



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

# Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

**A Report to the Diocese of Ballarat**

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## About this Report

The ACBC National Centre for Pastoral Research is pleased to provide you with this report on the Plenary Council project.

The findings in this report are a summary of submissions that were received from your diocese in Phase One of the Plenary Council process called 'Listening and Dialogue'. The National Centre for Pastoral Research was granted ethics approval for the data analysis of this stage in November 2018 through the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Christian Research Association.

The online process for submissions in Phase One opened on 20 May 2018 and ran until 6 March 2019. Due to the high response rate in the last two months, this deadline was extended to 13 March 2019.

The findings in this report include data from all submissions from your diocese that were received online, along with those received via email or in hard copy format, such as letters, books and submissions made through the 2018 Christmas card campaign.

The analysis provided in this report is mainly quantitative in nature and explores the demographic characteristics of individuals and groups that participated in the process. Some examples of these characteristics examined in the report are age, sex, country of birth, location and religion. This analysis was done using Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical software.

The report also includes a list of themes that were discussed by participants in their submissions related to the question: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?* A complete list of themes that were discussed nationally can be found in the report *Listen To What The Spirit Is Saying: Final Report for the Plenary Council Phase I: Listening and Dialogue*. This analysis was done using NVivo software.

Along with the list of themes, we have also included in this report the submissions of participants who consented to have their submission made public as well as released to their diocese. These submissions (made in response to Question 1: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?*) are published in full but have been de-identified in keeping with ethical protocols. Several participants made their submission through uploaded documents, while others uploaded additional material as part of their submission. These documents have been provided to the bishop of your diocese in electronic format.

The latter sections of this report contain a sample list of questions received from your diocese in response to Question 2: *What questions about the future of the Church in Australia would you like the Plenary Council to consider?* Along with this, a number of stories of faith or Church are shared, which were submitted by participants in response to Question 3: *Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?*

We hope you find this report insightful and helpful as we continue our work on the project.

Trudy Dantis

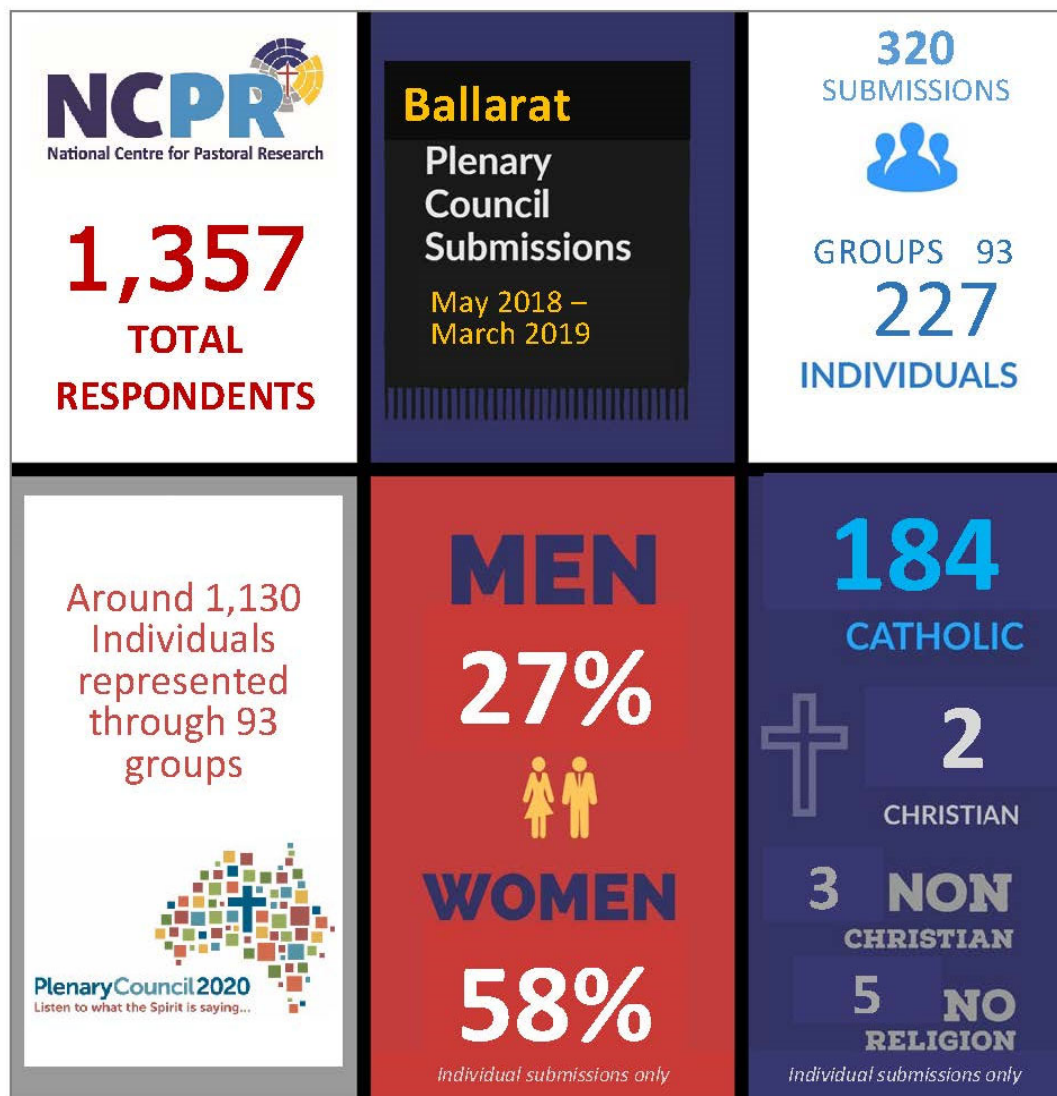
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## Diocesan Submissions Summary Snapshot: May 2018—March 2019



## Number of Submissions Received - all Australia

Across Australia, we received a total of 17,457 completed submissions from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 9,690 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue encounter. Another 2,113 were unsure if they had, so we presume they had not. Less than 26 per cent of the total number of respondents (4,402) indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 17,457 submissions, 4,699 were from groups or organisations and 12,758 submissions were from individuals. There were over 209,170 people represented through the 4,699 groups, bringing the total number of participants in the “Listening and Dialogue” process to over 222,000.

## Number of Submissions Received - Ballarat

The Plenary Council questionnaire did not ask respondents for the diocese in which they were located. However, it asked participants to type in their postcode. These postcodes were used as a basis for this analysis.

From the Diocese of Ballarat, we received a total of 320 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 197 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another 33 were unsure if they had. About 90 respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 320 submissions, 93 submissions were from groups or organisations and 227 submissions were from individuals. There were 1,130 people represented through the 93 groups. It is important to note, however, that not all groups completed this question, so total group numbers may be under-represented.

Overall, the total number of respondents from your diocese was 1,357.

<b>Table 1: Number of Submissions</b>	
<b>Total number of submissions received</b>	<b>320</b>
<b>Participated in Listening &amp; Dialogue Encounter?</b>	
Yes	197
No	90
Not sure	33
Not stated	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>
Submissions received from groups or organisations	93
Submissions received from individuals	227
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>

## INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 227 individual submissions had been received from your diocese. Most of the individual submissions were made online. However, a number were also received through letters, emails and the Christmas card campaign.

### Age of Respondents

Table 2 shows the ages of individual respondents from Ballarat. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 64 per cent (146) were received from those aged 50 and over. The most number of submissions within this age range were received from the 65-69 years age group (33 responses).

At the close of submissions, there were only 15 individual submissions received from those aged under 25.

Participants aged 16-17 were encouraged to discuss the questionnaire with their parent or guardian. Many of these responses came from schools that sent in their responses through the online survey. As Table 2 shows, there were ten individual submissions made from the 16-19 years age group in your diocese.

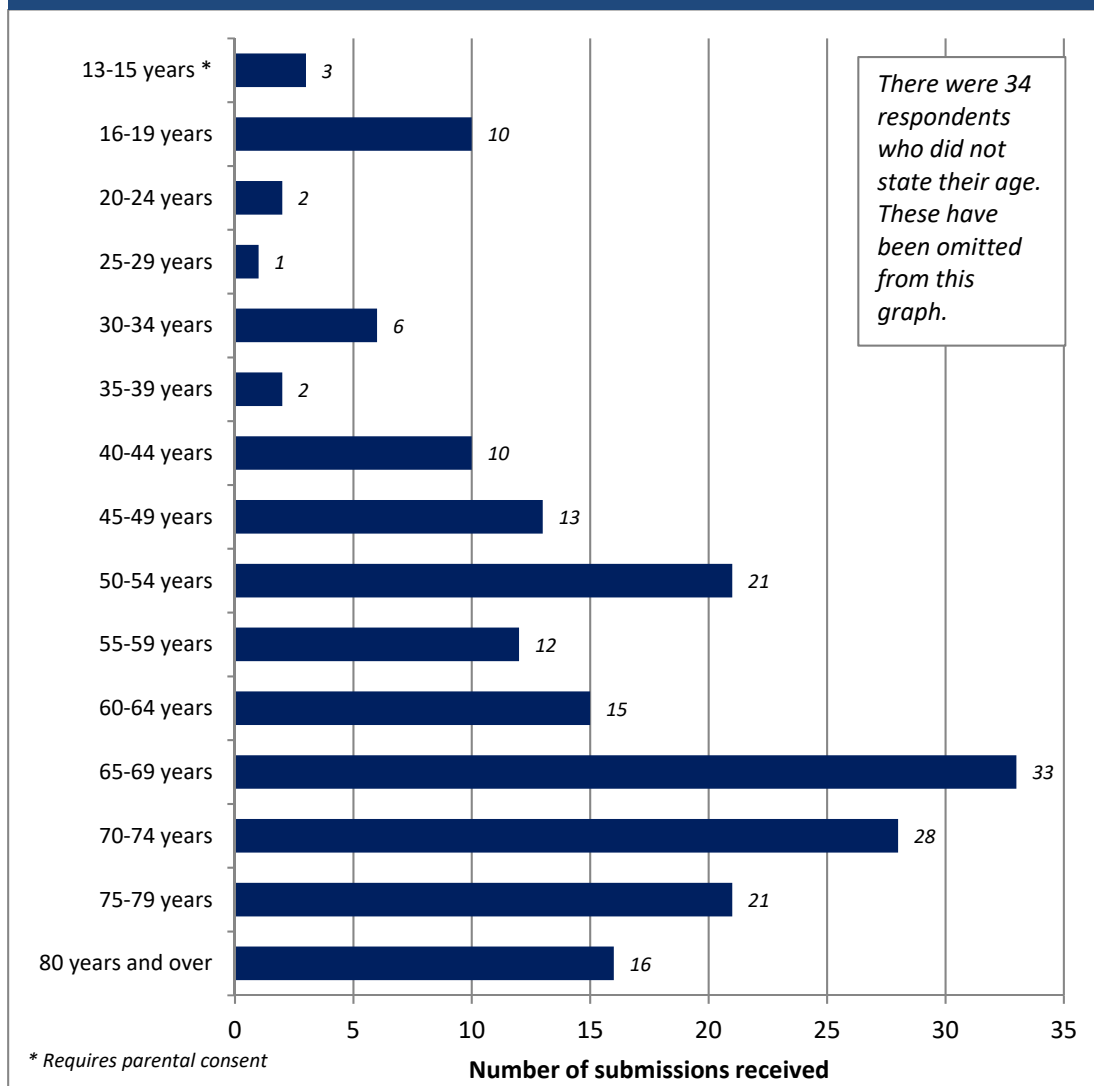
Participants aged 13-15 years were prompted to provide their parent or guardian's email address. An email was then automatically sent to seek consent for their child to participate in the study. There were three individual submissions made from this age group in your diocese.

**Table 2: Age groups (*individual responses only*)**

13-15 years *	3
16-19 years	10
20-24 years	2
25-29 years	1
30-34 years	6
35-39 years	2
40-44 years	10
45-49 years	13
50-54 years	21
55-59 years	12
60-64 years	15
65-69 years	33
70-74 years	28
75-79 years	21
80 years and over	16
Not stated	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>

*\* Requires parental consent*



**Fig. 1: Age groups (individual responses only)**

## Sex of Respondents

A little over half the number of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (58%), while a further 27 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 62 men and 131 women who made submissions. Five respondent preferred not to state their sex, while 29 respondents did not answer this question.

<b>Table 3: Sex (individual responses only)</b>	
Female	131
Male	62
Prefer not to say	5
Not stated	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>

## Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (74%) were born in Australia. Just under nine per cent came from other countries, while around 17 per cent did not state their birthplace. See *Appendix 1* for the full list of countries of birth. Table 4b provides a summary of the countries of birth by English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries\*, while Tables 4c and 4d indicate the countries of birth of the respondent's mother and father respectively.

<b>Table 4a: Countries of birth (individual responses only)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Australia	169	74.4
Netherlands	4	1.8
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	4	1.8
Other Countries	11	4.8
Not stated	39	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary (individual responses only)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Australia	169	74.4
Other English-speaking country	8	3.5
Non-English-speaking country	11	4.8
Not stated	39	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Table 4c: Mother's country of birth (individual responses only)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Australia	152	67.0
Other English speaking country	9	4.0
Non-English speaking country	19	8.4
Not stated	47	20.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Table 4d: Father's country of birth (individual responses only)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Australia	144	63.4
Other English-speaking country	15	6.6
Non-English-speaking country	19	8.4
Not stated	49	21.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Other than Australia, English-speaking countries refer to New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland, United States, Canada and South Africa. All other countries are designated as non-English-speaking countries.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Table 5 shows the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from your diocese who made submissions. At the close of submissions there were three individuals who identified themselves in this way, representing just over one per cent of all individual respondents.

<b>Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (individual responses only)</b>	
Yes	3
No	188
Not stated	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>

## Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 227 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 184 respondents (81%) were Catholic. Two respondents were from other Christian denominations while there were three from non-Christian religions. A further 33 respondents did not state their religion and five respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

<b>Table 6: Religion (individual responses only)</b>		<b>Person</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Catholic		184	81.1
<b>Other Christian:</b>			
Uniting Church		1	0.4
Other Christian		1	0.4
<b>Non Christian:</b>			
Other religion		3	1.3
No religion		5	2.2
Not stated		33	14.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>227</b>	<b>100</b>

For those who indicated that they were Catholic, a further question asked them to describe their participation in church activities. Their responses are shown in Table 7. A total of 146 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were 19 respondents who said they went to Mass and church activities sometimes, while seven respondents considered themselves Catholic but were not involved or described their participation in other terms. A further 12 respondents described themselves in another way or did not answer the question.

<b>Table 7: Religious description</b> (for those who answered 'Catholic' to previous question)				
	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Not stated</b>	<b>Total</b>
I am Catholic and regularly attend Mass and other church activities	94	50	2	146
I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes	15	4	0	19
I am Catholic, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	1	0	1	2
I consider myself Catholic but I am not sure what to think about the Catholic faith	5	0	0	5
Other	5	4	1	10
Not stated	1	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>184</b>

## GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of 93 group submissions made from your diocese. Around 1,130 individuals were represented through these groups. However, ten groups did not report their numbers of participating members, indicating that the total number of people represented through the group submissions may be considerably higher.

While 72 group submissions provided a group name, 21 did not do so. Table 8 shows a list of the Top 20 group submissions from the diocese with the number of members in each group. A complete list of groups is provided as *Appendix 2*. Groups that did not provide a name were omitted from this table. The number of participating members was provided by the person submitting the group response. These figures could not be checked for accuracy.

Prominent among the largest groups was Parish of Ballarat East with around 100 members. There were also a number of other groups such as the Catholic Education Office Ballarat with 80 participants and Parish of Cororooke with 40 members. There were seven other groups with 20 members or more.

**Table 8 : Group submissions from the diocese**

Name of group	Group size
Parish of Ballarat East	100
Catholic Education Office Ballarat	80
Goulburn Valley Spirituality in the Pub	80
Christian Life Community Australia, Victorian Region.	80
Parish of Cororooke	40
St Patricks Parish	24
Ballarat Cathedral Branch of Catholic Women's League Victoria Wagga Wagga Inc	22
St Joseph's Church Red Cliffs	21
Ballarat Diocesan Pastoral Support Group	20
Lumen Christi Catholic Primary School	20
Ballan Payer Group	19
Damascus College	19
Damascus College	18
Mary Glowrey Parish - Donald	18
Damascus College	17
St Mary's Church, Colac	17
St Joseph's Penshurst	15
St Patricks Parish	15
Catholic Women's League Colac Branch	14
SS Michael & John's Men's Breakfast group	14

## Age and Sex of Group Members

On 5 November 2018, a question was added to the survey asking group respondents to estimate the ages and sex of members represented in their group. Not all groups answered this question. Therefore, the results presented here reflect only the submissions of those groups which provided information to this question between 5 November 2018 and 13 March 2019. Table 9 shows the ages of group members for those submissions.

The 50-69 years age group was the largest group represented with 352 members. This was followed by the group aged 70 and over with 333 members. There was no age provided for around 18 group members.

<b>Table 9: Estimates of ages of people in group submissions</b>	
<i>(group responses - for submissions received after 04 November 2018 only)</i>	
Under 20 years	132
20 - 29 years	48
30 - 49 years	148
50 - 69 years	352
70 and over	333
Unknown	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,031</b>

*Totals in tables 9 & 10 will not always agree due to submission errors.*

Of the total 1,031 group members whose sex was reported, 66 per cent (680) were female and 34 per cent (351) were male.

<b>Table 10: Estimates of sex of people in group submissions</b>	
<i>(group responses - for submissions received after 04 November 2018 only)</i>	
Female	680
Male	351
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,031</b>

*Totals in tables 9 & 10 will not always agree due to submission errors.*



## RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1

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

## THEMES DISCUSSED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

A number of themes emerged nationally in Phase One of the Plenary Council project. These are described in the national report titled, *Listen to What the Spirit is Saying: Final Report for the Plenary Council Phase I: Listening and Dialogue* published in July 2019.

A wide range of themes were discussed in the submissions from groups and individuals in your dioceses. The most prominent ones are listed below. For a detailed analysis of each of these themes please refer to the **national report**. We have provided references to the report by way of chapter and page numbers for this purpose.

The top four topics discussed by participants from your diocese were:

- Love God, Love neighbour
- Leadership and Church governance
- Social Justice and the Environment
- Sacraments

Within each of these four areas, the most widely discussed themes were as follows:

- Love God, Love neighbour (Chapter 4)
  - *Greater focus on Jesus Christ* (p. 30)
  - *Care for neighbour* (p. 36)
  - *Greater trust, faith and hope in God* (p. 29)
  - *Remaining faithful to Church teaching* (p. 32)
    - *Emphasis on Church teachings on marriage* (p. 33)
  - *Better faith formation* (p. 38)
  - *Being a witness in society* (p. 34)
  - *Greater focus on the Word of God* (p. 31)
  - *Renewed call to holiness* (p. 35)
- Leadership and Church governance (Chapter 7)
  - *Greater role for women* (p. 83)
  - *New leadership and governance model* (p. 91)
  - *New model of Church, diocese, parish* (p. 93)
  - *Greater involvement of the laity* (p. 84)
  - *Greater leadership from bishops* (p. 87)
  - *Greater leadership from priests* (p. 88)
- Sacraments (Chapter 6)
  - *Greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments* (p. 64)
  - *Holy Orders - Ending celibacy/ allowing priests to marry* (p. 66)
  - *Holy Orders - Ordination of women* (p. 69)
  - *Restoring the Third Rite of Reconciliation* (p.75)
- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
  - *Greater Inclusion of all* (p. 108)
  - *Fighting for human rights issues* (p. 110)



- *Care for the environment (p. 112)*
- *Ending discrimination of LGBTI (p. 110)*

Other main themes that emerged from the responses from your diocese included:

- *Sharing the faith with others (p. 128)*
- *Listening to one another more (p. 136)*
- *Outreach to youth (p. 124)*
- *Modernise Church teachings (p. 169)*
- *Teaching authentic Catholic faith (p. 151)*
- *Call to repentance for clergy sexual abuse (p. 100)*
- *Listening to the laity (p. 138)*

## SUBMISSIONS MADE IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

The submissions in this section were made in response to the first question: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?*

In keeping with ethics guidelines of the online survey, the privacy of each participant was protected under the Privacy Act 1988. Due to the personal and detailed nature of the submissions, consent was sought to conduct any follow-up consultation and for publishing of the findings.

Care was taken, therefore, to obtain informed consent from each participant or group/organisation in three distinct areas. Firstly, whether they wished to have a member of the Plenary Council team contact them about their submission. Secondly, consent was obtained for the publishing of their de-identified submission online, via the Plenary Council website or through social media. De-identification is the process used to prevent a person's identity from being revealed. In this survey, this meant that all names, locations and other identifying information were removed prior to the response being used. Finally, consent was also sought for sharing their de-identified submission with their diocese.

In keeping with these guidelines therefore, the submissions that follow are only from those individuals or groups who consented to having their submission being made public and being shared with their diocese. About 40 per cent of all responses did not have consent for one or both of these criteria and therefore, their submissions have not been included here.

He is asking us to be a faith-filled and faithful Church. We must unyielding to what it means to be Catholic. Society needs a rudder and compass that endeavours to point it in the right direction. If we yield to societal pressures we become no better than any other secular organisation.... We must be different! God wants us to care for what has been created. This includes our world, our poor, our vulnerable, our oppressed, our unborn, our elderly and all those who are suffering. We must reach out and treat each of these with dignity, respect and value.

I think we are asked to come together as a community. Religious and lay people alike to work towards the good of mankind. I believe that it is time we restructured the administration of dioceses and parishes and let people trained in administration and let religious...priests, brothers, nuns all work in the area they were trained in ...e.g. let priests be priests. When employing lay people in administrative positions some adjustments need to be made to help this work effectively.

To work alongside other people of faith/religious identity for the common good of all. This means having a strongly unified voice in issues that deny the human rights of the vulnerable e.g. asylum seekers, the homeless, victims of domestic violence etc. Too often the "voice" of people of faith is heard strongly in relation to socially conservative issues (as condemnation of 'progressive' views), but fails to lead society towards a more compassionate path. Naturally, these messages are being promoted, but have no traction when working alone. As a collective call towards compassion, people of faith have much to offer. I believe God is calling us to attend to unity.

God is asking us to really consider how we can best be 'active disciples' in today's Church rather than mere spectators in the congregation on Sunday.

God is asking us to be an all-inclusive Church and make all people feel welcome. We spend too much time looking down on those who have had marriage breakdowns, those remarried outside of the Church as they found it too difficult to go through the annulment process and also those in the gay community who feel that they cannot practice their faith because of their sexual preferences. If God has made all people in his likeness then why do we discriminate against these people?

