

CATHOLICS FOR MINISTRY



2012 UPDATE

Catholic Parish Ministry in Australia: The Crisis Deepens

Peter J. Wilkinson



WATAC
Women and the Australian Church

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'Whether the pastoral ideals of Christian renewal can be realized will greatly depend on the quality and accuracy of information available to church leaders on the crucial problems they face. Equally, the success of the renewal process will depend on careful long-range planning and on continual re-examination of apostolic methods'. - Francis X Gannon, Director, CARA, Washington, DC

'The sociological report cannot take the place of pastoral decision-making ... [it] supplies only one piece the pastor has to find a place for in the jigsaw puzzle of his pastoral enterprise'. - Edward Schillebeeckx

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Introduction

This document updates *Catholic Parish Ministry in Australia: Facing Disaster?* published in February 2011 by Catholics for Ministry and Women and the Australian Church (online version available at www.catholicsforministry.com.au). It is based principally on data in *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia 2011-2012*. It includes new information, an update of the Statistical Summary and extra tables and figures.

As with the original document this update examines how the structures of the Church in Australia are coping and evaluates the capacity of parishes and their ministers to provide adequate pastoral and spiritual care to the People of God. Some of its principal findings are:

- There will be a 30 percent turnover within the Australian hierarchy in the 15 months between May 2011 and August 2012 when up to 12 new bishops are likely to be appointed through an opaque system with minimal input from the laity.
- Just 5 Australian bishops have convened a diocesan synod in the 47 years since Vatican II, and the last national synod convened by the Australian bishops was 75 years ago, in 1937.
- In 2006, there were an estimated 900,000 'ex-Catholics' in Australia, namely, persons baptized and raised as Catholics but who no longer identify as such. There are more ex-Catholics than regular Mass-goers.
- Over 30 percent of all parishes are now without a full-time resident priest not shared with another parish, an increase of 67 parishes in one year.
- The number of priests recruited from overseas to minister in parishes continues to increase. They make up around one quarter of all priests in parish ministry
- Local home-grown seminarians in Australia's 8 diocesan seminaries make up less than half of all students preparing for the priesthood and ministry in the territorial dioceses.
- 53 diocesan priests died in the year to August 2011, but just 28 new diocesan priests were ordained in 2011. Only half of the newly ordained were local or home-grown vocations.
- Permanent deacons have a minor role in parish ministry in Australia and make up just 3.7 percent of Australia's ordained clergy. Worldwide, permanent deacons constitute 8.3 percent of the ordained clergy, and in the US it is 32.9 percent.
- Lay associates and lay pastoral workers, overwhelmingly women, make up almost 20 percent of all parish ministers.
- Old age is a major factor confronting religious communities. In 2009 the median age of religious sisters was 74 years; the median age of religious brothers was 71 years; and 65 percent of all clerical religious were aged 60 years and over.
- Only 7 dioceses - Sydney, Parramatta, Wagga Wagga, Melbourne, Perth, Ballarat, and Broken Bay - had Mass attendance rates above the national average of 13.8 percent. Eleven dioceses, almost all regional or rural, had Mass attendance rates below 11 percent.
- Mass attendance by young Catholics aged 15-34 years has been falling steadily since 1996. In 2006 the attendance rate of those aged 20-29 years was 6 percent.
- The number of students enrolled in Catholic schools (710,623 in 2011) is almost exactly the same as the number of Catholics who attend Mass regularly (708,618 in 2006).

1. Dioceses and Bishops

1.1. The Data

At July 2011 the number of territorial dioceses in Australia remained at 28. However, three dioceses - Wilcannia-Forbes, Toowoomba and Sandhurst - were without a permanent bishop and in the care of an Apostolic Administrator (Note: A permanent appointment to Sandhurst was announced in February 2012).

There were 36 active bishops at July 2011, the same number as the previous year. However, during 2010-2011 several changes occurred: Bishop Joseph Grech of Sandhurst died, Bishop William Morris was removed from the Toowoomba Diocese in extraordinary circumstances, Bishop Michael Malone of Maitland-Newcastle retired early, and three new bishops were appointed: Bishop Peter Comensoli as Auxiliary to Sydney, Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv. as Auxiliary to Melbourne, and Bishop William Wright as Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle. Bishop Nguyen became the first Vietnamese-born and Asian priest to be appointed to an Australian diocese.

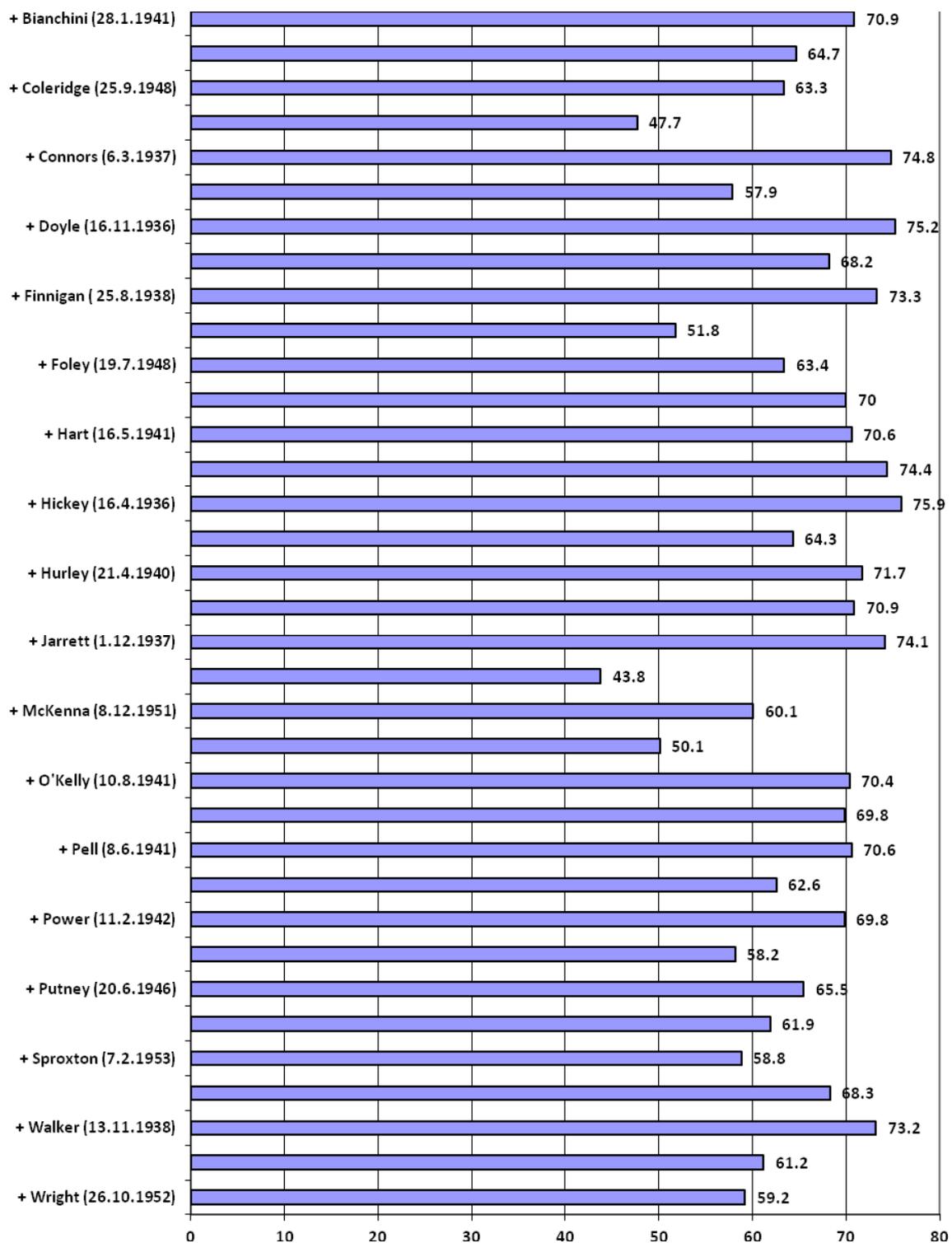
At July 2011 two bishops still in office had completed their 75th year and tendered their resignations: Bishop Luc Matthys of Armidale, and Archbishop Barry Hickey of Perth. Since then Archbishop John Bathesby of Brisbane has completed his 75th year (26 July 2011) and resigned. Prior to 30 June 2012 a further two bishops must tender their resignations: Archbishop Adrian Doyle of Hobart (b. 16 November 1936), and Bishop Peter Connors of Ballarat (b. 6 March 1937). Although Bishop Brian Heenan of Rockhampton will not complete his 75th year until 4 August 2012, he has already submitted his resignation and had it accepted. Bishop Patrick Power, Auxiliary of Canberra-Goulburn, who has just turned 70, will retire in June 2012. At 1 January 2012 the median age of the 35 active bishops in the 28 territorial dioceses was 59.9 years, while their average age was 65.2 years (Table 1.1). Within the next 5 years 16 of the current active bishops will have retired or be on the point of retiring.

During 2011 the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) met twice in plenary session. At its May 2011 meeting much of its attention was given to the bishops' 5-yearly *ad limina* visit to Rome scheduled for October 2011, as well as to forming a position on how to respond to the forced removal of Bishop William Morris from his diocese of Toowoomba. It also considered the report *Catholic Parish Ministry in Australia: Facing Disaster?* and proposed to further examine its pastoral implications.

On 30th September, 2010 the ACBC announced that new musical settings for the new English translations of the Roman Missal would begin in 1 January 2011 and official use of the new texts in parish liturgies would commence in Advent 2011.

During 2011 Bishop David Walker convened the first synod of the Broken Bay Diocese with the intention of laying the foundations for its future direction. This was only the sixth diocesan

Table 1.1. Age of 35 active bishops of 28 territorial dioceses at 1 January 2012



synod to be held in Australia since the Vatican Council II, in 1965, called for synods 'to flourish with vigour' (*Christus Dominus*, n. 36).

In August 2011 twenty-six Australian bishops led over 5000 young people from parishes throughout the nation to World Youth Day in Madrid, describing the event as 'one of the greatest opportunities to evangelize young people and to demonstrate the global church'.

1.2. Comment

Within a 15 month period (May 2011 – August 2012) up to twelve new bishops will likely be appointed to the Australian hierarchy, representing a 30 percent turnover at one of the most critical moments for the church in this nation. Perhaps it is time to ask: is the current process for the selection of bishops in Australia the best possible for our church?

During the first millennium the selection of new bishops often took place during synods, where clergy and lay people gathered together with their bishop and other bishops of the province. In the 5th century, Popes Celestine I and Leo I both insisted on the right of the faithful to elect their bishop, and condemned any attempt to impose a bishop without their consent. Pope Celestine I wrote: 'The one who is to be head over all should be elected by all. No one should be made a bishop over the unwilling'.

Vatican II encouraged synods, with the co-responsible participation of clergy and laity. However, current and recent bishops of Australia have generally shown a clear reluctance to hold them. The last Australian plenary or national synod – which changed the process for the selection of bishops - was in 1937, and in the 46 years since Vatican II just 5 bishops have convened 6 canonical diocesan synods. Perhaps now is an opportune time to have the process for selecting new bishops, and the role of the laity in it, discussed once again in a synod forum.

Canon Law allows any Ordinary, after consultation with his Council of Priests, to convene a diocesan synod when he considers it opportune. Choosing a new bishop would be an opportune occasion to convene one. A synod could be held when an incumbent bishop tenders his resignation or is approaching canonical retirement age, or when the pastoral demands of a diocese suggest the need for an auxiliary bishop. The appointment of a new bishop is a moment of grace for any diocese, as well as a time when gathered together in synod the clergy and laity of the diocese - or province - are able to discern the real needs of their community, describe the type of person they need as their bishop, and, if possible, identify those among the clergy who might be suitable for this office and ministry.

The ACBC's decision to introduce the new English translations of the Roman Missal without proper consultation with the laity and without parish trials caused much dismay and disappointment among both clergy and laity. With so many major problems facing the Church, many Catholics could not understand why Rome and the English-speaking bishops of the world insisted on these translations having such high priority, especially when the quality of the texts

had been widely questioned. However, Australian parishes have now introduced the new translations, and it is to be hoped that the bishops will properly survey their acceptance and effectiveness.

On 2 May 2011 Benedict XVI dismissed of Bishop William Morris as Ordinary of the Toowoomba Diocese. It had a massive negative impact on the Catholics of Australia and has reverberated throughout the world. As no charges were laid publicly against Bishop Morris, and no explanation given for the dismissal, the Pope's decision appeared to many as a naked exercise of power and authority. It left not only Toowoomba's Catholics shocked and dismayed, but many bishops concerned and confused. At the time the ACBC pledged to follow up these concerns during their October *ad limina* to Rome, but when they raised the issue there they were effectively told to swallow the decision and remain mute. Subsequently, two eminent lawyers, a retired Judge of Queensland's Supreme Court and a Melbourne archdiocesan canonist, have examined the available evidence, and both have concluded that Bishop Morris was denied procedural fairness and natural justice.

If the Pope Benedict, in making his decision, had intended to correct an error or teach a lesson, he failed. Without charge or explanation as to why the dismissal was necessary, no lesson was taught, the decision failed to challenge the conscience of the local church in Toowoomba and Australia, and it was poorly received. Worse, it revealed a lack of basic justice in the Church, caused dismay and division among the clergy and laity, weakened collegiality, and degraded the principle of subsidiarity. It gave preference to uniformity over spiritual unity, and revealed a lack of trust in the Spirit at work in a local church. Though Bishop Morris's reputation was damaged by the decision, he remains a bishop of good standing and has received strong support from some of his fellow bishops.

2. Personal Ordinariates for former Anglicans

2.1. The Data

On 4 November 2009 Benedict XVI issued the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* together with a set of *Complementary Norms* (CN) providing for new 'Personal Ordinariates' within the Roman Rite for Anglicans reconciling with the Catholic Church. Former Anglicans who enter into full communion with the Catholic Church will be able to maintain a degree of corporate identity and autonomy with regard to the Catholic bishops of territorial dioceses and preserve elements of their distinctive Anglican spiritual and liturgical patrimony.

The canonical model provided by the Apostolic Constitution allows for a Personal Ordinate providing pastoral oversight and guidance to groups of former Anglicans through an Ordinary, who will usually be appointed from among former Anglican clergy. An Australian Personal Ordinate would be expected to relate pastorally and practically with the local Catholic territorial dioceses and with the ACBC, and its Ordinary would be an *ex officio* member of the ACBC. There could also be more than one Australian Personal Ordinate.

The Ordinary of a Personal Ordinariate will generally follow the directives of the ACBC and coordinate the pastoral activity of the Ordinariate with the pastoral programs of the territorial diocese in which it is located (CN, 2-3). Married former Anglican bishops are eligible to be appointed as an Ordinary, but they must first be ordained a priest in the Catholic Church. The Ordinary will exercise pastoral and sacramental ministry within the Ordinariate with full jurisdictional authority, and can call on other former Anglican bishops belonging to the Ordinariate to assist him. They too can be invited to participate in ACBC meetings with the equivalent status of a retired bishop (CN, 11).

