



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

Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

A Report to the Diocese of Townsville

Trudy Dantis, Paul Bowell, Stephen Reid, Marilyn Chee & Leith Dudfield



Report prepared by: National Centre for Pastoral Research
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
GPO Box 368
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Telephone: +61 (02) 6201 9812
Email: ncpr@catholic.org.au
Web: www.ncpr.catholic.org.au

Contents of this Report

◆ About this Report	1
◆ Diocesan Summary of Submissions Snapshot: May 2018–March 2019	2
◆ Number of Submissions Received	3
◆ Individual Submissions	4
◆ Age of Respondents	4
◆ Sex of Respondents	5
◆ Countries of Birth	6
◆ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	7
◆ Religion of Respondents	8
◆ Group Submissions	9
◆ Age and Sex of Group Members	10
◆ Responses to Question 1	11
◆ Themes discussed in response to Question 1	12
◆ Submissions made in response to Question 1	14
◆ Responses to Question 2	44
◆ Questions for Plenary Council	45
◆ Responses to Question 3	47
◆ Stories of faith or Church shared in response to Question 3	48
◆ Conclusion	59
◆ Appendix 1: Complete List of Countries of Birth	60
◆ Appendix 2: Complete List of Groups from your Diocese	61

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

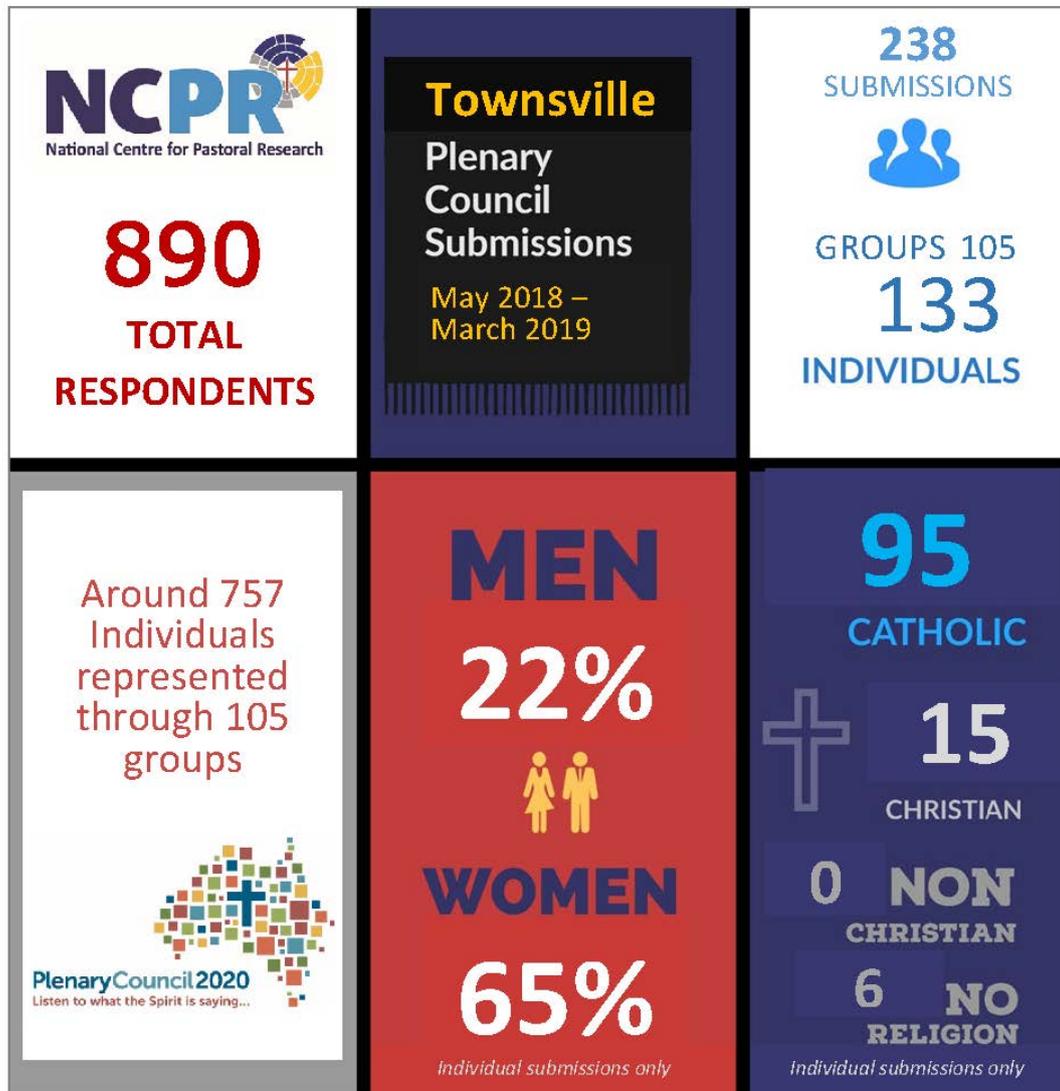
Paul Howell

Stephen Reid

Marilyn Chee

Leith Dudfield

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 - Townsville

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 Townsville, we received a total of 238 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 178 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another nine were unsure if they had. About 41 respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 238 submissions, 105 submissions were from groups or organisations and 133 submissions were from individuals. There were 757 people represented through the 105 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 890.

Table 1: Number of Submissions	
Total number of submissions received	238
<i>Participated in Listening & Dialogue Encounter?</i>	
Yes	178
No	41
Not sure	9
Not stated	10
Total	238
Submissions received from groups or organisations	105
Submissions received from individuals	133
Total	238

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 133 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 Townsville. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 41 per cent (55) were received from those aged 50 and over. The most number of submissions within this age range were received from the 50-54 years age group (16 responses).

At the close of submissions, there were 17 individual submissions received from those aged under 25.

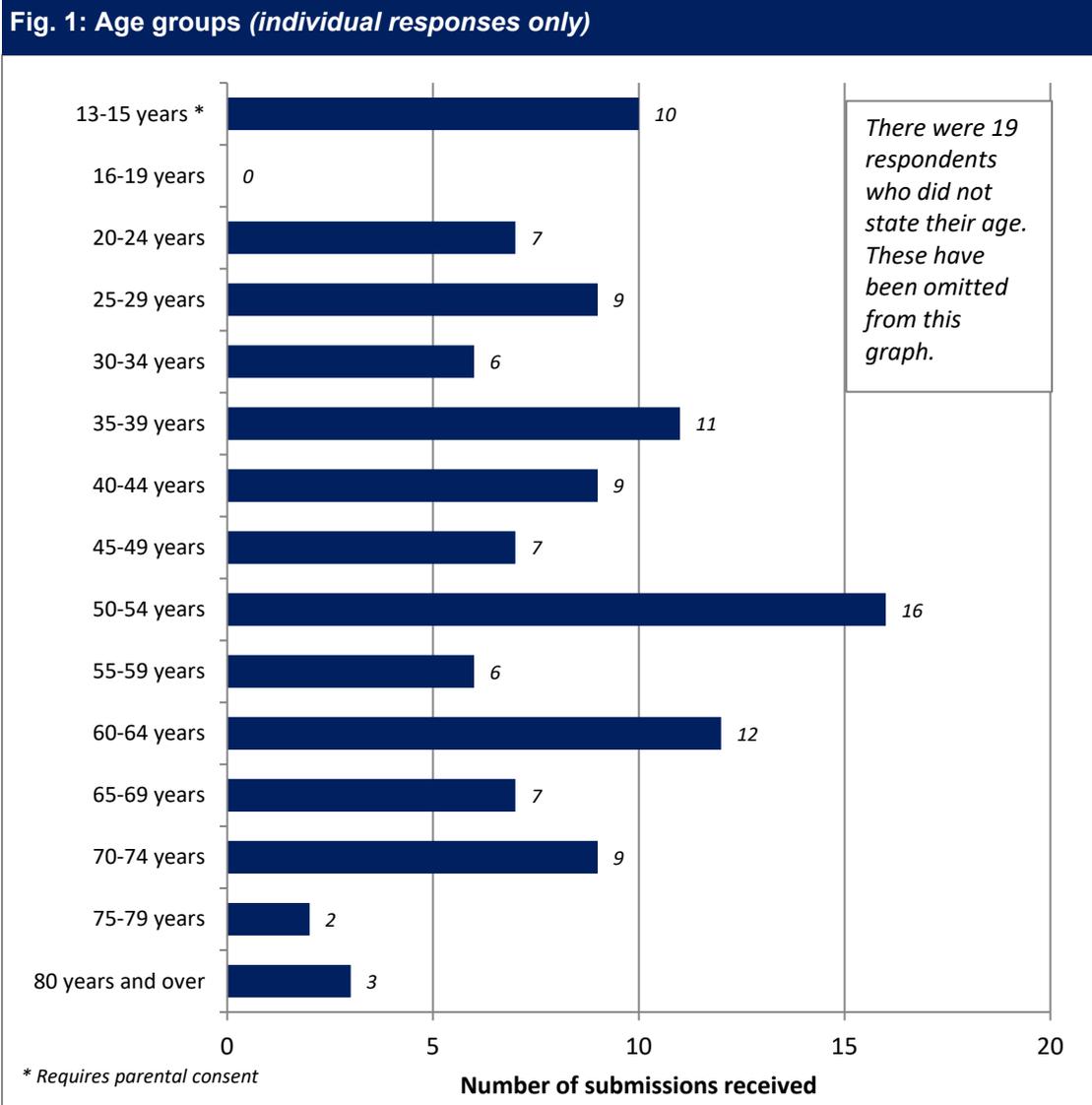
Participants aged 16-17 were encouraged to discuss the questionnaire with their parent or guardian. Many of these responses came from schools that sent in their responses through the online survey. As Table 2 shows, there were no individual submissions made from the 16-19 years age group in your diocese.

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 ten individual submissions made from this age group in your diocese.

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

13-15 years *	10
16-19 years	0
20-24 years	7
25-29 years	9
30-34 years	6
35-39 years	11
40-44 years	9
45-49 years	7
50-54 years	16
55-59 years	6
60-64 years	12
65-69 years	7
70-74 years	9
75-79 years	2
80 years and over	3
Not stated	19
Total	133

* Requires parental consent



Sex of Respondents

Over half the number of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (65%), while a further 22 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 29 men and 86 women who made submissions. Four respondents preferred not to state their sex, while 14 respondents did not answer this question.

Female	86
Male	29
Prefer not to say	4
Not stated	14
Total	133

Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (88%) were born in Australia. Just under eight per cent came from other countries, while around four 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	117	88.0
South Africa	4	3.0
Other Countries	7	5.3
Not stated	5	3.8
Total	133	100.0

Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	117	88.0
Other English-speaking country	9	6.8
Non-English-speaking country	2	1.5
Not stated	5	3.8
Total	133	100.0

Table 4c: Mother's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	93	69.9
Other English speaking country	13	9.8
Non-English speaking country	9	6.8
Not stated	18	13.5
Total	133	100.0

Table 4d: Father's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	86	64.7
Other English-speaking country	12	9.0
Non-English-speaking country	14	10.5
Not stated	21	15.8
Total	133	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 seven individuals who identified themselves in this way, representing just over five per cent of all individual respondents.

Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (individual responses only)	
Yes	7
No	111
Not stated	15
Total	133

Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 133 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 95 respondents (71%) were Catholic. Fifteen respondents were from other Christian denominations while there were none from non-Christian religions. A further 17 respondents did not state their religion and six respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

Table 6: Religion (individual responses only)		Person	Percent
Catholic		95	71.4
Other Christian:			
Anglican		7	5.3
Lutheran		1	0.8
Pentecostal		2	1.5
Uniting Church		2	1.5
Other Christian		3	2.3
Non Christian:			
Other religion		0	0.0
No religion		6	4.5
Not stated		17	12.8
Total		133	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 69 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were 18 respondents who said they went to Mass and church activities sometimes, while five 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	50	17	2	69
I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes	16	2	0	18
I am Catholic, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	1	3	0	4
I consider myself Catholic but I am not sure what to think about the Catholic faith	0	0	1	1
Other	2	0	1	3
Not stated	0	0	0	0
Total	69	22	4	95

GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of 105 group submissions made from your diocese. Around 757 individuals were represented through these groups. However, four groups did not report their number of participating members, indicating that the total number of people represented through the group submissions may be higher.

While 71 group submissions provided a group name, 34 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 Sacred Heart Parish with around 60 members. There were also a number of other parish and school groups such as St Francis School Ayr Cross with 16 participants and St Marys Worshipping Community with 18 members. There were 11 other groups with ten members or more.

Name of group	Group size
Sacred Heart Parish	60
Sacred Heart Parish, Ayr, Queensland	20
Knights of Southern Cross	20
St Marys Worshipping Community	18
St Francis School Ayr	16
St Patricks Catholic School, Winton	15
Pastoral Care - Mater Hospital, Townsville	15
Home group: Alpha study	15
RCIA	13
Informal (After Alpha group) that met to watch the series Catholicism by Bishop Barron.	12
St Josephs Parish of Giru	12
Holy Trinity Prayer group	11
Some members of the Diocesan Choir	11
Ryan Catholic College Board	10
St. ANTHONYS CATHOLIC COLLEGE: School Board	9
Commission for Cultural Diversity	9
McCabe family	9
St. Anthonys Parish, Deeragun 4818	8
Townsville Sisters of Mercy	8
Holy Spirit Church PPC1	7

Age and Sex of Group Members

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

The 30-49 years age group was the largest group represented with 188 members. This was followed by the group aged 50-69 with 180 members. There was no age provided for around eight 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	22
20 - 29 years	57
30 - 49 years	188
50 - 69 years	180
70 and over	99
Unknown	8
Total	554

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

Of the total 544 group members whose sex was reported, 70 per cent (383) were female and 30 per cent (161) 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	383
Male	161
Total	544

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
- Social Justice and the Environment
- Sacraments
- Leadership and Church governance

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)*
 - *Care for neighbour (p. 36)*
 - *Greater trust, faith and hope in God (p. 29)*
 - *Being a witness in society (p. 34)*
 - *Greater focus on the Word of God (p. 31)*
 - *Remaining faithful to Church teaching (p. 32)*
- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
 - *Greater Inclusion of all (p. 108)*
 - *Ending discrimination of LGBTI (p. 110)*
 - *Fighting for human rights issues (p. 110)*
 - *Care for the environment (p. 112)*
- Sacraments (Chapter 6)
 - *Holy Orders - Ending celibacy/ allowing priests to marry (p. 66)*
 - *Holy Orders - Ordination of women (p. 69)*
 - *Greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments (p. 64)*
 - *Holy Orders – Ordaining married men to be priests (p. 68)*
 - *Concerns regarding overseas priests (p. 71)*
- Leadership and Church governance (Chapter 7)
 - *Greater role for women (p. 83)*
 - *Greater involvement of the laity (p. 84)*
 - *New leadership and governance model (p. 91)*
 - *Ending clericalism (p. 80)*
 - *Greater leadership from bishops (p. 87)*

- *Greater leadership from priests (p. 88)*
- *More formation and support for priests (p. 89)*

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

- *Sharing the faith with others (p. 128)*
- *Outreach to youth (p. 124)*
- *The Mass – Inclusion of the divorced and remarried (p. 46)*
- *Modernise Church teachings (p. 169)*
- *Teaching authentic Catholic faith (p.151)*
- *Outreach to all the baptised (p. 122)*
- *Supporting same-sex marriage (p. 170)*
- *Outreach to the wider community (p. 123)*

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 54 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.