I think what God is asking from us is:

- That the Catholic Church comes out of their ivory tower and adjust to real life in the real world.
- That the lay people take control of the Catholic Church as how it was at the start of Christianity. Because over the last 100 years the leadership in Rome has clearly proven that it is incapable of good, modern leadership. It is totally out of touch with the real world. I accept that the Church needs to defend life as it does with matters such as abortion and euthanasia but if I look at matters as equality and sexual abuse then the Church is hopelessly old fashioned.
- To go back to basics and look after the poor and marginalised people in society and speak out if others don't. I think it's a disgrace that in a rich country such as Australia we have so many homeless people and a charity such as "The Smith Family" exists needing to help marginalised Australian children.
- To look after the world by living sustainable and speak out if others don't.

I believe that God would like the Catholic Church in Australia to teach the Catholic Religion. Currently it is not doing this. What it is doing is teaching a sloppy humanism. There are two, recent, shining examples of this: First the self-serving response to the child sexual abuse problem. Second the deafening silence from the Church about the disgusting homosexual marriage debate. Not content with hiding the rape of children, the "bishops" and "priests" suggested the laity pray for the parliament to be guided. Christ didn't ask for that, He gave a warning which involved a millstone around a neck and the sea!!! On another note I have had to endure our parish priest introducing a Muslim into the Church to preach to us. That is the deliberate introduction of a false prophet who subscribes to a religion which positively INSTRUCTS beheading non-believers!!! I repeat: **START TEACHING THE CATHOLIC RELIGION!!!!!!**

To be a welcoming and truly loving community, that all Catholic churches be open to the homeless because it's the safest place where people can sleep overnight and provided they will clean the church after their stay—there are things that are sacred inside the church like the tabernacle and other vestments, the parish priest and parishioners should look for ways to lock them, youth be guided and accompanied, everybody should participate in church activities, small prayer groups be organized not only in church but also in houses—there should include an enthronement of the Bible, an entrance song, an opening prayer, a reading of the gospel passage, reflection and sharing of personal experiences based on the gospel read, spontaneous prayers, closing song.

Compassion, Understanding.
To examine the institutional Church to see if it is relevant to today.
I think God is asking us to be more authentic to the teachings of Jesus, who demonstrated how to be inclusive and respectful. I think the Church at the moment is all about following rules and regulations that were formulated hundreds of years ago to suit the hierarchy of the time. Unfortunately, power and authority still seems to be what attracts and drives some of our clergy. Our Church hierarchy should represent, value and include all those who want to be part of it—women, men, single, married, divorced, regardless of sexual orientation. It seems that the majority of our parishioners are struggling with the incongruity between Church teachings and the realities of life. Our God is a loving God and in my heart, I know that our mission as Christians is to strive to see the divine in all humanity, as Jesus showed us.
To continue to support people, particularly those that are vulnerable, in the community and wider. To continue to have faith and develop this in our children.
To be a more sharing and caring country. To be considerate of others and to be aware of certain situations that are happening.
To be a more sharing country that is considerate of the situations happening in other countries.
I think God would love to see more people being active and involved in the Church.
To love each other, to respect others, to share God's Word and Love, to help others to believe in God, to be more welcoming, compassionate, non-judgemental, promote peace, help the poor and others in need, like those suffering drought, don't litter, don't harass little kids, be a community, come to Mass, help in the parish, volunteering for jobs at Mass. When asked what to do about the shortage of priests, I received the following answers: pray, lay people to celebrate weddings, baptisms, funerals, ordain women, lay men and women to celebrate Mass, let priests marry, let the bishop celebrate Mass for the whole diocese and people bring consecrated hosts to local communities, Mass on YouTube, TV, Video-chat, PR to advertise the worthwhileness of being a priest, Mass oriented to young people with uplifting music.
To be decent living people. Treat others as we want to be treated
God wants us to know Him through His Holy Spirit. Our spirit connecting with His spirit. By presenting the Alpha course (approx. 10 weeks, 2 hours a week) to all parishioners and new comers, will make God and the Bible come alive... this will give everyone an opportunity to speak their hearts on a real level and after the course, should provide a 'connect group' during the week at the church or somebody's house, giving people an ongoing opportunity to pray for each other and do life together, hence growing in God and keeping each other accountable during the week in a kind, safe environment... This could be run by a person who loves Jesus and His people... You don't need a theological degree or counselling degree, just an open home to share and have a coffee... Someone who is willing to facilitate the God talk and prayers... We need to read His word and make it count in our lives...

Us meaning The Catholic Church in Australia. 1) Contrition and Repentance. Contrition, not just for the sexual abuse of children but for all the ways that our Church practices and culture have created barriers that have prevented people experiencing the love and forgiveness of Jesus in their lives. Repentance and conversion back to being disciples of Jesus. When G.K. Chesterton said "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried." I don't think he was excluding the Roman Catholic Church from this critique. We have spent too much time and energy on the peripheral e.g. Reform of the English liturgy and making sure we get the rubrics correct and not enough on the central experiences of discipleship, community and faith and its relationship to the human experience. 2) As Pope Francis says, God is calling us to know the liberating joy of the gospel. We need to be evangelized. By each other and by those outside the Church. We need to become humble so that we can be healed. To continue to try to "protect" the Church through power and control can only lead to the Church's demise. We exist because God allows us to exist, but if we continue being a "stumbling block" to the smallest and most vulnerable and turn them away by our attitude, then maybe God will abandon us. People in Australia are joining the Church or even staying in the Church. We can't keep blaming the world and I don't believe there is problem with the Christian Gospel. So the problem must lie in the Church. We need to let go of pride and cry out to God for mercy and grace and be willing to receive from wherever that grace comes. It may come from our brothers and sisters in other Christian denominations or even from more unexpected places. We are broken and we need healing before we can offer life to others or proclaim life to the world.

1. For hierarchy of the Church be inclusive and welcoming (to divorced people, gay community, people with mental illness, Aboriginal people, refugees, single parents, homeless...). Individuals and Catholic organisations are welcoming and inclusive but the Church is perceived as harsh and unrelenting. 2. To return to the Church's origins and allow married priests. 3. To re-examine the historical biblical references to divorce and see them for what they are—precepts for an ancient people for whom men had absolute control. Note Jesus' "except in case of adultery" and allow that the decree of marriage insolvency is not absolute.

To tell the bishops and other leaders of our Church to be honest and open to all the atrocities that have happened over the past few decades.

1. To recognize and operate at all levels through strong conviction that the Holy spirit works through and inspires through all believers. 2. Work to change culture of authoritarianism in Church. To help change this by recognizing and acclaiming all ministries done by the laity. In parishes, explain/display all ministry groups and their purposes. Keep this information readily available to parishioners and communicate updates with parish community.

Get rid of the Church hierarchy as they have failed to provide leadership of the Church

The Church needs to adjust to conditions in Australia. We need to get back to the basic teachings of Christ. Develop the local parish faith community. Lay people to be given a greater role in the governance of the Church.

Individual Responses: Equality women and men, Married priests, Welcoming of divorced couples, Rebuild trust in our community and Church, Listen to ALL God's people, In the eyes of many young people, the Church is very tainted, We need to have more patience with each other—LISTEN, God Bless us all, We need women in the Church Community. Our Church in Australia has taken such a battering over what has happened in the past 50 years behind closed presbytery doors, and is now in the open. Ask ALL Catholics their thoughts. Through the Holy Spirit bring trust and respectability back into the Church, Allow priests to marry, Bring back young people to the Church, Be kind to each other

Group Responses: Leadership of the Church should be open to all who are called by the Spirit; i.e. female/male priests, starting with deacons, married priests and women in the Church, One person in God—All together, Spread our faith further, The Church needs a revolution in faith, We need to focus more on the Eucharist as the principle being of the Church.

To be more united so that the Church can grow. To spend more time in prayer and to have more prayers in Church—to pray as a community so that the bond gets stronger. Each to take part in some ministry or the other for the benefit of the Church. Each person helping the Church to grow in whatever way they can will do good. Love must increase among people. They need to be told about it. From love will come all the other virtues. People must smile and talk and be friendly with one another for the Church to grow. Be helpful to one another. Fellowship. For any person or the Church to grow, prayer and reading the Word of God is very important. Praise and Worship and Adoration is very important too.

I think God is asking us to move away from the edges of our faith and fully enter, into His heart. I hear Him asking me to roll up my sleeves and get my hands dirty, with His children. I hear Him asking me to not just care about all of His children, my brothers and sisters, but to live out that care and get involved. I feel He is asking us to go beyond the surface of recognition, care and concern and take risks; but most of all to trust Him.

To seek Him in our lives, to go beyond our own situation and to be a witness for others. To re-form.

To be more involved, to be kinder and whole-hearted, to get our hands dirty.

What have I done—what can I do to help others in need? Have I done enough? To live by God's commandments.

To treat all people as equal. To be tolerant. To help others less fortunate.

Kindness to others. Spreading his words/faith. Helping the poor, disabled and elderly. To treat others as you would like to be. To Pray.

To be a more open, kinder and considerate Church. Open: To be more welcoming. Kinder: to be more aware of others' needs. Considerate: To put other people before ourselves.

To step up and take responsibility. Help others in their role. Do not criticise unless you are prepared to do what you are criticising. Pray for a successful Plenary.

To connect with young people. To [put] His commands into practise. To give connection to separated/divorced couples.
To pray together. To support our young. To lead by example. To accept his way. To care for the earth.
To Live Justly. To Love Tenderly. To walk Humbly with our God. We are many parts, we are all one body and the gifts we have we were given to share.
To be more united in our prayers and inclusive of all. To listen to each other and share our faith. How can we be more pro-active? To be more welcoming.
To seek Him in our lives. To go beyond our own situation and witness to others.
To be more welcoming and accepting of gay relationships, to care for these people. 3rd rite Confessions need to be available. To include divorced and separated couples in the sacraments.
What am I doing to further God's kingdom? How can I do more? How can I be better? Being more open and welcoming. More caring and considerate. Putting other people first.
To develop and maintain a Catholic identity within our community and world. To remain true to the Catholic faith and traditions in a modern world. To be open to everyone's views, ideas, beliefs. To model and live the gospel values. To prioritise the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. To re-contextualise the gospel into today's world.
A community of open-minded people who show genuine care for all of humanity and creation. To welcome "the other"—those not the same as me. Compassion and respect for all regardless of our circumstances.
To be changed by the Scriptures, not the other way around. To recapture a sense of the numinous, the holy. To get away from current social mores, fads e.g. gender fluidity. To re-establish some absolutes. That not every culture, lifestyle, choice is approved by good—there is right, there is wrong. We need to be moulded into God's image—not the other way around.
To look after our land. To explore. To make a difference to everyone not just ourselves. To come together. To have faith. To follow in the footsteps of Jesus. To help the poor and the sick. To live by the light of Christ. To care for the environment. To live at peace with one another. To find the errors of our ways and fix them.
To be accepting, respectful, discuss concerns, be open-minded, listen to one another, be guided by the Holy Spirit, to be forgiving, grateful, considerate, nice, to be united, Catholic values, attending to our spiritual needs, community, accept change.
To save the planet. To help the poor and needy. To be more inclusive of all people/ Greater access to education for all.
God is asking us to 1. Demonstrate compassion towards refugees. 2. Connect to a world and individuals who are often disconnected. 3. To better Understand / respect beliefs of others. 4. Think more deeply about what others don't have 5. Work towards being united rather than divided.



I think we are being asked to remain open minded and accepting of all walks of life in Australia. To treat each other with humanity and empathy regardless of where someone comes from, their religion or even their gender identities.

To act more like a community and more inclusive. To be proud of our faith.

In times of confusion and abandonment of faith and persecution of Christians, as a mother of children aged 3,6,8,9, I believe God is asking for a return to holiness and clear teaching of virtue and faith in God and about salvation and the Church as the administrator of the sacraments. I grew up Protestant and with faith but no clear 'goal posts'—I believe the Catholic faith has the goal posts and needs to not be afraid to start teaching clearly, truthfully and with conviction about:- our need for salvation, sin, reverence in Mass, why we need the sacraments, what are virtues and why chastity is so important in this day and age that says anything goes and there is no such thing as sin. It is very confusing for children and young people—this relativism in our country. The Church needs to firmly uphold truth about marriage, why no sex before marriage, why no contraception, why abortion wrong, why priests are celibate. Presently I see many things as 'de-spiritualised' and as I see it, if the Church doesn't stand for these strong virtues and sacraments and present these understandings about the dignity of life, marriage, celibacy and sex, then we will present to young people nothing different from any other Church. That is, if anything goes, why bother going to Mass? I became a Catholic after deep reading and I believe that priests need more passion in conjunction with compassion—passion for the truth and dignity of marriage, sex, why homosexuality is sinful, why we need to be chaste in everything, why we need to go to confession, what mortal sins are—and that they can affect our salvation and relationship with God! The Church needs to clearly teach that our faith story is personal and communal—that is personal in loving and living a life imitating Christ and believing in the sacraments, obeying the teachings of the Church and not being afraid to speak up when there is wrong (same sex marriage, women priests, abortion etc.); and communal in that we need the sacraments given by the priest and Mass for our salvation and we need the teachings of the Church and we need the Holy Father and the bishops to be strong leaders—convicted and courageous like Jesus. Mass needs to be return to more reverence—kneeling at Holy Communion (as an Anglican we knelt and we didn't know what we were receiving! Why don't Catholics?) Beautiful sacred music is really missing and is integral to a holy Mass. Welcoming children and young families who will be noisy and restless and setting examples of welcome, reverence and piety would be great.

Great transparency from leadership. Greater gender inclusivity. Universal engagement with Pope Francis' call to integral ecology/care of our common home. Greater attention to the needs of our young people.

I believe we are asking the wrong question here. Instead of, what is God asking of us, I think the question should be what are people wanting from the Church? What brings them to church? Why are they committed/not committed to their faith? What ideas do they have to help strengthen our Church? What ideas do they have to help get more younger people involved in church? I fear that if things do not change drastically in the next couple of years in our parish that we will not have a parish community left. The Lutheran Church seems to be running strong, the Church of Christ numbers seem to be rising, yet our numbers continue to dwindle.



Maybe God is asking us to look at the gifts we have, and how we can best use them. We should not be so "priest dependant", but rather return to the ways of the early Church, with small, home based groups of worship. Over 75 years, I have experienced all sorts of parish priests, some who sorely tested my faith, while others, including our present parish priest, have been inspiring. However, it was my parents who instilled the faith in us, by their example and teaching.

To listen to each other with respect.

I am really saddened that the Third Rite of Reconciliation is no longer available. I have been to confession recently but many Catholics have not. How many more Catholics used to attend 3rd Rite, which gave them an opportunity to speak to God, to seek his mercy and forgiveness, to be forgiven and to make amends. Surely, this is what reconciliation is all about, an honest relationship with God. If the Catholic Church is fair dinkum about wanting Catholics to return to the Church, then reinstate the sacrament in the 3rd Rite. I believe many currently practicing and many lapsed Catholics would support this. [ - ]

To listen and be directed by the Holy Spirit so that the Church may be guided by Spirit and scripture and be released from the misguiding shackles of tradition.

Q1: WHAT DO YOU THINK GOD IS ASKING OF US IN AUSTRALIA AT THIS TIME? We think that God is asking us to face up to the challenge that Christians are rapidly moving from being the majority to becoming a minority. We have lost the minds and hearts of vast numbers of our people, evidenced by the growing disregard for the Teaching of the Church which has resulted, in recent times, in the legalising of abortion, same-sex marriage and (in Victoria) euthanasia. In addition, we are faced with the prospect of a serious restriction of our freedom to practise our Faith in the not too distant future and there is increasing antagonism towards the Church in the secular media. We believe our Church has become too institutionalised and bureaucratic, that our priests need to be concerned chiefly with the spiritual concerns of their parishioners rather than administration. The laity needs more spiritual and moral formation and ordained deacons and qualified laity could help with administration. Regarding Catholic education, it needs to be complete and age appropriate, delivered only by those who are wholeheartedly committed to the Teachings of the Church. This education should lead us to know the sacrificial love of Christ for each of us calling for a reciprocal response. We need to be aware of the seriousness of sin. Unrepented sin could lead to our eternal damnation.

I think the Holy Spirit is asking Australia's people to look again at the position of women in the Church. Jesus went out of His way to show that women were equal to men in the eyes of God. He had a human mother, He obeyed her as a child, spoke frankly with her when He was an adult. He praised and healed, got into arguments with women, accepted service from women. The result of His conversation with the woman at the well led her to be a disciple who encouraged many in her community to listen to Him. In the early Church, some women were made bishops. Mary was present when the Holy Spirit came down after the Ascension according to the Acts of the Apostles. At some point, hard hearts decided that women couldn't be leaders, that they should listen and not speak, this was not what Jesus taught, nor the experience of the early Church. Women and men share equally in the creation of a child. Women incubate the child and give birth but they can't create a child by themselves. The hormones which allow women to take this role do not

take away their dignity and the respect due to them as a human person any more than the hormones which allow men to protect themselves and their families make them less worthy of the dignity of a human person.
That we be understanding and flexible as we continue to adjust to dwindling ordained personnel and those with a calling to religious life. We cannot expect the same level of service to continue. Those in more populous regions must assume a higher level of responsibility for leadership as resources are shared more equally with isolated areas.
I can't speak for God, but I want us Catholics to believe that Vatican II was correct to describe the Eucharist as "source" and "summit" of the whole Christian life. I want all Catholics to have access to Sunday Mass every week.
It is evident of a gradual decline faith in Christ the world over. That lack of faith is reflected in church attendance. More and more, Australia society is giving way to the new religion of self, in turn, mocking God and his creation by giving in self-pleasure, and permissiveness. Many times in the recent past, the Church has attempted to keep in touch with current society, and changing beliefs by changing her appearance, and her voice. In short, the Church has lost her identity. The reason faith is waning, the reason for dropping attendance is simply due to the fact that people no longer recognise Christ or his Church. What they see today is a Protestant service without the reverence of old. Why should anyone choose to come to Church today? You ask 'What is God asking of us?' Simply this, to return to Him! Let the Church return to Him in such a manner that his people recognise Him again. Let the Mass return to reverence of the Eucharist. Let priests be bold enough to speak truth as Christ taught us, that sin is real, that hell is real, that damnation is real for the unrepentant! In short, preach the truth, live the truth, and praise Him with true worship, Catholic worship
1. What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at the present time? <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> 239. The Church proclaims "the Gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15) and she wishes to cooperate with all national and international authorities in safeguarding this immense universal good. By preaching Jesus Christ, who is himself peace (cf. Eph 2:14), the new evangelization calls on every baptized person to be a peacemaker and a credible witness to a reconciled life. [187] In a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter, it is time to devise a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society. The principal author, the historic subject of this process, is the people as a whole and their culture, and not a single class, minority, group or elite. We do not need plans drawn up by a few for the few, or an enlightened or outspoken minority which claims to speak for everyone. It is about agreeing to live together, a social and cultural pact. This is the request that is made of us as Church in Australia.
I think God is asking the Church to look truthfully at itself and change what needs to be changed in structure and content
I think our primary task at the moment is to look after this planet, our environment, the animals and all the people in it. I believe we are here as the stewards (in the sense of protectors, not masters) of creation and should live in harmony with all the creatures in this magnificent world. At the moment our planet is suffering, mainly through the greed and

apathy of its human inhabitants. I totally agree with Pope Francis's Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, in which he urges us to care for our world and all its creatures, human and other-than-human. The Church's past attitude of focussing on some other place ("heaven") and not caring for this wonderful home we have been given has not helped the situation at all. We need to wake up and do something before it is too late, and we are already getting perilously close to that point. I also believe that we live in a relatively sophisticated and educated society in which we should be able to interpret God's word in a way relevant to today's world. I think it is very dangerous to take Scripture too literally and to blithely believe whatever we are told without thinking for ourselves. God has given us intelligence and the powers of discernment, which we should certainly use. Above all, right now we need to put greed and self-interest aside and put our mother earth first.

God is asking the Church to fully repent for the injustices and criminal acts of the past and fully compensate the victims. In addition, those religious including the hierarchy should face justice and removed from their positions. The Church needs to return to the people as it was when Christ was on earth. The old bishops need to be replaced with newer blood who are with it with the younger generation. Much more laity need to be recruited to help in running the Church with many more women. Why can't women become priests and also priests marry?

I think God is asking us to return to the solid values espoused by the Gospels and the 10 Commandments. Modern society is disaffected by many issues and problems, and as Catholics we are often urged to move with the times. But this inevitably means discarding the values of God. Let us take as an example gay people. We are urged to accept the LGBTBIQ movement for example. Gay marriage follows. Children to gay couples etc. This is a very slippery slope. God has respect for gay people for sure, but he does not condone sexual relationships between gays or intimate relationships between gays. There are obvious problems associated with acceptance of gay marriage and gay relationships, i.e. Father's Day and Mother's Day lose their significance. How hard is it for teachers at schools when Father's Day and Mother's Day comes around, and there are 'children' of gay couples in the class? What about the commandment to love Father and Mother for these children? The Church should maintain its stance that gay people are accepted as God's children, but they must remain pure of heart, and maintain the sanctity of human life as that between a man and woman married in God's Church. I believe this is just one example of where the Church can lose her way, and in some parishes, has lost her way. My parish priest for example, supports the LGBTBIQ movement, and in fact has published on the Church Bulletin, an annual local event supporting this movement. I completely disagree with his views on this topic but have to respect his appointment as God's shepherd here on Earth. I ask the Church and Plenary Council to return to the tried and true pillars as laid down by God in the Gospels and the 10 Commandments.

The Roman Catholic Church closed to scrutiny and involvement of its faithful in the daily working, with no proper accountability except to the hierarchy, should be made more transparent and involving. Committees, necessary for orderly operation, be more inclusive by inviting all interested parishioners to meetings of the various bodies that make up the working of the Church. Involvement should include decisions made at parish level by the bishop in movement of priests and important matters affecting the parish directly or indirectly. The sacrament of Reconciliation (instituted by Man) should be overhauled, with

consideration given to protecting the Seal of the sacrament. Introducing the third rite of Reconciliation with individual confession optional, group confession offered, the celebrant placing prescribed conditions on absolution, e.g. no absolution unless counselling is sought, or the Penitent voluntarily self-reports, etc. .... Critics consider it unapostolic for the Church to have amassed untold riches, point of reference, Vatican and its abundant treasures. Tools should be put in place at the Vatican, to account for all income and expenditure incurred, towards accountability and transparency, to the Universal Church. Prayer Service or Mass, dedicated for victims of abuse, including our present clergy, on a regular basis quarterly, would convey the genuine concern and effort made by the Church to make amends.

God is life, and life is our community. And our community is asking those charged with leading the Church to lead, and not just on faith and morals.

