

Catholics

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The Pacific Islands

Christian evangelisation in the Pacific began during the period of Iberian expansion, when in 1668 Jesuit priests and brothers came from the Philippines to Guam, in the Mariana Islands – then known as the Ladrões (Thieves) Islands. The missionaries accompanied a military garrison intended to protect Spanish trade. Growth of the Catholic Church in the region in the nineteenth century closely followed colonial expansion there. In Micronesia, missionary influence depended very much on the colonial interests of several nations. On the Micronesian island of Yap, Spanish Jesuit missionaries came in 1710 and again in 1731, at a time when Spain controlled shipping in the region. Their mission was interrupted when the missionaries were killed. A century and a half later, in 1899, the Spanish–American war ended with Spain selling the Caroline Islands and Mariana Islands to Germany. With the exit of the Spanish, German missionaries began again the evangelisation of Yap. In 1921, after the First World War, Spanish Jesuits replaced the German Capuchin missionaries, only to be replaced themselves after the Second World War by American Jesuits. Each change of political control brought about a change in church personnel, with their different approaches and varied access to resources.

Britain became influential throughout Polynesia following the three exploratory voyages of Captain James Cook between 1768 and 1779. A British colony was established in Fiji in 1872. The Gilbert and Ellice Islands were administered as a British protectorate from 1892 and Niue from 1900. However, Catholic missionaries to the South Pacific in the nineteenth century were predominantly French. France raised its flag on New Caledonia in 1844 and again in 1854, turning it into a penal colony from the 1860s to the end of the transportations in 1897. With the declaration of a protectorate over Tahiti in 1842, France regarded the entire Marquesas Islands as French. These political moves opened the way for evangelisation by Catholic missionaries, particularly those belonging to the Society of Mary, commonly known as Marists. Jean-Baptiste Pompallier played a key role in founding the Catholic Church in the South Pacific. He was appointed Vicar Apostolic of the new Vicariate of Western Oceania in 1836 by Pope Gregory XVI. Pompallier initially intended to visit the Tahiti and

Tonga islands and then go to New Guinea. Later he changed his plans, starting his mission in New Zealand instead.

After the Second World War, the position of the Catholic Church in many parts of the Pacific was strongly influenced by the movement from colonialism to independence and the establishment of the local church. France was engaged in nuclear testing in the Pacific and was insisting that its colonies remain as overseas French territories. Whereas a century before, links with Western powers, particularly France, had proved to be advantageous in forcing recognition of freedom of religion, now, in the postcolonial era, the church found that links to Western powers provoked suspicion on the part of Indigenous people.

Currently, the Catholic Church serves throughout Oceania. The table on the following page shows how the Catholic population varies, with the church being a major presence in a few countries, such as Guam and parts of French Polynesia – for example, Wallis and Futuna; a major player in the Federated States of Micronesia, the Northern Mariana Islands and parts of French Polynesia and Papua New Guinea (PNG); and very much in the minority in countries such as Tuvalu and in some provinces of PNG.

Typically, religiosity is an orthodox and often-taken-for-granted component of Pacific identity and, by extension, public life. Papua New Guinean Catholic philosopher and former cabinet minister Bernard Narokobi, author of the book *The Melanesian Way* (published by the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies in 1983), argues that differentiation between religious and non-religious experiences is foreign to many people of the Pacific, who view the world as an integrated whole. Thus, many Pacific countries have not gone through the experience of modernity – distinguishing sacred and secular – that has shaped modern European-oriented cultures and Christian faith. While in theory there might be a separation of church and state, in practice that is far from the case. In Papua New Guinea, as in many Pacific nations, the secular has a negative connotation and religious language is notable in public discourse. The public role of the church in Melanesia, in a country such as Papua New Guinea, is most probably aided by the Catholic Church's important role as a primary provider of more than a third of the educational and health facilities in the country, and the exclusive provider in many isolated rural areas.