To provide for needs of rural and regional people by allowing lay people to celebrate the Sacrament of Anointing which they often miss through no local priest presence. To form overseas priests to understand our Indigenous people and their history and needs, as well as to understand the general Australian culture.

After much prayer and discussions over many years, I am certain that God is saying to us that we need to have much more involvement of lay people in the running of the church. That is: Have an easier path for lay people to follow to be leaders in the church. Have positions to allow lay people to undertake much of the work of priests, i.e.: do baptisms, lead Mass when priest not present, undertake other roles of priests. Allow female priests. Allow priests to be married.

God is calling us to renew, and refresh the church in Australia, remembering the traditions but moving forward in a more balanced form. Allowing lay, religious, women and men to be involved in all levels of the Church allows us all to bring our wisdom and stories to the table and our Church will be a more balanced and richer place to grow our faith and reach out to those that God wants us to help. God grants us all a vocation, whether it be clerical, religious, marriage, parenthood, caring etc. They are all valid vocations that God wants us to explore and honour.

To harness technology fully to inform, educate, uplift, include, invite, share, create discussion, evangelise moment by moment about spirituality not just religion in our local communities.

Make the church more relevant by: a. Married clergy. b. Attracting back those who have abandoned their faith.

God is asking the Catholic Church to get real, to actively encourage all parishioners everywhere to start praying for the Holy Spirit to come and renew our Church. To become real you have to forget the strong emphasis on the Eucharist and start being real with the people, make more community events based on Christ. Step down from the pulpit and speak to us not at us, and not from a prescribed text, but directly from the Bible and lifes experiences "make it real". More Pentecostal music so we can praise God with joy in our hearts. No more social cuppas more emphasis on a gathering of and recognizing that we are truly brothers and sisters ...in other words apart from formal liturgies like ordinations. Get rid of all the prayers by rote, the unnecessary formal actions, most dont know why they sit or stand anyway. Encourage youth to come and sing they will if the music is right example "Hillsong" MOST IMPORTANTLY BRING IN IMMEDIATELY OPTIONAL Celibacy!!! All Parish meetings to be open to anyone who wants to contribute, this will stop the "them and us, power kingdoms" that exist in all parishes. All members including the priest, to have to answer to an independent Justice committee, for ALL KINDS OF disputes. Not to be able to be stopped by the Bishop. That all parishioners to be treated with love and compassion. and not to be denied natural justice. Stop as soon as possible the import of priests from overseas. Bring back active encouragement to all school children the possibility of being priest or religious. Overseas priests bring in their 1950s spirituality like rosary before Masses which is not acceptable in todays world. Women priests. but mainly family priests. Close down churches with small numbers and bring a majority into larger churches. Step outside the Catholic SQUARE AND STOP LOOKING at this opportunity though the Catholic prism.

God is asking us to look after those less fortunate than ourselves. To look after one another and to look out from within ourselves to the world around us. What can we do to help?

God is asking us to care for one another in a way that gives everyone a voice.

This morning with the cross of the rosary in my hand, thinking through the Glorious Mysteries and arriving at the descent of the Holy Spirit of God upon the disciples, I understood the fruit of the Mystery as not only(as if it were not enough) Love of God but more particularly as Love of Jesus. Another morning on the Joyful Mysteries I understood the earth received from God the seed of life, and then the seed of consciousness but not until Mary and through Jesus, did we receive the gift of Love as all those of us on the strong boat of Peter hope to understand the Love of Jesus. After reading Archbishop [-]'s Synod reflections from down under on the National Catholic Register and while I am answering to this very question of what God is asking of us in Australia, on a Plenary Council given format and after receiving the rosary insight mentioned above through (I believe) the Holy Spirit, I must respectfully answer Archbishop [-] that "synodality" has found its way into the final document of the synod because we are all in the room where the disciples first received the Holy Spirit, because we all hope for the Grace of Mary, because we are all still on Peters strong boat resisting the waves and because synodality and the very rare possibility of it working (due to present circumstances of our Church and world) is what I think Pope Francis meant when He called for Wild Joy. It takes 100 years to change anything in the Church, right? We are at that 100 years crossroads because it is the first time in 100 years progressive and conservative Catholics are agreeing on a regular basis on many issues. We are all more passionate about Salvation and the

present and future strength of our Church than about the issues. Keeping and growing in this strength calls for compromise. Do not be afraid of words like decentralization, we are not in the 70s or 80s with liberation theology. We have a deeper understanding of Salvation. Recently in Madrid, Spain, in April and May, I was in Church with lifelong members of the Socialist party who openly declare they are not having to hide their faith any more. I am a member of the Australian Labor Party, the most senior of our branch members was recently baptized in our parish church in North Queensland. In our parish church group submission to this Plenary Council question, we spoke and submitted on decentralization only as it is relevant to our parish finances. We as the Catholic Church have come of age. We will behave maturely if given more freedom. Through Pope Francis, through synodality, even through measured decentralization and more lay involvement in Church decision-making, I believe God wants us to be able to speak of all issues in our Church, I believe God is asking, specially us Australians, to understand both sides of most issues. God wants us to be of true help to all, to help and understand those in favor and those against: abortion, same sex marriage... We are all children of God.

To engage with young people, to care for those in need, care for the environment, be inclusive of everyone, peace across all religions, married priests, women priests, role of lay people, be kind, caring, compassionate, understanding, leading by example, reaching out to farmers.

To work towards inclusion for all.

To reconsider the role of women priests. God created male and female equally. It is a social construct that females should not be allowed to be Christs representative on Earth. I can understand how it became mandated that males take on the role of Father, Priest and Confidant for their flock—it came from a strong patriarchal tradition. I think we have a lot to learn from other Christian denominations where females hold priestly positions. They do it with great success and fulfil the role of pastoral leader for their parishioners equally as well as males do. In this modern era of gender equality, I believe it is time to reconsider the role of the priest and match these to people, not gender. I believe there is a great deal that can be achieved in this area especially in the absence of priests in remote and rural areas. While I do not wish to downplay the role of tradition and practice at all, nor the excellent pastoral care provided by our male priests, I just think it is a burden they no longer have to carry alone—when there used to be two or three priests who could share the load of a parish between them—now there is one—it is a huge job—I believe we could share this load better.

EVANGELISATION—proclaiming the Good News and finding ways to lead young people to Christ and accompany the older generations; John Paul II "New Evangelisation" concept—fire in the belly for God and mission; Faith formations and absolute need for formators. An authentic faith that is lived out once we leave the pews. Need for defined requirements for all those who work in our Catholic institutions (parish offices, Catholic schools, etc.) as they are the agents that can enhance this evangelisation project and many do not even go to church.

I think God is asking us to really come alive in our relationship with Christ and our faith with a fire in our belly and live it out every day, not just on Sundays. Our actions and our lives are a more powerful witness to the unchurched than any words we could say. I also

think that God is calling us to look outwards and evangelize. To really desire and live that all may encounter Christ and His love for them. I believe one way to do this is by embracing the Charismatic Renewal and seeing a return of the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit in the Church. I also believe that evangelization is for Catholics too and needs to start going hand in hand with catechesis. Too many young people are catechised however when they move from home they stop receiving the sacraments and will bear no fruit. Often this is because they have not fully received and accepted the gospel message and have not yet made that personal decision for Jesus and made their faith their own.

I just want to begin by stating that I am a young millennial Catholic woman in Australia. This does not detract from my beliefs, opinions and views. I want to emphasise that I am an educated Catholic as I have completed postgraduate studies in Religious Education. Vatican II revolutionised the Church back in the 1960s. However, the world has changed dramatically since the 1960s. God is asking for change. It is time to renew our Church and faith for the new modern world. The greatest commandment in our Church is "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". It is time for love. It is time for acceptance. It is time for change. God is asking us to be accepting of all cultures, races, faiths, genders and sexuality. It is not our job to judge others. It is not our job to put down others. It is our job to love one another and love our God with all of the fullness in our hearts. God is asking us to love each other; note that this is not anything new. Australia is moving towards secularisation because of the Church's negative stance on a range of moral and ethical issues. The Bible was written in a different time that was applicable to that historical context. The Bible tells us to not wear certain materials and eat certain foods. The main messages of the Bible (for example, the Commandments and Catholic Social Teachings) are universal and stand the test of time. However, it is impossible to implement every little detail of the Bible into our forever changing world. Australia has approved same-sex marriage because Australians are loving and accepting of all people. However, it is not just Australians. Catholics are loving and accepting of all people. Let us open our eyes, minds and hearts to being more accepting of others. Let us create a religiously diverse Australia that encourages and promotes interfaith dialogue. This is the only way that the Catholic Church will continue to prosper in Australia. Let us work together in empowering our youth to be the agents of change our country needs. Our students are extremely passionate about social justice. Let us work towards empowering them with the knowledge and skills to enact social justice in their communities, rather than focusing on getting their bottom on a seat at Church. Let us work on creating a new generation that can actively live out their faith and become better human beings that work towards the common good for all. Furthermore, we must work towards equality for women and men. Why must Priests not be allowed to have a family? Why must women and their opinions be pushed to the side in the Church? Why are all those in power in the Church men? Why are all those reading this message in the Plenary Council men? We need equality within the Church. We need women to be recognised for their work within the Church just as much as men. We need women to be afforded the same opportunities as men.

To love one another and accept all, build a community that everyone feels comfortable in and contribute to.

I do find this a bizarre question as God doesn't change what he commands of us but will answer the obvious first. To pray more. To pray the rosary. To sin less. To spend more

time with the Lord. To live Catholic lives—become familiar with the catechism of the Catholic Church in order to do so would be essential for most. I feel asking this question shows how lost the Catholic Church is from the top. We need good shepherds to guide us and if this was being provided I doubt we would need to be asked what God is asking of us. Where is the leadership?

Asking us to show leadership as a country blessed with resources, a stable society and democratic political system. We are asked to remain secular, respect each others beliefs and spiritual wants and needs. We need to show compassion and mercy in a world that is growing more adversarial and selfish. We need to remain firm in our convictions of faith, and to call out wrongness. We can offer hope and assistance for those less fortunate to live a better way. This is what God is asking us.

Develop stronger clearer leadership skills in bishops, archbishops, priests, do not forget the cultural wisdom available. Use both old and new gems of the Church. Incorporate new technology teaching youth commend celibacy commend married priests. Importance of nurturing faith in family.

Three common threads appeared in [-] Catholic School, [-]'s initial Plenary Council meeting. Those present thought that God wants us to accept and welcome others; God wants us to have connection to the land and protect her; and God wants us to change the rules around 'who' can be a priest so that the Channel Country could have a local appointed as the 'head' of our parish. Please allow me to explain further. God wants us to accept and welcome others: The door to the Catholic Church in terms of receiving communion has been closed to divorced people, Indigenous people of spiritual faith, those not baptized or those baptized anything other than Catholic. We feel these old discriminations are the rules of man rather than God. The council meeting heard the need for reconciliation for past hurts and a move towards becoming a welcoming and compassionate Church to all, regardless of creed or background. We need to promote a safe, open door policy that is modelled on the Good Samaritan's values of tolerance, compassion, respect and mercy. God wants us to have connection to the land and protect her: Protection of Mother Earth has been the essence of Indigenous spirituality throughout the ages. God is asking us to listen to the voice of the land and be in communion with the earth and animals. We are God's people and we must speak for them. Through reconciliation and true integration of the memories of Australia's ancestors, our Church could become world leaders in enacting *Laudato Si'*. We would see issues such as the drought and climate change as emergencies worthy of prayer and immediate action. Together we should make changes to provide for generations to come and model love and respect by caring for our common home. God wants us to change the rules around 'who' can be a priest, therefore the Channel Country could have a local appointed as the 'head' of our parish: At the moment we have two priests for nineteen towns/shires. This ministry falls drastically short of the needs of these communities. We need a priest who is from our local community, who lives in our community, and who knows the community's needs and people. This person needs to be able to visit those who cannot travel into Sunday night Mass (i.e. properties on dirt roads many kilometres from town) and deliver them the Eucharist and counsel. We feel having a person we can relate to may bring others back to Mass as homilies would be made meaningful to our context. For the priest of our church to be local, rules around 'who' can be a priest will have to change. We feel the outdated

single, male priest model stems from the rules of man rather than God. We call for married men and women to be our local priests. We ask that they are given the title of priest, recognition in that role and the responsibilities to minister to our communities effectively.

1. God is asking us in the Church today, as in every age, to “Proclaim the Good News”. To be a community of believer who share the message and love of Jesus with all we encounter. To be inclusive of all peoples with whom we share the journey by communicating and demonstrating the Fathers love.

2. We are called to be a community of disciples who proclaim Jesus in word as well as action. The Church is very good at “doing” Social Justice and Humanitarian causes but fails to proclaim the message and teachings of Jesus. The Church is no longer the counter-cultural “voice in the wilderness” calling God’s people to return to him. It is time to start teaching God’s law once again to reclaim the moral authority of the Church that Clericalism has destroyed.

3. The Lay faithful are the backbone of the Church, new opportunities for their development and formation need to be made available. Acts 6:1-4 gives a good example of a “clergy - laity” led model of Church.

4. A Church that stirs the hearts and minds of the people, that ignites and fans the flame of the Holy Spirit within community by placing God as the number 1 priority in life. By developing small parish based groups / communities, God’s call may be more clearly and keenly heard, discerned and enacted.

To be accepting of all people that God has created.

To inspire our young generation to be involved in the life of the Church making decisions and becoming effective planners for the future mission of the Church. It is a journey of acceptance and reconciliation of past wrong doings. God would want us to be more open and accepting members of the universal Church.

This is the collated responses of a small group discussion held by invitation for parishioners of [-] City parishes. The chosen topic was priestly ministry: 1. Bringing in overseas priests isnt a long-term solution—it creates difficulties for the priests and the parishioners; 2. Parish ministry is different to missions; 3. Remain focussed on Christ and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; 4. "When was the last time you asked a young man to consider priesthood?" 5. [-] isnt aware of all the good things that are happening across the Universal Church; 6. Divisiveness about differences in theology and nit-picking application of rules is not of Christ.

1. Share the Good News—the GREAT JOY of the Resurrection. This is what God has asked of all who have met him, since Magdalene onwards. 2. Share the compassion of Christ—Christ died for love of us and we who are in Christ are called to love with passion—particularly in this ever more material world. 3. Invite all of our sisters and brothers into full communion—Christ gives himself to us fully in the Eucharist and it is a great sadness that so few participate in the Eucharistic life of the Church. 4. Work against divisiveness—the public square is becoming so divisive in modern Australia, particularly in the last few years. We who believe the *imago dei* dwells in every human can speak with love even with those with whom we adamantly disagree and promote and dialogue and collaboration rather than division and vindictiveness. Of course it must be modelled within

the Church first and foremost. 5. Continue the tradition with positivity—we are the children of the most beautiful love story ever told, we are called to live it out and to bear it out in our lives. 6. Be open and transparent—there have been heinous crimes committed in the name of the Church and then covered up and made worse. Nothing other can COMPLETE transparency in Church governance will heal those wounds. Christ himself taught us to bring everything out into the light and there is no theological reason not to have transparent governance within the Church.

True faith and service. One that is really based on the life of Jesus.