I believe God is asking us to 'recall' and 'be reminded' of the Power, Wisdom, Spirit, Love and Guidance that Jesus instilled in the Church at its inception; for it already possesses everything necessary to face any problems; because Jesus left us explicit instructions as to how we should live as Christians and how to deal with whatever difficulties we faced. His Will for His Church can never be outdated, what He told us, still stands. We need to hear 'proclaimed' that the Mass, Eucharist, Reconciliation and Grace continue to be our Place of Healing, Restoration, Inspiration and Growth. We need to proclaim to our wounded brothers and sisters that the Good News is still true, Jesus Christ is The Answer! How do we do that? By emulating the Pentecostal Churches, who truly reach out to the sick, forgotten, wounded, lonely, despised, addicted and abused. Because the disenfranchised, for whatever reason, are desperate for the 'personal touch', words mean nothing if we don't minister 'literally' to those in need. Love in action, attracts. And if in doubt regarding the veracity of the results of praying for people's needs in person, they might attend a Pentecostal meeting and see what happens. People need people, not talk, nor symbolic gestures. 1. We could have regular Masses offered publicly for particular needs of our extended communities and invite all to participate. 2. We could offer the Laying on of Hands after Mass for those who feel the need, or perhaps Anointing. 3. We could invite individuals to share their experiences of God's Grace in their lives from the pulpit. 4. We could invite those who have suffered institutional or other abuse to put forward their thoughts concerning their needs, rather than making decisions on their behalf. 5. We could relieve priests of their administrative duties to give them more time for pastoral care of parishioners. 6. We could have regular teaching from the pulpit regarding the beliefs of the Catholic Church. 7. We could have vigorous encouragement and support to form prayer groups and Bible study groups. We have everything we need at our fingertips within the Catholic Church. We might follow in Christ's Footsteps more closely by recalling whatever we 'do' for the least of our brethren, we 'do' for Him. Grace isn't just for us, it is to be shared. Unfortunately Catholics by nature in general, are more private about their faith. Let us be drawn to the Way we have been shown... and reach out in a real, personal and caring way to all. Let us open up our Masses to the Masses, 'changing nothing', but 'adding what is currently missing'. Let us be like Christ and the Apostles, not in name, but in action. I am a survivor of sexual and physical abuse by a large number of people, men and women, from infancy. Yet I 'have been healed' by God

and by praying people. I am a Catholic who loves the Church and I have a deep faith. I think I am sufficiently experienced to say God has given us what we need...

- Selection of bishop for a diocese to involve wide consultation with clergy and laity.
- Bishops to be appointed to a particular diocese for no more than ten years.
- Bishops to be given extensive professional training leadership, keeping in mind the need for both intellectual and emotional intelligence.
- Those to be ordained as presiders at Eucharist to be selected at diocesan level from both male and female parishioners and to be given a proper formal education for their role (not necessarily full-time).
- Serious consideration be given to changing seminary formation from enclosed medieval university structure to university education in the contemporary world coupled with apprenticeship style preparation for priestly ministry.
- A tightening of the selection of candidates for the priesthood in terms of their psycho-sexual health.
- Less hierarchical, more participative and more inclusive governance structures to be established at every level.
- Serious financial and intellectual resources to be dedicated to adult education in theology and scripture.
- Recognition that Pope Francis' call to ecological conversation, especially in *Laudato Si'*, is at the heart of the gospel. It is imperative that the gospel we preach highlights the correlation between human suffering and the degradation of the earth.
- Properly qualified lay people, women and men, need to be welcomed as preachers of the homily within the Eucharistic celebration.
- Clericalism is partly related to the single sex milieu of seminary life and needs to be addressed by changing the structures. In view of this, acceptance to study for the priesthood might be limited to those who have completed a university or trade qualification.
- The recent changes in the Roman Missal are alienating for laity and clergy alike. Attention to this is a matter of urgency.
- The use of Inclusive language and a revision of the choice of readings from Scripture are also matters of urgency.
- Not every teacher in Catholic schools is equipped to teach Religious Education. This needs to be addressed.

After listening to the Spirit in prayer, I believe God is asking us to return to an intimate relationship with God through Jesus, his son. The words from a hymn 'Come back to me with all your heart' is central to what I believe God wants from us. To listen to the voice within—in the depths of our being, where God resides, not with our mind, but with our heart. To do this, we need to stop; to be silent and to listen to what God is saying to us deep within our heart. God asks us to come back to him in a spirit of prayer and repentance so that we may know the Good News—not repentance in the sense of a



rebuke, however turning back to God in response to joyful encouragement, that we may know the Good News—that we are totally and abundantly loved by a tender, merciful and loving God who is good and wants the absolute best for us. I believe that it is important that we stay in this period of unease and uncertainty within the Church (the 'swamp') for enough time; that is until we, as Church, are ready to truly repent and turn back to God with ALL our heart, to listen to what he is asking of us and to allow God to lead us to where God desires us to go, not where we think we need to go.

I think God is asking us to focus on the Church and its teachings. I think too many people are blaming the Church for indiscretions that were carried out by priests. We need to focus on loving God and praying for help.

We make this submission as members of Catholic Earthcare [ - ] Diocese who long for a faith-filled, prayerful and compassionate Church. • That is attentive to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth both locally and globally. • That attends to the displacement of peoples and the degradation of earth as a gospel imperative. • That is humble and grounded/earthed in local communities. • That honours the experience, the spiritual traditions and wisdom of our Indigenous peoples on questions of sustainability and care of the Earth community. • That is well-formed in our gospel teaching on ecological justice (both social and environmental justice). • That critiques the traditional interpretation of the teaching of Genesis as promoting human domination over creation. • That undertakes a revision of the lectionary that respects ecological (human and other-than-human) sensibilities. • That promotes a profound mystique of the natural world. • That is attentive to the wisdom of other faith traditions and the best of contemporary science. • That makes available opportunities for education of both adults and children on ecological justice in the Catholic-Christian tradition. • That makes ecological justice an integral part of seminary formation and on-going priestly formation. • That puts a particular emphasis on the teaching of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*. • That sponsors and promotes eco-theological and eco-biblical academic research. • That accords a higher profile and greater financial support to the specific work of Catholic Earthcare Australia. • That names all exercise of power-over as contrary to the gospel. • That works towards inclusion (gender, age, cultural) at every level of its structures. • That eschews secrecy. • That readily acknowledges its failures and shortcomings. • That becomes utterly transparent in its governance and in the exercise of its mission. • That provides avenues for all to speak and to be heard. • That foregrounds the role of the laity in establishing less hierarchical and more inclusive and ecological ways of being Church. • That consistently brings its voice to the public conversation on matters of ecological justice, social and environmental (e.g. Murray-Darling crisis; Princeton development; Fracking). • That we take seriously the four presences of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration. • That Catholic Earthcare groups be established in every diocese. • That affirms directly and publically organisations and groups whose efforts have enhanced ecological harmony. • That encourages all Church organisations and individuals to conserve energy, to recycle, to live simply so as to walk more humbly on the land. • That refuses to treat the earth's bounty simply as resources for human consumption (an I-Thou rather than an I-It relationship between humans and the earth). • That ensures all Church investments are ecologically ethical. • That priority be given to sustainable energy sources for all Church establishments.

Loving our neighbours; being loyal to our faith but also being open to different ways, new life; being "green"—using resources carefully, caring for our environment; being joyful; acknowledging our Aboriginal forbears.

God is asking us to listen. Focus on the vulnerable. Go back to Jesus's teachings and sacramental Church.

I think God is asking us, as he has always done, to love one another. This is unqualified love, regardless of race, colour, background, religious belief, wealth or sexual preference.

I believe God is asking can we Catholics have an organisation that is more in tune with the needs of Catholics in the 21st Century

I believe God is calling us as a Church to become less concerned about the preservation of our Church and more concerned about outreach to the poor and marginalised. We are being called to put care of the poor in the heart of our Church. We are being called to rid the Church of all forms of clericalism. Our Church is being called to be more inclusive. She is called to include laity in all decision-making and management. Women especially are to be included in areas of decision-making and management. Our Church called to be much more transparent in all possible ways.

God is asking us to remain faithful to the Gospel teachings and to live our lives accordingly with Jesus as our teacher and guide. We need to be people who live with hope and love, while offering service. We should be proud of the achievements of Australian Catholics over many years because our families have built churches, schools, hospitals and welfare organisations which have worked tirelessly to cater for our people. We recognise the deep hurt of those who were abused by the clergy and trust that compensation and mental healing can be offered to them. It is a huge burden that the Church has to carry and we need to remember the value of being Catholic and participating in a community of faith. We need to show our children and grandchildren that you can live your life according to your values and ideals and not to stoop to a lower standard. We can serve with justice and humility especially to the under privileged and marginalised in our society and to treat all people with respect and dignity and to listen to their stories.

... young families). God is asking the Church to be accepting of homosexuality, diversity of people. God is asking us to continue to have faith. God wants us to continue teaching the fundamental message. God wants us to change from the inside. God wants us to forgive. To rally together as a united community—to stand for what is right and to love one another. To show kindness and compassion to people and our world Consider those who have turned away—where are their views represented? God is calling us to express our discontent. Discernment—seeing what is happening—acknowledge what has happened. 'Sorting the wheat from the chaff'. Acknowledge that people were not listened to. Challenges to be disciples today—what does it look like today? How do we share the Gospels and the stories of Jesus today—when it is so secular and there is a lot of information that is dismissive of faith. How do we explain our faith in light of what has happened? To be inarticulate about our faith is a challenge now. How do we take on the responsibility to dig deeper? What are the implications of the sex abuse for those of us who work for Catholic education? God is inviting us to think of new ways—new models—creatively to find the Spirit within us—how can we reach out to others? How can we be a

community? We are asked to think about the implications of the decisions we make now, on the people in 20 years from now.
To face the fact that the Church is by no means perfect. We are asked as individuals to voice our concerns and what troubles us in relation to the awful truth on what has occurred all over the world the abuse that has gone on for years all connected to this institute which is mainly run by men who have taken an oath of celibacy and why? Question is? Did God himself make this rule? I personally cannot recall seeing this in the Bible. To cut out the level of abuse wouldn't it be better for a man to have a partner. It is very obvious that it is not working as it is. There are lots of lonely men some depending on alcohol as a comfort. It may be argued that the Church can't afford to keep partners as well as possible families. What about the wealth in the Vatican! While some families can't afford to pay their bills. All those bishops appearing in their robes and being accommodated and treated like lords. This is an imbalance which upsets the general public. I hear it from concerned Catholics some practising and some who have left, so touched and so saddened by the Church and the hierarchy sometimes considered as a "Boys" club.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the Faith—and live it</li> <li>• Open our Hearts and Listen to others</li> <li>• Give “5 minutes” to another—and what a difference you might make in their lives</li> <li>• Openness to others—to the diversity in our Church and Society</li> <li>• Openness to the new</li> <li>• Respond to the needs of others.</li> </ul>
I think God is asking us to envisage a new type of Church- we need to be brave and vision a Church with equal participation, less hierarchy and rebuild after the damage of clergy abuse. We need to honour our values yet be less judgemental and more accepting/tolerant of differences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusivity</li> <li>• Back to Early Church—drop all the baggage</li> <li>• Review the “man-made” laws and return to God’s Law</li> <li>• Remember the importance of an “informed” conscience</li> <li>• Caring community</li> <li>• Respect for all—no matter gender, creed, colour</li> <li>• Empowerment of the Laity—particularly in a country where we are facing a priest shortage</li> <li>• Responsibility MUST be taken up by the Baptised people of the Church</li> <li>• Open our hearts—listen, communicate, SMILE</li> <li>• Remember WE (the Laity) are the Church.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive Liturgies.</li> <li>• Shortage of priests—Laity taking on more responsibility for some sacramental Leadership in Liturgy.</li> <li>• We must remember that the Laity is inclusive of men.</li> <li>• Laity need to be ‘formed’ to take on liturgical roles/responsibilities.</li> <li>• We need to speak out boldly and with conviction—but need to be informed and formed Catholics before we do this.</li> <li>• Listen with an open heart to all.</li> <li>• Accept the thoughts and ideas of others.</li> <li>• Face of the Church has to change.</li> <li>• Qualified Lay people are able to carry out many of the ministries that our very busy priests are expected to do in the parish—time for these people to be acknowledged and invited to work alongside our priests.</li> <li>• Lay Pastoral Councils to advise not only a parish priest but the bishops of the dioceses.</li> <li>• How do we cater for the religious education and spiritual development of those not in a Catholic school?</li> <li>• We need to offer a process of Faith formation that engages liturgically, spiritually, prayerfully and musically. If engaged then hopefully young and old will come back—and feel the call of the Spirit to return to their Faith. This needs to be offered during the week, not just the weekend.</li> <li>• Translation of Lectionary—this needs to be inclusive language. Needs to be done soon—25 years too long to wait this time.</li> <li>• Celebration of</li> </ul>



sacraments can be piecemeal. Order of sacraments of Initiation for example. Bishops need to “get their act together”. • Reconciliation—need to bring back the 3rd Rite—especially is we are serious about people participating in Reconciliation. People understand the fact that if in serious sin they need to attend 1st Rite.
To open the doors and look at ourselves with fresh eyes and renew our way of thinking and acting.
To listen to one another, to have respectful dialogue and not just ‘push our own barrow’. • To look at the changing Church with parishes closing or amalgamating, small church communities closing, fewer lay people being involved in parishes ...fewer people attending liturgies: to enliven the sense of community in parishes so that we don’t just come to Mass as a sense of duty (or a fear of sin) but as something we want to do to connect with others and celebrate our faith. • The older demographic as regards parishioners—young families rarely being involved except for the sacraments: For parishes and schools to work out ways that will encourage families and children to want to take part in parish life and make a commitment, e.g. taking on ministries such as Offertory Procession... Include parishioners in sacramental preparation and follow-up to establish a connection. • Fewer priests and religious: to support our priests and be understanding of their changing role, with responsibilities much greater than would have been envisaged when they were ordained. To think about the best way to organise parishes so that priests are able to celebrate liturgies and carry out the pastoral care of parishioners, rather than be tied up in administration, etc. To pray together for those making the ultimate decisions and for our many questions and thoughts to be heard and considered.
God the father is the same today as he was yesterday. Obey the ten commandments, follow Christ and his gospel not our own interpretations, No things by their fruits. Example 37 years of God’s work in Medjugorje. Fruits for our troubled world and Church.
I believe God wants from us in Australia at this time the same he has always wanted—for us to love and care for all people. I do not understand how clergy who taught us this were hurting children at the same time. I feel very disillusioned and confused with my religion after the abuse that has been revealed in the Catholic Church in recent times. My faith has always been the centre of my life but now I feel uncomfortable (mainly at the Cathedral in [ - ]) attending Mass.
I think God is asking us to stand up for what is right. To protect all life, to stand up for children and the elderly and everyone who needs help. The Church needs to stand up for what is right and what God expects of the Church. We need to stand up for basic rights for everyone, not for politically correct, fashionable ideas, such as more women involved in the Church and the greenhouse effect. There can be no respect for women if there is no respect for life. The Church should not be afraid to stand up against abortion and euthanasia, which will be accepted as normal in Australia in the near future, now that some states have started to legalise euthanasia.
God is asking for strength. God is asking for tolerance. God is asking for love. But in order to answer this call in today's society, the Church needs to change and adapt. The Church needs to adapt to the needs of today's society. Which are astonishingly different from the societies upon which the Catholic Church originally thrived. The teachings, the spirit, the

messages of Jesus and the call to share the good news are all relevant and needed. It's the delivery method that is turning younger generations away. The traditions within the Church whilst important, need to be adapted to be welcoming and inclusive. God is asking us to provide a Church that people would fight to belong to, be proud to be a part of and be a positive vessel of all love for our world.

I believe God is asking us to completely re-examine the Catholic Church, its practices and the way in which it promotes itself; to become far more inclusive; to recognize that the Church has failed many of its faithful and those in Catholic communities and that it needs to re-assess its priorities and to return to the Church which was instituted by Christ. So often in so many ways it is not following what Jesus would have us do. Although there are many good priests and religious, the Church, and those good members must acknowledge the evil and damage which has occurred especially to the young and most vulnerable, those most in need of protection, love and care. I am referring to those affected by child abuse, those whose lives have been destroyed and their families who have, like the children, been betrayed in the worst possible way. I personally have family members and friends who, after being abused and then falling into habits of drug abuse in order to escape the inescapable have finally taken their own lives because they were not able to live with the shame, guilt (for which they are not responsible) and the day to day struggle of continuing to face memories, nightmares and feelings of inadequacy. The fact that these abuses occurred in other parts of our culture, in other professions, in families and in other cultures in no way excuses the Church from its guilt and when I hear that used as an explanation I feel like vomiting. For so long we have been so discriminatory, we have made people living in same sex relationships feel like outcasts as we have done to those who are divorced or living with partners before marriage. They feel unwelcome in our "holier than thou" Church. We are all sinners, we all need love and acceptance despite our sins. We are far too intolerant of others despite preaching tolerance. The idea that Catholic priests would give a sermon, often on the evils of sex outside marriage or homosexual behaviour and then, behind closed doors, rape and abuse vulnerable children fill me with disgust and horror. I know that this was a few rather than many but they were far too many and those poor victims, if they dared tell anyone, were so often not believed. A Church which can produce such paedophiles must be doing something very, very wrong in its seminaries and in the Church structure itself. We need to get rid of the paraphernalia which encourages religious to see themselves as better, get rid of the robes, the fancy hats, the ceremonies which encourage such ideas and get back to JESUS. Shut down the Vatican as it is and demote bishops, archbishops, cardinals to the level of priest. There should be no ranks which promote superiority and power.

- Remodelling of the whole structure of Church.
- People now taking up vocations probably need more questioning, assessment on mental health state etc.—are they appropriate for the role.
- Become more democratic in decision-making—involve more laity.
- Lost credibility as an institution—how is this to be regained.
- Need to recognise more the importance of the grass roots gatherings and less emphasis on institutionalised activity.
- Don't have a top down imposing of change—grass roots need to influence the change.
- Attendance at Masses is dwindling—aging populations. Going to be a long slow process to build with young people.
- How do you have a grass roots model without a structure to support it?
- Some things within the Church are done very well but Church is regarded by

populous at large as being all one thing—good and bad together. • The good things are not always done by the Church structure at large—they are done by smaller religious groups with lots of laity involved and these can be growing, getting more people involved. • God is asking us to be more inclusive, more accepting of others. • Don't market ourselves well as Church—don't sell what we do well—schools, Aged Care, Vinnies. • Need to aware of the needs of our community, of our society. • Get back to basics. • Would like to see all the faiths coming together—would take a long time. • Allowing this dialogue to happen is an exciting event in Australia—80 years since the last one. People's perceptions of Catholic Church are governed by, coloured by media portrayal. • Still a desire to belong—think of the number of baptisms and first communions in our parish. • Welcoming, more tolerant, acknowledge the different aspects of course, not just at Mass on the weekend. • Difficulty of sharing our faith with people—shyness, embarrassment of sharing faith with others. Providing spiritual help to people—e.g. clients of Vinnies who have no experience of attending Church. • Be welcoming—meet people where they are at which now means having an online presence as many young people do not engage with old style media of papers, TV etc. and just do internet based. • Non-judgemental, help up not hand out. • Church to have a more visible presence. • To apologise, ask forgiveness, learn from the issues of the past. • All schools are only about 50% Catholic. Difficulties of pastoral care, hard to sort upsets. Part of Catholic DNA to ask forgiveness, apologise, accept forgiveness, hard to move on when non-Catholics involved seem to seek revenge. • What is God asking of us in terms of stewardship and creation. Church is not separate to the rest of our lives. Look after what we have. • What are you doing about the environment—each individual can respond to this without reference to an institution. • New directions, get back to the teaching of Jesus.

Total renewal: Re imagining how to bring Jesus words and actions to our people today. How to really engage all people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, etc., not just in rhetoric. "Promote" Jesus as a person to follow, make the Mass accessible, make it modern Australian and not medieval Roman. Jesus didn't set up the Mass. He talked about individual's relationship with God, His early followers met in small communities and shared and trusted. Win back trust (how?) publicly acknowledge fault again and again and again. Hit the media with ways we are reforming. The good we do: schools, hospitals, aged care, refugees, outreach, advocates for social justice, etc., etc. Be obvious.

To turn our hearts back to Him. To form our young people to know love and serve their Creator. Formation is so necessary.

I think God is asking us to be a light to the world. To shine the light of Christ in our everyday life. To stand up against the culture of death which offers abortion and euthanasia as the solution. The unborn have no voice but ours. The Church needs to be an advocate, a voice. A voice for refugees left for years in detention centres.

I think God is asking us to, seriously reform the Church. At the moment the Church is a Church in crisis. We have been let down by senior clergy. In the past anyone who tried to speak out was shut down .i.e. [ - ], Bishop [ - ] and others. It is about time bishops started to listen [to] [ - ] in [ - ]. The Archbishop in [ - ] (all [ - ] appointees) need to shape up and

listen to the people or else they are going to be left with an irrelevant structure in society. We the people are sick and tired of ecclesiastical claptrap.

What God is asking of the Church in Australia at "this time" is same as he commanded the Apostles before His Ascension: to go out to all the world and tell the Good News. Christ instituted His Church on Earth and remains the Head of the Church to this day. The last 50 years since Vatican 2 have been a dismal failure by the Church, with plummeting attendance at the sacraments, widespread abuse, homosexuality in the clergy. Catholics have forgotten that their calling is simple: to save souls. Not to combat "climate change" or push the Marxist agenda on the Church. Enough is enough! Return to Christ and His Church, the Magisterium, the Catechism, the sacraments and the traditions. Innovation has failed.

God is asking us to be kinder, gentler, more inclusive, less judgemental, more embracing, simpler, less hierarchical, more tolerant of difference, more protective of children and marginalised. More forgiving of divorcees, allowing second marriages, welcoming LGBTI's as full and equal Church members. Elevate the value of pastoral care and decrease the statue of bishops and archbishops. Christ's message is about love not abandonment, forgiveness not judgement. Women in the Church should have equal status as men. The patriarchal, misogynistic, power driven, controlling Church must make way for a more accountable, transparent, compassionate, encompassing and inclusive Church. The hypocrisy and arrogance of our leaders must be replaced with humility, sincerity, compassion and inclusion.

I feel God is asking for a renewal of the Church of Australia in a sacramental way. I return to the focus of the fundamentals of our faith being the Eucharist, reconciliation, adoration and prayer. Regular confession times at cathedrals and churches, more opportunities to attend daily Mass and more opportunities for adoration. I have resided in 4 separate dioceses in Australia over the past 8 years and [ - ] by far has the least amount of access to confession, adoration and additional weekday Mass times. Being the centre of the diocese, this should be the heart of the Catholic experience at [ - ]'s cathedral but this is not the case.

