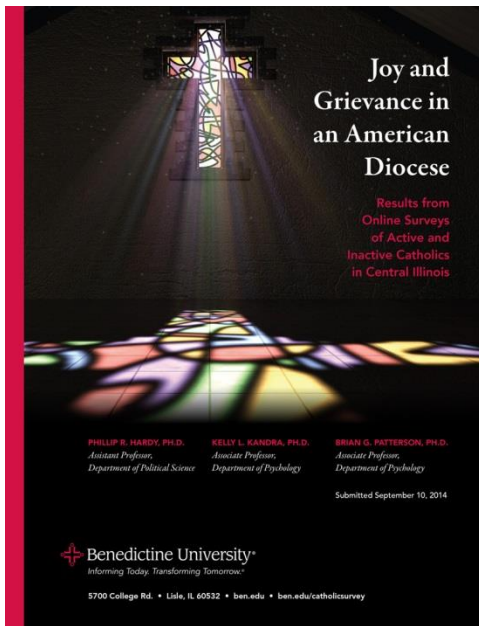


Joy and Grievance in an American Diocese:

Results from Online Surveys of Active and Inactive Catholics in Central Illinois



Phillip Hardy
Kelly L. Kandra
Brian G. Patterson

24 November 2014

Origins of this Project

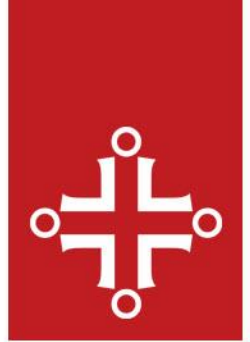


Our Research Questions



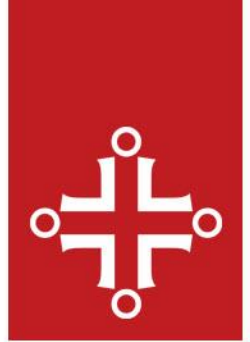
- Why are some parishioners no longer attending Sunday Mass?
- Why have some parishioners made the decision to separate from The Catholic Church?
- Can anything be done to improve retention rates in the Springfield area parishes and bring people back to The Church?
- How do the attitudes and behaviors of “Inactives” compare to those of “Active” parishioners?

The Research Design



- Wave 1: Online Survey of Inactive Catholics (November '12 – March '13)
- Wave 2: Online Survey of Active Catholics (February '14 – March '14)





Surveying Active Lay Members

- “Internal” recruitment strategy
- 21 parishes from 3 deaneries
- Final sample size = 827





Surveying Inactive Parishioners

- Limited print publication advertising
- Announcements and fliers at Sunday Mass
- Social media
- Benedictine & diocesan websites
- Requests from parishioners, to “Inactives” that they could complete the survey

- Final sample size = 575



Developing the surveys



- Review existing academic scholarship
 - Charles Zech & William Byron’s “Empty Pews” study (2011)
- Combination of open- and close- ended questions
- Similar surveys...*not* identical

Comparing the Samples



	Actives	Inactives
Gender	65% women	42% women
Age	79% 50 and above	58% 50 and above
Ethnicity	98% White	98+ % White
Marital status	78.3% married	61% married
	8.1% divorced	19% divorced
Raised Catholic	83%	87%
Post-HS degree	31%	38%

The “Actives” Survey



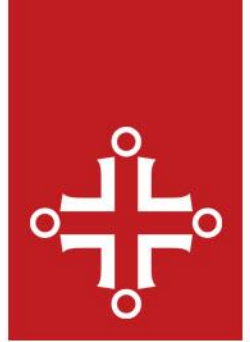
Church Membership and Attendance Characteristics



Variable	%
Parish Membership	
Yes	96.5
No	1.8
Not Sure	1.6
Considered Separation	
Parish Only	9.3
Catholic Church Only	3.1
Both Parish and Catholic Church	3.8
Frequency of Mass Attendance	
Daily	11.4
Weekly	73.2
Almost weekly	12.0
At least once a month	2.5
A few times per year	1.0



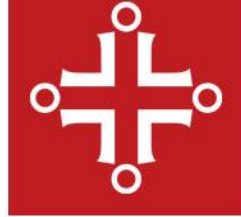
Why do you attend this parish?



- Sense of community
- Spiritual fulfillment & growth



The Parish Setting



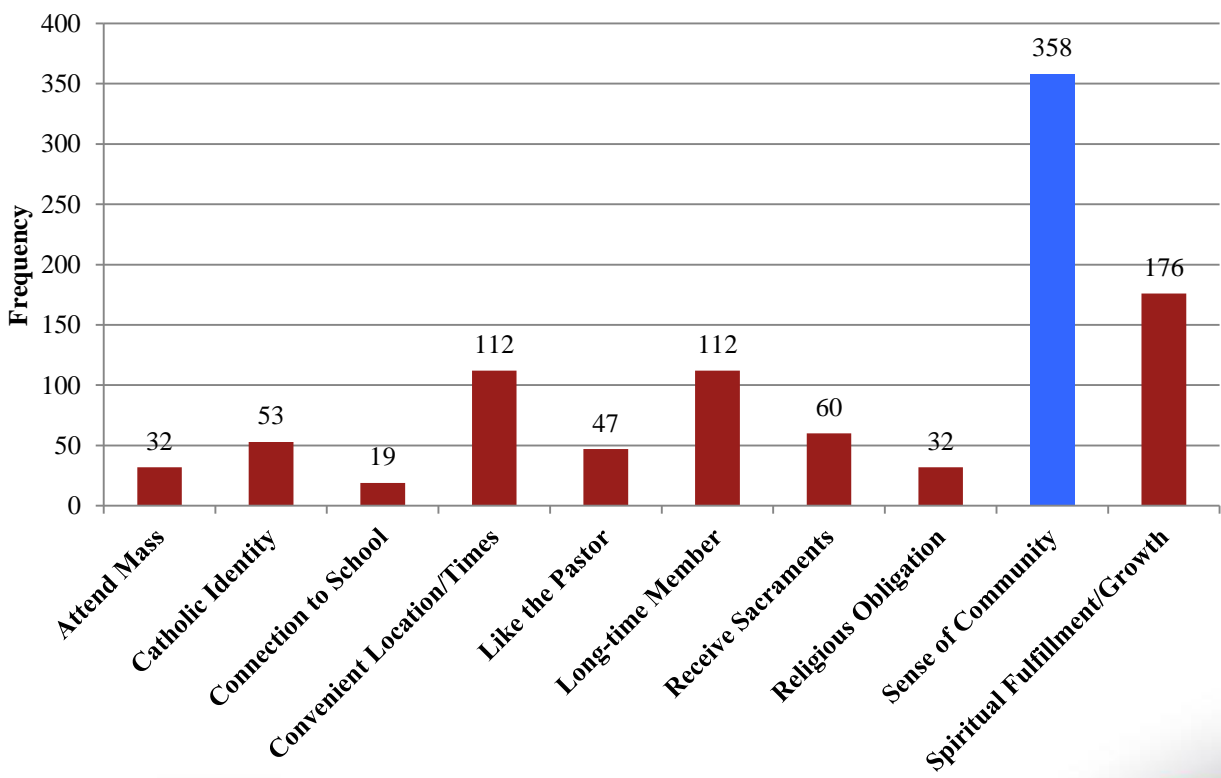
- Hospitality
- Warmth, professionalism of staff
- Welcoming
- Warm, friendly environment

- Mass locations & times
- Quality of physical facilities



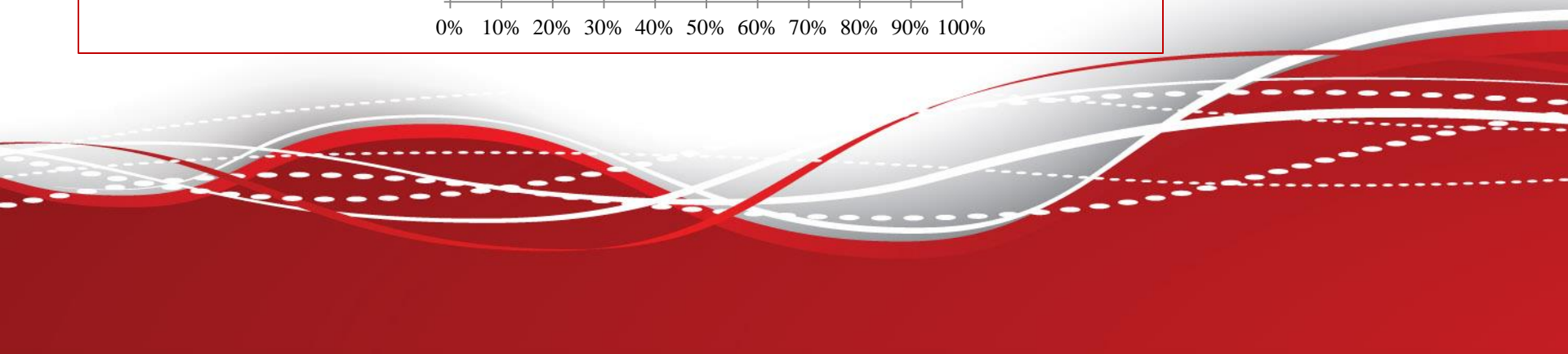
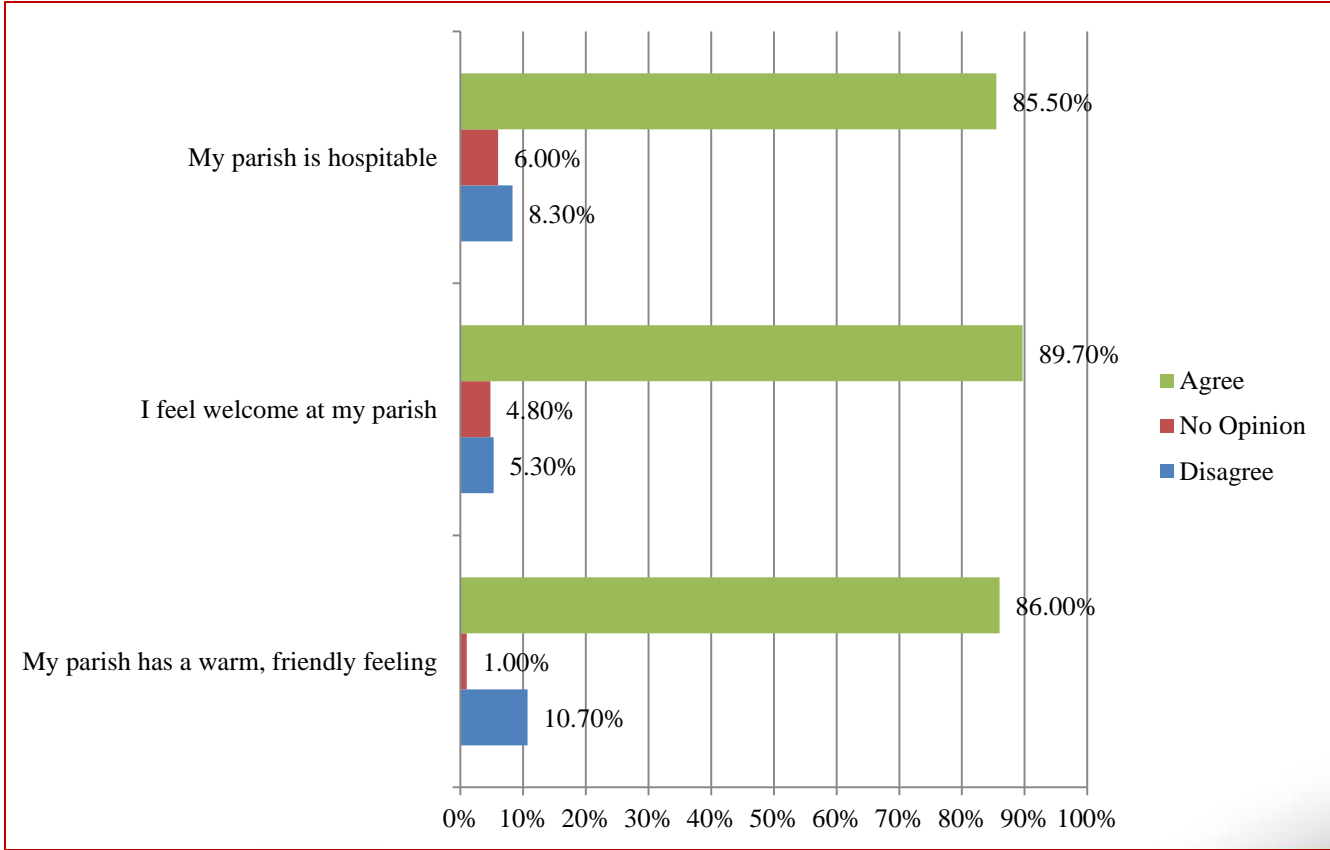


