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# **NCLS 2001 results for the Catholic Church in Australia**

## **Connections for Life Profile**

This report has been prepared by the Pastoral Projects Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference using the data, methodology and report templates of NCLS Research. NCLS Research is a joint project of the Uniting Church Board of Mission (NSW), ANGLICARE (NSW) and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

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## Connections for Life Profile

This Connections for Life Profile presents results organised around 12 *core qualities* of church life. For further details see Kaldor, P., Castle, K., Dixon, R. and Brookes, N. (2002), *Connections for Life: Core Qualities to Foster in Your Church*, Openbook Publishers, Adelaide or go to [www.ncls.org.au](http://www.ncls.org.au) and then select 'Research', then 'Healthy Churches'.



### The twelve core qualities

#### Faith and Worship

1. An alive and growing faith
2. Vital and nurturing worship

#### Our Life Together

3. Growth in belonging and involvement
4. An active concern for those on the fringe of church life
5. Care for young people

#### Community Connections

6. A focus beyond ourselves
7. Serving the wider community
8. Discussing faith and inviting others to church
9. Integrating newcomers

#### Vision and Purpose

10. A clear owned vision for the future
11. Openness to new possibilities
12. Empowering and inspiring leadership

The following pages provide detailed statistics for each of the 12 core qualities. Where possible, a comparison is provided with results from the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS).

More than 78,000 Mass attenders in a national random sample of 255 parishes completed an NCLS questionnaire in 2001. A number of different versions of the questionnaire were distributed to attenders in each parish, with a little over two-thirds completing Questionnaire A, a version which focussed on parish participation. Most of the results in this report are based on questions which appeared in Questionnaire A and therefore were answered by a very large national sample of Mass attenders. A few questions that only appeared in versions completed by smaller proportions of attenders are indicated in the text.

The results for Catholics are placed alongside those of Anglicans and Protestants treated as a single group. However, it should be noted that Anglicans and Protestants, and even respondents from different Protestant denominations, did not always answer questions in similar ways. Comparisons in this report between Catholics, on the one hand, and Anglicans and Protestants, on the other, should therefore be seen merely as a very rough indication of how the different traditions responded to the various questions. For a more detailed account of denominational comparisons, refer to *Initial Impressions 2001*, by John Bellamy, Peter Kaldor and the NCLS Team, which is available from [www.ncls.org.au](http://www.ncls.org.au).

Parishes participating in the survey were given a *summary score* between 0 and 10 for each core quality, based on all or a selection of the statistics relating to core quality. These scores have not been aggregated to national level for inclusion here.

#### Explanation of symbols used in the tables

- A dash indicates that no 1996 figure can be provided because the question was not included in the CCLS
- \* An asterisk indicates that related data do exist, but that the wording of the questions or the structure of the responses mean that results are not easily compared.



**An alive and growing faith**

*First of all, I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness. (Pope John Paul II: Novo Millennio Ineunte, n.30)*

Being a vital parish involves more than simply having large attendances at Mass. It also means promoting growth in faith, in holiness. This can happen through the liturgy, both in the way it is celebrated and through the homily and prayers, but also through adult faith education activities, prayer groups and service groups such as the St Vincent de Paul Society. Above all, training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished in the art of prayer (Novo Millennio Ineunte, n.32).

NCLS 2001 invited attenders to give a self-assessment of their own growth in faith over the last year. Around 39 per cent of all Catholic attenders said they had experienced much growth in faith over the previous year. Fewer than half of these (17% of the total) attributed their growth to their parish, and the same percentage (17%) said their growth in faith was a result of their own private activity. Five per cent said it occurred through involvement with other groups or churches, which could include deanery or diocesan programs, or in the case of teenage attenders, their Catholic school. A further 41 per cent of attenders said that they experienced some growth in their faith, while 20 per cent said there had been no real growth.

