want to be there as the Church does not see me as equal to men. Very hurtful! I contemplate often, leaving the Church for a more inclusive denomination.” (Canada)
* “Generally, I would rate the actions of the Church as poor but there are some bright lights, especially in Catholic schools for women, where the congregation or parish running the school is aware of the gender issues facing women and girls. Otherwise, women just fill up the pews of the Church on Sundays and holidays but their voices are not heard.” (Philippines )
* “I would say, of all the relationships, the most abusive relationship is that of priests and nuns. So called sisters have no place in the church hierarchy. It breaks my heart to see how poor 'sisters' have to tolerate all the demands of priests. I deeply regret my sister becoming a nun.” (India)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* Though the Church says big things about woman’s empowerment, Church is the biggest exploiter of women within its own organizations. Learn to share power and position with women. Provide enough development and other training mechanisms. When pointed out, the Church becomes defensive with showcasing some incidents and talks. Church will declare a woman saint after death but will not give power or ordain her when alive.” (India)
* “Accept women as EQUALS, including ordination. 51% of the church has NO power in the church and brings a HEALTHY balance in the Church.” (U.S.)
* “Nothing less than full equality in decision making and pastoral service will work.” (Canada)
* “Actually, the Church is ineffective in the care of spirit, in both men and women. Do we have *any* priests today who have the psychological wherewithal, the spiritual understanding, to lead people to develop their spirituality? For either men or women, groups that serve only to reiterate dogma, have fashion shows, go on moribund "retreats" repeating dead messages, march for a dogmatically approved reason, do nothing to develop the open kindness and acceptance that Christianity is supposed to be about. These things exist ONLY to reinforce exclusionary belief systems, not understanding. I find that, if you have a sense of wonder, if you have a curious mind, if you ask questions, if you truly seek...then you are most unwelcome in the Church if you are either a man or a woman!” (U.K.)
* Women MUST be allowed to play a more active role in the leadership of the church. The voice and influence of over 50% of the church is being suppressed. (South Africa)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Women** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **2%** | **17%** | **5%** | **32%** | **40%** | **4%** |
| U.S.A. | 2% | 16% | 4% | 33% | 42% | 2% |
| Canada | 2% | 14% | 7% | 28% | 49% | 1% |
| Australia | 2% | 24% | 4% | 31% | 37% | 2% |
| Europe | 6% | 19% | 3% | 40% | 31% | 0% |
| U.K. | 1% | 18% | 6% | 35% | 36% | 5% |
| Asia | 4% | 23% | 13% | 40% | 17% | 4% |

**Editor’s Note:** Where **overall** 19% felt the Church was Effective in caring for Women, 72% felt it to be Poor/Very Ineffective, a Satisfaction Ratio of negative 4. This was reflected in all blocs except in Asia where the Church was seen as Effective 27% to Ineffective 57%.

This theme was another where if 72% of the population adjudges that something needs to be done, then it should be placed clearly before the 2015 Synod for practical solutions and improvement.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 18%/72% Canada: 16%/75%

Australia: 26%/68% Europe: 25%/71%

U.K.: 19%/71% Asia: 27%/57%

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| Acknowledgment of **all** women’s gifts and talents, not merely their ability to give birth, vital to the Church’s future. | No equality in a patriarchal system where women are exploited to serve in lesser roles. Chauvinism leads to a second-class citizenship for women. |
| Women generally seek full equality in a collegial, collaborative culture where the gifts of all are recognized, contribute to the common good, and share power. | Discrimination! God’s call to women’s ordination is ignored, viewed as invalid, and dealt with punitively. |
| Women want respect and appreciation for what they bring to the church. | Disrespect is a characteristic of a domination system. |
| Women serve the Church in so many ways. What would happen to the Church if women decided to stop attending? | Gifts and talents are overlooked or the talented woman works endlessly for the good of the parish. |

**Cohabitation---71% Ineffective:**

The survey question read as follows: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of couples who are co-habiting?” only 9% saw the response as Effective compared to 71% who said Ineffective.

**Global Comments on Cohabitation Issues:**

* “An increasing number of young people live together before deciding to marry, if indeed they ever do marry. Some have children. If love is present, God is present with them in their union. They present a different image of lived Christianity to the world. They should be accepted, affirmed, and supported ‘where they are without in any way diminishing the richness of sacramental marriage.” (U.S.)
* “Cohabiting couples are considered living in sin by the Church rather than focusing on the positives of the relationship. The Church should be focusing on loving, commitment, couple mentality, lifelong relationships, etc. rather than focusing on sin.” (Canada)
* “The priests heading the churches/parishes are neither trained nor educated to address these issues even at an intelligent level. They are ready to offer advice based on the 10 commandments but never understand that - as examples of following these 10 commandments, the priests/clergy are very bad living examples, abusing the power of the cassock.” (India)
* “In this archdiocese, cohabiting couples are not considered to be worthy of serving the Church and are prohibited from doing so.” (Canada)
* “Ask these couples about their lives, relationships, and faith. Get to know them as people! Do not assume to know. 2.) Relationships change and grow constantly. Ask how the Church can support a couple's growth. 3.) Create a community that is welcoming, encouraging, and supportive of these couples. 4.) Do not just offer welcome and support but ask for their contributions to the Church's work.” (U.S.)
* “My three adult children were all educated in Catholic schools and all cohabitated prior to marriage. One eventually got married in the Church and he and his wife both promised to bring up their children as Catholics. But with very poor pastoral care from their Parish Priest, once their two children were ready for school, they sent them for education in State Presbyterian Schools. Their children were baptized and have made their First Communion. Another, originally wanted to assist his wife-to-be with an annulment, but once he realized it would take so long as well as being so costly, decided to get married by a civil celebrant. They have decided not to have children. Finally, the third adult child has decided to remain cohabitating for some twenty years with her devoted partner because she was so disillusioned with the "sexist" Catholic Church. They have not been able to have children. All three would have welcomed pastoral care from genuinely responsive Catholic priests as they received when they were children.” (U.S.)
* “Requiring couples to marry to ‘formalize’ their union is not the solution for cohabiting couples. More than anything else, couples should be made to understand the responsibilities of being in a relationship. The Pre-Cana sessions should focus more on the values of mutual respect, communication and love rather than on the DONT's in a relationship.” (Philippines)
* “Don't stigmatize by judging and motivating with fear. Teach what Jesus taught with love. Allow people to use their free will to make a choice. Don't make the Catholic Church the focal point of observing where God can be found & experienced.” (Canada)
* “Cohabitation is theologically sinful. But I am still in the Church since there is always a place for another sinner. Love as Jesus did; not as the Pharisees did.” (India)
* “A couple that is cohabitating will likely not attend church. They won't feel that they belong. They would tend to look elsewhere if they had a desire for spiritual nourishment. The church is much too black and white on these things -- much too judgmental.” (U.S.)
* “You don't want to discuss your living arrangements with your parish priest because you know he will make you feel you are committing a mortal sin and make you feel like a chastised child. The Church should be more flexible and understanding in dealing with these issues.” (Argentina)
* “A very black and white approach has seen many young people leave the church because of its lack of inclusivity. The hard line approach by the Church to couples living together before marriage is irrelevant. More young marriages would happen in the Church if it was more understanding, open, and receptive to the lives of young people today.” (U.S.)
* “Cohabitation is common in the Philippines because the cost of marriage rites is expensive. In a country where many are poor (75% according to government data, I believe the statistics are higher) couples just live together. The Church has programs of housing, health care, education for the poor but seeking out cohabiting couples and providing care to them is not done. Sometimes, if a bishop conducts his pastoral visit and the parish priest has a good grasp of his parish, then there might be services of mass weddings, which usually occur on Valentine’s Day or when election dates come around. Politicians often sponsor such mass weddings.” (Philippines)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “‘Living in sin’ is a judgment. The Church needs to look at today's society in the 21st century and see WHY couples are choosing this.” (U.S.)

