

Pastoral Research Online

Issue 56

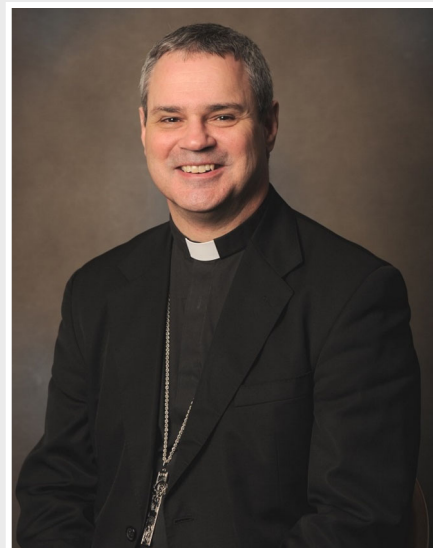
March 2022



*Above: Bishop Michael McCarthy,
Bishop of Rockhampton*

Welcome Bishop Michael McCarthy

At the end of 2021, a new bishops' representative was appointed to the Australian Catholic Council of Pastoral Research (ACPR). We would like to welcome Bishop Michael McCarthy, Bishop of Rockhampton, to the role and wish him all the best. We also pass on our thanks to Archbishop Peter Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne, who has held the post since May 2019.



*Above: Archbishop Peter Comensoli,
Archbishop of Melbourne*

Dear Readers,

As the diocesan consultation stage of the Synod of Bishops draws to a close at the end of April, the NCPR staff have been busy analysing the data and preparing reports from the submissions that were made through the online portal. You can learn more about this process via an update on the project in this edition.

This newsletter also features some important findings from our ongoing projects. Earlier this year, we completed preliminary reports on the 2021 National Count of Attendance and in this edition, we report on figures from the televised service 'Mass for You at Home'. We will provide a more detailed analysis on the Mass Count project later this year, once figures from the 2021 Census become available. Also included within, is a trend report on Mass attenders' Belief in the Real Presence and an update on recent work done around the history of Diocesan Pastoral Councils.

In other news, we recently farewelled two staff members, Paul Bowell and Lavina Thomas, who have moved on to new opportunities. We thank them for their friendship and the valuable service they provided the Conference over these past years and wish them the very best for the future. We hope you enjoy reading this issue. Please contact our office for any further information you may need.

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Recording Mass attendance via digital media

Findings from the 2021 National Count of Attendance

The emergence of COVID-19 meant that Mass attendance across Australia in 2020 and 2021 was disrupted by state and localised lockdowns. As a result, many Catholics across Australia over the past couple of years accessed Mass through a range of digital media, such as via live streamed or on demand Masses from parishes and dioceses across Australia and other parts of the world. There was also a weekly nationally televised Mass service (Mass for You at Home) broadcast every Sunday. The fragmented nature in which people consumed digital Mass services makes it difficult to accurately represent its uptake and effects on Mass attendances across parishes in Australia. However, our office has been able to obtain the collective household viewing numbers of Mass for You at Home nationally, although these figures only account for the number of views per household, not the number of people watching.



Mass for You at Home

Mass for You at Home is a pre-recorded televised Mass service and is currently a ministry of the Diocese of Wollongong in partnership with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, and initially a project of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. It is the longest-running religious program on Australian commercial television, broadcast since 1971, and the fourth longest-running program in Australia overall behind Four Corners, Playschool and Behind the News. Mass is celebrated at St John Vianney Co-Cathedral in the Diocese of Wollongong and is broadcast nationally each Sunday at 6am on Channel 10. It also premieres on the Aurora Channel on Foxtel each Sunday morning, then airs several times a day throughout the week. The program can also be accessed from the Mass for You at Home and 10Play websites. Viewership data for the metropolitan area

of five capital cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth) were received from Network 10 and regional viewership data were received from Rise Media Placement Pty. Ltd.

