



Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

A Report to the Diocese of Rockhampton

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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

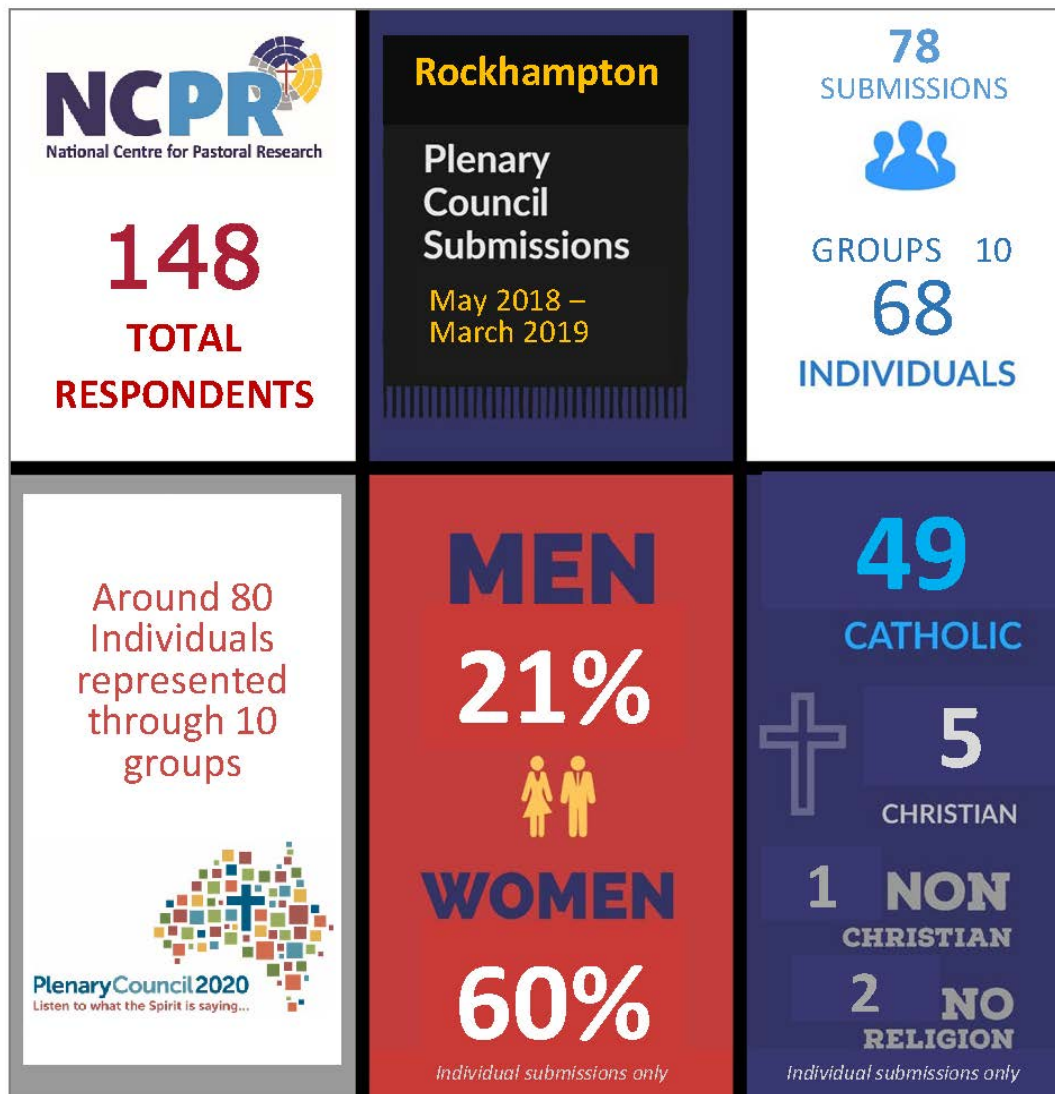
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Diocesan Submissions Summary Snapshot: May 2018—March 2019



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 - Rockhampton

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 Rockhampton, we received a total of 78 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 37 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another seven were unsure if they had. About 26 respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 78 submissions, 10 submissions were from groups or organisations and 68 submissions were from individuals. There were 80 people represented through the 10 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 148.

Table 1: Number of Submissions	
Total number of submissions received	78
<i>Participated in Listening & Dialogue Encounter?</i>	
Yes	37
No	26
Not sure	7
Not stated	8
Total	78
Submissions received from groups or organisations	10
Submissions received from individuals	68
Total	78

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 68 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 Rockhampton. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 47 per cent (32) were received from those aged 50 and over. The most number of submissions within this age range were received from the 50-54 years and 70-74 years age groups (6 responses each).

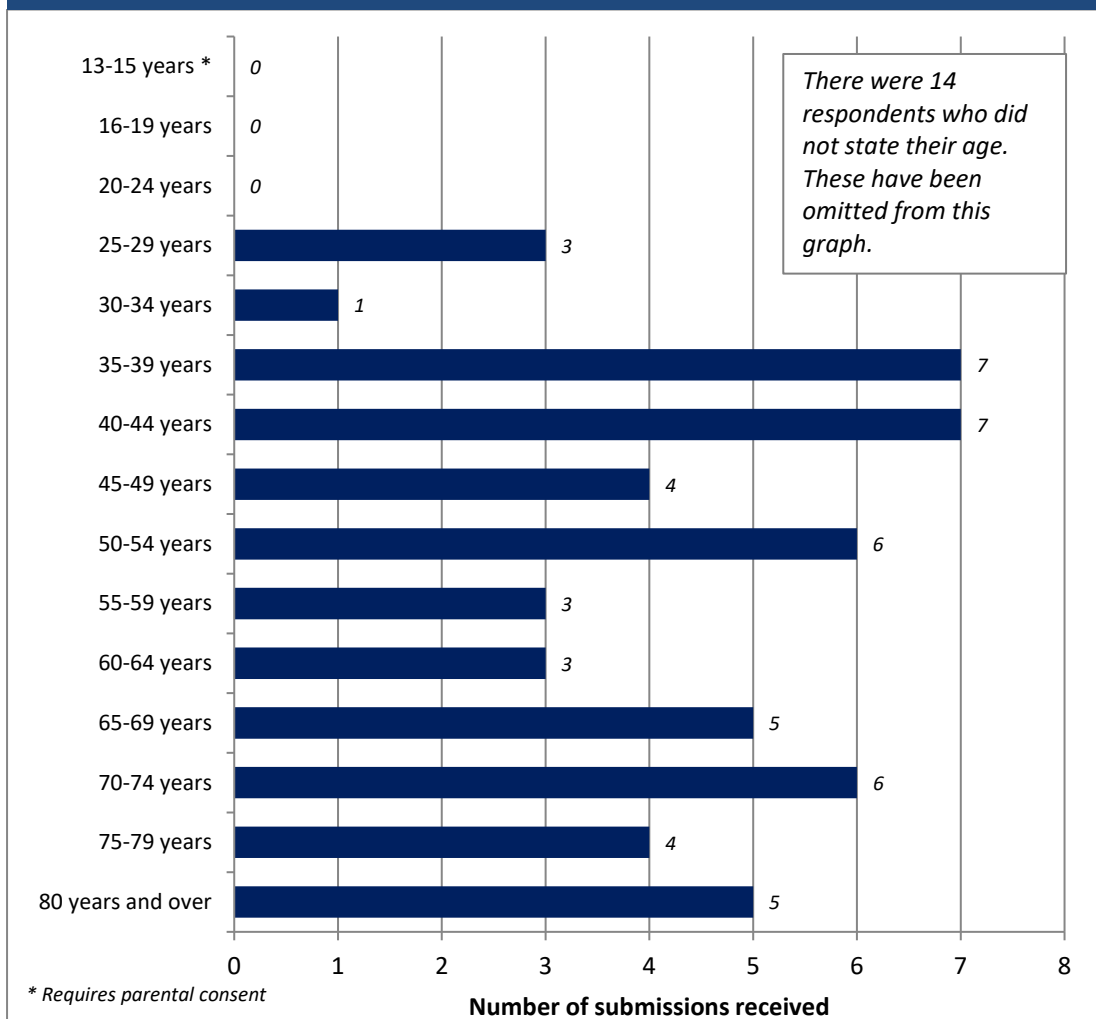
At the close of submissions, there were no individual submissions received from those aged under 25.