Most Important Reasons Why Parish Is Attended

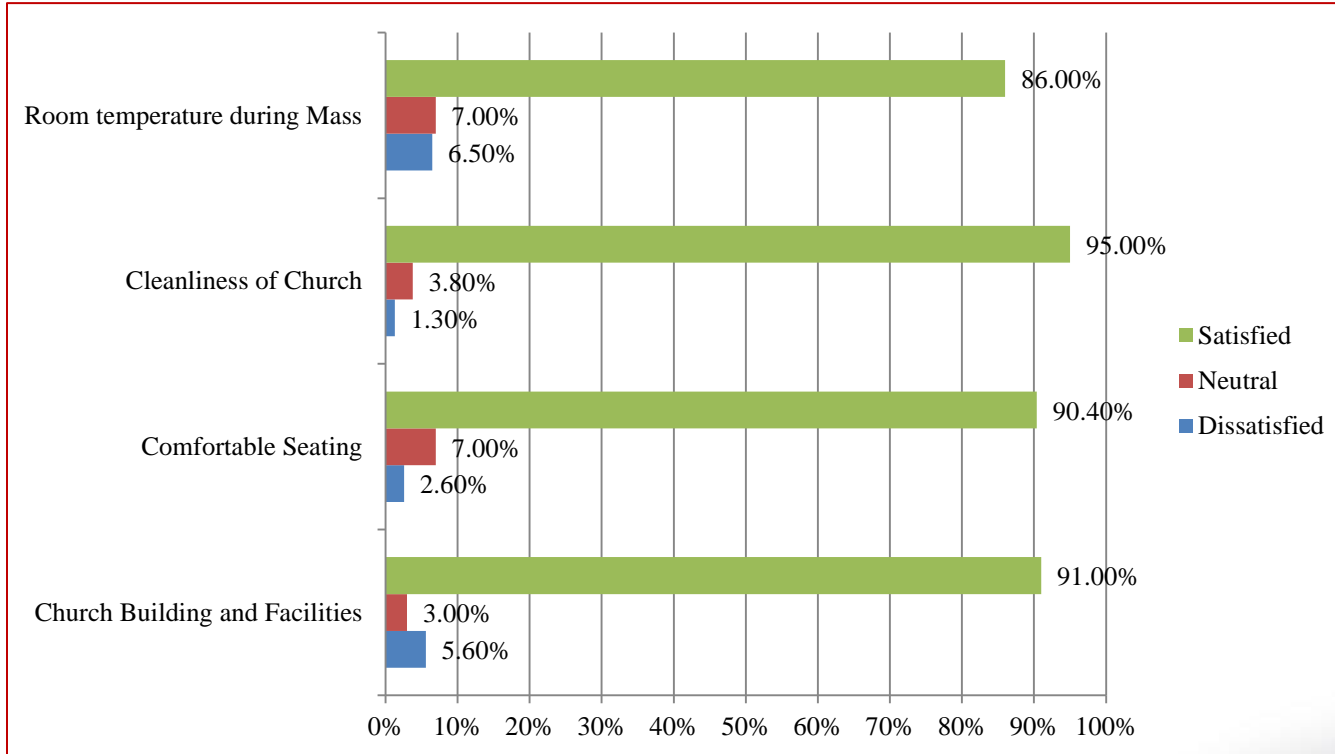




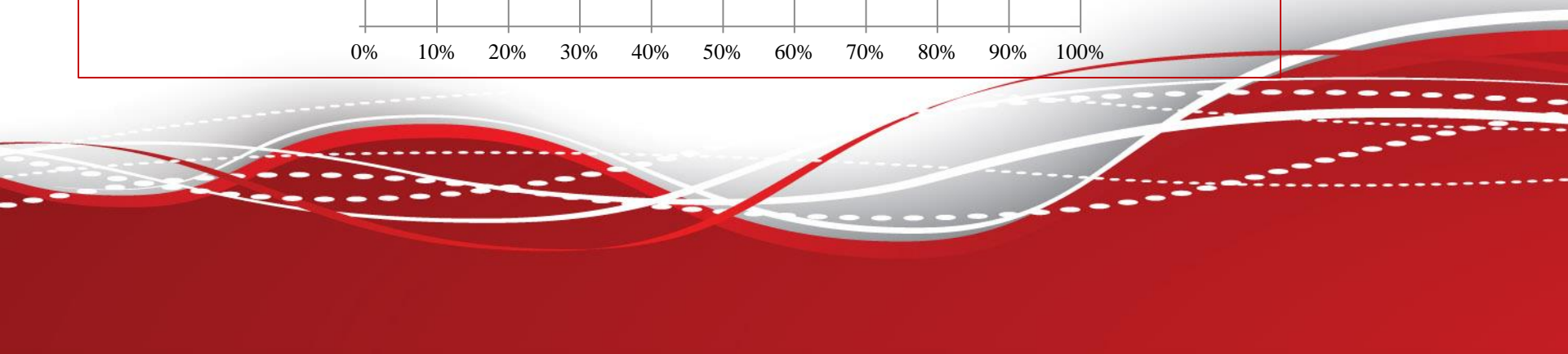
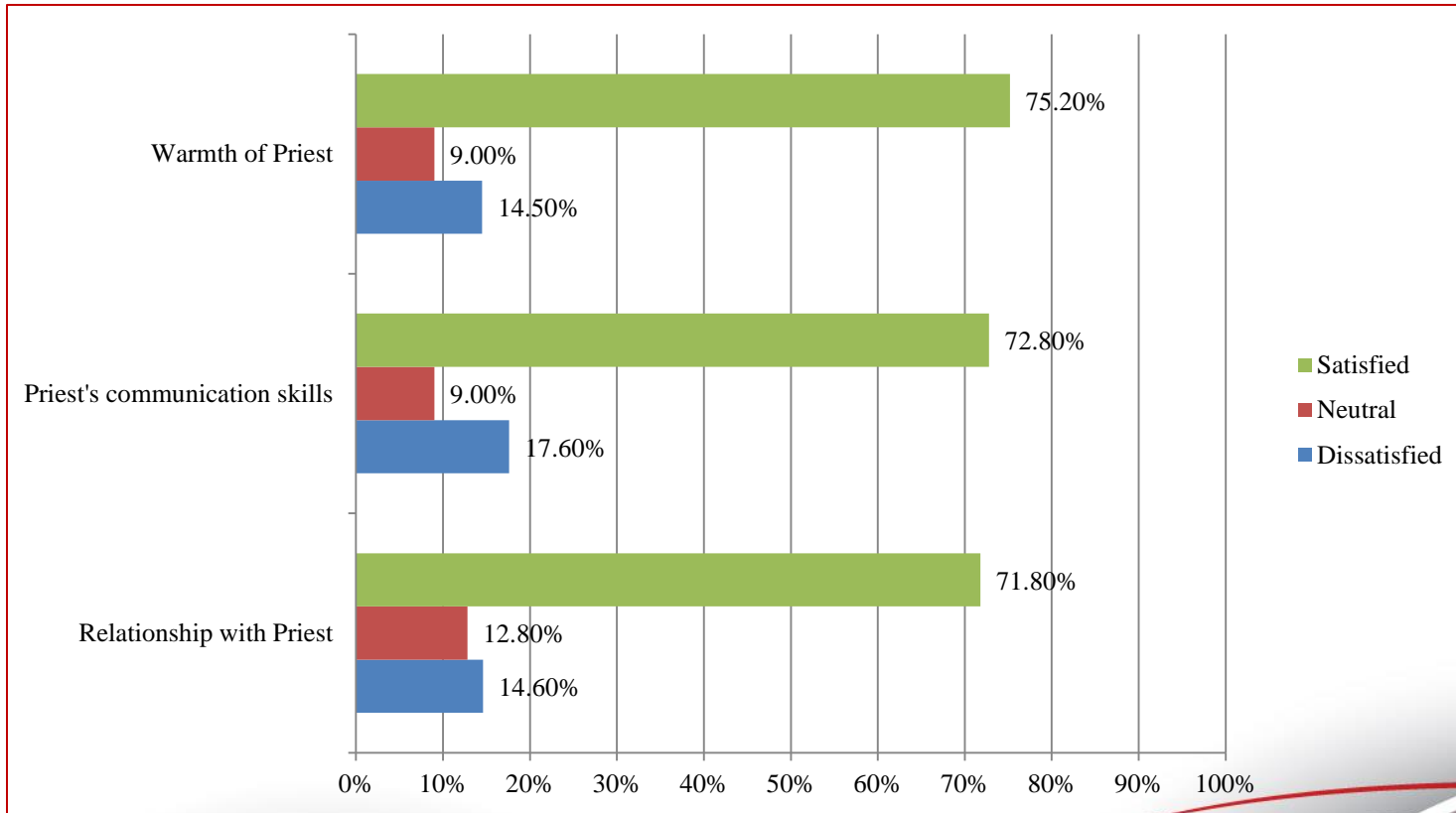
Level of Agreement with Sense of Community



