



## PAPERS IN PREPARATION FOR THE PLENARY COUNCIL

From February to April this year, I worked with a dozen people from around Australia to write a paper about the Church as a prayerful and Eucharistic community. We met twice in person and then, when the COVID-19 restrictions came in, we met by videoconference. Most of the group were lay people. We were from different states. We ranged in age from young adults to senior citizens (such as myself). We brought our different points of view but we shared a common interest in the Church, particularly in the Church as a prayerful and Eucharistic community of people.

We were one of six groups given the task of preparing papers on various aspects of the life of the Church. It was part of the process leading up to the Plenary Council to be held in 2021 and 2022. At the same time as we were meeting, five other groups were working on five other papers, focussing on other aspects of the Church's life. The themes for the papers were drawn from the discussions in Catholic communities around the country in 2019, discussions that involved 220,000 people. The six papers have just been published – appropriately on Pentecost Sunday, which is so strongly linked to the beginnings of the Church as a community filled with the Holy Spirit.

Each paper provides some reflections on the topic, notes some challenges and questions, and makes some proposals about how we could grow as a Church community. We can read the papers in full on the Plenary Council website [here](#).

Here I offer a few lines about each one.

The first paper asks how God is calling us to be a **Christ-centred Church** that is **missionary** and **evangelising**. The focus is on how we might fulfil the command of Christ, "Go, make disciples of all the nations". How can we share the good news of Jesus in Australia today?

The second paper reflects on the Church as an **inclusive** community, embracing a great multitude from every tribe, language and nation. How can we encourage everyone to contribute their gifts to the life of the community? How can we be a "synodal" Church, a community that walks together along the road that Christ marks out for us.

The third paper is the one about the Church as **prayerful** and **Eucharistic**. Being prayerful involves being in touch with God in personal and communal ways. In developing our prayer, we can draw on the rich tradition of the Church as well as the inspiration that the Spirit gives today. In being Eucharistic, we give praise and thanks to God, most wonderfully when we gather for the celebration of the Eucharist. Like the first disciples, we recognise Christ in the breaking of the bread and we are sent out from the Eucharist to love and serve as Jesus did.

The fourth paper asks how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is **humble**, **healing** and **merciful**. The paper recalls the Mass that Pope Francis celebrated on Holy Thursday in 2018 in the Regina Coeli Prison in Rome. As is customary on Holy Thursday, the Mass included a ceremony of washing of feet. On that occasion, the Holy Father washed the feet of 12 prison inmates from different cultural and faith backgrounds. In doing so, he was following the example of Jesus at the Last Supper, washing the feet of the disciples in humble service.

The fifth paper focuses on the call to be a **joyful**, **hope-filled** and **servant** community. We can rejoice in the blessings we have in Australia – the great natural beauty, the abundance of resources, and the gift of a generally peaceful society. At the same time, we recognise that there are problems to be faced – problems such as financial pressures, loneliness, physical and mental illness, and the devastating impact of drought, fire and flood. We are called to address such issues in a spirit of hope.

The sixth paper asks how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is open to **conversion, renewal** and **reform**. We recognise the call to conversion as a basic element of the gospel. We respond to this call when we acknowledge personal and communal failings and seek to live more authentically as Christ has taught us.

Over the coming months, these six papers will contribute to the framing of the agenda for the sessions of the Plenary Council.

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