* “Accept that this is happening and can be positive; arrange support programs and discussion groups based on relationship-building and the sacredness of partnering /marriage. Arrange support programs for understanding positive sexual relationships. My Experience: 1.) Our son and his partner arranged the Baptism of their child in their local parish. Pastoral care from the sacramental program team was very supportive and actually went to their home when they could not attend the pre-Baptism sessions. A marriage celebrant has since married them. Our granddaughter attends a Catholic school and the family is involved in school /parish activities. 2.) Our daughter cohabited prior to marriage; they chose a Sydney parish to be married and the parish priest was very welcoming, supporting the pre-marriage preparation and wedding arrangements, which was beautiful including the French family of our son-in-law! On an aside, I felt I had to tell my 82-year-old father that our daughter was cohabiting before other family members told him. I thought he would not have approved, however, he said, ‘I wouldn’t worry about that! They are doing that all over the world!’ 3.) ‘Temple Police’ in my current parish criticize the parish priest for baptizing babies/children of un-married parents. 4.) Priests in my parish are very welcoming of young co-habiting couples.” (Australia)
* “Acknowledge that the world, values, and understanding of what constitutes love and relationship are dynamic and will continue to change. I have been impressed with the commitment that some young couples have for each other outside of marriage. They see mistakes of their parents and friends and spend their "cohabitation" time learning the relationship skills that will hopefully keep their marriages together. C-habitation is not necessarily only occurring with the younger generations. Older formerly married persons also tend to cohabitate out of financial or emotional need. This also is a situation where the individual(s) make these decisions based on their conscious deliberation. It is next to impossible to find a parish priest or even one of the "marriage" coordinators/counselors at a Catholic Church who can honestly listen, actually HEAR and give untainted advice. Most persons don't even bother to seek them out knowing that the response will be dogma and not concern.” (U.S.)
* “Adopt a four-step process similar but different from the process before the Council of Trent. 1. Betrothal and public enrollment in a catechumenate for marriage. 2. Nuptial cohabitation. Living together for a specific time including martial/sexual intercourse. 3. Fertility. Leading to biological birth and long-term motherhood with exceptions such as those good reasons that Pius XII allowed married couples to be exempted from their procreative obligation. 4. Church Wedding.” (Australia)
* “Respect, respect, and respect! Create an atmosphere in which couples are encouraged and want to resume their relationship with the church. This negative business is doing no one any good, and is alienating many couples.” (U.S.)
* “Today more and more couples are "trying out" their relationship before making the commitment to marriage. Some think this is a way to avoid a future divorce. The Church needs to encourage these couples to attend marriage prep courses before ‘renting’ the church as a ‘venue’ for their event, regardless of their living arrangements.” (Canada)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cohabitation** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **1%** | **9%** | **15%** | **29%** | **41%** | **6%** |
| U.S.A. | 1% | 7% | 18% | 34% | 38% | 1% |
| Canada | 1% | 9% | 15% | 29% | 41% | 6% |
| Australia | 1% | 13% | 11% | 34% | 40% | 1% |
| Europe | 3% | 5% | 10% | 44% | 39% | 0% |
| U.K. | 1% | 14% | 16% | 36% | 29% | 4% |
| Asia | 0% | 8% | 11% | 36% | 40% | 6% |

The **Global** rating of the adequacy of the Church’s pastoral response to Cohabitation was Effective /Ineffective in the ratio of 9%/71%, or negative 8 times. The range of the ratios of Effective/Ineffective were from negative 4 (U.K., 15%/65%) and negative 5 (Australia, 14%/74%) through to U.S.A. at negative 9 (8%/72%) and Asia negative 9 (8%/76%).

Europe was significantly more dissatisfied with the Church’s treatment of Cohabitees with a ration of negative 10 (8%/83%). Any survey where respondents flag negative satisfaction over 80% warrants further scrutiny of the topic and a great deal more dialogue.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 8%/72% Canada: 10%/70%

Australia: 14%/74% Europe: 8%/83%

U.K.: 15%/65% Asia: 8%/76%

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| A relationship with the Church, a sense of belonging | Judgment. Black-and-white control using fear to motivate vs. acceptance |
| Someone/someplace where the couple could share their lives, hopes, and dreams | Clergy ill equipped, skilled and untrained to deal with cohabitation |

**Clerical Sexual Abuse—70% Ineffective:**

The survey question on **Sex Abuse** read: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in giving pastoral care to families who have experienced sexual abuse by clergy?” for 11% who saw the response as Effective, 70% saw it as Ineffective which included 42% who said Very Ineffective.

**Global Comments on Clerical Sexual Abuse Issues:**

* “I believe that this archdiocese is trying but there are many tragic cases where, in previous days, that pedophile priests had been moved from parish to parish to parish. One mother of a molested child, who asked for help to have someone go to a seminar on clergy pedophiles to address this travesty in Boston, was told by Cardinal Law that "We don't have that problem in this archdiocese." It will take decades for families like this to heal.” (U.S.)
* “We have the terrifying cases of Marcial Maciel’s victims all over Mexico, and nothing has been done yet. Many other recent cases exist as well.” (Mexico)
* “Often the victims themselves were blamed (I remember Bishop Campbell's statement that the boys had seduced the brothers at Mt. Cashel in New fenland). The approach had been one to protect the institution and let the victims fend for themselves. The whole sexual abuse scandal has tainted the entire church and its credible teaching role in our society.” (Canada)
* “Books have been written about the subject documenting how the clergy at all levels make it very difficult, if not impossible, for the victims to voice their complaints. The fact that such matters are sometimes written about in the papers indicates a change among the lay people. The hierarchy is complicit and silent.” (Mexico)
* “Admitting the wrongdoing, handing the accused to the police and letting them deal with it. *Solicitationis crimen* should be abandoned.” (France)
* “Despite all the meetings, reports, documents that have come out of this crisis, the actual assistance to victims is poor, although it may be getting better. I have personal experience of this. His parish priest sexually abused my husband, now 85, when he was in his early teens, for several years. He told no one but he did tell his confessor, who said nothing—**nothing**! This was in the '40's so maybe he was just too stunned, but I don't think so. I think it was already such an undercurrent culture in the clerical lifestyle that it wasn't much questioned (think boy choir members in the medieval Church).” (U.S.)
* “Mercy and compassion toward abused families/women and children are horrendous. Clerics involved in sexual abuse should be promptly and severely penalized, i.e., brought to the court of law. Justice must be served; otherwise, the Church loses moral ascendancy. “ (Philippines )
* “I've no experience of this happening. We need active congregations to achieve all this pastoral care. With diminishing congregations this becomes harder.” (U.K.)
* “I worked for the court system for many years. In cases of child sexual abuse, a jail sentence was mandatory. My church protected these predators thereby making every priest suspect in the eyes of the laity. The solution? Disclose, disclose, disclose! Expose and JAIL the perpetrators and their protectors/enablers and... APOLOGIZE with sincerity and humility while changing the system. Sell off some Church treasures to fund compensating victims and do not make the members of parishes and dioceses foot the bill.” (Canada)
* “No support at all. In India if an abuse is reported there is no independent inquiry. The best the bishop does is to transfer the priest after an inquiry by a bunch of priests. There is so much sexual abuse going on in parishes and seminaries in India. Due to the weak political/police system, the clergy continues to abuse.” (India)
* “The hierarchical Church of the Philippines covers up for the sexual abuses by clergy. The victims and families suffer in silence.” (Philippines )
* “My husband told me he was abused before we married. I was shocked but I guess I had always wondered about this possibility just from some innuendo one would hear now and then. It was not until 2000 when my husband was 70 and the Boston scandal was emerging that we started to talk about it more. He always thought that this was the behavior of one very sick priest; then he began to wonder that there might be others, many others who had his experience. In 2005-6, he began to realize this was widespread and possibly went to the very top of the Church; at this time he started to tell his siblings and our grown children. Soon his anger emerged and he began to tell others.

In 2008, he wrote to the Archbishop and he heard nothing back. In 2010, at the age of 80, he wrote the Archbishop again, and this time he did get a response and a hearing and an offer of help. The diocese where this abuse occurred paid for counseling, which he undertook for a year. But he felt the church never dealt with the real problem--the clerical cover-up. He says he has forgiven the offending priest, who is dead, as he was a victim of a sick culture, but he had great difficulty in forgiving the hierarchy. The Archbishop was not much help in this because he rather forcefully defended the Dallas accords and blamed my husband for not appreciating how much the church was doing in this regard. However, none of that was personally affecting my husband; it was mostly words on a page.

Now, at 85, I think he has come to some resolution, but it is mostly work he has done himself, and not so much what help he has gotten from the Church. He will not be fully healed until the Church definitively deals with this problem, something Pope Francis is beginning to address, thank God. The hierarchy needs to make public apologies to victims and make reparation for the harm they have done. I should add my husband went on to the seminary at 14, ordained a Catholic priest in 1957, so he has an added layer of understanding about the workings of the clergy and the church. He left the clerical state in 1968.” (U.S.)

