

Pastoral Research Online

Issue 55

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Above: Richard Rymarz, Ruth Webber, Bob Dixon, Stephen Reid and Marilyn Chee celebrating NCPR's 25th Anniversary

Dear Readers,

We give thanks for another year of work as we come to the end of 2021. It has been an extremely busy year for us as we coordinated a number of new research projects and took on other roles and responsibilities. This year, being our jubilee year, we were glad to mark the occasion with a public lecture delivered by Bishop Michael McKenna. Although COVID-19 put a damper on other special events planned, we will continue celebrations into 2022!

This newsletter brings you highlights of the jubilee lecture and an update on our new and ongoing projects. We also present some preliminary findings from the 2021 National Count of Attendance as we report on the languages that Mass is celebrated in around Australia. Also included is information on the Synod of Bishops and upcoming activities in 2022.

Our Melbourne staff are now well settled in their new office at St Pascal's Estate in Box Hill. You are most welcome to visit them for a coffee and a chat.

Finally, thank you to all those who support our team and our work. We wish you and your families a blessed Christmas and a peaceful start to the new year!

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2021 National Count of Attendance

Languages of the Mass



According to the 2021 National Count of Attendance, Mass was celebrated in at least 48 different languages, including English. While some of the Mass languages were relatively common, such as Vietnamese and Arabic, other languages, including Zomi and Swahili, had only one monthly Mass held during the four weekends in May, the period when the Count was conducted.

Some of the language names provided by parishes or other Mass centres were regional area language names, sometimes called dialects. For example, 'Indian' can be classified within any of the two Southern Asian languages of Dravidian (which includes at least 5 languages) or Indo-Aryan (which includes at least 15 languages). Malayalam, the language of many Syro-Malabar Catholic Masses, was the most common of the Indian languages spoken at Mass.

A number of parishes held Mass in Aboriginal languages. Two of these were Arrernte, spoken by those around Alice Springs, and Murrinh Patha, spoken by those from Wadeye and the western coast of the Northern Territory.

Of the approximately 6,000 languages spoken worldwide, the Australian Bureau of Statistics lists 435 languages, of which 217 are Australian Indigenous languages.

Detailed analysis of the language of Mass from the Count of Attendance is still to be done, which will include the average number of people attending the various Masses, a breakdown of languages by diocese, and a comparison with previous years.

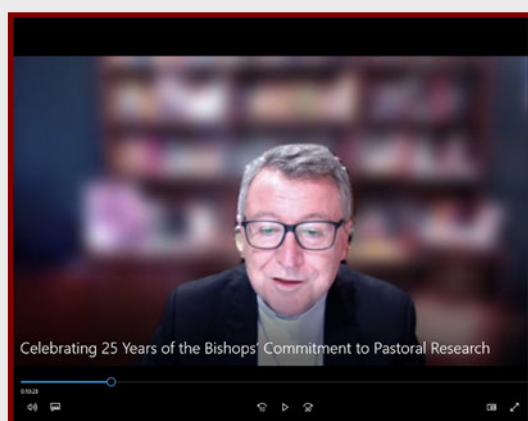


2021 Languages of Mass (created in wordclouds.com)

25 years of Pastoral Research

25th Anniversary Lecture

On 17 November 2021, Bishop Michael McKenna offered a lecture celebrating 25 years of Pastoral Research titled '*How do we know what we don't know*'. We give our thanks to the Australian Catholic University, and particularly Professor Dermot Nestor and Dr Gabrielle McMullen, who hosted the event. We also thank Mr Daniel Ang and Ms Danielle Cronin who responded to the lecture and provided their perspectives on the value of pastoral research to the diocesan and educational communities.



Bishop McKenna shared about the history of the office and noted the unique nature of its work stating that “no other national episcopal conference has its own pastoral research agency”. Despite any contrary views of the value of an internal agency, Bishop McKenna believed that the NCPR “still has benefit that’s yet to be fully realised”.

A copy of the lecture will be available on the NCPR website shortly.

25 years of pastoral research

Below is a short timeline of some of the milestones and major projects the NCPR and its previous iterations, the Pastoral Research Office and Pastoral Projects Office, have been involved with over the last 25 years.

