



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

Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

A Report to the Diocese of Bunbury

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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

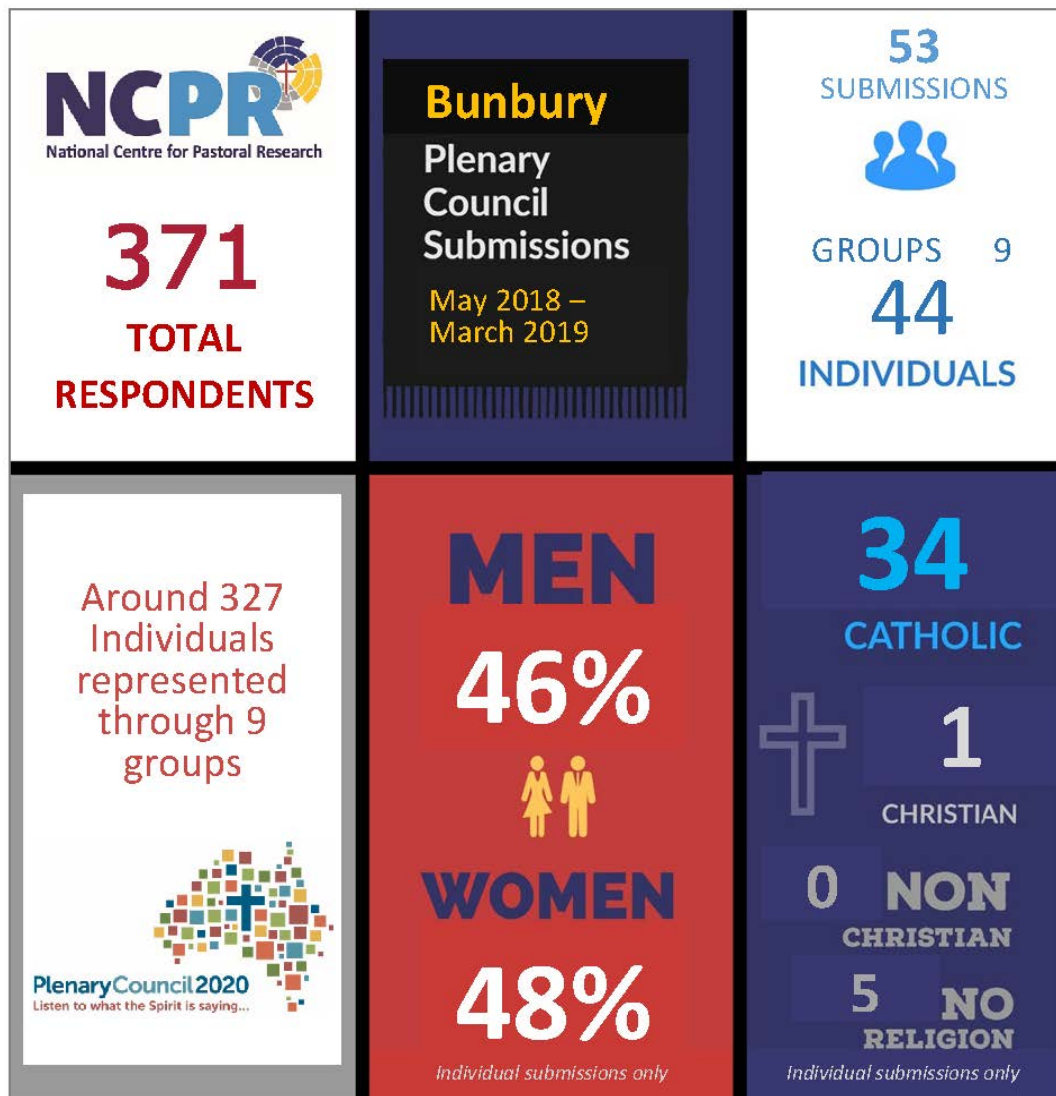
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Diocesan Submissions Summary Snapshot: May 2018—March 2019



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 - Bunbury

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 Bunbury, we received a total of 53 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 24 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another 10 were unsure if they had. About 19 respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 53 submissions, nine submissions were from groups or organisations and 44 submissions were from individuals. There were 327 people represented through the nine 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 371.

Table 1: Number of Submissions	
Total number of submissions received	53
Participated in Listening & Dialogue Encounter?	
Yes	24
No	19
Not sure	10
Not stated	0
Total	53
Submissions received from groups or organisations	9
Submissions received from individuals	44
Total	53

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 44 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 Bunbury. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 55 per cent (24) were received from those aged 50 and over. The most number of submissions within this age range were received from the 80 years and over age group (7 responses).

At the close of submissions, there were 11 individual submission received from those aged under 25.

