

Pope's Visit Strengthens Faith of American Catholics

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Staff Writer

(May 1, 2008) A new poll conducted by the Knights of Columbus found that the Pope's visit to the United States had a powerful impact on public attitudes toward the papacy, the Church, and a willingness to live their faith more fully.

The poll was conducted by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion between April 22-24 among 1,015 adults. Marist College, which conducted a similar poll before the Papal visit, compared the two polls and found that public opinion of the pope and the Church increased dramatically as a result of his visit.

For instance, the proportion of Americans with a favorable view of the pope jumped from 58 percent before the visit to 71 percent afterward. Those who say they view the pope positively as a spiritual leader went from 53 to 62 percent. Fifty-one percent now describe the pope as a good or excellent world leader, up from 41 percent before the visit.

Those polled said the most meaningful moments of the pope's visit was the meeting with victims of sexual abuse, the visit to Ground Zero and the Papal Masses at Nationals Park and Yankee Stadium.

While 58 percent said they were satisfied with the pope's apology to victims of the scandal, 46 percent still feel the Church has not done enough to prevent further abuse.

The most important impact of the Pope's visit is found in the area of faith. More than a third (35%) say they are now more in touch with their own spiritual values as a result of the pope's visit.

Nearly half (49%) said they have a better understanding of the Catholic Church's positions on important issues, and a significant proportion of Americans are prepared to change their personal involvement as a result with about four in 10 saying they are likely to lead a moral life and make family a bigger part of their lives. One in three say they are more likely to participate in elections, community activities and their parishes as a result of the papal visit.

Supreme Knight Carl Anderson said that the poll results "show clearly that Pope Benedict has presented the Catholics of the United States with a tremendous opportunity. Americans are a religious people, and they responded very positively to the message of faith, hope and love that the Holy Father delivered throughout his visit. It is now up to all of us in the Catholic community to walk through the door he has opened for us, and work together to build a civilization of love."

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