



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

# Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

**A Report to the Diocese of Darwin**

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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

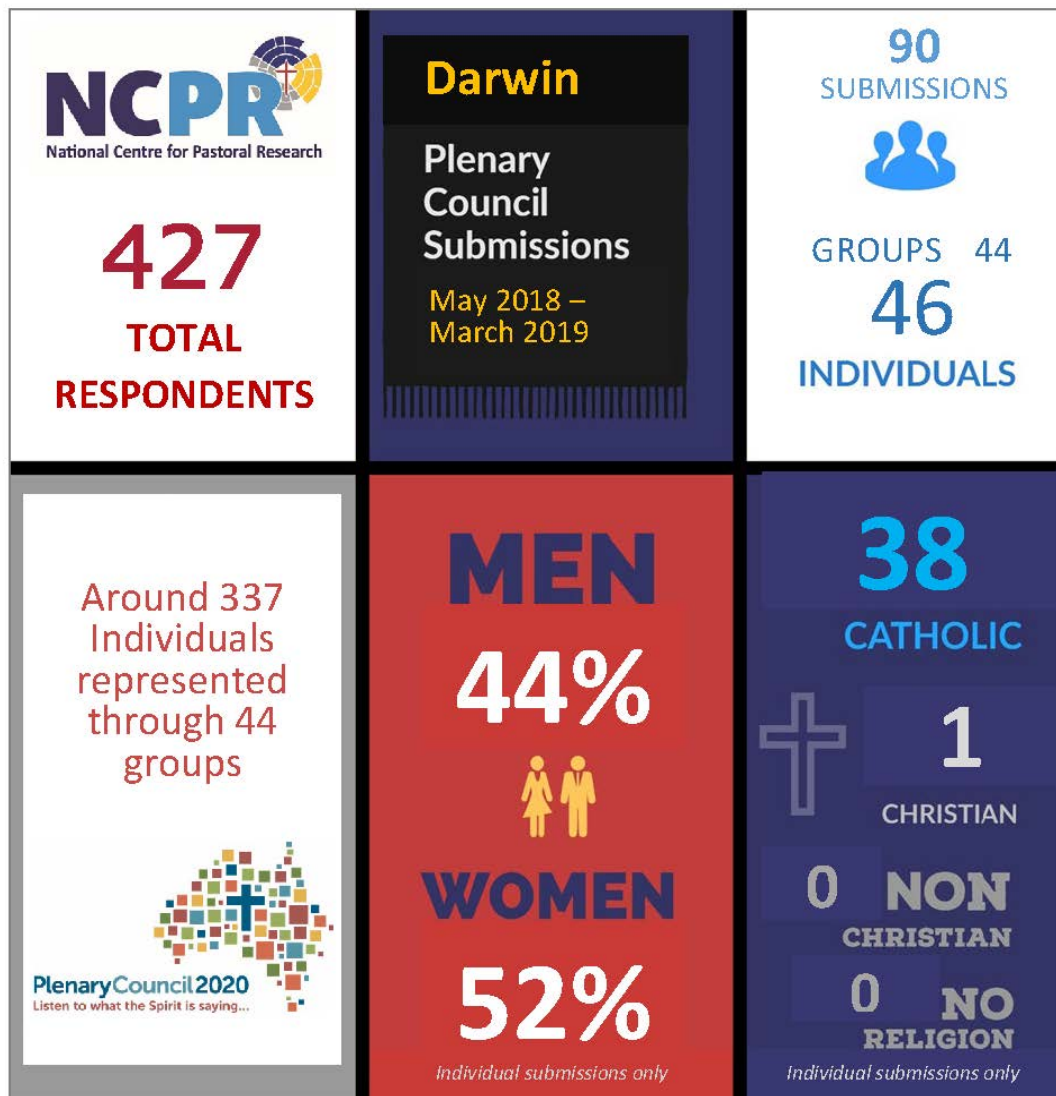
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## Diocesan Submissions Summary Snapshot: May 2018—March 2019



## 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 - Darwin

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 Darwin, we received a total of 90 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 66 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another two were unsure if they had. About 22 respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 90 submissions, 44 submissions were from groups or organisations and 46 submissions were from individuals. There were 337 people represented through the 44 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 427.

| <b>Table 1: Number of Submissions</b>                      |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Total number of submissions received</b>                | <b>90</b> |
| <b>Participated in Listening &amp; Dialogue Encounter?</b> |           |
| Yes  | 66        |
| No   | 22        |
| Not sure   | 2         |
| Not stated   | 0         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>90</b> |
| Submissions received from groups or organisations          | 44        |
| Submissions received from individuals                      | 46        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>90</b> |

## INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 46 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 Darwin. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 59 per cent (27) 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 (7 responses).

At the close of submissions, there were two 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 no individual submissions made from the 16-19 years age group in your diocese.

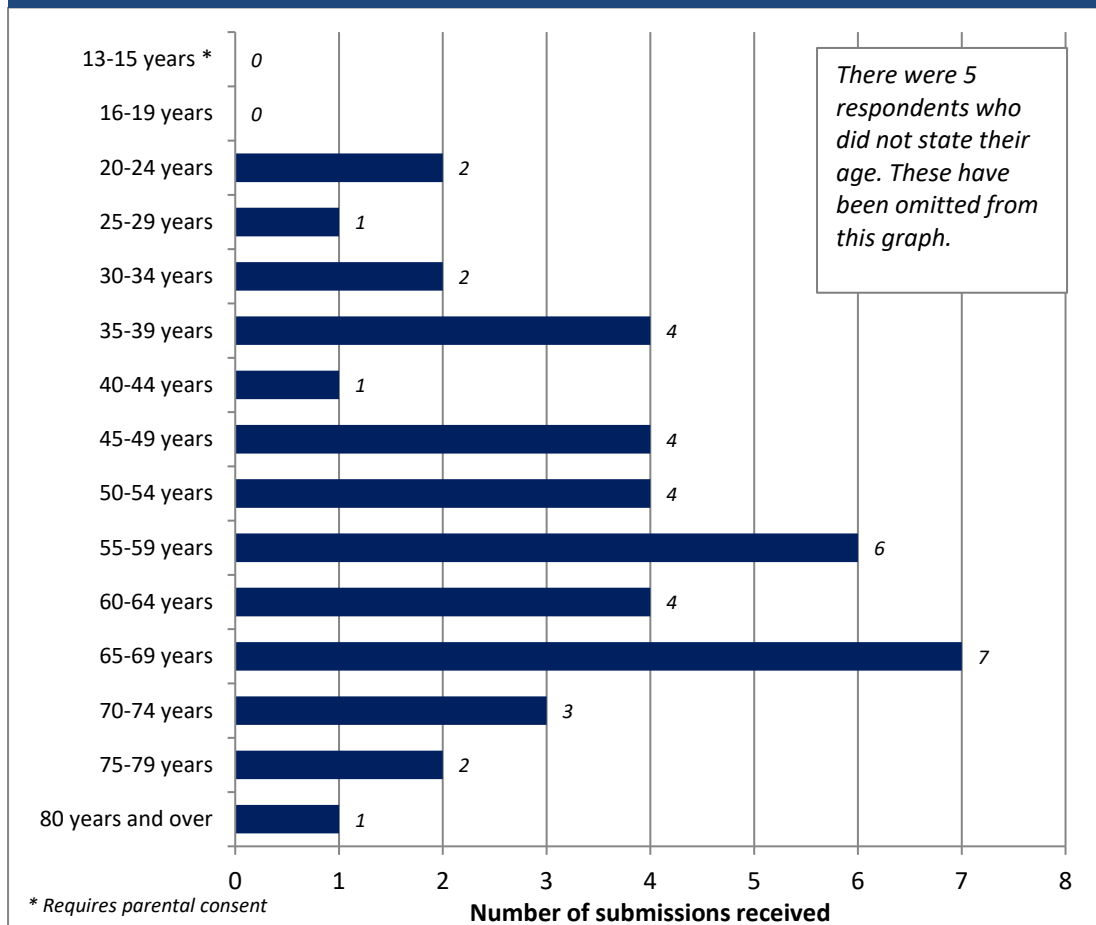
Participants aged 13-15 years were prompted to provide their parent or guardian's email address. An email was then automatically sent to seek consent for their child to participate in the study. There were no individual submissions made from this age group in your diocese.