I believe that God is showing us through the current difficulties now being experienced in the Catholic Church in Australia that there is a clear need for all Christian faiths to become much closer and stop the "us and them" approach that has been a fixture for my whole life.

More effective evangelisation 1: by presenting a positive and up-to-date image of the Australian Church. 2: developing true community 3: stressing the formation of faith of faith of children and young adults. Many evangelical churches have great success in evangelising children and young adults, and creating a strong sense of community. What can we learn from them? Given a high percentage of non-practising parents and many uncommitted teachers, how effective are Catholic schools? Other alternatives? E.g. where fun, entertainment, community, team building are combined with R.E. Historically there has been an emphasis on our superiority as the "authentic" Church with the fullness... with church buildings, statues, vestments over ornate. Would a simple image e.g. as a pilgrim people, among other pilgrims following the path revealed to them, be more in accord with the Australian culture? Televised Masses are usually marked by beautiful traditional music and a rather formal liturgy. How appealing are these to the non-evangelised? On multi-cultural Sunday our parish which represents 35 nationalities had a marvellous liturgy, many in national costume, African, Indian, Papua-New Guinea, Pacific Islands, Filipino music, readings, prayers of the faithful in various languages. No silence before Mass but reverential silence for the liturgy of the Eucharist, a wonderful spirit of joy, aliveness, community and the final song "We are Australia!" Can we get this type of image on the media?

1. We believe God is asking us to be a more inclusive Church. 2. A Church where each individual member's gifts are developed and utilized regardless of whether they are members of the clergy or members of the laity. 3. A Church where the laity are actively encouraged to be involved in all areas except those areas of the priestly ministry that are restricted solely to members of the priesthood. This would include the training of more Eucharistic Ministers and deacons as well as allowing married men the opportunity of becoming priests (See 1 Timothy 3). The married priests could be diocesan priests and not part of Orders which would still practice celibacy. 4. A Church where there is more collaboration between priests and laity. A Church where the laity take more of a leadership role particularly in administrative and financial areas to support our priests, so that they can become better pastors rather than administrators. 5. Bishops & priests to utilize the time they currently spend in administration in providing pastoral care and in studying and Ministering of the Word. (Acts 6:1-4 & Luke 4:18-19)

Add deacons to assist priests in parishes. They can assist with the pastoral care of families. Adopt a change of heart Adopt team approach and inclusivity within the Church. Adopt the gospel values. All baptised have a role in the life and mission of the Church. All included in Jesus' kingdom. All laity once Baptised are equal within Jesus Church. The clerics need to let go of their illegitimate power and follow Jesus. All members of the Church empowered to make decisions. Allow all people to support and help each other. An annulment can occur where there was grave immaturity of judgement. Let the laity need this information instead of keeping them in the dark Appoint a qualified woman as co-chairperson for the Plenary Council, so as to have a balanced representation of the Church. Articulate a vision and start to lead. Be a discipleship of equals. Be a non-judgemental Church, constantly affirm Gods love, be truly inclusive. Be a people of faith, truth, compassion and justice. Not just in words but in actions. Be accountable, transparent and inclusive. Be ready to act now, not at some time in the future. Bishop should subsidise therapy and supervision of clergy. Bishops should publish weekly diary of events, so people know where he is. Suggestion give him a map, so he could find his local churches. Bishops should spend time getting to know all the baptised in their diocese and provide good leadership. Cannot even discuss female ordination. Pope JP II Canon Law divides people and creates dissonance. Catholic Church regards woman as inferior, treats them as 2nd class, excluding them from important decision-making. Cease holding consultative meeting with cardinals only, for example the recent one on the Family. Involve the laity as they are living in these relationships. Celibacy is not an unquestionable truth. Peter was married and so were many of the early Christians. Church authorities should not ignore what people are telling them, as they are concerned for the future of the Church. Church has used women for centuries and we demand it cease now. Church leadership needs to be kept honest, and truthful. Church needs to stop putting wealth and power ahead of the vulnerable. Church Policy and Practices in response to emerging crisis remain scant. Churches failure to protect women. Churchs fundamental adherence to sex discrimination e.g. exclusion from priesthood. Churchs refusal to host conference by Voices of Faith within the walls of the Vatican. Churchs relegation of women to powerlessness. Clergy are no more sacred than anyone who is a baptised Christian. Clergy need to change from power to service in the Church. Clergy should practise what they preach. Communal reconciliation at the great feast such as Christmas and Easter. Confirmation emphasises a commitment to discipleship. Encourage active Catholics. Currently, clergy dominate rather than serve. They enforce rather than lead. It doesnt work.

###Clergy should not have gatekeepers between them and those who would seek them out Delineate for the life of the Church is asserting the Churchs pastoral identity and action is rooted in life situations. Develop a partnership with laity and clergy. Develop sound doctrine. Diocese exists to help parishes, not hinder them. Do we live authentically as the People of God. If not, what is stopping us? During the Mass we repent for our sins in various places, so there are no reasons why someone should be excluded from Christ table. Embody gospel values and attitudes. Emphasis priesthood is a gift of service not to be put on a pedestal and luxury homes so they are separated from the laity. Engage in Pastoral Theology—action and ethos of the Lord, and get attuned to challenges and cultures of 21st Century. Episcopal conferences need to have courage and stand up for

what is right and not be dictated to by the Roman Curia. Establish a National Protocol for assessing candidates for the priesthood and ordination. Every diocese should be a place of hospitality for all who are having difficulties and make this known to all. External multi-disciplinary teams should assess candidates for priesthood and ordination. Get rid of bishops if they are not maintaining Jesus' values. Get rid of consecrated positions, instead have ordained people. Most of the consecrated people tend to think themselves superior. Go back to basics. Get rid of the culture of clericalism. Get rid of the secrecy. Get rid of Canon 536, as a parish priest is not required for meetings to be effective. Get rid of the homophobic atmosphere in the Church, as a 3rd of all clerics are this way inclined. Get rid of the inside camps, go out. Good men and women are the main reason the Church still exists in any positive way, and the reason not all have lost faith. Harbour sexism and misogyny. Have married priest. Have open dialogue. Have women in representative decision-making is deliberative not consultative. His was kind and democratic and practiced equality. In Jesus' kingdom no distinctions based on race, wealth, class, money, power and no evil spirits. In the Bible God said, "it is not good that man should be alone". Gen 2:24 In the early Church women did lead the Eucharist services. Jesus always kind, compassionate and inclusive. Jesus assisted women whom society had discarded. Jesus never condemned women. Jesus said there only 2 laws—love God and your neighbour as yourself, so get rid of the rest. Jesus three steps—embrace them, heal them, call them to reform. Community. Jesus was radical and feminist. Jesus welcomed women as followers and discussed serious matters with them. Laity now should take the primary roles, as was the way in the early Church. Laity should select their clergy from within their community. Laity tasks could include—financial administration, funerals, weddings, empower laity, provide the Eucharist to every Catholic who desires it.

###Listen so as to learn. Look at the way Jesus outreached to others, gave them another chance, was compassionate, understanding, gave forgiveness and hope. Look for and train local people for all ministries rather than bringing people from overseas. Make celibacy optional. Mass on demand —use IT and focus on love and compassion of the Lord. Moral theology proceed from pastoral action of Jesus, embracing divine love, healing and then conversion of action in responsible conscience. New Testament Christs actions and words in relation to women. No more cover-ups. Open ordination to all who are called by God including women. Optimism is in, so use it. Ordained clergy only retain their ministry at the please of the community. Parents are the first teachers of their children. They show how to live lovingly in relationship with God and each other, as well as their neighbours. Parish Pastoral Councils should not be dissolved when the parish priest changes, as they provide stability and continuity. Pastoral action in framing the life and belief of the universal Church, in concert with traditional theology. Pastoral action to heal the hearts of those suffering, open doors and free people and to say that is good, forgives all and is the Father himself —People called by Christ to belong to His Church are all equal, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, respond to his message, person and work of Christ. People of God have a legitimate right to participate in the governing power of the Church, since all are equal before God. Please show me where Jesus taught only men can be priests or bishops. It does not exist. Pope Benedict XVI recognised the time of the laity has come. Pope Francis has stated pastoral theology is when all theology must take in human life and suffering in forming doctrine. God is merciful. Pope Francis has stated the

clergy should walk humbly with the people of God. Pope Francis includes the whole body of the faithful in relationship with God, a lived experience in the concrete call of their discipleship. Pope Francis points to interactive role between pastoral theology and historical disciplines of the Catholic theological traditions. Pope Francis requires liturgical and sacramental life be formed in the compassionate embrace so people take up gospel challenges. Pope Leo the Great said "he who is to rule over all must be chosen by all". Start following his words. Preach good news to the most abandoned and sometimes use words. Priest find your voices and be agents of change within the Church. Primacy of conscience, when it has been informed. Put qualified women in decision-making positions within the Church, instead of consultative ones only. Reclaim the values of Jesus embedded in the gospels. Reconciliation for those who commit sexual abuse should not obtain absolution until the perpetrator hands themselves into the police Rectors need extensive training in human formation and do not alone decide who goes through to ordination.

###Reform clericalism, hierarchies, authoritarian and dictatorial decision making. Review all Catholicism Laws and make them known and easily accessible to all. Review annulments and make known the grounds where it can apply. Review Canon Laws and remove all the obsolete ones. Review *Humanae Vitae* as there has driven many of the laity from the Church. Review reconciliation as a communal prayer, celebrating God's mercy and love. Clergy use it as a control. People just do not go any more. Review the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests. Do not demand celibacy. Review theological teachings of the Catholic Church. Review Vatican II *Gaudium et Spes*. See, judge, act methodology in understanding life and work of the Church. Select only proven pastors as bishops. Seminarians curriculum should include theology, philosophy, scripture, canon law, and human formation, relationships and vulnerability. Seminarians need professional training and input in ethics, morals and spiritual tasks. Seminarians need to demonstrate independence in living and financial affairs. Seminarians need to have an academic or trade background with at least 5 years experience, so they understand human formation. Seminarians need to have life experience before being ordained e.g. 25 plus. Seminarians need to live in the community where they will be working, so they can get to know and understand the people in that area. Some clergy act as dictators rather than serving and leading. A recent example I experienced in 2018. Some current clergy need to respect the laity and stop seeing themselves as superior. St Paul acknowledges that celibacy was not given to all. It is a man-made rule imposed to stop the clergy behaving badly. Stop breaking up small communities, as this is how the Church was established and was able to spread the gospel throughout the world. Stop demanding sexual perfection and realise it grows into humanity. Stop elevating priest above the laity. Stop having Sacristy priests (arrive, get dressed, do liturgy, put on street clothes and leave)—no connection to people, instead have pastoral leaders. Stop using the excuse that only Rome can decide the issue of womens ordination. Support clergy after ordination. Suspend 1st Rite of Reconciliation as people have lost faith and respect for the clergy. Take heed of the International Catholic reform network and look at implementing their actions. Teach dogma, scripture, moral theology, ecclesiology, liturgical and spiritual theology, ecumenical theology and social doctrine. The Church needs to act in the best interest of the people of God. Not their own. The Church should mirror the pastoral action of the Lord—accompaniment, see and

treat humans as God sees them, a precious soul, an individual. The Clergy should stop covering up bad behaviour and lying to the laity e.g. child abuse. The Leadership in the Church should discuss and look at how they have contributed and are contributing to the mess the Church is in.

##The present day leadership in the Church are behaving like the Pharisees intent on imposing rules for others, but not adhering to them. There needs to be a new ecclesiology (a) pastoral action (b) the church should mirror the pastoral action of the Lord. There should be on-going personal development of clergy paid for by the diocese covering holistic, rational, psychological, emotional and spirituality. Treatment of nuns is self defeating and irrational. Use 3rd Rite of Reconciliation because of the current behaviour of the clergy. Vatican II advocated intentional and active participation of the laity. Welcome all at the Eucharist. What is the Australian Church Plan B for recruiting priests? Plan A is not working. Women are kept outside the walls of the Church. Women rejected, judged unsuitable to run parishes. Acknowledge female deacons, pastoral associates, lectors, acolytes as they are already doing these roles. Establish a Charter of Fundamental Rights for all in the Church. Establish a better selection process for the appointment of bishops and remove the ones not suitable for this role. The Church should stop immediately sanctioning those speaking "their truth" from authoritative positions (the pulpit). Stop getting Rome's permission to discuss our Church e.g. Plenary Council Agenda had to be submitted to Rome beforehand. A new model Church for 21st century to reclaim its mission, authenticity. Church leadership should stop immediately fixating on compliance with the "Letter of the Law" while forgetting the Spirit behind and the compassion and love of Christ. Australian Church should look like what Pope Francis described as we are ALL citizens of the Church. Change the culture of the Australian Catholic Church from one of exclusion to one of inclusion. Church needs to stop abandoning people. Laity should be co-responsible for the life of the Church (Benedict XVI). The diocese should not be solely influenced by the personality and ecclesiology of the current bishop. Laity should be co-responsible for the life of the diocese and parish. There needs to be intentional letting go of power and control by the clergy. There should be a review of what Pastoral Councils are and the establishment of recognised guidelines to shape their constitution and role within parishes (not a list of you musts/rules and regulations). Ongoing formation and training of Pastoral Council. We need to form disciples and apostles for today, so the Holy Spirit will gift and inspire them to do things. We need to focus on formation, attitudes and strategies for pastoral ministry and shared parish leadership. Recover what was the norm in the early church. Commission liturgy leaders e.g. welcome and dismissal, ministry of the Word, ministry of the Eucharist. Have Laity lead public prayer, congregational singing, Baptism teams, non-Eucharist funeral services. Set up leaders in ministry training programs—spirituality and formation, theological studies, practical pastoral ministry.

##Recognise that many laity are qualified in theology—use them. Clergy need to throw off the mantle of power, authority and dogmatism. Clergy need to put on cloak of Spirit and humble mystic. Focus needs to be on the people you don't have e.g. lapsed, never part of Church. Church should in words and action be: compassionate, just, act with integrity, courage, faith, mercy, hope, encompassing and love. Toxic misogyny flows through the writings of bishops, monks, poets and theologians—Church needs to promote women's

voices. Jesus not hostile or critical of women, so why should we? Jesus preached inclusion, equality, forgiveness, love and non-discrimination. Ingredients for success: episcopal and clerical support, commitment of real resources, involvement of lay people.

##Clergy speak their sermons instead of reading them, if they truly believe the words they are saying. Need a charter of Fundamental rights in the Church. Clergy should believe what they preach and put it into action. Bishops should not say one thing to one group and something contrary to another. People talk and exchange this information. Look at the culture of theology, does this restrict people from believing as the information is foreign to them. Bishops need to stay in their own diocese and recruit people from within for the priesthood, deacons, acolytes etc. Church needs to understand and accept cross-cultural communities. We need to reshape our beliefs and practices in cross-cultural environments. Australian Church constantly advocates for people to care for the poor, but still maintains the riches within the Church e.g.: unused or minimally used church buildings and properties. Stop closing churches.

##Remove Canon Law 536—parish priests must preside at parochial councils. The laity provide the continuity and ongoing support in churches amid constantly changing parish priests. Allowing the parochial councils to sit and make decisions with parish priests (but not presided over by the parish priest) allows for parish stability and continuity.

Married priests, women priests, anyone who is called by God should be able to become a priest. Allow priests who are already ordained to marry. Open the Church up to gay and lesbian marriages

To treat everyone as equals, regardless of race, or religion. To help everyone not just select few.

