

# Pastoral Research Online

Issue 67

December 2024

## Second Assembly of the Synod of Bishops



Left: Participants from the Oceania region gather with Pope Francis at the Second Assembly of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality. PC: synod.va

The Australian participants included members, theologians, experts and facilitators each contributing in a unique way. NCP Director, Dr Trudy Dantis shares her experience of the event. Details inside...



Dear Readers,

As we approach the end of 2024, we look back on a year filled with a wide variety of interesting activities and projects for the team at the NCP. This issue includes some highlights of the more important initiatives.

This month, it gives us great pleasure to announce the launch of our Australian Catholic Mapping Online portal. Some of our readers will be familiar with prior versions of this program that enabled visual representations of Census Data. The new platform that has been recently developed gives users the ability to obtain up-to-date Census data for any parish or diocese. Additionally, it includes popups that show graphs and interactive charts that make it simple to graphically visualise the information. As the software is still being tested, we encourage readers to engage with the maps available in the portal and send us their feedback and suggestions.

Our work on the Synod on Synodality this year included coordinating diocesan and national consultations, assisting the Synod Working Group, interacting with the national network and reporting progress at various phases of the process. The experiences at the Second Assembly are shared in this edition, and we look forward to seeing how parishes and dioceses will begin to implement synodality in their regions in the years ahead.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us in any way throughout the course of this year. Our sincere thanks goes out to the bishops, our diocesan contacts, individuals who have provided advice and guidance on various projects, and everyone else who has shown support for the Centre and the work we do. We hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a happy New Year, as we look forward to continuing to bring you the best in pastoral research in 2025.



### Inside this issue:

- Launch of Australian Catholic Mapping Online Portal
- 2021 SEIFA scores for parishes
- Synod on Synodality: My experience of the Second Assembly
- 2024 in Review
- Journal Article: 'Responding to 'The Signs of the Times''
- David Shinnick OAM KSS
- Christmas Greetings

# Australian Catholic Mapping Online Portal



The NCPR is pleased to announce the launch of the Australian Catholic Mapping Online portal. The portal has been designed to provide easy access to selected thematic maps based on data from the 2021 Census for all Australian Catholic dioceses and parishes. The national map shows information about dioceses, whereas 28 diocesan maps contain information about individual parishes.

To access the portal, navigate to: <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/australian-catholic-mapping-online/> and click on the portal link.



## How do I use the maps?

The maps are easy to use. You can view Census data by simply opening a map, selecting the layer of interest and clicking on a parish or diocese to display information in a popup panel. The information panel has brief directions for getting started, and more details are accessible in the User Guide (these instructions are also available via the hamburger menu on mobile devices).

To view data for another location or topic on the same map, click on it or select a layer from the map legend. Use the Zoom option to view parishes or dioceses that are not large enough to be visible when the maps open (for example, the Archdiocese of Sydney in Figure 1 below).

## What data is available?

The first two layers, **Population** and **Catholic Families**, are displayed on the initial maps. The **Population** layer is visible upon opening the map. It displays the total Catholic population data for dioceses (in the national map) and parishes (in diocesan maps).

The coloured ranges contain varying numbers of dioceses or parishes, since statistically similar sized dioceses or parishes are clustered together in five categories. For example, instead of seeing five or six dioceses in the range with the largest populations, zooming in on the national map reveals only two.

The Population popup panel to the left displays information about a diocese's or parish's Catholic and total populations, as well as the proportion of Catholics, the number of Catholics by age group, and the number of Catholic females and males.

Figure 1 shows the Population layer format and popup.