Each Ordinariate is have a Governing Council, with its own statutes and composed of at least six priests. Half of its membership must be elected by the priests of the Ordinariate. The Governing Council has the same canonical rights and responsibilities as the College of Consultors and Presbyteral Council of a diocese, and the Ordinary must have its consent to admit candidates to Holy Orders, to erect or suppress personal parishes, to erect or suppress a house of formation, and to approve a program of formation. The Governing Council also has a deliberative vote when choosing a *terna* (a list of three names) to submit to the Holy See for the appointment of an Ordinary (CN, 12).

With the consent of his Council, the Ordinary may erect personal parishes, which must have a pastor - who may be assisted by a parochial vicar - and a pastoral and finance council. He may also establish territorial deaneries covering multiple personal parishes (CN, 4). For the pastoral care of former Anglicans living within the boundaries of territorial dioceses where no personal parish has been erected, the Ordinary, having consulted the local diocesan bishop, may set up quasi-parishes (CN, 14).

All Personal Ordinariates may have as Ordinary a bishop or a priest. Married former Anglican clergy may be ordained as Catholic priests, but never as bishops, and all Anglican clergy transferring to the Ordinariate for sacred ministry will require a Catholic priest as sponsor and ordination within the Catholic Church. As a general rule, an Ordinariate will admit only celibate men to the priesthood, and only men who belong to a personal parish of the Ordinariate or who were previously Anglican and have established full communion with the Catholic Church. With the consent of his Council and after a process of discernment based on criteria determined by the Ordinary in consultation with the ACBC and approved by the Holy See, an Ordinary may also present to the Pope a request for the admission of married men to the presbyterate. Ordinariate candidates for the priesthood are to be prepared alongside other Catholic seminarians, though the Ordinariate may establish a house of formation for safeguarding the Anglican patrimony. Persons who were previously ordained in the Catholic Church and who subsequently became an Anglican, cannot exercise sacred ministry in the Ordinariate; nor can Anglican clergy in irregular marriages be accepted for Holy Orders (CN, 6). Under local arrangements, Ordinariate priests may be members of the Presbyteral Council of the territorial diocese in which they exercise their ministry and, together with Ordinariate deacons, may also be members of a diocesan Pastoral Council (CN, 8).

Since the Ordinary must provide adequate remuneration to his clergy, and look after their needs in the event of sickness, disability and old age, it is expected that the Ordinary of an Australian Ordinariate will need to discuss with the ACBC resources and funds for the care of his clergy. If necessary, and with permission, priests of the Ordinariate may engage in secular professions compatible with their ministry.

All Anglicans wishing to be members of an Ordinariate must apply in writing. Anglicans who reconcile with the Catholic Church may choose to belong to either an Ordinariate or a Catholic territorial diocese. An Ordinariate will not be restricted to former Anglicans and any Catholic will be free to worship and receive the sacraments in an Ordinariate parish.

In response to the Apostolic Constitution, the ACBC set up an Ordinariate Implementation Committee, chaired by Bishop Peter Elliot, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne and a former Anglican. The ACBC also designated him as its delegate to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and the liaison person with Australian Anglicans wishing to reconcile.

Since 2009 two Ordinariate festivals have been held, in Queensland and Western Australia, both hosted by Bishop Elliot and Archbishop John Hepworth of the Anglican Catholic Church in Australia (ACCA), head of the Australian Traditional Anglican Communion (TAC) and, until March 2012, the TAC's global primate. The festivals were attended by members of the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA), the Anglican Catholic Church in Australia, the Anglican Church of Torres Strait, and some Anglican religious interested in becoming part of an Australian Personal Ordinariate. An Information Day was also held in Melbourne in June 2011. The consensus at all these gatherings was that unity could be achieved while preserving the Anglican patrimony.

Initially the ACBC anticipated the establishment of a small Personal Ordinariate by Pentecost 2011, with specific churches designated for its use. In February 2011, Archbishop Hepworth stated that some 800 people of the Anglican Catholic Church in Australia (ACCA) were committed to joining an Australian Ordinariate, and that once established, it would grow strongly. In May 2011 the ACBC established an Ad Hoc Commission for the Australian Personal Ordinariate to supervise the establishment process and to work with the Roman CDF.

By the end of 2011 three Anglican groups had submitted petitions to the Holy See for the establishment of a Personal Ordinariate in Australia. The first, in February 2011, was a joint petition from the Anglican Catholic Church in Australia (ACCA) and Forward in Faith (FiF); the second came from the 9,000-member Anglican Church of Torres Strait, which decided unanimously at its 2010 synod to petition the Holy See separately to become a Personal Ordinariate. While the Holy See has not yet publicly announced its decision on either petition, there is an expectation that the first Australian Ordinariate may be established sometime in 2012.

The Ad Hoc Commission supervising the project has received many applications from Anglican clergy to be ordained Catholic priests, and Bishop Elliot has recently announced that 15

Anglican clergy have received first-stage approval from Rome to prepare for ordination in the Australian Ordinariate. Six are from the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA) and nine are from the Anglican Catholic Church in Australia (ACCA). Nine have applied for the dispensation from celibacy (*The Swag*, Autumn 2012, p. 28). The Commission is also overseeing the formation and preparation of Anglican clergy and laity for reconciliation.

All three petitioning groups in Australia are 'traditionalist' Anglicans. ACCA and the Church of Torres Strait are both member churches of the Traditional Anglican Communion (TAC), an international breakaway communion of 15 Anglican churches claiming some 400,000 members. The TAC is guided by a College of Bishops who elect a primate. Until March 2012 the primate was Archbishop John Hepworth. The TAC churches left the mainstream Anglican Communion in 1991 for three main reasons: they rejected the ordination of women and practicing homosexuals; they opposed the theological modernism of Anglican liberals; and they did not want to have any updating or creative change to the traditional Anglo-Catholic liturgy. Forward in Faith (FiF) is also a 'traditionalist' movement operating in several provinces of the mainstream Anglican Communion, but opposed to the ordination of women and liberal views on homosexuality. Worldwide in 2005 there were 800 Anglican churches belonging to the FiF movement.

While primate of the global TAC, Archbishop Hepworth, was a prime mover for unity with the Catholic Church and a promoter of Ordinariates. Now, no longer primate, his influence will be modified. Also, because he was ordained as a Catholic priest before converting to Anglicanism, and because his marriage is canonically irregular, he cannot function as an ordained minister in any Personal Ordinariate (*Catholic Weekly*, 5 December 2011).

At February 2012 just two Personal Ordinariates had been established: Our Lady of Walsingham in England and Wales on 15 January 2011, and the Chair of St Peter in the United States on 1 January 2012. A petition for a Personal Ordinariate in Canada has been submitted, but the process is currently 'on hold' pending the resolution of some outstanding difficulties.

In the most recent development, which took place at an official meeting of the TAC College of Bishops – with 12 of 20 bishops in attendance – in Johannesburg in March 2012, it was decided that, while grateful for *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, the TAC would decline the invitation to unite with the Catholic Church and would remain fully Anglican.

2.2. Comment

Bishop Elliot has likened the Anglican Personal Ordinariate to 'a kind of national diocese', like the current Australian Military Ordinariate, or to an 'Eastern Catholic Church' but where clergy and laity will be part of the Roman Rite. He expects Anglicans who reconcile with the Catholic Church will be 'united but not absorbed' (*Catholic Weekly*, 27 November 2011). He has also indicated that when the Australian Ordinariate is established it will be a 'national' community with bases in most States. At March 2012 ten Catholic territorial dioceses are involved in the

planning – Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Ballarat, Sale, Hobart, Broken Bay, Cairns, Rockhampton and Brisbane – and Ordinariate parishes are likely to be established in these dioceses first.

The Apostolic Constitution envisions close pastoral collaboration between the clergy of Ordinariate parishes and the clergy of the territorial dioceses within which they are located (CN, 8-9). The *Norms* specifically grant pastors of a territorial parish that has a personal parish within its boundary, faculties to supply liturgical and pastoral services to the faithful of the personal parish in certain circumstances. When deemed appropriate, Ordinariate clergy are also expected to be available to assist the territorial diocese where they live, and in certain circumstances, diocesan and religious clergy, may collaborate in the pastoral care of the Ordinariate (CN, 9).

Collaboration between the laity and religious of an Ordinariate and a territorial diocese in pastoral or charitable activities can also take place under the supervision of the diocesan bishop or parish priest, but authority is to be exercised jointly with that of the Ordinary and the Ordinariate pastor (CN, 5). Continuing formation of Ordinariate clergy is to be through participation in local programs provided by the ACBC and local diocesan bishops (CN,10).

When an Ordinariate is established in Australia, its ministers and ministry will certainly intersect and interrelate with those of the territorial dioceses and parishes. To the extent, therefore, that the life and ministry of an Ordinariate will have an impact on local parishes and their communities, it must be considered relevant to parish ministry.

Bishop Elliot has stated that an Ordinariate ‘will add rich variety to our church’ and ‘strengthen ecumenical relations’. However, because all three Australian petitioning groups are very ‘traditionalist’ in their theological and liturgical outlook, difficulties could arise for ‘progressive’ Catholic bishops and clergy who are looking for greater Vatican II reform and have concerns about the ‘Reform of the Reform’ agenda currently being promoted by Rome. The recent decision of the TAC College of Bishops to ‘remain Anglican’ may also make the ACBC more careful and hesitant. It is too early to predict what might happen with an Australian Ordinariate, but the slow response of the Holy See to the petitions of the Australian groups suggests that there may be more problems and complexities than originally envisaged. If an Anglican Personal Ordinariate is established in Australia it is likely to be only the third in the world, and will probably model itself on the Ordinariate in the UK.

3. Catholic Population

3.1. The Data

At 30 June 2011 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated the total Australian population to be 22,635,000 (see Population Clock at www.abs.gov.au). Growth in the 12 months to 31 March 2011 was 312,400 (+ 1.4%) (ABS. Cat. 3101.0).

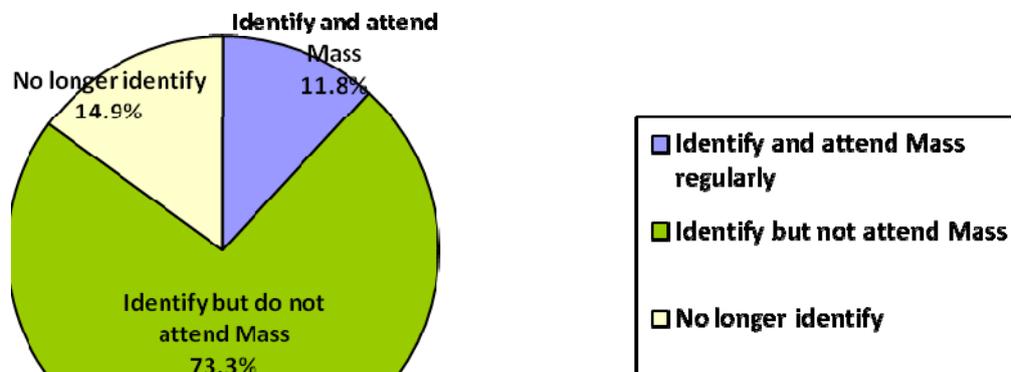
The self-identifying Catholic population at the 2006 Australian Census was 5,126, 885, and it may be expected that self-identifying Catholics in the 2011 Census will continue to make up around 25 – 25.8 percent of the total population. The number May 2011 is likely to be 5.66 million (25%) to 5.84 million (25.8%), suggesting an increase 530,000(+10%) to 710,000 (+14%), between 2006 and 2011, or an average annual increase of 100,000-140,000 during the period.

3.2. Comment

The 2006 Census Catholic population figure does not represent all Australian residents who have been baptized and raised as Catholic. Cahill (2011, 2) has estimated that at the time of the 2006 Census there were probably resident in Australia some 900,000 ‘ex-Catholics’, that is, persons who had been baptized and raised as Catholics but who no longer identified as such in the Census. That number would represent around 15 percent of some 6 million baptized Catholics in Australia. Australian ‘ex-Catholics’ are equivalent in number to all the Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus in Australia combined (ABS Fact Sheet, 70/2007).

Figure 3.1, which presents a picture of Australia’s estimated 6 million baptized Catholics, shows those who identify as Catholics and regularly attend Mass (708,618 or 11.8%), those who identify but do not regularly attend Mass (4,418,266 or 73.5%), and ‘ex-Catholics’ who were baptized and raised as Catholics but no longer self-identify as such (900,000 or 14.9%).

Figure 3.1. Self-identification and Mass attendance of estimated 6 million Australians baptized and raised as Catholic, 2006



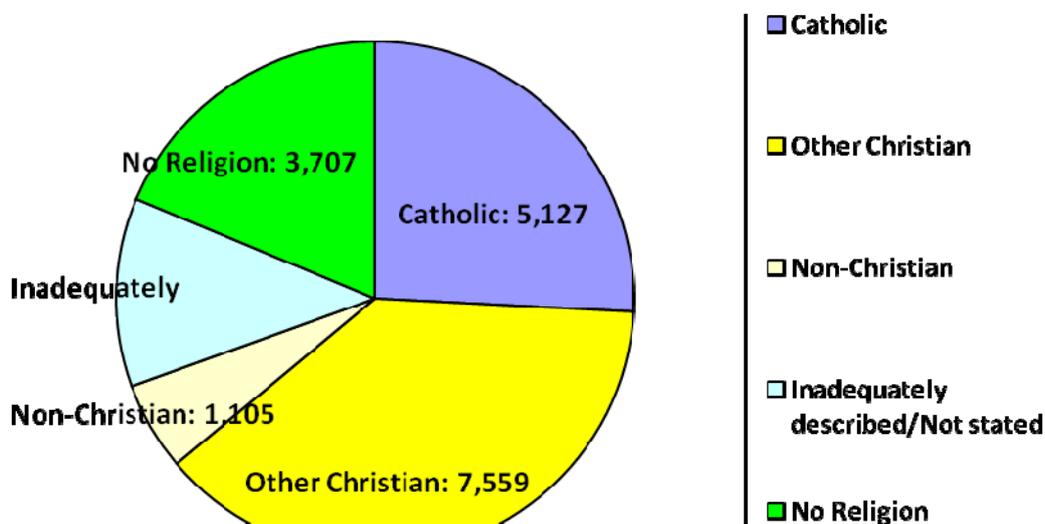
Source: ABS, 2006 Census; *National Count of Attendance*, 2006; Cahill, 2011,2

Australia is not the only country where there are large numbers of ‘ex-Catholics’. A 2009 survey in the United States found an estimated 30 million ‘ex-Catholics’, or 10 percent of all US residents baptized and raised as Catholics (www.pewforum.org).

The religious identity question in the Australian Census form has been optional since the first national census in 1911. From 1933, when the form explicitly stated that a response was 'optional', respondents not stating their religious identity have consistently represented around 10-13 percent of the total population, and among these were probably many baptized Catholics. Some baptized Catholics may even have identified as non-Christian or as having 'no religion'. Until 1966, Australians stating 'no religion' in the Census never exceeded 1 percent of the total population. However, in 1971 when the census form instructed 'if no religion, write none', there was an immediate 7-fold increase in respondents stating 'no religion': (from 0.8% of the total population in 1966 to 6.7% in 1971), and at the 2006 Census 3.71 million Australians, or 18.7% of the total population stated 'no religion'. It was almost the same number as those identifying as Anglican: 3.72 million and 18.7% of the total population (Figure 3.2).