Theologians worldwide have developed different approaches to interpreting their context. Where Classical Western theology often employs rational discourse based on revealed truth, Indigenous theologies in Oceania tend to look to human experiences as the locus for theology, and 'life' as their own distinctive key to meaning. The concept can have a range of meanings, from the cosmic concept of life as found in primal religions to the struggle for life in the urban and semi-urban settlements of the

Archdioceses and dioceses in Oceania

	(Arch)diocese	State/country	Catholic population (2017)	% of total population
Micronesia	Agaña	Guam	140,593	85.0
	Caroline Islands	Federated States of Micronesia	66,339	52.2
	Chalan Kanoa	Northern Mariana Islands	71,850	59.8
	Marshall Islands (Prefecture Apostolic)	Marshall Islands	5,100	9.7
Polynesia	Suva	Fiji	63,762	7.3
	Rarotonga	Cook Islands	2,255	19.0
	Tarawa & Nauru	Kiribati and Nauru	68,406	54.0
	Funafuti (Mission Sui Iuris)	Tuvalu	110	1.0
	Tonga & Niue	Tonga and Niue	14,691	14.2
	Sāmoa-Apia	Sāmoa	31,221	16.6
	Sāmoa-Pago Pago	American Sāmoa	12,600	20.7
	Tokelau (Mission Sui Iuris)	Tokelau	535	38.5
	Papeete	French Polynesia	105,780	38.2
	Taiohae ou Tefenuaenata	French Polynesia	8,997	90.1
	Nouméa	New Caledonia	132,015	48.7
	Port Vila	Vanuatu	34,320	12.0
	Wallis and Futuna	Wallis and Futuna	10,450	95.4
Melanesia	Honiara	Solomon Islands	61,400	22.2
	Auki	Solomon Islands	45,600	28.4
	Gizo	Solomon Islands	15,214	11.2
	Port Moresby	Papua New Guinea (PNG)	207,623	31.7
	Alotau-Sideia	PNG	54,795	17.3
	Bereina	PNG	94,000	68.2
	Daru-Kiunga	PNG	48,352	23.1
	Kerema	PNG	26,700	16.4
	Madang	PNG	180,224	34.6
	Lae	PNG	35,600	5.2
	Aitape	PNG	153,460	75.4
	Vanimo	PNG	38,476	33.7
	Wewak	PNG	215,700	48.4
	Mount Hagen	PNG	195,617	29.7
	Mendi	PNG	77,096	8.6
	Wabag	PNG	75,947	16.7
	Kundiawa	PNG	123,300	31.9
	Goroka	PNG	16,250	2.7
	Rabaul	PNG	354,004	43.9
	Kimbe	PNG	286,720	80.0
	Kavieng	PNG	102,900	52.2
	Bougainville	Autonomous region of PNG	157,000	62.5

regions. The search for the maintenance and celebration of life is present behind almost all efforts in Indigenous theology in Oceania. Aside from Australia and New Zealand, the majority of the population in Oceania are Indigenous people who are guardians of land, forests and one-third of the earth's water. Hence theological issues related to climate change and environmental issues reveal a passion derived from their personal experience and close identity with the natural world.

In November 1998, the Catholic bishops from Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands travelled to Rome to attend the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Oceania. The focus of the synod was the person of Jesus Christ and how to walk his way, tell his truth and live his life. Synods had previously been held for the bishops of Africa, Asia and the America, and a synod for Europe was in the final stages of preparation. However, the synod for Oceania was special in a number of respects. It was the only synod to which all the bishops of the region had been invited, and in fact all except three participated. Most of the bishops already knew one another, many having met at the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania assembly in Auckland in 1994. The impressive opening Mass in St Peter's Basilica included dancing and music from the Pacific, notably Sāmoa. That some Roman officials were rather critical of tattooed Sāmoan men in traditional dress dancing in the Basilica is perhaps symbolic of a cultural gulf, with sights that are quite 'normal' in the Pacific appearing scandalous to some members of the Roman Curia. In his speech at the presentation of *Ecclesia in Oceania*, the papal exhortation following the synod, Cardinal Williams – from New Zealand but with many years of experience in Sāmoa – noted that communion, inculturation and a renewed proclamation of the gospel in ways appropriate for the peoples of Oceania were the key themes and insights that emerged from the 1998 Synod of Bishops for Oceania.

