

Let's Listen & Discern



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



Missionary and evangelising



Inclusive, participatory and synodal



Humble, healing and merciful



Prayerful and Eucharistic



A joyful, hope-filled and servant community



Open to conversion, renewal and reform

Welcome

Thank you for participating in the second phase of preparing for the Plenary Council 2020. In this phase, we are continuing to listen to what the Spirit is saying as we move from listening and dialogue, into listening and discernment.

This is a process of Communal discernment, rather than individual discernment. As such, we are called to work together as a group. The process you are going to engage with today is built upon the practice of Spiritual Conversations¹. It is a process of prayer, contemplation, sharing with one another and seeking God's direction. As the Holy Spirit guides the Church in Australia, all are welcome to participate and discern together.

¹Spiritual Conversations is a part of the process of Communal discernment. The practice outlined in these pages is drawn from primarily from the Ignatian tradition of the Spiritual Exercises as well as other resources and practices of discernment.

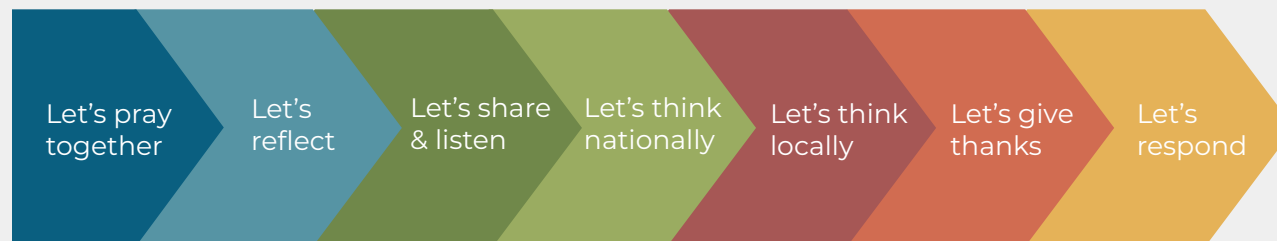
Let's prepare

As a group, choose one of the National Themes for Discernment your small group is going to focus on for your Listening & Discernment experience.

Ensure that all people in the group have the following resources:

- The Snapshot Report or the relevant section from the Final Report for your selected National Theme for Discernment
- The Listening and Discernment guide
- Scripture passage related to the National Theme for Discernment
- Notepad and pen / Personal journal

The Listening & Discernment experience



Time/Duration: 2 – 2.5 hours.
Number of participants: Maximum 10-12 per group.
Suggested location: Anywhere quiet.

Let's gather & pray together

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and we recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and honour them for their sacrifice and stewardship.

Gathering Prayer

You may like to say together the prayer provided below, pray the Plenary Council prayer or just speak to God from your heart. See more prayer resources on the Plenary Council webpage here: <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/pray/>

✠ Lord,
You once told us,
'Just as you did it to one of the least of these, who are members of my family, you did it to me.'
May our eyes be opened to the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned.
May our minds be freed from the bounds of self-interest, fear and prejudice.
May our hearts be moved to recognise and respond to the needs of your people.
May we be open to the fruits of your Spirit, so that our thoughts, words and actions can be infused with love, peace, compassion and selflessness.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.



Let's reflect

Listening to scripture

Choose your scripture readings from the guide provided, these relate to each National Theme for Discernment. Ensure each group member has access to the scripture text during the reflection time.

1. One person from the group reads the Scripture passage aloud.
2. After 2 minutes of silence, a second person from the group reads the Scripture passage aloud again.

Individual silent reflection

For at least 20 minutes, take time to reflect individually in silence, pray with the scripture passage you have heard, and reflect on the information about the National Theme for Discernment your group is focused on.

During this time of silence, consider the questions below. You may wish to journal, to draw or simply sit quietly with your thoughts.

How is God speaking to you in this scripture and all that you have read?
What words or phrases are you being drawn to and why?
How do you feel?



Let's share & listen

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Spiritual Conversations

This practice of Spiritual Conversations is taken from the Ignatian tradition. It is a part of the Communal discernment process and provides a way for groups of people to listen to God, by listening to one another. It is a way for us to listen to the voice of the Spirit.

After your time of individual silent reflection, regather together as a group, sitting in a circle.

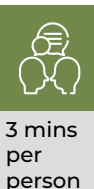
Sharing & listening, Round 1

Each person in the circle takes 2-3 minutes to share aloud with the group the fruits of your individual prayer, and say how you are feeling using the lead-in statements below.

Anyone in the group can begin, and the person on their left is the next person to share. Continue clockwise around the circle, until each person in the group has had their turn.

When others are speaking, remember to listen with an open and humble heart.

*"In my prayer today...
And I feel..."*



Reflect

Once everybody has shared, the whole group reflects in silence for 5 minutes. During this time, think about what you have heard the people in your group say, and ask yourself: "What am I hearing the Holy Spirit saying to us?"



