

Let’s

Listen & Discern

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



Inclusive, participatory and synodal

*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 and your students are going to engage with is built upon a recontextualised practice of Spiritual Conversations[[1]](#footnote-1) tailored to meet young people where they are. It is a process of connection, prayer, reflection, 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.



1

Introduction

**Tell Us About You**



Each person in the circle introduces themselves by telling the group their name and school and answering the questions below. As facilitator please keep an eye on the time and move the conversation on after 8 minutes.

8 mins

*1. What is the last Disney movie that you watched?*

*2. What superhero or cartoon character would you have been as a child and why?*

*3. Which song reminds you the most of your life?*

**Archbishop Message**



Begin focusing the conversation on the purpose of the day.

5 mins

*Have a think back to the message from the Archbishop.*

*1. What was the energy/standout from what the Archbishop said?*

*2. What did you really like or respond to?*

*3. Did anything “fire you up” a bit? Why?*

2

Let’s reflect

**Scripture Passage**

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*The Archbishop is calling us to listen to the Holy Spirit, so let’s take a moment to centre ourselves and allow the Holy Spirit to connect with us through scripture.*

3 mins

**1 Timothy 4:12**

Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

*Let’s take a moment to sit with this passage in silence (pause for just a minute).*

**Individual Silent Reflection**



*I’d like to invite you to listen to your truth, wisdom, insights on this topic by considering the question:*

8 mins

What do you find challenging about the way the church does or does not include and provide opportunities to participate in a Christ-centred Church?

*Use the post-it notes provided, ensuring that you write each thought/answer on an individual post-it note.*



3

Let’s share & listen

**Sharing and Listening, Round 1**

Each student has 2-3 minutes to read out what is written on their post-it notes and place them in the middle. Anyone in the group can begin, and the person on their left is the next person to share their post-it notes. They are welcome to “pass” if they don’t feel comfortable sharing.

2-3 mins per person

This is a time of sharing and listening ***not*** responding so the other members of the group need to refrain from commenting. This may be difficult for some students, but it is part of the practice of Spiritual Conversations and provides a way for groups of people to listen to God, by listening to one another. Students will have an opportunity to respond shortly after everyone has shared.

**Reflection Time**

Once everybody has shared, the whole group reflects in silence for 2 minutes. During this time ask the students: “*What did you hear in common*?”.

2 mins

**Sharing and Listening, Round 2**

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Invite students to talk to the person beside them and share what they heard in common. When you feel the time is right invite the pairs to share with the whole group, asking one student to be the scribe writing down what everyone heard in common.

15 mins

**Reflection Time**



Check in with the group about how they feel they went from a discernment point of view.

2 mins

*How do you feel we went in listening to the common voice in the group?*

Invite the group to share some simple appreciations.

 LUNCH BREAK



4

Let’s think about “actions”

**Sharing and Listening, Round 3**

Invite the students to take a quick look at and comment on the summary page of what they heard in common. Remember to encourage students to listen deeply when someone else is speaking, and to respond to the conversation with an open and kind heart.

5 mins

**Reflection time**

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*We now want to identify one* ***action*** *that we as the church can do to move us forward to a more inclusive and participatory faith community. What you name must be real and doable. What you come up with is important, your voices are important. What you come up with here* ***will*** *go to the writing groups to help them with their discernment and preparation of the draft papers for the 2020 Plenary Council. Your actions and wisdom will not go into some cupboard and not be seen nor heard.*

5 mins

*What topic within this theme has the most energy for you and why? Sit with that in silence for some time. When you are ready write the topic area on your card (*e.g. Including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our liturgy more) *and place it in the middle considering the question:*

How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church in Australia that is Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal?

*Have a look at the all the topics in the middle and tick the three you feel most energy towards.*

Identify the topic that received the most ticks as this will be one your group will focus on. Remind the students not to be concerned if their topic is not picked. This doesn’t mean it is not important, rather they should consider taking it back to their school, parish and community to explore it further in that context.

**Reflection time**



Give each student another card as they once again sit in silence to reflect:

5 mins

What is a simple doable action that we as a faith community could engage in that addresses this topic and leads to our community locally (at your parish or school) or nationally becoming more inclusive and participatory?

Remind students of the difference between an outcome and an action. The action needs to be:

1. Clear

2. Stated as a positive

3. As specific as possible

4. A real action (practical, achievable and measurable)

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4

Let’s think about “actions”

10 mins

**Sharing and Listening**

Each student shares their action and places the card on the floor in the middle. Any student can start with the person on the left sharing next.

**Group Discussion, Towards Decision**

20 mins

Talk through the actions allowing all students to offer their comments, suggestions and questions making the space for all possibilities.

Which action do we feel strongly called towards?

Which action could really help us to move toward becoming a Christ-centred Church which is Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal?

What is the most open, compassionate and loving response that the Spirit is calling us to?

Similarly to before, ask students to tick the two actions they feel are most doable and practicable. Again, remind the students not to be concerned if their action is not chosen, as they can take it back to the school, parish and community to explore it further.

**Group Discussion, Towards Decision**

20 mins

Identify the action (or combination of actions) that have been chosen to go forward and shape a fifty-word summary of the action. The following process below will help scaffold the writing of this summary.

**What** is the action

**When** might it take place

**Where** might it take place

**What** will we need to make it work/happen

**Who** will action it

 **How** will we do it?

**Reflection**

Invite the students to reflect on their listening discernment process.

5 mins

How do I *feel* about our proposed action, our group discussion?

Conclude with simple appreciations.

1. *Spiritual Conversations is a part of the process of Communal discernment. The practice outlined in these pages is drawn from primarily the Ignatian tradition of the Spiritual Exercises as well as resources and practices of discernment.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)