



CALLED TO FULLNESS OF LIFE AND LOVE:

National Report on the Australian Catholic
Bishops' Youth Survey 2017

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Introducing a new approach through a Synod with the topic, “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment”, the Church has decided to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognise and accept the **CALL TO THE FULLNESS OF LIFE AND LOVE**, and to ask young people to help her in identifying the most effective ways to announce the Good News today.

XV Ordinary General Synod: Young People Faith and Vocational Discernment, Preparatory Document.

FOREWORD



I want to express my thanks to the more than 15,000 young people who made time to share their personal experiences and ask questions of the Church in this national survey.

The survey was carried out over several months at a time when Australia was in the midst of some landmark discussions. Campaigning, debates and eventually voting on same-sex “marriage” and euthanasia were underway during the survey period, and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was coming to its conclusion. The media focus on the Church was unprecedented. Despite these challenges, the youth of Australia have responded passionately and earnestly.

It’s clear from the results of the survey that young people are concerned about mental health issues, including depression; about personal problems, including sexual, ethnic and spiritual identity; about their educational, employment and housing future; about forming and sustaining good relationships; about the direction of our politics, culture and Church on issues of life and love, justice and mercy; about avoiding loneliness and finding a community of real support; and about being a person of faith in an increasingly secular environment.

These are big issues that affect us all and they are all things about which the Church cares deeply and on which it has much to say. Even amidst the challenges raised in the survey, there is cause for great hope. For millennials, there has never been a more important time to rededicate themselves to the message and life of Jesus Christ. If ever we needed new John the Baptists to call people to repent and believe, to offer some really Good News amidst all the bad, and to point people to Christ, it is right now! Never in history have young people been more necessary! Never have young people had more opportunities to be the spiritual heroes our nation and our world needs!

In this special Year of Youth, and as the Church in Australia begins preparations for the Plenary Council in 2020 and 2021, the results of this consultation will help to guide Bishops, Priests and Lay people in working together for the good of all.

Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP
Chair, Bishops Commission for Family, Youth & Life
Bishops’ Delegate for Youth
Archbishop of Sydney
June 2018

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



TRUDY DANTIS

Trudy Dantis is the Director of the Pastoral Research Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. She is an experienced researcher with tertiary qualifications in pastoral studies, social work and community resource management. Trudy is the author of two books, including *A Handbook for Building Stronger Parishes*, which drew upon her doctoral research that explored the vitality of Australian Catholic parishes.



STEPHEN REID

Stephen Reid has worked as a Research Officer at the Pastoral Research Office for the past ten years. During that time, he has also worked concurrently as a Researcher with the Christian Research Association, working on numerous youth ministry, youth spirituality and youth wellbeing research projects.

ABOUT THE PASTORAL RESEARCH OFFICE

The Pastoral Research Office (PRO) is an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference whose mission is to assist the Catholic Church in Australia at all levels in understanding the cultural, social and personal dimensions of religion in the changing contemporary context. The work of the PRO is overseen by the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research which in turn reports to the Bishops Commission for Administration and Information. The PRO was established in 1996 and was located on the Melbourne campus of Australian Catholic University between 2004 and 2017. Since the beginning of 2018, the office has been located in Canberra.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the following people who contributed in many and varied ways to this extensive project.

Firstly, the **15,000+ young people** who took the time to respond to the survey. We are ever grateful to each of you for sharing your thoughts with us and contributing to this project.

Members of the Reference Group and **Editing Committee** had the responsibility of transforming the key questions and themes from the Preparatory Document for the Synod into comprehensible and appropriate questions for the survey. The members also provided general project and editorial oversight. The members of the group were: Ms Alison Burt, Mr Malcolm Hart, Ms Lucy Warhurst, Fr Greg Bourke, Mr Kieran Walton, Archbishop Anthony Fisher, Bishop Michael McCarthy and Fr Stephen Hackett.

Mr Malcolm Hart, the Director of the ACBC Office for Youth, ensured each step of the project and its outcomes were relevant to the young people being surveyed.

Ms Alison Burt, the Executive Secretary of the Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life, was responsible for steering the overall project from inception to completion. Alison ensured that every stage of the research process was kept to schedule, and managed to bring all of the individuals together to form a collaborative and hard-working team.

Ms Lucy Warhurst, as Executive Support Officer to the ACBC, was the driving force behind the scenes, ensuring that there was open and ongoing communication between the Reference Group and key diocesan personnel. Much of the success in the promotion of the survey to diocesan personnel can be contributed to Lucy's patient communication with the key youth representatives, keeping them up-to-date with the survey progress and gently pursuing them for their reports.

Ms Annemarie Atapattu, Administrative and Research Assistant at the ACBC Pastoral Research Office, who effortlessly assembled, checked, proof-read and edited no less than 30 individual reports for dioceses, as well as contributing to Australia's report for the General Synod of Bishops. Annemarie also designed the layout for the Diocesan Reports, and, together with Lucy Warhurst, provided administrative expertise for the overall project.

The key **youth representatives** from each of the dioceses whose tireless promotion of the survey, often in quite creative ways, contributed to the overwhelming response rate to the survey.

And finally, many others in schools and parishes around Australia who helped spread awareness of the survey and encouraged people to participate.

Thank you.

Trudy Dantis and Stephen Reid



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2017, in response to notification that there will be a Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2018 to discuss the topic of Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference commissioned the ACBC Pastoral Research Office to undertake an online survey of young people in Australia. This work was initiated by the Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life, working with the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry. The questions used were posed by the Synod Office in Rome but adapted for use in the Australian context. The survey sought to study the interactions between young people, the Church and society, to examine young people's religious practices and Church involvement, and to explore how the Church might better engage with young people.

During a six-week period between May and July 2017, young people aged 16 to 29 were invited to participate in the survey. Invitations were distributed via national and diocesan youth departments, Catholic parishes, Catholic schools, and other Church agencies which connect with young people. Overall, some 15,000 young people responded by completing all or part of the survey.

Respondents came from every diocese and eparchy¹, as well as a very small number from the Personal Ordinariates and Prelatures. Fifty-seven per cent were females, 37 per cent were males, while six per cent chose not to state their sex. Four-fifths of respondents (81%) were aged 16–18 years, with the vast majority of those (96%) attending a Catholic school. Eighty-four per cent were born in Australia, while other countries of birth with high proportions of respondents included the Philippines, India, the United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland), Iraq and New Zealand. Four per cent of respondents were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. Five per cent of respondents said they had a disability.

One-quarter of respondents described themselves as Catholic and were regularly involved in Mass and parish activities. A much greater proportion (64%) of those aged 19 or over described themselves this way. A further one-quarter of respondents were Catholic or Christian and were occasionally involved with church activities. Around 21 per cent of participants indicated that their

¹ An eparchy is a territorial diocese governed by a bishop of one of the Eastern Christian churches.

family was Catholic or Christian, but they didn't practise the faith or were involved in anything.

The most common involvement in the Church was through Youth Masses or liturgies, Catholic school groups, prayer experiences and social events. The most positive experiences of participating in Church groups or events for all respondents were youth groups, youth festivals, Mass and liturgical gatherings and mission and outreach opportunities.

According to participants, the four most engaging and successful gatherings within the Church were Masses and liturgies, youth groups, informal activities and musical events. Outside the Church, organised social events such as concerts and festivals, informal social gatherings, youth groups and sport, were seen to be most successful.

There were mixed reactions to the experience of attending non-Catholic religious events. Participants who enjoyed such experiences commented on the friendship, community spirit, music and engagement aspects of the services. For those who attended Catholic religious events, these were valued for the presence of the Eucharist and adequate time for prayer and quiet reflection.

According to the respondents, the groups of people who had influenced key decisions and directions in their life were family, friends and their school or teachers. Forty-four per cent of young people said that the parish or church community and Church or religious leaders had had at least some influence on them.

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, their experience of being listened to by people from the Church. Overall, a moderate score of 5.9 was recorded. School-aged young people rated their experience lower than older youth.

The main factors that largely contributed to young people's positive experiences of being listened to were talking to people who valued their story, the positive attitude of the clergy and the welcoming and supportive attitude of parishioners. In contrast, the factors that contributed to the negative experiences were negative personal encounters with people from the Church, occasions where their comments were ignored by others and what they saw as close-minded, biased attitudes of some people.

The main issues facing young people in Australia today, according to respondents, were mental health, school or study, drugs or alcohol, body image and friendships and relationships.

Participants believed that the main ways in which the Church could respond to young people today was by providing them help in dealing with personal problems and relationship issues, more faith formation opportunities and help in leading a Christian life, more resources for youth ministry and by being more open and inclusive to people of all walks of life.

According to participants, the Church could use social media to better connect with young people by having a greater presence on such platforms with engaging content and more advertising of events and through the development of great websites and apps with helpful resources. Participants who were not currently connected with the Church in any way also suggested the use of social media as a means of direct communication to them. They also suggested widely advertising events through schools, parishes and local events so that people of all faiths might participate. Older participants voiced a specific need for groups that catered to their age and interest.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In January 2017, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) received notification that in 2018 there will be a Synod of Bishops in Rome, the theme of which is: Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment. A Preparatory Document for the Synod was issued, which included around 18 questions, particularly focusing on analysing and understanding the situation of young people in the country. The target age of young people considered by the Synod is 16- to 29-year-olds.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference chose, therefore, to commission the ACBC Pastoral Research Office to undertake an online survey of Australian young people so as to provide some preliminary information to assist them with their response to the Synod. This work was initiated by the Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life, working with the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry. The purpose of the survey was to help the ACBC understand the world of young people, particularly young people of the Catholic faith and those who have some connection with the Church, however tenuous that link may be.

In particular, the survey sought to:

1. Study the interactions between young people, the Church and society.
2. Examine the level of participation of young people in religious practices and other Church activities and their experiences of these.
3. Explore ways in which the Church might better engage with young people.

Young people in the target age group were invited to participate in the online survey. Invitations using a survey link were distributed via national and diocesan youth agencies, Catholic parishes, Catholic schools and other Church agencies which connect with young people.

From the very outset, the focus of the research aimed at “listening” to young people. It was very important therefore that the survey design allow their voices to emerge. For this reason, a mix of

both closed and open-ended questions were included in the survey. The ability to write freely on many questions allowed young people to share their thoughts and feelings and their stories with us. The researchers were thus able to collect rich and detailed data of a kind that could not have been obtained from a random sample survey with pre-set responses.

The survey was launched on 24 May 2017 and closed on 2 July 2017, a period of almost six weeks. Overall, some 15,000 Australian young people responded by completing or partially completing the survey.

The first imperative of the survey data collected was to review it along with feedback received from dioceses in order to compile the ACBC national report to Rome for the Synod preparations by December 2017. Following that milestone, in early 2018, our attention turned to reviewing the raw survey data in more detail and from a national perspective in order to listen intently to the voices of those young Australians who had responded to the survey and to make that data available to others who were interested in responding purposefully to the feedback of those young people.

It is anticipated that the results of the survey will benefit the bishops and the Church in Australia, and more widely, dioceses, parishes, youth agencies and young people, by contributing to an understanding of young people in contemporary Australian society and the contribution they can make to the Church in Australia.



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report provides a national summary of results from the 15,054 young people who responded to the survey.

Because this was a voluntary activity that, with the exception of some secondary school students, respondents did in their own time, it is likely that there are some biases in the results. It is likely that the survey under-represents young people who are connected only marginally with a Catholic organisation, parish or school, and over-represents those young people who are highly involved or those who have a “vested” interest in the Church. It is also likely that the responses represent those young people who enjoy reading and doing surveys and does not represent well the opinions of those who do not enjoy such activities. In reading through this report, those possible biases should always be kept in mind.

In the tables throughout the report, the number of respondents to each question is indicated below

(N = xx,xxx). Not all respondents answered every question, so numbers differ from table to table.

A copy of the paper version of the survey can be found at the back of this report (Appendix 1).

The project was approved by the Ethics Committee of Australian Catholic University.

The reporting of results from the survey is followed by five short commentaries by people who are experts in their field. The commentators comprise a religious educator, a social worker, a priest, a family ministry worker and a youth minister.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT COPYRIGHT

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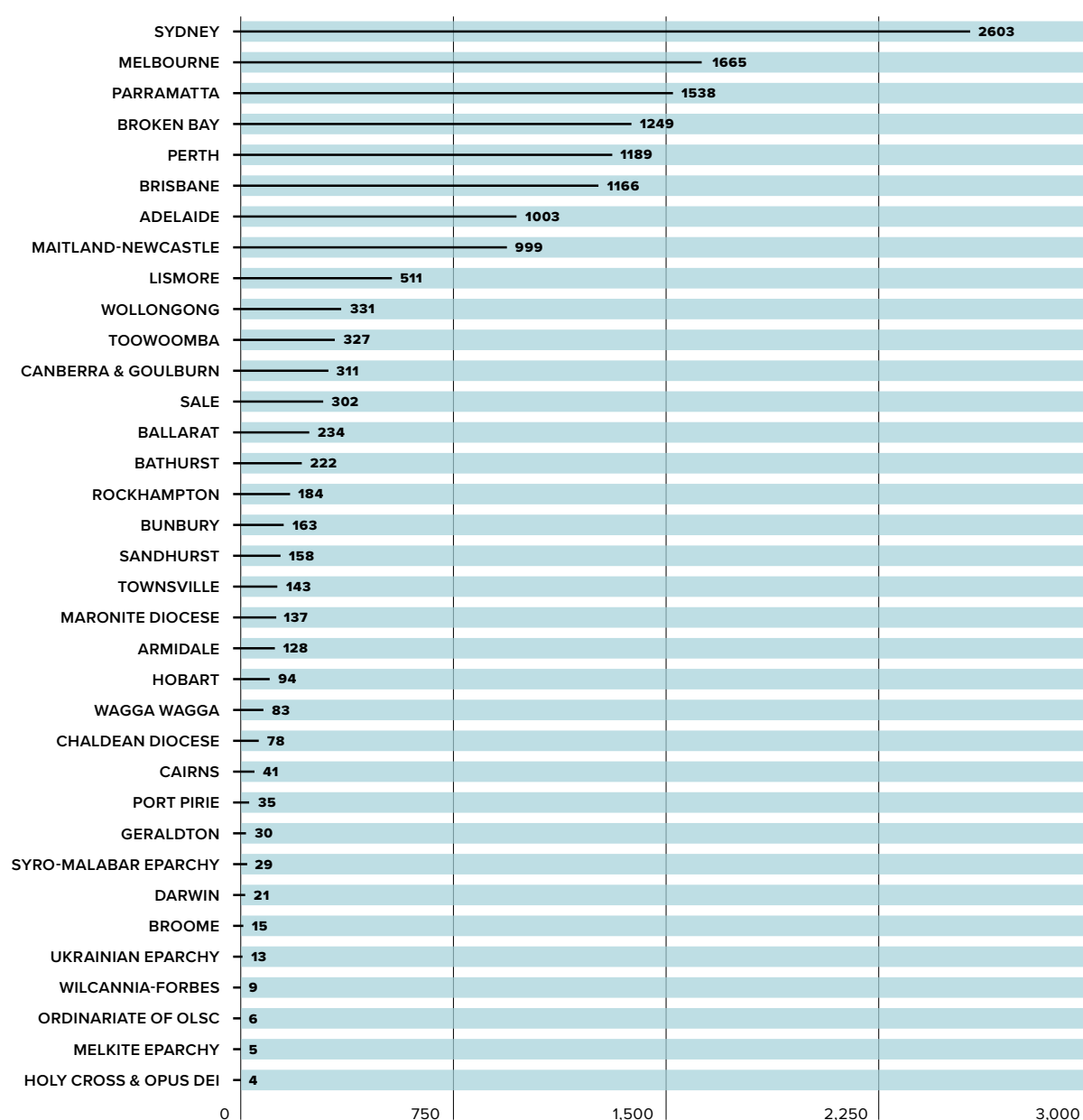
CHAPTER 2:

THE PARTICIPANTS

WHICH DIOCESE DID RESPONDENTS COME FROM?