Across all the denominations taking part in the NCLS, Catholics were the least likely to say they had experienced much growth in their faith over the previous twelve months. Catholic attenders, however, were among those most likely to feel they had grown a great deal in their faith through private study or reflection.

A further question in the survey asked attenders how important God is for them. Forty-six per cent of Catholic attenders said God is the most important reality in their lives, and another 34 per cent said God is more important than almost anything else.

**Attenders' growth in faith**

	<b>Catholics</b>		<b>Anglicans &amp; Protestants</b>
	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2001</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Attenders' growth in faith</b>			
Experienced much growth in their faith over the last year	30	39	47
Feel such growth has been mainly through our parish	15	17	28
<b>Importance of God</b>			
See God as the most important reality in their life	47	46	57
<b>Private devotional activity</b>			
Spend time in private devotion at least a few times a week	63	61	73
<b>Moment of decisive faith commitment or conversion</b>			
Experienced a moment of decisive faith commitment in the last five years	3	3	4
Always had faith, or came to faith gradually	81	78	61
<b>Spiritual needs being met at this parish</b>			
Strongly agree their spiritual needs are met at this parish	*	28	35



**Vital and nurturing worship**

*Our Christian communities must become genuine 'schools' of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly 'falls in love'. (Pope John Paul II: Novo Millennio Ineunte, n.33)*

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. Some years ago the American bishops warned us that 'Good worship nourishes and strengthens faith, while poor liturgy weakens and destroys it'. How do Australian Mass attenders experience liturgy?

**Attenders' experience of church services (usually or always)**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
A sense of God's presence	-	75	74
Growth and understanding of God	-	61	73
Joy	-	56	67
A sense of fulfilling an obligation	-	71	53
Inspiration	-	47	61
Spontaneity	-	22	28
Awe or mystery	-	22	21
Boredom	-	7	4
Frustration	-	6	5

**Attenders' views on the preaching**

Strongly agree the preaching is very helpful in everyday life	19	26	38
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Liturgy is often more formal and traditional than many younger attenders would prefer. NCLS research among Anglicans and Protestants shows that congregations making use of contemporary styles of worship and music are more likely to be attractive to those under 50 years of age and to non-churchgoers.

**Attenders' preferences regarding music at church**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
Prefer <u>traditional</u> songs and music - all attenders	-	74	56
- attenders aged 15 - 29 years	-	53	20
- attenders aged 30 - 59 years	-	70	45
- attenders aged 60 years or over	-	85	85
Prefer <u>contemporary</u> songs and music - all attenders	-	36	79
- attenders aged 15 - 29 years	-	41	87
- attenders aged 30 - 59 years	-	44	87
- attenders aged 60 years or over	-	23	67



**Growth in belonging and involvement**

*[The Church] is the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, the community of brotherly love, and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love. (Pope Paul VI. Evangelii Nuntiandi, n.15)*

A strong sense of belonging and high levels of involvement in parish life are vital for the development of a strong parish community. Many Catholics have a deep sense of attachment to their parish.

Previous research among Anglicans and Protestants shows that a sense of belonging is strongly related to other aspects of church life. These include growth in faith, a sense that the congregation has a clear sense of direction and vision, the presence of close friends in the congregation and satisfaction with worship. Preliminary examination of NCLS 2001 results suggests that these findings are also true for Catholic parishes.

**Attenders' sense of belonging**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
Strong and growing sense of belonging	35	39	55
Strong and stable sense of belonging	27	29	24
Strong but declining sense of belonging	8	9	8
Don't feel that they belong, as they are new in the parish	5	6	4
Don't feel that they belong and wish they did	4	3	2
Don't feel that they belong, but are happy to be on the fringe	16	11	4
Don't know	5	4	2

Positive, enthusiastic involvement is a sign that a parish is assisting attenders to grow in faith and that they find it worthwhile investing time and energy. On the other hand, high levels of attenders who say they are now less involved than they used to be could be a warning sign that things are not as they should be.

