American Catholicism is an example of religious change. In particular, the changes from the Vatican II council in 1962 continue to affect the church today.

**Change & commitment:** There are high levels of devotion (e.g., attending Mass) among Catholics, but a collapse in church’s authority. Most American Catholics don’t accept the church’s stances on sexual ethics.

**Governance & leadership:** The Catholic church is undemocratic despite Americans’ desire for more democracy. The priest molestation scandals were the result of a massive failure of leadership.

**Ethnicity:** Being Catholic has a different meaning for different ethnic groups. For blacks, conversion to Catholicism is related to upward class mobility; for Latinos becoming Protestant is related to upward class mobility.

**Women in the church** do much of the day-to-day work despite being excluded from the priesthood and most decision-making positions. However, relatively few Catholic women distance themselves from the church.

**Priest shortage:** Celibacy and male-only policies are seen as two reasons for the shortage. Stark & Finke argue that lowering of priests’ status by Vatican II is the primary cause.

**Resources:** U.S. Catholics give less money to the church than Protestants. This may reflect dissatisfaction with church leadership and/or policies.