I believe God is asking us to be flexible, to learn to accept new ways of being as a Church community, to be loving and respectful, especially towards each other. And to always ask "What would Jesus do (or say)?" in this situation.

In consideration of frail and elderly people who have compromised immune systems an alternative to the shared cup at Holy Eucharist needs to be found. Individual tiny cups, intinction, or some other solution needs to be found so these people do not miss out.

We need to care for our common home. The Church needs to value and invest in solutions for recycling waste products at every level to promote a sustainable planet. This is truly urgent. Our beautiful home loaned to us by God cannot last with current practices. Catholics could make a start and practice their faith by respecting the earth and the leadership of the Church needs to endorse effective and respectful action to bring about sustainability.

Most, definitely to get back to more reverence and ask God's Mercy for the sins of this diocese who are still trying to push forward agendas that truly offend God. Priest to listen and do what they can to help us have Adoration and Special Masses said for priest and our families (this has been denied me just recently) also God would like His Catholic faithful to be told "if you would like to kneel at the Concentration" meaning by mention this, quite often at funerals and children's Masses we are told to sit up. (So offensive that we are not encouraged to do what God would ask and our visitors in our Church are catered for more than us). And I feel strongly that we should do as we once did and say The St. Michael prayer after Mass. Please God by doing this. Our Church would become stronger and more protected against the abuses from within.

God is asking us to totally rethink who we are as a people whom believe in him. I am reluctant to use the word Church as, what has come to be known as Church, has so let us down, and it must change its fundamental structures. I went to my parish liturgy today, not because of the event but the people there; they are my Church. No bishops, cardinal or Vatican, just ordinary people trying to make sense of life under the guidance of Jesus' teachings. The fundamental changes include: celibacy as a requirement for the clergy; reconciliation in front of a sole priest, women's role in the Church and them being able to be ordained and the teachings on birth control.

I think he is asking us to behave like Jesus would have done. He would want us to speak strongly to support those facing the threat to their human rights. We have an appalling record with refugees in Australia. All refugees should be treated according to the International declaration of Human Rights. The Church must speak up. We must pressure governments to behave accordingly. We need to provide sound support and treatment for those who have fallen through the cracks of life and support them back to health. These include drug addicts, homeless people, unsupported people with mental illnesses and other marginalised people. We need to do some research to discover the issues of modern society in order to understand the causes of people losing their way and provide the support and resources for them to get help in the early stages. God would want us to be open and transparent. Currently to report a concern or to seek information you have to work your way through diocese, parishes, religious orders and other organisations within the organisation. The consequence is that you rarely get an answer and become disillusioned and lose trust.

I think God is asking us to love one another as he loved us, to practice compassion and understanding for each other. I think he is drawing us back to the sacraments, and that people in general are looking for something deeper in their lives. I think practising Catholics have to be above reproach in their behaviour (easier said than done) so they are an example to the broader society.

To be open to the faults in the Church and to respond to victims with compassion and generosity.

We think God is asking us to be strong in our faith and active in our participation in the Church, to be enthusiastic and to stay informed. We need to be prepared to be leaders and not just followers, expecting the priests to tell us what to do. We're currently in a state of crisis with the abuse of children by those who should have been figures of trust and models of discipleship and leadership, instead using their position and power to prey on



children. We think God is not asking us to judge but to listen and to prayerfully discern how we should respond. We need to reach out to those who are hurting and those who are in need, especially asylum seekers, refugees and Aborigines. We think we as a Church could do more for these groups, both practically and financially. We belong to a group that works to support justice issues and the needs of people who are less fortunate than ourselves both in Australia and overseas. We think God is asking us to oppose unjust policies our government proposes and follows. God is asking us to be faithful to prayer and to the practice of our faith, to be informed about our community and our world.

I believe God is asking us to examine whether we are really following the teachings of Jesus Christ as He taught.

I think God is asking us to recognise that the institution is broken and we need to renew our institution with a new model! God calls us to be a community of believers who follow the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth—to be a Christlike Church, symbolic of the REIGN OF GOD! An organisation which is open, transparent, inclusive and accountable! A Church which flexible and consultative and therefore relevant for the era in which it is operating!

To be grateful for what we have. We are so lucky here and we should share our country with those who need to seek refuge here. We should also take care of our environment. We only have one earth, and we aren't doing a great job at looking after it. I also think that if God sees us all as equals, he asks us to do the same. To see gay couples the same as male and female, and to allow them the same rights to marriage. To see females as being equally capable of being a priest as men are, and to allow them to do so. I also think that he would ask us to see each case of abortion and euthanasia individually. Each circumstance is different and I think God asks that we are more compassionate than just treating each case as 'an abomination'.

There are many things I am certain God is asking of us in the Church here in Australia but there is one particular thing I would like to focus on and that is faith and morals. I am 22 years of age and attended a Catholic all-girls school in [ - ]. Not once was I ever taught about why the Church teaches against sex before marriage or contraception. I had no idea so therefore went along with culture. When I was 20 years of age I was invited to a Theology of the Body talk. It blew my mind and transformed my life. It showed me who I am, my dignity, what I have been created for and answered all my questions on why the Church teaches what it does on morals. And it is beautiful!! I suddenly understood and my biggest regret is that I didn't discover the riches of the Church's teachings on faith and morals from when I was 14. Why was I taught in a Catholic school about all the different forms of contraception? But not theology of the body? Why in an all girls' Catholic school we weren't taught about the sanctity of life? I am quite certain this would have prevented many of my friends from having abortions. Based on my experience it would be an extraordinarily positive thing and great gift if the Theology of the Body course was taught in every Catholic Secondary school across Australia. It should be compulsory as part of the religious curriculum. What a blessing this would be for so many teenagers struggling with their faith.

In addition to what I have previously submitted is this: 1. In small country towns, there are 3 or 4 Church buildings serving different denominations. Many are struggling with the upkeep of the buildings. Can we encourage better sharing of buildings and resources? 2.

When implementing changes to the "norm", let us use pilot groups rather than wait until the Universal Church agrees on them. 3. The photos of the almost totally men's group during the recent council with the Pope discussing sexual assault matters, was cause for comment by people who are not Catholic. We need a better public face than that.

Allow others to feel okay being part of our community To love one another as we want to be loved To be accepting, involved and engaged in our faith, in a modern way. To be the best that we can be for ourselves and others. To be the face of, hands and feet of Jesus in our world and follow the example in our lives. To show forgiveness and comeback to the Church. To acknowledge what has happened in the past. Dignity of human life (stop racism, sexism, domestic, violence, locking up children in detention who seek refuge). Broaden perspectives and delve deeper into who people are, not where they come from. Inclusion of all. Celebrate differences. Open our hearts and minds. Forgiveness. To be united and be leaders of and good faith and love. Teaching people how to be good people. I felt that God would like to see women sharing equal responsibility/influence within the Church, e.g. Female bishops, priests etc. To focus on our relationships with each other. Technology is perhaps creating a medium for people to spread hate, vitriol, envy... e.g. social media. To be open to new ways of thinking and to have a place where we can share hopes in a trusting way. True equality between men and women in all areas of life, including the Catholic Church and its governance and ministries. Love—to love and care for others with respect, dignity and kindness. Compassion—refugees, homeless, vulnerable people, indigenous, to welcome others. Action—stewardship of God's creation/caring for the land now and forever. To live in right relationship with one another and our country—to heal the hurt of the past—sexual abuse and stolen generation. To build a just future for our children and generations to come—refugees, caring for our earth, Aboriginal people. To re-contextualise how we teach RE to make it real for our students. Strategies to keep Jesus alive. To include and accept all for who they are and the gender and/or sexual stance they choose. To adapt and change alongside the technological developments of the 21st century. To rethink the formal ways we approach Church Women in the Church? To develop our student's spirituality. To plant the seeds of faith today in our children—who knows the result. To be people of forgiveness and reconciliation. For the Church to stand up and say sorry for Church abuse, be proactive. To make the Church more user friendly. Challenges of the Church environment at this time. Involving families in the structure of the Church. The importance of the sacraments—how do these help our community to follow through? Stand up and make a change. What is Church these days? Active ministry What does it mean to be a Catholic today? To open dialogue. To display acceptance (not tolerance). To address Catholic Social Teaching directives. To challenge where there is injustice. To confront realities. Relevance/understanding/engagement of our religion for our children.

I think God is asking of us the same thing he continually asked of the people of Israel throughout the Old Testament—to return to him and the practice of the faith in the fullness of the truth. The Israelites so often fell away from worshiping the true God, instead worshiping the idols and adopting the immoral behaviour of the surrounding nations. In the Catholic Church in Australia, we too have, on the whole, fallen away from the practice of our faith and embraced the secular culture around us. Too many Catholics, including lay people, priests and religious, wrongly support and participate in homosexual relationships,

abortion, contraception, euthanasia and all other amounts of gravely immoral acts. They do not believe in the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, they don't attend Mass, they don't avail themselves of the sacrament of confession, of Eucharistic adoration. The Mass in most parishes across the country is people-focussed with outdated 70s songs with lyrics ranging from at best, uselessly sentimental to at worst, lacking any mention of God or verging on heresy. Reverence in the Mass being dismissed, liturgical abuse is now the norm. We need to return to the Lord our God and the deposit of faith granted to his one, holy, Catholic, apostolic Church. We need to be overtly, unashamedly CATHOLIC and return to the rich heritage of the Catholic tradition. We need:

- Daily Mass to be more widely available.
- More confession times to make it easier for people to make it regularly and frequently.
- More Eucharistic adoration times.
- Priests to preach homilies that actually challenge us and stretch us to be selfless and perfect Christians and soldiers of Christ, not just tell us that we're all nice people.
- Priests and bishops to encourage devotion to the rosary and guide us to develop solid prayer lives.
- More reverence in every single Mass, and for liturgical abuse to be completely stamped out.
- The traditional Latin Mass to be supported and promoted.
- Priests to say Mass facing 'ad orientem', emphasising that we are worshipping God together, not just 'hanging out' with each other in God's house.
- Music in the liturgy to be prayerful and reverent, executed by competent musicians. Gregorian chant and polyphony need to be encouraged and facilitated with training of parish musicians.
- Priests to devoutly preach against the sins rampant in our culture such as abortion, euthanasia and immoral sexual behaviour of all kinds.
- The tabernacle in every single Church to be positioned in its traditional location— in the centre rear of the sanctuary.
- That Jesus is given pride of place in our churches and not relegated to a corner to be ignored.
- Priests who do not uphold the faith to be removed from their positions—if they lack orthodoxy in some small matter it is simply the gateway for them to lack orthodoxy in larger matters such as sexual morality leading to child sexual abuse.

I think God is asking us to think about the original message he gave us through Jesus; to love others and to set an example through inclusion and non-judgement. I believe that the Church has built up dogma and structures which have made the Church less accessible to many and which is contributing to disconnection between the message of God and the actions of the Church. As a result it is becoming more difficult for Catholics to have a personal relationship with God and to have trust in the Church.



To re-engage youth with the Church. To share the good news (evangelise) in a secular world. To reach out to other religions, seeking commonality. To hear the voices of children. To develop right relations within the Church. To develop meaningful dialogue outside the Church, in the secular world. To embrace diversity and uncertainty. To celebrate the discipleship of Christian living. To celebrate local Church communities, enabling them to make decisions, and be understood and encouraged as 'the face of the Church'. To bring a missionary spirit to renewing and revitalizing parishes. To remember and acknowledge the poor amongst God's people, and act for them.

1. What is God asking of us in Australia at this time?

- To see the possibilities of a Church that is more in touch with today's world.
- To listen to the voices of women, as well as men, in our Church.
- To be Missionary Disciples, and to take up our responsibilities as Baptised Catholics.
- To stop relying on our Catholic schools to 'pass on the faith'.

Act as good Samaritans to others get back to basics—teach more faith in the schools. "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Take seriously the abuse of children—help the children heal. To work together as one for peace and prosperity. Look after the less fortunate. To be tolerant, accepting and inclusive of those who do not share our values or way of life. To care for his precious earth—reverse current trends. Better leaders—more in touch with the people. Be open to change in the Church—flexibility of clergy and laity. Community centre of Church—review some 'man made' rules. Be prayerful. Challenge traditions—how did the first church operate? Woman able to rupture the process—believe in ourselves. Be patient and understanding and willing to step up to leadership. Bring back the important of morals in society uphold the faith, live by the Catholic ethos—even in these difficult times—never lose sight. 'Love one another' to lead by example. Get back to Jesus' values of love, care, compassion and forgiveness. New image of Church—change image of cover ups, abuse and lack of compassion towards victims pray more and help people bring families to church on Sundays

I think God is asking now as he has always—to "Love one another as I have loved you." "Where two or three are gathered in my name—I am there." We are so far away from Jesus' teachings—love, honesty, inclusion, forgiveness, healing and have gone down the way of the priests and hierarchy of the Church that Jesus brought to task and at times condemned. I think God would ask—"Where is MY Church?"

To listen, reflect and act for a better and more inclusive world.

- To continue to live out our faith
- To love our neighbours—the homeless, the drug-affected, the refugees, the outsiders. "Live it, not say it."
- To foster the connection to our faith of young people who don't go regularly to Church.
- To be a welcoming, joyful community.
- To speak up about social justice issues.
- To share in the worship of other faith communities.

- To be guardians of our planet, not extravagant users of resources.
- To take responsibility for our own spiritual growth.
- To make regular time for prayer.

To keep strong in our Catholic faith and not be worried about how much the Church is hated. To find ways to teach us kids who don't go to Catholic schools—it would be good to start boys' clubs where priests and dads teach us catechism whilst having campfires and bike riding and fishing and kicking the footy and woodwork. They could teach us about different saints to have as heroes. At state schools we don't even get religious education—only scary stuff and it makes you feel lost. I would like to see the Church not as something in the background but as proud, publicising more on social media the charity works and inviting young people to join Vinnies and other Church charities. People only see the bad abuse stuff and want to punish the whole Church. The Church should put things on social media or ads on TV about hope, loving God, come back to Mass, Our lady is waiting, come back to confession, join the choir, learn about Church buildings, learn about love and marriage—all to get the spiritual and hope and faith back in people. All the projects of the Church and different mission work in war zones and 3rd world countries should be advertised too and put on social media to make the Church real in people's lives every day and to remind people of all the good—people really need at this time to see the good in the Church. Many don't know what the sacred heart is—need to educate through social media; need to promote getting married and the joy of it and having a family; need to promote babies and life; need to promote love of old people; need to promote the priesthood. I think there should be Holy Hours in all Catholic schools each week and every Church every week—it will give us all that spiritual renewal and encounter with Jesus and in times of mental health and stress for students it can be positive to spend this time praying quietly, writing in a prayer journal—conversions will happen and young people will develop that personal love of God and see how their prayers are answered. Jesus answered my prayers—my mum nearly died from cancer and I pray all the time now. Many of my friends don't know how to pray. If priests always wore their black gear it would be good so they stand out—it would help us not to worry about image all the time and trying to fit in with everyone else. I think priests are scared to talk to boys now a bit because of all the scandals and this is sad—we need them to be real fathers and interested in our lives. I also can't stand the music at Mass. At the cathedral it is really good with the big pipe organ and a bit magical and the singing awesome. I like all the candles and colours and I learned the Mass following the prayer cards as it was a bit confusing before my mum showed me this. Need priests to go back to teaching all the basic virtues in Mass like my mum reads us—none of my friends have any idea and it makes me feel I'm the only one. I think many grown-ups don't even know.

More Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Praise & Worship. Develop lay ministry for children after they have received the sacraments. The children in the Primary School age group—grade four to grade seven. (Pre-teens). Then another ministry for early teens in age group of 13, 14 and 15. By ministering to children with a take home program book we will be evangelising their parents. More devotion to the Rosary. God is asking His People to be Holy. Devotion, Prayer, Praise and Worship.

To keep families strong and intact with mother and father being valued as important for children. To value marriage between man and woman and encourage our children to understand sex is sacred and for the creation of children and that fornication will fragment your soul and leave you emotionally broken. To be strong and not be influenced by the media. Maybe the media needs to be used positively by the Church? To respect life from beginning to natural end. To ban all abortions past 16 weeks. To seek for doctors not to be prosecuted for refusing to refer for abortion. For sex to be taught within the context of marriage, children and mental health. To get rid of these dreadful safe schools programs that are trying to ruin our children. For prayers to remain said at the beginning of Parliament. To care better for our own vulnerable poor and drug dependent and elderly and Aboriginal rather than increasing migration. To re-Christianise our parliament and our society with Christian values.

To come to understand that we, the people, are 'the Church'...i.e. everyone in the pews, the priests, the religious. We are the Body of Christ. Without us, there is no Church. Not to harp back to the past but to look to the future.... To listen respectfully to what others have to say. To acknowledge that things have changed, not only for the Church but in the wider world, especially the wider 'Western' world. To acknowledge the faithful and humble service of the many priestly and religious people who have served us and continue to do so.

At this time of great humiliation for the Church, I think the Holy Spirit is asking for a new beginning and a spirit of humility to replace the arrogance of some of our leading clerical figures. The laity must not be ignored, our opinions are to be respected and acknowledged so that we can move forward. There needs to be less emphasis on doctrine and more emphasis on living life as a Christian—i.e. looking at situations through the eyes of Jesus and acting as he would. A less authoritarian clergy is needed recognising the valuable contribution of all baptised members of the Church according to their different talents. There has been little emphasis on ongoing faith development for Church members and that seems to include some of the ordained clergy who may be highly trained in theology and doctrine, but not in ways of living as Jesus would have—listening to others pain and showing compassion. The voice of women needs recognition—there are many fine religious and lay women in this country whose role is not recognised by the hierarchy. They have much to contribute. This Plenary Council is a new opportunity for the Australian Church to rise from the ashes of humiliation and become a role model for the Western world.

To be an all-inclusive Church of men, women, children and clergy; to especially take immediate steps to ensure women are involved in the selection and training of candidates for the priesthood; to especially take immediate steps to ensure women have an equal role in the governance of the Church.

I would like to suggest that as Pope Leo asked, that after each Mass celebrated the prayer to St Michael be recited. Prayer to St Michael to be said at each Mass celebrated.

Reform this out of touch Church.

Our main focus each and every day is faith in Jesus. Surrender to Jesus and allow God to guide us during our daily lives. Mass attendance is the way to partake in our Lord's

sacrifice and His sharing of His body and blood which is our spiritual food for our earthly journey to His kingdom in Heaven. Remember this earthly life is passing and it is our journey to spend eternity with God in Heaven, Treat people with acceptance and no judgement so that they experience the love of Jesus when you meet them. Pray the Rosary to ask for Our Blessed Lady to assist all people as they live their daily toil. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament ...make this our focus where we can sit and spend time with Jesus in silence to truly listen to His voice and we can rest near Him and feel secure in His love to truly understand that He loves us all. Pray for Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life and thank God for good holy men and women who dedicate their life to God to save all our souls. Be truthful in our daily lives, never be afraid to speak the truth to stand up for what is right and just. Practice hope, faith and charity by being a servant to all we meet. Sacraments are important so continue to go to Reconciliation to ask for God's unfathomable mercy to absolve our sins. Eucharist is our daily bread. Pray for all people, those who have died, those living especially those who don't see the need to be part of God's holy Church.

Review the role of women and young people in our Church, particularly in the decision-making processes; involve them in the discussions. We can still recognize the lifetime of study and theological experience of the cardinals, bishops and priests for final decisions and/or recommendations. Review the hierarchy structure in our Church and the perceived authority and or power that goes with it. People in this 21st century will not accept this as those in generations before have.

Authenticity. Honesty. Openness. Humility. Respect of others. Respect of self. Loving our neighbours: all who are damaged, broken, hurt, alienated, marginalised, weak, sinful, imperfect. I feel God is calling us to rethink 'Church' as we have traditionally perceived of it. As Pope Francis says, our Church is a community of communities. Some are doing amazing things. Some are not. We need frank, honest and open assessment of this. Our school system is bulging at the seams with 'Catholics' and 'non-Catholics' alike. Our schools are the front line Church for most families these days. You, the hierarchy and ageing parishioners, ask why the pews are bare but fail to ask why the schools are struggling to cater for all who seek this face of Christ in our world today. See this as a re-contextualising of faith, of Church, and embrace it. In Catholic schools across the nation, people meet the lay teachers and staff who are trying to enact the attitudes, teachings and fundamental love of Christ to all who attend. Here, the vulnerable, the weak, the average and the gifted co-exist in communities that seek to promote 'Christian values': faith, hope and love, in all that they do. This is not, sadly, the encounter of many in our parishes, where meeting the needs of the people can often be lost by the wayside, clinging to models of care and encounter of times long gone. I feel God is asking us to re-assess our notion of 'Church' and, modelled on the inclusive, practical nature of the earliest communities, seek out leaders (Deacons) wherever they present within our 'communities of communities' and empower these lay community members to facilitate formation and a sacramental life not solely focused on Sunday 9am Mass.

To allow women and lay people to take their rightful positions in the leadership of the Church alongside the clergy. To be a more inclusive and loving Church that mirrors the words and example of Jesus. The disasters of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church are a direct result of poor transparency and cover up which was led by the clergy. God is

asking our bishops to step aside and allow others to lead as the bishops have failed in their leadership and protection of the vulnerable. This would allow them to provide pastoral care to their people without the burden of management.

I think God is asking us to address the issues of power, transparency and accountability within the Church. God has created us, male and female in God's own image. God is not just asking us, but I believe imploring us to address this issue of equality within our society, within our Church.

I believe God is asking us to be open to change in ourselves, our parishes and dioceses. There needs to be a change of heart in the Church's approach to individuals and their circumstances in a way that mirrors how Jesus humbled himself to serve others. I believe that God has, and always will, ask us to be aware of how we can best serve others. To do this means relinquishing the need for power and control over others and the encouraging growth and deep spiritual awareness and development. I adamantly believe that women and men need to be equals in Church in leadership, decision making and stewardship. The Church can no longer exist as a male-dominated hierarchy. When decisions are made on behalf of a collective by only men, those decisions are inadequate. It is only when both sexes are represented that the gender intelligence of each will complement the process and the end result will benefit everyone equally. Women need to be represented in all areas of the Church. It is no longer acceptable for the Church to act in a way that excludes women from participating fully. We are highly educated, capable, faith filled participants who have equal abilities and incredible God given gifts and talents that need to be recognised and utilised. Women are currently the backbone of the Church, but we are not prepared to be excluded from ministering to others in menial and side roles. The Church needs to embrace all its members and their abilities if it is to survive.