Over the first four weekends of May 2021, across the five cities, an average of around 22,300 households viewed Mass for You at Home each weekend. In regional areas where Mass for You at Home was commercially broadcast (not all areas broadcast the program), an average of around 7,800 households viewed the program on each weekend during the same period. Overall, on a typical weekend in May 2021, over 30,100 households watched the program across Australia. Of course, it is important to note that a 'household' may include more than one individual watching the Mass. In some instances, such as an aged care facility or a prison, a 'household' will include multiple viewers.

Additionally, during the full month of May 2021, there were around 1,650 unique visitors to the Mass for You at Home program through the 10Play website, with 3,660 videos started and 5,653 video segments (portions of the program) viewed. A further 5,000-6,000 views were logged each week directly via the Mass for You at Home website. There was also additional viewership through Foxtel, although we were unable to obtain reliable figures.

In general, the viewership of Mass for You at Home rates highly on free to air television, in comparison to other religious programs broadcast before and after it. For example, in the regional areas during May 2021, the 30-minute Mass for You at Home program received on average a 30 per cent viewership share during three hours of religious programs broadcast each Sunday morning between 5am and 8am. More information on Mass for You at Home is available on the website at: <http://www.mfyah.com/>

QUICK STATS

Avg. TV viewership
per weekend (2021)

30,100
households

Belief in the Real Presence

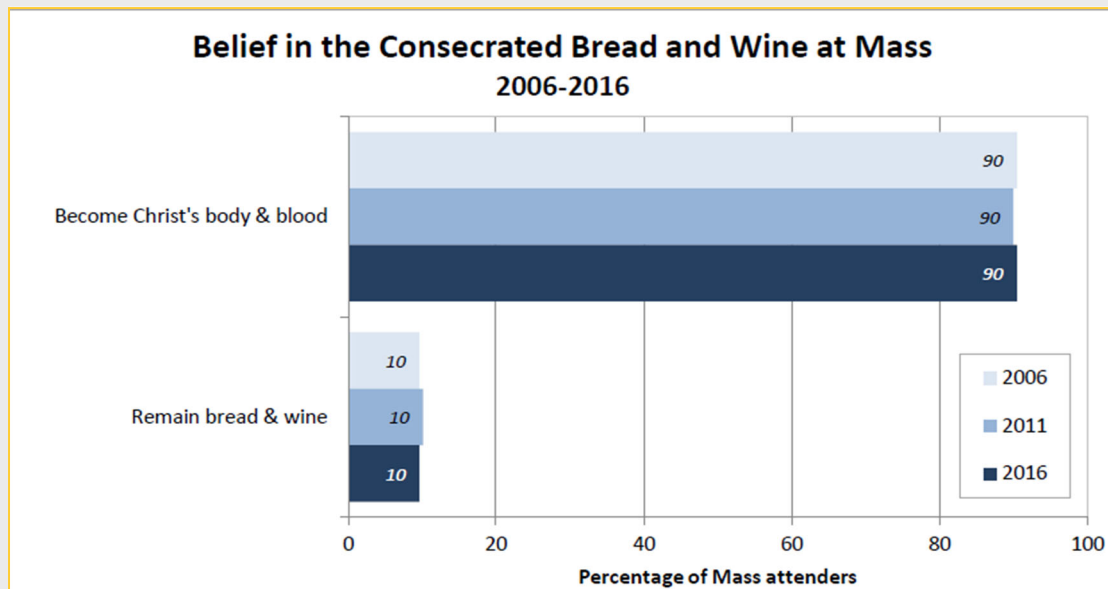
Findings from the 2016 National Church Life Survey

A recent data request led NCPR staff to analyse data from the 2016 and earlier National Church Life Surveys (NCLS) to understand the beliefs of Mass Attenders. In 2006, 2011 and 2016, Mass attenders were asked “Which of the following statements about the consecrated bread and wine at Mass expresses your belief?:

- They truly become the sacred Body and Blood of Christ
- They remain bread and wine.”