1991-ongoing	National Catholic Census Project (every 5 years)
1996	Pastoral Projects Office begins to oversee the National Catholic Census Project and the participation of the Catholic Church in the National Church Life Survey (NCLS).
1996-99	Collaborated in the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia project, report titled <i>Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus</i> .
2000	Became one of three sponsors of the NCLS project
2001-2016	National Church Life Survey (every 5 years until 2016)
2001-ongoing	National Count of Attendance (every 5 years)
2004-2007	Catholics Who Have Ceased Attending Mass
2005-ongoing	Annual compilation of statistics for the Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia
2009	<i>See, I am Doing a New Thing!</i> A Survey of Catholic Religious Institutes
2009-2015	Building Stronger Parishes
2010	Renamed as the Pastoral Research Office
2015-2017	Our Work Matters: Catholic Church Employers and Employees in Australia
2016	Foundation Director, Dr Bob Dixon, retires.
2016-2017	Australian Catholic Bishops' Youth Survey
2018	Renamed as the National Centre for Pastoral Research, Dr Trudy Dantis appointed as Director.
2018-2022	Plenary Council project

Synod of Bishops 2021 to 2023

*A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel,
"journeys together".*

*How is this "journeying together" happening today
in your local Church?*

*What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to
grow in our "journeying together"?*



The Synod of Bishops launched in October 2021 with Pope Francis presiding at the official opening in the Vatican. This event marked the start of the two-year global consultation process which will culminate in the bishops gathering in Rome in October 2023.

In Australia, a working group has been established by the Bishops Conference to assist with the implementation of the Synod of Bishops process. In line with directives from the Synod, most dioceses have appointed a Diocesan Contact Person and a team to coordinate the process. Weekly emails are sent to diocesan teams by the NCPR advising them of progress and keeping them informed about the latest news and resources.

To assist participation from groups and individuals, the NCPR and the working group have developed a set of resources, which include:

- A captivating and easy-to-understand video explaining the Synod process (produced by the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation);
- A suite of Listening and Discernment Guides which are based on the three dimensions of the Synod - Communion, Participation & Mission;
- An Individual Reflection Guide. This guide is based on *Lectio Divina* and is intended for use by individuals who wish to participate in the consultation process;
- Questions for Reflection: This document elaborates the three dimensions of the Synod, explains the ten themes and lists the questions within each theme. This was originally created in English, and has now been translated into various languages including Arabic, Croatian, Filipino, Italian, Malayalam, Polish and Spanish.

The Australian Synod of Bishops process will occur in conjunction with the ongoing Plenary Council. A graphical timeline has been created to enable dioceses to synchronise the respective schedules of events and activities within each process. The timeline, resources and several other documents can be found at the Australian website for the Synod of Bishops.

An online portal is available on the website until 27 February 2022 to collect submissions prepared by individuals (aged 16+) and groups across Australia. During this period, local churches are encouraged to hold consultations of their own and submit the fruits of these consultations to the NCPR through the portal.



Your voice is important! You are invited to reflect on the Synod themes and questions and send your submissions to the Synod through the online portal.

Please visit <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch> for more information including downloadable copies of the resources and access to the online portal. For more information, email us at ncpr@catholic.org.au.

Journey to Plenary Council 2018-2022 Update

Reflections on the first Plenary Council Assembly

By Paul Bowell

After having been NCPR's dedicated research assistant working on the Plenary Council since 2018, I was lucky to attend the First Assembly of the Plenary Council, which was held in early October this year. My role at the Assembly was with the Plenary Council Secretariat, which was responsible for taking the minutes of each session. It was a fast-paced dynamic week as the minutes for each day needed to be completed within hours, then amended as required, before the start of the next day's session.