Participants aged 16-17 were encouraged to discuss the questionnaire with their parent or guardian. Many of these responses came from schools that sent in their responses through the online survey. As Table 2 shows, there were no individual submissions made from the 16-19 years age group in your diocese.

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

Table 2: Age groups (<i>individual responses only</i>)	
13-15 years *	0
16-19 years	0
20-24 years	0
25-29 years	3
30-34 years	1
35-39 years	7
40-44 years	7
45-49 years	4
50-54 years	6
55-59 years	3
60-64 years	3
65-69 years	5
70-74 years	6
75-79 years	4
80 years and over	5
Not stated	14
Total	68

* Requires parental consent

Fig. 1: Age groups (individual responses only)

Sex of Respondents

More than half the number of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (60%), while a further 21 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 14 men and 41 women who made submissions. One respondent preferred not to state their sex, while 12 respondents did not answer this question.

Table 3: Sex (individual responses only)

Female	41
Male	14
Prefer not to say	1
Not stated	12
Total	68

Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (90%) were born in Australia. About six per cent came from other countries, while a little over four per cent did not state their birthplace. Table 4b provides a summary of the countries of birth by English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries*, while Tables 4c and 4d indicate the countries of birth of the respondent's mother and father respectively.

Table 4a: Countries of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	61	89.7
Ireland	1	1.5
New Zealand	1	1.5
South Africa	1	1.5
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1	1.5
Not stated	3	4.4
Total	68	100.0

Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	61	89.7
Other English speaking country	4	5.9
Non-English speaking country	0	0.0
Not stated	3	4.4
Total	68	100.0

Table 4c: Mother's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	48	70.6
Other English speaking country	4	5.9
Non-English speaking country	3	4.4
Not stated	13	19.1
Total	68	100.0

Table 4d: Father's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	45	66.2
Other English speaking country	6	8.8
Non-English speaking country	4	5.9
Not stated	13	19.1
Total	68	100.0

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

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Table 5 shows the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from your diocese who made submissions. At the close of submissions there were no individuals who identified themselves in this way.

Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (individual responses only)	
Yes	0
No	56
Not stated	12
Total	68

Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 68 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 49 respondents (72%) were Catholic. Five respondents were from other Christian denominations while there was one from a non-Christian religion. A further 11 respondents did not state their religion and two respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

Table 6: Religion (individual responses only)		Person	Percent
Catholic		49	72.1
Other Christian:			
Anglican		3	4.4
Uniting Church		1	1.5
Other Christian		1	1.5
Non Christian:			
Buddhism		1	1.5
Other religion		0	0.0
No religion		2	2.9
Not stated		11	16.2
Total		68	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 36 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were eight respondents who said they went to Mass and church activities sometimes, while a further two respondents considered themselves Catholic but were not involved or described their participation in other terms. A further three respondents described themselves in another way.

Table 7: Religious description (for those who answered 'Catholic' to previous question)				
	Female	Male	Not stated	Total
I am Catholic and regularly attend Mass and other church activities	26	8	2	36
I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes	5	3	0	8
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	0	0	1
Other	1	2	0	3
Not stated	0	0	0	0
Total	34	13	2	49

GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of 10 group submissions made from your diocese. Around 80 individuals were represented through these groups. However, there were three groups that did not report their number of participating members, indicating that the total number of people represented through the group submissions may be higher.

While eight group submissions provided a group name, two did not do so. Table 8 shows a list of the group submissions from the diocese with the number of members in each group. Groups that did not provide a name were omitted from this table. The number of participating members was provided by the person submitting the group response. These figures could not be checked for accuracy.

Prominent among the largest groups was an informal group of Religious Sisters and their Lay women friends with around 21 members. There were three other groups with 12 members or more.

Table 8 : Group submissions from the diocese	
Name of group	Group size
This is an informal group of Religious Sisters and their Lay women friends	21
Rockhampton Josephite Associates	18
Faith group meeting monthly	13
cannot do this	12
2 Aged Homes in RockhamptonRetire	8
St. Catherines Catholic College	3
St Catherines Catholic College - The Whitsundays	Not stated
Del Rowan	Not stated

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 70 years and over age group was the largest group represented with 16 members. This was followed by the group aged 30-49 years with six 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	0
20 - 29 years	3
30 - 49 years	6
50 - 69 years	5
70 and over	16
Unknown	0
Total	30

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

Of the total 30 group members whose sex was reported, 100 per cent (30) were female.

Table 10: Estimates of sex of people in group submissions	
<i>(group responses - for submissions received after 04 November 2018 only)</i>	
Female	30
Male	0
Total	30

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



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1

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

THEMES DISCUSSED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

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

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

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

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

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

- Love God, Love Neighbour (Chapter 4)
 - *Remaining faithful to Church teaching* (p. 32)
 - *Emphasis on: Marriage* (p. 33)
 - *Greater focus on Jesus Christ* (p. 30)
 - *Greater trust, faith and hope in God* (p. 29)
- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
 - *Greater inclusion of all* (p. 108)
 - *Care for the environment* (p. 112)
- Sacraments (Chapter 6)
 - *Holy Orders – Ending celibacy / allowing priests to marry* (p. 66)
 - *Greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments* (p. 64)
 - *Holy Orders - Ordination of women* (p. 69)
- Evangelisation (Chapter 11)
 - *Sharing the faith with others* (p. 128)
- Leadership and Church Governance (Chapter 7)
 - *Greater involvement of the laity* (p. 84)
 - *More formation and support for priests* (p. 89)
 - *Ending clericalism* (p. 80)

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

- *More welcoming parishes (p. 161)*
- *Modernise Church teachings (p. 169)*
- *Outreach to youth (p. 124)*
- *Stronger parish communities (p. 156)*
- *Radical change, a new order, inverted pyramid (p. 172)*

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 62 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 want to upload a longer document. In essence I think that we are being called to renewal: to go back to Jesus (model and message) and to look at the signs of THESE times in order to move forward.