* “The history of the Church in these matters is dismal, as we all know. The Bishops, normally, "cover up" for the clergy as they feel that they cannot be let down. The theological and moral aspects do not ring in.” (India)
* “I attended a Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) presentation just 2 evenings ago. The Speaker was a Catholic priest who gave an awesome presentation. He has been working for 30 years with victims of priest sexual abuse & their families and testified as an "expert witness." He described the organized "stonewalling" of the Catholic Clergy/Hierarchy. Billions of dollars have been spent "silencing" the victims and on efforts to sweep this terrible problem "under the rug." He excoriated the "clerical culture." Blaming the victims and hiding the perpetrators is wrong! *Of over 4,000 Bishops, he says only 4 are openly & sincerely dealing with these "crimes.* The Catholic Hierarchy are hardened bureaucrats more interested in protecting themselves and the "reputation" of an "institution" than ever doing the right, just and compassionate thing. When any in the body of Christ suffer, we, the people of God must respond. Many Catholics deny this is going on. This is what the Hierarchy wants. As a retired Educator & Mental Health Professional, I strongly believe this evil will never be rooted out unless and until the Body of Christ not the Hierarchy deal with this as Jesus would want us to do. Denying ordination to Women and Married Men and Women, along with ending the current "clerical culture" IS a CORE ISSUE!!!” (U.S.)
* “Appears to be getting better year on year but the hurt persists. More statements of condemnation and action must be made public.” (U.K.)
* “I heard of and experienced abuse by clergy, not only sexual. For example women who have relationships with priests and are somehow verbally or physically abused by the priest are not defended and the priest is not blamed in anyway. There is no justice in it.” (Italy)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “I can speak about this as a former coordinator in Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) who listened for quite some time to victims of abuse. Until the ***system*** is changed to one where the clergy have to be accountable to their donors and members (i.e. get rid of the monarchial model, which had nothing to do with Jesus anyway) they won't get anywhere. The structure of the church must be changed at a minimum as restitution to the Body of Christ they have abused. They have abused us all in this matter....sexual abuse is just the worst. The Roman Catholic hierarchy is completely asleep at the wheel of this barque of the church. This is a matter that will only begin to be repaired if the whole structure is changed into a more democratic one, where the pastoral leaders are truly servants of the people, not its lords.” (U.S.)
* “Too often Bishops have been concerned about protecting the reputation of the Catholic Church with no concern for the damage done to the victims. This must stop and victims given counseling and help to come to terms with their ordeals. Guilty clergy must face the law and be expelled from their clerical role.” (South Africa)
* “I’ve been sexually abused by a non-clergy person and have no sympathy for the clergy (MALE) who have abused and am sad and embarrassed as a Catholic, but not surprised that the Church has used every possible legal maneuver to avoid responsibility! Using statute of limitations, etc. to avoid rightful assumption of its responsibility is extraordinarily non-Christian. This mortal sin goes all the way up the chain of command. Sell those large real estate holdings and pay appropriate reparations.” (U.S.)
* “Arrest bishops & cardinals who were involved in the cover up of sexual abuse by clergy. Hand them over for trial by the civil authorities.” (U.K.)
* “We have been all abused by this church long enough. Our children have been abused; women have been abused; we have all been victims of a dysfunctional feudal system focused on power to the ‘lords’ who command the serfs to silence and obedience. Until this scandal, we believed we were sinful and unworthy. None of our sins compare to the abuse of our children, the cover ups, the pedophile transfers to other parishes with unsuspecting parishioners, the denial of justice to the victims, the secrecy of files, hiding money, bankruptcies all to hide remuneration to victims! This is beyond scandalous; it is sinful, corrupt, and abusive to the People of God.” (U.S.)
* “Do reparation and get women into more positions of leadership. This would NEVER have happened if women had been in positions of power/leadership to prevent and respond to this plague!” (U.S.)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sex Abuse** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **1%** | **10%** | **15%** | **28%** | **42%** | **5%** |
| U.S.A. | 1% | 10% | 14% | 30% | 42% | 3% |
| Canada | 0% | 10% | 18% | 24% | 46% | 2% |
| Australia | 1% | 8% | 10% | 31% | 50% | 1% |
| Europe | 6% | 6% | 21% | 24% | 35% | 6% |
| U.K. | 1% | 9% | 21% | 26% | 37% | 5% |
| Asia | 0% | 2% | 17% | 21% | 55% | 6% |

**Editor’s Note:** Not surprisingly for such a theme, the Church’s response was consistently repudiated, generally 6 or 7 time were dissatisfied as satisfied, thus **Global** was negative 7 (11%/72%).

Australia was most marked at negative 9 times (9%/81%) while Asia went off the scale at negative 38 (2%/76%). Even allowing for a high number of undecided (No Opinion/Blank), the negativity of the overwhelming majority was clear cut.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 11%/72% Canada: 10%/70%

Australia: 9%/81% Europe: 12%/59%

U.K.: 10%/53% Asia: 2%/76%

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| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| Respect, honesty, and changes in the systems and structures that allowed this to happen, perpetuating it for decades. | Vestiges of protecting the institution still remain in many places. |
| The dismissal and incarceration of any priest, bishop, or cardinal who either was a predator or an enabler to demonstrate a new severity of the institution to deal with the corruption. | Develops guidelines and talks the talk but walking the walk is a different story. |
| Public apologies from every priest and enabler as well as the Vatican with pledges to work with and for victims and prevention of same from now on. | Church deals with this on a case-by-case basis. No holistic initiative, it appears, is being planned. |

**Pressing Troubles Facing Families—70% Ineffective:**

The survey question on **Troubles Facing Families** was, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in understanding the pressing troubles facing families today?” 23% said Effective compared to 62% who said it was Ineffective.

* “Lack of compassionate response to the problems around HIV/AIDS, birth control, poverty, alienation, drug problems, etc., places the church outside the area of support of the most vulnerable. Bragging about the extent of material support to victims is no substitute. Be humble, you expect the laity to be humble but not yourselves, the clergy. I was struck by the Gospel reading yesterday at Mass, second week of Lent, Wednesday. My weekly Missal is in my car so cannot quote it chapter and verse at 11pm South African Time. How can the clergy carry on when they act like the Pharisees?” (South Africa)
* “A group of men who separate themselves from the realities of daily living in the family cannot understand. Holding meetings about family without including a variety of families, without including women, is fruitless. Stop talking and listen to those who are living what you want to discuss. Be open and learn.” (U.S.)
* “Many young families, who live with the stresses of modern life where both parents must work and try to raise a family as well, don't even bother with the church now. They are the ones to answer this question. Have they voted with their feet? I have found Passionist family groups are the most useful tool in helping these families, as we act like an extended family. Everybody in our dying and beleaguered church is so pushed, people in their 70's and 80's still doing the physical work of cleaning the church, working with those in need, and serving their own families, because the younger generations have been disenfranchised for many reasons covered in this survey and are no longer active members of the church.” (New Zealand)
* “Find ways to make children want to come to church. Sunday school for younger children during mass would be helpful. I do not feel I can bring my kids because they can't be still and quiet. (I have had angry looks from the altar when they have made noise.) When they get older and can sit still, they don't want to come - they are used to staying home and playing. Also, there is not much understanding for families with working parents. For example, it is nearly impossible to get children to church teaching every other Saturday. After a week of work and school, we must have time to have à day as à family. Is there another way to do this? I know church and good always should be first priority but I fear that forcing the kids will alienate them more from the church.” (Sweden)
* “Family life today is very different from what it was 50 years ago. The Church is still living at least 50 years ago. So my best advice is to start with seeing and accepting realities.” (Sweden)
* “Because women's voices are unheard, half of the wisdom of the familial experience is lost. The church must have women at every level and in every aspect of decision-making. A huge hurdle for modern families is the exploitation of women in commercial advertising. Do you know how difficult it is to raise a girl to revere her womanhood when every billboard and television ad uses a woman's body to sell a product? I would like to see the church speak out on this issue! However, it is the church that deems women unworthy of the priesthood, so how effective could its message be? It loses its moral authority because the actions don't match the rhetoric.” (U.S.)
* “Is the church interested in such families? Start by reaching out as Jesus did to those in unconventional situations. (U.K.)
* “Judging by what has happened in the recent past concerning clergy abuse, the church seems to have been ineffective because it has dealt with the problem in the wrong way. It seems to given the impression that it is more concerned with protecting the image of the church than dealing with the terrible outcome of such abuse on the victims. We should always be more concerned with people rather than institutions. I am convinced that enforced celibacy is an important element in the complex problem of abuse. A comparative study should be done between denominations that have married and women clergy and the Catholic Church to see if celibacy is significant.” (U.S.)
* “It is important to differentiate between the official Church as reflected in rules and regulations and statements which do not seem to be very aware of the world families inhabit and many of the Church agencies, which do very good work. The single biggest improvement would come from listening to real men and women, inviting them into the consultation process in a more meaningful way. The formal questionnaire released by the Synod was a good example of how not to be helpful. Most people do not have the time or the interest to contribute to a document which is couched in such churchy wording.” (U.K.)
* “In Germany, normally a family in trouble with their kids does not search for help in the local church. Normal is to visit a counselor or a government office for youth-problems.” (Germany)
* “The church continues to respond by admonishing, by pointing to what it says is "right." The troubles can be frightening for some families. They need support; they need understanding; they need love and as far as possible practical help.” (New Zealand)
* “The church locally is simply not in touch with the people. Apart from Mass and parish council meetings, there is nothing else really going on in any outreach way. Other organizations, such as Vincent de Paul or Citizens advice organizations for separated men and women provide help but the church is absent mostly. Use the physical space of the church to offer real support, whether it is tea/coffee and a chance to socialize and share or to run talks on budgeting and managing on a reduced income, or facilitating mutual support groups. Train Priests to be facilitators. Create offices for those who take up these roles in the church community. Work to make the identity with Christ a positive thing in the world.” (Ireland )