THIRD RITE OF RECONCILIATION That the third Rite of Reconciliation be reintroduced into the life of the Church in Australia. This Rite drew hundreds of people to the Church especially in preparation for big feasts like Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. It was an incredible disappointment when the Bishops of Australia failed to speak up for us (the people of God) when the issue of the Sacrament of Reconciliation was under discussion. (I am aware that I do not have total information on this issue). However, the blessing and life, the colour and texture that was experienced AS A COMMUNITY in this third Rite is no longer available to us—the living Church. It was a witness to the power of Sacramental Reconciliation which has ceased to be experienced even when a Reconciliation liturgy is held in our churches. PLEASE have this powerful gift of Sacramental life restored to us, the people of God.

- Youth engagement (making it more relevant to the audience)
- Be aware of culture
- Position of women in the Church
- Loosening the criteria for priest ordination to bring in fresh blood

God is asking us to re-focus on the mission of the Church to the words and actions of Jesus rather than the rules and regulations of the Church. Inclusion rather than exclusion!

<p>God is asking us as a Church to practice what we teach. God is asking us to be loving, kind, inclusive, respectful, accepting, empathetic, welcoming, forgiving and non-judgmental.</p>
<p>God is asking us to move the processes and conceptions of the Church into the future in order to connect and bring in the younger generation. Make it a celebration, make it fun, make it engaging, teach things in an exciting way. The values of the Church are still fantastic, however the way they are taught are too far behind the times and the new generations coming through do not value them. He is also asking us to open our doors to everyone. The more open the doors, the more followers the Church will receive.</p>
<p>Is there a culture of absolute forgiveness? Why are some people excluded? Women and married priests, LGBT, divorce, children and/ or unconfirmed from receiving the Eucharist.</p>
<p>To come together and share where Church is with ourselves. What can we do to ensure that Gods love is at the centre of all of our thoughts and actions in how we go about our everyday.</p>
<p>Compassion and a recognition that the Church needs to react to the signs of the times in matters of morality . The crucial dogma remains unchanged but as the rituals, rubric reflect a new era some issues around divorce and marriage need to change. Wrongly many priests and laity ostracise and condemn those who are divorced even excluding them from communion. More education needed here. Further when laws were determined about divorce life expectancy was in the 30s. A welcome back to church for remarried people is needed. Secondly, priests and congregations need to welcome young people where they are if evangelisation is to happen. Example, a relative who is Catholic married a non-practising Baptist. The ceremony was conducted by a Baptist lay minister. When the first baby was born ([-] diocese) the parents decided on a Catholic baptism. Two weeks after the baptism the Catholic priest rang the non-Catholic wife in the marriage to discuss her “irregular” marriage. Understandably, the couple had no further contact with the Church. The second child is not baptised, the children now attend an Anglican school—a perfect example of evangelisation missed because of rigid rules and a lack of compassion.</p>
<p>A repentant Church, humiliated but humble, still ready to carry out the mission of Christ to reveal the God of mercy and compassion to its own people and to the wider community, adapting and coping with changes but not losing its identity to be a witness to the values of the Gospel, though bruised still brave to speak out the truth, even if it may be against the currents (lest history condemn it as timid) and with a strong awareness for the need of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, drawing its energy from Sacraments and Word of God, where the grace is plenty. So be a light for the nation working hand in hand with other Christian denominations and religions and also with irreligious, going out to meet people in their life situations as Jesus did (if we wait [for]people to come in search of Church and Christ we may fail) and its leaders well motivated, spiritually oriented and trained as professionals for the mission. Church has to change its culture of being reduced to an institution carrying out daily business to its customers.</p>
<p>1.To be recognizably a Christ Centred Church.</p> <p>2. To be a more Word Centred Church; particularly during the Liturgy by:</p>

(i) Ensuring a dynamic delivery of the readings by lay lectors and a dynamic delivery of the Gospel by the Presider, followed by homilies that really break open the Word in the hearts and minds of the Assembly.

(ii) Ensuring a dynamic delivery of the Collects and in particular the Eucharistic Prayer—the import of these words is often lost in a hasty and unenthusiastic delivery.

(iii) Ensuring a dynamic delivery of the communal prayers, responses and hymns from the Assembly—the Assembly that is being unresponsive, has to be trained to participate with energy; the priest can do this by instruction; catechesis and by his own enthusiasm.

3. To be a more welcoming church: Some parishes do not greet people at the door thereby never finding out who is in the Assembly and how they might be able to contribute to the Community.

4. To offer more than the Mass: Adoration, Prayer meetings, Bible Studies, RCIA, Sacramental preparation which goes beyond one night sessions, Community Outreach groups such as Vincent de Paul and Church based social gatherings and opportunities to evangelize and share faith.

5. To be a Church where every member is aware of their baptismal duty to evangelize and can be recognized as such.

6. To be recognized as a Church not afraid to tackle the hard questions of life that people have to face.

7. To be a Church where individuals young and old alike and the communities we form are encouraged and expected to be transformed by our dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ and each other—not just people who give the minimum of 1 hour in church.

God is asking us to be the best people that we can, to do what we can to assist others and to live moral and ethical lives.

I think God is calling on us to focus on our core business of love and compassion within a very fractured world. The Church has a key role to play in being inclusive by recognising differences and modelling acceptance. It is time for the Church to become a leader in social justice by breaking down barriers, including everyone and being a leading voice in contemporary social issues.

God is asking us to be more accepting of differences. To be more connected with animals and the environment.

We feel God is asking us to put him first in our lives, to pray daily with intent, to evangelize in our daily interactions and to help young people to build their faith and trust in him. We think he wants us to care for the poor and marginalised, for refugees, older citizens and little children. We need to stand up for God and be counted in the fight against abortion, euthanasia, and human trafficking.

##We feel God is asking us to take our responsibility for evangelisation seriously and to be more active in this regard. We feel that the shrinking numbers of people at Mass and the duplication of resources across many Christian faiths takes away funding which could be used to support the needy across the whole community. We feel He wants us to work

<p>harder and pray more to save our environment from the waste and misuse of which we have been guilty.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusiveness - Acceptance - To advocate for, to serve, to work for and to love the most marginalised in our society (incl. Indigenous, refugees, LGBTQI)
<p>Rebuild the faith in the religious aspect of each person within the community to give words meaning. This can be facilitated by making Mass more engaging and relevant to all ages. Solve the disconnect with the population where the sacraments are a means to get into a Catholic school and bring back opportunities for there to be true meaning and faith in Gods words and the communities associated with a parish. Provide opportunities to connect involvement with a church and real life. The personal reactions to homilies in particular can transform a community when meaningful, current and actionable. We are all wanting to enjoy going to Mass again, enjoy the sense of community with morning tea afterwards and have the parish organize events that will engage the community. All parishioners just want to feel comfortable at Mass and society has changed.</p>
<p>Be kind.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Be a consistent and reliable presence - To adapt ways to be more engaging to the youth of today - Adapt more modern ways to deliver the gospel - Coming together and helping each other through difficult times - Tolerance/to be tolerant - Be happy - Be accepting of everyone - To have tolerance and understanding - Charity - Helping one another - To broaden our thoughts and acceptance of those that may not fit the mould
<p>God is asking us to love the other and step outside ourselves.</p>
<p>How are we going to reconnect and engage people with the Church? How can we make the Church feel more welcoming for people from diverse backgrounds? At times the Church seems to be at cross purposes to the teachings of Jesus. Our Church is lacking in appeal for youth. Many of our priests in Australia currently come from overseas and lack understanding of the Australian culture therefore people do not feel engaged.</p>
<p>The Church needs to be more inclusive and accepting of all individuals who want to belong to the Catholic Church. How would Jesus treat the outsiders/lepers? if he was here today. The central message of treat each other as you would like to be treated.</p>

To appeal to a wider audience to make faith more relevant to people. We believe this can be achieved by having more Australian priests, such as those who are married. This is important because in many parishes at the moment, people find it difficult to engage in Mass, particularly in the sermon, as international priests can be difficult to understand. International priests bring faith from their country which may not necessarily reflect the Australian version of the Catholic faith. We believe this is one way that would lead to more participation in church, and more inclusivity from those of varied backgrounds and ages.

God is asking us to reach out to those in need within the Church and from other faiths. God is asking us to be open and welcoming to people from different races, cultures, faiths and sexual orientation. God tells us to love another as Christ loves you and to love our neighbour. God is asking us to be more welcoming and non-judgemental to people who are divorced, people with mental health issues, people who are homosexual. God is asking us to complete this Plenary Council so we can reflect on our failures and fix our problems. God is asking us to recontextualise and transform the Church for our new and modern world. We must create a Church that is open, welcoming, accepting and non-judgemental for our youth. Without our youth, we will not have a continuing and flourishing Church. We need to connect, engage and support our youth more than filling a seat in Church.

God is asking the Australian Church to be welcoming and accepting of all. This means respecting peoples life choices, religious backgrounds and sexual orientation.

God is asking us to be accepting of all people. To be giving, forgiving and selfless.

Growing our Catholic Family

- be kinder compassionate and more understanding of each other
- share our beliefs and listen to people who may differ to our own
- more interesting, positive and motivational Masses
- more Catholic group participation
- buddy system/ welcoming committee/ mens groups/ more Catholic mentors (connecting Catholic people)
- help lapsed Catholics back with some strong and friendly Church interaction.

Leaders in our Church

- positive, refreshing priests who are motivating
- / more Catholic groups for men
- / priests to marry if they wish
- / female priests
- / more gender equality across all Catholic areas
- / succession planning for key Catholic Leaders. Community
- more reaching out to Community

/ more giving and community involvement and awareness

/ protect the vulnerable.

Youth

- grow our youth involvement /more family prayer/more family participation in masses/
grow religion in classes.

A Faith Injection

- we need a shot in the arm

- Missions, Retreats, Cursillos to build on our individual faith and love of Jesus

/ Is God calling us to go back to Vatican II documents and re-examine what the Council intended?

/Are our actions /inactions contributing to the evils of our age?

Encourage self reflection

/Encouraging a role for youth in the Church - students run one of the weekend Masses.
Give them a job and theyll turn up. There they can learn about the Sacraments, Faith,
love of Jesus and moral teachings

/ Encourage groups like CWL in parishes and support them with their Christian voice.

Education

- what is happening in Catholic schools with regards to developing Faith/home/school
Foundation

/ attend retreats and "days"

/ getting Youth to church isnt necessarily getting them to a faith, or getting them back to
God.

/why are we restricted by political correctness

/ Get our religion VISIBLE in other ways - sports teams etc. like Brothers Rugby League,
St Francis Soccer Team ,St Johns Touch team.

Relevance of Scripture messages to a changed world

- Its practical application. To keep the faith, pray, stay firm as the Church in Australia is
under extreme pressure from external forces and within. More stability in the Church.
Young people need to see that the Church is relevant to them. One group commented
"our life experiences in the Church were supportive and squeaky clean. 20 -30 years later
we never heard of any indiscretions in our area despite what's happened and come to light
in other places"

Education

- formation for teachers in our Catholic schools so they learn their Faith/encourage people to read the bible/to live as our religion interprets as Catholics.

Society

- How can we use the technology, values, pace of life, new modes of friendship in our quest for a genuine faith?

/Marriage as an option/reality for priests and ordained people.

/removing the annulment requirement for divorcees for remarrying in the Church

/ Palliative care options to allow(earlier)death naturally (not prolonged)

##Outreach - How can we get around political correctness, not to force religion down others throats but be free to advertise to others about the opportunity to share faith with others

/What is important to people in a world where weekends barely exist any more, days off are not necessarily when others have it BUT Mass is on Sunday.

/How do we bring God into young people's lives in an authentic and relevant way.

/Involving the youth at their level and experiences.

/What is the Church? —Firstly it's asking us to identify the Church as souls who participate in the life of the Faith known as the mystical body of Christ. God is always asking for us to grow the mystical body. But how does that happen? There are many different ways to follow but firstly the members have to be in a state of Grace. Only those in a state of Grace can communicate Grace—this effects conversions. People need to understand the spiritual life—education is needed. Do people know what a "state of Grace" is? Catholic Schools - Teach Religion, not Politics Not Climate Control.

/ Catholic Teachers in schools not leading by example.

/Why are we not attracting Catholic children to our Catholic Schools? Why arent they attending Church?

/ Children do not know when to stand and sit and kneel in Church

/ No Masses at the High School.

/Deputy APRE teacher did not know process of Mass and had to ask Parishioners what to do

/Deputy APRE teacher when first given position was on Reading Roster for Mass—she did not turn up to Mass.

/Teachers at High School do not say hello to children outside of School.

Royal Commission - No apology/ outcome and fix problem

/How to stop happening again.

Clergy - speak clear English /consider allowing lay Men and Women - could build population

/What happens when priests are gone?

/ Transition of Overseas priests - attitude towards Women

/ treatment of women (disrespect)

/Inspiring or lack of Inspiration

/a previous Parish priest would touch women and tell them not to wear item of clothing to Church

/ some priests refuse to acknowledge women and are rude to them (especially older women)

/priests often cannot understand anything.

To Love one Another as I have loved You—We need our Church to be more accepting of people's differences - to love EVERYONE and proclaim it.

/Set a good example in our families and with our friends and in our Community.

/We should do more than go to Church.

/ We dont show to others that we practise Christian Values.

Liturgy - Sermons that give a positive message /explanation of the Mass instead of repetitive sermons

/Sermons that connect Readings to today's life (ones we can understand , shorter and to the point).

Liturgy to attract the younger generation

/Reach out to young people in a way they can understand.

/Encourage the young people to join the Church community and come to Mass

/Question is how do we get the young to embrace their Catholic Faith? God wants us to be more accepting of those who have left the Church and find it hard to come back.

###Marriage - uphold the sacred marriage between a man and a woman.

/ have some thought for Catholics who choose to marry a divorcee. Can we be more considerate of their choice and needs.

We need to Evangelize as a Church - encourage more people to come to Mass. We have entered a post-Christian era in Australia. Need to go back to the early Church Fathers and re-learn what the Catholic Church actually teaches.

Togetherness - to accept all others- race and beliefs.

/To live together in harmony

/To be kind, loving, tolerant, giving, forgiving.

/To treat others with fairness, respect and dignity.

/Can we as a Church reduce the significant Homelessness in Australia.
 /Protect our most vulnerable
 /More care for the poor and needy
 /Consider organising Surrogate Grandparents for those who have no family in the Parish Community.
 Care for our Religious - Can the Church consider changing its Laws (adapting to current times) for our priests, brothers, and sisters.- consider the possibility of allowing them to marry.
 / Often times our Foreign

Love God, love one another, environment and community, peace and respect with a sense of justice in our response to others

- :Teachers
- :Care for our fellow man
- :Look after refugees
- :Spreading our wings and take a risk by showing empathy to people that you may not normally recognise nor associate with
- :Dont give up on our faith
- :Develop an empathy
- :Acceptance of one another
- :Humility and Humanity
- :Step up
- :Ownership of our Catholic Faith
- :Environment
- :Being in Community

Acceptance, recognition and inclusion of refugees and our Indigenous people. To continue with the process of reconciliation. To have courage and strength to speak up on the world stage. For our Church leaders to have more of a voice.