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

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| 13-15 years *     | 0         |
| 16-19 years       | 0         |
| 20-24 years       | 2         |
| 25-29 years       | 1         |
| 30-34 years       | 2         |
| 35-39 years       | 4         |
| 40-44 years       | 1         |
| 45-49 years       | 4         |
| 50-54 years       | 4         |
| 55-59 years       | 6         |
| 60-64 years       | 4         |
| 65-69 years       | 7         |
| 70-74 years       | 3         |
| 75-79 years       | 2         |
| 80 years and over | 1         |
| Not stated        | 5         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>46</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 (52%), while a further 44 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 20 men and 24 women who made submissions. Two respondents did not answer this question.

**Table 3: Sex (individual responses only)**

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Female            | 24        |
| Male              | 20        |
| Prefer not to say | 0         |
| Not stated        | 2         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>46</b> |

## Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (63%) were born in Australia. Just under 22 per cent came from other countries, while around 15 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<br/>(individual responses only)</b> |           |              |
|---|-----------|--------------|
|   | <b>N</b>  | <b>%</b>     |
| Australia   | 29        | 63.0         |
| Fiji  | 2         | 4.3          |
| Other Countries   | 8         | 17.4         |
| Not stated  | 7         | 15.2         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>46</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

| <b>Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary<br/>(individual responses only)</b> |           |              |
|---|-----------|--------------|
|   | <b>N</b>  | <b>%</b>     |
| Australia   | 29        | 63.0         |
| Other English speaking country  | 4         | 8.7          |
| Non-English speaking country  | 6         | 13.0         |
| Not stated  | 7         | 15.2         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>46</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

| <b>Table 4c: Mother's country of birth<br/>(individual responses only)</b> |           |              |
|--|-----------|--------------|
|  | <b>N</b>  | <b>%</b>     |
| Australia  | 25        | 54.3         |
| Other English speaking country   | 2         | 4.3          |
| Non-English speaking country   | 9         | 19.6         |
| Not stated   | 10        | 21.7         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>46</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

| <b>Table 4d: Father's country of birth<br/>(individual responses only)</b> |           |              |
|--|-----------|--------------|
|  | <b>N</b>  | <b>%</b>     |
| Australia  | 21        | 45.7         |
| Other English speaking country   | 4         | 8.7          |
| Non-English speaking country   | 11        | 23.9         |
| Not stated   | 10        | 21.7         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>46</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 two individuals who identified themselves in this way, representing just over four per cent of all individual respondents.

| <b>Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander<br/>(individual responses only)</b> |           |
|--|-----------|
| Yes  | 2         |
| No   | 39        |
| Not stated   | 5         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>46</b> |

## Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 46 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 38 respondents (83%) were Catholic. One respondent was from another Christian denomination while there were none from non-Christian religions. A further seven respondents did not state their religion and no respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

| <b>Table 6: Religion (individual responses only)</b> |  | <b>Person</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|--|---------------|----------------|
| Catholic   |  | 38            | 82.6           |
| <b>Other Christian:</b>                              |  |               |                |
| Other Christian                                      |  | 1             | 2.2            |
| <b>Non Christian:</b>                                |  |               |                |
| Other religion                                       |  | 0             | 0.0            |
| No religion  |  | 0             | 0.0            |
| Not stated   |  | 7             | 15.2           |
| <b>Total</b>   |  | <b>46</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 30 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were five 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.

| <b>Table 7: Religious description</b><br>(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                               | 17            | 13          | 0                 |  | 30           |
| I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes                                      | 2             | 3           | 0                 |  | 5            |
| 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            |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>21</b>     | <b>17</b>   | <b>0</b>          |  | <b>38</b>    |

## GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of 44 group submissions made from your diocese. Around 337 individuals were represented through these groups.

All 44 group submissions provided a group name. 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*. 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 Catholic Church Santa Teresa with around 50 members. There were also a number of other parish and school groups such as the Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School and Parish group with 22 participants and Katherine Parish with 20 members. There were seven other groups with eight members or more.

| Table 8 : Group submissions from the diocese         |            |
|--|------------|
| Name of group  | Group size |
| Catholic Church Santa Teresa                         | 50         |
| Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School and Parish group | 22         |
| Katherine Parish                                     | 20         |
| St Josephs Catholic College, Katherine, NT           | 19         |
| Catholic Education - Diocese of Darwin               | 11         |
| Catholic Schools on Tiwi Islands                     | 9          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 8          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 8          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 8          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 8          |
| Xavier Catholic College                              | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| Xavier Catholic College                              | 6          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 6          |
| SVDPNT Holy Spirit Conference                        | 6          |

## 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 30-49 years age group was the largest group represented with 104 members. This was followed by the group aged 50-69 with 94 members. There was no age provided for around 25 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  | 5          |
| 20 - 29 years   | 29         |
| 30 - 49 years   | 104        |
| 50 - 69 years   | 94         |
| 70 and over   | 28         |
| Unknown   | 25         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>285</b> |

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

Of the total 287 group members whose sex was reported, 64 per cent (183) were female and 36 per cent (104) 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  | 183        |
| Male  | 104        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>287</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 five topics discussed by participants from your diocese were:

