



## PLENARY COUNCIL SECOND PHASE

Much has been happening since the launch of the six themes at Pentecost. The report on the Listening and Dialogue phase was released and you can read the 314 page document [here](#). Snapshot reports that provide an overview of the stories, questions and submissions received during this time are available below. Six discernment and writing groups for each theme are being established to review these submissions and also receive responses from the second phase, "Listening and Discernment". The writing groups will also consider their relevant theme in light of Church teaching, of Church tradition, of Scripture and drawing from contemporary best practice within and outside the Church. Through the discernment process and drawing on the six National Themes for Discernment, the agenda for the first session of the Plenary Council will be developed.

The whole Catholic community is invited to participate in the Listening and Discernment phase and in the Ballarat Diocese this process has begun with each parish appointing leaders/facilitators willing to lead 'Listening and Discernment' encounters in their local faith communities.

Bernadette Lynch and Jane Collins along with Julie Boyd from the Ballarat Diocese held preparation training days for the parish leaders/facilitators across the diocese. These days were held in Warrnambool, Ballarat, Horsham, Swan Hill and Mildura. Over ninety people attended the sessions and there was great discussion and perspective on the next phase of the Plenary Council.



Building on these preparation training days, Lana Turvey-Collins from the Plenary Council Facilitation Team was in the Diocese on September 9-12 to assist the parish leaders/facilitators for this next stage of the Plenary Council process. Following on from the earlier days and Lana's sessions it is hoped that leaders have a clearer understanding of what discernment means, feel confident with options on how to facilitate the discernment experiences and have a clearer understanding of what a response may look like.

Leaders/facilitators were interested in the meaning of discernment and the spiritual conversations which are part of the discernment process. Materials were provided in order to facilitate these process in parishes. It is hoped that all Listening and Discerning encounters will be completed by Easter 2020. Responses can be submitted to the Discernment and Writing Groups through the Plenary Council portal on the website or handwritten or email responses can be sent into the Pastoral Ministry Office. For more information regarding discernment sessions please make contact with your parish.

*Jane Collins – Pastoral Ministry Office*









# Snapshot Report

How is God calling us to be a  
Christ-centred Church that is:

**MISSIONARY AND  
EVANGELISING**

**AS WE MOVE INTO THIS SECOND STAGE OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL JOURNEY, WE CONTINUE TO SEEK THE WISDOM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** Beginning in July 2019, we are invited to reflect on Scripture, Church teaching and our contemporary situation in order to discern the answer to this question: How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is missionary and evangelising? The fruits of what is discerned during this time will help shape the agenda of the first session of Plenary Council in October 2020.

This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who shared a passion for participating in the missionary nature of the Church and desire stronger support, involvement and formation among all the baptised who make up the Church. The data also identified the need to reach out and communicate more effectively and to find new ways of living and proclaiming the Gospel in Australia today. There was a call for the strengthening of leadership and ministries in parishes and schools, training to equip leaders for ministry, pastoral support for various groups within parish and faith communities, and a desire for a unified voice in engaging social issues such as life and religious freedom.

## TOPICS: WHAT DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT?

People spoke about a number of different topics in **PHASE 1: LISTENING & DIALOGUE**. A comprehensive report on all the voices of participants will be released on **JULY 28, 2019**.

Below are some of the topics that informed this particular theme, which was created through a combination of analysis, discernment and prayer.

- Affordable adult faith formation courses
- Authentic faith teaching in Catholic schools
- Be a witness in society
- Better communication of what the Church does
- Better faith formation
- Better formation for liturgical ministries and sacramental programs
- Better homilies
- Better preparation and support for married couples
- Better selection and formation of candidates to priesthood
- Better teachers in Catholic schools
- Better training and support for youth leaders
- Better youth faith formation
  - Church should adapt to multicultural reality
  - Church to act as a guide for Australian society
- Concerns for diminishing parish communities
- Defend Religious Freedom
- Defend right-to-life issues
  - Encourage vocations
  - End celibacy, allow priests to be married
  - Establish more youth programs
  - Evangelisation in and of the family
  - Faith formation for parents
  - Fight for human rights issues
- Focus on mission, being missionary disciples
- Focus on the new evangelisation
- Greater connection with and inclusion of Indigenous Australians
- Greater focus on Jesus Christ
- Greater focus on permanent deacons
- Greater focus on the Word of God
- Greater leadership from Bishops
- Greater leadership from priests
- Greater role for women
- Greater support for RCIA
- Greater trust, faith and hope in God
- Keep the commandments
- Keep the faith
- Listen to one another more
- Listen to the Holy Spirit
- More chaplains, youth ministers in Catholic schools
- More formation for priests
- Outreach to all the baptised
- Outreach to the wider community
- Putting Gospel values in action
- Remain faithful to Church teaching
- Remain faithful to Church teaching on marriage
- Share the faith with others
- Use social media to engage people
- Welcome back priests who have left to marry

## A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

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

“We are asked to be Missionary Disciples to do God’s mission as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus. To encourage and lead young families, by example, to the church. To model a Catholic life in our families, school and communities. To pray often”.

“More formation & teaching needed for the Mass/Eucharist for young people”.

“ How will the Good News be proclaimed?

These days, most Catholics do not go to church, so do not hear any teachings from the pulpit. Therefore, the bishops must use any and all means of communication to spread the Good News – perhaps a weekly newspaper column, a blog, a ten-minute TV session once a week, and using social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook). Of course, the world will object, but that doesn’t matter – at least people would know where the Catholic Church stands on

“I feel God is calling us to listen to each other and work together”.

“Have faith that He will keep His promise to be with us. And trusting in God’s grace, the Holy Spirit given to us, to go out and make disciples for Jesus Our Lord and teach them to do the same. Humbly renew our own encounter with the mercy and compassion of God in Jesus, to be forgiven and healed, and to be set free to encounter our world with that same mercy and compassion”.

“Based on the Gospel ‘that penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, unto all nations’, that we should love our neighbour, love God and follow the commandments.

My suggestions and comments on how I think we can live this out: To bring more people into the Church - stronger catechesis at schools and parishes ... Greater emphasis on the sacraments. Confession is vital for people to receive the mercy of God and have their sins forgiven - as such, people need to know why confession is necessary, and more times available to access this sacrament would be helpful. People need to learn apologetics and be prepared to evangelise and also defend the faith ”.

“God is asking us to be accepting of refugees and to understand and reach out to our indigenous people and those that are marginalised. God wants us to stop taking and to start giving”.

“I think that God is asking of us down here in Australia to be attentive towards Christian persecution and religious freedom, especially as our nation is becoming more secular. In relation, I also believe He is asking us to defend our faith and not be afraid to say that we are Christians”.

“...You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem...and to the ends of the earth.”

(ACTS 1:8)

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

## What questions do you have about the future of Australia that you would like the Plenary Council to consider?

“How can the Church go about changing societal values on abortion and other life issues?”

