



MEDIA RELEASE

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## National Count of Attendance begins this weekend

Across Australia, Catholic parishes are preparing to gather a snapshot of participation at Mass, as the 6th National Count of Attendance gets underway.

Conducted by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's National Centre for Pastoral Research, the Count will take place over the first four weekends in May, beginning on Saturday, May 2 and Sunday, May 3.

This year marks 25 years of gathering insights that help parishes and dioceses understand participation over time, respond to changing needs and plan with confidence.

Centre director Dr Trudy Dantis encouraged all parishes and dioceses to take part.

"The National Count is a simple but powerful way for parishes to contribute to a national picture of Catholic life in Australia," Dr Dantis said.

"The count will be conducted over the first four consecutive Sundays (and Saturday evenings) in May."

The National Count is conducted in the same year as the Australian Census (to be held on August 11) enabling comparisons of broad participation trends across different data sources where appropriate.

As preparations continue, researchers have welcomed a range of practical questions from parishes keen to get their details right.

One common question related to whether infants should be included.

"As this is a visible head count, all children present at the service are included," Dr Dantis said.

"That includes babes in arms, toddlers, teenagers, adults, celebrants, acolytes, deacons and anyone else present at the service."

Another question concerned whether First Communion services should be included in the count.

“The rule of thumb is whether the service fulfils the Sunday obligation for the people attending,” Dr Dantis said.

“If it does, it should be included in the count, with some brief details noted in the ‘special events’ section.”

As occurred at the previous count in 2021, parishes will be asked to provide overall estimates of the age and sex profile of attendees and to report the number of online ‘views’ for streamed Masses or other Sunday assemblies.

Where requesting this information may be sensitive, counters are asked to use the least intrusive approach and provide best-estimate totals by age band. Parishes may also offer an optional, anonymous way for attendees to indicate their age group (for example, by placing a token or slip in a clearly labelled box on entry).

According to the 2021 National Count, about 8.2 per cent of Australia’s Catholic population, or 417,300 people, attended Mass on a typical weekend in May.

Most of those attended Mass in a parish, but the figure also included people attending Mass in non-parish centres, such as migrant centres, hospitals, jails, boarding schools, and some who attended an assembly in the absence of a priest.

Counting over four Sundays ensures that fortnightly and monthly Masses are not overlooked. This is particularly important for many country towns and migrant communities.

For more information visit the [National Centre for Pastoral Research](#) website.

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