

**Religious Values Survey**  
**Saint Michael's College**  
Second edition, revised

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Requests for additional copies of the “Religious Values Survey” have prompted this second edition. This revised version contains several additions and editorial modifications but there are few substantial changes. Several charts were added to reflect new data received from the spring 2002 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), data that unfortunately is consistent with our findings that Saint Michael’s students are less religious than those at other Catholic colleges. Figures 3, 6, 9, 15, and 16 are new and several re-enforce this point. Finally, subsequent data analysis compelled me to re-write my comments on the religiousness of recipients of the Vermont Parish Scholarships. These students, I found, were significantly more religious than my previous comments had warranted.

Since first circulated in the summer of 2002, the campus community has taken a deep interest in the issues raised in this report, and the findings have been the subject of considerable institutional soul-searching. Our research conclusions seem inescapable, and confirm the suspicions of many: our students are less religious than prior generations of students and less religious than the average student at other Catholic colleges. In many ways, they are even less religious than students at many other secular institutions. Regional differences in religious practice, which have diminished greatly in recent years, do not explain the differences.

The waning of religiousness among our students is of enormous importance to the vitality and future of Saint Michael’s College. The most obvious implication of these findings is that it suggests a failure of the very mission of the institution. The “light of the Catholic faith” still shines, although not as brightly as several decades ago, and certainly not as intensely as the founding fathers envisioned.

But there are others reasons—pragmatic reasons—why the institution should care deeply about the importance of preserving a vital religious presence. I have listed seven.

- 1) Our religious affiliation is an important point of attraction to about 37% of our current students in their decision to apply.
- 2) Research suggests that “religious” 12<sup>th</sup> graders are psychologically better adjusted than their less religious peers—they have more positive attitudes towards themselves, enjoy being in school, feel hopeful about their futures, believe that life is meaningful, etc.
- 3) Students at Saint Michael’s who are more religious tend to be stronger academically.
- 4) The majority of our students believe that “the Catholic tradition of Saint Michael’s influences [their] college experiences in ways that are generally positive.”
- 5) Students at Saint Michael’s who are more religious tend to manifest higher qualities of citizenship on campus, and more religious alumni also tend to most clearly manifest the values of the Edmundite tradition. This is consistent with established research indicating that “religious involvement is a strong predictor of volunteering and philanthropy.”
- 6) Five years after graduation, our alumni who are Catholic were far more likely to report that they financially support the institution than those who were not Catholic. A similar pattern exists for self-described “loyalty to Saint Michael’s.” (Parallel data does not exist for the more generic descriptors “religious” or “non-religious.”)
- 7) Our foundational religious commitments contribute to the overall quality of environment that characterizes our common life on campus—such as our sense of community, our moral commitments to human dignity and service, and our mutual respect for each other. Even our common search for truth is a quality rooted in our religious tradition.

It is my hope that this report will continue to stimulate discussion of this vitally important topic.

Dr. Vince Bolduc  
January 12, 2003

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The findings from this survey are based on a scientific random sample of 417 students, with an unusually high 81% response rate. The statistics are subject to a 5% margin of error at the 95% confidence interval. The sample probably has a very slight bias towards the more religiously oriented, but is otherwise representative of students at Saint Michael's College.

The most common evaluative comment about religion at Saint Michael's was that it is "fine as is" yet in comparisons of beliefs and practice to random samples of adult Americans, Saint Michael's students were significantly less religious even though they seemed to affirm the value of a generalized spirituality. Comparisons to surveys with alumni classes show that current students are not as religious as our recent graduates. This might be due to normal age-related patterns of religiousness. But according to CIRP surveys of first year students, our students come to SMC less likely to pray or attend church than students at most other Catholic colleges, and much less likely to pray, go to Mass, or read the Bible than students at other Catholic institutions.

Sixty-one percent of our students describe themselves as Catholic, a sharp decline over prior decades. Their beliefs about traditional Catholic issues were barely distinguishable from that of non-Catholics. About 18% of the Catholic students went to Mass weekly. The largest non-Catholic group was Protestant (15%), "other" (12%), and 13% express no religious affiliation. One-third were "certain of God's existence" and just over one-third labeled their families as either "loosely committed" or "not at all committed" to religion. Only 2% consider themselves atheists. About 40% described themselves as "religious and spiritual" but another 40% described themselves as "spiritual, but not religious," a self-descriptor that did not yield any particular distinctive beliefs or practices. For example, they were not more likely to value "spiritual growth" than other students.

The vast middle range of the normal curve represented students who sometimes prayed or went to a religious service, but were far from orthodox in their Catholic practice or beliefs. On many items, they selected the "no opinion" option, and on many others they were "neutral." On the ends of the normal curve however, we found about 20% to 25% of our students who were active and serious Catholics and who would like to see SMC be more religious. They are consistently more religious on almost every item on the questionnaire, and without them, it is likely that our student body would be as secular as that of a state university. On the other end of the continuum there were about 10% to 15% of students who appeared to have no religious interests, and perhaps even felt latent antipathy towards religion. They identified with statements such as "strong people do not need religion" and "going to church is a waste of time."

About 37% of our sample found our religious affiliation to be an important draw in their choosing to come to SMC, but the figure is 50% for Catholics and 82% for Catholics who are high on our index of religiousness. Students from Catholic high schools (about 20%) did not select more religious (or Catholic) options than others, but often those with the Vermont Parish scholarships did so. By virtually all criteria, women were consistently more religious than men.

Most students reflected the liberal humanistic tradition in various expressions, but its connection to religious belief was weak. Among the hundreds of written comments, there were no significant statements of religious intolerance although occasional complaints about the requirement to take two courses in Religious Studies were expressed. Perhaps because of the low levels of religiousness observed, most were very satisfied with the amount of religious and moral/ethical education they receive, both in the classroom and outside.

## **BACKGROUND AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This study of religious values is based upon a survey of a random sample of Saint Michael's students conducted in the spring of 2002. The primary impetus for conducting this project was to gather data for a planning grant to Lilly Foundation on the subject of the need for cultivating young leaders and clergy for the future of our nation's religious organizations. While the planning grant ultimately was not funded, the Planning Committee felt that the survey should go forward. Dr. Vincent Bolduc's class in Methods of Social Research had already begun work on the research, and felt that the task could and should still serve as a class project for the duration of the semester.

In addition to the members of the class, several others made significant contributions to our work. These included Edmundite Superior General Rev. Richard Myhalyk, Director of Institutional Research John Kulhowvick, Registrar John Sheehey, Faculty Secretary Leslie Turner, and many others who suggested valuable ideas and support. The students provided the backbone of the data collection, and were a constant reminder of why there is a Saint Michael's College at all. The 27 students were as follows: Anne Austin; Gretchen Barrup; Tracey Bellavance; Dan Boisvert; Karissa Bollenger; Megan Borsuk; Cate Bresnahan; Bridget Brochu; Jessica Casey; Jessica DeCarlo; Rachel Etori; Anne Femenella; Tiffany Goddard; Joanna Karbel; Holly Leon; Sarah Littlejohn; Angela Madonia; Erin McShane; Angelo Musumeci; Kelly Nejman; Alex Newfield; Kate Rutkowski; Margaret Thies; Kevin Thomas; Danielle Wisz; Adam Wolcott; and Zachary Zeppieri.

## **INTRODUCTION**

When the Society of Saint Edmund founded the College in 1904, the wisdom of the founders placed religious education into the center of the mission and blessed it with their most fervent prayers. As the centennial anniversary draws near, we rejoice in the remarkable prosperity and growth of the institution, but pause to ask ourselves how well we have met our religious goals. The dominant culture is far more secularized than could have been anticipated 98 years ago, the Catholic Church has undergone significant changes, and today is facing extraordinary challenges.

There is no better judge of our successes or failures than our students--"by their fruits you shall know them." Many of our graduates over the decades have indeed honored the Edmundite vision with the persons they became, and the heroic deeds that so many have accomplished. The College has influenced and benefited thousands of young men and women and is continuing to do so. But at this particular point in history, how well do today's students reflect the religious spirit hoped for in 1904? In this research project, we turned to them for an answer to our question: "How are we doing?" Our survey is just a "snapshot" of the religious values of the student body as they responded to our questions in March and April of 2002. It reveals little of our past successes or failures, and while this snapshot hardly determines our next 100 years trends and comparisons reveal an ongoing erosions of religiousness of the College.

The 94 questions we asked came from many sources including prior surveys conducted on campus, some national surveys conducted over many decades, and of course new ideas from students and colleagues. A copy of the self-administered questionnaire appears in the Appendix, but the manner of presentation in this report follows nine subject areas.

A final observation about this point in history should be noted. It has been six months since the traumatizing events of September 11<sup>th</sup> when the United States suffered its worst terrorist attack in history. There was a surge in religiousness so palpable that two months later, the Gallup Poll found that an unprecedented 71% of Americans reported that they felt that religion in American was increasing in its influence. Yet by March of 2002, the same time we started our survey, that proportion had fallen close to its more characteristic level of about 35%. Our campus community seems to have gone through a parallel rise and fall cycle and our survey should reflect the same trend.

Saint Michael's students are not as religiously inclined as many would hope, but our standards of comparison are very high. An April, 2002 article in *US News* on "Faith in America" reminds us of the simple facts that scholars of comparative religions have told us many times. The United States is one of the most religious nations in the world, and by some measures, we are more religious now than at any time since the 1960's. Compared to European countries, we have almost negligible proportions of citizens who claim to be atheists (about 5%) or "non-religious" (about 7.5%). Again from *US News*: "There are more churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques per capita in the United States than in any other nation on Earth: one for about every 865 people." It should not be surprising that our expectations at a Catholic college are very high.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample size**

Following statistical conventions, it was decided that a completed sample of about 400 randomly selected students would reasonably represent all 1,872 undergraduates with a sampling error of about 5% at the 95% confidence level. These are customary margins for error, and well within the bounds of standard survey research. The Registrar, John Sheehey, using a program specifically designed to follow the rules of scientific random sampling, randomly drew a sample of about 700 names. We deliberately drew an excessively large sample, and ultimately used less than 600 names to obtain a final sample size of 417 completed surveys.

### **Securing our response rate**

The class wrote and mailed a letter of introduction to each of these 600 students explaining that they would be contacted shortly by a member of the class and asked to complete and return the survey. Each of the 27 students in class was assigned 20 random names that he/she was expected to contact. They were to hand carry the questionnaires to the selected respondent, and then make an appointment to return to pick up the completed form in a sealed envelope. Respondents were assured confidentiality of responses, and told of the importance of the research project.

In order to maximize the response rate, we took the unusual step of devoting 40 minutes of class time for each of the 27 students to read aloud each of the names of their 20 randomly assigned respondents. If another student in the class recognized a name as a friend or acquaintance, they would swap the name of one of their unrecognized respondents for the familiar name. In this way, we utilized the natural social networks of 27 students to enhance the probability of respondent cooperation. In most cases, students had a personal relationship with nearly three-quarters of the respondents they were seeking, yet without compromising the randomness of the name selection.

Students were given guarantees of “class participation points” for completing their quotas of completed questionnaires, and the incentives seemed to work. Our class discussed the ethics of polling, and the paramount need for users of the research to be assured of honest and uncorrupted data. Plagiarism of completed questionnaires was also discussed, and students were told that a random sampling of their returned questionnaires would be called for verification. Any student found to have fabricated a completed questionnaire would be charged with plagiarism and fail the course. Several students did not receive the extra class participation points because of their failure to meet their quota, and they accepted this penalty rather than fabricating data.

Students were asked to make more than 5 attempts to contact a respondent before giving up and going on to the next name. In some cases, students had to be issued new names. In the case of about 70 names, students in class had already met their quotas so no contact needed to be made, or our interviewer did not have a correct phone number or address, so these names were dropped from consideration and not included in our base. There were 82 respondents who appeared to have good numbers and addresses, but who never returned phone calls or were otherwise unavailable. We called these “failed respondents” and include them in the base of response rate calculation. There were only 14 students who flatly refused to participate. Thus our unusually successful response and refusal rates were as follows:

417 of 513 = 81% response rate <sup>1</sup>

14 of 513 = 3% refusal rate

82 of 513 = 16% failed to contact, but not flat refusal.

## Sample bias and representativeness

Sample surveys inevitably fail to secure cooperation from every person selected to be a respondent. There are always refusals and persons who cannot be reached. Yet the assumption of the methodology is that the final sample of respondents is not significantly different from the non-respondents who were scientifically selected but not ultimately surveyed. This can present a bias that is difficult to identify and correct. The 19% of students who we selected but failed to contact could have been too busy during the end-of-the-semester rush, or had very different feeling about religious values than the 417 students who shared their time and thoughts with us. If for some reason, the students we failed to contact consisted of all anti-religious students, then our survey over-estimated the religiousness of our students.

How likely is this? It is unlikely that all non-cooperators share a bias against religion (or in favor of religion, for that matter), but some bias is certainly possible. Bias is most likely among the 14 students (3%) who explicitly refused to complete the survey. Since they knew that the topic was about “religious values of students” when they refused, it is unlikely that they had positive feelings towards the subject. We were very fortunate that the rate of refusal was extraordinarily low.

The data seems to pass the “common sense test” that tells us that students were answering thoughtfully. As everyone should expect, we found that atheists didn’t go to church, and persons who prayed frequently were more committed to spiritual growth than those who never prayed. Catholics went to Mass more than students who told us they are “spiritual but not religious” and MOVE volunteers were very interested in “helping others” than those who said that “being well off financially” was a high goal. We found those expected patterns and a great deal more. We also found many answers that were within a percent or two of responses given to us in a 1999 survey, and answers consistent with some national surveys of first year students.

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<sup>1</sup> The author cannot be certain of the student reported figure of 70 bad phone numbers plus extra names that students never tried to contact. It is probably a bit inflated and some of those names should have been left in the base as non-cooperators. It’s difficult to know how many should be added, but even in the worst case, and all were returned to the base calculation, our response rate would only fall to 71% (417/587), still an excellent rate of response. In short, the response rate is “probably” 81%, but could be slightly lower.

We actually have some clues that can help us judge whether or not our sample contains a systematic bias, and these clues are encouraging. Since we know a number of things about the characteristics of all SMC students, we can compare those statistics to those of our sample to see if they are parallel. For example, if our sample consisted of 35% sophomores, yet we know that sophomores only make up 23% of our student body, we would know that our sample had at least this one source of “pro-sophomore” bias. On the other hand, perhaps the fact that a student is a sophomore or senior has no relevance whatsoever to religious values. Obviously, such comparisons only provide indirect evidence of bias, and they also make assumptions.

As it turns out, our sample is demographically quite representative of the 1872 full time students on almost all characteristics that we were able to identify. The following table presents these comparisons, and reveals that on most characteristics, our sample percentages fell within the desired 5% range of error for a sample size of 417. Our sample is representative in terms of majors, those receiving financial aid, attendance at Catholic high schools, Mass attendance, and year of graduation.

According to reported GPA, however, our sample appears to have disproportionate numbers with higher grade point averages compared to the Registrar’s data. Undoubtedly due to conscious or unconscious exaggeration, this has occurred in every survey that this researcher has conducted over the past 28 years. This even occurs in surveys of alumni who graduated 5 to 35 years ago. It is unlikely that only “better students” fill out our surveys. This point is supported by the fact that using identical sampling methodologies but when the researchers use official transcripts to apply official GPA’s to completed questionnaires, the results perfectly mirror the distribution for the College. Thus the sampling technique is without flaw; it’s the student who exaggerates.

We did find the common gender bias in response rates, however. Women constitute 55% of SMC undergraduates, but they constitute 62% of our sample. This surplus of 7% from female respondents is nearly universal, and parallels other research on “male underachievement” here and in many other educational environments. It is also possible that our use of social networks to hand out and pick up completed questionnaires fostered the gender bias since 22 of the 27 students in class are women. A gender bias would only present a problem if we had reason to believe that religious beliefs were in some way related to gender. Unfortunately, this is the case. American women tend to be more religious than men, participate more in religiously based activities, and express stronger religious beliefs. Our data indicates that the same is true among women at Saint Michael’s.

This surplus of women in our sample demonstrably gives our data a bias in the direction of greater religiousness and stronger faith beliefs. How much does this influence our aggregate data? Fortunately, not much. The seven percent over-representation translates into about 26 “extra” women from exact representation, and if the number had been 17 instead of 26, our data would have fallen within the normal range of sampling error. The sample size is large enough that these differences would not dramatically change the data, but a slight gender bias is undeniable.

The following table presents the exact statistics.

**Table 1, Comparison Between Sample Characteristics  
and “Known” Characteristics**

|  | <b>Sample<br/>characteristics</b> | <b>“Known”<br/>characteristics</b> |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Year of graduation</b>                          |                                   |                                    |
| 2002   | 25%                               | 24%                                |
| 2003   | 25                                | 26                                 |
| 2004   | 25                                | 25                                 |
| 2005   | 24                                | 25                                 |
| <b>Majors</b>                                      |                                   |                                    |
| Natural sciences, MA, CS                           | 13%                               | 11%                                |
| Social sciences (SO, PS, EC, PS)                   | 24                                | 24                                 |
| Pre-professional (BU, ED, JO)                      | 42                                | 37                                 |
| Humanities, other Liberal Arts                     | 17                                | 21                                 |
| Exploratory  | 5                                 | 7                                  |
| <b>Financial Aid</b>                               |                                   |                                    |
| Receiving no financial aid                         | 19%                               | 16%                                |
| Receiving a Pell grant                             | 13                                | 14                                 |
| Receiving other financial aid                      | 68                                | 70                                 |
| <b>Gender</b>                                      |                                   |                                    |
| Female   | 62%                               | 55%                                |
| Male   | 38                                | 45                                 |
| <b>Other</b>                                       |                                   |                                    |
| Graduated from a Catholic high school              | 20%                               | 16%                                |
| Percent Catholic <sup>2</sup>                      | 61                                | 60                                 |
| Percent who attend Mass weekly at SMC <sup>3</sup> | 12                                | 13                                 |

### **Margin of Error**

The data we present are believed to be accurate within five percentage points of the statistics that we would have found had we successfully asked these same questions of all 1,872 students. For example, when we report that the percent of students who “usually think of themselves” as “Catholic” as 59%, it is equally possible that the “true” percentage for the entire students body is 64% or 54%. Additionally, the sampling error only holds at the 95% “level of confidence” which means that had we an infinite amount of time and money, we could have taken 100 independent samples of 400 students and found our statistics in the same 5% range in 95 cases of the 100. This is a conventionally accepted margin of error. While we cannot statistically specify a reduction in the sampling error because of our very high 81% response rate and 3% refusal rate, we would describe the data as unusually “robust.” In the course of this report, we will frequently refer to “statistically significant differences” or sometimes just “significant differences.” Unless otherwise noted, this will always refer to differences that are statistically significant at the .05 level or greater.

<sup>2</sup> This estimate of percent Catholic is the statistical average of the last 5 years of CIRP surveys of first year students. Each year is within about 2% of the mean.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Marcel Rainville of the Office of Campus Ministry weekly surveys reveal attendance between 230 to 250 students each Sunday.  $240/1872 = 13\%$

## Reliability and Validity

If our data are “reliable” it means that if we were to do the same survey again a week after we completed this survey, we would get the same results. Reliability is a matter of being able to get consistent results so that we know that respondents are not guessing or randomly making up answers. Surveys such as this one are typically strong on reliability, and the reader will find many statistics that are exactly the same as statistics on items we used in other surveys done on campus in the past. Of course some items are more reliable than others.

Validity is the more important criteria. Validity addresses the issue of our success in testing exactly what we think we are testing. Are our findings really “true”? This is far more difficult to assess. For example, surveys of students over the past several years have revealed that about 60% describe themselves as Catholic. Validity asks whether or not they are “really and truly Catholic.” How does one answer such a question? Ask to see written evidence of Baptism and Confirmation? Affidavits of beliefs or behavior from friends and family? Inquisition from the Vatican Defender of the Faith? The problem of validity is extremely difficult to assess, and sometimes belongs more appropriately in the realm of philosophy.

Many of our questions have been used on national surveys and tested and re-tested, but proof of validity remains elusive. About half the questions were taken from a social science reference book (Hill and Hood, 1999) that contains thousands of pre-tested and well-established items from hundreds of surveys undertaken by researchers. About the best summary that we can provide is that most of the items appear to have “reasonable” levels of validity, and that the questions appear to be measuring what we think they are measuring.

## Comparisons to Other Surveys

The data becomes particularly valuable when we are able to compare our findings to responses on similar questions asked in other surveys in prior years, or to contemporary surveys done at other institutions. We are fortunate to have many such bases of comparisons, including identical questions asked in our own institutional research projects for prior classes of students and well as alumni questioned five years after graduation. But two national surveys also provide some important standards of comparison because they have been administered at hundreds and in some cases thousands of institutions across the country, as well as administered on this campus.

The most important of these is the well know **CIRP** survey of pre-freshmen, administered to hundreds of thousands students annually and as frequent participants, their database is available to us as well. It is especially valuable because it captures the attitudes, values, and practices of students their very first day or two on campus, before Saint Michael’s could influence these factors. Thus when the reader finds comparisons to the CIRP results, keep in mind that it refers to pre-freshmen. The second national survey is the **NSSE**, the National Survey of Student Engagement which we have administered in the past 4 or 5 years in the Spring semester, but only to first year students and seniors. Both of these surveys allow us to compare the findings from the present survey to a subgroup of the other colleges, including other Catholic colleges.

## FINDINGS

### Importance of Religion to Students

We asked students seven separate questions that all addressed how important religion was to them as well as various aspects of their general religiousness. Some questions were very direct, some less so. All seven of these questions are combined into an “index of religiousness” explained below.

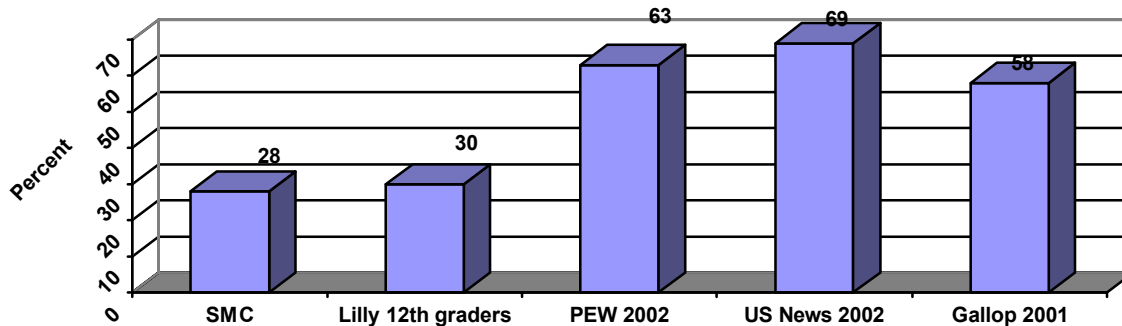
1. **Question 4:** How important would you say religion is in your own life—very important, somewhat important or not at all important?
  - a. 28% selected very important
  - b. 50% somewhat important
  - c. 22% not at all important
2. **Question 7:** How important is it to you to spend periods of time in private prayer—very important, somewhat important or not at all important?
  - a. 20% selected very important
  - b. 37% somewhat important
  - c. 43% not at all important
3. **Question 8:** How important is it to you to experience spiritual growth in your own life—very important, somewhat important or not at all important?
  - a. 45% selected very important
  - b. 39% somewhat important
  - c. 15% not at all important
4. **Question 15:** How important is it to grow spiritually throughout your life? Essential, very important, somewhat important or not at all important?
  - a. 32% selected essential
  - b. 31% very important
  - c. 30% somewhat important
  - d. 7% not at all important
5. **Question 56:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements... My religious faith gives meaning to my life.
  - a. 46% either “strongly agree” or “agree”
  - b. 40% are “neutral” on that statement
  - c. 15% either “disagree” or “strongly disagree”
6. **Question 59:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements... Religious commitment gives life a certain purpose that it would not otherwise have.
  - a. 39% either “strongly agree” or “agree”
  - b. 35% are “neutral” on that statement
  - c. 26% either “disagree” or “strongly disagree”
7. **Question 64:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements... Religion is important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.
  - a. 31% either “strongly agree” or “agree”
  - b. 38% are “neutral” on that statement
  - c. 31% either “disagree” or “strongly disagree”

Two of these questions (numbers 4 and 8) are the same questions as are commonly asked in national polls of adults, so we have good standards of comparison. In both cases, our students gave considerably less religious responses than random samples of American adults. Among our students, only 28% said that religion was “very important,” very similar to the responses of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in a national poll conducted by UNC and funded by the Lilly Foundation. A 2001 Gallup Poll of adults found 58% giving that response, a national Pew Poll in March of 2002 found 63% and another March 2002 poll sponsored by *U.S. News/PBS* found 69% (among Christians).