Most governments in the Pacific have adopted neo-liberal economic concepts and terminology, such as 'deregulation' and 'user pays'. Leaders are conscious of being part of global interests, particularly involving the

Catholics in Oceania, 1970

Region	Total population	Christian population	Catholic population	% of region Catholic	% of Christians Catholic
Oceania	19,718,000	18,250,000	4,546,000	23.1%	24.9%
Australia/New Zealand	15,661,000	14,633,000	3,464,000	22.1%	23.7%
Melanesia	3,399,000	2,978,000	855,000	25.1%	28.7%
Micronesia	248,000	237,000	131,000	52.6%	55.1%
Polynesia	410,000	402,000	96,500	23.6%	24.0%
Global total	3,700,578,000	1,229,309,000	658,556,000	17.8%	53.6%

Source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo (eds), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill), accessed January 2020.

USA and China, with some influence from Australia and New Zealand. Migration is an important aspect of life, with more Sāmoans living today in Auckland than in the Sāmoan capital, Apia. The majority of Cook Islanders live permanently in New Zealand. Church leaders are also aware of being part of a global movement of 'born-again' Christians, with increasing cross-national contacts between them and the centres of Evangelicalism in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Churches in the Pacific region are confronted by the attraction of the 'gospel of prosperity' proclaimed by some Pentecostal churches and are challenged to put the Catholic Church's social teaching into practice. In the Pacific, a theology of integral human development was the equivalent of liberation theology.

The Micronesian island states survive on a still widespread subsistence economy centred on fish, coconuts and foreign aid. Melanesia is an international source for timber and minerals. The Polynesian islands are helped by remittances from relatives living abroad and tourism. The growth of tourism and hospitality has meant investment in global alliances with air companies, hotels and tour operators. It has helped expose people to different cultures and to cross-cultural communication. Local specialties are valued in order to establish identities that differentiate them from other tourist destinations. However, this can be at a cost for local people, with the commercialisation of culture leading to undignified ways of seeking a livelihood, such as opening up sacred sites to the public and paid performances of Indigenous rituals.

Where, previously, missionary priests and sisters had come from Europe and other Western countries to the Pacific, now the reverse has been happening, and Pacific Islanders are migrating to so-called developed countries, bringing new life to the church there. In reality there is a noticeable difference now between the life of the church in what at times is a post-Christian reality in Australia and New Zealand, on the one hand, and the raw realities in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the Pacific Islands, on the other. The contrast is apparent in recent effects of and responses to the coronavirus.

Catholics in Oceania, 2020

Region	Total population	Christian population	Catholic population	% of region Catholic	% of Christians Catholic
Oceania	42,384,000	27,606,000	9,690,000	22.9%	35.1%
Australia/New Zealand	30,233,000	16,363,000	6,443,000	21.3%	39.4%
Melanesia	10,909,000	10,069,000	2,724,000	25.0%	27.1%
Micronesia	541,000	501,000	318,000	58.7%	63.5%
Polynesia	701,000	673,000	205,000	29.2%	30.5%
Global total	7,795,482,000	2,518,834,000	1,239,909,000	15.9%	49.2%

Source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo (eds), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill), accessed January 2020.

Australia

The first Catholics arrived and settled in Australia with the First Fleet in 1788. Most of them were Irish convicts; the majority were ordinary criminals and a small number were political rebels. The formal establishment of the Catholic Church in Australia began with the arrival of two chaplains, Fr John Joseph Therry and Fr Philip Connolly, appointed from London in 1820. Although the first Australian bishop – John Bede Polding, appointed in 1842 – was an English Benedictine monk, most of the priests were Irish and tried to create a Catholic model in Australia that was very similar to the Irish one. However, by the 1930s the number of Australian-born priests outnumbered the Irish clergy.

