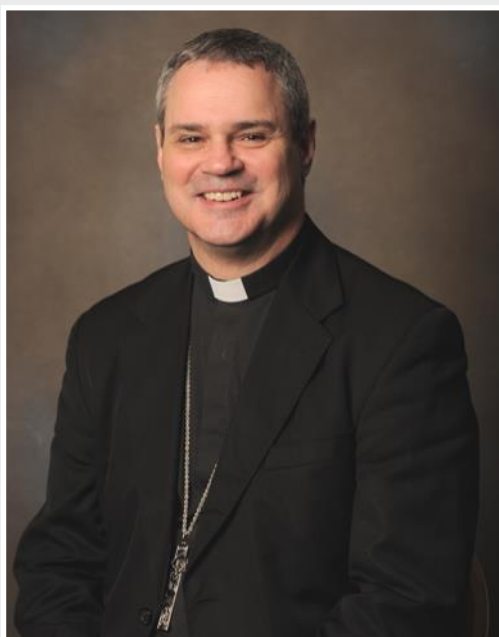


Pastoral Research Online

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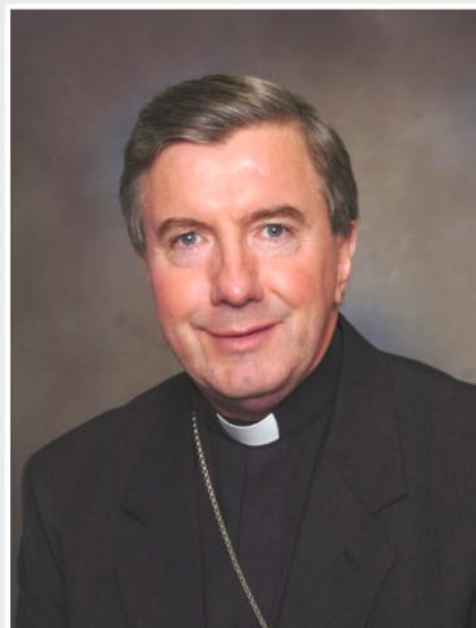
Welcome to Archbishop Comensoli and Farewell Archbishop Prowse



*Archbishop Peter Comensoli,
Archbishop of Melbourne*

After a brief time as the bishop's delegate to the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research (ACCPR), Archbishop Christopher Prowse has now moved onto a new role. We thank him for his support and guidance over the last six months.

But with every goodbye, comes a new hello. And we are delighted to welcome Archbishop Peter Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne, as the new bishop's delegate to the ACCPR. We look forward to working with him in the months ahead.



*Archbishop Christopher Prowse,
Archbishop of Canberra & Goulburn*

Dear Readers,

As winter wraps its chill around us, we hope you are well and warm wherever you are. Much has happened in the last three months, especially in the journey to Plenary Council 2020. The high response from Phase 1 was indeed a bit of a surprise. The NCPR staff have spent long hours analysing the data and we are currently working on the final report that presents the findings of the submissions gathered in the Listening and Dialogues phase. Meanwhile, our work on other projects continues. Marilyn Chee has been a big help in assisting us on the diocesan social profiles and we expect to publish these soon. Stephen Reid and I have been involved in presenting a number of workshops on findings from the Census and other research projects. We are also excited to be involved in a new study on leadership and governance. For more details, look inside...

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **Vatican Statistics 2017**
- **AuSSA 2019 Questionnaire**
- **Journey to Plenary Council 2018-2020: Data Camp**
- **Release of Summary of Submissions Report**
- **Workshops & Presentations**
- **U.S. Bishops' Perceptions of Ordaining Women Deacons**

Vatican Statistics 2017: Sacraments in Australia

Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations and Marriages

Each year the Vatican releases statistical data on the life and activity of the Catholic Church around the world. The data for 2017 was released recently. The information provided covers a range of topics including the numbers of dioceses and parishes within a geographical area, the numbers of clergy, and numbers of those who have left ministry.