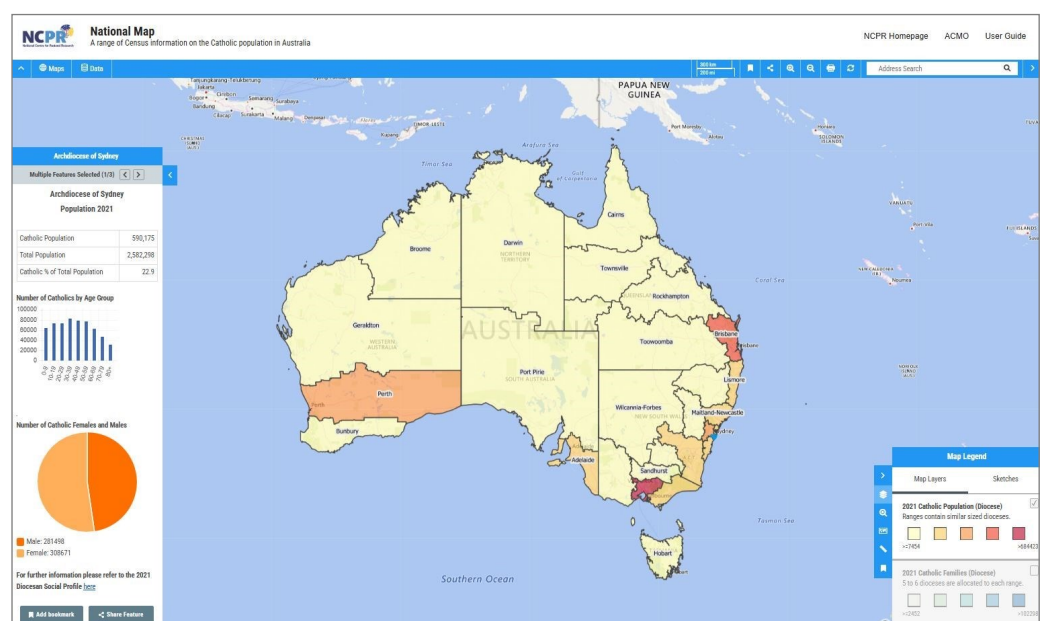


Figure 1: Population Layer—National Catholic Census Maps

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)

# Australian Catholic Mapping Online Portal



Selecting the **Catholic Families** layer provides information on the total number of families in a diocese or parish. In this layer, one-fifth of the parishes or dioceses are assigned to each hue range. The colours indicate which parishes have different total numbers of families. Opening the popup displays information about family types, weekly family income and the number of dependent children. Figure 2, shows the Archdiocese of Adelaide Family layer and its information popup panel.

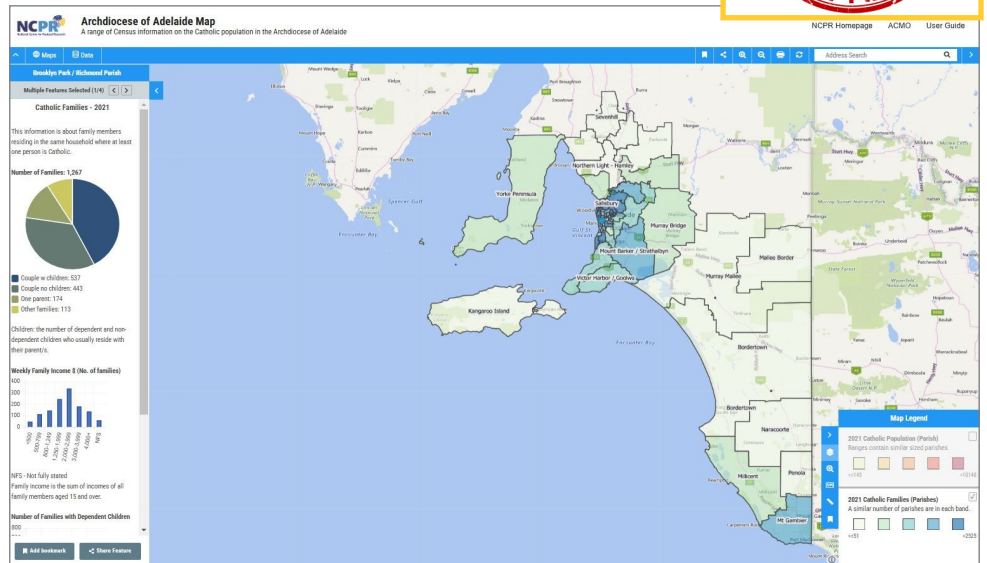


Figure 2: Families layer—Archdiocese of Adelaide Catholic Census Maps

## View on a variety of devices

Viewing the maps on a computer delivers the best experience. Smartphones provide good images and access to the popup information, but other functions, such as printing, are not supported.