While it has been of great concern to the Australian bishops that just 708,618 or 13.8 percent of the 5.127 million self-identifying Australian Catholics in the 2006 Census were attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis, what should be of equal or greater concern is why almost 15 percent of all those Australians who have been baptized and raised Catholics are turning their backs on their religion and refusing to identify with it. That, and the fact that there are now more ex-Catholics than Mass attenders, must be a wake-up call that something has gone terribly wrong.

Figure 3.2. Religious identity responses at 2006 Australian Census ('000s)



Source: ABS, *2006 Census of Population and Housing*. See 'Change in Religious Affiliations (1996 Census-2006 Census) and Major Religious Affiliation, 1901-2001'.

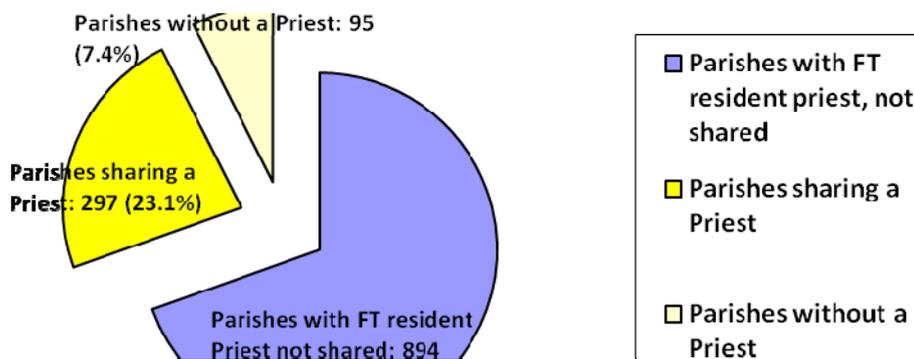
4. Parishes

4.1. The Data

The 2011-2012 *Directory* gives the total number of parishes in the 28 territorial dioceses as 1304. However, closer examination of the data suggests this number does not represent the situation on the ground. In several dioceses multiple parishes which have been amalgamated, merged or clustered into single parishes still appear in the *Directory* as if amalgamation or clustering had not taken place. A more accurate figure for the total number of parishes would be 1286, the number used in this document.

The *Directory* lists just 1191 parishes (92.6% of 1286 parishes) with a priest assigned. Of these, only 894 (69.5 percent of 1286 parishes) had been assigned a full-time (FT) resident priest who was not shared with another parish, while another 297 parishes (23.1% of 1286 parishes) had to share a priest with at least one other parish. Ninety-five parishes (7.4% of 1286 parishes) were listed without any priest assigned (Figure 4.1), and in 30 of these parishes were 2 in the care of a permanent deacon, 24 in the care of religious sisters and 4 in the care of lay women pastoral associates.

Figure 4.1: Parishes and assigned priests: 1286 parishes in 28 territorial dioceses, July 2011



Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2011-2012*. Note: Up until 1928 the official directories did not use term 'parish'. From 1841 to 1927 they referred to 'districts' (= parish) or 'missions' (= parish), or 'mission stations' (= out stations of a district), or 'churches' (= buildings). Sometimes they listed 'districts/churches' and 'mission stations' to make the distinction between places that had a church and resident priest, and those that did not.

Table 4.1: Parishes and assigned priests in 28 territorial dioceses, July 2010 and July 2011

Date	Total Parishes	Parishes with Full-Time Resident Priest (not shared)	Parishes sharing a Priest	Parishes without assigned Priest

July 2010	1282	961 (75%)	225 (17.6%)	96 (7.4%)
July 2011	1286	894 (69.5%)	297 (23.1%)	95 (7.4%)
Change	+ 4 (+ 0.3%)	-67 (-5.5%)	+ 72 (+5.5%)	-1 (-1%)

Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012*

The instances of bishops entrusting the pastoral care of parishes to deacons, religious sisters or brothers, and other lay persons, under the provisions of Canon 517.2, are increasing worldwide. In 1985 there were 1635 parishes (0.8% of all parishes) in this situation worldwide; in 2008 there were 3106 parishes (1.4% of all parishes). In 2011 in the United States 469 (2.6% of all parishes) were entrusted to deacons, religious sisters or brothers, or lay persons. In Australia in 2011 there were 30 (2.3% of all parishes) in this situation. During the year many more parishes had to share a priest with another parish (Table 4.1). At July 2010, 225 (17.6% of 1282) parishes had to share a priest; one year later 297 (23.1% of 1286) parishes had to share a priest (+5.5%).

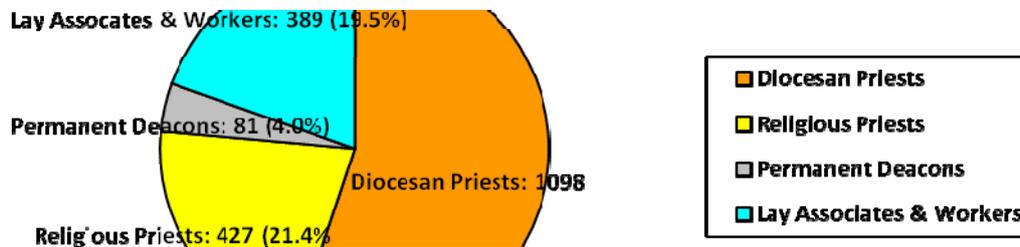
Table 4.2: Office/designation of 1524 priests resident in 1191 territorial parishes, July 2011

Office/Designation	Number	Percent
Bishop	37 (includes 1 retired bishop acting as Apostolic Administrator)	2.4%
Dean, Administrator, Moderator, Chancellor	130	8.5%
Parish Priest	860	56.4%
Priest in Charge, Rector, Community Leader, Abbott, Parish Vicar, Superior	21	1.4%
Assistant Priest, Associate Pastor	330	21.6%
Priest in Residence (including chaplains and retired priests)	137 (includes 26 retired priests)	9.0%
Contact Priests (7), Youth Minister (2)	9	0.6%

Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2011-2012*

Of the 1524 priests listed as resident or active in the 1191 territorial parishes with priests assigned, not all were engaged in full-time parish ministry. As their various listed offices or designations suggest (Table 4.2), possibly 15 percent of all priests residing or active in parishes had other duties besides parish ministry.

Figure 4.2: Groupings of all 1995 pastoral ministers in 1221 territorial parishes, July 2011



Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2011-2012*

These included administration, religious community leadership, youth ministry or chaplaincy to ethnic communities, hospitals and police. Moreover, of the 137 listed as priests-in-residence, 26 were retired priests, or Pastors Emeritus, who had chosen to spend some of their retirement years helping out in their former parish. At best, many of these priests provide only a modicum of pastoral care to local parishioners. The role/ministry of ‘contact priests’ is unclear.

The ministerial staffing of parishes is also diverse and changing significantly. The 2011-2012 *Directory* lists a total of 1995 pastoral ministers in 1221 parishes. They include 1098 diocesan priests (55.0%), 427 religious priests (21.4%), 81 permanent deacons (4.0%), and 389 lay pastoral associates or workers (19.5%). Included among the lay pastoral associates and workers were 194 religious sisters (Figure 4.2).

4.2. Comment

Almost one in every three territorial parishes is now without a full-time resident priest not shared with another parish. In a single year a further 72 parishes have had to share a priest with another parish. The situation is now deteriorating so rapidly that, should the present trend continue at the same rate for the next 10 years, only a handful of parishes with a full-time-resident priest not shared with another parish would remain.

Despite continued Catholic population growth just five new parishes were established in the year to July 2011. Since the year 2000, when 1397 territorial parishes were functioning, 200 have been merged, absorbed, amalgamated or clustered, representing 14.3 percent of all Australian parishes. This is double the rate of the United States where parish numbers have been reduced by 1359, or 7.1 percent of the 19,000 parishes functioning at the start of the decade. As in Australia, parish numbers in the US have now returned to where they were in the mid-1960s, and many Catholics are not happy.

US Bishop Howard Hubbard, reporting on his November 2011 *ad limina* to Rome, indicated that the Sacred Congregations for the Clergy and for Bishops have become increasingly concerned about the closing, merging and reconfiguring of parishes. New instructions on the restructuring of parishes will emphasize that, before any decision can be made, there must be extensive consultations with parishioners who will be affected, and with the diocesan Council of Priests. The assets of the closed parish will also have to remain within the local community and, if a parish or school are converted to other uses, insofar as is possible, they should be made available for social or charitable purposes. Rome is also planning to issue another instruction on the merging of parishes, highlighting the role that the ordained priest must play in whatever reconfiguration takes place (www.evangelist.org). In an extraordinary decision in early March 2012, following appeals to Rome by parishioners, the Holy See has reversed a decision by the Bishop of Cleveland, Ohio, to close 13 churches in the Archdiocese and instructed that the parishes be restored.

5. Priests

5.1. The Data

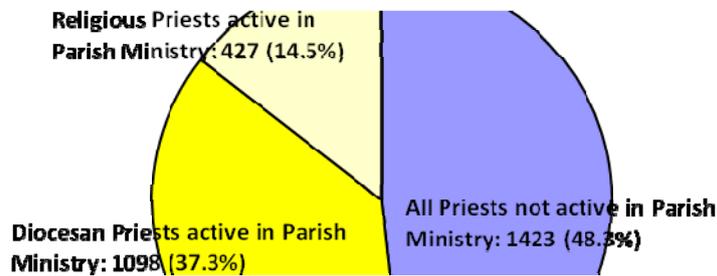
The 2011-2012 *Directory* lists a grand total of 2947 priests (including bishops) in the 28 territorial dioceses: 1816 diocesan and 1131 religious. Of the total, just 1524 priests (51.7%) were actively engaged in parish ministry, including 1098 diocesan and 427 religious (Figure 5.1).

In the year to 31 August 2011, the National Council of Priests reported the deaths of 86 priests (53 diocesan, 33 religious), representing almost 3 percent of all priests (www.theswag.org.au). Most were retired, but some were still active. It may be expected that similar numbers will die annually over the next 15 years as the large numbers of those ordained in the 1950s and 1960s move into their final years. By 2026 that could represent a further 1300 deaths.

During 2011 only 28 new diocesan priests were ordained from the 8 diocesan seminaries (Table 6.1). Ordinations of similar numbers over the next 15 years will add only 400-500 new priests.

While the 2011-2012 *Directory* shows 14 less diocesan priests in parish ministry than the previous year, it does not take account of the 26 retired priests residing in the parishes and considered 'active'. During the year there was an increase of 16 religious priests in parishes.

Figure 5.1. All 2947 priests in 28 territorial dioceses relative to parish ministry, July 2011



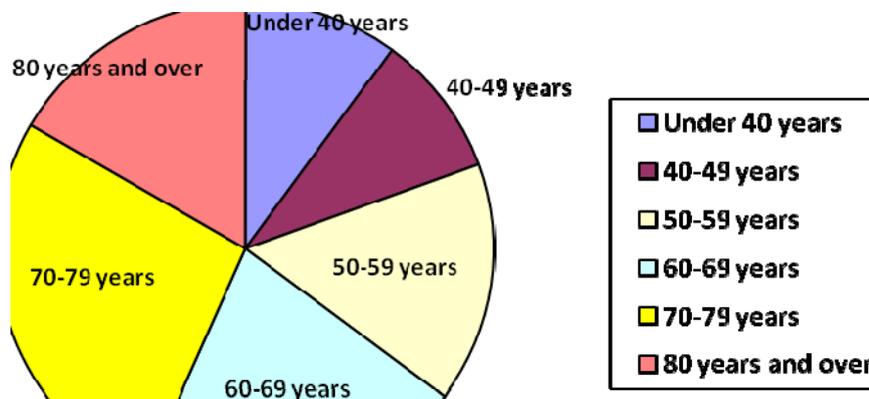
Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2011-2012*. Note: Throughout this document the term 'Diocesan Priests' is used, because that is the term which appears in the current *Official Directory*. However, official directories from 1841 up until 1940 used the term 'Secular Priests'.

Precise information on the number of overseas-sourced priests working in parish ministry is not available, but it is estimated that it has increased from 300-340 at July 2010 to around 350-400 at July 2011. This suggests that overseas-sourced priests, both diocesan and religious, now account for one in every four priests engaged in parish ministry. Given the continuing shortage of local, home-grown vocations, overseas-sourced priests will play an increasing role in parish ministry for the foreseeable future.

During the year new data on Australia's clerical religious became available. Published in the report *See, I am doing a new thing!*, the results of a 2009 survey showed that clerical religious numbers were holding up well (1415 members in January 2000; 1611 in January 2009), that they were the youngest group of all Catholic religious in Australia (median age 67 years), and made up 19.1 percent of all religious members (in 1901 they constituted 4%).

The age profile of the 1317 clerical religious at 1 January 2009 (Figure 5.2) showed 35 percent aged under 60 years, and 56.6 percent aged under 70 years. Almost 31 percent were aged 75 years and over. First professions during the period 1997-2008 numbered 182, but departures during the same period were 174. Deaths in the period 1997-2008 totaled 383, an average of 32 annually. Around three-quarters were born in Australia, with the others originating from 75 different countries, both English-speaking and otherwise. A large number were born in Ireland.

Figure 5.2. Age profile of 1317 clerical religious in Australia at 1 January 2009



Source: *See, I am doing a new thing!*, Table 9

5.2. Comment

The number of priests active in parish ministry across Australia remained steady during the year at 1524 (1523 in previous year). A slight decline in diocesan priests (-14) was compensated by an increase of religious priests (+16). However, the presence of 26 retired priests (mostly diocesan) still residing in parishes and considered 'active' masked a deteriorating situation.

The continuing efforts of many bishops to recruit priests from outside Australia also suggests that the number and proportion of overseas-sourced priests engaged in parish ministry will continue to increase for the foreseeable future. However, as Hoge and Okure concluded for the US, 'the priest shortage ... cannot be solved through bringing in international priests. The numbers are too low and the difficulties too great. International priests [will] provide only a partial alleviation' (Hoge & Okure, 2006, 28). This is also true for Australia.

The recruitment of overseas or 'international' priests is a growing phenomenon in the Western world, and a strategy promoted by Rome. One of the allegations made against Bishop Morris in an (unsigned) 2007 document from the Sacred Congregation for Bishops states that he had failed 'to have an effective and sufficiently dynamic program for ... finding priests from elsewhere', despite his 2006 Pastoral Letter stating that he was 'open to inviting priests from overseas'.

With so many overseas-sourced priests now working in Australian parishes, a major effort is needed to assist them to become fully integrated into the life of their respective presbyterates, and to acculturate them to Australian life and values.

Recruitment of professionals from overseas to Australia is not unique to Catholic priests or seminarians. Australian Health Occupation statistics for 2006 also show that 50 percent of GPs, 42 percent of medical specialists, 47 percent of dental practitioners, and 27 percent of nurses were born overseas (ABS, Cat. 4819.0). Over the past 20 years increasing numbers of health professionals have come from India, the Philippines and South Africa. In a submission to a Senate Inquiry into the supply of medical professionals to rural areas, the Australian Medical Association stated that 'half the rural medical workforce has been recruited from overseas. And while their work is appreciated, it is not sustainable in the long run' (*The Age*, 12 Jan 2012).