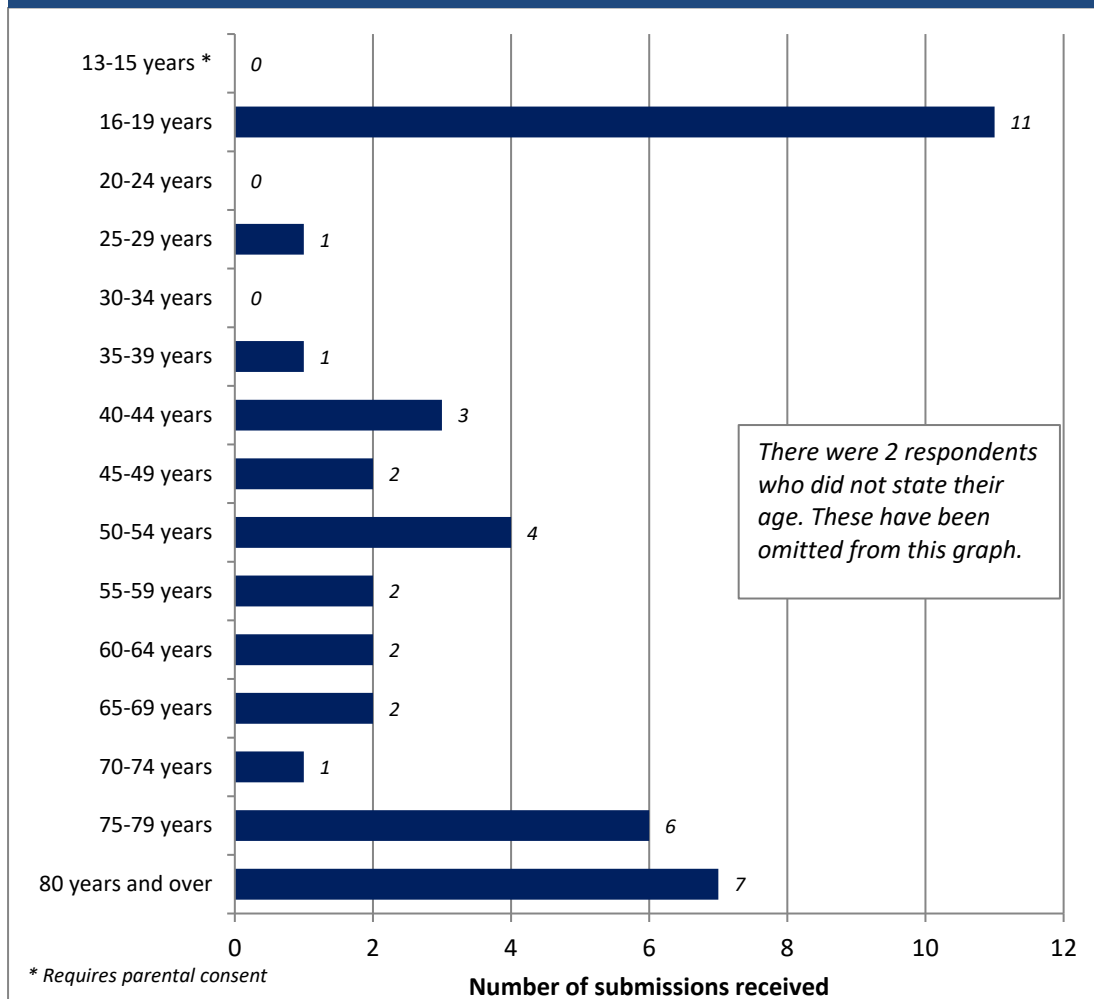
Participants aged 16-17 were encouraged to discuss the questionnaire with their parent or guardian. Many of these responses came from schools that sent in their responses through the online survey. As Table 2 shows, there were 11 individual submissions made from the 16-19 years age group in your diocese.

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 no individual submissions made from this age group in your diocese.

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

13-15 years *	0
16-19 years	11
20-24 years	0
25-29 years	1
30-34 years	0
35-39 years	1
40-44 years	3
45-49 years	2
50-54 years	4
55-59 years	2
60-64 years	2
65-69 years	2
70-74 years	1
75-79 years	6
80 years and over	7
Not stated	2
Total	44

* Requires parental consent

Fig. 1: Age groups (individual responses only)

Sex of Respondents

A little under half the number of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (48%), while a further 46 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 20 men and 21 women who made submissions. Two respondents preferred not to state their sex, while one respondent did not answer this question.

Table 3: Sex (individual responses only)

Female	21
Male	20
Prefer not to say	2
Not stated	1
Total	44

Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (73%) were born in Australia. Just over 20 per cent came from other countries, while around seven per cent did not state their birthplace. 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.

Table 4a: Countries of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	32	72.7
El Salvador	1	2.3
Ireland	2	4.5
New Zealand	1	2.3
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	4	9.1
Zambia	1	2.3
Not stated	3	6.8
Total	44	100.0

Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	32	72.7
Other English speaking country	7	15.9
Non-English speaking country	2	4.5
Not stated	3	6.8
Total	44	100.0

Table 4c: Mother's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	27	61.4
Other English speaking country	7	15.9
Non-English speaking country	5	11.4
Not stated	5	11.4
Total	44	100.0

Table 4d: Father's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	30	68.2
Other English speaking country	8	18.2
Non-English speaking country	1	2.3
Not stated	5	11.4
Total	44	100.0

* 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 no individuals who identified themselves in this way.

Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (individual responses only)	
Yes	0
No	40
Not stated	4
Total	44

Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 44 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 34 respondents (77%) were Catholic. One respondent was from another Christian denomination while there were none from non-Christian religions. A further four respondents did not state their religion and five respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

Table 6: Religion (individual responses only)		Person	Percent
Catholic		34	77.3
Other Christian:			
Salvation Army		1	2.3
Other Christian		0	0.0
Non Christian:			
Other religion		0	0.0
No religion		5	11.4
Not stated		4	9.1
Total		44	100

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 25 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were six respondents who said they went to Mass and church activities sometimes, while one respondent considered themselves Catholic but described their participation in other terms. A further two respondents described themselves in another way.

Table 7: Religious description (for those who answered 'Catholic' to previous question)				
	Female	Male	Not stated	Total
I am Catholic and regularly attend Mass and other church activities	12	12	1	25
I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes	3	3	0	6
I am Catholic, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	0	0	0	0
I consider myself Catholic but I am not sure what to think about the Catholic faith	1	0	0	1
Other	1	1	0	2
Not stated	0	0	0	0
Total	17	16	1	34

GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of nine group submissions made from your diocese. Around 327 individuals were represented through these groups. However, one group did not report their number of participating members, indicating that the total number of people represented through the group submissions may be higher.

While five group submissions provided a group name, four did not do so. Table 8 shows a list of the group submissions from the diocese with the number of members in each group. 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 Cyber Christian Community with around 160 members. There were also other parish and school groups such as Kearnan College with 40 participants. There were three other groups with three members or more.

Table 8 : Group submissions from the diocese	
Name of group	Group size
Cyber Christian Community	160
Kearnan College	40
St Joseph's Church Yarloop Committee	10
St Mary's Catholic Primary School Boyup Brook Staff	9
Catholic ladies	3

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 under 20 years age group was the largest group represented with 40 members. This was followed by the group aged 50-69 years with 16 members.

Table 9: Estimates of ages of people in group submissions	
<i>(group responses - for submissions received after 04 November 2018 only)</i>	
Under 20 years	40
20 - 29 years	0
30 - 49 years	10
50 - 69 years	16
70 and over	1
Unknown	0
Total	67

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

Of the total 67 group members whose sex was reported, 64 per cent (43) were female and 36 per cent (24) were male.