**Attenders' involvement with our parish**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
<b>Increasing or decreasing involvement</b>			
Participate <u>more</u> regularly now than two years ago	-	17	31
Participate <u>less</u> regularly now than two years ago	-	14	13
<b>Frequency of attendance at church services <u>in this parish</u></b>			
Attend weekly or more often	-	79	83
<b>Involvement in group activities</b>			
Regularly involved in small sharing, study or prayer groups	17	11	43
Regularly involved in clubs, social groups or other types of groups	11	19	44



An active concern for those on the fringe of church life

*While on the one hand people seem to be pursuing material prosperity and to be sinking ever deeper into consumerism and materialism, on the other hand we are witnessing a desperate search for meaning, the need for an inner life, and a desire to learn new forms and methods of meditation and prayer. (Pope John Paul II. Novo Millennio Ineunte, n.29)*

In a Catholic parish, those on the fringe of church life can include people who go to Mass each week but who take no other part in parish life, as well as those who attend less than weekly and those who are new to the parish and are still learning to feel at home there. It is important to recognise that people can be on the fringe of church life for different reasons. Some prefer a low level of involvement with their parish and resist any attempts to involve them more. Others may be in the process of decreasing their involvement due to infirmity, disillusionment with the Church, or time pressures. Still others may be looking for opportunities to become more involved but find it difficult to do so. Those on the fringe are often not heard. It is important for the parish to strengthen relations with them and listen to their needs.

While the proportion of Catholics who go to Mass on a regular but less than weekly basis is still small (only three or four per cent of all Catholics), many observers suggest that their number is growing, and that it may become a common or even dominant pattern among younger attenders.

The factors set out below are important to this core quality. How are new arrivals welcomed? How are occasional attenders encouraged to take a more active part in parish life?

Attenders' concern for those on the fringe

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
<b>Welcoming new attenders</b>			
Always seek out and welcome new arrivals	-	9	14
Mostly seek out new arrivals	-	10	25
Sometimes seek out new arrivals	-	30	39
Rarely or never seek out new arrivals	-	47	19
Not applicable (no new arrivals here)	-	5	3

Not all new arrivals in parishes have the same needs. Most have come from another Catholic parish, and already know the ropes of church life and are clear in their expectations of a parish. Welcoming and including such new arrivals is quite different from what is required for newcomers without a church background, who are tentatively experiencing church life for the first time.

When older Catholics move parishes, it is probably not for the first time. In contrast, for young adults going to a new parish, it may be their first experience of becoming involved in a parish other than the one in which they grew up. For this reason, it is even more important that they experience a sense of welcome and hospitality that will encourage them to make new friendships and draw them into the life of the parish.



Care for young people

*We must learn to interpret that heartening response [the generous availability of young people] by investing that enthusiasm like a new talent (cf. Mt 25:15) which the Lord has put into our hands so that we can make it yield a rich return. (Pope John Paul II. Novo Millennio Ineunte, n.40)*

The importance of specialised ministries for young people has long been recognised. Family and youth Masses and children’s liturgies have been provided in many parishes in an attempt to meet the special needs of children, youth and young adults. Antioch groups and youth groups provide social activities and forums for discussion for young people. These days, however, for a variety of reasons, there are many parishes where there is little on offer to young people.

Children are a vital part of our parishes. In many ways, they are our future. Over the last few decades many young people have drifted away from involvement, feeling that faith and how it is expressed had little relevance to their lives. Now, teenagers and those in their twenties are severely under represented in church life.

Attendees were asked how satisfied they were with what is offered at their parish for children, youth and young adults. The results below show the proportion who were very satisfied with what is offered. Other responses not shown include: being satisfied with what is offered; being dissatisfied; being unsure; or having no opinion.