In the case of overseas-sourced priests and seminarians for Australian parish ministry, the key issue of 'sustainability' has not been examined. Indeed, no serious study has yet been undertaken to fully understand how the whole overseas recruitment strategy was conceived and executed in Australia, or how effective it has been in achieving its goals. There is a pressing need for this research and evaluation.

The continuing drought in local home-grown vocations (Table 6.1 & Figure 6.1) shows that local parishes and long-established communities are not providing sufficient male celibate priests for parish ministry. Data from the diocesan seminaries (at mid-November 2011) also indicate that new local, home-grown priests will continue to be ordained at a rate of no more than 8-10 per year for the foreseeable future. It is a level of supply which cannot meet the demand.

Strategies currently in place to address the shortage of priests for parish ministry are:

- to maintain the effort to stimulate local and home-grown vocations to the male, celibate, full-time and life-long priesthood;
- to recruit ordained diocesan and religious priests from outside Australia, mostly on short-term contracts of 3-5 years;
- to recruit seminarians from outside Australia, to be trained in Australian seminaries, for permanent or temporary ministry in Australian dioceses; and
- to reduce the number of parishes, through amalgamation, merger, clustering or closure.

Strategies which the Australian bishops are unwilling or unable to consider are:

- to recognize and accept the vocation to priesthood given by God to married men;
- to train and ordain 'called' married men, and offer them parish ministry on flexible arrangements which accommodate their family and other work commitments;
- to invite back to ministry, on a case-by-case basis and with flexible arrangements, ordained Catholic priests who resigned from the clerical ministry to marry; and
- to recognize and accept the possibility that God is calling women, celibate or married, to the diaconate and the priesthood.

Australian Catholics now know that the response the bishops will give to any suggestion or proposal to even discuss the alternative strategies is 'the matters raised are beyond our

competence and any attempt to do so would be to breach *communio*'. If the treatment of Bishop Morris demonstrates anything at all, it is that Rome will not tolerate any questioning of its ban on discussion of these options.

As a result of the priest shortage increasing pressure is now being placed on priests in parish ministry, and increasing demands are being made on their energies. In rural and regional dioceses particularly, many priests in full-time parish ministry are now expected to serve two or more parishes on a regular basis, often at considerable distance from their base. There has to be concern that the extra burden placed on priests everywhere, but especially in remote and scattered parishes, will manifest itself in poor health, feelings of frustration and even depression. In a recent survey of 542 Australian priests, 47.4 percent agreed that their workload was excessive (McGillion & O'Carroll, 2011: 162).

Australian Catholics may well ask: is it possible that we are now in a situation similar to that mentioned in chapter 12 (vv. 1-8) of Matthew's gospel? Are we at the point where the nourishment and pastoral care of God's people have become subservient to man-made church rules? If Jesus was asked his advice, what would he say?

6. Seminarians

6.1. Data

The 2011-2012 *Directory* lists 26 seminaries in the territorial dioceses: 8 training 234 diocesan seminarians and 17 training 81 religious seminarians. However, a survey of the 8 diocesan seminaries undertaken in mid-November 2011 (Table 6.1), an examination of their websites and various articles in the Catholic media, found just 180 diocesan candidates were preparing for ministry in the 28 territorial dioceses. Of these, 80 (44%) were local or home-grown vocations, while 100 were of overseas origin, including seminarians from Vietnam, Philippines, Myanmar, India, Nigeria, Sudan, Fiji, Papua-New Guinea and Korea. A further 9 seminarians in these seminaries were preparing for ministry outside Australia.

Of the 35 candidates at the Neocatechumenal Way (NCW) Seminaries in Perth and Sydney, just one was Australian-born. Since 1994 35 NCW priests have been ordained from these seminaries: 33 for Perth and 2 for Sydney. Of these, 15 currently work in parish ministry in Perth, 2 in Sydney, and 18 others in the dioceses of Darwin, Adelaide and Melbourne, as well as in New Guinea and Malaysia.

Table 6.1. Australian diocesan seminaries and seminarians, mid-November 2011

Seminary	Dioceses preparing for:	Total Seminarians	Seminarians born outside Australia	Ordinations in 2011
Seminary of the Good Shepherd,	Sydney, Canberra & Goulburn, Bathurst,	29 (plus 1 for Melchite & 1 for	6 (minimum, from Vietnam, Korea,	3 (including 2 Korean)

Homebush, NSW	Wollongong, Perth	Chaldean Rites)	Philippines, Iraq, India & Africa)	
Redemptoris Mater (NCW) Seminary, Pagewood, NSW	Sydney (Neocatechetical Way)	20	20	2 (1 from Italy; 1 from Chile)
Vianney College, Wagga Wagga, NSW	Wagga Wagga, Lismore, Wollongong	19	8 (including 3 from Nigeria and 5 from Philippines)	3 (before end of 2011)
Seminary of the Holy Spirit, St Mary's, NSW	Parramatta	6	5	Nil
Corpus Christ College, Carlton, VIC	Melbourne, Ballarat, Sale, Sandhurst, Hobart, Adelaide, Canberra & Goulburn (also for Military Ordinariate & Hanoi Diocese)	46 (plus 2 for Military Ordinariate, 3 for Hanoi Diocese, 1 for Philippine diocese on contract)	22 (includes 12 from Vietnam, 2 from Africa, 2 from India, 1 from Korea, 5 from Philippines)	2 (including 1 in Philippines on contract to Sandhurst)
St Charles Seminary, Guildford, WA	Perth, Bunbury, Geraldton, Broome. (Also for a diocese in Vietnam).	19 (includes 5 in Rome & 3 in Pastoral Placement; plus 1 for a Vietnam diocese)	7 (includes 2 from Myanmar, 2 from Philippines, 1 from India, 2 from Vietnam)	10 (7 for Perth, 2 for Bunbury, 1 for Geraldton)
Redemptoris Mater (NCW) Seminary, Morley, WA	Perth (Neocatechetical Way)	15	14	3 (in November)
Holy Spirit Seminary, Banyo, QLD	Brisbane, Cairns, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville, Maitland-Newcastle. (Also for Umuahia Diocese, Nigeria).	25	18 (includes 14 from Nigeria, 1 from NZ, 1 from PNG, 1 from Sudan, 1 from India)	5 (2 in Brisbane, 3 in Nigeria)
Total		180 (plus 9 for other jurisdictions)	100	28

Source: Direct survey by the author of 8 diocesan seminaries in mid-November 2011

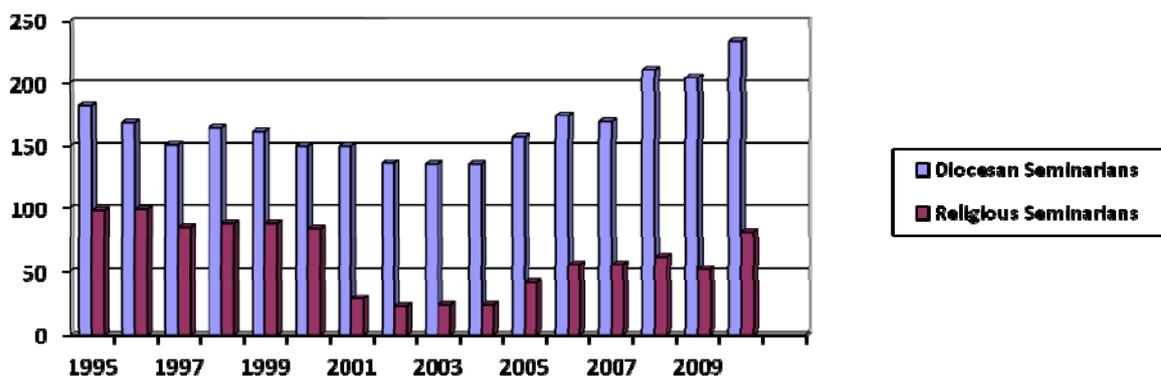
6.2. Comment

Cardinal Moran said that 'no nation can be said to have attained the full perfection of its growth in the religious life, unless its own children shall be found aspiring to the sanctuary'. More recently, Fr Peter Thompson CM, Rector of Vianney College in Wagga, wrote: 'As long as young men come forward from our own communities in insufficient numbers to train as priests, then we must look beyond our shores and benefit from the "riches" of other Catholic communities'.

Since the late 1960s, when the drought of local candidates for the priesthood began, there has been no evidence that it has broken or will break soon. Articles which regularly appear in some Catholic media proclaiming local and home-grown vocations to the priesthood are on the upswing tend to be more optimistic than realistic. They suggest a triumph of hope over reality.

Despite *Official Directory* data (Figure 6.1) showing a slight uplift in seminarian numbers since 2008, they also indicate historically low levels for both the diocesan and religious seminarians. In the period 1995-2010 *Directory* data show diocesan seminarian numbers oscillating between a low of 135 (2003-2004) and a high of 234 (2010), and religious seminarian numbers between a high of 183 (1995) and a low of 23 (2002-2003). However, the data do not indicate where the seminarians have come from. If the results of the mid-November 2011 survey are indicative (Table 6.1), less than half of all seminarian numbers in recent years may have been local or home-grown.

Figure 6.1: Diocesan and religious seminarians in territorial dioceses, 1995-2010



Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia* (various years). Note: The exact date for when the figures were compiled is not stated in any of the directories. A period of up a year may have elapsed before the figures were published. The *Directory* does not list the number of ordinations for each year.

Many Australian bishops have moved increasingly towards the recruitment of seminarians from overseas, a strategy not generally known by Catholics and rarely discussed outside clerical circles. Hoge and Okure, in their study of 'international priests' in the United States, examined this phenomenon and asked 'is it preferable for dioceses to sponsor seminarians for study in the US prior to ordination, or to recruit already ordained priests?' They found that there was a preference for the seminarian option, on the grounds of long-term inculturation, even though there was widespread recognition that the drop-out rate for students born outside the US was double that of locally-born seminarians. Underpinning this were both a lack of acceptance of the overseas-born students, and the difficulties those students had in making the requisite cultural adjustments to their new situation (Hoge & Okure, 2006: 103).

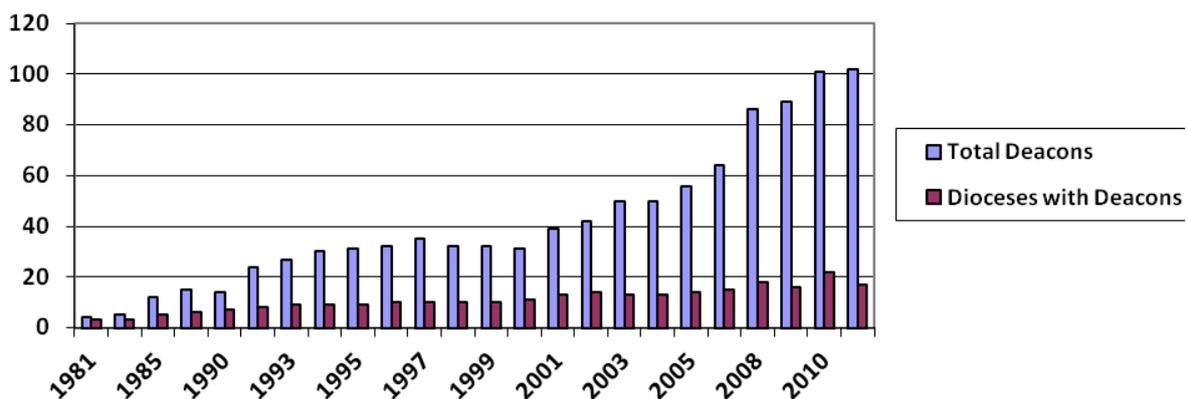
In Australia, long-established Catholic families of Anglo-Irish and European background, which were, until the late 1960s, a rich source of vocations, now supply few of their sons and daughters to the priesthood and religious life, even though most receive their primary and secondary education at quality Catholic schools and colleges. Is God not calling them? Are they hearing the call, but reluctant to answer? There does appear to be something in the Church which many of today's youth see and do not wish to be a part of. Do they consider the priesthood, as it is currently presented, a vocation that is unlikely to fulfil them? If they do, they are at odds with 90.22 percent of respondents to the 2010 McGillion and O'Carroll survey of 542 Australian priests who said that 'my life has been fulfilling' (*op. cit.*, 28-30, 162).

7. Permanent Deacons

7.1. The Data

The first four permanent deacons in Australia were listed by the *Directory* in 1981: 2 in Perth and 1 each in Townsville and Darwin. There were 35 deacons in 10 dioceses in 1997, but no significant increase until 2001 (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1. Permanent deacons in Australian territorial dioceses, 1981-2011



Sources: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*, various years

At 1 July 2011 there were 102 permanent deacons in 17 territorial dioceses with 81 engaged in parish ministry. Since July 2010 there has been an increase of just 1 permanent deacon across all territorial dioceses, and a decrease of 1 in parish ministry.

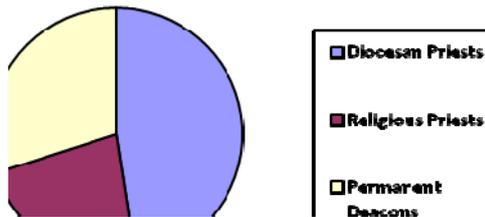
7.2. Comment

Permanent deacons are still comparatively few in Australia's territorial dioceses and make up just 3.7 percent of the total ordained clergy (Figure 7.2) and 4 percent of all parish ministers. Worldwide in 2008 permanent deacons numbered 36,539 and constituted 8.3 percent of the

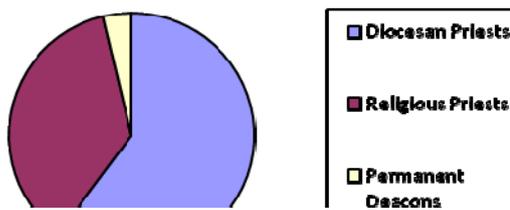
Church's total ordained clergy. In 2011 there were 16,921 permanent deacons in the US constituting 32.9 percent of that nation's ordained clergy.

Figure 7.2. Permanent deacons as a proportion of total clergy in the USA and Australia, 2011

Total Ordained Clergy in the United States of America, 2011



Total Ordained Clergy in Australia, 2011



Sources: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2011-2012*; Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, USA, www.cara.georgetown.edu

Vatican II stated that permanent deacons are able 'to administer baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside at the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, and to officiate at funeral and burial services' (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 29).

In Australia just 17 of the 28 territorial dioceses have permanent deacons. While it might be expected that the presence of deacons would be of great benefit to the People of God in a diocese, especially when there is a major shortage of local and home-grown priests, the Australian bishops who have not ordained deacons have not stated their reasons. Perhaps it is because there is now some confusion as to the nature and role of the diaconate.

John Paul II modified the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* dealing with the diaconate (n. 1581), and in 2009 Benedict XVI changed Canon 2009.3 to fit in with this. It now reads: 'those who are constituted in the order of the episcopate or the presbyterate receive the mission and capacity to act in the person of Christ the Head; whereas deacons are empowered to serve the People of God in the ministries of the liturgy, the word and charity'.

Deacons are now understood to be cut off from any direct connection with the *sacerdotium* which remains the exclusive reserve of bishops and presbyters. Ironically, in making this distinction between bishop and presbyter, who are sacerdotal, and deacon, who is not, these changes may have opened the door to the ordination of women deacons. For now, in this order, deacons cannot achieve anything like the sacerdotal or priestly rank.