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

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

- Love God, Love Neighbour (Chapter 4)
  - *Greater trust, faith and hope in God (p. 29)*
  - *Better faith formation (p. 38)*
  - *Greater focus on Jesus Christ (p. 30)*
  - *Being a witness in society (p. 34)*
  - *Remaining faithful to Church teaching (p. 32)*
  - *Care for neighbour (p. 36)*
  - *Greater focus on the Word of God (p. 31)*
- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
  - *Greater inclusion of all (p. 108)*
  - *Fighting for human rights issues (p. 110)*
  - *Ending discrimination of LGBTI (p. 110)*
- Outreach (Chapter 10)
  - *Greater connection with and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (p. 120)*
  - *Outreach to youth (p. 124)*
  - *Outreach to the wider community (p. 123)*
- Leadership and Church Governance (Chapter 7)
  - *Greater role for women (p. 83)*
  - *Greater involvement of the laity (p. 84)*
  - *New leadership and governance model (p. 91)*
  - *Greater leadership from bishops (p. 87)*



- Sacraments (Chapter 6)
  - *Greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments (p. 64)*
    - *Emphasis on: Praying the Rosary (p. 65)*
  - *Holy Orders – Ending celibacy / allowing priests to marry (p. 66)*

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

- *Listen to one another more (p. 136)*
- *More transparency and accountability regarding clergy sexual abuse (p. 102)*
- *Sharing the faith with others (p. 128)*

## 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 48 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.

God's love is asking us in Australia at this time—according to Saint Paul's Letter to the Corinthians—Chapter 12 Verses 4-13, and also to stop and see if you are a robot going through motions—no love at all. Look around you and see the suffering that is going on and pretend that is none of your help can be given... just show a little mercy and compassion... listen prayer-fully, instead of judging quickly. We need to look at how we offer our worship is it loud and empty, or should be it with love and praise, tenderly and humbly with trust in God. In our parish, how often one believes that Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament waiting for everyone to be healed and give to all that is lacking in grace and love— is also be known the Holy Tabernacle is not for decoration but it holds to us the very God who we have crucified and yet he humbly waits for everyone not only Catholics but the whole human race that is within boundary of the parish. All our reverends and Catholic priests should stop acting as if working in a corporate firm but be Jesus in washing dirty feet and working hard each day and stop complaining but be prayerful and cheerful always. Parish leaders should follow example of Jesus washing dirty feet. All parishioners work together in humility and perseverance come it may be for the parish or other needs required with cheerfulness and smile peacefully at all times. The adoration of the blessed sacrament should fill the church with all families why because it gives us faith renewal and receive blessing grace and holiness of the Jesus Christ present in our midst during adoration of the Holy Eucharist Jesus Christ. The Holy Rosary be prayed after Holy Mass is concluded slowly and prayerfully especially this time in Australia. God is calling us and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, to pray at all times with love and faith always. Our Youths and children of the parish should take pride in who they are, the parish with the support of parents and parish leaders and with many other activities outside the parish. The Angeles prayer at all parishes should be prayed and

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| everything stops when the bell is rung at the usual time according to tradition. May our concerns and prayers live with joy and trust in the love of God humbly and cheerfully.  |
| We think God is calling us to be an inclusive and welcoming Church committed to social justice and the teachings of the gospel. We are called to live out and share our faith as a community. The Church needs to acknowledge, repent and change the institutional practices that have led to child sexual abuse and cover-ups.  |
| We need to be role models for Jesus. Teaching our beliefs by example. Spread his love to everyone no matter who they are or where they come from.  |
| Take care of each other, spread Jesus' love and remember to be like what Jesus was before he went to heaven.   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To stand together in these times of debate and controversy.</li> <li>2. To have the courage to speak up about the need for change in contemporary society.</li> <li>3. To engage in dialogue with people of the Church and share experiences of faith.</li> <li>4. In the community of [ - ], for the strong women in the parish to have more leadership and encourage young people to get involved in the Church.</li> <li>5. Actively participate in the church activities—sacraments, singing, readings and prayer.</li> <li>6. To be more inclusive of people no matter difference such as cultural backgrounds, rather than pushing them away</li> <li>7. To have discussions about topics like married priests.</li> </ol> |
| God is asking us to be better role models within our community, better listeners to the people within our community and to work out ways to re-engage younger people.  |
| How can I/we share the faith in a tangible/relevant way to my/our students, peers, community and country? Not just in words but actions and deeds. How are we making the Church accessible to the young people in our community/country? How are we providing fellowship as we transition from current/older leaders to upcoming future/younger leaders? How can we acknowledge, accept and action the contemporary views of young Catholics? How do we give recognition to the Indigenous belief systems which run parallel to Catholic faith? How are we going to acknowledge and reconcile the 'sins' of the Church: sexual abuse, exclusion of women and judgement of sexual orientation?  |
| We need to find God ourselves and find where the Church and faith fits within the modern society. Once we find this, we need to come together as a Church community once again.  |
| For the Church to change. The areas that we feel change is needed in are: the role of women in the Church (allow those with gifts and knowledge to be ordained). Allow priests to marry if they wish, have more chaplains/deacons involved in schools. The Church also needs to be more inclusive of all people irrespective of faith, sexuality and culture.  |
| Love God. Love others as yourself.   |

|  |
|--|
| The same thing God has always asked of people throughout the ages. That I be your God and you are my people. Pope Francis mentions that the inter[play] of a father, a son and spirit is the centre of our faith.  |
| We are the Church and we need to always discern the level of society that we are representing. For example, Christ highlighted the imposing presence of the high priests and how they walked around in their fine robes but paid no attention to the plight of their own congregation. The Holy Spirit needs us to be alive to His presence and to act with courage, hope and fidelity. We are the Church; we cannot ask a group of people to provide us with answers if we are unwilling to shoulder some of the responsibility. We are the Church; we need to join with others and seek knowledge of our faith. We are the Church and we need to ask God to forgive us as we forgive others but we need to ACT in our faith. We need to be vulnerable in that, just as Christ gave His love to others, so too, need we. We are all brothers and sisters and the Holy Spirit wants us to each do that which we can. I can change the world just by changing the little things I do. I can love my family and do willingly those things that may appear trivial but by doing them in God's name, I can serve Him and He will provide the next thing. From little things..... |
| Education and encouragement of children and the youth. We seek genuine universal participation in the life of the Church. Priests should be allowed to be married. Child sexual abuse issue needs to be compassionately resolved so we can move on from that it has to be fair to the victims and acknowledge their suffering.   |
| God is asking us to be more accepting of different people: divorced, gender and sexuality diverse, different cultures and religions...just like Jesus was. God is asking us to care for the environment. God is asking us to be open to change and inclusion and to listen to the layperson. God is asking us to be less judgmental and to recognize that the society today in Australia is very different from the society of 40 years ago. God is asking us to contextualize Catholicism for today's society and the future generation.  |
| I think God is asking us to stay strong on our faith especially in light of the human errors that have occurred in the Church and with some clergy. To pray and be an example to those around us to show that we are followers of Christ.  |
| Encouragement of youth by listening to them; providing relevance to faith (what does it mean to me?); positive influence on youth—mentoring through individual or communal accompaniment.  |
| Engaging youth through: Liturgies - involvement in liturgies, creative (music, art, drama) - Family engagement - families involved as guides - supporters and mentors - School-Parish liaison workers (paid positions)   |
| All members of the Church are valued and reflected/embraced/included/respected. Catholic schools' roles and relevance. Engage with world today. Care of treasures. Community building. Poor Church's use of resources.   |
| Courage to care—to show concern and to act and be actively engaged. Issue of justice for all. To listen and engage. Youth—encourage active participation.  |
| Respect for the Eucharist during state services or important Masses. It grieves me to watch non-practicing Catholic politicians to have prime seating at Mass (such as our recent ordination of  |

