



# Religiosity and Spirituality Among Loyola Seniors

*Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research*

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

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This report examines the religious/spiritual characteristics, behavior, and development of seniors at Loyola.

The data are from the Boston College Questionnaire About the Undergraduate Experience (BCQ) research project, which was designed to gather information on faith development as it relates to the undergraduate experience at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. The BCQ project originated at Boston College, where the survey has been administered for the last several years. In 2008, Loyola was invited to join the project. Loyola's survey was administered by Boston College and the Loyola Office of Institutional Research, and sponsored by Loyola's Division of Mission and Ministry and the Office of the President.

All graduating seniors were invited to take the survey in spring of 2008. The response rate was 48%, with 648 seniors taking the survey. Respondents were representative of Loyola's graduating class in age, ethnicity, and school in which they were receiving their degree. Women responded at a slightly higher rate than did men.

## Key findings

### Characteristics

- Half of respondents reported themselves as Catholic, and 27% said that they had some other religious preference (see Table 1). Twenty three percent said they had no religious preference.
- Fifty nine percent of responding seniors said they were at least somewhat religious, while 80% said they were at least somewhat spiritual.
- Fifty five percent of seniors said they were both religious and spiritual; 16% said they were neither. One quarter said they were spiritual but not religious, while 4% said they were religious but not spiritual.
- Twenty two percent of seniors had been a member of at least one religious organization at Loyola.
- Nearly half of seniors said they attended religious services at least once a month.

### Religious/spiritual growth

- The activity most often reported by seniors as

important to their religious/spiritual growth was building strong friendships (see Table 2). Seventy one percent said it was important or very important, and fully 90% said it was at least somewhat important.

- Other activities important to students' religious/spiritual growth included conversations with peers about faith (60% important or very important) and prayer/meditation (59%).
- Fifty six percent reported exploring their vocation or calling as important or very important.
- Fifty six percent reported conversations with family about faith as important or very important to their religious/spiritual growth.
- More than half of respondents considered their participating in volunteer/community service programs as important or very important to their religious spiritual growth, while another 26% thought it was at least somewhat important.
- Fifty five percent said that reflecting on topics brought up in classes was important or very important, and a third thought it was at least somewhat important.
- Just over half of students said that attending religious services was important or very important to their religious/spiritual growth.
- Respondents reported living in a residence hall as least important to their religious/spiritual growth (24% important or very important).
- Other activities students considered relatively less important to their religious/spiritual development were going on a retreat (29% important or very important), conversations with professional on-campus staff about faith (33%), participating in community organizing on campus (35%), participating in religious organizations (36%) participating in immersion programs (38%), reflecting on co-curricular activities (39%), and participating in interfaith dialogue (40%).

### Discussions of faith

- Fifteen percent of respondents reported that they discussed faith at least once a month with a professor or instructor, and 10% said they did so with a member of the clergy (see Table 3).
- Nine percent said they regularly discussed faith with a member of campus Ministry staff, and 8% said they did so with a Jesuit.

- The professionals that students were least likely to discuss faith with were University counselors (.7%), health services staff (1.6%), and Office of Diversity staff (1.6%).
- Fifty two percent of the respondents said they had at least one professional with whom they regularly discussed faith.
- Of non-professionals, students were most likely to regularly discuss faith with a friend (59%) and a parent (51%). Many discussed faith regularly with a classmate (41%), a roommate (37%), and a sibling (32%).
- Students were least likely to discuss faith regularly with a fraternity brother/sorority sister (5%) and a teammate (4%).
- Eighty percent of respondents had at least one non-professional with whom they talked about faith regularly.
- Eighty two percent of respondents had at least one person (professional or non-professional) with whom they talked about faith regularly.

#### **Prayer location**

- Students were most likely to pray regularly (at least once a week) in their home, with 37% doing so.
- Students were also relatively likely to pray regularly on their way to class (23%).
- Eighteen percent of students regularly prayed in some off-campus chapel/prayer space, while 17% did so in some on-campus chapel/prayer space.
- Students were least likely to pray regularly at a volunteer site (5.4%) or in the dining hall (6.3%).

- Forty nine percent of seniors had at least one place where they regularly prayed.