“Are we giving enough support for parents as the primary educators of their children in the faith?”

“How can we focus more on families, welcoming them and involving them? They are the Church of tomorrow?”

“Who is evangelising the evangelisers?”

“How can the Church go about reinforcing Church teaching within our own congregations?”

“How do we get people to return to prayer when we live in such a fast paced life?”

“How do we deal with the lack of clergy available to celebrate communion at some parishes and some schools?”

“How can the Church support the faith of its school and other teacher?”

A SNAPSHOT OF

# Your Stories of Faith

## CHACKO

60 YEARS OLD, ADELAIDE

**I was ordained a Priest [in] 1985 and left active ministry in 2005.** I and my wife migrated to Australia for higher studies in 2005, and are well settled in life with professional jobs and active ministry participation in the Catholic faith. I would welcome the opportunity to return to the priesthood, as I come with a deeper and broader understanding of life, of the joys and struggles being experienced by the people and communities I would be serving. I have an enhanced wisdom of life prompted by the signs of the times that bring strong connections to families and communities.



## PATRICIA

71 YEARS OLD, BRISBANE

**I love my Catholic faith, and live it every day.** Without the Eucharist in Mass and listening to the homily, I would find life more difficult. Our western world leads many people on the wrong paths in life, and if they have no guidance from our church leaders, we will see empty pews in our churches. Especially under 55's. Our Catholic schools must prepare our students to be more active in the practice of their faith, and to resist the temptations that await them in the wider world. Our young people want the Church to be more inclusive of both men and women. And to realise, also, that they, the youth, have had little exposure to what the Church offers as in previous generations. Change must come.

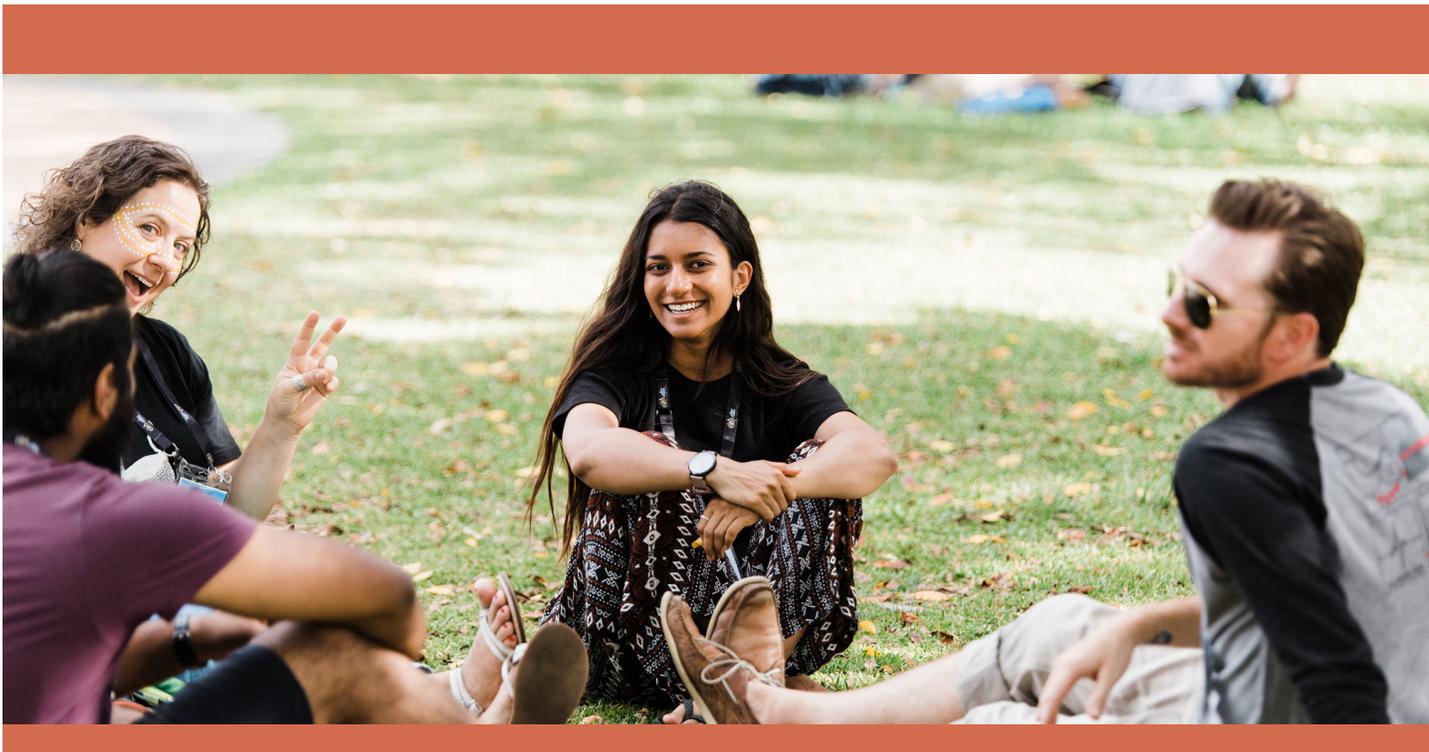


## VINCENT

23 YEARS OLD, PARRAMATTA

**When I was in year 11, I went to a 14-day retreat.** We had daily Holy Hours, prayed the Rosary, listened to many talks, went on street evangelisation and door knocking, observed times of silence and still managed to play games and do fun activities as well. As a shy person, I found it challenging to talk to others and especially when I went door knocking. But everyone was so welcoming and charitable that upon reflection, I realised I'd found a pocket of hope in a world of despair. It changed my life because although I intellectually understood that God loved me, having been taught this at school, at the retreat I truly felt His love in my heart. It was the love and charity everyone had for each other and for me that touched me and helped me to see and tangibly feel God's love for me.





### **UPCOMING REPORTS:**

Inclusive, participatory and synodal  
Prayerful and Eucharistic  
Humble, healing and merciful  
A Joyful, hope-filled and servant community  
Open to conversion, renewal and reform

JUNE 23, 2019  
JUNE 30, 2019  
JULY 7, 2019  
JULY 14, 2019  
JULY 21, 2019

**Please note this report contains only a snapshot of thousands of stories and responses shared. A comprehensive report on the voices of participants will be released on July 28, 2019.**

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Plenary Council



# Snapshot Report

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Christ-centred Church that is:

**INCLUSIVE,  
PARTICIPATORY  
AND SYNODAL**

AS WE MOVE INTO THIS SECOND STAGE OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL JOURNEY, WE CONTINUE TO SEEK THE WISDOM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Beginning in July 2019, we are invited to reflect on Scripture, Church teaching and our contemporary situation in order to discern the answer to this question: How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is inclusive, participatory and synodal? The fruits of what is discerned during this time will help shape the agenda of the first session of Plenary Council in October 2020.