Bishop [ - ]) and receive the Eucharist, while the regular devout faithful take secondary seating. Our politicians should be asked to sit to the side of the church where they can still be respected as dignitaries but can witness the true reverence and beauty of those who follow Christ faithfully. They should also be requested from taking communion unless they are fully in communion with the Church and its teaching. We don't need to be politically correct and accept such sacrilege, we need to respect the Eucharist for what it truly is and only encourage those who are truly following Christ to be in prime place within the Church. Yes we should welcome everyone and treat all with respect. But we should also be demanding respect for our God and his faithful by not allowing non-practicing dignitaries from coming forward to receive.

- Faith formation: The Holy Spirit has already spoken through the Second Vatican Council. What we see in Australia is that we have very little offered in terms of ecclesiastical movements in the parishes to give faith to the people. Those movements that are present are not given enough encouragement and support in the parish.
- Catechesis and what people receive within the Church is in crisis. Church is optional and only for moments of extreme emergencies. There is a clear divide between religion and life.
- We need to review how we do the mission of evangelisation within the Church.
- Community life: What the Holy Spirit says for the Church today in Australia is that we need to reinvigorate faith formation and bring back the community life where faith formation happens. Faith is not being transmitted to the younger generations and our parishes are dying. Young people are not engaged and see the Church as completely irrelevant to their lives.
- Evangelisation: Many times, the Church is failing in its primary mission to go out and evangelise because of clericalism and a legalistic mentality inside the Church. It is a duty and right given to us from our baptism to evangelise. In summary, we recommend an itinerary of faith formation be encouraged and supported in our parishes.

To light/ re-light the Easter/Pascal flame in the hearts of Australians by first being relatable to them, listening to them and guiding them back to the table of thanksgiving (Eucharist = action of thanksgiving).

I think that God is asking the Church to be strong enough to withdraw any clergy or lay person, no matter how important a personage, from an active role in the Church who is accused of wrongful behaviour. Until proven innocent.

What I think God is asking of us in Australia at this time is to bring the joy and message of the risen Christ both to the people within the Church already, as well as those that are far away from the Church, those that have left the Church and those who have never heard of Christ. The question is: how do we bring the joy and message of the risen Christ to people both near and far from the Church? For those who are close to the Church, are coming back to the Church or approaching the Church for the first time, the Plenary Council might consider an itinerary of Christian initiation. A way to ignite and develop the faith of lay people. With regards to those that are far, the mission of the Church from the beginning has been to evangelise. Perhaps the Plenary Council could consider how to allow and encourage lay people to actively participate in and collaborate with the clergy in the evangelising work of the Church.

To get our act together. To simply live as much as we can like Jesus wanted us to. To care for others. To stand with the disadvantaged. To be more joyous.

We need HONESTY, EQUALITY and TRANSPARENCY. The Catholic community has experienced shock waves after shock waves of revelations about sexual abuse committed, as well as cover-ups and self-serving secrecy by clergy and Catholic institutions against children. These revelations come to us predominantly via the Royal commission and the media. The latest shock wave relates to George Pell's conviction for child sexual abuse. I know that there is still an appeal happening, however, the impact is massive. On clergy and lay people alike. We need Church leaders who have the courage to speak up, tell the truth and take decisive action to protect survivors and restore justice. The time for cover ups, legal talk and protectionism is over. We need a change in the Church's structure. Our priests have an important role within the spiritual life of the Church to play. However, the Church needs to stop pretending that clergy are 'above' the ordinary people. Rather priests working in communities need our (common people's) moral support, especially after Pell's conviction (the highest clergy in Australia). Neither cardinals, bishops, priests, pope should be considered higher up in the face of God. ALL of us are called for service by God, just in very different ways and for different tasks and roles. Personal relationships (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, straight, etc.), celibacy, marriage for clergy etc. should all be left to the individual's choice. Any organizations that force individuals into prescribed life choices mess with people's expression of love and their freedom. Jesus himself most surely was a married man as was the custom of Jewish culture. The idea of celibacy was an addition that came about much later in history. Jesus never condemned, for example, homosexuality either. We need equality for men and women in the Church. If a woman experiences a calling to the priesthood, why should she be denied to fulfil this? We need to allow lay people to get more involved in the spirituality of the Church. E.g. participate in the homily. Rather than be mute consumers of what is being handed out by the Church. Today as people have access to education, they have the ability to think for themselves. They have access to many schools of philosophical and spiritual thinking. For example, I attend the Catholic Church for a whole variety of reasons, certainly not because I am a believer in its dogma. In fact, I have a whole range of beliefs and ideas that are very different to the Church's dogma. The main thing is that I share the Church's core values of social justice and compassion. We need an open conversation about sexuality. For example, change its dogma regarding contraception, the use of condoms, etc. After all that has happened, I believe that the Church has lost its right to poke its head into people's bedrooms. It needs to first address "the plank in its own eye" before telling ordinary people how to live their lives. Let's move into the 21 century.

Belief of faith comes from a shared understanding of peoples lived story. Warts and all there needs to be understanding of life's brokenness. The Church needs to be accepting and inclusive of both genders as leaders of the Church. People's faith is not based on the institution anymore but a shared understanding of who we are as Catholics.

God is asking us to remain FAITHFUL, to follow JESUS' TEACHINGS and to be a people who are welcoming, inclusive of all and non-judgemental. Some of us have been raised with the faith of those before us, sometimes leading us to blindly follow and not ask questions about our faith. Recent events have really shaken many of us. We reflected that as we have aged, many of us,

have “grown” in our beliefs and understanding of our faith. We have tried to relate the faith into our daily lives. We have allowed limited understanding and stereotypes to show the world who we are (e.g. Catholic guilt, mortal sin) and yet, when we meet people who speak negatively of our faith & beliefs, we are unequipped and unable to “defend” our faith, particularly as lay people. Sadly, some of us are too afraid to speak up. Are we living the way Jesus has demonstrated and invited us to do the same? Many of us agreed that we may be doing this individually, but we don’t necessarily do this as a community. We are not always open and welcoming to our neighbours (those of differing faiths, lifestyles, social situations, ethnic backgrounds etc.). We would like to see a Church that is united, and inclusive of all people & faiths. We should be living our faith joyfully. We draw people in by example—we need good examples! The media has portrayed the Catholic Church in a negative light—everyone in the Church has responsibility to improve our “image”.

