

Ask Mason & Teo



Catholic? Christian? What's the difference?

Hi Mason & Teo, I have heard about your column and I am a baptized Catholic. I go to Word of Life Church with my girlfriend who is a born-again Christian. She asked me, "What is the difference between a Catholic and a Christian?" What would be your answer? (Indifferent)

Dear Indifferent, Thank you for your interest in our column. We do appreciate your confidence in our ministry in sharing our love for Jesus Christ and the church.

Catholics are Christians, but not all Christians are Catholics. The word "catholic" in Greek means "universal," in the sense of "in keeping with the whole." Acts 11:26 states: "it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians.'" In the days of the Apostles, the word Christian represented the whole church, the universal church. All Christians were Catholics, and all Catholics were Christians.

The word Catholic became widely used by the year 110 A.D. to distinguish the universal church from heretical teachings. St. Ignatius of Antioch was a disciple of St. John the Apostle, and he was the first to document the term "Catholic" to describe the "universal" church, the whole church (Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Symneans, 8:2, c.110 A.D.). There was no difference between the two words; the Apostles used them synonymously.

The phrase used by the Apostles, "ekklesia katholikos," which means the universal church is still used today as a proper name for the Catholic Church. For the early church, if a person did not practice the Catholic faith, he was neither a Catholic nor a Christian.

Within the Catholic Church lives the fullness of Christ's body united with its head (see Ephesians 1:22-23). She receives from Christ the fullness of the means of salvation which God has willed, including the correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life and ordained ministry in apostolic succession. Thus, Jesus gives the church the whole truth, the fullness of truth.

The Eastern Schism in 1054 as well as the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century redefined the meaning of the word "Christian" to mean "those who believe in Christ." Today, there are approximately 38,000 different denominations in the world that claim to be Christians. Some of them also allege to being "catholic" or "universal."

Although all separated brothers and sisters can claim to be "Christian" because of their belief in Christ, they are not "Catholic" because they do not recognize the authority of the pope and bishops for preserving truth of faith and doctrine.

It was the Catholic Church that defined the doctrine of the "Trinity" which teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three persons in one.

It was the Catholic Church that protected the Bible across the ages before the invention of the printing press. Monks in monasteries faithfully copied the Scriptures by hand and it took each monk 10 years to copy one Bible. They protected the Bible through wars, famines, plaques, fires and threats from all over before other Christian denominations even existed. It was the Catholic Church, in 393 A.D. the Synod of Hippo and confirmed at Carthage in 397 A.D., that decided which books were to be included in the Bible.

A Catholic is a Christian who also believes in the communion of Mary and the saints, and the Sacramental life as given to the church by Jesus Christ. Not all Christians share the same foundational beliefs.

And then there are those who claim to be Catholics but who do not practice the faith, or preach it, or defend it. They may have been baptized in the Catholic faith but have stopped practicing it. They are Catholics by name only but not by association.

We continue to pray for all of God's people, those separated from the church, those who are faithful to the church, those who have gone before us and for our children of tomorrow. We pray as Jesus did in John 17:21 "so that all may be one" as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one.

And as God sent his son Jesus Christ into the world, so Jesus sends us into the world to go forth in love and service to one another as he has loved us selflessly.

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Millennial FAITH

Survey finds signs of hope, challenges among younger Catholics

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON

American Catholic adults under 30 share the commitment of older generations to philanthropy and volunteerism, but are more likely to believe that morals "are relative," according to a new survey commissioned by the Knights of Columbus.

The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., conducted the survey Dec. 23-Jan. 4 among 2,243 Americans, including an oversample of 1,006 "millennials" — those age 18 to 29.

The survey asked a wide range of questions about ideology, religious practices and beliefs, life goals and feelings about the nation's future, comparing the answers across generations and among Catholics in general, practicing Catholics who attend services at least once a month and Americans in general.

Among the survey's positive findings:

- When asked to choose among five long-term life goals, 31 percent of millennials chose "to be spiritual or close to God" as their top goal, the highest among any generation.
- Two-thirds (67 percent) of millennials and 71 percent of Catholic millennials said they had volunteered their time in the past 12 months, roughly equal to the percentages among other generations.
- A majority of millennials (56 percent) and Catholic millennials (52 percent) had donated money to a

charity in the past year. Although the percentages were higher at 67 percent for both Americans in general and American Catholics overall, the difference could be attributed to the fact that the younger people have lower incomes.

- Well over half of millennials (61 percent) and Catholic millennials (65 percent) were very or somewhat interested in learning more about their faith. Among practicing Catholics, 84 percent said they were very or somewhat interested.