Of particular interest are the statistics related to sacraments: baptisms, marriages and confirmations. These are indicators of the vitality of the Church in a particular region. This article reviews the statistics of sacramental data for Australia. A comparison with previous years is also provided which may be useful in understanding current trends and determining what pastoral actions might be needed.



Baptisms

As can be seen in Table 1, in 2017 there were 50,480 baptisms of children under the age of seven, and 4,735 baptisms of people above the age of seven. The latter figure is useful because it gives an indicator of people who had made a personal choice to be baptised, rather than a choice made by the parents on behalf of the child. The table also reveals that the overall number of baptisms in both categories have declined from the previous year.

Table 1: Baptisms in Australia in 2016 and 2017

	Australia 2016	Australia 2017	Difference
Up to 7 years	53,231	50,480	-2,751
Over 7 years	4,876	4,735	-141
Total Baptisms	58,107	55,215	-2,892

Marriages

In 2017, there were 4,458 marriages between Catholics, and only slightly fewer marriages (3,437) between couples where one person was Catholic and a non-Catholic (See Table 2). The decline in marriages from the previous year may be an indication of a decline in the overall

Table 2: Marriages in Australia in 2016 and 2017

	Australia 2016	Australia 2017	Difference
Between Catholics	4,534	4,458	-76
Between a Catholic and a non-Catholic	3,632	3,437	-195
Total Marriages	8,166	7,895	-271

number of marriages, or of a decline in the number of marriages conducted in the Catholic Church with people favouring a civil celebration instead, or a combination of the two.

Confirmations and First Communions

Table 3 reveals that in 2017 there were 48,481 Confirmations in Australia and 48,625 people made their First Communion. There was a decline in Confirmations compared to the previous year, which was consistent with the other indicators above. However, the number of people making their First Communion had increased by three per cent from the previous year.

While the Vatican statistics reveal much about the number of people receiving sacraments in Australia, they do not tell us about the number of adults (aged 18 and over) who specifically come through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) process. There are many adults who are baptised at Easter in parishes across Australia. These

figures are collected inconsistently across dioceses. There are also people who are baptised as infants and complete their initiation much later by receiving the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation as adults. Data on both these groups are not currently available at a national level. More research and better data collection methods will need to be employed if we want to have a complete picture of all those who are received into the Catholic Church in Australia every year.

Table 3: Confirmations and First Communions in Australia in 2016 and 2017

	Australia 2016	Australia 2017	Difference
Confirmations	51,080	48,481	-2,599
First Communions	47,218	48,625	1,407

2019 AuSSA Survey



2019 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes

The 2019 AuSSA Survey is currently being conducted on the topic of “Social Inequality”. Our office submitted three questions on behalf of Catholic Social Services Australia in this survey.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Can't choose
The level of income support payments, such as Newstart, should be set by a body independent of Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governments should report budget success by measuring wellbeing and inclusion, not just productivity measures like GDP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Between one year and the next, many people move in and out of poverty. Thinking about the next 12 months, how vulnerable are you and your family to experiencing poverty? Please place yourself on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means not vulnerable at all and 10 means extremely vulnerable.

The survey is carried out in four waves over the course of the year. We expect results from Wave One from the 2019 survey to be available in early 2020. The findings of the survey will be communicated to CSSA and will be released by them through online and print publications.

For more information on the survey, visit: <https://www.acspri.org.au/aussa>

Next issue: Preliminary findings from the 2018 AuSSA Survey on Religion

will be released

New Research Project

The Implementation Advisory Group Governance Survey

The Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) was established by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) and the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons to advise Catholic Church leaders in Australia on the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2013-2017).

The IAG Governance Review Project Team (GRPT) has commissioned our office to undertake a survey to understand the profile of individual and collective roles within dioceses and parishes. The survey will examine the profile of key diocesan personnel as well as that of finance councils, pastoral councils and other advisory bodies. It will attempt to capture data relevant to the scope, purpose and membership of diocesan and parish councils as well as the gender and religious status of executives within each diocese.