We must regroup, restore faith in Christ. Especially, we must propagate the belief of the real presence of Christ in the consecration. The Eucharist is the centre of our faith.

I think God is asking the Church to place Gospel values summarised in the beatitudes ("Righteousness" an incorrect translation in most English versions—should be "Justice") at the heart of the Church. This will mean a radical reform of those structures which are no longer relevant or are unjust—e.g. clericalism; exclusion of lay people, and women in particular, from decision-making re: Church policy; lack of accountability of bishops to the people of the diocese in which they serve (had there been such a local structure to which bishops were accountable then concealment of sexual abuse by priests in their dioceses may not have occurred). We are dismayed that those who are listed as having voting power in the Plenary Council 2020 are overwhelmingly in favour of male church officials. Lay people are listed as 'observers' and are therefore excluded from the decision-making processes of our Church in which according to our baptism ritual we are all supposed to be equal. Surely this is an example of great injustice.

God is asking us to show compassion and mercy to all people, especially the most needy in our communities. He is asking us to reach out to them, offer friendship and offer help.

Overall, Father God is asking us to come to repentance and holiness and also to have TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST. (-)

REPENTANCE. Come back to true FAITH and MORALS. Take on a PERSONAL inter-relationship with JESUS CHRIST our Redeemer, our Intercessor with God. Restore also the same relationship with the HOLY Spirit. Bring Catholics into an active, daily relationship with the JUDEO-CHRISTIAN SACRED SCRIPTURES. NOT the Koran. Forbid an equality between Christianity and Moslem beliefs. Christianity without Christ is an empty eggshell. (See later detailed comments.)

God is asking us to return to our Christian roots. Australia was once recognised as a very Christian country. In recent years this has changed. God is asking us to become more involved in Church activities and also in our workplaces and in our community. We are being asked to be carriers of the good news of the gospel out to the world, to those people who don't come into a church. Our society has seen rapid and almost unbelievable changes in morals and how we as a nation view basic tenets such as the right to be born, the right to live to a long age, the acceptance of people who may not hold the same views of morality and principles handed down to us through our Judeo-Christian traditions. We live in this world and so we have to offer a different perspective to society through our recognition that God is asking us to be disciples in this world in which we live. Jesus became incarnate and showed us a new way to live. We have to be the God-bearers to the world in which we now live.

I feel God is asking us to go back to Christ's teachings and focus more on our communities. The Church at present seems to be leaving its communities to drift without leadership. I don't mean leadership from the clergy, but leadership from within the community that is sustainable. In my diocese we seem to rely entirely on the clergy & they aren't equipped to build sound spiritual communities that survive after the priest moves on.

If God is asking this nation at this time it is to be "known", it may be to be understood, and to be acting in this manner.

I think that God is asking us as a Church to get back to basics—Love God and Love Neighbour. As a Church we seem to have a lot of red tape. Consider baptism. When we read the New Testament, someone is touched by the "Jesus' movement" and wants to be baptised—they immediately go to the nearest body of water and baptise the person. RCIA is a 6 month program. We are in an era when waiting 6 minutes is a stretch for some. In the wake of the Royal Commission, we need to have discernible changes to the way in which our Church is governed. We need to have a shared leadership model that extends to the celebration of the sacraments and other pastoral responsibilities. Celibacy needs to be optional and women need to be able to respond to [the] call of priesthood also. Our churches need to be lively places that are welcoming and capable of change. Our Masses need to have the flexibility of a dialogue style homily, music that is lively and upbeat or appropriately reflective. They need to be places that are teeming with children and young adults who are active in their faith. We need to be a Church that responds to the needs of society, not insular and self-protecting. We need to be more strategic in the community and be more entrepreneurial in our approach. We need to be Easter people who pray actively for our Church and for the Holy Spirit to renew our communities, which will, in turn, renew the face of the earth. It is important that we welcome all to the Eucharistic table, including those from other faith traditions, the divorced and gay/lesbian. As a Church we must love—it is not our role to judge.

Everyone must lead and see themselves as leaders, working in partnership with the ordained to sustain the Church in Australia. We must be people of faith, hope, love and joy.

I think God is calling us, drawing us and asking us to pray and to open our hearts to come to know Him more deeply, to know the length and depth, the height and breadth of His eternal, life giving love for us, and His longing for us to be in union with Him. I think God gave Saint John Paul II's Theology of the Body to the Church as a gift for these times of confusion, pain and de-generation of marriage and family and our Catholic faith. Theology of the Body should be widely prayed and studied. Theology of the Body enlightens us of God's love; of God's Word made flesh; of what it means to be human, male and female, in these challenging times; of the way marriage is meant to be a reflection of the communion of the Trinity—free, total, faithful and fruitful; of the way our lives are to be 'gift' but we are all broken and only the incarnate Jesus can recreate us in to who we are meant to be. Theology of the Body is for everyone; men, women, young, old, married, single, mothers, fathers, priest, religious, rich, poor. Theology of the Body enlightens all aspects of our Catholic faith—the Mass, especially the Eucharist, the Sacraments, our mother Mary, the Catechism—and gives depth, life, meaning and knowledge to Catholic teachings that are so misunderstood and unknown. Our Catholic Church is so in need of true, faith filled and authentic formation. The Catholic Church has so much richness and fullness of truth, with the Scriptures and Tradition, but this is barely known by the average Sunday going Mass attendee who often only hears a poor sermon. God is calling us into the fullness of His truth and love and into communion with His eternal, divine, life-giving love; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

To progress the spiritual side of our part in creation.

I feel God is asking a lot of us in Australia at the moment. He has given us many challenges, reaching out to those who do not know Him, welcoming the poor and disadvantaged, welcoming the broken, especially those in broken families, lack of vocations, abuse in the Church... these are but a few of the areas God is challenging us in & asking us to grow. The Church in Australia is already doing an incredible job in all these areas... but perhaps we are not getting to the root problem??? So many people do not know the incredible mystery of God's love for us. ... but as always God has not left us alone. He has given us the tools to embrace ALL these challenges through St John Paul II's Theology of the Body. ... for those who have eyes to see. I feel sure God is asking us to OPEN our hearts and minds through this teaching and spread it far and wide so that all people can know God's original plan for us. Theology of the Body guides us to truth and answers so many questions.