God is calling the Church to be more inclusive. There needs to be a new structure that is more democratic, less hierarchical and that represents ALL the Church.

The call of Christ to His body has never changed. He asks her always and everywhere to be His faithful bride: repenting and turning afresh to our Lord; carrying on His work of reconciliation of man with God and man with each other; living out the Gospel that "the Kingdom of God has come near" by laying down our lives in hope of the resurrection; etc. In short, Christ calls us, always, to live out the command to love God and love neighbour. This is an arduous calling and possible only through the grace of God and the sharing of gifts within His Church. The laity, administration and hierarchy must seek to serve each other as. We must together seek and share grace in sacrament, prayer, catechesis and community. The "Church" must identify herself as all the Catholic faithful, not simply the Church administration or hierarchy. The rest of society often identifies the Catholic Church as the Church bureaucracy, but we Catholics must not do the same. How should our Church respond to Christ in concrete ways? Perhaps it would not look anything different than what we already do. At the least, we must not be ashamed of the gospel, "the power of God and the wisdom of God". By what standard would we measure "success" in a process of renewal? "If you give even a cup of cold water," says our Lord, "you will not lose your reward". The measure of "success" is hardly quantifiable. This is an exciting time to be a Catholic. The world pushes in on us hard, urging us to give up our faith. But, the world hardly knows how much it needs the gospel—Jesus is Lord!—and the Church which faithfully professes it.

We must be inclusive and respectful of diversity. We need to embrace our human-ness and allow all others including religious to embrace this also. Our practice of faith needs to be aligned with the gospels and not in conflict with the structures of the Church. Faith is alive in and outside the church buildings and in particular in our relationships. We need to see leadership that stands up for the good and recognises good in all—therefore is wise and compassionate. Our children need to see us wrestle with the challenges of responsibility and sacrifice as this is reality—not expect that life should be easy and perfect. The answer to much of our concern in life these days lies in the goodness in everyone. We need to allow our Church to mould to the dynamic social and cultural diversity, and mould as we go through years. Set our basic premise on the constant truths that are within us and our relationships, rather than false, rigid, unchanging tenets that have not grown with us. We need lay people at all levels of governance of the Church; our roles should be



respected and valued, understood by the community we serve. We need to bravely confront the importance of respect for a woman in a dilemma of pregnancy, or someone tackling end of life issues. We must not judge. We need to care for our environment and nurture the life giving things. Perhaps we could accept that religion is strongly influenced by culture and therefore there are many forms of expressing very similar basic beliefs.

I believe God is asking us to listen more closely to His Son, Jesus and to the Holy Spirit through the Gospels and through Thomas Aquinas and other great Doctors of the Church. God never changes; His commandments never change; His love never changes; His love is always relevant to every generation. The interpretations and teachings of the Doctors of the Church have served us well over the centuries. This is what I hear the Holy Spirit saying to us.

I think God is asking the Catholic Church in Australia to re-design its place in the country. To evolve! The place we used to have in society is almost gone. We as a Church/organization have been and are being displaced. If we do not make changes, we will continue to become more and more of a minority group - even though the Church has so very much to offer to all people. To remain a central and meaningful part of a now largely secular society, I think God is calling us to still hold true to our Catholic values (not to compromise them) but to evolve into a whole new presence to the people of Australia. Not just to the Catholics in Australia, but to everyone! I think God is asking us to reach out to people and build communities in new ways apart from churches/schools. Through facilitating on a local level casual volunteer groups, where people can both contribute to society and also build meaningful relationships and values. Many churches already do things like this, with lunching groups, people visiting hospitals and schools etc. However maybe there is scope for these kinds of ministries to grow. To involve more people, people from outside the Church, people from other religions, younger people, families, working people, elderly people etc. Whilst we live in a time which is more "connected" than ever through technology, Australia (and many other countries) is suffering greatly from an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. Our families are broken and in pain, and young people are suffering a greater burden of mental health issues than ever before. We are people, young and old, absorbed in addictions, struggling to find reasons to live, craving for hope. The people of Australia are desperately thirsting for something the Catholic Church can offer them. Through God's great love, people of any race, religion or culture can experience meaning, hope, deeper connections and relationships, self-less love, a sense of self value, a means to contribute to improve the lives of others. The struggles born from an increasingly secular society inundated with technology and media are insidious and very real. This wonderful effort with the plenary council could bring peace, joy, love, healing and strength to a country with a crumbling soul and a Church which is so very wounded.

I love being Catholic. I believe that it is God's Church, and I believe in the teachings of the Church and its authority. I feel that one of the biggest challenges facing the Church in Australia (and the world) is a lack of trust by society in the Church; including a lack of trust by Catholics for the Church's magisterium, which has been fuelled by a disconnect being the laity and clergy, or teachings that have not been explained in a relatable and understandable way. I think God is calling us to be a genuine, inclusive, loving, faith-filled Church that holds to His teachings, but does it with compassion for all people, especially those who hold different opinions and beliefs. I think



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| God has given us a chance to start afresh, but with the benefit of hindsight, given our history, so that we can better serve all people and avoid the mistakes of the past. I think God is asking us to genuinely reflect on where we are at currently and how we came to be in the position. I think God is calling us to be the Catholic Church—the Universal Church, not just there for the function of the few (whether it's the pious, wealthy, clergy/religious orders, etc.), but the many: the Church that guides all people to God. I think God is asking us to start anew.   |
| <p>1. The option to have married priests &amp; women priests. The Catholic Church is excluding half of the Church population.</p> <p>2. Screening and on-going screening of psycho-sexual deviants. Are they well prepared for the challenges of being celibate if celibacy is to be retained?</p> <p>3. We need to have built into 'Prayers of the faithful'. An apology and recognition of the past atrocities and abuse of children in the care of Catholic Institutions.</p> <p>4. I am completely in favour of the 3rd rite of Reconciliation being the norm, private confession could still be an option for those who prefer. I know in the past the third rite has brought many non-practising Catholics back to the Church.</p> |
| Many changes need to be made in the Catholic Church.   |
| To be tolerant to other cultures and love one another.   |
| To include what could be called "mere Christian apologetics" in the school Religious Education curriculum.   |
| I think God is asking us to live in greater relationship with all of life in our universe. That we work together with a deeper consciousness of connection.  |
| Restructure the Catholic Church organisation along the lines of Alcoholics Anonymous as recommended by past retired church leaders.  |
| A deepening of faith; to be bold in our Catholic instructions; to live the gospel according to time and culture; be cautious and not modernise too much; to reach out and widen the definition of the Church; to be accessible and accepting; to welcome people back.  |
| Compassion; Leadership; Engagement; Connected; Inclusive; Reconciliation; Inspired. Show unity—how pleasant is it when brothers dwell in unity. To renew the Church; to fight for our faith. Engage with young people.   |
| To be an example to the world via witnessing gospel values; to be more compassionate with one another; to be a welcoming Church; to respect and accept others as they are; share our talents for the growth of our Church; to not be afraid of what is happening in the Church; pray together as families; tell a story about the strengths in social justice; we are asked to be responsive to criticism of the faults but our response is 'beige' and timid; not to be afraid; accept the past—its shame makes us more compassionate; be a rock on which the future experience of Church is built. Deepen our faith/spiritual life—charismatic.  |