But the survey also had some negative findings:

- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of millennials in general and 82 percent of Catholic millennials agreed with the statement that "morals are relative; that is, there is no definite right or wrong for everybody." A majority in every category except practicing Catholics (46 percent) agreed with that statement.
- Only 33 percent of millennials and 25 percent of Catholic millennials said they attended religious services at least once a month.
- Nearly two-thirds of Catholic millennials (64 percent) described themselves as at least somewhat more "spiritual" than "religious," about the same as millennials in general (66 percent) and Americans in general (63 percent).
- Sixty-one percent of Catholic millennials said they believe it is OK for people of their religion to practice more than one religion, compared to 54 percent of Americans in

general and 43 percent of practicing Catholics.

The survey also asked respondents to judge whether certain choices were morally acceptable, morally wrong or not a moral issue.

The majority of Americans (57 percent), millennials (58 percent), American Catholics (61 percent) and Catholic millennials (66 percent) said abortion was morally wrong, while more than half or nearly half of each group said gambling was not a moral issue.

The highest degree of unanimity was on claiming someone else's work as your own — with more than 90 percent of each group saying it was morally wrong — and on marital infidelity, judged morally wrong by percentages ranging from 87 percent (Catholic millennials) to 90 percent (Americans in general).

On the issue of same-sex marriage, 54 percent of Americans and 48 percent of American Catholics said it was morally wrong, but only 37 percent of millennial Catholics agreed with that view.

The margin of error for the survey was plus or minus 2 percentage points for Americans and plus or minus 3 percentage points for millennials.

"There is much good news for the church in this survey, especially when we consider that two in three Catholic young people want to learn more about the faith," said Carl Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus, in a statement from Rome, where he was attending meetings at the Vatican.

Movie reviews

Ratings



CNS photo/Sony Pictures

Dear John

(Screen Gems): This frequently sentimental drama, set in South Carolina, charts the love-at-first-sight romance between a Special Forces sergeant (Channing Tatum) home on leave to visit his mildly autistic father (Richard Jenkins) and an affluent college student (Amanda Seyfried), their prolonged separation due to his reenlistment following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and their efforts to maintain their bond by long-distance letter writing. Though the

portrayal of the conflicted filial relationship is moving, director Lasse Hallstrom's adaptation of Catholic writer Nicholas Sparks' best-selling 2006 novel focuses mostly on the emotionally unrealistic evolution of the lovers' attachment, and endorses its premature consummation along the way. Nongraphic premarital sexual activity with partial nudity, a few uses of profanity, at least four instances of the S-word. A-III (PG-13)

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I – general patronage; A-II – adults and adolescents; A-III – adults; L – limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O – morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G – general audiences, all ages admitted; PG – parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 – parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R – restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 – no one 17 or under admitted; NR – no rating.

- Alvin and the Chipmunks:
 The SqueakquelA-I (PG)
 AvatarL (R)
 The Blind Side.....A-III (PG-13)
 The Book of EliL (R)
 Dear JohnA-III (PG-13)
 Edge of DarknessL (R)
 From Paris With LoveO (R)
 LegionO (R)
 The WolfmanA-III (R)
 Sherlock HolmesA-III (PG-13)
 The Spy Next Door.....A-II (PG)
 Tooth FairyA-II (PG)
 Up in the AirL (R)
 Percy Jackson & The Olympians:
 The Lightning ThiefA-II (PG)
 When in RomeA-III (PG-13)
 Valentine's DayO (PG-13)

Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief (Fox): A mildly troubled New York high school student (Logan Lerman) discovers his true identity as a demigod – offspring of the Greek sea god Poseidon (Kevin McKidd) and a human mother (Catherine Keener) – and embarks on a quest to prevent a war among the deities of Mount Olympus, assisted by a semi-divine teen girl warrior (Alexandra Daddario) and a courageous but untested adolescent satyr (Brandon T. Jackson). Director Chris Columbus' glossy but shallow screen version of the first in novelist Rick Riordan's best-selling series of children's novels relies on some slick special effects to keep the adventure moving forward, though the titular hero's transformation from a 12- to a 17-year-old introduces elements unsuitable for some of the book's

younger fans, while parents who see the tale's mythological premise as more than a literary device will hesitate to allow impressionable youngsters to view it. Pagan themes, brief domestic discord, a few instances of sexual innuendo, a couple of crass terms. A-II (PG)