As the table below shows, respondents came from every diocese and eparchy¹, with the Archdioceses of Sydney and Melbourne most highly represented, followed by the Dioceses of Parramatta and Broken Bay, and the Archdioceses of Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide. There were a small number of respondents from the Personal Ordinariate and Prelature, and some of the Eastern Rite Eparchies, although it is possible that a number of respondents who otherwise may have identified with one such group may have indicated a geographical diocese.

FIGURE 2.1 NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS BY DIOCESE



The locations of 28 respondents were unable to be determined.

¹ Eparchy is a territorial diocese governed by a bishop of one of the Eastern Christian churches.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

AGE AND SEX

While invitations for the survey were distributed via national and diocesan youth agencies, Catholic parishes, and other Church agencies which connect with young people, the greatest number of responses came from students in Catholic schools. Not surprisingly, then, 81 per cent of respondents were aged 16–18. A further seven per cent of respondents could broadly be classified as being of university age, while the remaining 13 per cent were aged 23 to 29.

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents were female and 37 per cent were male, while the remaining six per cent chose not to state their sex.

FIGURE 2.2 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

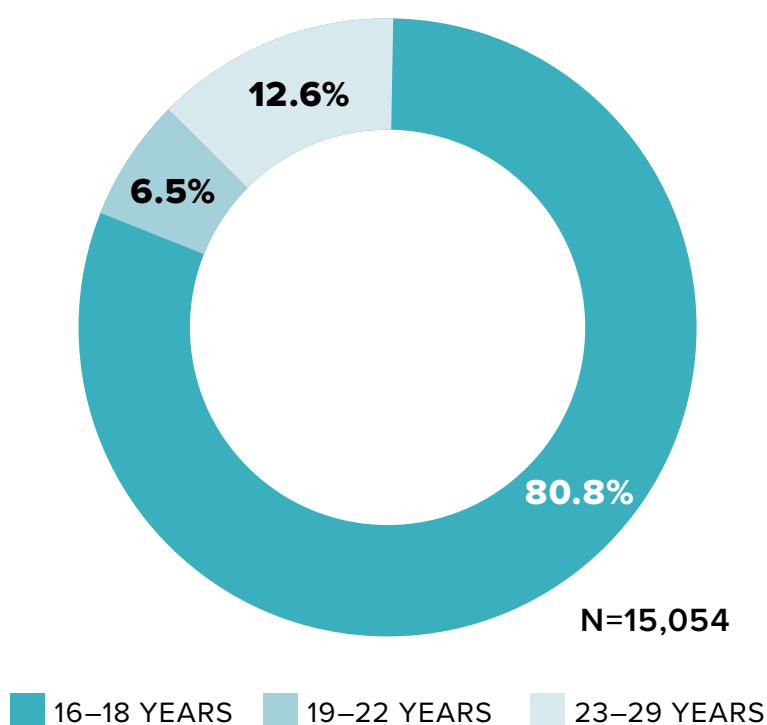


TABLE 2.1 AGE	N	%
16-18 years	12,170	80.8
19-22 years	986	6.5
23-29 years	1,898	12.6
Total	15,054	100

N = 15,054. Missing = 0.

TABLE 2.2 SEX	N	%
Female	6,021	56.8
Male	3,942	37.2
Prefer not to say	632	6.0
Total	10,595	100

N = 10,595. Missing = 4,459.

ETHNICITY

Most respondents (84%) were young people born in Australia. Other countries of birth with high proportions of respondents included the Philippines, India, the United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland), Iraq and New Zealand. However, 32 per cent were second generation Australians, having one or both parents born overseas. Twelve per cent of respondents were born overseas in a non-English speaking country and four per cent were born in an overseas English speaking country.

TABLE 2.3 COUNTRY OF BIRTH

	N	%
Australia	8,836	84.4
Chile	34	0.3
China (not including Hong Kong or Taiwan)	33	0.3
Egypt	31	0.3
India	142	1.4
Indonesia	33	0.3
Iraq	87	0.8
Ireland (including Northern Ireland)	38	0.4
Italy	31	0.3
Lebanon	44	0.4
Malaysia	41	0.4
New Zealand	84	0.8
North America	50	0.5
Philippines	199	1.9
Singapore	42	0.4
South Africa	60	0.6
Sri Lanka	38	0.4
Sudan (including South Sudan)	27	0.3
United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland)	131	1.3
Vietnam	35	0.3
Other country	456	4.4
Total	10,472	100

N = 10,472. Missing = 4,582.

FIGURE 2.3 TOP 5 BIRTHPLACES OF RESPONDENTS BORN OVERSEAS
(NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS)

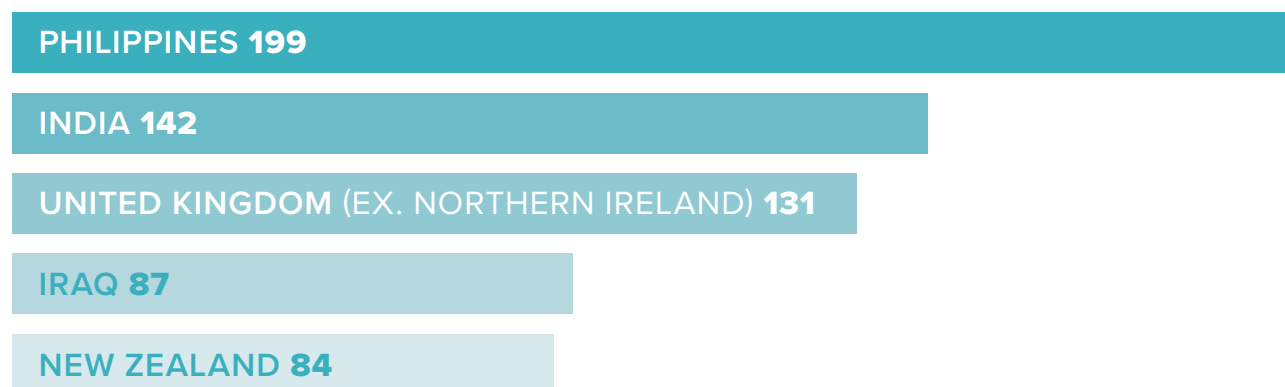


TABLE 2.4
MOTHER'S
BIRTHPLACE

	N	%
Australia	6,584	62.3
Another English speaking country	1,112	10.5
A non-English speaking country	2,668	25.3
Don't know	199	1.9
Total	10,563	100

N = 10,563. Missing = 4,491.

TABLE 2.5
FATHER'S
BIRTHPLACE

	N	%
Australia	6,318	60.4
Another English speaking country	1,223	11.7
A non-English speaking country	2,674	25.6
Don't know	246	2.4
Total	10,461	100

N = 10,461. Missing = 4,593.

FIGURE 2.4 BIRTHPLACE OF RESPONDENT BY PARENT'S BIRTHPLACE
(PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)

Australian born with Australian born parents

52%

Born in Australia, one or both parents born overseas

32%

Born overseas in an English speaking country

4%

Born overseas in a non-English speaking country

12%

Just over four per cent of respondents were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, higher than the overall rate for Australian young people aged 16–29, which was 3.6 per cent, and for Catholic young people, which was 3.5 per cent (*Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2016*).

<i>TABLE 2.6 ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	459	4.4
No	10,050	95.6
Total	10,509	100

N = 10,509. Missing = 4,545.

CURRENT WORK/STUDY STATUS

Young people were asked to select from a short list the responses which best described their current situation. Respondents could select more than one response, so the totals in Table 2.7 below add to more than 200 per cent.

Around 82 per cent of respondents were studying at secondary school, while 14 per cent were either at university or TAFE. Forty per cent were employed part-time, six per cent were employed full-time and four per cent were self-employed. Of note is the high proportion of respondents who described their situation as “Involved in home duties”. Traditionally this response indicates a non-working mother or father whose full-time role is to look after their children. However, as respondents

could tick more than one option, the data shows many of the respondents have described themselves as involved in “home duties”, even though they have also indicated they are studying at school, university or TAFE. Additionally, many student respondents indicated they were unemployed, even though full-time study means they are not in the labour force and hence cannot technically be considered to be unemployed.

Given that the survey was promoted in Catholic schools, not surprisingly almost all of the student respondents (96%) were studying at a Catholic school (Table 2.8). Two-thirds of those in other situations previously attended a Catholic school (Table 2.9).

<i>TABLE 2.7 CURRENT SITUATION</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Studying at school	8,578	81.6
Studying at university	944	9.0
Studying at TAFE	555	5.3
Employed full-time	894	5.5
Employed part-time	4,218	40.1
Self-employed	371	3.5
Unemployed	1,911	18.2
Involved in home duties	3,652	34.7
Other	317	3.0
Total	21,440	201

N = 10,511. Missing = 4,543. Total exceeds 100% because respondents could choose more than one response.

TABLE 2.8 CURRENT TYPE OF SCHOOL ATTENDING (IF CURRENTLY ATTENDING SCHOOL)

	N	%
Catholic school	8,214	96.0
Another Christian school	32	0.4
Government school	72	0.8
Another independent school	108	1.3
Home schooled	36	0.4
Other	91	1.1
Total	8,553	100

N = 8,553. Missing or Not applicable = 6,501.

TABLE 2.9 PREVIOUS TYPE OF SCHOOL ATTENDED (IF NOT CURRENTLY ATTENDING SCHOOL)

	N	%
Catholic school	1,316	66.2
Another Christian school	94	4.7
Government school	359	18.1
Another independent school	74	3.7
Home schooled	89	4.5
Other	55	2.8
Total	1,987	100

N = 1,987. Missing or Not applicable = 13,067.



EMPLOYMENT IN A CATHOLIC ORGANISATION

Those respondents who indicated they were employed were asked if they were employed in a Catholic organisation. Of almost 5,000 respondents for whom it was applicable, 12 per cent were employed in a Catholic organisation (see Table 2.10). Sixty-two per cent of those employed in a Catholic organisation were working in a Catholic school (Table 2.11), and two-thirds of those were teachers (Table 2.12).

TABLE 2.10 ARE YOU EMPLOYED IN A CATHOLIC ORGANISATION? (IF EMPLOYED FULL OR PART TIME)

	N	%
Yes	608	12.3
No	4,122	83.2
Not sure	122	2.5
Prefer not to say	104	2.1
Total	4,956	100

N = 4,956. Missing or Not applicable = 10,098.

TABLE 2.11 TYPE OF CATHOLIC ORGANISATION (IF ANSWER TO PREVIOUS QUESTION WAS 'YES')

	N	%
Catholic School	374	61.7
Catholic Education or Schools Office	36	5.9
Catholic Healthcare Organisation	15	2.5
Catholic Social Service Organisation	27	4.5
Catholic Diocese	55	9.1
Catholic Parish	37	6.1
Other Catholic Organisation	62	10.2
Total	606	100

N = 606. Missing or Not applicable = 14,448.

TABLE 2.12 ARE YOU A TEACHER IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL? (IF ANSWER TO PREVIOUS QUESTION WAS 'SCHOOL')

	N	%
Yes	248	66.3
No	117	31.3
Prefer not to say	9	2.4
Total	374	100

N = 374. Missing or Not applicable = 14,680.

DISABILITY

In order to understand the views, attitudes and practices of young people with a disability, two questions about disability were included in the survey.

Overall, around five per cent of respondents indicated they had a disability, while 89 per cent said they did not, and six per cent chose not to disclose it (Table 2.13). Table 2.14 shows the types of disabilities, and highlights that many had multiple disabilities.

Note: a separate report on the responses of those young people who indicated a disability was prepared for the ACBC Disability Projects Office.

<i>TABLE 2.13 DO YOU HAVE A DISABILITY?</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	508	5.3
No	9,414	89.0
Prefer not to say	600	5.7
Total	10,522	100

N = 10,522. Missing = 4,532.

<i>TABLE 2.14 TYPE OF DISABILITY (IF ANSWER TO PREVIOUS QUESTION WAS 'YES')</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Sensory - affecting ability to hear or see	170	33.2
Physical - affecting mobility or dexterity	179	35.0
Intellectual - affecting ability to learn	238	46.5
Mental illness - affecting thinking processes	286	55.9
Neurological - affecting brain and central nervous system	152	29.7
Physical disfigurement	134	26.2
Immunological - organisms causing disease in body	126	24.6
Other	102	19.9
Total	1,387	271

N = 512. Missing or Not applicable = 14,542. Total exceeds 100% because respondents could choose more than one response.



THE FAITH OUTLOOK OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In order to understand the background and faith of the young people who responded to the survey, a question was asked about how they considered their own faith. The young people could select from six options or an “Other”, which allowed them to describe their faith in their own words. The table below shows the results by sex and age group.

<i>TABLE 2.15 RESPONDENTS' SELF- DESCRIPTION OF FAITH (PERCENTAGE)</i>	<i>FEMALE</i>	<i>MALE</i>	<i>AGE 16–18</i>	<i>AGE 19–22</i>	<i>AGE 23–29</i>	<i>ALL RESPONDENTS</i>
I am Catholic and regularly attend Mass and other faith activities	26	25	16	65	64	25
I consider myself Catholic or Christian and go to church activities sometimes	26	23	26	17	20	25
My family is Catholic or Christian, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	22	22	25	6	6	21
I'm not sure what to think about the Catholic or Christian Faith	5	5	6	2	2	6
I follow another religion or belief	5	5	5	2	1	5
I don't identify with being Catholic or any other religion	12	15	16	4	3	14
Other	5	5	5	4	4	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

N: Sex = 10,587, Age = 15,032.

While there were no significant differences between the responses of females and males, the differences in the responses of young people from the three age groups was stark. While just 16 per cent of respondents aged 16–18 were “involved” Catholics, almost two-thirds of 19- to 22-year-olds and 23- to 29-year-olds described themselves as such.

Of interest is the relatively high proportion of responses (14%) from those who did not identify with any religion. Whilst the highest number came from young people aged 16–18, who were probably in a Catholic school and who were perhaps asked to

complete the survey by their teacher, a further 87 respondents aged 19–29 contributed feedback to a survey on the Catholic Church even though they themselves did not identify with being Catholic or any other religion.

The following table provides the results to the same question by respondents' birthplace. It shows that a much higher proportion of respondents born in non-English speaking countries identified as “involved” Catholics in comparison with those respondents born in Australia and other English speaking countries.

*TABLE 2.16
RESPONDENTS' SELF-
DESCRIPTION OF
FAITH (PERCENTAGE)*

	<i>BORN IN AUSTRALIA</i>	<i>BORN IN ESC</i>	<i>BORN IN NESC</i>	<i>ALL PARTICIPANTS</i>
I am Catholic and regularly attend Mass and other faith activities	22	26	42	25
I consider myself Catholic or Christian and go to church activities sometimes	25	19	19	25
My family is Catholic or Christian, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	24	22	10	21
I'm not sure what to think about the Catholic or Christian Faith	6	6	4	6
I follow another religion or belief	4	3	10	5
I don't identify with being Catholic or any other religion	14	20	10	14
Other	5	5	7	5
Total	100	100	100	100

N = 10,460. ESC = English Speaking country; NESC = Non-English Speaking country.

CHAPTER 3:

PARTICIPATION IN CATHOLIC GROUPS, ORGANISATIONS AND EVENTS

Respondents were asked the extent to which they had been involved in various Catholic groups, organisations or church activities, and their level of interest in those activities. The following table provides a summary of those responses.

<i>TABLE 3.1 PARTICIPATION IN CATHOLIC GROUPS, ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVITIES (PERCENTAGE PARTICIPATING)</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO, BUT WOULD LIKE TO</i>	<i>NO, NOT INTERESTED</i>
Big events (World Youth Day, Youth Festival, conferences)	21	44	35
Service / outreach programs / immersions	27	37	36
Parish youth groups	31	22	47
Local events (rallies, camps, etc.)	27	34	39
University chaplaincy initiatives	8	36	56
Social events / meeting new people	37	37	26
Youth Masses or liturgies	43	18	40
Community leadership (training or service)	22	38	40
Speakers & discussion initiatives (in parishes, pubs, other locations)	21	31	48
Prayer experience	39	19	42
Catholic school groups	42	21	37
Personal support services (counselling, mentoring, etc.)	19	43	38
Vocation or discernment programs	9	36	55
Other initiative	9	20	72

Each row adds to 100 per cent.