## Figure 1, Importance of Religion SMC and Various National Comparisons

*“How important would you say religion is in your own life? Would you say very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?”*

**Percent who say “very important”**



On questions 8 and 15 we phrased the issue in terms of “spiritual growth” and found our students describing themselves about as spiritual as most Americans report in national samples. On question #8 we found that 84% of our students told us that it was ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ to “experience spiritual growth in [their] your own lives.” The figure for the 2001 Gallup Poll found 80% of Americans with the same emphasis. We asked the parallel question “How important is it to grow spiritually throughout your life?” (question 15) and offered slightly different answer options. This time, 63% said “essential” or “very important” leaving the remaining 37% for “somewhat important” or “not at all important.” While the question may not be precisely comparable, this suggests that compared to national samples our students may be slightly more affirming of the importance of a generalized “spirituality.”

In 1987, Rev. Richard Myhalyk conducted a large and well-executed survey of all first year students, and his results reflect a more religiously oriented student body than we now have. In response to the statement “It is necessary for me to have a religious belief” 39% “strongly agreed;” 32% “agreed somewhat;” 16% were “undecided;” 9% “disagreed;” and 5% “strongly disagreed.”

His parallel 1990 survey asked students how important it was to “develop ethically, morally and spiritually as a person” and received the following answers:

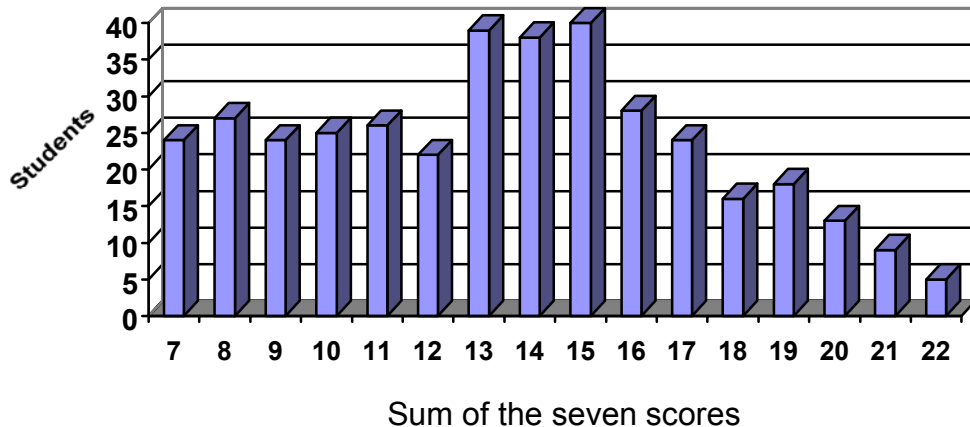
- 39% said it was “definitely important”
- 52% said “important”
- 7% said “uncertain or cannot judge”
- 2% said “not important” or “definitely not important.”

How our students would respond in 2002 would be sheer speculation.

When researchers are dealing with several different questions that each measure the same dimension, they often attempt to combine the various questions into a single index. This can be done when several criteria are met, including the requirement that each question be statistically correlated with each other. In this case, the seven questions identified above (4, 7, 8, 15, 56, 59, and 64) meet these criteria and have been indexed into a single summary measure of “religiousness” by mere addition of the mathematical values (e.g., options 1, 2, 3, etc) and re-categorization of the sums into three categories of “high,” “medium” and “low.” The chart below presents the raw data in a form that visually

illustrates the wide range of religiousness among our students. A student who selected the most important option for all of the seven belief questions would have received a score of seven (i.e., a one for each of seven questions). On the other end of the continuum, the most non-religious options to each of the seven questions would have summed to 22.

**Figure 2, Index of Student Religiousness  
Cumulative Values on Questions 4, 7, 8, 15, 56, 59, 64**



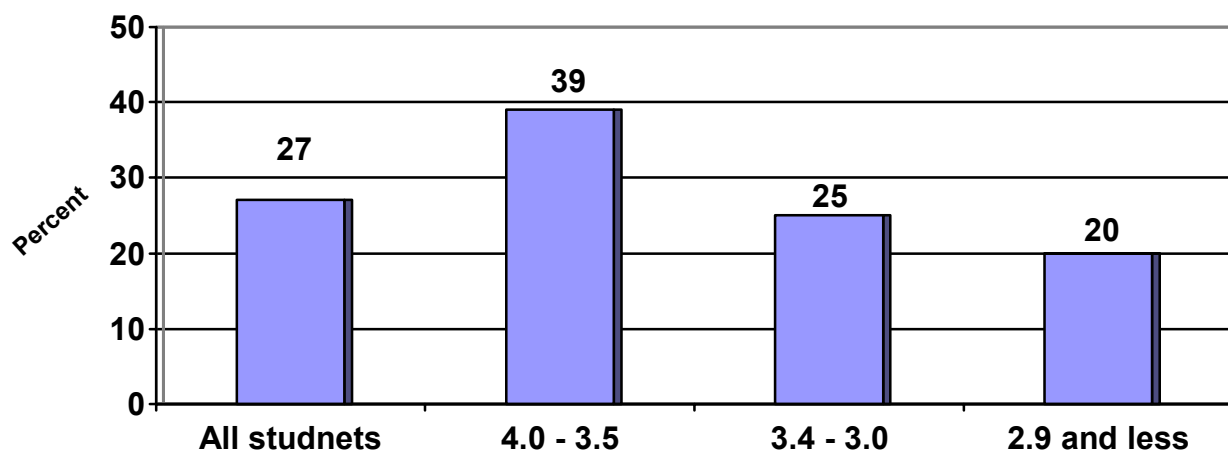
While it was difficult to find any breaks in the continuum to use as natural points of clustering, we eventually labeled the highest 26% of scores as the “most religious” and the lowest 28% as the “least religious” with the remaining 46% falling in the middle level. This resulting three-fold index turned out to correlate highly with many other questionnaire items and it was a powerful predictor of many values, beliefs and behaviors.

What types of students are most (or least) religious and what are their other beliefs? Using this index, we sought statistically significant differences that would help identify the distinctive characteristics of “religious” and “non-religious” students. For example, we learned that women tend to be significantly more religious than men and our Catholic students are somewhat more religious than our non-Catholic students. But non-relationships were also very interesting. For example, it appears that attending a Catholic high school does not correlate with a student’s religiousness, but receiving a Vermont Parish scholarship is positively associated with a number of important items.

The rough quartile of our students who are very religious on our scale tend to be higher academic achievers, at least as judged by the self-reported grades. Self-reporting tends to produce exaggerated claims of high grades, but the exaggerations tend to be somewhat consistent so that we have a fairly stable, if inflated standard. As we can see from the chart below, overall about 27% of our students fell into the category of the “most religious” but of the students who reported GPA’s of 3.5 to 4.0, 39% were in that distinguished category.

**Figure 3, Percent of Each GPA Range**

Rating as “Most Religious” on Index of Religiousness



The table below is a summary of many other differences in the three categories of respondents—the 26% who are the “most religious,” the 28% who are “least religious” and the remaining 46% of the students who fell in the middle. If the column on the far right has a “yes” in the column, then the differences which appear are statistically significant at the .05 level or more, and most were significant at the .000 level. This means that there is an extremely low probability that the differences that we see are due to chance or random variation. The base to which the percentages are calculated is always the number of respondents in each of the three index categories. For example, in the second column, we would read the first 38% statistic this way: “Of the 102 students who were classified as “most religious,” 38% said that since coming to SMC, they have become more committed to religion. Only 21% of the students who were ‘mid-level religious’ gave the same answer, as did only 3% of those who were least religious.”

**Table 2, Selected Religious Values and Beliefs  
By Index of Religiousness**

| Abbreviated question   | Most Religious<br>(102=100%) | Mid level religious<br>(196=100%) | Least Religious<br>(87=100%) | Signifi-<br>cant? |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Q3. Since coming to SMC, have you become more committed to religion?<br>% who said “more committed”                                    | 38%                          | 21%                               | 3%                           | yes               |
| Q5. How important was the religious affiliation of SMC in your decision to come here? Percent who said “very” or “somewhat” important. | 68                           | 35                                | 5                            | yes               |
| Q6. How important is it to you to continue to have the Edmundites on campus? Percent who said “very” or “somewhat” important.          | 85                           | 71                                | 38                           | yes               |
| Q11. How important is it to you to help others in difficulty? % who said “essential” or “very important.”                              | 91                           | 82                                | 76                           | yes               |
| Q12. How important is it to you to develop a meaningful philosophy of life? % “essential” or “very important.”                         | 87                           | 74                                | 60                           | yes               |

| <b>Table 2, continued</b>   | <b>Most Religious<br/>(102=100%)</b> | <b>Mid level religious<br/>(196=100%)</b> | <b>Least Religious<br/>(87=100%)</b> | <b>Significant?</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Q13. How important is it to you to influence social values? % who said “essential” or ”very important.”   | 84                                   | 67  | 52                                   | yes                 |
| Q14. How important is it to you to participate by volunteering? % who said “essential” or ”very important.”   | 75                                   | 62  | 50                                   | yes                 |
| Q20. How important is it to you to marry someone from your own faith tradition? % “essential” or ”very important.”                                  | 40                                   | 17  | 7                                    | yes                 |
| Q24. How often do you attend Mass or some other form of religious service? Percent weekly   | 34                                   | 6   | 0                                    | yes                 |
| Q26. How often do you read the Bible or other religious scripture? % monthly  | 28                                   | 9   | 8                                    | yes                 |
| Q27. Frequency of prayer or meditation? % daily.  | 41                                   | 5   | 0                                    | yes                 |
| Q34. How often do you talk about what is right to do vs. wrong to do? Percent who said “frequently”   | 45                                   | 32  | 28                                   | yes                 |
| Q35. How often do you talk about whether or not there is a God? Percent who said “frequently”   | 26                                   | 15  | 17                                   | no                  |
| Q36. How often do you talk about the meaning of life? Percent who said “frequently”   | 34                                   | 28  | 18                                   | no                  |
| Q37. Belief in God<br>% who are sure God exists<br>% who believe in God, but have doubts<br>% who are uncertain, plus atheists                      | 69<br>20<br>0                        | 28<br>32<br>3                             | 9<br>18<br>18                        | yes                 |
| Q38. Religious orientation of home in which you were raised...<br>% that were highly committed<br>% that were not at all committed                  | 55<br>1                              | 21<br>8                                   | 10<br>23                             | yes                 |
| Q39. Religious orientation<br>% among Catholics<br>% among non-Catholics  | 71<br>29                             | 63<br>37                                  | 38<br>62                             | yes                 |
| Q40. Which best described your beliefs<br>% both spiritual and religious<br>% spiritual but not religious   | 80<br>14                             | 31<br>54                                  | 8<br>43                              | yes                 |
| Q47. Have your Religious Studies courses strengthened your religious faith? % strengthened  | 44                                   | 30  | 13                                   | yes                 |
| Q51. Is the religious atmosphere on campus not strong enough or too strong?<br>% who say not as strong as it should be<br>% who say it’s too strong | 29<br>0                              | 11<br>3                                   | 2<br>7                               | yes                 |
| Q58. The education I am receiving is deepening my understanding of moral and ethical problems. Percent who “strongly agree” or “agree.”             | 66                                   | 63  | 50                                   | yes                 |
| Q61. If you are a strong person, you do not need religion. Percent who “strongly agree” or “agree.”   | 2                                    | 9   | 22                                   | yes                 |

| Table 2, continued  | Most Religious<br>(102=100%) | Mid level religious<br>(196=100%) | Least Religious<br>(87=100%) | Significant? |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| Q84. Have you participated in MOVE? % yes                   | 54                           | 46                                | 41                           | No           |
| Q88. Percent of those who have a Vermont Parish scholarship | 8                            | 8                                 | 4                            | No           |
| Q90. Percent of those who attended a Catholic high school   | 19                           | 19                                | 18                           | No           |
| Gender  |                              |                                   |                              |              |
| Percent of women  | 77                           | 60                                | 55                           | Yes          |
| Percent of men  | 24                           | 40                                | 45                           |              |

Our sample included a proportionate number of students who are Vermonters and who receive a parish scholarship. Their pastors have recommended all these Catholic students. Even though they are not significantly different on our scale of religiousness, there are a significant number of items in which their religiousness is higher than that of the average SMC student. They are more likely to

- attend religious services, pray or meditate
- have been drawn to SMC because of its religious affiliation
- desire to become active in their churches
- seek a job with a religious or moral dimension
- wish to more frequently discuss the moral implications of career choices
- come from homes that they describe as more religious
- highly value the continuing presence of the Edmundites

## Religious Affiliation, Family Background, and Perceived Need for Religion

Many members of the greater community seem to believe that most of our students are pious Catholics who come from conservative religious families. A few members of the faculty have even reflected that opinion. Such a belief is not consistent with our survey. Only 6 in 10 think of themselves as Catholics; only one-third are confident of God's existence; just over one-quarter come from "highly committed" religious families; and about 40% describe themselves as "spiritual, but not religious." In their relationship to organized religion, the vast majority believe that they can grow spiritually just as well without a church, a significant minority told us that if you were a strong person you didn't "need religion," and about the same number told us that going to church is "a waste of time." The number of "agnostics" among our students is much higher than in the population of the U.S. at large. We have few atheists among our students (2%) a fact that mirrors the nation's collective tendency to affirm the existence of God. According to a 2001 Gallup Poll, 95% of Americans believe in God, one of the highest rates of any Western country. (See footnote 4.) Following are the exact wording and answers to each of these questions:

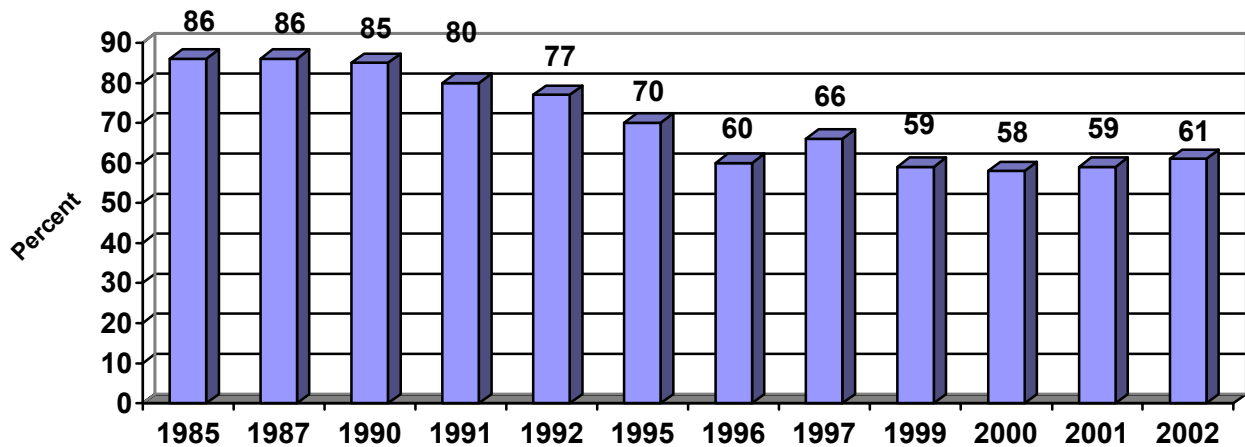
1. **Question 37:** Which of the following statements comes closest to expressing what you believe about God? <sup>4</sup>
  - a. 33% I know that God exists and have no doubts about it
  - b. 27% While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God
  - c. 9% I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at other times
  - d. 17% I don't believe in a personal God, in a higher power of some kind

<sup>4</sup> The well regarded year national 2000 "General Social Survey" used the same question and found the following: 60% have no doubts; 15% believe, with doubts; 3% believe sometimes; 7% higher power; 4% don't know and can't find out; 3% don't believe. The last 10% was "none of the above" or "no answer."

- e. 6% I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out
  - f. 2% I don't believe in God
  - g. 7% None of the above represents what I believe
2. **Question 38:** How would you describe the religious orientation of the home environment in which you were raised?
    - a. 28% Highly committed to religion
    - b. 36% Moderately committed to religion
    - c. 26% Loosely committed to religion
    - d. 10% Not at all committed to religion
  3. **Question 39:** Do you usually think of yourself as a Catholic, a Protestant, or do you have some other religious identification?
    - a. 61% Catholic
    - b. 15% Protestant
    - c. 12% Other
    - d. 13% No particular affiliation
  4. **Question 40:** Which of the following statements best describes your beliefs about being either "spiritual" or "religious?"
    - a. 39% I am both spiritual and religious
    - b. 41% I am spiritual but not religious
    - c. 8% I am religious but not spiritual
    - d. 12% Neither
  5. **Question 55.** Do you agree or disagree with the following: I believe that most people can grow spiritually just as well without going to church
    - a. 79% Strongly agree or agree
    - b. 15% Neutral
    - c. 6% Disagree or strongly disagree
  6. **Question 61.** Do you agree or disagree with the following: If you are a strong person, you do not need religion.
    - a. 11% Strongly agree or agree
    - b. 25% Neutral
    - c. 64% Disagree or strongly disagree
  7. **Question 66.** Do you agree or disagree with the following: In general, I consider church attendance a waste of time.
    - a. 13% Strongly agree or agree
    - b. 19% Neutral
    - c. 68% Disagree or strongly disagree
  8. **Question 90.** Did you attend a Catholic high school for most of your four years before coming to Saint Michael's?
    - a. 20% Yes, I did
    - b. 80% No, I did not

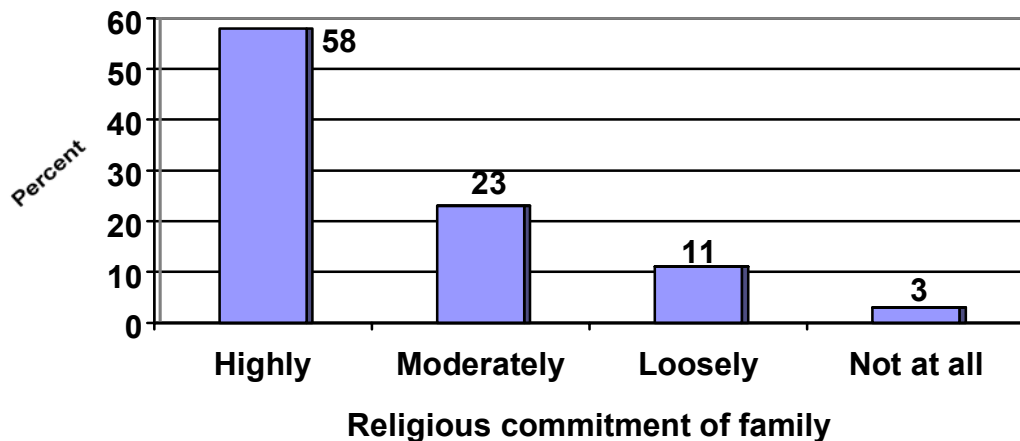
Many will be most surprised by the figure that only 61% percent of the students now consider themselves to be Catholic, but the number is consistent with the CIRP surveys that new students fill out during their first week on campus. Over the past 6 years, we have taken part in the national CIRP survey of first year students consisting of over 100 questions, including one on "religious identification." According to this source, the average percent Catholic that our first year students have been reporting is 60%. It is interesting to note, however, that among all Catholic colleges conducting the survey, the average over that time span was 67% Catholic students. Nationally, among all colleges taking part in the survey (Catholic and non-Catholic) the number is about 29%. Our "Five Year Alumni Surveys" have yielded proportions consistent with the decline of Catholics depicted below. The classes of 1991, 1992, 1995, and 1996 report the following percents: 80%, 77%, 74% and 72% respectively. According to the 2001 Barron's, Boston College, is 76% Catholic; Merrimack, 80%; Stonehill, 75%; Saint Anslem, 83%; Sacred Heart, 75%; Duquesne, 46%; Fordham, 68%. See Appendix A for a longer listing.

**Figure 4, Percent Catholic 1985 to Present, Various Sources <sup>5</sup>**



One sometimes hears disparaging anecdotes about “strict Catholic parents” and the rebelliousness that such religious socialization causes in a child. According to our data, however, students who were raised in home environments that were “highly committed” to religion actually became religious young adults. In case there was ever any doubt about the effectiveness of family religious socialization, our students offer testimony to the fact that children usually reflect their parent’s religious commitments. The following is just one chart of 20 or more that could be presented to underscore this point.

**Figure 5, Importance of Religion to Respondent  
Percent who say “very important”  
By Religious Commitment of their Families**



<sup>5</sup> 1985: Survey by Research Methods class; 1987 and 1990 from surveys of first year students by Rev. Richard Myhalyk; 1991 and 1992 are from alumni surveys 5 years out; 1995-2001 are from CIRP.

## **“Spiritual but not religious” vs. “both religious and spiritual”**

Of considerable interest is the recent popularity of the position of being “spiritual but not religious” (question 40) an increasingly common position among young persons today, and the subject of considerable academic curiosity. We attempted to find some of the correlates associated with the very different positions of “religious and spiritual” compared to “spiritual but not religious” by recoding this question and temporarily changing the two smallest categories of “religious but not spiritual” and “neither” as missing data. This resulted in a comparison of 158 students in “religious and spiritual” category, and 164 in the “spiritual but not religious” category. Combined, this analysis includes 77% of our sample of 417.

1) Measures of religiousness. First of all, the “spiritual but not religious” group is less likely to be Catholic but the long list of other statistically significant differences is revealing. Perhaps most obviously, students who think of themselves as “spiritual but not religious” are very low on all of our measures of religiousness:

1. (Composite index) Of all students who called themselves “spiritual but not religious,” only 9% fell into the “most religious” category of our seven item “index of religiousness,” compared to 55% of those who said they were both religious and spiritual;
2. Q61 The “spiritual but not religious” students are more likely to say that a “strong person does not need religion” (14% vs. 5%);
3. Q66. They are more likely to say that church is “a waste of time”(20% vs. 4%);
4. Q24. They are less likely to attend a weekly religious service (4% vs. 25%);
5. Q37. They are far less likely to believe in God, but more likely to believe in some sort of “higher power” (see Table 13);
6. Q38. They are less likely to come from “religious homes” (16% vs. 44%);
7. Q55. They are more likely to say that one can grow spiritually without going to church (94% vs. 63%);
8. Q81. They are more likely to say that the issues of “some priest pedophiles” weakens their commitment to Catholicism (46% vs. 29%);
9. Q80. They are more likely to say that the fact that women cannot be ordained as priests weakens their commitment to Catholicism (49% vs. 32%);
10. Q64. They are less likely to say that religion gives life meaning or answers questions about life (17% vs. 52%);
11. Q56. They are less likely to say that religion gives meaning to their lives (24% vs. 80%);
12. Q59. They are less likely to say that religious commitment gives their lives purpose it wouldn’t have otherwise (21% vs. 63%);
13. Q3. They are less likely to say that they have become more committed religiously since coming to SMC (16% vs. 33%).