Attendees' overall satisfaction with what is offered for young people

	All Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996	2001	2001
	%	%	%
Very satisfied with what is offered for <u>children</u> (under 12)	-	22	36
Very satisfied with what is offered for <u>youth</u> (12-18)	-	12	26
Very satisfied with what is offered for <u>young adults</u> (19-25)	-	11	20

*In 1996, 8 per cent said they were very satisfied with what is offered for children and youth*

Satisfaction among young attendees

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996	2001	2001
	%	%	%
15 - 18 year olds very satisfied with what is offered for 12 to 18 year olds	-	12	35
19 - 25 year olds very satisfied with what is offered for 19 to 25 year olds	-	10	24

Retention of children and young adults

The Survey also asked parents whether their children still living at home attend their parish, attend elsewhere, or do not attend anywhere.

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996	2001	2001
	%	%	%
Attendees' children (still living at home) who also attend our parish:			
- aged 9 years and under	-	78	88
- aged 10 - 14 years	-	82	83
- aged 15 years and over	-	43	47



**A focus beyond ourselves**

*This community realizes that it is truly linked with the human race and its history by the deepest of bonds. (Second Vatican Council. Gaudium et Spes, n.1)*

Australia is a nation made up of many different types of communities; each with its own unique characteristics, comprised of people from different social backgrounds and at different stages of life. A foundational pre-requisite for connecting with the wider community is to develop a focus beyond ourselves, an attitude that sees the importance of connecting our life-giving faith with the contemporary cultures and realities around us.

A focus beyond ourselves may encourage us to take new initiatives and to build bridges with those for whom we have a concern. It may help us to develop new ways of being a community of faith and to incorporate people with different ways of expressing their faith. We may, for example, need to shape our worship life to provide what is most helpful to those with whom we seek to connect, or to develop additional services or groups. It may require attenders and leaders to have an active concern for those on the fringes of church life.

What is it that attenders most value about their church involvement? NCLS 2001 asked attenders to nominate up to three aspects of church life that they most value from a list of 13 possibilities.

Aspects associated with church services were the ones most commonly selected. Among attenders of all denominations, sharing the Eucharist or receiving Holy Communion was the most popular option (49%), followed by Bible teaching and preaching (33%). Traditional worship (28%), contemporary worship (21%) and practical care for one another (20%) were the next most valued aspects. By comparison, more externally focused aspects, such as wider community care (12%) and reaching the unchurched (12%), were valued by a narrower range of attenders.

For Catholics around Australia, celebrating the Eucharist and receiving Holy Communion was by far the most valued aspect of parish life (62%), followed by a traditional style of worship and preaching (28% and 25% respectively). Because attenders could only choose a maximum of three things they valued most, high scores on some aspects of parish life necessarily meant that other aspects would receive low scores. Note that this doesn't necessarily mean that things like wider community care and social activities were not valued, only that they were less valued than some other aspects.

**Our parish's concern for the wider community**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
<b>Focus on serving the wider community</b>			
Strongly agree our parish is focussed on serving the wider community	-	20	27
<b>Values placed on community care and outreach</b>			
Attenders who most value their parish's:			
- wider community care or social justice emphasis	*	13	12
- concern to reach those who do not attend church	*	7	17



**Serving the wider community**

*Now is the time for a new 'creativity' in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by 'getting close' to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters. We must therefore ensure that in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the Kingdom? (Pope John Paul II. Novo Millennio Ineunte, n.50)*

More than a third of all church attenders (38%) are involved in social service groups or activities, representing a large, mostly voluntary, workforce making a significant contribution to the wider Australian society. Such activities here include community service and social justice or welfare activities. Other forms of voluntary activity are not included here.

Social service activities run by a parish have been termed 'church-based' activities. Other activities of this kind run by groups not connected to the attender's own parish have been termed 'community-based' activities. Overall, attenders are more likely to be involved in community-based activities.

This kind of involvement is strongly linked to age. Among Catholic attenders, involvement in community-based activities ranges from 15 per cent of 15–29 year olds to 25 per cent of attenders over 60 years of age. Similarly, seven per cent of 15-19 year olds are involved in church-based activities compared to 19 per cent of those aged 60 or more.