The following table shows the percentage of respondents in each age group who answered “Yes, I have participated in this event”.

<i>TABLE 3.2 THE PERCENTAGE IN EACH AGE GROUP WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN SUCH GROUPS . . .</i>	<i>AGE 16–18</i>	<i>AGE 19–22</i>	<i>AGE 23–29</i>
Big events	14	47	60
Service / outreach programs / immersions	3	47	49
Parish youth groups	24	67	63
Local events	22	52	50
University chaplaincy initiatives	3	27	29
Social events / meeting new people	32	63	57
Youth Masses or liturgies	38	67	66
Community leadership	18	40	37
Speakers & discussion initiatives	14	49	56
Prayer experience	33	62	65
Catholic school groups	40	51	47
Personal support services	18	25	27
Vocation or discernment programs	5	19	27
Other initiative	6	22	32

Respondents were also asked to comment on one or two positive experiences of participating in Catholic groups, organisations and events. The question that was asked was:

“Thinking further about the above-mentioned events and initiatives you’ve participated in, would you like to comment on one or two which have been particularly positive experiences for you and why?”

Among all the responses, youth groups, big events such as youth festivals, Mass and liturgical gatherings and mission and outreach opportunities were the top four positive experiences. In regional dioceses such as Maitland-Newcastle, Geraldton, Broken Bay and Sale, service and outreach programs and social events were also popular.

**TOP FOUR POSITIVE
EXPERIENCES OF
ALL PARTICIPANTS:**

- **YOUTH GROUPS • YOUTH FESTIVALS**
- **MASS AND LITURGICAL GATHERINGS**
- **MISSION AND OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES**



AGE 16–18:

In the 16–18 age group, the top three experiences were youth groups, mission and outreach initiatives and Mass and liturgical gatherings.

YOUTH GROUPS:

Participation in youth groups was the most positive experience among 16–18 year olds. These included Catholic school groups, youth ministry groups as well as Church groups, either in a Catholic parish or another Christian denomination.

Youth groups were popular because young people could make new friends, discuss issues and explore their faith in a comfortable environment. There was an atmosphere of enjoyment, energy and fun as well as a deep sense of connection and belonging that they could relate to. Youth groups also provided access to youth camps, another event that was very popular among this age group.

There were a number of Catholic youth groups frequently mentioned that included Youth For Christ, CSYMA, Don Bosco, Young Christian Students, Young Vinnies, Antioch and Stronger, amongst others.

Christian youth groups allowed youth to connect with random people that attended in a positive environment. All people there were accepted and treated respectfully while learning about

Jesus. My Catholic school gave me the learning environment of absolute care and advice from teachers. It gave the opportunity for Mass and prayer daily, which allowed me to reflect and feel the love of Christ.

Joining two parish youth groups have really changed me for the better and has definitely helped to grow strong in my faith and my love for God. Through this, I am able to share my experiences with others, learn from others and build amazing friendships with those who love and praise God just like I do as we can relate to one another. Aside from that, I am also a part of a Catholic school group within my school called Ambassadors of Grace and through that, I am able to serve for God in Masses and liturgies and do good deeds and fundraisers and encourage students around the school to do so as well.

MISSION AND OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

Activities and programs based on mission, outreach and service were positive experiences as they were novel and provided young people with the opportunity to help and serve others in the community. In addition, these experiences provided them space for self-reflection and spiritual growth. Participants who had had the opportunity to go on overseas immersion experiences found them particularly educational and inspiring.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to be able to go overseas and live in the less fortunate areas of Fiji for three weeks by invitation of the Marist Brothers. We volunteered our time rebuilding and painting local schools and we even taught the local Fijian kids how to pray in English. It was this immersion experience which was pivotal in my faith development as I was able to see God working through every single person that I met.

The school I attend runs CSL programs (Christian Service Learning) that encourages students to volunteer for a week at local services. I thoroughly enjoyed working at Vinnies for a week and it was an eye-opener to the many services and people dedicating their time to volunteer for these causes.

Outreach programs such as the Youth Mission Team organisation here in Australia are extremely beneficial, as they provide a young person close to your age to talk about real-life issues. The close proximity of age assists with understanding, for the world in which youth are thrust into today is far different from that experienced by most older people involved in the Church. Discussions on how to cope with social media, drugs, LGBT+ issues, etc. is relevant, and hence talking about it within the confines of Church and spirituality can be refreshing.

Immersion to Cambodia through my school was life-changing as I could see just how much of an impact being with people has in keeping hope alive. And not only keeping hope alive, but assisting them where they need it to achieve what they desire to, so that they can see the effects of having hope. It's something contagious if presented in the right way with consistently trying to obtain some results, and it would spread like wildfire once ignited.

MASS AND LITURGICAL GATHERINGS:

School Masses and parish Youth Masses were particularly positive experiences for participants in this group. Many young people had also attended Masses and liturgies during big Catholic events, retreats, youth camps, pilgrimages and on other occasions. They found these to be spiritually uplifting experiences.

School Mass has been a positive experience for me as I do not practice my faith outside of school, so this allows me an opportunity to connect with God.

At my school, we have Masses and liturgies which brings together our whole school community and this is really positive to me because it brings together so many different cultures and religions. It is such a special experience, whether you are a believer in the Catholic/Christian faith or not.

Youth Masses and liturgies: They have given me the confidence about my religion as well as more experience and interaction with other people of my age who are experiencing the love of God. It has also given me a guide on how I pray and showed me that reliance on prayer and the Bible is more important.

My Confirmation journey which involved weekly discussions and attending Mass with my teachers and friends which was very enlightening in that it allowed me to deepen my faith with God. Another particularly positive experience was when I went to a Youth Mass in my parish, where I was able to confess my sins and asked for forgiveness ... and the priest gave me valuable advice.

AGE 19–29:

In the 19–29 age group, the top three experiences were big events such as youth festivals, youth groups and Mass and liturgical gatherings.

BIG EVENTS (YOUTH FESTIVALS AND CONFERENCES)

Big events such as youth festivals and youth conferences were popular for the opportunities they provided to meet other young people and listen to engaging speakers. Participants in the 23–29 age group found this to be a particularly positive experience.

World Youth Day (WYD) and the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) were frequently mentioned. Many participants spoke of the opportunities for spiritual nourishment and faith formation that these events provided them with. For some, these events were also the beginning of their journey into more active participation in the Church. Other events that were mentioned included the Ignite Conference (Brisbane) and Shine (Lismore).

Australian Catholic Youth Festival—I have attended as a teacher and have seen the dramatic impact that this can have on young people in their faith. It was a growth experience for me also as an adult by seeing that the Church is alive and well among the youth of today.

I attended Movers and Shakers in 2014 and then later that year in September I went to Ignite Conference. These events were very different from each other, however it wasn't until I attended these that for the first time I consciously stopped and asked myself "what do I believe in?" Whilst I had attended Catholic schools and was at that point regularly going to Mass, I wasn't connecting with my faith like I should have been. They opened up my eyes to so much more than I realised. World Youth Day (2016) was definitely a highlight and one that I didn't want to end. It was incredible to

be able to travel to Poland and to celebrate and share our faith with 40+ people in my group and then with thousands of other people from all over the world.

World Youth Day has been the best thing I've ever experienced in my life, not only because it was an event where I got to learn more about the faith, but the highlight of attending WYD is being able to be part of a pilgrimage Travelling with like-minded young people around the world. Being a witness of their faith and sharing that journey with them really helped inspire me to grow stronger and take the faith more seriously. The experiences shared among the friends we have made/met helped me to grow closer to God, and to also hear different vocational talks and stories by traveling with priests and religious in the group.

World Youth Day was positive as it demonstrated the strength of the faith across cultures and that I am not alone. Australian Catholic Youth Festival, Veritas Youth Festival in Perth, Ignite Live in Perth and Embrace the Grace conference in New Norcia were all positive events I attended that allowed me to make friends and connections and share faith in a fun way.

The 2015 Maronite Youth Convention was such an amazing experience. It changed my life. I found myself through Christ.

YOUTH GROUPS:

Participation in youth groups was also a positive experience for 19- to 29-year-olds as they could meet young people with similar interests, discuss issues and explore their faith in a comfortable environment. Several participants also mentioned talks on faith as being helpful for spiritual nourishment.

We have a group of young people who joined together for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with benediction with the

opportunity for Confession. We then go out and eat while a priest teaches about different aspects of the faith e.g. moral teachings, Mariology, sacramental theology.

My participation in the young adults' group has allowed me to meet and know new friends who have the same faith as me. Through regular Sunday meetings, our friendship grows and we participate in various Church events, such as decorating the Easter Garden, Pentecost vigil celebration and so on. Through these activities, I have found joy in serving God and developed my identity as a member of the Catholic Church.

I am a part of a youth group called Antioch. This is an amazing youth group that is very strong in members ... My closest friends are all in this youth group and it is so cool to meet up every week with 50 odd people and just talk about my faith. I don't get many opportunities to do this anywhere else. My faith is really important to me so I look forward to having my Sunday nights filled with great conversations, reflection time, music, prayer and of course, food.

University Catholic groups—this is where I found my faith. It was a great place to be able to ask questions in a no-holds-barred kind of manner.

Having been a member of a parish youth group for some years up until last year, the youth group experience was a pivotal and life-changing part of my life which enabled me to deeply experience Jesus' mercy and forgiveness. I was also fortunate enough to witness this in fellow members and friends. The youth group forged lifelong local friendships and lifelong Catholic ideals and values and instilled in me the importance of the sacraments, of community and of a personal encounter of Jesus.

MASS AND LITURGICAL GATHERINGS:

Parish Youth Masses, in particular, and opportunities for Adoration were positive experiences for participants in the 19–29 age group. There was a mixture of preferences with regards to the style of Mass. Some preferred traditional Latin Masses, while others favoured Masses celebrated in a more contemporary style.

Adoration on weekly evenings gives the opportunity to take time out of a busy day/ week and spend time with Jesus, pray and listen to priest's reflections on Gospel reading, which really helps me to find peace amidst the stress/busy-ness.

I have become a Minister of the Word at the weekly Masses I attend. I have volunteered to also be a Minister of the Eucharist, and help with the Children's Liturgy held. These have been positive as they have enabled me to feel more connected to the parish community and that I can share my skills and strengths with others.

Youth Masses, where young people have actually been involved in arranging the Mass have been wonderful opportunities for youth to explore more traditional forms of liturgy and to explore the musical heritage of the Church.

Youth Masses - the one I attend uses "modern" music but which is still liturgically correct for the various parts of the Mass. I really enjoy the music and find that it really leads me into prayer.

Well prepared Masses which preserve the language of the Church (Latin) at least in some form (Eucharistic Prayer or responses/prayer such as the Pater Noster) have been instrumental in enriching in me a passion for understanding Church history and academically approaching both changes and theological rationales.

Youth and Family Mass a few years ago was really welcoming. The pastor then engaged us all and kept it at a level we could relate to.

CHAPTER 4: SUCCESSFUL GATHERINGS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

There were two questions that asked participants for their opinions on the most successful and engaging gatherings for young people. The first question focussed on gatherings within the Church:

“What types of gatherings, organised or informal, are the most engaging and successful within the Church? In your opinion, what makes them successful?”

Based on participants’ responses, the following gatherings are the top four most engaging and successful within the Church:

1. Mass and Liturgical Gatherings
2. Youth Groups and their activities
3. Fun, informal activities
4. Musical events, Praise and Worship

Mass and Liturgical Gatherings: Participants spoke about a number of different styles of Mass and occasions of liturgical celebration that they deemed successful. Youth Masses were popular because they had lively music and engaging homilies. For some participants, Latin Masses were preferred as they offered a reverence and style of faith that appealed to them. Liturgical celebrations based around the sacraments, particularly Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, provided young people with a greater sense of community and belonging to the faith. Easter and Christmas Masses and parish Feast Day Masses were also popular as more young people are actively involved and a greater number of people in the community participated in these events.

After-Mass morning teas were also mentioned as being successful events.

The types of gatherings that are most successful in my opinion, are the big Masses and Church celebrations around times such as Easter and Christmas, because everyone is happy and open to meeting new people, and happy to learn about new things, which is what makes them successful.

School-church gatherings such as Sunday Mass, First Communion, Confirmation, etc. these are successful because it allows for parents, students and teachers to gather together and celebrate special times.

The most engaging gathering is the monthly Young Adult Mass. The visible participation of Young Adults in the mass inspires others to become involved in the Mass & various other activities.

Any ceremonial Masses such as those celebrating Baptism, Marriage ceremonies, Easter, Confirmation, Communion and Christmas services tend to bring family and society together with a common interest.

Youth Masses, whether they be part of a conference/festival or part of parish/diocesan life are the most engaging and successful



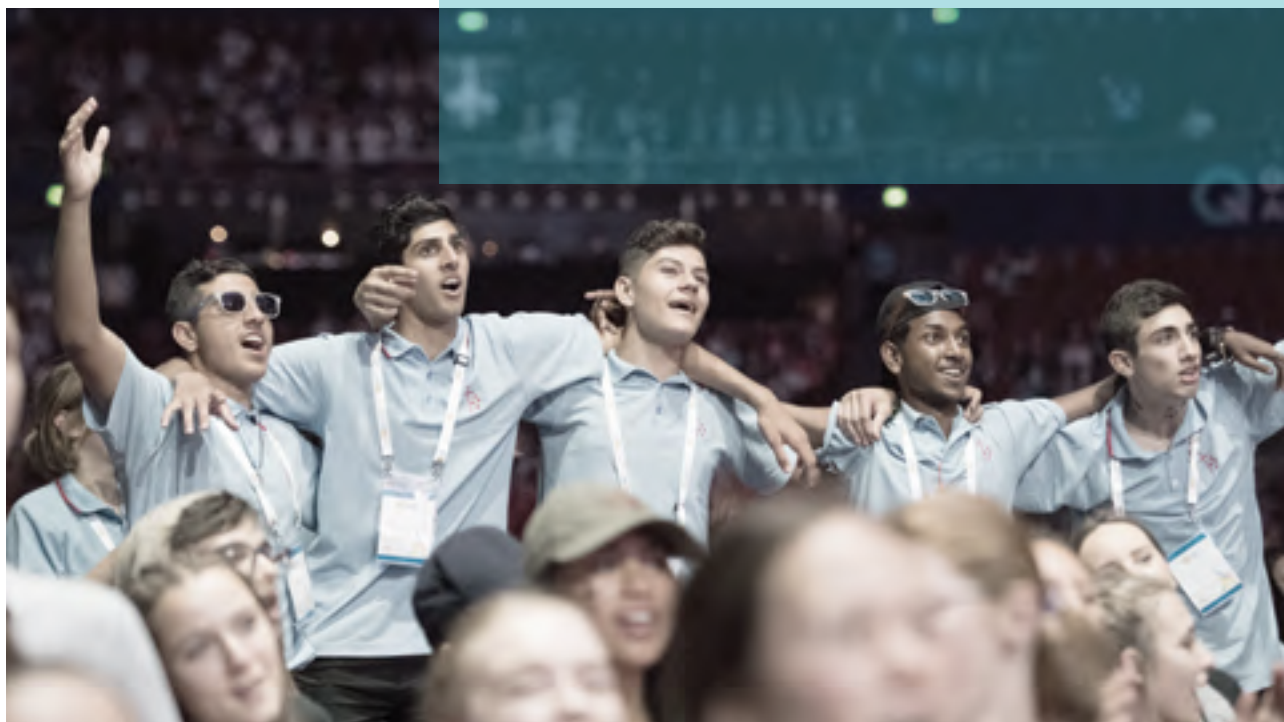
gatherings in the Church in my opinion. Knowing that all the other people in the room are alive with the same spirit burning in their hearts is an awe-inspiring experience.

The Latin Mass—It's an awe inspiring experience which puts people in touch with a two-thousand-year old tradition.

Sunday Mass is hands-down my favourite aspect of my faith, not any particular youth Mass - just regular Mass in my parish. The church is usually full, and there are people of all ages, from babies to the elderly, and cultural backgrounds that gather there. It is the time when I am most aware of Jesus' presence and it never fails to motivate and energise me to be better in the coming week.

