



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

**Pastoral Research Office**



# *Pastoral Research Online*

**Issue 33**

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## **Sacraments in Australia**

Each year the Vatican Publishing House releases statistical data about the Catholic Church worldwide. The data contained in these yearbooks is extensive, and includes demographic information, statistics on bishops, priests and religious, data on health and educational institutions, and, figures on religious practices in the Church, such as marriages, baptisms and first communions.

In the following pages of *Pastoral Research Online*, we have a look at some of the sacramental data contained in the Yearbooks, and uncover some interesting trends which have occurred in the last 10 to 20 years.

On the last page of this edition there are a number of news items worthy of reading, including details of a **new publication** recently launched at the Proclaim Conference in Chatswood, an update on the **National Church Life Survey**, and, information about the Pastoral Research Office's involvement in a forthcoming **international conference** in Atlanta, in the US.

**PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!**

## *Retirement Celebration*

in honour of

*Dr Bob Dixon*

*Director of the Pastoral Research Office*

**Friday 9th December 2016**

5.30 pm Mass at St John the Evangelist Church, East Melbourne  
6.30 pm for 7.15 pm Drinks and Dinner, Catholic Leadership Centre

St John the Evangelist Church and Catholic Leadership Centre  
576 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne

**Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
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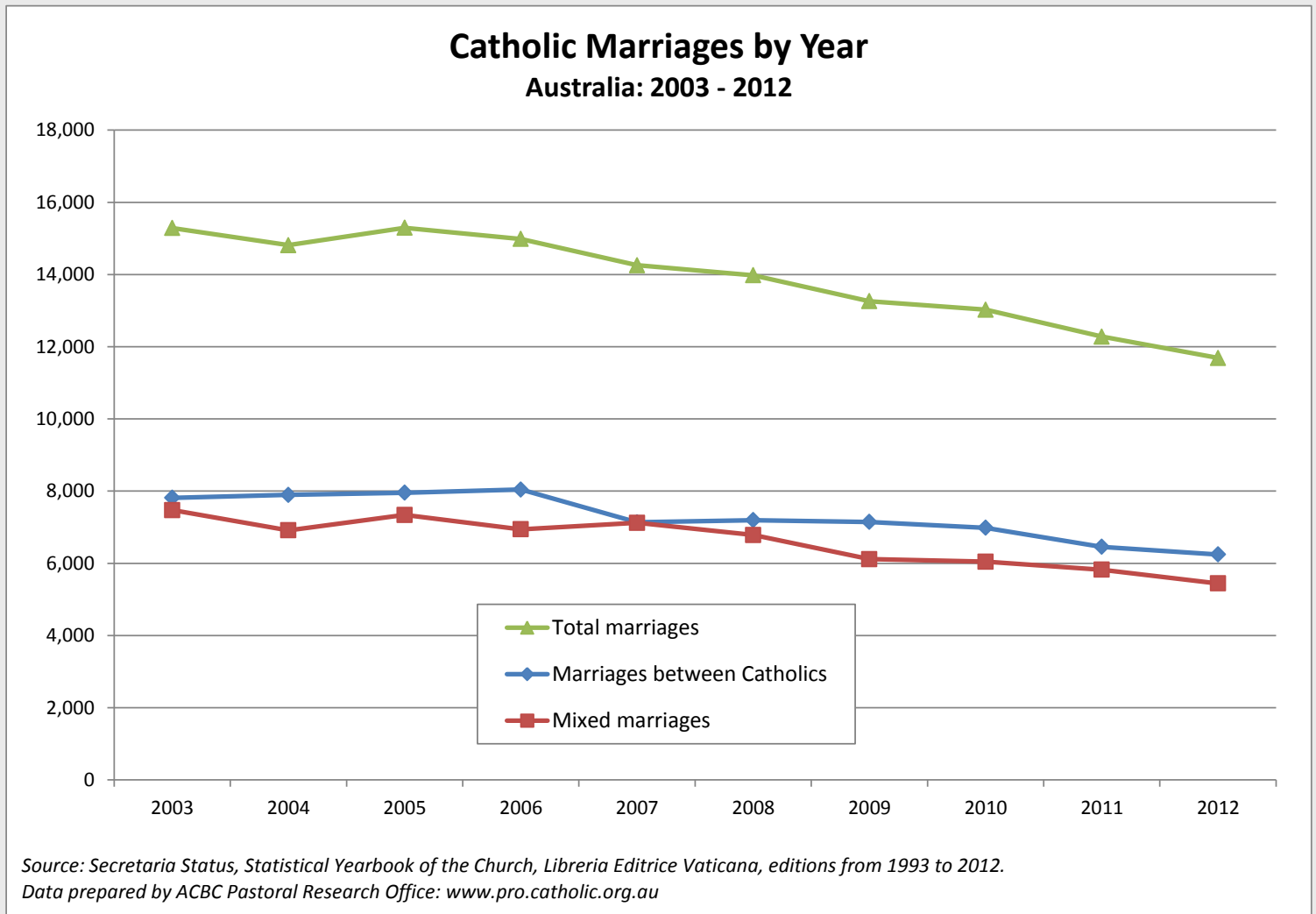
*If you are interested in attending, please email Stephen Reid at the PRO  
[s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au](mailto:s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au)*