Table 10: Estimates of sex of people in group submissions	
<i>(group responses - for submissions received after 04 November 2018 only)</i>	
Female	43
Male	24
Total	67

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 five topics discussed by participants from your diocese were:

- Love God, Love Neighbour
- Leadership and Church Governance
- Social Justice and the Environment
- Sacraments
- The Mass

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

- Love God, Love Neighbour (Chapter 4)
 - *Care for neighbour* (p. 36)
- Leadership and Church Governance (Chapter 7)
 - *Greater role for women* (p. 83)
 - *Ending clericalism* (p. 80)
 - *Greater involvement of the laity* (p. 84)
 - *Greater leadership from bishops* (p. 87)
- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
 - *Care for the environment* (p. 112)
 - *Greater inclusion of all* (p. 108)
- Sacraments (Chapter 6)
 - *Better preparation and support for married couples* (p. 73)
 - *Holy Orders - Ordination of women* (p. 69)
- The Mass (Chapter 5)
 - *Different translation of the Mass* (p. 56)
 - *Emphasis on: New translation of the Mass (inclusive language; p. 56)*

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

- *Greater concern for victims and survivors* (p. 101)
- *Focus on ecumenism* (p. 129)

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 45 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.

For everyone to love thy neighbour as they love themselves and to love thy God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.

To respect ourselves, others and our planet. To learn continuously about everything and be aware of what is happening around us. Listen without judgement. Be strong in the belief of Love.

Listen to the words of Father Thomas Keating 1923-2018. Evolutionary Model of Human Family, the Model of the Human Condition and the spiritual Journey Lectio Divina, Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina. His journey from the UROBIC, TYPHONIC, MYTHIC EGOIC, INTUITIVE opened my mind to "What God is asking us to do", now since the second Vatican council. I also think this is the journey that the current Pope may be on. This is my personal opinion. God Bless You all. :)

To stop clinging to the material and anachronistic institutions that restrict our sense of the spiritual, and seek to fully embrace the Vatican II notion of a diverse community united in Christ and guided by the Spirit, journeying to the kingdom of God. A key step forward would be accepting that this vision of the modern Church is no longer confined by its buildings, rituals and doctrine, and effectively removes the clergy from its highly authoritative role. Only then will we learn to recognise those members who are genuinely leading the way on this journey, and get a sense of the true Church: the spiritual community of Christ. The modern Church is not a building, nor is it a physical gathering of people in the same place at the same time. If 5 million Australians continue to indicate their membership of the Catholic Church on the census, then why aren't they attending Mass? Is their membership in the Church purely a matter of cultural heritage, or do they feel guided by the Spirit on a faith journey that has perhaps led them beyond a weekly obligation to attend church, and is calling them instead to be Church? The current Mass performed in your

average Catholic building contains no exclusive element of the modern, post-Vatican II notion of 'Church' - there is no sense of community that recognises diversity. What defines and guides the Mass is not the Spirit but the traditions, rituals and language of another time and place. Even a basic grasp of modern theology renders most of the words we hear and repeat during Mass so far removed from the meaning behind them and their application to our lives that they might as well still be in Latin. We have lost the simple, spiritual significance of Jesus' instructions to come together, break bread as a community and share a cup in remembrance of him. Having said that, the ongoing professional development and accreditation of Catholic teachers has delivered modern theology to the post-Vatican II generations in a way that has advanced our spiritual development beyond the scope of the average Sunday sermon. We are more conscious of our spiritual selves than the Church seems to give us credit for. Where our parents and grandparents might have needed a material sense of God in the sights, sounds and tangible elements of religion and Mass, we are much more receptive to the idea of an entirely spiritual notion of God. Maybe it has something to do with the wireless and digital information world we live in, but the idea that there is something entirely non-physical that both permeates every element of our existence and transcends the known universe is not as difficult to grasp as it might have been back when people thought humanity was the whole point. This is a postmodern world, where quantum physics rules and there is no such thing as objective fact. We no longer seek to define or describe God, to locate 'him' in space and time or to give 'him' such a finite place in our lives.

I believe God is asking us to go back to our roots. To be good people. Perhaps to challenge those who have preached being good, but have not been good people. Standing up for God's mission is important and that is what is important in 2019 and beyond. Holding on to traditions for the sake of traditions does not serve us, the Church or God's plan particularly well, in my view. Does God want us to go to church to say that we went to church? Does God want us to be a God person, as the heart of His message, lived through Jesus, tells us. Holding on does not appear to be the answer, and I think many people are showing that by the dwindling numbers at Church. Australia could be leaders in spreading God's word, but not through traditional means.

I think God is asking us to have a new thorough look at what we are as the people of God. We need to address the issue of clericalism, revert to the old translation for the mass which is not promoting an atmosphere of fear as well as other negative attitudes, involve lay people including women in governance in the Church, get serious about ecumenism, implement principle and practices which will ensure synodality, introduce a serious review of seminary training, teach the people of God an adult approach to the Eucharist and we as a Church need to address leadership especially lay leadership training if we are to be the Church that can carry out its mission to promote the Kingdom of God.

I believe God is asking us to fearlessly confront the declining state of the Church in Australia, which is almost to point of crisis, by strengthening the evangelisation strategies and resources to restore its influence in moulding society's moral culture and daily ethics as Jesus instructed the apostles before His ascension; 'teaching to observe all that I have commanded you'. Since one cannot solve a problem without understanding it, the first step is to establish a goal then identify the constraints to its achievement. That analysis becomes the basis for the evangelisation solutions in the form of strategies and approaches, all in accord with Church teachings.

The following is a submission I made for the 2019 [-] Diocesan Synod. That we as a diocese help parishes provide the support for marriage and family that is strongly recommended in “Amoris Laetitia”. Our smaller country parishes would need to be supported in doing this by working together in groups or with a larger parish. There is a whole chapter in “Amoris Laetitia” (The Joy of Love) on the Pastoral Care of Families (Ch.6). Para 202 states that: “The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the Parish.” Providing ongoing support for marriages / families—especially for the newly marrieds, marriage preparation, pastoral care for those in troubled marriages—including those in complex situations (para 247). Support for single parent families.

Keep traditions but modernize practices with less focus on rituals. More focus on inclusivity within the Church. Making our place in society more relevant. Making an effort to bridge the gap between our place as a Catholic community and the nature of modern contemporary society.

I think God is asking the Catholic Church in Australia to review itself with a view to adopting a new and broader range of initiatives that will make the Church more approachable in terms of those we have disenfranchised, less dictatorial in terms of our rules and regulations and more open to reconnect to the faithful.