Church attenders also make a significant contribution through more informal means, as shown in the table below. The impact of many ordinary church attenders in bringing hope or comfort in the wider community should not be underestimated.

**Attenders' involvement in community service groups**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
<b>Involvement in church-based activities</b>			
Community service, social or welfare activities connected to our parish	19	14	25
<b>Involved in community-based activities</b>			
Community service or welfare groups not connected to our parish	21	17	27
Social action groups not connected to our parish	7	5	6
<b>Involved in any of the above activities</b>	32	30	44

**How attenders helped others in the last 12 months**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
Lent money to someone outside family	-	22	25
Cared for someone who was very sick	-	23	24
Helped someone through a personal crisis (not sickness)	-	33	41
Visited someone in hospital	-	48	57
Gave possessions to someone in need	-	32	39
Tried to stop someone abusing alcohol or drugs	-	12	16
Donated money to a charity	-	71	76
Contacted an MP or councillor about a public issue	-	11	15
<b>Did one or more of the above activities</b>	-	<b>91</b>	<b>95</b>



**Discussing faith & inviting others to church**

*It is unthinkable that people should accept the Word and give themselves to the kingdom without becoming people who bear witness to it and proclaim it in their turn. (Pope Paul VI. Evangelii Nuntiandi, n.24)*

Christians are often asked to talk about their faith. For some, this isn't a problem; others prefer not to talk about their faith or find it difficult to do so. Many adults who join a church do so as a result of a personal invitation. Yet many, perhaps most, Catholic parishes don't seem to have a culture of inviting people to church.

Younger attenders are more likely to say that they find it hard to share their faith in ordinary language, whereas older attenders are more likely to say that they don't like to talk about their faith and that their life and actions are sufficient.

Attenders were also asked if they would be prepared to invite to their church any friends or relatives who currently don't attend anywhere. About 37 per cent of all attenders say they would be prepared to invite someone to their church and had done so in the past year, and a further 36 per cent would be prepared to invite someone but had not done so in the past twelve months.

Some care needs to be taken in interpreting these results, as it is likely that a majority of Anglican and Protestant attenders understand questions about talking about faith and inviting others to church as a measure of their commitment to evangelism. Catholic attenders, on the other hand, are far less likely to attach such a meaning to these items, but rather to interpret the first as a merely private measure of their own level of comfort in talking about their religious faith and the second as a matter of hospitality. In other words, the questions may mean very different things to different groups.

**Attenders' discussing their faith with others**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
<b>Participation in parish outreach activities</b>			
Involved in evangelisation or outreach activities of our parish	9	6	24
<b>Attenders' readiness to discuss faith with others</b>			
Have no faith	2	1	1
Do not like to talk about faith: life & actions sufficient	16	23	11
Find it hard to talk about their faith in ordinary language	19	13	20
Mostly feel at ease talking about their faith if it comes up	51	52	50
Look for opportunities to talk about their faith	12	11	18
<b>Attenders discussing faith at home</b>			
Frequently talk about their faith with members of their household	-	32	52

**Attenders' attitude to inviting others to church**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
Have invited someone to church here in the last year	26	30	44
Prepared to invite others, but have not done so in the last year	37	33	39
Not prepared to invite others	22	20	8
Don't know	15	17	9



**Integrating newcomers**

*In Jesus, God came seeking human hospitality. This is why he makes the willingness to welcome others in love a characteristic virtue of believers... In sending his disciples out on mission, Jesus makes the hospitality they will enjoy an act that concerns him personally: 'He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the Father who sent me' (Mt. 10:40). (Message of Pope John Paul II for World Migration Day 2000.)*

People who have belonged to their parish for more than five years accounted for 67 per cent of all Catholic attenders in the survey. The vast majority of the more recent arrivals were made up of visitors, mostly from other parishes (7%), and 'transfers' who had come from another Catholic parish within the previous five years (22%). Only four per cent were new to church life, or were returning after a long absence, and only one per cent were previously attending a church of a different denomination.