## **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. Why are some parishes very rich and some are very poor and nothing is done about it to help the poor parish?
2. Can each parish regroup all parishioners according to where they live so for carrying out the parish challenges and communication across the parish?
3. Can parish retreats be made compulsory according to best interest of the spirituality and the unity in faith and one's neighbour?
4. Can parish leaders, youth leaders be picked according to attendance of parish retreats or a humble worker who is present at every call of the parish for work and volunteer?
5. Can every parish have a sacramental retreat compulsory to learn the sacraments as a gift from God and give glory to God only?
6. How will the leaders of the Church listen and respond to the needs and concerns of the laity and especially women in the Church?
7. What are you going to do about women having more stronger roles through the Church?
8. How can we have the courage to be open to change?
9. How can we get more young people involved in the Church?
10. Why are people not engaged with the Church and how can we overcome this?
11. How is the Church going to embrace the youth so they can carry our faith into the future?
12. How do we give recognition to the Indigenous faith systems, which run parallel to Catholic faith?
13. How can we acknowledge and reconcile the sins of the Church?
14. What structures and traditions within the Church do we want to hold on to and indeed strengthen?
15. How will the Church engage youth?
16. Is the Church open to change?
17. Are you ready to better include and serve your local communities?
18. Are you humble enough to really listen in this process?
19. Are you brave enough to legislate/decreed change in areas within the Catholic Community and set up mechanisms to ensure its wide and effective implementation?
20. What processes and mechanisms are you going to put in place to have on going engagement with the grass roots (people & staff) of schools, organisations and

parishes ensuring they are operating according to biblical principles and Australian Catholic Decrees?

21. How can we provide more intentional faith based opportunities for youth?
22. How can Church provide relevant mentoring?
23. Can the structure be changed in terms of hierarchy that includes womens involvement?
24. How can we provide a platform for the voice of our Indigenous people?
25. How can we engage the youth in liturgies so they feel included and engaged?
26. What training is available to help people learn how to do "better" Masses?
27. How does the Church enhance clergy formation and professional development?
28. How do parishes actually become faith communities that are life giving?
29. What is the direction on alternative ministries such as the ordination of married men?
30. How to have more priests and more nuns from the current group of young adults from Australia?
31. What about the option of combining both sacraments of priesthood and marriage?
32. How does a Catholic layperson go about relating to people rather than preaching to them?
33. How is the Church hierarchy in Australia planning to rebuild trust within the community and integrity?
34. How will you support the priests working in communities, who will come face to face with peoples mistrust, outrage, loss of faith, and disappointment in the Church as an institution?
35. What are the structure and systemic reforms that you are considering in order to lead the Catholic Church into the future?
36. How much power and freedom does the Church in Australia have to make changes?
37. Are we reaching out to people who have left the Church and receiving their feedback on why, for the Plenary Council to consider?
38. How are we engaging young people that is more than using "entertainment" tactics?
39. How can parish priests be supported to build community within the parish?
40. How can we, the Church, encourage each other to faithfully follow Jesus our Lord?
41. Can we be more flexible—while maintaining the importance of the Eucharist—[to] examine the translation of the Eucharist to all in our midst?
42. Can we please review the meaning of priest and reorient to one that is not gender specific?
43. How can we be both compassionate to all and speak out about the termination of the unborn child?
44. What can we do to push back on the economic rationalism that threatens all our decisions?
45. How can we more adequately champion or bring the quiet and contemplative space closer to everyday practice so that it balances out the busy life?
46. How can we become a place and a people that are once again trusted?
47. How can we ensure that people truly encounter the Love of God when they encounter the Catholic Church?
48. How can we make anyone and everyone feel like they have come home when they step into a Catholic Church?
49. How will the Church go about upholding Her values and teachings in a way that Australian society can better understand and appreciate?

50. How will we engage with the younger population so that they can see the beauty and value of the Church?
51. How can we re-build the trust that has been broken for so many people?
52. How can we do catechesis better?
53. How can we do priestly formation better?
54. How can we attract people to religious life, especially in the current climate where priests and brothers are under so much scrutiny?



## 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 48 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.

Yes okay. In the year 2017 myself and my wife we went to the 100 years celebrations of Our Lady of Fatima anniversary and the canonization of Saint Jacinta and Saint Francisco communion time. Due to the big crowd we were not able to receive Jesus' body of Christ and we headed off to catch our coach when all of sudden the body of Christ lifted up right in front of us we received communion and we were amazed and looked at each other. From then on the miracle of the Eucharist I now spend more time in my church in front of the blessed sacrament. I believe that Jesus Christ is hidden in the tabernacle waiting for our visit every day after each time spent with Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament you are renewed in life and in grace and leave with the peace of Jesus Christ Amen Alleluia!

I go to my little church to find God, His love and most importantly finding peace for myself.

The Church has lost a lot of followers and people are not wanting to be part of the Church, associated with the Church or attending to Mass. This is because of their own personal experiences such as how the sexual abuse was handled by the Church. The Church has lost touch with modern society and does not align with contemporary culture. It's time for change.

I grew up in a faith family. Have always attended my local church. I made a personal commitment to follow Christ as a young teen. I cherish my quiet time of bible study and prayer every morning for the peace, clarity and enabling to do my day well-being the hands and feet of Christ serving my work and wider community. God has led me to work in a number of schools over the years: public education, Lutheran, Anglican, Adventist, Pentecostal, interdenominational Christian schools and a number of Catholic Schools. I have worked in top affluent schools and many disadvantaged schools and those with high Non-English Background families as well as Remote Indigenous communities. In each of these different settings God reveals himself in unique ways through a community's history, culture and language and the local Church is enriched with local flavour. Good schools respected by the local community have principals that follow biblical principles showing care to their staff and local community and the local pastor /parish priest is involved in the school. Sharing bible stories in contemporary ways at assemblies, visiting classes, being accessible in the school yard and connecting with teachers and staff. Some denomination pastors do this well, the Catholic parishes are not visible in the school community—very sad for staff, children and no accountability for principals who do not run their schools on biblical principles—genuinely caring for the well-being of their staff, the very best for their students and upholding an

excellent reputation within the local community—very sad. Priests need to keep principals in Catholic schools accountable!!! Perhaps membership on the school board, time at school assemblies, availability of an office space for weekly visits at school so staff/school community can book in a time for advice, grievances and support.