Sharing & listening, Round 2

Each person in the circle takes 2 minutes to share with the group from their reflection. What have you heard the Spirit saying in the voices of the group? Use the lead-in statements below.

This time when sharing, do not add anything new to the conversation – just your response to what you have heard already shared.

*"Listening to the Holy Spirit through the voices of this group,
I have heard..."
"And it leaves me feeling..."*



Reflect

Once everybody has shared, the whole group reflects in silence for 5 minutes. During this time, think about how you are feeling and about your experience of prayer and listening today.



Sharing & listening, Round 3

This third round of sharing and listening is open, less structured than the previous two rounds. The purpose of open conversation is to deepen your encounter with one another. Any person who wants to speak is invited to share. During this time, remember to listen deeply when someone else is speaking, and to respond to the conversation with an open and kind heart.

In light of all you have experienced today, share your thoughts and feelings with the group. When sharing, you might like to begin with these words:

*From my prayer today and listening to the voices of the group,
I feel...*



When the time is right, close the conversation by saying thank you to one another for sharing and invite everyone to enjoy a short break. Remember to note the time to get back together after the break.

Break Time



Let's think nationally

Reflect

The whole group reflects in silence for 5 minutes. During this time, think about the concrete, practical steps which could be taken to move forward in the thematic area you have been focused on today.



5 mins

For example: If you have been discerning *participatory and synodal* ways of engaging young people, some practical suggestions might be to form a state-based peer-to-peer encounter network for young parents, or explore the development of an online faith platform to support young people's mental health, church partnership with Beyond Blue etc. Consider the questions below and write your ideas on paper or post-it notes.

- How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church in Australia that is (insert: National Theme for Discernment)? Consider some examples of good practice or programs, locally, nationally or globally that you are aware of that could be explored.

Sharing & listening

Each person in the circle takes 2-3 minutes to share their ideas with the group. If you have used Post-It notes, place these in the centre of the group as you speak about them.



10 mins

Anyone in the group can begin, and the person on their left is the next person to share. Continue clockwise around the circle, until each person in the group has had their turn.

When others are sharing their ideas, remember to listen with an open and humble heart. You can ask the person sharing about their idea for understanding, and be sure to resist critique.

Group discussion, towards decision

Once everyone has shared their ideas for action, your group's task is to identify 2 or 3 emerging actions that can form the group's submission to the theme's Discernment and Writing Group.



20 mins

Below are some questions to guide your group's discernment:

What actions do we feel strongly called towards?

What actions could really help us to move toward becoming a Christ-centred

Church that is (insert National Theme for Discernment)?

What is the most loving response that the Spirit is calling us to?

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Remember, these actions need to be:

- clear
- stated as a positive
- as specific as possible
- a real action (practical, achievable and measurable)

Write down the 2 or 3 emerging actions that have been drawn from the discussions.

Your group can submit these to the Discernment and Writing Group for the theme being discerned, at the end of this session.

Reflect

An important part of discernment is listening to the voice of God within each one of us. This means we need to take notice of how we are feeling.



5 mins

Before submitting your group's response, take some time to reflect and pray individually on the emerging actions the group has identified. Ask God for a feeling of *consolation* – a feeling of peace or fullness of your heart about your decision.

How do I feel about our proposed actions, our group decision?

Let's think locally

Take some time now, as a group to discuss any ideas which might be acted upon locally, in your own lives, in parishes, communities or schools or in other parts of your local neighbourhood.



20 mins

Think about who you can collaborate with locally. You can speak with your Parish Priest or another community faith leader such as the Principal or parent leader at school, or local youth leaders, about your proposed ideas.

This part is your call to faith in action, living out the Gospel for God's mission.

What ideas do we have that can nourish our local faith community?

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Let's give thanks

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You may like to say together the prayer provided below, or pray the Plenary Council prayer, or just speak to God from your heart

Gracious God,
Through our experience of discernment,
you invited each of us
to hear the Holy Spirit in the voices of
others,
to challenge our own will, desires, fears and
prejudices and to be open to your will.

Lord Jesus, thank you for guiding us
as our beacon of light, truth and life
so that we can clearly see how best to
honour and serve you, our neighbours
and our true selves.

We pray that our decisions today
have stayed true to you
and to the faith and trust
that you have in us.

Through this experience,
may the Holy Spirit ignite
feelings of joy, and deeper faith,
greater hope and trust,
greater love and peace,
greater courage and compassion
in each of us and in your holy Church
as we journey forward together.
Amen ✠



5 mins

Let's respond

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Your group can send the outcomes of your Communal discernment (maximum 150 words) to the **Discernment and Writing Group** who are considering the same National Theme for Discernment that you have focused on in your group. You will find the link on the Plenary Council webpage under Discernment.

<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/listening-and-discernment/>

Thank you sincerely for continuing to engage in the Plenary Council process as we move toward the future God is calling us to.



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