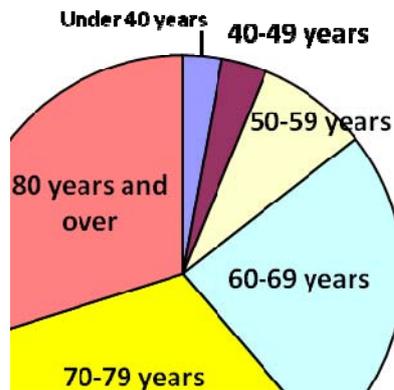
Deacons will continue their role in the liturgy and the service of the word, but in Europe they have found fuller meaning for their ministry in works of charity and social service ('service of love'), which was the way the German and French advocates of the diaconate had conceived of its ministry in the years leading up to Vatican II.

8. Religious Sisters

8.1. The Data

The 2011-2012 *Directory* lists 5276 religious sisters in the territorial dioceses. The 2011 report *See, I am doing a new thing!*, however, provided the first detailed insight since 1976 into what has been taking place among religious communities. It found that in 2009 religious sisters constituted 70.4 percent of all Australian religious and was the oldest of the three religious groups – clerics, sisters and brothers - with a median age of 74 years. The median age for religious brothers was 71 years, and for clerical religious, 67 years. Just 2.9 percent of religious sisters was aged under 40 years, 14.4 percent aged under 60 years, and 38.8 percent aged under 70 years. Almost 30 percent were aged 80 years and over and 6.5 percent 90 years or over (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1. Age profile of 5570 religious sisters in Australia, 2009

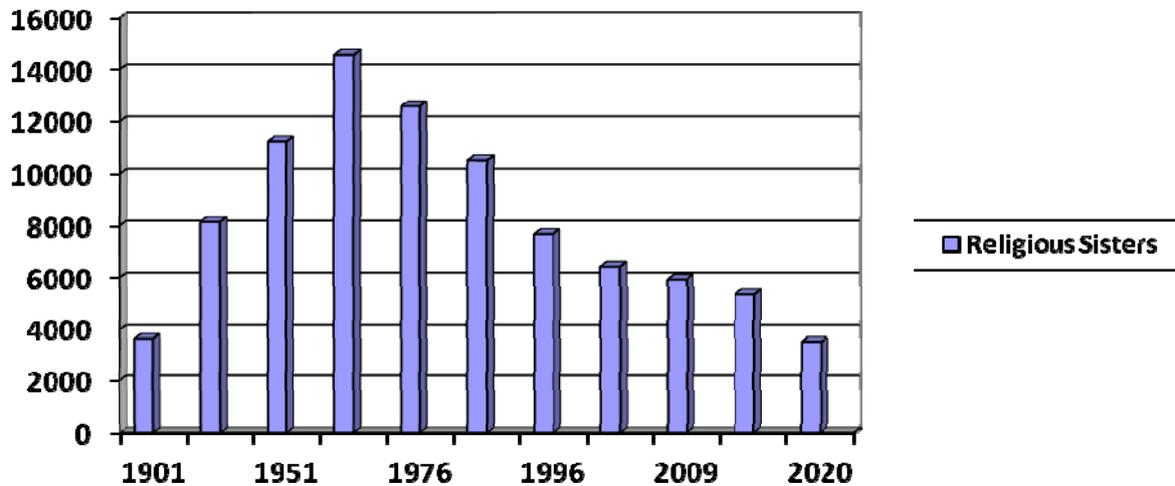


Source: *See, I am doing a new thing!*, Table 9

Between 1997 and 2008 just 206 women made their first profession, and only 164 of these were still religious in 2009. While there were 241 departures during the period 1997-2008, the biggest decline in membership was due to death. In the period 1997-2008 at an average 160 per year, 1,918 religious sisters died. Given the age profile of the current membership, by 2020 a further 1800 religious sisters might be expected to die, leaving just 1000 sisters, then aged under 70 years, to carry on the works of the institutes (Figure 8.2). By 2020 it is possible that religious sister numbers will be back to where they were in 1901.

When the number of sisters began to decline in the 1970s, almost all communities were forced to hand over the running and staffing of their schools and hospitals to lay people. When they sought new ministries where their 'deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet', one of the 'second career' ministries for sisters was in parishes, working as pastoral associates, or as designated pastoral leaders where there was no resident priest. The 2011-2012 *Directory* lists 191 religious sisters engaged in parish ministry: 162 working as pastoral associates and 29 as pastoral workers. In 24 parishes without a resident priest they ministered in a leadership role.

Figure 8.2. Religious sisters in Australia: 1901-2020 (actual and estimated)



Source: See, *I am doing a new thing!*, Table 1; *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia* (various years). Note: The figure for 2020 is an estimate only, based on the 2009 age profile of the group and the record of first professions over the period 1997-2008.

8.2. Comment

As dire as the survey results appear, religious sisters do not see the life and dynamism of their charisms limited to statistics. While acknowledging that they are now a ‘small remnant’ of the Australian Church’, some religious sisters see themselves being called to ‘a new openness to what God is doing ... a shift from owning [and] controlling ... to wonder and welcome as our eyes are opened to what God is doing with our charisms’. Others believe that, freed from the burden of schools, religious sisters have been able ‘to discover their passion’ and to ‘recognize other deep hungers in the world’ such as the care of refugees and the environment, and the need for contemplation and spiritual reflection. There is a recognition that religious life will continue to evolve ‘even in its diminishment’ and a key activity in that evolution will be ‘deeper communion with each other, with lay partners, and with bishops, not by any default dynamic, but by a mutually enriching dynamic at the service of God’s reign’ (Reid, 2011: 30, 36).

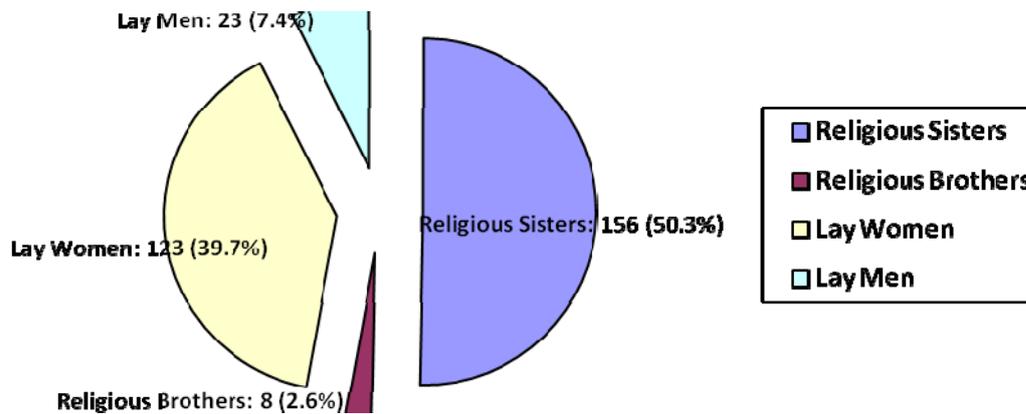
As leaders of the religious sister communities manage the ageing of their members and the constancy of death, they are aware that, while ministerial capacity is not age-related, the challenge is to free their younger members and to trust them, to not confine them to their institute’s ageing and decline, but to help them keep alive the passion for ministering to the poor and vulnerable in Australia and beyond (Reid, 2011: 30).

9. Lay Pastoral Associates/Pastoral Workers

9.1. The Data

The *Official Directory* lists lay ministers in parishes with various designations. The most common are 'Pastoral Associate' or 'Pastoral Worker', but others include 'Pastoral Assistant', 'Parish Co-ordinator/Moderator/Leader', and 'Religious/Sacramental/Liturgy Co-ordinator'. The 2011-2012 *Directory* listed 310 lay pastoral associates and 88 pastoral workers engaged in parish ministry in all but two of Australia's 28 territorial dioceses.

Figure 9.1. Pastoral associates (310) in parish ministry in 20 territorial dioceses, July 2011



Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2011-2012*

Of the 310 pastoral associates, the overwhelming majority (279 or 90%) were women, with more than half (156 or 50.3%) being religious sisters (Figure 9.1). Among all 398 lay parish ministers, 194 were religious sisters from many congregations (48.7%), 162 were lay women (40.7%), and 42 were men (10.6%), including 9 religious brothers. There were no lay ministers listed in the dioceses of Armidale, Cairns, Darwin, Toowoomba, Townsville, Wagga Wagga, Wilcannia-Forbes and Wollongong, and no more than two listed in the dioceses of Broome, Bunbury, Rockhampton and Sydney.

9.2. Comment

Lay pastoral associates and pastoral workers now make a major contribution to parish ministry, constituting almost 20 percent of all parish ministers. However, they face several challenges. Many accredited pastoral associates are concerned that their professional training and ministerial experience are not adequately recognized in all dioceses, while their co-responsible leadership role as a parish minister is still to be fully appreciated. At present, there is no national body with the brief and responsibility for defining their ministerial role, for establishing a professional training curriculum, for setting standards, for providing accreditation, and for issuing guidelines on practical issues such as contracts, remuneration, and terms and conditions

of employment. Qualified and experienced pastoral associates want to see their professional identity and leadership potential within the church properly recognized, and look to the Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry, soon to be established by the ACBC, to address these issues. A recent study by Professor Peter Carpenter, on the accreditation of pastoral associates in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, might provide guidance on how to address some of the outstanding problems nationally.

Pastoral associates understand their ministry as one of public leadership tied closely to the ministry of parish pastors. Several national conferences, already held, have sought to foster and strengthen this bond. Pastoral associates also seek to improve the cultural understandings between the growing number of overseas-sourced priests working in parishes and lay – especially female – ministers. They want opportunities to provide pastoral care to their own members within the ministry, and to develop mature and contemporary employer/employee relationships between parish priests and lay ministers.

More generally, the Church in Australia has few if any substantive structures which provide the Catholic laity with an effective role in the governance of the church and in shaping policies for its mission and ministry. This omission overlooks, even spurns, the wealth of talent within the laity and should be a priority issue for much-needed local diocesan synods and a central issue for a long-overdue Australian plenary synod.

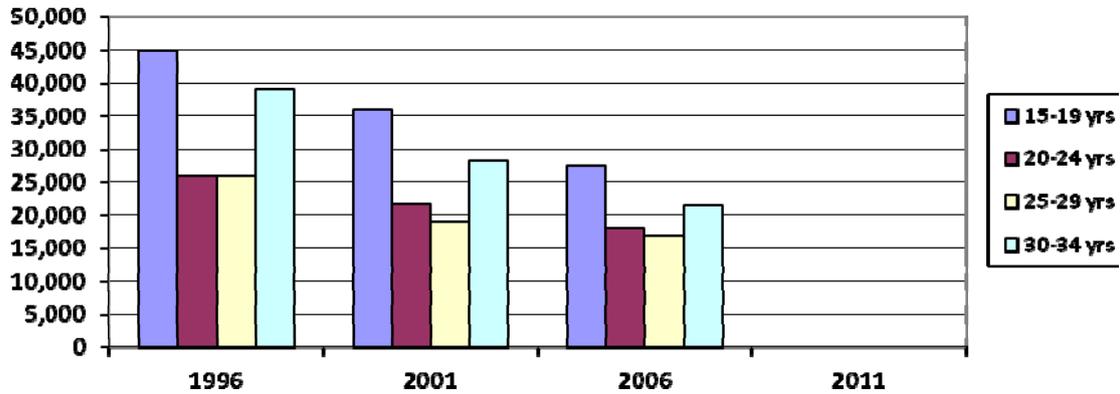
10. Mass Attendance

10.1. The Data

The surveys of Mass attendance in 1996, 2001 and 2006 all show a marked and continuous overall decline. For young Catholics aged between 15 and 34 years in particular, the decline has been significant (Figure 10.1). Over the 1996-2006 period their attendance has fallen 38 percent, from 136,000 in 1996 to 83,760 in 2006, a phenomenon which may partly explain why there have been so few local or home-grown vocations to the priesthood and religious life over recent years.

However, the recent ups and downs in Mass attendance in Australia are not the first. Earlier statistics indicate that just 19.2 percents of Catholics were attending Mass in 1850, 22 percent in 1864, 40.1 percent in 1870 and 31.4 percent in 1900 (O'Farrell: 1987: 184, 280).

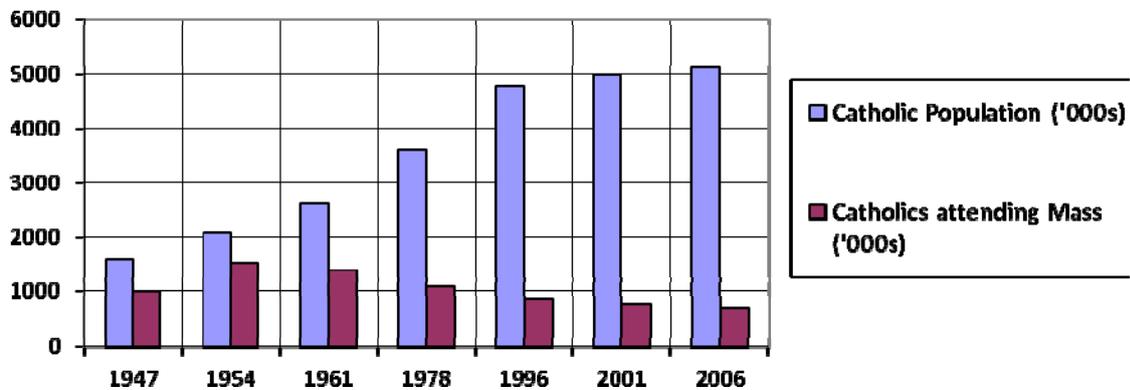
Figure 10.1. Mass attendance of young Catholics in Australia, 1996-2006



Source: *National Count of Attendance, 2001, 2006; Diocesan estimates, 1996; Catholic Church Life Survey 1996; National Church Life Survey, 2001, 2006; Mass Attendance in Australia, ACBC Pastoral Projects Office, 2008.*

Mass attendance by Australian Catholics has been falling since the mid-1950s when the rate was at a high of 74 percent. In 2006 the national count found just 708,618 Catholics attending on a regular basis, or 13.8 percent of the total Catholic population (Figure 10.2).

