



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

Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

A Report to the Diocese of Lismore

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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

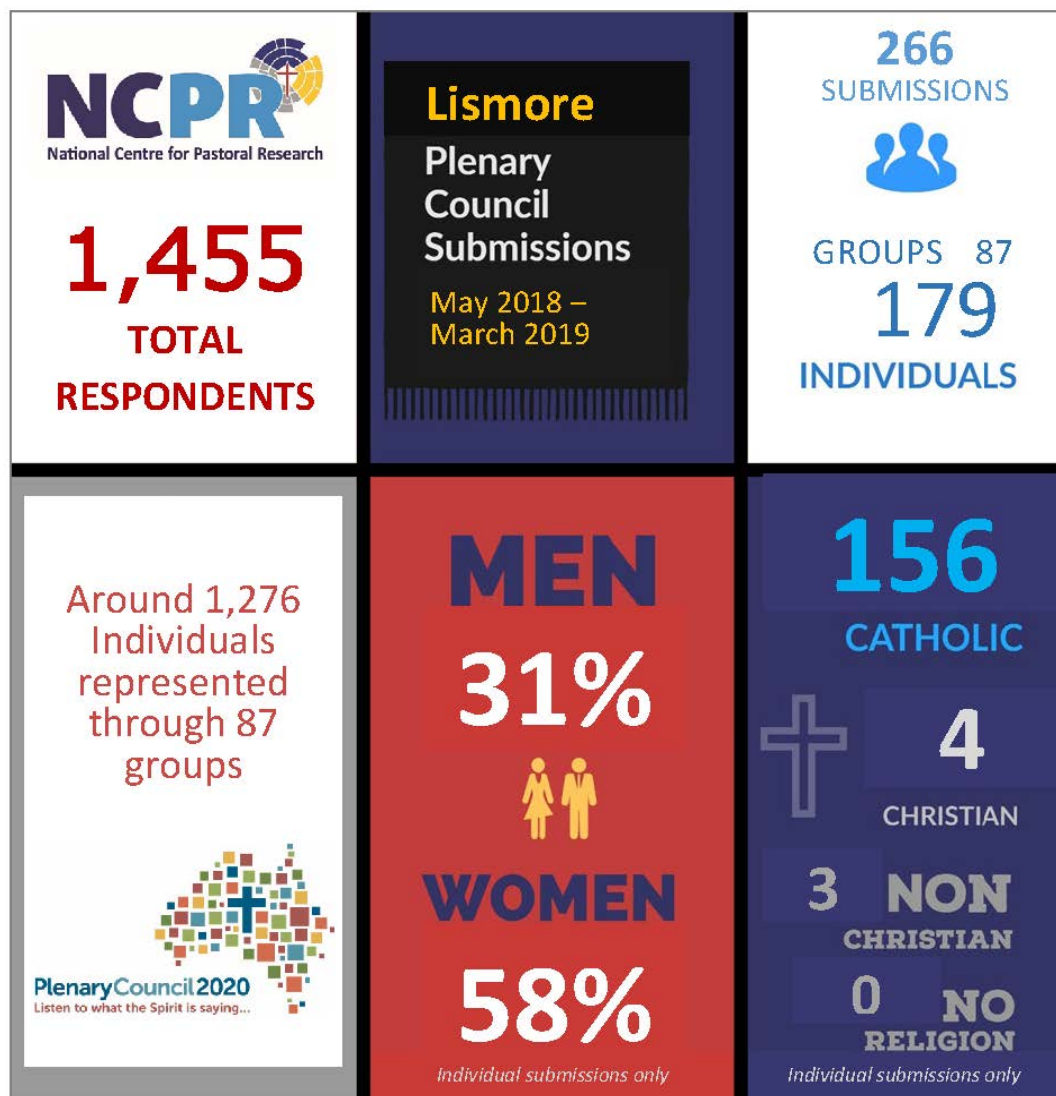
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Diocesan Submissions Summary Snapshot: May 2018—March 2019



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 - Lismore

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 Lismore, we received a total of 266 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 163 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another 26 were unsure if they had. About 75 respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 266 submissions, 87 submissions were from groups or organisations and 179 submissions were from individuals. There were 1,276 people represented through the 87 groups. It is important to note, however, that not all groups completed this question, so total group numbers may be under-represented.

Overall, the total number of respondents from your diocese was 1,455.

Table 1: Number of Submissions	
Total number of submissions received	266
<i>Participated in Listening & Dialogue Encounter?</i>	
Yes	163
No	75
Not sure	26
Not stated	2
Total	266
Submissions received from groups or organisations	87
Submissions received from individuals	179
Total	266

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 179 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 Lismore. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 74 per cent (132) were received from those aged 50 and over. The most number of submissions within this age range were received from the 65-69 years age group (33 responses).

At the close of submissions, there was only one individual submission received from those aged under 25.

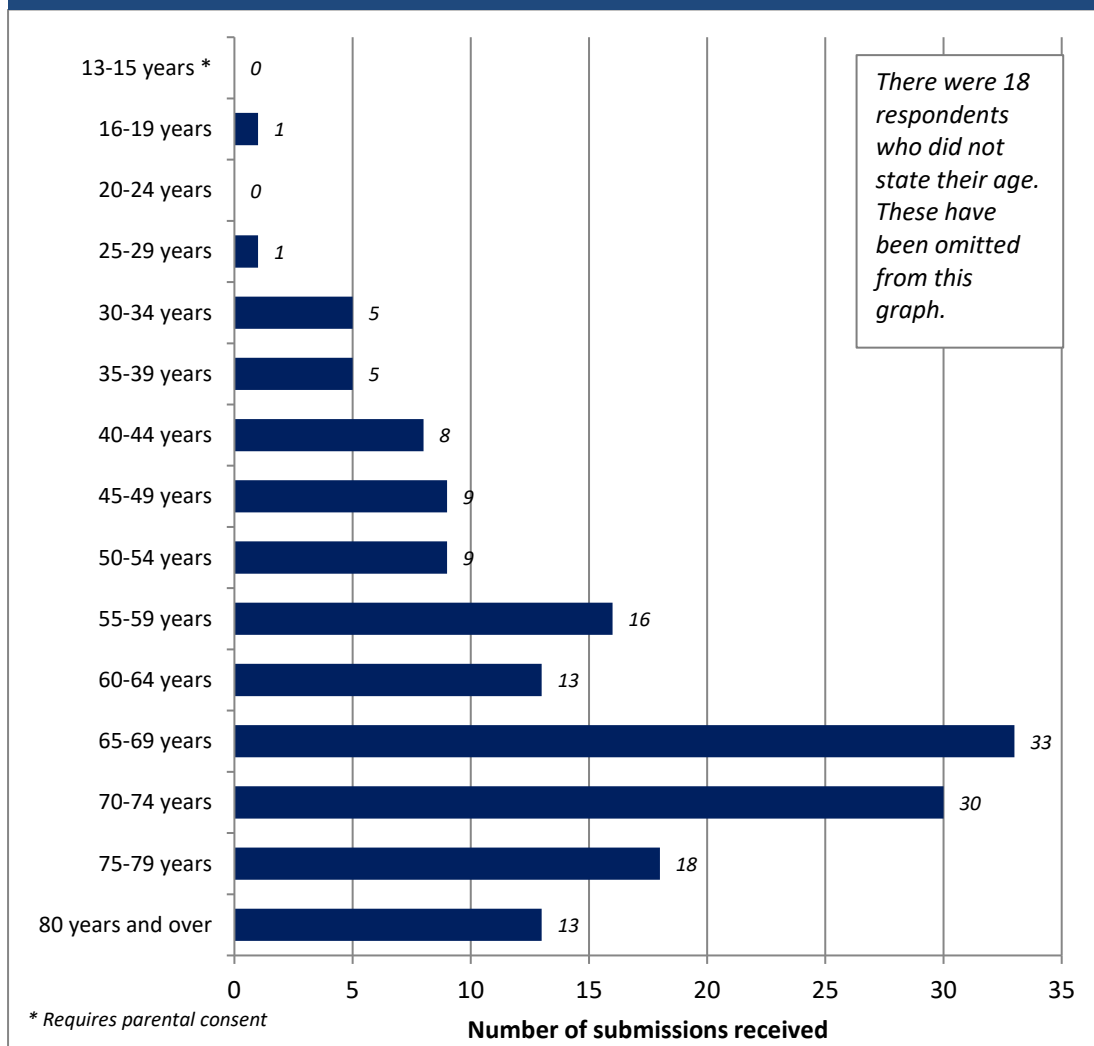
Participants aged 16-17 were encouraged to discuss the questionnaire with their parent or guardian. Many of these responses came from schools that sent in their responses through the online survey. As Table 2 shows, there was one individual submission made from the 16-19 years age group in your diocese.

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	1
20-24 years	0
25-29 years	1
30-34 years	5
35-39 years	5
40-44 years	8
45-49 years	9
50-54 years	9
55-59 years	16
60-64 years	13
65-69 years	33
70-74 years	30
75-79 years	18
80 years and over	13
Not stated	18
Total	179

* Requires parental consent

Fig. 1: Age groups (individual responses only)

Sex of Respondents

Over half the number of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (58%), while a further 31 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 56 men and 104 women who made submissions. Eight respondents preferred not to state their sex, while eleven respondents did not answer this question.

Table 3: Sex (individual responses only)

Female	104
Male	56
Prefer not to say	8
Not stated	11
Total	179

Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (75%) were born in Australia. Just under 12 per cent came from other countries, while around 13 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.

Table 4a: Countries of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	135	75.4
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	6	3.4
Ireland	3	1.7
Netherlands	3	1.7
South Africa	3	1.7
Other Countries	6	3.4
Not stated	23	12.8
Total	179	100.0

Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	135	75.4
Other English-speaking country	12	6.7
Non-English-speaking country	9	5.0
Not stated	23	12.8
Total	179	100.0

Table 4c: Mother's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	121	67.6
Other English speaking country	15	8.4
Non-English speaking country	13	7.3
Not stated	30	16.8
Total	179	100.0

Table 4d: Father's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	118	65.9
Other English-speaking country	14	7.8
Non-English-speaking country	18	10.1
Not stated	29	16.2
Total	179	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 four individuals who identified themselves in this way, representing just over two per cent of all individual respondents.

Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (individual responses only)	
Yes	4
No	155
Not stated	20
Total	179

Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 179 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 156 respondents (87%) were Catholic. Four respondents were from other Christian denominations while there were three from non-Christian religions. A further 16 respondents did not state their religion and no respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

Table 6: Religion (individual responses only)		Person	Percent
Catholic		156	87.2
Other Christian:			
Anglican		3	1.7
Other Christian		1	0.6
Non Christian:			
Hinduism		2	1.1
Other religion		1	0.6
No religion		0	00
Not stated		16	8.9
Total		179	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 130 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were 12 respondents who said they went to Mass and church activities sometimes, while four respondents considered themselves Catholic but were not involved or described their participation in other terms. A further ten respondents described themselves in another way or did not answer the question.

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	83	42	5	130
I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes	7	3	2	12
I am Catholic, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	1	0	0	1
I consider myself Catholic but I am not sure what to think about the Catholic faith	1	1	1	3
Other	3	3	0	6
Not stated	2	2	0	4
Total	97	51	8	156

GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of 87 group submissions made from your diocese. Around 1,276 individuals were represented through these groups. However, 11 groups did not report their numbers of participating members, indicating that the total number of people represented through the group submissions may be considerably higher.

While 66 group submissions provided a group name, 21 did not do so. Table 8 shows a list of the Top 20 group submissions from the diocese with the number of members in each group. A complete list of groups is provided as *Appendix 2*. Groups that did not provide a name were omitted from this table. The number of participating members was provided by the person submitting the group response. These figures could not be checked for accuracy.

Prominent among the largest groups was Lismore Diocese with around 170 members. There were also a number of other parish groups such as the St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie with 117 participants and Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Parish with 87 members. There were ten other groups with 20 members or more.

Table 8 : Group submissions from the diocese	
Name of group	Group size
Lismore Diocese	170
St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie NSW 2444	117
Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Parish Kyogle NSW	87
Xavier College, Llandilo NSW	80
Northern Leaders and Representatives	75
St Agnes Care & Lifestyle - Community Services	54
Sawtell Catholic Church	39
Oasis Young Adult Retreat	32
Crowley	30
Mt St Patrick College	28
Sawtell Catholic Church	26
Our Lady of Sorrows Kyogle	25
Macleay Valley Paris - SWR group 3-2-19	20
Macleay Valley Parish - Kempsey group 5-2-19	18
Catholic Schools Family Retreat	17
Year 10 Youth Ministry Class, St. Pauls College	14
St Anthonys Meditation Group	13
Sisters of Mercy	12
Donnelly House, St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie NSW 2444	12
St Marys parish / Family Group	12

Age and Sex of Group Members

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

The 50-69 years age group was the largest group represented with 422 members. This was followed by the group aged 70 and over with 349 members. There was no age provided for around ten group 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	109
20 - 29 years	70
30 - 49 years	217
50 - 69 years	422
70 and over	349
Unknown	10
Total	1,177

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

Of the total 1,203 group members whose sex was reported, 60 per cent (723) were female and 40 per cent (480) 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	723
Male	480
Total	1,203

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



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1

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

THEMES DISCUSSED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

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

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

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

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

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

- Love God, Love neighbour (Chapter 4)
 - *Greater focus on Jesus Christ* (p. 30)
 - *Better faith formation* (p. 38)
 - *Greater trust, faith and hope in God* (p. 29)
 - *Care for neighbour* (p. 36)
 - *Being a witness in society* (p. 34)
 - *Renewed call to holiness* (p. 35)
 - *Greater focus on the Word of God* (p. 31)
 - *Remaining faithful to Church teaching/ Keeping the commandments* (p. 32)
- 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)
 - *Holy Orders - Ordination of women* (p. 69)
- Leadership and Church governance (Chapter 7)
 - *Greater role for women* (p. 83)
 - *New leadership and governance model* (p. 91)
 - *Greater involvement of the laity* (p. 84)
 - *Greater leadership from bishops* (p. 87)
 - *Greater leadership from priests* (p. 88)
 - *More formation and support for priests* (p. 89)
 - *Ending clericalism* (p. 80)
 - *Working together in unity* (p. 95)
- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
 - *Greater Inclusion of all* (p. 108)

- *Fighting for human rights issues (p. 110)*
- *Care for the environment (p. 112)*

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

- *Outreach to youth (p. 124)*
- *Sharing the faith with others (p. 128)*
- *Better attention to all aspects of liturgy (p. 45)*
- *Greater connection with and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (p. 120)*
- *Stronger parish communities (p. 156)*
- *More transparency and accountability regarding clergy sexual abuse (p. 102)*
- *Listening to the Holy Spirit (p. 136)*
- *Outreach to the wider community (p. 123)*
- *Teaching authentic Catholic faith (p.151)*
- *More welcoming parishes (p. 161)*
- *Modernise Church teachings (p. 169)*
- *Call to repentance for clergy sexual abuse (p. 100)*
- *Focus on ecumenism (p. 129)*
- *Different translation of the Mass - emphasis on inclusive language (p. 56)*

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 28 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.

I think God is asking us to go right back to Mount Sinai where He gave the 10 Commandments to Moses. These are the laws given us by God to tell us how we should behave in this world to enjoy a happy, peaceful and strong religious life. These days many people do not even know the 10 Commandments and don't know how to keep them. To overcome this we need to teach them each of the 10 and explain that every sin on our soul derives from a broken Commandment. They teach us how to love God and how to love our neighbours. This love brings about Love, Joy and Peace into our world. Breaking these Commandments brings anger, hatred and revenge all of which cause strife, corruption, wars and terrible catastrophes.

To continue to have faith that the Holy Spirit is with the Church during these troubled times and to be positive in our outlook and conversations with others. To be more open to others, especially those who are marginalised i.e. other faiths especially Muslims, gay people, divorced and those who have experienced abortion.

I think God is asking us to sit still and listen to His voice. We have lost Truth because of our selfishness. The truth of the Catholic faith is so beautiful and full of mystery and incredible depth. People need to be educated in our faith because they do not understand it. There are misconceptions with almost all teachings. It must start in our Catholic schools. We also need dynamic RCIC and RCIA programs. In America, they have amazing speakers and programs that bring the Catholic faith alive. For priests to step outside their comfort zone and teach all truth in their homilies, even what may seem unpleasant; the reality of Hell, the dogma of Purgatory, the necessity of Confession, etc. We need to be encouraged by priests that we can achieve holiness

and sainthood as individuals and this is how we will build up our fallen Church. All priests should be taught throughout seminary and made mandatory to wear their priestly collar at all times during priestly ministries and strongly encouraged to wear it outside their priestly ministries for all people (those also outside the Church) to recognise them as priests, a true representation of Christ in our midst. This may encourage those afraid to come to the Church itself to approach a priest in their own environment. We need to bring holiness back into the Church. The Church has become a place of social interaction, rather than a place of mystery and an encounter with God. For example: Ensuring the Church is a place of silence, keeping social interaction for after Mass, outside the church. Only using Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for 'Extra-ordinary' circumstances. We seem to have more ministers up on the altar than people attending Mass itself. Keeping jokes, inappropriate music, clapping, singing happy birthday to parishioners etc. outside of the Mass, as it takes away from the focus of the holy sacrifice of Christ taking place. Priests should encourage and educate people as to why we should dress appropriately when attending Mass. I have seen signs about dress code at the front of some Churches. This works well. For priests to encourage parishioners to receive the Holy Eucharist on their tongue rather than their hand. This example alone would speak volumes to new members of the Church as to the holiness of what they will be receiving. Keeping ALL tabernacles in the middle of the Church, as Christ should always be the focus and centre. Leaving churches open during the day so that all people can access the church when needed. Asking members of the church to be committed in praying the holy angels will guard the church as the doors are left open and relying on Providence that God will answer our prayer. All churches must have a weekly or daily roster that includes adoration and rosary. These are the pillars that hold the Church together. "We do not want a Church that will move with the world. We want a Church that will move the world." G.K. Chesterton

Please be accepting of the LGBTI

I went to Mass out of my area last Sunday 11/11/2018, 100 years since the end of the first world war. This church is connected to a primary Catholic School and there was only one 18-month-old baby there with the Mum. No other children at all. We must educate our children, with prayer including the Rosary. Keep on reinforcing the graces that come only from God in the Blessed Sacraments, more emphasis on the basis of our religion, and how important it is to receive Jesus Himself in the Blessed Eucharist as often as possible. Teach more religious, fun loving songs, praising our God for all His daily Blessing. Explain that being a Catholic is a great gift from God and to bring all the family back together, the children must put all electronics away and encourage their parents to pray each night, and a morning prayer such as, "Dear God, Please help everything I do and say be a prayer to you today." Our busy families need God in their lives and this is just one way to help them get there. Many Blessings, [-]

To live by the commandments and to work as a whole Church, religious staff and congregation in consultation to do our best to keep God's commandments while being respectful of others' beliefs.

I feel God may be thinking: if we have ever listened to the ten Commandments, let alone follow them. I was once told by a priest, if in any situation just think "What would Jesus do in this situation?", I realise at times that can be very hard, but faith is the basis to Catholicism, and this is

<p>how we strengthen our faith by challenges, if we pray for help, we always get some strength or answer. I will never give up my faith, but have not been very impressed or happy with some of the Catholic ways of late. I think God would be telling us to pray to Him, so we will get Australia back to being a Christian country again.</p>
<p>Prayer. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ.</p>
<p>To reflect on the smaller role that the Church should be playing in society. That in the future we are a remnant church not a significant force in society and should restrict our activities to fulfilling the kingdom through actions that mirror Matthew 25:35 rather than as a moral guide to wider society. The Church needs to engage but these should be to provide services that society is failing to provide. The Church in Australia needs to reflect our society and changing values and how these align with gospel values. Issues of same sex relationships, gender equality and human rights align with Gospel teachings and the Church in Australia needs to reflect these rather than hang on to cultural teachings that exclude. Jesus showed love and was inclusive to all and the Church needs to change to reflect this. We are called to welcome people in same sex relationships. To include female leadership in rituals and practices, to allow priests to marry and to work to protect human rights in society, not to argue for institutional exclusions from complying with human rights. One issue for concern is the Catholic Church's decision to operate schools. These schools cater to students who are economically advantaged, which is evidenced in their above average ICSEA ratings. They diminish State provided schools who are left with social disadvantaged students reflected in significantly lower ICSEA ratings. Catholic schools do not cater for catechesis of Catholic students as practicing Catholics make up an insignificant and largely excluded minority in Catholic schools. They fail at evangelisation which is reflected in Church attendance data. In light of this reflection should be given to God's call to operate in this sphere when the Church's contribution has become that of increasing social disadvantage and class division. This does not fulfil Jesus call to evangelise or provide services to the poor.</p>
<p>The voices of the teachers at [-] College reflect the positive energy created when you involve people in the process of change: "It is really good that this is happening and that everyone is given an opportunity to be heard. It is a very inclusive approach as a space is created for many people to share their concerns. We will be part of making change within our Church—part of the bigger picture. We are very excited to see where this process will take us and what the outcomes will be."</p>
<p>To be more inclusive and welcoming to divorcees and less judging. To reflect the needs of current Catholics. To be a Church others want to be a member of.</p>
<p>To be more centred on the Eucharist, Sunday Mass and Adoration. To invite each other to take seriously God's call to holiness. To stand up compassionately for the truth of our faith and not allow it to be watered down or silenced by sin or society.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peace and Reconciliation. - To build relationships at a local level. - Rebuild trust towards the institution of the Catholic Church.

- The Church to take on transparent moral leadership in local communities.
- For the Church to share kindness and be inclusive of all, especially the vulnerable and on the outskirts of society.
- God is asking Australia to support family values and openness to local community.

Not sure who “US” is. For Australians in general, I believe we should return to a belief in Jesus as our saviour. Our lives should reflect this belief in the way we act towards our God, ourselves and each other. For Catholics, I am sure God is asking us to live out our Baptismal promises and tell everyone the Good News. Each of us is responsible for the richness of life offered by the Church and has something to offer to build up the community.

These are the key themes that emerged in our reflection. The full response is at the end of this submission.

Discipleship, Witness, Justice and Community.