As young people, we would like the Church to be open minded. Be open to gay marriage, be more inclusive, supportive of us, create avenues for us to talk to God. See a Church that reaches out to us. To see a Church that is not exclusive—a Church where at the moment, can raise a voice about the people/actions that it does not like. God would want us to welcome legitimate refugees with open arms. God would want the Church to be supportive of young people with mental health issues. A higher Church profile when it comes to mental health responses. The Church could do more/create more programs that are supportive of the environment—Gods creation. As young people, God is asking of us to be in the position to spread ideas, stand up for those without a voice. Facilitate us to put our hands out to others. God wants us to be more open to those who are not baptised—

<p>particularly within Church communities—be more welcoming. God is asking us to make a better future the generation after us.</p>
<p>He is asking us to be his presence to the people around us no matter their faith, culture etc.</p>
<p>Our group felt that we needed to be a more welcoming community. We felt this was in all aspects of Church life but particularly around the Eucharist. We felt that as we are all sinners and it is not our right to judge all should be welcome to the table of the Lord. The Catholic Church needs to review its rules here if it is to be relevant in an egalitarian society like Australia.</p>
<p>Need to allocate more time in Catholic schools for sound Christian education that includes contemporary interpretation of key living aspects of Gods word or Jesus stories. The concepts of prayer, Mass and spending time with Jesus is taught as a basic social principle. The underlying principle that God is good for you in daily affairs needs to permeate discussions. These discussions need to link daily challenges with Jesus intentions. Religious freedom needs to be respected in the social paradigm of Catholic schools. Catholic schools should be more visible—e.g. St Marys Soccer team, St Francis Relay for Life team—to increase the normalcy of Christianity in society. Catholic schools need to seek a greater responsibility from Catholic students, and in particular their parents, with regard to sound Christian and Catholic support for the children and their habits. Teachers at Catholic schools are expected to model Christian values—to [be] reflected in the code of ethics of teachers.</p>
<p>I believe God is asking us to reflect prayerfully on the Church’s role and to live our life by following in the footsteps of Jesus.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To find ways to involve children, the youth and young adults at different stages of their lives to continue growing in their faith. For example, to continue their faith formation after children do their sacraments of penance, confirmation and first communion. - To create prayer groups for young adults and the congregation in general to keep growing in faith (Refer to small-communities prayer groups’ model of the Latin American Catholic community of Brisbane). - To organise retreats regularly at diocese and/or parish level (Evangelization teams/ministries at diocese/parish level) - To support ethnic Catholic groups by providing them resources in their own language and to invite them and make them feel welcome in their own parish. - To create visitation ministries for the sick, the elderly and people who live alone.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To make time for Jesus at all times. 2. To find new ways in a contemporary world. 3. To persevere , trust, forgive and stand in solidarity. To communicate more simply and to be more relevant in delivering the Good News. 4. To show Christs love. 5. To evangelize urgently.

6. To connect to God with genuine daily prayer.
7. As a Church community to focus on Jesus in practical ways ; we seem to be distracted by too many other matters.
8. To be recognizably TRUTHFUL as a Church.

1. That we learn again how to appreciate the Eucharist and give it due reverence.
2. That priests demonstrate a more humble approach to the role of priesthood; that they genuinely live by the teachings of Jesus and that they are able to reach out to relate with people from all walks of life.
3. That those in authority in the Church acknowledge the spiritual and intellectual gifts of women.
4. That people can expect from those in authority in the Church: honesty, integrity and transparency in dealing with confronting issues.
5. That those who are divorced are not excluded from the sacraments.
6. That gay men and women are welcomed without judgement into the worshiping community.
7. That young people are given a deeper understanding of the prayers and rituals of the liturgy.

I think that God is asking us to become more sincere and involved with our faith. At present there are a lot of people half living their faith, following only rules that suit them. It seems also that the priests are allowing this, and giving mixed signals as to what is meant to be happening.

That the WHOLE Church rediscovers a sense of mission. That local parish communities become aware of the wider community around them and finds real ways to reach out. To have an outward focus and not only wait for people to knock on the door or rely on Church agencies to meet those needs (especially when many Church agencies are not run by practicing Catholics or even practicing Christians). The Church (parish communities) need to become once again a real, life giving, visible presence in the world that through their actions witnesses to the merciful, healing, loving presence of God. I dont mean a few of the parishioners belonging to St Vincent de Paul etc. instead that the parish as a whole, has a sense of its own mission in the place that God has placed it.

##That the Church truly strives to become the Body of Christ by recognising the gifts of all its people. The gifts of the Spirit are alive and dynamic, like the seed scattered upon the ground which, to the farmers amazement, "sprouts and grows" (Mk 4: 27) (address by Pope Francis to the OCD).

##to quote Karl Rayner, the future Christian will be a mystic or nothing.

#Formation in Mission and Leadership at the grass roots level.

I believe God is shining the light on all that is wrong in the Catholic Church today and He is asking us to take real action to restore His Church to one that actually by its words and deeds gives testimony and witness to Him not one that undermines the Good News of the Gospel and His Sacrifice of Love by its self indulgence and abhorrent behaviour.

We, a gathering of 12 parishioners, wish to thank the Australian bishops for providing this platform for us to consider the future of the Church in Australia. A number of people were concerned that the Plenary Council would be an opportunity to introduce practices and teachings and ideas that are antithetical to the Catholic faith. They expressed concern that in the current climate, that is so hostile to the Church, changes would be introduced that favour political or secular agendas rather than the Will of God. Having completed an Encounter we now believe that this opportunity to simply gather together, and to give serious consideration to the call of God, is itself one of the fruits of the Plenary Council. Though we are a small parish, the age of participants at our Listening and Dialogue Encounter spanned four generations (the youngest still could not speak). To begin with each generation seemed to be speaking almost at odds; however in the end we came to discuss the following shared concerns: Clearer teachings and catechesis was our chosen topic. A lot of discussion was required before this issue was crystallised under the above heading. The young lamented that they had not been taught about the faith, and they had no idea that there were specific truths of the Church that they should consider and accept or reject. They felt that the relativism that was taught in school also permeated the Catholic Church. They have found faith education from diverse sources—from World Youth Day catechetical sessions to YouTube videos from the likes of Fr Robert Barron. The middle-aged also were not satisfied with the paucity of their faith formation, nor with the ability of Catholic schools to communicate the faith, some saying that they had only found formation in their Scriptural understanding of God through contact with Protestant friends or congregations or through the wider Church charismatic movement, and catechetical knowledge through their own research. Our older parishioners seemed to take for granted their catechesis in the faith, and remained wary of any reintroduction of authoritarian teaching that motivates its listeners through fear. They agreed that their faith knowledge had perhaps not been passed on to successive generations in Australia. One added that each of us had to be more fearless in communicating our beliefs and practices to a sceptical world. We found common ground in that there was much to learn about being Catholic and all were interested in learning more from the homilies, especially about the lives of saints, early Church Fathers, Scripture and catechism. Ultimately, the conclusion reached was that although we are all united as brothers and sisters of Christ as a Church, we cannot share a union with those behind and in front of us on the pews without us being united in what we believe. Our parish wants a deeper unity based on faithfulness to the Church teachings. See this and other points in the uploaded additional material

I believe the Holy Spirit is shaking up and cleaning out the Church which was a place of moral guidance for the community and Catholics. The abuse that was perpetrated over many years has damaged the Church and numbers of believers have fallen as well as priests being attracted to serve God. Therefore Australia has been importing priests from India and Africa and Philippines. Whilst some of the new priests have been able to accept the Australian culture and profess a love of God, many have unfortunately been unable or

unwilling to accept the culture of equality, justice and a love for God and His commandments and also do not speak English well. Many do not listen to anyone for information or suggestions, but believe they have a God given right to tell parishioners what to do. This has contributed to changes in the Church and faithful people leaving. Because of the abuse, disrespect and not listening, many young people are searching and turning to other churches, new age practices or spiritualism.

My Recommendations:

1. Praise and worship music that will encourage younger people to attend. Music should commence 5 or 10 minutes before Mass so people are prepared to listen to what God is saying to us.
2. Priests should have a choice as to whether they wish to marry and have families and serve God in a vocation they have been called to. This can also enable them to minister and support families who are in crises. It is not Biblical that priests should not marry. Whilst St Paul may have been single he never discouraged people who served God from marrying. In fact he encouraged them to remain faithful to God and to their spouse.
3. The Church needs to be seen as the Moral compass of society and be very loud in their support and respect for life from the womb to the tomb. The big issues of abortion, same sex marriage, euthanasia, human trafficking, slavery, domestic violence and abuse of any kind should be at the forefront of what Christians stand up for. Not just on Social Justice Sunday, or an occasional letter to parliament.
4. Catholics need to become Bible carrying Christians who know the word of God and like in Revelations are on fire for Him and not lukewarm Christians.
5. Christians should also be taught and encouraged to pray and worship God and not Saints or Mary who all deserve recognition for responding to the call of God but be faithful to God, our Lord and Saviour and the 10 COMMANDMENTS.
6. Christians should also develop a personal relationship with Jesus who died for us. Some people think they will do this one day before they die, but in fact we should be living everyday in response to Gods call which was to know Him, to Love Him and to Serve Him.
7. The 10 Commandments need to be encouraged and spoken about regularly. Living our lives with the Commandments as our guide will ensure that we develop a relationship with God, respect for life and thereby influence society. Proud to be a Bible believing Christian.

1. I am in a youth group in Church but not many people want to join. I am embarrassed that the Church has had so much abuse but think this will improve now that it is in the open. The music needs to change as young people do not enjoy it or understand it. I love God and try to follow His example and think good inspiring music and prayers help.
2. I think priests should have a choice to marry and have families or stay single. If they have a family they can help people more.
3. The Catholic Church has to be more vocal about what is right and wrong in the community. It is now legal to kill babies through abortion, same sex marriage. The other

issues are euthanasia, human trafficking and abuse of any kind should be things the priests talk about and not just once a year.

4. Young people are searching for something and I know many who do not believe in God or turn to the new age activities instead of following God.

5. I started reading the Bible last year and while I recognised a lot of the gospels and readings, I enjoy reading the Bible and developing a relationship with God.

6. I have a copy of the 10 Commandments in my room and believe we need to use these as our guidelines to live a good life and to find our purpose.

To support a Catholic relationship of two people where both have gone through previous divorces and want to marry again in the Catholic Church. Both my partner and I were the victims of adultery, abandonment and being denied more children in one case and any children at all in the other. Neither of us broke the sacrament of matrimony. Neither of us should be punished. God is asking for Individual Theology. God is asking for an individual theology for civil divorced Catholics. God is asking for a theology for the individual victims of civil divorce. A theology with Magisterial Authority stating when each individual has or has not broken the sacrament of matrimony. A theology with Magisterial Authority trusting the individual and his or her discernment of spirits. Perhaps it would entail speaking with our priest and with our bishop and having them authorize the marriage together with the discernment of each individual. My present partner and I both have clear annulment arguments in our favour, but we both married very much in love and do not feel our sacrament of matrimony should be annulled, just reinstated into one, hers and mine as one.

Priests getting married so they can stop them from being tempted to commit crimes against young children.

I think God is asking us to be honest. Not to explain things away but to be completely honest. Honest in all our dealings, honest about Church teachings and honest about what the Bible tells us. Why is it that some passages of the Bible are seen as stories to make a point, or stories that reflect society at the time, while others have a literal interpretation and are the basis of rules. It seems to me that Bible stories that suppress women (cannot use modern contraception) and minority groups (gay and lesbian) are taken literally and form these rules. From my perspective, this directly serves to keep a hierarchy of men in the Church in power. This cannot continue. This does not reflect society. Congregations of people have done their very best to live by Church teachings, all while the men in power in the Church preyed on their most vulnerable followers. It is total hypocrisy. I also think God is asking the Church to reflect society. We live in a society where women have opportunities in all roles and this should be the case in the Church. We need women priests, bishops and cardinals. We need to allow priests to marry. Gay and lesbian people need to be accepted by the Church and allowed to fully participate in the Church.

Be a Catholic Church in Australia reporting to the Pope. Not just a branch office of Rome.

1. Live our Christlike Life and let it be known.

2. Evangelise: speak openly about our faith.

3. Encourage any opening to enquiry or opening to association; e.g. when non-practising parents bring their babies for baptism.
4. Be unashamed of our faith and rituals , especially the Mass.
5. Use any time or situation to evangelise.
6. Put a greater focus on the sacraments; particularly reconciliation; making it better understood and promoted.
7. Be more sincere, honest and less judgemental with ourselves and others in the community.
8. Learn (be taught) how to effectively and courageously talk about our faith.
9. Allow married men to become priests.
10. God is asking us to be more tolerant, respectful and understanding of all cultures. God wants us to learn and remember the lessons from history; we need to remember that we are our brothers keeper and we must welcome and see Christ in all.
11. A much greater emphasis on teaching children from the earliest times about Jesus, his life and his story so they become familiar with the Holy Spirit of Jesus and learn to feel his presence preparing them better for the time when they receive the sacraments.
12. Put value back into religion. Unless something costs, it is perceived to have no value.

I am 62 years old and lived enthusiastically through the aftermath of VC II. Having many close Protestant friends with a strong faith, I was happy to embrace changes that seemed to make Protestantism so relevant and “culturally appropriate”. This great modernisation does not seem to have inspired the hearts of the next generation. The modern Catholic Church cannot hold its own, let alone evangelise the nation. Some teachings from present-day clergy at every level of authority in the church convince me that a Catholic from 100 years ago would not even recognise the institution. This Plenary Council may bring forth more betrayals of our treasury of faith in an attempt to become more relevant and up-to-date. The further we go down that path the more we appear like politicians who adjust their policies according to the latest poll. I rest assured that God will not abandon His Church but sadly I have come to realise that real renewal in our Church grows out of the ashes of the old. Many things need to be done to recover authentic Catholic culture. I will mention only one. Of primary importance, is the reform of the Mass—source and summit of the Christian life. We need to revisit the ancient liturgy that transformed every Christian nation on earth, and reconsider the actual words of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to reform the reform of the liturgy in order to restore the essential character of the extraordinary form of the Mass. Relearning the musical and poetic heritage of our Church has enriched my faith and reignited my prayer life. During Mass when the priest prays on our behalf, he should look away from the congregation and face the east, the rising sun. The tabernacle, altar, and crucifix are all rich in imagery that reminds us that God is the essence of existence, and that He calls us into an intimate relationship with Himself. I am no theologian but I believe a major heresy in our Church is destroying its very purpose. Jesus summed the law in two fundamental teachings, love of God and love of neighbour—so basic that they ultimately depend on each other. It is a serious error to reduce them to love of neighbour alone. We have now reached the incredible point where the words

saintly, piety, and holiness have almost become insults. The adoption of Protestant reforms to liturgy—e.g. facing the people when we are talking to God, discarding most of expressions of Eucharistic reverence—has very thoroughly formed us into a people who no longer believe in the spiritual realm, or the necessity of the sacraments or the need to develop a strong prayer life. People may disagree but we all know enough good, kind, and generous folk who have abandoned practising their faith because they actually do not believe it is a channel of God's grace for them. Nothing could be less Catholic than that. Ultimately the things we believe are the things that we act upon.