These figures suggest that in parishes where attendance is increasing, the growth is caused by people moving to those parishes from another. Only a tiny proportion of attendance growth can be attributed to the process of previously uninvolved people joining parishes as newcomers.

In recent times, many Anglican and Protestant attenders have selected the church they want to attend on the basis of its teaching, styles of worship, activities for children, theological emphasis and so on. This has resulted in large numbers of attenders switching between denominations. In a similar way, it has become common among Catholics, at least in the cities, to look for a parish which best suits their liturgical preferences and theological outlook, even if this means travelling some distance to attend Mass.

**Attenders' arriving in the last five years**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996	2001	2001
	%	%	%
Visitors from another church or parish	9	6	2
Visitors not regularly attending elsewhere	0	1	1
Newcomers returning to church after a long absence	1	2	6
Newcomers who had never regularly attended church	1	2	4
Switchers coming from another denomination	1	1	13
Transfers coming from within the same denomination	17	22	13
Attended our parish for more than five years	71	67	61

Some parishes have ceased to draw in new people and have become closed systems. What are the various ways that people join Catholic parishes? Do we pay sufficient attention to encouraging and welcoming newcomers who have joined through any of these ways?

**Length of attendance**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996	2001	2001
	%	%	%
Visitors	9	7	3
Less than 1 year	6	7	10
1 - 2 years	8	8	11
3 - 5 years	12	12	16
6 - 10 years	14	16	15
11 - 20 years	18	20	17
Over 20 years	31	31	28



**A clear owned vision for the future**

*Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. (Second Vatican Council. Gaudium et spes, n.3)*

A characteristic of vital congregations and parishes is that they have a clear vision for the future to which attenders are committed. NCLS research has shown that Anglican and Protestant congregations with such a vision are more likely to be drawing in newcomers without a church background, to be involved in wider community activities, to have high levels of attenders sharing and discussing faith with others, and to have an outward focus. They are also more likely to have attenders who feel they are growing in their faith and in their sense of belonging.

Having a vision that is ‘owned’ by attenders is easier said than done, judging from results from NCLS 2001. Overall, only half of all Catholic attenders (49%) perceive that their parish does have a clear vision, goals or direction. Moreover, less than a third of these (18% of the total) say that they are strongly committed to this vision. A further 16 per cent indicate that they are partly committed to it, and 14 per cent are not committed to it at all. This situation provides a significant challenge for parish leaders as they seek to develop and implement a pastoral plan for their parish.

**Does our parish have a vision, goals or direction for the future?**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
Attenders who see a clear vision for the future and are:			
- strongly committed to it	17	18	38
- only partly committed to it	14	16	22
- not committed to it	13	15	7
Attenders who see ideas, but no clear vision, goals or direction	17	17	20
Attenders who are not aware of a clear vision, goals or direction	38	35	13

NCLS research points to the importance of a congregation's purpose and direction being owned by attenders. This requires leadership that creates an environment where attenders feel valued and empowered, as well as being inspired by the directions that are being developed.



**Openness to new possibilities**

*It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified — goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources — which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. (Pope John Paul II. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n.29)*

Jesus used the analogy that new wine should not be poured into old wineskins, because the wine will burst the skins and both the wine and skins will be ruined. Instead, new wine should be poured into fresh wineskins (Mark 2:22). A similar analogy can be made about parishes at a time when the gaps between Church and society seems so pronounced. Parishes need to be open to new possibilities as they develop and implement their pastoral plan.

Pastoral planning implies an openness to change: there is no need to plan if nothing ever changes. As Pope John Paul has reminded us, it is 'not a matter of inventing a "new programme". The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever.' But, 'for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication', the program must take account of the time and culture of the people to whom it is proclaimed (*Novo Millennio Ineunte* , n.29).