2) Religion at Saint Michael’s. Students who are “spiritual but not religious” are also distinguished by their attitudes towards various issues related to religion at Saint Michael’s:

1. Q51. They are not dissatisfied with the religious atmosphere on campus, being the most likely to say that it is “fine as is” (83% vs. 69%);
2. Q44. While few in our sample complained that the faculty are “too religious,” these “spiritual but not religious” students are much more likely to do so than students who are both religious and spiritual (89% vs. 11%);
3. Q5. They are less likely to have been drawn to SMC because of its “religious affiliation” (23% vs. 58%);
4. Q6. They are less likely to feel as though it is as important to maintain the presence of the Edmundites on campus (59% vs. 85%);
5. Q47. They are less likely to report that the Religious Studies courses have strengthened their faith (22% vs. 43%);

3) Institutionalized religion. Students who think of themselves as “spiritual but not religious” also have lower commitment to matters pertaining to institutionalized religion, including these:

1. Q19. They are less likely to wish to get married in a church ceremony (18% vs. 54%);
2. Q20. They are less likely to care about marrying someone from their own faith tradition (2% vs. 13%);
3. Q21. They are less likely to care about raising their children in their own faith tradition (6% vs. 39%);
4. Q39. They are less likely to be Catholic and more likely to be unaffiliated (see Table 3 below);
5. Q46. They are less likely think of the Catholic tradition of SMC as a positive thing (49% vs. 68%);
6. Q78. They are more likely to say that they could be just as happy in another church (34% vs. 21%);
7. Q77. They are more likely to say that there is “nothing special” about being a Catholic (31% vs. 10%);
8. Q73. They are more likely to say one can be a good Catholic without going to Mass (75% vs. 63%);

4) Spirituality. Perhaps most interestingly, students who are “spiritual but not religious” are also less spiritual than students who think of themselves as “both religious and spiritual.”

1. Q 8. They are less likely to say that “spiritual growth is important in their lives” (49% vs. 60%);
2. Q15. They are less likely to say that that it’s “essential” or “very important” to grow spiritually throughout one’s life” (34% vs. 44%);
3. Q27. They are less likely to either pray or meditate (6% vs. 27%).

The following table provides a few additional statistical comparisons of the two groups:

**Table 3, Selected Religious Values and Beliefs  
Comparison of Students who say they are  
“Spiritual but not Religious” vs. “Spiritual and Religious”**

| Abbreviated question  | “Spiritual and religious”<br>(164=100%) | “Spiritual but not religious”<br>(158=100%) | Sig-nificant? |
|---|---|---|---------------|
| Q37. Belief in God  |   |   |               |
| % who are sure God exists                                   | 56                                      | 15  | yes           |
| % who believe in God, but have doubts                       | 35                                      | 37  |               |
| % who don’t believe in a personal God, but a higher power   | 5                                       | 30  |               |
| % who are uncertain about a God                             | 1                                       | 7   |               |
| % atheists  | 0                                       | 3   |               |
| Q39. Religious orientation                                  |   |   |               |
| % among Catholics   | 82                                      | 48  | yes           |
| % among Protestants   | 11                                      | 14  |               |
| % among others  | 6                                       | 16  |               |
| % with no particular affiliation                            | 1                                       | 23  |               |
| Q84. Have participated in MOVE?                             | 48                                      | 51  | no            |
| Q88. Percent of those who have a Vermont Parish scholarship | 12                                      | 4   | yes           |

| Table 3, continued  | “Spiritual and religious”<br>(164=100%) | “Spiritual but not religious”<br>(158=100%) | Sig-nifi-cant? |
|---|---|---|----------------|
| Q90. Percent of those who attended a Catholic high school | 21                                      | 15  | No             |
| Gender  |   |   |                |
| Percent women   | 74                                      | 58  | Yes            |
| Percent men   | 26                                      | 42  |                |

## Religious practice

Most of the above issues have dealt with religious beliefs and values. This section explores “religious practice.”

1. **Question 7.** How important is it to you to spend time in private prayer?
  - a. 20% Very important
  - b. 38% Somewhat important
  - c. 42% Not at all important
2. **Question 24.** During the parts of the year when you are here on campus, on average, about how often do you attend Mass or some other worship services on Saturday or Sunday? (The second percent for each option is for Catholics only)
  - a. 12% Every week (RC: 18%)
  - b. 11% Every month, but not every week (RC: 15%)
  - c. 17% Several times a year, but not every month (RC: 23%)
  - d. 30% I almost never attend worship services (RC: 30%)
  - e. 30% I never attend worship services (RC: 15%)
3. **Question 67.** There are many reasons why students sometimes don’t go to Mass on Sundays. If you don’t go to Mass regularly, can you tell us why not? Which of the following reasons are significant to you? Check all that apply. (In this case, the percent given is for Catholics only.)
  - a. 18% The service doesn’t seem relevant to my religious and spiritual needs
  - b. 16% The sermons are not very engaging or valuable
  - c. 26% I have disagreements with some of the theology of the church
  - d. 3% I don’t feel that my participation as a student is sufficiently valued
  - e. 37% Other, please specify (see appendix for listing)
4. **Question 68.** How well does attending Mass and other religious services in the Saint Michael’s Chapel help you deal with important questions in your life? (In this case, the percent given is for Catholics only.)
  - a. 6% Very well (IF “Don’t know” are dropped, this becomes 11%)
  - b. 36% Moderately well (IF “Don’t know” are dropped, this becomes 63%)
  - c. 11% Moderately poorly (IF “Don’t know” are dropped, this becomes 19%)
  - d. 5% Very poorly (IF “Don’t know” are dropped, this becomes 8%)
  - e. 44% Don’t know (IF “Don’t know” are dropped, this becomes 0%)
5. **Question 73.** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? One can be a good Catholic without going to Mass. (In this case, the percent given is for Catholics only.)
  - a. 73% Strongly agree or agree
  - b. 16% Neutral
  - c. 11% Disagree or strongly disagree

6. **Question 25.** Since you've been a student here at SMC, have you gone to Mass *more frequently* than you did before coming to this college, *less frequently* than you did before, or has your attendance been *about the same*?
  - a. 13% I've gone more frequently
  - b. 48% I've gone less frequently
  - c. 39% I've gone about the same
7. **Question 26.** Over the course of the past year or so, on average, about how often did you read the Bible or other form of religious scripture?
  - a. 6% At least every week
  - b. 8% Every month, but not every week
  - c. 17% Several times a year, but not every month
  - d. 36% I almost never do
  - e. 33% Never
8. **Question 27.** Which of the following best describes your practice of prayer or religious meditation?
  - a. 13% Prayer is a regular part of my daily life
  - b. 27% I pray fairly often, but probably not daily
  - c. 30% I usually pray only in times of stress or need but rarely at any other time
  - d. 14% I pray only during formal ceremonies
  - e. 15% I never pray
9. **Question 32.** Have you ever personally tried to convert someone to your religious faith?
  - a. 1% Yes, frequently
  - b. 9% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 91% No, never
10. **Question 84.** Since you've started at Saint Michael's, have you ever participated in. . .
  - a. 42% A locally organized and run MOVE program
  - b. 9% An extended service trip run by MOVE at an out-of-state location
  - c. (Combined, 46% have participated in one or the other)
  - d. 13% Spiritual retreats such as LEAP, Emmaus or Busy Student Retreats
  - e. 9% Campus ministry activities such as the Liturgical Choir, Eucharistic ministers, etc.
11. **Composite:** How many of the above (Q84) have students participated in?
  - a. 46% none
  - b. 38% only one
  - c. 17% two or more

Each of these above questions about religious practice are statistically (and logically) related to our index of religious beliefs. Student scores on the seven item index of religiousness were tightly related to their religious practice. This should not be surprising, but inconsistencies between beliefs and behavior are common, especially in the area of religion. The table below illustrates just one example of the consistency of belief and practice.

**Table 4, Index of Religiousness and Prayer**

| Q27 Frequency of prayer                | All students    | Index of religiousness |                     |                  |
|--|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
|  |                 | Most religious         | Mid-level religious | Least religious  |
| Prayer is a regular part of my day     | 13%             | 41%                    | 5%                  | 0%               |
| I pray fairly often, but not daily     | 27              | 47                     | 29                  | 1                |
| I usually only pray in times of stress | 30              | 10                     | 42                  | 29               |
| I only pray during formal ceremonies   | 14              | 2                      | 16                  | 25               |
| I never pray                           | 15              | 0                      | 8                   | 45               |
| Total                                  | 100%<br>(n=417) | 100%<br>(n= 102)       | 100%<br>(n = 191)   | 100%<br>(n = 87) |

Rev. Dick Myhalyk’s 1987 survey of first year students asked questions very similar question to our question 27 above about prayer or meditation: “How frequently do you spend periods of time in private religious thought and meditation?” 7% said “very frequently;” 19% said “frequently;” 36% said “occasionally;” 29% said “rarely;” and 9% said “never”. Without getting bogged down in the comparison of adjectives, the proportions who are the extremes on both ends have each changed substantially.

National data from the General Social Survey conducted in 2000 found that the “average American” prayed more frequently than our average student: 27% pray more than once a day; 29% pray daily; 14% pray several times a week; 6% pray weekly; 22% pray less than weekly.

### **Church attendance**

For people who grew up in the Pre-Vatican II Church, the low attendance at Mass or worship services is surprising. According to our sample, only about 12% of students go to Mass weekly, and another 11% go monthly, but not as often as weekly. This is probably an unfair statistic since Catholics now only comprise 61% of our student body. But the figures for Catholic students are just slightly higher than for non-Catholics—only 18% of our Catholic students go weekly; 15% monthly; 23% several times a year; 30% almost never; and 15% never. Campus Minister Fr. Marcel Rainville affirms that this figure is likely correct. His office estimates that 230 to 250 students are regular attendees at weekly Mass, and 240 (the mid-point) calculated to a base of 1,872 students, yields 12%. This calculation assumes a negligible number of students going off campus to a religious service

Surveys taken in the 1980’s, as well as the CIRP national survey of first year students, supports the sense that our SMC students have decreasing attendance at religious services. Myhalyk’s 1987 survey of first year students found that 56% of students reported weekly attendance before coming to Saint Michael’s.

Three other questions attempted to get the thinking of our Catholic students behind Mass attendance. First, we learned in question 73 that 73% of our Catholic students believe that “one can still be a good Catholic without going to Mass.” Secondly, in question 67 we asked each Catholic who said they do not go to Mass regularly why they don’t, and the answers are mixed (see item 4, Q67 above) with the largest single category falling under “other.” Each of those open-ended responses appears verbatim in the Appendix. Finally, in question 68, we asked Catholic students how well attending Mass helped students “deal with important questions in their lives” and 42% said “very well” or “moderately well” but a remarkable 44% took the “don’t know” option. This 44% figure surely suggests a lack of spiritual development.

Since the entering class of 1995, yearly CIRP statistics for SMC first year students report that in the year prior to starting at Saint Michael’s, they attended a religious service less frequently than students at other Catholic colleges in the national data base, and in many cases at a level closer to that of all four year colleges and universities in America, most of which are secular. When our class of 2003 entered, for example, they reported that 82% of them attended “a religious service in the past year” but the figure was 89% for the other Catholic colleges surveyed by CIRP, and 84% for students at all colleges and universities. While there are not big differences in these proportions, the direction is consistent. For the class that entered in 1995, 89% said that they had attended a religious service in the past year.

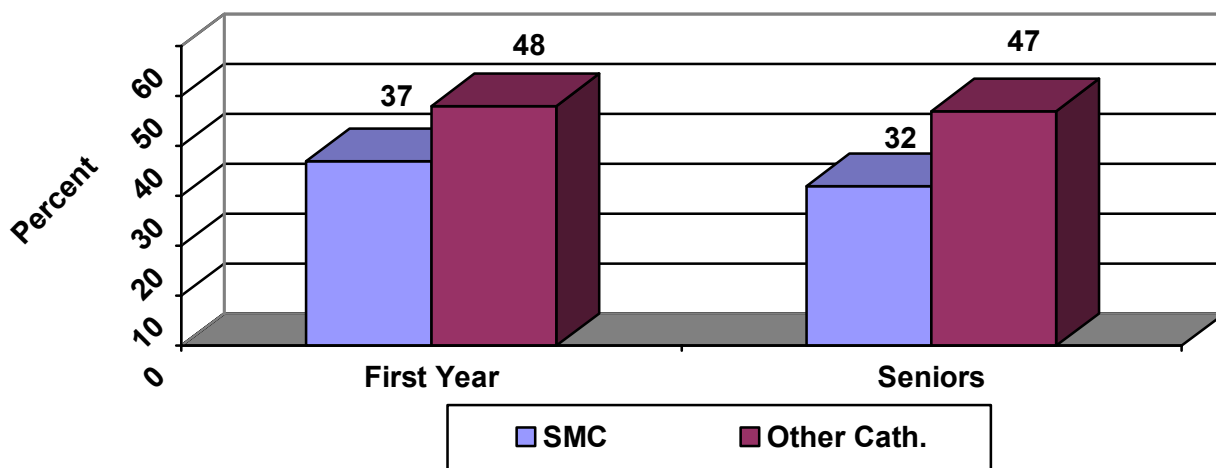
Student responses on question 25 regarding whether or not they have gone to church “more frequently” or “less frequently” since their arrival on campus” strengthen the case. Almost 50% of our students report that they go to Mass less frequently now than before they came to college. Only 13% attend more frequently, and 39% have not changed their pattern. The tendency to alter one’s church attendance after starting college is more pronounced among our Catholic students than our non-Catholic students. Significantly more Catholic students go to Mass more frequently after coming to SMC, but also more tend to go to Mass less frequently. Fewer remain unchanged. Among those raised in “highly committed” households, there is a tendency for these students to go to Mass less frequently than when they were at home, but women are the most likely to go “more frequently.”

The NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) was also conducted on campus in the spring of 2002, as well as several hundred other colleges, including five Catholic colleges. This survey is only of first year students and seniors. These responses suggested a much higher rate of attendance at religious services, but the question asked about attendance “last week,” a time period that overlapped with Lent. Significantly however, the rate for SMC is consistently lower than that of the five other Catholic colleges—Canisius; Mount St. Mary’s; Sacred Heart; St. Francis; U of St. Thomas. See the figure below.

**Figure 6, *Within the past seven days, have you participated in any religious service?***

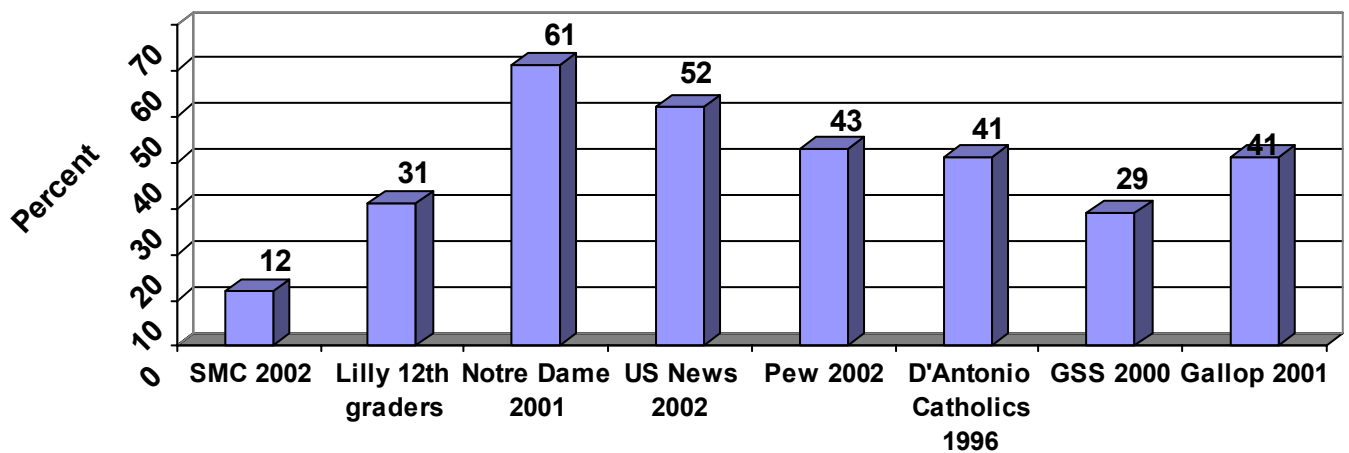
**Percent “yes”**

**NSSE survey, 2002, SMC and five other Catholic Colleges**



Our SMC figures are also very low when compared to national data on church attendance among adults. Part of the reason may be due to the fact that religious practice is generally lower among young adults. A UNC Lilly funded national poll of 12<sup>th</sup> graders found weekly church attendance to be at 31%, but the 2001 data for students at the University of Notre Dame are much higher, with 61% reporting that they go to Mass weekly. The chart below compares our rates with rates as reported in other recent national polls. Regional differences in church attendance have become minor, with northeast rates in the middle of the distribution. The “GSS 2000” is the well-regarded “General Social Survey.” Yet another poll conducted by ABC reported that about 26% of Catholic men attend weekly, compared to 49% of Catholic women. The precise wording of questions is sometimes slightly different, but not enough to significantly alter the response.

**Figure 7, Weekly Attendance at Worship Service  
SMC and Various National Comparison  
Percent who say “weekly”**



### Prayer and reading scripture

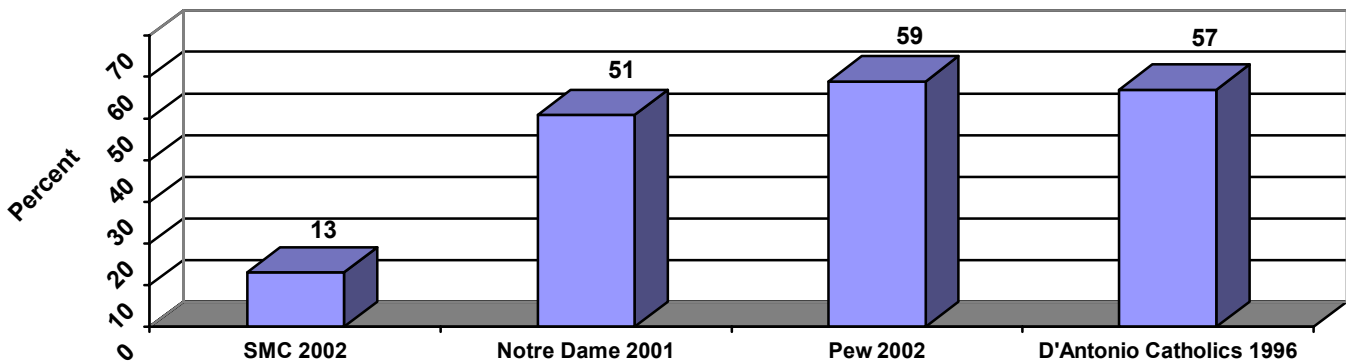
Prayer and reading scripture among our students also appears lower than that of comparison groups. While 13% of our students reported that “prayer is a regular part of my daily life,” the proportion at the University of Notre Dame was 51%, and a March 2002 survey of a random selection of Americans by PEW indicated that 59% pray daily. A recent survey of Catholics by D’Antonio found 57%. At SMC, daily prayer is slightly more common among our Catholic students than among our non-Catholics—15% compared to 10%. It is also more common among those who rated highest on our index of religiousness—41% for those “most religious,” 5% for those “moderately religious” and 0% for those who are “least religious.” See the tables below.

The CIRP national survey data of first year students sheds light on student practices prior to enrolling in colleges. Here too, our SMC students are less prayerful than others—not only at other Catholic colleges in America, but at most colleges and universities. Apparently, compared to most college students in America, SMC students are the least likely to pray. Here is the data for “time in prayer or meditation per week” for five of the last six classes to graduate from SMC.

**Table 5, Weekly Prayer, 1996 to 2001  
CIRP Data of First-Year Students**

|                                    | Weekly time in prayer or meditation |                    |      |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
|                                    | 1 hour or more                      | Less than one hour | None |
| <b>2001</b>                        |                                     |                    |      |
| SMC                                | 24%                                 | 36%                | 40%  |
| All CIRP colleges and universities | 33                                  | 34                 | 33   |
| All CIRP Catholic colleges         | 34                                  | 38                 | 28   |
| <b>2000</b>                        |                                     |                    |      |
| SMC                                | 22                                  | 37                 | 41   |
| All CIRP colleges and universities | 35                                  | 34                 | 31   |
| All CIRP Catholic colleges         | 35                                  | 38                 | 27   |
| <b>1999</b>                        |                                     |                    |      |
| SMC                                | 20                                  | 33                 | 48   |
| All CIRP colleges and universities | 36                                  | 34                 | 31   |
| All CIRP Catholic colleges         | 36                                  | 37                 | 27   |
| <b>1997</b>                        |                                     |                    |      |
| SMC                                | 19                                  | 38                 | 43   |
| All CIRP colleges and universities | 35                                  | 35                 | 30   |
| All CIRP Catholic colleges         | 36                                  | 39                 | 26   |
| <b>1996</b>                        |                                     |                    |      |
| SMC                                | 23                                  | 38                 | 39   |
| All CIRP colleges and universities | 35                                  | 35                 | 31   |
| All CIRP Catholic colleges         | 36                                  | 38                 | 26   |

**Figure 8, Daily prayer  
SMC and National Comparisons  
Percent who say “prayer is a regular part of my daily life”**

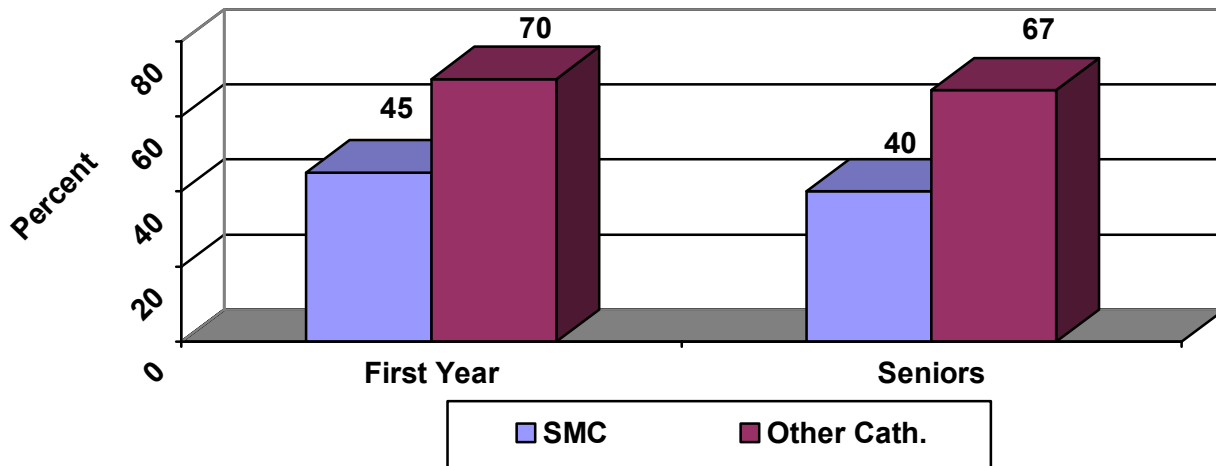


Compared to other Catholic colleges surveyed in the National Survey of Student Engagement, Saint Michael's College students also pray much less frequently. Note too, that this question was asked in a time period that overlapped with Lent. The five other Catholic colleges were Canisius; Mount St. Mary's; Sacred Heart; St. Francis; and U of St. Thomas.

**Figure 9, “Within the past seven days, have you spent any time in prayer or meditation? ”**

Percent “yes”

NSSE survey, 2002, SMC and five other Catholic Colleges



A similar pattern occurs for the practice of reading “the Bible or other form of religious scripture.” Only 14% of our students read weekly or monthly. At Notre Dame the number is 26%. In both cases, the numbers are slightly inflated because at any moment in time a number of students are enrolled in required courses in Religious Studies that may require reading scripture.