Youth Groups and their activities: Parish-based youth groups and other youth ministries such as Antioch, Young Christian Students, Youth for Christ, Jesus Youth, Lasallian Youth Ministry, Marist Youth Ministry and Vinnies Youth were seen to be successful because of the variety of opportunities they provided young people with. These included faith formation, an opportunity to gather and build community with like-minded people, social opportunities, young adult leaders who were good role models to teenagers, opportunities to learn how to pray and a space to encounter Christ. Youth camps were also very popular and successful.

Youth groups that are led by passionate young adults who know how to make the youth alive. Music makes it successful.



A youth group that has a structured night. A topic that we can learn from, time for prayer and questions. There is always time for socializing before or after and is a good environment to make some new friends.

Youth group—the balance of faith and social—you get explore your faith with like-minded people. You get to make lifelong friendships.

Gatherings that are for a targeted group of people e.g. young adults so they can feel a sense of community are the most successful. Having a range of events is helpful too.

Fun, informal activities: Informal activities and gatherings were seen as successful by many young people due to the relaxed feel of attending such events which made them more enjoyable experiences. Some examples of such activities included morning teas, dinners, fetes, picnics and other fun activities.

I think the more informal gatherings are the most successful such as BBQ events after Mass, spiritual discussions in the pub and community walks because they give people an opportunity to engage with their faith on a very human level but are also not overwhelming for those who

are new to the Church or family members or friends who may not be part of the Church but are attending with those who are.

Biggest Morning Tea and Picnics— It includes food, donations, coming together to support a charity and meeting new people.

I think informal gatherings are successful, where teenagers can gather together, have some good food, talk about God and the Church and perhaps watch films. This is engaging as it allows for fun and business in one.

The most engaging within a church is when the church involves the audience themselves in fun activities, these activities can be religion-based as well. These are successful because younger people tend to have a shorter attention span, so most of the time they will not remember what happened unless they were directly involved with something.

I find gatherings that are very social in nature, such as gathering for a meal or going to do an activity together, are good ways to engage young people without placing pressure on them to be perfect Catholics.

I think that family-oriented events like barbecues and dinners work best because they reinforce the idea that we are all children of God, and as brothers and sisters in Christ we should celebrate the love we know together as one family.

Musical events, Praise and Worship: Praise and worship events organised by local youth ministries or parish groups appeared to be very successful. Also, Masses, retreats and other events that had good music appealed to many participants.

Music nights are always very successful and enjoyable, as many people who attend may not have the strongest faith, but they connect to the music in a way that moves them.

Praise and Worship Nights—Us, as a parish, and our wider community, hold nights in which we sing, pray and hear from guest speakers about God's love. I think what makes it so successful is the unity we as a parish feel, plus the music is always a highlight.

Youth Rallies, Praise and Worship nights—music, food, a message, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, prayer teams. There's a moderation of everything.

Youth events that incorporate praise and worship music—I believe that what makes them successful is that music is a connecting point and interest for the young people of the world, and it is a way to have fun, but also be immersed in our faith.

Youth retreats with great music, even if it's Christian bands outside the Catholic Church, can make an event come alive.

We have events called "Praisefest" in our diocese which is combination of Adoration, prayer and music all in an amazing festival vibe. It is really uplifting and by the end of the night everyone is on such a spiritual high you can see and feel the joy and connection with God and his word.

In addition to these, participants aged 19–29 also indicated that conferences with guest speakers and retreats and prayer experiences were successful and engaging for people in their age group.

Silent retreats—as they develop one's ability to meditate and spend time in silence with Our Lord. Also, gatherings of young people with the guidance of a Catholic priest to run talks on aspects of the Church, Catholic theology and devotions. This is successful when a group knows each other and the priest well. Also, this is successful when the priest is an eloquent speaker and has well-formed knowledge.

Youth conferences and retreats—it is encouraging to see the amount of people who are wanting to grow in faith as much as me. Opportunities to encounter Christ with others is important and helps to relight the fire, but most of all seeing passionate laity, priests and religious at these events remind me that holiness is the key to life to the full.

Weekend retreats have been the most successful in my opinion. They're successful because running for the whole weekend allows young people to develop new friendships and overcome shyness, as well as being immersed in faithful Catholic culture. Also, it allows people time to open their hearts. And amazingly, you often get people who are on the fringes or really searching coming to them, because they are the ones who are desperate for something good in their lives or for meaning.

I think formation days, that include food, teaching on a topic, an opportunity to meet and connect with other young Catholics and a time of prayer.

Flexible prayer gatherings that break open our experience of life and open our eyes to a God that is active within our lives.

Conferences and talks by top Catholic speakers and theologians and nights of adoration and reflection are most effective. These help guide and inspire me to strive for holiness and create unity within the Church by helping young people to grasp Church teaching and rally behind a shared belief rather than have to guess what the Church has to say or invent their own definitions of Church teaching.

The second question focussed on gatherings outside the Church:

“What types of gatherings, organised or informal, are the most engaging and successful outside the Church? In your opinion, what makes them successful?”

Based on participants’ responses, the following gatherings, organised or informal, are the top four most engaging and successful outside the Church.

1. Organised social events – concerts, parties, music festivals
2. Coffee shops, cafes, informal social gatherings
3. Youth groups
4. Sport

Organised social events – concerts, parties, music festivals: These events were successful because people felt very welcome and not discriminated against. Young people had the opportunity to mix with like-minded individuals, the events were dynamic and there was a shared vision and a sense of belonging. Music, as always, was a huge factor in engaging young people.

Concerts, dinner parties, regular parties. I think concerts are similar to big events—people come to see a spectacle and enjoy and feel a great atmosphere. Dinner parties are also similar to the social events because it’s an avenue to pursue relationships and enjoy yourself. Also, food! Parties is, I think, a mix of both.

Probably music festivals—they have the “cool” factor with music, food, fashion, and stupid, photographable fun (like henna, colour-run,

inflatables) and the opportunity to meet new people. Let’s be honest—all that’s really on young people’s minds is that they want to meet people of the opposite gender. Music festivals provide and encourage it.

Events like concerts, rallies, festivals, panels with multiple speakers are fantastic, and successful, because they all bring people together to celebrate something, or discuss and learn something, or create a call for change and an awareness for people who otherwise might not know about it.

Festivals and markets—like music, food trucks, craft, etc. What I think makes them successful is how engaging they are with our age group. The advertising is good and the organisation is professional.

Music festivals, food festivals and cultural festivals - all about connecting people through one common theme. Festivals are gathering places; you would rarely see someone go by themselves. They are interactive, social, and exciting events to attend.

Informal social activities — meeting friends

at coffee shops, cafes or elsewhere: Informal activities gave young people opportunities to meet others one-on-one and share enjoyable experiences. These gatherings offered an authentic experience for youth to engage with other people, without the fear of being made to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

Anything that has to do with family or celebrating an achievement such as a birthday, because it brings the family together and people want to partake in it which makes it more enjoyable when everyone commits.

Informal tend to be more successful and engaging, in my opinion, because people feel more at ease in an informal presence with other people and can open up to talk about certain issues and connect on a more level playing field.



Things such as community gatherings where we are able to come in and talk with new people and establish new friends while also treating ourselves with nice treats and discuss recent events and other small talk. Catching up with friends at a cafe or just to have lunch or something along those lines. Anything that brings people together in a safe environment where you can freely speak your mind without fear of judgement.

Casual get-togethers with friends and any type of informal hobby-based group (e.g. open training sessions for sports, exercise classes, writers' groups, gaming lounges) would be my top two nominations. I think what makes them successful is the promise of sharing a common interest in a space where you feel welcomed, but you're also able to choose the extent to which you form social bonds, depending on how much you like the people there.

Small gatherings of friends and a few extra add-ins, around half a dozen to a dozen people - with food and drinks. The personal nature, the freedom to be oneself, the acceptance, space to laugh and the time to actually communicate: group to group, and one on one. Food and drink seem to be a foundational substrate to allow this to occur.

Youth groups: It was apparent from the participants' answers that many perceived youth groups as being outside the Church, rather than part of it. Some evangelical churches and non-Catholic youth groups also offered a strong attraction for young people looking for a connection to faith. These groups provided opportunities for youth such as camps, Bible studies and other youth-focussed activities.

Outside of the Church, youth groups are most engaging and successful as they promote a rewarding experience and give a powerful mind-set of all individuals, regardless of age, to be able to attain a voice of opinion and therefore change the way society approaches modern-day complications.

The youth group at my school—It's fun but also has times in the session where we listen to readings and talks about morals and stories of the Bible and issues in society.

Church youth groups are very successful as they bring kids of similar ages together to work together.

Youth gatherings, where young people can connect and relate. Establishing a community of young people is what makes these gatherings so successful, as it enables us to enjoy and embrace our faith while still having fun in a non-judgmental environment.



Sport: Sporting activities brought families and friends and diverse groups of people together in a healthy and positive manner.

Sporting events (participation, not spectating) are a good way to engage with all sorts of people/backgrounds/generations/etc., and learn how to communicate/work with others.

Sports activities organised both by other religious groups and non-religious groups. They are successful in attracting people because of the fun, community-spirited environment it creates.

Where I live in remote Australia, sport is the most common gathering. I would say that local sporting events are incredibly successful in that they have managed to motivate an enormous number of people to serve at them, week in, week out, as well as the players and the spectators. They have really managed to “sell the vision” well, as well as enculturate children from a young age to grow up playing, and wanting to play, a sport.

Going to an AFL football match, these events operate on the premise that there is hope that your team can win, that you can participate through cheering to hopefully motivate the players to the victory. These elements are what

makes it successful. Even when it seems teams have no hope of winning, people still come to the games in belief of that hope of victory.

Sporting teams are extremely successful as it attracts different people in different areas of interest, whilst giving them a healthy lifestyle.

EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS IN NON-CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EVENTS

To understand the experiences of participants at non-Catholic religious events, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had attended such events and whether they found them enjoyable. Some experiences of enjoyable events were:

Yes, I have attended a Hillsong concert. It was enjoyable as it was very lively, energetic and the musicians were filled with passion. Although at the same time, it focused more on feeling rather than praising and worshipping God himself.

Yes, the church I attended was Pentecostal, and I had so much fun, it was at Edge Church. They are excited and you can tell that the pastors want to be there, you can be as loud as you want and voice your opinion whenever you like.

I attended the Chinese Moon festival. There was a lot of good food and activities, not to mention the fireworks display. Many different stalls selling souvenirs. It's really fun.

I have attended and engaged with a lot of differing religious events that weren't Catholic. These have included Buddhism, Muslim, Hinduism, Anglican etc. These activities have been very enjoyable due to their deep connection to current issues and cultural context, something I believe is lacking in Australian Catholicism

I have attended Church of Christ services, and I enjoyed the music, and the friendly open way the service was conducted. Was a friendly and accepting community, made it easy to want to go.

Yes, Pentecostal services—amazing worship and incredible speakers. Multi-faith events—great to meet with others you wouldn't usually meet and get to know them.

Yes, I have attended services at mosques and Greek orthodox churches before and I found them enjoyable. Although their beliefs do not necessarily align with my own I enjoy seeing people being moved by faith. I like seeing people express what they believe in through prayer and that is why I enjoy Catholic and non-Catholic services.

I attended a Buddhist meditation for an excursion, and it was a very pleasant experience. The session encouraged us to find some peace in our busy lives, and I treasured this experience.

Some experiences of not-enjoyable events were:

Went to a Baptist Sunday service once, was invited by my friend. Was basically just endless rock songs with a sermon by the pastor in the middle. I actually got bored with all the music. It felt more like a social gathering/event than a "Mass", and I'm pretty sure it was the absence of the Eucharist at the core of the event that made it feel this way.

As mentioned, the Pentecostal churches are missing the Eucharist—which is a beautiful sacrament we have in our Church. It kind of feels a bit flat, the absence of the Jesus' presence is definitely felt by Catholics.

I attended CitiPoint once. It was not enjoyable. Loud music and worship, no sense of prayer.

I was raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The meetings were always standardised, focusing on repetitive themes and no matter how enthusiastic I was, often became quite boring. The study part of the meeting was not focused on discussion, but rather indoctrination as it was required to recite answers out of Watchtower magazines and allowed no scope for critical thinking.

I have attended a number of Christian services and while they were powerful in a number of ways, I found that the lack of silence and solemn moments made the events almost exhausting. Constant prayers and songs gave the event more of a concert feel, with little to no time for us to be still in prayer.

Many participants who enjoyed the activities and events of a non-Catholic ceremony commented on the warmth, friendship, community spirit, music and engagement aspects of the services. Not all had attended religious ceremonies. Many had attended a cultural event like a wedding or had visited a place of worship on a cultural tour. For those who did not enjoy such services, the lack of the Eucharist and time for prayer and quiet reflection were most often the reasons for their discontent.

It was interesting to note, however, the contrast in some answers given by participants. What appeared to be appealing to one person, for example, enthusiasm, energy or loud music, was completely unpleasant for another. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a general interest in the cultures and religious traditions of other faiths expressed by many participants, whether they enjoyed the celebration or not.

CHAPTER 5:

INFLUENCERS ON

YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

A question was asked about the extent to which the respondents had been influenced by people or groups of people around key decisions and directions in life. Table 5.1 below shows the degree to which such people or groups had been influencers.

According to the respondents, family and friends were by far the greatest influence on a young person's life, no matter what age (see Table 5.2). The parish or church community and Church or

religious leaders had at least some influence or more for 45 per cent of the respondents, while for eight to nine per cent of respondents they had been a discouragement.

TABLE 5.1
INFLUENCERS ON THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S KEY
DECISIONS AND DIRECTIONS IN LIFE (PERCENTAGE)

	HAS INFLUENCED A LOT	HAS HAD SOME INFLUENCE	HAS NOT INFLUENCED	HAS DISCOURAGED	NOT SURE / DON'T KNOW
Family	77	17	2	2	2
Friends	42	47	7	2	2
School / teachers	20	59	14	4	3
University / lecturers	6	19	35	3	38
Parish or church community	14	31	32	8	14
Church or religious leaders	15	30	32	9	14

Each row adds to 100 per cent.



TABLE 5.2
INFLUENCERS -
'HAS INFLUENCED A
LOT' (PERCENTAGE)

	AGE 16-18	AGE 19-22	AGE 23-29	BORN IN AUSTRALIA	BORN IN OTHER ESC	BORN IN NESC
Family	77	76	79	78	72	75
Friends	44	37	36	43	42	37
School / teachers	20	19	19	20	19	19
University / lecturers	4	9	12	5	6	10
Parish or church community	10	37	32	13	14	26
Church or religious leaders	11	38	33	14	15	28

ESC = English Speaking country; NESC = Non-English Speaking country.

CHAPTER 6: YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF BEING LISTENED TO

An important reason for undertaking the survey was to provide a forum for young people to voice their opinions, thoughts and concerns; that is, to listen to young people. Respondents were asked to rate their experience of being listened to by people from the Church, using a scale from 1 to 10, where '1' was "Very negative" and '10' was "Very positive". The survey defined the term "Church" as its people, practices and organisations, including schools. The following table shows a comparison of the mean scores for the different groups of young people.



TABLE 6.1 MEAN SCORES (ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10)
OF RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF BEING
LISTENED TO BY PEOPLE FROM THE CHURCH

MEAN
SCORES

Total	5.9
Female	6.0
Male	6.0
Age 16-18 years	5.8
Age 19-22 years	6.6
Age 23-29 years	6.5
Born in Australia	5.9
Born in another English speaking country	5.8
Born in a non-English speaking country	6.2
From an Archdiocese	6.1
From a Diocese	5.7
From an Eastern Rite Diocese/Eparchy	7.0
Catholic, involved regularly	7.1
Catholic or Christian, involved irregularly	6.3
Catholic or Christian, not involved	5.2
Not Catholic or Christian	5.0
<i>Currently attend . . .</i>	
A Catholic school	5.7
Another type of school (including home schooling)	5.5
<i>Previously attended . . .</i>	
A Catholic school	6.6
Another type of school (including home schooling)	6.4

As can be seen from Table 6.1, a moderate score of 5.9 was recorded. School-aged young people rated their experience lower than older youth. The minimum score given by people in each group was 1 and the maximum score given in each group was 10. Respondents who belonged to an Eastern Rite diocese or eparchy, and Catholics who were involved regularly in Church activities recorded the highest scores of 7 and 7.1.