In all three years of the surveys, around 90 per cent of Mass attenders stated a belief that the bread and wine truly become the sacred Body and Blood of Christ. The belief of those attenders accords with teaching in the Catechism of the Catholic Church which states:

...we offer to the Father what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread and wine which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ. Christ is thus really and mysteriously made present. (CCC 1357)



Sources: 2006, 2011, 2016 National Church Life Survey, Questionnaire S3 (W in 2006). Sample parishes only.

Additionally, the figures for 2016 were able to be broken down by demographic characteristics. Only birthplace, education and marital status categories showed statistically significant differences among the respondents. Those who believed that the consecrated bread and wine truly become the sacred Body and Blood of Christ were more likely to be born in a non-English speaking country and to be educated, but not to the level of a bachelor's degree. They were more likely to be separated/divorced or widowed.

Demographic characteristics (2016 only)

	Age of respondent			Sex		Birthplace			Education			Marital Status			
	15-34 years	35-59 years	60 years and over	Female	Male	Australia	Other English speaking country	Non-English speaking country	School	Trade certificate, Diploma or Associate diploma	Bachelor degree or higher	Never Married	Married *	Separated / Divorced	Widowed
Become Christ's body & blood (%)	87	90	91	91	89	88	90	95	91	93	88	87	90	92	96
Remain bread and wine (%)	13	10	9	9	11	12	10	5	9	7	12	13	10	8	4

N = 2,345

Not significant.

N = 2,336

Not significant.

N = 2,369

Significant at $p < 0.001$ level

N = 2,354

Significant at $p < 0.05$ level

N = 2,367

Significant at $p < 0.01$ level

* Includes 20 people who identified themselves as being in a de facto relationship

History of Diocesan Pastoral Councils

Response to the Governance Review Project

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) commissioned a review of diocesan and parish governance and management in Australia, the report of which was published in August 2020 as *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*. The ACBC's response was a document titled, "Response of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to The Light from the Southern Cross: Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia". (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1okB3jSsJ4dYAt_0GzrIJyVZS2l1cZBtC/view) Amongst the report's 86 recommendations were a number relating to Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Councils. The National Centre for Pastoral Research was commissioned by the ACBC to implement the Conference's response to these recommendations.



Photo by [Andrea Piacquadio](#) from [Pexels](#)

Dr Damian Gleeson, a 2022 Australian Religious History Fellow with the State Library of New South Wales, was engaged to undertake a significant study into Diocesan Pastoral Councils (DPCs) in Australia. His study included a comprehensive look at the history of archdiocesan and diocesan pastoral councils in Australia since Vatican II.

His report noted that six of the archdioceses (Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra & Goulburn, Hobart, Perth, Sydney) have previously had pastoral councils, primarily during the 1960s-70s, but currently none are in existence. The reestablishment of the Adelaide archdiocesan pastoral council is currently on the agenda. Ten dioceses have had pastoral councils since Vatican II, and currently five of those (Ballarat, Maitland-Newcastle, Parramatta, Port Pirie, and Toowoomba) are still in existence. However, only the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle had had a continuous Diocesan Pastoral Council from its inception in 1990, whereas other dioceses have had periods of ceasing and restarting such Councils.

Dr Gleeson observed that there were historical inaccuracies reported in both *The Light from the Southern Cross* report and the bishops' response regarding the existence and achievement of Australian diocesan pastoral councils. His research indicated that Australia had significant achievements with councils in the past. The reasons for the decline and discontinuation of early DPCs were complex and varied, but included factors such as the death of a bishop, lack of interest by the replacement bishop, inadequate formation and renewal of members, a narrow understanding of Vatican II, and councils where the majority of members were appointed by the bishop. Dr Gleeson stated that the "attitude, energy and enthusiasm of a bishop are the largest factors influencing the existence, meaningfulness and longevity of a Diocesan Pastoral Council" (p. 82, para 8.1). Diocesan pastoral councils were seen to have successes in shared decision making, respectful engagement between clergy, religious and lay people, and the broad implementation of pastoral services.