The survey is expected to be launched in August 2019 with analysis of the results to take place later in the year.

Journey to Plenary Council 2018-2020 Update

Data Camp

In late May 2019, the NCPR team met with the Plenary Council Facilitation Team and the Plenary Council Executive Committee to present the initial findings of the *Listening and Dialogue* stage of the Journey to Plenary Council. The data from the submissions made during this stage was presented to the group in workshop form over an intensive three-day “data camp”.



The responses to the question “*What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?*” were varied and covered a wide array of topics. From the data over 120 themes emerged that were organised under 15 topics. These included issues relating to the sacraments and liturgy, leadership, social justice, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, youth involvement, Catholic schools, parish life, modernising the Church and evangelisation., amongst others.

Dr Trudy Dantis, Mr Stephen Reid and Mr Paul Bowell presented the findings of the data to the group over the first day and a half of the camp. The participants took the opportunity to ask questions and clarify the information. The data was reflected upon as a whole group and then in a series of small group discussions. Attendees were then invited to spend time in prayer, focusing on the discernment of a number of themes.

Over the remaining couple of days, much discussion on the voices of the participants of the *Listening and Dialogue* stage ensued. Ideas were written down, shared and rearranged. By the end of the time together, through prayer and discernment, a consensus was reached.





Image thanks to Agaspi Production

What resulted was the forming of the six National Themes for Discernment. These six National Themes are presented in the question—*How is God calling us to be a Christ-Centred Church in Australia that is:*

- *Missionary and evangelising*
- *Inclusive, participatory and synodal*
- *Prayerful and Eucharistic*
- *Humble, healing and merciful*
- *A joyful, hope-filled and servant community*
- *Open to conversion, renewal and reform*

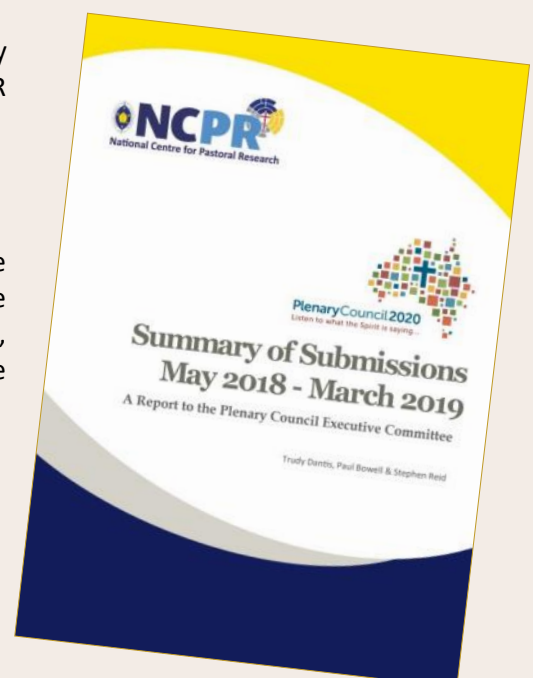
The six National Themes for Discernment are informed by the data and call the Catholic Church towards the future. The second stage of “Journey to Plenary Council 2018-2020” is the National Discernment Process which will involve establishing working groups for each National Theme. People across Australia will also be called to participate locally in their own communal Listening and Discernment sessions. The fruits of what is discerned during this time will shape the agenda of the first session of Plenary Council held in Adelaide from 4 - 11 October 2020. For more information see: <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/>

Plenary Council Summary of Submissions Report

The *Summary of Submissions May 2018—March 2019* of the Plenary Council Listening and Dialogue phase is now available on the NCPR website:

www.ncpr.catholic.org.au

This report presents the demographic and quantitative analysis of the submissions received in the Listening and Dialogue phase of the Plenary Council process. The report of the more comprehensive, qualitative analysis of the data from the submissions is due to be released on 28 July 2019.