Parishes are in a time of major transition: new models and mindsets are needed to respond to new realities. Seeking to relate to the communities of which we are a part may involve taking some risks in developing new initiatives. By doing so, we may discover more fully how to be the Body of Christ in our particular community. NCLS 2001 asked attenders whether they felt that their parish is always ready to try something new. Around 62 per cent of Catholic attenders agreed that it is, 30 per cent were neutral or unsure, and eight per cent disagreed.

Many attenders in Catholic parishes across Australia were concerned about the future of their parish, with 17 per cent believing that their parish needed to rethink where it is heading, four per cent saying the future was very unclear or doubtful, and seven per cent saying there was a need to go back to the way things were done in the past. Another 21 per cent chose 'Did not know' in response to the question about the future direction of the parish. The remaining 40 per cent said the parish was currently either planning or implementing new directions.

**Attenders' views about the future directions of their parish**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
<b>Openness to new possibilities</b>			
Strongly agree our parish is always ready to try something new	-	13	14
Agree our parish is always ready to try something new	-	49	50
Unsure if our parish is always ready to try something new	-	30	26
Disagree that our parish is always ready to try something new	-	7	10
Strongly disagree our parish is always ready to try something new	-	1	1
<b>Future directions of our parish</b>			
We need to go back to way things were done in the past	*	7	3
We are faithfully maintaining past directions	*	12	10
New directions are currently being decided	*	17	22
New directions are currently being implemented	*	23	39
New directions need to be re-thought	*	17	12
The future is very unclear or doubtful	*	4	3
Don't know	*	21	12



**Empowering and inspiring leadership**

*Saint Paulinus of Nola urges: "Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes". (Quoted by Pope John Paul II in Novo Millennio Ineunte, n.45)*

What styles of parish leadership are most effective in parishes today? NCLS 2001 asked attenders several questions about the leadership in their parish. They were asked about the extent to which leaders listened to their ideas, and the extent to which leaders put a priority on assisting them to discover and use their gifts and skills. They were also asked about the style of leadership of their parish priest or other pastoral leader.

NCLS research highlights the importance of leaders giving priority to the development of attenders' gifts and skills, listening seriously to attenders' ideas and perspectives, modelling an outward focus in carrying out roles, and inspiring people to take action. These are some aspects that go together to make empowering leadership.

Many commentators on church life recognise the importance of attenders discovering their gifts for ministry. Not all gifts and skills are present in one person alone. Effective leaders are able to develop an accurate picture of their own skill areas and look for others who can exercise their own gifts in a complimentary way alongside senior leadership.

In response to the question about style of leadership, two-fifths of all Catholic attenders (39%) said their parish priest (or pastoral leader, in those parishes where there is no resident parish priest) is someone who inspires people to take action. Another fifth (19%) said their parish priest or pastoral leader acts on goals that the people have been involved in setting, and 15 per cent described their leader as someone who tends to take charge. Only five per cent said that most of the initiative in the parish comes from the people, but almost a quarter (23%) said they don't know.

Sixty-four per cent of Catholic attenders say that their parish priest or appointed pastoral leader takes attenders' ideas into account, at least to some extent. As well, 44 per cent say their parish's leaders encourage them to find and use their gifts and skills in the parish, at least to some extent.

**Attenders' views about leadership in our parish**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
<b>Encouragement of attenders' gifts and skills</b>			
Leaders put a priority on attenders' gifts and skills, to a great extent	38	17	22
Leaders put a priority on attenders' gifts and skills, to some extent	26	27	37
<b>Listening to attenders' ideas</b>			
Senior leader takes into account attenders' ideas to a great extent	44	38	49
Senior leader takes into account attenders' ideas to some extent	22	26	30

**Style of leadership of the senior leader at our parish**

	Catholics		Anglicans & Protestants
	1996 %	2001 %	2001 %
Leader tends to take charge	13	15	12
Leader inspires people to take action	31	39	52
Leader acts on goals that people have been involved in setting	30	19	20
Leadership where people start most things	12	5	4
Don't know	14	23	12