This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who expressed a desire for individuals and groups within and also beyond the Church to find a better welcome and be incorporated more into her life and mission. There was a call to renew forms of governance and leadership in the Church, to find ways formally and informally of being co-responsible for ministry and mission, seeking structures and processes of collaboration, shared decision-making and financial co-responsibility in order to enable this greater involvement of lay people particularly of women, young people, people of diverse cultural backgrounds and people with disabilities. There was an expressed need for stronger connections across the many parts of the Church, and with other Christian traditions.

## TOPICS: WHAT DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT?

People spoke about a number of different topics in **PHASE 1: LISTENING & DIALOGUE**. A comprehensive report on all the voices of participants will be released on **JULY 28, 2019**.

Below are some of the topics that informed this particular theme, which was created through a combination of analysis, discernment and prayer.

- A voice in the selection and appointment of bishops • Affordable adult faith formation courses • Baby Boomer generation to listen to young Catholics • Become a Vatican II church • Better communication of what the Church does
- Better implementation of Royal Commission Recommendations • Better interface between parish and school
- Better Plenary Council process • Better preparation and support for married couples • Better selection and formation of candidates to priesthood • Better teachers in Catholic schools • Better use of finances • Care for neighbour
- Care for the environment • Care for the family • Church should adapt to multicultural reality • Communion for all
- Concerns for diminishing parish communities • Creation of small communities/groups within parishes • Cultural Masses
- Defend right-to-life issues • Diocesan Pastoral Council • End celibacy, allow priests to be married • End Clericalism
- End discrimination of LGBTQ • Establish more youth programs • Evangelisation in and of the family • Faith formation for parents • Fight for human rights issues • Focus on Ecumenism • Greater access to Mass and Reconciliation • Greater connection with and inclusion of Indigenous Australians • Greater focus on Jesus Christ
- Greater focus on permanent deacons • Greater focus on the Word of God • Greater inclusion of all people
- Greater involvement of the laity • Greater leadership from priests • Greater recognition of Eastern Catholic Churches • Greater role for women • Greater trust, faith and hope in God • Hierarchy to listen to the laity
- Importance of Communion services in rural parishes • Inclusion of the divorced and remarried • Laity supporting priests • Lay-led parishes • Lay-led liturgies and Masses • Listen to one another more • Mass to be appealing to youth and children • Modernise Church teachings • More chaplains, youth ministers
- More formation for priests • More transparency and accountability regarding clergy sexual abuse
- More welcoming parishes • New leadership and governance model • New model of Church, diocese, parish
- Ordaining married men to be priests • Ordination of women • Outreach to all the baptised • Outreach to the wider community • Outreach to youth • Overseas priests • Parish pastoral council • Parishes involved in planning for the future • Provide more youth facilities in parishes • Putting Gospel values in action
- Radical change, a new order, inverted pyramid • Restore the Third Rite of Reconciliation • Servant leadership • Share the faith with others • Special care of rural parishes • Stronger parish communities • Support same-sex marriage
- Transparency in governance and decision making • Use social media to engage people • Welcome back priests who have left to marry • Women deacons • Work together in unity • Youth to be involved more in Church community

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

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

“To build a compassionate, welcoming, inclusive and courageous community where we come together to better understand Gospel values, how to live them and put them into practice — strengthened by ritual prayer so as to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit”.

“Women need to be equal and their presence in all Church governance needs to be equal to the male presence.

Women shouldn’t only be able to be acolytes but also deacons and, yes, priests. There’s a whole hurting humanity because some people don’t want to go to a male priest for reconciliation. We are all Christ bearers”.

“To reintroduce and promote the Third Rite of Reconciliation so as to encourage more parishioners to participate in the sacrament, as neither the First or Second Rites are attracting many parishioners.”

“I have been a teacher for nearly 30 years in the same Catholic Secondary College ... I have personally suffered much persecution for my Catholic/Christian beliefs at school. There have been and are teachers who openly criticize students who have a faith and practice it, live it out, speak up about social issues that plague Australian society. It seems it is okay to have a social/moral stand on poverty, homelessness and other social issues affecting Australia but you cannot speak up about sex before marriage, homosexuality etc. ... Teachers like myself are few in number and many keep silent so as to not be found out for fear of reprisals”.

“God is asking us as a whole ‘Come back to me with all your hearts’.

There is not enough passion and commitment in us Catholics following the teachings given to us in the Bible by Jesus (and even the prophets in the Old Testament) and God wants to invite all of us young and old back into relationship with Him to know Him as He truly is, to love Him with heart, soul and mind, and to serve (to give without counting the cost) only Him”.

“To be compassionate to the marginalised. To be outspoken about injustice in all its forms.

“God is calling the teachers in schools and the laity to be better educated in the faith to then be able to pass on the faith to children. The laity need to be taught how to encourage children and lapsed Catholics to practise their faith”.

To be inclusive to all, irrespective of sexual disposition or marital status.

To modernise with the times”.

“While lay involvement is getting better and the Church does listen, I would love to see a Church that involves the laity more [and] gives more of a scope for the laity to participate in the management of the Church”.

“Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.”

(ACTS 4:32-33)

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

## What questions do you have about the future of Australia that you would like the Plenary Council to consider?

“Our parish clergy are overworked, stressed and stretched beyond reasonable limits. Moving beyond strategies of parish amalgamation and closure, what other options will we explore? By that I mean the non-ordained’s role in making pastoral decisions?”

“How does the Church law allow for inclusion of all peoples? Do we need to adapt these laws to a changing world?”

“Why has the hierarchy failed to publicise the good works undertaken by our schools, hospitals, refugee support, etc?”

“How can a more synodal approach to leadership in the Church at parish and diocesan levels be exercised as a shared responsibility, by virtue of Baptism, between both lay and clergy?”

“How is the Church able to respond to the diversity of our community to be inclusive of all – Indigenous/First Nations, environmental protection, gay rights?”

“How can we better nourish and support the spiritual life of adult lay people? ”

A SNAPSHOT OF

# Your Stories of Faith

## DENNIS

SYDNEY

**I have found being part of a ministry quite rewarding.** I currently hold [a] position ... [on a] parish pastoral council. The role can be time-consuming but very rewarding at the same time. For a long time, I was a parishioner who would attend Mass and that was it. My parish priest asked me to serve on the council and I am pleased to make my individual contribution to the parish. Further to that, I feel that I am serving God.



## JENNI

PERTH

**My husband's and my faith in the Catholic Church has been sorely tested since a new priest came to our parish.** We tried to work with him in many ways and on many levels, but he was not open to growth or advice from others. We have come out of this experience with an even stronger connection to Jesus/God/ the Spirit and each other, but are very disappointed not only in the way this priest operated but how our concerns were handled by some members of the hierarchy.