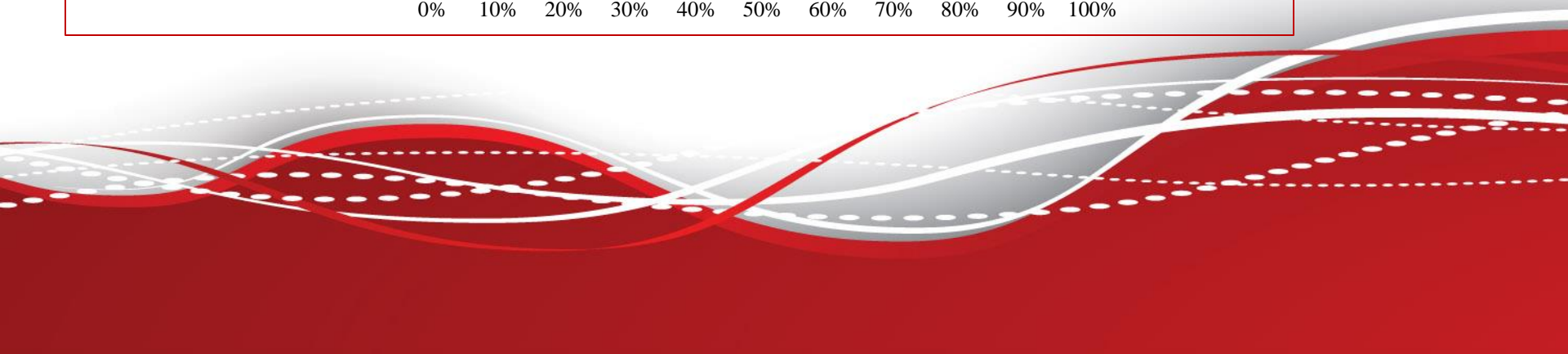
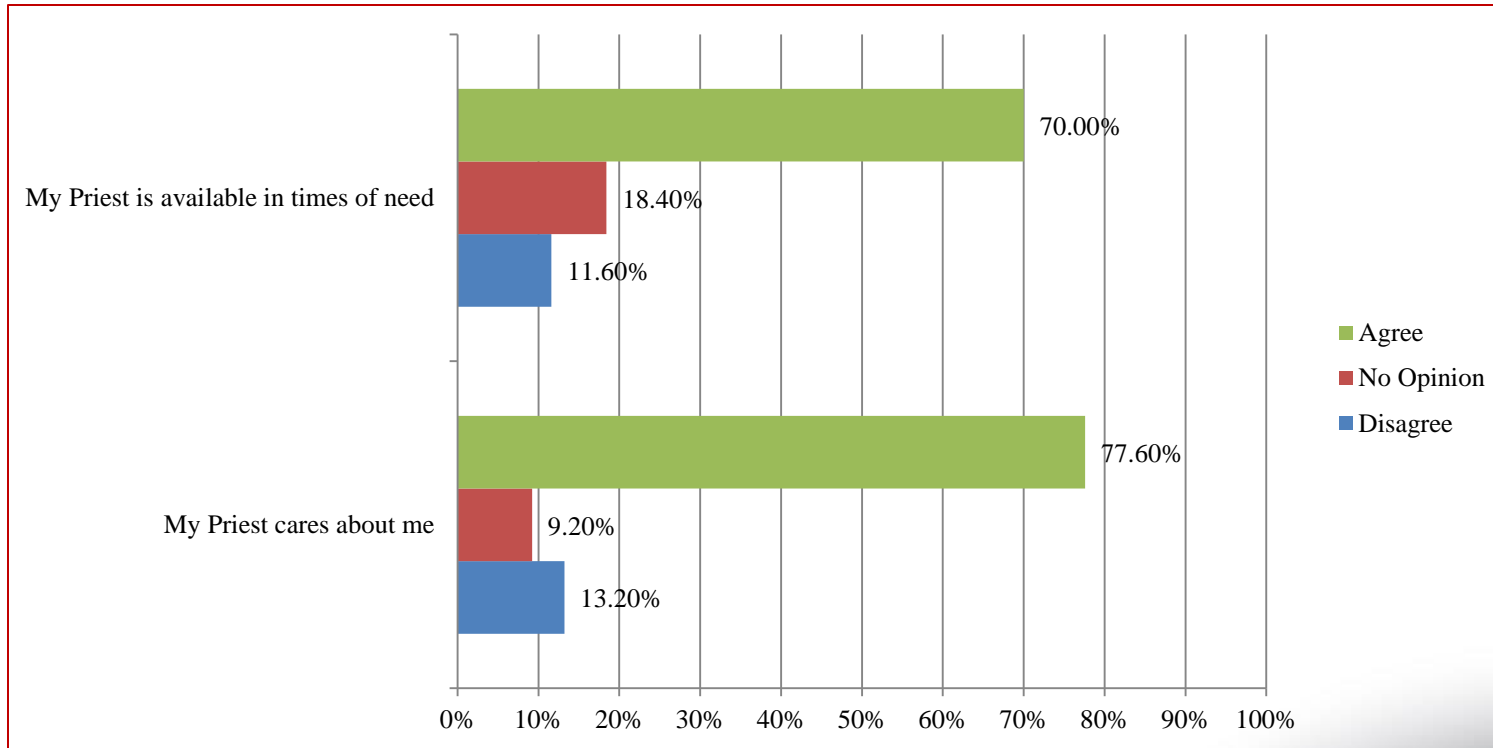
Level of Satisfaction with Church and Facilities



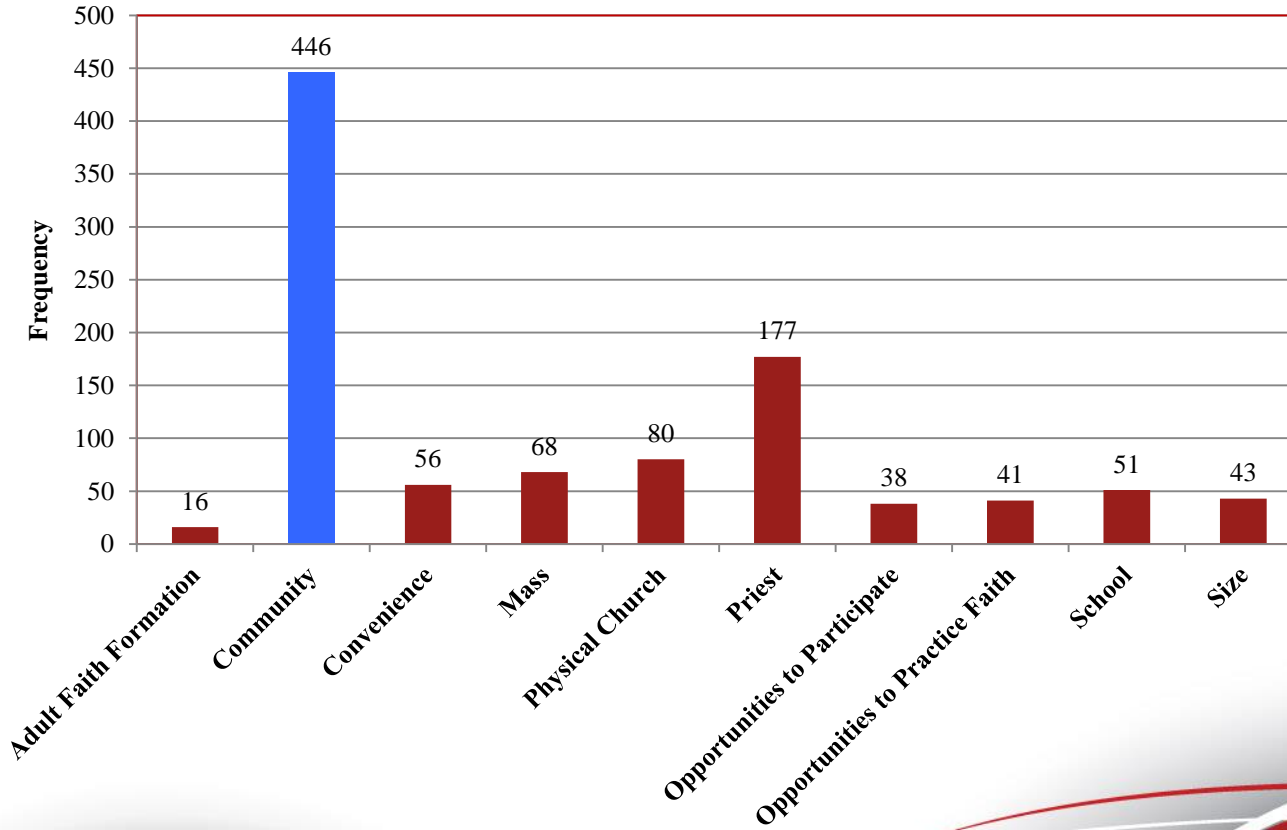
Level of Satisfaction with Parish Priests



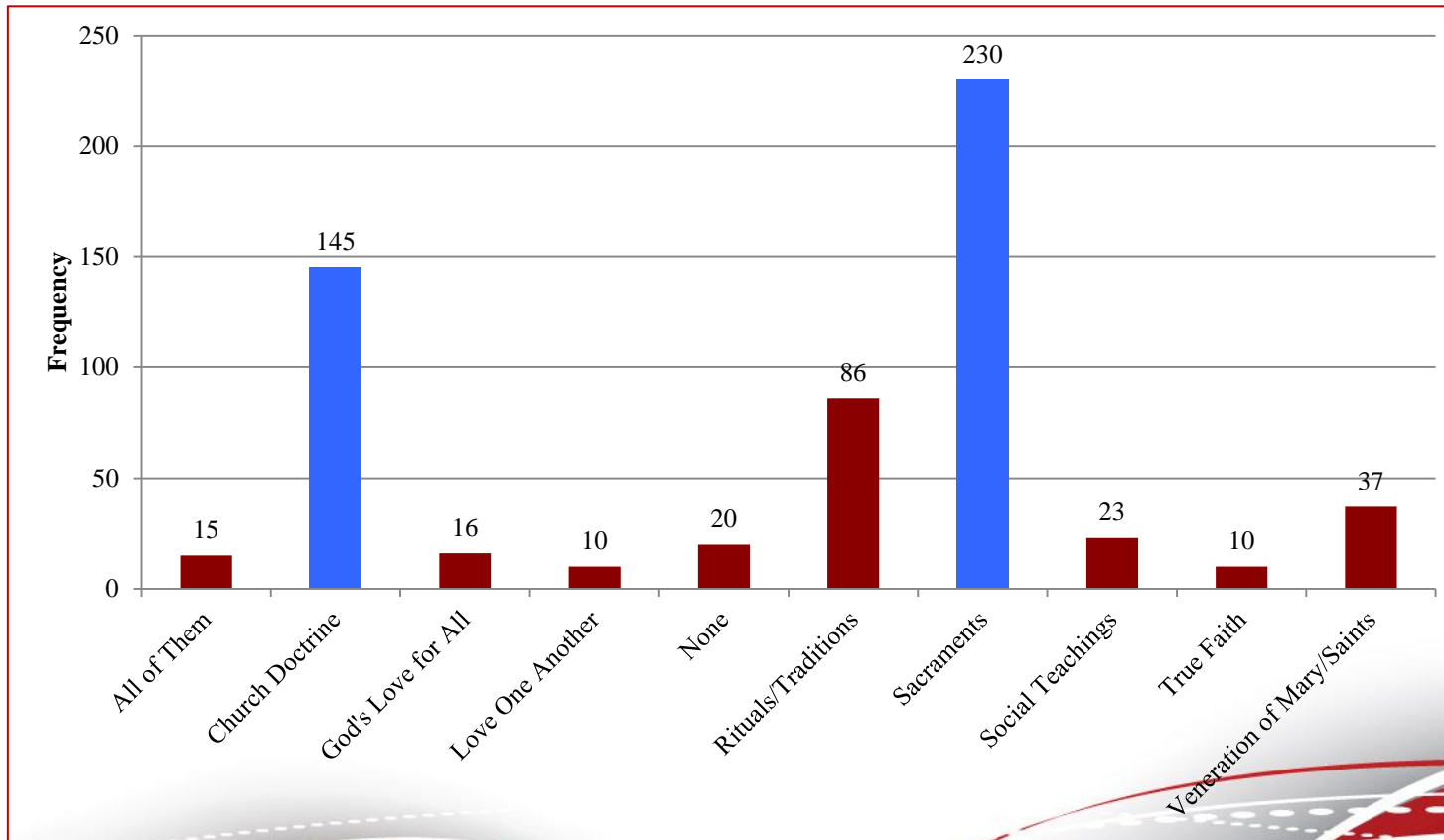
Level of Agreement Regarding Parish Priests