## Marriages

According to the *Statistical Yearbook of the Church*, in 2003 there were 15,287 Catholic marriages in Australia. Just over half of these (51%) were marriages between two Catholics, while the remaining 49 per cent were between a Catholic and a non-Catholic couple. Ten years later, in 2013, there were 11,688 recorded marriages, which comprised 53 per cent between two Catholics and 47 per cent between a Catholic and a non-Catholic.

The change between 2003 and 2012 represents a 24 per cent decrease in the total number of Catholic marriages. Whilst the Pastoral Research Office does not have complete data for some intervening years (see note below), in 1993 there were 22,139 Catholic marriages in Australia, with an almost 50 per cent split in marriages between two Catholics and marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic. The percentage change in the 20 year period between 1993 and 2012 was a decrease of 47 per cent in total Catholic marriages.



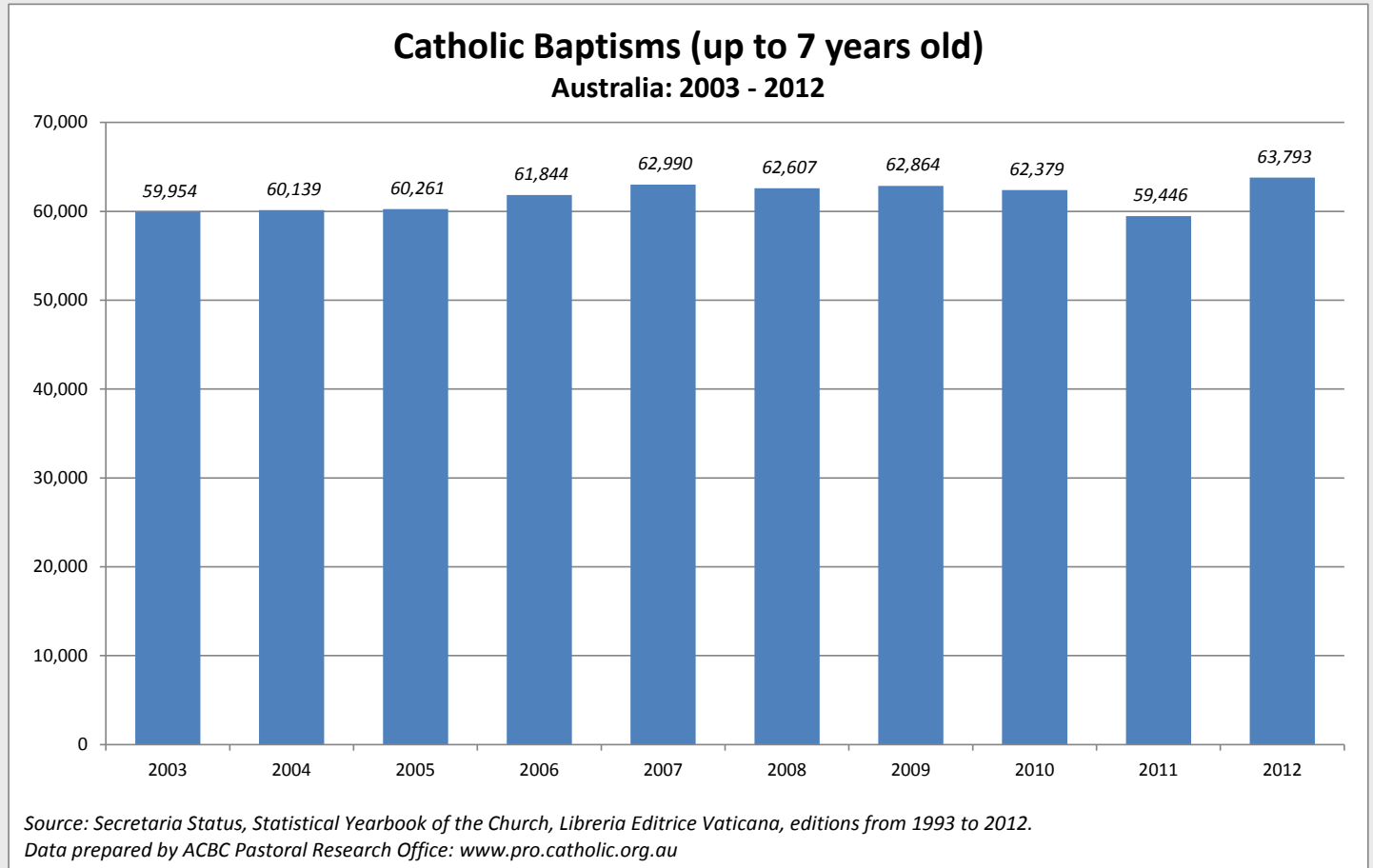
In the general population, the Australian Bureau of Statistics notes that in 2014 (the most recent data), 74 per cent of the marriages in Australia were civil celebrations, compared to 43 per cent of marriages in 1994. Of the 31,278 marriages conducted by ministers of religion, 32 per cent—or 11,858 marriages—were Catholic.