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “1) Skip the didacticism and study the real life issues that are facing families. 2.) Accept that the Church is obligated to help. 3.) Meet people where they are instead of waiting for them to come to Church. 4.) Make sure that there are enough personnel to meet the needs of all who need help.” (U.S.)
* “Although there are organizations in the Church who are exceptions to this observation, I believe that the clerical membership of the Church overall does not begin to take the beatitudes seriously. I see the current situation as essentially unchanged from the time of St Francis of Assisi - aloof from the world and refusing to meet those problems head-on.” (Australia)
* “Be mindful that we are no longer in the sixteenth century, and new methods and models reflecting the knowledge and experience of twenty-first century Catholics are needed.” (U.K.)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Family in Trouble** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **1%** | **22%** | **9%** | **38%** | **24%** | **5%** |
| U.S.A. | 2% | 23% | 9% | 38% | 26% | 3% |
| Canada | 0% | 22% | 9% | 38% | 30% | 2% |
| Australia | 2% | 24% | 5% | 44% | 22% | 3% |
| Europe | 2% | 16% | 16% | 44% | 21% | 2% |
| U.K. | 1% | 26% | 9% | 39% | 20% | 6% |
| Asia | 2% | 13% | 8% | 51% | 25% | 2% |

**Editor’s Note:** Consistent across the total sample and then the country groups was the fact that for everyone accepting the Church’s efforts to provide meaningful support for families in trouble, 2 to 5 times as many could not accept it. The **Global** ratio was about negative 3 (23%/62%). The Asia bloc ratio was negative 5 (15%/76%)

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 25%/64% Canada: 22%/68%

Australia: 26%/66% Europe: 18%/65%

U.K.: 27%/59% Asia: 15%/76%

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| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| Broader representations of families at the **FAMILY SYNOD**. They would like to see an amalgam of the different manifestations of families attending in order to visually “educate” the bishops of real-life realities. | Only prototypical families were present and spoke. Incongruent considering that many of the topics discussed had to do with other family constellations. |
| The clerical culture to speak out about the exploitation of women in the media, advertising, etc. to help families raising adolescent girls and their self- image. | Oblivious! |
| Learn what our lives are like. Meet us where we are, not where you want us to be. Approach us, talk to us. | Aloof from the world. |

**Violence against Women and Children—47% ineffective:**

The survey question on **Violence to Women and Children** read: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in pastoral care when there is violence to women and children in families?” the Church was seen as Effective by 20% compared to Ineffective ratings by 47%.

**Global Comments on Violence against Women and Children:**

* “A lack of care by other members of the church community meant isolation and loneliness, and a serious lack of affirmation of the truth of the situation. "I'm alright Jack" and "It's not for me to get involved in other peoples' business" ... drive this stand-off between women and children who experience violence in families and the wider church community. The most difficult situations for me after I had to leave my home with my children was with married women ... they would invite me to their home once and tell me where to sit (always not near their husbands). (U.S.)
* The Church needs to educate women about how to respond to women who have experienced family violence ... we did NOT bring it upon ourselves; we did NOT marry assuming we would be violated; we did NOT have children because we were sluts or tarts in the relationship.” (U.K.)
* “This depends on the parish/diocese or religious congregations. There are now religious congregations that have programs for victims-survivors of violence. I would really like to see all parishes and churches to have shelters available for victims of violence even if only for temporary periods. This used to be the role of churches offering sanctuary to people in need.” (Philippines)
* “All violence is considered to be provoked by women and their children. When such cases are brought to the Parish priest - they counsel the women and sometimes the men...to be kind to the women and the women ordered to be more religious, obedient to the husband, and not provoke him, so that he is less aggressive. “ (India)
* “This can only happen if the church members are aware of this in a family. As a Social Worker I know from experience that women are often too ashamed, too shy, or too frightened by their partner’s threats to ever divulge their situation. I know the Church would respond if such cases were brought to their attention. “Life Line” is available for calls 24 hours for people who can call for help and still remain anonymous if they wish to.” (U.S.)
* “Parishioners should be encouraged to report ALL INSTANCES of such abuse to the Police! We have all learned how ineffective the procedure has been when such abuse was reported to the Clergy?” (Canada)
* “I'm old enough to remember with horror the brutal murder of that unfortunate woman in Killmallock, Co., Limerick. She had sought help from her parish priest and was told that she had made her bed so she must lie on it. To some extent that attitude still prevails. Mind you, her parents had told her the same thing but priests were supposed to be more educated. More and more nowadays we find that it is the ordinary Catholics who are giving the lead to the hierarchy and not the other way around.” (Ireland)
* I think this varies from parish to parish. But most women in abusive relationships don't even find the Church approachable on this issue. It is again an issue of being welcoming and inclusive. (U.S.)
* “There are too few clergy now who are able to properly serve the needs of such women and families. Granted, the nuns have done their best, but they too, are getting old. More of society needs to be trained how to deal with such issues. This is a role where the Church and society have a dual role.” (Canada)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “Counseling of all family members is important and programs in each faith community should be in place to address this need. Outreach, care and concern by the faith community will promote unity within the family and faith community itself. When a family is hurting, the faith community is hurting as well.” (U.S.)
* “On our Catholic radio station, I heard more than one priest tell a woman that an 'alcoholic' husband has been given to her by God as a cross to bear. I don't believe in that kind of God. Statements like that lead devout women to stay in bad relationships -- the Church needs to educate itself -- violence against women is rampant in developing countries, as well -- I wish the USCCB would speak out against that as much as they do about contraceptives.” (U.S.)
* “Recognize the signs, act on them appropriately.” (Canada)
* “Church homilies refuse to address this issue and if they do on some specific occasion - women's / mothers' day...then the homilies are sarcastic jokes on the women who are striving to become like men / competing with men. SO TRAIN THE CLERGY - teach them from the 1st year of their Seminary sessions that women & men are co-heirs of the kingdom of God. Anything other than this - will only serve to belittle women and their contributions to the family and the church. Employ psychological testing of attitudes / scale of discriminatory thinking amongst men choosing to join seminary / holding power. Make the parish clergy to strictly follow norms/guidelines for selection of parish council members...so that these members become extensions of the church.” (India)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Violence** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **2%** | **18%** | **26%** | **25%** | **22%** | **6%** |
| U.S.A. | 2% | 18% | 28% | 26% | 22% | 3% |
| Canada | 2% | 16% | 23% | 34% | 23% | 2% |
| Australia | 3% | 23% | 23% | 24% | 24% | 2% |
| Europe | 6% | 18% | 24% | 26% | 23% | 3% |
| U.K. | 1% | 19% | 33% | 24% | 16% | 7% |
| Asia | 2% | 21% | 13% | 34% | 26% | 4% |

**Editor’s Note:** This was another theme where the respondents were more evenly placed, with twice as many dissatisfied as satisfied. **Globally**, the ratio was negative 2 (20%/47%) and countries mainly reflected that, with Canada and the Asia at negative 3 (18%/57% and 23%/60%).