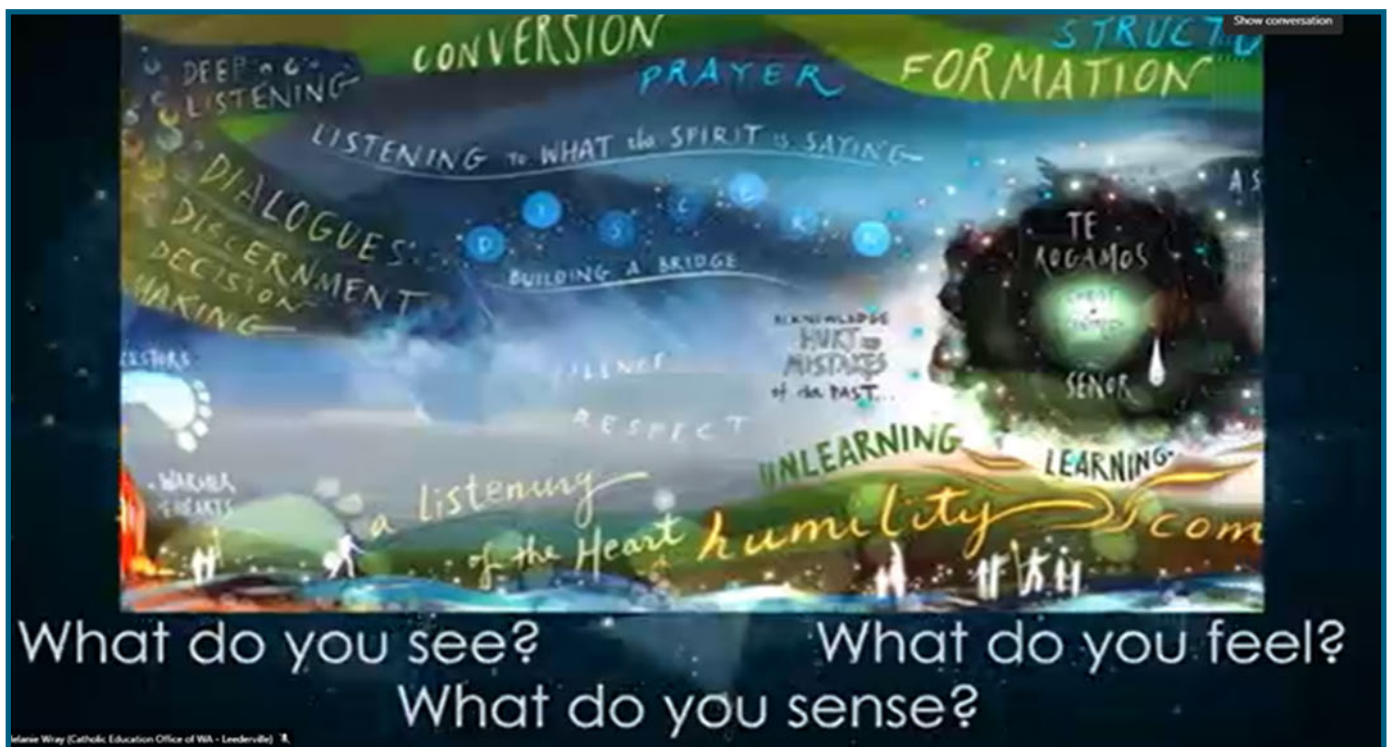
Reflecting on my experiences of that week, I remember feeling a sense of excitement as I watched the Opening Mass with Archbishop Tim Costelloe officially opening the Assembly with his homily:

"As we solemnly inaugurate the First Assembly of the Plenary Council today, I want to be so bold as to say, therefore, that perhaps the most important thing God is asking of us at this time is to return the Church to Christ and return Christ to the Church."

The first full day of the Assembly was process based, fulfilling the required statutory norms and regulations of a Plenary Council. However, quickly, the rhythm of the Assembly took shape as each day members, who were divided into ten small groups, presented the fruits of their discernment from the day before. The sessions were then followed with the presentation of written interventions and spontaneous responses to these.

What struck me here were two things: the thoughtfulness, openness and bravery of the members to listen to the Holy Spirit and share that with the Assembly, and also, the respect and willingness all had to listen to what was said, as throughout the Plenary Council process a wide and varying range of issues were highlighted at the Assembly.

As the Assembly drew to its conclusion on Saturday afternoon, there was a lovely moment where all members reflected on their journey throughout the week and contemplated the work still to come. This quiet prayerful moment was framed by an artwork (displayed below) produced for the Assembly, which encapsulated the many feelings expressed and felt throughout the week. Reflecting on my time at the first Assembly, I feel grateful and proud that I was able to share in this historical moment in the life of the Catholic Church within Australia.



