

# Pastoral Research Online

Issue 58

September 2022



## Congratulations to Stephen Reid!

Senior Researcher Stephen Reid, who has been with the NCPR since 2007, has completed his Doctorate of Ministry on the topic of Chaplaincy in Sport through Alphacrucis University College. NCPR staff are delighted that his work has been honoured and look forward to using his new title of Doctor when his degree is conferred in November this year.

Stephen's research examined the roles and functions of sport chaplains, and how chaplaincy was perceived by chaplains and church members. His research used a mixed method approach, employing case studies, interviews, and surveys, which provided rich qualitative and quantitative data for examination.

More information on his thesis and the results of his research study are available on Page 4.

*Left: Stephen Reid*

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our September 2022 issue! We have several staff to congratulate this month—Stephen Reid on the completion of his doctorate and Marilyn Chee on the arrival of her baby.

In this issue we continue unpacking data from the 2021 Census as more statistics become available to us from the ABS. We explore the age profile of the Catholic population and highlight the growth in Eastern Rite Catholic communities.

Meanwhile, we are continuing our work on the 2021 National Social Profile and hope to have it ready by the end of this year. We will soon begin the process of parish and diocesan boundary checking to help us map and calculate 2021 Catholic populations accurately.

Last month, we participated in a Zoom webinar along with the Christian Research Association (CRA) to help explore the 2021 Census figures for religious identification. This webinar was recorded and can be viewed online.

Our office has been busy with a number of projects this year, one of which is the Bishops Synod on Synodality. We invite your participation in the next phase—the Continental Stage—of this global consultation. More details can be found inside. Our current work also includes a number of surveys on a range of topics. If you need help with conducting such short surveys in your parish or organisation, feel free to contact us at any time.

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# Census 2021 Update

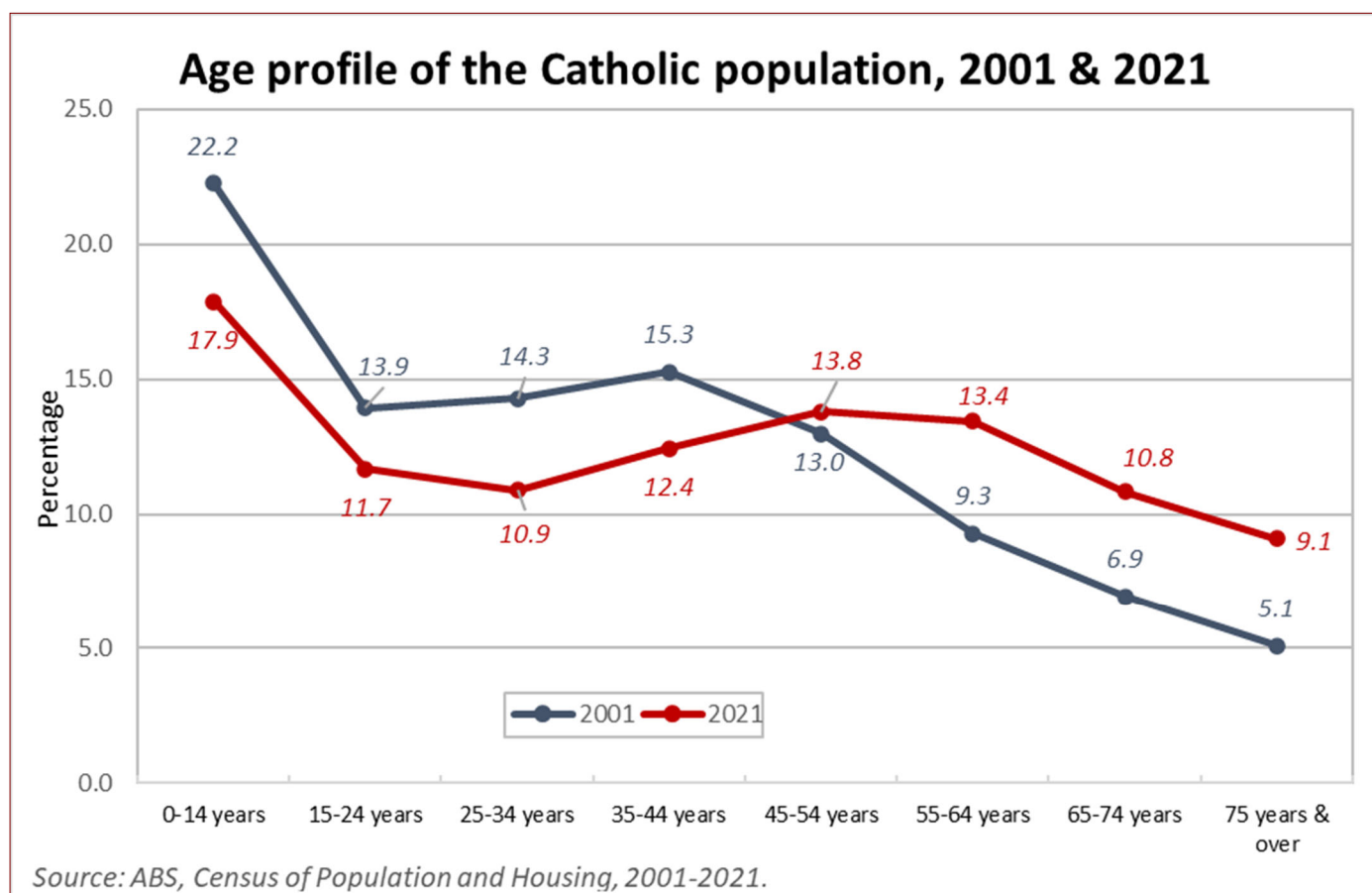
The Australian Bureau of Statistics has released further data from the 2021 Census and the NCPR continues to analyse and interpret the findings about the Catholic community in Australia. At present the data about religion is somewhat limited to just a few variables, but we expect to gain access to further variables over the next few weeks, which will allow us to commence work on the National, Diocesan and Parish Social Profiles.