I believe God is asking the Church in Australia to accept and act on the vision of Pope Francis as summarised in his Address on the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops and in Evangelii Gaudium. In short he supports a Synodal Church which includes the Laity and truly listens to each other, and allowing for regional differences and a decentralisation of decision making so that we only send to Rome those matters that truly need a Papal decision or advice. At the Australian level I believe we should be considering the Anglican model for diocesan synods including the role of their synod in the selection of bishops. The central objective should be to make us a joyful, loving and spiritual Church that has as its central objective the attainment of faith, hope and charity. It also needs to be a forgiving and welcoming Church which seeks to be as inclusive as possible and love and compassion, not sin as the dominant subject of our practise and actions.

I think to start every day in primary school the prayer to our guardian angel should be said, also tell the children that God made them and the world and share the beauty of creation. Look at the wonderful flowers, moon, stars and birds, so get them to love and care for God’s creation. I would like the teachers to read and share the book, “Living the Catholic faith: Rediscovering the Basics”.

I think that as a Catholic institution, we are mourning. As a principal, I found the insight from the Royal Commission so sad. I wonder how the Catholic Church can recover from this. I type this with raw emotion percolating with today's announcement of Pell's verdict. I so often feel that the clergy forgets the very real pressure this places schools under. Generally speaking, Churchgoers are 'the Church'. The pressure on schools and school staff is immense. In many ways, in modern Australia, schools are the face of tomorrow's Church. What is God asking TODAY: how will Catholicism respond to these allegations, these guilty verdicts? How will Catholicism in Australia regenerate its (very ageing) Church?

As a group we prayed met wrote and prayed again then have put together OUR AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC STORY [-]. In 2016 our church and the community house next door in [-] was burnt in a bushfire—the insurance money was paid out in full—is invested with the diocese of Bunbury

and the [-] parish are being paid the interest as income. We would like to rebuild a small church back on the site but have been told we cannot by the Bishop of [-] as there is no longer an adequate congregation to sustain it. For three years now and a lot of heartache in a very challenging time in our church we have been negotiating to get a building back as there are enough funds and we have proven we will sustain it. God must be asking—why we are being treated so? For whatsoever you do to the least of these you do to me? The [-] church committee can't just walk away and say this is the end—we want to rebuild a meeting place to honour our God and our heritage—so we can gather together and continue the mission of Christ in Australia—being witness to His love for us through caring for others Catholic and non-Catholic. We think God is asking Australia to heal from all past hurts by moving forward and putting people, not reputations and certainly, NOT FINANCES first as our current diocesan leadership does. Evidence of the financial priority can be seen in the [-] Diocesan Parish Pastoral Handbook where all decision making in Parishes is ultimately controlled by the Bishop of [-] and the Diocesan Financial Administrator. Concerns over the imbalance of power and financial priority have been expressed to the Nunciature in Canberra by more than one parish in the diocese last year. We just want our church back and only wish access to part of the funds the diocese is withholding. We believe God is asking his people in Australia to hope and so we have created a garden on the block and we hope. These three things remain - Faith Hope and Love and the greatest of these is love—we love our community and speak out on its behalf. May God bless your work. [-] Thank you for the opportunity to contribute. The [-] Committee

To stay strong and have faith in God in times of trial and challenge.

[-] The ongoing formation of people, especially our young people, needs to be seriously looked at—How they are guided by the Spirit to live more fully our Catholic / Christian way in their everyday. I suggest that our church revives / updates and encourages people to use the Cardijn “See, Judge, Act” process, or similar, to help them live their Christian / Catholic mission in their home / work everyday life situations. And to try to get bishops / priests / parish leaders see that recognising, supporting, encouraging and forming people for this, should be a main thrust of what they do.

[-] That couples living with love and commitment their sacrament of marriage be given their rightful place in the Plenary Council and in a Synodal Church. It was good that a number (14 I think) of married couples were allocated time to give input to the Synod on Marriage and Family in Rome in 2015. I don't think they were given a deliberative vote which is unfortunate! I hope sacramental couples will be given rightful place at the Plenary Council. If canon law doesn't allow for this surely Pope Francis would allow the law to be changed. Superiors of religious orders are part of the plenary council. Why can't national leaders, at least, of movements such as Marriage Encounter be included also? In a truly synodal church sacramental couples should be a vital part of things such as marriage preparation, ongoing support for marriage and family, ministry for the newly-weds, formation for the living of family life etc. It is good that trained counsellors help with these matters. But they should be supported by married couples or work with them. Alternatively, sacramental married couples could give the main input and be guided / supported by professionals. If this were the direction taken by bishops and diocesan leaders, priests and parish

leaders, our Church in Australia could move towards what Pope Francis strongly urges in *Amoris Laetitia* There is a whole chapter on the Pastoral Care of Families (Ch.6). Para 202 states that: "The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the Parish." Providing ongoing support for marriages / families—especially for the newly marrieds, marriage preparation, pastoral care for those in troubled marriages—Including those in complex situations (para 247). Support for single parent families.

To return to the true faith & to the pursuit of holiness.

I think God is very happy with most people who are struggling to be Church in the current situation in the Church. I think God is very disappointed with the leadership who have not listened and who have promoted clericalism. God has so much to offer those struggling in the world and we as Church have been navel gazing and ignoring the hardship out there. I think God wants his people in Australia to be empowered, all His people of all religions. Our Church has the potential to do this if it allows God to wake it up. Jesus said "change your way of thinking, have a paradigm shift in thinking and believe that the kingdom of God is here". The Bishops need to get an understanding of this and try it themselves and then teach others. Bishop [-] said that Christianity has the answer to all the world's woes, I believe this and I expect that with real evangelisation the Church could change the world. The scripture that comes to mind is "If My people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, seek My face, turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sins and heal their land, if My people will humble themselves and pray". God is asking the Church in Australia to trust Him, let go of fear (introduced in the mass translation) and preach his love. Let people know that God loves them, he even likes them. The Church needs to change its tone and the dictatorial image it portrays.

'God', the universe, whatever people believe in, want Australian people to be loving, caring, positive, honest, transparent and inclusive. People in authority to lead by example, provide reason, evidence and balanced argument around "recommendations" for how people best live their lives.