Research Projects in 2021

The Year in Review

The NCPR has been very busy over the last year and undertaken a wide variety of projects. Here is just a snapshot of what the office has achieved in 2021.

- **National Catholic Census Project:**
 - Published the 2016 Disability Report
 - Prepared dioceses and bishops for the 2021 Australian Census
- **National Count of Attendance:**
 - Published the *2016 Australian Catholic Mass Attendance Report*
 - Built the online submission portal for 2021 and prepared forms and instructions
 - Prepared training videos and organised a webinar for diocesan contacts
 - Data gathering, analysis and reporting
- **Australian Catholic Mapping Online (ACMO):**
 - Developed and tested the new ACMO portal
 - Imported parish and diocesan boundaries and 2016 Census data
- **Plenary Council 2020:**
 - Listening and Discernment - Phase II data preparation
 - Secretariat duties at Plenary Council First Assembly for two NCPR staff
- **National Catholic Education Commission project:**
 - Obtained Ethics Approval for the project
 - Conducted a Literature Review and Documentary Analysis
 - Presentations for key State Education stakeholders
 - Case Study research in progress in 10 schools
- **2021-2022 Catholic Directory statistics:**
 - Collected data for the *Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*
- **2020 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA):**
 - Reported on questions commissioned by Caritas Australia
- **ACBC Response to Recommendations of the Governance Review:**
 - Commissioned a Historical review of Diocesan Parish Councils (DPCs)
 - Conducted a website review of Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs)
 - Researched national and international models of DPCs and PPCs
 - Compiled previously-gathered research findings on DPCs and PPCs
- **Online surveys commissioned by the ACBC:**
 - ACBC IT Survey
 - Bishops Professional Development Survey
 - ACBC Bishops and Staff Decennial Half Way Review Survey
 - ACBC Staff Return to Work Survey
- **Disability Projects Office – 10 Year Review**
 - Online Survey and report to the Executive Secretary, Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service
- **XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops**
 - Provided executive support to the national working committee
 - National coordination of the diocesan contact team
 - Prepared hard copy and online resources
 - Conducted workshops and consultations (national and international)
 - Built the online portal to gather submissions
 - Prepared national and international reports

Ongoing Research in 2022

Pedagogy Development: Building on Positive Learnings from COVID-19 (2021 - 2022)

In association with the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), the NCPR will continue research into the lessons learned on remote learning in Catholic schools around Australia. This will provide information about the positive outcomes and new developments in pedagogy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Governance Review Project

The report from the Governance Review Project Team titled *The Light from the Southern Cross* outlined 86 recommendations for improving governance at many levels within the Catholic Church in Australia. The NCPR is involved with providing research into different models of diocesan and parish pastoral councils to inform improvements in these areas.

Synod of Bishops

As the Catholic Church worldwide moves towards the Synod of Bishops scheduled to take place in 2023, the NCPR is involved with helping coordinate efforts to consult with local churches. A number of resources have been developed and the NCPR will be involved in the collection and reporting of responses.

Do you have research needs for your organisation in 2022?

<https://www.ncpr.catholic.org.au>

In addition to coordinating the Census and Mass Attendance projects on behalf of the ACBC, the NCPR is able to provide customised reports, undertake further research and analyse data, depending on their needs of your parish, diocese or organisation. To find out more, please contact Dr Trudy Dantis on (02) 6201 9812 or at ncpr@catholic.org.au.

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Christmas Greetings From the National Centre for Pastoral Research

*"She will bear a son,
and you are to name
him Jesus, for he
will save his people
from their sins."
Matt 1:21*



Photo by Victor Dementiev on Unsplash

From the staff at the NCPR: Trudy, Stephen, Paul, Leith, Marilyn and Lavina.

CHRISTMAS SHUTDOWN



The NCPR office will have only limited staff from Monday 20 December 2021 until Friday 7 January 2022, and the office will be closed from 24 December 2021 until 3 January 2022 (inclusive). During this entire time we will be unable to process any data requests.

We thank you for your cooperation.