This response is a combination of the thoughts of a group of 18 people who then split into three sub-groups of 6 people. So this is a summary of those sub groups: God is calling us to be strong together, be more prayerful and develop and strengthen our personal faith. We need to be prophetically critical, and people of hope and prayer; to stand up and be Christian/Catholic and not go with the current Australian trend to be indifferent to religious values. We have to re-educate ourselves, be strong to make good decisions on how to live in our society. We have to be pro-active for life values, supporting life from conception to natural death and resisting the calls to liberalise abortion and euthanasia. Changes in our Church are tied up with societal changes e.g. breakdown of marriages and reconstituted families, along with current legislation that has re-designated the role of male and female within marriage, family and society in general. Gender

fluidity is posing enormous questions that we are not prepared for. Parents and grandparents must assume a more responsible role in educating their children within the home. The sacred tradition of marriage and family has to be supported as it is being belittled throughout our society and particularly via media. (An advertised telecast such as "Bad Mothers" due to be broadcast from 18th Feb). Ultimately it is our children who suffer when they are faced with dramatic changes in their lives. Separation and divorce leaves many children floundering and schools are not able to provide the nurturing they need and which should be found within the security of a family home. We are faced with the problem of a shortage of priests and we have to ask the question why are our young men not going to the seminary? We have to address the whole process of training of our priests, especially in light of the current clerical sexual abuse crisis. If married priests were to be allowed by Rome, how would we be able to afford them? If they have a family, would they also need other employment? How do we accept responsibility for this? We also have to address the concept of clericalism, i.e. allow the laity to be more involved in the running of the parish and provide roles/services so that the priests can focus on the "priestly duties" and leave the more secular aspects to the highly qualified people in the parish. We have to define the role of ministry for all members in the Catholic Church. We also have to be supportive of our overseas priests who come to us as missionaries. Some Catholics do not value their contribution to our Australian Church as well as they could. We are being asked to recognise and support them as they provide the priestly functions our own Australian youth are not taking up. The decline in the Religious Orders is also an issue we need to acknowledge. This relates to costs for the parish in many cases. We are being called to address the role of women in the functioning Church.

I take "The Church" to refer to all of God's people. We as the whole Church are called to humbly once again take up the gospel and present Christ to people. We are together to serve one another (the various churches) and go beyond an external ecumenism, and find that although we meet in different buildings, our hearts are for each other. I believe that Christ is asking us to share in the Lord's supper with one another and not to restrict communion between our traditions. We are truly "one body" when we are able to have this communion together. I believe the Spirit is calling us to be of one heart and one mind, serving each other, and together presenting the gospel to our nation. When the Bible speaks of "recognising the body of the Lord" in Corinthians 11, this surely must be God's people that we must recognise. As a non-Catholic, I declare my love for Catholics and all God's people and what I believe is God's desire for us to serve each other out of reverence for Christ. And together to serve our nation. The most effective gospel is the way that believers love one another, and that is what I believe God is asking of us. Much good is going to come if we seek that which is close to God's heart, and that is our unity of heart and mind.

The small bush town where I live definitely has dried up literally with the on- going raging drought. The rainfall is slowly less as less as the years unfold but what is more evident is the parched souls that wander this land without knowing who their true God is. I think in my town and throughout all of Australia, God is calling us to back to him. Most of our children, brothers and sisters, uncles, aunties, neighbours, co-workers, fellow citizens have no care for our Church. They have no time or inclination for our Church! It does not mean anything to them. Football or an array of distractions, on the other hand are definitely worth it! The children and youth are keeping fit, the parties are

so important for socialising, keeping community alive, promoting moral when all else fails! How desperate we are for hearing the Word of God! How desperate we are to know how to listen to God's voice!! I believe we need an urgent change of focus in what we are doing in the Church in Australia starting with our Catholic schools where students should have a bible as part of their book list and become as familiar with it as the ABC. The bible has the power to transform lives and isn't that what God is asking us to do here in Australia. He wants to turn our lives upside down, which as it turns out is right side up. He wants us to transform the way we think about ourselves, our relationships, about money and career, our world and culture. However, to most Catholic Australians the bible is seen as a foreign object not a place where we can go to, to ask for God's will in our lives ... a roadmap for our life's journey. God wants us to have a rich, full and happy life. So, wouldn't it be great if we are shown how to use the road map, shown how to pray with the scriptures so each day, how we can find a place, a silent place away from the all things that bombard our thoughts and listen to the One who really cares about us and who can show us the way! I see the dire need for our Australian Catholic Church to put Introducing the Bible; and Learning to Pray with the Word of God in an inspiring way as top priority in our schools (where our future lies), and into our parishes which are struggling to survive, and into the lives of parents and friends on the fringes of our parishes who come to our churches occasionally, into the lives of youth, and into the lives of the many other lost souls who have never known or have forgotten the importance of this precious guidebook. In Australia today we are starving ourselves of one of the main staples of a healthy spiritual life. We have the Mass, the sacraments, Mary, but the true meaning of all these riches are lost if we are denying ourselves of having a personal relationship with Jesus through His Word. The bible has always been at the heart of the Church and as we look for a better future here in Australia, we need to put this treasure into the centre of our lives and all the lives we can reach out to!

I think that God is wanting to be the main character in the Catholic Church in Australia. The Church does many good things for the poor and underprivileged and is to be commended for this. Where we fall short is that we tend not to be very open about Jesus in our lives and sharing this as the opportunity arises. The causes of this can be a range of things but I feel that we have never really trained in the varying methodologies of Christian witness. We have something good, something worthy and it is worth sharing. But how is this to be done? When we talk to someone and want to invite them to a function, what is there? What structures do we have in our Church for the introduction of people to Catholicism? I do know that RCIA is there but if an individual is just questioning, where can the answers be gained? Of course there is the internet but which sites are recommended and be relied upon to give accurate and stimulating answers / reasoning to an enquiring mind? It seems to me that evangelisation is not so high on the agenda in a parish setting and some strategy around this would be helpful. People need hope and the love of Christ in their lives and their families. No doubt the challenges are there but good men and women are available to be drawn to the task of spreading the good news of Jesus.

To endeavour to provide mechanisms and processes to actively re-engage with all those Catholics who have been baptised and/or educated at Catholic schools, who for reasons of their own, have chosen not to pursue the regular practice of their Catholic faith. This lapsing of faith practice and commitment is most evident in those under 40 and is escalating rather than diminishing. I have

even seen research that asserts the average age of regular Sunday Mass attendees is 59. So what can be done without breakaway movements and massive internal friction? Numerous things that can't be covered in 500 words. Two follow: 1) The clerical hierarchy, both domestic and in that haven of vested interests, the Vatican, have to realise that their obstinacy and resistance to sensible practical structural reform and reorganisation, is the greatest enemy the Catholic faith is facing. 2) The priesthood - Setting aside the appalling issues involving the priesthood and religious orders, examined by the Royal Commission, the rapidly declining number of priests due to ageing, accompanied by only a trickle of vocations to replace them, is an enormous problem. Residing in a parish where there is currently an African priest (whose generosity and commitment to his role as a priest can only be admired) and having had another African priest previously (whose erratic and apparently deceptive behaviour caused significant local and diocesan problems), it is blatantly obvious that because of linguistic and cultural problems, this importation of priests can only be an interim solution. Following is a solution. The priesthood becomes a time limited role with options to extend and also to make a lifetime commitment. Seminarians will undertake a THREE year course of preparation (similar to a large number of university degrees). On ordination, each will commit to five years of service as a priest with an option to extend for a further five years and beyond. This will potentially appeal to young men who are willing to commit a portion of their lives to God's service similar to those young people who commit to a period of community service both domestically and overseas. Similarly, a shortened seminary course and term of service option would apply to married men who would like to serve the Church. However, there would be a Restrictive Clause for married men. For married men, ALL CHILDREN OF THEIR MARRIAGE MUST HAVE REACHED AN AGE AND POSITION IN LIFE WHERE THEY ARE TOTALLY SELF SUPPORTING. There is a simple practical reason for this restrictive clause. Most parishes (mine certainly) operate on deficit budgets and could not support a married priest and his family. Will this radical change to the priesthood work? The proof of the pudding will be in the eating, but the concept brings a fresh, more flexible and potentially attractive invitation to young men to consider committing a portion of their lives to the priesthood.