In a separate question, participants were invited to share their experiences of being listened to by people from the Church: "Would you like to share briefly one positive and one negative experience of being listened to by people from the Church?" The next few sections discuss some of these positive and negative experiences as described by participants.



POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF BEING LISTENED TO

The participants' responses revealed that there were three main factors that largely contributed to the positive experiences of young people—talking to people who valued their story, the positive attitude of the clergy and the welcoming and supportive attitude of parishioners.

1) TALKING TO PEOPLE WHO VALUED THEIR STORY

The experience of talking to people who valued their story was particularly important for those aged 16–18 years. Participants in this age group spoke of their experiences in being able to share thoughts and opinions without being judged or laughed at and/or finding someone to share personal problems with or discuss faith matters with. These events usually took place

in a school with teachers, staff or youth ministry coordinators, or in the parish at youth groups or on certain occasions with people in the parish community. The following are some quotations from people within the 16–18 age group about their positive experiences:

I have been with the Church to support the homeless on several occasions and at the conclusion of such events the discussions that took place with the Sister allowed me to share my thoughts and worries and she talked me through my emotions and concerns which greatly helped to develop my sense of compassion.

Going to youth group I am always able to share my ideas and get help for future plans without judgement. And everyone is so supportive.

My school was very open and compassionate about Catholicism, it was easy to talk to any member of staff about worries or concerns and discuss God.

I once gave a speech on leadership and the audience (the youth group from church) listened intently. It was a good experience that helped me boost my confidence and slightly overcome my fear of public speaking.

I have been able to feel comfortable and able to speak my mind about my Catholic religion in both primary schooling and high school.

When sharing an experience where I felt God's presence in my life to my youth group and having them listen to me was an amazing feeling and also when listening to their stories.

I go to a school that is very inclusive and considerate of other backgrounds and personal circumstances, so in terms of being listened to by the school, it has been a positive experience on a daily basis. A particular positive experience would have been having the opportunity to attend a forum in which members of the diocese listened to students, and only students, about the positive and negative aspects of attending a Catholic school. This was definitely a positive experience of being listened to.

As a child, I had many questions about religion, which people from the Church have done well to answer. Regardless of whether I agree with what people from the Church say now, I appreciate the effort that some people make to listen and to respond.

At times when I need help and wisdom when I'm stuck in a predicament, I talk to my youth coordinator and can be open with her as she is very understanding and actually listens to what I'm saying instead of just brushing me off. It makes me feel needed and like I am worthy.

2) THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE OF THE CLERGY

The responses of participants in the 19–29 age group seemed to indicate that the positive attitude of the clergy was one of the main reasons why people in this group had positive experiences of being listened to by people from the Church. Participants spoke of priests who were supportive and welcoming and who were people whom you could share and discuss faith matters with. Some participants had had good experiences with parish priests who were open to new ideas and were willing to seek input into church events and activities that could better engage youth. Many participants had had good encounters with the priest during the sacrament of Confession. The following are some quotations from people within the 19–29 age group:

Any time I have needed help practically or spiritually, I have felt quite comfortable calling my parish priest and asking him around for dinner or if I could have spiritual direction, and have never felt anything less than well supported and heard. I particularly recall a time where I was looking for assistance for an unchurched friend who was facing homelessness and I received practical support, but also personal emotional support to keep me safe.

The parish priest supported my Confirmation, our marriage, baptism of our child, and sought out our views on young adults in the parish and acted upon them.

The parish priest and the parish coordinator have been amazing in listening to me and helping me grow into a faithful person on my return to the Church.

My parish priest is always available to talk to me about matters of the faith and was very helpful when my husband and I were experiencing a miscarriage. While I was at university, the Chaplain of my college helped me a lot whilst I was dealing with the results of my parents' divorce.

I often have had positive experiences in the confessional, with priests who aren't judgemental and are very understanding and loving.

There have been a number of priests and brothers who I really enjoyed having conversations with and who have listened and cared and been very positive presence in our community.

I have had good interactions with a number of priests in our diocese and around the country who have listened to my points of view and discussed various ideas with me.

I work for the Church in youth ministry and I find that priests and people of authority within the Church are always more than willing to listen to my ideas and thoughts and do what they can to make things happen.

3) THE WELCOMING AND SUPPORTIVE ATTITUDE OF PARISHIONERS

The supportive attitude of the Catholic parish community was one of the main factors that contributed to the positive experiences of young people in all age groups. Many participants spoke of parishioners who were understanding and supportive of their efforts in youth ministry. Others spoke of being welcomed into the parish, given opportunities to have their say in parish matters and being able to form genuine relationships with people in the community.

Within my own parish, they listen to our concerns for the Church, for example, lack of youth involvement and then actively try to change that.



The way that my local parish has embraced our Antioch youth group and been willing and open to work with us and allow us to be important parts of the Mass services or local events, and the extremely positive relationships we have formed with the parish staff and members of the parish as a result of this.

Whenever I have required help for myself or others practically or pastorally I have received time and care promptly and compassionately.

In the parishes I've been involved in, I've often felt warmly welcomed by the older generations: they like our vigour and enthusiasm for Jesus, and they listen to our suggestions for how to connect with young people, what we are yearning for and what we feel we need. I've felt supported in my churches many times in that I felt my opinion was very valid.

My friends, contacts and associates within the Catholic Church have generally been wonderful role models, encouraging me to take hold of my faith and never let go. I've been blessed that my experience with the Catholic Church has been largely positive, particularly in this regard.

As a leader in our youth group, I was asked to be a representative on the Parish Council to have a voice of young people heard and acknowledged within the parish community. This gave me a platform for presenting my concerns and opinions for the parish and the wider church community.

That my faith is what has encouraged some of the best life decisions and has been a drive towards my study at school. Being a part of the Christian community, I do see it as an objective to attend Mass when I can and regularly is preferred. However, even though I don't do so, I still feel the Church is still welcoming and knows who I am.

I love the group I have found comfort in the community I am with. I hold nothing back, they accept me as I am and they encourage me.

Within my parish, dialogue between our parish priest and the lay faithful are frequent occurrences as we seek to grow as a community.

Other positive experiences included good experiences at Mass or sacraments, the empowering leadership of the priest, positive experiences of participating in youth groups and greater opportunities being given to young people to participate in parishes.

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF BEING LISTENED TO

The top three main factors that contributed to the negative experiences of young people were a negative personal encounter with people from the Church, an occasion when their comments were ignored by the group, and what they saw as close-minded, biased attitudes of some people.

1) NEGATIVE ENCOUNTERS WITH PEOPLE FROM THE CHURCH

When participants had negative encounters with "people from the Church", they were often referring to either clergy, parishioners, lay Catholics or even teachers in a Catholic school. Some examples of such encounters included being "disregarded" for being too young or being "judged negatively" by people for expressing differing views of faith and/or beliefs:

Certain parishes ... have a horrible, exclusive community in which people are snubbed, glared at, judged and treated with resentment if they appear to be anything less than what they deem as a good Catholic. This can even include things such as women choosing not to wear a mantilla, or showing your knees/shoulders. Even people who aren't home-schooled are sometimes viewed as dangerous.

A sense of isolation based upon my weaker Catholic faith. People of firmer convictions believe that my opinions and beliefs must be wrong as I cannot possibly belong to any Catholic Church or have any moral understanding due to my weaker faith.

Sometimes being dismissed by older lay members of the church, even school teachers, when talking about different aspects of Christian faith and religion simply because I am young or have not experienced enough.

Some participants had had difficult encounters with the priest in Confession while others felt that they were being “forced” to believe in things that held no meaning for them.

Yesterday at the retreat I was denied absolution after saying how much I’m struggling with an area of sexuality and relationships.

Being told I was a bad person for what was shared in a place of reconciliation, which kind of turned me off the faith and believing of the religion. Also that religion is pushed so hard on you, especially at a Catholic school, that I find no interest in it anymore.

When I was younger, in primary school/early high school, religious education was more preached and indoctrinated to me and not really discussed and did not talk about our opinions.

Most people that go to church and are committed Christians or Catholics are overly persistent in insisting that I go to church. I am a good Catholic and believe in the existence of God, however, I also believe that if someone goes to church every single day; it’s because they have done something sinful and are begging for forgiveness from God. There is an alternative path to being a good Christian or Catholic rather than attending Church every Sunday.

Certain participants felt that the parishioners were old fashioned and people were not ready to listen to modern views or try new things. Some also felt unwelcomed and affronted by the attitudes and actions of people in parishes or by teachers or staff in school.

Some older members of our church are not as open to certain ideas and aren’t as willing to hear young people out on their perspectives and their views and shut them down without helping them to understand.

Some are so focused on the religion, and not enough on the relationship with Christ itself. This means that some of the Church can come across as not welcoming and critical of newcomers to the Church/ people who aren’t aware of the formalities of Mass, etc.

I often feel like there is no way in my parish to voice myself. Our parish is dominated by a select group of people who don’t allow for others to participate in liturgy preparation or the liturgy itself. There are next to no avenues for someone my age to engage in the Mass or contribute in any way.

My Catholic studies teacher remarked in front of my mother during a meeting that I should not be as curious as I am and refrain from asking bigger questions & looking for their answers, as I influence people (negatively) when I display my inborn traits of curiosity/ scepticism. Every other person I’ve met has praised me on this, and the condescending tone which was used in front of my mother and peers was humiliating.

Apart from all the forms of negative encounters listed above, there were two particularly prevalent in the 19–29 age group. In the first scenario, for some participants aged 19–29, negative encounters had often occurred when they had tried to promote Church teaching and practice.

At times it seems any enthusiasm on my part for the beauty of tradition is frowned upon by certain members of the Church and that my opinion is viewed as “rigid” and irrelevant.

When preparing for a youth event we hoped to have access to the sacraments (namely Reconciliation and Adoration). After having spoken to other young people they seemed to



agree that it would be appropriate to raise with the coordinators (adults supervising). We were happy to organise the logistics of that too but after raising it with said coordinators our request got knocked back because it wasn't attractive to the youth.

Some teachers in Catholic schools often teach ideologies contrary to the teaching of the Church such as the "importance" and necessity of contraception. Often they don't want to listen when you try to point out the fallacy and disregard what you have to say.

Another form of negative encounters by 19- to 29-year-olds, was when participants had had difficulties in setting up youth ministries in their parishes or were not being supported in youth work.

Some of the parish priests I have had have taken a very hands-off, or even at times limiting, approach to youth ministry and this has made expanding and deepening our programs difficult at times.

I have suggestions for a young adults' program that has been in place for 20 years (and worked then but has become increasingly ineffective), and the older leaders (50+ years old) cannot see that slightly adjusting a program, that may have worked 20 years ago, might be a good thing to consider.

I was on a Parish Council who was looking to build a new church. I was asked to be a youth representative. But after voicing that the young people were more interested in a more "traditional" style church, over a civic centre style, I was told that I couldn't speak for all young people and my opinions were no longer asked for. They built a civic centre church eventually.

A parish priest stated that my position as youth worker was not needed because young people didn't need a youth group they just needed to attend Mass. Consequently, when the youth group ended youth attendance at Mass in that parish declined significantly

2) OCCASIONS WHEN THEIR COMMENTS WERE IGNORED BY THE GROUP

Participants in both age groups spoke of occasions when they were ignored for voicing different beliefs or opinions.

Especially in our Study of Religion subject, whenever I present a respectful opinion regarding specific topics relevant to the faith and church my opinion is immediately refuted by my teacher and is practically considered “ridiculous.” My opinions are my own and I do not consider them to be hurtful or disrespectful so it is extremely upsetting to have my opinion viewed as invalid.

Youth concerns and views are regularly and summarily dismissed as folly or the uneducated and contrarian views of the young, rather than as a serious concern or criticism.

My opinions have been dismissed before for supposedly being unique and not reflecting those of other young Catholics. This usually occurs when my opinions don't reflect stereotypes of young Christians and are consequently ignored.

I am on the ... Liturgy [group] and I brought up an item about how we should be aiming to form church and unchurched young people about the sacraments of the Church and it was dismissed by other older people of the commission. I felt quite disappointed that my item for young people was not considered a priority.

3) CLOSE-MINDED OR BIASED ATTITUDES OF PEOPLE

The topics discussed by participants who spoke of this problem largely related to sexuality and marriage and the role of women in the Church. This might be the case as the issue of same-sex marriage was being debated in Australia at the time of the survey. There were more participants in the 16–18 age group who voiced such concerns.

A deacon at my church is very old fashioned in his views and regularly spouts what I would consider to be discriminatory teachings that include somewhat homophobic, sexist, etc. sentiments. He has expressed little respect for the views of young people, reflecting the traditional ignorance of my faith I had hoped we'd moved past from.

Being told I'm evil, that liking the same sex isn't natural or God's way, having that shoved down my face.

Marriage Equality: Not necessarily on a personal level but also on a wider scale. The youth are actively advocating for marriage equality within the Church and nothing has been done.

As a woman, I feel as though my voice is ignored I have to sit in a Mass or in school or anywhere and hear what men think about what I should do with my body. They are deciding on issues they can never fully understand as they never ever have to go through the issues and experiences we have to go through. So I cannot accept a church that is inherently sexist.

I feel the voices of women in general are undervalued in official church leadership (ordained ministry) and this is unfair.

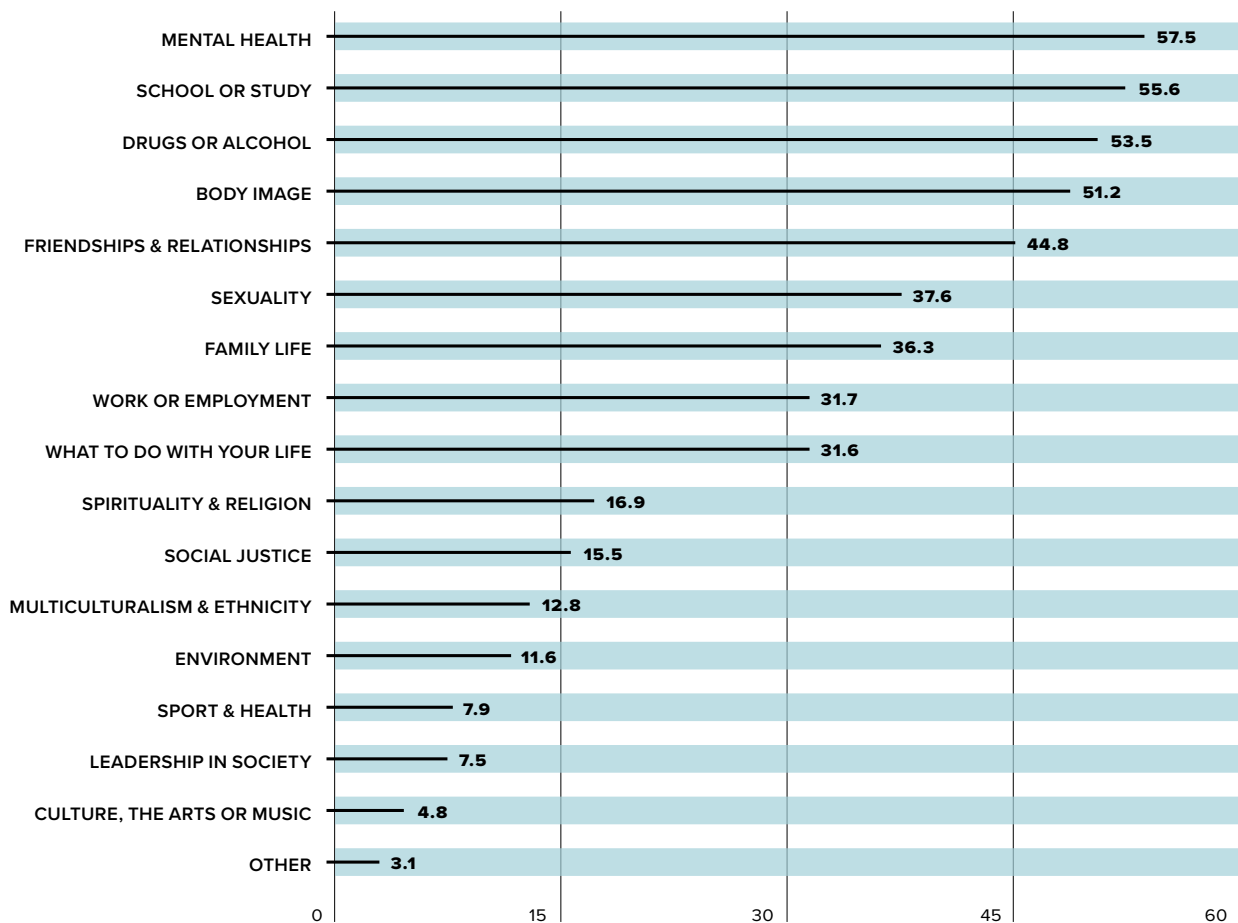
My current priest (for school) isn't really approachable. and I feel excluded from my religion because I am LGBTQI, and I feel like I can't connect anymore or will be rejected by the Church.