We must reform the Church; in particular, the power structures of the Church. The laity must be empowered, women must be empowered, and clericalism replaced with a genuine spirit of service. The process of appointing Bishops must be completely changed. They should be nominated and selected by the community they are to serve, not secretly appointed by the Church hierarchy. They should be appointed to terms of 5 years; after which their performance is reviewed and they can either be reappointed or replaced. Women should immediately be welcomed into the Order of Deacons as full and equal Ministers. The Order of Priesthood should be opened to married men and married women.

I believe God is asking us to truly encounter Jesus, present in the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of the Christian life. Every effort should be made to celebrate this sacrament with the utmost of solemnity. All of our best efforts should be given to making the holy sacrifice of the Mass truly feel like heaven on earth. As part of this, the faithful should be invited to rediscover the life changing power of the sacrament of confession. I believe that God is calling us to goodness, truth and beauty, to be a beacon to a world that has lost its sense of the sacred. Please, dear Bishops, do not be afraid to boldly proclaim the truth in love and to call all Christians to

conversion of life. Please give us beautiful and transcendent liturgy and promote music that contributes to this aim. Please support young parents, whose task it is to raise the next generation of Catholics. Please help us to make our local parishes the centre of a community life that doesn't only exist on a Sunday morning but throughout the week, as the faithful are called to join in the rhythm of the liturgical year through feast days, penitential seasons, Marian processions, adoration and benediction, outreach to the poor and marginalised and groups to support men, women and children in deepening and living their faith. Help us to know and be proud of our Catholic heritage.

The Church needs to reform. The bishops have failed and the laity needs to have a much greater input into the running of the Church. Bishops and priests should have to report to the laity on their activities on a regular basis.

I believe that God is asking the Church in Australia and all round the world to evangelise the culture. We need to show the world the beauty, goodness and truth in our Church and show them that we are a place of light in a world of darkness. We need to be brave, enthusiastic and courageous. The devil's plan and modus operandi is to 'divide and conquer' so we must stick together and encourage one another. We must teach our children that they don't need to fit in, they can stand out instead! That is being true to you yourself and forging your own path instead of following the crowd. Religion is 'cool'! We need to equip our priests with all the skills they need to conduct themselves in the world—as well as their theological and philosophical studies, they need training in preaching, management, communication, emotional intelligence and psychology. They need more social support from their bishops (especially in [-] WA) and from their parishioners. We also need to pray more for one another and to pray for healing for the Church.

Human connection and kindness. This world seems overwhelmingly full of greed and poverty, dehumanisation, use and abuse, judgement and corruption. I think God asks us to act in his name with love and acceptance.

To be Christ's hands and feet in our daily life e.g. caring, responding to a need, listening without judgement and supporting others in our community regardless of belief. To remove the elements of clerical confinements that are oppressive. E.g. some priests promote pre-Vatican II ideology that is not fruitful in the community in which we live. Inclusiveness of our brothers and sisters from different denominations. Trust ourselves because God trusts us. Religion in its institutional form often neglects the living presence of Christ.

I am a Catholic male who has returned to the Church after an absence of about 35 years, I have a child who was abused by a family member 45 years ago. It took almost 35 years for me to find out what and when it happened. What I can tell you is that my child will never forget or forgive and is still having breakdowns at the age of 52. None of my children will ever return to the Church as they do not see it relevant today. I feel that with the Royal Commission into child abuse has changed forever the way the Catholic Church will be viewed. If this continues as they are now, there will be no Church at all and that will be very sad. I am involved in the Church as a Reader, Commentator and Eucharistic Minister and enjoy what I do. I firmly believe that the Church has to rethink where it is today. It will have to consider allowing priests to have the choice to marry or not, otherwise we will lose them, at present, we have a lot of priests from second world countries,

this is okay for a stop gap, but it is not fair on them as in most cases they suffer from homesickness as would anyone. The other thing that needs to change is the method of reconciliation. Most elderly adults find it hard to talk to a much younger Asian priest who has no real understanding of how a family works and the trials that happen as a family. Their life is totally different. When I came back to the Church I found my priest very helpful in helping me to reconnect with my faith. He is Australian who had been a schoolteacher and principal before becoming a priest. One-on-one reconciliation is out of fashion with at least 90% percent of the parishioners. At Christmas there would only be about 10% now go to confession at all. My wife and I went to a nearby Catholic Church where the priest (Australian) who had served in the Australian Armed forces offered a much more relative and more fulfilling service to what he called a mix of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Rite. I have been to a number of different types, none one-to-one reconciliation, all were well patronized by the parishioners. During the service there was offered the one-to-one reconciliation as well as the group reconciliation. Only one out of about 80 parishioners used the old method, all our Deacons, Acolytes and Nuns other parishioners went up for the "2nd Rite". We had all examined our hearts and Minds, and asked God to forgive us our sins, before going up to the Priest for absolution, being fully aware in that if we were intent not to sin again, or absolution as usual would not be given by our Lord. The Church needs to offer women a much bigger role in the Church. How we get our children back to our Faith, I think that we have little chance. Most young adults today use the internet much more than us older adults, so they are fully aware long before us, who and what our priests, bishops and Cardinal Pell have done to our children. They will never forgive or forget. It is no good saying "I'm Sorry" and still denying assistance. May God Bless All.

1. Listen with an open heart 2. Be kind and be neighbourly and do what is needed 3. Look after our planet.



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. Is it possible for Catholicism to have female priests?
2. Why is there no unity in our Church?
3. Why do we need so many leaders in the Church?
4. Why are there so many secrets?
5. Why is the Church obsessed with financial investments and gains?
6. Can we provide more hands-on support for our young foreign priests to actively engage in the Australian Catholic community, particularly in terms of their adjustment to our largely secular culture?
7. Can we give [foreign priests] more practical strategies (perhaps even a parish-level facilitator) to quickly and effectively link them into the community?
8. How can we bring new theological understanding into the everyday activity and conversations of the Catholic Church here in Australia?
9. How can we encourage and support an intellectual search for answers to difficult
10. questions, and the continued faith journey of freethinking adults who have outgrown the anthropomorphic God of their childhood and subsequently lost direction?
11. How might a new concept of Church look in Australia?
12. Is church the answer—perhaps it used to be, but if Australians are not going to church, what other methods can the Catholic Church employ to help spread the word?
13. Why cant we as a diocese select our own bishop and have a limited tenure?
14. Are we going to become more inclusive of people of different nominations, sexual orientation, gender equality and race?
15. How are we going to become more relevant within our society?
16. Can we make what we do more relevant to the outside world and to what is happening in people's lives?
17. Will the Catholic Church consider married people to serve as our priests?
18. Why are there so many men that are making decisions on the future of the Catholic Church and will this practice continue in the future?
19. Will the Catholic Church consider women as priests and hierarchy of the Church?
20. Will the Plenary Council review some of the biblical interpretations that can be supported with science: e.g. are all the miracles really miracles?
21. Will the Plenary Council make decisions that enable our clergy to be our faith leader?
22. Can the Catholic Church sustain an attitude of finances first?