Some exemplary models of diocesan pastoral councils were identified in his report. These demonstrated some of the following traits (p. 83-85):

- Extensive consultation across clergy, religious and laity before formation of the Council.
- Strong inter-connecting relationships with parish and regional pastoral councils, and active engagement in diocesan and parish renewal programs.
- Accommodations were made for distanced and isolated communities by drawing on representatives from the different regions (vicariates/deaneries) within a diocese.

History of Diocesan Pastoral Councils

- Strong relationships with other diocesan organisations, especially finance and education.
- Councils had an elected, appointed or a hybrid system of membership.
- Ex-officio input did not outweigh the representative voices of clergy, religious and laity.

Some other attributes that contributed to successful DPCs in the past included (p. 86 – 87):

- Selecting the best available lay people
- A broad pastoral and social justice paradigm
- Fruits of parliamentary decision making
- Focus on 'total mission of the church'
- Effective secretariat or subcommittees to drive initiatives
- Integrated model of partnership between pastoral councils at parish, deanery and diocesan levels
- Chairmanship vested in lay people.

The full report, *Diocesan Pastoral Councils: An Australian Historical Study* is available on the NCPR website at:

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

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<https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/pro-newsletter/>



Call for Diocesan Statistics

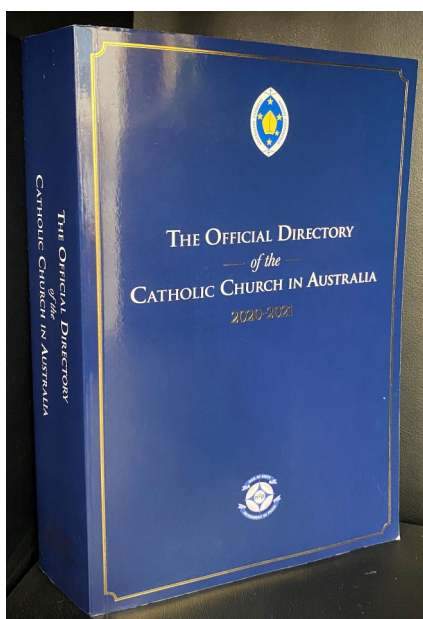
Diocesan statistics due by 20 April 2022

Diocesan contacts will have received a request from the NCPR to provide the annual statistics for the *Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*. The directory provides a valuable reference for the Catholic Church and presents a picture of the current population, clergy and numerous ministries in all dioceses.

The request includes a copy of the previous years' figures to assist with the process. Responses should be returned to NCPR staff by no later than

Wednesday 20 April 2022.

Any questions about the process, or the information required, can be directed to Stephen Reid at stephen.reid@catholic.org.au or Marilyn Chee at marilyn.chee@catholic.org.au.



Synod on Synodality Update



Diocesan Consultation phase:

The online portal for local submissions to be made to the “Synod on Synodality” to contribute to the global conversation about communion, participation and mission in the Church, closed on 13 March 2022. More than 1,100 online submissions were made, with more comprehensive material sent to dioceses directly via email and post. The NCPR has been analysing the data and preparing reports to send to dioceses by 1 April 2022.

Diocesan Synthesis:

During the month of April, dioceses are encouraged to use the submissions contained in this report to prepare their diocesan synthesis. In addition to this material, other sources of data will include Synod submissions sent directly to the diocese via post or email, diocesan reports from the Plenary Council Phase 1, diocesan reports prepared from the 2017 Australian Catholic Bishops Youth Survey, and other information gathered from diocesan synods and assemblies that have taken place in recent years. Dioceses will have until 30 April 2022 to prepare their final 10-page diocesan synthesis which will be sent back to the NCPR for collation.

Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting:

During the coming weeks, dioceses will also be holding their Pre-Synodal Meeting to celebrate and conclude the local consultation stage. The National Liturgical Council has prepared special liturgical resources which dioceses can use and adapt, to organise a gathering that invites their people to come together to pray, listen, reflect, and discern the synodal path along which God’s Spirit is calling them to.