Seventy per cent of the Catholic marriages in 2014 were between individuals who were both born in Australia, while five per cent were between individuals who were both born in the same overseas country. One-quarter of the marriages were between individuals born in different countries. (ABS data source: *Marriages and Divorces, Australia, 2014, Cat. No. 3310.0*)

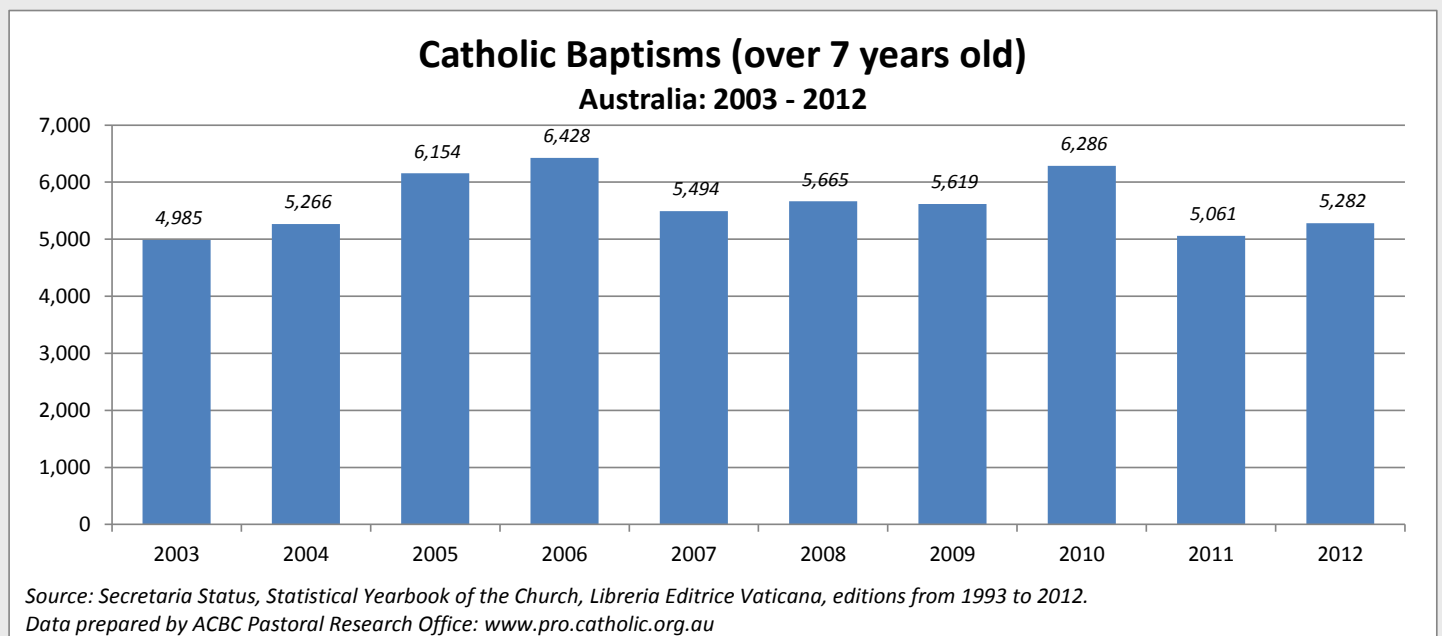
**WANTED:** If you have any of the following editions of the *Statistical Yearbook of the Church* (published by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana) lying around gathering dust, the Pastoral Research Office would like to add it to their library: 1995, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002.