## 2021 Census shows Australian Catholics are ageing

According to the 2021 Census, the age profile of Australian Catholics continues to get older, with around one in five (19.9%) Catholics aged 65 and over. At the other end of the age spectrum, the proportion of Catholic children (aged under 15) represents 17.9 per cent of the total Catholic population. In comparison, 20 years ago, in 2001, 22.2 per cent of Catholics were aged under 15, while 12 per cent were aged 65 and over.

Overall, in 2001, around half of all Catholics were aged under 35 and half were aged 35 and over. In 2021, around 40 per cent of Catholics were aged under 35 and just over 60 per cent were aged 35 and over.



Of course in many places around Australia the age profile will be very different to the Australian age profile shown above. For example, with larger populations the profile of a community in an urban area of a capital or regional city will often have a much more balanced age profile than a smaller population in a remote or rural area. This is particularly evident in many communities which have high proportions of Indigenous Catholics, who generally have a younger age profile than communities with few Indigenous Catholics.

With detailed 2021 Census data still unavailable for some smaller geographical areas, such as suburbs and towns, age profiles for the Catholic community are currently available for all Local Government Areas. The detailed data shows that a number of remote areas in Queensland and Western Australia had much younger than average

# Census 2021 Update

Catholic age profiles, while some areas of Western Australia and Tasmania had much older age profiles.

The five Local Government Areas with the highest proportion of Catholic children (aged under 15) were:

1. Westonia (Western Australia) - 40.4%
2. Cherbourg (Queensland) - 36.7%
3. Palm Island (Queensland) - 34.2%
4. Torres Strait Island (Queensland) - 30.0%
5. Chapman Valley (Western Australia) - 28.9%

The five Local Government Areas with the highest proportion of older Catholics aged 65 and over were:

1. Quairading (Western Australia) - 48.7%
2. Cue (Western Australia) - 47.5%
3. Beverley (Western Australia) - 43.8%
4. Flinders (Tasmania) - 40.5%
5. Break O'Day (Tasmania) - 40.5%

## Growth in Eastern Rite Catholic communities

In the June edition of *Pastoral Research Online* we reported a slight decrease in the proportion of Australians identifying as Catholic, from 22.6 per cent in 2016 to 20 per cent in 2021. However, while the number of people identifying as Latin Rite Catholic (or Western Catholic, as categorised by the ABS) decreased, the number of people identifying with one of the five Eastern Rite Catholic groups increased during the same period.

The largest of the Eastern Rite groups are the Maronites Catholics, who increased from 36,430 in 2016 to 47,010 in 2021 (an increase of 29 per cent). The next largest group, Chaldean Catholics, increased by 41 per cent in the five-year period, from 10,030 to 14,100. With a significant increase in immigration from India, the number of Syro-Malabar Catholics grew from 8,350 to 10,300 (23.4%), while the number of Melkite Catholics increased from 2,580 to 3,090 (19.6%). The number of Ukrainian Catholics decreased ever-slightly between 2016 and 2021, from 2,910 to 2,880 (or 0.9 per cent).