**Table 6, Prayer and Scriptural Reading  
By Religion and Religiousness  
*Differences are statistically significant***

|                                       | Religion |          | Religiousness Index |        |        |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|---------------------|--------|--------|
|                                       | Catholic | Non-Cath | Highest             | Middle | Lowest |
| <b>Prayer or religious meditation</b> |          |          |                     |        |        |
| A regular part of daily life          | 15%      | 10%      | 41%                 | 5%     | 0%     |
| I pray often, but not daily           | 30       | 23       | 47                  | 29     | 1      |
| I only pray in times of need          | 34       | 25       | 10                  | 42     | 29     |
| I only pray in formal ceremonies      | 15       | 14       | 2                   | 16     | 25     |
| I never pray                          | 6        | 28       | 0                   | 8      | 45     |
| <b>Read Bible or other scripture</b>  |          |          |                     |        |        |
| At least weekly                       | 5%       | 7%       | 9%                  | 4%     | 6%     |
| Every month, but not weekly           | 9        | 7        | 20                  | 5      | 2      |
| Several times a year                  | 19       | 15       | 25                  | 18     | 8      |
| I almost never do                     | 40       | 30       | 35                  | 43     | 26     |
| Never                                 | 27       | 41       | 12                  | 30     | 58     |

## The Catholic Issues

One section of the questionnaire was focused exclusively on issues related to the Catholic Church. Many students in class wanted to reserve this section of the questionnaire just for Catholics, but other students felt it would be “exclusionary” to do so. All students, they felt, deserved to have their voices heard on issues related to the church. As a compromise, we added the following boldface filter underneath the section titled CATHOLIC CHURCH: “**While we are interested in how all students feel about these questions, non-Catholics may choose to skip this section.**” Surprisingly, about 105 non-Catholic students chose to answer these questions, although we know that many did so simply because they failed to read the suggested limitation. The results for the total of both Catholics and non-Catholics are summarized below, as well as separate statistics for each group. In some cases, it is the lack of a statistically significant difference between the Catholic and non-Catholic’s difference that surprises.

**Table 7, Selected Catholic Issues  
(Subset of sample)  
Percent who “Strongly agree” plus “Agree”**

|   | <b>All<br/>333=100%</b> | <b>Cath.<br/>229=100%</b> | <b>Non-<br/>Cath.<br/>104=100%</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 69. Catholics have a duty to end racism.  | 54%                     | 55%                       | 54%                                | No          |
| 70. Catholics have a duty to try to close the gap between the rich and the poor.                    | 55                      | 57                        | 50                                 | No          |
| 71. Catholics have a duty to try to live more simply in order to preserve the environment.          | 40                      | 38                        | 44                                 | No          |
| 72. Catholics have a duty to try to protect all life from its beginning to its end.                 | 47                      | 52                        | 38                                 | Yes         |
| 73. One can be a good Catholic without going to Mass.   | 69                      | 73                        | 61                                 | yes         |
| 74. One can be a good Catholic without helping the poor.  | 34                      | 35                        | 33                                 | No          |
| 75. It would be a good thing if married men were allowed to be ordained as priests.                 | 68                      | 69                        | 68                                 | No          |
| 76. The Catholic Church is the one true church.   | 12                      | 16                        | 5                                  | yes         |
| 77. There is something very special about being a Catholic that you don’t find in other religions.  | 21                      | 28                        | 5                                  | Yes         |
| 78. I could be just as happy in another church.   | 26                      | 23                        | 32                                 | yes         |
| 79. The Catholic Church should give more leadership roles to the laity.                             | 32                      | 34                        | 29                                 | no          |
| 80. The fact that women cannot be ordained as priests weakens my commitment to the Catholic Church. | 39                      | 35                        | 49                                 | Yes         |
| 81. The current problems of some priest pedophiles weaken my commitment to the Catholic Church.     | 40                      | 37                        | 47                                 | Yes         |

| <b>Table 7, continued</b>  | <b>All<br/>333=100%</b> | <b>Cath.<br/>229=100%</b> | <b>Non-<br/>Cath.<br/>104=100%</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 82. Since coming to St. Michael's, has your commitment to Catholicism changed? Have you become more committed, less committed, or has there been no change at all? |                         |                           |                                    |             |
| Percent more committed   | 14                      | 18                        | 4                                  | Yes         |
| Percent less committed   | 27                      | 28                        | 23                                 |             |
| Percent no change  | 60                      | 54                        | 73                                 |             |

Most of these items on Catholicity were derived from recent national surveys of Catholics done by William V. D'Antonio and Dean Hoge. Many of the questions have been asked over the years, and can be tracked historically. The following table presents the comparisons.

**Table 8, Catholic Issues for SMC Catholics  
and a National Sample of Catholics  
Percent who "Strongly agree" plus "Agree"**

|   | SMC<br>Catholics | D'Antonio<br>and/or Hoge |
|---|------------------|--------------------------|
| 69. Catholics have a duty to end racism (Hoge, 2001:56).  | 55%              | 86%                      |
| 70. Catholics have a duty to try to close the gap between the rich and the poor (Hoge, 2001:56).  | 57%              | 76%                      |
| 71. Catholics have a duty to try to live more simply in order to preserve the environment (Hoge, 2001:56).  | 38%              | 73%                      |
| 73. One can be a good Catholic without going to Mass (Hoge, 2001:248 and D'Antonio, 2001:43).   | 73%              | 64% to 74%               |
| 74. One can be a good Catholic without helping the poor (Hoge, 2001:43).  | 35%              | 52% to 56%               |
| 75. It would be a good thing if married men were allowed to be ordained as priests (D'Antonio, 1996:120).   | 69%              | 72%                      |
| 76. The Catholic Church is the one true church (Hoge, 2001:248).  | 16%              | 48% to 50%               |
| 77. There is something very special about being a Catholic that you don't find in other religions (Hoge, 2001:57 and D'Antonio, 2001:45).   | 28%              | 60% to 68%               |
| 78. I could be just as happy in another church (Hoge, 2001:57 and D'Antonio, 2001:45).  | 23%              | 23% to 41%               |
| 80. The fact that women cannot be ordained as priests weakens my commitment to the Catholic Church April, 2002 <i>Newsweek</i> poll, <i>Newsweek</i> , May 6, 2002, p 25 notes that 73% of Catholics favor ordaining women).  | 35%              | --                       |
| 82. Since coming to St. Michael's, has your commitment to Catholicism changed? Have you become more committed, less committed, or has there been no change at all? (D'Antonio, 1996:40.) Original was "in your local parish." |                  |                          |
| Percent more committed  | 18%              | 22%                      |
| Percent less committed  | 28%              | 25%                      |
| Percent no change   | 54%              | 50%                      |

Opinions on virtually all of these issues differ significantly by how students rate on our index of religiousness. In every case, the higher the student scored on the religiousness index, the more likely they were to take a strong stand on Church teaching regarding the social justice issues as well as traditional core Catholic beliefs. Looking only at our Catholic students, the differences became slightly sharper as unaffiliated and less religious respondents were statistically removed.

Only 16% of our Catholic students “agreed” (either “strongly agreed” or “agreed”) with the statement “The Catholic Church is the one true Church,” a small proportion given the expectations of Catholics a generation ago. This is similar to the opinion expressed in the 2002 *U.S. News* poll of American Christians in which 19% said that “The religion I practice is the only true religion.”

On the two hot button questions of women’s ordination and pedophilia, we see that the more religious students of all faiths were much less likely to say that these issues weakened their faith. Among Catholics who were the “most religious” the difference is even more pronounced. On both of these questions, the statistic for “weakened my faith” is highest for “moderately religious”-- 42%, but only 25% and 27% respectively for the “very religious.”

A similar pattern was noted regarding whether or not students have become “more committed [or less] to Catholicism” since coming to SMC. As can be seen in the next table, the religious Catholics are the most likely to have their commitment enhanced, while the figures are less positive for other classifications.

**Table 9, Commitment to Catholicism (Q82):  
Increased, Decreased or Stayed the Same  
By Subgroups**

| Since coming to SMC, have you become more committed, less committed, or was there no change? | Most religious |          | Moderately religious |          | Least religious |          |
|--|----------------|----------|----------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
|  | Cath.          | Non-Cath | Cath                 | Non-Cath | Cath            | Non-Cath |
| More committed   | 32%            | 0%       | 12%                  | 6%       | 9%              | 3%       |
| Less committed   | 25             | 31       | 28                   | 32       | 34              | 16       |
| No change  | 42             | 69       | 60                   | 70       | 56              | 81       |

**Table 10, Selected Catholic Issues Among Catholics  
By Index of Religiousness  
Percent who “Strongly agree” plus “Agree”  
*ALL differences are statistically significant at the .05 level***

|  | Most religious<br>71=100% | Mid Level religious<br>120=100% | Least religious<br>32=100% |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 69. Catholics have a duty to end racism.   | 72%                       | 48%                             | 41%                        |
| 70. Catholics have a duty to try to close the gap between the rich and the poor.           | 76                        | 52                              | 34                         |
| 71. Catholics have a duty to try to live more simply in order to preserve the environment. | 55                        | 31                              | 26                         |
| 72. Catholics have a duty to try to protect all life from its beginning to its end.        | 73                        | 43                              | 37                         |

| <b>Table 10, continued</b>  | <b>Most<br/>religious<br/>71=100%</b> | <b>Mid Level<br/>religious<br/>120=100%</b> | <b>Least<br/>religious<br/>32=100%</b> |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| 73. One can be a good Catholic without going to Mass.   | 55                                    | 84  | 75                                     |
| 74. One can be a good Catholic without helping the poor.  | 17                                    | 42  | 44                                     |
| 75. It would be a good thing if married men were allowed to be ordained as priests.                 | 66                                    | 70  | 71                                     |
| 76. The Catholic Church is the one true church.   | 27                                    | 11  | 13                                     |
| 77. There is something very special about being a Catholic that you don't find in other religions   | 42                                    | 23  | 19                                     |
| 78. I could be just as happy in another church.   | 17                                    | 26  | 19                                     |
| 79. The Catholic Church should give more leadership roles to the laity.                             | 47                                    | 30  | 16                                     |
| 80. The fact that women cannot be ordained as priests weakens my commitment to the Catholic Church. | 25                                    | 42  | 28                                     |
| 81. The current problems of some priest pedophiles weakens my commitment to the Catholic Church.    | 27                                    | 42  | 41                                     |

## **The role of religion in the future of our students**

Questions that ask persons to predict or anticipate their future behavior are notoriously inaccurate. Students are at an age and stage of life cycle in which religiousness is typically at a low point, so if they follow the typical progression, they will become more religious as they age, even if they don't expect to today. Nonetheless questions about anticipated vocational paths are worth asking, as even vague expectations about one's future often set parameters and expectations, and shape behavior. Indeed, as these words are being written, scores of our seniors are preparing for graduation, many signing employment contracts, and some marriage contracts. If prior patterns hold, then about 40% of our graduates will marry other graduates or persons they have met through SMC, so commitments for tomorrow are being shaped daily. These questions were asked with the potential for the Lilly Grant on "tomorrows religious leadership" in mind.

The following questions asked students for their thoughts about their futures:

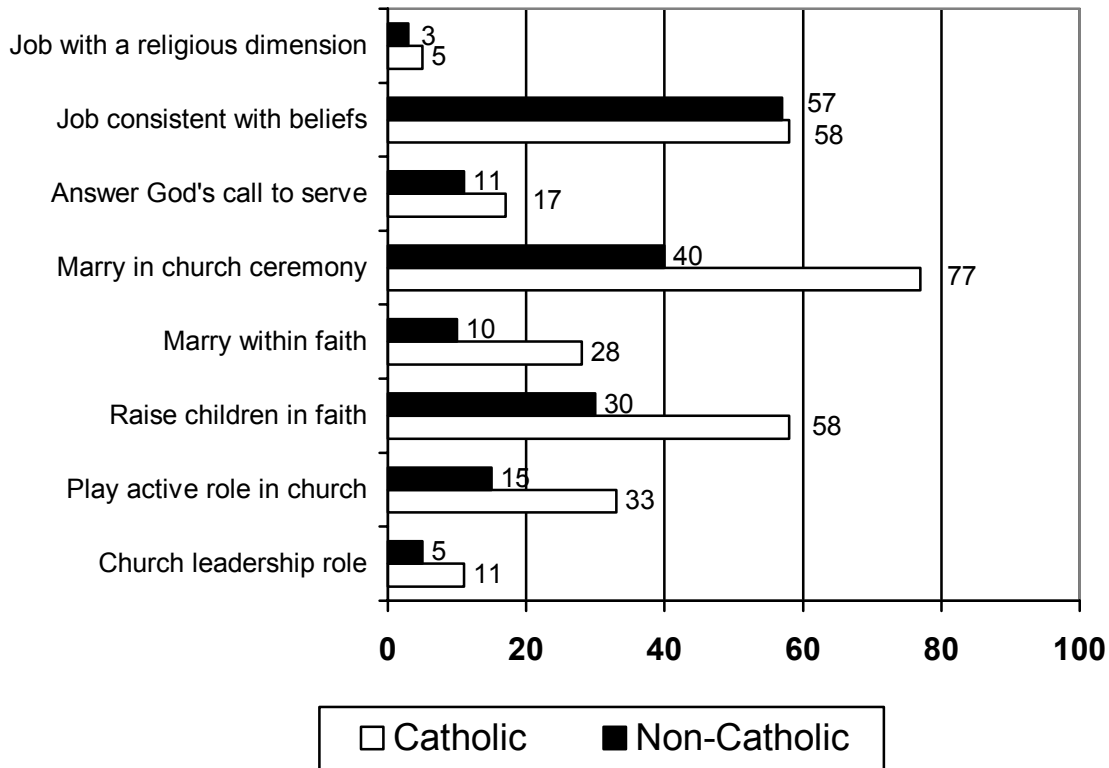
1. **Question 16.** How important is it to . . . secure a career that has a religious dimension?
  - a. 1% Essential
  - b. 3% Very important
  - c. 25% Somewhat important
  - d. 71% Not at all important
2. **Question 17.** How important is it to . . . secure a career that is consistent with your moral and religious beliefs?
  - a. 24% Essential
  - b. 34% Very important
  - c. 32% Somewhat important
  - d. 11% Not at all important
3. **Question 18.** How important is it to . . . secure a career that responds to God's call to serve?
  - a. 5% Essential
  - b. 10% Very important
  - c. 29% Somewhat important
  - d. 56% Not at all important

4. **Question 19.** How important is it. . . (If you marry) to have a church ceremony?
  - a. 36% Essential
  - b. 25% Very important
  - c. 22% Somewhat important
  - d. 18% Not at all important
5. **Question 20.** How important is it. . .(If you marry) to marry someone from your own faith tradition?
  - a. 7% Essential
  - b. 14% Very important
  - c. 28% Somewhat important
  - d. 52% Not at all important
6. **Question 21.** How important is it. . .(If you have children) to raise them in your faith tradition?
  - a. 21% Essential
  - b. 25% Very important
  - c. 32% Somewhat important
  - d. 23% Not at all important
7. **Question 22.** How important is it to. . .play an active role in your church?
  - a. 8% Essential
  - b. 18% Very important
  - c. 42% Somewhat important
  - d. 32% Not at all important
8. **Question 23.** How important is it to. . .play a leadership role in your church?
  - a. 2% Essential
  - b. 7% Very important
  - c. 28% Somewhat important
  - d. 64% Not at all important
9. **Question 28.** How often do any of the following apply to you...have you ever given serious consideration to a year of full time volunteer service after you graduate?
  - a. 20% Yes, frequently
  - b. 30% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 50% Hardly ever or never
10. **Question 30.** How often do any of the following apply to you...have you ever given serious consideration to becoming a priest, brother, sister, minister or rabbi?
  - a. 2% Yes, frequently
  - b. 5% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 93% Hardly ever or never
11. **Question 31.** How often do any of the following apply to you...have you ever thought about exploring a leadership role in your church or synagogue?
  - a. 2% Yes, frequently
  - b. 16% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 82% Hardly ever or never

As would be expected, these responses are hardly randomly distributed among all our students. The bar chart below illustrates that Catholics are considerably more likely to be interested in most forms of future religious commitments than are non-Catholics—on average, about twice as likely. Of the 11 items in this subject area, the responses to only two items have answers that are virtually identical for both Catholics and non-Catholics: interest in a year of full time service after graduation, and surprisingly, entering into the priesthood, ministry, or other religious life. The latter phenomenon is partially a statistical artifact in that the raw number is very low. Six students said “yes, frequently” and 20 said “yes, occasionally.” There is a significant overlap among the students who are interested in either performing a full year of volunteer service and those

interested in taking on a leadership role in their churches. Having “religiously committed parents” does predict interest in taking on leadership roles in the church but interestingly, not interest in becoming a priest, brother, sister or minister. Our sample in this category is so small however, that generalizations must be taken with a grain of salt.

**Figure 10, Expectations for Future Religious Commitments  
Catholic and Non-Catholic Comparisons  
Percent who answered “essential” or “very important”**



There were also the expected differences by religiousness, and that is illustrated in the next table. In every one of the 11 questions, there was almost a linear relationship between our seven-item index of religiousness and future religious commitments. It is worth noting that on these questions, there were very few significant differences by other aspects of a student’s background. These questions revealed significant gender differences, in each case with the women selecting the more religious positions. Women were more likely to want to play a leadership role in the church, and it was more important to them to marry and raise children within their own faith traditions. There were no differences by family income level, GPA, or attendance at Catholic high schools. There was only one question in this section on which the Catholic students who receive “Parish Scholarships” were different from Catholic students who do not receive Parish Scholarships—that of being more likely to want to play an active role in their churches (Q22).

**Table 11, Expectations for Future Religious Commitments  
By Index of Religiousness**

| <b>Abbreviated question</b>   | <b>Most Religious<br/>(102=100%)</b> | <b>Mid level religious<br/>(196=100%)</b> | <b>Least Religious<br/>(87=100%)</b> | <b>Sig-nifi-cant?</b> |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Q16. How important to have a career with a religious dimension? Percent “essential” or “very important”                                     | 11%                                  | 3%  | 0%                                   | yes                   |
| Q17 How important to have a career that is consistent with moral and religious beliefs? Percent “essential” or “very important”             | 84                                   | 56  | 31                                   | yes                   |
| Q18 How important to have a career that responds to God’s call to serve? Percent “essential” or “very important”                            | 38                                   | 9   | 1                                    | yes                   |
| Q19 How important to marry in a church ceremony? Percent “essential” or “very important”  | 82                                   | 61  | 38                                   | yes                   |
| Q20 How important to marry someone from your own faith? Percent “essential” or “very important”   | 40                                   | 17  | 7                                    | yes                   |
| Q21 How important to raise children in your faith tradition? Percent “essential” or “very important”  | 84                                   | 41  | 13                                   | yes                   |
| Q22 How important for you to play an active role in your church? Percent “essential” or “very important”                                    | 65                                   | 16  | 2                                    | yes                   |
| Q23 How important to play a leadership role in your church? Percent “essential” or “very important”   | 19                                   | 6   | 2                                    | yes                   |
| Q28 Have you ever considered a year of full time service work? Percent who said “yes, frequently” or “yes occasionally”                     | 65                                   | 49  | 40                                   | yes                   |
| Q30 Have you ever considered becoming a priest, sister, brother minister or rabbi? Percent who said “yes, frequently” or “yes occasionally” | 15                                   | 5   | 2                                    | yes                   |
| Q31 Have you ever considered exploring a leadership role in your church? Percent who said “yes, frequently” or “yes occasionally”           | 38                                   | 14  | 5                                    | yes                   |

## Life objectives, social justice commitments

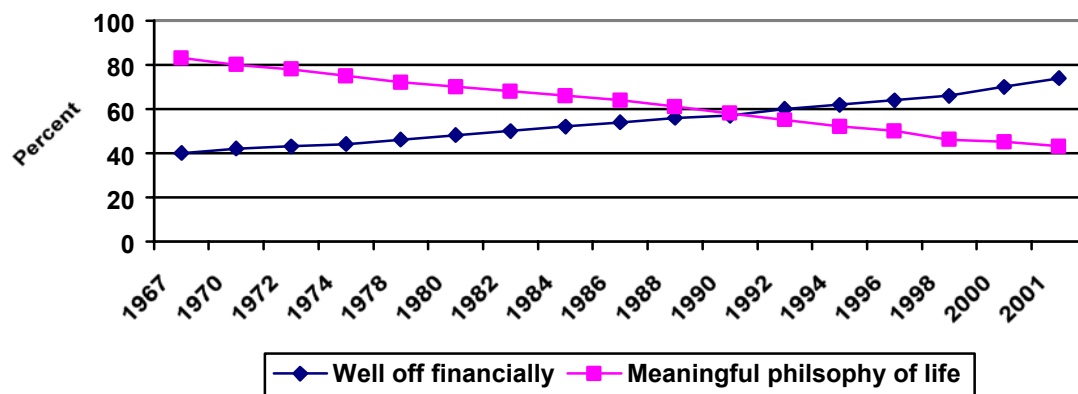
1. **Question 10.** How important is it to you to . . . Be well off financially?
  - a. 12% Essential
  - b. 47% Very important
  - c. 38% Somewhat important
  - d. 3% Not at all important
2. **Question 11.** How important is it to . . . To help others in difficulty?
  - a. 27% Essential
  - b. 56% Very important
  - c. 17% Somewhat important
  - d. 0% Not at all important
3. **Question 12.** How important is it to you to . . . Develop a meaningful philosophy of life?
  - a. 33% Essential
  - b. 40% Very important
  - c. 25% Somewhat important
  - d. 2% Not at all important
4. **Question 13.** How important is it to you to . . . Influence social values?
  - a. 18% Essential
  - b. 49% Very important
  - c. 29% Somewhat important
  - d. 4% Not at all important
5. **Question 14.** How important is it to . . . Participate by volunteering or community service?
  - a. 19% Essential
  - b. 43% Very important
  - c. 34% Somewhat important
  - d. 4% Not at all important
6. **Question 34.** How often do you talk about the following topic with your friends? What is right to do vs. what is wrong.
  - a. 34% Yes, frequently
  - b. 57% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 9% Hardly ever or never
7. **Question 35.** How often do you talk about the following topic with your friends? Whether or not there is a God.
  - a. 17% Yes, frequently
  - b. 54% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 29% Hardly ever or never
8. **Question 36.** How often do you talk about the following topic with your friends? The meaning of life.
  - a. 26% Yes, frequently
  - b. 49% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 25% Hardly ever or never
9. **Question 28.** How often does the following apply to you . . . Have you ever given serious consideration to a year of full time volunteer service after you graduate?
  - a. 20% Yes, frequently
  - b. 30% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 50% Hardly ever or never

10. **Question 84.** Which of the following activities have you participated in since you started at Saint Michael's? Check all that apply.
- a. 45% A locally organized and run MOVE program
  - b. 11% An extended service trip run by MOVE at an out-of-state location
  - c. 14% Spiritual retreats such as LEAP, Emmaus or Busy Student Retreats
  - d. 9% Campus ministry activities such as the Liturgical Choir, Eucharistic ministers, etc.
11. **Composite** measure of MOVE participation.
- a. 47% participated in either a local or extended service MOVE program
  - b. 53% did not participate
12. **Composite** measure of involvement in either MOVE or Campus Ministry.
- a. 46% did not participate in any MOVE or Campus Ministry program
  - b. 38% participated in any one of the four options in question 84 above
  - c. 6% participated in any two of the four options in question 84 above.
13. **Question 85.** (Asked only of the 193 above MOVE participants) Is your involvement in MOVE programs motivated by your religious beliefs, either partially or fully?
- a. 27% Yes
  - b. 73% No
14. **Questions 69 to 74** are also about social justice, but are discussed in the section on Catholic Issues.

## Life objectives

The first two questions in this section--the importance of "being well off financially" and the importance of "developing a meaningful philosophy of life"--are well known ones from the national CIRP survey of first year students that has been done annually at thousands of colleges and universities since 1967. Of the hundreds of questions asked, these two (Q10 and Q11) are often used as the journalistic "grabber" story line because they appear to have captured an important but incremental change in the orientation of college students over the decades. The importance of "being well off financially" has been steadily increasing since 1967 while the importance of "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" has been declining. Yearly line charts of the two trends present the image of a scissors and it is cited frequently as evidence of the decline of the liberal arts and the rise of materialism and careerism.

**Figure 11, Importance of Two Life Objectives  
1967 and 2001, National CIRP data <sup>6</sup>**  
*Percent who say "important" or "very important"*



<sup>6</sup> Only data points for 1967 and 2001 are precise. Others are only approximate.

