

When our Children stop going to Mass

Sandra Carroll

As a Religious Educator I welcome this report of the research project on Catholics who have stopped attending Mass. It reports the analysis of credible qualitative data that complements and adds depth to the considerable amount of quantitative data available as to why Catholics have stopped going to Mass. This research should help to provide an accurate assessment of the current situation enabling a firm basis for addressing some of the issues identified.



Many of the people interviewed seemed to be in the zone between disconnection with a supporting parish community and dis-identification as a Catholic. The report indicates that whereas ‘ceasing to attend Mass is an early phase of the process of disconnecting from the Church, disidentification is the final step’. What is interesting is that the report notes that, although the participants have stopped going to Mass, most are still connected in some way to Catholic life and faith. We need to listen to these people....

In Familiaris Consortio Pope John Paul II offers a positive vision of Church as a welcoming, inviting, inclusive and caring community.... Drawing on this metaphor of the Church as a great family, it would seem that in many families there is a period of an individual’s disconnection as part of the journey into adulthood. This research, however, reports a disconnection, or ‘drift away’ among adults, ‘people who were regular Mass attenders and active parishioners for many years of their adult lives’. The reality of their discontent and disconnection needs to be acknowledged.

From Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass (2009)

John J. Dietzen

We must acknowledge there comes a point when adult children become responsible for their own actions. It is a time when parents, after having done their reasonable best for their sons and daughters, allow that responsibility to shift to their children’s shoulders. They need not agree with all those children do. But a great load is lifted once we accept the fact that they are now adult persons in their own right and must answer for their own lives. We need not, and should not, feel a responsibility to provide solutions for everything, even for our families. We continue to put our best efforts into God’s hands, relax, and allow his grace and love to go to work in the people we care for.

Nothing parents have done out of love for their children is ever lost. Our loving actions may not always appear in the way we wish. They are there nevertheless, and will show themselves in times and places we never expect.

From Catholic Q & A: Real Questions by Real People (2009)

Sandra Carroll & John J. Dietzen - UCA News