23. Can the Church shift diocesan priorities to inclusion of all people in its ministry? (Not just Catholics)
24. What can the Church do to prove it is an agency of justice when its leadership currently treats its members with injustice?
25. How can we as Church make sure that synodality takes hold?
26. What steps and procedures can be adopted to eliminate clericalism as it is supported by both clergy and lay?
27. How can we develop liturgy that has meaning for people in today's world?
28. Where are women in Church leadership?
29. Do you honestly believe the Church would be in the situation it finds itself around child sexual abuse if women were leading the Church and administering as priests?
30. How can the Church in Australia support families to live the Catholic faith and transmit it to their children?
31. How can the Church support young people in the secular environment of university to develop an adult faith?
32. How can catechesis be strengthened, both at a parish and school level?
33. How can the sacrament of confession be re-established as an integral part of parish life and be made more easily accessible to all the faithful, especially to families?
34. The sustainability of vocations—where will our priests come from?
35. Does excluding people or judging people align with God's messages?



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 45 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.

Recently our community was affected by a natural disaster. ([-] Bush Fires). The Church mainly the Bishop showed very little support or compassion. All I witnessed was the bishop/ diocese receive the insurance money from the burnt church in [-] and within days purchase land outside of [-] rather than rebuild the church or help people. I am familiar with this purchased property and know it was an unnecessary and poor investment. The Bishop will claim that the new property is needed for the future as it is adjacent to a new Catholic College, but what he fails to realize is that if he continues to ignore the needs of the people today there will be no future. My belief in my faith is strong but my belief in the Church and the way they do things has me questioning its purpose.

I have lived in Australia since 1981. We must always look for the good and be aware of the evil. Stay in the moment. "I am not in the past or in the future I am in the now."

I was raised Catholic in Australia, post-Vatican II. My mother was a devout, cultural Catholic—born into the Eurasian community in Singapore, the Catholic faith was part of her cultural heritage, and therefore was not something to be questioned. My father was an RCIA Catholic. He was baptised when they got engaged, and although we attended Mass every Sunday as a family, he never spoke about his faith. But I understood him to be a truth seeker—despite having no high school education, he was always reading or watching documentaries on Jewish history and the historical aspects of the bible, especially the Old Testament. I went to Catholic primary school and Catholic high school, attending church every Sunday with my family until not far into my university degree, when I moved out of home. I still had a strong faith—I even joined an Antioch group, but it wasn't what I needed. By this stage, I knew that many of my beliefs no longer matched those pronounced by the Catholic Church as an institution, although I still considered myself a Christian—I understood God as a spiritual presence in my life, for certain. Everything else was questionable, and no one appeared to have any answers. I stopped attending Mass, but continued to tick 'Catholic' on the census. I had left the church—the physical one with the buildings and rituals and doctrines—but I had not left my faith. I married an agnostic in an Anglican Church, but I baptised my children Catholic and sent them to Catholic school. Working in a Catholic school, I enjoyed the accreditation courses because they were more in tune with how I saw my faith than anything I experienced during Mass. I began to see the Bible in a different light, and was surprised and more than a little disappointed that I never got the chance in my university years to explore the bible in

this way. Then about five years ago, after reading Fifty Shades of Grey and wondering why so many people attacked this book without reading more than a few snippets, I responded to a spiritual challenge to read the Bible—all of it, from cover to cover. By the time I had completed Genesis, I knew this would change my life. Because what I had once understood about the bible stories was nothing like what I was reading! I finished it, and realised that interpreting the bible had nothing to do with the words—not the ones you read or the ones you write in response. It has nothing to do with historical facts or evidence, either. It has to do with connecting with the subjective human experiences that are expressed. I realised that it doesn't matter whether Moses actually parted the Red Sea, whether the resurrection actually happened, or even whether Jesus was a real historical person—what matters is how we connect with these human accounts of spiritual experience. That is how we understand God—through the universal interconnectedness of life, past, present and future. And Jesus is the best example we have of how to achieve this.

I do not believe the Church is necessary to live God's word. In fact I know many church-going people who are not, in my opinion, good people living like Jesus. Priests have not always been good people and the Church has been burnt by this. It has forced Catholics to reconsider and get back to the heart of what it means to live God's mission. Let's not overthink it. But we must be creative.

I was brought up by a mother who was a convert and questioned everything and I picked up on that. My Father was a church leader in a large country parish and was a very dedicated Catholic. Two of my sisters joined the convent and are very active as spiritual directors, parish assistants and a missionary in a foreign country. I attended seminary for 2 years in my youth and I had many questions which I wanted answered. I had my questions answered and discovered that there is generally a reasoned intelligent answer for most questions about the Church. I was a member of the YCW and spent several years using the See-Judge-Act method for spiritual development and Christian action. Again as a member of a Catholic Family Group we used the same method for decision making in light of the scriptures. I mixed with members of other denominations and learned what they taught and what (in my arrogance) was wrong with their teaching. I knew the teachings of the Church better than most and was able defend Church teaching. In the 1960's I came to realise that all of these other churches had a lot to offer me in my knowledge of God and spiritual growth. When I was introduced to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal God came into my life in abundance and continually persuades me into more commitment. My 2 religious sisters have always been a source of religious guidance, theological thought and a sounding board for my wife and my thoughts and ideas. We have had a child with eye cancer and a son who died at 21 plus many other trials in our lives which draw us closer to God because of the support he provides. God continues to enlighten me and I have been eager for a synod for 20 years or more. I have high expectations of the Holy Spirit at the Council and hope for renewal of the church in Australia to continue the renewal begun by Vatican II and slowed to a crawl since the 80's.

It concerns my wife and me as a Catholic couple, that none of our four baptised children, all products of the Catholic education system, and now our 11 baptised grandchildren, attend Mass irregularly, if at all. Moreover, at least one of the latter, after 12 years of Catholic schooling, on reaching adulthood doesn't see anything wrong in engaging in fornication. Our dilemma is that all state their religion as Catholic.