To follow in the footsteps of His Son, Jesus—caring, compassion, kindness, justice,

To care for our environment,

To use our resources wisely,

Stewardship Unity, Tolerance, Inclusion, Acceptance,

To be self-reflective and willing to evaluate one’s own place and understanding of their role

To reflect on the theme of Stewardship and to act on it with care

Celebrate the good, our faith, united beliefs

Continue the Church’s mission started by Jesus

To be relevant to people of the 21st century

To be a welcoming community

To be people of hope who give example of the love of God through their lives

To care for the poor and the marginalised in our country

Inclusive to all members of our Australian community

Women and Men working in Church Leadership

To provide a future of hope for our young Connection and community

A new way to be a community—role of laity, role of women

To care for and understand young people, ‘the least in the kingdom’

Open our hearts (and arms) to all Catholics (not just the bums on seats Catholics)

Renewed focus on the message of Jesus, especially from those in Leadership

Modern Christians—how can youth live, understand, relate to God and the Church

Adaptive to societal needs and norms

<p>Celebrate and spread the beauty and joy of our faith</p> <p>To proclaim Christ—our source of hope—our inspiration for serving the poor in our communities</p> <p>Unity, Openness Understanding, Patience Love, Mercy, Forgiveness</p> <p>To care for immigrants—Those in detention, those who come to our country, those who seek refuge</p> <p>Unity in the Body of Christ in Australia—denominations working together ecumenically</p> <p>Formation</p> <p>Reaching out to the poor and dispossessed</p> <p>Reparations for injustice</p> <p>Show the love of God, live the Joy of the Good News Witness and not Words</p>
<p>For the Church to be meaningful to the people of the 21st century and consider how different the world is now as compared to when many of the current Church laws were instituted.</p>
<p>Compassion for others.</p>
<p>To help restore the image of Christ's church and message of love.</p>
<p>Keep The Traditions of the Catholic Church. Remain under the discipline of The Pope and Rome. Return to the Mass in Latin. Advise Cardinals, bishops and parish priests to remain under this discipline. Advise all parish priests to take charge of the administration, and running of their parish, and schools. No more parish managers, (unless clergy or other ordained persons), special committees or the like. Manage the parish for the Catholic Church, by the Catholic Church, for Jesus Christ Himself. Let us all return to following the word of Jesus Christ, and His properly appointed successors.</p>
<p>God is asking us to hold true to the messages of the gospels: love of neighbour, justice, forgiveness, compassion, peace and unity with all.</p>
<p>I think that God is asking us to return to regular practise of our faith, Mass and Sacraments. For families to reconnect. For "lapsed" Catholics to look at why they stopped attending and to come back. For the whole Church Community to see that being a Christian involves attending Mass, without that they are just being "good people".</p>
<p>More organised faith sharing and spiritual direction in parish, building community. At least monthly. More involvement by the priest in pastoral work with the community. More direct involvement by lay people in administration and business management of parish through Finance Council. Baptisms which are the basis of Faith community building held during Mass. More opportunities to build connections between parish schools and the rest of the parish community. The invitation extended to more parishioners to use their gifts for the faith community. The place and opportunity for social gatherings for all ages.</p>
<p>I believe God is asking Australians to go back to basics and remember the simple teachings of Christ. In particular, to not forget the marginalised e.g. homeless, those fleeing home countries due to war or dire circumstances.</p>

If "us" means laity only, we would like good management to be returned from the bishops down, which has been lacking in Australia. We have seen the Church changing over a period of many years which resulted in less reverence for the Real Presence. Without the Real Presence there can not be a Roman Catholic Church.
To update the Church ex music and to begin charismatic groups to enrich people lives fuller
How we can best update the Catholic Church in 2020 to attract more diverse followers?
<p>What is God asking of the Church in Australia? Openness—to be open to new theologies in line with the new Universe Story and new scientific discoveries which contradict the creed and many old dogmas such as the Assumption. To embrace new theologies such as Liberation and Feminist theologies. To be open to the voice of women, and accept their contribution at every level of Church life and ministry. To be aware of the richness of Aboriginal spirituality and incorporate it into Church liturgies. To be open to the many cultures which make up our Church today.</p> <p>Inclusiveness Be a welcoming community especially inclusive of LGBTI people and those who are divorced or living in a pre-marital relationship. To be more inclusive of the voice of the laity. Use inclusive language in the liturgy—get rid of archaic and convoluted language. Priesthood to reject clericalism and mandatory celibacy—allow priests to access the sacrament of Matrimony. To update training for the priesthood and take it out of the photo [sic] and ensure adequate screening, broad based education, wholesome life experience and psychosexual development for those in training for priesthood. Welcome back ex-priests who left to marry and who wish to return to ministry. Ensure ongoing spiritual and theological renewal and regular supervision for clergy. Listen to parishioners when abuse is occurring. Justice—for the Church leaders to speak out strongly on issues of justice such as the treatment of asylum seekers, homelessness etc. and not just lobby politicians on funding for Catholic Schools and sexual morality such as same-sex marriage and abortion. Reject those passages of scripture which seem to promote domestic violence or the servility of women. Image of Church. Pope Francis speaks of a poor Church for the poor. Use the wealth of the Church to help the poor and homeless in tangible ways. See the Church as a 'Field Hospital' which cares for those on the margins. "Whatsoever you do...."</p>
<p>God is asking us, the same as he has always asked: to love God and love others. That is the true nature of Christ. He wants us to be the best person we can be and to treat others the same respect and dignity. He asks us to help others in need and serve their needs before ours. Jesus knows our failings and asks us to strive to do better every day, to be humble and less judgemental. He asks us to appreciate our world and make sure that our environment is looked after as it is there is sustain us all. It is about relationships!</p>
<p>Formation of churches. Lay people to do communion services in the absence of priests (shortage of numbers). Lay people to provide assistance for Priests, who are under increasing pressure to do more with less. There needs to be more reverence and respect shown inside the Church (some participants said they had noticed a decrease in reverence since Communion in the hand came in). Too much talking in church—too loud, not respectful. Less talking in Mass—more time for reflection, no time for personal thanks Education. There needs to be more influence on practicing faith—including devotion to rosary and reconciliation. Having time for reflection is important to faith—quiet time in Church helps with this. We need more teaching of God's message—teachers</p>

of the Bible. The 10 commandments are not spoken of in detail—they should be talked about in detail, we should go out of our way for others and teach commandments. People need to learn how to get more out of the Gospel—opportunity for Gospel discussion groups (teaching and education, especially for the young). Youth. How are we going to encourage youth/young adults (schools) involved and taking the sacraments? How do we help them start practicing their faith? In years gone by, young people could participate in Children of Mary, Legion of Mary, CYO (for 15-25 year age group)—Look at groups/ways to get youth back and involved. Without the youth we haven't got a future... Welcoming Be more approachable/welcoming to all new people in the parish—increase the sense of community in church, socialise more (dances etc.) to get to know one another:

- Increase social opportunities to be together as a faith community (to have fun, laugh together)
- Show compassion and understanding to those less fortunate
- More friendly to others—be more accepting of others

Concerns. Concerned about:

- the influence of the media on young people and the Church (bad press)
- the maintenance of our church buildings (affordability)
- gay marriage and abortions (they have become prevalent in our time—why?)

Q “What is God asking of us in 2019”?

God's message is eternal, love. As St John said “God is love” what a shame he didn't go that step further and say “Love is God”. All edicts from God, forgiveness; do unto others; etc. flow from this fountainhead to “love one another”. Love in this sense must be genuine and free of self-interest. It is an edict to, with a good and clear conscience go beyond oneself and do what is right, to spread love to others rather than accumulating love for oneself. It is a message of service rather than oneself being served. And I think that same message to all of us, including the Church is as strong today as it has ever been. To reach beyond our own selfish needs and spread love; to serve others; to serve our communities. That message is not Church bound. The Church is a man-made organisation and is frail to all man-made weaknesses. Primarily self-interest. The development of rules, authority, hierarchy and obligations have their genesis in limiting service to others. In excluding participation. In telling people I'm right, you're wrong. So what is God asking of us in 2019, to love one another, to carry out our service to God by serving others, rather than being seen to serve oneself. This service to others must surely address full access to the Church's sacraments to all God's children.

Personal Experiences: Faith a very important part of each participants' life—each person found it had helped them through difficult times—it gave them hope. Everyone's faith is unique and drawn from a loving God. One participant said ‘now is my time to serve, to speak up through word and action for our God’. The Spirit is asking us to:

- Be more tolerant of different cultures and ethnic groups.
- Show compassion to people with disabilities.

- Be more charitable and understanding with each other.
- Live the Gospel as an example to others.
- Reach out with faith to others when tragedy strikes.
- Be more loving to all people of every faith and culture.
- Walk with people, just like Jesus did. To reflect on the Gospel and apply it to our lives – he walked with lepers, tax collectors, non-Jewish men and women. What is God asking of us at this time? How do we need to change?
- One participant felt God is asking us to include the 10 Commandments into the Mass, just as the Lord's Prayer is said and that they are a great tool examination of conscience before the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The participant felt more reference to the 10 Commandments would combine the Old Testament with the teachings in the Gospel of Jesus in the New Testament and finally the journey to the kingdom of God led by the Holy Spirit. Many family members came to church at Easter and Christmas, but knew nothing of keeping the Sabbath as a Holy Day of Obligation.
- God is asking us to be more welcoming. To invite relatives, children, grandchildren, neighbours and friends to share a 'cuppa' after church. They don't need to attend Mass, but come and share in the 'after church' gatherings. Let them know that this time of sharing is important to find out who is sick in the community, who needs a visit, who needs a lift to church, etc.
- To encourage and attract the younger generation ('sausage sizzles' after Mass suggested).
- To pray for each other especially those who are sick on experiencing difficult time - when we find that someone in the community is sick or disabled, (Catholics and non-Catholics) prayer cards may be useful. This will make the person feel that someone cares enough to say prayers for them.
- A couple of participants suggested that there was inconsistency across different parishes about different do's and don'ts of Church teaching on things like birth control and the rights of divorced people to receive the Sacraments. Some felt the process needs to be more clear and consistent.
- The churches are becoming desolate and are lacking the work of the Holy Spirit—this could be counteracted through tolerance, patience and embracing all people.

Set a good example—live the faith, honour and trust, lead by example, look out for your neighbours.

Use simple language that is understood by all. 'I am a simple man'.

Bishops and cardinals had no control over offences committed by abusive priests—but they were fraudulent in covering it up.

Be transparent (commit to not covering up – to taking the tough decisions when needed).

Be open. Speak up even when difficult.

Lay people—right or wrong they have a role to play.

Change culture—gave example of National Australia Bank CEO, Ken Henry resigning but having a staying on to find his replacement as not being useful in changing the culture at the bank—felt

this would lead to more of the same—To effectively flow through the whole organisation, culture and attitude change starts at the top.

Support the faithful in isolated parishes—get a car load together and go visit.

Show value and respect by sharing the Mass together.

What is God asking? Responses: To become more tolerant in the areas of:

- Modern birth control methods that individuals can choose.
- Divorced people to receive the Sacraments. People have left the Church because they are confused about what they can or cannot do.
- Offer to re-instate priests who left to get married.
- Give men called to the priesthood option of celibacy or marriage.
- Open the priesthood to women. Women are caregivers. Church is too patriarchal.
- Set up 'Welcoming Committees' to welcome the strangers.
- Communication between ethnic groups.
- Some people were aware of others experiencing conditions/restrictions regarding Baptisms, Communion and Confirmation—some parents are opting out of baptising their children and/or receiving communion. Have a 'no refusal' policy.
- Moral guidance on celibacy, birth control, homosexuality, female priests, premarital sex. The world is moving rapidly towards change.

What are we called to do? Responses:

- Spread the Gospel—Bible studies—Groups such as CWCI and KYB are known for their dynamic Bible teachings.
- Encourage young people to come to church—HOW!
- Ask the youth
- Get young people involved in the readings, choirs, welcoming committee, bands, Eucharistic Ministry, overheads, music, etc.
- Church goes to become more involved in community activities, visiting the sick, entertaining in nursing homes, feeding the homeless, Scripture in schools, children activities during Mass, children Masses, especially Christmas and Easter, children acting out the Stations of the Cross, Nativity, etc.
- To look after the environment. Herald the Good News stories. Example: our church raised money for eco-toilets to be sent to Kiribati the smallest and poorest group of islands in the world.
- Herald 'Good News' stories, overseas missionaries. We only hear the negatives.
- Richer liturgical Masses, cultural Masses, e.g. Polish tradition of blessing of food at Easter.

- Address the needs of individual parishes, e.g. picking up elderly people from their homes, taking Holy Communion to the sick in hospitals, nursing homes, etc.
- After Mass gatherings.
- Less Dogma and more community involvement—better balance for priests between rituals and community involvement—Out and about at schools, community events. Our Parish Priest was praised for doing just that in the community by visiting the sick, visiting the homeless and while still doing all the daily ritual things.
- In small communities—use one church for all Christian denominations to save on insurance, rates, maintenance, etc.

Who are we called to be? Responses:

- We are called to be spiritual, but be prepared to change. Young people are spiritual. They need spiritual nourishment. They look to Yoga, meditation, walks on the beach, music.
- Publicity officers and carriers of good news in the community.
- We are called to be Christlike
- Spiritual leaders in our community.
- Caretakers of the earth.

To begin with, I think God is happy with the Church and that the Spirit is glad there is an accountability happening. I think the Church had lost its way for a while and now I think that God is asking more of his bride. I think he would ask that we give more of ourselves in the work of the Church to help each other. In the past we relied on the religious congregations to be the main support of the Church and her services. Today, for now at least, I think there is a need for more of the laity to be involved and to support our priests and religious who will continue to have a significant role within the Church. I think God is asking us to be open and transparent about our struggles with faith and the lives we are called to lead. Through our testimonies we can strengthen and embolden each other. The Church needs to be reconfigured from the ground up. There needs to be a groundswell of people owning their parishes and supporting the priests to spread the good news of the gospel. By adding the culture we already have, we can strengthen what good we have. The child and sexual abuse stories have been told and the Church needs to keep allowing itself to be transparent for people to begin to or continue to trust them. One way of supporting the priests could be to have each parish have a youth pastor or worker attached to it. Perhaps some training not too dissimilar to what Hillsong has designed could be initiated. Hillsong promotes the arts for worship as they shepherd and disciple the young ones in their care. Of course there would need to be a sacramental focus and perhaps a contemplative focus to help young ones understand the rich heritage of such prayer the Church has. I think there is a need to advertise more of what the laity can do for the Church. I do not know much about any of the lay person orders or deacon roles in the Church. How can I find a place where I can serve better or more? Whilst the church building is only a symbol of the body of Christ, the physical churches themselves could do with a revamp. God's house needs to be attractive and welcoming. When

parishioners take pride in their church, the local community cannot help but notice what is going in and get curious about the activity. One of the more pleasant churches I have been in within Australia is [-] in [-]. I used to walk for over an hour most weeks when I was a student there just to pray and sit by the glass near the tabernacle. Lastly, I think the Spirit is asking us to challenge each other and to be prepared to account for our faith in the coming years. I know this seems obvious, but perhaps in Australia we shall begin to be persecuted more publicly like some of our Christian neighbours living in Asia. We need to begin now to build momentum together so we can stand united and have a clear and unwavering voice. There is joy when the Spirit is at work within the body. I think we need to pray for joy as we go about rebuilding the Church from the roots up.

To be a more inclusive, tolerant and respectful society. Understand tradition but also the relevance of a modern society.

I believe God is asking us to: be prayerful, have integrity, be transparent, take up our lay baptismal responsibility of serving and catechising to be compassionate.

Youth.

The young need to be more part of the church. Show youth how to pray, involvement, opportunity to participate, witness. Make faith more of a reality to our young people (e.g. John Bosco). If we don't get the young to the Church we won't have a Church!

Environment.

We need to stand with the poor and the earth. Increase our care for the environment (Laudato Si').

Faith Formation.

To understand our religion and not take it for granted—develop formation programs—after Mass and for Children. More formalised knowledge of what Church /faith is about—teaching of the religion. Faith is not taught from the pulpit—show faith through works and actions—discipleship. We need to form ourselves and our faith—what we believe and why? Greater formation of our faithful and then sent out from the pews to mission.

Better participation in the Mass.

Masses for different groups (Aboriginal, Youth) more frequently. To share faith with anyone and anywhere. To evangelise and to learn how to evangelise, to build a church where families can grow. To trust and be trusted by the Clergy.

Traditions.

To value our traditions and to know about them (clergy preaching on this)—guidance. Be more like the Old Church—listen, accept and gather. Act as Jesus did, share with those less fortunate,

those in need or those who want more community—Jesus walked with all those shunned by society. Changes from Vatican II—reverence, no talk of sin etc.

Prayer.

To be more prayerful. Acknowledge the power of Prayer. Bring a sense of hope through prayer and actions. Pray for priests—shortage, time for them to be able to talk to more people (unavailable due to shortage), pressure (huge hours), support from the faithful (prayers). One day of adoration per year for the support of priests and their work, devotions to Mary (Rosary and scapula). Listen to Blessed mother. Show faith—to stand up for faith—discipleship.

Community & Inclusiveness.

Need to be more accessible, inclusive Church and community (especially for families)—welcoming all to the Church—more welcoming to other ways of life and beliefs. To gather around the Church—formalised development of family and community around the Church. Be more like Jesus to walk with people who need/want it (not just those who are part of our church, and not hierarchical). Stop Parishioners leaving the church. ‘Stem the flow’. A concern about those living together. Cups of tea and conversations to get to know the Parishioners—greetings after Mass Relive our gathering like Jesus. Need of family—strong belief of faith through growing up. Sit around the table and share. Understanding those in need. To recognise and overcome isolation of people.

Humility and love.

More aware of those in need—loved and respected. To reduce our arrogance—only way to God, more compassion. Humble from the top down. To love God.

The Holy Spirit wants the Catholic Church to welcome everyone & be inclusive to everyone. Including gay people, those with physical & mental health issues, refugees, married, single, divorced, widowed, children, youth, adults with all of our disabilities, abilities and talents. The Spirit wants us all to get to know, love and learn to trust each other and to care for our planet. The best way to do this is to encourage small community groups of justice, spiritual, environmental, age related, circumstance related such as support groups, etc. This is the way to develop faith through others and the Holy Spirit will guide us and show us the way. Use and encourage the talents of everyone.

To be open to the voice of young people so they can engage in a Church that is understanding, relevant and inclusive. We ask that the Church be more of a listener to the voice of the people. A greater understanding of different family structures—single families, same sex families etc. A greater recognition of women and the role they play in undertaking ministries within our Church. Some traditions e.g. songs are not appealing. Offer options to cater for all people. To become responsible stewards of the environment. Make this a priority. Cogs are very slow moving in the

Church and we need to make rapid change to deal with current issues. Model of Church is out of date. Distribute leadership to appropriate and competent laity.
I think God is asking us to be brave, contemplate and visualize ways we can be more inclusive to all humans in our day to day interactions. Remember the marginalized people as we must remember we are all equal. We need to remember the only rule to follow is love in all and everything.
To be still and know that I am God. Learn and teach contemplative prayer. Encourage silence in a world of noise and activity. A relationship with Jesus and others grounded in the Gospels.
To be quite clear to each other, and to the Australian people in general that we actually truly believe the full literal content of the Apostles Creed. That the second Vatican Council was not a mistake, a departure from orthodoxy, a betrayal of the true faith and that the liturgical form of the Eucharist is valid and valuable. That the Incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ was about obtaining salvation of each individual soul who puts their faith in Him. Our Lord was not a socialist social worker or a political reformer and He wants the souls of the rich as well as the poor, the strong as well as the weak, to respond and be saved. That the great progress in sciences such as in biology, astronomy, physics and psychology has not once and for all disproved the truths of the Bible about the creation of the cosmos, the origin of life and the special nature of human persons as both biological and spiritual.
I think God is asking us to stand firm in our core beliefs that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Saviour. We need to be a strong and united voice to stand against the moral decline and erosion of our beliefs in the sacredness of life. We need to put our faith in God and Church and gospel teachings above popular and secular teaching. We also need to be a friendly and welcoming Church. Sadly, many people go to Mass on Sunday and are left alone except for a welcome and sign of peace. We need to talk to people after Mass and get to know them.
I believe that God is asking us to follow our faith and to “stick with it” despite the many challenges thrown up to us to question the Church and its teachings. I believe that God is welcoming us to feel part of a community and to share ownership, participation and responsibility for our Church.
I believe that God is asking the Church to complete the transition begun with Vatican II. Conservative Catholics have had time to wind back Vatican II’s momentum for change and the decline in vocations, adherence, and attendance are testimony to our parlous current situation.
I think God wants us to be better Christians. We should unite as Christians and stand up against things that we know are wrong especially where it concerns the education of our children who are the future of our country. If we allow our children to be corrupted and indoctrinated with the wrong ideas then what chance does our country have for a future
‘We’ are the Church and I believe that the higher echelon forgets that sometimes. So, it is with gratitude that the Plenary Council has been convened. The higher echelon of our Church needs to acknowledge that they have dealt with our recent past history poorly. ‘They’ need to seek forgiveness from those they have harmed. They need to kneel before all of the Church and confess that which troubles them and that which troubles the Body of the Church. In actual fact that is probably ‘what God is asking of us in Australia at this time’ —“what are we as a whole

Church going to do to find healing because of our recent past?" Our journey forward cannot begin until we have dealt with it. We are all responsible for healing within the Church. We all need to be involved with the answer! Until this happens we cannot move forward no matter how many answers the Plenary Council receives in answer to question one. Having said that, I think God is asking us to consider the Church's mismanagement of the potential of women within the Church. In my eyes, for many years women have been treated as subservient members of the Church. I agree that there has been a little change with women becoming involved in parish life but nowhere near appropriate nor in many leadership roles.

To start with we need Prayer and Penance, to make us strong Warriors of our faith. We need to stand up and have our say about our convictions. Don't just pray about it, HE needs our help too. God will hold our hands and help us all the way, but we MUST be His voice and his Instrument. For instance if you don't agree with something i.e. abortions, then put it out there on Facebook, etc. Show people that you care, don't just bury your heads in the sand and be as weak as water which also buries our faith. GOD WILL HELP US AS LONG AS WE HELP HIM. If people don't agree, then don't let it bother you, maybe their way can be changed. I can tell you that God cares and gives us many blessings for continuing His work as we not only build our faith but the faith of the Clergy too. Keep up the good work, [-].

I think God is asking us to "Come back to me with all your heart"; to believe and trust Him. This can only be achieved by a renewal of the practice of the Presence of God, taught, maybe, by Monastics; prayer.

God is asking that we as Catholics commit to more participation in the life of the Church and more sharing of our faith. I also believe God is asking us to reach out and connect to the youth and believe a Youth Syndicate should be formed for 12-16 year olds and 17-30 year olds. Redemptorist, Paulist priests were great spiritual guides and leaders in the past so we should explore whether Australia has any of these who could help guide and lead Catholic faith formation. Music is another issue—we should use modern hymns for modern times. More women should be included in senior lay roles within the Church as they should be involved in decision making. We need to refocus our efforts on creating prayer groups to ensure all we do comes from prayer and listening to God's voice.

We think God is asking us to enrich parish life by being a welcoming, caring and inclusive community that lives the Gospel value through LOVE IN ACTION. We believe we must be better at welcoming new comers and should explore small group networks so that parishioners are known and valued in our parishes.

For the Church to give greater voice to the laity especially women. For the bishops to have the courage of their convictions For the Church to be more inclusive and forgiving and less judgemental.