Valentine's Day (New Line): Ensemble romantic comedy, directed by Garry Marshall, charting the amorous ups and downs of a series of interconnected Los Angelinos over the titular holiday, including a newly engaged florist (Ashton Kutcher) and his live-in fiancée (Jessica Alba), a teacher (Jennifer Garner) and her doctor beau (Patrick Dempsey), a long-married couple (Shirley MaLaine and Hector Elizondo) preparing to renew their vows, and a pair of 18-year-old high school students (Emma Roberts and

Carter Jenkins) planning to lose their virginity together. As unengaging as it is unwieldy, screenwriter Katherine Fugate's tale of loves lost and found rejects marital infidelity, but otherwise takes the full physical expression of affection as a given, before marriage, before college and between members of the same gender. Implicit approval of nonmarital sexual activity and homosexual acts, partial nudity, adultery and phone-sex themes, sexual references and jokes, brief irreverent humor, a half-dozen crude and some crass terms. O (PG-13)

The Wolfman (Universal): Alternately spooky, savage and silly, this remake of the 1941 monster classic starring Lon Chaney Jr. tells of a decent if troubled man (Benicio Del Toro) periodically transformed into a hirsute beast after returning to

his ancestral estate in England following the brutal murder of his brother in 1891. Striking a tone that might be described as "visceral camp," director Joe Johnston entertains by rendering the trappings of lycanthrope lore with first-rate special effects and actors – Anthony Hopkins, Emily Blunt and Hugo Weaving – willing to feast on the material. Frequent episodes of moderately graphic violence including fleeting images of human entrails, decapitations and severed limbs; an instance of partial upper female nudity; several references to prostitution; one use of profane language. A-III (R)

From Paris With Love (Lionsgate): A Paris-based American diplomat and low-level CIA agent (Jonathan Rhys Meyers) yearns to be a real spy but finds himself bewildered

when assigned to partner a trigger-happy visiting operative (John Travolta) whose wild pursuit of drug dealers and terrorists sees the pair cutting a bloody swath through the French capital's criminal underworld while the novice's prolonged absence from home causes friction with his live-in Gallic girlfriend (Kasia Smutniak). As directed by Pierre Morel, the proceedings are occasionally amusing but far more often gleefully violent, with Adi Hasak's F-word heavy script glamorizing the mayhem and winking at the Travolta character's tawdry encounter with a streetwalker. Constant, sometimes bloody action violence, offscreen sexual activity with a prostitute, cohabitation, drug use, a couple of profanities, pervasive rough and much crude language. O (R)

OUR TURN



Therese J. Borchard | Religion makes us happier and more resilient

You don't need to talk me into praying or going to church, because I've benefited immensely from my holy streak. But it was refreshing to see religion discussed as part of the documentary series "This Emotional Life," which aired the first week of January on PBS and launched a multimedia project, including a sophisticated Web site with expert blogs and video clips.

One of the experts who appeared on the documentary was Edward Diener, a senior scientist for the Gallup Organization and emeritus professor of psychology at the University of Illinois. He has studied happiness across cultures and has pinpointed some universal reasons why some people are happier than others.

Diener told me in an interview that the four most prevalent

causes of happiness are supportive relationships, helping others, having a purpose or meaning in life, and finding activities where you can use your strengths. And if you look closely at most spiritual traditions, they afford us all of these things.

Religion gives us purpose and meaning. Personally, I think I'd be dead if I were an atheist, because my faith in God is the single thing

that keeps me going many a morning.

If I know that this world isn't forever, that it definitely ends and that I might get invited to the better one after it, I can slog through this life a tad more gracefully than if I thought this was it. Because of Jesus' redemption, any pain and suffering in my own life takes on meaning, which makes it much more tolerable.

Faith traditions also provide a social support system, vital connections to people with the same values.

In his book "Bounce: Living the Resilient Life," psychologist Robert Wicks writes: "Psychology has long emphasized the need for an excellent interpersonal network as a major element of health and happiness." Then he quotes an-

thropologist Margaret Mead, who wrote: "One of the oldest human needs is having someone to wonder where you are when you don't come home at night."

As part of a social network, people can both lend help and ask for help when they need it, both important to happiness.

If the religious experience is positive, it can inspire a person to identify personal strengths and to use those strengths as either part of the church community or in a job or hobby.

Again, the supportive network can provide the right kind of feedback so that a person is always striving to be his or her better self. Furthermore, as a moral compass, spirituality gives us rules to live by that keep us accountable to the right actions and relationships. Capitalizing on strengths, Diener says, is a key principle of happiness.

To learn more about the PBS series "This Emotional Life," visit the website: www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife.

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