



Pastoral Research Online

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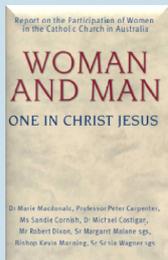
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WOMEN IN THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

This edition of *Pastoral Research Online* focuses on women in the church and Catholic women in Australian society. On page 2 we look at the leadership and ministry roles that women have in parishes, as well as the 'Top 20' occupations of female Catholics in Australia.

On page 3 we briefly examine just a small amount of data comparing women's and men's reasons for attending Mass, and satisfaction with various aspects of their parish. The data is based on a workshop given by Claudia Mollidor at the *Beliefs and Practices Conference* earlier this year.

Did you know that the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has an office dedicated to the participation of women in the Church? The **Office for the Participation of Women** (OPW) is a focal point for ongoing dialogue and the integration of ideas pertaining to women and their participation in the Catholic Church in Australia. The Director of the OPW, Donella Johnston, has contributed to this edition of the E-news. Further information about the office can be found on their website: opw.catholic.org.au



15 YEARS SINCE WOMAN AND MAN PUBLISHED

Twenty years ago the Australian bishops recognised the need to investigate the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia and commissioned what was to be the largest research project ever conducted by the Catholic Church in Australia.

August 2014 marked the 15th anniversary of the publication of the ***Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus Report on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia*** (1999).

You can access the Report's Executive Summary, Overview and the Bishops' response and recommendations outlined in the Social Justice Sunday Statement published in 2000 at: <http://opw.catholic.org.au/resources/woman-and-man-resources.html>

When you read these documents you might want to think about:

1. The ways in which women participate in decision-making, leadership and ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia.
2. What assistance and support are currently offered to women to participate in decision-making, leadership and ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia?
3. What are the barriers to women's participation in decision-making, leadership and ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia?
4. What are some ways in which women's participation in decision-making, leadership and ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia could be increased?

- Donella Johnston, Director, ACBC Office for the Participation of Women

DID YOU KNOW?



According to the 2011 National Church Life survey, females made up 61 per cent of all Catholic Mass attenders 15 years of age and over.

The Dioceses of Port Pirie and Cairns had the highest attendance of women at Mass, with 65 per cent of attenders over 14 years of age being women. The Archdiocese of Adelaide and the Diocese of Parramatta had the highest attendance of men (aged 15 and over) at Mass, with 41 per cent being men.

However, in some parishes, the proportion of women attending Mass was as high as 83 per cent, while just two parishes (out of a sample of 217) had under 50 per cent of women among Mass attenders.

Source: 2011 National Church Life Survey (sample parishes).

ROLES OF WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN PARISHES

In the 2011 National Church Life Survey, in a national random sample of 217 Catholic parishes, Mass attenders were asked whether they performed any particular leadership or ministry roles in the parish. According to the results,

Leadership or ministry role in parish	Females (%)	Males (%)	Total (%)
Reader or special minister of the Eucharist	19	16	18
Music ministry	8	6	7
Member of liturgy planning group	3	2	2
Preparing adults for sacraments (eg, RCIA, marriage preparation)	2	1	1
Children's liturgy or sacrament preparation	5	2	4
Religious education teacher in a Government school	2	1	2
Visitor to sick, elderly, others in need	9	6	8
Leader of a group in the parish	3	3	3
Member of parish council or similar leadership group	3	5	4
Member of a committee	4	5	5
Teacher in the parish school	3	1	2
Active involvement in parish school, but not as teacher	3	2	3
Other role not mentioned above	10	12	11
No leadership or ministry role	59	64	61
Total	134	124	130

Note: totals exceed 100% because attenders could choose more than one response.

Source: 2011 National Church Life survey

attenders were most likely to be involved in a role as a reader or special minister of the Eucharist, with 19 per cent of females and 16 per cent of males performing the role.

Women were more likely than men to hold roles in most leadership or ministry positions apart from as a committee member of a group, or as a parish councilor.

Of note is that 59 per cent of female attenders and 64 per cent of male attenders said they did

not have any leadership or ministry roles in the parish. The remaining 41 per cent of females and 36 per cent of males held multiple roles in parishes, so that, overall, 39 per cent of Mass attenders were performing all of the leadership or ministry roles between them.

FEMALE OCCUPATIONS

'Top 20' Occupations of female Catholics	Number in occupation
1 Sales Assistants (General)	93,830
2 General Clerks	60,663
3 Registered Nurses	56,507
4 Receptionists	39,762
5 Primary School Teachers	39,515
6 Child Carers	28,590
7 Office Managers	26,417
8 Accounting Clerks	25,898
9 Retail Managers	25,257
10 Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers	24,898
11 Aged and Disabled Carers	23,714
12 Secondary School Teachers	22,454
13 Bookkeepers	20,983
14 Secretaries	20,528
15 Commercial Cleaners	19,799
16 Waiters	19,055
17 Education Aides	18,118
18 Accountants	17,906
19 Contract, Program and Project Administrators	16,753
20 Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers	16,089

Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing (TableBuilder)

According to the 2011 Census, the most popular occupations of female Catholics were Sales Assistants (General), General Clerks and Registered Nurses. Receptionist, Primary School Teacher and Child Carer were also popular occupations among Catholic women.

The 'Top 20' occupations of female Catholics were identical to that of females in the general population, although the order was slightly different.

Of interest is that, although Catholics make up 25.3 per cent of the Australian population, more than one-third (33.8%) of all female Primary School Teachers and 30.3 per cent of all female Registered Nurses were Catholic.

