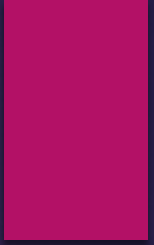


Pro-Life Polling and Messaging: Communicating with Conflicted Catholics

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Bringing people fully into the pro-life fold almost always means investing in long-term relationships and friendships.

It's what gives "the seed" the nourishment to sprout.

Everything that we do in the pro-life movement involves **communicating to persuade.**

- ▶ From working with clients of pro-life pregnancy centers, to convincing people to complete your State Catholic Conference's action alert, to getting parishes to do Respect Life Month or start a Respect Life Group - much of your success relies on persuasive communication with those who are conflicted about supporting the pro-life movement.
- ▶ Understanding this audience will set you up for success in much of the outreach you do, from emailing a reluctant priest, or talking with a family member - from creating a flyer, to getting your local Catholic school to actually distribute it.

Communications 101:

Identify your audience every time.

- ▶ Just because we put out information we think people *ought to want to know*, does not mean that they will care.
- ▶ We live in a digitally-connected society where people's attention is the most valued commodity in the world today. Companies spend trillions of dollars for mere seconds of anyone's attention.
- ▶ Successful communication relies on:
 - ▶ Knowing what your audience wants to hear,
 - ▶ Knowing what you want your audience to know, and
 - ▶ Presenting the information *you want them to know* in a way they want to hear. This is what is known as “meeting people where they are.”

What Polling Taught Us About Our Audiences in Catholic Parishes

Over our **three years** of participating in several **large-scale polling projects about** comes to pro-life attitudes within the Catholic Church, **two significant audiences emerged:**

- “Catholic and Pro-Life”
- “Catholics who may not believe abortion should be illegal”

The Two Audiences

These audiences have distinct different perspectives, different wishes and needs, and different language and approaches that speak to them.

Pro-Life Catholics tend to attend Sunday Mass regularly and many even attend Daily Mass. They are “Eucharistic Disciples” that accept Church teachings, live their lives around the Sacraments, and tend to see things more in black and white.

Catholics who don’t believe abortion should be illegal have more sporadic Mass attendance. There may be many things they disagree with about the Church besides abortion. They tend to see things more in shades of gray.

Catholics are “conflicted” about abortion see a “conflict” between the needs of mother and child.

- “Catholics who don’t believe abortion should be illegal” see a fundamental conflict between the needs and rights of women and the needs and rights of children.
- Of course, they have been subject to a lot of media misinformation, and need us to lovingly share the truth in response to the misinformation they have heard about abortion and women’s health.
- They also really need to **see and hear the compassion we have for women in challenging situations** – medical, financial, relational - whenever we talk to anyone about abortion.
- These compassionate conversations, focused on what truly serves women, are often more persuasive over time than focusing on the harm done to preborn babies.

Polling done by the USCCB and other organizations indicates that when Catholics who are “on the fence” about abortion **learn of the tremendous service and compassion** offered by the Catholic Church, they **become more open to Church teachings** on life.

Most Catholics, even those who attend Mass every Sunday, have **never heard** of the extensive network of services offered by the Church to pregnant moms and those parenting young children.

They don't know about the services offered by Catholic Pregnancy centers, Catholic Charities, St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic hospitals and others, and that together they often combine to offer comprehensive support to women in need.

They especially don't know that these services are open to single moms, those who aren't Catholic, and women from all different backgrounds. They don't know that these services are available long after the baby is born.

WALKING WITH MOMS IN NEED

Compassionate Service
Compassionate Communication



Walking with Moms in Need

Walking with Moms in Need is a process whereby Catholic parishes "walk in the shoes" of local pregnant and parenting women in need.

It is a **national movement** where Catholic churches across the country focus deeply on the needs of vulnerable women and their children, develop an inventory of local resources and a plan to ensure no woman falls through the cracks.

Each parish follows this similar process that helps parishioners better understand, befriend, and serve women in need in their community. Whether they already have a strong pregnancy care ministry or not, the *Walking with Moms* process helps support and magnify the work being done locally and at the parish.

The USCCB, and the Catholic Church in the USA, have never done anything quite like this before.



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We have found *Walking with Moms* to be effective in both *service and communication* and this is partly because it integrates all Catholic pregnancy care ministries and other ministries under one accessible umbrella.

If a diocese or parish already has their own pregnancy care center, they can still benefit from *Walking with Moms in Need*. The same goes for comprehensive pregnancy care ministries like The Gabriel Project and PREPARES.

Walking with Moms in Need does not turn parishes into pregnancy care centers. Rather, it supports pregnancy care centers where they exist, and where they do not, helps parishes fill in these gaps to help vulnerable women.



Models used for illustrative purposes only.
iStock.com/Drazen_

Short-term Communications Successes for Walking with Moms in Need:

- *Walking with Moms* has generated national press interest from The New York Times, the Associated Press, Fox News, NPR, ABC News, and more.

Long-Term Communications Successes for Walking with Moms in Need:

- **Moves Catholic parishioners to a deeper vision of what it means to serve the Gospel of Life**
 - Helping moms and families draws people together
 - New opportunities for collaboration, such as pro-life and social justice
 - A proactive, pro-woman, pro-life vision that will draw people further into the fullness of the Church's cohesive teachings, and witness to the dignity of every human person.



Image used for illustrative purposes only.
Black.com/RyanLane

Audience: Catholics who believe abortion should be **LEGAL**

Approach: “Walking with Moms in Need”



► **Communications Goals:**

To help Catholics who are supportive of or conflicted about legal abortion learn of the Church's compassionate approach for women in need, develop friendships, share service opportunities, and move them into a pro-life position over time.

Audience: Catholics who believe abortion should be LEGAL

Approach: “Walking with Moms in Need”

► **Goal**

To make Catholics who are supportive of or conflicted about legal abortion aware of the Church’s compassionate service to women in need

► **Key Messages**

- “Every life is valuable to God—both mother and child.
- “The Church is here for pregnant and parenting women in need.
- “Love them both.”
- “If you or someone you know is suffering after abortion, confidential, non-judgmental help is available from Project Rachel Ministry.”

► **Key Images**

Jesus sharing His love for all women, diversity, women with young children, communities coming together to serve moms, compassion and mercy

Ways to Reach Them

- Implement pastoral programs like “Walking with Moms in Need” that can “talk the talk” and “walk the walk”
- Tell stories about the programs and services within the Church that help vulnerable women and children.
- Ask your pastors to discuss pastoral care for vulnerable, pregnant and parenting women in homilies and bulletins for Christmas and Easter Masses, where pro-choice Catholics are more likely to attend.
- Explain the healing and mercy Christ wants to offer women who have had an abortion and advertise Project Rachel Ministry.

Online Resources

All resources are or will be posted on these websites. Everything a parish needs is or will be posted online in both English and Spanish.



www.walkingwithmoms.com



www.caminaconmadres.com



“ Why did Jesus teach
through parables? ”

CHRIST REACHED THE MASSES NOT THROUGH
STATEMENTS, BUT THROUGH STORIES.

He shared the finer points of doctrine with the
disciples (and sometimes with the Pharisees or
others who asked him direct questions).



Communicate Compassion to Conflicted Catholics