## Your feedback is encouraged

Our goal is to make the maps useful and easy to use. You are therefore encouraged to access the maps, test them, and offer us feedback on your experience. Any feedback on what works, revisions to make the maps easier to use, and/or recommendations for new layers can be sent to [ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au). This information will be utilised to improve the design of both existing and proposed layers.

## Further developments

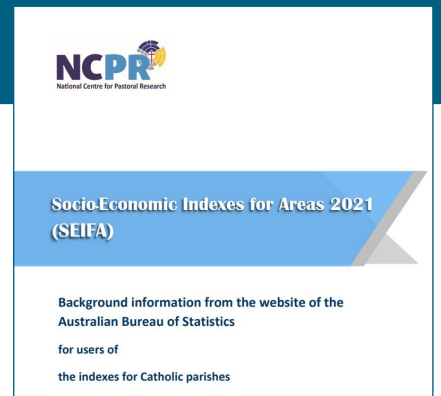
Three additional layers are in the works. A Birthplace and Language layer is nearly finished and two further layers on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics and Catholics with Disabilities are being developed. These layers will be released in 2025. The NCPR thanks our mapping consultant, Mr Steven Ferraro, whose knowledge and advice ensured that the maps saw the light of day. *Thanks, Steven!*

# National Catholic Census Project

## 2021 Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Scores

The NCPR has just released a new report to support dioceses and parishes seeking further information about socio-economic areas from the 2021 Australian Census data. The 2021 report explains the ABS Social-Economic Indicators for Areas (SEIFA) scores that help in understanding levels of disadvantage and advantage within communities. The NCPR has calculated the 2021 SEIFA scores for all Catholic parishes. SEIFA scores were first calculated for Catholic parishes for the 2001 Census, by Dr Bob Dixon, so this iteration marks the fifth instalment of the data. Please contact the Centre to request these scores for your parishes at a nominal cost.

View the SEIFA background report here: <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/SEIFA-2021-Background-Information.pdf>



# Bishops Synod on Synodality



## My Experience of The Second Assembly

October 2024 came around quickly, and before I knew it, I was travelling again to Rome, this time with Mrs Susan Sela from Fiji. The proceedings for the Second Assembly began with a two-day retreat in the Vatican, and while we spent these first few days delighted to reacquaint ourselves with friends from around the globe, the responsibility of landing somewhere on the many issues that had surfaced in Synodal consultations certainly caused some anxiety in those initial days. We were reminded by Fr. Timothy Radcliffe to “dare to bring to this Synod the deepest questions in our hearts, disconcerting questions which invite us to new life” and in the following weeks, we certainly did that.

Our daily routine was similar to that at the First Assembly as we worked in small groups through sections of the *Instrumentum Laboris For the Second Session*. Each module, like before, opened with Mass and a presentation by the General Rapporteur, followed by several rounds of "Conversations in the Spirit" in working groups, draft table reports, open interventions from the floor, and a final table report with proposals for further steps. Three methods were adapted for this Assembly:



My two working groups at the Synod

1. In 2023, we formed new working groups for each module. This year, we worked with one group on Modules 1 and 5, and another on Modules 2, 3, and 4. This allowed us to strengthen our relationships at the table and shift our conversations from the 'head' to the 'heart' level, creating space for vulnerability and honesty.
2. Round One of “Conversations in the Spirit” was split into two rounds, allowing participants to share their thoughts on the text that they found valuable and worthy of acceptance, followed by their insights on text that needed discussion, deepening, and correction. This proved to be really useful in drafting our table reports.
3. Draft table reports underwent further rounds of deliberation at linguistic tables to identify topics for open interventions from the floor.