According to the signs I see, God is asking us to get back to the pure Catholic Faith. Even the way many priests and sadly some bishops say Mass now is so 'sloppy' and 'dumbed down' that there is no "mystery and awe in the presence of God" discernible at all. Therefore no mystery and awe is taken with us as we go out to the world: "Go, the Mass is ended." Dumbing down is seen e.g. the Nicene Creed is seldom used; many priests do not invoke the Trinity in the Collect; the first Eucharistic Prayer is seldom used; so many priests do not "do the red and say the black" giving the impression of both rushing through, and NOT UNDERSTANDING THE REASON AND MEANING of what they should be doing. One result? There is then no 'awe' to enliven our consciences towards a good examination and Confession. Even the word often used now, "Reconciliation" bypasses the awe-filled process of humility before God in the examination process. Either call it by its first Rite, "Confession" or by its sacrament title, "Sacrament of Penance". Further, there are strong signs that we need to be TAUGHT. Giving the relevance of the scriptures of the Mass is only part of the work of a priest. The bishop through the priests should be TEACHING. So: 5-10 minutes of the 'Sunday Mass Homily' given to the relevance of the Scriptures as composed by the priest himself, and the other 10 or so minutes given to teaching—an ACBC-produced course of the Catechism of the Catholic Church using the apologetics genre befitting adults, taught over the 3-year cycle, the

same in every church so that if one is in a different parish on holidays or whatever, they do not miss out on that week's lesson. Evidence is showing that the younger generation and younger parents are seeking the sacredness of what is termed the Latin Mass. The Novus Ordo has been so dumbed down as I said and thereby so protestant-ised that signs of spirituality and sacredness have been lost. Catholics should 'dare' to pray what they [should!] believe. Even the Mystery of Faith proclamations directly after the consecration are adhered to by protestants as well—there is no affirmation of the transubstantiation as there is in the Latin Mass. The evidence from the liturgy is that Catholic beliefs have been lost. I thank God that transubstantiation DOES take place because of valid Holy Orders, but sometimes even some priests don't seem to believe that anymore. The last point, teaching the CCC through an Australia-wide official 3-year apologetics program will educate all attendees to the moral norms of the Church without having to have 'catch-up', concerted and costly efforts to inform Catholics they should NOT support s-s marriage, abortion, euthanasia When the government wants to legislate an immoral idea, or schools bring in something like "Safe Schools", Catholics would more readily, quickly and firmly see it as such.

1. Go to them and speak to them at their level
2. Be better at sharing the message of God's awesome power and love
3. Grow/transform into a Church that is relevant in the modern world.
 - 3.1 We MUST allow our priests to marry if they choose to, and for married men to be able to become ordained.
 - 3.2 We must allow women to be ordained as priests, and very quickly bring more women into all levels of the Catholic Church, including the Vatican.
4. Be honest, transparent and ask for forgiveness. Please see attached document for further explanation.

I think/believe that God is inviting us to a deep and sincere renewal as members of the Catholic Church here in Australia, at the present time. And, by that I mean an intentional return to a living out of the Catholic faith as it is presented to us in scripture and Tradition, for example, an intentional attempt to consistently align our lives with scripture and Tradition as it is expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. There is a need to faithfully, joyfully and wisely proclaim the teachings of the Church to the people of our time. It is my view that Catholics are (by & large) far too hesitant to do this—and far too many Catholics are unwilling to commit themselves to life-long formation in this area. This is a necessity if we are to take up properly the ministry of accompanying & discipling people. How do we "make disciples of all nations" if we are ill-prepared to make a disciple of our self firstly? Also, a greater emphasis on both clergy & laity being "co-responsible" for the mission of the Church needs to be taken up once again. And, this is not to mean that one group is in charge of the other—it is to mean that there is an authentic sharing of roles & responsibilities within the mission and ministry of the Church. Neither the role of the lay faithful or the ordained minister has to be watered-down for the sake of the other to legitimately exist and flourish ... which is sometimes the very real danger here. Both ministries, that of the laity and that of the ordained are authentic, life-giving & necessary expressions of the ministry of Jesus the Christ! There is always the issue of the exercise of legitimate authority in ministry within the

parish, and within the current canonical framework of the Church it is the parish priest who is ultimately responsible for the governance of the parish and the direction of ministry to the people entrusted to his pastoral care. I see no significant problem with this model provided that the parish priest has suitably qualified laity in co-responsible (and I mean co-responsible persons not just gap-filling) positions of lay responsibility within the parish with whom he can share the daily task of administering the parish, for example, Chair of the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils, Parish Safeguarding Representative, various Leaders of Parish Ministries; it is with these personnel that the parish priest and associate pastors can consult as part of their decision-making process & thereby ultimately their governance of the parish in general. It would be of immense help however if there were to exist a position within the diocesan administration structure an independent ombudsman to whom any person (lay or clergy) could consult with in order to resolve an issue with a lay or clergy authority figure. Above all at this time, we need to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit while being open to the teachings of the Church to guide us. Each of us also need to listen and speak up!

I believe that God is asking us to go back to the basics of the message that Jesus, the Son of God preached—that we should love God with all our heart and love our neighbour as ourselves. God is asking us to be prepared to make changes in our practices so that this is our central message. Jesus did not come to condemn and neither should we as a Church. We need to open our doors to all. We need to be a place of welcome where all will feel at home.

I think God is asking us to think seriously about what it means to be Catholic in the current social climate and how best to enact this vision. I think that roles of laywomen in the Church, attitudes to marginal groups, criteria for clergy (e.g. women priests and married priests) and the entire Church hierarchy are part of this consideration. I think God is asking us to consider radical change for our Church.

Australia becoming so unequal—gap between rich and poor—worsening work conditions, unaffordable housing etc. I think God would like us to actively advocate against this trend.

Individually, that we live and work toward the completion of the mission to which He commissioned us by his redeeming sacrifice on the cross without measuring the cost to ourselves in terms of the world around us or the deceptions of the evil one. He has called mankind to Him many times and provided us the guidance to enable us to come to Him. "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart ... and love your neighbour as yourself." How we achieve or complete our mission is essentially up to us for we as children of God are the only ones who in the end will answer for it. We have the Holy Spirit as our guide and the Church as an inspired and authoritative instrument in the physical world to turn to. As a Church to promote this individual action without fear of any earthly or worldly consequences to the Church as an institution or to the individuals who choose to belong to it.