Solid, faithful formation!! The Church is in need of reform, but there can be no reform without formation! Pure and simple, very few of us know our faith. Confusion reigns supreme. People are so easily swayed by pervasive, persuasive and powerful voices because we do not know and cannot defend our faith. Knowledge inspires, knowledge empowers, and God and his truth sets us free. Our Church and her teachings are beautiful and true and good. They are the hope and the love and light that so many are desperately seeking. Too often the negatives are highlighted, the prohibitions. The 'no's' are well known, but rarely understood and even more rarely put in light of the greater 'yes'. I think too we've lost sight of the basics—we are sinners, we are the ones who need to change. I get the sense many are waiting, hoping, expecting the Church to change and 'get with the times.' Again, it is us who need to change. We need to conform our hearts and minds to Christ and his Church, not alter established Church teaching to justify our current lives and opinions. We need to educate our hearts and minds and transform our lives, and we need to find relevant ways to spread that message to others.

I think that we the laity must assume more responsibility for defending the Faith against the rampant secularism that is threatening to overwhelm us. We need to draw on the experience of the past and explore new ways of being effective witnesses to our beliefs. We need to be able to explain and defend these beliefs in a firm non aggressive way. Parish led Adult Education in the Faith or, privately in small groups, e.g. studying Fr Flader's excellently presented "Journey into Truth" are examples of possible strategies.

God is asking the same thing of us contemporary Australians as He has asked of all peoples since the beginning of time. He is inviting us into a personal relationship with him; which, by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of His son Jesus, has the promise of eternal life. We have unprecedented peace, prosperity and good health in Australia, which can obscure the need for something bigger than ourselves. Yet everyone still confronts their mortality and the meaning of life. The Church in Australia should take advantage of new modes of communication, but must always proclaim Christ's teaching in the same way—through the sacraments—with the same meaning. The ubiquity of internet access means any attempts to deny the Church's history—such as deemphasising writings and practices from before the Second Vatican Council—will fall flat. The continuity the Catholic Church can trace, to Jesus himself entrusting the Church on earth to Peter, is its 'unique selling point' in a crowded spiritual marketplace where tribal loyalties have fallen away. The Church must return to making clear that we are all sinners, with a need to active penance through confession, prayer and cultural practices such as fasting. Currently most Australians think Catholics are 'holier than thou' hypocrites, judging others yet failing to stop sexual abuse in Church institutions. Only by emphasising our own sin and frailty, and living self-sacrificial lives, will our way of life become attractive again. It could be tempting to downplay the fullness of our 'hard teaching' in an attempt to ensure our institutions such as schools and hospitals are well-funded and inoffensive to secular mores, but this will not work; similarly, attempts to use the plenary council to propose that the Australian Church diverge from universal Catholic teachings—for instance on contraception and divorce—will just make us look more hypocritical; Christ came to redeem the whole world, and to suggest that moral teachings in Australia should be different to those in Asia or Africa would be absurd in an interconnected world.

God is asking us to show compassion to others, to be respectful of others' opinions and genuine beliefs. He would expect us to adjust to the times—after all the gospels were written by men nearly 2000 years ago and reflect the attitudes of the time they were written.

Explore ways of making the Church more relevant in today's world. Present the Church as a more socially active organisation, out in communities doing good works, not some exclusive group doing things behind closed doors.

For all to look at themselves and ask if we are adapting to an ever changing world.

I believe God is asking us to be Church in a totally new way. The current structures are problematic in so many ways. The "Church" seems unwelcoming to many people due to a number of factors. Firstly, more than 50% of the population (women) is excluded in major decision-making areas. Secondly, the hierarchy of the Church seems inscrutable, exclusive, and completely out of touch with the common person and those who are marginalised. Thirdly, our rites are outdated and stale and don't resonate with many people hence the poor Mass attendances. Fourthly, the inability of the Church to adapt to and accept diversity is self-defeating. The way we train priests must undergo a complete overhaul. No one should be accepted for the priesthood until they have had "life experience".

Be smart—the rest of the world is watching us



Thanks for this opportunity. This council is a great initiative and I hope and pray that there will be changes that help more people understand the message of Jesus and can live this message out in their lives. I think God is asking us to live out the gospel messages in the modern world in which we live. Matthew's account is still relevant—when Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All of Christianity comes down to how we love God and how everything we do—relationships, work, entertainment, education, displays our love for God. No success, status, or possession will matter at the end of our days. How we loved God and loved others will be our victory. Further to this Jesus says “Do to others as you would have them do to you”. Rather than doing to others what they have done to us or giving them what they may deserve, we are to treat them the way we want them to treat us. Jesus’ love for us is perfect, unchanging, and self-sacrificial. Our capacity to love others the way Jesus’ commands comes only from our experience of His love and from the power of the Holy Spirit. And then there are the Beatitudes—a great form of guidance and still so relevant.

I believe God is asking the Church to be humble and transparent.

Have compassion for diversity of everyone. An openness to welcome refugees to our country. Apologise for past historical abuses and mistakes; stolen children, clerical abuse, taking babies from mothers, missionaries not respecting other cultural rituals and practices. Include and respect the input of women and children in the Church. Allow women to have a significant role. Allow men to marry if they wish. Make celibacy optional. Women priests. Lay people priests. Change the hierarchical structure—too much about the structure not about the people. Rural and remote settings to be considered—running our own Church. Consider that the Catholic school is the only religious connection most people have so we have to get it right. We have to take the Church to the people, not expect them to come to the Church.

I think God wants us to get back to the basics—teaching the Catechism and preaching the Gospel—proclaiming the Good News to all-Christian and non-Christian alike! We can’t do that if we don’t know the gospel or the Catechism. We need to get back to “knowing, loving, and serving God in this life, so we can be happy with Him forever in Heaven”. He is asking us to be soldiers of Christ again. I think God wants us to rid His Church of all the “wolves in sheep’s clothing” that are lurking in the Church, leading people astray, and replacing the Truths of the Faith with a very watered down version of the original. I also think He wants us to weed out those involved in the ‘homosexual subculture’ that seems to be flourishing in the Church. We have become such a selfish society that loving our neighbour has fallen by the wayside—He would want us to fix that. But remember really loving people does not include endorsing a sinful way of life.

I think God is asking us to get back to grassroots faith—to community. To build up the trust and love that should exist with our Church. To get back in touch with the love for all humanity—ourselves, our families, friends, the stranger and our enemy. The Church starts with ourselves not Rome.



<p>We believe that God is asking us to listen and journey with the poor, that we can learn from the poor.</p>
<p>What does God ask of me: The same as everyone. To hold to my faith in an increasingly secular world; to act with love and kindness with all I am in contact with; and to be heard within my Church. Through voting I am engaged and have a say in the government of our country. Not so for the Catholic Church which is run by the clergy and excludes all lay people. Our Church is not really our Church when we have no say in how its affairs are managed. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has revealed a culture in the Catholic Church that is untenable. Nothing will change while the Church shuts us out. We must have a voice.</p>
<p>I believe God is asking the Church of Australia: To allow opportunities for a lived experience of the gospel teaching on ecological justice (both social and environmental) that the 'cry of the poor and the cry of the earth' has a profound message for all our lives. Be humble. To understand the mystery, wonder and preciousness of the natural world, as Jesus experienced it during his journeys two thousand years ago. To be inclusive (gender, age, cultural) at every level of its structures. To give the laity roles in establishing less hierarchical structure of being Church. Catholic Earthcare groups be established in every diocese—a network across Australia. To encourage all Church organisations and individuals to live simply and sustainably, to conserve energy, to recycle, so as to walk more mindfully on the land. To consistently speak out on matters of social and environmental justice (ecological). To recognise a greater understanding of the diversity of sexual identity. To recognise that people experience diverse combinations of families, that we need to accept and support all people. To reintroduce the Third Rite of Reconciliation.</p>
<p>Leadership teams should support all positions of leadership within the Church: clerical positions, school or university, and any other bodies auspiced by the Catholic Church. Every team should include at least 2 women, and potentially non-Catholic 'siblings', with the actual leader able to enlist those who are needed ... but the groups' composition must be published and its deliberation topics should be recorded, generally being published. We must support any individual's strengths and weaknesses by supplying a sounding board and shared prayer. Learning communities must be developed within parishes to enhance the 'discerning community' at local levels</p>
<p>To Act Justly, Love Tenderly and Walk Humbly With Our God! God is asking the Council to address change where the current actions of priests, religious or laity hinder love and introduce new concepts which facilitate love. Ask for forgiveness so that the Church can move forward. Feel the sorrow in the Church. We need change for the good—have faith in God and the Spirit. Appoint eligible competent women in the Church. Ensure bishops and archbishops and priests accountable.</p>
<p>God is asking of us to be warm, open, cooperative and productive in our RELATIONSHIPS. Our behaviour needs to be inclusive, accountable and transparent. We must FACE any UNRESOLVED trauma in our past lives in order to remove the deep hurt and ALLOW the HEALING of our spirit. As Church, we are being asked to discover new ways for all living creatures, human and other than human to live in peace joy and right RELATIONSHIP.</p>

God is asking us to engage with the spirit of Jesus... and to dismantle unhelpful traditions and practices that have not worked such as compulsory celibate clergy and adopt married and or women clergy. Also, adopt a parish system that is local...people having to travel long distances to participate in a Eucharist... Does not work...if there are not enough clergy, as they did in early times...simply invite somebody to preside of the celebration of the Eucharist.... The continuance of this destructive model of a compulsory priesthood has put many young men in severe temptation, given that we are all endowed with a God-given attraction to express our sexuality...to put young men in this problematic position to expose them to the occasion of sin...if they cannot express their sexuality in traditional ways, they are likely to be more devious in seeking out, such opportunities... Oftentimes at the expense of somebody ill-equipped to cope with approaches from a powerful person...but we also need to simplify the new priests we need everyday amateur priests as opposed to professional power driven career structures... [ - ].

\* To discover ways to have women and married leaders

\* To have regular apology services for the hurt and bruised abused—ask them what ways they want us to recognise our wrongs

\* Look at other denominations—see what we like and don't like about their ways and learn from them.

A complete training program for the whole Church on discerning the use of power as Jesus taught it based on the Wilderness Gospel of the First Sunday of Lent 2019. I have seen too many examples of change of power where the only models for the former protesters have been despotic and autocratic. I have worked hard to empower lay people in the Church but have seen an example recently of a businessman without faith or Church ethics divide a Christian community. I believe God is asking us to change the current model lacking transparency but it must be done with wisdom, humility, trust in God, responsibility, much prayer and an informed discernment, not a superficial replacement scheme.

Get rid of the homosexuals in the priesthood, ban Catholics from being Freemasons again, bring back the Latin Mass, bring back tradition. Direct parishioners how to vote in elections and have influence again in society. Stop watering down the Church doctrine to please degenerates and enemies of the Church. Bring back headscarfs and sacred silence. No women leadership as the Bible forbids it.

The same as He has always asked of us. It doesn't matter what "time" it is, whether it's 2019, 1019, or 3019, it has to be the same, as He has already revealed what He asks of us through the establishment of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church by our Lord Jesus Christ and the revelation on Pentecost by the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. Therefore, what He asks of us is to live our lives according to what the Catholic Church has always taught since our Lord Himself; it has not changed and it cannot change. Implying something has changed in what the Catholic Church teaches implies that our Lord missed something or got something wrong when He established the Church, and of course that is impossible.

God can be reflected through all his people, men, women and children. Look at the Church and understand where it has been disintegrating and move past this to a stronger future. Build His kingdom.
I think that God is asking us what he has always asked of us; to love and know him. The question is; how we interpret this today. I believe that this can be done by continuing our faith as strong, holy Catholics.
The Church in Australia needs a wholehearted move toward holiness. We need to provide opportunities for religious and lay Catholics to work toward personal holiness. This needs a multifaceted approach: a return to regular reception of all sacraments; the return to an aesthetics of beauty in liturgy; a return to respectful and prayerful liturgy; an appreciation of the artistic and musical cultural history of the Church; a serious examination of the Church's intellectual history. We need to invigorate monastic life in Australia so we can facilitate everyone's encounter with God. Australia is rapidly becoming increasingly secular and the Church is looking less and less legitimate and attractive to non-Catholics and to many Catholics. We need to remind ourselves and the rest of Australia what it is that we stand for and how we can best express our love of God and God's for us through the example of genuinely Christ-like lives.
I think God wants us to be a Church that becomes more skilled in discerning what God is calling us to do, especially in the area of Catholic community decision-making. Procedures need to be developed at all levels which enable members of a Church community to present their information and convictions. Towards the end of most Church meetings these questions could be asked: What do you think about the way this meeting has been conducted—about its preparation and conduct. Can the meeting-process be improved? How do you feel about this meeting? Hopefully, in the leadership team there will be some who, at the meeting or afterwards, can speak with the troubled person. All of that can happen in the context of an openness to the presence of the loving Mystery of God.
<p>The Catholic Church in Australia needs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the future and promote Christian contemporary values.</li> <li>• Focus on pastoral activities with less emphasis on ceremonial events.</li> <li>• Encourage and welcome broadest involvement in all Church activities.</li> <li>• Be fully accountable.</li> <li>• Be 100% transparent.</li> <li>• Be truly inclusive.</li> <li>• Rebuild trust.</li> <li>• Overcome current dysfunctional governance and leadership from incompetent bishops.</li> <li>• Learn from past errors.</li> <li>• Involve local laity in the selection of priests and bishops and hold them accountable to the community.</li> <li>• Find solutions to lack of priests.</li> <li>• Embrace inclusiveness of ALL members of the community including other races and religions, divorcees, LGTIQ etc. and make them truly welcome as equals, respect relationships and allow them to be fully involved in every Church service and activity.</li> </ul>

- Women must be given their equal place in the governance and priestly functions of the Church. Ø Celibacy should be optional and real relationships and married priests encouraged.
- Cease using Canon law to withhold criminal information.

Closing comment: Bishops will have the vast majority of votes at the Plenary Council. Australian bishops have proved themselves incompetent in response to the Royal Commission:

• No compassion • No remorse • No empathy • Absolute denial • Cover ups • Lost memory and no response

Humility. Justice. Change. Inclusion. Truth. Transparency. Consultation.

We as a married couple believe God is asking the Catholic Church of Australia to lead the way in returning to the mission of Jesus. We as lay members of the Catholic Church, need to have the courage and conviction to make a stand and be proactive in creating an inclusive Church. Jesus was not about power and exclusion, he came to teach those in authority that they had lost their way and that their role was to nurture and support all people. The Australian Catholic bishops and priests need to listen and hear what the lay community are expressing and not just pay lip service to them. We need to be empowered by those who lead to create an all-inclusive transparent Church. Those in authority need to acknowledge that there is a culture of secrecy, denial and exclusion, which has led to a 'boys' club' mentality. The exclusion of lay people in particular women in leadership roles, the unhealthy reliance on power of those in authority, along with an unhealthy obsession with procuring and the possession of properties and monies has led to poor stewardship, resulting in a dying Church.

To move forward to address the problems of this day and age and not try to go back to the ways of the middle of the last century. Local issues to be resolved at a local level by the local bishop and not have people contacting Rome as happens from time to time with unfortunate outcomes as with Bishop [ - ]. Our understanding of the gay and lesbian people who have been born this way and not chosen it and who suffer ridicule and bullying because of it. Reach out to the victims of sexual and physical abuse and try to offer healing and inclusion in the Church. The use of the third rite of reconciliation to make available a community prayer and reflection time.

Group One: The Catholic Church needs to change sooner rather than later to save its existence. It needs to be open and inclusive; not excluding certain groups. The role of women is not valued within the Church. We believe all people are created in the image of God yet the Church that does not recognise the dignity/equality of all people. Our mandate should be to ask the hard questions of the institution that oversees us.

Group Two: This is an exciting period and also difficult for the Church at the same time. Women and lay people are not recognized in the Church. Teenagers are not catered for. There is plenty of new wine. The problem is that we have always had old wineskins and have not yet arrived at new wineskins. Hopefully this process will create the new wineskins for the new wine. In the past wonderful things have been created by a need, e.g. Lay-led assemblies. There are challenging opportunities for people to serve; to look at scripture and be part of the leadership of a worshipping community. We are all part of the

priesthood of the baptised yet we always default to the priest. What is the priesthood? Developing prayer life, seeking to understand Jesus through scripture, developing spirituality. These are also qualities of the baptised (as well as the ordained). The Church needs to open up opportunities for others.

Group Three: Questions—What is the demographic of our Churches? Why are they different to other religious denomination's Churches, full of energy? Answer—They lack the presence of young people. Message—We need to make some radical decisions to bring some real changes to the structures/model of the Church that young adults would want to be part of.

We need to address the sexual abuse scandal. To do so, we need to change the Church law so that not only celibate men can be priests. Married men and women, celibate women and both straight and gay adults should be allowed to be priests. We need to change the confessional laws so that if a serious crime, including sexual assault is confessed, the priest must contact the civil authorities. We need another review of the wording of the Mass. Benedict's reforms haven't worked, and inclusive language for people, and non-gendered language, of God should be used. We need more adult education on modern understanding of scripture etc. so that people have a chance of move forward in their understanding.

Tolerance and acceptance and equality of migrants, indigenous, women and LGBTI people. Openness and open mindedness to this equality and accepting this changing world. People in regional, rural and remote areas need to be included, respected and heard and treated as equals. Don't put all focus on larger populations and cities and exclude these people. Not to use religion as a means of violence, discrimination or to hide things (not being transparent). From my recent experiences what God is asking of us, I think one of the biggest things is that even if people are not going to Church we still have a lot of schools and young people attending them. This is where a lot of young people are so the Church needs to be doing more to reach them. People are still part of the Church but not necessarily attending Church. There are a lot of lay people involved in the running of schools and they could be a positive influence on this group of people. People are discussing issues in this environment and the Church needs to tap into this area more fully. Don't confuse politics and faith. Some of our political leaders use religion as a part of their philosophy. Justifying religious ideology rather than reflecting upon it. God does not want us to be so strict about rules and doctrine. God wants us to be more human, have more spirituality focused on life's experiences. We don't need to have rules for the sake of rules without a lot of integration of people's lives. God is asking us to work more collaboratively together and be more inclusive. We need to seriously consider changing the powerful model of an all-male hierarchical system of Church with the ordination of male celibate men only. God and the world are asking more of us than this one singular way of ordering and financing the Church. Strengthen our understanding of Scripture and be open to the variety of ministry including lay ministry and women in ministry as witnessed in the Gospels. People are willing to embrace positive changes. We don't have to keep things the way they are because they have been that way for many centuries.

A call to unity founded in Christ like values by being open to the Holy Spirit. A call to prayer—imitate Jesus—pray constantly. Put God number one in our lives. A call to love

our Catholic faith Love of neighbour—through love of neighbour we see God and love Him. Holiness—founded in simplicity—God is pure simplicity. Obedience—to the Church not our own ideas or societal values Faithfulness to the Mass—i.e. not changing the words of the Mass; not using the old Eucharistic prayers; not leaving out prayers etc.

I think that God is asking us to treat ALL with dignity and respect. Our Church needs to listen and discern this message. We need to look at the issues facing our clergy. There are too few and they are too widely spread. Why is that? Is celibacy too challenging? Should we consider married priests? It works in the Eastern Rite Churches. What is happening in the seminaries? The young clergy are very clerical and conservative. They are out of touch with the world of today. What 'Father' says may not be the only response. This has to be addressed. Marriage after divorce or marrying someone from another faith tradition. We forgive murder but not divorce. Why? How can we refuse the sacrament to these people? We have to ask questions about the Gay community. I don't have a black and white approach, I really don't know what to believe but how we treat people worries me. What are we teaching our young people? God is as important now as at any time in history. We must speak up for our faith and beliefs, because if we don't know one else will. We used to be a country of faith but this is no longer the case. What we teach and how must be considered. I love my faith and my Church. I would like it to be passed onto our children and the wider community.





## RESPONSES TO QUESTION 2

*What questions about the future of  
the Church in Australia  
would you like the  
Plenary Council to consider?*



## QUESTIONS FOR PLENARY COUNCIL

Participants were also asked to submit questions about the future of the Church in Australia for the Plenary Council to consider. The question put to participants was:

*What questions about the future of the Church in Australia would you like the Plenary Council to consider?*

Responses to this question were examined for consent both for the publishing of their de-identified submission online and for sharing their de-identified submission with their diocese. Questions were also checked for comprehension and duplicate questions were identified. From this, a sample list of questions indicative of the submissions from your diocese was developed. This list is as follows:

1. How do we not lose our identity and so we don't become like other denominations?
2. How do we remain authentic and faithful to the universal Church?
3. How can we encourage families to be a more active part of church?
4. How can we accept the role of religious in our daily lives?
5. How can we address the fear of the unknown and help welcome those to whom Church and God is so foreign?
6. What changes need to occur so to build the involvement of youth in Church life?
7. How is the Church intending to publicly and prominently reconcile the terrible past of abuse and lack of responsibility of such abuse with today's Catholics?
8. When will there be an official apology offered by Pope Francis to the victims of sexual abuse from Australia?
9. When will the Church make changes to its patriarchal and archaic structure?
10. When will the Church allow both men and women to minister equally to the community?
11. Why cannot the Third Rite of Reconciliation be available?
12. How can we change current Church structures to engage and include all members of our Church?
13. How can we as a Church community repair relationships that have been damaged by the actions of some of our Church leaders in the past?
14. Why are we still following a structural model that is not in touch with our current reality or representative of its members?
15. What is the Catholic Church doing to remain relevant to all age groups in 2018?  
(There are few younger people/families actively involved in our community and I have not seen this changing, if anything it has gone down)
16. What is the Church's strategic plan to address priest shortages, particularly in rural areas?
17. Can we update the words of the baptismal ceremony to make them more positive and re-word the renouncing of Satan and all his pomp?
18. How do we genuinely honour, embrace and understand other faiths?
19. How can the Church be restructured to allow voice, participation and leadership of all genders?
20. Will there be a change in who the Church accepts?
21. Will religion be considered a good thing?
22. Is the Church money used in the best way demonstrating Catholic values?
23. Can we balance the Church with gender equality?
24. Will there be a change in the structure of Masses?
25. Can we make Mass more relatable for today's context?