We must hold on to the faith and do not alter it to fit the times—we must practice one faith. We must reform the management of parishes. Restore the outreach work of parishes and dioceses by recognising the role we can play in the community and engaging with it. As individual members of the Church we should challenge ourselves to do something for someone outside our immediate

<p>family every day. We should look for a method and style of delivery of the faith that meets the needs of our community members.</p>
<p>I think God wants us to have a relationship with Him, to spend time with Him daily in conversation that is speaking to Him in prayer and listening for His responses. His response comes to us through the Church and God also speaks to us in our hearts as a country I think God wants us to stand for Christian values, to speak up when we know things are wrong, to be tolerant, not complacent. Also if in doubt about Church teaching, find out. It's God's Church. Church teaching is God's teaching.</p>
<p>God is asking us to listen to the Holy Spirit and put his love and charisms into action with all people, old, young, churchd or not. More education is needed so all Catholics know what our faith really is now, post Vatican II without so much confusion from false news via media or hearsay. We need to reach out to the needy, especially Aboriginal people before our Church can be authentic. Not longer just Sunday Catholics but help refugees, shut-ins, isolated non-practicing Catholics. Our schools need to be a major area for evangelisation, no expense spared and teachers must be authentic examples of practicing Catholics for the children and parishes. Therefore Catholic school teachers need more spiritual guidance and more expected from them as authentic Catholics. I suppose my message is for our Church to be authentic and spirit driven. The Catholic schools have become mainly non-Catholic, what a shame to us all. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are real and need to be taught and practiced, reinvigorating practices such as adoration and praise and worship sessions with inspired teachers need to go to every parish. The “Missionaries of God’s Love” lead by Fr [-], are a good example of what we need in Australian Catholic Churches and they have a growing community. We need more like them for the future to be hopeful.</p>
<p>I think God is asking us to be a community of loving, welcoming, accepting Christians. He is asking us to go back to basics and love like Jesus loved. Welcome everyone without judgement. God would be excited to see the young people in our community returning to the Church with enthusiasm and passion. God would be so thrilled to see young people celebrating and singing his praises in a way that touches their soul. The opportunities that young people have today to connect with other young people of faith are so much better than they were when I was a teenager. This creates a sense of belonging that these young people will carry with them for the rest of their lives. I feel that God would want the Church to allow everyone, regardless of their faith background, to participate fully in the gathering for the Eucharist. I find it hard to believe that Jesus would have turned people away from a meal because they didn't understand the theological background of the celebration of the Eucharist. I don't think John the Baptist would have requested that people who want to be baptised do an 8-month course before they can be baptised. I think God would be disappointed at the people (including some clergy) who sit in the church and judge people before they know them. I think that God would welcome any person who feels they may be called to the Sacrament of Holy Orders—male, female, married, single. WHAT would JESUS Do? This should be at the heart of decision making in the Catholic Church.</p>
<p>What God is asking of us today is what he asked of us 2000, 1000, 500 years ago and yesterday? To care, to love & to forgive selflessly all people.</p>
<p>To follow in Jesus’ footsteps (his example, lead by example).</p>

Help & support others—mindful of those in need.

Showing God in yourself and allowing in others.

Continuous good work through actions—humility.

Proper community (inclusiveness):

- Cares for and is mindful of greater community
- Share openly
- Not be exclusive
- Non-judgemental
- More involvement of the laity (Allowing all to become priests -women/married persons)
- Women in the Church
- Options, respect for all
- Be relevant and current
- Outreach
- What are we going to do to get more involvement?
- The Our Father has no 'I' in it
- Focus on 'us' not 'me' for a collective focus
- Allowing non-Catholics to take small steps in faith, to ask questions and get involved. Increase engagement
- Collective (we, us), not enough interaction to make people (including those from other churches) welcome
- We need more connection through prayer.

Review of Canon Law—relevance to today's society

Make Mass more engaging (not necessarily more entertaining)

Alternative celebrations of the Eucharist:

- more than Mass
- engagement/improvement
- communicate with each other
- time to reflect Living Gospel values
- Gospel is baseline, no dilution of values, retaining spirituality (increase engagement)

Modernity—true to values, roles, spirituality vs engagement

Engagement of youth (Early education—from birth contact, talk to kids earlier about God, develop the connection of Church right at the beginning)

<p>Continue good work with youth</p> <p>Healing—way we can use this to advance healing in the Church (including Sexual Abuse victims and LGBTI community)—this should be a focus, don't make it token, follow it through until it's done!</p>
<p>As Catholic high school teachers, God is asking us to recognise and acknowledge the need for change. He is asking us to find new ways to deepen our faith in this era of change. The faith development of individual teachers needs to be strengthened by formation, witness and modelling by others. Teachers need to have experiences and opportunities to attend events that convert their hearts and deepen their faith.</p>
<p>God wants us to think and pray and listen to the Holy Spirit and then impart our thoughts to the Church hierarchy and he asks us to explain to the bishops and priests that they need to be shepherds not dictators, loving to all not judgemental, and accepting of all their people not just accepting of the ones that fit their idea of the ideal parishioner.</p>
<p>That as a Church we return to the values of Jesus as exemplified and enunciated by him during his life on earth. Specifically but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - His care for children. - The inclusion of both men and women as his followers and close friends. - His attitude to wealth and how it should be used. - His concern for the poor, sick and disadvantaged. - His words regarding the religious authorities of his time e.g., laying heavy burdens on others, their own perks (places of honour, manner of dress). <p>For the last two thousand years men (mainly men) have been adding layer upon layer of rules, regulations, customs and commands to what Jesus specified as required for eternal life. Namely: love God, love your neighbour as you love yourself.</p>
<p>My biggest concern for the Church is that its structure seems to deny it the opportunity to develop self-awareness or be critical in its position on itself. Everyone who is involved in any decision making is obliged to accept the directives of those higher up and the people at the top are surrounded by people who accept that the priest/bishop/pope is always right. This has hamstrung the Church and it is unable to be progressive because any change would be accepting that someone somewhere was wrong. We cling to doctrine based on an interpretation of texts that are 2000 years old. Sometimes it seems no one is aware of the irony in the texts when Jesus is imploring the Pharisees to ignore the dogma and embrace the central overriding tenet of love. The Church was somehow able to reconcile Jesus' teaching that accepted slavery as part of society of his time. I hope that they believe that had Jesus been born later he would have fought for the liberty of all people. In the same way I hope that the Church is able to accept that it is an outdated interpretation of society where women are excluded from the highest positions in the Church. To ignore the fact that women would have been punished for being part of Jesus inner circle 2000 years ago, possibly stoned for adultery for being the company of men they were not married to, would be wilful ignorance. The fact that a pope a hundred years might have still been able to</p>

ignore this in a patriarchal society, or that he might want to support the infallibleness of his predecessors over 2000 years has created a problem where the Church is dragged kicking and screaming in to the sort of fair and just society it should be promoting. It would also be wonderful if the Church leaders could spend as much energy speaking out publically against war or for preferential treatment of the poor, or for stewardship of the environment as they have in trying to prevent same sex marriage or in protecting government funding for Catholic schools. These are the only two issues that seem important enough for the Church leadership to become publically active. This gives the public the impression that Jesus' Church is one of greed and exclusion. The Church's position on both issues is problematic.

To make a radical reassessment of its structure and practices. To improve its liturgical work considerably. Somehow or other, we need to encourage congregations to sing with less inhibition and to encourage men to do more forthcoming for choir work. Altar servers to be drawn from all levels in the parish from both male and female.

God is asking us, the Church in Australia, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk with our sisters and brothers with humility. To offer an inclusive place for all, especially those who we have traditionally rejected—the widow today is represented by the separated and divorced, same sex couples, women who are denied a rightful place in clerical leadership, and above and beyond all else, victims of church abuse perpetrated by those in the Church who claim leadership roles they do not deserve. To be inclusive we must first, as a Church, take responsibility for our failure to keep children safe. This is not just a matter of saying sorry, or making financial recompense, although helpful, it is not until the Church in Australia starts to act within the law of this country and all leaders take it upon themselves to become mandatory reporters of child sex abuse, regardless of the seal of Confession that we can even claim to have listened to the abused. Jesus put children first, and it is time we followed His example. Until we do so, we, the Church, cannot claim we are doing God's work. All our good work is tainted and undermined by those in Church leadership who think they are above the law of our God, our country, and the international laws protecting the rights of the child.

1. To embrace all people.

- As Christians to show more love to each other and the wider community.
- To share what we have and care for those that are struggling.
- We are a multicultural society—to be more tolerant and understanding and to love all people no matter their race or cultural background.
- More support and recognition of Indigenous people.
- Refugees—the people of Australia need to come together to help refugees. As the Catholic Church we need to put pressure on the government to do more to aid refugees. Our current treatment of them is disgraceful and embarrassing.
- Need to love one another.

2. Lead people into a relationship with God.

- Come back to me—need to know God. How do we bring people into a relationship with God?
- Reach out to those that do not know God or have lost touch with God.
- Church needs to move from intellectual to the heart through contemplative prayer, reading scripture etc. Need to sit and listen to the Holy Spirit—this is the key to move forward. Reliving Pentecost—Apostles and Mary had to receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost before they could go out. We also need this before we can go out to people. We need to listen to the movement of the Holy Spirit. To ask each day “What does God want me to do today”?

3. To be missionary disciples.

- This is our responsibility as the baptised Church.
- Everyone needs to know they have a role to play in regards to ministry, that they have something to offer. No matter how small, all are important.
- Work with God’s bucket and spade not ours.
- To be more welcoming – we (Catholic Church) can appear cold and unwelcoming.
- Need to show “joy”.

4. To care for the environment.

5. Re-education of our core beliefs/values.

6. Focus on youth—how do we reach out to youth and bring them into a relationship with God?

Response to Plenary Council ‘Survey’. What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time? God wants from us what ‘He’ has always wanted: Love of God and love of our neighbour. The role of the Church is to help us in this endeavour. Love of God. The Church has many strategies in place to help us express our love of God. Foremost among those is Church liturgy. I grew up in the fifties when the Mass was in Latin and the expectation seemed to be that the laity were observers of mystical rites. Vatican II changed all that: the Mass was in English, the priest faced us and we were invited to be active participants in the liturgy of the day. We read, acted as acolytes, composed prayers of the faithful, took Communion to the sick, were members of Parish Councils that advised on more temporal affairs. The readings were accessible—the language was contemporary—and there were various forms of worship for different occasions. Then in 2005(?) it all changed. Back to a style of worship that I felt I had left behind years before. The language of this ‘new’/‘revised’/‘more authentic’ liturgy was flowery; full of religiosity (‘His Holy and venerable hands’); legalistic (‘consubstantial’); and lacking in true meaning. The parts of the Mass are written in a way that is often obscure and the impersonality of the prayers makes them inaccessible to the ordinary faithful. The focus seems to have returned to the priest. There seems to be a big emphasis on correctness and the humanity has disappeared from what should be

celebrations. I do not understand this need to return to traditional forms of worship: our social world is constantly changing and evolving. We should not be afraid to let our Liturgy do the same. With the 'new' Liturgy, one of the great casualties has been the music that has been abandoned. For the sake of a few changed words, whole Mass settings have been shelved. New Masses have been written, but especially the earliest ones put more emphasis on the correct text than on the music which so enhances our worship. Some traditional ceremonies are downright grim—instance the 3.00 pm ceremonies on Good Friday. The reading of the Passion is entirely appropriate—but does the part of Jesus always have to be taken by the priest? And as for the General Intercessions, they smack of self-satisfaction and condescension, as we pray for those who are not as enlightened as we! Reconciliation has always been important in our Church, and we need to acknowledge our failings. However, the use of the Third Rite of Reconciliation in the lead up to Christmas and Easter would be a big improvement, and a positive means of attracting more of our community to prepare for those feasts. There is great power in that ceremony.

I think God is asking the questions. Where do we go from here? How do we resolve the problem of sexual abuse and help victims of this abuse? Is enough being done to prevent ongoing sexual abuse by perpetrators in the Church? We need open and transparent dialogue. Free independent counselling for victims of abuse. The Church needs to engage parents of youth, and encourage a return to the faith. Catholic schools have become more interested in providing education on a monetary level and less on religious teaching. Not enough encouragement to parents to provide a religious and spiritual upbringing at home for their children, instead relying just on the schools to provide religious instruction. More active participation in providing group activities such as Spiritual Exercises and meditation. Each parish should provide a weekly meal for the homeless and utilise the parish halls for more charitable functions, reaching out to all of the community regardless of faith. We should be concentrating also on the environment and global warming. What can we contribute to help our planet survive? The rule of celibacy should be removed, to allow priests to marry if they desire. More woman should be engaged in religious service and given a voice in the important issues that threaten the Catholic faith. The Church at present needs to be challenged to be honest and open, more engaged and down to earth. Open the doors to unity and love, and let it shine from the pulpits.

I believe GOD is asking us to do what he did, involve women at all levels of the Church. God entrusted the life of his son to a women, that women, Mary, carried Jesus for nine months and then gave birth to Him, Mary then nursed and cared for Jesus, as all mothers do in those first years of life. Mary was then with Jesus all his life. Mary (a woman) is the only person to be raised body and soul to heaven. If God was so trusting of a woman then why are the leaders of the Church so blinded to the value and worth of including women at ALL levels of the Church. Do the leaders of the church know more than God? It is time Church leaders elevated Women to full membership (clergy) of the Church and follow God's lead.

We believe God is calling us to be welcoming, joyful and just. Forgiving of individuals. We are being called to reconciliation, forgiveness and love. We are called to be humble and to do "IT" Gods way. Learning to listen to The Spirit. We need to have a greater understanding of God. More understanding of the process of the Mass. Faith Formation is a key area of need. More laity

involved in the formation of priests and governing bodies. More transparency with problem issues.
To look at how we treat refugees and to address the divide between the haves and the have nots
<p>I think God is saying stop making my church an exclusive church that does not welcome all my children. So many people have been hurt by the Church often because if man made rules that do not uphold Jesus words—love one another as I have loved you. Would Jesus turn away divorced people, gay people, not welcome other Christians to the table let alone other faiths. ‘Acceptance before conversion’ —Jesus came for all people not just those fortunate enough to have been born into a Catholic family. Is the priestly state a healthy way to live? Why can’t priests be married? Why can’t women be priests? Why does the Catholic Church always appear as a ‘boys club’? There are wonderful , strong faith filled women in our Church who could also minister to God’s flock, indeed religious sisters have supported so many throughout the years. So many mothers have been the religious beacons for their families yet are still so often not afforded an equal say and an equal role in our Church. Why do we make it so difficult for people to be baptised into the faith, to receive the sacraments and to be accepted as a full member of our Church? Jesus accepted all people. He rebelled against man made rules that stopped people from experiencing the fullness of God’s love and forgiveness. The rampant child abuse in the Church needs to be acknowledged and those victims made to feel heard and accepted. The Church needs to say “we have made grave mistakes”. It was not the victim’s fault. They should not have to be let down again by a church that does not strongly condemn the mistakes of the past and make concrete efforts to change so that such things cannot happen again.</p>
To help and support the youth—the future of the Catholic Church.
I believe he is asking for us as Australians to love, respect, have peace, caring, helpful to others, putting families in line with faith, join mass for families and build a forgiving world and people.
<p>God is asking us to stop discriminating against same sex marriage. If Canon Law cannot be changed to allow same sex marriage to occur in the Catholic Church, at least recognise and embrace the choices of individuals and be inclusive of all. Jesus told us to love one another as I have loved you. This is not happening in regards to same sex couples and marriage.</p> <p>God is asking us to allow priests to marry or have a partner. This will make them more relatable to their congregations and the people they marry (through the sacrament of marriage). Choosing God over a family is a difficult and antiquated choice—why are they mutually exclusive? The number of priests is diminishing and this may allow more people to choose to join the priesthood</p> <p>God is asking us to embrace the role of women in the Church. In our changing society where men and women have equal rights, women are still discriminated against by not being able to hold high positions within the Church. A person's biological sex should not exclude them from a mission they may wish to pursue such as being a priest. Jesus loved everyone and the ancient and outdated tradition of His time where men were the only trusted and powerful is long gone.</p>
Get back to the basic teachings of JESUS...not the 'Church'. The faith has been corrupted through greed, power, control of people and structures that have allowed these damaging values to

flourish. The teachings of Jesus have been lost amidst this human construct. Seriously, if we believe that Jesus is God, then we have to ask ourselves what Jesus would do if he was in our midst in 2019...and quite frankly we think he would be disappointed in many aspects of the 'structure' of the Church and most impressed with those who are working at the grass roots level to bring about addressing those most marginalised in our society.

That priests be allowed to stay at the one parish as long as possible. They are lonely, and need to form lifetime friendships to be able to cope with the long term struggle of being a priest.

God is asking us to stand up for our convictions. To be vocal and spread our beliefs throughout the world.

God wants us to accept everyone, without judgement. He asks us to be witnesses; to show Christian values in our interactions with others: love, mercy, compassion, grace, reconciliation and forgiveness. God wants us to go out and tell others about the love that God has for all people. He wants us to reach out to everyone, regardless of the situation or circumstances they find themselves in. It is up to God to forgive sins, not people to make judgements about who and who isn't welcome as part of the Church, particularly people who are divorced and remarried or members of the LGBT community. The youth are essential to sustaining this message. We need to be a sign of the times, not seen as an archaic tradition with very little to offer the young people as active members of the Church. Include the youth in the music and prayer life as part of a worshipping community. The clergy need to be less authoritative and more compassionate and nurturing and on the same page as the people, especially in light of sexual abuse scandal. The lay people need to take up the mantle, taking on a more active role in the parish, if necessary, employing a greater number of people, including youth officers. We need to be in service of the church and its social teachings - preferential option for the poor, common good and human dignity.

To be a shining light of hope, kindness and humility for all people.

I think that God is asking us to spread love and healing. It is our personal relationship with God that counts. God wants everyone to love everyone else. I think God wants to appeal to all people—single, married, gay, young and old. I think he wants a balanced Church where there are Australian female priests, priests who are allowed to marry and have children—then they would understand married people better, families and children and themselves better and be happier people. They would be able to preach to the people at grass roots level on practical issues that families face. Maybe special parishioners could be used to preach, give out Communion (hosts already blessed by the priests). The second rite of Reconciliation could maybe be used more regularly especially in large or outlying Parishes. I think God is asking where have all the young people gone from the Church and why can't we update and make Mass and Bible studies more relevant, fun and interesting led by special young Priests who are purely working with youth and young adults? Maybe other Christian Churches could teach us how it's done. We need specially trained Youthful Priests to lead Masses, preach and make God relevant in our High Schools. This is where we need to improve and where our captive audience is. Encourage the youth to do more service in the

community—led by High Schools and Youthful Priests. Music, sermons and our Masses need to be more joyful, relevant and uplifting.
I believe God is wanting all Catholics and Christians to unite and be inclusive for all. Culture, race, sexual identity, socio-economic status should not affect anyone's ability to receive the Sacraments and be part of a faith filled community. In light of the sexual abuse concerns, the Catholic Church should have a transparent, honest and genuine compensatory process in place. All clergy and religious should be called to re-new their commitment to God, giving the (Not yet convicted) guilty individuals an opportunity to confess and be removed from their roles to avoid the unforgiving lies many are continuing to hide behind. Thank you for this opportunity.
God doesn't change so the same as we should always be doing which is worshipping God and serving others.
<p>Prayer & action for ongoing renewal of Catholic Church that includes deep commitment by the faithful within the pressures of our current cultural environment.</p> <p>After watching 'Four Corners' & 'Q&A' on ABC TV Monday 4.3.2019 I don't know that I think God is asking me anything as I am too overwhelmed, angry and disillusioned by the apparent large cover up by the clerical Church of these many offences damaging victims. I, like many Catholics I think, cannot understand how many of those we trusted could allow this to happen secretly while still outwardly professing their faith.</p> <p>That our Catholic faith be "no longer based on fear & guilt".</p>
<p>Submission to Plenary Council from [-] 12th February group Page 1 of 1 CONCERN FOR FUTURE OF CHURCH AND THE FAITH OF COMING GENERATIONS—includes most under 70! Issues for later generations. Thinking that only rational science is true. Not thinking that God and Jesus are relevant to their lives—even when they have some faith. Too busy to even consider going to Church. Hostile media. Rejection of hierarchical authority. Distrust of all institutions especially the Church. Ways to engage later generations. First we need to get to know them. Use social media. Connect through music. Have gatherings at their levels (not all the same)—relevant to their interests, their social conscience issues—relevant to age—especially sacramental programs—not just satisfying some formality. Massive prayer campaign for later generations. Always include specific prayer for youth in Prayers of the Faithful—Different selections of prayers each week. Always include extra prayers for later generations—perhaps at the end of Mass—perhaps the Lord's prayer, the Hail Mary and Glory be—similar to past campaigns for Russia, the Berlin Wall and South Africa. Have special intercession occasions—e.g. novena to Our Lady Help of Christians. We, the Church, must be more Jesus and Holy Spirit focused. Not just colourful human ideas and programs—We, the Church, need to pray, pray, pray—Our outreach programs must be Holy Spirit inspired and Jesus oriented—We, the Church, need to all be more like Jesus—not just for our own growth in holiness but as a matter of urgency for the future of the later generations—We need to be the living Gospel Good News. [-]</p>
Revitalise the relationship and trust between clergy and laity in the first instance. Once this has been achieved satisfactorily, set about restoring the relationship between the Church—destroyed

in large part by illegal clergy behaviour—and the community. Reconstruct part of our worship program so that it reaches out to young people who seek the Lord's message but in a form that they can relate to. While accepting the crimes and sins of the few reflect on us all, do not be cowed by this in our relationship with the wider community, rather engage and go on with our community support role. Reform the training of priests to bring them closer to parishes for community engagement after an initial period of about 18/12. Subsequent training can be done online in small groups in half day sessions from parishes designated for the role.

God is asking us in Australia to become the world leaders in holiness by worshipping God, without being swayed by politics, media hype and atheistic ideals. God needs us to take a strong stand in front of the whole world to speak up for His Kingdom. This takes courage for our Church leaders to be wise and outspoken on issues of abortion, same sex marriage and false claims and scare tactics of so-called "global warming". God wants brave courageous leaders and laymen of the Catholic Church to fight against these terrible false claims of the non-believing world, which we know is dominated by Satan. I feel that our Church leaders needed to speak up against the recent same-sex marriage proposal. I realise that some bishops and priests did so. However, I felt there was a lack of strength and fortitude by some of our leaders in speaking out loud and clear about the wrongfulness of "same sex" marriage, especially to our Catholic community. Some of our leaders have not mentioned much about the wrongfulness of abortion and euthanasia. Perhaps I'm naive in thinking that it is their duty to do so, but if the priests and bishops do not speak to the Catholic community, there can be complacency within the Catholic Church. Strong leadership from our high Church leaders (even as high up as the pope, especially when it comes to the falsehood of global warming) is wanting. Our Church needs more strength of conviction from our leaders in matters of euthanasia, abortion and same sex marriage.