Next steps:

Based on the diocesan synthesis reports, the NCPR will prepare a national synthesis that will be finalised during three sessions with the bishops in May and June. The consolidated report will be provided to the Holy See in August, and the Australian bishops will later engage with other episcopal conferences in the Pacific to prepare a regional contribution. More information about the Synod on Synodality can be found here:

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

Intersection of the Plenary Council and the Synod

A video by Bishop Shane Mackinlay was recently made available to explain the intersection between the Australian Plenary Council, the next session of which is being held in July 2022, and the Synod on Synodality for which consultation and discernment is currently being undertaken around the world.

As Bishop Mackinlay, the Plenary Council's vice president explains, when Pope Francis decided to hold what is now known as the Synod on Synodality, the Church in Australia found itself with some groundwork having already been laid in preparing for the Plenary Council. This means that the global Synod of Bishops process can draw on the Plenary Council's lessons, and the Plenary Council will have the chance to learn from the local consultation phase for the Synod that is underway.

He explains some of the intersecting aspects of the two timelines for the Synod and the Plenary Council, and how people can continue to participate in both. To watch the full video, click on the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnz0DCXGZIO>



America's Trust Declines

A recent study by the Pew Research Center reported in February 2022 that the level of trust that Americans once had in scientists and medical scientists has declined to below pre-pandemic levels. Overall, in December 2021, 29 per cent of US adults reported having a 'great deal of confidence in medical scientists to act in the best interests of the public', down from 40 per cent in November 2020.

This decline in trust extends to other groups and institutions as well. Notably Americans who reported having 'a great deal' of trust in religious leaders also showed a decline from a peak of 17 per cent in April 2020 to 12 per cent in December 2021. However, this is still above the lowest previously reported levels of trust in religious leaders at only nine per cent in February 2018.

This decline in trust is also seen in attitudes to the military, police officers, public school principals, journals, business leaders and elected officials.

Despite this, an earlier study conducted in September 2021 reported that 61 per cent of regular attenders of religious services have at least 'a fair amount' of confidence in their clergy or other religious leaders to provide guidance on COVID-19 vaccines, which is more than that in imbued in public health officials (60%), state elected officials (49%) or the news media (41%).

For more information on these studies go to

<https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2022/02/15/americans-trust-in-scientists-other-groups-declines/>