I feel there is a dire need to form Catholics to give witness to their faith. This means several things at once. In no particular order, it may mean:

a) Those who work in Catholic Education should be formed in the faith, and enabled to respond intelligently to the questions that children raise, and the questions that they themselves raise with

regard to the Catholic faith (e.g. science and religion, scandals in Church history, the possibilities/limits/good and bad fruit born of ecumenical/interfaith dialogue, etc.).

b) Young Catholics (including students in Catholic schools) should be linked to channels where their questions can be answered (e.g. Catholic Answers, Word on Fire Ministries, etc.), instead of questions being treated with an unhelpful excess of "respect" where children are left to fend for themselves, which often results in them losing the faith.

c) Catholics must be taught, again and again, how to pray, and how to grow and mature as Catholics in their own personal/family/community prayer life. This is the 'breath' of a Christian's faith, and without it they will essentially suffocate.

d) Every Catholic must come to terms with the fact that God is infinitely invested in them! And that God calls everyone (not just priests and religious), and be helped to very seriously pursue their vocation, and put all their gifts to the service of the Gospel.

e) The Church should search for, connect and journey with, and promote (insofar as is possible) the very best artists, scientists, business people, etc., to give the Catholic faith the most attractive and impressive face in the world.

f) The Catholic Church must go out (and be seen going out) to other Christian denominations and religious groups in a spirit of fraternity, receptivity, humility, and fruitful love—in the service God and all God's people; not as a vain exercise for a humanistic harmony, but for God to unify all people in their search for Truth, Goodness, Beauty, and the Peace which the world cannot give.

Fundamentally, I believe that God is asking us to live as Christians in fellowship with one another - supporting each other with our faith & life journey. At the root of this is love of one another and compassion for all. The question of 'HOW' is the cause of much consideration. Naturally it is the responsibility of each member of the Church family to live as a Christian, engage in fellowship and help and support those around them; however some changes to existing Church structures may assist this process. I see a future where 'the Church' goes out to meet people in their space, rather than insisting on people coming to 'the Church'. In a multicultural and multi-faith broader community, insistence on celebration of sacraments within a Church building isn't always practical, welcoming and inclusive. I have been to Masses, baptisms and weddings held in places that are not churches, sometimes outdoors, and they have been incredibly moving, spirit-filled moments where those of other faiths and even atheists have felt comfortable, welcome and included. I see a future where priests or other leaders are once again able to create 'Church families' and be the 'shepherd' by providing both pastoral support (including assisting the bereaved) and celebration of Mass and the sacraments. Due to the shortage of priests, they are currently so busy saying Mass and celebrating the sacraments that they are no longer able to know their 'flock' and care for them. This has meant that the laity is providing all of the care, whilst some guy (the priest) that people don't even know breezes through to administer the sacraments. An incredibly difficult situation for both parishioners & priests. This will include the ordination of women priests (as a modern day woman whose Catholic high school taught us that 'Women can do anything', I totally fail to understand why a priest must be male). It may mean that the role of lay leaders will need to be expanded (with appropriate training) to include provision of the sacraments, however I actually see a clear path/role for an expansion of the role

of deacons to include celebration of Mass & further sacraments (& naturally the inclusion of women as deacons). In small rural communities this person would have a job and undertake the role voluntarily; in larger communities the position would be full-time and paid. The current restrictions concerning marriage for deacons also require investigation. I see the definition of parish & parishioner expanding beyond those who regularly attend Mass. For a variety of reasons, many Catholics do not attend Mass even though they identify as Catholic and have a very strong faith in God. I see a future where our parish leaders attempt to connect with these people and maintain connection. This may be through regular newsletters, emailing of weekly readings & homilies and perhaps personal annual contact on special anniversaries; those things that make people feel part of the 'Church family'.

God is asking us to be more generous with our time. Give more time to God and God's works and be more involved with your parish community.

I believe God is asking us to centre the life of the Church on the gospel values of the Great Commandment and the Beatitudes. This means that the Church has to address the issues of unjust structures based on clericalism, exclusion of laymen and women as well as youth in decision making on policies etc. I believe God would be wanting bishops to be more accountable to the people of the diocese in which they serve. I believe God would be inviting more lay men, women and youth to have voting powers in the Plenary Council. I was horrified at the list of voting delegates. Lay people are simply observers when through the baptismal ritual we are considered equal (Another example of injustice).



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. Will the role of women be expanded in a meaningful and respectful way?
2. We must recognise the importance of the ministry of women in the Church. Will this be pursued?
3. How do we bring more people into Church every Sunday?
4. How will the Church address the shortage of priests?
5. Will it consider allowing married priests?
6. Can the Church explore options to encourage people back to this Sacrament [of Reconciliation]?
7. Can the Third Rite [of Reconciliation] be re-instated?
8. Are there aspects of Canon Law that can be discarded?
9. What aspects of the liturgy are flexible?
10. Are we able to have a rock style band in the Church and can we have the freedom to move to the music (clap hands, wave arms, and stomp feet)?
11. Why is it that younger priests seem to be less open to change and are seeking a return to "clericalism"?
12. Are lay-led liturgies with Communion possible in regional and remote areas?
13. Why is the Catholic Church not regularly in the media with good news stories?
14. Why don't we have our own Catholic merchandise that is commonly available in a store similar to Koorong?
15. Why promote obedience over the use of our intelligence to decide?
16. Why does there seem to be a huge divide between the parishes and schools in Australia?
17. How can we make our Catholic schools more Catholic?
18. How will music be taught in all our schools so that it will grow future musicians for our liturgies and Masses in our parishes?
19. Can the Church in Australia bring trained lay or religious from overseas to begin the process of working in our schools and parishes?
20. Can we have children in our schools doing voluntary work in our churches e.g. weeding in some gardens in clear view of other people; or a class with a teacher and teacher aide; going to do some cleaning in the church as part of a church roster?
21. Are we going to continue and increase the number of overseas priests we have in our dioceses as the number of locally grown priests dwindle even further in the near future?

22. Can it be part of the Catholic school curriculum that students in upper primary and high school take part in at least a day retreat once a year?
23. Can adoration, even for 20 minutes, be introduced as part of the RI curriculum?
24. What are you going to do about screening out homosexual men and men with other sexually-driven tendencies from being ordained even at a diaconate level?
25. What pro-active programs of vocations promotion & recruitment currently exist within each diocese in Australia for the sole purpose of inviting young Catholic men to consider the possibility of hearing Gods call to serve as priest?
26. What processes currently exist to ask the question of what other positions of leadership could/do exist which can be filled by suitably qualified & competent lay people?
27. What is currently being done to address the very significant issue of reviving the Catholicity of Catholic schools?
28. What processes currently exist to review the situation of rural/remote parishes to assess what they specifically need in order to simply just function on a daily basis?
29. What processes exist to reflect upon the area of providing ongoing support and catechesis for/to Catholic married couples?
30. We already do not have enough priests or religious to sustain our Church in Australia—what is the response to this situation in order to keep our Churches functioning?
31. Why cant women be priests or male priests be allowed to marry?
32. How can the Church respond to the needs of the present day in a spirit of faith and hope, rather than in ways which are frantic, jaded, pessimistic, or disinterested in the reality of the gospels and the ancient Tradition of the Church?
33. How can the Church speak in a language and manner which can be fruitfully received by the whole spectrum of people—young, old, rich, poor, man, woman, digital, housebound, hospitalised, etc.?
34. How do we tackle governance and leadership in a climate of ever reducing priest numbers?
35. Why are some priests discouraged from saying Mass and celebrating the sacraments in places other than their parish church building?
36. What steps can be taken to ensure that our Church becomes more Christ-centered and consequently a more loving, compassionate and just Church?
37. What steps will be taken to ensure that our Church is more inclusive of laymen and women in particular in the planning and decision making of the Church?