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 20%/48% Canada: 18%/57%

Australia: 26%/48% Europe: 24%/49%

U.K.: 20%/60% Asia: 23%/60%

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| Support for women and children caught in the cycle of abuse. | Clergy unprepared, untrained, and unable to be a support causing the Church to be perceived as unapproachable in these situations. |
| Women want to be understood when they say that they do not provoke the violence and are often ashamed, shy, or frightened by the partner’s threats to be fully disclosing. | Nothing unless gift cards for food or boxes of groceries. Shelter, badly needed, is not provided. |

**Single-Parent Families---40% Ineffective**

The survey question on **Single Parent Families** read: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of Catholic single-parent families?” (30% saw it as Effective compared with 40% Ineffective)

**Global Comments:**

* “20 years ago a friend of mine became a single parent and felt ostracized by our parish - I'm not confident much has changed. I didn't become aware of how she had been made to feel until many years later when her personal circumstances changed but I felt dismayed and discouraged by it.” (U.S.)
* “Single parents must not be made to feel like social pariahs and there is no justification for over-emphasizing the conventional form of family as the only acceptable one.” (South Africa)
* “A single Mother told me that she feels unnoticed by the Church she loves as she works to support her children and educate them. We must not 'judge' a single parent with one-sided answers. We need to understand the human situation going on here.” (U.S.)
* “These parents are by and large, women and women, without men are never equal persons in a parish community. Men who head up a family and are useful in the work of a parish are considered very useful; women who clean and care can be useful but are still not perceived as equals. They don't talk sports together with the clergy; they don't talk money and politics together with clergy. They are go-to people when the priest lacks confidence. They are adults; don't need care, but recognition and solidarity in their parenting role.” (Argentina)
* “If the single mother is turned away by her family and finds herself in a shelter run by religious sisters, then she can avail of the services and care of the Church - health, shelter, education, skills training. Otherwise, single parents turn to family and friends who help.” (Philippines)
* “A Tale of Two Churches: First Church (conservative diocese, “mothership”). Twice I approached them with my desire to have my three young children enrolled in their CCD classes. I explained that due to a divorce decree, they would have to miss alternating Saturday classes because they would be on required visitation with their father (father did not support CCD). I asked if there was a way I could obtain catechism lessons to teach them on those weekends or have them meet elsewhere for those lessons. The first occasion I made the request, I was rejected summarily by the Vicar. The second time I was told not to again approach the church with such a request. Second Church (not so conservative diocese). Much farther from home, this church welcomed my family without hesitation. They made accommodations for CCD so that all my children received their catechisms and sacraments. They embraced all people interested in participating in the church and went out of their way to help where help was needed.” (U.S.)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “Families come in all shapes, colors, beliefs, and sizes and the Church has to adjust to this new reality and stop posturing about the old fashioned nuclear family. What does the care of souls have to do with sociology?” (Canada)
* Have all clergy and Vatican officials spend time working at a halfway house for unwed mothers or attend support groups for single parents AND ALL join big brothers, big sisters.” (U.S.)
* “Bishops should invite Catholic singles to share their experiences of being a single parent via: symposiums with expert guest speakers, surveys, social media etc. so that parishes can begin to develop programs to minister to single parents.” (Canada)
* “My answer boils down to: Come out from behind the clerical walls that the ordained members of the Church have created for themselves and live out the pastoral model that Christ set.” (U.S.)
* “Introduce special programs for single parents, encourage small neighborhood programs to include such families, extend support to these children in schooling/counselling/job opportunities for the parent (2). The church clergy go out of their way to make such families feel included (3) normal/participating in church activities. Should not turn them away from the Church. The Clergy need to change their mindsets/attitudes and ideologies towards all such issues - gender equality, not support discrimination of any nature - gender, caste, language, conventional ideas of "good families". Train and generate deeper sensitivity among the clergy - both nuns and priests (more the priests) they have power and funds...so they have the last word.” (India)
* “All too often it has depended on the priest in the parish. If he is a pastoral person, then likely the single-parent will feel it. Far too often priests, because of the divorce prejudice and because they don't have children of their own, have no clue how to support the single parent. Married priests, both men and women, with families would guarantee that they would be more understanding of and pastoral towards single-parent families. More concentration on socials in the parish where singles and others get together, including divorced and LGBT, would be helpful so they can meet others in a good setting and be supportive of each other. The pastor should know about current sociology and psychology ideas, and be well trained in counseling practices.” (U.S.)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Single Parent Families** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **3%** | **27%** | **26%** | **26%** | **14%** | **5%** |
| U.S.A. | 3% | 26% | 27% | 26% | 15% | 2% |
| Canada | 3% | 31% | 28% | 23% | 11% | 3% |
| Australia | 3% | 38% | 19% | 25% | 11% | 3% |
| Europe | 6% | 21% | 24% | 32% | 16% | 0% |
| U.K. | 1% | 32% | 33% | 20% | 9% | 5% |
| Asia | 4% | 19% | 13% | 36% | 25% | 4% |

**Editor’s Note:** Respondents were significantly impressed with their experience of the Church support for Single Parent families. **Globally**, 30% rated it Effective to 40% rating it Ineffective. The Satisfaction Ratio was even for Canada (34%/34%) and positive for Australia (41%/36%) and the United Kingdom (33%/29%).

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 29%/31% Canada: 34%/34%

Australia: 41%/36% Europe: 27%/48%

U.K.: 33%/29% Asia: 23%/61%

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| Recognition of their plight and needs. | The Church sees them as invisible and lacks solutions to their issues. |
| Offer clarity and understanding of this situation to seminarians. Perhaps “field trip” exposure with work at a halfway house to experience family challenges. | The Church keeps a sanitary distance from the situation. |
| Married priests would be a blessing because they would have the needed experience to relate to families and their issues. It’s time, many believe, will come sooner rather than later because of these issues. | The Church accepts married clergy from other faiths but refuses to deal with Catholic married priests. |
| Special programs and services should be available for these people to have them experience some level of inclusion in the Church. | It is impossible to deliver programs and services to the “invisible.” |

**Inter-faith Marriages---38% Ineffective:**

The survey question on **Inter-Faith Marriages** read: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in pastoral care of Catholics in inter-religious families?” (35% to 38% who see it as Ineffective). Think beyond denominational boundaries. Encourage pastoral involvement of the family members in the church programs. Organize get-togethers for sharing of prayer and fellowship wherever desirable and feasible among inter-religious families.

**Global Comments:**

* “My experience has been that non-Catholics have welcomed me more into their lives than Roman Catholics. I feel deeply betrayed by the Catholic Church as a woman, as a significant contributor in parishes over many years (unacknowledged, un-affirmed, un-recognized, exploited, and left on the heap at Golgotha). Nuns have helped me (they are angels!) but priests have done nothing but 'take' and 'expect' from my gifts and talents. It’s a highly chauvinistic culture.” (U.S.)
* “Think beyond denominational boundaries. Encourage pastoral involvement of family members in the church programs. Organize get-togethers for prayer sharing and fellowship wherever desirable and feasible among inter-religious families.” (India)
* “My experience is limited, but I suspect this could be improved by small celebrations involving the presider from both faiths. Stop the prejudicial behaviors!” (Canada)
* “I think pastoral care in general has been very poor for a while now, and I recognize that this is largely due to the reduced numbers of priests, the ones who are left do not have the time for personal interaction with individuals and families. The Bishops have even less time and appear very remote, with just the occasional pastoral letter. It's a shame, this lack of human resources, while half of the population, that is, women, remains sidelined and barred from active participation in the ministry of the church. It seems crazy and sinful to ignore all their God given gifts which could be placed at His service.” (Great Britain)

* “The church must be welcoming. Refusing communion to other faiths who are striving to keep God in their lives is an insult to their whole family and everyone attending.” (Canada)
* “Some clergy persons are able to relate with others who are not Catholic with respect and even learn from them; the majority do not, and relate to the Catholic party as if they are in league with the Church to bring in the non-Catholic party. Doesn't matter if this is via lay persons as ultimately it is the clergy voice that is heard and heeded.” (Argentina)
* “In a 'disparity of cult' union there is no Eucharist. What kind of celebration is it when perhaps 80 percent of invitees are not invited to the table? If the Catholic family disagrees about the relationship and does not show up or few are there while a Hindu family is delighted and all show up..... What does that say about our self-description as a 'universal' church? The real disparity of cult in marriage these days is between those with a faith in the integrity of creation and those that do not. How does that shaping of faith through a Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, etc. lens is fascinating for those of us in inter-religious marriages.” (India)
* “1.) Recognize that in today's world people regularly meet people of different faiths and it is likely some will end as inter-religious families. 2.) Stop treating Catholicism as the Holy Grail that the non-Catholic member has to submit to its rules. 3.) Recognize the similarities in religions, not the differences1 4.) Realize religion is more about beliefs than it is about truths. Two different paths can get you to the same destination.” (U.S.)
* Some welcoming has been done but the overall message remains wanting to convert the non-Catholic partner. It is blatant, disrespectful, and insulting. There is little real appreciation for an ecumenical marriage. (Canada)
* “These folks are often treated as second class. I know of couples (one might be Episcopalian) where the non-Catholic spouse was relegated to sit in the pew at Communion, deemed unworthy to partake in the Eucharist. This unwelcome approach is a turn-off to the couple and their children.” (U.S.)
* “From what I have observed, Catholic Church in the Philippines tends to be more liberal when it is with inter-religious families. The religious practices of family members are respected yet there seems to be a very strong pressure to convert non-Catholics. Unlike in other churches, couples are required to follow only one religion/sect, thereby requiring the other to convert.” (Philippines )
* “I am from such a family. It bothers me greatly that I am accepted at the table of my husband's church, but he is not accepted at mine. It feels so wrong. I love that we are a sacramental church but sacrament should be the response to an invitation, not a prize given out to those who join the ‘club’.” (Canada)
* “The Philippines are predominantly Catholic; around 85% of the population is Roman Catholics. While the realities of ecumenical and inter-religious marriages occur, the Church just requires that the children be raised as Catholics. But spiritual guidance and care are not done. Many Church workers are not even prepared for such issues. I do not know of any ecumenical or inter-religious body in the Church. I know that among mainline Protestants, there is an ecumenical bishops’ forum and an ecumenical women's forum.” (Philippines )