"Education and health revolve around the wellbeing of people and the value of the individual, which is affirmed strongly in religious contexts. Moreover, religious groups play a prominent role in Australia in operating schools and hospitals." - Hughes & Fraser, Life, Ethics & Faith in Australian Society, Christian Research Association.

Why do people go to Mass?

How important to you is each of these reasons for going to Mass? - VERY IMPORTANT	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total (%)
I want to give thanks to God	66	57	62
I want to deepen my relationship with God	63	54	60
I need a time for prayer	57	44	52
It's important for my family	47	47	47
I want to be part of the Christian community	48	41	45
I want to offer sacrifice to God	42	42	42
I need encouragement and inspiration	44	37	41
I feel it is my duty	36	39	37
I would like to understand the Gospel	39	34	37
I want time to think	39	30	36

Source of data: 2011 National Church Life Survey. Questions come from Questionnaire S3 (N = 2786).

Respondents to a small sample questionnaire in the 2011 National Church Life Survey were asked to mark ten reasons for going to Mass on a four-point scale from 'Not important' to 'Very important'. The table to the side shows the percentage of women and men who marked each response as 'Very important'. The most common reason people

gave was to give thanks to God, with two-thirds of women and 57 per cent of men stating it as very important. This was the most prominent reason in all age groups, particularly among women, and well-aligned with the sacramental meaning of the Mass and, indeed, the very meaning of the word 'Eucharist'.

How satisfied are people with their parish?

Mass attenders are generally satisfied with their experience of parish life; it is probable that many of those who were not satisfied have stopped going to Mass. More than four-fifths (81 per cent) say that their spiritual needs are met by the parish, two-thirds (66 per cent) have a strong and growing or a strong and stable sense of belonging to the parish community, and the same percentage say they find it easy to make friends in the parish (see Table 3). Overall, almost half (45 per cent) say the parish is a very important or even an extremely important part of their life.

Men and women responded very similarly to these questions, the exception, though, being in relation to the importance of the parish in one's life, where women (48 per cent) were somewhat more likely than men (41 per cent) to say that the parish was very or extremely important to them.

** The full article from Claudia Mollidor's conference workshop can be found in the July 2014 issue of Australasian Catholic Record.

Aspects of satisfaction with the parish	Women (%)	Men (%)	Total (%)
My spiritual needs are being met here *	81	80	81
Strong sense of belonging to the parish	67	66	66
Have found it easy to make friends	67	64	66
Parish very important or extremely important in life	48	41	45
Leaders take ideas into account to a great extent	35	33	34
Gifts and skills encouraged to a great extent	14	12	13
Satisfied with what the parish offers for children	55	55	55
Satisfied with what the parish offers for youth	38	39	39
Satisfied with what the parish offers for young adults	35	36	35
<i>At Mass in this parish, always or usually experience ...</i>			
A sense of God's presence	83	76	80
Being strengthened spiritually	73	65	70
Growth in understanding of God	72	66	70
Preaching very helpful to my life	69	63	67
Joy	64	57	61
Inspiration	61	55	59
Being challenged to take action	47	45	46
Boredom	7	10	9

Source: 2011 National Church Life Survey. Questions come from Questionnaire AC (N = 32,153) unless otherwise indicated. * This question comes from Questionnaire S3 (N = 2786).

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STAFF NEWS

- **Bob Dixon** and his wife **Cath**, have just returned from long-service leave, during which time they undertook a one-month study course at *Ecce Homo Institute* in Jerusalem.
- On the 27th October, **Bob** will be attending the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) in Washington DC.
- Building Stronger Parishes Project Coordinator, **Trudy Dantis**, has just received notification from the University of Divinity of successful completion of her PhD thesis. Congratulations to Trudy on her fine efforts.

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Research Update

We are now in the stage of data analysis and reporting for the Building Stronger Parishes research project.

An in-depth case study analysis of ten participating parishes has been completed as part Trudy Dantis' PhD thesis. We are currently in the process of preparing a major report which we hope to publish next month.

The Project Reference Group met this month to discuss plans for further data analysis and the publication of research findings through a series of several supplementary reports to be released next year.

Don't forget to keep an eye on the website for further updates and resources:

www.buildingstrongerparishes.catholic.org.au

The most recent addition to the website includes a conference workshop handout on findings from the Building Strong Parishes project focusing on spiritual nourishment, faith formation and community building in parishes.

Download the 2-page handout to get some practical ideas for your parish.

Further research

The work of the Pastoral Research Office will be presented to an international audience when Bob Dixon presents two papers at the forthcoming **Society for the Scientific Study of Religion & Religious Research Association** Conference in Indianapolis, US:

- 'What Best Predicts Mass Attendance Rates?'
- 'Half-Empty or Half-Full? Structural and Personnel Challenges in Parish Life Compared in Australia and the United States'.

We will be providing more information about these two papers in future issues of *Pastoral Research Online*.

DID YOU HAPPEN TO SEE . . . ?

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) has completed a longitudinal study of women religious in the United States drawing on data reported by the religious institutes of women listed in the US Official Catholic Directory. The contributions of women religious continue to be evident today in Catholic institutions of education and healthcare across the United States, but there are, and have been, countless other contributions as well. Over the years, these valiant women have adapted to changing circumstances and forged ahead despite challenges to their way of life and ministry.

CARA has produced a *Special Report* in an effort to disentangle the story of women religious in the United States that is hidden in the numbers. The eight-page report can be downloaded free of charge from:

<http://cara.georgetown.edu/>