A more collaborative style of ministry. Lay people and especially women need a greater say in leading and governing our Church. Australia could set a standard for the rest of the Church. We should abandon the use of inviting priests from overseas to bail us out short term. If we had to deal with fewer priests it would open us up to alternative leadership and liturgical styles. Given the poor state of clergy and low standing of the clergy and the Church we need to show we are prepared to address the issues outlined in the Royal Commission, the legal system with an open minded realistic new approach to leadership. We cannot renew our broken Church with priests from a different culture who have not been a part of getting us to this state, we need to look closely at our style (terminology like Your Lordship, Your Grace and Your Eminence should be abandoned immediately along with many other medieval hangovers of robes and vestments and "hats"). I look forward to the day when the Pope will appear on the balcony in a suit and tie. Bishop's Palaces should be abandoned along with outlandish vestments and power. Ministry (both ordained and lay needs to be opened up to men and women / married and celibate). Seminary training must be revised out of the present archaic model and ordination opened up to fixed terms. Seminarians should study at University with other students and have a much shorter live time of formation. More resources must be made available to develop the spirituality and theology of the laity. Budget cuts should apply to seminaries and priests as well as youth ministry and lay spiritual formation. Amazing how money has been found for child safety (mainly to protect us from priests) that was never available to develop lay leaders.

God is asking us to be a more Christ centred Church which values the teachings of Jesus Christ above the doctrine of the Church. We need to build an authentic and WELCOMING COMMUNITY with Jesus Christ as the focus. God is calling Catholics to be honest/transparent in all dealings. To look outwardly and stop trying to cling on to irrelevant teachings.

To use scripture to refocus and give direction. Use scripture to depth authentic faith. Must always be ready to evangelize and to renew our parishes from inside out. Listen to the Spirit of God. Tap into life giving truth be a more forgiving Church.

To go back to basics and situate our faith development in Scripture. To be a more authentic Church. Put Christ before man. To be more relevant in our world and to evangelize lapsed Catholics. Fix our own house.

An inclusive Church—as expressed in attached document at end of submission.

More God-centred. We are all responsible. More prayer and humility. Setting and following examples. Less materialistic, more loving, more open to assisting those with invisible disabilities.

A Church that addresses issues, closer to Jesus teachings and leading everyone to God through the Mass and other sacraments.

I do not know what God is asking of us. The verses from the Gospel of Saint John keep echoing in my head: "feed my lambs ... take care of my sheep ... feed my sheep". Every year the Church receives new little lambs through thousands of baptisms. They may be back again for Christmas and Easter each year, but it is too late. The damage is done. They are already starved of contact with their community of brothers and sisters in Christ, starved of Scripture, starved of food for their soul. They are malnourished lambs. Lambs need to be fed carefully, and regularly, and gently. Of the baptised, a smaller but significant number of these children return for Confirmation. Somehow they complete a Sacramental program without enrichment, without guidance on a prayer-life, and without a desire to receive the food that could make up for all their impoverishment. They must be drip fed just enough to keep them connected to the Church by a flimsy, thin cord. Then there are the young adults who experience several critical points in their lives in a row. Times where they need help. They move out of home and make the decision consciously or unconsciously to move toward God, or ignore him altogether. They get coupled up and married and seriously consider their values and those that the other person holds. They have children and pore through book after book (or blog after blog) about how to raise them and what values to impart. If we really love Jesus, as Peter was asked, we would, at this point in the life of a Catholic, FEED HIS SHEEP. There are so many things I am sure God would want to see the Church in Australia doing at this time, but closest to my heart, is constructing the channels required to feed the current flock. By this, I dont mean that the Church needs to be looking inwards, rather they need to go out to recover the lost lambs and if they get them for the love of God feed them! We do need an education. Please think of this description of Rex Mottram from Brideshead Revisited: "You know Father Mowbray hit on the truth about Rex at once, that it took me a year of marriage to see. He simply wasn't all there. He wasn't a complete human being at all. He was a tiny bit of one, unnaturally developed... I thought he was a sort of primitive savage, but he was something absolutely modern and up-to-date that only this ghastly age could produce. A tiny bit of a man pretending he was whole..." This is what I was (and what I continue to heal from) without spiritual food from the Church. And this is how the baptised, who are lost, are disabled throughout their whole lives.

Open ears, compassionate hearts and humility.

Renewal of Faith.

This is difficult. How can I think myself so important as to know what God is thinking? So this is what I am thinking: Go back to basics. Start with LOVE and move on to HUMILITY AND CHARITY. The Church appears to be a business. Help us to help ourselves, lead by example. The idea of kissing the ring of a bishop who represents Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples, is appalling. Assist us to participate in charitable works, dont just tell us to do it. Catholic Education and Catholic Hospitals are for the middle to upper class because it has become big business. Basic health care is out of reach of so many

<p>Australian people as the Government system flounders. Many Catholic families cannot afford to send their children to Catholic schools as the uniforms and excursions and compulsory items are beyond them.</p>
<p>Australia, and the rest of the world, is at the crossroads. Society is becoming increasingly secular and there is the danger that what was once core belief is now considered obsolete or can be found elsewhere. God wants Australians to be accepting, inclusive and believers in his message.</p>
<p>For the Catholic Church to become more open, inclusive and people focused.</p>
<p>God is asking for Australians to be open minded and accepting of all peoples. God wants to have a relationship with all people regardless of gender, race or sexuality.</p>
<p>God is asking of us in Australia to treat one another in our parish and in our community with respect. The Catholic Church in Australia has and still does not always treat with respect and hospitality those who show difference, the divorced, the ill and disabled. I believe God is asking us to break down the entrenched structures of wealth, influence and power to face the true reason of why we are "Church". Jesus, my Saviour always welcomes me to join in the "Last Supper" with the Parish Community. Unwritten structures within the Local Church can no longer support only those that have longevity of community membership, or of marriage, or of conventional gender or family structure. The "iceing out or mushrooming" those that question the "status quo" is not to be tolerated and is why the "Church and the Eucharist" becomes the last port of call for seeking and attaining closeness with the Lord Jesus and hope of a deepening of faith to be able spread the Good News in everyday life.</p>
<p>For women to have a greater recognition and contribution to the Church/parish.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Our Father—in French they have re-worded the phrase, Lead us not into temptation ... The Jerusalem Bible speaks more about protection from the evil one. Isnt it time to use a better translation? Im sure the other Denominations would be glad for us to take the lead.2. Our Lady has been asking us to say the rosary, for a long time. I know it is a private devotion but when I was young The family that prays together, stays together, was highlighted and there was a lot more encouragement to pray. I or we could form rosary groups to pray together at a time that suits, but the Church could set an example too.3. I think that after Vatican II we threw the baby out with the bathwater. Benediction, in sung Latin, was a treat for the head and heart, involving the senses, sight, smell and hearing. I understand the emphasis has, now, been placed on the Word as well as the sacramental presence of Jesus but meeting the peoples need for beauty has been neglected in favour of a slightly Protestant liturgy. To experience a High Anglican Mass, if you can find one, will still touch the head and heart, if they have good music. Look at the practice of placing flowers and weeping where a person has died or been found. People turn up in droves to join in because they need meaningful symbols and rituals.4. Sermons. I know the practice is to use the Sermon to explain the readings of the day and sometimes Im very glad to hear an opinio n or point of view that I havent read or thought. Having taught in Catholic schools for most of my working life I feel a hankering for some of the old ways when we learned what the Catholic Church was about, what we

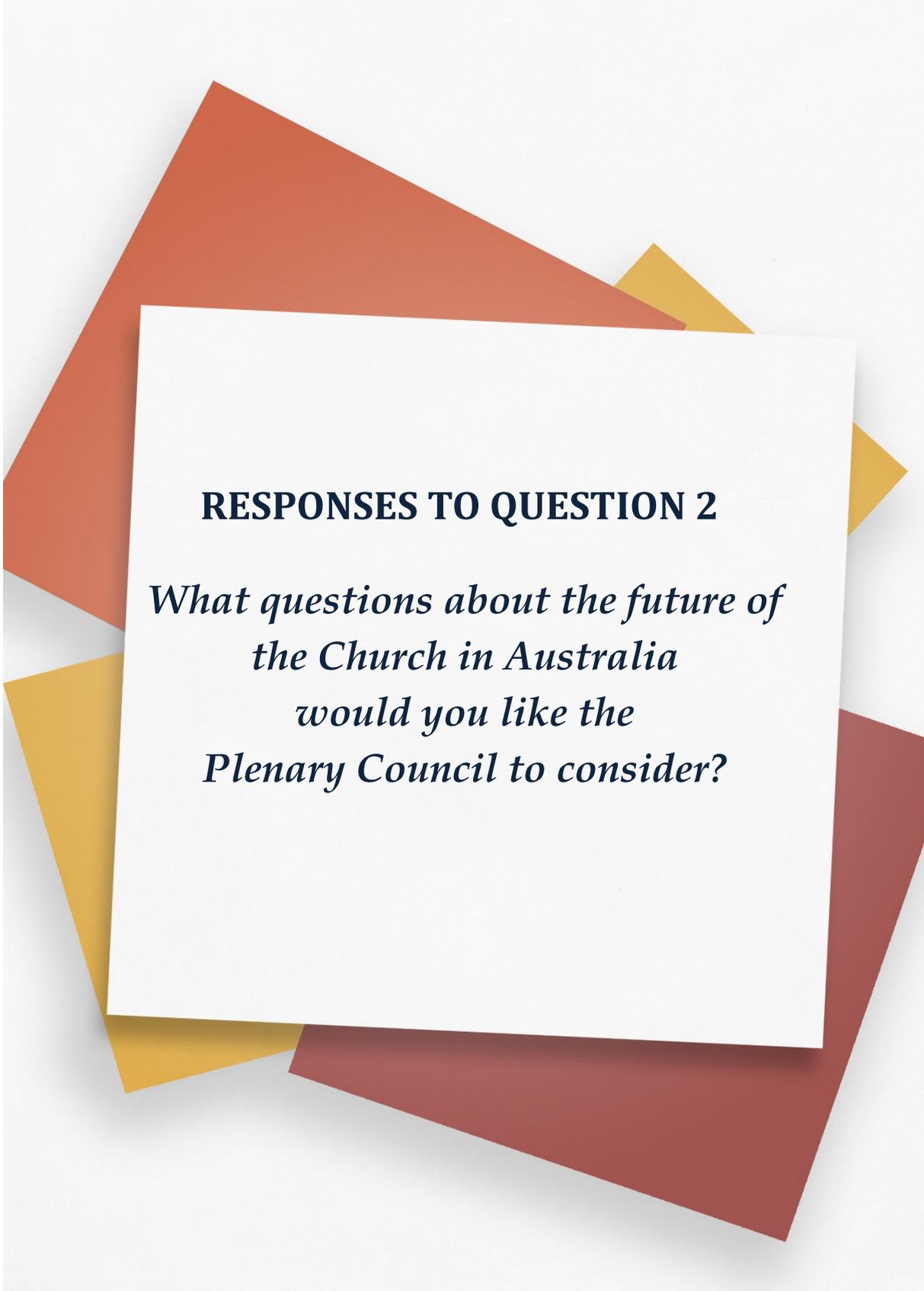
believed and why it was to be believed. Could there not be a place for using Sermons to teach, point by point, what is contained in the two Creeds? At Baptism the Credal beliefs are mentioned and we whiz through them at Mass each week: but to make it clear that this is what we believe, and theres no choice about it, might make us stronger believers.

Enacting of values, listening to the word of God (through active participation), relevance to the community that it serves, recognising that the traditions of the Church are important but everyone needs to be welcome.

Spread the word.

Enacting values listen to the word of God—active participation relevance—to the community it serves traditions of the Church are important but everyone needs to be welcome—no judgement.

To change the divorce law, concept of contraception and letting priests get married. To allow female priests and have more flexibility.



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. When are we going to stop getting Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation just done without deep formation of the parish community in its responsibility to form and support parents?
2. Why is it that the Catholic Church is only run by old men in Rome?
3. Why does our Church exclude lay people and women from taking a much greater role in the Church?
4. Why cant priests be married?
5. Why does the Church no longer celebrate or discuss lay vocations as they do clerical vocations?
6. How will the Church open up its teachings to the present social and culture structure?
7. How does the Church plan on bridging the gap between science and religion for our young people who seem to believe they need to take a side?
8. How will the Church manage religious pluralism as a sharing of co-operation, authenticity and spiritual enrichment?
9. What is the future of the Church when eventually there will not be enough ordained priests to go around all the parishes. Do we ordain married men and women?
10. When is the Church going to embrace the changing world and encourage young people to attend Mass by adapting the Mass to accommodate a younger person's needs and interests?
11. How will the future Church help create peace across all religions? How will the Church work with other agencies to promote sustainability?
12. How will the Church work towards inclusion for all who have not had an equal nor valued voice in the Church?
13. How will you [the Church] combat the ever-growing secularisation of Australia when you [the Church] retain your negative views on moral and ethical issues?
14. What further work will you do in promoting social justice issues and encouraging volunteering for our youth?
15. Why must women and their opinions be pushed to the side in the Church?
16. When will they [the Church] accept women to be priests?
17. When will gay and lesbian people be made to feel welcome [in the Church]?
18. How do we share our understanding of the Mass more fully?
19. How do we provide for ministry (priestly and pastoral) to the far-flung western areas of Townsville Diocese (and other remote parts of Australia)?
20. Could priestly celibacy become optional?
21. Could priesthood be for a fixed period rather than for a lifetime?

22. How can we re-frame our conversations to speak to a modern Australia that cant understand Church language?
23. How are you going to change the culture that currently exists?
24. Can it be mandated that community churches (school churches) can make school sermons more child friendly and age appropriate?
25. How committed is the Catholic Church to ensure that it will align with the views and beliefs of our modern society?
26. Will they [the Church] take ownership and acknowledge the wrong doings of the past mistakes?
27. In the face of dwindling numbers and increasing dwindling engagement (particularly with young people), will the Church start to change its position on topical social issues such as marriage equality?
28. Will the Church take full responsibility for the historical sexual abuse claims and commit to proceeding with full honesty and transparency?
29. Why is birth control still frowned upon in the Church?
30. How can the Church and liturgy be consistent?
31. How can traditional models of Church remain relevant to people today?
32. When is gender equality going to be represented in the Church?
33. When will the Church recognise and allow same-sex marriage to occur in the Church?
34. How will you make the Church enact and encourage kindness in tangible ways that are genuinely inclusive?
35. What is the best way to engage the audience and bring more people to the Church?
36. How can priests make sermons more relatable to their audience?
37. When will access to the Church be equal for men and women?
38. When will the Church be more welcoming and non-judgemental of divorced peoples?
39. When will the Church be more welcoming and accepting of people from other faiths, cultures, races and sexual orientations?
40. Will the Church be as accepting of mental health issues as physical issues?
41. In what ways will you engage the youth in Catholicism, beyond just making them attend Church?
42. Will the Church encourage contemplative prayer through Christian meditation?
43. Is the Church going to do more to support refugees?
44. What support are our missionary priests receiving to connect meaningfully with the people of the parishes?
45. How can we reach out to our young families and help them come together in prayer even if they cant get to Mass?
46. Why is the Church so slow to act; even when we can see what needs to be done?
47. How is the Church going to be open and honest about mistakes it makes?
48. How is the Church going to deal with misconduct in the future and keep its members informed?
49. What is the Church doing to attract vocations from within Australia?