That we invite our Indigenous brothers and sisters to dialogue and exchange of ideas to make a more inclusive church and society and recognise and appreciate their contribution. That we uphold gospel values in all our dealings especially involving the poor, the homeless and those with mental health issues and become a voice for the voiceless. That we trust in the Holy Spirit to instil the courage to make our voices heard in all areas of society and thereby work towards practical outcomes.

Stop being fearful and reactionary. Step forward with faith, hope and innovation. Let the laity take up their baptismal promise. It's time for all members of the Church to play their part.

The Catholic Church has gone through major changes in its long history. By taking the name of St Francis, our present pope has demonstrated that he wants the Church to return to a more simplistic setting. We should therefore be prepared for significant changes in the future Catholic church. Celibacy. The present crisis of child and adult sexual abuse within the Catholic Church is very embarrassing for many Catholics. While many priests can cope with celibacy, others obviously struggle. As Paul states in Corinthians 7: "Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." The role of women in the Church. Apart from Mary the mother of Christ, the importance of women in the Church has long been neglected. We might recall that Mary Magdalen was the first person to witness the risen Christ. Is that not remarkably significant? There is documentary series currently being shown on ABC' Compass.

Entitled Jesus' Female Disciples—The New Evidence, this programme shows how women played important roles in the early church as disciples of Christ. I think the leaders of the Catholic Church should watch this programme and reconsider the role of women in the male dominated Church. I believe that women should supervise and oversee young altar servers and be granted important positions within the hierarchy of the Church.
God must be horrified to see His Church in such a mess. I think He asking the Church to go forward not backward, live in the present, to face up to its mistakes and STOP protecting its image & clergy at the expense of innocents. Be humble, listen to the faithful.
To remain loyal to our faith. To show love & compassion to our fellow men and women.
Prayer to pray for our pope Francis.
I think he would like us all to be more like the young people who have the energy and confidence to show their enthusiasm and devotion e.g. WYD and similar. Perhaps older ones could support them financially and with prayer. Basically, don't be so complacent
To know, in stillness, who the Holy Spirit is. To pray for guidance & knowledge of parishioners to be leaders of our community in faith. To be faithful to the "Joy of the Gospel". To pray, to be vigilant, & to attend our Community Mass Celebrations.
God is asking us to pray for everything in our beliefs will be heard, for the Good News of God's word to be heard by all people young and old.
To show love and respect to all people. To follow his word. To pray often for a better world, to end evil and to enjoy what he has given to us. To pray for peace. Pray for sick and lonely of our community.
To be patient and faith-filled during these difficult times.
I believe God is asking of us to continue to LISTEN to the words of Jesus—to repent, believe in Jesus and the Good News, and LIVE the Faith of the Catholic Church and be a LIGHT to the Australian community and the world. To be HOLY. Holy bishops, priests & religious and all baptised Christians to be HOLY. Be not lukewarm!! To be UNITED—Jesus prayed that we would be ONE and united—as He and the Father are ONE. God is / has asked us to LISTEN to Jesus' mother at Fatima - Have we listened? The world would be in a better place if the Church's hierarchy had listened and passed on the message to the laity. How many young ones know the message of Fatima and Our Lady's request to pray the Rosary every day? The reflection on the Mysteries of the Rosary protects the basic beliefs of the Catholic Faith. Jesus also asked us to LISTEN to HIM through His messages to St Faustina—how well have we listened??? There isn't even UNITY between the bishops and priests leading and joining with the laity with the celebration of the Feast of Divine Mercy that Jesus HIMSELF requested be the Sunday after Easter. The important message here is of the great Mercy of the Sacrament of Confession that the "Easter Crowds"—which sadly are getting smaller in number—are not being given this information given to us by Jesus. St John Paul II called this to be a Universal Feast Day. God is asking us to be UNITED as One in Australia..... This can only happen when our bishops are united in their mission for Australia's Catholics. Bishops need to be UNITED so they can pass on this unity of purpose and functioning to their Priests. PRIESTS need to be united to their bishop and UNITED to one another, so they can

let this unity continue to flow into their parishes—this then will unite the laity to all priests, all bishops and to our pope who they should all be united and supportive. There needs to be fraternal correction when needed. We need to be united to the teachings of the Catholic Church, faithful to the gospel and in communion with the Catechism which outlines the basic beliefs of the Catholic Church and Catholic Faith. With the present hurts and scandals caused by members of Christ's Church, we need to be called to repentance and conversion. MOST IMPORTANT—The leaders of the Church also need to name the HOMOSEXUAL influence and lobby within the CHURCH. The Leaders of the Church need to be brave and courageous and not follow the "worldly" way of the LGBT+++++ & Homosexual Agenda. We need to be ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC and APOSTOLIC. Each parish needs to be the best version of itself that it can be. "Parish" naturally includes our Catholic Schools.

Equip suitable and willing lay persons of all ages, married or single, through educational training for ministry within the Church as Lay Pastoral Leaders or Pastoral Associates. A major and ongoing component of this training would be the deepening and growth of their spirituality through retreats, providing valuable prayer and experiences. Also basic training in theology and Bible studies, the Church and the teachings of the 2nd Vatican Council, liturgy, the Mass, and the Sacraments of the Church. On completion of their training course, on taking up a position in a parish, that they be paid a just and fair salary for their services.

That we provide more combined church's ecumenical experiences, especially with the Anglican and Uniting Churches. E.g. Shared blessing of the Palms on Palm Sunday, shared Pentecost liturgies or celebrations, e.g. Catholics and Anglican congregations share.

There is an urgent need for the Church—the local parish—to connect with the real people, with people who struggle with issues of all kinds. There is a dire need for parishes to have designated PARISH VISITORS to call on and visit the people in their homes, to let them know the Church cares. E.g. Single people (young and old) families, single parent families, unemployed, sick and frail persons, elderly, (some living alone) as well as parishioners who are practising their faith together. The Pentecost and Liturgy of the Word.

God is asking us to bring the liturgy alive—to make it vibrantly beautiful. God is saying: "Look to the eastern religions, see how their sacred chanting brings the Holy Spirit into them moment by moment. See how joyfully they love God. See how fully alive, how vibrant they are. Your people have been leaving in droves for decades, nobody is coming to fill their place and you can't work out why? They long for the honest beauty of deep connection, for intimacy, vibrancy and authenticity. They long to fully open their hearts and lungs, to cry out in joy or sorrow—Here I am Lord! But they remain timid, disconnected, disillusioned and half dead. The meaning of the liturgy may be pure but its power to connect is sadly lacking. You have made it dull. You made a mistake when you gave up the chanting because chanting is the quick way to open hearts and connect with me. But remember there is chanting that is alive and there is chanting that is dead. Then having done the chanting make good time for stillness so that the chanting can complete its work of bringing inner unity." Somewhere in the Bible it says: "Be still and know that I am God". Most of us are slaves to the demands of our chattering minds—slaves to our constantly changing thoughts

and emotions. Most of us fear silence. Most of us don't know how to be still. God is asking us to stop obeying our wild and wilful minds. God is asking us to slow down—to remember we are part of nature, not separate nor above. God is asking us to embrace simplicity, stillness, silence and deep listening. God is asking us to go deeply into silent prayer through meditation and contemplation—to reside with him in the warm, glowing vault of love within each of our hearts. God is asking us to open up to him at the deepest level so that we awaken to his all-encompassing love, compassion, joy, equanimity and wisdom—all of which lies within us. He is asking us to become aware of our every action. He is asking us to surrender to him and just "be". God is asking us be fully human.

I don't think our objective has changed, we are still required to go out and preach the gospel, but I feel that today we are not taught enough of what our faith is traditionally speaking, so people fall back on "it's a private/personal walk", because we are ignorant of our faith teachings.

God is asking us to reach out more to others and not to be so judgmental. To be a more welcoming and loving community and not place so much emphasis on rights and wrongs..."rules".

My daughter and I sat and had a conversation about the question 'What is God asking of us in Australia at this time?' My daughter is a 23 years old, single, female—here is her response:

- To feel acceptance and love within a community for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation
- Church seems homophobic, strict, conservative...
- Gay people think they are hated by the Church—We need to create an environment where people feel safe enough to ask questions
- Everyone has a unique place in this world
- No 1 commandment of Jesus was to show love
- Ability to love God
- Pope Francis is the role model for where our Church should be heading
- Don't worry about other stuff
- Encourage self-love, give confidence so that all people feel loved and accepted no matter what.

I am a 55 year old, married person (celebrating 30th anniversary this year) with two adult children. Here is my response:

- Promote healing and peace
- Inspire those who have been discouraged or hurt by the Church or others to be open to Jesus and turning back to God
- Be witnesses to God's goodness
- To sacrifice to His will
- Forgiveness (as Jesus did)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humility, Rest in Him. • Now is the time to serve • To speak up for Him.
<p>I think God is asking us to look deeper into our lives as individuals, families and communities and to be more accepting of ourselves and each other in this changing world we live in.</p>
<p>God is asking us to be real followers of Jesus Christ responding with love and compassion to all. To be a welcoming and faith filled community, to pray and have a deeper relationship with God.</p>
<p>As a Catholic Australian, I believe that God is asking me to live my life in a manner that reflects my Catholic faith as the base in all my endeavours. Therefore, my relationships with family, friends and the wider community need to be carried out using the basic tenets of love, honesty fairness and accepting of all people regardless of background or ethnicity. In addition I also believe that God is asking me as a Catholic to be actively involved in my local parish. Attending Mass at least on Sunday's helping out with some ministries of which I may have some aptitude and supporting the priests and nuns in their work and treating them as you would treat your own personal family.</p>
<p>(1) Generally speaking Catholic liturgies are very ritualistic and formal, shows of pomp at times and a puzzle and not welcoming to those not yet part of Church. We should seek and encourage simplicity and spontaneity in liturgy and remove some of the nit-picking directions, e.g. that music in liturgies must be live and not recorded.</p> <p>(2) "By their fruits you shall know them" and "Faith without good works is dead". Church should be fearless, and more visible, in matters of social justice—active and obvious on issues such as homelessness, poverty, the environment, refugees and the like. Church should fill gaps not met by government agencies. Once this was through establishing schools, hospitals and aged care but perhaps we should have less involvement now in those areas and move to address other more current needs. We should publicly show "Care and Concern" at a local community level and more broadly.</p> <p>(3) I believe we are called to address issues where traditional Church teaching has estranged many, especially issues of contraception and divorce. Women are definitely not meant to be in a constant state of child-bearing, and through scientific development the good Lord has provided harmless means, other than by using the frequently-unsuccessful 'natural methods', of ensuring this does not have to be the case. Likewise the often sneeringly referred to "Catholic Divorce" through Marriage Tribunals is a standing joke! Instead of finding marriages officially null/void based on technicalities and hair-splitting, the exercise of conscience by those concerned, as to whether a marriage with a former partner actually continues to exist if it ever did exist, should be greater—and there should be encouragement for individuals to feel able to make this judgement.</p> <p>(4) The Church in Australia, and more broadly, should be open-minded on the nature of clergy: married clergy would be a wonderful asset to the Church for many reasons, and women should not be excluded because Church laws, usually based on interpretation of the scriptures, hark back to a patriarchal society.</p>

God is asking us to be inclusive, relevant and meaningful to the wider society in the 21st century.
I believe God is asking us to return to a simpler Church and faith where the focus is on being Christ-like to the best of our ability. I believe he is asking us to be less focussed on 'theology' and more on how to live as a good human being who is a positive influence. I believe there should be less focus on the institutions and the ranks and more on who we are as people.
To make sure that the Koori population is represented and cared for at this time, ensuring that their faith and spirit and dedication to their faith are supported.
A coming together to establish a common agreement, transparency, and accountability on matters of justice; refugees, the environment, gender equality, ethnic and racial acceptance. The Church needs to look inwards, 'less Roman'; feel remorse for sex abuse victims, and critically look inwardly. Lay members having greater responsibility; closing the gap between clergy and lay members. Discussion around women's role in leadership; like Mary to the Disciples, women have a distinct value to offer the Bishop's Conference. A revamp of the way the Church welcomes and prepares people for the sacraments; confirmation, marriage, Holy orders (seminary formation) etc. There needs to be accountability on how we fruitfully guide people into the faith community. It is often dry and irrelevant formation.
Honesty and leadership from all clergy.
To seriously consider how Church attitudes and views on sexuality and love affect so many aspects of life for Christians this century.
God is asking us to think about what Jesus would have done in all situations that we encounter. Our Catholic religion has been tainted by a clerical hierarchy that is out of touch—we need the hierarchy to return to the basics of our faith—"Love one another as I have loved you".
We are seeking changes in Catholic culture to increase our openness to a relationship with God and with one another as outlined below. While not considering there is anything 'wrong' with the old Catholic culture but we understand that God is now asking us to change. We are asking for initiatives and encouragement for these changes of [the] institutional Church: - while not considering the institutional Church (bishops and priests) to be any more responsible for the existing culture than the larger Church community of parishioners and recognising that some people—both priests and parishioners—already embody these changes. We have also realised that we, the people preparing this submission, are very much part of the 'old' culture and that we ourselves are being called, individually, to make these changes.
<p>1. Religious Education in Catholic schools needs to be presented in a better way; better curriculum, more creative channels of faith formation, curriculum reflective of an active Church.</p> <p>2. A more productive response in loving ALL our neighbours: the focus needs to be shifted away from divisive topics (i.e. gay marriage), we need to stop loving our neighbour selectively, while the Church is too quiet and less productive on topics such as immigration/ detention centres.</p> <p>3. Clergy support; greater training and formation for lay people preparing people for sacraments. Lay people involved in the Homily.</p>

<p>4. Community; a stronger sense of community in parishes, unifying different generations, focus more on needs in Parish rather than administration or 'what we've always done', a need for more social opportunities in Parishes (family groups)</p> <p>5. Youth Formation; greater focus on young adult ministry, youth are part of the solution, parishes want young people in the pews but aren't willing to speak to them or engage them in the Mass.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To concentrate on the problems within our country (e.g. prioritising Veterans) rather than problems outside of the country (e.g. refugees) • To help people discover who God is and what the faith is, beyond just going to church—i.e. putting faith into action • To help out charities, the homeless & the poor • To promote the Church in a positive manner
<p>To revitalise what we already have without sacrificing the traditions of the Church that symbolise the rich history of Catholicism and love of our God. We do need to engage with a changing society and bring the message of Jesus to all.</p>
<p>Fixing homeless problems. Climate change/natural disaster relief. Continuing reconciliation. To teach people about Christianity. Help the homeless. To be faithful. To teach people the way of God. To better know the Catholic faith and to share it. Everyone has rights. Pray. Treat everyone with respect. Take care of the environment. Look after wildlife. Change the world for the better.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tolerance of diversity in Australian culture, and an ability to listen to their needs. 2. We need to engage better with youth (18 - 30); make Catholic marriages more inviting, adapt music to present generations, approach disaffiliated youth. 3. Renewal of clergy; consider married priests. 4. We should follow the example of the Eastern Church, they connect between generations and have a rich community. 5. We need to listen to the Aboriginal people about how to care for the environment. 6. Social Justice is a need the Church has serviced for centuries, the focus needs to continue. 7. Parish communities are hostile, boring and unaccepting.
<p>To welcome all people into the Church, to care for the poor and marginalised and to make the Church relevant to young people.</p>
<p>Recent scandal in aged care and clerical sexual abuse is an opportunity to clear out wrong thinking and hypocritical practices. The whole Church without hierarchical distinction requires tools to navigate an honest and egalitarian Church. To regain trust is not simply a matter of words; truth is revealed in matching words with action. Discernment is a product of understanding responsibility and accountability; Paul reminds the Corinthians 'You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let her/him remain with God' (1 Cor. 7:23-24).</p>

<p>To be open to the change and willing to make changes even though it may challenge the traditions of the Church. To engage the youth and get them involved as much as Possible... WYD and ACYF are great examples. To be supportive of our priests and help them in parishes wherever possible.</p>
<p>God is asking us to renew and heal the Church. This will take time but the Church needs to be more inclusive and to provide opportunities for all to be consulted on change and decisions (e.g. national redress scheme). It is not good enough for bishops to make decisions on behalf of laity as the people are the Church of God. Consultation starts at parish levels and annual renewal days need to take place. God is asking that His Church be more compassionate to those abused by religious staff. Like many of my fellow Church members, I am overwhelmed with the level of cover up and subsequent inertia demonstrated by the Church hierarchy. God is asking us to move forward with a change of heart. And to install equal numbers of accomplished spiritual women at all levels, introduce married clergy and get rid of hiding behind the sanctity of the confessional. God is asking us to put his people and the care of children before power. I pray we can learn from the past and become more compassionate and open.</p>
<p>For the Church to be open and honest and allow ordinary women to play a real part in the working of the Church. I also believe it is an opportunity for the Church to become community focussed so its members are being actively Christlike in their everyday lives. I believe God is giving us an opportunity to look really hard at the way we worship. The Mass is the centre of our worship, the wording of many of the prayers should be relevant to today. There is opportunity for other relevant liturgy to play an important role in the Catholic community. Many of our Catholic schools have wonderful, meaningful liturgy for the children and their families; however the parish church does not.</p>
<p>For the Church to be supportive of all, so ALL feel the love and support of God and His Church, on a parish level as well as diocesan and national. For pastoral care to be focused on love and need rather than bureaucracy.</p>
<p>1) TO BECOME MORE PRAYERFUL AND REFLECTIVE, individually & as communities, & be unafraid to enter daily into silence & stillness to hear God's voice in our lives; to return to practices like Eucharistic adoration; to pray with the Scriptures; to make greater use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation; to desire a personal relationship with God so our participation at Mass is only one expression of our Catholic faith.</p> <p>2) TO SURRENDER OUR FEARS AND PREJUDICES TO GOD & ALLOW HIS SPIRIT TO MOVE/LEAD US BEYOND OURSELVES to... SPEAK WITH neighbours or those at Mass whom we don't know or don't like & then reach out to WELCOME, WALK WITH/ADVOCATE FOR the voiceless &/or marginalised in & beyond our communities e.g. the unborn & those dealing with unplanned pregnancies, refugees/asylum seekers, new migrants, those with mental illness, prisoners etc.</p> <p>3) CHALLENGE & ERADICATE ATTITUDES OF SUPERIORITY, AUTHORITARIANISM AND ENTITLEMENT AMONGST CLERGY incl. titles of honour e.g. "My Lord" & "Monseigneur" which speak of privilege and not of the humble servant leadership which Jesus modelled and requires of His disciples.</p>

4) To INVESTIGATE whether the title "FATHER" is appropriate for a Priest as he "in persona Christi", God's Son and our Brother. Perhaps "BROTHER" is much more appropriate.

5) To CHANGE ABSTINENCE RULES SO THEY ARE RELEVANT e.g. prohibition of meat is a non-issue for vegetarians/vegans!

6) To use INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE WHEREVER POSSIBLE—esp. in Liturgy—e.g. in some Scriptural texts and the Eucharistic Prayers; in the Nicene Creed delete "men" in the line: "For us men..."; use "Brothers and Sisters" & delete "Brethren" etc. and,

7) To (GRADUALLY?) DELETE OLD ENGLISH NOUNS & PRONOUNS FROM PRAYERS & substitute them with "You/Your" etc.

8) To CELEBRATE MASS IN A MORE AUTHENTIC WAY.... While "tailoring" Mass to particular congregations (e.g. there will obviously be differences in "non-essentials" if the worshippers are nursing home residents cf. if they are participants in a youth rally) we must never lose sight of the profound, divine action that is taking place in our midst. If we truly believe that Jesus is present there among us then our demeanour (incl. that of the priest) should express the reverence & awe but also the gratitude and joy that will well up within us. PERIODS of SILENCE (as set down in the GIRM) should not be ignored as they can help us focus on the sacred. Growing up in a religious culture which frowned on any show of human emotion in the church building and encouraged us to participate in the Mass in a robotic manner, rattling off responses without prayerful consideration for what we are saying, many of us leave looking as if we've come from a morgue! We also need to guard against the danger of going in the opposite direction, treating the Mass as if it's some sort of concert whose program we are free to change at will. Beautiful, respectful yet joyful liturgies give great honour & glory to God!

This is the time of sacred spirit. It requires equal recognition of all humanity in an ungendered manner. There needs to be a recognition that an only male priesthood skews the view of humanity into an archaic and dysfunctional society. The views and experiences of other than male are regarded as inferior by denying them the right to contribute equally to decision making. There are no proscriptions from Jesus discriminating against women. This is only a decision of convention which has continued the suppression of women through absence of a direct role in the hierarchy of the universal Catholic Church. Women contribute immensely but they do not contribute from an equal platform of respect for their decision making capacity. Sacred Spirit is genderless.

That we revitalize the Church and keep young people in the Church.

He is asking us to look at the gospels and to see how he responded to males, females, prostitutes and everyone. He is asking us to realise that the Church has major problems because it is completely male dominated while the Church population is at least 50% female.

To stop the haemorrhage of the faithful and encourage the proselytising. Go back to before Vatican II and find out what went wrong. Why millions of people left the faith (e.g. Holland) along with the religious? Pope Pius XII said if you change the Mass all will be lost, which Vatican II did. Jesus said the body (Church) was to be one, which means there can be only one body; the true Church, when protestant churches look at the Eucharist as a symbol they deny the gospel of John

6:53 therefore they cannot be the true church—only the Catholic Church believes that the Eucharist is the body of Christ—so all people need to come to the one true Church that needs to come into the true Church that believes in the body of Christ—not the 32,000 protestant churches—who are not one body—we have to as a Church realise this fact—Jesus says "I am the way, the truth and the life" "I am the same yesterday, today and tomorrow"—Scott Hahn says in America alone there are 31 million Catholics and 15 million non-practising—we have to work out why they have left and get them back—you can do that unless you believe that you are the only one true Church—or else you are simply one among many—this doctrine of ecumenism has come from all the popes since pope Pius the XII onwards—now our current pope has done further damage by statements like "there is no hell" "who am I to judge" "people can live together without marriage" the St George medal given to a pro abortionist" "Katy Perry gives lecture to clergy about transcendental meditation" "Holy communion for all". They "the Shepherd" seem not to believe the true gospel anymore, it is essential to have a good Shepherd if you want a healthy flock and at the moment we just don't have one.

I think that God is asking us to work at having more Collaborative Leadership style in our parishes and in our dioceses and that we to be more inclusive and welcoming in our approach to people in our parishes and in the language we use in our liturgies. To show our young people by our actions that we value them as part of our church, especially as they will be the future leaders of our church. To guide them by example to be accepting, welcoming, compassionate and hospitable to all.