## Census Seminar: *What the 2021 Census Figures Really Mean*

On 27 July 2022, the NCPR and the Christian Research Association (CRA) jointly hosted a seminar exploring the meaning of the 2021 Census figures for religious identification. The speakers were Dr Stephen Reid and Dr Trudy Dantis from the NCPR and Rev Prof Philip Hughes from the CRA. The seminar provided a background to the Census as well as the historical context of religion in Australia and an overview of results from the 2021 Census. It also explored the growth and decline in different religious groups, and how the Catholic Church in Australia uses Census data to assist bishops, dioceses and parishes to understand and their own local Catholic community.



The recording of the seminar is available to view via YouTube using this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smkUXjqANUQ>

# Chaplaincy in Sport: Summary of a Doctoral Thesis

Sport plays a significant role in Australian society and its historical and continuing influence cannot be understated. Though large in geographical size yet relatively small in population, Australia has 'punched above its weight' on the international sporting stage. While Australians have a passionate obsession with sport, there continues to be a significant decline in religious activities and beliefs, as well as negatively changing attitudes towards Christianity.

However, in contrast to the evident decline in Christian identification and church attendance amongst Australians, the demand for Christian chaplaincy in various settings has seen a steady increase. One such area which has seen significant growth in demand, is sports chaplaincy. In Australia, sports chaplaincy is now represented in a wide array of sports and leisure activities, and at all levels, from grass-roots local sporting clubs to semi-professional teams, state and national institutes and fully professional national sporting clubs.

Using a mixed methods research approach involving case studies, interviews and surveys, the thesis explored what clubs sought in the roles and functions of Christian sports chaplains in contemporary Australian society, and how chaplaincy was perceived by the chaplains themselves and by church members. The study gathered qualitative and quantitative information about how effective chaplains were in their various roles.

The research findings identified a number of major dimensions to a sports chaplain's role:

The chaplains saw themselves as involved in the mission of God and the ministry of the churches, and largely understood their role as providing a Christian presence and care within the sporting club, foremost through the building of relationships. For those in the sporting clubs, the role of the chaplain was to develop relationships and to provide support to those in the club who needed it.

The chaplain's contribution to building team morale and strengthening a positive club culture manifested itself in the ways people in the club treated each other and the values they expressed. For most chaplains, being present and available at training, games, events and other club functions was considered the most practical of ways to build morale and culture, although many chaplains also provided practical assistance around the club or led specific team morale building programs and activities.

The provision of pastoral care was seen by chaplains, and most of the clubs, as the chaplain's main role. Many of the other functions they fulfilled extended from that role. Building relationships allowed chaplains to primarily develop rapport, ensuring that any pastoral care that was needed could be offered by someone who was trusted and sincere. Providing spiritual care was seen as an extension of the pastoral care chaplains provided, although with clear distinctions related to the functions they fulfilled in that aspect of their role. Such spiritual chaplaincy activities included leading prayer, chapel services or Bible studies, usually for those in the clubs who requested it. Other spiritual care activities included organising or undertaking religious or spiritual ceremonies, such as weddings, baptisms or funerals.

Through their various roles, sports chaplains are seen to be highly effective, and are providing a genuine connection between the secular world of sport and spirituality in contemporary Australia.



*Stained Glass Window at St Ignatius Catholic Church Richmond, Victoria.*

**If you would like more information about how the NCPR can support your organisation, parish or diocese, please contact us at [ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au)**

# Bishops Synod on Synodality

## National Synthesis Report

On 15 August 2022, the NCPR finalised the National Synthesis Report for the first phase of the Bishops Synod on Synodality and sent it to the Synod General Secretariat in Rome. The National Synthesis Report for Australia is available on the Synod website at <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>. A complete list of diocesan reports are also available on the site.

## The Continental Stage

The Synod process now enters the Continental Stage. All Bishops Conferences around the world have submitted their Synthesis Reports to Rome. The Synod General Secretariat is currently preparing the *Document for the Continental Stage*, which will be drafted at a meeting from 21 September until 2 October.

Once finalised, this *Document* will be shared with the Bishops' Conferences and dioceses around the world, who will coordinate further reflection on its contents. This is not a matter of beginning consultation all over again, but of continuing the dialogue that has already begun.

## Australia's contribution to reflection on the Document

In Australia, NCPR's director, Dr Trudy Dantis, has been appointed to serve as the ACBC representative on the Synod Oceania Taskforce chaired by Adj Prof Susan Pascoe AM. Australia is part of Oceania, which also includes New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and other Pacific island nations. The national Synod working group will create processes and resources for the Continental stage to assist groups to reflect on the *Document* and provide feedback when it is released.