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 54 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 had a request from a country parish without a local priest to support a dying parishioner who was longing for anointing and viaticum—and she died without them. Some locals prayed the rosary with her and prayers for the dying but they felt it was not enough. I know from others that this is replicated in all our country dioceses. It makes me as who are the elders in the Church? referred to by James —just clergy?

When I was in my mid 20s, I was running my building company and heavily involved in the Church live. Vice Diocesan President of St Vincent De Paul, heavily involved in parish life. I was at a crossroads and felt that something was missing. Plus I thought that to be really successful in business, it would be a conflict with my beliefs. I was at Mass one Sunday morning praying about these things, and Jesus came down off the cross over the altar and stood beside me and spoke of the actions I should take. I shut my business, moved town, worked for Government to make public housing more suitable to underprivileged persons. Eventually life again got in the way and I eventually started my own business again. But always still feeling I was missing something. If I could have become a priest and stayed married, I would have done so. But this was not possible and there was no avenue that I knew of to become more involved in doing Gods work. Although I still continue to be heavily involved in parish life. Jesus wanted me to do more when he spoke to me, but I think there was no avenue to do what he wanted of me. How many more people have experienced such an interaction but been stifled with the current structure of the Church?

I work for the local parish, one day a lady came into the parish, she was looking for assistance to leave a violent home situation. She had been recently assaulted by her partner and there were obvious signs of the assault. We were trying to help her by getting her accommodation etc. at the same time my daughter was in the office doing her homework she was about 8 years old at the time she decided of her own accord to get the women a glass of water, the women cried when she gave her the water, she said she had never had anyone do something for her without having to ask for it. This random act of kindness had moved this woman because she felt like a person. It reminded me that the simple things we do everyday make a difference in people's lives. We were all busy taking care of the larger things that none of us thought to take the time to simply sit with the woman and get her a drink. Our actions everyday should reflect our baptismal call not just the big things people notice but the little things as well.

I was taken to Church by my mother as a child and attended Bible classes on a Wednesday evenings. My experience of Mass on Sundays was complete boredom. I loved Bible class because I had a loving and fun teacher, we filled our hour or so with many different types of activities and I was with other children. I drifted away from religion after my communion but found myself searching spiritually in my mid-twenties as I was studying counselling and needed to understand my own spiritual space in order to explore this with others. Through this search I found the Bahai faith. I was drawn to the writings and the way women were portrayed in these writings to be refreshingly uplifting, encouraging and supportive. I drifted away from the Bahai faith after a couple of years as I received mounting pressure from members of the Bahai community to marry the person I was dating. I felt this decision was mine and this persons to make and not the Bahai communities'. It was only at the beginning of this year that I felt a yearning to connect with my spirit once again, and to divine grace a person came into our store who was deeply spiritual, had been on many pilgrimages, always happy and suffered from a physical disability chatted with about some questions I had about how to find faith again. From that discussion I searched online different religions doctrines. The Catholic faith still resonated the strongest. I found a church close to my house and attended Mass on the following Sunday. I LOVED it! I loved the singing, the caring and smiling faces of the congregation, the engaging priest. I have been every Sunday since, done the Alpha course and attended three plenary council meetings. I feel a connection with this church. There are still some things I struggle with though. I have many questions to ask about how to be Catholic, about some of the things I read and dont understand, about how I could become involved in other things in the Church and what they might actually be. As a new member of the Church the answers to these questions seem to be so hard to find. They shouldnt be if the Church is wanting its community to be engaged, vibrant, enlightened and active participants. My feeling is why would people bother with exploring faith if it is so hard to find the answers. This is where I believe technology comes in. Each church needs to have a website, apps, etc. where people can easily find up to date information, prayers, songs, events, explanations of church procedures, volunteer work the list goes on... So a sense of inclusiveness can foster for all from children, youth, young adults, middle age and aged (who are becoming more tech savvy). I would love my 6 year old son to attend a Bible class like I did, but all that is on offer is a quick picture to colour in in a different room while the adults attend Mass. I feel very sad that he does not have the same pleasure I had in attending an hour long Bible class separate to Sunday Mass.

Searched for God from an early age, always wanted to be part of the Catholic Church. Very devoted young girl until Vatican Council, left the Church came back, when daughter went to school, was born again became a charismatic, filled with joy and love for everyone still to this day. From 1978 I have been a Eucharist Minister, Reader, commentator, and have greeted people at the front door of my church from 1978 to Today. 9 years a Liturgy Chairman, 15 years on a parish Council, coordinator of liturgical dramas, major liturgies, Christmas, Easter, Holy Thursday, for 10 years a daily communicant, 12 years teacher of religion in a State Primary school. Youth leader 5 years, 22 years ran a community coffee shop each weekend after a Mass, this built a strong community. Contributed lots of material needs to the Church, from helping build retaining walls to donating safes....Last four years have conducted an ecumenical community gathering for most months of the

year. It was a concert format , I provided free meals, also encouraged those attending to contribute, free entertaining both with music, singing, dancing, The labour was supplied by the Salvation Army. Given the keys of the church from 1978 to recently, by all priests as I was considered a total trustworthy person. Held ecumenical celebrations functions for special events like Australia day and Queensland day. Provided lots of birthday parties for bishop and priests. Have been actively involved from 1979 to today... Now the not so good, a new priest arrived, in the early 1993 I suffered a minor sexual abuse coupled with a very serious abuse of power. With our any explanations I was stripped from all my ministries. The local bishop and parish stonewalled me for three years, until I rang the sexual abuse centre and a lady came up and after interviewing everyone involved. She held a meeting with the then second in charge, the priest who was at fault, myself. Her decision was I was to have all my ministries RESTORED, especially my coffee shop. A personal sorry from the priest, and a 8 weeks counselling with a counsellor of my choice, all this was achieved. Except because they wish to keep things quiet, they just said, they would just put in a welcome back notice in the Parish Bulletin. It took the then parish priest 8 years to restore my coffee shop which I changed to meet the needs of todays people to the free concert format. For all of the 25 years plus the recent 4 years there has never been a complaint, and during the last four years will had many of the helpers from the Salvation Army who were Catholics come to Mass. However, on the 23rd of June this year, I held an Irish night ecumenical function. Several things occurred that I could not possible have foreseen. Without any warning, I was told I was forbidden to hold any more suppers. I was defamed, false allegations written on parish letter head. I was denied natural justice. Im still in fighting for justice today would love help.

I am an acting member of my own parish—a very small ageing parish who are finding it difficult to bring younger members to participate in parish life. Im hoping the council sees this as a major part of their agenda.

The Church has given me a place to connect with the wider community. The support and companionship at a time when I was at rock bottom saved me from a life of despair. Being connected has given me hope.

At Loyola University New Orleans I studied strong progressive Social Justice together with neoliberal Austrian economics. My Catholic education and professional calling include what I think is an example of a possible prism of multiple hope for all the Catholic Church and hopefully for all the world someday. It is possible to understand both sides of most issues. The above is what I think the Australian Catholic Church should do. My Catholic education began at [-] Primary in [-], in [-]. Junior High with [-] in [-]. High school in [-], uni first at [-] in [-] branch and transferred and graduated from [-] University, [-]. I was a member of FECUM, Spanish federation of university Marian communities, a liberation theology socialist base community formed by Jesuits, former Jesuits and lay Catholics. I have organized English language courses in several Opus Dei summer camps. The Australian Catholic Church must look towards the American Catholic Church but also, and especially when it comes to helping and participating towards the Chinese Catholic Church and towards our Southern Hemisphere brothers and sisters in the South American Church. We can only do this with full understanding of all issues concerning the Church, that is to truly believe God is both in favour and against. To do God's work we

must be ready to work in this way, we must know and understand both sets of arguments, those in favour and those against.

Our experience of Church depends on the parish we were involved in and the priest. At our parish everyone is welcome. Schools that are engaged in evangelising are key to the Catholic Church. Its ok not to attend Mass every Sunday.

The change of language to exclusive, masculine centred wording personally caused me a great deal of hurt. There was a reason it was changed from the traditional language and that was because we had moved on from a purely masculine tone of the liturgy. It was a huge step backwards for women and for the universality of the Catholic Church. As a member of a school leadership team who was required to in-service staff on the changes it was humiliating and demeaning. I felt let down by the Church I worked very hard for and the faith that I have loved and supported. If you cannot have inclusivity in the liturgy, our most central ritual you cannot hope to be included in other areas. The first weekend of the new missal was the last weekend that my sister attended Mass. She was 45. The Church showed itself to be an organisation of old men who have no interest in the equality of women and young men who are inherently misogynistic. It was the closest I came to leaving the Church apart from the sexual abuse scandal. The people who made these decisions to take our Church back to the middle ages have little understanding of the sign of the times. The language of the Mass and all liturgical celebrations and sacraments need to bear witness to the human connection, not the male connection. The lectionary should be updated to be rid of scripture that is no longer relevant. No priest ever uses the homily to draw attention to the world behind the text. Very little theological understandings are ever present in the homily that can negate the exclusive nature of the language used. Pronouns matter and the Holy Spirit thinks we can do better.

I was raised Catholic however, I did drift away for a few years. I had false ideas that the Catholic Church was boring, that you could go to Mass and leave no different because you had no idea what any of it meant and it was boring as a result. I also was frustrated by the inconsistencies I saw between people I knew went to Church on Sundays and the things I was seeing of them on social media. Many of my unchurched friends had voiced the same issues with Christians and listed these as reasons for their resistance to the Church. I tried an evangelical church and was appalled at the messages that were being preached of doom and terror and the end of the world. During this time I really got lost and I got married and found myself divorced at 21 because of domestic violence, I spent several years suicidal in psychiatric hospitals. I became desperate for a miracle and God because it felt like I had nothing left. God is a God of miracles and not long after, I was introduced to the Missionaries of Gods Love Sisters and the Charismatic Renewal group in [-]. It was here I truly encountered Gods love, freedom and healing. As time went on I really saw how vibrant and rich the Catholic faith is. In learning more about Jesus and the Catholic faith, the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Sacraments and the Mass and truly beginning to understand the significance of them all, I was able to make a decision to really make Jesus Lord. I find myself here today so in love with the Church and the truth She bears and truly desiring that other Catholics would experience a similar awakening so that with transformed hearts and lives we all come together with our various experiences and gifts and lead the unchurched to Jesus. I have seen so many people in broken places who need to experience Gods love for them as I did, we just need to start

going out and reaching them and I know I will devote my whole life to doing so and I will forever thank God for the MGL Sisters and the CCR group in [-] who reached me.

I belong to this Church because it is the Irish culture of my grandparents, I could express my faith in God or join many other communities but this is where I am. My parents left the Church of their childhood but I have come back in my middle age as my children are young. I feel the need for a spiritual community. Most people of my age like "new age" spirituality such as mediation, energy healing, yoga. They do not think they are a part of the Church and they have turned away from the Church because of its abusive behaviour and the rules that they do not agree with such as divorce, sexuality and contraception, celibate male priests. I also disagree with these rules and wish the Church to become more in tune with modern society of accepting and loving all people. I am in a dilemma—to I belong to the Church for the parts I like and the support and the way to be with God or do I leave the Church because then I am part of an institution which is against people that I know and love. Currently I dont tell many people that I am a member of the Church to avoid their scorn and I have other spiritual practices and communities as well. I do not carry out spiritual practices openly at home as my husband is anti-religion. I feel I need to be part of the problem to be part of the solution. My children attend Catholic school and I am very happy they can be in a spiritual environment. I am a high school teacher and I can see church is for old people and for primary school but not young people. It is boring and they dont know "h ow to do it right". Christian churches are very popular with young people. I dont agree with the Jesus centred approach or literal interpretations but I admire their ability to have services that are interesting, suitable for babies and toddlers, and teenagers, great music , great social events and gatherings e.g. the teenager Friday night disco and the Saturday ladies coffee.

I have personally benefited greatly as has my family from having a devoted traditional Catholic priest increase my knowledge and understanding so that I may live a life worthy of eternal life. Fr [-] has truly provided what is needed for growth both personally and spiritually. This priest is a living saint.

I have, I suspect, a story so similar to many.... Growing up in a family of love, with a strong sense of spirit although not "religious". I enjoy Mass when I attend (one to three times annually, excepting funerals...). I gain comfort from the Mass, mouth the familiarity of prayers yet I countenance the true sentiment of words such as the Nicene creed. My children attended Catholic schools and Masses during those years. I regret the feeling I have that Sunday Mass was not practical in our life, but the reality is that it was not. I do not have any suggestions nor answers to this dilemma for the Church. I hope that my future connection with the Church will align closer to my feeling of spirit, and not be darkened by a sense of failure at keeping the "religious faith". I hope and pray this for my family, friends and all.

My life was centred around Mass and Catholic school. Nuns taught me most about God. Parents thought faith was a private thing. Wasn 't until I made a Life in the Spirit seminar, and made a commitment as an adult that my faith was sparked off in such a deep and meaningful way. My husband and I committed after that seminar and it changed our lives. We did much for spe [sic] reading the faith, and being pastoral in our community to anyone. We had 6 children and now 16 grandchildren, 5 great grandies. 3 of girls were

sexually abused, 1 girl gang raped, one grandson raped, 2 children alcoholic/schizophrenic, school abuse rife in children and some grandchildren. 1 girl in domestic violence situation. And the Law does not help at all. As a mum I feel overwhelmed at times with that. [God] knows me and has a plan for me helps a lot, and it seems when its darkest, some small miracle comes to bring light into darkness. Ice has done its damage to some younger ones. Evil is alive and well. The church, more than ever before, needs to be encouraged. Justice for those afflicted by evil.

We feel people are moving away from the Church because of social pressures from the congregation; that they are not accepted.

Tough discipline by the clergy at the time made us strong. It instilled faith and made us resilient. Education in a Catholic school taught strict catechism and ritual. Faith is still part of our being.

I grew up in a small parish, yet by a fluke of demographics there were 16 children in my year level from my parish who were Mass-goers and who attended the Catholic secondary schools outside the parish. These days, I believe I am the only one who still attends Mass regularly. I don't say that in any self-aggrandizing manner (God alone knows how sinful my life has been) but to point out how disastrous the deterioration in Mass attendance is. One thing that I have started doing this year is posting a little story of the saint of the day on Facebook and I have been amazed by the amount of positive feedback I have received from many of those who have given up Mass attendance. This is one example of sharing our tradition positively. I would also like to commend the bishops for calling this plenary—let us all heed the call of the Holy Spirit in this Great South Land!

The 'Church' has let me down. God hasn't. The Church has done its worst to turn the faithful away. And still they stay. These people are the real Church. These people are the ones Jesus would be with.

The only story I wish to share is the experiences in attending Mass in outback towns and discussions with many of the locals.

We as a Catholic Organisation are ecumenical because we pray together along with Jesus His pray[er] to the Father in John 17:20-23. Yet as we move around among our ecumenical brothers and sisters we find that so many of them were Catholics who have been hurt by the Catholic Church. We find the same thing in our work places in the world. Unfortunately these lambs were not fed, these sheep were not tended to and these sheep were not fed while they were members of the Catholic Church. These sheep were starved of the Word of God and of the Love of God, they were abused, they were not tended to, so they strayed. This must change and it must start with our bishops and priests returning to the ministry that they were given by Jesus. Yes, we the laity have a part to play but the lost sheep will not come home to the Catholic Church and there will be healing, no unity until our bishops and priests return to work Jesus gave them to do. They must return to living in community, studying, contemplating the Word of God together, praying together and then going out into the world in pairs and ministering the Word. Priests living alone in isolation, separated from their brothers must become a thing of the past and recognized as the mistake it was and is. We do not wish to single out one order. This order is not based in our diocese but we have seen the way members of this order go out together as

a group on mission and we have witnessed the fruit of their work. We know that they only go out on mission after they have spent time in the Word, in their own formation and in prayer.