Figure 10.2. Australian Catholic population and regular Mass attendance: 1947-2006

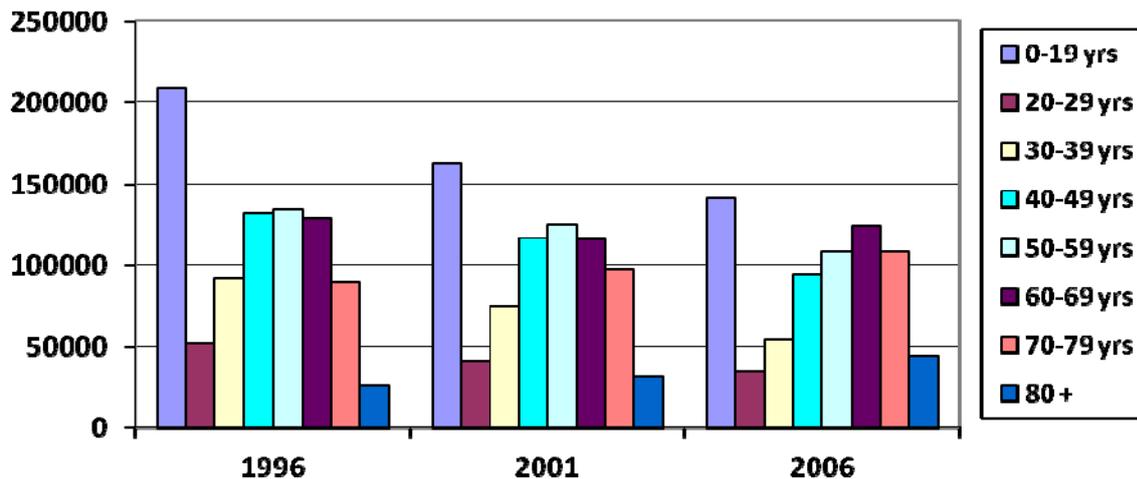


Sources: ABS Census Data (various years); *National Count of Attendance, 2006; Catholic Church Life Survey, 1996 and 2001; National Church Life Survey 2001 and 2006; CROPP, 1978; Mol, 1985, O'Farrell, p. 428; Gallup Polls, 1947, 1960, 1976.*

The national counts and other surveys show Mass attendance varies significantly between age groups. While attendance for all age groups up to 69 years fell between 1996 and 2006, it fell most significantly for the groups aged 0-19 years (- 32.6%), 30-39 years (-41.2%) and 40-49

years (- 28.4%). Only the groups aged 70-79 years (+ 20%) and 80 years and over (+ 70%) showed increased attendance (Figure 10.3).

Figure 10.3. Mass attendance by number by age group: 1996, 2001 and 2006



Source: ABS Census (various years); *National Count of Attendance 2001 & 2006*; *National Church Life Survey, 2001 & 2006*; Diocesan estimates 1996; *Catholic Church Life Survey 1996*.

Rates of attendance (i.e. the percentage of Catholics in the age groups who attend regularly) also vary significantly between age groups. While the average attendance rate across all groups in 2006 was 13.8 percent, it was 36 percent for the group aged 75-79 years, less than 10 percent for the group aged 15-39 years, and around 6 percent for the group aged 20-29 years. Though attendance rates for all age groups between 2001 and 2006 remained broadly similar, between 1996 and 2006 two age groups showed significant change: while 27 percent of Catholics aged 50-54 years regularly attended Mass in 1996, in 2006 just 15 percent did so; and while 30 percent of Catholics aged 55-59 years attended Mass regularly in 1996, in 2006 just 19 percent attended.

The official report for the 2006 national count of attendance did not show Mass attendance by diocese. However, the 2011 report, *See, I am doing a new thing!*, does provide data from which it is possible to estimate diocesan attendance figures with reasonable accuracy (Table 10.1).

Allowing for some margin of error, the findings which emerge from this data show:

- just seven dioceses had Mass attendance rates above the national average of 13.8 percent: Sydney (18.9%), Parramatta (18.9%), Wagga Wagga (15.7%), Melbourne (15.4%), Perth (14.4%), Ballarat (14.3%) and Broken Bay (14%);
- eleven dioceses, almost all regional or rural, had Mass attendance rates below 11 percent;

Table 10.1. Catholic population and Mass attendance by territorial diocese, 2006

Diocese	Catholic Population of Diocese	% of all Catholics in Australia	Catholics in Diocese attending Mass regularly ¹	% of Catholics in the Diocese attending Mass regularly	Average Mass attendance per parish in the Diocese
Adelaide	277,251	5.4%	34,722	12.5%	503
Armidale	44,266	0.86%	4,960	11.2%	198
Ballarat	98,954	1.93%	14,172	14.3%	272
Bathurst	66,392	1.29%	7,794	11.7%	410
Brisbane	645,435	12.58%	71,570	11.1%	702
Broken Bay	212,346	4.14%	29,761	14.0%	1144
Broome	8,291	0.16%	708	8.5%	79
Bunbury	53,622	1.05%	4,960	9.2%	184
Cairns	57,144	1.11%	4,960	8.7%	216
Canberra & Goulburn	160,082	3.12%	21,258	13.3%	387
Darwin	40,783	0.80%	4,251	10.4%	283
Geraldton	23,004	0.45%	2,125	9.2%	177
Hobart	87,755	1.71%	7,086	8.1%	283
Lismore	108,173	2.11%	12,046	11.1%	430
Maitland-Newcastle	153,744	3.0%	15,589	10.1%	371
Melbourne	1,057,058	20.62%	162,273	15.4%	741
Parramatta	307,685	6.0%	58,106	18.9%	1185
Perth	378,974	7.39%	54,563	14.4%	505
Port Pirie	27,174	0.53%	3,543	13.0%	186
Rockhampton	97,846	1.91%	10,629	10.9%	343
Sale	90,199	1.76%	12,046	13.4%	446
Sandhurst	103,617	2.02%	11,337	10.9%	283
Sydney	576,606	11.25%	109,127	18.9%	791
Toowoomba	62,861	1.23%	8503	12.5%	243
Townsville	72,952	1.42%	6,377	8.7%	236
Wagga Wagga	63,218	1.23%	9,920	15.7%	320
Wilcannia-Forbes	33,423	0.65%	3,543	10.6%	177
Wollongong	178,892	3.49%	22,675	12.7%	731
TOTAL	5,126,885	99.24% ²	708,618	13.8% (overall)	543 ³

Sources: ABS, 2006 Census; *National Count of Attendance 2006*; *See, I am doing a new thing!* (Table 13); *Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia 2011-2012*. Notes: 1) The numbers in this column were arrived at by multiplying total Mass attendance (708,618) by the diocesan percentage (% of all Australian Catholics attending Mass regularly) which was published in the 2011 report); 2) Total does not include 0.76% of all Catholics belonging to the Eastern Rite churches; 3) Average is based on the number of parishes in each territorial diocese..

- in general, there was a marked difference in attendance between the metropolitan dioceses (higher) and the rural and regional dioceses (lower), with some exceptions (Ballarat, Wagga Wagga, Port Pirie and Toowoomba);
- across all dioceses the average numerical Mass attendance per parish was 543 persons;

- average Mass attendance per parish varied significantly between the metropolitan dioceses (higher) and the regional and rural dioceses (lower);
- just 2 dioceses – Parramatta and Broken Bay – had an average parish attendance exceeding 1000 persons; another 4 dioceses – Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Wollongong - had average parish attendances above 700 persons ; and 6 rural dioceses - Armidale, Broome, Bunbury, Geraldton, Port Pirie and Wilcannia-Forbes - had average parish attendances below 200 persons.

Sex and age has a significant bearing on Mass attendance. Of all Mass attenders in 2006 aged 15 years and over, 60.4 percent were women, and their median age was 58 years. The median age of all Catholics aged 15 years and over in 2006 was 44 years. Ethnicity also has a bearing on attendance. In 2006 some 58,000 Catholics (8.2% of all Mass attenders) regularly attended a Mass celebrated in one of 30 languages other than English. In Melbourne over 17,000 regularly attended Mass celebrated in 19 different languages. Over 10,000 Catholics attended weekly Mass in Vietnamese, Italian and Arabic.

The 2006 *National Church Life Survey*, found that many Catholics, especially those aged under 45 years, no longer believe it is a sin not to attend Mass on Sunday. A 2007 study by Dixon et al., examining why mature age, long-term Mass-attending Catholics had stopped attending, found ten reasons: seven ‘Church-centred’ and three ‘participant centred’ (Table 10.2).

Table 10.2. Reasons why mature age, long-term Mass-attending Catholics no longer attend

Church-centred reasons: relating to the lack of connection between the concerns of the Church and the concerns of Catholics	Participant-centred reasons
Church seen as ‘irrelevant’ to life today	Family or household related issues, e.g. work demands
Perceived misuse of power and authority	A personal crisis of faith
Problems with a local priest	Mass not seen as a priority in relation to other commitments
Lack of intellectual stimulation at Mass, especially in homilies	
Concerns about the parish as a community	
Sense of being excluded by Church rules, particularly for divorced and homosexual Catholics	
Structural concerns: e.g. parish amalgamations and changes to Mass times	

Source: Dixon R. et al., *Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass*, PPO, ACBC, 2007

10.2. Comment

The 2001, 2006 and 2011 ACBC-sponsored national counts of Mass attendance all coincided with the Australian Census. Should the results of the 2011 count, made in every territorial

parish, show no improvement – or worse, a decrease - in the rate of attendance, a pivotal point for parish ministry in Australia will have been reached and would have to call into question the strategies in place for the past 15 years. If those strategies have been unable to halt or turn around a deteriorating situation, it will be time to put others on the table.

The 2006 data, though now out of date, confirm that the decline in Mass attendance which began the 1950s has continued. Moreover, if the 900,000 ‘ex-Catholics’ were included, the rate of attendance would not be 13.8 percent, but rather 11.8 percent. When the results of the 2011 national count of attendance and the 2011 Census become available, the bishops must take careful notice, for three reasons: 1) if increasing numbers of baptized Catholics are opting not to identify as Catholics in the Census, this could signify that there is not only a crisis of faith among Australian Catholics, but also a crisis of identity; it could signify a cultural rejection of Catholicism as well as a religious rejection; 2) any further decrease in Mass attendance would have to be read as a further loss of confidence in the leadership of the Church and a further loss of trust in the direction that the leadership has chosen; and since the ‘church-centred reasons’ why mature age, long-term Mass-attending Catholics are no longer attending relate to the lack of connection between the concerns of the Church and the concerns of those Catholics, it would suggest that church leaders and ordinary Catholics are no longer living in the same world; ordinary Catholics have largely ‘switched off’ and are no longer listening to their leaders; and 3) with the Church in Australia already in crisis, should the situation deteriorate further, at some point the leadership will have to face a downward spiral of morale; this may take place within both the clergy and laity, but will be most dangerous when it affects the parish clergy.

The Australian presbyterate has never fully recovered from the mass resignations of some 1000 priests in the 1970s and 1980s, most of whom left to marry. Recruitment of local candidates to the priesthood plummeted in those years and has never recovered. Now, as the current parish clergy age, they can see that there will be negligible numbers of home-grown priests to replace them in ministry, and that the burden which they carry will grow no lighter. Add to this the increasing number of parish amalgamations and mergers, and the dwindling numbers attending Mass, particularly among the younger generations, and there is little to lift morale.

Though there is only occasional mention of it, the financial viability of some dioceses and parishes must also be of concern. In dioceses where there is now a catastrophic shortage of priests and a critically low Mass attendance, it is inevitable that there will soon be insufficient income for self-support and financial assistance will have to come from outside. In some dioceses and parishes there are signs it is already happening. In Canberra and Goulburn, where Mass attendance has almost halved over the past 15 years, Archbishop Mark Coleridge stated in March 2011 that the diocese was both asset and cash poor, had no investment portfolio, depended entirely on the Catholic Development Fund for its financial survival, and that he had asked parish priests how they intended to rectify the position (*Cathnews*, 16 March 2011). There are 16 dioceses with lower Mass attendances than Canberra and Goulburn and some may already be in financial difficulties.

Mass attendance data indicate that the situation is likely to get worse before it gets better. In 2006 it was the younger generations that were least attending Mass. Any analysis, therefore, would have to conclude that Catholic schools are not producing the results that the bishops would expect, and that the prognosis for Mass attendance in the decade ahead is not good.

11. Catholic Schools

11.1. The Data

Three recent Australian Government reviews - the Productivity Commission's 2007 *Report on Government Services* and its current review of *Schools Workforce*, and the 2011 Gonski *Review of Funding for Schooling* – have provided a wealth of up-to-date and accurate data on primary and secondary education in Australia. Submissions prepared by the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) for these inquiries have also provided detailed and reliable data on Catholic schools. Add the data gathered by the National Catholic Census Project and the information for individual schools publicly available on the *MySchool* website, and a unique picture of contemporary Catholic schooling in Australia emerges.

In 2010 a total of 9468 schools operated by three sectors - government, Catholic and Independent – educated some 3.5 million full-time equivalent students at an annual cost of around \$39 billion. The schools were primary, secondary, combined primary and secondary, and special (Table 11.1).

Table 11.1. Schooling in Australia by sector, 2010

	Government	Catholic	Independent	Total
Primary Schools	4879	1230	248	6357
Secondary Schools	1034	303	72	1409
Combined Schools	498	148	640	1286
Special Schools	332	27	57	416
Total Schools	6743	1708¹	1017	9468
Percentage of all schools	71.3%	18%	10.7%	100%
Primary Students	1,390,543	389,671	230,985	2,011,199
Secondary Students	901,255	323,618	260,248	1,485,121
Total full-time equivalent Students	2,291,798	713,289¹	491,233	3,496,320
Percentage of Students attending	66%	20%	14%	100%

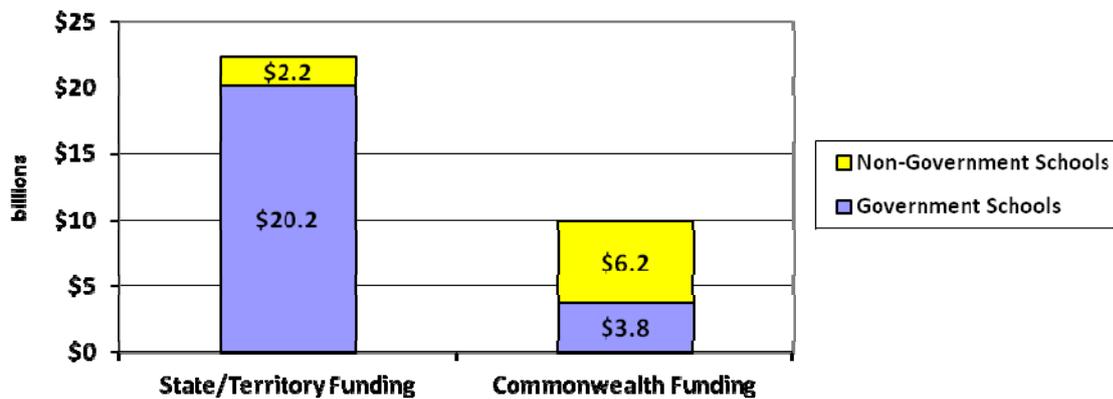
Source: ABS, 2011c, *Schools Australia*, Cat. No. 4221.0; Note: 1. Includes 72 non-systemic Catholic schools educating 9579 primary and 44,593 secondary students.

Catholic schools in 2010 numbered 1708 and made up 18 percent of all schools. There were 1230 primary (72% of all Catholic schools), usually attached to parishes across the nation and operated by 8 state and territory Catholic 'systems' overseen by Catholic Education

Commissions. There were 303 secondary (18% of Catholic total) with all but 72 (mostly owned and operated by various religious institutes) operating within the Catholic 'system'. There were also 148 combined primary/secondary (8.7% of Catholic total) and 27 special (1.6% of Catholic total). Forty-seven Catholic schools provided boarding facilities for 6560 students. In 2010 Catholic schools educated 713,289 full-time equivalent students, or one in every five students (Table 11.1).

Commonwealth, State and Territory governments all provide funding for schools in the three sectors. In 2009 they spent a combined \$32.4 billion to educate some 3.5 million students in schools across the nation (Figure 11.1). The funds were allocated according to arrangements which the Gonski Review found to be 'unnecessarily complex, lack[ing] coherence and transparency, and involv[ing] duplication of funding effort in some areas' (Gonski, xiv).

