



# The Spirit's Tether: Family, Work, and Religion among American Catholics

*Mary Ellen Konieczny*

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Cultural conflicts about the family - including those surrounding women's social roles, abortion, same-sex marriage, and contraception - have intensified over the last few decades among Catholics, as well as among Americans generally. In fact, they are the source of much of the political polarization we see. But how do individuals in local settings and cultures - especially religious ones - experience and participate in these conflicts? Why are they so resonant?

By exploring how religion and family life are intertwined in local parish settings, Mary Ellen Konieczny seeks to explain how and why Catholics are divided about the family. *The Spirit's Tether* presents a detailed comparative ethnographic analysis of the families and local religious cultures in two Catholic parishes, one conservative and one progressive. Through an examination of the activities of parish life and the faith stories of parishioners, this book reveals how parishes support and shape the ways in which Catholics work out the routines of marriage, childrearing, and work-family balance, as well as how they connect these everyday challenges to public politics. Local parishes, Konieczny argues, promote polarization through practices that unintentionally fragment the Catholic tradition.

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