### **Conclusions**

- More than three in four respondents reported having some religious preference.
- Religiosity and spirituality are not the same thing for many students. More students reported themselves as spiritual than as religious.
- Relationships with others are key to students' religious/spiritual growth. Building friendships and conversations about faith with peers are most important, while conversations about faith with family are also important.
- Prayer/mediation is also important to students' religious/spiritual development, and they are most likely to pray on their own at home and on their way to class.
- For many, reflecting on topics brought up in classes was important or very important to their religious development.
- A great majority of students reported having at least one person with whom they regularly discussed faith. For most of those students, this was a friend or parent, although many students also talked about faith regularly with a classmate, roommate, or sibling.
- Students are much less likely to talk regularly about faith with professionals than with non-professionals, but of professionals, they are most likely to do so with a professor.

Table 1	
Spirituality and Religious Characteristics and Behavior	
	Percent
Religious preference	
No Preference	22.7
Catholic preference	49.9
Other preference	27.4
Religious	
Not religious*	41.4
Somewhat or very religious	58.6
Spiritual	
Not spiritual*	20.2
Somewhat or very spiritual	79.8
Religious/spiritual	
Neither religious nor spiritual	16.4
Spiritual but not religious	25.0
Religious but not spiritual	3.8
Religious and spiritual	54.7
Member of at least one religious organization	21.9
Attend religious service at least once monthly	48.1

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\* Includes not applicable/don't know .

Table 2 Importance of Activities to Religious/Spiritual Growth*				
	Not important	Somewhat important	Important/very important	Number of respondents
	Percent	Percent	Percent	
Building strong friendships	9.6	19.5	70.9	492
Conversations about your faith with your peers	11.7	28.2	60.0	478
Praying/meditating	13.2	27.9	58.9	455
Exploring your vocation or calling	15.3	28.3	56.4	413
Conversations about your faith with your family	16.2	28.0	55.8	450
Participating in volunteer/community service programs	19.5	25.9	54.6	390
Reflecting on topics brought up in your classes	12.0	33.6	54.5	459
Attending a religious service	19.6	29.2	51.1	438
Participating in interfaith dialogues	24.6	35.2	40.3	293
Reflecting on co-curricular experiences	21.8	39.5	38.7	390
Participating in domestic/international immersion programs	34.4	27.4	38.2	241
Participating in religious organizations	30.2	33.3	36.4	291
Participating in community organizing on-campus	31.8	33.2	35.0	340
Conversations about your faith with professional staff on-campus	33.4	33.1	33.4	362
Going on a retreat	42.7	28.6	28.6	255
Living in a residence hall	51.4	24.6	24.1	403

Boston College Questionnaire About the College Experience

\* Respondents who did not participate in an activity are excluded from the percentages for that activity.

Table 3	
Discussion of Faith with University/Other Professionals and Non-professionals	
	Percent
Faith talk with professionals (at least once a month)	
Professor/Instructor	14.9
Clergy/Religious Leader	10.4
Campus Ministry staff	8.6
Jesuit	7.6
Community service program staff	3.3
Academic advisor	3.3
Residential Life staff	2.9
Office of Diversity staff	1.6
Health Services staff	1.6
University Counseling staff	0.7
Other	10.2
Faith talk with non-professionals (at least once a month)	
Friends	58.9
Parents/Guardians	51.3
Classmates	41.2
Roommates	37.0
Brothers and/or sisters	31.6
Co-workers	21.5
Volunteer/community service peers	13.7
Fraternity brother/Sorority sister	5.4
Teammates	4.0
Other	9.4
Talk to anyone about faith at least once a month	81.9
Talk to professional about faith at least once a month	51.9
Talk to nonprofessional about faith at least once a month	80.4

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Table 4 Location of Regular Prayer/Meditation	
	Percent
Residence hall/apartment	36.6
While you walk to classes	22.5
Off-campus chapel/ prayer space	17.7
On-campus chapel/ prayer space	16.6
Outdoors on-campus	15.6
Public transportation	14.6
Public parks (beaches, bike paths)	14.4
Private transportation	13.9
While you exercise	11.3
Workplace	10.7
Library	8.7
Dining hall	6.3
Volunteer site	5.4
Other	12.2
<b>Pray at least once a week somewhere</b>	<b>48.5</b>

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