The task was difficult at times, especially when serving as “Secretary,” which required several extra hours of work

to collect and summarise contributions and prepare group reports. However, through it all, I cherished the opportunity to converse and dialogue with other Synod members on range of matters. I learnt:

- **Equality:** This meant feeling at ease with others, regardless of their ecclesial or social status or cultural background. I realised you can be at peace with yourself, while treating everyone else with the dignity and respect that each human being has in Christ. We learnt to be equal at the table.
- **Offering my contribution as one among many:** Members brought diverse views to synodal discussions, including theological and pastoral ideas, personal experiences, and consultation outcomes. This experience helped me discover and offer my unique contribution, without attempting to dominate the conversation, and being willing to listen to another’s perspective.
- **Being open to seek conversion for synodal outcome:** Seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance is crucial for successful synodal discussions. This necessitates personal conversion, a journey that is unique for each individual, but



Working as group Secretary



Oceania members at the FCBCO dinner



At the USIG lunch for Women

# Bishops Synod on Synodality



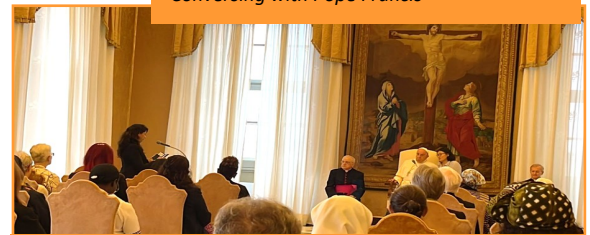
important. It requires exploring questions like, "What is God calling me to today?" "Where does he want to lead me?" I experienced that it was only through personal conversion of individuals at the table and the intervention of the Holy Spirit, that our conversations transformed into a symphony of shared outcomes.

The learning continued in so many different ways. Pope Francis taught us a lot about listening, humility, and patience as he spent time with Synod participants. I am grateful for the several occasions that I spent time with him.

There were other significant moments as well. Some highlights included presenting a message from Oceania women to the Pope during the Women's private audience, attending the private audience for lay men and women at the Synod, and sharing my experiences with German students during an online Synod event.



Conversing with Pope Francis



Presenting Oceania's report at the women's private audience



Interviewing Synod members worldwide

Meeting and interacting with other Synod participants was a delight. One main way was through my series of video interviews with them. What began as a simple desire to communicate Synod news to an Australian audience evolved into an enjoyable sharing of experiences. It was intriguing to learn about participants' work and how they lived and experienced their Catholic faith in different ways in many corners of the globe.

Our relationships also grew with those we lived with during that period. I was fortunate to be accommodated with a diverse group of 31 Synod members, ranging from many cultures and language groups. The barriers between us slowly dissolved as we began each day with Mass, walked to and from the

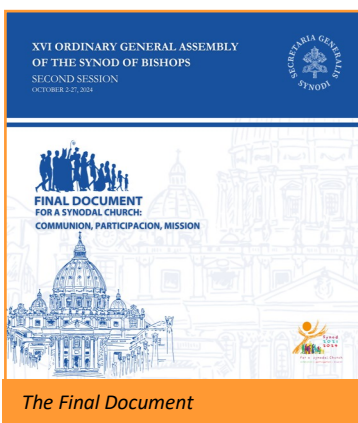
Vatican four times a day, shared all our meals and engaged in fervent informal conversations on Synod matters. Of course, it required a whole lot of sign language in some instances and the assistance of Google Translate as well! My gratitude goes out to the sisters from the Society of the Sisters of Jesus who looked after our needs and made sure we were well taken care of during our visit.

As our discussions reached their conclusion in the final weeks and the text of the *Final Document of Second Assembly* was subsequently released, I reflect back on an experience for which I am eternally grateful: being a part of this historic journey. The challenge now is to take this learning and apply it to help embed a culture of synodality that will assist the Church in furthering its mission.