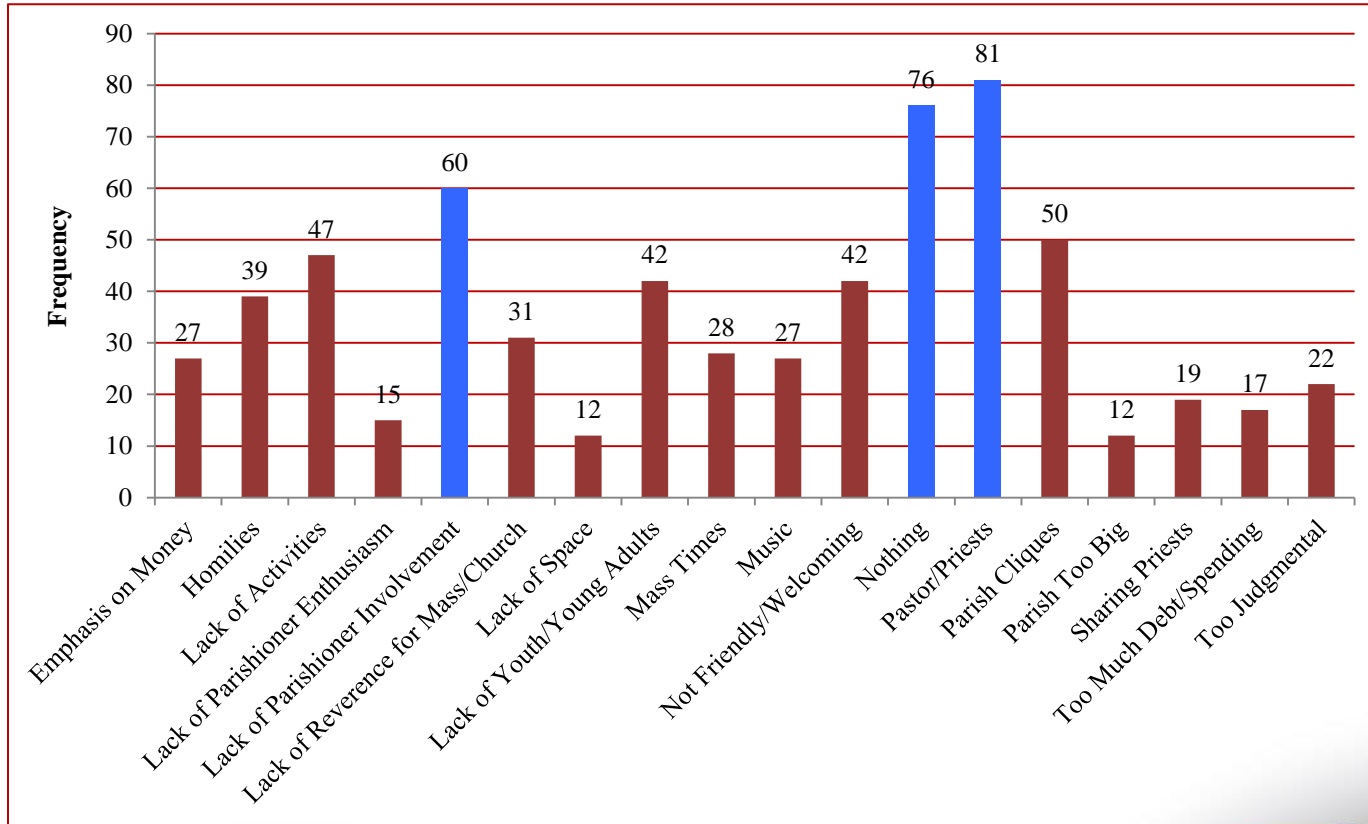
What Springfield Parishioners Like Most



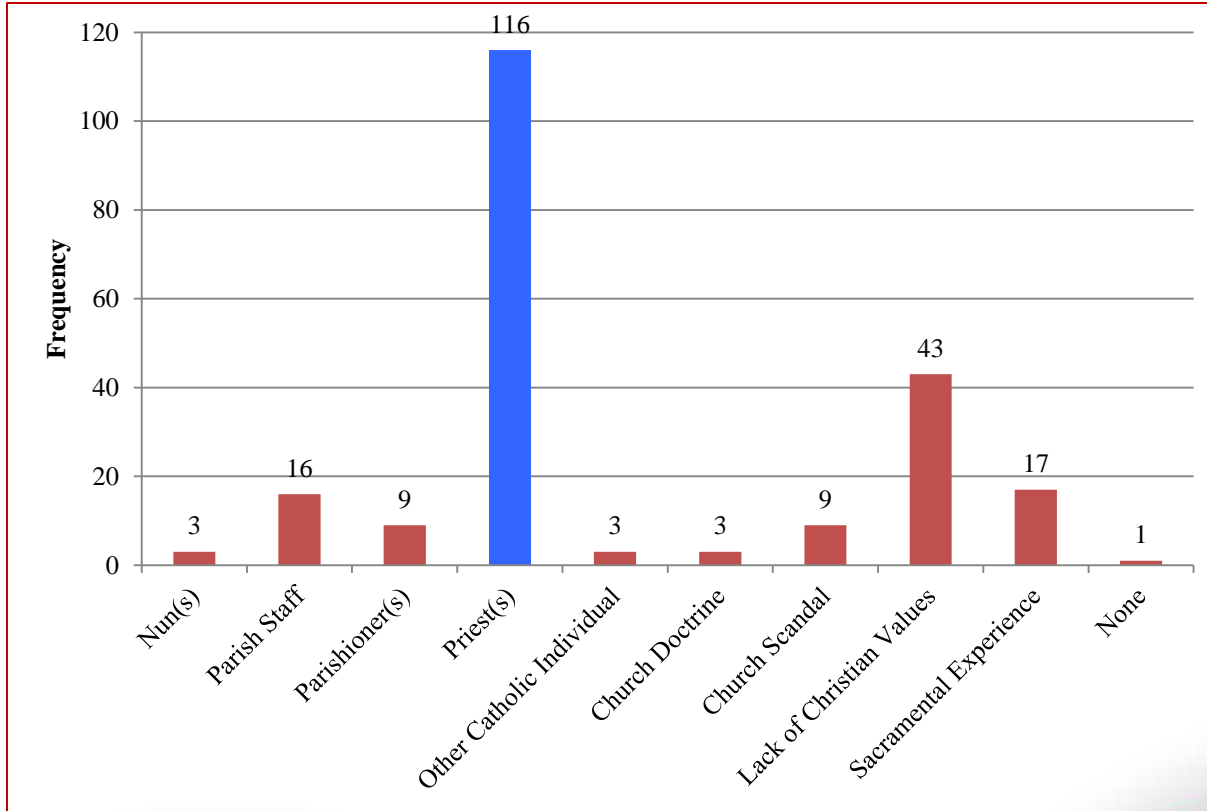
Catholic Beliefs/Practices Considered Especially Important



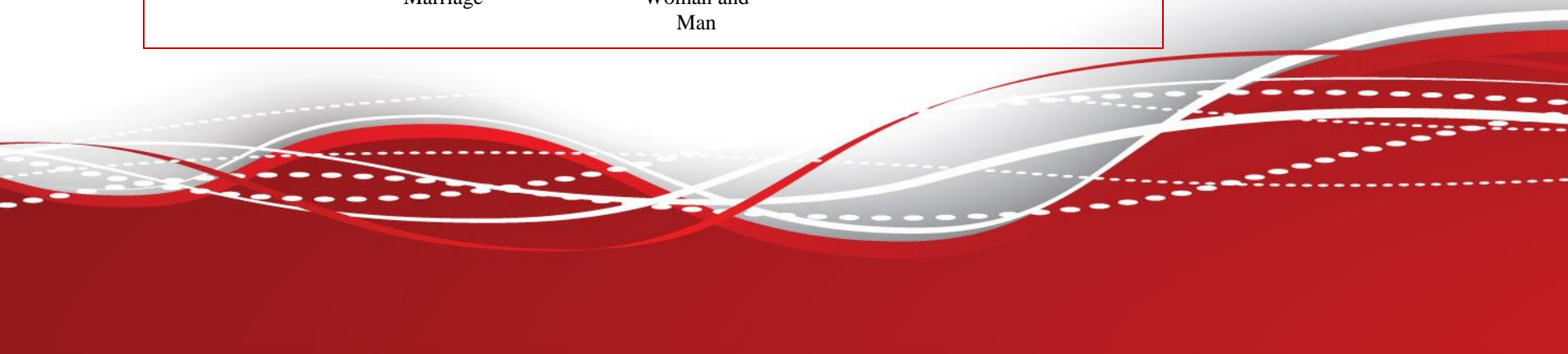
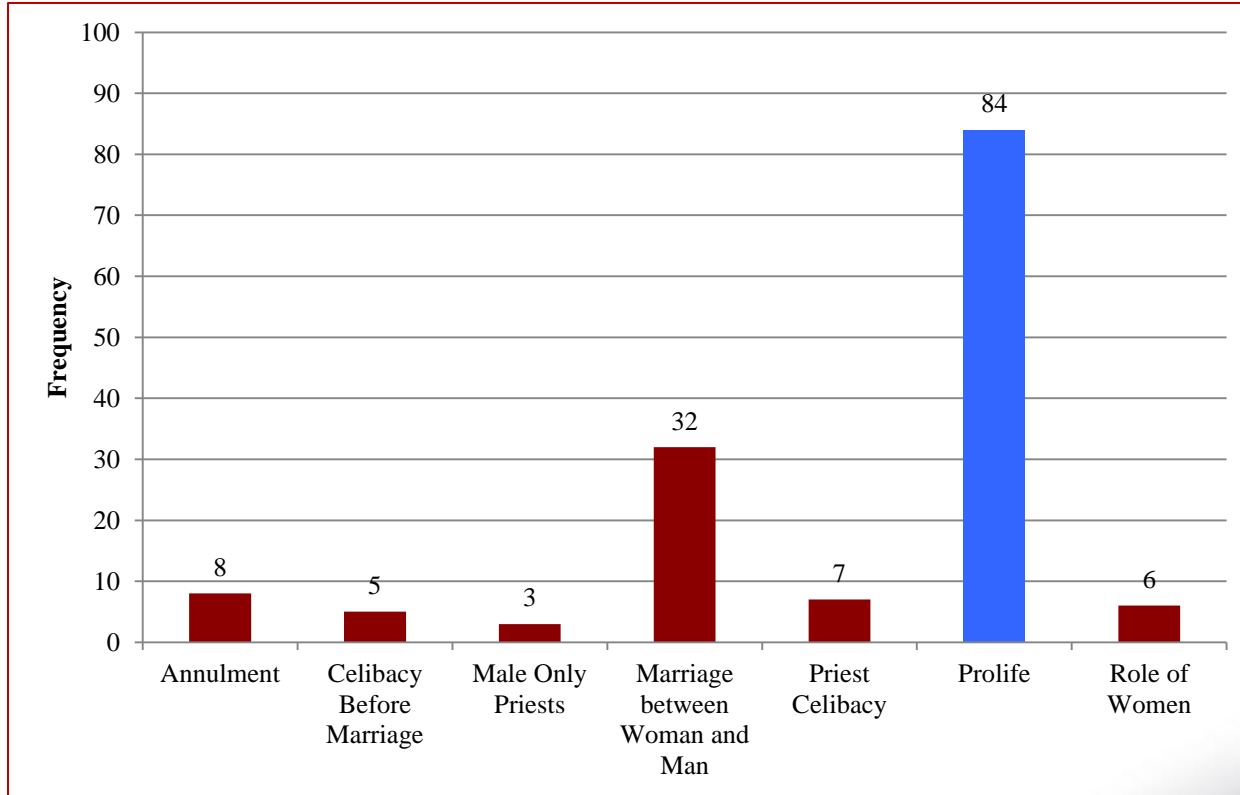
What Springfield Parishioners Like Least