26. Can we make the Church more relatable for all age groups?
27. How can we engage young people into the Church?
28. Will priests ever be allowed to marry?
29. How can the Church help to connect people to their own communities?
30. How can the Church justify placing tradition as the guiding force of the Church above scripture?
31. Will the bishops encourage our priests to preach the Faith fearlessly so as to better prepare the laity to understand why living together before marriage, the use of contraception, the acceptance of same-sex marriage, abortion and euthanasia etc. are all seriously sinful and risk the loss of the person's soul for all eternity?
32. Will the Bishops encourage our priests to wear their clerical attire with confidence so as to be more visible as Christ's representatives?
33. Parents have entrusted their children to the Catholic education system, only to find too late, that in many cases their religious education has been inadequate, or worse, inaccurate or even heretical. Can we expect that the bishops of Australia will seriously consider our concerns?
34. What will we do to offer all Catholics in Australia access to Sunday Mass every week?
35. Are bishops likely to be allowed to express their own opinions and not sign documents to say they won't discuss issues such as ordination of females?
36. Are women still going to be considered inferior to males within the Church and within society in general?
37. Is the language of the liturgy likely to change so that it is more relevant to people today?
38. How will the Church maintain the truths of the Gospel?
39. How will the Church reinforce the themes of the 10 Commandments?
40. Will the Church consider the taking of priests and religious from overseas to support the dwindling numbers here in Australia?
41. How can the Church encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life?
42. Could public acts of faith such as processions on major feast days be considered?
43. How can the Church encourage parents to send young children to learn about their faith through Sunday school sessions or any other times?
44. What steps can be put in place to bring reverence and respect for the House of God, by the faithful, before and after Mass?
45. Encourage parishioners to participate in community prayer, especially, the Rosary before Mass, is there an incentive to achieve this?
46. What steps might be taken to promote a far greater emphasis on the cry of the earth in relation to the cry of the poor?
47. How will the Church become more inclusive of its members from all backgrounds?
48. How will the Church serve God in modern society?
49. How does the absence of children from Mass, impact us as Catholic educators?
50. How will the Church support the high level of skill teachers will need to teach RE in a secondary school?
51. How will the Mass be celebrated in a way that is inclusive?
52. Is the Hierarchy prepared to change? Will they truly listen to the Laity?
53. Does the Plenary Council consider that they have heard the voice of youth in this process? If no, then how are you going to gather this input?
54. Direction of local parishes - what will the parish structure become?



## RESPONSES TO QUESTION 3

*Would you like to share a story  
about your experience of faith  
or of the Church in Australia  
that has shaped you?*

## STORIES OF FAITH OR CHURCH SHARED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 3

The stories in this section were shared in response to the third question: *Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?*

In keeping with the guidelines of consent explained earlier in the report, these stories are only from those individuals or groups from your diocese who consented to having their submission being made public and being shared with their diocese. About 40 per cent of all responses did not have consent for one or both of these criteria and therefore, their stories have not been included here.

I have been involved in the Church for most of my life. She has, over the years, been my employer. My Catholic faith has defined who I am and how I have lived out my life. When chaos has swirled around me, my Church and my faith in Christ has been my rock.

The Church has been a major part of my life. I grew up a passive Catholic in a liberal Catholic family and did not think much about it until my mid-20s. It was during post-graduate studies that I began studying theology and felt "the lights turn on." Inspired by extraordinary lecturers, I went on to study at Masters level, including units undertaken at the University of Leuven. My career has been in Catholic Education and I have viewed this as part of my ministry within the Church. In addition, I have been actively involved in parish and diocesan roles throughout my adult years, including as a lay-leader for Sunday Assembly of Word and Communion in the absence of a priest. All experiences have shaped me into becoming the committed Catholic that I am today, offering both extraordinary faith formation, as well as deep frustration at times. My pain associated with the Church included the link of the tragedy of my two cousins who took their lives with the findings of the Royal Commission. As was the realisation that my [ - ] parish of the 1980s was shared by [a mother] and her daughters who were so tragically abused at that time. However, the only time I seriously considered leaving the Church was after the election of Pope Benedict, the "easy option" for the cardinals and a deeply conservative leader. I yearned for more dynamic and creative leadership in the new century and thought about alternative Christian communities. Nonetheless, Francis' greatest legacy was humanising the papacy with his resignation and opening the door for the new direction of Francis. It is this "humanising" of priesthood and leadership that is so desperately needed now. Women have left the Church in droves, taking their families with them. Those of us who have stayed will not accept a passive role any longer.

I grew up in the Catholic Church but I didn't really come to know God or form a personal relationship with Him until I left and attended a non-denominational Evangelical church. Once my faith was stronger, I returned to the Catholic Church. I think that sometimes the rigidity of the rules/routines/emphasis on tradition means that people's own personal stories and faith is not shared as openly as in other churches. We need to build the excitement of God's love and the sense of community within the Catholic Church.

I married in the Catholic Church and held my marriage vows strongly despite being a victim of domestic violence in my marriage until the day came that I had a complete breakdown and realised that my marriage was killing me. I looked at an annulment but when I had to find people who knew that this was happening in my marriage I could not find anyone as I was too ashamed to speak about it. The only people who knew where my parents and by this time they [had] both died and were unable to speak on my behalf. I then met a fellow who was also Catholic and had been through a very bad marriage and he too like me did not want to drag up the past as we had both moved on to a better stage in our life. I firmly believe that God put us in each other's path and we have since married outside the Church, as we could not marry in the Catholic Church, as we did not have an annulment. I have an amazing marriage and one that I wished I had the first time around. I believe that there are many people who do not want to marry in our Church in the first instance should something go wrong and they have to go through the messy divorce proceedings and then have to go through the in depth process of the annulment, with no guarantee that it will be granted.

Yes. When I was instructed in the faith by a Marist priest. He repeatedly stated to me: "You and I are so lucky because our religion is cut and dried so we know what's what and what to do". Soon after Paul VI abolished the true Holy Mass. Now you are organising a gabfest. Well, if you want to save the Church in Australia do two things: One; bring back the true Mass and TWO; bring back the penny Catechism.

Small groups is very effective where we can worship and pray to God. Everybody knows us and our needs and concerns. Faith is developed and there is love and encouragement felt. I think we have to do what the early Christians did in the Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47

Being a member of the [ - ] diocese I have sadly seen time and again how the Church has let down its children. Those children now have their own children. I have taught in Catholic schools and my 3 sons have been through primary and secondary Catholic schools. Many of the parents from my age group have left the Church and yet many still will at the very least have their children baptized. So what I see is there is still some feeling of wanting to be a part of the Catholic community. However, I also see the Church wasting this opportunity and waiting for the schools to do their job 6 years after the child was baptized.

As a leader of song in my parish, I am regularly reminded of how much the congregation value full and active participation in the Mass. We value our very elderly priest whose homilies are simple, practical messages of the hope, joy and love that the Gospel gives us. This is what is life giving in our local parish.

I am concerned that the Church is not remaining relevant. Recently at Mass, the Gospel was about adultery and the priest skipped part of it as half of the congregation probably would have got up and left. We have teenage children who have started to question Gospel stories and I worry that it will push them away to a degree when they are older as they don't see them as being relevant. I hope you are able to get authentic feedback from the younger generations during this process. Another observation I have is that in our community, there are 3 other Christian faiths that have very strong followings from all ages. One has just built a new chapel/conference centre, which I recently toured. Surely,

the Catholic Church has something to learn from these other faiths that seem to grow their congregation and attract members from all age groups?

Parish missions and retreats. Open the Churches up. Allow those who want to pray the opportunity to do so. Preach about quiet prayer time.

I was born into the Catholic Church but we were ex communicated due to parents' divorce, so we started going to a Pentecostal Church where we found Jesus and His word. However, God has called my husband and I back to the original Church, the Catholic Church but it was dead, there wasn't any Sunday school for our kids and we have a priest who doesn't seem to like people or kids but we are here under clear instructions by God. We need the Spirit of God to come alive again in the Church, with priests who are called to the position, Spirit led & who love people. We need women involved and lay people more involved seeing we obviously have a shortage of practising priests. My experience had not been great but I'm back because of my obedience to God.

In 1978, I was a part of small youth group in my local parish. The group by circumstance, not design, all boys. We 16-18 year olds. The general interests of the group were girls, drinking, sport and music. I was the only member of the group who regularly attended Mass and this was because of the pressure I felt from parents and also the fear I felt for my own salvation. We met once a week in the presbytery. The group was run by the assistant priest who was closer to our age than he was to the parish priest's age. There was no formal program. We got together, played pool and talked mainly about the above subjects. Occasionally the young priest would try and steer the conversation to things a bit more spiritual. We all liked him because he just "hung out" with us. He didn't pass judgement or try to pressure us into "pretending" we liked the Church. We didn't. We thought it was boring. I knew vaguely that this young priest was involved in the Charismatic Renewal. I didn't really know what that was but I clearly remember one conversation because it disturbed me. He talked about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He reminded me of what was described in Acts about Pentecost and in Corinthians about the gifts of the Spirit. I remember arguing passionately that those things only happened in the early Church. They never happened now and weren't meant to happen now. He talked about his own experience of some of these gifts and I remember feeling extremely uncomfortable. A few weeks later we were all invited to go to a Catholic Charismatic Youth retreat. Some of the others guys said yes, so not wanting to be left out and also feeling slightly curious, I also agreed to go. When we arrived at the weekend I quickly found myself even more confused and disturbed. There were a lot of young people there who were able to talk about Jesus as if he was a person they actually knew. There were prayers said that were spontaneous and prayers said in what sounded like gibberish. There was also an atmosphere that was reverent and spiritual but totally outside my previous experience. I remember praying to myself "God if this real—show me, but if it's not, get me out of here". The Saturday night of the retreat, there was a gathering for prayer. People stood around, arms linked in a circle and prayed as they were led. I was part of a circle but as the prayers were said, I became more and more uncomfortable until I just had to leave. I went outside and soon our young priest came out to see me and encouraged me back in. I agreed and as soon as I re-joined that circle I experienced an incredible mix of sorrow for my own sinfulness and joy for the forgiveness and love that I was receiving. Tears flowed and then laughter and gratitude. I was nearly 18 years old. I'm



now 57 and that deep joy and gratitude for the love of Christ has never left me. My love for the Church also solidified after that weekend.

I have taught in Catholic schools for over 30 years. I received a work related injury at the last school I taught in and I was treated really as though I wanted to take advantage of the school. I was dismissed while being a Worksafe recipient and on Worksafe payments. I was in hospital for a few weeks and never did a member of the Religious organisation ever come to me or my wife asking "how can we help?" My wife also taught at the same Religious Order school. When she passed away, not one member of the Order came to the funeral or sent their sympathy. And yet the same order spent millions of dollars defending their criminal members to avoid jail or going on trial. And yet in their Mission Statement they mention that we need to look after the students we taught and had dealing with them. I cannot come to terms with the teaching of the Church that the children who we taught at the time were precious in God's eyes and yet treated members of staff with total discontent when something went wrong. I was taught by the same Order right through my primary schooling as well as my secondary education and held them in high regard and defended them when as a member of the workforce before becoming a teacher in their schools. It has tested my belief in the Catholic Church, their teaching and their standing in our society.

In the early Church in Australia, I believe it was the saying of the Rosary in the home that kept the community of faith alive. In our time the faith community is most important yet the authorities are closing Churches which mean the faith community is dispersed. To me this is a grave injustice to that faith community. We must provide another way for the faithful to come together to worship and pray. Already the laity carry out the Liturgy of the Word so why not have Liturgy of the Word with or without Communion. At this stage permission and encouragement must be given by the bishops.

We are questioning the loss of a sense of community in the local parish.

In 2010, I was received into the Catholic Church from the Anglican Church of Australia. The parish priest at the time and the people then and since were/have been most joyfully welcoming and accommodating. For me it was a "coming home experience". Despite Royal Commissions, vehement media attacks, etc., it still is! Also heartening to me is it seems to me that in some seminaries there is a welcome return to orthodoxy away from heterodoxy and excluding liberalism.

Church, attending a Catholic school, going to Mass, retreat, sacraments, wedding, funerals, baptism, prayer (daily), Church at Christmas, people showing Catholic values, Religious Education, Christian Personal Development Award, fundraising for Catholic charities, volunteering, donations (money and materials), religious celebrations such as Lent, Advent, Easter and Christmas, changing of Church colours, use of candles, cross throughout the school, use of the Bible in Religious Education classes and prayer, social justice.

I was raised in a strong Catholic family and attended Mass weekly. My best experience of faith is my mum and dad and watching them live by example, the Word of God.

I was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 42 with my youngest being 8 months old. Thanks be to God we were near a regional city and had a wonderful Indian priest who



came before my mastectomies and to each and every chemotherapy to give me the Sacrament of Anointing. This sacrament needs to be promoted for the sick. There is a real lack of faith in the power of this sacrament for anyone who is sick. I was given a terminal diagnosis with MRI showing a 12[cm] tumour. After Masses and anointing my pathology after surgery showed less than 1cm invasive cancer and my diagnosis turned to be one of the best with low recurrence. I truly believe that the administration of this sacrament aided my healing and regular adoration. I became a Catholic at age 27 after growing up Anglican and exploring Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches but I was so disillusioned by the way they did not stand strong and united on issues like abortion, sex before marriage. I was blown away by the unity of the Catholic Church and her uncompromising stance! I was also drawn to the Eucharist and thought how can anyone not want to come to Mass to receive the King of Heaven and Earth! I also loved how priests were celebrated and setting the example of total dedication to the Church and their flock. I was also blown away by the honour given to Mary and felt that women were really honoured in the Church by respecting their wombs and encouraging openness to life and ultimately in honouring the life of Mary—this made me ponder why some factions in the Church have pushed for women's ordination? It seems they have somehow missed the Churches deep understanding of the unique dignity of women which is so refreshing in the world that devalues motherhood and sees the womb as a curse. I think we need to really focus on this and encourage marriage between young people and that having children does not ruin your life and actually can be a 'career'! The wondrous valuing of marriage also blew me away and the clear teaching about divorce. I love that the Church is so clear because I think if you don't stand for something you fall for anything—or you become a Protestant and start your own Church!

I would like to share the pain I experience every time I am invited to preach in an Anglican or Uniting Church. I can break open the Word of God in other contexts, even as part of Seminary training or of Priests' In-service programs, but never in the context of a Catholic Eucharistic celebration.

When I was younger I was diagnosed with Cancer and my parish community (and the wider community) came together to support me and my family. I felt so connected and supported not only by my faith but by my parish community. Now I feel disconnected. We are not doing enough to help form connections at our parish. We have a huge church with four rows of seats yet everyone sits towards the back, spread out from each other, quite often you have to try and find someone for the "peace be with you". Why would we not all sit closer together, get to know each other? There are so many social issues happening in our community, yet we never talk about them or hear from agencies in our area working with those in need. We have too many people who pick and choose when religion suits them, when they want to get married, when they want to baptise a child, when they want their child to attend school, but a part from the occasional appearance at Christmas and Easter they never show up.

My faith was instilled by my parents, and I am proud to be a "cafeteria Catholic", as that is the only way in which I can still remain a practising and devout Catholic. Each of my siblings are still active and contributing to their respective parishes, but the next generation does not share the same sense of duty to an institution they see as irrelevant.

If the Church in Australia does not take this opportunity to radically change and return to scripture and dump tradition as the guiding force of what is decided in Rome then the Church in Australia has no future other than a provider of medical and educational services. The current business model of the Catholic Church, based on power and control, is dysfunctional in an educated, free society. Change the business model or continue down a path of self-destruction. This Plenary Council is not an opportunity to tidy-up, bit of window dressing or clever re-branding, it is a chance for the Church to avoid a death sentence in this world and the next.

The [ - ] Branch of the Catholic Women's League closed down a few years ago as there was no one available to fill the executive positions. However, the members were very committed to staying together and decided to continue to meet informally as general members of the League. These members met monthly, praying the League prayers, studying passages from Scripture, holding discussions regarding topics from our Social Questions Committee and sharing afternoon tea. We continued to have Masses offered for our deceased members. Every three months or so we would attend Mass together and have a shared lunch. This was coordinated by one of our very kind-hearted members. Two or so years later three women generously offered to take on the leadership and reform the group as [ - ] Cathedral Branch of Catholic Women's League of [ - ] Inc, in time to celebrate the centenary of our foundation in 1917. The now Dr Sr [ - ] Servant of God was our first President. Some of us were surprised that our numbers did not diminish during this unofficial period. We concluded that the ladies felt the importance of Christian fellowship and the opportunity of faith enrichment through our prayer and Scripture study. We believe that these are key elements for maintaining the practice of our faith for all age groups. The mercy of priests and teachers who were abusers, but now also as we reap the cost of the effects of deficient catechetics? Parents have entrusted their children to the Catholic education system, only to find too late, that in many cases their religious education has been inadequate, or worse, inaccurate or even heretical. Can we expect that the bishops of Australia will seriously consider our concerns?

I was excited by the Second Vatican Council and had high hopes that by this time everything would be well. I have seen many attempts to follow the recommendations of the council over the years and have been disappointed that we get in God's way and nothing much happens. I pray that this council will have a better chance and I thank you for allowing all of us to have a say. I am married 46 years. My children—4 are grown up and we have 5 grandchildren. We attended Mass every week, read Bible stories, went to family camps and immersed ourselves in Catholic community. None of our children have grown up to be believers yet. I am sad that this is so. I hope the council will help young people more to feel part of the Church and give them work to do to make their faith seem worthwhile to them.

I grew up in a Catholic family with many Catholic relations and attended Catholic schools. My family are baptised and while living at home attended Mass. They did not attend Catholic schools, which didn't worry me as many country people of faith missed that opportunity. However, the faith is now flimsy as secular mores and demands take precedence over Catholic practice and tradition. I always enjoyed the cross section of citizens, which were members of the local Church. The social part was always important although I was well aware that you often needed a connection from elsewhere or be part

of one of the Church aligned groups to feel you belonged. Witnessing a romance bloom; babies growing to teenagers; families greeting each other and then support in grief. It was an important part of the weekly routine. Now sport or entertainment hold sway. I must acknowledge though that many people—young and older work very hard. Life has far more challenges now than when I was growing up or raising my family.

When I was a child there was Mass at the nearest Church once a fortnight. In the previous generation, my mother could hear Mass (as they said in those days) every three or four weeks. We never thought that any prayers or gatherings could substitute for the Sunday Mass so we never tried to put anything in its place. It never occurred to us that anyone but an ordained celibate Catholic man who had graduated from an eight year seminary course could say Mass with us. I hope we are approaching a time when that story and those views will seem quaint.

So many of us have experienced the abandonment of participation in the Church by well-prepared and well-inclined children almost immediately upon their commencing at Catholic secondary schools. Some of us have experienced great comfort and help from Centacare, from counsellors and from clergy in family stress, separation, divorce, annulments, but most of the Catholic community is unaware of the help available, which seems unappreciated, even by clergy. Some of us have experienced an apparent total lack of appreciation of the value of women with high academic qualifications in theology when decisions are made about closing of Mass centres and provision of spiritual support.

My faith was shaped by my parents' example. They were faithful people, but were not afraid to challenge teachings that they considered were a hindrance rather than a help.

Over the past four years, I have been attending five or six-session study courses conducted by Father [ - ] and Sister [ - ]. They are based on the Gospels and have a strong environmental message. I have found these sessions to be extremely relevant, interesting and thought provoking. Without a pope like Pope Francis and the sort of input received at these sessions, I feel it would be easy to become totally disillusioned with the Catholic Church.

In my younger years I loved the Church and its processes however since the injustices have been made public I think some of the clergy at the time were hypocrites as has now been confirmed. My views of priests at the time were saints or God like. It is hard to see how the non-Catholic public will respect our Church when these matters were covered up.

I was raised in a strong Catholic family by two faithful parents. Unfortunately, my siblings have drifted away from the faith, although two maintain a loose attachment to the Church. My three children also are not regular attendees at Mass, and some struggle with the faith. I believe a strong insistence on Catholic values is important for consistency. A Church that wavers in the breeze, or is uncertain is weak. We must maintain strong Christian values. If people choose not to accept the faith, that is a clear choice they make. We must simply "wipe the dust from our feet". I think the Church should rely also more on contemporary and historical saints and mystics for inspiration. Medjugorje for example is a prime example of many good wholesome works being performed by many, with apparitions from Our Lady to visionaries still occurring. If the Church is not happy to support these events, then what about seeking solace from Lourdes, Fatima or Kibeho more frequently? What

about St Padre Pio and other contemporary saints? Why aren't these great saints venerated more each week in Church?
My experience of faith in [ - ] Cathedral was the recent Holy Hour organised by Father [ - ] and Father [ - ], supported by Father [ - ], which illustrated the enthusiasm and fervour of our parishioners, coming from far and near, to spend time in adoration and prayer, before the Blessed Sacrament. Most impressive and heart-warming was to observe young children no older than 10 confidently leading the Rosary, most-favoured prayer of the Blessed Mother at Fatima and teenagers exhibiting their willingness to participate as Altar-boys. The hours' adoration, at [ - ] Cathedral during Advent, which was overwhelmingly popular, as also the Friday Adoration, which is gaining momentum, perpetual adoration in the parish may well be considered. Perpetual Adoration is not uncommon in many parishes around the country and its benefits are visible by the immeasurable and untold graces and blessings wherever it has been introduced. Jesus is the source of all graces and the Sisters of Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Nazareth prove this point by the increase in vocations. Location of a small simple chapel, in the parish grounds should not be an issue, situated where the previous Parish Council had proposed the memorial garden, would serve the purpose.
My experience with an abusive parish priest who had me removed as an assistant priest on specious grounds ultimately led to my being appointed as the first Religious Education Director in my diocese. This provided me with the opportunity for overseas post-graduate theological education. It gave me the freedom to establish a team of well-qualified educators and to set up a theological Resource Centre for the diocese which has expanded and served schools and parishes for almost 50 years. I was later to hold the position of Head of Religious Education at [ - ] University. I am still engaged in adult theological education, presently with 118 local parishioners. This is a good news story that involved a deal of pain, especially in the initial stages of my ministry.
I experienced a marriage split about 16 years ago which really hurt all people involved obviously. I look back often and think that without my faith in God I may not have coped at all.
As Catholic Earthcare [ - ] Diocese, we represent a group of interested people rather than an officially recognised agency within the Church. There is a Social Justice Commission but no Commission for Environmental Justice.
Faith of parents and their Christ like actions to neighbours and family members in need. Modelling of prayer daily and in times of need. Sacramental celebrations to sustain me even if not agree with the ideas and actions of the institutional Church.
Mine was a child growing up with the faith in another Catholic community. My parents were divorced and my mother (who is now deceased) was actively shunned from the Church by the religious and the laity. My re-engagement was due to a lovely Sister of Mercy Nun asked so graciously to join the local Church to which I belong to now.
Our Church has many and wonderful stories to tell but I believe the emergence of women in our Church over past decades in all areas has been exciting and inspiring. In liturgy, theology, scripture and music they are giving new life to our Church.

I have grown up in a very active Catholic family and parish and I have respected and enjoyed their sense of community, faith, commitment and service. It gave me an example of how to raise our family, teach happily within Catholic schools over many years and continue to be a practising Catholic in an increasing hostile environment. Our parish is a loving community but it is also an ageing population. My family feels welcomed and accepted by the good and faithful people and this continues to give hope and enjoyment, as we celebrate the Eucharist together. Many of our friends are also Catholic and we can relate to each other easily as we share similar values and attitudes. When a family suffers a bereavement, the Catholic community responds with great love and comfort. There is a wonderful sense of celebration when we attend a Catholic funeral.