# Baptisms

While the Pastoral Research Office has previously noted the decline in Mass attendance in Australia in the last few decades (see *Mass attendance in Australia: A critical moment*, available from the PRO website), the number of Catholic baptisms in Australia has not seen such decline. In fact, according to the *Statistical Yearbook of the Church*, between 2003 and 2012 there was an increase of around six per cent in the total number of baptisms. In 2003, there were 59,954 baptisms of children up to 7 years of age, and 4,985 baptisms of individuals over 7 years. By 2012, this had increased to 63,793 and 5,282 respectively.



However, in 1993, there were a total of 75,278 baptisms, meaning that in the 20 year period to 2012 there was a decline of around eight per cent, with much of this decline occurring in the mid-1990s). The decline in baptisms only occurred for children up to 7 years (from 71,055 to 63,793), while baptisms for those over 7 years increased by 25 per cent (from 4,223 to 5,282).



## Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Meeting

At the end of October, Bob and Stephen will be travelling to Atlanta, Georgia, in the US, to attend the next SSSR meeting and to present papers.

Bob's paper, titled "Counting Australia's Catholics: History, Methods, and Applications", will look at how the Catholic Church in Australia makes use of Census data to contribute to the Church's mission and ministry in parishes, dioceses and at the national level.

Stephen will present some of the preliminary work of his doctoral studies, and will examine the possibilities of sports chaplaincy being undertaken as a local church ministry.

The SSSR meeting will take place from 28 to 30 October, and both Bob and Stephen will also take some annual leave before and after the meeting.

A few days after the SSSR meeting, Bob will take part in the second meeting of the 'Asia-Pacific Catholicism and Globalisation Project' in Washington DC, together with 15 or so other sociologists, theologians, anthropologists and the like. The group met for the first time in Melbourne in April, and will meet again in Manila next March before meeting for the final time at a conference in Melbourne in June next year. It is an exciting project revealing the rich diversity of the histories and contemporary realities of Catholicism in countries like Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Australia. The project coordinators are sociologist Jose Casanova and theologian Peter Phan, both from Georgetown University in Washington.

The material for this edition of *Pastoral Research Online* was prepared by the following PRO staff:

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## 2016 National Church Life Survey

### UPDATE

Orders for the 2016 National Church Life Survey have now been finalised and all participating parishes should receive their survey kit (with questionnaires, instructions, etc.) by the end of September. Parishes can choose any weekend in October or November to undertake the survey.

There are some helpful resources on the survey website ([www.2016ncls.org.au](http://www.2016ncls.org.au)) which encourage parish leaders to promote a positive attitude towards participation, including promotional material, worship resources such as prayers and homily notes, and audio visuals.

Parishes should receive their results before Easter, which in 2017 is in mid-April.

All of the details about the survey can be found at the NCLS website, or contact Stephen at the PRO for further information if you can't find what you're looking for.

## NEW RELEASE:

### A HANDBOOK FOR BUILDING STRONGER PARISHES

*A Handbook for Building Stronger Parishes* was officially launched by the Chair of the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research, Archbishop Julian Porteous, at the recent *Proclaim* Conference in Sydney.

In this new book, published by Garratt, Dr Trudy Dantis draws on her ground-breaking research into factors that lead to parish vitality to provide Australian case studies with down-to-earth examples of what can be achieved in eight key areas that lead to stronger parishes: planning, spirituality and faith formation, liturgy, community building, welcoming and hospitality, outreach, evangelisation and leadership.

This work is supported by the Bob Dixon's helpful introductory articles, enabling parishes to build up a comprehensive parish profile from readily available information.

*A Handbook for Building Stronger Parishes* provides excellent case studies, reflection questions, worksheets and action plans to support you and your parish team.

***A Handbook for Building Stronger Parishes* is now available for purchase from:**

[garrattpublishing.com.au](http://garrattpublishing.com.au)