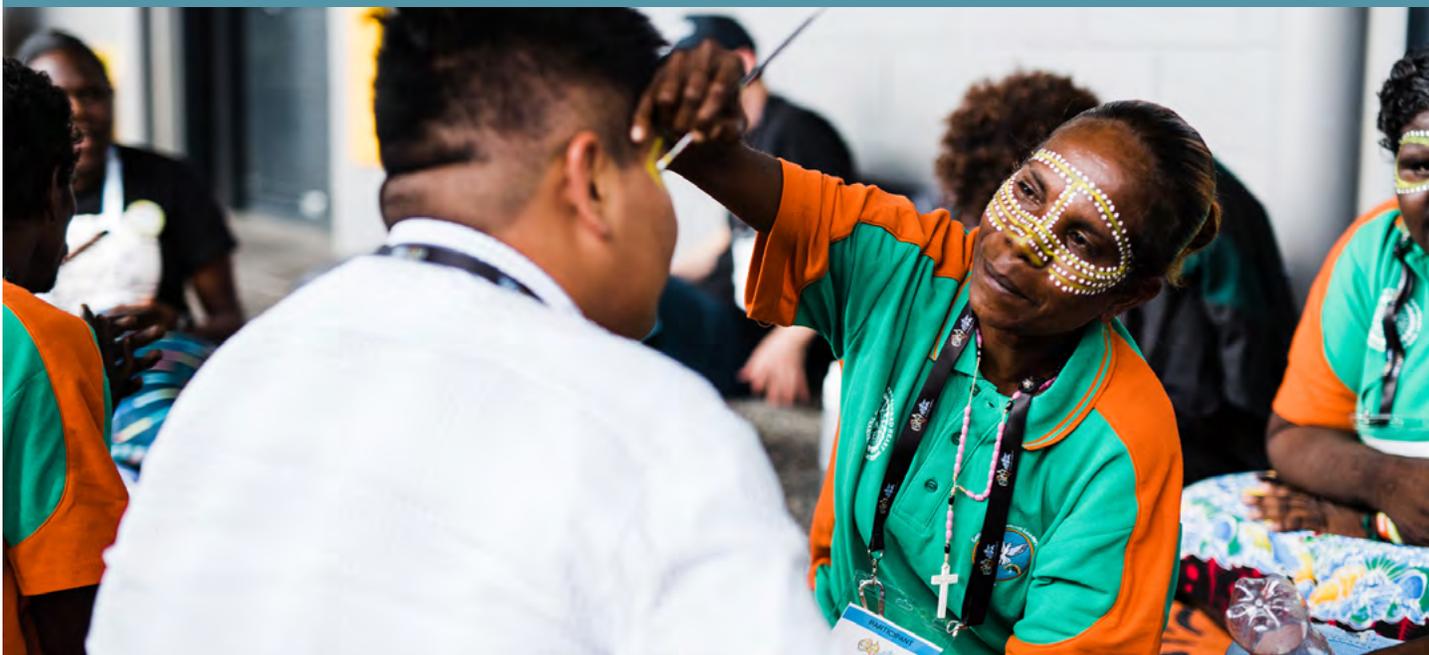


## JESSICA

MELBOURNE

**From the ages 15 to 20, I attended a young adult faith formation group through my parish.** It taught the Church's teaching on moral and ethical issues, it also covered explanations on the Mass. Guest speakers were invited and it was well attended. I am ever grateful for this formative opportunity, given to me through the generosity of young, faithful, passionate lay Catholics. This adult formation set me up for life; I still recall the basic principles I learnt 15 years ago on absolute truth, transubstantiation and ethics relating to abortions and euthanasia.





### **RELEASED REPORTS:**

Missionary and Evangelising [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary)

### **UPCOMING REPORTS:**

Prayerful and Eucharistic	JUNE 30, 2019
Humble, healing and merciful	JULY 7, 2019
A Joyful, hope-filled and servant community	JULY 14, 2019
Open to conversion, renewal and reform	JULY 21, 2019

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# Snapshot Report

How is God calling us to be a  
Christ-centred Church that is:

# PRAYERFUL AND EUCHARISTIC

AS WE MOVE INTO THIS SECOND STAGE OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL JOURNEY, WE CONTINUE TO SEEK THE WISDOM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Beginning in July 2019, we are invited to reflect on Scripture, Church teaching and our contemporary situation in order to discern the answer to this question: How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is prayerful and Eucharistic? The fruits of what is discerned during this time will help shape the agenda of the first session of Plenary Council in October 2020.

This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who shared how deeply they treasured the Eucharist and the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. There was a call for stronger and more engaging preaching, with an emphasis on the Word of God and connection to daily life, some seeking a uniquely Australian expression of prayer and Eucharistic celebration, drawing from the wisdom and rituals of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and also bringing together the many migrant communities which make up the Church in Australia. There were many divergent expressions of ways in which people and communities encounter God through their experiences of prayer, music and liturgy, and a desire for catechesis, training and formation for those in ministries related to these.

## TOPICS: WHAT DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT?

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Below are some of the topics that informed this particular theme, which was created through a combination of analysis, discernment and prayer.

- Acknowledge Christ's presence in the Eucharist
- Affordable adult faith formation courses
- Authentic faith teaching in Catholic schools
- Better attention to all aspects of liturgy
- Better communication of what the Church does
- Better Faith formation
- Better formation for liturgical ministries and sacramental programs
- Better homilies
- Charismatic spirituality
- Church to act as a guide for Australian society
- Contemplative spirituality
- Cultural Masses
- Eucharistic adoration
- Greater attention to music in the liturgy
- Greater emphasis on prayer and Sacraments
- Greater focus on Jesus Christ
- Greater focus on the Word of God
- Greater involvement of the laity
- Greater leadership from Bishops
- Greater leadership from priests
- Greater support for RCIA
- Greater trust, faith and hope in God
- Importance of Communion services in rural parishes
- Keep the commandments
- Keep the faith
- Listen to the Holy Spirit
- Mass to be appealing to youth and children
- New translation of the Mass (inclusive language)
- Pray the Rosary
- Remain faithful to Church teaching
- Remain faithful to Church teaching on marriage
- Renewed call to holiness
- Return to Traditional Latin Mass
- Return to traditional pre-Vatican II ways

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

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

“Eucharistic Adoration: For Churches to offer daily Holy Hours or, where possible, perpetual Eucharistic Adoration to grow deeper in faith”.

“Pray more. To be more reverent at Mass.

God wants us to obey God’s truth in the Bible, God wants us to obey the 10 Commandments. God wants us to say the Rosary. God wants us to love Him. God wants a personal relationship with Him”.

“I think God is wanting us so-called Christians to get involved with learning more about our faith, to enable us to pass information onto the outside world; that is, hungry to know the truth. We can’t say we go to Mass and think that is all God expects of us”.