My children are frowned upon in Mass—their needs are not supported. The people at Mass are old and people aren't going to Mass anymore. Caring circles/children's liturgies provided strong community presence. Family groups provided connection and belonging—this has been lost now. The only motivations for families to enrol their children in the sacraments is to get them into Catholic schools.

Having been baptised at the age of eight I have always tried to practise my faith as from the Church's teachings. I myself and members of my family have had our share of bad experiences with the Church. My own mother married a fellow who had been studying for the priesthood and had left after finding he was not suited. The marriage was never consummated because he could not bring himself to being a husband in this respect. The relationship broke down then she met my father. This was many years ago when divorce was considered a no-no and there was no financial welfare available. My father and mother never married but stayed lifetime partners. My aunt had to be married in the vestry as her partner would not turn a Catholic. They remained lifetime partners. My cousin was physically handled by a young Italian priest when she attended a pre wedding instruction class. She has never gone back to the Church. I was accused by an elderly priest in the confessional of doing sexual acts with a boy, he wanted to know all details. I was only about eleven or twelve years of age at the time and had no idea what he was on about but realised it was not good and made me feel very uncomfortable. He even made me confess to this before he would give me absolution. I never told my mother because I thought she would not believe me. These last two events happened in the [ - ] parish of [ - ]. I was also denied communion when my own marriage broke up because I didn't have an annulment from the Church when I met someone else, which in time finally came through after much stress. I am a practising Christian and a member of the Church but my faith is in God. He knows me, my life story and he is the one that forgives.

Unless we learn to be still and listen to our hearts—then we are closing ourselves to the further development of our Spiritual selves.

I had a wonderful bishop in [ - ] who was brave enough to consider tough questions and realities now be asked of us in the Plenary. He helped shape my positive outlook that there are visionaries looking to enact positive change and develop solutions. I do hope as a Church we can be more forward thinking and ...

The day that our first daughter was born my very much-loved Father died. Until that day I thought I had a faith but it was very superficial. But at that time I feel only coped with my life with the faith that I found that I had within. It was a time of very missed emotions and



praying and my belief in God got me through this time. Today my faith sustains me daily and I give thanks for the gift I have been given.

I will try, just typing and using a computer, is a challenge for me. To start for me my story would have to be told in person as its personal and long, although I call my testimony my 6 seconds because it is like St Pauls conversion, but like St Paul it's ongoing. I did a TV talk some years back on it on Melbourne TV show Spirit TV if anyone interested maybe they still have it.

I feel my faith has developed from the day I was born. My Catholic upbringing in family and school has been a major influence on the person I am today. After marrying, we moved towns a number of times and the first thing I looked for in new towns was the local Catholic Church. Being in a Church community helped us settle into new towns. It is only in the past approximately ten years in [ - ], and being informed of the years of abuse within the Church that I have been disillusioned. There are many, many good dedicated priests and I really feel they are being judged on the basis of what bad clergy have done. I pray the good priests are able to stay strong and continue their good works.

I was educated in a state school, with 30 minutes religion each week from nuns and then from a priest at secondary school. We were taught the commandments, which were handed down from God, which are all there so we will not to hurt other people. This is very simple. I was taught by my father that all it needs for evil to succeed is for good people to do nothing. This appears to be what the Church is doing now. Not standing up against what is wrong, especially abortion and euthanasia. If the Church leaders don't have the confidence or ability to stand up on these issues, they need to support the Right to Life Association, which has never given up on fighting for life, with no support from the Church in the past.

Being part of my parish is simply about love for me and my family. Sharing love, giving of love and receiving of love. Teaching my children to love others and using the teachings of Jesus to encourage them to be forgiving, kind and generous souls. You'll notice I didn't mention attending Mass. Whilst important to some, I feel my faith more strongly when I am out in the community, with my family, helping others, sharing with all.

I was baptised shortly after birth and have been Catholic my whole life. I have a brother a priest, uncles and an aunt, now deceased, who were priests and a nun. My family have been practising Catholics who have been devoted to the Church. Now I am so disillusioned and disgusted and feel so betrayed by the evil that has been perpetrated on innocent and vulnerable children and young people that I can hardly bear to go to Mass. I used to be a special minister, reader, facilitator and take Communion to the sick. I can no longer participate in any of these ministries. I can't read as I don't believe half of what is in the readings, I can't take an active role in any job that requires involvement in the Church itself. I continue to be part of Vinnies which I see as being an organisation which is carrying on Jesus' work and which can be done outside the Church building. I am so close to losing my faith and it is and has been so precious to me that this is a very painful time. My grown children have almost all given up their faith, some continue to go to Church occasionally but I wonder for how long. They are all good people, but the reality is if they and their friends stop going to Mass altogether, where is the future of the Church? Relying on priests from less developed countries to fill our needs is not going to work, just as

relying on migrants, refugees and others entering Australia will not work. Their children, like mine will grow up and leave the Church. Looking around at Mass the Church is aging. The homilies are often uninteresting, quite boring in fact and are conducive only to a catch-up nap. Mass, like so many other current Catholic ceremonies means little too many even those who attend. I used to love the Mass, now the only part I don't wish to miss is the Eucharist. That love is too ingrained in me to let go. I think I will probably remain Catholic and it will break my heart if I don't, but I need to see change. Lots of change. I wonder where the Church went wrong and I think it became too involved with power and riches, as so many powerful organisations do to see the writing on the wall. I recognise that there have been other periods of Church history where evil was rife and somehow, we got through but I wonder if it is possible this time without Massive change. Tradition means nothing if it is not a good tradition. In conclusion my faith has shaped who I am and I hope I never lose it but it is only that I see so many good people still in the Church that I have any hope. Good people living good lives. That is what our faith should be about. Following Jesus and that sometimes means ignoring official Church rules and regulations and going with our consciences.

[ - ] and outback seen as mission areas—for priests from other countries. Aboriginality and Catholicism—acknowledgment of country. Bring in aboriginal flag to Mass on appropriate occasions. Use of resources from diocese of [ - ] in local school RE classes. Understanding of different stories—impact of different cultures and how Christian stories are interpreted. E.g. In December 2018 we had the privilege of hosting a display of over 400 cribs from many different countries. This became a great opportunity for sharing the Christmas story and how it is interpreted differently in different cultures—schools groups came with their teachers. Children went home, spoke about it and brought their parents back to share the experience. A great shared ecumenical experience.

My experience is that of a 63-year-old woman brought up in the Church, actively involved and with a deep interest in theology and its intrinsic relationship with science. Old enough to appreciate the Second Vatican Council and the changes it brought. And to be bitterly disappointed that many of those changes were lost over time, or were negated or were actively fought against. That the promise of Vatican II is still valid in our Church but unless that “window thrown open” is acknowledged and we are brave enough as a Church to look through and re imagine how we could live as faithful Catholics, it will never be fulfilled.

Yes, I thank God for the formation I received in my schooling under the guidance of religious sisters. And have passed the banner on. How can students be taught religion by teachers that do not believe in a God they are teaching about? Catholic schools need to be Catholic with practising Catholic teachers. Back to basics.

My faith has become very important to me over the years. Two of our children were diagnosed with a fatal birth defect. On both occasions, we were given the option of abortion. Instead, my husband and I chose to love our children for as long as we could. It's been a hard road over many years. But I feel these experiences have brought me closer to Jesus.

I come from a family where there are many who have become priests or nuns. I see the pain they are going through because of the present crisis. They feel let down by the



bishops and cardinal Pell. How do I know? They have told me. I have no story of faith in the Church at the moment only sadness.

I grew up in what would be described as a very devout Catholic family: Mass every Sunday, the family Rosary each night, I was home educated. I became an altar boy and served regularly. And yet I never felt totally engaged in the Mass, despite plenty of "full, conscious, active participation". It is only recently, as a married father of 3, seeing the lack of reverence by priests and laity alike at Mass that I understand why. I feel closer to God as a low Latin Mass than I ever did at a Novus Ordo. As soon as I can, I will leave behind the impoverished, Protestantised Novus Ordo and be fully Latin Mass.

I was sexually abused from the time I was a child, over a period of years at the hands of a priest. The impact has been deeply significant and has shaped my life. He has never acknowledged the abuse while I've lived my life trying compensate for it. Such an experience distorts & influences a child's view of the world. My health has suffered enormously because I kept the secret. I used to confess my sin to another priest but he did nothing to stop it. I am a gay Catholic who has never felt accepted or wanted by the Church. I was told once in confession that I would go to hell for my sins. Is this the Church of Christ that uses & abuses then rejects & punishes? Fortunately my faith in God is stronger the hold the Church has over me.

At my confirmation when I was 10 years old, the bishop laid his hands on me, and I received the most amazing inner filling of the Holy Spirit. I had earnestly asked God to give me all the gifts of the Spirit that He wanted me to have. I didn't know what to expect. What I received was delightful. I felt bubbles starting in my heart and flooding my whole being, giving me goose bumps on my arms and legs. I still get that sometimes now. I did a "Life in the Spirit" series of 8 weeks many years ago and I received the gift of tongues and had some words of knowledge come to me. I believe I have a healing gift, but have been frustrated that there isn't really a way of sharing that with those who need it, especially victims of sexual abuse.

I have hopes that this Council will be the one to make the necessary changes and light a holy fire under all of us to follow Jesus teaching.  
I have waited a very long time it feels, I hope this time courage is not lacking.

I am very grateful to God for the good He is doing and His guidance.  
I will say here what I wanted to say. Firstly this is all very difficult and believe has been done this way to make it hard on us. First meeting my husband and I went to was such a disappointment. The priests were not encouraging for prayer but only encouraged those that wanted change. It is very hard to explain but friends in surrounding parishes were also disappointed and many like myself felt it is not worth saying anything because there is a real agenda being pushed on us. I feel very sad that many who are disappointed have not written to you as they feel defeated daily lives. We have a small number of playful and loving families and they pray for our Church and especially God's Sons / our priest. My husband [ - ] [and I] feel the closeness to our Loving God and feel he is working away with His people on this area.

I was reared in a vibrant and happy stage of the Church on the heels of Vatican II. Yes, I was number 7 of 8 children and know well that I would not exist if Church teachings on

contraception were different. That's fine; I was not looking to exist before I did. At this stage there was a sense of joy and winds of change were in the sails. The teachings of Christ were taking precedence over Church doctrine. It appears to me that the hierarchy's fear put all brakes onto the direction the Church was going and we are in a far darker place than pre-Vatican I or II. My Church has/is suffering a very slow and arduous death. The Royal Commission into institutional sexual abuse has exposed the rot but clearly the Catholic hierarchy is not willing to address the disease nor cut out the rotting fruit. This week's next layer of revelation of George Pell being infected by that disease has been another nail driven into the Church's, oh so public, crucifixion. These people were given so much power beyond the ordinary parishioner and expected to live in the most unnatural way. Of course, they became delusional that they could get away with the unspeakable. I have left the Church and come back numerous times. My spirituality needs a home with likeminded people and I know it is going to take courage to continue expressing my faith but the Church hierarchy needs to give us some hope for a future based on Christ.

The Mass has always been a source of peace to me, I travelled all over the world and the Mass is the same wherever you go, and there is a certain unity in this and a source of stability. I find I am not interested in politics from the pulpit as I am not convinced that some of the younger priests have the life experience to offer me advice, scriptural interpretation and how it relates to everyday life yes but politics no and there is a fine line. I hope my comments help and wish you all the best with the Council.

We both spoke of the influence of our mothers, of the importance of CLC (Christian Life Community) in our lives and one of the power of healing in the Sacrament of reconciliation when it was one to one. My own faith grew through my Catholic education but changed dramatically when in my early-married life, a Mercy nun who was leading a discussion group, led me to believe that Jesus wanted to have a personal relationship with me. That was a milestone in my faith life and so when another Mercy nun gently introduced Ignatian spirituality into a prayer group I joined, that later became a CLC group, it was a natural fit. This led to training as a spiritual director and a lifelong connection with CLC and while we don't have a CLC group in our small town now I lead a meditation group and that's growing.

I was raised in a Catholic family by my lovely Mother, who was left without her husband due to the ravages of war on his mind and body. She was assisted firstly by her parents and sister. My primary schooling was Catholic and even then I was aware of shortcomings in the system. I was preparing to leave the Church when my now husband, non-practicing Lutheran then, entered my life. Due to his need to belong to a Church congregation, he saved me from a bad decision. Being Catholic is who I am because even though I have thought of abandoning the Church it's not at this stage an option for me. I am relying heavily on the belief that God sent Pope Francis to lead us back to the light and love in which Jesus encouraged us to live.

I'm a practicing Catholic female of 73 years. I've participated actively in all aspects of Church community life as a teenager in youth groups, as a parent of 4 children attending Catholic schools, as an office bearing parent in the school P & F, as a primary teacher, vice principal and REC in Catholic schools, as a liturgy co-ordinator in the parish, as leader of song at Mass and a parish councillor on two occasions. I have been in the same

parish for 50 years and I think I can read the signs of the times which are telling me that my community of believers is diminishing because of a lack of leadership and genuine dialogue with the faithful and some gap in spiritual nourishment of the faithful, (the young say that Mass doesn't 'speak to them'), the scandal of child sexual abuse by ordained priests and religious and the ensuing cover-ups, as well as the ageing of the faithful. I hope and pray that the Church will be very different very soon and that I will belong to community of believers who meet regularly to remember the teachings of Jesus Christ and care for each other and all the humans and natural world around them as we strive to bring about the REIGN OF GOD!

How can we engage in the faith without being limited by the traditions/teachings of the past? Where to from here? How do we rebuild that trust/connection/honesty/transparency/reconciliation? How do we realise Catholic values with our modern society? What is the relevance to 21st century values? What is the identity role of our faith community moving forward? Can we place our trust and hopes in the institution of the Church? Can it open itself to be more of a Church for the people? How can the laity-men and women have more of a real involvement in active ministry esp. ordained women? How do we respond to social justice in our world, school? What does being a Catholic mean for me today? How do I support my faith today? How do we bring our young Catholics and older Catholics to see and recognise each other's value in our beliefs? Everyone is valid! What are we going to do to get our adolescents and young adults more involved in our Church and in their faith? Will women ever be allowed to become priests? What does the Church offer our youth, as without them, what is the future of the Church? How can we rebuild trust? Connections, honesty, transparency, reconciliation. How do we align Catholic values with 21st century life? When will women be able to become priests? How do we heal the distrust of sexual abuse? How do we engage the young in the Church? Where to from here?—building trust, connections, honesty/transparency, reconciliation, righting wrongs. Can we place our trust and hopes in the institution of the Church? Can it open itself to become the Church of the people? How to align Catholic values with the values of society?

I was raised attending Mass every Sunday in my local parish. I attended my parish primary school from prep to grade 4 and was confirmed in grade 6 in my parish. By the time I was in year 12 I attended Mass with my father and brother but was totally not engaged. The music was dated and the execution lacking to say the least. The homilies were a drone. I had no faith life outside of attending Sunday Mass. When I finished school I joined a small group at a Protestant Church and it was these people who introduced me to Christ for the first time in my life. I began to pray daily and develop a relationship with God. I also had regular contact with some cousins and a friend who were devout Catholics who led me back home to the Church, helping me understand the authority of the Church's teachings and that the Church's teachings on sexual morality did actually make sense, through Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body. Since then, I have had to wade through the lack of faith in most parishes to maintain my own faith. Parishes with a reverent liturgy that doesn't distract from the worship of God, have been hard to find. I've had to travel further to get to better parishes, filter every homily in my head to check for heresy and attempt to find anything useful in it, grin and bear it through terrible music executed by incompetent musicians. After trying a few, I never found a youth group that

sufficiently supported my growth in the faith because they were always operating at a kind of "entry-level" of formation and couldn't provide anything more meaty for those who had already encountered and accepted the Lord and wanted to take that relationship deeper. I am eternally grateful for the gift of faith that I have received and that God reached out and got to me when he did. I am never going back on following him. But it is frustrating to see the Church dying around me—parishes closing and grey hair proliferating the parishes still operating—all the while with parish leadership insisting that Kumbaya style folk Masses are what works.

We belong to a parish that is spread over an area approximately 150km to 200km. We have 13 Communities where Mass is celebrated on a regular basis. We have two priests and two retired priests, both over 85, who help out. Our priests travel between 150 and 200 km each weekend for Sunday Masses. Fortunately our parish priest is proactive in encouraging the Laity to share in the leadership of these Communities. He listens to, and trusts, these groups. But he is not always listened to by the Church hierarchy. We really hope that the Plenary Council will give the members of the Australian Church some hope for the future, not just for ourselves, but for future generations who have lost trust and confidence in the Church and therefore are not active parishioners.

Remember with fondness the way of the older generations when families came to Church together each Sunday—faith was important families would attend Mass—rain, hail or shine. Cows to milk, children to feed, in good times and tough times in times of hardship & sorrow. Strength came from our faith and from our wonderful community of St [ - ] and St [ - ]. We all support each other grew up with a strong sense of belonging our community is very important to us and we don't want to lose it if we can no longer have a visiting priest.

I have been attending Church my whole life and have always found it a place of belonging—though I have been mostly part of two very small strong Catholic communities. My parents took our family to Church and it was a family outing (the only one for the week!) My husband and I took our children to Mass nearly every week and it became a family outing for them where the after Mass socialising took as long or longer than Mass. They say it takes a village to raise a child and I am forever grateful for my Catholic village in our children's lives and giving them a sense of belonging. Sadly, my children do not attend Mass. They are good people—compassionate, caring and I have no doubt some sense of belief in God but no interest or connection with the formal Mass. We cannot go back no matter how wonderful those times were (it wasn't all good—fear, hell etc.). But WE—the people who are the Church—must begin to create a Church that is honest, inclusive and relevant to the world today and the Gospel—will the Church leaders who have the power and say support and nurture us or drown us in theology, rules and formality?

I was brought up in an active Catholic family. I am still actively involved in the Church. I am proud of the good that the Church does for all people. I am saddened that the institution of the Church has let us down. I have seen power abused and people hurt. I have seen trust broken and souls destroyed. I have visited former friends and teachers in prison for harming children and yet I return to Church each week because being Catholic is part of who I am. I am questioning the institution of the Church and learning to draw a line between institution and faith. I look towards a time where we can transcend the

protective rules of the institution and become focused instead on our relationship with a God of love and acceptance who calls us to be co-creators in the kingdom of God. I now know that the Church cannot preach to me about morals or ethics. Instead, I look for guidance in becoming a more spiritual person of faith.

I was young when my mum was diagnosed with cancer and I was so scared. I knew I couldn't live without her and I wanted to die too. But we had a priest come and anoint her every chemo and she said he came before her surgery and he said Mass at our house many times and he prayed the rosary and we said a novena with others. He was amazing and helped me trust Jesus. And my mum was healed. I believe Jesus heard our prayers. Now when I am scared I say 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus help me' over and over in my head. I also hold my rosary beads at night when I am scared. What happened to me made believing in God and the sacraments [are] really, really real. Our whole lives depended on God and it made me realise that the Bible stories are just as real today through the priests and Church. But so many of my friends don't have this personal experience or understanding. Somehow, you need to help make it real to them please.

Yes, I'm a mother of three adult children. Two of which suffer severe mental illness as a result of child sexual abuse by a nun and priest. I am also a sister of brothers who were victims of sexual abuse at [ - ] [school]. One of my brothers suicided. I have a 'mother's degree' in the care and daily struggle of mental health, substance abuse, loss of faith. I am strong in my faith and have much to offer a ministry of healing for Church, our broken priests and our broken families. May God Bless and Guide you all as you navigate through all the material.

I've just turned 50, father of four. Always practiced my faith and prayed. We did have it drilled into us with the threat of hell and so I kept to the straight and narrow. I didn't understand fully why no sex before marriage etc. until meeting my wife who had read a lot. I now try to teach my children and remain firmly committed to the Church through good and bad. As the Apostles said after the crucifixion: "where else would we go?" The Church has the answers to happiness, a fulfilling life, to love, to salvation, to holiness, to virtue, to how to try to avoid sin—just need to get it out there—been too much waffle and watering down for too long. Now is the time for the re-conversion of the world—souls are thirsting for truth—to love and know God.

I dropped out of the Church for around 37 years—pre-Vatican II, not because of any gripe but it just didn't fit in with my lifestyle in the 1960s! My children were baptised but were not brought up in any faith. It was very distressing for my mother as the Church was her life. I didn't lose my faith in there being a God, but that God was very remote and had no relevance in my life. However, I'm really not sure why, but I gradually felt a need for some sort of belief. The urge wasn't so great that I did anything about it, though. My grandson was born in 2000 and my daughter, who'd had nothing to do with the Church the whole of her life, wanted him to be baptised. His father was Anglican, but he had no interest in pursuing that avenue, so my daughter persuaded me to ring the local Catholic parish priest. He was lovely and invited us to attend the baptism preparation meeting in the parish. That fell through because of my son-in-law's ill health, so wasn't pursued. Not long after my stepson who lived in [ - ] committed suicide and that was the catalyst for my return. I couldn't resist the urge. I found a Church very different from the one I left...one



where the priest faced the people, where lay people had ministries that involved going onto the sanctuary and assisting in the celebration of the Mass. To me women seemed to figure prominently. It was such a different Church—and yet I heard women saying they had no involvement and ‘no say’. To me—this new Church was amazing. I was able to contribute and felt very welcome—no castigation because I had dropped out for so long. For me it has been a wonderfully fulfilling experience.

My experience as a layperson within the Australian Church has generally been a positive one. I grew up in an observant Catholic family and was taught by Josephite nuns at primary school followed by the Sisters of Charity at secondary school and gained a good grounding in the faith. This was all good even though the God I came to know at that time was rather punitive and judgemental. However, I have subsequently been presented with many opportunities for faith development within the Catholic Church through retreats, spiritual direction and my faith is now based less on what the Church says I should believe and do and more on a compassionate and forgiving God. The place of good liturgy remains very important to me especially the Eucharist. I also love hearing the Divine Office sung at places like the Benedictine Abbey at Jamberoo as well as the spiritual direction that places such as Jamberoo offer. There are also many online opportunities for nourishing faith in these times.

I remain a committed practising Catholic with trust in my parish priests but have no faith or trust that ACBC understands that ordinary Catholics have any faith or trust that ACBC and the higher echelons of the Church in Rome have a sincere commitment to curing the ills of clericalism or sexual abuse.