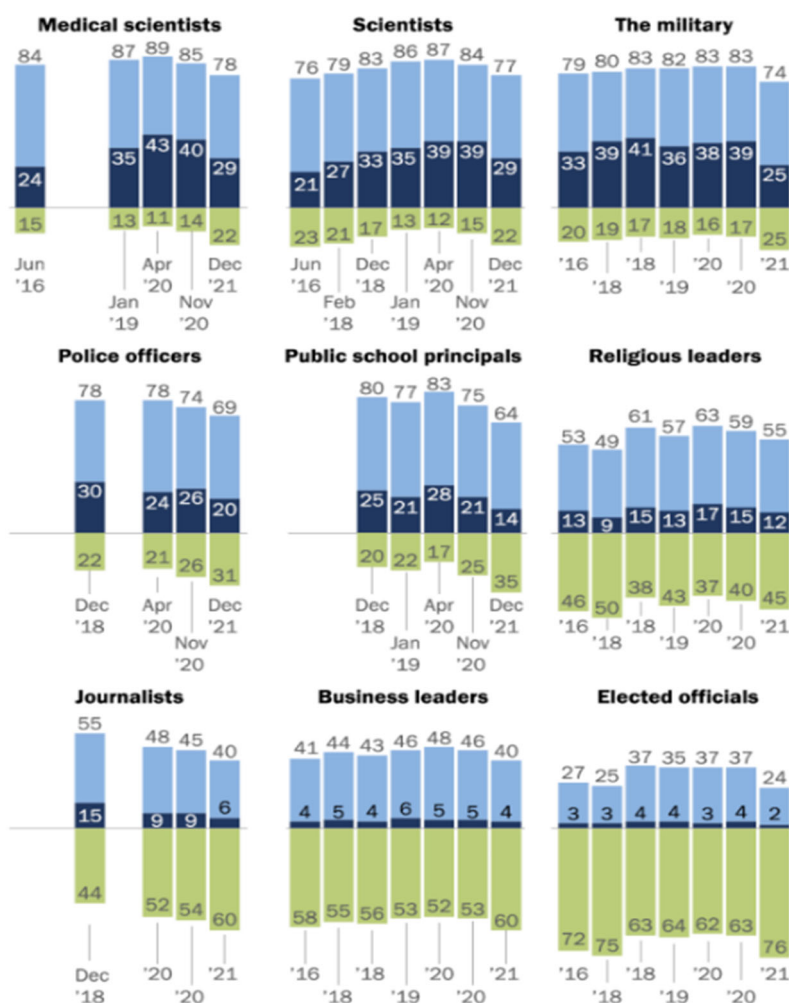
and

<https://www.pewforum.org/2021/10/15/most-americans-who-go-to-religious-services-say-they-would-trust-their-clergys-advice-on-covid-19-vaccines/>

Public confidence in scientists and medical scientists has declined over the last year

% of U.S. adults who have ____ of confidence in the following groups to act in the best interests of the public

● A great deal ● A fair amount ● Not too much/No confidence at all



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 30–Dec. 12, 2021.

"Americans' Trust in Scientists, Other Groups Declines"

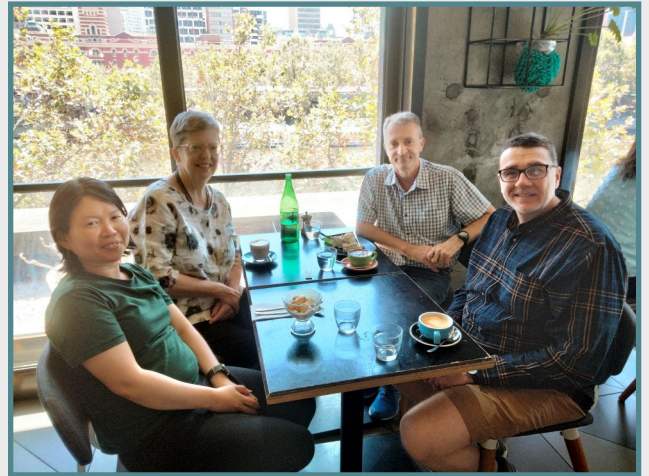
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Farewell to NCPR Staff

Paul Bowell and Lavina Thomas are moving on

In early February, Paul Bowell and Lavina Thomas resigned from their positions at the NCPR to pursue new opportunities.

Paul began with the NCPR in October 2018 as the research assistant for the Plenary Council project. His efforts in the organisation and analysis of the more than 17,000 responses in the first phase of the project were invaluable. Paul also contributed to other projects including the 2016 National Catholic Census project, the NCEC Positive Learnings from COVID-19 and the Governance Review projects. He is currently completing his PhD at Swinburne University looking at understanding the affective experiences of digital self-tracking practices among Australian Football League for Women (AFLW) footballers. Paul is moving to an academic position in La Trobe University and we wish him all the best for his career.



Left to Right: Marilyn Chee, Gabrielle McMullen, Stephen Reid and Paul Bowell



Above: Lavina Thomas

Lavina joined the NCPR in February 2020 initially as a volunteer then later as an employee. She was integral to a number of our projects including the de-identification of the diocesan reports for the Plenary Council, gathering the annual statistics for the 2020-2021 Catholic Directory and, most recently, coordinating and supporting the upcoming Synod on Synodality. Lavina has recently advanced her tertiary qualifications as a Project Manager and is moving to a position that will enable her to utilise her new skills more fully. We thank Lavina for her service and wish her all the best for the future.

On 23 February, the staff of the Melbourne office and chair of the ACCPR, Gabrielle McMullen, met for lunch to farewell Paul. The Canberra staff plan to do the same later in the month to farewell Lavina. They will both be greatly missed but we know the organisations they are moving to will be lucky to have them.

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