Dioceses, parishes and other Catholic organisations are invited to help organise online reflection groups to gather feedback on the document. The groups would comprise of people who:

- ◆ Are a mix of lay, religious and clergy
- ◆ Are aware of Church matters at a national and diocesan level
- ◆ Have the ability to read and reflect on the *Document* and provide feedback

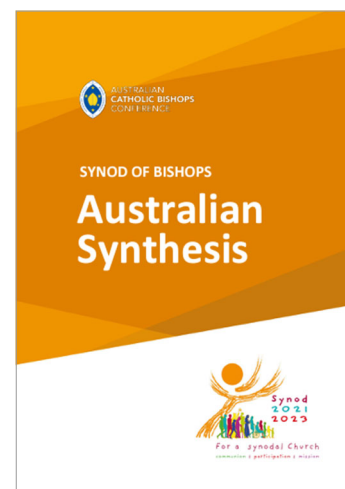
**All interested group coordinators are invited to contact the NCPR ([ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au)) and register their interest in being part of this process. A special webinar will be hosted for group coordinators in late October.**

The NCPR will establish an online portal to collect feedback nationally. At this stage, we anticipate collecting feedback in November and in early December. More information will be provided to dioceses and group coordinators in the coming weeks, and especially once the *Document* is published.

## Synod Resource

The NCPR has also recently received a document *Towards a Spirituality of Synodality* which has been released by the Synod General Secretariat. This resource offers an overview of the main features of a synodal spirituality that can inform and assist the synodal process. This can be accessed on their website at:

<https://www.synod.va/en/highlights/towards-a-spirituality-for-synodality.html>





# Plenary Council - Second Assembly

The second, and final, assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia took place on 3-9 July 2022. As Adjunct Secretary of the Plenary Council, Dr Trudy Dantis was a member of the Steering Committee and helped coordinate the work of the Secretariat, which was responsible for supporting the development and organisation of the documentation of the Council, recording the deliberations at the event, preparing minutes, receiving written resolutions and submissions, and assembling the Acts.

## Timeline—what happens next

The final decrees of the Plenary Council assembly are available at <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/>. These decrees have been sent to the Holy See for review. Once they have been satisfactorily reviewed, they will be promulgated in the *Australasian Catholic Record* and on the website of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. The decrees will oblige six months after they have been promulgated.

The implementation of the Plenary Council decrees will be reviewed over the next five years. Interim review reports are to be published in 2023 and 2025. The final review report is to be published in 2027, five years after the final Plenary Council assembly. The Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council is responsible for establishing terms of review, and a roundtable body will be responsible for coordinating the reviews.



*The Secretariat team at the final dinner of the Plenary Council.  
PC: Louise Zavone*



**Plenary Council 2020**  
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

## New Research Projects

### Pastoral Care of Bishops

The health and well-being of Australian Catholic bishops was one of the topics discussed earlier in the year at the Bishops' May plenary meeting. The NCPR and the Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry created a confidential survey designed to gather feedback in areas of well-being, mental health and spiritual health, with the opportunity for bishops to raise concerns and suggest supportive strategies. The NCPR will collate the data and present the findings to the Bishops' plenary meeting in November.

### Australian Catholic Media survey

The Australian Catholic Media Council, an advisory body to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, has engaged the NCPR to develop a short survey to assess how Catholic organisations and publications adapted to the various restrictions from March 2020 related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is hoped that the results will help Catholic communicators to understand how new initiatives used during the pandemic might influence decisions in the future.

### Staff COVID-19 survey

The ACBC COVID-19 Committee has engaged the NCPR in conducting a survey to assess the impact of the introduction of flexible working arrangements on ACBC staff. The survey has been shared with staff and the NCPR is currently collecting the data. The aggregated results will be shared with the COVID-19 Committee.

## Global Trends of Vocations

An article in the 29 March issue of The Pillar examined the global trends in vocations based on data from the Vatican's annual handbook of Church statistics.

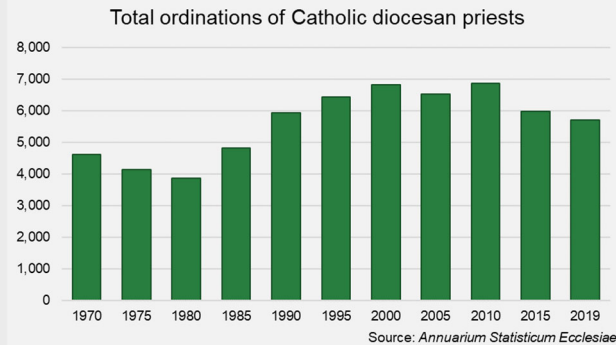
The highest number of ordinations to the diocesan priesthood in the global Church since 1970, when the

Vatican first started compiling Church statistics, came in the decade between 2000 and 2010, when the Church



ordained around 6,800 men annually as diocesan priests. While at first glance the trend of ordinations seems to be decreasing since the beginning of the new millennium (see Figure 1), examining the data broken down by region paints a different picture.