In the first place I think we are being asked to stop, be still and listen to God and then to engage with and listen to others—our family and friends, our parish and wider communities, to the whole world, especially those on the margins, but also to those in positions of leadership and those whose viewpoints are different to our own. We need to remember that God works in many ways and sometimes through the most unexpected people. All should be included and their input and expressions welcomed. In time, hopefully, a way forward will become clear and "our hearts will burn within us" allowing us to move forward in a spirit of love and truth.

I think we need to stop and listen. We need to assess what is happening around us to determine if we are ignoring God's message. Many have forgotten the 10 commandments and how they apply to our everyday life. What are we doing to our fellow citizens? Our environment? Our world?

We are being asked to stand up as Catholics and be counted, have a say, be vocal, reach out to others, be an example of what it is to be a Catholic Christian. Our parish needs to be more involved in our local parish school and in our local community.

As a practicing Catholic, former choir boy & altar server, the guilty verdict on Cardinal Pell was a wake up slap. It kind of felt like finding out your spouse had been cheating for years & despite friends' warnings, you stayed because you didn't really know for sure. But now here's conclusive proof and you have to acknowledge it and face it. Now there are counter calls of 'liar' on both sides. The truth is hard to see. But actions speak louder than words. It's difficult to stay with the Church when there's a consistent pattern of accused priests being rewarded and promoted within the hierarchy. After Pell was successfully exonerated from sex abuse allegations in 2002 he supported other priests during their court appearances over the next few years. Then Pope

Francis, in 2014, rewarded Pell by promoting him to head up the new financial body of the Catholic Church—making Pell #3 from the top job. Meanwhile other clergy like Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, who spoke out AGAINST abuse and negligence in managing it, got demoted. It IS systemic and it appears to go all the way to the top. To me, 'Money' is the cigarette habit that seemed harmless at the time but is the root cause of this devastating cancer. Financial quotas have for decades become the focus for parish priests and a key measure of success—and possible advancement. As younger generations leave in droves and the aging faithful die off, financial pressures increase as revenue streams dry up. Bishops and higher-ups still manage to live luxuriously with plenty for travel and capital refurbishment. With about 5 million Catholics in Australia, average \$5 donation per week, that's about \$1.3 billion PER YEAR—the trough won't dry up just yet. So have I been a scammer my entire life? Is it ALL a lie? I'm blessed by knowing in my heart that God is real because I've had personal experience of God's presence. But the Catholic Church, the one that taught me and guided my path to God, seems now to be totally corrupted. Dark forces have infiltrated its highest ranks in order to destroy it from within. I can't be a part of that! But then it's not easy to simply throw your whole belief system and everything you've believed in your whole life. And by leaving I allow those dark forces to win. It's a tough one to decide. The only way for me to know the God's will is to return to The Bible. The Word of God will light my way. Likewise the Catholic Church itself. A return to essence of truth is needed. Every word of Jesus in the Gospels need to be taken as the absolute truth and followed closely. We Catholics fool ourselves. There are some pretty specific passages that Catholic canon blatantly contradicts—Matt 23:8, use of Father; Exodus 20:4-6, graven images. Very difficult to explain these ones to young children. Maybe the Church itself should look at Mark 10:21—"Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven."

Love God and His teachings. Be inclusive of ALL PEOPLE. Listen respectfully to what people have to say. To live with increased humility and love. To be non-judgmental. Listen to, love and assist the poor and marginalised.

God would like us to be truthful.

That all members of the Church become active in their responsibility to enact the Mission of the Church to evangelise. This particularly involves the laity who alongside the religious in our Church have a calling to become Missionary Disciples.

To discern and ask the Holy Spirit through Jesus and Mary to open our hearts and minds to hear the Elderly and Youth. Especially to hear their Story, Wisdom and Ideas. To open our Hearts like Jesus to those on the margin and those who feel lost and despondent. I met up with a school friend at a classmate's funeral recently and it was this reason that she was back in Church. She said she had not been because of the Child Abuse Scandal surrounding the Clergy. I said that God is the same, despite scandals and we have to pray and support our clergy, as the Devil is very busy trying to destroy families and the priesthood, being the most important structures of our Church. Also to dialogue with people of other denominations, as Our Blessed Mother that her Son and herself do not make distinctions. Only we do; and that everyone who accepts Jesus and who does not deliberately deny Him will be welcomed in God's Kingdom.

Jesus strongly involved women in all aspects of His life. I think that God is asking the Church in Australia to seriously address clericalism which we know can be achieved in a number of ways. There is pressure on the Church to end forced celibacy and allow the clergy to marry. Of course this may be long shot given that any decision would be made by the Vatican. Nevertheless it should be on our agenda so that the Australian Church is free to raise this without fear of retribution. Likewise let's start talking about women in real decision making positions including becoming priests, and not simply married to one. Another long shot but at least allow and encourage the clergy and the laity to openly talk about it as a future option. Meanwhile consider the possibility of women deacons and involve the laity in all aspects of decision making at higher levels. At a very basic level, I think the Australian Church (all parishes) should be addressing gender equality in the use of language in our readings. The liturgy has such an important role in evangelisation and acceptance of the high number of women attending weekly / daily Mass. If we left there would be no Church. Women are simply propping up a patriarchal institution and this must change. On the matter of annulments. I would like our Australian Church to lobby to broaden the criteria to include the relationships throughout the marriage and not just at the time of the wedding. A couple may well have full commitment and intention to be faithful to each other and consider the marriage to be binding for life. A propensity towards domestic and family violence or mental health, drug issues or indeed infidelity may not develop until much later following major crises such as illness, poverty, death of a child. My final thought about what God is asking of us in Australia is that we put social justice at the top of our parish lives. All parishes should be required to take action at a parish level at our Masses to acknowledge and work with our Traditional Owners towards reconciliation, support refugees, address homelessness, poverty etc. It is my hope that one day we will acknowledge country at every Sunday Mass.

God is asking THE CLERGY to clean up their ACT...GOD is reminding US, WE THE PEOPLE are and always have been THE CHURCH! Fortunately, there are really GOOD PRIESTS among US. The current upheaval in the Catholic Church is the culmination of the clergy has lived behind a WALL that did not allow the priests to move beyond the set boundaries and nor did it allow WE the people in. We were good followers from childhood and we listened well. The leadership of the Catholic Church has broken down and it has SHAMED US ...DO something with the 'rot' rather than asking us. I am ok other than shamed, God is still there for the people!

To be a missionary Church rather than a maintenance Church. We cannot remain confined to the pews, we need to go out if we want to invite and entice people into the joyful life offered by Christ and His Church. In order for this to occur, our faithful need to be better formed in the faith. We need to know what we believe as Catholics and what the Church teaches, and why. We need to cultivate an attitude among the faithful that desires formation. We need intentional Bible studies and discussion groups where we can learn, and grow a culture that is hungry to delve deeper into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Whilst the Mass is the source and summit of our faith, it is not the most practical tool for formation for most Catholics.

I think God is asking Australians to go back to the gospels and develop their relationship with Jesus, in order to become missionary disciples, just as our baptism calls us to be. From that flows all else; loving our neighbour, being out there in the world (not retreating into ourselves and our own small world), building the Kingdom of God. There has been too much focus on rules and

dogma and excluding people, from the upper levels of the Church, and there should be more love and joy shown to others. We need for people to be attracted to the central mystery of Christ and God's great love for us, so that people see our joy and say 'We want what they've got' and come and join us. At the moment, we (the Catholic Church) are not a very attractive proposition to people. While this is sad and a little frustrating, it's also a great opportunity for us to think about how we can do better, in new ways and with new means. There is also a need to strip back to more simple times... especially in terms of the 'bells and whistles' that often come with our celebrations. We cannot be seen as a greedy, wealthy church and then not look after the poor... Hypocrisy like this does us no favours out in the wider world.

To look at priests being able to marry, women having a higher role. Come into the 21st century. Priests not judging Catholicism by the number of people in the pews.

We are called to evangelise today in a secular and even hostile environment. We must first recover our cultural inheritance before we can transpose our faith onto an unbelieving world. To accomplish this, we need a strong education and formation in The Faith. This must be offered at every level: e.g. CCD classes (as in the USA model) outside school hours will make the faith available for both Catholic and State schools. We need Sacramental preparation in every Parish, delivered by orthodox Catholic, who adhere to ALL the teachings of the Church. We cannot share the faith if our Catechesis is deficient. We must have a strong prayer life, coupled with Bible Study programs that are faithful to the teachings of Holy Mother Church. We should use the New Technologies to spread the word, including an active parish website. We need to learn and PROMOTE our faith. We need a beautiful liturgy, and promotion of Mass in all its beauty, whether it be the Extraordinary Form as well as the Novus Ordo Mass. (Re this topic: we must stamp out a 'them and us' mentality. This can be achieved with proper instruction.) Solid study programs, including Apologetics, RCIA, must be offered in every parish, an active prayer life (including Adoration, etc.) should be promoted and a strong social life (youth groups, family groups, etc.) fosters a sense of family. Religious must be supported by the laity, so they won't feel isolated and abandoned. One of the best ways to achieve a more active parish is by employing a Parish Co-ordinator, who will encourage a brains trust of ideas and talents. A good Co-ordinator can be a bridge between Religious and Laity. A warning here however, there is a danger of Nepotism. The role needs to be transparent and approachable. The Co-ordinator must be sensitive to the parishioners needs. Another bureaucrat we do not need.

- Our parishes need revival. Through prayer and formation we need to go deeper in faith. Through this the Church will undergo conversion. Catholics will start living out our call to holiness. It will become alive and a light in the darkness.

- The treasures of the Church need to be embraced. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, Divine Mercy etc. are all tools that need to be encouraged to be used in our Parishes.

- Parishes need more formation

- Practical ways the Catholic Church needs to grow in.

<p>1. The Church needs to provide more formation to those who do not practice the faith however make use to the Sacraments e.g. Compulsory Baptism preparation - Marriage preparation classes that present a truly Catholic view on Marriage and family.</p> <p>2. We need teachers in our Catholic School who practice the faith and have encountered Jesus. There is such an opportunity for evangelisation of teachers, children and parents. Teachers need more retreat and prayer opportunities.</p>
<p>I think God is asking us to broaden our horizons which include having married priests and women priests. This will enable many more dedicated, committed, faith-filled people to work for God, often without feeling isolated and having the support of a partner and the experience of parenting in the case of married priests. These people would bring hands-on life experience to the vocation.</p>
<p>I believe God is asking us to be more prayerful, more hospitable, kinder and to love one another as He loves us. "We must not make idols of tradition: it is the Word of God that we must first reverence."</p>
<p>God is asking us to deepen our faith and prayer life centred on the if's and teaching of Jesus. Our commitment to our Christian faith is calling us further into the Mission of the church and service of others, through love, understanding and acceptance of all. We believe more opportunities must be given for adult faith development in parishes and dioceses.</p>
<p>One Family</p> <p>Unite</p> <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Non-Judgmental</p> <p>Open our hearts, minds and souls to hear God speaking through us</p> <p>Listen to what the people wants and needs</p> <p>Spirituality</p> <p>Be realistic</p> <p>Kindness</p> <p>Compassion</p> <p>Community/unity Non-judgemental/Inclusion Understanding Belief/Faith Prayer/ Christian meditation</p> <p>Unite all Australians in Christ through grace</p> <p>Have faith and trust in God</p> <p>To recognise God/Jesus in all things/people</p> <p>To be able to tell our stories and listen humbly to each other and act where we can to help all in various needs/belongings</p> <p>To have a discerning heart to give advice to those in need</p>

<p>That the Church is Grace-based not based on sin but on redemption and inclusiveness</p> <p>Act justly, love kindness and walk humbly with God</p> <p>To be faith-filled</p> <p>Listen to the Holy Spirit</p> <p>Unity within the Church</p> <p>Listen to the Gospel readings and incorporate in our lives</p> <p>Help our people to recognise, understand, see God in their lives</p> <p>Those of us who are living out our Catholic faith be given the tools to explain to others when criticized what our faith really is—through the help of the Holy Spirit</p> <p>God is asking us not to be afraid to say we are Catholics</p> <p>Those who are our leaders in the Church lead by example, our teachers who are teaching in Catholic be authentic Catholics</p> <p>Women in the Church-define roles</p> <p>To re-energise the Church</p> <p>To go back to basics—why we do what we do</p> <p>Outreach—homeless, unemployment, poor</p> <p>Catholic Education—purpose Christ-like</p> <p>To pray</p>
<p>To re-establish the importance of Reconciliation. To welcome all, find humanity, unite and respect each other as God's creation. To become more aware of the teachings of the Church, to go back to basics, to be true disciples, to live according to the Gospel values and the 10 commandments. To use simple language especially in Bible study. To be more environmentally aware and aware of the poor. To promote the Church in a new light. A call for more laity. To counteract those that actively oppose the Catholic Church.</p>
<p>To start to really listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us and live the Good News. Our parish has become a business enterprise and has forgotten what our mission is about.</p>
<p>To keep our morals and beliefs true to the word of God. To keep our standard as individual Catholics regardless of the appalling child abuse that has been covered over for centuries</p>
<p>Jesus was a God of justice, with justice meaning love. Our church is far removed from this simple message. The current Church is bound up with rules and regulations, infiltrated with clericalism. It is a rare priest who welcomes all and does not speak with a voice of superiority. The priests that we experience are not humble, going to the people. The priests we experience still expect the people to approach them, this attitude is buried in the past, when Catholics were expected to "Pray, Obey and Pay". The priest, representing the Church, needs to go the people he is serving. The spirit of Vatican II has been stifled and in turn the laity have been seen as subservient to the all-powerful priests. In our parish, every decision regarding the parish is made by the priest. Input</p>

from the laity is not invited and often points of view of highly educated laity are responded to with anger by the priest. An example of the same anger, unfortunately, has been shown to three families in our parish who each have 2 children who were training to be altar servers. In each case, the parish priest spoke harshly to the children and consequently we have lost 6 altar servers. Instead of being grateful we have 6 young altar servers, the priest could pick out their faults and rather than look to increase their training or asking the laity to help with training, curt words drove the children and their families away from the church.

To be aware of the gifts of individuals and to look for the face of Jesus in all we meet. To put aside time for Him—to commune with God through Scripture, nature, Church and community God is asking us for positivity and to be the compassionate face of Australia. Take better care of our country and fight against greed and materialism. To take stock of ourselves and ask ourselves as Catholics—how do we mirror Jesus? Are we compassionate, loving and seeking justice for our community, country and the world?

- Open our eyes and ears to the reality of what is happening in the world around us and participate in action and contemplation. Meditation/contemplation is the missing and neglected piece, it moves us towards compassion and action. God is calling us to inclusiveness, expansion and generosity. Leave behind what the culture would have us believe that there is not enough. We have abundant resources, history, experience and know how. Include all our brothers and sisters. Coming from the place of the heart/love can make this happen through meditation. Have a metanoia experience through encouraging meditation in all schools and offer this Christian way of meditation for everyone not just Catholics—promote, invite and sustain this work and we will see change. We believe the Holy Spirit has demonstrated to us how interaction with other churches during this period of crisis has created openings for grass root changes of attitude towards seeing a closer unity as Christians thus we have been enabled to share our resources and create community while also including what is central and important in our own parishes.
- Protect the integrity of the Church.
- Assist in the survival of the Christian faith
- The Church is under fire from politics, media and society's progress on issues contrary to our faith—all seeking to diminish our faith into merely a hindrance to society:- I think it is important that our faith and our Church is protected because without it all the good works of the Church will be in danger—charitable works will be under threat.
- To trust the Holy Spirit to guide us on our true purpose and mission in life with a rich life filled with people and love so that we can act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God. We need to learn to work together, listen to others' stories and give support to uplift all.
- To celebrate others' skills, talents, and encourage good leadership to effect change for the better.
- Educate students so that the world can be a better place.
- Examine the Daily Examen, study the bible teachings and deepen spirituality to be able to see God in all things through meditation.

- To be one big family and to teach his children to be kind and respectful towards the teaching of God's Word, pray regularly with the Holy Spirit.
- To be faithful, prayerful, loving, accepting and understanding of all people.
- To share the joy of our faith with all those we meet.
- To look into what the Church teaches about challenging topics to gain understanding and wisdom. To look within first so as to be able to look outside with clarity and truth through meditation.

We believe that God is asking us all to make a positive impact in both our parishes and in our daily lives. This can sometimes be challenging to achieve when your parish is under manned and it's very difficult to receive the guidance needed when the priests are so busy coping with the administration, compliance and other tasks that take away their time to properly minister or train others. With the ever decreasing numbers entering the seminaries, it is most certainly time to reconsider married men and women to take on the role of ministering effectively. It's all very fine to import foreign priests, however many language barriers exist and parishioners need to have a close relationship with their minister to enable them to work closely with the workload our priests currently have. For the Church in Australia to grow, it is essential we branch out to include more people to join the Church. Whilst the vocation is a wonderful gift to some, few people have the time or inclination to spend 8 Years in a seminary to prepare for the priesthood. New inductees could easily spend time in a current parish as a deacon as a pathway to priesthood and thereby offering this opportunity to many more people.

I believe that God is asking us if the Church is being true to the gospel teachings.

Ask of our Church Leaders to sincerely show transparency with their honesty and grief in child sexual abuse that has occurred from clergy within our Church. This must include ALL dealings with the Faithful and the world in general. To show us that they are true Shepherds of God's flock, act more justly, live more humbly by being inclusive with all. This must mean equality of decision makers by including both men and women in equal numbers on any panels.

I think God would expect His church to be relevant to the present needs of mankind, give direction and realistic help (food, shelter, hope/jobs) in a very troubled world.

Works of Charity. Attend meetings associated with the Church. Volunteer for working bees. To heal our Church. Encourage youth to appreciate the Eucharist. Show compassion for poor—those in need and take action. More lay people helping priests/religious. Stop providing facilities for ourselves and spend money on the poor. Provide homeless shelters—build small houses for the poor that they can eventually buy with interest-free loans (could be built by some voluntary labour). Parishioners to volunteer to organise youth groups—have a paid parish co-ordinator for the job. Provide food for Fred's place. Work in Aboriginal communities educating RE. Grow faith by doing good works and influencing others by our love of God. We think God is saying "Come back to ME with all your heart". Too many of God's children have strayed. Masses have few children (K - 18yrs). Those aged 50-90yrs and the students in our Catholic Schools attend Mass but where are the others? Start by making a good confession and come back to Mass. Visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, say your morning and night prayers. Say the Rosary and The Mercy prayer

every day. Pray for God's guidance for our priests, nuns, brothers and the pope, cardinals, bishops to keep contact with parishioners. Encourage all to put God first in our lives.
To make the most of the opportunities that our parish offers to come together to build community and to be more willing to volunteer our time to help these efforts. By building strong relationships we will build a stronger Church. God is relationship. By building strong communities in our parish our Church, in turn, is strengthened and we can then move forward together to evangelise.
People's trust in the Catholic Church has been broken. When someone mentions the Catholic Church the first thing that comes to my mind is the findings of the royal commission which has totally changed my perception of Catholicism as a Religion. Before this happened, what I thought of, was what I learnt at school about Catholicism as a Religion. That has totally changed for me. Now, I don't think of it as a religion any more. I think of it as some sort of industry or business that controls everything from above and has done serious damage to its clients. Priests should be family oriented people. They should be allowed to marry and have children. This will help them value what is really important in life.
We (what is a better word to use?) sacramentalize children extremely well before they are old enough to experience the Holy Spirit and come to a commitment to faith and Church. There it generally stops with little or no evangelism taking place for adults in the mainstream Church. We are personal, private, habitual and comfortable! That's why few Catholics in this country go to Mass. Liturgy is too controlled , repetitive, one-directional, colourless, boring and designed to keep us awake (stand, sit, kneel, stand....). Love God and love one another? Much of the former but little opportunity for the latter. Our Church (?) seems to be more business than anything else. I love my church, my parish, my community but when I look around, I don't see much LIFE!!!
God is asking of us in Australia to preserve and nurture the word that Jesus taught and to carry it forward from generation to generation. I believe that our future lies with the young people of our parish, and to do so we should introduce a way in which they could openly and enthusiastically praise God for His goodness. I have had the privilege to attend the [-] Church in [-], and was so impressed with the sheer number of young people waving their arms as if to say "come Lord Jesus, take my hand, I am willing to do your bidding". There was a band on stage with upbeat hymns that appealed to the young people. As an added thought, so many young people are led astray with drugs and alcohol, and wouldn't it be wonderful, if on hearing the music and seeing the enthusiasm that they too would like to join in and be a part of a Christian family, as they might not have a family of their own? I would have loved to attend the Listening & Dialogue sessions on the given days, but we will be overseas until the middle of February.
Tolerance and inclusion.
God is asking us to become an inclusive community of the baptised and the ordained. God is asking us to be more fully involved, accepting responsibility, for example by ensuring that all parishes and dioceses have active COUNCILS whose activities are transparent and accountable. God is asking us as a Church to be *more focussed on the pastoral needs of all,

*more compassionate,
*less judgmental,
*less concentrated on rules and regulations (and 'liturgical correctness'), especially when it is not clear that these truly reflect the gospel,
*more aware of the needs of lay people for ongoing formation/education/support,
*more sensitive to the ongoing needs of converts to the faith,
*more responsive to the needs of young families (for example between infant baptism and school enrolment),
*more welcoming and approachable as parishes and individuals.

We need to feel the relevance of the Church in our time, addressing current issues of poverty, social injustice, lack of hope/employment while maintaining the core values of our religion.

To teach the young people the Catholic faith in such a way as they come to understand that participation in the life of faith and the sacraments is fundamental to their salvation. I believe this could be achieved by a more thorough catechising of the Catholic school students from year 1-12. Possible people who could teach this curriculum are the state school catechists—who are generally church going people who engage their faith and the sacraments on a daily - weekly basis or regular churchgoing parishioners. Young children learning off by heart the fundamentals of our Catholic faith is essential for the future of the Church. I also believe that the catechists should be paid for their service just as the school teachers are.

Footnote.... If the Muslims or Jehovah Witness had our school systems the children would know the Koran or the Old Testament thoroughly and all of the teachings of their faith. I believe we are failing our children badly by not using our extensive Catholic school system to unapologetically teach the tenets of our Catholic faith.

*God is asking us to seriously address the decline in regular Sunday Mass attendance and the large scale loss of trust within and outside the institutional Church.
*A major factor in the decline as been the shocking revelations of the royal commission into the abuse of children by priests and religious in Catholic institutions over decades.
*In view of that history of abuse it is vital that the processes for selection of prospective candidates to the priesthood and diaconate be reformed with strict scrutiny of their suitability. Suitably qualified married men and women should be accepted in ministries of priesthood and diaconate creating EQUALITY AND WHOLENESS in service to the Church. Lay collaboration should be a major consideration in the formation to ministry and will be facilitated with lengthy periods of time outside seminary enclaves for candidates to live, study and work within parish family communities. In that situation, the candidates need to be mentored in pastoral awareness and leadership by qualified lay people. Candidates also need education of the heart as well as the intellect. Education to enable them to let go of the entrenched institutional tradition and expectation of secrecy and protection. They need to be accountable to themselves and be made accountable to their community for their ministry and personal behaviour.