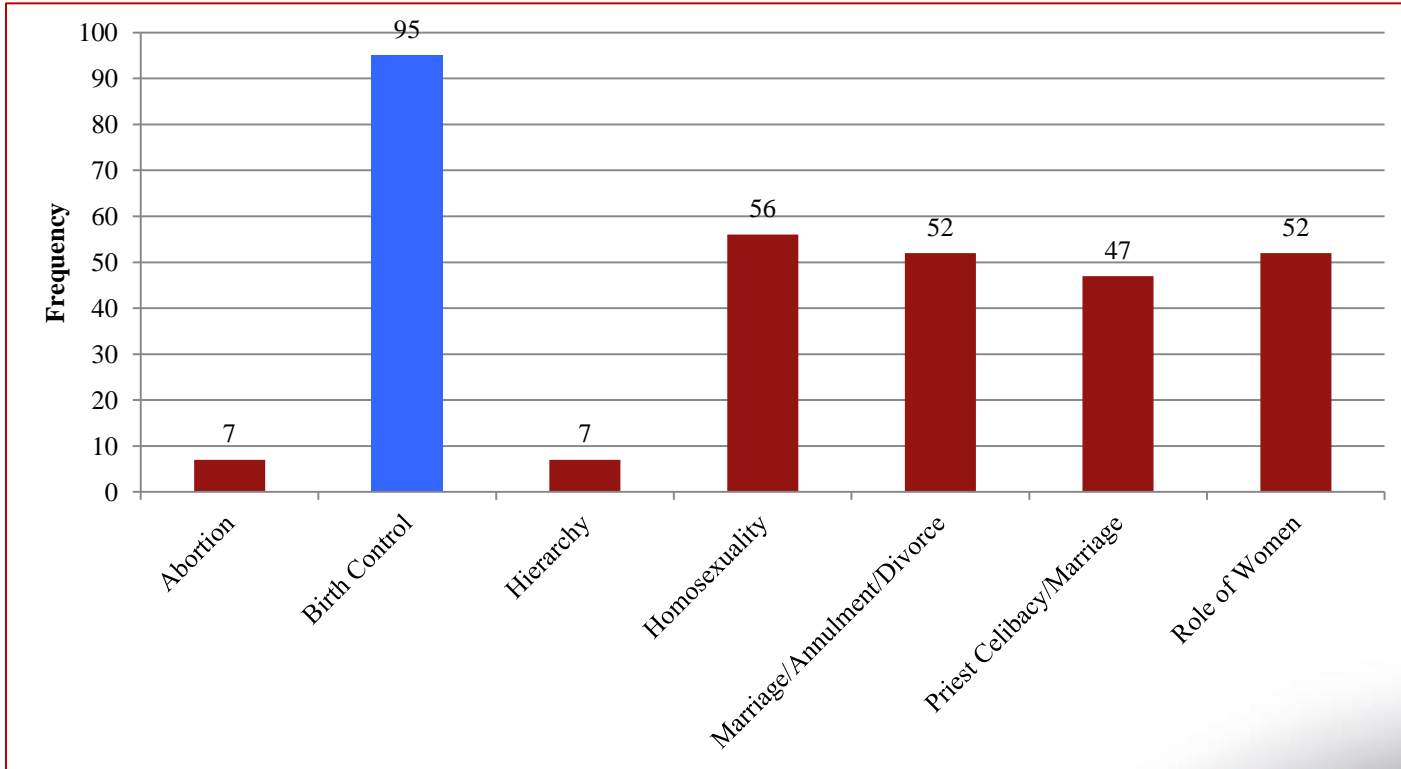
Active Respondents' "Bad Experiences" With Any Person Associated with the Church



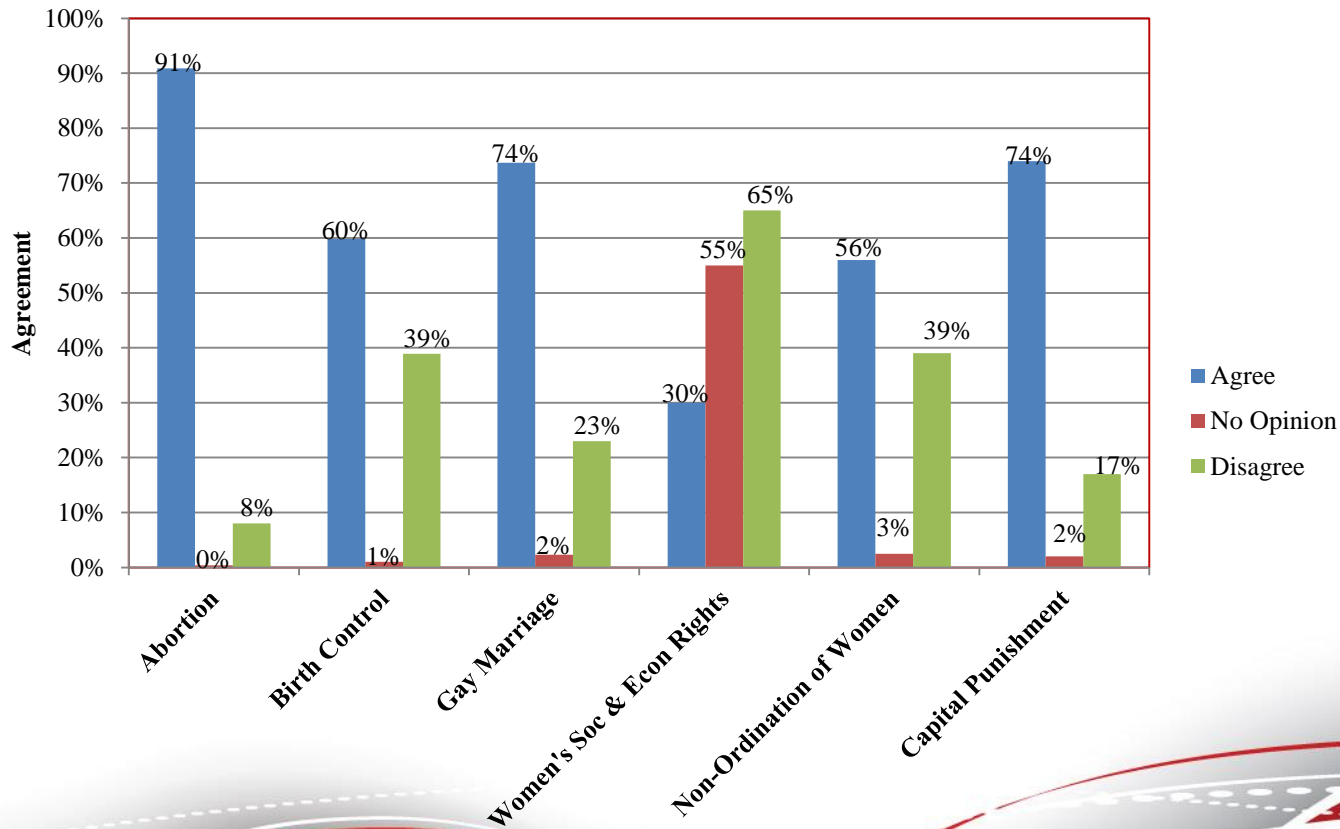
Catholic Doctrine Considered Especially Important



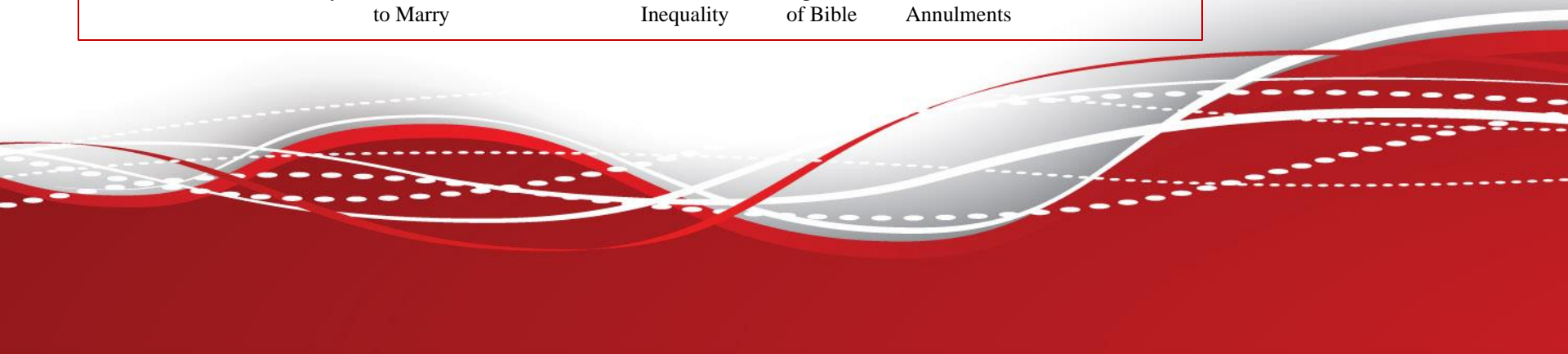
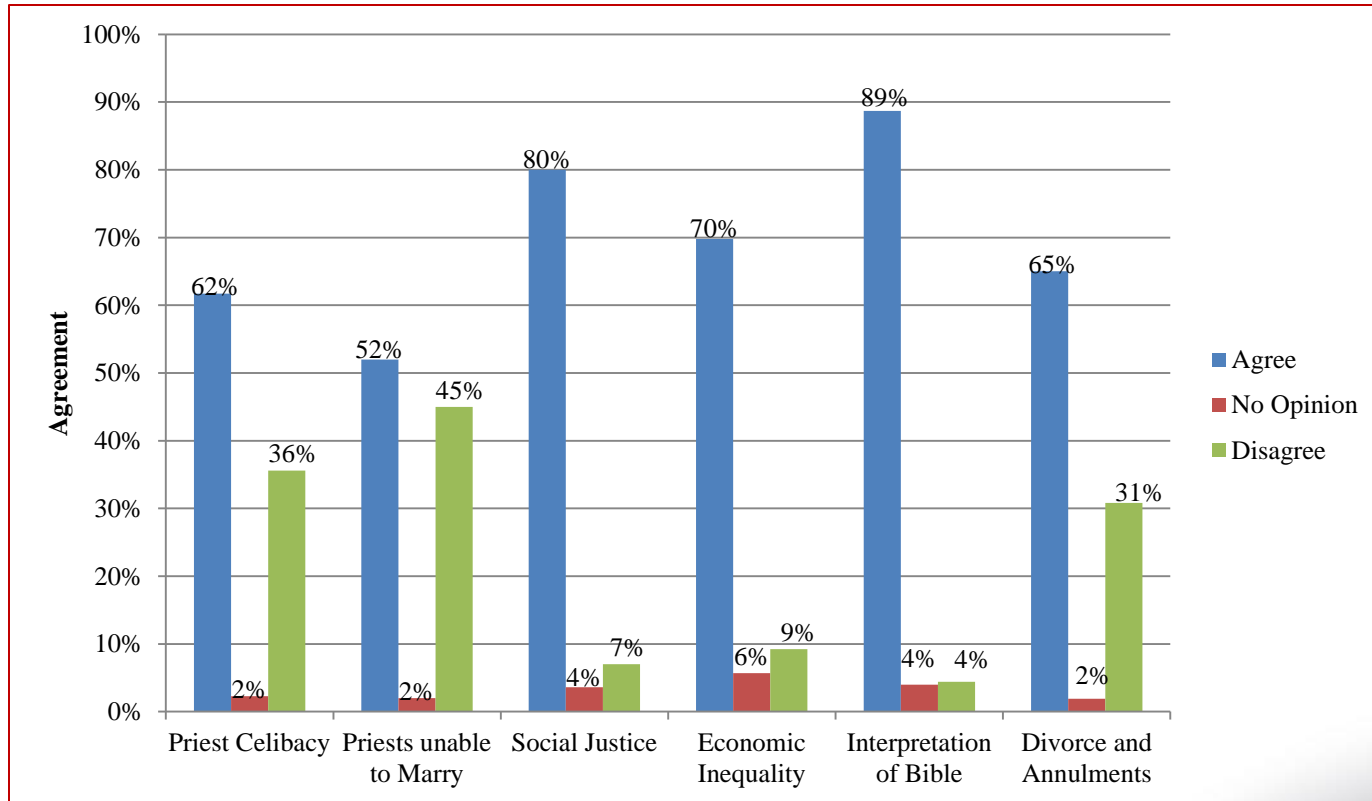
Church Doctrines That Trouble Springfield Catholics