Early Catholic settlers in Australia had little regard for the Aborigines. The first missions, established by Bishop Polding, completely failed. During the nineteenth century, the missionaries wanted to 'civilise' the Aborigines. Unfortunately, we can now see in hindsight that the Catholic Church's methods were intimately linked to European colonialism in Australia. European colonialism eventually caused the Aboriginal people to lose their cultures, languages, rights and land. Polding spoke about the injustices inflicted on the Aborigines by the white man, but many missionaries were clearly aligned with the colonialist power. For example, the church played a shadowy role in the infamous 'Stolen Generations' era of Australia's past by providing homes to Indigenous children taken from families. The 'Stolen Generations' were the children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were removed from their own families by the Australian government and church missions between 1910 and 1970. On 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, on behalf of the Australian people, expressed a national apology in parliament to the Aboriginal peoples for all historical wrongs done to them. It was an act for national reconciliation and had a huge impact on the national consciousness. The Catholic Church has also been working on this national reconciliation and acknowledging its own wrongs in this 'Stolen Generations' affair.

Changes in Catholics in Oceania, 1970–2020, growth rate, % per year

Region	Total population	Christian population	Catholic population
Oceania	1.54%	0.83%	1.53%
Australia/New Zealand	1.32%	0.22%	1.25%
Melanesia	2.36%	2.47%	2.35%
Micronesia	1.57%	1.51%	1.80%
Polynesia	1.08%	1.04%	1.52%
Global total	1.50%	1.45%	1.27%

Source: Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo (eds), *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill), accessed January 2020.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Australian constitution had discriminatory references against the Aboriginal people. An overwhelming 'yes' vote in a 1967 national referendum demanded change in the constitution to recognise and allow the Commonwealth to make laws about Aboriginal Australians and include them in the census. These societal changes and the Second Vatican Council (1962–5) influenced the Catholic Church in Australia. The Second Vatican Council's new missionary approach introduced the concept of inculturation, which affirmed the need to incarnate the gospel in different cultures while appreciating and integrating the values within that culture. With this new approach, Catholic missionaries attempted to adapt to Aboriginal congregations. For example, an experimental Aboriginal Mass was developed that included Indigenous music, dance art and a specially composed Aboriginal Eucharistic Prayer.

Boniface Perdiert was ordained Australia's first Indigenous deacon in 1974 and Pat Dodson was the first ordained Indigenous priest in 1975. However, much remains to be done in this regard. According to the Aboriginal author Graeme Mundine, the history of the Catholic Church in Australia is one of indifference, toward subjects of mission in the past and toward subjects of social justice issues more recently. For Mundine, the fact that Australia has non-Indigenous leadership and no authentic participation of Aboriginal people in their own inculturation process causes deep barriers. That is why the future of Indigenous Catholics is an important challenge for Catholicism in Australia. Indigenous people number 460,000 in Australia and make up 2.4% of the Australian population. In the census of 2016, there were 133,540 Indigenous Catholics.

Pope John Paul II's visit to Australia in 1986 was pivotal in the journey of Indigenous Catholics. His address to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people sparked a recognition of Aboriginal and Islander ministries:

Your Christian faith calls you to become the best kind of Aboriginal people you can be.... Only then will you make your best contribution to all your brothers and sisters in this great nation. You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.

After John Paul II's visit, an Aboriginal Catholic ministry in Melbourne was born, and many Aboriginal Catholic ministries grew in other states and territories. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, an advisory body to the Australian Catholic Bishops on issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics, was founded in 1992. At present there are Aboriginal and Islander ministries in every state

and territory of Australia. In each of these ministries the traditional owners are striving to incorporate the gifts of their culture, rituals and symbols into the liturgy and the life of the church. For example, Aboriginal art and items are being used as altar cloths and vessels. In some communities, rituals such as water blessings and smoke ceremonies are culturally appropriate to incorporate into the Mass.