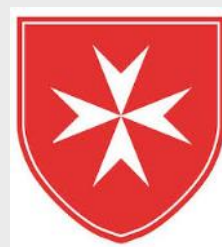


Workshops and Presentations

Knights of Malta

On 31 May, Dr Trudy Dantis presented at the National Biennial Assembly of the Australian Association of the Order of Malta in Sydney.

The topic of Trudy's presentation was "The Family in Australia Today – definitions/changing demographics". The content of the presentation was largely from the recently released 2016 *Social Profile of the Catholic Church in Australia*. It covered topics such as marital status, cohabitation trends, registered and de-facto marriages, religious and civil weddings, couples of mixed religion and family income. The presentation also included new research findings on Catholic same-sex couples and forms of blended families in Australia.



Bathurst Diocese Presentation

On Thursday 13 June 2019, Mr Stephen Reid presented to the priests, deacons and Catholic school principals of the Bathurst diocese at their annual gathering in Orange. He covered two main topics:

1. A high level overview, using data from NCPR projects, of the current situation of the Church in Australia and in the diocese.
2. A summary of the Plenary Council National Themes for Discernment arising out of the Listening and Dialogue stage.

His presentation was well received, with the attendees asking a number of questions about the data.

Jesuit Pastoral Ministries

On 11 June, Dr Trudy Dantis presented at the 2019 Jesuit Pastoral Ministries Conference in Melbourne. The attendees at the conference were parish teams from the seven Jesuit parishes in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.



Trudy's presentation was based on the Eight Measures of Parish Vitality interspersed with data from the themes of Plenary Council. A parish-based workshop followed where participants were invited to reflect on the research and their own knowledge of their experience of parish life. A few rounds of conversation followed with reflective sharing and open discussion to reveal new ideas for ministry that could be developed as pastoral strategies in each parish.



ISSR Conference

In July this year, Trudy and Stephen will travel to Barcelona to deliver two papers at the International Society for the Sociology of Religion conference. Trudy's paper focuses on the findings from Phase 1 of the Journey to Plenary Council in Australia. Stephen's paper is related to his doctoral studies and investigates the honorary nature and funding of sports chaplains in Australia.

Overseas Research News

U.S. Bishops' Perceptions of Ordaining Women Deacons

In anticipation of a report to Pope Francis on a review of the historical viability of women deacons in the Catholic Church, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) undertook a study of U.S. bishops and deacon directors to identify their attitudes toward the possibility of the future ordination of women to the diaconate. The findings were released in a working paper titled *"The Perceptions of U.S. Bishops and Deacon Directors Regarding the Work of the Papal Commission of Study on the Diaconate of Women"* in January 2019.



The researchers found that nearly three-quarters of the respondents did not believe that the Holy See would authorise the ordination of women as deacons. Approximately two-thirds did not believe the Holy See should authorise women's ordination, and around 60 per cent of the bishops and half of the deacon directors did not believe that the ordination of women as deacons was theoretically possible. However, the majority of bishops agreed that if the Holy See did authorise women's ordination as deacons, they would implement it in their diocese.

The majority of those surveyed indicated that if there were women deacons, there would be a diverse range of ministries in which they could serve. A number of respondents commented that women were already serving in those roles as laypersons, notably in ministries of Charity and Word. However, they also identified challenges to such an undertaking, including opposition by others within the Church to women deacons, and the impact on the Church's teaching on priesthood.

The advantages of having women as deacons was seen as threefold: improving the quality and number of ministries, women being able to share in the sacramental grace of the diaconate and giving a greater recognition of women's experience and voice in the Church.