As shown in Figure 2, while ordinations in North America and Europe have been declining, ordinations in Africa have been increasing. In 1970, Europe accounted for 55 per cent of all the Church's ordinations to the diocesan priesthood. By 2019, the number of men ordained in Europe had nearly halved. At this



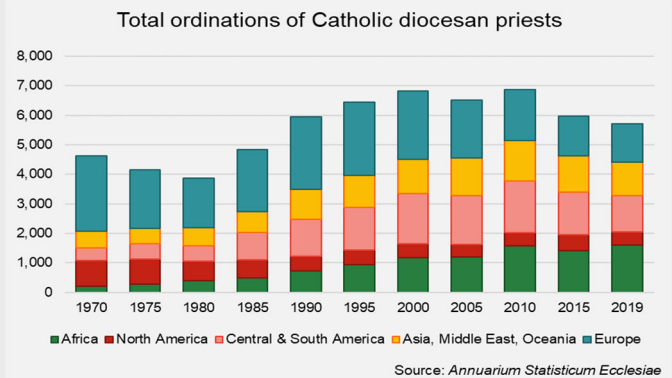
**Figure 1: Total ordinations of Catholic diocesan priests**

time, Europeans made up only 23 per cent of all ordinations, whereas Africans made up 28 per cent. The number of diocesan priests ordained in North America dropped 50 per cent between 1970 and 2000, but has since levelled off. In Central and South America, as well as in Asia, the number of diocesan priestly ordinations increased dramatically from 1970 to 2010, but has since declined.

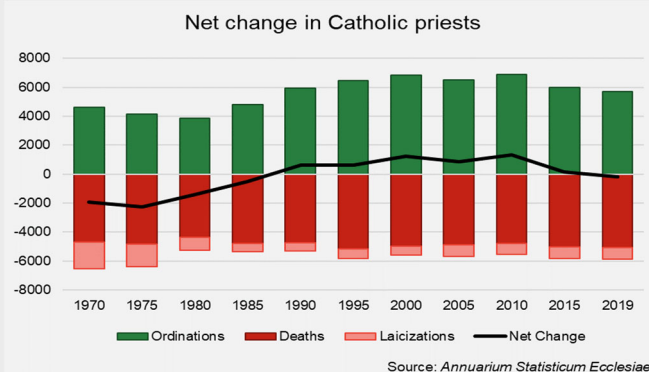
To understand the impact of vocations on the total number of diocesan Catholic priests, it is necessary to view the number of ordinations against the number of priests who die or are laicized (see Figure 3).

In the 1970s and 1980s the net change in priests was negative, because of large numbers of priests seeking laicization in the 1970s, and a dramatic decrease in the number of ordinations in Europe and North America in the years following Vatican II.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the net change in the number of priests was positive, as the number of laicizations declined and the number of ordinations in Africa and Asia increased.



**Figure 2: Total ordinations of Catholic diocesan priests displayed**



**Figure 3: Net change in Catholic priests**

However, in the last few years the net change in the number of priests has remained neutral because of a slowdown in diocesan priestly ordinations in the developing world, and the death of priests ordained in the 1960s and early 1970s.

To read more of this analysis of global vocations, the original article can be found at <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/is-there-a-global-vocations-crisis?s=r>

## Staff News

### Congratulations to Marilyn Chee!

Marilyn Chee, research assistant at the NCPR, gave birth to a baby girl, named Kiara, in August 2022. Our team is thrilled for her, and will miss her while she takes maternity leave. Trudy Dantis and Stephen Reid were able to join her and her partner, Paul, for a visit recently.



*Above (L-R): Trudy Dantis, Marilyn Chee holding baby Kiara, Marilyn's partner Paul, and Stephen Reid.*

Marilyn joined the NCPR as a casual research assistant in 2013, before progressing to a maximum-term role at the office in 2020. She has been involved in a number of projects including the creation of social profiles for the National Catholic Census project in 2011 and 2016, and analysis and reporting of the National Count of Attendance project over the same period.

Marilyn says she feels it has been a privilege for her to be part of the amazing research team at NCPR which has just celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2021. She looks forward to reengaging with the office in 2023.

**Do you enjoy this newsletter? Do you know someone who would benefit from receiving a copy?**

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

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