



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Media Council

MEDIA RELEASE

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Catholic media provides different viewpoint and nourishes faith: survey

The first comprehensive survey of people's experience of the Catholic media landscape in Australia has revealed that users value Catholic media for the different perspective it provides and, in most cases, it has played a role in their personal faith development.

The Australian Catholic Media User Survey was conducted online by the Australian Catholic Media Council (ACMC) from late September to the end of November 2017. It received more than 1,000 responses.

The survey mainly reached those who are highly engaged with Church life and in the older age groups, which reflects the Mass-going profile in Australia.

"This affirms that Church-going Catholics are interested in accessing Catholic media, but it also presents an important opportunity to find new strategies to reach out to those people not in the pews, especially young people," said ACMC chair Debra Vermeer.

When it comes to what kinds of Australian Catholic media people are using, the humble parish newsletter was the big winner, with 78 per cent of respondents saying they use it.

This was followed by websites (59 per cent), email newsletters or eNews (54 per cent), Facebook (44 per cent) and then print newspapers (39 per cent), print magazines (38 per cent) and online newspapers (37 per cent) and magazines (31 per cent), and online-only publications (32 per cent). Television (16 per cent), radio (12 per cent), podcasts (14 per cent) and social media (other than Facebook) lagged behind.

Asked to nominate what other forms of Catholic media they use, people responded with apps, YouTube, CDs and DVDs, online discussion forums, Catholic cable TV, journals and the Bible.

Most respondents said they use Australian Catholic media daily (41 per cent) or a few times a week (23 per cent), with a reasonable number saying they use it several times a day (13 per cent).

The survey showed people primarily value their Catholic media because it gives a Catholic perspective (67 per cent) and it provides local community/diocesan news (60 per cent). Most said they find it spiritually nourishing (62 per cent) and almost 70 per cent of respondents said it provides something that they don't get elsewhere in Church life.

Most said it had played either a significant role (23 per cent) or at least some role (59 per cent) in their personal faith development and the majority of respondents said the Australian Catholic media plays a significant role in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ (7 on a scale of 1-10).

In terms of opportunities for growth, respondents were seeking more open debate and analysis (53 per cent) in Catholic media and there was a thirst for more spirituality (48 per cent).

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Gavin Abraham • Media & Communications Director • Australian Catholic Bishop Conference
0408 825 788 • media@catholic.org.au

People were also seeking higher quality (35 per cent), more teaching from Bishops (30 per cent), more news (29 per cent), more content in line with Church teaching (26 per cent), more features (24 per cent) and more social media (21 per cent).

In the comments, the key themes that emerged were that people wanted more availability of Catholic media, especially at parish level. There was an even split over whether people wanted more Church teaching and dogma or more open discussion and debate, and there was also a strong impulse to pursue professional social media strategy.

“The survey provided strong affirmation for the place of Catholic media in people’s lives and in the life of the Church,” Mrs Vermeer said.

“It found that Catholic media both informs with a uniquely Catholic perspective and nourishes in faith life.

“Importantly, many people said it provides a broader perspective on faith life than is available through the parish and thus connects people to the bigger faith community, whether at a diocesan, national or global level.”

She said the challenges are to keep encouraging quality in content and production, and to work on social media strategy to engage the young and those not in the pews.

Mrs Vermeer said there was a strong call from the survey to make people more aware of the different kinds of Catholic media available and to provide easy access to it, especially at parish level.

“The ACMC will use the results of the survey to form advice for the Australian Bishops, including a proposal to establish a central listing of Catholic media outlets, as well as promoting regular opportunities for further professional development for those working in Catholic media,” she said.

- *The results of the survey will be further unpacked at an upcoming briefing for Catholic media professionals, as well as at the Australian Catholic Communications Congress, to be held in Brisbane from September 5-7.*

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