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “The only couples I know of in this category are Catholics who marry atheists or agnostics or marry non-practicing Muslims. We should be as welcoming as we can to the non-Catholic partner. If they have children and they are at a Catholic school, you can approach the parents through their children.” (U.K.)
* “All people who come to Church should be welcomed. Avoid making judgments. If people are not made comfortable and welcome, they are not going to consider their "own" problems and communicate better with their fellow Christians.” (U.S.)
* “All the Church can do is be available, have priests and deacons trained to be a resource or to answer questions to inter-faith families. Instead of being so centrists as Catholics, we need to rise above that and see that we are all on the same path.” (Australia)
* “Allow non-Catholic spouses to receive Communion and take part in services. My husband was told by a priest that he was the problem when I doubted my faith.” (U.S.)
* “Means have to be found to give communion to both sides. Both sides should be made FULLY welcome to our liturgies. Again we need to get back to the concrete attitudes that Jesus had towards people - and especially towards those whose lives were not fully in accord with the Law. Jesus received all and he showed them the love of the Father.” (Tanzania)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Mixed Faith** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **3** | **32** | **23** | **25** | **13** | **4** |
| U.S.A. | 3 | 32 | 25 | 25 | 14 | 2 |
| Canada | 1 | 34 | 22 | 30 | 10 | 4 |
| Australia | 3 | 40 | 19 | 24 | 12 | 3 |
| Europe | 3 | 19 | 24 | 34 | 19 | 0 |
| U.K. | 2 | 33 | 22 | 26 | 15 | 2 |
| Asia | 4 | 28 | 9 | 30 | 25 | 4 |

**Editor’s Note:** Once again, focusing on the Satisfaction Ratio of Effective to Ineffective ratings, respondents were more even in their opinions such that the **Global** SR was 1 (35%/38%). Australia was even more positive with the majority rating the treatment of Mixed Faith families at 43% Effective compared to 36% Ineffective.

Europe was less satisfied with a ratio of -2.5 (22%/53%).

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 35%/38% Canada: 35%/40%

Australia: 43%/36% Europe: 22%/53%

U.K.: 35%/41% Asia: 32%/55%

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| Tolerance, kindness, understanding and acceptance of the relationship. Get to know us! How is the Church universal if it cannot accept differences? | Diversity is problematic. |
| We want an inclusive sacramental Church—open to all! | An exclusive Church governed primarily by man-made rules that introduce prejudice and bigotry to the faith. |
| Accept us for who and where we are. | You can be accepted if you convert. |

**Children in Difficult Situations---37% ineffective:**

The survey question on **Children in Difficult Situations** read: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the care of families in difficult situations caring for their children?” (31% saw it as Effective compared to 37% who saw it otherwise).

**Global Comments:**

* “They run a mile ... put them in the 'too hard' basket - drugs, sex, alcohol, suicide, porn, bullying, humiliation, lack of employment, working parents, body image, living wage, respectful relating, sport, money, parents, grandparents, marriage breakdowns, government services ...Young people have had to grow up too quickly... Loss of self-respect and shame through immature experimentation ... Living in a world that does not make room for growing and becoming ...Provide emotionally safe places and individuals for young people to go to, to explore their confusions and explorations without judgment or humiliation ... Good pastoral support in schools in/at every level of school life.” (U.S.)
* “The Church needs to care more for families in difficult situations caring for their children by setting up within the community assistance for such families. Those families need to know the Church will provide care for them not only to the "worthy" ones. The neglected families need care, even the ones who want to remain anonymous by the community at large.” (Canada)
* “The clergy's only recourse is to demand that these families read the Bible. No additional support to even avail entitlements from the government that would help such families help them through every day troubles.” (India)
* “The problem is I don't think our Church is united in their response. Few are reaching-out.

Some parishes and religious congregations have looked into family life but the church’s attitude to today's challenges has remained traditional.” (Philippines)

* “One disabled child makes a disabled family, and eventually in many cases a broken family. It can be a very lonely life for all. A concerted effort in a parish to give practical help and time to each individual, some respite care on a REGULAR basis, and an atmosphere of tolerance in church and school would help a lot. Once again, a celibate priesthood cannot begin to understand the stresses, even if they wanted to try.” (U.S.)
* “Church has become a group of greedy priests who are indulging in all possible types of luxury. They are insensitive to the hardships of the people. All things are free for them. So they have a sense of entitlement. Maybe ask them to work two days a week to support themselves. This may introduce to reality.” (India)
* “Those most concerned with maintaining the rules are not at all effective in helping anyone. The local priests and nuns can be quite effective in the care that they actually give, but they must work within the restraints of the larger Church.” (U.S.)
* “As a high school counselor, I have been very disappointed in the Church's response to the very real stresses on our young people. I have seen a lot of denial and pretense, saying as much as "We Catholics - and Catholic schools - don't have those problems." I have seen teens expelled from parochial schools and shuffled to public schools so the religious schools can continue to turn a blind eye to problems and continue to claim superiority. And, I also know Catholic school counselors who tow the party line in public, but disagree with policy on a personal level. It is the hypocrisy that I find so disturbing.” (U.S.)
* “Pastoral concern, care, and compassion (caring for the education, empowerment, and employment of children of the families in difficult situations) demand the greatest attention of the pastors. The accumulated wealth of the institutions could be a source of support for such children.” (India)
* “Church leaders and clerics, in general, need to drastically reform their archaic mindsets and holier-than-thou attitudes. They act as superiors, not pastors. Moreover, they seem clueless regarding the challenges of pregnancy and raising a family. Also Hierarchy needs to change their mindset.” (Philippines)
* “I benefitted by a priest getting me into a convent-school to work for a secondary education which I would not have had otherwise; he was exceptional. The nuns of the church are the ones who usually did the work of Christian charity.” (Canada)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “As the mother of a developmentally disabled son, respite would have been wonderful. One local parish (because of the lay leadership) did have a religious Ed program for children with special needs, and that was great, as at least he made his First Communion. One daughter has three very difficult children and her husband refuses to get them the help they need. But how does a parish know about folks like that, unless the family takes the initiative? I am so well aware that parish staff can't do it all, so how does 'the Church' reach out and provide pastoral care? And I'm aware that many of my suggestions would exhaust a staff, so I'm not sure what the answer is. To some extent, it involves respecting and empowering lay leaders, but that is not easy, and many laity are already overburdened with responsibility between family and work.” (U.S.)
* “Pastoral concern, care, and compassion in terms of caring for the education, empowerment and employment of children of the families in difficult situations demand the greatest attention of the pastors. The accumulated wealth of the institutions could be a source of support for such children.” (India)
* “Create a friendly environment at the parish level which welcomes people of all ages and stripes.” (U.S.)
* “This is a major issue affecting almost all families: parents and children belong to separate worlds. To date the general stance has been to blame the children. So, as a first step we need to listen more effectively to the children who clearly belong to the digital generation. With a significant percentage of fathers working as migrants and so leaving their wives and children at home for many years at a time, we need to see how either to have whole families becoming economic migrants, or to campaign to change the economic system that causes such family-splitting migration.” (Indonesia)
* “Leadership must include married people of all genders and orientations and put money behind education, programs, and counseling.” (Canada)
* “Be pastoral - go see them - be in their homes - see what they are going through. (U.S.)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Children** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **3%** | **28%** | **25%** | **23%** | **14%** | **6%** |
| U.S.A. | 3% | 27% | 28% | 24% | 15% | 3% |
| Canada | 2% | 23% | 30% | 26% | 14% | 5% |
| Australia | 3% | 40% | 19% | 24% | 10% | 4% |
| Europe | 3% | 32% | 19% | 24% | 18% | 3% |
| U.K. | 4% | 30% | 26% | 16% | 16% | 8% |
| Asia | 4% | 28% | 9% | 34% | 21% | 4% |

