

Religious Change: The Case of Catholicism in the U.S. (Christiano et al., chapter 8)

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 become 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.