Vicky Walker Clark, a descendant of the Mutthi Mutthi tribe of south-west New South Wales, has dedicated decades of her life to increasing understanding of aboriginal spirituality and defending the rights of the Aboriginal. A coordinator at the Aboriginal Catholic ministry in the Archdiocese of Melbourne until 2015, she has lamented the fact that the Aboriginal contribution has not been fully accepted by the Australian Catholic Church. From her perspective, Aboriginal culture and symbols of the land continue to be viewed with suspicion, and there is a reluctance to adopt them into mainstream everyday Catholic life.

The Catholic Church in Australia has five provinces: Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. It has 35 dioceses comprising geographic areas, as well as the military diocese and dioceses for the Chaldean, Maronite, Melkite and Ukrainian rites. The national assembly of bishops is the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, presently headed by Brisbane's Archbishop Mark Coleridge. In total, 175 Catholic religious orders operate in Australia, affiliated under Catholic Religious Australia, presently headed by Sr Monica Cavanagh.

The latest national census, in 2016, revealed that Christianity remains the most common religion (57.7% of the population). Catholicism is the largest Christian group in Australia, accounting for almost a quarter (22.6%) of the population. One of the dominant features of the Australian Catholic community today is the plurality of cultures from different parts of the world. The 2016 census showed that the ancestries with which Australian Catholics identified were extremely varied, the largest being English (1.49 million), Australian (1.12 million), Irish (577,000), Italian (567,000) and Filipino (181,000). Other important immigrant Catholic groups come from Croatia, India, Vietnam and Malta. According to the National Church Life Survey of 2016, which sampled Mass attendees in Catholic parishes all over Australia, immigrant people felt a stronger sense of belonging to the Catholic Church than their Australian counterparts, and their participation in the church has helped them to settle into the nation. Despite these positive results, however, many of the third generation of current migrants are not following the religious practice of their parents and grandparents and are highly secularised. The Catholic Church continues to be challenged by the diversity of its community. In a pluralistic society it is not easy to incorporate the values of each culture. The 2016 census statistics

showed also that nearly one in five Catholics (19.1%) were born outside of Australia in non-English-speaking countries, while 5.6% were born overseas in English-speaking countries. This situation gives the Catholic Church an opportunity to be a space of intercultural dialogue, receiving the faith and values that refugees and migrants bring from all over the world. Around Australia Mass is celebrated in more than 35 different languages every Sunday. This trait certainly helps immigrants – but is it aiding them in truly assimilating into a foreign culture, and, further, is it possibly isolating Australians from the benefits of diversity? Another challenge to consider is that many communities have been importing so-called ‘international priests’. There are now more ‘international priests’ than locally born priests in Australia.

The Catholic Church in Australia is the largest non-governmental provider of welfare services. Catholic Social Services Australia aids some 450,000 people annually and is the Catholic Church’s most important national social-services body. It advocates for the most disadvantaged and campaigns for a fair and just society. The St Vincent de Paul Society, with 40,000 volunteers, is the largest volunteer welfare network in the country.

Catholic presence in Australian political life is also important. Historically, Catholics have been a considerable presence in leadership positions. In the late nineteenth century, the Catholic community had an allegiance with the Labour Party. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Catholic politicians concentrated their fight against communism, breaking away from the Labour Party to form the Democratic Labour Party from 1957 to 1978. From 1980 onward, Australian Catholics have had no allegiances and individual politicians have followed their own values and choices. The fact that politicians do not receive any ecclesial support or preference today has aided a healthy autonomy between religious and political identity. Australia has had several Catholic prime ministers (most recently Malcolm Turnbull, 2015–18). Because Australian political life is based on a democratic liberal foundation, Catholic politicians have room to act according to their faith.

