



October 2023
PRESS RELEASE

The
Impact for **Catholics**
of **TRAUMA**
on
FAITH BELIEF & PRACTICE



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SACRED STORY INSTITUTE RELEASES NEW USA NATIONAL SURVEY ON THE IMPACT FOR CATHOLICS OF TRAUMA ON FAITH BELIEF AND PRACTICE—WILL HOLD WEBINAR WITH NOTED TRAUMA SPECIALIST DR. GABOR MATÈ

In a first of its kind study, [Sacred Story Institute](#) (SSI), has conducted a national survey on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) on Roman Catholics in the US and their faith belief and practice.

The findings of the survey shed light on the intricate interplay between childhood traumas, faith, and various demographic elements for Roman Catholics. From the 1016 respondents, the data highlights that a significant portion of individuals exhibited a complex relationship with their religious identities.

Delving into the specifics, it was found that nearly 29% of individuals who reported ACE had experienced some form of child abuse, underscoring the traumatic nature of their upbringing. Similarly, 26% had undergone verbal abuse during their childhood, and 24% had faced emotional neglect, indicating the pervasive impact of such adverse events on the emotional and spiritual well-being of individuals.

Notably, 18% of those who experienced ACE had left the Catholic faith for another religion. The data indicated a notably higher proportion of females among individuals who reported experiencing ACE, with 68% of those affected identifying as female.

Furthermore, the survey underscored the influence of racial dynamics on the experience of childhood traumas. While 52% of those who experienced ACE identified as non-Hispanic white, the data revealed an overrepresentation of Black individuals among those who reported experiencing ACE compared to their counterparts who did not, with a ratio of 6.4% to 2.2% respectively.

The survey also explored attachment profiles, uncovering nuanced patterns of interpersonal dynamics among individuals with a history of trauma. Notably, individuals with ACE were less likely to fall into the attachment profile characterized by trust and direct communication (29% compared to 47% in the non-ACE group). Instead, they demonstrated a higher inclination (32%) towards the attachment profile marked by dependency and anxiety in relationships, often linked to low self-esteem.

People who experience trauma had slightly more difficulty to form positive relationships with people, especially with their own gender. This finding also suggests further studies could help caregivers provide the support needed for women and men to develop healthy, joyful bonds that can promote stronger families.

In addition, the data indicates that Individuals with a history of trauma displayed a stronger agreement with the positive impact of Judeo-Christian codes of conduct (50% compared to

46% in the non-ACE group), underscoring the potential role of faith-based moral frameworks in navigating the complexities of trauma and its aftermath. Furthermore, the data highlighted a deeper, more emotionally charged relationship with God among individuals who had experienced trauma, accompanied by heightened concerns about damaging this relationship.

Go to our press kit page on sacredstory.net to download the full 117 page report. To help process the findings, SSI is hosting a national webinar with noted trauma specialist, Dr. Gabor Maté at 7 PM PDT on November 2, 2023.



ABOUT THE SURVEY

In preparation for over seven months, the survey had three major components. The first was crafting the questions. Most were variations on questions in the [Whole-Life Survey \(WLS\)](#) pioneered by Fr. Bill Watson, S.J. for his doctoral work at The Catholic University of America. The WLS is used by SSI for researching most of the pastoral programs developed by the Institute. The second component was teaming with Qualtrics who identified the US subjects for the survey. The third component was the extensive work in data cleansing and analysis performed by [DATABIT Solutions](#) of Calgary, Canada. DATABIT Solutions is the partner for SSI going forward in helping faith communities with the WLS who want to identify trends in their members for a holistic analysis that will inform many aspects of their pastoral planning.

ABOUT DR. GABOR MATÉ and the WEBINAR 11-2-23 at 7pm PDT

Dr. Maté and Fr. Watson have known each other for over a decade. Fr. Watson reached out to Dr. Maté while doing his analysis of the conversion of St. Ignatius Loyola. Maté's work in trauma and addiction was informative in helping Watson see new dimensions of St. Ignatius' conversion process. To pre-register for the free webinar with Dr. Maté and Fr. Watson November 2, 2023 at 7-8:30 PM PDT, go to [this link](#).

ABOUT SACRED STORY INSTITUTE

Founded in 2012, SSI is at the forefront of researching and developing dynamic, entirely new applications of classic Ignatian spirituality. Fr. William Watson's program development is informed by a life of study, spiritual direction, and Ignatian program development and research in neuroscience, medicine, psychology, and trauma studies. [SSI's board](#) supports and has strongly encouraged this "systems theory" approach of body, mind, and spirit in the development of SSI's pastoral programming.