For the same reason, we have also been asking the same questions periodically in our student surveys at SMC since 1986. We have done the CIRP at the conventional time, but we have also asked these CIRP questions in April to a cross-section of all four classes. The obvious interpretive difficulty, however, is that the comparisons are not perfect. When we ask it of a cross section of all students—rather than just first year students—we are comparing students at slightly different ages and stages of development. Nonetheless, the data are very interesting. We have also asked several other of the CIRP items that appear to measure altruism and willingness to help others.

Comparing the two CIRP columns on the right (Table 12 below) we see that on virtually every item our first year students at SMC are almost indistinguishable from the average first year student in America. Yet after they have been at SMC for a period of time, the ethos of the College seems to influence them in the direction of greater altruism and commitment to “developing a meaningful philosophy of life.”<sup>7</sup> In Table 12B below, we included the CIRP 1999 data because it includes many of the same students who took our survey this spring.

**Table 12A, Life Objectives  
SMC and National Comparisons  
Various Years,**

| How important is it to . . .                          | Essential or Very Important |                    |                                 |                              |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
|   | Current survey 2002         | Senior Survey 2001 | SMC, CIRP survey of frosh, 1999 | National CIRP of frosh, 2001 |
| 10. Be well off financially?                          | 59%                         | 68%                | 65%                             | 74%                          |
| 12. Develop a meaningful philosophy of life?          | 73                          | 73                 | 46                              | 43                           |
| 11. To help others in difficulty?                     | 83                          | 82                 | 65                              | 61                           |
| 13. Influence social values?                          | 67                          | 70                 | 40                              | 38                           |
| 14. Participate by volunteering or community service? | 62                          | 56                 | 27                              | 23                           |

**Table 12B, (continued) Life Objectives  
SMC and National Comparisons  
Various Years,**

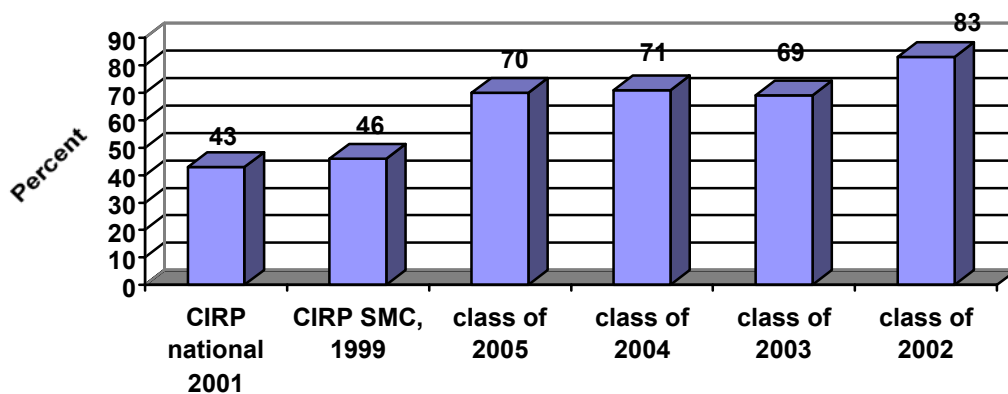
| How important is it to . . .                          | Essential or Very Important |                             |                                 |  |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
|   | Survey of all students 1987 | Survey of all students 1990 | SMC, CIRP survey of frosh, 1995 | National 1995 CIRP, frosh Cath. Colleges |
| 10. Be well off financially?                          | 77%                         | 56%                         | 66%                             | 73%                                      |
| 12. Develop a meaningful philosophy of life?          | 73                          | 63                          | 47                              | 44                                       |
| 11. To help others in difficulty?                     | 82                          | 74                          | 65                              | 67                                       |
| 13. Influence social values?                          | 59                          | --                          | 42                              | 44                                       |
| 14. Participate by volunteering or community service? | --                          | --                          | 36                              | 28                                       |

<sup>7</sup> There was an exception: in the 1987 survey (Table 12B). SMC students seemed to be more financially oriented than the rest of the nation, but they also they also became “more philosophical.”

This data suggests that we may be effective in meeting this aspect of our mission, but there are other interpretations. Since comparisons to CIRP are to younger students, perhaps all that we are seeing is natural maturation, and the same pattern would be seen across the nation if the survey were administered to all four classes at other institutions as well. Another possibility is that our students merely learn to say different things after they have been here for a while, but they are uncritically reflecting the culture of the College, and the carryover into the real world will not match the rhetoric.

In some cases, we can chart the change from year to year—whether the cause is the influence of SMC or natural maturation. Most of the items are not as clear or as statistically significant as this example, but it is generally true that graduating seniors reflect the values embedded in our mission more successfully than first year students. We saw an identical pattern in our 1999 “Mission Survey” that was done by the Research Methods class for the decennial re-accreditation. Here is one graphic illustration:

**Figure 12, Importance of “meaningful philosophy of life”  
Current Survey and Selected Comparisons  
Percent who say “important” or “very important”**



There was another set of parallel questions in this section on how frequently students talk about important religious or philosophical issues. These questions were drawn from a 1988 Gallup Poll and were also asked on the 1999 Mission Survey on campus. It is likely that each of the questions are brought up in classes on a regular basis, but personal discussions with friends are triggered by situational events. It is somewhat surprising that the events of September 11, 2001 did not provoke greater soul searching over these issues in a manner that would have been picked up in the current survey. The table below presents these comparisons.

| <b>How often do you talk about the following topics with your friends? (Percent who say “Yes, frequently”)</b> |                  |                      |                      |
|--|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|  | Gallup Poll 1988 | Mission Survey, 1999 | Current survey, 2002 |
| 34. What is right to do vs. what is wrong  | 38%              | 46%                  | 34%                  |
| 35. Whether or not there is a God  | 23               | 17                   | 17                   |
| 36. The meaning of life  | 21               | 27                   | 26                   |

## MOVE

According to this data set, about 47% of students are involved in one of our MOVE programs (Mobilization of Volunteer Effort)—either a locally run program or an extended service trip. There is a lot of overlap in students who do both. This 46% figure is a bit lower than the other estimates, but the phrasing makes involvement more limited, and probably excluded the students who do one-time projects. Surveys of graduates five years after graduation have revealed proportions that are just slightly higher. Forty-six percent of the class of 1991 report involvement in MOVE, and about 54% of the classes of 1992, 1995 and 1996.

Students who participate in MOVE are different from students who do not in a number of ways. All of the differences below are statistically significant.

1. They are more likely to be women than men (56% of women participate compared to 33% of men).
2. They are more likely to be social science majors (65% compared to proportions in the 30's and 40's for other majors).
3. They are more likely to go to church weekly and monthly as opposed to those who rarely or never go. Of students who go weekly, 67% volunteer compared to only 35% of those who never go to church.
4. They are less likely to have gone to Catholic schools (36% of students from Catholic schools participate compared to 50% of those from public schools).

MOVE volunteers also clearly manifest their desire to serve others in their responses to many other questions as well. Of all those involved in MOVE . . .

1. 73% say it is “essential” or “very important” to participate by volunteering or community service compared to only 51% of those who are not involved in MOVE.
2. 89% say it is “essential” or “very important” to “help others in difficulty” compared to only 77% of those who are not involved in MOVE.
3. 20% say it is “essential” or “very important” to “respond to God’s call to serve” compared to only 11% of those who are not involved in MOVE.
4. 48% say it is “essential” or “very important” to “be well off financially” compared to 69% of those who are not involved in MOVE.
5. 63% have “frequently” or “occasionally” given serious thought to a year of full time service work after graduation compared to only 39% of those who are not involved in MOVE.

MOVE volunteers are also considerably more religious than those who are not involved in MOVE, in spite of the fact that only 27% of MOVE volunteers responded that their involvement was motivated by religious beliefs. Of all those involved in MOVE . . .

1. 38% pray regularly compared to only 23% of those not involved in MOVE.
2. 52% say that religion gives meaning to their lives compared to 40% of those who were not involved in MOVE.
3. 26% say their religious commitment has increased since coming to SMC compared to only 17% of those who were not involved in MOVE.
4. 62% felt that the Catholic tradition of SMC has made a positive difference compared to 50% of those who were not involved in MOVE.
5. 72% say the presence of the Edmundites is important compared to 61% of those who were not involved in MOVE.
6. 25% say their lives have been enhanced through Campus Ministry programs compared to only 9% of those who were not involved in MOVE.

Even though MOVE is under the aegis of Campus Ministry and there is this strong religious orientation among many who are involved in MOVE, the programs are very “light” in their religious emphasis. This light religious emphasis, it turns out, is very satisfactory with 89% of the students who told us that “the amount of religious affiliation in MOVE programs” is “fine as is.”

The 9% of our students involved in Campus Ministry activities (Liturgical Choir, Eucharistic Ministers, etc.) form the core of the religiously oriented students on campus. They are significantly more likely to receive the highest scores on all our measures of religiousness, and also the most likely to express a disappointment with the low level of religious atmosphere in their classes, on campus, and in the residence halls. They are most likely to be females and from religious home environments.

Given the above, the reader might expect that our students who come from Catholic high schools are slightly more religious than other students, and thus more likely to be active in MOVE. But the opposite is true. Our students who are graduates of Catholic high schools do not express more religious attitudes than other, and in fact are less inclined towards many service related attitudes. They are less likely to believe that it is important to be involved in a community service (46% to 66%) ; less likely to consider a year of full time service (40% to 53%); less likely to have worked on a MOVE project (36% to 50%); less likely to say that “SMC has deepened my understanding of moral and ethical problems” (46% to 66%); and more likely to believe that “it is important to be well off financially” (73% to 56%).

The longer a student has been at SMC, the more likely they are to have been involved in more than one MOVE or campus ministry activity, so Seniors have the highest rates of past engagement. Women are also the most likely to be involved in more than one such activity.

## Religion at SMC

### General Religious Issues

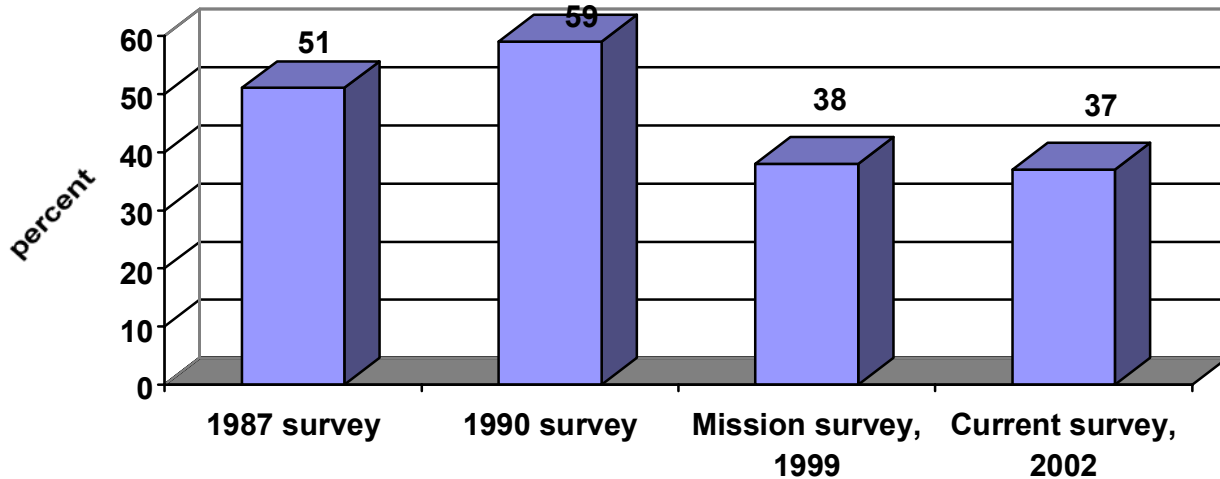
1. **Question 2.** How about at Saint Michael’s? Do you think that religion is increasing its influence at Saint Michael’s or losing its influence?
  - a. 9% Increasing
  - b. 26% Losing
  - c. 51% Staying the same
  - d. 13% No opinion
2. **Question 5.** How important was the religious affiliation and orientation of St. Michael’s in your decision to come here?
  - a. 7% Very Important
  - b. 30% Somewhat Important
  - c. 63% Not at all important
3. **Question 6.** How important is it to you to continue to have the presence of the Edmundite priests on campus?
  - a. 25% Very Important
  - b. 41% Somewhat Important
  - c. 34% Not at all important
4. **Question 46.** Do you think that the Catholic tradition of SMC influences your college experience in ways that would be different if you had attended a similar college that was NOT Catholic?
  - a. 55% Yes, I think there would be a difference, and the effect is positive
  - b. 7% Yes, I think there is a difference, but the effect is negative
  - c. 38% No, it has no effect

5. **Question 58.** The education I am receiving at Saint Michael’s is deepening my understanding of moral and ethical problems.
- d. 58% strongly agree or agree
  - e. 34% neutral
  - f. 7% disagree or strongly disagree

Item 2 (question #5) above on the role of the religious affiliation of SMC in attracting students to come to SMC is an important one. Only 7% of our students tell us that this was a “very important” factor but another 30% tell us that it was “somewhat important.” The loss to our admissions effort of this 37% would be catastrophic if we were suddenly to become secular.

The same question has been asked in other surveys, including the national CIRP surveys and Rev. Richard Myhalyk’s on-campus surveys. In the 1995 CIRP survey 10% said it our religious affiliation was “very important” in their decision to attend but they did not provide the number for “somewhat important.” In Myhalyk’s 1990 survey of first year students the number was 59% (11% for “very important” and 48% for “somewhat important”) and in his 1987 survey the figures were 51%, or 14% and 37% respectively. In our 1999 “Mission Survey” the TOTAL proportion was 38%. The trend of diminishing proportions of students attracted by our religious affiliation is irrefutable.

**Figure 13, “How important was the religious affiliation of SMC in your decision to apply?”  
For Four Time Comparisons  
Percent who say “very important” or “important”**

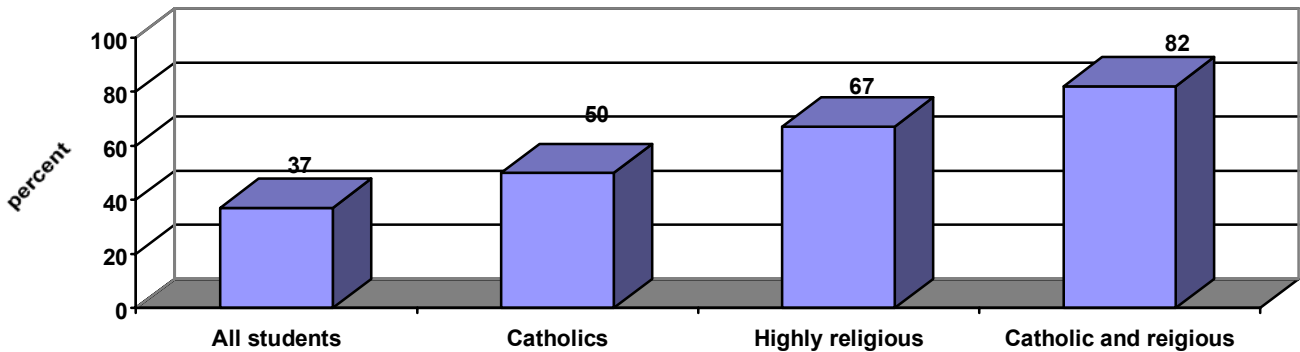


As with so many other items, there are large and statistically significant differences in the responses of students depending on how they scored on our index of religiousness. Among the 20% of our students who are both “religious” and Catholic, the differences are even more striking. Saint Michael’s would be a very different institution without any students in this category, or the reverse--if all students were in this category.

The 37% of our students said that our Catholic religious affiliation was important in their decision to attend SMC (7% plus 30%) rises to 50% among the Catholic students, 67% among the “religious” students, and 82% among those who are both Catholic and religious. Among those

who are least religious, the proportion it is a mere 5%. Women find the Catholic affiliation a more important draw than men, and it is also more important to student recipients of parish scholarships—their percent was 65%.

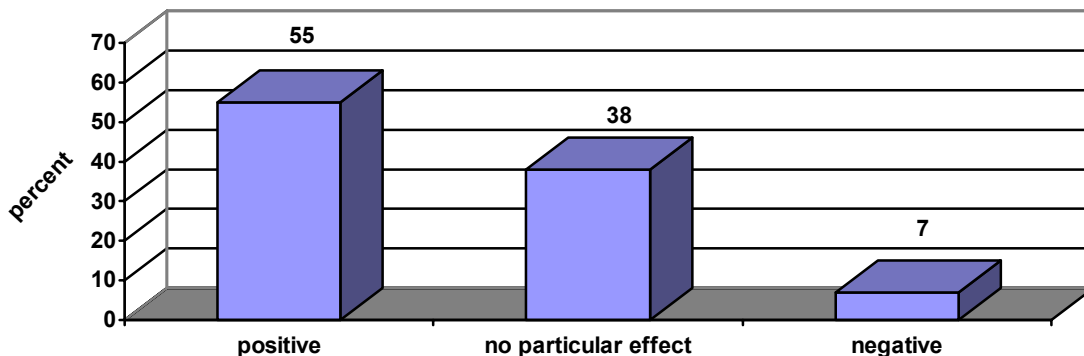
**Figure 14, “How important was the religious affiliation of SMC in your decision to apply?”  
For Catholics and Index of Religiousness  
Percent who say “very important” or “important”**



The same pattern is reflected in student responses to the perceived importance of having the Edmundites on campus. Sixty-six percent of all students say it is “very important” or “somewhat important,” but 77% of the Catholic students, 86% of those who are religious and 93% for those who are both Catholic and religious. It too is higher among women, and among recipients of parish scholarships.

Given the fact that so many of today’s students are not religious, it is somewhat surprising that the Catholic tradition of the College is not negatively regarded. This is somewhat a consequence of the fact that Catholicism is not a highly visible force on campus, and could hardly be seen as an “oppressive” influence in the manner that it was surely regarded by many in the days of the pre-Vatican II. Then too, many have called this generation of students the “whatever” generation. The chart below shows that a slight majority of students think that the Catholic tradition of SMC influences their college experiences in ways that are generally positive.

**Figure 15 “Does the Catholic tradition of SMC influence your college experiences in ways that are generally . . . “**

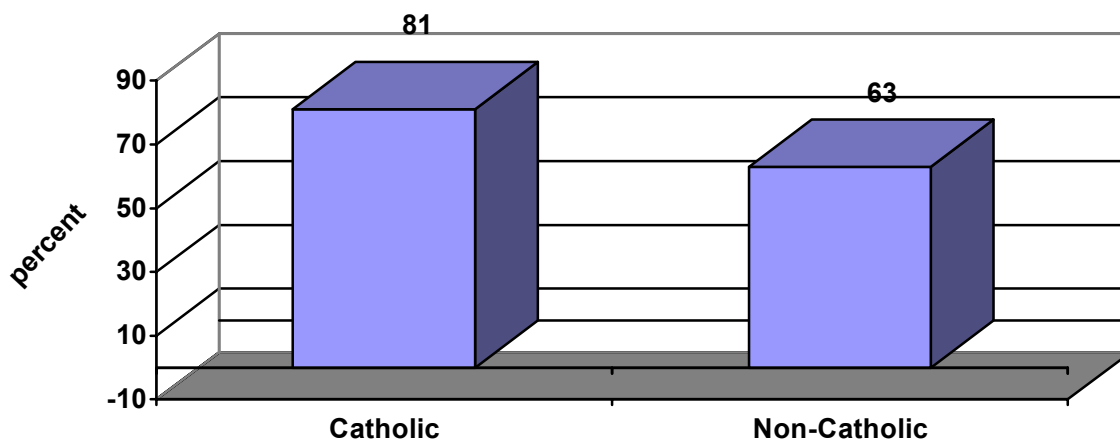


The final question in this category repeats the pattern. Fifty-five percent of all students think that the “Catholic tradition of SMC influences [their] college experience in ‘positive’ ways that would have been different if [they] had attended a similar college that was NOT Catholic.” Catholics and religious Catholics are much more likely to have this opinion—both around 70%. Graduating seniors were also more likely to look positively at our Catholic character. It is interesting to note that the overall figure has been almost identical on the “Five Year Alumni Surveys” of the classes of 1995 and 1996—56% and 57% respectively.

The “Five Year Alumni Surveys” contained related items that are worth mentioning. In the 1996 and 1997 surveys of the classes of 1991 and 1992, just over 90% of alumni reported that “my expectations of the spiritual/religious life at Saint Michael’s were met or exceeded.” Similar 90+% proportions of agreement accrued from these two statements when asked of the classes of 1995 and 1996: “Expectations about the general spiritual and religious character of SMC” and “Expectations about the Catholic character of SMC.”

These Alumni surveys also reveal that our graduates who are Catholic tend to maintain stronger affiliation with the College five years after graduation. For example, the five-year survey of the class of 1955 (conducted in 2000) found that 64% of the Catholic graduates agreed with the statement that “Over the past five years, I have felt increasing loyalty to SMC” compared to only 41% of the non-Catholics who agreed. The figure below also comes from that year 2000 survey.

**Figure 16, Percent of Alumni Reported Giving, by Religion  
Class of 1995, conducted in 2000**



More than half of our current students (58%) told us that “the education [they] are receiving at SMC is deepening [their] understanding of moral and ethical problems” but this is not as high as we have found in the surveys of alumni five years after their graduations. Of the classes of 1992, 1995 and 1996, the proportions were 88%, 81% and 83% respectively. Either SMC has changed, or graduates tend to see things differently in retrospect. The latter could happen either with selective recollection or their opinions have shifted in light of their comparative experiences after college.

The first item in this category—item one (Question 2) above tells us that only 9% of our students think that religion is increasing its influence at SMC. This stands in sharp contrast to the PEW March 2002 survey of Americans in which 37% told researchers that religion is increasing in significance in American life. About one-quarter of our students think that religion is declining in influence at SMC, and most (51%) think that it is remaining the same.