Other negative experiences included Masses that were “long and boring”, confusion or contradiction in faith teachings and revulsion by the sex abuse scandal in the Church, amongst others.

CHAPTER 7: ISSUES FACING YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

A question asked respondents to consider some of the main issues facing young people in Australia today. The graph below shows the overall results, sorted from the highest percentage to the lowest percentage of young people overall selecting each issue.

FIGURE 7.1 MAIN ISSUES FACING YOUNG PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA TODAY (PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS)



Total exceeds 100% because respondents could choose more than one response.

The main issues facing young people in Australia today, according to respondents, were mental health, school or study, drugs or alcohol, body image, and friendships and relationships. The table below (7.2)

shows the results by age group, followed by Table 7.3 showing the results by birthplace, sorted from the highest percentage to the lowest percentage of young people overall selecting each issue.

TABLE 7.2 MAIN ISSUES FACING YOUNG PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA TODAY	AGE 16-18 %	AGE 19-22 %	AGE 23-29 %	TOTAL %
Mental health	59	50	52	57
School or study	62	30	20	56
Drugs or alcohol	57	37	35	53
Body image	55	33	33	51
Friendships and relationships	45	42	47	45
Sexuality	35	52	50	38
Family life	36	37	41	36
Work or employment	30	39	41	32
What to do with your life	32	34	29	32
Spirituality and religion	14	33	34	17
Social justice	16	14	15	15
Multiculturalism and ethnicity	13	11	11	13
Environment	12	11	12	12
Sport and health	9	4	4	8
Leadership in society	7	9	11	8
Culture, the arts or music	5	6	5	5
Other	3	4	5	3
Total	488	447	444	480

N = 12,780. Missing = 2,274. Total exceeds 100% because respondents could choose more than one response.

As can be seen in Table 7.2, the main issues faced by those aged 16–18 were similar to those indicated in the overall results. Those aged 19–29 however, also recorded higher scores for issues such as friendships and relationships, and sexuality, indicating that these areas were particularly a concern for people within this age group

School and study, and drugs and alcohol were two issues commonly faced by young

people from all ethnic backgrounds, as indicated in Table 7.3. More than half the number of respondents born in Australia and other English-speaking countries also recorded mental health and body image as serious issues. Concerns about friendships and relationships were recorded to a larger extent by those born in countries other than Australia, indicating that this might be an issue commonly faced by immigrant youth.

TABLE 7.3
MAIN ISSUES FACING
YOUNG PEOPLE IN
AUSTRALIA TODAY
(PERCENTAGE)

	<i>BORN IN AUSTRALIA</i>	<i>BORN IN OTHER ESC</i>	<i>BORN IN NESC</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Mental health	60	57	46	57
School or study	57	50	50	56
Drugs or alcohol	54	57	50	53
Body image	53	52	45	51
Friendships and relationships	44	47	49	45
Sexuality	38	41	40	38
Family life	35	37	42	36
Work or employment	32	30	32	32
What to do with your life	32	29	34	32
Spirituality and religion	15	15	27	17
Social justice	15	20	18	15
Multiculturalism and ethnicity	12	16	18	13
Environment	11	15	13	12
Sport and health	8	6	8	8
Leadership in society	7	10	10	8
Culture, the arts or music	4	5	8	5
Other	3	3	5	3
Total	479	489	494	480

*N = 10,407. Missing = 4,647. Total exceeds 100% because respondents could choose more than one response.
 ESC = English Speaking country; NESC = Non-English Speaking country.*

CHAPTER 8: HOW CAN THE CHURCH HELP?

Participants were asked to indicate specific ways in which they believed the Church could be of help to them: In what ways do you believe the Church can help you and your friends in today's world?

Many participants responded that the Church could provide guidance, help and counselling for young people in dealing with stress, anxiety, personal problems, and sexuality and relationship issues. This was strongly evident in the responses of participants aged 16–18.

The Church can help youths in Australia through programs which combat drug and alcohol abuse and truancy, they can also set up programs to help with finding employment and dealing with mental health issues.

I believe the Church can provide a stable environment for those trying to figure out where they want to go in life. However, it can also be another pressure especially when it comes to sexuality and mental health.

Opening up to discussing new topics that perhaps have not been addressed as much as they should be. E.g., depression, bullying. Make an effort to connect with the young people in a way that makes sense to them, rather than expecting them to understand something that may be old or outdated.

By caring. The people who are under the influence of drugs usually do not have people who actually care for them. Also, the school load can stress many students, therefore students need to be able to have some relaxation time with the people who care for them.

Listen, add guidance, information sessions, make contemporary services to address new issues like body image and divorce and family break-ups.



Providing ways of resolving disputes/issues, giving advice for a positive and optimistic outlook on life, promoting self-worth and good values.

I think the Church can help young people by providing activities and meeting groups where we can come together and discuss what's going on with like-minded people, as well as receiving guidance from older members of the parish who have probably lived through similar experiences.

There was a strong need expressed by participants in this group for help in dealing with the more practical issues in life and other emotional problems. "Providing awareness" and "guidance", "creating a support network" and "providing a safe space" were terms frequently mentioned. Similar concerns were also voiced in the 19–29 age group, with a perceived need for the formation of more groups and communities for young people in this age group.

The Church can supply young people with a safe place to go to when they are struggling with the pressures of being a young person. It should be a welcoming place, free of judgment that helps youth to know their worth, give them fulfilling life experiences (including those of social justice) and supporting them wherever they are on their faith journey (not appearing restrictive or exclusive).

Creating communities that genuinely build relationships with us—this just opens up a doorway for us to get good advice/mentorship/support and also teaches us precepts of the Church in a more personal way (I believe we are oftentimes lost to these).

To be a supportive community and encourage friendships and relationships in light of Catholic values. Plus, mentorship programs to assist navigating the field of work and its conflicting values. Mostly providing the sacraments and pastoral guidance on the tough issues of life.

A large number of participants in the 19–29 age group also spoke strongly about the need for more faith formation opportunities and help in evangelising others and leading a Christian life.

I feel the Church can really teach me about faith and educate my friends about belief and what it means to be a Christian.

An active participation in church activities that are not too theoretical in approach, more practical ways on how to get to know faith and Jesus.

Setting a good example and only acting with love and compassion. There is no room to be judgemental and act with disdain towards people who sin differently to you. We also need to be taught the honest and hard truths of the Church in schools, not a watered-down version of Christianity by people who are offended or scared by the ways of the Church. Human hearts instinctively seek truth, and when we are given a washed-out version of truth, or only presented with the parts that feel nice, we grow bored quickly.

The Church acts as a place of refuge for me and my friends within my youth group, but I can imagine this is rare. Further, Mass could become more relatable through the delivered homilies, explaining exactly what happens during a Mass, the priest being approachable and friendly. All of these are not the answer but I feel they could assist young people in coming to understand the beauty of the Church and what it can offer them because the Church and my faith has offered me so much and I want it to be appealing to others my age just as it is for me.

The Church needs to be strong, hold fast to the teachings of Christ and be the stable presence in our world. To teach young people how to pray as adults. To build a relationship with Jesus. Faith, hope and charity developed from this relationship will be the nourishment needed to allow a Christian to persevere through life's difficulties and rejoice in the little things.



To help young people understand the good in being a part of the Church (in a broad sense). What do we have or how do we act that interests people in a way of asking “What is that? I want to be a part of that”. To bring our faith down to a level enough to welcome the young person who has never experienced faith in his/her life. Be relational, relevant and pay attention to young people. Don’t assume you know what they want. Let them do the talking and value what they have to offer.

Talks / faith development on some of the awesome teachings that the Church has, such as on human love and sexuality, mission and evangelisation, salvation, scriptures, etc. Also, more opportunities to serve in ministry and ministry training - not just youth ministry but also women’s, men’s, family, parish etc.

I believe that where the Church’s rich teachings are communicated clearly and in a gentle manner they offer both a profoundly beautiful account of human dignity and a radical challenge to realise the consequences this in our lives, with those around us and in our interaction with society as a whole.

Participants in both age groups felt the need for more engagement with young people and more resources for youth ministry.

Having church youth groups for children, teenagers and young adults would be beneficial for Christians wanting to meet friends of the same faith. Also encouraging young people to invite their friends to church activities, getting them to know God.

Although there are various activities within the diocese set up, things like Pub Theology or Arch D radio are not widely advertised, so it is difficult for young people to find out about them. Also, having greater support for youth groups, not so much in terms of money, but in terms of people.

I think the Church has plenty to offer on a range of these topics, but firstly it needs to engage with people. The parishes/groups that are doing best have a sense of “community”: there are events people can go to and places for people to communicate, these can be things like youth groups, Vinnies night patrols and fetes. My diocese used to have a monthly talk/meal at a local pub with a

guest speaker which was great before it got cancelled. Belonging to something and having friends who are Catholic has helped more than any talk or campaign, and it's the first thing we need to get right.

Providing more youth groups to assist youth within communities and more opportunities for youth to be more involved within the church community

By the Church having resources open to teens like youth groups, retreats, sessions and such. I think it helps people who need a support or who need to get away from something toxic in their life. It has helped me and many of my friends by going on camps and retreats in finding who we are and helping us help other people.

A small proportion of respondents in both age groups felt that the Church ought to be more open and inclusive, especially in terms of accepting different sexualities.

I would love to see the Church be more open and actually talk. I would like to see the Church talk about the issues in the world that we currently live and not brush them under the rug. I find some churches struggle to talk about suicide, sexuality, mental health, racism etc. Jesus taught us to love one another and that doesn't mean we just ignore what is going on around us. I would like to see the church be more inclusive of everyone.

By being positive, and accepting, and open minded and moving forward with beliefs. Change is hard, but it is vital in growth. If the Church was more accepting of all different kinds of people, and realised that human beings are, at the core, all the same and deserve the same basic fundamental human rights, then younger people in today's world would feel much more included, and much happier to come to the Church for help

The Church can help us in the world today by stop being sexist towards women. The Church should also accept gender equality and accept transgender people and gay people.

In our parish, we find that music and youth events have greatly encouraged young people to take part in Mass and the life of the Parish. I'd love to see more discussion about LGBTQI issues within the Church so that more people who experience these feelings can feel accepted within the Church and can be allowed to feel closer to God and the Church.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Young people were also asked, "From your experience, how could the Church use social media and technology to better connect with you?"

In response to this, there were several suggestions for a greater presence of parishes and clergy on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. Participants expressed the need for the Church to use social media to provide faith formation and highlight youth events in the local area or diocese.

The Church could use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat) in order to be able to connect with younger people who regularly use social media. It is an easier way for the Church to reach out to young people, in turn would also be easier for young people to reach out to the Church and its teachings.

Advertising social events on a wider platform. There are many times that I don't hear of events taking place, other than through word of mouth, or unless a friend shares it on Facebook. Not limiting it to closed groups, but opening it up for the world to see, and feel invited.

The Church should use social media to send out important messages so they're easily accessible and easily relatable to youth. What the Pope wants youth to know will only reach them (easily) through social media. I already know of many ways the Church is using social media to share their teachings and experiences such as Instagram and I believe it's fantastic.

The short videos of engagement like Fr Mike Schmitz and Bishop Barron would be great from Australian priests who are well versed in contemporary issues facing Australians at large and Catholics.

We need a regular Catholic Australian video series that is shared on social media and YouTube and Vimeo, Facebook etc ... Let's get some online Bible studies happening. Some Q and A online. Xt3's Ask a Priest is good and we could improve it. Let's get online programs where you can get certificates if you learn your catechism or your Compendium.

There were also suggestions of having a Youth Ministry app or a diocesan app to provide regular news, spiritual resources and other helpful information. Respondents also said that they would like parishes and dioceses to have better websites with clear information about Mass times and youth events and activities.

For a youth ministry app with suggestions, prayers, activities, advice and catechesis as well as aspects where youth can directly engage with their faith.

It would be great to have an Australian app for Mass times, churches, Daily mass readings etc. similar to Laudate but Australian. It would also have upcoming youth events for around Australia.

Parishes and Archdioceses could very easily create a larger online presence. It would allow people to keep more up-to-date with events that are going on. Most parishes you have to physically go to ask questions but if you were able to connect with them via email, or private messages, it would become a lot easier to get information quicker.

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE NOT INVOLVED IN CHURCH

Respondents who were not involved in church activities were asked to indicate ways in which the Church could connect better with them. In response to this, many (especially those in the 16–18 age bracket) suggested advertising youth events and activities through emails or on social media platforms such as Facebook as a means of direct communication.

My friends and I can be connected through our schools and local area, where we take interest in particular activities we see. We can also be connected through social media.

Reaching out to high schools and universities and asking them to spread details about church events online (particularly through social media) is a good way to reach us.

Social media. I am on it often enough and if it came up with times and places on where to meet I might listen.



Another frequent suggestion was to plan fun and interesting events and activities for young people and advertise them widely through schools, parishes and at local events so that people of other faiths might hear about them and have the opportunity to participate in them.

By making church activities more relevant to us, more mainstream. At present the groups for young people that I have been to have been too devout for me and too scripture focused rather than an experience that feels comfortable to me. By being modern and up-to-date with today's current society.

My friends and I are currently not involved. In my opinion, offering students an interesting range of activities such as sport and art and music throughout a day intertwined with modern and fun youth speakers or advocates on a weekday could be engaging for the youth.

Possibly by changing the nature of these activities, making it accessible to people who are outside of the Catholic faith.

Probably by hosting camps or groups where you meet both boys and girls and targeting people between a certain age, so that we can mingle and have fun while being involved in camp activities

I'm really not sure, but I think it needs to be personal, and probably start within individual communities. I am less likely to go to a big event with my friends that is unfamiliar. However, if there were talks or smaller events planned from outside sources for young people, I would likely invite my friends over.

Who knows? Meet us where we hang out—in the pubs, night clubs, radio, social media, sporting venues, coffee shops. Let our peers be the messengers, too, but older people who are good communicators and listeners could connect with us in the right environment.

Some older participants in the 19–29 age group also voiced a specific need for groups that catered to their age and interest.

I think there needs to be more different groups. As for myself I am married but still in my youth, although I find it harder to engage with youth groups because we're at different stages, it would be nice to see more activities for the younger married couples.

Seeing as I am a young married father with three children, I no longer attend events that are not family oriented. I would be interested in attending events for families with young children.

In recent times, I have, along with some of my friends stepped aside from youth ministry because we fell between the 24–30 category and there is a lack of gatherings tailored for our age bracket. We don't quite fit the youth bill ... At the same time, we don't fit the over 30s either, particularly as a lot of us are unmarried, and without our own family. We are always told "we need you, come and be a leader at our youth function/event" which we have done, but are exhausted as we're lacking our own nourishment ... [It would be good] If there were more tailored events for the older age bracket 25–30, where we could actually participate and not be expected to be leaders. We have our own struggles that no one is talking to us about e.g. our peers with children out of wedlock, working for people who are pro "marriage equality", and pro/choice, we're financially struggling, often having to move back home, our identity as an older young adult, our concerns around feeling "used as leaders", concerns around late marriage and children, and what this means for us, as well as how others can support us.

