

# Why Mexicans Are Making a Mass Exodus From Catholicism

Pope Francis is visiting Mexico, a country that has been a stronghold of Catholicism for centuries. But a growing number of Mexicans are leaving the Catholic faith, and the pope is hoping to use his visit to convince them to stay faithful to the church.

Sara Granados is among those who have left the faith. She was born into a devout Catholic family, and by 17 she had already fulfilled all the required religious rites. But soon she realized that wasn't getting her closer to God.

"After 17 years old, I still had emptiness in my heart," Sara explained. "I had no desire to live and for me, it was better to die than to live. A friend of my mother told me, 'I'm taking you to this place.' She never mentioned church, but she brought me to church. That day the pastor was preaching and he said a word that touched my heart."

Thousands of Mexicans like Sara are embracing evangelical Christianity.

In 1970, 96 percent of Mexicans claimed to be Catholic. According to a 2010 Mexican national census, that figure has dropped to less than 85 percent.

One reason for the decline? Evangelicals leaders are spiritually closer to their flock.

Surveys have found an average of one Catholic priest for every 6,000 Catholics in Mexico, compared to one evangelical pastor for every 200 followers.

"The work of the evangelical Christian church in evangelism has been successful in past few decades. Many have come to

hear a different message that brings peace, harmony, blessing, and salvation to human beings,” Pastor Benjamin Lomeli of Iglesia El Buen explained.

Other reasons Mexicans have left Catholicism include evangelical outreach and the tarnished image of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Church spokesman Father Jose de Jesus told CBN News that Catholic Church leaders “... must recognize that certain scandals have caused many to be disappointed by the church and to seek a different spirituality.”

With a record number of people here now embracing evangelical Christianity, Pope Francis is hoping his visit will re-energize his flock and keep Mexicans faithful to the Catholic Church.