

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Bridge Initiative Releases Report: “Danger & Dialogue: American Catholic Public Opinion and Portrayals of Islam”**

Washington, DC, 9/12/2016 - The Bridge Initiative, a Georgetown University research project on Islamophobia, released today a report that sheds light on American Catholics’ views of Islam, and the way Islam is discussed in Catholic publications.

This report, “Danger & Dialogue: American Catholic Public Opinion and Portrayals of Islam,” finds that nearly half of Catholics can’t name any similarities between Catholicism and Islam, or say explicitly that there are no commonalities.

DOWNLOAD the full report, or read a summary of the main findings, on our website, [bridge.georgetown.edu](http://bridge.georgetown.edu).

The report, which includes survey data on Catholics views of Muslims and interreligious dialogue, reveals that three in ten Catholics admit to having unfavorable views of Muslims, while only 14% say they have a favorable impression. The poll also shows that respondents who consume content from Catholic media have more unfavorable views of Muslims than those who don’t.

The report, authored by Jordan Denari Duffner, also analyzed nearly 800 articles about Islam in Catholic media outlets. It found that half of the time the word “Islamic” was used in nine prominent Catholic outlets, it was in reference to the Islamic State terrorist group. The headlines of Catholic articles on Islam had a negative sentiment overall, but the outlet that mentioned Pope Francis most in its headlines on Islam had positive sentiment.

The report also explores the 100-plus books, audio programs, and DVDs sold by Catholic publishers about Islam. Interfaith dialogue is a prominent topic in these for-sale materials on Islam, but differences between Christians and Muslims are often stressed in introductory materials or those that attempt to compare Christianity and Islam. The most prolific authors on Islam for Catholics take varied approaches, with some focusing on dialogue and others on sharing the Christian faith with Muslims.

A number of individuals connected to anti-Muslim organizations have impacted American Catholic discussions about Islam. In some cases, Catholic publishers, media outlets, Catholic bookstores, and prominent figures have promoted their views. Books and articles by Robert Spencer, who leads Jihad Watch and the American Freedom Defense Initiative (groups identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as anti-Muslim hate groups), have been distributed by some Catholic outlets and institutions.

Duffner says she hopes the report’s findings can inform the work of diverse Catholics, both lay people and clergy. “We hope the report gives Catholic leaders and educators insights into how ordinary Catholics view Islam and interfaith dialogue,” she says. “The report should give Catholic outlets, bookstores, and publishing companies a broad picture of how their content is representing Islam and potentially shaping Catholics’ views.”

---

---

The Bridge Initiative is a research project dedicated to educating the public about Islamophobia. Based in Georgetown University’s Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, the Bridge Initiative connects the academic study of Islamophobia with the public square.

Contact: Research Fellow Jordan Denari Duffner, [bridge@georgetown.edu](mailto:bridge@georgetown.edu), 202-687-0290.