Approximately 36 years ago I applied to have my marriage annulled after my husband divorced me. I paid \$100, a lot for me at that time. I was refused an annulment but told to contact them again if I found someone that I wanted to marry. I was furious as I wanted to know exactly where I stood with the Church before considering another marriage and now they wanted more money if I wanted them to reconsider. Approximately 10 years ago, I again applied for an annulment and paid \$300. Was again refused. A few years later I was so furious about this that I rang the office and asked to speak to the people on the board who made this decision. Was told 'you can't, because it's different people each time. The reason you were refused was because you have no witnesses. Because you married so young to the only person you had gone out with, we could grant an annulment if you have witnesses.' I don't know what witnesses are supposed to verify for me but I needed to explain why I genuinely did not have any. I was told I could not do this. I told the woman on the phone that these people need to be told that they are dealing with people's lives and should not keep saying send more money and we will reconsider. I was basically sentenced to life alone and without children by this Church which is how I've had to live since my ex-husband took my children at the divorce. He on the other hand remarried quickly because he's not a Christian. Also, the reason we were married in a Christian Church originally was because my mother in law insisted. I was not Catholic or Christian at the time of my marriage. I really think this whole thing sucks. You can basically ruin someone's future and there is no option to appeal the decision or speak to the decision makers. I received a cheque for \$300 from the annulment office unexpectedly after my last



complaint but that can never give back all the years I've had alone and the hopelessness I've often felt.

Strong Catholic faith nurturing by my mum and dad who put Jesus and their complete trust in Jesus in their daily life. They gave everything to Jesus and prayed every day with complete faith that God would take care of everything, they were aware of the graces God sent to them and embraced them with heartfelt thanks. The taught me that despite ridicule Faith in Jesus is the most important belief.

I was born into a family proud of its Irish Catholic heritage and fully committed to our faith. I finished high school and did a degree in religious studies, followed by Post Grad work in Jewish Studies and the early Christian Church. I felt called to a vocation of teaching Religious Education and did a Grad Dip Ed (Sec), teaching in a girls' school in [ - ] for a number of years—a school attended by many students who I now realise were abused at the hands of the local parish priest and present to my classes as disengaged young women, damaged in some way that, as a young teacher, I had no understanding of. Returning to study, I commenced a master's degree, which was rolled into a PhD research paper on the identity of the earliest Church communities. I then had the opportunity to teach at tertiary level, both scripture and Catholic social teaching, to prominently young adults looking to work in teaching, nursing or para-medicine. I am an active member of my local parish, teaching into the RCIA, Children's liturgy and sacramental programs. I have had all of my three children baptised and try to bring them up conscious of and in good relationship with God. I absolutely believe in my commissioning, through baptism, 'to bring the good news to the poor'. While tragedy after tragedy is revealed about my Church in the news each day, I find myself needing more and more to proclaim that that is not my Church. They are not the face of Christ I seek or hope to represent. Having embedded myself in the epicentre of sin: [ - ], I cannot underline enough the need for honesty and renewal. A refocusing on the teachings of Christ. A letting go of power in the adoption of a model of Church based on service and humility. Where the first are last and the last are put first. I cannot tell you how hard it is to stand in front of a class of 15 year olds at this point in our history and be trying to promote the Gospel when the Australian Church is in such a state of disrepair. From one Catholic to another, I beg you, the way ahead needs to be a radical renewal in terms of practice and Church operations. Humility, honesty and servitude to a damaged people are going to be key to moving forward here in the footsteps of Christ.

Over the last forty years there has been a steady decline of those involved with our local parish, much of this could be contributed to the ongoing sexual abuse crisis as well as the judgmental attitude of the Australian Catholic Church as particularly led by Cardinal George Pell. The Catholic Church has had a culture of covering up the most horrendous of crimes against Children and even those of us with a strong faith are considering walking away. We have a lovely community led by a dedicated parish priest who receives very little support from the local bishop which is again a failure in the leadership structure.

My faith was nurtured within my family in a small rural community. The blessed life that I had, where family, community and faith were so intertwined is not the experience of so many today. I am wondering how welcoming we are to those who are "different" from ourselves. I was challenged by one of our parishioners when he said that we here in

Australia need to be welcoming of all. "Our Church needs to be welcoming of those who we in my country call 'the third sex'." It made me reflect on the ways in which I, as an outsider, a "kartiya" or white person was welcomed into a remote Indigenous community—being given a skin group so that I knew with whom and how I could relate to others in that community, being given a bush name as a sign of identity. Is our mainstream Church as welcoming in embracing difference, in welcoming the other and the stranger—not just in a token way. Our Church is no longer an Anglo-Celtic or even European Church. Are we really reflecting that diversity at all levels?

When visiting Iraq and seeing and hearing firsthand accounts of so much persecution to Christians, a priest friend asked a local bishop what we in the West could do for them. One could imagine a response along the lines of; tell our story, funds, donations etc. His actual reply, 'People in the West need to live their faith.' That simple. We do that, we transform ourselves, our families, our workplaces, our communities, our world—one heart at a time. What is needed is authentic Catholic witness. To do that, we must learn our faith and we must do a better job transmitting it to others entrusted to our care and instruction. We need to go deeper. Pray more. Return to scripture. Cherish and adore Christ in the Eucharist. Go to Mass more and delve deeper into that beautiful and amazing mystery. We need to change, and we need to stand up with courage and share in our words and actions, the gospel with all—it is the good news after all, and it is good news for everyone!

A small group of nine people ranging in age from 55 years of age to 90+ decided that we would like to enhance our knowledge of our faith in a prayerful setting. We have been meeting fortnightly for a couple of hours each session to study Fr Flader's programme "Journey into Truth, Instructions in the Catholic Faith". We feel that we can recommend this as an enlightening and rewarding experience.

No specific stories I would like to share, but there are countless positive stories—such as inter-generational bonds promoted by parish life. I valued my experience of World Youth Days in 2008 and 2011, and think all young Catholics should have an 'experiential' opportunity if they pursue RE voluntarily as a senior secondary subject; this could be Catholic Youth Festivals or retreats. This shows young practising Catholics that they are not alone, and is an appropriate time to use contemporary music and technology; attempts to do this through the Mass patronises young people and denies them what is often the only hour of potential reverence and silence in their week.

I have been a practising Catholic my whole life, been an altar boy, went to a Catholic boarding school. I have 4 children who have been raised as Catholics, sent to Catholic schools, are all extremely well educated and now are ambivalent about their faith. While extremely disappointed with many aspects of the Church, I still practice my faith.

I was born into a Catholic family, experienced Catholic schooling, and continue to practise my faith (although other family members & friends do not!) I sometimes question the relevance of the Church and think that it has not kept up with modern times.

I always felt protected as a member of my local Church communities. However my strongest sense of faith growing up was that it was a Church of rules. I experienced much angst over breaking what I now know are trivial rules and that God was like a policeman keeping a tally of my misdeeds. The love and mercy of God was certainly lost in

translation. Even as a young woman, I agonised over so many issues due to an immature faith formation. I still feel I have a long way to go in my faith development and I'm hanging in there.

My thoughts—we need to do more in the area of 'end of life' like hospice care. Hospices run by nuns were beautiful places. Better balance is needed—away from the medicalization of death and more towards the soul's spiritual journey. Hospitals and institutions don't have the time, philosophies or ethos to be able to provide the companionship, quietness and serenity which is needed for the preparation for death, spiritual healing and contentment. Euthanasia and assisted dying are the current topics and I think the Church should be more obvious and involved on the subject of peaceful and dignified death and the soul's journey to God.

My parent's positive sense of faith and some of the talented, kind and enlightened nuns that taught me have shaped my faith. I was not brought up to believe that people who chose the religious life were better or had more power but were human beings the same as me with talents and faults too. I also had an aunt who was a very happy nun, which helped educate me as well. I am finding the lack of leadership in our parish really difficult and it seems the diocese is just too busy with other matters which I understand given the current new headlines. I have little hope for the future of the Catholic Church in Australia if it remains the same. We do need to pray and consider how we can change while remaining faithful to God's teachings. I do get very frustrated with people who think Weekly Sunday Mass attendance is what defines them as a "Good" Catholic. I think we need to look more broadly at what God is asking of us.

I am a Sister of Mercy, and I was very fortunate to be given the opportunity to be appointed by the bishop to be a parish leader of three small country communities. My directives from the bishop was to prepare the people to be self-sufficient. The previous parish priest had done a great deal of work with his parishioners in preparing the people in the celebration of Word in their Lay-led assemblies. So in one sense much of the ground work was done for me. In each of the three communities there were 8-10 people (male and female) who had volunteered or had been asked to be leaders at these assemblies. Whenever a lay-led assembly was scheduled a preparation meeting was held and two leaders were selected. The assemblies were held once or twice a month depending on the availability of priests in the neighbouring parishes. After a time it became obvious to me that many of those leaders were capable of leading the community in the celebration of Eucharist and the question was often asked of me "Why don't you celebrate Eucharist for us". After all in the early Church wasn't someone from that worshipping community selected to celebrate Eucharist? Obviously, that person or persons would need some preparation for that particular ministry and that it be a shared ministry for a certain period. Maybe others would be prepared for the ministry of baptism. Others for the preparation of the sacraments. Others for funeral ministry. Recently Fr. [ - ] who is a retired parish priest but still celebrating Eucharist showed me an article that he had written on this very idea which was similar to the thoughts that I had had years ago. We all know there are few Australian men who are joining the seminary and those who are have either come from a different culture or who are attracted to clericalism which Pope Francis has asked us to move away from. We also know that there is no biblical reason why women can't lead us in the celebration of Eucharist but it would need to be a very different understanding of

priesthood and a discussion that women would need to take a major role. I feel that we would not be in this situation if Vatican II had not been closed down by the conservatives in the Church and if we had remained open to the Spirit. It is not difficult to read the signs of the times with the present struggle of woman to be treated equally and that everyone and every living thing be treated with respect and dignity. Thank you to all who have taken on this incredible task of collating these submissions. I will continue to pray that the Spirit will guide you and give those who will sit in council the courage and strength to make the necessary changes to give the faithful hope in the Resurrection.

As a young person in the 1980s I feel there was more time and energy given to catechising the youth. I was in Salesian 12 Star and young co-operators groups that really helped me in my faith. We did community service like visiting (and singing to them) the sick/elderly and cleaning the local cemetery. We started a choir in our local Church, went on outings—some just for fun, and sometimes to special Masses etc., went on youth camps. All of this really helped strengthen our faith and showed us how to put God and others first. I think more emphasis on orthodox youth groups is a must.

I was brought up in a large Catholic family with strong connections to our local Catholic Church, our faith and all the rituals across the liturgical year. We were poor but had a lot of security and were surrounded by love. We were taught the strong tenets of love for others, the greater good rather than the individual, forgiveness, the values expounded in the beatitudes. Then I rebelled, then return to the faith when I had my own children. None of my 7 brothers and sisters or my 3 children go to Mass. They are all good people and continue to live out their Jesus values through secular expressions of social justice.

The [ - ] Community [ - ], as a community situated in a lower socioeconomic area in [ - ] respectfully ask that other communities like ours are given the opportunity to discover God more fully by having people of faith living and journeying with them. Our mission statement is : [ - ] VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT, January 2014. We, the members of the [ - ] Community believe that we are called to be amongst the people of [ - ], with the parish of [ - ]. This calling involves: a) Journeying with the people of [the parish] and with each other to discover God more fully. This journey requires a deep listening to God and the needs of the people. b) Being an ecumenical community of faith and a compassionate presence of God and Church at the service of a God who is constantly with the people. c) Being a community of Good News in word and action. We acknowledge that the poor have good news for us and good news to share with us. We empower the people by building with them structures of justice, peace, mercy and leadership. d) Being a community that courageously addresses the situation of the people. We are enriched by sharing our gifts and weaknesses. We are part of a wider network of faith communities.

My experience: I am 65, married with one adult daughter. I have attended Sunday Mass my whole life sometimes consciously, sometimes without much thought. My parents were Christian. My father was raised in the Protestant faith. He, a returned serviceman, only attended Mass at Christmas time. My mother was a regular Churchgoer. My immediate family and siblings are non-believers. Most of my close friends have no religious affiliation although some acknowledge a God. My niece and one friend sees the spiritual in people and places. One wise and long patient friend remains Catholic but does not attend

Church. One of our extended family have been very involved in the Church but are struggling with their faith.
We have travelled to many parts of Australia as volunteer teachers, staying in remote areas for a month or two. We recognise a great spirit as we enter the doors of many Churches... but not all. The people express a relaxed sense of ownership, shared responsibility and joy at coming together. Parish life is wonderful when all kinds of people are asked to bring their gifts, be nurtured, grow in confidence and capacity to welcome/reach others. No single leader or priest can do this. 'Catholic' strength is based on universal inclusion, not exclusion. Community life depends on having community as a purpose in itself. Every parish needs a nurturing group responsible for this. It should not depend on the personal tendency or energy of one bloke, as it often does, especially if new Indian priests supply to rural Qld parishes where they show little appreciation of the life there.
In 1989, I was travelling in Italy near Assisi. On the roadside I found a Shrine with the Prayer of St Francis in Italian, I copied the words. On our way to Assisi that day I tried to translate... remember the prayer.... the words of the song.....to my amazement my mind was a blank. I was intent on visiting the Basilica but my husband, a non-Catholic didn't particularly share the same enthusiasm. On arrival in Assisi, the Basilica was covered in scaffolding, there were throngs of tourists, buses galore and it was raining. Our patience with one another became frayed and we impatiently disagreed where to go, we became separated. Within a short time, I found myself in the crypt alone in the most simple of holy places. I sat on a simple bench and burst into tears with the following words pounding in my thoughts. NOT SO MUCH TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS TO UNDERSTAND. To this very day I firmly believe St Francis & the Holy Spirit were reminding me that I need to remember that what was important to me often demanded that I be UNDERSTOOD and perhaps I should be more open to the other point of view and UNDERSTAND, particularly in our marriage.
My Antioch youth group from 1984 was what inspired me so much to continue my faith journey. Having that was magnificent. The fire is still burning in me as I hear the song from the National Conference in 1985 "One For Others, One in the Lord"!
When I was a child I believed the answer to the Catechism question Where is God? God is everywhere. I have experienced this in my life constantly in many different ways and it has challenged me to relate to all people and creation knowing this is so. Therefore, I have never believed we Catholics have sole possession of God and thank God I was never taught "Outside the Church there is no salvation!"
I have worked in Catholic schools for more than 30 years because I believe that the message of the Church is an amazing one. I still think there is hope.
The story of faith that I could share is probably the time I feel closest to God. This is whenever I am at a good Mass, one in Latin, with incense, candles, choir and a sermon about God (not about what the priest did on the weekend or what he saw on Q+A).



1. Disappointment that so many clergy and religious are still unable to speak about the most disturbing crime, that of sexual abuse. 2. The witness of so many faithful people still attending Mass and living Gospel centred lives.

We both grew up in traditional Catholic homes, where going to Mass, saying the rosary, receiving the sacraments etc. was part of our life journey. We are grateful to our parents who raised us to know and love our God and to feel part of a faith community. As adults, we understandably started to question aspects of our Catholic beliefs; however, we never felt despondent or considered whether we wanted to remain part of the Church. Now in our sixties we are questioning whether this Church that has been so much a part of our lives, has completely lost direction in what its' mission is all about. The cover up by those in leadership positions within the Catholic Church of the abuse to innocent young people is inexcusable. We feel affronted that those in leadership have used the word 'Catholic Church' when apologising for the pain caused by clergy and religious. We are part of the 'Catholic Church' and neither of us have ever abused a child. These leaders need to take responsibility for their own actions and admit that they failed these children and the communities within the Australian Catholic Church. It is very hard to trust those in authority, there appears to be more interest in protecting the finances of the Church than supporting the victims who have been given life long sentences by this abuse. Trust is hard to regain and those in leadership positions within the Australian Catholic Church have a huge responsibility to work towards healing and building a very different Church than the one we have today. This Plenary Council is a step in the right direction, however if the lay community is not listened to and heard, we wonder what the Australian Catholic Church is going to look like going forward, we feel sure many more people will leave the Church.

By responding positively to requests to participate in Church activities has led me to a greater understanding of the way Christ is calling me i.e. Communion to the sick, Reading at Mass etc.

The main inspiration I draw from is my young adult formation in the 1980's and 1990's. It worries me that this formation is not being offered to young people in today's Church.

Our main theme is the need for the Church to be more inclusive and tolerant. What we have experienced in this area—My dad was asked to be a Lector at Mass, he is not Catholic but as a Christian the parish decided that he would be able to read the Lectionary and rostered with others. He agreed to do this. There were complaints about this from some members of the parish community and the bishop was informed. He was then told that he was not allowed to be a Lector. This had a big impact on me as a child and I still remember it as an adult. I felt first hand as a young child how un-inclusive we are. I want this situation to change. My mother has studied theology and has a lot of experience. Generally there was a lot of push back towards her as a female lay minister. I witnessed a lot of discrimination against her and believe this was because she was very well qualified and a woman. Rather than have a lay parish leader we are placing priests from overseas in our parishes. Many people cannot understand them. Their English is poor and their theology is conservative. We are selling small rural community Churches and people are expected to merge into larger parishes. The people are not given adequate time to plan and imagine a new vision of parish life. We could be developing other models of lay



leadership but we continue to hang onto the model of male celibate priests as the only form of leadership. Many priests in rural parishes are exhausted from all the travel they do, please help to create a new model of pastoral leadership and stop being afraid of women and non-celibate leadership. Working for Catholic education and involved in the independent education union I am aware that there has been a very huge turnout of LGBTI teachers in Catholic schools who express themselves at IEU [Independent Education Union of Australia] meetings. There has been a lot of hurt and feelings of betrayal because of what they have put their professional efforts towards as Catholic teachers but they also know what they are doing is working for an institution that is part of their culture and family but are being told, "don't put one foot out of line." Therefore, they are not able to support children the way they would like to. They know these orders come from the top, the bishops and yet they see children suffering in their schools. These teachers are not allowed to live their lives in terms of their choice to get married or have families of their own. Some of my friends have had their children baptised so that they can send their children to a Catholic school and yet the parents greatly resent this. The parents are against some of the teachings of the Catholic Church. The parents want to give the children every option they can so they go along with it but it really does not mean a lot to them. I have worked in health care in pastoral care and they have worked hard to develop this role albeit with more improvements to be made. In the community (parishes) it is less supported and being I.

We love our Church so much!!!!!!

I have remarried after my husband died and was remarried in my husband's Church. My parish priest blessed our marriage at Mass but my husband was unable to take communion!! Can you imagine the pain? We technically can't share what is the most important of sacraments. I am not supposed to take communion when I go to Mass at his Church (Anglican). This is unreasonable. Many people have left the Church over this issue. As yet I am not one of them.

## CONCLUSION

This report presented a summary of submissions that were received from your diocese in Phase One of the Plenary Council process called 'Listening and Dialogue'. The findings are in response to three main questions:

Question 1: What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

Question 2: What questions about the future of the Church in Australia would you like the Plenary Council to consider?

Question 3: Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?

Phase Two of the Plenary Council: *Listening and Discernment* is already underway and will continue until early 2020. The purpose of this stage is to listen deeply to what the Spirit is saying through the responses that have been submitted in Phase One and to understand and connect with the sense of faith that has been shared by the people of God across Australia.

We hope this report helps you in continuing to lead and encourage the engagement of many people in your diocese in this second phase as we discern together how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is:

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

The National Centre for Pastoral Research sincerely thanks all the people from your diocese who participated in the Listening and Dialogue phase and those who continue to be engaged in the preparations towards Plenary Council 2020. We wish you and your diocese all the very best for the journey ahead.

## APPENDIX 1: COMPLETE LIST OF COUNTRIES OF BIRTH (Individual responses only)

The table below is the full list of individual respondents' countries of birth from the Diocese of Ballarat.

Country	Number of respondents
Australia	169
Argentina	1
Canada	1
Croatia	1
Germany	1
India	2
Ireland	2
Netherlands	4
New Zealand	1
Papua New Guinea	1
Philippines	1
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	4
Not stated	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>

## APPENDIX 2: COMPLETE LIST OF GROUPS FROM YOUR DIOCESE

This is a complete list of group submissions from the Diocese of Ballarat. Groups that did not provide a name were omitted from this table.

Name of group	Group size
Parish of Ballarat East	100
Catholic Education Office Ballarat	80
Goulburn Valley Spirituality in the Pub	80
Christian Life Community Australia, Victorian Region.	80
Parish of Cororooke	40
St Patricks Parish	24
Ballarat Cathedral Branch of Catholic Women's League Victoria Wagga Wagga Inc	22
St Joseph's Church Red Cliffs	21
Ballarat Diocesan Pastoral Support Group	20
Lumen Christi Catholic Primary School	20
Ballan Payer Group	19
Damascus College	19
Damascus College	18
Mary Glowrey Parish - Donald	18
Damascus College	17
St Mary's Church, Colac	17
St Joseph's Peshurst	15
St Patricks Parish	15
Catholic Women's League Colac Branch	14
SS Michael & John's Men's Breakfast group	14
St Michael and St John Parish	14
Catholic Earthcare Ballarat Diocese	13
St Mary's Parish, Hamilton, Victoria	12
Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission	12
Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission	12
St Michael and St John Parish - night meeting	12
Life In The Spirit Charismatic Group	11
St Patrick's Parish Primary School	11
St Francis Xavier Primary School Ballarat East Ltd	10
Emmaus catholic primary school	10
Ballarat menALIVE group	10
Diocese of Ballarat Bishop's School Advisory Council	10
St Joseph's Parish Bereavement Support Group	9
St. Malachy's School	9
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 1	8
St Joseph's Parish, Red Cliffs	8
Catherine of Siena Institute, Australia	8
Our Lady Help of Christians School - Staff group 1	7
Anne Rossiter, Brenda Ryan, Min Myer, Peter Dalton, Mary Sullivan, Mick Myer, Shirley Edgar	7
Diocesan Pastoral Council	7

Name of group	Group size
Small group of Loreto College staff	7
Family	7
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 2	6
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 3	6
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 4	6
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 5	6
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 6	6
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 7	6
Exodus Community Wendouree West	6
St Joseph's parish Ouyen 8	5
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 9	5
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 10	5
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 11	5
St Joseph's parish	5
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 12	5
St Joseph's Parish Ouyen 13	5
St Columbas' Parish	5
Visiting Team	5
St Vincent de Paul	5
Parish Liturgy Team	5
Bereavement Team St Marys Parish Hamilton	5
DMAC	4
□	4
Catholic Education Ballarat	4
Catholic Education Ballarat	4
Community of the son's and daughter's of God, Ballarat	4
Damascus college Ballarat	3
Mary's Mates participants	2
Jo Russell & Noreen Ryan	2
Vogels family	2
Van Dillen's	2
OLHC	Not Stated

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