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 62 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 done this briefly in the attachment. I grew up in the pre-Vatican [II] Church, in a Catholic home, became a religious, taught in secondary schools, spent years as a university chaplain before coming to rural and remote ministry. Over the years completed a B.Theol and later an M.A. Theo apart from my secular studies.

I was educated by Christian Brothers in the 1950s. There was much turmoil evolving in those days which has led to our present state. In the midst of this I was taught to pray, earnestly and honestly. A simple thing that formed my faith and shaped my life. When I fell away I was restored my prayer to Our Lady and I claim her intervention in the restoration of my faith.

I grew up in a Catholic family. I attended a Catholic school and Mass every Sunday. The majority of the children in my class were also Catholic and therefore we all made our communion together, all were confirmed together etc. I am now a teacher in a Catholic school and most of the children in a classroom today are either not Catholic, or not practicing. They have no understanding or personal experience of Church and it is difficult to teach this to them. I feel many traditions are being lost and this is a great shame.

I was brought up by a Catholic mother and converted father. My mother gave me my Catholicity and my father gave me a living faith. Add a quarter century spent in religious life (till Jesus called me out) and later in a faith-filled covenant community.

I came from England to Australia as a 16 year old in 1954. I found the Australian Catholic Church very different to that in England. There was obvious bigotry towards other religions. I was asked to be best man for my brother at his wedding and found I had to seek permission from a priest to do so as he was being married in a church relevant to his fiancée's faith. I was refused that permission and had to tell my brother, who had shared many years with me in a close working relationship that I could not fulfil that task. That placed me in an extremely difficult position as I was forced to choose between my family relationship and my Church relationship. That should not have occurred when you consider the relevance and sacredness of marriage to the Church and to the world in general. I also found it unbelievable that, because of the prevailing Irish Catholic influence on the Australian, there were even laws bordering on commandments that Catholics were obliged to follow e.g. Catholic parents must send Catholic children to Catholic schools.

The changes in my home life and family life have been many over many years, large changes involving pain have not been an issue. Giving up smoking on request was one. There are 4 of this type of personal change so far.

I am so pleased to be a Catholic. I was raised an Anglican and became a Catholic after attending ACU and teaching in a Catholic school. For me, I feel closer to God and I have always seen Catholicism as a faith that is lived. There was a need to educate children, so schools were formed. There was a need for health care, so hospitals were established. Our faith is a lived faith.... but we must read the signs of the times. As a Church we have lost the ability to take risks and change continually. We have stagnated. We have tied the Holy Spirit up in rules and obligations. It will require shared leadership, clear mission and a strengthened sense of Catholic identity to rebuild faith communities in Australia that are vibrant and meaningful to the wider society.

Members of this group who met are women, with the majority being mothers, grandmothers and sometimes great-grandmothers, while three are religious sisters. They have varying experiences of Church, but many have experienced disappointment within their parish setting. They have been subjected to parish decisions that have been made by one person and one person only. This person has been the only authority within the parish, has often only been there in a temporary capacity (i.e. for a designated time) compared with the decades of parish living that the community has experienced, and decisions have been made that have severely impacted the community. There has been no consultation with the parish and the decision has been deemed as binding and final. This operation of ministry is not conducive to the building up of the people of God and yet it is what we have experienced and even continue to experience in some cases.

Having attended a Catholic high school in [-] ([-] College) I have grown to appreciate and love Catholicism. Currently I'm the leader of the [-] Ministers Fellowship, and also the Chair of the [-]. In my work here I get to mingle with many leaders of different churches, and have found in doing so, that we all share a big heart for the lost, a common burden about the state of our churches and our nation. I've come to see that our united hearts, our united prayers, and simple practical things like sharing communion with each other, can have an impact on society.

I am very grateful that a Catholic Church and the Sisters of St Joseph had come to my home town in [-] at the time I was at primary school. I am also grateful that my parents had 10 children and loved their Catholic faith, followed its traditions and supported their parish community in any way they could. I went to our State School for 8, 9, and 10th grade then away to boarding school for Senior. I am sure that my parents thought at the Catholic boarding school we would learn about our faith and receive lots of formation. These years were not marked with such learning, even less than the years at the State School when we had a once a week RE lessons! Luckily, I found going to Mass a great joy and occasionally went to a bible study group in other towns when I had the opportunity. When my children were in primary school and high school, we hosted members of the [-] team a few times. Later my eldest daughter was part of the [-] team and when the opportunity came, I went to [-] Conference several times. The work that is done by this community in [-] is awe-inspiring and from this I see a great potential for our regional dioceses to offer employment for these young people to venture away from the city and work alongside the priests, deacons and parishioners, inside the schools as chaplains, or RE specialists. Other Christian churches are leading the way in growing youth groups and finding ways to work with

community groups to reach out to the young. We have well established schools but very few young people are touched by the Word of God, so on leaving 12 years of education they are not much further ahead in their faith than their peers in the State School. Is it that not all our teachers in the Catholic Schools are confident in teaching their faith? Should we have more specialised RE teachers just as we have specialised Physical Ed or music teachers. These personnel would become the main teacher for RE lessons assisted in the classroom by the regular teacher. The regular teacher would be inspired and mentored by the specialist. I believe if this idea was implemented, we would be growing a community who would have young ones knowing who they are and what their lives are for, encouraging some of the older ones who have lost their way. We would have no severe shortage of priests and religious because we would have young men and women tuned in their God. Think how many less suicides and mental health problems would be reduced if we can have our generations talking to God everyday so when we have problems talking to Him is a habit. I see our schools as powerhouses and the way we are to turn around our mistakes of the past and present by investing in our young and revealing to them the wonders and truth of the Word of God.

I came to quite a renewal experience of my faith when I participated in a [-] Seminar in 1989. This was extremely significant for me, cemented in me a love of Jesus and the Catholic faith. I was very uplifted and my faith has remained a driving force for me since. The sacraments are significant in my life and have enormous value for me. Since that time other organisations like menAlive have been immeasurably helpful to me in the long walk of my life.

As mentioned in Q1, I read myself into the Church. HOWEVER, it was the example of Catholic friends and nuns right from childhood that whet my curiosity. I did not go to a Catholic school, but I lived in a country town where the children all knew each other, whether from sports, the guiding movement, socialising or whatever. From them I saw spirituality, esp. from the Nuns, in their habits, praying their Office; praying the Rosary; who had a chapel in their convent; and sacredness in females covering their heads to enter the church, in the rubrics of the Mass (the priest leading the people, facing 'East' whence the Lord was to return, leading the liturgy of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. No 'playing to the congregation' there, no eye contact, no changing anything from what the Church authorised. The Latin did sound 'rushed' to the untrained ear but that wasn't a problem as one was able to follow the translation). I am blessed that some Catholic devotions remain in my area—Adoration, Rosary, Sunday night Devotions, Sacred Heart Sodality, ... I came from a protestant denomination and the Novus Ordo does not 'tell' me anything different from what I had believed before I read myself into the Catholic Church. I am not happy that it seems the Catholic Church is putting me back into Protestantism. The Mystery of Faith statements are the 'up front' evidence. I believed all those alternatives in the Novus Ordo as a protestant; but the REAL MYSTERY did not take place in the protestant service. In composing the Novus Ordo the very, absolute, heart, of Catholic belief was removed from consciousness. It may as well have been denied – and now it very frequently seems to be denied, certainly no longer believed.