Education has been a pillar of the Catholic Church in Australia. An important proportion of faith-based schools and children’s homes were run by Catholic entities after the Second World War. In 2016 the church had some 760,000 students in more than 1,700 schools. The education of young people has been one of the most important means for the Catholic Church to transmit the gospel. However, the enormous and fruitful presence of the church in educating generations of Australians has also become its Achilles’ heel. It enabled one of the darkest chapters in Australian church history: the sexual abuse of minors by clergy. In the twenty-first century the Australian Catholic Church is facing a deep crisis due not only to these crimes of sexual abuse but also to the extensive cover-up of those crimes

at the institutional level. The Australian government's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2013–17) handed down its final report in December 2017. Sixty-two per cent of the survivors who were abused in religious settings were abused in Catholic institutions.

Theologian Robert Gascoigne has analysed the causes of the sexual abuse crisis in the Australian Catholic Church. Gascoigne considers the problem to be that the church received the tools of liberal society but at its core remained hierarchical and authoritarian. According to him, before the nineteenth century, Catholics in the British Empire suffered from restrictions and sanctions, but due to the development of liberalism they finally obtained civil freedom. For example, Governor Richard Bourke's Church Act in New South Wales (1836) allowed Catholics to become a social group with their own identity and civil rights. However, the church's internal structure did not change along with the new political structures of liberalism. Unfortunately, the combination of clericalism, the massive engagement with young people and the freedom that the church in Australia had won enabled these crimes to occur without any accountability. Failing to prosecute offending religious clergy, the church operated in a realm separate from the public sphere, where secular law did not apply. The findings of the Australian Royal Commission not only illuminated the crimes of sexual abuse but also exposed major failures in ecclesial government and leadership, and it also recommended a review of church governance at a national level.

It is highly likely the crisis of sexual abuse has had a strong impact on the faith and trust of Australian Catholics. Although the Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination in Australia, with 5,439,268 people, the 2016 census found a fall in both overall numbers and the percentage of Catholics: around 22.6% of the population in 2016, down from 25.3% in the 2011 census.

Following the Royal Commission's advice, the Catholic Church undertook an independent review of governance. This report, published confidentially to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in May 2020, is titled *The Light from the Southern Cross: Promoting Co-responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*. The report proposes a co-responsible synodal model of church with much more participation of lay people, particularly women, at all levels. Could this report and the coming Australian synod, originally scheduled for October 2020 but delayed by the coronavirus pandemic, lead the Australian church on a path of justice for victims and institutional transformation? The bishops will discuss this report and take their ideas to the plenary council. The plenary council will be the first to be held since the Second Vatican Council. The first phase, 'Listening and Dialogue 2018', features the voices of the faithful who

participated, contributing 17,457 submissions. During the second phase, 'Listening and Discernment 2019', Catholics all over Australia participated in writing and discernment sessions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the plenary council 2020 has been postponed until 2021–2.

Although the crisis has been very difficult for believers, this situation could be an opportunity for renewal and change. If the Australian Catholic Church takes on a new co-responsible model we perhaps could expect a future in which the church can serve as an example for other Catholic communities around the world. Time will tell.

New Zealand

New Zealand is about 2,000 kilometres east of Australia across the Tasman Sea and 1,000 kilometres south of the Pacific Island areas of New Caledonia, Fiji and Tonga. Due to its remoteness, it was one of the last lands to be settled by humans. New Zealand's isolation has led to its distinct biodiversity of animal and plant life. The country's varied topography and its sharp mountain peaks, such as the Southern Alps, are the result of rapid tectonic uplift of land and volcanic eruptions.

The date of the first settlement is a matter of debate. Some affirm that the earliest settlement of Aotearoa took place up to 1,000 years before James Cook's arrival in 1769, but current understanding is that the first arrivals came in the late thirteenth century. The ancestors of modern-day Māori made their way from the Southeast Asian and Micronesian regions into what came to be known as Polynesia in the Pacific. They travelled northward to Hawaii and to Rapanui (Easter Island) in the east and likely made their way to New Zealand from more than one Polynesian island. Europeans did not become aware of the country's existence until later, in 1642. Abel Janszoon Tasman, a Dutch captain, sighted 'a large land, uplifted high', probably referring to the Southern Alps. Four of Tasman's party were killed by Māori from the Ngāti Tūmatakōkiri tribe and the Dutch captain responded by shooting and hitting one Māori. The Dutch ship was forced to leave.