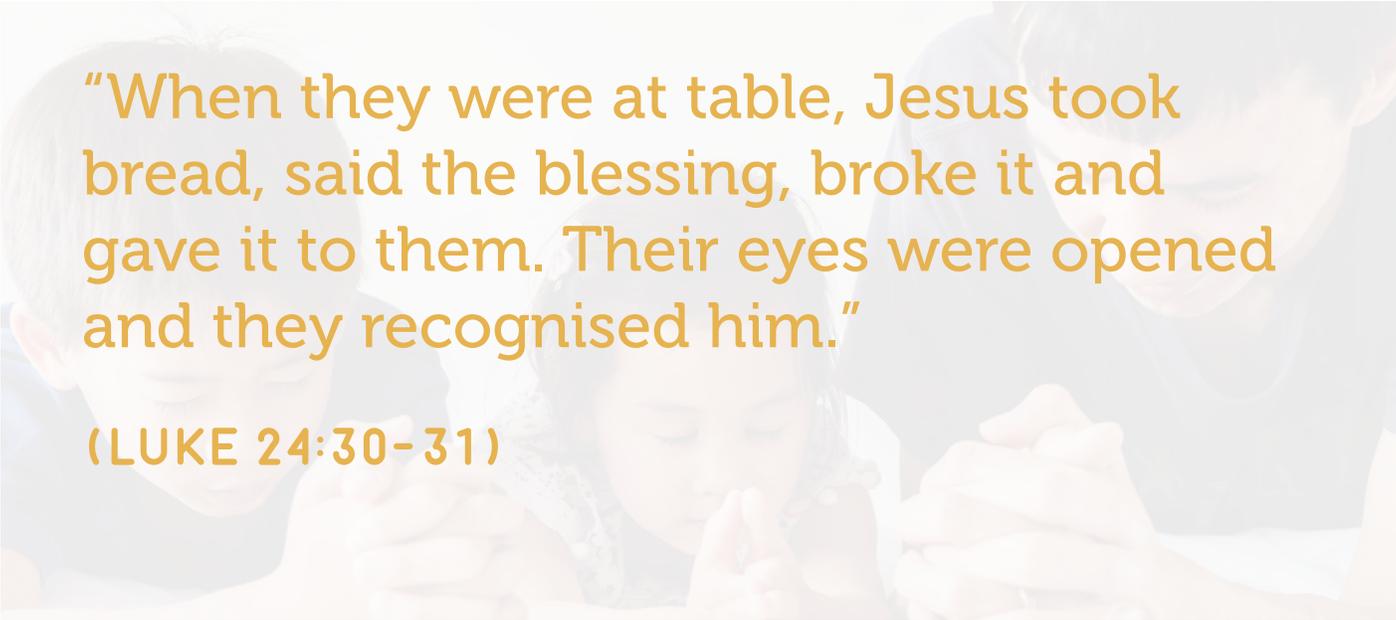
“Firstly to be patient. Many improvements/revivals in the Catholic Church over the centuries came from new movements inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, to listen. Much wrongdoing in our present society is very apparent if we revert to ‘first’ Christian principles.

“God is asking us not to give up on Catholic schools.

I want Catholic education authorities to value the religious life of the Catholic school, not as a photo op or a 20-second sound bite, but as places that privilege the transmission of Catholic culture, where both tradition and contemporary life are valued”.

Thirdly, we need to act: The Church and its members are too institutionalised and divorced from what is happening in our own neighbourhoods. We are not doing or acting like Christ would have done and in fact what Christ is still today wanting us to do. I think Pope Francis is making a definite leap in this direction”.



“When they were at table, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognised him.”

(LUKE 24:30-31)

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

## What questions do you have about the future of Australia that you would like the Plenary Council to consider?

“What does it mean to live a true Christian life?”

“How can we encourage all Catholics to be open to the Spirit working in people in different ways, through different forms of liturgy (traditional and charismatic), different types of worship and different faith responses to the Spirit in individuals and communities?”

“How do we get people to return to prayer when we live in such a fast-paced life?”

“Can lay-led liturgy be made to resemble the Mass more closely in regards to the prayers that are not part of lay-led liturgy but are part of the Mass?”

“How do all the faithful called to prayer and a living relationship with Jesus Christ learn about their faith through the Sacraments, catechesis, ongoing education and following the traditions of the Church in a multicultural society which has become very secular?”

A SNAPSHOT OF

# Your Stories of Faith

## ALAN

72 YEARS OLD, SYDNEY

**As someone from a strong Catholic family,** I had the benefit of a good Catholic upbringing and education. After school, I joined the local parish CYO where I met my future wife, who also had experienced a similar faith journey. Throughout our lives we have engaged in retreats, parish missions, family group activities and RCIA programs. These have helped to continue our faith experiences.



## CELIA

58 YEARS OLD, MELBOURNE

**At the daily Mass I attend,** the priest will give a short three- to five-minute homily directly relevant to the Gospel and which aims to teach the faithful some key component of living Christian life and challenge us to live the faith better. The best homilies get to the point quickly and are not afraid of speaking clearly about the demands and rigour of living Catholic faith to the full.



## ANONYMOUS

**I came close to God through crisis.** In many ways I feel like the prodigal son. When my wife was diagnosed with cancer at [in her 20s] my understanding of my faith was changed forever. Two years into her journey, I had completely turned my back on God – why would a loving God allow my wife to die and be in so much pain? Why would he let her get cancer at precisely the time we were planning to have children? Why would my life be completely disrupted to become her carer – losing my job and moving away from friends and family? I did not understand God, or where He was in my life at all. But I did witness my wife completely surrender her life to Him. She knew she was going to die and that God would take her to Heaven when He was ready for her. Three-and-a-half years after the diagnosis, He did exactly that. And I then realised that God was helping me the whole time – He was working through me to care for her, to be God for her and to love her. I sacrificed everything to care for her, but God gave me the physical, emotional and mental strength to carry [my wife] through her difficult earthly pilgrimage.

Read more stories and snapshots at [plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/voices-of-the-plenary-council/](https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/voices-of-the-plenary-council/)



### **RELEASED REPORTS:**

Missionary and evangelising  
Inclusive, participatory and synodal

[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary)  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive)

### **UPCOMING REPORTS:**

Humble, healing and merciful  
A joyful, hope-filled and servant community  
Open to conversion, renewal and reform

JULY 7, 2019  
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AND MERCIFUL**

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This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who expressed a deep and faith-filled trust in God and a need for lament and healing within the Church, acknowledging the sexual abuse crisis as a turning point for the Church in Australia. It identified the need for relationship and reconciliation among many within the Catholic community, and with the wider Australian society, particularly with Australia's First Peoples and with all of creation. A desire was expressed for stronger prayer and sacramental life and more effective outreach to those who seek healing, as a renewed openness to and sign of God's mercy.

## TOPICS: WHAT DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT?

People spoke about a number of different topics in **PHASE 1: LISTENING & DIALOGUE**. A comprehensive report on all the voices of participants will be released on **JULY 28, 2019**.

Below are some of the topics that informed this particular theme, which was created through a combination of analysis, discernment and prayer.

