

2011 National Black Catholic Survey

Highlights

Religious Engagement

- A major finding of the NBCS indicates that, contrary to anecdotal accounts, African American Catholics are highly involved with their religion and parish life.
- The study shows that a high level of religious engagement has always been a trait of African American Catholics.
- Even though African American Catholics are relatively small in number, they demonstrate greater involvement in their parish than white Catholics.
- A remarkable and consistent finding of the study is that on almost every conceivable measure of religious engagement, ranging from religious beliefs to practice, African Americans are more religious than most other Americans.

Cultural Effect

- Compared with other religious and racial groups, African American Catholics participate in their church like all other African Americans.
- For years, African Americans had to withstand being unwelcomed in churches. They fought to be included and acknowledged as equal parishioners.
- African American Catholics clung to their Catholicism as a means of comfort and solace from harsh societal realities.
- They consider faith and its institutions vital to their survival.
- The same marginalizing forces that produce a religiously engaged African American community also affect African American Catholics.

Racism and the Church

- On direct questions of racism and the Church, African Americans overwhelmingly do not consider the Church racist.
- African American Catholics do, however, perceive challenges of inclusiveness in the Church.
- They express some dissatisfaction in the areas of emphasizing black saints, promoting black leaders, targeting black vocations, supporting issues like affirmative action, calling attention to problems in Africa and promoting racial inclusiveness.
- About one in four African American Catholics report some form of personal intolerance in their parish, such as being avoided because of their race, the reluctance of others to shake hands and insensitivity and indifference of priests and leaders on issues of race.