I have been raised in the Catholic faith and attended Catholic schools. My grandparents were Italian on my maternal side and Irish on my paternal side, so as you can imagine the cultural aspect of identifying as a Catholic, meaning that it is heavily intertwined with both Italian and Irish culture, so although I do not attend church regularly, I find comfort in Catholic churches and enjoy the familiar rituals that take place inside them, something I've experienced since infancy up until now. I travelled extensively and lived in Italy for some time, I felt immediately at home and accepted because I identified as Catholic, I always lit candles in churches and I found it easy to relate with people from opposite ends of the globe because of our shared Catholicism. I even walked the Camino de Santiago in Spain through one such connection I made. I've volunteered for the Saint Vincent de Paul society, through an Indigenous program, camps for disadvantaged children, soup kitchen and migrant tutoring. Spiritually I'm somewhat confused, and I struggle with a belief in Jesus, but I've again I've always found comfort in the image of Mary. I don't profess to know the secrets of the universe and I believe that atheists are arrogant in claiming that they do, just as they claim religious groups to be delusional in professing their knowledge of creation. I always wanted my children to be baptised as it's also been a big part of my culture. In January, I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy and I wanted him baptised. The hospital told me that this was not possible because the priest in residence at the hospital was old school. My baby was stillborn at 34 weeks, he was real and alive and loved for those 8 months and I just wanted a ceremony like I had when I was a baby to merely acknowledge his existence. Fortunately for me, my family had contacts within the Church and a lovely old nun and minister performed the baptism for me. I could care less that they weren't ordained priests, they did what I needed and acknowledged the life of my child. I was disappointed in the priest in residence and his attitude and it got me thinking about the other women having to go through stillbirths in [-], who perhaps weren't friends with any nuns and therefore didn't get any kind of ceremony other than the funeral to honour the existence of their baby. I believe the Catholic Church needs to move with the times and change its stance on many things, in order to strive for compassion rather than protocol. I've received many positive experiences through being a part of the Catholic community but obviously this experience with my [-] has left me questioning the effectiveness of certain practises. Surely the role of religion is to offer comfort during times of need and grief? The person in charge of bereavement, representing the Catholic Church at the hospital is, in my opinion failing to fulfil his duties by not performing baptisms on stillborn babies.

One of our local Catholic Priests (Father [-]) has brought many people back to practicing their Catholic faith by attending Mass by simply making everyone feel welcome at the table. He has a good understanding of the local community and its needs as he was brought up in the local community. He engages the parishioners by making the Mass content relevant to the local community.

As a divorcee who has remained celibate and single, I was told I was "lucky" (by a lecturer at the Institute of faith education) to be allowed communion in my parish and that I

<p>probably shouldn't have been allowed to be secretary of our Parish Council. (Fortunately my wonderful parish priest forwarded these written comments to the bishop.)</p>
<p>Our story as a group had similarities that showed we had all experienced life as a Catholic growing up and going to Catholic schools and attending Mass. We all seem to stop attending as early adolescents to some degree with many of us returning in some capacity.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are aware of many people who are hungry to hear the Word of God preached with heartfelt conviction and despite having to lose the Eucharist, have chosen to leave the Catholic Church for other Christian Churches that they find more life giving. 2. The Assembly can be taught to respond with enthusiasm: The Late Bishop [-], on at least two occasions stopped and insisted that the people needed to respond more convincingly with the Amen at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer. We repeated it.
<p>I am currently taking part in RCIA program after many years of working in a Catholic school. While the leadership of the Church has disappointed me many times, the people I interact with daily have inspired me with their openness and commitment to living their faith. I have reconciled with the idea that I can love the faith without necessarily loving the institution.</p>
<p>A group member's daughter wanted to do the Sacramental program at her school but was not allowed as she was not christened Catholic but Anglican. Her daughter came home and said, "why does Father [-] say God accepts and loves us all when it is not true". A good way to turn a 9 year old off the Church. A teacher in a Catholic school wasn't allowed to participate in Communion although she was confirmed in the Presbyterian Church. Second marriages are not accepted in the Church.</p>
<p>Bishop [-] [said] at a Baptism in church when their children got a bit restless (as there were seven)—"your children are home" and she has never forgotten this. The words of a priest are so powerful, when conflict occurs in the congregation it is important for a priest to role model appropriate responses, even if it is in the middle of Mass. Catholicity is so strong in some regional communities but also very compassionate. Some words said by priests have framed the development of some lives in this room. It is so empowering to have a priest say "God gave us the ability to give right judgement, not condemn. I don't have the right to agree with you but I don't judge you." The most powerful stories around the table are that teaching in a Catholic school has really shaped all of us as we attempt to guide young people in their faith journey. The hidden information about how rituals are done, how to prepare and present rituals respectfully. Sunday Mass could show us how to be ritual and engaging.</p>
<p>The leaders of the Church need to be more inclusive, progressive, welcoming and engaging and an example on how to be kind and approachable. Going to church should not be boring and meaningless based on a fear of a negative consequence, either now or in the afterlife. People have stopped going to church because they don't feel that they are getting powerful spiritual guidance. How close to God do the leaders and clergy actually feel? What spiritual experiences have they had? Be genuine. Charity should be given back to the community. Move with the times—people shouldn't be discriminated against</p>

<p>for being divorced, or a sole parent, never married. You cant be a little bit inclusive —its like being a little bit pregnant.</p>
<p>The majority of the group has had one parent that was religious and one that was not. We need to look at why there is such a difference.</p>
<p>The [-] floods brought out the best in people who were able to love others and help complete strangers even though they may have been experiencing hardship themselves. One group member experienced a loving church environment in a Catholic church which allowed priest to be married.</p>
<p>Our group discussed how their faith was encouraged by priests that made sermons relevant to the people involved at the church at the time. This has made members of our group continue to want to attend church.</p>
<p>All at our table of 5 discussed our experience of Church. The experiences included: a Church that was stooped in tradition, old men preaching Bible stories. Songs/Mass in general were not engaging. Priests that had no real life experiences (marriage, parenthood, etc.) Also the stories related to the dark history of the Church. Also it was common that churches were not accepting of non-Catholics and some were reluctant to allow non-Catholics to become Catholic.</p>
<p>I grew up as a Catholic in a very active parish. The sense of belonging to a community, sharing prayer, helping others, celebrating with others was so important.</p>
<p>We discussed that some of the best Christians we know are not being included in our Catholic faith because they are divorced, gay or deemed by other humans not worthy enough. "Let he/she who has not sinned throw the first stone" John 8</p>
<p>I believe I received a strong foundation in my faith from my parents and grandparents and from the Mercy Sisters and parish priests. As a teacher in a Catholic school I have received ongoing support and education in living the faith.</p>
<p>In the question—What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time? I mentioned the "small-communities" prayer groups. This has been an effective tool/model the Latin American Catholic Community in Brisbane has adopted for many years now. Each prayer group is led by a coordinator. All prayer groups study a topic provided by the general coordinators which in turn answer to the priest responsible for the community/chaplaincy. These prayer groups are formed after members have participated in a "life in the spirit retreat". They pray at the start and end of the meeting, discuss the topic, share a testimony and reflect on a topic of meditation. Members of these prayer groups can become active in ministry life based in Acts 2, 42.</p>
<p>I have had a strong faith in God since I was very young and believed when I was confirmed that the Holy Spirit really did take over my life. I have always gone to church but as I became older, was invited to study the Bible with other Christian friends. I am now part of the Catholic Charismatic Group who Praise and Worship God and read the Bible. God has given me the strength and courage to face many traumas and disasters and in my life, but unfortunately priests have been little or no support as they are often unsure what to say regarding the loss of a baby and the breakup of a marriage due to adultery. They tell me to pray which I have already been doing.</p>

I have seen my mothers faith over the years and she has encouraged me to have a relationship with God. Last year our family went through a horrible time through a breakup and I turned to the Bible. God has helped me so much.

I found my faith through Mary at [-] Catholic Primary School in [-]. Transferring to the Capuchin Franciscans monastery of [-] in the middle of [-]s orange groves, I had to fight hard to keep my Marian strength being made fun of for holding to my unclasped hands in prayer. This strength led me to study at two Jesuit universities: [-]University [-] Campus and [-] University [-], from where I graduated. After graduation working in and from [-] I was a member of FECUM, Spanish Federation of Marian University Communities. Mary taught me how to pray, the Franciscans and Jesuits taught me how to fight for the promises in Her Rosary, our Pope Francis and our Church keep me strong in my faith; please help my partner [-] and I feel welcomed in Mary every day.

They are a large number of good people in the Catholic Church. I have encountered many good people in dioceses, parishes, Church agencies in Education, Health Care, Centacare, SVdP and other pastoral care.

I have been always engaged in works of social justice. Support for refugees and downtrodden. With a few rare exceptions, it was not a priest who inspired me to live the gospel.

My family attended Sunday Mass every week of my life. When I was 16 I found myself sitting in the pews wondering if the priest was an atheist like me. I didnt summon the courage to ask him—he was a man I respected and liked, but he was withdrawn, and I didnt know what he would say. Although I had a wonderful relationship with my parents I couldnt ask them. I feared that I would pass on the empty burden of my atheism, and that they too would be "converted". Today I am an enthusiastic member of the Church. I dont know exactly why me, and not my brothers, or all my friends from university who remain atheists or agnostic. I can only say that I am grateful that I was caught at the ends of the earth by the unseen hook on the invisible line and brought back with a twitch upon the thread. My eyes were opened by Bishop Barron. He took the time to explain scientism, some basic metaphysics, natural law, Saint Thomas Aquinass proof of the existence of God, and eventually I realised I was not the first Catholic to grapple with doubt of Gods existence, nor was it the worst flaw. It must be typical for people of my generation that the first real connection that they made with the clergy, was in most ways an unreal, virtual connection. Father Barron, as he was then, brought me from atheism to theism. Later I began to watch more videos and realised I had a hunger to understand the deeper meanings of the Scriptures that I had heard all through my childhood and teenage years. It was confession and adoration that later changed my heart (and believe me, I attended my Holy Hour for months wondering if what I was doing was worthwhile, or if I was just wasting my time in front of a thin piece of bread). I thank God for the priests that loved their flock enough to teach them the faith, especially those in [-] like Fr [-], Brother [-] who was at [-] for a while, Fr [-], who did several retreats there from the Missionaries of the Most Holy Eucharist, and the late Father [-], who heard with steadiness and compassion my most shameful confessions.

A loving home with good boundaries and regular formation in Catholic faith through a good Catholic primary school (I attended a state secondary college) and felt accepted for my faith as there were others of many faiths.

My story is that I was shocked when I stopped going to Mass for 3 years, that not one person in the parish asked me why. Prayer and my own personal faith brought me back to weekly Mass. I still feel that there is not a network within parishes that used to exist in the seventies. Maybe the difference is the size of the community I now live in. Smaller communities seem to have better networking.

I am lucky. My experience with my faith journey has been a positive one. I was surrounded by strong women and fortunate to have parish priests who supported the faith and lived out the mission of the Church. My family was instrumental in the shaping of me. They taught me to question, reflect and seek out the truth.

I had a wonderful parish priest, Father [-] of [-] Parish, [-] who supported my faith journey, he never let me fall through the cracks! I also had wonderful Josephite nuns who always listened, cared and encouraged me to strive to do my best for 9 years of my primary and secondary education. I became a teacher due to their faith in my abilities, my love of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, along with my parents deep Catholic faith is largely due to them. Sister [-] was one of the toughest but kindest teachers that I had! I have had my moments of challenges in my faith, namely a divorce, serious health issues, and challenges within my family. I do not want to be distant from God, from the Mass, the Eucharist, the parish to which I belong. In recent decades so many times I have had to grit my teeth and walk away from speaking my mind when I see injustice occur. I know perfection within the Church is impossible but the path of intransigence amongst clergy and some members of my local Church saddens me deeply. The Pope is saying one thing and what is occurring in reality seem to me to be completely different.

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 Townsville.

Country	Number of respondents
Australia	117
South Africa	4
India	1
Ireland	1
Netherlands	1
New Zealand	2
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2
Not stated	5
Total	133

APPENDIX 2: COMPLETE LIST OF GROUPS FROM YOUR DIOCESE

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

Name of group	Group size
Sacred Heart Parish	60
Sacred Heart Parish, Ayr, Queensland	20
Knights of Southern Cross	20
St Marys Worshiping Community	18
St Francis School Ayr	16
St Patricks Catholic School, Winton	15
Pastoral Care - Mater Hospital, Townsville	15
Home group: Alpha study	15
RCIA	13
Informal (After Alpha group) that met to watch the series Catholicism by Bishop Barron.	12
St Josephs Parish of Giru	12
Holy Trinity Prayer group	11
Some members of the Diocesan Choir	11
Ryan Catholic College Board	10
St. Anthonys Catholic College : School Board	9
Commission for Cultural Diversity	9
McCabe family	9
St. Anthonys Parish, Deeragun 4818	8
Townsville Sisters of Mercy	8
Holy Spirit Church PPC1	7
SACC Group	7
TCEO	7
St Margaret Marys College	7
St Brigids Parish Stuart -Wulguru	7
Holy Spirit Church (Bill)	6
St. Brigids Parish, Wulguru: Group RP	6
Cranbrook parishioners	6
Catholic Primary School Teachers	6
Southern Cross Catholic College	6
Southern Cross Catholic College	6
SCCC	6
St Marys Bowen	6
plenary parish group	6
Faith Friends	5
Faith Friends	5
Townsville Catholic Education Office	5
Holy Spirit Church (Shirley)	5
Holy Spirit Church (Premo)	5
St Marys Parish, Bowen	5
St Colmans Parish Council	5
St Marys Parish Listening and Dialogue Community Group	5

Appendix 2: Complete list of groups from your diocese

Name of group	Group size
Ryan Parish Community Group - Michael and friends	5
St Patricks Parish Ingham	5
Townsville. Catholic charismatic	5
Townsville Catholic Charismatic Renewal	5
Our Lady of Lourdes	5
Townsville parishes plenary council listening small group	5
Southern Cross Catholic College	5
Southern Cross Catholic College	5
SCCC	5
Southern Cross Catholic College	5
Southern Cross Catholic College	5
Marian Catholic School 2	5
Marian Catholic School (group 3)	5
St Brigids Parish, Wulguru	5
St Colmans School	5
St Anthony's Catholic.edu.au	5
APRE Tsv	4
Parishioners of St Josephs Parish, North Ward, Townsville, Qld.	4
St Anthony's Catholic College	4
St Anthony's Catholic College	4
SACC	4
Holy Spirit Parish 14/02/2019	4
Southern Cross Catholic College	4
Parish group	4
WOMEN TOGETHER	4
Holy Spirit Parish Group1	3
Holy Spirit Parish	2
Young Christian Students	Not Stated
Informal After Alpha group submission 2.	Not Stated
Mundingburra Parish and Finance Council	Not Stated

This page is intentionally left blank



National Centre for Pastoral Research
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
GPO Box 368
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