The first Catholics known to have set foot in New Zealand arrived in 1769 aboard James Cook's barque *Endeavour*. From the 1790s, New Zealand was visited by British and French whaling and trading ships. Their crews traded European goods, including guns and metal tools, for Māori food, water, wood and flax.

Māori in New Zealand have had a strong religious life and spirituality. For them, human beings and everything in creation have a *wairua*, a divine sparkle that comes from the gods; respect for nature and creation is a natural consequence of this belief. Māori believe in supernatural and immortal beings. For them, Atua is the supreme God that is beyond any

knowledge. Atua can also mean Rangi and Papa – the Sky Father and the Earth Mother – and the different forces of nature. A strong connection exists between the material world and the spiritual world; they are not separated worlds. *Whakapapa* (genealogy) links animate and inanimate things, terrestrial and spiritual worlds, and is what binds all things, inter-connecting them. In Māori culture the land has a deep meaning. It belongs to their ancestors and has ethical implications; land has *mauri* or *wairua* force. The spiritual values of *atua*, *wairua*, *whanau* (family) and *mana* meant that it was not hard for many Māori to accept the Christian faith brought by Europeans; they felt that Christian values were similar to their own.

In the 1820s and 1830s New Zealand attracted Australian Catholic migrants to Hokianga, the Kaipara, the Bay of Islands and the Bay of Plenty. The best-known and most respected of these early New Zealand-Irish Catholics were Thomas and Mary Poynton. The Poynton family became a point of reference to their Māori neighbours and the migrant Catholics in Hokianga. They gathered many Catholics in their house on Sundays to pray together and be instructed by Thomas Poynton. By 1838 Poynton estimated 40 or 50 Catholics lived in Hokianga alone.

The Catholic Church was slow to send clergy to New Zealand, however. Between the suppression of the Jesuits, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, its attention was focused elsewhere. The first real plan for sending missionaries began in 1830. Rome approved the new mission territory of the South Sea Islands (south of the Equator from Easter Island to New Zealand) and appointed Fr Gabriel Henri Jérôme de Solages as responsible for missions in the region. Although Solages never actually went to the region, Rome declared that New Zealand was part of the mission of the French church.

In January 1836 Rome established the Vicariate of Western Oceania, which included New Zealand, and then began finalising arrangements for missionaries to staff it. At that time the Society of Mary (Marists) was seeking official recognition as a religious congregation. Rome offered its approval while also requesting the Marists to accept the new mission field of Western Oceania. Eastern Oceania was given to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Picpus Fathers). Jean-Baptiste Pompallier, a young French bishop, was entrusted with the mission in New Zealand, arriving with a few priests and brothers of the new congregation. Pompallier, a handsome and charismatic 36-year-old, arrived in 1838 with Fr Catherin Servant and Br Michel Colombon and began his mission in Northland. From Hokianga they soon moved east to the Bay of Islands and later south to the new capital, Auckland.

Pompallier, Servant and other Marists very quickly learned Māori. Some Māori converted to Catholicism, in many cases because rival tribes

had become Anglicans or Methodists. Pompallier urged his priests to build Catholic belief around Māori customs. The missionaries set up a printing press and printed books in the Māori language. Their focus was to evangelise the Māori. During the period 1838–43 almost 40 members of the Society of Mary arrived in New Zealand. Bishop Pompallier had many qualities that attracted the Māori people, but he was less accomplished with respect to administration and finance. In 1842 the Catholic Church was in a financial crisis, and some of the Marists priests complained about Pompallier: they felt abandoned, overworked and under-resourced. The tensions grew between Pompallier and Jean-Claude Colin, the Superior General of the Marists, and in 1848 Rome decided to divide New Zealand into two dioceses, Auckland and Port Nicholson (Wellington). Pompallier oversaw Auckland while the Marist Philippe Viard took over Port Nicholson. As more European settlers arrived in New Zealand, many of them Irish Catholics, the Catholic Church became more of a settler church than a Māori mission.