Positive memories of school Masses involving children that incorporated liturgical dance, music, song and inclusive of everyone. On the other hand, many people who attend Mass but are not Catholic often feel excluded, particularly at Holy Communion when they cannot receive the host. Catholics are allowed to receive at other churches such as Anglican churches, perhaps this is something that could be discussed.

Yes, my story goes back to the time my parents became converts and lived their Catholic life through their church attendance and raising 7 wonderful children. Not eating meat as a compulsory rule before going to Holy Communion, the constant rules and regulations of the Church about birth control and other debilitating rules that were not conducive to a happy lifestyle; so much so they feared God. My dad went to his grave with that feeling. What a travesty, to fear a loving God because of all the so-called demands of their Church. This affected me because when I went to Rome and saw the Vatican City with its pomp and ceremony the Sistine Chapel with its amazing colours, St Peter's Basilica with little reference to Jesus, only the pomp and ceremony of the Popes and the Church's insane wealth, it actually reminded me of the heartbreak I saw in my parent's eyes when they could not make ends meet. My faith was shattered to the core when I saw this and could not reconcile myself to the God of love and the greed and wealth of man. I was broken. A few years later I was fortunate enough to go to Ireland on a Pilgrimage to Dublin when I was working for MercyCare where I saw and experienced the origins of Catherine McAuley and the Mercy Sisters and the way they looked after the poor and disadvantaged. Something in my inner self made me realise that this is what the Catholic Church is all about, not the audacious pomp and glory exhibited in Rome. In recent years I discovered many of my teachers at [-] in South Australia and [-] were either named, jailed or shamed in the Commission for their paedophile activities as well as some of the priests I knew from the [-] diocese also being jailed. And then ultimately learn that our Cardinal was found guilty of the same activities, yet all this time very little condemnation was forthcoming by our leaders in our Church (all of which are men). As a final point in my story, these comments are underpinned by the fact that I went to the [-] monastery in [-] from 1970-1976. I left the monastery because I found the woman of my life. We have been married for nearly 42 years, had 6 children and have 8 grandchildren. The heartbreaking thing for me is that in all these years I did not know all the carry-on behind the scenes and the disappointment in the Church for not standing up for the innocent, rather spending the Church's money in defending the indefensible with the Church's wealth rather than on the children. I have little if any faith in the institution of the Church and look to the plenary council to provide some answers and hope for our grandchildren to be able to mend the Catholic Church in Australia and to provide the framework to enable Catholics to live their faith in a very consumeristic environment without fear.

My personal experience of faith has largely been based on my interaction with the many good priests and religious and laity and my personal acceptance of the teaching of Christ as portrayed in the Gospels.

I have been blessed by joining the community of the sons and daughters of God which has truly enriched my faith and desire to live in the presence of the Lord at all times.

Sexual abuse has challenged my faith. Whilst we can theologise about it in attempt to forgive and move on, it is a constant reality. Child safety is paramount but we now have Code of Conduct,

Protective Behaviours and Mandatory Reporting training. All of these are important but there are so many compliance measures on schools. We have the abuse media, a former Priest who has received numerous allegations and a recent teacher jailed for sexual behaviours. Thankfully I spend my time with a range of wonderful children. I therefore value this process as long as they are at the centre of subsequent action.

Our experience collectively in the past three years—being treated with contempt—and left feeling money is more important than people—has meant we have all questioned our faith. We have faith in Jesus but not in the Catholic Church. We are currently trying our best to help be the light of Christ in our little community when it is healing from the fires—trying to maintain community and show love for others—asking for support and understanding while being embarrassed to say our own Church won't give us our own money back. This is a difficult time in Australia now when admitting you are a Catholic brings ridicule—however [-] is an inclusive community that historically has not discriminated in the past who they help or include and Catholics are an important part of the fabric of the town. The reputations of Catholics is in our hands and our good works in the community and the way we try to live by the Gospel values means Catholics are respected in [-] however it is well known that we are being mistreated by our own Church. We still have faith and have stuck to trying to keep our religion but it has not been made easy by Church leadership. We have kept ownership of our religion however and why should we leave our faith—it is ours and they need to be held accountable and get out not us! Our experience is continually shaping us—we are blessed God is at the centre and we trust in him alone. Please see our attachment for our AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC STORY.

I feel that low attendance at weekly Mass is dependent on the priest in each parish i.e. if the homilies reach people / are relevant to their lives then attendance will increase. The choice of music is important too.

My story connected with this: Involvement in earlier years with Young Christian Workers; and then later realising that so many of the people who promoted good, just, things in our communities had been formed by Y.C.W. and other movements using the see judge act process. It was and is a method of prayerful discernment that people can easily understand and practise. Christian Life Groups and Christian Family Groups adapted the see judge and act process as a basis for their faith / life sharing meetings I have been involved for about 40 years in Marriage Encounter—in its early days in W.A. many who took part in the weekend and then became leaders had been formed by Y.C.W. I could give other examples of how those formed by Y.C.W. have been leaders in parish and community. Archbishop [-] had been Y.C.W. chaplain for many years in S.A. He established a “prophetic” form of pastoral leadership in Adelaide in the ‘80’s—This could be a model used to work towards dioceses and parishes being synodal in their decision making and leadership. In [-]Diocese most energy seems to be put on maintaining the inner workings of our parishes—forming ministers for liturgical and other ministries, parish councils etc. Little or nothing is being done to encourage people in their homes and community and work places to read the ‘Signs of the Times’ and see the value of what they do in their every day in helping promote God’s Kingdom. I googled ‘Signs of the Times’ and was pleased to be linked to the See, Judge and Act program explained very well from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Commission. Pope John XXIII in Mater et Magistra, picked up Pius XII’s expression the ‘signs of the times’ and used the

phrase to call the Church to renewal in its own life and in its involvement in the world by 'reading the signs of the times'. In his writings he himself set about reading the hopeful and concerning signs of his time. In *Mater et Magistra* he affirms the process of See, Judge, Act as a way of reading and responding to the signs of the time.