Figure 11.1. Government recurrent funding (\$ billions) for all schools, 2009



Source: Gonski Review, pp. 14-15

Total Commonwealth Government spending for all schools increased from \$4.8 billion in 1999-200 to \$20 billion in 2009-2010 (Gonski, 39). Between 2009 and 2013, under the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*, the Commonwealth will provide \$36 billion to non-government schools under three main streams: recurrent, capital and targeted.

Since 1973 Catholic schools have received funding from both the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments, with the bulk coming from the Commonwealth (Figure 11.1). In 2009 net recurrent income for all Catholic schools was \$7.0 billion, with net recurrent income per student at \$10,002. Government schools in 2009 had net recurrent income of \$25.2 billion and \$11,121 per student, while independent schools had net recurrent income of \$6.6 billion and \$13,667 per student. Catholic school net recurrent income per student was 10 percent less than government schools and 27 percent less than independent schools.

Catholic schools received 57 percent of their recurrent per student income from the Commonwealth, 20 percent from the States/Territories and 23 percent from private sources, including fees (Table 11.2).

Table 11.2 Average net recurrent income per student, by source and by sector, 2009

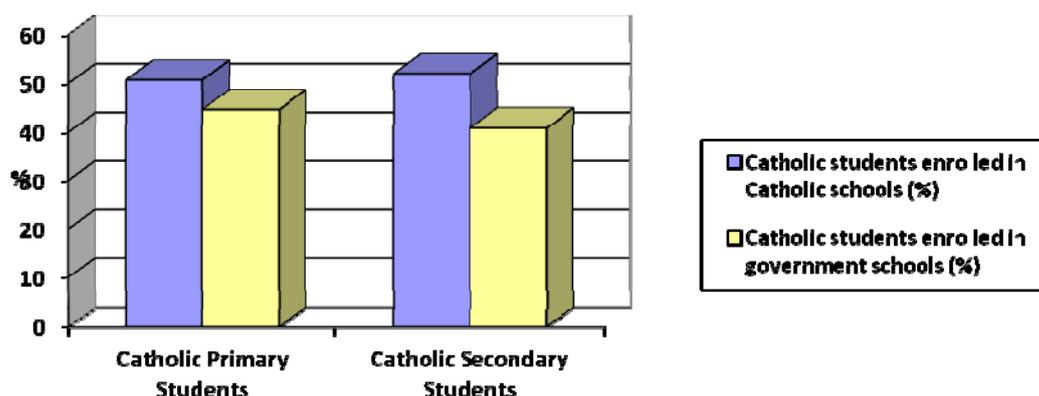
Source of Income	Government schools	Catholic Schools	Independent schools
Commonwealth	\$1,600 (14.4%)	\$5700 (57%)	\$4500 (32.9%)
State/ Territory	\$9,000 (81.6%)	\$2000 (20%)	\$1700 (12.4%)
Fees, charges, etc)	\$400	\$2600	\$8200
Other private sources	\$200	\$600	\$900
Deductions for capital	-\$100	-\$900	-\$1600
Total per student	\$11,121	\$10,002	\$13,667

Sources: ACARA, dataset for 2011. Gonski Review, p.15. Note: Source amounts are rounded.

In Catholic schools the majority of recurrent income was allocated to the salaries of 47,242 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers and almost 31,000 other staff. A total of \$1.63 billion was also spent on capital projects, with 53 percent of that amount derived from government funding.

Catholic schools do not educate every Catholic student, and have never done so, even though every Catholic child, through baptism, has a right to education in a Catholic school. In 2001 just 51.7 percent of Catholic primary students were attending Catholic schools while just 52 percent of Catholic secondary students were attending Catholic schools (Figure 11.2). In the same year 44.6 percent of Catholic primary students were attending government schools, as were 40.9 percent of Catholic secondary students.

Figure 11.2. School enrolment of Catholic primary and Catholic secondary students, 2001

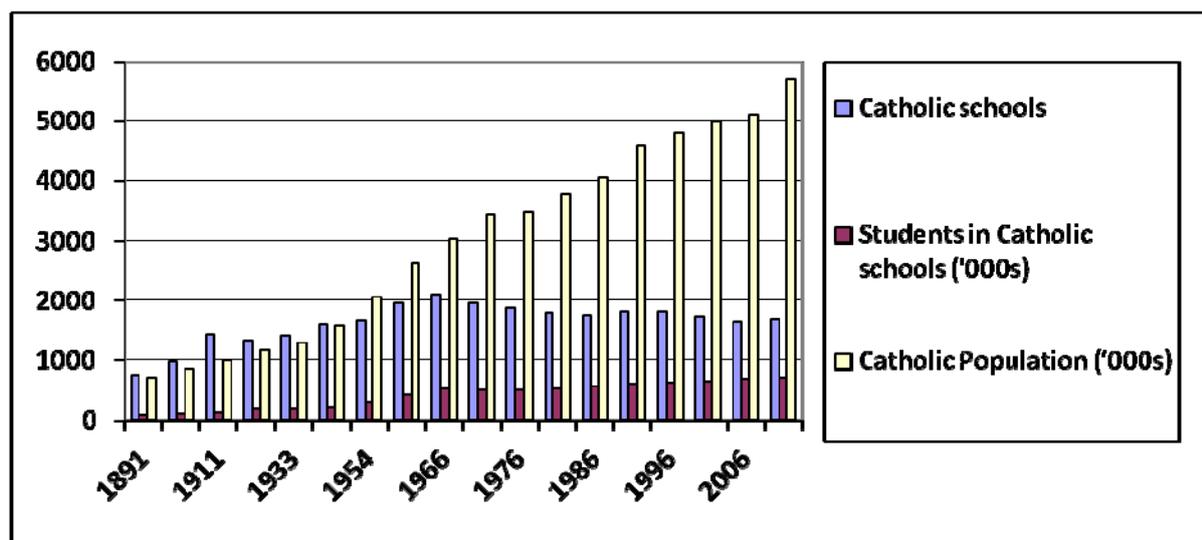


Source: ABS, 2001 Census. Data obtained as part of the National Catholic Census Project

Catholic schools also educate large numbers of non-Catholic children. This is because many non-Catholic parents and guardians wish to entrust their children's future to Catholic schools because of their explicit goals and acknowledged educational quality. In 2001 almost 19 percent of all enrolments in Catholic primary schools, and 26.3 percent of all enrolments in Catholic secondary schools were non-Catholic students (ABS, 2001 Census). In Tasmania over 40 percent of all students in Catholic schools are non-Catholic.

Catholic schools are currently unable to educate all Catholic children. They are insufficient in number and lack the resources. Though total enrolments at Catholic schools have risen from 302,136 in 1954 to 710,623 in 2011, the number of schools in that period has only increased from 1660 to 1695 (Figure 11.3). To address the issue of resources, the ACBC and NCEC both insist that public funding for schools should take account of the basic principles of parental choice, religious freedom, funding equity, educational partnership, funding certainty, accountability, and a fair allocative mechanism.

Figure 11.3. Catholic schools and students and total Catholic population: 1891-2011

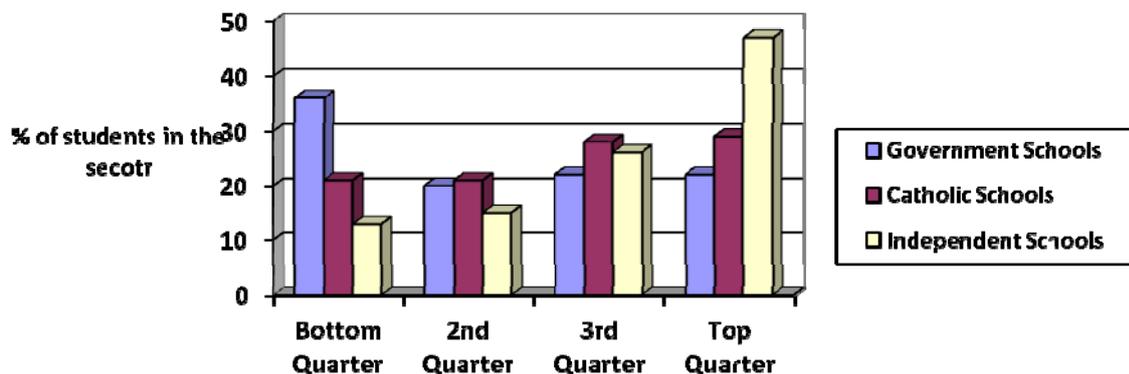


Sources: *Australasian Catholic Directory*; *Official Year Book of the Catholic Church in Australia*; *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*; ABS, Australian Census (various years). Note: Population figure for 2011 is estimate only.

The Gonski Review has highlighted the growing gap between the highest and lowest performing students in Australian schools, and the high proportion of the lowest performing students not meeting minimum standards of achievement. It identified an unacceptable link between low levels of achievement and educational disadvantage, particularly among students for low socio-economic and indigenous backgrounds, and insisted it be addressed.

The NCEC maintains that no Catholic child is ever denied a Catholic education because of their family’s financial situation. Catholics schools have always provided educational opportunities for the children of poorer and disadvantaged families, for indigenous students, for refugee and migrant children, and for children living in remote areas. St Mary MacKillop and her sisters are renowned for this work. However, in 2010, just 21 percent of students in Catholic schools were from the lowest quarter of socio-educational advantage, compared to 36 percent of all students in government schools, and 13 percent in independent schools (Figure 11.3). While government schools had the highest concentration of students from the bottom quarter of socio-educational advantage, Catholic and independent schools had the highest concentrations from the 3rd and top quarters. This suggests that some Catholic schools have moved away from ‘the option for the poor’, and tended towards exclusivism and elitism. Among all students suffering disadvantage, Catholic schools enrolled just 9 percent of total indigenous students, 20 percent of all those with English language difficulties, 16 percent of all those with a disability, 15 percent of all those with socio-economic disadvantage, and 13 percent of all those living in remote and very remote areas (Gonski, 10).

Figure 11.3. Distribution of students by socio-educational advantage quarter, by sector, 2010



Source: *Gonski Review*, Figure 1, ACARA data set, 2011.

The Gonski Review has called for schooling which will achieve ‘improved outcomes for all Australian students’ and will insure that ‘differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions’. It has recommended a system that is transparent, fair, financially sustainable and effective in promoting excellent educational outcomes for all. Gonski insists that Australia have a schooling system that is the best in the world for its quality and equity, and one where ‘every child should have access to the best possible education, regardless of where they live, the income of their family, or the school they attend’. The NCEC should have no difficulty with any of this.

10.2. Comment

When the first Catholic 'denominational' school was opened at Parramatta in 1820 it was to help poor and uneducated Catholic parents to educate their children in the Catholic faith and basic knowledge. Ever since Catholic schools have been one of the key instruments shaping and supporting the Catholicism in Australia.

When Bishop Bede Polding arrived in Sydney in 1835 there were 10 Catholic 'denominational' schools. By 1858 there were 250, including 4 'superior' Catholic schools for boys and girls, all receiving support from the government by way of land grants, construction costs, books and requisites, and part payment of teacher salaries.

Over the past 190 years, however, the rationale for Catholic schools has become complex. In 1833 when plans were unveiled for a national free, compulsory and secular system of education, with funding to be withdrawn from 'denominational' schools, the Catholic bishops agonized over whether they could accept a secular system with a religious content over which they did not have full control, and whether they could allow Catholic parents to be forced to act against their conscience in sending their children to a secular school.

Most bishops believed that a secular system would violate parental rights and their rights of conscience, that good social order was not achievable without religious and moral principles instilled from childhood, and that Catholic schools were best placed to instil these principles. If every school was converted into an instrument of the state, it was argued, they would become dangerous not only to freedom but also to religion.

However, starting in Tasmania and South Australia in the 1850s, and followed up later in the other colonies through a series of Education Acts, free, compulsory and secular education was introduced and government funding for denominational schools was terminated.

The Catholic bishops responded by determining to continue and expand Catholic schools without government aid, and to operate them as a decentralized system through partnerships between bishops, parish priests and religious orders. In 1879 the NSW bishops issued a Pastoral Letter instructing Catholic parents that they 'must' send their children to Catholic schools to ensure they received a religious education. In 1885 the 1st Plenary Council of Australia threatened denial of absolution if Catholic parents did not send their children to Catholic schools. The rationale for Catholic schools was now no longer simply to educate the children of the poor, but rather, or principally, to denounce and reject the schools that the state had to offer.

Though the bishops were sympathetic to education being used to develop a harmonious, progressive and united society, they feared the secular system would remove religion and morals from the curriculum. The bishops always thought in terms of doctrine and dogma. While

most viewed Catholic schools as necessary for the general health of Catholicism, some saw them as seedbeds for vocations to the priesthood, some as the best way to keep Catholic children separated and isolated from Protestant contamination, and some as the only means to rid the Church of ‘mixed marriages’.

Table 11.3. Catholic schools and school students in Australia: 1891-2011

Year	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Combined & Special Schools	Total Schools	Primary Students	Secondary Students	Total Catholic Students	% of all Australian Students
1820	1			1				
1835	10			10				
1841	24			24				
1858	>246	4		>250			>11,000	
1891	563	186	-	749	-	-	75,890	
1901	681	291	-	972	-	-	99,966	
1911	1099	342	-	1441	-	-	116,243	
1921	914	419	-	1333	-	-	157,895	
1933	957	449	-	1406	-	-	195,273	
1947	1180	419	-	1599	134,551	41,151	212,551	
1954	1268	392	-	1660	227,410	60,954	302,136	16.9
1961	1459	491	-	1950	323,041	101,306	424,347	19.4
1966	1512	598	-	2110	363,330	153,805	517,135	20.6
1971	1423	536	-	1959	324,124	167,559	491,683	17.6
1976	1351	521	-	1872	314,258	178,653	492,916	16.8
1981	1311	473	-	1784	316,954	195,697	512,651	17.9
1986	1300	450	-	1750	331,791	233,877	553,223	18.4
1991	1310	433	69	1812	342,776	253,663	596,439	19.4
1996	1294	403	105	1802	353,794	263,346	617,140	19.6
2001	1255	343	119	1717	343,520	245,096	655,987 ¹	20.2
2006	1176	346	123	1645	376,645	309,162	685,807	20.4
2011	1222	316	157	1695 ³	387,944	322,679	710,623 ³	20.1

Sources: *Australasian Catholic Directory* (various years); *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia* (various years); *The Official Year Book of the Catholic Church in Australia* (various years); ACARA, 2009, Table 14; ABS, Cat.4221.0, *Schools Australia* (various years). Notes: 1. Includes 63,371 ‘other’ students, not specified; 2. The years selected are those when official national censuses were held; 3. Totals include 4 combined schools belonging to the Maronite Diocese which educate 481 primary and 1678 secondary students, and 1 Melkite Diocese primary school educating 188 students; 5. A 1844 Select Committee on Education found that half of the NSW colony’s 25,675 children aged 4-14 years were receiving no schooling whatsoever.

In 1862 Archbishop Polding, defining the principles of Catholic education, stated: ‘We hold that [the] subjects taught, the teacher and his faith, the rule and practices of the school day, all combine to produce the result which we Catholics consider to be education’ (O’Farrell, 1977, 149). In 1869, the 2nd Provincial Council stated that ‘education must take place in, and be infused by, a religious atmosphere which acts upon the child’s whole character of mind and

heart'. It was not just the direct teaching of Catholic doctrine, but the interpenetration, in the school, of a vital Catholic atmosphere, its infusion with a Catholic life and a spirit of prayer (O'Farrell, 1977, 160).