## Courses and faculty

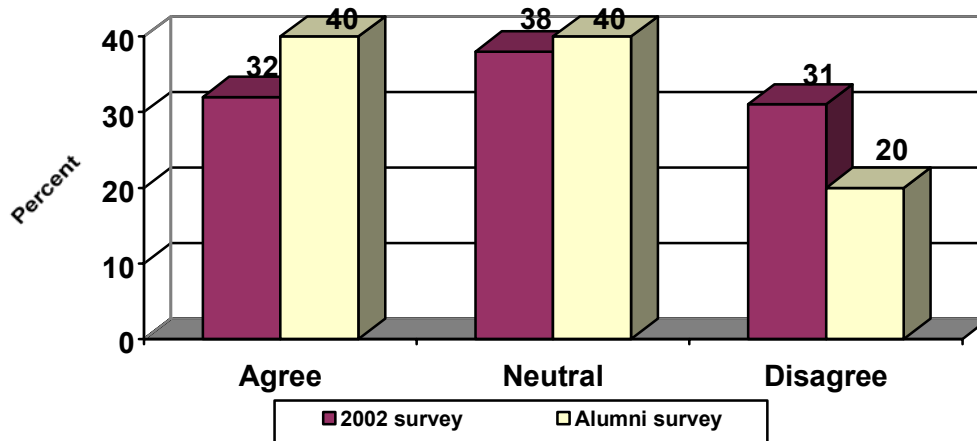
1. **Question 9.** How important is it to you to take the two required courses in Religious Studies?
  - a. 14% Very Important
  - b. 45% Somewhat Important
  - c. 44% Not at all important
2. **Question 29.** Have you ever selected a course based on its presumed religious or spiritual content? (Other than as a LSR requirement)
  - a. 6% Yes, frequently
  - b. 18% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 76% Hardly ever or never
3. **Question 43.** Since coming to SMC, how satisfied have you been with the religious qualities that you hear or see manifest from the faculty?
  - a. 25% Very satisfied (IF we exclude “no opinions,” it becomes 32%)
  - b. 43% Somewhat satisfied (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 56% )
  - c. 7% Somewhat dissatisfied (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 9%)
  - d. 2% Very dissatisfied (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 3%)
  - e. 23% Does not apply or no opinion
4. **Question 44.** (Asked only of the 36 who said “dissatisfied” above) If dissatisfied: Is this because the faculty has been “too religious” or “not religious enough?”
  - a. 35% too religious
  - b. 65% not enough
5. **Question 45.** Thinking about your professors this semester, have any of them ever discussed the moral implications of the subject matter you are studying?
  - a. 81% Yes, one or more has
  - b. 19% No, no one has
6. **Question 47.** Have the Religious Studies courses that you’ve taken here at SMC strengthened or weakened your spiritual faith?
  - a. 30% Strengthened my faith
  - b. 10% Weakened my faith
  - c. 54% No clear effect
  - d. 7% Haven’t taken yet
7. **Question 48.** Have you ever had a course in which any member of the faculty addressed issues of the *moral or ethical implications* of career choices that students might consider pursuing?
  - a. 56% Yes, at least one has
  - b. 44% No, never
8. **Question 49.** Would you like to have more discussion of the *moral and ethical implications* of career choices in your classes or is there enough discussion as is?
  - a. 29% Yes, I would like more (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 42%)
  - b. 40% No, there is enough now (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 58%)
  - c. 31% Don’t know or no opinion
9. **Question 50.** Would you like to have more discussion of *religious aspects* of career choices in your classes or is there enough discussion as is?
  - a. 13% Yes, I would like more (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 21%)
  - b. 48% No, there is enough now (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 79%)
  - c. 39% Don’t know or no opinion

10. **Question 52.** Some members of our community feel that the “religious character” or “atmosphere” of the College is not as strong or visible as it should be, while others feel that it is too strong. Which way do you feel about the following? How about the religious atmosphere of *our classes*?
- 9% It’s not as strong as it should be (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 10%)
  - 4% It’s too strong (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 4%)
  - 79% It’s fine as is (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 86%)
  - 8% Don’t know or no opinion
11. **Question 62.** My spiritual life is being enhanced through my classroom experience and/or academic work.
- 32% Strongly Agree or Agree
  - 38% Neutral
  - 31% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The responses to questions in this section suggest that students are generally satisfied with the religiousness of both the faculty and their classes. Here are some of the highlights to this lengthy section:

1. More than half think of the Religious Studies courses as “important”
2. More think that their Religious Studies courses have “strengthened” the faith of more students than the reverse—30% vs. 10%, although most report “no clear effect;”
3. Students rarely select their courses based on the presumed religious or spiritual content (24%);
4. 68% are satisfied with the “religious qualities” they see manifest in the faculty, but among those who are not satisfied with faculty religiousness, two-thirds say they the faculty is not “religious enough;”
5. 79% think that the “religious character or atmosphere” of their classes is “fine as is;”
6. 81% currently have a professor who has dealt with the moral implications of the subject matter in a course this semester;
7. 56% have had professors discuss the moral and ethical implications of career choices;
8. Almost all of those who have an opinion on the subject think that the amount of discussion of the religious aspects of career choices in their classes is ample as is;
9. Students are evenly split on whether or not their spiritual lives are being enhanced through their classroom work—32% agree, 38% are neutral and 31% disagree. Alumni five years after graduation tended to be more positive about the religious effects and benefits of their classroom work. About 40% took the affirmative position in all three of the surveys in which we asked the question.

**Figure 17, “My spiritual life is being enhanced through my classroom experience and/or academic work”  
Percent who agree or disagree**



Those who are highest on our index of religiousness are more enthusiastic about the religious/spiritual qualities of the faculty and courses than others, but it is important to note that those who are lowest on the index are not particularly critical of these religious and spiritual issues. They most commonly take the “no-opinion” option. Compared to those lowest on the religiousness index, the highest on the index of religiousness were:

1. Most likely to say that their Religious Studies courses had strengthened their faith (44% vs. 13%); (two-thirds of the lowest said it had “no effect;”)
2. Most likely to say that their spiritual life had been enhanced through their classroom experiences (37% vs. 20%);
3. Most likely to say that the RS requirement was important (83% vs. 32%);
4. Most likely to want more on the moral implications of careers (48% vs. 13%);
5. Most likely to say that the religious atmosphere of classes was “not as strong as it should be” (22% vs. 2%);
6. (If they were dissatisfied with the “religious qualities” of the faculty) were most likely to say that they were not religious enough (93% vs. 20%).

Catholic students were more likely to take more religious positions on most of the questions in this section compared to the non-Catholics, including seeking slightly greater religious content in their courses. Graduating seniors were the most likely to say that the faculty had talked about the moral implications of career choices.

### **Evaluation of general religiousness at SMC**

1. **Question 41.** Do you feel that your own religious and/or spiritual beliefs are treated with appropriate respect on campus?
  - a. 54% Yes, all the time (IF we exclude “don’t know,” 63%)
  - b. 28% Yes, almost all the time (IF we exclude “don’t know,” 33%)
  - c. 4% No (IF we exclude “don’t know,” 5%)
  - d. 14% Don’t know
2. **Question 42.** Since coming to SMC, how satisfied have you been with the support you have received for the growth and development of your personal spirituality?
  - a. 30% Very satisfied (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 42%)
  - b. 34% Somewhat satisfied (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 47%)
  - c. 6% Somewhat dissatisfied (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 8%)

- d. 2% Very dissatisfied (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 3%)
- g. 29% Does not apply or no opinion

Some members of our community feel that the “religious character” or “atmosphere” of the College is not as strong or visible as it should be, while others feel that it is too strong. Which way do you feel about each of these areas?

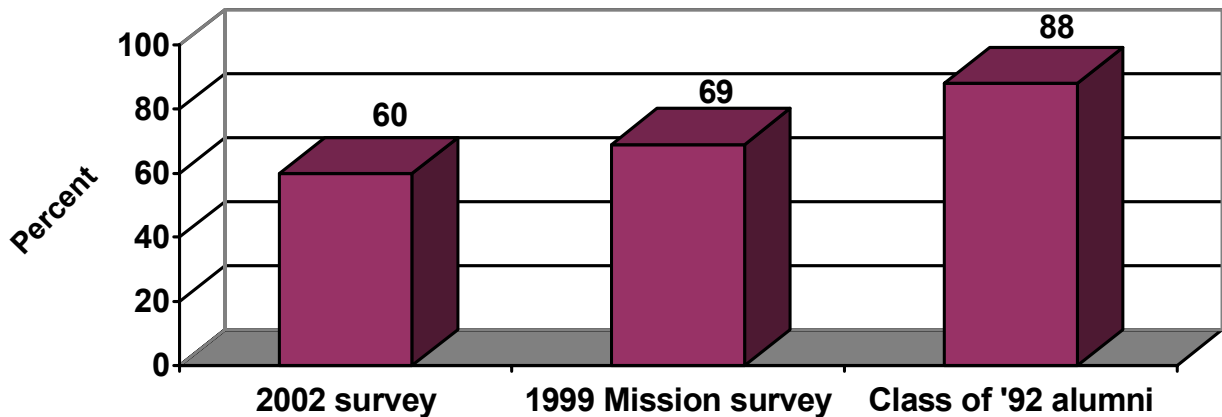
3. **Question 51.** Is the *general* religious atmosphere *on campus* not as strong as it should be or is it too strong the way it is?
  - a. 14% It’s not as strong as it should be (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 15%)
  - b. 3% It’s too strong (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 3%)
  - c. 75% It’s fine as is (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 82%)
  - d. 8% Don’t know or no opinion
4. **Question 53.** How about the religious atmosphere of *student life and the residence halls*?
  - a. 14% It’s not as strong as it should be (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 16%)
  - b. 6% It’s too strong (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 7%)
  - c. 67% It’s fine as is (IF we exclude “no opinions,” 77%)
  - d. 13% Don’t know or no opinion
5. **Question 58.** The education I am receiving at St. Michael’s is deepening my understanding of moral and ethical problems.
  - a. 60% Strongly Agree or Agree
  - b. 32% Neutral
  - c. 8% Disagree or Strongly Disagree
6. **Question 65.** My spiritual life is being enhanced through the campus ministry programs I have attended (*check neutral if you have not been at all involved*)
  - a. 16% Strongly Agree or Agree
  - b. 73% Neutral
  - c. 11% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Students are generally satisfied with the religiousness they find here at SMC. Fewer than 10% express any element of dissatisfaction with the respect that their beliefs receive, and with the support they receive for the growth of their own spiritual development. More than two-thirds of students who have opinions on the subject feel that the general religious atmosphere on campus and in the residence halls and student life is “fine as is” but among the minority who would like to see a change, more express a desire for more religiousness rather than less.

Sixty percent agree with the statement that “the education I am receiving is deepening my understanding of moral and ethical problems,” but most of the others are neutral on the subject. This is somewhat lower than we found on the 1999 “Mission Survey” in which 69% agreed with the statement, and it is much lower than the responses we have been receiving from the Alumni Surveys. Eighty-eight percent of the class of 1992, when polled in 1997, answered in the affirmative. Perhaps their more positive answers stem from either selective recollection or the comparative differences they are finding in the world of work. But it is also possible that we did a better job a decade ago.

**Figure 18, “The education I am receiving at SMC is deepening my understanding of moral and ethical problems”**

**Comparisons between surveys**  
Percent who agree



**Students consider change in America, SMC, and themselves**

1. **Question 3.** How about you, personally? Since coming to St. Michael’s, has your commitment to religion changed? Have you become more committed, less committed, or has there been no change at all?
  - a. 21% More committed
  - b. 26% Less committed
  - c. 53% No change
2. **Question 82.** Since coming to St. Michael’s, has your commitment to *Catholicism* changed? Have you become more committed, less committed, or has there been no change at all?
  - a. 13% More committed
  - b. 28% Less
  - c. 59% No change
3. **Question 60.** My appreciation of religion has increased since I’ve come to St. Michael’s.
  - a. 37% Strongly Agree or Agree
  - b. 36% Neutral
  - c. 27% Disagree or Strongly Disagree
4. **Question 25.** Since you’ve been a student here at SMC, have you gone to Mass *more frequently* than you did before coming to this college, *less frequently* than you did before, or has your attendance been *about the same*? (Responses are for Catholic students only.)
  - a. 16% I’ve gone more frequently
  - b. 53% I’ve gone less frequently
  - c. 31% I’ve gone about the same
5. **Question 65.** If more of my friends went to church, I’d go too.
  - a. 18% Strongly Agree or Agree
  - b. 18% Neutral
  - c. 64% Disagree or Strongly Disagree
6. **Question 33.** Have you ever been interested in going to Mass or some other religious service but not gone because your friends wouldn’t go?
  - a. 2% Yes, frequently
  - b. 12% Yes, occasionally
  - c. 86% No, never

7. **Question 63.** My thinking about religion has been influenced by what my friends think.
- a. 11% Strongly Agree or Agree
  - b. 21% Neutral
  - c. 68% Disagree or Strongly Disagree

The most notable trend that we see in this section is the lack of change that most students report in their own religiousness. With the exception of diminished Mass attendance, students generally had a preference for the options that portrayed them as not having changed their religious commitments since coming to SMC. When there are changes in a student’s general religious commitment, it appears that as many students become more committed as become less committed. With regard to their commitment to Catholicism however, more become less committed. But the most common claim is that of “no change.”

This is entirely possible, as the literature suggests, that our religious beliefs do not change a great deal after initial formation. Yet if this were entirely true, much of our mission should be rewritten and we should lower our expectations for the transforming power of education. Alumni surveys are more positive in that more of our graduates write of the changes they experienced while at SMC. The author suspects that students are reluctant to speak of change as it implies a weak or dependent sense of self. This is paralleled in the last three questions on peer group influence in which students likewise depict themselves as independent thinkers who make up their own minds on religious thinking on whether or not to go to church. This may be similar to the common claim from students that advertising influences most other people, but not them personally.

It is notable (and perhaps predictable) that those who ranked highest on our index of religiousness, were the most likely to say that their religiousness has increased since coming to SMC. For example, if only 21% of our sample say they have become “more committed to religion,” the figure is 38% for our students who rated highest on our index of religiousness. It’s also slightly higher for Catholic students. See the Table 13 below. Note that almost all of the “least religious students” fall into the “no change” category.

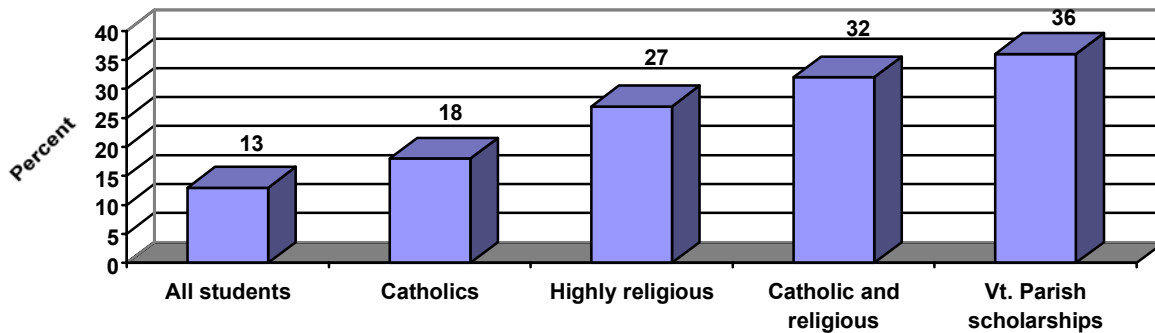
**Table 13, Changes in Commitment to Religion, by Index of Religiousness**

| Since coming to SMC, has your commitment to religion changed? | Index of Religiousness |                      |                 |                 |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|   | Most Religious         | Moderately religious | Least religious | Total           |
| More committed  | 38%                    | 21%                  | 3%              | 21%             |
| Less committed  | 27%                    | 31%                  | 14%             | 26%             |
| No change   | 36%                    | 49%                  | 83%             | 53%             |
|   | 100%<br>(n=101)        | 100%<br>(n=194)      | 100%<br>(n=87)  | 100%<br>(n=382) |

The following figure depicts this same pattern for the question on commitment to Catholicism, question 82. Note that recipients of Vermont Parish Scholarships are highest on this variable.

**Figure 19, “Since coming to SMC, has your commitment to Catholicism changed?”**

**Various comparisons, percent who say “more committed”**



### **SUMMARY**

Religion is losing ground at Saint Michael’s, a process that undoubtedly started several decades ago. The proportion of Catholics among our students seems to have leveled off at about 61%, with only about one-quarter of all students indicating a consistent commitment to religion. Without this core group, it is likely that the religiousness of our student body would be indistinguishable from that found at a state university. On the other end of the religiousness continuum, a minority of about 15% of our students seems to have some antipathy or aversion towards religion, leaving the majority of students in a middle ground of religious belief and practice. Many of those in this middle ground are nominal Catholics who only situationally emphasize their religious affiliation. The large minority (41%) that describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious” are not statistically identifiable as “spiritual” beyond their self-description.

With the exception of the quartile of religiously committed students, it is difficult to see how most students who enroll at Saint Michael’s are different than first year students at other Catholic and secular institutions. They go to church less, pray less and discuss religion less. While they do have histories of more active volunteering, our religious affiliation is becoming a less important point of attraction for the average student. A cross section of current students reveals that they are nonetheless satisfied with their own moral and religious growth, and the religious character of the institution. Indeed, most believe that there is more discussion of moral issues at Saint Michael’s College than at most other colleges. Their commitment to the values of humanism and moral and religious understanding seems to increase while they are here, a fact emphasized by our alumni as they consider their years at Saint Michael’s in retrospect.

The widespread tolerance that pervades the campus makes religious tensions rare, but a more likely reason for the tolerance is that so many students are either ambivalent about religion or religiously apathetic. The most common response to many of our questions is some variant of “no opinion”. Reading of the verbatim comments in “Appendix C” below conveys a troubling sense of apathy and lack of rudimentary sophistication in student religious understanding. Their basic religious literacy is not what most members of the faculty would wish. The humanistic ethos of the campus community gives a palpable and widely praised sense of community and caring to our collective life, a characteristic deriving from our religious tradition, but which may continue to decline without a critical mass of religiously committed students and a supportive and encouraging institutional structure.

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## APPENDIX A, Proportion Catholic at other institutions

**Proportion Catholic at Various Colleges and Universities**  
**Percent of student body**  
**Source: Barrons College Guide, 2001**

| <b>Institution</b>                 | <b>Percent Catholic</b> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| All colleges and universities      | 29%                     |
| Boston College, MA                 | 75                      |
| Canisius College, NY               | 47                      |
| Catholic University of America, DC | 88                      |
| Christian Brothers University, TN  | 26                      |
| College of St. Rose, NY            | 60                      |
| College of St. Joseph, VT          | 55                      |
| Depaul University, IL              | 45                      |
| Fordham, NY                        | 68                      |
| Georgetown University, DC          | 56                      |
| John Carroll University, OH        | 70                      |
| LeMoyne College, NY                | 58                      |
| Marist College, NY                 | 60                      |
| Marquette University, WI           | 69                      |
| Merrimack College, MA              | 80                      |
| Quinnipiac University, CT          | 65                      |
| Rockhurst University, MO           | 52                      |
| Sacred Heart University, CT        | 75                      |
| Saint Anselm College, NH           | 83                      |
| Saint John's University, NY        | 58                      |
| Saint John's University, MN        | 74                      |
| Stonehill College, MA              | 75                      |
| University of San Diego, CA        | 57                      |
| University of San Francisco        | 50                      |
| Vilanova University, PA            | 83                      |
| Providence College, RI             | "most"                  |
| Fairfield University, CT           | "most"                  |
| University of Notre Dame, IN       | "most"                  |
| College of the Holy Cross, MA      | NA                      |
| Assumption College, MA             | NA                      |

## Religious Values Survey

Saint Michael's College, April 2002  
A Research Project in Sociology and Anthropology

1. At the present time, do you think that religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence?  
 increasing **17%**       losing **60%**       staying the same **19%**       no opinion **4%**
2. How about at Saint Michael's? Do you think that religion is increasing its influence at Saint Michael's or losing its influence?  
 increasing **9%**       losing **26%**       staying the same **51%**       no opinion **13%**
3. How about you personally? Since coming to St. Michael's, has your commitment to religion changed? Have you become more committed, less committed, or has there been no change at all?  
 more committed **21%**       less committed **26%**       no change **53%**

| <i>How important are each of the following religious issues to you?</i>  | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not at all important |
|--|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 4. How important would you say religion is in your own life—very important, somewhat important, or not at all important? | <b>28%</b>     | <b>50%</b>         | <b>22%</b>           |
| 5. How important was the religious affiliation and orientation of St. Michael's in decision to come here?                | <b>7</b>       | <b>30</b>          | <b>63</b>            |
| 6. How important is it to you to continue to have the presence of the Edmundite priests on campus?                       | <b>25</b>      | <b>41</b>          | <b>34</b>            |
| 7. How important is it to you to spend periods of time in private prayer?  | <b>20</b>      | <b>37</b>          | <b>43</b>            |
| 8. How important is it to you to experience spiritual growth in your own life? (Gallup)                                  | <b>45</b>      | <b>39</b>          | <b>15</b>            |
| 9. How important is it to you to take the two required courses in Religious Studies?                                     | <b>14</b>      | <b>55</b>          | <b>41</b>            |

### I. LIFE GOALS

Below is a list of objectives that many graduates have. After reading each one, please check the appropriate box indicating the importance that you assign to it.

| <i>How important is it to . . .</i>  | Essential  | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not at all important |
|--|------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 10. Be well off financially?   | <b>12%</b> | <b>47%</b>     | <b>38%</b>         | <b>3%</b>            |
| 11. To help others in difficulty?  | <b>27</b>  | <b>56</b>      | <b>17</b>          | <b>1</b>             |
| 12. Develop a meaningful philosophy of life?                                     | <b>33</b>  | <b>40</b>      | <b>25</b>          | <b>2</b>             |
| 13. Influence social values?   | <b>18</b>  | <b>49</b>      | <b>29</b>          | <b>4</b>             |
| 14. Participate by volunteering or community service?                            | <b>19</b>  | <b>43</b>      | <b>34</b>          | <b>4</b>             |
| 15. Grow spiritually throughout your life.                                       | <b>32</b>  | <b>32</b>      | <b>30</b>          | <b>7</b>             |
| 16. Secure a career that has a religious dimension?                              | <b>1</b>   | <b>3</b>       | <b>25</b>          | <b>7</b>             |
| 17. Secure a career that is consistent with your moral and religious beliefs?    | <b>24</b>  | <b>34</b>      | <b>32</b>          | <b>11</b>            |
| 18. Secure a career that responds to God's call to serve?                        | <b>5</b>   | <b>10</b>      | <b>29</b>          | <b>56</b>            |
| 19. If you marry, would you want a church ceremony?                              | <b>36</b>  | <b>25</b>      | <b>22</b>          | <b>18</b>            |
| 20. If you marry, would you want to marry someone from your own faith tradition? | <b>7</b>   | <b>14</b>      | <b>28</b>          | <b>52</b>            |
| 21. If you have children, would you want to raise them in your faith tradition?  | <b>21</b>  | <b>25</b>      | <b>32</b>          | <b>23</b>            |
| 22. Play an active role in your church or worship community?                     | <b>8</b>   | <b>18</b>      | <b>42</b>          | <b>32</b>            |
| 23. Play a leadership role in your church?                                       | <b>2</b>   | <b>7</b>       | <b>28</b>          | <b>64</b>            |

## II. RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

24. During the parts of the year when you are here on campus, on average, about how often do you attend worship services on Saturday or Sunday?
- Every week **12%**
  - Every month, but not every week **11%**
  - Several times a year, but not every month **16%**
  - I almost never attend worship services **30%**
  - I never attend worship services **31%**
25. Since you've been a student here at SMC, have you gone to Mass *more frequently* than you did before coming to this college, *less frequently* than you did before, or has your attendance been *about the same*?
- I've gone more frequently **13%**
  - I've gone less frequently **48%**
  - I've gone about the same **39%**
26. Over the course of the past year or so, on average, about how often did you read the Bible or other form of religious scripture?
- At least every week **6%**
  - Every month, but not every week **9%**
  - Several times a year, but not every month **17%**
  - I almost never do **37%**
  - Never **32%**
27. Which of the following best describes your practice of prayer or religious meditation?
- Prayer is a regular part of my daily life **13%**
  - I pray fairly often, but probably not daily **27%**
  - I usually pray only in times of stress or need but rarely at any other time **30%**
  - I pray only during formal ceremonies **14%**
  - I never pray **16%**

| <b>How often do any of the following apply to you?</b>  | Yes,<br>Frequently | Yes,<br>Occasionally | Hardly<br>ever/never |
|---|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 28. Have you ever given serious consideration to a year of full time volunteer service after you graduate?                        | <b>20%</b>         | <b>30%</b>           | <b>50%</b>           |
| 29. Have you ever selected a course based on its presumed religious or spiritual content? (Other than as a LSR requirement)       | <b>6</b>           | <b>18</b>            | <b>76</b>            |
| 30. Have you ever given serious consideration to becoming a priest, brother, sister, or minister after you graduate?              | <b>2</b>           | <b>5</b>             | <b>93</b>            |
| 31. Have you ever thought about exploring a leadership role in your church or synagogue?  | <b>2</b>           | <b>16</b>            | <b>82</b>            |
| 32. Have you personally tried to convert someone to your religious faith?   | <b>1</b>           | <b>9</b>             | <b>90</b>            |
| 33. Have you ever been interested in going to Mass or some other religious service but not gone because your friends wouldn't go? | <b>2</b>           | <b>12</b>            | <b>86</b>            |
| <b>How often do you talk about the following topics with your friends?</b>  |                    |                      |                      |
| 34. What is right to do vs. what is wrong   | <b>34</b>          | <b>57</b>            | <b>9</b>             |
| 35. Whether or not there is a God   | <b>17</b>          | <b>54</b>            | <b>29</b>            |
| 36. The meaning of life   | <b>26</b>          | <b>49</b>            | <b>25</b>            |

37. Which of the following statements comes closest to expressing what you believe about God?
- I know that God exists and have no doubts about it **33%**
  - While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God **27%**
  - I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others times **9%**
  - I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind **17%**
  - I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out **6%**
  - I don't believe in God **2%**
  - None of the above represents what I believe. **7%**

38. How would you describe the religious orientation of the home environment in which you were raised?
- Highly committed to religion **28%**
  - Moderately committed to religion **36%**
  - Loosely committed to religion **26%**
  - Not at all committed to religion **10%**
39. Do you usually think of yourself as a Catholic, a Protestant, or do you have some other religious identification?
- Catholic **61%**
  - Protestant **15%**
  - Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_) **12%**
  - Don't know
  - No particular affiliation **13%**
40. Which of the following statements best describes your beliefs about being either "spiritual" or "religious?"
- I am both spiritual and religious **39%**
  - I am spiritual but not religious **41%**
  - I am religious but not spiritual **8%**
  - Neither **12%**

### III. RELIGION AT SAINT MICHAEL'S

41. Do you feel that your own religious and/or spiritual beliefs are treated with appropriate respect on campus?
- Yes, all the time **53%**
  - Yes, almost all the time **28%**
  - No **4%**
  - Don't know **14%**
42. Since coming to SMC, how satisfied have you been with the support you have received for the growth and development of your personal spirituality?
- Very satisfied **29%**
  - Somewhat satisfied **34%**
  - Somewhat dissatisfied **6%**
  - Very dissatisfied **2%**
  - Does not apply or no opinion **29%**
43. Since coming to SMC, how satisfied have you been with the religious qualities that you hear or see manifest from the faculty?
- Very satisfied **25%**
  - Somewhat satisfied **43%**
  - Somewhat dissatisfied **7%**
  - Very dissatisfied **2%**
  - Does not apply or no opinion **23%**
44. If dissatisfied: Is this because the faculty has been "too religious" or "not religious enough?"