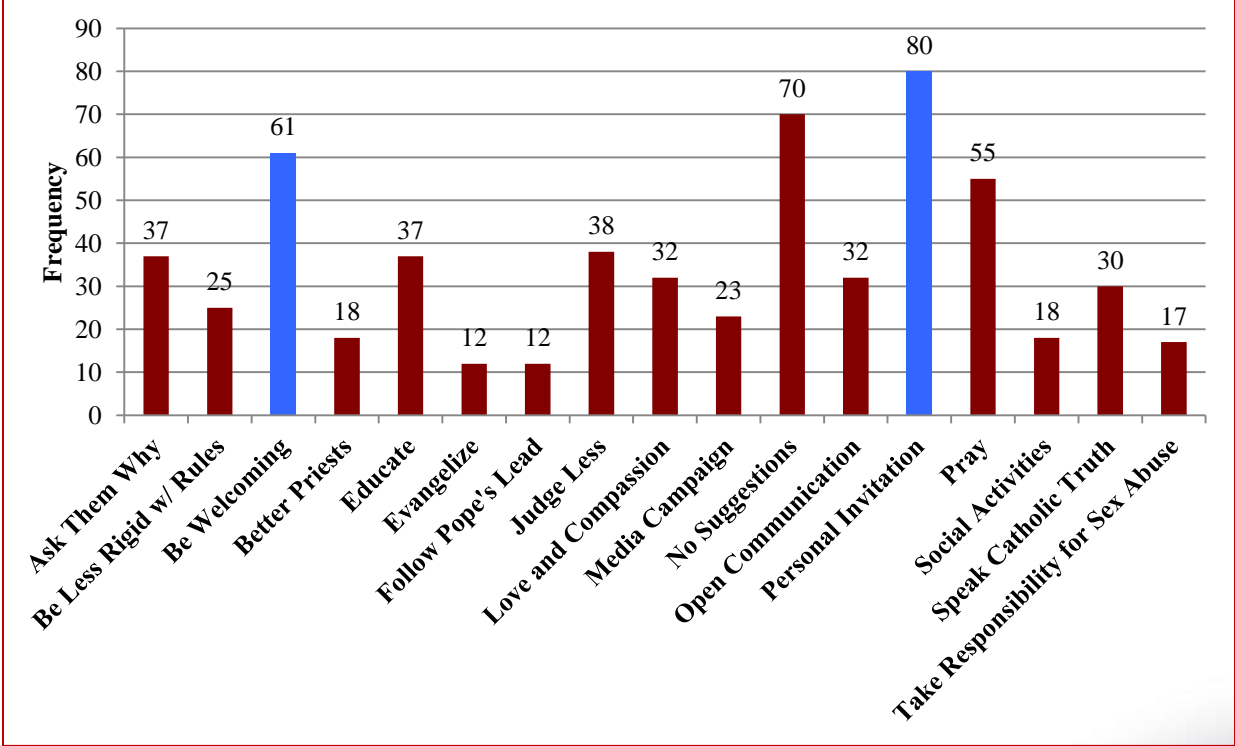
Level of Agreement with Various Aspects of Church Doctrine



Level of Agreement with Various Aspects of Church Doctrine



Suggestions for Diocese of Springfield to Bring Back Inactive Catholics

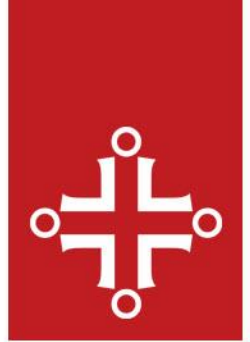


What “Actives” Had to Say about Church Doctrine



- “I don’t understand why the Church is opposed to birth control that prevents conception...”
- “Many younger couples are banned from communion due to marriage problems. A failed marriage is not an unforgivable sin.”
- “I do sometimes disagree with the way the church...confronts issues. Pope Francis speaks my thoughts.”
- “Beliefs against gays. Politics shouldn’t mix with religion. Always demanding money.”

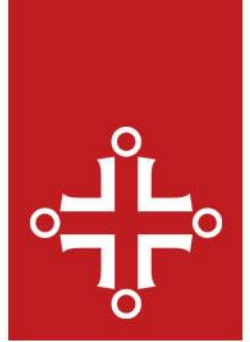
What “Actives” Had to Say about Improving Parish Experiences



- “Please teach our priests how to give meaningful sermons...”
- “I want to feel like I belong to a community of saints. It feels so very fake and artificial.”
- “We need to engage outsiders in conversation after Mass and make them feel welcome.”



Key Findings



- Parishioners are quite pleased with church experience:
 - Staff, Environment viewed as warm, friendly, strong community
 - Mass times accessible
 - Qualities of facilities
 - Agreement on most Church doctrines (except priest lifestyles; divorce)
 - Sacraments
- Erosion in parishioner attitudes is seen in:
 - Priest warmth, communication skills, availability
 - Adult programs, social activities, adult education

The “Inactives” Survey

A large wooden cross is positioned on the right side of the central image, set against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. Sunlight rays emanate from behind the cross, creating a halo effect.


***Are you a former or “drifting” Catholic from a Springfield parish?
Have you stopped attending Mass?***

Researchers from Benedictine University seek drifting and former Catholics from the Springfield area to complete a brief online survey, which will help them understand why some have left or distanced themselves from the Catholic Church.

An analysis of survey responses will be made public and shared with the Springfield Diocese.

Respondents can remain anonymous and all responses are kept confidential.

To participate in this study or for additional information, please visit www.ben.edu/catholicsurvey or call (630) 829-6460.

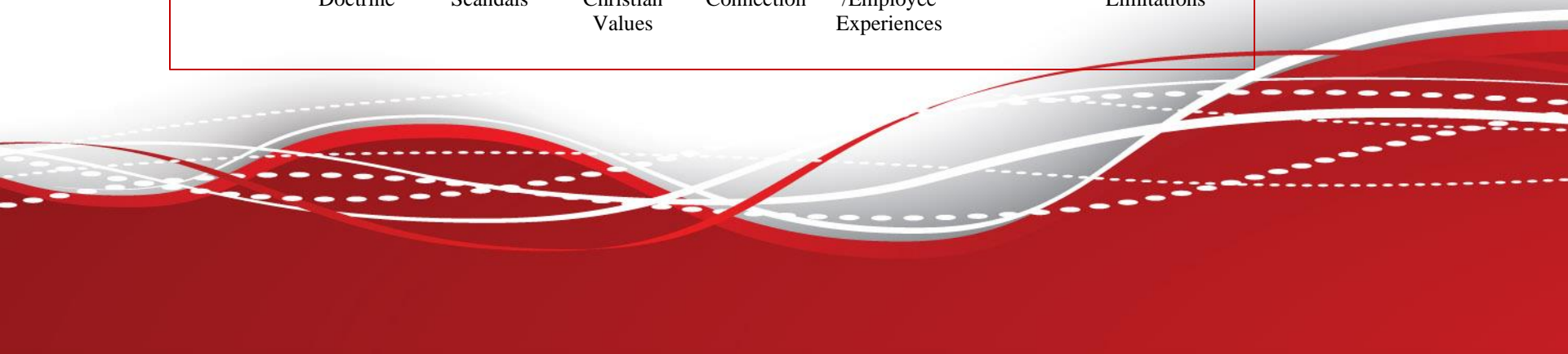
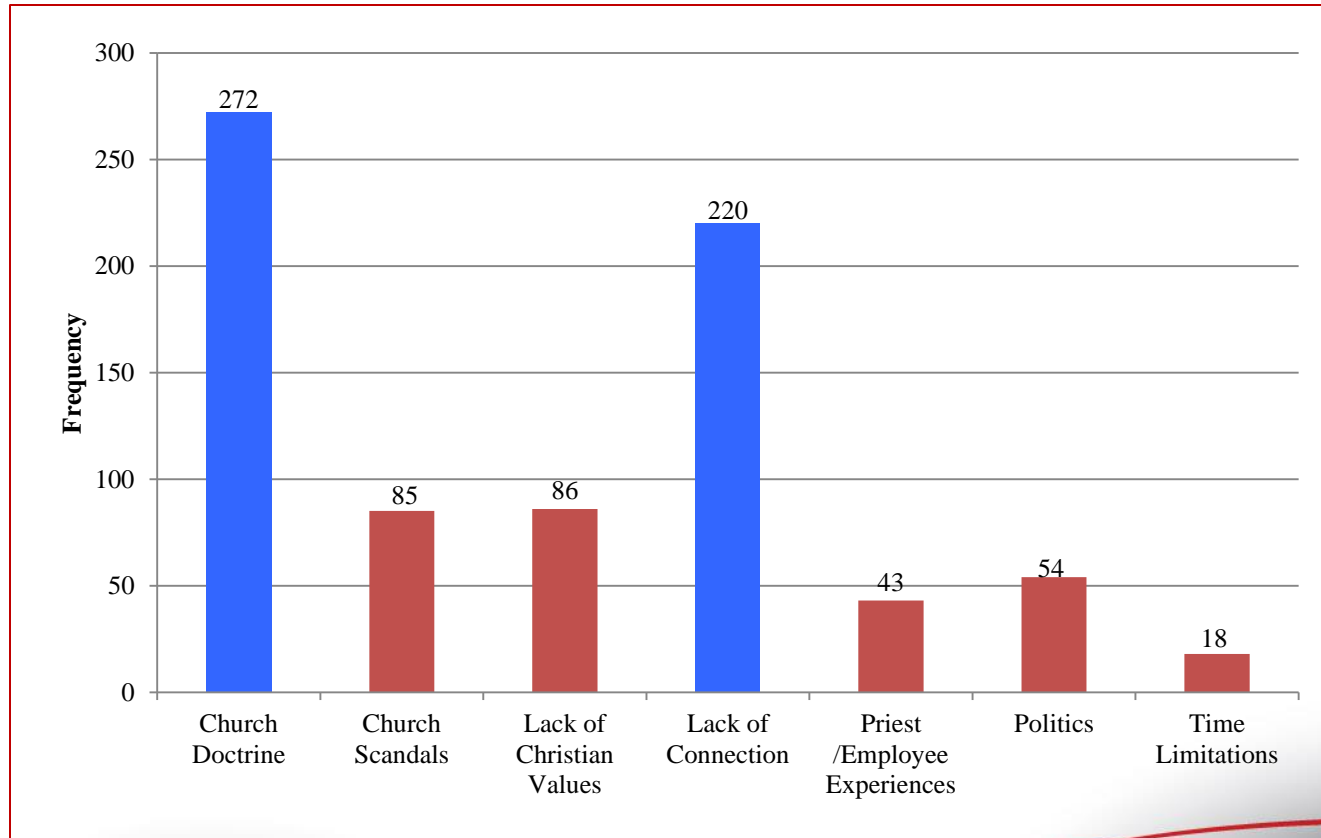
 Benedictine University®



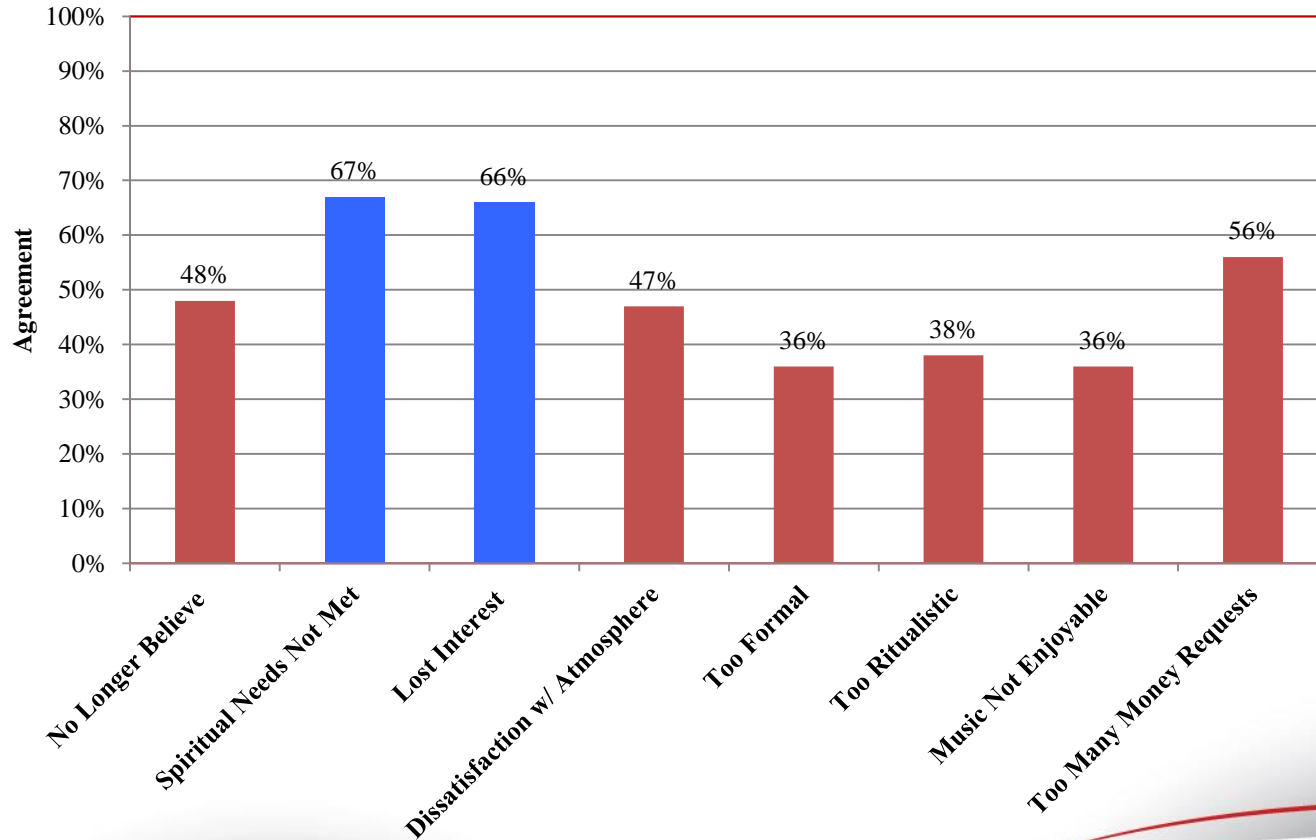
Church Separation Characteristics

Variable	%
Parish Membership	
Yes	67
No	26
Not Sure	7
Separation	
Parish Only	24
Catholic Church Only	20
Both Parish and Catholic Church	56
Conscious Decision to Stop Attending Mass	
Yes	76
No	11
Not Sure	13
Last Attended Mass	
Within the Past Week	13
Within the Past Month	13
More than A Month	11
Six Months or longer	65