- Allow contraception, birth control
- Baby Boomer generation to listen to young Catholics
- Be a witness in society
- Better communication of what the Church does
- Better homilies
- Better implementation of Royal Commission recommendations
- Better training and support for youth leaders
- Call to repentance for clergy sexual abuse
- Care for neighbour
- Care for the environment
- Care for the family
- Defend right-to-life issues
- End clericalism
- End discrimination of LGBTQ
- Establish more youth programs
- Fight for human rights issues
- Focus on the new evangelisation
- Greater access to Mass and Reconciliation
- Greater concern for victims and survivors
- Greater connection with and inclusion of Indigenous Australians
- Greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments
  - Greater focus on Jesus Christ
  - Greater focus on the Word of God
  - Greater leadership from bishops
- Greater leadership from priests
- Greater recognition of Eastern Catholic Churches
- Greater trust, faith and hope in God
- Heal and move beyond the clergy sexual abuse scandal
- Healing liturgies and public signs or acts of reparation for clergy sexual abuse
- Inclusion of the divorced and remarried
- Listen to one another more
- Mass to be appealing to youth and children
- More transparency and accountability regarding clergy sexual abuse
- More welcoming parishes
- New translation of the Mass (inclusive language)
- Outreach to all the baptised
- Outreach to the wider community
- Outreach to youth
- Reduce margins between rich and poor
  - Restore the Third Rite of Reconciliation
  - Special care of rural parishes
  - Stronger parish communities
- Transparency in governance and decision making
- Youth to be involved more in Church community

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

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

**“In Australia we still have a big divide between Indigenous brothers and the rest of us.**

**The Church needs to take a leading role in building reconciliation by adopting positive gestures that enhance and challenge this overdue reconciliation”.**

**“We’re living in the wake of the greatest possible disaster that could have descended upon the Church in this country—the sexual abuse crisis.**

**Firstly, I think God wants every possible effort to be directed towards offering assistance to victims of abuse in the Church.**

**Secondly, I think that God wants us as a Church collective to hang our head in shame”.**

**“Discern how to engage and bring to active faith those parents who send their children to Catholic schools but are not churchgoers.**

**Discern how to engage and bring to active faith the many people who attend Mass at Easter and Christmas or for Baptisms, but not otherwise”.**

**“Divorce is never wanted or planned for and, in some cases, necessary for the safety and wellbeing of the individuals involved.**

**The Church should not turn their backs on them as this denies their dignity and makes them less equal than their peers”.**

**“God is asking us to do something about the clericalism and subsequent abuse arising from this misuse of power. He is asking us to remember and come to know Jesus and to live as He did”.**

“By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”

(LUKE 1:78-79)

AUS: How do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

## What questions do you have about the future of Australia that you would like the Plenary Council to consider?

“How does the Church plan to address the issue of sex offenders within the Church and how will it support its victims?”

“Can we decrease authority in Church hierarchy and give some authority to the people?”

“How do we use Church resources for service to the poor?”

“How can we work to be more welcoming, inclusive, open, kind, loving, forgiving, compassionate, listening, and so build a ‘home/community’ Church for all, not just an institutional one?”

“How can we make the Church more inclusive of divorced and remarried, LGBTIQ, people with a disability, including the mentally ill, those who have been damaged by abuse in the Church—emotional, spiritual, physical and sexual abuse?”

A SNAPSHOT OF

# Your Stories of Faith

## GENNI

BUNBURY

**As a small group we are cradle Catholics with a strong faith base and love of God, but a floundering confidence in the institution that is the present Catholic Church.**

We want the Church to move forward to reflect a contemporary outreach while still upholding the high moral values with regards to abortion, euthanasia and the sanctity of marriage for example. We seek to see the Church open its eyes to the needs in the communities in which we live. For example, abolish the “clericalism” attitude of some clergy that causes division and lack of inclusiveness. Our personal experience has seen the Baptism of four babies by a paedophile priest while a former priest in a parish community is deemed unworthy of his priesthood (because he married), but he had been a major positive influence in the day-to-day care of the parish community.



## BENJAMIN

ARMIDALE

**To have the courage to let go the trappings of clericalism.** To let go of elitism and exclusion. To embrace the downtrodden, the heart broken, the marginalised. For us to contemplate, how each of us may serve the Other? How may we tear down boundaries and take action to walk with others- to show mercy, to forgive, to love. To lead the way in bringing light to darkness- to take action in living-love in all things. To contemplate and act holistically- in our spiritual, social, political, environmental lives.



## RUTH

SANDHURST

**The sexual abuse scandal, the anti-gay marriage rhetoric, the patriarchal nature of governance and the attitude towards contraception has made it impossible for [my children] to remain active participants.** All of my children are strong advocates for social justice and they applaud the Australian bishops for their stance on offshore detention and other issues such as climate change. However, the Church in Australia must engage with the other issues mentioned if it is to have a hope of retaining educated women within the ranks of its faithful. As a teacher in a Catholic school, I find the only way to recontextualise my faith so that it has relevance to my students is through social justice. I continually promote Caritas and all its wonderful work but I despair at times for the future of my parish and the Church in Australia as a whole.



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### **RELEASED REPORTS:**

Missionary and evangelising  
Inclusive, participatory and synodal  
Prayerful and Eucharistic

[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary)  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive)  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/prayerful](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/prayerful)

### **UPCOMING REPORTS:**

A joyful, hope-filled and servant community  
Open to conversion, renewal and reform

JULY 14, 2019  
JULY 21, 2019

Please note this report contains only a snapshot of thousands of stories and responses shared. A comprehensive report on the voices of participants will be released on July 28, 2019.

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# Snapshot Report

How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is

**A JOYFUL, HOPE-FILLED AND SERVANT COMMUNITY**

AS WE MOVE INTO THIS SECOND STAGE OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL JOURNEY, WE CONTINUE TO SEEK THE WISDOM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Beginning in July 2019, we are invited to reflect on Scripture, Church teaching and our contemporary situation in order to discern the answer to this question: How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is a joyful, hope-filled and servant community? The fruits of what is discerned during this time will help shape the agenda of the first session of Plenary Council in October 2020.

This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who expressed a yearning for the Church to be a sign of God's kingdom for all people in Australia – to be able to see the Catholic Church in action, and to recognise Jesus. There was an expression of faith-filled hope in the capacity of the Catholic community to celebrate together, to show what it is to be a follower of Christ and to be loved unconditionally by God. There was a call to contemplate the Gospel call to be a servant Church for the good of all people in Australia – particularly for refugees and asylum-seekers and other people who are vulnerable or at risk. Many responses called for greater sharing of the story of the good works done by so many people and organisations of the Church. Some responses expressed a hunger for strong witness of faith, especially by priests, young people and female leaders in parish and school ministries.

## TOPICS: WHAT DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT?

People spoke about a number of different topics in **PHASE 1: LISTENING & DIALOGUE**. A comprehensive report on all the voices of participants will be released on **JULY 28, 2019**.