A small number of participants said they didn't wish the Church to connect with them at all. The reasons given by some of them for this were either because they weren't interested in religion at all, others didn't want beliefs forced upon them while still others had grown tired of religion and had deliberately chosen not to connect in any way.

CHAPTER 9: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research project was to help the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference understand the world of young people, particularly young people of the Catholic faith and those who have some connection with the Church.

The core objectives of the research were to study the interactions between young people, the Church and society and to examine the level of participation of young people in religious practices and other Church activities and their experiences of these. The study also explored ways in which the Church could better engage with young people.

PARTICIPATION AND EXPERIENCES IN CHURCH-RELATED ACTIVITIES

One-quarter of respondents described themselves as Catholic and were regularly involved in Mass and parish activities. A much greater proportion (64%) of those aged 19 or over described themselves this way. A further one-quarter of respondents were Catholic or Christian and were occasionally involved with church activities. Around 21 per cent of participants indicated that their family was Catholic or Christian, but they didn't practise the faith or get involved in anything.

The research found that the most common involvement that young people had with the Church was through Youth Masses or liturgies, Catholic school groups, prayer experiences and social events.

The most positive experiences of participating in Church groups or events for all participants were youth groups, youth festivals, Mass and liturgical gatherings, and mission and outreach opportunities.

16- to 18-year-olds: Participation in Catholic school groups, youth ministry groups or groups in a Catholic parish or another Christian denomination were particularly positive experiences due to the ability to make friends, discuss issues and explore their faith in a comfortable environment. Mission, outreach and service-related activities were also seen to be positive experiences for this age group as they provided young people with new experiences, opportunities to help and serve others and space for self-reflection and growth.

19- to 29-year-olds: Big events such as youth festivals and youth conferences (for example, World Youth Day and the Australian Catholic Youth Festival) were good experiences for participants in this age group due to the opportunities they provided to meet other young people and listen to engaging speakers. In addition, Masses and opportunities for Adoration were also seen as positive experiences.

Based on participants' responses, the four most engaging and successful gatherings within the Church were:

1. Mass and Liturgical Gatherings
2. Youth Groups and their activities
3. Fun, informal activities
4. Musical events, Praise and Worship

Participants aged 19–29 also indicated that conferences with guest speakers and retreats and prayer experiences were successful and engaging for people in their age group.

According to participants, the top four most engaging and successful activities outside the Church were:

1. Organised social events - concerts, parties, music festivals
2. Coffee shops, cafes, informal social gatherings
3. Youth groups
4. Sport

While many participants had attended non-Catholic religious events, there were mixed reactions to the experience. Participants who enjoyed such experiences commented on the friendship, community spirit, music and engagement aspects of the services. For those who attended Catholic religious events, these were valued for the presence of the Eucharist and adequate time for prayer and quiet reflection.

THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE, THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The main issues facing young people in Australia today, according to respondents, were mental health, school or study, drugs or alcohol, body image and friendships and relationships. According to the respondents, the groups of people who had influenced key decisions and directions in their life were family, friends and their school or teachers. Forty-four per cent of young people said that the parish or church community and Church or religious leaders had had at least some influence on them.

Respondents were also asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, their experience of being listened to by people from the Church. Overall, a moderate score of 5.9 was recorded. School-aged young people rated their experience lower than older youth.

The main factors that contributed to the positive experiences of being listened to for young people were found to be talking to people who valued their story, the positive attitude of

the clergy, and the welcoming and supportive attitude of parishioners. Finding someone to share personal problems with or discuss faith matters with and being able to share thoughts and opinions without being judged or laughed at was particularly important for those aged 16–18 years. For those aged 19–29, the positive attitude of the clergy—priests who were supportive and welcoming, collaborative and good listeners—contributed largely to their positive experiences of being listened to. Other positive experiences among participants included good experiences at Mass, the empowering leadership of the priest, enjoyable experiences of participating in youth groups and greater opportunities being given to young people to participate in parishes.

The main factors that contributed to the negative experiences of young people being listened to were found to be negative personal encounters with people from the Church, occasions where their comments were ignored by others and what they saw as the close-minded, biased attitudes of some people. There were a number of different experiences of negative encounters shared by participants, which were:

- Being disregarded for being too young
- Judged negatively for expressing differing views of faith and/or beliefs
- Difficult encounters with the priest in Confession
- Being “forced” to believe in things that held no meaning
- Parishioners and teachers not ready to listen to modern views or try new things

In addition, for some participants aged 19–29, negative encounters had often occurred when they had tried to promote Church teaching and practice or when they had difficulties in setting up youth ministries in their parishes or were not being supported in youth work.



ENHANCING THE CHURCH'S ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Participants stated that one of the main ways in which the Church could respond to young people today was by providing them with help in dealing with personal problems and relationship issues. There was great need for help in dealing with mental issues such as stress and anxiety, coping with educational burdens and other problems such as bullying, body image and sexuality.

A large number of participants in the 19–29 age group spoke strongly about the need for more faith formation opportunities and help in evangelising others and leading a Christian life. Participants in both age groups felt the need for more engagement with young people and more resources for youth ministry. Some respondents also felt strongly that the Church ought to be more open and inclusive, especially in terms of accepting different sexualities.

According to participants, the Church could use social media to better connect with young people by having a greater presence on platforms such

as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. Participants also felt that the Church could use social media to provide faith formation and highlight youth events in the local area or diocese. Other suggestions included having apps to provide regular news, spiritual resources and other helpful information, and better parish and diocesan websites with clear information about Mass times and youth events and activities.

Finally, for those who were not currently involved in church, there were several suggestions of how the Church could connect with them:

1. Many participants (especially those in the 16–18 age bracket) suggested advertising youth events and activities through emails or on social media platforms such as Facebook as a means of directly communicating with them.
2. Planning interesting events and activities for young people and advertising them widely through schools, parishes and local events so that people of all faiths might participate.
3. Older participants in the 19–29 age group voiced a specific need for groups that catered to their age and interest.

COMMENTARIES

The following commentaries provide insights on the national youth survey from five experts in the fields of religious education, social work, priesthood, family life and youth ministry.

A RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR'S RESPONSE: PROF RICHARD RYMARZ

Professor Richard Rymarz was born in Melbourne, Australia. He was the inaugural Peter and Doris Kule Chair in Catholic Religious Education, St Joseph's College, University of Alberta. Before his move to Canada, he worked at the Australian Catholic University and remains an Adjunct Professor there. He is also an Honorary Research Fellow at both the University of Divinity and the Pastoral Research Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. He has returned to Australia to become the Head of Religious Education and Director of Research at the Broken Bay Institute – The Australian Institute of Theological Education.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Youth Survey adds to a growing literature on youth, young adults and their sense of religious engagement.

A large part of my work involves religious education in Catholics schools – both the production of materials for use in schools as well as preparing religious education teachers.

There are many things in the report that impact on my work. To nominate just three, I would start with the contrast between the under-18 responses with those of older participants. I think what we are seeing here is a reflection of the diversity of students enrolled in Catholic schools, a diversity that is not as evident in parishes and other Church structures. Most of the under-18 responses came from students in Catholic schools. What is evident in these responses is a looser affiliation with the Church but also a positive encounter. This is a reflection on the way in which Catholic schools are able to cater to the needs and aspirations of a range of students. It directs us toward a more detailed consideration of the transition of youth from Catholic schools into the world of work and tertiary study. The seminal question is,



how can we better accompany young people in this transition and what is it that we as Catholic educators can offer these young adults?

This leads onto a second consideration about the responses of the 19- to 29-year-old participants. Their sense of being part of the Church is quite strong. The acknowledgment of the importance of liturgy is one example of this. This suggests that what is being done in some parishes and other forms of outreach to young adults is achieving positive results. A number of questions follow on from this. How can this participation and how can these programs be consolidated and strengthened? And to reiterate the first point, how can more young adults be made aware of these opportunities for faith formation once they have left school? As identified in the report, one current strategy is the “big event.” This clearly has an important place in pastoral ministry and outreach. The deeper issue is how can other, more ongoing, structures be put in place that aim for a sustaining and more integrated faith formation.

A perennial finding in studies of the religious engagement of youth and young adults is the influence of the family. Time and time again

across a wide range of studies this finding has emerged. The Australian Catholic Bishops’ Youth Survey has also supported the role of family as a critically important influence on youth and young adults. In terms, especially, of religious education in schools, a key question then is how can families be better acknowledged and integrated into what is done in the formal programs in schools?

A SOCIAL WORKER’S RESPONSE: MS ASHLEIGH GREEN

Ashleigh Green is the Community Engagement Coordinator at CatholicCare Sydney, with a background as a social worker with disadvantaged young people living in Out of Home Care. Ashleigh was the Australian Youth Delegate in Rome in April and September 2017, where she participated in preparatory meetings for the upcoming Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment. Ashleigh has experience in interfaith dialogue, and in 2015 was the event coordinator for the inaugural Youth PoWR, Australia’s largest interfaith youth gathering. Ashleigh is passionate about engaging youth on the margins and helping young people cultivate their unique skills and passions to make a difference in the world.



This report is an excellent insight into the views and experiences of young Australians as we draw closer to Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment. As a young adult who works in Catholic social services with disadvantaged young people, this report is a confronting reminder of the challenges that many young Australians face, but it is also a source of tremendous hope.

The young people surveyed have challenged the Church to listen to their stories – not only the happy stories, but the stories from the streets, from the school playgrounds, from the hospitals and from the juvenile detention facilities. Talking to people who valued their story was a key factor that made young people in the 16–18 age group feel listened to. The experience of being able to share thoughts and opinions without being judged or laughed at was important to this age group. This result brought to life a fundamental aspect of Catholic Social Teaching – that is the life and dignity of the human person – which should form the essence of Catholic social services. As Catholic social service agencies we are working within a changing industry. As talk of money, business models, profits and “filling beds” infiltrates our planning meetings, this report is a timely reminder of what our work is about. There was nothing far-fetched or complicated about what the survey participants requested... no policies or paperwork, just a real, open, human-to-human connection.

The survey revealed that young people yearn for the Church to play a role in addressing issues such as mental health, drug abuse and unemployment. Many participants responded that the Church could provide guidance, help and counselling for young people in dealing with stress, anxiety, personal problems, sexuality and relationship issues. This report is a challenge to social service agencies to make it known that our work comes from a place of faith. We are the Church. We do this work because we are pilgrims seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. There is an underlying disconnect between social service agencies, schools, youth groups and

parishes that pervades the survey responses. The report challenges us, as diverse branches of the Church, to form a united, universal front. Finally, as a young adult in the Church I was struck by the comment of one survey participant who noted that “the Church acts as a place of refuge for me and my friends within my youth group, but I can imagine this is rare.” I believe it is crucial for young adults to be surrounded by like-minded people of faith. However, it is easy for youth groups to turn into exclusive cliques. Pope Francis urges us to get off the couch, to follow Jesus, the Lord of risk and to take the path of the craziness of our God. This report challenges us to be a church that looks outward, that takes risks and that evangelises those on the margins.

A PRIEST'S RESPONSE: FR CHRIS RYAN MGL

Fr Christopher Ryan is a Missionaries of God's Love (MGL) priest. During 2007-2008 he was the coordinator of the pilgrimage of the World Youth Day (WYD) Cross and Icon throughout Australia. After WYD Fr Chris became rector of the MGL's formation house in Melbourne. He is currently a parish priest in Sydney. Fr Chris is the author of *In the Light of the Cross: Reflections on the Australian journey of the World Youth Day Cross and Icon (St Paul's); Bring Forth Hope: Pope Francis speaks to the Youth of the World (St Mary's Press); and editor of Australian Catholic Youth Ministry: Theological and Pastoral Foundations for Faithful Ministry. Fr Chris is a member of the Australian Catholic Youth Council (ACYC) and chair of its Research Task Group. Fr Chris has an honours degree in theology and is currently working on his PhD in youth.*

I firstly wish to commend the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for commissioning the survey in preparation for the General Synod. It was a valuable initiative that sought to listen directly to the voices of young Australians concerning the issues that were most important to them, as well as to their experience and reflection about matters of faith and belief.

From my perspective, what most clearly emerged from this massive listening exercise was the diversity of young people's experience and expectations concerning what they thought important, what they needed and what needs to change for the Church to better engage with them into the future. Some young people highlighted the significance of the faith community through activities that fostered a sense of belonging; others stressed the importance of traditional Catholic expressions of prayer (especially the Eucharist), while others expounded upon the value of contemporary expressions such as praise and worship. Still others stressed the need for substantial faith formation, while most seemed to value the "big event" strategy that is predominant in much youth ministry at the present (although this may also be an example of one of the biases present in the study). A more challenging instance of the diversity present in the responses were the divergent perspectives concerning the Church's moral teaching.

At the very least, such diverse responses clearly indicate that the Church cannot continue to treat young people as a monolithic group but rather needs to recognise the different perspectives and opinions of young people both in and beyond the pews. This will require a much greater commitment to the personal accompaniment of young people than we are currently undertaking.

I also think that such diversity points to an underlying cultural value that the Church must pay much greater attention to, which is that expressions of spirituality and faith today must speak personally to youth (and not only to youth) if they are to be deemed important in their lives. Faith practices cannot be imposed from without, but must be personally appropriated by the individuals themselves. Even those young people who value traditional expressions of Catholic faith and piety do so on this basis: that it speaks to them personally rather than primarily because the Church teaches that this or that practice is valuable.

At the risk of truncating this diverse picture, the principal questions that the report left me with were:

i) How can our faith communities create spaces which are able to "hold" the young people who are trying to discover what they believe and those who currently hold views that are contrary to Catholic belief so that they are free to explore, to doubt and to question without fear of sanction or rejection what it is that we truly believe about the mystery of God revealed in Christ?

ii) How can these same faith communities also nurture other young people who have made a commitment to Christ, who want to understand their faith more deeply, and who may express it in various expressions of prayer, liturgical devotion that may or may not sit easily with older members of the community? Note that the report indicates that this may not always be a case of young people wanting contemporary music over older people's preferences for a more traditional hymnody (although it clearly often does), but could also involve a young person wanting a neo-gothic church to worship in over the objections of an older generation's desire for a different liturgical setting.

We can lament the difficulties of addressing such diversity, or we can perpetuate the polarisation present in the Church by rendering the diversity as a problem to be overcome. Or we can embark on a fresh journey to discover a deeper sense of catholicity, a catholicity which does not eliminate genuine diversity, but simultaneously finds true unity in the One who holds all things together in Him.

A FAMILY MINISTRY WORKER'S RESPONSE: MRS LOUISE TINDALE

Louise Tindale is a Catholic married woman with three young adult children. Together with her husband, Louise lives in rural NSW and works as a health professional in private practice. She facilitates the local Prepare & Enrichment program for couples preparing to marry in the Catholic Church to explore their relationship, strengths and growth areas; to learn to be active listeners / communicators and resolve conflict and to focus on personal, couple and family goals. Louise and her husband have

also been trained to participate in the UK-based Explore Program which involves couples talking to Year 11 students in local Catholic schools about their marriage as part of Families Week and students are encouraged to ask the couples questions about their marriage.

I commend the Synod and subsequent report for gaining insights into how the Church might better engage with young people as this has been an ongoing concern of mine and other parishioners, as we witness significantly dwindling numbers of youth attending Mass and couples marrying, and marrying in the Church.

What resonated with me was the most positive experience for the participants was youth groups/youth festivals/mass and liturgy/mission and outreach opportunities. There is a need for greater leadership for our youth in the form of youth groups in our diocese. Our local Catholic school employs part-time youth leaders, but there is no organised youth group that would facilitate youth ministry.

I strongly feel that the Church should pay part-time youth leaders/workers to run youth groups outside of the schools to provide a safe, inclusive forum for the issues raised in this report and others to be openly discussed and facilitated and for youth to openly celebrate their faith. The youth could then take ownership and organise other events - music/masses/mentoring/community service/assist in children's liturgy etc. They could include people of non English speaking backgrounds and include their cultural activities for greater inclusion.