I have relationship, health, financial and boredom issues just like any other person. I have noticed that Yahweh walks with me bringing his kingdom to me when I invite him into my life. Call me on [ - ] and I can explain further.

I was married to a man who was 18 years older than myself. I met him when I was sixteen and did most of the chasing. My home life was terrible, father absent and violent, mother plagued with guilt at having had a large family and always letting us know this. A brother had committed suicide and we were a very dysfunctional affair. I wanted to escape and married the first man I saw—just before my 18th birthday and already pregnant. I was not a great example of what it is to be married but the man I was married to was probably not that good either—he had obsessive behaviour and always thought that his life was a nightmare. Eventually, after many years of marriage, an abortion, affairs and stupid behaviour, on my part, I gained a divorce. All of the above is true and seems to belong to another time and involving a completely different person because I have always had a relationship with Our Lord and those times that kept me from Him were the worst. My former husband had said that he would commit suicide if we had another child—we only had one at that time; thus the abortion. I played around and sought the love of the father I never had and felt worthless. My children were a beautiful thing in my life and still are. I thank God for them and we love and care for each other and their father who continues to be in our lives. I divorced and met a man who was a practicing Catholic and for once, in my life, I did not want to do and act as I had previously. I knew of the great love that God had for me and I was able to humbly approach the Church for an annulment—for without this, we would not marry. We did not live together and did not want to give up our faith. I was granted an annulment and we were married in a church and were blessed with a child. My life has been painted with scenes that have kept bringing me back to God, my bedrock. Without my faith and without knowing of His great love for me, I would not have been able to be the person I now am. The process of obtaining the annulment was difficult but necessary—the cathartic reaction allowed me to forgive myself and my former spouse and move forward. We say—too often, "Oh well, it is happening, we probably need to give it legitimacy." Most do not seek an annulment because they think that they are not worthy or others will think them hypocrites—and they do but it is about the person and God, not about the opinions of others. I now teach religion in a fantastic Catholic College and love the chance to share the faith with others. God is good.

I grew up with Catholic parents with my mother being the stronger Catholic as my father walked out of Mass one Sunday after the priest made a point of telling him he had to join in the singing, I was about 14. I had two aunts who were nuns and worked as nurses in the north of Australia. I found attending daily Mass consoling after my father died suddenly at the age of 42 even though we were not close it changed the nature of our family and my responsibilities. Because I was attending daily Mass the Good Samaritans had me lined up to join the convent and I was spoken to daily about making a decision. It all became unbearable and I pulled back and rejected their approaches. I became a Sunday Mass attendee only for many years. After marrying and having my



own children my faith became stronger and the need to have prayer in my life to help me as a parent was again important to me. I do worry that I am not good enough and not always the good person or parent I should be but to be able to talk in my mind to God and to Mary is very important to me. If I can be a support to those around me I am grateful for the opportunities. I have been honoured to be asked to help with RCIA candidates and that has given me new knowledge learning at the same time as the candidates and again I am grateful.

Just a scenario for reflection...Will your love for Jesus change if He was in love with Mary Magdalene and may have had sex with her? If it was me I would love Jesus even more because it sounds more like human. And I don't care or underestimate my love for Jesus based on just one of His action. This is what I believe Christ also wanted us to love like. Love never fails when it is given freely, without limits and expectations... I respect the vow of celibacy maintained among the priesthood. And believes it as a great blessing to be able to withhold sex from whole life. But it has total control to distract the young adults of Australia to be priests or even to try priesthood. But what is wrong for a priest having sex especially if sex is sacred and meant to be shared? God created us and have given this gift of ability to love people. I believe God doesn't mind if priests are married or not if they are able to be fruitful. Abraham, Moses, King David were all great leaders who were married and was able to look after Israel, the people of God. I believe married priests can have greater influence among Catholic families than unmarried priests. Marriage is finding a best friend to live and share the entire life with. Because Catholic priests took vow of celibacy does not mean that they will be comforted when a human comfort is needed in the life of a priest. They are isolated and do not have a person to share the existing life with. I read the book by Lane Anderson about "Priests in Love" which gives a brief impression about Australian Catholic clergy and their intimate relationships. Which spot lot of scenarios existing in the Catholic Church, which I believe can be avoided if the sacrament of marriage and priesthood can be combined.

I attended Catholic Primary School in Melbourne and was taught by religious. (Nuns) Salesian brothers also had a presence at the school but did not teach. My faith formation was largely from this presence, my family were non-practicing but I was blessed enough to learn my faith and to love Jesus. We need a bigger religious presence in the formation of faith of children in Catholic schools today. Leaving it up to the family is not getting the job done well enough. I applaud Fr [ - ] for his catechesis of the sacraments at St [ - ] in [ - ]. The kids are learning true faith rather than wishy washy sacramental programs seen in other parishes.

We have experienced this itinerary of faith through the Neo-catechumenal Way. In our small communities where we get to know each other and meet weekly to celebrate the Eucharist and word celebrations; we have seen the Spirit working in the families that have been rebuilt; couples that have been open to life and have many children, the transmission of faith to the youth; discernment to different vocations, people that have been freed from addictions, the lonely given a place to belong, the elderly supported in the latter stage of life, the ill comforted and the dying accompanied.

Eldest in a family of 10 children, I was never supposed to be born as my father's plan was not to have children at all. Abortion was the solution. I share a similar experience as my dad but because of faith no abortion for me just faith in Jesus Christ and in God's providence.

I have come to know Christ in the Catholic Church through the Neo-catechumenal Way. Walking in this Way, in a community alongside other people, has helped me to live my life seeking to do the will of God. In particular it has helped me to live the teachings of *Humanae Vitae*, to be open to life. I have six children. Through this Way I have been able to discover that God loves me as I am, a sinner, and that he loves every other person as well, individually. This love that I have experienced in my life has led me to desire to reach out to others to bring this same love to them. I now work as a Primary School Chaplain.

It is impossible to be proud of our Church in Australia. Small pockets maybe.

My faith has been shaped by my family I grew up going to church with them. It was their personal witness of faith in the care for next door neighbour left a mark on me. My life has not always been smooth sailing a major car accident at 21 shaped my faith journey and called me to closer relationship with God. I now am very blessed I have a faith filled wife and a beautiful daughter. I also have a great love of the Church even in its woundedness.