My story associated with the submission: I have been involved for over forty years with Marriage Encounter. Was national priest leader for 3 years and am now part of M.E. Western Unit Leadership with a Married Couple. Just yesterday I was part of a rich, prayerful transmission of leadership. The retiring couple and I handed over to the recently discerned leader couple. It was a bit like an 8 hour retreat. I was heartened and amazed at the depth of their marriage / family spirituality. Their involvement with Marriage Encounter in receiving and giving formations and presenting on regular weekends, supported by like-minded loving couples, has greatly enriched their relationships. During the day they gave witness in everyday language of the depth of their love and that they were looking forward to continuing to grow in the unity and intimacy of their relationship. Our Church leaders don't seem to be aware of the treasure we as the body of Christ have in our sacramental married couples. They must surely find their rightful place in a Church that is aiming to be synodal! Archbishop [-] kindly attended the social dinner of the Annual National Conference of Marriage Encounter last year at [-]. 5 couples representing M.E Units in the Australian States gave moving witness in a few words of the treasure they have in husband or wife; and how Marriage Encounter had helped them greatly enrich their relationship. I shared a little how I had been able to grow in "Emotional Intelligence" and my ability to share intimately and be supported by married couples. The Archbishop was moved by the sharings and has been more supportive of our movement since. My hope and prayer is that our priests and parish leaders and our bishops recognise the value we have as Church in our sacramental married couples. That they will be able to do so much more for marriage and families by recognising that many married couples, especially after going through enrichment and formation are called to do more for other marriages and families. To entrust them / empower them to be involved in this sort of ministry; and to work with them.

Though a near daily communicant, by my mid 40s I had lost the true faith and unwittingly taken on 'new age' philosophy through intensive and I thought complementary eastern meditation practice over almost 2 decades. I then experienced a profound Marian conversion while visiting Australia (though born and raised in Australia, I've lived and worked overseas most of the last 50 years). I am deeply consecrated to Christ through His mother and practice various devotions, principally engaging in MMP cenacles alone or with others, but always seeking to remain within Mary's Immaculate Heart. As Mary Help of Christians, I have found she has the certain means to draw down whatever graces are needed for the community (e.g., rain; fire relief) if called upon through prayer and fasting novenas specifically targeted on a cause and made known as widely as possible in inviting others to join. I and others have done this several times here in Western Australia and she has never let us down. My conclusion is that God wants now, more than ever before, to honour Mary and instil faith through her mediation of grace for humanity at a time of peril for the world and for the Church. Mary Help of Christians pray for us!

I was involved with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal during 70's, 80's and 90's. We received very good teaching on all aspects of spiritual, religious and secular life. People's gifts for service were gradually identified and they were encouraged to practice and nurture their gifts. I believe that the same principle applies to the whole Church. The Church is full of people whose gifts are dormant because of fear that the bishop or priests will be overshadowed or things will get out of control unless there is strict control. The Holy Spirit is being controlled and not able to renew the Church and serve the world with this attitude. I have seen people come alive and discover that God really does love them.

I was born into and brought up Catholic. I no longer practice as a Catholic and have been disillusioned for my adult life. I hope there is a higher entity and an afterlife. I do find myself praying at times. My experience of the Church was one of rules and regulations that were set down and preached about often in the form of threats rather than reason. My parents tried to correlate Church teachings with life but the Church's teachings in the 60's were guilt laden, causing fear and anxiety. Bishops ranted from the pulpit, priests and nuns backed up the threats on a daily basis. There were some younger, kinder nuns, brothers and priests but most of these people left the religious life eventually. On occasion when I have attended Mass with my mother I have found it fairly irrelevant to the modern world. I work in Mental Health (Public) and work with many marginalised, vulnerable people who manage as best they can with [the] hand they have been dealt. I don't see the Church represented in any meaningful way in our area. I suffered from OCD for many years age 11 -35yrs which had a mainly religious theme.

My grandparents and parents had an enormous role in shaping my faith. I appreciate their dedication and unreserved love, their patient acceptance and generous encouragement. I was fortunate to know many good priests and nuns who had similar qualities. I have been a teacher in Catholic secondary schools for 25 years, and have attached a letter outlining my concerns with what I perceive to be the most serious current problem in inspiring future generations to continue developing their faith.

All of my schooling was completed at Catholic institutions but I left school with no real notion of what the faith was about or the significance of Jesus' death on the cross. It was only when I went to university that I encountered other young Catholics from strong Catholic families who helped me to realise what authentic faith looked like. We met through the campus Catholic society and this association, as well as the campus ministry programme, were essential to my faith progressing from that of a child to that of an adult. Please prioritise strong, authentic and joyful university ministry programmes, that will not only support young Catholics in the very secular university environment but will also help to fill in the often significant gaps in their catechesis. As a young wife and mother I have now found a home in the Latin Mass chaplaincy, to which my family and I travel a significant distance, and attend as often as we can. This is because we feel that this chaplaincy truly supports our efforts to raise our children in the faith and gives us a way to live this faith every day, not just for a few hours on a Sunday. It is a true community of faith and fellowship where we feel challenged to always strive towards holiness and encouraged not to settle for mediocrity. We appreciate the beauty and solemnity of the liturgy and music and feel that the importance placed on living the feasts and fasts of the liturgical year gives our family life a rhythm that keeps us grounded amidst the business of modern life.

I [was] educated in Catholic schools and I was a seminarian for 4 years. So I have some inside knowledge. Both my younger brothers were abused by the Christian brothers. I joined the Army and was in the army for 25 years. After the Catholic education system the Army was easy. I am a practising Catholic in spite of the bishops. A sign outside the Royal Commission read Jesus Christ must be weeping. That says it all.

I have many small, positive experiences with my faith. I am so very grateful to have God in my life. I feel slightly disheartened at the moment though. I do feel the Church has lost its way in being representatives of God's word.

As a group we are (cradle) Catholics with a strong faith base and love of God and a floundering confidence in the institution that is the present Catholic Church. We want the Church to move forward still upholding the high moral values against abortion, euthanasia, homosexual marriage, but seek to see the Church open its eyes to the needs around us i.e. abolish the "clericalism" and 'boys' club' attitude of some clergy that cause division and lack of inclusiveness. In fact they promote an exclusiveness that is highly inappropriate considering the versatility of the mix of people in their care. Our personal experience has seen the baptism of 4 beautiful babies by a paedophile priest while a former priest (because he married) in the community is deemed unworthy of his priesthood but had been a major contributor to the day to day care of the parish community.

An experience of one member was that she had chemo as a child and was told that she could not have children and she believes that the power of prayer resulted in two beautiful children.

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.



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