Not many rural areas take ownership of this and subsequently youth attendance and involvement in the Church outside school is extremely poor. The positive comments around the camaraderie, support, depth of faith/ministry facilitated in youth groups elsewhere galvanised my belief that this is essential in all areas. I feel paid employees are necessary to coordinate this as it takes time and energy and I feel this is warranted if we are to embrace the youth and our Church's future.

"Making their faith relevant" and "not connecting with their faith" were two comments that resonated with me. I feel the Church needs to facilitate this and to help young people address the overwhelming concerns such as mental health, drugs and alcohol, relationship issues. I feel youth groups run by paid employees (leaders) are a safe forum to address these and other issues and to nurture their faith in the increasingly secular world. Guest speakers – clergy, mental health workers/counsellors, health workers/relationship counsellors, musicians, refugees, married couples of different ages and stages of their marriage etc. – invited to attend could facilitate discussion, dictated by what the group wants to learn/celebrate/worship. A supportive environment "for the youth – by the youth" is instrumental in nurturing and developing their faith.

I feel the positive suggestions around social media were fabulous. We have to evolve with the youth and have contemporary ways of "reaching them". Again be relevant to them through accessible means of prayer and music and messages. Youth group participants could set up their own "chat rooms" for safe dialogue about issues and their faith/events etc.

I will certainly be applying some of these social media applications in discussion with my young adult children for ways they can stay connected with and "grow" their faith – particularly for those children who live away from home.

A YOUTH MINISTER'S RESPONSE: MRS ANITA PARKER

Anita Parker works fulltime as the Director for Catholic Youth Ministry in the Archdiocese of Perth and previously worked as a high school Music, Mathematics and Religious Education teacher. She has participated in and led pilgrimage groups to the last seven World Youth Days. She is actively involved in the teens and young adult ministry at her parish and is also the chairperson of the Australian Catholic Youth Council (ACYC). Her current role involves supporting and starting Parish based youth

groups, providing centralised training for youth leaders, hosting central youth events, giving talks and leading youth retreats.

Many ministries in the Church, including youth ministry, require hard work, patience and long-term planning. Youth ministers aim to provide formation, support, inspiration and address faith issues with young people in their early stages, but it takes many years and a whole “village” to raise a young person in their faith. The gift of young people is their honesty, frankness and openness to question and dialogue.

The questions raised in the report should be taken as opportunities for areas of growth in our Church, not just challenges to be faced. Youth ministers across the country in their various situations should all take time to read, reflect and evaluate what the report raises for areas of growth in their own ministry.

The report shows that families and schools have a strong influence on the lives and decisions of young people (ref Chapter 5). Our ministry with young people must also incorporate working with families, schools, parish and the broader community in equipping them with resources to support young people in their faith life. Typically youth ministers will focus solely on direct ministry to young people, but there needs to be a move to a much broader focus to incorporate resources and formation for families, collaboration with schools – both Catholic schools and chaplaincy in non-Catholic schools. This collaboration and broader formation will allow the “village” to speak the same language in areas of faith formation for the young people.

Unfortunately our reality in Australia is that the majority of young people are not connected to church activities. In this Synod process, Pope Francis has also asked that the voice of those young people not connected to the Church also be actively heard by the Church. These voices in the section “Connecting with people not

involved in church” (ref Chapter 8) spoke about the opportunity of utilising social media platforms for communication with young people who aren’t actively involved in church activities. The practical ideas listed also lead to new opportunities or different ways to consider evangelisation and outreach across the teens, young adults and also ministry to young married couples. Youth ministers and their teams should evaluate these suggestions and their own efforts of outreach to those young people not connected to the Church. Youth ministry should constantly be seeking to also reach out to young people on the fringes and creating opportunities to connect with new people.

In the summary section “Enhancing the Church’s engagement with young people”, these practical tips are a great summary for youth ministers and the broader Catholic community to also act on. The pastoral support for the mental health of young people is a growing ministry need, and has been for a number of years now. The constant review of the Church’s online presence, through engaging websites, apps and social media, is also needed.

Overall, the report shows the great need for the Catholic Church in Australia to continue in sustaining and growing our support for active youth ministry in all areas – diocesan, parish, communities and movements. The majority of young people are not connecting to the Church and our engagement of young people is crucial for the growth of the Church. Funding, roles and ongoing youth ministry support should be at the forefront of planning to seize these opportunities and act on engaging the young people of Australia with the Catholic Faith. Our national vision for Catholic youth ministry calls us all to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person, to draw young people into responsible participation in the life and mission of the Catholic faith community and to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in today’s world. May we all be inspired through these report findings to grow and support youth ministry across our country.

APPENDIX 1: COPY OF SURVEY (PAPER VERSION)

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' YOUTH SURVEY 2017

Thanks for participating in this survey. Pope Francis wishes to hear from young people and so the Australian Catholic Bishops have developed this survey to provide him with feedback. Your thoughts will contribute to a national submission that will be considered by Pope Francis as part of the **General Synod on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment** to be held in Rome in October 2018.

What's a Synod? A Synod is a special meeting of Church members including: bishops, priests, religious sisters and brothers, men and women. But it's more than a meeting—it's a journey and a way for the Pope to hear from the whole church on issues. After the Synod the Pope usually writes a special document for the whole of the Church.

Who: This survey is for **Australians** aged between **16 and 29 years**. Note: if you are under 18, you may wish to discuss the survey with your parents.

How: This survey should only take about 10–20 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers, so just answer each question as honestly as you can. If you do not want to answer a question, just move onto the next one. In each question, simply tick the box which best represents your response or write your comments, and then move onto the next question.

Can I withdraw from the survey? Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the survey at any time up until you hand in the survey.

Questions: If you have any queries about this survey, please contact Stephen Reid, ACBC Pastoral Research Office (E: synod2018@catholic.org.au).

Results: The results from the survey may be summarised and appear in publications or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify you in any way. Your privacy is important to us. Please go to the ACBC website to view the ACBC privacy policy to find out how we handle your information: www.catholic.org.au/acbc-privacy/australian-catholic-bishops-conference-privacy-policy

Ethics: This survey has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (Review no. 2017-110E). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee, care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice
Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059
Ph.: 02 9739 2519 Fax: 02 9739 2870
Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

End date: This survey will close at midnight on Sunday 2 July 2017.

This is an opportunity to make your voice heard. Thank you for participating.

By completing the questions below you are consenting to participate in this survey.

Q1. Which diocese do you belong to?

Q2. If you do not know which diocese you are located in, please just write in your postcode:

Q3. How old are you? (Note, this survey is only for those aged 16–29)

Q4. Which ONE of the following best describes you?

- ☐ I am Catholic and regularly attend Mass and other faith activities
- ☐ I consider myself Catholic or Christian and go to church activities sometimes
- ☐ My family is Catholic or Christian, but I don't practice or get involved in anything
- ☐ I'm not sure what to think about the Catholic or Christian Faith
- ☐ I follow another religion or belief
- ☐ I don't identify with being Catholic or any other religion
- ☐ Other (Please describe in just a few words):

Definition: *in this survey you will find the term “Church” used throughout. By this we mean its people, practices and organisations, including schools.*

Q5. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your experience of being listened to by people from the Church.

(Write an X on the bar, or skip to the next question if you are unsure.)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Q6. Would you like to share briefly one positive and one negative experience of being listened to by people from the Church?

Positive experience:

Negative experience:

Q7. What do you consider are some of the main issues facing young people in Australia today?

Please select up to 4 issues

- ☐ Family life
- ☐ Friendships and relationships
- ☐ School or study
- ☐ Work or employment
- ☐ Environment
- ☐ Spirituality and religion
- ☐ Body image
- ☐ Drugs or alcohol
- ☐ Multiculturalism and ethnicity
- ☐ Sexuality
- ☐ Mental health
- ☐ What to do with your life
- ☐ Sport and health
- ☐ Culture, the arts or music
- ☐ Leadership in society
- ☐ Social justice

☐ Other (Please describe in just a few words):

Q8. In what ways do you believe the Church can help you and your friends in today's world?

Q9. From your experience, how could the Church use social media and technology to better connect with you?

Q10. Below is a list of some of the opportunities for young people to participate in Catholic groups, organisations or church activities. Please indicate your level of participation. (If you are unsure, just leave it blank.)

	Yes, I have participated in this event	No, I've not participated but would be open to it	No, and not interested
Big events (World Youth Day, Youth Festival, conferences)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Service / outreach programs / immersions	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Parish youth groups	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Local events (rallies, camps, etc)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
University chaplaincy initiatives	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Social events / meeting new people	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Youth Masses or liturgies	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Community leadership (training or service)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Speakers & discussion initiatives (in parishes, pubs or other locations)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Prayer experience	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Catholic school groups	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Personal support services (counselling, mentoring, etc)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Vocation or discernment programs	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Other initiative not listed above (describe briefly):	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Q11. Thinking further about the above-mentioned events and initiatives you've participated in, would you like to comment on one or two which have been particularly positive experiences for you and why?

Q12. What types of gatherings, organised or informal, are the most engaging and successful **within** the Church? In your opinion, what makes them successful?

Q13. What types of gatherings, organised or informal, are the most engaging and successful **outside** the Church? In your opinion, what makes them successful?

Q14. If you, or your friends, are not involved in church activities, how could we connect with you?
(Please skip this question if you are currently involved in church activities.)

Q15. Have you ever attended a religious event that wasn't Catholic? What was or wasn't enjoyable?
(Please skip this question if you haven't attended a non-Catholic religious event.)

Q16. To what extent have the following groups of people influenced key decisions and directions in your life?

	Has influenced me a lot	Has had some influence	Has not influenced me at all	Has discouraged me	Not sure / Don't know
Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School / teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University / lecturers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parish or church community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Church or religious leaders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (describe briefly):	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (describe briefly):	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABOUT YOU

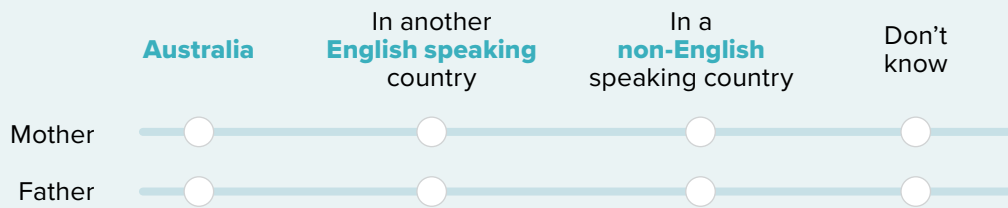
Q17. Are you?

- ☐ Female
 ☐ Male
 ☐ Prefer not to say

Q18. In which country were you born?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Australia | <input type="radio"/> Chile | <input type="radio"/> China (not including Hong Kong or Taiwan) |
| <input type="radio"/> Croatia and other Former Yugoslavia | <input type="radio"/> Egypt | <input type="radio"/> Germany |
| <input type="radio"/> Hong Kong | <input type="radio"/> Hungary | <input type="radio"/> India |
| <input type="radio"/> Indonesia | <input type="radio"/> Iraq | <input type="radio"/> Ireland (including Northern Ireland) |
| <input type="radio"/> Italy | <input type="radio"/> Korea, Republic of (South) | <input type="radio"/> Lebanon |
| <input type="radio"/> Malaysia | <input type="radio"/> Malta | <input type="radio"/> Mauritius |
| <input type="radio"/> Netherlands | <input type="radio"/> New Zealand | <input type="radio"/> North America |
| <input type="radio"/> Philippines | <input type="radio"/> Poland | <input type="radio"/> South Africa |
| <input type="radio"/> Sri Lanka | <input type="radio"/> Sudan (including South Sudan) | <input type="radio"/> United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland) |
| <input type="radio"/> Vietnam | <input type="radio"/> Other country (please name): <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%; margin-top: 5px;"></div> | |

Q19. Where were your parents born?



Q20. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you selected "Yes" to the question above, please answer Q21 and Q22.

If you selected "No" to the question above, please skip to Q23.

Q21. If you attend Mass, is it at a local parish or an Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Ministry?

- ☐ A local parish
- ☐ An Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Ministry
- ☐ I don't attend Mass

Q22. Do you know about the local Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Ministry?

- ☐ Yes, and I am involved in it
- ☐ Yes, but I don't have anything to do with it
- ☐ No, I haven't heard of it before now
- ☐ Don't know

Q23. Which of the following best describes your current situation? (Click all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> I am studying at school | <input type="radio"/> I am studying at university |
| <input type="radio"/> I am studying at TAFE | <input type="radio"/> I am employed full-time |
| <input type="radio"/> I am employed part-time or casually | <input type="radio"/> I am self-employed |
| <input type="radio"/> I am unemployed | <input type="radio"/> I am involved in home duties |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please describe) _____ | |

If you selected "I am studying at school", please answer Q24.

If you did not select "I am studying at school", please skip to Q25.

Q24. What type of school do you currently attend?

- ☐ A Catholic school
- ☐ Another Christian or church-run school
- ☐ A government school
- ☐ Another type of independent or private school
- ☐ I am home-schooled
- ☐ Other (please describe) _____

Q25. What type of school did you MOSTLY attend when you were younger? (If you attended more than one type of school, select the type you spent the most time in.)

- ☐ A Catholic school
- ☐ Another Christian or church-run school
- ☐ A government school
- ☐ Another type of independent or private school
- ☐ I was home-schooled
- ☐ Other (please describe) _____

In Q23, if you selected “I am employed full-time” OR “I am employed part-time or casually”, please answer Q26.

If you did not select “I am employed full-time” OR “I am employed part-time or casually”, please skip to Q29.

Q26. You indicated in a previous question that you are employed. Are you employed in a Catholic organisation (i.e. school, parish, hospital)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐

If you selected “Yes”, please answer Q27.

*If you did **not** select “Yes”, please skip to Q29.*

Q27. Please select the type of Catholic organisation you are **MOSTLY** employed in. (If you are employed in more than one sector, select the one you spend most time employed at.)

- ☐ Catholic School
- ☐ Catholic Education / Schools Office
- ☐ Catholic Healthcare Organisation
- ☐ Catholic Social Service Organisation
- ☐ Catholic Diocese
- ☐ Catholic Parish
- ☐ Other Catholic Organisation

If you selected “Catholic School”, please answer Q28.

*If you did **not** select “Catholic School”, please skip to Q29.*

Q28. Are you a teacher in a Catholic School?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q29. Do you have a disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If you selected “Yes”, please answer Q30 to Q32.

*If you did **not** select “Yes”, please skip to Q34.*

Q30. How would you describe your disability? (Choose more than one option if appropriate.)

- ☐ Sensory (it affects my ability to hear or see)
- ☐ Physical (it affects my mobility or dexterity)
- ☐ Intellectual (it affects my ability to learn)
- ☐ Mental illness (it affects my thinking processes)
- ☐ Neurological (it affects my brain and central nervous system)
- ☐ Physical disfigurement
- ☐ Immunological (certain organisms cause disease in my body)
- ☐ Other (please describe briefly) _____

Q31. In what ways do you contribute to your Catholic community?

Q32. How does your Catholic community welcome you?

Q33. This question has been omitted from the paper version of the survey.

Q34. Would you like to add any further comments?

*You have now completed the survey. Thank you for your response.
Please keep the forthcoming Synod in your prayers.*

*Please visit the Year of Youth website: youth.catholic.org.au/year-of-youth, where
you can find out more about this exciting initiative happening in 2018.*

YEAR OF YOUTH PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit of this Great Southland

Inspire our entire faith community,
as we prayerfully discern new horizons for spreading joy
in the lives and communities of the People of God.

Come Holy Spirit of Youth

Fill the hearts of young people with the
hope and love of Jesus Christ;
enliven our community with the creativity,
energy and joy of youth;
guide us together, as we strive to offer God's mercy
to those who feel abandoned or outcast.

Come Holy Spirit of Faith

Empower our community to be courageous;
unite your people as witnesses of love.
Walk with us, as we blaze new trails of discipleship;
accompanying young people as we renew the Church together.

Come Holy Spirit of Vocation

Stir within young people an awareness of God's call;
reveal to us the graces of young people;
guide us all, in finding our place and raising our voices
to build a civilisation of love.

Amen

Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians, pray for us.
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, friend of the young, pray for us.

This prayer was developed to mark the Year Of Youth, celebrated in Australia in 2018.



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
Pastoral Research Office