To acknowledge that the Church is in crisis. Acknowledgement of the betrayal of trust and the shame that a few have brought to the whole community and be assured it will never happen again. To 'pick ourselves up and get going again' after the terrible damage that has been inflicted on the whole Church, especially victims, by the findings of the Royal Commission.

Action: To make a public apology to all those who have been abused, (e.g. National sorry day)
Listen to the voices of all those who have been hurt in many ways over the years, not just sexually abused but emotionally and psychologically in parishes, church schools, orphanages and other institutions. Not to give up hope, to keep persevering and BE STRONG.

Bishops: To demand 100% transparency from Church hierarchy. Each diocese must completely open up their records. Clericalism: To take a serious look at candidates for priesthood and their training. Clericalism has been condemned by Pope Francis when he said ...to say 'no' to abuse is to say 'no' to all forms of clericalism'. It could be that seminaries can perpetuate clericalism and candidates for the priesthood should spend more time living in parishes, and take their place in parish ministries and generally being part of the social and religious activities of a parish. If they have a good grounding in pastoral work they will be better prepared as priests who serve their community. To put emphasis on the idea that WE are the Church, clergy and laity—we are parts of the same body, with different functions to perform, all seeking the same things in life (and hereafter). There should not be a division into THEM and US, with divisions of status and importance. To encourage our priests to be part of our community to break down the separation of clergy and laity by reaching out to them in friendship and support. Laity In the spirit of Vatican 2, lay people need to be more involved in the life and mission of their local church. Pastors need to empower their local faith communities to use their talents to serve others. There should be more respect for the laity's education, ideas and tremendous faith through thick and thin. LISTEN TO US!!! One significant result of clericalism is that parish clergy are often blissfully unaware of the education and training of their community. Women in Leadership: To involve women in leadership and decision making in Church Life. Parish Structures: To get back to the fundamental message of the gospel "Love one another as I have loved you." To build communities of faith based on gospel values and nourish one another in our search for justice, truth and goodness. To be the 'face of Christ' to the world. Let others see HIM in us through our love and service to those in need, especially the poor and marginalized. Our parishes need to be more welcoming and inclusive. Parishes need to be re-invigorated with opportunities for parishioners to belong to smaller groups such as family groups and service groups.



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 2

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

QUESTIONS FOR PLENARY COUNCIL

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

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

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

1. How can divorced couples who remarry be more welcomed into the Church community?
2. How do we deal with a Catholic education system that seems to becoming less and less Catholic in teaching and practice?
3. How can the Church include all people?
4. How can the Church be a light of truth and moral example?
5. Will the Church be considering changing the rules on birth control?
6. Are issues of celibacy, married priesthood or female ordination open to discussion and change?
7. What future is there for women and LGBTI [people] in the Catholic Church?
8. Why is it that priests do not promote the Rosary?
9. When is the Church going to accept the contribution of women at every level of Church ministry and authority?
10. We already have married priests from the Anglican tradition, why the hesitation in allowing the Sacrament of matrimony to all our priests?
11. What are we doing about priest 'burn out'? How can we change our expectations to fit the practical conditions of the moment (one priest to two parishes)?
12. How can we encourage young people to church?
13. Is it possible to have more consistency with parish priests and their assistants?
14. How do we help the bishops really hear what the people are saying and, for some of them, to be more pastoral?
15. How can the Church of the future be fully trusted by my children?
16. Is the structure of the Catholic Church changing to meet the needs of contemporary congregation?
17. The Church is suffering from a credibility crisis where people dont want to connect with the Church - how will this be reconciled?
18. Why is it necessary for people to work so hard to be accepted into our faith?
19. Why cant priests be married or female?
20. How are we going to ensure that the horrible paedophilia issues that the Church has hidden in the past wont happen again?
21. How are we going to welcome and encourage people who have felt ostracised or unwelcome in the Church back?
22. Will our Church commit its resources to serve humbly the poor, homeless, the disadvantaged people of Australia who need a compassionate and material assistance immediately?
23. How is the Plenary Council going to create the environment to make the Church more inclusive?

24. How does the Church stay true to spirituality while staying relevant (especially with youth) and encouraging engagement?
25. How can Catholic teachers, who have the role of evangelising every day, call on the Holy Spirit in this secular world and stand together for what we believe?
26. Churches action on the treatment of refugees in Australia- what has been our response and what action should we be taking to aid refugees in Australia?
27. Will the Church welcome gay couples and bless their marriages and their families?
28. Why is the Catholic Church so inflexible with the Mass in relation to age appropriateness i.e. young children and teenage Masses are not engaging and largely irrelevant to their audience?
29. Why are many of the priests of today so conservative and somewhat removed from the people compared to my recollections of priests from my youth?
30. Why cant Masses and the music be more joyful and uplifting?
31. How does the Catholic Church ensure that its message conveys adequately the completeness of Gods love?
32. Is it possible to reform the liturgy to enable room for it to be less legalistic, more simple and spontaneous and therefore more welcoming to all?
33. Has the Church the courage to take a more fearless and visible stance in matters of social justice and the environment?
34. Would the Church consider less involvement with already-established missions such as schools, hospitals and aged care, all of which receive very significant government assistance, and move to filling up those areas of concern, which do not have that same government attention, e.g. homelessness, support of refugees etc.?
35. How can the Church be a springboard for inclusion in society?
36. How can we help the youth through their journey into adulthood?
37. How can we make the Church relevant and meaningful for today's society?
38. Why do we exclude people from our faith – divorcees, LGBTQ community?
39. How do we encourage more young people to become priests?
40. Why is there a strict structure around the Eucharist?
41. What will the Church do to address the hypocrisy of some couples having their marriage annulled while others are denied the sacraments because they are divorced?
42. How will the authority of the Church in Australia become open to educate the people in each diocese for their spiritual growth?
43. What happens in seminaries that produce clerical priests?
44. Can we establish regular consultation with the parishioners?
45. Can you please consider allowing lay people to have a greater role in the Church?
46. Why arent our priests and bishops encouraging the laity to undertake the training necessary to be part of a collaborative leadership model of Church?
47. How is the Catholic Church going to support practicing Catholic families who are becoming isolated in parishes?
48. What role does the Church play in Catholic education?
49. How does the Church intend to expand the role of the laity?
50. What processes can be put in place to utilise the higher order talents of the women in the Church?
51. How can the Church educate parents of children in their parish schools about the role the parish plays and entice them to become involved in parish life?



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 28 per cent of all responses did not have consent for one or both of these criteria and therefore, their stories have not been included here.

I have been baptised in the Holy Spirit and have prayed for many people for healing. My husband, my grandson and my son-in-law were all miraculously healed and I'm only a mother of seven children. Think how many more would be healed and converted if I had been a Catholic priest with the gifts of healing and all the other Holy Spirit gifts.

I am a married woman, 74 years of age, married for 53 years and myself and my husband have two grown up adopted children. I worked for the Catholic Church for 34 years in [-] Diocese ([-] for 26 years) and in the [-] Diocese ([-] Parish for 8 years). I have been a member of many committees and councils including those at parish and diocesan levels. I am presently a very active member of my [-] parish and am a regular member of our ministry roster.

I am a cradle Catholic. I thought I knew the faith, had a good grasp of it, as I attended a Catholic school as a child and grew up on the Holy Rosary and weekly Mass. It was only when I was given a special grace much later on in my adult years, that a great desire to learn more about the Church took place in my heart. I began to dig a little deeper into Her teachings. The deeper I dug, (through reading great Catholic books and in particular listening to Catholic Lighthouse CD's and DVD's) the more I was made aware I knew little to nothing. As I began to learn, a whole new understanding of our Catholic faith emerged. The true beauty cannot be put into words. For me the greatest thing I have been made to understand is that all the doctrines and laws of the Church are centred purely on God's love for us. Every law in which the Church is bound, (which has been given to us through the holy Magisterium, guided by the Holy Spirit till the end of time, so we are assured there is no error) is there to protect us and to ensure our happiness. If people would only get a little grasp, a little taste of the real truth, they would yearn for more like myself and the Church would grow and flourish.

We must believe in God and in miracles as they really do happen daily, I saw many while I was nursing. One is - my fellow colleague told me to go and see the flowers in bed 13. I went there and the curtain was pulled between her and the next patient. I spoke to this lady for a couple of minutes, but there was definitely no flowers. So I went around the curtain to bed 12. Here I found a patient near death, I won't go into personal details, it was a half hour before she was revived and the emergency was over. My colleague ask me if I had seen the flowers, and I told her there

was no flowers in bed 13. She pulled the curtain back and sure enough there was the biggest most beautiful bunch of flowers ever seen in the hospital. The patient stated they had been there all along. This was truly a miracle from God, to block them out so I could help the lady in the next bed. Many Blessings. [-]

I grew up with very simple parents who worked hard, but had great faith. I would not have thought of saying to my father I did not want to go to Mass. When I was young, I grew up in [-] and went to school at [-], all Nuns. We had a lot to do with the "Brown Nurses". Dad often would take a box of clothes or food to various houses in Sydney around [-] and poor areas, sometimes the Brown Nurses would come with us. I did not realise till I was older, why. It so happened that dad's aunty was one of the first nurses, [-] and worked with [-]. We moved and lived in the city of Sydney, when I was a teenager, where our parish was [-]. There were many Masses during the day, always seemed to have a Confessional light on, and what I always saw, was many people from all different walks of life. The old Homeless man, sitting at the back, well dressed, lady going to Mass in her lunchtime, not many families. Some people praying at the side altar crying. It made me think at a young age, that was all part of life, everyone went to Mass and prayed, God accepts us how we are, not what we have got. I realise I was very lucky to have the many influences that I had. Sometimes seeing is believing, today we don't have much religion in our schools, and we don't have too many religious, so we don't see a lot of example. I have had so many answers or given strength throughout my life, because of my upbringing, and how lucky I have been. I do feel very sorry for people who do not believe in God or do not want to know about his very humble way of life. That is what we need to be doing and educating our children from kindergarten to year 12. Something hopefully will rub off, or may cause them to want to know more.

I am sad that my siblings and friends from my country parish are no longer seen at Mass. I grew up in a community where EVERYONE went to Mass every weekend. The entire school was there with their parents and siblings etc. They stayed afterwards for at least 30 minutes chatting etc. What went wrong? Parents perhaps delegated too much to nuns, priests and brothers, and did not register that faith had to firstly and foremostly come from them, and that children should not necessarily accept the confused nonsense of some with religious vocations. Families were perhaps not inoculated against confusion and wishy-washy rot which snuck in from religious who erroneously thought that morality was entirely subjective. There was in their eyes no more need to go to Mass. I bitterly miss my siblings and friends not joining me and my family at Mass. I feel terribly betrayed by whichever religious and priests let the confusion in and spread. I cry.

My faith has been challenged by a lack of welcoming acceptance within parishes. I have been asked to take noisy kids outside, listened to homilies that call for discrimination and submission of wives to husbands, felt ignored and unwelcomed in new parishes by priests and laity who don't engage as a community. The Church in Australia needs to be about welcome and acceptance not exclusion.

The boundaries between the sacred and the secular need to be dissolved. Our faith is founded on the Incarnation. As a consequence of this cornerstone of our faith, we need to embrace a theology which testifies that "the Holy inhabits the ordinary." Hence the Church needs to be more inclusive of all people and extend its celebrations of liturgies to places wider than the church building. First and foremost the liturgy is the work of the people. Therefore, it needs to rise out of

the lived reality of the people of God. Good and meaningful liturgy leads the people who choose to participate in it, to an experience of mystery and transformation in ways that connect with the movement of God's spirit in their lives. Liturgy is the great source of integration and meaning for life. There is a need to widen the experience of faith/life integration by not restricting interaction to Sunday Mass but to see how God exists and is present in all things and all spaces both real and virtual. Shaping a New Ecclesiology introduce structures and practices that emphasise the fact that the Church is a community – the people of God. It is not an event that you go to "once in a blue moon". Encourage more talk and discussion especially with particular ministry groups in the Church like teachers. How can the Plenary Council 2020 have a wider impact including for us teachers? Listening to the voices of everyone, not just those affiliated with the Catholic Church. Greater inclusion of women at all levels of the Church. Living with the tension between the "Church of Perfection" – with Christ as the cornerstone and the "Church of Imperfection" – the face of God as the Prodigal Father. An image of a Church in need of healing. It is necessary to heal the reputation of the Church and its position of trust within society overall. The Church needs to be a dynamic rather than a static organisation so as to adapt to a changing society and allow the Spirit to breathe through all the rules and structures. It is possible to have change, adaptability and agility within the narrative of our faith – a God who is unchanging – the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Accountability and Adaptability. Accountability for the sins and abuse of power of the Church power and authority is exercised as a result of listening, dialogue and collaboration. Embracing the vulnerability of the Church as it allows and at times initiates open and transparent processes. Ensuring that the foundational faith of our Church is maintained with respect but acknowledge flexibility in the expression and application of the core beliefs of the Church.

There have been a handful of people in my life, both lay and clergy, who I would regard as genuinely saintly. They have affected me and my faith profoundly, and are a very large part of the reason I am a Catholic (and a priest) to this day. We can organise strategies and pastoral plans ad infinitum, and don't get me wrong, they are necessary. But what our Church really needs are saints. This is what I think Christ is asking of us: to be focused on Him and his will rather than our own - the universal call to holiness.

As a baby boomer, I had a very sound grounding in my faith. In the 1960s church was a very cultural thing - everybody went, so it was also social. It was the centre of life. There was not much for me as a young adult, so I didn't go often. I didn't lose my faith, I just didn't go to church. As a married couple, we were in a wonderful Church community on the edges of [-] for 32 years. Adult Ed, social justice, great music and liturgies, family groups, Antioch (1980s), Paulian group for young mums, playgroup, an on and off group for teenagers. Five years ago my husband and I moved to the country to retire. We do have a very small church group of about 25. There is not a lot happening for our group. We have limited resources which have to be spread across three churches in the parish. We have a Lenten Group each year and a meditation group each week. Faith is much harder! I am our church rep on the Inter-church council and being involved with these committed Christians helps me a lot. I believe our small Church community would like more education and spiritual guidance but do not know how to go about it with constraints of budget,

our age and distance. Our parish priest does run an evening course each week or so, but for our group it is a 30 km drive in the dark, so no surprises, we don't attend.
Many of my friends turned away from the Church because of the current view of birth control. After having two or three children, they felt they could not continue having children indefinitely.
I have lived in 20 or so places and been involved in all the parishes in each place in the main I have been welcomed and found a welcoming faith family, and been able to participate in parish fully. However, in a couple of places I have experienced the results of poor priestly involvement with the people and how this has caused so much heartache grief and loss for the community. For this reason I believe the Church needs an open trusting management sector where two or more people can represent the community in a consultation process to alleviate the difficulties of priestly work.
Our Roman Catholic faith made us aware of sin and go to confession. We received unadulterated Catholic teaching. The nuns taught us how to pray and taught us the catechism. In high school, the parish priest taught us the liturgy and the Bible. In primary school, we went to Mass during the week, before school, accompanied by our teacher. On Sundays, our parents took us, and we were all dressed in our Sunday best. At an early age we were taught about the Real Presence and to be quiet during Mass. Priests to us were very special people, not only because they were dressed like priests, but also because their hands were anointed so that they were allowed to touch the Host. We received the Host on the tongue and kneeling and we were not allowed behind the altar rails.
Boring and out of date
Even though I am a regular, practising Catholic, I am sorry to say I have too many negative experiences to share and I don't want to be negative. I choose to go to Church to worship as a community, with my community, but many times I feel less Christian after Mass than I did going in.
Which leads me into the third question, "Share your experience". My experience is the Church appears governed by fear and self-interest. By outdated theology and rules to exclude participation rather than welcoming it. My experience is also the Church is fearful of change. Almost as if, if the Church promotes the truth that God's message (love one another) is not confined to Catholicism; that the Kingdom of God is not confined to Catholicism, that the Church will lose its place in the world, and the Church will become redundant. I don't go to Church because of all the rules, I like the prayer; the quiet reflective experience; the sharing of that experience with others; the receiving of the Eucharist; I like being a part of that family. I love the new world order of leadership I see in Pope Francis and my bishop [-] in the [-] Diocese. Love, forgiveness and humility in service of others appears to be their motto. But they appear a small drop in a big pond. In my experience, the Church generally appears fearful [of] change and slow to update itself. As such, the Church is already redundant on another front. The Church has not kept pace with theologically educating its people. The concept of a theistic God (a being who resides somewhere in the universe and can impose "himself" on the world when God chooses) is not a God I can believe in anymore. So for some years I have been in search of God or redefining God. It would be wonderful if the Church could help in that search. Many students have outgrown this child-like concept of a theistic God by the time they leave school. The Church is being left behind,

people are choosing alternatives because of a steadfast refusal to educate from the pulpit. I cannot place my faith any longer on “Mary’s virginity”; “water into wine”; “walking on water”; “loaves and the fishes”; “Lazarus and Jesus literally rising from the dead”. The Church has a strong and welcoming message to share, love your neighbour; forgive your neighbour; break bread with your neighbour; help your neighbour. And though those acts and placing your faith in God, you will receive and experience love, forgiveness and fellowship. The days of grounding the robustness of our theology in magical feats is over. [-]

In the not too distant past, our parish priest of the time was regularly celebrating Mass outside the church building. This encouraged many people to partake of the sacrament who would not usually come into the church. All were welcome to come and the feeling of love was very apparent. We as parishioners were asked what we wanted and our thoughts were included as much as possible. It really felt like our Mass and happiness was apparent.

My growth in faith through contemplating the word on a regular basis. Sitting and asking God through the Holy Spirit what he wants of me today.

I was drawn into the experience in UK of the phenomenon of release of the Holy Spirit and exercise of prophecy, discernment of spirits, healing gifts and prayer in tongues. We were well guided by bishops and spiritual directors and experienced fellow Christians during all the time I was there. It was rudimentary or absent after my return to Australia.

Well, I have had many experiences with different denominations and have learned a lot about the importance of having a relationship with Jesus. I think that the Church when I was growing up was much better at teaching the Bible in some ways. The hymns about God were much better than just singing about everyone loving each other which is important of course but love needs to be based on God’s love for us. I think that the Church has inherent truth in it and we need to focus on that more.

I don’t really feel inclined to address this question because the story I would relate is too distressing to me. I just want to believe that the Plenary Council can bring about change, but I don’t feel confident in the leadership of the Church to accept that change is necessary and then to have the will and ability to bring about these changes,

Christ’s love is not a noun but a verb. When a Christian meets another sinner, the Christian puts an arm around the other sinner and says, “I know we are both sinners, but God, Christ, and Spirit are here with us equally so I’ll collect you before church starts and we’ll go together. We’ll sit together, I’ll show you what to do, we’ll walk down the aisle, one behind the other, and we will celebrate God’s love in the Eucharist.” And, as we get to the door of the church, the Church asks, “Wait on. Is your sinner friend Catholic, heterosexual, not in a forbidden intimate relationship?” I answer, “I don’t know. Did the Samaritan care?” And we go across the road for coffee.

Sometime after my marriage broke up I went to a Beginning Experience Weekend and this encounter changed my life. I stopped feeling guilty that my marriage had not lasted, I was able to get past the grieving and get on with my life. I think that the Beginning Experience program is really good and helps a lot of people begin over after the death of a partner or the end of a marriage. We are taught that marriage is for life and that only "death should part the couple" but

sometimes circumstances completely beyond our control cause a marriage to end. It is sad that when a partner is left alone because the other party goes off with someone else, that the one left cannot have another relationship within the sanctity of the Church.

My faith – I was born and raised in a deeply religious family in rural NSW. I spent five years within religious life questioning my faith and how I would best serve the Lord. I discovered that the answer was within secular life. Since then my journey has been one of self-discovery and exploration of my faith. Below are some of my reflections of that journey. We all see Jesus and God in a different light. In my opinion it does not matter what faith window I look through on my lineal journey. What matters is how honest I am with my belief; and how I integrate my faith in my day-to-day living. God may be perfect but my interpretation of God is not. How could it be as I am imperfectly human? And yes I believe in only one God; one entity; one who is more powerful than I; one who cares about the journey of life on this planet. God gives me the strength to live in the present; (s)he gives me hope; (s)he is a framework to follow good. An unknown person once said 'Our lives are the only Bible some people will ever read.' To me this is the greatest challenge of my life – to live my life by example. No I am not a Joan of Arc, a Mother Theresa nor am I a saint (well . . . I do have my really good days!). I am a normal everyday person who deep in my soul knows that, even in my imperfection, to do good is one of the reasons that I live. My faith and soul journey is unique as is everyone's. And this unique individual is just one of many unique individuals within the Church. Apart from life, human potential is the greatest gift we have all been given and our personal journey is to discover what that potential may be is our greatest challenge in life. And although the discovery of our potential is a personal goal, the achievement may ripple out from each person to affect many if not all of humanity. I say nurture the fragile amongst us. This is one of the greatest gifts that we can give to humanity. It is also one of the essential missions of the Church.

Our parish priest was Fr [-], served till 90 years old and passed away last month at 92 yo. A more humble, loveable man is yet to be found. Where there was a need, he filled it. Loved by the whole congregation not just Catholics. The parish is [-]. God Bless [-]

I have experienced considerable darkness in prayer, and, at times, in life generally. Receiving great encouragement from St John of the Cross (especially his "Dark Night of the Soul"), enhanced by our bishop's Lenten Studies, I have been greatly strengthened.

We are both from Catholic families where the faith was very important in our upbringing, attending Catholic Schools where the nuns supported the faith, our parents taught us and supported the faith the nuns taught. We understood our vocation to married life was to bring our children to God through the Church. Life was simple then and our children accepted the faith without question until they left home, then one by one by one they all left the Church saying we forced it on them. Lured by the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the advent of technology and we didn't see it coming. Our hearts are broken and all we can do is pray and love them. Our schools are now filled with children whose parents don't attend Mass, so now the schools have an enormous responsibility to instil the Catholic faith in these children so they can take it into their homes and evangelise their parents.