**Editor’s Note:** This theme was the most even-handed. **Globally**, the Satisfaction Ratio of Effective to Ineffective was 1 (31%/37%), and this was repeated across the groups. The ratio was positive for Australia (43%/34%) and for the United Kingdom (34%/32%). It was mildly downbeat for Canada (25%/40%) and for the Asia (32%/55%) at a ratio about negative 2.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 30%/37% Canada: 25%/40%

Australia: 43%/34% Europe: 35%/42%

U.K.: 34%/32% Asia: 32%/55%

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| There are too many issues teens face today that make it impossible for parents to monitor, speak about and support the child. Sometimes parent voices are the least to be heard. Have young approachable “role model” ministers on staff that is savvy in dealing with challenging issues. | What issues? |
| Helping these families could be an evangelization moment. Please help us by developing an attitude of tolerance; create a friendly environment; be approachable without judgment. | The Church is a rules-driven organization; service is for the poor outside of our parish. |
| Stop the arrogance and aura of superiority, the” know-it-all” attitude and speak to us with a tone of respect. | These issues are not our problem as we have no familiarity with these issues. |

**Mixed Families---29% Ineffective**

The survey question on **Mixed Families** read, “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in the pastoral care of parents with children from different marriages?” 20% saw it as Effective compared to 29% who saw it Ineffective.

**Global Comments:**

* “My children never received any support for having a dad who did not practice any faith tradition (although stated he did on any census). My children were often humiliated by Church and schools always holding up examples of fathers who had the resources to be generous to either the Church/ school community, other children at the Church/school etc. This patriarchal understanding of "charity" is very damaging and disempowering indeed with long-standing effects.” (U.S.)
* “Encourage small neighborhood programs to include such families, extend support to children of such families. The Clergy need to change their mindsets/attitudes conventional ideas of "good families." Train and generate deeper sensitivity amongst the clergy - both nuns and priests.” (India)
* “Allowing blended families with divorced and/or remarried parents to fully participate in the sacraments of the Church would be an excellent way to encourage them to stay and participate.” (U.S.)
* “Given that many feel excluded from Church because of remarriage or living together, I would say they really don't want the pastoral care of the Church.” (Australia)
* “As long as the hierarchy doesn't know, they do OK. Don't make parents status a limitation to a child's entrance into church/school activities. Don't blame the child for the parent's issues.” (U.S.)
* “Children are a family thing. They only get to church for baptism, first communion, and confirmation or when they study in Catholic schools where they can access programs, services, and care. “ (Philippines)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “At the diocesan and parish level, a nurturing, caring faith community is needed to support the psychological and spiritual needs of these parents so they can be more understanding (acceptance), loving and caring to their children of mixed marriages.” (U.S.)
* “Be nice and accepting. Children are not responsible for their family’s actions. Don't shun gays. Five of my extended family members are with gay partners. Cardinal Burke says we should shun them and not invite them to dinner; so gay parent children are denied meeting their first cousins? Is that what Jesus would do? He has no experience of how families are today! This puritanical attitude makes our Church appear judgmental, rigid and out of date for today's realities. That is why nobody follows their stupid Man-made rules.” (U.S.)
* “The whole understanding of divorce, church rules and regulations have to change first or there needs to be dialogue about how to live a Christian life. Care implies Love: don’t demand or force.” (Australia)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Mixed Family** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **3%** | **17%** | **46%** | **17%** | **12%** | **5%** |
| U.S.A. | 3% | 17% | 49% | 16% | 12% | 3% |
| Canada | 4% | 14% | 49% | 18% | 9% | 6% |
| Australia | 1% | 22% | 45% | 15% | 13% | 4% |
| Europe | 3% | 19% | 31% | 26% | 19% | 2% |
| U.K. | 1% | 16% | 50% | 20% | 7% | 6% |
| Asia | 4% | 11% | 28% | 40% | 15% | 2% |

**Editor’s Note:** Response to this question was marked by an apparent general lack of experience of the situation and/or the Church’s pastoral response. This can be seen whereby half expressed No Opinion or left the question Blank, **Globally** 51%, and for U.S.A. (52%), Canada (55%), Australia (49%) and for the United Kingdom (56%).

Europe and Asia were more definite at 33% and 30% undecided. There was a muted overall dissatisfaction of 20% Effective to 29% Ineffective.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 20%/29% Canada: 18%/27%

Australia: 23%/28% Europe: 22%/45%

U.K.: 17%/27% Asia: 15%/55%

**America Magazine:** “Results of Family Synod Survey from South Africa” 4/7/15

Eighty percent of Catholics reported that they knew of no pastoral care for those in what was termed “unconventional families.” This included single parents, divorced parents (regardless of whether they have married again or not), and separated parents, parents who are of the same sex and families that relied on uncles and aunts and other family members for support. A UNICEF report in 2012 stated that 32 percent of children under the age of 18 are living with both biological mothers and fathers. Therefore the majority of families in South Africa (68 percent) can be described as unconventional families. This highlights a significant challenge and pastoral gap in the practice of the church in South Africa.

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| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| We often feel humiliation and being excluded particularly when we are not allowed full participation in sacraments. | Rules are rules! |
| Don’t use blended families as yet another excuse to judge us. | Rules are rules! |

**Marriage Preparation---26% Ineffective and 46% effective!**

The survey question on Marriage Preparation read: “In your experience, how effective has the Church been in their marriage preparation courses?” (46% to 26% who see it as Ineffective). It is self-evident that the Church’s pastoral response is seen as effective in the area of **Marriage Preparation**.

**Global Comments:**

* “‘*Humanae Vitae*’ is still an extremely difficult hurdle for marriage preparation programs to navigate. It reflects a poor understanding of marital love and rigid theology.” (U.S.)
* “It has become more of a ritual than genuine preparation. Bureaucratic methods need to be given up and involvement of mature family couples could be another important way of marriage preparation.” (India)
* “One-on-one marriage prep is necessary in our culture. Many engaged couples have not been well catechized. Couples should be encouraged to have an elder couple who can support them throughout their married life.” (Canada)
* “A formality, imposed as a condition, often poorly and reluctantly conducted in a general way without attention to individual needs, and really not at the ideal time. Marriage preparation courses were directed toward augmenting the Church, toward further "capturing" souls, both those of the spouses and of future children. How much concern was there? Should not the families of the couple be more involved with true 'marriage preparation? The interests of the Church, like those of the state, get taken care of after the family is done with their celebrations and the preparations for that, or preferably, long before. The Church should preach marriage frequently. The idea of marriage preparation in connection with reserving the parish and a time and place often is derived from a sort of "last chance" opportunity mentality. Too late or too soon.” (U.S.)
* “What is a celibate man going to be able to impart any practicality to a couple about to be married?” (US)
* “Bishops and the clergy have to be better informed/educated regarding the challenges that await couples preparing for marriage. Otherwise, "nemo dat quod non habet" (nobody gives what he ain't got)! Even their homilies at Mass leave much to be desired; they are often long-winded and lacking in substance and take-away thoughtful messages for the faithful to ponder and remember. Most parishes in the country have a preparation seminar which is called Pre-Cana conference for couples who marry in the Church. Philippine government has a parallel seminar, mostly focused on responsible parenting - family planning. But this applies only to those who intend to marry civilly or in the Church.” (Philippines)
* “From my own experience of marriage preparation (14 years ago) I was pleased that the priest realized his own limitations in this area and facilitated support and help for us from another couple which was welcome. I would like this balance of spiritual and pragmatic support to be more widely followed.” (U.K.)
* “Sadly, the laity do not see the reason for these courses. Maybe these are too didactic from the view point of the laity. If that is so, much needs to be done. The laity presents themselves when "training programs" are being proposed by companies. Even here, there are people who think that they are a waste of time.” (India)
* “Course too short and covers things very superficially.” (Canada)
* “We were married many, many years ago, some 40 years and fortunately the priest at our University church was understanding and spent the time discussing religion and philosophy with my philosopher- Jewish husband. We were married in France where they were reassured we had followed marriage preparation sessions. In other circumstances, we would never have been married in the church. I think marriage preparation needs to cover many more aspects, be more open to questions concerning procreation, concerning child and wife abuse. It needs to be with recently married couples and older couples so that one sees the continuum of experiences, both good and bad, and learn that it won’t all be easy, but difficulty can be overcome together. We need to enable participants to talk freely and to see that indeed it is possible to stay together. Maybe some sessions ought to be divided by sex so that specific questions can be asked in a more restricted and comfortable environment.” (France/China)