The Church has always been in the background of my life and I have been fortunate to encounter wonderful servants of Christ. I have been a teacher in Catholic education for over 30 years and have done many courses and readings to gain greater understanding of God and Jesus Christ, which has enabled me to grow in these areas.

My father is a devout Catholic and I can see his faith guides him in his daily decisions. He is thinking and reflecting on his actions and choices. My mum stopped attending regular Mass after Vatican 2. They are both important to my faith and Catholicism. Through Dad I understand how to manage with the basic principles of Love your neighbour as yourself and be true—discern through prayer and be confident in your goodness. Through Mum I see the importance of asking questions and the need for integrity—not just doing something for the sake of alignment or tradition. Both my parents act from their conscience and have strong commitment to social justice and equity. The three children have all grown up loved and appreciating we are loved deeply for who we are—despite failings. This is something I don't see happening in a significant number of people's lives. We are losing our skills in conflict resolution and relationship development. Our children need to be loved by those that know them the best—we only establish inner strength that we are OK, when we have felt loved despite our weakness/wrong-doing. Forgiveness and sacrifice are essential experiences to enable our own acceptance of ourselves and our fallibility. It is my experience of my own goodness that led me to adoption when my husband and I could not conceive. I did not wish to lose sight of the meaning of my life (with all the beauty of relationships and mystery) in the context of focusing on the importance of recreating my biology. We are scourged with a need to expect the best, quickest, safest and fastest solutions, so much so that we risk missing the point of our experience all together.

I am a cradle Catholic. My experience of faith and the Church was guided by my parents, my parish priest and the sisters by whom I was educated in the 1950's and perhaps more significantly than all else, by my experiences in [ - ] on two occasions during the past 13 years. I experienced a deadening of faith for many years along with so many of my generation. We were all subjected to the bombardment and evils of radical feminism and the sexual revolution of the 60's and 70's. These things, among many others, inflicted so much harm on generations of God's children. As I

have aged, I have become increasingly aware of God's voice in my life. I have learned to listen to the small promptings of the Holy Spirit in everyday life and to wait and discern rather than rushing to impulsive and often misguided conclusions. Maybe this is just something that comes to most of us as we age. Whatever, I am grateful for this gift. I am afraid for my children and particularly for my grandchildren and great grandchildren who have grown up in what has become a Godless society in so many ways.

There are two experiences which had a powerful influence on my teenage years. At the age of 14, a friend invited me to help her carrying some soup after school to the Baptist church where her mum was volunteering helping out with a free meal the church used to hold weekly for anyone hungry or lonely or curious that wanted to come. I ended up spending almost every Tuesday night there over the following 3 to 4 years, until the program eventually ended. These Tuesday nights held some of the most incredible experiences of encountering Jesus. Through meeting people struggling, making friends, playing games, and laughing with people I once used to be scared to see on the streets. My Catholic faith was formed so much through these experiences, despite it being run by a Baptist church and not being a strictly "religious" activity at all. Another formative experience was the very first youth camp I attended at the age of 15. It was the first time my diocese had a Catholic youth camp. In that weekend I had my first confession in about 8 years, I made friendships with people that I still have almost 10 years on and friendships that help form my faith and build a community for Catholic values to grow in. I also have the youth events which followed to thank for meeting the man who will in a few weeks be my husband. We both had various Catholic youth groups to thank for our encounters with God's love and the foundations to build a relationship more meaningful than we could have imagined. I am sure there are many other young people across Australia with similar stories thanks to the youth movements within the Catholic church in the last 10 years.

I grew up Catholic my whole life; celebrating the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, reconciliation and first communion all before I was 10; just the same as many other Catholics, and I am now preparing to be married in the Catholic Church. For most of my life, there has been very little in the way of teaching of Church doctrine—catechesis. Rather, I learnt Catholic teaching more as rules and in a 'because we said so' mentality. There was very little opportunity, especially while I was young, to have a deeper and fuller understanding of the teaching of my Church. It wasn't until I took ownership of my faith in my late teens/early 20s while I was questioning whether or not I believed in God (and by extension, the Church), that I started to explore what the Church taught. I wish that I could have had this understanding (or age appropriate theological teaching) at a much younger age as it would have shaped much more than how I understand God and the Catholic Church, but rather, would have allowed me to participate more fully and to feel more confident in my faith, especially in such a secular society where faith is viewed to be for the disillusioned and less intelligent population, and where those who have faith are to be looked down upon and their beliefs are not as important in how Australia designs public policy and laws.

I was mentally and physically abused by nuns in the 1960's. I was told the night before my wedding, by our parish priest, that God would not bless my marriage as he knew I was pregnant. We have now been married for 49 years. Fortunately, I always believed God had a different opinion of me than the nuns and priests of that time. Thanks to my upbringing, I have continued

to practise my religion, although, with the number of clergy that have been charged with paedophilia it has often been very difficult.

I moved to [ - ] from [ - ] just because of weather. I didn't realise that my health was to improve only 1 week after arriving. A doctor took me off 75% of medication I was on.

## 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 Darwin.

| <b>Country</b>                                       | <b>Number of respondents</b> |
|--|------------------------------|
| Australia  | 29                           |
| Fiji   | 2                            |
| Brunei Darussalam                                    | 1                            |
| Canada   | 1                            |
| Germany  | 1                            |
| India  | 1                            |
| Ireland  | 1                            |
| Italy  | 1                            |
| South Africa   | 1                            |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | 1                            |
| Not stated   | 7                            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>46</b>                    |

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

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

| Name of group  | Group size |
|--|------------|
| Catholic Church Santa Teresa                         | 50         |
| Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School and Parish group | 22         |
| Katherine Parish                                     | 20         |
| St Josephs Catholic College, Katherine, NT           | 19         |
| Catholic Education - Diocese of Darwin               | 11         |
| Catholic Schools on Tiwi Islands                     | 9          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 8          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 8          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 8          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 8          |
| Xavier Catholic College                              | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 7          |
| Xavier Catholic College                              | 6          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 6          |
| SVDPNT Holy Spirit Conference                        | 6          |
| OLSH Parish  | 6          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 6          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 6          |
| MCPS Primary school                                  | 5          |
| Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School             | 5          |
| Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School             | 5          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 5          |
| Alice Springs OLSH Parish                            | 5          |
| OLSH Parish Alice Springs                            | 5          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 5          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 5          |
| Wurrumiyanga school communities                      | 4          |
| Bathurst Island Catholic Schools                     | 4          |
| 1st Community St Francis                             | 4          |
| OLSH Parish Alice Springs                            | 4          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 4          |
| St Marys Cathedral, Darwin                           | 4          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 4          |
| St Mary;s Cathedral Darwin                           | 4          |
| Catholic Education - Diocese of Darwin               | 4          |
| Catholic Education - Diocese of Darwin               | 4          |
| St Marys Cathedral Darwin                            | 3          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 3          |
| St Marys Cathedral                                   | 3          |





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