My faith has been greatly helped by the Missionaries of God's Love and the annual Summer School of Evangelisation run by the Disciples of Jesus. These people have growing numbers in their faith communities, either as religious or lay, and they need to be looked at as a great example for today and a hopeful sign for our Church. They have active projects in and outside of Australia in youth, work and families, the homeless, refugees, and the poor, the aboriginal groups up north and people like myself wanting to grow in my faith. No one is left out. My family has seen some terrible and tremendous examples of the faith in the more than 5 generations my family has been Catholic. One niece fell pregnant to a priest and was treated like a criminal That man now continues as a priest outside the Catholic Church and his son lived with him and another Catholic priest for many years . I wonder who had authority over this man and what a terrible example he gave. However our family continues to love Jesus and forgiveness is our tradition, praise Jesus. The good examples of priests far outweigh the bad and so many parish priests have blessed our family. Our most recent parish priest was accused of historic sexual abuse and is in jail awaiting retrial. I was ashamed of the way he was treated by the Church and he is a son of God, I believe innocent, but whether innocent or not he deserved support and help from the Church. His elderly parents had to mortgage their home to pay for his long trial. The Church needs to remain loyal to him and all the other priests accused because that is our authentic mission. Is it not our responsibility, as a group, to support these priests who fell into sin through lack of support or mental illness or whatever the cause? They are the lowly, the ones Jesus reaches out to and called. All of these and many other experiences have led us to continue to love Jesus and learn more about our faith every day. Our heritage is mainly from the Irish faithful who helped start the Catholic Church here in Australia and I'm forever grateful.

Music in the church has connected me to the Church in a more complete way. I am a part of a group of women who play and sing at church once a month. I also played an instrument in the youth Mass when I was a teenager. These experiences have helped me to feel connected to God and to others in my community. I have had a negative experience with a priest, which turned me away from the Church for a while. This particular priest refused to allow my child to enrol in the Catholic school because she is not baptised. I am a practising Catholic and I work at the school as a teacher. My child attends Mass with me each Sunday. My husband has not been blessed with the gift of faith. My husband requested that my child should be able to make her own decision when she was older about whether she wished to be Catholic. I had to go to the priest and beg him to allow her to attend a Catholic school. I still hold a lot of anger towards that priest due to his judgemental, un-Christ-like behaviour in this situation. He denied many children access to Catholic education for a number of years—even though there was room for them at the school. Many people were hurt by him. He was one of the most judgemental people I have met and I feel it is crazy that this man can claim to be serving people in his Holy Orders. Thankfully for me, he has moved on to another parish. They are having to endure his judgemental actions now! When I am feeling disillusioned with the Church—I have to remind myself—the Church is damaged by the humans who have the power (unfortunately predominantly men). I try to return to the love of Jesus and the goodness of so many people who are Catholic and are working so hard to be the face of God to others. There are many more good people in our Church than bad people. The

<p>good people just need to have more opportunity to have a voice in the Church. Thank you for allowing us a voice in this situation!</p>
<p>When I needed help I prayed, God came to me and calmed me. He is always with me. I see God shake his head at me when I err but he never leaves me.</p>
<p>I was baptised as a baby, received all the sacraments at the appropriate time as a child, married a Catholic. We raised 3 children in the faith, attended Marriage Encounter, accepted all the teachings of the 2nd Vatican Council, and had friendships with many parish priests. We both came from Catholic families, attended Catholic schools. Attended Mass weekly for all our lives. We have been very involved in Family Groups, acting as regional coordinators and family group leaders. We are members of a St Vincent de Paul Conference. We are now very unhappy with our Church due to Child Sexual Abuse and the way it has been ignored for years. We are disgusted with the way many of our priests over the past 10 years have completely ignored their parishioners, not supported the laity, in fact we have not seen a priest at our St Vincent de Paul meetings for the past 5 years. We had a bishop who lived a life of plenty and was beyond the reach of the ordinary people. We have had priests who were weird and preached such archaic Church rules that people just got up and walked out of the Church during the homily. We have priests that do not communicate things they are happening in our local church. The Church is not a democracy I know but surely there should be some communication between a parish priest and their community. How has the Church shaped me? The lay organisations, St Vincent de Paul, Family Group, Marriage Encounter, and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have lead me to learn more about my Christian faith, to read the Bible and learn from the word of God. Priests and bishops have had a little to do with showing me the love of God. The goodness in my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ has truly shown me the love of God. Most of my learning of Jesus has come from my experience with church organisations such as those I mentioned previously. I suppose these organisations are the Church but they are the laity not the religious.</p>
<p>As an adolescent, I attended Catholic youth camps arriving home filled with the Spirit to strive to be better, to do better to live better. In later years I learnt that many of the boys I so admired from camp had been abused. Not knowing that such abuse existed in the world, I have since lived with the guilt of not knowing what was happening to these amazing young people who seemed to have the world at their feet. I know that some of these young people took their own lives, some have lived with a great sorrow of being let down by the people who were supposed to honour them, and some I know nothing of. But still I feel a sense of responsibility for them, and I now want the Church, as an organisation to share that responsibility.</p>
<p>My experience of faith has been the journey from childhood, born into a faith filled family and community, where we shared our beliefs and lived the ways that Christ taught us. To have the opportunity to teach and learn faith based activities, such as scripture teaching in schools and to join groups such as the Legion of Mary. Also to experience the journey in the Spiritual Exercises, introduced to our parish. To have active and wonderful priests who look after and nurture the parish, and keep urging us forward in faith and charity.</p>
<p>The best faith is one that is lived, in action, not just preached in words.</p>

I was molested as a child by a Catholic school teacher. This episode has shaped my life. The teacher was simply moved onto another school, to probably ruin the childhoods and mar the adult lives of other victims. Please may this never be allowed to happen again!
I have always been Catholic and raised my family as a Catholic. I never seek worship outside the Catholic Church because the Catholic community supported me in every way spiritually. Now I watch my children looking for what I have always taken for granted and they are finding it in other religions.
I had experienced a minister at another faith; tell me if I was leaving this church I would be leaving God. This has shaped me, in saying that God is everywhere, not just in a building. Maybe faith needs to be outside the walls, not just inside the building.
As a child we grew up in a Church that our parents revered and never questioned. It was full of mystique for us, as children, but as we grew and questioned many of the Church teachings, reverence gave way to disdain as many aspects of dogma appeared corrupt and unbelievable through a need to 'control' the people and provide them with an answer which was quite frankly simplistic and defying reason. I am tired of being preached to at Mass and being retold scriptural scenarios without relating these to what is going on in our world today.
As a member of the Catholic community, I believe that there are many passionate people involved in the Church. We need to recognise that without change, the Church that will exist for the small number of children that are connected to the Church at present, will be nothing in comparison to the message we have been entrusted to pass on. The Church needs to be a sign of the times. It needs to change. The hierarchy needs to change—to be disempowered.
My sister married a divorcee who is not baptised, but whose first marriage was to a Catholic, in a Catholic Church. At present, the Church's teachings forbid her to receive the Eucharist. Modern music should be encouraged in the liturgies. Many older people in our parish are dismissive of this trend and actually avoid family Masses because the younger people attending are taking up their seats. Priests should be more flexible in allowing secular music at certain ceremonies such as funerals. At a recent funeral in our parish, the grieving husband was refused a secular song at the recessional procession, a decision that lacked understanding and empathy to those grieving their wife, mother and friend's death. About eighteen months ago, our parish was instructed by the bishop to stop charging for services to the schools that the parish built and owns, until they had legal advice on the implications of changes to the education act in NSW. As a result, the parish cannot receive any income for services or rental of their properties, which is having a significant and potentially terminal effect on the parish finances. Our parish manager has projected that within three years our parish will be insolvent if this continues. Our finance council has tried to expedite a decision from the bishop, but cannot obtain a satisfactory decision, even after eighteen months. There has been a distinct lack of communication from the diocese on this matter and our parish finance council is very frustrated. We are responsible for the financial management of the parish and if we sit back and let this continue, could be judged as remiss in our fiducial duties.
My faith was fostered by my family who lived within a small NSW rural community in the 70s and 80s. I was privileged to be part of a loving, caring, faith filled community. Taught by the Sisters of Mercy and having very fond memories of all clergy who were a part of my faith formation and day

to day life. Through my teen years, my faith took a backward step. As my career in Catholic Education began, the importance of my faith became more relevant. I am thankful every day for the opportunities I have had to date in my personal formation and in working with others to support their own spiritual formation. My theologian studies have also contributed to my faith deepening. In today's climate, I remain a very proud Catholic and I believe it is part of my calling to be the face and love of God to others.

At one parish, we attended as a young family in a new area, an older lady whose children had grown up, organized for morning tea to be had after Sunday Mass. I found this to be a very practical way in which people would stay back (instead of rushing off) and meet new people and make them feel welcome, from there forming friendships and becoming involved in the parish. My sons (who are now middle-to-late teens) are commended by a lot of people on how they serve on the altar reverently. This is only because a certain priest took the trouble to teach them and pray with them on a regular basis. These are just a few things that come to mind.

I was raised in an active Catholic home, eldest of eight, & educated in Catholic Schools by Ursuline nuns & De La Salle brothers. Since leaving school, I have remained involved in parishes in regional NSW as I moved around in employment. I am married to an active Catholic lady and we educated our children in Catholic Schools where possible. I have participated in a variety of parish based groups in each community and attend Mass and liturgies regularly.

Having been educated in Catholic schools in 1950 and 1960s it seemed to me that the message 'belted into us' was that heaven (eternal life) could only be reached by total obedience to Church law. Whereas the approach after Vatican II is all about God's love and forgiveness, but I'm not sure that this message is reaching our parishioners let alone the wider community. If it is, it seems to be often seen as hypocritical given the Church's apparent reaction to the victims of abuse over the last fifty years.

No - just stories of little faith of adult children raised in Catholic homes and then later generations with no or limited faith and certainly no Mass attendance.

Throughout my life, at the most unexpected times and places, God has demonstrated his love of us all. I am a retired health professional, I have seen people's lives saved many times when all the right people gather, the right equipment is there, to an emergency situation when ordinarily none would be present. Have always put this down to the hand of God.

Since my arrival in this area in 1991, I have witnessed a decline in the number of practising Catholics. We were regular attendees at the Mass on Sundays. Our two children always accompanied us. The Catholic schools always had a policy of employing Catholic teachers where possible. It was natural to see teachers at the Mass and we felt that our children were given reinforcement of the Catholic faith at School, as well as at home. My children have grown and left this town, and regrettably do not attend Mass at all. However, I have noticed that there has been a decline in the number of teachers from the Catholic schools attending the Mass. Many of the children only attend Mass if their school class attends a mid-week Mass. I have noticed that the teachers who are in charge of these classes are very mindful that the children behave appropriately. I commend them highly for this. However, in the Senior Schools, I feel that there

are fewer “Church going” teachers, so there is probably a lack of true faith and therefore a lack of a spiritual commitment. I do not have statistics to support this observation. My faith has been shaped by the wonderful strength of faith and commitment of many friends and acquaintances within the Church. My husband and I make the effort to attend weekday Masses as well as Sunday Masses. We also take on liturgical duties. We have noticed that there is a lack of volunteers for these duties. Mass attendances have dropped considerably. We try to keep our faith alive by prayer and attending Mass as often as possible. Our Church has been hit by a number of internal misdeeds. These included some priests leaving the Church to marry, or even committing sexual misconduct with a female minor. Some parishioners were disappointed by events and left the Church. We chose to continue to support our priests and we knew that we needed to continue to be faithful to God and our Church. After the recent events of paedophilia that have rocked our Church, we were highly shocked, but have continued in our worshipful support of our priests and Pope, by attending the Mass, Stations of the Cross in Lent, Exposition, Rosary groups, and by attending Bible study groups with a couple of our priests. We remain part of the diminishing Catholic community. Where else is there to go? We know that Jesus is the Victor, in the end. We have tried to keep our faith as strong as possible by learning as much as we can. We feel despondent at times after all the sexual offences by the clergy that have come to light, but consider that we would never leave the Catholic Church, with God’s help.

1. Very close to a religious community that did not handle and share abuse allegations and charges and relevant information with lay members and its Brothers. It was a microcosm of the Church and its dealings of abuse. This was damaging to all parties and people lost faith and trust.
2. We have felt disenfranchised with the Church over the handling of lack of regards sexual abuse. However, our bishop has been a faith of Jesus that has allowed trusting, having hope and seeing the possibilities for belonging.
3. Being in a small parish with young children it has been great to see how they are accepted and have a real sense of belonging. When we talk to our children about God and faith they tell us Mass needs to be ‘kid friendly’ which we interpret this as relevant music, appropriate homilies and language to their level. It’s not rocket science. Everyone has a part to play to welcome everyone into the community celebration.

My faith used to be very deep, after losing our younger son even more so. Through the immense pain I felt God by my side and experienced a serenity I'd never felt previously. Now I don't know anymore, I still believe in God but the Church is sending me too many negative signals and I experience sadness and anger and feel sometimes that I would be better off following my faith on my own between God & myself, in peace. The only thing that has stopped me at this stage is the fact that I go to Mass with my old Mum. I respect our innocent priests and our bishop is a very humble & realistic man and he gives me hope for the future of the Church & my faith.

I come from a Catholic family, both my parents were Catholic. I grew up in a farming community near a small town in NSW. My education began at the local public primary school. I went to the Catholic school for Sacramental programs and continued there and Secondary schooling with the Mercy nuns. I continued with the practice of my faith after school, met my husband and married. With my husband, we have been involved in parish small groups and other programs. Our children (4) have been educated in Catholic schools. I have attended retreats and prayer days and tried to live my faith daily.

Working in Catholic schools has really taught me how difficult it is for kids who want to follow and enrich their faith. The nature of our schools is such that we rely very heavily on secular enrolments. This has been to the detriment of our students who are faith-filled.

My story is common to many who have turned their backs on Christianity and in later life found themselves spiritually bereft with a deep inner longing that has nowhere to go. During that time of darkness I came upon Buddhism and felt an immediate connection. I fell in love with the teachings of Buddha, which are very similar to the teachings of Christ. Buddhism felt alive whereas Christianity had seemed to be dead. At its highest level, Buddhism is about union with the absolute, which Christians and other religions call God. I was a student for many years and it is through the kindness of my astounding teacher that I have come back to Christianity. My mother was a Catholic who became ostracised from the Church when she married my non-religious father, who was a magnificent human being. Mother's pain on leaving the Church was something she never got over, yet her faith remained strong. I went to a Church of England school, did well at divinity but felt no heart connection and so I turned my back on religion for many decades. It's amazing how I have been led to this point. The deeper I got into Buddhism the more Christianity came my way. Long before this my mother asked me had I forsaken Jesus. I hadn't given a thought to Jesus for many years, but her words never left me. My Buddhist Lama would speak of Christ and Christianity now and again during his teachings. He would speak with such reverence and understanding and this began to awaken in my heart. He had many lapsed Christian students as well as practicing Christian students. Meanwhile I began having, what I can only call, Catholic experiences. One very hot morning in [-] I thought I saw an angel in a mirage. It was a Mother Teresa nun and the next day I was working at the mission of compassion and marvelling at the joyfulness of the nuns doing the most menial of tasks. These experiences built up and I was feeling a warm connection with the Catholic faith. Years later, I met Fr [-]. He was so much like Jesus and he guided me into many more experiences. One was meeting Sister [-]. I sat in the front row and tears rolled down my cheeks for most of her talk. Much earlier, my mother became demented and died. It felt natural to me that she should have a Catholic funeral. My husband, a long lapsed Catholic, was dying at that same time. He became touched by Father [-]'s spell. Preparing for two Catholic funerals opened my heart more. The kind Catholics of [-] sort of adopted me over the years and finally it hit me—If I don't give it a go, how will I ever know. I am currently doing the RCIA course, but am I ready to become a Catholic at Easter? I am in love with so much of the Catholic faith and Jesus is now Lord of my heart. However, I can't seem to think like Catholics appear to think, and I just can't do the God talk. Yet I have this deep feeling that a very big part of me belongs to the Catholic Church.

I was raised in a Catholic household & school. It wasn't until a couple moved to our parish and started a prayer group that branched off a group in Sydney, that I really started to grow spiritually and encouraged my children and friends around me to do the same. Our priest at the time was very traditional and took every opportunity to preach Catholicism, encouraging various devotions and his homilies did not have a time limit, some stop coming to his Masses but also some came because of this. I feel that as time goes on less and less is required of us, and so people don't value their faith much anymore.

Our parish has had many changes in the past 10 years. From losing our priest and being twinned with another parish, having a married priest from the Anglican faith and then a married Deacon who is currently on sick leave. We are left with a visiting priest to say necessary Masses and a moderator who we are told we probably won't see. We are told that the parish secretary, who works only 2 days a week, will take care of everything. As anyone can imagine all this change has caused great upheaval. The point we would like to make is that all these changes take place and we are not consulted or even advised about what is happening. Everything is talked about on a higher level and we are not advised of the possible changes or consulted in any way until they are all in place. We are the people being directly affected. It is as though the ordinary people don't matter and we are the ones struggling to keep our parish running smoothly. We have been told by visitors and new parishioners that we have a lovely welcoming parish community, however, we are losing some people because of all the changes and lack of support and it is very sad.

Our parish, being a small parish, has experienced many changes in the last 10 years. Firstly (2008) we lost our parish priest and were to be amalgamated with the adjoining parish. We were told 2 weeks before our priest left and the changeover happened to be the week we had 40 pilgrims arriving in the parish for WYD. We managed to remain a separate parish and became "twinned" to the other parish. The initial change was very traumatic but with much help from parishioners and a caring and understanding parish priest, after a few years we finally had the two parishes working really well. After 6 years, we were given a new parish priest for our parish, a former Anglican priest who was married, although his wife continued to live in their former home away from the parish. People did not seem concerned that this priest was married but things did not go well. Some of our best workers were treated badly; our Pastoral Assistant left and things were not going well. This priest left after 2 years because of sickness and a married Deacon was appointed. After less than 2 years he is now taking 12 months sick leave. We have a priest coming just to say necessary Masses, a moderator apparently has been appointed, although we are told we probably won't see him and apparently our parish secretary (2 days a week) has been left to manage the parish. We don't ever get consulted. During all this process over the years, each time there is to be change we were not informed of the proposed changes until the last minute and are told after everything is in place without any consultation. I find it actually insulting when told by an outsider that there are to be changes and we have not been "officially" told. Hard working parish volunteers are treated as second class citizens, not entitled to know what is happening or being planned. We are constantly being told that the people are the Church but it seems that we are not treated as though we are worthy of any input in a higher level into the running of our own parishes. I would love all the bishops to take note of this and realise the effort ordinary people are putting into our faith communities. We have a great parish community but many are becoming disheartened and a few are not coming to Mass any more. It is our caring community and the love of God that keeps the rest of us together and going forward. A bit of encouragement would go a long way. Thank you for letting me have my say.

I worked in an administrative role in the Catholic Church for 26 years, and was fortunate to work with a number of wonderful priests. I am a widow, a few days away from turning 76 years old. I was born to parents both aged 45, and had three considerably older siblings. Religion was a source of great tension in the home, my mother being very Catholic and my father being quite

anti-Catholic. I understand the Church had interfered in their marriage when my siblings were younger and he was resentful. He was a wonderful father, though. I was raised a Catholic, attended a private Catholic school against my father's wishes, and was 'very Catholic'. A virgin when I married "a good Catholic boy" at age 18 (he was 21), Nuptial Mass and Papal Blessing and all the trimmings, first baby 12 months later, second baby 12 months after that, and so on. The 'rhythm method' of the time was totally useless! The marriage disintegrated leaving me with 4 children to raise on my own, the eldest aged 8, the youngest a baby—and although I realise there was more than one reason for the marriage failure, contraception, or lack of it, was certainly a factor. After many years of my case proceeding, or not proceeding, through the Marriage Tribunal it was found that the original interviews were flawed and the whole process should recommence! Hahaha! Not for me! I married my second husband, a Catholic bachelor, in the Anglican Church some hundreds of kilometres away from our home town where a good friend was the priest, and because I was a prominent member of the Catholic community in my home parish the fact I had not married in the Catholic Church was never made public. People made their own assumptions that I had an annulment and had married in the Catholic Church, and I didn't disillusion them. As far as I was concerned my marriage to my second husband was blessed by God, and we had one son, his only child and my fifth, born when I was 40 and he was 49. What a blessing! We were married 34 years prior to his death, after a long illness during which I was his carer. I am an on-going committed member of my parish and could not have lived what has been a quite difficult life without Jesus having chosen to pour his love upon me and strengthen me through the knowledge of that love. So blessed.

The story shared by the group was one of a teacher who went to find out about becoming a special minister to assist at school Masses. The priest listed all of the things which meant that one was not "good enough", and as a divorcee she was included. This has been a terrible pain for a lady who decided to join our church as an adult. The school faith community encouraged her to be a member of our faith but the greater Church community did not completely accept her. We asked is this acting as Jesus taught us?

There used to be reconciliation Masses in our parish, but it was not continued due to lack of representatives. That they be held regardless of the amount of people, in the hope that more will attend as it becomes known. At least this will serve those who are present.

We work in Catholic Education and we have had great success leading students to Christ. However, they make little connections to parish life because often the parishes are not hospitable places. They make no effort to grow to allow space for young adults and families.

All my life Sunday Mass has given me the strength to cope with whatever problems you may encounter in the days ahead.

A woman who was asked by the Tribunal to declare that she had never loved her first husband could not bring herself to make such a declaration because of what her two daughters would feel. This same woman was thrown down the stairs by her husband while pregnant with her second daughter and subsequently divorced him. She was not granted an annulment.

I have been a member of the Passionist Family Group Movement for over 30 years and I am also a Passionist Companion. I have witnessed the simplicity of these structures, with no emphasis on

'power' but rather an emphasis on caring and supporting one another has been so visibly beneficial to so many people. I have witnessed people coming into the Church through the RCIA program because of their experience within their Family Group –they have seen faith in action not just what is preached about. I have seen single mothers supported in practical ways with childcare because of the bonds they have formed with other families within their Church community. I have seen people return to Mass because they have a sense of belonging within their Family Group whereas they had previously not considered themselves as part of their parish faith community.

We value Bishop [-], placing a focus on the formation of the young adult network. He wants us to be the best people we can be, and we want that too.

We are a group of high school students who are involved in our faith at a school and diocesan level. We are part of a Senior Youth Ministry team at our school and want to share our faith with others.

We are a youth ministry class at a Catholic high school. We are seeking to explore our faith more and to learn skills to share it with others.

1. Divorced people prevented from receiving the Eucharist; young people at school with sexual identity problems; people with mental illness never being engaged in conversation... what is the Church doing about these needs?

2. Grandmothers and mothers have a big impact on faith; can we better support these relationships with focused homilies, resources, prayer nights, small groups?

3. The prayer group is always taken over by someone's personal opinion. No one is trained properly on how to facilitate groups.

My experience of the Church as a child was a place I went because my parents made me but that was fine because all my friends were there too. We gathered after church and socialised. We also socialised at Church functions or events such as parish picnics, Parish Youth Groups, Antioch weekends and lots of other events. Church is no longer providing this community interaction for the youth - other things have replaced this. Changing and adapting to meet the young where they are at is necessary. I have seen priests refuse to allow certain music, refuse to baptize children whose parents are not baptized, refuse to allow divorced parishioners receive the Eucharist and refuse to make changes because it might upset some long-time parishioners. We can't expect things to stay the same and change to occur because it won't. The young are different, still very spiritual but different. My fear is that there will be no Church to worship in when I am growing old because the ideas that result from this process will not be acted on and things will just go on like they have for generations.