**Globally Recommended Solutions:**

* “1) I believe this is one area in the Catholic Church where we have spent a great deal of time during my 38 years as a priest. In fact, many Protestant denominations now require a process of preparation similar to the Catholic Church. 2) We need to train married couples to be sponsor couples for those getting married. This is definitely a gift married couples can bring to the church. 3) We need ongoing gatherings with married couples such as "Date Night Outs' where we invite married couples to dinner and have a particular presentation on a topic of interest to married couples.” (US.)
* “Continually update the program to deal with today's reality of blended families, no-children families, different faith couples, no faith of one person, same-sex couples, etc.” (Canada)
* “The Church's marriage preparation courses have focused more on the mundane due to assuming the couple is well versed in the Faith. Any serious Catholic couple will accept a more Faith-filled, and rigorous course as a foundation to establish a happy marriage that will stand the test of time.” (Canada)
* “In this day and age, a celibate priest will not be taken seriously when he gives marriage instructions. Marriage preparation should be ongoing, non-threatening, welcoming and nonjudgmental part of every parish run by married couples with the lived experience of marriage and family, rather than a prerequisite weekend affair with 400 other couples.” (Canada)
* “A course is not the way to marriage preparation. Pastoral care can't deal with isolated problems: it needs good spiritual direction from the beginning. Moreover, it needs expert pastoral care professionals with human skills and deep spirituality.” (U.S.)
* “Although never married, I am the daughter of a couple joyously married for 66 years, a sister married happily for 35 years, and a brother married three times now, after having been divorced twice. From observing these five marriages, I would pose a number of questions at the very least. 1.) Are you comfortable being with yourself? 2.) Are you afraid of being alone? 3.) Do you have interests of your own separate from your soon-to-be spouse that you will work to nurture to strengthen yourself, your spouse, and your marriage? [Following the death of her father, a child said she never knew her parents as individuals because they always did activities together, and never pursued individual interests.] 4.) Have you ever experienced or observed divorce and/or remarriage in your family? 5.) If so, what would you do to ensure that you learn from the experiences of others? 6.) How do you handle hurt, anger, and hostility? 7.) Do you internalize your hurt, anger, and hostility? 8.) Do you have physical outlets to express your emotions? 9.) Do you understand what is meant by the phrase, "using kids of divorce as political footballs?" 10.) How do you respond as individuals to that question? 11.) Have you discussed that question? I feel somewhat arrogant offering these ideas in that I have never considered marriage, and thus have never been involved in marriage preparation courses. (U.S.)
* “Always start with the reality. When I designed a program for the parish where I worked. I gathered couples together and asked them what, from their experience of marriage, they wished their marriage prep had done for them or covered. We created a program out of their experience. I think the FOCUS questionnaire is a good instrument, but only an instrument. Some places connect a mentoring couple with newlyweds. I think that's a good idea, but needs to be carefully approached, lest the new couple be made to feel inferior, or they think we lack something.” (U.S.)

**Similarities and Differences in Global Viewpoints:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Marriage Preparation** | Very Effective | Somewhat Effective | No Opinion | Poor | Very Ineffective | Blank |
| **Global** | **7%** | **39%** | **23%** | **17%** | **9%** | **5%** |
| U.S.A. | 7% | 41% | 24% | 17% | 10% | 2% |
| Canada | 5% | 47% | 26% | 9% | 10% | 4% |
| Australia | 4% | 40% | 29% | 17% | 8% | 1% |
| Europe | 8% | 26% | 16% | 31% | 16% | 3% |
| U.K. | 5% | 40% | 20% | 20% | 9% | 6% |
| Asia | 13% | 43% | 8% | 19% | 13% | 4% |

**Editor’s Note:** The Church’s approach to preparation of candidates for marriage was **universally** supported (46% to 26%). While Europe was dissatisfied (34%/47%), the other countries were clearly appreciative of the Church’s approach.

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction ratings by Country/Region are:**

U.S.A.: 48%/26% Canada: 52%/19%

Australia: 44%/25% Europe: 34%/47%

U.K.: 45%/29% Asia: 56%/32%

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| --- | --- |
| ***The People Are Calling For…*** | ***The Hierarchical Clerical Culture Delivers…*** |
| *Humanae Vitae* is problematic for a majority of Catholic couples. It is not a binding teaching; the people have rejected it. Let’s say that and move on. | Rules are rules! |
| Marriage Prep is yet another Catholic hurdle to jump over. How can a celibate man be effective in preparing couples for marriage? | Rules are rules! |
| Many of the faithful see no reason for Marriage Preparation but it may have a value-added benefit if there were married couples serving as sponsors that walk the walk with the newly married couple. Have social events where both the couple and the sponsors have opportunities for dialogue. | Will offer it to the Parish Council for further research. |
| These programs need continual updating because society is changing and all couples need mentoring. | No need for change |
| Perhaps marriage mentoring would be optimal. | Interesting. We’ll offer the concept to our Parish Council for debate. |

**Peripherally Significant Issues:**

* America Magazine: “Results of Family Synod Survey from South Africa” 4/7/15

The Institute established that many South Africans found the definition of “family” problematic. The Eurocentric view of family—father, mother and children (nuclear family)—is foreign to African traditional understandings. The increasing trend of children who grow up in the absence of biological parents under the care of extended family was highlighted. A number of respondents said that they consider the extended family to be mother and father and therefore family is not a “nuclear family.”

Despite the fact that the family is often spoken of as important in the Catholic Church, Catholics did not know of support programs for family life because of the lack of communication. People had some idea about pre-marriage formation, but 46 percent of respondents did not know of any initiative at parish level to support couples in the early stages of marriage. Many said that they were not aware of any specific promotion of marriage or parenthood by the church.

A strong view was that priests were too busy to minister to individual families and that many struggling families get support elsewhere. The need for lay people to be more involved in family ministry was emphasized. This is curious—if family life is a priority for the church, one might conclude that this would be a priority for clergy in their pastoral practice. Many respondents did not think priests were equipped to practically support families emotionally. Questions were asked about the effectiveness of priestly formation in the area of family ministry. In some formation centers it was reported that no practical training is given; the only training received was in the Canon Law of marriage.”

* The New York Times recently took Pope Francis to task in the following statements: (<http://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/05/06/opinion/frank-bruni-catholicism-undervalues-women.html?referrer=>)
  + *“He vented outrage, calling it a “pure scandal” that women didn’t receive equal pay for equal work.”*
  + *He left out the part about women in the Roman Catholic Church not even getting a shot at equal work. Pay isn’t the primary issue when you’re barred from certain positions and profoundly underrepresented in others.*
  + *Pay isn’t the primary issue when the symbolism, rituals and vocabulary of an institution exalt men over women and when challenges to that imbalance are met with the insistence that what was must always be — that habit trumps enlightenment and good sense.*
  + *Let’s be clear. For all the remarkable service that the Catholic Church performs, it is one of the world’s dominant and most unshakable patriarchies, with tenets that don’t abet equality.*

Epilogue

The respondents to the survey were conscious of the fact that they were addressing issues put to them by the members of the organizing committee for the Synods of Bishops in 2014-15. They understood that they were being consulted, that their views, opinions, observations, and recommendations would be welcomed, heeded, and valued. They responded openly, courageously, and in a spirit of candour and transparency.

They trust that their responses will inform the conversations and reflections of the Ordinary Synod of Bishops in October, 2015 during which the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world” are considered and debated.

It is evident from the consistent tone of the responses that people are hoping that the Synod will achieve consensus on genuinely compassionate solutions to the difficult pastoral problems. It is also equally clear that most respondents are calling upon Church leadership to acknowledge the intrinsic goodness and grace in their lives no matter how compromised these might be in terms of Church doctrine and law.

The survey respondents are inviting the Pope and Bishops to acknowledge that their problems are not unique, pointing to the fact that every family in the Catholic community throughout the world and probably without exception faces the same issues of breakdown, conflict, and irregularity when these issues are determined and understood in a doctrinal perspective.

A reasonable conclusion is that, if and when the stories gathered in this record in all their integrity and transparency are heard and acknowledged, then the tone of the conversation changes profoundly. The dynamics of pastoral practice shift dramatically when the primary focus moves away from law and becomes the application of authentic compassion and mercy in service of evangelization.

It is this style of evangelization that Jesus preached as a fulfilment of the strict requirements of doctrine and law. It is, therefore, in keeping with the example of Jesus that his Church gives priority to pastoral evangelization, interpreting doctrine and law in service to this mission rather than as conditions to meet before Evangelization can take place. Otherwise, doctrine and law become the servants of ideology and not of Christ. This is clearly how Pope Francis sees the role of compassion and mercy.