The paper can be found on the CARA website: <https://cara.georgetown.edu/WorkingPaper10.pdf>

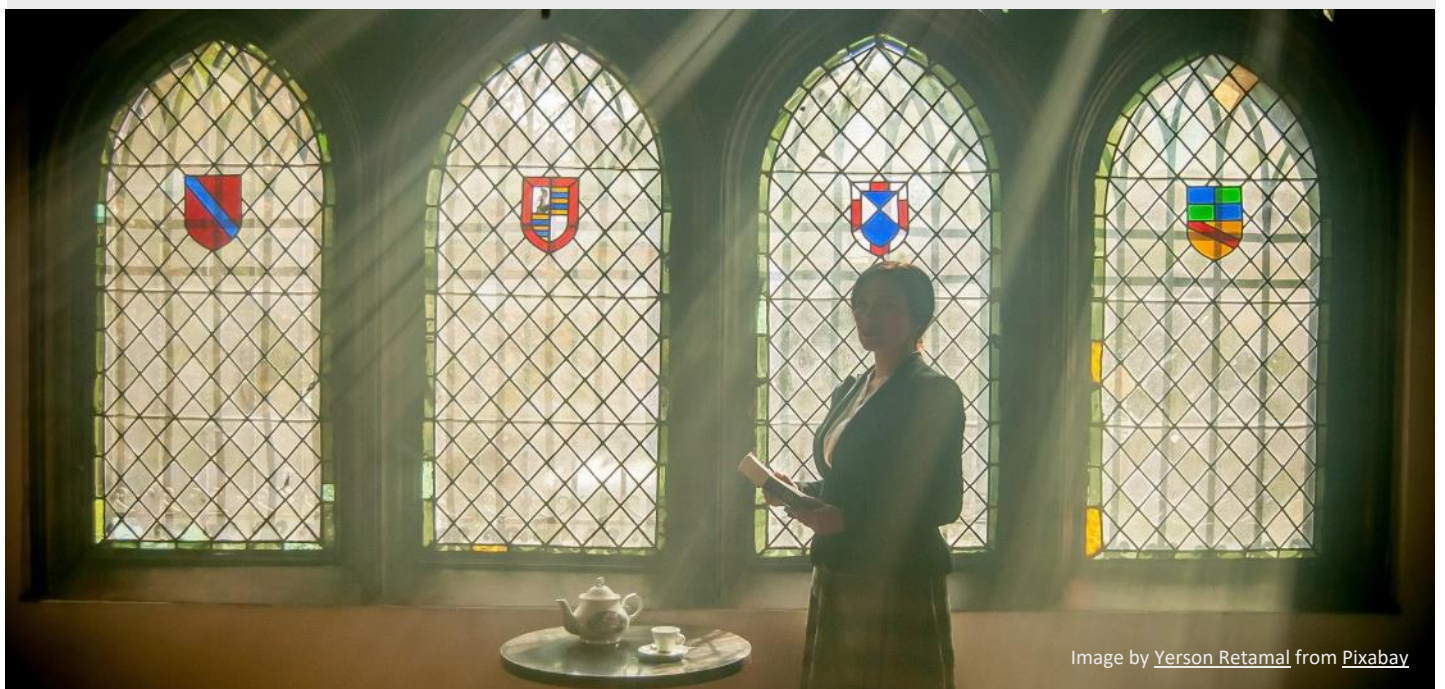


Image by [Yerson Retamal](#) from [Pixabay](#)



Snapshot Reports released on the National Themes for Discernment



Snapshot reports giving a brief look at some of the responses, questions and stories provided to the Plenary Council 2020 are being progressively released each week. Each report focuses on one of the National Themes for Discernment that were released at Pentecost on 9 June 2019. So far, reports have been released on the themes of *Missionary and evangelising* and *Inclusive, participatory and synodal*. The remaining four reports will be released on the following dates in the lead up to the release of the final report by the NCPR on the Plenary Council 2020 Listening and Dialogue Phase I:

Prayerful and Eucharistic	30 June 2019
Humble, healing and merciful	7 July 2019
A joyful, hope-filled and servant community	14 July 2019
Open to conversion, renewal and reform	21 July 2019

For more information, or to download the reports, go to the Plenary Council website:

www.plenarycouncil.org.au

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