With members of the group I lived with

As participants, we were happy to receive an artwork from Pope Francis at the close of the Synod: a reproduction of Gerolamo Muziano's *Descent of the Holy Spirit* from the 16th century, which is held in the Vatican Apostolic Palace. It serves as a reminder that, while we all bring different and unique perspectives, the symphony of synodality can only be wrought by the Holy Spirit. May God continue to guide us on the journey ahead!



The Final Document



Pope Francis' gift to Synod participants

# 2024 in Review



In 2024, the NCPR undertook three new major projects and continued a variety of projects for the Bishops Conference and the wider Catholic community. Below is a snapshot of what we achieved this year.

## National Catholic Census Project:

- Published 1,227 Parish Social Profiles.
- Developed two specialised reports:
  - *The 2021 Disability Report for the Catholic Church in Australia.*
  - *Engaging with your Parish Social Profile.*
- Calculated the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas 2021 (SEIFA) scores for parishes and published the Background Information report.

## National Count of Attendance:

- Published a comprehensive national report on the 2021 Count of Attendance.
- Finalised parish-level reports and distributed to dioceses.

## A Profile of Catholic Clergy in Australia:

- Surveyed 850 clergy for Stage 1.
- Prepared a report for the Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry.
- Interviewed 40 clergy for Stage 2.

## Absent from the Table:

- Surveyed 2,015 people for Stage 1.
- Began the data analysis from Stage 1.
- Received ethics approval and began Stage 2 planning.

## Evaluating the Implementation of Woman and Man:

- Completed Stage 1 survey, with 61 submissions, containing 646 documents.
- Preliminary report drafted for review.
- Stage 2 preparations underway— diocesan survey and interviews.

## Australian Catholic Mapping Online (ACMO):

- Developed several National thematic maps.
- Launched the ACMO portal, with maps providing information about dioceses and parishes.
- *Population and Catholic Families* layers released.

## Catholic Directory statistics:

- Collected statistical data for the *2024-2025 Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia.*

## XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

- Coordinated the two-tiered 2024 Australian consultation in preparation for the Second Assembly.
- Prepared the National Summary from the consultation, compiled the diocesan testimonies and submitted them to the General Secretariat.
- Provided executive support to the Synod Working Group.
- Coordinated Australian Synod contacts network.
- Developed and distributed synodality resources.
- Director attended the Second Assembly of the Synod as a non-bishop voting member.

## Pedagogy Development: Building on Positive Learnings from COVID-19:

- Revised the final report and published it on the NCPR website.

## 2018-2019 Catholic Religious Australia survey:

- Published a journal article from research findings.

## Online surveys commissioned by the ACBC:

- ACBC employee engagement survey.

## Data Requests

- 23 Data Requests were processed, ranging from a simple request for Census data, to more complex requests that required collating and analysing data from a number of sources over an extended period of time.

## Workshops

- NCPR staff delivered 18 international/national seminars and workshops in 2024.

# ACR Journal Article

## Responding to ‘The Signs of the Times’

In the October 2024 edition of the *Australasian Catholic Record*, NCPR researchers Dr Trudy Dantis and Dr Stephen Reid, along with the ACCPR Chair, Professor Emeritus Gabrielle McMullen AM, have authored a journal article titled, “Responding to ‘The Signs of the Times’: The 2018 Survey of Catholic Religious Institutes in Australia and Emerging Initiatives”. The article shares some results from the 2018-2019 survey of Catholic religious institutes in Australia, along with some implications for the future examining the impact of increased immigration and new models of ministry such as Ministerial Public Juridic Persons.



# David Shinnick OAM KSS – The Father of Pastoral Planning

David Shinnick OAM, a man who made an immense contribution to the life of the Church in South Australia and throughout Australia, died on 11 November, aged 94.

David worked for the Archdiocese of Adelaide from the time of his appointment by Archbishop Gleeson in 1965 right up to his retirement in 1995. I named him the “Father of Pastoral Planning in Australia” because of the visionary way he developed this ministry in the light of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and the changing nature of Australian society. Dioceses around the country learnt from what he and his co-workers had done in Adelaide.

