



Preparing for the Plenary Council 2020

Your voice is important to shaping the future of the Church

The Australian Plenary Council is being held in two sessions in October 2020 and May 2021. The process of preparation aims to hear from people around Australia - young and older, those connected to Catholic faith, those disconnected, those who are part of the wider Catholic network of serving and being served, anyone who wishes to respond. People are asked to gather together, to listen, reflect and share - using this process to help each person develop their response.

From now until Ash Wednesday 2019 is the first stage of preparation – Listening and Dialogue. A Listening and Dialogue Encounter is an opportunity to get together a group of friends, family or colleagues and spend some time thinking and talking about your experiences of faith, life and the Church. The Plenary Council has asked us to consider and respond to these questions:

1. What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?
2. What questions do you have about the future of the Church for the Plenary Council to consider in 2020?
3. Do you have a story of your experience of faith, or the Church you would like to share?

Responses can be made by either individuals or groups. Meeting in a group in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter is a way to develop your responses. There may be a range of responses from the people in the group. These can all be submitted, together or individually.

Of course you can be part of several or many Encounters. They may be informal conversations, discussion with family members, or talking with people you've just met. You can encourage others to have their voices heard. You can answer some or all of the three questions. Responses do not have to be formal, they can be written, or in poems or pictures, rap songs or prayers. Responses are submitted online directly to the Plenary Council - details on back page.

A Listening and Dialogue Encounter

Suggested steps for your gathering

PRAY
TOGETHER

READ QUESTION
AND REFLECT

SHARE AND
LISTEN

PRAY AND
RESPOND

STEP
01

Pray Together

You are invited to pray together. You might like to read scripture, you can use the prayer on the back of this leaflet or just speak to God from your heart.

STEP
02

Read Question and Reflect

What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

Reflect on the question in silence.

- Write a list of all the responses to this question that come to mind.
- Share aloud with each other all of the responses you have written down.
- Working together, **choose one topic** from your responses to focus on for Step 3.
- *You can repeat Step 3 for each topic on your list of responses over time. You may want to get together again in future weeks and months in order to continue to talk with one another using these steps. Use this process for each question listed on the front of the leaflet*

STEP
03

Share and Listen

- **REFLECT** What have I experienced in the area of this topic?
In silence, reflect on your personal experience of faith, life and

the Church related to the topic area you have chosen to dialogue about. You may want to write your thoughts down, or simply sit quietly with your thoughts.

- **SHARE AND LISTEN Tell a story of my experience in this area.**

Take turns to share aloud with each other your personal experience of faith, life and the Church. When others are speaking, remember to listen with an open and humble heart.

- **REFLECT How has another perspective influenced my own?**

After each person has shared, in silence, reflect on how stories shared by other people have influenced your own perspective. You may want to write your thoughts down, or simply sit quietly with your thoughts.

- **SHARE How has another perspective influenced my own?**

Show that you have listened deeply and openly to each other. Some phrases you may find helpful are: 'I feel your sharing has helped me to...' or 'From what you have shared with me, I now understand...'

STEP
04

Pray and
Respond

PRAY

At the end of your first Listening and Dialogue Encounter, you are invited to pray together. You can use the words below, or you might like to say a prayer of gratitude in your own words.

Creator God, we thank you for the encounter with one another today.

We know that where two or three are gathered, you are in our midst.

Thank you for being with us and for the courage to speak boldly and with passion, and the humility to listen with open hearts.

We ask you to continue to walk with us, as we discover the pathway toward the future you are calling us to.

Amen.

RESPOND

Your voice is important to shaping the future of the Church.

Ballarat Diocese Prayer for the Plenary Council

Blessed are you, God of all creation.

**You have given us life and light
and all the wonders of the world.**

**You have sent your Son Jesus
to be our Saviour
and your Holy Spirit to be our guide.**

**As we prepare for the plenary council,
we ask you to come into our hearts
with your Son and Holy Spirit.**

Come to us and make your home in us.

**We pray for our local community,
for the people of our diocese
and for the Church throughout Australia.**

**May your wisdom show us the way,
for your word is a lamp for our feet
and a light for our path.**

**Come and fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in us the fire of your love,
that we may live by your gospel
and share your good news with all we meet.**

**Holy Mary, Mother of our Saviour, pray for us.
St Mary MacKillop, pray for us.**

In our different ways and places we gather to listen and dialogue. We come from all backgrounds and perspectives and provide an affirming and respectful space in which to listen and dialogue. All views are welcome. People may wish to remain silent. We are asked not to correct others or to speak against them, but to preface our comments with "My opinion is ..." or "My story is ...". This is a spiritual process. We are seeking to understand what God is asking of us.

A good group size is 3 to 8 people – larger gatherings should divide into smaller groups.

The share group is a safe space to offer our personal reflections and stories. Therefore we honour the confidential nature of our sharing.

Submit your responses to the three questions via a short and straightforward online questionnaire. There is also the opportunity to upload longer responses. Ask someone in your parish or group to assist with this if needed.

<http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/have-your-say/>

All responses are read and compiled by the Plenary team.

In May 2019, major themes emerging from the responses will be announced. These themes will then be discussed around the country and developed into formal submissions to the Plenary Council 2020 first session.