  - too religious **35%**
  - not enough **65%**
45. Thinking about your professors this semester, have any of them ever discussed the moral implications of the subject matter you are studying?
- Yes, at least one has **81%**
  - No, never **19%**
46. Do you think that the Catholic tradition of SMC influences your college experience in ways that would be different if you had attended a similar college that was NOT Catholic?
- Yes, I think there would be a difference, and the effect is positive **55%**
  - Yes, I think there is a difference, but the effect is negative **7%**
  - No, it has no effect **38%**
47. Have the Religious Studies courses that you've taken here at SMC strengthened or weakened your spiritual faith?
- Strengthened my faith **30%**
  - weakened my faith **10%**
  - No clear effect **54%**
  - Haven't taken yet **7%**
48. Have you ever had a course in which any member of the faculty addressed issues of the *moral or ethical implications* of career choices that students might consider pursuing?
- Yes, at least one has **56%**
  - No, never **44%**

49. Would you like to have more discussion of the *moral and ethical implications* of career choices in your classes or is there enough discussion as is?

Yes, I would like more **29%**       No, there is enough now **40%**       Don't know or no opinion **31%**

50. Would you like to have more discussion of religious aspects or career choices in your classes or is there enough discussion as is?

Yes, I would like more **13%**       No, there is enough now **48%**       Don't know or no opinion **39%**

Some members of our community feel that the "religious character" or "atmosphere" of the College is not as strong or visible as it should be, while others feel that it is too strong. Which way do you feel about each of these areas?

51. Is the *general* religious atmosphere **on campus** not as strong as it should be or is it too strong the way it is?

It's not as strong as it should be **14%**    It's too strong **3%**    It's fine as is **75%**    Don't know or no opinion **8%**

52. How about the religious atmosphere of **our classes**?

It's not as strong as it should be **9%**    It's too strong **4%**    It's fine as is **79%**    Don't know or no opinion **8%**

53. How about the religious atmosphere of **student life and the residence halls**?

It's not as strong as it should be **14%**    It's too strong **6%**    It's fine as is **67%**    Don't know or no opinion **13%**

54. If you feel that the moral/ethical or religious aspects of life decisions should receive more attention and be discussed more, can you suggest ways in which this might be done here at SMC?

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#### IV. RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

| <i>Do you agree. . .</i>   | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral   | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 55. I believe that most people can grow spiritually just as well without going to church.  | <b>79</b>      |       | <b>15</b> |          | <b>6</b>          |
| 56. My religious faith gives meaning to my life.   | <b>46</b>      |       | <b>40</b> |          | <b>15</b>         |
| 57. Although I am a religious person, I will not allow religious considerations to influence my everyday affairs.  | <b>23</b>      |       | <b>43</b> |          | <b>35</b>         |
| 58. The education I am receiving at St. Michael's is deepening my understanding of moral and ethical problems.   | <b>60</b>      |       | <b>32</b> |          | <b>7</b>          |
| 59. Religious commitment gives life a certain purpose that it would not otherwise have.  | <b>38</b>      |       | <b>35</b> |          | <b>26</b>         |
| 60. My appreciation of religion has increased since I've come to St. Michael's.  | <b>37</b>      |       | <b>36</b> |          | <b>27</b>         |
| 61. If you are a strong person, you do not need religion   | <b>11</b>      |       | <b>25</b> |          | <b>64</b>         |
| 62. My spiritual life is being enhanced through my classroom experience and/or academic work.  | <b>32</b>      |       | <b>38</b> |          | <b>31</b>         |
| 63. My thinking about religion has been influenced by what my friends think.   | <b>11</b>      |       | <b>21</b> |          | <b>68</b>         |
| 64. Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.  | <b>31</b>      |       | <b>38</b> |          | <b>31</b>         |
| 65. My spiritual life is being enhanced through the campus ministry programs I have attended ( <i>check neutral if you have not been at all involved</i> ) | <b>16</b>      |       | <b>73</b> |          | <b>11</b>         |
| 65. If more of my friends went to church, I'd go too.  | <b>18</b>      |       | <b>18</b> |          | <b>64</b>         |
| 66. In general, I consider church attendance a waste of time.  | <b>13</b>      |       | <b>19</b> |          | <b>68</b>         |

**V. CATHOLIC ISSUES.** This section is to see how students feel about selected issues related to the Catholic Church. While we are interested in how all students feel about these questions, non-Catholics may choose to skip this question.

67. There are many reasons why students sometimes don't go to Mass on Sundays. If you don't go to Mass regularly, can you tell us why not? Which of the following reasons are significant to you? Check all that apply.
- The service doesn't seem relevant to my religious and spiritual needs. **18%**
  - The sermons are not very engaging or valuable. **16%**
  - I have disagreements with some of the theology of the church. **26%**
  - I don't feel that my participation as a student is sufficiently valued. **3%**
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_ **37% (see appendix for listing)**
68. How well does attending Mass and other religious services in the Saint Michael's Chapel help you deal with important questions in your life?
- Very well **5%**
  - Moderately well **27%**
  - Moderately poor **10%**
  - Very poorly **6%**
  - Don't know **51%**

| Do you agree . . .  | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral    | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| 69. Catholics have a duty to try to end racism.   | <b>54%</b>     |       | <b>34%</b> |          | <b>12%</b>        |
| 70. Catholics have a duty to try to close the gap between the rich and the poor.                    | <b>54</b>      |       | <b>36</b>  |          | <b>10</b>         |
| 71. Catholics have a duty to live more simply in order to preserve the environment.                 | <b>39</b>      |       | <b>43</b>  |          | <b>18</b>         |
| 72. Catholics have a duty to try to protect all life from its beginning to its end.                 | <b>47</b>      |       | <b>39</b>  |          | <b>14</b>         |
| 73. One can be a good Catholic without going to Mass.   | <b>69</b>      |       | <b>21</b>  |          | <b>9</b>          |
| 74. One can be a good Catholic without helping the poor.  | <b>34</b>      |       | <b>32</b>  |          | <b>33</b>         |
| 75. It would be a good thing if married men were allowed to be ordained as priests.                 | <b>69</b>      |       | <b>25</b>  |          | <b>7</b>          |
| 76. The Catholic Church is the one true church.   | <b>12</b>      |       | <b>28</b>  |          | <b>60</b>         |
| 77. There is something very special about being a Catholic that you don't find in other religions   | <b>21</b>      |       | <b>42</b>  |          | <b>37</b>         |
| 78. I could be just as happy in another church.   | <b>26</b>      |       | <b>55</b>  |          | <b>19</b>         |
| 79. The Catholic Church should give more leadership roles to the laity.                             | <b>33</b>      |       | <b>62</b>  |          | <b>5</b>          |
| 80. The fact that women cannot be ordained as priests weakens my commitment to the Catholic church. | <b>40</b>      |       | <b>39</b>  |          | <b>21</b>         |
| 81. The current problems of some priest pedophiles weakens my commitment to the Catholic Church.    | <b>39</b>      |       | <b>35</b>  |          | <b>25</b>         |

82. Since coming to Saint Michael's, has your commitment to Catholicism changed? Have you become more committed, less committed, or has there been no change at all?
- More committed **13%**
  - Less **28%**
  - No change **59%**

**VI. BACKGROUND**

83. What is your major? (If you are a double major, check the one that you register with first.)
- One of the natural sciences, math or computer science **13%**
  - One of the social sciences (Psychology, Sociology/Anthro, Economics, Political Science) **24%**
  - One of the pre-professional fields (Business, Education, Journalism) **42%**
  - One of the humanities and other liberal arts fields **17%**
  - Exploratory **5%**

84. Which of the following activities have you participated in since you started at Saint Michael's? Check all that apply.

- A locally organized and run MOVE program **45%**
- An extended service trip run by MOVE at an out-of-state location **11%**
- Spiritual retreats such as LEAP, Emmaus or Busy Student Retreats **14%**
- Campus ministry activities such as the Liturgical Choir, Eucharistic ministers, etc. **9%**

85. Is your involvement in MOVE programs motivated by your religious beliefs, either partially or fully?

- Yes **27%**
- No **73%**

86. Are you satisfied with the amount of religious affiliation there presently is in your work with MOVE? Would you like to see more religious focus, or less religious focus?

- Fine as is **89%**
- Needs more **4%**
- Needs less **7%**

87. During the current year, do you receive financial aid in the form of loans, grants, scholarships, or work-study?

- No **19%**
- Yes ↴

88. IF YES, Is it in the form of a

- Stafford loan **68%**
- Some other form of loan, or scholarship or aid
- A Vermont Parish scholarship
- Pell Grant **13%**

89. What is your approximate GPA?

- 4.0 to 3.5 **22%**
- 3.4 to 3.0 **42%**
- 2.9 to 2.5 **29%**
- 2.5 to 2.1 **5%**
- less than 2.1 **2%**

90. Did you attend a Catholic High School for most of your four years before coming to Saint Michael's?

- Yes, I did
- No, I did not

91. Gender:

- Female **62%**
- Male **38%**

92. Year of Graduation:

- 2002 **25%**
- 2003 **25%**
- 2004 **25%**
- 2005 **24%**

## VII. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

These last question gives you the opportunity to comment on any of the issues that might have been raised anywhere in this questionnaire. We would be especially interested in two possible issues:

Do you have any suggestions to make the College a more helpful and supportive place for the religious development of students?

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While at St. Michael's, have you had any religious experiences that significantly changed your view of religion or spirituality? If so, can you explain them for us?

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**Thank you VERY much for your time in filling out this questionnaire!**  
Call Dr. Vincent Bolduc at 655-2389 with any questions, or [vbolduc@smcvt.edu](mailto:vbolduc@smcvt.edu)

## APPENDIX C, STUDENT COMMENTS

This section contains the verbatim comments from questions 39, 54, 67, 93, and 94. They are numbered according to the questionnaire code number, and could be traced back to any answer in the data set. No attempt was made to summarize their content. Anyone unfamiliar with general student thinking on religion will find reading them back-to-back in this fashion to be a valuable representation of the general religious inclinations of a cross-section of our students.

Two reminders might help set the context for questions 54, 93 and 94. First, during Lent of this year, the Office of Campus Ministry sent out mass daily e-mails with brief inspirational prayers and biblical passages. Some students objected and it was the subject of some controversy. Second, there are a number of references to the LSR (Liberal Studies Requirement) that all students take two courses in Religious Studies, one on Christianity, the other on the Old or New Testament. A number of students always express a desire to substitute other courses on other religions in its place to fulfill the requirement. Any student may take Buddhism, for example, but as an elective after fulfilling the LSR requirement.

### **Q39. Do you usually think of yourself as a Catholic, a Protestant, or do you have some other religious identification? (The pre-coded options resulted in Catholic, 61%; Protestant, 15%; no affiliation, 13%; “other,” 12%. These responses appeared on the line available for “other \_\_\_\_\_”)**

43. My own religion – a combination of beliefs, values, traditions.
47. Buddhist
49. Episcopalian
55. Greek Orthodox
58. Catholic Buddhist
99. Episcopalian
101. Catholic but questioning.
105. Muslim
107. Lutheran
112. Methodist
127. I have my own ideas.
133. Catholic-Protestant.
159. Involved in a lot of New Age practices and healing.
180. I’m a Jew—not simply confined to the religious aspect.
190. Deist
199. Non-believer
202. Episcopalian
214. Baptist
219. Catholic and Jewish.
227. Catholic and Greek Orthodox (baptized and confirmed)
230. Greek Orthodox
252. Brought up Catholic but don’t intend to continue Catholic worship.
257. Christian
267. Methodist
285. Unitarian
290. Fallen away Catholic/Christian
298. My own personal spiritual theories.
302. Buddhist
305. Muslim
309. Methodist
314. Episcopalian
315. Methodist
317. Christian
323. Lutheran
324. Buddhist/Taoist/Christian mix of beliefs
325. Naturalist/Atheist. If there were a god, it would be nature.

- 330. Lutheran
- 334. Pagan – Celtic Shamanist
- 345. I also practice some Zen Buddhism.
- 353. Buddhist
- 355. Methodist
- 365. Human Being.
- 374. Lutheran
- 375. Either Eastern Orthodox or “experimental”.
- 376. Rastafarian branch of Christianity.
- 386. Baptist
- 414. Unitarian

**54. If you feel that the moral/ethical or religious aspects of life decisions should receive more attention and be discussed more, can you suggest ways in which this might be done here at SMC?**

- 3. Here I sense according to the philosophy “If something isn’t broken don’t try to fix it.” Religious life is very ubiquitous in many ways on this campus. I feel it is fine.
- 25. Need different religious classes.
- 69. Emphasize a more personal role between advisors/RD’s/mentors and students in some way.
- 77. More discussion of moral, ethical and religious aspects (both Christian and non) in classes—not just philosophy and religious studies classes.
- 85. At the start of the year you should be able to sign up to receive those religious e-mails instead of sending them to everyone.
- 95. more discussion of social inequality in all realms, business, science, etc. More about service and generosity.
- 103. Maybe offer housing for people who will specifically follow Catholic Church teachings. Allow opportunities for students to create and run retreats (other than the already created LEAP and Emmaus). Hold a weekly/monthly forum discussing current issues and the Catholic Church’s stance on it.
- 122. Working on programs concerning choices (ethical) made while drinking.
- 141. Be more open, the faculty divides the community. Very few members place students as equal. This is why SMC is not moving forward as an academic community. It’s like another 4 years of high school.
- 143. I think if you stress Catholicism too much you will alienate non-Catholics.
- 154. Have a more Protestant influence, i.e., separate church to go to.
- 158. Not sure—discussions in class could generate ideas that get people thinking. Professors should have some idea of the influence they have on students.
- 164. Maybe tie religion into student life decisions.
- 170. I think that time should be allowed in or out of class as an opportunity not obligation for students to discuss these things if they wish.
- 179. I find it sickening that the Women’s Center and Health Services are restricted from helping the females on this campus with things such as birth control because of the Catholic influence on campus.
- 200. Religion is something that shouldn’t be forced on people, it should be accessible to those who seek it.
- 227. Through Christianity courses—during one of my Christianity classes we somewhat touched on moral/ethical and religious aspects of life decisions—not enough though.
- 228. I do like the mass e-mails we received during Lent. I thought they were uplifting—more stuff like that—I guess.
- 232. Better treatment of one another. More service opportunities.
- 234. Moral implications or a career should not be discussed in entry level classes. Reserve this topic for a separate class or incorporate this into higher level (Sr/Jr) classes.
- 240. I think that students should be asked to think and write more about ethics and morals in classes, such as requiring everyone to take ethics and also focus more in religion class on Catholicism specifically.
- 247. Perhaps talking more about specific career choices and how students feel about them. There has been little talk of service jobs in my classes and I’d like more.
- 257. No, but ethics class does a great job of this and should be a class that everyone should take.
- 260. In some circumstances the Catholic views should be pushed aside and realism should be recognized (i.e., birth control, contraception @ Health Services, Women’s Center.)
- 261. Maybe just make people more aware that the members of Campus Ministry are there to answer any questions that you have.

- 262. I think the religious studies courses need to be discussed more.
- 280. I would like to see the Edmundites in non-Campus Ministry or academically endowed situations. People need to learn that the Edmundites are as much a friend as they are in the vocation.
- 292. Have a course on ethics as part of LSR requirement.
- 293. Maybe have the priests give special talks on things like abortion outside of mass.
- 304. Well, I think that it is fine, but sometimes we lose that, and everything is way too liberal.
- 310. E-mail.
- 316. We should have small group sessions where people can sign up to be in a small group. You can share, pray, and encourage each other in not just religious aspects—but in many other ways.
- 325. I believe that we first need to discuss environmental morality to then discuss job choice, etc. The de-spiritualizing capitalist society we live in needs to also be examined.
- 339. I feel that a more liberal perspective is encouraged over a Catholic one and feel almost attacked for actually agreeing with the Christian faith. It is sad that even at a Catholic school, people are angered when Catholic e-mails and announcements are made.
- 344. I don't think it should be discussed in class.
- 357. More opportunity for discussion. The classes sometimes feel lifeless.
- 376. Let students know the true impact of their decisions. Don't hide the truth. Expose the corruption of corporations. Do it in class—kids listen then but don't listen to clubs like Free the Planet, Amnesty, etc.
- 387. Moral and ethical aspects of life would be good topics for group discussions, perhaps with some of the Edmundites.
- 396. More emphasis on religious practices and beliefs.
- 405. Although this is a Catholic Institute incorporating other religions might receive more attention.
- 407. There are not enough daily/weekly ways to explore ones faith on campus. Campus Ministry puts a monopoly on all religious/spiritual activities on campus. Diversity and accessibility are needed.
- 417. We already have ethical classes.

**67. There are many reasons why students sometimes don't go to Mass on Sundays. If you don't go to Mass regularly, can you tell us why not? Which of the following reasons are significant to you? Check all that apply. (The percent given is for Catholics only, but many non-Catholics also gave us answers.)**

- a. 18% The service doesn't seem relevant to my religious and spiritual needs**
- b. 16% The sermons are not very engaging or valuable**
- c. 26% I have disagreements with some of the theology of the church**
- d. 3% I don't feel that my participation as a student is sufficiently valued**
- e. 37% Other, please specify (See below)**
- 12. I think many people go for wrong reasons, rather not be around their house.
- 17. School work gets in the way.
- 18. I don't feel going to Church is necessary to be a good moral person.
- 22. I feel I don't need to go to church to show I am religious.
- 24. Just don't get around to it.
- 30. Too lazy.
- 31. Don't feel like it.
- 32. Time.
- 33. I don't go to church, not religious and especially not Catholic.
- 34. Many people don't go because The Simpson's are on (seriously).
- 35. Sleep in morning – Simpson's at night.
- 44. I rarely went at home – it's not a huge part of my beliefs right now – I am more about learning different religions.
- 47. I don't care.
- 48. It's too funky. Church should be proper.
- 59. Because I go to the bars on Friday and Saturday and need to catch up on work on Sunday.
- 62. Non-Catholic.
- 64. I get a lot out of it but I just don't have the time Sunday night. Usually working.
- 70. Closed to my lifestyle as a gay male.
- 72. Time of mass.
- 76. Other things to do.

82. Just can't make time.
88. I don't understand what is going on—except the motions.
92. I don't want to participate in a male dominated hierarchy.
98. Don't think about it.
100. If I have too much work.
105. I'm not Catholic.
107. Lazy.
109. Time restraints.
110. I have work, homework to be done.
115. I am more spiritual and less about organized church services.
122. No thought put into prayers, etc.
123. No time.
125. I don't choose to go.
127. If I don't full believe I feel like a hypocrite.
128. I don't like the Catholic Church services.
131. Religion is not important to me.
136. Don't think its necessary at this point in my life.
139. I am lazy.
144. Don't feel like it.
146. Lazy.
151. While I believe, I do not feel that ritual activities are necessary.
152. Little time.
153. Don't always have time.
163. Laziness, procrastination.
164. I don't like the church and music.
168. Time constraints, laziness.
169. Attendance is simply not a priority for me.
171. Time of services.
172. Priests can relate to students.
176. I have disagreements with church policy.
180. I am not Catholic.
181. No time.
183. Don't have time, inconvenient.
187. Not religious.
191. No time/motivation.
192. Not high on my priorities, often forget about it until it has already started.
193. I think God can be found in many and sometimes better places than church.
196. I don't feel the need to go to church to believe in God.
198. Not enough time.
199. Non-believer.
205. Too much homework.
209. I'm not Catholic—feel lost.
210. It's boring and a waste of time.
211. Too much schoolwork.
212. The time the mass is held (I don't like how they changed the time of mass.
214. Throughout my life I never really attended church.
215. Not very religious or spiritual.
217. I am uninterested in what goes on during mass.
220. Varsity competitions are often Sundays.
225. I am used to a more traditional mass and the solemnness of it. Also, not kneeling during consecration is weird.
226. I am not Catholic and don't always understand certain elements of the service.
228. Sometimes I honestly have too much work to do.
229. Too busy.
232. Instead people should spend the hour or so helping others—Jesus would probably dig that more.
234. Don't feel comfortable as a non-Catholic.
235. I've been forced to my whole life.
241. Here at SMC mass seems more like a stage production rather than a gathering of people of the same faith in celebration.

- 248. Too lazy, have work to do.
- 255. I don't feel as if I need to attend church to be "closer to God".
- 257. I love my sleep.
- 259. I'm lazy but I like to go when I can.
- 264. I don't like the service at SMC—too non-traditional.
- 265. I don't always feel that I can pay attention during church and therefore get something from it.
- 269. Work late Sundays (all day)
- 273. Schoolwork to be done.
- 278. Too long.
- 280. I go every week but this is because I actively participate in the mass. When I was younger, I didn't see the point of continuous standing and sitting.
- 283. Seems boring to me.
- 286. My church is at home. I like it.
- 289. I sometimes have lots of homework to do and I am very busy.
- 292. Dislike the format of mass—it's too showy, prefer the traditional mass.
- 294. Don't feel the need to.
- 296. Too much homework, lack of motivation late on Sundays.
- 299. Too busy.
- 308. No time.
- 313. Lazy.
- 325. I am not Catholic.
- 326. Time, atmosphere.
- 327. Get caught up in work.
- 328. Not enough time to go regularly.
- 329. Not interested.
- 332. I wait until Sunday to do weekly work.
- 333. The Simpson's
- 334. I am not Catholic.
- 342. Time.
- 354. I rarely have time or the motivation.
- 359. Questioning my faith.
- 361. Working on weekends/studying—no time.
- 362. Homework, sleep time.
- 366. I would go on Sunday nights but I usually get caught up with homework and forget.
- 385. As a non-Catholic I just don't feel like I belong there...I feel out of place.
- 387. Usually I have work to finish unfortunately—studying.
- 389. Lazy/other things going on in my life. Not too happy with the current events happening in the church today.
- 390. I am not religious at all.
- 396. Time.
- 401. I don't like the dancing.
- 404. No time.
- 407. I've gone but as a Protestant I'm not accepted there.
- 415. No time.
- 417. I'm not Catholic.