Being a Christian layperson meant, for David, being committed to the promotion of justice and peace. In association with Australian Catholic Relief (now Caritas Australia), he was responsible for introducing the Australia-wide Lenten appeal known as Project Compassion, and in 1991 he was the mastermind behind the extraordinary Turning Point National Forum held in Adelaide to celebrate the centenary of *Rerum Novarum* and the future of Catholic Social Teaching.

From the late 1950s, David and his wife Barbara were active members of the local parish that had been established in the Adelaide suburb of St Mary’s in 1952. His monumental, 645-page (plus attachments on a CD) history of the parish, *From the paddocks*, was published in 2013. It was in the parish church of St Bernadette that David’s funeral was held on 20 November, with his brother, Fr Maurice Shinnick, presiding, assisted by the Archbishop of Adelaide, Pat O’Regan, his longtime associate Fr Bob Wilkinson and other priests.

David was made a Knight of St Sylvester by Pope John Paul II in 1981, and in 1996 he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for services to the Church and community.

David was a friend and mentor to me. I learnt a lot from him when I began working in pastoral planning and research in the early 1990s, and I tried to see him whenever I was in Adelaide. When I last saw him, in October last year, he asked me to bless him. I reminded him that I am not a priest, but he said that didn’t matter. Saying that prayer of blessing over David was a very privileged moment for me.

In 2015, the National Pastoral Planning Network (NPPN) inaugurated an award for excellence in pastoral planning. It was called the David Shinnick Award and the first person to receive it was David himself “in recognition of his outstanding contribution and distinguished service”. David’s daughter, Anne-Marie, told me that he was immensely proud of this honour but always hoped that another person would join him as a recipient of the award. Sadly, the NPPN ceased to function not long after that, so David’s wish has not yet been fulfilled. Perhaps the NCPR can do something about it, as there are numerous people in Australia who have made or will make valuable contributions to the Church’s mission through the ministry of pastoral planning.

*Bob Dixon, Foundation Director (Retired), ACBC Pastoral Research Office.*

## NCPR Staff

Trudy Dantis  
Director

[trudy.dantis@catholic.org.au](mailto:trudy.dantis@catholic.org.au)  
(02) 6201 9812

Leith Dudfield  
Research Assistant

[leith.dudfield@catholic.org.au](mailto:leith.dudfield@catholic.org.au)  
(02) 6201 9813

Carole Gan  
Research Assistant

[carole.gan@catholic.org.au](mailto:carole.gan@catholic.org.au)

### Melbourne Office:

90 Albion Road  
Box Hill VIC 3128

Stephen Reid  
Senior Researcher

[stephen.reid@catholic.org.au](mailto:stephen.reid@catholic.org.au)  
(02) 6201 9808

Katherine Jelavic  
Research Assistant

[katherine.jelavic@catholic.org.au](mailto:katherine.jelavic@catholic.org.au)  
(02) 6201 9801

For more information please contact:  
National Centre for Pastoral Research  
Australian Catholic Bishops  
Conference,  
GPO Box 368 Canberra ACT 2601  
P: (02) 6201 9812  
E: [ncpr@catholic.org.au](mailto:ncpr@catholic.org.au)  
W: [www.ncpr.catholic.org.au](http://www.ncpr.catholic.org.au)



## Christmas Greetings From the National Centre for Pastoral Research

*Look! The virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.*

*Matthew 1:23*



*From the NCPR staff: Trudy, Stephen, Leith, Katherine and Carole.*

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

*Use the link below to catch up on previous issues or to subscribe to ensure that you get all the pastoral research news straight to your inbox.*

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

## CHRISTMAS SHUTDOWN



The NCPR office will be closed from **Monday 23 December 2024** until **Friday 3 January 2025** (inclusive). During this entire period, we will be unable to process any research requests.

We thank you for your cooperation.