As young person I was very faithful to the Church and her teachings without question. As I matured beyond school years I discovered that to ask questions regarding my faith life and Church teaching is a healthy thing! However, I also discovered that there is a difference between

questioning and discerning on the one hand; and questioning to force one's agenda on the Church. And, my concern with the Plenary Council is that some people may use the opportunity to attempt to force their own agenda onto the Church.

I was born in the late 1960's into a family of strong faith and for my formative years I lived in a Vatican II Church which seemed to be turning out towards the people of God and recognising their gifts and talents. There was a movement back to the roots of the Church. There was a relaxation of some of the formality and our churches became a place where there was a welcome and a strong sense of community. We stopped looking in on ourselves and started to reach out to the world. Discussion and education were encouraged. Then slowly, almost without our realising it was happening, we seem to have gone backwards. The changes to the liturgy in the last ten years, particularly in the language that is used, have been a retrograde step. Pope John XXIII when he called for the Second Vatican Council said "Throw open the windows of the Church and let the fresh air of the Spirit blow through." We need God's Spirit. Let's keep the window's open.

My experience of faith in Australia has been overwhelmingly positive and the sense of community I have experienced in all parishes that I have been a part of has been wonderful. It is for this reason that I would like to see some serious action undertaken so that generations to come can experience the same. However, methods of engaging and catering for younger members needs to be considered (e.g. electronic bulletins, social media use, different community activities) and currently conversation about these issues in our parish do not seem able to progress which is concerning.

When I was a young man in the 60's and 70's I was raised as a Catholic by Catholic parents, educated in Catholic schools, attended weekly and many times daily Mass and yet as a young adult lost the practice of my faith until my 30's. At this time I had both the prodigal son and lost sheep experience and returned to my faith. The guides or "shepherds" who brought me home were men of the Church, some of them ordained, some not, but they had one single thing in common—they had the knowledge of the Truth and were not afraid to proclaim it. Under their guidance and instruction I came to see that the deficiencies in my knowledge were linked to deficiencies in the education I had received sometimes because my teachers did not know their own faith despite in some cases being ordained ministers. These deficiencies in my education became subliminal cracks in my faith which once cracked became broken. If there is one single thing that I might point to as a means of Salvation it is knowledge—knowledge of the Truth, of the desire of God to have a personal two way relationship with me and knowledge of the fact that the evil one wants exactly the opposite. If I can know the Truth, I can reject the deception but this can only happen if someone teaches me the Truth and THAT is the job of the Church—to teach the Truth.

My faith grew most when I was approaching the end of my high school education (which I think is a pivotal moment in any young person's journey). Although I was already a committed Catholic, I was impacted by retreats and opportunities in the school which enlivened my faith and gave a missionary impulse to my gifts and how I wanted to use them (for others*). After school, I decided to remain in contact with the Church—attending Mass on Sundays and, if possible, on weekdays; offering my humble gifts to the service of the Church (visiting the aged care home, playing piano at Mass, even things like vacuuming the carpets). This continued for some years, and was gently

deepened by invitations to 'more.' (i.e. what started as a simple desire to 'help out' led to more significant commitments to serve the people of God; and this journey was walked in a parallel deepening of prayer). As questions in my faith arose, I dealt with them as maturely as I could—consulting competent mentors, researching and submitting my research to people who were more formed than I was, submitting my concerns to God in prayer and waiting patiently for a response, etc.). In essence, my journey is a very simple one where I desired to pursue God, and was (thank God) encouraged and helped by those around me to pursue God. Thus, the pursuit of God became the purpose of my life, not some project next to my work and leisure. This, I would hope, should be a common story, although the details may change significantly. Everyone who desires God (which is a lot of people, more than we might expect) should be able to say "I was helped and encouraged in my pursuit of God, and that pursuit has become the purpose of my life." If this is not the experience that people seem to be sharing, I think the Church in Australia should be sorry... and needs to very seriously ask why this is the case.

I am a 35 year old single female living in [-]. My local Church is about 55 km away in [-], where Mass is rostered to be celebrated once a month. There are 8 semi-regular parishioners (including 1 Anglican), with about half from properties 50-100 km away. My influences have been Catholic as well as broader Christian. I love the openness & joy with which Christians worship and live their lives, but I also love the tradition, familiarity & comfort of Catholic Mass. I believe all Christians are one family, it is just how we practice our faith that differs. When I was a child, my family definitely fitted into the 'Christmas Catholics' category. When I was about 12 years old, my interest in religion and God was intensified due to the influence of a few people in my life and especially due to the death of my grandmother. I attended a Catholic boarding school for secondary schooling. It was here that I began to attend Mass regularly, learn more about the Catholic Church, become involved in the Mass (as a reader and an extra-ordinary minister of Holy Communion, as well as tidying the Church after Mass) and I became interested and involved in liturgy preparation. During my post-schooling years, Mass became more of an 'if it's convenient' type of event. I didn't even attend a fixed Parish, but instead went to Mass wherever it suited me at the time. In my mid-20s I decided to make Mass more of a priority in my life. I chose a regular Church and a regular Mass time and became a 'regular'! From here, I quickly became involved in parish life and loved my 'Church family'. I have since returned home and have been with my current parish for 8-9 years. After initially encountering a lot of resistance to my desire to become involved, the aging (and passing) of our parishioners has meant that I am more or less the 'go to' person for our parish. I have so much to learn about all the various roles and how to do them. Throughout my life I have had a somewhat active prayer life. I have lapsed plenty, but I generally try to live as a Christian. I have been blessed to have had numerous encounters with God where he has given me instruction &/or clearly answered my question/s. In the fullness of time he has, of course, always been right. This has been very helpful for trying to 'let go' and let his will control my life, but as a control freak I am finding this very hard to do! When I look back over my Church life, I can see that I have nearly always attended very low-key, no fuss Masses. At university, Mass wasn't even held in a Church, but simply a room at the uni. I have often attended Sunday afternoon Masses—primarily because they have suited my lifestyle, but these are also usually quite relaxed. I guess this fits well with my more Christian than Catholic outlook regarding a lot of things.

I was very privileged in my youth to be introduced to the YCW Movement and I became a very active member of the YCW (Young Christian Workers Movement). It was in these weekly sessions that I encountered Jesus Christ and learnt how to deepen my relationship with Him and then consecrate my life to serving Him. As well as this, I learnt the method of reading the Signs of the Times (John XXIII) using the - SEE, JUDGE AND ACT- process and I have used this approach to my life and ministry in the variety and diversity of ministries I have been involved in over the years. I was amazed when I worked in the Centre for Life and Mission in one of our Archdiocese Offices at how many of my co-workers were YCW trained as well.

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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