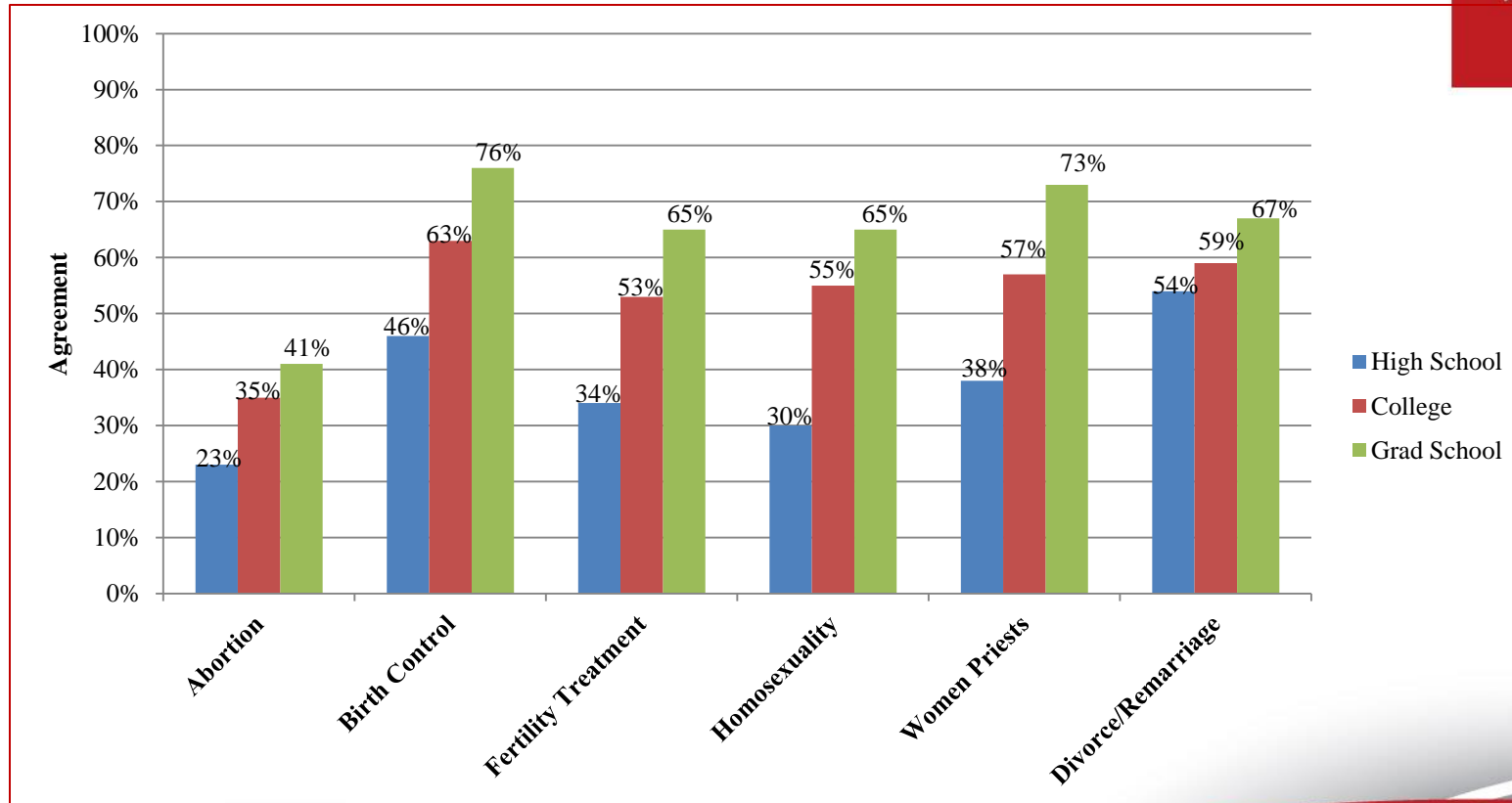
Reasons Why Respondents Stopped Attending Mass



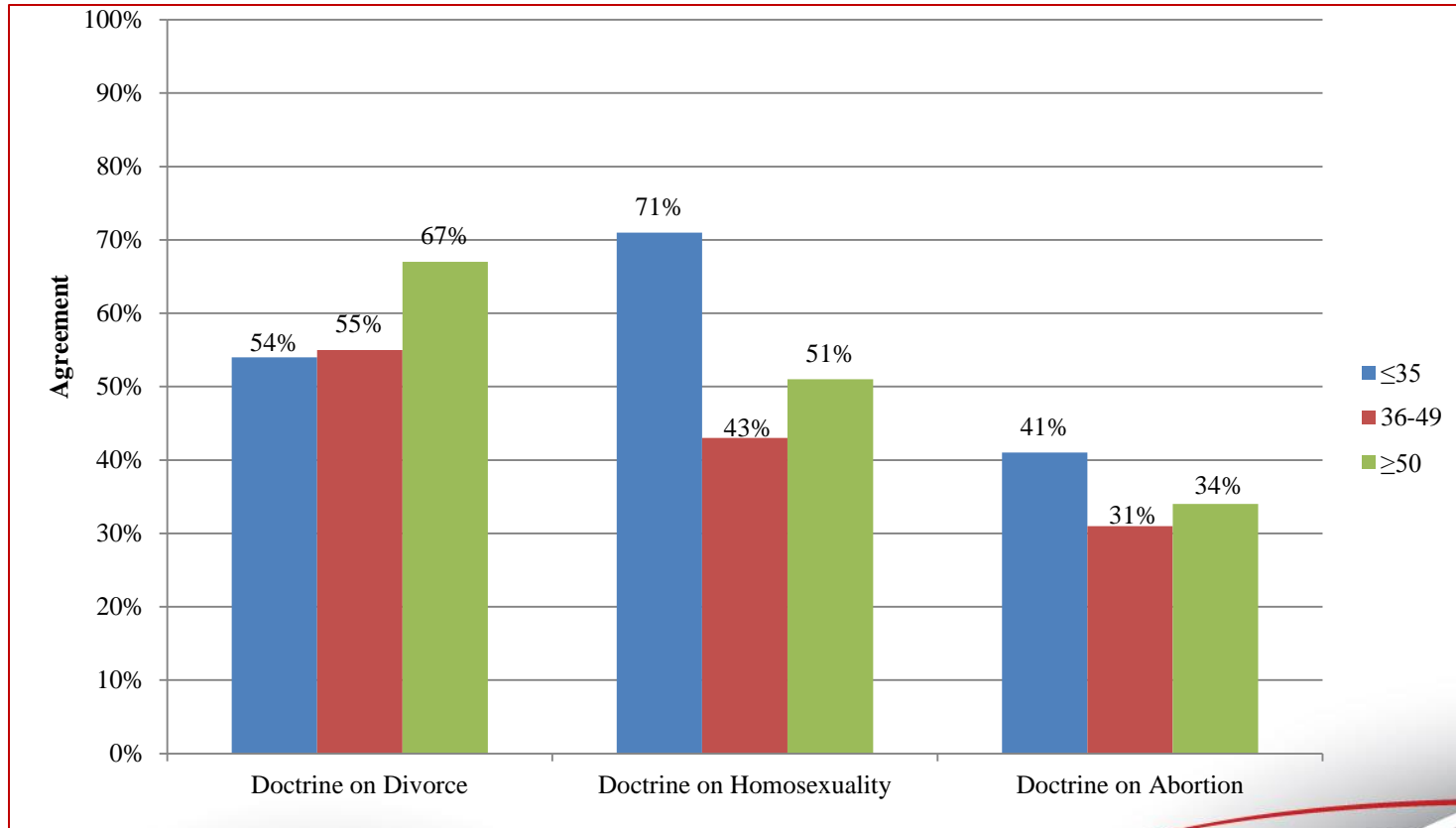
Catholic Church and Mass Issues as Reasons for Distancing or Leaving Catholic Church