**93. Do you have any suggestions to make the College a more helpful and supportive place for the religious development of students?**

- 2. I think the less oppressive and "pushy" the college is with religion the more diverse the environment will be. A diverse environment promotes an open mind and spirituality on a personal level.
- 4. I don't think religion and/or religious preference is something that can be forced upon anyone or cause anyone to feel uncomfortable. I feel that this college is very helpful and supportive, especially religiously and nothing should be changed.
- 5. More studies that put the existence of God into question.
- 6. For whatever reason I feel that the e-mails sent by [Campus Ministry] are very imposing and incredibly irritating. I know I can just delete them but they offend me and I hate getting them.

7. I understand that this is a Catholic School, but I don't think Christianity Past and Present should be a pre-requisite to all other religion classes. We should be able to choose both religious classes that we are required to take as Liberal Arts requirements.
15. I don't feel as though the religious aspect of this college should be pushed on anybody especially because not everybody at SMC is Catholic or even religious.
20. No, I think that the colleges does a good job. I don't know how the college could do so without pressuring Catholicism on those of other faiths.
22. Not really – it's nice we have a church on campus and easy to get involved if one wants.
25. The courses offered need to offer more real-life insight on issues of students and bring more awareness of other Catholic's problems/struggles.
26. I am not really sure at this point what would help.
33. I am not Catholic and see myself as a very spiritual person lacking religious background. Thus far at St. Mike's I have never felt uncomfortable about my religious background and have no need for any religious change here.
37. I think St. Mike's does a good job now contributing to students' religious development.
43. Being tolerant and supportive of all forms of religion in classrooms and in general.
44. One thing that bothers me a little is that the LSR for two religion classes are all related to Christianity. I don't understand why taking a Hindu or Buddhism class shouldn't be considered part of that LS requirement.
45. I understand that as a Catholic college, our LSR requirements are all forms of Christianity and I understand that we should have to take a course on Christianity but I think receiving credit for courses such as Buddhism and Hinduism would be beneficial to the religious development of students.
49. No. I am not religious at all. So the religious development at SMC does not have any immediate effect on me.
50. Religion classes should be a choice.
58. Incorporate more study of other religions (Eastern).
60. I think Campus Ministry does a very good job of outreach and providing support for Catholic students' growth. However there are times when I have not felt spiritually at home on campus because I am a Protestant.
71. I think it is fine. Religion is there for ones who want to be involved in it.
73. I think religion should be optional and they should offer a larger variety of classes. This would help some feel less pressured in religion.
77. I am a transfer student from a small, protestant college and I have had a large influence on my religious development by going there. I think that by having teachers try to incorporate mortal/ethical ideas in the class will help students more in life in general.
78. Some profs. go too far. One prof. I had stated that he believed that organized religion was responsible for all that was wrong in the world.
79. Religion courses should relate to current issues in Church. I've found most religion classes boring and I'm glad my requirements are finished. I didn't learn or develop anything about my own religious beliefs from classes.
84. Demand a little less in terms of academics to allow time for personal and religious development of students.
86. Give more of a chance for students to get involved. More encouragement to join.
87. No, I'm not a religious person and do not seek religious development.
92. Have opportunities for those who are religious, but don't go overboard to respect those who don't want to get involved.
95. Keep up the religious programs for those who enjoy them. Encourage kids to start up new religious organizations in all the religions, Christian, Muslim, Judaism—maybe to study the relationship between the religions—current relations ex: Jewish-Christian relations.
99. I don't have a basis for judgment about that because the word religion and all it encompasses is too much for me to consider considering. I rarely ever think about my religious development.
100. I would like to do retreats and things. I wish you would post them on our mail.
101. I think the religious atmosphere at St. Mike's is fine how it is. It provides the opportunity to be involved in religious activities without forcing them upon you.
102. Students (religious) as Eucharistic Ministers and on call to answer questions.
103. In addition to having an academic or academic advisor, maybe first-year students could be hooked up with a priest or spiritual advisor.
104. I believe other religious classes (Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.) should count as religious core classes. It is bias to only allow Christianity classes to represent the religious requirement at St. Michael's.

109. Maintain a Catholic tradition is a must, but I personally would like to attend holiday masses here before I go home and vacation as well, but that's tough to have.
115. Since there are quite a few non-Catholic students, it would be nice to see more emphasis on different types of spirituality, not just Catholic spirituality.
120. I think the College should be more inclusive of all religions and teach about all different faiths.
121. Not expect that everyone is a die-hard Catholic and teach more about alternative beliefs. Classes like Buddhism should count for LSR, not just Christianity classes.
124. Emphasize spiritual growth without trying to overemphasize Catholicism.
128. What I like about this college is that although religiously affiliated, is open towards others. This allows us to be supportive to someone who would otherwise not attend St. Michael's.
129. I think that SMC has a very respectable religious program and they do a great job.
130. Have more of a presence on campus.
132. I like SMC the way it is. It is a strong community.
134. I believe its good the way it is. To be any stranger would not allow students to think for themselves and come to their own conclusions.
138. Back off with the Catholic influence. I realize it's a Catholic college but there are students here from other countries who are of other religions who need support too.
154. Build a Protestant place of worship.
159. It isn't really open and supportive of all religious/spiritual beliefs—it seems to be only supporting Catholicism.
163. Encourage more students to attend LEAP.
165. I would never guess it's a Catholic school if I didn't come here. I have several professors who curse and talk about unnecessary subjects.
167. I feel that the religious organizations on campus are somewhat cliquey—this may just be a result of a small campus.
169. Allowing one of the LSRs for Religious Studies to be a non-Christianity course. Requiring only Christianity classes implies that other religions are not necessary for a liberal arts education.
170. I believe the college could reach more people if it could concentrate more on the spiritual aspects of life than the religious. It is too easy to turn people away from any spiritual participation by concentrating on religion.
180. Know that there are other religions and cultures on campus. Start more organizations for non-Christians.
181. More religious classes—trips—extended services.
182. At times SMC could be more open minded when dealing with modern issues.
185. Don't stress any religion and make Buddhism and Hinduism classes religious studies courses.
186. I don't think religion should be forced onto students—especially with the requirement of 2 religion courses. I understand it is a Catholic College—but I think students should have the freedom to pick their own classes.
190. I don't feel qualified to answer this question.
191. Have the Edmundites (all of them) more visible and easily accessible to students and faculty on campus.
195. Realize that Catholics are not the only Christians out there.
196. I feel that everyone should find their own spirituality and they don't need to be religious or have any extra religious experiences. So as far as I'm concerned, nothing needed to be changed for me.
198. No, I think everything is fine the way it is.
203. Possibly hold services other than Catholic mass.
208. More priests available for conversation more often.
210. No, I think it is supported enough already.
216. I think it is already doing great!
217. School has a good balance of Catholic beliefs and values.
220. Have a mid-week service open only to SMC students.
223. They need to reach out more to the African Americans.
225. No, I think it is very good—it is just something (a different way) that I should get used to.
226. I did not come to St. Mike's because I'm Catholic. I'm not but I like the values the church has and influences on the school.
227. Make going to church a class give 1 or 2 credits.
228. I'd like to see the priests more during my daily comings and goings. I feel they are a comforting and uplifting presence on campus.

231. I think that the 2 required religion courses should either be optional or there should be 100 and 200 level religion classes optional that are not only based on Christianity.
232. More focus on treatment of others and more volunteer programs.
234. Encourage the acceptance of different opinions. Stop the hypocrisy here at SMC. We say we are a Catholic college yet we openly support homosexual conduct/activities but refuse to even discuss sex? That is ridiculous!!
238. Women's bible study.
240. I think students should take more theology and philosophy and less social science, because College should really try to make students think about morals and ethics and understand their beliefs.
243. The two required religious courses shouldn't have to be Christian based. I think we should be allowed to choose from other religions.
244. Make the two required religious courses open to all religion classes not just Catholicism.
245. I am agnostic and SMC was my first experience being a part of a religious community. I felt that my religious views or lack there of were respected and I had room to grow and learn about religion and religious culture.
247. I think its important for students to understand that many people at SMC are not Catholic. I think there needs to be a greater awareness and understanding of many different religions.
250. I feel that the students who want religious development will see it, while those who have faith in a more non-traditional sense will maintain their own spirituality and not seek support from an organized religion.
251. I feel students who feel this is important can develop, but they don't push religion too much.
252. More programs like LEAP because it is very hard to get into because it is in high demand.
257. I think it is fine as is.
259. No and I hated this survey. Half of my answers aren't my exact feelings. The answers were worded poorly.
260. It would be helpful to support diverse religious beliefs while holding on to their Catholic beliefs.
261. Encourage learning more about other religions.
262. I think the religious studies programs need to be reviewed and changed to discuss current issues and moral decisions within the church.
269. More exposure/attention to other religions, not only Catholic church.
270. I think that the College should allow students to choose courses in other areas of religious interest after just one Christianity course, rather than requiring two.
272. More mass times.
279. More interaction between SSE and students. More Campus Ministry programs.
281. While not religious myself, I do respect the moral outreach of the church on campus...for everyone.
288. Perhaps focus on other religions more—like as in Theologies of God. Offer seminars or something.
290. I think Saint Michael's should be open and willing to support religion and spirituality of all kinds—especially Buddhism and personal spirituality. Faith can only be strengthened by exposure to other forms of spirituality.
292. I think that there needs to be a stronger spiritual presence but a little less stress on Catholicism. Though it is a Catholic school there are classes that are supposed to be about Christianity that look only from the point of Catholicism.
293. I think St. Mike's does a great job at showing support for the well being of its students. [Campus Ministry] and the priests are awesome!
296. I find that the time of mass usually prevents my friends and I from attending.
297. I've been asked to raise my hand if I didn't have any religious affiliation. This created an uncomfortable situation whereas I was one of only two people to raise their hands.
298. Yes. You should provide more opportunities to study different religions (other than Catholicism and Christianity) in the second level set of required religious courses.
301. Continue to offer programs and opportunities but by no means should the religion be forced into others.
304. Well, I think it is TOTALLY ridiculous to see the stupid hippies complain about the religious messages that are sent by Campus Ministry.
307. No, I think SMC does a great job of enforcing and encouraging the importance of religion.
310. No, because I feel religion is an individual decision.
314. I'm not too involved with Campus Ministry but from what I can tell I think everything is fine as is.
317. I think the school does a good job in offering religious education courses other than Catholicism. The liberal nature of the school is very important.

325. If you are strictly referring to Catholic “religious development”, no. I think you may be deterring many intelligent amazing people from coming to St. Mike’s.
328. I feel that the College is great the way it is.
329. I am not very religious, however, many of my friends are and it is my understanding that their needs have been met.
333. Don’t push religion on the students, just push spirituality and thinking.
340. Offer some sort of course for students who are very religious.
344. Be more open to other religions.
349. Emphasis more on the theory and exploration of religion.
353. More variety of religious services (Buddhist, Jewish, etc.).
357. We shouldn’t be required to learn religion. What we have now is very arbitrary. Students, as a result are losing interest.
361. I feel SMC is a very liberal Catholic College and I respect that. I would like to see the college continue to evolve as society evolves and also continue to be open to new ideas/suggestions presented to them.
365. We need to alter views on family planning.
367. Allow more versatile 200 level courses, not just Catholic.
368. The college is fine as it is, with support for religious development.
369. I think St. Mike’s does a good job of being open-minded in many issues that the church does not agree with.
370. It is difficult because they’re many non-Catholic or non-religious students yet St. Mike’s should not lose its religious identity.
376. Allow the LSR requirements to be filled in not Catholic courses only. Provide resources for students to explore Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., besides by taking 300 level courses. Students don’t have time in schedule.
384. As a religious community, we should be more open to other religions. This will make our faith (Catholic) stronger.
387. As I stated previously, discussion groups with the Edmundite priests would be interesting and informative. Just talking about current issues./what’s going on on campus would be nice.
388. Fine as is.
393. Having come from 4 years of Catholic high school it would have been more beneficial educationally to take advanced religious courses to fulfill the LSR because I had already been drilled with Christianity. I got A’s in both my classes without doing any work because I had learned it all in High School.
394. Recognize and appreciate other religions in forums other than coffee houses—offer more classes.
401. The priests should be more involved in activities whether sponsored by the church or other activities.
412. Required RS courses should include non-Christian classes.
413. I feel the religious atmosphere provided allows students opportunities to get involved in the church if they want to, however does not force itself upon students that choose not to get involved.
414. Don’t require both religion classes to be Christianity based.
417. I would suggest that religious ostracization not be included in the classes. Again and again I have been made to feel that hiding the fact that I am a Protestant would benefit me.. I’ve had professors say terrible things, false things about my religion that truly insulted me.

**94. While at St. Michael's, have you had any religious experiences that significantly changed your view of religion or spirituality? If so, can you explain them for us?**

1. No, I realized that I don’t want to raise my children Catholic.
2. There are times when I have felt spiritual growth through classes (non-religious) but cannot pinpoint one specific moment.
3. LEAP – Excellent – enough said.
11. Taking Intro. to Christianity made me think about whether or not God exists and think there is a God, but I think the Bible and organized religion have nothing to do with God.
13. I attended my first Catholic Mass and I felt very excluded because I am not Catholic and therefore did not know what to do when. I also attended a United Methodist service which was much more welcoming. Since I accept all kinds of people the UM view matches mine much more than that of Catholicism.
15. No, I have not had any significant religious experiences.
22. No, I have not.

25. I have had difficulty as a woman in a “leadership” position – my vote has been questioned because of my gender and not given full value or respect.
26. No, I have not.
33. LEAP was a great experience for me spiritually, however I got nothing out of it religiously.
34. Coming from a predominantly Jewish public high school I definitely notice the religious affiliation at SMC.
37. Not really.
43. Learning about meditation at Buddhism in a class impacted my personal spirituality.
45. Intro. to Christianity with [name]!! This is one of the best courses I’ve taken overall at SMC and this is the best intro to a “religious” course that I think anyone could take because it explores the differences between religion and spirituality. I think by doing this, it then makes me more open to want to know about different religions whereas taking an intro course that focused on the history of Christianity would’ve been boring to me if I hadn’t taken a course like this that helps to show the importance of learning about religion. I wish everyone took intro. with him!!
47. Buddhist religious thought with [name] sent my spirituality down more fulfilling roads in 3 months than 20 years in the Catholic Church.
53. I love going to mass here because it is nice and fun.
59. Yes, [name]’s Intro. to Christianity and Theologies of God classes—mind blowing! I didn’t like the questions about Catholics’ duties to end racism—I think it’s up to the human race.
60. Being at St. Michael’s has allowed me to learn about Catholicism—in effect I have been able to reflect on my own spirituality and strengthen it by learning new perspectives. That’s it in a nutshell.
70. Death of a friend in my class, LEAP, reflections on extended service trips.
71. The only mass I went to was the vigil, and I really liked it because it got everyone together for a good cause.
77. I have been to a Spanish Mass which was very interesting in learning about how religion is in a different culture.
79. Nothing at SMC, but the current issues of the Church have made me question my beliefs and commitment to Catholicism.
80. The unity on September 11th, going to church made me feel a lot safer.
84. I have had several such experiences: one came from personal prayer, another from Emmaus, one from my time abroad. I have also been touched many times by the kindness of others at SMC.
92. My religion classes have actually given me facts and backup to why I don’t agree with the Catholic Church.
95. We studied Buddhism in Anthro and animistic religion to some extent—studying religious pluralism is essential to spirituality.
99. Theologies of God with [name]—provokes thought and inquiry about the society we live in.
104. My work for women’s movements have significantly changed my view of religion and I strive to find a way to incorporate feminism with the Catholic tradition, theology.
107. After September 11, I think SMC handled supporting everyone’s views and opinions equally.
109. My Intro. to Christianity course was great as it gave me more background and history behind how it became so prominent, not why.
110. LEAP was awesome. It gave me a whole new perspective and more self confidence.
115. Going on extended service with MOVE enhanced my view of religion, because our program was Catholic affiliated. The hope that the people had at the soup kitchen was amazing to see, and it was nice to see how religious and spiritual the majority of the people were.
116. The Philosophy Department and English Department changed my life immeasurably. Life has a meaning the church could not give me.
123. How everyone was able to come together for 9/11.
124. [Name of priest] is the best. More encouraging and supportive priests. If all priests were as good of a priest as he is maybe I’d return to the church.
129. No, I haven’t though I do want to participate in LEAP and hope that would be a good experience.
130. Dealings with [names of two priests] have been great because they offer a personal touch, rather than the normal up on the altar view.
133. Yes, in [name]’s “Christianity and Modernity” class. Shows many different views on Christ and religion. Great class—very informative.
137. Religious studies courses helped see church with a critical eye, and to not just accept it. This made me see many of the hypocrisies of the church and therefore lose faith in some aspects of it.
147. LEAP—This helped me understand myself more in some areas. I think it is a great program to be offered for students!!

159. I live my life in accordance with my spiritual beliefs and the main goal is to be a good person to my full potential. St. Mike's has lots of opportunities to do things that encourage being a good person.
160. Yes, a personal revelation/conversion experience.
162. LEAP
163. I find myself questioning my religion more in college because of the alternative explanations for the biblical stories that I've been taught.
167. The masses here have really sparked my interest in coming to church. I really enjoy the experience and they have really made me think.
168. Yes. Death in the family made me question faith in God...ultimately, I dealt with it and still have the same beliefs.
169. Taking [name]'s Intro. to Christianity really opened my eyes to the wide variety of ways in which people experience and express spirituality—it was how all RS classes should be. Note: I was bothered by the wording of some of the questions on this survey. Specifically the statement about Catholics; duty to protect all life from beginning to end, which I felt skirted the important issues of abortion and capital punishment. Also, though the survey allowed respondents to identify themselves as non-Catholics, many questions seem to assume the respondent to be a member of the Catholic Church, something that is not true for many people on campus.
170. No—I have been solidly spiritual and non-religious since before college. I appreciate, however, that I feel comfortable being non-religious on such a religious campus. Keep it that way!
180. If anything, my pride and identity of being Jewish/Hebrew has been reinforced. For that reason alone, I could never be a Christian. I do have to say that SMC does a good job of fostering a tolerant campus.
185. No—I'm just living life and watching world events.
186. No, I haven't had any significant religious experiences. However, I do commend the Church for the unity and support of the masses offered to the community after Sept. 11. It offered some inner peace during a time of chaos.
195. Not as a result of anything here at St. Mike's.
196. I haven't had any religious experiences.
203. Being in liturgical dance.
209. Not having any religious background, I have become more interested in religion. It has opened my eyes. My dad is Catholic, my mom is nothing. They left it up for me to decide when I got older. They didn't want to commit me to a religion without my consent.
216. Yes, the impact of 9-11, being a person of Persian decent, it was interesting to see how I was treated.
219. LEAP had a profound effect on my spirituality.
223. The LEAP made me view where my life was going. It made me become more aware that God hasn't just brought me here to let me fail.
227. September 11, all the people who flooded the church and the campus brought people closer.
228. not religious experiences per se, but some really tough personal trials that have significantly increased my spirituality.
230. When first arriving at St. Mike's the mass for incoming freshmen was very moving for me. The whole atmosphere (music, etc.) motivated me to go to mass more. This experience was completely different than what I have grown up with. It definitely had a positive effect on me.
231. I am not anti-religious, and have had many spiritual ideas, however, I believe religion is quite personal and school and religion should not go so strongly hand in hand.
232. My experiences have caused me to question my faith.
234. [name]'s classes have drastically changed my view of Catholicism and Catholics in general. She is neither rigid nor close-minded about religious beliefs, a great teacher in the class and in life.
243. Since coming to college, I have lost my Catholic faith. I still believe in a higher power, but I am not quite sure what my beliefs are.
244. I am open now to the study of many different religions!
245. My two religions classes really helped me understand the historical nature of religion and opened my mind to different churches and beliefs.
247. I went on LEAP and although I'm not Catholic, it was an amazing experience from which I gained a great deal spiritually. Also, I have gone to a couple of masses when there have been gospel choirs and bands and this has made the experience of church very enjoyable.
248. I took a Buddhist course and learned about meditation. Afterwards I went home and had a spiritually enhanced experience while trying to meditate myself. To this day I will occasionally meditate for relaxation.
249. The response of the staff after 9/11 really changed me in the heart. Its amazing how everyone was brought together and held services which really help. Thanks for that.

251. No, I still feel the same I did before.
256. LEAP is an awesome religious experience which I feel would definitely cause anyone's faith to grow.
257. No, I pray before hockey games and with [name] and that is it.
260. LEAP made me believe in a higher power without pushing the Catholic faith upon me. It greatly strengthened my individual spirituality.
261. I like the fact that many students choose to go to church. My church is mostly elderly people.
262. Some priests have difficulty with women in the ministry and this is a challenge to my religious strength.
281. Again, I was not raised with a traditional religion and still would not classify myself as religious. However, the morals from classroom teaching which are taught in the Catholic tradition, have helped me feel like a better person and given me spiritual strength.
287. LEAP. This program definitely increased my spirituality.
288. LEAP—one of the amazing things I have done at St. Mike's, in life—I feel that I grew many ways, one being spiritually from this experience.
290. I took a class with [name] that changed my life. In the material we covered and the discussions we had in class. I found greater comfort and spirituality than I ever had found in the church.
291. I lost my 38 year old uncle to cancer in October. I have had to really look at my faith and understand that this was what God intended. I had looked for my faith to keep me going, keep me strong, and close to my uncle always. My faith has done all.
292. When I went abroad, I realized how foolishly people identify themselves. I saw that people do not obey the rules of the church and never go to mass, yet swear up and down to be Catholic. This is when I drew away from structured religion. It no longer fulfilled me because all I could see were a multitude of people dispassionately reciting the Creed, not even noticing what they were saying and watching their watches waiting for it to be over until the next Sunday. Religion should be community sharing their faith not machines waiting to leave so they can drink a beer.
293. I think working with the priest at mass and also retreats have increased my faith.
307. Since I did not attend a Catholic high school, it is helpful to be around more people here who have stronger religious beliefs.
310. My religious classes were phenomenal.
314. I am very interested in becoming more involved in Liturgical Choir.
325. Every day, interacting with nature, even breathing can be a "religious" experience. From birds singing in the a.m. to the senseless ravaging of our habitat, all influence my "spirituality" continually with varied intensity at all times.
329. Pedophilia... scary.
330. [Name] in the Philosophy Department has very much broadened my view on life and spirituality.
331. The meaning of life has been more important at St. Mike's than religion.
340. Not really. Religious courses have helped me understand it more.
344. 9-11, all/most of the campus joined together.
351. The New Age music at church.
353. Discovering Buddhism.
359. Since September 11, religious beliefs have been questioned. I lost a close man in my life and affected me greatly. Where was God then, on September 11?
361. I have always been a fairly religious person in my own way—through the values and morals I grew up with, however I believe that the Catholic Church needs to rise and evolve as well.
366. The Peace and Justice program has definitely influenced my view of both religion and spirituality in a positive way.
368. The only thing that has turned me away from the Catholic Church is the priests' behavior. I no longer go to church because I don't feel like listening to hypocrites preach to me what I should do when they are ruining the lives of children, then to have the church cover it up for years and pass the priest to another church where he does the same thing over again.
369. No, religion has always been a part of my life. It is not a separate thing that influences my actions or decisions. I have been raised to do good and help others. I learned this in church, at school and home.
370. I attended Spanish Mass once and took Intro. to Christianity. I found that to be very interesting, even though I do not practice religion, I do appreciate it.
376. Going to NZ and Thailand—it really opened my eyes to other religions—but more so enhanced my spirituality.
379. Although I have no religious affiliation I do find the religious studies courses useful. It helps me understand and appreciate other's religious choices.

384. [Name]'s class has given me hope in regards to the Catholic faith. He is the best teacher I have had at Saint Mike's.
394. No, the school hasn't affected my thoughts on spirituality—I've evolved through personal and experience and conversations.
399. I have never seen so many Catholics supporting the Gay & Lesbian movement which male to male ``relations are considered to be such a strong sin. The gay support here makes my religious movement much less and because of that I do not go to church here, but off campus instead.
409. I have heard so much about LEAP and I am going this weekend so I hope this will help me to clear up some issues I have.
414. I thoroughly enjoyed [Name]'s Intro. to Christianity class because it helped me explore my spirituality without imposing a specific set of religious beliefs on me.