Below are some of the topics that informed this particular theme, which was created through a combination of analysis, discernment and prayer.

- Acknowledge Christ's presence in the Eucharist • Authentic faith teaching in Catholic schools • Be a witness in society • Better attention to all aspects of liturgy • Better communication of what the Church does
- Better formation for liturgical ministries and sacramental programs • Better homilies • Better selection and formation of candidates to priesthood • Better use of finances • Care for neighbour • Charismatic spirituality • Church to act as a guide for Australian society • Contemplative spirituality • Creation of small communities/groups within parishes
- Cultural Masses • Defend right-to-life issues • End clericalism • Faith formation for parents • Greater access to Mass and Reconciliation • Greater attention to music in the liturgy • Greater connection with and inclusion of Indigenous Australians • Greater focus on Jesus Christ • Greater focus on permanent deacons • Greater focus on the Word of God
- Greater inclusion of all people • Greater leadership from priests • Greater trust, faith and hope in God • Hierarchy to listen to the Laity • Keep the faith • Laity supporting priests • Listen to one another more • Listen to the Holy Spirit • Mass to be appealing to youth and children • More welcoming parishes • Outreach to all the baptised
- Outreach to the wider community • Outreach to youth • Overseas priests • Parish pastoral council • Parishes involved in planning for the future • Pray the Rosary • Putting Gospel values in action • Renewed call to holiness • Share the faith with others • Stronger parish communities • Work together in unity • Youth to be involved more in Church community

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

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

“The Church in Australia is completely fragmented. Unify the approach for the future so that all priests and laity are ‘on the same page’.

At present, each diocese, and even each parish, follows its own rules, set by the bishop or, in some cases, the parish priest. The Church must come together in order to survive. Some parishes are very progressive in their thinking and practices, but others follow a very hard-line conservative approach”.

“Strengthen our practice as Christians through public worship and genuine assistance to the people seeking a loving relationship with Jesus. We need to reach people who are not inclined to attend established public worship”.

“To be not afraid in this time of the denial of God as God is always with us.

To pray, pray, pray. Prayer is the oxygen of the soul and without it we cannot be close to God. Bishops, priests and religious nuns should constantly encourage the faithful to pray the Rosary and to frequently spend time in Adoration of the Holy Eucharist. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is much neglected in these times and the faithful should be constantly urged by bishops and priests to return to the practice of monthly Reconciliation”.

“To serve Him and others. Love always and grow in love with others. Pray more. Live out the Gospel values. Increased discussions on bigger issues, e.g. poverty, abortion. The ability to discuss our beliefs with everyone. Practise what we preach and believe. Celebrate the greater things in life. Be appreciative of the gifts God gave each of us. Include and accept all cultures within our community. Remember that God loves us unconditionally. Take care of our environment”.

“To turn back to prayer in our daily lives.

To look for good in others, put them first, love our neighbour. We pray when we are in trouble, but must remember to thank God when our prayers are answered. Look after the elderly and sick in our parish.

To give back to them for their long service to our parish life. They may need someone to visit them and support them. This is a very worthwhile parish ministry to be encouraged.

To have some follow-up with parents who have attended the preparation classes for their children to receive the sacraments to encourage them to attend Sunday Mass in the future and join our parish life”.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Each day they met together in the Temple; they broke bread in their homes; they shared their food with great joy and sincerity of heart; they praised God and won the favour of all the people.”

(LUKE 1:78-79)

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

## What questions do you have about the future of Australia that you would like the Plenary Council to consider?

“How do we engage people to be members of their parish community?”

“How do we offer hope to the Catholic people of Australia?”

“How can we better integrate our many foreign-born priests into the Australian Church?”

“Are we willing to return to the simplicity and fidelity required to reawaken a love of God’s truth in the world?”

“Can liturgy be more a means of expression of what is happening in a community—joy, grief, forgiveness, etc.—rather than a rigid adherence to ‘ritual’ which is not always relevant to a situation or life-giving?”

A SNAPSHOT OF

# Your Stories of Faith

## EUGENIA

BRISBANE

**Some parishes are very welcoming as they know their community and are attentive to each other.** In this way, they practise charity and more people will be willing to engage in their activities. [At one parish] the parish council is aware of greeting newcomers, they organise a monthly morning tea with the community and celebrate special occasions together.



## JOHN

BRISBANE

**We enjoyed the RCIA journey and were confirmed at the Easter Vigil.** About 17 years later, I attended a Cursillo retreat and it also renewed my faith and helped me understand more about community. We are involved in a small Rosary group at the moment and the friendship and joy that has brought to me has been incredible. I am so glad that God brought me to the Church and that it was in the post-Vatican II era. The people really are the body of Christ along with all true believers.



## PATRICK

MELBOURNE

**I had a mother who had great faith which she received from her mother.** Their faith was sustained by Mass and the family Rosary. They attended state schools as they lived in a remote area. Mum could argue intelligently with any trained theologian as she had received a deep understanding of her faith from her mother. I witnessed the power of prayer and how often it is answered even when you think that there is no hope – almost miraculous – definitely astounding and very impressive. Mum used to say the Rosary will sustain your faith. I gave up the daily Rosary eventually. I then realised that my life just wasn't working. I went back to it and I have noticed an enormous improvement in almost every area. I suspect the Rosary requires things like faith, hope, trust, humility, self sacrifice and contemplation on the core moments of Gospels.



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### **RELEASED REPORTS:**

Missionary and evangelising  
Inclusive, participatory and synodal  
Prayerful and Eucharistic  
Humble, healing and merciful

[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary)  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive)  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/prayerful](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/prayerful)  
[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/humble](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/humble)

### **UPCOMING REPORTS:**

Open to conversion, renewal and reform

JULY 21, 2019

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# Snapshot Report

How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is

**O P E N T O  
C O N V E R S I O N,  
R E N E W A L A N D R E F O R M**



**AS WE MOVE INTO THIS SECOND STAGE OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL JOURNEY, WE CONTINUE TO SEEK THE WISDOM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** Beginning in July 2019, we are invited to reflect on Scripture, Church teaching and our contemporary situation in order to discern the answer to this question: How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is open to conversion, renewal and reform? The fruits of what is discerned during this time will help shape the agenda of the first session of the Plenary Council in October 2020.

This National Theme for Discernment is inspired by the voices of the People of God who expressed a desire to do things differently in response to Christ and the experience of our people, accepting that faithfulness to tradition requires change that is both personal and communal. Respondents also affirmed the important role of the clergy, expressing their appreciation for their vocation and recognising the need for support and ongoing formation and accompaniment. Some asked for a consideration of alternative approaches to ordained ministry, some for a greater inclusion of laity and different groups in the Church's life, some for new models of governance and leadership, and some for a renewed fidelity to the Church's teachings. There was also a call for a renewed life of prayer and communion with one another, including understanding the many different ways in which we encounter God and experience a conversion of heart.

