

New Study Finds Catholics Want the Tools to Grow More in their Faith Life

Webinar Series Hopes to Help Catholics take their Faith to the Next Level

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As a response to a groundbreaking 2021 study that found 1 in 5 devout Catholics were uncomfortable sharing their faith, DeSales Media and Vinea Research are following up with a [new report](#) focusing on Catholics and different aspects of their Faith life. The

study found that American Catholics lead compartmentalized spiritual lives, meaning that just because they are strong in one aspect of their faith lives, doesn't mean they are strong across the board. The bottom line from the respondents is that everyone needs some growth in their



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Dave Plisky

faith somewhere. A new webinar series created by DeSales Media aims to help Catholics take their faith to the next level.

The 2023 Discipleship Study divides the Catholic population into segments according to how strong they are as disciples and how much they need to grow in discipleship. The Weak Aspiring and Strong Aspiring groups are highlighted as key targets for growth and engagement. (Graph 1)

Weak Aspiring are younger, somewhat diverse, with moderate involvement in faith groups and a strong prayer life. They desire significant growth in their faith and evangelization skills but face numerous barriers, particularly time and lack of interest. They are interested in online spiritual direction.

Strong Aspiring are older, more diverse, deeply committed, and comfortable with faith-sharing. They have strong involvement in faith groups and spiritual direction but cite “lack of opportunity” as a barrier to further evangelization.

Key Findings of the study include:

Faith Life: Most respondents are highly engaged with their faith, regularly attending Mass and engaging in daily prayer (70% pray daily). Prayer and sacraments were significant influences on their faith journey.

Evangelization: While 82% of respondents are comfortable talking about their faith, many expressed a need for better skills and resources to evangelize effectively. (Graph 2)

Spiritual Direction: Over half have experienced spiritual direction, but only 20% are currently engaged. Many are unaware of its availability. If spiritual direction were more available, more people would participate in it. The data suggests that even among disciples, Catholics will not go out of their way to seek out spiritual direction. It may need to be offered differently to different marital status segments and different generations. The best Googlers (our youngest) aren't finding spiritual direction, probably because the information is not available online.

Technology Use: Almost all respondents own smartphones, and 71% regularly use faith-related apps, including podcasts and prayer apps. There is a positive correlation between time in prayer and the use of prayer apps. That is to say, prayer apps - and digital devices such as prayer aids in general - work! There may be a particular opportunity here for those with children.

Community: There's an appetite for formation to happen in community with others, and we know this approach can work. Despite being labeled as the digital generation, young people actually desire in-person community the most. Many parishes do have youth and young adult groups, and some have senior groups. Rarely do you see groups for people in their 30s, 40s and 50s. The data shows that these generations aren't active in age-related faith groups.

There's a clear link between worship, prayer, and spiritual direction – they go hand in hand in sustaining the spiritual journey. The goal of the study is to use these insights to reveal how we can integrate our faith throughout our lives.



Faith-Sharing Comfort Level

“We can approach different sub-groups of disciples differently, even among those who recognize a strong need for growth in discipleship. For example, those already strong in their faith who are introverted yet have a high interest in connecting with others – this tells me small groups are perfect for them. On the other hand, it seems like online spiritual direction could be a game-changer for those feeling weaker in their faith who may have trouble finding a spiritual director in their area,” said Dave Plisky, Director of Product & Innovation at DeSales Media.

DeSales Media, as a ministry of the Church, shares these results freely because it believes in a unified Church. Our formation initiatives seek to help dioceses with the formation of their religious education teachers and faithful. At the same, we focus on the right technology solutions that help to modernize Church communications, allowing parishes and schools to engage their parishioners and families in the faith. We invite others to join the conversation with us and discuss how best to move ahead.

As a lay leader in the Church, you can contribute by taking the [discipleship self-assessment](#). You can become a stronger disciple by learning the different ways to increase in discipleship.

The full study reports are lengthy but are not meant to be overwhelming. To that end, Plisky has partnered with Father John Gribowich to unpack the study in a series of webinars and podcasts to reveal what our most engaged parishioners and lay leaders are looking for to take their faith to the next level. With their guests, Dave and John will explore how you can put the findings of the study to work in your ministry and personal life.

“As we discuss the results of this survey with experts in Church ministry, we will discover how each of us can help build a stronger Catholic community in our parishes, schools, and families,” said Plisky.

The [Religion to Reality](#) webinars are FREE to everyone and designed for people currently working in ministry or those who want to see their parish thrive. Click on the link for the full list. The next webinar, Spiritual Direction – Guidance and Grace, will take place Monday, Oct. 14, 1:00pm EDT.

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Overall Report: <https://hubs.ly/Q02RdW1x0>

Segmentation Report: <https://hubs.ly/Q02RdWzp0>

Additional Charts: <https://hubs.ly/Q02RdWw30>

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