According to the 2013 census the Catholic Church represents 12.6% of the total population, with 492,384 members. In New Zealand there is one archdiocese, in Wellington, and five suffragan dioceses: Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton and Palmerston North. The church is overseen by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference.

In 2013, Māori who were Catholic numbered 71,700 – or 10.7% of the Māori population. New Zealand has had one Māori bishop: Pā Max Takuirā Māriu's ordination in 1988 fulfilled a long-held desire of Māori. When Bishop Māriu died in 2005, both Māori and the church in Aotearoa New Zealand strongly felt his loss. Not many vocations to the priesthood or religious life have come from the Māori community. It seems that the Catholic Church has not been able to reach Māori people nor to integrate the faith with Māori values and culture. Catholic Māori Deacon Karatea-Goddard affirmed, 'We always have had a Māori translation of the Mass but it has never been inculturated. Māori elements and expressions were never included formally in the Mass' (*New Zealand Catholic*, 2018).

For generations, as in many Western countries, Indigenous people have suffered from discrimination, and that is no different in New Zealand. In response to this discrimination, Māori New Zealanders are experiencing a renaissance in their own identity and spirituality. The Catholic community must find a way to present faith and worship in a way that makes sense to Māori culture. Te Rūnanga o te Hāhi Katorika ō Aotearoa, the national Māori advisory group appointed by the bishops, advises the bishops on the pastoral care of Māori. Māori pastoral care is organised in different ways in the six dioceses. Some dioceses have a vicar for Māori, while others have a Māori chaplaincy, and all have Catholic *marae* (meeting grounds).

The main trait of the Catholic Church in New Zealand has been its focus on education. Catholic missionaries set up many church schools from 1877. The early Catholic Church in New Zealand belonged largely to the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Recognising this, the missionaries used education as a tool to raise the economic and social status of Catholics, producing doctors, lawyers, priests and other professionals. Bishop Patrick Moran of Dunedin (1823–95) was one of those who in the nineteenth century promoted and built many schools. He affirmed, 'Build your schools and churches must follow, neglect your schools and your churches must close'. By 1895 the Diocese of Dunedin had 27 Catholic schools for 2,000 children. In 1877 the government decided to withdraw all subsidies from church schools, making schooling free, secular and compulsory. It was only in 1975 that religious schools were integrated into the state system and again received state funding. Today, 8.5% of primary and secondary students in New Zealand attend the nation's 237 Catholic schools, which equates to about 70,000 students.

Besides education, the Catholic Church has been committed to social services. Catholic Social Services began in Auckland in 1923 and has offices in different dioceses. It has a commitment to the community and provides professional services in counselling, parenting assistance, prison chaplaincy, mitigating poverty and working for justice.

The minority status of the Catholic Church within the New Zealand population has brought both benefits and disadvantages to the Catholic community. Without a national established church, all religious denominations have been on an equal footing. On the other hand, because the Catholic Church operates independently of political power, its influence and societal impact are weaker than in other countries.

Recent migration from the Pacific, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America has boosted numbers in the Catholic Church. New Zealand society is very tolerant of cultural diversity, but the challenge for the Catholic Church is to have communities that integrate the values and traditions of different nationalities. Another challenge is the very low number of New Zealand seminarians, which has forced the church to import priests or seminarians from overseas. Will overseas-born priests be able to understand and reach New Zealand's secular society? Perhaps a possibility for the future is that lay people, especially women, assume responsibilities and even ministries within the church.

Conclusion

Oceania is a unique area covering almost one-third of the earth's surface. It has vast areas of water and is marked by outstanding natural beauty. It has high proportions of both migrants and Indigenous peoples. Two

important commitments of the Catholic Church are most relevant for this region: ecological, protecting the land for future generations, and social, promoting the equality and dignity of all the people of God from different cultures, nations and traditions.

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