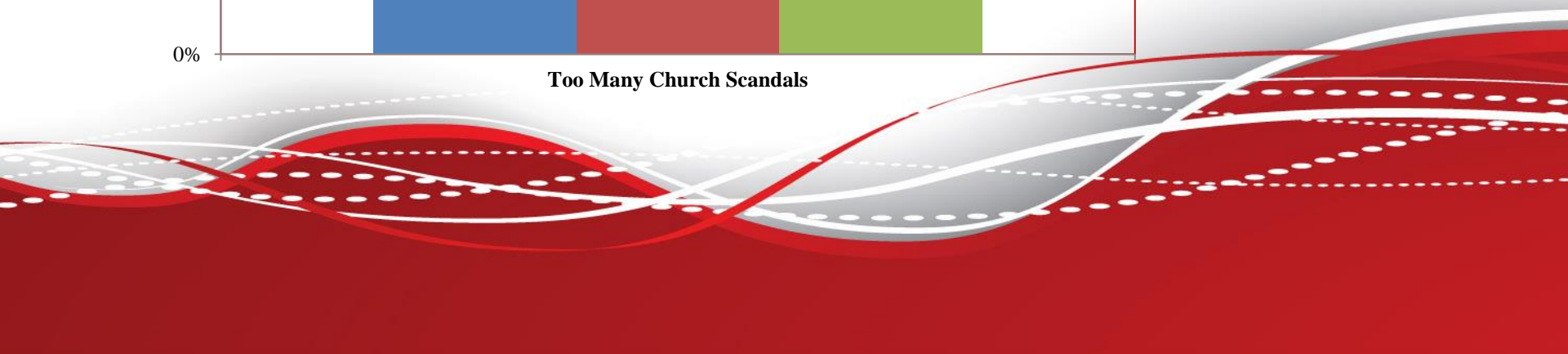
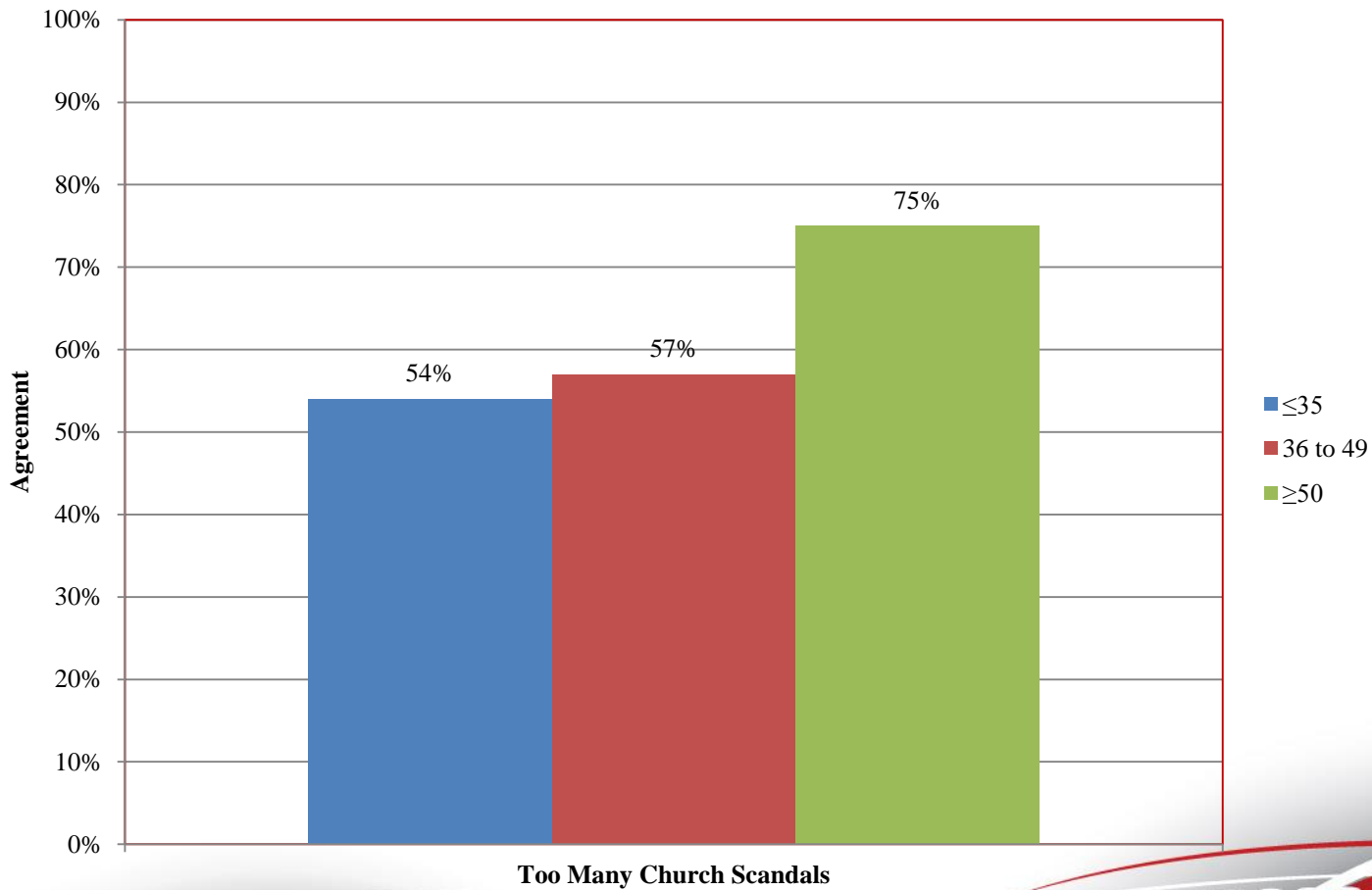
Education Level Differences in Reasons for Distancing or Leaving Catholic Church



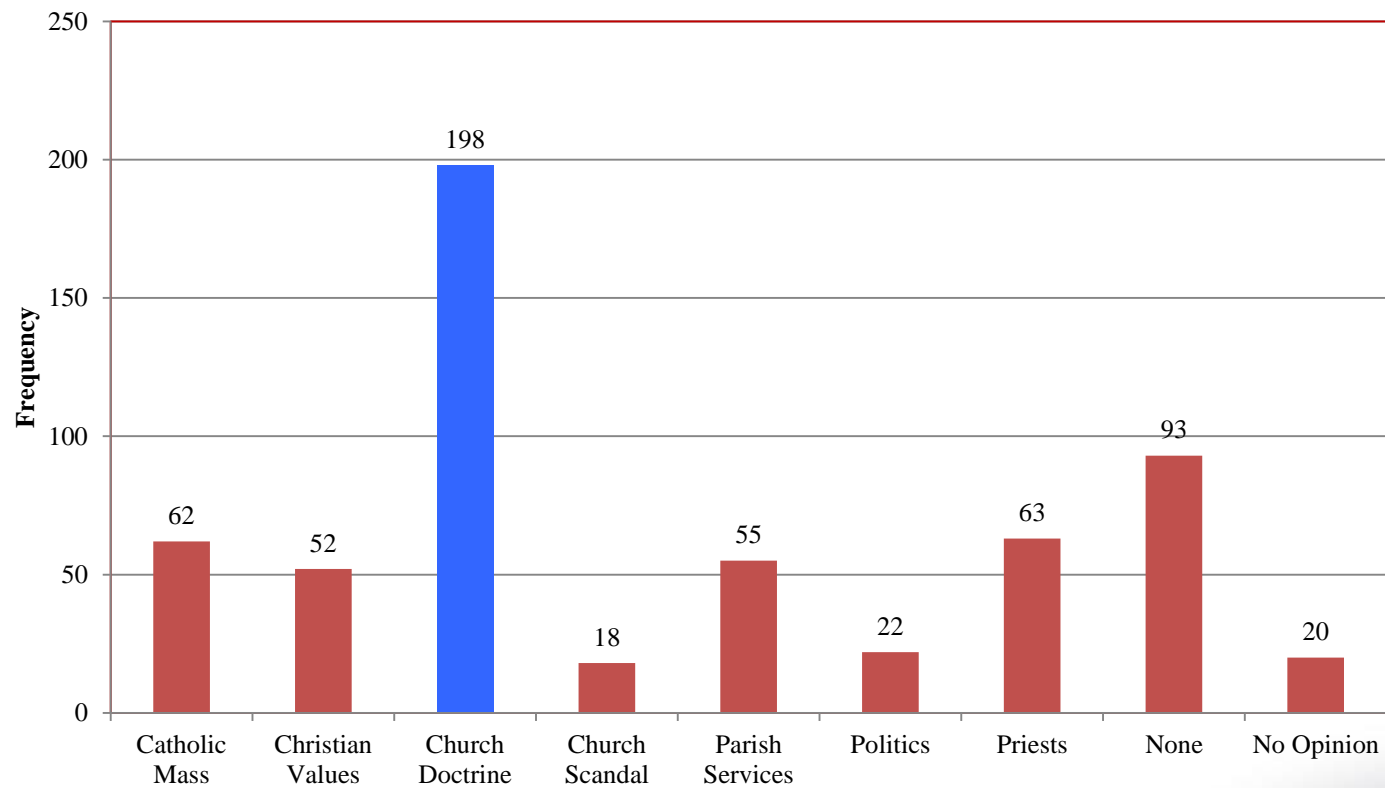
Age Differences in Reasons for Distancing or Leaving Catholic Church



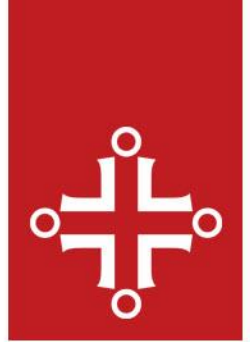
Age Differences in Too Many Church Scandals



Changes That Might Prompt Respondents to Return to Parish



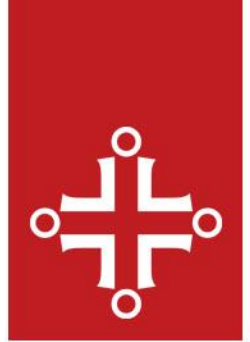
What “Inactives” Had to Say – Lack of Connection/Disappointment



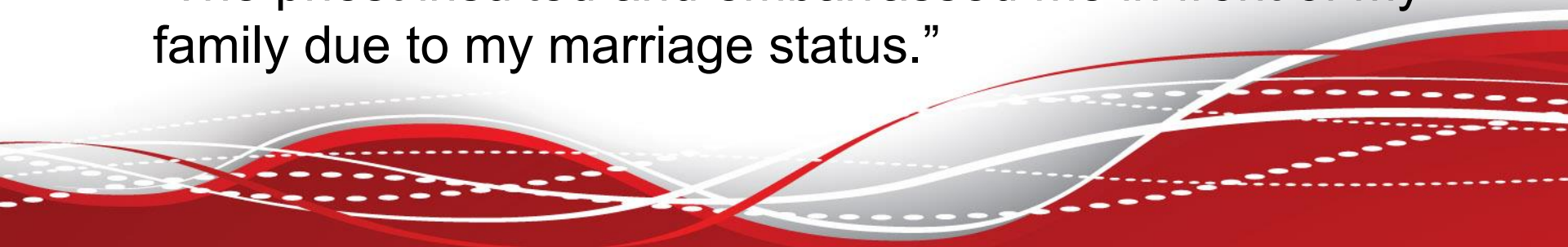
- “I was only going through the motions.”
- “I struggle with the way the Catholic Church has not adapted to an ever changing world.”
- “I no longer felt that I could endorse the philosophies and views of a church that would exclude so many...”
- “...began with the gluttonous priest and the sexual molestation scandal.”



What “Inactives” Had to Say – Lack of Connection/Disappointment



- “Enough with the politics, especially the conservative Republican politics.”
- “When my ex-husband was very ill and near death. I asked a deacon...if he could give him a blessing. He said he could not because he was not a Catholic.”
- “The priest insulted and embarrassed me in front of my family due to my marriage status.”

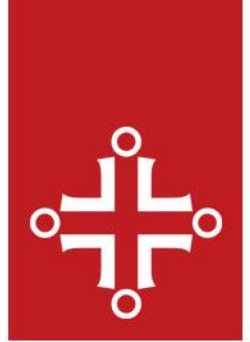




“I’m still seeking a church with a sense of community, friendliness. I joke with my friends that I’ve gone to a church for 7 years and no one has ever spoken to me.”



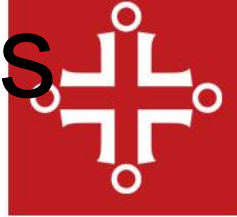
Key Findings



- ~ 65% had not attended Mass for six months or more
- Objections to Church doctrine
 - Birth control, divorce, priest lifestyles, women priests, homosexuality
- Spiritual needs not being met
- Sex abuse scandals



Comparing the two groups



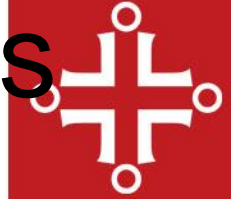
- **Actives**

- Older sample; more women respondents
- Higher marriage rate; lower divorce rate
- Agrees with the Catholic Church on most doctrinal issues
- High rate of weekly Mass attendance
- Very happy with sense of community

- Some dissatisfaction with priests



Comparing the two groups



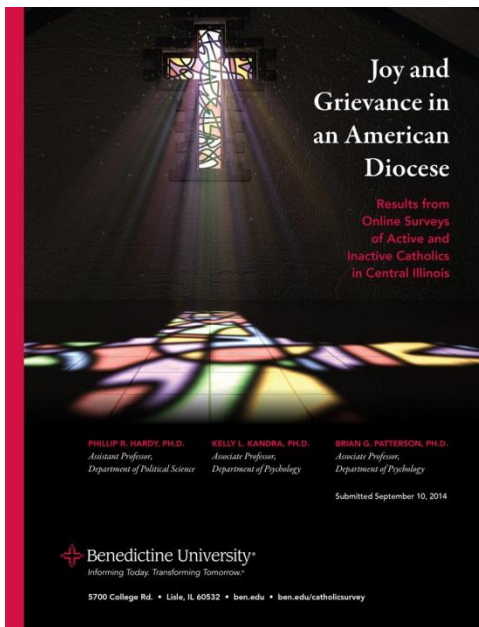
- **Inactives**

- Younger sample; fewer women respondents
- Lower marriage rate; higher divorce rate
- Disagrees with the Catholic Church on many doctrinal issues
- Dissatisfied with the spiritual experience at Mass

- Divorce, priests' lifestyles, birth control, socially more liberal
- Major exception: abortion
- Dissatisfied with pastoral relationship

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