There are many good, honest and holy men of faith who take a priestly role and I feel that they will be pilloried because of the hypocrisy of Pell. The sooner the trappings of hierarchy are dispensed with the better.

My involvement in Student Discipleship events/opportunities (e.g. Ignite in [-], ACYF in [-], [-] Diocesan events..) has made my faith and experience of it more real... a deeper awareness of and relationship with Jesus

All of this child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church makes me rethink my whole belief system. Everything I was taught as a child, all of my family traditions, days of celebration is now under threat. How can we gain the trust of the Church again? There is still so much secrecy and denial of the revolting things priests and religious have done to children, both boys and grooming of young women to take advantage of. It is heartbreaking. These men should not be leaders, the people need to lead. Mass is so boring, other Christian religions have great spiritual music, that is attractive to young people. People want to congregate at a place that feels uplifting and spiritual. We need bands and great singers, not little old ladies on the organ with the same boring music that hasn't changed with the times, singing way too high that no one can join in.

We have always practiced our faith in rural Australia, and we have always been the minority. In our 20s my husband and I were often the only young family in our Church, in our 30s and now 40s it has continued to be the same. Not only are we often the only/or one of a small handful of family that practices (we are younger than the majority of our parish by 3-4 decades) we are the only ones with children. Our children have grown up being often the only children/ teens in our parish and it's hard. Arranging for our children to receive their Sacraments for the past 18 years has been a constant stress. We don't feel supported on a parish level, we've had to look to the wider Church for support and it saddens us that this is so. It shouldn't be like this.

My parents were both deeply committed Catholic Christian people and our family lived next to our local parish church in suburban [-]. As a child I chose to attend daily Mass. As soon as I finished high school at 17 I joined the local YCW group (back in the mid-late 1960s). I am forever grateful to God for that. The 'See Judge Act' method of Christian Living combined with the guidance of some amazing chaplains (some of whom were newly ordained & not all that much older than our group members) and the support of fellow members at our weekly meetings transitioned me into an adult faith and set me firmly on the path of life-long journey of Christian living. It was there that we learned that when God calls us He provides us with the courage and strength to step out knowing that He is with us. Although the YCW had single sex groups at that time, it wasn't all Scripture reflection meetings and prayers, but it provided both its young men and women members plenty of opportunities for supervised social gatherings. (Our long-suffering chaplains were our chaperones, and they did an amazing job!) Many a life-long, happy marriage began at those gatherings. 50 years on and many of us - not just from our local parish YCW group but also from other parish groups across the archdiocese and beyond - are still close friends and deeply committed Catholics who encourage and support one another (and others) to deal with the difficult issues (including major scandals) which surface in our Church and society on all too regular a basis. The support from other members of our Church family has been and continues to be a great blessing from God!

When I was ... finishing high school, I considered that I may have a vocation to lead a religious life. However, I suppressed this calling because of the knowledge that I would forever be excluded from any real decision making because of my gender. In this way are the lives and gifts of women wasted. There is a direct route to expression that some women must follow and it is not to be suppressed by the inequality of the male gender. This will free the male priesthood of its one gendered dysfunctional state. Celebrant status should be a matter of education and suitability rather than of gender.

Having raised two daughters in the faith, it has been an inevitability that they would wander from the Church as they hit their late teens. There was nothing to hold them in the Church. It was boring and dull. They have gone off to 'born again' services where they feel much more comfortable. The Church is woeful at retaining younger members. Get some dynamic preachers from the laity to do the sermons.

I was a religious sister for 15 years and married a wonderful man who'd been a religious brother for 20 years. The religious orders in which we lived didn't want to know us when we left, but we were supported by a wonderful priest and bishop who gave us work and enabled us to buy a home in which to raise the two beautiful children with whom we were blessed. Over the years it has really saddened me to see priests, who have given the best years of their lives to serving God in the priesthood, being discarded when they decide that they can no longer continue in that pathway. They are wonderfully brave men who would still be working as priests if somewhere in the history of the Church men had [not] decided that only celibate men could be priests. Some of these 'celibate' men have really scarred the Church.

In the 90's our parish priest encouraged parishioners to become involved in various ministry roles in our parish, beginning with The Christian Leadership Course, a Parish Pastoral Team, Baptism Preparation Team, RCIA team, Care and Concern group, Family Group Movement, Parish Visitation Team, Marriage Preparation Team, Family Ministry, Bereavement Support Group, Antioch, just to name a few. The next parish priest built upon this foundation and we had a year of 'Catholics Coming Home' which was very successful, building up the parish and empowering lay leadership. Our parish church was not bursting at the seams but we had very good numbers and a lot of young families who regularly attended. I went away from the area to work and returned home to live 6 years later. We had a new parish priest with a radically different leadership style, while a good man with great gifts to offer he did not seem to find the parish ministry teams necessary (particularly the Parish Pastoral Team) and nearly all of the ministry teams which were led by the laity had floundered or been closed. The next parish priest was not interested in re-establishing any of these teams and he also seemed to think that any involvement of the laity apart from that of attending Mass was beyond our capabilities. Our next (now) parish priest is trying to re-establish some of those groups and is faced with the difficulty that there is no longer such a large group to draw from as the numbers attending each weekend have dropped significantly. Some parishioners have died, some have moved away and some have just lost interest. There are a few young families still regularly attending church but now they can be counted on one hand. It seems unlikely that such a dramatic change would have taken place in just [a few] years if the people in the parish had still felt empowered to minister to each other. Is it just, that the person whose role it is to minister to the people of God can dismantle the good works put in place by his predecessors? Shouldn't the laity have the privilege to share in the leadership of the Church? Are we not the body of Christ? Not all eyes, not all hands, not all feet but all important-gifted? Using those gifts to benefit the whole Church? If the laity helped more with the everyday things, then the ordained minister would have more time to administer the sacraments. If we were really serious about having a Church in the future we might even go so far as to look at the people who are being ordained and rethink the idea of married Catholic clergy and women priests. We could even think that by accepting and loving the people who we are

currently closing the door to - LGBTI people, divorced and remarried people, priests who have left the priesthood to marry and raise a family - may very well be the people who show the world that we love God and others. That we are authentic followers of Jesus and not judgemental, bullying, hypocrites that so many outside the Church think we are.

My faith has been a mainstay for me all of my life. I was born to a Catholic mother and an Anglican father who had to be married in the Sacristy. This hurt my mother very much as she was a faithful Catholic and she told me later how our dad was such a good man and didn't deserve to be treated like that. Later we moved from [-] to a coastal village where we were part of a small but welcoming Catholic community -we had to walk a few kilometres to get to 7am Sunday Mass, rain, hail or shine, so I guess I absorbed the fact that it must be important, as we never missed. I attended the Catholic Primary School in the nearby town and later a Catholic Boarding College in a large town, which was the centre of the diocese. This experience was very different to my home parish but very enriching - I learned a lot about the Church and I remember being very devout and loved daily Mass in the Cathedral. While there, my father died and I relied very much on my faith at this time - it was my comfort and I felt very close to Jesus at this time. While in my final year of school, some of the sisters were becoming excited about the announcement of the Vatican Council and my interest was piqued. However I don't remember hearing any more until I was into my 20's, married with a couple of children and the poor parish priest was trying to introduce all the changes in the Mass and attempting to get the people to sing and they were dragging their feet! In my youth, I had become very tired of the Latin Mass, the boring old hymns with outdated and obscure language and I drifted into a state of deep spiritual dryness. However as we became more aware of the Vatican Council recommendations and these were implemented our parish really came to life. We really felt like the Body of Christ and so many were now participating in the life of the Church and ministries and the Spirit was alive and active. This continued for many years with the guidance and cooperation of wonderful priests. However, later on conservative forces in the Church began to spread their influence and seemed to negate a lot of the wonderful results of Vatican II suggesting we had gone too far. There was no longer much support for lay leadership and ministries and participation began to dissipate. Personally, I felt very demoralised by this especially when a friend who had been organising Christian Leadership courses in the Diocese asked for relief from some of her responsibilities and was told to just let it go and to throw all the excellent material and resources in the bin! Despite this I have continued to do my bit in our parish but it isn't quite the same. Many people are no longer active. When I heard about the Plenary Council, I initially felt quite sceptical and thought, why bother, they won't listen anyway. After hearing a speaker I decided to give it a go and so here is my response - literally at the last minute!!

I am a born Catholic, attending Catholic schools and have been involved in church activities all my life. Recently I stood aside from my parish involvement due to over commitment within the parish. Due to age, health and lack of numbers it is becoming increasingly difficult to find volunteers etc. and therefore the few take on more until their life takes second place. Finances are less for the same reasons and so parishes are struggling to carry on. Again, the few carry the load. We baptise babies and children we never see again, we put children through sacramental program never to be seen again, we have parents who treat the church building like a concert hall.

What is being done about it? What can we do about these things which are so far outside our upbringing that we do not understand?
Not long ago I spent 4 years on the Parish Pastoral Council. This was a very busy time for me balancing my working life, home life and parish commitments. At the same time, I became involved in Conference work with the SVDP. The needs of my parish and local community soon became 'real' issues, very much 'In my face'. How did I deal with it? Not really sure, certainly found where the real support in the parish was coming from but it never really was enough. I often felt let down and struggling. Prayer became a much more important part of my life. My faith and need for God in my life was huge, I was really starting to listen to his word and understand it. I think I am able to cope with life 'needs' so much better.
My experience for most of my life has been of a living in loving faith filled community. Born into a loving Catholic home with strong but humble religious beliefs. I attended Catholic schools which I fortunately, only had good experiences. I trained to be a registered nurse and midwife in Catholic hospitals for which I will always be eternally grateful for the teachings, love, care and support I received from the religious who ran these hospitals. Married to a Catholic from similar background made our religious life simple. Through family deaths and sadness, I do not believe I could have coped in life without my spiritual beliefs and prayer. Did always feel inclusive in the Church but have to say that maybe for last 20 years with appointment of a new Cardinal in [-] and following on from this appointment our local Diocesan Bishop retired, a new Bishop was appointed and the inclusive Church I had known somehow seemed to change. I have never ceased to be loyal but somehow was made to feel "a peasant" in this now Church of monarchical behaviour and clothing and materialism. Fortunately, for me now, there is a new Bishop who has given me a feeling of new hope, inclusiveness and revival. I do know and have many friends who are religious and I feel very deeply for them in this very dark chapter in our beloved Church history by the present scandals engulfing us.
<p>1. My aunt Sr [-] spent her life starting the first Catholic boarding school for girls in [-], then after being injured in [West Africa], established several homes for homeless men in [-] UK, then taught Catholic, Druze & Arab children in Israel. She should have been allowed to become a priest if she wanted to. My second cousin worked as a Sister-nurse for 20 years in [-] and is now the sole Catholic member of the clergy in an Aboriginal town but is not permitted to become a priest. I have been a Rotarian for 24 years and have observed that Rotary is greatly improved by now including women as well as men.</p> <p>2. Jesus was a great man who welcomed all people to worship and work together. He did not preach the Trinity, which cannot be proven and is an impediment to religious unity. The Assumption only became a Church belief a couple of centuries ago. If we want to honour Mother Theresa we should not have to wait for miracles.</p> <p>3. The recent conclave of cardinals and bishops in Rome has little prospect of reducing child abuse because it is in essence a club trying to protect itself. Every bishop should have a lay council assisting him with major matters like child abuse.</p>
My formation has come from 1) A strong Catholic family upbringing 2) a profound experience of the love of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit at a youth ministry retreat at the age of 17,

which lead to my proactive involvement in this movement for 3 years and formation which has stayed with me for the next 30. Thank you [-] for Antioch, and 3) ongoing practice of my faith with my family through parish involvement and my subsequent employment after [many] years as a school teacher, to a School Evangelisation position at the [-] Catholic Schools Office. Through this role, my vocation as a teacher has flourished even more through the direct role I now play in the evangelisation of teachers and students in our schools. Through practice, we learn and the opportunities that I facilitate for others continue to form me.

I was brought up in a strict Catholic family and other than a few years when I left school after 6 years in a Catholic boarding school, have been a fully participatory and active member of the parishes where I have lived. I have been a regular reader at Sunday Masses for 33 years, Passionist family group leader for 8 years, on various liturgy committees and worked in other voluntary capacities in the parish. I was married in 1974 and had five babies, one of who died of SIDS in 1979. I was married for 26 years until 2000 when my husband and I separated and divorced several years later. Our marriage was not annulled and I have not remarried, I would like to see changes made to the annulment criteria and have prayed about this for many years. As a reader, I am concerned that the liturgy lacks inclusive language and lack of consistency between parishes. This is just one significant factor that demonstrates gender inequality in the Church and at a parish level.

Meeting and conversing with priests who deliver hope and care in our communities has comforted and supported me.

My wife and I met overseas whilst volunteering with a Catholic youth ministry, NET Ministries. NET is a fruit of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and we too have a desire to see a revival of our Church, for her to come fully to life! We have recently begun our own faith discussion group in our parish and hope and pray that in our parish, a greater sense of authentic Christian community, fellowship and formation can grow, so that our children will be able to be a part of a Church that is not dead and boring, but rather is fully alive!

My experience of the Church has been positive overall. I was taught by strong women (PBVM) and learned men (Christian Brothers) who instilled in me a great sense of justice and working for the Kingdom. I have also met many people, lay and religious, of great spirituality and wisdom, who have formed my faith and shown me what it is to have a rich relationship with God. I have also studied theology, which has informed my faith, and in particular made me appreciate the richness and depth of our tradition. However, there has also been much that has frustrated and saddened me about the Church in many areas. I hope that we can move our Church forward to once again be an attractive option to people, that inspires them to build their own relationship with God and help to bring about the Kingdom of God.

As a cradle Catholic, born in 1951, I have been a part of the changes within the modern Catholic Church. I am grateful to those Religious who helped form and nurture my strong faith.

How Adoration and formation changed my life. I was raised Catholic however stopped practicing the faith in my teen years and leaving school. I had a conversion through the Baptist Church and eventually God led me back to Catholicism as I continued to search for truth. I started attending a monthly event held in the local parish, which involved a meal with others, followed by a talk and

prayer time. This was the first time since primary school that I had received any formation and questions could be answered. My first experience of the parish life again was when I was asked to commit to an hour of Adoration a week. This hour of Adoration opened the door to a true relationship with God. Up until this point I would call out to God when I thought I needed Him and only briefly. When I came to the church for my hour each week it would pass by so quickly. I had so much to pray about. This Holy hour enabled me to take time out of the busyness of life and just be present to God (people these days go through life with no silence). It also opened my eyes to His true presence in the Eucharist, which until this point in my life I never had taken the time to truly Adore. I attended a 2 week Mission School of the Immaculate Community and after this experience I fell in love with the Church. It evolved prayer, formation and fellowship and during these weeks that I experienced the love of God in a profound way that I had not before.

I have felt a sense of community & belonging because of my faith. I have very much appreciated the mighty work of the parish priests I have been involved with (I have been a catechist for 40 years) and the amazing sacrifices they have made. I have often felt their lives could have been supported and enhanced by a partner and family.

My mother nurtured my faith; my older sisters continue to do so. Various members of my family have been victims of child sexual abuse at the hands of priests, and physical abuse by nuns. To the best of my knowledge none of these have been reported. I am very grateful to the good priests who continue to "soldier on" and nurture our faith.

In our group was a lady who suffered at the time of her annulment. So often laws and rules are destroying our faith.

Excuse my self-indulgence but my dearly loved parish priest of 50 years recently died. I have known no other parish priest in my life since I was a 5 year old child and I am now 55 years old. He was the most wonderful person and he more than anyone else shaped my faith and my participation in the Church. He kept our parish safe and good. He was not a person for clericalism and lived to serve his people and his Church. I don't think I would still be a part of this Catholic Church without the guidance and leadership of our beloved Fr [-]. Every parish or every little Catholic girl should be so lucky.

I have been going to Mass since day dot and when I was about 16, I stated thinking I'm only going to Mass because my parents want me to. I was fortunate to meet a girl at 19 that was in love with me enough to want to know more about Catholicism and actually became Catholic. All of a sudden, I had my reason to continue going to Mass. The Lord works in mysterious ways. I consider myself blessed to have met this girl. We are now married and have three children.

I have been fortunate to have a strong Catholic faith instilled in me by my grandparents and Josephite nuns. An opportunity to complete an Ignatian Spirituality course changed my attitude to my faith, giving me a personal experience of Jesus. This in turn led me to study theology, Indigenous leadership and spirituality at [-] University. My faith world expanded and, due to scholarship and theologians, I learnt how the interpretation of the Catholic faith has changed since my early faith formation. I am amazed at how the changes have not been relayed to the congregation who sits before the priest every Sunday, at least. For decades the priest has reiterated parables and stories we have heard many times over our lifetime. However, there has

been no passing on of new interpretation of the faith or changes made by the Church since many parishioners received their sacraments. I believe that there is a huge vacuum, particularly for those of us in the country, between what is current Catholic belief and practice and the lens of those who sit in the pews. The faithful have not been professionally developed in their faith. In some faiths there is Bible study, build into faith practice. We need updating, from every pulpit, to bring the faithful into this century. Even with the release of an Encyclical, the local priest and the local parish, do not even mention it. City parishioners may be better served. This is a huge area to be examined and strategically planned to remedy.

Sadly, there have been a number of times in both my life and my parent's lives regarding the Church. My elderly parents were very active in their Church, when a new foreign priests arrived, this changed dramatically, not only language difficulties, but also a very strict liturgy focus, my parents were so dismayed they moved parishes, after being in one for over 60 years. I also found one of our foreign priests was so very liturgical, no movement at all, the children did not adapt at all, and I myself almost left the Church over him. Thankfully a good friend reminded me that the priest was human and that we can all like the same people, however we were brought up to place priests on a pedestal, now that has gone completely. The other BIG issue is the new laws on compliance. No more working bees where the church community gathers to help, now you need to have a green card, have a police check, and sign a document with all of your details that can be shared with a 3rd party! This bureaucracy has seen a rise in employment at parishes for compliance offers! What are we achieving with all of this? No one will volunteer and we all know a parish will slowly die if no volunteers are willing to go through the hoops before they can even start to contribute!

I find this hard to do without trumpeting that enveloping power of the Spirit and my brothers in my conversion at a very early Cursillo in [-] at the [-] Monastery. A small and lively prayer group grew out of that and subsequent Cursillos in the parish of [-] which was ongoing for nearly 15-20 years. Each member of that group was active in parish life as acolytes, Eucharist ministers, readers, retreat leaders, Antioch youth parents, a parish prayer and healing ministry and, most important, initiating a family group which ran a "cuppa & chat" for parents and children after Sunday Mass. We did receive a lot of cooperation and involvement from the clergy and that helped enormously. Most of that group have gone happily to God now but those left still keep in touch and are still active wherever we are.

If I was able to attend the sessions, I would have imparted how I joined the Catholic Family through the RCIA and the impact that it has made on my life.

Several members of this group shared deeply personal stories of hurt, related to legalities surrounding marriage, remarriage, annulment and encounters with priests who were severe judgmental, legalistic, non-pastoral, unforgiving.

A case for more local authority, the marriage tribunal. Many applicants cite delays in responses and "paper shuffling" causing years of frustration for applicants.

We've grown up in the Catholic Church all our lives. We are disillusioned by what has been done to OUR CHURCH. Our Church, that we so love and have faithfully followed and served is in crisis. We gratefully acknowledge the wonderful clergy and religious who have influenced our lives. We

appreciate the opportunity to have our say. It has been a "release" to voice our recommendations under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We are senior Catholics who have spent most of our adult life in this Diocese. Our children have attended our local Catholic Schools and many of us have had active roles in various ministries in our parish. We can say it's 'our parish' and the priests come to serve us for a period of time. We've had some wonderful caring priests, who have ministered to us and empowered us to take on ministries in the parish. For them we are most grateful. We are disappointed now with the lack of involvement of lay people in the social and spiritual life of the parish. Liturgies have become more formal and seem to be governed by more regulations around music and rituals. There is no avenue for parishioners to have their voice heard, so until that happens nothing will change.

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 Lismore.

Country	Number of respondents
Australia	135
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	6
Ireland	3
Netherlands	3
South Africa	3
India	2
Austria	1
Brazil	1
France	1
Zimbabwe	1
Not stated	23
Total	179

APPENDIX 2: COMPLETE LIST OF GROUPS FROM YOUR DIOCESE

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

Name of group	Group size
Lismore Diocese	170
St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie NSW 2444	117
Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Parish Kyogle NSW	87
Xavier College, Llandilo NSW	80
Northern Leaders and Representatives	75
St Agnes Care & Lifestyle - Community Services	54
Sawtell Catholic Church	39
Oasis Young Adult Retreat	32
Crowley	30
Mt St Patrick College	28
Sawtell Catholic Church	26
Our Lady of Sorrows Kyogle	25
Macleay Valley Paris - SWR group 3-2-19	20
Macleay Valley Parish - Kempsey group 5-2-19	18
Catholic Schools Family Retreat	17
Year 10 Youth Ministry Class, St. Pauls College	14
St Anthonys Meditation Group	13
Sisters of Mercy	12
Donnelly House, St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie NSW 2444	12
St Marys parish / Family Group	12
Xavier Catholic College, Ballina	11
Faith sharing group	11
Macleay Valley Parish -Kempsey Group 10/2/19	11
St Agnes Parish PLT	11
SFX Parish Ballina	10
Anawim	10
St Anthonys Kingscliff Parish Pastoral Council	10
St Agnes Parish 21Feb19 Group	9
St. Johns Conference EH of SVdP	9
St Josephs Regional College	8
The Rosary Team, Mullumbimby Parish	8
Anawin Prayer Group	8
St Josephs Regional College	7
St Francis Xavier Parish group 6	7
menALIVE Ballina Thursday	7
Buchanan Family	7
Ballina 12th February	7
St Josephs Primary South Murwillumbah	7
informal group	7
IDENTITY - Young Adults	6
St Carthages Primary School	6
Evans Head Parish Men's Group	6

Name of group	Group size
Evans Head Men's Group	6
Evans Head Men's Group	6
St. Pauls Senior Ministry Team	6
St Agnes Parish Young Adults	6
Sisterhood	6
Lismore Diocese	6
St Anthony's Parish Pottsville community	6
Niven Family Group	5
One Alstonville Parish Group	5
Cathedral Parish	5
CSO Lismore	5
Parish Group	5
Lismore Students	5
Macleay Valley Parish - SWR Group 8-2-19	4
Friends	4
Mary Gods Holy Spirit	4
St Anthony's Parish Sisterhood Group	4
Lismore Presentation Sisters	3
Spash family	2
Macleay Valley Parish Kempsey Group 8-2-19	1
Macleay Valley Parish	1
St Agnes Parish	1
Family School Partnership Coordinator	Not Stated
NV Parish	Not Stated



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