## TOPICS: WHAT DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT?

People spoke about a number of different topics in **PHASE 1: LISTENING & DIALOGUE**. A comprehensive report on all the voices of participants will be released on **JULY 28, 2019**.

Below are some of the topics that informed this particular theme, which was created through a combination of analysis, discernment and prayer.

- Better communication of what the Church does
- Better formation for liturgical ministries and sacramental programs
- Better implementation of Royal Commission recommendations
- Better Plenary Council process
- Better selection and formation of candidates to priesthood
- Better teachers in Catholic schools
- Better use of finances
- Charismatic spirituality
- Communion for all
- Concerns for diminishing parish communities
- Contemplative spirituality
- Creation of small communities/groups within parishes
- Diocesan Pastoral Council
- End celibacy, allow priests to be married
- End clericalism
- End discrimination of LGBTQ
- Fight for human rights issues
- Focus on the new evangelisation
- Greater focus on Jesus Christ
- Greater focus on permanent deacons
- Greater focus on the Word of God
- Greater inclusion of all people
- Greater involvement of the laity
- Greater leadership from bishops
- Greater leadership from priests
- Greater trust, faith and hope in God
- Heal and move beyond the clergy sexual abuse scandal
- Healing liturgies and public signs or acts of reparation for clergy sexual abuse
- Hierarchy to listen to the Laity
- Inclusion of the divorced and remarried
- Laity supporting priests
- Lay-led parishes
- Lay-led liturgies and Masses
- Listen to one another more
- Listen to the Holy Spirit
- Mass to be appealing to youth and children
- Modernise Church teachings
- New leadership and governance model
- New model of Church, diocese, parish
- New translation of the Mass (inclusive language)
- Ordaining married men to be priests
- Ordination of women
- Overseas priests
- Parish pastoral council
- Parishes involved in planning for the future
- Radical change, a new order, inverted pyramid
- Reduce margins between rich and poor
- Renewed call to holiness
- Restore the Third Rite of Reconciliation
- Servant leadership
- Support same-sex marriage
- Transparency in governance and decision-making
- Use social media to engage people
- Welcome back priests who have left to marry
- Women deacons

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

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

“Adopt a change of heart. Adopt a team approach and inclusivity within the Church. Adopt the Gospel values. All baptised have a role in the life and mission of the Church...”.

“As a community voice, the vision we have for an Australian Catholic Church is that it be a place for all Australian Catholics. At the moment, it is not. I would like to see our Church be more inclusive. We exclude the very people Jesus would have walked out of His way to help”.

“To form a cooperative structure of bishop, priests, religious and laity to lead and oversight the leadership and management of the Church. This could be done by a group of people working together as a pastoral council of the diocese or as a group of 6 or 8 on an elected ‘Board’;. There would be an equal number of women and laity”.

“Leaders in the Church, especially bishops, priests and consecrated members, need to be courageous in sharing their faith without compromising on any of the more controversial topics as models for the rest of the members of the Church, especially those members who are disheartened or afraid to proclaim Christ’s teachings”.

“Bishops and priests are called upon more than ever to bear witness to the Gospel values of humility, service and solidarity with ordinary people, especially the poor - in fact and deed, not just in words. As Pope Paul VI once said, ‘The Church needs witnesses more than teachers’—now more than ever!”.

“Priests should have a choice as to whether they wish to marry and have families and serve God in a vocation they have been called to. This can also enable them to minister and support families who are in crises”.

“After John the Baptist had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee and began preaching the Good News of God. He said, ‘The time has come; the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Good News.’”

**(MARK 1:14-15)**

A SNAPSHOT OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION

## What questions do you have about the future of Australia that you would like the Plenary Council to consider?

“How do we empower our youth to take on more of a leadership role?”

“How can women be included into the governance of the Church at the highest levels?”

“How can a more synodal approach to leadership in the Church at parish and diocesan levels be exercised as a shared responsibility, by virtue of baptism, between both lay and clergy?”

“Our parish clergy are overworked, stressed and stretched beyond reasonable limits. Moving beyond strategies of parish amalgamation and closure, what other options will we explore—and by that I mean, the non-ordained role in making pastoral decisions?”

“Will you review the annulment process so it is more understanding of real life circumstances and not punish someone whose marriage has ended— particularly if it has ended due to abuse and deception?”

“Are you willing to put aside traditions (‘this is the the way we have always done things’) and dedicate yourselves to prayer to hear from and listen to the quiet, still leading of the Holy Spirit—what God has for the next chapter of the Catholic Church is Australia? ”

“How will sacraments be administered with declining numbers of clergy?”

“How do we provide much better support for priests new to their role as leaders; priests in a new country; priests new to a diocese or different place?”

A SNAPSHOT OF

# Your Stories of Faith

## PAULINE

PERTH

**We had a wonderful parish priest.** His humility, willingness to serve, selflessness and compassion changed my life at a time when I was considering looking for an alternative parish or maybe even denomination. He made every person in our large parish feel important to God. Because of the way he radiates the love of Christ, people wanted to be involved. He taught me that humility, gentleness, patience and love are the key to closeness to Jesus. Priests who are part of the parish community, not set apart from the community, make such a difference.



## PENELOPE

BROKEN BAY

**As a married couple with young children, [our local parish] formed my ideal of parish: a warm community with many people participating eagerly in parish activities.** So what was the secret of this parish? I suggest it was a priest who listened to his people, discerned their needs and acted on what he heard; who was warm, democratic and inclusive. As a result, the parishioners responded with wholehearted participation and helped each other both in their spiritual lives and in their very active family lives. Perhaps it was a function of the time and the place, and perhaps now it would not be possible to work in exactly that way, but I need to believe that my experience of vibrant and nourishing parish life is still possible in Australia.



## ANONYMOUS

MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

**One of our group has a gay brother who stopped going to his local parish community as he felt unwelcomed by the wider Church.** He wanted to be an active, practising Catholic who could receive Communion, but felt outcast under existing Church rules. It also put a great strain on his relationship with his practising sister as she was in terrible conflict between her love for her brother and her loyalty to obeying the Church rules. This conflict also extended to their wider family. In the end, he stayed away from church as a way of minimising the family conflict. The sister is realising that Jesus always loved and never judged the marginalised people he came into contact with and that people must always be put ahead of rules in a truly merciful Church. Surely, as a Church, we must be doing the same and welcoming the brother fully into our community.

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## RELEASED REPORTS:

Missionary and evangelising	<a href="http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary">plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/missionary</a>
Inclusive, participatory and synodal	<a href="http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive">plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/inclusive</a>
Prayerful and Eucharistic	<a href="http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/prayerful">plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/prayerful</a>
Humble, healing and merciful	<a href="http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/humble">plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/humble</a>
Joyful, hope-filled servant community	<a href="http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/servant">plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/servant</a>

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