

## PLENARY COUNCIL 2020

Pope Francis has given his approval for the Australian Catholic Church to hold the first Plenary Council – the most significant national gathering that can be held – in more than 80 years, the last one held was in 1937. A Plenary Council provides an occasion for the whole Church to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to our Church at this time. For this to happen, wide consultation of the entire Australian Church will be necessary so that all voices have an opportunity to be heard. Processes that enable all to genuinely listen to each other will also be required. A new relationship of trust and confidence has to be created within the Church in Australia and the wider community.



**Plenary Council 2020**  
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...



Recently, there were gatherings throughout the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat that provided opportunities to look at *Listening and Dialogue towards 2020*. Prayer and Dialogue are essential elements in this whole process of preparation for the 2020 Plenary Council. Representatives from Parishes, School communities, Catholic organisations and all others interested, were invited to attend one of the gatherings which were held in Warrnambool, Ballarat, Horsham and Mildura.

The gatherings were an opportunity to hear from and meet Ms Lana Turvey-Collins, Facilitator of the Australian Plenary Council 2020 Preparation Team. Lana gave insights into the process of the *Listening and Dialogue Encounter* phase that is now open to hear the voices of all who wish to respond.

The Listening and Dialogue part of the preparations for the Plenary Council offers an opportunity for individuals and groups to have their voices directly heard by the Plenary Council prior to the Council's agenda being developed. This Listening and Dialogue phase of preparation is open until Ash Wednesday 2019. These are the questions you are asked to consider and respond to:

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?

Parishes and other groups in the diocese, large or small, are encouraged to gather to listen, talk and respond. A group does not need to develop a single response. All responses can be submitted, all voices are welcome.

Lana also talked about the overall three year process of preparing for the Plenary Council 2020 and answered questions. After the *Listening and Dialogue phase*, up until October 2020 there is the dialogue and



discernment stage where themes from all submissions will emerge to make-up the agenda of the Plenary Council. In October 2020 the Plenary Council will meet for eight days, where around three hundred delegates, made up of one hundred clerical, one hundred religious and one hundred lay people, will look at these themes and discern what the future of the church in Australia will look like. Following this, the implementation phase will begin.

Plenary information is available on [www.ballarat.catholic.org.au](http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au)

*Fr Kevin Maloney, Vicar General*