But in defining Catholic education, the bishops were denouncing the secular system, pronouncing it unacceptable to Catholics, and without any moral virtues. They even refuted the principle that it was the responsibility of Catholic parents to provide religious instruction to their children, arguing that many parents, because of their ignorance and indifference, were unable to discharge this duty.

So strong was their opposition to secular education that the bishops even caused other Christian churches to turn on them and to incite anti-Catholic sentiment. Catholic attitudes to education were portrayed as conservative, inimical to freedom, progress and enlightenment, and resistant to democracy. It didn't help when Bishop Patrick Geoghegan stated that 'if there could not be Catholic education, it would be better if there were no education at all' (O'Farrell, 1977, 165). Archbishop Goold's public denouncement of secular education in 1872 as 'God-less compulsory education' and 'hateful oppression and tyranny' opened up battle-lines between Catholics and non-Catholics that led directly to the Victorian *Education Act 1872* which ended all state aid to denominational schools. In defeat, Catholics had to pay, not only for their own schools if they wanted them, but also, with their taxes, for the schools which their bishops had repudiated.

Starting with Bishop Geoghegan in Adelaide, a succession of bishops set out to prove that Australian Catholics could establish and maintain their own schools without government funds. Their strategy was to staff the schools with religious sisters and brothers from both local and overseas religious congregations and to relegate expensive lay teachers to secondary roles. Fund-raising and well-organized propaganda campaigns, often feeding on the laity's deep feelings of fear, alienation, resentment and insecurity in a hostile environment, laid the basis for financial viability, while the main strategies for getting apathetic Catholic parents to enroll their children, were sanctions and coercion. Those who did not send their children to Catholic schools were scorned and denied the sacraments; while those that did, although not always convinced it was worth the sacrifice, acquiesced out of faith and obedience, and because they felt they had to be loyal to the Church.

While the bishops, with Archbishop Vaughan at their head, continued to inveigh against secular education, other motivations not entirely spiritual, such as some not-so-well-concealed worldly ambitions and pretensions, supported the zeal to construct Catholic schools and colleges. The growing and impressive assemblage of Catholic schools became a signal to other Australians that the Catholic Church was gaining status, and that its people had pride in their special identity. Schools also became the symbols of Catholic unity and the key to preserving religious, political and social identity. In most parishes, building the school and collecting money even assumed an inordinate focus and almost became the rationale for parish life. While it often created parish cohesion – though some felt overly coerced by the clergy – it shifted the

emphasis off the spiritual life and other aspects of ministry, and directed it, especially for the clergy, towards administration, politics and money.

For decades, the bishops presented Catholic education less as 'education' and more as the 'political rights of Catholics'. They allowed no room for lay discussion of the issues, monopolized the setting of policy and direction, and expected the laity to show total obedience. However, in their subservience, Catholic parents failed to recognize that they had surrendered to the clergy their inherent right to determine the religious education of their children and to have their proper say in setting educational policy.

By 1880, Catholic schools had become tightly controlled by the religious orders who took over from lay teachers as the principal educational workforce. Male and female religious teachers made an enormous human contribution, while the laity contributed massive financial support. Between 1870 and 1935 some £50 million was spent on building and maintaining all Catholic schools and in 1935 alone construction of parish school buildings throughout Australia cost £6.4 million (*Australian Encyclopaedia*, v.8.p.28). From 695 primary and secondary Catholic schools educating 67,908 children in 1889, the number grew to 1950 schools educating 424,347 children in 1961, almost one in every five Australian students (Table 11.3).

By the early 1960s, however, Catholic schools had become 'a jumbled collection of parish primary and secondary schools and various kinds of schools run by the religious orders with varying degrees of autonomy from the diocese in which they were located'. Moreover, they were on the point of collapse (Selleck, 1985, 104). But then, due to some profound educational, political, theological and ecclesiastical developments, the schools were transformed into a fully articulated 'system'. With power sharing realigned among the educational partners, including governments and the laity, they were positioned to survive and prosper (O'Brien, 1999, 4). By 1983, a new Catholic 'system' had come into being, capable of taking independent action, going it alone, challenging governmental hegemonies, and demanding a place at the table when the national parliament was debating education (O'Brien, 1999, v).

In 1963 the Commonwealth reversed the Education Acts of the 1870s and began allocating funds to non-government schools. First, there were grants for science blocks, then libraries, and in 1972 small (\$35-\$50) *per capita* recurrent funding. In 1973 the Karmel Review recommended recurrent government money provided on a 'needs-based block funding' model with funds allocated to the Catholic 'system' authorities for distribution to parish and secondary schools. The bishops responded by establishing the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) to liaise with the Commonwealth and other key national education bodies and to support the various State and Territory Catholic Education Commissions. With new funding in place Catholic schools could now 'consolidate their collective position as partners in the national educational endeavour' and work as 'partners with governments, families and church communities in achieving national educational goals for young Australians' (Ernst & Young, 2010, 5).

The understanding of Catholic education had again changed. Catholic schools are now no longer viewed as the antithesis of secular schools, but rather as contributors to the Church's mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ; offering the Catholic community and the people of Australia an educational foundation for life to the full, meaning the full development of the person - intellectually, spiritually, physically, morally and emotionally; fulfilling parents' rights in a democratic, free society to choose the schooling for their children which reflects their own values, beliefs and hopes as Australians; and being significant proven contributors to the development of the Australian community (NCEC). The Gonski Review saw Catholic schools as providers of 'holistic education that includes religious instruction' (Gonski, 6).

Table 11.3. Catholic schools and students in Australian territorial dioceses, 2011

Diocese	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Combined Schools	Special Schools	Primary Students	Secondary Students
Adelaide	59	9	18	2	25,229	17,625
Armidale	19	3	2	0	3,685	1,886
Ballarat	52	11	1	0	8,536	8,154
Bathurst	26	5	4	0	5,638	3,842
Brisbane	103	37	18	0	49,165	34,729
Broken Bay	36	11	3	2	11,646	12,135
Broome	6	0	7	0	1,352	211
Bunbury	22	2	3	0	5,614	2,766
Cairns	19	6	1	0	6,156	3,483
Canberra & Goulburn	42	9	7	0	12,948	11,343
Darwin	7	3	5	0	2,789	1,956
Geraldton	7	2	2	0	2,134	1,377
Hobart	24	5	8	0	7,497	6,966
Lismore	34	13	0	0	9,046	8,769
Maitland-Newcastle	44	8	1	1	9,511	7,921
Melbourne	251	60	11	2	75,955	65,245
Parramatta	55	25	0	1	22,338	22,814
Perth	75	2	29	0	30,655	22,022
Port Pirie	9	0	4	0	2,789	1,658
Rockhampton	28	10	0	0	8,609	7,116
Sale	34	7	0	0	8,038	7,199
Sandhurst	40	11	3	0	8,331	7,523
Sydney	111	43	9	1	39,418	39,766
Toowoomba	24	6	4	0	6,174	4,000
Townsville	20	9	3	0	7,168	4,942
Wagga Wagga	27	5	0	0	4,974	3,454
Wilcannia-Forbes	18	1	0	0	1,951	647

Wollongong	29	13	0	1	9,929	11,452
TOTAL	1,222	316	143	10	387,275¹	321,001²

Source: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2011-2012*. Notes: 1. Almost 20 percent of these students are likely to be non-Catholic. 2. Over 25 percent of these students are likely to be non-Catholic. 3. In 2010 there were 6560 students boarding at 47 Catholic schools across Australia (*Gonski Review*, 7).

The Gonski Review has stated that Australia must have a schooling system that is the best in the world for its quality and equity, and one where ‘every child should have access to the best possible education, regardless of where they live, the income of their family, or the school they attend’. The NCEC, in its submission to the review, stated that a key mission of Catholic schools is to ensure that students should not be prevented from achieving their potential because of background or family circumstances, or because of the location of their school (p.17). The time has now come to revisit the original rationale for Catholic schools in Australia, namely, ‘to provide a Catholic education for the children of the poor’.

If Gonski’s recommendations are accepted, Catholic schools will have a unique opportunity, and a duty, to make a truly major contribution to addressing the current inequities in education. With the certainty of adequate resources, Catholic schools, both primary and secondary, can and must take a leadership role in ensuring that there is not only excellence in education, but excellence in equity. They should curtail any tendencies towards elitism and exclusivity, which only create educational envy, and re-focus emphatically on the needs of those who are educationally disadvantaged. In this way, they will best fulfil their mission.

Conclusion

The official data for the year to July 2011 indicates that little progress was made in dealing with the parish ministry crisis confronting the Catholic Church in Australia. Rather, the evidence suggests that the crisis has deepened.

While it can be said that some areas of ministry have held steady, there are qualifications. The number of priests engaged in parish ministry did not show significant change, but only because the religious institutes assigned more priests to parishes, because more priests were recruited from overseas, and because many retired priests are included in the listings. The uplift in seminarian numbers is also due, not to increased local vocations, but largely to seminarians recruited from overseas.

There has been little change in the ratios of Catholics to priests and parishes, parish numbers held steady, amalgamations were fewer, there was only a slight fall in the number of permanent deacons, lay pastoral associates and pastoral workers, one new parish primary school was opened, and an additional 5500 students were enrolled in Catholic schools.

However, in other areas there was significant slippage. The forced removal of Bishop William Morris from the Toowoomba Diocese dealt a serious blow to the credibility and reputation of

church leadership, both within Australia and worldwide. The failure of the canonical system to afford him natural justice and due process revealed a church out of touch with contemporary Western standards of justice, and at odds with the best of Australian values. The underlying injustice of this affair will remain a running sore every bit as disastrous as the way church authorities handled the crimes of clerical sexual abuse. Both have impinged directly and adversely on parish ministry.

During the year another 67 parishes lost their full-time resident priest, and an extra 72 parishes have had to share their priest with at least one other parish. Over 30 percent of all parishes are now without a full-time resident priest who is not shared with another parish. There are also 95 parishes without an assigned priest. During the year more parishes in almost every diocese became reliant on priests sourced from overseas. Local vocations to the priesthood remained low and may even have decreased. In 2011 there were just 80 local diocesan seminarians for all 28 territorial dioceses.

Australia's bishops continue to maintain their reluctance to hold synods, despite Vatican II calling for them to flourish and the Holy See recommending them 'when a crisis emerges which requires urgent and significant pastoral, administrative or disciplinary change'. It has to be assumed that most of the bishops have no desire to involve their clergy, religious or laity in the co-responsible discerning, planning and decision making for their diocese. Perhaps, when the majority of the current group, now over 65 years, is replaced within the next 5 years, the next generation will adopt a more co-responsible form of leadership.

While the ACBC will not address some issues which it considers 'outside its competence' there are other critical matters which it can and must address, including structural reforms. The present structures deprive the laity of their rightful place in shaping mission and ministry. It must review the sustainability and effectiveness of recruiting priests and seminarians from outside Australia, and it has to arrive at a better understanding of why so many Catholics have turned their backs on the sacraments and their faith, and no longer identify as Catholic.

Catholic schools and their teachers, who now play an increasingly important role in the Church's mission and ministry, have a unique opportunity to re-focus on the disadvantaged and the poor. It should be seized with courage and faith.

The results of the 2011 National Count of Mass Attendance will shortly be available. Should they reveal a further deterioration, this would signal an imminent 'meltdown' of parish ministry, and the failure of current strategies and policies. Wise leaders would plan for that contingency and prepare to consider other options. The eminent economist John Maynard Keynes is reputed to have said: 'When the facts change, I change my mind. What, sir, do you do?' The essence of his observation is that when we find ourselves in a new situation, our ideas must be flexible to respond to it.

The Church in Australia has the benefit of the grace and wisdom of the Holy Spirit working to guide and direct it in its new situation. The task for the People of God is to discern what the Spirit is saying and to respond.

**Summary Statistical Table: Territorial Dioceses of the Catholic Church in Australia,
July 2009, 2010 & 2011**

	July 2009	July 2010	July 2011	Change
Territorial Dioceses	28	28	28	n/c
Bishops (active) in Territorial Dioceses	37	36	36	n/c
Priests (active, retired and other)	2967	2954	2947	-7
– Diocesan Priests	1850	1847	1816	-31
– Religious Institute Priests	1117	1107	1131	+24
Catholic Population (2006 Census)	5,087,747	5,087,747	5,087,747	
- Estimate (ABS Population Clock)	5,500,000	5,600,000	5,660,000 ¹	+60,000
Parishes in Territorial Dioceses	1315	1282	1286²	+4
Mass Centres (including Parish Church)	2353	2414		
Priests (active) in Parish Ministry	1579	1523	1524	+1
– Diocesan Priests	1185	1112	1098	-14
– Religious Institute Priests	394	411	427	+16
– Overseas-sourced Priests (est.) ³		300-340 est.	350-400 est.	+50 est.
Seminarians (Australian and Overseas sourced)	274	257	315	+58
– Diocesan	171	167	199 ⁴	+32
– Religious Institutes	62	52	81	+29
– Neocatechetical Way ⁵	41	38	35	-3
Permanent Deacons (active and retired)	89	101	102	+1
- Active in parish ministry	87	82	81	-1
Religious Sisters (active & retired)	5767	5565	5276	-289
– Sisters active in Parish Ministry	195	200	191	-9
Religious Brothers (active & retired)	930	889	918	+29
- Brothers in parish ministry			9	
Lay Pastoral Associates/Workers in Parish Ministry (not religious)	182	209	197	-12
Catholics (average no.) per parish	4183	4368	4400	+72
Catholics (average no.) per Priest in Parish Ministry	3483	3676	3714	+38

Catholic Schools/Students	1699/692,623	1686/700,266	1691/708,276	+5/+8010
- Primary	1224/377,882	1221/381,811	1222/387,275	+1/+5464
- Secondary	350/314,741	325/318,455	316/321,001	-9/+2546
- Combined Schools (P & S)	110	141	143	+2
- Special Schools	10	10	10	n/c

Sources: *The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, July 2009-June 2010*, NCAP, Belmont, VIC, 2009
The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia July 2010-June 2011, NCAP, Belmont, VIC, 2010
The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia July 2011-June 2012, NCAP, Belmont, VIC, 2011
Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Australian Census, and ABS Population Clock

- Notes: 1. Estimate based on 25 percent of the estimated total population of 22.635 million at 30 June 2011. Based on 25.8 percent, it would most likely be 5.84 million.
2. The *Directory* figure of 1304 parishes includes multiple listings for merged parishes.
3. The *Directory* does not provide statistical data on overseas-sourced priests.
4. The number, from a survey in mid-November 2011, was 153. Both the *Directory* and survey figures include only seminarians studying for ministry in the 28 territorial Dioceses of Australia.
5. Diocesan seminarians studying at the Neocatechetical Way seminaries in Sydney and Perth.

What all of us need are fewer opinions and more facts; less rhetoric and more research; a cooling of instinctual and sometimes visceral reactions and an intensification of cerebral response to problems, real or imaginary, with which we are presented’.

- Bishop Ernest J. Primeau, Bishop of Manchester

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